The Yogācāra Doctrine of Buddha-Nature: Paramārtha vs. the Fa-hsiang School

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Abstract

There were two main streams in Yogācāra Buddhism. On the one hand, there was the Old School of Sthiramati and Paramārtha. On the other hand, there was the New School of Dharmapāla and Hsuan Tsang. Due to the work of Yoshifumi Ueda and Gadjin Nagao in Japan, the distinction between Paramārtha and the Fahsiang School has been to a large extent clarified. The difference between their doctrines on Buddha-nature has been, however, relatively neglected by modern scholarship. This paper aims clarify the distinction between Paramārtha and the Fa-hsiang's doctrines of Buddha-nature. Following Ueda, this paper will also differentiate Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature from the doctrine tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith. Especially, we will see that Buddha-nature in the Awakening of Faith and the Fa-hsiang School are committed to a version essentialism. Finally. it will discern some interesting parallels between Paramārtha's doctrine and the perfect teachings of T'ien T'ai Buddhism.

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There were two main streams in Yogācāra Buddhism. On the one hand, there was the Old School of Sthiramati and Paramartha. On the other hand, there was the New School of Dharmapāla and Hsuan Tsang. Due to the work of Yoshifumi Ueda and Gadjin Nagao, the distinction between Paramārtha and the Fa-hsiang School has been to a large extent clarified.¹ The difference between their doctrines on Buddha-nature has been. however, relatively neglected by modern scholarship. This paper aims to clarify the distinction between Paramartha and the Fa-hsiang's doctrines. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to differentiate Paramartha's doctrine of Buddha-nature from the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith. The concepts of Buddha-nature in the Awakening of Faith and the Fa-hsiang School are committed to a version of essentialism. Paramartha, on the other hand, provides a more dynamic theory of Buddha-nature that effectively corrects the shortcomings of both the Awakening of Faith and the Fa-hsiang School. Furthermore, being consistent with the Mahāyāna commitment to equality, Paramārtha's doctrine bears significant affinity with the perfect teachings of T'ien T'ai Buddhism.

Traditionally, the *Fo-hsing lun* (*Theory of Buddha-Nature*) has been identified as the most important text on Buddha-nature in Yogācāra Buddhism. ² Mou Tsung-san (1909-1995)—a major founder of contemporary Neo-Confucianism—develops an interpretation of this text in his *Fo-hsing yu po-je* (*Buddha-Nature and Prajñā*). ³ In order to pursue this line of thinking, we will start with a critical examination of Mou's interpretations, and then indicate our agreement with Ueda's differentiation of Paramārtha's doctrine from the *Awakening of Faith*.

This will give rise to a separation of Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature from more traditional interpretations.⁴

Historically, the Korean monk Yuan Hsiao (Wenhyo, 617-686) might be the first scholar who tried to discern between Paramārtha's and Hsuan Tsang's doctrine of Buddha-nature. In the *Nie-p'on tsong-yao* (*Nehanshuyo*, *A Summary of the School of Nirvāna*), he writes:

The sixth group of masters identifies the *amalavijñāna* as the enlightened understanding of the *tathatā* to be the essence of Buddha-nature. As the $S\bar{u}tra$ says, "Buddha-nature is the name of emptiness ($s\bar{u}nyat\bar{a}$) in the superior sense." This is Paramārtha's doctrine [of Buddha-nature].⁵

Yuan Hsiao then contrasts Paramārtha's doctrine with that of the new Fa-hsiang School:

The thesis that the natural seeds of the *ālayavijñāna* as the essence of Buddha-nature is held by the New School [of Yogācāra Buddhism] and others. This is basically the position of masters belonging to the newly founded Fahsiang School of the T'ang dynasty.⁶

Yuan Hsiao's characterization of Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature is consistent with the one given by Chi Tsang before.⁷

In modern scholarship, the Japanese scholar Daijo Tokiwa's *Busshō no kenkyu* (*A Study of Buddha-Nature*) is a classic work on the problem of Buddha-nature in Yogācāra Buddhism.⁸ In his treatment of the distinction between Paramārtha's and the Fa-hsiang doctrine of Buddhanature, however, Tokiwa only focuses on the contrast between the *ekayāna* and the *triyāna* positions. Following the Chinese, as well as the Japanese tradition, Tokiwa interprets Paramārtha's doctrine in terms of the *tathāgatagarbha* presented in the *Awakening of Faith*.⁹ In the Western scholarship, John Keenan follows this line of hermeneutics.¹⁰

Although Mou knows that Paramārtha has been the alleged translator of the Fo-hsing lun, for some reason he assigns this text to the lineage of the Fa-hsiang School. Following Masaaki Hattori, however, we would rather argue that one finds Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature in the Fo-hsing lun. Accordingly, we will develop an alternative interpretation of this text to the one proposed by Mou. This will enable us to recognize the affinity between Paramārtha's and the T'ien T'ai doctrine of Buddha-nature. For both of them, Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure, nor determinately impure. My understanding of Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature is not only different from the traditional interpretation, but also confirms Ueda's differentiation of Paramārtha's Yogācāra thought from the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith.

Ι

According to Mou, the concept of the seed $(b\bar{\imath}ja)$ traditionally plays an important role in the Yogācāra. The natural seed generally represents the force that continues from our previous deeds. As the cause of results $(vip\bar{a}ka)$, which gives certain responses, it can lead to future actions, and is in sense inheritable. As is well known, there is a distinction between the pure and impure seeds. In contrast to the impure seeds, the pure seeds can lead to positive result in attaining Buddhahood. Mou, however, claims that "Vasubandhu's *Fo-hsing lun* does not consider the natural seed to be the essence of Buddha-nature." Buddha-nature in the Fa-hsiang sense is not identical with the concept of the pure seed. Mou points out that there is

a distinction between two types of Buddha-nature in the Fo-hsing lun: the rational Buddha-nature (li-hsing fo-hsing) and the practical Buddha-nature (shing-hsing fo-hsing). 12 While "the rational Buddha-nature must have its essence in the asamskrta in accordance with the principle of emptiness (śūnyatā)," the practical Buddha-nature refers to the pure seeds. 13 So when Mou denies the identity of Buddha-nature and the pure seeds, he is denving the identity of the rational Buddha-nature with the pure seeds. For him, the rational Buddha-nature refers to the emptiness of self (ātman) and things (dharmas), whereas the practical Buddha-nature consists of the pure seeds. In justifying his position, Mou distinguishes between Dharmapāla's and Asanga's doctrine of pure seeds. Asanga denies any "inherent" pure seed. That is, all pure seeds are results of the hearing permeation. To be more precise, the pure seeds are generated by learning the Buddhist teaching, as well as by following the instructions of the master in practice. Dharmapāla maintains that the pure seeds are naturally inherent. Dharmapāla, however, also stresses that since these innate seeds are hidden deeply, they need the assistance of impressions of hearing (the Dharmas) in order to arise. For Mou, Dharmapāla's notion of inherence must not be understood in the transcendental sense, because it is basically an empirical concept. These naturally inherent pure seeds are at best "a priori" in the temporal sense. Mou concludes that "ultimately speaking, all these naturally inherent pure seeds are not *a priori* in the logical sense."¹⁴

Mou further points out that for the Fa-hsiang School, the pure seeds, in principle, are not to be equally distributed. That is to say, it is purely contingent for one to have the pure seeds. As a result, there is a class of sentient beings that entirely lack the pure seeds. This is exactly what the Fa-hsiang School means by the *icchantika*. For Mou, this points to another essential distinction between the rational Buddha-nature and the naturally inherent pure seeds: While the distribution of the rational Buddha-nature is universal and necessary, the distribution of the pure seeds is particular and contingent.

Mou says of the Fa-hsiang School, "the rational Buddha-nature cannot be confused with 'the *tathāgatagarbha* of the originally pure mind." In his eyes, unlike the *tathāgatagarbha* of the originally pure mind in the sense of the *Awakening of Faith*, the rational Buddha-nature understood by the Fa-hsiang School cannot be characterized as being originally equipped with all *asaṃskṛta* virtues. Yet the rational Buddha-nature is not a mind at all. Secondly, in opposition to the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* presented in the *Awakening of Faith*, the *tathatā* in the sense of the Fa-hsiang School does not function as a transcendental ground of the world. For the Fa-hsiang School, the ground for the rise of the world

is to be found in the ālayavijāāna. The ālayavijāāna is here conceived both as an ontological principle and a principle of cognition. The Fahsiang School insists that even after enlightened transformation, the ālayavijnāna is needed for the cognition of the tathatā. As the correlate of the transformed eighth consciousness, the tathatā remains an objective principle. This indicates that for the Fa-hsiang School, after enlightenment, the relationship between the eighth consciousness and the tathatā is still understood in terms of a subject-object dichotomy. Viewed from this perspective, there is an unbridgeable epistemic gap between the transformed eighth consciousness and the tathatā. In particular, the parinispanna is understood as referring solely to the tathatā, in the sense of the objective, static principle of śūnyatā. That is, the consummative nature (parini panna) is achieved purely in terms of freeing oneself from any attachment to the seeing part as the ego and the seen part as a substantial thing. This, however, does not give rise to a real identity between the transformed eighth consciousness and the tathāta. Mou concludes that, for the Fa-hsiang School, the rational Buddha-nature belongs to the objective side, and the practical Buddha-nature belongs to the subjective side. To the extent that the pure seeds only belong to subjectivity, they are different from the rational Buddha-nature.

When the Fo-hsing lun claims that Buddha-nature, itself, potentially has all the virtues that it deserves to acquire, Mou indicates that this does not imply that these virtues can be generated from the rational Buddha-nature alone. That is to say, such an acquisition is not a priori guaranteed; neither is there any absolute guarantee for any pure seed to become maturely grown.¹⁶ This explains why, for the Fa-hsiang School, both the success of the acquisition and full growing is purely a matter of contingency. Only Buddha-nature in an ideal sense can claim these virtues. In short, the Fa-hsiang concept of the *tathāgatagarbha* is not identical with a transcendental mind. It signifies the *tathatā* as an objective principle, rather than as an activity. Accordingly, the rational Buddha-nature is only the principle (of emptiness) to be witnessed. Being inactive, it is different from the tathāgatagarbha in the sense of the Awakening of Faith. The latter represents a principle of subjectivity. Thus, while tathāgatagarbha of the Fa-hsiang School is a static principle, the tathāgatagarbha of the Awakening of Faith is an active transcendental mind.17

It is clear that, for the Yogācāra doctrine of Buddha-nature, the pure seeds also contribute to the attainment of Buddhahood. According to the modern Chinese monk Master Yin Shun (1906-2005), this signifies an unnecessary complication. Mou, however, holds that this is only due to Master Yin Shun's overlooking of the fact that there are two kinds of

Buddha-nature: the rational and the practical Buddha-nature. As is seen above, for the Fa-hsiang School, the rational Buddha-nature is emptiness $(\delta \bar{u}nyat\bar{a})$ as an objective principle, and the practical Buddha-nature, consisting of the pure seeds, is a subjective principle. The abiding place for the pure seeds is the $\bar{a}layavij\bar{n}\bar{a}na$, rather than the rational Buddha-nature. As the principle of emptiness, the rational Buddha-nature is not understood as the dynamic ground for the possibility of becoming enlightened. It is only the static principle to be witnessed. This indicates that there is a distinction between emptiness and the principle of emptiness. The efficient effort for attaining enlightenment is exclusively found in the pure seeds. The growth of the naturally inherent pure seeds is solely responsible for the activity in attaining the $\bar{a}\dot{s}raya-par\bar{a}vrtti$. Therefore, it is not repetitive for the Fa-hsiang School to introduce the pure seeds as the necessary condition of attaining Buddhahood.

Mou's articulation of the Fa-hsiang doctrine of Buddha-nature is basically consistent with Yuan Hsiao's report. From a historical standpoint, their accounts are faithful to K'uei Ch'i's understanding of the distinction between the rational Buddha-nature and the practical Buddhanature. In the Miao-fa lien-hua ching hsuan-tsan (An Illumination of the Mystical Meanings of the Lotus-sūtra), K'uei Ch'i writes: "While all sentient beings have the rational Buddha-nature, only some have the practical Buddha-nature." Mou's articulation can also help to clarify K'uei Ch'i's thesis in the following way: First, as an objective principle of emptiness (śūnyatā), all sentient beings possess the rational Buddhanature. Second, given the unequal distribution, as well as the contingent nature of the pure seeds, it is legitimate to claim that some, but not all, sentient beings can have the practical Buddha-nature. With his account of the difference between the two kinds of the Buddha-nature, K'uei Ch'i aims to settle the controversy between the ekayāna and the triyāna. While the ekayāna insists that all sentient beings can become Buddhas, the triyāna only allows a certain class of sentient beings to attain Buddhahood. For the latter, the fruits of praxis are different for the bodhisasattva, the pratyekabuddha, and the śravāka. In terms of the universality of the rational Buddha-nature, K'uei Ch'i argues that the Fa-hsiang School is more than just a doctrine of the triyana. Mou's articulation of the contingent nature of the pure seeds (and hence of the practical Buddhanature), however, shows that the Fa-hsiang School is, in reality, committed to the doctrine of the *triyāna*, rather than that of the *ekayāna*.

Critically, Mou's interpretation of the *Fo-hsing lun* as the Fahsiang doctrine of Buddha-nature is not a faithful interpretation of the text. The reason is two-fold. First, from a philological standpoint, as Massaki Hattori points out, the author of the *Fo-hsing lun* is not Vasubandhu, but

Paramārtha.²¹ Lu Ch'eng also remarks that even Hsuan Tsang himself did not assign this text to Vasubandhu.²² Secondly, Mou himself does not deny that there is a difference between Paramārtha's and the Fa-hsiang doctrine of Buddha-nature. One can hardly believe that Paramārtha would have translated a text that only accords with his opponent's position. Finally, in interpreting the concept of *dhātu*, there is a quotation from a passage from the *Srimālādevi-sūtra*, which is found only in Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya*: "The *tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmadhātugarbha*, the *dharmakāyagarbha*, the *lokōttaragarbha*, and the *prakṛtipariśuddhivgarbha*." ²³ This passage also appears in the *Fohsing lun* for the sake of clarifying the essence of Buddha-nature. ²⁴ Evidently then, Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature is consistent with the position of the *Fo-hsing lun*.

Π

Despite Paramārtha's doctrinal kinship with the Fo-hsing lun, it is not necessary for us to accept the traditional interpretation of his doctrine of Buddha-nature. According to this interpretation, Paramartha tries to synthesize Yogācāra Buddhism with the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith. This could be supported by Paramārtha's above-mentioned interpolation of the text from the Srimālādevi-sūtra into his translation of the Mahāyānasamgrahabhāsya. Traditionally Paramartha is the alleged translator of the Awakening of Faith, as well as the founder of the She-lun School. All this indicates that Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature results from the development of the idea of the tathāgatagarbha from the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Awakening of Faith into Yogācāra Buddhism. Paramārtha's concept of the amalavijñāna (immaculate consciousness) is therefore only a Yogācāra correspondent to the tathāgatagarbha in the sense of the Awakening of Faith. In short, according to the traditional interpretation, Paramartha introduces an eternal pure consciousness into the Yogācāra doctrine of Buddha-nature.

In the *Awakening of Faith*, such an originally pure mind of Buddha-nature has been identified as the central reality of all reality. Paramārtha supposedly transforms the essence of the *ālayavijñāna*. In particular, as Master Yin Shun claims, Paramārtha introduces the concept of the "enlightening *ālayavijñāna*." According to the original position of Yogācāra Buddhism, the *ālayavijñāna* is strictly defiled. Under the influence of the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* represented by the *Awakening of Faith*, however, Paramārtha is obliged to distinguish between two kinds of the *ālayavijñāna*: the "defiled *ālayavijñāna*" in the traditional sense, and the "enlightening *ālayavijñāna*." While the former

is identical with the impure *paratantra*, the latter coincides with the pure *paratantra*. Like the pure mind of the *tathāgatagarbha* in the sense of the *Awakening of Faith*, Paramārtha's pure mind of Buddha-nature is called "*tathāgatagarbha*" when covered by obstruction. Conversely, it is called "*Dharmakāya*" when it is free from any obstruction. In itself, the pure mind of the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to have potentially acquired infinite virtues. Ontologically, such a pure mind functions as the transcendental ground for the possibility of both the supramundane and mundane world. On the level of praxis, it is a synonym for original enlightenment in the *Awakening of Faith*.

From a historical standpoint, this traditional interpretation of Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature has the virtue of being able to explain why his version of Yogācāra did not fare so well. In identifying Buddha-nature as the eternal pure mind (or the original enlightenment), it signifies a modification of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* along the lines of the *Awakening of Faith*. This also subsumes Yogācāra thought under the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* presented in the *Awakening of Faith*. There is, as a result, the danger of undermining Yogācāra Buddhism in favour of the latter doctrine. Therefore, Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddhanature has been rejected as a heretical Yogācāra. Historically, this kind of critique has prevailed since K'uei Ch'i.²⁷ Even today this is considered to be evidence for Paramārtha's deviation from the original position of Maitreya, Asanga and Vasubandhu.

This traditional interpretation of Paramartha's doctrine of Buddhanature is, however, highly problematic. First, mainly thanks to the efforts of Ueda, modern scholarship has already reached the consensus that it is highly improbable that Paramartha was the translator of the Awakening of Faith. 28 Second, there is an essential distinction between Paramartha's and the Awakening of Faith's doctrines of the tathāgatagarbha. Buddha-nature in the Awakening of Faith is absolutely pure. In contrast, for the Fo-hsing lun. Buddha-nature "is neither determinately pure nor determinately impure."²⁹ This shows that Paramārtha's Buddha-nature is not absolutely pure. As Paramārtha explains, "If it is determinately pure, then it is not identical with ignorance." To this extent, his theory of Buddha-nature is rather similar to that of T'ien T'ai Buddhism. In claiming that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, like the T'ien T'ai Buddhists, he assigns impurity (= ignorance) and purity (= bodhi) to the Being of sentient beings. For the author of the Fo-hsing lun and T'ien T'ai Buddhism, apart from ignorance, there is no Buddha-nature.

In terms of their divergent conceptions of ignorance, one can discern another essential distinction between Paramārtha's and the *Awakening of Faith*'s doctrines of Buddha-nature. For Paramārtha,

ignorance is an immanent possibility of Buddha-nature. It is for this reason that he declares Buddha-nature to be neither determinately pure, nor determinately impure. Apart from ignorance there is no Buddha-nature. Accordingly, in attaining Buddhahood one only has to manifest the possibility of purity, rather than impurity. On the other hand, according to the *Awakening of Faith*, ignorance is extrinsic to Buddha-nature. Here, the Buddha-nature itself is absolutely pure. Consequently, Buddha-nature and ignorance constitute an exclusive either/or relation.

Although Paramārtha and the *Awakening of Faith* both employ the phrase "the original pure mind" in characterizing their respective conceptions of Buddha-nature, they differ in their understanding of its meaning. The same linguistic phrase should not blind us to the semantic distinction. The traditional interpretation of Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature results from overlooking this important distinction.

Positively speaking, the uniqueness of Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature is evidenced in the *Fo-hsing lun*:

In essence, there are three types of Buddha-nature. These three are the so-called three types of Buddha-nature as the three grounds. These three grounds refer to: (1) the ground for the deserved attainment; (2) the ground for the endeavour (prayoga); (3) the ground for perfection. The ground for the deserved attainment refers to the tathatā manifested by the $\dot{sunyata}$ of the dual [i.e., self and dharmas]. In virtue of such a śūnyatā, one deserves to attain the mind of the *bodhi*, the endeavour, etc., and even the post-path *Dharmakāya*. That is the reason why it is called "the deserved attainment." The ground for the endeavour refers to the mind of the bodhi. In virtue of such a mind, one can attain the thirty-seven ranks, ten bhūmi, ten pāramitā, the auxiliary skills and even the post-path *Dharmakāya*. That is the reason why it is called "the ground of the endeavour." The ground for perfection basically refers to the endeavour. In virtue of the endeavour, one can attain both the ground of perfection and the fruit of perfection. While the ground for perfection refers to happiness, wisdom and praxis, the fruit of perfection refers to the transcendence of favours and virtues in terms of wisdom. Among these grounds, the first one has its essence in the asamskrta in accordance with the principle [of emptiness]; the latter two have their essence in the samskrta wish and action.³¹

For Paramārtha, there is a three-fold structure of Buddha-nature. First, Buddha-nature functions as the ground for the deserved attainment. Second, it functions as the ground for the endeavour (*prayoga*). Third, it functions as the ground for perfection. More precisely, that which functions as the ground for the deserved attainment is "the *tathatā* manifested by the emptiness of self (*ātaman*) and things (*dharmas*)." Insofar as this ground refers to the *asaṃskṛta tathatā*, it constitutes the rational Buddha-nature. Conversely, that which functions as the ground for the endeavour (*prayoga*) and for perfection is the mind of the *bodhi* and the endeavour. Since these two grounds refer to the *asaṃskṛta* wish and action, they constitute the practical Buddha-nature.

It is possible that Paramārtha is trying to articulate the point made by Asanga in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*: "The supramundane mind arises because its seed is the impressions of hearing [the *Dharmas*] that flows from the purest *Dharmadhātu*:"

Paramārtha tries to articulate Asanga's concept of the purest *Dharmadhātu* from the standpoint of Buddha-nature. Such a possibility is anticipated by Vasabandhu's thesis in his commentary on the *Madhyāntavibhāga*: "It is called '*dharmadhātu*' because the holy *Dharma* functions as the ground."

The origination of the pure seeds, and hence of the supramundane mind, is traced back to the pure possibility of Buddha-nature. When Buddha-nature is in the state of impurity, it is attached to the external world. When the pure possibility of Buddha-nature is realized, however, it becomes identical with the purest *Dharmadhātu*.

Unlike in the case of the Fa-hsiang School, Paramartha does not identify the practical Buddha-nature with the pure seeds. For him, while the former signifies a condition of the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, the latter represents the actual condition of realizing Buddhahood. The practical Buddha-nature consists of the ground for the endeavour and perfection. This can be understood, in modern terms, as the existentialontological possibility of becoming enlightened. To be an existentialontological possibility means to be a mode of Being of the sentient being. This is so because the Fo-hsing lun states, "All sentient beings have the tathāgatagarbha," as well as, "All sentient beings tathāgatagarbhā."35 This shows that apart from the tathāgatagarbha, no sentient being is possible. In other words, the tathāgatagarbha belongs to the Being of sentient beings.

On the other hand the pure seeds result from hearing the virtuous teachings and practicing Buddhist *Dharmas*. We could say that there is an ontological difference between the practical Buddha-nature and the pure seed: While the practical Buddha-nature is an ontological concept, the pure seed is an ontical concept. That is to say, the practical Buddha-nature

constitutes the Being of sentient beings, whereas the pure seeds are contingently acquired by sentient beings. For Paramartha, practical Buddha-nature and the pure seeds are different things. In contrast, for the Fa-hsiang School, the practical Buddha-nature and pure seeds are identical. Moreover, Paramārtha's practical Buddha-nature meaningfully involves both the determination of the mind and the endeavour. According to him, both the rational and the practical Buddha-nature are essentially active and dynamic. For the Fa-hsiang School, however, only the practical Buddha-nature is active, whereas the rational Buddha-nature remains static. Finally, since the Fa-hsiang School denies the universality of the practical Buddha-nature, it is not wholly faithful to the Mahāyāna standpoint. In granting the practical Buddha-nature to all sentient beings. Paramārtha makes possible the doctrine of the ekayāna. Particularly, following Asanga's thesis that all pure seeds result from new permeation, Paramārtha does not allow the pure seeds to be only possible for a certain and limited class of sentient beings. The practical Buddha-nature in Paramārtha's sense is therefore entirely different from that employed by the Fa-hsiang School.

If Paramārtha's articulation does not change Asanga's original position, then what is his contribution? One can answer this in the following way. First, with the thesis that Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure nor impure, Paramartha is able to develop the cardinal thesis in the Madhyāntavibhāga that "there is also abhūtaparikalpita in śūnyatā" from the standpoint of a theory of Buddha-nature. 36 While the Madhyāntavibhāga's approach is more descriptive, Paramārtha's orientation is more existential-ontological. For Paramartha, the rational and practical Buddha-natures are two sides of the same coin. Paramārtha thereby shows in what way Yogācāra Buddhism is committed to the unity of the doctrinal and practical approaches. Paramartha indeed borrows the language from the Ratnagotravibhāga in articulating his theory of Buddha-nature. This, however, does not imply that he is committed to the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith. The latter position is primarily transcendental. In contrast, Paramārtha develops a Yogācāra doctrine of Buddha-nature from an existential-ontological perspective.

III

In claiming that Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure nor determinately impure, the *Fo-hsing lun* also states: "This [Buddha-] nature is non-abiding, non-attaching and groundless." ³⁷ Buddha-nature, in Paramārtha's eyes, does not function as the transcendental ground for the possibility of the world as does the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Awakening of*

Faith. The Yogācārin Paramārtha, on the contrary, tries to explicate the meaning of Buddha-nature in terms of the Three Natures, for "such Three Natures embrace the *tathāgata* in an exhaustive manner." In this context, The Three Natures not only covers the *parikalpita* (imaginary nature), the *paratantra* (other-dependent nature) and the *pariniṣanna*, but also include the Three Non-Natures, i.e., the *lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāvatā* (non-essence of characteristics), the *utpattiniḥsvabhāvatā* (non-essence of origination) and the *paramārthaniḥsvabhāvatā* (non-essence of superior truth). To say that "the Three Non-Natures are non-ground," is equivalent to saying that Buddha-nature is groundless. ³⁹ This is another sign of Paramārtha's existential-ontological approach.

The *Mahāyānasaṇgraha* states: "The destruction of defilement by the Bodhisattvas signifies the reach of the non-dual *nirvāṇa*." ⁴⁰ As Vasubandhu explains, this thesis aims to say:

The *bodhisattvas* do not see the difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*...The *bodhisattvas* have already attained the non-discriminating wisdom (*nirvikalpajñāna*). Since there is no difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, they are non-dual.⁴¹

Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature is generally close to the perfect teachings in the T'ien T'ai Buddhist sense. In fact, Chih I (538-597), the founder of T'ien T'ai Buddhism, notes that the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* has the tendency towards the position of the perfect teachings. In the *Ching-kuang-ming-ching hsuan-i* (*On the Mystical Meaning of the Suvarnprabhāsa-sūtra*), Chih I writes:

When one follows the simile of the contamination of gold by soil in the $Mah\bar{a}y\bar{a}nasamgraha$, then one can discover that it points to the position of the perfect teachings. Here soil signifies the $\bar{a}d\bar{a}na$. The contamination signifies the $\bar{a}laya$. And gold signifies the amala. Clearly, this is a doctrine of the perfect teachings.

In illuminating Chih I's point in the *Ching-kuang-ming-ching hsuan-i che-yi-chi (An Explication of the Mystical Meaning of the Suvarnprabhāsa-sūtra*), Chih Li (960-1028), a major representative of the T'ien T'ai School during the Sung period, likewise states:

If one wants to develop the perfect teachings, it is necessary to follow the thesis in *Mahāyānasamgraha* that

a lump of gold, soil and the contamination are inseparable from each other. As a result, all the minds of the $\acute{S}ravaka$, the Bodhisattva and the Buddha are equipped with these three kinds of $vij\~n\=ana$.

In this way, Chih I and Chih Li find a germ of the perfect teachings in Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. Regrettably, they fail to recognize the homogeneity between Paramārtha's and their own doctrines of Buddha-nature. In particular, Chih I classifies Yogācāra Buddhism as of the distinctive, rather than of the perfect, teachings in his syncretism.

In introducing the simile of the contamination of gold by soil, what Asanga has in mind is the two-fold status of the *paratantra* in his doctrine of the Three Natures. As Vasubandhu expounds, "The point of the thesis that the *paratantra* is equipped with two parts is to stress that all *dharmas* are neither real nor unreal." ⁴⁴ In explicating this important thesis of the Yogācāra Buddhist founders, Paramārtha writes:

The Two Truths can neither be said to be real nor to be unreal. It is because they are neither real nor unreal. The paramārtha (Superior Truth) can neither be said to be real nor to be unreal. It is due to the fact that man and dharmas are unreal, the *paramārtha* cannot be said to be real. And it is due to the fact that the paramārtha clearly serves the manifestation of emptiness of the two [i.e., self (ātman) and things (*dharmas*)], it cannot be said to be unreal. It is due to the parikalpita that the samvrti cannot be said to be real. And it is due to the paratantra that the samvrti (Conventional Truth) cannot be said to be unreal. In addition, the paramārtha is indeterminate regarding reality or non-reality. Man and dharmas are both at the same time real and unreal. Even their śūnyatā is at the same time real and unreal. The same holds for the samvrti. It is due to the parikalpita that the samvrti cannot be said to be determinately real. And it is due to the paratantra that the samvrti cannot be said to be determinately unreal.⁴⁵

In Paramārtha's eyes, there are two kinds of the *paratantra*: the impure and the pure. While the impure *paratantra* depends on the *parikalpita*, the pure *paratantra* depends on the *tathatā*. ⁴⁶ Therefore, to say that the *paratantra* is of two kinds implies that the *saṃvṛti* can neither be said to

be determinately real nor determinately unreal. Correlatively, the *paramārtha* can neither be said to be real nor unreal. This indicates that there is a dependence of the Two Truths upon the Three Natures. With the Two Truths one explains the world, but with the Three Natures one aims to transform the world. According to the original position of Yogācāra Buddhism, practical philosophy is primary. More importantly, Paramārtha tries to radicalise this thesis from the standpoint of Buddhanature. Accordingly, he declares, "If one does not speak of Buddhanature, then one does not understand emptiness." To this extent, Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddhanature results from a radical development of Asaṇga's and Vasubandhu's Yogācāra thought. In this way, he harmonizes Yogācāra Buddhism with the Madhyamīka.

Mou might be the first scholar to remind us of the above-mentioned important remarks made by Chih I and Chih Li on the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. ⁴⁹ Unfortunately, like Chih I and Chih Li, he fails to appreciate Paramārtha's affinity with the T'ien T'ai School's perfect teachings. As a consequence, he also misses the real difference between Paramārtha's and the Fa-hsiang doctrine of Buddha-nature. Despite these limitations, Mou must be appreciated for working out the major characteristics of the perfect teachings of T'ien T'ai Buddhism. ⁵⁰

With the help of these essential ideas one can confirm Paramārtha's affinity with the perfect teachings. First, T'ien T'ai practitioners reject the transcendental-grounding approach. Instead, they stress the idea of the non-abiding ground. From a non-abiding ground, nonetheless, all *dharmas* emerge. Likewise, Paramārtha speaks of "the non-abiding *nirvāṇa*." Accordingly, Buddha-nature in his sense does not function as a transcendental ground for the possibility of the world of *dharmas*. In claiming that the Three Non-Natures are groundless, Paramārtha also recognizes that all *dharmas* are given to us *via* the *manojalpa*. As a Yogācārin, he accounts for the origin of the world in terms of the seeds. Unlike the Fa-hsiang School, however, he does not treat the seeds as substantial. Rather, Paramārtha identifies the seeds as something postulated from the standpoint of the present moment. Thus, he characterizes the seeds as virtual in regard to their ontological status.

Secondly, according to the T'ien T'ai, even after enlightenment, the world remains. To experience the emptiness of the world does not imply any destruction of the world itself. What is to be removed is only the sickness (= the attachment to the world and the ego), but not the *dharmas*. In other words, the world remains intact even after the removal of ignorance. As Ueda points out, for the Old School of Yogācāra Buddhism, the *pṛṣṭa-labdha-jṭ āṇa* (the subsequently acquired wisdom) has the form of the "non-discriminating discrimination."

of non-duality, but also the aspect of duality, i.e., subject-object distinction. The validity of the subject-object schema is not, however, absolute; rather it is relativized. It is conceived as a necessary moment of wisdom. ⁵⁵ In order to emphasize this fact, Paramārtha coins the term *amalavijñāna* (immaculate consciousness). In reality, the *amalavijñāna* consists of two aspects: the aspect of the identity between the knowing subject and the known object, and the aspect of the opposition of the knowing subject and the known object. Certainly, the identity aspect is the more fundamental of the two. With the help of such a non-discriminating discrimination, the world of *dharmas* remains even when all the ignorance is removed.

Thirdly, in opposition to the absolutely pure mind as presented in the *Awakening of Faith*, the T'ien T'ai speak of the mind of ignorance and *Dharamatā*. In other words, for the perfect teachings, both authenticity and inauthenticity *qua* possibilities are immanent to the Being of humans. This implies that humans are responsible for their fallenness. This, however, also signifies that no one can be *a priori* excluded from the possibility of attaining Buddhahood. In claiming that Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure nor impure, Paramārtha aims to assign the possibility of attaining Buddhahood to all sentient beings. In expounding the concept of the bipartite *paratantra* in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, he proclaims: "While the opposition between the state of sentient being and that of the enlightened is the opposition between the blind and the sight, these two states belong to one and the same person." Thus, like T'ien T'ai Buddhism, Paramārtha considers *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* to be non-differentiated.

Finally, according to the T'ien T'ai, affliction is identical with the *bodhi*, and the *bodhi* is identical with affliction. Paramārtha says that "The realm of sentient beings is not different from the *Dharmakāya*, and the *Dharmakāya* is not different from the realm of sentient beings." They share the aim to stress that both authenticity and inauthenticity belong to the Being of sentient beings.

Our association of Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature to the T'ien T'ai doctrine by no means implies that they are identical with each other. First of all, the Yogācāra theory of the pure seeds is missing in T'ien T'ai Buddhism. From Paramārtha's emphasis on the importance of the hearing permeation, one can also infer that he would reject the path of sudden enlightenment. Such a possibility is nonetheless open for T'ien T'ai Buddhism. As Ueda observes, the emphasis on the relation between the knowing subject and the known object is unique to the Yogācāra. More importantly, Paramārtha, unlike the T'ien T'ai, does not grant Buddha-nature to non-sentient beings such as grass and tiles. Paramārtha is

not so radical in claiming that Buddha-nature has evil.

Critically, one could raise the following challenge: "What is the virtue of stressing that Paramārtha's Yogācāra thought belongs to the dimension of the perfect teachings?" In order to answer this important question, let us consider the difference between the distinctive and the perfect teachings. As Mou points out, both the doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha presented in the Awakening of Faith and the Fa-hsiang School belong to the dimension of the distinctive teachings.⁵⁹ For the distinctive teachings, the supramundane pure mind is separated from the world. In other words, the world does not belong to the Being (or ontological structure) of the pure mind (in the empirical or transcendental sense). On the other hand, according to the perfect teachings, the mind and the world are inseparable. In modern terms, the mind is essentially a beingin-the-world. The removal of defilements only signifies the mind's release from attachments to the world. This does not imply that the mind and the world constitute a zero-sum game. Furthermore, with its idea of nonground, the perfect teachings do not identify the mind as the transcendental ground for the possibility of the world. Thereby, the perfect teachings avoid the danger of subjectivising the world. Failing to see the difference between the perfect and the distinctive teachings, the traditional interpretation errs in identifying Paramartha's Buddha-nature as the transcendental ground of the world.

Undeniably, as far as understanding Buddha-nature is concerned, there is also a fundamental distinction between the Fa-hsiang School and the Awakening of Faith. The Fa-hsiang School holds the theory of the "five distinct lineages (gotrā)." It admits the group of sentient beings who are completely devoid of the possibility of attaining Buddhahood. Accordingly, its approach is non-egalitarian. For the Awakening of Faith, however, all sentient beings must have Buddha-nature, and their Buddhanature is absolutely pure. To this extent, it is faithful to the Buddhist ideal of equality. They are, however, common in being "deterministic" in their approaches. While the Fa-hsiang School's discriminative distribution of the pure seeds gives rise to the five fixed types of lineage, the Awakening of Faith adheres to the concept of an absolutely pure Buddha-nature. From an existentialist standpoint, both are committed to the error of granting priority to "essence" over "existence." That is to say, both understand Buddha-nature from an essentialist perspective. In contrast, in claiming that Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure nor determinately impure, Paramartha is consistent with the existentialist thesis that "existence precedes essence."60 This shows that Paramartha's theory of Buddhanature is "existentialistically" justified.

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* can lend support to Paramārtha's theory of Buddha-nature. This *sūtra* states: "The *icchantikas* are indeterminate...Even the *srota-āpannas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* are indeterminate...If an *icchantika* is rid of his ichantikahood, he can attain Buddhahood." On the way towards Buddhahood, no sentient being is determinate. This is an implication of Paramārtha's claim that "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature." As Mou insightfully observed:

Such a position in granting indeterminacy to different finite existential stages is reminiscent of the French existentialist Sartre's thesis of the "undefinability of man."...If man is defined according to a certain ideal type, then he would become a sentient being of a determined essence...If this is the case, then the attaining of Buddhahood would become an impossible dream. In this way, Buddha would only be an ideal archetype which is never attainable. But the principle of "indeterminacy" in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* rejects this idea.

The principle of indeterminacy in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* shows that in granting Buddha-nature to all sentient beings, its position is anti-essentialist. Indeed, it also states: "Buddha-nature is neither *saṃskṛta* nor *asaṃskṛta*, therefore it is not discontinuous." Paramārtha's view—that Buddha-nature is neither determinately pure nor determinately impure—is a consistent development of this position.

IV

In regard to Jikido Takasaki's puzzle, "Was Paramārtha's Yogācāra doctrine (= theory of the Three Natures) not influenced by the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* [along the lines of the *Awakening of Faith*] at all?" one can answer as follows: ⁶⁴ In employing the *language* of the texts belonging to the lineage of the *Awakening of Faith*, Paramārtha developed an innovative doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. While Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature is close to the perfect teachings, the *Awakening of Faith*'s doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* belongs to the distinctive teachings.

One can articulate the essential differences between Paramārtha's and the Fa-hsiang doctrine of Buddha-nature as follows: First, for Paramārtha, the rational and practical Buddha-nature are basically two aspects of one and the same coin; both are dynamic in character. Conversely, according to K'uei Ch'i, the practical and rational Buddha-

natures are separated from each other: While the rational Buddha-nature is basically static and objective, the practical Buddha-nature is dynamic and subjective.

Second, the practical Buddha-nature, in Paramārtha's sense, signifies an existential-ontological possibility for sentient beings. The possibility of becoming a Buddha is primarily grounded in the practical Buddha-nature, rather than in the acquisition of pure seeds. For Paramārtha, the pure seeds are only the empirical, ontical condition of attaining Buddhahood. Insofar as the pure seeds constitute the condition of the realization of Buddhahood, they contribute to the process of becoming a Buddha. With the claim that "all sentient beings have Buddha-nature," however, Paramārtha is able to defend the Mahāyāna spirit of Yogācāra Buddhism. For the Fa-hsiang School, the practical Buddha-nature is reduced to the naturally inherent pure seeds. The pure seeds, however, are only attributed to some sentient beings. There is thus an inequality among sentient beings regarding their possibility of attaining Buddhahood. As a result, the Fa-hsiang School can hardly demonstrate the Mahāyāna spirit

In conclusion, we can say that since Paramārtha's doctrine of Buddha-nature grants a priority to the practical, he more closely adheres to the original spirit of Yogācāra Buddhism. On the other hand, while being imprisoned in the primacy of knowledge, the Fa-hsiang School's doctrines actually undermine the importance of praxis. This contrast also shows us in what ways one can achieve a Yogācāra doctrine of Buddha-nature that is compatible with the position of the *ekayāna*.

NOTES

- ¹ Cf.: Yoshifumi Ueda, Bukkyo shis hsi kenkyu (A Study in the Buddhist History of Ideas). Tokyo: 1958; Yoshifumi Ueda, "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogàcàra Philosophy." Philosophy East and West, Vol. 17 (1967), pp. 155-165; Nagao Gadjin, Madhyamīka and Yogàcàra, trans. Leslie Kawamura. New York:
- ² In Taish^o, Vol. 31, pp. 787-813; Vasubandhu is labeled as its author, and Paramārtha as its translator.
- ³ Mou Tsung-san, Fo-hsing yu po-je (Buddha-nature and Praj\(\frac{1}{2}\)\(\dot\)). Taipei: 1997.
- ⁴ I benefit from the comments of an anonymous referee in developing these lines.
- ⁵ *Taish*°, vol. 38, p. 249.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ T'ang Yung-tung, Han Wei Liang-Chin Nan-pei-ch'ao Fo-chiao Shih (History of Chinese Buddhism from 206 B.C. to A.D. 589). Taipei: 1976, pp. 681-682.
- ⁸Cf.: Tokiwa Daijo, Bussh^o no kenkyo (A Study of Buddha-nature). Tokyo: 1972.
- ⁹ Ibid, pp. 151-152.
- ¹⁰ John Keenan, "The Doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese Buddhism—Hui-K'ai on Paramārtha." Buddha Nature: A Festschrift in Honor of Minoru Kiyota, ed. Paul Griffiths and John Keenan. Tokyo: 1990, pp. 125-137.
- ¹¹ Ibid, p. 188.
- ¹² Actually these two terms were introduced by K'uei Ch'i. But Mou applies these two terms in characterizing the Fo-hsing lun.
- ¹³ Ibid, pp. 317-318.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 315ff.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 318; see also: pp. 316-317.
- ¹⁶ Cf.: Ibid, pp. 322-323. This could well be Mou's tactic in interpreting the following thesis in the Fo-hsing lun: "The tathatā is neither determinately pure nor determinately impure."
- ¹⁷ Cf.: Ibid, p. 512ff.
- 18 Cf.: Master Yin Shun, She ta-ch'eng lun chiang-chi (An Explication of the Mahyānasaügraha). Taipei: 1962, p. 143ff.
- ¹⁹ Cf.: *Fo-hsing yu po-je*, p. 311ff.
- ²⁰ *Taish*°, Vol. 34, p. 656.
- ²¹ Cf.: Massaki Hattori, "Busshōron' no ichi kousatsu (An Examination of the Fo-hsing lun)" Bukky shigaku, Vol. 4 (1955), p. 160-174.
- ²² Cf.: Lu Ch'eng, Yin-tu fo-hsueh ssu-hsiang kai-lun (A General Introduction to Indian Buddhism). Taipei: 1983, p. 243.
- ²³ Taish^o, Vol. 31, p. 796. See also: Master Yin-shun, Ju-lai-tsang chih yen-chiu (A Study of the Tathàgatagarbha). Taipei: 1988, p. 217.

 ²⁴ Taish°, Vol. 31, p. 156. See also: "The Doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese
- Buddhism --- Hui-K'ai on Paramārtha."
- ²⁵ "The Doctrine of Buddha Nature in Chinese Buddhism --- Hui-K'ai on Paramārtha," p. 131.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf.: Ju-lai-tsang chih yen-chiu, p. 212.
<sup>27</sup> Cf.: K'uei Ch'i, Bien chung-bin lun shu-chi (A Commentary on the
Madhyāntavibhāga), Taisho, Vol. 44, pp. 1-46.
<sup>28</sup> Cf.: Jikido Takasaki, "Nyoraizo to arayashiki (The Tathāgatagarbha and the
Ālayavij¤āna)" Nyoraizo shiso (The Thought of the Tathāgatagarbha), ed. Akira
Hirakawa, et. al. Tokyo: 1982, Chapter. 6.
<sup>29</sup> Taish<sup>o</sup>, Vol. 31, p. 795.
<sup>30</sup> Ibid.
<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 794.
<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 787.
<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 117. Here I modified Keenan's translation in: Asanga, The Summary
of the Great Vehicle, trans. John Keenan. Tokyo: 1991, p. 21.
<sup>34</sup> Taish°, Vol. 31, p. 452.
35 Ibid, p. 811; p. 808.
<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 451.
<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 795.
<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 794.
<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 867.
<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 129.
<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 247.
<sup>42</sup> Taish°, Vol. 39, p. 5.
<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 26.
44 Taish°, Vol. 31, p. 193.
<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pp. 793-794.
46 Ibid, p. 794.
<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ibid, p. 808.
<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 787.
<sup>49</sup> Cf.: Fo-hsing yu po-je, p. 580ff.
<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 677ff.
<sup>51</sup> Taish°, Vol. 31, p. 799.
<sup>52</sup> Cf.: Ibid, p. 199ff. See also: Bukkyo shis°hsi kenkyu, p. 140ff.
<sup>53</sup> Cf. Taish<sup>o</sup>o, Vol. 31, p. 163.
<sup>54</sup> Cf.: Yoshifumi Ueda, Bonbun yushiki sanjuju no kaimei (An Explication of
Sthiramati's Yogācāra Triü÷ikā). Tokyo: 1987, p. 121.
55 Such a relativation of the subject-object schema is existential-ontologically
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Robinson. New York: 1962, pp. 444-445.) Like Heidegger, Paramartha only

opposes the thesis of the primacy of the subject-object dichotomy. ⁵⁶ Yoshifumi Ueda, Shodaijoron kodoku (A Study of the Mahāyānasaügraha). Tokyo: 1981, p. 299.

justified. As Heidegger points out, "Thematising Objectifies...the thematising of entities within-the-world presupposes Being-in-the-world as the basis of Dasein." (Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie and E.

⁵⁷ *Taish*°, Vol. 31, p. 796.

⁵⁸ Yoshifumi Ueda, *Daijobukkyoshis*° (The Thought of Mahayana Buddhism).

Tokyo: 1982, p. 129ff.

⁵⁹ Cf.: Fo-hsing yu po-je, p. 636; p. 838.

60 Cf.: Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, trans. Philip Mairet.

London: 1948, p. 34.

⁶¹ Taish^o, Vol. 12, p. 493.

⁶² Ibid, p. 522. ⁶³ Ibid, p. 494.

⁶⁴ Jikido Takasaki, "Shindai sangtz° no shiso (On Tripitaka Paramrātha's Thought)." Shukyo Katsumata wakushi kosa kinen ronbunsh⊚ (Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Shukyo Katsumata). Tokyo: 1981, p. 706.

65 Taisho, Vol. 31, p. 787.

paṭipatti