

Wŏnhyo's Faith System, as Seen in His Commentaries on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith

Sung-bae Park

There are two key aspects to Wŏnhyo's conception of Buddhist faith: complete negation and complete affirmation. Wŏnhyo's commentaries generally begin with a lengthy discussion of the t'i(體) or body of the text under consideration, characterized by a series of compounded negations.

His Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith(大乘起信論疏) follows this pattern, with the opening section beginning by negating all kinds of linguistic expressions. Wŏnhyo does not stop at negation, however. Once mokṣa(解脫) is attained, his next step is to affirm everything fully and absolutely from the perspective of the liberated or enlightened person.

He is careful, however, to distinguish how this enlightened affirmation is different from other forms of affirmation, which remain tangled in conceptual understanding. Indeed, he implies that unenlightened practitioners should practice Buddhist faith in terms of negation, not affirmation. By this he means not a passive or destructive practice, but one that focuses squarely on the limits of conceptual understanding and linguistic expression. This conception of Buddhism is the underpinning for his non-sectarian, synthetic approach to Buddhist doctrine.

Sung-bae Park is a Professor of Buddhist Studies at State University of New York at Stony Brook

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I . Prelude: The True Nature of Faith

It is very difficult to define the true meaning of religious faith. Faith is deeply related to the experience of living and is therefore, in a sense, beyond description.

Faith, in a religious sense, has two opposing sides. On the one hand, faith liberates us from the dark side of life and delivers us into Enlightenment. Seen from this perspective, faith that does not eradicate vice cannot be called true religious faith.

On the other hand, faith also helps us to accept the dark side of life. However useless and even vicious the dark side may be, we should accept and make use of it in the name of faith. Seen from this other perspective, if faith does not bring light to the dark side of our nature, it cannot be called true religious faith.

'The field of faith' thus contains seemingly opposing elements: destruction and construction, negation and affirmation, death and life, and darkness and brightness.

In this paper I will elucidate this seemingly contradictory structure of faith through a critique of Wōnhyo's *Commentary on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith* (大乘起信論疏).

II . What is Faith?

Aśvaghōṣa's *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*(大乘起信論, T. 32, 1666, 575~583), which so impressed Wōnhyo, is the earlier version translated by Paramārtha(499-569), rather than the later version(T.32, 1667, 583-591) translated by Śikṣānanda(695-7040). In the Paramārtha version, the Chinese character hsin(信, faith) is used 53 times. In the Prologue it is used 4 times; in Chapter One 3 times; in Chapter Three 21 times; in Chapter Four 18 times; and in the last chapter, 6 times.

As I understand it, Aśvaghōṣa classifies faith into two categories: One is the enlightened faith of the Buddha, and the other is the unenlightened faith of ordinary, unenlightened people.

Enlightened faith is based on the truth of non-duality. This point is indicated in the commentary's title, *Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*, and is emphasized in a number of key sections, including the Prologue; the first chapter, "Reason for Writing the Treatise(因緣分);" the second chapter, "Establishment of Fundamentals(立義分);" and the third chapter "Detailed Explanation of Mahāyāna Doctrine(解釋分)".

In contrast to enlightened faith, unenlightened faith can be divided into two types. The first is a non-backsliding faith, which is strong even though still not enlightened. The second is a backsliding faith, which is still shaky, as the faith itself is not solid enough.

Paradoxically, Chapter Two of the treatise, "Establishment of Fundamental Mahāyāna Doctrine(立義分)," is the key to Wŏnhyo's conception of faith, despite the fact that it does not include a single usage of the character *hsin*(信, faith). Chapter Three, which accounts for 70% of the total treatise, merely elaborates on the ideas presented in Chapter Two. It is not an exaggeration to say that the rest of the treatise is in fact intended to assist with the interpretation of the second chapter. Wŏnhyo makes this point in the first part of his commentary, titled "The Body of Doctrine(宗體章):"

This text provides much explanation but, in short, its ultimate purpose is to open the two gates (aspects of Mind), which are True Suchness and Phenomenal Mind (所述雖廣 可略而言 開二於一心) (HPC, 1-733b)

In short, he advises his readers to focus on the message of "The Establishment of Fundamental Mahayana Doctrine" while reminding themselves of the One Mind and the Two Aspects of Mind.

According to "The Establishment of Fundamental Mahayana Doctrine," the main theme of Aśvaghōṣa's text is Mahāyāna. Aśvaghōṣa defines Mahāyāna as the mind of sentient beings, but Wŏnhyo has serious doubts about this definition. His commentary begins with this doubt and goes on to negate every possible explanation, while pointing out the limitations of language itself. Even the word 'Mahāyāna' is presented as a compromise:

"I do not know how to speak of it, but as I am compelled now to name it, I call it Mahayana"(不知何以言之 強號之謂大乘) (HPC, 1-733a)

Though he himself is a writer and philosopher, Wŏnhyo is continually challenging the world of thought and language. Why? Here we can see Wŏnhyo's diamond mind, the "sharp blade of the knife" which destroys and denies everything. It is the kind of total negation that cannot be successful without the underpinning of religious faith. But along with this complete negation we also get complete affirmation, i.e., the two key aspects of Wŏnhyo's conception of Buddhist faith.

III. The Blade of Complete Negation

At this point, we cannot help but raise several important questions. First, what is Mahāyāna? In the realm of language and thought even Mahāyāna is completely negated. Through the gesture of negation, it serves as the 'finger' pointing us to the 'moon,' which is the actual object we are seeking.

Aśvaghoṣa defined Mahāyāna as 'the Mind of all sentient beings'. This Mind is not our ordinary mind, or a vengeful mind, but is One Mind, which opens two Gates(or aspects of mind), i.e. the Suchness Aspect(眞如門) and the Arising-Ceasing Aspect(生滅門). There are some people who think that One Mind is something similar to the Christian God. But this misconception arises from a misunderstanding of Wŏnhyo's blade of complete negation.

Aśvaghoṣa explained the two aspects of One Mind in terms of the Three Greatnesses¹: *t'i*(體), *hsiang*(相) and *zung*(用), or the essence,

¹ If we read the Three Greatnesses in terms of *t'i-yung*(體用) construction, it's a gross misinterpretation. The *t'i-yung* formula is a device to show the inseparability of two seemingly separate but in reality non-distinct things. But the Three Greatnesses are a device to explain substance through *t'i-yung* formula. The character of *t'i-yung* is non-dual, but the Three Greatnesses are complementary.

attributes and functions of One Mind.

The Absolute aspect of One Mind is referred to as *t'i*(體), "essence", while the phenomenal aspect is called *hsiang*(相), "attributes", and *yung*(用), "function". To substantialize One Mind, or to think that something is supposed to come from it, is to be ignorant of the Greatness of Mahāyāna. The Greatness of Mahāyāna is talked about in terms of the philosophy of emptiness. If we cling to self-identity, we will be forced to confront no-self. But if we throw away the erroneous belief in self-identity, everything in this world becomes One and we cannot help but believe in the Greatness of Mahāyāna. It is quite paradoxical.

There is a well-known Buddhist paradox: "Everything existing in reality is not existent, everything that is nonexistent is real existence." In the same way, whether we refer to Mahāyāna, the Mind of all sentient beings, or One Mind, if it is really great, it should contain no discrimination between self and non-self. Everything is one and one is everything. This is called 'greatness'.

Why do people try to reduce the principle of "One Mind and Two Gates", which was greatly admired by Wŏnhyo, to the idea of a 'small mind'? When Wŏnhyo applied the sharp blade to the word 'Mahāyāna', all language and thought were completely shattered. Mahāyāna, mind of all sentient beings, One Mind and even *Tathāgata* were all shattered completely. If there is anything that is not shattered, it is that thing mentioned in the chapter called "The Body of Doctrine," namely, the spirit of complete negation. That is the reason why I consider this chapter to be a confession of Wŏnhyo's religious faith.

A spirit of complete negation is the necessary precondition for true religious faith. Even 99.99% negation is not religious faith. The remaining 0.01% can be exceedingly dangerous in that much more doubt and attachment can be hidden. Only when one's faith has reached a 100% complete negation can it be called true religious faith.

IV. To Die Is to Live

Where does such shattering power come from? To answer simply, such power does not come from the usual view of selfhood. In Wŏnhyo's faith system, there is a strong belief that we must first die in order to live. Only when we kill the old self will every negative thing perish. This belief may be described as "One death(一死) is the death of everything(一切死)." This is often expressed in the Buddhist scriptures as "Death is life and life is death." Religious faith is not a language game. We should not pretend to understand.

As I mentioned earlier, religious faith bears a close relationship to life. Faith itself is an integral part of our existence. Religious faith does not exist outside of or apart from life. It lives within us.

If we are not sure about faith, it is not religious faith. If we are not sure about a decision, whether to go or not, whether to choose this or that, what is right or wrong, then it is not religious faith. In our daily life, if we have to give up one in order to choose another, that is not Buddhist faith.

If anything in our daily routine distorts our religious life, it should be discarded. Then our religious life will be born anew and life itself will become worthwhile. This is the real meaning of the Buddhist expression "Death is life and life is death." Religious life means that if we have to kill, we kill completely. That is why Buddhist Scriptures such as *The Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith* emphasize the necessity to eradicate ignorance, illusion, delusion and the Three Poisons. In regard to religious faith, we must seek 'death'. Thus the first priority of religious faith is 'destruction and negation'.

One who is ignorant of darkness does not seek light. As our life is shrouded with darkness, we must first drive out the darkness. The darkness is man's ignorance. All kinds of vices come from this ignorance; it is the root of all evil. If we do not rid ourselves of ignorance, it is useless to talk about this and that for a whole lifetime. Only when the darkness has been eliminated can we see brightness.

Affirmation without negation is liable to become a language game.

Construction without destruction is not religious construction. That is the reason why "breaking the false doctrine and making manifest the correct one(破邪顯正)" is referred to so often in Buddhist teaching. It is only when the clouds clear away that we can see the brightness of the sun. One who does not seek the correct way cannot challenge the false.

People who only repeat that "Life is death and death is life" have no religious faith. According to Wŏnhyo's philosophy of negation, the first thing we have to attain is self-negation, i.e., 'Great Death'. To be more specific, life should die and, paradoxically, even death should die. This brings to mind Master Lin-chi(臨濟)'s golden utterance:

"If you meet the patriarchs, kill them, and when you meet the Buddha, kill him!"

There seems to be some similarity between Wŏnhyo's way of thinking and that of Master Lin-chi.

"Religious faith" is, of course, a man-made concept; it is created by human beings to meet a pressing human need. Without it, human beings could not perform their proper functions. Human beings are mortal, we die every minute, but overwhelmed by ignorance, most of us struggle to survive. The religious world is different. First we die spiritually, in what is called "Great Death(大死)". This is the field of religious faith. "To die in order to live" means that life where there is a struggle to survive is not the true way of life.

What is Wŏnhyo trying to do by continually negating our most familiar concepts? He is trying to crush everything that is struggling to survive. He is trying to show us that in order to live, we must kill the self. This negation is the most distinct characteristic of a true religious faith.

A man who has no religious faith may also use negation, of course, but there is a difference between the two uses. A religious person uses negation in order to eradicate the self, while a nonreligious person employs it in order to protect the self. The difference between the two comes from religious faith. In a religious context, we kill the self in order to live a true life. But in the secular world, we negate

others in order to survive physically, economically and psychologically. In such a world the target of negation is always others, never the self. But in religion the target of negation is always "I". Of course, this "I" is cunning and sly and changes shape continuously. How can "I" kill this "I"? The answer is that the power to kill the self does not come from within oneself.

When we make a mistake, we can repent and confess. Then why we do repeat the same mistakes again and again? Why is it so difficult for us to turn away from backsliding faith to non-backsliding faith?

V. Awakening Faith

Every language carries its own karma. Most people live under the pressure of such linguistic karma. If we take a look at the title *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*, we can easily recognize how this karma oppresses us.

When we speak of "awakening faith," the question inevitably arises: "Whose faith is awakening?" The very nature of language requires an "I" to be the subject of the sentence containing that phrase. We think we use language but we do not. Language controls our way of thinking.

In the *Platform Sermon of the Sixth Patriarch*(六祖壇經), the phrase "arousing thought(起念)" appears in the section explaining no-thought(無念). Typically, this phrase also elicits questions about "who is thinking what."(T.44, 1846, 240-287)

It is assumed that we always need a dualistic subject and object structure in order to think about experience. Without the familiar categories of subject and object, we assume that the world does not make sense. That means, in a way, that we are slaves to language. We are too dependent on words and letters.

Hundreds of commentaries have been written on Paramārtha's *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith* since its publication in the middle of the 6th century. Of these, the *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun i-chi* (大乘起信論

義記, T.44, 1846, 245b) of Fa-tsang(法藏, 643-712) has been the most influential. In his book, Fa-tsang looks at the treatise's title and explains the relationship between "Mahāyāna" and "Awakening Faith" as based on the *neng-so*(能所) or subject-object construction, a hermeneutic device used in Buddhist thought. In Fa-tsang's words:

As "Mahāyāna" is the object in which we believe, its cause is substance and function (大乘 所信之境 體能²爲義).

As "Awakening Faith" is the believing mind, its character is purity and clarity (起信卽 能信之心 澄淨爲性).

So we call "the mind that believes and the object we believe in" together Awakening Mahāyāna Faith (心境合目 故云 大乘起信).

(T.44, 1846, 245b)

In the tradition of East Asian Buddhist commentary, the *neng-so*, or subject-object construction is employed as a syntactic device to isolate the subject of a verb. But these days it refers to a dualistic way of thinking in which subject and object are strictly distinguished from each other. I wonder if Fa-tsang's interpretation of *neng-so* can be compared with a contemporary dualistic subject-object structure.

Wŏnhyo's interpretation is quite different from that of Fa-tsang's. In Wŏnhyo's words:

To conclude: Mahāyāna is the essence of the doctrine of this treatise; awakening faith is its efficacious function.

[Thus], the title is composed [in such a way as] to show the unity of essence and function. Hence the words, "Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith"(總而言之 大乘是 論之宗體 起信是 論之勝能 體用合舉 以標題目 故言 大乘起信論也). (HPC, 1-735a)

Unlike Fa-tsang, Wŏnhyo interprets the relationship between

² Here Fa-tsang's 體(*ti*) and 能(*neng*) is contrasted with Wŏnhyo's 宗體(the essence of doctrine) and 勝能(efficacious function). Wŏnhyo compared 宗體 to Mahāyāna and 勝能 to Awakening Faith while Fa-tsang intentionally compare "*ti* and *neng*" only to Mahāyāna, in a dualistic *neng-so* formula. As Fa-tsang's commentary was published far later than that of Wŏnhyo, his interpretation is considered to be intentional.

"Mahāyāna" and "awakening faith" in terms of the non-dualistic *t'i-yung* (體用) or "essence-function" construction. Let us look a little more closely at the difference between essence-function and subject-object construction.

In the hermeneutic tradition of East Asia, *t'i*, or "essence," refers to noumenal, internal, and invisible aspects of reality, whereas *yung*, or "function," refers to its phenomenal, external, and visible aspects. The purpose of the *t'i-yung* formula is to show the inseparability of two seemingly separate but in reality non-distinct things.

One of the earliest classical works of Ch'an literature in China, *The Platform Sermons of the Sixth Patriarch* (六祖壇經), illustrates the relationship between *t'i* and *yung* with the analogy of a lamp and its light. Whereas the bright lamp is *t'i*, "essence," its light is *yung*, "function." A lamp and its light are inseparable and nondual. The *t'i-yung* hermeneutic device thus removes false discrimination originating from a dualistic way of thinking, as reflected in such dichotomies as subject-object, cause-effect, arising-cessation, and birth-death.

While *neng-so*(能所), or subject-object construction is focused on *yung*(用, *yung*), function, *t'i-yung* or essence-function construction emphasizes *t'i* (體, essence). It reveals an apparent difference to be, in actuality, a linguistic difference arising from ignorance and illusion. It thus emphasizes the need to return to the *t'i*(essence) as a remedy for the fundamental cause of the illness. *Neng-so* is more concerned with outward function (用, *yung*), which refuses to eliminate differences.

If we take a careful look at Fa-tsang's quotation, he seems to see Mahāyāna or awakening faith as the cause of the division of the title, *Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*(大乘起信), into two separate units. He therefore states that "awakening Mahāyāna faith" is not the same as enlightenment.(T.44, 1846, 245b)

According to Fa-tsang, "awakening Mahāyāna faith," means to control one's mind while trying to move towards the attainment of Buddhahood. He asserts that one should not misinterpret "awakening Mahāyāna faith" as the attainment of full Buddhahood. He thus opposes Wōnhyo's interpretation.

Wŏnhyo's interpretation of "Mahāyāna" as *t'i*(體, essence), and of "awakening faith" as *yung*(用, function), posits "awakening Mahāyāna faith" as enlightenment. For Wŏnhyo, Fa-tsang's *neng-so*-based interpretation is primarily an exhortation to the ignorant: "Concentrate your mind and study hard."

I have no idea when Wŏnhyo wrote his *Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, or when Fa-tsang read it. Wŏnhyo was 25 years older than Fa-tsang; when he died at the age of 68, Fa-tsang was still writing Buddhist books. But, in comparing the two commentaries, there is a big difference in viewpoint. While Wŏnhyo sees the treatise through religious eyes, Fa-tsang interprets it from a scholastic viewpoint. The religious eye is the Buddha's eye. If Buddha's eyes are not working, we cannot call it religious faith.

Wŏnhyo emphasized "the stage of attainment," something which Fa-tsang failed to include in his interpretation. The stage of attainment is the state of Buddhahood. If we can accept this state, we will attain true religious faith.

VI. A Firm Basis for *t'i-yung* Interpretation

It is a well-known fact that Wŏnhyo gave the highest praise to Aśvaghōṣa's *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*. He also criticized other scholars for not understanding the main idea of the treatise.

In the tradition of East Asian commentary, the correct interpretation of a text's title reveals the essence of the text's meaning. Thus, Wŏnhyo's insight into the title of the *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith* provides a key to his interpretation of the entire work. If one translates *Ta-ch'eng-ch'i'-hsin-lun*(大乘起信論) as *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna Faith*, as has been done by all translators without exception, the term *ta-ch'eng*(大乘), or "Mahāyāna," becomes the object of *ch'i'-hsin*(起信), or "awakening faith," thus establishing a *neng-so*(能所), or "subject-object," structure wholly alien to the text and to Mahāyāna Buddhism in general. Wŏnhyo that the

t'i-yung(體用)principle, introduced in the treatise itself, is the proper tool for understanding Mahāyāna Buddhist faith. In his interpretation, the act of arousing faith is conceived of as the natural *yung* or "function" of One Mind, the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna, 大乘), which is known as *t'i*, or essence.

Even though many commentators consider Fa-tsang to be Wōnhyo's successor³, there is a huge difference between them in their interpretations of the title. If we interpret awakening Mahāyāna faith in Wōnhyo's way, Mahāyāna is the subject, but if we interpret it in Fa-tsang's way — the awakening of Mahāyāna faith — Mahāyāna cannot be the subject.

Whose interpretation is right? Let's take a look at the first part of the *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*, the *Lun-yüeh chapter*(論曰章)⁴. It begins,

"I declare that the dharmin can arouse the root of Mahāyāna faith. Therefore I must explain it" (論曰有法能起 摩訶衍信根 是故 應說). (T.32, 1666, 575b)

"Dharmin" is a technical term and the subject of the sentence. According to Śikṣānanda's subsequent translation of the treatise, there are actually two different meanings, i.e., dharma and dharmin. "Dharma" is teachings or Buddhist truth. "Dharmin" is "one who has the dharma." So ultimately the word refers to the mind of all sentient beings (T.32, 1667, 584b).

Both the commentaries of Hui-yüan(慧遠523-592, T.44, 1843, 177b26) and Wōnhyo(HPC, 1-737a) use the technical term dharmin(有法) as the subject of the sentence. This naturally implies, given the *t'i-yung*(體用) construction, that only Mahāyāna can awaken faith. Why do people refuse to acknowledge this interpretation? Because most interpreters are so overwhelmed by the dualistic *Neng-so*(能所) conception that they think Mahāyāna is "the object to be believed" and

³ Late Professor Rhi Ki-young always claimed that Fa-tsang was an unofficial disciple of Wōnhyo.

⁴ No one can deny that this chapter has the first starting sentence except the ritual verse called Opening Adoration(歸敬).

ch'i-hsin(起信, awakening faith) is "the believing mind." The reason why Fa-tsang's dualistic *neng-so* interpretation has prevailed until now is that most of us are accustomed to *neng-so* thinking.

Let's return to *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*(六祖壇經), once again and take a look at the interpretation of *nien* (念, thought). According to Hsing-Ch'eng-ssü(興成寺) version, "*nien*" is interpreted as "thinking about Suchness," which clearly contains the *neng-so* perspective. This interpretation is a gross mistake, but it has been considered correct up till now, while Tun-huang's(敦煌) *t'i-yung*-based perspective has been disregarded.

A typical example of the misinterpretation is found in Professor Philip Yampolsky's translation of the *Platform Sūtra*, published by Columbia University Press in 1969⁵. He says that he used the Tun-huang(敦煌) text of the sutra as the basis of his English translation, but supplemented it with part of the Hsing-Ch'eng-ssü(興成寺) version, because in places the Tun-huang(敦煌) text does not make sense. Regrettably he does not explain why the Tun-huang(敦煌) version does not make sense. Maybe he is too accustomed to dualistic *neng-so* thinking.

Let us now turn our attention to the *Lun-yüeh Chapter*(論曰章) of the treatise, which contains an extremely brief introduction to the text, beginning with a single short sentence explaining the title: *yu-fa-neng-ch'i-mo-ho-yen-hsin-ken*有法能起摩訶衍信根): "There is a dharma which can arouse the root of Mahāyāna Faith." *Yu-fa-ch'i-hsin*(有法起信), "a dharmin can arouse faith," and *Ta-ch'eng-ch'i-hsin*(大乘起信), "Awakening Mahāyāna Faith," are essentially the same expression. In other words, we can use the phrase *yu-fa-neng-ch'i-mo-ho-yen-hsin-ken*(有法能起 摩訶衍新根)" to interpret the phrase *Ta-ch'eng-ch'i-hsin*(大乘起信). We can therefore paraphrase the *Lun-yüeh Chapter*(論曰章) in the following way:

Ta-ch'eng-neng-ch'i-mo-ho-yen-hsin-ken(大乘能起摩訶衍信根):
"Mahāyāna can arouse the root of faith."(T.32, 1666, 575b)

5 Philip B. Yampolsky, the *platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 139.

If a man is *t'i*(體, essence), what he does is his *yung*(用, function). In the same way, if Mahāyāna is *t'i*, awakening faith is its *yung*.

As Mahāyāna is always functioning, whether we have faith or not, there is no-backsliding. This is good news for us and gives us great joy. Thanks to this characteristic, even non-believers can listen and try to practice.

Lun-yüeh chapter(論曰章) also draws our attention to its role as a prelude to the second chapter, "Establishment of Fundamental Mahāyāna Doctrine." The main theme of the second chapter is Mahāyāna, and Mahāyāna is none other than "the mind of sentient beings." The second chapter states that the mind of sentient beings creates dualities such as good and bad through the act of discrimination. Thus, everything in this world comes from the mind of sentient beings.

The second chapter concludes with the idea that the mind of sentient beings and the Buddha are the same. In order to explain this concept, Asvaghōṣa introduces what he calls the Three Greatnesses of Suchness. The essential point of this formulation is that the mind of a sentient being has three main characteristics or "greatnesses:" the greatness of the essence(體, *t'i*) of Suchness; the greatness of the attributes(相, *hsiang*) of Suchness; and the greatness of the function(用, *yung*) of Suchness. Accordingly, the mind of a sentient being has the inherent characteristics of the Buddha.

The key point of the second chapter is that the mind of the Buddha and the mind of sentient beings are exactly the same mind. How can we accept this fact? The answer is self-evident. *Ch'i-hsin*(起信 awakening faith) is being aroused by the Buddha, not by me. We should not assume that we are the ones doing "*ch'i-hsin*".

The third chapter of the treatise, "Detailed Explanation of the Mahāyāna Doctrine" has exactly the same message as the second chapter. The main idea is that we should not divide One Mind into the Suchness aspect and the phenomenal aspect of mind. As long as we use different words to describe them, it looks like the two are in fact

different, but they are in reality simply different aspects of a single unity.

VII. *Neng-so*(能所) Construction in Wŏnhyo's Philosophy

While Zen masters claim to have "no dependence on speech and words," they have in fact written many books. This may look like a contradiction, but it is not. What Zen Masters deplore is the act of clinging to language. They do not reject language. The problem we are facing in regard to the *neng-so* formula is quite similar. I am not criticizing the *neng-so* formula itself, but rather the kind of misinterpretation of the Buddhists scriptures which uses *neng-so*. If we use *neng-so* properly, without being enslaved by it, it can become the Buddha's *neng-so*.

We can find the *neng-so* formula many times in Wŏnhyo's *Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. To cite just one example, he uses the *neng-so* formula in his interpretation of the Opening Adoration. The Opening Adoration begins with "歸命盡十方", which means, "I devote my life to the Buddha, Him who embraces all the universe."

Who devotes one's life? And to whom? Wŏnhyo has no other choice but to interpret *Kuei-ming*(歸命, devoting one's life to the Buddha) with the *neng-so* formula. The important point here is that this *neng-so* has nothing to do with attachment and bondage. The thing that is bound up with attachment and bondage is the "I," but *Kuei-ming*(歸命), which means "I dedicate myself to the Buddha," completely denies "I." Even when Wŏnhyo uses *neng-so*, he is not bound by *neng-so*.

The proper use of *neng-so* is thus governed by the given situation in which it is used. *Kuei-ming*(歸命), (dedicating one's life to the Buddha), refers to a practitioner's actions, which is *neng*(能). When we use *neng*(subject), we must logically use *so*(object). So we can see that Wŏnhyo's interpretation of the Opening Adoration using *neng-so* is correct and very natural, in exactly the same way that it is correct for

him to interpret *ta-ch'eng-ch'i-hsin*(大乘起信, awakening Mahāyāna faith) in terms of the *t'i-yung*(體用) construction. Religious faith comes from the perspective of *t'i'*, and "Awakening faith" is a religious expression of *t'i*.

Wōnhyo addresses the subject of *t'i* at the very beginning of his commentary, telling us "Mahāyāna is *t'i* itself(大乘之爲體也)"(HPC 1-733a). This is obviously a very sweeping statement, but the means of interpreting it can be found in his next remark, beginning, "Some people say that Mahāyāna is a great achievement...." He advises us not to interpret Mahāyāna from the *yung*(用) perspective, concluding, "*I do not know how to speak of it, but as I am compelled now to name it, I call it Mahāyāna*(不知何以言之 強號之謂大乘)." He then turns his attention to the topic of transcending language(離言) and cutting off thought(絕慮), stating, "*let practitioners permanently turn away from delusion and arrogance and eventually return back to the origin of One Mind* (爲道者永息萬境 遂還一心之原)."(HPC, 1-733b11)

This focus on *t'i-yung* can be seen in his famous logic of "Unfolding and folding(開合)" which posit that the relationship between One Mind and all dharmas is "inter-penetration and un-obstructedness."

The key to Wōnhyo's approach to *t'i*(體) is that he sees it as a matter of faith. Faith, for Wōnhyo, is a *t'i'* problem, not a *yung*(用) problem. What is the main difference between the two? If we use the *neng-so*(能所) formula, faith becomes a faith of *yung*, and if we use the *t'i-yung* formula, it becomes a faith of *t'i*.

VIII. Complete Affirmation

When we interpret everything from a *t'i-yung*, rather than a *neng-so*, perspective, there is nothing in this world that needs to be discarded. Whether it is the good or the bad, worldly things or transmundane things, everything arises in Mahāyāna and everything is Mahāyāna's function.

Our minds are too narrow to accept everything that happens in

Mahāyāna. We have to throw away this and that and there are too many things to discard in our life. The stage of Buddhahood that accepts everything presupposes that we will throw away our narrow minds first. That negation, to discard oneself, is the affirmation that embraces everything.

Religious faith is not mere theory. If we understand the true meaning of a statement like "Dharma is the mind of sentient beings," which is discussed in the second chapter of the treatise, we can expect some real change to take place in our lives.

Let's look at an example. A teacher or friend may give a very impressive dharma talk and then ask, "Do you understand what I am saying?" You may answer, "Yes, I understand." But if there is no real change in your life, what does "yes" mean? The truth is that we may understand it intellectually, but not on a deeper, spiritual level. We sometimes mistake intellectual understanding for faith, but it is not faith in a religious sense. Cognitive understanding is not the faith that Wŏnhyo and Aśvaghōṣa are talking about.

Mahāyāna creates all good cause and effects, so why does it seem as if there are no real changes if we really understand and have faith? Wrong belief is like a light that is switched off. The current of faith is still running in Mahāyāna, even though the switch is off. We have to turn the switch on so that the current of our true faith can flow freely. If we understand that it is Mahāyāna that awakens our faith, not "I," the current of faith will start running immediately. In other words, the negation of "I" is affirmation of Mahāyāna.

In Chapter Four, "The Practice of Mahāyāna Faith(修行信心分)," and Chapter Five, "The Advantage of the Practice of Mahāyāna Faith(勸修利益分)," there is an explanation of various kinds of faith for those who cannot let go of the self. As long as we deny the self completely, Mahāyāna, the mind of sentient beings, and One Mind will be working. The working of life itself is the working of the Buddha.

Wŏnhyo does not address these two chapters, however. Rather, his text concludes:

For the next two chapters, just follow the original text, getting away from delusion. Don't be attached to the language, because it's just a useless argument. So my commentary stops here to avoid being troublesome.(此後二分者 但可依文 勸息妄想 不可執言 分別是非 以諍論故 今釋 煩不更消息也).(HPC, 1-697c 13-15)

IX. The Big Picture

The main theme of Wōnhyo's *Commentary on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith* is contained in the "Body of Doctrine" chapter, even though this chapter never mentions faith(信). It is quite similar to Asvaghōṣa's own approach in the treatise; faith is not mentioned at all, even in the main chapter, "Establishment of Fundamental Mahāyāna Doctrine." What does this mean? It seems that both Wōnhyo's and Asvaghōṣa's starting point is the concept of enlightenment as described in terms of the Hua-yen school's Four Aspects: Faith(信), Understanding(解), Practice(行) and Enlightenment(證). Enlightenment is the stage of complete non-duality. If one fully attains Enlightenment, other aspects such as Understanding, Practice and Faith are already accomplished.

Why is it so difficult to attain Enlightenment? Because the self is always struggling to survive. How can we kill it? It is only possible through attainment of enlightenment. Whatever we do, according to our opportunities and karma, whether it is prayer, chanting, repentance, or making a vow, it is the working of enlightenment.

Wōnhyo tried to draw a big picture of the enlightenment process in terms of a faith system. At first glance, this picture looks foreign and intimidating, but if it eventually leads us to salvation and freedom from life and death, it will have proven its value.

While enlightened beings see everything from a *t'i*(體) perspective, unenlightened beings see everything from a *yung*(用) perspective. At the same time, every unenlightened being's perceptions are different according to his or her individual karma. The *yung* perspective is distorted by prejudice, misjudgment, and illusion, while the *t'i* perspective is free of those things. From the *t'i* perspective, one sees

with the Buddha's eye, the eyes of Mahāyāna.

While Wŏnhyo talked about "the awakening faith" in terms of *t'i-yung*, he also emphasized "devoting one's life to Buddha(歸命)" and the tri-ratna(三寶). That's the reason why I call Wŏnhyo's picture a truly big picture. A small picture sticks to the yung's perspective, and so collides with many other small pictures. Sometimes it denounces big pictures as wrong from a position of delusion and arrogance.

Wŏnhyo defined the Three Greatnesses as a name(名義) that explains *t'i*, Mahāyāna. In Chinese characters 名義 means "a tool to explain a certain name." In other words, it is a finger(用, *yung*) that points to the moon(體, *t'i*), our ultimate object. Many people forget to look at the moon. They just look at the finger, thinking that doing so is religious faith. Whenever we read Buddhist scriptures, we should try our best to read from the *t'i* aspect rather than the *yung*.

At the very start of this paper, we referred to the place where seemingly opposing elements such as negation and affirmation, death and life co-exist in "the field of faith." Here we must clarify that expression. Whether it is negation or death, as long as we are bound by the *neng-so*(能所) formula and use only *yung* language, these opposing elements cannot coexist. But if one really understands religious faith as meaning that "to die is to live," life and death can exist together. This is because both affirmation and negation are functions of *t'i*. It is a gross mistake to interpret the coexistence of affirmation and negation in terms of the *yung* perspective.

Wŏnhyo insists that, while opposing elements can't coexist in yung's function, they can exist together in *t'i*'s function, where emptiness and causation are working together. This is because *t'i*'s function is the working of *t'i* itself.

If we detach *yung* from *t'i*, our picture will become a small one, but if we merge *yung* into *t'i*, we will have a big picture which comprises all small pictures. Since small picture embraces a *yung* perspective, they are liable to be wrong. If a small picture cannot realize it's smallness, then a big picture will give it a crushing blow. But if they are united, a big picture extends good care to the suffering

wound.

This is the true aspect of a big picture from *t'i's* perspective. Wŏnhyo's faith system can be understood only through this kind of big picture.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

- Ch'i-hsin 起信
Chin-kang-san-mei-ching 金剛三昧經
 Fa-tsang 法藏
Haedongso(K) 海東疏
Han'guk pulgyo chŏnsŭ(K): HPC, 韓國佛教全書
 Hua-yen school 華嚴宗
 Hui-yuan 慧遠
 Lin-chi 臨濟
Lun-yueh chapter 論曰章
 Neng-so 能所
 Nien-fo 念佛
 Paramārtha 真諦
 Shin(K,J) 信
Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun 大乘起信論
Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin su 大乘起信論疏
Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun i-chi 大乘起信論義記
 t'i and yung 體用
 T'i-hsang-yung 體相用
 Wŏnhyo(K) 元曉
 Zen(J) 禪

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