

Critical Considerations on Zen Thought

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I. Zen thought and “cessation of thinking”

It cannot be denied that the tradition of *dhyaṇa* (Ch'an, Sōn, Zen) has its origin in pre-Buddhist Indian philosophy, because it seems quite definite, according to Buddhist scriptures, that the Buddha has practiced *dhyaṇa* and asceticism before the enlightenment (*bodhi*)⁽¹⁾.

When *dhyaṇa* theory, or Zen thought, was introduced into Buddhism, it is most probable that the theory was modified from the standpoint of Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, if we try to understand the original or genuine form of Zen thought, we are obliged to clarify the meanings of Zen thought in its pre-Buddhist stage.

Then, what were the essential characters of pre-Buddhist Zen thought? The essence of Zen thought in those days, I think, lied in its idea of “cessation of thinking”⁽²⁾ and its inseparable connection with *ātman* (self) theory. It seems certain that the goal of *dhyaṇa* theory then was “cessation of thinking,” because we can find, in the early Buddhist scriptures, the various theories of *dhyaṇa* or *samādhi*, the goals of which can be construed as “cessation of thinking.”

For example, the word “*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*” (想受滅) of the *saññā-vedayitanirodha-samāpatti* seems to mean “cessation of thinking and sensation.” We can also understand that, it is “*saṃjñā*” (*saññā*想), “the thinking faculty, that was denied by the *nevasaññānāsaññā-āyatana-samādhi* (非想非非想處定). Moreover, because the term “*nimitta*” (相) of the *animitto ceto-samādhi* (無相心定) means the object of “*saṃjñā*”, we can understand that, in this *samādhi* also, “cessation of thinking” seems to

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be aimed at as its goal.

However, against the argument above, it may be objected that the *dhyāna* theories above mentioned are not those practiced in pre-Buddhist stage, because they are found in Buddhist scriptures. But we cannot assume that all the theories found in Buddhist scriptures are of Buddhist origins. As for the *dhyāna* theories mentioned above, it seems that they have their origins in pre-Buddhist stage of Indian philosophy. In those days of India, the practices of asceticism (苦行) and *dhyāna* were quite popular among ascetics (śramaṇa沙門), as is shown by the fact that asceticism and *dhyāna* were two chief virtues practiced in Jainism, which I think was the typical example of pre-Buddhist ascetic philosophy.

According to Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha himself practiced *dhyāna* and asceticism for six years before his enlightenment. It is stated that he studied the *ākīñcañña-āyatana-samādhī* (無所有處定) from the master Ālāra Kālāma, and studied the *nevasaññā-nāsaññā-āyatana-samādhī* from the master Uddaka Rāmaputta. So if we rely on this scriptural statement, we can conclude that the *nevasaññā-nāsaññā-āyatana-samādhī*, which was counted as the last of the four formless *dhyānas* (四無色定) in the early Buddhist classificatin of *dhyānas*, was of pre-Buddhist and non-Buddhist origin.

It goes without saying that we cannot entirely rely on the scriptural statements concerning the two masters of the Buddha. But I think it is most probable that the *dhyāna* theories, which the Buddha studied before his enlightenment, had as their goals "cessation of thinking."

In the case of the theory of the four *dhyānas* in the material world (四禪) also, I think the leading idea was nothing other than "cessation of thinking and sensation," because, in the theory, the process of gradually calming and suspending all mental functions including "thinking and sensation" is explicitly stated. In fact, in the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (MN), it is stated as follows:

Having separated myself from desires (*kāma*) and evil properties, I have accomplished the first *dhyāna*, i.e. the joy and happiness (*pīti*-

sukha), which [still] possesses “*vitakka*” and “*vicāra*.”

Then, owing to the extinction of “*vitakka*” and “*vicāra*,” I have accomplished the second *dhyaṇa*, i.e. the joy and happiness born from *samādhi*, inwardly pure and concentrated, which no longer possesses “*vitakka*” and “*vicāra*.”

Then, owing to the separation from joy, having become indifferent and composed, rightly conscious, I have enjoyed happiness by my body (*kāya*).

Namely, I have accomplished the third *dhyaṇa*, of which the sacred (*ārya*) explained “[one becomes] indifferent and composed, abiding in happiness.”

Then, owing to the abandonment of both happiness and pain (*dukkha*), and owing to the former extinction of joy and sorrow, I have accomplished the fourth *dhyaṇa*, which is purified by indifference and composure, without pain and happiness. (MN, I, pp. 21-22)

In this passage, I think “*vitakka*” and “*vicāra*,” which are made extinct⁽⁴⁾ in the second *dhyaṇa*, both mean the faculty of conceptual thinking, while pain and happiness, abandoned in the fourth *dhyaṇa*, are the varieties of sensation (*vedanā*).

So we can understand that, by the theory of four *dhyaṇas* of the material world expressed in the passage above, “cessation of thinking and sensation” is definitely meant as its goal.

Moreover, I think Fujita Kōtatsu 藤田宏達 is right when he claims that the theory in question as well as the theory of the four formless *dhyaṇas* was of non-Buddhist origin. Further, according to Fujita, the *saññāveday-itanirodha* or the *nirodha-samāpatti* (滅尽定) could not have significance from the original standpoint of early Buddhism, because we can distinguish it from mere death only because it still has life⁽⁵⁾ (*āyu*), bodily heat (*usmā*) and clarity of sense faculties.

Thus, we may have the conclusion that the leading idea of the original form of Zen thought was, “cessation of thinking and sensation,” aimed at as the goal of the various *dhyaṇa* theories of non-Buddhist origin.

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Later, in the fifth century A.D., it was stated in the *Yogasūtra* (YS, I, 2) as follows:

Yoga is the cessation of mental functions (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*).

This definition of “*yoga*,” I think, shows clearly the fundamental idea of the whole Zen thought, namely, “cessation of all mental functions including thinking and sensation.” However, it should be noted that “cessation or denial of thinking” especially has played the central role in the whole history of Zen thought. In other words, we can say that “thinking” has been regarded as something like “original evil” throughout the history of Zen thought.

For instance, we can read the strongest aversion to “*saṃjñā*” (想) in the whole of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* chapter of the *Suttanipāta* (Sn). A typical example is found in the following verse of the chapter:

For him whose “*saṃjñā*” is abandoned (*saññā-viratta*)⁽⁶⁾, there are no bondages. (Sn, v. 847a)

It seems undeniable that the main theme of the chapter was “cessation or denial of thinking.”

In the texts of Chinese Ch’an Buddhism we can find many passages where “cessation or denial of thinking” is preached. For example, by the passages in the *Ratification of True Principles* 正理決, we can understand that Mo-ho-yen 摩訶衍, who is considered to have participated in the well-known *bSam yas* debate held at the end of the eighth century in Tibet, taught that one can attain Buddhahood merely by abandoning “*saṃjñā*.” In fact, in the *Ratification of True Principles* it is stated as follows:

If one becomes separated from false “*saṃjñā*” (妄想) without giving rise to false mind, the true nature, originally existent, and the omniscience [of the Buddha] will be naturally manifested [to him]⁽⁷⁾.

Mo-ho-yen’s rejection of “*saṃjñā*” was based on the following two passages of the *Diamond Sutra*:

[A] Some people, if they become separated from “marks” (相), are called Buddhas. [離一切諸相、則名諸佛] (Taisho, 8, 750b)

[B] All “marks” (相) are false. [凡所有相、皆是虛妄] (Taisho, 8, 749a)

Here the original Sanskrit for “mark” in Passage [A] is “*saṃjñā*,” while that for “mark” in Passage [B] is “*lakṣaṇa*.” However, because Mo-ho-yen, when he quoted these two passages in the *Ratification of True Principles*, altered “mark” (相) into “*saṃjñā*” (想), he was able to make the passages the scriptural basis for his theory of “separation from ⁽⁸⁾*saṃjñā*.”

Here we must remember the fact that “*nimitta*” (相, mark) was held to be the object of “*saṃjñā*” (想) in the Northern Abhidharma treatises.⁽⁹⁾ So we have good reasons to consider that the Chinese words “hsiang” (相) and “hsiang” (想) are sometimes interchangeable in the texts of Chinese Buddhism in general. Thus, although Mo-ho-yen was wrong in understanding the original meaning or the Sanskrit meaning of Passage [B], his interpretation of “separation from *saṃjñā*” was quite consistent concerning the Chinese translations of the two passages in question.

As to Mo-ho-yen’s understanding of “*saṃjñā*,” it must be noted that all “*saṃjñā*” are, according to him, totally false without exception. In other words, he did not accept the difference between true “*saṃjñā*” and false “*saṃjñā*.” This theory seems to contradict with our common sense ideas, because we ordinarily think that there are two kinds of judgement, i.e. wrong judgement and right judgement. But Mo-ho-yen thought otherwise. Every judgement or every thought is wrong without exception, according to him.⁽¹⁰⁾ So for him “thinking” or “*saṃjñā*” was something like “original evil,” as is known from the following passage:

[Question] What is the defect of “*saṃjñā*” ?

[Answer] The defect of “*saṃjñā*” is that it covers the omniscience which sentient beings (*sattva*) possess originally and makes them reborn in the three evil destinations so that they have everlasting⁽¹¹⁾ transmigrations.

It seems noteworthy that Mo-ho-yen rejected, as something like “original evil,” not only “*saṃjñā*” (想) but also “kuan” (觀) in the *Ratification of True Principles*. So he was famous for his advocacy of “pu-kuan”⁽¹²⁾ (不觀). Then, what was the meaning of “kuan,” which he rejected so

vigorously? His theory of “pu-kuan” also was based on a passage of a sutra. It was the following passage from Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*:

[C] “pu-kuan” (不觀) is enlightenment (bodhi) [不觀是菩提], because it is separated from “yüan” (緣) [i.e. *ālambana-pratyaya*].

“pu-hsing” (不行) is enlightenment, because it is “wu-i-nien” (無憶念).

(Taisho, 14, 542b)

Mo-ho-yen quoted the phrase “pu-kuan is enlightenment” in the *Ratification of True Principles*.⁽¹³⁾ But because the original Sanskrit text of the sutra is not available, it is very difficult to ascertain the original Sanskrit words for “kuan” (觀) of “pu-kuan” and for “i-nien” (憶念) of “wu-i-nien” in Passage [C].⁽¹⁴⁾ However, according to Hsüan-tsang’s translation and Tibetan translation,⁽¹⁵⁾ it seems certain that the original Sanskrit for “i-nien” is “*manasikāra*,” while that for “kuan” seems “*samāropa*,” according to Tibetan translation, because the Tibetan word corresponding to “i-nien” is “sgro btags pa.”⁽¹⁶⁾ But my opinion at present is that we cannot deny the possibility that the original Sanskrit for “kuan” was also “*manasikāra*,” because it seems improbable that Kumārajīva translated “*samāropa*” by the word “kuan.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Anyway, I think we can assume that Mo-ho-yen meant, by advocating “pu-kuan,” the rejection of “*manasikāra*.” In fact, it might be an indirect evidence that Kamalaśīla’s opponent in the third *Bhāvanākrama*, who is generally considered to be Mo-ho-yen, advocated “*amanasikāra*” and “*asmṛti*” there.

Thus, it seems evident that not only “*saṃjñā*” but also “*manasikāra*” was rejected as “original evil” by Mo-ho-yen. Then what is the meaning of “*manasikāra*”? It is needless to say that this term has been quite important from the beginning of Buddhist tradition, because it is stated in the Mahāvagga chapter of the Vinaya that the Buddha did “*manasikāra*” (*manasākāsi*) on Dependent-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in regular and reverse orders at the first portion of the night of his enlightenment.⁽¹⁸⁾ So

if we can rely on this scriptural statement concerning the Buddha's enlightenment, we may conclude that the Buddha's enlightenment was nothing other than "*manasikāra*" of Dependent-arising. It goes without saying that we cannot accept the scriptural statement in question as expressing literally the historical facts. But at least we can understand that the compilers of the Mahāvagga chapter of the Vinaya seem to have been of the intention to express the interpretation that the Buddha's enlightenment lied in "*manasikāra*" of Dependent-arising.

Anyway, at least we can say that "*manasikāra*" has been an important technical term from the beginning of Buddhist tradition. However, the Abhidharma definition of "*manasikāra*" as "*cetasa ābhoga*" (directing mind [to objects])⁽²⁰⁾ seems insufficient. In Japanese Buddhist studies, "*manasikāra*" is generally translated by Chinese word "tso-i" (作意), and sometimes translated by English word "attention." But I cannot approve these translations. As to the Chinese word "tso-i," although it is well-known for being used by Hsüan-tsang in translating the term "*manasikāra*," it is just a word-for-word translation of "*manasikāra*," and besides is not the sole Chinese translation of the term. The following is a list of examples of Chinese translations by different translators for "*manasikāra*":⁽²¹⁾

Kumārajīva: 念・憶念

Paramārtha: 思惟・思量・觀

Hsüan-tsang: 作意・思惟・觀

Among the examples shown above, "ssu-wei" (思惟) seems to be the most appropriate for translating "*manasikāra*," because I think "*manasikāra*" primarily means "thinking," like "*saṃjñā*." If we consider that the meaning of "*manasikāra*" is merely "attention," we cannot exactly understand the significances of Mo-ho-yen's denial of "*manasikāra*" and Kamalaśīla's vindication of "*manasikāra*." Thus we can reach the conclusion that Mo-ho-yen advocated "separation from thinking," and rejected "*saṃjñā*" and "*manasikāra*" as the terms meaning "thinking."

It is quite noteworthy that Mo-ho-yen's denial of "*saṃjñā*" and "*manasikāra*"⁽²²⁾ was evidently under the influence of Shen-hui 神会 (684-758),

the famous advocator of the so-called "Southern School." He quoted, in his *Platform Speech* 壇語, Passage [A] of the *Diamond Sutra* and the underlined parts (不觀是菩提、無憶念故) of Passage [C] of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*.⁽²⁴⁾ Moreover, he stated in the *Platform Speech* as follows:

The mere "pu-tso-i" (不作意, *amanasikāra*), without mind rising, is the true "wu-nien" (無念).--- All sentient beings are originally markless (wu-hsiang, 無相). All marks (相) are false minds (妄心). If mind becomes markless (無相), it is immediately the Buddha's mind.⁽²⁵⁾

We must remember here the interchangeability of "hsiang" (相) and "hsiang" (想) in Chinese Buddhist texts. In other words, the word "hsiang" (相) used in the passage above must be interpreted as "hsiang" (想) which means "*saṃjñā*." According to this interpretation, it is quite clear that Shen-hui's message in the passage above is totally based on Passage [A] and Passage [B] of the *Diamond Sutra*, because "all marks are false minds" (今言相者、並是妄心) in the passage above is merely a modification of Passage [B] (凡所有相、皆是虛妄), and because "if mind becomes markless, it is immediately the Buddha's mind" there is simply an alteration of Passage [A] (離一切諸相、則名諸佛).⁽²⁶⁾

Thus it is clear that Shen-hui, like Mo-ho-yen, denied "*saṃjñā*" and asserted that one can attain Buddhahood only by abandoning "*saṃjñā*," based on Passages [A] and [B] of the *Diamond Sutra*. Moreover, Shen-hui also stated, in the passage above quoted, the denial of "*manasikāra*," i.e. "*amanasikāra*," by the word "pu-tso-i" (不作意). But it should be noted that the word "wu-nien" (無念) used there also means "*amanasikāra*," because it seems improbable that Shen-hui was not aware that there had been some cases where the term "*manasikāra*" was translated by Chinese word "nien" (念). Therefore, we may conclude that, for Shen-hui, the terms "pu-tso-i" (不作意) and "wu-nien" (無念) are synonymous, both meaning "*amanasikāra*."

To sum up, Shen-hui's theory of "no thinking" was expressed by three words, i.e. "wu-hsiang" (無相) meaning "*a-saṃjñā*," and "pu-tso-i" (不作意) and "wu-nien" (無念) both meaning "*amanasikāra*." This theory of

“no thinking” was, needless to say, representing Shen-hui’s central position, because he stated in the *Platform Speech* that he erected “wu-nien” as his central thesis (立無念為宗⁽²⁷⁾).

The influence of Shen-hui’s theory of “no thinking” is to be found almost everywhere in Ch’an texts later than Shen-hui. We have already seen an example in the *Ratification of True Principles*. But Mo-ho-yen, because he belonged to the so-called “Northern School,” did not use the term “wu-nien (無念)⁽²⁸⁾.” The direct influence of Shen-hui can be found in the *Li-tai fa-pao-chi* 歷代法宝記 (774). According to the text, Wu-chu 無住 (714-774) stated as follows:

If [one becomes] “wu-nien,” he will see the Buddha.

If [one is] “yu-nien” (有念)⁽²⁹⁾, he will transmigrate.

[無念即是見佛，有念即是生死]

Moreover, in the text, Wu-chu is described as the person who have “exclusively stopped thinking” (一向絕思斷慮)⁽³⁰⁾. It goes without saying that Shen-hui’s influence was found in the *Platform Sutra* 六祖壇經 (Yampolsky ed.), according to which it is stated by Hui-neng 慧能 (638-713) as follows:

This teaching has established “wu-nien” as its thesis [立無念為宗]⁽³¹⁾.
(p.7,11.7-8)

In Japanese Zen Buddhism also, the theory of “no thinking” or “cessation of thinking” has been the central idea. For example, Dogen 道元 (1200-1253), stated in his earliest work *Fukan-zazen-gi* 普勸坐禪儀 (1227), as follows:

Suspend the functions of “citta,” “manas” and “vijñāna.”

Stop the conceptions of “nien” (念), “hsiang” (想) and “kuan” (觀)⁽³²⁾.

[停心意識之運轉，止念想觀之測量]

Here the terms “nien” and “kuan” must be interpreted as the translations of “*manasikāra*,” while the word “hsiang” is to be construed as that of “*saṃjñā*.” It is clear that Dogen meant here the cessation of all mental function, especially “cessation of thinking.”

Thus it is now clearly known that Zen thought, from the pre-Buddhist stage to Dogen, has rejected “thinking” as something like “original evil” and has advocated “cessation of thinking.” But why was “thinking” rejected

so ardently? My opinion is the following. It is undeniable that the essence of Zen thought lies in its idea of "concentration," or "*cittasya eka-agratā*" (one-pointedness of mind), to use the Abhidharma definition of "*samādhi*." It is quite noteworthy that the word "*eka*" (one) is used here. The term seems to indicate that the idea of "concentration" cannot be established without conceiving the existence of something single (*eka*). In other words, the theory of "concentration," or Zen thought, presupposes the existence of something which is ontologically single (*eka*) and equal (*samā*) without distinction (*nirvikalpa*). In this sense, it is also to be noted that the word "*sama*" (equal) is found in both terms "*samādhi*" and "*sa māpatti*." Thus, to state rather extremely, it seems evident that Zen thought is possible only when it is based on monism. And this is why Zen thought has been inseparably connected with *ātman* theory. Then why is "thinking" rejected in monism? It is because both "thinking" and "language," which makes "thinking" possible, have the function of dichotomizing or differentiating objects. Thus, roughly speaking, "thinking" and "language" are antagonistic to monism. Zen thought, based on monism, denies "thinking" and "language."

II. Zen thought and *ātman*/Buddha-nature

It is generally considered that the connection of Zen thought with *ātman* theory or monism is not fully evident. In fact, Jainism, the chief representative of pre-Buddhist ascetic philosophy, and the Yoga school, whose definition of "*yoga*" as "cessation of mental functions" has been discussed above, are based on dualism. However, it is undeniable that both Jainism and the Yoga school have evidently admitted *ātman* theory. Especially, Jain theory of asceticism is theoretically not possible without accepting the difference of impure body (B) and pure mind (A), i.e. *ātman*. This theory is indeed dualistic. But I believe that this is the simplest or the most general form of *ātman* theory in India. The monistic *ātman* theory of Śāṅkara, although held to be the most orthodox theory,

cannot be considered to be the general idea in India. Without accepting two mutually opposing existences, i.e. (A) and (B), even the theory of “liberation”⁽³⁵⁾ (*mokṣa*) cannot have been established in India, because “liberation” was conceived there primarily as that of *ātman* (A) from impure body (B). Jain asceticism was nothing other than the endeavor to reduce impure body (B) to nothing and to liberate *ātman* (A) from the body.

Then, what is the meaning of “thinking” in this dualistic *ātman* theory? In the theory, it is evident that “thinking” and “*ātman*” are considered to be opposed to each other, because the former is dichotomizing function, while the latter is one and the same ontological existence (*eka, sama*). So it is doubtless that, among two principles, “thinking” was regarded as Principle (B), impure, false and to be reduced to nothing. Here lied the logical ground for establishing the Zen theory of “cessation of thinking.”

The connection of Zen thought with *ātman* theory is also found in the Aṭṭhakavagga chapter of the *Suttanipāta*. We have already discussed the rejection of “*saṃjñā*” in the chapter (Sn,v.847). Besides, in the chapter, there are many passages where the existence of “*ātman*” is positively admitted.⁽³⁶⁾ For example, the following expression are found there:

“the abode of *ātman*” (*bhavanam attano*) [Sn,v.937]

“the *nirvāṇa* of *ātman*” (*nibbānam attano*) [Sn,v.940]

“the stain of *ātman*” (*malam attano*) [Sn,v.962]

“possessing *ātman* uncovered” (*abhinibbutatta*) [Sn,v.783]

The strong aversion to “thinking” (B) and the positive acceptance of “*ātman*” (A) are not mutually incompatible in the chapter, because the leading idea there was the dualistic *ātman* theory explained above. Thus it goes without saying that we cannot directly reconstruct the fundamental ideas of the earliest form of Buddhism, simply relying on the accounts of Aṭṭhakavagga or the *Suttanipāta*, which principally was but a Buddhist version of the ascetic literature quite popular and prevalent in those days of India.⁽³⁷⁾

Moreover, as for the two masters, from whom the Buddha studied

two kinds of *dhyāna*, the accounts in the twelfth chapter of the *Buddhacarita* are not to be ignored. In fact, the master Ālāra, who taught *ākīñcañña-āyatana-samādhī*, was there described as a Sāṃkhya philosopher, and the master Uddaka also was there stated to have admitted the existence of “*ātman*.” It goes without saying that we cannot simply accept the accounts in the *Buddhacarita* as representing historical facts. But I think they are important because they seem to indicate that the two *samādhīs* in question were of non-Buddhist origin. It is also to be noted that Sāṃkhya philosophy was the basis for the fundamental ideas of the Yoga school. Moreover, “*ākīñcañña*” (possessionlessness, 無所有) was one of the five chief virtues of Jainism, and theoretically presupposed the distinction between “*ātman*” (A) and “non-*ātman*” (B), because “*ākīñcañña*” was the theory enjoining people from possessing and adhering to “non-*ātman*,” being impure and transient.

In early Buddhism, “*dhyāna*” was placed at the second level of “three studies” (*tisso sikkhā*, 三学). In other words, “*dhyāna*” was merely the means to attain “*prajñā*” (right cognition). The final goal of Buddhism was considered to be “*prajñā*,” or the right cognition of Buddhist philosophy. It seems clear that this evaluation of “*dhyāna*” contradicts the general “*dhyāna*” theory of “cessation of thinking,” because right cognitions can not be produced from “cessation of thinking.” However, I do not think that the “*dhyāna*” theory of “cessation of thinking” has never been preached in the whole history of Buddhism. On the contrary, the theory has been taught quite often within Buddhism, as is shown by the arguments above.

Then, why was Buddhist evaluation of “*dhyāna*” as the means to attain “*prajñā*” altered into the general theory of “cessation of thinking”? I think it was due to the influence of monism or “*ātman*” theory. For instance, it is generally believed that Buddha’s cognition (*jñāna*) is “distinctionless cognition” (*nirvikalpajñāna* 無分別智). But the concept of “distinctionless cognition” is not so old in Buddhist philosophy. I do not think that the term “distinctionless cognition” (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) was used

before the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. At the second century A.D., when the oldest form of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāpraññāpāramitā-sūtra* was translated into Chinese for the first time (179), it seems that the term “distinctionless” (*nirvikalpa*) was found in the text, and not the term “distinctionless cognition” (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*). The same can be said about the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna (c.150-250), where only one example of the term “distinctionless” can be found (XVIII,9). However, the Yogācara philosophers of the fifth century used the term “distinctionless cognition” (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) quite often. These facts seem to indicate that the concept of “distinctionless cognition” was preceded by the concept of “distinctionless” in Buddhist tradition, and that the term “*nirvikalpa-jñāna*” (distinctionless cognition) originally meant “the cognition of what is distinctionless.” It goes without saying that “what is distinctionless” means the single substance or the highest reality, postulated by monism.

Thus we can understand how the concept of “distinctionless cognition” was formed under the influence of Hindu monism. At around the latter half of the fourth century A.D., the theory of Buddha-nature (*buddha-dhātu*) was formed in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. The sutra is well known for its accepting “*ātman*” theory openly. The following statement is found in the first Chinese translation (418):

The [term] “*Buddha*” means “*ātman*.” [彼佛者、是我義]. (Taisho, 12, 862a)⁽³⁹⁾

According to my understanding, the theory of Buddha-nature or the theory of *Tathāgatagarbha* was nothing other than a Buddhist version of “*ātman*” theory in Hinduism. When the theory of Buddha-nature was introduced into China, there were some cases where the theory was modified under the influence of Taoist philosophy. Thus, two types of Buddha-nature theory was formed in China.⁽⁴⁰⁾

One is Buddha-nature Immanence theory 仏性内在論, and the other is Buddha-nature Manifestation theory 仏性顕在論. The former is the original type, or Indian type, according to which Buddha-nature is considered to exist in one’s body, like “*ātman*.” In fact, it is stated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* as follows:

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All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, which is in their bodies.

[一切衆生皆有佛性、在於身中] (Taisho, 12, 881b)

The latter, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, is the developed or the extreme type, according to which Buddha-nature is wholly manifested on all phenomenal existences, including insentient beings such as trees and stones. In other words, the phenomenal things (事), as such, are regarded as Buddha-nature itself, and thus absolutized totally, according to the theory.

Without correctly making distinction between these two theories of Buddha-nature, it seems difficult to understand the philosophical meaning of Ch'an Buddhism. Of these two theories, we will at first discuss Buddha-nature Immanence theory in Ch'an Buddhism. This theory is found in the writings or the analects of Tao-hsin 道信, Hung-jen 弘忍, Shen-hsiu 神秀, Hui-neng 慧能, Shen-hui 神会, Ma-tsu 馬祖, Pai-chang 百丈, Ta-chu 大珠, Huang-po 黄檗, Lin-chi 臨濟, Tsung-mi 宗密 and so on. For example, the *Hsiu-hsin yao-lun* 修心要論⁽⁴²⁾ and the *Kuan-hsin lun* 觀心論⁽⁴³⁾ have the following passage:

Sentient beings have diamond-like Buddha-nature in their bodies.

[衆生身中，有金剛佛性]

It is clear that Hui-neng's central position was Buddha-nature Immanence theory, because he stated in his commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*, i.e. the *Chin-kang ching chieh-i* 金剛經解義⁽⁴⁴⁾, as follows:

There is Buddha-nature, originally pure, in one's own body (自身中)⁽⁴⁵⁾.

In the commentary, he also admitted that Buddha-nature is identical with "ātman" as follows:

"Ātman" is [Buddha-] nature, and [Buddha-] nature is "ātman."⁽⁴⁶⁾

[我者性也，性者我也]

As is stated above, Buddha-nature Immanence theory is not other than Indian Tathāgatagarbha theory, which in turn is a Buddhist version of "ātman" theory in Hinduism. So, because the theoretical structure of Buddha-nature Immanence theory is nothing other than "ātman" theory, Hui-neng's identification of Buddha-nature with "ātman" was correct.

It is needless to say that Buddha-nature Immanence theory is stated in the following passage of Shen-hui's *Platform Speech*:

Everyone has Buddha-nature in one's body. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ [一一身具有佛性]

The connection of Buddha-nature Immanence theory with "ātman" theory seems quite evident in the case of Lin-chi. In the *Lin-chi lu* 臨濟錄, his famous teaching is found as follows:

On your lump of red flesh, there is a true man of no rank, always going in and out of the face-gate of every one of you. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

[赤肉团上, 有一無位真人, 常從汝等諸人面門出入] ⁽⁴⁹⁾

As I argued before, I consider the word "lump of red flesh" (赤肉团), or the corresponding word "heart of flesh-lump" (肉团心) in the Sung version of the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 景德傳灯錄, to mean "heart" (*hṛdaya*) and think that the "true man of no rank" means "ātman," because, in Indian "ātman" theory from the times of the *Atharva Veda*, it has been considered that "ātman" exists in "heart" (*hṛdaya*). Moreover, Śaṅkara (c.700-750), the chief representative of the Vedānta school, explained the word "heart" found in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* as follows:

The term "heart" (*hṛdaya*) means a lump of flesh ⁽⁵⁰⁾ (*māṃsa-piṇḍa*) possessing the shape of lotus (*punḍarīka*).

The Sanskrit word "*māṃsa-piṇḍa*" (lump of flesh) was translated by Hsüan-tsang as "jou-t'uan" (肉团). So it is clear that the "lump of red flesh" (赤肉团) means "heart" (*hṛdaya*) and that "true man" (真人) means "ātman."

It might be generally considered that the main stream of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism has lied in Buddha-nature Immanence theory. But if we ignore the fact that the other stream of Buddha-nature Manifestation ⁽⁵¹⁾ theory was definitely found in the history of Ch'an Buddhism, we cannot reach the correct understandings.

The theoretical founder of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory may have been Chi-tsang 吉藏 (549-623), because he admitted, in his *Ta-ch'eng hsüan-lun* 大乘玄論 (Taisho, 45, 40b) that grasses and trees also have Buddha- ⁽⁵²⁾ nature, and that they can attain Buddhahood. The attainment of Buddhahood

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by grasses and trees (草木成佛) thereafter had become the central tenet of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, because the attainment of Buddhahood by insentient beings cannot be established in Buddha-nature Immanence theory.

In Ch'an Buddhism, the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees was admitted in *Chiieh-kuan Lun* 絕觀論 as follows:

Not only human beings but also grasses and trees have been predicted
[by the Buddha to attain Buddhahood]. [非独記人，亦記草木]⁽⁵³⁾

However, the most confident advocator of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory seems to have been Hui-chung 慧忠 (-776), because he not only advocated the theory but also denied Buddha-nature Immanence theory. In the *Tsu-t'ang chi* 祖堂集, he stated as follows:

The insentient things such as walls and tiles are the mind of the old
Buddha. [牆壁瓦礫，無情之物，並是古佛心]⁽⁵⁴⁾

Here "the mind of the old Buddha" means Buddha-nature or something regarded as absolute. Therefore, because phenomenal things including insentient beings are here considered to be Buddha-nature, it is evident that Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is stated here. Moreover, in the same text Hui-chung stated as follows:

My [theory of] Buddha-nature is that body and soul are identical ---,
while the southern [theory of] Buddha-nature is that body is
impermanent and soul is permanent.⁽⁵⁵⁾

[我之佛性、身心一如、南方佛性、身是無常、心性 is 常]

Here the second theory is Buddha-nature Immanence theory, because in the theory the dualistic contraposition between Buddha-nature (A) and body (B) is indispensable. For instance, it is considered that Buddha-nature (A) is permanent and pure, while body (B) is impermanent and impure. Moreover, it goes without saying that, according to the theory, Buddha-nature is considered to be pure mind or soul, because Buddha-nature is but a Buddhist version of "ātman." Therefore, it is quite evident that Hui-chung criticised Buddha-nature Immanence theory in the passage above.

It is to be noted that Buddha-nature Immanence theory is obliged to have the dualistic structure, like the general idea of “*ātman*” theory which we have discussed above. On the contrary, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory has the structure of extreme monism, where all distinctions, including that between body and soul, are not admitted. Because phenomenal existences or things are, as such, absolutized by the theory, it seems clear that the theory is an ultimate form or an extremity of the theory of “affirming the realities”⁽⁵⁶⁾ (現実肯定).

Anyway, after Hui-chung, the advocates of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory repeatedly criticised Buddha-nature Immanence theory. For example, it is well known that the criticism on Lin-chi’s theory by Hsüan-sha 玄沙 (835-908) is found in the *Ching-te ch’uan-teng lu* (Taisho, 51,345a). But it is not correctly recognized that Hsüan-sha’s philosophical standpoint was Buddha-nature Manifestation theory. In the *Hsüan-sha kuang-lu* 玄沙広録, he states as follows:

Mountain is mountain. River is River——.

There is no place, in the whole world of ten quarters, that is not true.⁽⁵⁷⁾

〔山是山、水是水…尽十方世界、未有不是处〕

Here every phenomenal existence, especially insentient being, is affirmed as absolute.⁽⁵⁸⁾ So it is doubtless that Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is stated here.

In Japanese Zen Buddhism, Dogen, before his visit to Kamakura (1247-1248), was an ardent advocator of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory. Based on the theory, he criticised Buddha-nature Immanence theory in his *Bendōwa*⁽⁵⁹⁾ 弁道話 (1231). It is evident that his criticism there was strongly influenced by Hui-chung’s criticism on Buddha-nature Immanence theory, because Dogen mentioned there Hui-chung as his authority and expressed his own position by the words “body and soul are identical” (身心一如). But of course Dogen’s criticism was not actually directed to the upholders of Buddha-nature Immanence theory in China. His criticism there, the criticism of the so-called “shin-jō sō-metsu” (心常相滅) theory, was directed

to the followers of the Nihon-daruma-shū⁽⁶⁰⁾日本達磨宗, because its position was Buddha-nature Immanence theory.

Therefore, because Dogen's own position in the *Bendōwa* was Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, the extreme type of Buddha-nature theory, I cannot approve of Hakamaya Noriaki's interpretation that Dogen⁽⁶¹⁾ criticised "original enlightenment thought" (本覚思想) in the *Bendōwa*. I am rather sceptical of the validity of the term "original enlightenment." Hakamaya's definition of the term seems indistinct. My opinion is the following. If we do not make distinction between the two types of Buddha-nature theory, and if we do not recognize that Dogen's own position in his early days was also one type of Buddha-nature theory, we cannot stop praising Dogen as the excellent philosopher who denied the general⁽⁶²⁾ interpretation of Buddha-nature as something substantial and permanent.

It is quite noteworthy that Dogen criticised his former position, i.e. Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, after his return from Kamakura. In fact, in the Shizen-biku⁽⁶³⁾四禅比丘 volume of the *Twelve-fascicle Shōbōgenzō* 十二卷本正法眼藏, he criticised Buddha-nature Manifestation theory as follows:

Some people say that ————— to see mountains and rivers is to see Tathāgatas.

They do not know the way of Buddhas and Patriarchs.⁽⁶³⁾

I do not think that Dogen's criticism here is not fully logical. Nevertheless, it is evident that he tried to criticise Buddha-nature Manifestation theory without declaring that the theory was nothing other than his own position in his former period.⁽⁶⁴⁾

In the *Twelve-fascicle Shōbōgenzō*, the word "busshō" (佛性) was never used. On the contrary, he stressed the theory of "īṅga" (因果), meaning Dependent-arising according to my interpretation. Although it goes without saying that Dogen was not freed from the way of thinking influenced by Tathāgatarbha thought, it can not be denied that his philosophical position was gradually shifted from Tathāgatarbha thought to the theory of Dependent-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which

I consider to be the essence of Buddhism.

III. Conclusion

According to the *Eiheikōroku* 永平広録, Dogen stated in a “jōdō” (上堂) [No.437] in 1251 as follows:

Ordinary people (凡夫) and non-Buddhists (外道) also practice Zazen (坐禅). ————If one’s understanding (解会) is identical with that of non-Buddhists, it is useless [to practice Zazen] even if he troubles his mind and body [by practicing Zazen].⁽⁶⁵⁾

I think this message of Dogen is most important. It seems that Zen practice is to be directed to attaining correct understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

NOTES

CZ=Critical Studies on Zen Thought (Zen shisō no hihanteki kenkyū), Matsumoto, 1994.

DE=Dependent-arising and Emptiness (Engi to kū), Matsumoto, 1989.

1) Cf. MN (26), MN (36).

2) Cf. CZ, pp. 2-85.

3) Cf. Schmithausen L., “On Some Aspects of Descriptions or Theories of ‘Liberating Insight’ and ‘Enlightenment’ in Early Buddhism,” *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus, Alt-und Neu-Indische Studien*, No.23, 1981,p.236,n.133;CZ,p58.

4) Cf. CZ,p.84,n.106.

5) Cf. Fujita K., “Genshi Bukkyō niokeru Zenjō Shisō,” Satō Mitsuyū Hakase Koki kinen Bukkyō Ronsō, Sankibō, 1972,pp.300-308;CZ,pp.59-64.

6) The word “viratta” was interpreted as “pahīna” in the *Paramatthajotikā* (II,p.547) and translated in the Chinese translation by the word “捨” (Taisho,4,180c).

7) Ueyama’s text (Ueyama D.,Tonkō Bukkyō no Kenkyū, Hozōkan, 1990), p.549.Cf.CZ,p.6.

8) Ueyama’s text,p.548,p.545. Cf.CZ,pp.7-8.

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- 9) Cf. the definition of "saṃjñā" as "viṣaya-nimitta-udgraha" in the *Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya* (AKBh, Pradhan ed., p.54, ll.20-21).
- 10) Cf. CZ, pp.8-10; Philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism (Chibetto bukkyō tetsugaku, Matsumoto, 1997), pp.288-289.
- 11) Ueyama's text, p.546. Cf. CZ, p.57.
- 12) Cf. Ueyama's text, p.546, p.549; CZ, pp.14-21.
- 13) Ueyama's text, p.546.
- 14) Cf. CZ, pp.15-17.
- 15) The corresponding word in Hsüan-tsang's translation seems to be "作意" (Taisho, 14.565a).
- 16) The corresponding word in Tibetan translation seems to be "yid la byed pa" (P.ed.Bu, 198b7).
- 17) Cf. P.ed., Bu, 198b7.
- 18) On this point, my view has slightly changed. Cf. CZ, p.17.
- 19) Cf. Vinaya, I, p.1.
- 20) Cf. AKBh, p.54, l.22.
- 21) Cf. CZ, pp.18-20.
- 22) Cf. CZ, pp.36-48.
- 23) Hu Shih's text (Taipei, 1968), p.235.
- 24) Hu Shih's text, p.236.
- 25) Hu Shih's text, pp.246-247.
- 26) Cf. CZ, pp.41-42.
- 27) Hu Shih's text, p.241.
- 28) On this problem, cf. CZ, p.53.
- 29) Yanagida's text (Zen no Goroku, 3. Chikuma Shobō, 1976), p.170. Cf. CZ, p.50.
- 30) Yanagida's text, p.170.
- 31) On the formation of the *Platform Sutra*, I have two main perspectives. The first is that the *Platform Sutra* was formed on the basis of Hui-neng's commentary on the *Diamond Sutra*, i.e. *Chin-kang-ching chieh-i*, and the second is that rather strong aversion to Shen-hui is found in the *Platform Sutra*. On this problem, cf. CZ, chap.II. In this respect, it seems that the phrase "立無念無宗" (p.6.l.14) at the beginning of the

- seventeenth chapter of the *Platform Sutra* of the Tun Huang manuscript must not be altered into “立無念為宗” by the Kōshōji edition, because the passage “if there is not yu-nien (有念), wu-nien (無念) also can not be established” (p.7,1.8) in the chapter can be interpreted as the message which rejected Shen-hui’s thesis. On this problem, cf. CZ, pp.223-224.
- 32) *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* (Chikuma Shobō, 1969,1970) II, p.3.
- 33) AKBh, p.54, l.23.
- 34) On the meaning of “*sama*,” cf. DE, pp.243-246.
- 35) On the theory of “liberation,” cf. DE, pp.191-194.
- 36) Cf. DE, pp.200-202.
- 37) On my criticism of Nakamura Hajime’s method of reconstructing the earliest forms of Buddhist thought by uncritically relying on the verse portions of the early Buddhist scriptures, cf. Matsumoto, “Critical Considerations on Buddhism (Bukkyō no hihanteki Kōsatsu), *Sekaiizō No Keisei* (Ajia kara kangaeru 7), Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan kai, 1994, pp. 137-155.
- 38) On “*nirvikalpa*” and “*nirvikalpa-jñāna*,” cf. DE, pp.238-248.
- 39) On this passage, cf. Matsumoto, “The *Nirvāṇa-sūtras* and *ātman*” (Nehangyō to ātman), Ga No Shisō, Shunjūsha, 1991, p.150.
- 40) On the two types of Buddha-nature theory, cf. CZ, pp.96-103; pp.589-597.
- 41) Cf. CZ, pp.97-103, pp.193-194, n.34.
- 42) Tanaka’s text (Komazawa Daigaku Zen Kenkyūsho Nenpō, No.2, 1991), p.37.
- 43) Tanaka’s text (Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyūkiyō, No. 44, 1986), p.49.
- 44) On my study on this commentary, cf. CZ, chap.II.
- 45) *Enō Kenkyū* (Daishū-kan, 1978), p.431.
- 46) *Enō Kenkyū*, p.422.
- 47) Hu Shih’s text, p.232.
- 48) Iriya Y., *Rinzairoku*, Iwanami Bunko, 1989, p.20.
- 49) Cf. CZ, chap.III; Matsumoto, “On Criticising Zen Thought” (Zen shisō hihan nitsuite), Komazawa Daigaku Zen Kenkyūsho Nenpō, No.6, pp. 55-91.
- 50) *Ten Principal Upanishads with Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, Delhi, 1964, p.894, l.22.

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- 51) It seems that Buddha-nature Manifestation theory has been dominant among the Ch'an masters belonging to the lineage of Ch'ing-yüan 青原 (673-741). I think the position of Yung-shan 洞山 (807-869) also was Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, because he affirmed "dharma-preaching by insentient beings" (無情說法). On this problem, cf. CZ, pp.102-103, p.198, n.55.
- 52) Cf. CZ, pp.101-102.
- 53) Yanagida's text (Zenbunka Kenkyūsho, 1976), p.91.
- 54) *Sodōshū* (Chūbun Shuppansha, 1972), p.61a.
- 55) *Sodōshū*, p.64a.
- 56) I consider the philosophical position of the so-called "Tendan Hongaku Hōmon" in Japan to be Buddha-nature Manifestation theory. Cf. Matsumoto, "Dogen and Tathāgatagarbha Thought" (Dōgen to nyōraizō shisō), Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyūkiyō, No.56, pp.136-160.
- 57) *Genshakorōku* I (Iriya ed., 1987), p.12.
- 58) I cannot approve of the interpretation that Hsüan-sha in his later days denied his former position (cf. *Genshakōroku* I, p.14, p.68, p.101). On this problem, I am planning to argue in my next book.
- 59) Cf. CZ, pp.587-597; "Dogen and Tathāgatagarbha Thought" (cf. note 56 above), pp.128-136, pp.145-148.
- 60) Cf. "Dogen and Tathāgatagarbha Thought," pp.165-166.
- 61) Hakamaya N., *Critiques of Original Enlightenment Thought* (Hongakushisō Hihan), Daizō Shuppan, 1989, p.141.
- 62) On my criticism on Hakamaya's theory, cf. CZ, chap. VI, especially, pp.587-597; "Dogen and Tathāgatagarbha Thought," pp.128-132, p.150.
- 63) *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* I, p.711.
- 64) Cf. "Dogen and Tathāgatagarbha Thought," pp.149-151, p.166, n.2.
- 65) *Dōgenzenjizenshū* (Shunjū-sha version), IV (1988), p.26. I was influenced by Ishii Shūdō, who repeatedly stressed the importance of this "jōdō." Cf. Ishii S., "Dogen in His Last Days" (Saigo no Dōgen), *Issues concerning the 12-fascicle Shōbōgenzō* (Jūnikanbon Shōbōgenzō no Shomondai), Daizō Shuppan, 1991, pp. 359-365.
- (This paper was read at the International Conference on Korean Sōn Buddhism, Paekyang-sa Buddhist Monastery, Korea, August 19-22, 1998)