

BUDDHA-NATURE AND DAO-NATURE OF MEDIEVAL CHINA

A COMPARISON OF THE CONCEPTS OF  
BUDDHA-NATURE AND DAO-NATURE OF MEDIEVAL CHINA

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## Abstract

This thesis, a comparison of the concepts of buddha-nature and dao-nature in the medieval period (from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries) of China, presents a historical investigation of the formation of the idea that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature in medieval Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. In Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, the concept of buddha-nature was originally defined as a potential possessed by sentient beings that enabled them to achieve buddhahood. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the concept was reinterpreted within the Chinese Buddhist tradition so that insentient things were also able to possess buddha-nature. Recent scholarship has pointed out that the idea of insentient things having buddha-nature is a combination of Buddhist and Daoist ideas based on the concept of the all-pervading Dao found in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In this sense, buddha-nature seems to be interpreted as equivalent with the Dao of Daoism. My project suggests that the reinterpretation of buddha-nature in association with the insentient realm should be elucidated in a more nuanced way than the idea of all-pervasiveness of the Dao. A historical, doctrinal investigation of the intellectual formation of the concept of buddha-nature in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism demonstrates a new interpretation of buddha-nature in the context of insentient things having buddha-nature. Further, through a historical investigation of intellectual exchange between Buddhism and Daoism, some evidence provided in this project illustrates that the idea of insentient things having

dao-nature in Daoism was not inherited from Buddhism, but drawn from Daoist tradition.

This new perspective is different from that of some contemporary scholars who have claimed that the idea of insentient things having dao-nature was borrowed from Chinese Buddhism. A chronological investigation of the discussion of nature in Chinese thought demonstrates that the idea of insentient things having buddha-nature incorporates earlier Daoist traditions found in Arcane Study.

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## List of Abbreviations

CTP: Chinese Text Project (Chinese: 中國哲學書電子化計劃), ed. Donald Sturgeon.

URL: <http://ctext.org>

DDB: Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, ed. A. Charles Muller. URL:

<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>

EDBT: *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, see Nakamura Hajime 中村元. 2009.

L: *Qianlong dazang jing* 乾隆大藏經 (Qianlong Edition of the Canon). 1991. Taipei:

Xinwenfeng Chubanshe 新文豐出版社. Collected in Chinese Buddhist

Electronic Text Association (CBETA) 中華電子佛典協會, 2011.

MMPS: *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra* (Daban niepan jing 大般涅槃經).

OTIC: *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, see Hucker, Charles, O. 2008.

PDB: *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, see Buswell, Robert E. Jr. and Donald S.

Lopez Jr., ed. 2014.

RGV: *Ratnagotravibhāga-Mahāyānottaratantra-Śāstra* (Baoxing fenbie dasheng jiuqing

yaoyi lun 寶性分別大乘究竟要義論, or Jiuqing yisheng baoxing lun 究竟一乘

寶性論).

T: *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (Taisho Tripiṭaka). 1988 Ed. Taishō

Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai 大正新修大藏經刊行會. Tōkyō: Daizō Shuppansha

大藏出版社. Collected in Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA)

中華電子佛典協會, 2011.

TTC: *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* 道藏通考, see

Schipper, Kristofer and Franciscus Verellen, ed. 2004.

X: *Manji Shinsan Dainippon zoku zōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經 (A revised version of the Kyoto supplement to the Manji edition of the canon). 1975–1989. Ed.

Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照. Tōkyō: Kokusho kankōkai Corporation Ltd. 株式

會社國書刊行會. Collected in Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association

(CBETA) 中華電子佛典協會, 2011.

ZD: *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏.

ZhD: *Zhonghua Daozhang* 中華道藏. 2004. Ed. Ren Jiyu 任繼禹. Beijing: Huaxia

chubanshe 華夏出版社.

## Introduction

In Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, the concept of buddha-nature (*foxing* 佛性) was originally defined as a potential possessed by sentient beings that enabled them to achieve buddhahood. From the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries onward, some Chinese Buddhist exegetes reinterpreted the concept so that insentient things such as plants, trees, mountains, rocks, and so on, were also able to possess buddha-nature. The idea that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature is a distinctive feature of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism that syncretizes ideological currents found in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and Chinese Daoism. In Daoism, from the Northern and the Southern dynasties (420–589 A.D.), a concept similar to buddha-nature appeared in what Isabelle Robinet calls “practical Daoism,”<sup>1</sup> or religious Daoism. The concept is called *daoxing* 道性, which I translate as “dao-nature.” The concept became an important Daoist doctrine and was included in

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<sup>1</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 3. Robinet points out that it is meaningless to draw a distinction between what has been called “philosophical” and “religious” Daoism. The sources of Daoism are various, and they are not limited to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Most scholars of Daoism agree that Daoism/*daojia* 道家 was not a school, and some scholars argue that Laozi and Zhuangzi were independent thinkers and there is no evidence that they influenced each other (Robinet, 2011a, 1:5). However, many texts and authors reflect the ideas of both the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*, such as the concept that the Dao is the universal, ultimate source of the universe, or that people are able to return to the Origin or the Dao by turning within oneself to achieve the peacefulness and simplicity that are required to experience the Dao (Robinet, 2011a, 1:5). I also agree with Robinet’s translation of *daojiao* 道教 as practical Daoism because the word *jiao* contains a meaning of practice of the Way as shown in the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (the Doctrine of the Mean): 修道之謂教, in CTP. Although the *Zhongyong* is considered a Confucian text, the meaning of *jiao* as shown here contains a meaning of practice.

some medieval Daoist texts.<sup>2</sup> Insentient things are included in the concept of dao-nature. This idea is parallel with some medieval Chinese Buddhist exegetes' assertions that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature. The parallel between the two concepts of nature indicates some relationship between these two concepts. By comparing the concepts of buddha-nature and dao-nature from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, this project will investigate the historical formation of the idea in medieval Chinese Buddhism that such inanimate things have buddha-nature. By means of historical, doctrinal, and textual investigation I will lay out the intellectual chronology of buddha-nature and dao-nature with a focus on insentient things.

## 1. Discussion of previous scholarship

The notion of the buddha-nature of insentient things in both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism has been discussed in detail by contemporary scholars such as Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄, Fabio Rambelli, Lambert Schmithausen, Shi Hengqing 釋恆清, Jacqueline Stone, and Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士.<sup>3</sup> For this project it is helpful to consider the buddha-nature of insentient things as having two aspects: epistemological and ontological.

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<sup>2</sup> Relevant Daoist texts include the *Benji jing* 本際經 (Scripture of the Genesis Point) by Liu Jinxi 劉進喜 (ca. 560–ca. 640) and Li Zhongqing 李仲卿, the *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞 (Pivotal Meaning of the Daoist Teaching) by Meng Anpai 孟安排 (7<sup>th</sup> century), and the *Xuanzhu lu* 玄珠錄 (Record of the Mysterious Pearl), which was composed by Wang Xuanlan 王玄覽 (626–697 A.D.).

<sup>3</sup> Rambelli, 2001; Schmithausen, 2009; Hakamaya, 1997, p. 73; Shi, 1996a; Stone, 1999; Kamata, 1968.

The epistemological aspect, as pointed out by Robert Sharf, is that of non-duality.<sup>4</sup> That is, people, by their conceptual non-duality, view both sentient beings and insentient things as essentially nondual. The issue of whether insentient things ontologically have buddha-nature is not emphasized. The second aspect is ontological, and this aspect is the focus of this dissertation: buddha-nature is universal and exists in both sentient beings and insentient things. As we shall see, this doctrine is consistent with Daoist ontology. In contemporary scholarly discourse, the discussion of the buddha-nature of insentient things primarily focuses on Buddhist intellectual history. I will argue, however, that the doctrine can only be understood in the broader context of Chinese thought.

Some contemporary scholars such as T. H. Barrett, Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭, Kamata Shigeo, Okuno Mitsuyoshi 奥野光賢, and Robert Sharf<sup>5</sup> have already argued that buddha-nature is a synthesis of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and Chinese Daoism. These scholars suggest that the holistic inclusion of insentient things in the discussion of buddha-nature is basically a Daoist idea that combines Buddhist and Daoist concepts and is based ultimately on the idea of the pervasiveness of the Dao found in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. This suggestion might be based on a medieval Chan text, *Jueguan lun* 絕觀論<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sharf, 2007, p. 212; Buswell, 1992, pp. 151–52.

<sup>5</sup> Barrett, 1991, p. 8; Kamata, 1968, p. 81; Okuno, 2002, p. 393; Hakamaya, 1997, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> According to McRae, the knowledge of the text began with the publication of D.T. Suzuki's 鈴木大拙 *Shōshitsu issho* 少室逸書 in 1935. After Suzuki, additional Dunhuang manuscripts and critical editions of the text were published. Some Japanese scholars such as Ui Hakuju 宇井伯壽, Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山, and Kuno Hōryū 久野芳隆, in their studies of the Niuto 牛頭 (Ox-head) school of Chan Buddhism,

(Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition).<sup>7</sup> The term “buddha-nature” does not appear in this text. The author of the *Jueguan lun* used the word Dao rather than buddha-nature to discuss the salvation of grasses and trees.<sup>8</sup> This usage raises a number of interesting questions: The author must have known the concept of buddha-nature, so why did he not use the term “buddha-nature” to argue for the salvation of grasses and trees? Was the author conscious of the difference between the Dao and buddha-nature, and chose the Dao to argue for universal salvation for grasses and trees? Contemporary scholars view buddha-nature as conceptually equivalent with the Dao of Daoism. The problem with this point is that if buddha-nature were equivalent to (on the same level as) the Dao, it would be easy to misunderstand the concept of buddha-nature as one of cosmology, which it is not. It is, rather, a discussion of the nature of sentient beings, and maybe insentient things as in East Asian Buddhism. In Buddhism, there is no creator or a unique source that bestows life upon any creature in the world, as does the Dao in Daoism. No doubt most Chinese Buddhist exegetes were aware of the meaning of the Dao in terms

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include an examination of the relationship of the text with the Ox-head school. There is some debate about the authorship of the text. Some scholars such as Kuno and then Sekiguchi Shindai 關口真大 suggest that the author of the text is Niuto Farong 牛頭法融, who is a legendary figure of the Ox-head school. The authorship of the text as Farong is mentioned in some texts, see T48.2016.941a24–941a25; X9.245.707c22–707c23; X65.1283.311c15. However, Suzuki has a different view on this point. The only point that all scholars agree with is that the text is associated with the Ox-head school. More discussion about the text, see McRae, 1983, pp. 171–75; Yanagida, 1980 and 1970.

<sup>7</sup> 問曰，道者為獨在於形靈之中耶？亦在於草木之中耶？入理答曰，道無所不遍 (Fonds Pelliot chinois, Notices 2001–2500, *Jue guan lun 絕觀論*; Yanagida and Tokiwa, 1976, p. 91).

<sup>8</sup> 問曰，若木亦合道者，經中何故不記草木成佛、乃偏記人也？答曰，非獨記人，草木亦記 (Fonds Pelliot chinois, Notices 2001–2500, *Jue guan lun 絕觀論*; Yanagida and Tokiwa, 1976, p. 91).

of an ultimate source in Daoism. Unlike the author of the *Jueguan lun*, some Chinese Buddhist exegetes did not use the word Dao, but they still used buddha-nature in their arguments that insentient things were able to possess buddha-nature. Therefore, the question is: Is there any term and idea other than the Dao that Chinese Buddhist exegetes might have referred to? I have found a Daoist term similar to buddha-nature in some Daoist texts; this term is *daoxing* 道性, or dao-nature. As I will show in Chapters 1 and 2, dao-nature for some Daoist thinkers and texts refers to *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity, Nature, natural). Dao-nature is defined as equivalent to spontaneity. If the Dao and dao-nature (spontaneity) refer to two separate things, it implies that there is another concept, dao-nature, rather than the Dao, that we can examine to see its relationship with buddha-nature. The question of how to understand the term *daoxing* prompted me to re-examine the intellectual relationship between buddha-nature and dao-nature in greater depth.

Some scholars such as Shi Hengqing point out that buddha-nature as universal in some medieval Chinese Buddhist exegetes' arguments, such as Jizang's 吉藏 (549–623 A.D.), is based on the notion of principle, or *li* 理.<sup>9</sup> Contemporary scholars<sup>10</sup> have shown that the source that Chinese Buddhist exegetes referred to in their interpretations

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<sup>9</sup> Shi, 1996a.

<sup>10</sup> See Shi, 1996a; Plassen cites the work of a Korean scholar, Kim Indök 金仁德 (Plassen, 1997, p. 2); Liu, 2008, pp. 80–4, and others.

of buddha-nature in terms of principle is Chapter 27 of the Mahāyāna

*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*<sup>11</sup> (hereafter MMPS), or the *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經 that was composed in Central Asia and translated by Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433 A.D.)

in 421.<sup>12</sup> There, buddha-nature is deemed to be equivalent to the

*dharmakāya*/doctrines/teachings of the Buddha, such as the Paramount Truth of

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<sup>11</sup> There is a group of sūtras entitled *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (MPNS, Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*), which are divided into two main groups: (1) Nikāya/Āgama texts; and (2) Mahāyāna texts (Radich, 2012). According to Michael Radich, in the Pāli Nikāyas, the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* is *Dīghanikāya* 16. Several Chinese versions of the Mainstream MPNS are listed in Radich's discussion of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. The Nikāya/Āgama version relates a series of events leading up to the death and cremation of the Buddha and the disposal of his relics (Radich, 2012). The discussion of buddha-nature does not appear in the Nikāya/Āgama but only in the Mahāyāna versions, which contain similar materials, but vastly expanded, including some new doctrines. One of the new doctrines is the concept of buddha-nature. As for the Mahāyāna MPNS, there are three Chinese versions, two translations and one revision: (1) *Foshuo daban nihuan jing* 佛說大般泥洹經 (Sūtra of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Preached by the Buddha), T12.376.853–899, translated by Faxian 法顯, whose date is unknown but we know that he lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Buddhahadra 佛陀跋陀羅 (359–429 A.D.) in the southern capital of Jiankang 建康 in 418 A.D. (Liu, 1982, p. 64). This version consists of 6 fascicles; (2) *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T12.374.365–603, or the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, Northern edition 涅槃經北本, translated by Dharmakṣema in Guzang 姑臧 in 421. The whole of Dharmakṣema's version of the MMPS was not translated at the same time. Recent scholars, such as Chen Jinhua 陳金華 (2004) and Stephen Hodge (2010 and 2012) do not question Dharmakṣema's contribution as translator of the additional portions of the MMPS, implying that the additional portions were not initially written in Chinese. It contains 40 fascicles in 13 chapters; (3) *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T12.375.605–852, or the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, Southern edition 涅槃經南本, translated by Huiyan 慧嚴 (363–443 A.D.), Huiguan 慧觀, and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433 A.D.). This version contains 36 fascicles, and was based on the Northern edition (Liu, 1982, p. 64; Shi, 1996b, p. 32).

<sup>12</sup> There is more than one Chinese version associated with the MMPS (Radich, 2012). The complete version of the *Sūtra* only exists in Chinese translation (Blum, 2003, 2:605). As for the dating of Dharmakṣema's arrival in China and his completion of translation of the *Sūtra*, Chen points out that there are two dates for Dharmakṣema's arrival proposed by contemporary scholars, and they are the years 412 and 421. The first is the year 412, and it is first proposed by Fuse Kōgaku 布施浩岳 and Kamata Shigeo and supported by some scholars such as Funayama Tōru 船山徹 and Yamabe Nobuyoshi 山部能宜 the arrival date of Dharmakṣema in Guzang is 412, and thus, the *Sūtra* was completed in 421 (Chen, 2004, p. 234). Sources that these scholars rely on are the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent monks), *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 (History of the Three Treasures in Successive Reigns and Catalogue of the Sūtras), *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 (Catalogue of Tang Dynasty Buddhist Sūtras), and *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (Record of Buddhist Teachings [Compiled during] the Kaiyuan Period). Chen and Hodge think that Dharmakṣema arrived in Guzang around 420 and began, rather than completed, his translation of the *Sūtra* in 421, completing it around 428 (Chen, 2004, p. 258; Hodge, 2010 and 2012, p. 25).



Emptiness and the Middle Way,<sup>13</sup> the twelve links of dependent origination,<sup>14</sup> and so forth. However, in Chapter 37 of Dharmakṣema's version of the MMPS we read:

非佛性者。所謂一切牆壁瓦石無情之物。離如是等無情之物。是名佛性。<sup>15</sup>

Excluded from buddha-nature are insentient things such as all walls, earthenware, and stones. [That which is] apart from those insentient things are named [beings that possess] buddha-nature.

This statement is in the enlarged portion of Dharmakṣema's version of the MMPS.<sup>16</sup>

Although buddha-nature is deemed to be equivalent to *dharmakāya*, insentient things are excluded from buddha-nature in the MMPS. The notion of principle in Chinese Buddhist exegetes' discussion of buddha-nature seems to be inconsistent with the concept of *dharmakāya* in Buddhism.

Although contemporary scholars have pointed out that some Chinese Buddhist exegetes asserted buddha-nature as universal in terms of principle, they do not further explain why it is necessarily to be principle if buddha-nature is claimed as universal.

Therefore, the notion of principle in Chinese philosophy will be examined in Chapter 1.

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<sup>13</sup> T12.374.523c13.

<sup>14</sup> T12.374.524a3–524b1.

<sup>15</sup> T12.374.581a22–581a23.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Hodge suspects and suggests that the author of the additional portions of the MMPS is Dharmakṣema (Hodge, 2010 and 2012, p. 26). This requires verification. However, it has been tacitly accepted by scholars that the additional portions of the MMPS are of Central Asian origin (Hodge, 2010 and 2012, p. 26). The geographical origin of the additional portions of the MMPS, Central Asia, makes it clear that the idea of the rejection of insentient things from buddha-nature is not of Chinese origin, but of Central Asian origin. Therefore, the MMPS does not include insentient things in the subject of buddha-nature.

The significance of the notion of principle in the discussion of nature in Chinese thought provides us with some references to understand more broadly how Chinese Buddhist exegetes interpreted buddha-nature in terms of principle, and why buddha-nature is necessarily to be interpreted in terms of principle as the claim to be universal already includes insentient things.

## **2. Methods and questions addressed in this project**

My project offers a comparison of the concepts of buddha-nature and dao-nature and suggests that the idea of a universal buddha-nature for medieval Buddhist exegetes should be elucidated in a more nuanced way than simply viewing it as a Buddhist appropriation of the pervasiveness of the Dao. From historical and doctrinal approaches, this project suggests that, rather than being simply equivalent to the Dao, buddha-nature is parallel to, but not identical with, dao-nature, which is further defined as *ziran*, and not equivalent to the Dao itself. Questions addressed in the study include:

1. What is the definition of buddha-nature according to Chinese Buddhist exegetes?
2. If buddha-nature is defined as a universal essence that may have been partly influenced by Daoism, then why and how are the concepts of buddha-nature and dao-nature made compatible?
3. In what way are insentient things included in the Chinese Buddhist understanding of the world both ontologically and soteriologically?

For this project, I choose Jizang and Zhanran 湛然 (711–782 A.D.) as two among

several Chinese Buddhist exegetes who asserted that insentient things were able to possess buddha-nature. There are three reasons for addressing the works and methods of these two Buddhist exegetes:

1. Their ontological view is consistent with Daoism;
2. Their assertions incorporate Chinese thought;
3. Jizang and Zhanran belonged to different Chinese Buddhist schools, the Sanlun 三論 (Three-Treatise) school and the Tiantai 天台 school, respectively. However, they both proclaimed their teachings as orthodox, based on Nāgārjuna 龍樹 (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> c.), the founder of the Indian Madhyamaka school (Zhongguan 中觀).

The conviction of both Jizang and Zhanran that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature is based on the ideas of the Madhyamaka school. However, a contemporary Chinese philosopher, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995 A.D.) points out that the *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* (Zhong lun 中論, Treatise of the Middle Contemplation)—a significant text that represents the main idea of the Madhyamaka school—does not talk about buddha-nature.<sup>17</sup> The concept of buddha-nature is associated with *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> Buddha-nature is

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<sup>17</sup> Mou, 2004, 1:179. According to Mou, the Madhyamaka school and the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras emphasize the true reality of all *dharmas*. The notion of buddha-nature appears in the *Nirvana Sūtra*. The *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* (one of Madhyamaka texts) does not talk about buddha-nature. However, Mou also points out that the ideas of permanence (*chang* 常), joy (*le* 樂), self (*wo* 我), and purity (*jing* 淨) in the MMPS also appear in sūtras associated with the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras (Mou, 2004, 1:180). The doctrine of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) is the core teaching of the school. This doctrine does not particularly belong to the Madhyamaka school.

<sup>18</sup> Contemporary scholars such as Ogawa Ichijo 小川一乘 (Ogawa, 1990, pp. 232, 241) and Brian E. Brown (Brown, 1991) have detailed discussion of buddha-nature in terms of *Tathāgata-garbha* thought in the *Ratnagotravibhāga-Mahāyānottaratantra-Śāstra*, or RGV in abbreviation.

deemed synonymous with *tathāgata-garbha*<sup>19</sup> since both terms can refer to a cause that enables sentient beings to attain buddhahood.<sup>20</sup> *Garbha* means storehouse, womb,<sup>21</sup> hidden, embryo, and matrix.<sup>22</sup> *Tathāgata-garbha* is defined “matrix,” “seed,” or “treasure-store of the Tathāgata.”<sup>23</sup> *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is a Mahāyāna doctrine that expresses a conviction that, in William H. Grosnick’s words, “all beings have within themselves the virtues and wisdom of the *Tathāgata* (buddha), but that these are hidden by a covering of defilements (*kleśakośa*).”<sup>24</sup> The existence of virtues and wisdom of the *Tathāgata* (*tathāgata-garbha*) indicates the nature of sentient beings in a positive way. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought affirms the ultimate existence of the nature of sentient beings. Besides *Tathāgata-garbha* thought, the MMPS also has the same view on the nature of

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<sup>19</sup> EDBT, s.v. “性,” 2:710–11; Takasaki, 1974, p. 127. The synonym of these two terms can be seen through a comparison of the three statements of the RGV, which are: (1) “As for someone who lacks *tathāgata-garbha*, [the one] is unable to detest suffering and happiness and to crave for *nirvāṇa*” 若無如來藏者。不得厭苦樂求涅槃, T31.1611.831a10; (2) “As for someone who lacks buddha-nature, [the one] is unable to detest all sufferings” 若無佛性者不得厭諸苦故, T31.1611.831a15, and (3) “As for someone who lacks buddha-nature, [the one] is unable to crave for the bliss of *nirvāṇa*, neither has desire nor wishes for [attaining *nirvāṇa*]. As for someone who has desire, the one will crave for *nirvāṇa*” 若無佛性者不求涅槃樂亦不欲不願故。又欲者。求涅槃故, T31.1611.831a17. These statements are parallel, but only *foxing* 佛性 replaces *rulai zang* 如來藏. Both *foxing* and *rulai zang* mean a cause that enables sentient beings to desire liberation from suffering and to attain buddhahood or *nirvāṇa*. The Sanskrit term of *foxing* 佛性 is *buddha-dhātu* (Nakamura, 1961, p. 69). As I will show later, there are more terms than *buddha-dhātu* for *foxing*.

<sup>20</sup> This is from a cause perspective. Zimmermann points out that *garbha* can be identified with *dhātu*, in reference with *hetu* as a meaning of cause. In this sense, *tathāgata-garbha* refers to the cause of sentient beings to attain buddhahood (Zimmermann, 2002, pp. 58–9). According to Brown, *tathāgata-garbha* refers to both cause and effect in different perspectives (Brown, 1991, p. 23).

<sup>21</sup> Takasaki, 1974, p. 55; Hookham, 1991, p. 99. It also means embryo or treasure in a mine that implies a meaning that, in Hookham’s words, “something is valuable or potentially valuable as well as its container or bearer” (Hookham, 1991, p. 99).

<sup>22</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:826; Rawlinson, 1983; Shinoda, 1963.

<sup>23</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:827.

<sup>24</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:827.

sentient beings as *Tathāgata-garbha* thought does. In the MMPS, buddha-nature within all sentient beings is characterized by permanence (*chang* 常), joy (*le* 樂), self (*wo* 我), and purity (*jing* 淨).<sup>25</sup> Buddha-nature that is characterized by self affirms the ultimate existence of the nature of sentient beings. The nature of sentient beings in positive view in these two concepts (buddha-nature and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought) seems to contradict the view in the Madhyamaka school. According to the *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, the nature of all things is *śūnyatā* (emptiness), or non-self, or dependent origination.<sup>26</sup> The existence of the nature of all things and sentient beings in the Madhyamaka school is seen negatively. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the Madhyamaka school have different views on the discussion of the nature of sentient beings. These two different views of the nature of sentient beings are syncretized in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought. According to David Seyfort Rugg, the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is subsumed in the *Tathāgata-garbha* texts such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga-Mahāyānottaratantra-Śāstra* (hereafter RGV), or *Baoxing fenbie dasheng jiujing yaoyi lun* 寶性分別大乘究竟要義論 (Analysis of the Source of the [Buddha] Jewel), or *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論 (Treatise of the Treasure Nature of the Ultimate Ekayāna) and its commentaries, and other scriptures and doctrines associated with *tathāgata-garbha*.<sup>27</sup> S.K. Hookham points out that the RGV is

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<sup>25</sup> Blum, 2003, 2:606.

<sup>26</sup> See T30.1564.33b11–33b22.

<sup>27</sup> Rugg, 1992, p. 36. Also see T31.1611.840a5–840a12. The RGV is a significant text for the study of *Tathāgata-garbha* thought because it is the only Indian Buddhist treatise composed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

a synthesis of the *Tathāgata-garbha* sūtras and the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) sūtras, and the latter “have primary focus on the exposition of *śūnyatā* and the elaboration of its pervasiveness to all things.”<sup>28</sup> *Śūnyatā* in both Madhyamaka school and the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras is the truth of all things. However, the *Tathāgata-garbha* sūtras represent a different class of literature than that which are associated with Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka.<sup>29</sup> *Tathāgata-garbha* thought does not exclude the doctrine of *śūnyatā*. However, it evaluates the doctrines of the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras as incomplete teachings.<sup>30</sup> Some *Tathāgata-garbha* sūtras such as the RGV were composed after the emergence of Madhyamaka thought. The RGV justifies its claim as supersession of the previous doctrine of the Madhyamaka thought.<sup>31</sup> The RGV<sup>32</sup> and the *Śrīmālādevī Śiṃhanāda Sūtra* (Shengman shizihou yisheng dafangbian fangguang jing 勝鬘師子吼

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devoted to *Tathāgata-garbha* thought (Grosnick, 2003, 2:827). The concept of buddha-nature is associated with *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Buddha-nature in the MMPS also refers to the doctrine *śūnyatā*, but the doctrine is called the Paramount Truth of Emptiness (*diyiyi kong* 第一義空) (See T12.374.523b12–523b13). As will be shown later, the doctrine of *śūnyatā* in both *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS refers to *dharmakāya*, which is inseparable from wisdom.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 145; Hookham, 1991, p. 169. Also Grosnick points out that the Madhyamaka school understood thusness to mean the emptiness of all *dharmas* (Grosnick, 2003, 2:827). The view on the nature of all *dharmas* in terms of *śūnyatā* in Madhyamaka school is consistent with the view in *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras.

<sup>29</sup> Hookham, 1991, p. 169.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 135. According to Hookham, the *Tathāgata-garbha* sūtras, in comparison with the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, are a later development of Mahāyāna thought, and they appeared in India around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. (Hookham, 1991, p. 169). They were probably a little later than the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, of which the earliest ones arose around approximately 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.D. (Hookham, 1991, p. 169).

<sup>31</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> 是故聖者勝鬘經言。世尊。有二種如來藏空智。世尊。空如來藏。若離若脫若異一切煩惱藏。世尊。不空如來藏。過於恒沙不離不脫不異。不思議佛法故, T31.1611.840a15–840a19.

一乘大方便方廣經, or the Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala, hereafter *Śrīmālā Sūtra*)<sup>33</sup> discuss *śūnyatā*. They assert that *tathāgata-garbha* is both *śūnya* (void) and *aśūnya* (not void).<sup>34</sup> According to these two *Tathāgata-garbha* sūtras, *tathāgata-garbha* in terms of *śūnya* is for someone who has an erroneous view of the existence of substantial essence. Therefore, the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is provided for one to detach from this false view,<sup>35</sup> and to inspire one to perceive the phenomenal world as relative, conditioned, impermanent, dependently originated, and indeterminate, that is as ultimate essence of things.<sup>36</sup> However, the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* who over dogmatize the doctrine of *śūnyatā* and disappreciate the existence of Tathatā (the Absolute Suchness of reality) as the real essence of all things<sup>37</sup> also hold an erroneous view. A warning for this erroneous view is given by *tathāgata-garbha* in terms of *aśūnya*.<sup>38</sup> The RGV, as Grosnick points out, “insists that while the *tathāgatagarbha* is empty of *kleśas*, it is not

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<sup>33</sup> 世尊。有二種如來藏空智。世尊。空如來藏。若離若脫若異。一切煩惱藏。世尊。不空如來藏。過於恒沙不離不脫不異不思議佛法, T12.353.221c16–221c18.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 141. Detailed discussion on *Tathāgata-garbha* as both *śūnya* and *aśūnya*, see Brown, 1991, pp. 141–49. Brown quotes from Takasaki that “The Essence (of the Buddha) is (by nature) devoid [*śūnya*] of the accidental (pollutions) which differ from it; but it is by no means devoid [*aśūnya*] of the highest properties which are, essentially, indivisible from it” (Brown, 1991, p. 141).

<sup>35</sup> See footnotes 32 and 33.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, 1991, pp. 136–37.

<sup>38</sup> 真如如來真如平等無差別, T31.1611.824b24; 佛法不相離者。依此義故。聖者勝鬘經言。世尊。不空如來藏。過於恒沙不離不脫。不思議佛法故。及彼真如性者, T31.1611.835b27–835b29; 有二種如來藏空智。世尊。空如來藏...不空如來藏...如是以何等煩惱以何等處無。如是如實見知名為空智。又何等諸佛法。何處具足有。如是如實見知名不空智。如是明離有無二邊如實知空相...如來藏智名為空智。世尊。如來藏空智者。一切聲聞辟支佛等。本所不見。本所不得。本所不證。本所不會, T31.1611.840a16–840a29.

empty of the virtues of the Buddha.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, in terms of *aśūnya*, the existence of the virtues of the Buddha is not negated. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought affirms that the virtues of the Buddha ultimately exist. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought places *śūnyatā* as an incomplete view. Therefore, *Tathāgata-garbha* thought assimilated *śūnyatā* into its teaching by positing *śūnyatā* as an incomplete teaching. Tathatā as the Absolute Suchness of reality ultimately exists.

In Chinese Buddhism, the syncretism of the two distinct views on the nature of sentient beings in Madhyamaka thought and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is shown in the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature in Jizang’s and Zhanran’s assertions. They claimed that their teachings and discussions were based on the teachings of Nāgārjuna, so, how did they syncretize these two distinct views (*tathāgata-garbha*/buddha-nature and *śūnyatā*) of the question of nature? In order to do so, they needed to adjust the definition of sentient beings in a way that makes sentient beings equal in some sense with insentient things. Thus, this project will investigate the definition and interpretation of sentient beings in Jizang’s and Zhanran’s arguments to see how these two Buddhist exegetes adjusted their definitions of sentient beings to create such an equal valence. Is there any Chinese thought and/or method that would enable them to reconcile the discussion of nature in these two distinct Indian Mahāyāna approaches? These are the main points of

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<sup>39</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:827.



this project, which aims to investigate why and how Jizang and Zhanran were able to reinterpret buddha-nature in terms of Chinese thought in order to include insentient things in the discussion of buddha-nature.

### **3. The significance of the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature for East Asian Buddhism**

The idea that insentient things possess buddha-nature represents a crucial moment that shifts the whole spectrum of East Asian Buddhist thought in a new direction. Further Buddhist teachings and practices in East Asian Buddhism, such as the Tendai *Hongaku shisō* 本覺思想 (Original Enlightenment thought)<sup>40</sup>—the key doctrine of medieval Japanese Tendai Buddhism<sup>41</sup> and some medieval Japanese literature<sup>42</sup>—were developed based on this new perspective. In addition, *Hongaku shisō* extended Buddhist soteriology

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<sup>40</sup> The term “Original Enlightenment thought” did not appear until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shimaji Daito 島地大等 (1875–1927 A.D.) used the term to designate the intellectual mainstream of medieval Japanese Tendai Buddhism (Stone, 1999, p. 3).

<sup>41</sup> Jacqueline Stone explains that “original enlightenment thought denotes an array of doctrines and concepts associated with the proposition that all things, both sentient beings and insentient things, are enlightened inherently. All things, both sentient and insentient, are innately Buddhas, and the whole phenomenal world is the primordially enlightened Buddha, or tathāgata. Thus, not only human beings, but ants, mountains, and rivers, grasses and trees are all innately Buddhas” (Stone, 1999, p. 3).

<sup>42</sup> For instance, the phrase, “grasses and trees realizing buddhahood” is reconstructed to read “the Buddha who becomes even grasses and trees” (Stone, 1999, p. 160). The study of Original Enlightenment is significant because it affects the interaction between Buddhism and Shintō. Stone explains “Shimaji saw original enlightenment thought as representing the ‘climax’ of Buddhist philosophy and argued that research in this area would shed light not only on the development of Japanese Buddhism, but on medieval Japanese culture itself, including Buddhist-Shintō interactions, ethics and morality, literature and the arts” (Stone, 1999, p. 3). The Japanese Zen master Dōgen’s 道元 (1200–1253 A.D.) *Sansui kyo* 山水經 (Mountains and Waters Sūtra) offers another famous illustration of the idea of the non-duality of sentient beings and insentient things.

to the insentient realm. Plants are not only able to possess buddha-nature but could also become buddhas. The argument about the salvation of plants is shown in the *sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成佛 (plants becoming buddhas) thought discussed in Kūkai's 空海 (774–835 A.D.) esoteric Buddhism,<sup>43</sup> and other works.<sup>44</sup> Some scholars of Japanese Buddhism, such as Hakamaya Noriaki, have pointed out that when the concept of buddha-nature came to Japan in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, along with the doctrine of original enlightenment, it was a Chinese Buddhist idea that combined Buddhist and Daoist concepts.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the concept of buddha-nature in East Asian Buddhism, especially the incorporation of insentient things into the discussion of buddha-nature, has been considered an example of the syncretism of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism and Daoism. This raises the following question: In what way is the concept of buddha-nature reinterpreted in terms of Daoism to justify the idea that insentient things have

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<sup>43</sup> As for Kūkai's discussion of the possibility of the salvation of plants in terms of esoteric Buddhism, see Rambelli, 2001, pp. 30–40. Kūkai was the first Japanese Buddhist to mention the possibility of the salvation of plants (Rambelli, 2001, p. 30).

<sup>44</sup> These works are listed by Rambelli (2001): The Tendai monk Annen's 安然 (841–895? A.D.) *Taizō kongō bodaishingi ryaku mondō shō* 胎藏金剛菩提心義略問答抄. (Annotations from an Abridged Dialogue on the Concept of *Bodhicitta* as Related to the Womb and Vajra Maṇḍalas) and the *Kantei sōmoku jōbutsu shiki* 勘定草木成佛私記 (A Personal Collection of Selected Passages on Plants Becoming Buddhas), Ryōgen's 良源 (912–985 A.D.) *Sōmoku hosshin shugyō jōbutsu ki* 草木發心修行成佛記 (Record of Plants Arousing the Desire [for Enlightenment], Performing Religious Practices, and Becoming Buddhas), Genshin's 源信 (942–1017 A.D.) *Sanjūshika no kotogaki* 三十四箇事書 (Notes on Thirty-four Items), and Chūjin's 忠尋 (1065–1138 A.D.) *Kankō ruijū* 漢光類聚 (Classified Collection of the Light of the Han) (Rambelli, 2001, pp. 13–5). These medieval Japanese Buddhist texts contend that plants are endowed with buddha-nature and are able to become buddhas. Rambelli mentioned that none of these traditional authorships is correct because the texts appear to have been written later during the Middle Ages (Rambelli, 2001, p. 13). See further details on plants becoming buddhas in Japanese Buddhism in the work of Rambelli (2001).

<sup>45</sup> Hakamaya, 1997, p. 73.

buddha-nature? Textual and doctrinal investigations on the discussion of nature in Chinese thought, especially in a Daoist context, are crucial to understanding how the concept of buddha-nature was able to include insentient things in its framework.

#### **4. Background: The legitimacy of the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature in non-Chinese sources**

In order to show that the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature is part of the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism, it is necessary to examine the legitimacy of this concept in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. The term buddha-nature does not appear in either Indian or Central Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism. *Foxing* is a Chinese term. There is no single Sanskrit term that corresponds to *foxing*. As for the Sanskrit term(s) for buddha-nature in the MMPS, some contemporary scholars have made comparisons between the MMPS in Chinese and later Tibetan translations of the MMPS.<sup>46</sup> It has been suggested that the term *foxing* translates a number of Sanskrit terms such as *tathāgata-garbha*, *gotra*, *tathāgata-dhātu*, or *Buddha-dhātu*.<sup>47</sup> These diverse terms

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<sup>46</sup> Scholars such as Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘 (1997) contributed to the study of this issue by making a comparison of all three Chinese translated versions as well as the Tibetan translation. Common ideas in all three Chinese versions are suggested to be close to the original meaning of the Sanskrit version of the *Sūtra*. Although it is difficult to fathom the real meaning of the *Sūtra*—unless fragments of the *Sūtra* are discovered and some of fragments have been found—Shimoda’s method is one way to arrive at accurate translations of the *Sūtra*. Shimoda suggests that Faxian’s version is closer to the original meaning of the *Sūtra*, based on the chronology of the translations of the three versions (Shimoda, 1997, pp. 168–69).

<sup>47</sup> Nakamura, 2007, p. 263; Shi, 1996b, p. 62.

suggest that there is no single Sanskrit term for buddha-nature. In fact, there are several Sanskrit terms that were mapped onto the concept of buddha-nature, such as *Buddha-dhātu*,<sup>48</sup> *Buddha-gotra*,<sup>49</sup> *Buddha-garbha*, *tathāgata-dhātu*, *tathāgata-gotra*, *gotra*,<sup>50</sup> *tathāgata-garbha*, *dharmatā*, *dharmakāya*, *buddhatva*, *buddhavaṃśa*, and *buddhatā*.<sup>51</sup> These terms may be considered the original Sanskrit drawn upon by Chinese translators for the concept of buddha-nature. The term *foxing* corresponds to more than one Sanskrit term even in the same text. For instance, in the RGV, the term *foxing* is a translation of the Sanskrit term *Buddha-dhātuḥ* in the statement:

Buddha-dhātuḥ sacen na syān nirvid  
duḥkhe 'pi no bhavet /  
nêcchā na prārthanā nāpi praṇidhir nirvṛitau  
bhavet<sup>52</sup>

若無佛性者 不得厭諸苦 不求涅槃樂 亦不亦欲不願<sup>53</sup>

One who lacks buddha-nature is unable to detest all sufferings, neither seeks for the bliss of *nirvāṇa*, nor has desire for and wishes for [attaining *nirvāṇa*].<sup>54</sup>

In this passage, *foxing* translates *Buddha-dhātuḥ* in Sanskrit. However, in the same text,

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<sup>48</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:826.

<sup>49</sup> Lai, 1982, p. 99. Also, another possible translation of *buddhagotra* into Chinese is *fozhong* 佛種, which appears in the *Lotus Sūtra*, see T9.262.15b22–15b23; T9.262.9b8–9b9. However, the meaning of *buddhagotra* can be considered synonymous with buddha-nature.

<sup>50</sup> Nakamura, 2007, p. 263.

<sup>51</sup> EDBT, s.v. “佛性,” 2:568–69; Ogawa, 1963, pp. 166–67; Rawlinson, 1983, p. 259.

<sup>52</sup> Nakamura, 1961, p. 69.

<sup>53</sup> T31.1611.831a7–831a8.

<sup>54</sup> My translation is based on Chinese version of the text.

*foxing* translates another Sanskrit term in another statement:

gotraṃ tad dvi-vidhaṃ jñeyaṃ nidhāna-phala-vṛikṣavat<sup>55</sup>

佛性有二種 一者如地藏 二者如樹果<sup>56</sup>

Buddha-nature [can be understood] in two aspects. First, [buddha-nature] is like a store of the earth. Second, [buddha-nature] is like a fruit of a tree.<sup>57</sup>

According to the passage, *foxing* translates another Sanskrit term, *gotraṃ*. Therefore, *foxing* can correspond to more than one Sanskrit term in a text.

The reason for the coexistence of multiple terms related to *foxing* is because of the word *xing* 性 (nature). The word *xing* was used to translate several different Sanskrit terms, such as *prakṛti*, *gotra*, *dhātu*, and *svabhāva*,<sup>58</sup> and these Sanskrit terms were also translated with Chinese characters other than *xing*, such as *ti* 體, *shen* 身, *zhen* 真, and *shi* 實.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, there is no single Sanskrit term that corresponds to *xing* and no single Sanskrit term that is equivalent to buddha-nature.

When the multiple Sanskrit terms associated with buddha-nature were translated simply as *foxing* in Chinese, it made the meaning of *foxing* ambiguous. Therefore, the understanding and interpretation of buddha-nature between Indian and Chinese Mahāyāna traditions became problematic and complex.

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<sup>55</sup> Nakamura, 1961, p. 139.

<sup>56</sup> T31.1611.839a1–839a2.

<sup>57</sup> My translation is based on Chinese version of the text.

<sup>58</sup> EDBT, s.v. “性,” 2:710–11.

<sup>59</sup> EDBT, s.v. “性,” 2:710–11; Rawlinson, 1983, pp. 259–60.

The Sanskrit terms mentioned above that correspond to *foxing* comprise three main concepts: *dhātu*, *gotra*, and *garbha*.<sup>60</sup> In combination with the terms buddha- or *tathāgata*-, such as *buddha-gotra*, *tathāgata-garbha*, and *buddha-dhātu*, they can be understood to mean a cause that enables sentient beings to achieve buddhahood.<sup>61</sup> Takasaki Jikido 高崎直道<sup>62</sup> and other scholars<sup>63</sup> have made significant contributions to our deeper understanding of each concept. Since this project emphasizes the discussion in Chinese Buddhism, the project avoids repeating these scholars' detailed contributions concerning buddha-nature in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. In general, according to the writings of these scholars, the three concepts do not show that insentient things are included in the topic of the possession of buddha-nature.

The assertion that insentient things have buddha-nature in an ontological view is based on the *dhātu* concept, and, as mentioned, the source that Chinese Buddhist exegetes such as Jizang and Zhanran quoted (to be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) is found in Chapter 27 of Dharmakṣema's version of the MMPS. There, buddha-nature is deemed to be equivalent to *dharmakāya* of the Buddha. Jizang and Zhanran only quoted the doctrines of the Paramount Truth of Emptiness (*diyiyi kong* 第一義空) and the Middle Way as being equivalent to buddha-nature in the MMPS in order to argue that insentient

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<sup>60</sup> Ogawa, 1963, pp. 166–67; Shinoda, 1963, pp. 223–26.

<sup>61</sup> EDBT, s.v. “性,” 2:710–11; Takasaki, 1974, pp. 178, 180–81; Yamabe, 1997, pp. 195–96.

<sup>62</sup> See Takasaki, 1974.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Lai, 1982; Tokiwa, 1972; Zimmermann, 2002.

things have buddha-nature. The problem for Jizang's and Zhanran's interpretations of buddha-nature in terms of the doctrine of the Paramount Truth of Emptiness is: Is the doctrine associated with the insentient realm in the MMPS? The statement "as for buddha-nature, it is described as the Paramount Truth of Emptiness. The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as wisdom" 佛性者名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧<sup>64</sup> in the MMPS indicates that buddha-nature refers to wisdom while its equivalence with the Paramount Truth of Emptiness is also equivalent to wisdom. The author(s) of this statement restricted the Paramount Truth of Emptiness to an association with wisdom. The idea of buddha-nature in terms of *dharmakāya* and the Paramount Truth of Emptiness in the MMPS also appears in the RGV and the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*.

In the RGV, *tathāgata-garbha* is associated with and is not separated from *dharmakāya*.<sup>65</sup> In this text, as Grosnick points out, "*dharmakāya* is identified as 'thusness apart from pollution' (nirmalā tathatā)."<sup>66</sup> Thusness, in Grosnick's words, "means supreme truth apprehended by non-discriminating and undifferentiated wisdom."<sup>67</sup> *Dharmakāya* is not separated from wisdom. As mentioned,

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<sup>64</sup> T12.374.523b12–523b13.

<sup>65</sup> "The *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdēsa-Sūtra* (the *Sūtra of Neither Increasing nor Decreasing*) states, "Śāriputra says, 'As for *tathāgata-garbha*, it is identical with *dharmakāya*.' Also, saints, the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* states, "The World-honoured one, without separating from *dharmakāya*, there is *tathāgata-garbha*. The World-honoured one, without separating from *tathāgata-garbha*, there is *dharmakāya*" 不增不減經言。舍利弗言。如來藏者。即是法身故。又復聖者勝鬘經言。世尊。不離法身有如來藏。世尊。不離如來藏有法身, T31.1611.835c9–835c12.

<sup>66</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:827.

<sup>67</sup> Grosnick, 2003, 2:827. In Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, *dharmakāya* can refer to *dharmatā*. The term

*Tathāgata-garbha* thought also includes *śūnyatā*. *Śūnyatā* in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is associated with wisdom as shown in *kongzhi* 空智 (the wisdom of *śūnyatā*, or the voidness knowledge<sup>68</sup>). In the context of *kongzhi*, *tathāgata-garbha* is both *śūnya* and *aśūnya* as described in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*:

有二種如來藏空智。世尊。空如來藏。若離若脫若異。一切煩惱藏。世尊。不空如來藏。過於恒沙不離不脫不異不思議佛法。<sup>69</sup>

The voidness knowledge of the *Tathāgatagarbha* is of two kinds. The two are as follows: Lord, the *Tathāgatagarbha* is void [*śūnyatā*] of all the defilement stores, which are discrete and knowing as not liberated. Lord, the *Tathāgatagarbha* is not void of [*aśūnyatā*] the Buddha *dharmas* which are non-discrete, inconceivable, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, and knowing as liberated.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of *aśūnya*, according to the passage, *tathāgata-garbha* is not void of the *Buddhadharma* (Buddha *dharmas*)/*dharmakāya*, or *fofa* 佛法. In terms of *aśūnya*, *kongzhi* becomes a wisdom of *śūnyatā*. *Śūnyatā* refers to conceptual knowledge and wisdom of non-differentiation and non-discrimination. All buddhas possess this wisdom.

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*dharmatā* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras refers to the real nature of things as empty yet diverse in their appearances. Zimmermann points out that the term *dharmatā* contains at least three meanings in the development of the history of Buddhism. First, *dharmatā* can stand for the nature of all *dharmas* in the sense of the rule to which all *dharmas* are subject, primarily the law of *pratītyasamutpāda*, which is not introduced in the *Tathāgatagarbha-Sūtra*. Second, *dharmatā* can simply mean the character, nature or essence of somebody, or something. Third, in a later development that is restricted to Mahāyāna Buddhism, *dharmatā* came to designate the true essence of all *dharmas*, and here it is understood in a metaphysical reality more or less synonymous with *tathatā*. In this sense, *dharmatā* represents the absolute truth (Zimmermann, 2002, pp. 54–5). John Makransky points out that other than the *dharmatā* of all things, the limitless field of the buddhas' enlightened knowledge and power is also referred to *dharmakāya* (Makransky, 2003, 1:78).

<sup>68</sup> This is Brown's translation of *kongzhi*, see Brown, 1991, p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> T12.353.221c16–221c18.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 31. Brown quotes this passage from Wayman and Wayman's translation of the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*.



According to Takasaki, Buddhadharma is not separated from *guṇa*,<sup>71</sup> or virtuous qualities (of buddhas), or *fogongde* 佛功德.<sup>72</sup> *Dharmakāya* is the basis of the *guṇa* of all buddhas. Virtuous qualities of the Buddha are the attendants of *dharmakāya*/wisdom. Such virtuous qualities of the Buddha are called *butuo zhihui gongde* 不脫智慧功德 in Chinese, or *avinirmuktajñānaguṇa*. The term *avinirmuktajñānaguṇa* consists of two parts: *guṇa*, (virtuous qualities of buddhas), and *jñāna*, wisdom, or *zhi*, which involves awakening, *wu* 悟.<sup>73</sup> The *guṇa* (*gongde* 功德, virtues) of the Buddha are inseparable from *jñāna* (*zhihui* 智慧, wisdom). Such wisdom, of which the virtuous qualities of the Buddha are attendants, is called *butuo zhihui* 不脫智慧.<sup>74</sup> Virtuous qualities of buddhas are manifestations of Buddhadharma/*dharmakāya*,<sup>75</sup> and they truly exist permanently. Thus, in the context of *kongzhi*, *tathāgata-garbha* as the wisdom and the virtuous qualities of the Buddha is not void. The true nature of sentient beings (*dharmakāya*/wisdom and the virtuous qualities of the Buddha) is not void. The existence of *dharmakāya* in the *tathāgata-garbha* texts shows that *dharmakāya* is not separated from the sentient realm.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> For a detailed discussion of *dharmakāya* as inseparable from wisdom and virtues of the Buddha, see Takasaki, 2009, pp. 108–11.

<sup>72</sup> Takasaki, 2009, p. 110.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed discussion of the term *avinirmuktajñānaguṇa* and the word *amuktajñāna*, see Takasaki, 2010, pp. 67–76.

<sup>74</sup> For a detailed discussion on the inseparable of virtuous qualities of the Buddha and wisdom, see Takasaki, 2010, pp. 67–76; Schmithausen, 2009, pp. 253–54.

<sup>75</sup> 真如有雜垢者。謂真如佛性未離諸煩惱所纏。如來藏故。及遠離諸垢者。即彼如來藏轉身到佛地得證法身。名如來法身故。佛無量功德者。即彼轉身如來法身相中。所有出世間十力無畏等。一切諸功德無量無邊故。及佛所作業。即彼十力等。一切諸佛法自然常作無上佛業。常不休息常不捨離。常授諸菩薩記。彼處次第有四種法不可思議。是故名為如來境界, T31.1611.827a1–827a9.

<sup>76</sup> “According to the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdēsa-Sūtra* [*Sutra of Neither Increasing nor Decreasing*],

Thus, the definitions of *dharmakāya* and of the wisdom of *śūnyatā* restrict the subject of possessing *tathāgata-garbha*/buddha-nature to sentient beings.

Similar to *Tathāgata-garbha* thought, the Paramount Truth of Emptiness in terms of *dharmakāya* in the MMPS is a conceptualization of *śūnyatā* as wisdom and knowledge, and it is what the statement “the Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as wisdom” 第一義空名為智慧 means. The equivalence of the Paramount Truth of Emptiness with buddha-nature indicates that buddha-nature refers to *dharmakāya*, and buddha-nature is also associated with wisdom. It implies that buddha-nature is restricted to the sentient realm. In this sense, insentient things are not included in the subject of possession of buddha-nature; they are incapable of possessing wisdom/consciousness in the Buddhist perspective. Therefore, insentient things are excluded from the discussion of buddha-nature. This corresponds to the statement in Chapter 37 of the MMPS that insentient things such as walls, earthenware, and stones are excluded from buddha-nature mentioned before. The statement in Chapter 37 of the MMPS is significant because it clearly excludes insentient things from those beings that possess buddha-nature.

Thus, the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature is not considered legitimate

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“Therefore, Śāriputra, the [ordinary] living beings and the Absolute Body (*dharmakāya*) are not different from each other. The living beings are nothing but the Absolute Body, and the Absolute Body is nothing but the living beings. These two are non-dual by meaning, and different merely by letters” (Takasaki, 1966, p. 170. Takasaki’s translation is based on the original Sanskrit text) 如不增不減經言。舍利弗。不離眾生界有法身。不離法身有眾生界。眾生界即法身。法身即眾生界。舍利弗。此二法者義一名異故, T31.1611.832b17–832b20.

in either *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism or the MMPS.

## 5. The definition of “sentient beings”

According to the concept of buddha-nature, all sentient beings have buddha-nature. The question is: Are plants and inanimate things sentient beings? “Sentient beings” are defined differently in different religious traditions. In pre-modern Chinese folk religion, there is some evidence for the belief that some trees, plants (including vegetables and fruit), material objects (household articles), and minerals are endowed with mystical power or spirits.<sup>77</sup> Plant spirits manifest themselves in human and animal form.<sup>78</sup> Thus, plants and inanimate things possess spirits just as humans and animals do. There is no distinction between animals, humans, plants, and inanimate things in terms of possession of spirits.

Both the Vedic and Jain Indian religious traditions include plants and trees as sentient beings.<sup>79</sup> In Jainism, all concrete beings in the universe, both animate and inanimate, are endowed with sentience, but they are classified in five different levels; the level of the “beings” is based on the number of senses that each classification of “beings” possesses. Earth matters are the lowest sentient beings, because they possess only a sense

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<sup>77</sup> Doré, 1918, 5:XI, 5:717–735; Doré, 1914, 1:134–137. The idea that spirits metamorphose into various objects is also shown in figures number 61–1, 61–2, 61–3, and 61–4 in Doré 1914, 1:134–137.

<sup>78</sup> Doré, 1918, 5:733.

<sup>79</sup> Schmithausen, 1991, pp. 3–4.

of touch. Human beings are considered the highest level of beings since they possess five senses.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the classification of all beings in the universe in the Jain tradition is a matter of the degrees of sense, not of kind or species.<sup>81</sup>

In Chinese Buddhism, the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature is expressed in Chinese texts as *caomu you foxing* 草木有佛性 (grasses and trees have buddha-nature) and *wuqing you foxing* 無情有佛性 (insentient things have buddha-nature).<sup>82</sup> These two expressions are synonymous. The term *wuqing* 無情 (insentient things, or things that do not have sentience/consciousness/sentiment) in the second expression was applied probably after Xuanzang's 玄奘 (602?–664 A.D.) translation of *sattva* (“being”) as *youqing* 有情 (sentient beings, or beings having sentiments, emotions, thoughts, etc.).<sup>83</sup> In Chinese Buddhism, both terms *wuqing* and *caomu* 草木 (grasses and trees) refer to insentient things. They are distinct from and not included in the sentient realm.

In Japanese, terms such as *sōmoku kokudo* 草木國土 (plants and the territory), *sōmoku kasen gareki* 草木河川瓦礫 (plants, rivers, bricks, and stones), and *sōmoku* 草木 (plants) all refer to concrete things in the material world.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the term

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<sup>80</sup> Valley, 2008, p. 98. The Valley's source refers to Umāsvāti.

<sup>81</sup> Valley, 2008, p. 98.

<sup>82</sup> For example, passages such as: 草木有佛性, T45.1853.40b23; 無情有性, T46.1932.781b1; 無情有佛性, T51.2076.438a28.

<sup>83</sup> Schmithausen, 1991, p. 242; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “眾生.”

<sup>84</sup> Rambelli, 2001, pp. 1–2. For works about this idea in Tendai teaching, see Rambelli, 2001, pp. 12–30,

*sōmoku* in Japanese medieval doctrines, such as the concept of buddha-nature, can be a collective term including both plants and inanimate things, and they are all considered to be insentient.<sup>85</sup>

In Indian Buddhism, according to Daniel A. Getz, “sentient beings is a term used to designate the totality of living, conscious beings and audience of the Buddhist teaching.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Getz states that “translating various Sanskrit terms (*jantu*, *bahu jana*, *jagat*, *sattva*), sentient beings conventionally refers to the mass of living things subject to illusion, suffering, and rebirth (*samsāra*).”<sup>87</sup> Based on Getz’s explanation, sentient beings are not only living beings but also conscious beings. They are capable of generating karma which determines their destinations to be reborn into one of the six categories of being in the *samsāra* world, or of being liberated from the cycle of rebirth to become enlightened beings.<sup>88</sup> However, some Vinaya texts such as the *Shisong lü* 十誦

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and footnote 44. As mentioned, *jōbutsu* 草木成佛 (plants becoming buddhas) thought was discussed in Kūkai’s 空海 (774–835 A.D.) esoteric Buddhism. Therefore, the idea of universal buddha-nature and salvation for plants had appeared in Japanese Buddhism around 8<sup>th</sup> century. Before 8<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion of universal Buddha-nature had appeared in Chinese Buddhism such as Jizang’s work as will be shown in Chapter 3.

<sup>85</sup> Rambelli, 2001, pp. 1–2.

<sup>86</sup> Getz, 2003, 2:760.

<sup>87</sup> Getz, 2003, 2:760.

<sup>88</sup> Getz, 2003, 2:760. The six of the ten categories of beings refer to gods (*deva*), demonic beings (*asura*), humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings of hell. According to Getz, this classification is based on the Vātsīputrīyas, one of the eighteen Nikāya schools in early Indian Buddhism and one division of the Sarvāstivāda school; this classification gained popularity in East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism (for more classification in other Indian Buddhist tradition, see Getz, 2003, 2:760; Muller, 2009). These six categories are designated as the *samsāra* world (cycle of rebirth). The other four categories are *śrāvaka* (voice-hearer), *pratyekabuddha* (enlightened by contemplation on dependent arising), bodhisattvas, and buddhas. Beings in these four categories are considered to be enlightened ones. Conventionally, sentient beings refer to beings of the six categories in the *samsāra* world, and because they suffer and have illusions, they remain in the cycle of rebirth (Getz, 2003, 2:760; PDB, s.v. “sattva”). In general, enlightened beings in the four categories

律<sup>89</sup> (Vinaya in Ten Recitations) view various spirits such as the mountain spirit (*shanshen* 山神), the tree spirit (*shushen* 樹神), the river spirit (*heshen* 河神), and so on, as sentient beings.<sup>90</sup> These spirits abide in trees and plants. Thus, it seems to be the spirits that are considered sentient beings, and not the trees and plants themselves.

The idea that all sentient beings have buddha-nature, or *zhongsheng jieyou foxing* 眾生皆有佛性, appears repeatedly in the MMPS. The question is: What is the definition of “sentient beings” in the MMPS? In Dharmakṣema’s version of the MMPS, the idea that plants and inanimate things are able to possess life is criticized and deemed as a heterodox teaching as shown in the following:<sup>91</sup>

一切穀米草木之類皆有壽命。佛說是已便入涅槃。如是說者即是魔說。<sup>92</sup>

“Categories associated with all grains, rice, grasses and trees have life-destiny,<sup>93</sup> and the Buddha entered *nirvāṇa* after saying this.” If a

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are also considered to be sentient beings (Getz, 2003, 2:760).

<sup>89</sup> It is a Vinaya text of the Sarvāstivāda school.

<sup>90</sup> 眾生者。謂樹神泉神河神舍神交道神市神都道神蚊虻蛄蜺蚨蝶噉麻蟲蠹蟲蟻子。是眾生以草木為舍, T23.1435.75a23–75a26. Another Vinaya text, *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (Sifen lü 四分律, Vinaya of the Four Categories) also mentions a tree spirit that interacts with monks (See T22.1428.832b15–832c1; T22.1428.713a9–713a18; T22.1428.584.a24–584a28; T22.1428.785c28–786a10). Other than Vinaya texts, tree spirits and other nature spirits are also mentioned in Buddhist sūtras, such as the *Dīrghāgama* (Chang ahan jing 長阿含經, Longer Āgama-Sūtra) (T1.1.29a25–29a29), the *Mādhyamāgama* (Zhong ahan jing 中阿含經, Middle Length Āgama-Sūtra) (T1.26.711c4–711c16; T1.26.711c16–712a10), the *Ekōttarāgama-Sūtra* (Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含經) (T2.125.621b15–621b29; T2.125.683a7–683a13; T2.125.721c7–721c16; T2.125.726c23–727a2; T2.125.814b27–814c7), the MMPS (T12.374.415a12–415a16; T12.374.602a13–602a18), and others.

<sup>91</sup> Schmithausen provides more discussion and examples on this point (Schmithausen, 2009, pp. 113–15).

<sup>92</sup> T12.374.408c29–409a1.

<sup>93</sup> I thank Dr. Wendi Adamek for the suggestion. The translation of *shouming* 壽命 as “life-destiny” represents a meaning that something or someone not only have life, but also destiny that is generated by karma (or karmic destiny), and the idea that insentient things have life-destiny is unacceptable in Buddhist teaching in this context as presented in this passage.

person says that the World-Honoured One has said this (the statement), it is spoken by Māra.

And,

穀米草木無命無我。非眾生數。若有能作如是說者。是我弟子。<sup>94</sup>

“Grains, rice, grasses and trees have no destiny<sup>95</sup> and no self. They are not included among sentient beings.” If a person says that the World-Honoured One has said this (the statement), [the one] is considered my disciple.

And,

若有說言聽著摩訶楞伽。一切種子悉聽貯畜。草木之屬皆有壽命。佛說是已便入涅槃。若有經律作是說者。當知即是魔之所說。<sup>96</sup>

If there is [someone who] preaches, speaks, hears, or writes that in the *Mahā-Laṅkā[vatārasūtra]*, [it states,] “All kinds of seeds are permitted to be stored, and all kinds of grasses and trees have life-destiny. The Buddha said so and then entered *nirvāṇa*.” If there is a sūtra or vinaya that says this, it should be known that it is spoken by Māra.

These three passages clearly state that plants (grasses and trees) and crops do not have destiny, or *ming* 命. The proposition of the MMPS is that the idea of plants and crops having destiny is unacceptable in Buddhist teaching. Other than plants and crops, inanimate things are also excluded from sentient beings as shown in the following:

儲畜種子草木有命。...若言世尊作如是說。當知是為外道眷屬。非我弟子。...我說四大無有壽命。若有經律作是說者。是名佛說。若有隨順佛所說者。當知是等真我弟子。若有不隨佛所說者。是魔眷屬。<sup>97</sup>

“[The Buddha] has permitted the storing up of seeds. Grasses and trees

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<sup>94</sup> T12.374.409a8–409a9.

<sup>95</sup> Similar to footnote 93.

<sup>96</sup> T12.374.406a23–406a25.

<sup>97</sup> T12.374.406a28–406b5.

have destiny....” If [a person] says that the World-Honoured One has said this, [one] should know that such [a person] is the kindred of the heretics and not my disciple.... I say that the four great elements do not have life-destiny. Should any sūtra or vinaya say thus, such is what the Buddha has said. Any person who acts in accordance with the word of the Buddha is, one should know, my disciple. Any person who does not follow the word of the Buddha is a kindred of Māra.

Grasses and trees and the four great elements,<sup>98</sup> according to the passage, do not have life-destiny, or *shouming* 壽命, and this is one of the reasons that grasses and trees are to be considered as distinct from sentient beings. Since plants, crops, and the four great elements do not possess life-destiny as mentioned in the MMPS, inanimate things and plants, according to the MMPS, are not considered living beings. Based on the definition of sentient beings mentioned earlier, i.e., Getz’s definition, sentient beings are defined as living, conscious beings. Thus, the definition of sentient beings, or “all sentient beings,” in Dharmakṣema’s version of the MMPS does not include insentient things such as grasses, plants, and earth elements, since they do not have a life-destiny.<sup>99</sup> This exclusion is consistent with Chapter 37 of the MMPS, in which, as mentioned above, insentient things such as walls, earthenware, and stones are excluded from buddha-nature. The

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<sup>98</sup> The four great elements are earth, water, fire, and wind, and are considered to be inorganic.

<sup>99</sup> Statements referring to “all sentient beings” in the MMPS such as T12.374.407b27; T12.375.648b22; T12.374.423c1; T12.374.423c12; T12.374.428b21–428b23; T12.374.465c18; T12.374.554b15; T12.374.557a7; T12.374.559b19; T12.374.559b28; T12.374.512b18; T12.374.516c8; T12.374.517a7; T12.374.537.2; T12.374.538a27; and T12.374.539b11 demonstrate that the phrase “all sentient beings” describes living beings who possess three poisons, five aggregates/*skandha*, the twelve links of dependant origination, consciousness, and mind. Insects are included. These elements cause living beings to remain in the cycle of rebirth in the realms of gods, humans, *asuras*, animals, hungry ghosts, and hellish beings. These livings have capacity to have karmic destiny. It seems that plants are not physically included in the field of sentient beings, or what is called “all sentient beings,” in Dharmakṣema’s version of the MMPS.



statement in Chapter 37 of the MMPS shows that inanimate things are insentient things, and they are not, and do not possess buddha-nature.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the legitimacy that insentient things have buddha-nature is not granted in the MMPS.

The idea that insentient things have buddha-nature is not supported by either *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism or the MMPS. However, the idea is a feature of East Asian Buddhism. The definition of “sentient beings” in both Indian and East Asian Buddhism does not include plants and inanimate things as well. Since inanimate things and plants are still considered insentient things, how can they be thought to possess buddha-nature? As I will show in Chapters 3 and 4, Jizang and Zhanran turned to Chinese thought to find a solution to deal with this problem. They incorporated Chinese thought into their definition and interpretation of the term sentient beings, reinterpretation of buddha-nature, and models of their arguments.

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<sup>100</sup> This statement is ambiguous because it does not clearly state the exclusion of insentient things from the aspect of *you foxing* 有佛性 (i.e., having/possessing buddha-nature, the possession of buddha-nature), i.e., insentient things are unable to possess buddha-nature, or of *shi foxing* 是佛性 (is buddha-nature. the definition of buddha-nature), i.e., insentient things cannot be considered as having buddha-nature. This ambiguity stems from the fact that the statement is not taken from the original version of the MMPS. It is taken from the Chinese translation. The only way to be sure of the original meaning of the statement would be to read a Sanskrit version of the MMPS. Unfortunately, it is hard to determine the original meaning of the statement because only a few fragments of a Sanskrit version of the MMPS have been discovered (Habata, 2009, p. 551; Nakamura, 2007, p. 212; Sueki, 1990, p. 11; Takasaki, 1971, p. 1024).

## 6. Chapter summaries

### Chapter 1

The project suggests that the reinterpretation of buddha-nature to include insentient things is based on dao-nature/the nature of the Dao.<sup>101</sup> The discussion of the nature of the Dao is a discussion of the concept of nature (*xing*) itself. Therefore, Chapter 1 will investigate the discussion of nature in Chinese philosophy from ancient China to the time of *xuanxue* 玄學 (Arcane Study). A contemporary Chinese philosopher, Lao Siguang 勞思光 (1927–2012 A.D.), divided his discussion of (human) nature in Chinese philosophy into two distinct systems: the nature of the mind, or *xinxing lun* 心性論 and ontology, or *benti lun* 本體論.<sup>102</sup> In his view, Confucianism represents the former, and Daoism the latter. My discussion of nature is based on Lao's model. This project suggests that the idea of the buddha-nature of insentient things in Chinese Buddhism is consistent with the ontology of Daoism. In particular, Arcane Study is a critical intellectual movement that brought a new perspective to the interpretation of Daoism. The metaphysical, ontological

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<sup>101</sup> The term dao-nature does not appear in works associated with Arcane Study, a philosophical movement characterized by the metaphysical analysis of the Dao/essence dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. As this project will demonstrate in Chapter 2, this term began to appear in practical/religious Daoism. However, this does not mean that the discussion of “dao-nature” did not exist in Arcane Study. It appeared before dao-nature in practical Daoism. Scholars of Arcane Study discussed the nature of the Dao, but they did not use the term dao-nature in their discussion. The nature of the Dao in Arcane Study refers to universal principle in ontology. The concept of dao-nature in practical Daoism as borrowed from the concept of buddha-nature is a discussion of soteriology. Although the nature of the Dao (ontology) and dao-nature (soteriology) are different perspectives, both refer to spontaneity. Through this study, the terms dao-nature and “the nature of the Dao” are used interchangeably to refer to spontaneity.

<sup>102</sup> Lao, 2010, p. 87.

discussion by scholars of Arcane Study significantly influenced later Daoists and Chinese Buddhist exegetes. I will suggest that the interpretation of buddha-nature and the discussion of insentient things having buddha-nature by Jizang and Zhanran were based on the discussion of the nature of the Dao (spontaneity) from Arcane Study, rather than the Dao itself.

## **Chapter 2**

The concept of buddha-nature is an exploration of the doctrine of salvation, known as soteriology. Aside from the developments within Buddhism itself, religious Daoists borrowed the concept of buddha-nature from Chinese Buddhism to form the soteriological concept of dao-nature from the time of the Northern and the Southern dynasties to the Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.). The term dao-nature first appeared in religious Daoism. Dao-nature became a soteriological topic that was discussed in some key medieval Daoist texts.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the discussion of buddha-nature not only had profound effects on Buddhism in East Asia, but also attracted attention from other religions such as Daoism.

However, evidence will be offered in Chapter 2 to illustrate that the idea that insentient things have dao-nature in the ontological perspective is inherited from Daoism,

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<sup>103</sup> See footnote 2.

rather than from the Buddhist tradition. This argument differs from some contemporary claims that the idea of insentient things having dao-nature was inherited from Chinese Buddhism, especially from Jizang. Textual investigation rearranges the intellectual chronology between buddha-nature and dao-nature as related to the concept of insentient things having buddha/dao-nature.

### **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 closely examines Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature. The question for this chapter is: In what way did Jizang's argument allow for grasses and trees to have buddha-nature? This examination will demonstrate that Jizang's interpretation of buddha-nature is based on the discussion of dao-nature found in Daoist texts of the time. In addition, the method applied in Jizang's assertion incorporates concepts formulated in the works of Arcane Study thinkers.

### **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 examines another Chinese medieval Buddhist exegete, Zhanran, who stated that insentient things have buddha-nature. Both Zhanran's and Jizang's interpretations of buddha-nature are based on the discussion of dao-nature. However, the method that Zhanran applied in his argument is different from Jizang's model. Therefore, this chapter

will examine how Zhanran incorporated Chinese indigenous thought to establish his assertion that insentient things were able to have buddha-nature.

This study, with its focus on Daoist materials, will provide a new perspective on the concept of buddha-nature from an approach that reflects Chinese culture and philosophical developments in medieval China. It will demonstrate the encounter and interaction of two religious traditions in China. As regards syncretism in the study of religion, this research will demonstrate how two different religious ideas, originally from two religions in different cultures, were able to be assimilated.

## **Chapter 1: An Examination of the Relationship between Human Nature and the Nature of Inanimate Things in Chinese Thought**

As this project suggests and as will be demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, the Buddhist exegetes Jizang 吉藏 (549–623 A.D.) and Zhanran 湛然 (711–782 A.D.) took an ontological view when they asserted that insentient things had buddha-nature. In this ontological perspective, buddha-nature is understood and interpreted as universal nature. However, as mentioned in the Introduction, the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature is not given legitimacy in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism or in the MMPS. When some medieval Chinese Buddhist thinkers, including Jizang and Zhanran, used the term *foxing* 佛性 (buddha-nature), they were consciously or unconsciously drawing on different nuances of the discussion of *xing* 性 (nature) from Indian Buddhist works and the MMPS. This chapter suggests that the discussion of nature in non-Buddhist Chinese thought also served as a source for Chinese Buddhist exegetes to develop their arguments to the effect that insentient things had buddha-nature. Therefore, this chapter will explore the discussion of nature in classical and medieval

Chinese thought and examine its unique contribution to the discussion of (buddha-) nature in Chinese Buddhism.

The approach to nature in Chinese thought is not merely philosophical or metaphysical; rather, it also involves a view of the contemplation of the whole of one's personal experience.<sup>1</sup> The common aspects of the worldview of pre-modern Chinese thought are that people seek harmonious relationships with others in this world, and they also seek spiritual freedom, or *jingshen ziyou* 精神自由, by transcending the self to attain unification with a transcendent being or state. This being does not have to be anthropomorphic or a creator. To attain spiritual freedom, Chinese philosophers such as Mencius 孟子 (371–289 B.C.E.) and Zhuangzi 莊子 (c. 360 B.C.E.) began with a view of human nature that offered people insights into the nature of the self. This gave rise to two questions:

- What is human nature?
- In order to attain liberation and spiritual freedom, does human nature have to be the same as that of inanimate things?

As mentioned in the Introduction, the contemporary Chinese philosopher, Lao Siguang 勞思光, divided his discussion of human nature into two distinct systems: the nature of the mind, or *xinxing lun* 心性論, and ontology, or *benti lun* 本體論.<sup>2</sup> In his view, Confucianism represents the former, and Daoism the latter. The answer to the

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<sup>1</sup> Tateno, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Lao, 2010, p. 87.

questions above is distinct in these two philosophical systems. This chapter will demonstrate that, to become an ideal man (*shengren* 聖人 [sage] and *junzi* 君子 [gentleman] in Confucianism, and *zhenren* 真人 [true man]<sup>3</sup> in Daoism), the unity of human nature with the nature of inanimate things is required in Daoist thought, but not in Confucianism, and that this affected how “buddha-nature” was understood. It is not easy to discuss the nature of human beings in sequential lineage of each time period in this chapter because of the limit of space of this dissertation. This chapter only focuses on significant views of the nature of human beings of Confucianism and Daoism as well as the main idea of the nature of Arcane Study. The discussion of nature of Arcane Study is significant because, as it will be shown in the following chapters, its discussion bears some similarities to Jizang’s and Zhanran’s discussions of universal buddha-nature.

## **1. The discussion of *xing* 性 in terms of the nature of mind before**

### **Arcane Study**

Human nature was not emphasized in Confucius’ (552–479 B.C.E.) teachings as found in the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects).<sup>4</sup> Confucius’ view is that the ideal man is a *junzi*,

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<sup>3</sup> True man is a Daoist sage. Another term for the Daoist sage, according to Burton Watson, is the Perfect Man or the Holy Man. They are synonymous (Watson, 2013, p. 42).

<sup>4</sup> The work is composed of short pieces of dialogue most frequently conducted by Confucius and his disciples, and the main value of the work is that of providing insight into the behaviour and daily life of Confucius and his disciples (Cheng, 1993, p. 313).



who behaves in accordance with propriety/rituals/rites/*li* 禮. His discussion emphasizes the propriety of a person's gentlemanly behaviour. In the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.E.), the moral value of human life attracted Confucius' attention and he oriented his teachings principally towards human behaviour and morality. The word *xing* (nature) appears only twice in the *Lunyu*. The first mention occurs in the chapter “Yanghuo” 陽貨: “The Master said, ‘By nature people are similar; they diverge as the result of practice’”<sup>5</sup> 子曰:性相近,習相遠.<sup>6</sup> Confucius only mentioned these similarities of human nature, but did not elaborate further on this idea. The second mention is in the chapter “Gong yechang” 公冶長:

子貢曰:夫子之文章,可得而聞也。夫子之言性與天道,不可得而聞也。<sup>7</sup>

Zigong said, “The Master's cultural brilliance is something that is readily heard about, whereas one does not get to hear the Master expounding upon the subjects of human nature or the Way of Heaven.”<sup>8</sup>

This statement comes not directly from Confucius, but from his disciple, Zigong 子貢.<sup>9</sup>

From Zigong's statement, we learn that Confucius did not expand on human nature in detail. This was because he saw that the decline of the state was caused by losing sight of the Way (*dao* 道). The restoration of the Way would be accomplished through the moral

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<sup>5</sup> Slingerland, 2006, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Lunyu*, 17:2.

<sup>7</sup> *Lunyu*, 5:13.

<sup>8</sup> Slingerland, 2006, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Zigong saw that his mission was to serve Heaven by helping to reinvigorate this “Way” in the period of decline (Slingerland, 2006, p. xix).

path of the true human being and endorsed by Heaven.<sup>10</sup> As I will show later, some Confucian thinkers such as Mencius, Xunzi 荀子 (313–238 B.C.E.), and Gaozi 告子<sup>11</sup>, based on Confucius’ teachings of human morality as the propriety of humans’ gentlemanly behaviour, developed widely divergent philosophical views on the issue of human nature. Mencius and Xunzi also claimed that the way that serves humans to understand the true reality and become the ideal man is the way of moral principles.

Heaven is the source of human nature as described in the beginning of the “Zhongyong” 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean),<sup>12</sup> which reads: “What Heaven has conferred

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<sup>10</sup> Heaven is an important notion in Chinese thought. It was conceived as the sky, the supreme deity, and the residence of the deity in the Western Zhou dynasty (1050–771 B.C.E.) (Tseng, 2011, p. 3). Heaven was the mighty force that established the political order of the human world (Tseng, 2011, p. 17). People of the Western Zhou believed that the Shang (ca. 1600–1045 B.C.E.) was succeeded by the Western Zhou due to the ruthlessness of the Shang King. Heaven took back the ruling power from the Shang King and bestowed the power to Zhou King (Emperor Wu 武王) to rule and assure the world in order. People of the Western Zhou dynasty believed that the power transmission and succession of dynasty was decided by Heaven. Thus, they began to construct the notion of the mandate of Heaven to ensure the reign of the Zhou dynasty after its conquest of the Shang (Tseng, 2011, p. 89). As shown by Lillian Tseng, a song in the *Book of Odes* shows that once Heaven granted the mandate to a ruler, “it would also send down many ‘blessings’ (*fu* 福), such as health and prosperity, to fortify the mandate” (As for the song, see Tseng, 2011, p. 89). Tseng also points out that “Bronze inscriptions confirm the prevalence of the idea that Heaven’s blessings manifested its mandate in the Western Zhou” (Tseng, 2011, p. 89). The Zhou king was believed to be the only mediator between Heaven and the human world (Tseng, 2011, p. 3). However, the political situation changed in the Eastern Zhou (770–256 B.C.E.) dynasty. The Eastern Zhou dynasty was in turmoil. Some individuals started to ponder the relationship between humans, the world, and Heaven. They were searching for some ways to be able to communicate with Heaven. Tseng gave an example that Qu Yuan 屈原 composed *Heavenly Questions* showing that individuals during this period of turmoil were overwhelmed by the idea of communicating with Heaven (Tseng, 2011, p. 235). Confucius and some Confucian scholars were living in this unstable period. Confucius intended to restore the Way by emphasizing human morality because it is human morality that leads humans to be able to know Heaven and to communicate with Heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Gaozi lived in the same period as Mencius; his conversation with Mencius was collected in a chapter entitled “Gaozi” in the *Mencius*.

<sup>12</sup> “Zhongyong” is a section of the *Liji*, which, according to Riegel, “is a ritual’s anthology of ancient usages, prescriptions, definitions and anecdotes (Riegel, 1993, p. 293). The *Liji* contains forty nine sections, but all sections did not originate at the same time or in the same scholastic context, and the date of each section and its provenance are still controversial (Riegel, 1993, p. 293). “Zhongyong” is a section that explains the teachings of Zisi 子思 (or Kongji 孔伋, 492–431 B.C.E.), who was Confucius’ grandson (Riegel, 1993, p. 296).

is called nature” 天命之謂性。<sup>13</sup> Heaven, as the contemporary Chinese philosopher, Cheng Zhongying 成中英 describes, “was to be seen and understood in terms of how things take place, how things act as they do, and how things are conditioned.”<sup>14</sup> In terms of humans, since nature is conferred by Heaven, Heaven, as the true reality of humans, can be understood inwardly from realizing someone’s internal nature, or human nature.

Human nature was proclaimed as good by Mencius, evil by Xunzi, and neutral by Gaozi. Although they possessed divergent positions on human nature, they all agreed that acquired learning, *xue* 學 is a way to lead people to behave morally and to attain a realization of Heaven. This acquired nature is seen as a second, or moral, nature, as differentiated from intrinsic nature,<sup>15</sup> which is biological. These two types of nature are shown in the second part of the chapter “Jinxin” 盡心 (Mind fulfillment) of the *Mencius*:

口之於味也，目之於色也，耳之於聲也，鼻之於臭也，四肢之於安佚也，性也，有命焉，君子不謂性也。仁之於父子也，義之於君臣也，禮之於賓主也，智之於賢者也，聖人之於天道也，命也，有性焉，君子不謂命也。<sup>16</sup>

The way the mouth is disposed towards taste, the eye towards colour, the ear towards sound, the nose towards smell, and the four limbs towards ease is human nature, yet therein also lies the Decree. That is why the gentleman does not ascribe it to nature. The way benevolence pertains to the relation between father and son, duty to the relation between prince and

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<sup>13</sup> *Liji* 禮記, *Zhongyong*, 1; *Zhongguo gudai zhexue shi* 2006, pp. 53–4; Xu, 2007, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> Cheng, 2011c, p. 440.

<sup>15</sup> As it will be shown later, moral nature is also intrinsic according to Mencius.

<sup>16</sup> *Mencius*, 7:B:24.

subject, rites to the relation between guest and host, wisdom to the good and wise man, the sage to the way of Heaven, is the Decree; but therein also lies human nature. That is why the gentleman does not ascribe it to Decree.<sup>17</sup>

The intrinsic or biological nature refers to biological parts of body such as the mouth, eyes, ears, nose and the four limbs. The biological parts correspond to the senses of taste, colour, sound, smell and touch. These senses involve appetites, whereas spiritual life refers to morality. Other than biological nature, humans also possess another nature, which is moral nature. The moral nature refers to the four virtues, which are: benevolence (*ren* 仁), duty/righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety/rituals/rites (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). Morality is emphasized in Mencius' work because it is true nature that leads humans to become sages and fulfill the way of Heaven. Biological, intrinsic nature is what human beings share with other living creatures, but moral nature is what distinguishes people from other creatures.<sup>18</sup> Mencius did not imply that people share an intrinsic, biological nature with inanimate things. The distinct, innate moral nature of humans is described in the first section of the chapter "Gaozi:"

仁義禮智，非由外鑠我也，我固有之也，弗思耳矣。<sup>19</sup>

Benevolence, dutifulness, observance of the rites, and wisdom do not give me a lustre from the outside; they are in me originally. Only this has never dawned on me.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Graham, 1990, pp. 38–9.

<sup>19</sup> *Mencius*, 6:A:6.

<sup>20</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 125.

Moral nature refers to benevolence, duty, propriety and wisdom. According to Mencius, human intrinsic nature is also endowed with morality. Thus, in Mencius' view, there are two types of intrinsic nature: biological and moral. The enhancement of our moral nature leads people to know Heaven as described in the first section of the chapter "Jinxin:"

盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。存其心，養其性，所以事天也。<sup>21</sup>

For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. The retention of his heart and the nurturing of his nature are the means by which he serves Heaven.<sup>22</sup>

To know Heaven is to realize someone's nature through full realization of one's moral nature/heart (or mind). This full realization of self through one's moral heart/nature not only gives a person access to Heaven but also leads to an epistemological perception that is indifferent to the self and all things in the world, as Mencius describes in the same section:

萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。<sup>23</sup>

All the ten thousand things are there in me. There is no greater joy for me than to find, on self-examination, that I am true to myself. Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Mencius*, 7:A:1.

<sup>22</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 145.

<sup>23</sup> *Mencius*, 7:A:4.

<sup>24</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 146.

A sage is not entirely segregated from others, but all things are embraced within the sage's mind. Mencius' statement, "all the ten thousand things are there in me" 萬物皆備於我矣, is an epistemological view that the sage is able to transcend heart and mind beyond all discrimination and embrace all varieties within his mind. This is benevolence, in his view.

Another Confucian thinker, Gaozi, proclaims human nature to be neutral. Gaozi discusses the biological and acquired natures with Mencius in the following passage:

告子曰：「生之謂性。」孟子曰：「生之謂性也，猶白之謂白與？」  
曰：「然。」「白羽之白也，猶白雪之白；白雪之白，猶白玉之白與？」  
曰：「然。」「然則犬之性，猶牛之性；牛之性，猶人之性與？」<sup>25</sup>

Gaozi asked, "Is that which is inborn what is meant by 'nature'?"

"Is that," said Mencius, "the same as 'white is what is meant by 'white'?"

"Yes."

"Is the whiteness of white feathers the same as the whiteness of white snow and the whiteness of white snow the same as the whiteness of white jade?"

"Yes."

"In that case, is the nature of a hound the same as the nature of an ox and the nature of an ox the same as the nature of a man?"<sup>26</sup>

And in the next passage:

告子曰：「食色，性也。仁，內也，非外也；義，外也，非內也。」<sup>27</sup>

Gaozi said, "Appetite for food and sex is nature. Benevolence is internal, not external; rightness is external, not internal."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Mencius*, 6:A:3.

<sup>26</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> *Mencius*, 6:A:4.

According to Gaozi, nature exists when life, or *sheng* 生, comes into existence.<sup>29</sup>

“Inborn” nature contains the appetites for food and sex common to both man and animals.<sup>30</sup> However, when Mencius asked if the nature of man was the same as the nature of other animals, Gaozi realized a distinction between man and animals: humans possessed moral control over inborn nature.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, peoples’ inborn nature is not different from that of other creatures, but they also possess other characteristics<sup>32</sup> that make them distinct. Gaozi did not clearly define whether this distinct nature of humans was moral nature.

Xunzi proclaims human nature to be evil, a philosophical view of human nature wholly opposite to that of Mencius. Xunzi puts greater emphasis on propriety (*li*) because he believes that human nature could become good by observing propriety. Human nature is bestowed by Heaven: “As for *xing*, it is bestowed by Heaven” 性者，天之就也。<sup>33</sup> In addition, human beings are superior to other beings, as shown in the chapter “Wangzhi” 王制 (The regulations and rules of the king):

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<sup>28</sup> Lau, 2003, p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Graham translates the word *sheng* as “the living process” instead of “inborn,” Graham, 1990, pp. 45–6.

<sup>30</sup> Graham, 1990, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Graham, 1990, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> I use “human characteristics” instead of “natural characteristics” based on Graham’s point that Gaozi recognizes man’s uniqueness. He finds uniqueness not in his nature but in his moral control over nature. Therefore, I am not sure if benevolence and righteousness, in Gaozi’s perspective, are included in human nature or not. So, I use the word “characteristic” to represent moral principles, such as benevolence and righteousness.

<sup>33</sup> *Xunzi*, 23:4.

水火有氣而無生，草木有生而無知，禽獸有知而無義，人有氣有生有知，亦且有義，故最為天下貴也。<sup>34</sup>

Water and fire have *qi* (force) but are not alive. Grasses and trees are alive but have no consciousness. Animals have knowing but no righteousness. Human beings have *qi*, life, knowing, and righteousness. Therefore, this is the reason that [humans] are considered the most valuable [beings] in the world.

Humans are distinct from, and superior to, other entities, both animate and inanimate, because humans not only possess the same fundamental elements as other entities but also possess moral qualities, such as righteousness. Preserving life in health and longevity, in Xunzi's point of view, is determined by humans' behaviour and actions as responses to Heaven. This is shown in the chapter "Tianlun" 天論 (A discussion of Heaven):

天行有常，不為堯存，不為桀亡。應之以治則吉，應之以亂則凶。…養備而動時，則天不能病；脩道而不貳，則天不能禍。…養略而動罕，則天不能使之全；倍道而妄行，則天不能使之吉。…故明於天人之分，則可謂至人矣。<sup>35</sup>

Nature (*tian* 天, Heaven)<sup>36</sup> operates with constant regularity. It does not exist for the sake of (sage-emperor) Yao, nor does it cease to exist because of (wicked king) Jie. Respond to it with peace and order, and good fortune will result. Respond to it with disorder, and disaster will follow. . . . If people's nourishment is sufficient and their labor in keeping with the seasons, then Nature cannot inflict sickness. If the Way is cultivated without deviation, then Nature cannot cause misfortune . . . If there is meagre nourishment and little work, then Nature cannot enable the people

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<sup>34</sup> *Xunzi*, 9:19.

<sup>35</sup> *Xunzi*, 17:1.

<sup>36</sup> Chan translates *tian* 天 as Nature in a naturalistic sense rather than in the sense of Heaven. He thinks that the concept of Heaven in Xunzi's perspective is closer to Daoism than to the perspectives of Confucius and Mencius (Chan, 1973, p. 117).



to be preserved. If people violate the Way and act foolishly, then Nature cannot give them good fortune . . . Therefore, one who understands the distinctive functions of Heaven and man may be called a perfect man.<sup>37</sup>

Humans are able to recognize their relationship with Heaven and are able to act morally.

They are in a reciprocal relationship with Heaven. A good life results from moral behaviour and actions. Therefore, humans are superior to other creatures.

As Confucian thinkers, Mencius, Gaozi and Xunzi place humans in a superior position to other creatures because mind enables them to live morally. Although they each have distinct positions on human nature, they share the view that human nature is of two types: the first is the intrinsic, biological nature that humans share with other beings. The other is moral nature, which makes humans distinct from other beings. In Mencius' view, this moral nature is considered intrinsic, and human nature is good. Gaozi and Xunzi do not consider intrinsic nature to be good, but, rather, neutral and/or evil. However, in their view, moral nature can be acquired through learning. Regardless of whether intrinsic nature is good, neutral or evil, the three Confucian thinkers agree that people will attain sagehood while they are in concordance with Heaven through their moral nature. The standard nature in the Confucian perspective is moral nature. The unity of human nature with the natures of non-human entities is not required in Confucianism, because it is not required that humans attain sagehood.

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<sup>37</sup> Chan, 1973, pp. 116–17.

The approach to human nature in Confucianism refers to mind and moral nature. Mind is emphasized because it enables human beings to understand Heaven through moral principles. The nature of mind as human nature refers to moral nature and moral principle. Principle is the way that leads human beings to understand Heaven, fulfil human nature, and become sages. Also, human nature as moral nature is represented in terms of moral principles. Human nature in terms of principle is parallel to that of the position taken by our Buddhist thinkers, who asserted that insentient things were able to possess buddha-nature. As I will show in Chapters 3 and 4, Jizang and Zhanran interpreted buddha-nature in terms of principle. Although moral principle in the Confucian perspective is only applied to humans and is not universal,<sup>38</sup> the discussion of human nature in Confucianism and of buddha-nature by Jizang and Zhanran share the common view that human nature/buddha nature in these two traditions can be rendered by means of “principle.”

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<sup>38</sup> Although in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), a Confucian scholar, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 195–105 B.C.E.; traditionally 179–104 B.C.E.) linked human capacity to a cosmological dimension, such as popularized the processes of the interaction between humans and Nature in terms of the system of the “*yinyang* five phases theory” (*yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行), to make the process of moral education a significant factor in cosmic harmony, but moral education made inchoate conditions of human nature be transformed into something worthwhile (Ames, 2011a, p.239). In Dong’s perspective, human intrinsic nature is neutral (性者，天質之樸也) (see section “*shixing*” 實性 in the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 in CTP). This intrinsic nature is not the nature to become a sage as well as in correspondence to Heaven, which is the source of human beings, but moral nature through moral education does (性雖出善，而性未可謂善也...天所為，有所至而止。止之內謂之天，止之外謂之王教。王教在性外，而性不得不遂。故曰性有善質，而未能為善也。...以性為善，此皆聖人所繼天而進也，非情性質樸之能至也...善，教訓之所然也，非質樸之所能至也，故不謂性。性者宜知名矣，無所待而起，生而所自有也。善所自有，則教訓已非性也。...善者，王教之化也) (section “*shixing*” 實性 in the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 in CTP). Therefore, Dong as a Confucian scholar still emphasized that moral nature, but not neutral, intrinsic nature, as the nature to become a sage.

## 2. The discussion of *xing* in terms of ontology

### 2.1 The discussion of *xing* in terms of Daoist ontology before Arcane Study

*Xuanxue* 玄學 (Arcane Study), which will be discussed in the next section, describes (human) nature as *ziran* 自然 (a term variously translated as spontaneity, things as they are,<sup>39</sup> natural, “That-which-is-of-itself-what-it-is”<sup>40</sup>). The discussion of human nature in reference to spontaneity in Arcane Study is based on a statement found in the *Daode jing*: “Man takes his models from Earth; Earth takes its models from Heaven; Heaven takes its models from the Dao; and the Dao takes its models from the Natural (spontaneity)”<sup>41</sup> 人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。<sup>42</sup> However, this statement identifies neither the nature of the Dao nor human nature as spontaneity. In fact, the word *xing* does not appear in the *Daode jing*.<sup>43</sup> The discussion of the Dao in the *Daode jing* is not a metaphysical discussion.<sup>44</sup> Rather, the orientation of the *Daode jing* is more social and political.<sup>45</sup> The *Daode jing* deals with the relationship between the Dao and the world (society).<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the statement above is not part of a metaphysical discussion. It only states that the Dao takes spontaneity as a model. It does not state that the nature of

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<sup>39</sup> Robinet, 1999, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> Wagner translates *ziran* as “That-which-is-of-itself-what-it-is” (Wagner, 2003, p. 203).

<sup>41</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 96.

<sup>42</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 25.

<sup>43</sup> Henricks, 1999, p. 162.

<sup>44</sup> Robinet points out that Chad Hansen agrees with A. G. Graham that the Dao of the *Daode jing* is not a metaphysical entity (Robinet, 1999, p. 128).

<sup>45</sup> Kirkland, 2005, p. 43.

<sup>46</sup> Chan, 1991, pp. 123–24.

the Dao is spontaneity. Spontaneity refers to the discussion of the function of the Dao. The ultimate achievement of harmony in the state and in the world requires following the way that the Dao accomplishes itself, and that way is spontaneity. Thus, the functioning and regulation of the world are ascribed to spontaneity as a principle or pattern, or one might say a rule, law or way. In addition, the statement “the Dao takes its models from spontaneity” indicates that the Dao and spontaneity refer to two separate things; the Dao is not equivalent to spontaneity, but it takes spontaneity as a model. In terms of attaining spiritual freedom, to be unified with the Dao is to follow spontaneity. Although the statement above does not state the nature of the Dao as spontaneity, it provides some indication that the standard model that humans should follow is a universal one which applies to the Dao, to humans, and to all things in the world. The scholars of Arcane Study whom will be discussed in the next section reinterpreted the above statement and included it in their discussion of human nature.

The term *xing* and some discussion of it appear in the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>47</sup> *Xing* in the *Zhuangzi* primarily refers to human nature, as here: “[People] might revert to their true

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<sup>47</sup> “By gathering [his] nature into a unity” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 壹其性 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 48:19:11); “embodying [the instincts of his] nature and embracing [his] spirit” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 體性抱神 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 31:12:68); “That shape was the body preserving in it the spirit, and each had its peculiar manifestation, which we call its Nature. When the Nature has been cultivated, it returns to its proper character; and when that has been fully reached, there is the same condition as at the Beginning” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 形體保神，各有儀則，謂之性。性修反德，德至同於初 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 30:12:39); “After this the people began to be perplexed and disordered, and had no way by which they might return to their true nature, and bring back their original condition” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 無以反其性情而復其初 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 41:16:10–1); “If the nature of the self as it is” (Legge’s translation in

nature, and bring back their original condition” 無以反其性情而復其初。<sup>48</sup> The discussion of *xing* in the *Zhuangzi* deals with human nature and human life<sup>49</sup> because the *Zhuangzi* emphasizes empirical speculation about the world.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, *xing* in the *Zhuangzi* is not a metaphysical discussion on the nature of the Dao. It is a discussion of human nature and how people attain spiritual freedom. Therefore, the discussion of nature in the *Zhuangzi* is not about the nature of the Dao, but about human nature.

In the Daoist perspective, including the *Zhuangzi*, the cultivation of human nature is in a “reverse” (*fan* 返) direction, reverting to the origin, or beginning, (*fanqixing* 返其性,<sup>51</sup> or *fixing* 復性), instead of moving forward. This is different from the perspective of Confucian thinkers who encourage people to enhance moral nature by discipline, or by fulfilling their nature (*jinxing* 盡性).<sup>52</sup> In the Daoist perspective, mind is not a capacity that makes humans superior to or distinct from other entities. The inherent capacity of the

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CTP) 若性之自為 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 31:12:51); “not to lose the real character of the nature with which we are endowed” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 不失性命之情 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 21:8:8). There are more examples in the *Zhuangzi*.

<sup>48</sup> *Zhuangzi yinde*, 41:16:10–1. Other examples are shown in footnote 47.

<sup>49</sup> Moreover, *xing* in the context of humans in the *Zhuangzi* refers to human life, as described in the chapter “Mati” 馬蹄 of the *Zhuangzi*: “The people have a constant course of life proper to them; to clothe themselves by weaving and feed themselves by ploughing, which are called ‘sharing in the Virtue’: in unity to form no factions, which is named their ‘Heaven-given freedom’” (Graham, 2001, p. 11) 彼民有常性，織而衣，耕而食，是謂同德；一而不黨，命曰天放 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 23:9:7–8). *Xing* in this context refers to ideal human life, which is a plain and simple life. This life leads people to attain spiritual freedom (Meng, 1996, p. 50).

<sup>50</sup> Kohn, 2012, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Tang, 2004, p. 61; Robinet, 1999, p. 131.

<sup>52</sup> Tang, 2004, p. 54.

human mind enables people spiritually to transform the self.<sup>53</sup> However, all things, not only the human mind, possess the inherent capacity to fulfill their functions successfully.<sup>54</sup> Unlike in Confucianism, human thought and mind in the Daoist perspective are less emphasized because thoughts are generated by the same fundamental properties of all things in the universe.<sup>55</sup> These properties are *qi* 氣 (breath, life energy, vital energy, force) and *jing* 精 (vital essence) as described in the *Nei Ye* 內業<sup>56</sup>

(Inward Training, or Inner Cultivation):

精也者，氣之精也。氣〈道〉「導」乃生，生乃思，思乃知，知乃止矣。凡心之形：過知失生。<sup>57</sup>

The vital essence: it is the essence of the vital energy.  
When the vital energy is guided, it [the vital essence] is generated,  
But when it is generated, there is thought,  
When there is thought, there is knowledge,  
But when there is knowledge, then you must stop.  
Whenever the forms of the mind have excessive knowledge,

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<sup>53</sup> Graziani, 2011, 1:466.

<sup>54</sup> Graham, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Graziani, 2011, 1:469.

<sup>56</sup> It dates from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. (Robinet, 1997, p. 39). The text appeared before the two fundamental texts of Daoism, the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* (Roth, 1999, pp. 8–9; Kirkland, 2005, p. 52). Kirkland points out that the form and the content of the *Nei Ye* are more different from the *Daode jing* than they are from the *Zhuangzi*. The three texts differ in significant ways: the *Daode jing* emphasizes moral and political issues, while the *Zhuangzi* emphasizes epistemological issues, and the *Nei Ye* emphasizes bio-spiritual cultivation (Kirkland, 2005, p. 43). Roth thinks that the *Nei Ye* can be called “the original Dao” because it represents the earliest extant presentation of a mystical practice that appears in all the early sources of Daoist thought, including the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* (Roth, 1999, p. 2). The three texts share some ideas, such as the concept that one can live one’s life wisely only if one learns how to live in accordance with life’s unseen forces and subtle processes, and not on the basis of society’s more prosaic concerns (Kirkland, 2005, p. 59). Primarily, the *Nei Ye* provides information on inner cultivation in practice as well as in a cosmological view. Daoists of the later “religious” Daoism, or practical Daoism (as Robinet suggests), incorporate some cosmological ideas and techniques into their texts, in order to attain longevity through mystical practices (Roth, 1999, p. 8; Robinet, 1997, p. 39).

<sup>57</sup> Roth, 1999, p. 61.

You lose your vitality.<sup>58</sup>

*Jing* is another form of *qi*. It is highly refined and concentrated and is the subtle form of *qi*.<sup>59</sup> According to *Nei Ye*, human thoughts are generated by *jing*. *Jing* not only exists in human thoughts but also in myriad things described in the same text:

凡物之精，此則為生。下生五穀，上為列星。流於天地之間，謂之鬼神，藏於胸中，謂之聖人。<sup>60</sup>

The vital essence of all things—  
This is what makes life come into being:  
Below, it generates the five grains,  
Above, it brings about the constellated stars.  
When it flows in the interstices of Heaven and Earth,  
It is called “spiritual beings”;  
When it is stored up inside [a person’s] chest,  
It is called “sageliness.”<sup>61</sup>

Sages, ordinary people, grains, heaven and earth, etc., are undifferentiated because their lives are generated by *qi* and *jing* (refined *qi*), they only differ in the quality of *qi* and the location of *jing*. The difference between body and mind is determined by the quality and the fluidity of *qi* as described by Kohn: “thicker, slow moving *qi* appears as body, and fine, fast moving *qi* is subtle and appears as mind, and body and mind are composed of the same fundamental substance.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Roth, 1999, p. 60.

<sup>59</sup> Roth, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>60</sup> Roth, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> Kirkland, 2005, p. 43.

<sup>62</sup> Kohn, 2012, p. 21.

Similar to the *Nei Ye*, the idea that the lives of all things are generated by *qi* also appears in the *Zhuangzi*:<sup>63</sup>

人之生，氣之聚也。聚則為生，散則為死。…故萬物一也。<sup>64</sup>

Life is a concentration of the breath; when it concentrates itself, that is life, and when it disperses, that is death.<sup>65</sup> . . . Therefore, the ten thousand things are one.

Human life is generated by *qi* as concentration or dispersion. *Qi* is the fundamental substance that gives birth to the universe and all living beings, including plants, animals and humans<sup>66</sup> and which sustains the lives of all things. Thus, all things are able to transform, or *wuhua* 物化 (transformation of things, metamorphosis), from one form to another, from animal to inanimate, and vice versa. According to Chinese beliefs, *wuhua* is a system of metempsychosis. According to Doré, “[The] Chinese believe that soul is reincarnated and transformed to all various things including humans, animals, trees, plants (including vegetables and fruit), material objects (household articles), and minerals.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, as the contemporary Japanese sinologist, Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久, points out, the idea of the transformation of things, metempsychosis (*zhuansheng* 轉生) or reincarnation is a Chinese indigenous idea, but it is not the same as in Buddhism.<sup>68</sup> In

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<sup>63</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> *Zhuangzi yinde*, 58:22:11.

<sup>65</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 33.

<sup>66</sup> Graziani, 2011, 1:473.

<sup>67</sup> Doré, 1918, 5:XI, 5:717–35; Doré, 1914, 1:134–37. The idea of spirits metamorphosing into different objects is also shown in figures number 61–1, 61–2, 61–3, and 61–4 in Doré, 1914, 1:134–37.

<sup>68</sup> Ikeda, 2009. A detailed discussion of the transformation of things appears in Chapter 7 of Ikeda’s work.



Chinese thought, transformation takes place beyond the boundary of different species.

Animals are able to transform to become inanimate, and one example is given in Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*, “Dazong shi” 大宗師 (The teacher who is the ultimate ancestor).<sup>69</sup>

When Master Yü 子輿 was ill, Master Ci 子祀 went to ask him if he hated his illness and his body, and Master Yü said:

曰：「嗟乎！夫造物者，又將以予為此拘拘也！」子祀曰：「汝惡之乎？」  
曰：「亡，予何惡！浸假而化予之左臂以為雞，予因以求時夜；浸假而化予之右臂以為彈，予因以求鴉炙；浸假而化予之尻以為輪，以神為馬，予因以乘之，豈更駕哉！…吾又何惡焉！」<sup>70</sup>

‘Ugh! The maker of things still goes on turning me into this crumpled thing.’

‘Do you hate it?’

‘No, why should I hate it? Little by little he (the maker of things) will borrow my left arm to transform it into a cock, and it will be why I am listening to a cock-crow at dawn. Little by little he’ll borrow my right arm to transform it into a crossbow, and it will be why I am waiting for a roasted owl for my dinner. Little by little he’ll borrow and transform my buttocks into wheels, my daemon into a horse, and they’ll be there for me to ride, I’ll never have to harness a team again. . . . What would be the point in hating it?’<sup>71</sup>

According to the passage, the right arm is transformed into a crossbow, the left arm into a cock, buttocks into wheels, and the daemon 神 into a horse. Things are not only transformed into other things, parts of the human body are able to transform into other

<sup>69</sup> This is Graham’s translation, 2001, p. 84.

<sup>70</sup> *Zhuangzi yinde*, 17:6:50–3.

<sup>71</sup> Graham, 2001, p. 88.

species, such as the cock, as well as into objects, such as a crossbow. In this example, although the metempsychosis is not taken by things themselves but the maker of things does, it shows that by the maker of things, transformation is taken beyond species.

Another example is from the same chapter of the *Zhuangzi*:

俄而子來有病，喘喘然將死，其妻子環而泣之。子犁往問之曰：「叱！避！無怛化！」倚其戶與之語曰：「偉哉造物！又將奚以汝為？將奚以汝適？以汝為鼠肝乎？以汝為蟲臂乎？」<sup>72</sup>

Soon Master Lai fell ill, and lay panting on the verge of death. His wife and children stood in a circle bewailing him. Master Li went to ask after him. Master Li went to ask after him.

“Shoo! Out of the way!” he said. “Don’t startle him while he transforms.” He lolled against Lai’s door and talked with him.

“Wonderful, the process which fashions and transforms us! What is it going to turn you into, in what direction will it use you to go? Will it make you into a rat’s liver? Or a fly’s leg?”<sup>73</sup>

According to the passage, human beings, by the maker of things not by humans themselves, are able to transform into other objects, such as a rat’s liver or a fly’s leg, which are neither human beings nor animals. This metempsychosis is taken possible because of *qi* that enables things to transform from one form to another beyond the boundaries of species and objects.

Unlike in Confucianism, mind and thought in the Daoist perspective are not teachers or authorities that a person should follow and rely on. The “ultimate ancestor” as an

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<sup>72</sup> *Zhuangzi yinde*, 17:6:53–6.

<sup>73</sup> Graham, 2001, p. 88.

authoritative teacher that a person should follow is the ancestor that generates all things in the world and guides someone in reverting to pure spontaneity.<sup>74</sup> This ultimate ancestor is universal as shown in Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*. When Yi Erzi 意而子 visited Xu You 許由, Xu asked Yi what riches he obtained from Yao 堯. After Yi replied, Xu explained what he thought about the authoritative teacher who is the ultimate ancestor:

吾師乎！吾師乎！齧萬物而不為義，澤及萬世而不為仁，長於上古而不為老，覆載天地、刻彫眾形而不為巧。此所遊已。<sup>75</sup>

My Teacher, O my Teacher! He chops fine the myriad things but it is not cruelty; his bounty extends to a myriad ages but it is not goodwill; he is elder to the most ancient but is not growing old; he overhangs heaven and bears up earth and cuts up and sculpts all shapes but it is not skill—“It is over *this* that you have to roam.”<sup>76</sup>

The ultimate ancestor that Daoists follow to attain liberation is not the moral principles of the human mind, but a universal ancestor that is not subject to any change.

The discussion of the nature of the Dao does not appear in either the *Daode jing* or the *Zhuangzi*. It appears in a Han text, the *Laozi Heshang Gong zhangju* 老子河上公章句 (Heshang Gong’s commentary to the *Laozi*), and will be discussed in Chapter 2. The metaphysical discussion of the Dao in the *Laozi Heshang Gong zhangju* is given less emphasis<sup>77</sup> because, as in the *Daode jing* (or *Laozi*), Heshang Gong’s commentary has

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<sup>74</sup> Graham, 2001, p. 84.

<sup>75</sup> *Zhuangzi yinde*, 17:6:88–9.

<sup>76</sup> Graham, 2001, p. 91.

<sup>77</sup> Chan, 1991, pp. 123–24. There is diverse opinion among contemporary scholars about the date of the commentary. Chan argues that the commentary may be dated to the Eastern Han (25–220 A.D.) dynasty,

more to do with the relationship between the Dao and the world from both a political and religious (self-cultivation) perspective.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, Heshang Gong wrote his commentary focusing on political and religious aspects.<sup>79</sup> The discussion of the nature of the Dao from a philosophical and metaphysical perspective takes place in Arcane Study.

## 2.2 The discussion of *xing* in terms of ontology in Arcane Study

As this project suggests, Jizang's and Zhanran's arguments that insentient things have buddha-nature have some relationship to Chinese thought, especially Arcane Study; therefore, this section will examine the ontological discussion of nature in Arcane Study, especially the thought of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249 A.D.) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312 A.D.), to see what contributions the scholars of Arcane Study may have made to the work of later Chinese philosophers and Buddhist exegetes in China, such as Jizang and Zhanran.

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and the commentary shows that Heshang Gong read the *Daode jing* from a religious perspective, such as the Huang-Lao tradition (the School of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi) which dominated intellectual and political thought in the early Han period (Chan, 1991, pp. 3, 118). He's commentary explains the Dao in the same metaphysical or ontological terms as he interpreted *wu* in Chapter 11 of the *Daode jing*, that is, as *kongxu* 空虛 (empty and void) (Chan, 1991, p. 123). Whereas Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249 A.D.) in Arcane Study interprets *wu* as non-being (Chan, 1991, p. 47), Heshang Gong defines *wu* as nothingness or nothing (Chan, 1991, p. 123).

<sup>78</sup> Chan, 1991, pp. 90, 115, 123–24.

<sup>79</sup> Chan, 1991, p. 90. As mentioned, Han scholars attempted to incorporate human nature with a cosmological dimension as well as linking political and religious aspects. He's commentary to the *Daode jing* also follows this as he says: 四大，道、天、地、王也。凡有稱有名，則非其極也。言道則有所由，有所由然後謂之為道，然則是道稱中之大也，不若無稱之大也，無稱不可而得為名，曰域也。天地王皆在乎無稱之內也，故曰域中有四大者也。八極之內有四大，王居其一也 (*Daode jing*, Chapter 25, in CTP). More commentary, see He's commentary to Chapter 25 of the *Daode jing* in CTP.

The scholars of Arcane Study were concerned with metaphysical descriptions of the Dao. Their discussion of the Dao focused on ontological analysis. The ontological views of scholars of Arcane Study are divergent.<sup>80</sup> Some, such as Pei Wei 裴頠 (267–300 A.D.), viewed ontology in the affirmative (崇有論 *chongyou lun*) and proclaimed that the ultimate reality is *you* 有 (being). Others, such as He Yan 何晏 (2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> A.D.) and Wang Bi felt that ontology is negative (崇無論 *chongwu lun*)<sup>81</sup> and asserted that the ultimate reality is *wu* 無 (nothingness, non-being, or negativity).<sup>82</sup>

Both He Yan and Wang Bi follow the *Daode jing* in their conviction that the Dao is nameless and formless. There is no name and form that adequately, wholly describes and identifies the Dao as described in Chapters 1 and 25 of the *Daode jing*.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>80</sup> The scholars of Arcane Study favoured metaphysical studies (Liu, 2011, p. 365). The tendency towards metaphysical studies in Arcane Study can be traced back to its socio-political background. The Eastern Han dynasty declined because of corruption in government. The ruler of the Wei state (220–265 A.D.) was also corrupt (Chan, 1973, p. 314). The criteria for leadership of the Wei state were not based on virtue, but on ability, or *caineng* 才能 (Xin, 1993, pp. 37–8). Some scholars of “pure critiques” (*qingyi* 清議), or “pure critiques and judgment of morality” (*qingyi pinping* 清議品評), were critical of the fact that morality was disregarded as a criterion for government office, and as a result were persecuted. As a consequence, scholars of pure critiques turned away from the study of moral qualities to the study of “Pure Conversation” (*qingtan* 清談). The content of the conversation turned to political issues and transcendental, metaphysical qualities, such as non-being, vacuity, and the noumenal world (Chan, 1973, p. 314). The Six dynasties (220–589 A.D.) were in a period of disunion. Scholars of Arcane Study were seeking a way to restore the state in order and harmony. Therefore, as I will show later, scholars of Arcane Study reinterpreted the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Their reinterpretation brought new perspectives to Daoism. Instead of setting Confucian classics aside, scholars of Arcane Study placed Daoist classics above the Confucian classics (Kohn, 2011a, 2:1141).

<sup>81</sup> This is in section “liezhuan 13” 列傳 13 of fascicle 43 of the *Jinshu*: 魏正始中，何晏、王弼等祖述老莊，立論以為天地萬物皆以無為本 (*Jinshu*, 1971, 2:672). The *Jinshu* was composed by Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648 A.D.). It was compiled in 644 A.D. and presented or printed in 646 A.D. The book covers period from 265–419 A.D. (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 503).

<sup>82</sup> According to Chan, *wu* in classical Chinese implies the sense of “not having” something and functions as the opposite of the common word *you*, “having” something (Chan, 2013).

<sup>83</sup> 道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名 (*Daode jing*, Chapter 1, in CTP). 吾不知其名，字之曰道，強為

Dao is abstract and mysterious, or *xuan* 玄 (mystery). *Xuan*, as Alan Chan states, “figures the Dao as the profound depth and unfathomable.”<sup>84</sup> Although the Dao is too abstract and mysterious, it does not mean that the Dao is altogether inaccessible. Therefore, scholars of Arcane Study, including He Yan and Wang Bi, are concerned with the metaphysical question: What is the Dao, or what is the Dao like? What is the character of the Dao? What is the true meaning of the Dao?<sup>85</sup> The Dao can be approached from its nature and function. Chan characterizes Arcane Study thus: “*Xuanxue* aims at unlocking the mystery of the Dao,” and “bringing to light the nature and function of the Dao.”<sup>86</sup> Both He Yan and Wang Bi agree that the Dao can be understood through the concept of *wu* 無 (non-being). *Wu* is translated as non-being or “not having” any determination.<sup>87</sup>

He Yan identifies the Dao as “*wu* (non-being) that which does not have anything”<sup>88</sup> 夫道者，惟無所有者也。<sup>89</sup> This idea is also shown in his *Dao lun* 道論<sup>90</sup> (Discourse on Dao):

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之名，曰大 (*Daode jing*, Chapter 25, in CTP).

<sup>84</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Chan, 2004, 1:15.

<sup>86</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Chan, 2011, p. 742.

<sup>88</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>89</sup> This is from He Yan’s *Wuming lun* 無名論 quoted in Zhangzhan’s 張湛 *Liezi zhu* 列子注 (Commentary to the *Liezi* 列子); see *Liezi zhu*, 1935, 3:41. See also Fung, 2008, 2:605.

<sup>90</sup> According to Chan, He Yan’s works only exist in fragments today (Chan, 2013). Therefore, it is hard for us to see He Yan’s whole discussion of the Dao.

有之為有，恃無以生；事而為事，由無以成。夫道之而無語，名之而無名，視之而無形…則道之全焉，故能昭音響而出氣物、包形神…員方得形而此無形。<sup>91</sup>

Beings depend on *wu* in coming into existence, in becoming what they are. Affairs on account of *wu* come to fruition and become what they are now. Now, one tries to speak about *wu*, but no words could describe it; name it, but it has no name; look at it, but it does not have any form....Then, indeed, it is clear that the Dao is complete. Thus, it can bring forth sounds and echoes; generate *qi*-energies and things; establish form and spirit...The round and the square obtain their form, but that which gives them their form itself does not have any form.<sup>92</sup>

The passage points out an idea that the existence of all things is sustained by, or depends on (*shi* 恃) non-being 恃無以生. It is an ontological view. Things are not born of non-being, but their existences depend on non-being. As for the discussion of the Dao, the Dao is undifferentiated wholeness, completeness, and fullness.<sup>93</sup> It is complete (*quan* 全) because it is non-being that makes the Dao, in and of itself, indeterminate, and thus, the Dao is anything. He Yang's concept of non-being makes the critical point that it is non-being that makes the Dao be everything. In addition, non-being sustains the existence of all things.

Another scholar who gives an ontological discussion in terms of non-being is Wang Bi. Wang's interpretation of the *Daode jing* is not necessarily consistent with the original meaning of the *Daode jing*, and it is shown in his commentary on Chapter 40 of the

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<sup>91</sup> *Liezi zhu*, 1935, 3:3. See also Fung, 2008, 2:605.

<sup>92</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>93</sup> Chan, 2013.

*Daode jing* “All things in the world are born of being; being is born of nonbeing”<sup>94</sup> 天下

萬物生於有，有生於無，as:

天下之物皆以有為生，有之所始，以無為本，將欲全有，必反於無也。<sup>95</sup>

All things under Heaven achieve life because of existence, but the origin of existence has nothingness (non-being) for its roots. If one would have things achieve their full existence, he must allow them to revert to nothingness (non-being).<sup>96</sup>

The passage indicates Wang’s ontological view that non-being is the source/origin of all things. Non-being is the source that sustains the existence of all things, and all things achieve their full existence by reverting to it. Wang brought new interpretations to his commentary on the *Daode jing* in terms of ontology. In the *Daode jing*, all things (you 有，

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<sup>94</sup> Cleary, 1993, p. 34. I use Cleary’s translation because his translation represents the meaning of the *Daode jing* in terms of cosmology, i.e. the idea of production/being born of/*sheng* 生. As for the idea of production of the *Daode jing*, we can refer to Chapter 42 of the text: 道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和. Legge’s translation is: “The Dao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things. All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonised by the Breath of Vacancy” (Legge’s translation *g* in CTP). According to Legge, this statement is about the transformations of the Dao, see Legge’s translation of Chapter 42 of the *Daode jing* in CTP. Lynn’s translation is: “The Dao beget the One; the One begets two; two begets three; and three beget the myriad things. The myriad things, bearing yin and embracing yang, form a unified harmony through the fusing of these vital forces” (Lynn, 1999, p. 135). From the statement of Chapter 42 and the two translations, myriad things are transformations of the Dao. It implies that myriad things are ultimately born of/produced from the Dao. Therefore, I think that the idea of production of Chapter 40 is close to the original meaning of the *Daode jing*. Also, the idea of production in terms of cosmological view is one of the Han ideas. Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 points out that Wang Bi (or scholars of Arcane Study) intended to read the *Daode jing* in terms of ontology. Tang also says that Wang interpreted the *Daode jing* in terms of a metaphysical, ontological, and abstract view, rather than the one in a cosmological, concrete view of Han thought (Tang, 2001a, pp. 114–15). Therefore, I think that the word *sheng* in this statement of the *Daode jing* refers to the idea of production. Cleary’s translation is closer to this idea. I also refer to other translations. Lynn’s translation of this text is: “The myriad things under Heaven achieve life in existence. Existence arises from nothingness (non-being)” (Lynn, 1999, p. 130). Robert G. Henricks’ translation is: “The things of the world arise from being, And being comes from non-being” (Henricks, 2000, p. 77).

<sup>95</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:206.

<sup>96</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 130.



beings) are born of (*sheng* 生) non-being 有生於無. Beings and non-being are in the relationship of production/being born of like mother-and-son.<sup>97</sup> It is a cosmological view. However, Wang's commentary takes the ontological perspective. As a contemporary Chinese philosopher, Zhou Daxing 周大興, points out, Wang reinterprets the idea "all things (beings) are born of non-being" 有生於無 of the *Daode jing* as "all things (beings) originate from non-being," or "the origin of existence is non-being" 有始於無.<sup>98</sup> That means, the ground or the origin (*shi* 始) of the existence of all things is non-being. Wang replaces the idea of production (*sheng* 生) by that of origin (*shi* 始). Wang, as pointed out by a contemporary Chinese philosopher, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, interprets the *Daode jing* in terms of an ontological view (the Dao is the substance of all things, or the Dao is the origin of all things), rather than the cosmological view (all things are born of the Dao) of Han thought.<sup>99</sup> Wang's discussion is more concerned with the question of the existence (*sheng* 生) of all things in terms of ontological view, rather than how things are produced. Therefore, Wang's commentary to the *Daode jing* is framed in terms of ontology.

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<sup>97</sup> See footnote 94.

<sup>98</sup> Zhou, 2006, p. 151.

<sup>99</sup> Tang, 2001a, pp. 82–3, 114–15. Chan also has the same point that Wang Bi "did not pursue a cosmological or religious interpretation of the process of creation" (Chan, 2004, 1:15). See also footnote 94.

As for Wang's discussion of the existence of things, he employs the duality of *tiyong* 體用 (substance/embodiment and function)<sup>100</sup> to explain the relationships between the Dao and all things, non-being and beings,<sup>101</sup> and unity and multiplicity. He intends to give a logical discussion on the relationship between unity (the Dao) and multiplicity (things). The Dao is the embodiment of all things. The question is: How can the Dao as a unity be all things? Therefore, Wang's ontological discussion begins with the question about the foundation of being; as such, the Dao cannot be itself a being; otherwise, the infinite regression of all things to a specific entity calls into question the origin of the entity.<sup>102</sup> That is, that which gives rise to beings with differentiated features cannot itself be a being.<sup>103</sup> If the Dao was a being, or if the Dao was identified as a specific entity (being), how did the Dao as a unity give rise to various things and make them complete; and how did all various things revert to such unity, the Dao? Wang answered this fundamental question by referring to the concept of *wu*/non-being.<sup>104</sup> Non-being does not mean non-existence. Wang did not deny the existence of the Dao or the ultimate true

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<sup>100</sup> Tang Yongtong (2001a, p. 86) and other scholars agree that Wang Bi is the first Chinese scholar who employed the method *tiyong* in the ontological discussion.

<sup>101</sup> Zhou, 2006, p. 152.

<sup>102</sup> Chan, 2004, 1:15; Chan, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>104</sup> Wang also discussed the Dao in both the *Analects* and the *Zhouyi* in terms of *wu* (Tang, 2001a, p. 114). Tang Yongtong points out that Wang's concept of *wu* shifts the discussion of the Dao (in all the *Analects*, the *Zhouyi*, and the *Daode jing*) from concrete, cosmological view of the Han dynasty to abstract, metaphysical view in Arcane Study (Tang, 2001a, pp. 114–15). Tang explains that Wang used the concept of *wu* to describe the Dao (識道之無體超象), and it is *wu* that makes the Dao abstract and indeterminate, and be able to transcend itself beyond all concrete things (能超具體之事象,而進於抽象之理則) (Tang, 2001a, p. 115).

reality. Non-being makes all things originate from a unity (the Dao) possible.<sup>105</sup> In

Wang's ontological view, the existence of all things is sustained by a reason/source/cause

<sup>105</sup> There is a debate among contemporary scholars on the question of whether *wu* is the Dao. That is, do *wu* and the Dao refer to two separate things? Or, is the *wu* the Dao? Du Baorui 杜保瑞 (2007) and Fung Youlan 馮友蘭 (Fung, 2008, 2:608–9) argue that *wu* is the embodiment of the Dao, it is not the Dao. According to Du, metaphysically, there is something as embodiment of the Dao, and it is *wu*. He calls *wu* as *daoti* 道體 (the substance of the Dao) (see Du 2007). *Wu* as *daoti* indicates that the Dao is characterized in terms of negativity. Or, it might imply that the substance of the Dao is negative. Since *daoti* refers to the substance of the Dao, *wu* and the Dao are two separate things. *Wu* as the embodiment of the Dao makes the Dao nameless and formless (Du 2007). Other scholars such as Isabelle Robinet (Robinet, 2011e, 2:1005) and Tang Yijie 湯一介 (Tang, 2009, p. 295) argue that the Dao is *wu*. I am not sure if the idea that the Dao is *wu* refers to a definition of the Dao; that is, the Dao is “defined” as *wu*. Tang thinks that *wu* is the root of all things, and beings (*you*) are born of *wu*. Beings are also born of the Dao. Therefore, the Dao is *wu*. In some case, other than Dao, Wang Bi uses another term, progenitor of all things (*wanwu zhizong* 萬物之宗) to mean the ultimate source of all things as shown in his commentary on Chapter 14 of the *Daode jing*: “That which is free from form and nameless is the progenitor of the myriad things” (Lynn, 1999, p. 73) 無形無名者，萬物之宗也 (*Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:196). Progenitor is the ultimate source and the ultimate reality of all things. This is also found in Wang Bi's *Lunyu shiyi* 論語釋疑 (Resolving problems in interpreting the *Analects*), which, according to Lynn, was lost during the Song era, but is partially reconstructed. Ma Guohan (1794–1857 A.D.) gathered together 40 items (*jie*) of this work, and combined with gleanings from quotations in other sources, the work was published in his compendium, the *Yuha shan fang jiishu* (Reconstruction of lost works done in the Mountain Retreat Where Jade is Harbored) (Lynn, 1999, p. 20). Wang Bi writes: “What is meant by Dao? It is a term for non-being, which permeates all and from which all originates. The name Dao is especially used because it (nonbeing) is itself silent and without substance, cannot make any tangible appearance. It is when the ultimate of the functioning of being is reached that the achievement of non-being is manifested” (Fung, 1983, 2:183) 道者，無之稱也，無不通也，無不由也。況之曰道，寂然無體，不可為象 (Fung, 2008, 2:607). As for the statement “道者，無之稱也，” Fung translates the statement as “What is meant by Dao? It is a term for non-being.” Fung's translation indicates that Dao is a term for non-being. I am not sure if Fung interpreted this statement as Dao was defined as *wu*/non-being, or Dao and non-being were considered the same. I think that Wang did not intend to “define” what the Dao was. There is nothing that can fully, adequately describe and define the Dao, but the Dao can be understood by means of *wu*. This idea can be found in Wang's work *Laozi zhiliue* 老子指略, or *Laozi weizhi lilüe* 老子微旨例略: “名之不能當，稱之不能既。名必有所分，稱必有所由。有分則有不兼，有由則有不盡；不兼則大殊其真，不盡則不可以名，此可演而明也” (ZhD, 9:10:188); “夫「道」也者，取乎萬物之所由也；「玄」也者，取乎幽冥之所出也；「深」也者，取乎探蹟而不可究也；「大」也者，取乎彌綸而可及也；「遠」也者，取乎綿邈而不可及也；「微」也者，取乎幽微而不可睹也。然則「道」、「玄」、「深」、「大」、「微」、「遠」之言，各有其義，未盡其極者也。然彌綸無極，不可名細；微妙無形，不可名大。是以篇云：「字之曰道」，「謂之曰玄」，而不名也” (ZhD, 9:10:188); and “名也者，定彼者也；稱也者，從謂者也。名生乎彼，稱出乎我。故涉之乎無物而不由，則稱之曰道，求之乎無妙而不出，則謂之曰玄。妙出乎玄，眾由乎道。故「生之畜之」，不壅不塞，通物之性，道之謂也。「生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰」，有德而無主，玄之德也。「玄」，謂之深也；「道」，稱之大者也。名號生乎形狀，稱謂出乎涉求。名號不虛生，稱謂不虛出。故名號則大失其旨，稱謂則未盡其極。是以謂玄則「玄之又玄」，稱道則「域中有四大」也” (ZhD, 9:10:189). These passages show that the ultimate reality (the Dao) cannot be clearly defined. “Dao” is a name given to the ultimate reality, but it is not identical with the

as shown in his commentary on Chapter 49 of the *Daode jing*: “Matters have their progenitor, and things have their master”<sup>106</sup> 物有其宗，事有其主。<sup>107</sup> The existence of all things can be attributed to their source/origin/progenitor.

As for the discussion of progenitor/origin of things, Wang uses One (*yi* 一) to identity the existence of all things as originating 始 from a single root, as shown in his commentary on Chapter 39 of the *Daode jing*:

一，數之始而物之極也。各是一物之生，所以為主也。物皆各得此一以成。<sup>108</sup>

One is the beginning of numbers as well as the ultimate number of things. Each thing, as such, is produced by the One [Unity], and this is why it is the master of them all. All things achieve completeness by obtaining this One.<sup>109</sup>

And in his commentary on Chapter 42 of the same text:

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ultimate reality. Thus, I think that, in Wang’s perspective, the Dao cannot be “defined” as *wu*/non-being. *Wu* does not refer to the definition of the Dao. It refers to characteristic/property of the Dao, or embodiment of the Dao. Thus, *wu* and the Dao are two separate things. Zhou Daxing has a detailed discussion on Wang’s interpretation of the Dao as being or non-being. According to Zhou, *wu* gives a reason why a unity (the Dao) gives rise to various things (*you* 有, beings) (Zhou, 2006, p. 150). It is a discussion of function of the Dao. Wang views the relationship between the Dao and non-being, and all things in terms of *tiyong* (substance-function), not of a linear production (all things are born of the Dao) as like mother-son relationship as a cosmological view (Zhou, 2006, p. 152). Therefore, as for the question of the Dao as being or non-being in Wang’s perspective, Zhou thinks that Wang’s view on this point is that the Dao embraces such duality (being and non-being) while Wang argues that substance and function are two aspects of one reality 體用一如 as shown in his commentary to the *Daode jing* (Zhou, 2006, p. 170). For a detailed discussion on the discussion of the Dao as being and non-being, see Zhou, 2006. Also, Henricks mentions that Chen Guying 陳鼓應 thinks that the Dao (the Way) of the *Daode jing* is both “being” and “non-being” (Henricks, 2000, p. 77). More discussion on this point, see Henricks’ comments and notes (Henricks, 2000, p. 77). Based on Chen’s and Zhou’s point, the Dao in both the *Daode jing* and Wang’s perspective cannot be determinately defined as non-being.

<sup>106</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 144.

<sup>107</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:209.

<sup>108</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:206.

<sup>109</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 127.

萬物萬形，其歸一也。何由致一？由於無也。由無乃一，一可謂無。<sup>110</sup>

Although the myriad things exist in a myriad forms, they all revert to the One. What is it due to that they all ultimately become One? It is due to nothingness (*wu*/non-being). Because it is from nothingness that One comes, One can be called “nothingness” (non-being).<sup>111</sup>

From the two above passages, it is clear that Wang uses One to symbolize the origin of the existence of all things as one. In addition, the passages indicate that it is non-being that makes the regression of various things to the unity (the Dao, One) possible. Wang uses the concept of non-being to give a logical explanation on the relationship between one (the Dao) and multiplicity (things). Non-being explains the Dao (unity) by being itself as indeterminate (formless and nameless); thus, the Dao is able to originate various things and make things complete, as shown in his commentary on Chapter 1 of the *Daode jing*: “The Dao, by being itself formless and nameless, originates and brings the myriad things to completion”<sup>112</sup> 言道以無形無名始成萬物。<sup>113</sup> Non-being characterizes the Dao as formless and nameless. In other words, non-being indicates the character of the Dao as “not having” any determination. So that, the Dao is able to “originate and bring all things to completion.” In addition, non-being, as stated by Chan Wingsit 陳榮捷, “transcends all distinctions and descriptions.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, the Dao, by itself non-being, enables itself to

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<sup>110</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:207.

<sup>111</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 135.

<sup>112</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:192.

<sup>114</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 316.

transcend all distinctions and descriptions as a unity. Therefore, non-being resolves the problem of the relationship between differentiated things and a unity.

Ontologically, Wang Bi argues that non-being is the original embodiment<sup>115</sup> of all things, or “the root of all beings” 以無為本.<sup>116</sup> The myriad things “cannot reject having nothingness (*wu*/non-being) as their embodiment”<sup>117</sup> 不能捨無以為體. As for the notion of *ti* 體 (embodiment, essence, substance), it has several meanings in Chinese philosophy.<sup>118</sup> According to Cheng Zhongying, the verb *ti* means “to embody.” Cheng writes: “‘to embody’ is to actually participate in and share something, so that one forms one body with a thing, a value, an idea, or an ideal.”<sup>119</sup> In Wang’s ontological view, *ti* refers to non-being.<sup>120</sup> Non-being is the *ti* and root of all things. That is, non-being is the origin of the existence of all things. *Ti* is embedded in things. It is the embodiment of things (appearances, phenomena).<sup>121</sup> The Dao (*ti*, embodiment, or non-being)<sup>122</sup> and all

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<sup>115</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 316.

<sup>116</sup> Wang Bi’s commentary on Chapter 40: 天下之物皆以有為生，有之所始，以無為本 (*Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:206). There is a question that whether or not Wang Bi’s concept of *wu* was inherited from the doctrine of emptiness of Buddhism. According to Tang Yongtong, Arcane Study (maybe also include Wang’s concept of *wu*) is not inherited from Buddhism (Tang, 2001a, p. 166).

<sup>117</sup> Wang Bi’s commentary on Chapter 38 of the *Daode jing*: “Although the myriad things are noble, their functioning is based on nothing (*wu*), and they cannot reject having nothingness (*wu*) as their embodiment” (Lynn, 1999, pp. 121–22) 萬物。雖貴以無為用，不能捨無以為體也 (*Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:205).

<sup>118</sup> Robinet, 2011d, 2:973. More meanings of *ti*, see Cheng, 2011d.

<sup>119</sup> Cheng, 2011a, p. 717.

<sup>120</sup> In terms of ideal, *ti* can refer to the Dao. Therefore, the Dao and non-being can be considered the embodiment of things. However, I do not think that in Wang Bi’s perspective, the Dao is defined as non-being. The Dao can be understood by means of non-being, but it is not defined as non-being, see footnote 105.

<sup>121</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 725; Ames, 2011b, p. 847.

<sup>122</sup> Here I do not mean that the Dao is defined as non-being. As discussed before, the Dao cannot be fully defined as a being or anything. It can only be understood by means of non-being, but it is not defined as

things (*yong*, function, or beings) coexist. Things are manifestations of the Dao. Thus, phenomena are manifestations of true reality. There is no a true reality that exists other than phenomena. Phenomena are true reality, and vice versa.<sup>123</sup> This idea is different from the Indian Madhyamaka school, which holds that phenomena are impermanent, and they are illusions because they are devoid of nature.<sup>124</sup> Phenomena are not true reality. The only true reality is emptiness itself.<sup>125</sup> In Wang’s ontological view, since non-being is the root of all things, it indicates the nature of all things in negativity. Also, non-being seems to be a characteristic and property of the Dao. According to his commentary on Chapter 40 of the *Daode jing*, “That which is free from form and nameless is the progenitor of the myriad things”<sup>126</sup> 無形無名者，萬物之宗也，<sup>127</sup> the progenitor of all things is characterized as namelessness and is free of form. If the progenitor of all things is the Dao, the Dao is formless and nameless, and thus indeterminate. The Dao by itself as

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non-being. The Dao does not exclude beings. Therefore, the Dao is both; see footnote 105. The Dao and non-being are considered embodiments (*ti*) of all things and beings respectively. All things and beings are considered functions (*yong*) of the Dao and non-being respectively.

<sup>123</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 725; Ames, 2011b, p. 847. This idea is not a distinct idea of Wang Bi and Daoism. It also appears in other Chinese works such as the *Yijing*. Therefore, the idea that things and phenomena are true reality is a Chinese thought in general.

<sup>124</sup> According to the Twofold Truth, phenomena are relative truth that things exist provisionally as dependent beings or temporary names (Chan, 1973, p. 358). Dependent existences are unreal (Chan, 1973, p. 359). This idea is described in the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*: “That which is dependent origination, Is explained to be emptiness. That, being a dependent designation, Is itself the middle way” (Garfield, 2009, p. 31). Garfield’s translation is based on Tibetan version of the text. This translation is originally collected in Garfield, 1995. Chinese version of the text is: 眾因緣生法 我說即是無 亦為是假名 亦是中道義, T30.1564.33b11–33b13. Phenomena exist as dependent origination, thus, their existences are unreal. The only true reality, or the absolute truth, is emptiness, which is that all *dharmas* are empty.

<sup>125</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 357.

<sup>126</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 73.

<sup>127</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:196.

non-being is able to give rise to various things and make them complete. Therefore, non-being refers to both the characteristic and the property of the Dao.

In addition to the character of the Dao, the nature of the Dao includes the discussion of function, *yong* 用 (function, activity, use, application).<sup>128</sup> The function of the Dao refers to *wuwei* 無為, or non-action, and it is shown in Chapter 37 of the *Daode jing*: “The Dao in its constancy engages in no conscious action, yet nothing remains undone”<sup>129</sup> 道常無為，而無不為。<sup>130</sup> The Dao functions as non-action to give rise to all things in the universe and make them complete without interfering with them. Non-action does not mean no action. It means that the one acts without deliberation or intention, not artificially. Wang Bi comments on this statement as:

順自然也。萬物無不由為，以治以成也。<sup>131</sup>

It complies with the Natural (spontaneity). In either getting its start or achieving its completion, every one of the myriad things, without exception, stems from what is done in this way.<sup>132</sup>

Wang glosses non-action as *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity, that which is natural). Spontaneity is another expression of non-action. They are synonymous. Both terms imply a meaning that a subject functions and acts without deliberation, intentionality, or artificiality. Thus,

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<sup>128</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 723. *Ti* (embodiment) and *yong* (function) are two aspects of the same reality; they are different but inseparable (Robinet, 2011d, 2:973).

<sup>129</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 117.

<sup>130</sup> *Daode jing* in CTP.

<sup>131</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:204.

<sup>132</sup> Lynn, 1999, pp. 117–18. In Lynn’s note, he mentions that the base text read *zhi* 治 (being governed) instead of *shi* 始 (getting its start), therefore, in Wang’s commentary, to link with the idea of completion of all things, or *cheng* 成, it should read *shi* instead of *zhi*. I agree with Lynn’s point.



spontaneity and non-action are functions of the Dao. Function, according to Isabelle Robinet, refers to the nature of being.<sup>133</sup> In Wang’s perspective, the nature of the Dao is spontaneity, because spontaneity is the way that the Dao complies with its nature, as described in his commentary on Chapter 25 of the *Daode jing*: “It is by taking Its models from the Natural (spontaneity) that the Dao avoids acting contrary to the Natural (spontaneity) and so realizes its own nature. . . . The Dao complies with the Natural (spontaneity)”<sup>134</sup> 道不違自然乃得其性 . . . 道順自然.<sup>135</sup> Spontaneity is what the Dao complies with to realize its nature. The nature of the Dao is expressed by spontaneity. Wang’s view that spontaneity is what the Dao follows to form, fulfill, and accomplish its nature does not appear in the *Daode jing*. As mentioned, the *Daode jing* states that neither is spontaneity the nature of the Dao, nor does the Dao take spontaneity to form or fulfill or accomplish its nature. The *Daode jing* only states that the Dao takes spontaneity as a model, or *Dao fa ziran* 道法自然. Based on this statement, Wang reinterpreted the statement of the *Daode jing* and extended it to the discussion of the nature of the Dao. In Wang’s perspective, the Dao and spontaneity are not identical. They refer to two separate things. Wang’s interpretation on this point is consistent with the *Daode jing*.

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<sup>133</sup> Robinet, 2011d, 2:974.

<sup>134</sup> Lynn, 1999, pp. 96–7. Wagner’s translation is: “The Way not deviating from That-which-is-of-itself-what-it-is and consequently achieving their [the ten thousand entities’] nature” (Wagner, 2003, p. 203).

<sup>135</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:200–1.

In addition to the Dao, according to Wang's commentary in the above, spontaneity is the way that things stems from it. Other than the Dao, spontaneity is also what things, including people, follow to do the same for their own nature, as described in his commentary on Chapter 29 of the *Daode jing*: "The myriad folk<sup>136</sup> (things) follow nature [*ziran*] in forming their natures [*xing*]"<sup>137</sup> 萬物以自然為性.<sup>138</sup> According to Lynn's translation, spontaneity is what all people follow to form, fulfill and accomplish their nature. The nature is self-sustaining, not created or ruled by a creator or ruler; in other words, "things as they are."<sup>139</sup> Thus, spontaneity is what humans and all things to accomplish their natures as the same as what the Dao does. Therefore, the nature that human nature refers to is a universal nature.

Spontaneity represents a principle/pattern, or *li* 理. *Li* is another important concept in Wang's discussion. Wang Bi, as Chan points out, understands from both the *Yijing* and the *Daode jing* that things and affairs follow certain patterns, such as the cycle of growth

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<sup>136</sup> Lynn's translation of the term *wanwu* 萬物 in Wang's commentary as the myriad "folk" (*wu* 物) is worth noting. He does not translate *wanwu* as myriad things. It indicates that, in Lynn's perspective, the word *wu* in some contexts refers to human beings in the Chinese philosophical perspective. *Wanwu* in some contexts can be translated as myriad things. I do not think that it is significant to distinguish the subject of *wu* as either people or things, because in the discussion of nature, Wang Bi's commentary shows that he identified human nature, or the nature of all things, as spontaneity, which is also the nature of the Dao. The inclusion of human beings in the meaning of the word *wu* is significant because it demonstrates that in Chinese thought, and perhaps in Daoist thought, the human being as an entity is ontologically undifferentiated from other things. The next section will include a more detailed discussion on Chinese taxonomies.

<sup>137</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 105.

<sup>138</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:202.

<sup>139</sup> Robinet, 1999, p. 143; Chan, 1991, p. 62.

and decay and the manifold patterns and principles that govern the universe.<sup>140</sup> Wang designates these patterns as principle/*li*. *Li* serves as a medium for people to understand things and reality, as shown in Wang's commentary on Chapter 47 of the *Daode jing*:

事有宗，而物有主…識物之宗，故雖不見，而是非之理可得而名也。  
明物之性，因之而已。<sup>141</sup>

Matters have a progenitor, and things have a master...Because he (the sage) recognizes the progenitor of things, although he does not see what happens, which principles of right and wrong are involved are his to name. He (the sage) understands the nature (*xing*) of things and does nothing other than stay in accord with it.<sup>142</sup>

According to the passage, the existence of all things can be attributed to a cause/progenitor. The progenitor of things (reality, the Dao, non-being) is abstract and it cannot be seen, but it can be approached from principles because it manifests itself by things and principles. The progenitor does not exist in a transcendental world. It is embedded in things. The Dao as an abstract progenitor of things can be understood through principle. This principle is spontaneity because spontaneity is what the Dao complies with in order to realize its nature and what it follows in order to form, fulfill and accomplish its nature, as we already mentioned. Principle is a representation of the nature of the Dao. Spontaneity is the principle that provides the model not only for the Dao, but also for people and all things. Therefore, spontaneity is a universal principle.

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<sup>140</sup> Chan, 2013.

<sup>141</sup> *Daode zhenjing zhu Wang Bi zhu*, ZhD, 9:11:208.

<sup>142</sup> Lynn, 1999, pp. 141–42.

Wang's ontological discussion significantly influenced later Chinese philosophers, including scholars of Arcane Study and Buddhist exegetes,<sup>143</sup> such as Jizang and Zhanran, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4. In his ontological view, non-being (*wu*) explains how the Dao as a unity gives rise to all things. In his discussion of nature, Wang identifies the nature of the Dao, people, and all things in the world as a universal principle: that of spontaneity.

Another significant scholar of Arcane Study is Guo Xiang. Guo brought new interpretations to his commentary on the *Zhuangzi*. His commentary is inconsistent with the original meaning of the *Zhuangzi*,<sup>144</sup> including his discussion of spontaneity. Guo characterized the nature of human beings as spontaneous as shown in his commentary on chapter "Shanmu" 山木 (The Tree on the Mountain)<sup>145</sup> of the *Zhuangzi*: "To be natural (or spontaneous) is to be said to [live in accordance with] nature" 自然耳，故曰性。<sup>146</sup> However, Guo's discussion of spontaneity is different from both Wang Bi's discussion and the traditional Daoist view. Guo explained that the nature of all things was formed and transformed spontaneously, individually, and independently without relying on a source. This individual transformation is called individual-transformation,

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<sup>143</sup> Lynn and Chan, 1999, p. 381.

<sup>144</sup> Ziporyn, 2003, pp. 99–101.

<sup>145</sup> The title is Legge's translation; see CTP.

<sup>146</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 7:18.

self-transformation, or “transformation in solitude,”<sup>147</sup> or *duhua* 獨化. He explains *duhua* in his commentary on “Dazong shi” of the *Zhuangzi* as “the cause of someone’s existence is ‘natural/spontaneous’ (*tian* 天). The spontaneous formation of life is self-transformation” 人之所因者，天也；天之所生者，獨化也。<sup>148</sup> The idea of individual/self, or *du* 獨, is emphasized, and the idea of transformation in terms of the self is different from traditional Daoism. According to traditional Daoism, all things derive from, transform from and rely on the Dao. In Guo’s perspective, there is no subject that begets life and causes life formation and transformation, and no subject regulates the existence of things.<sup>149</sup> In Guo’s concept of *duhua*, life is formed by individual-transformation; therefore, life is formed through non-causality, or *wudai* 無待<sup>150</sup> and through spontaneity, as shown in his commentary on chapter “Tianyun” 天運 (The revolution of Heaven)<sup>151</sup> of the *Zhuangzi*: “As for the reason that life becomes existence, it is not created [by something] but taken by spontaneity” 命之所有者，非為也，皆自然也。<sup>152</sup> There is no cause for the formation of life. Life comes into existence spontaneously, and is what is called spontaneous-formation, spontaneous-production, or

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<sup>147</sup> This is Ziporyn’s translation; see Ziporyn, 2003, p. 20.

<sup>148</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:5.

<sup>149</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 317. See also Guo Xiang’s commentary on “Dazong shi”: “道，無能也。此言得之於道，乃所以明其自得耳。自得耳，道不能使之得也；我之未得，又不能為得也。然則凡得之者，外不資於道，內不由於己，掘然自得而獨化也。夫生之難也，猶獨化而自得之矣，既得其生，又何患於生之不得而為之哉！” (*Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:8).

<sup>150</sup> Fung, 1983, 2:210.

<sup>151</sup> The title is Legge’s translation; see *Zhuangzi* in CTP.

<sup>152</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 5:29.

*zisheng* 自生. The explanation of spontaneous-formation is shown in Guo's commentary on chapter "Qiwu lun" 齊物論 (The Adjustment of Controversies)<sup>153</sup> of the *Zhuangzi* in the following:

然則生生者誰哉？塊然而自生耳。自生耳，非我生也。我既不能生物，物亦不能生我，則我自然矣。自己而然，則謂之天然。天然耳，非為也...故物各自生，而無所出焉，此天道也。<sup>154</sup>

What, then, produces things? They spontaneously produce themselves. Being spontaneously produced, it is not I who produces them. And just as I cannot produce things, things also cannot produce me. Hence I am spontaneously what I am. That everything is spontaneously what it is, is called natural. And to be natural means not to be made to be so. . . . Therefore everything produces itself and does not issue from anything else. That is the Way of Heaven.<sup>155</sup>

Moreover, spontaneous-formation is not the same as self-production, or *wosheng* 我生.

According to the passage, self does not produce self. *Zisheng*, in Guo's perspective, means that there is no subject, even no self, or creator that begets the process of formation/production, but the process takes place self-sufficiently and spontaneously without having a subject or creator. This idea is illustrated in Guo's commentary that "everything produces itself and does not issue from anything else."<sup>156</sup> The Chinese philosopher, Fung Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990 A.D.), explains Guo Xiang's idea of spontaneous formation: "We cannot designate any particular thing as the cause of any

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<sup>153</sup> The title is Legge's translation; see *Zhuangzi* in CTP.

<sup>154</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 1:12.

<sup>155</sup> Derk Bodde's translation of Fung Youlan's book, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2:209.

<sup>156</sup> Fung, 1983, 2:209; Ziporyn, 2003, p. 109.

other particular things.”<sup>157</sup> Fung’s statement is based on Guo’s commentary on chapter “Tianyun:”

夫物事之近，或知其故；然尋其原以至乎極，則無故而自爾也。自爾則無所待問其故也，但當順之。<sup>158</sup>

We may claim that we know the causes of certain things. But if we push our investigation of these causes to the furthest limit, (we reach) something which is self-produced without any cause. Being self-produced, we can no longer ask what is the cause of this something. We can only accept it as it is.<sup>159</sup>

Spontaneous-formation is a principle that signifies the coming into existence of things spontaneously without any cause or reason.<sup>160</sup> It is also discussed in Guo’s commentary on chapter “Zhibei you” 知北遊 (Knowledge Rambling in the North)<sup>161</sup> of the *Zhuangzi*:

然則先物者誰乎哉？而猶有物無已，明物之自然，非有使然也。<sup>162</sup>

Thus what can it be that is prior to things? And yet things are continuously being produced. This shows that things are spontaneously what they are. There is nothing that causes them to be such.<sup>163</sup>

Life is formed by non-causality. Spontaneous-formation is also discussed in his commentary on chapter “Dazong shi:”

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<sup>157</sup> Ziporyn, 2003, p. 109; Fung, 1983, 2:210.

<sup>158</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 5:26.

<sup>159</sup> Fung, 1983, 2:210.

<sup>160</sup> Ziporyn, 2003, pp. 19, 109.

<sup>161</sup> The title is James Legge’s translation; see *Zhuangzi* in CTP.

<sup>162</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 7:38.

<sup>163</sup> Fung, 1983, 2:208.

無也，豈能生神哉？不神鬼帝而鬼帝自神，斯乃不神之神也；不生天地而天地自生，斯乃不生之生也。<sup>164</sup>

As it is nonbeing (*wu*), how can it (Dao) produce the gods? It does not cause the gods to be divine, but they are divine of themselves. Their divinity is thus an uncaused divinity. It does not produce the world, but the world is produced of itself. Its production is thus an uncaused production.<sup>165</sup>

Guo criticizes the notion of the ultimate source by itself as non-being, or that the ultimate source is described by means of non-being. He argues that non-being cannot give life to beings. Unlike Wang Bi,<sup>166</sup> Guo suggests that the ultimate source, *xuan* 玄,<sup>167</sup> can be described by means of both being and non-being, as described in his commentary on chapter “Dazong shi” of the *Zhuangzi*: “As for the mystery, it can be described as non-being but yet is not non-being” 玄冥者，所以名無而非無也。<sup>168</sup> Therefore, *xuan* refers to both non-being and being. Life formation takes place spontaneously, independently, and individually. This spontaneous-formation of life is indiscernible and unknowable as described in his commentary on chapter “Xiaoyao you” 逍遙遊 (Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease)<sup>169</sup> of the *Zhuangzi*:

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<sup>164</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:7.

<sup>165</sup> Fung, 1983, 2:208.

<sup>166</sup> Wang Bi only says that the Dao can be understood by means of non-being. He does not say that the Dao can be understood by means of both.

<sup>167</sup> According to his commentary on “Dazong shi,” *xuan* is the ultimate ancestor of all things as shown in the following: 此玄同萬物而與化為體，故其為天下之所宗也 (*Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:7).

<sup>168</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:10.

<sup>169</sup> The title is Legge’s translation; see *Zhuangzi* in CTP.



(鵬蝦)所以均異趣也。夫趣之所以異，豈知異而異哉？皆不知所以然而自然耳。自然耳，不為也。<sup>170</sup>

The fabulous (*peng* bird) and the small (quail) have different interests. Are their interests different because the birds knowingly differ? No, they are naturally different and no one knows why. To be natural means not to take any unnatural action.<sup>171</sup>

The natures of the enormous *peng* and the tiny *xia* (quail) are different and the reason is unknown. Life formation, as Ziporyn points out, is conceived as self-sufficient, uncaused, and self-subsisting.<sup>172</sup>

In Guo Xiang's perspective, human beings can be divided into two parts: *xing* 形 (form) and *shen* 神 (spirit), as shown in his commentary on chapter "Dazong shi":

故聖人…雖終日揮形而神氣無變，…夫見形而不及神者，天下之常累也。<sup>173</sup>

Therefore, a sage...although his form is dispersing all the time, [his] spirit and vital force remain unchanged... To see form but not see spirit, it is the mistake that most people make.

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<sup>170</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 1:3.

<sup>171</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 326.

<sup>172</sup> The mechanical process of life formation of each creature is unknowable by any other created being and it is not comprehensible in terms of the cognitive concepts of causality. Ziporyn, 2003, pp. 19, 109. This remark is also shown in a contemporary Chinese philosopher, Tang Yijie's 湯一介 statement quoted by Ziporyn, "Human cognition can only cognize the traces of things, that is, cognize the traces left behind by the activity of other things; they cannot cognize the "own nature" [self-determinacy, *zixing*] of other things which leaves these traces. If we don't distinguish between the two, we would have to hold that we can cognize the own nature – self determinacy] of other things, and that other things were the real objects of out cognition. But Guo Xiang believes that each thing is an absolute and independent existence, which cannot be the object of cognition" (Ziporyn, 2003, p. 38). The nature of things is neither discernible nor knowable by others.

<sup>173</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13.

This commentary is about the text in the *Zhuangzi* in which Zi Gong 子貢 (who came back from Master Sang Hu's 桑戶 funeral) asked Confucius what kind of men sang in the presence of the corpse and displayed inappropriate behaviour in the ceremony. Guo Xiang comments on this specific text, saying that people easily make a mistake of making final judgements based on what they see of someone's form (appearance), but that they do not see the person's spirit (internal world) 夫見形而不及神者，天下之常累也. Guo Xiang's commentary to this text contains the notions of self vs. others, and subjectivity and objectivity. People in reference to others are divided into two parts: physical (form) and spiritual (spirit). From Guo's commentary, it is acceptable to perceive a person (others) in terms of objectivity as an object by his/her *xing* without taking his/her spiritual world into consideration. This concepts of the division of people to self and others, and perceiving others in terms of objectivity (only physical form of a person is taken into consideration) significantly influenced Jizang, whose work will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Based on the passage from *Daode jing* stating that the Dao takes its models from the Natural (spontaneity) 道法自然, the Dao and spontaneity refer to two different things. Scholars of Arcane Study such as Wang Bi and Guo Xiang followed this idea and reinterpreted spontaneity as the principle that the Dao and people must follow to form, fulfill, and accomplish their natures. The discussion of the nature of the Dao in terms of

universal principle (spontaneity) in Arcane Study provides a reference for Jizang and Zhanran to reinterpret buddha-nature as the nature of buddhas and humans in terms of a universal principle. Chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate that Jizang and Zhanran interpreted buddha-nature as a universal principle, that is, that insentient things are able to possess the universal principle (buddha-nature in this case).

In the Daoist perspective, the “standard” nature that humans should follow to attain spiritual freedom is the same as is required of inanimate things, because the standard nature is spontaneity, which is a universal principle.

### **3. The taxonomy of Daoism**

As mentioned in the previous section, mind/consciousness is not the element that makes humans superior to others in the Daoist perspective. In Daoism and Arcane Study, i.e. Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, humans, sentient beings and inanimate things are equal in essence and nature. This equality is represented by the word *wu* 物 in pre-modern Chinese literature, especially in Daoist texts.

The word *wu* may be used to refer to the distinction between others (*wu* 物) and self (*wo* 我). *Wu* does not necessarily refer to objects or things, but to all entities other than self, including other people. The term *wuwo* 物我 renders a notion of self and others,

and the notion of subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>174</sup> In some Daoist texts, the word *wu* is used to refer to all beings (both humans and things) objectively as opposed to subjectively. In the Daoist perspective, the key distinction is not between humans and non-humans as in Confucianism, but between self and others.

The objective representation of beings in the external world using the term *wu* can be found in the *Daode jing*: “If any lord or prince could hold on to it, the myriad folk would undergo moral transformation spontaneously”<sup>175</sup> 侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。<sup>176</sup> Lynn translates the term *wanwu* 萬物 (myriad things) as myriad folk. *Wu* in Lynn’s translation specifically addresses people, and not objects/things. According to Lynn, this passage is primarily addressed to the ruler who would be a sage-king and it is concerned with achieving a good society through harmony with nature.<sup>177</sup> In Lynn’s understanding, the passage deals with the relationship between a lord or ruler and his people. Therefore, *wu* specifically addresses people as an object and the king as a subject. Some scholars translate *wanwu* as “ten thousand things” or “ten thousand beings.” For instance, Robert G. Henricks translates the passage as: “Marquises and kings can maintain it, and the ten thousand things transform on their own.”<sup>178</sup> Henricks translates *wanwu* as “ten thousand

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<sup>174</sup> For instance, in chapter “Yangzhu” 楊朱 in the *Liezi*, we read: “The monarch and his subjects are all well, others and self are benefited” 君臣皆安，物我兼利 (*Liezi* in CTP).

<sup>175</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 118.

<sup>176</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 37, in CTP.

<sup>177</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> Henricks, 2000, p. 45.

things.” Thomas Cleary translates the passage as: “If lords and monarchs could keep to it, all beings would evolve spontaneously.”<sup>179</sup> Cleary translates *wanwu* as “all beings.” I am not sure if it is necessary to translate the term *wanwu* in reference to people as Lynn did. Lynn’s translation seems to be based on the orientation of the *Daode jing* as social or political. Therefore, the object of a ruler (subject) is people. However, in Chapter 27 of the *Daode jing*, the text uses the word *ren* 人 to mean “people,” as shown in the passage: “Therefore sages always consider it good to save people, so that there are no wasted humans”<sup>180</sup> 是以聖人常善救人，故無棄人。<sup>181</sup> Lynn’s translation of the passage is: “This is how the sage is always good at saving people, so no one is discarded.”<sup>182</sup> In this passage, people refer to objects of a sage (subject). Other than *ren*, another term, *baixing* 百姓 is also applied to mean people as objects shown in the *Daode jing*: 天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗；聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。<sup>183</sup> Cleary’s translation of this passage is: “Heaven and earth are not human; they regard all beings as straw dogs. Sages are not humane; they see all people as straw dogs.”<sup>184</sup> Lynn’s translation is: “Heaven and Earth are not benevolent and treat the myriad things as straw dogs. The sage is not benevolent and treats the common folk as straw dogs.”<sup>185</sup> Both Cleary and Lynn translates the term

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<sup>179</sup> Cleary, 1993, p. 31.

<sup>180</sup> Cleary, 1993, p. 25.

<sup>181</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 27, in CTP.

<sup>182</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>183</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 5, in CTP.

<sup>184</sup> Cleary, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>185</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 60.

*wanwu* as myriad beings/things. According to their translations, the term *baixing* refers to people as object as opposed to sage as subject. Therefore, the word *wu* does not necessarily mean folk/people in the *Daode jing*. It can refer to all things/beings in a holistic view, and humans are also included.

Although translations of the term *wanwu* by contemporary scholars are not identical, their translations share the view that the term *wanwu* refers to both people and things as objects; that is, they are not subjects.<sup>186</sup> Thus, in the Daoist perspective, there is no distinction between humans and non-humans, but between self and others, and objectivity and subjectivity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Human nature in both classical Confucianism (Mencius, Gaozi, Xunzi) and early medieval Daoism, or, more precisely, Arcane Study, is present by means of principle in different connotations. In Confucianism, human nature refers to moral principles that make humans distinct from other species and even superior to other species.

In the Daoist perspective, according to Arcane Study, or maybe even earlier,<sup>187</sup>

Wang Bi reinterpreted the *Daode jing*: the Dao takes its models from the Natural

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<sup>186</sup> More examples of the same problem of the inconsistent translations on the word *wu* by contemporary scholars can be seen when comparing their translations of the *Daode jing*.

<sup>187</sup> Spontaneity in association with the nature of the Dao appears in Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Daode jing* in the Eastern Han dynasty. This will be discussed in Chapter 2.

(spontaneity) 道法自然; Wang designated the nature of the Dao as principle, and this principle is spontaneity. He identifies the nature of the Dao, all things, and people in terms of the principle of spontaneity. Similarly, Guo Xiang identified the nature of all things as the universal principle of spontaneity. It does not make humans distinct from or superior to other creatures.

Another contribution made by Wang Bi is his ontological discussion in terms of the concept of non-being, offering an ontological view of negativity. As I will show in Chapters 3 and 4, the Buddhist exegetes Jizang and Zhanran interpreted buddha-nature ontologically in negativity and as a universal principle, and this universal principle was their reason to legitimately claim that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature.

In terms of seeking spiritual freedom, the true nature that people look for in Confucianism contrasts with the Daoist perspective. Moral principles are principles that people must follow to fulfill their natures and in order to know Heaven and become a sage. Mind is a power to enable humans to know Heaven through moral principles. The self-cultivation of mind enables humans' second or moral nature to know Heaven. Only humans are able to possess mind and a moral nature. Therefore, the unity of human nature and the natures of inanimate things is not required for someone to attain unification with Heaven.

In the Daoist perspective, spontaneity is the principle that humans follow to form their natures. To fulfill one's nature is to follow spontaneity, not moral principles. Spontaneity is a universal principle. Spiritual freedom is attained through spontaneity. Therefore, the unity of human nature with the natures of other things is required in Daoism.



## Chapter 2: A Discussion of Dao-Nature in Practical Daoism

As mentioned in the Introduction, there is a Daoist term and concept similar to buddha-nature in *Daojiao* 道教, or practical Daoism,<sup>1</sup> called *daoxing* 道性, which is translated as dao-nature. Unlike the discussion of the nature of the Dao in terms of the metaphysical, ontological perspective in Arcane Study shown in Chapter 1, the concept of dao-nature in practical Daoism is a soteriological view as it inclines to buddha-nature. This chapter will investigate the discussion of dao-nature of practical Daoism from the Southern dynasty (420–579 A.D.) to the Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.).

In the Tang dynasty, several Daoist texts had a specific section dedicated to the discussion of dao-nature. Some texts, such as *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞 (Pivotal Meanings in Daoist Teaching), a doctrinal compendium containing ten chapters compiled by Meng Ampai 孟安排<sup>2</sup> (7<sup>th</sup> century), include insentient things in their discussion of

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<sup>1</sup> As for the translation of *daojiao* as practical Daoism, see footnote 1 in the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Kohn and Kirkland, 2004, 1:354. We only know that Meng received the patronage of Empress Wu (624–705 A.D.) at a monastery on Blue Brook Mountain (Qingxi shan 青溪山) in Hubei in 699 (Barrett, 2011a, 1:321). There is a discrepancy with regard to Meng's dates. Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850–933 A.D.) *Daode zhenjing guangshengyi xu* 道德真經廣聖義序 (Extended Interpretation of the Emperor's (Xuanzong 玄宗) [r. 712–756 A.D.] Exegesis of the Authentic Scripture of the Dao and Its Virtue), which was completed in 901 (Benn, 2011a, 1:386), states Meng's time is the Liang dynasty (云梁道士孟安排), Chen, 1975, p. 2. In Chen Guofu's 陳國符 *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考, Chen refers Du's view and holds the point that the time of Meng is the Liang dynasty, not the Tang dynasty, which is different view on the time of Meng recorded in a Tang poem, Chen Ziang's 陳子昂 (661–702 A.D.) *Jingzhou dachong fuguanji bei* 荊州大崇福觀記碑, which states the time of Meng as in the reign of Empress Wu (624–705 A.D.) (see Chen, 1975, p. 2). However, the *Daojiao yishu* quotes some Tang Daoist texts such as the *Benji jing* 本際經 (Scripture of the Original Bound), which was composed by Liu Jinxi 劉進喜 (ca. 560–ca.

dao-nature. Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 points out that the idea in the *Daojiao yishu* that insentient things have dao-nature derives its origin from the works of Buddhist thinkers, particularly Jizang 吉藏 (549–623 A.D.) and Farong 法融 (594–657 A.D.) of the Niutou<sup>3</sup> 牛頭 (Ox-head) school.<sup>4</sup> However, he only traces the relationship of the idea and Buddhism back to Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–592 A.D.) and the time of Jizang.<sup>5</sup> Kamata’s work in tracing the lineage of the idea seems to go no further than Jizang. In this chapter I will advance an alternative view to that of Kamata. Instead of tracing the lineage through Buddhist texts, I suggest that the idea of insentient things possessing dao-nature existed prior to Jizang, and that this idea has clear Daoist antecedents. The term dao-nature did not appear in the works associated with Arcane Study. It only began to appear in what Isabelle Robinet calls “practical Daoism.” Thus, this chapter will investigate the discussion of dao-nature in order to demonstrate that, under the influence of the concept of buddha-nature, the discussion of dao-nature appeared as early as the

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640) for the first five chapters in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and Li Zhongqing 李仲卿 appended the latter five chapters shortly thereafter (Miller, 2011, 1:227). Therefore, I agree with some scholars that Meng lived in the Tang not the Liang dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> The Ox-head school is one of the schools of Chinese Chan Buddhism. On the genealogy of the Ox-head school, see John McRae, 1983; Sekiguchi Shindai 関口真大, 1964; Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙, 1968; Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿, 1939; Yinshun 印順, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Kamata, 1968, p. 87. As mentioned in the Introduction, the idea that insentient things have buddha-nature (the Dao) appears in a text entitled *Jueguan lun* 絕觀論 (Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition). However, the text does not use the term buddha-nature but Dao to argue for the Dao in a holistic view. According to McRae (1983), contemporary scholars are still debating whether Farong is the author of the text. As for knowledge of the text, see the Introduction, footnote 6. For details about the text, see McRae, 1983, pp. 171–75.

<sup>5</sup> According to Kamata (1968), the discussion in the *Daojiao yishu* that insentient things have dao-nature corresponds to the direct nature (*zhengxing* 正性) of Jizang’s concept of the five types of buddha-nature found in his *Zhongguanlun shu* 中觀論疏 (Commentary to the *Treatise of Middle Contemplation*).

Liang dynasty (502–557 A.D.)—that is, earlier than Kamata has traced it.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the idea that insentient things are able to possess dao-nature in practical Daoism appeared before Jizang’s argument and is, in fact, a fundamental Daoist idea. The definition and discussion of dao-nature in practical Daoism will help us better understand the references which Daoism would provide for Jizang and Zhanran to interpret buddha-nature holistically.

The discussion of the nature of the Dao as spontaneity appears in some important Daoist works. One of the texts is Heshang Gong’s 河上公 (circa 202–157 B.C.E.)<sup>7</sup> commentary to the *Laozi* (or the *Daode jing*) also known as *Laozi Heshang Gong zhangju* 老子河上公章句 or *Laozi Heshang Gong zhu* 老子河上公注 (Heshang Gong’s Commentary to the *Laozi*).<sup>8</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Heshang Gong read the *Daode jing* in terms of political and religious (Huang-Lao thought, self-cultivation) perspectives.<sup>9</sup> The notion of the Dao in relationship with spontaneity is drawn from Chapter 25 of the *Daode jing*:

人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kamata traces the date of the discussion of dao-nature back to the Sui dynasty (Kamata, 1966, p. 107).

<sup>7</sup> His dates are unknown and we only know that he lived during the reign of Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 202–157 B.C.E) of the Han dynasty (*Daojiao da cidian*, s.v. “河上公”).

<sup>8</sup> Although there is a controversy over the date of the compilation of this text, most scholars agree that the text was compiled between the Western Han (206 B.C.E.–24 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (25–220 A.D.) dynasties. As for the discussion of the time of Heshang Gong’s commentary to the *Laozi*, see Cheng, 2000; Chan, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Chan, 1991, p. 90; Kohn, 2012, pp. 45–6; Chang, 2000, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 25.

Man takes his models from Earth; Earth takes its models from Heaven;  
Heaven takes its models from the Dao; and the Dao takes its models  
from Nature (spontaneity).<sup>11</sup>

Heshang Gong commented on the statement of the *Daode jing* “the Dao takes its models from Nature (spontaneity)” 道法自然, “The Dao is characterized as spontaneity” 道性自然.<sup>12</sup> In Heshang Gong’s commentary *daoxing* is not a single term. *Daoxing* is understood as two discrete lexical units,<sup>13</sup> *Dao* and *xing* (nature), to describe the characteristic of the Dao as spontaneity.<sup>14</sup> The word *xing* in this statement refers to characteristics of the Dao because the context of this section talks about characteristics of Earth, Heaven, and the Dao. Therefore, *daoxing* is translated as “the Dao is characterized as,” and it is not a term in itself. Heshang Gong’s commentary shows that the characteristic of the Dao is spontaneity. As I will show later in this chapter, Heshang Gong’s comment is a prelude to the discussion of dao-nature in practical Daoism in the Six dynasties (220–589 A.D.).

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<sup>11</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> ZhD, 9:7:140. He’s commentary is consistent with the original meaning of the *Laozi* (Tang, 1991, p. 132). In the *Daode jing*, the Dao is linked immediately with the One (*yi* 一), which derived from the Dao directly (Kohn, 2011c, 2:1159). Thus, the Dao and the One are not identical. However, there is another interpretation of the relationship between the Dao and spontaneity in which the Dao and spontaneity are identical. This idea is shown in another commentary to the *Daode jing*, known as the *Laozi xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注, the *Xiang'er commentary to the Laozi*, or *Xiang'er*, which was the first commentary to the *Daode jing* to be written for common people rather than for the elite (Bokenkamp, 1999, p. 37). The text was composed in the Han dynasty (Tang, 1991, p. 97). In the *Xiang'er*, the Dao, the One, and spontaneity are identical. A comparison of these two texts and a detailed discussion on the relationship between the Dao and its nature may be found in Tang’s article (1991).

<sup>13</sup> I thank Dr. Benn for his clarification of this point.

<sup>14</sup> The denotation of *daoxing* in He’s commentary is different from *foxing* (buddha-nature). *Foxing* denotes the potential that enables sentient beings to attain buddhahood.

The term *daoxing* appears in some practical Daoist texts too. The term *daoxing* in practical Daoism carries a different weight from the nature of the Dao that is discussed in traditional Daoist works like Heshang Gong's commentary or the works of Arcane Study. Heavily influenced by the Buddhist concept *foxing*, *daoxing*, in practical Daoism, inclines to the function of buddha-nature as a potential or a “cause” that enables a person to attain not buddhahood, but rather immortality or longevity. In this sense, the connotation of *daoxing* is soteriological. Therefore, like *foxing*, *daoxing* in practical Daoism is employed as a technical term, and it may be translated in English as “dao-nature,” analogous to buddha-nature.

## 1. The discussion of dao-nature in practical Daoism

In the Six Dynasties, the concept of dao-nature in terms of potential appeared in texts of practical Daoism. Discussions can be found in the works of two significant Daoist scholars. The first is Tao Hongjing 陶弘景<sup>15</sup> (456–536 A.D.). His discussion of dao-nature as a potential for someone to attain longevity appears in his *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (Concealed Formula for Ascending to Reality),<sup>16</sup> which is quoted in the

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<sup>15</sup> Tao Hongjing was associated with the Shangqing school. Some architectural elements from his tomb that were discovered on Mt. Mao during the Cultural Revolution bear an inscription calling him “a disciple of the Buddha and of the Most High Lord Lao” (Espeset, 2011, 2:969).

<sup>16</sup> The text was compiled sometime between 493 and 514 A.D. (Robinet, 2011b, 1:356–57).

*Shangqing jing mijue* 上清經秘訣<sup>17</sup> (Secret of the Scriptures of the Shangqing

[School]).<sup>18</sup> The second Daoist scholar is Song Wenming 宋文明 (fl. 549–551 A.D.),<sup>19</sup>

who writes about dao-nature in his work, *Daode yiyuan* 道德義淵 (Profound Meaning of the *Daode [jing]*).

### 1.1 Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 discussion of dao-nature

This is what Tao Hongjing says:

《登真隱訣》云：所論一理者，既是一切眾生身中清淨道性。道性者，不有不無，真性常在，所以通之為道。道者有而無形，無而有情，變化不測，通于群生，在人之身為神明，所以為心也。所以教人修道也，教人修道即修心也。道不可見，因生以明之；生不可常，用道以守之。生亡則道廢，合道則長生也。<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> According to the ZhD, the *Dengzhen yinjue* originally contained twenty-four or twenty five fascicles. Unfortunately, only three fascicles are preserved (ZhD, 2:22:245; Robinet, 2011b, 1:356). However, Tao Hongjing's discussion of dao-nature is partly preserved as it is quoted in the *Shangqing jing mijue*.

<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the specific passage on dao-nature does not appear anywhere in these three surviving fascicles.

<sup>19</sup> TTC, 3:1275; ZhD, 28:9:601. Song Wenming's biography is collected in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Readings of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period), a Daoist encyclopedia compiled by order of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (939–997 A.D., r. 976–997 A.D.) of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 A.D.). The title, Taiping 太平 was given based on the title of the Emperor's reign name. The quotation from *Laoshi shengji* 老氏聖記 (Sacred Record of Master Lao) says, "Song Wentong, his formal name was Wenming. He was born in Wu prefecture. During the reign of Jianwen 簡文 of the Liang dynasty (503–551 A.D., r. 549–551 A.D.), Wenming realized that the Daoist commentaries that had appeared at that time were not adequate explanations, he composed a work [called] *Lingbao jing yishu* 靈寶經義疏 (Commentary to the Meaning of the *Scripture of Numinous Treasure*), and inscribed a title "Tongmen" (the Gate of the Sameness) to the work. [He also composed (a work about) the essential meaning of [the *Daode jing*], entitled *Profound Meaning [of the Daode jing]*. Daoist scholars took it as model and as a reference to compose their own works. He (Song Wenming) was invited by people from far away" 宋文同字文明，吳郡人也。梁簡文時，文明以道家諸經莫不敷釋，撰《靈寶經義疏》，題曰謂之《通門》。又作大義，名曰《義淵》。學者宗賴，四方延請。 According to the *Taiping yulan*, Song lived around the time of Emperor Jianwen of the Liang dynasty. Cheng, 2009, pp. 172–73. Song's biography, see TTC, 3:1275.

<sup>20</sup> ZhD, 2:50:440.

The *Dengzhen yinjue* states, “As for the discussion of One Reality, it is the pure dao-nature, which dwells within all sentient beings. As for dao-nature, [it is] neither being nor non-being. The true nature exists permanently. Thus, [one is able to] reach the Dao. As for the Dao, it exists but is formless. [It] is abstract but has emotions. [Its] changes are unpredictable. [It] is able to reach to all existences. [When the Dao reaches] the human body, it becomes illuminated spirit, and thus becomes mind. Therefore, its teaching to people is to practice the Way. The teaching to people in terms of practice of the Way is to cultivate the mind. The Dao is unperceivable. It is able to manifest itself through existences. [However,] existences are impermanent, [therefore,] it needs the Dao to preserve [the permanency of existences]. When birth ends, then the Dao is extinguished. Union with the Dao leads someone to attain longevity.”

According to the passage, dao-nature is the true, pure nature of sentient beings. It is a potential or cause that enables sentient beings to attain the unification with the Dao. This passage is not a metaphysical discussion about the nature of the Dao as spontaneity. It has a clear soteriological message. The discussion of dao-nature in terms of soteriology was strongly influenced by the concept of buddha-nature in Buddhism. In fact, during Tao’s time, the Chinese version of the MMPS that was translated by Dharmakṣema (385–433 A.D.) appeared in 421 A.D. The concept of buddha-nature of the MMPS was widely discussed in intellectual circles. The discussions about buddha-nature are collected in the *Daban niepanjing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解 (Collected Explanations of the MMPS), which was compiled on the orders of Emperor Wu 梁武帝 (464–549 A.D., r. 502–549 A.D.) of

the Liang dynasty in 509 A.D.<sup>21</sup> This imperially commissioned work indicates that the ideas of the MMPS attracted the emperor's attention. One of the key ideas was of course the concept of buddha-nature. Thus, Tao was living at a time when the concept of buddha-nature was widely discussed. In addition, he had a close relationship with the Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, his discussion of dao-nature in terms of potential that is shown in the passage above also mentions the idea of *shenming* 神明 (spiritual brilliance), or *shen* 神 (spirit). The discussion of *shen* was another important issue in his time. There were debates on such issues as the permanent or impermanent existence of spirit (*shen mie bumie lun* 神滅不滅論) and the concept of spontaneity of Daoism vs. the concept of cause and effect (or conditioned arising, or *yin yuan* 因緣) of Buddhism. These issues and debates from scholarly works are collected in Sengyou's 僧祐 (445–518 A.D.) *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (Collection Spreading the Light [of Buddhism]). The debate around the existence of spirit attracted the attention of Emperor Wu, who also dedicated a work to this issue, entitled *Lishenming chengfo yiji* 立神明成佛義記 (the Meaningful Record on the Establishment of the Spiritual Brilliance to

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<sup>21</sup> Kamata, 1966, p. 66; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “大般涅槃經集解”.

<sup>22</sup> *Nanshi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), 1975, 3:1898–99; Ishii, 1980, pp. 32–4. Tao's biography is collected in section “Liezhuàn 45” 列傳 45 in fascicle 51 of the *Liangshu* 梁書 (History of the Liang Dynasty), 1973, 3:742–43, and in section “Liezhuàn 66” 列傳 66 in fascicle 76 of the *Nanshi*, 1975, 3:1897–1900. The *Liangshu* was compiled by Yao Cha 姚察 (533–606 A.D.) and Yao Silian 姚思廉 (d. 637 A.D.) in 628–635 A.D. and presented or printed in 636 A.D. The book covers the period from 502–556 A.D. (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 503). The *Nanshi* was compiled by Li Yanshou 李延壽 (fl. 618–676 A.D.) in 630–650 A.D. and presented or printed in 659 A.D. The book covers the period from 420–589 A.D. (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 504). For a detailed discussion, see Ishii, 1980, pp. 96–119; Ren, 1998, 1:184–90.



Become a Buddha). It was collected in the *Hongming ji* to defend his position on the permanent existence of spirit. Therefore, we know that the spirit (*shen*) was a topic of debate in Chinese Buddhist circles as well. Geographically, the Liang state was where Tao was most active. Tao must have been aware of the concept of buddha-nature. Thus, it is highly likely that the concept of buddha-nature inspired him to interpret dao-nature as a potential in terms of Daoist soteriology.

In terms of competition with Buddhism, Sengyou's work also points out that some scholars, whether Buddhist or not, denigrated the practices of practical Daoism, including the use of talismans and alchemy, and the pursuit of immortality, calling them heterodox.<sup>23</sup> Tao's interpretation of dao-nature promoted the teachings of practical Daoism to compete in the same soteriological arena as buddha-nature, even though his discussion of dao-nature is patterned on Buddhist arguments.

Tao's interest in the topic of attaining longevity was inherited from Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343 A.D.) tradition of seeking immortality.<sup>24</sup> Practices such as nourishing life (*yangsheng* 養生), longevity,<sup>25</sup> alchemy, and medicine, are all included in the discussion of immortality.<sup>26</sup> However, Ge's primary concern was the search for immortality; he

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<sup>23</sup> In Sengyou's *Hongming ji*, Cheng lists the main issues of debate in Seng's work (Cheng, 2009, pp. 87–9).

<sup>24</sup> *Nanshi*, 1975, 3:1897; Espeset, 2011, 2:968–71; Ishii, 1980, pp. 98, 100–1, 113, 115; Sunayama, 1990, pp. 108–9.

<sup>25</sup> Robinet points out that there is a distinction between longevity and immortality. Longevity is only a single step toward, and a necessary condition for, immortality (Robinet, 1997, p. 87).

<sup>26</sup> Ren, 1998, 1:187; Kobayashi, 1990, pp. 15–7.

claimed that the goal of Daoism was not limited to nourishing life, but to achieving immortality.<sup>27</sup> In addition, he asserted that it was possible, but supremely difficult, for someone to attain immortality.<sup>28</sup> Ge believed that immortality could be achieved through great effort.<sup>29</sup> In the process of attaining immortality, he asserted that there is a “cause” that prompts a person to pursue the Way, or *xindao zhi xing* 信道之性. A person is able to attain immortality only if the person believes the Way and this Way (Dao) is the attainment of immortality, or *xian dao* 仙道.<sup>30</sup> This “cause” dwells in a person’s embryo as nature, and is described in the chapter “Bianwen” 辯問 (Argument and Inquiry) of the *Baopu zi* 抱朴子 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity):

按仙經以為，諸得仙者，皆其受命偶值神仙之氣，自然所稟。故胞胎之中，已含信道之性，及其有識，則心好其事，必遭明師而得其法。不然，則不信不求，求亦不得也。<sup>31</sup>

According to the *Scriptures of the Immortals*, all immortals have been endowed with the forces of spirit immortality and with spontaneity. Therefore, [when they were] in the embryonic state, the nature of believing in the Way dwells within and extends to consciousness, then the mind inclines to the issue [of pursuing the Way], the person must meet a brilliant teacher and receive the teaching. Otherwise, the person neither believe nor craving for it [seeking immortality], and it cannot be obtained by seeking.

Ge quoted from the *Xianjing* 仙經 (Scriptures of the Immortals) that the force of spirit

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<sup>27</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Sunayama, 1990, p. 108.

<sup>29</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Sunayama, 1990, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> Ge, 1998, p. 70; ZhD, 28:9:622.

immortality is required to become an immortal. Based on this idea, Ge concluded that the achievement of immortality requires an innate nature dwelling in the embryo, and it is this innate nature that gives rise to the desire for immortality. Immortality is unattainable without the innate nature. However, Ge did not identify this cause as dao-nature. It was Tao who gave a name to this innate nature for attaining longevity when he patterned dao-nature after the equivalent Buddhist term.

Although Tao's discussion of immortality draws upon the work of Ge, there are some discrepancies between the positions of Ge and Tao.<sup>32</sup> In Tao's perspective, the attainment of immortality is not difficult.<sup>33</sup> Tao suggested that an efficient way to attain immortality is to recite a scripture.<sup>34</sup> Such a mode of practice was excluded in Ge's perspective.<sup>35</sup> Although Tao's view of the attainment of longevity might be inherited from Ge, his discussion is not necessarily consistent with Ge.

For Tao, dao-nature is a potential possessed by all sentient beings. His conception of dao-nature is inconsistent with the discussion of the nature of the Dao in Arcane Study but mostly inherited from Buddhism. However, Tao's discussion of dao-nature in terms of potential clearly identifies human nature by giving it a name: dao-nature.

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, Daoist scholars of the Shangqing 上清 school, such as Tao Hongjing, tended to criticize Ge's tradition, and Tao did so in order to promote the status of the Shangqing school (Kobayashi, 1990, pp. 31–2).

<sup>33</sup> Sunayama, 1990, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Sunayama, 1990, pp. 108–9; Kobayashi, 1990, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Kobayashi, 1990, p. 18.

## 1.2 Song Wenming's 宋文明 discussion of dao-nature

### 1.2.1 *The authorship of the Daode yiyuan*

Another Daoist text from practical Daoism that contains a discussion of dao-nature and its possession by insentient things is Song Wenming's *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, only two fragments are preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts and collected in Ōfuchi Ninji's 大淵忍爾 *Tonkō Dōkyō mokuroku* 敦煌道經目錄<sup>37</sup> *Beijie* 北芥 number 97 (hereafter B.97) and S.1438. This text is not collected in the *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 (Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong Reign Period [1436–1449 A.D.], hereafter ZD in abbreviation), but it is collected in Volume 5 of the recent *Zhonghua Daozang* 中華道藏 (hereafter ZhD in abbreviation).<sup>38</sup> According to the ZhD, these two fragments (B.97 and S.1438) of the *Daode yiyuan* in the Dunhuang manuscripts are not identified, but Ōfuchi gives a title *Daojiao yi* 道教義 (the Meaning of the Teaching of the Dao).<sup>39</sup> In addition, the authorship of the two fragments of the Dunhuang manuscripts is not identified by Ōfuchi. In the ZhD, they are identified as parts of Song Wenming's *Daode yiyuan*. The authorship of the text and the text identification must be examined with care. If B.97 and S.1438 are identified as Song Wenming's work, it will prove that

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote 19. Cheng, 2009, pp. 172–73.

<sup>37</sup> Ōfuchi, 1960, pp. 734–37. Lu identifies the fragments of the text as part of Song's *Daode yiyuan* 道德義淵 (Lu, 1993, pp. 70–1).

<sup>38</sup> ZhD, 5:28:519–24.

<sup>39</sup> ZhD, 5:28:523; Ōfuchi, 1960, p. 734.

the idea that insentient things having dao-nature appears before Jizang's argument to the effect that insentient things have buddha-nature. In addition, the idea that insentient things have dao-nature in the Tang Daoist texts such as the *Daojiao yishu* did not borrow the idea from Jizang, but rather drew from Song's work. It is, therefore, critical to determine the authorship and to identify the texts of B.97 and S.1438 to establish the chronology of the intellectual relationship between dao-nature and buddha-nature.

Lu Guolong 盧國龍 proved the authorship and identified B.97 and S.1438 as Song's *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>40</sup> Some points in his argument must be elaborated.

The authorship of the *Daode yiyuan* is recorded in Song's biography and collected in the *Taiping yulan*:<sup>41</sup>

宋文同字文明…又作大義，名曰《義淵》。<sup>42</sup>

Song Wentong, his courtesy name is Wenming...[He] also composed an essential meaning of [the *Daode jing*]; its title is *Profound Meaning* [of the *Daode jing*].

As Lu points out, in this biography, the title of the work, *yiyuan* 義淵 (Profound Meaning), must refer to *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>43</sup> This passage indicates that the author of the (*Daode*) *yiyuan* is Song Wenming. In addition, Lu points out that another Daoist text clearly states that the author of the *Daode yiyuan* is Song Wenming; fascicle 7 of the

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<sup>40</sup> Lu, 1993, pp. 70–1.

<sup>41</sup> See footnote 19.

<sup>42</sup> See footnote 19.

<sup>43</sup> Lu, 1993, pp. 70–2.

*Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊<sup>44</sup> (A Satchel of Pearls from the Three Caverns) gives the following:

The second part of Song Wenming's *Daode yiyuan* also quotes the *Classics of the Eight Plains*: . . . 宋文明《道德義淵》下又引《八素經》云...<sup>45</sup>

The first part of Song Wenming's *Daode yiyuan* states that the fruits of merit for humans are specially governed by the thirty-two heavens. . . 宋文明《道德義淵》上所說者，此三十二天則專主人福果...<sup>46</sup>

These two statements clearly state that the author of the *Daode yiyuan* is Song Wenming.

Lu<sup>47</sup> and Cheng Canshan 鄭燦山<sup>48</sup> provide a practical suggestion for identifying the text. They suggest comparing B.97 and S.1438 with some of Song's ideas that are quoted in other Daoist texts. Quotations from Song can be found in works such as the *Sandong zhunang*, the *Daojiao yishu*, and the *Xuanmen dayi* 玄門大義<sup>49</sup> (Great Meaning of the

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<sup>44</sup> ZhD, 28:7:405–79. The author of the work is Wang Xuanhe 王懸和 of the Tang dynasty. Some inscriptions of imperial texts carved on stela show his time to be around the reign of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (649–683 A.D.), and he may have compiled this work at the behest of the throne. The work is a collection of excerpts from scriptures, biographies, and other texts dating from the second to the sixth centuries. It is a significant work for several reasons: it preserves passages from works that no longer exist and serves as a basis for authenticating some Daoist texts that survived and for scriptures and liturgies that were available to Daoists of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Benn, 2011b, 2:832–33). Lu provides a detailed argument on the authorship of the *Daode yiyuan* as Song Wenming (Lu, 1993, pp. 70–2).

<sup>45</sup> ZhD, 28:7:449.

<sup>46</sup> ZhD, 28:7:452.

<sup>47</sup> Lu, 1993, pp. 67–82.

<sup>48</sup> Cheng, 2009, pp. 172–88.

<sup>49</sup> Mugitani, 1986, pp. 268–70, 314; Barrett, 2011a, 1:321. The text was composed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (TTC, 1:440). The text contains twenty fascicles (TTC, 1:439). Unfortunately, most parts of the *Xuanmen dayi* are lost. One fascicle is preserved and collected in the ZhD 5:29:525–32. The title of the text is *Dongxuan lingbao xuanmen dayi* 洞玄靈寶玄門大義 (Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries of Lingbao, Cavern of Mystery Section) known by other equivalent names, *Xuanmen dalun* 玄門大論 (Great Essay on the School of Mysteries) (ZhD, 5:29:525), *Daomen dalun* 道門大論 (Great Essay on the School of the Dao), or *Xuanmen lun* 玄門論 (Essay on the School of Mysteries) (Schmidt, 2004, 1:440). However, Schmidt points out that this conclusion contradicts *Daozan que jing mulu* 道藏闕經目錄 (Catalogue of Missing Daoist Scriptures in Daoist Canon of the Yuan Dynasty 1279–1368 A.D.), which has separate entries for a

School of Mysteries, or Principle Meaning of Daoism)<sup>50</sup> quoted in the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Slips from the Bookbag of the Clouds).<sup>51</sup> The phrase “Dunhuang fragments” will be applied throughout this chapter to denote B.97 and S.1438 as Song’s *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>52</sup>

Song’s idea quoted in section “Jingzhi yi” 境智義 (the Meaning of Phenomena and Wisdom) of the *Daojiao yishu* is:

宋法師云：道智、實智、權智，是為三智。<sup>53</sup> (P1)

The Daoist Teacher Song says, “The wisdom of the Dao, the wisdom of the Reality, and the wisdom of expedient are three types of wisdom.”

It is difficult to determine whether this is a direct quote from the Daoist Teacher Song. It may be either a direct quote from Song, or a statement of his ideas. However, it can be identified as Song’s idea following the attribution “*Song fashi*” 宋法師 (The Daoist Teacher Song).<sup>54</sup> This passage is similar to another quotation in the section “Miyao juefa

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*Dongxuan lingbao xuanmen dayi* and a *Xuanmen dalun* in twenty fascicles (Schmidt, 2004, 1:440, Schmidt’s point here refers to Ōfuchi’s *Dōkyōshi no kenkyū*, pp. 280–87, 334–36). There are some fragments quoted by some Daoist texts such as the *Sandong zhunang*.

<sup>50</sup> TTC, 1:439–40.

<sup>51</sup> Boltz, 2011, 2:1203–6. The *Yunji qiqian* is a Daoist encyclopedia, composed by Zhang Junfang 張君房, a Daoist, whose date is unknown. We only know that he lived in the reign of Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (968–1022 A.D.) of the Northern Song dynasty. It contains 122 fascicles. It collected Daoist ideas before the Northern Song dynasty. The *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist canon) contains Sandong 三洞 (Three Grottoes) and Sifu 四輔 (Four Supplements) totalling seven parts. The *Yunji qiqian* extracts essential parts of each of the seven.

<sup>52</sup> Song’s works, the *Daode yiyuan* and *Lingbao jing yishu* are all fragments that were preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts, and they are collected in ZhD 5:28:509–32 and ZhD 5:27:509–18, respectively.

<sup>53</sup> ZhD, 5:31:572.

<sup>54</sup> There is a section in the *Taiping yulan* dedicated to biographies of some Daoists (See ZhD, 28:9:596–601. From the list of Daoists, there is only one Daoist whose family name is Song, and this Daoist is Song Wenming. Therefore, the term “*Song fashi*” in the passage refers to Song Wenming. In addition, a

bu (sanyi)” 秘要訣法部 (三一) (The section on the Essential Secret Instructions and Teachings: [the concept of] “Three-in-One”) in fascicle 49 of the *Yunji qiqian*. According to the *Yunji qiqian*, the discussion of the concept of “Sanyi jue” 三一訣 (the formula of Three-in-One) of the *Xuanmen dalun* is based on the ideas of four Daoist scholars; the second scholar is *Song fashi*, and Song’s concept of “Sanyi” (Three-in-One) is quoted in the following:

玄門大論三一訣…

二者宋法師解云：有總有別，總體三一，即精、神、氣也；別體者，精有三智，謂道、實、權；神有三宮，謂上、中、下；氣有三別，謂玄、元、始。<sup>55</sup> (P2)

The explanation of “Three-in-One” in the *Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries* . . .

Second, the Daoist Teacher Song’s explanation states, “[the Three-in-One] can be understood in wholeness and categories. As for the Three-in-One in reference to essential wholeness, it is pneuma, spirit, and vital force. As for the Three-in-One in reference to essential category, pneuma includes three types of wisdom, which are the Dao, Reality, and expedient. Spirit includes the three palaces, which are upper, middle, and bottom. Vital force may be divided into three kinds, which are Mysterious, Original, and Inaugural.”

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Tang Buddhist monk, Xuanyi 玄嶷 composed a work entitled *Zhenzheng lun* 甄正論 to criticize some Daoist scholars who stole Buddhist concepts and made them into Daoist teachings. See T52.2112. Xuanyi listed four Daoist scholars in the Six dynasties, and they were: Ge Xuan 葛玄, Song Wenming 宋文明, Lu Xiujing 陸修靜, and Gu Huan 顧歡 (T52.2112.561a17–561a19). The works of these four Daoist scholars attracted a Buddhist monk’s attention. Among these four Daoists, only Song Wenming has the family name Song. Therefore, Song Wenming was a significant figure known to both Daoists and Buddhists. Xuanyi also criticized Song Wenming’s works in detail, see T52.2112.561a25–561b10; T52.2112.563c20–563c26; T52.2112.565a22–565a29.

<sup>55</sup> ZhD, 29:49:399.



In this passage, *Song fashi* refers to Song Wenming.<sup>56</sup> Both passages (P 1 and P2) mention the notion of the three types of wisdom (*sanzhi* 三智) in terms of the Dao, the Reality (*shi* 實), and the expedient (*quan* 權). The concept of Three-in-One is not a concept that belongs uniquely to the Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) school, as it also appears in Shangqing 上清 (Highest Clarity) texts.<sup>57</sup> The concept of Three-in-One that the four Daoist scholars mentioned in the *Xuanmen dalun* is distinct.<sup>58</sup> From the passage (P2), we know that the concept of the Three-in-One in terms of the Dao, the Reality, and the expedient quoted in the *Xuanmen dalun* is Song's concept.

Moreover, Song Wenming's discussion of the concept of Three-in-One in the passage (P2) shows that his concept of *sangong* 三宮 (the Three Palaces) refers to the upper, middle, and lower cinnabar fields (*dantian* 丹田). This reference corresponds to the concept of *sangong* mentioned in the Dunhuang fragments:

人身有三宮：上宮在眉間却入三寸，號泥洹宮，為上丹田；中宮在心央，號絳宮，為中丹田；下宮在臍下却入三寸，號命門黃庭宮，為下丹

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<sup>56</sup> *Song fashi* 宋法師 in reference to Song Wenming is also found in Song's work, *Lingbaojing yishu* 靈寶經義疏, which is collected in ZhD 5:509–18. The source of this fragmental piece of work is the Dunhuang manuscripts P.2861 and P.2256. The term “*Song fashi*” appears in that work many times to refer to Song Wenming himself.

<sup>57</sup> Kohn, 2011b, 2:854–55. In Shangqing practice, the basic factors of human life, which are essence (*jing* 精), pneuma (*qi* 氣), and spirit (*shen* 神), correspond to the three palaces: the Palace of the Muddy Pellet (*niwang gong* 泥丸宮), the upper Cinnabar Field, and the Crimson Palace (*jiang gong* 絳宮). The Palace of the Muddy Pellet is in the head and the Crimson Palace is in the heart. The Lower One, the Cinnabar Field, is the master of the Gate of the Vital Force (*mingmen*) and it refers to the Original King of the Yellow Court (*Huangting yuanwang* 黃庭元王) in the lower center of the body (Kohn, 2011b, 2:855). These three palaces are also in the section “Three-in-One” of Song's *Daode yiyuan* (ZhD, 5:28:523).

<sup>58</sup> Each detailed discussion of the concept of Three-in-One of the four scholars, see ZhD, 29:49:399–400.

田也。<sup>59</sup> (P3)

There are three palaces residing inside a physical body. The upper palace resides three inches below the space between the eyebrows. It is named the Palace of the Muddy Pellet, and it is the upper Cinnabar Field. The middle palace resides in the heart. It is named Crimson Palace, and it is the middle Cinnabar Field. The lower palace resides three inches below the navel. It is named the Palace of the Gate of the Vital Force of the Yellow Court, and it is the lower Cinnabar Field.

The quotation (P2) from the *Xuanmen dalun* identifies Song's concept of the Three-in-One in terms of the upper, middle, and lower cinnabar fields. It is possible that the Dunhuang fragments (or P3) bear a relationship to Song's work. The concept of the Three-in-One cannot be the only reason for identifying the Dunhuang fragments as a Lingbao work or Song's *Daode yiyuan*. More research is needed to identify the Dunhuang fragments, since the concept of the Three-in-One in terms of upper, middle, and lower cinnabar fields also appears in the Shangqing school.

In the same section of the previous quote (P3) in the Dunhuang fragments, Three-in-One is quoted in several *Lingbao* texts, such as the *Lingbao siwei dingzhi* 靈寶思微定志 (Scripture of Fixing Will and Reflection on Subtle Numinous Treasure)<sup>60</sup> and the *Qingwen jing* 請問經 (Scripture of Questions). In addition, the idea of the field of merit, *futian* 福田, of the later scripture quoted in the Dunhuang fragments says:

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<sup>59</sup> ZhD, 5:28:523.

<sup>60</sup> ZhD, 5:28:523.

《請問經》：道為无心宗，一切作福田者。<sup>61</sup> (P4)

The *Scripture of Questions* states, “The Dao is the ancestor of no-mind. It enables all beings to dedicate to the field of merits...”

This quote also appears in the *Daojiao yishu*:

《靈寶經》：道為無心宗，一切作福田。<sup>62</sup> (P5)

The *Scripture of Numinous Treasure* states, “The Dao is the ancestor of no-mind. It enables all beings to dedicate to the field of merits...”

And in the same text, the *Daojiao yishu*:

《請問經》：道為無心宗。<sup>63</sup> (P6)

The *Scripture of Questions* states, “The Dao is the ancestor of no-mind...”

The three quotations (P4, P5, and P6) are almost identical. Only the title of the text in P5 is different from the other two. According to P5, the title of the text, *Lingbao jing* (Scripture of Numinous Treasure), indicates that the three passages (P4, P5, and P6) belong to the Lingbao school and not the Shangqing school. It seems that the author of the Dunhuang fragments emphasized Lingbao thought.

Also, in the same section of the previous quote (P3) in the Dunhuang fragments the statement, “The discussion in the *Commentary of the Meaning of the [Scripture of] Numinous Treasure . . .*” 論在靈寶義疏中<sup>64</sup> indicates that the author of the Dunhuang

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<sup>61</sup> ZhD, 5:28:523.

<sup>62</sup> ZhD, 5:31:574.

<sup>63</sup> ZhD, 5:31:544.

<sup>64</sup> ZhD, 5:28:523.

fragments had composed another Daoist text entitled “*Lingbao yishu*” 靈寶義疏,<sup>65</sup> or *Linbaojing yishu* 靈寶經義疏 (Commentary to the Meaning of the *Scripture of Numinous Treasure*) before the Dunhuang fragments.<sup>66</sup> The *Lingbao yishu* is a commentary on the *Lingbao jing* 靈寶經 (Scripture of Numinous Treasure). The ZhD identifies the author of the *Lingbao yishu* as Song Wenming.<sup>67</sup> In the *Lingbao yishu*, the term “*Song fashi*” appears repeatedly referring to the commentator as *Song fashi*. As mentioned above, *Song fashi* refers to Song Wenming. Thus, Song Wenming is the author of the *Lingbao yishu* and the Dunhuang fragments.

P4 and P5 mention the idea of “no-mind” (*wuxin* 無心) in combination with the notion of the cultivation of *futian* (field of merit). The notion of the field of merit is similar to the notion of *fuguo* 福果 (fruits of merit) which Song mentions in the *Sandong zhunang*:

宋文明《道德義淵》上所說者，此三十二天則專主人福果，異乎九天及三十六天。福果由於業行，業行起六根，眼耳鼻口身心也。<sup>68</sup>

According to Song Wenming’s *Profound Meaning of the Daode* [jing], the thirty-two heavens are specialized in governing the fruits of merit in the

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<sup>65</sup> ZhD, 5:27:509–18. There are only two fragments of the work preserved in Dunhuang manuscripts and collected in Ōfuchi Ninji’s *Tonkō Dōkyō mokuroku* number P. 2861 and P.2256. This text is not collected in the ZD, but is collected in ZhD 5:27:509–18. Another title of the text is *Tongmeng lun* 通門論 (Discussion of the General Gate). According to the ZhD, these two fragments did not have titles. Ōfuchi gives the title “*Tongmeng lun*” to these pieces, based on the text quoted in fascicle 7 of the *Sandong zhunang*. The content of the text is similar to both *Xuanmen dayi* and fascicle 2 of the *Daojiao yishu*.

<sup>66</sup> I thank Dr. Cheng Canshan for his explanation that this statement is a distinct expression of an author who mentions his work. Footnote 34 in Cheng, 2009, p. 174.

<sup>67</sup> ZhD, 5:27:509.

<sup>68</sup> ZhD, 28:7:452.

human realm. They are different from the nine heavens and the thirty-six heavens. The fruits of merit is based on karmic actions. The karmic actions arise with the six faculties, which are eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body, and mind.

This passage clearly indicates that *fuguo* is noted as a karmic action in Song's *Daode yiyuan*. As for the concept of *fuguo*, it is a combination of the concepts of *fu* 福 (merit) and *guo* 果 (fruit). This concept (*fuguo*) also appears in the Dunhuang fragments: "Merit is called 'fruit'" (福者語其果).<sup>69</sup> According to the Dunhuang fragments, the concepts of *futian* and *fuguo* are distinct.<sup>70</sup> Merit (*fu*) in terms of *futian* refers to *yin* 因 (cause) (田者明其因).<sup>71</sup> The author of the Dunhuang fragments, i.e. Song Wenming, quoted the concept of *futian* from some Daoist texts.<sup>72</sup> It indicates that the concept of *futian* had been discussed in other Daoist texts before the Dunhuang fragments. In the same section of the *futian* in the Dunhuang fragments, it discusses the notion of merit in another perspective: merit in terms of *guo* 果 (fruit, effect) (福者語其果), or *fuguo*.<sup>73</sup> In comparison with the notion of *fuguo* quoted in the *Sandong zhunang* in the passage in the above, the concept of *fuguo* can be a source to identify the Dunhuang fragments as Song's *Daode yiyuan*.

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<sup>69</sup> ZhD, 5:28:522.

<sup>70</sup> 夫福者富也，田者填也。以滋長為義，藝種填滿，致富貴之報也。田者明其因，福者語其果；「果」從因得，故從果以命因。此由是植福之田，故曰福田…《消魔》所云因心立福田者也。陸先生《黃錄唱齋》云：人身、口、意，為罪福之田，ZhD, 5:28:522.

<sup>71</sup> See footnote 70.

<sup>72</sup> See footnote 70.

<sup>73</sup> See footnote 70.

Textual comparisons conclude that the two fragments (B.97 and S.1438) of the Dunhuang manuscripts are Song's *Daode yiyuan* based on the reasons: 1) the author of the Dunhuang fragments is associated with the Lingbao school; 2) the author of the Dunhuang fragments is the same as the *Lingbao yishu*; and 3) Song's concept of *fuguo* also appears in the Dunhuang fragments.

### 1.2.2 Song Wenming's discussion of dao-nature

Song Wenming's discussion of dao-nature is based on Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Laozi*. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the term *daoxing* does not appear in Heshang Gong's commentary. Song quoted Heshang Gong's commentary to legitimize his discussion of dao-nature as orthodoxy. However, his discussion of dao-nature is not identical with Heshang Gong's commentary. In Song's perspective, dao-nature is interpreted as a potential in ontological and soteriological perspectives.

In his *Daode yiyuan*, Song Wenming dedicated a section entitled “Ziran daoxing” 自然道性 (Spontaneity [as] dao-nature) to elucidate dao-nature:

經云：道法自然。河上公云：道性自然，无所法也。經又云：以輔万物之自然。物之自然，即物之道性也。<sup>74</sup>

The [*Daode*] *jing* states, “The Dao takes its models from the Natural (spontaneity).”<sup>75</sup> Heshang Gong states, “The Dao is characterized as

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<sup>74</sup> ZhD, 5:28:521.

<sup>75</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 96.

spontaneity. [Thus, spontaneity] has nothing to model after.” The [*Daode jing*] also states, “Thus he helps the natural development of all things.”<sup>76</sup> Things [that live in accordance with] spontaneity are identical with [living in accordance with] dao-nature of things.

The syntax of *daoxing* in Song’s passage is not identical with Heshang Gong’s *daoxing ziran* 道性自然 (the Dao is characterized as spontaneity). Spontaneity is a universal model that all things follow as shown in both the *Daode jing* and Heshang Gong’s commentary. Song reinterpreted Heshang Gong’s *daoxing ziran* and identified spontaneity as dao-nature, which is the nature of *wu* 物 (things), as shown in the statement: “Things [that live in accordance with] spontaneity are identical with [living in accordance with] dao-nature of things” 物之自然，即物之道性也。Dao-nature is identical with spontaneity. In this statement, *daoxing* is a term that denotes the ontological nature of things (*wu*). Song Wenming identified spontaneity as dao-nature. Thus, dao-nature is the universal character of all things.

In Chapter 1, we saw how scholars of Arcane Study began to discuss the nature of the Dao in terms of the universal principle, spontaneity. However, scholars of Arcane Study did not use the term “dao-nature” to refer to spontaneity. So far, the first Daoist scholar

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<sup>76</sup> The translation of the *Daode jing* is from Legge, in CTP. This passage is in Chapter 64 of the *Daode jing*. Lynn translates this statement: “He enhances the natural state of the myriad folk” (Lynn, 1999, p. 171). Lynn translated the word *wu* 物 as “folk”, or “people.” Legge translates *wu* as “things.” I agree with Legge’s translation because, in the context (*Daode jing*, Chapter 64), words that refer to people (folk or human beings) are *ren* 人 (學不學，復衆人之所過 [*Daode jing*, Chapter 64], as in “he learns what (other men) do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by” [Legge, in CTP, the *Daode jing*, Chapter 64]). Therefore, the word *wu* does not necessarily refer to people (folk). I think *wu* refers to things.

whom I have found to use dao-nature to denote spontaneity and the nature of things, including human beings, can be traced to Song Wenming. In Song's discussion of dao-nature, it has two connotations. His consideration of dao-nature in association with the universal principle, spontaneity, follows both traditional Daoism and Heshang Gong's commentary. But the other connotation refers to potential, and here he is clearly influenced by Buddhist ideas. Song incorporated dao-nature into soteriology. For him, dao-nature is a potential possessed by sentient beings:

論道性以清虛自然為體，一切含識各有其分，先稟妙一以成其神，次受天命以生其身，身性等差，分各有限，天之所命，各盡其極。…今論道性，則但就本識清虛以為言；若談物性，則兼取受命形質以為語也。一切无識亦各有性…夫一切含識皆有道性，何以明知？夫有識所以異於无識者，以其心識明闇，能有取捨，非如水石，雖有本性，而不能取捨者也。既心有取，則生有變，若為善則致福，故從蟲獸以為人；為惡則招罪，故從人而墮蟲壽。人蟲既其交換，則道性理烝通有也。<sup>77</sup>

As for the discussion of dao-nature in terms of essence, it is pure, void and spontaneous. All beings that possess consciousness are differentiated, but they all commence to the wondrous Oneness to be spirit. Then, they are endowed with the mandate of Heaven to be born in a physical body. Their bodies, natures, etc., are various. Their differentiations are limited. Their destinies are endowed by Heaven. Each individual lives in its utmost. . . . The discussion of dao-nature here specifically is spoken of in terms of purity and void for the consciousness as the original [essence]. If the discussion refers to the nature of things, then it is spoken in association with both the endowment of destiny and characteristics of form. All things without consciousness also have nature. . . . All sentient beings have

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<sup>77</sup> ZhD, 5:28:521–22.



dao-nature. How is it known clearly? Sentient beings are different from insentient things based on beings who possess mind to be conscious with [a distinction] between bright and dark. They are able to make decisions. Unlike water and minerals, which have innate natures but they are lacking in making decisions, [sentient beings] have mind and are able to take [decisions], and then change arises. If [a being] does good, merit will arrive. So the being will transmigrate from insects or animals to human beings. If [a being] does evil, suffering will come toward it. Therefore, a being will transmigrate from human being to insects or animals. The alternative transmigration between human beings and insects is because the principle of dao-nature applies to all beings.

According to the passage, the term *hanshi* 含識 (containing consciousness) refers to sentient beings. Consciousness makes sentient beings distinct from insentient things because mind and consciousness enable sentient beings to distinguish bright and dark (以其心識明闇) as well as making decisions (能有取捨), and this distinction parallels Chinese Buddhism as shown in a Chinese Buddhist commentary on the MMPS, the *Niepanjing jijie* 涅槃經集解 (Collected Explanations of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*):

無情之物者。無情。無悟解之性。非性也。<sup>78</sup>

As for those that are considered insentient things, [they] neither possess sentience nor have a capacity to understand and attain enlightenment. [They] are excluded from [buddha-]nature.

In the Chinese Buddhist perspective, insentient things are unable to possess buddha-nature because of the absence of abilities of understanding (*jie* 解) and enlightenment (*wu* 悟). The distinction between sentient beings and insentient things was

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<sup>78</sup> T37.1763.598b13.

included in the discussion of the concept of buddha-nature. As we have already seen, in Song Wenming's time, the concept of buddha-nature was an important idea for both philosophy and religious salvation in Southern China. It was a teaching of universal salvation for people living in a period of disunion and instability. Song was acutely aware of Buddhist soteriology, and he was aware of the distinctions between sentient beings and insentient things. The Lingbao school, with its primary concern for universal salvation, was strongly influenced by Buddhism.<sup>79</sup> Song was associated with Lingbao Daoism and thus also concerned with universal salvation.<sup>80</sup> The concept of buddha-nature provided him with references to develop the idea of salvation in dao-nature. In Song's discussion of soteriology, dao-nature as the potential of sentient beings is not universal. Only sentient beings have the priority to possess dao-nature.

Song's discussion of dao-nature is inconsistent. In the beginning of the section "Ziran daoxing" in the *Daode yiyuan*, he quotes the discussion of the holistic nature of the Dao in the *Daode jing* and Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Daode jing*. In the latter portion of the section, in terms of religious perspective, only sentient beings are able to possess dao-nature. It is the dao-nature that enables sentient beings to transform from one form to another. Thus, transformation only takes place in the sentient realm. The notion

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<sup>79</sup> Robinet, 1997, p. 153.

<sup>80</sup> Lu points out that Song composed some Daoist texts associated with the Lingbao school, such as the *Lingbaojing yishu* 靈寶經義疏 and the *Lingbao zawen* 靈寶雜問 (Lu, 1993, p. 71).

that transmigration between the sentient and insentient realms is impossible contradicts the idea of transformation, or *zhuan sheng* 轉生 (“turning births,” rebirth) and *wuhua* 物化 (transformation of things, metamorphosis) between the realms of human and nonhuman things, as described in the *Zhuangzi* (mentioned in Chapter 1). The idea that only sentient beings possess dao-nature and are capable of transformation is consistent with Buddhism, but inconsistent with traditional Daoist thought. Therefore, Song’s position on who or what can possess dao-nature is ambiguous. His intention to incorporate dao-nature into a Daoist religious perspective by limiting dao-nature to sentient beings demonstrates the tension and competition between Buddhism and Daoism as well as denigration of practical Daoism by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.<sup>81</sup>

Song’s identification of dao-nature with spontaneity and the nature of all things provides a reference point for later Daoists, as it interprets dao-nature as universal. In addition, the identification of dao-nature with spontaneity as a universal characteristic appeared before Jizang’s assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature. Therefore, the Daoist idea that insentient things have dao-nature existed before Jizang’s (549–623 A.D.) assertion of the Buddhist equivalent.

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<sup>81</sup> There are some criticisms of Daoism by Buddhists shown in Sengyou’s *Hongming ji* as shown in footnote 23.

## 2. The discussion of dao-nature in the Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.)

The study of Double Mystery (*Chongxuan xue* 重玄學) was an intellectual trend of Daoism of the early Tang dynasty during which the *ti* 體 (substance, essence) of the Dao was much discussed. Scholars of the Double Mystery tradition, such as Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl. 631–50 A.D.) and Li Rong 李榮 (fl. 658–63 A.D.), interpreted and discussed the substance of the Dao. Contemporary scholars, such as Kamata Shigeo,<sup>82</sup> Lu Guolong,<sup>83</sup> and Mugitani Kunio 麥谷邦夫,<sup>84</sup> have discussed Double Mystery and its doctrinal interaction with Buddhism in detail.

One topic associated with the substance of the Dao is dao-nature, which is found in such Daoist texts as the *Haikong zhizang jing* 海空智藏經 (Scripture of [the Perfected of] Sea-Like Emptiness, Storehouse of Wisdom, the *Taishang yisheng haikong zhizang jing* 太上一乘海空智藏經), the *Xuanzhu lu* 玄珠錄<sup>85</sup> (Records of the Mysterious Pearl),

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<sup>82</sup> As for the discussion of dao-nature of the Tang dynasty and its relationship with Buddhism, see Kamata, 1966.

<sup>83</sup> Lu, 1993.

<sup>84</sup> Mugitani, 1986, pp. 307–16.

<sup>85</sup> This is a collection of the teachings of Wang Xuanlan 王玄覽 (626–697 A.D.). It was recorded by his disciple Wang Taixiao 王太霄 around the time of Empress Wu. According to Wang Taixiao, Wang Xuanlan began to study Buddhism in his thirties. *Xuanzhu lu* is divided, unsystematically, into approximately 120 sections. It unifies Daoism and Buddhism, an example of which is his discussion of the Dao and the Middle Way (*zhongdao* 中道) of Buddhism. The direct influence of Buddhism on Wang Xuanlan is drawn from texts such as Jizang's 吉藏 *Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義 (Mysterious Meaning of the Three Treatises), Nāgārjuna's *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* (Treatise of the Middle Contemplation), and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* (Teaching of Vimalakīrti). Wang Xuanlan is indirectly influenced by Daoist works that involve Yogācāra doctrines included in the *Haikong zhizang jing* and the idea of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) included in the *Benji jing* (Sakade, 2011, 2:1142).

the *Benji jing* 本際經 (Scripture of the Original Limit),<sup>86</sup> and the *Daojiao yishu*. The last two texts have sections that explore dao-nature in detail. The discussion of dao-nature in the *Benji jing* is in fascicle 4, entitled “Daoxing pin” 道性品 (the chapter of dao-nature). It focuses on religious perspectives, in which the subjects that possess dao-nature are referred to as sentient beings. Insentient things are not included in the discussion. The discussion of dao-nature in the *Daojiao yishu* is in section 29 of fascicle 8, entitled “Daoxing yi” 道性義 (the meaning of dao-nature), and in this segment of the work insentient things are included in the discussion of dao-nature.

According to section “Daoxing yi” of the *Daojiao yishu*, the idea that insentient things are able to possess dao-nature is shown in the following:

又道性體義者，顯時說為道果，隱時名為道性。道性以清虛自然為體。一切含識乃至畜生、果木、石者，皆有道性也。究竟諸法正性，不有不無，不因不果，不色不心，無得無失。能了此性，即成正道，自然真空，即是道性。<sup>87</sup>

In addition, as for the meaning of dao-nature in terms of essence, when [the essence] manifests, it is spoken of as the fruits of the Dao. When [the essence] hides, it is named dao-nature. Dao-nature in terms of essence is pure, void, and spontaneous. All beings who possess consciousness and

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<sup>86</sup> Another name for the text is *Taixuan zhenyi benji jing* 太玄真一本際經 (Scripture of the Original Bound of the Perfect Unity of Great Mystery). According to Miller, the text was composed by Liu Jinxi 劉進喜 (ca. 560–ca. 640) who wrote the first five chapters, and by Li Zhongqing 李仲卿, who appended the latter five chapters. Only two chapters of the original ten were found in the Daoist canon. The second chapter appears in the *Benji jing* and in the *Jueyi jing* 決疑經 (Scripture on Resolving Doubts). The ninth chapter is included in the *Kaiyan bimi zang jing* 開演秘密藏經 (Scripture on Elucidating the Secret Storehouse) (Miller, 2011, 1:227). ZhD, 5:14:207–13.

<sup>87</sup> ZhD, 5:31:573.

even animals, fruit and plants, and minerals, all possess dao-nature. The utmost true nature of all phenomena is neither being nor non-being, neither cause nor effect, neither phenomena nor mind, neither gain nor loss. If someone is able to realize this nature, this one is able to achieve the true Way. Spontaneity and the true emptiness is dao-nature.

This passage demonstrates the connection between dao-nature and insentient things. It shows that dao-nature is a universal nature. Sentient beings and insentient things (plants, fruit, and minerals) are able to possess it. In addition, the statement in the passage,

“dao-nature in terms of essence is pure, void, and spontaneous. All beings who possess consciousness and even animals, fruit and plants, and minerals, all possess dao-nature”

道性以清虛自然為體。一切含識乃至畜生、果木、石者，皆有道性也 (P7) is close to

the following two statements from Song Wenming's *Daode yiyuan*:

論道性以清虛自然為體，一切含識各有其分。<sup>88</sup> (P8)

As for the discussion of dao-nature in terms of ontological essence, it is pure, void and spontaneous. All beings who possess consciousness are differentiated.

And,

夫一切含識皆有道性。<sup>89</sup> (P9)

All sentient beings have dao-nature.

The similarities in both meaning and sentence structure in P7, P8, and P9 illustrate the relationship between the two texts. The question is: Is there any relationship between the

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<sup>88</sup> ZhD, 5:28:521.

<sup>89</sup> ZhD, 5:28:521–22.

*Daojiao yishu* and the *Daode yiyuan*?

It is worth examining the relationship between *Daojiao yishu* and the *Daode yiyuan* because their relationship might tell us that the idea that insentient things have dao-nature in the *Daojiao yishu* is directly/indirectly inherited from Song's *Daode yiyuan*, or (practical) Daoism, rather than from Buddhism. To examine the relationship between these two texts, the *Xuanmen dayi* is critical, because it might serve as a medium to connect the *Daojiao yishu* to the *Daode yiyuan*.

Some scholars have pointed out a relationship between the *Daojiao yishu* and the *Xuanmen dayi*.<sup>90</sup> The *Daojiao yishu* is an excerpt from the *Xuanmen dayi*, as shown in the preface of the *Daojiao yishu*:

惟玄門大義，盛論斯致。但以其文浩博，學者罕能精研，遂使修證迷位業之階差；談講昧理教之深淺。今依准此論，芟夷繁冗，廣引眾經，以事類之，名曰《道教義樞》。顯至道之教方，標大義之樞要，勒成十卷，凡三十七條。<sup>91</sup>

As for the *Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries*, it contains flourishing discussions. However, since the text is extensive and broad, scholars are not able to study it sophisticatedly, so that it makes them confused and attain the result of cultivation in different stages, and [therefore] the discussion of principles and teachings are various. Here the work uses the text (*Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries*) as its basis, cuts prolixity, quotes widely from many scriptures, classified by events, and is entitled *Pivotal Meanings in Daoist Teaching*, to illuminate Daoist

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<sup>90</sup> Mugitani, 1986, pp. 268–69, 314; Barrett, 2011a, 1:321; Sharf, 2002, p. 57; Schmidt, 2004, 1:440. It is also mentioned in the preface of the *Daojiao yishu*.

<sup>91</sup> ZhD, 5:31:542–43.

teachings, to list the pivotal concepts. It is condensed to ten fascicles in thirty-seven topics.

The preface criticizes the prolixity of the *Xuanmen dayi*.<sup>92</sup> The compiler of the *Daojiao yishu*, Meng Anpai, aimed to produce a text that was more concise than the *Xuanmen dayi*, and this prompted him to produce a work that was suited to his time and place.<sup>93</sup>

According to Mugitani, the *Xuanmen dayi* and the *Daojiao yishu* were written between 50 and 100 years apart.<sup>94</sup> Both texts contain Daoist doctrine from the time of the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589 A.D.) to the Sui dynasty (581–618 A.D.).<sup>95</sup> According to Schmidt, Ōfuchi has shown that the *Xuanmen dayi* is based on Song Wenming's *Lingbaojing yishu* (*Tongmen lun* 通門論).<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the author of the *Xuanmen dayi* referred to Song's works. Mugitani points out that Meng Anpai also referred to Song's *Lingbaojing yishu*, as he quotes excerpts from the *Xuanmen dayi*.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, Mugitani concludes that Meng Anpai's *Daojiao yishu* referred to both the *Xuanmen dayi* and Song's *Lingbaojing yishu*. The question is: Did Meng Anpai also consult Song's *Daode yiyuan*, or are the *Daode yiyuan* and *Daojiao yishu* related?

The preface of the *Daojiao yishu* explains that it is an excerpt from the *Xuanmen dayi*,

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<sup>92</sup> Barrett, 2011b, 2:1134.

<sup>93</sup> Barrett, 2011a, 1:321.

<sup>94</sup> Mugitani, 1986, pp. 268–69, 314.

<sup>95</sup> Mugitani, 1986, p. 315.

<sup>96</sup> Schmidt, 2004, 1:440. Schmidt refers to Ōfuchi's "On Gu Lingbao jing" 古靈寶經 pp. 33–6. According to TTC, in Ōfuchi's "On Gu Lingbao jing," the Dunhuang manuscript P. 2256 is identified as a fragment of Song's *Tongmen lun* 通門論 (TTC, 3:1275). See also footnote 65.

<sup>97</sup> Mugitani, 1986, p. 270.



but the *Xuanmen dayi* is not the only source in the *Daojiao yishu*, which also quotes passages from various Daoist sources and mentions various Daoist scholars in the text. However, P7 of the *Daojiao yishu* is very close to the two statements (P8 and P9) of Song's *Daode yiyuan* as mentioned. If P7 is originally from either Song's work or from other Daoist sources, the sources of P7 must be provided. Meng Anpai neither provides the source, nor indicates that P7 is a quote. As for some passages or ideas from Song's works which were quoted in the *Daojiao yishu*, Meng Anpai clearly identified that their sources began with a phrase, "the Daoist Teacher Song says . . ." 宋法師云 as shown in the following three passages:

故宋法師釋此六天是不緣不入。<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, Daoist Teacher Song explains these six heavens as neither conditioned nor penetrated.

And,

宋法師云：行上品十戒，口業淨，生欲界，身業淨，登色界，心業淨，登無色界。<sup>99</sup>

Daoist Teacher Song states: "If one practices the ten precepts of the Upper class, to purify the actions that is from mouth one is able to be reborn in the realm of desire. To purify the actions that is from body one is able to be reborn in the realm of form. To purify the actions that is from mind one is able to be reborn in the realm of formlessness."

And,

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<sup>98</sup> ZhD, 5:31:550.

<sup>99</sup> ZhD, 5:31:551.

宋法師云：道智、實智、權智，是為三智。<sup>100</sup>

Taoist Teacher Song states: “The wisdom of the Dao, the wisdom of the Reality, and the wisdom of expedient are three types of wisdom.”

These three passages show that quotes from Song’s works are clearly identified in the *Daojiao yishu*. However, Meng Anpai did not indicate that the source of P7 was the *Xuanmen dayi*. It may be possible to say that the *Daojiao yishu* is an excerpt from the *Xuanmen dayi*, and that Meng Anpai only provided sources of quotes other than the *Xuanmen dayi*. An examination of the relationship between the *Daode yiyuan* and *Xuanmen dayi* is critical for determining the original source of P7. Therefore, the source of the *Xuanmen dayi* should be examined.

The *Xuanmen dayi* originally contained twenty fascicles. Unfortunately, only one fascicle was discovered and preserved, and it is collected in section “Taiping” 太平 (Great Peace) of the ZD. This fragment is also collected in Volume 5 of the ZhD.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to access the whole text to determine the source of P7. However, a textual comparison of the *Daode yiyuan*, *Xuanmen dayi*, and *Daojiao yishu* indicates a relationship and/or genealogy among these texts. So far, the preface of the *Daojiao yishu* indicates a direct relationship between the *Xuanmen dayi* and *Daojiao yishu*.

The author of the *Xuanmen dayi* is not identified, so it is difficult to determine its

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<sup>100</sup> ZhD, 5:31:572.

<sup>101</sup> ZhD, 5:29:525–32.

relationship to the *Daode yiyuan*. According to the ZhD, the author of the *Xuanmen dayi* lived sometime between the Sui and the Tang dynasties,<sup>102</sup> and it was composed around the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>103</sup> However, we can identify that the *Xuanmen dayi* was composed after the *Daode yiyuan* because Song's ideas are quoted in the *Xuanmen dayi*. The quotation “Everyone is consistent with the Daoist Teacher Song that the eight congregations refer to the Three Origins and the Five Virtues” 一家同宋法師，八會只是三元五德<sup>104</sup> shows that the *Xuanmen dayi* was composed after Song's time. According to the *Yunji qiqian*, Song's concept of Three-in-One is quoted in the *Xuanmen dalun (Xuanmen dayi)*,<sup>105</sup> and shows that the author of the *Xuanmen dalun* consulted Song's works.<sup>106</sup> As mentioned above, Ōfuchi has shown that the *Xuanmen dayi* is based on Song Wenming's *Lingbaojing yishu*. From the only one fascicle of the *Xuanmen dayi* that is preserved and collected in the ZhD, we know that the text is about the classification of the Daoist texts into twelve divisions (*shier bu* 十二部).<sup>107</sup> Both the *Lingbaojing yishu* and the *Xuanmen dayi* are about the classification of the Daoist texts into twelve divisions.<sup>108</sup> However, the

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<sup>102</sup> ZhD, 5:29:525.

<sup>103</sup> Schmidt, 2004, 1:440.

<sup>104</sup> ZhD, 5:29:527.

<sup>105</sup> The quote is in footnote 55. ZhD, 29:49:399.

<sup>106</sup> According to the explanation of the *Xuanmen dayi* in the ZhD, another name of the *Xuanmen dayi* is *Xuanmen dalun* (ZhD, 5:29:525). See also footnote 49.

<sup>107</sup> On the *Xuanmen dayi*, see Schmidt, 2004, 1:439.

<sup>108</sup> These two texts are collected in ZhD 5:27:509–18 (*Linbaojing yishu*) and ZhD 5:29:525–32 (*Xuanmen dayi*). According to the *Linbaojing yishu*, Song's *Linbaojing yishu* is a continuation of Lu Xiuqing's 陸修靜 (406–477 A.D.) work (ZhD, 5:27:511–12; TTC, 3:1275). Lu gained fame primarily on his compilation of a Daoist canon in 1128 fascicles organized into the three great “receptacles” Dongzhen 洞真, Dongxuan 洞玄, and Dongshen 洞神, which became the traditional divisions for classifying Daoist scriptures (TTC,

*Xuanmen dayi* contains twenty fascicles. We are unable to access the whole content of the text. However, given its length, I suspect that the whole content of the *Xuanmen dayi* is not restricted to the discussion of the twelve divisions. Since the *Daojiao yishu* is an excerpt from the *Xuanmen dayi*, the *Daojiao yishu* provides us some reference to know about the *Xuanmen dayi*. As discussed earlier, the *Daojiao yishu* expounds the meaning of some essential Daoist concepts in detail. Since the *Daojiao yishu* is an excerpt from the *Xuanmen dayi*, it indicates that the *Xuanmen dayi* also expounds the meaning of some essential Daoist concepts. This type of work is not the same as Song's *Lingbaojing yishu*. Thus, Song's *Lingbaojing yishu* is not the only text to which the author of the *Xuanmen dayi* referred. However, both the *Xuanmen dayi* and the *Daojiao yishu* are about the explanation of the meaning of some essential Daoist concepts. Such type of the texts is similar to Song's work, the *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>109</sup> According to Lu, Song's *Daode yiyuan* was the first Daoist text that expounded the meaning of essential Daoist concepts.<sup>110</sup> In fact, Song's works influenced later Daoist scholars who used both the content and its arrangement as a template to compile the Daoist doctrinal encyclopaedia.<sup>111</sup> If we examine the structure of the text, the *Xuanmen dayi* has similar structure in the pattern of content arrangements to Song's *Daode yiyuan*. A comparison of the pattern of content

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3:1268).

<sup>109</sup> Lu, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>110</sup> Lu, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>111</sup> Mugitani, 1986, p. 270; Lu, 1993, p. 70.

arrangements of the *Daode yiyuan* and the *Xuanmen dayi* gives some information about a direct relationship between the two texts. The pattern of content arrangement in the *Daode yiyuan* appears in the Dunhuang fragment:

- 1) 上德无為第二 Chapter 2: Supreme virtue and non-action
  - a) 序本文 Description of the original text
  - b) 無為為 Not acting on action
  - c) 為無為 Acting on non-action
  - d) 无為无為 Non-acting on non-action
- 2) 自然道性第四 Chapter 4: Spontaneity and dao-nature
  - a) 序本文 Description of the original text
  - b) 明性體 Illuminating the concept of nature in terms of ontological essence
  - c) 詮善惡 Explanation of good and evil
  - d) 說顯沒 Illustration of the manifest and the hidden
  - e) 論通有 Discussion of pervasiveness through being
  - f) 述迴變 Elaboration of cyclic transmigration
- 3) 積德福田第五 Chapter 5: Virtue accumulation and merit field
  - a) 序本文 Description of the original text
  - b) 釋名義 Explanation of the meaning of the concept
  - c) 明身業 Illuminating the actions of body
  - d) 述口業 Elaborating the actions of speech
  - e) 分心業 Distinguishing the actions of mind
  - f) 例三一 Regulation by “Three-in-One”
  - g) 論種子 Discussion of seeds
- 4) 功德因果義第六 Chapter 6: The meanings of merits and cause-and-effect

- a) 序本文 Description of the original text
- b) 辯名義 Elaborating the meaning of the concept missing . . .

Each chapter of the *Daode yiyuan* follows the pattern of original text (*benwen* 本文) followed by an explanation of the meaning of a concept (*shi mingyi* 釋名義).<sup>112</sup> In addition, the title of each chapter in Chinese contains the title of a chapter followed by the number of the chapter:

自然道性第四

Title (Spontaneity and dao-nature), chapter number (four)

The fragment of the *Xuanmen dayi* that has been preserved contains the following pattern:

- 1) 正義第一 Chapter 1: The main meaning (of the text)
- 2) 釋名第二 Chapter 2: Explanation of the meaning (of the twelve Daoist classics)
- 3) 出體地三 Chapter 3: Sources of literary style (of the twelve Daoist classics)
- 4) 明同異第四 Chapter 4: Illuminating the sameness and differences (of the twelve Daoist classics)
- 5) 明次第第五 Chapter 5: Illuminating the order (of the twelve Daoist classics)
- 6) 詳釋第六 Chapter 6: Detailed explanation (of the twelve Daoist classics)
- 7) 釋本文第一 Chapter 1: Explanation of the original text
- 8) 釋神符第二 Chapter 2: Explanation of spirit talisman
- 9) 釋玉訣第三 Chapter 3: Explanation of the formula of jade  
(omitted)
- 19) 明教第一 Chapter 1: Illuminating teachings
- 20) 明行第二 Chapter 2: Illuminating practices

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<sup>112</sup> Lu, 1993, p. 79.

The main category of the *Xuanmen dayi* is from items 1 to 6. Item 1 introduces the text, which is a discussion of the classification of the Daoist texts into twelve divisions (*shier bu*). Item 2 introduces the twelve Daoist divisions in general. Items 4 and 5 illuminate the text, or *ming* 明. Item 6 explains the twelve Daoist divisions in more detail. Items 7 to 18 are subcategories of item 6, and each of the twelve Daoist classics are discussed in detail in 7 to 18. Therefore, in terms of the pattern of the content arrangement in the *Xuanmen dayi*, the “content of the text” (the main meaning, *zhengyi* 正義) is followed by an “explanation” of the text (*shiming* 釋名), which, in turn, is followed by a discussion of the “illuminating” (*ming* 明) relationship between the twelve Daoist classics and their order. The order “content of the text,” “explanation” and then “illuminating” is similar to Chapters 4 to 6 of Song’s *Daode yiyuan* (“the original text,” “explaining” and then “illuminating”). In addition, the format of the title of each chapter of the *Xuanmen dayi* in Chinese is identical to the format of Song’s *Daode yiyuan*. A comparison of the format of the title of the two texts is given below:

The *Daode yiyuan*: 自然道性第四

Title (Spontaneity and dao-nature), chapter number (four)

The *Xuanmen dayi*: 正義第一

Title (the main meaning of the text), chapter number (one)

Both the order of content (“the original text,” “explaining” and then “illuminating”) and the format of the title of each chapter (title, chapter number) of the two texts are similar in

pattern and format. This structure indicates that the author of the *Xuanmen dayi* referred to the *Daode yiyuan* and used the format of the *Daode yiyuan* as a template to develop the *Xuanmen dayi*.<sup>113</sup> Thus, we know that the author of the *Xuanmen dayi* consulted the *Daode yiyuan*, that there is a direct relationship between the two texts and can therefore expect that some excerpts from the *Daode yiyuan* may be included in the *Xuanmen dayi*.

Let us compare the format of the chapter titles of the *Daojiao yishu* with both the *Daode yiyuan* and the *Xuanmen dayi*. The format of the chapter titles of the *Daojiao yishu* is: 道德義第一

Title (the meanings of *Dao* and *de*), chapter number (one)

The format of the chapter titles of the *Daojiao yishu* is identical to the formats of both *Daode yiyuan* and *Xuanmen dayi*. Since the *Xuanmen dayi* has a direct relationship with the *Daode yiyuan*, this direct relationship of the *Xuanmen dayi* and the *Daode yiyuan* indicates that the *Daojiao yishu* has an indirect/direct relationship with the *Daode yiyuan*.<sup>114</sup> This implies that P7 in the *Daojiao yishu* from the *Xuanmen dayi* is originally from the *Daode yiyuan*. Therefore, the genealogy of the three texts in chronological order is the *Daode yiyuan*, *Xuanmen dayi*, and *Daojiao yishu*. Some ideas from the *Daode yiyuan* also appear in the *Daojiao yishu*. An example is the metaphor of a growing field to

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<sup>113</sup> Lu, 1993, p. 78.

<sup>114</sup> Cheng also points out that some concepts listed in the content of the *Daojiao yishu* indicates that Song's *Daode yiyuan* has some influence on the *Xuanmen dayi* (Cheng, 2009, pp. 97–8).



represent the accumulation of merit. In the *Daojiao yishu*:

田以能生為義，謂能生善福，謂福善填滿，諭如世之良田。<sup>115</sup>

Field implies a meaning of having an ability to grow, and it is equivalent with growing good merits, with merits and goodness are filled in full. It metaphorically symbolizes good field of the world.

This idea is similar to the section “Jide futian” 積德福田 (Virtue accumulation and merit field) of Song’s *Daode yiyuan*:

夫福者富也，田者填也。以滋長為義，藝種填滿，致富貴之報也。<sup>116</sup>

Merit is equivalent with wealth. Field is equivalent with filling in. Its meaning implies nourishment and growing, planting seeds and fill in them in full, to become wealth as an effect.

In both passages, growing/cultivating *tian* 田 (field) is a metaphor to emphasize the importance of merit accumulation. Therefore, we can see that the *Daojiao yishu* has direct/indirect relationship with the *Daode yiyuan*, since both texts have a relationship with the *Xuanmen dayi*. Based on this, the source of P7 is Song Wenming’s *Daode yiyuan*. The identification of dao-nature with spontaneity as a universal nature appeared in Song Wenming’s *Daode yiyuan*, which is before Jizang’s time.

Textual comparison of the three Daoist texts, the *Daode yiyuan*, the *Xuanmen dayi*, and the *Daojiao yishu*, demonstrates the interrelationship of the three texts and the idea that insentient things are able to possess dao-nature appeared in the *Daojiao yishu* is a

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<sup>115</sup> ZhD, 5:31:574.

<sup>116</sup> ZhD, 5:28:522.

Daoist idea that it directly or indirectly inherited from the *Daode yiyuan*.

### 3. Conclusion

The development of the concepts of dao-nature and buddha-nature is an example of the complex interweaving of both Daoist and Buddhist thought. Dao-nature has two connotations: ontology and soteriology. In terms of soteriology, the connotation of dao-nature in practical Daoism is not identical with traditional Daoism and Arcane Study. Daoists such as Tao Hongjing and Song Wenming, under the influence of the concept of buddha-nature, coined the term, dao-nature, to denote a cause/potential that enabled a person to attain individual longevity (in Tao's perspective) and enabled the transformation of sentient beings from one form to another to attain universal salvation (in Song's perspective). In terms of ontology, according to Song's *Daode yiyuan*, the author defined dao-nature as spontaneity. He made this definition by quoting both the *Daode jing* and Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Daode jing* in the beginning of Chapter 4 (Spontaneity and dao-nature 自然道性) in his *Daode yiyuan* in order to demonstrate his conception of dao-nature as orthodoxy. The equivalence of dao-nature and spontaneity indicates dao-nature as a universal characteristic and nature.

Song's *Daode yiyuan* upholds the genealogy of the legitimacy that insentient things have buddha/dao nature between Buddhism and Daoism. His discussion of dao-nature as

a universal nature (spontaneity) gives legitimacy to the idea that insentient things have dao-nature, an idea not inherited from the Chinese Buddhist exegete, Jizang, instead, it is a Daoist idea.<sup>117</sup> As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, dao-nature as spontaneity was understood by Jizang and Zhanran as a universal principle. In a holistic view in both practical Daoism and Arcane Study, the nature of the Dao, or dao-nature, provides some references for Jizang and Zhanran to reinterpret buddha-nature as a universal principle that includes insentient things.

In addition, an examination of the genealogy of *Daojiao yishu* shows that the idea that insentient things have dao-nature in the *Daojiao yishu* is not inherited from Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature, but, rather, that the former is inherited from Song's *Daode yiyuan*. Therefore, although the soteriology of dao-nature was borrowed from Buddhism, the idea that insentient things have dao-nature was originally a Daoist thought.

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<sup>117</sup> Song's discussion of dao-nature in terms of spontaneity as a universal nature is a Daoist idea. His discussion of dao-nature in terms of soteriological view is from buddha-nature. As pointed in this chapter, his discussion of dao-nature in the same section of the *Daode yiyuan* also contradicts to the discussion itself. My point here is that Song's definition of dao-nature as spontaneity and universal principle as he quoted from the *Daode jing* and Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Daode jing* (經云：道法自然。河上公云：道性自然，无所法也。經又云：以輔万物之自然。物之自然，即物之道性也) shows that dao-nature is also the nature of insentient things is a Daoist idea.

## Chapter 3: A Discussion of Jizang’s Argument that Grasses and Trees Have Buddha-Nature

In the *Dasheng xuanlun* 大乘玄論 (Discussion of the Profundity of Mahāyāna),<sup>1</sup> the medieval Buddhist exegete Jizang 吉藏 (549–623 A.D.) asserts: “Not only sentient beings have buddha-nature; grasses and trees also have buddha-nature” 不但眾生有佛性。草木亦有佛性也。<sup>2</sup> Jizang’s assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature offers two perspectives: one is an epistemological view,<sup>3</sup> that is, the idea that grasses and trees have buddha-nature is a view of conceptual non-duality. This epistemological view has been discussed by contemporary scholars such as Liu Mingwood, Jörg Plassen,<sup>4</sup> Robert Sharf and others. The second perspective, which will be demonstrated in this chapter, is that Jizang’s argument involves Daoist ontology, in which buddha-nature serves as the ground of all entities, both sentient beings and insentient things, to sustain their existence.

According to Jizang’s *Dasheng xuanlun*, buddha-nature had been discussed by

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<sup>1</sup> The *Dasheng xuanlun* is a late work by Jizang, compiled by others (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “大乘玄論”). Some scholars, such as Ito, suspect the section “the meaning of the Eightfold negation” (*bayi* 八義) in the *Dasheng xuanlun* is not Jizang’s work, but may have been added by his disciples later (Ito, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> T45.1853.40c14–40c15.

<sup>3</sup> 唯識論云。唯識無境界。明山河草木皆是心想。心外無別法。此明理內一切諸法依正不二。以依正不二故。眾生有佛性則草木有佛性。以此義故。不但眾生有佛性。草木亦有佛性也。若悟諸法平等。不見依正二相故, T45.1853.40c11–40c16.

<sup>4</sup> Plassen, 1997.

Chinese Buddhist exegetes who were specialized in eleven distinct “schools”<sup>5</sup> in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589 A.D.). Jizang’s discussion of buddha-nature in association with plants was partly aimed at Chinese Buddhist exegetes who were specialized in the *Dilun* 地論 (*Daśabhūmikasūtra-śāstra*), the *Shelun* 攝論 or the *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論 (*Mahāyānasaṃgraha-śāstra*), the MMPS, and the Yogācāra school.<sup>6</sup> Chinese Buddhist exegetes associated with these four schools or thoughts claimed that only sentient beings possessed buddha-nature, and not insentient things.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Before Jizang, there was no systematized school. Chinese Buddhist exegetes were identified based on their specialties in a Buddhist thought and/or text. As for the discussion of buddha-nature before and in Jizang’s time, as mentioned by Jizang in his *Dasheng xuanlun*, there were eleven “schools,” see T45.1853.35b20–35c19. The discussion of buddha-nature of the Six dynasties (420–589 A.D.) is also shown in a Korean monk’s, Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686 A.D.) work, *Niepan zongyao* 涅槃宗要, see T38.1769.249a7–249b14. This discussion is also mentioned in Junzheng’s 均正 *Dasheng silun xuanyi* 大乘四論玄義, see X46.784.601a18–602a11.

<sup>6</sup> Buddhist exegetes who were associated with the *Dilun* asserted that *ālaya-vijñāna*/store-house consciousness, or the eighth consciousness, is the true, pure mind, and it is the true reality (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “地論宗”). Buddhist exegetes who were associated with the *Shelun* asserted that the eighth consciousness is not the true reality. The true, pure mind as the true essence of sentient beings is the ninth consciousness, which is *amala-vijñāna* (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “攝論宗”).

<sup>7</sup> The examples of the exclusion of insentient things from the concept of buddha-nature in the Six dynasties are also shown in Wonhyo’s *Niepan zongyao*: 第三師云。眾生之心異乎木石。必有厭苦求樂之性。由有此性故修萬行終歸無上菩提樂果。故說心性為正因體。如下文言。一切眾生悉皆有心。凡有心者必當得成阿耨菩提, T38.1769.249a21–249a25; 第四師云。心有神靈不失之性。如是心神已在身內。即異木石等非情物。由此能成大覺之果。故說心神為正因體。如來性品云。我者即是如來藏義。一切眾生悉有佛性即是我義。師子吼中言。非佛性者謂瓦石等無情之物。離如是等無情之物是名佛性故。此是梁武蕭焉天子義也, T38.1769.249a26–249b4. Also in *Daban niepanjing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解 (Collected Explanations of the MMPS), which is a collection of the commentaries on the MMPS from some Buddhist exegetes in the Southern dynasties (420–579 A.D.), one of Buddhist exegetes, Baoliang 寶亮 (444–509 A.D.), states: “As for those that are considered insentient things, [they] neither possess sentience nor have a capacity to understand and attain enlightenment. [They] are excluded from [buddha-]nature” 無情之物者。無情。無悟解之性。非性也, T37.1763.598b13. Baoliang was appointed by Emperor Wu 梁武帝 (464–549 A.D.) of the Liang dynasty to compile the work in 509 A.D. (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “大般涅槃經集解”). Emperor Wu also wrote a preface for the work. The list of Buddhist exegetes is included in the Emperor’s preface, see T37.1763.377a5–377a9; T37.1763.377b10–380a25. According to Baoliang, insentient things cannot possess buddha-nature because of the absence of sentience (*qing* 情). Mind enables sentient beings to understand (*jie* 解), and attain enlightenment (*wu* 悟). For more discussion of the exclusion of insentient things from the discussion of buddha-nature in the Southern China in the period of

The eleven schools discussed buddha-nature from various perspectives. Jizang did not entirely reject their discussions on buddha-nature, but he thought that their discussion of buddha-nature was biased and incomplete. The discussion of buddha-nature should not be limited to any of the eleven schools. His intention was to include and integrate all discussions of buddha-nature of these eleven schools in his discourse of universal buddha-nature.

Jizang was more concerned about the issue of restricting buddha-nature to sentient beings. As will be shown in this chapter, he intended to show that the existence of buddha-nature is not restricted to sentient beings, mind, and *ālaya-vijñāna*. In his perspective, buddha-nature as universal true reality exists in both sentient beings and plants. His view of universal true reality is shown in his assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in the ontological perspective, and this ontological view is consistent with Daoist ontology. This ontological view will be shown in this chapter.

As mentioned in the Introduction, some scholars, such as T.H. Barrett,<sup>8</sup> Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄,<sup>9</sup> Okuno Mitsuyoshi 奥野光賢<sup>10</sup> and Robert Sharf, point out that the idea of grasses and trees having buddha-nature derives from the *Zhuangzi*,<sup>11</sup> in which the Dao is all-pervasive. The question is: “In what way is buddha-nature able to be

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the Northern and Southern dynasties, see Koseki, 1980, pp. 20–4.

<sup>8</sup> Barrett, 1991, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Kamata, 1968, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Okuno, 2002, p. 393.

<sup>11</sup> Kamata, 1968, p. 81.

successfully connected to the insentient realm?” The answer to this question may be found in the method called “within principle (*li*), beyond principle (*li*),” or *linei-liwai* 理內理外,<sup>12</sup> which Jizang applied in order to argue that grasses and trees do possess buddha-nature. In fact, the method that he applied to his argument is more sophisticated than merely the all-pervasiveness of the Dao. Therefore, Jizang’s argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature should be understood in a larger context, through the meaning of the word *li* 理 (principle). The word *li* plays a critical role. Its definition is a pivot that illustrates Jizang’s argument in terms of Daoist ontology. This chapter will examine the meaning of the word *li* and the method of *linei-liwai*. In addition, the method *linei-liwai* that he applied in his argument incorporates methods and ideas from Arcane Study, particularly as exemplified by the third-century Arcane Study thinker and commentator, Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312 A.D.). The issues discussed in earlier chapters now come to bear on the question of the buddha-nature of insentient things in Jizang’s view.

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<sup>12</sup> The method of *linei-liwai* was not developed by Jizang. According to Jizang’s *Jingming xuanlun* 淨名玄論 (Treatise on the Profundity of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*), he learned of this method from his teacher, Falang 法朗 (507–581 A.D.), or Xinghuang Falang 興皇法朗, T38.1780.896c9–896c13. Jizang devoted a specific section to the discussion of *linei-liwai*, T38.1780.896.c14–897a12. Although he borrowed the method from his teacher, the terms *linei* and *liwai* do not necessarily carry the same meaning as was given to them by his teacher. The method is also applied in Zhiyi’s 智顓 (538–597 A.D.) discussions, such as in the *Guanyin xuanyi* 觀音玄義 (Commentary to the Profundity of Chapter “Universal Gate” of the *Lotus Sūtra*), T34.1726.883a22–883c17, and the *Weimojing xuanshu* 維摩經玄疏 (Commentary to the Profundity of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*), T38.1777.535a19–535b12, T38.1777.556b3–556c15. However, the meaning of *li* in Zhiyi’s discussions is different from the definitions given by Falang and Jizang. Therefore, the method of *linei-liwai* has different semantic significance, which varies in different contexts.

Plassen creates a useful chart to summarize Jizang’s structure of the discussion of the location of buddha-nature in terms of *linei-liwai* in the following:

Section	sentient beings		plants	
	內	外	內	外
1. 內有外無				
1.1 通	有	無	有	無
1.2 別	有	—	無	—
2. 外有內無				
	無	有	—	—

According to Plassen’s chart, the discussion of the existence and non-existence of buddha-nature takes place in terms of inside and outside of principle as well as the division of sentient beings and plants. Jizang’s discussion of buddha-nature in association with plants is only in 1.1.

I suggest that Jizang’s discussion of buddha-nature with plants is more sophisticated than Plassen’s chart. I demonstrate another possible model to show Jizang’s structure. Here, I only focus on Plassen’s 1.1 because 1.1 is the view showing that plants are able to possess buddha-nature:

(subjectivity/self)	others/objectivity		perspective
	sentient beings	plants	
1) 內	有	有	epistemological view
	無	無	epistemological view
2) 外	有	有	ontological view
	無	無	ontological view

As I will elaborate in detail later, Jizang divides sentient beings into two different



referential positions, which are subjectivity/self and objectivity/others. In terms of objectivity and others, only the physical aspect of sentient beings is included in his discussion, but mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity<sup>13</sup> is excluded. In this sense, sentient beings without mind in the quality of subjectivity are not differentiated from plants, since they are considered “objects” and thus, are essentially equal. Based on essential equality, both sentient beings and plants are able to possess buddha-nature, and this is how Jizang asserts that grasses and trees have buddha-nature from the ontological perspective. My chart of Jizang’s structure in the above is not a final, determined interpretation. My interpretation provides some alternative suggestions for reading Jizang’s assertion.

It is not easy to interpret Jizang’s work because his works are based on his own interpretation that might not be consistent with original meaning of a text or someone’s thought. Therefore, in this chapter my interpretation of Jizang’s work will be based on his own meaning by textual comparison of an idea in different texts of his works.

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<sup>13</sup> As I will show later, sentient beings in terms of others and objectivity also have mind/consciousness, but this mind/consciousness is considered as the one in the quality of objectivity as opposed to sentient beings in terms of self who have mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity.

## 1. Sentient beings: *Are they buddha-nature or do they have buddha-nature?*

Jizang is conscious of a distinction between the notion of *shi foxing* 是佛性 (“is buddha-nature”) and *you foxing* 有佛性 (“having buddha-nature”) as shown in his

*Dasheng xuanlun*:

既言眾生有佛性。那得言眾生是佛性耶。若言眾生是佛性者。可得言一切眾生悉有佛性。一切佛性悉有佛性不。若不得者。故知。眾生與佛性有異。不得言眾生是佛性也。<sup>14</sup>

It has already been said that sentient beings *have* buddha-nature, but how can it be said that sentient beings *are* buddha-nature? If we say that sentient beings *are* buddha-nature, then can we not conclude that all sentient beings without exception contain [all] sentient beings and that all buddha-nature without exception contain buddha-nature? If we say that this is not the case, then this is because we know that there are distinctions between sentient beings and buddha-nature. It cannot be said that sentient beings are the buddha-nature.

According to the passage, buddha-nature and sentient beings cannot be considered

identical. Jizang’s criticism might aim at Buddhist exegetes such as Huiyuan 慧遠

(523–592 A.D.), also known as Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠,<sup>15</sup> who proclaimed that

mind/sentient being is identical with buddha-nature as shown in his *Dasheng yizhang* 大

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<sup>14</sup> T45.1853.36a22–36a26.

<sup>15</sup> There are two Chinese Buddhist exegetes with the name Huiyuan. The name Jingying Huiyuan is used to distinguish the scholar mentioned here from another Buddhist scholar, Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠 (334–416 A.D.), who established the Chinese Pure Land school at Mt. Lu and was considered the patriarch of the Chinese Pure Land school (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “慧遠”).

乘義章 (Essay on the Meaning of the Great Vehicle):<sup>16</sup>

故經說言。為非佛性說於佛性。非佛性者。所謂一切牆壁瓦石。<sup>17</sup> 又經說言。凡有心者悉是佛性。<sup>18</sup> 此等皆是能知性也。<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, the *Sūtra* (the MMPS) uses a discussion of “those without buddha-nature” to explain buddha-nature. As for “those that are excluded from buddha-nature,” those things are said to be all walls, earthenware, and stones. Also, the *Sūtra* (the MMPS) states that as for all those beings who possess a mind, all of them without exception are buddha-nature.

These [beings] are all considered “[buddha-]nature that knows.”

According to the passage, sentient beings “are” buddha-nature.” This idea is from the aspect of *nengzhi xing* 能知性 (“buddha-nature that knows,”<sup>20</sup> “buddha-nature that perceives”).<sup>21</sup> Buddha-nature and sentient beings are considered nondual.

In Jizang’s perspective, buddha-nature and sentient beings are in a subject-object relationship. Buddha-nature is considered an attribute possessed by sentient beings.

Buddha-nature and sentient beings cannot be identical. In this sense, the notion of *shi foxing* cannot be applied to the discussion of subject of possessing buddha-nature. That is, sentient beings “are not” buddha-nature in themselves (*shi foxing*), but they are able to

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<sup>16</sup> Sharf, 2007, pp. 211–12. However, Huiyuan belonged to the *Dilun* school, which was based on *Yogācāra* and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought.

<sup>17</sup> This quotation is from the MMPS, see T12.374.581a18–581a23.

<sup>18</sup> Maybe this quotation is from the MMPS, see T12.374.524c7–524c10.

<sup>19</sup> T44.1851.472c19–472c22.

<sup>20</sup> This is Sharf’s translation. For more discussion on this aspect, see Sharf, 2007, pp. 211–12.

<sup>21</sup> Huiyuan’s *Dasheng yizhang* also talks about buddha-nature in association with insentient things: 眾生為內。山河大地非情物等。以之為外。若當說彼因果之性。局在眾生。得言是內。若說理性。性通內外, T44.1851.476b10–476b13. This is from another aspect, *suozhi xing* 所知性 (buddha-nature that is known [This is Sharf’s translation], or buddha-nature that is perceived). For a detailed discussion on this aspect, see Sharf, 2007, pp. 211–12. Since this chapter only focuses on Jizang’s discussion of Buddha-nature in association with insentient things, Huiyuan’s discussion is not elaborated in detail here.

possess buddha-nature (*you foxing*). As for Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature, he is conscious of his assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature, which is derived from the perspective of *you foxing* in an active sense.

## 2. Jizang's definition of buddha-nature

Jizang's view of the location of true reality is presented in his assertion that plants have buddha-nature in terms of Daoist ontology. If true reality is universal, it exists in both sentient beings and insentient things. Therefore, this section will examine Jizang's view of true reality and its location.

Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in the ontological perspective is neither restrictively attributed to spiritual liberation nor doctrinal argument. It might be partly due to competition between the Sanlun school 三論 (Three-treatise) school,<sup>22</sup> which he was associated with, and other Buddhist exegetes associated with other Buddhist doctrines. Before and during his time, the teaching of the Sanlun school

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<sup>22</sup> The school based its study primarily on the Indian Madhyamaka school. Jizang was neither the pioneer nor the only Sanlun scholar to revive that school, the restoration of which had been begun by Falang. According to Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782 A.D.) work, the *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 (Slip of the Explanation of the Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*), "The *Satyasiddhi-Śāstra* (Chengshi lun 成實論) was flourishing south of the Yangzi River whereas those north of the Yellow River were partial to *Abhidharma*. At the time, Master Lang from Gaoli (Korea) came from Jianwu of Qi to the south of the Yangzi River, and he had debates with Buddhist exegetes who were associated with the study of *Satyasiddhi-Śāstra*. The masters were all tongue-tied and no opponent could face him. As a result, Master Lang himself spread the Sanlun teaching. Thereupon, Emperor Wu of the Liang appointed 10 monks to study the Sanlun" 江南盛弘成實。河北偏尚毘曇。於時高麗朗公至齊建武來至江南。難成實師結舌無對。因茲朗公自弘三論。至梁武帝勅十人止觀詮等令學三論, T33.1717.951a21–951a24.

was less competitive than other Buddhist teachings such as the *Chengshi lun* and teaching associated with the MMPS.<sup>23</sup> Jizang had to find a new philosophical idea to compete with other Buddhist exegetes,<sup>24</sup> and the argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature was new and largely rejected by Buddhist exegetes in his time. Therefore, his argument of grasses and trees having buddha-nature became one of the representations that demonstrates the philosophical thought of his school and his teachings as all-inclusive in order to compete with those Buddhists exegetes.

Jizang combined the concept of buddha-nature with the doctrine of the emptiness/the Middle Way to form the term “Middle Way-buddha nature,” or *zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性.<sup>25</sup> As will become clear later, Jizang’s doctrine of emptiness is not identical with, but rather more complex than the doctrine in the Indian Madhyamaka school. In his *Dasheng xuanlun*, Jizang identifies Middle Way-buddha nature in the following statements: “As for the vehicle in terms of principle, it refers to Middle Way-buddha nature” 理乘即是中

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<sup>23</sup> In his *Bailun shu* 百論疏 (Commentary to the *Bailun*), he states: 昔山中大師云。出講堂不許人語。意正在此。恐聞之而起疑謗故也, T42.1827.302c2–302c3, and Zhanran’s *Fahua xuanyi shiqian*: 江南盛弘成實, T33.1717.951a21.

<sup>24</sup> The tensions between Jizang and other Buddhist exegetes is shown in his debates and criticism of other scholars’ work in his own works, such as the *Bailun shu* and the *Dasheng xuanlun*. Jizang’s works mostly criticized Buddhist exegetes who were associated with the study of the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* (*Chengshi lun* 成實論) (Yang, 2012, p. 56). According to the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks), a Buddhist scholar of the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* study with whom Jizang had intense debates was Zhituo 智脫 (541–607 A.D.), T50.2060.499a16–499a29. Jizang had many debates with other Buddhist exegetes, as shown in his biography in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T50.2060.513c19–515a8.

<sup>25</sup> Jizang was not the first Buddhist exegete to use the term *zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性.

道佛性<sup>26</sup> and “Middle Way-buddha nature is principle” 中道佛性理也。<sup>27</sup> According to Jizang’s definition, Middle Way-buddha nature specifically refers to principle. His discussion of buddha-nature contains three vehicles: a) principle (*lisheng* 理乘), b) practice (*xingsheng* 行乘), and c) attainment (*guosheng* 果乘).<sup>28</sup> In comparison with the vehicles of practice and attainment, the syntax of Middle Way-buddha nature addresses the discussion of buddha-nature in the context of the doctrine/principle of the Middle Way. Buddha-nature in terms of principle (the Middle-Way) in Jizang’s discussion is consistent with Chinese thought, in which human nature in both the Confucian and Daoist (Arcane Study) perspectives is described in terms of principle.

As for the Sanlun school, true reality is universal. The existence of true reality is not restricted to sentient beings/mind/*ālaya-vijñāna*. Jizang follows Sengzhao’s 僧肇<sup>29</sup> (384–414 A.D.) view. Sengzhao’s discussion of the location of true reality can be found in his “Buzhenkong lun” 不真空論<sup>30</sup> (A Discussion of the Emptiness of the Unreal), in the *Zhao lun* 肇論 (Treatise of [Seng]zhao). In the “Buzhenkong lun”, Sengzhao

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<sup>26</sup> T 45.1853.45a25–45a26.

<sup>27</sup> T45.1853.66c10.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, in reference to the vehicle of practice, buddha-nature is called conditionally caused-buddha nature 行乘即是緣因佛性, and in reference to the vehicle of attainment it is called attainment-buddha nature 果乘即是果佛性, T45.1853.45a26–45a27.

<sup>29</sup> Sengzhao studied the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* early in his life. He was inspired by the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* and became a Buddhist. Sengzhao specialized in the study of emptiness and wrote commentaries on Kumārajīva’s works (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “僧肇”).

<sup>30</sup> The section “Buzhenkong lun” emphasizes the ontological discussion of the absolute reality in the aspect of *jing* (phenomena) (Li, 2011, p. 163). In Seng’s point of view, reality does not exist in either *jing*, or *zhi*, but in both. As for the discussion of *zhi*, it is shown in his other work, the *Boruo wuzhi lun* 般若無知論, in the third section of the *Zhao lun*.

criticizes the discussion of the location of true reality carried on by *geyi fojiao* 格義佛教 (categorizing Buddhist concepts)<sup>31</sup> in his time such as: true reality (*wu*) exists in mind (*xinwu zong* 心無宗),<sup>32</sup> true reality exists independently beyond material objects (*benwu zong* 本無宗),<sup>33</sup> and that true reality exists with material objects (*jise zong* 即色宗)<sup>34, 35</sup> Sengzhao did not entirely reject their discussions, but he thought that their discussions of the location of true reality was biased and incomplete. He argued that true reality exists with all phenomena, both mind and things. In addition, his criticism of *benwu zong* shows that true reality does not exist outside things as like the Dao of Daoism. True reality exists with and inside things as he says this idea in his “Buzhenkong lun”:

然則道遠乎哉?觸事而真!聖遠乎哉?體之即神!<sup>36</sup>

He does not depart from reality in order to establish them in their places; reality is right where they are established. This being so, is the Way far

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<sup>31</sup> As for the six “schools” and seven divisions 六家七宗 of *geyi fojiao* in Sengzhao’s time, Buddhist exegetes had divergent discussions on the location of true reality, *wu* 無 (non-being). Their discussions can be categorized in three general perspectives as mentioned in Sengzhao’s “Buzhenkong lun.” Some Buddhist exegetes associated with *benwu zong* 本無宗 held a view that true reality (*wu*) existed outside of phenomena: 然則真諦獨靜於名教之外，豈曰文言之能辨哉?，45.1858.152a26–152a27. Some Buddhist exegetes associated with *xingwu zong* 心無宗 claimed that *wu* as true reality only existed in mind: 心無者，無心於萬物，萬物未嘗無。此得在於神靜，失在於物虛，T45.1858.152a15–152a16. Buddhist exegetes associated with *jise zong* 即色宗 claimed that *wu* as true reality existed with phenomena: 即色者，明色不自色，故雖色而非色也，T45.1858.152a17. Jizang also knew the discussion of true reality of the six schools and seven divisions and Sengzhao’s criticism of these schools in his “Buzhenkong lun” as mentioned in his *Zhongguanlun shu* 中觀論疏 (Commentary to the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, or Commentary to the *Treatise of the Middle Contemplation*), see T42.1824.29a4–b14. More discussion on the six schools and seven divisions, see Li, 1999, pp. 152–58; Lu, 1999, pp. 111–15.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 31.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote 31.

<sup>34</sup> See footnote 31.

<sup>35</sup> T45.1858.152a15–152a28.

<sup>36</sup> T45.1858.153a4–153a5.

away? Reality is wherever there is contact with things. Is the sage far away?  
Realize from one's life and there will be spiritual intelligence.<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, the statement “Is the Way far away? Reality is wherever there is contact with things” 然則道遠乎哉?觸事而真 (P1) indicates that true reality (*dao*, the Way) not only exists in the mind, but also in the phenomenal world (*shi* 事). In addition, true reality does not exist beyond phenomena. It exists inside phenomena (觸事而真).<sup>38</sup> True reality and phenomena coexist<sup>39</sup> and interdependent. Thus, as for the location of true reality, Sengzhao asserts that true reality not only exists with phenomena but is also inside phenomena (道遠乎哉?觸事而真).<sup>40</sup> Besides, Sengzhao does not say *wu* as true reality. He uses the character *dao* 道 to present true reality. Dao in this context refers to the Middle Way:<sup>41</sup> things are neither being nor non-being,<sup>42</sup> or devoid of essence, yet their existences are not empty. The true reality (the Middle Way) as a principle is universal. It cannot be violated by someone's conceptual interpretation. A sage can

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<sup>37</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 356.

<sup>38</sup> Peng, 1999, p.303.

<sup>39</sup> Lu, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> T45.1858.153a4–153a5. More discussion on Sengzhao's point about the location of true reality, see Peng, 1999, pp. 252–304.

<sup>41</sup> As for his discussion of true reality in terms of the Middle Way, see T45.1858.152a28–153a5.

<sup>42</sup> This idea is based on the Sengzhao's statement: “Insofar as things have already taken shape, they cannot be said to be nonexistent, and since they have no true existence, they cannot be said to be really existent. From this, the principle of the emptiness of the unreal should become clear” (Chan, 1973, p. 355) 欲言其有，有非真生；欲言其無；事象既形。象形，不即無；非真，非實有。然則不真空義，T45.1858.152c16–152c18; “Thus not being existent and not being nonexistent do not mean that there are no things, but that all things are not things in the real (absolute) sense. As all things are not things in the real sense, what is there in relation to which a thing can be so called? Therefore the scripture says, ‘Matter is empty by virtue of its own nature; it is not empty because it has been destroyed’” (Chan, 1973, p. 353) 如此，則非無物也，物非真物。物非真物，故於何而可物？故經云：「色之性空，非色敗空。」，T45.1858.152b6–152b8.



perceive it but cannot infringe upon it.<sup>43</sup>

In section “Buzhenkong lun”, Sengzhao also quotes some references from the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>44</sup> The idea of *Zhuangzi* provides Sengzhao with some reference with which to discuss essential equality in terms of the phenomenal world (*jing* 境). Sengzhao’s work is critical, because he not only incorporates Daoism in his discussion, but also bridges Daoism and Buddhism.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, in Sengzhao’s perspective, true reality (the Middle Way) exists in

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<sup>43</sup> “Therefore the sage exercises his true mind and is in accord with principle (*li*), and there is no obstruction which he cannot pass through. He views the transformation of all things with the clear understanding that [they are all of] one material force and therefore he is in accordance with whatever he may encounter...since he is in accordance with whatever he encounters, he sees the unity of things as he comes in contact with them. Since this is the case, although the ten thousand forms (phenomenal things) seem to be different, they are not so in themselves...Thus things and I sprang from the same root” (Chan, 1973, p. 351) 是以聖人乘真心而理順，則無滯而不通；審一氣以觀化，故所遇而順適...所遇而順適，故則觸物而一。如此，則萬象雖殊而不能自異。...然則物我同根，T45.1858.152a7–152a12. Chan comments on this passage that the description of the mind of a sage is similar to the *Zhuangzi* and the Guo Xiang that there is no deliberate mind of someone, so that the self and others are unified in one without distinction (Chan, 1973, p. 351). The idea that a sage concentrates his mind in order to see the absolute reality and achieve unification of himself and others is shown in Guo Xiang’s commentary on Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*: 故聖人常遊外以私內，無心以順有 (*Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13).

<sup>44</sup> For instance, Sengzhao quotes Chapter 2, “Qiwu lun” 齊物論 (the Adjustment of Controversies), of the *Zhuangzi*. In the “Qiwu lun” it is stated: “By means of a finger (of my own) to illustrate that the finger (of another) is not a finger is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not so by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a finger; and by means of (what I call) a horse to illustrate that (what another calls) a horse is not so, is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not a horse, by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a horse” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 以指喻指之非指，不若以非指喻指之非指也；以馬喻馬之非馬，不若以非馬喻馬之非馬也 (*Zhuangzi*, Qiwu lun:6, in CTP). This idea is quoted in Sengzhao’s work as: “the *Zhuangzi* resorted to the similes of marks and horses [which are but names]” (Chan, 1973, p. 356) 園林託指馬之況，T45.1858.152c29. Another idea in the *Zhuangzi* is in the same Chapter: “Heaven, Earth, and I were produced together, and all things and I are one” (Legge’s translation in CTP) 天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一 (*Zhuangzi*, Qiwu lun:9, in CTP). This idea is quoted in Sengzhao’s work as: “Thus things and I sprang from the same root” (Chan, 1973, p. 351) 物我同根，T45.1858.152a12. These quotes show that Sengzhao had encountered the *Zhuangzi*.

<sup>45</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 344. For instance, the Daoist idea about the sage having no deliberate mind of his own (Chan, 1973, p. 344) is shown in his “Buzhenkong lun”: “This is to make clear that the sage, in his attitude toward the myriad things, leaves the vacuous nature of things as it is and does not need to disintegrate it before he can penetrate it” (Chan, 1973, p. 353) 以明夫聖人之於物也，即萬物之自虛，豈待宰割以求通哉！，T45.1858.152b8–152b9.

phenomena, both mind and things, and it exists within, not outside of,<sup>46</sup> both mind and phenomena (things).

As I will show later, Jizang’s discussion of universal buddha-nature in association with plants in an ontological view also quotes P1. Jizang says: “Is the Way far away? Reality is wherever there is identity with things”<sup>47</sup> 道遠乎哉。即物而真聖遠乎哉。<sup>48</sup> Jizang’s quotation is not identical with P1. He changed the character *chu* 觸 (contact) to *ji* 即 (identical, identity), and this change also appears in Zhiyi’s 智顓 (538–597 A.D.) work.<sup>49</sup> The concept of *ji* (identical) is one of the important ideas in both Zhiyi’s and also Tiantai teaching.<sup>50</sup> Zhiyi’s concept of *ji* demonstrates that true reality not only exists in, but is also identical with phenomena.<sup>51</sup> Since the idea of the identity of true reality with things (即物而真) is in Jizang’s discussion of true reality (buddha-nature), it shows that

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<sup>46</sup> This point is critical as it will be shown in Jizang’s argument that plants and trees have buddha-nature in terms of ontology later.

<sup>47</sup> I refer to Chan’s translation but change the word “contact” 觸 to “identical” 即. Also Sengzhao uses *shi* 事 (phenomena), and Jizang uses *wu* 物 (things).

<sup>48</sup> T45.1853.40c8. Although Jizang says that his statement is a quotation from Sengzhao (故肇法師云。道遠乎哉。即物而真聖遠乎哉。悟即是神也, T45.1853.40c7–40c9), in fact he edited Sengzhao’s statement.

<sup>49</sup> Zhiyi mentioned this idea several times, for example: 若即事而真不必在遠, T33.171.760c25–760c26. This idea is very close to Sengzhao’s statement (P1). It indicates that Zhiyi’s idea is inherited from Sengzhao. Both Sengzhao and Zhiyi use *shi* 事 (phenomena), Jizang uses *wu* 物 (things). Sengzhao uses the word *chu* 觸, but Zhiyi changes *chu* to *ji* 即.

<sup>50</sup> More discussion of the concept of *ji* of the Tiantai school will be introduced in Chapter 4. At this stage, I just want to point out that Zhiyi brought some new interpretations and ideas that were not identical with Buddhism, such as the Threefold Truth, and the idea of nature as coexistence of good and evil.

<sup>51</sup> In Zhiyi’s perspective, the three truths (即中, 即假, 即中) are not separate. They must be perceived as one. That is, the three truths are being simultaneously (即中即假即中). For Zhiyi’s discussion of the non-duality of the three truths (即空即假即中), see Zhang, 1994, pp. 176–77. It shows that the true reality and phenomena are non-dual, or identical (*ji*).

buddha-nature as true reality exists with and is identical with things (即物而真聖遠乎哉).

Therefore, Sengzhao, Zhiyi, and Jizang all agree that true reality (the Middle Way) is universal, and that it is inside/identical with both sentient beings and insentient things.

True reality coexists with phenomena (both sentient beings and insentient things), and they are interdependent.

Jizang defines buddha-nature or Middle Way-buddha nature as universal principle (the Middle Way). Buddha-nature in terms of universal principle is parallel to, but not identical with, dao-nature and the nature of the Dao, while the latter refers to spontaneity.

Jizang's concept of emptiness is not identical with, but more complicated than the doctrine of emptiness in the Indian Madhyamaka school, in which the main teaching is the doctrine of the Twofold Truth. The provisional truth refers to phenomena. The existence of phenomena is provisionally true, but it is not the true reality, which is emptiness, in which all things are devoid of essence.<sup>52</sup> This idea is described in one of the three main treatises of the Madhyamaka school, the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*:

That which is dependent origination  
Is explained to be emptiness.  
That, being a dependent designation,  
Is itself the middle way.

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<sup>52</sup> The Chinese version of the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* states: 諸佛依二諦。為眾生說法。一以世俗諦。二第一義諦, T30.1564.32c16–32c18; and 眾因緣生法。我說即是無。亦為是假名。亦是中道義, T30.1564.33b11–33b13. Jizang quotes these two statements in his *Dasheng xuanlun*, where he states: 中論云。因緣所生法。我說即是空。亦為是假名。亦是中道義。因緣生法是俗諦。即是空是真諦。亦是中道義是體, T45.1853.19b18–19b20.

There does not exist anything  
That is not dependently arisen.  
Therefore there does not exist anything  
That is not empty.<sup>53</sup>

The Middle Way holds that things are empty in nature, but yet are various in appearance.

Emptiness is the universal nature of all things; thus, everything must have emptiness as its nature. Emptiness is the second truth of the Twofold Truth: the absolute/real truth.

However, Jizang has a different perspective on the definition of the real truth than the one in the Madhyamaka school. Jizang thinks that the Twofold Truth refers to the teaching of the Buddha. The teaching of the Buddha, in Jizang's view, is not equivalent with true reality. He clearly distinguished teaching (*jiao* 教) from principle (*li* 理) as described in his *Dasheng xuanlun*: “The Twofold [Truth] refers to teaching. Non-duality refers to principle” 二是教。不二是理。<sup>54</sup> Teaching and principle imply opposite meanings. Jizang classifies the Twofold Truth as applicable to teaching (*jiao*), as shown in the same text:

明如來常依二諦說法。一者世諦。二者第一義諦。故二諦唯是教門。  
不關境理。<sup>55</sup>

The instructions for the illumination of the Thus Come One constantly rely on the Twofold Truth; the first [Truth] is provisional truth whereas the second [Truth] is the absolute truth. Therefore, the two truths (or the

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<sup>53</sup> Garfield, 2009, p. 31. See footnote 124 of Chapter 1.

<sup>54</sup> T45.1853.15b16–15b17.

<sup>55</sup> T45.1853.15a15–15a17. This idea is also shown in the same text: “The teachings of the buddhas are based on [the Twofold Truth]. This is named the Truth of teaching” 諸佛依此而說。名為教諦耳, T45.1853.15b9–15b10.

Twofold Truth) are merely the gate of the teaching and are not associated with phenomena and principle.

According to Jizang, the teaching of the Buddha is a skillful means of expressing the absolute reality to sentient beings, to assist them to attain enlightenment.<sup>56</sup> Thus, teaching is not necessarily applied to insentient things (phenomena). Teaching is not identical with the true reality, as explained in his *Erdi yi* 二諦義 (the Meaning of the Twofold Truth):

二諦為表不二之理。如指指月。意不在指。意令得月。二諦教亦爾。  
二諦為表不二。意不在二。為令得於不二。是故以不二為二諦體。<sup>57</sup>

The Twofold Truth is the representative of the principle of non-duality. It is like a finger pointing to the moon; the meaning is not inside the finger, the meaning is that the finger commands us to behold the moon. The Twofold Truth is also this way; the Twofold Truth represents non-duality, the meaning is not in their duality but in that they command us to behold non-duality. This is why non-duality is taken to be the embodiment of the two truths.

The moon is a metaphor that represents the true reality. The finger represents the Twofold Truth. The true reality is the moon, not the finger (the Twofold Truth). The Twofold Truth is a teaching that guides someone to attain the true reality, which is the principle of non-duality (*buer* 不二). A distinction is made between the Twofold Truth (*jiao*,

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<sup>56</sup> “Question: in your perspective, what is the difference between principle and teaching? Answer: the Twofold Truth refers to teaching. Non-duality refers to principle” 問若爾理與教何異。答自有二諦為教不二為理, T45.1853.15 c11–15c12; “Now, as for the meaning of there being a third truth: their teaching does not have a third truth as they take principle to be truth. Now, if we take teaching as truth, then the Twofold Truth is the principle of the natural world. Now, I will make clear that there is in fact only one truth and as an expedient we say that there are two. Similarly, there is only one vehicle, but as an expedient we say that there are three” 今意有第三諦。彼無第三諦。彼以理為諦。今以教為諦。彼以二諦為天然之理。今明。唯一實諦方便說二。如唯一乘方便說三, T45.1853.19b11–19b14.

<sup>57</sup> T45.1854.108b22–108b25.

teaching) and the true reality (*li*, principle). And, in the same text:

二諦是教門。教門為通不二之理。故以中道不二為體也。<sup>58</sup>

The Twofold Truth refers to teaching. Teaching is an access to the principle of non-duality. Therefore, the Middle Way refers to non-duality and is the embodiment of [the two truths].

From the passage, teaching (the Twofold Truth) itself is not equivalent to the true reality.

It guides someone to access the principle of non-duality, which is the true reality. Jizang

made a clear distinction between *dharmakāya* (or teachings in Jizang's understanding)

and the absolute reality as opposing to Chinese Buddhist exegetes who proclaimed

*dharmakāya*, or teachings of the Buddha as true reality.<sup>59</sup> He applied the concept of

principle to elevate principle (true reality) beyond wisdom to become universal. True

reality refers to principle.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the true reality is the principle of non-duality, not the

teaching of the Twofold Truth. According to the passage, the Middle Way and the

non-duality (principle) are synonymous. Thus, the Middle Way refers to principle, which

is true reality, and it is universal. It is also described in his *Zhongguanlun shu* 中觀論疏

(Commentary to the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*,<sup>61</sup> or Commentary to the *Treatise of the*

*Middle Contemplation*):

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<sup>58</sup> T45.1854.108b27–108b28.

<sup>59</sup> 開善云。二諦者法性之旨歸。一真不二之極理。莊嚴云。二諦者蓋是祛惑之勝境。入道之實津。光宅云。二諦者蓋是聖教之遙泉。靈智之淵府。三說雖復不同。或言含智解。或辭兼聖教。同以境界為諦。若依廣州大亮法師。定以言教為諦。今不同此等諸師, T45.1853.15a20–15a25.

<sup>60</sup> 為對由來以理為諦故, T45.1853.15a26–15a27.

<sup>61</sup> This is one of the three main treatises of the Madhyamaka school.

中是所詮之理。論是能詮之教。斯無理不攝。無教不收。問何由爾耶。答所詮之中則三種中道。世諦中真諦中非真非俗中。能詮之教即論此三中。<sup>62</sup>

The Middle [Way] is principle of that which “is explained,” whereas “discussion” (Treatise) is the teaching that “it can explain”; that which is without principle is not included and that which is without teaching is not contained. Question: Why is this so? Answer: the Middle Way of that which is explained is equivalent to the threefold Middle Way, which is the Middle Way in terms of provisional truth, the Middle Way in terms of real truth, and the Middle Way that is neither true nor provisional. The teaching that explains about is nothing other than the explanation of the threefold Middle Way.

According to the passage, the Middle Way refers to principle. Principle can be explained by teaching, but it cannot be violated by teaching. Jizang holds the view that principle and teaching are not identical. The equivalence of buddha-nature with principle and the Middle Way indicates that Jizang denotes buddha-nature as a universal principle. It is not restricted to wisdom and sentient beings. Principle (true reality) cannot be violated by wisdom or or any conceptual activity. Instead, it is beyond wisdom and all conceptual activities.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> T42.1824.2a5–2a8.

<sup>63</sup> Jizang’s view of principle (the Middle Way) in terms of universal principle is not his own idea. This idea has been discussed in Sengzhao’s discussion of the location of true reality in his “Buzhenkong lun” as discussed before. Zhiyi’s also discusses the Middle Way in terms of universal principle. The difference between Sengzhao’s and Zhiyi’s views of the Middle Way is that Sengzhao defines the Middle Way as neither being nor non-being 非有非無 (若有不自有，待緣而後有者，故知有非真有。有非真有，雖有，不可謂之有矣。不無者，夫無則湛然不動，可謂之無。萬物若無，則不應起；起則非無， T45.1858.152c3–152c7). Zhiyi applied the concept of *ji* 即 (identity) to the Middle Way that the Middle Way (the ultimate reality) is identical with provisional truth (and emptiness as well) (圓三智者。有漏即是因緣生法。即空即假即中。無漏亦即假即中。非漏非無漏亦即空即假。一法即三法。三法即一法。一智即三智。三智即一智。智即是境境即是智。融通無礙, T33.1716.714a24–714a28).

In Jizang's perspective, the Middle Way is not the ultimate reality. He disagrees with the discussion of the Middle Way as the ultimate reality offered by some Chinese Buddhist exegetes who specialized in different doctrines, such as Kaishan Zhizang 開善智藏 (458–522 A.D.) whose speciality was the study of the *Chengshi lun*. Jizang's criticism of Zhizang's work is shown in his works such as *Erdi yi* and *Dasheng xuanlun*.<sup>64</sup> Jizang criticized Zhizang's model of the Middle Way and argued that the Middle Way should not end with the transcendence of the Twofold Truth, which are *you* 有 (being) and *wu* 無 (non-being). In Zhizang's model, the Middle Way as the transcendence of being and non-being is considered the true reality of being and non-being. However, as the ultimate reality, Jizang criticizes Zhizang's claim of the Middle Way as the ultimate reality because it juxtaposes two opposites, *zhen* 真 (real, true, reality) and *su* 俗 (unreal, mundane, ordinary, provisional).<sup>65</sup> He argues that the ultimate reality should transcend *zhen* and *su*.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Jizang's concept of the Middle Way transcends the "Middle Way" of Zhizang's concept of Twofold Truth.<sup>67</sup> Jizang created a fourfold Twofold Truth,<sup>68</sup> in which the ultimate reality transcends all possible dichotomies and

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<sup>64</sup> T45.1854.108a24–10816; T45.1853.15c13–15c23; Yang, 2012, p. 182. For more detailed criticism and discussion, see *Erdi yi*.

<sup>65</sup> "Kaishan explains the Twofold Truth, ... the Middle Way in terms of real truth is still considered the true reality" 開善明二諦...真諦中道還是真諦, T45.1854.108a24–108a28.

<sup>66</sup> "My explanation here is that the embodiment of the Twofold Truth transcends both provisional and real [truths]" 今明。即以非真非俗為二諦體, T45.1854.108b16.

<sup>67</sup> Yang, 2012, p. 170.

<sup>68</sup> For Jizang's detailed discussion of fourfold Twofold Truth, see Yang, 2012, pp. 127–30, 180–88.



two opposites and cannot be described in words and forms. It is described in his work

*Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義 (Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises<sup>69</sup>):

所以然者。諸法實相非中非不中。無名相法為眾生故強名相說。欲令因此名以悟無名。<sup>70</sup>

As for that which is self-so, it is the true reality of all phenomena and is neither the Middle Way nor not the Middle Way. On behalf of sentient beings, the nameless and formless Dharma (self-so or the true reality) is thus forced to take on names and forms as teachings in order to lead sentient beings to enlightenment, which is nameless (self-so).

The Middle Way is considered true reality, which is opposed to non-true reality. True reality (*zhen*) and non-true reality (*su*) are still opposite. Therefore, according to the passage, the ultimate reality (self-so) is beyond the Middle Way. It encompasses and transcends both Middle Way and non-Middle Way. The Middle Way is not the ultimate reality. Jizang seems to know that the ultimate reality is mysterious and indeterminate, but can be approached via personal experiences and practices<sup>71</sup> of teachings and principles. He applies the dialectical negation as a method to negate all possible definitions and concepts to demonstrate the ultimate reality (self-so) as profound,

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<sup>69</sup> The three Treatises are the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (Zhong lun 中論), the *Śata-Śāstra* (Bai lun 百論, Treatise of One Hundred Verses; see Muller, 2011, “百論”), and the *Shiermen lun* 十二門論 (Treatise of the Twelve Aspects; see Muller, 2007, “十二門論”). They are three main treatises of the Madhyamaka school.

<sup>70</sup> T45.1852.14b3–14b5.

<sup>71</sup> Yang, 2012, p. 141.

mysterious.<sup>72</sup> This method is shown in his fourfold Twofold Truth. He did not deny the existence of the ultimate reality.<sup>73</sup>

Jizang’s idea that the mysteriously ultimate reality can present itself by means of teachings and principle might refer to both the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* and the *Daode jing*.<sup>74</sup> His quotations from the *Daode jing* show that Jizang was familiar with the idea that the Dao as the ultimate reality was mysterious (*xuan* 玄). In fact, Jizang was aware of Arcane Study in his time. In the *Sanlun xuanyi*<sup>75</sup> Jizang mentioned the three mysteries (zhendan sanxuan 震旦三玄).<sup>76</sup> The three mysteries refer to the *Zhouyi* 周易,<sup>77</sup> the

<sup>72</sup> Yang, 2012, pp. 129–30.

<sup>73</sup> Yang, 2012, p. 141.

<sup>74</sup> *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* sates: 無自性故空。空亦復空。但為引導眾生故。以假名說。離有無二邊故名為中道, T30.1564.33b16–33b18. This passage is consistent with the *Daode jing* which Jizang quoted in some of his works. In the *Zhongguan xushu* 中觀序疏 (Commentary to the Preface of the *Zhongguan*, or Commentary to the Preface of the [Treatise] of Middle Contemplation), he writes: “The *Daode jing* states, ‘the mystery upon mystery and gateway of all subtleties’ I borrow the language to name the work” 老子云。玄之又玄。眾妙之門。借斯言以目今論也, T42.1824.4a23–4a25. The translation of the *Daode jing* is by Lynn (1999, p. 52). In the preface of Jizang’s *Shiermen lunshu* 十二門論疏 (Commentary to the *Dvādaśānikāya-Śāstra*, or Commentary to the *Treatise of the Twelve Aspects*), he states: “As for the twofold mysteries, it is described in the *Daode jing*, which states, ‘the mystery upon mystery and gateway of all subtleties’” 兩玄者即老子云。玄之又玄眾妙之門, T42.1825.173b11–173b12. The *Dvādaśānikāya-Śāstra* is one of the three main treatises of the Madhyamaka school. This text was attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated by Kumārajīva (Muller, 2007, “十二門論”). The text explains the doctrine of emptiness in twelve aspects (Muller, 2007, “十二門論”). In the preface of Jizang’s *Bailun shu* 百論疏 (Commentary to the *Śata-Śāstra*), he states: “The *Daode jing* states, ‘the mystery upon mystery and gateway of all subtleties.’ [I] borrow this language to discuss about embodiment to enlighten someone to realize the marvelous Way of double mystery” 老子云。玄之又玄眾妙之門。今借此語歎論主體悟重玄妙道, T42.1827.234b4–234b5. The *Śata-Śāstra* is one of the three main treatises of the Madhyamaka school. The central discussion of the text is to refute other non-Buddhist teachings by the doctrine of emptiness and the concept of non-ātman (*wu wo* 無我) (Muller, 2011, “百論”; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “百論”).

<sup>75</sup> T45.1852.1c28–2a25.

<sup>76</sup> T45.1852.1c29.

<sup>77</sup> The *Zhouyi* is part of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes).

*Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>78</sup> The discussion of the three mysteries was significant in the Chen period (557–589 A.D.). Jizang (549–623 A.D.) also lived in this period. In addition, in the same text, Jizang also mentioned Zhou Hongzheng 周弘政(正)<sup>79</sup> and Zhangji<sup>80</sup> 張機(譏).<sup>81</sup> Both Zhou and Zhang specialized in the study of the three mysteries. They were reputed in the study of the three mysteries in the Chen period. Zhou's lecture on the *Zhouyi* attracted both officials and common people.<sup>82</sup> Emperor Gao 高宗 (569–582 A.D.) even attended Zhang's lecture on the *Zhuangzi* and the *Daode jing*.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Jizang must have been familiar with the three mysteries in his time. Arcane Study should be included in our examination of Jizang's thought. In Jizang's perspective the ultimate reality of all things (*zhufa shixiang* 諸法實相), or self-so (*suoyi ran* 所以然) is mysterious, and this idea is also shown in his use of the word *xuan* (mystery) in the title of his work, *Dasheng xuanlun*. Middle Way-buddha nature is not equivalent with the Dao

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<sup>78</sup> *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “震旦三玄.”

<sup>79</sup> His biography is collected in section “*liezhuan* 18” 列傳 18 in fascicle 24 of the *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:305–10. According to the biography, Zhou specialized in the *Daode jing* and the *Zhouyi* 周易 when he was ten years old (年十歲，通老子、周易). His works include commentaries to the *Daode jing*, the *Zhouyi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and others. For a detailed information about Zhou, see *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:305–10.

<sup>80</sup> His biography is collected in section “*liezhuan* 27” 列傳 27 in fascicle 33 of the *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:443–45.

<sup>81</sup> 同盜牛之論(周弘政張機並斥老有雙非之義也), T45.1852.2a25.

<sup>82</sup> 時於城西立士林館，弘正居以講授，聽者傾朝野焉，弘正啟梁武帝周易疑義五十條，*Chenshu*, 1972, 2:307. In Yuanxian's 袁憲 biography in section “*liezhuan* 18” in fascicle 24 of the *Chenshu*, it states: “國子博士周弘正謂憲父君正曰：「賢子今茲欲策試不？」君正曰：「經義猶淺，未敢令試。」居數日，君正遣門下客岑文豪與憲候弘正，會弘正將登講坐，弟子畢集，乃延憲入室，授之麈尾，令憲樹義。時謝岐、何妥在坐，弘正謂曰：「二賢雖窮奧蹟，得無憚此後生耶！」何、謝於是遞起義端，深極理致，憲與往復數番，酬對閑敏。弘正謂妥曰：「恣卿所問，勿以童稚相期。」時學衆滿堂，觀者重沓，而憲神色自若，辯論有餘，” *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:312.

<sup>83</sup> 仍令於溫文殿講莊老，高宗幸宮臨聽，賜御所服衣一襲，*Chenshu*, 1972, 2:444.

of Daoism.

The Middle Way is a principle of non-duality. Mind and phenomena are considered two opposites. The Middle Way as true reality transcends and encompasses both phenomena and mind.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the Middle Way is a principle of non-duality 不二之理, which transcends and encompasses both mind and the phenomenal world. The principle, the Middle Way, is universal. As mentioned earlier, Jizang's definition of Middle Way-buddha nature refers to principle 理乘即是中道佛性.<sup>85</sup> The equivalence of buddha-nature with the Middle Way indicates that buddha-nature is a universal principle. It cannot be violated by any conceptual activity. Buddha-nature as a universal principle is thus parallel to dao-nature, or the nature of the Dao, as spontaneity, also a (universal) principle.

In Jizang's perspective, buddha-nature in terms of principle (the Middle Way) as true reality is universal. If this is the case, buddha-nature exists in plants. How then is it

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<sup>84</sup> “Your elucidation of the absolute truth of emptiness refers merely to the phenomenal world and is not wisdom. This is a biased way. What you call wisdom is totally not, in its very foundation, the wisdom that elucidates. Your elucidation of wisdom is merely a wisdom that is without the phenomenal world, and this is indeed a biased truth that cannot be called the Middle Way. And yet the truth of the Middle Way is difficult to discern for it is endowed with a central proposition that is similar to the Twofold Truth: it is neither the middle nor the sides and does not abide in either the middle or the sides, for the middle and the sides are of equal calibre and are both provisional names for the Middle Way” 彼明第一義空但境而非智。斯是偏道。今言智慧。亦非由來所明之智慧。彼明智慧但智而非境。斯亦是偏道義。非謂中道也。但中道義難識。具如二諦中辨。非中非邊不住中邊。中邊平等假名為中, T45.1853.37b29–37c5; and “The Middle [Way] expresses its meaning through phenomena. The Middle [Way] expresses its meaning through mind... Therefore, One Dharma (the Middle Way) expresses its meaning through all *dharmas*. All *dharmas* have meanings based on the One Dharma” 中以色為義。中以心為義...故一法得以一切法為義。一切法得以一法為義, T45.1852.14b12–14b15.

<sup>85</sup> T 45.1853.45a25–45a26.

possible for Jizang to make the assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in terms of ontology? The main goal of this chapter is to examine Jizang's assertion.

Jizang's ontological discussion of buddha-nature holds that grasses and trees have buddha-nature, as shown in the following paragraph (hereafter P2):

今次明佛性之有無。問為理外眾生有佛性。為理內眾生有佛性耶。答曰。問理外眾生有佛性不。此不成問。何者。理外本自無有眾生。那得問言理外眾生有佛性不。故如問炎中之水。本自不曾有。何得更問炎中之水從何處來。是故理外既無眾生。亦無佛性。五眼之所不見。故經云。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相。即非菩薩。是故我與人乃至今人無有佛性。不但凡夫無佛性。乃至阿羅漢亦無佛性。以是義故。不但草木無佛性。眾生亦無佛性也。若欲明有佛性者。不但眾生有佛性。草木亦有佛性。此是對理外無佛性。以辨理內有佛性也。<sup>86</sup>  
. . . 故肇法師云。道遠乎哉。即物而真聖遠乎哉。悟即是神也。<sup>87</sup>

Now, at this time let us elucidate the existence and non-existence of buddha-nature. Question: Do sentient beings beyond *li* have buddha-nature, and also do sentient beings within *li* have buddha-nature? Answer: You ask if sentient beings beyond *li* have buddha-nature or not? This is not a good question. Why? There do not exist sentient beings beyond *li*. Thus how can you ask whether beings beyond *li* have buddha-nature or not?

This is thus like asking about the water within fire: it fundamentally does not exist, so how can we ask about the water that is within fire? Where would it come from? For this reason in no way can those beyond *li* be sentient beings, and furthermore buddha-nature does not exist [beyond *li*]. The five [types] of vision are unable to see [the buddha-nature]. Therefore, as the *Sūtra* (the Diamond Sūtra) states, “No bodhisattva who is a real bodhisattva cherishes the idea of an ego entity, a personality, a being, or a separated individuality.”<sup>88</sup> For this reason all of the selves and others all

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<sup>86</sup> T45.1853.40b10–40b21.

<sup>87</sup> T45.1853.40c7–40c9.

<sup>88</sup> The translation of the *Jingang jing* is from Price and Wong, 1990, p. 19.

the way down to the present are without buddha-nature. Not only do ordinary people not have buddha-nature, but all the way down to the *arhats* are without buddha-nature. Therefore, relying on this truth, not only do grasses and trees not have buddha-nature, but also sentient beings are without buddha-nature as well. If you intend to illustrate those who have buddha-nature, then not only do sentient beings have buddha-nature, but also the grasses and the trees have buddha-nature as well. This argument is for those who assert that “the inexistence of buddha-nature beyond *li*” in order to support “the existence of buddha-nature within *li*.”

. . . Therefore, Master [Seng]zhao says, “He does not depart from reality in order to establish them in their places; reality is right where they are established. This being so, is the Way far away? Reality is wherever there is identity with things. Is the sage far away? Awaken from one’s life and there will be spiritual intelligence.”<sup>89</sup>

Although contemporary scholars have made valuable contributions to the analysis of Jizang’s assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in terms of epistemology, P2 is not included in their discussion. I suggest that Jizang’s argument that plants have buddha-nature as an ontological view is in P2. To understand how Jizang made his assertion possible, it is necessarily to examine what the meaning of the word *li* and the method of *linei-liwai* are applied in this passage. In addition, as mentioned before, Sengzhao’s discussion of the location of true reality (P1) is quoted by Jizang in P2 to support his argument that insentient things have buddha-nature in the ontological perspective. These two points will be elaborated in detail in the next sections.

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<sup>89</sup> Chan, 1973, p. 356. The translation associated with Sengzhao’s work is from Chan, except for the word “awaken,” which replaces the word “realize” because Chan’s translation is of Sengzhao’s work, “Buzhenkong lun” 不真空論 of the *Zhao lun*. I also replaces the word “contact” (*chu* 觸) by “identical” (*ji* 即).

### 3. An examination of Jizang’s argument of buddha-nature in an ontological view

#### 3.1 The meaning of the word *li* 理 (principle) and the method of *linei-liwai* 理內理外 (within *li*, beyond *li*)

The word *li* appears many times in Jizang’s works, but it has a variety of meanings depending on the context. *Li*, in the specific context of *linei-liwai*, has been interpreted differently by scholars. Aaron Koseki interprets *li* as the principle of the Middle Way.<sup>90</sup> Plassen does not clearly define *li* in the context of *linei-liwai*.<sup>91</sup> Liao Minghuo 廖明活 interprets *li* as reality/principle/Buddhist teachings, and suggests that *linei* refers to someone who understands reality/principle/Buddhist teachings/principle of non-duality, and *liwai* refers to someone who does not.<sup>92</sup> Shi Hengqing 釋恆清<sup>93</sup> and Yang Huinan 楊惠南 interpret *li* as *weishi li* 唯識理, or the principle of the Consciousness-only of the *Yogācāra* tradition,<sup>94</sup> or teachings of *Yogācāra* tradition, the principle/teaching of

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<sup>90</sup> Koseki, 1977, p. 221.

<sup>91</sup> In Plassen’s article, he does not clearly define what “principle” in the context of *linei-liwai* refers to. As we see in his chart on p. 4 of his article, Table 1 is about “Existence of the buddha-nature inside and outside the principle.” I am not sure if the “principle” in Plassen’s chart refers to the principle of equality (*pingdeng zhi li* 平等之理) as he points out on p. 6 of his article.

<sup>92</sup> Liu, 2008, pp. 103–4.

<sup>93</sup> Shi, 1996a.

<sup>94</sup> Yang, 2012, p. 252. Yang argues that the title of the text, *Weishi lun* 唯識論 (Treatise on Consciousness-Only), is included in Jizang’s works, such as the *Fahua xuanlun* 法華玄論 (Treatise on the Profundity of the *Lotus Sutra*) (T34.1720.389.c1; T34.1720.390c11) and the *Dasheng xuanlun*, which states: 唯識論云。唯識無境界, T45.1853.40c12. He also suggests that the *Weishi lun* mentioned in Jizang’s works is in fact that of Vasubandhu (around the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries) *Dasheng weishi lun* 大乘唯識論 (A Mahāyāna Treatise of Consciousness-Only), which was translated by Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569 A.D.) (Yang, 2012, p. 250). The *Dasheng weishi lun* states: 此唯識理無窮 (T31.1589.73c9), and 成就唯識理,

Consciousness-Only. Although the scholars have different interpretations of the word *li*, their interpretations illustrate a common point that the word *li* refers to principle and teachings.

Another possible interpretation for *li* is sentient beings. The source of *li* in reference to sentient beings is in Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra* (Niepan lun 涅槃論),<sup>95</sup> which was translated by Dharmabodhi (Damoputi 達磨菩提) in the Northern Wei 北魏 dynasty (386–519 A.D.).<sup>96</sup> The *Śāstra* states: “Sentient beings are *li*, there are no sentient beings beyond *li*” 眾生是理。理外更無眾生,<sup>97</sup> and this statement parallels that of Jizang: “since there are no sentient beings beyond *li*” 理外既無眾生.<sup>98</sup> The parallel between these two statements illustrates that Jizang might have read Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra*, since these two statements are very close in structure.<sup>99</sup> Jizang may have been

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T31.1589.73c10. Therefore, *weishi* of *weishi li* refers to *Dasheng weishi lun*. I examined some texts associated with the Consciousness-Only school, and found that the term *weishi li* appears in the *Dasheng weishi lun*. The term *weishi li* also appears in another of Vasubandhu's works, *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* (*She dasheng lun shi* 攝大乘論釋, Commentary to the Summary of the Great Vehicle), which was also translated by Paramārtha. The *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* states: 由能解唯識理故, T31.1595.208c14. The term *weishi li* only appears in these two works of Vasubandhu. *Li* in the term *weishi li* in these two texts refers to the principle of Consciousness-Only (see T31.1589.73c1–73c15), and it can be interpreted as “the principle of Consciousness-Only,” as suggested by Yang. Based on Yang's suggestion that *li* refers to the teachings of the *Yogācāra* tradition, Yang interprets the term *linei* as all things and phenomena within the store-house consciousness/*tathāgata-garbha*, and *liwai* as all things and phenomena outside the store-house consciousness/*tathāgata-garbha* (Yang, 2012, p. 252).

<sup>95</sup> The Sanskrit title of the text is my translation based on Chinese title, Niepan lun.

<sup>96</sup> Radich, 2008.

<sup>97</sup> T26.1527.280c5–280c6.

<sup>98</sup> T45.1853.40b14.

<sup>99</sup> The meaning of Jizang's statement “理外既無眾生” is not identical with the statement “理外更無眾生” of the *Nirvāṇa Śāstra*. Although these two statements are similar, their meanings are not identical. I suspect that Jizang changed some characters of the statement of the *Nirvāṇa Śāstra* strategically in order to make the statement fit to his own argument. Therefore, we do not need to read Jizang's statement based on the one in the *Nirvāṇa Śāstra*. Jizang's statement is interpreted as “since no sentient beings exist in the external



familiar with the technical use of the word *li* to represent sentient beings,<sup>100</sup> as he quoted Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra* in some of his works;<sup>101</sup> moreover, the title of the text appears throughout his works.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra* may have provided Jizang with the concept that the word *li* can be applied to signify sentient beings. In addition, as pointed out in Jizang's *Dasheng xuanlun*, some of the eleven schools also identify sentient beings as *li* to show non-duality of principle and phenomena (sentient beings).<sup>103</sup> Therefore, it is possible to interpret *linei* and *liwai* as inside sentient beings and outside sentient beings respectively. Based on this interpretation of *li* as sentient beings, the statement "buddha-nature exists within *li*" 理內有佛性 (P3) can be

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world of the mind," or "beyond mind since there is no sentient being."

<sup>100</sup> The reference to *li* in association with the sentient realm also appears in the specific discussion of the subject of buddha-nature in the *Dasheng xuanlun*: 故信等五根未立者。理外行心名外凡夫。五根立者。理內行心名內凡夫。故言理內行心理外行心。既有此語。亦即是理內外義, T45.1853.40a25–40a28.

<sup>101</sup> The *Dasheng xuanlun* states: 涅槃論云。王宮生生而不起。雙林滅滅而不無也。亦是假名者, T45.1853.31a24–31a25. The statement is consistent with Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra*, which states: 是故王宮生雙林滅皆是遊戲, T26.1527.278a28. According to Vasubandhu's explanation, the formation of a palace and the devastation of a forest are unreal, and it is consistent with Jizang, who states: 故涅槃論云。眾生有佛性非密。眾生無佛性亦非密。眾生即是佛乃名為密也, T45.1853.41b3–41b5. Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra* states: 願佛開微密廣為眾生說。云何微密。身外有佛亦不密。身內有佛亦非密。非有非無亦非密。眾生是佛故微密, T26.1527.277c29–278a2. Jizang replaces the term buddha-nature for the word buddha in Vasubandhu's work. These two evidences illustrate that Jizang had read Vasubandhu's *\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra* when he was composing the *Dasheng xuanlun*.

<sup>102</sup> The name of the text, *Niepan lun* (*\*Nirvāṇa Śāstra*), also appears in the *Dasheng xuanlun*. See T45.1853.31a24; T45.1853.41b3.

<sup>103</sup> I think Jizang's interpretation of *li* as sentient beings is not necessarily consistent with the one in the *Nirvāṇa Śāstra* because the statement "sentient beings are *li*" 眾生是理 in the *Nirvāṇa Śāstra* present an idea of non-duality of principle (true reality) and sentient beings (phenomena). The "idea" that sentient beings are principle is also criticized by Jizang (是故應須破洗...第一家以眾生為正因, T45.1853.35c25–35c29). His criticism of this idea is also shown in his argument that if buddha-nature is sentient beings, it is problematic to say sentient beings possess buddha-nature (see footnote 14). Although Jizang criticized the idea, it does not mean that he did not accept the technical use of *li* to present sentient beings. It is possible, but as I will show that the meaning of *li* in Jizang's method of *linei-liwai* refers to subjective mind.

interpreted as “buddha-nature exists within sentient beings.” However, as for another statement “sentient beings who are within *li* have buddha-nature” 理內眾生有佛性 (P4), it is impossible to interpret this statement as “sentient beings who are within sentient beings have buddha-nature.”

In fact, the meanings of P3 and P4 are not identical. P3 is a discussion of the location of buddha-nature in terms of within 內 (*liwai* 理內), i.e., buddha-nature exists within sentient beings. P4 is also a discussion of the location of buddha-nature, but it is not about the existence of buddha-nature within sentient beings. Rather, it is about sentient beings in reference to a specific subject (*li* 理) having buddha-nature: sentient beings who are within *li* (*linei zhongsheng* 理內眾生). The subject of P3 is *linei* 理內 (within sentient beings). The subject of P4 is “*linei zhongsheng*” 理內眾生 (sentient beings who are within *li*). Therefore, the interpretation of *li* as sentient beings can be applied to P3, but not to P4. *Li* seems to have other interpretation than sentient beings.

My suggestion is that *li*, in the specific context *linei-liwai*, refers to “mind” in terms of subjectivity.<sup>104</sup> It is possible to interpret *li* as mind because one of the eleven schools of Jizang’s criticism claimed that mind was a direct cause.<sup>105</sup> Although Jizang might not agree with the idea that direct cause is restricted to mind, he was aware that mind was

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<sup>104</sup> This is also pointed out by the contemporary Chinese philosopher, Fang Litian 方立天. According to Fang, the meaning of *li* in Jizang’s context of *linei-liwai* refers to mind as the subjective (Fang, 2004, p. 335).

<sup>105</sup> 第三師以心為正因佛性, T45.1853.35b29.

considered direct cause and principle. My suggested interpretation of *li* as “mind” in the quality of subjectivity is based on the possible interpretation of the statement “*linei zhongsheng*” 理內眾生. Although both *li* and *zhongsheng* 眾生 (sentient beings) refer to sentient beings, they seem to be two different references. I suggest that *li* in Jizang’s method of *linei-liwai* refers to sentient beings in terms of self and subjectivity, and *zhongsheng* refers to sentient beings in terms of others and objectivity. However, as mentioned, it is impossible to interpret *li* as sentient beings for the statement *linei zhongsheng*. Thus, although *li* refers to sentient beings in terms of self and subjectivity, it is more specifically saying that one possible interpretation of *li* is mind in the quality of subjectivity. I will interpret Jizang’s definitions of *li* and *zhongsheng* based on his own meaning and discussion in the following.

As suggested before, *zhongsheng* in Jizang argument refers to sentient beings in terms of objectivity. That is, *zhongsheng* are considered “objects,” and the mind in the quality of subjectivity is excluded. My suggestion is based on the concept of *zhongsheng* in terms of *jiaren* 假人 (people in terms of provisional existence) as Jizang quoted from one of the eleven schools and included in his criticism of their discussions of buddha-nature. According to the school quoted by Jizang, *zhongsheng* refers to *jiaren* (眾生即是假人)<sup>106</sup> as shown in the discussion of *zhengyin* 正因 (direct cause) in terms of

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<sup>106</sup> 第二以六法為正因。此之兩釋。不出假實二義。明眾生即是假人。六法即是五陰及假人也,

the six *dharmas*: “[The school] explains *zhongsheng* (sentient beings) as beings in terms of provisional existence. The six *dharmas* are the five *skandha* and beings in terms of provisional existence” 明眾生即是假人。六法即是五陰<sup>107</sup>及假人也。<sup>108</sup> From the statement, *jiaren* is one of the six *dharmas*. *Jiaren* also refers to another concept, *shoujia* 受假 (人為受假).<sup>109</sup> Jizang quotes the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* saying that the five *skandha* refer to *fajia* 法假 (Dharma in terms of provisional existence) and bodhisattva refers to *shoujia* 受假 (someone/bodhisattva in terms of provisional existence).<sup>110</sup> *Shoujia*, in this case, refers to an aggregation of the five *skandha* to form a chimerical self<sup>111</sup> (bodhisattva, *ren* 人, person), and this self/person is considered provisional existence.<sup>112</sup> Based on the concept of *shoujia*, *ren* as an aggregation of the five *skandha*

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T45.1853.36a1–36a3.

<sup>107</sup> The five aggregates (five *skandha*, *wuyun* 五蘊, *wuyin* 五陰) are: 1) form (*rūpa*, *se* 色); 2) sensation, emotion, or feeling (*vedanā*, *shou* 受); 3) recognition or perception (*saṃjñā*, *xiang* 想); 4) karmic activity, formation, force, or impulse (*saṃskāra*, *xing* 行); 5) consciousness (*vijñāna*, *shi* 識) (Boisvert, 2003, 2:779). According to Mathieu Boisvert, in Buddhism, *rūpa*/form as one of the five *skandha* is made of four primary elements (*mahābhūta*): air, fire, water, and earth. *Rūpa* “is also described as an amalgam of twenty-three secondary elements, which include the five sense organs, as well as their respective objects” (Boisvert, 2003, 2:779).

<sup>108</sup> See footnote 106. Another statement is: 言六法者。即是五陰及假人也 (T45.1853.35b27–35b28).

<sup>109</sup> 又五陰為法假。人為受假。人法皆有名為名假, T42.1825.207b5–207b6.

<sup>110</sup> 故大品云。波若及五陰為法假。菩薩為受假。一切名字為名假, T45.1853.18b26–18b28. Jizang also quotes the discussion of the three kinds of provisional existence (*sanjia* 三假) from Zhizang 智藏 (Brewer, 2012). In Yogācāra, the three kinds of provisional (*prajñapti*, *jia* 假) existence are: things (*fa*, 法), sensations (*shou* 受), and names (*ming* 名) (Brewer, 2012).

<sup>111</sup> Brewer, 2012. Also, Huiyuan explains *shoujia* as: 受假者。總含多法。故名為受。受假多法聚集而成。故曰受假, T44.1851.479a11–479a12.

<sup>112</sup> Although Jizang quotes the discussion, he might disagree with dividing phenomena into true and provisional aspects as he says: 問云何名假名惑實法惑耶。答成論師云。緣假迷假稱假名惑。則迷假人法等。緣實迷實名實法惑。如迷五塵等。今明。此是三藏一部之義耳。大乘假實惑者。即向所明之。即前之假名為假惑。即前之實名為實惑。所以然者。諸法未曾假實。今有此假實。良非惑耶, T45.1853.60c21–60c27. However, we know that Jizang knew the notions of *jiaren*, *shoujia*, etc.

in terms of provisional (conditional) existence is not differentiated from things because things/insentient things/world<sup>113</sup> also exist conditionally and provisionally. In addition, *shoujia* also refers to *jiaren* and *zhongsheng* (眾生假人。此是受假).<sup>114</sup> It indicates that *zhongsheng* can be defined as people/sentient beings in terms of provisional existence (*jiaren* and *shoujia*). *Zhongsheng/jiaren* does not mean that sentient beings/people do not have mind/consciousness. They still possess mind/consciousness because they are aggregation of the five *skandha*. As for the statement *linei zhongsheng*, it is possible to say that *zhongsheng* refers to sentient beings who possess mind/consciousness in the quality of objectivity. In this sense, mind/consciousness of *zhongsheng* in terms of provisional existence is considered one of the five *skandha* (elements). Mind/consciousness as one of the five *skandha* and elements is considered “physical” aspect of sentient beings.

Originally, the discussion of *zhongsheng* in terms of *jiaren* and *shoujia* refers to sentient beings in totality. *Zhongsheng* is not divided in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. As for Jizang’s statement *linei zhongsheng* 理內眾生, since *zhongsheng* can be understood in terms of *jiaren*, *zhongsheng* could be sentient beings in reference to “objects” which exist provisionally and conditionally, as opposed to *li*, or mind in the

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<sup>113</sup> As for *shoujia*, I think that in Jizang’s perspective, the term *shoujia* is not necessarily restricted to “someone” in terms of provisional existence. It can also refer to “something” (like world) in terms of provisional existence (世界為受假, T45.1853.18b29).

<sup>114</sup> T45.1853.18b24.

quality of subjectivity. Mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity is excluded in the notion of *zhongsheng*. Therefore, both *zhongsheng* and *jiaren* refer to “physical” aspect of people/sentient beings in terms of objectivity.<sup>115</sup> Only mind in the quality of subjectivity is considered real “mind.”

Furthermore, the notion of *zhongsheng* in Jizang’s discussion refers to the notion of others, as distinct from the self. Jizang’s distinction between self and others is seen in the following passage:

今只問。何者是眾生。而言以此為正因耶。經云。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相則非菩薩。又言。如來說眾生即非眾生。正因本為菩薩。經既說言有眾生相則非菩薩。寧得以眾生為正因耶。<sup>116</sup> (P5)

Here is a question about what sentient beings are in order to have this [definition of sentient beings] in the discussion of direct cause. The *Sūtra* (the Diamond Sūtra) states, “No bodhisattva who is a real bodhisattva cherishes the idea of an ego entity, a personality, a being, or a separated individuality.”<sup>117</sup> Also, [the *Sūtra*] states, “Thus-come says, ‘sentient beings are not [real] sentient beings.’” Direct cause originally refers to bodhisattva. Since the *Sūtra* says that a being (sentient being) is not bodhisattva, how can it be said that sentient being is direct cause?

This passage demonstrates Jizang’s criticism of one of the eleven schools which

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<sup>115</sup> Objectivity here means that mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity of sentient beings is excluded as opposed to mind/consciousness of subjectivity of sentient beings is included.

<sup>116</sup> T45.1853.36a8–36a12. Jizang’s division of people/sentient beings in terms of self and others can be seen in the whole passage: 第一師以眾生為正因者。今只問。何者是眾生。而言以此為正因耶。經云。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相則非菩薩。又言。如來說眾生即非眾生。正因本為菩薩。經既說言有眾生相則非菩薩。寧得以眾生為正因耶。故知。有眾生者皆是妄想。何可以妄想顛倒得為正因耶。又若以眾生為正因者, T45.1853.36a7–36a14. *Zhongsheng* as a group of people who have illusion cannot be direct cause (何可以妄想顛倒得為正因耶). Therefore, Jizang’s argument here is a discussion of the definition of *zhongsheng* and a division of sentient beings in terms of two referential positions.

<sup>117</sup> The translation of the *Jingang jing* is from Price and Wong, 1990, p. 19.

proclaimed *zhongsheng* as direct cause. In this passage, Jizang contends that the term *zhongsheng* cannot be employed to define sentient beings in terms of totality. He divides bodhisattva and *zhongsheng* as people in two different references, i.e., someone (bodhisattva) who has attained conceptual non-duality vs. someone (*zhongsheng*) who has not attained conceptual non-duality, or self vs. others. According to Jizang, bodhisattva, not *zhongsheng*, is considered direct cause (正因本為菩薩). *Zhongsheng* as someone who has not attained conceptual non-duality cannot be a direct cause (何可以妄想顛倒得為正因耶). Thus, Jizang criticizes the discussion of *zhongsheng* of the school by dividing sentient beings into two categories, which are self and others. He made this division in order to criticize someone who proclaimed *zhongsheng* in totality have buddha-nature, and *zhongsheng* is defined as all sentient beings who possess consciousness/mind. Jizang intended to find a way to make sentient beings and plants (insentient things) equal in essence. Therefore, he contends that the term *zhongsheng* should not be defined in totality. If we consider as well Jizang's notion of *zhongsheng* in terms of physical aspect of sentient beings, we can see that Jizang classified all people in terms of self vs. others, and subjectivity vs. objectivity.

In addition, the statement of the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra* (*Jingang jing* 金剛經, Diamond Sūtra)<sup>118</sup> in P5 indicates that Jizang quotes this idea in order to divide

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<sup>118</sup> According to Gregory Schopen, the *Jingang jing* is classified as a Perfection of Wisdom sūtra by

people/sentient beings in terms of different referential positions as self vs. others.<sup>119</sup> He does not quote this *Sūtra* to show the idea of conceptual non-duality. It is necessarily to interpret Jizang's quotation of the *Sūtra* carefully based on Jizang's own idea, as opposed to the *Sūtra* itself. Jizang's quotation of the *Sūtra* in P5 is significant, because it helps us better understand the same quotation in P2. It is possible to argue that the quotation of the *Sūtra* in P2 might demonstrate an idea of conceptual non-duality; therefore, Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in P2 is a conceptual non-duality, thus an epistemological view. However, P5 shows that Jizang quotes the *Sūtra* to argue for different referential positions of people (bodhisattva and *zhongsheng*) in terms of self vs. others. As we learned from P5, *zhongsheng*, in Jizang's argument, refers to others. It

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contemporary scholars, even though, in relationship to the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, the text still remains problematic (Schopen, 2003, 1:227). According to Makransky, the term *dharmatā* in the Perfection of Wisdom sutras is translated as *thinghood*, which refers to the real nature of things as emptiness; nature is undifferentiated, but is yet diverse in its manifestations (Makransky, 2003, 1:78). As for sentient beings, the doctrine of emptiness/the Middle Way in terms of Dharmakāya refers to the non-dual awareness of the emptiness of all things (Makransky, 2003, 1:78).

<sup>119</sup> As for the idea of self vs. others, it can be seen from Jizang's quotation of the *Sūtra* and his interpretation of the *Sūtra*: 經云。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相則非菩薩...正因本為菩薩。經既說言有眾生相則非菩薩。寧得以眾生為正因耶...何可以妄想顛倒得為正因耶。又若以眾生為正因者 (see footnote 116). The statement of the *Sūtra* (若菩薩有我相人相眾生相則非菩薩) indicates, in Jizang's perspective, bodhisattva and *zhongsheng* in a relationship of self vs. others since *zhongsheng* refers to others as opposed to bodhisattva, and it (*zhongsheng*) refers to sentient beings who have not attained conceptual non-duality, and thus cannot be considered as direct cause (何可以妄想顛倒得為正因耶). In the end of Jizang's criticism of the same school, he says: 云何以眾生為正因耶。又汝引經言一切眾生悉有佛性。故知。眾生是正因佛性者不然。既言眾生有佛性。那得言眾生是佛性耶。若言眾生是佛性者。可得言一切眾生悉有眾生。一切佛性悉有佛性不。若不得者。故知。眾生與佛性有異。不得言眾生是佛性也, T45.1853.36a20–16a26. This argument shows that Jizang's discussion of *zhongsheng* in this context does not refer to conceptual object of a bodhisattva as conceptual non-duality since *zhongsheng* cannot be considered buddha-nature. *Zhongsheng* is the subject of possessing buddha-nature. Therefore, Jizang's criticism of the school is about the definition of *zhongsheng* in terms of two referential positions, i.e., self vs. others, not of conceptual duality vs. conceptual non-duality.



implies that Jizang's quotations of the *Sūtra* in P2 do not represent a discussion of conceptual non-duality, but rather about different referential positions of sentient beings in terms of self vs. others.

Therefore, Jizang's definition of *zhongsheng* refers to others and objectivity. With the method *linei-liwai*, *zhongsheng* in the statement of *linei zhongsheng* 理內眾生 refers to others and objectivity. *Li* refers to sentient beings in terms of self and subjectivity. As discussed, it is problematic if we interpret *li* as sentient beings. As suggested in this chapter, *li* refers to both “mind” in the quality of subjectivity, and also self. It is possible to interpret *linei zhongsheng* as “sentient beings within mind.” This mind refers to mind in the quality of subjectivity, not of objectivity. In other words, *zhongsheng* (sentient beings) who are within mind refer to others and objectivity. In this sense, *zhongsheng* refer to image within mind. Thus, one of the possible interpretations of Jizang's terms *linei* and *liwai* is “within mind” and “beyond mind” respectively.

My interpretation of *li* as mind may be understood from another passage:

有理外眾生理外草木。有理內眾生理內草木。定何者有佛性。何者無佛性耶。<sup>120</sup>

There are sentient beings that are beyond *li*, and grasses and trees that are beyond *li*. There are sentient beings that are within *li*, and grasses and trees that are within *li*. Which is determined as having buddha-nature, and which is determined as not having buddha-nature?

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<sup>120</sup> T45.1853.41a24–41a25.

From this passage, sentient beings, as well as grasses and trees can be conceived as having two aspects: a) *liwai* (beyond *li*, beyond mind), and b) *linei* (within *li*, within mind). According to the above passage, Jizang groups sentient beings *and* grasses and trees together, thus joining together the internal and the external worlds, but not based on whether they possess consciousness. This passage is about sentient beings, grasses, and trees in both the internal and external worlds having buddha-nature. *Li* is a boundary that makes the distinction between the internal and the external worlds. *Li* as a boundary represents mind in subjectivity.

The interpretation of *li* as mind in the quality of subjectivity, and *zhongsheng* in terms of sentient beings in reference to others can be confirmed in a statement: “There are sentient beings beyond mind to be saved” 理外有眾生可度.<sup>121</sup> According to this statement, *zhongsheng* are considered others who are beyond mind, or in the external world of the mind. Therefore, they are objects of salvation. Another statement to confirm the interpretation of *li* and *zhongsheng* is: “Both sentient beings and all phenomena in the external world (*liwai*) are unperceivable by the five types of vision” 五眼不見理外眾生及一切法.<sup>122</sup> This statement indicates that sentient beings and all phenomena are objects in the external world, which may not be perceived by the five types of vision. Again, this statement shows that sentient beings and insentient things are grouped as objects in the

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<sup>121</sup> T45.1853.41a8.

<sup>122</sup> T45.1853.22c12; T38.1780.893a6–893a7.

phenomenal world that are beyond a boundary (*li*), and this boundary is mind.

*Zhongsheng*, grasses, and trees in the external and internal worlds refer to different things. In terms of *liwai* (beyond mind), all sentient beings, grasses, and trees are considered physical objects. This aspect of the external world is associated with the Buddhist analytical category of *jing* 境 (phenomena). The discussion of the nature of things in terms of *jing* (in the external world of mind) refers to an ontological perspective. Thus, the terms *linei* and *liwai* denote the internal world of the mind (within mind) and the external world of the mind (beyond) respectively. Therefore, the statement “sentient beings, grasses, and trees in terms of within *li* (*linei*)” can be interpreted as “sentient beings, grasses, and trees of the internal world of the mind.” The statement “sentient beings, grasses, and trees in terms of beyond *li* (*liwai*)” can be interpreted as “sentient beings, grasses, and trees of the external world of the mind.”

In his argument that plants have buddha-nature, Jizang defines sentient beings (*zhongsheng*) as being grouped with insentient things as objects in the external world, and more specifically, as beings that are considered insentient things. Only the subjective mind and cognitive activity is considered as a truly “sentient being.” Jizang is conscious of such distinctions (self and others). The word *wu* 物 (objects/beings) is used to describe people in terms of others and to distinguish them from self. An example that shows this distinction is in his *Zhongguanlun shu*, which states: “Although the principle is

neither the Middle [Way] nor not the Middle [Way], because beings are caused to attain awakening, the name ‘middle way’ is applied” 理雖非中不中。為令物得悟故強立中名也。<sup>123</sup> Here, *wu* must be interpreted as a person in terms of others, because it is only people and not things that are able to attain enlightenment.

Sentient beings are rendered by means of the term *wu* in Jizang’s *Zhongguanlun shu*:

十者大明物病不出二種。一者執性。二者迷假。此論正破性假二生悟入無生。故觀因緣。<sup>124</sup>

10) In broadly elucidating the illness of beings, there are only two kinds: 1) grasping onto one’s nature, and 2) being lost in delusion. This *Treatise* (the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, or the *Treatise of Middle Contemplation*) will precisely demolish these two – nature and delusion – and will give rise to realization, as well as access into non-arising. Therefore it is the contemplation of conditioned arising.

The subject of illness is *wu*, and it is only sentient beings/humans that can grasp onto one’s nature and have illusions. Therefore, the word *wu* in this passage must be interpreted as sentient beings/humans. Also, another statement in the same text states:

八不即是三世諸佛方等要經。論主稟經發生二智然後為物造論。此即是經資於論。<sup>125</sup> (P6)

The eight negations<sup>126</sup> is none other than all of the buddhas of all the

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<sup>123</sup> T42.1824.2b18–2b19.

<sup>124</sup> T42.1824.6c14–6c15.

<sup>125</sup> T42.1824.9c5–9c6.

<sup>126</sup> The eight negations, or *babu* 八不, refers to the doctrine of the Middle-Way (*Foguang da cidian* s.v. “八不”).

directions of the three times and all of the essential sūtras. Commentators base sūtras to give rise to the two types of wisdom and accordingly compose doctrines for the sake of beings (*wu* 物). This is none other than the sūtras providing the basis for the doctrine.

*Wu*, in this passage, refers to people/sentient beings, because they make it necessary for commentators to compose discourses. People (sentient beings) and commentators have an object-subject relationship. To be certain that the meaning of the word *wu* refers to sentient beings/humans, I compare it with another statement in the same section:

所以說八不二諦者。為令眾生發生二智故也。望佛從本至末。望緣即是因教發智也。<sup>127</sup>

Therefore, the one preaches the eight negations and the Twofold Truth in order to cause sentient beings to give rise to the two types of wisdom. This completely accords with the Buddha's intention; his intention being that the conditions are none other than the causes for the teachings that give rise to wisdom.

This statement shows that it is sentient beings that motivated the Buddha to establish his teaching of the eight negations (*babu* 八不). Thus, those who receive the Buddha's teachings are sentient beings. In comparison with P6, those for whom commentators compose discourses, are sentient beings. Therefore, the *wu* in P6 refers to sentient beings/humans.

However, there remains a question: Why does Jizang use the word *wu*, but not the term *zhongsheng*, to refer to sentient beings? I suspect that he may do this in order to

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<sup>127</sup> T42.1824.9b28–9b29.

make a distinction between self and others.<sup>128</sup> Again, the term *zhongsheng* cannot be applied to define sentient beings in totality. The statement in P6, “Commentators base sūtras to give rise to the two types of wisdom and accordingly compose doctrines for the sake of beings (*wu* 物)” 論主稟經發生二智然後為物造論, demonstrates that commentators are subjects who compose discourses. *Wu* as objects receive discourses. Both commentators and *wu* are sentient beings, but they signify different references. Therefore, Jizang applied the word *wu* to refer to others of sentient beings, to distinguish from commentators (subjects/self).

The definition of *zhongsheng* (sentient beings) in Jizang’s perspective is not consistent with Indian Buddhism, which does not divide sentient beings into the internal and external worlds, subjectivity and objectivity, or distinguish self and others. As mentioned in the Introduction, according to Daniel Getz, sentient beings is “a term to designate the totality of living, conscious beings and audience of the Buddhist teaching.”<sup>129</sup> In addition, the realms of sentient beings (*zhongsheng jie* 眾生界) refer to the nine realms:

1. hell-being
2. hungry ghost
3. animal
4. human
5. *asura*

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<sup>128</sup> I thank Dr. James Benn for helping me to understand this idea.

<sup>129</sup> Getz, 2003, 2:760.

6. god
7. *śrāvaka*
8. *pratyekabuddha*
9. bodhisattva<sup>130</sup>

The nine realms do not include the realm of insentient things. Jizang regroups all sentient beings and insentient things in terms of the internal/external worlds as well as self /others, and he carefully develops his arguments and discussions on the basis of these ideas, which appear in his *Zhongguanlun shu*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the idea of self vs. others is widely applied in Daoism and Arcane Study. This idea also appears in Guo Xiang's commentary on Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*. Jizang had, indeed, encountered Guo's work. In Jizang's *Zhongguan xushu* 中觀序疏 (Commentary to the Preface of the *Zhongguan*, or Commentary to the Preface of the [Treatise] of Middle Contemplation), he quoted Guo's work and stated: "As for the brightness of dawn, Guo Xiang states, 'leaving life and death behind and quitting both the internal and the external worlds'" 朝徹者。郭象云。遺死生亡內外。<sup>131</sup> This quotation is from Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*, "Dazong shi"

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<sup>130</sup> EDBT, s.v. "眾生界," 2:1125. In general, the realm of buddhas may also be considered as the realm of sentient beings. The realms where sentient beings are reborn to can be found in texts such as the *Pañca-viṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (Mohe bore boluomi jing 摩訶般若波羅蜜經), which states: 須菩提報舍利弗: 眾生顛倒因緣故, 造作身、口、意業, 隨欲本業報受六道身——地獄、餓鬼、畜生、人、天、阿修羅身, T8.223.360a25–360a27; and 世尊! 無性法中無有業用。作業因緣故, 若墮地獄、餓鬼、畜生, 若人、若天, 乃至生非有想非無想天。以是業因緣故, 得須陀洹、斯陀含、阿那含、阿羅漢、辟支佛。菩薩摩訶薩行菩薩道, 當得一切種智。得一切種智故, 能拔出眾生於生死中, T8.223.412b29–412c6; and the MMPS, which states: 復有一義說無量名...亦名眾生...亦名十二因緣。亦名聲聞辟支佛。亦名地獄餓鬼畜生人天, T12.374.564a10–564a17; 一切眾生亦復如是。有五道性故有地獄餓鬼畜生人天, T12.374.598c7–598c9.

<sup>131</sup> T42.1824.4a6.

大宗師 (the teacher who is the ultimate ancestor)<sup>132</sup> and discussions of the internal vs. the external worlds, subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others appear in this chapter. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in terms of others mentioned in Guo's commentary, people in the external world are divided into form (*xing* 形) and spirit (*shen* 神). The former refers to the physical and the latter to the spiritual. Buddhism also divides human beings (sentient beings) into physical and mental aspects; this is shown in the concept of the five *skandha*.<sup>133</sup> Only form refers to the physical aspect (form, *rūpa*, *se* 色). Both Buddhism and Chinese thought divide human (sentient) beings into their physical and mental aspects. However, in Buddhism, sentient beings are considered the sum total of the five *skandha*. Sentient beings are not classified in terms of subjectivity/self and objectivity/others. The concept of the five *skandha* is applied to sentient beings in totality. All sentient beings possess both physical and mental aspects.

In Chinese thought, people can be classified in terms of subjectivity/self and objectivity/others, as shown in Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*, in which Zi Gong 子貢, upon returning from the funeral of Master Sang Hu 桑戶 asked Confucius what kind of men sang in the presence of the corpse and displayed inappropriate behaviour during the ceremony. Confucius replied to Zi Gong that the person who sang in the presence of the corpse left life and death behind. The person transcended himself to achieve spiritual

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<sup>132</sup> The title is Graham's translation. See Graham, 2001, p. 84.

<sup>133</sup> See footnote 107.



freedom and thus be able to “have joined with the Creator as men (man, the person) to wander in the single of heaven and earth”<sup>134</sup> 彼方且與造物者為人，而游乎天地之一氣。 His inner world was beyond social rites/*li* 禮。<sup>135</sup> This conversation represents the concept of self and others 彼此。 The person, in the state of spiritual freedom, in reference to others, unified self with the world (heaven and earth) as one. The Dao does not exclude others (both people and the world). In the Daoist perspective, someone in reference to others who has attained spiritual freedom is undifferentiated from all things. This undifferentiated unity of someone with all things is an ontological view, not an epistemological view as pointed out in the *Mencius*<sup>136</sup> mentioned in Chapter 1.

Guo comments that the conversation between Confucius and Zi Gong in the above shows how easy it is for a person to make a false judgment based on seeing the external expressions of others.<sup>137</sup> A person only made a judgment based on someone’s external behaviour/appearance/expression (that is, singing in the presence of the corpse). Guo’s commentary contains the notion of *nei-wai* 內外 to denote the internal world and the external world of a subject respectively.<sup>138</sup> People are grouped in terms of self and others.

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<sup>134</sup> Watson, 2013, p. 50.

<sup>135</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13. 孔子曰：「彼游方之外者也，而丘，游方之內者也。外內不相及...彼方且與造物者為人，而游乎天地之一氣。彼以生為附贅縣疣，以死為決病潰癰。夫若然者，又惡知死生先後之所在！假於異物，托於同體；忘其肝膽，遺其耳目；反復終始，不知端倪；茫然彷徨乎塵垢之外，逍遙乎無為之業。彼又惡能憤憤然為世俗之禮，以觀眾人之耳目哉！」

<sup>136</sup> The passage is: “all the ten thousand things are there in me” 萬物皆備於我矣, *Mencius*, 7:A:4.

<sup>137</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13. 夫見形而不及神者，天下之常累也。

<sup>138</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13. Guo Xiang’s commentary is: 夫理有至極，外內相冥，未有極遊外之致而不冥

People in terms of the external world refer to others and, as mentioned in Chapter 1, they contain the notion of form 形 and spirit 神. The former refers to the physical and the latter to the spiritual. Form refers to someone's physical body and external expression. People (others) in the concept of the division of physical and spiritual parts refer to those in the external world of a subject, i.e., a sage (聖人常遊外以私內), and Guo's discussion of others in this specific context only refers to the form of others as objectivity.<sup>139</sup> The division into the physical and spiritual/mental aspects refers to others in the external world. In this sense, people (sentient beings) are not designated wholly in terms of the definition of sentient beings in Buddhism.

Jizang employs the concepts of subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others, the notion of *nei-wai*, and the division of the physical and spiritual aspects in his argument. In addition, he also incorporates the idea that people in terms of others who have attained spiritual freedom are undifferentiated from things. In Jizang's model of self and others, the objectivity of sentient beings (others) in both the internal and the external worlds refers to their physical aspect. The mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity is excluded. It is only the physical aspect of sentient beings that is included in the discussion of others/objectivity. In this sense, the physical aspect of sentient beings (the body) is

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於內者也，未有能冥於內而不遊於外者也。故聖人常遊外以私內，無心以順有。

<sup>139</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:13. 故雖終日見形而神氣無變...夫見形而不及神者，天下之常累也。

undifferentiated from insentient things. Thus, Jizang’s division of sentient beings into subjective and objective aspects, and sentient beings in the external world are deemed objects with reference to their physical aspect are consistent with Chinese thought.

Chronologically, it is evident that the *Zhongguanlun shu* was composed before the *Dasheng xuanlun* from the fact that the title and some of the content of the former is quoted in the latter. Jizang was conscious of Guo’s work at the time he was developing the argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, Guo’s commentary provides Jizang with some ideas about the internal vs. external worlds, subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others.

We can conclude that the word *li* in the context *linei-liwai* denotes the subjective mind. The terms *linei* and *liwai* are interpreted as “the internal world of the mind” and “the external world of the mind” respectively. Based on these interpretations, the next section will interpret the main paragraph of Jizang’s argument.

### **3.2 An examination of Jizang’s argument that insentient things have buddha-nature**

As mentioned, Jizang’s assertion that grasses and trees have Buddha-nature in terms of ontology is opposed to Chinese Buddhist exegetes who deny the existence of

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<sup>140</sup> In footnote 1, it is stated that the *Dasheng xuanlun* was compiled by others. Although the work was not written by Jizang himself, the argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature was his idea. The source of the metaphor of water within a fire was applied to argue the essential emptiness of all things in the *Dasheng xuanlun* is *Zhongguanlun shu*.

buddha-nature beyond sentient beings/mind/*ālaya-vijñāna* and affirm the existence of buddha-nature only within sentient beings/mind/*ālaya-vijñāna*. As Jizang argues in P2, if there are no sentient beings (in reference to physical aspect) beyond mind/*ālaya-vijñāna*, this contradicts the idea that all sentient beings are able to have buddha-nature, as proclaimed by both the concept of buddha-nature and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought. Thus, in his critique, Jizang posits that, if the teaching were correct, the question of whether sentient beings in the external world have buddha-nature cannot be a question for discussion 理外本自無有眾生。那得問言理外眾生有佛性不。 Jizang strategically reinterprets *zhongsheng* to sentient beings who are in reference to others and objectivity. Therefore, he argues that if there is no *zhongsheng* (in reference to physical aspect) beyond the mind, buddha-nature does not exist with *zhongsheng*, or *zhongsheng* do not have buddha-nature, and this argument is opposed to someone who proclaimed that buddha-nature only exists with sentient beings (*zhongsheng*) as well as non-existence of buddha-nature beyond mind and sentient beings. His argument is in the following:

故如問炎中之水。本自不曾有。何得更問炎中之水從何處來。是故理外既無眾生。亦無佛性。五眼之所不見。<sup>141</sup>

This is thus like asking about the water within fire: it fundamentally does not exist, so how can we ask about the water that is within fire? Where would it come from? For this reason in no way can those beyond *li* be sentient beings, and furthermore buddha-nature does not exist [beyond *li*].

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<sup>141</sup> T45.1853.40b13–40b15.

The five [types] of vision are unable to see [the buddha-nature].

According to the passage, the source of the water within fire does not exist if the water does not exist. It is the same as buddha-nature and *zhongsheng* (sentient beings in terms of others and objectivity) beyond mind. He disagrees with Buddhist exegetes who proclaimed the non-existence of buddha-nature beyond mind and *zhongsheng*. Thus, he argues that if *zhongsheng* (beings in reference to physical aspect in the external world) does not exist, then *zhongsheng* do not have buddha-nature (是故理外既無眾生。亦無佛性). Buddha-nature (true reality) and *zhongsheng* coexist. Jizang's point of the coexistence of true reality and phenomena is consistent with Sengzhao. As discussed, Jizang learned from Sengzhao that true reality and phenomena/things coexist (觸事而真) and are interdependent. If phenomena do not exist, true reality does not exist either. Moreover, as discussed in section 2, true reality does not exist beyond phenomena, but rather “within” phenomena in Sengzhao's perspective. And since Sengzhao was considered a leading Buddhist exegete in the study of emptiness in Chinese Buddhism, Jizang quotes his statement P1 (然則道遠乎哉?觸事而真) in P2 to demonstrate his own argument that buddha-nature/true reality/the Middle Way is pervasive and orthodox. P1 in Sengzhao's “Buzhenkong lun” is a discussion of the location of true reality, and presents the argument that true reality exists ontologically inside both mind and phenomena.

Jizang's quotation (即物而真) of Sengzhao's work (觸事而真) in P2 indicates that

P2 is a discussion of the location of true reality (buddha-nature), and his assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in P2 is an ontological view. As mentioned, Jizang changes Sengzhao's statement to say that true reality is identical with things (即物而真). Based on this, Jizang argues that someone like Sudhana will be able to attain enlightenment by perceiving true reality through things, since things are identical with true reality.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, the location of true reality exists universally with both sentient beings and insentient things. Thus, buddha-nature as true reality not only exists with sentient beings, but also with grasses and trees. This ontological view parallels, but not identical with, Daoist ontology.<sup>143</sup>

Another passage of the P2 demonstrates Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature as ontological view is his quotation from the *Jingang jing*. The *Jingang jing* is a *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtra.<sup>144</sup> In terms of the discussion of nature, all entities are essentially equal. *Jingang jing* as a *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtra also holds this view.

However, as mentioned, Jizang quotes the passage of the *Jingang jing* in P2 not in order to discuss conceptual non-duality, but to divide people/sentient beings in terms of self vs.

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<sup>142</sup> 華嚴明。善財童子。見彌勒樓觀即得無量法門。豈非是觀物見性即得無量三昧。又大集經云。諸佛菩薩。觀一切諸法無非是菩提。此明迷佛性故為生死萬法悟即是菩提。故肇法師云。道遠乎哉。即物而真聖遠乎哉。悟即是神也, T45.1853.40c4–40c9.

<sup>143</sup> This ontological view is not identical with Daoist ontology because Jizang's P2 follows Sengzhao that true reality does not permanently exist outside phenomena, but it exists within phenomena. However, as for the discussion of the location of buddha-nature, buddha-nature not only exists within sentient beings, but also within plants and trees.

<sup>144</sup> As for *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, Roger R. Jackson points out that “in paradoxical rhetoric, these (*prajñāpāramitā*) sūtras describe emptiness as the true nature of all entities and concepts, from form through a buddha's awareness; thus, there really is no form, no Buddha” (Jackson, 2004, 2:809).

others. *Zhongsheng* refers to sentient beings in terms of others<sup>145</sup> and objectivity. In this sense, plants and *zhongsheng* beyond mind are non-differentiated because “mind”/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity of *zhongsheng* is not included. As for the location of true reality (buddha-nature), it exists with all things, including *zhongsheng* beyond mind. In terms of essential equality, *zhongsheng* beyond mind is essentially equal<sup>146</sup> with plants. That is *zhongsheng* and plants possess the true reality, which is buddha-nature, or the Middle Way-buddha nature. Based on the idea of essential equality, Jizang argues in P2 that “not only do grasses and trees not have buddha-nature, but also sentient beings are without buddha-nature as well” 不但草木無佛性。眾生亦無佛性也。 The next statement, “If you desire to understand those who have buddha-nature, then not only do sentient beings have buddha-nature, but also the grasses and the trees have buddha-nature as well” 若欲明有佛性者。不但眾生有佛性。草木亦有佛性, is Jizang’s assertion that insentient things are ontologically able to possess buddha-nature if they are essentially equal to sentient beings. In this context, buddha-nature is interpreted as being

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<sup>145</sup> In P2, he states: 故經云。若菩薩有我相人相眾生相。即非菩薩。是故我與人乃至今人無有佛性。不但凡夫無佛性。乃至阿羅漢亦無佛性, T45.1853.40b15–40b18. According to the passage, self, others, ordinary people, and *arhats* are not bodhisattvas because they have not attained conceptual non-duality. Therefore, this passage is a discussion of people/sentient beings in terms of self (someone who has attained conceptual non-duality) vs. others (someone who has not attained conceptual non-duality). In this sense, *zhongsheng* does not refer to a conceptual object to be perceived by bodhisattva. This passage demonstrates Jizang’s argument that sentient beings can be divided into two referential positions. *Zhongsheng* cannot be defined in terms of totality.

<sup>146</sup> Swanson also points out that although Madhyamaka philosophy does not attempt to construct an ontological theory of the external world, the authors of many aspects and texts of Buddhism concern themselves with ontological matters in order to deny that external objects exist in the sense of a substantial, unchanging Being (Swanson, 1989, p. 272). An example of this tendency is seen in Jizang’s argument in the *Dasheng xuanlun* that insentient things have buddha-nature.

equivalent to the Middle Way/emptiness. That is, in terms of objects in the external world of the mind, all things, both sentient and insentient are essentially equal.

Jizang's structure of the method of *linei-liwai* and his discussion of the location of buddha-nature are more sophisticated than merely the location of buddha-nature in terms of inside and outside principle. His method *linei-liwai* (beyond mind and within mind) and the classification of people/sentient beings in terms of self vs. others, and subjectivity vs. objectivity make sentient beings and grasses and trees be equal in essence. Based on essential equality, sentient beings and grasses and trees are able to possess buddha-nature.

#### **4. A comparison of Jizang's discussion of buddha-nature with the dao-nature of Daoism**

Buddha-nature denotes the Middle Way in Jizang's argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature.<sup>147</sup> The Middle Way as a representation of nature in terms of universal principle is parallel to the principle of spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) in Daoism. As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars of Arcane Study described the nature of the Dao in terms of the universal principle of spontaneity. However, they did not use the term dao-nature to mean spontaneity. As we saw in Chapter 2, until the Southern dynasties (420–589 A.D.), the term dao-nature appeared in the works of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536 A.D.) and

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<sup>147</sup> Sharf also points out that Jizang's definition of buddha-nature is yet another way to affirm emptiness, dependent origination, and the Middle-Way, and from these, all distinctions disappear (Sharf, 2007, p. 212).



Song Wenming 宋文明 from the Liang dynasty (502–557 A.D.). Song borrowed the concept and the term “buddha-nature” from Buddhism and incorporated it into his concept of dao-nature and made the concept a soteriology. The definition of dao-nature as spontaneity in religious Daoism remains the same as in Arcane Study. Thus, dao-nature denotes spontaneity as a universal principle in Daoism.

Jizang’s identification of buddha-nature with the Middle Way as a universal principle parallels that of spontaneity as a universal principle in Daoism. In fact, Jizang was familiar with the principle of spontaneity in Daoism, as was clear from his criticism of spontaneity in the *Zhongguanlun shu*:

從自然生者外道推求諸法。因義不成故謂萬法自然而生。但解自然有二家。若如莊周所論。明有之已生則不須生。無之未生復何能生。今言生者自然爾耳。蓋是不知其所以然。謂之自然。此明自然有因自然無因。二者外道謂諸法無因而生名為自然。<sup>148</sup>

As for spontaneous arising, the heretical schools have investigated and put forth the idea that since the causes of all phenomena cannot be identified, so then the myriad things arise spontaneously. But of those who discuss spontaneity, there are two schools. For example, the discussion in the *Zhuangzi* makes clear that being comes after arising and hence it is not a precondition for arising, and that non-being comes before arising, and so how can it give rise to beings? Now, in discussing arising, it is spontaneous and nothing else! This covers the issue of not knowing of the source and calling it spontaneous. This explanation of spontaneity includes the spontaneity with a cause and the spontaneity without a cause. As for the second proposition, the heretic schools say that all phenomena are without

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<sup>148</sup> T42.1824.15b3–15b9.

a cause and yet are born, and the name given to this is spontaneity.

The discussion of spontaneity with reference to the formation/origin of things in Daoism indicates that Jizang was aware of the questions. Jizang mentions the notion of non-causality (*wuyin* 無因), which is also considered to be synonymous with spontaneity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this notion is Guo Xiang's concept of *duhua* (transformation in solitude), signifying that all things are formed and generated spontaneously (*zhi sheng* 自生). Guo attributed the concept of non-causality/*duhua* to spontaneity. There is no creator or single source that bestows life on others. As mentioned several times earlier in this chapter, Jizang had already encountered Guo's work. Thus, he was familiar with the concept of spontaneity in Daoism and Arcane Study (Guo Xiang). Buddha-nature as a discussion of (human) nature in terms of principle is consonant with Chinese thought. And buddha-nature as a universal principle is consistent with Daoism in Arcane Study.

## 5. Conclusion

As for the discussion of nature, Jizang syncretizes buddha-nature and emptiness by reinterpreting the notion of *dharmakāya* in association with buddha-nature in the MMPS to principle. As discussed in the Introduction, *dharmakāya* is not only teachings/doctrines of the Buddha but it is also not separated from wisdom.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, buddha-nature in

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<sup>149</sup> According to Makransky, after the Buddha's physical death, *dharmakāya* referred especially to the corpus of teachings that the Buddha bequeathed to his monastic *saṃgha*, whose institutional life centered

terms of *dharmakāya* does not include insentient things. Jizang is conscious of the notion of *dharmakāya* and its association with sentient beings. He devaluates *dharmakāya* to skillful means, in which *dharmakāya* is teaching (*jiao*) guiding sentient beings to attain true reality (*li/principle*). Jizang argues that teaching/*dharmakāya* is not identical with true reality. True reality is universal principle and can be explained by teaching, but it cannot be violated by teaching. In Madhyamaka school emptiness is true reality. The nature of all entities is characterized by emptiness. In Arcane Study the nature of all entities is attributed to a universal principle. Thus, the nature of all entities in terms of *dharmakāya* (emptiness) in the Madhyamaka school is compatible with the discussion of the nature of all entities in terms of universal principle in Arcane Study. *Dharmakāya* (emptiness) and the notion of universal principle of Arcane Study provide Jizang with some reference to extend the discussion of (buddha-) nature in terms of principle to the insentient realm. Buddha-nature as the nature of sentient beings is reinterpreted by Jizang in terms of universal principle. Therefore, Jizang incorporated the notion of universal principle of Arcane Study to his discussion of the nature of sentient beings in terms of universal principle. This universal principle, in Jizang's discussion of buddha-nature, is the Middle Way. Thus, he reinterprets buddha-nature in terms of *dharmakāya* to universal

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on the recitation, study, and practice of *dharmakāya*. Also, Makransky points out that in Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions, *dharmakāya* refers to the Buddha's "body of *dharmas*," where *dharmas* are pure qualities of enlightened mind (Makransky, 2003, 1:76). As discussed in the Introduction, *tathāgata-garbha*/buddha-nature in terms of *dharmakāya* in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought in Mahāyāna Buddhism is also not separated from wisdom.

principle.

Jizang does not cast away the teaching of Madhyamaka school in his discussion of buddha-nature. His discussion of buddha-nature is based on the teaching of the Madhyamaka school, of which emptiness does not exclude insentient things. In the Madhyamaka school, the inclusion of insentient things in emptiness refers to physical aspect. The nature/characters of all entities with causations in physical aspect are conditioned and impermanent. The true reality is emptiness. If Jizang intended to extend Middle Way-buddha nature (true reality) to the insentient realm, he had to reinterpret sentient beings to make sentient beings undifferentiated from insentient things in terms of physical aspect. To do so, he argues that the term *zhongsheng* cannot be used to define sentient beings in totality. He divided sentient beings in terms of subjectivity/self and objectivity/others as shown in the method of *linei-liwai*. The meaning of the word *li* (principle) in Jizang's method of *linei-liwai* is the mind in the quality of subjectivity. It does not refer to the mind of others, that is, objectivity. With this definition of the word *li*, the terms *linei* and *liwai* are interpreted as “the internal world of the mind” and “the external world of the mind” respectively. Sentient beings in terms of objectivity/others refers to physical aspect, and it is physical aspect that make sentient beings undifferentiated from insentient things. Jizang's argument that grasses and trees have buddha-nature in the ontological view is in the context of “the external world of the

mind,” or *jing* (phenomena). Sentient beings (*zhongsheng*) in the external world refers to objects, because sentient beings in the sense of objectivity refers to their physical aspect.

The ideas of a) dividing sentient beings into subjectivity and objectivity, self and others, and b) sentient beings as objectivity/others with reference to their physical aspect are inconsistent with Indian Buddhism. However, they are consistent with Chinese thought, and one of the examples is in Guo Xiang’s commentary on Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*. The ideas of self/others, subjectivity/objectivity, and the internal/external worlds as applied in Jizang’s argument can be traced to Guo’s commentary to the *Zhuangzi*. These Daoist ideas enable Jizang to develop the method of *linei-liwai* to argue that, ontologically, insentient things have buddha-nature. Thus, sentient beings in the external world refers to their physical aspect, and in this sense, sentient beings are not differentiated from inanimate things, such as grasses and trees, because all of them in the external world are considered objects. Both sentient beings and insentient things in the external world are ontologically equal when they are understood through the idea of essential equality. Therefore, they all possess the same nature, which is the Middle Way/buddha-nature.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Dao is mysterious and unfathomable. However, it presents itself by means of principle, spontaneity. Therefore, the Dao and spontaneity are two separate things. The identity of the Middle Way with buddha-nature in terms of

universal principle in Jizang's argument is parallel to spontaneity as dao-nature, or the nature of the Dao, since they are both associated with the discussion of nature and they refer to universal principles. Therefore, Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees are able to have buddha-nature contains both epistemological and Daoist ontological views. As for the one in consistent with Daoist ontology, his definition of buddha-nature (the Middle Way) is consistent with dao-nature (spontaneity) in Daoism.

## Chapter 4: An Examination of Zhanran’s Discussion of Buddha-Nature

Aside from Jizang, another Buddhist exegete, Jingxi Zhanran 荆溪湛然 (711–782 A.D.), the ninth patriarch of the Tiantai 天台 school, also asserts that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature. This claim appears in such works as his *Jingang bei* 金剛錚 (Diamond Scalpel Treatise)<sup>1</sup> and *Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue* 止觀輔行傳弘決 (Instructions on Supporting Practice and Broadly Disseminating [the Teachings of the Great] Cessation and Contemplation, hereafter *Fuxing* 輔行).<sup>2</sup> The latter is a commentary on Zhiyi’s 智顓 (538–597 A.D.) *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (Great Cessation and Contemplation).<sup>3</sup> Zhanran’s assertion has been discussed in detail by contemporary scholars such as Andō Toshio 安藤俊雄, Chen Yingshan 陳英善, Chen Shuman, Lai Yonghai 賴永海, Melinda Pap, Sakamoto Yukio 坂本幸男, and Brook Ziporyn.<sup>4</sup> They discuss Zhanran primarily in the context of Buddhist doctrine. In addition, the works of Lai, Ziporyn, Pap, Chen Yingshan, and Chen Shuman have shown that

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<sup>1</sup> T46.1932. According to Chi Limei, this work was composed after the *Fuxing*. Zhanran’s discussion of buddha-nature and his assertion that insentient things have buddha-nature is based on the *Fuxing*, but the discussion in the *Jingang bei* is more complete (Chi, 2008, p. 93).

<sup>2</sup> T46.1912. According to Chi, Zhanran took ten years (755–765 A.D.) to complete the work (Chi, 2008, pp. 87, 137–38). For a detailed discussion about the dating of the *Fuxing*, see Chi, 2008, pp. 130–48. The commentary is one of four major commentaries in the *Mohe zhiguan* by Zhiyi (Swanson, 1989, p. 372). Okubo states that the author of the *Fuxing* is Zhanran (Okubo, 2007; Penkower, 1997, p. 1329 [10]).

<sup>3</sup> Penkower, 1997, p. 1327 (12). *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “止觀輔行傳弘決”.

<sup>4</sup> Andō, 1992; Chen, 1997; Chen, 2011; Lai, 1993, pp. 35–74; Pap, 2011; Sakamoto, 1959; Ziporyn, 2010.

Zhanran’s argument that buddha-nature is universal, and that insentient things have buddha-nature is made from an ontological perspective.<sup>5</sup> Chen Yingshan and Chen Shuman further suggest that Zhanran’s ontological argument is based on the concepts of *xingju* 性具 (nature as all-inclusiveness) and *lijū* 理具 (principle as all-inclusiveness).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Lai, 1993. Chen Yingshan’s and Chen Shuman’s works have detailed discussions of this topic. Ziporyn explains that for Zhanran (buddha-) nature as all-inclusive exists in all entities (Ziporyn, 2010, p. 507). Ziporyn defines Zhanran’s view of nature in the following terms: “. . . unconditioned omnipresence, and findable in all time and places, and it is what is called X-as-the-nature, X is the nature, X is findable everywhere, X is omnipresent, X is present at all times, in all places, in all things; whatever anything is appearing to be, its real identity is to be X, all appearances are reducible to X, are expressions of X; X appears as all other, non-X entities” (Ziporyn, 2010, p. 502).

<sup>6</sup> Zhanran also included *xinju* 心具 (the mind as all-inclusiveness), which is from Zhiyi, in his discussion of buddha-nature. Zhanran’s concept of *xinju* is not identical with Zhiyi’s concept of *xinju*, which is represented in Zhiyi’s ideas: *yinian sanqian* 一念三千 (the trichiliocosm in a moment of consciousness), *shijie huju* 十界互具 (the interpenetration of the ten realms, the mutual inclusion of the ten dharma realms, one Mind/one thought involves characteristics of beings of the ten realms) in his *Mohe zhiguan* and *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義 (A Commentary to the *Lotus Sūtra*), and the idea that Mind/mind is replete with good and evil in his *Guanyin xuanyi* 觀音玄義 (A Commentary to Chapter “Universal Gate” of the *Lotus Sūtra*), T34.1726.882c17–882c21. Ziporyn (2010) has a detailed discussion of the last idea. Ng (2010) points out that the author of the *Guanyin xuanyi* was Zhiyi’s disciple, Zhang’an Guanding 章安灌頂 (561–632 A.D.). Guanding recorded Zhiyi’s teachings. As the work was completed after Zhiyi passed away, he was not able to complete the proofreading of the work (Ng, 2010, p. 13). Thus, it is not certain whether the idea that mind is replete with good and evil comes directly from Zhiyi. The authenticity of this idea is not the topic of this chapter, but it is affirmed that the idea was not invented by Zhanran. The idea is a traditional Tiantai doctrine and Zhiyi’s concept of *xinju* is epistemological. It focuses the discussion on the nature of mind. The ten realms in the doctrine of *shijie huju* refer to those of hell-dwellers (*diyu* 地獄), hungry ghosts (*egui* 餓鬼), animals (*chusheng* 畜生), warlike demigods (*asuras* 阿修羅), humans (*ren* 人), *śrāvakas* (*shengwen* 聲聞), *pratyekabuddhas* (*yuanjue* 緣覺), Bodhisattvas (*pusa* 菩薩), and Buddhas (*fo* 佛) (Tang, 2001b, p. 195). These ten realms do not include any realm of the insentient. In addition, Zhiyi realized the discussion of *xin* (mind/heart) in some Indian and Chinese works could refer to the insentient realm, as described in the *Mohe zhiguan*: “*Citta* is an Indian sound, which in our regional vernacular is called *xin*, that is, the reflective and cognitive mind. In India [*xin*] is also called *hrdaya*, which in the [Chinese] vernacular is called the ‘heart’ of grasses and trees. It is also called *yi-li-tuo*, which in [Chinese] vernacular is *xin* [the ‘central’] as in the core of the collective aggregates [that make up a human being]. In filtering out the negative [with regard to *bodhicitta*], we exclude [the sense of] *xin* as [the central core of] the collective aggregates and as [the heart of] grasses and trees; only *xin* as the reflective and cognitive mind is pertinent here” (Swanson, 2004, pp. 51–2) 質多者天竺音此方言心。即慮知之心也。天竺又稱污栗馱此方稱是草木之心也。又稱矣栗馱此方是積聚精要者為心也。今簡非者簡積聚草木等心。專在慮知心也, T46.1911.4a20–4a24. Zhiyi was aware of the distinction between the sentient and insentient realms, but his discussion of mind was limited only to the former. Penkower points out that doctrines and practices of post-Zhiyi Tiantai transmission are not identical in the varied texts and contexts of different Tiantai scholars (Penkower, 1997, p. 1336 [3]). Although Zhanran claimed in his *Fuxing* that his ideas and teachings can trace their origin directly to Zhiyi (Penkower, 1997, pp. 1327 [12]–1326 [13]), he took



Therefore, this chapter will not repeat this argument. Instead, the chapter suggests that Zhanran's ontological argument that insentient things have buddha-nature incorporates some native Chinese systems of thought. The method that Zhanran applied in the argument is different from that of Jizang. This chapter will investigate the method, Chinese sources and ideas that Zhanran used to create his ontological argument.

The reason that prompted Zhanran to assert that insentient things were able to possess buddha-nature was related to competition among Buddhist schools in China for political patronage.<sup>7</sup> In Zhanran's time, the Tiantai tradition was in decline, and this is

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Zhiyi's teachings and reinterpreted them in order to compete with the Huayan, Faxiang and Chan schools (Lai, 1993, p. 77). Therefore, our study of Zhanran's ideas must be in the context of Zhanran's own works, and cannot rely wholly on the ideas of Zhiyi.

<sup>7</sup> The competition can be seen from his critique of other Buddhist schools on the issue of the exclusion of insentient things having buddha-nature as in his *Jingang bei*: "Many Buddhist exegetes quote the *Nirvana Sūtra* to criticize [the direct cause, or *zhengyin* 正因], and quote this idea to compose many treatises" 世人多引涅槃為難。故廣引之以杜餘論, T46.1932.782.a9–782.a10. Among these Buddhist exegetes, Zhanran intended to criticize Fazang 法藏 (643–712 A.D.), third patriarch of the Huayan school, in particular. Zhanran's criticism of Fazang can be seen in Zhanran's statement in the *Jingang bei*: "I (the inquirer) once heard that someone quote from the *Dazhidu lun* that the Thusness is named Dharma-nature in the context of the insentient realm, and it is named buddha-nature in the context of the sentient realm. I read through the whole text of the text (*Dazhidu lun*), but I do not find this idea mentioned in the text. Or it is misunderstood or misquoted, and mistakenly passed from one to the next to become a common idea. [People] only know the name without getting to know its meaning" 僕曾聞人引大智度論。云真如在無情中但名法性。在有情內方名佛性。仁何故立佛性之名。余曰。親曾委讀細檢論文都無此說。或恐謬引章疏之言世共傳之。汎為通之。此乃迷名而不知義, T46.1932.783.a5–783.a9. Here, the treatise mentioned in Zhanran's statement is *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, a Commentary to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, a Commentary to the *Perfection of Wisdom [Sūtra]*), attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated by Kumārajīva. The work that Zhanran criticized also appears in Fazang's work, *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* 大乘起信論義記 (Record of the Explanation of the *Awakening Faith of the Mahāyāna*): "The Treatise states that [Tathatā] is named buddha-nature in the context of sentient beings, and it is named Dharma-nature in the context of insentient things" 論云。狂眾生數中名為佛性狂非眾生數中名為法性, T44.1846.247.c13–247.c14. The same idea also appears in Zongmi's 宗密 (780–841 A.D.) *Dasheng qixin lun shu* 大乘起信論疏 (Commentary to the *Treatise of Awakening Faith of the Mahāyāna*), "Therefore, the [*Da*]zhi[*du*] lun states that [Tathatā], in the context of sentient beings, is named buddha-nature, and it is named Dharma-nature in the context of insentient things" 故智論云在眾生數中名為佛性在非眾生數中名為法性, L141.1600.90.a1–90a2. Zongmi's work is a commentary on Fazang's

shown in the predominance of three schools, which were Huayan 華嚴, Faxiang 法相, and Chan 禪, in the Tang dynasty described as follows in the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀

(Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs):

自唐以來。傳衣鉢者起於廬嶺。談法界闡名相者盛於長安。是三者皆以道行卓犖名播九重。為帝王師範。<sup>8</sup>

Since the Tang dynasty, the [school] of robe and bowl transmission grew stronger on [Mt.] Yuling. [The school] that discussed *dharmadhātu* and the [school] that talked about name and form flourished in Chang'an. The teachings of the three [schools] were promulgated and their repute attracted the court. [Their teachings] became models for emperors.

The “school of robe transmission” (*chuan yibo* 傳衣鉢) refers to the Chan school. The school with its main teaching on *dharmadhātu* was Huayan. The school that emphasized discussion on name and form was Faxiang. According to the passage, the three schools predominated during the Tang dynasty. Some emperors accepted and followed the

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*Record (Foguang da cidian, s.v. “大乘起信論疏”). Therefore, the idea that Tathatā is given by different names in different references might be from Fazang's work. Zhanran said that the idea that the Tathatā in different contexts had different names was not actually from the *Dazhidu lun*. According to Sakamoto, Zhanran passed away when Zongmi was only three years old. Therefore, Zhanran's quote cannot come from Zongmi's work (Sakamoto, 1959, p. 22). Although with reference to this particular idea, Zhanran did not state clearly whose work that he was criticising, it shows indirectly that his criticism is partly aimed at the work of Fazang. This is an example of the competition between the Tiantai and the Huayan schools on the issue of the subject of buddha-nature. The Huayan Buddhist scholar whom Zhanran intended to criticize is not necessarily Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839 A.D.), the fourth patriarch of the Huayan school, because Chengguan's *Dafang Guangfo Huayan jing shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏 (Commentary to the *Flower Garland Sūtra*) appeared after Zhanran had passed away (Guo, 1999, pp. 50–1; Sakamoto, 1959, p. 21). In addition, Guo Chaoshun 郭朝順 suggests that Zhanran only intended to criticize Buddhist exegetes who were associated with the study of *weixin* 唯心 (Mind-Only) (Guo, 1999, pp. 50–1). I agree with Guo's argument that the Fazang and Huayan schools are not the only targets of Zhanran's critiques.*

<sup>8</sup> T49.2035.188c27–189a1.

teachings of the three schools. The author of the *Fozu tongji* is Zhipan 志磐,<sup>9</sup> a Tiantai monk. In addition, the decline of the school is also shown in Zhanran's critique of the three Buddhist schools.<sup>10</sup> Aiming to restore the Tiantai school in the mid-Tang dynasty, Zhanran, like Jizang, proclaimed his mission to revive it,<sup>11</sup> as demonstrated by his *Fuxing*, which elaborates a significant Tiantai work, the *Mohe zhiguan*.<sup>12</sup> And his argument about the buddha-nature of insentient things is part of that doctrinal revival project.

As will be shown later in this chapter, in Zhanran's *Fuxing*, we find Chinese sources, ideas, and texts. The quotations from Chinese sources show that Zhanran had broad knowledge of traditional Chinese thought. In the *Zhiguan yili* 止觀義例 (A List [Explanation] on the Meaning of the *Great Cessation and Contemplation*)<sup>13</sup> and *Zhiguan fuxing soyao ji* 止觀輔行搜要記 (Record of Searching for the Essential [Meaning] of

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<sup>9</sup> His dates are unknown, and we know only that he lived during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279 A.D.) (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “志磐”). The content of the work is primarily about the Tiantai school, including its teachings, lineage, the biographies of each of its patriarchs, etc. (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “佛祖統紀”).

<sup>10</sup> T49.2035.188c25–189a6; Chen, 1997, pp. 1–2. Penkower provides evidence showing Zhanran's critique of these schools, Penkower, 1997, pp. 1327 (12), 1321 (18), 1317 (22). For more detailed discussion about the three Buddhist schools in the Tang dynasty, see Lai, 1993, pp. 10–6. His critique of the study of *weixin* 唯心 is an example, see footnote 7.

<sup>11</sup> T49.2035.189b4–189b7; T49.2035.440c9–440c10; T51.2069.103b2-103b10; T49.2036.606c16-606c22; T50.2061.740a2-740a9; Ziporyn, 2000, pp. 195–96; Tang, 2001b, p. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Tang, 2001b, p. 414; Penkower, 1997, pp. 1327 (12)–1326 (13). Penkower points out that Xuanlang 玄朗 (673–754 A.D.), with whom Zhanran studied, gave a lecture on the *Mohe zhiguan* for general discussion, and later Zhanran wrote a commentary on this work (Penkower, 1997, pp. 1329 [10]), proving that Zhanran received lectures on the *Mohe zhiguan* from Xuanlang.

<sup>13</sup> “Quotes from Confucianism and Daoism...Although names (terms) are the same, it does not mean that they imply the same in meaning” 引用儒道。...不以名似將為義同, T46.1913.447c6–447c8.

the *Fuxing*),<sup>14</sup> he also states that he drew on some non-Buddhist ideas (Confucianism and Daoism) in his discussion (引用儒道). Moreover, some commentaries on Zhanran's *Fuxing* by other Tiantai monks also shed further light on this point.<sup>15</sup> However, Zhanran explained that he only borrowed terms from Chinese sources, but not their meanings (不以名似將為義同). It is also interesting to note that he was from a Confucian family<sup>16</sup> and that he studied with Xuanlang 玄朗 (673–754 A.D.), who, as Linda Penkower points out, “was well-versed in the Confucian texts and Daoist texts. It was not that he found the study of [secular and other texts] objectionable, but that only through [the study and practice of] calming and contemplation—not through other means—could enlightenment be reached.”<sup>17</sup> Xuanlang did not reject indigenous Chinese thought and Zhanran may have been partly influenced in this by his teacher, Xuanlang. Therefore, Zhanran's knowledge was not limited to Buddhism. Although he explained that he only

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<sup>14</sup> “Searching for teachings of sudden [enlightenment] and of gradual [enlightenment] in order to reconcile these two teachings. [Therefore, I] borrowed part of Confucian and Daoist teaching to cut off mistakes” 搜求漸頓以融通。片奪儒道以隔弊, X55.919.742a10.

<sup>15</sup> For commentaries on Zhanran's *Mohe zhiguan yili*, see Congyi's 從義 (1042–1091 A.D.) *Mohe zhiguan yili zuanyao* 摩訶止觀義例纂要 (Compilation of the Essential [Meaning] of A List [Explanation] on the Meaning of the Great Cessation and Contemplation), X56.921.10a3–10b6. Another commentary is Chuyuan's 處元 (his date is unknown, but we know that the content of the work was orally given on May 8<sup>th</sup> in the third year of the Chongning 崇寧 period, or 1104 A.D.) *Mohe zhiguan yili suishi* 摩訶止觀義例隨釋 (Appended Explanation on A List [Explanation] on the Meaning of the Great Cessation and Contemplation), X56.923.129b13–129c9.

<sup>16</sup> “[He] came from a Confucian family” 家本習儒, T49.2035.188c6.

<sup>17</sup> Penkower, 1997, p. 1333 (6); *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “玄朗.” The text of this idea is: “Later, [Xuanlang] studied with Chan masters and focused his study on the practice of contemplation. [He] also studied broadly Confucianism and Daoism. There is nothing that he was not interested in. Although his specialization was broad, he was in favour of the teaching of cessation and contemplation, and he thought that this teaching was the only way to obtain the true teaching” 後依恭禪師重修觀法。博達儒書兼閑道宗。無不該覽。雖通諸見獨以止觀以為入道之程, T50.2061.875c14–875c16.

borrowed terms but not meanings from Chinese sources, he consciously or unconsciously incorporated Chinese thought into his discussion on the issue that insentient things have buddha-nature in order to compete with other Buddhist schools. Therefore, our study of Zhanran's ideas should be broader than only its Buddhist context.

## 1. An examination of Zhanran's argument of insentient things having buddha-nature

Zhanran argued that sentient beings and insentient things are undifferentiated in three ways: first, that sentient beings consist of two aspects: physical and mental:

若論無情何獨外色。內色亦然。故淨名云。是身無知如草木瓦礫。若論有情何獨眾生。一切唯心。是則一塵具足一切眾生佛性。亦具十方諸佛佛性。<sup>18</sup>

As for the discussion of insentient things, how would it be exclusive to “outward form” (*weise*)? It should also include “inward form” (*neise*). Therefore, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* states: “This body is without understanding, like plants or trees, tiles or pebbles.”<sup>19</sup> In terms of sentient beings, how could it be exclusive to all beings? All [sentient beings] are no more than the mind. Thus, a speck of mote is replete with the buddha-nature of all sentient beings as well as the buddha-nature of all buddhas.

This passage points out two concepts: *wuqing* 無情 (insentient things) and *youqing* 有情 (sentient beings), and *weise* 外色 (outward form) and *neise* 內色 (inward form).

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<sup>18</sup> T46.1912.152a20–152a23.

<sup>19</sup> The translation of the statement of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is by Watson, 1997, p. 35.

The latter concept (*weise* and *neise*) is included in the concept of *wuqing*. As for the definitions of *neise* and *weise*, Zhanran names *weise* as such things as plants, trees, and other inanimate things. *Neise* denotes human beings and/or sentient beings. The denotations of *weise* and *neise* are explained in his *Fuxing*:

內色外色各十時異。<sup>20</sup>內色異者。一歌羅邏時異。二阿浮陀時異。三閉手時異。四胞時異。五初生時異。六嬰孩時異。七童子時異。八年少時異。九盛壯時異。十老死時異。外色亦爾。牙莖枝葉華果時異。<sup>21</sup>

Each of “inward form” and “outward form” contains ten distinct periods of time. As for the inward form, the first is the *kalala* period.<sup>22</sup> Second is the *arbudam* period.<sup>23</sup> Third is *peśī* period.<sup>24</sup> Fourth is the fetus period.<sup>25</sup> Fifth is the birth period. Sixth is infancy. Seventh is childhood. Eighth is youth. Ninth is adult. Tenth is aging and death. The outward form is the same. [They contains distinct periods, which are] seed, stem, branch, leaf, flower, and fruit.

Zhanran gives the term *neise* (inward form) to mean the ten periods of the life of a human being. It indicates that *neise* is associated with sentient beings. *Waise* (outward form) refers to plants, implying a relationship to plants, trees, and other inanimate things. The

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<sup>20</sup> The ten stages a human being passes through from conception to death: (1) membrane 膜; (2) foam 泡; (3) in the placenta 胞; (4) ball of flesh 肉團; (5) growth of limbs 逆; (6) infancy 嬰孩; (7) childhood 童子; (8) youth 少年; (9) mature adult 盛壯; and (10) decrepit old age 衰老. The first five are prenatal 胎內五位 and the latter five are postnatal 胎外五位 (Swanson, 2008, 十時).

<sup>21</sup> T46.1912.293b27–293c2.

<sup>22</sup> This is the period of the embryo, and it is the first week after conception (Muller, 2007, 歌羅邏 *kalala*; EDBT, s.v. “歌羅邏,” 3:1442; EDBT, s.v. “羯邏藍,” 3:1526). *Kalala* is translated as “membrane” (Muller, 2008, 膜).

<sup>23</sup> This is the second of the five periods of a fetus, and it is the second week after conception (Muller, 2008, 頸部曇; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “頸部曇”; EDBT, s.v. “頸部曇,” 3:1548). Foam (Muller, 2008, 泡).

<sup>24</sup> This is the period of the mass or fetus, and this is the third week after conception (Kritzer, 2012; EDBT, s.v. “閉尸,” 2:1156).

<sup>25</sup> Muller, 2008, 胞.

inclusion of the concept of *neise* and *waise* in the discussion of *wuqing* (insentient things) indicates that “outward form” (*waise*) in this context refers to insentient things. In Zhanran’s discussion, both *neise* (sentient beings, inward form) and *waise* (insentient things, outward form) are associated with the insentient realm (*wuqing*). It is interesting to note that, as Lai Yonghai points out, Zhanran uses the word *se* 色 (form, phenomena) to refer to all entities, both sentient beings and insentient things,<sup>26</sup> in the concept of *neise* and *waise*. It shows that all entities (sentient beings, plants, inanimate things) are considered “form” (*se*).<sup>27</sup> *Neise* refers to the physical aspect of human beings/sentient beings, but mind in the quality of subjectivity is excluded from the discussion of *neise*. Therefore, in terms of the physical aspect (form) of sentient beings, they are undifferentiated from insentient things; that is, they are classified as insentient things (*wuqing, se*).

Unlike Jizang, in the context of universal buddha-nature, sentient beings in Zhanran’s definition are not divided into self and others. He followed the definition of sentient beings according to the holistic view of Buddhism. However, as for universal buddha-nature, he divided sentient beings in terms of physical and mind/mental aspects. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the division of sentient beings into physical and mind/mental aspects is also illustrated by the concept of the five *skandha* in Indian Buddhism.

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<sup>26</sup> Lai, 1993, p. 60.

<sup>27</sup> Lai, 1993, p. 60.

Moreover, Zhanran quotes the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, which mentions that the physical aspect of sentient beings makes them undifferentiated from insentient things, because sentient beings in reference to their physical aspect lack *zhi* 知 (understanding, consciousness).<sup>28</sup> The difference between Zhanran’s view of sentient beings here and that of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is that the physical aspect of sentient beings is considered provisional existence, and thus it is not true reality in the latter.<sup>29</sup> But true reality in Zhanran’s discussion does not exclude the physical aspect. According to the *Sūtra*, the physical aspect is conditioned and impermanent. The sickness of Vimalakīrti is an illusion. Vimalakīrti intends to illuminate true reality through his sickness; his sickness and physical body are impermanent and unreal. The true reality is *foshen* 佛身, or *rulai shen* 如來身. It is, in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, equivalent with *fashen* 法身 (*dharmakāya*) and *gongde zhihui* 功德智慧 (*Buddha-guṇa* and wisdom), which is the manifestation of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>30</sup> As for *dharmakāya*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* also talks about *śūnyatā* (emptiness). However, the doctrine of *śūnyatā* in this *Sūtra* refers to conceptual knowledge of non-duality. It is a subjective view of nondualism.<sup>31</sup> This conceptual knowledge of non-duality enables

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<sup>28</sup> The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* states: “This body is without understanding, like plants or trees, tiles or pebbles” (Watson, 1997, p. 35) 是身無知，如草木瓦礫, T14.475.539b23–539b24.

<sup>29</sup> “This body is empty and unreal” (Watson, 1997, p. 35) 是身為虛偽, T14.475.539b25. For more detail, see T14.475.539b10–539b29.

<sup>30</sup> “[You] should seek the Buddha body. Why? Because the Buddha body is the Dharma body. It is born from immeasurable merits and wisdom” (Watson, 1997, p. 35) 當樂佛身。所以者何？佛身者即法身也；從無量功德智慧生, T14.475.539b29–c2. For more detail, see T14.475.539b29–539c11.

<sup>31</sup> Watson states: “The doctrine of nondualism is not intended to be an objective description of the true nature of reality, but rather a recommendation as to how one can best view reality in order to advance one’s



someone to attain enlightenment and merits as the Buddha does.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the true reality/*dharmakāya* (佛身者即法身) in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* lies in the mental aspect, and the physical aspect is excluded. However, Zhanran only quotes portions of the message of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* to support his argument as orthodox. He reinterpreted the idea, and argued that buddha-nature as the true reality does not reject the physical aspect of sentient beings. Since the physical aspect of sentient beings is undifferentiated from that of insentient things, buddha-nature as the true reality of sentient beings and not rejecting the physical aspect of sentient beings is also the true reality of insentient things. Thus, his argument of universal buddha-nature is from the point of view that the physical aspect of sentient beings is undifferentiated from that of insentient things (是身無知如草木瓦礫。若論有情何獨眾生). Zhanran's view that buddha-nature/true reality does not exclude the physical aspect of sentient beings is inconsistent with the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. He defended his position of buddha-nature as universal by not differentiating sentient beings and insentient things in terms of their physical attributes.

The second way in which Zhanran does not differentiate sentient beings and insentient things is from a spatial perspective.<sup>33</sup> He divides the universe into ordinary

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religious aims, a tool to assist one in realizing the Middle Way" (Watson, 1997, p. 12). Therefore, although the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* also talks about *śūnyatā*, *śūnyatā* refers to wisdom and mental part as a subjective view of nondualism.

<sup>32</sup> 當樂佛身。所以者何？佛身者即法身也；從無量功德智慧生，T14.475.539b29–c2.

<sup>33</sup> The argument of universal buddha-nature in terms of space also appears in Jizang's *Dasheng xuanlun* 大乘玄論：大涅槃哀歎品中。有失珠得珠喻。以喻眾生。迷故失無佛性。悟故得有佛性。故云。一闡

beings (*fan* 凡) and buddhas and bodhisattvas (*sheng* 聖), in addition to differentiating the mundane world from buddhahood. This distinction is shown in his *Jingang bei*:

言佛性者。所謂十力無畏不共大悲三念三十二相八十種好。子何不引此文。令一切眾生亦無。何獨瓦石。若云此是果德。眾生有此果性者。果性身土何不露於瓦石等耶。<sup>34</sup>

As for buddha-nature, it is the ten powers, fearlessness, perfection, great compassion, three bases of mindfulness (*trīṇi smṛty-upasthānāni*),<sup>35</sup> thirty-two marks,<sup>36</sup> and eighty minor marks<sup>37</sup>. Why do you not quote this text to exclude sentient beings from the subject of buddha-nature, but only earthenware and stones? If it is said that it (buddha-nature, the ten powers, fearlessness, etc.) is the fruits of virtue, and sentient beings have such fruits of (buddha-) nature, why are earthenware and stones excluded from the realm of the fruits of the nature?

Buddha-nature in terms of the fruits of virtue, or *guode* 果德, refers to *Buddha-guṇa*, which includes such outstanding characteristics as the ten powers, perfection, thirty-two marks, and so on. Buddha-nature is the consequence and manifestation of mental awakening and a consequence of wisdom/*dharmakāya*. Thus, buddha-nature is associated with characteristics of the Buddha (佛性者。所謂十力無畏不共大悲三念三十二相八十種好), or with buddhahood. Sentient beings as unenlightened ones in the mundane world

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提無佛性。殺亦無罪也。又呵二乘人如焦種。永絕其根。如根敗之士。豈非是明凡聖無佛性耶。眾生尚無佛性。何況草木。以此證知。不但草木無佛性。眾生亦無佛性也, T45.1853.40b27–40c3.

<sup>34</sup> T46.1932.782a20–782a24.

<sup>35</sup> The three bases of mindfulness refer to the Buddha's upholding of the wisdom and maintaining his mind in neither rejoicing nor grieved while sentient beings believe, do not believe, or part believe and part do not believe (Muller, 2007, 三念住; EDBT, s.v. “三念住,” 1:106).

<sup>36</sup> The thirty-two marks, see Muller, 2009, 三十二相; EDBT, s.v. “三十二相,” 1:94.

<sup>37</sup> Muller lists eighty minor marks, see Muller, 2010, 八十種好.

are considered unenlightened, and thus, do not possess the outstanding characteristics of buddhas. In terms of spatial perspective, sentient beings and insentient things (*washi* 瓦石, earthenware and stones) are not differentiated because the outstanding characteristics of the Buddha are not manifested in sentient beings in the mundane world. Thus, in terms of the spatial perspective, buddha-nature is the fruits of the virtue of the Buddha (or characteristics of the Buddha, or *Buddha-guṇa*), and it is associated with buddhahood. Both sentient beings and insentient things in the mundane world do not have buddha-nature. In other words, *Buddha-guṇa* does not manifest in sentient beings and insentient things in the mundane world. However, although both sentient beings and insentient things live in the mundane world, both *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS hold a view that buddha-nature/*tathāgata-garbha* is attributed to sentient beings as a potential that enables them to become buddhas in the future. Insentient things are excluded. Therefore, in terms of the mundane world, sentient beings are still considered distinct from insentient things in both *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS.

The third way in which Zhanran does not differentiate between sentient beings and insentient things is seen in his ontological view that all things in the universe possess the same essence (*ti* 體):

[淨名]注云云者。經中有並。謂以眾生草木聖賢而為並詰。如通凡聖及情非情。若彌勒如得授記者。一切眾生小乘賢聖無情草木。亦應記耶。若眾生等不得記者。彌勒亦然。何獨眾生及賢聖等有得不得。如

不應同。如體既同記何不等。<sup>38</sup>

The commentary to [the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*] states that [the *Sūtra*] points out [that as for the discussion] of equality, sentient beings, grasses, trees, and saints are all equal [in essence]. From the mundane world to the sacred world as well as from the sentient realm to the insentient realm, if Maitreya receives a prediction [of his future buddhahood], all sentient beings, worthies of the Lesser Vehicle, saints, insentient things, grasses, and trees should receive [a prediction] as well. If sentient beings, etc., do not receive a prediction, neither does Maitreya. Why are the subjects of receiving a prediction discriminated in terms of [whether they are] sentient beings and saints, unless they are different [in essence from Maitreya]? If they have the same [essence as Maitreya], why are they excluded from [the possibility of] receiving a prediction?

The argument is from the perspective of essential equality. In terms of essence, there is an integrated, united nature. All entities, both sentient beings and insentient things, in both the mundane world and buddhahood possess this universal nature. Thus, if Maitreya receives a prediction of his future buddhahood, not only sentient beings, but also insentient things are able to receive similar assurances because of their essential equality.

Therefore, Zhanran's argument for the non-differentiation of sentient beings and insentient things may be seen as having three aspects:

1. Separation of the mental (mind) from the physical aspects of sentient beings. In terms of the physical, sentient beings are undifferentiated from insentient things if the mental aspect/mind of sentient beings is excluded. In this sense, sentient beings and insentient things are considered objects (form, *se*). Therefore, sentient beings are considered non-differentiated from insentient

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<sup>38</sup> T46.1912.349b10–349b15.

things;

2. Spatially, he makes a distinction between the mundane world and the achievement of buddhahood. Buddha-nature as *Buddha-guṇa* is the consequence of mental awakening. It is associated with the achievement of buddhahood. Sentient beings are considered unenlightened beings living in the same mundane world as insentient things, and this world is that of the mundane. If insentient things cannot be associated with buddha-nature because they do not manifest the characteristics of the Buddha, then that should be equally true of sentient beings;<sup>39</sup>
3. In terms of essence as totality, there is no essential difference among sentient beings, insentient things, and buddhas (in this case the future Buddha, Maitreya).

This last aspect, viewed from the perspective of a universal essence, is associated with the concepts of *xingju* and *liju*. Later, I will compare Zhanran's discussion of buddha-nature as a universal nature with some aspects of Chinese thought.

## **2. Zhanran's definition and interpretation of buddha-nature**

### **2.1 Zhanran's discussion of nature**

In Zhanran's discussion of (buddha-) nature, *xing* 性 (nature) is permanent and unchanging: "The inherence exists permanently unchanging from beginningless time, thus, it is described as nature" 無始至今其種不變。故名為性。<sup>40</sup> The nature of all phenomena is *sandi* 三諦 (Threefold Truth), which is permanent and unchanging, as described in his *Fuxing*:

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<sup>39</sup> I thank Dr. Wendi Adamek for her clarification of this point.

<sup>40</sup> T46.1912.352a12.

言法性者亦是諸法具三諦性。…三諦性冥始終無變。亦可界法性法即是實相。實相之體三諦具足。<sup>41</sup>

As for the discussion of the nature of phenomena, all phenomena possess the nature of the Threefold Truth...The Threefold Truth nature is embedded in the beginning and end without changing. Both the phenomenal (*jiēfǎ* 界法) and the noumenal worlds (*xìngfǎ* 性法) are identical with true reality. The essence of the true reality is replete with the Threefold Truth.

According to the passage, both noumenal and phenomenal worlds are identical with *shíxiāng* 實相 (true marks/true reality). The idea, as will be discussed later, is consistent with non-Buddhist claims that phenomena are manifestations of and identical with true reality. It indicates that true reality does not exclude the phenomenal world. The Threefold Truth, as true reality, consists of: *kōng* 空 (emptiness), *jiǎ* 假 (provisional existence), and *zhōng* 中 (the Middle Way).<sup>42</sup> All phenomena manifest these three truths because the Threefold Truth is the nature of all phenomena (三諦性). The Threefold Truth refers to principle. Thus, the nature of all phenomena (*fǎxìng* 法性) represents principle as described by Zhanran as: “The nature of phenomena is principle. Principle is identical with the [Threefold] Truth. Since ‘all-inclusive’ is the nature of phenomena, ‘all-inclusive’ can be considered as the [Threefold] Truth” 法性是理理即是諦。既俱法性故俱稱諦。<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the nature of all phenomena, in Zhanran’s

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<sup>41</sup> T46.1912.293a25–293a27.

<sup>42</sup> Swanson, 1989, p. 363.

<sup>43</sup> T46.1912.226b6–226b7.

perspective, refers to principle, and this principle is universal.

## 2.2 Zhanran's definition of buddha-nature

Zhanran defined buddha-nature in terms of principle shown in his articulation of emptiness:

若大乘空。此空由於即事而得。故名隨理。理即事故即義該深。故即空中含於不空。名為佛性。<sup>44</sup>

As for emptiness of Mahāyāna teachings, emptiness is obtained through its identity (*ji* 即) with the phenomenal world (*shi* 事). Therefore, it (the emptiness) is named “principle accords with [phenomena].” Principle is identical with phenomena. Therefore, the meaning of “identity” is profound. Thus in emptiness is included not-emptiness.<sup>45</sup> It is described as buddha-nature.

Zhanran denotes emptiness as principle (*li* 理). Principle is not separate from phenomena.

It is identical with phenomena (*lijishi* 理即事). Thus, in Zhanran's perspective, emptiness is defined thus: in emptiness is included not-emptiness (即空中含於不空).

Not-emptiness represents phenomena (*shi* 事). Phenomena are empty in essence (emptiness, principle, *li* 理). They are manifestations of principle, and they are principle (理即事). True reality is not emptiness, but it is non-duality of principle and phenomena, or “phenomena are principle.” He calls this true reality *dasheng kong* 大乘空 (the emptiness of the Mahāyāna teachings). At the end of the passage, Zhanran states that this

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<sup>44</sup> T46.1912.246c19–246c22.

<sup>45</sup> I thank Dr. Wendi Adamek for this interpretation and translation.

*dasheng kong* (即空中含於不空) is described as buddha-nature. Buddha-nature and *dasheng kong* are synonymous. Therefore, Zhanran interpreted buddha-nature in terms of principle. This principle is the principle of non-duality, which transcends and encompasses two opposites. Both *dasheng kong* and buddha-nature transcend and encompass two opposites: essential emptiness (*li*) and not empty in appearances and existences (*shi*).

Zhanran's interpretation of buddha-nature in terms of principle referred to traditional Tiantai doctrine: the concept of Threefold buddha-nature: a) *zhengyin* 正因 (buddha-nature as direct cause), b) *liaoyin* 了因 (buddha-nature as complete cause), and c) *yuanyin* 緣因 (buddha-nature as conditional cause).<sup>46</sup> According to Tiantai doctrine, buddha-nature in terms of *zhengyin* refers to the *dharmakāya*, or Dharma-body of the Buddha.<sup>47</sup> Zhanran follows this perspective as shown in his assertion that insentient

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<sup>46</sup> “As for the threefold buddha-nature, the direct cause refers to *dharmakāya* (the teaching of the Buddha). The complete cause refers to *prajñā*. Conditional causes refer to liberation from suffering” 三佛性者。正因即法身。了因即般若。緣因即解脫, T.46.1912.221b27–221b28; Swanson, 1989, p. 365.

<sup>47</sup> Although the discussion of buddha-nature in combination with the doctrine of the Middle Way is also found in the works of Zhiyi, Swanson points out that his discussion of buddha-nature in terms of *zhengyin xing* 正因性 (direct cause [of buddhahood])—which corresponds to true nature itself or reality or principle—refers to the innate potential in all sentient beings to become buddhas (Swanson, 1990, pp. 176–77). Swanson makes an important note that *zhenxing gui* 真性軌 (the true nature of reality), which is the integrated, non-illusory, and non-differentiated aspect of reality, corresponds to *zhengyin xing*. *Zhenxing gui* refers to phenomenal world (*jing* 境), to buddha-nature. Both are in the same category of the Threefold Reality. Buddhahood is inherent in all sentient beings, since they all participate in the true nature of reality as simultaneously empty of substantial Being, yet conventionally existent (Swanson, 1989, p. 306). Swanson's explanation indicates that although both the phenomenal world and buddha-nature refer to *zhenxing gui*, it does not mean that the discussion of buddha-nature also refers to the phenomenal world. Zhiyi's discussion of buddha-nature is in the context of the sentient realm, and here I agree with Swanson's explanation. Ng points out that Zhiyi identifies buddha-nature with dharma-nature (Ng, 2010, p. 123), and concludes that Zhiyi countenances the idea of insentient things having buddha-nature. However, this is only



things have buddha-nature, based on the first cause: *zhengyin*. He defined buddha-nature as equivalent with the doctrine of *diyiyi kong* 第一義空 (the Paramount Truth of Emptiness) and the Middle Way:

佛性者第一義空。第一義空名為中道。中道名佛。佛名涅槃。<sup>48</sup>

As for buddha-nature, it is the Paramount Truth of Emptiness. The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as the Middle Way. The Middle Way is described as Buddha. Buddha is described as *nirvāṇa*.

The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is synonymous with the Middle Way. Thus, buddha-nature is equivalent with the Middle Way. It indicates that buddha-nature refers to *dharmakāya*. The question is whether Zhanran's view of *dharmakāya* (the Paramount Truth of Emptiness/the Middle Way) is consistent with views found in Indian Buddhism? Is the Middle Way a universal principle and also applicable to the insentient realm? The above passage is from the MMPS.<sup>49</sup> However, as mentioned in both the Introduction and Chapter 3, the MMPS specifies that the Paramount Truth of Emptiness refers to wisdom.<sup>50</sup> It shows that the Paramount Truth of Emptiness in the discussion of

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Ng's suggestion. There could be another interpretation that, although buddha-nature and dharma-nature are identical, insentient things are psychologically included in sentient beings. Therefore, insentient things do not ontologically possess buddha-nature. I would agree more with Swanson's point, because if we read the whole text of Zhiyi's work, the discussion of buddha-nature is within the context of the practice of contemplation, not ontology. Zhiyi and Guanding do not clearly affirm that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature (Penkower, 1997, p. 1316 [23]). However, Zhanran firmly argues that insentient things are ontologically able to possess buddha-nature.

<sup>48</sup> T46.1912.166a8–166a10.

<sup>49</sup> 佛性者即第一義空。第一義空名為中道。中道者即名為佛。佛者名為涅槃, T12.374.524b8–524b9.

<sup>50</sup> The MMPS states, "As for buddha-nature, it is described as the Paramount Truth of Emptiness. The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as wisdom" 佛性者名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧, T12.374.523b12–523b13.

buddha-nature in the MMPS refers to conceptual emptiness, that is, the conceptual transcendence of dualities.<sup>51</sup> Both the Paramount Truth of Emptiness and the Middle Way refer to *dharmakāya* and wisdom, which is restricted to sentient beings. Thus, *dharmakāya* in the MMPS is associated and not separated from sentient things and wisdom. According to the MMPS, buddha-nature is described as the Paramount Truth of Emptiness, it indicates that buddha-nature in terms of *dharmakāya* is restricted to sentient beings (佛性者名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧).

However, in his discussion of nature, Zhanran seems to ignore the portion of the MMPS containing the concept of the Paramount Truth of Emptiness being associated with wisdom (第一義空名為智慧)<sup>52</sup>, and reinterprets the notion of *dharmakāya* of the MMPS in terms of the notion of principle in Arcane Study. He defined buddha-nature as equivalent with the Middle Way in terms of principle. Thus, the Middle Way is universal, and it also exists in the insentient things as described in the *Fuxing*:

至真實者。即是止觀所緣之境。…一色一香無非中道者。中道即法界。法界即止觀。止觀不二境智冥一。所緣所念雖屬於境。且語能緣以明寂照。<sup>53</sup>

To achieve true reality is identical with the state of cessation and

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<sup>51</sup> T12.374.523b11–523b23. Dualities in the sentient realm, such as suffering and nirvāṇa, are not true reality. True reality transcends both suffering and nirvāṇa, and this is the Middle Way (Fujii, 2000, pp. 31–4). The Middle Way is synonymous with the Paramount Truth of Emptiness because both of them refer to conceptual transcendence of dualities. Thus, the Middle Way as a wisdom is also restricted to sentient beings. The Middle Way is the true reality of sentient beings (Fujii, 2000, pp. 31–4).

<sup>52</sup> T12.374.523b12–523b13.

<sup>53</sup> T46.1912.151c16–151c23.

contemplation of the conditioned world (*suoyuan* 所緣)...Any form and odour is no other than the Middle Way. The Middle Way is identical with phenomena. Phenomena are identical with cessation and contemplation. Cessation and contemplation are non-dual. Phenomena and wisdom are united as one. Although the conditioned phenomena and objects of thoughts refer to phenomena, they are able to speak of [teachings of the Buddha] to someone (*nengyuan* 能緣) in order to explain the “silent and luminous” [as the characteristics of Suchness].

According to the passage, the Middle Way unites wisdom (*zhi* 智) and phenomena (*jing* 境) as one. The true reality (the Middle Way) does not exclude the phenomenal world (中道即法界). It exists in both wisdom (sentient beings) and in the phenomenal world (insentient things). The Middle Way is the true reality that exists pervasively,<sup>54</sup> even in the phenomenal world (*suoyuan*, conditioned realm). The statement “the Middle Way is identical with phenomena” 中道即法界 indicates that phenomena are manifestations of the true reality (the Middle Way). Therefore, phenomena are true reality, or “all phenomena are nothing but the true reality,” *shixiang bi zhufa* 實相必諸法.<sup>55</sup> This idea

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<sup>54</sup> In the context of the sentient realm, the Absolute Truth also exists in ignorance, as shown in Zhanran’s *Fuxing*: “The principle of Absolute Truth is identical with ignorance. Someone contemplates the Absolute Truth profoundly as identical with perceiving buddha-nature. It is perceiving [buddha-]nature through ignorance” 真諦之理即是無明。但深觀真即見佛性。即是觀於無明見性, T46.1912.246c29–247a1.

<sup>55</sup> T46.1932.785c12. Zhanran’s idea of *shixiang bi zhufa*, or *zhufa shixian* 諸法實相, follows Tiantai teachings that all phenomena (*dharmas*) are true reality. That is, all phenomena possess the Threefold Truth. In this sense, the true reality exists in all phenomena in the ordinary world (See T34.1718.38b22–38b24). However, different Buddhist texts have various definitions to *zhufa shixian*. For instance, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* (Dazhidu lun 大智度論) defines *zhufa shixian* as *prajñāpāramitā* (諸法實相即是般若波羅蜜, T25.1509.190a25–190a26; 諸法實相是般若波羅蜜, T25.1509.195c16). It implies that *zhufa shixian/prajñāpāramitā* is associated with the sentient realm, because only sentient beings are able to possess *prajñā* (wisdom) and to attain *pāramitā* (across to the other shore) (See T25.1509.191a3–191a12). In addition, the text also states that the *prajñāpāramitā* does not refer to teachings and truths of the ordinary world, of *śrāvaka* (voice-hearer), and *pratyekabuddha* (individual enlightened one), but only refers to bodhisattvas and buddhas (See T25.1509.195c16–196a10). Therefore, *zhufa shixian/prajñāpāramitā* in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* does not refer to the ordinary world. As mentioned earlier, Zhanran read the

is not identical with the Twofold Truth<sup>56</sup> of Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka school and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*’s claim that all entities (phenomena) function as conditionally dependent origination are considered provisional truth.<sup>57</sup> They are not true reality (the ultimate truth).<sup>58</sup> In the Madhyamaka school, the true reality (the ultimate truth) as what *dharmas* really are is emptiness,<sup>59</sup> not *dharmas*, which function as conditionally dependent origination. Therefore, in Nāgārjuna’s Twofold Truth, phenomena are not true reality. The true reality (the ultimate truth) of all phenomena (*zhufa shixiang* 諸法實相)

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*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra* (See footnote 7). He might have been familiar with the definition of *zhufa shixian* in the text. However, his definition of *zhufa shixian* does not refer to *prajñāpāramitā* and thus, is not identical with the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-Śāstra*. In other Buddhist text, the *Madhyamaka-Śāstra* (Zhong lun 中論) defines *zhufa shixian* as *nirvāṇa* (諸法實相即是涅槃, T30.1564.25a1–25a2).

<sup>56</sup> Twofold Truth, or two truths, does not only belong to the Madhyamaka school. Many Buddhist schools also include Twofold Truth with different contents in their teachings (see PDB, s.v. “satyadvaya”). As for Madhyamaka school, “conventional truths are falsely perceived... with its connotation of deception. Ultimate truths, literally “supreme object truths,” might be described as those realities that exist as they appear and whose direct perception can lead to liberation from rebirth (see PDB, s.v. “satyadvaya”). Therefore, the ultimate truth in terms of “reality that exists as things appear” is emptiness in Madhyamaka school’s perspective. In Zhiyi’s perspective, his concept of *ji* (identity) makes the three truths in equal position (more detailed discussion, see Li, 1999, pp. 188–94). Zhiyi’s Threefold Truth is not identical with the Madhyamaka school (Li, 1999, p. 192). Zhiyi’s reinterpretation of the Twofold Truth to the Threefold Truth, see Li, 1996, pp. 434–50.

<sup>57</sup> The *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* states the doctrine of the Middle Way of the Madhyamaka school as: “because everything is dependently arisen, the extreme of annihilation (*ucchedānta*) is avoided; because everything is empty, the extreme of permanence (*śāsvatānta*) is avoided” (PDB, s.v. “Madhyamaka”). The school speaks of the two truths as: “[the two truths] must simultaneously proclaim the emptiness of all phenomena (the ultimate truth) while describing the operations of the world of cause and effect and the process of governing the path to enlightenment (all of which are deemed conventional truths) (PDB, s.v. “Madhyamaka”). The doctrine of the Middle Way of the Madhyamaka school is to avoid the two extremes. Both the ultimate truth and the provisional truth must be proclaimed simultaneously. However, in Madhyamaka school, the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatyā*) is the emptiness of all phenomena. For those things that function based on dependent origination is provisional (conventional) truth (*saṃvṛtisatyā*). However, the provisional truth is not rejected (PDB, s.v. “Madhyamaka”).

<sup>58</sup> As for Nāgārjuna’s discussion of the Twofold Truth, it does not mean that ultimate truth exists in a transcendental world and provisional truth in the mundane world. Provisional truth refers to conditioned, impermanent functioning, which are dependent on conditions. Emptiness as no substantial entity in virtue exists with phenomena. Therefore, emptiness as true reality is not a reality in a transcendent world.

<sup>59</sup> Emptiness, as Roger R. Jackson describes, “refers to what *dharmas* (elements of reality) really are through what they are not: not as they appear, not conceptualizable, not distinguishable... lacking permanent, independent, intrinsic existence” (Jackson, 2004, 2:809).

is emptiness.

In the Tiantai school, emptiness is real truth (*zhendi* 真諦), but it is not the ultimate truth (the Middle Way),<sup>60</sup> which encompasses the two truths (provisional truth and real truth) as non-duality. Phenomena (provisional truth) and emptiness (real truth) are non-dual. Thus, the ultimate truth (the Middle Way) is: “phenomena (*shi* 事, *ji* 假) are identical with emptiness (*li* 理, *kong* 空)” (理即事). This ultimate truth is *dasheng kong*, as described by Zhanran in the above. Thus, true reality (*shixiang* 實相) is not emptiness (real truth), but the Middle Way (the ultimate truth).

As for the meaning of *zhufa shixiang*, it is variously defined in different contexts of Chinese Buddhist schools.<sup>61</sup> The phrase *zhufa shixiang* can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be interpreted as *zhufa de shixiang* 諸法的實相 (the true reality of all phenomena). Second, it can be interpreted as *zhufa ji shixiang* 諸法即實相 (all phenomena are identical with the true reality), or *shixiang bi zhufa* 實相必諸法. These two interpretations have different connotations. In the former interpretation, phenomena function as conditionally dependent origination are impermanent. Therefore, they are not true reality, but emptiness is. This interpretation is consistent with Nāgārjuna’s Twofold Truth. The latter interpretation shows that the ultimate truth is not emptiness, but rather

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<sup>60</sup> Swanson creates a useful chart to summarize the Threefold Truth of the Tiantai teaching, see Swanson, 1989, p. 363.

<sup>61</sup> See footnote 55. For more detailed discussion of various meanings of *zhufa shixiang* of different Buddhist thoughts and in Chinese Buddhist schools, see *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “諸法實相.”

the non-duality of phenomena and emptiness, thus, the Middle Way. The Middle Way as non-duality of phenomena and emptiness represents an idea that phenomena are identical (*ji*) with true reality (the Middle Way), and phenomena are true reality (諸法即實相).

In the Tiantai school, the idea of *zhufa shixiang* contains three aspects.<sup>62</sup> The school includes both connotations mentioned above. One of the three aspects refers to the second connotation, which is that all phenomena are identical with the Middle Way (the ultimate reality), and this idea presents in the statements “any form and odour is identical with the Middle Way” (*yise yixiang jieshi zhongdao* 一色一香皆是中道)<sup>63</sup> and “any form and odour is no other than the Middle Way” (*yise yixiang wufei zhongdao* 一色一香無非中道). These ideas appear in Zhiyi’s *Mohe zhiguan*. They are representations of the second interpretation: *zhufa (ji) shixiang* 諸法(即)實相. The Middle Way as the ultimate truth is universal, and all phenomena that are identical with and manifestations of the Middle Way (the ultimate truth) are true reality as well. This idea seems to be in parallel with the logical assumptions of Chinese thought. According to Roger T. Ames, in classical

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<sup>62</sup> The first aspect is consistent with Nāgārjuna’s perspective mentioned earlier. The second aspect is that both being and non-being (emptiness) are considered conditioned, and they are not absolute reality. The Middle Way transcends both being and non-being. Thus, the Middle Way is the true reality of all phenomena. For the three aspects, see *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “諸法實相.”

<sup>63</sup> 問。示三文者。文是色。色是門為非門。若是門者。色是實相更何所通。若非門者。云何而言一色一香皆是中道。答。文門並是實相, T46.1911.3c28–4a2; 一色一香皆是中道, T46.1911.4a1–4a2. These two statements are in Zhiyi’s *Mode zhiguan*. This idea is also found in Guanding’s *Guanxinlun shu* 觀心論疏 (Commentary to the Treatise of the Contemplation of Mind): 二明觀法者。即是一念法界繫緣法界。言法界者。一色一香皆是中道。無非佛法故皆是法界也。而念心緣一切法。皆是佛法。即是真妙實相法界。故云繫緣法界一念法界。故經云。言法界者。信一切法皆是佛法。佛法者。無前無後無有際畔。同是一佛界故, T46.1921.600c13–600c19.

Chinese thought there is no counterpart between “reality” and “appearance;” that is, there is no “reality” behind changing appearances.<sup>64</sup> Reality is appearance, and vice versa. The question is: Is Zhiyi’s idea of the identity of phenomena (any form and odour) and the ultimate truth (the Middle Way) associated with Chinese thought?

Zhiyi encountered the discussion of *sanxuan* 三玄 (three mysteries) of Chinese thought. The three mysteries is a topic of metaphysical discussion favoured by most intellectuals of Arcane Study<sup>65</sup> and based on three texts: the *Daode jing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes).<sup>66</sup> In the *Mohe zhiguan*, Zhiyi quoted Zhou Hongzheng’s 周弘政(正)<sup>67</sup> discussion of three mysteries.<sup>68</sup> Zhou’s biography is collected in the *Chenshu* 陳書 (the History of the Chen period),<sup>69</sup> which covers the period from 557 to 589 A.D. According to *Chenshu*, Zhou served in office as *shangshu* 尚書 (Minister).<sup>70</sup> He was knowledgeable and specialized in the discussion of *xuan* (mystery) (弘正博物知玄象;<sup>71</sup> 弘正特善玄言).<sup>72</sup> His works include commentaries to

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<sup>64</sup> Ames, 2011b, p. 847.

<sup>65</sup> Liu, 2011, p. 365.

<sup>66</sup> Liu, 2011, p. 365.

<sup>67</sup> His biography is collected in section “*liezhuan* 18” 列傳 18 in fascicle 24 of the *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:305–10. According to the biography, Zhou specialized in the *Daode jing* and the *Zhouyi* 周易 when he was ten years old (年十歲，通老子、周易). His works include commentaries to the *Daode jing*, the *Zhouyi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and others. For detailed information about Zhou, see *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:305–10.

<sup>68</sup> 周弘政釋三玄, T46.1911.135a15–135a16.

<sup>69</sup> The book was compiled in 622–629 A.D. and presented in 636 A.D. (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 504).

<sup>70</sup> OTIC, 2008, s.v. “尚書.” Literally it refers to someone in charge of writing; one of the most important titles of imperial history (OTIC, 2008, p. 410). Throughout the Northern-Southern dynasties the units headed by Ministers were called either Sections (*cao* 曹) or Ministries (*bu* 部) (OTIC, 2008, pp. 19, 411).

<sup>71</sup> *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:308.

<sup>72</sup> *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:309.

the *Daode jing*, the *Zhouyi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and others. As for Zhou's dates, according to Zhang Ji's 張譏 biography in the *Chenshu*, Zhang favoured the discussion of *xuan* as well, and he studied with Zhou.<sup>73</sup> Zhou also had debates and discussions on the *Zhouyi* with Zhang in the imperial college (國學 *guoxue*) in the Tianjia 天嘉 (560–566 A.D.) period.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, Zhou and Zhang lived in the same period. In addition, Zhang's biography mentions that Emperor Wu (464–549 A.D.) of the Liang dynasty invited scholars, including Zhang, to discuss the *Zhouyi*.<sup>75</sup> It indicates that Zhou and Zhang lived in the time approximately from the reign of Emperor Wu to the Chen period, or from 464 to 589 A.D. Zhiyi (538–597 A.D.) also lived in this period. As for the situation of the discussion of the three mysteries during this period, Zhou's lectures on the *Zhouyi* 周易<sup>76</sup> widely attracted officials and people (弘正居以講授，聽者傾朝野焉).<sup>77</sup> According to both Zhou's and Zhang's biographies, their discussions of the three mysteries attracted emperors, scholars, Daoists, and Buddhist scholars<sup>78</sup> in the Liang and Chen periods. In

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<sup>73</sup> 篤好玄言，受學于汝南周弘正 (*Chenshu*, 1972, 2:443). Zhang's biography is collected in section "liezhuan" 列傳 27 in fascicle 33 of the *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:443–45.

<sup>74</sup> 天嘉中，遷國子助教。是時周弘正在國學，發周易題，弘正第四弟弘直亦在講席。譏與弘正論議，弘正乃屈，弘直危坐厲聲，助其申理 (*Chenshu*, 1972, 2:444).

<sup>75</sup> 梁武帝嘗於文德殿釋乾、坤文言，譏與陳郡袁憲等預焉，勅令論議，諸儒莫敢先出，譏乃整容而進，諮審循環，辭令溫雅。梁武帝甚異之，賜裙襦絹等，仍云「表卿稽古之力」 (*Chenshu*, 1972, 2:443).

<sup>76</sup> The *Zhouyi* is part of the *Yijing*. According to Shaughnessy, the title of *Zhouyi* refers to the original parts (i.e. the hexagram and line statements) with special reference to the original context that were composed. The title *Yijing* refers to the complete canonical text, including the group of its commentaries called *shiyi* 十翼 (Ten Wings) with the entire text that was understood as one of the Classics (Shaughnessy, 1993, p. 216).

<sup>77</sup> *Chenshu*, 1972, 2:307.

<sup>78</sup> Scholars and Buddhist monks studied the three mysteries with Zhou shown in: 弘正特善玄言，兼明釋



particular, Zhou was a significant scholar of Arcane Study in his time as mentioned in Emperor Yuan's 元帝 (508–555 A.D., r. 552–555 A.D.) work, *Jinlo zi* 金樓子, which says that the scholar whom the Emperor esteemed was Zhou.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, Zhou's discussion of the three mysteries was well reputed in his time.

Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan* mentions Zhou's discussion of the three mysteries. It indicates that Zhiyi was aware of Arcane Study (the discussion of the three mysteries). Zhiyi's idea that "any form and odour is identical with, or no other than, the Middle Way" might incorporate some ideas from Arcane Study. Zhanran's idea of *shixiang bi zhufa* follows traditional Tiantai teaching and Zhiyi's view, but is not identical with Nāgārjuna's perspective, though he proclaimed that the lineage of Tiantai teaching can be traced back to Nāgārjuna.<sup>80</sup> In Zhanran's perspective, the ultimate reality cannot be violated by epistemological interpretation. Someone will attain enlightenment from the inspiration of the phenomenal world (境且語能緣以明寂照) because the ultimate reality (the Middle Way) is embedded in the phenomenal world, or even phenomena themselves are true

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典，雖碩學名僧，莫不請質疑滯 (Chenshu, 1972, 2:309). Emperors, scholars, Daoists, and Buddhist exegetes studied the three mysteries with Zhang: 譏性恬靜...講周易、老、莊而教授焉。吳郡陸元朗、朱孟博、一乘寺沙門法才、法雲寺沙門慧休、至真觀道士姚綏，皆傳其業 (Chenshu, 1972, 2:444–45). Zhang gave lectures on the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* in the Wenwen Hall 溫文殿, and Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (530–582 A.D., r. 569–582 A.D.) attended the lectures and bestowed a robe on Zhang (仍令於溫文殿講莊、老，高宗幸宮臨聽，賜御所服衣一襲, [Chenshu, 1972, 2:444]).

<sup>79</sup> 元帝嘗箸金樓子，曰：「余於諸僧重招提琰法師，隱士重華陽陶貞白，士大夫重汝南周弘正，其於義理，清轉無窮，亦一時之名士也。」 Chenshu, 1972, 2:308.

<sup>80</sup> 致使龍樹之後。妙觀斯在良由於此。從此之止觀下。今師祖承。此中即是先總舉於所傳人法，T46.1912.147b18–147b20; 今師祖承從後向前者。為指文師以承龍樹文便故也，T46.1912.147c5–147c7.

reality.<sup>81</sup> Since phenomena are true reality, they are no other than the Middle Way. Thus, they are buddha-nature. The identity of buddha-nature with insentient things also presents itself in another passage:

自山家教門<sup>82</sup>所明中道唯有二義。一離斷常屬前二教。二者佛性屬後二教。於佛性中教分權實故有即離。今從即義故云色香無非中道。此色香等世人咸謂以為無情。然亦共許色香中道。無情佛性惑耳驚心。<sup>83</sup>

The Middle Way illuminated in the teaching of the Tiantai school has only two aspects. First, [the Middle Way] transcends impermanence (*duan* 斷) and permanence (*chang* 常). This aspect belongs to the first two types of teachings.<sup>84</sup> Second, [the Middle Way] refers to buddha-nature. This aspect belongs to the latter two types of teachings.<sup>85</sup> In reference to buddha-nature, [the Middle Way] is divided into [two types of ] teachings, which are the provisional teaching and the true teaching. Thus, [the Middle Way] refers to [two aspects]: identity (*ji* 即) and transcendence (*li* 離). From the aspect of identity, it is said that form and odour are no other than the Middle Way. Ordinary people think that these forms and odour are considered insentient. However, form and odour may be altogether in

<sup>81</sup> Similar idea in Jizang's *Dasheng xuanlun*: 華嚴明。善財童子。見彌勒樓觀即得無量法門。豈非是觀物見性即得無量三昧。又大集經云。諸佛菩薩。觀一切諸法無非是菩提。此明迷佛性故為生死萬法悟即是菩提。故肇法師云。道遠乎哉。即物而真聖遠乎哉。悟即是神也, T45.1853.40c4–40c9.

<sup>82</sup> *Shanjia jiaomen* 山家教門 refers to teachings of the Tiantai school that was opposed to the non-Tiantai school. The term “*shanjia*” 山家 specifically refers to the Tiantai tradition (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “山家”). In the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 A.D.), the Tiantai school was divided into two subdivisions: *shanjia pai* 山家派 (orthodox) and *shanwai pai* 山外派 (heterodox). The difference between these two divisions is their different explanation and interpretation of Tiantai texts (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “山家山外”). Since the division of the Tiantai school took place in the ninth and tenth centuries, after Zhanran passed away, *shanjia* in Zhanran's text refers to teachings of the Tiantai school as opposed to the non-Tiantai school.

<sup>83</sup> T46.1912.151c24–151c28.

<sup>84</sup> The two former teachings are the *zang jiao* 藏教 (Tripiṭaka Teaching) and the *tong jiao* 通教 (Shared Teaching). They are two of the fourfold teachings of Zhiyi's scheme of doctrinal classification (Swanson, 1989, p. 10; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “藏教; 通教”).

<sup>85</sup> The latter two types of teachings are the *bie jiao* 別教 (Distinct Teaching) and the *yuan jiao* 圓教 (Perfect Teaching). The teachings of Tiantai school belongs to *yuan jiao* (Swanson, 1989, p. 10; *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “圓教; 別教”).

terms of the Middle Way, and [this claim that] “insentient things [are] buddha-nature” perplexes one’s ears and frightens one’s mind.

The statement “insentient things [are] buddha-nature” indicates a relationship between insentient things and buddha-nature. Insentient things are included in the discussion of buddha-nature. According to the passage, the relationship between insentient things and buddha-nature is based on the concept of identity, or *ji* 即.<sup>86</sup> Based on this concept, “form and odour are no other than the Middle Way” 色香無非中道, and this statement implies that form and odour are “identical” with the Middle Way. Since buddha-nature is identical with the Middle Way, insentient things are thus identical with buddha-nature. In this way, insentient things are included in the discussion of buddha-nature. This logic leads to the conclusion that insentient things are identical with buddha-nature, or that insentient things *are* buddha-nature. The equivalence of buddha-nature with the Middle Way implies that buddha-nature is “identical” with insentient things. Thus, the statement “*wuqing foxing*” 無情佛性 can be interpreted as “insentient things *are* buddha-nature.”<sup>87</sup> This idea (*wuqing foxing*) is in the context of identity, or *shi foxing* 是佛性 (“is”

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<sup>86</sup> Zhanran defines *ji* 即 as identical and nondual in his *Fuxing*: “As for *ji*, [the dictionary] *Guangya* defines it as combination (*he* 合). If the definition [of *ji*] is based on this explanation, it is still like a combination of two things, and it is named *ji*. This explanation is still not accurate. Here, in terms of essence, [*ji*] refers to non-duality, and it is given by the name, *ji*. Three are identified with one implying a different meaning from combination [in the *Guangya*]” 即者。廣雅云合也。若依此釋。仍似二物相合名即。其理猶疏。今以義求體不二故。故名為即。即三而一與合義殊, T46.1912.149c13–149c16. Zhanran describes *ji* as identical and nondual. *Ji* in Zhanran’s understanding is different from its definition in the dictionary *Guangya*.

<sup>87</sup> Chen Shuman interprets the phrase *wuxing foxing* as “Insentient things *are* buddha-nature” (Chen, 2011, p. 76). For further discussion of the phrase, see Chen, 2011, pp. 75–6.

buddha-nature), not in the context of possession, or *you foxing* 有佛性 (“possess” buddha-nature). Although this argument is not a discussion of insentient things in terms of being able to possess buddha-nature, it shows how Zhanran includes insentient things in the discussion of buddha-nature in terms of identity. The idea that “insentient things [are] buddha-nature” implies that phenomena/insentient things possess buddha-nature.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the ultimate reality/the Middle Way/buddha-nature is not limited to sentient beings but also exists in insentient things. The statement in the above passage, to the effect that the inclusion of insentient things in buddha-nature perplexes and frightens someone, indicates that this argument was not accepted by Buddhist exegetes at the time of Zhanran.

Therefore, “all *dharmas* (phenomena) are not differentiated from nature,”<sup>89</sup> “true reality is what all things are,” or “the true reality is nothing but all phenomena” (*shixiang bi zhufa*).<sup>90</sup> Thus, all phenomena are identical with and manifestations of true reality. Insentient things/phenomena are undifferentiated from buddha-nature/true reality, and they are buddha-nature. The idea that phenomena are manifestations of true reality is not

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<sup>88</sup> Logically, if insentient things “possess” buddha-nature, it does not necessarily follow that insentient things “are” buddha-nature. However, if insentient things “are” buddha-nature, it can be concluded that insentient things “possess” buddha-nature. For instance, in Jizang’s discussion discussed in Chapter 3, Jizang argues that sentient beings are not buddha-nature, but they possess buddha-nature.

<sup>89</sup> Ziporyn, 2010, p. 503. Ziporyn offers a detailed philosophical discussion of the relationship between reality (X, or nature) and its phenomena in his article, “Tiantai Buddhist Conceptions of “The Nature (*Xing*) and Its Relation to the Mind” (Ziporyn, 2010, p. 502).

<sup>90</sup> T46.1932.785c12.

an empirical view. All-inclusive nature (the Middle Way/buddha-nature) is universal, possessed by all things.

The ideas “in emptiness as being included not-emptiness” (即空中含於不空) and “non-being but yet it gives to beings, and this is the Threefold Truth” 不有而有三諦宛然<sup>91</sup> indicate the Middle Way/emptiness/Threefold Truth is a principle of the transcendence of two opposites (non-being vs. being; empty vs. non-empty). Thus, the Middle Way is a principle of transcendence of all opposites, such as emptiness vs. provisional existence, the noumenal world vs. the phenomenal world, pure vs. impure, good vs. evil, the sentient vs. the insentient realms, etc. It is a principle of all-inclusivity and the unity of two opposites. When the Middle Way is synonymous with buddha-nature, it indicates that buddha-nature is one of all-inclusivity and the unity of all opposites, and this is the true nature. Zhanran states: “The nature that transcends (or/and encompasses) two opposites is identical with the true nature” 不二之性即是實性.<sup>92</sup>

*Dasheng kong*, buddha-nature, the Middle Way, and the Threefold Truth are synonymous, and they are universal principle. Buddha-nature as the nature of all buddhas, sentient beings, and insentient things is a universal principle.<sup>93</sup> Zhanran’s concept of buddha-nature in terms of universal principle seems to be consistent with the notion of

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<sup>91</sup> T46.1912.298c11–298c12.

<sup>92</sup> T46.1912.438c28–438c29.

<sup>93</sup> See footnote 44.

principle in Arcane Study since buddha-nature in the notion of *dharmakāya* of the MMPS and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is associated with wisdom and sentient beings. As I will show later, some Chinese thought quoted in his *Fuxing* indicate that the discussion of nature of Chinese thought might provide Zhanran with some references to create his concepts of *xingju* and *liju* in his discussion of buddha-nature in terms of universal principle.

### 2.3 The relationship between unity and diversity

Zhanran explains the relationship between unity and diversity by the method called “[Suchness that is] absolute/unchanging (*bubian* 不變) and [Suchness] that in accordance with following conditions (*suiyuan* 隨緣)” that had been employed in the Huayan school,<sup>94</sup> as shown in his *Jingang bei*:

故子應知。萬法是真如。由不變故。真如是萬法。由隨緣故。<sup>95</sup>

Hence, you should know that myriad *dharmas* are [identical with] Suchness, from the perspective of the unchanging. Suchness is [identical with] myriad *dharmas*, from the perspective of following conditions.

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<sup>94</sup> Ziporyn, 2000, pp. 195–96; Stone, 2003, p. 7. Zhanran also applied this method in his discussion of the cultivation of mind in his *Zhiguan dayi* 止觀大意 (Great Meaning of the *Cessation and Contemplation*): “Although following conditions, [and hence presenting in some particular, conditioned way], it is [unconditioned and] unchanging. Hence it is ‘the Nature.’ Although unconditioned [and unchanging], it follows conditions [and hence manifests in this particular, conditioned way]. Hence it is ‘the mind’” (Ziporyn, 2010, p. 494.) 隨緣不變故為性。不變隨緣故為心, T46.1914.460b8. This statement is in the context of sentient beings, especially as relates to the cultivation of the mind. It is a discussion of the mind as a permanent, unchanging nature of sentient beings, as opposed to fluctuating mind.

<sup>95</sup> T46.1932.782c19–782c20.

In the same text, Zhanran also states that Suchness is another name of buddha-nature 真如即佛性異名。<sup>96</sup> Suchness/buddha-nature varies in accordance with “following conditions” 真如隨緣即佛性隨緣。<sup>97</sup> In terms of “the unchanging” (*bubian*), phenomena are undifferentiated from Suchness/buddha-nature. In terms of “following conditions” (*suiyuan* 隨緣), Suchness/buddha-nature by its characteristics of all-inclusiveness is able to be various natures in accordance with different conditions.<sup>98</sup> The method *bubian-suiyuan* is applied to explain the relationship between buddha-nature (unity) and the natures of sentient beings (multiplicity). Buddha-nature as a universal nature is all-inclusive (*bubian*). It is various (*suiyuan*) in accordance with different conditions. This is similar, but not identical, to the concept of “nature origination” (*xingqi* 性起), the main teaching of the Huayan school. According to the concept of *xingqi* in Huayan philosophy, the original mind is pure. The pure mind becomes pure or impure depending on a variety of conditions. The difference between the concepts of *xingqi* and Zhanran’s concept of *xingju* is that the former concept proclaims that the original mind/nature is pure. The latter concept holds that original nature is all-inclusive and embraces dual opposites, not only the positive, i.e., pure, good, etc.<sup>99</sup> Zhanran’s concept of *xingju* is different from

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<sup>96</sup> T46.1932.783b4–783b5.

<sup>97</sup> T46.1932.783b1–783b2.

<sup>98</sup> Ziporyn points out that, although a given X may be nature, which is unchangeable and present pervasively, as X is equally Y, X need not be present anywhere at all; as X itself, it might express itself in a form Y or in Y (Ziporyn, 2010, p. 507).

<sup>99</sup> 若見觀音玄文意者。則事理凡聖自他始終修性等意。一切可見。彼文料簡緣了中云。如來不斷性

*Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and the concept of *xingqi* of the Huayan school. Zhanran's discussion of nature (*xingju*) is inseparable from the concept of *liju*. In his discussion of nature, the ultimate reality is not mind, but principle. He criticizes some Buddhist exegetes who proclaimed that the true reality to be contemplated is mind. Zhanran argues that mind is not the object to be contemplated<sup>100</sup> because mind gives rise to and represents the six or ten realms differently at different times.<sup>101</sup> Mind cannot be considered *ju* 具 (all-inclusive) as a whole at one time, and thus, mind cannot be considered true reality to be contemplated. The true reality is the principle of *ju*, which is all-inclusiveness as a whole at one time, and this true reality is *li* 理 (principle). It indicates that, in Zhanran's perspective, mind is not the true reality, but principle. This principle is universal and all-inclusive.

In Zhanran's perspective, buddha-nature as true nature is universal and all-inclusive, and it transcends (and/or encompasses) two opposites (不二之性即是實性). In this sense, buddha-nature encompasses all dichotomies, including sentient beings and phenomena.

Buddha-nature as all-inclusiveness (*bubian*) is various (*suiyuan*) in accordance with

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惡闡提不斷性善, T46.1912.296a16–296a19; 故知善惡不出三千。彼又問云。既有性德善亦有性德惡不。答。具有, T46.1912.296a25–296a27.

<sup>100</sup> 問。一心既具但觀於心何須觀具。答。一家觀門永異諸說。該攝一切十方三世若凡若聖一切因果者。良由觀具。具即是假。假即空中。理性雖具若不觀之。但言觀心則不稱理。小乘奚嘗不觀心耶。但迷一心具諸法耳, T46.1912.289c24–289c29.

<sup>101</sup> 問。若不觀具為屬何教。答。別教教道從初心來。但云次第生於十界。斷亦次第故不觀具。或稟通教即空但理。或稟三藏寂滅真空。如此等人何須觀具。何者。藏通但云心生六界。觀有巧拙即離不同。是故此兩不須觀具, T46.1912.289c29–290a6.



different conditions. Thus, the true nature of all entities and all dichotomies is buddha-nature.

Thus, buddha-nature, the Paramount Truth of Emptiness, the Threefold Truth, the Middle Way, and the *Dasheng kong* are synonymous for Zhanran. Buddha-nature is a universal principle of “in emptiness as being included not-emptiness” (即空中含於不空). The existence of all things follows and is sustained by this universal principle. Zhanran’s interpretation of buddha-nature in terms of the Middle Way illustrates two points: first, buddha-nature/the Middle Way as a universal nature encompasses all opposites; second, buddha-nature represents itself by means of universal principle (the Middle Way). These two points have some similarities with Chinese thought, as will be shown in the next section.

### **3. An investigation of Chinese thought in Zhanran’s *Fuxing* and its association with Zhanran’s discussion of buddha-nature**

As mentioned earlier, some contemporary scholars contend that Zhanran’s argument that buddha-nature is a universal nature is based on the concepts of *xingju* 性具 (nature as all-inclusiveness) and *liju* 理具 (principle as all-inclusiveness). The question is: Is Zhanran’s discussion of buddha-nature as a universal nature based on Chinese thought? If so, what are the Chinese sources that Zhanran might have referred to, which might have

provided him with knowledge and methods to create a discussion of nature in terms of totality?

As this chapter suggests, Zhanran's discussion of buddha-nature as a universal, united, all-inclusive nature parallels some ideas in Chinese thought, namely the discussion of *sanxuan* (three mysteries). Zhanran's discussion of the three mysteries is based on the work of Zhou Hongzheng 周弘政.<sup>102</sup> As mentioned, Zhiyi points out Zhou's discussion of the three mysteries in his *Mohe zhiguan*,<sup>103</sup> but without elaborating on the idea in detail. However, Zhanran's work *Fuxing*, which is a commentary to Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*, elaborates upon the three mysteries of the *Mohe zhiguan* in detail.

According to the *Fuxing*, *xuan* can be understood as having three aspects: *you* 有 (beings) (約有明玄), *wu* 無 (non-being, nothingness) (約無明玄), and both being and non-being (約有無明玄).<sup>104</sup> These three aspects are based on the *Yijing*, the *Daode jing*, and the *Zhuangzi* respectively. As will be shown later, Zhanran may or may not have consulted these three texts directly. Some Chinese ideas mentioned in his *Fuxing* might be indirectly quoted from the works of other Buddhist exegetes. However, as this chapter suggests, the discussion of *xuan* in terms of the three mysteries has some points in

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<sup>102</sup> 言周弘政釋三玄者, T46.1912.440c4. For the biography of Zhou Hongzheng, see footnote 67.

<sup>103</sup> See T46.1911.135a15–135a19.

<sup>104</sup> These three aspects were not invented by Zhanran. Zhiyi also mentioned these three aspects in his *Mohe zhiguan*. According to Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*, these three aspects of the discussion of *xuan* is Zhou's discussion. Zhanran just followed Zhiyi's quotation and elaborated on the three aspects in more detail.

common with Zhanran's argument concerning universal buddha-nature.

In terms of beings, the idea that *xuan* can be understood by means of beings 約有明玄 indicates that *xuan* represents itself by means of beings (phenomenal world, entities). Reality is not differentiated from phenomena (beings). Phenomena are real. The source for the discussion of the true reality (*xuan*) manifesting itself through beings is the *Yijing*.

In the *Fuxing*, Zhanran quotes the *Yijing*<sup>105</sup> to illustrate the idea:

初易中云易判陰陽等。約有明玄者。如云太極生兩儀。分而為天地變而為陰陽。故曰是生兩儀。兩儀既立變化生乎其中。又云。天地變化能生能成。君臣變化能安能理。故知君臣父子之道不出於陰陽。八卦六爻亦不出於陰陽變化。變化相易吉凶生焉。吉凶雖生窮理盡性。以至天命。故知即是約有明玄也。又復周易但論帝王君子之道。卜筮陰陽之理。故並不出於有。<sup>106</sup>

According to the beginning of the *Yi [jing]*, change is determined by *yin* and *yang*. As for the discussion that Mystery is understood by means of beings, it is said, “the Great Ultimate generates (produces) the two principles/opposites.”<sup>107</sup> [The Great Ultimate] is divided and becomes heaven and earth. [The Great Ultimate] transforms itself to become *yin* and *yang*. Hence, it is said to produce opposites. When the two opposites are established, all differentiations and transformations are produced and bound with them. In addition, the differentiations and transformations of

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<sup>105</sup> The *Yijing* was regarded as a text compiled at different times by different authors including: the mythical emperor Fu Xi 伏羲, King Wen of the Zhou (Wenwang 文王, r. 1099–1050 B.C.E), the Duke of Zhou (Zhougong 周公, ?–1032 B.C.E.), and Confucius (Robinet, 2011f, 2:1161). According to Robinet, the text was first used as a manual of divination, and later as a source of wisdom and cosmological lore, when it was given a moralistic interpretation (Robinet, 2011f, 2:1161). In pre-Han and Han times, there was no clear division among the studies of the *Yijing*, the *Daode jing*, and the *Zhuangzi* (Robinet, 2011f, 2:1162). Daoists also used the text to interpret the ordering of the cosmos, and this contrasts with the traditional exegesis of the text that emphasizes the internal relationships of the hexagrams (*gua* 卦), their nuclear trigrams, and their lines (*yao* 爻) (Robinet, 2011f, 2:1162–63).

<sup>106</sup> T46.1912.440c6–440c15.

<sup>107</sup> The translation of the statement from the *Yijing* is by Robinet. See Robinet, 2011c, 2:936.

heaven and earth are able to produce and make [things] complete. The interactions between monarch and his subjects are able to [make the state maintain] peace and order. Hence, it is known that the ways of monarch-subjects and father-son are bound with *yin* and *yang*. The Eight Trigrams and the Hexagrams are bound within the succession of *yin* and *yang*. The change, succession and alternation [of *yin* and *yang*] produce auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. Although auspiciousness and inauspiciousness are produced, they thoroughly follow principle and fulfill their natures to the utmost. Thus, they are ultimately able to attain the Mandate of the Heaven. Hence, it is known that the Mystery is understood by means of beings. In addition, in the *Zhouyi*, the discussions of the way of monarchs, the way of gentlemen, and divination in terms of the principle of *yin* and *yang* are all bound within beings.

According to the *Yijing*, *taiji* 太極 (the Great Ultimate) is the cosmological substance and source of all things, and all things have been created and have evolved from it.<sup>108</sup>

The *taiji*, as described by a contemporary Chinese philosopher, Cheng Zhongying, “has the function of comprehensive creation and pervasive sustenance of things and life.”<sup>109</sup>

The *taiji* gives rise to *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are terms to express opposites<sup>110</sup> and contrastive relationships among all existences.<sup>111</sup> They are considered the function of the

*taiji*. According to Ames, *yin* and *yang* are explanatory rather than ontological; that is,

“there is nothing that is essentially *yin* or *yang*, and whether something is *yin* or *yang*

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<sup>108</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 724.

<sup>109</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 724.

<sup>110</sup> Ames points out that *yin* and *yang* express “opposition” between two or more things, rather than duality or dualism (Ames, 2011b, p. 846). He makes a distinction between the notions of opposition and dualism: “Dualism arises when a transcendent, determinative principle creates and sustains a world that stands independent of itself. . . There is a putative ‘reality’ behind changing appearances as ‘one’ behind the many” (Ames, 2011b, p. 846).

<sup>111</sup> Ames, 2011b, p. 846.

depends on what particular relationship is being expressed.”<sup>112</sup> *Yin* and *yang* represents two opposites. The succession of two opposites, or *yinyang bianhua* 陰陽變化, produces all things. In Cheng’s words, “all things in the world are the functions of eight forms and sixty-four hexagrams, as they are creative results of these forms and hexagrams as real situations in action.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, all entities, phenomena, moral relationships, divinations, and so on, are ultimately bound within the succession of and the alternation of *yin* and *yang*. In the *Xici* 繫辭 (Appended Statements, also known as *Dazhuan* 大傳 and often translated as “Great Treatise”),<sup>114</sup> the author comments on the idea of the succession of *yin* and *yang* as: “. . .the succession of and the alternation between *yin* and *yang* that is called the way (the *dao*)”<sup>115</sup> 一陰一陽之謂道.<sup>116</sup> This commentary is also quoted in

Zhanran’s *Fuxing*:

易曰。「一陰一陽之謂道。陰陽不測之謂神。」歲月時等乃至五行八卦莫不並為陰陽所攝。故陰陽之法布於世間。<sup>117</sup>

The *Book of Changes* states, “It is the succession of and the alternation between *yin* and *yang* that is called the way (the *Dao/dao*). That which is unfathomable in (the movement of) the inactive and active operations is (the presence of a) spiritual (power).”<sup>118</sup> Years, times, etc., and even the

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<sup>112</sup> Ames, 2011b, p. 847; Tang, 2006, p. 92.

<sup>113</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 724.

<sup>114</sup> Robinet, 2011f, 2:1161–62. It is one of a group of commentaries (*shiyi* 十翼, or the Ten Wings) to the *Yijing* (Robinet, 2011f, 2:1161–62; Shaughnessy, 1993, p. 220). It is a synthetic explanation of the *Yijing*, its composition, function, and meaning (Shaughnessy, 1993, p. 220).

<sup>115</sup> Ames, 2011b, p. 846.

<sup>116</sup> *Xici*, I:5.

<sup>117</sup> T46.1912.244.a21–244a23.

<sup>118</sup> The translation of the passage of the *Book of Changes* (the *Xici*) refers to Ames’ translation. See Ames, 2011b, p. 846.

five phrases and the Eight Trigrams are all embraced in *yin* and *yang*.

Therefore, the law of *yin* and *yang* exists pervasively in the world.

The quotation of the *Yijing* in the passage is found not in the *Yijing* but, in fact, in Chapter 5 of the first part of the *Xici*, which, as mentioned, is a commentary to the *Yijing*. Zhanran did not use the title *Xici*, but he used *Yi(jing)* as the title of the source of the quotation. In fact, the usage of this title (*Yi*, or *Yijing*, or “*Yi yue*” 易曰, which is translated as “the *Yijing* says”) for this specific quotation is common in other Buddhist works such as Xuanyi’s 玄嶷<sup>119</sup> *Zhenzheng lun* 甄正論,<sup>120</sup> Faling’s 法琳 (572–640A.D.) *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論,<sup>121</sup> Chengguan’s 澄觀 *Dafang guangfo huayanjing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔,<sup>122</sup> and Daoxuan’s 道宣 (596–667 A.D.) *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集<sup>123</sup> and *Jigujin fodao lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡.<sup>124</sup> The two statements (一陰

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<sup>119</sup> His dates are unknown. He lived in the Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.), perhaps during the reign of Empress Wu (624–705 A.D.), *Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “玄嶷.”

<sup>120</sup> 故易云。一陰一陽之謂道。明道則陰陽也。陰陽不測之謂神明。即此陰陽之理, T52.2112.571a8–571a10.

<sup>121</sup> 易云...故曰。一陰一陽之謂道, T52.2110.523b25–523c13. Faling composed the text to against the criticism made by some Daoists, such as Li Zhongqing 李仲卿 and Liu Jinxi 劉進喜, against Buddhism (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “辯正論”).

<sup>122</sup> 易云。一陰一陽之謂道。陰陽不測之謂神, T36.1736.104c9–104c10.

<sup>123</sup> 周易云。一陰一陽之謂道。陰陽不測之謂神, T52.2103.282c1–282c2. The text is a compilation of documents associated with religious and political issues in Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, as well as relations between the saṃgha and the state (Muller, 2013). Daoxuan named the text as *Zhouyi*. There is a mistake in the title because, as mentioned in footnote 76, the *Zhouyi* refers to the original context. The title *Yijing* refers to the complete canonical text, including its commentaries. The *Xici* is a commentary. Therefore, the title either *Xici* or *Yi(jing)* is more appropriate for the quotation.

<sup>124</sup> 宗師周易五運相生。既闢兩儀陰陽是判。故曰一陰一陽之謂道。陰陽不測之謂神, T52.2104.381c16–18. Same as the *Guang hongming ji*, the title of the source of the quotation is *Zhouyi*, but it should be *Yijing*, or *Xici*. The *Jigujin fodao lunheng* is a compilation of documents associated with religious debates between Buddhism and Daoism from the Eastern Han (25–220 A.D.) to the early Tang dynasty (*Foguang da cidian*, s.v. “集古今佛道論衡”). From the text, we learn one of issues that Buddhists and Daoists debated about is the superiority of Buddha or the Dao. Some Daoists argued that the Dao came before the world, including the Buddha, and the Buddha was born of the Dao and he attained enlightenment through the Dao. For a detailed argument, see T52.2104.381b29–381c25.

一陽之謂道 and 陰陽不測之謂神) quoted in those Buddhist texts and Zhanran's passage in the above are the first and the last sentences of the Chapter 5 of the first part of the *Xici*. Some Buddhist exegetes such as Faling and Daoxuan quoted the two statements in order to debate with Daoists about the superiority of the Buddha (Buddhism) over the Dao (Daoism).<sup>125</sup> Before Zhanran, the two statements of the *Xici* were commonly quoted by medieval Buddhist exegetes with the title *Yi(jing)* as the source of the quotation. Thus, Zhanran may not be quoting directly from the *Xici*; rather, his quotation may be from the works of Buddhist exegetes. Thus, the title given for these two sentences shown in the passage in the above is not the *Xici* but the *Yijing*.

According to Chapter 5 of the first part of the *Xici*, the *dao* is defined as: the way (process) of the alternation between and the succession of *yin* and *yang* 一陰一陽之謂道. Cheng comments on this idea as follows: “The process of change is seen as a creative process of formation and transformation of things, the alternation and exchange of *yin* and *yang* would be creative action in reality.”<sup>126</sup> The *dao* is the way of change.<sup>127</sup> It refers to a process/way/law/principle. This idea is also explained in Faling's *Bianzheng lun*: “As for the *dao*, it is principle” 道也者。理也。<sup>128</sup> This process (the *dao*) involves

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<sup>125</sup> T52.2110.523c2–523c13 and T52.2104.381b29–c25. See also footnote 124.

<sup>126</sup> Cheng, 2011d, p. 203.

<sup>127</sup> Cheng, 2011b, p. 724.

<sup>128</sup> 一陰一陽之謂道(說卦云。立天之道曰陰與陽。立地之道曰柔與剛。立人之道曰仁與義。兼三才而兩之。故三畫而成卦也) 陰陽不測之謂神。道也者。理也, T52.2110.523c2–523c4.

participation of two opposites. It is the embodiment of all things. In Chinese thought, *benti* 本體 (embodiment, original body, essence, original substance, fundamental or essential reality)<sup>129</sup> of all things is not necessarily a substance. It can be a process/way/law/principle as explained by Cheng:

. . . the source of reality that give rise to the cosmos, life, and all things in the world, forming and transforming them, ceaselessly sustaining and completing them; thus it presents itself as the ultimate reality of all things. But this does not mean that *benti* is a substance. . . . it is an open process of creative formation and transformation. In this formation and transformation there is no domination or absolute control.<sup>130</sup>

According to Cheng's explanation, *benti* as the embodiment of all things is not necessarily a substance. "It is an open process of creative formation and transformation."

Therefore, the process (the *dao*) is an open process of creative formation and transformation that produces change (*yi* 易) and everything in creation. It is able to "give rise to the cosmos, life, and all things in the world, forming and transforming them, ceaselessly sustaining and completing them." Therefore, the embodiment of all things, according to the *Xici*, refers to a process, called the *dao*; a process of change, formation, and transformation of things by the succession and the alternation between two opposites. The *dao* manifests itself through all entities and all relationships as changing, forming, and transforming. Thus, all entities and all relationships as changing, forming, and

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<sup>129</sup> My translation of *benti* is based on Cheng's work, 2011a, p. 718.

<sup>130</sup> Cheng, 2011a, p. 718.



transforming are reality. Change (*yi*) is the *dao* and is reality. This idea is parallel to Zhanran's views that "principle is identical with phenomena" (理即事), "emptiness as the virtue of all phenomena is identical with all phenomena" (即是性空。此性即法),<sup>131</sup> "all things are manifestations of the true nature," "any form and odour is no other than the Middle Way" 一色一香無非中道, or "all phenomena are true reality" 諸法實相.

The connotations of *dao* in the *Yijing* and the *Xici* are different from those of the Dao in Daoism.<sup>132</sup> In fact, *dao* has a range of meanings in different Chinese texts.<sup>133</sup> This is one of the connotations described by Cheng: "Because the *dao* embodies the way things are created and the way events change, it can represent laws, limitations, or destiny, which things must obey and follow."<sup>134</sup> Therefore, all existences are governed by the *dao*, or a law/process/principle. It is the law of *yinyang* (*yinyang zhifa* 陰陽之法) and it exists pervasively (陰陽之法布於世間), as described in Zhanran's *Fuxing* mentioned above.

Moreover, the *dao* in Chapter 5 of the first part of the *Xici* also refers to the discussion of nature as:

一陰一陽之謂道，繼之者善也，成之者性也。…陰陽不測之謂神。<sup>135</sup>

The successive movement of the inactive (*yin*) and active (*yang*) operations constitutes what is called the course [of things] (the *dao*). That

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<sup>131</sup> T46.1912.208b23.

<sup>132</sup> For a detailed discussion on the distinction between the *Yijing* (and the *Xici*) and Daoism, see Cheng, 2011d, pp. 203–4.

<sup>133</sup> Concerning the range of meanings of *dao* in Daoism, see Kirkland, 2011, 1:304–9.

<sup>134</sup> Cheng, 2011d, p. 203.

<sup>135</sup> *Xici*, I:5.

which ensues as the result [of their movement] is goodness; that which shows it in its completeness is the natures [of men and things].... That which is unfathomable in [the movement of] the inactive and active operations is [the presence of a] spiritual [power].<sup>136</sup>

According to the *Xici*, the nature of all entities is the *dao*, which in its completeness encompasses two opposites such as *yin* and *yang*. Mou Zongshan comments on the statement “that which shows it in its completeness is the natures” 成之者性也 of the *Xici* as “all things have the *dao* as their natures.”<sup>137</sup> The *dao* in its embrace of two opposites is the essence/nature of all things. Therefore, in Chinese thought, especially in the *Xici*, the true nature of all things, the *dao*, is endowed with two opposites to be complete. *Dao* in reference to nature has various connotations described by Cheng:<sup>138</sup>

*Dao* is the whole of nature and the whole universe, as shown in our experiences of natural things. *Dao* envelops nature as a whole and produces nature as a whole.

And,

*Dao* is thus the process in which the whole of nature manifests itself and the process in which and by which things are created or procreated and nature is manifested. The process is the way, and the way is the process.

As for the discussion of the *dao* in reference to nature in both *Xici* and Cheng’s connotations, the *dao* refers to a process, and it by itself as wholeness/completeness gives rise to the natures of all things. Thus, the natures of human beings and all things are endowed with the *dao* as completeness and as a process.

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<sup>136</sup> Legge, *Xici*, I:5, in CTP.

<sup>137</sup> Mou, 2009, 2:45.

<sup>138</sup> Cheng, 2011d, p. 203.

Although the discussion of the natures of human beings and all things in terms of completeness (成之者性也) in the *Xici* is not quoted in Zhanran's work, the *dao* in terms of completeness and of a process (一陰一陽之謂道) provides Zhanran with a reference that true reality (the *dao*) encompasses two opposites as completeness. Zhanran's discussion of buddha-nature mirrors that of the *dao* in the *Yijing* and the *Xici* where the *dao* represents itself by means of universal process/principle of the succession of and the alternation between two opposites, culminating in completeness. All phenomena are manifestations of the universal principle of the completeness of two opposites.

Buddha-nature as the true reality represents itself by means of a universal principle (*lijū* 理具), the Middle Way, with the all-inclusive as shown in the statement that "the nature that transcends (or/and encompasses) two opposites is identical with the true nature" (不二之性即是實性) (*xingju* 性具). Buddha-nature as true reality encompasses all dichotomous and opposite natures, such as pure vs. impure, good vs. evil, the natures of sentient beings vs. the natures of insentient things.<sup>139</sup> In addition, as mentioned, phenomena are true reality (中道即法界…境且語能緣以明寂照). Therefore, Zhanran's discussion of (buddha-) nature in terms of all-inclusive and principle has some common points with the *Yijing* and the *Xici*.

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<sup>139</sup> As we learned from the MMPS and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought, buddha-nature is not associated with the nature of insentient things. Buddha-nature in both the MMPS and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is the nature of sentient beings as well as buddhas. However, in Zhanran's view, buddha-nature as true nature is possessed by insentient things.

In terms of non-being, Zhanran explains that *xuan* can be understood in terms of nothingness/nonexistence/non-being (*wu* 無). The source he draws upon is the *Daode jing*. Zhanran explains *xuan* in his *Fuxing*:

老子守雌保弱去泰去甚。<sup>140</sup> 如云有生於無不可名焉。<sup>141</sup> 復歸於無。如是等並約無明玄。<sup>142</sup>

The *Laozi* (*Daode jing*) [speaks of] maintaining in female feebleness and putting away excessive effort and easy indulgence.<sup>143</sup> It follows that existence (beings) sprang from non-being and not named.<sup>144</sup> It is again that [existence] reverts to non-being. Such [explanations] are said that the Mystery can be understood by means of non-being.

*Xuan* (mystery) can be understood by means of non-being 約無明玄, indicating that *xuan* is characterized in negativity. Negativity makes *xuan* indeterminate, formless and nameless, and thus, it can be everything. All things, according to the passage, are born of non-being. Thus, non-being is the embodiment of all things. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the discussion of the nature of the Dao and all things in negativity is Wang Bi's 王弼 ontological view. Based on Wang's view, Lynn and Chan explain non-being as follows:

“Nonbeing does not mean nonexistence, but it transcends various forms and images, and

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<sup>140</sup> The idea of *shouci* 守雌 (sustains the female) is from Chapter 28 of the *Daode jing*: “He who knows the male yet sustains the female” (Lynn, 1999, p. 103) 知其雄，守其雌. The idea of *baoruo* 保弱 (maintains in softness) is from Chapter 40 of the *Daode jing*: “Softness is the function of the Dao” (Lynn, 1999, p. 131) 弱者道之用. The ideas of *qusheng* 去甚 (to get rid of extremisms) and *qutai* 去泰 (to get rid of complaisance) are from Chapter 29 of the *Daode jing*: “the sage rids them of extremisms, extravagance, and complaisance” (Lynn, 1999, p. 105) 是以聖人去甚，去奢，去泰.

<sup>141</sup> This is from Chapter 40 of the *Daode jing*: “The myriad things under Heaven achieve life in existence. Existence arises from nothingness” (Lynn, 1999, p. 130) 天下萬物生於有，有生於無.

<sup>142</sup> T43.1912.440c15 – 440c17.

<sup>143</sup> My translation refers to that by Legge; see CTP.

<sup>144</sup> This is Legge's translation; see CTP.

it is able to accomplish all differentiated things because it is indeterminate and unbound.”<sup>145</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, unlike the *Daode jing*, Wang’s concept of non-being is not about cosmogony, rather, it is ontology. He applied the concept of non-being to explain how the Dao (unity) can be various things (multiplicity). According to Wang, the Dao by itself as non-being as a characteristic makes the Dao be everything. Wang’s commentary to the *Daode jing* is that non-being “is able to accomplish all differentiated things because it is indeterminate and unbound” as in Lynn and Chan’s explanation. Therefore, *xuan* as the united, ultimate source in relationship with all things is delineated by the concept of non-being. Thus, non-being connects *xuan* (unity) and beings (multiplicity).

Zhanran also borrows the concept of non-being and includes the concept in his discussion of nature in order to explain the relationship between unity and multiplicity as described in his *Fuxing*:

其性天殊何名體一。答。…法性無性。…即是性空。此性即法法體即空。<sup>146</sup> (P1)

Various natures are different. How can it be said that the essence is one? Answer, ... The nature of phenomena is non-nature<sup>147</sup> ... This nature is emptiness. Such nature (the emptiness) is identical with phenomena, and the essence of phenomena is identical with emptiness.

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<sup>145</sup> Lynn and Chan, 1990, p. 381.

<sup>146</sup> T46.1912.208b17–208b23.

<sup>147</sup> I thank Dr. Wendi Adamek for this clarification of the term.

This passage is not a discussion of nature in terms of emptiness. It is a discussion of the relationship between united nature (buddha-nature) and various natures. That is, how a united nature (buddha-nature) is able to be various natures (其性天殊何名體一). The nature of all things is characterized as non-nature, or *wuxing* 無性. It does not mean that the nature of all things does not exist. The nature is emptiness (*xingkong* 性空). *Wuxing* and *xingkong* delineate the true nature as non-substantial and indeterminate. Although the natures of all things are various, their true natures are non-self/emptiness (法體即空), which is the united nature. Therefore, the concept of *wu* explains true nature as indeterminate and non-substantial, and the true nature (united nature) by these characteristics (*wu*, non-substantial, indeterminate) is able to be various natures. Buddha-nature (united nature, non-nature, *wuxing*) is able to be various natures in accordance with following conditions (佛性隨緣).<sup>148</sup>

Both *wu*/nothingness/non-being in Daoism and Wang Bi's concept of non-being, and *wu*/non-nature in Zhanran's discussion of nature demonstrate true nature/true reality (the Dao, buddha-nature) in characteristics of non-substantial and indeterminate, and these characteristics connect true nature/true reality with various natures/things.

The last aspect of Zhanran's discussion of *xuan* is that it can be understood by means of both being and non-being 約有無明玄. This idea is consistent with Guo Xiang's view

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<sup>148</sup> T46.1932.783b2.

that *xuan* by itself is both being and non-being, as mentioned in Chapter 1. This idea is found in Guo’s commentary on Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*, or “Dazong shi” 大宗師 (the teacher who is the ultimate ancestor): “As for the mystery, it can be described as non-being but yet is not non-being” 玄冥者，所以名無而非無也。<sup>149</sup> Although Zhanran does not specify the source of the idea, “*xuan* can be understood by means of both being and non-being” is Guo’s ontological view, it points to a relationship with Guo. However, Zhanran specifies that the source he quotes for this discussion is the *Zhuangzi*. He quotes the *Zhuangzi* in his *Fuxing*:

莊子內篇自然為本。如云「雨為雲乎。雲為雨乎。孰降施是。」皆其自然。又言有無者。內篇明無外篇明有。又內篇中玄極之義皆明有無。如云夫無形故無不形。<sup>150</sup> 無物故無不物。不物者能物物。<sup>151</sup> 不形者能形形。故形物物者。非形非物也。夫非形非物者。求之於形物。不亦惑乎。以是而言雖有變非之言。亦似四句而多在不形而形等。<sup>152</sup> 即有無也。又云。有信有情無為無形。如此等例其相非一。故知多是約有無明玄。<sup>153</sup> (P2)

In the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, spontaneity is the root. As [the *Zhuangzi*] states, “(Then) how the clouds become rain! And how the rain

<sup>149</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 3:10.

<sup>150</sup> Although Zhanran’s passage states the source of this quotation as the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, the quotation does not appear in the original text of the *Zhuangzi*. The quotation is from Chapter 22, “Zhibei you” 知北遊 (Knowledge Rambling in the North) of the *Zhuangzi*: 道不可聞，聞而非也；道不可見，見而非也；道不可言，言而非也。知形形之不形乎？道不當名 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 60:22:62–3).

<sup>151</sup> This is from Chapter 22, “Zhibei you” of the *Zhuangzi*: 物物者與物無際 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 59:22:50). Guo Xiang’s commentary on this passage is: 明物物者，無物而物，自物耳。自物耳，物自物耳，故冥也 (*Zhuangzi zhu*, 7:35). Other texts from the *Zhuangzi* in the same chapter: 仲尼曰：「…物物者非物。物出不得先物也，猶其有物也。猶其有物也，無已。」 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 60:22:75–6).

<sup>152</sup> This is from Chapter 22, “Zhibei you” of the *Zhuangzi*: 不形之形，形之不形 (*Zhuangzi yinde*, 59:22:41–2).

<sup>153</sup> T46.1912.440c15–440c27.

again forms the clouds! Who diffuses them so abundantly?”<sup>154</sup> All happenings follow spontaneity. In addition, as for the discussion about being and non-being, the Inner Chapters [of the *Zhuangzi*] discuss about non-being, and the Outer Chapters [of the *Zhuangzi*] discuss about being. Also, the meaning of the ultimate Mystery in the Inner Chapters refers to both being and non-being. For instance, not form but yet not no form, not thing but yet not nothing. Since not thing, it is able to dominate/govern all things. Since not form, it is able to form all forms. Hence, as for [subjects to] form forms and dominate things, [they can be] neither defined as a form nor a thing. As for [subjects] that are neither forms nor things, [they] obtain forms and things [to manifest themselves] without being deluded [by forms and things]. Based on this saying, although the explanations involve the ideas of changing and negation, it is similar to the tetralemma and more emphasizes the discussion on the idea “no forms but yet in forms,” and it is what being-and-nonbeing is. In addition, believing, sentient beings, non-action, no forms etc., they do not present in unified form. Therefore, they are diverse. It is said that the Mystery can be understood by means of being and non-being.

Zhanran realizes some similarities between the *Zhuangzi* and the tetralemma of Buddhism.

Both the ideas of “not thing” (*wuwu* 無物) and the discussion of “not form” (*wuxing* 無形) are in Chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi*<sup>155</sup> and Guo’s commentary to the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>156</sup>

According to the *Zhuangzi* quoted in P2, the true reality has no form (or is not a form), but yet it is able to form in various forms 無形故無不形, or X is non-being but yet X is not non-being, or X is non-being but yet X is everything. The absolute reality (*xuan*) is “not thing” (*wuwu*). It does not mean that the absolute reality does not exist. *Wuwu*

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<sup>154</sup> I refer to Legge’s translation on the Chapter 11, *Zaiyou* 在宥 (Letting Be, and Exercising Forbearance): 5. See CTP.

<sup>155</sup> See footnotes 150, 151, and 152.

<sup>156</sup> See footnote 151.



describes the absolute reality as indeterminate and unbound. Since the absolute reality is “not thing” and indeterminate, it is able to dominate/govern/form all things 不物者能物物. The absolute reality manifests itself through beings. Thus, the absolute reality can be understood by means of both non-being and being 約有無明玄. This idea is parallel to the Tiantai teaching and Zhanran’s discussion of the true nature (the ultimate truth, the Middle Way) as the principle of non-duality of emptiness (*li*, principle) and phenomena (*shi, fa* 法) (理即事故即義該深。故即空中含於不空。名為佛性).

In P2, Zhanran also mentions the concept of *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity) in the *Zhuangzi*. According to his quotation from the *Zhuangzi*, neither rain nor clouds is creator of the other. Rain and clouds simply form spontaneously. As for the discussion of spontaneity, Zhanran goes further to explain spontaneity as having four aspects.<sup>157</sup> One of these aspects is spontaneity in terms of non-causality (*wuyin* 無因), and he states:

有計自然即是無因。故莊云。天其運乎。地其處乎。日月諍於所乎。孰主張是。孰綱維是。孰居無事。而推行是。莊既不達緣起之法。而亦不知誰張於天誰綱於地誰推日月。不測其業故推依報而屬自然。<sup>158</sup>

Beings that are born spontaneously are attributed to non-causality. Therefore, the *Zhuangzi* states, “How (ceaselessly) heaven revolves! How (constantly) earth abides at rest! And do the sun and moon contend about their (respective) places? Who presides over and directs these (things)? Who binds and connects them together? Who is it that, without trouble or

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<sup>157</sup> See T46.1912.238b5–238b17.

<sup>158</sup> T46.1912.238b8–238b13.

exertion on his part, causes and maintains them?”<sup>159</sup> Zhuangzi’s teaching does not go as far as the teaching of conditioned arising [in Buddhism], neither he knows who revolves Heaven, who abides Earth, who presides over and direct things, and who binds and connects them together. All are attributed to spontaneity.

One aspect of spontaneity concerns the concept of non-causality (*wuyin* 無因). Zhanran did not reject spontaneity because spontaneity implies that there is no creator and ruler that governs the life of all entities. The formation and existence of all things follow spontaneity, which is a principle. The concept that Zhanran criticizes is non-causality, which is distinct from the concept of causality in Buddhism. In fact, the notion of non-causality is consistent with Guo’s concept of *duhua* 獨化 (self-transformation) and *zisheng* 自生 (spontaneous-production, spontaneous-formation) that there is no creator or a source that begets life. All things are formed and generated spontaneously. Guo attributes the idea that all things are generated spontaneously without a creator or a single source to spontaneity. This view is inconsistent with traditional Daoism, the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Zhuangzi still believed that all things are begotten by the Dao. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Guo’s concept of non-causality is a new interpretation of Daoism. In Guo’s perspective, spontaneity, *duhua*, and non-causality are synonymous.<sup>160</sup>

Therefore, Zhanran’s quotation of the idea of non-causality and its relationship to

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<sup>159</sup> The quote from the *Zhuangzi* is Legge’s translation. Legge, *Zhuangzi: The Revolution of Heaven*: 1. See CTP.

<sup>160</sup> Li, 2011, p. 85.

spontaneity seem to come from the ideas of Guo, and not from the *Zhuangzi*. Again, Zhanran does not specify Guo as the source of the idea because the criticism of the notion of non-causality also appears in the works of other Buddhist exegetes, such as Chengguan's *Dafang guangfo huayanjing shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏 (Commentary to the *Flower Garland Sūtra*),<sup>161</sup> Jizang's *Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義 (Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises).<sup>162</sup> Therefore, Zhanran may have quoted Guo's idea from the work of some Buddhist exegetes without directly consulting Guo's work himself. However, the notion of non-causality is a Chinese idea (Guo Xiang's). The idea of no creator and ruler in Guo's concept of *duhua* is parallel to the concept of dependent origination in Buddhism. In Buddhism, things are not born of a creator or a source. However, Buddhism proclaims that the existences of all entities must have a cause, but this cause does not have to be a creator, a source, or a united cause.

Moreover, Zhanran understood the term *ziran* to mean self-so (*zier* 自爾) and links the concept of *ziran* with self-so to show that all things are what they are. Self-so is the nature of all things (*faxing* 法性) as described in his *Fuxing*:

法性自爾者。凡聖法悉皆自爾。自爾祇是自然異名。<sup>163</sup> (P3)

The nature of all phenomena is self-so (*zier*). [The nature] of all phenomena in the ordinary world and in the saintly world is self-so. Self-so

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<sup>161</sup> T35.1735.521b2–521b7.

<sup>162</sup> T45.1852.1b23–1c9.

<sup>163</sup> T46.1912.289c18–289c19.

is merely another name for spontaneity.

According to the passage, self-so and spontaneity are synonymous. Self-so is the nature of phenomena (things). The idea that the nature of all things is self-so is not originally in Zhanran's discussion. It appears in Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*.<sup>164</sup> However, Zhiyi did not connect self-so with spontaneity in his *Mohe zhiguan*, but Zhanran did. The synonym of self-so and spontaneity is also parallel to Guo's commentary on Chapter 22 of the

*Zhuangzi*:

誰得先物者乎哉?吾以陰陽為先物。而陰陽者。即所謂物耳。誰又先陰陽者乎?吾以自然為先之。而自然即物之自爾耳。<sup>165</sup>

Who could arise before things? I think that *yin* and *yang* arise before things. As for *yin* and *yang*, they are identical with what is spoken of things. Who could arise before *yin* and *yang*? I think that spontaneity does. Spontaneity is identical with the self-so of things.

According to Guo's commentary, all things are formed spontaneously without a creator or a single source. Guo attributed self-so as spontaneity. Thus, self-so and spontaneity are synonymous. It is parallel to Zhanran's passage (P3) that self-so is another name for spontaneity. Although Zhanran did not identify Guo as the source of his idea, or indicate that he might have quoted this idea from someone who in turn quoted it from Guo, the source of the synonym of self-so and spontaneity can be traced back to Guo. The synonym of self-so and spontaneity, in Zhanran's view, indicates that there is no creator

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<sup>164</sup> “Answer: the nature of all *dharma*s is self-so, which is not created by something or someone” 答。法性自爾非作所成, T46.1911.51c19–51c20.

<sup>165</sup> *Zhuangzi zhu*, 7:38.

or a ruler who begets or governs the life of all things. Zhanran still believes that the existence of all entities must have a cause, but that this cause is not a creator or a single source. Both Zhanran and Guo attributed the origin of all things to principle: spontaneity in Guo Xiang's perspective, and the concept of dependent origination in Zhanran's view. Zhanran's criticism of spontaneity in the *Zhuangzi*, or more accurately Guo's concept of non-causality, indicates that he was aware of the notions of spontaneity and non-causality. As for the discussion of nature, it is acceptable in Chinese thought, such as Arcane Study to have the idea that the nature of all human beings refers to universal principle, such as spontaneity. This view gives Zhanran a reference to argue buddha-nature as the nature of sentient beings in terms of universal principle. Zhanran's discussion of buddha-nature as universal principle is on the same level as the character of *xuan*, which is spontaneity, not *xuan* itself.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Buddha-nature in Zhanran's interpretation is a universal, all-inclusive nature. This all-inclusive nature (*xingju*) is identified as a principle, the Middle Way, which is a universal, all-inclusive principle (*liju*). From Zhanran's discussion of the *sanxuan* (three mysteries), I found that the discussion of characteristic/nature of *xuan* in terms of the *Yijing*, the *Daode jing*, and the *Zhuangzi* bears some similarities with Zhanran's

discussion of buddha-nature in reference to all-inclusive nature (*xingju*) and all-inclusive principle (*liju*).

In comparison with the *Yijing* and the *Xici*, buddha-nature as true reality in terms of universal principle (the Middle Way) and the principle of completeness is parallel to the *dao*. The *dao* is defined as the process of the succession of and the alternation between two opposites: *yin* and *yang*. The *dao* encompasses two opposites. By itself, it is the process by which the completeness of two opposites gives rise to all things. Thus, the true nature of all entities are endowed with the *dao* (process of participating of two opposites) as a complete nature. The true nature in terms of universal principle of completeness in the *Yijing* and the *Xici* gives Zhanran's definition of buddha-nature a legitimacy to argue universal buddha-nature in terms of all-inclusiveness and completeness, and of universal principle (the Middle Way). Buddha-nature is a nature that transcends (or/and encompasses) two opposites 不二之性. In addition, all phenomena are manifestations of the *dao* (true reality) as shown in the *Yijing*. The identity of phenomena with true reality is parallel to Zhanran's idea that true nature as true reality is identical phenomena (此性即法).

In comparison with the *Daode jing*, Zhanran uses the concept of *wu*, such as *wuxing* 無性 (non-nature) to connect the united nature (buddha-nature) with various natures. It is consonant with Wang Bi's concept of *wu* (non-being). Wang uses non-being to explain

the characteristics and properties of the Dao as indeterminate, formless and nameless.

Thus, the Dao as a united source is able to be anything and exist pervasively. Wang's ontological view of non-being provides an explanation for unity and multiplicity. Zhanran incorporates Wang's concept of *wu* to his discussion that how buddha-nature (united nature) as non-nature is various natures in accordance with following conditions (佛性隨緣).<sup>166</sup>

In comparison with the *Zhuangzi*, Zhanran compared self-so 自爾 with spontaneity 自然 of Daoism. Zhanran did not reject spontaneity as the principle underlying the nature of all entities, but in his discussion of it, he criticized the notion of non-causality, perhaps basing his view on the thinking of Guo Xiang. Both the *Zhuangzi* and Guo's idea in Zhanran's discussion indicates that Zhanran is aware of the notion of spontaneity in the discussion of nature in both the *Zhuangzi* and Guo's discussion. He might or might not have consulted Guo's work himself. However, Guo's idea is alluded to indirectly.

According to Arcane Study, the nature of the absolute reality (*xuan*) and all things is attributed to spontaneity, which is a universal principle. This discussion of nature in terms of universal principle (spontaneity) also gives Zhanran a legitimacy to argue buddha-nature as a universal principle, which is not identical with, but is parallel to spontaneity in Daoism.

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<sup>166</sup> T46.1932.783b2.

The *dao*, non-being, and spontaneity are associated with the discussion of characters of *xuan*, which may be understood as having these three aspects. They are representations of *xuan*, but *xuan* is not defined by any of them. Buddha-nature is not the same as *xuan*, nor does it represent an original cause or ultimate source, such as the Dao in Daoism. Buddha-nature as a universal principle is the true nature of all entities. All entities themselves are manifestations of buddha-nature, and thus, they are true reality. Therefore, insentient things not only have buddha-nature, but are also buddha-nature.



## Conclusion: A Comparison of Buddha-Nature and Dao-Nature

Both Jizang and Zhanran interpreted buddha-nature in terms of 理 *li* (principle), and identified that principle as the Middle Way. Their inspiration in so doing was the claim that buddha-nature is equivalent to the doctrine of the Paramount Truth of Emptiness 第一義空 and the Middle Way described in the MMPS:

佛性者名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧。<sup>1</sup> (P1)

As for buddha-nature, it is described as the Paramount Truth of Emptiness. The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as wisdom.

And,

佛性者即第一義空。第一義空名為中道。<sup>2</sup> (P2)

As for buddha-nature, it is identical with the Paramount Truth of Emptiness. The Paramount Truth of Emptiness is described as the Middle Way.

According to P2, buddha-nature is equivalent with the Paramount Truth of Emptiness and the Middle Way. This equivalence indicates that buddha-nature is associated with *dharmakāya*/doctrine/teachings of the Buddha. In addition, P1 shows that the Paramount Truth of Emptiness refers to wisdom. Thus, the Paramount Truth of Emptiness in terms of *dharmakāya* is not merely a doctrine, but is associated with wisdom. The conjoining of doctrine (the Paramount Truth of Emptiness) and wisdom in the MMPS corresponds to

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<sup>1</sup> T12.374.523b12–523b13.

<sup>2</sup> T12.374.524b8–524b9.

*Tathāgata-garbha* thought, which incorporates the doctrine of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras into its teaching. In the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, emptiness is the true nature of all entities and concepts.<sup>3</sup> *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS have different views on the nature of sentient beings from the one of the doctrine of emptiness.

In *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS, the nature of all sentient beings is ultimately affirmed. However, *Tathāgata-garbha* thought does not reject the doctrine of emptiness. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought incorporates the doctrine found in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras into its teaching, so that *śūnyatā* is conceptualized as knowledge and wisdom of non-differentiation and non-discrimination. Emptiness is not merely the true reality of all entities, but it is wisdom: *kongzhi* 空智 (wisdom of emptiness). It is the wisdom of non-duality. According to the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* and the RGV, *tathāgata-garbha* in terms of the wisdom of *śūnyatā* has two aspects: *śūnya* (void) and *aśūnya* (not void). In terms of *śūnya*, *tathāgata-garbha* refers to emptiness in order to inspire sentient beings to detach from the unreality of things as determinate and having independent, self-subsistent entities.<sup>4</sup> In terms of *aśūnya*, *tathāgata-garbha* refers to *dharmakāya*/wisdom, representing the virtuous qualities of the Buddha, or *Buddha-guṇa*, *fogongde* 佛功德, or *zhihui gongde* 智慧功德. These are the highest properties of the Buddha, and not void.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jackson, 2004, 2:809.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, 1991, pp. 158, 161, 169–70.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 161. “The essence of inconceivable and immeasurable properties of the Buddha is nothing other than absolute wisdom and knowledge; they are the self-expressive modes of its complete

These properties are the intrinsic forms of the appearances and spontaneous activities of wisdom, and they are full manifestations of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>6</sup> Thus, *dharmakāya* is not separated from the *tathāgata-garbha* as embryonic absolute knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, *śūnyatā* in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought refers to the wisdom of *śūnyatā*, which is *dharmakāya* and inconceivable wisdom. The wisdom of *śūnyatā* is an empirical, conceptual knowledge and state. *Tathāgata-garbha* is not void, whereas the wisdom of *śūnyatā*, in the context of *dharmakāya*, is seen as the wisdom of the Buddha and *Buddha-guṇa*. Therefore, *dharmakāya* in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is inseparable from both wisdom and sentient beings. This idea also presents itself in the MMPS as shown in P1 that the Paramount Truth of Emptiness refers to *śūnyatā* as wisdom. All buddhas have this wisdom as their basis, and they are essentially equal in sharing the same wisdom/*dharmakāya*. Sentient beings have access to buddhahood through this wisdom as well. Thus, all sentient beings intrinsically possess the same essence (buddha-nature) as buddhas, whereas buddha-nature refers to *dharmakāya*. Sentient beings are already endowed with *dharmakāya* (buddha-nature), enabling them to attain enlightenment in the future, if they are able to perceive and realize *dharmakāya* (buddha-nature). Therefore, *dharmakāya* is more anthropic than cosmological in orientation. The notion of

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manifestation as...the *dharmakāya*.”

<sup>6</sup> Brown, 1991, pp. 161–62.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, 1991, p. 162.

*dharmakāya* as wisdom in the MMPS advances sentient beings over insentient things to have priority to possess buddha-nature because sentient beings possess consciousness, which is absent from insentient things. The subject of buddha-nature in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS is restricted to sentient beings. P2 indicates that the Middle Way and the Paramount Truth of Emptiness are synonymous. The synonym of the Middle Way and the Paramount Truth of Emptiness implies that the Middle Way refers to *dharmakāya* and wisdom, while the Paramount Truth of Emptiness is associated with wisdom. Buddha-nature in reference to the Paramount Truth of Emptiness and the Middle Way relates to wisdom and sentient beings.

The discussion of buddha-nature in the MMPS gives Jizang and Zhanran a source to interpret buddha-nature in terms of *dharmakāya* and/or principle. However, the Middle Way in these two Buddhist exegetes' assertions that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature refers to universal principle, applicable to both sentient beings and insentient things. Their view of principle seems to be not identical with the notion of *dharmakāya*/doctrine/teachings such as the Middle Way and the Paramount Truth of Emptiness in the discussion of buddha-nature found in the MMPS. In their perspectives, principle is universal. The Middle Way is a universal principle. They followed the idea that buddha-nature is equivalent to the Middle Way found in the MMPS. However, they reinterpreted *dharmakāya* in terms of principle. Their treatment of (buddha-) nature in

reference to principle is consistent with the discussion of nature in Chinese thought.

Chapter 1 has shown that the discussion of (human) nature in both Confucianism and Daoism refers to principle. In Confucianism, human nature refers to moral principles, and only humans are able to possess and practice moral principles. In the Daoist perspective, scholars of Arcane Study such as Wang Bi and Guo Xiang attributed the nature of the Dao to spontaneity, which is a universal principle. The source that they refer to is Chapter 25 of the *Daode jing*: “The Dao takes its models from the Natural (spontaneity)”<sup>8</sup> 道法自然.<sup>9</sup> This statement shows a relationship between the Dao and spontaneity. However, the statement does not say that the nature of the Dao *is* spontaneity. Scholars of Arcane Study commented on this statement from a metaphysical point of view, saying that the nature of the Dao was attributed to spontaneity. The Dao models itself after spontaneity to accomplish, fulfill, and form its nature. Thus, the nature of the Dao is characterized as spontaneity. This idea also appeared in Heshang Gong’s 河上公 commentary to the *Daode jing* that “the Dao is characterized as spontaneity” 道性自然. Scholars of Arcane Study also articulate the idea that spontaneity is not only the nature of the Dao but is also the nature of all entities. Thus, the nature of the Dao and all entities is characterized by a universal principle, spontaneity. Scholars during the period of Arcane Study favoured looking at a universal ground that serves as the fundamental basis for myriad things. They

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<sup>8</sup> Lynn, 1999, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> *Daode jing*, Chapter 25, in CTP.

attributed this universal ground to principle/*li*. Therefore, principle/*li* in the perspective of Arcane Study refers to universal principle. Spontaneity as the nature of the Dao and all entities is a (universal) principle.

After Arcane Study, Daoists in practical/religious Daoism in the Six dynasties, such as Song Wenming and Tao Hongjing, borrowed the term and the concept of buddha-nature to create Daoist soteriology in the form of the concept of *daoxing* 道性 (dao-nature). In particular, Song also includes the principle of spontaneity in the concept of dao-nature as shown in his *Daode yiyuan* 道德義淵, referring to Heshang Gong's commentary to the *Daode jing*. He quotes Heshang Gong's work in order to demonstrate that his commentary on dao-nature represents an orthodox teaching of Daoism. In Song's reinterpretation of Heshang Gong's commentary, the Dao is characterized by spontaneity 道性自然, as dao-nature is equivalent with spontaneity (物之自然，即物之道性). The phrase *daoxing* 道性 (the Dao is characterized...) in Heshang Gong's commentary is reinterpreted by Song as a technical term, dao-nature. Dao-nature is identified as being equivalent to spontaneity, a universal principle. The idea that dao-nature is equivalent to a universal principle (spontaneity) is quoted in a Tang Daoist text, the *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞. A textual comparison of Song's *Daode yiyuan* with the *Daojiao yishu* demonstrates that the idea that insentient things have dao-nature in the *Daojiao yishu* was inherited from the *Daode yiyuan*. Song's work is critical because it offers a chronology of

buddha-nature and dao-nature in association with the insentient realm. The fact that insentient things have dao-nature in Song's *Daode yiyuan* shows that the idea appears before Jizang's assertion. The inclusion of insentient things in the discussion of buddha-nature/dao-nature is a Chinese idea.

Buddha-nature is a discussion of the nature of sentient beings. According to the MMPS and *Tathāgata-garbha* thought, buddha-nature is not necessarily to be universal to include insentient things. However, Jizang's and Zhanran's assertions that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature in an ontological view demonstrates that buddha-nature in a holistic view is based on the interpretation of buddha-nature in terms of universal principle. Buddha-nature in terms of universal principle is parallel to, but not identical with, the discussion of the nature of the Dao in Arcane Study and dao-nature in practical Daoism that the nature refers to spontaneity, a universal principle. The nature of the Dao as a universal principle might provide Jizang and Zhanran with some reference to argue the buddha-nature of human/sentient beings in terms of (universal) principle.

Jizang and Zhanran incorporated Chinese thought as sources and methods to develop different models to argue that insentient things were able to possess buddha-nature.

Jizang discusses the subject of buddha-nature from two points of view: the phenomenal world (*jing* 境) and wisdom (*zhi* 智). This method is also used by Sengzhao in his discussion of the absolute reality, in which he discussed absolute reality in two different

contexts. The discussion of the absolute reality in terms of the phenomenal world refers to ontological view, and is seen in the section “Buzhenkong lun” 不真空論 (A Discussion of the Emptiness of the Unreal) of the *Zhao lun* 肇論. The absolute reality in the ontological view is universal. Sengzhao also makes reference to some Daoist ideas to argue that the absolute reality is not violated by a sage’s epistemological interpretation. The absolute reality exists pervasively and in all entities. A sage can only perceive and realize it. However, Sengzhao’s discussion of the absolute reality in terms of the ontological view in the “Buzhenkong lun” does not use the term buddha-nature. Jizang borrows the discussion of absolute reality in terms of *jing* (the phenomenal world) to develop his holistic argument that buddha-nature as true reality is the nature of all entities. In so doing, he must also adjust his definition of sentient beings in order to equate sentient beings with insentient things, and this adjustment is shown in his redefinition of sentient beings. He uses the concepts of subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others to divide sentient beings into two categories. Sentient beings in reference to subject/self/subjectivity refer to beings, of which the mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity is taken into consideration. Sentient beings in reference to others/objectivity refer to beings, or *jiaren* 假人 (beings in terms of provisional existence, or *shoujia* 受假), of which only the “physical”<sup>10</sup> aspect is included in the discussion.

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<sup>10</sup> Mind/consciousness in the quality of objectivity is considered one of the five *skandha* as opposed to the



Mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity is excluded. As opposed to subject/self/subjectivity, “sentient beings” in reference to objectivity/others in both the internal (*linei* 理內) and the external (*liwai* 理外) worlds are considered undifferentiated from things/objects/insentient things because mind in the quality of subjectivity is excluded. That is, sentient beings in terms of objectivity/others are considered “things.” In the phenomenal world, all entities, both sentient and insentient, are objects because they are considered provisional existence, or *shoujia* 受假.<sup>11</sup> Jizang’s definition of sentient beings is inconsistent with the definition in both Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism, both of which hold that sentient beings are defined as living beings in totality and which possess consciousness and generate karma determining their lives in the future. Only the physical aspect of sentient beings (*jiaren* and *shoujia*) is included in Jizang’s discussion of universal buddha-nature in association with insentient things, whereas mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity of sentient beings is excluded.

The division of all entities into subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others in Jizang’s discussion is consistent with Daoism. Such a division is shown in Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi* and Guo Xiang’s commentary on that chapter. We read in the *Zhuangzi*, that when a disciple of Confucius, Zi Gong 子貢 came from Master Sang Hu’s 桑戶 funeral and asked Confucius what kind of men sang in the presence of the corpse and

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one from the mind/consciousness in the quality of subjectivity.

<sup>11</sup> 世界為受假, T45.1853.18b29; 眾生假人。此是受假, T45.1853.18b24.

displayed inappropriate behaviour in the ceremony. Confucius replied to him, saying that the person who sang in the presence of the corpse had attained spiritual freedom to join with Creator and heaven and earth as one (彼方且與造物者為人，而游乎天地之一氣). This conversation represents the concept of self and others 彼此. The person in reference to others (sang in the presence of the corpse in this case) who has attained spiritual freedom is undifferentiated from all things because the person has joined with the ultimate reality (Creator, the Dao) and all things as one. Thus, in the Daoist perspective someone in reference to others/objectivity is undifferentiated from all things.

In addition, Guo's commentary on this conversation between Confucius and Zi Gong in the above states that people only made a judgment based on someone's external appearance, but do not see the individual's internal world. Guo's commentary on this conversation divides a human being of the external world into two aspects: *xing* 形 (form, physical part of the body, external appearances) and *shen* 神 (spirit, spiritual part, mind). Based on this division, Guo interpreted that people (a subject/self) easily make a false judgement based on form (of others), but are often unable to see the internal world of a person or thing in the external world (others). A person who is considered other/object can be viewed from the perspective of *xing*. It is acceptable to perceive a person in terms of objectivity as an object by his/her *xing* without taking his/her spiritual world into consideration.

Both the *Zhuangzi* and Guo's commentary in this specific context demonstrate awareness of self vs. others. People in subject (self) and in others refer to different contexts. Further, people in terms of others are divided into form and spirit. Thus, a person (as subject, self) may easily make a false judgement based on the form or appearance of others. This categorization indicates that in Chinese philosophy, it is acceptable to perceive only the objectivity of another person, that is, their form/appearances, without considering the spirit/internal reality. Therefore, in terms of others in Chinese philosophy, people can be defined with reference only to their physical reality, thus excluding their internal, spiritual aspect/mind. In addition, people in reference to others/objectivity are ontologically undifferentiated from all things because the ultimate reality does not exclude all things. Jizang applied the concept of subjectivity/subject/self vs. objectivity/others to his argument that sentient beings and insentient things are undifferentiated because the mind/consciousness—the primary element distinguishing them from insentient things—is excluded. We know that Jizang read Guo's commentary on this specific chapter and that, therefore, he must have been aware of the division of human beings with reference to their physical and spiritual aspects, subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others. He also must have known that it is acceptable to define sentient beings in terms of others with reference to objectivity.

Jizang's assertion that grasses and trees have buddha-nature from an ontological

perspective relates to the phenomenal world. Based on the definition of sentient beings in terms of others/objectivity—with reference to their physical aspect in the phenomenal world—sentient beings are undifferentiated from insentient things because mind in the quality of subjectivity is not included in the definition of sentient beings (*zhongsheng*) in the phenomenal world. Middle Way-buddha nature as a universal principle does not exclude the phenomenal world, and it articulates that both sentient beings and insentient things in the phenomenal world are essentially equal. Therefore, Jizang argues that if someone asserts that sentient beings have buddha-nature, based on the principle of essential equality, insentient things must have buddha-nature as well. This is how Jizang argues for insentient things having buddha-nature by redefining sentient beings in terms of subjectivity vs. objectivity, and self vs. others. Thus, his discussion of the location of buddha-nature in terms of the method *linei-liwai* is more sophisticated than the division of sentient beings (*zhongsheng* 眾生) and plants as suggested by some contemporary scholars.

In Jizang's perspective, buddha-nature is not on the same level as the Dao. Rather, Middle Way-buddha nature as a universal principle is parallel with spontaneity. Spontaneity in Daoism is a universal principle which holds that the nature of all entities is ascribed to this principle. In some of his works, Jizang discussed the Daoist notion of spontaneity. He must have been aware of the notion from the discussions of nature. He

did not criticize spontaneity, only the notion of non-causality. Therefore, Jizang must have been familiar with the discussion of nature of Daoism in association with universal principle and spontaneity. Both Middle Way-buddha nature and spontaneity are universal principles that consider the nature of human/sentient beings as well as the nature of insentient things. Therefore, Jizang's discussion of buddha-nature in terms of universal principle parallels the nature of the Dao and dao-nature of Daoism.

Zhanran's model is different from that of Jizang. He uses the concepts of *xingju* 性具 (nature as all-inclusiveness) and *lijū* 理具 (principle as all-inclusiveness) to define Middle Way-buddha nature as an all-inclusive nature, which is an all-inclusive principle.

Zhanran's idea that buddha-nature as the nature of all entities is based on an all-inclusive principle parallels the notion of the *dao* in the *Yijing* and its commentary, the *Xici*. Both works are quoted in Zhanran's *Fuxing*. The connotation of the *dao* in these works is different from the Dao in Daoism. According to the *Xici*, the *dao* is a process/principle/law that encompasses two opposite participants as completeness (一陰一陽之謂道). In terms of nature, the *dao* represents completeness and bestows nature upon things. Thus, the true nature, the *dao*, of all entities is a complete nature that encompasses all opposites, and this true nature is a process/principle. True nature in terms of universal principle of the completeness of two opposites might give Zhanran a reference to argue universal buddha-nature in terms of all-inclusive nature and an

all-inclusive principle that encompasses all opposites, such as essential emptiness vs. not empty in appearances and existences, pure vs. impure, good vs. evil, sentient beings vs. insentient things, and so on. In addition to the *Yijing* and the *Xici*, Zhanran is aware of the notion of spontaneity in terms of universal principle in the discussion of nature in both the *Zhuangzi* and Guo Xiang's discussion. Thus, the *Yijing*, the *Xici*, the *Zhuangzi*, and Guo Xiang's commentary to the *Zhuangzi* provide Zhanran with an idea that true nature is ascribed to universal principle that encompasses all opposites as shown in his concept of buddha-nature as an all-inclusive nature and all-inclusive principle.

Buddha-nature as an all-inclusive nature is united. Its relationship with various natures is described in the concept of “*bubian* 不變 ([Suchness/nature that is] absolute/unchanging) and *suiyuan* 隨緣 ([Suchness/nature] that in accordance with following conditions).” Zhanran borrowed Wang Bi's concept of non-being to explain the relationship between unity and multiplicity. According to Wang, the Dao by itself as non-being makes the Dao indeterminate, and thus, the Dao is able to be various things. Therefore, non-being explains the relationship between unity and multiplicity. Zhanran also characterizes the united nature as non-nature (*wuxing* 無性), which makes the united nature indeterminate. Based on non-nature, the united nature (buddha-nature) is various natures in accordance with following conditions (佛性隨緣).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> T46.1932.783b2.

In Zhanran's view, *xuan* 玄 (mystery) as the absolute reality can be understood from beings (約有明玄), non-being (約無明玄), and both being and non-being (約有無明玄). Zhanran seems to know that *xuan* as the absolute reality is unperceivable and inconceivable. Therefore, he did not intend to define what *xuan* is. However, *xuan* can be approached from the following three perspectives: beings, non-being, and both being and non-being. As this project suggests, buddha-nature is not on the same level as the Dao or *xuan*. Zhanran's discussion of buddha-nature as a universal principle parallels the *dao*, the concept of non-being, and spontaneity. His discussion of buddha-nature in terms of (universal) principle also follows the discussion of nature in Chinese thought, especially from the Daoist perspective.

To ground the nature of both sentient beings and insentient things in equality, Zhanran, like Jizang, had to adjust the definition of sentient beings to be in some sense equal to insentient things. In Zhanran's discussion of universal buddha-nature, sentient beings are not divided between subjectivity and objectivity, and self and others. Zhanran follows Indian Buddhism in defining sentient beings holistically. In his *Fuxing*, Zhanran also divided sentient beings between their physical and mind/mental aspects, the physical aspect being equal to insentient things, because in this context, they lack consciousness/ knowing/understanding 知.<sup>13</sup> Zhanran said that he quoted this idea from the *Vimalakīrti*

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<sup>13</sup> 故淨名云。是身無知如草木瓦礫, T46.1912.152a20–152a21.

*Sūtra*.<sup>14</sup> However, he quoted only a portion of the *Sūtra*. The difference between Zhanran's view of the physical aspect of sentient beings and the view in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is that it is considered provisional existence, and thus, it is not true reality in the latter,<sup>15</sup> but it is true reality in Zhanran's argument. The true reality in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is *dharmakāya*,<sup>16</sup> which is associated with wisdom. Thus, *dharmakāya* is restricted to the sentient realm. *Dharmakāya* as true reality in reference to the sentient realm in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is consistent with *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS. However, in Zhanran's view, the physical world is a manifestation of the true reality (the Middle Way). The true reality encompasses all opposites. Thus, true reality does not exclude the physical world, and this association places sentient beings and insentient things on essentially equal footing, because they are undifferentiated in terms of their physical aspect.

Jizang's and Zhanran's ontological assertions that insentient things have buddha-nature is a representation of the syncretism of two distinct views of nature of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism: emptiness and buddha-nature/*Tathāgata-garbha* thought. Emptiness is associated with the Madhyamaka school, while buddha-nature and *tathāgata-garbha* are associated with *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS. All

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<sup>14</sup> The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* states: 是身無知，如草木瓦礫, T14.475.539b23–539b24.

<sup>15</sup> T14.475.539b10–539b29.

<sup>16</sup> T14.475.539b29–539c11.



three conceptualizations agree that all phenomena in the *samsāric* realm are empty of intrinsic existence. However, when it comes to understanding the nature of sentient beings, the substantial existence of the nature of sentient beings is negated in the former but affirmed in the latter two, since buddha-nature/*tathāgata-garbha* in the *asamsāric* realm is permanent and exists. Therefore, the Madhyamaka school has a divergent view of the nature of sentient beings from the one in both *Tathāgata-garbha* thought and the MMPS. Buddha-nature and *tathāgata-garbha* are only attributed to sentient beings.

Jizang and Zhanran sought to include insentient things in buddha-nature first by equalizing the nature of sentient beings with the nature of insentient things, by reinterpreting the notion of *dharmakāya*, and by adjusting the definition of sentient beings and reinterpreting buddha-nature. Both adjusted the definition of sentient beings in the context of universal buddha-nature when considering sentient beings only with reference to their physical aspect. In terms of the reinterpretation of buddha-nature, they referred to Arcane Study, according to which the nature of all entities, including human beings, is represented by means of universal principle (spontaneity). This gives both Jizang and Zhanran a reference point for reinterpreting buddha-nature in terms of universal principle.

Their reinterpretation is based on the Twofold Truth of the Madhyamaka school: the ultimate truth is emptiness: namely, that everything is truly devoid of intrinsic existence,

and the provisional truth, which is that all entities are empty, or interdependent.<sup>17</sup> Based on the Twofold Truth, Jizang and Zhanran defined the Middle Way—which encompasses the two truths—as the third truth and the true reality. The Middle Way as true reality is a principle of non-duality: principle (emptiness) is identical with phenomena.<sup>18</sup> Thus, phenomena are true reality (理即事).<sup>19</sup> The Middle Way is a universal principle, which is applied to all entities, both sentient beings and insentient things.

The equivalence of buddha-nature and the Middle Way indicates that, from the perspectives of Jizang and Zhanran, buddha-nature is defined as universal principle. Therefore, buddha-nature, according to both Jizang and Zhanran, is not identical with *dharmakāya* as wisdom that represents the perfect characteristics of the Buddha. Thus, buddha-nature—in terms of the Middle Way in Jizang’s and Zhanran’s assertions that insentient things have buddha-nature—becomes a principle/law, which represents the nature of all entities. In this context, the Middle Way and buddha-nature refer to universal principle and true reality which cannot be violated by any empirical interpretation, but which can be perceived and comprehended through cognitive activity/thought.

As this project suggests, buddha-nature is not on the same level as the Dao or *xuan*. Some medieval Buddhists, such as Jizang and Zhanran did not treat buddha-nature on the

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<sup>17</sup> Jackson, 2004, 2:809.

<sup>18</sup> It is shown in Jizang’s idea of 即物而真, and Zhanran’s idea of 理即事.

<sup>19</sup> See footnotes 44, 81, and 83 of Chapter 4.

same level as the Dao in their assertions that insentient things have buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is a discussion of the nature/character of sentient beings. The view of buddha-nature as a universal principle of the nature of all entities corresponds to the notion of (universal) principle in the discussion of nature in Arcane Study. Jizang and Zhanran chose the notion of principle of Arcane Study rather than *dharmakāya* to interpret buddha-nature in terms of universal principle, to place the natures of sentient beings and insentient things on essentially equal footing and to assert that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature. Buddha-nature in terms of the Middle Way as a universal principle is parallel with dao-nature as spontaneity. Therefore, Jizang's and Zhanran's ontological assertions that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature not only harmonize two distinct ideological currents found in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism (emptiness and buddha-nature/*Tathāgata-garbha* thought), but also advance a Buddho-Daoist idea that syncretizes Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and Daoism. Their ontological view that insentient things are able to possess buddha-nature is acceptable in Chinese thought, but not in *Tathāgata-garbha* thought of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

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