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TRUTH AND METHOD IN THE *SAMDHINIRMOCANA SŪTRA*

The problem of the relationship between truth and method, as indicated by the title of Hans-Georg Gadamer's magnum opus, has not only been explicitly treated in hermeneutics, but has also been taken as the most fundamental issue in the history of philosophy. What is truth? What is method? How is truth revealed through method? In this article, I will address these questions to the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (hereafter, *SNS*), an Indian Yogācāra philosophical scripture that had been translated into Chinese four times since the fifth century. The text I use here is Xuan Zang's (602–664) Chinese translation.¹

In the following, I will examine two usages of “truth” in the *SNS*, that is, “ontological truth” and “propositional truth,” arguing that ontological truth takes the particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) (*zixiang* 自相) as the object of knowledge, while propositional truth takes the universal (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) (*gongxiang* 共相) as the object of knowledge. The questions that follow up in this inquiry are: How are these two aspects of truth to be known? Are they to be known synchronically or diachronically in the course of cognition? According to the later theory proposed by Dignāga (ca. 480–540), the author of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, the particular is known through perception (*pratyakṣa*) (*xianliang* 現量), while the universal is known through inference (*anumāna*) (*biliang* 比量).² However, in the *SNS* the answer seems not as clear and systematic as what Dignāga proposes. The whole issue is rather treated in the complicated context of hermeneutic meditation. It is in the progressive course of meditation that propositional truth is required as the prerequisite for the final intuition of ontological truth. Precisely owing to the epistemic role of propositional truth played in the attainment of awakening, we are able to explain why Buddhist logic and epistemology were developed in the Yogācāra School named after its emphasis on the practice of meditation. On the one hand, as indicated by the label *yogācāra*, “practice of yoga,” the main concern of the school is to achieve the awakened

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experience through transformation of consciousness. On the other hand, Buddhist logic and epistemology reached the mature stage of historical development solely within the Yogācāra School. To explain the special feature of combining mysticism and logic in Yogācāra philosophy is part of my intention in this research.

The same distinction between propositional truth and ontological truth is also found in the usage of *satya* (*di* 諦), another Buddhist term for the notion of truth. Derived from the root \sqrt{as} (be, exist, happen, take place), *satya* means “reality” first. As far as the experience of reality is expressed in language, however, there is also the meaning of *satya* as the truth of statement. According to the Buddhist theory of two truths, the *satya* as reality is called the ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*) (*shengyi di* 勝義諦), while the *satya* as discourse is called conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) (*shisu di* 世俗諦).³ The ultimate truth can be known only through the conventional truth. This doctrine holds good for both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. For Yogācāra, however, they further argue that the ultimate truth should be revealed through propositional truth.

I. IS YOGĀCĀRA PHILOSOPHY MERELY A FORM OF FACTISM?

In addition to *satya*, there are several other Buddhist terms, such as *tattva*, *tathatā*, and *bhūta*, in parallel with the notion of truth as conceived in Western philosophy. The term most frequently used in early Buddhism to designate “truth” is *yathābhūtaṃ*, a compound designation derived from the words *yathā* and *bhūtaṃ*, meaning “seeing things as they are” or “in accordance with fact.”⁴ Thus, K. N. Jayatilleke claims that the Buddha basically accepts a correspondence theory of truth, even though consistency and utility are also considered as criteria of truth.⁵ If the Buddhist notion of truth is construed as correspondence with fact, then the question that immediately follows is: What is meant by “fact”? The answer to this question can be detected in the usage of *tathatā* (*zhenru* 真如), one of synonyms for *yathābhūtaṃ*, which is rendered by Jayatilleke as “objectivity,” that is, the objective state of causation or dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).⁶

According to Hakamaya Noriaki’s etymological interpretation, however, in addition to the meaning of objective fact, “*tathatā*” also means “correctness.” The “*tathatā*” as “correctness” is said to have been derived from the adjective stem *tatha* (true, correct), while the “*tathatā*” as “fact” is said to have been derived from the adverb stem *tathā* (thus). Hakamaya contends that the distinction of two usages of “*tathatā*” reflects different Buddhist philosophical positions, that is,

logicism and factism.⁷ That is, logicism is more concerned with the judgment of truth and falsity, while factism is rather committed to the disclosure of facticity.⁸ According to Hakamaya's classification, Yogācāra philosophy falls under the category of factism. As I will argue in this article, however, Hakamaya's classification is overly one-sided, because, as we will see below, the logic of syllogism is fully recognized in the early Yogācāra philosophy.

II. TRUTH IN THE *SAMDHINIRMOCANA SŪTRA*

Before we clarify the usage of *tathatā* in the *SNS*, let us see its definition in the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* of *Yogācārabhūmi*:

What is *tathatā*? It is the state of affairs (*vastu*), which is disclosed in the self-less-ness of thinghood, known by the holy insight, and no referents of all discourses.⁹

According to this definition, the notion of *tathatā* is referred to the state of affairs that has not been conceptualized and verbalized. It is directly perceived by nondiscriminative insight only. In the same section of *Yogācārabhūmi*, "*tathatā*" is further taken as the synonym of "*dravya-sat*" (real existence) and "*paramārtha-sat*" (ultimate reality).¹⁰ All these synonyms suggest that the notion of *tathatā* refers to the real state of affairs prior to conceptualization and verbalization.

When we come to the *SNS*, we find that the motif of the whole scripture is centered upon the hermeneutical task of disclosing the meaning of *tathatā*. In the chapter entitled "The Characteristics of the Ultimate Truth," the ultimate truth is characterized as "wordless, nondual, transcending the object-realm of reasoning, transcending identity with and difference from all phenomena, and one flavor in all phenomena."¹¹ First, the ultimate truth is described as "the wordless state of affairs" (*anabhilāyadharmatā*) (*liyan faxing* 離言法性) that is neither conceptually constructed nor linguistically expressible. It can be perceived only by nondiscriminative insight. Second, ultimate reality is realized by the practitioner inwardly and reflexively. It cannot be known through reasoning (*tarka*). While the object-realm of reasoning is subject to conceptualization, verbalization, and argumentation, the ultimate reality is subject to none of them.¹² Third, there is neither identity nor difference between ultimate truth and phenomena. They are identical, because the ultimate reality is not ontologically separate from the phenomena. They are different, because the ultimate reality is purified of conception and defilements, while the phenomena is still defiled and conceptually discriminated.

Fourth, the ultimate truth is referred to as “pure object of cognition” (*visuddhāmbana*) (*qingjing suoyuan* 清淨所緣) in varying taxonomies or categorizations, such as “five aggregates,” “twelve sense-fields,” and “eighteen realms,” which are used for the practice of meditation.¹³ It should be noted that in this context the notion of *āmbana* (*suoyuan* 所緣) is taken to mean the object of cognition in meditation.¹⁴ According to the *Commentary* of Wonch’uk, the “pure object of cognition” in meditation refers to the ultimate *truth* of aggregates and so on, by which the mind is in turn purified. It also refers to *the ultimate* as the object which is free from all defiled bondages.¹⁵ Obviously Wonch’uk is correct with regard to the usage of “pure object of cognition” as referring to both propositional truth and ontological truth.

It is also crucial to note that in the *SNS* the usages of “ultimate truth” (= the truth of the ultimate reality, *paramārthasatya*) and “the ultimate” (*paramārtha*) are clearly differentiated. The ultimate *truth* is said to take the universal as the object of cognition, while the ultimate as reality is itself the particular.¹⁶ Since the ultimate truth takes universals as objects, it is subject to expression in proposition, while the particulars by definition are detached from words and concepts. Now, if the ultimate reality is wordless, how could it be talked about through communication? If it is not communicable, then the Buddha’s teaching would not be possible from the beginning. Since the Buddha did teach about his awakened experience, it clearly implies that the ultimate experience is communicable. Thus the question arises in the *SNS* is how this seeming contradiction is solved. The Buddha could only speak of the ultimate truth, but not the ultimate, yet there is a correlation and relation between the two

For the early Yogācārins, the hermeneutics of truth begins with belief in the validity of the Buddha’s teaching. These truth claims are stated in propositions such as: “All conditioned existences are impermanent.” “All existences are suffering.” “All existences are no-Self.” These statements are asserted prior to any argumentation. They will be proved, recognized, and re-experienced again in the later stages of meditative practice. Only if these truth claims have been thoroughly examined, can they be experienced through the method of deconstruction called “wedge-evicted-by-wedge.” For the Yogācārins, the solution to the problem of seeming contradiction lies right in the effectiveness of deconstructive practice in the advanced stage of meditation.

III. TRUTH AND MEDITATION

According to the manual of meditation in *SNS.VIII*, there are two prerequisites which should be fulfilled, that is, relying on scriptures and dwelling on the vow of attaining the Supreme Wisdom of Enlight-

enment.¹⁷ In the initial stages of meditation, reading scriptures plays a vitally important role. A Buddhist text is taken as a hermeneutic device, which has two features. First, it is the hermeneutical vessel carrying the experiential message of enlightenment. Second, particularly in light of the Abhidharma heritage, a Buddhist text provides an inclusive taxonomy by which all states of affairs can be classified for contemplative analysis.¹⁸ Concerning the first feature, the Yogācāra conception of text could be viewed as parallel to the conception of text in Romantic hermeneutics.¹⁹ That is, through reading and interpreting a scripture one is expected to re-experience the author's experience. In the case of Buddhism, one is instructed to re-experience the Buddha's process of enlightenment through reading and meditating on the scripture in the first place.

After reading scriptures, the course of meditation in the Yogācāra tradition is further divided into four steps in accordance with four meditation objects: (i) "image with non-discrimination" (*nirvikalpa-pratibimba*);²⁰ (ii) "the image with discrimination" (*savikalpa-pratibimba*);²¹ (iii) "the limits of states of affairs" (*vastu-paryantatā*);²² and (iv) "the accomplishment of the task" (*kārya-pariṇiṣṭi*).²³ Before four steps are taken progressively, a Buddhist practitioner is required to reside in solitude so that she is able to concentrate on reading and thinking. This precondition for engaging in reading is "calming" (*śamatha*), that is, the calming down of the mind-body.²⁴ The method of calming the mind-body allows the mind to abide in an "image with non-discrimination." If the image is analyzed, it is called "the image with discrimination," the meditation object of discerning (*vipaśyanā*). When all states of affairs are interiorized as the meditation objects of the basic Buddhist categories, for example, "five aggregates," "twelve sense bases," "eighteen realms," and "four noble truths," the practitioner is able to attain "all-inclusive knowledge" (*yāvadbhāvikatā*) (*jin suoyou xing* 盡所有性). He will then attain "all-inclusive truth" (*yathāyāvadbhāvikatā*) (*ru suoyou xing* 如所有性) insofar as the truth (*tathatā*) of each and every state of affair is realized.²⁵

Seeing states of affairs as they are in the concentrative state is called "the limits of states of affairs." In this stage, calming and discerning are operating synchronically. The same technique of mediation also operates synchronically in the last stage, "the accomplishment of the task." In this stage, due to the unfailing efforts of calming-discerning meditation in the preceding three stages one is able to destroy all gross wickednesses (*dauṣṭhulya*) and, therefore, to attain the fundamental transformation (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*). After one's mind is fundamentally transformed to nondiscriminative insight, the image (mark) is also transcended.²⁶ At the final stage, what a practi-

tioner realizes is bare experience of reality without any trace of concepts, that is, ontological truth.

Regarding the realization of truth, the last two stages, that is, “the limits of the state of affairs” and “the accomplishment of the task,” are most crucial. In the stage of the limits of the state of affairs, a practitioner is said to be able to comprehensively know the truth of all existents. In the same section of *SNS*, seven truths (*tathatā*) cognized at this stage are listed: (i) truth of evolution; (ii) truth of characteristics; (iii) truth of consciousness; (iv) truth of suffering; (v) truth of the cause of suffering; (vi) truth of cessation; and (vii) truth of path.²⁷ It should be noted that these truths are stated propositionally. For example, “truth of evolution” is stated as “All conditioned existents are without linear sequentiality.” “Truth of characteristics” is stated as “All existents are characterized by the selflessness of both personality and thinghood.” “Truth of consciousness” is stated as “All conditioned existents are consciousness-only.” Most of those statements can be found in the Buddha’s teachings, which are already well learned at the initial stage of meditation and investigated thoroughly in the concentrated state of mind.

As the objects of contemplation, those propositional truths are investigated with the method of inspection (*pravīcīnoti*).²⁸ In another context, they are said to be the object of analysis (*paryeṣate*, *vitarkayati*) and examination (*mīmāṃsām*). All these methods of analytical inspection are employed to examine the object of meditation thoroughly. The object of inspection includes (i) meaning (*artha*); (ii) state of affairs (*vastu*); (iii) aspects (*lakṣaṇa*); (iv) category (*pakṣa*); (v) time (*kāla*); and (vi) reason (*yukti*).²⁹ Regarding the inspection of meaning, the practitioner must inspect the verbal expression first in order to discern its meaning. As indicated above, the doctrines in the scriptures always serve as the hermeneutical vehicle for further investigation. Then, the practitioner needs to move forward to inspect the state of affairs listed in the written or orally transmitted text and inspect its two aspects, that is, particular and universal. It should be noted here that the four reasons (*yukti*) (*daoli* 道理) are also listed as objects of inspection. They are (i) reason for the origination of an existence in dependence on others (*apekṣā-yukti*) (*guandai daoli* 觀待道理); (ii) reason for an existence to have its own function (*kārya-kāraṇa-yukti*) (*zuoyong daoli* 作用道理); (iii) reason for proof (*upapatti-sādhana-yukti*) (*zhengcheng daoli* 證成道理); and (iv) reason for the true nature of existence (*dharmatā-yukti*) (*faer daoli* 法爾道理).³⁰ As we will see later, the reason for proof is established as a Buddhist theory of knowledge. Up to this point, it is quite clear that at the meditation stage of “the limits of states of affairs” the object of meditation is mainly inspected with the logical and epistemological

analysis, which is called “*vicinoti*,” “*tarka*,” or “*mīmāṃsā*.” Hence the truth that is analyzed at this stage cannot be other than the propositional truth, while the ontological truth would be disclosed only consequently at the final stage of meditation, that is, the “accomplishment of the task.”

At the final stage of meditation, the “accomplishment of the task,” the propositional truths need to be deconstructed and substituted by the intuition of the ontological truth. The distinction between the final stage and the previous stages lies in the different ways of cognition. At the previous stages of meditation, the objects in the form of images are known by the analytical mind. The truth of these objects is attained through logical and epistemological analysis. However, at the final stage of meditation, one comes to know the objects devoid of “image” through pure perception, which is also called “non-conceptual insight.” It is at this final stage that the ontological truth of the state of affairs is fully disclosed. On the contrary, the propositional truths attained at the previous stages have their function as a provisional instrument only. They are not final truth.

IV. “WEDGE EVICTED BY WEDGE”: A YOGĀCĀRA DECONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH

If the truth in the form of concepts and propositions has been attained at the early stage of mediation, how could they be switched to the nonconceptual and nonpropositional truth at the final stage of meditation? It is a crucial problem for both theory and practice. In the early stages, concepts are required for analytical contemplation (despite the fact that in Buddhism all concepts are accepted only as provisionally true). However, these concepts and verbal expressions need to be erased at the final stage, because the ontological truth would not be fully disclosed, if the mind of contemplation is still contaminated with conceptual and mental traces.

Methodically speaking, how could these concepts possibly be erased? The propositional truths are realized when one arrives at the first stage, that is, the Path of Insight (*darśana-mārga*). For anyone who is going to enter the First Stage a thorough discipline in calming and discerning is absolutely essential. She should be capable of meditating upon the “image with non-discrimination” as well as the “image with discrimination.” Only by being equipped with this kind of meditation technique can a practitioner comprehend the “limits of states of affairs,” which is done by operating calming and discerning synchronically.³¹ At this stage a practitioner possesses all-inclusive knowledge and all-inclusive truths. The latter is further subdivided into seven

kinds of truth, in which the truth of “consciousness-only” is included.³²

After the first stage, the calming-discerning meditation is still required for all subsequent stages. If a practitioner stops at the stage of the “limits of states of affairs,” she will not be able to attain liberation, because anyone who is satisfied by mere intellectualistic understanding will remain caught in mental-conceptual marks (*nimitta*) which the Yogācārinś consider a major bondage.³³ At the subsequent stages, all sorts of psycho-linguistic-conceptual marks are brought to the discernible level in the form of images in order to be erased. The deletion of marks is the most crucial moment in the whole process of meditation. Generally these marks are deleted through a special meditation technique called “intensive understanding of [propositional] truth” (*tathatāmanaskāraṇa* 真如作意). Here “*tathatā*” is understood as propositional truth because the practice of deleting marks is taken at the stage of the “limits of the state of affairs,” not at the final stage. Only if the practitioner fully understands the truth of impermanence and selflessness, she is capable of erasing the traces (something like ink marks) of verbal designations. To delete the marks of names and their referents is the first step. The same procedure is also applied to the sentences and their meanings. Taking the taxonomy of dharmas as a guiding map, the practitioner is finally able to gradually delete all marks over the course of her progression along the path.³⁴

How many marks are there to be eliminated? Theoretically, there are marks as numerous as the states of affairs. They can be categorized by all sorts of taxonomies.³⁵ Including the marks of pure and impure dharmas, they are divided into two basic categories, “coarse marks” and “subtle marks.” The coarse marks refer to those which appear in the everyday mental state.³⁶ In the course of meditation, the practitioner eliminates the coarse marks by replacing them with the subtle marks, that is, the images, in a way analogous to expelling a thick wedge by using a thin wedge.³⁷ As listed in the *SNS*, there are twenty-one kinds of subtle marks appropriated by mind in the form of an image: The mark of experience, the mark of consciousness, the mark of defilement and purity, the mark of altruism, the mark of wisdom, the mark of propositional truth (*tathatā*), the mark of the four noble truths, and so forth.³⁸ When the coarse marks have been erased, the subtle marks are in turn ready to be eliminated by the same method of “wedge-evicted-by-wedge.”³⁹ Obviously the mark of *tathatā* is the trace left by the concepts and statements in which Buddhist truths are consisted. In addition to the analogy of “wedge-evicted-by-wedge,” the analogy of metallurgy should not be overlooked. It is intended not only to emphasize the gradual character of Yogācāra path, but also to

describe how the hidden, stubborn defilements can be “melted down” by attentive thinking on the truth.⁴⁰

V. LOGIC, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND HERMENEUTICS

In the *SNS*, as explained above, truth is realized progressively in the course of meditation which is directed to the full disclosure of the ontological truth realized by the Buddha and stated in his teachings. To read the scriptures in which the Buddhist truth is embodied is hermeneutically required at the beginning stage of meditation. However, a practitioner does not merely accept the Buddhist truths as dogmas. She is rather asked to examine and verify by herself the truths that have been taught. In the course of meditation as described in the *SNS.VIII*, such sort of examination and verification of the propositional truths is carried out at the stage of the “limits of the state of affairs.” Nevertheless, the method of verification is not laid out in detail in the *SNS.VIII*. It is rather seen in the *SNS.X*, “The Accomplishments of the Tathāgata,” that the “four methods of reasoning” (*catasro yuktayah*) (*sizhong daoli* 四種道理) are employed as the hermeneutical and logico-epistemological method to make explicit the Buddha’s teaching. Moreover, the correct interpretation of the “four methods of reasoning” is itself still the subject of much controversy. Most of scholars classify it as the doctrine belonging to the tradition of Buddhist logic. However, Ernst Steinkellner criticizes this interpretation as “misleading,” emphasizing that the whole chapter of *SNS.X* is “a great *summa* of Buddhist hermeneutics” in which the Buddha’s teachings are examined in “a strictly ordered argumentative way.”⁴¹ Steinkellner’s interpretation does make the point that so-called Buddhist logic needs to be recontextualized within the broader hermeneutical and soteriological situation.

The theory of four methods has been mentioned in many Yogācāra texts other than *SNS.X* and *Yogācārabhūmi*. Before coming back to *SNS.X*, let us look into two parts of *Yogācārabhūmi*, *Śrāvakabhūmi* and *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, to see how the theory is treated in these texts. In the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, the four methods are practiced at the stage of thinking (*cintā*) after one learned from the Buddha’s teachings in which all existences are categorized and explained.⁴² Following the stage of hearing (*śravaṇa*), then one is required to move to the stage of thinking in which all dharmas (existents) are examined in terms of two categories, that is, particular and universal. The method of thinking is of two kinds, categorizing and reasoning. The latter is further divided into four methods of reasoning.⁴³ At this stage, one is able to reach “all-inclusive knowledge” by categorizing, while “all-inclusive

truth” is reached by the method of reasoning. All we need to note here is that the four methods, including the method of proof, are employed at the intermediate stage of meditation.

The four methods are also found in the *Tattvārtha* Chapter of *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, in which the knowledge of reality is divided into four levels: (i) the knowledge of reality which is established conventionally; (ii) the knowledge of reality which is established by reasoning (*yukti*); (iii) the knowledge of reality which is the object-realm of insight purified of defilements; and (iv) the knowledge of reality which is the object-realm of insight purified of ignorance. Those four levels of knowledge are arranged in the hierarchical structure, wherein the conventional knowledge of ordinary people is considered the lowest, knowledge of reasoning established by philosophers and logicians the second, knowledge established by the Hīnayānists the third, and the highest is the knowledge established by the Mahāyānists.⁴⁴

As the knowledge of reasoning is concerned, it is referred to as that which is established through the valid sources of knowledge, that is, perception, inference, and scriptural authority. Unlike the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and *SNS.X*, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* the truth established by logic and epistemological analysis is considered as mundane knowledge. Nevertheless, in all of three texts there is no disagreement with arranging the hierarchy of knowledge in accordance with the progressive stages of meditative practice.

In the *SNS.X*, the four methods of reasoning are taken as one of the characteristics of “root tenets” (*mātrkā*), the prototype of Abhidharma. Like any other scholastic tradition, basic tenets always need to be explained by textual exegesis as well as validated by logical argument. It is thus reasonable for the early Yogācārins to use the four methods of reason as logical tools (*upāya, yoga*) by which the ontological ground of existence can be predicated and analyzed. Hence, *yukti* has two primary meanings, “reason” and “method of reasoning,” with both usages being grammatically evidenced in the text.⁴⁵ Like many other Indian concepts, it is not unusual to use “*yukti*” in both ways.

Among the four *yuktis*, the method of proof stands in need of greater elucidation. In the *SNS.X*, the “method of proof” is referred to the logico-epistemological “cause and conditions with which the proposition of thesis can be established and consequently the correct enlightenment can be attained.”⁴⁶ This method is further divided into two parts: Pure (*parisuddha*) and impure (*aparisuddha*). In Buddhist logical and epistemological terms, to characterize a method of proof as “pure” or “impure” is the same as to characterize it as “valid” or “invalid.” However, it is also important to note the religious flavor that the metaphors of “pure” or “impure” possess, a feature which is

wholly absent in modern logic.⁴⁷ As to the validity of proof, five conditions are said to be fulfilled: (i) direct perception (*pratyakṣa*); (ii) inference that is based on perception; (iii) analogy (*upamāna*); (iv) soundness of argumentation; and (v) scriptural authority (*āgma*).⁴⁸ Among the five conditions, perception, inference, and scriptural authority are considered to be the valid means of knowledge (*pramāna*).⁴⁹

In the *SNS.X*, each logico-epistemological valid condition is further explained as follows: (i) knowledge of the impermanent nature, knowledge of the suffering nature, and knowledge of the selflessness of all phenomena are true, if they are known by mundane perception; (ii) knowledge of the momentariness of all phenomena, knowledge of the existence of other worlds (*paraloka*), and knowledge of the non-collapsibility of karmas are true, if they can be inferred from the other knowledge which is available to direct perception; (iii) knowledge of impermanence, suffering, etc., is true, if it is stated with the aid of analogies; (iv) knowledge is perfectly established, if it fulfills the above conditions (perception, inference, analogy); and knowledge of, for example, “utmost quiescence of *nirvāṇa*,” is true, if it is declared by one who is omniscient (*sarvajña*).⁵⁰

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the relation between truth and method is concerned, we found that, for the early Yogācārins, truth would not be obtained without being situated in the course of meditation. Truth and method are mutually related. On the one side, the Yogācāra methodical practice is designed as a progressive course of meditation. On the other side, the levels of truth are also differentiated in accordance with different stages of meditation. Roughly, there are two levels of truth, that is, propositional truth (truth expressed in propositions) and ontological truth (truth as reality). The latter is obtained at the last stage of meditation, while the former is obtained at the stage preceding to the last stage. Between two stages, there is radical transformation of mind, that is, from the conceptual mind to the nonconceptual mind. The conceptual mind takes propositional truth as its object, while the nonconceptual mind takes ontological truth as its object. Between two levels of knowledge, the deconstructive practice called “wedge-evicted-by-wedge” is required for achieving such a radical transformation.

At the stage of thinking and reasoning, logic and epistemology are seriously treated. As seen in the *SNS.X*, the method of proof is employed at this stage as a hermeneutical tool to elucidate and justify

the truths of Buddhism. However, we should not overlook the scholastic character of Buddhist logic and epistemology, which is evidenced in the priority of thesis (*pakṣa*) and the scriptural authority as the epistemic source of Buddhist faith. Such scholastic character is also seen in the Buddhist soteriological conception of truth which leads to the awakening and liberation.

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ENDNOTES

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1. For textual-historical sources, see Étienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra, L'Explication des Mystères* (Louvain and Paris: Université de Louvain & Adrien Maisonneuve, 1935), 7–29.
2. Masaaki Hattori, *Dignāga, On Perception* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).
3. The function of language in conventional truth is evidenced in both the Pāli and Sanskrit traditions. In both traditions, as Genjun H. Sasaki points out, conventional truth is made possible only with linguistic designations (*prajñapti*). See Genjun H. Sasaki, *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 79, 82–83. Also see Gadjin M. Nagao, “An Interpretation of the Term ‘Samvrti’ (Convention) in Buddhism,” in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). The Chinese equivalent of *satya* as *dī* 諦, which contains the radical *yan* 言, also suggests that truth can be expressed only in language.
4. *Yathā* means “in which manner or way, according as, as, like,” while *bhūta*, derived from the root $\sqrt{bhū}$ (to become, be, arise, come into being, existence), means “fact, reality, actual occurrence.” Cf. Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960, reprint), 841–42, 760–61. Also cf., David J. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1976), 39, 134. The meaning of *yathābhūtam* as “in accordance with fact” is also confirmed by its Chinese equivalent, *rushi* 如實.
5. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980, reprint), 352–59. Mark Siderits argues against Jayatilleke, claiming that in early Buddhist correspondence theory of truth there still includes a strain of pragmatism which can be seen in the Buddha’s use of the notion of a category mistake. See Mark Siderits, “A Note on the Early Buddhist Theory of Truth,” *Philosophy East and West* 29, no. 4 (1979): 491–99. Whether or not the Buddha stands for a position on correspondence theory, coherence theory, or pragmatism does not concern us at the moment.
6. *Ibid.*, 447.
7. Hakamaya Noriaki, *Yuishiki no Kaishakugaku* 《唯識の解釋學》 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1994), 86–88.
8. *Ibid.*, “Preface,” ii–iv; also cf. Hakamaya Noriaki, “Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy,” *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 56–80.
9. *Yūgīeshidilun* 《瑜伽師地論》 (*Yogācārabhūmi*), in Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku, eds., *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 《大正新脩大藏經》 (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932), Vol. 30, 696.a. (Hereafter, T.)
10. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T.30.696.b.

11. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.713.c.
12. *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, T 16.689.c–90.a.
13. T 16.691.c–692.a.
14. Derived from *ā-√lamb* (to hang from; to lay hold of, seize, cling to; to rest or lean upon; to take up; to appropriate; to bring near; to get; to give oneself up to), *ālambana* means “depending on or resting upon; hanging from; supporting, sustaining; foundation, base.” See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 153. As a philosophical concept, *ālambana* is rendered as “consciousness-support” by Alex Wayman and as “cognition-support” by F. Tola and C. Dragonetti. Cf. Alex Wayman, “Yogācāra and the Buddhist Logicians,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979); F. Tola and C. Dragonetti, “Dignāga’s *Ālambanaparikṣāvṛtti*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (1982). In the Chinese rendering, *ālambana* literally means “the object of apprehension.”
15. Wonch’uk, *Jieshenmi Jing Shu* 《解深密經疏》, in *Zokuzōkyō* (Taipei: Xinwenfong, reprint, 1980) 34.3.356.
16. SNS, T.16.690.c.
17. SNS, T.16.697.c; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 88.
18. Cf. Paul Griffiths, *On Being Mindless* (La Salle: Open Court, 1986), 53.
19. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. characterizes the Yogācāra hermeneutic as “Romantic in the sense that their primary concern is to stand behind the text in an effort to establish the intention of the Buddha in terms of his audience.” See “Buddhist hermeneutics: A conference report,” *Philosophy East and West* 37, no. 1 (1987): 74. Later in his article “Interpretation of the Mahāyāna Sūtras,” he points out the divergence between Schleiermacher and Buddhism: “Rather, the task of the Buddhist hermeneutician appears more akin to Schleiermacher’s divinatory method in which the interpreter seeks ‘to transform himself, so to speak, into the author’ in order to understand the meaning of the text. But again, the Buddhist exegetes are not dealing with the mental processes of an ordinary author. The author is the Buddha, the Awakened One, endowed with the knowledge of all aspects (*sarvākarajñāna*), fully aware in each instant of the modes and varieties of all phenomena in the universe, and possessed of super knowledge (*abhijñā*). . . . Nor is the Buddhist exegete to discern the unconscious of the Buddha, for he has none.” See Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 50–51.
20. Alex Wayman’s rendering of *nirvikalpa-pratibimba* (*wu fenbie yingxiang* 無分別影像) is “the image devoid of predication.” See *Analysis of the Śrāvakabhūmi Manuscript* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 86. *Vikalpa* refers to a wide range of mental activities, including perception, conception, and judgment.
21. Alex Wayman’s rendering of *saṅkalpa-pratibimba* (*you fenbie yingxiang* 有分別影像) is “the image attended with predication.” See Wayman, *Analysis*, 86.
22. *vastu-paryantatā* (*shi bianji* 事邊際).
23. *kārya-pariṇispatti* (*Suozuo chengban* 所作成辦).
24. Alex Wayman’s rendering of *śamatha* as “calming the mind” seems to fail to take into account the fact that the body also needs to be calmed. It is stated in the text that both bodily alleviation (*kāya-praśrabhhi*) and mental alleviation (*citta-praśrabhdi*) are required as the preconditions for philosophical contemplation. See SNS, T 16.698.a; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 89.
25. The term *yāvadbhāvikatā* (*jing suoyou xing* 盡所有性) is defined in the SNS as the limit of all states of affairs, pure and impure, such as those comprised in five aggregates, six internal sense bases, and six external sense bases. See SNS, T 16.699.c. The same account is also seen in the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, T 30.427.b–c.
26. *Śrāvakabhūmi*, T 30.427.c; Wayman, *Analysis*, 86. Also see “Yogācārabhūmi Database,” available on-line at <http://ybh.chibs.edu.tw/>
27. SNS, T 16.699.c.
28. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.451.b; Cf. Wayman, *Analysis*, 110.
29. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.451.c.
30. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.451.c. Also see Yoshimizu Chizuko, “*Samdhinirmocanasūtra* nitsuite shishu no yukti ni tsuite,” *Journal of Noritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*,

- 19 (1996): 160. Whether the meaning of *yukti* is understood as “reasoning” or “reason” will be explained below.
31. SNS, T 16.702.b.
 32. SNS, T 16.699.c.
 33. “Mark” (*nimitta*) (*xiang* 相) is defined as the object of consciousness and the referent of language. It is something like the ink trace that is fading out, yet still discernible. Cf., *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.696.a–697.b.
 34. SNS.VIII: “Bodhisattva Maitreya asked the Buddha again: World Honored One, by what kind of attentive thinking (*manaskāra*) are the marks (*nimitta*) eliminated? How are the marks eliminated? The Buddha replied to Bodhisattva Maitreya: Son of Good Family, by the attentive thinking of things as they are (*tathatā*), the marks of teaching (*dharma*) and meaning (*artha*) are eliminated. If one is not cognitively caught by name (*nāma*) and the self-nature (*svabhāva*) of name, nor discerning the mark of the base (*āśraya*) of [name], he then eliminates [the mark of name]. The same process applies to sentence (*pada*), syllable (*vyañjana*) and meaning (*artha*). By the same token, if one is not caught by spheres (*dhātu*) and the self-nature of sphere, nor discerning the mark of the base of sphere, he then eliminates [the mark of Realm].” T 16.700.c.
 35. For a list of 64 kinds of *nimittas*, see the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* of *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.697.a.
 36. Wonch’uk, *Commentary*, 26.3.a.
 37. *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 30.669.a. There are two kinds of marks, the original mark and the mark of an image. The former refers to those which are produced by the discrimination of the past and those which are produced by marks themselves. The latter refers to the images which are produced in the calming-discerning praxis. The mark of image is employed as an antidote to cure the original mark. See T 30.697.b.
 38. SNS, T 16.702.a; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 114–15.
 39. This process is summarized in the following passage: “At that moment, since they have attained the Path of Insight, now they realize the meditation object of the limits of the states of affairs. Furthermore, in the subsequent stages they practice assiduously and meditate upon three kinds of meditation objects. It is as if a thick wedge is expelled by a thin wedge. By utilizing the method (*upāya*) of wedge-evicted-by-wedge the bodhisattvas erase the internal marks as well as all sorts of defilement associated [with those marks]. Since marks are erased, the gross wickednesses are also erased. When all marks and the gross wickednesses are cut off completely, in the subsequent stages the bodhisattvas refine their minds step by step in a way similar to the method of metallurgy. In so doing, they finally attain Supreme Perfect Enlightenment and the meditation object of Accomplishment of the Task. Son of Good Family, this is how the bodhisattvas attain Supreme Perfect Enlightenment through the correct practice of calming and discerning.” SNS T 16.702.b.
 40. SNS, T 16.699.a.25: “During [*tathatā*]-thinking all bases of the gross wickednesses are melted down moment by moment.”
 41. Ernst Steinkellner, “Who is Byaṅ chub rdzu ’phrul? Tibetan and non-Tibetan Commentaries on the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*—A Survey of the Literature,” *Berliner Indologische Studien*, Band 4/5 (1989): 247.
 42. Buddhist practice is normally divided into three stages: “hearing,” “thinking,” and “cultivation.”
 43. *Śrāvakabhūmi*, T 30.419.a; Wayman, *Analysis*, 78–79.
 44. Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga’s Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), 69–74. Also cf., T 30.486.b–c.
 45. As pointed out by Hidenori Sakuma and Yoshimizu Chizuko, sometimes “*yukti*” is grammatically used in the instrumental case in the *Śrāvakabhūmi*. However, Yoshimizu argues that “*yukti*” is also used in the accusative case, meaning “an objective ground or principle which consists of the phenomenal world or facts and based on which one can explain originations and changes of phenomena as well as relations between things including logical relations.” See Yoshimizu, “*Samdhinirmocanasūtra* nitsuite shishu no *yukti* ni tsuite,” 125, 160; Hidenori S. Sakuma, *Die*

- Āsrayaparivṛtti-Theorie in der Yogācārabhūmi*, Teil II (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 99, n. 596.
46. SNS, T 16.709.b; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 155–56, 262.
47. Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 155–56. Derived from √*sudh* (to purify), “*śuddha*” means “cleansed, cleared, pure, free from, free from error, faultless, right, correct, accurate, etc.” Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1082.
48. SNS, T 16.709.b; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 156, 263.
49. SNS, T 16.709.c–710.a; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 264.
50. SNS.X, T 16.709.b–c; Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 156–57, 263. Following the explanation of the five valid logico-epistemological conditions, seven invalid conditions or logical fallacies are described. This part is not discussed here due to limits of space.