

A Controversy over the Buddha-nature in T'ang China: The Initial Debate between Ling-jun, Shen-t'ai and I-yung¹⁾

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The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is well known for its doctrine that “all beings, without exception, have the Buddha-nature.” According to this sūtra, there is no one in the world incapable of attaining Buddhahood. This is because each and every being possesses within himself or herself the nature of the Buddha (Buddha-nature). In fact, this sūtra asserts that even *icchantikas*, totally depraved and evil beings, possess the Buddha-nature and are capable of actualizing Buddhahood.²⁾

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* was introduced to China during the early decades of the fifth century.³⁾ Subsequently, its doctrine that the Buddha-nature is

1) Abbreviations used in this paper:

T: TAKAKUSU and WATANABE 1924-1934.

DZ: HIEIZAN SENSŪ IN FUZOKU EIZAN GAKUIN 1975.

2) Standard works on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* include ŌCHŌ 1981 and FUSE 1973. On the Buddha-nature doctrine in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, see LIU 1982.

3) The first version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* rendered into Chinese was the six fascicle *Ta pan ni yūan ching* 大般泥洹經, translated in 418. This translation of the sūtra corresponded to the first section of the more complete forty fascicle *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* which was translated in 421 by Dharmakṣema (385-431) in north China. In 436, the sūtra was revised by Hui-yen 慧嚴 (363-443), Hui-kuan 慧觀 (?-453) and the poet Hsieh Ling-yun 謝靈運 (385-433). This thirty-six fascicle version is commonly called the “Southern edition” to distinguish it from Dharmakṣema’s version, which is popularly known as the “Northern edition.” It was this revised “Southern edition” which became the most popular version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* in East Asia. On the translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, see CH’EN 1964, 113-4. In the pages below, I will refer to both Northern (cited as “N”) and Southern (cited as “S”) editions when citing the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.

found in all beings was enthusiastically adopted by Chinese monks, and became a key concept in the subsequent development of Buddhist thought in that country.

However the Buddha-nature doctrine of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* was faced with a serious challenge in the early part of the T'ang 唐 dynasty. In 645, the great translator Hsüan-tsang 玄奘 (600-664) returned to China after a seventeen year trip to India. During his journey, Hsüan-tsang not only visited many sacred Indian Buddhist sites, but also studied at some of the most famous centers of Buddhist learning there. In particular, he remained at Nālanda, the great Buddhist university, for five years and studied the Yogācāra consciousness-only philosophy under Śīlabhadra. After returning to China, Hsüan-tsang gained the patronage of Emperor T'ai-tsung 太宗, the second T'ang emperor, and threw himself into the task of translating the enormous number of Buddhist texts he had brought back to his native land. By the time he died some two decades later, he had completed the translation of 74 works in 1338 fascicles (WEINSTEIN 1959, 119). Among his large output were many of the most important texts of Yogācāra Buddhism which he had mastered in India.

Hsüan-tsang's new translations had an immediate and profound impact upon the Chinese Buddhist community. The Yogācāra treatises which Hsüan-tsang translated were avidly studied by his peers and disciples and led to the development of a new school of Chinese Buddhism, the Fa-hsiang 法相 school. However, although Hsüan-tsang's new Yogācāra teachings enjoyed great popularity, they were not accepted unconditionally. In particular, the Yogācāra doctrine of the Five Lineages immediately provoked intense opposition among more traditionally-minded monks.

According to the doctrine of the Five Lineages, all beings can be distinguished into five "lineages" (*gotras*) in accordance with their innate spiritual potentials (FUKAURA 1954, 638-658). These lineages are:

- (1) the determinate lineage of bodhisattvas 菩薩定姓
- (2) the determinate lineage of pratyekabuddhas 獨覺定姓
- (3) the determinate lineage of śrāvakas 聲聞定姓
- (4) the indeterminate lineage 不定種姓

(5) lineageless beings 無姓有情

In contrast to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Yogācāra school claims that not all beings are able to attain perfect Buddhahood. They held that only those belonging to the lineage of bodhisattvas (along with a certain portion of those belonging to the indeterminate lineage⁴⁾) have the innate spiritual capacity to reach Buddhahood. According to this view, beings of other lineages are by nature incapable of becoming Buddhas, and must be content with inferior levels of attainment. Moreover, the Five Lineages scheme accepts the existence of a class of beings called "lineageless beings," identified with the *icchantikas*, who are eternally bound to the cycle of birth-and-death and are totally incapable of gaining release from transmigration.

The Yogācāra doctrine of the Five Lineages clashed sharply with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*'s doctrine that all beings possess the Buddha-nature and are thus capable of attaining Buddhahood. Not only did the Yogācāra proponents maintain that only a limited number of beings can reach perfect Buddhahood, but they also insisted that certain beings, specifically the *icchantikas*, can never escape from the cycle of transmigration at all. Hsüan-tsang's new Yogācāra soteriology flew directly in the face of the earlier, more egalitarian Chinese Buddhist world-view, based on the premise that all beings can, and indeed eventually must, reach Buddhahood. Thus it is no surprise that the Yogācāra Five Lineages scheme came quickly under attack.

In the following pages, I would like to consider the acrimonious debate between Ling-jun 靈潤, Shen-t'ai 神泰 and I-yung 義榮 on whether or not to accept the new Yogācāra theory.⁵⁾ Although not as famous as the later exchange over the same question between Fa-pao 法寶 (627?-705?) and Hui-chao 慧沼 (649-714), it is historically significant as the first debate over the question of whether or not all beings can attain Buddhahood which erupted in the wake of

4) Indeterminate beings are those who possess the seeds for attaining the fruits of two or more of the Three Vehicles (bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas). Naturally, indeterminate beings who can reach Buddhahood are those possessing seeds of the bodhisattva lineage which leads to Buddhahood.

5) This exchange is discussed in TOKIWA 1977, 220-240 and FUKIHARA 1988, 195-208.

Hsüan-tsang's translations.

Ling-jun's Defense of the Buddha-nature Theory

The first person to criticize the new Yogācāra doctrine of the Five Lineages was Ling-jun (exact dates unknown). Ling-jun was the most prominent monk of the She-lun 攝論 school of Chinese Buddhism in the years before Hsüan-tsang's return to China. During these decades, the Ti-lun 地論 school and the She-lun school were the representative schools of Yogācāra philosophy in China. The Ti-lun school was based on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra Śāstra*, a commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* by Vasubandhu translated by Bodhiruci, while the She-lun school was based on Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*.⁶⁾ Unlike Hsüan-tsang's version of Yogācāra consciousness-only philosophy, these two schools supported the position that all beings can attain Buddhahood.⁷⁾ In particular, they placed great emphasis on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and its doctrine of universal Buddha-nature. It is significant that many of the great scholars of the She-lun and Ti-lun schools lectured and wrote commentaries on this sūtra.

According to his biography in the *Hsü kao seng chuan* 續高僧傳 (*Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*), Ling-jun was born into the Liang 梁 family, prominent in the Yü-hsiang 虞鄉 area in southwest Shansi.⁸⁾ The year of his birth is unknown. While still a child, he became a novice under the Dharma Master Ling-ts'an 靈粲 of the Ta hsing-shan ssu 大興善寺 in Ch'ang-an.⁹⁾ Ling-ts'an, a disciple of the great Ti-lun scholar Hui-yüan 慧遠 (523-592) of Ching-ying ssu 淨影寺, was a noted scholar of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra Śāstra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. At the age of thirteen, Ling-jun began to attend

6) On these schools, see PAUL 1984, 38-71.

7) The Yogācāra teachings as transmitted by Paramārtha especially emphasized the ability of all beings to attain Buddhahood. See NEMU 1986, 129-135.

8) Ling-jun's biography is found in *Hsü kao seng chuan*, T 50, 545b-7a. Perhaps because Tao-hsüan 道宣, the author of the *Hsü kao seng chuan*, knew Ling-jun personally, this biography is quite detailed. However, it fails to give the dates of his birth and death. Ling-jun's life is also summarized in FUSE 1973, 2:475.

9) Ling-ts'an's biography is found in *Hsü kao seng chuan*, T 50, 506b-c. See also FUSE 1973, 2:470.

lectures on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* under Ling-ts'an. Later he studied the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra Śāstra* and the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* under Tao-tsang 道瑩. Finally at the age of 23, Ling-jun became a disciple of Pien-hsiang 弁相, an authority on the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* and an author of a five fascicle commentary (now lost) on it. Pien-hsiang was a student of T'an-ch'ien 曇遷 (542-607) who is noted for transmitting Paramārtha's teachings to north China.¹⁰⁾ Most likely, Ling-jun continued his study of the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* under Pien-hsiang.

In 605, Ling-jun retreated into the mountains to practice austerities. A decade later, he returned to Ch'ang-an in 616, where he once again took up residence at the Ta hsing-shan ssu. There he conducted a series of lectures on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. During the warfare that accompanied the fall of the Sui Dynasty, he fled to the Hua-kan ssu 化感寺 in Lan-t'ien 藍田 located to the east of Ch'ang-an. In 634, after the Sui had been defeated and the new T'ang Dynasty established, he was summoned to reside at the Hung-fu ssu 弘福寺 in Ch'ang-an, a temple completed in that year by T'ai-tsung in memory of his mother.¹¹⁾

In 645, the Hung-fu ssu which was chosen as the site of Hsüan-tsang's translation project by T'ai-tsung. As a result, Ling-jun was commanded to join Hsüan-tsang's translation team as one of twelve "verifiers" (*sheng-i* 証義).¹²⁾ However, it appears that he soon clashed with Hsüan-tsang over various aspects of the new Yogācāra doctrines, and composed a treatise attacking them. By 648 at the latest, he had left Hsüan-tsang's team of translators.¹³⁾ But soon after writing this treatise, Ling-jun died. Although it is not known when he died, it is

10) Biography in *Hsü kao seng chuan*, T 50, 571b-574b. A summary of his life is found in PAUL 1984, 44-5.

11) On the Hung-fu ssu, see WEINSTEIN 1987, 136, note 22.

12) The list of the twelve verifiers appointed at this time is found in *Ta T'ang ta tz'u en ssu san ts'ang fa shih chuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (*Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Ta tz'u en ssu of the Great T'ang*), a detailed biography of Hsüan-tsang. See T 50, 253c.

13) This is suggested by the fact that Ling-jun's name does not appear in the list of verifiers given in the postscript to the translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* completed that year. The postscript is found in T 30, 811c.

believed to have been around 649 (TAMURA 1988, 246).

As a dedicated student of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (he is said to have lectured on this sūtra over seventy times during his life; see T 50, 546c), Ling-jun must have had strong reservations about Hsüan-tsang's new Yogācāra teaching, especially its doctrine of the Five Lineages. Moreover, since he was a scholar with great expertise in the doctrines of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* as well as Yogācāra treatises such as the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (he lectured on this text over thirty times during his life and composed several studies on it, including a thirteen fascicle commentary which is no longer extant; see T 50, 546c), Ling-jun was quite capable of mounting an erudite attack on Hsüan-tsang's positions.

Unfortunately, Ling-jun's treatise has not survived intact.¹⁴ Even its title is lost to us. Only a portion of this work has survived, quoted in the Japanese monk Saichō's 最澄 *Hokke shūku* 法華秀句 (*Superior Passages from the Lotus Sūtra*). According to Saichō, Ling-jun's treatise was one fascicle in length, and was divided into fourteen sections (hence it is now commonly referred to as the *Shih ssu men i* 十四門義 [*Fourteen Gate Thesis*]).¹⁵ However, only the first of the fourteen sections is quoted in the *Hokke shūku* (DZ 3: 154-172). But this section, in which Ling-jun presents his objections to the Fa-hsiang position that not all beings possess the Buddha-nature, is undeniably the most important part of the treatise.

In this section, Ling-jun summarizes his opponent's view as follows.

1. Certain beings do not have the Buddha-nature.

2. The words "all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature" found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* refer, not to all beings among the total number of beings (*ch'üan fen i ch'ieh* 全分一切), but to all beings among a limited portion of beings (*hsiao fen i ch'ieh* 少分一切).

3. When certain beings are said not to possess the Buddha-nature, this means that they do not possess the practical Buddha-nature (*hsing fo hsing* 行仏性). It does not mean that they do not have the Buddha-nature as principle

14) On this work see TOKIWA 1977, 220-30.

15) This provisional title was first proposed by Tokiwa Daijō (in TOKIWA 1977, 220) and since then has become widely accepted among Japanese Buddhologists.

(*li fo hsing* 理仏性).

First, according to Ling-jun, the followers of the new Yogācāra teachings assert that not all beings possess the Buddha-nature enabling them to attain Buddhahood. Certain beings, specifically the lineageless beings, are devoid of the Buddha-nature and are thus incapable of becoming Buddhas and gaining release from the cycle of birth-and-death. Concerning this claim, Ling-jun summarily dismisses it as attachment to an incomplete Hīnayāna teaching, arguing,

This represents an attachment to an incomplete teaching (*pu liao chiao* 不了教) held by common beings and followers of the Two Vehicles (śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas). Because they have yet to hear and believe in the Tathāgata's secret treasury and the wonderful scripture of the Mahāyāna, they produce such attachments. (*DZ* 3:155)

According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, its teaching that "all beings have the Buddha-nature" is the "Tathāgata's profoundly secret treasury 如来甚深秘密藏" unknown to the followers of the Two Vehicles (T 12, 405b [N] ; T 12, 646a [S]). On the basis of this passage, Ling-jun criticizes his opponents as being no different from the followers of the Two Vehicles who are ignorant of the Buddha's most profound teaching of universal Buddha-nature.

Next, Ling-jun quotes eleven passages (nine from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and one each from the *Hua-yen* 華嚴 and *Anuttarāśraya Sūtras*) to demonstrate that all beings do indeed possess the Buddha-nature (*DZ* 3: 155-158). For example, from the *Hua-yen Sūtra*, he quotes, "There is no place where the Buddha's wisdom cannot be found" (T 9, 623c). Since, according to this passage, the Buddha's wisdom is all-pervasive, there cannot be any being in whom this wisdom (which Ling-jun identifies with the Buddha-nature) cannot be found (*DZ* 3: 155). Moreover, from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, he quotes such lines as the following.

Furthermore there are *bhikṣus* who preach the profound scriptures of the Buddha's secret treasury: all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature. (T 12, 404c [N] ; T 12, 645b)

And,

Beings are also thus. They all, without exception, have the mind. Those

who have the mind will definitely be able to attain *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*. It is for this reason that I always proclaim, “All beings without exception have the Buddha-nature.” (T 12, 524c [N]; T 12, 769a [S])

On the basis of these and other passages, Ling-jun argues that there can be no being who does not possess the Buddha-nature.

Second, according to Ling-jun, a certain follower of the new Yogācāra teaching argued that the word “all” in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*’s phrase, “all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature,” refer not literally to all beings, but to all beings among a certain limited portion of beings. This argument is found in the Bandhuprabha’s *Buddhabhūmi Śāstra*, translated by Hsüan-tsang in 649 (T 26, 298a; cited in FUKIHARA 1988, 197). However, the ultimate source of this interpretation is found in a passage in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* itself. In that sūtra, the Buddha states that among the things he preaches, there are things which are complete in meaning, as well as things which are incomplete in meaning. In response Cunda recites the following verse.

That which I possess

I give to all.

This is only to be praised

And is not to be censured. (T 12, 425a [N]; T 12, 666b [S])

The Buddha then declares that this verse actually means that, with the exception of one type of beings, alms should be given to all. The beings to be excluded, he continues, are the *icchantikas* who are not worthy of receiving alms because they break the precepts. After a lengthy discussion concerning the *icchantikas*, the Buddha, requested by Cunda to clarify the meaning of the verse above, explains that “all” to whom alms should be given refer, not literally to all beings, but to “all beings among a limited portion of beings” (T 12, 426a [N]; T 12, 667b [S]). Based on this passage, Ling-jun’s opponents claimed that, in the same way, the word “all” in the phrase “all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature” denote only all beings within a limited circle of beings, i. e., all beings who are not *icchantikas*. In this way, they sought to demonstrate that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* does not invalidate the new Yogācāra teaching that certain beings do not possess the Buddha-nature.

After introducing this argument, Ling-lun retorts, “This is the mark of folly, not the mark of wisdom. This is the mark of a heretical view which slanders the Mahāyāna” (DZ 3: 159). According to Ling-jun, when the sūtra states that all beings have the Buddha-nature, it literally means all beings. Ling-jun cites a number of Buddhist works, including the *Hua-yen Sūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, *Anuttarāśraya Sūtra*, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, *Buddha Nature Treatise* and the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, to support his contention. For example, he quotes the following lines from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.

(Kāśyapa Bodhisattva asked:) “Among the twenty-five modes of existence, is there a self or not?” The Buddha said, “Son of good family! Self refers to the *tathāgatagarbha*. All beings without exception have the Buddha-nature. This is what is meant by the self.” (T 12, 407b [N]; T 12, 648b [S])

As is well known, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* provides a positive description of *nirvāṇa*, attributing to it the four qualities of eternity, bliss, self and purity (ŌCHŌ 1981, 97-8). In the passage above, this self is equated with the *tathāgatagarbha* and the Buddha-nature. However, the important point here is that the Buddha-nature (which is equivalent to the self and *tathāgatagarbha*) is said to be possessed by all beings within the twenty-five realms of existence. The twenty-five realms of existence refer to the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, *asuras*, the four continents, the six heavens of desire, the seven heavens of form and the four formless heavens, i. e., the entire universe. In other words, the sūtra passage above asserts that all beings in the universe possess the Buddha-nature. Thus, Ling-jun argues, all beings, and not just a certain portion of them, have the Buddha-nature.

Besides, Ling-jun continues, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* repeatedly proclaim that “all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature” represents the Buddha’s complete teaching. According to the sūtra, the position that the Buddha-nature is not found universally in all beings is an incomplete teaching. Moreover, as the sūtra states, “Those who believe that sentient beings have the Buddha-nature (but maintain that) not all (beings) necessarily have it, is called (one who is) lacking in faith” (T 12, 575b [N]; T 12, 822c [S]). In this way

Ling-jun attacks his opponents as being attached to the Buddha's incomplete teaching, and belittles them for their lack of faith. He closes this section with the rhetorical question, " 'All beings without exception have the Buddha-nature' is a profound meaning discussed only within the complete sūtras of the profound, secret Mahāyāna. Why do you decide that it is identical to the incomplete (teaching that 'all beings' refer to) all among a limited portion (of beings)?" (DZ 3: 159).

Third, Ling-jun takes up his opponent's argument that there are two kinds of Buddha-natures: the Buddha-nature as principle and practical Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature as principle refers to the Tathatā immanent in all beings. This definition of the Buddha-nature derives from the *Buddha Nature Treatise*, which states,

Buddha-nature refers to the Tathatā revealed through the dual emptiness of persons and dharmas.... Once one attains this principle, one escapes from deluded attachments. (T 31, 787b)

On the other hand, the practical Buddha-nature refers to the undefiled seeds within the *ālayavijñāna* which is the actual cause of Buddhahood.

According to this theory, all beings possess the Buddha-nature as principle (= Tathatā), while only certain beings (specifically beings of the determinate bodhisattva lineage and certain types of beings of the indeterminate lineage) possess the practical Buddha-nature. Although all beings possess the Buddha-nature as principle, this does not mean that they can all attain Buddhahood. Buddhahood is attainable only by those beings who possess the practical Buddha-nature, or the undefiled seeds leading to Buddhahood. In other words, according to this theory, the universal existence of Buddha-natures as principle does not translate into the actual attainment of Buddhahood by all beings. Only beings who also possess the practical Buddha-nature can reach Buddhahood.

On the basis of this theory of the two kinds of Buddha-natures, the scholars of the new Yogācāra philosophy argued that their position does not contradict the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. When the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* states that all beings have the Buddha-nature, it means that they possess the Buddha-nature as principle, i. e., the Tathatā immanent in all things. The sūtra's words are not

to be understood as meaning that all beings have the practical Buddha-nature enabling them to attain Buddhahood.

Against this interpretation, Ling-jun gives two objections. First, he argues that there is no ground for differentiating between the two kinds of Buddha-natures, since this distinction is not found in any Buddhist texts, including the treatises of the Yogācāra school itself (DZ 3: 164). Ling-jun's objection here seems valid, since the theory of the two Buddha-natures is in fact not found in any Yogācāra texts of Indian origin. It appears to have been first formulated by Hui-yüan of Ching-ying ssu.¹⁶⁾

Second, Ling-jun protests that this theory of the two Buddha-natures contradicts the teachings of the sūtras and treatises, and quotes passages from the *Hua-yen Sūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, *Ratnagotravibhāga* and *Buddha Nature Treatise* as evidence (DZ 3: 164-7). In particular, Ling-jun points out that, far from maintaining the distinction of the two types of Buddha-natures, several texts argue that the practical Buddha-nature is inseparable from the Buddha-nature as principle. In other words, these works declare that the desire to seek and actualize Buddhahood (which is what the Yogācāra scholars call the practical Buddha-nature) is an essential element of the Buddha-nature which all beings possess. Borrowing the words of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Ling-jun explains that the practical Buddha-nature is not a distinct entity, but the "function" (業) of the Buddha-nature as principle.¹⁷⁾

One important source for Ling-jun's view is the *Buddha Nature Treatise* (DZ 3: 167). This treatise discusses the Buddha-nature in terms of three "causes" or

16) MOCHIZUKI 1931-63, 5: 4456. For example, the following lines can be found in Hui-yüan's *Ta pan nieh p'an ching i chi* 大般涅槃經義記 (*Notes on the Meaning of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*): "The (Buddha-) nature as principle is of one taste and it is the same in meaning both above and below. However, distinctions exist concerning the practical (Buddha-) nature and they are not equal previously and subsequently." T 37, 869a.

17) The *Ratnagotravibhāga* discusses the Buddha-nature in terms of ten aspects, among which the fourth is "function" (T 31, 828b). In a later passage, the treatise explains that both the sufferings of the world and the pleasure of *nirvāṇa* are based upon the Buddha-nature as Tathatā (T 31, 831a). Ling-jun interprets this passage to mean that the sentient beings's desire to gain the pleasure of *nirvāṇa* is the function of the Buddha-nature as Tathatā.

three aspects: (1) cause of attainability, (2) the practical cause and (3) complete fulfillment cause. The first cause of attainability refers to Tathatā which is the basis of all spiritual attainments. The second practical cause refers to the aspiration for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) which provides the foundation of spiritual practice and through which one attains the thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment, the ten stages of the bodhisattva, the ten perfections, the auxiliary aids to practice and the dharma-body. Finally the complete fulfillment cause refers to practice which results in the complete fulfillment of the cause and fruit of the Buddha-nature (T 31, 794a; cf. KING 1991, 40). Here Ling-jun points out that the *Buddha Nature Treatise* treats these three causes — Tathatā, the aspiration for enlightenment and the practices leading to Buddhahood — as three integral aspects of the Buddha-nature. This reveals that the practices for Buddhahood cannot exist apart from Tathatā, and conversely, that the Buddha-nature as Tathatā is always accompanied by the potential to propel one towards Buddhahood. In Ling-jun's words, "Wherever the Buddha-nature as principle exists, there exists the practical Buddha-nature" (DZ 3: 167). For this reason, Ling-jun concludes that "attachment to (the position that there are beings) without the practical Buddha-nature is a mistaken attachment and is not the correct meaning (of the Buddha's teachings)" (DZ 3: 167).

Finally, Ling-jun returns to the question of whether or not there really are beings devoid of the Buddha-nature. He begins by addressing the distinction made by the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra*, an important Yogācāra treatise, between two kinds of beings devoid of the *nirvāṇa* dharma: (1) those who attain *parinirvāṇa* with time (時迦般涅槃法), and (2) those who are ultimately without the *nirvāṇa* dharma (畢竟無涅槃法). Ling-jun quotes,

The *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra*, Chapter on Lineages, states, "Those without the dharma of *parinirvāṇa* refer to (beings) of the rank of those who are devoid (of the Buddha-nature). This is of two kinds: (1) those who attain *parinirvāṇa* with time, and (2) those who are ultimately without the *nirvāṇa* dharma. There are four types of people among those who attain *parinirvāṇa* with time: (1) those who solely practice evil deeds, (2) those who have thoroughly eliminated wholesome dharmas, (3) those who lack

good roots leading to liberation, and (4) those who do not possess good roots. As for those ultimately without the *nirvāṇa* dharma, they are, by nature, unable (to attain) of *parinirvāṇa* because they do not possess the cause (for Buddhahood). That is to say, they only seek birth-and-death and do not desire *parinirvāṇa*. (DZ 3: 168; the original is found in T 31, 595a).

According to this passage, beings ultimately without the *nirvāṇa* dharma are eternally bound to the cycle of birth-and-death because they are devoid of virtue and lack all cause for attaining *nirvāṇa*. Clearly, this treatise argues for the existence of beings without the Buddha-nature, i. e., *icchantikas* incapable of reaching liberation. But, continues Ling-jun, according to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, even *icchantikas* totally deficient in virtue can, through the Buddha's power, arouse good roots and achieve Buddhahood. The same point is made in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* which states,

Ichchantikas who have cast aside all good roots will also at some time arouse good roots, thanks to the wisdom of the Tathāgata's supernatural powers. Why? Because the Tathāgatas do not forsake any being. (DZ 3: 170; the original is found in T 16, 487b-c)

Thus, even though the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra* contends that there exist beings who are "ultimately" lacking the *nirvāṇa* dharma, according to Ling-jun this does not mean that they are eternally unable to attain liberation from the cycle of transmigration. Even they can arouse good roots and finally achieve Buddhahood.

Response by Shen-t'ai

It was some time before the proponents of the Fa-hsiang school replied to Ling-jun's objections. The person who came to its defense was Shen-t'ai, one of Hsüan-tsang's noted disciples.

Unlike the case with Ling-jun, we have little information about Shen-t'ai. Neither his family background nor the year and place of his birth is known. It appears that he was a monk at the P'u-chiu ssu 普救寺 in P'u-chou 蒲州 in Shansi, in the same general vicinity as Ling-jun's birthplace.¹⁸⁾ In 645, he was called to Ch'ang-an to serve, along with Ling-jun and ten other monks, as veri-

fier in Hsüan-tsang's newly organized team of translators (T 50, 253c). In 657, when the Hsi-ming ssu 西明寺 was built in Ch'ang-an, Shen-t'ai was appointed its administrator or *ssu-chu* 寺主 (MOCHIZUKI 1931-63, 2: 1428). The following year, he was one of seven Buddhist monks summoned to participate in a debate with seven Taoist priests at the Ho-pi kung 合璧宮.¹⁹⁾ During his life, Shen-t'ai wrote a number of commentaries on Indian Buddhist treatises translated by Hsüan-tsang. Among them, the most famous is his twenty fascicle *Chü she lun shu* 俱舍論疏 (*Commentary on the Abhidharmakośa*). Along with P'u-kuang 普光 and Fa-pao, both of whom also wrote authoritative commentaries on this work, Shen-t'ai is counted as one of the three great scholars on the *Abhidharmakośa* (KAMATA 1987, 243). It is not known when he died.

Sometime during his life, Shen-t'ai wrote a treatise, whose title is now lost, in response to Ling-jun's attacks on the new Yogācāra position. Like Ling-jun's *Fourteen Gate Thesis*, only a portion of this work remains, also quoted in Saichō's *Hokke shūku* (DZ 3: 172-187). Presumably, this treatise originally presented Shen-t'ai response to all the fourteen objections which Ling-jun raised against the Fa-hsiang doctrines. However the *Hokke shūku* only quotes the section which presents Shen-t'ai's response to Ling-jun's arguments that all beings possess the Buddha-nature.

In the extant portion of this work, we find Shen-t'ai's reply to Ling-jun's objections presented above. Shen-t'ai begins with Ling-jun's first argument—that the position that some beings do not possess the Buddha-nature is an attachment to incomplete Hīnayāna teachings. Shen-t'ai argues here that, contrary to Ling-jun's statement, the teaching that certain beings are devoid of the Buddha-nature is found in a number of Mahāyāna texts. One such work is the

18) In the list of the twelve verifiers appointed in 645 to Hsüan-tsang's translation staff, Shen-t'ai is given as "*Śramaṇa* Shen-t'ai of P'u-chiu ssu of P'u-chou." See T 50, 253c. This statement shows that Shen-t'ai was a resident of the P'u-chiu ssu at least for some time before being summoned to Ch'ang-an to assist Hsüan-tsang. See MOCHIZUKI 1931-63, 3: 2076.

19) Details of this debate is found in Tao-hsüan's *Chi ku chin fo tao lun heng* 集古今仏道論衡 (*Collection of Balance of Arguments concerning the Buddha Path Old and New*). See T 52, 387c-8c.

Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālamkāra which, as we have seen above, affirms the existence of beings ultimately without the *nirvāṇa* dharma. Another example is the *P'u sa shan chiai ching* (菩薩善戒經) which states,

Although lineageless beings may arouse the aspiration for enlightenment, strive in their practice and are diligent, they ultimately cannot attain supreme enlightenment. (DZ 3: 181; the original passage is found in T 30, 962c).

In this passages, the *P'u sa shan chiai ching* maintains that lineageless beings can never attain the supreme enlightenment of the Buddha. In a later passage, the same text declares that lineageless beings are eternally barred from gaining release from the cycle of birth-and-death and for this reason are taught to seek, not *nirvāṇa*, but rebirth in the (relatively) pleasant realms of humans and heavenly beings (T 30, 900a).

Moreover Shen-t'ai further argues that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* itself contains passages attesting to the existence of beings without the Buddha-nature. In this connection, Shen-t'ai refers to the sūtra's famous parable of the three types of people with illnesses. According to this parable, the three types of people are: (1) those who would be cured, regardless of whether or not they encounter a skilled physician, (2) those who would be cured if they encounter a skilled physician, but would not if they don't, and (3) those who cannot be cured whether or not they encounter a skilled physician. The first refers to those beings of the bodhisattva lineage, the second to those belonging to the indeterminate lineage, and the third to those belonging to the lineages of the Two Vehicles (śravakas and pratyekabuddhas) and lineageless beings, i. e., beings without Buddha-natures (DZ 3: 175-6; the original parable is found in T 12, 518a [N]; T 12, 762a [S]).

In this way, Shen-t'ai seeks support within the Buddhist scriptures for his position that beings without the Buddha-nature actually exist. Moreover, he argues that people who insist that all beings have the Buddha-nature are guilty of slandering the Buddhist teachings. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* states,

Son of good family! If (someone) preaches that all beings definitely have the Buddha-nature, this person is called (someone who) slanders the Buddha, Dharma and saṅgha (the Buddhist order). If (someone) preaches that

all beings definitely do not have the Buddha-nature, this person is also called (someone who) slanders the Buddha, Dharma and saṅgha. (DZ 3: 175)²⁰ According to these lines, people who declare that all beings either do or do not have the Buddha-nature slander the Buddha, Dharma and saṅgha. On the basis of this passage, Shen-t'ai accuses Ling-jun of slandering the Buddhist teachings by maintaining that all beings definitely possess the Buddha-nature. As Shen-t'ai states,

Throughout the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, it is always preached (thus): "If one states that all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature, this person is called one who slanders the Buddha, Dharma and saṅgha." On the basis of this passage, it is already evident that you are an *icchāntika* who slanders the Dharma, and one of those people who have destroyed all good roots. (DZ 3: 173)

It may be recalled that previously Ling-jun, citing the words of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, disparaged the followers of Hsüan-tsang's new doctrines as deficient in faith. Here Shen-t'ai turns the table on Ling-jun and, quoting from the same sūtra which Ling-jun had quoted, accuses Ling-jun of being an *icchāntika* who slanders the Dharma.

Second, Shen-t'ai focuses on Ling-jun's argument that all beings, and not just a limited portion of beings, possess the Buddha-nature. Here too Shen-t'ai cites passages from the sūtras to demonstrate that there exist beings without the Buddha-nature. The key passage here is the following from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.

Son of good family! In this sūtra, I proclaim the one vehicle, one path, one practice and one condition to the *bhikṣus*. These one path, and so on up to one condition become the great quiescence for sentient beings. They eliminate all entanglements, anguish, suffering and the cause of suffering and makes beings reach the one existence. Upon hearing me preach thus, my

20) The original is slightly different. "If someone preaches and says that all beings definitely have the Buddha-nature or definitely do not have the Buddha-nature, this person is also called (someone who) slanders the Buddha, Dharma and saṅgha." See T 12, 580b [N]; T 12, 827c [S].

disciples do not understand the meaning of my (words). They proclaim that the Tathāgata preaches that *srotāpannas*, and so on up to arhats all attain Buddhahood. Son of good family! In this sūtra I preach that *srotāpannas* will return to (the realms of) humans and heavenly beings seven times and enter *nirvāṇa*. And so on up to, arhats are of two kinds: (1) those of the present and (2) those of the future. They eliminate the defilements of the five *skandhas* in the present and eliminate the defilements of the five *skandhas* in the future (respectively). Upon hearing me preach thus, my disciples do not understand the meaning of my (words). They proclaim that the Tathāgata preaches that *srotāpannas*, and so on up to arhats all do not attain Buddhahood. (DZ 3: 177; the original is found in T 12, 568cc [N]; T 12, 815b [S])

Here the sūtra states that practitioners who have attained the four fruits of the śrāvaka path, specifically *srotāpannas*, *sakṛdāgāmins*, *anāgāmins* and arhats, both attain Buddhahood and enter *nirvāṇa* without attaining Buddhahood. In interpreting this passage, Shen-t'ai states that, if all beings have the Buddha-nature and can attain Buddhahood, then the sūtra would not declare that beings from *srotāpannas* up to arhats do not attain Buddhahood. Since the sūtra states that these beings enter *nirvāṇa* without attaining Buddhahood, this proves that there are beings who lack the Buddha-nature among the practitioners of the śrāvaka path. To make sense of this passage, it must be interpreted as teaching that certain practitioners of the śrāvaka path belong by nature to the determinate śrāvaka lineage, while others belong to the indeterminate lineage. Whereas the latter group of śrāvakas possess the Buddha-nature and are capable of reaching Buddhahood, the former group lack the Buddha-nature and are destined to enter *nirvāṇa* without realizing Buddhahood. In this way, Shen-t'ai argues that this passage from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* reveals that certain beings are without the Buddha-nature.

Shen-t'ai's third point concerns Ling-jun's rejection of the view that there exists two kinds of Buddha-natures: the Buddha-nature as principle and practical Buddha-nature. Shen-t'ai begins by citing the following lines from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.

Son of good family! Although I preach that all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature, sentient beings can not comprehend these words which accord with the Buddha's own intentions (隨自意語). Son of good family! Not even bodhisattvas in their final stage can understand these words. How much less can the practitioners of the Two Vehicles and other bodhisattvas (understand them)! (DZ 3: 179; the original is found in T 12, 574b-c [N]; T 12, 821c [S])

According to this quotation, the statement that all beings have the Buddha-nature are "words which accord with the Buddha's own intentions," whose meaning is so profound that not even bodhisattvas of the highest achievements can understand it. But how can the seemingly straightforward statement that "all beings have the Buddha-nature" be incomprehensible? Clearly there must be another, less overt meaning hidden behind the manifest meaning of these words. In other words, concludes Shen-t'ai, it must be understood in the light of the new Yogācāra teachings transmitted to China by Hsüan-tsang. Only then can such ambiguous lines in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* be understood correctly.

Moreover, continues Shen-t'ai, to understand the Buddhist teaching concerning the Buddha-nature properly, it is necessary to realize that this term is defined in various ways. At times, Buddhist texts speak of the Buddha-nature as the principle of Tathatā immanent in all beings. As we have already seen, the *Buddha Nature Treatise* equates the Buddha-nature with the Tathatā revealed by the dual emptiness of persons and dharmas. This corresponds to the Buddha-nature as principle. The statement found throughout the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* that all beings have the Buddha-nature, refers to this type of Buddha-nature. At other times, the term Buddha-nature may refer to the actual cause (which, from the perspective of the Fa-hsiang school, refers to the innate undefiled seeds within the *ālayavijñāna*) leading to the realization of Buddhahood. This corresponds to the practical Buddha-nature. When Buddhist texts (such as the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra* and the *P'u sa shan chiai ching* cited above) speak of beings without Buddha-nature, they are referring to beings without this type of Buddha-nature.

Finally, some works equate the Buddha-nature with defilements (*kleśa*), since defilements frequently serve as the condition for seeking liberation and Buddhahood. A famous example is found in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, which states “Such things as dusts which wearies (the mind, *ch'en-lao* 塵勞²¹) are the seed of the Tathāgata” (T 14, 549b). Likewise, a verse in the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* states, “Defilements constitute the limbs of awakening” (T 31, 150c). In both of these cases, defilements are identified with the Buddha-nature.

In this way, Shen-t'ai points out that the Buddha-nature is defined in different ways in the scriptures. But, he continues, Ling-jun is firmly attached to the definition of the Buddha-nature as the universal principle of the Tathatā immanent in all beings, and refuse to accept all other definitions of the Buddha-nature. In Shen-t'ai's view, this is unacceptable dogmatism on Ling-jun's part and leads to deluded attachment to the position that all beings can become Buddhas. Such attachment blinds Ling-jun to passages in the scriptures which reveal the true Buddhist teachings — that not all beings necessarily possess the Buddha-nature enabling them to realize Buddhahood (*DZ* 3: 180-2).

Lastly, Shen-t'ai takes up Ling-jun's argument that, contrary to the words of the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra*, all beings can attain Buddhahood because even *icchantikas* can arouse good roots as a result of the Buddha's marvelous powers. To this argument, Shen-t'ai retorts that *icchantikas* who can arouse good roots upon encountering the Buddha are not truly lineageless beings. They are actually beings of the bodhisattva lineage who have come to harbor mistaken views after meeting evil companions. In Shen-t'ai's view, those who truly belong to the *gotra* of lineageless beings can never arouse good roots and be made to seek Buddhahood, no matter what (*DZ* 3: 184).

Rebuttal by I-yung

The final work in this polemical exchange was written by I-yung. Virtually nothing is known about this monk²². At some unknown date, I-yung wrote a leng-

21) This term is synonymous with defilements. It refers to the “dusts” (= defilements) which cling to the mind and wearies beings by making them undergo the endless cycle of birth-and-death. See NAKAMURA 1975, 1:800.

thy line-by-line critique of Shen-t'ai's treatise. Although this work is now lost, it survives in partial form, again quoted in Saichō's *Hokke shūku* (DZ 3: 187-240). As in the earlier works by Ling-jun and Shen-t'ai, Saichō quotes only the section pertaining to the question of whether or not all beings possess the Buddha-nature. Compared with those of Ling-jun and Shen-t'ai, I-yung's arguments are much more complex and detailed, showing that the arguments between the two camps had become increasingly sophisticated with time. Lack of space makes it impossible to discuss I-yung's arguments in full below. Instead, we will only summarize his main points.

First, I-yung defends Ling-jun's argument that the Yogācāra teaching concerning how certain beings lack the potential to attain Buddhahood is an inferior Hīnayāna teaching, and does not deserve to be included among the Mahāyāna. As proof, I-yung quotes from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, which declares that the doctrine that all beings possess the Buddha-nature is not taught in the nine kinds of scriptures which comprises the Hīnayāna canon (*chiu pu ching* 九部經)²³ but appears only in the Mahāyāna sūtras (DZ 3: 190)²⁴. This, claims I-yung, demonstrates that the Yogācāra doctrine belongs to the inferior Hīnayāna teachings, and is not worthy of being included within the superior Mahāyāna teachings.

22) It has been suggested that he may have been from the Korean kingdom of Silla. In the *Shugo kokkaishō* 守護国界章, Saichō speaks of a pair of monks whom he refers to as "Hsiao 暁 and Yung ("Gyō" and "Ei" in Japanese) of Silla. "The former undoubtedly refers to the great exegete Wōnhyo 元曉. Tokiwa Daijō has tentatively identified the latter with I-yung, and on the basis of this conjecture, set forth the hypothesis that I-yung was from Silla. See TOKIWA 1977, 234.

23) The nine kinds of scriptures are (1) sūtra or the teachings of the Buddha in prose, (2) *gāthā* or the Buddha's words preached in verse, (3) *itivṛttaka* or stories of the former lives of the Buddha's disciples, (4) *jātaka* or stories of the Buddha's former lives, (5) *adbhūta* or stories of the Buddha's miracles, (6) *nidāna* or stories explaining why certain people now encounter the Buddha's teachings, (7) *aupamya* or parables, (8) *geya* or verses in which the Buddha repeats what he had already preached in prose, and (9) *upadeśa* or discussions of doctrine. See HURVITZ 1960-62, 337-8.

24) The sūtra states, "Kāśyapa Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, saying, '(The doctrine that) all beings have the Buddha-nature such as you have preached above, has yet to appear within the nine kinds of scriptures.'" T 12, 405a [N]; T 12, 646a [S].

Next I-yung considers the passages Shen-t'ai quotes from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* to show that this sūtra recognizes the existence of *icchantikas* who can never escape from the cycle of transmigration. Although I-yung admits that these passages are indeed found in the sūtra, he argues that they do not necessarily prove that *icchantikas* never attain Buddhahood. A good example is the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*'s three types of people with illnesses quoted by Shen-t'ai above. Although the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* likens *icchantikas* to patients who can never recover whether or not they encounter a skilled physician, it does not mean that they are bound to the cycle of transmigration forever. They too have the Buddha-nature and will eventually attain Buddhahood in the future (DZ 3: 198).

Finally, I-yung takes up the distinction which the Fa-hsiang sect makes between the Buddha-nature as principle and practical Buddha-nature. Here again, he admits that (just as Shen-t'ai states) the Buddha-nature is defined in various ways in the scriptures. However, this does not prove that there are different types of Buddha-natures. In particular, he finds the concept of the practical Buddha-nature problematic. This concept, he argues, is found neither in the writings of Indian sages nor in the works of Chinese Buddhist masters.²⁵ The distinction between the two kinds of Buddha-natures that Shen-t'ai upholds is without basis in the Buddhist canon. Thus, he concludes, it cannot be accepted as a valid Buddhist doctrine (DZ 3: 212).

Conclusion

This particular exchange over the question of universal Buddha-nature initiated by Ling-jun after Hsüan-tsang's return to China finally came to a close with I-yung's rebuttal to Shen-t'ai. However, the virulent arguments between the two opposing camps continued unabated. As mentioned above, another fierce debate soon developed between Fa-pao and Hui-chao. In his *I ch'eng fu hsing chiu ching lun* 一乘仏性究竟論 (*Ultimate Treatise on the One Vehicle and the*

25) This, however, is not true. As noted above, it originally appeared in the writings of Hui-yüan.

Buddha-nature Doctrines), Fa-pao presented an extremely detailed criticism of the doctrine of the Five Lineages. In reply, Hui-chao composed the *Neng hsien chung pien hui jih lun* 能顯中辺慧日論 (*Treatise of the Sun of Wisdom Revealing the Middle and the Extreme*), where he gave a point-by-point refutation of Fa-pao's arguments. This exchange between Fa-pao and Hui-chao marks the high point of the universal Buddha-nature/Five Lineages debate in China. But soon afterwards, aided in large part by the rise of Hua-yen sect, the theory of the Five Lineages came to be considered a provisional teaching lacking ultimate validity. Thus the position that all beings can attain Buddhahood (because they identically possess the Buddha-nature) triumphed in China.

However, the debate continued in Japan, where the Hossō (Japanese for Fa-hsiang) sect remained an important force within the Buddhist establishment long after its power had declined in China. In the early years of the Heian period, this became a topic of a lengthy and emotional debate between Saichō, who founded the Japanese Tendai sect, and Tokuitsu 徳一, a Hossō scholar. But in Japan too, the doctrine of all beings have the Buddha-nature eventually won out, and became one of the most important soteriological presuppositions of the new Buddhist sects of the Kamakura period.

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唐代における仏性についての論議

——靈潤，神泰，義栄について——

(要 旨)

ロバート・F・ローズ

玄奘三蔵は、十七年にわたるインドへの旅を終えて、645年に中国へもどるとすぐに、旅行中に収集した膨大な仏典の翻訳にとりかかった。玄奘の翻訳した經典は、その後の中国仏教の發展に大きな影響を及ぼすことになったが、彼が新たに伝えた五姓各別説も、当時の中国仏教界に大きな衝撃を与えた。この五姓各別説は、衆生をその先天的性質により、五種類に分けるものである。ここでいう五姓とは、

- (1) 菩薩定姓
- (2) 縁覚定姓
- (3) 声聞定姓
- (4) 不定種姓
- (5) 無性有情

であり、その中、菩薩定姓のものと、不定種姓のなかの一部の衆生のみが仏の正覚を獲得することが可能であるとされている。従来、中国の仏教者は、涅槃經の「一切衆生悉有仏性」などの言葉に基づき、すべての衆生が仏果に到ることができると考えていた。そこで玄奘が五姓各別説を伝えた直後から、この新しい学説の是非についての激しい論争が沸き起った。

玄奘がもたらした五姓各別説を最初に攻撃したのは、摂論宗の伝統を引く靈潤であった。後に玄奘の弟子の神泰は靈潤の非難に答え、玄奘の伝えた新学説を護持した。しかし神泰の論説も後には義栄によって論破された。このように、この三人の学僧の間で、五姓各別説の是非について激しい論争が繰り返されたのであるが、残念なことに、今日彼らのこの論争に関する著作は完全な形で保存されてはいない。しかし彼らの仏性についての論争は、幸にも日本天台宗の開祖である最澄の法華秀句の中に引用されている。そこで本論では法華秀句の中の引用文を中心に、靈潤・神泰・義栄の仏性についての論議を考察した。

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