

A Characteristic of Chih-Yen (智儼)'s Nature-Origionaton (性起) Theory

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Nature-origination theory holds a very important position in the Hua-yen (華嚴) doctrinal system. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the nature-origination theory of Chih-yen, the second master of the Hua-yen school.

Though the nature-origination theory of Chih-yen has been studied by many scholars, it is possible to clarify its distinctive character by looking at it from a different perspective.

The first point which needs to be emphasized is that Chih-yen understands nature-origination (性起) in the relation between the original-being (本有) and the originated-by-practice (修生). He states that original-being corresponds to 'nature' (性), and the originated-by-practice to 'origination' (起). This pairing is found in such works as the *Fa-hua-hsüan-i* (『法華玄義』) by the T'ien-t'ai (天台) master Chih-i (智顛). But Chih-yen substantially clarified the meaning of the nature-origination by adding to it the concepts of 'the original-being as the originated-by-practice' (修生本有) and 'the originated-by-practice as the original-being' (本有修生).

Chih-yen further maintains that, in addition to the realization-by-practice (修成) which is the causality realized by perfuming practice

through hearing *dharma* (聞薰習), there is also, another aspect to nature-origination—that of the manifestation-through-practice (修顯) which is the causality of the nature itself. Thus, one of the distinctiveness of Chih-yen's interpretation of nature-origination lies in the fact that he sees the function of the nature from the viewpoint of the original-being.

The nature-origination theory which appears in Chih-yen's early work the *Sou-hsüan-chi* (『搜玄記』), holds that the origination (起) of the nature-origination (性起) is present in the mind-ground (心地). The mind-ground here is probably based on that found in the *Shih-ching-lun* (『十地經論』). This latter work says that there is the nature (性) in the mind-ground, but not the origination (起), because the mind-ground, though it includes the delusory mind (虛妄心), has an aspect transcending delusion (虛妄). It is worth noting that the *Shih-ching-lun's* words are the result of considering the origination (起) of non-origination (不起) from the viewpoint of *dharma* (法).

The nature-origination theory does not hold a central place in Chih-yen's later doctrinal system, such as that found in the *K'ung-mu-chang* (『孔目章』), etc. But it is noteworthy that Chih-yen considers the nature-origination to manifest the *dharma*-realm (法界) of the Ekayāna (一乘). It is especially important that he considers the nature-origination as the edge (際) of the dependent-origination (緣起).

Does the edge of the dependent-origination refer to what transcends the dependent-origination, or does it refer to what is identical to it? Though I could not find any passage which collaborates my interpretation

it is possible that Chih-yen understood nature-origination to represent the highest point of dependent-origination of *dharmā*-realm (法界緣起). However, since his description is very brief, it is impossible to say for sure that it represents the final point of his doctrinal system.

Still, Chih-yen's standpoint is that the nature-origination is the "origination of non-origination" and "non-origination which is identical to origination". It also means that which transcends dependent-origination while being identical to dependent-origination and that which originates dependently while transcending dependent-origination.

Though the full systematization and thorough explication of the concept of nature-origination had to await further developments, he does grasp the Ekayānistic or Mahāyānistic implications of the nature-origination theory. Since this is a point most difficult to grasp clearly, we must say that his limitation is unavoidable.