

Emptiness and Liberation in the Pure Land: A Reconsideration of the Views of Asaṅga and Wonhyo

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Aim and Scope of This Article

IN ABOUT THE FOURTH CENTURY CE, the Buddhist scholar Asaṅga (c. 315–390) provided a rational, scholastic, and theoretical basis for the doctrines of the Pure Land sutras. Before Asaṅga, Mahayana sutras had propounded the perspective of rebirth in one of several pure Buddha lands, most notably Sukhāvātī, showing only rudimentary attempts at a systematization of these doctrines. This article contains an outline of Asaṅga’s systematics and their later reception by the Korean scholar Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686 CE).¹ In addition, some glimpses of Sukhāvātī doctrines in contemporary Mahayana Buddhism will be provided, referring firstly to the views of Nakamura Hajime, and further below to those of Thích Nhất Hạnh and Dennis Hirota.

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¹ The term “systematics” and its derivatives are used in this article in the sense of theoretical organization and philosophical advancement of religious ideas. See also Keenan 1987, p. 29.

In order to assess the premodern Pure Land thought of Asaṅga and Wonhyo, exemplary passages from their writings are presented and evaluated, along with some of the comments by Vasubandhu (c. 330–410) on Asaṅga's views. The analysis will focus on the question of how these writers align the ontology and soteriology of the Pure Lands with their understanding of Mahayana systematics in general.

Methodological Considerations

Ever since its first English publication in 1980, Nakamura Hajime's *Indian Buddhism* has remained a standard companion to the study of Buddhism in its homeland. Nakamura relates the history of Buddhism in ancient India, organized into dense and concise sections, and provides solid bibliographical references for further research. An updated version of this standard work has not yet been produced, and thus the original edition of 1980 remains among the indispensable sources for research in this field. Though mostly concerned with a factual view on ancient history, Nakamura exceptionally discusses developments in research history, thus providing a minimal amount of "discourse analysis," as we might call it nowadays. Notably, in his section on Pure Land texts and traditions, Nakamura, in his usual conciseness, includes some remarks that surpass mere fact-finding about ancient cultural history: "Now time has elapsed. How should contemporary Pure Land Buddhists interpret [the] Pure Land? Why is it that Pure Land Buddhism is not welcomed in the West?"² Nakamura does not answer this question directly. Rather, he concludes his section on Sukhāvātī texts by saying:

However, more intellectual and sophisticated Pure Land Buddhism in later days in various countries could not be satisfied with the figure of Amitābha related hyperbolically in scriptures. What is Amitābha? Is he a person, or a principle? Some of them adopted the interpretation that his essential body is *dharmā*, the universal law. The idea of the Pure Land also had various unclear points, and it caused a controversy in later days whether [the] Pure Land is a Reward Land or a Transformation Land.³

Quite surely, Nakamura's question of why Pure Land Buddhism did not receive a warm reception in the West is not intended to be merely a "disinterested search for truth"⁴ about the history of Buddhist culture. It is at

² Nakamura 1980, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 208–9. On this debate, see also Tanaka 1990, pp. 105–6.

⁴ Russell 1945, p. 835.

the same time a question about the future of Buddhism, with far-reaching implications for the future of Buddhist studies as an academic field. This question of persisting relevance has motivated the production of this article and delineated its aim and scope, under the presupposition that an accurate understanding of the past provides the most solid foundation for decisions in the present with consequences in the future.⁵ As is common in other fields of science, I conduct basic research here in the hope that it may help to develop practical solutions. The present study is “disinterested” only insofar as an attempt is made to assess the historical facts as objectively as possible and thereby shed more light on disputed topics, while keeping in mind that studies in the history of thought have in recent decades been criticized for a lack of objectivity and self-reflection.⁶ Awareness of the motivation underlying any kind of academic writing does indeed help in minimizing bias, but be that as it may, this article is primarily written with the pragmatic aim of gaining reliable information about premodern and modern Pure Land thought.

Some further words on methodology are necessary with regard to another point that has been the subject of recent debates: when studying the Pure Land traditions, we recognize a considerable gap in education and ambition between those who devised the pertinent texts and religious practices, on the one hand, and a significant proportion of the followers for whom these were meant, on the other. In recent decades, it has rightly been questioned whether it is legitimate to study the writings of the erudite few while neglecting the culture of the common people, the vast majority. In fact, I admire many of the rather anthropological studies of Buddhism for their clarity and profundity,⁷ and their scheme seems to me just as valid as the

⁵ These considerations apply to premodern Pure Land thought as a whole. More specifically, Indian Pure Land thought has been outlined in the framework of a recent publication on Tibetan Pure Land culture (Halkias 2013). A thorough evaluation of Halkias’s publication made a swift reassessment of the respective sources seem sensible. Nonetheless, although I will consistently refer to the pertinent pages of his work, it seemed more beneficial to present new translations and interpretations rather than discuss Halkias’s views and methodology. For a critical review, see Jones 2014, p. 2.

⁶ The academic discourse about objectivism and subjectivism in research methodology, which had its peak in the late 1980s, has been summarized and evaluated by Sokal and Bricmont (1999, p. 16). I agree with the authors’ assessment and, unable to go into detail here, warmly recommend their article to the interested reader.

⁷ See, for example, Mumford’s (1989) reflections on the cultural exchanges between Gurung shamanist funeral rites and Tibetan Buddhist rites in two neighboring Himalayan villages or Hodous’s (1924) records of conversations about Buddhism during his 1901–1917 stay in China.

philological approach followed in this article.⁸ Still, when studying ancient culture, we must acknowledge that globally, most regions have shifted from more than ninety percent illiteracy in premodern times to more than ninety percent literacy today;⁹ the former majority has now become the minority, at least in the countries to which Pure Land Buddhism has spread. This development is one of several reasons that commend pursuing both anthropology and philology on an equal footing.

The gap between authors and followers seems to play a role, for example, in the disputed question of whether Pure Land practices aim at rebirth in the Pure Land as the final goal, or whether rebirth in the Pure Land is just a means to achieving nirvana, which in some passages is specified as full Buddhahood, the non-abiding (Skt. *apraṭiṣṭhita*) nirvana.¹⁰ While the sources analyzed in this article clearly affirm the latter, the philologist has to be aware that there were (and are) followers aiming at the former, often less for themselves but rather for their parents and ancestors.¹¹ Keeping this in mind, the current article will follow Nakamura's suggestion and trace some of the more "intellectual and sophisticated" theories on the existence of the Pure Land and its place on the Buddhist path.¹²

Ontology: Mind, Matter, and Emptiness in the Pure Lands

In the passage quoted above, Nakamura mentions several philosophical issues of actuality, two of which seem most essential: firstly, whether the Buddha Amitābha is, in Nakamura's phrasing, a "principle," and secondly "whether his essential body is *dharma*, the universal law." If both questions were to be answered in the positive, then what would this principle, this universal law, comprise concretely? In other words, what principle could the Buddha Amitābha symbolize? The possible interpretations are probably innumerable: compassion, wisdom, benevolent guidance, care for the deceased of previous generations, and other principles are available to the exegete. Here, I would like to focus on what is likely the most central principle in

⁸ See also Kapstein's (2014, p. 3) balanced view on this issue.

⁹ Suzuki (1997, pp. 72, 74), for example, records a poem in praise of the *nenbutsu* 念仏 composed in the first half of the twentieth century, saying, "As I am illiterate, I dictate it, and my son writes it down."

¹⁰ On nirvana in *Sukhāvātī*, see, for example, Harvey 2013, pp. 165, 216. Buswell and Lopez (2013, s.v. *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*) rather taciturnly state that "all of the beings born there will achieve enlightenment in their next lifetime."

¹¹ See also Bayer 2013, pp. 77–81.

¹² Several fundamental methodological issues cannot be addressed here; again, I can only recommend the abovementioned treatment by Sokal and Bricmont (1999, esp. p. 2).

Mahayana Buddhist thought, the “highest meaning” (Skt. *paramārtha*), which is, essentially, emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*) and its complete understanding. In other words, it is indeed the *dharmakāya*. Already one of the oldest Mahayana texts, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, contains a wealth of passages that describe the Pure Lands as empty or illusory, just like our ordinary world is ultimately, but only ultimately, empty:¹³

The [Tathāgatas] purify the Buddha fields,
Perceiving of the activities of beings
Just as the field of space,
Not having the conception of beings as beings.¹⁴

In terms of the body of a Buddha, the same text teaches:

Venerable Ānanda, the Tathāgatas have the *dharmakāya* [as their body], not the body of the flesh (*āmiśa*). The Tathāgatas have the supramundane body because they have completely transcended (*samatikrāntāḥ*) all mundane *dharmas*. . . . The body of the Buddha is not composed¹⁵ and [it has] passed beyond all verbal designations.¹⁶

¹³ Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*_s (ch. 7, par. 7, verse 15): *buddhakṣetrāṇi śodhenti sa[t]tvānāṃ caritaṃ yathā / ākāśakṣetrānuprāptā na sa[t]tve sa[t]tvasaṃjñīnaḥ //*. Cf. the translation of T no. 475, 14: 550a1–2 by McRae (2004, p. 154): “Although he understands that the buddha lands / And sentient beings are empty / He always practices purifying his land / Teaching the hosts of beings.”

¹⁵ My rendering “composed” adheres closely to the etymology of *saṃskṛta* in the sense of “making, producing” (*kr*) by means of putting “together” (*saṃ*; to the same effect, Tib. *’dus byas*). This does not necessarily imply that the object thus “composed” consists of a combination of several material or spiritual substances. Especially in Buddhist usage, a *saṃskṛta* phenomenon can be “conditioned” in a merely abstract way, too, namely conditioned by causes that are no longer present in the phenomenon. When understood in that way, the prefix *saṃ* no longer adds the more palpable connotation of “together” to the word, but rather the well-attested, more abstract, and surely secondary, connotation of “finished, complete.” The Chinese equivalent *youwei* 有爲 (Yokoyama and Hirokawa 1996, s.v.), for example, does not express any combinative connotation.

¹⁶ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*_s (ch. 3, par. 45): *api tu bhadantānanda dharmakāyās tathāgatā nāmiśakāyāḥ / lokottarakāyās tathāgatāḥ sarvalokadharmasamatikrāntāḥ / [. . .] asaṃskṛtas tathāgatasya kāyāḥ sarvasaṃkhyāvīgataḥ*. Although the situation seems to be quite complex (see *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*_s, p. xiii), the translators into Tibetan appear to have misread *sarvasaṃkhyāvīgataḥ* as *sarvasaṃskāravīgataḥ* (see *ibid.*, n. 2). Hence Thurman 1976, p. 33: “The body of a Tathāgata is uncompounded and free of all formative activity.” Cf. translation of T no. 475, 14: 542a by McRae (2004, p. 107).

In fact, it is not only “emptiness” that the Buddha realizes, but more specifically, the absence of duality:

The Buddhas, the Bhagavats, are those who have, in the world, the divine eye. They do not abandon the place of meditative concentration; they see all Buddha fields, and with them, duality does not unfold (/they are not overpowered by [the concept of] “two”).¹⁷

There is always a danger of confusing “emptiness” with mere nothingness or mere absence, missing out on the more subtle, correct understanding of emptiness:

“Matter” and “what is empty” [form] a duality. Indeed, matter is exactly emptiness. It is not that emptiness [arises] from the annihilation of matter: The very nature of matter is emptiness. In the same way, feeling, apperception,¹⁸ impulses, and perception [on the one hand, and] what is empty [on the other hand, appear mistakenly as] a duality. Indeed, perception is exactly emptiness.¹⁹ It is not that emptiness [arises] from the annihilation of perception. The very nature of perception is emptiness. Here, an appropriate understanding, with wisdom (*jñāna*), with regards to five appropriated *skandhas*,²⁰ that is entry into nonduality.²¹

The wording of this passage undoubtedly sounds familiar since it closely resembles the most prominent lines of the *prajñāpāramitā* sutras. Still, it

¹⁷ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, (ch. 3, par. 31): *buddhā bhagavanto loke divyacakṣuṣo ye samāhitāvasthām ca na vijahati sarvabuddhakṣetrāṇi ca paśyanti / na ca dvayaprabhāvitāḥ /*. Cf. translation of T no. 475, 14: 541b by McRae (2004, p. 103).

¹⁸ On the equivalent “apperception” for *saṃjñā*, see Bayer 2010, pp. 314–20, n. 41. Cf. Schmithausen 2014, pp. 11–12, n. 3.

¹⁹ Only the first of the *skandhas*, matter, and the last one, perception, are designated as being exactly emptiness, with the other three being treated slightly differently in the middle. This is clearly just a way of avoiding repetition, so that what is said here applies to all five *skandhas* equally. As an example for the abbreviation of lists in the *Heart Sutra*, see Nattier 1992, pp. 162–63.

²⁰ Literally, “the one who understands accordingly (*anubodha*) with regard to the five appropriation-*skandhas*.”

²¹ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, (ch. 8, par. 17): *rūpaṃ śūnyam iti dvayam etat / rūpaṃ eva hi śūnyatā / na rūpavināśāc chūnyatā / rūpaprakṛtir eva śūnyatā / evaṃ vedanā saṃjñā saṃskārā vijñānaṃ śūnyam iti dvayam etat / vijñānam eva hi śūnyatā / na vijñānavināśāc chūnyatā / vijñānaprakṛtir eva śūnyatā / yo 'ra pañcasūpādānaskandheṣv evaṃ jñānānubodho 'yam advayapraveśaḥ /*. Cf. translation of T no. 475, 14: 551a (ch. 9) by McRae (2004, p. 161).

seems that the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* places more emphasis on the principle of nonduality, lest emptiness be misunderstood as nothingness. Rather than an absolute “real” void underlying illusory manifestations, the absolute is a *mode* of existence, in fact beyond existence and nonexistence as they are conventionally understood. This state is difficult to realize, even more difficult to express in words, and thus in the end of the chapter on nonduality, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* contains a famed passage in which Vimalakīrti, when asked about nonduality, responds with silence. A series of statements on nonduality, spoken by various bodhisattvas, lead up to this famous moment of silence. The final one, spoken by the bodhisattva who “Delights in Truth” (Satyanandin), reads:

Truth and deception [form] a duality. The one who sees the truth does exactly not consider the truth, so whence will he see any deception? For what reason [is that so]? Indeed, he does not see with the eye made of flesh (*māṃsa*): he sees with the eye of insight (*prajñā*). Thus, as he sees, he neither sees, nor does he see beyond, and that where there is neither seeing and nor seeing beyond (*vipaśyanā*), that is entry into nonduality.²²

In the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the emptiness of the Pure Lands is thus asserted again and again, and it is explained again and again that emptiness refers to their mode of being, beyond any duality of existence and nonexistence.

²² *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, (ch. 8, par. 31): *satyaṃ mṛṣeti dvayam etat / satyadarśī satyam eva na samanupaśyati / kuto mṛṣā draṅśyati / tat kasmād dhetoḥ / na hi sa māṃsacakṣuṣā paśyati / prajñācakṣuṣā paśyati / tathā ca paśyati / yathā na paśyati na vipaśyati / yatra ca na paśyanā na vipaśyanāyam advayapraveśaḥ*. According to the editors of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, (p. 89, n. 2), the underlined phrase reads *tathā ca paśyati / na viparyasyati* in the MS, against the Tibetan translation *ji ltar mi mthong na rnam par mi mthong* (hence Thurman 1976, p. 77: “one sees only insofar as there is neither sight nor nonsight”). In accordance with the Tibetan version, the editors emend to *tathā ca paśyati, yathā na paśyati na vipaśyati*. This basically conforms to the Chinese version (T no. 475, 14: 551c13–15), which reads: 非肉眼所見慧眼乃能見而此慧眼無見無不見是為入不二法門 (McRae 2004, p. 164: “That which the physical eye cannot see can be seen by the wisdom eye, but this wisdom eye is without seeing and without not-seeing. This is to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality”). The mistake was possibly caused by the peculiar usage of *vipaśyati* and *vipaśyanā*, which should normally be rather positive and in accordance with *prajñā*. Therefore, “he sees and is not in error” (*tathā ca paśyati / na viparyasyati*) seems to be a more commonsensical choice. In fact, it is not so clear whether *vipaśyati* is here intended as the simple opposite/negation of *paśyati*, or whether it alludes to the more contemplative modes of seeing in *vipaśyanā* meditation. Possibly, a wordplay with the double meaning of *vi-* (expand, dissolve) is implied here.

This applies equally to both the Pure Lands and the body of the Buddhas. The same idea is expressed in the *Vajracchedikā*, in a passage that reads:

The Bhagavat spoke: Subhūti, if any bodhisattva said, “I will bring about arrays (*vyūhāḥ*) of [pure] fields,” he would speak wrong. Why is that so? [What people call] “the arrays of fields, the arrays of fields”: these are taught by the Tathāgata to be non-arrays (*avyūhāḥ*).²³

While emptiness and nonduality appear as commonplace principles throughout the literature of Madhyamaka and classical Yogācāra,²⁴ we find more specific Yogācāra doctrines in Asaṅga’s commentary to the *Vajracchedikā*:²⁵

Because they are the outcome (*niṣyanda*)²⁶ of wisdom (*jñāna*),
Because they are mere cognition (*vijñaptimātrata*),
He does not discern (*udgraha*)²⁷ the [Buddha] fields.
Because they have no shape and because they are supreme,
They are thought to be, by nature, non-array as well as array.²⁸

²³ *Vajracchedikā*, section 10b (my translation); Sanskrit according to Conze 1957, p. 35: *bhagavān āha / yaḥ kaścit subhūte bodhisattva evaṃ vaded / ahaṃ kṣetra-vyūhān niṣpādaiṣyamīti / sa vitathaṃ vadet / tat kasya hetoḥ / kṣetra-vyūhāḥ kṣetra-vyūhā iti subhūte ’vyūhās te tathāgatena bhāṣitāḥ*. Cf. Halkias (2013, pp. 10–11 and p. 220, n. 20).

²⁴ In my usage, “classical Yogācāra” refers to those segments of the Yogācāra tradition adhering to the doctrines of *ālayavijñāna*, the three natures (*trisvabhāva*), and the view of subject and object as mind only (*cittamātra*). See Bayer 2010, p. 28, n. 67.

²⁵ On this text, see, for example, Nakamura 1980, p. 256. Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 12, and p. 249, n. 149.

²⁶ “Outcome” (*niṣyanda*) here carries the connotation of an outcome that shares important characteristics of its cause (Tucci 1956, p. 63: Ch. version 1, *xi* 習, version 2, *liu* 流; Tib. *rgyu mthun*). See also Bayer 2010, p. 343, n. 131. Keenan’s (1989, p. 38) translation, “nothing but constructions flowing from wisdom,” accurately renders the metaphorical implication of */syand*, “flow.”

²⁷ “Discerning” (*ud-/grah*) usually refers to grasping (*/grah*) the specific characteristics of an item out of (*ud-*) mere sense data, which is a function of the *skandha* of apperception (*saṃjñā*). See Bayer 2010, p. 315, n. 41.

²⁸ My translation. Tucci 1956, p. 63, verse 20: *jñānaniṣyandavijñaptimātratvāt kṣetranodgrahaḥ / avigrahatvād agratvād avyūhavyūhatā matā*. Tucci proposes an emendation to *avyūha[m] vyūhatā*. While an *anusvāra* can easily vanish on a manuscript, the compound *avyūhavyūhatā* goes along well with the Tibetan and Chinese versions. This reading would even support Tucci’s translation “the arrangement (*vyūha*) of these fields is said to be essentially a non-arrangement (*avyūha*)” (p. 103). Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 12.

Cause and effect described in this reasoning appear to be similar to the process described in the *Triṃśikā* (hereafter, *Thirty Verses*): first, the nature of phenomena is discerned as mere cognition, a realization which then leads to the realization of their ultimate nonduality. Unlike the worldly phenomena mentioned in the *Thirty Verses*, phenomena in the Pure Lands are created by a Buddha's wisdom. Asaṅga further describes various attributes of a Pure Land in his **Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (hereafter, MSg), for example in the following passage:

It has arisen from supreme, supramundane wholesome roots [ch.
10, section 30a.5],
It has the characteristics of a sovereign cognition that is eminently
pure [30a.6],
It is the abode of the Tathāgata [30a.7].²⁹

Further below, Asaṅga explains these three attributes in more abstract terms:

It [has] an exalted cause [30b.5],
It [is] an exalted result [30b.6],
It [has] an exalted master [30b.7].³⁰

The explanations of “exalted cause, result, and master” strongly resemble specific Abhidharma explanations on karmic causation, namely the teachings on the “sovereign result” (Skt. *adhipati-phala*), a kind of *karman* which determines environmental conditions such as the quality of soil or rainfall. The term for “master” used in the MSg original was probably Sanskrit *adhipati*, since the respective terms in Tibetan (*bdag po*) and Chinese (*zhu* 主) are known as equivalents for *adhipati* (or otherwise *svāmin*).³¹ I will say more on the “sovereign result” below when discussing Wonhyo's

²⁹ Numbering of the sections according to Nagao 1987, pp. 119–20 (left-to-right pagination). Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 94: 5. 'jig rten las 'das pa de'i bla ma'i dge ba'i rtsa ba las byung ba / 6. dbang sgyur ba'i rnam par rig pa shin tu rnam par dag pa'i mtshan nyid / 7. de bzhin gshegs pa'i gnas (see also Griffiths et al. 1989, pp. 354–55). T no. 1594, 31: 151a15: 5. 勝出世間善根所起, 6. 最極自在淨識為相, 7. 如來所都. Note that the expression *du* 都 means “capital,” at least as a connotation: another indication that a Buddha presides over his Pure Land similar to a king presiding over his kingdom.

³⁰ D4048 (fol. ri 41b3), P5549 (fol. li 48b6): 5. rgyu phun sum tshogs pa dang / (D: rgyu phun sum tshogs pa dang /; P: omitted) 6. 'bras bu phun sum tshogs pa dang / 7. bdag po phun sum tshogs pa (see also Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 94; Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 359). T no. 1594, 31: 151a26: 因圓滿。果圓滿。主圓滿。

³¹ Equivalents for *adhipatiphala* are *bdag po'i 'bras bu* in Tibetan, and *zeng shan guo* 增上果 in the standard terminology of Xuanzang 玄奘 (c. 602–664).

phrasing. As for the above MSg passage, the aspect of “result” (30b.6.) is further deepened in the commentary by Asvabhāva (c. 450–530):

“It has the characteristics of a sovereign cognition that is eminently pure.” This means that [its]³² characteristics are that of an eminently pure sovereign cognition,³³ because it is cognition only (**vijñaptimātra*). There are no [wonderful attributes of the Pure Land such as] jewels and so on, apart from cognition. Rather, cognition itself, because it is completely pure, appears as those [jewels and so on]. This explains [the phrase] “it is an excellent result.”³⁴

Just like any other world system, including our own, a Pure Land might appear as external to the mind, but in fact it is mere cognition, mental production, while its true nature lies beyond the polarity of existence or non-existence. Asaṅga explains this ultimate ontology, for example, in the tenth chapter of the MSg, a chapter dedicated to the elucidation of wisdom (Tib. *ye shes*; Skt. **jñāna*) as being identical with the three bodies of a Buddha.³⁵ Concerning the nonduality of the *dharmakāya*, Asaṅga states:

³² Cp. Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 213: “means that Buddha land is characterized by.” In fact, an equivalent to “*wei fo jing tu*” 謂佛淨土 is missing in the English rendering of the Chinese version, and it seems to have been wrongly included in the translation of the Tibetan version. Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 12.

³³ Cp. Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 213: “masterful and well-purified conscious construction.” Although the Pure Lands can of course be described as “masterful,” the translation of *dbang sgyur ba'i rnam par rig pa* (Xuanzang: *zi zai [jing] shi* 自在[淨]識) as “masterful,” in the sense of “skillful,” “virtuoso,” is quite clearly a euphemism. The Buddha undoubtedly exerts (**vartin*) control (**vaśa*) over the Pure Land. See, for example, Inagaki 1978, s.v. *dbang sgyur nyid*: “State of a Vaśavartin god, *vaśavartiva*” (Ch. *ta hua zi zai tian wang* 他化自在天王). The Buddha Amitābha was clearly seen as the ruler of his Pure Land, to some extent the empyrean equivalent to a worldly king.

³⁴ D4050 (fol. *ri* 290b7–291a1), P5551 (fol. *li* 350b4–5): *dbang sgyur ba'i rnam par rig pa shin tu rnam par dag pa'i mtshan nyid ces bya ba ni de dbang sgyur ba'i rnam par rig pa shin tu rnam par dag pa gang yin pa de'i mtshan yid yin te / de rnam par rig pa tsam gyi phyir ro // de na rnam par rig pa las gzhan pa'i rin po che la sogs pa med kyi / rnam par rig pa de nyid shin tu rnam par dag pas de tar snang ste / 'dis ni 'bras bu phun sum tshogs pa bstan to //* (see also Griffiths et al. 1989, pp. 354–55). T no. 1594, 31: 446a17–20: 最極自在淨識為相者。謂佛淨土最極自在清淨心識以為體相。唯有識故。非離識外別有寶等。即淨心識如是變現似眾寶等。此句顯示果圓滿。

³⁵ MSg, ch. 10, section 1. D4048 (fol. *ri* 37a3), P5549 (fol. *li* 43a4–5): *ye shes kyi khyad par ji ltar blta bar bya* (D: *blta bar bya*; P: *blta*) *zhe na/ sangs rgyas kyi sku gsum po*. See also Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 279; Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 83.

As for the [*dharmakāya*'s] characteristics of nonduality: Because [*dharmas* have] characteristics of nonduality of existence and nonexistence, all *dharmas* are without existence, and they are the existents which have the characteristics of emptiness. Therefore [the *dharmakāya* has the characteristics of nonduality].³⁶

Further below in the same chapter, Asaṅga reaffirms the nonduality of the *dharmakāya* in a verse that reads:

There is no complete *bodhi* anywhere, and it is not the case that everything is without *bodhi*.³⁷ In every moment it is unfathomable. It unfolds the nonexistence of existence.³⁸

The stanza follows a rather cryptic style and leaves much room for interpretation, especially in the absence of the Sanskrit original. Does this verse deal with *bodhi* or more concretely with the Buddha? Both readings are possible, yet it seems that even if the original Sanskrit term was *buddha*, it might stand for an abstract principle rather than a concrete person.³⁹ This

³⁶ MSg, ch. 10, section 3.3. D4048 (fol. *ri* 37b5–5), P5549 (fol. *li* 43b8–44a1): *gnyis su med pa'i mtshan nyid ni yod pa dang med pa gnyis su med pa'i mtshan nyid kyis chos thams cad dngos po med pa dang / stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid kyi dngos po yin pa'i phyir ro*. See also Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 285; Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 84. The logic of the argument is difficult to follow, and Buddhaśānta's translation seems slightly mistaken: 不二相事非事二相故。依一切法非事故。有為無為不二相 (T no. 1592, 31: p. 110a11–12). Xuanzang's version makes the argument more explicit, albeit still with some differences from the Tibetan, stating that the “characteristics [insofar as they are] manifestations of emptiness, really exist”: 三無二為相。謂有無無二為相。由一切法無所有故。空所顯相是實有故。有為無為無二為相 (T no. 1594, 31: 149b11–13).

³⁷ The most straightforward explanation for this phrase is probably that Buddhas, in a way, “exist” even though they have no “real” existence. This is clearly Vasubandhu's interpretation (see Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 340). Nonetheless, in Asvabhāva's reading, this more abstractly expresses that the dependent nature is in a way identical to the perfected nature: *thams cad sangs rgyas ma yin min // zhes bya ba ni gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo* (D: *gi ngo bo*; P: *de*) *nyid yongs su grub par yod pa'i phyir ro* (D4051 *ri* 287a7, P5552 *li* 346b5). These two interpretations do not contradict each other, and the MSg author probably expressed himself rather ambiguously on purpose.

³⁸ MSg, ch. 10, section 28.3. D4048 (fol. *ri* 40a3–4), P5549 (fol. *li* 46b8): *gang yang mngon rdzogs sangs rgyas med // thams cad sangs rgyas ma yin min // skad cig re la dpag tu med // dngos po'i dngos med rab tu phye*. See also Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 340; Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 91. Xuanzang's translation: 現等覺非有一切覺非無一念無量有非有所顯 (T no. 1594, 31: 150b24–25).

³⁹ Nagao (1987, p. 388) suggests Skt. *abhisambuddha* for Tib. *mngon rdzogs sangs rgyas* and interprets it as “the matter (fact) called opening awakening” (悟りを開くということ), that

principle is taught to be beyond existence and nonexistence, and possibly even to pervade all illusory manifestations of phenomena. Vasubandhu, in his comment on this verse, equates this *buddha/bodhi*, beyond existence and nonexistence, with suchness, an interpretation that seems consistent with Asaṅga's original intention:

“It unfolds the nonexistence of existence.” This means: Here, suchness (**tathatā*) is the nonexistence of existence. What is unfolded by that is *bodhi*/the Buddha. This is the meaning [of this verse].⁴⁰

Many open questions remain in the interpretation of this and similar passages of the MSg. The Sanskrit original of this particular passage probably contained the multifaceted word *prabhāvita* (“manifested, pervaded, characterized”),⁴¹ a term that is of central importance for the interpretation of *cittamātra* systematics. Since the exact implications of *prabhāvita* are as yet not affirmatively settled,⁴² my translation of the above passages can only be provisional. Still, it can probably be said that Asaṅga considered the *dharmakāya* to be neither confined to a specific position in space and time, nor a mere subjective mental event, but as transcending and even pervading the whole of phenomenal existence. While this is undoubtedly an important question for the theme of this article, it cannot, unfortunately, be discussed in more detail here.⁴³

Asaṅga's statements about the Pure Lands are thus far from arbitrary remarks on a somewhat foreign phenomenon: they are firmly rooted in the consistent and complex systematics of the Yogācāra tradition, and they are, as far as I see, completely in line with the teachings of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*.

is, the action rather than the agent. Similarly, he suggests Skt. *buddha* for Tib. *sangs rgyas* in the second line and interprets the phrase as “it is not the case that everything (/everybody?) is not awakened” (あらゆるものが悟われていないのではない). In his comments, he further presents his interpretation of Vasubandhu's commentary to the effect that “everything is the Buddha, everything is ‘awakened’” (すべては仏陀であり“覚された”である, Nagao 1987, p. 389).

⁴⁰ D4050 (fol. *ri* 182b5–183a1), P5551 (fol. *li* 222b3–5): *dn̄gos po'i dn̄gos med rab tu phyē / zhes bya ba ni 'dir de bzhin nyid ni dn̄gos po'i dn̄gos po med pa ste / des rab tu phyē ba ni sangs rgyas yin no zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go*. Xuanzang's translation: 有非有所顯者。此顯真如是有非有。諸佛是此真如所顯 (T no. 1597, 31: 374c18–19). See also Griffiths et al. 1989, p. 340.

⁴¹ See Nagao 1987, p. 388.

⁴² See Schmithausen 2014, pp. 411–18.

⁴³ See also Bayer 2013, pp. 82–90, for the *dharmakāya* in the context of tantric practices relating to Sukhāvati.

In the same way, Vasubandhu's summary of Yogācāra doctrine, the *Thirty Verses*, also culminates in a description of the unthinkable *dharmakāya*:

The element without inflows (*anāsrava*),
Is the unthinkable, wholesome, imperishable, joyful Body of Lib-
eration.
It is the so-called [body of]⁴⁴ the doctrine of the Great Sage.⁴⁵
(verse 30)

The “Body of Liberation” (*vimuktikāya*) is a doctrinal topos known from the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra*. It designates a state of liberation reached by *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and fully awakened Buddhas that is different from the *dharmakāya*, which is reached only by fully awakened buddhas.⁴⁶ According to Sthiramati's commentary on the *Thirty Verses*, the “Body of Liberation” signifies overcoming the obstructions consisting in *kleśas* (*kleśāvaraṇa*); and, the *dharmakāya*, in this context, signifies overcoming the obstructions in the way of the things to be known (*jñeyāvaraṇa*).⁴⁷ The *Uttaratantra* further states that the “Body of Liberation” represents one's own benefit, and the *dharmakāya* the benefit of others.⁴⁸ Still, when it comes to the factual qualities of these two bodies, the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* propounds that, even though there are significant differences, these are hard to describe.⁴⁹

The gradual path of understanding as outlined in the *Thirty Verses* culminates in the attainment of these two bodies, with the *dharmakāya* being the ultimate body of the Tathāgata. One cannot help but notice that this resembles the above-quoted passage in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (ch. 3, par. 45), according to which:

⁴⁴ See Sthiramati's commentary (Buescher 2007, p. 142): *mahāmuner dharmakāya ity ucyate*.

⁴⁵ Buescher 2007, p. 149: *sa evānāsravo dhātur acintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ / sukho vimuktikāyo 'sau dharmākhyo 'yaṃ mahāmuneḥ*. See also the translation by Frauwallner (2010, p. 417).

⁴⁶ Chapter 10, section 2, of the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* is probably the earliest source for the concept of *vimuktikāya*. See Buescher 2008, p. 161, n. 2; Schmithausen 2014, p. 354, n. 1599.

⁴⁷ See Buescher 2007, p. 142, and Nagao 1991, p. 24.

⁴⁸ *Uttaratantra*, ch. 2, verse 30 (Johnston 1950, p. 84). See also Takasaki 1966, pp. 30, 320, n. 56, and pp. 322–23; Schmithausen 1971, p. 163; Brunnhölzl 2009, p. 330; Fuchs 2000, p. 197.

⁴⁹ See Lamotte 1935, p. 149: *de la dpe bya bar yang sla ba ma yin* (*Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra*, ch. 10, section 2).

The Tathāgatas have the *dharmakāya* [as their body]. . . . The Tathāgatas have the supramundane body (*lokottarakāya*) because they have completely transcended all mundane *dharmas* (*lokadharmas*). . . . The body of the Buddha is not composed and is past (*vigata*) all verbal designations.⁵⁰

This ultimate *dharmakāya* of the *Thirty Verses* is clearly identical with the “highest meaning” according to an earlier verse:

[One kind of “naturelessness” (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) results from the fact]⁵¹

That it [i.e., the perfected nature] is the highest meaning (*paramārtha*) of the factors.

This [perfected nature]⁵² is also suchness,

Because it is such at all times.⁵³

It is just (*eva*), mere cognition by nature (*vijñaptimātratā*).⁵⁴ (verse 25)

⁵⁰ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*_s (ch. 3, par. 45): *dharmakāyās tathāgatā . . . / lokottarakāyās tathāgatāḥ sarvalokadharmasamatikrāntāḥ / . . . asaṃskṛtas tathāgatasya kāyaḥ sarvasaṃkhyāvigataḥ*.

⁵¹ See *Thirty Verses*, verse 24, in Buescher 2007, p. 149: *aparā niḥsvabhāvatā*.

⁵² See Sthiramati’s commentary (ibid., p. 130): *pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvaḥ paramārtha ucyate*.

⁵³ The verb *bhāva* in this context carries quite a bit of significance. Here, it seems not to express existence but rather identity in the sense of “serving as” (see Mayrhofer 1992–2001, s.v. *BHAV*). While some of the Tibetan versions translate this as [*de bzhin*] *yod*, others read [*de bzhin*] *nyid* (see Buescher 2007, p. 131, n. 10). The latter could be, at first sight, a simple miscorrection of an unwanted reading, but even in this case, it surely points to a significant problem, namely that the translation of the commentary on this verse reads *dus thams cad du de bzhin te / gzhan du ma yin pas de bzhin nyid ces bya’o* (ibid., p. 131, my underlining), where *yin pas* is a translation of Skt. *bhavati* (see ibid., p. 130). Notably, most Tibetan versions of the verses (*kārikāḥ*) alone do not fall into the mistake of rendering *bhāva* as *yod*, while *yod* is used in the translation (of the verses) in the context of Sthiramati’s commentary. One possible explanation for this is that, after the initial translators, later generations tended to study the commentary rather than the verses alone, which might have led to a miscorrection of *nyid* to *yod* (or the unmetrical *yod pas*), while in the *kārikās*, *nyid* was left untouched (see ibid., 2007, p. 131, n. 10). Tib. *nyid* is supported by Xuanzang’s translation (T no. 1586, 31: 61a27): 常(當)如其性故 即唯識實性. See also Watanabe 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 101: 常如の性であるから; and vol. 1, p. 29: 真如一切時に、そのように有るからである.

⁵⁴ Buescher 2007, p. 149: *dharmāṅgāṃ paramārthaś ca sa yatas tathatāpi saḥ / sarvakālam tathābhāvāt saiva vijñaptimātratā*. See also the translation by Frauwallner (2010, p. 417).

While it is easy to see how the *dharmakāya* is identical with “naturelessness” (*niḥsvabhāvatā*), the “highest meaning” (*paramārtha*), suchness (*tathatā*), and the perfected nature (*pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvaḥ*), it might be more difficult to equate this with the principle (-*tā*) of mere cognition. *Vijñaptimātratā* is quite clearly the principle that subject and object of perception are both mere cognition, a principle that, when rightly understood, leads to the realization of the highest meaning and everything equated with it, in a direct perception (*abhisamaya*), as the commentary puts it.⁵⁵

Just like the identity of “arrangement” (*vyūha*) and “non-arrangement” (*avyūha*) in the *Vajracchedikā* seems paradoxical at first sight, so does the equation of “cognition-only(-ness)” (*vijñaptimātratā*) with the highest meaning in the *Thirty Verses*. This doctrine is elucidated in the section following verse 25 of the *Thirty Verses*: in the process of liberation, dualistic grasping cannot disappear as long as “cognition does not rest in the principle of mere cognition” (verse 26).⁵⁶ Although it could seem as if this resting of cognition in cognition could be the highest goal, it is not enough to simply think that the seemingly material objects of cognition are in reality cognition by nature (verse 27). One rests in mere cognition when wisdom (*jñāna*) does not behold of any object, because when there is nothing to grasp, the grasping too becomes obsolete (verse 28), and thus the “grasper,” the subject of perception, does not arise (commentary to verse 28).⁵⁷

At the same time, it is also true that cognition, even when manifested as subject and object, is thoroughly pervaded by the highest meaning, and vice versa.⁵⁸ In the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* (ch. 8, section 31) for example, this principle is phrased in the following way:

Maitreya! In the Mahayana, “teaching the characteristic of emptiness” means that the dependent characteristic (*paratantra-lakṣaṇa*)

⁵⁵ Buescher 2007, p. 132: *saiva vijñaptimātratety anena vacanenābhisamaya uktaḥ*.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 149: *vijñaptimātratve vijñānaṃ nāvatiṣṭhate*. See also the translation by Frauwallner (2010, p. 417).

⁵⁷ See Buescher 2007, pp. 136–39. To the same effect, Tola and Dragonetti (2004, p. 211, commenting on the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, verse 25): “One reaches the knowledge that it is the mind and only the mind which creates the beings and things that are perceived, that consequently beings and things exist only with the existence of mental creations, are mere illusions. Finally, one acquires the knowledge of the absolute nature: if duality, under which form the dependent nature appears, does not exist really, the only ‘entity’ that remains is the inexistence of duality i.e. the absolute nature.” See also Schmithausen 2014, p. 606.

⁵⁸ See also Tola and Dragonetti 2004, p. 211 (commenting on verse 25 in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*): “The absolute nature is also *in* the dependent nature.”

and the perfected characteristic (*pariniṣpanna-lakṣaṇa*) are [by nature, Tib. *nyid*] completely free of the imagined characteristic (*parikalpita-lakṣaṇa*) concerning both pollution and purification; and, that [imagined characteristic] is not made an object [of perception] there [i.e., in the union of the dependent and perfected characteristic].⁵⁹

In contrast to the abovementioned section of the *Thirty Verses*, this section of the *Samḍhi-nirmocana-sūtra* does not use the expression “the highest meaning” (*paramārtha*). Nonetheless, from the point of view of later commentators, this is seen to be implied, as Jñānagarbha (c. 700–760), for example, holds in his commentary on the Maitreya chapter:

It is said [in the sutra]: “that is said to be the condensed characteristics of emptiness.” [This means the following:] The three natures which are condensed in the [two] truths, veiled and highest meaning, are empty. Therefore [the three characteristics] are the condensed meaning of emptiness.⁶⁰

The above sources concordantly assert the emptiness of the Pure Lands, and any discord about this question is hardly discernable.⁶¹ Whatever disputes may have arisen about ontology,⁶² the ultimately nondual nature, emptiness and manifestation inseparable, of Buddha fields *just as much as any fac-*

⁵⁹ The Tibetan version reads: *byams pa gzhan gyi dbang gi mtshan nyid dang / yongs su grub pa'i mtshan nyid rnam pa thams cad du kun nas nyon mongs pa dang / rnam par byang ba'i kun brtags pa'i mtshan nyid dang shin tu rnam par bral ba nyid dang / de la de [mi] dmigs pa gang yin pa de ni theg pa chen po la stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid bstan pa zhes bya'o* (D774 ca 34b3–4). See also Lamotte 1935, p. 110; Schmithausen 2014, p. 366, n. 1664. Cp. T no. 676, 17: 701b14–17: 善男子。若於依他起相及圓成實相中。一切品類雜染清淨。遍計所執相畢竟遠離性。及於此中都無所得。如是名為於大乘中總空性相。Tib. *mi dmigs pa* seems to stand for *anupalambha*. See Yokoyama and Hirose 1996, s.v. *mushotoku* 無所得。

⁶⁰ D4033 bi 337a6–7: *de ni theg pa chen po la stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid bsdus pa zhes bya'o zhes bya ba ni kun rdzob dang don dam pa'i bden pas bsdus pa'i ngo bo nyid gsum stong pa'i phyir stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid bsdus pa yin no //*. Cf. Powers 1992, p. 190: “[The passage.] ‘the full character of emptiness in the Great Vehicle’ [indicates that] because the three natures that are subsumed by the two truths—the conventional and the ultimate—are empty, this includes the character of emptiness.”

⁶¹ Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 220, n. 45.

⁶² See, for example, Schmithausen 2014, p. 401, n. 1774. Inagaki (1998, pp. 49–53) describes the Pure Land doctrine of Nāgārjuna. Even though the authenticity of some sources ascribed to Nāgārjuna is uncertain, views such as “Buddha and voidness are not different” (Inagaki 1998, pp. 50–51) seem to conform to his original tenets.

tors (*dharmas*) in our universe was, to my knowledge, undisputed in Indian Buddhism.⁶³

Excursus: The Pure Land, A Foreign Element in Buddhism?

Much has been written on a possible Central Asian influence in the formation of Pure Land culture, and indeed, in the formative period, cultural exchange with the successors of the Persian and Macedonian empires flourished.⁶⁴ Therefore, it has almost been taken for granted that this particular Central Asian cultural blend shaped the imagery and the narratives of Sukhāvātī. Snellgrove,⁶⁵ for example, regards the worship of Buddha Amitābha as an alien element within the Buddhism of Asaṅga's time and thinks it probable that it was introduced through the "inherited beliefs of some of those Greeks and Scythians and other peoples of the far northwest who before their conversion to Buddhism were already aware of another great religion centering on Ahura Mazda, the Supreme God of Light." Given this possible origin, Snellgrove interprets the worship of Amitābha as a "popular and unorthodox form of Buddhism in that its religious aspiration is directed primarily to rebirth in Amitābha's paradise and thus is largely unconcerned with the winning of nirvana, the true goal of early Buddhist practitioners, or with cultivating the thought of enlightenment." Schopen also mentions the peculiarity of Sukhāvātī imagery, but rather than dealing with its origins, focuses on its spread in Buddhist literature.⁶⁶

Although a Central Asian influence on the imagery of Amitābha is surely possible, or even probable, we find ourselves in a situation in which the available evidence does not suffice for retracing such an influence in any meaningful sense. In fact, the association of the sky and light with safety and salvation could be as old as human culture itself, originating from the real-life experience of elevated places as a refuge from natural enemies.⁶⁷ It is

⁶³ Due to the limitations of this article, several important doctrinal developments cannot be taken into account, such as the two kinds of *dharmakāya* devised by Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542?; see Inagaki 1998, p. 75), or the doxographical scheme of Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–592) in which "emptiness" seems to have a somewhat depreciative connotation (see Tanaka 1990, pp. 32–37). See also *ibid.*, p. 203, n. 22, on the influence of Huiyuan's thought on Wonhyo, whose views will be discussed below.

⁶⁴ Beckwith (2012) provides an impressive introduction to the cultural exchanges in Gandhāra around the time of the Kuṣāna empire.

⁶⁵ Snellgrove 1987, pp. 55–56.

⁶⁶ Schopen 1977, pp. 190, 192, 201.

⁶⁷ See Kilian in Jellen 2011.

by no means a unique element of Persian religion. The Buddhist conception that the gods live in the sky and the *preta* under the earth probably predates the Sukhāvātī literature,⁶⁸ and even the association of sunset (the west) with death is so obvious that it would be difficult to trace its transmission.

Furthermore, the narrative of a pure Buddha land, easier to attain than nirvana in this life, fits in well with the Buddhist order's changing role in ancient Indian society and its efforts to engage the laity. It is thus equally possible that the Sukhāvātī culture was formed to the south of the Hindu-kush without any significant influence from the north or west. As will be shown below, the availability of such an easily accessible Pure Land does not necessarily imply that the ultimate aim of nirvana or Buddhahood is abandoned, neither within the texts portraying Sukhāvātī, nor within the broader Buddhist culture that carries this complex of beliefs and practices.

Asaṅga's Views on the Soteriological Value of Pure Lands

There is probably no part of the Mahayana tradition that has not been influenced by Asaṅga's seminal works on Buddhist systematics in one way or another. Asaṅga is one of the first, and definitely the most influential, scholars who sought to systematize the doctrines of the Mahayana sutras into a coherent, presentable, and defensible whole. The most challenging part of this undertaking was surely the harmonization of statements in different sutras that seem to contradict each other. An effective exegetical method was devised: namely, identifying such statements as spoken with a "covert intention," made-to-measure for a specific audience, and not to be taken literally.⁶⁹

This exegetical device is probably best known from the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* as the teaching of the "three turnings of the Dharma wheel." Although it gained wide recognition, some traditions were naturally not willing to accept that the *āgama* sutras were only spoken to people with a lesser capacity, or that statements such as "there is no matter, feeling, apperception . . ." were to be taken less literally than they appear in the *prajñāpāramitā* sutras. The East Asian tradition mostly followed Xuanzang's acceptance of the *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* and Asaṅga's system-

⁶⁸ I therefore follow Gómez (1996, pp. 35–36), who dismisses the sutra's light imagery as sufficient evidence for Central Asian influence, pointing to the topos of divine light in various parts of the Buddhist tradition. These occurrences are also adduced by Harvey (2013, p. 173), who makes no mention of possible Central Asian influence. Cf. Halkias 2013, pp. 22, 227. In the *āgama* sutras, the Buddha quite naturally recommends to laypeople a course of action that leads to rebirth in heaven (Skt. *svarga*), as a motivation to eventually enter the path towards nirvana. See Harvey 2013, p. 48.

⁶⁹ See also Buswell and Lopez 2013, s.vv. *abhiprāya*, *abhisamḍhi*.

atics, so that the fervent critiques by Candrakīrti (c. 600–650) remained unheard. On the other hand, Asaṅga’s approach to Sukhāvātī doctrines became a much disputed matter. In these two points, the East Asian standard position reversely mirrors the Tibetan mainstream in which Candrakīrti is defended with great fervor, while the ten recollections of Amitābha (see below) never gained much prominence.⁷⁰

A first look at Asaṅga’s systematization could lead to the impression that he held the Pure Land doctrines in rather low esteem,⁷¹ and therefore, it seems appropriate to disregard secondary sources and later interpretations for the moment and take a direct look, once again, at his writings. In the second chapter of the MSg,⁷² Asaṅga presents a doctrine of four “intentions” (*abhīprāya*) of the Buddha, that is, four different intentions underlying different sections of the Buddha’s teachings.⁷³ Among those, the second kind of intention concerns the Pure Land teachings:

[The second kind of intention,] “intention for another time,” means the following: [statements such as,] “by grasping only the name of the Buddha ‘Many Jewels’ (Bahuratna),⁷⁴ one will be established in the right, complete awakening” etc., or, “by only making a solemn wish,⁷⁵ one will be reborn in the world of Sukhāvātī, just as it was spoken [by the Buddha].”⁷⁶

⁷⁰ See also Bayer 2013, p. 83, n. 23.

⁷¹ See Tanaka 1990, pp. 12–13. Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 19.

⁷² On the textual situation, see Griffiths et al. 1989, p. xv, and Nakamura 1980, p. 264, where the available versions of the MSg and its commentaries are listed.

⁷³ See Tanaka 1990, p. 223, n. 47.

⁷⁴ It is unclear to which sutra the name Bahuratna alludes, even though the name is similar to Prabhūta-ratna in the *Lotus Sutra*. See Nagao 1982, p. 392, n. 3.

⁷⁵ The translation “solemn wish” for *praṇidhāna* is used provisionally for lack of a better term. Some of the related problems are addressed in Edgerton 1953, vol. 2, s.vv. *praṇidadhātī*, *praṇidhāna*, *praṇidhyeti*. See also Gómez 1996, p. 224, n. 7.

⁷⁶ MSg, ch. 2, section 31.2. D4048 (fol. ri 20b5–6), P5549 (fol. li 23b2–4): *duṣ gzhān la dgongs pa ni 'di lta ste / de bzhin gshegs pa rin chen mang gi mtshan bzung* (D: *bzung*; P: *gzung*) *bas bla na med pa* (D: *pa*; P: *par*) *yang dag par rdzogs pa 'i byang chub tu nges par 'gyur ro zhes bya ba lta bu dang smon lam btāb pa tsam gyis 'jig rten gyi khams bde ba can du skye bar 'gyur ro zhes ji skad gsungs pa lta bu'o* (see also Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 41). Sanskrit parallels in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṅkāra-bhāṣya* according to Lamotte 1938, vol. 2, p. 130: [*bahuratnasya* {added by Lamotte}] *tathāgatasya nāmadheyagrahaṇamātreṇa niyato bhavaty anuttarāyāṃ samyaksaṃbodh[au]*, (Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 24), and *ye sukhāvatyāṃ praṇidhānaṃ kariṣyanti te tatropapatsyante*, (Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 4–5). Cp. T no. 1592, 31: 103b16–19: 二者時節意趣。所謂若稱多寶如來名者。即定於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。如無量壽經說。若有眾生願取無量壽世界即生爾 (my underlines). See also Tanaka 1990, p. 210, n. 63. Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 19.

So far, this section of the MSg contains nothing that would belittle Pure Lands explicitly, let alone belittle them as being a token for the “spiritually inferior” or “morally indolent.” Nonetheless, we do find the word “laziness” (*kausīdya*) in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, which is a verse text generally held to be either composed by Asaṅga himself, or written down by him as dictated by his teacher. In chapter 12, verse 18 of the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, the four kinds of “intention” are listed briefly, very much in agreement with the MSg. It is in the following verse (12.19) that the term “laziness” appears. The passage reads:

The four kinds of intention are intended [to refer to: 1.] sameness, [2.] another meaning. Likewise [3.] another time,⁷⁷ [4.] and again, the disposition of a living being.⁷⁸ (ch. 12, verse 18)

A low opinion [1.] with regard to the Buddha and [2.] the Dharma, [3.] laziness, [4.] being content with only little, [5.] acting in passion or [6.] haughtiness, [7.] remorse, and [8.] separation out of indecision.⁷⁹ (ch. 12, verse 19)

Thus, verse 19 contains a list of attitudes that hinder a wholehearted pursuit of the Dharma. Among them, “laziness” is the third one. In the verses themselves, it is not made clear that the first four obstructing attitudes are necessarily related, respectively, to the first four “intentions” listed in verse 18. At this point, we have to consider the prose commentary on the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, ascribed to Vasubandhu, which firstly explains the four intentions of verse 18 without any mention of laziness.⁸⁰ It is only in Vasubandhu’s explanation on verse 19 that he presents examples for each of those shortcomings that obstruct the aspirant following the Buddhist path. About the obstruction of “laziness” [3.], the commentary states:

An explanation [of the Buddha] that counteracts the obstruction of laziness: “Those who make a solemn wish (*praṇidhāna*) for Sukhāvātī will be reborn there.” And, “By grasping only the name

⁷⁷ “Another time” appears here as the third item, as different from the MSg where it stands in the second position.

⁷⁸ Lévi 1907, p. 82, l. 27–28: *samatārthāntare jñeyas tathā kālāntare punaḥ / pudgalasyāśaye caiva abhiprāyaś caturvidhaḥ*. See also Thurman 2004, p. 161.

⁷⁹ Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 8–9: *buddhe dharme ’vajñā kausīdyaṃ tuṣṭir alpamātreṇa / rāge māne caritaṃ kaukrīyaṃ cāniyatabhedaḥ*. See also Thurman 2004, p. 162.

⁸⁰ Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 4–5: *kālāntarābhiprāyo yadāha / ye sukhāvatyāṃ praṇidhānaṃ kariṣyanti te tatropapatsyanta iti kālāntareṇety abhiprāyaḥ*. See also Thurman 2004, p. 161.

of the Tathāgata Unstained Moonlight they will be settled in right, complete awakening.”⁸¹

It is thus not absolutely certain that the author of the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alamkāra* had the Pure Land teachings in mind when mentioning “laziness.” Furthermore, even in Vasubandhu’s commentary on verse 19, “laziness” is surely the only fault that is remedied by the teaching of the Pure Lands, but this is not necessarily a kind of inferiority or a *moral* shortcoming. As Tanaka (1990, p. 210, n. 64) has noted,⁸² Vasubandhu applies this understanding in his commentary on the MSg, too:

“Thinking of another time” [means] those with a lot of laziness are made to apply themselves to the Dharma by means of this kind of method. “[Just by] grasping the name of the Tathāgata Many Jewels,” [that is to say, just] because of the wholesome root (**kuśalamūla*) arising from that, this becomes the cause for those [people] to attain excellence (Tib. *khyad par*). It is only that [meaning] which [the Buddha] intended [when he spoke the sutra], while [in actuality], by only just grasping the name, one will not enter into being settled [there],⁸³ and one will not attain unsurpassable awakening. [It is] just like when one says “one copper coin (**paṇa*) will become a thousand copper coins,” this means “one day,” or “at another time”; [it means that] only one copper coin will become the cause of a thousand copper coins.⁸⁴ Also [the

⁸¹ Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 22–25: *kauśīdyāvarenaṣasya pratipakṣasambhāṣā / ye sukhāvatyāṃ prañidhānaṃ kariṣyanti te tatropapatsyanta iti / vimalacandrāprabhāṣasya ca tathāgatasya nāmadheyagrahaṇamātreṇa niyato bhavaty anuttarāyāṃ samyak sambodhāvīti*. See also Thurman 2004, p. 162.

⁸² Cf. Halkias 2013, p. 225, n. 94.

⁸³ Cf. Nagao 1982, p. 391, n. 1: “becoming decisive/determined” (Jp. “*ketteiteki to naru*” 決定的となる).

⁸⁴ Vasubandhu’s simile of coins must of course be seen in the context of the theory of “seeds” (*bīja*) of good and bad action, ripening subconsciously. While the “seed” metaphor was in use long before Aśāṅga and Vasubandhu, the two were probably the first Abhidharma scholars to provide it with a thorough theoretical foundation. In analogy to agricultural seeds, the “seeds” in the mind were not only said to mature at a certain point in time, they were also assumed to grow or increase (*vr̥dh*, see Bayer 2010, pp. 148, 338). It would therefore not be far-fetched to consider that Vasubandhu had an interest-bearing fund in mind (on such funds, see Schopen 1994). Nonetheless, more probably, he seems to allude to a common saying to the effect that several small amounts of money add up to a huge sum. Nagao (1982, p. 391, n. 1) clearly understands it in this sense. See also T no. 1596, 31: 292b1: 豈一日得耶, “how could one possibly obtain [a thousand cents in] a single day!”

teaching], “one will be born in the Sukhāvātī world realm only by making a solemn wish” has to be seen in the same way.⁸⁵

It must be noted that in Abhidharma terminology, a “wholesome root” is both wholesome in itself as well as a root of wholesome action. Strictly speaking, it refers to the attitude, or character feature, underlying a wholesome action (such as the opposites of greed, hatred, and delusion—i.e., *alobha*, *adveśa*, *amoha*), rather than the karmically effective act itself, even though the term can be used in the latter sense.⁸⁶ The corresponding phrase in the Chinese translation by Paramārtha (499–569) is ambiguous: its most natural reading is probably “those who are indolent in their wholesome roots, by reciting and holding the name of the Buddha Many Jewels, will progress to exalted (*shangpin* 上品) qualities (/the qualities of a noble person).”⁸⁷ It seems that Paramārtha’s translation of the passage played an important role in the understanding of the issue in East Asia. The ambivalent compound of “indolent” and “wholesome roots” (*landuo shangen* 懶惰善根) is probably the term that made this appear like a moral condemnation. Xuanzang, in contrast, speaks only of “those who are indolent in terms of interest and vigor.”⁸⁸ Possibly, the passage was later even understood to imply that

⁸⁵ D4050 (fol. *ri* 154a2–4), P5551 (fol. *li* 184b1–4): *dus gzhan la dgongs pa zhes bya ba la / gang snyom las mang ba rnams thabs kyi rnam pa 'di nyid kyi chos 'di la sbyor bar byed pa yin te / de bzhin gshegs pa rin chen mang gi mtshan bzung ba'i rgyu las byung ba'i dge ba'i rtsa bas de dag khyad par thob pa'i rgyur 'gyur ba tsam la dgongs nas yin gyi mtshan bzung ba tsam nyid kyi nges pa la 'jug par 'gyur zhing / bla na med pa'i byang chub 'thob (P: 'thob; D: thob) pa ma yin te / ji ltar pa na (D: na; P: na) gcig pa na (D: pa na; P: omitted) stong du bsgyur (P: bsgyur; D: sgyur) zhes brjod pa de ni nyi ma gcig gis sam / dus gzhan du zhes bya ba'i don te / pa na (D: na; P: na) gcig po de nyid pa na (D: na; P: na) stong gi rgyur gyur pa bzhin no // smon lam btob pa tsam gyis 'jig rten gyi khams bde ba can du skye bar 'gyur ro zhes bya ba yang de bzhin du blta bar bya'o //*. T no. 1595, 31: 194a26–b7: 論曰。二別時意。釋曰。若有眾生由懶惰障不樂勤修行。如來以方便說。由此道理於如來正法中。能勤修行方便說者。論曰。譬如如有說。若人誦持多寶佛名。決定於無上菩提不退墮。釋曰。是懶惰善根。以誦持多寶佛名。為進上品功德。佛意為顯上品功德。於淺行中欲令捨懶惰勤修道。不由唯誦佛名。即不退墮決定得無上菩提。譬如由一金錢營得千金錢。非一日得千。由別時得千。如來意亦爾。此一金錢為千金錢因。誦持佛名亦爾。為不退墮菩提因。

⁸⁶ See Bayer 2010, pp. 321–22, n. 47.

⁸⁷ T no. 1595, 31: 194b1–2: 是懶惰善根。以誦持多寶佛名。為進上品功德。

⁸⁸ T no. 1597, 31: 346b4–7: [別時意趣者。謂此意]趣令懶惰者。[由彼彼因於彼彼法精勤修習。彼彼善根皆得增長。此中意趣顯誦多寶如來名因。是昇進因]。Unfortunately, Lamotte (1938, vol. 2, p. 130) translates only a summary which is in fact found further above in Xuanzang’s version (T no. 1597, 31: 346a10–13: 二別時意趣。謂如說言若誦多寶如來名者。便於無上正等菩提已得決定。又如說言由唯發願便得往生極樂世界)。See also Nagao 1982, p. 389.

those “indolent” people were not yet “exalted/noble” but the opposite of that.⁸⁹

Leaving Paramārtha’s problematic terminology aside, neither Asaṅga nor Vasubandhu engages in a moralistic disqualification of those for whom the Buddha spoke the Pure Land teachings. Vasubandhu’s association of Pure Land teachings with laziness probably matches the original intention of the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, and his understanding might go back to oral instructions he received from his brother Asaṅga.⁹⁰ Still, Vasubandhu’s explicitness may also be an expression of a certain inflexibility he brought with him as an exalted Sarvāstivāda scholar. A comparison of his *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* with Asaṅga’s *Abhidharma-samuccaya* shows that Vasubandhu confronts his opponents, using no uncertain terms, and engages them in lengthy fictional debates. Asaṅga, on the other hand, often moves around controversial issues with great flexibility.⁹¹

It was, nonetheless, not the mention of “laziness” that became the main object of contention in later East Asian debates, but rather the exact implications of the term “intention for another time” (*bie shi yi qu* 別時意趣).⁹²

⁸⁹ The later Pure Land commentaries developed a complex scheme of nine ranks in which people are reborn in Sukhāvati, each characterized by being either inferior (Ch. *xiapin* 下品), middling (Ch. *zhongpin* 中品), or supreme (/exalted, noble, Ch. *shangpin* 上品). See Nakamura 2001, s.v. *kuhon* 九品.

⁹⁰ The authorship of the *bhāṣya* is not certain, and ascribed variously to Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and a certain Vyavavādā-samaya (Griffiths 1990, p. 45). Here, it is hypothetically assumed that Vasubandhu wrote down the commentary in accordance with oral instructions by Asaṅga. Given the scarcity of reliable evidence, this assumption comes with no claim of certainty. The tradition of arranging and publishing oral instructions often complicates the ascription of a specific author to a specific text. See Bayer 2010, p. 18.

⁹¹ See Bayer 2010, p. 16. The identity of Asaṅga’s (half-)brother with the author of the *Abhidharma-kośa* is still an unsettled issue. As Sakuma (2013, p. 356) records, Lambert Schmithausen has recently pointed out that the technical term “specific transformation of the mental continuum” (*saṃtatipariṇāma-viśeṣa*) can be found not only in those works that hitherto seemed closer to the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*, but also, for example, in Vasubandhu’s commentary on the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra* (Lévi 1907, p. 122, l. 21). In my opinion, the burden of proof has thus shifted to those who uphold that these texts were written by two different persons. See Schmithausen 2014, p. 27, n. 53.

⁹² See Tanaka 1990, p. 44. Gyōnen 凝然 (1240–1321) provides a conciliatory view on these debates and their Indian roots in his *Jōdo hōmon genru shō* 淨土法門源流章 (Dharma Gate to the Pure Land: A Section on Sources and Transmissions), translated by Blum (2002). Blum has added a wealth of explanations and references to Gyōnen’s remarks on Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (pp. 167–77), and his book is warmly recommended as an introduction to this theme. Hayashi 2006 (esp. p. 107) outlines one of the earliest East Asian interpretations of “intention for another time” in the writings of Xuanzang’s disciple Ji 基 (632–682).

Buswell and Lopez (2013, s.v. *abhiprāya*) interpret these doctrines in the following way: “For example, [the Buddha] may assure lazy persons who are incapable of any virtuous practice whatsoever that they will be reborn in Sukhāvātī, the paradise of Amitābha, if they will simply call on that Buddha. He does this in order to encourage them to accumulate a modest amount of merit, although he knows that they will not be reborn there immediately or even in their next lifetime, but at some other time in the future.” The ambiguity in Buswell and Lopez’s paraphrase (“immediately or even in their next lifetime”) amply reflects the obscurity of the original texts: it is very well possible that Vasubandhu here simply clears up the misunderstanding that, just by grasping the name “Many Jewels,” one will *in that very moment* become a perfect Buddha. In the same way, it is at least possible that Asaṅga wanted to preclude an all-too-literal understanding of the sutra passages that claim that a solemn wish will bring about rebirth in Sukhāvātī: Although this wish will eventually be fulfilled, this will not happen at that very moment, but only “at a later time,” namely after the end of this life. The available comments of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are thus somewhat ambiguous, and in fact, the longer *Sukhāvātī-vyūha-sūtra* (Ch. *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經; T no. 360; hereafter, *Longer Sutra*) itself is ambiguous as far as the mere longing for Sukhāvātī is concerned. Does mere longing really suffice, or are the generation of *bodhicitta* and the ten moments of recollecting the Buddha Amitābha necessary prerequisites, too? The issue will be discussed in more detail below, in the context of Wonhyo’s commentaries.

So far, one may wonder whether the ambiguity of the Indian exegetes could have been intentional. They were not only dealing with the theoretical question of what is factually true and systematically coherent about the Mahayana sutras, even though this is the apparent purpose of the MSg and related texts. As a subtext, these works deal with the question of what their readers should teach after completing their studies, when fulfilling their duties as educated monks. Asaṅga seems to suggest that it is legitimate to follow the example of the Buddha and propound edifying doctrines appropriate to the audience, with lesser regard for the question of whether they were meant to be literally true. Asaṅga leaves it open whether “a later time” means the very next lifetime or a later one, and it was probably the reader’s choice to teach one or the other, depending on the occasion.

What, then, was Asaṅga’s overall judgment of the Pure Land doctrines? As Tanaka (1990, p. 13) notes, “a Pure Land commentarial tradition in India was virtually nonexistent,” and accordingly we find “little solid evidence of active scholarship on Pure Land doctrine in India.” Asaṅga’s endeavors can only be understood when seen in this cultural context. One of Asaṅga’s

main undertakings was a unification, or a reconciliation, of different Buddhist groups, probably at a point in history when the Gupta dynasty unified formerly-warring kingdoms in the north and south of India. Parts of his *Abhidharma-samuccaya*, for example, can be seen as a very smooth, uncontroversial introduction to doctrines that were vigorously debated by others.⁹³

Although the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* is understood in both the Tibetan and the East Asian traditions as a Mahayana Abhidharma, and rightly so, it mostly rests on the scriptural authority of the pre-Mahayanist sutras. This is, since its beginning, just what Abhidharma is: a systematization of the thought to be found in the revelation of the sutras. While many non-Mahayanist traditions had their own Abhidharma, Asaṅga worked not only towards the unification of “*āgamic*” Abhidharma doctrines, but also towards the creation of a Mahayana Abhidharma, a systematization of the thought found in the extensive Mahayana sutras. This was surely an arduous undertaking, especially at a time when new Mahayana sutras kept appearing.

With this underlying motivation, his doctrine that the Pure Land teachings are aimed “at a later time” appears in quite a different light. In the MSg and the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, the author attempts to harmonize different Mahayana sutras, even if their doctrines appear to be contradictory. In contemporary scholarship, it is, as far as I see, undisputed that the Pure Land doctrines do present an option to follow the full Eightfold Path not in this lifetime, but in an afterlife, in a world free of concerns for offspring, food, and shelter. That is to say: if teachings are classified as enabling spiritual attainment “at a later time,” this does not imply any value judgment. Furthermore, even if Vasubandhu recommends these teachings in order to counteract “laziness,” this does not imply, inversely, that all those who aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land are necessarily lazy. This is made evident, for example, in the *Longer Sutra*, where even the Bodhisattva Maitreya is advised to strive for the Pure Land,⁹⁴ and there is no indication that Vasubandhu took a radically different stance.

With his systematization of Mahayana materials, Asaṅga quite surely did more to promote Pure Land teachings than he did to criticize them.⁹⁵ In

⁹³ See Bayer 2012, p. 219.

⁹⁴ See Gómez (1996, p. 106): “Therefore, Ajita, bodhisattvas who are free from doubts should generate this aspiration to attain awakening. And, in order to obtain quickly the capacity to confer benefit and happiness on all living beings, they should dedicate their roots of merit to rebirth in the Land of Bliss.” Ashikaga 1965, p. 60: *tasmāt tarhy ajita; bodhisattvair nirvicikitsair bodhāya cittam utpādyā, kṣipraṃ sarvasattvahitasukhādhānāya sāmārhāpratilambhārthaṃ, sukhāvatyāṃ lokadhātāv upapattaye kuśalamūlāni pariṇāmayitavyāni.*

⁹⁵ See also Inagaki 1998, p. 39.

order to fully understand this, it might be helpful for us to imagine his situation at a time in which no systematic reflections on the Mahayana sutras existed. If we take the stance of a person trying to create unified Mahayana systematics, based on the Mahayana sutras available at the time, how would we go about it? How do the doctrines of the Pure Lands fit into the grander whole? It seems Asaṅga found the best possible solution, integrating the Pure Land doctrines in a system in which no one sutra is discarded in favor of another.⁹⁶ Rather than depreciating the Pure Land doctrines, he provided them with a theoretical foundation. Quite surely, the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* is mostly known as an outline of Yogācāra systematics. And yet, a reader expecting only an outline of the three natures and the *ālayavijñā* will be surprised by how much importance is attributed to the Pure Lands, and how thoroughly and favorably they are discussed.

Wonhyo on the Ontology of Sukhāvātī

There is hardly any need to introduce Wonhyo, a pivotal figure in the development of Buddhist thought in “East Asia,” or, in other words, in the cultural sphere using Han 漢 characters (Jp. *kanji bunka ken* 漢字文化圈).⁹⁷ Although the authorship of the works attributed to him may not be clear in all cases,⁹⁸ Wonhyo’s importance in propagating the doctrines of the Sukhāvātī sutras is widely acknowledged.⁹⁹ Unlike Asaṅga, Wonhyo’s high esteem for these doctrines and practices has, to my knowledge, never been questioned.

Remarkably, when reading Wonhyo’s commentaries, we do not have to engage in a prolonged search for answers to the questions that concern us most: the substratum of Sukhāvātī (or absence thereof), and the relation of Sukhāvātī to the Buddhist paths outlined in other sutras. Wonhyo addresses these two questions in prominent position, in the prolegomenon to his commentary on the shorter *Sukhāvātī-vyūha-sūtra* (Ch. *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經;

⁹⁶ The four intentions are mentioned in the Vaipulya section of the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* (Gokhale 1947, p. 35, l. 21–22), where it is made explicit that these intentions are a special feature of some of the Vaipulya (=Mahayana) scriptures. The respective explanations on “another time” in the *Abhidharma-samuccaya-bhāṣya* (Tatia 1976, p. 1, l. 1–4, §134) almost literally match Vasubandhu’s *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra* commentary. See also Nagao 1982, p. 391, n. 1.

⁹⁷ On the problematic terminology for defining this cultural realm, see Buswell 1998 and 2011.

⁹⁸ See Tanaka 1990, p. 206, n. 10, referring to the *Yūshin anraku dō* 遊心安樂道 (T no. 1965, vol. 47), attributed to Wonhyo. On the authorship of the *Yūshin anraku dō*, see, for example, Etani 1974.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Gyōnen’s recognition of Wonhyo and the corresponding remarks by Blum (2002, p. 192, n. 39).

T no. 366; hereafter, *Shorter Sutra*). That is to say, at the very outset of his commentary, the *Bulseol amitagyeong so* 佛說阿彌陀經疏 (Annotations on the Amitābha Sutra Spoken by the Buddha; T no. 1759), Wonhyo goes *in medias res* and mentions not the Buddha Amitābha or the Pure Lands, but the mind of ordinary sentient beings. This is followed by remarks on its freedom from signs (Ch. *xiang* 相; Skt. **nimitta*) and its emptiness:

The mind of sentient beings, [*that*] is what is “mind”!¹⁰⁰ It is free from signs, free from a nature, like the ocean, like empty [space].¹⁰¹

Wonhyo outlines these fundamental truths, stressing the immediacy of the highest truth in the mind of ordinary beings, before alluding to the location of Sukhāvātī:

Because it is like space, there are no signs which it does not pervade. How could there be a place such as east or west? Because it is like the ocean, it preserves no nature.¹⁰²

In other words, there are no appearances in the world that are not pervaded by emptiness, the ultimate nature of mind.¹⁰³ Although the meaning of Wonhyo’s dense phrases is at times difficult to grasp, the introduction to his commentary on the *Longer Sutra* (K. *Yanggwon muryangsu gyeong jongyo* 兩卷無量壽經宗要; Inherited Essentials of the Two-Volume Sutra of Infinite Life; T no. 1747)¹⁰⁴ fortunately provides important clues to his commentary on the *Shorter Sutra*. The *Longer Sutra* commentary is almost identical, but written in a smoother, less dramatic, and more understandable style. Here, we find the same idea as in the above-quoted passage, but phrased as “the nature of mind of sentient beings pervades and penetrates [everything] without obstructions. It is as great as empty space.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, according

¹⁰⁰ For the Taishō reading “[*that*] is what is mind!” (K. *wi sim ya* 為心也), Muller (2012, p. 215, n. 4) records an alternative reading in a 1989 edition of Wonhyo’s works, namely “[*that*] is the stage/ground of mind” (K. *wi sim ji* 為心地). With some uncertainty, I follow his accepting the Taishō reading. Possibly, a later scribe or editor expected a more Abhidharma-like term instead of Wonhyo’s nontechnical way of expression.

¹⁰¹ T no. 1759, 37: 348a11–12: 夫眾生心之為心也。離相離性如海如空。See also the edition and translation in Muller 2012, p. 215.

¹⁰² T no. 1759, 37: 348a12–14: 如空之故無相不融。何有東西之處。如海之故無性是守。

¹⁰³ Cp. Muller 2012, p. 215: “There are no marks that are not subsumed within it.” The problematic term here is *yung* 融, “melting, blending,” but also “including, subsuming.”

¹⁰⁴ The term *jongyo* 宗要 is only provisionally translated as “inherited essentials,” due to the multifaceted meanings of *jong* 宗 (ancestor, clan, tradition).

¹⁰⁵ T no. 1747, 37: 125c1–2: 夫眾生心性融通無礙。泰若虛空。

to the commentary on the *Shorter Sutra*, the mind of sentient beings, when rightly understood, preserves no nature, like a creek flowing down a mountain; water preserves no specific shape when in motion.¹⁰⁶

Embedded in Wonhyo's introduction to the *Shorter Sutra* commentary, we find a sweeping statement about the absence of absolute locations, in empty space, in the mind of beings, and therefore, it seems, in the universe. This implies denying that Sukhāvātī can be in the western direction in an absolutely real sense, an implication which fits in well with Wonhyo's overall emphasis on the truth beyond all distinctions.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, it could also indicate that Wonhyo was under the influence of a spherical-earth theory, or even a heliocentric theory, in which "the West" cannot function as a cosmological constant anymore. Notably, Wonhyo deals with all these concepts without having even mentioned Sukhāvātī yet.

Although it is thus clear that Wonhyo considers the Pure Land to transcend a specific location in a certain way, this does not necessarily imply that he categorically denies that the Pure Land exists in a specific location. These two assumptions need not be mutually exclusive.¹⁰⁸ At any rate, Wonhyo continues his introduction to the *Shorter Sutra* commentary by saying:

How could there not be a time when it gets into motion or calms down?¹⁰⁹ It sometimes flows out widely, caused by defilement, followed by karma and the five turbidities.¹¹⁰ Or, consecutively, [due to] purification [as a] condition, the four torrents are interrupted and there is serenity for a long time. All this movement

¹⁰⁶ See also T no. 1747, 37: 125c4: 能隨緣而不逆 ("it follows conditions and does not go against [them]").

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, T no. 1747, 37: 125c3, and T no. 1965, 47: 110b18: 何有淨穢之處 ("How could there be a place for purification or pollution?").

¹⁰⁸ On the question whether Sukhāvātī exists in a specific location, or rather in the mind, see Tanaka 1987, p. 36. Tanaka designates the two possible positions as "subjective" and "objective." Some remarks on the Tibetan tradition can be found in Bayer 2013, pp. 86, 87, 93.

¹⁰⁹ See also Muller 2012, p. 141: "How could it not have moments of movement or stillness?"

¹¹⁰ T no. 1759, 37: 348a14–15: 豈無動靜之時。爾乃或因染業隨五濁而長流。 This sentence contains allusions to the major factors of defilement in Buddhist doctrine: defiling factors (K. *yeom* 染; Skt. *saṃkleśa*), *karman* (*eop* 業), latencies (*su* 隨; *anusāya*), the five turbidities (*tak* 濁; *kaṣāya*), and the torrents (*yu* 流; *ogha*), all embedded in the metaphor of a wave flowing out from the ocean. The syntax of the phrase is difficult to ascertain, but it seems to present a causal chain of origination, from basic defilements to actions, the karmic residues of which bring about life in a troubled world.

and calm is a great dream! Based on awakening (K. *gak* 覺), is the view of neither flowing nor serenity.¹¹¹

Turbulent defilement and calm purification: both are based on the same great ocean, mind and emptiness in union. This imagery clearly expresses the same meaning as the section of *Samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* quoted above:

“Teaching the characteristic of emptiness” means that the dependent characteristic (*paratantra-lakṣaṇa*) and the perfected characteristic (*pariṇiṣpanna-lakṣaṇa*) are [by nature, Tib. *nyid*] completely free of the imagined characteristic (*parikalpita-lakṣaṇa*) concerning both pollution and purification. (ch. 8, section 31)

Wonhyo basically follows the usual four-syllable-structure, and in this passage, his commentary almost reads like a kind of poetry in eight-syllable verse:

The polluted earth and the Pure Land
 Originate from One Mind.
 Birth and death [i.e., samsara] and nirvana
 Are ultimately not two sides.
 Yet,
 Awakening towards nonduality,
 Is difficult to attain rightly.
 The single dream of delusion,
 Is not easy to surpass.¹¹²

As Fuji (1997, p. 262) has shown, these descriptions of nonduality can be directly traced to the MSg (ch. 2, section 30):

¹¹¹ T no. 1759, 37: 348a15–16: 或承淨緣。絕四流而永寂。若斯動靜皆是大夢。以覺望之 無流無寂。The syntax of *jeong yeon* 淨緣 is problematic, especially since this duo seems to play the antagonist role to *in yeom* 因染. Either conditions (= *dharmas*) are purified, or purified *dharmas* (i.e., the *anāsrava-dharmas*) become the condition. In effect, this would not make a major difference, and either way, it is the cause for the interruption or cutting off of the four torrents (desire, existence, ignorance, wrong views).

¹¹² T no. 1759, 37: 348a16–18: 穢土淨國本來一心生死涅槃終無二際然無二之覺取之良難迷一之夢去之不易。Unfortunately, the parallelism of 無二之覺 and 迷一之夢 is not easily rendered appropriately in English. Furthermore, the phrase *mu i ji gak* 無二之覺 would more literally be rendered into English as “understanding of nonduality,” with the term *gak* 覺 having a double meaning of “understanding” and “waking up [from sleep]” (akin to Skt. *bodhi*). Since the metaphor of dream and awakening seems to prevail here, the genitive *ji* 之 is freely translated as “towards.”

What is originally peace, what is originally not peace, and the non-duality [of those];
 What is naturally completely annihilated [i.e., naturally in a state of *parinirvāṇa*],¹¹³ what is naturally not completely annihilated, and the nonduality [of those];
 And again, samsara, nirvana, and the nonduality [of those];
 Through these and other classifications (**prabheda*),
 The Fortunate Ones, the Buddhas, have taught all their hidden intentions (**saṃdhāya*),¹¹⁴ [as] paradigms (**paryāya*)¹¹⁵ such as permanent, impermanent, and so on.
 In the same way, those [polarities] have to be understood as being the three natures.¹¹⁶

Thus Wonhyo, in the above passage from his *Shorter Sutra* commentary, demonstrably follows classical Yogācāra thought as far as nondualism is concerned. Still, he goes beyond the doctrines of the MSg-related texts

¹¹³ The original Sanskrit phrasing probably used the past participle **prakṛti-parinirvṛta*, as proposed by Lamotte (1938, vol. 2, p. 127), and attested in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* (see Lévi 1907, p. 68, l. 1–2: *yo hi niḥsvabhāvaḥ so 'nutpanno yo 'nutpannaḥ so 'niruddho yo 'niruddhaḥ sa ādiśānto ya ādiśāntaḥ sa prakṛtiparinirvṛta*).

¹¹⁴ Skt. equivalent *saṃdhāya* for Tib. *ldem po* according to Yokoyama and Hirokawa 1996, s.v. *mitsui* 密意. See also Nagao 1982, p. 384: *abhisamdhivacana*. Lamotte 1938, vol. 2, p. 127: “Les énigmes.”

¹¹⁵ On the term *paryāya* (lit. “revolving, repetition”), see Nagao 1991, p. 132, and Bayer 2010, p. 373, n. 220, p. 401, n. 339. See also Nagao 1982, p. 386, n. 2.

¹¹⁶ D4048 (fol. *ri* 23a7–b2), P5549 (fol. *li* 23a3–5): *gzod* (D: *gzod*; P: *bzod*) *ma nas zhi ba dang gzod* (D: *gzod*; P: *bzod*) *ma nas ma zhi ba dang gnyis su med pa dang / rang bzhin gyis mya ngan las 'das pa dang / rang bzhin gyis mya ngan las ma 'das pa dang gnyis su med pa dang / 'khor ba dang mya ngan las 'das pa dag kyang* (D: *dag kyang*; P: *dang*) *gnyis su med do zhes bya ba la sogs pa'i rab tu dbye ba dag gis* (D: *gis*; P: *ga*) *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnam kyi ldem po dag thams cad rtag* (D: *rtag*; P: *brtag*) *pa dang mi rtag pa la sogs pa'i rnam grangs bstan pa bzhin du / ngo bo nyid gsum yin pa dag tu khong du chud par bya'o //*. See Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 40; vol. 2, p. 127. See also Nagao 1982, pp. 381–88. Paramārtha's translation (T no. 1593, 30: 121a25–28): 本來寂靜不寂靜無二。本來涅槃非涅槃無二。生死涅槃無二。由如此等差別。諸佛如來依義密語。由此三性應隨決了。My translation “as being the three natures” follows the Tibetan. Lamotte (1938, vol. 2, p. 127) translates the final phrase as “doivent être comprises . . . à la lumière des trois natures propres” (to the same effect, Nagao 1982, p. 386). Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's *bhāṣya* clarifies: “Therefore, following the three natures, one understands the correct explanation of permanence, impermanence, and so on.” T no. 1595, 31: 193b23–24: 由此三 (for the Taishō reading 三, the Song 宋, Yuan 元 and Ming 明 editions have *er* 二) 性應隨決了常無常等正說。No corresponding passage in Tibetan *bhāṣya*, P5551, fol. *li* 183a.

when he emphasizes the doctrine of “One Mind” (Ch. *yixin* 一心).¹¹⁷ The expression “One Mind” does not figure prominently in Indian Yogācāra and gained prominence only through the apocryphal *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana; T no. 1666; hereafter, *Awakening of Faith*). The phrasing “One Mind” clearly entails the danger of substantialism, the idea that there is *one* inherently and eternally existing substratum, namely mind, behind all phenomena. Such a substratum can easily be misunderstood as being one, and *not* being beyond one or many, beyond existence and nonexistence.

In order to avoid such a misinterpretation, it would be tempting to translate the final four four-graph phrases of Wonhyo’s above passage as “The understanding of nonduality / is difficult to attain rightly. / The delusion that [apparent dualities] are one / is not easy to surpass.”¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the more prosaic understanding of “one delusion” seems to be supported by the introduction to the commentary on the *Longer Sutra*. Here, the *Longer Sutra* commentary contains the same verses as the *Shorter Sutra* commentary until the phrase “ultimately not two sides.” After that, the commentary on the *Longer Sutra* continues not with the difficult phrases “The understanding of nonduality . . .” and so on, but instead we read:

So, [as for] the original great awakening,
The accumulation of skillful actions¹¹⁹ leads to [its] attainment,
But the [constantly] consecutive flow of the long dream,
Cannot be opened up in one instant.¹²⁰

If we follow the commonly accepted chronology, namely that the *Longer Sutra* commentary was written first, and that the *Shorter Sutra* commentary is its synopsis,¹²¹ it seems that Wonhyo shifted his attention, in this passage, from gradual original awakening towards nonduality and the understanding of dreamlike existence. This is, nonetheless, just a minor detail, and as a whole,

¹¹⁷ On Wonhyo’s particular synthesis of Yogācāra, *tathāgata-garbha*, and “One Mind” doctrines, see Fuji 1997, pp. 262–63.

¹¹⁸ To this effect, Muller 2012, p. 216. Original text: 無二之覺取之良難迷一之夢去之不易 (T no. 1759, 37: 348a17–18).

¹¹⁹ “Skillful action” (K. *gong* 功) is here probably meant as an abbreviation for “virtue” (K. *geongdeok* 功德, the common equivalent for Skt. *guṇa*).

¹²⁰ T no. 1747, 37: 125c6–9: [若斯動寂 皆是大夢。以覺言之無此無彼。穢土淨國本來一心。生死涅槃終無二際。] 然歸原大覺積功乃得。隨流長夢不可頓開。 See also the edition and translation in Muller 2012, p. 141, and Fuji 1997, p. 261.

¹²¹ See Tanaka 2004, p. 46.

the true nature of mind and phenomena plays an outstanding role in both texts, as can be seen in another passage from the *Longer Sutra* commentary:

Buddha wisdom¹²² is free from characteristics.
 When one returns to the origin of the mind, wisdom is the One Mind.
 It is blended, equal, and nondual.
 Because the initial awakening is exactly the same as original awakening,
 Therefore, there is not a single [external] object that would appear outside that wisdom.
 Because of this principle, there is no object that would not be exhausted, and also, no limit exists.
 Because the unlimited wisdom illuminates all objects without limitations.¹²³

Wonhyo's verses are clearly based on the *Awakening of Faith*,¹²⁴ and he continues with a quotation from this text:

As it is said in the *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith*:
 The whole world of objects is originally One Mind.
 It is free from apperception (**saṃjñā*) and recollection (**smṛti*).¹²⁵

Further below, Wonhyo endorses another central concept from the *Awakening of Faith*, namely the doctrine that all phenomena are pervaded by the activity (K. *yong* 用) of Buddha wisdom. The passage quoted by Wonhyo reads:

¹²² My equivalent "wisdom" only insufficiently covers the connotations of *ji* 智, which can be used in a very rational and analytic sense, rather akin to "knowledge," the English cognate of *jñāna*. Nonetheless, since "knowledge" is rather unfit to render the unitarian aspect of *ji*, "wisdom" is preferred here with the risk of underrepresenting the analytical aspect of *ji*.

¹²³ T no. 1747, 37: 131b12–15: 佛智離相。歸於心原。智與一心。渾同無二。以始覺者。即同本覺。故無一境。出此智外。由是道理。無境不盡。而非有限。以無限智。照無邊境故。See also Fuji 1997, p. 264.

¹²⁴ Doctrinally and terminologically, Wonhyo's verses are closely related to the corresponding passage in the *Awakening of Faith*: 法身說名本覺。何以故。本覺義者對始覺義說以始覺者即同本覺。始覺義者依本覺故而有不覺依不覺故說有始覺。又以覺心源故名究竟覺不覺心源 (for the Taishō reading 源, the Old Song and Kongō-zō versions read *yuán* 原) 故非究竟覺 (T no. 1666, 32: 576b14–18). See also T no. 1666, 32: 581a18–19: 於真如法中深解現前所修離相。

¹²⁵ T no. 1747, 37: 131b15–16: 如起信論云。一切境界。本來一心。離於想念。This is a literal quotation from T no. 1666, 32: 581b21. See also Fuji 1997, p. 263.

The Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, are free from the characteristic of seeing,¹²⁶ there is no place they do not reach, because it is the true reality of the mind. In exactly the same way, the nature of all dharmas itself manifests and illuminates all false dharmas. There is the activity of the great wisdom [and] limitless [compassionate] methods. Thus, sentient beings can obtain understanding.¹²⁷

The above passages can offer no more than a first glimpse of Wonhyo's Pure Land ontology. Although the treatment is preliminary at best, I hope to have demonstrated that Wonhyo places great importance on the views of mind and emptiness that he inherited from his Indian predecessors, while he also manages, in just a few lines, to take his stance on more specifically East Asian topics such as "One Mind" and its activity, original awakening, and sudden and gradual awakening. Using coherent metaphors and a rather dramatic entry to his commentaries, his style is exquisitely poetic and original, and at times it is difficult to draw the line between prose and verse. While Wonhyo's expressive style somewhat differs from the rather mellow and technical MSg, his scholarly approach reenacts Asaṅga's endeavors to endorse the doctrines of the Sukhāvātī sutras, going at great lengths to embed them in a general ontological worldview.

Wonhyo on the Place of Sukhāvātī on the Buddhist Path

Wonhyo was surely aware of the problematic issues around whether the doctrines of the Sukhāvātī sutras were to be taken literally, and the extent to

¹²⁶ In the systematics of the *Awakening of Faith*, "the characteristic of seeing" (Ch. *jian xiang* 見相) signifies the illusory subject that perceives external phenomena (see T no. 1666, 32: 577a10–11: 二者能見相。以依動故能見。不動則無見, alternative readings omitted; see also Suzuki 1900, p. 72). Thus, the concept of "the characteristic of seeing" seems to correspond to the "seeing part" (Ch. *jian fen* 見分) in Xuanzang's adaptation of *cittamātra* systematics. On the latter, see Schmithausen 2014, p. 293. In the *Awakening of Faith*, the "characteristic of seeing" is the cause of "the characteristic of the objective world," meaning the objects that appear to be different from perception, similar to Xuanzang's "part of characteristics" (Ch. *xian fen* 相分). See T no. 1666, 32: 577a11–12: 三者境界相。以依能見故境界妄現。離見則無境界。Notably, in the *Awakening of Faith*, the "the characteristic of seeing" is caused by "movement" (Ch. *dong* 動), a central theme in Wonhyo's metaphor of the wave and the ocean.

¹²⁷ T no. 1747, 37: 131b17–21: 諸佛如來離於見相。無所不遍。心真實故。即是諸法之性。自體顯照一切妄法。有大智用。無量方便。隨諸眾生所應得解[悉能開示一切法義。是故得名一切種智]。This is a literal quotation from T no. 1666, 32: 581b23–26 (as for the bracketed part of the final passage, Wonhyo slightly diverges from T no. 1666, 32: 581b26–27: 皆能開示種種法義。是故得名一切種智). See also Fuji 1997, p. 263.

which they could lead to a discouragement, not encouragement, of religious practice. Some of his more general positions on soteriology shine through in the sections already quoted above, and we have seen that he considers it “not easy” (K. *bur i* 不易)¹²⁸ to overcome dreamlike delusion, which cannot be unraveled in one instant (K. *bul ga don gae* 不可頓開). If we proceed further along his commentary on the *Shorter Sutra*, he then seems to embark on the literalness of the Sukhāvātī sutras, firstly by reaffirming manifestations of the Buddhas:

Therefore, the manifestations of the Great Sage (Mahāmuni) exist far away and nearby.¹²⁹

This can probably be understood as a commentary on the auspicious first word of the title, “Buddha,” which denotes the Buddha Śākyamuni who speaks the sutra. In fact, since the numerus of the nouns used here is not made explicit, Wonhyo might be referring to the one Buddha Śākyamuni as well as to a plurality of *munis* and buddhas at the same time. Then, possibly alluding to the second word in the title, “teaches/explains” (K. *seol* 說), Wonhyo continues:

The instructions taught [by Him] at times praise, at times blame.¹³⁰

Thus, even though there are ultimately no distinctions in this world, the Buddhas display/proclaim (K. *jin* 陳) preferences and dislike in the world, in a manner that is sometimes difficult to understand. Some theoretical background for this assumption is provided in the explanations on the four “intentions” of the Buddha, as found in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālaṃkāra* (ch. 12 verse 18, quoted above): here, the exposition of [3.] another time (rebirth in a Pure Land) is followed by the fourth intention, “the disposition of a living being” (Skt. *puḍgalasyāśay[a]*), which means the particular mentality, the mindset that makes a specific living being receptive to one kind of instruction and not to the other. The proper assessment of this disposition is

¹²⁸ Cp. the expression “the way of easy practice” (Ch. *yi xing dao* 易行道, T no. 1851, 44: 683b10) used for practices aimed at Sukhāvātī, as expounded by Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠 (334–416) and others. See Tanaka 1990, p. 55, 2004, p. 52, and Mochizuki 2001, p. 254.

¹²⁹ T no. 1759, 37: 348a18–19: 所以大聖垂迹有遐有邇。See also Muller 2012, p. 216: “Therefore the great sages leave their mark both near and afar.” “Manifestation” (K. *sujeok* 垂迹) can be translated more literally as “leaving a trace/mark.”

¹³⁰ T no. 1759, 37: 348a19: 所陳言教或褒或貶。

considered a key virtue of a fully awakened Buddha.¹³¹ Wonhyo's phrasing that the Buddha's words "sometimes praise sometimes blame" is an almost literal adoption of the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṅkāra*'s explanation of the fourth intention, explaining why the Buddha praises some people for giving generous gifts and blames others for the very same action.¹³² Wonhyo further emphasizes the *intention* behind the Buddha's teaching by saying:

The Muni, the Sugata, appears on this impure earth in order to warn against the five turbidities and exhort us towards a [good] rebirth.¹³³

This, again, explains why the Buddhas engage in seemingly mundane activity, acting in ways that are at times difficult to understand. We find this explained in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, in the section following the above-quoted passage on the *dharmakāya*:

And therefore, again, the Bhagavat has appeared among the five turbidities, and by his dishonest, bad, and poor actions, beings are to be tamed.¹³⁴

As can be seen above, Wonhyo finds it necessary to affirm, at the beginning of his commentary, that the Buddhas at times say things that are not true on a higher level. Although he does not make explicit how far this applies to the Sukhāvātī sutras, he seems to affirm Asaṅga's position in the MSg.

A) *The Buddha Amitābha Creates the Pure Land and Guides Living Beings*

So far, in his commentary on the *Shorter Sutra*, Wonhyo has explained that there is ultimately nothing vile about the expedient means employed by the Buddhas. He has mostly commented on our defiled earth and Buddha

¹³¹ See, for example, the exposition of the ten kinds of control (*daśa-vaśita*) in the *Abhidharma-samuccaya-bhāṣya*, where the ability to please the mind (*citta-paritoṣaṇa*) of all beings in whatever way appropriate appears as the ninth *vaśita*. The power to carry out the deeds of the Buddha in whatever way appropriate to beings forms an essential aspect of the tenth *vaśita* and marks the culmination of the tenfold list (Bayer 2010, pp. 295–96). This pedagogical insight into human nature played an even more dominant role in earlier descriptions of the Buddha's powers (see Schlingloff 1963, p. 38).

¹³² Lévi 1907, p. 83, l. 6: *kaśyacit praśamsate kaśyacit vigarhate*. On the MSg parallel, see Lamotte 1938, vol. 2, p. 131; Nagao 1982, pp. 399–93; T no. 1595, 31: 194b18–19: 譬如如來先為一人讚歎布施後還毀訾。

¹³³ T no. 1759, 37: 348a19–20: 至如牟尼善逝現此穢土。誠五濁而勸往。

¹³⁴ *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, (ch. 3, par. 46): *atha ca punaḥ pañcaśāyē bhagavān utpannaḥ / tenānarthalūhadaridrācaryayā satvā vinetavyāḥ*.

Śākyamuni. Now, he turns to the Buddha Amitābha and his Pure Land, treating the two Buddhas in the order in which they appear in the title of the work (Ch. *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經):

The Tathāgata Amitābha presides over his Pure Land. He pulls [there] the three classes of people and guides them to rebirth [in the Pure Land].¹³⁵

The sutras lack detailed explanations about the mechanism by which the Pure Land is created (purified/adorned) in a concrete, physical sense.¹³⁶ In Wonhyo's commentary, the role of Buddha Amitābha is expressed by the polysemic term *eo* 御, basically indicating that he presides as the ruler of his Pure Land. Among the meanings of the word *eo*, we find “to arrange, to administer, to settle,” “imperial,” but also “to attend to [a certain task].”¹³⁷ This clearly indicates a conception similar to that of a worldly ruler, an overlord responsible for the material and spiritual well-being of his land. We have already discussed a similar notion implied in MSg doctrine of a “sovereign cognition that is eminently pure” (MSg X.30a.6).

In the context of soteriology, it is often asked how the Pure Land doctrines can be aligned with the theory of *karman*. Do beings reach a state of bliss not by their own efforts, but rather as a bestowal of the Buddha Amitābha, regardless of their *karman*? If it is correct that Buddha Amitābha shares features of a worldly king, as Wonhyo's use of the term *eo* seems to affirm, it should be considered that in Sarvāstivāda/Yogācāra *karman* doctrine, the external circumstances, that is, the fertility and the wealth of the country, are not the result of strict individual retribution. Rather, they come about as the “sovereign result” (Skt. *adhipati-phala*) of the actions of sentient beings, among which, nonetheless, the overlord (Skt. *adhipati*) plays an exalted role.¹³⁸ Significantly different from that, the external conditions

¹³⁵ T no. 1759, 37: 348a20–21: 彌陀如來御彼淨國。引三輩而導生。

¹³⁶ See Gómez 1996, pp. 8–9. In the Chinese version of the *Longer Sutra*, the process of “adorning” the Pure Land is described, for example, in the following terms: “Based on his great adornment, equipped with many practices [?], he directed living beings to attain virtues. He remained in emptiness, freedom from signs and wishes of [all] *dharmas*. Without production, without rising: He saw the *dharmas* to be like [illusory] transformations.” (T no. 360, 12: 269c16–18: 以大莊嚴具足眾行令諸眾生功德成就。住空無相無願之法無作無起觀法如化。See also Gómez 1996, p. 174).

¹³⁷ See Tōdō, Matsumoto, and Takeda 1993, s.v. *yu* 御。

¹³⁸ See Hopkins 1906, p. 587; Bayer 2010, pp. 370–71. See also Harvey 2013, p. 261, on *karman* as the cause for timely rainfall. Abhidharma descriptions of the *adhipati-phala* deal with agriculture, and thus a rural setting, exclusively. In contrast, in the Sanskrit *Longer Sutra*, even though it is emphasized that “at the proper time clouds of heavenly perfumed water

found in the Pure Land are often explained to result from the power of the Buddha Amitābha's virtues (/vows) alone.¹³⁹ It would therefore contradict classical *karman* doctrine if the individual's contribution to shaping and experiencing the environment is wholly denied, as Wonhyo's commentary seems to affirm.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Wonhyo seems to be reserved with regard to this explanation,¹⁴¹ and he cautions his readers that there are different views on this issue.¹⁴²

At any rate, it is certainly not the effort of the adept alone that brings about the desired leap towards liberation, and this is a significant difference from *āgamic* Buddhism. While the "Noble Eightfold Path" can be practiced whether or not a Buddha is present, the Sukhāvātī sutras teach that the Buddha Amitābha plays an active role in elevating aspirants to the Pure Land, according to the *Longer Sutra*, even appearing before them with his retinue at the moment of death.¹⁴³ Again, it depends upon a combination of the practitioner's initiative with the Buddha's activity, in which the latter plays a dominant role. Clearly, religious devotion plays an increasingly central role, as was drastically asserted in the doctrine of the "power of the other" (Ch. *tali* 他力),

bring down rain" (Gómez 1996, p. 91), Sukhāvātī as a whole resembles a pleasure akin to the suburban setting of early monastic *vihāras*. In the Chinese version, solid monastic buildings with towers and lecture halls are added (see Gómez 1996, p. 181), resembling the later *vihāra* style, probably from Central Asia. On the development of *vihāra* architecture, see Schopen 2006; on rural and (sub-)urban imagery in Abhidharma and Sukhāvātī, Bayer 2010, pp. 354–55.

¹³⁹ See the commentary on the *Jingtu lun* 淨土論, also called *Wangsheng lun* 往生論 (T no. 1524, vol. 26, ascribed to Vasubandhu; hereafter, *Treatise on the Pure Land*) by Tanluan, the *Jingtulun zhu* 淨土論註 (T no. 1819, vol. 40) as translated by Inagaki (1998, p. 74): "the three kinds of glorious accomplishment are, in their origin, [Dharmakāra's] adornment with the Pure Vow-Mind through forty-eight vows and so on. Since the cause is pure, the result is equally pure. They are not what has come into existence without any cause or by some other cause." T no. 1819, 40: 841b7–9: 此三種莊嚴成就由本四十八願等清淨願心之所莊嚴。因淨故果淨。非無因他因有也。 I have underlined the words from the *Treatise on the Pure Land*.

¹⁴⁰ T no. 1747, 37: 128b7–8: 但承如來本願力故。隨感受用。非自業因力之所成辦。 On this passage, see also Tanaka 2004, p. 53.

¹⁴¹ T no. 1747, 37: 128b8–9: 是故說無往生因。

¹⁴² T no. 1747, 37: 128b9: 此因之相經論不同。 I am unaware of the exact discourses Wonhyo alludes to by "sutras and treatises." Although Muller's translation seems sensible ("The [explanations of the] characteristics of this causation differ between the sutras and the treatises," Muller 2012, p. 175), an alternative interpretation in the sense of "between [various] sutras and treatises" might be legitimate, too. In fact, in the following passage, Wonhyo adduces sutra and *śāstra* doctrines in which the practices of the adept appear as a cause for rebirth in Sukhāvātī.

¹⁴³ See Inagaki 2003, p. 31; T no. 360, 12: 272b18–20: 此等眾生臨壽終時無量壽佛與諸大眾現其人前即隨彼佛往生其國。

entrusting one's salvation to Amitābha alone, as emphasized, for example, in the writings ascribed to Daochuo 道綽 (562–645).¹⁴⁴ Although Wonhyo acknowledges that Amithābha elevates beings to the Pure Land, he does not go so far as to recommend complete reliance on Amithābha alone.¹⁴⁵

At this point, it might be worth reconsidering the conception of “method,” which can refer to fundamentally different activities. Above, Wonhyo mentions the manifestations of the “Great Muni,” as well as his skill in exposition. That is to say, the “Great Muni” adapts his *teachings* to the mental disposition of his listeners, so that the teaching of the Pure Lands could be no more than a method to attract beings to the Dharma, while factually not true. On the other hand, the Pure Land doctrine seems to imply a development of this doctrine, namely that the Buddhas adapt their wondrous *activity* to the minds of sentient beings, which would support a literal interpretation. In this case, this would be the creation of the Pure Land and the transference of living beings to that sphere, in accordance with the Bodhisattva Dharmakāra's original vow, an activity adapted to the mindset of less advanced Buddhist followers.¹⁴⁶ That is to say, when the Pure Land sutras are designated a “method” or “expedient means” (Skt. *upāya*, Ch. *fangbian* 方便), it seems appropriate to distinguish whether this refers to a skillful *teaching* (which might not be true) only, or whether it includes a skillful *activity*, such as creating a Pure Land and guiding the deceased there.¹⁴⁷

B) Ten Moments of Concentration on the Buddha Amitābha

How, then, can the Pure Land be reached? Wonhyo endorses the *Longer Sutra's* famed doctrine that a person who has his or her mind concentrated on the Buddha Amitābha for at least ten (successive) moments will in fact reach this Pure Land after death,¹⁴⁸ given other prerequisites that will be addressed below. That is to say, Wonhyo still belongs to the exegetes who

¹⁴⁴ On Daochuo, see Tanaka 1990, pp. 17, 45; Harvey 2013, p. 216. See also Tanaka 2004, p. 53, on doctrines resembling the “power of the other” in Wonhyo's commentaries.

¹⁴⁵ See also Muller 2007, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ See also Tanaka (2004, p. 53): “The power of the Tathāgata's original vow’ ([Ch. *ruilai benyuan li*] 如来本願力) is conceived and imagined in accordance with the sensibilities of the people of unsettled nature.”

¹⁴⁷ Cp. the summary of the Buddha Wisdom for Accomplishing the Tasks in Muller 2007, p. 8. Muller confines his description to the passive/perceptive aspects of this Buddha-wisdom while leaving the active/creative aspects unmentioned.

¹⁴⁸ T no. 360, 12: 272c6–7: 當發無上菩提之心一向專意乃至十念念無量壽佛願生其國。

recommend “recalling” the Buddha (Ch. *nianfo* 念佛) in the sutra’s original sense of recollecting (Skt. *smṛti*) the Buddha and his virtues,¹⁴⁹ without necessarily reciting his praise.¹⁵⁰ In Wonhyo’s phrasing, “To the extent of ten [moments of] recollection, recollect, [while remaining] focused, that Buddha [i.e., Amitābha]!”¹⁵¹

Quite probably, the specific count of at least *ten* recollections, which the sutra requires, derives from and hints at another meditative practice: for a major part of the Indian Buddhist tradition, the very beginning of the Buddhist meditative path consist in the recollection of the breath (Skt. *ānāpāna-smṛti*), while counting the breath from one to ten.¹⁵² Thus, the ten moments of recollecting the Buddha Amitābha function as a preliminary concentration practice for those who cannot, in this life, pursue the practice of *ānāpāna-smṛti*, and the successive path of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* meditations. When focusing single-mindedly on the Buddha with the hope for a good life after death, they can at least plant a seed consisting in ten moments of focused attention,¹⁵³ a residue (Skt. *vāsanā*) that will hopefully resurface as a habit or ability for meditative concentration in the future.¹⁵⁴ Hopefully, the (lay) followers who have completed the ten moments of focused attention will at some point attain rebirth under more tranquil conditions, in a place where they can practice *śamatha*, the contemplations on the Four Noble Truths and

¹⁴⁹ Hence Gómez (1996, p. 167) translates the respective phrase in the *Longer Sutra* as “bring to mind this aspiration for even ten moments of thought.” Cf. Muller 2012, p. 217, n. 8 (“maintain steadfast mindfulness up to ten times”); Jang 2003, p. 178 (“ten time’s chanting of Buddha’s name”); and Suzuki 1997, p. 31 (“only thinking of me for, say, up to ten times”).

¹⁵⁰ This has already been observed in Tanaka (2004, p. 50), “focusing of the mind on the Buddha, . . . differing from the oral recitation promoted most vigorously by Shandao.” Nonetheless, the *Longer Sutra* is often considered “a locus classicus for the famous eighteenth [vow] of Amitābha, in which he promises Pure Land rebirth to those who chant his name” (Muller 2007, pp. 1–2).

¹⁵¹ T no. 1747, 37: 128b22–23: [二者。]乃至十念。專念彼佛。[是助滿業]。 Muller 2012, p. 176: “For up to ten recollections, they single-mindedly focus on that buddha.” Of course, “up to” is meant here in the sense of “at least,” or “until [the count of ten is reached].” Cf. Suzuki (1997, p. 32): “one must pronounce the Name. . . . According to the Shin tradition, just one time is enough, but this sutra advises ‘up to ten times.’ In fact, pronouncing Amida’s name just once is enough, but if once is enough, then ten times will also be sufficient.”

¹⁵² Deleanu 1992, p. 52, referring to the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* (Pradhan 1967, pp. 339–40).

¹⁵³ On recollection of the Buddha as one of several methods to attain *samādhi*, see Harvey 2013, p. 323. See also Buswell and Lopez 2013, s.v. *samādhi*.

¹⁵⁴ On habitual actions in future lives, see Bayer 2010, p. 51.

so on, the path to complete *bodhi*. According to the Pure Land sutras, this place will be Sukhāvātī in the very next existence. While this doctrine might have been viewed with some suspicion by those Abhidharma scholars and Yoga practitioners of ancient India who did not accept the Mahayana sutras as authentic, they might have been able to see the benefits of this practice, even if rebirth under more favorable conditions would mean human rebirth with a prospect of ordination at some point in the near or far future. In either case, there can be no doubt that the recollection of the Buddha for ten moments is not merely a devotional exercise. It is at the same time a minimal exercise in *samādhi*.¹⁵⁵

C) The Wish for Complete Buddhahood as a Prerequisite for Rebirth in Sukhāvātī

Still, according to the same passage in the *Longer Sutra*, a timespan of ten moments of recollection alone is not a sufficient cause for rebirth in the Pure Land. As is well known, the sutra advocates that there are three kinds of beings reborn in the Pure Land,¹⁵⁶ namely, ordained members of the *saṃgha*, virtuous laypeople, and laypeople of lesser effort or merit.¹⁵⁷ All three of them need to have the wish to be reborn in the Pure Land, focus on the Buddha Amithābha, and, most strikingly, all three have to generate *bodhicitta*, the wish to gain awakening and to become a Buddha for the sake of all living beings.¹⁵⁸ Without this decision, rebirth in the Pure Land is impossible. Evidently, life in Sukhāvātī is by no means the ultimate goal

¹⁵⁵ Wonhyo's profound discussion of the "ten [moments of] recollection" would provide plenty of material for a separate article. Neither his views nor the pertinent literature on this practice in East Asian Buddhism can be dealt with in appropriate detail here. Quite essentially, Tanluan held that the original term (Ch. *shī nian* 十念) "does not mean ten *times* or *moments*, but a state of mental concentration, which he calls the 'ten consecutive contemplations'" (Tanaka 1990, p. 120). According to Mochizuki (2000, p. 162), Tanluan taught that "the devotee should with singleness of mind think on the Buddha Amitābha, and his mind should be interrupted with no other thoughts: when ten such thoughts succeed one another, this is what is termed 'the ten continuous thoughts.'" While adhering to this doctrine, Tanluan vigorously propagated the recitation of the Buddha's name as a practice that yields various benefits (Mochizuki 2000, p. 161).

¹⁵⁶ T no. 360, 12: 272b16: 凡有三輩. See Inagaki 2003, p. 31.

¹⁵⁷ See T no. 360, 12: 272b16–c10.

¹⁵⁸ T no. 360, 12: 272c4–7: 其下輩者 . . . 假使不能作諸功德當發無上菩提之心一向專意乃至十念念無量壽願生其國. See Inagaki 2003, p. 32: "The lower grade of aspirants . . . although unable to do many meritorious deeds, . . . awaken aspiration for highest enlightenment and single-mindedly think of Amitāyus even ten times, desiring birth in his land." See also Gómez 1996, p. 40; Tanaka 2004, pp. 49–50; and Jang 2003, p. 174.

of this path.¹⁵⁹ This does not contradict the assumption that life in the Pure Land was a more palpable goal than ultimate Buddhahood for a great number of followers, probably even the vast majority, who never read the sutra. Rather, when reconsidering Schopen's designation of Sukhāvātī as a "religious goal,"¹⁶⁰ I would like to suggest a clear differentiation of the *subjects* actively calling upon the Buddha Amitābha, as the sutra recommends. The intentions of various subjects were and are probably quite diverse, and for some, the ancestors' *being* in the Pure Land collectively is probably more important than their own *going* to the Pure Land individually.¹⁶¹ Therefore, it seems more appropriate to speak of "goals," some of which were never recorded in writing. On the other hand, as far as I see, the intent of the sutra itself is sufficiently clear.

The Pure Land is, according to the sutra's doctrine, a den from which various future Buddhas will emerge, no more and no less than that. As for this life, the sutra's requirement of *bodhicitta* implies a hierarchy of values about good behavior in the world. Even though rebirth in the Pure Land is relatively easy to attain, it is still the superior path to take ordination, do virtuous deeds and, in addition to that, wish for rebirth in Sukhāvātī. Among laypeople, again, virtuous activity according to the generally accepted principles of Mahayana Buddhism is superior to the lifestyle of a man or woman who aims for the higher goals but does not engage fervently in religious activity, even if this lack of engagement is due to unsurmountable obligations or obstacles in the present life.

D) Wonhyo on Bodhicitta as a Prerequisite for Sukhāvātī

Wonhyo developed the abovementioned doctrine by emphasizing a distinction between two kinds of human beings who have generated *bodhicitta* and made the wish to be reborn in Sukhāvātī, namely, (1) beings of "uncertain nature," and (2) beings of bodhisattva nature.¹⁶² These two are widely known

¹⁵⁹ See Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 41; vol. 2, pp. 130–31.

¹⁶⁰ Schopen 1977, p. 177.

¹⁶¹ This ancestral aspect of Pure Land faith is clearly reflected in the fact that Amitābha is in Japan addressed as Oya-sama 親様, a reverential term that, according to Suzuki (1997, p. 25), "means parent, but not either parent, rather mother and father . . . united in one personality." This point is further elaborated by Hōzen Seki in his introduction to Suzuki's book: "For example—my parents, my society, my nation, the air, earth, sun, etc.—all these powers of compassion are called *Oya-sama*. I cannot live in this world without Oya-sama. Oya-sama and I are in oneness" (Suzuki 1997, p. 9).

¹⁶² See T no. 1747, 37: 128b24 (不定性人), 128c1 (菩薩種性人). See also Tanaka 2004, p. 49.

from a categorization of living beings into five kinds of potential, or five flocks of beings,¹⁶³ a paradigm specific to Asaṅga's tradition.¹⁶⁴ Among those five, the group of uncertain nature (or potential) possibly has its historical roots in the Indian monasteries of Asaṅga's time or earlier, when followers of the Bodhisattvayāna (Mahayana) and of the purely *āgāmic* traditions often lived side by side in monasteries. Quite probably, for one reason or another, some had not explicitly committed to the new trend though partly following its doctrines or rituals.¹⁶⁵

If the above assessment is accurate, the allusion to beings of "uncertain nature" included committed practitioners of the *āgāmic* traditions with some Mahayana leanings in the Indian context, while in Wonhyo's Korean context, such constellations were probably nonexistent or rare, since most Korean monks and nuns followed the Mahayana. Thus, in his commentary, the beings of uncertain potential seem to be characterized by a feeble commitment to Mahayana Buddhist practice as a whole, rather than a wavering between the *āgāmic* traditions and the Mahayana movement that had still been in the process of taking a distinct shape at the time of Asaṅga.¹⁶⁶

According to Wonhyo, the "uncertain" beings' prerequisites for rebirth in Sukhāvātī are: (1) generating *bodhicitta* (the "proper cause," K. *jeong in* 正因), (2) awareness of Amitābha for ten moments of thought (the "assisting, fulfilling action," K. *jo man eop* 助滿業), (3) the wish to be reborn in Sukhāvātī (no technical term).¹⁶⁷ The second group, those of bodhisattva nature, have to fulfill the same three categories of requirements: (1) generating *bodhicitta* along with *deep faith*, (2) awareness of Amitābha for only one moment of thought, (3) the wish to be reborn in Sukhāvātī.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ The etymology and semantics of the term *gotra* have been discussed, for example, by Dayal (1932, pp. 51–52), and Snellgrove (1987, p. 67, n. 87, pp. 111–12, 190).

¹⁶⁴ The fivefold scheme consists of the widespread threefold categorization into Hearers (*śrāvaka*), Individual Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*) and Bodhisattvas, to which are added the two categories of persons of uncertain potential (*aniyata-gotraka*) and those who have no potential for awakening (*agotraka*). See Wangchuk 2007, p. 37.

¹⁶⁵ See also my notes on the five *gotras* in the context of the "common vehicle" (Tib. *theg pa thun mong*). Bayer 2011, p. 71.

¹⁶⁶ In terms of Asaṅga's five-*gotra* doctrine, a person who has generated *bodhicitta* would technically cease to belong to the uncertain *gotra* and thus enter the Bodhisattva *gotra*. See also Tanaka 2004, pp. 50, 52.

¹⁶⁷ T no. 1747, 37: 128b21–24: 初人三者。一者。假使不能作諸功德。當發無上菩提之心。是明正因。二者。乃至十念。專念彼佛。是助滿業。三者願生彼國。此願前行和合為因。是明不定性人也。See Tanaka 2004, p. 49. See also Jang 2003, p. 173.

¹⁶⁸ T no. 1747, 37: 128b24–c1: 第二人中有三句者。一者。聞甚深法。歡喜信樂。此句兼顯發心正因。但為異前人舉其深信耳。二者。乃至一念念於彼佛。是助滿業。為顯前人無深信故。必

Strikingly, for the committed bodhisattva, it is not even necessary to uphold a focus on the Buddha Amitābha for ten moments of time. Thus, advanced practitioners are burdened with *less* meditative concentration than those *lacking* commitment. Why should that be so? Should we not rather expect that, for enthusiastic bodhisattvas, ten moments of recollecting the Buddha would be no more than a minor addition to the schedule of their daily *vita religiosa*?

So far, Wonhyo's doctrine is in line with the sutra, which only requires that committed practitioners, both ordained and non-ordained, generate the wish to be reborn in the Pure Land, but does not prescribe any minimum time span for the [*anu-*]smṛti (Ch. *nian* 念) on the Buddha. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the sutra's indulgent handling of the bodhisattva's *anusmṛti* serves a symbolic purpose rather than a practical one: the "certain" way of life of the active bodhisattva is surely the commendable lifestyle,¹⁶⁹ superior to that of the "uncertain" follower who, nonetheless, will reach Sukhāvātī upon fulfilling minimum requirements.

E) Doubt, Faith, and Devotion

As seen above, even an advanced bodhisattva such as Maitreya is encouraged to strive for birth in Sukhāvātī, while pursuing his exalted career. At the same time, he is warned of the single most perilous factor that could seriously impede his sojourn in the Pure Land: doubt. Hence the Buddha speaks in another passage of the *Longer Sutra*: "Maitreya, you should know that you have, since innumerable *kalpas*, cultivated the bodhisattva conduct in order to save sentient beings."¹⁷⁰ Now, having made the wish to be reborn in Sukhāvātī, "In your next life [you will be in] the Buddha land of Amitāyus, [the land of] limitless delight. For a long time endowed with the virtues of the path, you will be forever liberated from the roots of birth and death, that is to say, there will be no troubles such as the painful afflictions of desire, anger, and ignorance."¹⁷¹ "Without [deliberate] action, just

須十念。此人有深信故。未必具足十念。三者。以至誠心。願生彼國。此願前行和合為因。此就菩薩種性人也。 See Tanaka 2004, p. 50.

¹⁶⁹ See also Muller 2007, p. 4: "Almost everything in Wonhyo's text deals with ways in which rebirth in the Pure Land is contingent upon one's own effort."

¹⁷⁰ T no. 360, 12: 275b28–29: 彌勒當知汝從無數劫來修菩薩行欲度眾生。 See also Inagaki 2003, p. 46 (section 33); Gómez 1996, p. 204 (§156).

¹⁷¹ T no. 360, 12: 275c9–11: 後生無量壽佛國快樂無極。長與道德合明永拔生死根本無復貪患愚癡苦惱之患。 See also Inagaki 2003, p. 46 (section 33); Gómez 1996, p. 204 (§158).

naturally, you will proceed on the path of nirvana. You should each diligently proceed with this longing in your heart. If you hesitate with doubts that you might not obtain what you aspire for, and if you regret [your aspirations] in the midst [of proceeding towards the Pure Land], then, because you yourself make that mistake, you will be born in the outskirts of that [Pure Land], in a palace made of seven kinds of jewels, and for five hundred years you will suffer various misfortunes!”¹⁷²

Although it is imperative to avoid doubt, we find little specification in this sutra passage how doubt can be recognized or categorized. If doubt has disastrous consequences, is it just any kind of doubt in one’s success on the bodhisattva path, or is it doubt in rebirth in Sukhāvātī? In this context, it is probably mostly the latter, as well as doubt in other aspects of the Dharma, with little need for a scholastic definition. Nonetheless, in a later passage of the *Longer Sutra*, we find a mention of doubt in the “unobstructed Buddha wisdom.” In the Sanskrit version, this is not further specified, and its most significant implication is probably doubt in the Dharma and in the teachings of this sutra.¹⁷³ The respective passage in the Chinese version has been significantly enlarged and restructured;¹⁷⁴ it contains a list of four kinds (or epithets) of Buddha wisdom. Doubting such wisdom will cause rebirth in the periphery of Sukhāvātī and exile to the jewel palace as described above.¹⁷⁵

It is at this point that Wonhyo’s commentary on the *Longer Sutra* diverges significantly from the sutra’s original phrasing and doctrines, for he explains these four kinds of Buddha wisdom as corresponding, respectively, to the four kinds of Buddha wisdom taught in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*.¹⁷⁶ Only a correct and profound understanding of all Four Wisdoms qualifies as *deep faith* (K. *sim sin* 深信) and permits birth in the center of Sukhāvātī. On Wonhyo’s high standard for the desired goal, Tanaka (2004, p. 51) observes,

¹⁷² T no. 360, 12: 275c13–15: 無為自然次於泥洹之道。汝等宜各精進求心所願無得疑惑中悔自為過咎生彼邊地七寶宮殿五百歲中受諸厄也。 See also Inagaki 2003, pp. 46–47 (section 33), Gómez 1996, p. 204 (§158).

¹⁷³ “They do not bring forth any doubt, they do not hesitate about the unhindered Buddha wisdom” (*na vicikitsām utpādayanti, na kāṃkṣanty asaṅgabuddhajñānaṃ*, Ashikaga 1965, p. 58). See also Gómez 1996, p. 105 (§136).

¹⁷⁴ See also Gómez 1996, p. 241, n. 95, commenting on a rather abrupt transition between the sections (§136 and §137) in the Sanskrit version.

¹⁷⁵ T no. 360, 12: 278a22–24: 若有眾生以疑惑心修諸功德願生彼國不了佛智不思議智不可稱智大乘廣智無等無倫最上勝智於此諸智疑惑不信。 Inagaki 2003, p. 58 (section 43); Gómez 1996, p. 217 (§216). See also Jang 2003, pp. 172, 175.

¹⁷⁶ On the four kinds of *buddha-jñāna*, see Satō 1985, Makransky 1997, pp. 100–103 (referring to *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, ch. 9, verses 67–76).

“Deep faith, thus, involves quite an advanced level of wisdom, for it entails realization of emptiness.” Accordingly, Wonhyo’s explanations of the four appear to be the apex of his commentary. Addressing the Four Wisdoms one by one, Wonhyo’s comments are clearly based on the traditional explanations of Indian lore, into which he has skillfully interwoven a red thread of ascending insights with regard to the Pure Land, its reality and ultimate meaning.¹⁷⁷

(1) In order to understand the “Wisdom for Accomplishing the Tasks” (K. *seong jak sa ji* 成作事智), one accepts that through ten recollections of the Buddha, one is reborn in Sukhāvati, as the sutra teaches.¹⁷⁸ It is this kind of wisdom that can accomplish such a feat,¹⁷⁹ establishing an alternative to the ordinary six realms of existence. Doubting sentient beings wonder whether this mechanism is in fact effective enough to overcome the fetters of *karman* which, as the sutra teaches, do not wither away,¹⁸⁰ let alone the habitual tendencies of the *kleśas* and clinging to the characteristics of phenomena.¹⁸¹ Whether or not this matches the intention of the Chinese *Longer Sutra*, Wonhyo has identified the “Unthinkable Wisdom” mentioned in the sutra with the “Wisdom for Accomplishing the Tasks.”¹⁸² This seems quite appropriate when considering that “unthinkable” is a well-established designation for the powers of the Buddhas to carry out their specific tasks,¹⁸³ and Wonhyo illustrates this by listing a number of these tasks, such as annihilating misdeeds and so on.¹⁸⁴

(2) The “Wisdom of Subtle Observation” (K. *myo gwan chal ji* 妙觀察智) understands all phenomena as illusory, dreamlike, neither existent, nor non-existent, free from language and thought.¹⁸⁵ And still, even though one does not chase after words, one can name and measure all *dharmas*.¹⁸⁶

(3) The “Wisdom of Equality” (K. *pyeong deung seong ji* 平等性智), among other qualities, is not fixated on the narrow doctrines of the “Small

¹⁷⁷ For the details of Wonhyo’s explanations, see Jang 2003, pp. 176–84, and the translation by Muller 2012, pp. 195–208.

¹⁷⁸ T no. 1747, 37: 130b28: 經說十念念佛得生彼國。See Muller 2012, p. 200.

¹⁷⁹ T no. 1747, 37: 130b27: 成作事智。所作之事。

¹⁸⁰ T no. 1747, 37: 130b29: 如佛經說善惡業道。罪福無朽。

¹⁸¹ T no. 1747, 37: 130c3–4: 又無始來。起諸煩惱繫屬三界而相纏縛。

¹⁸² T no. 1747, 37: 130b4: 不思議智者。是成所作智。

¹⁸³ See Kritzer 2002, Bayer 2010, p. 296.

¹⁸⁴ See T no. 1747, 37: 130b7: 永滅多劫重罪。See also Muller 2007, p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ See T no. 1747, 37: 130b10–11: 一切法。皆如幻夢。非有非無。離言絕慮。See Muller 2012, p. 197.

¹⁸⁶ See T no. 1747, 37: 130b11: 非逐言者所能稱量。See also Muller 2007, p. 8.

Vehicle,” but rather frolics in non-self, wherefore there is no non-self.¹⁸⁷ The power of this wisdom about a common essence can lead all sentient beings to the unsurpassed *bodhi*.¹⁸⁸

(4) The “Great Mirror Wisdom” (K. *dae won gyeong ji* 大圓鏡智) is the return to mind’s origin,¹⁸⁹ the true *dharmakāya*.¹⁹⁰ Wonhyo’s final explanations of the “Great Mirror Wisdom” form the ultimate culmination of his commentary, stating that “Buddha wisdom is free from characteristics, a return to mind’s origin; wisdom is the ‘One Mind.’”¹⁹¹ Having realized that “this initial awakening is exactly the same as original awakening,”¹⁹² one comes to understand that “therefore, there is not a single [external] object that goes beyond that wisdom.”¹⁹³ Thus, “unlimited wisdom illuminates all infinite objects.”¹⁹⁴

This abridged outline should suffice to demonstrate the gist of Wonhyo’s commentary: namely, outlining an ascending path of insight into the nature of mind and phenomena, culminating in the realization of the “One Mind” and resulting in a return to the world of mind-made phenomena. Wonhyo’s outline is strikingly similar to the process described in Vasubandhu’s *Thirty Verses* (see above), though it differs in its positive and affirmative depiction of the absolute. Notably, Wonhyo’s order of the Four Wisdoms reverses the sequence found in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṅkāra*.¹⁹⁵ Originally, the first Buddha wisdom (“Mirror Wisdom”) epitomizes the fundamentally mental nature of all phenomana, the second rises to the heights of nondualism, while the third represents a return to the phenomenal world with a clear analytical understanding, and the fourth the compassionate implementation of this understanding. In Wonhyo’s sequence, understanding seems to dawn with an apprehension of the Pure Land, which illustrates a Buddha’s activity, from which one moves towards analysis, nondualism, and the “One Mind” underlying all phenomena. Finally, this understanding permits a fundamentally new perspective on the phenomenal world. Considering that the original

¹⁸⁷ See T no. 1747, 37: 130b13: 不向小乘。遊無我故無不我。 See also Muller 2012, p. 198; Muller 2007, p. 198.

¹⁸⁸ See T no. 1747, 37: 130b14–15: 此同體智力。普載無邊有情。皆令同至無上菩提。 See also Muller 2012, p. 198.

¹⁸⁹ T no. 1747, 37: 130b17: 方歸心原。 See Muller 2012, p. 199.

¹⁹⁰ T no. 1747, 37: 130b19: 如是鏡智。正是法身。 See Muller 2012, p. 199.

¹⁹¹ T no. 1747, 37: 131b12: 佛智離相。歸於心原。智與一心。 See Muller 2012, p. 207.

¹⁹² T no. 1747, 37: 131b13: 以始覺者。即同本覺。 See Muller 2012, p. 207.

¹⁹³ T no. 1747, 37: 131b13–14: 故無一境。出此智外。 See Muller 2012, p. 207.

¹⁹⁴ T no. 1747, 37: 131b14–15: 以無限智 照無邊境。 See Muller 2012, p. 207.

¹⁹⁵ On the Four Wisdoms, see Makransky 1997, pp. 100–3, as mentioned above.

Sanskrit sutra mentions nothing more than doubt in the Buddha's wisdom, and that the Chinese version contains only five general terms for awakened wisdom, the purpose of Wonhyo's extensive explanations is, in my opinion, quite obvious—emphasizing the value of the more abstract and advanced contemplations, culminating in the doctrines of the *Awakening of Faith*.

For the most part, these contemplations consist in overcoming a set of four doubts in the four wisdoms respectively, doubts that are, as Muller (2007, p. 9) observes “all quite discursive in character, the kind of doubts that might be called failed attempts at thinking these cognitions through logically.” That being so, is the path advocated by Wonhyo a merely intellectual endeavor? How much time should the adept spend studying Mahayana systematics, as different from remaining in nondual meditation on the Buddha wisdoms? Wonhyo's instructions leave the aspirant in an uncertain place in the triangle between religious faith, rational study, and formal meditation. Or, if all that is required is a rational understanding of the Five Wisdoms, would this not lead to the logical consequence to engage in compassionate activity, the implementation of the first Buddha wisdom, once this rational understanding has been obtained? Wonhyo provides hardly any guidance for the concrete application of his explanations. Nonetheless, he does provide a justification for different styles of religious life, depending on the aspirant's situation and preferences. While this leaves some room for uncertainty, Wonhyo certainly supplies a coherent ontological and soteriological basis for Pure Land faith, even for readers who cannot pursue a prolonged path of study and practice in this life.

Since the final explanations on the “Great Mirror Wisdom” and the “One Mind” are based on the *Awakening of Faith*, Wonhyo closes this section with a longer quotation from said treatise, corroborating his points. Dramaturgically, we are clearly in falling action, and at this point, the reader acquainted with the *Longer Sutra* might have found himself either inspired to pursue the contemplations on the “One Mind,” or otherwise overwhelmed by the high demands put on the aspirant for the Pure Land. It is only in the final lines of his commentary that Wonhyo opens a window of opportunity for those who feel unable to realize the Four Wisdoms in an appropriate way: “Those whose minds are not yet open, if they revere the Tathāgata only (/profoundly), with single-pointed devotion and faith,”¹⁹⁶ they can be reborn in the center of the Pure Land, not in the periphery.¹⁹⁷ Of course, one

¹⁹⁶ T no. 1747, 37: 131b26–27: 心眼未開。仰惟如來。一向伏信。 See Muller 2012, p. 209.

¹⁹⁷ T no. 1747, 37: 131b28: 不在邊地。 See Muller 2012, p. 209.

may ask how this doctrine fits in with what has been said before. Evidently, doctrinal coherence is at this point no longer the focus of Wonhyo's commentary. After all, his final words seem to be very well in line with the doctrine of the sutra. His long and intense excursus on the Four Wisdoms might have been nothing more than a broad hint not to abandon the thoughts and practices of the *Awakening of Faith*, let alone *bodhicitta*.¹⁹⁸

Summary and Review on Asaṅga and Wonhyo

The Indian Mahayana texts presented in this article seem to agree insofar as Pure Lands are understood as not existing inherently or absolutely. Rather, they have the nondual union of manifestation and emptiness as their ultimate nature. Within Indian Mahayana literature, I am not aware of any assertion to the contrary, that is, to the effect that the ultimate nature of Pure Lands is in any way different from that of the ordinary worldly realms. In this doctrinal point, the systematization of Mahayana doctrines as developed by Asaṅga seems universally valid. Furthermore, there seems to be a consensus that the auspicious attributes of Pure Lands are generated by the minds of the respective Buddhas; that is to say, they are, on a slightly less-than-ultimate ontological level, mental apparitions in which living beings can take part. This mental nature of the Pure Lands does not lessen their value in any way. Rather, they are seen as a wondrous display of the Buddha mind.¹⁹⁹

As for the soteriological value of the Pure Lands, there seems to be widespread accord that those beings aiming for the Pure Lands eventually reach there, gain a spiritually advanced stage, find the ideal conditions for following the bodhisattva path, and eventually attain complete Buddhahood. The commentaries are much less explicit on the question of when and under what preconditions the Pure Lands can be reached, and Vasubandhu's explanation is somewhat ambivalent when he states that the wish to be reborn

¹⁹⁸ Cp. Muller 2007, p. 13: "in terms of [Wonhyo's] final assessment of the point of the sūtra, indeed, something very much like faith in other power is the final solution." I can only agree with Muller in so far as mere faith is presented as a *viable* solution, and it might be the only viable solution for the majority of lay followers. Still, as said above, he provides justification for a variety of religious lifestyles, among which monkhood and intense religious activity are depicted as supreme.

¹⁹⁹ See also Schmithausen 2014, p. 607: "the development of (Yogācāra-)Vijñānavāda thought is . . . characterized by a strong tendency to establish . . . the mind . . . as an intermediate level between fiction and ultimate reality, and on this level it was possible to create not only an elaborate 'idealist' Abhidharma-like system but also an elaborate theory of the *Buddhas and their salvific activity* in the world" (my italics).

there will eventually yield its result just like “one copper coin will become a thousand copper coins.”

In Asaṅga’s writings and Vasubandhu’s commentaries, it is evident that both authors recommend practicing the Dharma intensely in this lifetime. Although there is thus a certain value statement involved, the Pure Lands are seen as an excellent design by the Buddhas, especially for those who are not able or willing to engage more fully at this time and instead postpone their practice to their arrival in the Pure Lands. Therefore, Asaṅga used (or invented) the exegetical device of explaining the Pure Land teachings as being intended, by the Buddha, for “a later time” (*kālāntara*), without this implying any depreciation of those teachings. Vasubandhu’s comments on this doctrine have been translated by Paramārtha, and it is in his translation that we can find the compound “indolent wholesome roots” (Ch. *lan duo shan gen* 懶惰善根), which suggests more of a moralistic value statement than we can find in Vasubandhu’s original phrasing.

With his explanation of the intent that underlies seemingly contradictory sutras, Asaṅga could resolve the conflict between those texts emphasizing arduous practice in this lifetime and many consecutive eons, and those texts focusing on rebirth in the Pure Lands. His treatises formed an important foundation for the rapprochement of various Buddhist traditions, probably in connection with the unification of hitherto antagonist regions under the rising Gupta dynasty. While resolving conflicts inside the Buddhist tradition, Asaṅga also provided a legitimate explanation for the Pure Land teachings as the word of the Buddha.

As for Wonhyo’s commentaries, it must first be remarked that he puts much more emphasis on dramaturgy and the aesthetic impact of his writing than do the Indian commentators. While presenting his interpretations in an often poetical style, he follows the doctrines of the early Yogācāra tradition quite closely. When he addresses issues such as “One Mind,” original awakening, and sudden/gradual awakening, he is probably not fully aware that these issues were discussed quite differently in India. Much of Wonhyo’s writing is directed towards outlining the comforts and the spiritual opportunities of the Pure Land, while at the same time, he seems concerned about the aesthetic inspiration of his readers and the elucidation of the more abstract truths of Mahayana Buddhism. Notably, his assertion that “by awakening into signlessness, there is nothing that is not signified”²⁰⁰ offers

²⁰⁰ T no. 1747, 37: 125c21: 入無相故無所不相.

an exegetical perspective in which rational analysis and yogic *unio mystica* can reinforce each other.²⁰¹

Asaṅga's systematics carry the seed of a world-affirming doctrine, in which the *suchness* of the world, its underlying reality, and its manifold manifestations, can be seen as fundamentally positive and auspicious, even in our seemingly impure *sahā* world. There is little in the original Sukhāvātī sutras that would support such an interpretation, and the overall gist of the texts suggests a stark contrast between our manifest world full of badness and distress (*duḥkha*) and, in the beyond, the manifestation of goodness and happiness (*sukha*) by the Buddha of Limitless Light.

Insofar as our present human condition, and the condition of samsaric beings as a whole, is seen as primarily characterized by suffering, the Sukhāvātī sutras seem to basically conform to the teachings of non-Mahayanist Buddhism. Vasubandhu, for example, in his *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*, holds that the world as it is cannot possibly be the creation of one divine being, and if it was, a creator who would delight in it must surely have a disturbing appetite for misery; he must be a bloodthirsty Rudra.²⁰² On the basis of such a primarily negative view of samsaric life, a Pure Land as the creation of a compassionate Buddha can justly be understood as a negation of our world, a counterworld, so to say, in which all the pleasant appearances are characterized by *sukha* rather than *duḥkha*.

Still, as for Vasubandhu's own position, recent research supports the traditional assumption that he already adhered to the *cittamātra* philosophy as systematized by Asaṅga when he wrote the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*, including his sarcastic remarks about the creator god Rudra. Thus, his views about the underlying ultimate nature of phenomena was probably more optimistic than his "Sautrāntika" positions in the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* suggest.²⁰³

If we consider it possible that authors wrote with such covert intentions, it can be asked whether the Sukhāvātī sutras were not addressed to an audience for whom the teachings on emptiness, *cittamātra*, and the ultimate nature might not have been disturbing or even dangerous. This is at least Asaṅga's claim, and it can be valid whether or not we hold the Buddha to be the author

²⁰¹ See also the *Longer Sutra*: "He penetrates the nature of all *dharma*s, realizes the signs of beings, clearly understanding all lands" (T no. 360, 12: 266b6: 通諸法性, 達眾生相, 明了諸國).

²⁰² See Pradhan 1967, p. 102, l. 5–10.

²⁰³ Although this theory, upheld most prominently by Jaini and his disciple Kritzer, is still disputed, their evidence seems rather convincing, and I have added my own observations on "Sautrāntika"-like positions in the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* in Bayer 2013.

of the sutras. The authors of the Sukhāvātī sutras, it seems, let their ontological views shine through only occasionally, if at all.

Even if the doctrine of immediate rebirth in Sukhāvātī was meant more literally than Asaṅga is willing to concede, all sources seem to agree that the insights gained by bodhisattvas in Sukhāvātī, up to nirvana, are identical to the insights gained by bodhisattvas anywhere else, and thus that the ultimate soteriological goal of the sutras conforms to the general Mahayana ideal.

Brief Reflections on Pure-Land Systematics Today

When considering modern presentations of Pure Land doctrines, it seems to be most pragmatic to learn from those teachers who have proved to be successful in attracting and inspiring audiences and maintaining a stable *saṃgha* of followers. Among those, the Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh (b. 1926) stands out for his wide global popularity, as well as for his emphasis on diversity, that is, adapting programs to specific groups such as young adults or overseas Vietnamese. In the introduction to his discourse on the *Shorter Sutra*, he opts to first emphasize individual practice and direct experience:

The notion that the Pure Land is an exterior reality, a place to be found far away in the western direction, is just for beginners. If we deepen our practice, the Buddha and the Buddha's land become a reality in our mind. Our ancestral teachers have always said this.²⁰⁴

When taken out of context, this phrasing could lead to the wrong assumption that Thích Nhất Hạnh holds a somewhat denigratory view of the Pure Land. Nonetheless, his commentary mostly follows traditional views and thus naturally presupposes the reality of the Pure Land.²⁰⁵ As he further states in the introduction: “Amitabha Buddha had a deep wish to make a Pure Land. He was able to create a place that had security, love, and favorable conditions for the practice.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 23. In a similar way, Suzuki (1997, p. 24) claims: “According to my understanding, Pure Land is right here, and those who have eyes can see it around them. And Amida is not presiding over an ethereal paradise; his Pure Land is the defiled earth itself. It is now clear that my Pure Land interpretation will go directly against the traditional or conventional view.”

²⁰⁵ On the views of premodern and modern Chan (Zen) advocates, see also Tanaka 1987, p. 37.

²⁰⁶ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 23. Cf. the explanation by Suzuki (1997, p. 30): “Another idea held by Indian thinkers and religious figures is that when one attains spiritual perfection, the place where one is situated, or one's environment, also changes. . . . When Amida attained enlightenment, therefore, the environment changed in the same way.”

In these initial passages it is not the ontological aspect or the *dharmakāya* that concerns Thích Nhất Hạnh the most, but the Pure Land as a vision of an ideal society:

Every one of us has the same aspiration as Amitabha. We, too, want to establish a place where we can stay, where we can receive our friends and loved ones, a place to practice, study, and benefit from the presence of solidity, love, freedom, and peace.²⁰⁷

It is worth observing that Thích Nhất Hạnh, on this occasion, focuses on the social dimension and leaves a more philosophical approach to later sections of his commentary. Indeed, a view that regards the *suchness* of all phenomena as the Buddhist *summum bonum*, beyond existence and nonexistence, does have its own dangers and promises. Asaṅga, for example, concludes his MSg with a warning against misinterpreting the doctrine of the timeless and limitless *dharmakāya*: if, based on this doctrine, adepts wane in their efforts, thinking that attainments are timeless and thus without a cause, this would be the wrong conclusion.²⁰⁸ Asaṅga thus clearly sees the potential for this doctrine to serve as a base for heedlessness, while at the same time, he does not deny the timelessness of the *dharmakāya* and its omnipresence throughout pure and impure lands; he is probably the most important theoretician ever of this doctrine. Thích Nhất Hạnh, too, seems to be concerned about the appropriate framework, namely social responsibility and everyday practice, and only after this framework is properly established does he address the more transcendent and unitarian aspects of the Pure Land:

All of us have the body of flesh and blood. We also all have the body of the Dharma. Our Dharma body is Buddha Amitabha. . . . If Buddha Amitabha is our own Dharma body, we can never say that the Pure Land lies only in the West; it also lies in the South, the North, and the East, because it is our own mind and everywhere it shines brightly. This means that Buddha Amitabha is everywhere; Amitabha is limitless light and limitless life.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 23.

²⁰⁸ See MSg, ch. 10, section 39. See Lamotte 1938, vol. 1, p. 99; Griffiths et al. 1989, pp. 267, 376. Insofar as Asaṅga's closing words of the MSg exhort man to endeavour despite omnipresent goodness, they bear a striking resemblance to the closing of Wonhyo's *Longer Sutra* commentary, commending humility despite the grandeur of the "One Mind."

²⁰⁹ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 29.

When speaking about the birds that provide enjoyable sounds and sights in Sukhāvātī, he asserts that,

From the point of view of the retribution of actions, they are created by past actions. From the point of view of the Dharmakaya, they are a wonderful manifestation of the Dharmakaya and their nature is the nature of no birth and no death, no coming and no going.²¹⁰

Many efforts have been made in the Japanese Pure Land traditions to rephrase traditional teachings and embed them in contemporary currents of science and philosophy. My knowledge of this literature is insufficient at best. Among the few sources I am acquainted with, the volume *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism* edited by Dennis Hirota (2000) deserves special notice, for the authors strive to find out what can, in modern times, still be considered to be true about the Buddha Amitābha and the Pure Land. They are seemingly determined to accept tradition as valid only when it proves applicable in contemporary thought. This honesty yields convincing results in statements such as:

Although Tathagata, or true reality, is said to pervade all beings, since it completely transcends the conceptualization of human intellect, ordinarily it lies beyond our awareness; its presence therefore holds no significance for our existence. As long as we remain ignorant of it, our delusional attachments bind us solely to samsaric life.²¹¹

While this honest and experimental approach is surely a delight to the academic reader with an interest in metaphysics, I am unaware how far it has been transported to the broader public in a constructive way. In conclusion, Hirota (2000, p. 247) contemplates whether the right “ontological presuppositions” in combination with “current philosophical thought and cognitive science” might help to bring “Pure Land symbols into a frame of reference with sufficient resonance in the present,” so that, on a more social note, “the reinvigoration of this Buddhist path [will] contribute significantly to . . . global religious culture.” The efforts of Hirota and others might prove vital for the future of Shin Buddhism, even more so since these thought experiments are

²¹⁰ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 72.

²¹¹ Hirota 2000, p. 55.

conducted freely and with the full awareness that academic success alone does not guarantee a broader reception.

In a way, our modern pluralist society has come to resemble ancient polytheist India, where preachers of various kinds roamed the villages, trying to win the hearts of people. Modern times force increased demands on contemporary Buddhist teachers. In order to strive in such a volatile environment, traditional groups need to adapt their teachings to diverse social groups with diverse needs. One of these needs is certainly the search for stability and continuity, as it can be found in traditional liturgy, ritual, and doctrines. This alone, nonetheless, can hardly be enough to carry the established orders into the coming centuries. Traditional orders must develop a broad spectrum of activities in which the laity, especially the young, can find their connection with Buddhism, quite in line with the fourth kind of “intention” mentioned in the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra*, the intention directed at the particular mindset of living beings.²¹² The teachings on the existence and nature of the Pure Land and its significance for the individual’s path through life are no exception: they need to be continually reconsidered from a perspective of reevaluation and improvement (Jp. *kaizen* 改善), carefully rephrased and adapted to a variety of audiences. In the words of Thích Nhất Hạnh:

When we think about Pure Land practice, we can only do so with an open and inclusive mind. Buddhism has 84,000 Dharma doors. We are very fortunate if we are able to discover one of these Dharma doors and our practice of it brings us happiness. We should be careful not to say that our way of practice is correct and all others are incorrect. Such a statement is not in accord with the spirit of Buddhism. . . . Meditation and Pure Land differ from each other only in words, not in substance. Only if we have the ability to see the interbeing of the Meditation and the Pure Land can we understand the words of this sutra.²¹³

²¹² Skt. *pudgalasyāśaya*, discussed above.

²¹³ Thích Nhất Hạnh 2003, p. 35.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Awakening of Faith</i>	<i>Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mayahana</i> (Ch. <i>Dasheng qixin lun</i> 大乘起信論).
D	<i>The Nyingma Edition of the sDe-dge bKa'-gyur and bsTan-'gyur</i> . 120 vols. Ed. Yeshe De Project. Oakland: Dharma Mudranālaya. 1981.
<i>Longer Sutra</i>	<i>The Longer Sukhāvātī-vyūha-sūtra</i> (Ch. <i>Wuliangshou jing</i> 無量壽經)
MSg	<i>Mahāyāna-saṃgrāha</i> .
P	<i>Ei'in Pekin ban seizō daizōkyō</i> 影印北京版西藏大藏經. 164 vols. Ed. Saizō Daizōkyō Kenkyūkai 西藏大藏經研究会. Tokyo and Kyoto: Saizō Daizōkyō Kenkyūkai. 1955–61.
<i>Shorter Sutra</i>	<i>The Shorter Sukhāvātī-vyūha-sūtra</i> (Ch. <i>Amituo jing</i> 阿彌陀經)
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經. 100 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.
<i>Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa</i> _s	Sanskrit text of the <i>Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa</i> (Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature 2006).

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