

The Mind-only thought in the Commentaries on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*

Suah Kim

This paper is focused on identifying Jñānaśrībhadrā's and Jñānavajra's the notion of Mind-only in their Commentaries on the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (Abb. LAS). Jñānaśrībhadrā's and Jñānavajra's interpretations of mind-only is based on the philosophical tendencies of later Indian Buddhism. That is they are both strongly influenced by the Yogācāra_Svātantrika_Madhyamaka school. Even though Jñānaśrībhadrā claims to be a follower of Dharmakīrti, his philosophical position regarding the ultimate truth adopts the ontological ideas of the Madhyamaka school's ontological idea.

I. Introduction

The Yogācāra school brought the notion of mind-only to the Mahayana world around the third century in India. Traditionally, Indian Buddhists have considered that the notion of mind-only (*cittamātra*) appeared in three Mahayana texts: the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, and the *Śaṅdhinirmocanasūtra*. The principle is that the three worlds are only mind. "The three domains of existence" (*tridhātu* or *tribhāva*) are: *kāmadhātu* (*kāmaśrībhāva*) "the domain of sense-desires,"

Suah Kim is a Researcher, Korean Buddhist Research Institute of Dongguk University.

International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture February 2004, Vol. 4, pp. 127~139.

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rūpadhātu (*rūpabhāva*), "the domain of form," and *arūpyadhātu* (*arūpabhāva*), "the domain of no-form." These three domains include all of our existence, both external and internal, physical and mental. According to the notion of mind-only, all things, conditioned and unconditioned (*saṃskṛta* and *asaskṛta*), are merely an idea, just a thought (*cittamātratā*), just a conception (*viññaptimātratā*).

The Yogācāra school, however, is not the original power of this notion. As Rahula explains:

The *śūnyatā* philosophy elaborated by Nāgārjuna and the *cittamātra* philosophy developed by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are not contradictory, but complementary to each other. These two systems, known as Mādhyamika and Yogācāra or Viññānavāda, explain and expound, in different ways with different arguments, the very same doctrines of *nairātmya*, *śūnyatā*, *tathatā*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, but are not a philosophy of their own which can properly be called Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's philosophy. (W. Rahula, 1974:120)

Like other Buddhist scholars,¹ his main opinion is that like emptiness, the notion of mind-only is one of the interpretations of Buddha's fundamental discourses. In other words, this notion is one with the fundamental teaching of Mahayana Buddhism.

Even though the Yogācāra school did not invent this theory, the school's paramount contribution to this notion is that they interpret conventional truth with mind-only and then assert the non-existence of external objects, even in conventional truth, because there is nothing but one's own mind. In order to describe all phenomena with the non-existence of external objects, the Yogācāra school searches for the basis of all phenomena (*dharmatā dharmanāṃ*) supported by the theory of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*): the *parikalpita svabhāva* (imagined), the *paratantra svabhāva* (depend-on-other), and the *pariṇiṣpanna svabhāva*

¹ The inquiry that the *tri-svabhāva* doctrine of the Yogācāra school is related to the authority of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, especially *Śaṅghinirmocanasūtra* and *Pañca*, has long been of interest to Buddhist Studies scholars, such as E. Obermiller, . Lamotte and S. Yamaguchi. The Maitreya chapter in the *Śaṅghinirmocanasūtra* based on works by E. Conze and Iida has recently been done by N. Hakamaya.

(consummated). Among the three, the second is the most important with regard to the basis of all phenomena, and it is considered to be a new interpretation of depending co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in Buddha's discourse.

The notion of mind-only provoked controversy between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools in the sixth and the seventh centuries. Unlike the Yogācāra school, the Madhyamaka school tended to explain all things by applying the notion of two truths without thoughts considering the basis for doing so. The Yogācāra school's sensational interpretations, especially the notion of mind-only or the non-existence of external objects, were vigorously criticized by Madhyamaka thinkers, Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti, in the sixth and seventh centuries in India. Although Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti refuted the Yogācāra school's notion of mind-only, the later Madhyamaka thinkers recognized that it is a more effective interpretation of the non-substantiality of phenomenon. Thus, after the eighth century in Indian Buddhism, both the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools took the theory of mind-only as their own theory of conventional truth. As mentioned above, the main characteristic of the later Madhyamaka thinkers in the eighth century was that they followed Bhāvaviveka's interpretation of the two truths, and they also adopted certain concepts, such as causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) and self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) from Dharmakīrti's ideas, but they applied these concepts to differentiate correct from incorrect convention rather than to distinguish convention from ultimate truth. Like Bhāvaviveka, they also rejected the basis of all phenomena.

Madhyamaka thinkers utilized the LAS in relation to the notion of mind-only. Thus, my main concern in this section is to investigate the theory of mind-only in relation to Madhyamaka thinkers.

Regarding controversies between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, there are two main issues: first, dependent-on-other (*paratantra svabhāva*), and second, the concept of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *rang rig*) along with the existence of storage consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). As Iida and Hirabayashi state:

We shall focus on the Madhyamaka critique of the *paratantra*, rather than the critiques of the *ālayavijñāna* and *svasaṃvedana*, because this forms the heart of this distinction between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra point of view.(J. Hirabayashi and S. Lida, 1977:341-360)

The early Madhyamaka thinkers criticized the interpretation of mind-only by their Yogācāra counterparts from an ontological perspective. The concept of the dependent-on-other was the main controversy between the two Mahayana schools. Later Madhyamaka thinkers, however, who accepted the notion of mind-only in the Madhyamaka system, attempted to examine this theory from ontological and epistemological perspectives. Thus, for the later Madhyamaka thinkers, the concept of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *rang rig*) is an issue with the Yogācāra school. Here, my main concern is how the two concepts of mind-only are understood in these two Indian commentaries on the LAS.

II. The Notion of Mind-only Among Madhyamaka Thinkers

In approximately the sixth century, Madhyamaka thinkers officially began to criticize the Yogācāra school's doctrines, including the notion of mind-only, the existence of the storage consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), and so forth. The critique of the notion of mind-only appears in the fifth chapter of Bhāvaviveka's *Tarkajvālā*, in the sixth chapter of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvātāra*, and in the ninth chapter of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Even though Madhyamaka thinkers, both Svātantrika and Prāsangika, rejected the notion of mind-only, their basic viewpoints are not exactly alike. In the fifth chapter of *Tarkajvālā* in the passage that is supported by Yogācāra thinkers in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, Bhāvaviveka asserts that "these three realms are mind only" does not mean that external objects are non-existent, but only that there is no agent other than the mind. He also argues that the notion of mind-only does not agree with Buddha's discourses.(Yamaguchi, 1941:211-228) On the other hand, Candrakīrti

asserted that Buddha taught the notion of mind-only for those who do not understand the real meanings of Madhyamaka philosophy. (D. Cozort, 1998:73-101 ; C. W. Huntington, 1989, 60-68) Consequently, both of these early Madhyamaka thinkers admitted the existence of external objects in conventional truth, but their reasons for rejection are different.

Like Sautrāntika, Bhāvaviveka accepts external objects (*bāhyārtha*) in conventional truth and rejects that a form of direct knowledge called self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana* or *svasaṃvṛtti*), which is cognition comes from the five sense-faculties and the mind. His critique of mind-only is in the fifth chapter of his *Tarkajvālā*. Rather than searching for the basis of all phenomena. As was done by the Yogācāra school, he tried to find some connection between all phenomena and the nature of ultimate reality through a thought exploration and development of the notion of two truths. For him, understanding the nature of conventional truth by applying logic would gradually lead to the true nature of ultimate reality. S. Iida defines this characteristic of Bhāvaviveka as follows:

At this point we notice the characteristics of Bhāvaviveka's reasoning. He does not argue only from *yukti* (reasoning), but also on the basis of *āgamas* (scriptures). (S. Iida, 1980:2)

Consequently, Bhāvaviveka uses the distinctions between two *saṃvṛtisatyas* and two *paramārthasatyas*, and he rejects the basis of all things. In conventional truth, there are two truths; one, such as the mirage of water, is false or incorrect (*mithya*), and the other, such as water itself, is real or correct (*tathya*). The criterion for distinguishing between the two is causal efficacy (*kriyākārasāmarthya*). In ultimate truth, there are also two truths: the inexplicable variety typified by silence (*aparyayaparamārtha*) and the other sort embodied in the action of Buddha (*paryayaparamārtha*). Bhāvaviveka's interpretation of the two truths is fundamentally in opposition to the Yogācāra school's theory of the three natures, because he refutes any ultimate basis of all things. For this reason, his interpretation of the two truths was criticized by Sthiramati of the Valabhī school and Dharmapāla of the Nalanda school.

Candrakīrti's criticism of the tenets of the Yogācāra school also concerns the doctrine of mind-only (*cittamātra*) and the existence of a storage consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). In his commentary on the notion of mind-only, he also criticizes the Yogācārins' assertion of the existence of dependent-on-other (*paratantra svabhāva*), by which Yogācārins assert the existence of the dependent-on-other, while Madhyamaka thinkers desire to refute their true existence. His criticism is found in the sixth chapter of his *Madhyamakāvatāra*.² Candrakīrti denies that apparent objects are the result of activities of *ālaya* (storage) from beginningless time and that consciousness is separate from objects.

If one rejects the non-existence of external objects, one simultaneously rejects the notion of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) as well as the notion of storage consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). First, the notion of self-awareness or self-cognition (*svasaṃvṛtti* or *svasaṃvedana*) was elaborated by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttika*, which was inspired by his teacher, Dignāga. Dharmakīrti's idea was derived from Sautrāntika's representation theory of consciousness, holding that the form and image (*ākāra*) of consciousness is an external object, and the form of external objects exists regardless of what we perceive directly in consciousness. According to the notion of self-awareness, there are three aspects of our consciousness: the object, its cognition, and self-awareness (*grāhya*, *grahāka*, and *svasaṃvṛti*). In a single moment of function of our consciousness, the three aspects of consciousness are not separate, and the object is apprehended only through cognized form. Madhyamaka thinkers reject the notion of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), however, and assert that the comprehended object itself is the cause of recollection.

In eighth-century Indian Buddhism, Śāntarakṣita adopted the notion of mind-only into the Madhyamaka system just as Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti synthesized the Sautrāntika and the Yogācāra philosophies. The former school is called the Yogācāra_Madhyamaka,

² The sixth chapter of *Madhyamakāvatāra* is partial translated by L. de la Vallee Poussin (1907-11). The Tibetan text is available (with auto-commentary) as *Madhyamakāvatāra* par Candrakīrti edited by Le Valle Poussin (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, reprint, 1970). P. Fenner, "Candrakīrti's refutation of Buddhist idealism," *Philosophy East and West* 33- 3 (1983): 135-173. This article is based on his translation of the MA, Ch. 6. Verse 6.45-6.77 from La Valle Poussin's edition.

and the latter is called the Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka. In order to establish the new notion in conventional truth, Śāntarakṣita accepted the notion of causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*), which was originally formulated by Dharmakīrti.(K. Kano, 1991:119-128)

Sautrāntika's idea of causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritvā*) was made possible by Dharmakīrti's notion. For both Sautrāntika and Dharmakīrti, it was a criterion of ultimate reality, but Śāntarakṣita applied this notion to the correct conventional truth (*tathya-saṃvṛti*), and he illuminated ultimate truth by means of the notion of neither unitary nor plural, which means there is no existence at all. Although Śāntarakṣita and other later Madhyamaka thinkers developed their doctrines under the strong influence of the Yogācāra school, they maintained the doctrine of ultimate reality in the tradition of the Madhyamaka school. For this reason, they examined correct convention by means of concepts from the Yogācāra school. Śāntarakṣita adopted self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), and he is considered *sākārajñānavāda*.

III. Jñānaśrībhadrā and Jñānavajra on Mind_only

Jñānaśrībhadrā's and Jñānavajra's fundamental philosophical position in interpreting the LAS is based on the non-existence of external objects, except for mind-only or mere cognition (*cittamātra* or *vijñaptimātra*). Due to their respective lineages, however, Jñānaśrībhadrā explains the notion of mind-only by means of Dharmakīrti's ideas, while Jñānavajra interpreted it within the tradition of the Yogācāra_Svātantrika_Madhyamaka school.

Madhyamaka thinkers developed the notion of the two truths because they did not accept the basis of all phenomena as developed by the Yogācāra school. Like Bhāvaviveka, Jñānagarbha's and Śāntarakṣita's distinct notion of the two truths divides conventional truth into two kinds: correct and incorrect conventions (*tathya* and *mithya saṃvṛti*). (M. D. Eckel, 1987:75-76)

Like other Madhyamaka thinkers, however, Jñānaśrībhadrā divides object of knowledge into two truths, but his unique interpretation of the

two truths is by means of the three natures:

So, the Omniscient One (is Buddha) has shown, by means of conventional and ultimate truths, imagined, dependent-on-other, and consummated established.³

But Jñānaśrībhadrā, as a Yogācāra thinker, explains all phenomena "external" as follows:

because there being except for cognition no external objects all these objects (are) of the nature of a mental image.⁴

Although Jñānaśrībhadrā follows Dharmakīrti's epistemological approach, he maintains Madhyamaka's ontological approach. Like Dharmakīrti, he applies his concept of self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *rang gi rig pa*), which is a very important concept in the notion of mind-only, as a means to know ultimate truth.

The gross and subtle knowable object are seen through insight (*prajñā*), having become empty on the basis of non-perception, then since there is no dualistic conceptual thought such as apprehender and apprehended, speech and object of speech, act and subject, created and creator, thing and non-thing etc. non-duality they are fully understood and cognized to be non-dual. ⁵

Jñānaśrībhadrā, however, shifts his attitude regarding ultimate

3 Jñānaśrībhadrā, D:27b: kun rdsob dang don dam pa'i bden pas brtags pa dang/ gshan gyi dbang dang yongs su grub ba rnam thams cad mkhyen pas de ltar bstan to/

4 Jñānaśrībhadrā, D:11b-5: rtogs pa ma gtogs par phy'i don med par ni 'di dag thams cad snang ba'i chos nyid kyi phir te/

5 Jñānaśrībhadrā, D:3b-7: bdag gi sems snang ba'i spyod yul yongs su shes pa'i don la mkhas pa shes ba la/ bdag gi sems rnam par shes par bya ba yul nyid du mkhas pa dang dag gis don yongs su shes pa de dag la de skad ces byao/ shes pa ma gtogs par phyir don med do shes dang dag gis yongs su rtogs shes bya ba'i tha tshig do/ phy'i don 'byung ba ni mdo sde 'di nyid las 'byung ste/ gzugs ni rdul phran gshigs pa na/ rdul phran cha ni yod pa min shes pao/ gang gi tshes shes par bya ba bsom pa dang/ phra ba shes rab kyiis gshigs te mi dmigs nas stong par gyur pa de'i tshes/ 'dsin pa dang/ gzung ba dang/ smra ba dang/ smra bar bya ba dang/ bya ba dang/ byed ba po dang/ skyed pa dang/ skyed pa po dang/ dngos po dang/ dngos po ma yin pa la sogs pa gnyis su rnam par rtog pa med pas na mi gnyis par khong du chud du cing rtogs pa rnam so/ gzung ba med nyid kyiis 'dsin pa med par 'zug ste/ so so rang rig ces pa ni yang dag par rig pa mngon sum du ste/ mig gi shes pa nges par shugs pa gbugs thub pa yang dag par rig pa bshin no/

truth, and unlike the Yogācāra school, he does not recognize the nature (*svabhāva*) of dependent-on-other and consummated nature in either the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* or the LAS.⁶

Jñānavajra's ideas of both the two truths and mind-only, on the other hand, are based on the ideas of the Yogācāra Svātantrika Madhyamaka school that, in ultimate truth, all phenomena are empty, but, in the conventional truth, there is mind-only.

Here, since what appears as variety of (things) such as form etc. appears incongruent with (what is) ultimately mind, it is but (a question) of not accepting nature of mind as simply ultimate. So, were it be shown that even for what is true conventionality external object would not be appropriate, then thinking "what is then such a mental image," a mental image for what is conventional established to be mind-only. ⁷

Although Yogācāra Svātantrika Madhyamaka thinkers accept the notion of mind-only from the Yogācāra school, they do not recognize any existence in ultimate truth. This is because they maintain their ultimate reality from an ontological rather than an epistemological perspective. Jñānavajra also follows ideas of the Yogācāra Svātantrika Madhyamaka school, as states as follows:

[In this way,] the dependent-on-other (*paratantra*) or the

6 Jñānaśrībhadrā, D:129a: de la rtag pa ni rtag pa dang/ bdag dang/ phyi rol gyi dang/ rul phra mos brtsams pa dang/ rdsas dang/ yon tan dang/ las dang/ spyi la sogs pa'i mtshan nyid gang gis kun brtags par byed pa de dag gis de la rang bshin mes pao/ gshan gyi dbang gi rnam pa rnam ni skye ba med pa nyid rang bshin med pao/ don dam pa la yang gnyid kyi rnam pa'i rang bshin med cing bsams pa med pa/ snang ba med pa/ don dam pa'i bden pa mi gnyid pa rang bshin gyis od gsal ba dngos po dang dngos po med pa rnam par mi tog pa'i chud par gdogs pa la gang yang brtags pa med pa bshin pa dang/ gshan gyi dbang dngos po med pa bshin du yongs su grubs pa yang med ces smra ba de ni dam pa'i chos dang bral bar 'byung pa'i las sgrub par byed do/ de 'di ltar dgongs pa nges par 'grol pa'i tshul gyis kgrid pa'i don gyis lang kar gshegs pa dam pa'i chos kyi 'grel par rtsod pa'i gnas mdo sde'i don bkri bar ma lus pa rgya cher bshad par byao/

7 Jñānavajra, D: 44b-5-6, P: 51b-3-4, C:44b-4-5: 'dir gzugs la sogs pa sna tshogs su don dam par sems dang mi mthun par snang bas/ sems kyi ngo bo don dam pa nyid du kham mi len pa kho nao/ de ltar yang dag pa'i kun rdsob tsam du yang phyi'i don mi 'thad pa nyid du bstan pa na/ de ltar snang ba 'di ci yin snyam du sems na/ kun rdsob tu snang ba sems tsam du sgrub ste/

consummated (*pariniṣpanna*) of mind-only, awareness, is taught to be born from other causes and conditions. So it is not non-existent. The meaning of unborn or non-existent etc. refers as stated before, to the three ways of non-existence. This is not acceptable. In this sutra, it is said that just like an illusion, view the nature of arising as non-existent. Like an illusion, things arise in the convention depending on other causes and conditions but not on oneself. In ultimate truth, it is not appropriate for anything to arise either from oneself or from others, so the characteristics of dependent-on-other (*paratantra*) also does not exist.⁸

In the same context, Jñānavajra recognizes self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) in conventional truth, but he rejects it in ultimate truth.

If one objects: "cognitiveness is established by self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) immediate perception and also different mind streams is established by yogis by means of immediate perception through an aspect of other awareness and the ordinary people, however, prove (it) by means of inference," while it is needed so ultimately it is not correct (to consider) only self-awareness; (this will be shown in) other context. So, since there is no prove and since there is a counter argument it is not correct (to hold) that awareness as the mind itself is an ultimate entity.⁹

Consequently, Jñānavajra accepts some aspects of the epistemological approach in his interpretation of mind-only, but his final

8 Jñānavajra, D: 53b-1-3, P; 62a-2-5, C:53b-1-3: sems nyid rig pa'i gshan dbang dang yongs su grub ba rgyu tkyen gshan las skyes pa nyid du bstan pas 'di ni med pa yin la/ med pa dang ma skyes ap la sogs par bstan pa'i dgongs don ni sngar bstan pa bshin du med ba rnam pa gsum yin shes pao/ 'di ni mi 'thad de/ mdo sde de nyid las sgyu ma byas pa ji lta ba bshin du skye ba ngo bo nyid med pa blta bar byao shes gsungs pas/ sgyu ma bshin kun rdsob tu rgyu rkyen gshan gyi dbang gis skye'i bdag nyid las skye ba ma yin la/ don dam par ni rang ngam gshan gang las kyang skye ba mi 'thad pas gshan gyi dbang gi mtshan nyid kyang med par bstan to/

9 Jñānavajra, D:54b-1-2, P:63a-4-6, C:54b-1-2: gal te shes pa ni rang rig pa'i mngon sum nyid kyis grub la/ sems rgyud tha dad pa yang rgal 'byor pa rnams kyis ni gshan rig pa'i chas mngon sum gyis grub cing/ phal pa rnams kyis kyang rjes su dpag pa'i sgo nas grub po she na/ kun rdsob tu re ltar yin med kyi/ don dam par rang rig pa nyid ma 'thad de/ skabs su bab pa na bstan par byao/ de ltar sgrub bued med cing gnod byed yod pas sems nyid rig pa don dam pa'i dngos por mi 'thad do/

philosophical position is on Madhyamaka's ontological approach.

In sum, Jñānaśrībhadrā's and Jñānavajra's interpretations of mind-only is based on the philosophical tendencies of later Indian Buddhism. That is they are both strongly influenced by the Yogācāra_Svātantrika_Madhyamaka school. Even though Jñānaśrībhadrā claims to be a follower of Dharmakīrti, his philosophical position regarding the ultimate truth adopts the ontological ideas of the Madhyamaka school's ontological idea. As such these two Indian commentaries on the LAS entertain the philosophical ideas of later Indian Buddhism.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

(文獻)

Daśabhūmikasūtra 十地經

Laṅkāvatārasūtra 楞伽經

Samdhinirmocanasūtra 解深密經

Madhyamakāvātāra 入中論

Tarkajvālā 思澤炎

Bodhicaryāvātāra 入菩提行論

Pramāṇavārttika 量評釋

(語彙)

cittamātratā 唯心

vijñaptimātratā 唯識

śūnyatā 空性

nairātmya 無我

tathatā 真如

pratītyasamutpāda 緣起

trīsvabhāva 三性

parikalpita svabhāva 遍計所執性

paratantra svabhāva 依他起性

pariṇiṣpanna svabhāva 圓成實性

arthakriyā 效果的 作用性

svasaṃvedana 自覺

ālayavijñāna 阿賴耶識

saṃvṛtisatya 世俗諦
paramārthasatya 勝義諦

(人名, 學派)

Nāgārjuna 龍樹

Asaṅga 無着

Vasubandhu 世親

Jñānaśrībhadrā

Jñānavajra

Bhāvaviveka 青辨

Candrakīrti 月稱

Dignāga 陳那

Dharmakīrti 法稱

Sthīramatī 安慧

Dharmapāla 護法

Yogācāra_Svātantrika_Madhyamaka 瑜伽行 中觀學派

Svātantrika 自立論證派

Prāsaṅgika 歸謬論證派

sākārajñānavāda 有形相知識論者

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