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Paramārtha's Ultimate Truth and the Development of Chinese Buddhism's Ultimate Truth

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Abstract: This paper discusses the development of ideas of the ultimate in the thought of Chinese Buddhism in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. The concept of ultimate truth is, along with that of conventional truth, a core concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism. During the Sui Dynasty, Chinese Buddhism developed the unique perspective of the Three Truths, the foundation for which was formed during the Southern and Northern Dynasties. This begins with *Jie jie Jing* 解節經 (in full, *Foshuo Jiejie Jing* 佛說解節經) by Paramārtha (499–569), which is a partial translation of *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and presents the theory of ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) to Chinese Buddhists. Through a comparison of *Jiejie Jing* with other Chinese and Tibetan translations of *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, we establish Paramārtha's thoughts on the ultimate. The relationship between Paramārtha's thought on the ultimate and the development of the Three Truths is evaluated in a comparison of Paramārtha's thoughts on ultimate truth with the thinking of nearly contemporary Chinese monks.

Keywords: *Jiejie Jing* 解節經; Paramārtha; ultimate truth; three truths



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1. Introduction

The ultimate (Skt. *paramārtha*, Tib. *don dam pa*) is a core concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nāgārjuna compares ultimate and conventional truth to explain the emptiness and origination by dependence (Hirakawa 1974–1979, vol. 2, pp. 42–45). The Yogācāra school developed the three natures of phenomena (*trisvabhāva*) based on the two truths. The ultimate is constantly being explained. After Buddhism was introduced into China, Chinese monks gradually developed a unique conception of the ultimate, that is, the Three Truths: the ultimate, the conventional, and the primary meaning of the middle way 中道第一義諦.

The Three Truths, first developed during the Sui Dynasty, was a unique outgrowth of Chinese Buddhism, a novel perspective on the ultimate. Its direct sources were *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *Humane King Sutra*, and other sutras and treasures. However, its motivation was the heated discussion among many monks in the Southern Dynasty regarding the relationship between *nirvāṇa*, thusness, and the ultimate and conventional.

Paramārtha was a great Indian translator who lived during the Liang and Chen dynasties. Beginning in the Chen dynasty, his works were cited by many Chinese monks. Paramārtha was also believed to be associated with the Sinicization of Buddhism. *Jie jie Jing* 解節經 (*Jie jie*) is a partial translation of *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (SNS) by Paramārtha. The *Jie jie* is largely concerned with the characteristics of the ultimate.

In *Jie jie*, Paramārtha chose a method quite distinct from that of Xuanzang (玄奘, 600/602–64) and Bodhiruci (菩提流支, 道晞 or 道希, ?–527), which used several synonyms to translate the word “*paramārtha* (the ultimate)”, such as *zhenshi* 真實 and *zhenru* 真如. This may reflect Paramārtha's unique view of the ultimate.

This paper analyzes the text of *Jie jie* to identify Paramārtha's thinking on the ultimate and compare it with the thoughts of Chinese monks at the same time so as to investigate the foundation of the Three Truths in the Southern Dynasty and the relationship between Paramārtha and the Sinicization of Buddhism.

2. The Overview on the Text of *Jie jie*

Jie jie is a Buddhist scripture on the characteristics of ultimate truth. Paramārtha completed it in 561 (Paul 1982, p. 57; X369, pp. 179b5–b7). According to *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks* (Xu gaoseng zhuan 續高僧傳)¹ and the postscript to the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* translated by Paramārtha (*Jingang bore boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經)², when he planned to transfer to a larger ship bound for India, Paramārtha was invited by the prefect of Liang'an County 梁安郡³, Wang Fangshe (王方賒 or 王方奢), to translate Buddhist texts and teach Buddhism at Jianzao Monastery 建造寺. Paramārtha translated *Jie jie* to provide a text to characterize ultimate truth. Following this, Paramārtha was asked to translate *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in 562. Additionally, he also wrote some volumes of commentaries on these sutras.

According to *A Commentary on the Samdhinirmocanasutra* (*Jie shenmi jing shu* 解深密經疏) by Wōnch'ūk (圓測, 613–696) and *The Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記), Paramārtha carefully selected four chapters from a longer Sanskrit version of SNS for translation⁴. However, without further evidence, we still do not know whether there is a preexisting independent Sanskrit original equivalent in length to *Jie jie*, nor do we know the supplementary relationship between *Jie jie* and other translations.

The textual contents are not very different from those of two other Chinese translations of SNS, namely, Bodhiruci's *Shenmi jietuo jing* 深密解脫經 (*Shenmi jietuo*; T675,) and Xuanzang's *Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經 (*Jie shenmi*; T676). However, the title, prologue, and epilogue of *Jie jie* differ from those two Chinese translations and Tibetan translation. A brief analysis will be made below.

2.1. Analysis on the Title of *Jie Jie*

Paramārtha analyzes the possible meanings of the title in his commentary of *Jie jie*. His analysis, as quoted by Wōnch'ūk, is given below:

“In the word *jiejie* 解節, according to Paramārtha's commentary, *jie* 解 means interpretation, while *jie* 節 means a hard joint 堅結. Hard 堅 means tough and solid. Joint 結 means to knot. For instance, the knot of a tree or human bone is both hard and tightly bound. The extremely profound and secret meaning that is revealed in this sutra is hard to attain, hard to interpret. Ordinary being and novice bodhisattvas cannot even understand it. Therefore, this meaning is said to be hard and joint. [However,] this sutra can interpret [it]. Therefore, [this sutra] is named *jiejie*. [言解節者，如真諦記，解即解釋，節謂堅結。堅是堅固，結縛楯，如木節及人骨節，並有堅固，拘結纏縛。此經所明甚深密義，難可通達、難可解釋，故非凡夫、新行菩薩所能解了，故說此義名為堅結；此經能解，故名解節。】 (X369, pp. 179b15–b19)]

This quote indicates that Paramārtha interprets *saṃdhi* to be something extremely firm and difficult to be realized. This leads to his choice of translation as a “joint (*jie* 節).” This is a literal translation as well as a metaphor.

The four Chinese translations of SNS, namely, Guṇabhadra's *Xiangxu jietuo* (T678, T679)⁵, Bodhiruci's *Shenmi jietuo* (T675), Paramārtha's *Jiejie*, and Xuanzang's *Jie shenmi* (T676), all have very different titles. The length of the four Chinese translations is shown in Table 1. Much has been written about these differences.⁶

Table 1. The chapters of four Chinese translations of the SNS.

SNS	Prologue	C.1	C.2	C.3	C.4	C.5	C.6	C.7	C.8	C.9	C.10
<i>Xuangxu jietuo</i>										C.1	C.2
<i>Shenmi jietuo</i>	prologue	C.2	C.3	C.4	C.5	C.6	C.7	C.8	C.9	C.10	C.11
<i>Jie jie</i>		C.1	C.2	C.3	C.4						
<i>Jie shenmi</i>	prologue		C.2			C.3	C.4	C.5	C.6	C.7	C.8

Taking this previous research into account, it appears that *jie* 解 is more appropriate than *jietuo* to translate *nirmocana*. In the epilogue, Buddha says that this sutra is a sutra of the explicit meaning (*liaoyi* 了義)⁷, and *Jie jie* directly presents profound and subtle correct teachings of the Buddha. Thus, *nirmocana* means interpretation, that is, *jie* 解. Paramārtha translates *saṃdhi* as *jie* 節, which expresses the same meaning as *shenmi*. The word *saṃdhiniromocana* appears twice in the body of SNS, once as the name of a bodhisattva in Chapter 1 of *Jie jie* and again when the questioner asks the Buddha to describe the main idea of this sutra in the epilogue. Paramārtha translates the word *saṃdhi* in both instances as *jie* 節⁸, while Xuanzang translates it as *shenmi*⁹. Thus, Xuanzang’s translation style is a precise free translation, while Paramārtha’s version is more literal. This may be because Paramārtha follows in the steps of Kumārajīva to a certain extent (Keng 2009, pp. 158–59), whose translation method was more accommodating of the realities of the Chinese language, whereas Xuanzang is precise to the point that the readers need to read the Sanskrit alongside the Chinese to make sense of the text.

Thus, the literal meaning of the title for *Jie jie* is “The Interpreting of the Meaning Joins”¹⁰, as *Jie jie* interprets the characters of ultimate truth, which is profound and subtle.

2.2. The Prologue and Epilogue of *Jie jie*

According to Wöñch’ük’s commentary, Paramārtha translates *Jie jie* to clarify the characteristics of the ultimate truth. This is why he only translates four chapters from SNS. He completes this sutra with the three complete parts—the prologue is placed within the Chapter of Non-duality and the epilogue is placed at the end of the Chapter of Single Taste¹¹. We carefully analyze the prologue and epilogue of *Jie jie* and compare them with those of *Shenmi jietuo*, *Jie shenmi*, and the Tibetan translation.

2.2.1. The *Jie jie* Prologue and Prologues in Different Places and for Different Audiences

The prologues of *Shenmi jietuo* and *Jie shenmi*, and the Tibetan translation are very similar, and they consist of three main parts or topics: the immeasurable or ornament of the palace where the Buddha teaches, the merit of the Buddha, and the merit of the word-listeners (Skt. *śrāvaka*) and the bodhisattvas who attended the assembly.

However, the prologue of *Jie jie* is quite different. It is shorter, and the main content is that the Buddha abides in *Ḡḍhrakūṭa* of *Rājagṛha* with Bodhisattvas, Buddhist monks, Buddhist nuns, laymen, and laywomen. The content of the Buddha’s speech on earth may be the same as his speech in the Pure Land, but his audience is different.

We believe that the prologue of *Jie jie* was created by Paramārtha himself, rather than a translation of the original SNS prologue. This conclusion follows from a consideration of Paramārtha’s circumstances. When Paramārtha passed through Liang’an County, he was invited to translate sutras and teach Mahāyāna Buddhism. *Jie jie* may have been developed as material for his lectures. Paramārtha lists *bhikṣus*, *bhikṣuṇīs*, *upāsakas*, and *upāsikās* as all disciples (*catasraḥ parśadaḥ*) and uses the analogy of all four disciples to encourage the listeners in Liang’an County to strengthen their faith in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Moreover, the prologue of *Jie jie* is structurally similar to that of *Wushang yi jing* 無上依經 (in full, *Foshuo wushang yi jing* 佛說無上依經, T669), translated by Paramārtha in 557¹². Unfortunately, because the Sanskrit original of *Wushang yi jing* is lost, we cannot identify the relationship between the prologue to *Wushang yi jing* and that of *Jie jie*.

2.2.2. The Epilogue of *Jie Jie* Is a Synthesis of the Epilogues of the Last Four Chapters of SNS

The main function of an epilogue of a text such as *Jie jie* is to highlight the main themes of the foregoing scripture and declare the merits and virtues of the recipients. The epilogue of *Jie jie* mainly consists of the audience's questions and the Buddha's answers. The questioner is the Avalokiteśvara, rather than the questioners who appear in the main text of *Jie jie*. The Avalokiteśvara is the questioner of Chapter 9 of SNS. Perhaps because the questioner is the same, Ui Hakuju believes that the epilogue of *Jie jie* is equivalent to the epilogue of the chapter of The Questions of Avalokiteśvara of *Shenmi jietuo* (T675, pp. 685a03–a08), the chapter of The Stages and the Perfections of *Jie shenmi* (T676, pp. 708a29–b06), and *Xuangxu jietuo di boluomi liaoyi jing* (T678, pp. 718a18–a21, [Ui \[1930\] 1965](#), p. 83). However, a closer examination of the epilogue of *Jie jie* reveals that it also contains the contents of other chapters' epilogues.

In the epilogue, *Jie jie* is described as having three themes: the correct teaching on explicit meaning, the correct teaching on ultimate objects and cognition, and the correct teaching on which the 10 stages and perfections depend (T677, pp. 714c04–c06). The epilogues of the last four chapters of SNS repeatedly emphasize that this sutra describes the teachings of the explicit meaning, which are the same as that of *Jie jie*. The correct teaching on which the 10 stages and perfections depend is the main theme of Chapter 9 of SNS.

The fruits gained by the participants after attending the assembly in *Jie jie* also constitute a synthesis of the last four chapters of SNS. For instance, some Bodhisattvas received patient acceptance based on the awareness of the non-arising of phenomena in the state of the non-arising of dharmas (T677, pp. 714c07–c08). This is what the Bodhisattvas achieved in Chapter 7 of SNS (T675, pp. 674a27–a28; T676, pp. 697c05–c06).

Moreover, on the evidence of Xuanzang's translation and the Tibetan translation, SNS does not have a final epilogue. Takahashi argues that *Shenmi jietuo* does have a form of final epilogue ([Takahashi 2014](#), p. 72), but the form of that document is different from the epilogue seen for *Jie jie*.

2.3. Different verses in Chapter 4 of *Jie Jie*

To emphasize his teachings, Bhagavan delivers some verses at the end of each chapter. Chapter 4 of *Jie jie* contains one more verse than the equivalent text in other Chinese and Tibetan translations, consisting of four *pādas*: “[It] reverses the currents of life and death. [It] is subtle, profound, and hard to be realized. Covered by lust and ignorance, ordinary people cannot realize [it].”¹³ What is being referred here to is not specified, but it is likely to be the ultimate. These verses are Paramārtha's own composition, added to the end of Chapter 4 to highlight that the ultimate truth is extremely difficult to be realized for ordinary people.

However, a similar verse can be found in Chapter 6 of *The Synthetic Edition of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* (*Hebu jingguangming jing* 合部金光明經, T664): “(It) reverses the currents of life and death. (It) is very profound, subtle, and hard to be realized. The lust has covered the sentient beings. [The sentient beings are] stupid, blind and in darkness, thus, cannot realize [it].”¹⁴

Chapter 6 of *The Synthetic Edition of the Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*, the Chapter of the *Dhāraṇī* on the Stage of the Highest Purity (*Tuoluoni zuijingdi pin* 陀羅尼最淨地品), is ascribed to Paramārtha's translations. However, some scholars believe that these chapters were most likely composed in China ([Radich 2014, 2015](#)). According to *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *The Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Dynasties*, *Jie jie* was translated later than the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*. It is striking that similar verses appear in two very different sutras, leading to the supposition that Paramārtha composed them himself.

3. Paramārtha's Thoughts on Ultimate Truth

The main subject of *Jie jie* is the characteristics of the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth is ineffable and nondual. It transcends the realm of thought and feeling. The relationship between the ultimate truth and conditioned states of being transcends sameness and difference. Ultimate truth relates to one taste in all compounded things.

However, Bodhiruci, Paramārtha, and Xuanzang give different translations for the term ultimate truth. Basically, Xuanzang translates the ultimate as *shengyi* 勝義, while Bodhiruci translates it as *diyi yi* 第一義. Paramārtha uses several words to translate ultimate truth.

The postscript to the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* mentions that Paramārthā was already quite familiar with the Chinese while working on that text¹⁵. The different terms used to translate “ultimate truth” may reflect Paramārtha's different views on this truth. Therefore, we investigate Paramārtha's translations of the ultimate in *Jie jie* and his other works, as well to summarize his thoughts on ultimate truth.

3.1. Statistics Data on the Translations of “Ultimate Truth” in *Jie jie*

In *Jie jie*, Paramārtha flexibly uses several synonyms to translate “*paramārtha* (the ultimate)”. Paramārtha mainly used “true reality (*zhenshi* 真實)” to translate *paramārtha* 23 times. Here, “truth *zhen* 真” corresponds to *parama*, while the “reality *shi* 實” corresponds to *artha*. Since “truth” and “reality” are used as short forms of “true reality,” “the characteristic of true reality (*zhenshi xiang* 真實相)” is also translated as the “true characteristic (*zhenxiang* 真相)” and “real characteristic (*shixiang* 實相)”, and these terms appear four and five times, respectively.

In addition, not all that is identified as true reality in *Jie jie* should be understood to translate ultimate truth. In Chapter 1, the “true reality” in “Only this is true and everything else is false (*ci shi zhenshi, yi ci feizhen* 此是真實, 異此非真)” is a translation of “true” whose corresponding Tibetan translation is *bden pa* and the original Sanskrit word is *satya*, appearing a total of four times (T677, pp. 712a19–b08). *Feizhen* means “false,” and its Tibetan counterpart is *brdzun pa*.

Some other words are also used by Paramārtha to translate the ultimate, as follows: “true theory (*zhenshi li* 真實理)” appears once, “real characteristic of dharmas (*zhufa shixiang* 諸法實相)” once, “the dharma of the reality (*zhenshi zhi fa* 真實之法)” is seen twice, “the theory of thusness (*zhenru zhi li* 真如之理)” is found once, “superior truth (*shengzhen* 勝真)” appears twice, and “the theory of truth (*zhenshi zhi li* 真實之理)” is found once.

It is worth noting that Paramārtha used the “thusness (*zhenru* 真如, or *ruru* 如如)” to translate “the characteristic of ultimate truth”, “ultimate truth”, and “truth” a total of 17 times. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, “thusness” was almost fully established as a translation of the Sanskrit word *bhūtatathatā* or *tathatā*, meaning “the way things are”. Although this closely resembles the ultimate truth in content, it places more emphasis on the true state of things as they are than on the truth directly realized by the sages.

Moreover, in Chapter 4 of *Jie jie*, the word “the thusness” is omitted seven times, while “the ultimate” is omitted once, and “the selflessness of dharmas” is omitted once. The original text is as follows. By comparing with other translations, I use () to indicate the supplement of the omitted part:

If the practicing monks had completely realized the thusness of one aggregate, the selflessness of persons and dharmas (that is the ultimate), they do not need to have a meditative insight into the thusness (, the ultimate and the selflessness of persons and dharmas) which contained in the rest of aggregates one by one. If [the practicing monks] had completely realized the thusness (, the ultimate) and the selflessness of persons and dharmas in twelve sense fields, twelve links of dependent arising, four sustenance, four truths, the realms, four bases of mindfulness, the correct abandonings, the supernatural abilities, the faculties, the powers, the factors of enlightenment and the factors of noble eightfold path,

[they] do not need to have a meditative insight into the thusness (, the ultimate and the selflessness of persons and dharmas).¹⁶

Just as the aggregates were of mutually different characters, as twelve sense fields, twelve links of dependent arising, four sustenance, four truths, the realms, four bases of mindfulness, the correct abandonings, the supernatural abilities, the faculties, the powers, the factors of enlightenment and the factors of noble eightfold path were of mutually different characters, if the thusness of the dharmas (the ultimate and) the selflessness of persons and dharmas were of mutually different characters, then the thusness of the dharmas, (the ultimate, and) the selflessness of dharmas cannot be the ultimate, they would be produced from causes. If they were produced from causes, they would be compounded. If they were compounded, it would be necessary to search for another ultimate from them. Subhūti, since (the thusness,) the ultimate (and the selflessness of persons and dharmas) was (/were) not produced from causes, it was (/they were) not compounded, not that which was not the ultimate, and it is not necessary to search for another ultimate from them. Why is this? These dharmas were permanent and eternal. Whether a Tathāgata appears in the world or not, the reality, the reality realm and the dharma abiding all abide eternally. Therefore, Subhuti, you should understand that the ultimate is of one universal taste everywhere.¹⁷

3.2. Paramārtha's Thought on the Ultimate Truth in *Jie Jie*: The Thusness Is Equal to the Ultimate Truth

We summarize Paramārtha's thoughts on the ultimate based on the statistics of the translation terms in *Jie jie* and compare them to Paramārtha's other works.

As for the three different Chinese translations of SNS, we can certainly regard them as a means of investigating the Indian original to understand the teaching of Buddha. However, we can also read the texts in the context of the translated language, find out the differences between them, and try to understand what the translators are trying to tell the Chinese audience. As noted, Paramārtha's choice of translation terms for the ultimate is accurate and flexible. Thus, when Paramārtha focused on translating the ultimate with a single word, the word could be related to the content.

Paramārtha believes that the thusness is the ultimate, and the gain of the sight of the thusness is the prerequisite for attaining *niroāṇa*. In Chapter 3 of *Jie jie*, which describes the transcendence of sameness and difference, Bhagavan uses reduction to absurdity to argue that the characteristic of the ultimate and conditioned states of being transcend sameness and difference (T677, pp. 713a17–b23). If the ultimate and conditioned states of being were not different, then all ordinary beings would have insight into truth, and they would achieve full, perfect enlightenment. If the ultimate and conditioned states of being were different, the saints who previously gained insight into truth would not now be free from two kinds of bindings, bindings of all marks and bindings of the debilitating afflictive, nor would they be able to realize full, perfect enlightenment. Because no ordinary beings have realized full, perfect enlightenment, saints who have gained insight into truth have become free from two kinds of bindings and realized full, perfect enlightenment, so the assumption that the ultimate and conditioned states of being are the same or different is not true.¹⁸ In this passage, Paramārtha uses "thusness" to translate both "the ultimate truth" and "the truth"¹⁹ to explain the relationship between "thusness" and the attainment of the supreme calm of extinction of all desires (*Wushang ruan niepan* 無上如安涅槃, T677, pp. 713a19, a26–27), that is, realizing the thusness is a prerequisite for the attainment of the supreme calm of extinction of all desires.

Paramārtha believes that the thusness equals the ultimate and associates the thusness with the ultimate, the reality, and the reality realm. We do not take the aforementioned omissions of Chapter 4 as a mistranslation of Paramārtha's own, but rather as a reflection of Paramārtha's view that the thusness and the ultimate are synonymous. In Chapter 4, Buddha says that once the practicing monks have realized the thusness of one aggregate,

the selflessness of persons and dharmas, then they need not bother to have a meditative insight into the thusness, which is contained in each of the remaining aggregates (T677, pp. 714a29–b05), because the thusness is the ultimate truth, which is of one universal taste. Through permanence, Paramārtha equates the thusness with the ultimate, the selflessness of persons, the reality, and the reality realm. Moreover, in his work, *Shiba kong lun* 十八空論, Paramārtha interprets the seven kinds of thusness mentioned in SNS, and he proposes that the seven kinds of thusness are the ultimate.²⁰ The creation of *Shiba kong lun* was earlier than the translation of *Jie jie*.²¹ When he later translated *Jie jie*, Paramārtha maintained the continuity of his thought, which regarded the thusness as equivalent to the ultimate.

Paramārtha believes that the ultimate is the aboriginally pure mind covered by lust and ignorance. It is not specified, but the subject of the extra verse at the end of Chapter 4 should be the ultimate. These four *pādas* emphasize that the ultimate cannot be realized by common people because it is covered with greed and ignorance. *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*, translated by Paramārtha (Zhongbian fenbie lu 中邊分別論, T1599), proposes that the mind is innately pure but polluted by objective things.²² In Paramārtha's other compositions, similar thoughts are seen.²³ This seems to imply a tendency to the Tathāgatagarbha in Paramārtha's thought on the ultimate.

3.3. Comparison with the Thoughts of Nearly Contemporary Chinese Monks

Paramārtha's view, the thusness equals the ultimate, is different from that of Chinese monks who were his contemporaries. Baoliang (寶亮, 444–509) believes that the thusness lies beyond the two truths, both the ultimate and the conventional.

Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty once directed more than a dozen Chinese scholar-monks to comment on the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, and they created a commentary entitled *The Collection of the Interpretations on the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Dabō niepan jing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解, T1763). According to the records of critics such as Jizang (吉藏, 549–623) and Huijun (慧均 or Junzheng 均正) in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, there were many Chinese monks in the Southern Dynasty who put forward different views on the principal cause of Buddha nature.²⁴ Baoliang was among the most representative monks.

Baoliang believes that the thusness is the principal cause of Buddha nature. He proposes that “the wonderful substance of the consciousness (*shenming miaoti* 神明妙體)” is the thusness, namely, the way things really are.²⁵ Moreover, “the element of the consciousness (*shenming fa* 神明法)” or “the wonderful substance of the consciousness” that is composed of the two truths, the ultimate and the conventional, is the principal cause of Buddha nature.²⁶ In Baoliang's opinion, it is not correct to consider the conditioned existence of the world to be identical with conventional truth, and emptiness as ultimate truth. Instead, “the wonderful substance of the consciousness,” that is, the thusness, should be understood as *diyiyidi* 第一義諦.²⁷

Baoliang's view that thusness is the principal cause of Buddha nature is similar to Paramārtha's own view that the development of the sight of the ultimate is a prerequisite for attaining *nirvāṇa*, leaving open the possibility that Paramārtha could agree with Baoliang that the thusness is the ultimate truth; however, he is unlikely to agree with Baoliang that the thusness is composed of two truths, the ultimate and the conventional. Note here that *zhendi* and *diyiyidi* are both used to translate the term ultimate truth. Paramārtha was not directly involved in the existing Chinese discussion of the relationship between *nirvāṇa* and the two truths. *Jie jie* can thus be seen as his private response to the problem of the principal cause of Buddha nature.

Before Paramārtha came to China, Chinese monks had further interpreted the two truths taught in Indian scriptures in their own way. They tried to synthesize the teachings of the different Mahāyāna texts as mentioned above and discuss the relationship between the Buddha nature of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the two truths of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and treatises. Baoliang's view implies that thusness transcends ultimate truth and conventional truth, forming an important basis for the unique Three Truths of Chinese Buddhism.

4. Paramārtha and the Development of the Ultimate in China

The ultimate in Indian Buddhism experienced a process of evolution, with different emphases at different stages, just as in the Three Wheels in SNS. At first, the core of Buddhism was its doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*, and ultimate truth was embodied in the Four Noble Truths. Here, *śrāvakayāna* Buddhists attain *nirvāṇa* through the realization of the Four Noble Truths. In the second stage, the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* do not express anything about the nature of a cause, and the ultimate truth is mainly embodied as the emptiness. Grasping ultimate truth through words and designations is shown to be impossible. Meanwhile, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* states that ultimate truth cannot be realized if conventional truth is not first mastered and that the person is a fiction constructed based on skandhas and so on, in relations of dependent origin (Siderits and Katsura 2013, pp. 236–38). Then, the Yogācāra School adds to the understanding of ultimate truth and conventional truth by proposing the three natures and the threefold absence of nature (T676, pp. 697a23–09). Since Paramārtha was an Indian monk, his translation of *Jiejie* and other works can be regarded as a new stage in the development of the ultimate truth in Indian Buddhism, that is, the ultimate has the tendency of Tathāgatagarbha.

Beginning with the introduction of Buddhism to China, Chinese monks sought to define the ultimate and establish how it is to be understood. On the one hand, they interpreted the Buddha's original meaning in the Buddhist scriptures transmitted from India and continued to develop Buddhist philosophy; on the other hand, they selected and developed Indian Buddhist doctrines with reference to the Chinese tradition.

The ultimate, which means the only reality, is not to be found in the original Chinese philosophy before Buddhism came to China. For Chinese philosophers, the difference between original root (*bengen* 本根) and phenomena does not lie in reality and illusion, but in source and tributary, whole and part (Zhang 1982, pp. 8–10). Due to the influence of Taoism, Chinese Buddhism identifies being, inactivity, and the one as forming part of higher truth, assigning their opposites, unreal non-being, active responding, and the many to lower truth (Lai 1979, p. 341). Sengzhao (僧肇, 384–414), the disciple of Kumārajīva, influenced by Taoist terminology, describes the ultimate as “the primary true meaning” (*diyī zhēndī* 第一真諦) or “true meaning” (*zhēndī* 真諦). In his works, Sengzhao emphasizes that primary true meaning is that dharmas are neither existent nor nonexistent. The primary true meaning cannot be achieved and attained unless this is done through conventional truth. He also states that to identify true meaning is to understand that it is not existence, while discussing conventional truth is to comprehend that it is not nonexistence (T1858, pp. 152b11–b15). Therefore, primary meaning is to be understood to mean the ultimate truth. Following Kumārajīva's team, especially Sengzhao, emptiness and the two truths can be truly understood (Li 2003, pp. 106–7).

Daosheng (道生 355–434), another of Kumārajīva's disciples, vigorously expounded the theory of Buddhahood, advocating that everyone has Buddha nature and all living beings can become Buddhas (Fang 1995, p. 74). The Buddha nature gradually became a central issue of Chinese Buddhism. Daosheng draws a link between permanence and *nirvāṇa*. He believes that the Chinese word *mie* (滅, extinction, termination) may be used in the sense of terminating mental burdens or defilements and, therefore, evoking the higher permanence of the *dharmakāya* or Buddha nature (Lai 1982, p. 103). The Buddha nature is not only an aspect of the ultimate but also an internal motivation for Buddhahood. The Buddha nature of Buddhism has something in common with human nature as described in Confucianism. As a kind of living being, human beings have a Buddha nature, that is, the good side of nature.

Similar to Daosheng, many monks in the Southern Dynasty discussed the two truths in the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (Furusaka 1971, pp. 639–40). In discussing the relationship between *nirvāṇa* and the two truths, the question as to whether the two truths contain all the dharmas is discussed. Zhizang (智藏, 458–522) of the Kaishan Monastery 開善寺 believes that the two truths contain all of the dharmas (Nakai 2020, p. 779), while Sengmin (僧旻, 467–527) of the Zhuangyan Monastery 莊嚴寺 believes that the two truths

cannot contain all of the dharmas, and *nirvāṇa* is not included in the two truths (T1854, pp. 113a29–b06). Although he does not use the term *diyi* or the middle way to refer to the dharma beyond the two truths, Sengmin was the first to propose a third truth. Bao Liang indicates that thusness forms the substance of the two truths, and the two truths form the function of thusness, which can also be seen in terms of the Three Truths.

Some scholars have proposed that the Chinese were attempting to deal with the implications of the two truths concept and were beginning to favor a threefold structure to resolve the tension that they saw inhering in the two truths between the time of Sengzhao and the Liang Dynasty. The creation of the apocryphal *Humane King Sutra* is an example of this (Swanson 1989, p. 48). The idea of the Three Truths initially relied on apocryphal texts, perhaps for fear of having no basis in legitimacy. Zhiyi (智顗, 538–597) mentions the Three Truths from the *Humane King Sutra* in *The Doctrine of the Four Teachings* (*Si jiaoyi* 四教義, T1929, pp. 727c02–c23). Jizang's idea on the "primary meaning of the middle way" (*zhongdao diyi di* 中道第一義諦) also comes from the *Humane King Sutra*. He cites the *Humane King Sutra* as the source for the existence of the Three Truths and makes clear that he would break away from Paramārtha's commentary and propose his own doctrine of three truths²⁸.

In *Jie jie*, we can see evidence that Paramārtha would not agree with the Three Truths presented in the *Humane King Sutra*, since there is only one ultimate truth, and *zhendi* and *diyi* are the translations of the term: the ultimate. We cannot deny the possibility that Paramārtha made commentaries even on *sūtras*, which he knew to be apocryphal. It is possible that Paramārtha made use of the *sūtra* that was already established and well-known in China in order to spread the Buddhist teachings when he was invited to preach to a Chinese audience (Funayama 2009, pp. 162–63). Therefore, even though Paramārtha wrote a commentary on it, it cannot adequately represent his point of view. In *Jie jie*, Paramārtha holds that there is only one ultimate truth, not three.

Paramārtha expanded the original meaning of the ultimate. As Funayama says, in the *Awakening of Faith* and other works, the translation of the thusness, *zhenru*, is divided into two, *zhen*, and *ru*. And they are given different meanings by Chinese monks. When *zhen* and *ru* that have been separated are constructed into the word *zhenru*, they complete their complementary functions. By reintegrating the categories into one, we can understand the vocabulary that was previously obscured by multiplicity and comprehension and spread the word to the area of word processing. Therefore, the inclusion of words is meaningful. From this point of view, a number of important ideas that have not been considered to be directly linked overlap and begin to intersect. As a result, the main words, the thusness, *tathāgata*, *Tathāgatagarbha*, the aboriginally pure mind, the reality, the reality realm, and so on, used in different contexts and contexts, are shared with each other, and they share the meaning of each other (Funayama 2017, p. 59). For Paramārtha, even without the analysis of *zhen* and *ru* separately, the ultimate is synonymous with the thusness, the reality, the reality realm, and the aboriginally pure mind in *Jie jie* and his other works.

Paramārtha's thought of the ultimate inspired the development of the ultimate in Chinese Buddhism to a certain extent. The Chinese monks who developed the Three Truths have similar ideas. Jizang proposes that the middle way that is the non-ultimate and non-conventional is the primary cause of Buddha nature (T1853, pp. 35c20–37a10), and he considered the middle way as the third truth, however, his Three Truths were always attached to the two truths and illustrated the unattachment of nondual and not nondual (Kashiwagura 1995, pp. 54–55; Awaya 1982, p. 139). On the other hand, Zhiyi not only equates the middle way with Reality (*Shixiang* 实相), Buddha nature, the thusness, and *Tathāgatagarbha*, but also expands the equivalent forms of these categories and reaches a series of conclusions of categorical equivalence. The explanation of the Three Truths has already clarified the point that truth is One. The two truths are nondual. Reality is an integrated unity. Reality is best described as "one", integrated, and interpenetrating (Swanson 1989, pp. 152–54; Wang 2012, pp. 45–46).

The ultimate thought of Chinese Buddhism still inherits that of Indian Buddhism in content, but differs greatly in the thinking method. Take Zhiyi is the example. His Three Truths are based on the theory of reality. All dharmas have the Three Truths, namely emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle way. The third truth is the synthesis, not merely the transcendence, of the two truths. The Three Truths of are integral parts of the same reality, it shows the Chinese spirit of inclusiveness and mutual adjustment (Li 2017, pp. 35–36).

5. Concluding Remarks

Jie jie is a partial translation of the longer original of SNS, made to explain the ultimate. The title of *Jie jie* means “The Interpreting of the Meaning Joints”. Paramārtha created the prologue for *Jie jie*, and the epilogue emerged as a synthesis. *Jie jie* is, therefore, an elaborative translation by Paramārtha. At the end of Chapter 4, Paramārtha adds one more verse consisting of four *pādas* that implies the ultimate is covered by lust and ignorance and is hard to be realized by common people.

For Paramārtha, *zhenru*, *zhenshi*, and *diyiyidi* are all the translations of the term: the ultimate. Paramārtha believes that the thusness equals the ultimate. The gain of the sight of the thusness is the prerequisite for attaining *nirvāṇa*. He also implies that the ultimate is the aboriginally pure mind covered by lust and ignorance.

The foundation for the thought of the Three Truths was laid well before Paramārtha came to China. Both the discussion of the two truths and Buddha nature by Chinese monks and apocryphal texts that preached the idea of the Three Truths, such as the *Humane King Sutra*, were foundational. According to Paramārtha’s thinking on the ultimate truth, as reflected by *Jie jie*, even if he wrote the commentaries on the *Humane King Sutra*, he would not agree with the doctrine of the Three Truths in it.

The significance of Paramārtha’s *Jie jie* is not only the comparative study it allows of SNS, but lies also in the fact that it embodies Paramārtha’s thinking on the ultimate. Paramārtha forges links between the words: the ultimate, thusness, reality, reality realm, the aboriginally pure mind, etc., which represent the only principles of the world to make the contents of the ultimate richer. This allows sufficient room for interpretations. This may be the reason why later Chinese monks attributed their achievements on the thusness or pure mind, including *Awakening of Faith*, to Paramārtha.

Chinese monks gave these synonyms different emphasis, even ranking them differently, when interpreting the Buddhist scriptures from India. This is not a misreading but rather a creative development and continuation, as the discourse on ultimate truth has different emphases in different texts. The Three Truths proposed by Zhiyi laid the foundation for the development of Chinese Buddhist sects. The conception of the Three Truths was developed by Chinese monks following their own thinking.

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Abbreviations

- Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85vols. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932. Available online: <https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/satdb2015.php> (accessed on 1 December 2021)
- Shinsan dainihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經. 90 vols. Edited by Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照, Nishi Yoshio 西義雄, and Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–1989. CBETA electronic edition (Version 5.3, 6 October 2016).

Notes

- ¹ 又汎小舶至梁安郡，更裝大舶欲返西國。學徒追逐相續留連。太守王方奢述眾元情，重申邀請，諦又且修人事，權止海隅。伺旅束裝，未思安堵。(T2060, pp. 430a12–a15)
- ² 西天竺優禪尼國三藏法師，號拘羅那他，此云真諦。梁武帝遠遣迎接。經遊閩越，暫憩梁安。太守王方賒乃勤心正法，性愛大乘。仍於建造伽藍，請弘茲典。法師不乖本願，受三請而默然。尋此舊經，甚有脫悞。即於壬午年五月一日重翻天竺定文，依婆藪論釋。法師善解方言，無勞度語，矚彼玄文，宣此奧說，對偕宗法師法虔等並共筆受。至九月二十五日文義都竟，經本一卷，文義十卷。法虔爾目，仍願造一百部流通供養，并講之十偏。普願眾生因此正說，速至涅槃，常流應化。(T237, pp. 766b29–c11).
- ³ Several studies have confirmed that Liang'an County was located in what is now the county-level city of Nan'an 南安市 in Fujian Province 福建省. See Tang ([1938] 1983, pp. 615–24); Zhang (1983, pp. 82–85); Zhang (1985, pp. 94–98); Fang (1990, pp. 199–200); Liao (1997, pp. 1–5); and Yang (2015, pp. 101–5).
- ⁴ Interpretation: Paramārtha translates *Jie jie* to clarify the characteristics of the ultimate truth. Thus, [he] only translates the middle 4 of the 18 chapters, and leaves the other 14 chapters untranslated. [解云：真諦翻《解節經》意欲確明勝義諦相。故十八品內但翻中間四品，略而不翻餘十四品。] (X369, pp. 184c19–c21) According to *Shenmi jietuo jing* (T675) and the Tibetan translation of SNS, SNS has a prologue and 10 chapters. This interpretation, however, states that SNS has 18 chapters. The record of *Jie jie* in *The Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記) also mentions that SNS originally had 18 chapters: “The sutra originally had 18 chapters”. Now, it is one volume, just one chapter, that is, Chapter four. Paramārtha simply translated it to prove the doctrine. [此經本有一十八品，今此一卷，止是第四一品，真諦略出以證義耳。] (T2034, p. 87c14) Although both *Lidai sanbao ji* and Wönc'h'ük state that Paramārtha's SNS has 18 chapters, they have different records on the corresponding chapters of *Jie jie*, that is, Fei states that *Jie jie* corresponds to Chapter 4 of SNS, while Wönc'h'ük states that Paramārtha translated the middle four chapters of SNS. Since we know nothing about the 18 chapters version of SNS, we cannot judge which part of it *Jie jie* corresponds to. Ui Hakuju speculates that “just one chapter, that is, Chapter 4 (*disiyipin* 第四一品)” may be the mistake of “the first four chapters (*diyisipin* 第一四品)”. See (Ui [1930] 1965, pp. 82–83).
- ⁵ In Daizokyo, Guṇabhadra's translations of SNS are *Xuangxu jietuo di boluomi liaoyi jing* 相續解脫地波羅蜜了義經 (T678), and *Xuangxu jietuo rulai suozuo liaoyi jing* 相續解脫如來所作隨順處了義經 (T679). However, the record in the *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka* (*Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集) is “*Xiangxu jietuo jing* 相續解脫經, two volumes” (T2145, p12c26). *The Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記) and the *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* (*Datang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄) both take it as “*Xiangxu jietuo liaoyi jing* 相續解脫了義經, two volumes” (T2034, p91b09; T2149, p258c25). Since this paper only compares the titles of four Chinese translations, we call Guṇabhadra's translation *Xuangxu jietuo*, which corresponds to *saṃdhinirmocana*.
- ⁶ Regarding the analysis on the Chinese titles of SNS, see Wönc'h'ük's *Commentary on Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* (X369, pp. 179b10–c18); Tullyun 遁倫 or Toryun 道倫's *Note on Yogācāra treatise* (T1828, pp. 771b09–b14); (Lamotte 1935, pp. 12–13; Edgerton 1953, p. 558; Takasaki 2009, pp. 168–69).
- ⁷ The Buddha told the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara: This sutra is called ‘the correct teaching of the explicit meaning’. 佛告觀世音菩薩：“此經名為‘了義正說’。”(T677, p. 714c04).
- ⁸ “Nengjie shenshenyi jie pusa 能解甚深義節菩薩”: T677, p711c16–p712b12; “jie jie shen fa 解節深法”: T677, p714c02
- ⁹ “Jie shenhenyi miyi pusa 解甚深義密意菩薩”: T676, p688c12–689c04; “jie shenmi famen 解深密法門”: T676, p697b27, p703a27, p708b01, p711b15–b16.
- ¹⁰ This is my attempt at a provisional translation of the title.
- ¹¹ In order to complete this sutra along with the three whole parts, the prologue is placed before the Chapter of Non-duality (Chapter 1) and the epilogue is placed at the end of the Chapter of Single Taste (Chapter 4). Chapter 1 of Paramārtha's commentary states, “The general preface is omitted at the beginning of the sutra because the translator omits it.” Interpretation: “omitting” means that the chapter name is not placed or there is no “prologue” to name it. 為成此經具足三分，故《不二品》內安通序文，《一味品》末安後流通。故真諦《記》第一卷云：“經初不說通序文者，譯家略故。”解云：不安品目故說為略，非無序文名之為略。(X369, p184c21–c24).
- ¹² *Wu shang yi jing* is a sutra on Tathāgatarbha. It appears in Chinese only (T669). Paramārtha translated it in the Jingtu Monastery 淨土寺 of Nankang County 南康郡 in 557. See Yang (2016, pp. 64–70); Takasaki (2010, pp. 99–108).

- 13 逆生死流道，微細深難見。欲染癡覆故，凡人不能得。(T677, pp. 714b28–b29).
- 14 逆生死流道，甚深微難見，貪慾覆衆生，愚冥暗不見。(T664, pp. 377a20–a21).
- 15 The master is good at understanding dialects and does not need a mediator. 法師善解方言，無勞度語。(T237, pp. 766c06–c07).
- 16 修行比丘若已通達一陰真如、人法無我，不勞更觀一一餘陰所有真如；於十二入、十二緣生、四食、四諦、諸界、念處、正勤、如意足、根、力、覺分、八聖道分，若已通達一陰真如、人法無我，不勞更觀餘聖道分所有真如。(T677, pp. 714b01–b05).
- 17 猶如諸陰互有別相，如十二入、十二緣生、四食、四諦、諸界、念處、正勤、如意足、根、力、覺分、八聖道分互有別相，若諸法真如、人法無我互有別相，則諸法如如、人法無我不成真實，應由因生；若由因生，則成有為；若是有為，則非真實；若非真實，更應於此求別真實。須菩提！由此真實不從因生，非是有為，非不真實，於中不勞求別真實。何以故？此法恆常。若佛出世，若不出世，法性、法界、法住皆悉長住。須菩提！以是義故汝應當知，一味真實等一切處。(T677, pp. 714b10–b20).
- 18 I have referred to two English translations for my analysis. See (Powers 1995, pp. 37–41; Keenan 2000, pp. 18–19). The original text is following: 淨慧！若真如與行相不異者，一切凡夫應見真如；複次一切衆生正在凡位，應得無上如安涅槃；複次一切衆生於凡位中，亦應能得無上菩提。若真如相異於行相，一切聖人已見真如，則應不能伏滅行相；由不伏滅諸行相故，雖見真諦，不能解脫衆相繫縛；若於衆相不得解脫。亦不解脫庵重繫縛；若不解脫二種繫縛，則不能得無上如安無餘涅槃，亦應不得無上菩提。淨慧！由諸凡夫不見真如，在凡夫位不得無上如安涅槃，亦不能得無上菩提，以是義故，真如之理與諸行一，是義不然。若有人說真如與行相不異者，由此義故，當知是人不如理行。複次，淨慧！一切聖人由見真如，已能伏滅諸法行相，非不能；故已能解脫一切相結及庵重惑，非不解脫；由二解脫，已得無上如安涅槃，乃至已得無上菩提。是故真如與行相異，是義不然。若有人說真異行相，以是義故，當知此人不如理行。(T677, pp. 713a17–b07).
- 19 Correspondingly, Bodhiruci translates it as *diyiyidi* 第一義諦 or *dishi* 諦實; Xuanzang translates it as *di* 諦; and the Tibetan translation is *bden pa*. See T675, p.667b21(*diyiyidi*), b24(*diyiyidi*), b26(*dishi*), c01(*dishi*), c03(*dishi*); T676, pp. 690b21, b24, b26, b28, c01, c07–c09; (Lamotte 1935, pp. 3, 43–44).
- 20 *Shiba kong lun*: 《解節經》明：佛說有七種真如：一生，二相，三識，四依止，五邪行，六清淨，七正行。… 此之七種真如，即第一義諦。第一義諦即真實性攝，是故名為七種真如，即是前明七種真實。(T1616, pp. 864b03–b12).
- 21 *Shiba kong lun* is contained in *Neidian* and supposed as *Da kong lun*. *Da* 大 is very similar to *shiba* 十八 when written vertically. Yang believes that *Shiba kong lun* is *Da kong lun*, which was composed in 558, at the Qiyin Monastery 栖隱寺 of Yuzhang County 豫章郡. See (Radich 2012; Yang 2015).
- 22 *Madhyāntavibhāṅghāṣya* translated by Paramārtha: Neither defiled nor undefiled, neither pure nor impure. Because the mind is originally pure, because [it is defiled by] the afflictions and adventitious defilements 不染非不染，非淨非不淨。心本清淨故，煩惱客塵故。(T1599, pp. 453a28–a29).
- 23 Just a few examples: *Shiba kong lun*: How can it be ascertained that the dharma realm is neither pure nor impure? Answer: *Amoluo shi* is the innately pure mind. It is only because it is tainted by adventitious dirt that we speak of it as ‘impure’; because of adventitious dirt, [that is,] we establish that it is [also] impure.” 雲何分判法界非淨、非不淨？答：阿摩羅識是自性清淨心。但為客塵所污，故名不淨；為客塵盡，故立為淨。(T1616, pp. 863b18–b21) *Foxing lun*: The nature of Tathāgata is the innate purity. It can be covered by adventitious defilements because of emptiness. Thus, it has nothing to lose. The thusness is inseparable from the cause of the purity, always equal to the non-rejecting wisdom that is more than the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River and virtues of inconceivable Buddhas. Thus, it has nothing to add. If dhammas are causeless, the emptiness of the thusness is observed [through] this nonexistent dhamma. Since the remaining dharma exists, the non-emptiness of the thusness is observed. So, the thusness has both emptiness and non-emptiness. 如來性者，自清淨故。能染客塵者，自性空故。故言無一法可損。眞如者，與清淨因不相離，過恒沙數等不捨智，不可思惟諸佛功德恒相應故。故言無一法可增。若法無因此無法觀眞如空，以餘法有故，觀如不空。故言眞如亦空不空。(T1610, pp. 812b25–c01) For the relationship between *Amoluo shi* 阿摩羅識 (**amalavijñāna*) and the Tathāgatagarbha proposed by Paramārtha, see (Radich 2008, 2016).
- 24 In *A Profound Discourse on the Great vehicle* (*Dacheng xuanlun* 大乘玄論), Jizang lists 11 views on the principal cause of Buddha nature in the Southern Dynasty (T1853, pp. 35b20–c25). Additionally, in *A Note on the Profound Meaning of Four Treatises on the Great Vehicle* (*Dacheng silun xuanyi ji* 大乘四論玄義記), Huijun states that there are 3 major views and 10 minor views of the principal cause of Buddha nature (X784, pp. 601a18–602a11). Tang combined these lists and made a detailed arrangement. See (Tang [1938] 1983, pp. 474–76).
- 25 Baoliang said: In the second part below, the middle way of reality is redefined. If [we] only talk about the teachings of the past, [we] just choose life and death, emptiness and existence as reality. If [we] now take the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra as the teaching, [we] can know the wonderful substance of the consciousness, thusness, as reality. 寶亮曰：此下第二重明實相中道也。若直談昔教，偏取生死空有為實。若就今經為語，乃識神明妙體眞如為實。(T1763, pp. 460c02–c09).
- 26 Baoliang said: Although Buddha nature is in the aggregates, elements, and fields, it is not contained by the aggregates. The two truths together constitute an element of the consciousness. However, the edge of the conventional is always aggregates, fields, and elements; the substance of the ultimate is always unconditional. Since the substance of the ultimate is unconditional, though [Buddha nature] is in the five aggregates, it is not contained in the five aggregates. The substance of the ultimate is immobility, so there is no temporary loss of the function. Because there is no loss of the function, choose [the element of the consciousness] as the principal cause. If there is no wonderful substance [of the ultimate], which is the basis of the functioning of [the element of] the consciousness, then it should not be said that though [Buddha nature] is in the aggregates, fields, and elements, it is not contained in the aggregates and fields. 寶亮曰：佛性雖在陰界入中，而非陰所攝者。眞俗兩諦，乃是共成一神明法。而俗邊恒陰

入界，眞體恒無爲也。以眞體無爲故，雖在陰，而非陰所攝也。體性不動，而用無暫虧。以用無虧故，取爲正因。若無此妙體爲神用之本者，則不應言雖在陰入界中，而非陰入所攝也。(T1763_37.0465 a04-a20).

- 27 If one first believes in two truths, one believes that life and death are false existence, namely, its substance is non-existence. This reveals the two gates, emptiness and existence after being based on *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Later, if one further believes the primary meaning, one believes that the supremacy of the wonderful substance of the consciousness, that is, thusness. Therefore, it is known that the truth clearly defined by the present teaching is not the emptiness of self-nature in the past teaching. 無信於二諦者，信生死是忘有，即體無性。此據《大品》以來，開空有二門。後更稱信第一義諦者，信神明妙體眞如之第一。故知今教所明“眞”者，非昔教之性空。(T1763, pp. 538a30–b05).
- 28 The second part clarifies that the conventional is the truth for common people, and the ultimate is the truth for saints. [The category of] the ultimate and the conventional is not the reality, [The middle way that is both] the non-true and non-false is the reality. Why does the Humane King Sutra say there are three truths, namely, the truth of existence, the truth of non-existence, and the primary meaning of the middle way? Interpretation: In fact, there is only one truth, not three. Just follow all living beings to teach the Three Truths, follow those that rely on the ultimate and the conventional to teach the ultimate and the conventional. So, the Mahāpa-rinirvāṇa Sūtra states that “the conventional is the ultimate truth.” Then, it goes on to say that “The truth known to the world is called the conventional Truth, and the truth known those that is out of the world is called the ultimate truth.” Apart from that, Paramārtha makes clear that there is the meaning of three truths, now, I make clear that these three truths are just taught following the sentient beings. Since two truths are taught following sentient beings, the primary meaning of the middle way is also taught following sentient beings. 第二節明俗於凡是諦、眞於聖是諦；眞俗並非諦，非眞非俗諦者，《仁王經》何故云三諦——有諦、無諦、中道第一義諦耶？解云：實唯一諦，無有三諦，但隨順衆生說有三諦，隨眞俗緣故說眞俗諦。所以《涅槃經》明“世諦即第一義”。次即云“世人知者名世諦、出世入知者名第一義諦也。”脫眞諦三藏，明有三諦義。今明此三諦並，隨衆生故說耳。二諦既是隨衆生說，中道第一義諦亦是隨衆生說。(T1854, pp. 101b14–b27), See (Hirai 1964, p. 675).

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