

**PART THREE:  
OTHER PAPERS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

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**SEEING SUKHĀVATĪ:  
YOGĀCĀRA AND THE ORIGINS OF PURE LAND  
VISUALIZATION**

Richard K. PAYNE

Precis: One of the practices characteristic of the Pure Land tradition is visualization, as found for example in the *Visualization Sutra* and the *Rebirth Treatise Discourse on the Pure Land* attributed to Vasubandhu. The question this paper pursues is: How did the creators of such visualization practices conceive that they would be effective in leading one to awakening? The origins of Pure Land visualization practice place it in the same religious milieu as Yogācāra. Any religious practice implies a conception of human existence which defines the human condition, the path, and goal of practice. For an understanding of how visualization practice was understood to be effective, it is important to consider what the contribution of Yogācāra psychology was to the intellectual milieu of Pure Land visualization practice.

Most importantly for Yogācāra, the idea of a fundamental re-orientation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) of consciousness serves to identify the way in which practice effects a change leading to awakening. This paper will, therefore, first describe an instance of visualizing Sukhāvātī, and second describe the Yogācāra conceptions of the way in which a fundamental reorientation of consciousness is achieved. Finally, it will be suggested that visualization practice was understood in a variety of ways, at least one of which was that of Yogācāra psychology.

## Introduction

In the *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*, Śākyamuni Buddha advises the bodhisattva, mahasattva Bhadrapāla that

bodhisattvas, whether they be householders or renunciants, go alone to a secluded spot and sit down, and in accordance with what they have learned they concentrate their thoughts on the Tathagata, Arhat and Perfectly Awakened One Amitayus; flawless in the constituent of morality and unwavering in mindfulness they should concentrate their thoughts on him for one day and one night, or for two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or seven days and nights. If they concentrate their thoughts with undistracted minds on the Tathagata Amitayus for seven days and nights, then, when a full seven days and nights have elapsed, they see the Lord and Tathagata Amitayus. Should they not see the Lord during the daytime, then the Lord and Tathagata Amitayus will show his face to them in a dream while they are sleeping.<sup>1</sup>

This and similar visualization practices seem to have become very popular in medieval India, being found in both Brahmanic and Buddhist texts. In their Buddhist forms, they provided one of the bases for the development of Pure Land Buddhism in East Asia. There are many questions which we could pursue in relation to this and similar visualization practices, but I believe that one of the most important questions is: How did the authors and practitioners of these visualization practices think of them as being effective in producing self-transformation? At the same time, we must note that there is the very real possibility that this question cannot be answered with certainty, and that the best we can accomplish will be speculative. This will be of use, however, for formulating a contemporary understanding of the efficacy of Pure Land practice.

### **Self-transformation and the Efficacy of Visualization**

One possible way of characterizing all of Buddhist thought is that it is concerned with the issue of self-transformation, though what self-transformation means is understood differently within different Buddhist traditions. None of Buddhist thought exists simply as an abstract claim or simply as an intellectually satisfying system of thought. The context of all of Buddhist thought —qua Buddhist —is the process of self-transformation, structured in many cases in the categories of ground, path and goal. The ground is the definition of the human condition, the goal is the condition sought, and the path is the process by which the practitioner moves from ground to goal.

Thus, for Buddhists, the question concerning how medieval Indian, Central Asian, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist thinkers and practitioners thought the practice of visualizing the Buddha Amitayus, his retinue and his Pure Land was effective in producing self-transformation is not purely philosophical or historical. Rather, it goes to the core of the significance of the practice. In addition, I believe that answering this question is important to us today in developing our own, contemporary understanding of self-transformation and the ways in which it can be achieved.

It is, of course, possible to generate any number of possible explanations for the efficacy of visualization practice. In order to inform any contemporary explanation, I think that it is important to understand the traditional explanations. Various texts within the Buddhist tradition seem to have utilized two types of explanations, which I will refer to here as cosmological and psychological. These categories are not those of the original texts, but are rather adopted from contemporary Western philosophic discourse. While some might automatically reject this adoption as an imperialistic imposition of Western intellectual conceptions onto the Buddhist tradition, I would want to note two things. First, that there are

analogous concepts to these two categories in Buddhist thought. Second, that for our purposes here, which are to develop a contemporary understanding of the efficacy of visualization practice, these categories are of heuristic value. As we will see below, the relation between these two kinds of explanations is not one of mutual opposition, but rather one of differing emphasis. Some explanations give greater emphasis to cosmological considerations, while others place their emphasis on psychological ones.

Those explanations which work with the idea that successful visualization means that one has actually seen Sukhāvati, the Buddha Amitābha and his retinue which exist independently of one's visualization of them are what I am calling cosmological. Such explanations have epistemological significance, in the sense that in the absence of a living Buddha of our own realm, one is able to enter into the actual presence of another Buddha, Amitābha for example, and there hear the dharma directly.<sup>2</sup> Another epistemological aspect of this kind of explanation is that the object of perception changes from this realm of samsaric existence to the Sukhāvati. Explanations which refer to visualization itself producing a transformation of consciousness are what I am calling here psychological.

The *Visualization Sutra* itself gives us a psychological answer to the question of how visualization is effective. However, the answer it gives is so brief, so condensed that additional work needs to be done to make the answer something we can understand today. In relation to his own work on *The Awakening of Faith*, Hakeda has cited Edward Conze's comment to the effect that "We at present must reconstruct laboriously what 1,500 years ago seemed a matter of course."<sup>3</sup> Concerning the practice of visualizing Sukhāvati, the *Visualization Sutra* says:

The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī: When you have seen these things, next perceive the Buddha [of Immeasurable Life]. Why? Because each buddha-tathagata, as the body of the dharma-realm,

pervades the mind of all sentient beings. Therefore, when you perceive a buddha in your mind, it is your mind that possesses the thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary attributes; your mind becomes a buddha; your mind is a buddha; and the wisdom of the buddhas — true, universal, and ocean-like — arises from this mind. Therefore, you should single-mindedly fix your thoughts and clearly perceive the Buddha, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha. (III.8; Ryukoku translation)

This answer says that by forming a visual image of the Buddha, our minds become the Buddha. It seems clear that what is meant is not that the mind becomes that of any particular buddha, e.g., the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. Rather, the term “buddha” is being used here to identify awakened consciousness, which is the same in all buddhas, all awakened beings. But how can a visual image transform my consciousness from one which contributes to my daily frustration to one which experiences things as they actually are?

In contrast to the cosmological explanations which assert the literal existence of Sukhāvātī, Yogācāra views of visualization practice have a more psychological emphasis. That is, instead of referencing a change in the object of perception from the samsaric realm to Sukhāvātī, the change is in the workings of the mind and its ability to perceive the actuality of things as they are.

### **Yogācāra Psychology of Self-Transformation**

Within the Buddhist tradition, one of the most systematic treatments of how the mind works is found in the Yogācāra school. The Yogācāra theory of mind can provide us with a psychological explanation of how visualization is effective in the process of self-transformation. The Yogācāra texts describe the mind as having two levels. One is the level of

our present awareness, including both momentary, sensory experience and ego-consciousness. If this were all, however, there would be no way of explaining how it is that there is continuity of experience across such breaks in consciousness as sleep and deep meditative states (*nirodha-samāpatti*), and no way of explaining how consciousness can be transformed. So in addition to our present consciousness, the Buddhist psychologists hypothesized that there must be a level of mind that is outside of our present conscious awareness, a foundational consciousness which is normally outside of our conscious awareness, i.e., unconscious. This foundational consciousness is, of course, the *ālayavijñāna*.

The foundational consciousness is the source of our repetitive frustrations. Our ego-centric actions – karma – produce effects not only in the world around us, but also in the foundational consciousness, which then becomes part of the conditions of following experiences, leading to habitual patterns of behavior. John Keenan has described this function of the foundational consciousness, or which he refers to as the “container consciousness”:

The container consciousness is understood as the seminal consciousness because it serves as a latent and preconscious accumulation of karmic seeds from defiled experiences in the transmigratory past. In virtue of this accumulation of seeds, the entire growth and development of consciousness is karmically defiled and enmeshed in ignorance and illusion. This container consciousness lies hidden beneath the everyday activities of sensing, perceiving, and thinking, and issues in a propensity towards discrimination.<sup>4</sup>

The modern Shin thinker Soga Ryojin points out, however, that the *ālayavijñāna*, the foundational consciousness, “is at once the principle of *avidyā*, primal ignorance, and of enlightenment. The actual world of

ignorance is brought about by *ālayavijñāna*, but once aware of, awakened to, the process by which *ālayavijñāna* comes to be defiled, we are already on the way toward enlightenment.”<sup>5</sup>

This idea of a foundational consciousness level of our mental existence has been criticized by some as a crypto-soul, an atman theory being snuck into Buddhism. This critique, however, is based on an uninformed misconception of the Yogācāra conceptualization of the *ālayavijñāna*.<sup>6</sup> For example, one of the main sutra sources for the Buddhist psychologists, the *Sutra Explaining the Intent (Samdhinirmocana sutra)* presents the foundational consciousness as impermanent in very clear terms. In the closing verse of the fifth chapter of this sutra, the Buddha declares:

If the appropriating consciousness [i.e., *ālayavijñāna*], deep and subtle, all its seeds flowing like a river, were conceived as a self, that would not be right. Thus I have not taught this to children.<sup>7</sup>

The *Sutra Explaining the Intent* employs a very traditional metaphor – waves on a river – for describing the working of mind. Thoughts arise like waves on the river which is the ongoing flow of the foundational consciousness. Like a river, the foundational consciousness is empty of any permanent, substantive, eternally unchanging essence, being instead an ongoing process, flowing.

By changing the way in which the foundational consciousness effects subsequent experiences, it may be possible to break the continuity of frustrating habit patterns. The Yogācāra texts referred to such a change as a turning over or revolution in the base of consciousness: *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. This is the key to self-transformation: that there can be a fundamental change in how we experience the world.

According to Alan Sponberg, another of the main Yogācāra texts – the *Mahāyānasamgraha* by Asaṅga-outlines a theory of awakening in which

non-discriminating cognition (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) is the direct cause of unfixed nirvana (*apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*), the goal of the bodhisattva who, balancing wisdom and compassion, is fixed neither in samsara nor in nirvana.<sup>8</sup> “This is the ‘basic revolution’ (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) in which [the bodhisattva] rejects all defilements (*saṃkleśa*) and yet does not abandon the mundane realm subject to death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*).”<sup>9</sup> Sponberg describes non-discriminating cognition as being characterized not only negatively, but also positively, as “the direct and intuitive cognition” of the truth that all things are empty of independent existence, i.e., *paramārthasatya*. The *Mahāyānasamgraha* describes the turning over, conversion, or revolution of the foundational consciousness as leading to the attainment of the “Dharma Body” (*dharmakāya*). In Paramārtha’s translation of the commentary on the *Mahāyānasamgraha* by Vasubandhu, the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, this is explained that purification is attained “by the conversion of the container consciousness” [i.e., *ālayavijñāna*]:

Conversion means that, upon the arising of its antidote, one becomes separated from one aspect of the impure states of the foundational consciousness, and associated with one aspect of the pure states of the foundational consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Another explanation of the transformation of the foundational consciousness is found in Tsong Khapa’s Ocean of Eloquence. Tsong Khapa’s explanation is that a pure dharma, taking up residence in the foundational consciousness begins to purify the whole of the foundational consciousness:

In this [Yogācāra] way [of thinking], then, the seed of uncontaminated [wisdom] that is on the matured [*ālaya*] consciousness is not *ālayavijñāna*, since it is an antidote to *ālayavijñāna*. When, through a great deal of

fostering by the conditions of listening, thinking, and contemplation, the pure seed increases and the seed of the afflictions is impeded, then . . . when the seed of complete affliction is impeded and purity expands, a fundamental change takes place.<sup>11</sup>

Using this understanding of how the foundational consciousness is transformed could be developed into an explanation of the efficacy of Pure Land visualization in which the experience of seeing Amitabha, his retinue and Sukhāvati constitutes that pure dharma. Since these are pure dharmas, experiencing them is their entry into the foundational consciousness, and being pure, they purify. Note that there is an important distinction which is implicit here, the distinction between visualizing Sukhāvati and seeing it. This would seem to be entirely consistent with Shinran's conception of the difference between self-power and other-power. The limited efficacy of visualizing is an instance of self-power, while the transformative efficacy of seeing is an instance of other-power.

Within the Yogācāra tradition, two different conceptions of the foundational consciousness developed. In one, the foundational consciousness was understood to be itself inherently pure, while in the other it was seen as the obscuring factor overlaying a more fundamental and pure consciousness which is inherently awakened and identical with the awakened consciousness of all buddhas. In East Asian Buddhism, this inherently awakened, naturally pure consciousness was conflated with the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha*, and came to be called "Buddha-nature."

According to B. Alan Wallace's explanation, the idea of Buddha-nature has two aspects.<sup>12</sup> One aspect is future oriented – it is the idea that everyone has the potential of becoming fully awakened, of becoming a buddha. No one is excluded from the possibility of becoming a buddha, or perhaps more appropriately, no one is excluded from the responsibility of becoming a buddha. A metaphor employed to describe this aspect is that of the seed of awakening. Everyone has the seed, and the seed cannot be destroyed, but it

requires the right conditions, the effort of practice in order that it germinate, grow and produce flowers and fruit.

The other aspect is present oriented, it is a description of our present condition as already, naturally and inherently awakened. It is this aspect that is identified with *dharmakāya*, which is one of the three bodies of the buddha, the characteristics of which Jacqueline Stone has described as “the truth without beginning or end that is inherent in all things.”<sup>13</sup> Wallace explains the identity of *dharmakāya* and Buddha-nature, saying “When one’s own Buddha-nature is completely unveiled, one’s own mind is revealed as *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* one experiences when becoming a Buddha is not intrinsically separate from anybody else’s *dharmakāya*.”<sup>14</sup> To explain this identity another metaphor, that of the mirror, is often employed. In this metaphor the foundational consciousness is said to be like a mirror. A mirror naturally, effortlessly, and spontaneously reflects whatever comes before it. Any dust or dirt that may accumulate on the surface of the mirror may interfere with the reflective qualities. But the dust and dirt are only present accidentally and not inherently-adhering to the mirror, they can be cleared away, revealing the clear, spontaneously reflective surface beneath.

The idea that all living beings (and perhaps even the trees and grasses) can become Buddhas because they possess Buddha-nature was accepted by almost all schools of East Asian Buddhism. The single exception was the East Asian branch of Yogācāra thought founded by Hsüan-tsang, the Fa-shiang school (Jpn. Hossō). In medieval Japan, the Hossō scholar Tokuitsu attempted to reconcile the idea that Buddha-nature is universal with the idea that there are those who will never become Buddhas by distinguishing two kinds of Buddha-nature. Stone describes the character of these two and how they relate to the idea of the *ālayavijñāna*. The two are: Buddha nature as suchness or principle (*ri-busshō*), which is universal, and active Buddha nature (*gyō-busshō*), which is not. Ri-bussho is quiescent

and does not manifest itself in the phenomenal world; thus the universality of the Buddha nature in this sense does not mean that all people can become Buddhas. Realizing Buddhahood depends on *gyo-bussho*, which consists of “untainted seeds” present in the *ālaya* consciousness from the beginning-less past. Those who possess such seeds can become Buddhas; those who lack them can never attain Buddhahood, no matter how hard they may strive.<sup>15</sup>

In the long run, however, the idea that Buddhahood was foreclosed to some living beings was not accepted. Instead, we find the view that all living beings — indeed, everything — would attain Buddhahood becoming the view throughout Japanese Buddhist thought generally, including Jodo Shinshu. The “*Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’*” strongly suggests that Shinran’s view was consistent with this view that universal Buddha nature means that all existing things — “plants, trees, and land” — will attain Buddhahood:

Nirvana is called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharma-body, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness, and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood.<sup>16</sup>

While perhaps not as central to his thinking as the concept of *shinjin*, the idea of Buddha-nature does appear to have been very important to Shinran. In his collected works there are many references to Buddha-nature, and most of these references equate Buddha-nature with *shinjin*. We find this equation being made, for example, in a sequence of three of the “Hymns of the Pure Land”:

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When a person realizes the mind of nondiscrimination,  
That attainment is the ‘state of regarding each being as one’s only  
child.’

This is none other than Buddha-nature;  
We will awaken to it on reaching the land of peace.

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Tathagata is none other than nirvana;  
Nirvana is called Buddha-nature.  
Beyond our ability to attain it in the state of foolish beings,  
We will realize it on reaching the land of peace.

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The person who attains shinjin and joy  
Is taught to be equal to the Tathagatas.  
Great shinjin is itself Buddha-nature;  
Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata.<sup>17</sup>

Another instance of this equation of shinjin and Buddha-nature is found in Shinran’s *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone.’* Here Shinran cites Vasubandhu, the medieval Indian Yogācāra author mentioned previously, saying:

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu declares that this true and real shinjin is none other than the aspiration to become a Buddha. [i.e., bodhicitta] This is the great thought of enlightenment of the Pure Land. This aspiration for Buddhahood is none other than the wish to carry all beings across the great ocean of birth-and-death. This shinjin is the aspiration to bring all beings to the attainment of supreme nirvana; it is the heart of

great love and great compassion. This shinjin is Buddha-nature and Buddha-nature is Tathagata. To realize this shinjin is to rejoice and be glad. People who rejoice and are glad are called “people equal to the Buddhas.”<sup>18</sup>

In his “True Teaching, Practice, and Realization” Shinran repeatedly quotes the *Nirvāna sūtra*, one of the primary sources of Buddha nature thought in East Asian Buddhism. One of these citations makes the equation of Buddha nature and shinjin quite explicit, giving Shinran a canonic source for his assertions of their identity:

Buddha-nature is great shinjin. Why? Because through shinjin the bodhisattva-mahasattva has acquired all the paramitas from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great shinjin. Therefore it is taught, “All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature.” Great shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathagata.<sup>19</sup>

This identification of Buddha nature, Tathagata, nirvana, suchness and shinjin appears to be consistent throughout Shinran’s writings.

That Buddha nature is universally present in all living beings and existing things, however, creates a further question concerning the relation between universal Buddha nature and the process by which one realizes awakening. Stone outlines two possible strategies which are based on the idea of universal Buddha nature, saying

Once the Buddha nature has been defined as innate in all beings, the question arises as to whether awakening depends on removing the attachments and false views that obstruct one from discerning the Buddha nature, or on a direct realization of the Buddha nature, as

whose consequence the mental defilements will naturally be dispelled or transformed.<sup>20</sup>

The latter view, i.e., that realizing Buddha nature is what dispels “attachments and false views” would seem to be more in accord with the emphasis on other power.

With these ideas regarding the relation between Buddha nature and awakening in mind, we can go back to the formulations of Vasubandhu and the other Buddhist psychologists concerning the working of the mind. A key concept for the Buddhist psychologists is what they called the “three natures” (*trisvabhāva*). These are subjective awareness, mental constructs and things as they actually are. In the metaphor of the mirror we employed earlier, the mirror is subjective awareness, mental constructs are the dust and dirt that accumulate on the mirror, and things as they actually are are the objects reflected in the mirror. The mirror will naturally and spontaneously reflect whatever it is presented with, whether that is the dust and dirt of mental constructs or things as they actually are. Once cleared of dust and dirt, the mirror is only left with things as they actually are.

Like all metaphors, however, this one is of limited value and can only be pushed so far. It is too static and does not account for the dynamic qualities of mind that lead to the patterns of repetitious frustrating behaviors. This is the “appropriating mind” referred to in the quote from the *Samdhinirmocana sutra* given above. The metaphor can also contribute to a mistaken notion of self-power, in that it implies that we are somehow ourselves other than, or separate from the mirror, and can clean it of dust and dirt, leading to our own self-empowered awakening. This is like the first strategy identified by Stone above, that is, that Buddha nature is revealed through the clearing away of “attachments and false views.”

So how do visualization practices such as that we opened with effect a self-transformation? How do they cut through the obscuring dust and dirt of

mental constructs to allow the subjective awareness to reflect things as they actually are, to allow the foundational consciousness to act in its natural, spontaneously pure fashion? For certain strains of thought regarding the practice of Buddha visualization the key was not visualizing the Buddha *per se*, but rather seeing the Buddha that was transformative. In other words, while the practice of forming a mental, visual image of the Buddha Amida arises from one's personal effort, it is understood as creating the conditions for the Buddha's responsive reaching out to us, for us to see the Buddha. The same thing is true of reciting the name of the Buddha: it is not our effort in reciting the name of the Buddha that produces our own self-transformation, but rather such recitation creates a condition of responsiveness on our part that allows us to hear the name of the Buddha spoken to us by the Buddha. It is in these formulations, which accord both with the idea of other power and the idea that realizing Buddha nature clears away the obscurations, that the cosmological and psychological emphases in explaining the efficacy of visualization are merged. Our ego-consciousness cannot go beyond its own limited view. This is the profound insight of Shinran's rejection of self-power, i.e., efforts arising from the ego-consciousness. But ego-consciousness can come to realize that it is itself the source of its own frustrations and, becoming aware of its own limitations, create an attitude of desiring something else, what Soga Ryojin calls "the profound aspiration in our own mind – springing up from the *ālayavijñāna* – to become denizens of a world of truth and purity."<sup>21</sup>

While *nembutsu* is usually identified with verbal recitation of the name of the Buddha, it more literally means "to keep the Buddha in mind" and includes the visualization of the Buddha as well. Such a practice begins to weaken the hold of the ego-consciousness (*manas*) and for the underlying, inherently pure and awakened consciousness to manifest itself as the true locus of our lives. The ego-centric activity of the ego-consciousness (*kliṣṭamanovijñāna*) continually obscures the inherently awakened

consciousness. By focusing our attention on the Buddha, we break the constant flow of obscurations. Such breaks in the repetitive self-aggrandizement of the ego-consciousness open an opportunity for the Buddha-nature to become the active center of our lives. Soga cites another work by Vasubandhu, the *Triṃśikā*, to say that “the *ālayavijñāna* is . . . like a rushing torrent. It will manifest itself amidst illusory thoughts, break through all the forms of ignorance of sentient beings, and someday must fulfill all of their innermost aspirations.”<sup>22</sup> This is the turning over at the foundations of consciousness, a shift of the position from which we live our lives from the ego-consciousness to Buddha-nature. To close with a final quote from Soga,

To be awakened to the depth of the Original Vow then means to attain the enlightened wisdom to know who one really is. Once awakened to the depth of the Original Vow, one shares in the enlightenment of Amida in the Pure Land – the transcendent realm – while yet remaining in this world of relativity: one’s eventual attainment of Buddhahood is a certainty, is assured.<sup>23</sup>

## NOTES

This is a revised version of a paper originally presented to the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies, at the Ninth Biennial Conference, Hawai’i, 1999.

1. Paul Harrison, tr., *The Samadhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present: An Annotated English Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Samukhavasthita-Samadhi-Sutra*, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series, no. 5. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990. p. 32 [3B].

2. There is a suggestive similarity here to Gnosticism in which visionary experiences are held to have salvific significance. According to Dan Merkur, the Gnostics developed “a distinctive type of visionary experience. The visions were not regarded as (“extrasensory”) perceptions of objectively existing external realities. They did not disclose the real appearances of heavenly beings and locations in manners consistent, for example, with the celestial journeys of Jewish and Christian apocalyptists. Gnostics recognized their visions as subjective mental experiences whose contents varied from moment to moment and individual to individual” (*Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993], p. 114). Merkur’s description of the Gnostics’ understanding of the importance of their visionary experiences suggests something closer to what I am calling here a psychological explanation. An extended comparison is beyond the scope of this paper, however. In addition, the value of such a comparison is dependent upon a theory of such experiences and their interpretation, itself a task even further beyond the scope of this paper.

3. Hakeda, *The Awakening of Faith*, p. 4.

4. John Keenan, “Introduction” to Griffiths, et. al., trs., *The Realm of Awakening: A Translation and Study of the Tenth Chapter of Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 7.

5. Soga Ryojin, “Dharmakara Bodhisattva,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, I. 1 (1965); reprinted in Frederick Frank, ed., *The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 224.

6. For a discussion of the impermanence of the related concepts of *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha-nature, see Sallie B. King, “The Doctrine of Buddha-Nature is Impeccably Buddhist,” in Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, eds, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997).

7. John Powers, tr., *Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Mahāyāna*

*Sūtra* (Emeryville, California: Dharma Publishing, 1995), p. 77.

8. Specifically, nirvana-without remainder (*nirupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*), i.e., that goal attributed to śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas for which they are criticized in Mahayana discourse.

9. Alan Sponberg, “Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 1. 2 (1979, pp. 44-64), p. 48.

10. Paul J. Griffiths, et. al., trs., *The Realm of Awakening*, p. 116.

11. Gareth Sparham, tr., *Ocean of Eloquence: Tsong kha pa’s Commentary on the Yogācāra Doctrine of Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 92.

12. B. Alan Wallace refers to the present-oriented aspect of Buddha-nature as “discovered” and to the future-oriented aspect as “developed.” B. Alan Wallace, “Buddha-Nature” in Jean Smith, ed., *Radiant Mind: Essential Buddhist Teachings and Texts* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999. Pp. 235-237.), p. 235.

13. Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 12. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), p. 19.

14. Wallace, “Buddha-Nature,” p. 235.

15. Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, p. 13.

16. Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, *The Collected Works of Shinran* (hereafter, C.W.S. 2 vols. Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), I. 461.

17. C.W.S., I.350-351. The last hymn is quoted in a letter to Shinran by Kyoshin, thus evidencing that Buddha-nature was at least familiar, if not a topic of discussion, among Jodo Shinshu adherents (C.W.S., I. 541).

18. C.W.S., I. 463.

19. C.W.S., I. 99.

20. Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, p. 38.

21. Soga, “Dharmakara Bodhisattva,” p. 226.

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22. Soga, "Dharmakara Bodhisattva," p. 227.
23. Soga, "Dharmakara Bodhisattva," p. 223.



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