

An Exploration of the Early One-True Dharmadhatu Thoughts----From Mind Only Chittamatra, Tantra to Huayen Theory

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Abstract: The concept of one-true Dharmadhatu originates from India Buddhism, and it appears both in Vijnapti-matrata and Tantra classics, approximately having the same meaning. Li tongxuan was the first one who introduced the concept of One-true Dharmadhatu into Huayen theory. Conformed with the thinking mode of Matter-mind-being Nonduality by Li Tongxuan, taking Fundamental Wisdom as its basis, One-true Dharmadhatu has such harmonious teaching characteristics as wisdom and earth being one, nature and things binging not different, and harmony without obstacles. Later, Chengguan, in his Wutai Mountain Period, explained One-true Dharmadhatu as Dharmadhatu Pure Wisdom, and combined it with Fazang's Five Dharmadhatu thought, thus made it more philosophical.

Introduction

In China's Huayen thoughts, One-true Dharmadhatu is an important concept. Since was introduced into Huayen theory by Li Tongxuan, One-true Dharmadhatu has appeared often in Chenguan's works and the Huayen works of the following dynasties. Japanese scholar Xiaodaodaishan, Tanwan region researcher Hong Meizhen have discussed the concept of One-true Dharmadhatu in their works. [1]China Main Land scholar Liu Yuanyuan has discussed Li Tongxuan's thoughts on One-true Dharmadhatu and its influences on Chengguan deeply, but it is not comprehensive, and also not involves in the thoughts of Chengguan. Chengguan's thoughts on One-true Dharmadhatu can be divided into two periods: the first periods is when he dwelled in Wutai Mountain , in which his thoughts on One-true Dharmadhatu is complicated, and the second period is when he moved to Chang'an and Zhongnan Mountain, in which, One-true Dharmadhatu is explained with the concept of yixin(One-mind). In this essay, I am going to illustrate the early time development way of One-true Dharmadhatu concept from Mind Only Chittamatra, Tantra, Li Tongxuan until to Chengguan's Wutai Mountain period.

One-true Dharmadhatu Illustrated in the Mind Only Chittamatra

In the Xianqing fourth year, Gao Emperor of Tang Dynasty(659), Xuanzang translated Vijnaptimatratasiddhi-sastra. In the ninth volume of which, it says:

The crowning truths consist of four: 1. the world crowning truths, which mean Yun, Chuand Jie etc; 2. theory truths, which mean the four true theories as miseries, causes, nirvana, and practicing ways; 3. the experienced truths, which mean thusness on the two kinds of empties(empties of ego and dharma); 4. the most crowning truth, which mean one-true dharmadhatu. Here, the crowning truth refers to what the last one means. [2]

In this paragraph, the author highly honors one-true dharmadhatu as the most crowning. Kuiji says , in the ninth volume of *Book Record on Hearing Vijnaptimatratasiddhi-sastra*, “ the first one means the ten kinds of convenience, the second means the four true theories , the third is to have the truth appear with the help of language, and the forth is to highlight the truth by melting the language. ” [3] In his other works as *Ideas Trees of Mahayana Dharma Garden*, he says that the

most crowning truth---- one true dharmadhatu is not created by concept reasoning, which the other three are based on.

In the volume 80 of the book *Yogabhumi-Sastra*, The fundamental classics of mind only chittamatra, it says that when Arahant is living in the state of rest-body nirvana, he lives in the pure, effortless, clear, and true dharmadhatu, which equates to one true dharmadhatu.

One-true Dharmadhatu Thoughts in the Tantra Sect of the Tang Dynasty

In volume 2 of the *Outsanding Monks' Stories* written by Zanning, it says that in the year 716, Shanwuwei, came from the central India to Chang'an of China, carrying sutras of the sanskrit version. And in the next year, he began to translate the Buddhism sutras. One of the sutras he translated is *Vajra Top Sutra*, in volume 1 of which, it says:

All the Buddhas' diamond mani treasures are of the same dharmata, one-true dharmadhatu, tathataa, without coming or going, no phase or action, the pure dharmakaya shining the complete tranquil extinction. [4]

From this paragraph we can infer that the concept of one-true dharmadhatu means dharmata, sunyata, or, it can mean pure dharmakaya. In the same sutra, it also says, "person is empty, dharma is empty, and self-nature is empty; one-true dharmadhatu is empty essentially." [5]

Till here, we can safely conclude that one-true dharmadhatu has different connotations in Mind only chittamatra works (appearing after one experiences person empty and dharma empty.) and vajrayana works as *108 Dharmakaya Marks of Vairocana in Vajra Top Sutra* (empty or sunyata).

On the other hand, in the *Commentary to the Great Sun Sutra*, it says, "Since the hindrances of the world have been swept, there is no opposition, which is called one-true dharmadhatu." [6] Here, the concept of one-true dharmadhatu is similar to the one of mind only chittamatra.

One-true Dharmadhatu Concept in Li Tongxuan's Buddhism Thoughts

Li Tongxuan is the first person who began to use the concept of one-true dharmadhatu in the system of Chinese Buddhism thoughts. From his experiences, we know that he received the concept of one true dharmadhatu from the works of mind only chittamatra, because Li Tongxuan probably did not see *108 Dharmakaya Marks of Vairocana in Vajra Top Sutra* and *Commentary to the Great Sun Sutra*. After reading Li Tongxuan's work, we find that his concept of one true dharmadhatu is different from the ones in mind only chittamatra and tantra schools. I'm going to analyze this from the following two aspects:

Non-duality of nature and form, reason and things, wisdom and earth. In the volume 1 of *Commentary to the Newly Translated Avatamsaka Sutra*, it says, "..... *Avatamsaka Sutra* is not like this, and it only highlights the fundamental wisdom which itself is the non-dual fundamental body and fundamental dharmadhatu. Due to the essence and function of Buddha, the nature and form are non-dual; at the same time, the body of essence and the body of karmic retribution are consistent. The sutra directly give a sudden show of the one-true dharmadhatu fundamental wisdom of Buddha's fruit, in order to open a door for people to get enlightened and enter, without the process of delusion causing consciousness." [7]

What is one true dharmadhatu? The answer is not given clearly in this paragraph, but can be got through analyzation. Firstly, trueness is contrary to delusion, and wisdom is in opposition to consciousness. In the common beings' situation, delusion generates consciousness; while in the fruition phase of Buddha, the fundamental wisdom gains one-true dharmadhatu, or rather, it can be said that fundamental wisdom itself is one-true dharmadhatu, because in Buddha's phase, realm and wisdom are non-dual. Secondly, what is "one-true"? there are two points: 1. fundamental body and fundamental dharmadhatu are consistent, or non-dual. In other words, in the phase of Buddha, there is no distinction between inside and outside. 2. nature and form are non-dual, and it is same in the relation of body of essence and body of karmic retribution.

Li Tongxuan announces that dependent arising dharmadhatu is actually nature arising, because nature and phenomena(form) are non-dual. In volume 2 of *Commentary to the Newly Translated*

Avatamsaka Sutra, it says, “*The Avatamsaka Sutra* shows the dependent arising dharmadhatu, in which the nature and phenomena are non-dual, and all the conditions are nirvana(tranquil extinction), all the things are true. The worlds of the ten directions are the sea of one-true nature” [8] From this paragraph, we can find that Li Tongxuan’s concept of dharmadhatu means dharmata, or nature. Therefore, the dependent arising dharmadhatu is actually nature arising, which means that nature arises its function as all the dharma.

Li Tongxuan thinks that wisdom itself is the earth, and the two are non-dual. Therefore, there is no distinction between the sentient and the non-sentient, and the non sentient earth is wholly the great wisdom, further, the sea of nature, or one-true dharmadhatu, because the earth is complete true realm, and is not depending on the karma. [9]

Cause and effect being non-dual; suddenly attaining one-true dharmadhatu in a thought moment. Cause and effect are non-dual, hence when a man is making his initial resolve to attain the right enlightenment of Buddha, he has already achieved it. Therefore, the first-dwelling bodhisattva attains one-true dharmadhatu. From then on, he further cultivates his Buddha dharmakaya in the five phases. Li Tongxuan says, “the initial resolve dwelling and the following nine dwelling bodhisattvas are all in the phase of darsana-marga, or path of seeing. The phases of ten practices, ten backs, ten stages, are stages of preparations and stages of equipments at the same time. Preparation stage and Buddha stage advance together as cause and effect.” [10] He has a strange idea that samantabhadra’s practice fruit and Manjusri’s nature fruit are equipped each other. In other words, in the first dwelling phase, having attained enlightenment, a bodhisattva enters one-true dharmadhatu of Buddha fruit. After this, in all the phases, causes(preparation phase, equipment phase)and effects(Buddha phase)are at the same time. Under the concept of one-true dharmadhatu, by reconstruction, Li Tongxuan completely breaks the routine structure of bodhisattva’s practice process in vijbana-vada, which goes through path of equipment, path of preparation, path of enlightenment gaining, path of cultivation, and path of the ultimate. [11]

According to Li Tongxuan’s idea, you can attain one-true dharmadhatu in the time of a thought suddenly. After that you will be free to make improvement, there being no need to practice the other dharmas or to root out troubles in other ways, and there being no distinction between effect and fruit. in other words, after you gain the first dwelling stage, although it seems that you make improvement through the five phases, in fact, there is no present and before, rather we can say, there is no time in one-true dharmadhatu. [12]

In a words, the core of li tongxuan’s huayan thoughts is in one-true dharmadhatu. [13] his concept of one-true dharmadhatu originates from vijbana-vada’s four true crowning truths and surpasses it. In fact, there is another element which contributes to his thoughts of one-true dharmadhatu. That is the theory structure of mind-matter- non-duality in *Awakening Faith of Manayana*. It says,

Mind and matter are non-dual all the time. the nature of matter is wisdom, which is formless, and can be called body of wisdom; wisdom and nature is matter, and can be called body of essence which is ubiquitous. the matters raised by mind can be limitless and be the whole universe, so the immeasurable bodhisattvas, buddhas’ reword bodies, and all the ornaments, although being different, are in fact of no boundaries, and do not get in the way of each others. this can not be understood by the conscious recognition, and it is the free function of tathataa. [14]

The concept of mind and matter non-duality in *Awakening Faith of Mahayana* unites the phases of causes and fruits. In Buddhas’ fruits phase, mind is wisdom, which raises the matters of immeasurable worlds and ornaments that are harmonious and do not interfere with each others. Li Tongxuan’s concept of one-true dharmadhatu is similar to this.

At the same time, Li Tongxuan’s thoughts of one-true dharmadhatu belongs to state theory which indicates Buddha’s state, and has strong practical character which is very similar to the way of Zen sect’s sudden enlightenment. However, speaking from the levels of practice, the one who can arrive at this state must attain Huineng’s criteria of self-mind Buddha nature, which advocates that self nature has the three bodies and four wisdoms of Buddha. In the later periods of Zen sect, those who had overcome the last obstacle in the process of meditation practice may not meet the

standard.

Chengguan's Thoughts of One-true Dharmadhatu in His Wutai Period

Chengguan traveled and studied Buddhism from all kinds of schools from 20 years old until 40 years or so. Then he dwelled in the Wutai Mountain, writing *Commentary and Sub-commentary to Huayen Eight Volumes*, at the same time teaching them to his students. Later, he was invited to Tang Dynasty's capital---Chang'an by the emperor. Hence, he spent his rest years in Chang'an and Zhongnan Mountain. In these years, he wrote *Commentary to Huayen Forty Volumes*. Chengguan's thoughts of one-true dharmadhatu can be divided into two: one of the early period and one of the later. The early period is when he lived in Wutai Mountain, which is an accumulation period. The later one is when he dwelled in Chang'an and Zhongnan Mountain, which is a creative period. Here, we mainly discuss the early period, when Chengguan's thoughts of one-true dharmadhatu has the following features:

Integrating Fazang's concept of five dharmas and Li Tongxuan's definition of one-true dharmadhatu. In his commentary to huayen eighty, chengguan says, ".....firstly, what being entered is one-true dharmadhatu, which generally speaking is of two aspects: thusness and matters, but specifically, can be divided into five kinds: 1. matters dharmadhatu, 2. thusness dharmadhatu, 3. dharmadhatu of the both, 4. dharmadhatu of neither, 5. unhindered dharmadhatu" [15]

Bringing out the connotation of one-true dharmadhatu from the aspects of wisdom and state. Chengguan thinks that one-true dharmadhatu beyonds the concepts of inner and outer, one and many. In order to help people understand it, we can divide it into two: that can obtain, which is mind(or wisdom), and that being obtained, which is state. [16]

Considering one-true dharmadhatu as wisdom. In section 23 of his *Sub-commentary to Huayen Eighty Volumes*, he states, "in *Vajra Ekshara Sutra* and *Yogacara-bhumi-sastra*, there are five wisdoms, among which, the first one---dharmadhatu pure wisdom is one-true dharmadhatu." [17] We can see that Chengguan here use wisdom to explain one-true dharmadhatu, which is succession and transformation to Li Tongxuan's concept, because Li Tongxuan's concept of one-true dharmadhatu is the fundamental wisdom.

Looking one-true dharmadhatu as state. In section 1 of *Commentary to Huayen Eighty Volumes*, he says that the incomparable state can be divided into two: the clean inside-trouble dharmadhatu which is a state that is to be believed in, the purest outside-trouble dharmadhatu, which is to be obtained. He thinks that the two kinds of incomparable states are both one-true dharmadhatu. This is a thoughts integration of tathagata-garbha school and yocacara school. Because the first kind is in fact thusness or tathagata-garbha, and the second one refers to the thusness of yocacara, which can only be obtained after long time yoca practice. at the same time, this is a combination of state theory and nature theory, while Li Tongxuan's concept of one-true dharmadhatu is only state theory.

Use the nature of dharmas to explain one-true dharmadhatu. In the first section of the sub-commentary to huayen of eighty volumes, he states, ".....it means that one-true dharmadhatu is the mysterious nature, above which there are various wonderful matters." [18] One-true dharmadhatu of this meaning, in Chengguan's works, can sometimes be used to refer to body of essence. In the fourth section of the *Sub-commentary to Huayen of Eighty Volumes*, there is such statement.

Use one-true dharmadhatu in the way of pure yogacara school. Chengguan sometimes uses the concept of one-true dharmadhatu in completely the same way as it is used in *Vijnaptimatratat-siddhi Sastra*.

From the above analysis, we know that Chengguan's one-true dharmadhatu thoughts are comprehensive enough to embrace the concepts of Li Tongxuan, Fazang's, and even yoyacara's. His concept of one-true dharmadhatu has the connotation of both state theory and nature theory.

Conclusion

Li Tongxuan firstly introduced "one-true dharmadhatu" into the concepts system of Huayen theory.

Based on the matter-mind-non-duality idea, he transformed the concept of one-true dharmadhatu with fundamental wisdom and the non-duality of several pairs of concepts, such as nature and matter, wisdom and earth, body of essence and body of reward, cause and effect. This transformation adds new elements to China's Huayen theory, although it makes Li Tongxuan's Huayen thoughts a little different from Zhiyan and Fazang's. later, Chengguan absorbed Li's thoughts of one-true dharmadhatu, keeping Li's strong practice character, and at the same time adding theoretical derivation of Zhiyan and Fazang's. It is in the process from Li Tongxuan and Chengguan's development that the concept of one-true dharmadhatu finished its way of maturation.

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