

The Sinitic Buddhist Context of Wŏnhyo's View of "Other Power"

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How did Wŏnhyo understand the concept of “other-power”?

- Other power 他力
- Silla 新羅 monk Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686)
- Tanluan 曇鸞 (ca. 488–554)
- Daochuo 道綽 (562–645)
- aspiration to enlightenment 菩提心 (Skt. *bodhicitta*)
- state of non-retrogression 阿惟越致 (Skt. *avaivartika*).

Sinitic Buddhist Context

- Nāgārjuna (ca. 50–150)
- Kumārajīva (343–413)
- Bodhiruci I (fl. 508–535)
- Although Wŏnhyo does not employ the term “other-power” in his extant writings on Pure Land scriptures, his views on the topic can be inferred from his *Muryangsu-gyŏng chongyo* 無量壽經宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the *Larger Pure Land Sūtra*) and show a greater affinity to mainstream Sinitic scholarly views on the significance of arousing the aspiration to enlightenment.

Da baoji jing lun 大寶積經論 (*Ratnakūṭa-sūtra-śāstra*; Treatise on the *Mahāratnakūṭa*)

attributed to the Indian writer Sthiramati (Anhui 安慧, sixth century) in later Tibetan materials, was translated into Buddhist Chinese by Bodhiruci I (Putiliuzhi 菩提流支, fl. 508–535)

- 問曰：若是菩薩初發心者，我當成於正覺。彼心有何等性？復有何相？有何等念？有何功德？有何勝事？以何所攝？為誰根本？是誰現氣因？誰所依止？
- 答曰：初正願性，豈欲求相？菩提為念及念眾生，以一切智，因無量功德，一切世間聲聞緣覺願中上故，為勝。信地所攝，無上菩提根本，慈悲現氣因，菩薩戒所依止。然是發菩提心，略有二種：一者出世因；二者不出世因。是中出世因者，若發心已永，遂不忘，是名出世因。不出世因者，若心不永，遂中忘。彼心退亦有二種：一者永退；二者不永退。是中永退者，若有數退而復能生。不永退者，若退已即生。然彼心以四種緣、四種因及四種力而能生。何等四種緣？一者見聞如來希有變化故，發菩提心；二者因於無上菩提，以聞法為憐愍利益眾生故，發菩提心；三者菩薩為欲正法久住故，發菩提心；四者見末世眾生受諸重苦故，發菩提心。何者四種因？一者具性故；二者具善知識故；三者慈悲為首故；四者不驚怖世間長夜。種種深重，有聞等因故。何等四力？一者自力；二者他力；三者因力；四者修行力。是中自力者，以自力故，堪樂欲發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心，是名自力。他力者，以他所勸令發心，是名他力。前所習大乘善法者，是名因力。現在法中親近知識，長夜之中聞思等正法習行善不息者，是名修行力。是中若廣略，此四緣及四因藉故。若使內自力及以因力，具此二因生彼心者，如是故名為有益、名堅不動而生。他力修行力生彼心者，名為不應動失。應知。彼心退轉相亦有四種：無性故、惡知識所攝、於諸眾生不起悲愍心及恐怖世間故。不忘菩提心，菩薩還憶持彼菩提心故，能修行功德智明。助道所攝善根法中，彼如是修諸行已，善法滅不增長因故說諸法。 (*Da baoji jing lun* 大寶積經論 1, T 1523, 26.207c27–208b4)

Shizhu piposha lun 十住毘婆沙論 (**Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣa*; A Detailed Explication of the Ten Stages), in 17 rolls, attributed to Nāgārjuna (Longshu龍樹, ca. 150–200), was translated by Kumārajīva (Jiumoluoshi鳩摩羅什, 344–413) between 402 and 412

- In the Buddhadharma there are immeasurable approaches, just as in the world there are roads that are difficult and easy. **Although walking on landed routes is suffering, riding a boat on waterways is a pleasure.** The way of the bodhisattva is also like this. Some [practitioners] diligently make seminal progress, and some [practitioners] use faith as an expedient means, **easily and quickly reach [the stage of] *avaivartika* [non-retrogression].**
- 佛法有無量門。如世間道有難有易。陸道步行則苦。水道乘船則樂。菩薩道亦如是。或有勤行精進。或有以信方便易行疾至阿惟越致者。(Shizhu piposha lun 5, T 1521, 26.41b2–6)
- **If bodhisattvas desire in this body to be able to reach the stage of *avaivartika* and attain *annuttara samyaksambodhi*, they should recollect all the buddhas of the ten directions and intone their names.**
- 若菩薩欲於此身得至阿惟越致地成[2]就阿耨多羅三藐三菩提者。應當念是十方諸佛稱其名號。(Shizhu piposha lun 5, T 1521, 26.41b15–17)
- **If one would travel easily on the path and quickly be able to reach the stage of *avaivartika*,** this is a timid and inferior expression; it is not an explanation of a great being [mahāsattva] whose will is firm and dauntless.
- 若有易行道疾得至阿惟越致地者。是乃怯弱下劣之言。非是大人志幹之說。(Shizhu piposha lun 5, T 1521, 26.41a29–b2)

Wuliangshou jing youpotishe wangshengjie 無量壽經優波提舍往生偈
(*Sukhāvātīvyūhopadeśa*), or *Wangsheng lun* 往生論 (Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure
Land), Vasubandhu (Shiqin 世親 or Tianqin 天親, ca. 320–400)

- O World-Honored One, I wholeheartedly take refuge in he who exhausts the ten directions, the Tathāgata Unhindered Light, and vow to be reborn in the realm of peace and bliss [*Sukhāvātī*].
- 世尊我一心，歸命盡十方，無礙光如來，願生安樂國。(*Wuliangshou jing youpotishe wangshengjie*, T 1524, 26.230c17–18)
- I craft this treatise to explain this gāthā, and vow to see the Buddha Amitābha, and universally together with all living beings, seek to be reborn in the realm of peace and bliss.
- 我作論說偈，願見彌陀佛，普共諸眾生，往生安樂國。(*Wuliangshou jing youpotishe wangshengjie*, T 1524, 26.231b5–6)

Tanluan (1)

Wangsheng lun 往生論 (Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure Land)

求二世有道。聞勝唯是。但得正水。蓋薩。之乃外聲。他者皆謂便乘如舍。葢道濁難者。破五目。力大譬提。行五此。二人。觸者願入。婆云難於。惡行。事道佛即致優也。沙者謂難意。顧梵等行。乘持跋經者。婆一。為義。薩無壞斯易。住毘壽航毘。者致示。薩者能如。土力阿量風住。道道跋以。亂三果。苦淨佛是無之十種行。毘三善。善持則生。即此退薩。二難阿五。悲倒力行。願土定。不菩有。求言。慈顛他步緣淨正樂致。樹致道時粗反。漿大者無路因清。則極龍跋行佛。障四力陸佛彼聚船之。案毘易無途。修利。自如信生之乘衍謹阿者於多相。自德是譬以往定路上。

(Wuliangshou jing youpotishe
yuanshengjie zhu, T 1819, 40.826a28-
b11)

I humbly cite the case of Nāgārjuna’s *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* (*Pusa shizhu piposha* 菩薩十住毘婆沙), which says, “Bodhisattvas seek *avaivartika* [non-retrogression] in two ways: (1) the way of difficult practice, and (2) the way of easy practice. The way of difficult practice means that in the world of the five impurities, in a time when there is no buddha, seeking *avaivartika* is difficult. These difficulties are of many paths; but roughly speaking there are three or five of which I will reveal their meaning.

...

(5) There is only self-power, and one does not observe other-power. Such things as these are all eye-catching. It may be compared to painfully walking overland on foot.

The way of easy practice means that merely by the causal conditions of believing in a buddha one vows to be reborn in the Pure Land, and by availing [oneself] of the power of the buddha's vow, one is then able to be reborn there in the clean and pure land. **Abiding in and maintaining buddha-power**, one enters the group of those assured of certain success in the Mahāyāna. “Assured of certain success” is precisely *avaivartika* [non-retrogression]. It may be compared to joyfully riding on water in a boat.

This *Upadeśa on the Sūtra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* covers the extremes of the superior *yāna* and brings about wind-blown sails that do not regress.

Tanluan (2)

Wangsheng lun

緣。佛。願。力。故。超。出。常。倫。諸。地。之。行。現。前。故。
修。習。普。賢。之。德。證。以。超。出。常。倫。諸。地。之。行。現。前。故。
所。以。得。上。緣。三。不。定。以。斯。而。推。他。行。力。示。戒。修。是。從。轉。聞。他。
為。增。他。持。通。為。王。是。可。乘。當。生。信。心。勿。自。局。分。也。
(Wuliangshou jing youpotishe
yuanshengjie zhu, T 1819, 40.844a17–
27)

For this reason, because of the power of the Buddha's vow, one transcends the standard [levels], the practices of all the stages manifest before one, and [one cultivates the virtues of Samantabhadra](#). Because one transcends the standard [levels] and the practices of all the stages are manifest before one, this is the reason one obtains [the Pure Land] speedily. This is the third realization. [This advances other-power as a contributing condition](#). How could this not be so?

Now, to present an example of the characteristics of self-power and other-power, it is like a person who, because he is afraid of the three unwholesome realms of transmigration, he receives and observes the prohibitive precepts (Skt. *śīla*, *prātimokṣa*); because he receives and observes the prohibitive precepts, he is able to cultivate *dhyāna*-absorption; because of *dhyāna*-absorption, he is able to cultivate the spiritual penetrations; and because of the spiritual penetrations, he is able to roam in the four realms. These kinds of things are called “self-power.” Furthermore, [other-power] is like an inferior man who, unable to straddle a donkey, follows the actions of a wheel-turning king (cakravartin), rides through empty space, and roams the four realms without hindrances. These kinds of things are called “other-power.”

How foolish! Future students will hear of other-power and be able to ride it producing the mind of faith. Do not, of yourself, limit your lot.

Daochuo

Anle ji 安樂集 (Pure Land Anthology)

一切萬法皆有自力、他力，
一自攝、無他攝，汝無中時樂不
無量識五思，疑往是事
又不可重，得者，
聚者，
礙？不為
入正定

(*Anle ji* 1, T 1958, 47.10c11–16)

All the myriads of dharmas are all self-power, other-power, self-embracing, and other-embracing; a thousand are open and ten-thousand are closed, limitless and boundless, how is one able by perceiving the hindrances to doubt that, the dharma of non-hindrances? Furthermore, among the five inconceivable things, the Buddhadharma is the most inconceivable. If one regards being subject to karma in the three realms as heavy, doubting that, recollecting the Buddha [Amitābha] when one is young is light; one will not be able to be reborn in the land of peace and bliss (Sukhāvatī), **one will enter the group of those assured of certain success**, and this matter will not be like that.

Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686)

- *Muryangsu-gyŏng chongyo* 無量壽經宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the *Larger Pure Land Sūtra* T 1747)
- *Amit'a-gyŏng so* 阿彌陀經疏 (Commentary on the *Smaller Pure Land Sūtra*, T 1759)
- “Gāthā on Amitābha’s Realizing Buddha-Nature” (*Mit’a chŭngsŏng ke* 彌陀證性偈, H 27).
- *Yusim allak to* 遊心安樂道 (The Way to a Wandering Mind and Peace and Bliss, T 1965)



Wŏnhyo: Causes of rebirth in the Pure Land

For the most part, the causes of rebirth in the Pure Land that have been explained are not directly able to influence the direct reward, which is the ornamentation; but they are able to influence its dependent reward, which is the Pure Land.

Because you only avail yourself of the power of the original vow of the Tathāgata, you are gratified [rewarded] according to its influence. It is not what is accomplished by the causal power of one's own karma. For this reason, it is called the cause of rebirth in the Pure Land.

凡諸所說往生之因。非直能感正報莊嚴。亦得感具依報淨土。但承如來本願力故。隨感受用。非自業因力之所成辦。是故說無往生因。(Muryangsu-gyŏng chongyo, T 1747, 37.128b6–9)

Wōnhyo:

Direct Cause of Rebirth in Pure Land [1]

Now, in the [previous] passage, I analyzed the difference between the characteristics of rebirth, of which there are two: first, direct causes; and second, ancillary causes. When the sūtra speaks of the “direct cause,” it means the *bodhicitta*. “Arousing the mind of unsurpassed bodhi” means not taking refuge in wealth or pleasure in the mundane world or giving oneself over to the nirvāṇa of the Two Vehicles. The bodhisattva’s consistent desire for the bodhi of the three bodies is called the mind of unsurpassed bodhi. This is a general overview, although within it there are two sections: (1) Arousing the *bodhicitta* according to phenomena; (2) Arousing the *bodhicitta* in accordance to principle.

今此文略辨其生相。於中有二。先明正因。後顯助因。經所言正因。謂菩提心。言發無上菩提心者。不顧世間富樂。及與二乘涅槃。一向志願三身菩提。是名無上菩提之心。總標雖然。於中有二。一者。隨事發心。二者。順理發心。(Muryangsu-gyōng chongyo, T 1747, 37.128c1–6)

Wōnhyo: Direct Cause of Rebirth in Pure Land [2]

Even though [the fruition rewards of this state of mind] are bodhi, its elegant reward is existence in the Pure Land. The reason this is so is because the measure of the *bodhicitta* is immense and boundless, far-reaching and limitless. Hence, it is able to influence you to obtain the immense and limitless dependent reward, which is long life. Apart from the *bodhicitta*, you would not be able to experience this; hence, it is said that this state of mind is the direct cause of that [rebirth in the Pure Land].

雖是菩提。而其華報。在於淨土。所以然者。菩提心量。廣大無邊。長遠無限。故能感得廣大無際依報淨土。長遠無量正報壽命。除菩提心。無能當彼。故說此心。為彼正因。(Muryangsu-gyōng chongyo, T 1747, 37.128c14–18)

Wŏnhyo: “crossing the river” expedient (*toha pangp’yŏn* 渡河方便)

What states of mind do we call the sincere mind? What is meant by the continuation of the ten recollections (*sangsok simnyŏm*; Ch. *xiangxu shinian* 相續念佛)?

Kumārajīva explains this saying:

This is like a man in a desolate wilderness that encounters an evil highwayman who levels his spear at him and draws his double-edged sword, and who comes right after him to murder him. That man runs urgently and sees that he has to cross a river. If he does not cross the river, he will lose his head! At that time, he will only think of a means for crossing the river. “Because I have to reach the shore, should I cross keeping my clothes on or should I cross having taken them off?” If he keeps his clothes on, he fears that he will not make it; and if he takes his clothes off, he fears he will run out of time. He only has this thought and no other thoughts. He must think only of crossing the river. And this is his one recollection. These ten recollections are not denatured with other recollections.

Practitioners are also like this. If they recollect the name of the Buddha, if they recollect the marks of the Buddha, and so forth, and recollect the Buddha without interruption up to ten thought-moments, this sort of sincere mind is called the ten recollections. 以何等心名為至心。云何名為十念相續者。什公說言。譬如有人於曠野中。值遇惡賊。揮戈拔劍。直來欲殺。其人勤走。視度一河。若不度河。首領難全。爾時但念。渡河方便。我至河岸。為著衣度。為脫衣度。若著衣衲。恐不得過。若脫衣衲。恐不得暇。但有此念。更無他意。當念度河。即是一念。此等十念。不雜餘念。行者亦爾。若念佛名。若念佛相等。無間念佛。乃至十念。如是至心。名為十念。 (*Muryangsu-gyŏng chongyo*, T 1747, 37.129a28–b8)

Exegetes: River Crossing Story

- River Crossing story not in any work attributed to or translated by Kumārajīva
- Tanluan and Wōnhyo:
 - “continuation of ten recollections” or a “continuation of ten thought-moments” (*shinian xiangxu* 十念相續)
- Daochuo:
 - “samādhi on recollecting the Buddha” (*nianfo sanmei* 念佛三昧)
- Shandao 善導 (613–681):
 - “protect a believing mind or mind of faith” (*shouhu xinxin* 守護信心)
- “continuation” (*sangsok* 相續; Skt. *anusamḍhi*)

Wŏnhyo: Resolving Doubts to Enter Group of Those Assured of Certain Success

If you desire to produce faith you should try to plumb them through these circumstances. It can be compared to a stack of firewood accumulated over a thousand years that, although it has a height of one hundred miles (*ri* 里), which suddenly catches fire and is completely consumed in one day. One may ask, “How could that stack of firewood accumulated over a thousand years be consumed in one day?” Furthermore, it is like a crippled man who struggles to walk under his own power (*charyŏk* 自力) and who is only able to walk one *yojana* (league) over many days. If he is able to ride in someone’s ship and if they encounter a strong tailwind, then he will be able to cross a thousand miles in the space one day. One may ask, “How could the body of the crippled man travel a thousand miles in one day?” If even in this world the body of the boat master can still accomplish these sorts of incomprehensible events, how much more possible is it for the influence of the Tathāgata, the King of the Dharma, to achieve these inconceivable events? This is the cure to the first doubt.

若欲生信。應以事況。譬如千年積薪。其高百里。豆許火燒。一日都盡。可言千年之積薪。如何一日盡耶。又如蹙者。自力勤行。要逕多日至一由旬。若寄他船。因風飆勢。一日之間。能至千里。可言蹙者之身。云何一日至千里耶。世間船師之身。尚作如是絕慮之事。何況如來法王之勢。而不能作不思議事耶。是為對治第一疑也。(Muryangsu-gyŏng chongyo, T 1747, 37.130c9–16; cf. Lüelun anle jingtu yi, T 1957, 47.2b13–17)

Concluding Reflections

- How did Wŏnhyo understand the concept of “other-power”?
 - Primacy of arousing the *bodhicitta*
 - Arousing the *bodhicitta* is direct cause of rebirth in Pure Land
 - Pure Land (Sukhāvatī) created by power of original vow of Amitābha
 - Pure Land is feasible/practical objective for bodhisattva practitioners
 - Use available power to enter group of those assured of certain success
 - Importance of Faith
 - River Crossing story: “continuation of the ten recollections”
- Hence: Other power exists, but it does not remove the responsibility of practitioners to arouse the *bodhicitta* and develop appropriate meditative capacities so that they may enter the group of those assured of certain success and attain the state of *avaivartika*.