

# The Emergence of Essence-Function (*ti-yong*) 體用 Hermeneutics in the Sinification of Indic Buddhism: An Overview

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## 국문요약

본질-작용(體用, Ch. *ti-yong*, J. *tai-yū*; 일본에서 불교학 이외의 연구에서는 *tai-yō*) 패러다임은 기원전 5세기부터 근대 시기에 이르기까지 중국, 한국, 일본의 종교·철학적 문헌을 해석할 때에 가장 널리 사용된 해석학적 틀로 볼 수 있다. 먼저 중국에서는 유교, 도교, 불교에 적용되는 과정에서 풍부한 발전을 이루었는데, 특히 인도 불교의 중국화 과정에서 폭넓게 적용되었다. 그리고 종종 理事(*li-shi*)와 유사한 형태로 화엄, 천태, 선과 같은 중국 토착 불교 학파

들의 철학을 위한 토대를 형성하였다. 나아가 송대 신유학(新儒學)에서 ‘체용’의 용례는 특히 잇따라 나타나는 또 다른 유사형태인 理氣(*li-qi*)의 형식으로 변화하고 확장되었다. 불교와 신유학 모두 한국에 뿌리를 내리면서 한국 학자들은 신유교와 불교 각각의 종교에 대한 해석뿐 아니라, 둘 사이에 있었던 대화와 논쟁에도 체용 패러다임을 폭넓게 적용하였다. 본 논문은 동양과 서양 모두의 불교학에서 거의 완전히 무시되었던 이 지극히 중요한 철학적 패러다임에 관한 논의를 되살려 보고자 한다. 그리고 이것을 중국 불교 주석문헌들 초기의 용례, 『대승기신론』속에 나타난 그 역할, 더불어 한국 불교, 특히 원효와 지눌의 저작에서 사용된 몇 가지 용례들을 조사함으로써 시도할 것이다.

주제어: 본질-작용(體用), 이사(理事), 이기(理氣), 『대승기신론』, 중국불교, 원효, 지눌

## I. Essence-function 體用: Introduction

This examination of the place of the essence-function paradigm 體用 (Ch. *ti-yong*, K. *che-yong*, J. *tai-yū*; in non-Buddhological studies in Japan, *tai-yō*) in early Chinese Buddhist sources marks an attempt at re-opening discussion regarding the earliest and most pervasive form of East Asian Buddhist hermeneutics, with essence-function being the most widely-used hermeneutical framework for East Asian Buddhist commentators for several centuries. I say “re-opening” because it was a topic that received some attention a couple of decades ago when philosophical interest in early Chinese Buddhism was at a peak, but which seems to have fallen from attention without ever being fully explored.

My first introduction to the topic of essence-function came from my graduate school advisor, Sung Bae Park. Prof. Park was trained as a Seon monk in the Korean Jogye order, and was taught with this analytic tool by his Seon master in Korea, Seongcheol 性徹 Sunim (1912-1993), regarded by many as the greatest Korean monk of the twentieth century.<sup>1)</sup> Park introduced *ti-yong* in university classes as the most appropriate way of interpreting East Asian philosophical/religious discourse in Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. But he also taught it as a way of examining and evaluating one’s own personal spiritual life as juxtaposed with the stark realities of dealing with the complex problems of the secular world—for removing our self-constructed barriers between our “inner experience” and “outer realities,” and as a way of distinguishing genuine altruistic attitudes

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1) Described in *The Mom/Momjit Paradigm*, 6-7.

from utilitarian, external behavior, the secular and spiritual, and so forth.

*Ti-yong* is a distinctive Sinitic archetypal concept that serves as the basic philosophical organizing framework for all three major East Asian religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, and is the primary paradigm that distinguishes East Asian Buddhism from its Indic and Tibetan forms.<sup>2)</sup> For this reason, this concept is sometimes not well understood by scholars who specialize in Indian, Southeast Asian, or Tibetan Buddhism, while on the other hand, is often taken so much for granted by scholars of East Asian thought, due to its ubiquitous presence in Sinitic philosophical literature, that it slips by unnoticed. Generally speaking, it refers to the deeper, more fundamental, more internal, more important, or invisible aspects of something: any kind of being, organization, phenomenon, concept, event, etc. Its application in the major East Asian thought systems varies according to the circumstance. In the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*, an essence-function relationship is seen between underlying principles, or originary forms, and natural or man-made objects; the “principles” of things, as opposed to their more outwardly manifest, phenomenal aspects, such as, for example, the uncarved block 樸 and the utensils 器 of the *Daodejing*, or the utility and non-utility of the gnarled trees in the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>3)</sup> In the Buddhist

2) This is a point that virtually all scholars who have written on the topic take as self-evident.

Hirai, Shimada, Lai, Park, and Funayama all state this point straightforwardly.

3) E.g., *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 1: Huizi said to Zhuangzi: “I have a large tree, which people call Ailanthus. It has a great trunk that is all swollen and knotted, such that you cannot use a plumb line. Its branches are twisted up so that they don’t line up with the carpenter’s square. If it were standing along the road, a lumberjack wouldn’t give it a glance. Now, sir, your words are big, but lack application — the kind of thing everyone avoids.” Zhuangzi said: “Have you alone never seen badgers and wildcats? They crouch down low, and then are proud of

commentarial tradition, it links the inner meaning of the doctrine with its verbal expressions; it also comes to be used as a way of dissolving the dualism between form 色 and emptiness 空, *prajñā* 智慧 and skillful means 方便, and so forth. But its most important application, seen in both Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism, is that of *che* referring to the human mind, especially the deeper, more hidden dimension of the human mind—the pure, innate mind as it is before entering into the realm of activity. In this context, *che* refers to the sage-mind, Dao-mind, or Buddha-mind, and *yong* to the behavior of the person; and that behavior may be the behavior of an ordinary unenlightened person, a bodhisattva, or a buddha. In Confucianism, this behavior, or function, could either be that of the petty man 小人, or the noble man 君子. Although the archetype is not specifically designated with the graphemic compound *ti-yong* 體用 until the third century CE, analogous philosophical paradigms can be discerned in texts going back as far as the 5th century BCE, including the *Liji*, *Yijing*, *Daodejing*, *Analects*, and so forth, being expressed in such forms as roots and branches 本末, stillness and movement 靜動 and others. An oft-cited line from the *Liji* reads:

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themselves as they dart around from East to West on the beams. But they can't avoid going between the high and low ground, and in the middle get caught in traps, and die in the nets. Then there is the Yak, said to be so large as to cover the sky. Well, it certainly can be regarded as huge, but it can't catch mice. Now you sir, have this great tree, and you fret over its uselessness. Why don't you go and plant it in the Village Where There is Nothing Whatsoever, in the broad and empty fields; hang around without aims at its side, freely and easily nap underneath it. Axes and hatchets do not cut its life short, and it is not harmed by people. Why are you suffering over its uselessness?" (Translation by Charles Muller: <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/zhuangzi.html>)

人生而靜，天之性也。感於物而動，性之欲也。物至知知，然後好惡形焉。好惡無節於內，知誘於外，不能反躬，天理滅矣。

A man is born quiescent, as it is his inborn nature. His mind moves when affected by external things, which is the nature of desire. As he encounters things, he knows more and more, subsequently giving rise to the forms that are liked and disliked. When liking and disliking these are not regulated within, and his awareness is enticed to external things, he cannot reflect upon himself, and his inborn principle disappears. (*Liji* 禮記, *Leji* 樂記7)

This is an extremely important passage in the origins of Sinitic thought, as East Asian intuitions of static vs. active are so often virtually equivalent with those of nonbeing and being 無/有, thusness and conditioned phenomena 眞如/有爲. Additionally, here, the human being is understood to possess a fundamentally serene nature (“essence” 體), which can be led astray in its function (用). This same model of “fundamental goodness” which can evolve in either wholesome or unwholesome directions will later be articulated repeatedly in Confucianism, Daoism, and East Asian forms of Buddhism.

In Confucianism, this underlying paradigm can be seen in such cognate forms as humaneness 仁 as “essence,” along with its “functions” of propriety 禮, filial piety 孝, justice 義, and so forth. In Daoism, it is seen in such pairs as the Way and its power 道/德, the uncarved block and utensils 樸/器, black and white 黑/白 and so forth. In Buddhism, the *ti-yong* paradigm takes a pivotal role in the process of the sinification of Indian Buddhist doctrine, by taking such seemingly dichotomous notions as wisdom and expedient means 般若/方便, emptiness and form 空/色, principle and teaching

理/教, principle and phenomena 理/事, and Buddha-nature and sentient being 佛性/衆生, conjoining them as two aspects of a single thing. As distinctive Chinese forms of Buddhism develop, they are deeply structured by *ti-yong*: essence-function is used extensively as an exegetical tool by Zhiyi 智顛 (538-597) and his students; it structures the entire discourse of such influential texts as the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*<sup>4)</sup> (as typified by the famous water/waves simile for enlightenment and affliction), the *Platform Sutra* (with lamp and its light as metaphor for meditation and wisdom), and in the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (with Chapter One, the “sudden” chapter, representing essence, and the ensuing “gradual” chapters, representing function). And as Sung Bae Park has discussed at considerable length in his book *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, it is the basis for the entire East Asian Buddhist explanation of the sudden and gradual aspects of enlightenment. It is used by the Huayan masters to structure their soteriological system of the four levels of religious awareness 四法界,<sup>5)</sup> using the *ti-yong* terminology, but even more, the analogous, but more narrowly focused *li-shi* 理事 (principle and phenomena) terminology. With the rise

4) In rendering the title of the *Dasheng qixin lun* as “Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith,” as opposed to Hakeda’s “Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna” I am following the argument made by Sung Bae Park in Chapter 4 of his *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*. There he argues that the inner discourse of the text itself, along with the basic understanding of the meaning of *mahāyāna* in the East Asian Buddhist tradition, does not work according to a Western theological “faith in . . .” subject-object construction, but according to an indigenous East Asian essence-function model. Thus, *mahāyāna* should not be interpreted as a noun-object, but as a modifier that characterizes the *type* of faith.

5) The four levels of religious awareness are: (1) awareness of phenomena 事; (2) awareness of principle 理; (3) awareness of the nonobstruction between principle and phenomena 理事無礙; (4) awareness of non-obstruction among phenomena 事事無礙.

of Song Neo-Confucianism, the *li-shi* framework is taken up and adapted by the Cheng brothers 二程<sup>6)</sup> and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) into the *li-qi* 理氣 (principle and material force) hermeneutic, which is used to explicate the nature and feelings 性/情 of human beings throughout the Confucian classics, based on the distinction made between the human nature and feelings in the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸. It is in Joseon Korea where the most advanced discussion of the relationship between the original human nature and the emotions took place in the form of the Four-Seven Debate,<sup>7)</sup> and it is the originator of the Four-Seven Debate, Toegye (1501-1570), who sets forth what is probably the most detailed examination of the term *ti-yong* in the entire East Asian tradition.<sup>8)</sup>

In the West, there are several journal articles that give specific treatment to the topic of *ti-yong*, with these being exclusively works on Neo-Confucianism, focusing on the interpretations of Zhu Xi.<sup>9)</sup> This is not surprising, since it is in the works of Zhu Xi that the paradigm received its most extensive application. In the Buddhist studies of North America, both Whalen Lai and Sung Bae Park paid much attention to *ti-yong* in their respective dissertations on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. Park also relied on the essence-function paradigm in the development of his arguments contained in *Buddhist*

6) Cheng Hao 程顥, 1032-1085; and Cheng Yi 程頤, 1033-1107).

7) Explained in Michael Kalton's *The Four-Seven Debate* and Edward Chung's *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Toegye*.

8) This is in his "Sim mu che-yong pyeon" (Critique on the Position that the Mind Does not have Essence and Function) 心無體用辨, *Toegye jeonseo* 41:16b-19a. (From the online version of Toegye's works at <http://ygc.skku.edu/kyungbu/kyungbuContent.jsp>). I have translated this essay in a forthcoming article.

9) See, for example, the articles by Cheng, Cua, Gedalecia, and Kong.

*Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, and finally wrote a (the only) full English-language book on the topic in his *One Korean's Approach to Buddhism: The Mom/Momjit Paradigm*. While this book offers a rich discussion of the meaning and applications of the essence-function paradigm, especially its potential as a means of facilitating the reconciliation of one's inner spiritual feelings with the "reality" of the external world, Park does not provide a detailed inquiry into the historical and philological roots of the paradigm. So, it is a topic on which more can certainly be said, starting from its earliest appearances in China, and its full-blown development in Tang commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan works, and its formal role in framing some of the most important philosophico-religious debates in Korea.

The investigations that I have made on this topic up to now make one thing eminently clear: it is not possible to fully understand the development of the *ti-yong* paradigm only in the context of Zhu Xi, or even only Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism. Nor can it be adequately understood by looking at it only from its Buddhist or Daoist manifestations. As this paradigm passed through periods of history being adopted, adapted, and used by each of these traditions, it gained important new dimensions to its meaning. For instance, although Neo-Confucians such as the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi, and Toegye apply *ti-yong* (mainly via *i-gi* 理氣) to refer to the originally pure mind and its variegated manifestations, this was not the way it was first applied by Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249). It takes on the pure mind/varied manifestations application only with the appearance of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, \**Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, the East Asian Buddha-

nature commentarial tradition, and the development of Huayan *li-shi* metaphysics. As with other seminal Neo-Confucian concepts, it is not possible to envision the emergence of *i-gi* or the Neo-Confucian understanding of *ti-yong* without the intervening development that took place in Sinitic Buddhism. But following in turn, the application of the paradigm as seen in the teaching methods of a modern Zen master like Seongcheol would seem to be reliant on the behavioral applications of the concept seen in such Neo-Confucian thinkers as Zhu Xi and Toegye.

The first philosophical exegetic application of the term is traditionally attributed to the Confucian scholar Wang Bi (王弼; 226-249) in his commentary to the *Daode jing*, entitled *Laozi zhu* 老子注.<sup>10)</sup> Although its first overt application is seen in Wang Bi's commentary, its usage as a pervasive hermeneutic principle in Confucian studies does not come about until the Song dynasty, first in the works of the two Cheng brothers and then almost everywhere in the writings of Zhu Xi, who refines it, explains it, and applies it many different ways, including the usage as a tool for analysis of personal behavior, which seems to be transmitted back to Buddhism to influence some forms of Zen instruction, at least in Korea. The most pervasive use of the paradigm is seen in Korea, where the most famous debates, including the Buddhist debate over sudden and gradual enlightenment,<sup>11)</sup> the debate between Buddhists and Confucians during the Goryeo period,<sup>12)</sup> the harmoni-

10) See especially his commentary to Chapter 38. English translation by Richard Lynn (1999).

The evidence that Wang Bi was the first to actually make usage of this construction is not fully conclusive, as has been argued by Funayama (2004).

11) See Sung Bae Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*.

12) Examined in my book, *The Great Korean Buddhist-Confucian Debate*.

zation of the three teachings,<sup>13)</sup> and last, the greatest, the “four-seven” debate between Toegye and Yulgok (and their disciples) regarding the nature of the mind,<sup>14)</sup> were all carried out firmly within the matrix of *ti-yong*.

While it is used generally for distinguishing priority in terms of importance, according to the context, its applications tend toward the ontological, the metaphysical, the ethical, or the personal—but always hermeneutical in one way or another. There are also minor differing tendencies to be seen in its various applications in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. A full treatment of the paradigm entails not only an accounting of the term *ti-yong* 體用 itself, but its broad range of analogs in the three traditions, such as *ben-mo* 本末, *ben-ji* 本迹, *xing-xiang* 性相, *li-shi* 理事, *pu-qi* 樸器, *hou-bo* 厚薄, and many more. In Buddhism, the usage of this paradigm as a tool for hermeneutic analysis is seen considerably greater in Tathāgatagarbha/Buddha-nature-based works and their derived schools such as Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan, which makes sense, as their doctrines were developed along the same lines. But we also find the essence-function framework applied in commentaries on, and translations of Madhyamaka and Yogâcāra works.

## II. Defining Essence-function 體用

The basic meaning of the term is given by Shimada Kenji as “*Tai* and *yū* have a complementary relationship wherein *tai* is what is fundamental,

13) Best exemplified in Hyujeong’s (1520-1604) 休靜 *Samga gwigam* 三家龜鑑.

14) Explained in Michael Kalton’s *The Four-Seven Debate* and Edward Chung’s *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T’oegye*

most essential, while *yū* is derivative, subordinate, secondary.”<sup>15)</sup> Sung Bae Park explains more precisely its Buddhist connotations, especially its emphasis on nonduality, in *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*:

The purpose of the *ti-yong* formula is to show the inseparability of two seemingly separate but in reality nondistinct things. One of the earliest classical works of Chan literature, the *Platform Sutra*, illustrated the relation between *ti* and *yong* with the analogy of a lamp and its light...Thus, the purpose of the *ti-yong* hermeneutic device in Chinese Buddhist texts is to remove false discriminations originating from a dualistic way of thinking, as reflected in such dichotomies as subject-object, means-end, cause-effect, arising-cessation, and birth-death. (36)

Further connotations are elaborated more extensively by Whalen Lai, who writes:

(1) *Ti-yong* is an ontological pair. *Ti*, substance, subsists as a permanent basis to changing phenomena. [...] (2) *Ti-yong* is not a causative pair. *Ti*, substance, does not cause *yong*, function, to come into existence. *Ti* evolves into *yong*. Water becomes waves. [...] (3) *Ti-yong* is a harmonious pair. In the *Awakening of Faith*, suchness (water) and phenomenal particulars (waves) fuse with one another and interpenetrate harmoniously. (4) *Ti-yong*, being non-causative, is a timeless pair.[...] (5) *Ti-yong* is a sinitic pseudo-“non-dualistic” pair. *Ti-yong* is a paradoxical pair that can imitate the negative nondualistic dialectics of *advaya*

15) 体とは根本的なもの、第一的なもの、用とは派生的、従属的、第二的なもの、を相関的に意味すべく用いられていること、である (“*Tai-yū no rekishi ni yosete*,” 430)

(not-two). (6) *Ti-yong* has other associations that draw on the Han *yin-yang* tradition. *Ti* is usually passive; *yong* is active. *Ti* is *ben* 本 (basis, origin) whereas *yong* is *mo* 末 (end, tip). The more mature use of *ti-yong*, however, collapses the “sequential” overtones involved in the above sets which argue that originally the *ti* was quiet and not moving but in the end activity evolved. (*The Awakening of Faith*, 125-126)

But I would tend to be suspicious of item (1), as I have not yet encountered a case where “*ti*, substance, subsists as a permanent basis to changing phenomena...”

Antonio Cua, writing mainly based on his reading of Zhu Xi, shows the vitally important ethical dimensions of the paradigm:

The distinction of *ti* and *yong* may also be rendered as a distinction between inner or inward and outer or outward—in the familiar Confucian language, the distinction between *nei* 內 and *wai* 外. In this sense, *ren* 仁 represents the *ti*, that is, the inward character of ethical commitment. The *yong*, its outer or outward expression, depends on the committed person’s endeavor to pursue actualization of the idea. Because the moral significance of *ren* depends on *li* 禮 as representing moral tradition, and *yi* (rightness) 義, the *ti*, or the nature of the ethical life, depends on its *yong*, that is, one’s efforts in pursuing *ren*.

By extension, we can also infer that spiritual training carried out from the perspective of the *ti-yong* paradigm can be carried out with two kinds of emphasis: *ti*-oriented and *yong*-oriented. A sincere and wise religious focus

on essence will bring about a change in function, and the effects of correction of external behavior will gradually permeate the inner person (a phenomenon seen superbly explained in the Yogâcâra notion of habit energies (*vasana*) and seed (*bīja*)). In the context of Buddhist practice, an emphasis on meditation could be seen as *che*-oriented, and an emphasis on moral discipline could be seen as *yong*-oriented. Engagement in meditation is likely to improve one's practice of the precepts, and vice-versa. Some radical Chinese Chan masters are characterized as being totally focused on essence and unconcerned about external function, as seen, for example, in Huairang's laughing at Mazu's efforts at gaining enlightenment by practicing. (「磨磚豈得成鏡」景德傳燈錄 T 2076.51.240c22). The published sermons of the Korean Seon master Seongcheol also indicate a strong *che*-oriented tendency, although reports from direct disciples also depict a master whose teaching array was replete with expedient devices. Confucius, on the other hand, never tells his students to directly cultivate their *ren* 仁 (*che*), but endeavors to show how to develop it by focusing on the functional behaviors of justice 義, propriety 禮, filial piety 孝, and so forth.

### III. Essence-function 體用: Problems with English Translation

Up to now, I have referred to *ti-yong* in English as “essence and function” without mentioning the problematic aspects of this translation (or other translations) into English. Using the English word “function” for *yong* 用 is

not problematic. But especially in the wake of postmodern discourse, the usage of the word “essence” for *ti* 體 *is* problematic. This problematic character derives generally from the fact that Western religious and philosophical discourse has been more dualistic, as seen in such dichotomies as spirit/matter, subject-object, Platonic “ideas,” the general Greek notion of *hypokeimenon*, or in Aristotle’s discussion of the notion of “essence,” later taken up by prominent Western philosophers such as Hegel, understanding it to refer to an indelible, and usually hypostatic, entity, self-existent, self-defined, and clearly distinct from its visible representations. Many earlier scholars rendered *ti* in English as “substance,” which also presents problems. I have a slight personal preference for “essence” over “substance,” since the etymology of “substance” as “standing below” seems to denote more directly an ontological duality that is almost never implied by *ti-yong*. It is in part, to escape from this translation problem, that Sung Bae Park has abandoned the use of terminology of both “essence-function” and the Korean *che-yong*, choosing instead the Korean vernacular terminology *mom* 몸 and *momjit* 몸짓, which mean “body” and “gesture.” But he also felt that the term *ti-yong* had become too much of a philosophical abstraction, and used the Korean vernacular in order to personalize it.<sup>16</sup> In any case, *ti* is never understood to be a self-existent, self-defining quality; it is not an *ātman* or *brahman*; it does not refer to *svabhāva*; in fact, there is no truly

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16) In his book, *The Mom/Momjit Paradigm*, Park writes: “[The Chinese term *ti-yong*] has a rather abstract, philosophical tone [...] being somewhat removed from the nitty-gritty details of everyday life. My primary interest, however, is in the human being’s personal understanding and experience of nonduality. How are we able to access this nondual realm? It is only through our practice.” (11)

equivalent term in Indian Buddhism for *ti-yong*. *Ti* only exists in its mutually-defining reference to *yong*; some writers say it exists in an interpenetrated form with *yong*. For this reason, if you encounter an article by a scholar who refers to *ti-yong* as a “dichotomy,” I would advise caution in relying on its findings.

Up to now, I have employed the rendering of “essence,” but always with the caveat that I do not mean essence in its technical western philosophical senses, but rather in commonsense usage. We can then work with the commonsense definition of “the most important, crucial element.”<sup>17)</sup> A good metaphor is also provided by the concept of “an extract that has the fundamental properties of a substance in concentrated form,”<sup>18)</sup> in the sense that *ti* has strong connotations of density, or thickness (often seen expressed in Daoism with the Chinese terms *hou* 厚, *nong* 濃, etc.).

#### IV. Essence-function 體用: Appearance in Early Chinese Buddhism

Although he did not use the term *ti-yong* explicitly, Sengzhao saw a structure involving mutual containment of stillness and movement that presages the essence-function terminology, close in connotation to the earlier cite from the *Liji*:

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17) *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition.

18) *American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition.

余則謂之不然。何者。放光云。法無去來 無動轉者、尋夫不動之作。豈釋動以求靜。必求靜於諸動。必求靜於諸動。故雖動而常靜。不釋動以求靜。故雖靜而不離動。然則動靜未始異。

It is said in the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*: “Dharmas do not come or go, and do not move.” Is their motionless activity to be sought by discarding motion and instead pursuing stillness? No, it is within all movements that stillness is to be sought. Since stillness is to be sought within all movements, though moving, dharmas are always still. Since stillness is to be sought without discarding motion, though still, their motion never ceases. Indeed, motion and stillness are in no way distinct. (*Seng lun* 肇論 T 1858.45.151a10-13)

The mutual containment, yet conceptually prior/after relationship of stillness and movement is a basic component of *ti-yong*. During the Northern and Southern Court period, other similar structures play a similar role, including the pairs of “trace” 迹 and “that which has a trace” 所以迹.<sup>19)</sup> In Buddhist discourse that attempted to distinguish Buddhism from Confucianism and Daoism—while at the same time asserting underlying agreement, the notion of principle and teaching 理/教 was popular (Hirai, *Tai-yū*, 64-66)

One of the first actual appearances of the term as a pair is found in the *Hongming ji* 弘明集, which emphasizes the critical point that *ti* and *yong* are neither the same nor different, only possible in relation to each other

(臣續曰。既有其體便有其用。語用非體。論體非用。用有興廢。體無生滅)將

19) See, for example, T 1718.34.21a10.

恐見其用異。便謂心隨境滅(臣續曰惑者迷其體用故不斷猜。何者。夫體之與用不離不卽。離體無用故云、不離。用義非體故云、不卽。見其不離而迷其不卽。迷其不卽便謂心隨境滅也)。

I, Ji, say, “Wherever there is essence, there is function. But the word function refers to that which is not essence. The word essence refers to that which is not function. In function there is flourish and decline, but in essence there is no arising or extinction. I am afraid that if one sees function as being different, he will think that the mind is extinguished, following its objects.”

I, Ji, say, “Deluded people are confused regarding essence and function. Therefore, they cannot remove afflictive emotions. Why? Essence and function are neither different nor the same. Since, apart from essence there is no function, they are not different. Since the meaning of function is different from the meaning of essence, they are not the same. Seeing their nondifference, one is confused about their non-sameness. Confused about their non-sameness, one is prone to say that the mind disappears along with its objects.” (T 2102.52.54c2-4)

## V. Jizang

One of the earliest prolific users of *ti-yong* as a hermeneutic tool is Jizang 吉藏, who employs it extensively throughout his commentaries. In his Exposition of the Two Truths (*Erdiyi* 二諦義) he uses it to articulate an essence-function relationship between the *paramârtha-satya* and *saṃvṛti-satya*. During his time, the analogous terms of *ben-mo* 本末 and *li-jiao* 理教 were

still used with greater frequency than *ti-yong*, but to the same effect, as in:

三乘竝解二諦、若是涅槃經、明五百聲聞不知二諦。尙不知世諦、況甚深第一義諦。故從來義不成也。今時得有此義。何者。二乘生滅斷常心、不行中道、不見佛性。中道是本。既不識本、豈能知末。既不見理。豈能識教。

If it is the case that the adherents of the three vehicles equally understand the two truths, how is it that the *Nirvana Sutra* makes it clear that the five hundred *śrāvakas* did not understand the two truths. If they were unable to understand the conventional truth, how could they possibly understand the ultimate truth? Up to now this meaning has not been made clear, but now we are able to apprehend its meaning. How? The adherents of the two vehicles [see the world] in terms of arising and ceasing, nihilism and eternalism, and do not practice the middle way, do not see the Buddha Nature. The middle way is the root. If you don't cognize the root, how can you know the branches? If you can't see the principle, how can you know the teaching? (T 1854.45.80b1-5)

Teaching 教 in this case refers to the specific way that the truth 理 is taught according to the perspective of each school.

Below, in the context of the discussion of the two truths, Jizang clarifies the analogous relationship between “principle-teaching” 理教 and essence-function 體用.

次說二諦令離二見者。此二諦竝是失。何者。爲著有衆生說第一義。爲著空衆生說世諦。此有無竝是衆生所著。是故皆失也。次說二悟不二。此二諦竝得。何者。因二悟不二。二卽是理教。不二卽是教理。二卽中假。不二卽假中。二

卽體用。不二卽用體。

Next I will explain the two truths as made different from the two views. In this case both of the truths are missed. How so? For sentient beings who are attached to existence we teach the ultimate truth. For sentient beings who are attached to emptiness we teach the conventional truth. Both of these sentient beings are attached to existence or nonexistence, and thus they both miss the point. Next I will explain how the two realizations are not two; in this both truths are both apprehended. How so? Based on duality, one awakens to nonduality. Duality is the teaching of the principle; nonduality is principle of the teaching; duality is the nominal of the middle[way]; nonduality is the middle[way] of the nominal; duality is the function of the essence; nonduality is the essence of the function. (T 1854 .45.82c1-6)

Finally, the clarification essence as representing nonduality, and function representing duality:

今明。卽以非眞非俗爲二諦體。眞俗爲用。亦名理教。亦名中假。中假重名中假。理教重爲理教。亦體用重爲體用故。不二爲體二爲用。

Now I will clarify: When there is neither real nor conventional, this is the essence of the two truths. When there are real and conventional, this is their function, which is also called principle and teaching, and is also called middle [way] and provisional. Middle way and provisional are again designated as middle way and provisional. Principle and teaching again serve as principle

and teaching; and essence and function again serve as essence and function. Nonduality is [in the purview of] essence; duality is [in the purview of] function. (T 1854.45.108b16-19)

## VI. Essence-function 體用: The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith

It would be a rather unwieldy undertaking to provide all the examples the application of the essence-function paradigm in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, since, as most scholars of the text would readily agree, the entire expository structure of the text is framed along the lines of *ti-yong*. This starts with the very opening passage, where the author declares that he will discuss the *AMF* in terms of the greatness of the essence 體, aspects 相, and function 用 of the Mahāyāna. In fact, even the rendering of the title as “Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith” rather than “Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna” is a recognition of the essence-function structure. Basically, the entire structure of the Yogācāra account of consciousness and liberation is rearranged along essence-function lines.

At the core of these arguments is the famous metaphor of water and waves. The water is quiescent mind as thusness; the waves are the mind in its afflicted, unenlightened state, which are brought about, disturbed, by the wind of ignorance. Thus the One Mind is said to have a suchness aspect and an arising and ceasing aspect. The mind may be disturbed, but it is the same mind, which is merely in a different state of function. When the mind

is stilled it returns to its original state. But in terms of process of adapting the essence function paradigm, the relationship between the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* and the *AMF* is interesting, with the water-waves paradigm as an instructive case. Whalen Lai describes the *AMF* as a sinified derivation of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, a text that took the first step in trying to tread the slippery ground between the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha models of the mind. The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* also uses the water waves metaphor, but with an interesting difference. Lai writes: “The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* uses the ‘water and wave metaphor’ to explain the organic relationship between the *ālayavijñāna* and the other consciousnesses.”

The sea of the storehouse consciousness is permanently subsisting. The wind of the phenomenal realm stirs it. Various consciousness spring up [at the sea of the storehouse consciousness,] churning out like waves [responding, moment to moment, each to its own sense-field] The way in which the sea gives rise to the waves, is the way in which the seven *vijñānas* arise inseparably with the mind [*citta*, *ālayavijñāna*] Just as the sea agitates and various waves swell out so too the seven *vijñānas* come about not different from the mind. (Lai, 222)

Lai explains further:

The metaphor of “water and wave” is used by the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* to explain a psychological process in which the five senses, the mental center, the ego-conscious mind (*manas*) arise together with the eighth consciousness in an organic fashion, being stimulated into endless karmic entanglements by the

alluring phenomenal realms of the sense-fields. The metaphor is not used to depict a theory of the ontological generation of *saṃsāra* (the phenomenal realm or reality) from out of the Suchness Mind itself. The discrepancy did not go unnoticed, as [Hui-yuan discusses it in his commentary on the *AMF*]. ... there are crucial differences and the *AMF*'s formulation is unique. In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, the phenomenal realm is said to lure the various consciousnesses to action, but in the *AMF*, the Suchness Mind (influenced by ignorance) creates the phenomenal realm out of itself.

This is just one example of the various ways that that the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* shifted Buddhist discourse onto essence-function lines, and the fact of this structure was noticed with great interest by the great Korean scholiast Wonhyo 元曉 (617-686), who placed primary emphasis on the essence-function paradigm in his commentaries on the *AMF*, and often relied on this paradigm in his commentaries on other sutras. The structure also made a deep impression on Fazang and the ensuing Huayan masters, who used both the *AMF* and the essence-function paradigm, mostly reworked into the terms principle-phenomena, to organize their own soteriological system, which also greatly influenced Chan Buddhism.

## VII. Essence-function 體用: Some More Examples

I would like to move now to offer a few basic examples of its usage by some eminent classical East Asian Buddhist scholiasts.

One of the most prolific early users of the *ti-yong* paradigm is Zhiyi 智顓, with more than 2,000 instances of usage in his works contained in the Taishō corpus. Here, in his commentary on the *Diamond Sutra* (金剛般若經疏, T 1569), he describes the applications of essence and function, giving the example of hardness as essence as and sharpness as function. He also makes it clear that essence cannot exist without function and vice-versa:

今通取堅利爲譬。舊云體堅用利。體堅衆惑不侵。用利能摧萬物。今問。體唯堅不利。用唯利不堅。亦應體則不利用則不堅。此乃不堅不利何謂堅利。百論云眼非知意非見。別既非見合云何見。今依中論通此問卽無滯義。今言堅利者不堅不利。假言堅利。如言苦以不苦爲義。無常以常爲義。空以不空爲義。此一例語任運不畏斯難。般若如大火聚四邊不可觸。豈可定作體用耶。體用因緣不一、不異。體堅用亦堅、體利用亦利。既其不一假名義辨。若說體堅卽說用利。此是假名義一邊之說。離用無體離體無用。用卽寂寂即用。無別有無用之體主於用也。亦無別有無體之用主於體也。不一亦不異有因緣故亦可說一說異。

Now we will generally take hardness and sharpness as a metaphor. It was formerly said that the essence [of wisdom] is hardness and its function is sharpness. Its essence being hard, it cannot be corrupted by myriad afflictions. Its function being sharp, it can destroy anything. Now the question arises: is the essence only hard and not sharp? Is the function only sharp and not hard? Also, it should be the case that its essence is not sharp, and its function is not hard. This would mean that without being hard and without being sharp, how can we say that they are hard and sharp. The *Bai lun* says: “The eyes do not cognize,

and the mind does not see. If there is already a separate non vision included, how can one see?" (See T 1569.30.172c15 ff.) Now, relying on the *Madhyamaka-śāstra*, we can resolve this by not getting trapped in the meaning. What we are now calling hardness and sharpness is neither hard nor sharp. They are nominally designated as hard and sharp. It is like defining suffering by means of non-suffering, or defining impermanence by permanence, emptiness by nonemptiness. By this one example of language there naturally is no fear of this objection. *Prajñā* is like a great ball of fire untouched on four sides. How can one definitely apply essence and function? Essence and function are neither the same as, nor different from causes and conditions. Its essence is hard and the function is also hard. Its essence is sharp and its function is also sharp. They are already not the same but are nominally designated and discussed. If you say that its essence is hardness, this implies that its function is sharpness. This is an explanation based on the one extreme of nominal designation. Apart from function there is no essence, and apart from essence there is no function. Function is tranquil and tranquility is function. There is no separate essence that has or lacks function based on the function. There is also no separate function that has or lacks essence based on essence. Not one, not different, it has cause and condition, and hence it can be said as being the same, and being different. (T 1698.33.75b4-18)

Thus, essence and function should not be understood in a reified manner, as if they are real qualities. They are provisional, interdependent, designations, and nothing more.

It is well known that the Silla monk Wonhyo 元曉 was one of the most

prolific users of the essence-function paradigm, getting a major influence from his work on the *Awakening of Faith* 起信論, which explicates the meaning of Mahāyāna in terms of essence 體, aspects 相, and function 用. He applies the *ti-yong* structure in many places in his works, both explicitly and implicitly. The Huayan scholar Fazang 法藏 (643-712) was also a prolific user of the *ti-yong* paradigm, not surprisingly, since it is in the Huayan corpus that it is probably most pervasively applied. Here, essence characterizes the quiescent Dharma realm and function characterizes the application of skillful means in saving sentient beings. But it is not only these Tathāgatagarbha-oriented scholars who use it for explication of structures related to depth and shallowness. The leading exponents of the Faxiang 法相 school also employed it extensively. In the *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 it is used in a number of places to explain the relationship between various aspects of consciousness. For example:

或執諸識用別體同。或執離心無別心所。爲遮此等種種異執。令於唯識深妙理中得如實解故作斯論。

Some hold the position that the consciousnesses differ in function but are the same in essence. Some hold the position that apart from mind there are no separate mental functions. In order to dispel these various attachments, and to have people gain an accurate understanding within this profound principle of consciousness-only, I write this treatise. (T 1585.31.1a16-18)

Kuiji 窺基 (632-682) also employs it in the explication of consciousness,<sup>20</sup> as does Woncheuk 圓測 (613-696), who describes the *ālayavijñāna* as

essence and the remaining forthcoming consciousnesses as function.<sup>21)</sup>

Even from these few examples, we can begin to pay attention to the fact that although the basic application *ti-yong* of distinguishing priority, importance, etc., is uniform, it is applied in a wide range of situations, and if we go through all cases in the canon, we will see that the objects to which it is applied vary tremendously.

## VIII. Korea

### 1. Wonhyo

It is well known that the Silla monk Wonhyo was one of the most prolific users of the essence-function paradigm, getting a major influence from his work on the *Awakening of Faith* 起信論, which explicates the meaning of Mahāyāna in terms of essence 體, aspects 相, and function 用. Given that *śāstra*'s explicit introduction of these terms, it is not surprising that Wonhyo applies the same model throughout his exegesis. For example, when explaining the meaning of the words in of the title of the treatise, he says:

In conclusion: “Mahāyāna” is the essence of the doctrine of this treatise; “awakening faith” is its efficacious operation. Thus, the title is composed to show the unity of essence and function. Hence the words, “Treatise on Awakening

20) See, for example, 成唯識論述記 T 1830.43.241a22-28.

21) 般若波羅蜜多心經贊「意根通用 八識為體。」(T 1711.33.546c16)

Mahāyāna Faith.” 總而言之 大乘是論之宗體 起信是論之勝能 體用合舉 以標題目 故言大乘起信論也 (T 1844.44.203b7)

Thus, the relationship between *jongche* 宗體 or “essence of the doctrine” which corresponds to the 大乘 *daeseung* of the title, and *seungneung* 勝能 or “efficacious operation,” which corresponds to the *gisin* 起信 of the title, is here considered by Wonhyo simply to be that of *che* 體 and *yong* 用. Therefore, we can say that for Wonhyo, “mahāyāna” and “awakening faith” are not to be treated as two separate things, but as two aspects of the same thing.

Again just below, in the same commentary, he frames the discussion in terms of essence and function.

The part of the sentence referring to the Buddha Treasure has three significations: Praising the excellence of Buddha’s mind; praising the excellence of Buddha’s form; concluding the praises of the person. In praising the excellence of Buddha’s mind, (one) is praising function and essence. 實之內亦有三意 先歎心德 次歎色德 第三句者舉人結歎 歎心德中 敷用及體 (T 1844.44.203b20-21)

Already before his work on the *AMF*, but especially after, Wonhyo’s usage of the essence-function framework becomes pervasive, but with it not being necessary to explicitly use the terms *che* and *yong*. The One Mind in Two aspects, and his essence-function understanding of the relationship between the two truths become the main ways in which this non-dichotomizing, yet value-distinguishing discourse unfolds.<sup>22)</sup>

## 2. Seon, Jinul, and the Pervasive Frame of Essence-Function

The way that the essence-function framework ends up framing all of subsequent Korean Seon soteriological discourse is in a manner that seamlessly evolves out of the models established in Chinese Buddhism, starting from Jizang, through the *AMF*, Huayan Buddhism, and texts such as the \**Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*, which articulate with great force the doctrine of innate purity of the mind, and the kinds of practices that are understood as leading to the realization of this original mind. Most critical is Jizang's articulation of the two truths as being in a nondual, essence-function relationship. This basic understanding compounds with and supports the water-waves image provided in the *AMF*, along with its correlative One Mind that has the aspect of thusness, and the aspect of arising and ceasing. Such an approach is replicated in the Huayan hermeneutics of principle and phenomena as a metaphysical description of cognized reality, and the influential soteriological model of faith and practice articulated in the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* and the Two Entrances and Four Practices (*Er ru sixing lun*) 二入四行論 (attributed to Bodhidharma).

That is to say, the metaphysically-oriented description of the One Mind as being still and enlightened, or turbid and ignorant, merged together with the two truths, the first ineffable and the other effable, finds further expression in Huayan's principle, also inconceivable, ineffable, distinguished from the conventional, expressible reality of the conceptual realm. These two are

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22) In Wonhyo's extant works, the appearance of the term 體用 as a pair occurs nineteen times, but there are probably four or five times as many cases where the ideographs are applied to a discussion separately.

quickly restated as being actually one in the statement “non-obstruction between principle and phenomena” 理事無礙. But in the framework of the two accesses of 理行二入 taught in the *\*Vajrasamādhi*, “principle” 理 indicates not only the nonconceptual in itself, but “access via the non-conceptual.” This means entering enlightenment by simply being enlightened, which is the meaning of the “correct faith” 正信 taught in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, and enlightenment by sustained application of effort. This structure of principle and practice is exactly parallel to that of the principle soteriological pair in Chan practice, sudden awakening 頓悟 and the gradual practice 漸修. In the context of this literature, it must be noted that the use of the actual terminology of *che-yong* is replaced most of the time. *Che* will henceforth be supplanted by *i* 理—in Huayan, many Chan works, the *\*Vajrasamādhi*, and then later on in Neo-Confucianism. *Yong* is replaced by a variety of terms, according to the situation, for example, *shi* 事 in Huayan, *xing* 行 in the *\*Vajrasamādhi*, and *qi* 氣 in Song Confucianism.

But although all of these related structures are coming into full development in Chinese Buddhism, with these obvious correlations, it is in Korean Seon, and most importantly in the writings of Jinul 知訥 (1158-1210) (and works attributed to him), where principle and phenomena, faith and practice, sudden and gradual are all tied together and framed into an essence-function based system of practice. And Jinul occasionally reminds us of the old underlying paradigmatic structure of *che-yong*, as in the passage below, where he is discussing the relationship of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice based on the essence-function model, placing priority on the sudden approach, offering a description that, in its association of *che-yong* with

stillness and movement, hails back to the early passage from the *Liji* cited in the beginning of this paper:

此中惺惺寂寂之義、或直約離念心體、或約用功門說之。故修性俱圓、理行兼暢、修行徑路、莫斯爲最。但得意修心、脫生死病爲要、何容名義爭論而興見障乎。而今若善得離念心體、卽與佛智相契、何論三賢十聖漸次法門。

At this point, the aspects of alertness and calmness may be explained either in direct reference to the ineffable essence of mind (*che*) or in relation to their earnest application in practice (*yong*). Consequently, [relative] cultivation and [absolute] nature are both fully consummated, and principle and practice are mutually pervasive. On the roads and byways of practice, there are none that are more important than these [viz., alertness and calmness]. The only thing you need is proficient cultivation of the mind, which brings liberation from the malady of birth and death. Why allow disputations over words and meanings and thus strengthen the obstruction of views? If you now skillfully recover the ineffable essence of mind, you will be in mutual concordance with the wisdom of the buddhas; so why talk about a gradual progression through the three stages of worthiness and the ten stages of sanctity? (Translation by Buswell, 149-150)

Jinul invokes the essence-function framework repeatedly throughout his work, as he does here when explaining the nondual relationship between *samādhi* and *prajñā*:

答。若設法義、入理千門、莫非定慧、取其綱要、則自性上體用二義、前所謂空寂靈知、是也。定是體、慧是用也。卽體之用故、慧不離定、卽用之體故、定不離慧。定則慧故、寂而常知、慧則定故、知而常寂。

Jinul: If we were to consider these [two] dharmas and their attributes, of the thousands of approaches for accessing the principle, there are none that do not involve *samādhi* and *prajñā*. Taking into account only their essentials, from the standpoint of the self-nature they then are characterized as the two aspects of essence and function—this is what I have previously called the void and the calm, numinous awareness. *Samādhi* is the essence; *prajñā* is the function. Because [*prajñā*] is the functioning of the essence, *prajñā* is not separate from *samādhi*. Because [*samādhi*] is the essence of the function, *samādhi* is not separate from *prajñā*. Because where there is *samādhi* there is *prajñā*, [*samādhi*] is calm yet constantly aware. Because where there is *prajñā* there is *samādhi*, [*prajñā*] is aware yet constantly calm. (Buswell 230)

It is also within the matrix of Korean Seon Buddhism that the approach of Correct Faith as a direct entry to enlightenment, under the label of Patriarchal Faith, becomes established in contradistinction to the gradual approach of Doctrinal Faith. In the text introduced below, long attributed to Jinul, the “correct Mahāyāna faith” of the *AMF* is taken to be a kind of absolute faith, similar to the Christian notion of “leap of faith,”—it is given the label of “patriarchal faith,” which is to be distinguished from “doctrinal faith”—the *laukika* type of faith articulated in the *Cheng weishi lun* and so forth, which is based on rational structures of doctrine, which posits the possibility of spiritual improvement based on wholesome activity and meditation, eventually leading to Buddhahood.

The text is the Direct Explanation of the True Mind (*Jinsim jikseol*; 真心直說),<sup>23)</sup> where these two kinds of faith are clearly distinguished:

[Section heading:] The Direct Mind of True Faith 真心正信 (HBJ 4.715c1-15; T 2019A.48.999b13)

或曰。祖門之信與教門信有何異耶。曰多種不同。教門令人天信於因果。

Someone said: “How does the faith of the patriarchal teaching and the faith of the doctrinal teaching differ?”

Response: “They differ significantly. The doctrinal teaching allows humans and celestials to believe in the law of cause-and-effect.”

有愛福樂者信十善爲妙因、人天爲樂果。有樂空寂者、信生滅因緣爲正因。苦集滅道爲聖果。有樂佛果者、信三劫六度爲大因。菩提涅槃爲正果。祖門正信非同前也。不信一切有爲因果。只要信自己本來是佛。天真自性人人具足。涅槃妙體箇箇圓成。不假他求從來自備。

Those who want to enjoy the fruits of merit believe in the ten kinds of wholesome actions as the marvelous cause, and that rebirth as a human or celestial is the happy result. Those who enjoy empty quiescence believe in arising and ceasing and causes and conditions to be the correct cause, and take suffering, arising, cessation, and the path to be the noble result. Those who enjoy Buddhahood believe that the practice of the six perfections through the three incalculably long eons are the great cause, and that bodhi and nirvāṇa are their direct result.

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23) Recent research by Choe Yeonsik has called into question the accuracy of the attribution of authorship to Jinul, arguing instead that the text should be ascribed to the Jurchen Chan monk Zhengyan 政言 (d. ca. 1184-1185). See Buswell, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 89, which refers to Choe's article “Jinsim jikseol ui jeojeo e dae han saero un ihae”, 77-101.

The correct faith of the patriarchal teaching is not like these. One does not believe in all kinds of conditioned causes and effects. It only demands the faith that one is originally Buddha. This nature is originally replete in every single person. The marvelous essence 體 of nirvāṇa is fully perfected in every case. One does not need to look at the provisional other to find what is originally endowed in oneself. (T 2019a.48.999b13-999c7)<sup>24)</sup>

Thus we have here an essence-function model of faith and practice, with Patriarch Faith being the approach of essence (the sudden approach, non-linguistic approach, nonconceptual approach, approach of principle), and Doctrinal Faith being the approach by function (the gradual approach, accessible by language, conventional approach).

The examples in Jinul's work of the application of this paradigm can be cited at much further length, and can be further supplemented by examples in the writing of those who followed Jinul in the Korean Seon tradition, such influential monks as Gihwa and Hyujeong.

## IX. Neo-Confucian Expansion of the Essence-Function Paradigm

If we can characterize the broad history of the usage and study of essence-function in East Asian thought by saying that the paradigm was first born out of the early Chinese classics, then significantly deepened in

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24) A full English translation of this text is available in Robert Buswell's *Tracing Back the Radiance*, starting from page 119.

the process of its incorporation into, and transformation of, Buddhism, we can also say that it finally becomes the comprehensive matrix for Neo-Confucian philosophy, with Neo-Confucian concepts swimming around in the sea of *ti-yong* like fish in water. There is nothing that goes on in Neo-Confucian thought that is not either circumscribed by, or about, or spoke in reference to essence and function, or one of its narrower analogues. When all is said on the topic of *ti-yong* it is clear that the overall degree of influence of the paradigm as a hermeneutic tool, the extent, and variety of its applications, is most fully promoted in the works of Zhu Xi, with the usual caveat that he was probably pushed in this direction based on influence received from the Cheng brothers. As was the case with Chan and Huayan Buddhists before them, the Neo-Confucians sometimes used the actual terminology of *ti-yong*, but their philosophical system was articulated mainly through the analogous, but more focused structure of principle/material force (*li-qi* 理氣).<sup>25)</sup>

Neo-Confucians took *li* 理 (K. *i*) to refer to the deep guiding patterning contained in the term *dao*, but with a greater concern toward moral discourse and the problems seen in self-cultivation amidst the competing dynamics of self-centered and appropriately life-enhancing relationships. Neo-Confucians differentiated the guiding patterning dimension of existence from the concrete, historical process of dynamic change and constant fracturing into differentiated multiplicity. The latter they identified as *qi* 氣 (K. *gi*), once the term for

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25) Occasional statements by Zhu Xi and later Korean thinkers show that they quite consciously understood it as an analogue of *ti-yong*, with *ti-yong* being the more originary, widely-embracing archetype and *li-qi* being a more specific application.

vitality and the force of feelings, now generalized as the stuff of existence. *Qi* in its concrete and dynamic historicity could itself include qualitative differences, described in terms of relative clarity or turbidity.

As was the case with early Buddhist doctrinal questions and debates, whose problems showed an even greater tendency to be framed in *ti-yong* hermeneutics, the concentration of Korean Neo-Confucian writings focused on what is perhaps the ultimate Confucian *ti-yong* conundrum in the history of the tradition, that of the relation between the four feelings and seven emotions derived from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, re-evaluated through the essence-function analogs of *dao*-mind and human mind, as well as *li-qi*. This is of course, a reference to the Four-Seven debate engaged in by Toegye and his various disputants and supporters in the mid-Joseon.

But what is more important that its focused usage in intra-Confucian discussion and debate, it is the fact that essence-function was larger and deeper than any of the single traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, or Buddhism. It served as the basic intellectual matrix for all three of these traditions (and in Japan and China, as well as Korea), serving as the medium through which Confucians and Buddhists could evaluate each other's systems: to have discussion, or debate, or to criticize. As I have shown in my recent book *The Great Korean Buddhist-Confucian Debate*, when Jeong Dojeon 鄭道傳 (1342-1398) and Gihwa 己和 (Hamheo Deuktong, 1376-1433), the respective leaders of Confucianism and Buddhism of their generation, engaged in debate regarding which was the "true" religion, they did so wholly through the *ti-yong* paradigm. Briefly put, *ti-yong* is about consistency between *ti* and *yong*, and both Jeong and Gihwa accused the rival system of

falling short of consistency in within this paradigm.

## X. Conclusion

What I have provided here is nothing but a brief sampling of some of the usages of the essence-function paradigm, focusing primarily on some important examples of its usage in East Asian Buddhism. But there is far more work that can be done here. First of all, we could build a clear picture of the precise character of the development of *ti-yong* analogs in the Confucian classics, primarily the *Analects* and *Mencius*. We could then compare this with the model that developed in the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi*, where the structure is still implicit, but can be clearly demonstrated in a number of different ways. As we have shown to some extent in this paper, its early applications in East Asian Buddhism, in such authors as Jizang, are mainly toward the purpose of resolving dualistic reception of important Buddhist notions such as emptiness and form, wisdom and expedient means, where via essence and function they are reunified in the Chinese mind. With the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and Buddha-nature texts, essence takes on its connotations originally seen in the *ren* of Confucius and Mencius, being identified with the pure, innate human mind, which functions both skillfully and unskillfully. It is this model that is adopted by Song Neo-Confucianism, in its pairs of “mind of dao” and “human mind,” the pure faculties of the basic mind and the confusion that occurs in the seven emotions, which leads to the Four Seven debate.

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Abstract

## The Emergence of Essence-Function (*ti-yong*) 體用 Hermeneutics in the Sinification of Indic Buddhism: An Overview

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The essence-function 體用 (Ch. *ti-yong*, K. *che-yong*, J. *tai-yū*; in non-Buddhological studies in Japan, *tai-yō*) paradigm can be seen as the most pervasively-used hermeneutical framework in the interpretation of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese religious and philosophical works ranging from as early as the 5th century BCE up to premodern times. It developed in richness during the course of its application in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, first in China, where it was applied extensively in the sinification of Indian Buddhist doctrine, and formed the basic framework for the philosophy of the Chinese indigenous schools of Buddhism such as Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan, often in analogous forms such as *li-shi* 理事. It was then further transformed and expanded in its usage in Song Neo-Confucianism,

especially in the form yet another analogue *li-qi* 理氣. As both Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism took root in Korea, Korean scholars made extensive use of the *che-yong* paradigm, both in the interpretation of the individual religions of Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as in interreligious dialog and debate. This paper seeks to revive discussion of this vitally important philosophical paradigm, which has been almost fully ignored in Buddhological studies, both East and West, by examining its early appearances in Chinese Buddhist commentary, and then its role in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, as well as some examples of its usage in Korean Buddhism, in the writings of Wonhyo and Jinul.

**Key words** : essence-function(*ti-yong*, 體用), *li-shi*(理事), *li-qi*(理氣), the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*(『大乘起信論』), Chinese Buddhism, Wonhyo, Jinul

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