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A Study of the Hua-t'ou Method as a Way of Engaged Buddhism: With Reference to the Gongan (Kōan) of Baizhang's Meeting with a Wild Fox from the Perspective of Critical Buddhism

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Abstract

This article seeks to clarify the hua-tʼou method as a way of engaged Buddhism with reference to the gongan (kōan) of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox (百丈野狐) from the perspective of critical Buddhism by surveying the necessity of engaged Buddhism in the modern world, the critique of Zen thought from the perspective of critical Buddhism as a movement of engaged Buddhism, critical Buddhists' understanding of causality through the gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox, and lastly the possible ripostes toward critical Buddhists. As modern society with its increasing structural crisis makes it impossible to solve its own problems through individual awakenings, engaged Buddhism appears to be an alternative movement necessary to cope with those problems. Critical Buddhism is noteworthy as a movement of engaged Buddhism with its critique of social discrimination and collective egoism which might be traced back to the ideology of Zen thoughts. Hua-tʼou as a balance to rational thinking, however, should be understood positively in its more profound and diverse hermeneutic dimensions as is noted by Sallie B. King, Peter N. Gregory, and Stuart Lachs.

Key Words: *Critical Buddhism, Baizhang's Meeting with a Wild Fox (百丈野狐), Social Discrimination, Matsumoto Shiro, Hakamaya Noriaki, David Loy, Stuart Lachs*

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참여불교의 길로서 화두에 대한 고찰: 비판불교의 시각에서 백장야호百丈野狐공안과 관련하여

류제동

국문요약

현대 사회의 구조적 문제가 점점 더 심각해지고 개인적 깨달음만으로는 이러한 문제를 푼다는 것이 불가능해지는 상황이 도래하고 있으며, 이러한 상황에서 참여불교운동은 필수적 대안이라고 할 수 있다. 특히 집단 이기주의 및 사회적 차별에 대한 반성에서 비판불교운동은 선사상에서 중요한 지점을 다루고 있다고 할 수 있다. 비판불교운동은 선사상의 기반이 되는 본각사상을 비판하면서도 백장야호 공안을 통하여 인과에 대한 철저한 인식의 중요성은 여전히 견지하고 있다. 이러한 입장에 대하여 샐리 킹과 피터 그레고리 같은 학자들은 본각사상에 대한 비판불교의 지나치게 협애한 비판을 문제 삼는다. 비판불교의 문제 인식은 여전히 소중하다. 특히 일본에서는 침략 전쟁에 대한 반성이 아직도 제대로 이루어지고 있지 않은 상황에서 그 문제 인식은 더욱 심화될 필요가 있다. 그러나 다른 한편으로 지나치게 합리성 위주의 좌뇌 위주의 치우침 또한 경계할 만한 면이 있다고 할 것이다. 스튜어트 래크스의 언급대로 합리성과 선의 지혜 사이에 보완이 필요하고, 에드워드 드 보노(Edward de Bono)의 주장처럼 수직적 사고를 보완하는 수평적 사고가 필요하다고 할 수 있다.

주제어: *비판불교, 백장야호(百丈野狐), 사회적 차별, 마츠모토 시로, 하카마야 노리아키, 데이빗 로이(David Loy), 스튜어트 랙스(Stuart Lachs)*

I. Introduction

Today, Zen Buddhism is so popular that even the West is greatly attracted to it around the mindfulness boom, while it has recently been criticized due to its negative connection to the Japanese aggressive attitude in the Second World War and its showing little concern over social problems including social discrimination toward the oppressed people. Although its popularity as a helper in healing efforts might be regarded as a desirable phenomenon, this positive contribution might be also problematic in that this healing effect may induce indifferent attitudes in the mind of the practitioner of mindfulness towards real problems in his or her society. It is found that the change of inner attitudes does not necessarily lead to outer actions of participating in common efforts to solve social problems.

Especially, with the rise of Critical Buddhism movement in Japan since the late 1980s, Zen Buddhism has been criticized even as having deviated from the proper tenets of Buddhism. While some people regard this criticism as rhetorically extremist, it is noteworthy that the idea of original enlightenment as the ideological base of Zen Buddhism is being severely criticized by Critical Buddhist scholars as essentially problematic, not only from a Buddhist perspective but also from philosophy in general in that original enlightenment might be conducive to discriminatory social structure under the name of harmony. In spite of their own critique of Zen Buddhism, they put positive values on some of late writings of Dōgen (1200-1253), one of greatest Zen masters in the history of Japan, especially on his latter years' interpretation of the gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox (百丈野狐), which makes their criticism of Zen Buddhism a nuanced one. Thus, understanding and evaluating correctly the legitimacy of their criticism with reference to the gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox might be helpful in envisioning the desirable future of Zen Buddhism not only in Japan but also in Korea.

II. The Importance of Engaged Buddhism Today: with reference to the Argument of David R. Loy

Recently, engaged Buddhism has become an important stream so as to be regarded as a "fourth Yana" following Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, emphasizing Buddhist social engagement to deal with major modern social problems. The rise of engaged Buddhism might be partially explained to be due to the unprecedented social change in modern times that needs the fundamental restructuring of Buddhism to deal with such a change.

David R. Loy suggests the timely importance of engaged Buddhism by the distinctive governing system of modern times capable of showing social concern more actively in a dimension different from the one of premodern times that showed relatively little social concern.

> To survive in the often ruthless world of kings and emperors, Buddhism needed to emphasize its otherworldliness. This encouraged Buddhist institutions and Buddhist teachings (especially regarding karma and merit) to develop in ways that did not

> question the social order. Modern democracy and respect for human rights, however imperfectly realized, offer new opportunities for understanding the broader implications of Buddhist teachings (Loy 2004).

Loy argues that Buddhist otherworldly attitudes related with karma and merits in traditional societies are not essential but dependent upon the historical situation of premodern times. That is, pre-modern times were stricken with the ruthless dictatorship of kings or emperors unlike democracy of modern times. Although some will find unsatisfactory Loy's implication that the absolute truth of Buddhism is confined to the limits of historical situations, his request for more and active social engagement of Buddhism according to modern social change should be considered positively. As an enlightening religious tradition, Buddhism has a more appropriate function to contribute in a more enlightened and rationalized world.

Although pre-modern Buddhism did not succeed in breaking down traditional class discrimination system, it has actually contributed to undermining its ideological base. Considering that even modern democratized India is still suffering due to caste discrimination, we should note Mavis Fenn's following observation on the concern of Buddhism in social equality.

> Within the kingship system of government, the ideal king (*cakkavattin*) not only keeps the realm safe from robbers and foreign invasion, he also pays his public administrators fairly and is required to ensure that the realm is free of poverty. These practices (not sacrifices) guarantee social and cosmic stability. The notion that the priests were inherently more moral than others and that one was born into a specific class because of one's moral actions was also challenged. All classes of society had ethical and nonethical individuals within them. And, while Buddhism did not reject the class system per se, it rejected any notion that there was a moral component to this system of social organization. There were good and bad people within every class of society (Fenn 2012, 20-21).

David R. Loy also focuses on the magnitude of social problems' influence in modern times partially due to the rapid development of natural sciences and technologies.

> In the low-tech, Iron-Age world that the Buddha lived in, the consequences of social problems were quite limited. A king might oppress the people he ruled; his mercenaries might kill or get killed in a war; people might perish in a famine; but sooner or later society and the natural world would recover, usually sooner. Today we find ourselves in a much more dangerous situation, thanks to weapons of mass destruction and the large-scale ecological impact of other modern technologies (and the modern economies that use those technologies)(Loy, 2004).

His observation on the dangerous magnitude of the influence feels more real when he explains it with the example of George W. Bush.

> Like it or not, George W. Bush is the most powerful person in human history. For those of us who do not like it, he is also the most dangerous person in history. His actions, along with the actions of those who follow him or fight him, can have enormous consequences that will significantly affect not only global human society

> but the whole biosphere, for thousands of years to come. Those of us who consider ourselves Buddhists can no more afford to disregard this truth than anyone else can. The three roots of evil remain the same: greed, ill will, and delusion (or «ignore-ance»). But our incredibly powerful technologies mean that they now operate and interact on a scale that is vastly larger than during the Buddha's day. For Buddhists to ignore this reality, while devoting ourselves wholly to our own liberation, is to ignore our responsibility to the world. Enlightenment, after all, includes realizing that we are part of the world, nondual with it, and today our world needs all the help it can get (Loy, 2004).

The president of the United States with its most advanced technologies is so powerful as well as so dangerous that his choice and action might incur enormous benefits as well as horrible damages to the whole world. Considering the confrontation between South Korea and North Korea both equipped with nuclear weapons, the Korean people feel the danger more acutely than any other people.

In such a context, Loy is concerned first of all in the relation between *dukkha* (suffering) as the first noble truth of Buddhism and the sense of self, especially the collective sense of self. His focus on the collective sense of self appears to stem from the modern combination of scientific technologies and bureaucratic organization that subordinates people to fixed roles within organizations. That is, he thinks that the suffering of modern people is exacerbated by the sense of self thwarted by its collectivization. He even thinks that contemporary information technologies are also problematic in that they induce people to the collective sense of self (Loy 2004).

According to David Loy, the collective sense of self has become so autonomous with the advancement of highly effective forms of bureaucratic organization that it needs a different approach than traditional Buddhist approaches to human psyche. He thinks that modern institutionalization of the collective sense of self tend to sustain a life of its own as a new type of group ego. His conception of institutionalized group ego is illustrated well by the case of competitive market. According to him, competitive market coerces corporations in it to adapt to the constraints built into that market. For example, stockholders and Wall Street analysts threaten the CEOs of big companies to expand their profits, even sacrificing their social responsibilities. That is, the collective sense of self is impersonalized. In this context, he argues that the responsibility of socially engaged Buddhism must take a new approach to this problem of institutionalized form of dukkha engendered by group ego (Loy 2004).

According to David Loy, the firm formation of collective sense of self leads to the institutionalized forms of greed, ill will, and delusion. Unlike individual and personal forms of greed, ill will, and delusion, they are incurable when addressed from the traditional Buddhist perspective. He thinks that the traditional way of Buddhist practice focused on the removal of individual forms of greed, ill will, and delusion

> What is the relationship between our Buddhist practice and our social engagement? How does each influence the other, or interweave with the other? My main point is that they are, and we must realize them to be, different aspects of the same developmental process. To think otherwise, viewing them as distinct issues, is a

> delusion of the sort that we are trying to overcome in our spiritual practice, showing we are not yet mature enough in our spiritual understanding. Believing and acting as if they are separate – that is, trying to liberate or awaken myself while leaving the rest of the world to take care of itself -- is another instance of the subject/object, self/other duality. This duality expresses the fundamental ignorance that needs to be overcome.
>
> In other words, our Buddhist practice and our social engagement need each other. Without responsible engagement by people committed to spiritual practice, the U.S. and world situation will continue to deteriorate, causing more people to suffer, along with the rest of the biosphere. Furthermore, our own spiritual practice is negatively affected by a self-defeating self-preoccupation – self-defeating, because a self-centered practice reinforces one's sense of self even as one works to overcome it. We may think that we are being spiritually transformed, but if the changes that happen reinforce our self-centeredness, the "cure" is worse than the disease (Loy 2004).

Thus, Buddhist practice without any idea of social engagement might aggravate the modern social problems by a "self-defeating self-preoccupation."

III. Critical Buddhists' Critique of Zen Thoughts

The significance of the critique of Zen thoughts for the Critical Buddhism movement is clearly suggested by the fact that Critical Buddhism itself has been established and developed by its recognition and critique of the essential problems in Zen thoughts. Its clear recognition starts at the Machida incident.

> Perhaps the most obvious factor in stimulating the critical look at Buddhist ideas within the Soto Zen school was the shock of the so-called "Machida Incident" that stems from the 1979 World Conference on Religion and Peace. Machida Muneo, then president of the Buddhist Federation of Japan and secretary general of the Soto Zen sect, denied that any form of social discrimination existed in Japan. He subsequently recanted (in 1984) and the Soto sect admitted its long history of perpetuating social discrimination and established numerous committees to study and rectify the situation. Still, many of those involved began to look at the issue more deeply, wondering if there was any systemic reason why such practices could continue unquestioned for so much of Soto history. Although to some these sorts of things might seem like a tempest in a Zen teabowl, it was not so then, nor is it now, either within the Soto sect or among the outcast groups in Japan (Hubbard 1997, x).

Critical Buddhist scholars were seriously ashamed of this incident, and began a thorough self-reflection. They felt acutely that today's Zen Buddhism failed to recognize the Japanese modern social realities as they are in its conscientious depth. The critique and self-reflection on the negative roles of Japanese Buddhism in the Second World War and other social problems have never, of course, been Critical Buddhist scholars' unique concerns. Critical Buddhist scholars were, however, prominent in that they have traced the problems to the fundamental ideas of Zen Buddhism.

As Swanson notes, the essential problem of Zen Buddhism is pinpointed by Critical

Buddhist scholars to be found in its idea of original enlightenment.

> The current attack is led by two Buddhist scholars at Komazawa University (associated with the Soto Zen sect): Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shiro. The main focus of their attacks is the *hongaku shiso* tradition (strictly speaking, the idea that all things are "inherently" or "originally" enlightened) and the implications of this kind of thinking (such as the ideal of *wa*, "harmony" or "conformity") that function as largely uncritical assumptions in Japanese society at large (Swanson 1997, 4).

Thus, Critical Buddhist scholars argue that the absolutely positive Weltanschauung accepting everything as perfect and beautiful as it is coupled with its implication of uncritical harmony have permeated through Japanese society essentially due to the ideology of original enlightenment in Zen Buddhism. They perceive that Machida Muneo's distorted view is traced to the uncritical stance of "harmony" or "unity" permeating Japanese society that stall the efforts to recognize and improve or correct social problems.

They expand the object of this critique from Japanese society to East Asia and to Asia as a whole including India and even to human society in general. According to them, the ideas of humanity since the dawn of its history might be divided into critical ideas and topical ideas ascribable to the *dhātu-vāda* way of thinking. On the *dhātu-vāda* way of thinking, Swanson notes:

> Matsumoto adds that the *dhātu-vāda* way of thinking can be found in all ancient societies, both East and West. It is the idea that "all things arise from and return to an all-encompassing One." If so, it is possible to say that *tathāgata-garbha* thought/*dhātu-vāda* is the theoretical or philosophical development of "native" (*dochaku*—dare I say "primitive"?) animistic ideas and "folk religion" (*minzoku shūkyō*). Some have claimed that the idea of "the Buddhahood of grasses and trees" is the climactic development of Buddhist thought, but for Matsumoto it is no more than a form of animism. At no time in history has animism been held in higher esteem than it is today (Swanson 1997, 8-9).

Such a critique on the problem of original enlightenment might be refocused upon the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana as its alleged source text and upon the idea of *tathāgata-garbha* as the ideological base of the text. All the problems arise due to its recognition of a substance transcending causality. Thus, Critical Buddhists' basic stance lies in that Buddhist understanding of causality should be established upon the idea of no self without any essential substance, which leads them to their own unique understanding of the gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox (百丈野狐) with its accompanying ideas of "not falling into causality (不落因果)" and "not obscuring causality (不昧因果)."

IV. Critical Buddhists' Understanding of Causality through the Gongan of Baizhang's Meeting with a Wild Fox

The gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox (百丈野狐) is noted by Critical Buddhist scholars partially due to their own focus upon true Buddhism with the idea of no self without any essential substance and possibly due to their own identity as Japanese Buddhists originating from Dōgen (道元, 1200-1253) who cherished the gongan to his last day. The gongan might be briefly summarized as a story about Pai-chang (百丈, 720-814)'s turning word (一轉語) of "not obscuring causality (不昧因果)" that liberates a monk who transmigrated five hundred times as a fox due to his having said that a man of great practice does not fall into causality (不落因果).

This gongan has been interpreted diversely throughout the history of Zen Buddhism. Even Dōgen himself changed his view on it several times, while Critical Buddhists focus only upon his late years' assertion that not obscuring causality is the only legitimate understanding since not falling into causality is wrongly mistaken due to its amounting to the denial of causality (撥無因果). Steven Heine notes the aspect of Critical Buddhism focusing upon the idea of hongaku (本覺, original enlightenment):

> The overall aim of Critical Buddhism involves more than a simple reinterpretation of the *Shōbōgenzō*. The aim is to use Dōgen's change of heart as a starting point from which to challenge the *hongaku* orthodoxy that has perpetuated social discrimination and tacitly supported the status quo on the basis of claims of epistemological nondiscrimination and ontological dynamism (Heine 1997, 269).

Thus, he emphasizes Critical Buddhist scholars' focusing upon Dōgen's "deep faith in causality (深信因果, Jinshin inga)" as reflecting their overall aim of criticizing the idea of original enlightenment.

> For the Critical Buddhists, Dōgen resolves this dilemma by asserting in "Jinshin inga" that "the law of causality is clear and impersonal (or selfless)" in the sense that it is universal and inviolable, and yet that it has an eminently subjective quality ("deep faith") in that the freedom of noncausality can be attained only in and through the continuing process of moral puri³cation perfected within the realm of causality. This recalls the Madhyamika view that nirvana is found in terms of causality—nirvana occurs in the midst of samsara and not as an escape from it, yet is attained only through a fundamental change of perspective rather than the mere acceptance of causal relations. However, Dōgen's approach is based not on a nonrelational freedom from karma, but on an eminently μexible and polymorphous process in which the stages of practice and realization, while often simultaneous and overlapping, occur in irreversible sequence (Heine 1997, 270-71).

He likens the Critical Buddhists's hermeneutic attempts to the Western deconstructive theology in that it "highlights and deconstructs the substantive ideological presuppositions underlying conventional theology in its attempt to unravel and decenter all logocentric standpoints" (Heine 1997, 284) or liberation theology in that it "advocates a rethinking of the foundational sources (i.e., the Gospels) as the basis for contemporary

social reform and justice" (Heine 1997, 284), while he asks a question about their task.

> The main contribution of Critical Buddhism to the debate between historical and philosophical textual studies lies in its effort to bridge the methodological gap by reexamining and reevaluating areas of shift, transition, and syncretism from the standpoint of philosophical consistency and continuity with the foundational doctrines of Buddhist thought. According to this movement, Buddhism can and must change, and the model for this must come from within the tradition. However, for Critical Buddhism to make the 12-fascicle text the basis for reform and have a concrete impact on contemporary society, the methodology must deal with one overriding issue: How exactly does Dogen's view of karma, or the Critical Buddhist view of Dogen's view, promote social change? Can, in other words, Dogen's understanding of karmic causality in a medieval monastic context be translated into an agenda for the modern social reform of institutional Buddhism (Heine 1997, 285)?

Thus, Heine perceives that Critical Buddhism should be considered positively in that it seeks the modern change of Buddhism within tradition itself, one dominant problem being focused upon Dōgen's understanding of causality in karma possibly leading to "an agenda fro the modern social reform of institutional Buddhism." With regard to this perception, Critical Buddhists' stance might be approached from the following claims of Hakamaya Noriaki, as interpreted by Swanson:

> The moral imperative of Buddhism is to act selflessly (*anātman)* to benefit others. Any religion that favors the self to the neglect of others contradicts the Buddhist ideal. *The hongaku shisō* idea that "grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers have all attained Buddhahood; that sentient and non-sentient beings are all endowed with the way of the Buddha" (or, in Hakamaya's words, "included in the substance of Buddha") leaves no room for this moral imperative (Swanson 1997, 13).

Here, "to act selflessly (*anātman)* to benefit others" can become a basis for action toward social transformation. The *hongaku shisō* idea that "grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers have all attained Buddhahood; that sentient and non-sentient beings are all endowed with the way of the Buddha" might be explained to be criticized in that it leaves no room for social change, accepting everything positively as it is. In this context, the following words of Hakamaya, quoted by Paul Swanson, is significant.

> Buddhism requires faith, words, and the use of the intellect (wisdom, *prajñā)* to *choose* the truth of *pratītyasamutpāda*. The Zen allergy to the use of words is more native Chinese than Buddhist, and the ineffability of "thusness" *(shinnyo)* asserted in *hongaku shisō* leaves no room for words or faith (Swanson 1997, 14).

In short, "to act selflessly (*anātman)* to benefit others" can be interpreted as signifying to "*choose* the truth *pratītyasamutpāda*" for social transformation. You cannot remain without any choice here. In such a context of choice, faith, words, and the use of the intellect becomes necessary, making it obvious that Critical Buddhist scholars should criticize Zen Buddhism with its idea of original enlightenment that negates faith, words, and the use of the intellect.

V. Possible Ripostes to Critical Buddhists

Should Zen Buddhism with its idea of original enlightenment be criticized just as in the critique of Critical Buddhist scholars? In the book of *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, not only western scholars including Sallie B. King and Peter N. Gregory but also some Japanese scholars proposes diverse ripostes to their critique. Although there might not be a conclusive judgment, such a process of debates reveals that the critique should be accepted with some reserve in spite of its possible authenticity.

In particular, Sallie B. King claims that the idea of Buddha nature as an ideological base of original enlightenment should be understood not as an ontology with any substance, but as an apparatus for salvation. In spite of such a positive claim for the idea of Buddha nature, she recognizes the fact that its premodern role was historically different from the role of the "Light Within" in Quakers, while both concepts might be similar otherwise.

> The striking difference between the two, as embedded in their historical religious traditions, is that in Quakerism the Light Within is directly tied to ethical teachings and practice—of exactly the kind Matsumoto and Hakamaya seem to seek—while in Buddhism the ethical import of the Buddha-nature has, until modern times, been rather minimal. In Quakerism we see belief in the Light Within directly and explicitly tied to a belief in human equality and the inherent dignity and value of each human being. These, in turn, engender the belief that it is religiously and ethically right to challenge authority, to defy social practices that support social inequality and hierarchy, and to practice strict nonviolence (King 1997, 190).

In Quakerism, the "Light Within" has led clearly and directly to the spirit of human equality and resistance to "social practices that support social inequality and hierarchy," (King 1997, 190) while there has been little comparable role in the case of Buddha-nature, as King recognizes. She argues, though, that the distinction is not fundamental or essential, but historical.

> It is highly likely, for example, that the ethical stance of Quakerism was strongly influenced by the socioeconomic status of its founder, George Fox (he was from a poor, lower-class stratum of society) and by the severe government persecution that early Quakers endured—for, after all, being from the lower-class might make one more likely to be critical of class structure, and being persecuted by authority might tend to make one critical of authority.
>
> Consider some Buddhist cases. We know next to nothing about the social conditions of the authors of Buddha-nature thought, but it is highly unlikely that they were beaten, jailed, and hung for their religious views, as were some Quakers. Why should it then occur to our Buddha-nature authors that they need to emphasize in their writings the importance of being critical of authority (King 1997, 191)?

Here, we can remind ourselves of Loy's emphasis on the modern historical necessity of Buddhist social engagement. King also mentions the actual Buddhist social engagement being inspired by the idea of Buddha nature.

> These modern developments demonstrate that Buddha-nature thought does have

> resources upon which the Buddhist can draw to justify social engagement and action to transform society. That Buddhists in the modern period can and do put the term to this kind of use, while premodern Buddhists largely did not, simply demonstrates the importance of hermeneutics: a text will yield one set of answers to one set of questions, and quite another set of answers to another set of questions—it depends upon what assumptions, needs, and aspirations one brings to the text. A group or individual that wants to take up social engagement, and brings those concerns to texts of the Buddha-nature tradition, will end in those texts usable resources for their project (King 1997, 192).

She emphasizes the importance of hermeneutic efforts in the actual contribution of the idea of Buddha nature for Buddhist social engagement and practice. As she says, "a text will yield one set of answers to one set of questions, and quite another set of answers to another set of questions—it depends upon what assumptions, needs, and aspirations one brings to the text." (King 1997, 192) While this appears to be regarded as undermining her own argument by attenuating the significance of the idea of Buddha-nature, her position should be understood to be based upon her actual observation on the importance of hermeneutics in the history of ideas.

Gregory also emphasizes the importance of hermeneutics in his argument against Critical Buddhist scholars, saying that Critical Buddhist scholars are not properly focused upon the history of interpretation in Buddhist thoughts.

> It is not *hongaku shisō* alone that is the problem. The problem, rather, is how it was, and is, interpreted.
>
> To put the point more generally, I would contend that doctrines never have a simple and straightforward singular meaning but are always multivalent and complexly nuanced formulations that are susceptible to a wide range of interpretive possibilities. Of course, the range within which any given doctrine can be plausibly interpreted is circumscribed, although even here we cannot draw hard lines. The parameters of plausible interpretation are set by the way the doctrine itself is formulated as well as by the entire field of doctrines within which that doctrine is located. As the constellation of the doctrinal field changes, so do the parameters within which any doctrine in that field can be interpreted. Doctrines have no meaning outside of the interpretive contexts in which they are embedded just as ideas have no reality independent of the minds that think them. This is why it seems meaningless to me to try to understand doctrines outside of their context because outside of their context they have no meaning (Gregory 1997, 290-91).

Thus, while Peter Gregory recognizes cautiously that "the range within which any given doctrine can be plausibly interpreted is circumscribed," his emphasis is put on the fact that "we cannot draw hard lines" in circumscribing the range and that any given doctrine is "susceptible to a wide range of interpretive possibilities." His assertion on the importance of hermeneutic contexts is based firmly upon the fact that "ideas have no reality independent of the minds that think them." (Gregory 1997, 290-91)

Although some might simply think that the ripostes of Sallie B. King and Peter N. Gregory criticize squarely the stance of Critical Buddhist scholars, we should note that

both of them are essentially sympathetic to the critical spirit of Critical Buddhist scholars. Concretely, Peter N. Gregory emphasizes the role of critical spirit for today.

> Yet, such objections aside, I have great sympathy for Matsumoto and Hakamaya's emphasis on the importance of the critical spirit in Buddhism. Although this may not be the only voice with which the tradition speaks, it is certainly an important one and one that I think is particularly relevant for Buddhists today. My main criticism of "Critical Buddhism," then, is that it is not yet fully critical. As Matsumoto and Hakamaya point out, this critical spirit is embodied in such teachings as no-self, conditioned origination, and emptiness, which undermine the belief in an unchanging essence or substance. But this critique is not only directed against the "self"; it is also aimed at the identi³cations in terms of which the "self" is defined as a self. Insofar as we identify with something called "Buddhism," "Buddhism" (or "true Buddhism") is also a construction of the ideology of the self, and in that sense it too must be "emptied." Hence, in some sense at least, we cannot escape the paradox of being Buddhists. Can we then conclude, in the spirit of the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, that someone can only be called a Buddhist if he or she realizes that there is nothing that can be grasped as Buddhism (Gregory 1997, 296)?

He even asserts that "'Buddhism' (or 'true Buddhism') is also a construction of the ideology of the self, and in that sense it too must be 'emptied.'" (Gregory 1997, 296)

> How should we accept this assertion? Loy's argument may be helpful.
>
> According to Buddhist teachings, for example, whether or not you consider yourself a Buddhist is not in itself very important, because there is nothing salvific about that label or, for that matter, about merely believing in the Buddhist teachings. What is important is how one practices and embodies those principles. A bodhisattva does not vow to save all other Buddhists; he or she vows to help liberate all sentient beings (Loy 2004).

In Korea, as in other countries, the tension around religious identity is problematic, although there has never been armed conflicts between Buddhist groups and other religious groups. For example, whether you are a Buddhist or not influences your opportunity to get a job in a Buddhist firm. As we observed above in the context of David R. Loy's attention on the collective sense of self, Buddhism might be the proper tradition to eradicate such a problem fundamentally.

In addition, the Critical Buddhist scholars' critique of original enlightenment might be addressed by locating the status of original enlightenment in its relation with incipient enlightenment (始覺) as in Miriam Lindsey Levering's emphasis on incipient enlightenment in Ta-Hui (大慧 宗杲, 1089-1163)'s advocation of hua-tʼou method.

> On a more doctrinal level, Ta-hui argues, the proponents of stillness as the fundamental principle in Ch'an practice make a mistake in their interpretation of two key terms in Buddhist theory, "pen-chüeh 本覺" and "shih-chüeh 始覺." "Pen-chüeh" refers to the Buddhist belief that one's mind is from the beginning of time fully enlightened; "shih-chüeh" refers to the belief that at some point in time we pass

from imprisonment in ignorance and delusion to a true vision of the transcendent activity of our mind. Our enlightenment is timeless, yet our realization of it occurs in time.

Ta-hui claimed that the followers of "silent illumination" collapse these two important poles of the enlightenment paradox into one. They take "silence and no words" as "shih-chüeh," and "the Nirvana of Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja Terrible Sound Kind (i.e., a time incalculable aeons ago)" as "pen-chüeh." Since in their teaching they identify "silence and no words" with "the Nirvana of Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja," while they seem to be sustaining the distinction between "pen-chüeh" and "shih-chüeh," they are in fact trivializing it or eliminating it. Ta-hui saw this as a terrible mistake: the doctrinal distinction is necessary because "shih-chüeh" is different from "pen-chüeh" (while at the same time not-different from it): a moment of awakening does occur. If there were only "pen-chüeh," there wouldn't be any delusion. If all is adequately described as "awakening from the beginning" (pen-chüeh), then from what Śākyamuni awake (Levering 1978, 273-274)?

In addition, Stuart Lachs asserts that three points should be emphasized in Ta-hui's advocation of the hua-tʼou method:

Firstly, Ta-Hui insisted on the necessity of an actual moment of awakening. He felt that *hua-t'ou* practice was an effective means to attaining that moment of awakening. Secondly, Ta-Hui also felt " that *hua-t'ou* practice can be carried out by laymen in the midst of their daily activities." It is clear that Ta-Hui wanted to make Zen enlightenment available to laymen as well as monks, and not have the laymen serve mostly as donors to collect merit for a future life, which was the more popular attitude of his time. Thirdly, hua-tʼou is a way of exhausting and silencing rational thinking, thereby allowing the mind to open to Zen wisdom (Lachs 2012, 3).

Lachs is noteworthy in asserting the accessibility of hua-tʼou practice for laymen in comparison with today's Korean situation where hua-tʼou practice is sometimes regarded as highly difficult for laymen. In relation with Critical Buddhism, while "exhausting and silencing rational thinking" might be problematic, "allowing the mind to open to Zen wisdom" should be noted (Lachs 2012, 3). Lachs emphasizes Zen wisdom as a balance to rational thinking.

The *literati* were in their important positions because they had passed the highly competitive civil service exams, the subjects of which were what Ta-Hui referred to as the "nine classics and the seventeen histories." The literati were highly educated thinkers whose formal education started at age five or six and continued until about thirty. Their informal education continued thereafter deepening their understanding, truly a life's work.

What struck Ta-Hui most was that the education of the literati had fostered a rational approach to knowledge and understanding. This emphasis on the intelligent mind and the vast amount of learning required to pass the state exams deflected the literati from achieving self-knowledge or developing virtuous or wise conduct,

> leading them instead to focus on mastery of detail and rational thought.17 Knowledge for them was something gained from the outside. According to Ta-Hui, Zen wisdom can be gained in an instant if the rational mind is cut-off. Focusing on the hua-t'ou can bring the practitioner to a point where the rationalizing and conceptualizing mind is stopped, enabling a person to realize Zen awakening (Lachs 2012, 5).

He asserts that hua-tʼou practice was sought after then as a balance to excessively rational approach to knowledge and understanding deflecting the literati from "achieving self-knowledge or developing virtuous or wise conduct," (Lachs 2012, 5) which might be applied to today's situation.

> There are obvious parallels between the literati that interested Ta-Hui and western people today who are interested in Zen. For one, many if not most Zen practitioners today are lay people who hold jobs with some level of responsibility. As the literati had to function in their daily lives as laymen, so do many Zen practitioners today. In addition, most practitioners and people interested in Zen today are well educated and almost all are raised in an environment that values rational thinking, one characteristic of western traditions. People today are often afraid to give up rational thought just as Ta-Hui claimed was the case with the literati (Lachs 2012, 5-6).

Stuart Lachs' focus on hua-tʼou practice not as an alternative but as a balance to rational thinking can be interpreted to be in agreement with Critical Buddhist scholars' spirit of critique in that he does not oppose rational thinking as itself. While Critical Buddhist scholars assert that the weak development of rational thinking in East Asia in comparison to the West can be ascribed to the idea of original enlightenment in Zen Buddhism, causing social discrimination to be maintained even in present-day Japan (a charge that might not be denied by many conscientious Japanese intellectuals besides the Critical Buddhist scholars), the harmful consequences of excessively mechanical and rational approaches to learning process without a proper attitude of critical thinking are prominent even in today's Korea as well as in Japan. In short, although the tendency of overly mystifying hua-t'ou practice is still problematic, Zen wisdom through hua-t'ou practice can be regarded as a proper balance to rational thinking, which can be possibly embraced by Critical Buddhist scholars themselves.

VI. Conclusion

Today, it cannot be denied that modern social problems have become severely deteriorated in their structural dimension so as to acknowledge that our efforts in individual and private enlightenment do not lead to a better world. In this situation, social concern and engagement in Buddhism are becoming necessary to address those problems. In particular, as Loy suggests, the problematic collective sense of self should be transcended in that social discrimination is a major cause of global conflicts.

Critical Buddhist scholars' efforts are noteworthy in tracing the problem of social discrimination back to the essential idea of original enlightenment in Zen Buddhism, while its fundamentalist adherence to rationalism might be regarded as overly excessive. Through their own interpretation of the gongan of Baizhang's meeting with a wild fox

(百丈野狐), they might be still regarded as maintaining their identity as Zen Buddhists, only emphasizing the thorough pursuit of causality without accepting any essential substance. While outside scholars including Sallie B. King and Peter N. Gregory object to Critical Buddhist scholars' probably somewhat narrow and prejudiced attack on the idea of original enlightenment, they also agree to their spirit of ethical criticism.

In short, the critique of Critical Buddhist scholars is important today, especially in that Japanese government still refuses to recognize the responsibility of Japan in its aggressive warfare in the first half of 20th century. Excessive rationalism, however, has also caused many problems in the modern world. As Lachs suggests, there should be a balance to rational thinking, which might be achieved by the pursuit of Zen wisdom with some caution to its mystification. From this perspective, contemporary Korean Buddhism might be regarded somewhat fortunate in that Korea has had no aggressive role in the modern world. Korean Buddhists have adhered to the spirit of Chinul, the actual founder of Korean Seon Buddhism in the middle of Goryeo dynasty, in that they have pursued the balance between rational thinking and Zen wisdom.

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