

The Definition of Being in *The Agama Sutras*

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Abstract

This article studies the definitions of “being” in both Eastern and Western, religious and philosophic worlds, including Western philosophy, the Kyoto School, the theory of Brahma-atma-aikya, Taoism and Buddhism, and also explores the crucial differences among them. Among these differences, the most critical one is, “Buddhism takes positivism (*positivus*) of empiricism as its kernel of definition. However, all other religions and philosophic systems claim that being cannot be recognized and realized.”

According to Buddha’s definition of being in *The Agama Sutras*, being has the meaning of the origin of the universe and life, and it is personally realizable for everybody. This kind of unique definition in Buddhism has lots of evidence in the Buddhist sutras and conforms to the Buddhist dependent-arising doctrine. This article concludes that the definition of being, which is personally realizable, has three necessary conditions. This paper also proposes three judging rules that can be really operated and provide the criteria to ascertain if someone personally realizes the origin of life or not. For those who want to personally realize the origin of life, these rules are very inspirational.

Regarding the key argument, the possibility of personally realizing the origin of life, this article outlines three important reasons to explain why philosophic scholars claim that being cannot be recognized and realized. Those reasons are,

1. The origin of the universe, which has the unlimitedness property, cannot be realized because the life and capability of human beings have their limitations.
2. The one that possesses the property of unlimitedness must be the origin of the universe.
3. Kant’s transcendental philosophy claimed that moral postulates themselves were enough to be the reasons to achieve rational religions, not necessarily based on the verification of facts.

The above three reasons are wrong because they all neglect the importance of the personal realization. *The Agama Sutras* bring up the definition of being from positivism and claim that all philosophic theories should return to the inspection by facts. This key subject will speed up the progress of the research in the religious and philosophic worlds.

Keywords: being, ontology, Brahma-atma-aikya, Kyoto School, transcendental philosophy, antinomy

1. Preface

“Ontology (Being),” as the number one philosophic topic of Western philosophy for more than two thousand years, has been proposed and defined by many famous philosophers with lots of theories. Nevertheless, for the phenomena of the universe and life that mankind faces, the truth for the origin of them should be unique. As one of the ancient oriental philosophic thought, what is the definition of “being” in Buddhism? This article hopes to propose the definition with operative meaning, supply new nourishment for both Eastern and Western philosophic thoughts, and direct the final destination for all lives.

At the beginning, “being” did not have the meaning that modern people now understand. It only had the meaning of “being/to be,” which is from the verb “*einai*”¹ of Greek. The Greek philosopher Parmenides (500 BC) expounded its generality through the general usage of this verb. He explained that the content of thought should use “to be” to express it and the object of thought is “being;” the content and the object of thought are the same thing. Parmenides defined that being possesses the characteristics of neither-arising-nor-ceasing, continuity and perfection; it has a fixed form of sphere and is the Principle (*arche/nature*)² of the universe.

Aristotle (384/3 – 322 BC) further extended its philosophic meaning and concluded the object of the first philosophy as “being.” “The philosophic meaning of ‘being’ is ‘substance’ (*ousia*) and every meaning of ‘substance’ can be obtained through the analysis on the logical function of the copula ‘be.’”³ There are three logical functions of the word “be”:

- (1) It is a copulative word of judgment. ... “S is P.” S is a subject and P is a predicate, and they need the linking verb “is” to become a judging statement.
- (2) It is a subject itself. ... For example, in English, “S is.” means “There is S.” ... When S does not have any predicate, the verb “is” means S itself.
- (3) The concept to be defined equals the definition itself. Its format is “S is Df.” ... A definition statement is different from a judging statement. The predicate of a judgment expresses its subject, and the positions of the subject and its predicate in the sentence are not interchangeable. ... On the other hand, the position of the subject to be defined and its definition are interchangeable with no change in meaning.⁴

Each of these three functions corresponds to one of the following three philosophic meanings of “being”:

- (1) Substance versus attribute

From the form of a judgment “S is P,” we can categorize the subject and the predicate into

¹ The bold italics stand for Greek.

² Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, pp.25-28.

³ Same as above, p.105.

⁴ Same as above, pp.104-105.

two logical groups—the subject belonging to the group of “substance” and the predicate belonging to the group of “attribute.”

(2) The first substance versus the second substance

“Is” refers to the S itself, “this one,” which is the first substance. A specific thing is the first substance. Attribute and category of that specific thing is the second substance. “This one” expresses the existence of the specific thing which “being” points out, and thus brings up the meaning of “existence.”

(3) The first substance⁵ versus definition

The logical form of definition expresses the equality relationship between the subject and the definition. The definition expresses “what it is” (*ti estin*) or “essence” which is in fact the substance itself.⁶

Aristotle thought the world was constructed by three categories of substances: “The first category is the moving substances that are impermanent. The second category is the moving substances that are permanent. The third category is the non-moving substance that is permanent. The first category is the objects on the earth. The second category is celestial bodies. Both of these substances are made of structures and materials. They are perceptible and concrete physical things. The third category of substances, although individual, is imperceptible and does not contain any materials. It does not belong to the empirical world but is the holy substance in theology research. It is called as “god (*theos*).”

Aristotle’s concept regarding god has three levels of meaning: “First, the non-moving pusher or the first pusher; second, pure form or pure activity (*entelecheia*); third, pure thought or the thought of thought (*noesis noeseos*). ... Pure thought cannot have any external object; otherwise, it will pursue an external target. Therefore, god is a thinking substance and thinks himself permanently. The activity of god is the activity of thought. As for the question of why the activity of thought by god himself can be the pushing power of the motion of physical substances, it is a puzzle.”⁷

“‘Being’ has the widest scope and is at the highest level, and everything is included in it. Only the first philosophy studies ‘being’ itself and its essence or attributes. The other sciences study merely part of ‘being’ or its some properties, but not all.”⁸

From here, Western philosophy starts the study of “being,” explores the philosophic

⁵ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, p.110. “Aristotle distinguished the substance from the real substance. He said, ‘The substance is an internal form. Both the form and material are the origin of the real substance.’ The former is the substance in logic sense, i.e., the expression of definition; the latter is the substance with real meaning, i.e., the moving things in the experienced world.”

⁶ Same as above, pp.105-108.

⁷ Same as above, p.111.

⁸ Same as above, p.104.

proposition that if the origin of the universe exists, and builds up the content of contemporary philosophic thought—“being.”⁹

Influenced by the propagation of Christianity, Deism, regarded as the origin by Greek natural philosophy, was given the meaning of human characteristic. The philosophic proposition of exploring the origin of the universe was Christianized as the proposition of exploring “the existence of God.” Aristotle regarded the god as the existent, permanent and non-moving substance, the non-moving pusher or the first pusher. But the god does not belong to the empirical world and is the holy substance of theological research. He cannot be perceived by human sense organs and proved by experience. Any other substances except the god are existent and physically sensible by mankind. The meaning of existence includes the god that is not provable and all the other things that are provable.

The Western philosophy inherits Aristotle’s non-empirical ontology and has three basic methods to prove the existence of God as follows:

- (1) With conceptual deduction, to prove that the existence is exactly the being

St. Anselm (1033 – 1109) said, “God is real being because He has all the perfect attributes, and the real existence has better perfection than the conceptual existence.”

- (2) To prove the existence of God by the requirements of human or the rational religious moral fulfillment

For example, for the purpose of moral fulfillment, Voltaire (1694 – 1778) said, “We must create a God; even He does not exist.” “The whole natural world tells us loudly that God does exist.”¹⁰ Kant (1724 – 1804) made a postulate, which was the requirement of moral fulfillment for the rational religions, to prove that God exists.

- (3) To prove the existence of God by belief

We can only believe in the existence of God because the unlimitedness property of God cannot be proved with the limitedness of human beings.

In the first method, St. Anselm’s theory can also prove that the empirical ontology is better than the non-empirical ontology. It is because, for the human beings, the essence and attribute that can be proved is more perfect than that cannot be proved. Nevertheless, there is no true empirical ontology in the Western philosophy.¹¹

⁹ “Being” has some different definitions. In this article, the phrase “the being of Principle” will be used for the definition of being in Buddhism, which has the meaning of Principle, so as to distinguish it from the being without the meaning of Principle.

¹⁰ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, p.375.

¹¹ William P. Alston, “*The Perception of God*,” *The Existence of God*, ed. by Richard M. Gale and Alexander R. Pruss, Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate/Dartmouth, c2003, pp.429-458. In this article, the positivism stands for the objective and consistent facts. Although Revelationism and the Miracle Theory claim that someone can see or hear the response from God, those proofs are not consistent, especially in message form. Furthermore, none of the proofs can confirm that the response is from God.

The perceptions on God, which are inconsistent and with speculations, conflict with the uniqueness of God if all those

In the second method, the claim, due to the need of human beings, that God is created provides the counterevidence on “God creating human beings.” Therefore Feuerbach (1804 – 1872) said, “At first, those people who did not have knowledge and will created God in their image. And then this God who had knowledge and will created human beings in His image.”¹² Kant’s demonstration of moral postulate just confirms the argument that God is not provable. God can only exist through the unchallengeable and authoritative postulate set by human beings.

In the third method, the concept of limitedness and unlimitedness in number, that is used to identify the attribute of human beings and the origin of the universe respectively, is taken to be the basis to prove that human beings cannot experience the origin of the universe. This concept inherits “the theory of numbers being the origin” from Greece. By contrast, Buddhist scholar Nishida (1870 – 1945), the founder of Japanese Kyoto School, thought, “The so-called pure experience is the mind-consciousness which is not objectified, is real self at that time, and exceeds time, space and any perceptive decision. This is an instant, instinctive and secret mind-consciousness. This state of mind-consciousness is called Place. The mind-consciousness at that time is empty and has nothing at all. Therefore, it is also the place of absolute nothingness. This is exactly Ultimate Reality.”¹³ “The mind-consciousness relates to the predicate, and the subject means the thing that the mind-consciousness points to. When the scope of the predicate (Place) extends continuously, it means that the mind-consciousness can incorporate those things related to the subject more completely. Theoretically, this scope can be extended unlimitedly and thus the content of the mind-consciousness can approach the unlimitedness.”¹⁴ Therefore, “the mind-consciousness can be regarded as the unique reality.”¹⁵ “Everything or being is contained in the place of absolute nothingness.”¹⁶ “The integration power of pure experience has its metaphysical origin and thus can be called unlimitedness.”¹⁷ “Our God must be the internal integration power of the universe; He makes celestial bodies and the Earth in motion, and breeds everything on them; there is no one except God can have this power.”¹⁸ Nishida claimed that the mind-consciousness has unlimitedness property and that human beings can personally realize the pure experience of mind-consciousness. But he neglected the following teachings of Buddha Sakyamuni, who is the founder of Buddhism: “All arising-and-ceasing dharmas are the dependent-arising dharmas and must depend on other conditions for arising. The

claims are true. In addition, if God is almighty, He should deliver some methods to us to prove His permanency. But there is no such a kind of demonstration till now. It is completely different from the viewpoint in this article, which provides some verifiable judging principles to prove the “permanency.” Therefore, the evidence of both Revelationism and the Miracle Theory does not have the positivist meaning.

¹² Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Substance of Christianity*, trans. by Rong Zhenhua, Commercial Press Limited (Beijing), 1995, p.167.

¹³ Wu Rujun, *The Philosophy of Absolute Nothingness*, Taiwan Commercial Press Limited (Taipei), 2001, p.17.

¹⁴ Same as above, pp.18-19.

¹⁵ Same as above, p.16.

¹⁶ Same as above, p.20.

¹⁷ Same as above, p.14.

¹⁸ Same as above, p.15.

mind-consciousness, which was born in this life, is exactly an arising-and-ceasing dharma with the nature of dependent-arising and is thus impossible to be the origin of the universe.” As for the origin of the universe with the integration of pure experiences, Nishida thought that it was impossible to be understood and regarded it as the object that was similar to God, who cannot be experienced in Western philosophy.

These kinds of claims regard the mind-consciousness with unlimited nature as the unique reality from the point that human beings, with the limitation of life, cannot realize God who possesses the unlimitedness property, or the point that the mind-consciousness has the unlimitedness property because it can exceed time and space. If the mind-consciousness is the unique reality, it should be the origin of the universe. Nevertheless, these kinds of claims not only violate the basic doctrine of Buddhism but also are inconsistent with common sense and medical facts. Therefore they must additionally set up God, who cannot be experienced and proved, as the origin of the universe. They think the human beings are restricted by the limitation set up by themselves, and based on the assumed unlimitedness, making conjectured arguments that violates the facts. Are these the rational objective discourses that the philosophy flaunts?

In Eastern philosophy, the theory of Brahma-atma-aikya in Upanisads of ancient India developed the thought of Original Human (Purusa) from the imaginative “*tad ekan*” of the four kinds of *vedas*. It was thought the whole universe is a real Original Human who never dies. Each part of his body is one part of the universe and all phenomena. He lives in the heaven as well as pervades all small empty space of human hearts. Therefore, the inherent nature of human, the small universe, equals that of Origin Human, the large universe. Evolving from Brahmanas to Upanisads, the rationale finally became, “Brahma is the unique reality and the lord of the whole world. Everything is developed from Brahma and everything is the body of Brahma. Everything dwells in Brahma and each keeps its self-appearance of Brahma. Thus, when extinguished, everything will return to Brahma. On the other hand, ‘self’ (*āman*) means the mind-consciousness, going through consciousness state, dream state, sound sleep state to death state, gradually changes from the non-free state that is constrained by outside environment to the absolute state of the most freedom and pleasure by exceeding the constraint.¹⁹ ‘Brahma’ is the original permanent existence and pure subjective substance that departs from relativity. It is not an object to be recognized.”²⁰

From the theory of Brahma-atma-aikya, we can find the theoretical origin of the Kyoto School. Both regard the free state of the mind-consciousness as the unique reality. But considering the fact that the mind-consciousness possesses the nature of arising-and-ceasing, both theories cannot help but connect the mind-consciousness to the unrecognizable “Brahma” or “God,” who pervades the

¹⁹ Huang Chanhua, *A Historic Outline of Indian Philosophy, Modern Buddhist Study Series*, Vol. 22, Maitreya Publishing Co. (Taipei), 1983, pp.13-35. For the “self” of Brahma-atma-aikya, there are three sayings of three stages, four stages and five treasures. In this article, the saying of four stages is used.

²⁰ Same as above, pp.36-37.

whole universe. Brahma-atma-aikya was the background environment when Buddhism developed, and the Kyoto School developed from the theory of Buddhism. Since *The Agama Sutras* are the most important documents that can stand for the Buddhist doctrines, is there any similar theoretical structure in those sutras?

In Eastern philosophy, Taoism, belonging to China originally, regards Lao-tzu's *The Classic of the Way and Virtue (Tao Te Ching)* as the highest guideline for the definition of "being." Lao-tzu brought up the theory that "Tao" is the natural rule that keeps everything in the universe continuously operating from the very beginning to the future. "The appearance of Tao is distraint," represents the indescribable and unrealizable nature of Tao. Therefore, Chinese Taoism also thinks that the origin of the universe cannot be recognized through experience.

What is the definition of "being" that Buddha, the Buddhism founder, claimed? Is the discussion of the highest level of philosophy only the conceptual inference? The limitedness of human beings is really the restriction that human cannot go beyond? Is unlimitedness property the really effective criterion to verify the origin of the universe?

2. The definition of being and nothingness

Before discussing the definition of the being of Principle, we must understand Buddha's definition on "being" and "nothingness" that does not have the meaning of origin. *The Kindred Sayings (Samyuktagama)*, Vol. 2, Sutra 37, states,

At that time, the World-honored One told the bhiksus, "I do not argue with the mundane people, but they argue with me. Why? Bhiksus! The one who speaks according to the dharma does not argue with the mundane people. Therefore, the mundane wise say it is being; I say it is being as well. What is 'The mundane wise say it is being; I say it is being as well'? Bhiksus! Form is an impermanent, bitter and changeable dharma; the mundane wise say it is being; I say it is being as well. Similarly, sensation, perception, formation or consciousness is an impermanent, bitter and changeable dharma; the mundane wise say it is being; I say it is being as well. The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well. Form is permanent, everlasting, unchangeable and truly dwelling. The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well. Sensation, perception, formation or consciousness is permanent, everlasting, unchangeable, and truly dwelling. The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well. This is the meaning of 'The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well.' Bhiksus! I expound to the people what I have personally realized and perceived in the world and the mundane dharmas; it is not my fault that those blind persons cannot know or see it."²¹

The sutra at first explains that Buddha did not argue with the mundane people but the

²¹ *Taisho Tripitaka*, Vol. 2, p.8.

mundane people argued with Buddha. It is because Buddha's saying is "according to the dharma." The modern meaning of "the saying according to the dharma" is "saying something according to the fact or appropriately saying the real truth about all dharmas." The real truth of the fact is simplified as the "reality." If anyone simply describes the real truth of the fact, for sure he does not argue with others; it is because any other person who really recognizes the truth will describe the truth of the fact in the same way. Therefore, "the real truth of the fact" is the unique criterion to evaluate if the saying is true or not. It is the basis of the personal realization.

Subsequently, the sutra explains Buddha's standpoint that He just followed the mundane people's sayings and did not conflict with their mundane meanings. He said, "The mundane wise say it is being; I say it is being as well. ... The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well." We must notice that when Buddha said the word of "the mundane wise," at the same time, He meant Buddha Himself was "the supra-mundane wise person." It also reflects the difference of insight between Buddha and the mundane wise is in fact the difference between "the supra-mundane wise" and "the mundane wise."

Buddha said that He just followed the mundane wise to say "being" for the appearance of the changeable impermanent five aggregates (*skandhas*). Anything that appears will disappear in the future. The mundane wise always called the production and existence of things as "being." Buddha pointed out that the term "being" was contradictory but He followed that term to teach the mundane people. Thus, it manifested Buddha's definition for "being": in terms of the scope that the mundane people can recognize to define it.

Buddha also said that there was permanency in the disappearance of the five aggregates and He just followed the mundane wise to say "nothingness." Something disappeared could be reborn later on, so there should be permanency that could generate things. The mundane wise always called the disappearance of things as "nothingness." Buddha pointed out that the term "nothingness" was contradictory, but He just followed conditions to teach the mundane persons with nothingness. Thus, it manifested Buddha's definition for "nothingness": in terms of the scope that the mundane people can recognize to define it, but not to use the term "permanency," which could generate things but the mundane wise cannot recognize it, to define "nothingness."

Buddha thought that it was contradictory that the mundane wise called "being" or "nothingness" according to the production or extinction of things. But in order not to conflict with the mundane wise on those wordy definitions, He just followed their terms of "being" or "nothingness" to define the same scope accordingly. Therefore, the definitions of "being" or "nothingness" here had the same scopes with those the mundane wise defined.

The meaning of "being" in Buddhism has the same meaning of "the world." The world can roughly be categorized as "three kinds of being," i.e., "the being of desire realm," "the being of

form realm” and “the being of formless realm.” Sometimes it can also be categorized as “twenty-five kinds of being.” Buddhism categorizes the world into different kinds of being, and explains those differences and the reasons of formation.

On the other hand, what is the meaning of “nothingness?” Basically, it has three meanings:

- (1) There is “no” “three kinds of being” or “twenty-five kinds of being” before the production of them.
- (2) There is “no” “three kinds of being” or “twenty-five kinds of being” in the extinction of them.
- (3) Anything, for example, “the turtle’s hair or the rabbit’s horn” as Buddha mentioned, that does not exist in the past, present and future time is called “nothingness.”

For the first and the second meanings of “nothingness,” which define things before the production or in the extinction as “nothingness,” do these meanings really define “nothingness?” Are they the same as the third meaning, which defines the things that do not appear all the time as “nothingness?” All things of three or twenty-five kinds of being will cease to exist finally; after they have disappeared or before they have been created, can we call them as “being” during that period? These situations are the contradiction of “being” or “nothingness” that the mundane wise defined and had been criticized by Buddha. The modern scholars have mentioned such kind of contradiction too. For example, the modern scholar C. J. F. Williams thinks that the proposition of “Socrates exists,” is in fact embedded in the proposition of both “Socrates no longer exists,” and “Socrates might have never existed.”²²

The meaning of “being or nothingness” that Buddha defined above is similar to the definition of “being” in contemporary philosophy regardless if it includes the meaning of origin or not. It is because being or nothingness is defined based on the phenomena of arising-and-ceasing. That is the scope that all ancient and modern mundane wise people (including both Eastern and Western philosophers and religionists) can reach. There is an implicit meaning in the above statement. It is, “The hypotheses, theories or inferences on the being with the meaning of origin brought up by ancient or modern mundane wise people are all covered in the scope of ‘being or nothingness.’” The reason is that all the mundane wise can only observe the arising-and-ceasing dharmas, which are called either being or nothingness contradictorily. All the hypotheses, theories or inferences they proposed belong to the scope of “being or nothingness” of arising-and-ceasing. That is to say, it is “nothingness” before they bring up those hypotheses, theories or inferences; it is “being” after they bring up them; then after the environment of human beings is destroyed, everything becomes

²² C. J. F. Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth*, Oxford, O. U. P., 1992, pp.28-30. “Lord Hailsham no longer exists,” means “It used to be the case that (Lord Hailsham exists), but it is not now the case that (Lord Hailsham exists).” And “Amy Williams might never have existed,” means “It might have been the case that it was always not the case that (Amy Williams exists).” The statement of “A does not exist,” will become meaningless except the statement of “A exists,” is meaningful.

“nothingness.”

The scope of being or nothingness they defined is the same as the scope of dependent-arising dharmas too. It is because the definition of dependent-arising is “the being of this causing the being of that, and the vanishing of this causing the vanishing of that” for every dharma, which still belongs to the arising-and-ceasing dharmas. The dependent-arising dharmas are in fact the existence, being or nothingness that the mundane wise state.²³ Then, what is the difference about the definition of being between the supra-mundane wise person Buddha and the other mundane wise? What is Buddha’s definition of “being” that has the meaning of Principle?

3. The definition of the being of Principle

The Kindred Sayings (Samyuktagama), Sutra 37, states that, in the five changeable aggregates, there is a “permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller,”²⁴ which is the content of Buddha’s “self perception.” Buddha identified and expounded it to the mundane people with the hope that they could perceive it as well. Nevertheless, the mundane people, like blind ones, could not know and observe the “permanent, everlasting, unchangeable truly dwelling dharma,” which Buddha said. That was not Buddha’s fault.

The sutras states, “Form is permanent, everlasting, unchangeable and truly dwelling. The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well. Sensation, perception, formation or consciousness is permanent, everlasting, unchangeable, and truly dwelling. The mundane wise say it is nothingness; I say it is nothingness as well.” The mundane wise can only observe the dharma of arising-and-ceasing. Therefore, they call the complete extinction of the five aggregates as “nothingness.” But in fact, in the extinction of the five aggregates, there still exists the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller rather than complete nothingness. These statements illustrate the property of permanent existence of the true dweller.

Nevertheless, that the true dweller exists permanently was personally realized and known by Buddha Himself, not just a speculation or a guess. This kind of personal realization is not for Buddha only; Buddha had preached and illustrated the true dweller in the sutras and the practitioners can, through practicing accordingly, personally realize the same true dweller too. If the true dweller could be personally realized by Buddha only, it would be unnecessary “to preach and illustrate it to other people.” If it were ever true, there should not be Buddha who practiced from an ordinary human being; Buddha should come from the Caste system that proclaimed,

²³ The mundane wise think they have addressed the exploration of Principle; but from Buddha’s definition, that thought is only their imagination or speculation, still in the scope of being or nothingness.

²⁴ “Permanency” means neither-arising-nor-ceasing; that represents that It is not produced by the dependent-arising dharmas and has existed since the beginningless eons. “Everlasting” means permanent existing, never to be destroyed and having diamond-like nature. “Unchangeability” means Its attributes and functions of the substance never change. “True dwelling” means It continues to exist in every instant and never stops; It is also called “Original dwelling.”

“Human beings should be human beings permanently, and Buddha should be Buddha permanently.”

However, Buddha claimed that all sentient beings are equal and the Caste system was wrong. He claimed human beings could become buddhas through practice. Owing to compassion, He taught and illustrated the dharma of becoming a buddha²⁵ to other people with the hope that they could personally realize the true dweller as well. Therefore, the definition of the being of Principle is, “The permanent, everlasting and unchangeable ‘true dweller’ hides in the arising-and-ceasing phenomena of the five aggregates and Buddha had personally realized it; according to Buddha’s teachings, anyone can also personally realize the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable ‘true dweller.’” According to the definition of the being of Principle, the true dweller needs three necessary conditions for qualification:

Condition 1:

There is “the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller” in the extinction of the five aggregates. It means there is the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller coexisting with the five aggregates. It continues to exist even after the five aggregates disappear. This necessary condition leads to the following three judging rules.

Rule 1-A, the judging rule of “permanency”

The true dweller still exists in the extinction of the five aggregates. By the fact that the true dweller exists, and that we cannot find any time when it disappears through inferring forward or backward in time,²⁶ we can prove the true dweller is neither arising nor ceasing.

Rule 1-B, the judging rule of “non-aggregate”

The true dweller coexists with the five aggregates. The five aggregates are arising and ceasing, but the true dweller is neither arising nor ceasing. They have completely different attributes. The true dweller is definitely not the five aggregates.

Rule 1-C, the judging rule of “not-off-aggregate”

What that does not coexist with the five aggregates is not the defined true dweller.

Condition 2:

Buddha personally realized the attributes and functions of the true dweller through His “self perception,” not realizing it through other people.

²⁵ Personal realization of the true dweller is a prerequisite to become a buddha. The sutras will be cited later.

²⁶ *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*, Vol. 25, *Taisho Tripitaka*, Vol. 30, p.419. “What is the verification of a theory? It means the theory of all aggregates being impermanent and the things produced by conditions being bitter, empty and selfless can be really observed through the three-ways-of-knowing. Through the three-ways-of-knowing by ultimate teachings, personal experience and logical inference, one can verify the theory.” Therefore, the logical inference is a way of verification.

Condition 3:

Through Buddha's various kinds of teachings and illustrations, anyone is likely to "perceive" the attributes and functions of the true dweller.

The followings are further details of the above rules (starting with Rule 1-B for logical sequence):

Rule 1-B, the judging rule of "non-aggregate"

One must distinguish the true dweller from the five aggregates through their completely different attributes that the five aggregates are perishable, but the true dweller is not; therefore, the true dweller is definitely not the five aggregates. This is an important operative definition. The true dweller can be verified only when one thoroughly understands the content of the five aggregates. It is because the mundane wise can only recognize the arising-and-ceasing dharmas; the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller is merely recognized by Buddha Himself. It is the most important topic for the Buddhist learners to understand the content of the five aggregates. Without knowing the content, one will misunderstand the true dweller completely. This explains why there are lots of repeated explanations on the content of the five aggregates in *The Agama Sutras*. After completely understanding the content of the five aggregates, one can observe that the five aggregates of any sentient being in the three realms are perishable. None of them conform to the non-perishable attribute that the true dweller has.

Rule 1-A, the judging rule of "permanency"

If one finds the true dweller in the extinction of the five aggregates, one can infer that the true dweller is not perishable. It is because, under that situation, one can infer that the true dweller will definitely coexist with the five aggregates if the five aggregates still exist. In addition, one can infer backward in time that the five aggregates in the womb or even in one's previous life definitely coexisted with the true dweller. One can further infer forward that the five aggregates of one's next life will coexist with the true dweller too. Therefore, one can make the conclusion that the true dweller exists permanently. If the five aggregates had been extinguished and the true dweller had been extinguished too, the life would become nihilistic; thus from the beginningless past time till the present time, all lives should have ceased totally.

Rule 1-C, the judging rule of "not-off-aggregate"

That means the true dweller coexists with the five aggregates. The importance of this rule is that the true dweller possesses the important function to produce the five aggregates. Therefore the five aggregates must coexist with the true dweller so that this functionality can be accomplished. The arising-and-ceasing dharmas depend on other conditions and do

not have their own natures. How can the five aggregates, without their own natures, be produced by themselves? It will be proved later, based on the sutras, that the five aggregates and the twelve links of dependent-arising are all produced by the true dweller. Thus the true dweller must coexist with the five aggregates so that the functions of the true dweller can be manifested.

In Condition 2, the true dweller is recognized through the way of Buddha's "self perception." Perception is the functions of the six consciousnesses like seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, etc. And the true dweller is the object of the perception. In other words, the true dweller can be recognized through the functions of the six consciousnesses. Someone may call that as "direct observation,"²⁷ "personal realization" or "secret experience."²⁸ But if we combine Condition 2 and 3, i.e., anyone can achieve the same realization as Buddha's through following Buddha's teachings and practicing correctively, the term of "secret experience" is not proper wording at all. For example, durian is called "the king of fruits" in south Asia. Before it was imported into Taiwan, there were many contradictory statements about the properties of durian. Someone said it is tasty, but some others said it is disgusting; someone said it is good to health, but some others said it is not. It was really a secret experience about the taste and the understanding of durian for the people living in Taiwan. But after durian had been imported, anyone can understand its taste with eating it. Through eating it frequently, Taiwanese people can gradually understand its properties and the "secret experience" disappears. Therefore, it is incorrect to define the experience that all or some people can personally realize as the "secret experience." It is also improper to use the term "secret experience" as the reason of negation for the philosophical research, which explores everything of the universe. Using these kinds of reasons to exclude Buddha's realization from the philosophical research is somehow arbitrary.

Furthermore, the true dweller is permanent and the object of perception. Except the true dweller, there is no other substance in this world. The definition of the substance is, "The entity that can be personally realized and can exist permanently independent of any other things." The true dweller possesses the attributes of permanency, everlasting and unchangeability. Based on the proposition of "Socrates exists," the proposition of "the existence of the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller" is always true. The true dweller is not produced through giving it any attributes.²⁹ The true dweller has existed since the beginningless eons, even before the

²⁷ Same as Footnote 26, personal experience is another way of verification.

²⁸ Feng Yulan, *The History of Chinese Philosophy*, Taiwan Commercial Press Limited (Taipei), 2002, p.4. Feng Yulan thinks the state of Buddha's realization is "unable to be told," and thus is "non-philosophy." But in fact there are the reasons for being "unable to be told." It is arbitrary to conclude Buddha's realization as non-philosophy based on being "unable to be told." Further explanation will be provided in this article to clarify it.

²⁹ One of the propositions of "being" in analytic philosophy is that the being of a class requires the property of that class is instantiated at least once. For example, "an elephant exists," means "the property to become an elephant is instantiated at least once." This proposition is defined according to the dependant-arising dharmas with arising-and-ceasing nature, but not for the true dweller, which is not produced with some properties. The true dweller has existed since the beginningless eons and is the origin of all dharmas. It is "the original dweller" rather than the produced object.

existence of the Earth and the universe, and will continue to exist forever. Therefore, this proposition is true forever. The permanent truth of the proposition is not because the proposition itself is tautology; it is because the true dweller is a kind of substance possessing the attribute of permanency that can let the like of the proposition of “Socrates exists,” be always true, and leave alone the implicit contradiction of that proposition. Such a substance—the true dweller—that makes the proposition always true is exactly Buddha’s definition of the being with Principle meaning. In order to avoid the confusion of language, Buddha usually substitutes the words “non-arising,” “non-ceasing” or “neither arising nor ceasing” for the “being” with Principle meaning.

By contrast, the five aggregates—form, sensation, perception, formation and consciousness—are all changeable and dependently arising-and-ceasing dharmas, not the substance at all. For example, the form aggregate is called material by modern people. Although material is the real sensible object for human beings, it is proved, through modern science, that material is composed of smaller units. What is the smallest unit of material? There is no conclusion till now. But we can assure that material is not the necessary requirement of life;³⁰ neither is it the origin of life. It is because that the combination of material only cannot create life. As for the other four aggregates—sensation, perception, formation and consciousness, they all belong to the dependently arising-and-ceasing mental dharmas, not the substance either.

Some scholars wrongly think, “The difference between the life theory of Buddhism and other mundane life theories is that although the life theory of Buddhism states the fact of transmigration of life, it completely denies, in the process of transmigration, the existence of ‘self,’ which individually and independently exists and is a permanent, everlasting and unchangeable substance.”³¹ This kind of statements contradicts above Buddha’s definition and misunderstands the definition of “self” in *The Agama Sutras*. Firstly, according to Buddha’s teachings in the sutras and historic facts, the major difference between Buddhism and other mundane theories is that Buddhism claims the origin of the universe is personally realizable; and there are lots of historic records on the realization of Buddhist learners. Nevertheless, all the other mundane wise claim that the origin of the universe is not realizable; they can only speculate on or imagine it. Secondly, in this article, a passage in *The Kindred Sayings (Samyuktagama)*, Sutra 37, is cited to prove the difference between the five aggregates and the permanent unchangeable true dweller. In addition, another indirect evidence is that *The Kindred Sayings* is also called *The Self Sutra*.³² Due to the

³⁰ The sentient beings of the formless realm do not have the form, i.e., not possess physical bodies. Therefore, material is not a prerequisite for life.

³¹ Shi Zhaohui, *I Think as Such*, Dongchu Publishing Co. (Taipei), 1990, p.160.

³² Shi Yinshun, *A General Assembly of Sutras and Treatises about “The Kindred Sayings,”* Vol. 1, Zhengwen Publishing Co. (Taipei), pp.22, 143-159. “The sequence of *The Kindred Sayings* is rearranged. Sutra 37 of this sutra corresponds to Sutra 149 of *Aggregate Corresponding*. According to the new sequence and the comparison of the praise (self, insignificance, seed, cease, five turns, seven, two attachments, perception and the food of aggregates), this sutra is called *The Self Sutra*.”

misunderstanding that the “self” is restricted to the five aggregates, most people make the following mistakes: (1) Being aware of a “self” existing, and (2) Imaging this “self” exists permanently. From the previous definition, we know the five aggregates, which the mundane wise understand, are arising-and-ceasing dharmas. They perceive there is a “self” in the arising-and-ceasing dharmas of the five aggregates (i.e., the self-view). But if we analyze this perceptive “self,” it is in fact the functions of the mind-consciousness, which is illusory with the nature of arising-and-ceasing. Nevertheless the mundane wise imagine that this illusory, arising-and-ceasing “self” is permanent (i.e., regarding non-self as self). They do not think that the true dweller, which still exists in the extinction of the five aggregates, is the permanent and everlasting “self” (i.e., regarding self as non-self). That is exactly the “topsy-turvy on self,” one of the four kinds of topsy-turvy. The Buddhist sound-hearer dharma is to observe and confirm, in the arising-and-ceasing dharmas of the five aggregates, that there is no truly permanent dharma in each of the five aggregates, and thus to eliminate the “self-view” so as to achieve the realization of “no-self.” Although realizing the no-self dharma, those practitioners do not negate the existence of the “self” with permanent, everlasting and unchangeable substance.

One must notice that the true dweller is the permanent “self,” and it is completely different from the human perceptive arising-and-ceasing “self,” which comes from the function of the consciousness aggregate. The latter is illusory arising-and-ceasing dharma, and thus called “non-self” or “no-self.” The former is the permanent “self,”³³ which the mundane people can only imagine or speculate on, but Buddha can identify and show it to the mundane people. Therefore, the real meaning of the true dweller, which is defined as the being of Principle, is the substance that exists individually and independently with the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable natures during the process of each sentient being’s transmigration. It will be further analyzed later if this permanent true dweller has the property of Brahma-self or Divine-self.³⁴

Another meaning of Condition 2 is that Buddha Himself is the first person that attained personal realization. Is Buddha’s such proclamation a kind of “arrogance?” The proclamation can be considered to be arrogance only when it is not the fact and is exaggerated. If one speaks according to the fact, he is not arrogant because anyone will state the same fact. Together with Condition 3 that Buddha said anyone can personally realize the true dweller as He did, Condition 2 is thus not arrogance at all. In the preface of this article, it has mentioned that both Eastern and Western philosophic theories claim that the origin of the universe is unperceivable, but Buddha claimed that it is perceivable and many of His followers had perceived it. Thus, Condition 2 is a

³³ “The self” is another name of the true dweller. Although Buddha said that there is no self in the five aggregates, it does not matter to call the true dweller as “the self.”

³⁴ Shi Yinshun, *A Study on Tathagatagarbha*, Zhengwen Publishing Co. (Taipei), 1981, p.41. Shi Yinshun thought that *tathagata* is an alias of Divine-self, and both *tathagatadhatu* and *tathagatagarbha* relate to *tathagata*. Thus when discussing “self,” one should pay attention to the saying of Tathagatagarbha, which has the implication of Divine-self.

statement that is an objective statement that conforms to the fact, and it is thus not arrogance. This also responds to the term “speaking according to the dharma,” which has the objective meaning of stating the real fact.

Based on Conditions 2 and 3, we know Buddha and any other personal realizers must have the same conclusion on the attributes and functions of the true dweller. The records in the sutras also include many important attributes and functions of the true dweller, which can be used as the criteria to verify future practitioners’ realization. Due to this reason, the sutras are also called the Saint’s Teachings.³⁵ In order to identify if someone does realize the true dweller or not, Buddha intentionally kept some important attributes and functions of the true dweller in secret. Then, from the personal realizer’s descriptions on the attributes and functions of the true dweller, He could judge if that realizer attained the true enlightenment or not. The reserved portions are exactly the content that “should not be said” and the “Tathagata’s secret”³⁶ stated in the sutras. The “verification” process in the Zen School of China at a later time exactly followed the similar judgment of Buddha.

Some scholars wrongly think, “The sutras do not have any theory. It only states some views on the mundane affairs, but does not have any theory for the views to become a philosophy. Therefore, we usually do not treat Buddhist sutras as philosophic literature. By contrast, the treatises are totally different. There are plenty of strict rationales in the treatises to support the views or concepts in the sutras. Only the theories that have many supported rationales can be qualified as a philosophy.”³⁷ This kind of understanding ignores the meaning of “speaking according to the dharma.” The purpose of philosophy is to explore the truth of the universe, and the truth is based on the fact. However, the observing capability of human beings is restricted to the arising-and-ceasing dharmas only so that lots of misunderstanding has been generated. In order to correct those misunderstanding, the sutras state “the views on mundane affairs” according to the fact, with the implication of “absolutely consistent descriptions” on the truth of the origin of the universe. All these “absolutely consistent descriptions” direct to the definition of the being of Principle and consist of the core doctrine of Buddhism. By this way the Buddhist sutras construct the theory and demonstrations. On the other hand, philosophy cannot bring up the definite proof on the origin of the universe till now and make an excuse that it is unperceivable. Because the Buddhist sutras have brought up the definite theory and demonstrations on the origin of the universe, all Buddhist treatises must base on this definition of the being of Principle and should not violate it. Otherwise, the rationale will not consist with the fact. It is because the definition of the

³⁵ Same as Note 26, Buddha’s sayings are the ultimate teachings. The sutras recorded Buddha’s doctrine and are a kind of verification.

³⁶ *Avgulimaliyasutra*, Vol. 4, *Taisho Tripitaka*, Vol. 2, p. 539. “Tathagata’s secret.”

³⁷ Wu Rujun, *A Study of Philosophy in Nagarjuna’s “Treatise on the Middle-Way,”* Taiwan Commercial Press Limited (Taipei), 2004, p.7.

being of Principle is personally realizable and conforms to the fact. If any theory or demonstration contradicts the fact, i.e., “speaking not according to the dharma,” it cannot be called a philosophy since the purpose of philosophy is to explain the fact. The sutras explain the mundane affairs according to the fact, “speaking according to the dharma,” and conform to the purpose of philosophy. These sutras definitely are qualified as philosophy and even exceed it. Perhaps the philosophic researchers should make self-examinations on this topic. The importance that the theory or demonstrations should conform to the fact will be discussed in further detail afterward.

From the previous three necessary conditions for the being of Principle and the definition of “being and nothingness,” we can very clearly distinguish the definition of “the being of Principle” from that of “being and nothingness,” which does not have the meaning of origin. Both sets are completely incompatible with each other and each has its specific strict definition. The true dweller has the permanent attribute and is a perceivable substance. It is definitely different from the five aggregates, which is arising-and-ceasing, and temporarily exists or does not exist. Therefore, according to the definition, the permanent unchangeable true dweller is “neither being nor nothingness.” That is to say, “being” is a set of collection of things that are produced with conditions, but the true dweller is another set not produced with any conditions. Hence the true dweller is not “being” (non-being). On the other hand, the true dweller is an understandable and realizable permanent substance; it is not in the set of “nothingness” (non-nothingness). The true dweller is not an arising-and-ceasing dharma and must be “neither being nor nothingness.” The term of “neither being nor nothingness” completely conform to the modern concept of set. It has totally nothing to do with the “negation principle.”³⁸

In summary, Buddha’s definition of the being of Principle in *The Agama Sutras* is an epochal view in all ages. For quite a long time, the Eastern and Western philosophic researchers have thought, “The criterion to judge a kind of knowledge to be or not to be a science depends on if this knowledge is a deductive system or not, rather than on how the premise of the deductive system can be recognized and proved.”³⁹ Therefore, philosophers set up many different kinds of premises and deduct many different kinds of origin of the universe, but all cannot be proved. On the other hand, *The Agama Sutras* make an inquiry based on the fact with positivist spirit and proclaim that anyone can personally realize it. This kind of actual verification has its consistency because it is a confirmation of the fact.

The reason why the modern natural science progresses so fast is the introduction of

³⁸ Wu Rujun, *The Methodology of Buddhist Research*, Taiwan Student Book Co. (Taipei), 1996, pp.445-450. Abe Masao of the Kyoto School thought the “emptiness” in Buddhism is the ultimate object, which goes beyond the duality of both being and nothingness. It was called the “absolute nothingness” in contrast to the relative nothingness and was an emphasis of the “negation theory.”

³⁹ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, p.212. This is the claim of Thomas Aquinas (1224/1225 – 1274). After Renaissance, theology is no longer regarded as a science, but (Kant) still claimed that people should believe in God, who was postulated. His claim is away from the positivist spirit.

experimental spirit that based on the fact. Although different people have different views, the experimental results should be always the same since there is only one fact and the fact is experimentally repeatable. Similarly, *The Agama Sutras* bring up positivism to investigate all the claims of philosophic theories based on the fact. Therefore the correct research on *The Agama Sutras* will definitely make fast progress in philosophy. We will discuss afterward on the related topics of the personal realization of the true dweller such as, “Why can the limited ability of human beings personally realize the origin of the universe which has unlimitedness nature?” and “Is the positivism or Kant’s transcendentalism rational?”

4. Preliminary discussion on some related statements and their meanings of *The Agama Sutras*

Since Buddha claimed that the true dweller is a provable substance, there must be some passages in *The Agama Sutras* recording the actual attributes and functions of the true dweller to prove Buddha’s realization, and to further prove that the definition of the being of Principle in this article does conform to Buddha’s claim. In *The Agama Sutras*, there are definitely many related records that are worthy of further investigation. Because these are minor topics, we take only two examples in *The Agama Sutras* for reference as follows. *The Kindred Sayings*, Vol. 2, states,

I had heard the following. One day Buddha dwelt at Jetavana Vihara in Shravasti. Buddha told the *bhiksus*, “There are five kinds of seeds. What are they? It is root seed, stem seed, node seed, self-falling seed and fruit seed. If these five kinds of seeds do not stop, spoil, perish or paralyze and are newly matured and firm, but there is only the earth realm without the water realm, then those seeds cannot grow up and strengthen. If these newly matured and firm seeds do not stop, spoil, perish or paralyze, but there is only the water realm without the earth realm, then those seeds cannot grow up and strengthen either. If these newly matured and firm seeds do not stop, spoil, perish or paralyze, and there are both the earth and the water realms, then those seeds can grow up and strengthen. *Bhiksus!* Those five kinds of seeds are the simile for ‘the consciousness staying together with the five aggregates’; the earth realm is the simile for the ‘four dwellings of consciousness’; the water realm is the simile for ‘greed and joy.’”⁴⁰

This sutra uses “the consciousness staying together with the five aggregates” as another name of the true dweller to express its specific meaning; i.e., the true dweller is the consciousness that stays together with the five aggregates so that it conforms to Rule 1-C, “the judging rule of ‘not-off-aggregate.’” The five kinds of seeds are the simile for “the consciousness that stays together with the five aggregates,” and their properties of “non-stopping, non-spoiling, non-perishing, non-paralyzing and being newly matured and firm” are the similes for the

⁴⁰ *Taisho Tripitaka*, Vol. 2, pp.8-9.

“permanent, everlasting and unchangeable” properties of the true dweller. Therefore, the true dweller has another name of “the seed consciousness.” The seed consciousness has the seeds of the five aggregates so that it can produce the five aggregates and make them grow. It possesses “the functions to make the five aggregates grow.” From the viewpoint of viviparism, if the seed consciousness does not stay together with the five aggregates, it cannot function to make the five aggregates grow. From the viewpoint of growth and development, since the seed consciousness has those functions, it must stay together with the five aggregates to make the sentient grow, mature, age and die finally. This is a real example to explain how the true dweller possesses the functions to make the five aggregates grow or ruin. *The Kindred Sayings*, Vol. 12, states,

What is the conditioned dharma? It means the being of this causes the being of that. It means ignorance conditions behavior, behavior conditions consciousness, etc. and thus so much suffering aggregates. What is the condition-arisen dharma? It means, ignorance and behavior, these dharmas permanently exist and dwell in the dharma realm no matter if Buddha has been born or not. Buddha has personally realized it and attained the true enlightenment. He expounds and manifests it to the people. It means, in the phenomenon of ignorance conditioning behavior until birth conditioning aging and death, this dharma permanently exists and dwells in the dharma realm no matter if Buddha has been born or not. Buddha has personally realized it and attained the true enlightenment. He expounds and manifests it to the people. It means aging, sickness, death, worry, sadness and suffering is conditioned by birth. These dharmas have the properties of dwelling, emptiness, steadiness, and suchness. They are neither away nor different from suchness. Truly examining the fact and being non-topsy-turvy, by this way to follow the conditions is called the condition-arisen dharma. It means ignorance, behavior, consciousness, name and form, six sensational faculties, contact, sensation, attachment, grasp, existence, birth, aging, sickness, death, worry, sadness and suffering is the condition-arisen dharma.⁴¹

This sutra states “the conditioned dharma” and “the condition-arisen dharma.” The conditioned dharma means “the being of this causing the being of that” and is the dependent-arising dharma. All the mundane dharmas are the arising-and-ceasing dharmas that depend on the aggregation of conditions. The conditioned dharmas are produced through mutual dependence and aggregation. Tracing back to the source, what is the earliest origin of these conditioned, arising-and-ceasing dharmas? It is similar to Aristotle’s question on tracing back to

⁴¹ *Taisho Tripitaka, Samyutta-nikaya, Paccaya*, Vol. 2, p.84. “Regardless if Tathagata appears in the world or not, that realm firmly exists and possesses the natures of dwelling, steadiness and dependence. Tathagata personally realized and knew it. After having realized and known it, I teach, proclaim, expound, demonstrate, identify and show it as ‘Look, All of you!’”

Chinese Theravada Buddhism Tipitaka, Vol. 14, p. 29. The statement of “That realm firmly exists,” means the dharma realm in *The Agama Sutras*, and is another name of “the true dweller.”

Due to the certain existence of this “dharma realm,” the “dependent-arising dharmas can have the natures of dwelling, steadiness and condition-dependence. All three natures are based on “the true dweller,” which produced the dependent-arising dharmas and provides them with these natures.

the first cause that makes the universe run. For a single condition-arisen dharma, it will finally disappear after it appears; how can a dharma be regenerated after it ceases to exist?

From the definition of “the being of this causing the being of that” for the dependent-arising dharma, it does not necessarily have the cause-and-effect relation. It is because “the being of this causing the being of that” is to explain a kind of “related relation” and it may not be an absolute cause-and-effect relation. Hume (1711 – 1776) focused on the exploration of the cause-and-effect relations by studying the base of experimental knowledge and querying what the base of cause-and-effect is. He asked the right question, but gave the wrong answer. His answer was, “Not any knowledge can explain the cause-and-effect relation because the inference of the cause-and-effect relation is just a habit.”⁴² However, *The Kindred Sayings* provides the following answer: “No matter if Buddha exists in this world or not, the existence of the condition-arisen dharma will definitely manifest the real existence of the true dweller.” The sentence of “The dharma permanently exists and dwells in the dharma realm,” exactly means the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller. Buddha personally realized the true dweller and told the mundane people its existence. Because of it, the twelve links of dependent-arising can be generated; because of it, the twelve links of dependent-arising can continuously run and can “arise according to the conditions.” That is to say, all the arising and ceasing of the arising-and-ceasing dharmas are the functions of the true dweller; all the links between arising and ceasing of those dharmas are caused by the true dweller too. Due to the permanency and the functions of the true dweller to generate all arising-and-ceasing dharmas, the twelve links of dependent-arising can operate in order, and thus it makes the related relation of “the being of this causing the being of that” become the cause-and-effect relation. Therefore, in the sutras, when Buddha explained the dependent-arising dharma of “the being of this causing the being of that,” He could infer the cause-and-effect relation and personally realized the fact; all of those are because there is a condition-arisen dharma behind them. The fact that “the being of this causing the being of that” of dependent-arising dharma can become the cause-and-effect rule is based on the premise that the true dweller possesses the functions to generate everything. The true dweller is the root cause of all dharmas and the first cause to push all dharmas forward.⁴³ This conclusion answers Aristotle’s question and also answers the question why the dependent-arising dharma of dependent-arising emptiness can be pushed forward and run everlastingly.

The relation between the twelve links of dependent-arising and the true dweller is, “All these

⁴² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, trans. by Guan Wenyan, The Commercial Press Limited (Beijing), 1991. “Obviously, the cause and the result are the relation which is obtained from our experience, rather than from any abstract inference or thought” (p.85). “All inferences about the cause and the result are obtained from our habits” (p.210). Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, pp.358-360.

⁴³ The root cause means that the cyclic rebirths of all sentient beings are based on each sentient being’s true dweller. On the other hand, “the first cause” of Western philosophy has the meaning of “unique” and stands for “God.” However, in this article, “the first cause” means it is the first one in sequence rather than the unique one, and does not stand for “God.”

dharmas are dwelling, empty, such and natural, and neither away from suchness nor different from suchness.” It means, “Because of the permanent existence of the true dweller, it makes the twelve links of dependent-arising can continuously arise and operate in this world (dwelling); it makes them appear and then disappear, and disappear and then appear again repeatedly (empty); it makes their nature be similar to the suchness nature of the true dweller (such);⁴⁴ it makes them operate correctively (natural); the twelve links of dependent-arising cannot operate without the true dweller (not-off-suchness); they cannot depart from suchness (not different from suchness).” It clearly explains that the cause-and-effect relations of all dharmas are exactly the functions of the true dweller themselves.

One of David Hume’s questions is, “Why can we assert that those specific causes must result in those specific results?”⁴⁵ He thought that our inference from the causes to the effects is neither from our observation on these specific objects nor from the fact that we have an insight into the dependent relations among them.⁴⁶ Our minds can always imagine any effect that comes from any cause, and can even always imagine an event followed by any event because anything is likely to exist if it can be imagined clearly, and if anything can be imagined clearly in any way, it may exist in that way.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, if we examine it based on the fact, it is not true. David Hume’s conclusion is, “All the inferences of cause-and-effect are based on experience; all the inferences of experiences are based on the assumption that ‘the progress of nature is always running continuously, consistently and unchangeably.’”⁴⁸ Hume asked a correct question, but he made the wrong inference and conclusion because he could not personally realize the true dweller and therefore could not make the inference based on the fact. As for the statement of “An event can be followed by any event,” if this kind of imagination could be the fact, we could foresee that this world will become a chaotic environment that does not have any cause-and-effect relation to infer. But in fact, the real world does not work like that way. The order of cause-and-effect relations in the real world is from the functional operation of the true dweller. Hence, all cause-and-effect relations are based on the true dweller that can generate all dharmas and all cause-and-effect inferences are based on it as well. “The progress of nature being running continuously, consistently and unchangeably” is not an assumption; it is in fact the functions of the true dweller since it is permanent and unchangeable in that way throughout the past, present and future time.

This sutra explains that the twelve links of dependent-arising operate completely according to the dharma nature of the true dweller. Furthermore, the explanation of being “neither away from suchness, nor different from suchness” conforms to Rule 1-C, the judging rule of

⁴⁴ There are lots of meanings for “suchness.” It includes the meanings of non-moving and non-activeness.

⁴⁵ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, trans. By Guan Wenyuan, The Commercial Press Limited (Beijing), 1991, p.94.

⁴⁶ Same as above, p.104.

⁴⁷ Same as above, p.262.

⁴⁸ Same as above, p.106.

“not-off-aggregate,” because suchness is another name of the true dweller; the statement of “This dharma permanently exists and dwells in the dharma realm,” conforms to Rule 1-A, the judging rule of “permanency;” the statements of “Buddha personally realized it and attained the true enlightenment; He expounded and manifested it to the people,” completely conform to Conditions 2 and 3. This sutra repeatedly explains the previous definition of the true dweller in *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 37, and further proves that the definition of the being of Principle proposed in this article consists with *The Agama Sutras* and completely conforms to the Buddhist doctrine.

This sutra states, “Buddha personally realized it and attained the true enlightenment.” It explains that Buddha personally realized the true dweller, and finally attained the ultimate stage to become a buddha. Therefore, personally realizing the true dweller is the premise to become a buddha.

The true dweller has many other names. For example, “the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable *tathagata’s garbha*” is mentioned nineteen times in *The Angulimaliya Sutra*, Vol. 4. Therefore “Tathagatagarbha” is another name of the true dweller. This sutra states that the attributes of Tathagatagarbha are “clear and clean,” “difficult to see,” etc. The true dweller has many different names to represent its different meanings, attributes or functions. This is another topic worthy of further research.

5. The inspection of positivism

All the mundane wise can only perceive the arising-and-ceasing dharmas and discuss the origin of the universe within that scope. Based on that scope, they define “being,” “nothingness” and the “being” without the meaning of Principle. However, Buddha personally realized the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller and defined “the being of Principle” accordingly. Is that rational to define the being of Principle according to the positivism in *The Agama Sutras*? The following passages will discuss the positivism defined by Western philosophy with three kinds of viewpoints:

- (1) Human beings have limitation. Therefore, we cannot realize the origin of the universe that has unlimitedness property.
- (2) Anything possesses the unlimitedness property must be the origin of the universe.
- (3) Should the premise of any philosophic proof be evaluated by the fact?

The first viewpoint thinks that human beings cannot realize the origin of the universe, which possesses unlimitedness property, because human beings have limitation. Actually limit and no-limit are a concept of “number” created by human beings and that concept does not restrict us. For example, as stated in the discussion of “A flying arrow can never move,” of Zeno’s Paradoxes: “An arrow is shot from Point A to Point B. Before it passes Point B, it should pass the midpoint

between A and B. But before it passes the midpoint between A and B, it should pass the midpoint of 'A and the midpoint between A and B.' Continuing to infer by the same way, we can never find a point that is the nearest to Point A. Therefore, it is concluded that 'A flying arrow can never move.'" This claim was brought up based on the idea that the "limited" distance between Point A and B has "unlimited" points. But because of conflicting with the fact, it confused philosophers for quite a long time. This problem was solved until the concept of "limit" was brought up.

Although there is a statement of "A flying arrow can never move," from the fact, the shot arrow always moves. Therefore, any statement that conflicts with the fact will be overturned finally. Any truth must be based on the fact and any theory that conflicts with the fact will not be the truth. The fact is always there and does not forbid anyone to understand it, and thus the truth does not forbid anyone to understand it either.

Limit and no-limit are a case of antinomy that Kant brought up. For two absolutely contradictory statements of the positive statement, "The world is limited in both time and space," and the negative statement, "The world is unlimited in both time and space," Immanuel Kant provided the same effective logical inferences to prove both of them are correct. About the limit of time, he inferred that it was impossible to have passed unlimited series of time before a specific time because this specific time had occurred; therefore the time was limited. On the other hand, about the unlimited time, he inferred that if there was a beginning of time in the world, there would be no time before that beginning; the state that did not have time could not have any condition to let time exist; the time series could not pass from non-existence of time to existence of time; thus the time did not have beginning and was unlimited.⁴⁹

From the proof of the antinomy of limit and no-limit, we can conclude that it is possible for one thing to possess the attributes of both limit and no-limit. This kind of demonstration proves that limit and no-limit is a puzzle to human beings about "number." Depending on different aspects of discussion, anything can possess both limitedness and unlimitedness properties. For example, anything has the same number of unlimited attributes. We can ask unlimited questions of attributes on one thing to decide if that thing possesses those unlimited attributes. We can also ask the same unlimited questions of attributes on another thing. Thus, everything has the same number of unlimited attributes. In the same way, everything has limit because we can categorize and understand it. If there is a thing without limit that we cannot categorize and understand, the description of that thing itself has already categorized and understood it. Therefore, everything has limitation. It is in fact a puzzle of "number" to use the reason of "Human life is limited," to build up the restriction of "The recognizing capability of human is limited and thus cannot recognize God with assumed and unlimitedness property."

⁴⁹ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, pp.429-430.

Conditions 2 and 3 of the definition of the true dweller explain that it can be realized and recognized, and this is its limitedness. Condition 1 explains that the true dweller continues to exist in the extinction of the five aggregates; we cannot find any time that the true dweller ceases to exist and thus can prove the neither-arising-nor-ceasing attribute of it. This permanency of neither-arising-nor-ceasing is the unlimitedness property of the true dweller. The limitedness property of Conditions 2 and 3 and the unlimitedness property of Condition 1 are not in conflict with each other because they are stated in different aspects. Thus, limitedness and unlimitedness do not restrict human beings to understand the true reality. The first viewpoint is wrong.

The second viewpoint regards the thing that possesses unlimitedness property is the origin of the universe. Kyoto School thinks that the pure experience of mind-consciousness can bring forth the perception and tolerance that exceeds time and space, and possesses the unlimitedness property; therefore the mind-consciousness in the pure experience is the origin of the universe. But in fact the mind-consciousness is limited within a lifetime and is one of the consciousness aggregate of the five aggregates. It is exactly an aggregate and thus violates Rule 1-B, the judging rule of “non-aggregate.” The mind-consciousness will be surely extinguished when the five aggregates are extinguished. It belongs to the arising-and-ceasing dharma, does not have the permanency of time and thus does not conform to Rule 1-A, the judging rule of “permanency.” In addition, the pure experience itself has the metaphysical origin (God) and this origin is away from the five aggregates of human beings. It violates Rule 1-C, the judging rule of “not-off-aggregate.” As for the metaphysical origin (God), it cannot be personally realized and violates Conditions 2 and 3. Therefore, the theory of the Kyoto School violates all three required conditions and completely differs from the definition of the true dweller in *The Agama Sutras*. Of course it violates the fact that the mind-consciousness is extinctive, and violates medical common sense too.

In the theory of Brahma-atma-aikya, the “self” possesses the function of recognition and is defined as “the recognizer who cannot recognize recognition.”⁵⁰ Recognition is the function of the mind-consciousness, and thus the “self” of Brahma-atma-aikya is still the mind-consciousness. It is thought that the mind-consciousness still exists even in the state of sound sleep or death and becomes the absolutely pure state without restriction. It is “the recognizer who cannot recognize recognition,” and thus cannot recognize anything. As a matter of fact, the mind-consciousness is extinguished temporarily in the state of sound sleep or death. The mind-consciousness is conscious when it exists; it cannot hide or stop its perceptive characteristic at that time. The self of Brahma-self is the mind-consciousness. Similar to the Kyoto School, the statement violates both Rule 1-B, the judging rule of “non-aggregate,” and Rule 1-A, the judging rule of “permanency.” Brahma pervades the whole universe, has the unlimitedness attribute and does not coexist with the

⁵⁰ Huang Chanhua, *A Historic Outline of Indian Philosophy, Modern Buddhist Study Series*, Vol. 22, Maitreya Publishing Co. (Taipei), 1983, p.36.

five aggregates; it thus violates Rule 1-C, the judging rule of “not-off-aggregate” too. Brahma is a purely subjective substance that is independent of relativity and is not the object to be recognized. So, it violates Conditions 2 and 3. In summary, the theory of Brahma-atma-aikya completely violates the three required conditions of the origin of the universe and the fact that the mind-consciousness can be extinguished. Although Brahma has the unlimitedness attribute, it cannot be the origin of the universe according to the definition of the being of Principle. Therefore, the second viewpoint is wrong as well.

The third viewpoint thinks that the premise of philosophic proof needs not base on the fact. But actually the purpose of philosophic proof is to pursue the rational religion, and only the rational religion can lead human beings to the final safe refuge. The rational religion is away from imagination and speculation. Therefore, the method of logical proof is used for the establishment of rational religions. If the logical proof cannot leave imagination and speculation, it is still a wizard’s statement, not a logical one.

“A demonstration is effective if, from the fact, it is impossible to have the true premise and the false conclusion, no matter whether anyone believes its premise and suspects its conclusion. By contrast, a proof is ineffective if, from the fact, it is possible to have the true premise and the false conclusion even though many people believe that the premise is enough to guarantee the conclusion to be true. That is to say, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a demonstration has its objective criteria from the fact. The purpose of logic is to find the way to judge if a demonstration is effective or not. Not only does a demonstration have the objective criteria to judge its effectiveness, but also the truth of a sentence does. It is not the case that most (or even all) people think that it is true and then it will be true, or vice versus. If a statement conforms to the fact, that statement is true. Otherwise, it is false. A statement is either true or false. It is impossible to be both true and false because it states the fact. The statement either conforms to or does not conform to the fact, but cannot be both.”⁵¹ “That demonstration is either effective or ineffective is judged according to its demonstration form.”⁵² By using logical proof, the philosophic research wants to infer, according to the effective demonstration type, a true conclusion from a true premise that conforms to the fact. Therefore, a demonstration with a form conforming to effectiveness must be able to examine if the premise conforms to the fact or not according to the objective principle of logical proof. If a demonstration cannot examine the truth or falsity of the premise, even the demonstration type being effective, it is still a useless demonstration that cannot judge the truth or falsity of the conclusion.

Before Renaissance, Aquinas of scholasticism thought that the premise needed not be proved by the fact. He thought the criterion to judge whether a kind of knowledge was a science was

⁵¹ Lin Zhenghong, *Logic*, Sanmin Book Co. Ltd. (Taipei), 2004, pp.2-3.

⁵² Same as above, p.13.

dependent on if it was a deduction system or not, but not on how the premise of deduction could be recognized and proved. He thought scientific philosophy depended on rationality, but theology depended on belief. Both of them used deduction system and belonged to the scope of science, but theology was not in the scope of rationality. Nevertheless, the truth or falsity of a premise or statement must be examined by the fact. If the premise cannot be proved true, the logical conclusion of the inference cannot be proved true either. After Renaissance, due to the development of pursuing knowledge and experimentalism in natural science that broke Aristotle's explanation on natural philosophy, the base of theology started to shake. David Hume definitely excluded the traditional theology and scholasticism from the scope of knowledge. His reason was, "The concept of 'God' cannot be proved through experience. ... The existence of God cannot be proved through inference either. ... The problem of 'existence' is a fact. We cannot inherently prove a problem that is a fact. The moral proof of the existence of God is not reliable because the misfortune and suffering of human beings have provided the counterevidence to it."⁵³

After Renaissance, Kant made a great contribution to the being of the first philosophy. Immanuel Kant's transcendentalism separated "being" from "existence" based on semantics and broke two thousands year tradition of metaphysics, which combined these two items together. He terminated the ontological proposition of "God is being," and started the research of analytical philosophy that identifies the error or uncertainty of metaphysics through semantic analysis and logical inference. Thus he basically negated the traditional metaphysics as a kind of knowledge. But Immanuel Kant built another practical philosophy from the point of ethics and thought, "Free will, imperishable soul and the existence of God are the three moral postulates that are the sufficient reasons for anyone to fulfill the moral practice in rational religions."⁵⁴

The concept of Kant's transcendental philosophy came from Hume's analytic and synthetic propositions. Hume thought the analytic proposition of "All people will die," was prior, destined and not related to experience. It was decided by the sentential implication of that statement, i.e., the subject of the proposition already included the meaning of predicate. The reason why the prior proposition exists was that, from the known knowledge, we could not explain the cause-and-effect relationship of "All people will die." Because this cause-and-effect relationship could not be personally realized, he called it "prior;" because there was no exception, this proposition was always true. By contrast, the synthetic proposition was not prior and was created by conditions. For example, "These people are sitting" should be examined from the fact to prove its truth. Kant thought the knowledge of experience also had "the pervasive certainty," or called a prior synthetic judgment such as transcendental sensibility, understanding and reasoning, and all transcendental things were always prior and possessed the pervasive certainty, but all the others were not.⁵⁵

⁵³ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, pp.356-357.

⁵⁴ Same as above, pp.432-440.

⁵⁵ Zhao Dunhua, *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Wunan Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2002, pp.409-426.

Nevertheless, the prior proposition or a prior synthetic judgment is not pervasively certain in nature; it becomes pervasively certain under the condition of some premises. For example, the proposition of “All people will die,” has already the meaning of “death” that included in the definition of “people” and assumes “People will die,” and “God will not die.” This proposition already has the premise that classifies people and God. It also assumes, “People are to be people forever, God is to be God forever and animals are to be animals forever.” Therefore, people are always the servants of God and people manage animals forever; the premise of the Caste system cannot be broken. With this kind of proposition, where is the meaning of Kant’s moral practice of free will?

Let us bring up another proposition, “All sentient beings can liberate from life and death,” for further discussion. “Sentient beings” include all ten dharma realms. Although ten dharma realms seem to be the Caste system, they are not because the term of “sentient beings” breaks the border of classification already. The question of “If sentient beings can liberate from life and death,” is in fact a proposition that has the meaning of moral practice in rational religions. There are four kinds of situations for this proposition:

- (1) For the sentient beings of the six-rebirths that cannot liberate from life and death, they, according to the virtue or evil of their behavior, will be born in the heaven to enjoy the life or be down to the realms of animals, hungry ghosts or hell to suffer.
- (2) For the persons, like sound-hearers or solitary-realizers, who are at the first to the fourth fruition stages and are going to liberate from life and death,⁵⁶ they are still human beings but will liberate from life and death forever soon after future limited life cycles.
- (3) For the persons, like the bodhisattvas of the first fruition to the equal-enlightenment stages, who are going to liberate from life and death and to become buddhas,⁵⁷ they are still human beings but will liberate from life and death forever and become buddhas soon after future limited life cycles.
- (4) For the buddhas, they have liberated from life and death already.

The differences between this proposition and “All people will die,” are, “All sentient beings can, according to their free will, decide the virtue or evil of their own behavior. Then this virtue or evil behavior decides their destination of rebirth and restricts their will of enjoyment or suffering, sensibility, understanding and reasoning. It is the non-liberty of the will. It is a fact that the will has both liberty and non-liberty. Every sentient being relies on the free will to decide the non-liberty of the will itself. Therefore, as human beings, a kind of sentient beings, we should decide our own

⁵⁶ The sentient beings going to be liberated include both the celestial and human beings. But in order to consist with the previous proposition, only the human beings are discussed.

⁵⁷ The sentient beings going to be liberated and become buddhas include both the celestial and human beings. In addition, according to bodhisattvas’ vows, they are likely to rebirth in the five paths. But in order to consist with the previous proposition, only the human beings are discussed.

future destinations of rebirth according to our current behavior and take the responsibility.” Such free will then has the meaning of moral practice and is the practice of rational religions. In summary, David Hume’s prior proposition is a wrong one because it includes lots of premises.

Hume’s prior proposition includes many premises that have not been proved. It should not be called prior. The transcendental philosophy, which comes from the concept of the prior proposition, should not be called transcendental either, because it still includes many premises that have not been proved and is not pervasively certain. For example, transcendental sensibility, understanding and reasoning all are based on the premise of the normal operation of human mind-consciousness and the five sense-organs. In the state of womb before birth, people do not have the full functions of sensibility, and do not have understanding or reasoning. Right after being born, people have the full functions of sensibility and a little bit of understanding, but do not have reasoning. Hence, sensibility, understanding and reasoning do not have the pervasive certainty.

If we define the prior proposition must have the pervasive certainty, the true prior proposition will be “The permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller exists,” because this proposition is always true. In addition, if we define the synthetic proposition should use the fact to prove its truth or falsity, “The permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller exists,” is a synthetic proposition too, since it can be proved true or false through the inspection with the fact. Why does a proposition possess two different characteristics at the same time? It is because both Hume and Kant assumed that “the pervasive certainty” cannot be proved, and that the base of all cause-and-effect relationships cannot be proved either. Based on that, they distinguish between the prior and non-prior propositions. The meaning of inferring a proposition is to use a linking verb to “judge” the relation between the subject and the predicate. The term “judge” means comparing with the fact to decide if the proposition is true or not. Judgment should come after the existence of the fact and use the fact as the base. The fact is always true and needs not be proved. Judgment comes after the fact and is used to decide if a proposition is true or not according to the logical inference. Therefore, the prior proposition and the synthetic prior judgment themselves from Hume or Kant are exactly the contradictory error definitions and categorization.

Kant brought up three moral postulates according to transcendental reasoning and used them as the sufficient reasons for the people to fulfill the moral practice of rational religions. In fact, he just arbitrarily made a declaration rather than objectively proved it. When human beings become God’s servants and face this master with uncertain behavior that is according to his temper, they can only observe the master’s temper and behave accordingly. How can they use reasoning to decide their behavior? How can they take the responsibility for themselves? Taking these kinds of postulates as premises, can human beings have the criteria of rational behavior as the standard of moral practice? Especially when the philosophic wizards create different masters according to their preferences, which master should people obey? Which master should people identify as the real

one? Thus, the build-up of postulates, which is unnecessary to be proved, has already violated the definition of rational religions. For example, when a postulate states “Any male *vajra guru* and any female buddha-mother can become buddhas in this lifetime, if they can copulate with each other and reach orgasm forever,”⁵⁸ can this kind of postulate conform to the moral practice? Therefore, although Kant used three moral postulates as the sufficient reasons to fulfill rational religions, he was in fact apart from the practice of the rational religions and led to the irrational religions that are full of imagination and speculation, and violated the moral practice.

In summary, the third viewpoint violates the objectivity of proof and the purpose of the moral practice in rational religions. It is a wrong concept too.

6. The key point of positivism

In this article, I bring up three necessary conditions from the definition of the being of Principle. Condition 3 implies that everyone can personally realize it. But referring to the history, we can find only very few people did personally realize it. This will be a topic we can study further. Here, one of the key points is in Condition 1: to have a thorough understanding on the content of the five aggregates. All the mundane wise can only recognize the arising-and-ceasing dharmas of the five aggregates. They can observe from the five aggregates, the twelve-fields of sense and the eighteen-divisions of sense in their own bodies to confirm there is no dharma that can exist forever. The arising of all those dharmas depends on the arising of other dharmas. None of them can be the true, original, permanent and dwelling “self.” Therefore, they can completely confirm that the perceptive “self” is illusory, eliminate the “self-view” and then attain the state of “no-self” finally. Because the five aggregates, the twelve-fields of sense and the eighteen-divisions of sense are all the dharmas that the mundane wise can observe and analyze, those dharmas have the positivist meanings for everyone. Those are the premises and conclusions that everyone can personally realize except the people who misunderstand or do not really understand the true meaning of those dharmas.

After having deep understanding on the dharmas of the five-aggregates, they can further observe and examine that if there is any dharma neither-arising-nor-ceasing, and confirm that this

⁵⁸ Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, trans. by Xu Liemin, etc., Chengbang Shangzhou Publishing Co. (Taipei), 2004, pp.93-96. “Some time the *tantric* masters take the practice of violating precepts, like eating meat and sexual intercourse, to help them ‘transcend morals,’ and thus transcend the world. ... Tibetan Buddhism possesses this kind of elements, but can be categorized as Mahayana Buddhism in a broad sense. ... Through imaging your deity, you can fulfill the combination of both you and your deity. This kind of non-dual combination is symbolized by the bisexual intercourse. The bisexual intercourse can combine two bodies into one. Being the companions of buddhas, goddesses (or called sexual powers) have an important position in Tibetan Buddhism. ... They (Note: Bonist) thought Buddhism was a fraud. It brought the disasters to Tibet and became the source of evil.”

Such a kind of practice method, which is called “transcending morals,” has violated and destroyed the behavior criteria of rational religions from the sense of moral practice. It does not have any moral practice of rational religions and should not be called “transcending morals.”

dharma still continues to exist in the extinction of all the five aggregates. Nevertheless, those people who have not personally realized the true dweller are still the mundane ordinary people. How can they exceed the border of mundane and supra-mundane world and personally realize the true dweller that possesses permanency? What is the key point to personally realize it? In this article, we provide a clue by citing a passage from *The Payasi Sutra, The Long Sayings (Dirghagama)*, Vol. 3,⁵⁹ as follows:

There was a person of Brahmin called Payasi, who did not believe the existence of future rebirth and the cause-and-effect of doing virtue or evil. He questioned Virgin Kasyapa, who was Buddha Sakyamuni's follower and had attained the fruition of *arhat*. Payasi said that he once put a thief into a large pot that was completely sealed and covered with heavy mud so that the pot did not leak at all. Then he burned the pot to examine if there was any "spirit" coming out. Consequently, he could not find anything and did not see the spirit even when he opened the pot. Then, Payasi bound another thief at another time, cut off the thief's flesh piece by piece, and tried to find the "conscious spirit." He cut and pounded the thief into jam of flesh and bones, but still could not find the "conscious spirit" at all. Thus, he made the conclusion that there was no future rebirth. Virgin Kasyapa replied, "A wise person can understand things through simile. A Brahmacarin who worshipped fire was going to travel out of the forest. He taught his boy that the fire should be always kept on, and, in case the fire was off, the boy should drill the wood by the drill and use the drilled fire to burn the wood pieces. Unfortunately, the fire was extinguished due to the boy's carelessness. The boy tried many methods like blowing the ash, cutting the wood and pounded the wood into pieces in the mortar but all failed to get the fire. Finally, the Brahmacarin came back. He demonstrated the method to get the fire through drilling the wood by the drill and burning the wood pieces. Then he told the boy, "If you want to get the fire, you should do it like this way and should not cut the wood or pound the wood into pieces in the mortar."

This sutra emphasizes, by simile, that it is not the right way to use boiling, peeling or cutting to find the "conscious spirit" in the body. Like getting the fire, it is not the right way to use cutting or pounding the wood. Only using the correct method of "drilling the wood by the drill and burning the wood pieces" one can get the fire. The sutra allegorizes that the real key point to realize the true dweller is methodology. Only according to the right methodology, can people personally realize the permanent true dweller. This is another topic that can be explored further in the future.

7. Conclusions

According to the above analysis, following conclusions can be made:

⁵⁹ *Taisho Tripitaka*, Vol. 1, p.44.

- (1) For the being of the origin of the universe, both Eastern and Western philosophers and religionists all claim that it cannot be personally realized. But *The Agama Sutras* bring up, according to the true reality, the definition of being based on positivism.
- (2) About the definition of being or nothingness, it is restricted in the scope that all mundane wise can understand, including all the philosophic theories and researches. The true dweller that the supra-mundane wise personally realize does not belong to this scope.
- (3) The definition of the being of Principle:
 - (A) There exists the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable true dweller in the process of arising-and-ceasing of the five aggregates. (B) Only Buddha and bodhisattvas have personally realized the true dweller. (C) Anyone who practices according to the correct method can personally realize the true dweller as well.
- (4) According to the definition of the being of Principle, three judging rules are developed:
 - (A) The judging rule of “permanency,” (B) the judging rule of “non-aggregate,” and (C) the judging rule of “not-off-aggregate.”

The true dweller is the substance; except the true dweller, there is no other substance.
- (5) Through referring to *The Agama Sutras*, it is proved that the definition of the being of Principle brought up in this article has other supports. It consists with the Buddhist doctrine of dependent-arising in *The Agama Sutras*. Some other sutras, but not detailedly discussed due to the limited space, are also cited to further explain the attributes, functions and aliases of the true dweller.
- (6) We explore the key issue—the possibility of personal realization—and have the following three conclusions:
 - (A) Limitedness and unlimitedness is a human beings’ puzzle on number. People should not restrict the pursuing of the truth by the reason of human beings’ limitation. The truth is based on the fact and the fact is always there for people’s understanding. Thus the truth is also always there for anyone to understand it.
 - (B) It is a wrong standard to use unlimitedness property to infer that the true dweller cannot be recognized and realized, and to use this inference to judge if it is the origin of the universe or not. The theories of the Kyoto School and Brahma-self or Divine-self are analyzed and it is found they completely violate the definition of the being of Principle in *The Agama Sutras*.
 - (C) The premise of philosophic proof should be examined according to the fact. Otherwise it will violate the objectivity of philosophic proof. The prior and transcendental propositions of David Hume and Immanuel Kant use the assumptions that have not been

proved as the premises. Those propositions do not have the pervasive certainty and are the wrong propositions with the premises of the Caste system. They also violate the moral practice of rational religions.

- (7) The key of the personal realization on Buddhist “no-self” is based on the thorough understanding of the content of the five aggregates. The five aggregates are the scope that the mundane wise can recognize, and are the provable premises and conclusions. The key of the personal realization on the “self” with permanency, joy, self and purity of Buddhahood is premised by the personal realization of the true dweller. The key point of that realization is the right methodology.