

Appendix A

Author's Reply to the Editor of *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies*

This is the first letter to the editor of *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* from the author of *The Definition of Being in The Agama Sutras*.

To: The Editor of *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies*

Article's title: The Definition of Being in *The Agama Sutras*

I hereby respond to the Journal's following review comments: "The author presents his standpoints primarily based on *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutras 37 and 296, and uses them as the theoretical proof and the ultimate teachings. However, he does not contrast with *Samyutta-nikaya*, Sutras S.22:94 and S.12:20, of *Nikayas*, and thus has many misunderstandings and the mistakes of punctuation. His many claims even violate the viewpoint that the public all agree. Therefore, we do not recommend publishing this article."

My responses include three parts as follows.

- 1. The author presents his standpoints primarily based on *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutras 37 and 296, and uses them as the theoretical proof and the ultimate teachings.**

My response:

Actually, *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 39 and *The Angulimaliya Sutra* are also cited in my article. However, in addition to the names of "the true dweller," "suchness," "Tathagatagarbha," and "the consciousness staying together with the five aggregates" cited to support my standpoint, there are lots of other aliases in the entire *The Agama Sutras* like "the non-arising dharma" (*The Kindred Sayings*, Sutras 283, 296, 297, 440, 808, 898 and 985), "nirvana" (too many to list), "dharma-nature" (*The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 854), etc. with their important specific meanings respectively. It is hard to state all the aliases in this article, and the reason has been explained in it.

2. However, he does not contrast with *Samyutta-nikaya*, S.22:94 and S.12:20, of *Nikayas*, and thus has many misunderstandings and the mistakes of punctuation.

My responses:

- (1) According to the title of this article, it is easy to see that the topic is studied by the method of “hermeneutics.” That the reviewer criticizes the article with the view of “philology” that *Samyutta-nikaya* of *Nikayas* is not contrasted with is as if a philologist criticizes hermeneutic scholars: “Why do you interpret only a few sutras but not other related sutras? Why don’t you contrast with *Nikayas*?” If the reviewer thinks that, based only on the above reason, “the use of materials and the logic inference and analysis” of this article are of low quality; that implies the reviewer also thinks that “the use of materials and the logic inference and analysis” of all hermeneutic scholars are of low quality too.
- (2) It is not objective, not professional, and very superficial to review this article from the view of “philology” and request me to contrast with the Chinese translations of *Nikayas* [Note: the Chinese *Nikayas* being translated from the Japanese versions, not directly from the Pali]. There are many disputes about the *translations* of *Nikayas*. For example, Shi Dahe states in the translator’s note of *Selections of Pali Sutras*, “Dr. Mizuno once said, ‘There are many mistakes in the Japanese version of *Tipitaka of Nikayas*. As for the English version, due to the different way of thinking of the Westerner from the Easterner’s, the meaning of the English translation may be a little different from that of the original text. To precisely understand *Tipitaka of Nikayas*, it will be best through the original Pali version’” (by Mizuno Kogen, translated by Shi Dahe, Dharma Drum Culture, 2005, p.7).

Under such a review request of the Journal, it would be necessary to contrast more than one version of texts. I would have to compare the merits with demerits of various versions in Chinese, Japanese and English, even have to translate the Pali *Nikayas* directly by myself or have to look for the Sanskrit sutras for contrast. Furthermore, I would have to find the related texts of other sutras to contrast with the texts of sutras in Pali, and then to contrast with *The Agama Sutras* in Chinese. In case there is any discrepancy in these comparisons of various translations or disapprobation of the Pali sutras, will it be proper to take *The Agama Sutras* as the proof canons? It would almost need twenty thousand words just to state how the literature is collected, contrasted and analyzed. Therefore, this kind of article would become a textual research on *The Agama Sutras*. When the readers read such an article, how can they know about the author’s contention and opinions on *The definition of Being in The Agama Sutras*? The readers may instead ask, “Why does the author spend a lot of time to contrast these texts? What is the importance of the contrast?” It can surely be a topic for further research to contrast the texts by means of “philology,” but should not be the top priority. How can the reviewer ask an article to include the research of “philology” as well as “hermeneutics” at the same time

within twenty thousand words?

- (3) Certainly, in the research of hermeneutics, it is a plus to contrast the sutras of different languages, but it is not absolutely necessary. It is up to the author's considerations of research. In most cases, there are two considerations. The first is to consider "if the meanings in the sutras of the same language consist with each other or not." The result of my article shows that the meanings of many texts in *The Agama Sutras* are consistent, can be proved mutually, and independently form into a complete system. So, there is no need to contrast with other sutras of different languages.

The second is to consider "if the space of an article is enough or not." Concerning the problems of the Pali *Nikayas* as aforementioned, it will take a lot of space to deal with the philological problems. In fact, when I wrote this article only by means of "hermeneutics," I have discarded lots of research aspects and compacted the contents in order to meet the requirement of the number of words. For example, as my above arguments, I have reluctantly discarded the citations and explanations of different texts or the elaboration of other related issues, even though they are important. If both ways of "hermeneutics" and "philology" should be included in a study at the same time, I think it will need the space of a book to complete the study of the topic *The Definition of Being in The Agama Sutras*.

- (4) Furthermore, the review request is based on the premise of "The original texts of both *Nikayas* and *The Agama Sutras* are in the same language and of the same version." Is this premise true? In case it is not true, is there any significance of the contrast of both texts? In fact, *The Agama Sutras* in Chinese was translated from the sutras in Sanskrit. Is it because there are problems in the Sanskrit sutras so that the reviewer has such an unreasonable request?
- (5) The reviewer requests me to "contrast" and thinks my article has "many misunderstandings and the mistakes of punctuation" due to the lack of contrast. Obviously the reviewer thinks only *Nikayas* are correct, and many misunderstandings and the mistakes of punctuation are induced because of no contrast to *Nikayas*. That is, the reviewer deems that *Nikayas* are correct and *The Agama Sutras* in Chinese are false. What is this opinion based on? If this opinion is not what you deem, the reviewer should be able to point out the mistakes directly according to the texts of *The Agama Sutras* I cite; however, in the item 1 of the reviewer's comments in this reply, there is no such comment in it. Instead, the reviewer thinks the misunderstandings and the mistakes of punctuation result from the lack of contrast with *Nikayas*.

If the reviewer thinks there are significant discrepancies between *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 37, and *Nikayas*, S.22:94 (if so, please point them out!), how can you assert *The Kindred Sayings* are false, but *Nikayas* are correct? Or the translations of the sutras in Sanskrit are false, but the ones in Pali are correct? As my previous argument, in case there is any discrepancy or

disapprobation in these comparisons among various Pali versions and the explanations of Pali, will it be proper to take *The Agama Sutras* in Chinese, which were translated from the Sanskrit, as the proof canons? From the reviewer's comments, the answer seems "negative." Many texts of *The Agama Sutras* have been cited in my article, and these texts can be proved mutually and independently form into a complete system. But all of these cannot be accepted and adopted by the reviewer. With this kind of review attitude, all four divisions of *The Agama Sutras* may be totally negated.

In fact, the meanings of *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 37 and *Nikayas*, S.22:94 are consistent. And the S.12:20 and 22 of *Nikayas* are not the only evidence. It is regretful that the reviewer cannot point out the consistency of sutras and I cannot answer it for the reviewer. Furthermore, it is unexpected that the reviewer has such a claim violating the academic logical thinking. Besides, which version of *Nikayas* is it that you reply on for your review? Is it in Chinese, Japanese, English, Pali, or Sanskrit? Or do you take the philological methods to synthetically assert that the texts of *The Agama Sutras* that I cite are not convincing?

The Seeder of Earthly Buddhism, authored by Shi Zhaohui, states, "Since Western scholars have paid much attention to the Pali *Nikayas*, Japanese scholars are influenced and fall into the prejudice of 'Without studying Pali language, one will not be able to understand the original Buddhism'" (Dong Da, 1997, p.185). Does the reviewer really think, "Without studying Pali language, one will not be able to understand the original Buddhism?"

Even from a very conservative view, in case the Pali *Nikayas* were much different from the Chinese *Agama Sutras* and contradicted each other, would only the Pali *Nikayas* be valuable but not the Chinese *Agama Sutras*? If someone thinks there are contradictions in some sutras, should we discard all these sutras and not study them? Or should these contradictory sutras be researched only by philological scholars rather than by hermeneutic scholars? What is the standpoint of the review committee?

From the viewpoint of philology only, your value judgment, which only recognizes the Pali *Nikayas* but completely negates the Chinese *Agama Sutras* translated from the Sanskrit origin, has no academic objectivity and rationality at all.

- (6) Although *The Agama Sutras* belong to the sound-hearer division, it is not necessary to take *Nikayas* as the standards. There are also some benefits to research based on the Chinese *Agama Sutras*. Shi Yinshun had a proper statement to this point in his *The Position of Chinese Translations of Buddhism Sutras in the World* (collected in *Studying Buddha Dharma by Buddha Dharma*). Besides, for example, regarding "the illusive consciousness-only school," one of the three schools of great-vehicle which was wrongly categorized by Shi Yinshun, he explored the origin of "the illusive consciousness-only school" from *The Agama Sutras* in his

Exploring the Origin of the Consciousness-Only Theory. Why cannot the origin of “the true permanent mind-only school,” another one of the three schools of great-vehicle, be explored from *The Agama Sutras*? Since it is also an investigation of great-vehicle, according to Yinshun’s opinions in *The Position of Chinese Translations of Buddhism Sutras in the World*, how can the reviewer exclude the Chinese *Agama Sutras* and only favor the Pali *Nikayas* instead?

The academic value of this article is to propose the idea that “the true permanent mind-only school” can be originated from *The Agama Sutras*. Although I do not clearly show the value in the article, any scholar who has profession or specialty of philology can find it out. In my article, I decide to use the methodology of hermeneutics instead of philology. If I do not bring up the theory of “the true permanent mind-only school” by means of hermeneutics first, it is impossible to have further research of the same topic in philology. Then, how can the readers understand the value of “contrasting” with those sutras?

- (7) It is a fact that “the true permanent mind-only school” had golden ages in both Indian and Chinese histories. If there were no origin of “the true permanent mind-only school,” how could a “zenith” of “the true permanent mind-only school” occur in both Indian and Chinese histories? The only way to explain this historical fact and not to neglect it is to find its origin. According to the origin, further research will continue. Therefore, in this article, the idea that “the true mind-only school” originated from *The Agama Sutras* is an important and initial finding in philology, which can exactly explain the historical fact of the “zenith” of “the true mind-only school” in both Indian and Chinese histories. This kind of study result should not be negated by the reviewer of the Journal.
- (8) From the viewpoint of academic methodology, regarding different research methods of the same topic, it is not necessary to have “completely the same conclusion.” This is the basic concept of academic research and I do not need to explain any more. According to the review comments, the reviewer seems to review my article based on some preconceived viewpoints (may be wrong) of philology so that he brings up the unreasonable requests and opinions, which violate the fundamental principle of academic research. If it is the fact, the Journal should announce the standpoint of “Our Journal only accepts the articles that adopt the methodology of philology to make the conclusion,” when soliciting articles.
- (9) Finally, this article’s title is *The definition for Being in The Agama Sutras*. “Agama” is Sanskrit, and the corresponding Pali sutras of Theravada Buddhism are “*Nikayas*.” They are generally called as “*The Four Agama Divisions*” and “*The Five Nikaya Divisions*” respectively. If the Journal requests the scope of *The Agama Sutras* in this article to contain the contents of “*Nikayas*,” it means *The Agama Sutras* have nine divisions, but not four. Is it the definition of the Journal for *The Agama Sutras*? Does the academia agree to this kind of definition? The

research scope of this article is clearly limited to *The Agama Sutras*, but the Journal requests “the contrast to *Nikayas*.” Does it meet the academic requirement?

When I titled the article, *The Agama Sutras* was intentionally emphasized in it to clearly define the scope of research as the Chinese *Agama Sutras* rather than the Pali *Nikayas*. Although I have also studied some related information about “*Nikayas*,” I cannot but put it aside in order to meet both the scope and the methodology of research. Furthermore, for example, in your *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, Issue no. 4, the article of *A Study of the Collection of Agama and the Origin of Mahayana Sutras* is restricted to the scope of *The Agama Sutras*; the full text is a study of the collection of the Chinese translation of *The Agama Sutras*, and does not cover *The Five Nikaya Divisions* at all. That article did not cause any confusion of review to the Journal. Therefore, my article, which has the same definition as that one, should not cause any confusion to the Journal either. For another example, in your *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, Issue no. 11, the article of *Gautama Becoming Buddha—the Reconstruction of the Way to Buddhahood through Nikayas* is restricted to the scope of *Nikayas* and does not touch the Chinese *Agama Sutras* at all. It did not cause any confusion to the Journal either. Similarly, my article clearly defines the title with *The Agama Sutras* and thus *The Agama Sutras* are the scope of the whole research. Is it proper that the Journal has different review standards and requests for different authors?

(10) Based on the above reasons, I do not agree with the review comments. It will be appreciated if the Journal can respond to my questions with open and fair review standards.

3. His many claims even violate the viewpoint that the public all agree.

My responses:

- (1) Who is “the public” that you mean? Is that the viewpoint from the two or three members of the committee, from the editorial team of the Journal, or from someone else?
- (2) If the viewpoint of this article, according to the content of sutras, completely agrees to the view of “the public (who?),” this article will have neither innovation nor value to the academia. If the review standards of the Journal are based on “the viewpoint that the public all agree,” the Journal should replace the declaration of “We have the conscientious attitude and open mind, and are willing to accept all different viewpoints,” with that of “The claims of articles submitted to the Journal should not violate the viewpoint that the public all agree.”
- (3) When Yinshun published his works in the early stage, his claims also violated the viewpoints that “the public all agreed” at that time. Master Taixu and the academia at that time also accepted his works for publication as long as his works met certain academic requirements. In the same way, Nicolaus Copernicus, an astronomer, raised “Heliocentrism,” which also violated the viewpoint that “the public all agreed”—Geocentrism—at that time. But his

viewpoint was proved to be the truth afterward. What I have mentioned here in this reply is all basic concepts of academic standards, but I have no choice. What is the level of the academic training and spirit of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, the publisher of the Journal? I am surprised that I have to use the basic concepts of academic research to make these explanations and arguments to the Institute, which proclaims itself as the leader of the Buddhist academia.

- (4) What are the freedom and spirit of academic research? If all the conclusions of articles are requested to meet what “the public all agree,” it is a kind of thinking inspection, not academic research.
- (5) Please clearly state what “the public all agree” should be in the Journal’s future notice of soliciting articles; if my viewpoints are not the same as your so-called “the viewpoint that the public all agree,” I will not submit my article to the Journal for publication in order to save the time and effort.
- (6) Here I expect that the Journal can raise the publicly recognizable academic standards to review this article, and can specifically point out where the misunderstandings and the wrong punctuations of the cited passage of *The Agama Sutras* are in this article, and give me your guidance and convincing statements. Finally, I wish the academic spirit and level of the Journal will not violate what the public expect.

Conclusion:

I understand the difficulty and pressure for the publication of a journal. So, there might be some inevitable negligence and omissions in the review process. I have expressed my opinions about the research methods, considerations of the article’s title, and arguments as above. I sincerely hope the Journal can respond to my arguments with care. In case there is any impoliteness in this reply letter, I would like to apologize and beg your understanding.

Best Regards,

Tsai Lichen

The author of *The Definition of Being in The Agama Sutras*

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