

Inaugural Statement

The publication of the *Journal of True Enlightenment* is not just a new journal in the Buddhist academia; it is an inevitable responsibility for us, as the Buddha's followers who actually realize Tathagatagarbha, to worldwide propagate the true Buddha dharma to both the Buddhist academia and the philosophical society. For the propagation of Buddhism from the very beginning, one branch, called Theravada Buddhism, spread southward from India to Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, etc., mainly in southeast Asia; another branch, called Mahayana (Great-vehicle) Buddhism, spread northward to China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, and has gone through flourishing and declining for more than two thousand and five hundred years. Nowadays in India, the true orthodox Buddhism has been completely extinguished with only a few superficial appearances left, and the substance has been replaced by the non-Buddhist *tantrism* of couple-practice. About Theravada Buddhism, although it can still keep the appearance of sound-hearer Buddhism and is not defiled by the non-Buddhist *tantrism*, it is rare to find the saints who can personally realize the sound-hearer liberation now. As for Mahayana Buddhism, there are only Buddhist rituals and the mind-consciousness dharma now in China, which has just recovered from the ravage of the Cultural Revolution. In both Japan and Korea, only the appearance of Buddhist rituals but not practice remains and there is no even the mind-consciousness practice like in China. Therefore the practitioners in China, Japan and Korea cannot touch the real content of the practice and realization to fulfill the Buddhahood way of the great-vehicle Buddhism. Owing to the recent spreading of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism to the global areas like Europe, America and Australia, Westerners have understood Buddhism for only more than two hundred years through both the Japanese Buddhist researchers, who did not actually realize Tathagatagarbha but published papers with conceptual imagination, and the Tibetan *tantric* couple-practice practitioners, who completely distorted the real Buddhism and were in fact Lamaists but not Buddhists at all. For the future continuation of Buddhism, only Taiwanese Buddhism, which stands for the Chinese traditional Buddhism, has still a slight hope of developing the true Buddhism. Therefore, the everlasting of the true Buddha dharma is the most significant meaning and mission for the publication of the *Journal of True Enlightenment*.

However, it is difficult for us to imagine in advance the conditions to establish the True Enlightenment Education Foundation and publish the *Journal of True Enlightenment*. Since the twentieth century, most resources of the Taiwanese Buddhist society have been dominated by the four Buddhist groups: Dharma Drum Mountain, Chung Tai Mountain, Fo Guang Shan, and Tzu Chi. But all four groups with action oppose the true Tathagatagarbha dharma, which is advocated by the Chinese traditional Buddhism and our foundation. The reason why they oppose us is that

the content of the Tathagatagarbha dharma propagated by the Buddhist True Enlightenment Practitioners Association, as the main benefactor of True Enlightenment Education Foundation, and me, as the secondary benefactor of it, aims to help people personally realize the true reality of the eighth consciousness, Tathagatagarbha, which is taught in the consciousness-only theory of the orthodox Buddhism. This Tathagatagarbha dharma provides a contrast to the dharma those four groups propagate, which falls into the conscious state and makes no difference with the non-Buddhist permanence view. The contrast also incidentally reflects the fact that their teachings do not conform to the tradition of “verifying the mind with mind” in the Zen School and the ultimate teachings of the three-vehicle sutras in the Doctrinal School. Nevertheless, establishing the True Enlightenment Education Foundation and entering the Buddhist academia were not our original intention to spread the Buddha dharma. It is just like that we simply concentrated on the practice and propagation of the Tathagatagarbha dharma and did not want to criticize any Buddhist group over ten years ago. But when the Buddhists read the publications of the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association or the True Wisdom Publishing Co., which are based on the evidence of Buddhist sutras and the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha, they will understand the true dharma more in depth, and unavoidably discover, by comparison, those four groups’ misunderstandings on the Buddha dharma. Due to the fear that their followers may leave gradually, all four groups take many actions in private to restrain their followers from reading our books, deprive them of the right to obtain the true dharma, and let them lose the freedom of both understanding and choice. In current Taiwan where the democracy and freedom have been promoted a lot, it is really regretful that the behavior of violating religious freedom still exists. The reason why they behave so we think is the consideration of losing their reputation, wealth and followers. On the other hand, since starting to spread the dharma, we have never been concerned about any personal reputation, wealth or followers, and have not gotten any worldly benefit either. Without aspiring to personal reputation, wealth or followers, we just elaborate the true dharma against the false ones according to conditions, rescue the misguided learners, and thus of course displease those masters with wrong teachings. After our diligent endeavor for over ten years, what we have obtained is only our selfless contributions, and none of us have gotten any personal benefit from the society.

In order to forbid their followers to read our books, all these four groups, Dharma Drum Mountain, Chung Tai Mountain, Fo Guang Shan, and Tzu Chi, rebuff, distort and slander the true Tathagatagarbha dharma in private. We are thus forced to passively respond to their anti-freedom actions by publishing more books to clarify their irrational distortion and defamation of the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha. However, we criticize the false views of Shi Yinshun, whom all four groups believe in and highly praise, actively rather than respond passively; it is because all his publications of forty-one books are based on the false views of the

six-consciousness theory of Tibetan Secret Schools, which are originated from the ancient Indian non-Buddhist *tantrism* and are in fact Lamaism that seizes the position of Buddhism now but are not real Buddhism. Yinshun completely distorted and slandered the Chinese traditional Buddhist thought, which emphasizes on the personally realizable Tathagatagarbha dharma, as the thought of Brahma-self or Divine-self. Yinshun's books provide a theoretical base against the true Tathagatagarbha dharma for all four groups and let them spread the conscious permanence view based on it. Although Yinshun's thoughts are full of mistakes and hence cannot avoid being extensively corrected by the realizers according to doctrine or inference and being unable to respond their criticism at all, these four groups never want to depart from Yinshun's conscious permanence view. The Chinese traditional Buddhism, which is the personally realizable Tathagatagarbha dharma, is the kernel of the true original Buddhist doctrine and the main value for the existence of global three-vehicle Buddhism; it is not only the unique dependency for the practitioners of Mahayana Buddhism to see the way and enter the stage of cultivating the way, but also the only support for the practitioners of Theravada Buddhism to avoid falling into the state of complete extinction in nirvanic liberation. However, some monks and nuns of Yinshun School, who have operated for several decades and now occupy important positions in the Taiwanese Buddhist society, have severely destroyed the Buddhist core doctrine of Tathagatagarbha for many years before the establishment of the Buddhist True Enlightenment Practitioners Association. Due to this reason, our association, after endeavoring for over ten years, cannot get any public support from other Buddhist groups and still solely faces these Buddhist monks, nuns and their followers who wrongly claim, "Buddha Sakyamuni did not personally realize the eighth consciousness, Tathagatagarbha." After spreading for several decades, the false view of Yinshun School's six-consciousness theory is very influential now. It results in that, in Taiwan, the practitioners of Theravada Buddhism cannot eliminate their self-views and the practitioners of Mahayana Buddhism cannot personally realize Tathagatagarbha, having no chance to see the way of both the great and small vehicles. None can deny that Yinshun and his followers are the persons who badly destroy the Buddha dharma. Therefore, the objective of establishing the True Enlightenment Education Foundation and the unavoidable mission of the realized Buddha's followers are to transmit the information of "Teaching sentient beings to personally realize Tathagatagarbha is the unique reason that Buddha Sakyamuni appeared in the world," to the whole world, and further into the Buddhist academia under Shi Zhaohui's invitation.

As the only Buddhist group that personally realizes Tathagatagarbha nowadays in the whole world, we cannot get away from the fact that very few people understand the kernel of Buddhism should be based on the realization of Tathagatagarbha, and that many Buddhist learners lose the chances of personal realization and seeing-the-way. At the same time, we must do something on the fact that the base of Taiwanese Buddhism has been completely replaced, negated and destroyed

by the non-Buddhist permanence views of Yinshun School, all four groups, and Lamaism. Hence in recent years, we have changed our attitude, with the hope of rescuing the misguided learners, from passive responding to active analyzing and discoursing on the doctrine against the four groups who have badly destroyed the true Buddha dharma. We also hope all four groups, who have great influential power, can return to the true dharma of realizing Tathagatagarbha of the Chinese traditional Buddhism so as to benefit the existence of Buddhism and the propagation of the true dharma; then those actions will benefit themselves on their future personal realization of Tathagatagarbha as well. This will be the best result to benefit the whole Buddhist society. But from the current fact, all four groups still insist on their false views, do not want to give up their evil thought of the conscious permanence view, and continuously rebuff and slander the true Tathagatagarbha dharma in private. Although we have expressed our kind intention of communication for over ten years, there is no positive response yet.

We have extensively criticized Yinshun's false views, but intentionally did not comment on the error discourses in Shi Zhaohui's books and postponed publicly criticizing her followers' discourses so as to reserve the opportunity for helping her get enlightened in the future. Shi Zhaohui of Buddhist Hong Shi Institute inherits the claims from Shi Yinshun against the realization of Tathagatagarbha, and cannot reply to our detailed criticism, which has been done for several years, on many Yinshun's errors of opposing the realization of Tathagatagarbha at all. She said that Yinshun's teachings could be criticized, but she always threw the books that were mailed from some critics into the wastepaper basket directly. Then, she asked the critics to criticize Yinshun's viewpoints in the Buddhist academia (reference to the tape of *The Ethics of Buddhism* from the TV channel of Dharma Realm Satellite). It in fact indicates that, in the Buddhist society, she has no wisdom to debate the doctrine completely. She thinks that our discourses, derived from the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha, on the Buddha dharma are from the viewpoints of Buddhist believers, and cannot pass the inspection of the academic viewpoints because the standpoint of religious belief should be removed in academic discussion. In other words, she has given up her standpoint as a Buddhist nun, who should believe in the Buddhist doctrine, and does not want to debate with us on the subject of "the realization of Tathagatagarbha being the unique cause for Buddha Sakyamuni to become a buddha." Although she has lost her standpoint as a Buddhist nun since her inviting us to enter the academia, which does not belong to Buddhism, we, based on the basic etiquette, cannot help but enter the academia with pleasure and debate with her. We sincerely hope she will be able to publish some Buddhist academic papers to prove that Buddha's achievement of Buddhahood did not result from the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha, that the nirvana of the sound-hearer Buddhism is not complete extinction, and that the sound-hearer *arhats* have realized and attained Buddha's wisdom of the dharma-realm truth after she has denied the eighth consciousness, Tathagatagarbha.

From the global scope, the debate of the Buddha dharma in the Taiwanese Buddhist society may not matter much in the current chaotic world. But from the essence of this event, we can find that the event of the debate on the Buddhist doctrine in Taiwan has the same tempo with the Buddhist events in other countries, or even with other non-Buddhist religious events. That is to say, the focus of both the Taiwanese Buddhist event and the global Buddhist academia is the same in nature. It is even exactly the same core question on exploring the truth of the universe in the global philosophical academia. The current key questions explored in Taiwan are the following: “Although the traditional Buddhism, starting from ancient time in India till nowadays, has claimed the realization of Tathagatagarbha, does Tathagatagarbha really exist? Does the method of personal realization itself possess objectivity, validity, repeated realizability, and the characteristic of being able to be inspected iteratively? Should the Buddhist academia adopt that method? Are the methods often used by the Buddhist academia really precise without any mistake in both practice and theory? Are these methods able to be repeatedly realized and inspected?” Of course there are lots of extended questions but we will not list them all here. Similar questions were brought up in Japan too. For example, Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shiro initiated Critical Buddhism and let people reconsider the following: “Is the Tathagatagarbha thought the kernel of Buddhism? Is the critical method with objectivity and validity, and should the academia adopt that method? Can the way they criticize Buddhism be adopted unconditionally in practice?” Similarly, there are lots of relevant questions of Critical Buddhism that both Japanese scholars cannot face and we will not list all here as well.

Therefore, the focus and substance of those questions are the same. Those are all related to the question of the first philosophy that the philosophical academia explores, and the questions of epistemology and methodology like “What is the real Buddhism? What does the name of Tathagatagarbha mean? What are the similarity and difference between the neither-arising-nor-ceasing of Tathagatagarbha and the permanent existence of God (or Allah) in other religions? Can the practitioners of monotheism personally realize the existence of God, the creator of the world, and the place where He stays? Can the same experience on realizing the permanency of God be repeatedly verified by other persons? Can anyone see and interact with God after personally realizing Him? Can we understand and identify the contents of Tathagatagarbha? What methods should be used to research Tathagatagarbha?” But the broader philosophical questions are the following: “Is the substance of the questions explored by both Eastern and Western philosophies the same or different? If the substance is the same, should the final truth be the same? What is the real face (the origin) of life? If a philosophical theory cannot be objectively verified but is just a purely inferred thought, is there any value for its existence? What methods can precisely explore and verify the true reality of the universe and life?” From the concerns of the Buddhist events in both Taiwan and Japan, we can find that the paces of both Buddhism and the vigorous developing

global religions have the same tempo. But here we only concentrate on the exploration of both the Buddhist doctrine and the origin of the universe rather than the problems of worldly affairs.

The causes and conditions have been developing so wondrously and incredibly; although we know the true content of Buddhism had faded away in the world, we did not think about how to improve it before. We simply pity those practitioners in both China and Taiwan who aspire to see the way of the great-vehicle and liberation but fail to achieve it. On the other hand, the four Taiwanese Buddhist groups—Dharma Drum Mountain, Chung Tai Mountain, Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi—have dominated most of the Buddhist resources in Taiwan, but almost all of them follow Shi Yinshun’s false view of the six-consciousness theory, which claims that no Tathagatagarbha can be personally realized and only the view of “the nature of all arising-and-ceasing dependent-arising dharmas being empty” is true. Unfortunately, this kind of claims has influenced the Buddhist society of China for over ten years and the Chinese traditional Buddhism has only the external appearance left now. The truth of the great-vehicle Buddhism has been messed up by Shi Yinshun’s many publications. We just want to contribute our effort, although very little, to diligently help the practitioners of Mahayana Buddhism realize Tathagatagarbha so as to enter the stage of seeing-the-way, and at the same time, to help them realize the liberation of Theravada Buddhism as well. By accepting Shi Zhaohui’s invitation, we are going to enter the Buddhist academia; we hope our endeavor made in Taiwan can help both academic scholars and Buddha’s followers in the world start to understand the theory and methods of realizing Tathagatagarbha so that the real face of the wondrous dharma of the great-vehicle Buddhism during the Buddha’s time can reappear. In the near future, we also will actually and gradually rebuild the bodhisattva *sangha* community of the great-vehicle Buddhism that is similar to the *sangha* of the Buddha’s time—both home-staying bodhisattvas, similar to Manjusri or Samantabhadra, and home-leaving bodhisattvas, similar to Maitreya or Vasudhara, live together over a long period of time in the True Enlightenment Temple to concentrate on spreading the dharma and benefiting the public.

Entering the Buddhist academia and publishing our own journal in fact do not have a necessary relation. As Buddha’s followers who have personally realized Tathagatagarbha, we only have a simple thought of looking for a proper channel that could deliver our information to help Buddha’s followers realize Tathagatagarbha and obtain the virtue and merit of seeing-the-way. By this way, we can rescue the followers who have wrong views, respond to Shi Zhaohui’s invitation of entering the Buddhist academia to debate, and even communicate with the global Buddhist academia. Nevertheless, after evaluating current environment, the academic researchers in our association all conclude that current Taiwanese Buddhist academia is almost dominated by the schools led by Shi Yinshun, who claimed that no Tathagatagarbha can be realized and that the view of the empty nature of dependent-arising is based on the “no-cause-but-condition-only” theory rather than Buddha’s cause-and-condition theory centered with Tathagatagarbha. According to our

academic researchers' comments, we are likely to face unfair heckling and blocking (in fact, it already happened), and completely have no chance to claim Tathagatagarbha in the Taiwanese Buddhist academia. Being the religious believers who pursue the truth, we could not imagine that the behavior of unfairness, irrationality and unwillingness to pursue the fact could happen in the Taiwanese Buddhist academia, which always claims to pursue the truth. With the Buddhist enthusiasm and the optimistic attitude to the Taiwanese Buddhist academia, we still thought if we could explain clearly and provide enough evidence of the ultimate teachings from the sutras, the academia, based on the noble spirit of pursuing the truth, might change. We should not jump to the conclusion of negating the Taiwanese Buddhist academia before we had a trial.

Therefore, Tsai Lichen, one of our association members, wrote an article entitled *The Definition of Being in The Agama Sutras*¹ to prove, by citing related sutras, the existence of the ultimate teachings that Tathagatagarbha permanently exists and can be personally realized. In addition to expounding “the possibility of realizing Tathagatagarbha,” in his article, Tsai also explored the definition of “being” in ontology of Western philosophy, which has been studied for more than two thousand years, explained that Buddha defined “being” in *The Agama Sutras* with the method of personal realization, and discussed the differences between both definitions. In order to avoid the possible unfair treatment, Tsai carefully considered and decided to submit his article to the journal of *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies* because it declares itself the best in the Taiwanese Buddhist academia and always claims, “We have the conscientious attitude and open mind, and are willing to accept all different viewpoints.” He thought with this kind of attitude, that Journal would treat his article rationally and provide a fair opportunity for publication.

Unfortunately, the situation we had worried about really happened. The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, the publisher of the *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Studies*, commented Tsai's article with the conclusion of “his many claims even violating the viewpoint that the public all agree”² without further explanation. That conclusion completely conflicts with the academic review criteria, and violates their ideal of “open mind” and “accepting all different viewpoints” as well. The paper review procedure similar to the thought inspection under despotism should not happen in current free and open academia, but it really happened in front of us and there was even no specific reason about “which consensus being violated.” Given the unconvinced reviewers' comments, Tsai wrote a reply letter to reviewers. Due to strong evidence in his reply letter, The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies agreed to review his article again. As a matter of fact, Tsai declared his premise in the article by citing the passage from *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 37 (*Puppha, Samyutta-nikaya*, S.22:94), as follows: “I (Buddha) do not argue with the mundane, but the mundane argue with me.” Then Buddha explained the former clause that the mundane thought,

¹ Refer to pp. 209-240 of this issue of the Journal.

² Refer to pp. 241-247 for the *Author's Reply*.

“The dharmas of the worldly five aggregates (*skandhas*) with the impermanent, bitter and changeable characteristics are being; the dharmas of the worldly five aggregates with the permanent, everlasting and unchangeable characteristics are nothingness,” but Buddha “did not argue with them.” Consequently, what does the latter clause exactly mean about “the mundane arguing with me?” Obviously from semantics, Buddha was not a mundane wise man but a supra-mundane wise man instead; it implied that the supra-mundane dharma—Tathagatagarbha—must be permanent, everlasting and unchangeable and is the argument between the supra-mundane wise man, Buddha, and the mundane wise. This also reflects a tremendous difference between the Tathagatagarbha realizers and non-realizers; all realizers can easily comprehend the real meaning of Buddha’s teaching, but the non-realizers, even after reading the statement, still insist that Buddha did not talk about the existence of Tathagatagarbha in *The Agama Sutras*. Therefore, Buddha concluded in the following statement of the same passage that the persons who did not personally realize Tathagatagarbha could not see the Tathagatagarbha dharma, even Buddha already elaborated it for them; Buddha said those persons were blind and helpless by any means. From the above evidence, we can conclude that the wisdom attained from the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha is the prerequisite to fully understand the meaning of sutras. It also proves the importance of positivist spirit in the Buddhist society. The Buddhist academia and philosophic society have ignored its importance for quite a long time so that no body can personally realize Tathagatagarbha and bring forth *prajna* wisdom to know the true reality. From the above statement of the sutra, Tsai has explained that Buddha regarded the permanently dwelling and non-ceasing true-self as the main premise for the dependent-arising with empty nature of the aggregates. But because Yinshun and his followers have claimed and gotten used to the wrong theory for several decades, all four groups do not accept Buddha’s eight-consciousness theory. Regardless of their wrong thought, many Buddha’s followers and academic scholars still admit Buddha’s eight-consciousness theory. Therefore, the Institute’s statement of Tsai’s “many claims even violating the viewpoint that the public all agree” is questionable. In addition, many persons in the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association have personally realized Tathagatagarbha now, and the number of realizers increases every year. The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies claims that Buddha did not say the eight-consciousness theory; it implies they blame that Buddha had less wisdom than the practitioners of our association so that He could only recognize the six consciousnesses of the consciousness-aggregate rather than the eighth consciousness, Tathagatagarbha. Nevertheless, what *The Four Agama Sutras* record does not state as the Institute’s claim.

All teachings in the great-vehicle Buddhism and its sutras regard the personal realization of Tathagatagarbha as the kernel; the personal realization of the two-vehicle Buddhism, according to the historic facts in *The Four Agama Sutras*, has the central thought of believing in the permanent

existence of Tathagatagarbha so that the state of the remainderless nirvana becomes real, permanent and unchangeable, and does not fall into the nihilistic state. It is not just us who claim Tathagatagarbha as the kernel of Buddhism; it has been so since the very beginning when Buddha established Buddhism. Many examples can be easily found in *The Agama Sutras*; I have cited and elaborated them clearly in my seven volumes of *The Correct Meanings of The Agama Sutras*. This view was really recorded in both *The Four Agama Sutras* of Mahayana Buddhism and the *Nikaya* of Theravada Buddhism, which states the attachment *alaya*, happiness *alaya*, delight *alaya*, joy *alaya* and exhausting the life-and-death aggregates; not only the Chinese traditional Buddhism claimed it in the past, but also many modern knowledgeable Buddhism researchers have the similar viewpoint. By contrast, the claim of “the six-consciousness theory of dependent-arising being empty,” which totally denies the existence of Tathagatagarbha and has the substance of complete extinction, was only initiated by a few Japanese Buddhist scholars in last few centuries, and then exaggerated and enlarged by the contemporary monks, nuns and scholars in Mainland China or Taiwan like Ouyang Jingwu and Lv Zheng of China Interior Institute or Shi Yinshun of Taiwan Fu Yan Buddhist Institute and his followers, who blindly followed the academic methodology of Western theology. Under the background of both the degeneration of Buddhism after the Cultural Revolution in China and the extreme tolerance of Taiwanese traditional Buddhist society for Shi Yinshun, this false viewpoint, which lacked both the personal realization experience and the reasonable inference, was over exaggerated and enlarged to gradually replace the eight-consciousness theory of the tradition Buddhism, propagated from Japan to China and Taiwan, and dominated all the announcing channels of the Taiwanese Buddhist academia finally. Based on Shi Yinshun’s six-consciousness theory, The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies simply and arbitrarily made the review comment with a sentence to completely overrule and deny the correct Tathagatagarbha definition, which has been recognized by the whole Buddhist society and academia for more than two thousand years. They peremptorily denied the documented evidence about Tathagatagarbha in *The Agama Sutras*, which are the most early and reliable documents of Buddhism. They claim that the philological textual contrast is an important base, but behave in the reverse way. This kind of review comments totally violates the commitment of “having the conscientious attitude and open mind, and being willing to accept all different viewpoints” that The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies committed in public. It is really regrettable.

After receiving the second review comments, the author found the review criteria of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies were full of not only academic but also religious prejudices; these criteria completely followed Shi Yinshun’s self-created no-cause-but-condition-only theory and excluded all the other traditional religious or academic viewpoints; they did not refer to the viewpoints of the treatises in the global Buddhist academia either; with totally

excluding the important methodologies of positivism and hermeneutics, they parochially adopted the viewpoints of Shi Yinshun School, and requested the author to use only the method of philological textual contrast. Moreover, although requesting the author to use the method of philology, they completely denied the records of the personal realization on liberation in the sutras and the possibility of personal realization in Buddhism. It is exactly the academic and religious prejudice. For example, when the author provided the evidence of the sutras to prove the permanent existence of Tathagatagarbha, the reviewers of the committee argued with the statement of “The fourteen questions of Tathagatagarbha being permanent, etc. are unidentifiable,” arbitrarily overturn the author’s discourse, and denied the rightfulness of discussing the truth of facts. They completely ignored the fact that the discussion of these questions, as recorded in *The Agama Sutras*, was not absolutely unidentifiable. In both *Nikaya* and *The Agama Sutras*, although there are the records that Buddha answered some questions with no-identification, He explained that because the questioners only recognize the five aggregates but do not personally realize Tathagatagarbha, it is useless to answer or expound the Tathagatagarbha of the nirvanic origin for them; therefore I do not answer. Thus it is called no-identification. The sutras also state, “The four noble truths are suchness; they neither leave suchness nor differ from suchness, and thus are called the noble truths”³. This explains that the liberation way is built based on Tathagatagarbha, and is suchness; it is not the nihilistic emptiness with the state of both the five aggregates’ extinction and no Tathagatagarbha left. Therefore, the theoretical base of the actual review of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies is biased. With denying the existence of Tathagatagarbha, the theory of Shi Yinshun School leads to the situation that the nirvana of the two-vehicles is inevitable to fall into the nihilistic state. In order to get rid of that dilemma, they cannot help but set up an illusion true-suchness as the appearance of extinction, which can never be personally realized and is in fact only a setting name, to avoid others’ criticism of nihilism. As stated in the sutras, Buddha said it was meaningless to explain whether Tathagatagarbha exists or not for those people who badly lacked the Buddhist knowledge; He would enable them to eliminate the self-view first by any way rather than expound the existence of Tathagatagarbha; therefore in this situation, it was called no-identification—not identifying the possibility of seeing-the-way. On the other hand, for those bodhisattvas or the *arhats* who had personally realized nirvana, the same questions were definitely not unidentifiable; instead, they were very important questions and that made Buddha even explain them more deeply; for example, the sutras of both the second and the third round of dharma transmission are all about the truth of this fundamental consciousness, Tathagatagarbha; it was by no means unidentifiable. Therefore in *The Four Agama Sutras*, Buddha used lots of space to explain to the *arhats* that the state of nirvana was not nihilistically empty, but steady, cool, real, permanent and unchangeable. For those questioners who did not have the view of the existence of

³ *Puppha, Samyutta-nikaya, S.56:20 and 27, and The Kindred Sayings, Sutra 417.*

Tathagatagarbha, they were not qualified for any discussion of the three-vehicle Buddha dharma; thus Buddha replied their questions with no-identification. The reviewers of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies overturned this viewpoint might be due to the reason that they did not read the records of *The Agama Sutras*, had read but unable to understand them, or purposely denied it with prejudice. It is obvious that, from the methodology of philology, we should treat all documental evidence equally; every sentence should have the same effectiveness unless it is actually proved to be false. This is a basic and necessary attitude for a scholar who adopts the methodology of philology in his research. It is doubtful that a scholar who does not have this attitude can have reliable research results, let alone the fairness to review articles with this kind of prejudicial attitude. All above viewpoints are based on the most ancient and correct philological documents, for your further interest, please refer to *A Further Discussion on the Fourteen Questions of Identification in The Agama Sutras* in current issue of this Journal for detailed evidence and discourses.

To be a right methodology, the research method of philology must follow some principles. If anyone violates those principles, his academic research is not for pursuing the truth but will become a farce with preset standpoint. Similarly, if the academia wants to obtain the fruition of the rational criticism and avoid a farce, the method of criticism should also follow some principles so as to be a reasonable one. Based on the methodology, when criticizing is used as a method to study Buddhism, it is called “Critical Buddhism.” With the same rationale, when the personal realization is used as a method to understand Buddhism, it should be called “**Positivist Buddhism**” rather than other names because the persons who are qualified to criticize the Buddhist doctrine must be those who have personally realized and thoroughly understood the contents of both Tathagatagarbha and sound-hearer liberation described in the sutras. The only way to recognize the real Buddhism is through the positivist method and spirit, But not philological study That is the base of human beings to recognize both nirvana and the true reality. For example, how can we recognize the taste of the water in a cup? There is no way to clearly, correctly and completely describe the taste and temperature of the water through language; the only way to completely recognize it is through drinking it in person. Through this personal realization, then one can clearly, correctly and completely describe the taste of the water, and know how to objectively describe the taste and temperature of it. Therefore there is a Chinese proverb of “Like someone drinking water, only he knows how cold or warm it is,” to explain the importance of personal realization. Similarly, most sentient beings have never recognized Tathagatagarbha since the past beginningless eons because they have only perceived the arising-and-ceasing changeable dharmas since then. They never realize Tathagatagarbha, which is everlasting and neither-arising-nor-ceasing, and thus can only speculate or imagine Tathagatagarbha after hearing it. Most people even think it is impossible for them to personally realize it during this life. Hence personal realization is the only way to

recognize Tathagatagarbha, and the Tathagatagarbha realizers are those who are qualified to comment It.

Tathagatagarbha is indeed personally realizable. Until this month, October 2007, there are more than three hundred persons in our association, mostly in Taiwan and very few in both China and the west coast of the U.S., who have personally realized Tathagatagarbha. The number of realizers is increasing with the rate of over sixty persons every year. Through personal realization, they have found the origin of life, really verify the inherent, intrinsic and pristine nirvana, and can correctly understand the true meanings of Buddha's teachings in the sutras of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, rather than through only speculation or imagination. They can, through realization, personally verify the existence of Tathagatagarbha, and observe and experience various substantial natures of It. For those who have personally realized Tathagatagarbha, it is absolutely impossible for them to make the mistake of recognition or methodology because this recognition is exactly what they have walked through in person. By this way they can truly understand the methodology, liberation and the true reality of Buddhism. Therefore, the method of personal realization is the unique and precise way to completely understand Buddhism. As for the detailed steps and procedures for personal realization, we will not discuss them here.

These are very important applicability problems in the methodology of Buddhist academic research, and have been brought up in both Taiwan and Japan already; the Buddhist researchers should seriously face them. For this reason, we publish the article of *The Definition of Being in The Agama Sutras* by Tsai and his twice reply letters to review comments from the committee of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies with English version as well.⁴ In these letters, some important contents are worthy of attention for the Buddhist academia; therefore we publish them to show these fundamental problems on the methodology of the Buddhist academic research with the hope that the scholars who are interested in this topic can provide their valuable comments.

Although we think there should be some Buddhist academic organizations in Taiwan that still have the spirit of fairness, it is unfair that these organizations generally restrict the qualification of article authors to teaching scholars. That is to say, only the academic researchers can have the voice about Buddhism rather than the real Buddhist practitioners. One example is that the old Monk Guangqin in Taiwan, who is illiterate, is a personal realizer recognized by the Taiwanese Buddhist society, but he could not have any voice in the Buddhist academia. He is a target to be studied rather than a speaker to explain his own realization. If the contents of his personal realization were distorted by any researchers, he could not even speak for himself in the academia under current environment. Based on the fact, will an enlightened Buddhist sage have better explanation on the real Buddhism or an academic researcher? If the explanations between them are

⁴ Refer to pp. 249-280, the *Author's Reply (2)*, which identifies some major errors of the Institute's review comments based on the evidence of *The Agama Sutras* in both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.

different, which one is more reliable? Apparently the former possesses the capability to understand the real meanings of Buddhism, and the latter can only express the imagined Buddhism but not the real one. This ridiculous phenomenon is just like that if Socrates, who learned by himself, lived in current environment, he still could not have any voice in the philosophic academia. This kind of contradiction has been introspected in the global Buddhist academia, but the Taiwanese Buddhist academia does not have this kind of self-examination yet.

Here we would like to appeal to the Buddhist academia for thinking about the following questions: “Based on the core value of pursuing the truth, what kind of academic system can really benefit people to discover the truth? Is it possible that only the Buddhist academic researchers can discover the truth rather than the personal realizers? Is it possible that the practical and personal realizers have more chances to discover the truth? Is the purpose of the Buddhist academic research to discover the truth? If some other theory is more reasonable, should we get rid of our previous wrong viewpoints? Should we accept the viewpoint that we cannot reasonably overrule or argue? Or should we insist our original superficial viewpoints and temporarily keep the unreal reputation in the Buddhist society? What kind of review criteria of papers can help us explore the truth more objectively and efficiently? Should the methods of personal realization be excluded in the methodology of the academic research?” At the same time, we expect that the academic society can deliberately inspect if the viewpoints brought up by the authors in this Journal help pursue the truth or not, rather than focus on arguing the wording. As stated in *The Kindred Sayings*, Sutra 923 (*Kesi, Avguttara-nikaya*, A. IV. 111), Buddha said, similar to the horse training, there were three ways to train and adjust people as follows: soft way, hard way, and both-soft-and-hard way. Similarly, the personal realizers of Tathagatagarbha, based on the substance of real experience, debate with both-soft-and-hard way in the Buddhist academia and will insist on the truth and justice. We also expect the Buddhist scholars, especially those from the Buddhist society, can seriously contemplate and recognize the following two points. Firstly, one will violate the ultimate target of pursuing the truth and goodness in academia if he cannot recognize the limit on the application of research methods, does not follow the experimental criteria, or, based on the viewpoint through only wording inference, misleads readers to depart from the true reality. Secondly, please agree to our spirit of pursuing the truth in the academic research for benefiting Buddhist learners and to our attitude of rational and faithful debate against the irrational arguers without any compromise, and please do not ask us to restrict our personal realizers to consider those false view speakers’ reputation and wealth so as to write their articles hypocritically.

Under current hypocritical environment of the Taiwanese Buddhist academia, which is exclusively dominated by big Buddhist groups that neither rationally study others’ discourses nor provide reasonable explanation for discussion, we realize that, if we do not have our own journal, we will lose our voice for Buddha Sakyamuni’s true dharma of personally realizing the

Tathagatagarbha of the true reality in the Buddhist academia, and lose the opportunity to benefit the academic society too. Being the unique group of personally realizing Tathagatagarbha in the Buddhist society nowadays, and responding to Shi Zhaohui's invitation to enter the academia, we are obligated to publish this Journal to strive for our right to speak in academia, and to take the historical mission of revitalizing the true Tathagatagarbha dharma of the traditional Buddhism.

About the religious prejudice, it is surprising that The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies denied the possibility of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha. Shi Shengyen of Dharma Drum Mountain declared that he has certified more than ten followers for enlightenment and seeing the buddha-nature, i.e., they have enlightened and personally realized Tathagatagarbha. These are two extremely contradictory and confusing events. Dharma Drum Mountain have proclaimed their enlightenment (the realization of Tathagatagarbha) for a long time; although their content of realization is in fact the sixth consciousness, which is corrected by us in the book series of *Commenting by Koans*, rather than the eighth consciousness, Tathagatagarbha, of Zen School, at least both they and we have the consensus on the possibility of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha. Owing to that, the author of the above-mentioned article in our Journal was puzzled with the following question: "Is that possible the 'personal realizers' of Dharma Drum Mountain did not participate in the Buddhism research of their Institute so that, due to lack of communication, The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies denied the possibility of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha?" Although the possibility is very little, in order to clarify this standpoint, the author mailed his article and the committee's review comments to Shi Shengyen himself, who declared he has enlightened (personally realized Tathagatagarbha), for reconfirmation. Surprisingly, Shi Shengyen agreed to the standpoint of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, i.e., denying the possibility of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha. His agreement implies that Shi Shengyen denies the possibility of his and his followers' enlightenment (personal realization of Tathagatagarbha) although they all proclaim that they have enlightened and thus have realized Tathagatagarbha. It is an extremely contradictory behavior. Although Shi Shengyen declared his enlightenment and the realization of Tathagatagarbha, and we have also provided evidence in *The Agama Sutras* of Mahayana Buddhism (the *Nikaya* of Theravada Buddhism also having similar evidence) for Buddha's teachings of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha, The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, which belongs to Dharma Drum Mountain, denies the possibility of personal realization with the support from Shi Shengyen. Is that not an extremely severe religious prejudice and discrimination for such kind of behavior as allowing oneself to claim the realization of Tathagatagarbha, disallowing others to claim that it is realizable, and agreeing to the standpoint of denying the realization of Tathagatagarbha claimed by his subsidiary institute? Because the true dharma and speaking channel were unreasonably blocked, our only choice is to establish the True Enlightenment Education Foundation and publish our own

journal to proclaim the true dharma so that the Buddhist academia can inspect and discuss it altogether. Due to this reason, the review committee of this Journal has a brief comment in the *Editorial Note* on the behavior of Shi Shengyen of Dharma Drum Mountain, who violates his own Zen thought and betrays his vision of establishing The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, so as to expose the actual environment of the Taiwanese Buddhist academia, keep the record as the evidence of the Buddhist history, and explain the reason and mission of publishing this Journal as well.

Soon after Shi Shengyen had approved his twelve followers' enlightenment in public, his explanation on the content of personal realization of Tathagatagarbha, which is another kind of sayings, was posted on the website as follows: "A vacuum state is Tathagatagarbha; Tathagatagarbha is only a set-up name; there is no real thing that is called Tathagatagarbha."⁵ That means Shi Shengyen regards the nihilistic emptiness as Tathagatagarbha, or regards the mind-consciousness as Tathagatagarbha. But in the same passage, he says, "Keeping in the vacuum state but following conditions, from Buddha's standpoint, this conditions-following is wondrous existence. Therefore, Tathagatagarbha is not the first cause or the Brahma-self. If someone can personally realize the vacuum state of Tathagatagarbha, he has attained liberation based on the observation of Tathagatagarbha's dependent-arising." The above two sayings contradict each other completely. Furthermore, Buddha did not say it like that way but Shi Shengyen implicates Buddha with that false view. He has in fact slandered Buddha already. As he says, if Tathagatagarbha can follow conditions and is the wondrous existence, It is obviously not the nothingness of dependent-arising with emptiness nature because the emptiness of nothingness is not likely to follow conditions. Any dharma that can follow conditions must be a real dharma that can operate or respond, but definitely not a set-up name only. It is impossible for a set-up name to operate or respond. In addition, based on semantics, Shi Shengyen's saying of the view of Tathagatagarbha's dependent-arising means there does exist a real dharma, Tathagatagarbha, which is always operating, and has the dependent-arising nature to be observed through responding to following conditions and through generating all dharmas by following conditions. All saints' teachings of the three rounds of dharma transmission state that Tathagatagarbha (called the womb-entering consciousness in *The Agama Sutras*) enters and stays at a womb so that the name and the form can be generated.⁶ The mind-consciousness cannot enter and stay at a womb. After the fundamental consciousness enters a womb, stays at it, and generates the five sense-organs, the mind-consciousness can then be generated and exist. Therefore, the consciousness that enters and stays at a womb is the fundamental consciousness, Tathagatagarbha, and it is proved that

⁵ The Classroom of Buddhist Theory, The Education of Buddhist Theory, Dharma Drum Mountain Worldwide Web, Website <http://oldweb.ddm.org.tw/index.asp>, 2007/03/21 retrieved. [Editor's note on 2007/11/20: this passage on the website having been deleted.]

⁶ Xiao Pings, *The Correct Meanings of The Agama Sutras*, True Wisdom Publishing Co., 2007, Vol. 2, p.355.

Tathagatagarbha is a really existing dharma. The nihilistic nothingness of dependent-arising with emptiness nature or Tathagatagarbha being only a set-up name, which Shi Shengyen says, should not be regarded as the real vacuum state with wondrous existence because the dependent-arising with emptiness nature of all aggregates, fields and divisions must be the nihilistic emptiness, rather than the emptiness nature of wondrous existence. On the other hand, if someone regards any part of aggregates, fields or divisions as the permanently dwelling and non-perishable dharma, he will become the non-Buddhist with permanence view, who does not eliminate his self-view yet. The above fact shows Shi Shengyen's intention as follows: "He wants others to think that he is a saint who has personally realized Tathagatagarbha, but at the same time, he wants to avoid others exploring that whether he has realized Tathagatagarbha or not. Then, he can be free from his numerous followers' requests of teaching the method of realizing Tathagatagarbha, and get rid of the dilemma of being unable to teach that." This behavior of inconsistency between saying and doing has violated the precept of not lying as a Buddhist monk. Unfortunately, Shi Shengyen is a famous teacher of Zen School in the great-vehicle area, a well-known person in the Buddhist academia and the one in charge of The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Under this abnormal environment, we would like to explain a special way about the authors' names we take temporarily. Some authors of this Journal are still the students of the Taiwanese Buddhist institutes now although they have different views and standpoints from those of their institutes. Because the situation of unfairness becomes more obvious and severe, they must hide their standpoints from the institutes so that they can avoid the repeatedly unfair or irrational treatments and losing the opportunity to obtain the degrees of master or doctor. For the past several decades with the tolerance of the Taiwanese traditional Buddhist society, Shi Yinshun School grew up, became strong, and now almost occupies most resources of the Taiwanese Buddhist academia. Although having this kind of influential power, they can neither comment the correctness of the academic truths from others nor endure those different viewpoints. Due to the requests from some authors and our confirmation after investigating current environment of the Taiwanese Buddhist academia, we agree some authors to use pseudonyms so that their free speech rights can be kept. But the authors should let us know their real names in order to take the responsibility for their articles. At the same time, we will take our responsibility of supervising. After we ensure that the author can be treated fairly, we will announce his or her real name so as to be responsible to the readers and the Buddhist academia. On the other hand, being a balancer of the academic freedom, we also have the responsibility to check each author's identity and provide a fair and public platform for pursuing the academic truth and establishing the model of the modern Buddhist discourse. Any writings that strictly follow the discourse standard of the three-ways-of-knowing are welcome, including those different viewpoints of the scholars in the institutes that we have criticized. We will provide a fair opportunity for publication in this Journal with the condition that

the discourse must conform to the review standard of the three-ways-of-knowing. With these actions, we would like to let those Taiwanese Buddhist institutes with unfair attitude understand that the suppression of the academic speech cannot stop scholars' pursuit and voices of the academic freedom. We hope then those institutes can return to the ultimate targets of the freedom of speech and pursue the truth.

At last, I would like to appreciate the authors' enthusiastic contributions, the editorial committee's cautious review and the publishing team's hard work to make this Journal published smoothly. It also means that the Taiwanese Buddhist academia will enter a new era and both our and global Buddhist research can have the same tempo. Then, we all can be bathed in the mercy sunlight of Buddha Sakyamuni's smile during taking a flower.

Xiao Pings, The Board Chairman
True Enlightenment Education Foundation
October 10th, 2007

