

Teachings on Karmic Retribution in the *Huayan jing* and *Zhancha jing*

ITO Makoto

Adjunct Lecturer, Toyo University, Japan

Visiting Researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies, Toyo University

Abstract

The *Huayan jing* in 80 fascicles and the *Zhancha jing* were both objects of reverence during Empress Wu Zetian's reign in Zhou China. Although they both include teachings on karmic retribution, the two sūtras offer contrasting approaches to the topic. This paper examines the different views on karmic retribution set forth in the two sūtras and aims to gain insight into the significance their ideas may have for us today.

The doctrine of karmic retribution elaborated in the teachings of the second stage (the Stainless Stage) in the Chapter on the Ten Stages in the *Huayan jing* focuses on refraining from bad deeds and practicing the good, at the same time encouraging altruistic practices to save all sentient beings. It presents a positive, ethical theory of practice for advanced practitioners. In contrast, the *Zhancha jing* addresses the anxieties of the sinful and weak-at-heart. The bodhisattva Dizang preaches a method of divination to discern one's negative karma and to perform repentance rituals, enabling the practice of deep meditation to take effect. Here, the focus is on the defilements deeply rooted within the human mind. Despite such differences, the two sūtras share the same idea that in Truth, all that exist are ultimately "like an illusion," that their nature is nirvāṇa.

The two sūtras teach practitioners to observe one's deep-rooted tendencies and true nature. In a modern perspective, they encourage us to scrutinize the latent powers within our mind, enabling us to cope with the negative and to build upon the positive in our quests to improve ourselves and others.

Keywords: *Huayan jing*, *Zhancha jing*, karmic retribution, Three Groups of Pure Morality, One True Realm (華嚴經、占察經、業報論、三聚淨戒、一實境界)

Introduction

It was in the same Zhou era under the reign of Empress Wu Zetian (武則天) that two sūtras, seemingly with little in common, were officially endorsed in China. One was the eighty-fascicle *Flower Ornament Sūtra* (《大方廣佛華嚴經》, hereafter: *Huayan jing*)¹ translated into Chinese in 699 by Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀) and a group of Chinese adepts including Fazang (法藏). Based on a newly acquired Sanskrit text from Khotan, Empress Wu herself contributed an introduction. The other was the *Sūtra of Divining the Good and Bad Karmic Retribution* (《占察善惡業報經》, hereafter: *Zhancha jing*)². This sūtra, whose origin had previously been questioned, was recorded as an authentic sūtra in the *Great Zhou Catalogue* (《大周刊定衆經目錄》) compiled in 695 under the auspices of Empress Wu. Although it is easy to see that the teachings in the *Zhancha jing* is centred on the doctrine of karmic retribution, it is interesting to note that the *Huayan jing* also has a section propagating the doctrine with distinct differences in its orientation compared with the *Zhancha jing*.

In the first fascicle of the *Zhancha jing*, the bodhisattva Dizang (地藏菩薩, Kṣitigarbha) preaches the method of divination using dice-like utensils called “wooden-wheels” (木輪) to discern one’s negative and positive karma and their retribution, followed by elaborate penance rituals to cleanse oneself of negative karma. The second fascicle teaches the theory and method of meditation based on a doctrine on the pure and deluded aspects of the mind reminiscent of the ideas in the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* (《大乘起信論》), together with an idealist doctrine (唯心論) that all existence is “like an illusion, phantom-like, the moon in the water, images in the mirror” (「如幻，如化，如水中月，如鏡中像」, T17, p. 908b10) reminiscent of the *Huayan jing*. In both fascicles, the sūtra pays attention to the defiled nature of the age (五濁惡世) and sentient beings with dull faculties (鈍根者).

In contrast, in the *Huayan jing*, apart from general remarks on rebirths in the Six Realms (六道輪迴) and on the idea that good causes lead to joyous results while bad causes lead to painful ones (善因樂果，惡因苦果), karmic retribution is not a focus of strong attention. However, in the teachings on the second stage of the Ten Stages, the

¹ T10, No.279. The sixty-fascicle *Huayan jing* translated during the Jin era is T9, No.278. This paper focuses on the former.

² T17, No. 839.

Stainless Stage (《十地品·離垢地》), the sūtra elaborates on the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action (十善·十不善業道) and their retribution.

What do the *Zhancha jing*, officially approved as an authentic sūtra during Empress Wu's reign, and the *Huayan jing*, translated during the same decade, teach about the karmic retribution of the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action? What are the aims of the respective doctrines? Through a comparative examination of the ideas set forth in the two sūtras, we may understand the doctrine of karmic retribution from different perspectives and the significance it may have for us today.³

1. Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action and Karmic Retribution in the Stainless Stage of the *Huayan jing*

1-1. Overview of the Stainless Stage

The Chapter on the Ten Stages in the *Huayan jing* is set in the palace in the Sixth Heaven of the Sensuous Realm (他化自在天宮) where the Buddha is surrounded by myriad bodhisattvas. There, the bodhisattva Jingangzang (金剛藏菩薩, Vajragarbha), under the majestic power of the Buddha, preaches the Ten Stages of the bodhisattva path which begins from the Joyful Stage (歡喜地) and culminates in the Cloud of Dharma Stage (法雲地). Each stage corresponds to one of the Ten Perfections (十波羅蜜) as we can see in bodhisattva Jingangzang's verse, for example, as follows:⁴

是菩薩十波羅蜜中檀波羅蜜增上。餘波羅蜜非不修行，但隨力隨分。(初歡喜地)

十波羅蜜中，持戒偏多。餘非不行，但隨力隨分。(第二離垢地)

³ The topic of this paper is based on a proposal kindly offered to the author by Master Hsien Du (賢度法師), Dean of Huayen College and President of Huayen Lotus Association. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Master Hsien Du for giving me an opportunity to explore a significant field of enquiry regarding the two sūtras revered in Tang China which continue to fascinate me.

⁴ This focus on the Ten Perfections is acknowledged by Fazang in his treatise, the *Huayan jing tanxuanji* (《華嚴經探玄記》). In his comments on the ten core teachings (宗) of the Chapter on the Ten Stages, he writes: "The ninth core teaching is summarized as the practice based on [progressive] levels. It means accomplishing the practices of the Ten Perfections such as generosity through the Ten Stages." (「九約寄位之行。謂於十地成檀等十度行。」, T35, No. 1733, p. 277c03-04).

十波羅蜜中忍波羅蜜偏多。餘波羅蜜……。(第三發光地)⁵

The focus of the Stainless stage is on the Perfection of Morality (戒波羅蜜), which is elaborated as the teachings on the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action. Let us briefly go over some of the key ideas.

1-1-1. Ten Wholesome Courses of Action and their Fruits

The bodhisattva Jingangzang proclaims that “a bodhisattva achieves entrance into the Second Stage of the Stainless with these Ten Minds” (「菩薩以此十心得入第二離垢地。」, T10, p. 185a20) and lists the Ten Profound Minds (十種深心) from Resolution (直心) to the Great Mind (大心). Jingangzang goes on to say that “when a bodhisattva resides in the Stainless Stage, as one’s nature, one abandons all forms of killing” (「菩薩住離垢地，性自遠離一切殺生。」, T10, p. 185a20). This is followed by the teaching on how a bodhisattva will adhere to the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action, namely, abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, malicious speech, verbal abuse, frivolous speech, craving, ill-will, and wrong views.⁶ For example, abstention from stealing and wrong views are explained in the following way:

性不偷盜。菩薩於自資財常知止足。於他慈恕，不欲侵損。若物屬他，起他物想，終不於此而生盜心。乃至草葉不與不取。何況其餘資生之具。
(T10, p. 185a25-28)

又離邪見。菩薩住於正道，不行占卜，不取惡戒。心見正直，無誑無諂。
於佛法僧起決定信。(T10, p. 185b24-25)

We may note that the teaching is elaborated in practical, even mundane, terms. However, a point of interest for us here, with regard to the *Zhancha jing*, is that Jingangzang proclaims that a bodhisattva residing in the proper path does not practice divination. Here, we may discern an intellectual orientation of the *Huayan jing* towards the doctrine on karmic retribution that distinguishes itself from trends in popular beliefs.

⁵ T10, No. 279, pp. 183a20, 186c10, 188c21-22. In addition to the Ten Perfections, one or more of the Four Articles of Sympathy (四攝法) are practiced in each of the Ten Stages. For example, in the First Stage it is said that “one salvages sentient beings with the first two articles of sympathy. They are generosity and kind words.” (「以前二攝攝取衆生。謂布施愛語。」 T10, p. 183a18-19). The Stainless Stage is strongly focused on the virtue of kind words (「愛語偏多。」, T10, p. 186c10).

⁶ T10, p. 185a21-185b25.

Next, these ten virtuous behaviour are declared to lead to rebirths not only as humans and devas, but even allowing for rebirths in the highest heaven of the Formless Realm (「是人天乃至有頂處受生因。」)⁷. However, the different fruits of rebirths depend on how one practices the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action.

又此上品十善業道以智慧修習，心狹劣故，怖三界故，闕大悲故，從他聞聲而解了故，成聲聞乘。又此上品十善業道修治清淨，不從他教自覺悟故，大悲方便不具足故，悟解甚深因緣法故，成獨覺乘。又此上品十善業道修治清淨，心廣無量故，具足悲愍故，方便所攝故，發生大願故，不捨衆生故，求諸佛大智故，淨治菩薩諸地故，淨修一切諸度故，成菩薩廣大行。(T10, p. 185c03-12)

Even if bodhisattvas practice the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action through wisdom and pursuit of purity, if they are narrow-minded and lack compassion, the resultant rebirths will be as śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. Conversely, if efforts are accompanied by purity, boundless mind, compassion, skillful means, and great vows, never forsaking other sentient beings, one will accomplish the great practices of bodhisattvahood. This is a memorable passage that solicitously emphasizes the altruistic side of bodhisattvahood which is based on efforts to both benefit oneself and others.

1-1-2. Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action and their Retribution

The Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action are “causes of rebirths as hell denizens, beasts, and hungry ghosts” (「十不善業道，是地獄畜生餓鬼受生因。」，T10, p. 185c01-02). However, the sūtra’s focus is on retribution in the human realm. Although the sūtra acknowledges that the unwholesome deeds lead to “degradation into the three unfavourable destinies” (墮三惡道)，it also states that “if one is reborn among humans, there will be two kinds of retribution” (「若生人中，得二種果報。」，T10, p. 185c20-21) For example, stealing will lead to poverty and deprivation, and ignorance will result in rebirth in an ignorant family or to be born disposed to flattery.⁸

The *Huayan jing*’s focus on human life rather than the three unfavourable destinies forms a contrast with the *Zhancha jing*. We shall examine this contrast in later sections.

⁷ T10, p. 185c02-03.

⁸ 「偷盜之罪、亦令衆生墮三惡道。若生人中、得二種果報。一者貧窮。二者共財不得自在。」 (T10, p. 185c20-21), 「邪見之罪、亦令衆生墮三惡道。若生人中、得二種果報。一者生邪見家。二者其心諂曲。」 (T10, p. 186a07-09)

1-1-3. The Ten Minds and Sentient Beings

After elaborating on the painful retribution of unwholesome deeds, the bodhisattva Jingangzang preaches that one must embrace the Ten Minds such as the mind to benefit others, to put others at rest, to convert non-believers, to keep practitioners from retrogression, etc.⁹ These arise from compassionate minds extended towards sentient beings.¹⁰ This focus on compassion towards sentient beings mired in ignorance, desire, and unwholesome deeds is further emphasized in Jingangzang's following words:

衆生可愍。墮於邪見惡慧惡欲惡道稠林。我應令彼住於正見行真實道。
(T10, p. 186a15-17)¹¹

This passage on the Ten Minds is another important example revealing the standpoint of the *Huayan jing* regarding karmic retribution which we shall examine further in sections 1-2-1 and 1-2-3.

1-1-4. The State of Mind in the Stainless Stage

Lastly, let us see how the bodhisattva Jingangzang explains the ultimate state a bodhisattva is expected to reach on completing the practices of the Stainless Stage.

是菩薩於無量百千億那由他劫，遠離慳嫉，破戒垢故，布施持戒清淨滿足。譬如真金置礬石中，如法鍊已，離一切垢，轉復明淨，菩薩住此離垢地。(T10, p. 186c04-07)

The perfection of morality, together with the perfection of generosity attained in the First Stage, is emphasized once again. Abstention from all that are stained, crystallized in the teachings on the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action, will enable a bodhisattva to reach a state of higher level of purity.

1-2. Notable Aspects of the Doctrine on Karmic Retribution in the Teachings of the Stainless Stage

⁹ 「復於一切衆生、生利益心、安樂心、慈心悲心、憐愍心、攝受心、守護心、自己心、師心大師心。」(T10, p. 186a13-15).

¹⁰ 「依增上悲念衆生故生十種心。」(澄觀，『華嚴經疏』，T35, No. 1735, p. 776a27) .

¹¹ Here, the bodhisattva Jingangzang goes on at considerable length to explain how sentient beings are easily distracted by dualistic views, desire, anger, etc. and hence in need of assistance by compassionate bodhisattvas. It takes up almost a quarter of the prose (長行) on the Stainless Stage (T10, p. 186a12-186b24).

Let us now examine some of the notable aspects found in the teachings on the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action elaborated in the section on the Stainless Stage. The focus of our analysis will be on (1) what kind of people are envisaged as the practitioners (or hearers of the sermon) and (2) who these practitioners are expected to save. The characteristics we shall find in these two focal points will be the objects of comparison when we examine the doctrines on karmic retribution in the *Huayan jing* and the *Zhancha jing* together.

At the outset of the Chapter on the Ten Stages, those assembled at the seat of the Buddha's sermon are depicted as follows:

其諸菩薩，皆於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提不退轉。悉從他方世界來集，住一切菩薩智所住境，入一切如來智所入處，勤行不息。善能示現種種神通，諸所作事，教化調伏一切衆生。(T10, p. 178c01-03)

The hearers of the sermon are bodhisattvas with non-retrogressing resolve, wisdom, and unremitting efforts. The bodhisattvas assembled to hear the teachings of the Stainless Stage are, logically, such bodhisattvas who have completed the practices of the First Stage; they are in no way ordinary beings (凡夫) fearing banishment to hell or being reborn as hungry ghosts. Such character of the practitioners defines the nature of the doctrine on karmic retribution propagated in the Stainless Stage, forming a stark contrast to the same doctrine laid out in the *Zhancha jing*, as we shall see later.

1-2-1. The Three Groups of Pure Morality

The Stainless Stage, as we have seen, is the stage where morality (戒) becomes the centre of attention. More practically, the doctrine on the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action forms the core of the bodhisattva Jingangzang's sermon. Traditionally, beginning with the *Treatise on the Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (《十地經論》) by Vasubandhu, this doctrine has been interpreted in terms of the Three Groups of Pure Morality (三聚淨戒), namely, morality of embracing discipline and fitting conduct, morality of embracing wholesome deeds, and morality of embracing sentient beings (攝律儀戒・攝善法戒・攝衆生戒).¹²

¹² In China and Japan, the doctrine of the Three Groups of Pure Morality has been discussed mainly within the topic of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Precepts (大乘菩薩戒), both by practitioners and academics. The earliest teachings are said to be those in the *Huayan jing* (道端[1985], p. 104), later

Vasubandhu, in his interpretation of the Ten Profound Minds (十種深心, or in Vasubandhu's terminology, Ten Straightforward Minds 十種直心) given at the outset of his discourse on the Stainless Stage, elaborates on the Three Groups of Pure Morality. He states that "this pure morality involves two kinds of purity: first, the generation of purity, second, the embodiment of purity" (「此清淨戒有二種淨。一發起淨。二自體淨。」, T26, No.1522, p. 145b25). This embodiment of purity signifies upholding and practicing the Three Groups of Pure Morality.

自體淨者有三種戒。一離戒淨。二攝善法戒淨。三利益衆生戒淨。離戒淨者謂十善業道。攝善法戒淨者，於離戒淨爲上。……利益衆生戒淨者，於攝善法戒爲上。(T26, p. 145c15-22)

Purity of the morality of dissociation (離戒淨) here is equivalent to purity of the morality of embracing discipline and fitting conducts (攝律儀戒); the morality of benefitting sentient beings (利益衆生戒) is synonymous with the morality of embracing sentient beings (攝衆生戒). Chengguan, quoting Vasubandhu, likewise interprets the embodiment of purity as the practice of the Three Groups of Pure Morality.¹³ Fazang, in his *Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, explains that the first six of the Ten Straightforward Minds correspond to the morality of embracing discipline and fitting conducts, the next two to the morality of embracing wholesome deeds, and the last two minds to the morality of embracing sentient beings (「初六律儀戒。次二攝善戒。後二攝生戒。」, T35, p. 316c11-12).

We may note here that although the first of the Three Groups of Morality, namely, the morality of embracing discipline and fitting conducts is equated with the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action (離戒淨者謂十善業道), in practice, it means abstaining from the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action (止惡), while the morality of embracing wholesome deeds entails proactive practice of the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action (行善). The morality of embracing sentient beings would entail,

developing in diverse ways through sūtras such as the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (《梵網經》) and the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* (《菩薩瓔珞本業經》). There are numerous academic studies on the doctrine, including Michihata's 道端[1985] (Chapter 2) which examines the doctrine within the development of Chinese Buddhism, Yoshizu's study with regard to interpretation of bodhisattva precepts by Zhiyi (智顓) and Fazang (法藏) (吉津[1991], Chapter 8), and from a more practice-oriented perspective, 齊藤[2018] (Chapters 5 and 8), among others.

¹³ 「第二自體淨中明三聚淨戒。即分爲三。初律儀淨。論云離淨。謂離殺等故。……二攝善法戒。三攝衆生戒。」(《華嚴經疏》T35, p. 771b29-771c03).

as an act of altruism (利他行), leading sentient beings to abstain from the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action and to practice the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action.¹⁴ However, in the *Huayan jing*, the distinction between the first and second of the Three Groups of Morality (攝律儀戒 and 攝善法戒) is not necessarily clear that Zhiyan (智儼) and Chengguan both give their own detailed explanation:

由善義順理、理法甚深故……不等惡業。……此十善業，由附觀智，智既漸深，福亦漸細，故不同也。(《華嚴經內章門等離孔目章》、T45, No. 1870, p. 565b12-15)

謂非唯律儀不闕不斷，常攝善法亦無斷闕。

離惡但是惡止。住善兼於善行，具有止作二持。……謂非唯不殺。護衆生命，如護己命。是第一善。(《華嚴經疏》、T35, p. 774b28-29, T35, p. 776a16-19)

Zhiyan claims that the practice of the morality of embracing wholesome deeds (攝善法戒), means deepening one's wisdom through the practice of the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action and coming to embody the profound principle (理), implying that the practice of morality of embracing discipline and fitting conduct (攝律儀戒) constitutes the physical or the phenomenal aspect (事). In contrast to the more theoretically oriented ideas of Zhiyan, Chengguan emphasizes the need to turn one's mind towards sentient beings. He explicates that the morality of embracing wholesome deeds entails proactively practicing them with the salvation of sentient beings in mind (「非唯不殺。護衆生命，如護己命」). This can be taken to mean that one must not only abstain from unwholesome deeds but to make proactive practice of wholesome deeds a way of life, that is, to embody them.

Although the doctrine of the Three Groups of Morality cannot be found in the *Huayan jing* explicitly, its essence is clearly there. The crux of the doctrine on karmic retribution propagated in the section on the Stainless Stage can be found in the following lines.

一切衆生墮惡趣者，莫不皆以十不善業。是故我當自修正行，亦勸於他令修正行。何以故。若自不能修行正行，令他修者，無有是處。(T10, p. 185b27-29)

¹⁴ 齊藤[2018], p. 59。

Practices to benefit and to improve oneself, encapsulated in the first two of the Three Groups of Pure Morality (攝律儀戒, 攝善法戒) are for making possible the practice of benefiting others, that is, embracing sentient beings (攝衆生戒). We may conclude that the teachings of the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action in the *Huayan jing* culminate in the propagation of the practice of altruism, as Chengguan argued in his treatise.

1-2-2. Emphasis on the Human Realm

In this section, we shall focus on another distinct characteristic of the doctrine of karmic retribution found in the Stainless Stage: emphasis on the human realm of existence. As we have seen, the sūtra acknowledges that the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action are “causes of rebirths as hell denizens, beasts, and hungry ghosts” (「十不善業道，是地獄畜生餓鬼受生因。」). It is further explained that “the worst cases are causes for [rebirths in] hell, moderate cases are causes for [rebirths as] beasts, petty cases are causes for [rebirths as] hungry ghost” (「上者地獄因。中者畜生因。下者餓鬼因。」) (T10, p. 185c17). However, the retribution in the form of rebirths into these three unfavourable forms of existence is not explicated any further. Moreover, the focus of the teaching shifts to the human realm, listing two kinds of retribution for each of the ten unwholesome courses of action, as we have already confirmed (「若生人中，得二種果報」). They are depicted in real and graphic expressions that are rarely found in the *Huayan jing*.

於中殺生之罪，能令衆生墮於地獄畜生餓鬼。若生人中，得二種果報。一者短命。二者多病。偷盜之罪，亦令衆生墮三惡道。若生人中，得二種果報。一者貧窮。二者共財不得自在。邪淫之罪，亦令衆生墮三惡道。若生人中，得二種果報。一者妻不貞良。二者不得隨意眷屬。妄語之罪……一者多被誹謗。二者爲他所誑。兩舌之罪，……一者眷屬乖離。二者親族斃惡。惡口之罪，……一者常聞惡聲。二者言多諍訟。綺語之罪，……一者言無人受。二者語不明瞭。貪欲之罪、……一者心不知足。二者多欲無厭。瞋恚之罪，……一者常被他人求其長短。二者恆被於他之所惱害。邪見之罪，……一者生邪見家。二者其心諂曲。(T10, pp. 185c16-186a08)

Vasubandhu claims that these retribution in the human realm are fructification of latent tendencies (習氣果) brought about by residual forces (餘勢) of bad karma (惡

業)。¹⁵ Even if one achieves rebirth as a human being, karmic effects of unwholesome deeds are persistent and painful.

However, despite the harshness of retribution in the human realm, prospects of degradation into the three unfavourable destinies are nonetheless major causes for fears and anxiety. The discussion of this topic in the sūtra seems excessively simple and condensed. In fact, Chengguan, remarking on Vasubandhu's treatise, gives a more detailed account.

……果有三塗不同。因有三時階降，論名時差別。三時復二。一者約心。謂如殺生，欲殺，正殺，殺已。三時俱重名為上者，隨一時輕為中者，三時俱輕為下者。二約時。謂少時，多時，盡壽作等……復應於一一塗中各有三品等。然依正法念經，三塗各有邊正。正者為重，邊者為輕。正鬼望邊畜。則餓鬼罪重故。雜集等鬼次於獄。若正畜望邊鬼。則畜生罪重故，今云下者餓鬼因。(T35, pp. 775b28-775c08)

Chengguan describes the workings within the mind of a killer during the process of the act (約心): when one wishes to kill, when one is actually in the act of killing, when one has perpetuated the killing (「欲殺、正殺、殺已」). Frequency and period of harbouring the intent (約時) are also taken into account. Furthermore, Chengguan notes that whether rebirths as beasts or as hungry ghosts are considered results of deeper karma differs among different sūtras. Since Chengguan's detailed and realistic analysis is applicable to the nine other unwholesome deeds such as lying, anger, and wrong views, people have plenty of causes for harbouring anxiety and fears.¹⁶ We may say that Chengguan's focus on retribution in the three unfavourable realms complements the relative lack of interest in the *Huayan jing* into this aspect of karmic retribution.

The economical use of space on what must be objects of serious concern and anxiety to sinful sentient beings can also be seen in the following lines. This is a passage that concludes the bodhisattva Jingangzang's teachings on the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action.

佛子。十不善業道能生此等無量無邊眾大苦聚。是故菩薩，作如是念，我

¹⁵ 《十地經論》T26, 149c12.

¹⁶ Li Tongxuan (李通玄) also gives additional analysis on degradation to the three unfavorable destinies (《新華嚴經論》, T36, No. 1739, p. 888b02-05).

當遠離十不善道，以十善道為法園苑，愛樂安住，自住其中，亦勸他人令住其中。(T10, p. 186a09-12)

It is clear from the above that the hearers of the sermon on karmic retribution in the Stainless Stage are those who are able not only to abstain from unwholesome actions but also to regard the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action as “a garden of dharma, happily and peacefully residing therein” (「以十善道為法園苑，愛樂安住」). This can be confirmed from Chengguan’s interpretation regarding the aim of the *Huayan jing* in mentioning the retribution of rebirths as hell denizens, beasts, and hungry ghosts and the dire results even of rebirth in the human realm. Chengguan states that this is to help practitioners to observe the retribution and to become aware of the causes, so that one may eliminate beforehand the causes of immeasurable suffering in future lives (「是以觀果知因，應當除斷。無邊苦聚，由此生故。」, T35, p. 776a09) .

The highly positive orientation towards moral practices obviously makes the teachings in the Stainless Stage powerfully ethical and spirited. However, it is also clear that simply encouraging practitioners to follow the teachings will not enable all to reside happily and peacefully in the garden of the law. Then how does the bodhisattva Jingangzang relate himself to sentient beings who are actually drowning in the sea of suffering? Let us proceed to examine a passage where Jingangzang gives a detailed account of his standpoint in relation to such sentient beings.

1-2-3. Practice in the Morality of Embracing Sentient Beings

After describing the unfavourable retribution of the various unwholesome deeds that human beings suffer from, the bodhisattva Jingangzang elaborates on the practices to help the pathetic sentient beings who have “fallen into the dense forest of wicked views, unfavourable wits, desires, and practices” to reside in right views and to practice the true path (「衆生可愍，墮於邪見惡慧惡欲惡道稠林。我應令彼住於正見，行眞實道。」, T10, p. 186a15-16) . Bodhisattvas are advised to embrace sympathy towards them in the following way:

又作是念。一切衆生，常隨三毒，種種煩惱因之熾然，不解志求出要方便。我當令彼除滅一切煩惱大火，安置清涼涅槃之處。……又作是念。一切衆生，在於生死險道之中，將墮地獄畜生餓鬼，入惡見網中，為愚癡稠林所迷。隨逐邪道，行顛倒行。譬如盲人，無有導師，非出要道……我當

拔出如是險難，令住無畏一切智城。……佛子。菩薩如是護持於戒，善能增長慈悲之心。(T10, pp. 186a21-24, 186a28-186b04, 186b20-24)

Here, the various images of sentient beings writhing under the shackles of defilements are described in succession, each time encouraging bodhisattvas to renew their resolve to salvage those in suffering through compassion. This is a long passage (as mentioned earlier) that propagates the practice of the Morality of embracing sentient beings (攝衆生戒), the third of the Three Groups of Pure Morality (三聚淨戒). Those who cannot help themselves through the practices of the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action are saved by the more able bodhisattvas who will practice acts of compassion for them. Ultimately, the *Huayan jing* embraces the able and the lesser able sentient beings to help them make progress in their respective ways on the path of bodhisattvahood. We may also discern a conviction on the part of the able bodhisattvas that all sentient beings are capable of following the paths of bodhisattvahood if they are given appropriate guidance.

Finally, let us return once again to the nature of the bodhisattvas who are the hearers of the sermon on the Stainless Stage. We find no extensive discussion on any negative tendency those practitioners might have within them. This is only natural as they have already accomplished the First Stage of bodhisattvahood. The *Huayan jing* expounds the vast and profound resolve and saving powers of the bodhisattvas who are able enough to follow the practices taught in the Stainless Stage. In contrast, we find little in this sūtra that might resonate with ordinary beings afflicted with various defilements looking for ways to salvage themselves... However, although they are not to be directly saved by the teachings of the Stainless Stage, they are not neglected, as the ultimate aim of the able bodhisattvas is to embrace them with compassion and lead them to the same paths of bodhisattvahood.

In our examination of the *Zhancha jing* in the next section, we shall be encountering bodhisattvas with a distinctly different character.

2. Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action and Karmic Retribution in the *Zhancha jing*

2-1. Overview of the *Zhancha jing*

Together with the *Mahāyāna Great Assembly Sūtra of the Ten Wheels of Dizang* (《大乘大集地藏十輪經》, hereafter: *Shilun jing*) and the *Sūtra on the Original*

Vows of Bodhisattva Dizang (《地藏菩薩本願經》, hereafter: *Benyuan jing*), the *Zhancha jing* has been regarded as one of the major sūtras in which the bodhisattva Dizang (地藏菩薩, Kṣitigarbha) plays a central role.¹⁷ However, its origin is unclear. The first record of the *Zhancha jing* appears in the catalogue of sūtras compiled in 594 by Fajing (法經, 《衆經目錄》). The *Record of the Three Jewels Through Successive Generations* (《歷代三寶紀》) compiled in 597 by Fei Changfang (費長房) first mentions the name of Putideng (菩提登 or 菩提燈 in the Goryeo Tipiṭaka, Bodhidīpa?) as the translator but Fei comments that it is likely “a recent compilation.” Fei also states that this sūtra was banned in connection with the spread of a certain “stūpa penance ritual” (塔懺法) in Guangzhou.¹⁸ However, the *Great Zhou Catalogue* first acknowledged the authenticity of this sūtra, followed by the *Kaiyuan Catalogue* (《開元釋經錄》). In recent studies, Françoise Wang-Toutain has left open the possibility that this is a translation (or a compilation) by Putideng, noting that if this were an indigenous work created in China, the creators would have chosen a more prominent person as the purported translator. However, the general view of academics in Japan has been that this is an indigenous text created in China towards the end of the Sui.¹⁹

This sūtra opens with the bodhisattva Jianjingxin (堅淨信菩薩) requesting the Buddha to deliver a sermon to save sentient beings in the degenerate age. To this, the Buddha praises the past vows and efforts of the bodhisattva Dizang and instructs Dizang to preach. In the first (upper) fascicle, divination methods to discern one’s karmic retribution are expounded, together with rules on penance rituals to eliminate unfavourable karma. The rituals include praying to Dizang and reciting his name, among others. A set of 19 dice-like utensils the size of a fingertip are used for the

¹⁷ There are two translations of the *Shilun jing*: T13, No. 411 《大乘大集地藏十輪經》 translated during the Tang by Xuanzang (玄奘) and T13, No. 410 《大方廣十輪經》 translated during the Northern Liang by an unknown translator. The former is based on an expanded text compared to the latter. The *Benyuan jing*, T13, No. 412 is recorded as a translation by Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀). In the *Ritual of Penance and Vows in Worship of Dizang Pusa* (《讚禮地藏菩薩懺願儀》) by Zhixu (靈峰藕益大師智旭), who propagated Dizang worship during the Ming, we find the line “worship wholeheartedly the *Dizang pusa benyuan jing*, *Dasheng daji dizang shilun jing*, *Zhancha shan’e yebao jing*, and the entire dharma store of the three ages” (「一心頂禮地藏菩薩本願經、大乘大集地藏十輪經、占察善惡業報經及三世一切法藏。」, X74, 585a18-19). From this we know that at least Zhixu already had the idea of regarding these three sūtras as central to Dizang worship.

¹⁸ See 師[2011], pp. 141-142, Lai[1990], p. 176.

¹⁹ Moro has suggested a Korean origin during the Chinese Sui era or slightly earlier (師[2011], p. 135, 154). There are various views on its origin (眞鍋[1960], 柏木[1981], 池平[2000], Lai [1990], Kuo [1994], among others. See Ito [2016A] fn. 1 and reference list).

divination. These “wooden wheels” (木輪) are shaped as rectangular columns with both ends sharpened like a pencil. Onto each of the four flat faces in the middle section of each wooden wheel, a word (such as one of the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action), a number, or a line expressing the power or period of karmic forces is engraved. The karmic retribution of a practitioner is discerned by throwing these wooden wheels in succession in designated ways and order.

In the second (lower) fascicle, the topic shifts to a more theoretical discussion on the Mind Only doctrine (唯心), elaborating on how the entire perceived environment is generated from the mind which consists of true and deluded (真·妄) nature. It goes on to describe two different methods of meditation respectively for the able-minded and the dull-minded. For those who still lack the wholesome disposition which helps them make progress in their practices, the sūtra instructs them to recite Dizang’s name at all times.

2-2. Sentient Beings and Karmic Retribution in the *Zhancha jing*

What are the main concerns of the *Zhancha jing* in regard to karmic retribution? This section examines the sutra’s basic views on the world, sentient beings, and their karmic retribution.

2-2-1. Sentient Beings in the Latter Age of the Dharma and Divination by the ‘Wooden Wheels’

At the beginning of the sūtra, the bodhisattva Jianjingxin recounts the words of the Buddha regarding the sentient beings living in an age approaching the Latter Age of the Dharma (末世).

是念如佛先說：「若我去世，正法滅後像法向盡及入末世。如是之時，衆生福薄多諸哀惱，國土數亂災害頻起，種種厄難怖懼逼擾。我諸弟子失其善念，唯長貪瞋嫉妬我慢。設有像似行善法者，但求世間利養名稱，以之爲主。不能專心修出要法。爾時衆生，觀世災亂心常怯弱。……如是於後入末法中，經久得道，獲信禪定通業等，一切全無。」(T17, p. 901c17-29)

The deplorable states of the sentient beings may reflect the tumultuous time in China between the end of the Southern and Northern Dynasties period to the end of the Sui. However, even in such unstable times, Jianjingxin believes that practitioners with wholesome dispositions still exist and asks the Buddha to reveal the methods of

salvation suited for saving such people. The Buddha complies by instructing Dizang, a bodhisattva known to excel in saving sentient beings, to preach. Dizang expounds the means of salvation, including divination using the wooden wheels, for future ages long after the Buddha's passing

若佛滅後惡世之中，諸有比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷，於世間出世間因果法中，未得決定信，不能修學無常想苦想無我想不淨想成就現前。……以不勤觀如是法故，不能畢竟不作十惡根本過罪。……有如是等障難事者，當用木輪相法，占察善惡宿世之業現在苦樂吉凶等事。緣合故有緣盡則滅。業集隨心相現果起。不失不壞相應不差。如是諦占善惡業報，曉喻自心，於所疑事以取決了。(T17, p. 902b05-20)

於一者輪相，能示宿世所作善惡業種差別。其輪有十。二者輪相，能示宿世集業久近所作強弱大小差別。其輪有三。三者輪相，能示三世中受報差別。其輪有六。(T17, p. 902b29-902c03)

From the above, two characteristics of this sūtra can be pointed out. Firstly, Dizang's sermon is directed at start-up practitioners of Mahāyāna (「初學發意求大乘者」, T17, p. 902a25-26) living in a degenerate age approaching the Latter Age of the Dharma. Their mind is weak, burdened with serious afflictions, and will, in time, inevitably commit serious unwholesome deeds. Secondly, the divination which Dizang expounds for the sake of such sentient beings is focused on: the practitioners' unfavourable karma accumulated in previous lives, how serious they are, and the negative and positive retribution in the present and future.²⁰

The above two aspects of the *Zhancha jing* stand in stark contrast to the views on karmic retribution found in the teachings of the Stainless Stage in the Chapter on the Ten Stages of the *Huayan jing*. While the latter is oriented towards the future, the former tries to discern the future based on serious examination of the past, namely, karma accumulated in previous lives (宿世). Furthermore, the teachings on the Stainless Stage are directed towards highly motivated and able bodhisattvas.²¹ Their basic interest with regard to karmic retribution is to avoid committing unwholesome

²⁰ 尹富貴 also highlights these two points. See 尹富貴[2009], pp. 37, 39.

²¹ 「入一切如來智所入處，勤行不息。善能示現種種神通，諸所作事，教化調伏一切衆生。」(T10, p. 178c01-03).

deeds and to practice the good (止惡修善), which is structured around compassion to form the practice of the Three Groups of Pure Morality with special emphasis on the Morality of embracing sentient beings (三聚淨戒, 攝衆生戒). In contrast, the *Zhancha jing* directs its attention on practitioners who are, themselves, suffering from the effects of unfavourable karma accumulated in past lives. This means that the views on karmic retribution in the *Zhancha jing*, reflecting the awareness that the Latter Age of the Dharma is near at hand, is focused on sentient beings with deep-rooted unfavourable tendencies who cannot help committing unwholesome deeds.²²

2-2-2. Fruits of Wholesome and Unwholesome Deeds

Wholesome and unwholesome deeds of past lives are scrutinized by the first round of the wooden wheels divination.

當刻木爲十輪，依此十輪書記十善之名。一善主在一輪於一面記。次以十惡書對十善，令使相當，亦各記在一面。言十善者則爲一切衆善根本。能攝一切諸餘善法。言十惡者亦爲一切衆惡根本。能攝一切諸餘惡法。(T17, p. 902c04-902c08)

當或純具十善，或純具十惡，或善惡交雜，或純善不具，或純惡不具。如是業因種類不同。習氣果報各各別異。(T17, p. 903a16-903a18)

The notion of good and bad karma in this sūtra is based on the doctrine of the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action much like in the *Huayan jing*. However, as the retribution that will be discerned by the next two rounds of divination are not just future possibilities that may be avoided or won but real outcomes that might influence the life of the practitioners, analysis into the diverse courses of action and the resultant retribution are more detailed compared to the *Huayan jing*. The extent of karmic effects of past wholesome and unwholesome deeds are discerned by the second round of the wooden wheels divination, while the actual retribution in the present or future rebirths are discerned by the third. In the third round, six wooden wheels, each with three consecutive numbers engraved on three sides of the middle part, are thrown

²² The fatalistic view that the state of existence in the present life is determined by karma from the previous one must be handled with careful attention as it entails potential risks of being used to justify or to tolerate social discrimination. It should be stated that this paper, in recognition of such risks, examines the doctrine of karmic retribution found in the *Zhancha jing* as a historical product, focusing on positive insights that may be gained from it today.

three times. The numbers engraved start from 1, ending in 18, hence the sum of the numbers revealed by the wheels falls between 0 to 189. The sūtra lists all the possible 189 different retribution in the following way:

一者求上乘得不退。二者所求果現當證。……五者求神通得成就。……

五十者求官位當得獲。五十一者求壽命得延年。……五十三者觀學問多所達。……

一百者當所失永不得。一百一者觀所失自還得。一百二者求離厄得脫難。一百三者求離病得除愈。……(T17, pp. 905b03-906a04)

Although some outcomes are related to progress in Buddhist practices, many are distinctly mundane. Some reveal that the present life is the result of lower existence in the previous life, while some foretell the mode of existence in the next life.

(Mode of existence in the previous life)

一百六十一者從地獄道中來。一百六十二者從畜生道中來。一百六十三者從餓鬼道中來。一百六十四者從阿修羅道中來。一百六十五者從人道中而來。一百六十六者從天道中而來。一百六十七者從在家中而來。一百六十八者從出家中而來。一百六十九者曾值佛供養來。一百七十者曾親供養賢聖來。百七十一者曾得聞深法來。

(Mode of existence in the next life)

一百七十二者捨身已入地獄。一百七十三者捨身已作畜生。一百七十四者捨身已作餓鬼。一百七十五者捨身已作阿修羅。一百七十六者捨身已生人道。一百七十七者捨身已爲人王。一百七十八者捨身已生天道。一百七十九者捨身已爲天王。一百八十者捨身已聞深法。一百八十一者捨身已得出家。一百八十二者捨身已值聖僧。一百八十三者捨身已生兜率天。一百八十四者捨身已生淨佛國。一百八十五者捨身已尋見佛。一百八十六者捨身已住下乘。一百八十七者捨身已住中乘。一百八十八者捨身已獲果證。一百八十九者捨身已住上乘。(T17, p. 906b13-906c05)

These present and future retribution are supposedly results of past karma. However, there is no explanation on which of the ten wholesome or unwholesome deeds specifically lead to which results. In contrast to the *Huayan jing* which gives detailed accounts of the retribution in human and heavenly rebirths that follow each of the ten

unwholesome deeds, the retribution expounded in the *Zhancha jing* are results that come from the sum total of good and bad deeds. In this respect, although it may still be effective in making practitioners refrain from committing the ten unwholesome deeds in general, the doctrine on the Ten Wholesome and Unwholesome Courses of Action in the *Zhancha jing* does not necessarily function as a specific code of conduct. Rather than instructing practitioners specifically to avoid each of the ten unwholesome deeds, it teaches practitioners to repent in order to purify oneself of the karmic effects of deeds committed in previous rebirths, as we shall see next.²³

2-2-3. Penance Rites in the *Zhancha jing*

After discerning one's past karma and their retribution in this or the next life, practitioners are expected to do two things: first, to mentally observe one's own positive and negative dispositions revealed by the wooden wheels divination, and secondly, as mentioned above, to perform penance rites.

(Inner observation of positive deeds and results)

於五欲衆具得稱意時，勿當自縱以起放逸。即應思念，由我宿世如是善業故今獲此報，我今乃可轉更進修不應休止。(T17, p. 903a28-903b01)

(Inner observation of negative deeds and results)

若遭衆厄種種衰惱不吉之事，擾亂憂怖不稱意時，應當甘受無令疑悔退修善業。即當思念，但由我宿世造如是惡業故，今獲此報。我今應當悔彼惡業，專修對治及修餘善無得止住。懈怠放逸，轉更增集種種苦聚。(T17, p. 903b02-903b06)

(Penance rites)

若未來世諸衆生等，欲求度脫生老病死，始學發心修習禪定無相智慧者，應當先觀宿世所作，惡業多少及以輕重。若惡業多厚者，不得即學禪定智慧。應當先修懺悔之法。所以者何。此人宿習惡心猛利故，於今現在，必

²³ There is a passage that mentions the Three Groups of Pure Morality (三聚淨戒) in the *Zhancha jing* (「願總受在家出家一切禁戒，所謂攝律儀戒、攝善法戒、攝化衆生戒、而不能得善好戒師廣解菩薩法藏先修行者，應當至心於道場內恭敬供養……先說十根本重戒，次當總舉三種戒聚，自誓而受。」 T17, p. 904c06-12). However, it comes up in the elaboration of making vows and receiving precepts by oneself in cases where a master cannot be found to perform a formal ceremony for the occasion. Therefore, it does not give any detailed account of the doctrine. The passage has been referred to in Japanese Buddhist texts that discuss Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Precepts (大乘菩薩戒).

多造惡毀犯重禁。以犯重禁故，若不懺悔，令其清淨而修禪定智慧者則多有障礙不能剋獲。(T17, p. 903c06-13)

The aim of inwardly observing one's own positive and negative actions and retribution in past rebirths is to acknowledge the results of past deeds in order that one may concentrate on dealing with them.²⁴

Penance rites are explained in detail. The repentant must consecrate a clean, quiet room for the purpose, where a statue of the Buddha, flowers, incense, and ornaments are prepared in reverence. The sūtra goes on to give detailed instructions on worshipping, prostrating, and reciting the names of buddhas and Dizang. The repentance rites must be continually performed until one is able to get perfect results in the wooden wheels divination which is repeated at certain intervals of days or weeks. This can be extremely demanding, as one may need to perform the repentance rite of worshipping and recitation of holy names six times during the day and night for a hundred days, or even a thousand days.²⁵

We can find here, again, a focus on the deeply-rooted nature of afflictions and the weakness of the human mind. However, practitioners are instructed to make vows not only to deal with negative karmic retribution by repenting but also to practice good deeds. We can see the sūtra acknowledging the potential for progress even in sentient beings with the most defiled dispositions. What are the grounds for such optimism? The idea of the “One True Realm” holds the key.

2-3. The Final Goal of the Doctrine on Karmic Retribution

When the practitioner has successfully completed the repentance rites, the next step is meditation. The lower fascicle of the *Zhancha jing* elaborates on several forms of meditation. What are the practitioners expected to achieve through meditation? The aim is closely related to a vow the bodhisattva Dizang makes in the upper fascicle before preaching on the wooden wheels divination.

願共一切衆生修行，如是供養已，漸得成就六波羅蜜四無量心，深知一切法本來寂靜無生無滅一味平等，離念清淨畢竟圓滿。(T17, p. 903a05-07)

²⁴ 「我今應當悔彼惡業、專修對治及修餘善無得止住。」(T10, p. 903b04-05).

²⁵ For details on the penance rite, see T17, pp. 903c16-904b24.

In his vow to fulfill the Six Perfections and the Four Boundless Minds, Dizang vows to do so together with all sentient beings. Furthermore, Dizang vows to deeply realize the truth that “all things are originally quiescent, not generated, not destructed, equal as of one taste, dissociated from [deluded] thought, pure, ultimately perfected.” In the lower fascicle, this truth is expressed in the idea of “One True Realm.”

善男子。若有衆生欲向大乘者，應當先知最初所行根本之業。其最初所行根本業者，所謂依止一實境界。……所言一實境界者，謂衆生心體從本以來，不生不滅，自性清淨，無障無礙。猶如虛空離分別故，平等普遍無所不至。圓滿十方究竟一相。……以一切衆生心，一切聲聞辟支佛心，一切菩薩心，一切諸佛心，皆同不生不滅，無染寂靜，真如相故。(T17, p. 907a01-10)

According to Zhixu (智旭) who propagated Dizang worship in the Ming era, the One True Realm is what “a thousand sūtras and ten thousand treatises all make clear.” Zhixu says it is expressed as “the dharma realm of unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena” (事事無礙法界) in the *Huayan jing*, “the ultimate reality of the One Vehicle as realized by the Buddha” in the *Lotus sūtra* (一乘實相佛之知見).²⁶ It may be so, but the teaching in the *Zhancha jing* is more closely related to the practitioners’ mind.²⁷ The One True Realm is not only synonymous with the aforementioned truth that “all is originally quiescent...” (「一切法本來寂靜無生無滅一味平等」), it also means that the mind of all sentient beings are originally “not generated, not destructed, pure in its own nature...equal, pervasive, with no place it does not reach” (「不生不滅，自性清淨……平等普遍無所不至」, T17, p. 907a05-06). From this, it follows that the mind of all sentient beings are one and the same with the mind of all buddhas and great bodhisattvas (in that they are empty of self-nature and of itself pure) and that it can be called “reality of Truth” (真如相).

²⁶ 《占察經玄義》X21, pp. 420b08-11, 412b08. Zhixu gives a detailed analysis of the One True Realm in his *Profound Meaning of the Zhancha jing* (《占察經玄義》). In a recent study, Ikehira who discussed the close relationship between this sūtra and Zhiyi’s (智顓) repentance methods, points out that the term One True Realm appears in the 《觀普賢菩薩行法經》 (池平[2000], p. 372). Shinoda examines the term in connection with Zhiyi’s idea of “manifested mind of singular concentration” (現前一念心) in 篠田[2003].)

²⁷ Ikehira has pointed out that “in terms of the idea that penetrates the two fascicles, it is the idea of the One True Realm, namely, idea of the mind that forms the subcurrent as the ground for practice” (池平[2000], p. 367).

We can see that the *Zhancha jing*, after delineating at length the karmic retribution of an ordinary man (凡夫) in a degenerate age, ultimately denies the essential existence of karmic retribution. The view that opens up before us is remarkably close to the world view of the *Huayan jing*. Below are passages from the *Zhancha jing* (quoted from the lower fascicle) and from the *Huayan jing* (from the section on the Sixth Stage in the Chapter on the Ten Stages):

我即爲說真實之義。所謂一切諸法本性自空，畢竟無我無作無受。……無有生死涅槃一切諸法定實之相而可得者，又復爲說，一切諸法，如幻如化，如水中月，如鏡中像……煩惱生死畢竟無體求不可得。……自性寂靜即是涅槃。如此所說能破一切諸見，損自身心執著想故，得離怯弱。(T17, p. 909c09-19)

所謂一切法無相故平等。無體故平等。無生故平等。無成故平等。本來清淨故平等。無戲論故平等。無取捨故平等。寂靜故平等。如幻如夢，如影如響，如水中月，如鏡中像，如焰如化故平等。有無不二故平等。(T10, p. 193c09-14)

Conclusion: Significance of the Doctrine on Karmic Retribution

From the analysis of the doctrine of karmic retribution in the *Huayan jing* and the *Zhancha jing*, we have found two contrasting standpoints from which the two sūtras expound their respective ideas. In the *Huayan jing*, the doctrine is firmly based in the present life, preaching a highly ethically disciplined way of life in abstaining from committing bad deeds and practicing the good. Furthermore, grounded in the “true significance” (真實之義) of the dharma realm that all sentient beings are equal because of their existence being “as an illusion, as a dream,” “originally in nature, of itself empty” (「如幻如夢」「本性自空」), it propagates a theory of altruistic practice to salvage sentient beings lost in the forest of ignorance: the Three Groups of Pure Morals (三聚淨戒) with special emphasis on the Moral of embracing sentient beings (攝衆生戒), which is not only practically oriented but also imbued with deep religiosity. One drawback that can be pointed out is that there is an undeniable distance between the highly ethical, honourable bodhisattvas who engage themselves in the act of salvation and the very sentient beings drowning in the sea of delusion and suffering that they are to salvage.

In this respect, in the teachings on karmic retribution found in the *Zhancha jing*,

the practitioners are themselves ordinary beings who are weak at heart and cannot help committing the ten unwholesome deeds (「心常怯弱」「不能畢竟不作十惡根本過罪」). Through a unique method of divination by wooden wheels, practitioners come face to face with deep-rooted defilements accumulated in previous lives and made to realize the causes of the dire situations of the present life that they find themselves in (「即應思念，由我宿世如是善業(惡業)故，今獲此報。」). Self-observation as such is not found in the doctrine on karmic retribution expounded in the *Huayan jing*.

Through these findings, we may gain some insight into what the doctrine on karmic retribution might mean for us today. Living in the modern age, karmic retribution may sound unreal to some. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge the possibility that this doctrine can be corrupted to support social discrimination. However, we may still find significance in the following aspect of the doctrine: it teaches us to seriously and humbly observe the deep-rooted dispositions within ourselves. This brings to mind the teaching in the *Huayan jing* which delineated the retribution one may be faced with in rebirths as humans or devas. We saw how Chengguan clarified the significance of this teaching as need for practitioners to “observe the [potential] outcomes, realize the causes, and eliminate them” (「是以觀果知因，應當除斷」). In this highly stressful age, we are easily carried away by anger, frivolity, or depression; it is then, important for us to look into the darkness deep down within ourselves.

This is not in any way a backward, negative way of coming to terms with ourselves. The *Zhancha jing* teaches us that “one is in nature quiescent, which is one with nirvāṇa. These teachings will destroy all deluded views, defeat the cravings within one’s mind, enabling one to dissociate oneself from weakness of the mind” (「自性寂靜即是涅槃。如此所說能破一切諸見，損自身心執著想故，得離怯弱」). By acknowledging both the weaknesses and the boundless potential as vast as empty space which we find within us, we will be able not only to salvage ourselves but also, as the bodhisattva Jingangzang encourages practitioners to do, “on seeing the multitude of sentient beings in suffering, highly enhance your great compassion” (「復見群生受眾苦，轉更增益大悲心」).²⁸

Abbreviation

T : 大正新脩大藏經 (大藏出版)、X : 卅新纂大日本續藏經 (國書刊行會)

²⁸ T17, p. 909c19-20, T10, p. 187a10.

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