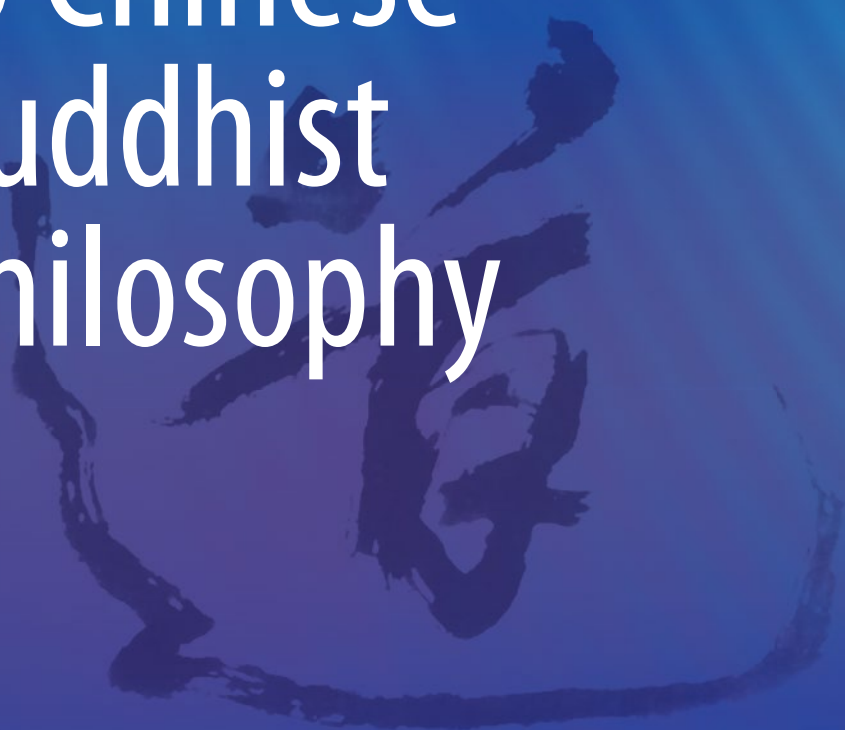


Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy 9

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Dao Companion to Chinese Buddhist Philosophy



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Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy

Volume 9

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Dao Companion to Chinese Buddhist Philosophy

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*For Charles Wei-Hsun Fu (1933–1996), In
Memoriam*

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Abbreviations

- HTC *Hsu Tsang Ching (Xu Zang Jing)* 續藏經 (*The Supplemental Buddhist Canon*). 1968–1970. Reprint of *Dai Nihon Zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 (NAKANO Tatsue 中野達慧, ed. Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin, 1905–1912). 150 vols. Taibei: Xinwenfeng Chuban Gongsī.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (*The Newly Edited Buddhist Canon During the Taisho Era*). 1922–1933. TAKAKUSU Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and WATANABE Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. Tokyo: Daizo shuppan kai. 85 vols.
- X *Shinsan Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經 (*The New Edition of Great Japanese Supplemental Buddhist Canon*). 1975–1989. KAWAMURA Kōshō 河村孝照 ed. Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai. 90 vols.

When authors quote from, or make reference to, one of these Buddhist canons, the abbreviated title is conventionally followed by the number of the volume, scripture, page, column, and (sometimes) line where applicable.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy and Its “Other”



Youru Wang

It goes without saying that, as a practical and institutionalized religion, Chinese Buddhism offers more than just philosophies or doctrines. It involves the exercise of various kinds of ritual, the construction and maintenance of sacred sites, the formation and implementation of monastic precepts, the routine practice of meditation and contemplation, the use and development of cultural and genealogical narratives, the continuation of scriptural exegesis, and so on. Nevertheless, acknowledging these crucial aspects of Chinese Buddhism does not amount to the negation of the role that doctrines and philosophies played in Chinese Buddhism.

Schools of scholastic Buddhism, in the different forms of Abhidharma, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, spread to China along with other components of Indian Buddhism. Elite monks often performed further philosophical reflection upon various themes provided by newly translated Indian Buddhist scriptures, as they followed the scholastic tradition of scriptural and doctrinal exegesis, attempting to understand, assimilate and appropriate the soteriological paradigm of Indian Buddhism in Chinese contexts. There is a discernible thread of philosophical discussion and reflection running through the early, less mature, and later, more mature, schools of Chinese Buddhism, from the *Prajñā* (般若) schools of the Wei Jin 魏晉 Period, to the masters of *Nirvāṇa* (涅槃) schools, based on the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, the masters of *Chengshi* (成實師, based on the *Satyasiddhi Śāstra*, *Chengshi Lun* 成實論), the masters of *Shelun* (攝論師, based on Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha*, the *She Dasheng Lun* 攝大乘論), the masters of *Dilun* (地論師, based on Vasubandhu's *Daśabhūmikāsūtra Śāstra*, the *Shidi Jing Lun* 十地經論) in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (Nanbei Chao 南北朝), and finally to the more famous schools of Sanlun 三論, Faxiang 法相, Tiantai 天台 and Huayan 華嚴 in the Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 Dynasties. Although whether those groups of thinkers before

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the Sui and Tang could be called “schools” in any sectarian sense is debatable, and the Chinese uses of the term “*zong* 宗” (often translated as “school”) in ancient texts are ambivalent, one fact is certain: there is no lack of philosophy, and philosophy is part of the legacy of Chinese Buddhism.¹

One might argue that the sinification of Buddhism has produced two more popular but not-philosophy-oriented schools—Chan (禪) and Pure Land (淨土)—which seem to have challenged the entire tradition of Indian Buddhist scholasticism. While this is true, one still needs to pay attention to the following two things. First, while Chan and Pure Land Buddhists are certainly not doing philosophy, some of their teachings are seen by many as philosophically interesting, or philosophically inspiring, and have philosophical implications. These implications and inspirations contribute to the development of Chinese Buddhist philosophy and entire Chinese philosophy, and have become philosophically influential. Thus, they deserve to be included in the subject areas of our study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Second, in the case of Chan ideology, while there is a strong tendency in Chan to promote the special transmission of the mind beyond teachings, or more radically, the separate transmission outside teachings (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳),² there are persisting voices inside Chan on the unification or underlying correspondence between the Chan transmission of the mind and scriptural/doctrinal teachings (*Chanjiao yizhi* 禪教一致). Based on their understanding of the unification of Chan and doctrinal teachings, many Chan masters utilize philosophical insights from scholastic traditions, or offer their own philosophical insights into the existential and soteriological issues many Buddhists face. Chan Buddhism as a seemingly anti-philosophical tradition has ironically become a philosophically influential and powerful tradition as witnessed by Chinese intellectual history since the Song Dynasty. Chan philosophical insights also have profound impact on Chinese aesthetics, literature and arts, especially poetry and paintings, on naturalistic perspectives in health and healing, and even on social issues such as the unification of three religions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.³ Overall, Chinese Buddhist philosophy, partaken in by many different schools, has showed that it has much to contribute to a wide range of philosophical concerns, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and philosophy of religion, even when viewed in its own context. Meanwhile, it is clear that Chinese Buddhist philosophy

¹ Mario Poceski points out recently: “[W]e have to be mindful that the Chinese term for ‘school’ (*zong*) presents us with a number of challenges, given its multiple connotations and its ambivalent uses in a range of contexts. The same term can be used to denote the essential purport of a particular doctrine (that might be associated with a specific scripture, such as the *Huayan Jing*), a tradition of canonical exegesis or philosophical reflection (e.g. Madhyamaka), a systematization of particular doctrines or practices, or a grouping of practitioners that adhere to a set of teachings or ideals. Often it involves a combination of several of these interpretative possibilities.” (Poceski 2014: 51–52) For different views of these early “schools” or groups of thinkers, see Lü 1979: chapter 6–8; Ch’en 1964: chapter 5–6; Lai 2009: 341–345, in addition to Poceski’s.

² Cf. Wang 2017: 209–211; Foulk 1999.

³ Cf. Wang 2017, “Introduction: A Concise History of Chan Buddhism” and many publications in the section of “Studies on Chan Language, Literary Genre, and Art” of “Bibliography.”

cannot be limited to traditional Western divisions of philosophy and to fixed Western categories or norms.⁴

Obviously, including a volume on Chinese Buddhist philosophy in the series *Dao Companion to Chinese Philosophy* is necessary, since Chinese Buddhist philosophy has enriched Chinese philosophy so much. Without involving Chinese Buddhist philosophy, Chinese philosophy cannot be presented as a whole. Currently, most published books related to Chinese Buddhist philosophy either center on a period of development, a school, a thinker, a text, an issue or an aspect of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. A book that can cover Chinese Buddhist philosophy as a whole, or offer a general picture, would be ideal to students and many others who are interested. This volume can be seen as a modest attempt to approach this ideal through a collection of essays that investigate the various schools, thinkers, ideas, and texts foundational to the study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy as a whole. However, a general picture about Chinese Buddhist philosophy is not equivalent to mere investigations of individual schools and thinkers. To understand what gathers together these very divergent individual schools, ideas and texts and what defines the nature and identity of Chinese Buddhist philosophy requires a further disclosure of the underlying circumstances and varied causal relationships, which is more fundamental than just focusing on individual schools and doctrines, although it is no easy task.

1 Chinese Buddhist Philosophy and Its “Other”

1.1 *Something Neither “Originally Indian” nor “Originally Chinese”*

The challenge of this task is best demonstrated by current debates on the understanding of the nature and identity of Chinese Buddhism and its philosophy. One of the keys to this issue is the relationship of Chinese Buddhist philosophy with its other. This “other” could involve: any non-Chinese Buddhist philosophies, such as Tibetan or Japanese Buddhist philosophy, but most notably Indian Buddhist philosophy; non-Buddhist philosophical-religious traditions in China such as Daoism and Confucianism, or Western philosophy in modern time. The word “Chinese Buddhist philosophy” can refer to either transmitted Buddhist philosophy (from India) in China, or the so-called Sinitic or Sinicized (Chinese transformed) Buddhist philosophy. The latter has been the focus of modern studies on Chinese Buddhist philosophy. However, recent scholarly works, though mostly by philologists and historians of Chinese Buddhist literature and thought, have critically questioned those clear-cut distinctions and resulting hierarchies, including the presumptions underlying these distinctions and hierarchies.

⁴This aspect will be further discussed in the ensuing part of this introduction.

One of the presumptions claims the normativity of Indian Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy as a unifying and homogeneous foundation in terms of which Chinese Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy is judged. It is precisely based on this presumption that the question of whether Chinese Buddhist teaching is faithful to its Indian origin acquires its haunting power, and that Chinese Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy, at its best, can only be an extension or a Sinitic variation of this homogeneous Indian Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy. One of the lessons we learn from recent critical studies of Buddhism is that such a unifying and homogeneous Buddhism does not stand up to examination even within the area of Indian Buddhism itself, much less can be found out in the areas of vastly diverse cultures where Buddhism takes new forms and contents. Contemporary scholars thus have talked about multiple “Buddhisms” instead of a unifying and homogeneous Buddhism (Sharf 2002: 7). Consequently, rather than justifying the alleged dismissal of the technique of using native Chinese terms to match the meanings of Indian Buddhist concepts (*geyi* 格義) as misconstruing Indian Buddhism in the early stage of Chinese Buddhism, scholars have pointed out that *geyi*, on the contrary, has never left Chinese Buddhist philosophy. It in fact characterizes a way of Chinese comprehending, assimilating, and appropriating foreign concepts, which is part of a broad, underlying, indispensable and everlasting hermeneutical process.⁵ Rather than being a source of distortion, this complex social-cultural and linguistic conditioning of the Chinese reception of Buddhism makes possible the alternative developments in both Buddhist theory and practice.

As the fixed distinction and hierarchy of the original over unoriginal, or authentic over inauthentic, is subverted by contemporary scholarship, the fixed distinction and hierarchy of Sinitic over non-Sinitic, or “domestication”/“independent growth” over “preparation” (Wright 1959), is challenged too. The Chinese assimilation and appropriation of Buddhism is seen more as a process than a stage. The study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy cannot be restricted to just those Sinitic schools if we understand Chinese Buddhism and its philosophy as a process and acknowledge the fact that this process starts long before the formation of the so-called Sinitic schools. This understanding allows us to pay as much attention to early Chinese Buddhist thought as to those of the Sinitic schools. Meanwhile, the subversion of these fixed distinctions and hierarchies, and withdrawal from a unified and homogeneous conception of Buddhism, does not necessarily mean that Chinese Buddhism can be defined as something installed in a closed box of Chinese culture. That would fall into the other side of polarity, a polarity that bases itself on the isolation and stagnation of two sides. As a matter of fact, Chinese culture has never been the same ever

⁵Cf. Sharf 2002a: 10; Lai 2009: 325–326, 341; Thompson 2014: 231–246; Lin and Radich 2014: 16. Dessein argues that “‘*geyi*’ originally referred to a particular method of exegesis, restricted to an Abhidharmic context, and not to a more general method of expressing Buddhist ideas in terms of Chinese philosophical terms, i.e. the meaning it was given later. The connection of ‘*geyi*’ with the numerical lists of categories of elements (*shishu* 事數) also justifies the use of the element of ‘*ge*’ in the term ‘*geyi*’: ‘categorization’.” (Dessein 2015: 288) This is an interesting interpretation on the original nature of the technique of *geyi*. But the article does not deny the broad sense of *geyi* being used beyond its original limit. It is this broad sense of *geyi* that we are discussing here.

since Buddhism was assimilated into this culture, and in the meantime, Chinese Buddhism is still not the same as Indian Buddhism. The Chinese assimilation and appropriation of Indian Buddhist soteriological messages and paradigms is a process of interaction, interchange and interpenetration, which could even be used to illustrate the Huayan Buddhist philosophy of mutual identification and mutual penetration in all things. Perhaps we should more consciously let this Huayan insight guide our understanding of Chinese Buddhism, to avoid a polarized way of thinking.

The result of this process of assimilation is something similar to the Gadamerian notion of “fusion of horizons,” something blended, neither originally Indian nor originally Chinese, whose identity is of no-self-identity.⁶ Our reflective understanding of the issue of identity and alterity in Chinese Buddhist philosophy may benefit from a closer look at the concept of assimilation we used here. The English word *assimilate* involves the meaning of “to appropriate,” “to incorporate into the substance of the assimilator,” “to take in,” or “to absorb into the system.”⁷ This meaning presupposes the substance, the system, and the assimilator and its identity. Assimilation as appropriation may be understood not only as active selection, but also as autonomous choice-making, on the part of the assimilator.⁸ However, the word *assimilate* also involves the meaning of “to make similar” (especially from its Latin root *assimilare*) or “to alter by the process of assimilation.”⁹ This meaning is subversive to the meaning of substance, system and identity involved in the concept of assimilation. It suggests that both the outside and the inside, the assimilated and the assimilator, can be altered in and by the process of assimilation. Both can be appropriated and superseded by, and subjected to, the process of assimilation itself. A purely autonomous selection by the assimilator immune to alterity, or an unaltered identity survived from the whole process of assimilation, is only an illusion and unverifiable. The subversive meaning of assimilation justifies the point that the sinification of Buddhism should be more broadly understood as a process of interaction, interchange and interpenetration, a process of making the outside in or the inside out, which is also conditioned by multiple social-historical, linguistic-conceptual and practical factors. If we follow this understanding, we would have no difficulty seeing many of the Chinese Buddhist teachings and philosophies as representing and exploring alternative possibilities and developments, which are either implied, marginalized or neglected by the available Buddhist tradition, and as “roads not taken” in Indian Buddhism (Lin and Radich 2014: 17–18).

⁶Contemporary scholars of Chinese Buddhism are divided when applying the Gadamerian notion of “fusion of horizons.” Some attitudes are positive, others negative. See, for instance, Sharf 2002a: 10; and Thompson 2014: 241. As our mentioning of this notion shows, we are positive, although we are aware of “the underlying hermeneutical issues.”

⁷*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*. p. 132.

⁸To my understanding, this meaning is what Derrida termed and criticized as “the classical mode of appropriation.” Derrida 2002: 336.

⁹See note 7 above.

1.2 *How Chan Buddhists Assimilate Daoist Ideas—A Case Study for the Process of Hermeneutic Selection*

The issue of identity and alterity can be found as well in the relationship between Chinese Buddhist philosophy and other Chinese traditions. For example, it is commonly acknowledged that Chinese Buddhist philosophy's preoccupation with the theory of Buddha-nature and Buddhahood is deeply rooted in the Confucian philosophy of original human goodness, the paradigm of sage-hood and the theory of mind-nature. These indigenous philosophical frameworks condition Chinese Buddhist thinkers' hermeneutic selection, the formation of Chinese Buddhist philosophy and its development. Contemporary scholars have drawn attention towards these indigenous frameworks—the so-called “local *episteme*”—and the central role they played in the vicissitude of Chinese Buddhism (Sharf 2002: 23). However, it should be noted that the conditioning of a cultural environment does not necessarily entail that historically, individuals or groups could not even have any opportunity to choose or select. Choices and possibilities of alternatives will always be there, no matter how limited they are. The key to understanding this conditioning is not whether there are choices or not, but how choices are made and how multiple factors interact together in the process of choice making.

One instance of the Chan Buddhist assimilation of Daoist ideas would illustrate this point. When the *Platform Sūtra* presents Huineng 慧能 (638–713)'s explanation of no-thought (*wunian* 無念) as living with the flow of all thoughts and things, the text¹⁰ uses the statement “*Dao* must flow freely (*dao xu tongliu* 道須通流)” (Yampolsky 1967: 136), a statement that evidently borrows ideas from Zhuangzi's conception that the sameness or constancy of free moving, changing or exchanging of all things is the *dao* (*dao tong weiyi* 道通為一).¹¹ Although the availability and familiarity of the Zhuangzian idea determines the use of the term, the need to refute the opponent's misunderstanding of freeing from all thoughts (*linian* 離念) and to justify this refutation is also a triggering force. Without this practical need, the editor might not be compelled to borrow or use this Zhuangzian idea directly, even though the idea is always already there, always available in this cultural environment. In other words, to help establish the ideological identity of this emerging

¹⁰ Many modern and contemporary scholars have assumed that Shenhui 神會 (684–758) and his followers are the main editor of this extant Dunhuang text, based on the observation that the text is heavily influenced by Shenhui's sectarian rhetoric against the alleged Northern school and its leader Shenxiu 神秀 (ca. 606–706), and that what is exactly taught by Huineng cannot be verified through this text.

¹¹ The most important paragraph involving Zhuangzi's concept of free flowing *dao* is found in Chap. 2 of the *Zhuangzi*. See *Zhuangzi Yinde* 莊子引得: *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, p. 4. The English translation of the term *tong* from the text of *Zhuangzi* is a difficult task. Among various existing English translations of this Chinese word, two are outstanding. One is A. C. Graham's rendering of it as “interchange” (Graham 1981: 53). More recently, Hinton rendered it as “move freely” (Hinton 1997: 23). Both convey the correct meaning of the original Chinese. Since this Chinese word is, like many other words, polysemous, I think it involves both meanings in the context of Zhuangzi's use.

Chan sect, the editor of the text unhesitatingly invokes the Daoist idea of flowing *dao*; to be other than the opponent’s view, the editor embraces the *other* of Buddhist thought—the Daoist ideas, incorporates it into a Chan Buddhist context and weaves it into the web of Chan Buddhist vocabulary. This is the irony, contradiction and twist of identity and alterity: the newly established Chan ideology inevitably involves its other, even its other’s other. From the very beginning this “other” has been there and always been part of this so-called identity.

Overall, the definitive move of the editor of this text in assimilating Daoist ideas is a cultural event of multifactorial complex, which defies any reductionism. This observation could be further supported by the fact that the use of the notion of flowing *dao* was soon replaced by the more popular Hongzhou 洪州 Chan notion of *renyun* 任運 (free flowing together with all things and circumstances).¹² The Hongzhou masters did not repeat the Zhuangzian term *dao xu tongliu*, but the spirit of Zhuangzi’s flowing *dao* is alive in this Hongzhou notion of *renyun*. The language of flowing *dao* is substituted by a more distinctive Chan language using the vocabulary of medieval Chinese vernacular language. The first character of the word *renyun*—the verb *ren*, involving the meaning of “follow” or “let”—has a very popular use in the everyday spoken language of commoners in the Tang dynasty.¹³ It is this language that the Hongzhou masters identified themselves with, and that further helped form the identity of the Hongzhou school and its followers.

However, what underlies this formation of the linguistic-ideological-sectarian identity is none other than the play of difference. “Dao must flow freely” and “*renyun*” are just two links within a dynamic chain of differentiation and substitution. The selection and substitution of terms is largely determined by the shift of social-cultural environment and the development of Chan practice. In this case, the social-political change of the mid-late Tang dynasty played a great role behind the scenes of the formation of the new Chan identity. The alleged opponent in the *Platform Sūtra*—Shenxiu and his Northern Chan—and Shenhui, the campaigner against them, aligned themselves very much with aristocracies and imperial court, while Hongzhou Chan and the so-called Southern Chan aligned themselves more with commoners.¹⁴ The former could not survive the destructive consequence of the “An-Shi Rebellion” and the ensuing mass persecution on Buddhism, especially in the capital cities and northern areas of China. The Hongzhou school and the other lineages, on the contrary, was less damaged by the rebellion and persecution, due to its lesser dependence on Imperial support and on formal doctrines/teachings, as well as its being farther away from the urban and northern areas. This typical case

¹² The earliest appearance of the term “*renyun*” is from Daoxin 道信’s (580–651) *Rudao Anxin Yao Fangbian Famen* 入道安心要方便法門, included in the *Lengqie Shizi Ji* 楞伽師資記 by Jingjue 淨覺 (683–ca. 750). However, it was the Hongzhou masters who most frequently used this term. It also appears in Zongmi 宗密’s (780–841) description of the Hongzhou school in his *Zhonghua Chuanxindi Chanmen Shizi Chengxi Tu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖. See Yanagida 1971: 205; Kamata 1971: 308. Also cf. chapter 15, section 1, of this anthology.

¹³ See Shimuru 1984: 298, 302, 309–312. Also cf. Jiang and Cao 1997: 318.

¹⁴ Cf. Weinstein, “The effects of the An Lu-Shan rebellion on the Buddhist church,” in Weinstein 1987: 59–65. Also cf. Abe 1986: 120.

shows us the whole complex of multi-factorial interaction in the process of the Chinese Buddhist assimilation of its other. To understand Chinese Buddhist philosophy requires us to understand this interaction, interchange and interpenetration between them.

1.3 Ways of Responding to Otherness: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy and Modern Western Philosophy

The most powerful other of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, and of entire Chinese philosophy, in modern and contemporary times, is Western philosophy, or Western philosophical challenge. However, either as part of Chinese philosophy or as part of Buddhist philosophy, the relationship of Chinese Buddhist philosophy with Western philosophy is complicated and can be viewed from different angles. From the perspective of Western philosophy, both Chinese and Buddhist philosophies were excluded from the history and canon of philosophy during the period of late eighteenth – early nineteenth century by modern German philosophers. The erasing of this other began from the Kantian school and culminated in Hegel, to establish the parochial identity and its exclusive Greek origin of the modern academic discipline of philosophy, and to distinguish it from non-European origins and the so-called religious thought, along with its separation from Christian philosophy, as a denial of and move away from the pre- and early modern inclusion of them.¹⁵ Despite the increasing presentation of linguistic and textual knowledge about Buddhist and Chinese philosophies by Western Buddhologists and Sinologists, they were at most seen as preliminary to Greek philosophy or as the pre-history of philosophy. From then on, the absence of this other from philosophy departments, “from the lecture halls and seminar rooms of philosophy had become normal” (Park, 9). However, this other of Western/European philosophy has always presented itself as an impossibility of, or a resistance to, exclusion, not only through its acknowledgement by the pre- and early modern historiography of philosophy and its re-affirmation by the criticisms on the Kantian-Hegelian exclusion, but also through the often neglected fact that, accompanying many great moments of self-critical reflection on Western philosophy in modern and contemporary times, there are Western philosophers who turn towards the East in finding inspirations.¹⁶ In other words, the suppressed other often resurfaces itself during the time of self-critical reflection of Western philosophy. While the tension between the inside and the outside, or between inclusion and exclusion, never ends, and various social-cultural and hermeneutical situations continue to set limits on the understanding of the other, the post-colonial and post-

¹⁵ For example, there were inclusive attitudes toward Chinese philosophy in Voltaire (1694–1778) and Leibniz (1646–1716). See Clarke 1997: 43–50; also see his account on “The Jesuits and the New Vision of Cathay,” in *ibid.*: 39–42.

¹⁶ See related chapters in Park 2013, and chapter 7 of Clarke 1997. For the most recent contribution to this important subject see Nelson 2017.

modern understanding of identity and alterity calls for a more open-mindedness towards this other of Western philosophy, a more critical awareness of the misrepresentation of non-Western philosophies based solely on Western philosophical categories,¹⁷ and a more appreciation of the contribution that non-Western philosophies could make to addressing shared philosophical concerns and problems.¹⁸

Looking at the other side, traditional Chinese Buddhist philosophy, along with all Chinese philosophy, has been pressured to deal with the “invasion” of Western culture and philosophy into Chinese soil for more than a hundred years, from the early time of the national-cultural crisis to the more recent “door-opening” era. As that trial began, many Chinese scholars and thinkers quickly discovered the similarities and differences between Chinese traditions and Western philosophy. Some prominent figures became acutely aware of the challenge of modernization and utilized Western philosophical concepts, approaches and methodologies to re-contextualize and reinterpret traditional Chinese philosophy, unfolding its significance in a new age. Thus we see in early figures, such as FENG Youlan 馮友蘭 (FUNG Yu-lan, 1895–1990), HU Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), and LIANG Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988), that Chinese philosophy, including Chinese Buddhist philosophy, is elaborated with the accompanying concepts and methods from various Western philosophies, such as neorealism, pragmatism, Bergsonism and so on.¹⁹ The consequence of this tendency that carries on to contemporary times is twofold. On the one hand, assimilating and borrowing Western philosophy not only helps Chinese philosophy connect and respond to Western philosophy and the modern global situation, but also acquires new interpretive power and dimensions for

¹⁷A typical examination of the misrepresentation of Asian philosophy based mainly on Western philosophical categories can be found in Tuck’s study of the Western interpretation of Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (see Tuck 1990). Tuck lists various Western interpretations of Nāgārjuna in terms of Kantian philosophy, logical positivism, the late Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language, and so forth. This type of Western interpretations unavoidably spreads to the study of Chinese Buddhist philosophy as well, as we can see from some Western readings of Chinese Madhyamaka, Huayan and Chan.

¹⁸Clarke has summarized a sequence of three stages of Western philosophical contacts with the East in the twentieth century as the universalist, the comparative, and the hermeneutical, and indicated that the first stage of subsuming Asian philosophy in a universal whole dominated by Western philosophical categories has ended; the comparative approach is continuously used, but the Western categories and methodologies as standards for comparison are critically questioned; the more recent stage of hermeneutical approach is characterized as going beyond mere comparison but engaging Asian philosophy in contemporary discussions of issues concerning self, mind, consciousness, mind-body dualism, emotions and so on, and even “mediating Western philosophical concepts through Eastern ideas.” It “involves the recognition of diversity, otherness, difference, without thereby separating out East and West into substantive and incommensurable enclaves.” I echo his view and see the third direction as more hopeful and fruitful in this global age. See Clarke 1997: chapter 7.

¹⁹For FENG Youlan’s relationship with neorealism, see ZHAO Dezhi 1994, chapter 4, “FENG Youlan Yu Xinshizailun 馮友蘭與新實在論.” For HU Shi’s relationship with Dewey and pragmatism, see Makeham “HU Shi and the Search for System” (Makeham 2012: 170). For LIANG Shuming’s relationship with Bergsonism, see Thierry Meynard, “Introducing Buddhism as Philosophy: The Case of LIANG Shuming, XIONG Shili, and TANG Yongtong” (Makeham 2012: 190).

Chinese philosophy. As one of the results of this interaction between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy, “many neologisms have to some extent become part of Chinese everyday language and philosophical discourse.” “A total avoidance of such neologisms is impossible and would render contemporary Chinese scholars speechless” (Defoort 2006: 629, 646). This is the current reality that everyone who is involved in the discourse of Chinese philosophy must face.

On the other hand, this approach of assimilating Western philosophy does cause such concern that “ancient Chinese ideas end up being disfigured by a selection on the basis of their resemblance to traditional Western philosophy or by an interpretation through that jargon, as ‘feet being forced into small shoes’ (削足適履),” or “a concern to protect the rich Chinese tradition from the professional straitjacket of modern Western academia” (Ibid.: 629). These concerns are legitimate in the sense that they bring up the issue of how to bridge the gap between our contemporary context (assimilating or dialoguing with Western philosophy is part of this context) and the historical context of original Chinese texts in any philosophical interpretation, and the issue of how to avoid violence in cross-cultural interpretations. It reminds us to be more cautious, more respectful towards the contextual difference and otherness of the Chinese texts being cross-culturally examined, and to avoid using Western categories or concepts as a standard. However, following these concerns, a return to what Makeham called “epistemological nativism,” “the idea that the articulation and development of China’s philosophical heritage must draw exclusively on the endogenous paradigms and norms of China’s indigenous heritage” (Makeham 2012: 347), namely, a return to the exclusion of this modern other of Chinese philosophy—Western philosophy—from the study of Chinese philosophy itself seems not only impossible but also unnecessary. It is true that we need to pay attention to inner demand, inner logic or internal thread in the development of Chinese philosophy and its textual history as opposed to external influences (such as Western philosophy) on Chinese philosophy (Ibid.: 365–366), but the internal and the external cannot be understood as isolated from each other without any interaction or connection. This kind of isolation can neither meet the practical demand of living in this global age, nor be reconciled with the development of Chinese philosophy in the past one hundred years. As someone has argued by using the case of Hu Shi, Western philosophy has proved essential or at least instrumental to Hu Shi’s “identifying the inner threads of China’s philosophical past” (Ibid.: 366). In other words, from the modern history of Chinese philosophy we can see that the internal and the external have been intertwining with each other, and it is inconceivable and unfruitful to exclude from each other. The autonomy of Chinese philosophy or Chinese intellectual history, if there is any, must be understood as relational or in a relational context.

To maintain this interactive relationship of Chinese philosophy with Western philosophy does not mean that Chinese philosophy must surrender itself to the hegemony of Western philosophy. Rather, Chinese philosophy can challenge Western philosophy in its interaction with the latter. Nor does it mean that every project of Chinese philosophy must focus itself on its relationship or comparison with Western philosophy. The inclusivism we advocate here should extend to the

inclusion of diverse approaches or projects even within Chinese philosophy itself. Some could more explicitly utilize and redefine (or re-contextualize) Western concepts to interpret Chinese philosophy; others could more concentrate on the inner dynamics or internal threads of Chinese philosophy. A grand project could include both. All would contribute to the same goal of the study and development of Chinese philosophy by complementing each other, as diverse approaches in many chapters of this anthology have showed.

The dynamic relationship of the outside in or the inside out can be best illustrated through Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Compared with Confucian philosophy and the Daoist philosophy of Lao-Zhuang, Chinese Buddhist philosophy is more a part of soteriological teachings of an institutionalized religion, and serves and reflects its religious practices. This rich context of soteriological teachings and practices cannot be exhausted by the mere study of its philosophy. Despite this unique characteristic, the twentieth century saw an active interconnection and interchange between Chinese Buddhist philosophy and Western philosophy. In the early decades of the twentieth century, when dealing with the overwhelming influence of modern Western science, logic and other parts of modern Western culture, many Chinese thinkers and scholars appealed to Chinese Buddhism and its philosophy as a way to counteract them and help solve the social-cultural crisis—a main reason for the revival of the Chinese Yogācāra school and its philosophy.²⁰ However, even when these thinkers/scholars promoted Yogācāra philosophy with such a clear purpose, and even when the logic (*yinming* 因明) and terminology (*mingxiang* 名相) of Yogācāra philosophy seemed more sophisticated and seemingly useful than those of the other Chinese Buddhist schools in serving this purpose, Western concepts and categories were still integrated into their re-contextualization and reinterpretation of Yogācāra philosophy. One can easily find such examples as in Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), LIANG Shuming, and XIONG Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968).²¹ A different but similarly illuminating case is Japanese scholars’ introducing of Chan/Zen Buddhism to the West in the twentieth century in connection with Western existentialist philosophy and structuralist psychoanalysis. When the Western interpretation of Chan thought was reintroduced back to China in 1980s and 90s, it inspired a new wave of the study of Chan in China, although this Japanese interpretation of Chan through Western frameworks was critically questioned later (see Faure 1993, chapters 1–2).

One of the problems with this borrowing or assimilating Western approaches and concepts into Chinese philosophy or using them as interpretive tools is the shift of the paradigms of Western philosophy itself as we especially witnessed in the twentieth century. Many times when someone appropriates a paradigm of Western philosophy to interpret Chinese philosophy, that paradigm is sooner or later replaced by a new one, with which the limitation of the old one becomes evident. This is the vicissitude of Western philosophy—there are as many different Western philosophies as there are many different definitions of philosophy in the West. If we understand this process correctly, we would feel no surprise upon discovering how limited

²⁰ Cf. many chapters and “Introduction” in Makeham 2014.

²¹ Ibid., chapters 5, 7 and 8.

his view is when FENG Youlan declares Chinese philosophy's need for a formal system as he accepts the paradigm of neorealism (Makeham 2012: 357). When discussing the later Wittgenstein and the later Heidegger, Rorty wrote: "Their later work is therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing rather than to supply him with a new philosophical program" (Rorty 1979: 5–6). The same observation can apply to post-structuralism, post-modernism, and many other philosophies. Notwithstanding Rorty's own preference, it offers a useful clue to seeing the whole picture, the flowing reality and diversity of current Western philosophy. Looking at this phenomenon from a positive perspective, each different approach may provide a different dimension when applied to the interpretation of Chinese philosophy, and would enrich the interpretation itself, as long as it is not used as a standard, or imposed upon Chinese philosophy, but rather, carefully re-defined and re-contextualized in terms of its comparability or "family resemblance."

Here we have touched upon the issue of the other of philosophical method. Mainstream modern Western philosophy has distinguished itself from other academic disciplines, such as literature, art, and history, by the pursuit of system, argumentation, conceptual hierarchy and analytic rigor with a problem-solving orientation until the recent challenges from post-structuralism and post-modernism. The latter often questions the metaphysical, onto-theological or logo-centric pre-suppositions of Western philosophy from the other site, "a non-philosophical site" (Derrida 1984: 108), or by using a non-philosophical method, in order to make Western philosophy "other than itself" so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner or anew. Meanwhile, the traditional method of philosophy is not abandoned (Ibid.: 108–109). This inclusive perspective sheds light on the issue of the method of Chinese philosophy including Chinese Buddhist philosophy. For a long time, traditional Chinese philosophy has always been considered to fall short of the rigorous method of modern philosophy. Many classical texts are not considered purely philosophical even though they are philosophically related. These shortages condition our philosophical interpretation of these texts and call for the application of modern analytic method wherever deemed appropriate, but they don't have to be seen negatively since they warn us about the limitations of the Western philosophical method. In the West, the study of Chinese Buddhist texts has often involved text-critical (or philological) study, linguistic study, historical study and philosophical study shared by Buddhologists, Sinologists and philosophers. These different studies are based on different academic disciplines, but they are not necessarily exclusive to each other. All of these factors and methods can be accommodated and integrated in light of this inclusive perspective. Those non-philosophical studies should be seen as necessary preparations for philosophical studies, and they can often inspire and challenge philosophical reflections. Scholars of Chinese Buddhist philosophy have no reason to neglect the accomplishment of these studies. On the other hand, scholars who do non-philosophical studies need to cultivate their capability of understanding Chinese Buddhist texts philosophically, especially in dealing with those philosophically laden texts. Although what we have stated here are basically the editor's own opinions, not meant to be imposed on our contributors,

many chapters in this anthology seem to share or support these views of mutual complementarity and inclusion while their main approaches and methods remain philosophical.

2 Survey of Chapters

The chapters following the introduction are divided into eight parts. Parts I and II, “Intersections,” look at Chinese Buddhist philosophy mainly from the angle of its relationship with the “other” and with the traditions outside itself, which contribute to its development, and in terms of how Chinese Buddhist philosophy grows out of, and reacts to, this relationship. It helps readers gain an overview of this relationship through the investigation of many individual cases and topics. The ensuing six parts look more into various individual philosophical schools, and thinkers, ideas, issues, and texts that are distinctive to these schools, which fleshes out the general picture of Chinese Buddhist philosophy.

More specifically, Parts I and II examine Chinese Buddhist philosophy in terms of its interconnection and interchange with Indian Buddhist philosophy and the philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism. Three chapters are placed in Part I under the title “Intersections: Assimilating and Appropriating Buddhism,” and focus on cases of how Indian Buddhist ideas and paradigms are re-contextualized, assimilated and appropriated by Chinese Buddhist thinkers in early and later periods.

Chapter 2, Wawrytko’s “The Sinification of Buddhist Philosophy: The Cases of ZHI Dun and *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana* (*Dasheng Qixin Lun*),” introduces early Chinese Buddhist thinker ZHI Dun 支遁’s doctrine of *ji-se* (即色, form as suchness), a rarely discussed precursor of the so-called sinification of Buddhist philosophy. Wawrytko represents ZHI Dun’s doctrine as a skillful position astride the two realms of emptiness and form by emphasizing the realization of emptiness in the midst of forms while going along with forms so as to draw clear lines with Confucian moralists, who lack the perspective of transcendence, and with Daoist naturalists, who simply see the mundane world as dust. The chapter refutes several misinterpretations of ZHI Dun by other modern scholars, and at the same time places ZHI Dun’s doctrine in a rich historical context of Chinese intellectual and cultural sentiment. Wawrytko then examines the content of each section of the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* 大乘起信論 with a focus on the responsiveness of the text to the intellectual demand of Chinese Buddhist communities. This responsiveness is best shown through its theory of suchness or the mind encompassing both phenomenal and transcendental states of being, which resonates with the Daoist concept of *dao* encompassing both named and nameless, and through revealing how this innately pure mind could become concealed or uncovered, which resounds with the Confucian doctrine of the heart/mind’s innate goodness. The chapter also draws close attention to the text’s epistemological methodology of shifting and broadening one’s awareness of reality, and to its antithesis of a mystical trance state often erroneously associated with Buddhist practice.

Chapter 3, Shen's "The Ethics of Generosity in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism: Theory and Practice," investigates how the ethics of generosity is inherited from Indian Mahayana Buddhism and developed in Chinese Buddhism. The central part of this investigation is his critical study of the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* and Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠 (523–592)'s *Dasheng Yizhang* 大乘義章 (*The Meaning of Mahayana Buddhism*). Shen argues that the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* offers an ontological foundation for Buddhist generosity through its affirmation of "one mind" or "the mind of all sentient beings" as ultimate reality, since this "one mind" is the source for the sameness and equality of all sentient beings, and therefore provides the grounds for negating separation/discrimination and practicing care and generosity for others. However, Shen also points out that when this theory sees difference/otherness as merely a delusion, it limits the development of the ethics of generosity, which nonetheless requires respect for difference/otherness. On a practical level, both the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* and Huiyuan's *Dasheng Yizhang* affirm the act of *huixiang* 迴向 (turning over to the benefit of all sentient beings), although the latter specifies three kinds of *huixiang*: *bodhi huixiang* 菩提迴向 (turning upwards to enlightenment), *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向 (turning to all sentient beings) and *shiji huixiang* 實際迴向 (turning towards reality). These acts of *huixiang* best illustrate the contemporary ethical concept of strangification—the act of going out of oneself to many others, including strangers, motivated by the spirit of generosity. Notwithstanding these profound ethical meanings, the remaining question for Chinese Buddhism, in his view, is whether ethics is just an instrument for enlightenment or not, which calls for further critical reflection.

Chapter 4 is Wang's "Wholesome Remembrance and the Critique of Memory—From Indian Buddhist Context to Chinese Chan Appropriation." Although the major part of Wang's investigation is on the mode and acts of remembering in Chan Buddhism, he opens with a survey of the traditional Indian Buddhist context of remembering, its differentiation of wholesome and unwholesome acts of remembering, and its critique of unwholesome and discursive modes of memory, as Buddhism evolves from Theravada to Mahayana. This context is a necessary condition under which the interaction between Indian and Chinese Buddhist ideologies, or between the inherited tradition and its Chinese Chan appropriation, becomes possible. Wang then examines how Chan masters, from early to classical period, appropriate and develop the traditional distinction of wholesome and unwholesome remembrance and its affirmation of the former and critique of the latter in a Chinese context. As opposed to the widespread Chan hierarchy of forgetfulness over remembrance that has shaped much of our modern understanding, Wang presents a rediscovery of Chan teachings on remembrance, disclosing how remembrance is related to the internal tension between the positive attitude towards the traditional cultivation and the iconoclastic attitude towards it in various Chan ideologies. The approach of these examinations is a combination of textual/contextual inquiry, conceptual analysis and philosophical interpretation. The part of "summary and reflections" includes a review of the uniqueness of the Chan mode of remembering, especially an analysis of its ethical dimension by using, and comparing it with, Ricoeur's

ethics of memory, and an exploration of the paradoxical relationship between remembering and forgetting.

Three chapters in Part II are placed under the title “Intersections: Interacting with Indigenous Traditions.” These chapters probe the cases of interaction between Chinese Buddhist philosophy and philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism, which involve particular historical periods, individual thinkers and schools, and some distinct topics. Chapter 5, Kantor’s “The Daoist-Buddhist Discourse(s) on Things, Names, and Knowing in China’s Wei Jin Period,” studies the groundbreaking interaction and interfusion between Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414)’s Chinese Madhyamaka philosophy and the philosophy of Daoism and Neo-Daoist “Dark Learning (*xuanxue* 玄學).” Kantor reveals the epistemological, ontological and linguistic significance of this interaction through a close and comparative examination of discourses on central philosophical concepts such as the nature of things, naming, and knowing in Neo-Daoist and in Sengzhao’s texts. The result of this examination is the discovery of a structural similarity between Neo-Daoist and Sengzhao’s epistemological discourses. The former dichotomizes two epistemological fields of the ineffable *dao* and namable things while deeming them as inseparable; the latter also distinguishes the true sense of emptiness from conventional knowledge while acknowledging that the ultimate truth cannot be separate from conventional truth. This underlying similarity contributes to the conditioning and facilitating of Chinese Madhyamaka thinkers’ adoption of Daoist terms. However, as Kantor points out, ontologically they differ in that the Madhyamaka teaching of emptiness sees the world of distinct things as illusion, whereas Neo-Daoist texts accept the reality of the *dao* and all things that come into being by virtue of its efficacy. This difference does not obstruct Sengzhao’s further integration of the Daoist rhetoric of spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) into his account of the realization of emptiness and Buddhist liberation, which has great influence on Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) and Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), the thinkers of the Sanlun 三論 and Tiantai 天臺 schools.

In Chap. 6, “The Epistemology and Process of Buddhist Non-dualism: The Philosophical Challenge of Egalitarianism in Chinese Buddhism,” Wawrytko addresses the interaction between Buddhist heritage and indigenous traditions by focusing on how the Buddhist philosophy of non-dualism brings the challenge of egalitarianism to Chinese intellectual traditions and how Chinese Buddhist thinkers respond to that challenge. The Buddhist philosophy of non-dualism and its egalitarian message in advocating universal Buddhahood is explicit in key scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism such as the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Diamond Sūtra*. This type of non-dualism and egalitarianism requires an epistemological shift from the perspective of hierarchical distinctions to the perspective of the non-dualistic and egalitarian nature of reality. In the first section of this chapter, Wawrytko examines this process of epistemological shift as is discussed by those scriptures. She interprets this process in terms of a contemporary epistemic-existential model of “Triple Loop Learning.” An example of the Chinese reception of this non-dualism and egalitarianism can be seen in the *Platform Sūtra*. However, the egalitarian message of universal Buddhahood is not spread without resistance, as it is demonstrated by the *icchantika* 一闍提 controversy. Behind this controversy are various hierarchical

distinctions and conceptual discriminations sustained by Daoist and Confucian traditions. In the second section of the chapter, Wawrytko analyzes how these tendencies undermine egalitarianism and non-dualism. One of the great developments of egalitarianism and non-dualism in Chinese Buddhism is the Caodong 曹洞 Chan Buddhist philosophy of “five ranks 五位,” which is examined in the third section of this chapter, and further illustrated by using the insights from contemporary neuroscientific findings about the non-dualistic and mutual complementing relationship between stimulus-driven ventral attention and task-oriented dorsal attention in the hybrid brain.

Chapter 7, “Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism: From Zongmi to Mou Zongsan,” written by Wing-cheuk Chan, sheds new light on the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism by exploring and comparing the thoughts of the ninth century Chan-Huayan Buddhist Zongmi 宗密 and the twentieth century Neo-Confucian Mou Zongsan 牟宗三. Chan discovers the structural parallel between their opposing theories: both hold a doctrine of true mind as the central component, and both are influenced by the *tathāgatagarbha* 如來藏 doctrine of the *Dasheng Qixin Lun*. The former uses them to synthesize Huayan 華嚴 and Chan 禪 Buddhist soteriology; the latter assimilates them into his framework of Neo-Confucian moral metaphysics. Seen as a response to Zongmi’s criticism of Confucian metaphysics in general, and the shortcomings of the mandate of heaven and the lack of causal theory in particular, Mou stresses the universality of the Confucian *Dao*, which is supported by the Song Neo-Confucian ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200)’s unified ontological principle (*li*). Rather than appealing to the mandate of heaven, Mou makes clear in following WANG Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) that the Confucian *Dao* can be manifested by the sage through his infinite intellectual mind, which is immanent in every human being, so as to solve the problem of the highest good without postulating a transcendent god nor appealing to the karmic causality. Mou’s response, supplemented by other Neo-Confucian theories such as XIONG Shili’s and TANG Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978)’s, is a prominent example of how Confucian tradition meets the challenge of Chinese Buddhism while absorbing Buddhist influence. However, Chan also points out that Mou’s Neo-Confucian philosophy provides a possibility of defending Chinese Buddhism in face of the critique raised by Critical Buddhism.

The next six parts of this anthology are organized under the category of “Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts.” They include 11 chapters, which are grouped in terms of the major schools of Chinese Buddhism to which these investigations are related, no matter whether they focus on a philosopher, a doctrine or a text. Part III is for “the Sanlun school 三論宗,” or the school of Three Treatises, which refer to Nāgārjuna’s *Middle Treatise* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*), *Twelve Gate Treatise* (*Dvādaśamukhaśāstra*), and Āryadeva’s *Hundred Verse Treatise* (*Śataśāstra*). It is also called the Chinese Madhyamaka school of Indian Buddhist philosophy. We have two chapters contributing to the discussion of the thought of this school. In Chap. 8, “The Non-duality of Motion and Rest: Sengzhao on the Change of Things,” Ho ponders the Sanlun precursor Sengzhao 僧肇’s thesis from the essay *Wubuqian Lun* 物不遷論 that myriad things do not move in time. This thesis at first seems

counter-intuitive and running against the Mahayana Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. Ho coins two terms “moment-thing” and “continuum-thing” to conceptually clarify the understanding of existence of things in time, with regard to Sengzhao’s discourse on the change of things. In terms of a purely logical analysis, Sengzhao’s main argument for things-not-moving-in-time, including two supporting arguments, and his causality argument, such as “the cause does not move in time,” are all unpersuasive. However, in terms of a contextual analysis of Sengzhao’s overall stance on the change and non-change of things, Ho argues, one cannot conclude that Sengzhao’s non-moving thesis is false. Sengzhao views things paradoxically as both moving and non-moving: they are two intertwined aspects of one and the same reality, depending on which perspective one takes. Furthermore, Sengzhao uses words such as moving/non-moving and existent/non-existent in a provisional, indeterminate, non-reifying and non-exclusive manner. He endorses and combines the traditional Buddhist view that things move in time without any enduring stuff with his insight that things, being momentary, do not move in time. The perspectives of moving and non-moving, or continuum and moment, complement each other and signify the non-duality of motion and rest. Although there might still be problems with Sengzhao’s double thesis, Ho demonstrates that they can be overcome by a closer analysis of Sengzhao’s view, and the avoidance of seeing Sengzhao as positing any inherent or determinate nature in moment-things.

The other contribution to the study of the Sanlun school is Chap. 9, Zhang’s “*Po: Jizang’s Method of Negation in the Four Levels of Twofold Truth*.” It analyzes the deconstructive strategy Jizang 吉藏 employs in his account of the four levels of the Mādhyamika notion of twofold truth. These four levels display a process of progressive negation, a movement from single negation to double negation, for attaining a thorough understanding of twofold truth. At the fourth level, all previous three levels of understanding are seen nonetheless as conventional truth, and ultimate truth is further realized beyond any conceptual language and as “sacred silence,” a dialectic process of establishing words and meanings and then deconstructing them to the end of the self-subversion of all oppositional hierarchies. Jizang characterizes this strategy as “deconstructing what is false/misleading and manifesting what is corrective (*poxie xianzheng* 破邪顯正).” It is a technique to cut off every attachment to conceptual duality by using negation without asserting a proposition, and by expounding or edifying without pointing to a determinative reference. Following this strategy, even the very idea of “corrective (*zheng* 正)” itself is finally cancelled out too. Zhang argues that this negative strategy is not nihilistic, since Jizang accepts the possibility of attaining the ultimate via direct awareness. Moreover, in response to the Chinese Buddhist need for something more positive than the Madhyāmikan emptiness, Jizang advocates the notion of the middle-way-Buddha-nature (*zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性). However, Jizang emphasizes that neither middle-way nor Buddha-nature should be understood in an essentialist or extremist view. Like emptiness, they are dependent-arisen, and their resulting duality should be deconstructed as well.

Chapters in Part IV address the thoughts and texts of the Faxiang school (法相宗, the Dharma Characteristics school), which is often called Chinese Yogācāra

school or Consciousness-Only school (Weishi zong 唯識宗), or called Ci'en school (慈恩宗). Chapter 10, Lau's "In What Sense *Jñeyāvaraṇa* Is A Mahayana Idea? According to Xuanzang's *Vijñānavāda* in the *Cheng Weishi Lun*," critically examines the notion of "the obstruction of knowledge (*jñeyāvaraṇa*)," one of the key Mahayana Buddhist concepts, based on Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664)'s synthesis of the Mahayana meanings of *jñeyāvaraṇa* in the *Cheng Weishi Lun* 成唯識論. Lau first distinguishes two morphological readings of the Sanskrit term *jñeyāvaraṇa*, and points out that the meaning of "the obstruction to knowledge" is the mainstream model of the understanding of the term, as especially demonstrated by Xuanzang and East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda. Lau thus refutes some scholars' view of *jñeyāvaraṇa* as mere "obstruction by knowledge," which nonetheless has strong influences on contemporary Chinese Buddhism. Following the *Cheng Weishi Lun*, Lau discusses different meanings of *jñeyāvaraṇa* within the context of opposing epistemological realism, imbalance between ultimate and conventional truths, and incomplete knowledge, which often occurred among ordinary sentient beings and those who are on the different stages of the bodhisattva path. Further attention is then called to the Mahayana inclusion of mundane knowledge in bodhisattva practice and its soteriological and ethical implications, as the discourse on *jñeyāvaraṇa* has involved the concepts of five sciences (*pañca vidyā*), omniscience (*sarvajñā*), and countless eons (*Asaṃkhyeyakalpa*). These concepts indicate the broad range of the inclusion of mundane knowledge, and the requirement for continuous cultivation and accumulation of knowledge due to the temporal limitations. Through comparison with Kant's theory about complete knowledge as regulative principle or openness towards systematic knowledge, Lau sees the resemblance of the role of the Yogācāra emphasis on achieving omniscience and overcoming the obstruction of knowledge.

The second contribution to the study of the Faxiang school is Chap. 11, Lin's "How to Attain Enlightenment through Cognition of Particulars and Universals? Huizhao on *Svalakṣaṇa* and *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa*." It centers on the master Huizhao 慧沼 (650–714)'s theory about particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) and universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) by examining his major work *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge* (*Erliang Zhang* 二量章). The theory revolves around the issue of whether particulars and universals are cognized in the concentrated state of mind by Buddhist practitioners. Huizhao introduces three perspectives on this issue from Indian and Chinese Buddhist sources. Among them, the third one accepts the distinction of particular and universal only in the non-concentrated state of mind. In the concentrated state, even universals are taken as particulars. Huizhao aligns himself with this perspective. Following Dignāga, Huizhao indicates that in the concentrated state of mind, the nature of a particular object, such as impermanence, is intuitively perceived as particular by the transformed consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*) without the conceptual superimposition. While taking a nominalist view of universal as conceptual construct, exclusion and being without substance, Huizhao thinks that when impermanence, suffering and so on are vividly perceived as the direct object of cognition in the concentrated state of meditation, it cannot be said to be

unreal. This compromising is also manifest in Huizhao’s theory of language. For him, particular is verbally inexpressible, while universal expressible. The verbal expression, such as “sound is impermanent,” composed of noun and sentence, functions on the ground of universals, which in turn are based on the transformation of consciousness without real substance. However, in the state of concentration, one is able to directly perceive both particular and universal; in this case, both “sound” and “impermanence” are perceived as particular without superimposing conceptual distinction.

Part V in this anthology is assigned to the Tiantai school (天台宗), in which the thought of its principal founder, Zhiyi 智顗, and other patriarchs is discussed in Chap. 12, Kantor’s “Dynamics of Practice and Understanding – Chinese Tiantai Philosophy of Contemplation and Deconstruction.” Kantor starts with introducing several dimensions or implications of the deconstructive practice of contemplation in Zhuyi’s teaching. Epistemologically, this practice uncovers the falsehood or illusion that shapes the way ordinary humans relate themselves to the world. This disclosure of the falsehood or illusion becomes instructively useful and beneficial to the transformation from the unawakened state to the awakened state. These epistemological and soteriological dimensions are closely linked to its ontological dimension of non-duality by such insights as the inseparability of truth and falsehood. Furthermore, the dynamic sense of deconstruction is demonstrated in the two complementary ways of invalidating (*shuangzhe* 雙遮) both the ordinary reification of propositional references and the reified understanding of the teaching of emptiness, which paradoxically bring about mutual validation (*shuangzhao* 雙照). Such a dynamics is characterized as the middle way. Zhiyi’s three contemplations (*sanguan* 三觀) on emptiness, falsehood and the middle way attempt to incorporate three aspects into one practice and thereby lead practitioners to the subtle awakening through the inseparability of deconstructing and sustaining (*jipo jili* 即破即立). In sections 2 and 3, Kantor elaborates on the semantics of the Tiantai concepts of contemplation and “real mark (*shixiang* 實相),” and the paradoxical relationship of deconstructing and sustaining in the concept of emptiness. Sections 4 and 5 explore the rhetorical significance of contradiction in Madhyamaka and Tiantai, and the relevance of both speech and silence. The remaining three sections respectively examine the Tiantai notion of “middle-way- Buddha-nature (*zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性)” and its relationship with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Tiantai view of hermeneutics and its connection to the compositional structure of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the Tiantai understanding of the mind based on the *Garland Sūtra*, all showing the deep root of Tiantai thought in the textual sources of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

Two chapters in Part VI converge on the study of the Huayan 華嚴 or Garland school. Chapter 13, Jones’ “The Metaphysics of Identity in Fazang’s *Huayan Wujiao Zhang*: The Inexhaustible Freedom of Dependent Origination,” takes an analytic rather than expository approach to the Huayan patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643–712)’s *Huayan Wujiao Zhang* 華嚴五教章 and its central argument that mutually reliant things are mutually identical. Jones first shows Fazang’s focus on the relationship between cause and conditions, namely, cause depending on conditions, in the

understanding of the Buddhist notion of dependent origination. Causation, for Fazang, involves both meanings of existence and emptiness. A causal power originates from association with conditions instead of from self-nature. Fazang's identification of three complementary functions of causal powers working with conditions frames his argument for the mutual reliance and mutual identity between cause and conditions. To reconstruct the logical structure of Fazang's argument, Jones follows seven interpretive assumptions to establish two sub-arguments at a basic level, from which he derives five principles, such as "lacking self-nature entails being created" and "being created entails being identified," to provide constraints for the ensuing interpretation. These two basic level sub-arguments are complemented by two sub-arguments at meta-level, which provide further constraints. Jones demonstrates how Fazang appropriates the Chinese *ti-yong* 體用 paradigm to explain the cause-conditions relationship in terms of various "coordinate frames," each of which allows for four possibilities or presentations of the *ti* and *yong* relationship. With this paradigm, Jones interprets Fazang's key concepts of existence, emptiness, creation, and especially identity. Jones' interpretation involves arguments for the relativity and exchangeability of the *ti* and *yong*, and the acknowledgment of the *ti* aspect of dharmas as existent and the *yong* aspect as empty in Fazang. The latter seems to be justified by Fazang's acceptance of the *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Jones concludes his discussion with considering the implications of Fazang's metaphysics for contemporary discourse on substance and ontological foundations.

In Chap. 14, "'Temporality and Non-temporality in Li Tongxuan's Huayan Buddhism,'" Park explores the influential, though not mainstream, lay Huayan Buddhist thinker Li Tongxuan 李通玄's concept of non-temporality and other related interpretations of Huayan philosophy. In the context of a tenfold doctrinal classification of Buddhist teachings, which ranks the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (*Huayan Jing* 華嚴經) as the highest, Li claims Huayan Buddhism's superiority over early stages of Buddhist teaching by the notion of non-temporality (*wushi* 無時) instead of temporality, and challenges the temporal understanding of existence and causality, which sees cause and effect as independent units. Expanding Fazang's notion of "simultaneous sudden arising" and "simultaneous mutual containment," Li emphasizes the simultaneity of cause and effect and thereby the non-temporal understanding of dependent arising. The notion of non-temporality thus goes hand in hand with Li's interpretation of the traditional Buddhist notion of dependent arising as non-arising, since, for Li, no independent "others" can be dependent upon and no arising can take place to lead to the identity of that which is arising. The nature of dependent arising is equivalent to non-arising; therefore, it is also called "nature-arising (*xingqi* 性起)," despite the lack of its own self nature. The non-temporality and non-arising or nature-arising lay the foundation for Li's identification of the Buddha with sentient beings and for his comprehension of the subitist nature of enlightenment, which is demonstrated through his use of examples of sudden enlightenment in the dragon girl of the *Lotus Sūtra* and in the youth Sudhana of the *Huayan Jing*. Li's Huayan thought has been well received by Chan Buddhists, as he does not perceive awakening as a matter of the cultivation of the kalpas of time, but rather as an occurrence of the existential transformation of the subject in a moment of life.

The next three chapters in Part VII are all contributed to the study of the Chan or Meditation school (禪宗). Chapter 15, Jia’s “Redefining Enlightenment Experience: A Philosophical Interpretation of the Dunhuang Version *Platform Sūtra*,” argues that a central theme running through the *sūtra* and stringing various concepts and voices together is the reinterpretation of enlightenment experience for Chan Buddhism. Rather than redefining what enlightenment is, the *sūtra* focuses on why an ordinary person can attain enlightenment and how enlightenment is experienced. It answers these questions from ontological, soteriological-methodological, and metaphorical perspectives. In terms of ontological paradoxicality and indeterminacy, the *sūtra* blurs the distinction between empirical mind and pure nature, and endows the mind-nature unity with the transcendental implication of original enlightenment. By emphasizing the emptiness and nonattachment of the mind-nature with the doctrines of no-thought, no-form, and no-abiding, which are grounded in the *prajñāparamita* and Mādhyamika literature, the *sūtra* integrates the *tathāgatagarbha* thought with *prajñā* wisdom to illuminate why enlightenment is possible for ordinary people in their existential experience. For its soteriological-methodological concern, the *sūtra* applies the *Awakening of Faith*’s “two aspects of one-mind” to seeing one’s originally enlightened mind-nature directly from the perceptual experience of true reality. This enlightenment experience solves the dilemma between the soteriological categories of ignorance and enlightenment. As a result, it advocates the approach of sudden awakening and reinterprets *samādhi* (meditation) and *prajñā* (wisdom) as identically and simultaneously representing the experience of enlightenment. Finally, through a series of metaphors such as the genealogy of dharma transmission, ordination genealogy, platform, ritual, and the entire *sūtra* itself, Huineng 慧能 becomes a “living Buddha,” or the embodiment of enlightenment experience by such an ordinary person.

Chapter 16, Wang’s “Philosophical Interpretations of Hongzhou Chan Buddhist Thought,” examines some of the most important perspectives Mazu 馬祖 and his followers hold, based on Wang’s reading of reliable Hongzhou 洪州 texts and utilizing contemporary philosophical insights. The first is trans-metaphysical perspective, which is embodied in the Hongzhou deconstruction of the tendency to substantialize Buddha-nature as something independent of the everyday world of human beings. Hongzhou overturns Shenhui 神會’s quasi-metaphysical understanding of the realization of Buddha-nature as intuitive awareness isolated from ordinary cognitive activities, and as the favorable *ti* (essence), which relies on no conditions, over the *yong* (function). The second is liminological perspective, which is manifested in the Hongzhou understanding of the limits of descriptive language, the relativizing of the absolute boundary between speaking and non-speaking or silence, and the use of language to play at the limits of language. The third is ethical perspective, but it demonstrates itself through a twist of the ethical and non-ethical. While the Hongzhou masters often subvert conventional moral distinctions, they advise students to practice morality merely according to shifting conditions. This relational perspective enhances Hongzhou Chan’s profound ethicality. The fourth is counter-institutional perspective, which describes the Hongzhou masters’ middle way towards institutionalization, an attitude of “being with and against” institution

by walking two roads at the same time, and avoiding the extreme iconoclasm and conformism. It helps Hongzhou Chan de-stabilize the hierarchical effect of formalization and generalization, emphasize the expedient nature of institutionalized teaching and practice, and make the institution remain open to changing circumstances. These perspectives provide implications for contemporary discourse on metaphysics/ontology, philosophy of language, ethics, and critical theory on institution; however, they originally only serve Hongzhou Chan's soteriological purpose.

Chapter 17, Jiang's "Character is the Way: The Path to Spiritual Freedom in the *Linji Lu*," begins with his reflection on how scholars of philosophy manage to deal with challenges from historians when the integrity of Chan texts as well as their authorship is critically questioned. Jiang suggests distinguishing inherited text from original text, textual author from historical author, and textual intent from authorial intent. In this way a more robust intellectual space for the philosophical discourse on Chan classics can be carved out from the dominant historicist discourse, and philosophical interests would not be completely marginalized by historical concerns when it comes to the interpretations of Chan texts that continuously present philosophical and spiritual lure to contemporary readers. However, Jiang's central argument is for an alternative interpretation of Linji's signature teaching of sudden enlightenment by connecting Linji's demand for immediacy in his training of disciples with the nurturing of a particular set of character traits conducive to Chan enlightenment. The *Linji Lu* 臨濟錄 indicates that only those practitioners with a strong character can weather the grueling demand of the arduous spiritual journey prescribed in Chan teachings. Therefore, Jiang describes Linji's teaching as advocating "character is the Way." By putting an emphasis on character in his discussion of spiritual freedom, Linji highlights the crucial role character plays in the Chan Buddhist project that sees spontaneous and confident performance in dealing with challenging circumstances as the best indicator of an enlightened person, rather than the ability to engage in sophisticated conceptual deliberations that dominates much of Buddhist scholasticism. Chan practice, in the *Linji Lu*, is understood as focusing on the transformation of a practitioner's character rather than underlining the cognitive aspect of the spiritual pursuit.

Part VIII, the last division of the anthology—Chapter 18—is given to the study of the Jingtu 淨土 (Pure Land) thought. We have noticed that the existence of an independent Pure Land school, its historical lineage and a distinctive "Pure Land" approach to Pure Land scriptures and practices separate from other Chinese Buddhist schools have been critically questioned by recent scholarship (see Sharf 2002). Being receptive to this critical debate does not mean that we no longer need to study the thought of those patriarchs traditionally imputed to the Pure Land school. It instead calls for further critical studies. While we are unable to include any chapter concentrating on the study of the thought of those Pure Land patriarchs in this edition, we are glad to take in Ng's "Pure Land and the Environmental Movement in Humanistic Buddhism," which discusses the new interpretation of

Pure Land in terms of the thought of a modern Buddhist master. There are two most popular interpretations of the Buddhist idea of Pure Land. The first one regards Pure Land as actual places in the external world created by different buddhas. The second one understands Pure Land as an inner stage of mind resulted from spiritual cultivations. Ng shows that Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan, especially Master Sheng Yen 聖嚴's teaching, develops hand in hand with a new understanding of Pure Land, which not only challenges the traditional understanding, but also provides a theoretical grounding for the social engagement of Buddhism in general and environmental protection in particular. Ng argues that the Pure Land teaching of Sheng Yen demonstrates a three-dimensional understanding of Pure Land. In spatial terms, the inner dimension promotes the purification of one's mind; the vertical dimension embraces the transmigration to the other world, the Pure Land of Amitabha; and the horizontal dimension indicates the establishment of Pure Land on the earth. This three-dimensional Pure Land not only integrates the two traditional interpretations, but also adds a socially engaged dimension to it. The concept of Pure Land thus differs sharply from the old syncretic tradition. It can be described as "this-worldly Pure Land." It is a new orientation of Humanistic Buddhism, which deviates drastically from the traditional idea of leaving the mundane world for a world of ultimate happiness.

The final words we would like to mention are that undertaking the task to compile such a collection of essays with width and depth results in more challenges than expected. Most scholars of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, including us, specialize in the study of individual schools, philosophers or texts. Hardly do we ever research Chinese Buddhist philosophy as a whole and thus, rarely do we end up reflecting enough upon this general picture of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. The process of editing this volume is just the beginning of our struggle with how to understand the general picture. Furthermore, not only do the editors' own understandings face limits, there are also restrictions on time and resources. As the old generation of scholars of Chinese Buddhist philosophy ceases to be active in the English-speaking world, there are not enough new scholars to replace them. Many contemporary scholars in the study of Chinese Buddhism are historians or philologists; therefore, their main interest is not philosophical interpretation, even though their historical or philological study of Chinese Buddhist texts can inspire, or contribute to, philosophical inquiries. Lastly, due to busy schedules, several experts in Chinese Buddhist philosophy were unable to contribute chapters to this volume. With these existing problems, a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of Chinese Buddhist philosophy in a single volume seems very impossible. Despite all these limits, the editors and contributors tried their best to overcome various obstacles and present an anthology of Chinese Buddhist philosophy with high scholarly quality and accessibility. Whether or not we have achieved this goal will be left to readers' judgment.

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Part I
Intersections: Assimilating and
Appropriating Buddhism

Chapter 2

The Sinification of Buddhist Philosophy: The Cases of Zhi Dun and *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (Dasheng Qixin Lun)



Sandra A. Wawrytko

Buddhism arrived in China along with the goods traded across Central Asia via the Silk Road in the first century c.e. As the ritual practices of foreign merchants gradually began to infiltrate the broader society, a Buddhist-Daoist melding occurred. Communities of Religious Daoism invoked the name of Buddha (Huang-Lao Fotuo 黃老佛陀) and Buddhist symbols as sources of supernatural power supplementing their own. Although initially Buddhism generated little interest among the literary classes, some rulers sought to promote its pacifist message among the masses (a strategy practiced by Confucian officials during the Tang Dynasty to deal with restive Vietnamese subjects¹). Very little evidence of Buddhist philosophy can be found at this early stage. The few Chinese translations of Buddhist texts available could not convey the profound, complex meanings of the original sources. Hence hundreds of years elapsed before Buddhism became recognized as a valued contributor to China's thriving intellectual tradition.

Kenneth K. Inada succinctly observes “Too few people really understand or attempt to understand Buddhism in the true light and even fewer people practice it correctly since it is mixed with peripheral elements” (Inada 1969: 119). Thus we must begin by liberating Buddhist philosophy from the stigma of a miasmatic mysticism that has impeded its acceptance within the field of philosophy. Speaking as a scholar of primal Buddhism dismissive of the Mahāyāna school, Richard Gombrich asserts that mysticism (characterized as a transcendence of both rationality and linguistic expression) is the dominant trend in all of East Asian Buddhism. He suggests

¹Exiled to Vietnam, LIU Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) constructed Buddhist temples and schools for the native population as the foundation of a pacification strategy stimulating them “to reject their phantoms and desist from killing, and to press on with devotion towards humanity and love” (Schafer 1967: 91).

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that this misunderstanding of the historical Buddha's message results from "the great difficulties of translating Indian texts into Chinese, difficulties both of a practical character and inherent in the vast difference between the cultures of the two countries" (Gombrich 2012: 3). Li Zehou presents a contrary analysis from the standpoint of Chinese culture, asserting that "the Chinese nation accepted Buddhism, assimilated and reformed it" such that "the Chinese tradition of practical rationalism and historicism eventually triumphed over mysticism and fanaticism" (Li 1994: 105). Each acknowledges a misplaced mysticism attached to Buddhism, but they differ in assigning blame for the disdained mutation. It is undeniable that mystical elements infiltrated the practice of Buddhism as a religion in China and elsewhere. Nonetheless, the radically profound epistemology of Buddhism bestows philosophical credibility, as will be demonstrated in this volume.

More specifically, despite occasional lapses, the distinctive philosophy of Buddhism has nondualism as its core, which defies classification among more common philosophical approaches. Inada defends Buddhism against charges of dualism, pessimism, relativism, nihilism, monism, pluralism and all forms of theism, including atheism, while succinctly outlining the true parameters of the Middle Way (*madhyamā-pratipad*; *zhong dao* 中道), such that "[n]o *sūtra* will ever present a clear-cut dualistic and metaphysical basis of truth because man is still the pivotal element in the conditioning of the said truths" (Inada 1969: 110).

Gombrich's association of mysticism with the transcendence of language and "the vulgar sense of defying normal logic" represents a misapprehension of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, particularly Chan 禪 (Gombrich 2012: 3). The historical Buddha's epistemological methodology clearly challenged the ability of all linguistic and conceptual constructs to encompass reality, without denying the provisional efficacy of either language or conceptualization. Gombrich frames this as a rejection of Vedic exaltation of linguistic pronouncements believed to be inextricably intertwined with metaphysical reality—"to know a thing and to know its name were the same" (Gombrich 2012: 146). Our perceptions as well as the resulting conceptualizations and linguistic labels were recognized as impermanent and unsatisfactory, such that "Buddha concluded that it was inherently impossible for any language to fully capture reality," necessitating an apophatic approach to language, that is, use of the *via negativa* and reliance on metaphor (Gombrich 2012: 149–50, 153).

Even a cursory reading of core Chinese Buddhist texts reveals these same assumptions and corresponding techniques. For example, in *Trust in Mind* (*Xinxin Ming* 信心銘) Chan's attributed Third Patriarch, Sengcan 僧燦 (d. 606), observes: "When thought objects vanish, the thinking subject vanishes./ To seek Mind with the (discriminating) mind is the greatest of all mistakes./ To this ultimate finality no law or description applies" (Mu 2004: 14–16). Mu Soeng describes language as "an endless feedback loop" that can only be ended by "a quantum jump"; the existence of Chan conversations and texts demonstrate a distrust, but not a wholehearted rejection of, language (Mu 2004: 111). The Sixth Patriarch, Huineng 慧能 (637–712), famously manifested his readiness for awakening with a poem that deconstructed Shenxiu 神秀 (ca 606–706)'s simplistic assertions about the bodhi tree, the mirror stand, and deluded dust. Moreover, he denies that he had been given

any instruction by the Fifth Patriarch: “The only thing he talked about was seeing our nature. He didn’t talk about meditation or liberation... these two teachings are not the teaching of buddhas. The teaching of buddhas is a teaching beyond duality” (Red Pine 2006: 123).

Buddhism’s skepticism about the efficacy of language resonated with both the Daoist and Confucian schools in early China. Laozi 老子 redirects our attention from the Dao that may be named to one that is nameless (*Dao De Jing* 道德經, chapter 1). Kongzi 孔子 defends his preference to “leave off speaking” by invoking the silence of Heaven (天 *tian*), which nonetheless sustains the cyclical seasons (*Lun Yu* 論語 17:19) (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 208). However Buddhists are more pragmatic and creative in wielding their linguistic tools. The Buddha’s pedagogical strategy of *upāya* (*fang bian* 方便) has been aptly cast as leading to “meta-teachings,” which serve as means to beneficial ends (Gombrich 2012: 166). Due to the inherent complexity of language and multiple ways it is understood, some questions simply cannot be answered without creating confusion in the questioner. What is required is an assessment of the questioner’s mind to determine the most pragmatic approach capable of disrupting unexamined epistemological positions. This often requires the Buddha to provoke cognitive dissonance, so that “one sees into a whole new reality” (Austin 2009: 137).

Two rarely discussed philosophers served as agents of epistemological change during crucial moments in the transition from Indian to Chinese Buddhist Philosophy: ZHI Dun (支遁; aka ZHI Daolin 支道林 314–366) and the unknown author (around 550) of the foundational commentary *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng Qixin Lun* 大乘起信論). ZHI Dun was a Chinese monk who propagated Buddhism in court circles through philosophical dialogues known as “Pure Conversation” (*qingtan* 清談), that is, conversation purified of the stench of political infighting. The author of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* traditionally has been identified as a prominent Indian Buddhist, Aśvaghosha (first to second centuries).² The terseness of the text, a mere nine pages in the Taishō Tripitaka, suggests a Chinese author; based on the overall evidence Hakeda states “it might be wiser to regard the work as an original composition in Chinese” (Hakeda 2006, 4). Both authors lived in what has been called the Period of Disunity (220–589), after the fall of the Han 漢 Dynasty and prior to the rise of the Tang 唐 Dynasty (618–906), widely regarded as the golden age of both Chinese culture and Chinese Buddhism. Hence through these philosophers we can get a sense of how Buddhism entered into and interacted with Chinese consciousness and culture. Each faced unique challenges in conveying Buddhist philosophy to Chinese audiences steeped in the rich philosophical traditions and assumptions of Daoism and Confucianism, which were themselves in a state of transition.

²Hakeda rejects the claim for Aśvaghosha’s authorship since his other works discuss Theravāda Buddhism, while the *Awakening of Faith* is clearly focused on Mahāyāna doctrines (Hakeda 2006: 2–3). Ryūichi Abé voices similar doubts about the authorship of the text in his introduction to a reprint of Hakeda’s translation (Hakeda 2006: 17).

1 ZHI Dun's *Ji-se* (*chi-se* 即色; Form as Suchness) Doctrine

ZHI Dun was among the most influential proponents of Buddhism in the Eastern Jin 東晉 period (317–420). The son of a scholarly Buddhist family, he dedicated himself to the study of Mahāyāna's Prajñā-pāramitā (wisdom gone beyond) philosophy from an early age, and was ordained at 25. Of particular note is his upāyic strategy of utilizing Daoist principles and the *Zhuangzi* (莊子) text as an entrée to Buddhist philosophy. Daoist terms and concepts served as provisional tools, like the raft to be discarded once one has arrived at one's destination. Often he is written off as a mere mystic; Zürcher assumes ZHI Dun was promoting attainment of "the mystic state of non-perception," concluding the "ideal state is one of mental lethargy" (Zürcher 1972: 124, 126). This interpretation seems to be grounded in a misunderstanding of ZHI Dun's reference to "absence of mentation (*wuxin* 無心)." In the same vein, Kohn locates ZHI Dun within China's "mystical tradition" as someone pursuing a "mystical path" focused on "mystical attainment" (Kohn 1992: 119–20). While Demiéville credits ZHI Dun with "certain philosophic innovations," Wright includes among these a dualistic framework opposing transcendental principle to empirical experience (Wright 1971: 47).

Such characterizations misconstrue the core doctrine of the Twofold Truth as set forth by Inada: "in Buddhism, strictly speaking, there is no absolute splitting of reality into good and evil, pure and impure, or into two levels or categories of being. All bifurcations are in the final analysis mental in nature and they become one of the basic sources of what Buddhism calls 'ignorance' (*avidyā*)" (Inada 1969: 105). It is more accurate to speak not of two truths, but two forms of discourse that form a continuum. At the tip of the epistemological iceberg are statements reflective of everyday discourse (*saṃvṛti-satya* 俗諦), but beneath the surface we find the deconstructed discourse of the awakened (*paramārtha-satya* 真諦). Similarly, there seems to be a disconnect between how the average person describes our material "reality" and the bizarre descriptions of string theory's multiverse offered by a quantum physicist. The underlying reality remains the same, only the perspective has shifted, or more precisely broadened. This epistemological shift parallels the distinction recognized in cognitive science between dorsal and ventral attention, moving from top-down to bottom-up perception respectively, (Vossel et al. 2014; Hickok and Poeppel 2004). James H. Austin relates this to the shift from egocentric to allocentric processing in *kenshō* (*jianxing* 見性), the initial insight experienced through Zen meditation, whereby "[m]eaning is amplified to the level of immanence" (Austin 2009: 63).

ZHI Dun's Buddhist agenda benefitted from the philosophical bifurcation found in literati circles at this time, reflecting a *duḥkha*-drenched environment receptive to Buddhism's central message. The collapse of the Han Dynasty led many to question the efficacy of its state ideology, Confucianism, opening the way for a resurgence of Daoism. Ideological "struggle and antagonism" was rampant:

the outdated rites and laws could not withstand the onslaught of new ideas, and political persecution could not stop the change in the general mood. From philosophy to literature

and art, from concepts to customs, new things that appeared to be wild and absurd triumphed over and replaced the old and orthodox, which were essentially hypocritical. Talent won against moral codes, simple burial superseded extravagant funerals, Wang Bi surpassed the Han Dynasty Confucians, and the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove became the ideals of the Six Dynasties (Li 1994: 90).

Within the chaotic contours of the ensuing Period of Disunity, a self-styled Moral Majority of conformists in the School of Names (Ming Jiao 名教) assumed the Confucian mantle, while the dissenting voices of the Daoist-leaning Naturalists (Ziran 自然), non-conformists, reflected Daoism's gradual transition from philosophy to religion via the Dark Learning (Xuanxue 玄學) movement. The competing claims and priorities were centered on the concepts of Being or Something (*you* 有) associated with Confucianism versus the Non-Being or No-thingness (*wu* 無) of Daoism.

The ensuing philosophical dialectic is documented in an extremely important, but idiosyncratic work, *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語) compiled by LIU Yiqing (劉義慶 403–444).³ The genre of anecdotal literature has a long history in Chinese philosophy, from the recorded conversations of Confucius in the *Analects* (*Lun Yu* 論語) to later compilations of Chan biographies such as the *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuandeng Lu* 景德傳燈錄). Covering the tumultuous period from 120 to 420 c.e., Liu's *Tales* allows us to listen in on complex encounters among key players in China's philosophical dynamic, providing crucial, albeit vague, insight into how Chinese thinkers envisioned their encounters with Buddhist thought.

The nearly 50 references to ZHI Dun in the *Tales* demonstrate his adeptness in applying the Buddhist technique of *upāya* to entice his audiences. He adopted a middle way of engagement over the confrontation or avoidance displayed by the Moralizers and the Naturalists.

One anecdote (4:25) reveals how proponents of the three major philosophies regarded their own views. It falls under what Nanxiu Qian calls “self-invented categories of analysis” whereby “individuals could evaluate themselves and others on the basis of their own standards and values” (Qian 2001: 47). The first statement by CHU Pou (303–349) characterizes the learning (*xuewen* 學問) of northerners, which seems to embody Ming Jiao morality: “deep synthesis; extensive erudition.” In response, SUN Sheng (ca. 302–373) presents the southern or Daoist-leaning Ziran approach to learning (*xuewen*) as “clear, flowing; terse summarizing.” The Naturalist embrace of clarity and succinctness stands in stark contrast to the Moralist boasting about the comprehensive depth and breadth of their scholarship. Dynamic flow contrasts sharply with staid gravity.

Hearing of this exchange, ZHI Dun added his own observation, which rises above the traditional partisanship of native philosophies. Although initially reluctant to become mired in linguistic formulae, he recasts the two characterizations using light metaphors, indirectly elucidating how Buddhist philosophy transcends the limitations of its rivals: “The sagely and talented of old forget words. To return to

³For recent studies on the *Shishuo Xinyu*, cf. articles in the special issue of the *Early Medieval China* on the *Shishuo Xinyu*, vol. 20 (2014).

the average person, northerners in their study (*kanshu* 看書, reading, a focus on texts) are like observing the moon in a clear place; southerners' learning (*xuewen*) is like peeking at the sun through a window." ZHI Dun's words serve as a finger pointing to the moon of Buddhist philosophy. Rather than looking to some external light source, it offers an inherent means to enlightenment. The Moralizers position themselves in the open, suffused with clear light, implying eminence and renown, consistent with their striving for reputation and pride in their visibility. However it is the light of the moon (authoritative texts?), hence a mere reflection of an even brighter source, the sun. So despite their high profile, the Moralizers settled for a fairly low level of light/enlightenment.

The Naturalists seem to fare much better, since they are linked with the more intense light of the sun. Yet here too there is a self-imposed limitation, for they remain confined indoors. The light of the sun is accessible only through a window, which frames the wider reality, offering a glimpse of an as yet unattained end. ZHI Dun's observation both echoes, and challenges, the opening lines of chapter 47 in the *Dao De Jing*: "One can know the world without going out-of-doors;/One can see Heaven's Dao without peeping through windows." Accordingly, Daoists like Zhuangzi avoided the dusty world, while Buddhists like ZHI Dun were actively, compassionately, and nondualistically engaged in the world.

ZHI Dun may have been thinking in terms of the same imagery he so famously expounded from the opening chapter of the *Zhuangzi* involving the massive Peng bird, "whose wings look like overarching clouds," who is dismissed by little birds. Earlier commentators XIANG Xiu 向秀 (ca. 221–300) and GUO Xiang 郭象 (d. 312) evaluated the Peng bird and little bird or quail as having equally valid viewpoints, in accordance with their respective natures: "each was following its own natural disposition, each was equally wandering free and easy in its own terms" (Holcombe 1994: 114). However, in his groundbreaking commentary *Zhi Dun Ji* 支遁集, Zhi emphasized an important distinction between them, representing the gap between Great Knowledge and Small Knowledge: "Because the Peng Bird's path through life is far reaching, it neglects [spiritual] satisfaction beyond the body. Because the quail is nearby, it laughs at what is distant and is pleased with itself in its heart" (Holcombe 1994: 115). Compare ZHI Dun's analysis to a verse in "Poems from My Heart" (Yonghuai Shi 詠懷詩), by the noted Xuanxue adherent YUAN Ji (阮籍 210–263), where the non-conformists are the free-flying crane and the conformists confined quails:

Amid the clouds there is a dark-hued crane;
With high resolve it lifts its mournful sound.
Once flown from sight into the blue-green sky,
In all the world it will not cry again.
What has it to do with quails and sparrows
Flapping their wings in play within the central court! (Mather 1976: xix).

Yuan Ji's tragic outlook contrasts with ZHI Dun's commitment to rise above all self-imposed limitations—whether Confucian social constructs or Daoist thought constructs—by awakening to an encompassing vision of reality. He clearly

subscribed to the Buddhist view that the potential for awakening was universal awakening (Holcombe 1994: 116).

Each side of China's philosophical dialectic contributed to the ongoing disunity by narrowing its view of reality to see only what confirmed its dearly held assumptions. The Confucian Moralists luxuriated in the clear moonlight, a blissful little bird. The opening chapter of the *Zhuangzi* proclaims that "a person whose knowledge is limited to one office, whose conduct accords with the wishes of the people of one community, whose virtuosity satisfies the sovereign and whose abilities can win the trust of the people of one State, views himself like this [little bird]," an obvious reference to a "successful" scholar-official still stuck in the Confucian box of rituals and moral codes. The Daoist Naturalist glimpsed the sunlight, but remained limited. Like the Peng bird, the nonconformists resemble the exemplar of "the spiritual person," the Daoist philosopher Liezi 列子. The Peng bird "can ride on the wind, carrying the blue sky on its back, and nothing can stop it," just as Liezi is said "to ride on the wind skillfully with ease." Yet both remain dependent on the wind.

As Zhuangzi stipulates, only the nameless Sages have transcended even the wind, and hence can "ride on the truth of Heaven and Earth, drive the six vital elements (*qi*氣), and leisurely stroll in the infinite [cosmos], what do they have to depend upon?" (Fu and Wawrytko 2009: 168). Zhi Dun created a space for the Buddhist philosopher in the guise of the nondualistic Perfected Person, "who ascends heaven directly and joyfully wanders endlessly in freedom. He treats things as things and is not treated as a thing by other things... he does not act and is not hasty, yet he is quick.... If you are not perfectly satisfied, how can you wander free and easy?" (Holcombe 1994: 115). The little bird, like a conformist, is "pleased with itself in its heart." The nonconformist, like a Peng bird, has merely glimpsed sunlight through the window; hence "it neglects [spiritual] satisfaction beyond the body." Only those perfected, by Buddhism, are capable of free and easy wandering since they are perfectly satisfied. There is no need to depend on the external light of either the moon or the sun. Zhi Dun again invokes Zhuangzi in his nondualistic vision of awakening in his biography (*Gaoseng Zhuan*): "Not an attribute, yet explaining attributes (*feizhi youzhi*)/Utterly other and yet not separate" (Kohn 1992: 120, 123). Whalen Lai defines Zhi Dun's "spiritual freedom" as "an ability to dwell in the midst of form (*ji-se*) as forms and without reducing them to emptiness, and simultaneously to fathom through them the freedom that is Emptiness" (Lai 1983: 72).

Li Zehou draws a direct link between the world chronicled in the *Tales* and early Buddhist art in China. The aesthetic ideals of the nobility were projected onto Buddhist figures in the Northern Wei: "an emaciated body that suggested some illness, a faint smile with a hidden meaning that could not be divulged, the wise look of a philosopher who had found the truth, the carefree manner of one above secular interests... [an] ideal character whose two most important features were an inner wisdom and a refined style" (Li 1994: 114). This contrasted sharply with the social and political engagement expected of the ideal Confucian. Indeed, Li interprets the "sagacious smile" found on statues of Buddhist "gods" as a sign of a transcendence that implied "contempt for the world of reality" (Li 1994: 114).

Li's depiction of a Buddhist aloofness from mundane reality is directly challenged by the philosophy of ZHI Dun. Whalen Lai discusses ZHI Dun's nondualist teaching, *ji-se* (*chi-se* 即色; form as suchness), in the context of competing Buddhist schools: "until Chih Tun the discussion on form [*se*, *rūpa*] and emptiness always proceeds on the assumption that we are dealing with two discrete items at first: Being and Nonbeing. Pen-wu [本無] reduced one to the other; Hsin-wu [心無] knew instinctively that was wrong; Chi-se avoided the reduction but tried to stand astride the two worlds, that is, 'roving in the mysteries (Nonbeing) while in the midst of things (Being)'" (Lai 1983: 74; see also Zürcher 1972: 126). Hence, "we discover Emptiness in the midst of these very real forms themselves while going along with or abiding in them" (Lai 1983: 70). This realization resonates with the famous line from *The Great Wisdom Gone Beyond Heart Sūtra* (*Māha Prajñā Pāramitā Hridaya Sūtra*; *Bore Boluomiduo Xin Jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經), "form is emptiness, emptiness form"; the same nondualism is seen in all five of the *skandhas* that contribute to our deluded epistemological framework—form or matter (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*samjñā*), conception/volition (*samskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). Edward Conze considers this "transcendental" wisdom to be both beyond and fully inclusive of "everything earthly, or sensory" (Conze 2001: 83).

In *The Essentials of Faith* (*Fengfayao* 奉法要) ZHI Dun's student XI Chao (郗超 336–377) identifies the source of the dualistic dialectic that ensnared the Moralists and Naturalists: "ideas of 'being' and 'nonbeing' come from the 'one inch square' [a metaphor for the mind]. Ultimately they have nothing to do with the external world. Although one employs such concepts in our daily dealings with things, yet when our (discriminatory) feelings are spent there is, mysteriously, only the oneness with the Principle. How can it be said that Nonbeing is attained when Being is destroyed, or the Ultimate is reached when we reduce [*ad nihilum*]?" (Lai 1983: 73).⁴ Lai credits Sengzhao (僧肇 383–414) with taking Buddhist nondualism to the next level "by recognizing ... the Emptiness that is the Unreal itself" (Lai 1983: 74). This was possible through the infusion of further philosophical insights contained in translations by the eminent Kuchen monk Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什 344–413), Sengzhao's teacher. Combining literary elegance with philosophical accuracy, the collaborative work of Chinese and non-Chinese scholars allowed a deeper understanding of Buddhist doctrine to be developed, thus preparing the path for Chinese Buddhist philosophy.

2 The Mahāyāna's Faithful Unfolding

As China's Period of Disunity was drawing to a close, a new phase in the sinification of Buddhism was heralded by the appearance of an important commentarial text in 550. The standard English translation of its title is deceptively religious in

⁴Quoting Tang Yongtong 1955, 263.

tone— *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*. A more accurate rendering is *Mahāyāna's Faithful Unfolding*, which shifts the focus from faith (an entry stage in Buddhism) to Mahāyāna (understood here as the encompassing message of Buddhism). Although traditionally attributed to the Indian philosopher-poet Aśvaghoṣa, no Sanskrit original has been found.⁵ The text may have resulted from a collaboration with the reputed translator Paramārtha, or could be the work of an anonymous sixth century Chinese monastic. Whoever the author was, the text has been hailed as “the product of a mind extraordinarily adept at synthesis” (Hakeda 2006: 1). Dale Wright considers it “an immensely influential attempt to give a systematic account of the essentials of Mahāyāna Buddhism” (Wright 1984: 37). Contrary to Li Zehou's characterization of the Northern Wei Buddhist ideal as devoid of “love, kindness, or concern for the world ... uninterested in or unmoved by worldly affairs” (Li 1994: 114), Ryūichi Abé lauds *The Awakening of Faith* for advocating “a dynamic social engagement based on compassion and wisdom” (Hakeda 2006: 21). The influence of this message extended beyond the borders of China. The Korean monk Wŏnhyo (元曉 617–686) produced a highly esteemed commentary on the text, *Qixin Lun Shu* 起信論疏. He also led a remarkable socially engaged life, interacting equally with royal patrons, commoners, children, and rogues (Hakeda 2006: 18).

Although a detailed analysis of the text is not possible here, we can convey a sense of its philosophical importance to the emergence of Chinese Buddhism. Abé praises the responsiveness of the text to “the intellectual demand of Chinese Buddhist communities,” which made it “essential for the development of Buddhism in East Asia throughout its long history” (Hakeda 2006: 25). The overall structure resembles a sophisticated self-help manual, addressing misunderstandings of the Buddha's original message that were current at the time. Adopting a therapeutic approach, the author diagnoses the problem—what has gone awry in the propounding of the Buddhist message? An effective treatment regime is then prescribed—how can we come to realize the real message? The awakening process is explained and clarified by posing questions that plague practitioners, then resolving or dissolving those questions. Confusions arising from lingering dualisms—unawakened vs. awakened, purity vs. defilement, emptiness vs. being, polluted vs. perfumed, ignorance vs. Suchness, Saṃsāra vs. Nirvāṇa—are prominently featured.

⁵Intriguingly, Daoxuan's (道宣 596–667) biography of Xuanzang (玄奘 602–664), in *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu Gaoseng Zhuan* 續高僧傳), states that Xuanzang produced a Sanskrit translation of the text for Buddhists in India (Hakeda 2006: 5). This lends credence to speculation that its author was a Chinese Buddhist. Moreover, Abé notes the lack of commentaries or even mentions of *The Awakening of Faith* in Indian or Tibetan Buddhist texts (Hakeda 2006: 23). However the literary style of the text also has been linked with Indian sources. Abé thus suggests that the author or authors originally might have been from India or Central Asia, but became steeped in Chinese Buddhist culture (Hakeda 2006: 25).

2.1 Part One: “The Reasons for Writing”

Consistent with Buddha’s goal to end *duḥkha*, the initial motivation of the author is (1) to liberate suffering beings. However this requires (2) clearly interpreting or explaining the meaning or message of the Tathāgata (*rulai* 如来)⁶ to remove obvious misunderstandings. The result for seasoned practitioners is (3) “unretrogressive faith” in Mahāyāna, with no danger of backsliding. The next three reasons are of special philosophical significance (Hakeda 2006: 33). Echoing the Great Faith of religious practitioners, (4) one must encourage cultivation of “the faithful [believing] mind” among those at beginning levels of goodness. Similar to science’s expression of Great Doubt, (5) *upāya* or skillful means are necessary to remove impediments to recognizing reality, hence guarding the mind and liberating it from stupidity (delusion) and arrogance. This facilitates the Great Death of delusion by (6) revealing two meditational practices: “cessation [of illusions]” (Sanskrit *śamatha*; Chinese *zhi* 止) followed by “clear observation” (*vipaśyanā*; *guan* 觀). However, since rote practice is insufficient, (7) the *upāya* of “single-minded meditation (*smṛiti*)” as a means to rebirth “in the presence of the Buddha” [one’s own Buddha-nature] prevents the resurgence of misunderstandings (Hakeda 2006: 34). Finally, (8) the advantages of the text in encouraging awakening are detailed.

The author then asks, why repeat what the *sūtras* already say? Why are secondary texts needed to supplement primary texts? A decline in the quality of the audiences and their environment combined with a lack of teachers possessed of the *upāyic* eloquence of a Tathāgata is said to mandate such an approach. Varying degrees of receptivity to the message are listed. Those who are able to “listen extensively” can understand through self-power. Some “listen to very little and yet understand much” or, lacking self-power, depend on “extensive discourses” to understand. Yet others “looked upon the wordiness of extensive discourses as troublesome” and hence prefer what is “comprehensive, terse, and yet contained much meaning.” The text intends to satisfy all of these needs, reflecting “the limitless meanings” of the Dharma (Hakeda 2006: 34), as reflected in the historical Buddha’s pedagogy.

2.2 Part Two: “Outline”

A very brief exposition of the text thesis is provided, focusing on two perspectives of Mahāyāna: “principle” (Dharma) and “significance” (true meaning). As previously noted, the term Mahāyāna is not used as a sectarian label, but rather refers to the “great” (*mahā*) or comprehensive message concerning Suchness (*tathatā*, *zhenru* 真如) or ultimate reality. Echoing the nondualism of ZHI Dun’s teaching of

⁶The historical Buddha is often referred to as the Tathāgata, indicating one who has awakened. The term also opened the way for a recognition of universal Buddhahood, as set forth in chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, “The Life Span of the Thus come One.”

ji-se, Principle or ‘the Mind of the sentient being,’ the ground of reality, is said to encompass both phenomenal and transcendental “states of being.” The potential for universal Buddhahood is latent in all beings. Hence, from the perspective of significance, greatness (*mahā*) imbues principle’s essence (“all phenomena (dharmas) are identical with Suchness”), attributes, and influences (Hakeda 2006: 35–36). The Mind of a sentient being also is referred to as the *Tathāgathagarbha* or womb that gives birth to a Tathāgata, resonating with references to Dao as Named and Nameless in the opening chapter of the *Dao De Jing*. In both cases, as Laozi notes, these two spring from the same source. Named Dao is viewed as the Mother of the phenomenal Ten Thousand Things while Nameless Dao evokes its noumenal “hidden wonders (*miao* 妙). Together they represent a “Gateway to all wonders,” just as principle and significance do in the *Awakening of Faith*. Similarly, Wisdom Gone Beyond (*Prajñā-pāramitā*; 般若波羅蜜多) is depicted as a goddess who is the mother of all Buddhas, in the sense that no one realizes Buddhahood without being birthed by this special kind of wisdom.

2.3 Part Three: “Interpretation”

The bulk of the text is devoted to a detailed explanation of the dualistic terms and concepts employed to discuss the “mutually inclusive” dimensions of nondual Mind (Hakeda 2006: 38). When Suchness is described as transcending “all forms of verbalization, description, and conceptualization” (Hakeda 2006: 39), this should not be interpreted as a descent into mystical miasma. Rather it is indicative of an epistemological analysis whereby language represents a conceptual construct incapable of encompassing the full meaning of reality. We cannot talk about, think, or even conceptualize reality. Nonetheless, it is assumed possible to “enter into” (*ru* 如) what is provisionally called Suchness when sentient beings “are freed from their thoughts.” Suchness is “truly empty” precisely because “it has nothing to do with thoughts conceived by a deluded mind” (Hakeda 2006: 40–41).

Herein lies what is perhaps the text’s most crucial contribution to Buddhist epistemology—an explanation of how the mind becomes deluded, polluted, or estranged from the Suchness. What accounts for our self-imposed misidentification? True to the nondualistic paradigm, bondage to thought generated by discriminating mind due to ignorance, “does not exist apart from enlightenment” (Hakeda 2006: 46). Ignorance and enlightenment are mutually generating dualistic concepts. One cannot exist without the other and neither can be destroyed, precisely because both are merely mental constructs. This relationship is conveyed in images of the ocean (awakening) and waves (presumed multiplicities of deluded minds) stirred by the wind (ignorance): “If the wind stops the movement [discrimination] ceases. But the wet nature [wisdom] remains undestroyed” (Hakeda 2006: 47).

Given Mengzi’s 孟子 (371–289 b.c.e.) Confucian doctrine of the heart/mind’s (*xin* 心) innate goodness that degenerates due to external conditions, Chinese readers presumably could understand how the innately pure Mind could become polluted

or deluded. It is essentially due to our mistaken identity as mere individuated mind (the wave). The crucial factor in the misidentification is ignorance of one's true Mind. When awakened to one's true nature (the ocean)—by seeing one's true Mind—one does not **become** but only **realizes** that is what one has always been. One enters into one's true Mind merely by stopping the deluded concepts that prevented clear observation of reality. Sentient beings become lost and confused because they are ignorant of their nondualism with Suchness and fixated on an erroneous path to personal identity. However, "if he is freed from [the notion of] direction altogether, then there will be no such thing as going astray" (Hakeda 2006: 48). For the Tathāgata, coming is going and going coming. Hence it is said that delusion arises because of the concept of enlightenment.

Similarly, Laozi, in chapter two of the *Dao De Jing*, notes:

Under Heaven all know beauty as beauty,
Hence arises ugliness;
All know good as good,
Hence arises what is not good.

Although awakening is "unobtainable," it can be realized (Hakeda 2006: 50). Confusion arises when we assume that something is missing, when our essence is and has always been Suchness. Otherwise we are like Yājñadatta in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, who woke up one day and deludedly started looking for his lost head. This became a favorite story among later Chan Masters such as Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866): "the true person knows there is nothing that needs doing, while others lacking inner confidence run around carelessly trying to find something; it's like throwing away your own head and then going to look for it" (Addiss et al. 2008: 49).

Three "aspects" bind the deluded mind to its mistaken identity. Misperception, "the activity of ignorance," occurs when mind is agitated and anxious. Scientists refer to this as "inattentional blindness." A narrowing of perceptual focus, common to the egocentric processing of dorsal attention, prevents one from seeing what is literally right in front of one's nose.⁷ Once ignorance initiates the process of discrimination we erroneously separate ourselves from Suchness, so "the perceiving subject" emerges as the illusion of a distinct entity. That subject (*atmān*) in turn generates "the world of objects," the other, as separate and separable from the presumed self (Hakeda 2006: 49). An internalized delusion gives birth to an externalized delusion.

Deluded mind then creates a sixfold world, fueled by cognitive confusion:

1. "[discriminating] intellect" makes distinctions based on its preferences, its likes and dislikes;

⁷ Among the most famous examples of inattentional blindness is the Gorilla in Our Midst experiment designed by the Visual Cognition Laboratory at the University of Illinois; subjects are so focused on counting basketballs being tossed around a circle that they are blind to the entrance of a person in a gorilla suit (Mackink and Martinez-Conde 2010: 84–86). See also George Orwell's 1946 essay, "In Front of Your Nose" where he discusses the kind of cognitive dissonance he later famously dubbed "doublethink" in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

2. “continuity” sustains the process through ongoing “awareness of pleasure and pain”;
3. “attachment” ensues as Mind projects itself upon its own construct of reality, “superimposing its deluded thoughts on the world of objects”;
4. “speculation (*vikalpa*; *fenbie* 分別; dividing, discriminating or discerning) on names and letters” fixates on conceptualizations expressed in language;
5. “[evil] karma” arises from reliance on and then attachment to concepts and language;
6. “anxiety” results from these attachments (Hakeda 2006: 49–50).

Anxiety is an apt translation for the negative consequences of our attachments fueled by fear, exposing the deluded epistemology at work here. The English word is derived from the Latin *anxius*, mental suffering, the *duḥkha* that motivated Siddhartha Gotama to become the Awakened One, the Buddha. Anxiety (from Latin *angere, anguere*, “to choke, squeeze”) implies a narrowing of attention, as in the egocentric dorsal attentional system. It is generated by the previous five aspects, thereby obstructing the continuum of Suchness. Defective cognitive processing prevents the mind from functioning at its optimal level, resulting in erroneous data.

Three “types of aspiration for enlightenment” (*yānas* or means of conveyance) are then described (Hakeda 2006: 79). Since only original enlightenment, hard-wired in the mind, is recognized the three distinctions are conceptual and linguistic constructs. Like religion, aspiration “through the perfection of faith” involves the cultivation of goodness, allowing one to “enter the group of the determined,” including “conforming himself to the essential nature of Reality, which is free from hindrances produced by stupidity” (Hakeda 2006: 79, 82). Like science, aspiration “through understanding and deeds” entails “profound understanding of the principle of Suchness” of reality and conformity to “the perfection of zeal ... to the perfection of wisdom” (Hakeda 2006: 83). The third approach is characterized by spontaneity rather than conformity, hence it does not rely on language and is “free from any fixation of thought” (Hakeda 2006: 87). Like a pristine mirror, non-discriminating Mind accurately reflects what it encounters without imposing expectations or value judgments. This corresponds to the allocentric processing of the ventral attentional system. It is then possible to “enter into” reality, just as Zhi Dun’s Perfected Person “ascends heaven directly and joyfully wanders endlessly in freedom” (Holcombe 1994: 115).

2.4 Part Four: “On Faith and Practice”

Continuing the self-help model, the text poses and answers “how to” questions concerning a cultivation process involving four kinds of faith and five types of practice. Traditionally Buddhists speak of faith in the Triple Gem (*Tri-ratna*): the Buddha as

messenger, Dharma as his message, and the Sangha as the communal support network. All three are mentioned in the text, but only after “faith in the *Ultimate Source*. Because [of this faith] a man comes to meditate with joy in the principle of Suchness” (Hakeda 2006: 88).

Of the five practices, the first two, charity and precept observance, are religious in tone, while patience and zeal are suited to scientific inquiry. The final two-pronged meditation practice, involving “cessation” and “clear observation,” resembles deconstruction—a means to deconstruct, rather than demolish, our evolutionary-induced and socially-reinforced cognitive frameworks so we may see through them without obliterating them. Such focused awareness is the antithesis of a mystical trance state erroneously associated with Buddhist practice. Cessation, more specifically cessation of cognitive delusions, requires us to “observe and examine,” just as a scientist does. “All thoughts, as soon as they are conjured up, are to be discarded, and even the thought of discarding them.” This leads to a state of “transcending thoughts” whereby one can “observe and examine,” eventually suspending conceptualization to reveal “the oneness of the World of Reality (*dharmadhātu*)” (Hakeda 2006: 91–92).

Clear observation complements and completes the practice of cessation. As the nonconformist Xi Kang (嵇康 223–262) observed, “The many entanglements of the world come from simply not seeing things clearly” (Henricks 1983: 47). The historical Buddha used the term *yathā-bhūta-dassana* [*rushi* 如實], “seeing things as they are” (Gombrich 2012: 159). The cognitive therapy of Buddhism reveals self, originally predicated on the Vedic model of *ātman*, to be a construct and the cause of suffering as impermanence. Echoing the *Diamond Sūtra*’s closing *gāthā*, the past is viewed “as hazy as a dream,” the present as “a flash of lightning,” and the future as “clouds that rise up suddenly” (Hakeda 2006: 94). Looking deeply leads to the allocentric compassion for other beings who remain enmeshed in their delusions. Fearlessness also arises, as we realize that deluded views “derive from cowardice” (Hakeda 2006: 95). This relates to fear as the enabler of anxiety, the last of the six aspects noted above.

2.5 Part Five: “Encouragement of Practice and the Benefits Thereof”

The brief closing section promises that the “correct faith” of the text will insure “unsurpassed enlightenment.” Jettisoning mystical presuppositions, these statements can be regarded as claims that the text is a faithful unfolding of the Mahāyāna or encompassing way, “the secret treasury of the Buddha” (Hakeda 2006: 96). Although dependence on the Buddha’s power is futile, the teaching presented in the text is identified as the means by which “all Tathāgatas have gained nirvana and ... all Bodhisattvas have obtained Buddha-wisdom” (Hakeda 2006: 97). Hence, Buddhist philosophy is recognized as not data-driven but rather grounded in an epistemological methodology of shifting and broadening one’s awareness of reality.

This parallels the imagery of the Five Eyes: physical, heavenly, wisdom, Dharma, and Buddha eyes.⁸ The inherent limitations of reliance on our physical eyes could be expanded gradually. Cultivation of awareness initiates deconstructed seeing, allowing us to open our heavenly or divine eyes, much as science and technology provide us access to a deeper experience of the world. Through further practice one could acquire the wisdom eyes of insight, or a philosophical overview of reality.

The Dharma eyes provide an even more expansive scope of vision, the transcendent wisdom available through what Master Sheng Yen 聖嚴 (1930–2009) has labeled “artistic vision”: “It is possible for an artist to attain a state that may be called an artist’s enlightenment, a kind of unified [nondualistic] mind, where the artist merges with the art, but the experience is still grounded in existence, not emptiness” (Sheng Yen 1993: 308, 312). Only one’s Buddha eyes can experience a sweeping allocentric view of reality—unfiltered, unedited, non-discriminating. Such is “the unsurpassed enlightenment” devoid of fear or weakness promised in the *Awakening of Faith* (Hakeda 2006: 96).

The above discussion provides a mere glimpse into the complex introduction of Buddhism as a philosophy into the highly evolved Chinese philosophical milieu and culture. In pre-Tang China, the sinification of Buddhism was made possible by a creative interaction with indigenous Confucian and Daoist philosophies. The distinctive doctrine of nondualism was gradually introduced and clarified by a series of philosophers, including the monk Zhi Dun and the author or authors of *The Awakening of Faith*. In arguing for the continuum of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, Mahāyāna’s epistemological analysis addressed the underlying causes of deluded mind and the means to realize original Mind. Engagement with reality unfettered by conceptualization or linguistic constructions thus constituted awakening to, or more precisely as, Suchness.

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⁸See *The Diamond Sutra*, 18; Conze 2001: 59.

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Chapter 3

The Ethics of Generosity in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism: Theory and Practice



Vincent Shen

1 Introduction

Buddhism is an excellent example of a religion that has spread from its place of origin to have a global influence, starting first in South Asia, then reaching Central Asia, East Asia, Europe, and North America, and from there extending to the rest of the world. As such, Buddhism exhibits the act and process of going out of oneself to many others, from one's familiar spheres to those of strangers, which I refer to as an act and process of *waitui* 外推 (strangification). This act of going outside of oneself to reach strangers, foreigners, outsiders, indicates an original generosity in Buddhism. Thus we can say that Buddhism is a religion of strangification *par excellence*. Through developments that have taken place over the course of several centuries in China, Buddhism from India has become an essential part of Chinese philosophy and Chinese culture itself.¹

In this chapter I will explore both the theoretical and the practical aspects of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism's ethics of generosity from a philosophical point of view. First of all, on the theoretical side, I will explore the ontological foundation of the ethics of generosity in *The Awakening of Faith* (Hakeda 1967), produced in the sixth century, which, for me, is one of the founding works in the history of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. I will argue that *The Awakening of Faith* offered an ontological

¹The term *waitui* 外推 (strangification) is a neologism used here to refer to the act of going from outside of one's familiarity to reach strangers. The term "strangification" was first used by F. Wallner to serve as an epistemological strategy of interdisciplinary studies (Wallner 1992), after which it was modified by myself as *waitui* 外推 (strangification) and extended to cultural interaction and religious dialogue (Shen 1994, 1997, 2002). I discern three levels of *waitui* 外推 (strangification), linguistic, pragmatic and ontological. Concerning the developments of Buddhism in China in regard to its linguistic, pragmatic and ontological strangifications, see Shen 2003: 43–62.

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foundation to Buddhist generosity in the affirmation of One Mind or the Mind of All Sentient Beings as the Ultimate Reality, while at the same time setting it certain limits by denying difference/otherness, and seeing difference/otherness as merely a delusion. Second, on the practical side, I'll discuss the three types of gift, namely the gift of material goods, the gift of no fear and the gift of teaching Dharma, and more interestingly, the practice of *huixiang* 迴向 (turning one's merit to many others) as discussed by Jingying Huiyuan (淨影慧遠 523–592) in the entry “*huixiang*” of his *Dasheng Yizhang* 大乘義章 (*Treatise on the Meaning of Great Vehicle*) (T 44, 1851: 636a–637c) and other related literature of philosophical significance.

Before I enter into a more detailed discussion of the Buddhist ethics of generosity and its ontological foundation in *The Awakening of Faith*, let me discuss briefly the precise nature of the Chinese approach to the Reality Itself that has impact on the ontological foundation of its ethics. In the three major traditions of Chinese philosophy, namely Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, there is always a relation to the Reality Itself by which human relations with many others are to be founded, justified and clarified.

Here I use the term “many others” to replace the concept of “the Other” propounded by philosophers such as Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Levinas, Giles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida. For me, “the Other” is merely an abstract concept that doesn't exist in reality. In everyday life and in reality, there always exist many others. We are born into a life that contains many others, and we live and grow up and build up a meaningful life among many others. This concept of “many others” is also suggested by the Confucian ethical idea of *wulun* 五倫 (five relations), the Daoist cosmological idea of *wanwu* 萬物 (myriad of things) and the Buddhist idea of *zhongsheng* 眾生 (all sentient beings), all of which contain the notion of multiple others or many others rather than merely “the Other.”

Generally speaking, Chinese philosophers, when grasping Reality Itself, or more importantly Ultimate Reality in their religious and philosophical experiences, in an enlightening insight by human speculative reason, tend to form a kind of Original Image-Idea, something between a pure Idea and an iconic/sonic image, keeping thereby the holistic characteristic of the manifestation or the intuitive reception of the Ultimate Reality. This Idea-Image is seen as expressive and evocative of, though never exhaustive of, the richness of Reality Itself or Ultimate Reality, and therefore only enjoys the status of a metaphor. Chinese philosophers, by their function of speculative reason, grasp intuitively the Ultimate Reality and call it *tian* 天 (Heaven), *taiji* 太極 (the Great Ultimate), *dao* 道 (the Way), *ren* 仁 (humaneness), *xin* 心 (mind/heart), *cheng* 誠 (sincerity/true reality), *kong* 空 (emptiness), or *yixin* 一心 (One Mind) etc. All of these should be seen as metaphorical interpretations of the Ultimate Reality thus grasped. The metaphorical nature of Chinese metaphysical discourse, or “metaphorical metaphysics,” as I term it, allows them a device by

which to mediate practicality so as to connect with its moral and ethical action, artistic creativity and vision of historical account.

In moral and ethical actions, the practical function of reason brings the Original Idea-Image into the judgment of events and the intervention of one's own action into the course of events and thereby takes responsibility for them. Moral and ethical action becomes thereby the practical instance of manifesting this Idea-Image of Ultimate Reality.

In Chinese artistic creativity, by the imaginative function of reason and its poetic transformation, artists render this Original Idea-Image into a sort of concrete iconic/sonic image and thereby materialize it. Works of art thereby become an aesthetic vehicle of the Idea-Image of Ultimate Reality.

In its function of historical reason, the Ultimate Reality is made manifest through human actions that constitute events and events that constitute stories by way of the use of plot. Stories bring us hope because somehow or other, the meaningfulness of existence may be revealed or manifested through the telling of stories, although always in a metaphorical way. Through stories of our own and those of many others, we might get closer to the Ultimate Reality.

In comparison, in Western philosophy, as I see it, pre-Socratic philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, among others, still kept a very intimate relation with the original Idea-Images, in relating, for example, the idea of *arché* and *physis* to water, to the unlimited, to air, to fire, etc. However, the mainstream of Western philosophy from Parmenides and Plato onward consists in pushing the Idea-Image into pure ideas, and then, with intellectual definitions, conceptualizing it and relating one concept with other concepts in a logical way. Concepts are deliberately detached from images, things and events, and are defined and related to one another logically in descriptive sentences and discourses and by argumentation. By this detachment, concept and argumentation could help the human mind to develop the critical function of reason, by not limiting it to the particularity of images, things and events, but paying attention to the abstract universalizability of concepts and the rigor of their logical relation. Although the validity of concepts and argumentation might be absolutized in such a way as to claim for universality and rational structure per se, in fact, they only allow us to see Reality and its structure in an abstract way. On the other hand, metaphors, mostly related to one another by poetic phrases and stories, are different from abstract concepts and well-structured argumentation yet still keep an intimate relation with images and events. Thus, in contrast to the Western philosophy, all philosophical and religious texts in the Buddhist tradition constantly use metaphors and tell stories to illustrate their wisdom of life, visions of reality and practices towards achieving the most meaningful life and relation with the Ultimate Reality. This allows them a mediating space of practicality to connect the theoretical with the practical.

2 Part I – Examination of Sources

2.1 *Ethics of Generosity in Indian Buddhism*

At this juncture, it may be helpful to briefly discuss the nature of Buddhist ethics of generosity in its Indian origin in order to get a good sense of comparison in the process of dealing with the same issue in the Chinese version. In its Indian tradition, Mahayana Buddhism advocates a life of compassion, an altruistic way of life, therefore a life of generosity. Given the limited scope of this paper, I will confine myself to the discussion of just two examples; the example of Asanga and that of Santideva.

In Asanga's *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, one of the major works of Indian Yogācāra Buddhism, it is said that once one arrives at supra-mundane wisdom, one achieves equality of oneself with many others. There is five-fold equality: equally no-self, equally suffering, equally working, equally lack of payment in return, and equally like other Bodhisattva. In his compassion for all creatures, Bodhisattva does his utmost for the welfare of many others; he employs himself for the *artha* (meaning) of their life; and he is tireless in his work for others, which gives him no anxiety and for which he expects no return from others. This is an unconditional kind of generosity, which shows that the bodhisattva's generosity toward many others is a generosity beyond the golden rule of reciprocity. In Chapter 14 of *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, we read the following two verses:

Verse 38:

Those who, without the view of self, have here the view of self,
 Those who, without suffering, are extremely afflicted **for others**,
 Those who develop the work of all without waiting for returns **from others**,
 As one develops for self, the welfare of one's proper person.
 (Asanga 1992: 274; my emphasis in bold)

In another verse, not far from this one, we find the affirmation of unconditional generosity as a kind of affection and love that applies to all creatures in a tireless way. Somehow, such generosity and affection is based on the ontological identification of one's self with many others. This is illustrated by *Verse 41* that reads,

Verse 41:

The sons of victor have affections for the creatures;
 They have love, they have employment, and they are tireless,
 He (Bodhisattva) is the supreme marvel in the worlds; or rather not!
 As the others and self are identical for him. (Asanga 1992: 275)

I should point out here that this kind of unconditional generosity towards many others is an idea that frequently appears in Asanga's writings. Take another text, Chapter 4 of the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, where Asanga discusses the problem of knowing reality (Tattvartha); it is written that,

The Bodhisattva has many benefits: he rightly engaged in thoroughly ripening the Buddhadharmas for himself and for others, in thoroughly ripening the Dharma of the Three Vehicles. Moreover, thus rightly engaged, he is without craving for possession or even for his own body.... You should know that the bodhisattva thus rightly engaged carefully

attends all virtuous beings with worship and reverence. And all un-virtuous beings he carefully attends with a mind of sympathy and a mind of supreme compassion. And in so far as he can and has the strength he is engaged in dispersing their faults. He carefully attends all harmful beings with a mind of love. And in so far as he can and has the strength, being himself without trickery and without deceit, he works for their benefit and happiness, to eliminate the hostile consciousness of those who do evil because of their faults of expectation and practice. (Asanga 1979: 156–157)

Indeed, the ethics of unconditional generosity is essential to Asanga's idea of the ethical life of *Bodhisattva*, who dedicates his/her life to people of both virtuous and un-virtuous natures, even to all harmful beings with an attitude of love. Merging a vision of reality and an ethical practice, the ethics of generosity is indeed crucial to this ultimate knowledge of reality.

However, for the purpose of comparison I should note here that after its introduction into China in the form of Chinese *Weishi* 唯識 (Consciousness-Only) School, less attention was paid to the “many others” in the ethical sense of acts of unconditional generosity. Rather, the *Weishi* School put more emphasis on the purification of consciousness and its transformation into wisdom. Even when “equality” was mentioned, it did not evoke the idea of unconditional generosity towards many others so much as a spiritual horizon towards which we should aspire.

I tend to be of the opinion that the importance of many others in ethical life started to decline during the development of Indian Yogācāra, so as to give philosophical support to its later and more serious reduction in the Chinese *Weishi* School: the status of many others was reduced from that of ontological otherness to that of constructed otherness, and then the status of constructed otherness was reduced to the transcendental emptiness of the other. This is what is implied in Professor Thomé Fang's argument that Yogācāra begins with a kind of descriptive phenomenology, taking the one hundred dharmas as a description of reality, thus sharing some views of the *Abhidharmakosa* (*Treasury of Abhidharma*). Then, it is developed into a constructive phenomenology in the form of critico-epistemological idealism before finally culminating in a transcendental phenomenology that might well be reconciled to some extent with the philosophy of *śūnyata* based on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Da Bore Jing* 大般若經, *Sūtra of the Great Wisdom*) (Fang 1981: 167–168). In this process of appropriation, the Other, or in my terms, many others, might be reduced to a transcendently constructed otherness or even to an empty otherness, thereby giving rise to a situation in which there is no unconditional generosity. The focus, therefore, moves to the purification of one's own consciousness rather than unconditional generosity toward many others.

Another example of Buddhist ethics of generosity is the very famous *Bodhicaryavatara* or *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* by Santideva (Santideva 1997). There we find a deeply felt and enthusiastic concern for releasing all sentient beings from their suffering on the one hand (ibid.: 34) and the striving for the complete happiness of all sentient beings on the other (ibid.: 21), by the unsolicited good deeds of a Bodhisattva (ibid.: 22). As we read,

May I be an inexhaustible treasury for the destitute. With various form of assistance may I remain in their presence.

For the sake of accomplishing the welfare of all sentient beings, I freely give up my body, enjoyment and all my virtues of the three times.

Surrendering everything is nirvana, and my mind seeks nirvana. If I must surrender everything, it is better that I give it to sentient beings. (Ibid.: 34)

In order to attain nirvana as well as in compassion for all sentient beings, one becomes generous in giving one's own body, one's enjoyment and even one's virtues at all times to all sentient beings. The life of a Bodhisattva is therefore a life of generosity. We read,

The perfections of generosity and so forth are progressively more and more lofty. One should not forsake a better one for the sake of a lesser one, unless it is in accordance with the bridge of the Bodhisattva way of life.

Realizing this, one should always strive for the benefit of others. Even that which is prohibited has been permitted for the compassionate one who foresees benefit. (Ibid.: 56–57)

Generally speaking, this ethics of generosity is well maintained in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, albeit that the emphasis shifts from caring for many others to the primary concern with self-awareness and enlightenment, and thereby the priority of many others, including their difference, diversity and otherness, cedes to the priority of the search for wisdom, or many others are to be seen only as sentient beings to be treated with *fangbian* 方便 or expedient methods. There remains an exception, however: Pure Land Buddhism continues to put its primary emphasis on *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向 (turning one's merits to all sentient beings).

2.2 Generosity in The Awakening of Faith

Let me now turn to Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, represented here by the *Dasheng Qixinglun* 大乘起信論 (*The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, abbreviated here as *The Awakening of Faith*), arguably attributed to Asvaghosa and translated by Paramartha (499–569) into Chinese around AD 553. (I do not agree with this attribution and am of the opinion that *The Awakening of Faith* was penned by an unidentified Chinese Buddhist thinker. However, I don't want to involve myself in the debate over its authorship here.) While I recognize the overwhelming importance of this text in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and that almost all schools of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism have been strongly influenced by it, here I will limit myself to the discussion of the theory and practice of ethics of generosity in this great work. According to my reading, two kinds of generosity may be perceived in *The Awakening of Faith*. The first I will term textual, that is, generosity in the reading and writing of the text of *The Awakening of Faith* itself as resulted from Buddhist compassion; the second may be termed practical generosity that is realized as virtue in the process of the Buddhist cultivation of ethics. The first kind of generosity can be perceived at the beginning and also at the end of *The Awakening of Faith*, while

the second type of generosity is to be found as one among five practices after the ontological foundation is made clear.

On the textual level, *The Awakening of Faith* claims to have been written for reasons of generosity and invites us to read it with or for the virtue of generosity. The generosity of the author in creating this text and his explicit appeal to the readers' generosity are expressed in the invocation with which it begins, in its explanation of why it was written and in the concluding prayer. The generosity that is involved in the act of invocation is placed at the beginning of the act of reading: *The Awakening of Faith* begins with the traditional invocation of the Buddha, of the Dharma,² and of the Sangha, and adding to them, ends by expressing good wishes for all sentient beings: "May all sentient beings be assisted to discard their doubts, to cast aside their deviated attachments, and to give rise to the correct faith in the Mahayana, **that their Buddha seeds may not be interrupted.**" (Hakeda 1967: 23; my emphasis in bold) Such wishing in itself implies generosity and good will towards many others, that is, all sentient beings.

Also, generosity is the motivation for writing this text, whose main message concerns the freeing of all sentient beings from their suffering, by which correct understanding and un-retrogressive faith in Buddha's teaching without error, stupidity and arrogance will be achieved, and enlightenment will be attained. This is explained in the beginning section titled "The Reasons for Writing":

The first and the main reason is to cause men to free themselves from all sufferings and to gain the final bliss; it is not that I desire worldly fame, material profit, or respect and honor. The second is that I wish to interpret the fundamental meaning [of the teachings] of the Tathagata so that men may understand them correctly and not be mistaken about them. The third is to enable those whose capacity for goodness has attained maturity to keep firm hold upon an unretrogressive faith in the teaching of Mahayana. The fourth reason is to encourage those whose capacity for goodness is still slight to cultivate the faithful mind. The fifth is to show the lower level of the unsettled expedient means by which they may wipe away the hindrance of evil karma, guard their minds well, free themselves from stupidity and arrogance, and escape from the net of heresy. The sixth reason is to reveal to them the practice of two methods of meditation, cessation of illusions, and clear insight, so that ordinary men and the followers of Hinayana may cure their minds of error. The seventh reason is to explain to them the expedient means of single-minded meditation so that they may be born in the presence of the Buddha and keep their minds fixed in an unretrogressive faith. The eighth reason is to point to them the advantages of studying this treatise and to encourage them to make an effort to attain enlightenment. These are the reasons for which I wrote this treatise. (Hakeda 1967: 25–26)

In the above, the author makes clear that the text was written out of Buddhist compassion for all sentient beings and the concern to act always for their ultimate benefit. It is also clear that the composition was necessitated by the situation in the post-Buddha period, that is, the period after the nirvana of Buddha, when Buddha

²"I take refuge in [the Buddha] the greatly Compassionate One, the Saviour of the World, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, of most excellent deeds in all the ten directions; And in [the Dharma], the manifestation of his Essence, in Reality, the sea of Suchness (**True Thusness**), the boundless storehouse of excellences." (Hakeda 1967: 23) In the following, I'll translate *zhengru* 真如 as *True Thusness*, to replace Hakeda's translation as *Suchness*.

was no longer speaking with a perfect voice that could be understood by everyone equally well. At this juncture there was an urgent need for the act of linguistic strangification,³ that is, the act by which one communicates Mahayana Buddhist truth in a language that is understandable to different levels of intelligence, understanding and enlightenment.⁴ This act of speaking in a language understandable to many others implies an act of original generosity by which one goes outside of one's own familiar sphere in order to communicate with many others, with strangers, using languages or discourses that are accessible and understandable to them.

Also, at the end of *The Awakening of Faith*, the readers' act of reading and, for sure, the author's act of writing, conclude with a prayer that all merits thereby obtained are to be turned over to the general benefit of all sentient beings, as we read:

Profound and comprehensive are the great principles of all Buddhas, which I have now summarized as faithfully as possible. May whatever excellent merits I have gained from this endeavor in accordance with reality, be **turned over** to the benefit of all sentient beings. (Hakeda 1967: 104; my emphasis in bold)

The turning over (*huixiang* 迴向) of one's merits is quite usual in the reading and chanting of Buddhist texts and when achieving any merit or good dharma. I'll discuss the ethics of generosity implied in the act of *huixiang* 迴向 (turning over) later on in this paper. For now, suffice to say that here the evoked act of *huixiang* 迴向 refers explicitly to the so-called "all sentient beings *huixiang*" (turning over to the benefit of all sentient beings) and reality *huixiang* (turning over in accordance with reality), although, the *bodhi huixiang* is also implied there, if we take into consideration the previously mentioned invocation and explanation of reasons for writing.

On the practical level, the practice of generosity or that of gift is listed as the first among the five practices: gift to others, precepts, patience, zeal, cessation and insight. Although the latter four practices also include the act of *huixiang*, in particular the act of *bodhi huixiang*, the turning over toward enlightenment, here I will focus on the gift or generosity to many others. It is said in *The Awakening of Faith*:

³By linguistic *waitui* 外推 or strangification I mean the act by which one translates the language of one's own philosophical/religious or cultural tradition into the language of or understandable to another tradition, to see whether it becomes understandable or absurd thereby. In the latter case, reflection and self-critique should be undertaken with regard to one's own tradition rather than taking a self-defensive stance or using other more radical forms of apologetics. Although there is always some untranslatable residue or hard core of meaningfulness, commonly shared intelligibility would be enough to prove universalizability. If one can only talk of the meaningfulness of one's philosophy/religion within one's own cultural tradition, as some nationalist philosophers and scholars of religion would maintain, this is only proof of its own limit rather than its own merit.

⁴"After the passing away of the Tathagata, there were some who were able by their own power could listen extensively to others and to reach understanding; there were some who by their own power could listen to very little yet understand much; there were some who, without any mental power of their own, depended upon the extensive discourse of others to obtain understanding; and naturally there were some who looked upon the wordiness of extensive discourses as troublesome, and who sought after what was comprehensive, terse, and yet contained much meaning and then were able to understand it." (Hakeda 1967: 26–27)

How should **one practice giving to others**? If he sees **all who** come to him begging, he should give him the wealth and other things in his possession, in so far as he is able; thus, while freeing himself from greed and avarice, he causes the beggars to be joyful. Or, if he sees one who is in hardship, in fear, or in grave danger, he should give him freedom from fear in so far as he is able. If there is a **sentient being who** comes to seek instruction in the teaching, he should, according to his ability and understanding, explain it by the use of expedient means. In doing so, however, he should not expect any fame, material gain, or respect, but he should think only of benefiting himself and others alike and of extending the merit toward the merit of enlightenment. (Hakeda 1967: 93; my emphasis in bold)

What is most interesting in the first kind of gift or generosity, sometimes called the material gift or generosity with material goods, is the idea that what makes the receiver happy is not so much the giving of the material goods as the giver's generosity that frees him/her from greed and avarice. It's therefore the fact of giving rather than receiving goods that represents the spirit of generosity on the material level.

The second type of generosity, *wuweishi* 無畏施 the gift of no fear, should not be understood as the paternalistic act of taking those who are fearful under one's protection. Rather, it is a way of setting oneself free, so as to let many others be free, so that they can be themselves, without any existential anxiety or fear. It is through letting-be, not in the Heideggerian sense of *Seinslassen*, but rather in the Buddhist sense of being empty, that one really allows many others to be freed from their anxiety.

The third type of generosity or gift is the instruction of Buddha's Dharma or teaching of those in need of teaching, not out of the desire for fame, material gain, or out of respect for others, but for one's own benefit and that of others and for nurturing enlightenment. The instruction should not be considered as one of the highest generosity; if it were, it could become a pretext for the interest of monks.

Under the genuine Buddhist spirit that sees all beings as equal, we should say that all three kinds of gift to many others are equal, in the sense that they are all equally generous, equally without gain, and equally unconditional. Nevertheless, for a Buddhist life, the attainment of enlightenment should be considered as the highest value, in the state of which one indeed allows oneself and many others to be free, that is to say, allows other people to be themselves, or otherwise to be empty. The generosity of no fear, here understood in the sense of facilitating the enlightenment of others, empowering them to be themselves, or else realizing that they are empty and therefore without any existential fear or anxiety, may be seen as the highest generosity from which the other two kinds follow.

2.3 *Ontological Foundation of Buddhist Ethics of Generosity*

According to *The Awakening of Faith*, Reality Itself, or the *zhengru* 真如 (True Thusness), is the *yixin* 一心 (One Mind) or the *zhongshengxin* 眾生心 (Mind of all Sentient Beings), which includes within itself all worldly dharmas and all

beyond-world dharmas, and which manifests itself into both the aspect of True Thusness and the aspect of birth and death. The meaning of Mahayana may be unfolded on the basis of the One Mind or the Mind of All Sentient Beings, because the True-Thus aspect of the One Mind represents the substance or the being of Mahayana; whereas the aspect of birth-and-death or becoming of the One Mind or the Mind of All Sentient Beings represents the attributes and function of Mahayana.

Here we should take note of the difference that may be perceived between One Mind, which represents a monist view of the ultimate reality, and the Mind of All Sentient Beings, which is potentially suggestive of a pluralist view of the ultimate reality. However, this pluralist potentiality is denied, or absolutely absorbed in the monist view, by the identification of the Mind of All Sentient Beings with the One Mind, denying therefore all differences and individuality by treating them as mere delusions. This will be seen in the following analysis, in particular in the metaphors that point to the One Mind as ultimate reality, and multiplicity and difference as mere delusions.

The term “Mahayana” contains both “*maha*” and “*yana*.” There are three aspects to the meaning of the adjective “*maha*” in the compound “Mahayana”: first, the greatness of substance, for all dharmas are identical with the True Thusness and are neither increasing nor decreasing; second, the greatness of attributes, for the Tathagata-garbha is endowed with numberless excellent qualities; third, the greatness of functions, for the function of True Thusness gives rise to good causes and effects in this and in other worlds alike. As to the meaning of *yana* in the compound “Mahayana,” this refers to the vehicle by which all enlightened ones achieve their enlightenment, and by which all the enlightened-to-be can reach the stage of True Thusness (Tathagata).

In the chapter on Interpretation in *The Awakening of Faith*, the One Mind, as the ultimate reality, is presented as having two gates (aspects): one is the gate of Mind in terms of the True Thusness, and the other is the gate of the Mind in terms of birth and death. These two gates are mutually inclusive.

According to the gate of True Thusness, the One Mind, in itself, is beyond all thoughts and languages that function to differentiate or discern things and concepts out from Reality Itself. It's by way of freeing oneself from all differentiation and discernment that one can return to the Reality Itself that is the Original Oneness. We read: “It is only through illusions that all things come to be differentiated. If one is freed from all mental ideas or thought, then to him there will be no distinctive mark of all horizons and lands, therefore all things from their origin transcend all forms of discourse, names and conceptualization. And are ultimately equal, without change and indestructible.” (Hakeda 1967: 32–33).

This text tells us that, ontologically speaking, all are One and are lived as One, beyond the differentiation of thoughts and languages; therefore there is the dimension of transcendence and otherness, in the sense of vertical otherness, not that of horizontal difference among individual beings. The vertical otherness of the One Mind is based on the unthinkable and the unfathomable of the ultimate reality as One. The horizontal otherness existing among individual beings is merely resulted from the magic of thought and language. In the One Mind, there is no place

for horizontal otherness. In the state of True Thusness, all things are undifferentiated and are incapable of being explained or thought of, hence the name True Thusness, meaning unthinkable, unfathomable. No otherness or difference exists in individual sentient beings.

According to the Gate of birth and death, the One Mind is rooted in the *rulaizang* 如來藏 (Tathagata-garbha or the Thus Come Treasure), which includes in itself both the aspect of enlightenment and the aspect of non-enlightenment. The Thus Come Treasure is the One Mind in each sentient being or, to put it in anthropocentric terms, in each human being. This is somewhat similar to Classical Daoism, according to which *dao* is the ultimate reality and *de* 德 or power is the *dao* in each and every being. In Mahayana Buddhism, according to *The Awakening of Faith*, One Mind or Mind of All Sentient Beings is the ultimate reality, whereas the *rulaizang* 如來藏 (Thus Come Treasure) is the One Mind in each sentient being (including each human being) by which it is possible for each sentient being and each human being to become enlightened and thereby become one with the One Mind.

“Becoming enlightened” implies a movement from non-enlightenment to enlightenment. Ontologically speaking, all sentient beings are in the One Mind, and therefore are already enlightened. This already enlightened root of all sentient beings is the original state of the Thus Come Treasure in each one of us, thus the term “Original Enlightenment” in *The Awakening of Faith*. However, an individual might not be aware of this original and ultimate state of existence, and therefore he/she exists in the state of non-enlightenment and should enter into the process of actualization of enlightenment. In the state of non-enlightenment, caused by the fact of “not truly realizing oneness with the True Thusness,” one acts always according to ignorance, as perceiving subject, focusing on the names and concepts of things, constantly viewing objects by way of intellectual distinction, concerned with one’s own pleasure and pain, with attachment of all kinds, thereby giving rise to karma and therefore sufferings. Activity is thus seen as a sign of non-enlightenment, whereas the ultimate reality or the True Thusness is seen as absolutely static or immobile.

The process of attaining enlightenment is therefore a process of going beyond all mental activities by which one makes distinctions, differentiations and attachments, or the mental activity of thought and language, or even activity as such. This process could be seen as somehow proceeding through the inceptive enlightenment of ordinary man, the enlightenment in similitude of the Hinayana Buddhists and the beginning Bodhisattvas (who are able to be free from all changing objects of thought), the enlightenment of accomplished Bodhisattvas (who are able to be free from thinking or the tendency to abide in thought), and finally the ultimate enlightenment (entering into the original nature of the One Mind beyond all thoughts), which in fact is the return to one’s Original Enlightenment.

Practice should be interpreted as one essential phase in the process of returning to Original Enlightenment in the One Mind. Therefore, in a certain sense, the practice of generosity and the ethics it entails is only instrumental in the process of returning from non-enlightenment to enlightenment. Ethics should be considered as situated in this process only, not in the original manifestation of the One Mind itself.

Therefore, unlike E. Levinas and J. Derrida who take ethics to be the first philosophy,⁵ the status of ethics in *The Awakening of Faith* seems to be secondary, rather than the first philosophy in Buddhism.

This raises a particular philosophical question: if the ultimate reality is the One Mind, whereas the individuality of all sentient beings has only the status of phenomenon, or even the status of delusion, what is the justifiable reason for generosity toward many others? Is it because in One Mind, all sentient beings are the same as me? Or is it because I respect their being different and other than myself? Related to the possible answers to this question, I will refer to the Buddhist concept of *ping-den* 平等 (equality) meaning respect for all sentient beings, which can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, we may understand equality negatively as no discrimination, no differentiation, no distinction, or on the other hand, more positively, as belonging to the One Mind. If understood in the negative sense, as making all equal merely through the denial of hierarchical difference and discrimination, then the moral agent can still make an effort to treat many others with generosity, not for the reason of reciprocity or for the expectation of any return. However, if interpreted in the positive sense, as belonging to the same One Mind, then one is generous to all other sentient beings only because we all belong to the same One Mind, which is absolute, and belonging to the same reality, absolute altruism is called for.

2.4 *Metaphors for the Relation Between One Mind and Individual Beings*

Although, theoretically speaking, there is still some potential ambiguity in the meaning of the ultimately real (One Mind or the Mind of All Sentient Beings) as to whether it concerns many sentient beings in equality (as we may be led to imagine or interpret by the use of the term the Mind of All Sentient Beings), or that all are in the same One Mind without any multiplicity (as seems to be affirmed by the use of the term One Mind), the use of metaphors in *The Awakening of Faith* to describe the relation between the ultimate reality and individual beings or the relation between enlightenment and non-enlightenment, is very helpful in clarifying the true meaning of the ontological foundation of Buddhist ethics of generosity. The first metaphor speaks in terms of the ocean and waves. We read,

All modes of mind and consciousness [under the state of non-enlightenment] are [the product of] ignorance. Ignorance does not exist apart from enlightenment; therefore it cannot be destroyed [because one cannot destroy what does not exist], yet it cannot be not destroyed [in so far as it remains]. This is like the relationship that exists between the water of the ocean [i.e. enlightenment], and its waves [i.e. modes of mind] stirred by the wind [i.e.

⁵This is a radical change in post-modern philosophy: instead of the Aristotelian tradition which takes metaphysics to be the first philosophy, post-modern thinkers such as Levinas and Derrida take ethics to be the first philosophy.

ignorance]. Water and wind are inseparable; but water is not mobile by nature, and if the wind stops the movement ceases. But the wet nature remains undestroyed. Likewise, man's Mind, pure in its own nature, is stirred by the wind of ignorance. Both Mind and wind have no particular forms of their own and they are inseparable. Yet Mind is not mobile by nature, and if ignorance ceases, then the continuity [of deluded activities] ceases. But the essential nature of wisdom [i.e. the essence of Mind, like the wet nature of water] remains undestroyed. (Hakeda 1967: 41)

In this metaphor, the non-differentiation of all waves as water excludes the possibility of interpreting each individual as different and autonomous in the context of many others. The water of the Ocean is the same everywhere, despite the appearance of waves caused by the wind.

However, with this metaphor, it is hard to explain why wind and water are inseparable, how the wind is outside of the water and yet still affects the water so as to produce waves. To say that the wind is a metaphor for original ignorance does not tally with the doctrine that original ignorance is within human nature and works within the human mind to create the delusion of individuality. Also, the metaphor of waves and the ocean suggests an ontological quietism in *The Awakening of Faith* in seeing the ultimate reality as quiet and immobile. We may also ask why the essence of water consists merely in its abstract wetness and not in its nurture of life and constantly mobile nature. This is to ask: why does *The Awakening of Faith* take it for granted that "To be is to be quiet," and "To act is to suffer," instead of "To be is to act" and "To act is to create," which for me is a more reasonable vision of reality. If water is by nature not only wet, but also nurtures all forms of life and is constantly moving, then it would be easier for us to conceive how it creates wind which in turn creates myriad waves.

The second metaphor employed in the explanation of non-enlightenment is that of losing one's direction. Non-enlightenment is defined in terms of not realizing oneness with the True Thusness. We read, "Because of not truly realizing oneness with True Thusness, there emerged an unenlightened mind, and consequently, in thoughts. These thoughts do not have any validity to be substantiated; therefore they are not independent of the original enlightenment." (Hakeda 1967: 43) Here the author of *The Awakening of Faith* uses the metaphor of getting lost to explain the relation between non-enlightenment and the original enlightenment:

It is like the case of a man who has lost his way: he is confused because of [his wrong sense of] direction. If he is freed from [the notion of] direction altogether, then there will be no such thing as going astray. It is the same with men: because of [the notion of] enlightenment, they are confused. But if they are freed from the fixed notion of enlightenment, then there will be no such thing as non-enlightenment. (Ibid.)

This metaphor is very helpful in understanding the ontological relation between original enlightenment and non-enlightenment. Ontologically, original enlightenment and non-enlightenment are one. Conceptually speaking, however, they are different. It is due to the existence of a certain fixed concept of enlightenment that there is non-enlightenment. Enlightenment as a constructed reality creates the distinction between enlightenment and non-enlightenment. This is not to say that there is no direction in our life at all; Buddhism does not deny that there is direction in our

life based on the dynamic vector of relatedness in the spatio-temporal structure of existence as constituted by the network of dependent causation.

However, if this metaphor is taken to mean or represent reality, then the dynamic network of causal dependence will be neglected. In this case, there is the problem of how to coherently combine the metaphor of losing one's direction with the doctrine of the network of dependent causation, though the metaphor of losing one's direction is itself very inspiring in its suggestion that believers make no discrimination between enlightenment and non-enlightenment, which corresponds well to the Buddhist spirit of seeing all things as equal.

The third metaphor, also used to describe the relationship between enlightenment and non-enlightenment, is that of pottery and clay. There are two relations involved here: identity and non-identity. As to identity, we read,

Just as pieces of various kinds of pottery are of the same nature in that they are made of clay, so the various magic-like manifestation (maya) of both enlightenment and non-enlightenment are aspects of the same essence, the True Thusness. For this reason, it is said in a sutra that "all sentient beings intrinsically abide in eternity and are entered into nirvana. The state of enlightenment is not something that is to be acquired by practice or to be created. In the end, it is unobtainable." (Hakeda 1967: 45–46)

This is to say, given that enlightenment is not to be acquired by practice or produced by any ethical effort, the only way to enlightenment is to return suddenly to the Original Enlightenment, without the need for practice or cultivation. From this perspective, the attainment of enlightenment is something that is beyond ethical practice and moral self-cultivation. As to non-identity, *The Awakening of Faith* says,

Just as various pieces of pottery differ from each other, so differences exist between the state of enlightenment and non-enlightenment, and between the magic-like manifestation [of the true thusness manifested] in accordance with [the mentality of men in] defilement, and those of men in ignorance who are defiled [i.e. blinded] as to the true nature of True Thusness. (Hakeda 1967: 46)

This metaphor clarifies the idea that an individual belongs to a different unit of existents, just as a piece of pottery has a different and individual body, but to think in such a way is a delusion, a result of the imagination. The passage goes on to say, "Also it has no corporeal aspect that can be perceived as such. Any corporeal aspects [such as the makers of the Buddha] that are visible are magic-like product [of True Thusness manifested] in accordance with [the mentality of men in] defilement." (Ibid.) All items of individual pottery are made of clay, and we have taken notice of the fact that the metaphor of clay is also used to give a real sense of the oneness of the Mind. In this ontological situation, where individuality is delusion and therefore multiple otherness is also mere illusion, there is no need to practice ethics and moral self-cultivation. The overwhelming Oneness of the ultimate reality cancels the need for the practice of ethics.

3 Part II – The Buddhist Ideas of Strangification and Generosity

3.1 *Some Critical Reflections on The Awakening of Faith*

At the end of this discussion of *The Awakening of Faith*, one may ask whether it is, ethically speaking, more valuable to be generous to many others because of their ontological sameness to me, because they share the same ultimate reality, or because many others are different from me, other than me, and therefore it is necessary for me to go outside of myself to do things that benefit them or serve to their good. In my view, if there is no respect for many others in one's mind/heart, and all that exists can be absorbed into ontological sameness, then there will be no ethics at all. That being said, the notion of reducing all sentient beings to the One Mind might be helpful in inviting compassion toward many others by considering them to be the same as myself: that to kill others is to kill myself or part of myself, and to be generous to others is to be generous to myself or to part of myself, and to do good to others is to do good to myself or to part of myself, and so on. In the end, to think in this way will make the effort to be ethical or moral self-cultivation unnecessary or even impossible.

3.2 *The Concept of huixiang 迴向 as a Buddhist Idea of Strangification*

In this second part of my examination of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist ethics of generosity, I will examine the concept of *huixiang* 迴向 (*parinama* or turning toward) as one of the most important conceptual and spiritual resources of Buddhism in the era of globalization. *Huixiang* may be understood in two senses: on the one hand, to turn one's mind upwards or vertically, towards enlightenment or wisdom, and, on the other, to turn one's spiritual merits outwards or horizontally to many others for their spiritual well-being. According to *huixiang*, through the accumulation of merits or good deeds, one can raise oneself to a higher or ultimate form of existence such as *bodhi* or *nirvana*; one can also turn them to the spiritual benefit of all sentient beings, and at the time of mourning for the dead, one can turn one's accumulated merits to the spiritual benefit of the dead, that is, for the peace of his/her soul.

There are several types of *huixiang* in Mahayana Buddhism, including the *bodhi huixiang* 菩提迴向 (turning upwards to *bodhi* or enlightenment), the *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向 (turning to all sentient beings), and the *shiji huixiang* 實際迴向 (turning toward Reality). For the understanding of *huixiang*, we can refer to Huiyuan's entry "huixiang" in his *Dasheng Yizhang* 大乘義章 (*The Meaning of Mahayana Buddhism*), where we read:

The so-called *huixiang* means to turn one's good dharma to the benefit of others, that's why it is named "*huixiang*". But there are different kinds of *huixiang*. Within the same gate there are three kinds of *huixiang*: the first is *bodhi huixiang*; the second is all sentient beings *huixiang*; the third is reality *huixiang*.

The so-called *bodhi huixiang* turns itself to the search for the mind of the wisdom that knows all. It is turning all good dharma that one has been cultivating to all kinds of virtues that belong to *bodhi*. That is why it is named the *bodhi huixiang*.

The so-called all sentient beings *huixiang* is the mind/heart that is deeply concerned with all sentient beings, and it is because of this concern that one turns all good dharma realized by oneself to them. That's why it is named the all sentient beings *huixiang*.

The third is reality *huixiang*. It is the mind that one disentangles from one's involvement in the realm of beings so that one can look for the True Thusness, that one destroys the realm of beings for the purpose of the True Reality, and uses one's own good nature (root) to turn to the attainment of the all equal and thus true Dharma Nature. This is named the reality *huixiang*. (T 44, 1851: 636c; my English translation).

Huixiang, as the act of transferring one's merits to many others, may be considered as an act going outside of one's self for the benefit of many others, that is to say, all sentient beings, which presupposes an original generosity. I should say that the *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向 or the turning to all sentient beings does in fact show a kind of generosity towards many others, even if the ultimate end of this is to bring them together to the realm of enlightenment, which is the ultimate end of all Buddhist praxis. However, to bring many others to enlightenment presupposes one's own enlightenment; that is why Buddhism's emphasis is always upon the turning upwards to enlightenment, or *bodhi huixiang* 菩提迴向 which means turning to one's own spiritual promotion and conversion into higher forms of consciousness or spiritual forms, to the point of achieving enlightenment. Moreover, since enlightenment is the state of mind that has obtained the ultimate reality, or the True Thusness, both *zhongsheng huixiang* and *bodhi huixiang* are ultimately based on an ontological view of reality which is obtained by the mind of the True Thusness. In this sense, *huixiang* is related to and developed by promoting oneself to the obtainment of *bodhi* and the fulfillment of the True Thusness.

When exploring the concept of "*huixiang*" in *The Meaning of Mahayana Buddhism*, Huiyuan explains that this need to turn towards *bodhi*, or the reason for cultivating *Bodhi huixiang*, is because of the limitation of one's goodness, and that it is the unlimited goodness cultivated for Buddha's sake that could provide an unlimited foundation for turning one's merits to many others. We read,

..., because the goodness cultivated for one's own sake is limited either in scope or in number, whereas the goodness cultivated for Buddha's sake is unlimited in scope and number. Therefore one should cultivate *huixiang*. What is the meaning of this? Bodhi's merits for nirvana are immense and without boundary, but it could be looked after only by the one singular good nature [of mine]. Since in every side of the great *bodhi* there is always someone leading a life of goodness, once one good *huixiang* is increased and extended, other good natures will follow the example and get into the same process [of increasing and extending]. That's why in Buddhist Scriptures it is always taught that *huixiang* brings the greatest benefit. It is for these three reasons that we should cultivate and practice *bodhi huixiang*. (T 44, 1851: 637a; my English translation)

However, in Huiyuan's discussion of the term *Huixiang*, it is not clear how one goes about turning toward wisdom or *bodhi*. It is therefore of interest to look for the procedure of turning towards wisdom in, for example, the conversion of consciousness into wisdom as explained in Indian Yogācāra, or more so in Chinese Weishi, as it is interpreted by Weishi's concept of *zhuanyi* 轉依 (turning and transforming). Here *bodhi huixiang* may be interpreted as the *zhuanyi* 轉依 (turning and transforming) of consciousness into wisdom. I will elaborate a little further on this idea in what follows.

3.3 *Turning Upwards to bodhi as Transformation of Consciousness Into Wisdom*

The concrete procedure of turning towards *bodhi* is most clearly exemplified by the practice of yoga. Yogācāra in India and *Weishi* in China are renowned for their meticulous analysis and minute classification of consciousness, presented most completely in the so-called 100 dharmas which are classified into five categories: Citta-dharma (mind), Caitasika-dharma (mental contents), Rūpa-dharma (material elements), Citta-viprayukta-samskāra (things not associated with mind) and Asamskrta-dharma (non-created elements), as they were elaborated out of the 75 dharmas of the *Abhidharma-kosa* (Takakusu 1976: 72–74). However, all these minute distinctions are not purely intellectual inventions and they in fact appear in the process of Yoga praxis. Because of this, these classifications are very helpful in Yogācāra's pedagogy and in the teaching of Yogācāra's wisdom, and they are most useful for tracking the progress of one's spiritual advancement.

In Yogācāra and *Weishi* Buddhism we find an analytic progression, or better, a phenomenological reduction, from the five consciousnesses to the sixth consciousness or the empirical self-consciousness, then to the seventh consciousness or the transcendental self-consciousness, and finally to the ontological origin of all consciousness, the Alaya-vijñāna or the bhūtatathatā (the True Thusness). Five sense perceptions – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting – are seen as the five consciousnesses. These should be bracketed or reduced to the empirical self-consciousness, which is the empirical center of the five sensations or the sense-centered consciousness, and thus called the sixth consciousness.

Thus the act of phenomenological reduction is also a process of analyzing the dynamic structure of consciousness, which entails entering deeper and deeper layers of consciousness, from the five consciousnesses to the sixth, then to the seventh, then to the eighth. It is thus a process of acquiring deeper self-understanding and returning to the root of one's true Self.

The seventh consciousness as the thought-centered consciousness, the manas-vijñāna, is the imagined center from which all willing and thinking come about, and often attaches itself to its own imagined centeredness as true self. It may be compared with the Cartesian concept of “*Je pense*”, or the Husserlian “transcendental

ego.” Yet it differs in the sense that the concept of “*Je pense*” for Descartes and the transcendental ego for Husserl are seen as the transcendental constituent of human self, or better, the transcendental origin of the constituting dynamism of all our empirical experience, while the seventh consciousness for the *Weishi* School is only a derivative transformation of the eighth consciousness.

Finally, the eighth consciousness, the *alaya-vijñāna* (*alaiyeshi*, storehouse consciousness) contains all seeds or potentialities of right/wrong thoughts and good/evil deeds to be manifested and effected in the previous seven forms of consciousness, and at the same time, is also influenced by them. That is to say, the *alaya-vijñāna* contains a double process: on the one hand, it realizes the seeds into deeds and thoughts in the process of manifestation; on the other, it receives their influence or is fumigated by the former seven consciousnesses in actual operation. In the Indian Yogācāra tradition, all these distinctions between psychic layers are eventually abandoned in the process of Yoga praxis for the benefit of the enlightened and for the benefit of many others and they should not be perceived as real distinctions.⁶

For me, the most interesting philosophical idea of the *Weishi* School concerns the transformation of consciousness into wisdom. This concept presupposes that one enters into the ultimate reality, either as *alaya-vijñāna* (according to the tradition of Xuanzang) or as *bhūtatathatā* (according to the tradition of Paramārtha), both of which are related with but still detached from (yet not determined by) all other dharmanas and from the determination of all specific representations and names.

By the marvelous function of the ultimate reality, the eighth consciousness is transformed into mind/heart corresponding to the “wisdom of the grand perfect mirror.” The metaphor of “grand mirror” is used to describe the reflection of marvelous reality as it is. This is therefore a wisdom that reaches the Reality Itself and sees things in their utmost authenticity and purity.

Then, leading on from this, one transforms the seventh consciousness into mind/heart corresponding to the wisdom of equality. Instead of being self-centered, this is a wisdom that opens one to all beings and sees all others as equal to oneself and perceives all as equally worthy of compassion.

Then, the sixth consciousness may be transformed into mind/heart corresponding to the wisdom of marvelous observation, which produces enlightened understanding of perceived objects and the capacity to teach different people according to the nature of their own being.

Finally, basing upon all these, the five actual consciousnesses may be transformed into the wisdom of achieving all deeds, by which one can realize all good deeds on the levels of action, words and intention, for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Although there are different views of the ultimate reality, either as *alaya-vijñāna* in Xuanzang 玄藏’s tradition, or as *bhūtatathatā* itself in Paramārtha’s tradition, it is noticeable that there is always a double process involved in the transformation of consciousness into wisdom. On the one hand, there is the process of retracing

⁶Cf. Xuanzang 玄藏 1973.

self-awareness, tracing back to deeper and more original layers of self-awareness from the five consciousnesses to the sixth, to the seventh, to the eighth consciousness, until we arrive at the Original Ground, that being either the *alaya-vijñāna* or the *bhūtatathatā*. On the other hand, there is the process of purifying manifestation, which first transforms the eighth consciousness into the wisdom of the grand perfect mirror, then purifies and realizes the seventh consciousness into the wisdom of equality, then purifies and realizes the sixth consciousness into the wisdom of marvelous observation, and finally purifies and realizes the five consciousnesses into the wisdom of achieving all deeds. We can interpret all these as a process of transforming one's consciousness into wisdom, by which one sees all things as they are, in equality, with full understanding of their concrete existential situations in order to realize good deeds on the levels of action, words and intention, for the benefit of many others.

3.4 *Turning to Many Others as Act of Strangification and Generosity*

Based on the wisdom or *bodhi* obtained through the process of transformation of consciousness into wisdom, one is able to turn towards many others, which, according to my interpretation, may be properly seen as an act of *waitui* 外推 (strangification), that is, the act of going out of oneself to many others, from those with whom one is familiar to strangers, motivated by a certain spirit of generosity. In Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, this process is put in the context of *fangbian* (方便), or expedient methods for dealing with many others in order to bring them to enlightenment, rather than an act of ethical goodness. *Huixiang* here is understood as the act of transferring one's merits to the welfare and eventual enlightenment of all sentient beings. Generosity is here related to the Buddhist concept of gift, emphasizing first of all the gift of assistance toward enlightenment.

The Buddhist concept of gift seems to put more emphasis on the immaterial gift, such as the gift of meaning and dharmas, rather than on the material gift, even if the material gifts that lead to many others' physical happiness are not neglected. In the *Perfection of Wisdom in 150 lines*, concerning the concept of gift, we read:

The gift of Consecration leads to the acquisition of kingship over everything in the triple world; the gift of meaning leads to the fulfillment of all hopes; the gift of Dharma leads to the attainment of the sameness of all dharmas; the fleshly gift leads to the acquisition of all happiness in body, speech and thought. (Conze 1973b: 187)

Here the most important kinds of gift are the gift of meaning, the gift of Dharma, and the material gift that leads to the acquisition of all physical and mental happiness (in body, speech and thought). However, in my discussion of *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana*, where three kinds of charitable practices are mentioned, namely the charity in giving material goods, the charity of letting others be without fear, and the charity of instruction, I have shown that, under a genuine Buddhist spirit of

seeing all as equal, all three kinds of generosity should be seen as equal: equally generous, equally without gain and equally unconditional.

Most interesting is that, when one practices *huixiang*, one should do so as if one is not doing so; that there should be no agent of *huixiang*, no method of doing *huixiang* and no object of *huixiang*, so as to make an act of *huixiang* a genuine *huixiang*. This applies to both the upward or vertical *huixiang* and to outward or horizontal *huixiang*. What the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* says on the *huixiang* is more concerned with the mindlessness of upwards *huixiang* in transferring one's merit to enlightenment. There we read,

When in one who turns over there proceeds the perception of a thought, or if the turning over of the perception of enlightenment involves the perception of a being: Established in perception, false views, and thought, it is tied by the triple attachment. It does not become turned over to those who apprehend it. But when he thus cognizes: These *dharmas* are extinct and stopped, and wherein they are turned over, that is also extinct.

Nor is ever anywhere dharma turned over into a dharma: Then it does become turned over in one who thus considers wisely. When he makes a sign, he does not turn over [to enlightenment]. But if [he turns to it as] the signless, [that] becomes turned over into enlightenment. Just as though food mixed with poison were good to eat, so has the taking of pure *dharmas* as a basis been spoken of by the Jina. Therefore thus should one train in turning over: As the Jina wisely know that wholesome [root], – Its class as it is, its origins as they are, its characteristics as they are, – Thus do I rejoice [in that wholesome root], thus do I turn [it] over. And thus turning merit over into enlightenment, he does not upset the Buddha, one who has preached what the Jina has taught. As many as there are in the world Buddhisatvas who lean on a basis all of them surpasses the hero who turns over in this way. (Conze 1973a: 21–22)

In comparison, when we come to sutras favored by Chinese Buddhists, the emphasis is more on the mindlessness of generous acts to many others, especially in the generous giving of material goods. This spirit is developed later in the charity work practiced by Pure Land Buddhism. As I said in my discussion of *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana*, it is in the generous act of gift that the giver “while freeing himself from greed and avarice, causes the beggar to be joyful.” Also, in *The Diamond Sutra*, which is a basic text of all schools of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, in particular of Chan Buddhism, we find the idea of Buddha's merit as no merit. We read,

If a son or daughter of good family had filled this world system of 1.000 million worlds with the seven precious things, and then gave it as a gift to the Thathagatas, the Arahats, the fully enlightened Ones ... On the strength of that this son or daughter of good family would beget a great heap of merit, immensurable and incalculable. But if, on the other hand, there were such a thing as a heap of merit, the Tathagata would not have spoken of a “heap of merit”. (Conze 1973b: 134)

This non-attachment to one's own generosity, even if one's generosity arises from compassion, will render generosity more genuine and self-transcending. This goes well with the spiritual meaning of emptiness, that is, the non-attachment to any merit or achievement. Most important is not mere idea, but the implementation of idea in the act of generosity towards all sentient beings. The promotion to *bodhi huixiang* would provide the non-foundational foundation to Buddha's merit as no

merit, or the mindlessness of one's generous act towards many others. However, it is with regard to all sentient beings that one can bestow this unconditional generosity. Huiyuan in his discussion of *huixiang* gives the following explanation:

Third, we say to increase and extend, because all goodness for oneself is narrow and small, whereas all benefits for others have more goodness in number. In order to allow all goodness increase and extend according to the rhythm of things, one should cultivate and practice [all sentient beings *huixiang*]. What does this mean? It means if one practices one good deed to turn to and bestow upon all sentient beings, there will be unlimited numbers of sentient beings to increase and extend this goodness unlimitedly. Once this particular good is increased and extended, all other good natures will be increased and extended in following this example. It is for the reason of these three meanings that one should cultivate and practice all sentient beings *huixiang*. (T 44, 1851: 637a; my English translation)

It is for the same reason that Pure Land Buddhism puts emphasis on the *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向, by which one turns all that one has accumulated as good deeds or good *dharma*s, in willing to bestow them on many others, even to the point of returning from the pure land back to the world in order to bring salvation to many others. There are two kinds of *huixiang* in Pure Land Buddhism: the *wangxiang huixiang* 往相迴向 (the turning towards Pure Land), which means the giving of one's merit in the past and present to all sentient beings for communal rebirth in the Pure Land; and the *fanxiang huixiang* 返相迴向 (the returning back from the Pure Land), which is the act of returning to this world after being born in the Pure Land, through one's compassion for the teaching and transformation of all sentient beings so that they can progress on the Way to Buddhahood.

4 Conclusions

As we can see from *The Awakening of Faith*, the ethics of generosity in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism has both a theoretical and practical aspect. On the theoretical level, the ontology of Oneness or Sameness lays the foundation for this Buddhist ethics. On the practical level, there are various practices of gift, such as the gift of material goods, the gift of no fear and the gift of *dharma*, among which I perceive the gift of no fear as the gift that allows sentient beings to be themselves, that is, to be Buddha, the enlightened one, and hence there is no more need of fear. However, according to my critical analysis, we can still question the monist ontological foundation of this ethics of generosity. This concerns the problem of the ontological presupposition of One Mind as the ultimate reality, which takes all sentient beings as belonging with sameness to the One Mind. It is possible that this presupposition might weaken the ontological status of, and the ethical respect for, difference and diversity. It would be more ethical to respect the ontological status of many others, with their difference and diversity, as crucial to the relation among sentient beings.

As I see it, in today's world, ethics should be considered as the first philosophy, not merely as an instrument for enlightenment; and Buddhism should engage in some critical self-reflection on this philosophical issue, whether ethics takes priority

over enlightenment or enlightenment takes priority over ethics. This theoretical issue is accompanied by another problem on the practical level: although in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism there is indeed abundant generosity towards many others in the form of *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向, *bodhi huixiang* 菩提迴向 always takes priority over other types of *huixiang*. Thus, the transformation into wisdom is prioritized over *Zhongsheng huixiang* and *Reality Huixiang* 實際迴向. In this sense, the original generosity towards many others is given secondary priority, while enlightenment and wisdom enjoy the first priority in most Chinese Mahayana Buddhist schools, with the exception of Pure Land Buddhism. I fully appreciate that, in Pure Land Buddhism, the *zhongsheng huixiang* 眾生迴向 is given first priority, not only in the *wanxiang huixiang* 往相迴向 that gives one's merit in the past and present to all sentient beings for communal rebirth in the Pure Land, but also in the *fanxiang huixiang* 返相迴向 (the returning back from Pure Land), by which one returns from the Pure Land back to this world through compassion for all suffering sentient beings. Here ethical concern is admirably put to the forefront, rather than merely having the status of an expedient measure for obtaining enlightenment, although I fully understand that in Buddhism in general, enlightenment is always crucial.

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Chapter 4

Wholesome Remembrance and the Critique of Memory—From Indian Buddhist Context to Chinese Chan Appropriation



Youru Wang

This chapter investigates the mode and acts of remembering in Chan Buddhism.¹ It consists of three parts. The first part offers a survey of the traditional Indian Buddhist context of remembering, its differentiation of wholesome and unwholesome acts of remembering, and its critique of unwholesome and discursive modes of memory, as Buddhism evolves from Theravada to Mahayana. This context is a necessary condition under which the interaction between Indian and Chinese Buddhist ideologies, or between the inherited tradition and its Chinese Chan appropriation, becomes possible. The second part examines how Chan masters, from early to classical period, appropriate and develop the traditional distinction of wholesome and unwholesome remembrance as well as its affirmation of the former and critique of the latter in a Chinese context. As opposed to the widespread Chan hierarchy of forgetfulness over remembrance that has shaped much of our modern understanding, this section presents a rediscovery of Chan teachings on remembrance, disclosing how remembrance is related to the internal tension between the positive attitude towards the traditional cultivation and the iconoclastic attitude towards it in various Chan ideologies. The approach of these examinations is a combination of textual/contextual inquiry, conceptual analysis and philosophical interpretation. The last part—summary and reflections—includes a review of the uniqueness of the Chan mode of remembering, an analysis of its ethical dimension by using, and comparing it with, Ricoeur's ethics of memory, and an exploration of the subtle relationship between remembering and forgetting.

¹ See Gethin's analysis on Indian Buddhist literature's focus on the act of remembering, rather than what is remembered; the latter was a Brahmanical focus since the *R̥gveda*. I think Chan Buddhist literature indicates the same direction (Gethin 1992: 36).

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1 The Traditional Indian Buddhist Context of Remembering and the Critique of Memory

Contemporary scholars generally agree that Indian Buddhist discourse (here I limit it to Pali, Sanskrit texts and many of Chinese-translated Indian Buddhist texts) showed no particular interest in a systematic explanation of ordinary memory as a personal recollection of past experience and its uses to mundane life. Scholars have also pointed out that the lack of discussion on memory on its own in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism is pretty much due to the lack of the context in which Western thinkers often see the importance of memories in terms of personal identity and continuity through time.² Buddhism, in general, holds a non-substantialist view on personal identity (*anātman*), and sees persons and all their mental or physical elements, including memories, as transient and dependent on conditions. However, as a functioning human institution, Buddhism could not disconnect itself from memory. Every symbolic beginning of the canonical scriptures—“Thus have I heard. On one occasion ...”—and the widely spread life stories of the Buddha, including the Buddha’s recollection of his past lives, are incontestable testament to the point that Buddhism is, no exception, a tradition of collective memory, among other things. What makes a difference is that Buddhism places and treats memory and remembrance mainly in a soteriological context. Many Buddhist texts mention and discuss remembrance within the framework of mindfulness and meditation practice.

It is commonly known that the Sanskrit term *smṛti* (Pali: *sati*, Chinese translation *nian* 念 or *yinian* 憶念) involves two basic meanings: one is mindfulness (the most common English translation for this Buddhist term) or awareness, and the other remembrance or recollection. What kind of relationship these two meanings have in the usage of Buddhist Sanskrit/Pali texts has been a topic for scholarly debate.³ The moderate, and more appropriate, view on the issue, it seems to me, is that, while one should definitely reject any simple reduction of the Buddhist mode of remembrance to just a passive recollection of previous personal experience, one cannot deny the involvement of the faculty of remembrance within the structure of the practice of concentration, contemplation and wisdom, even though it may involve more a “performative function of memory in the present” (Gyatso 1992: 2). Some more close-to-tradition interpretations on the involvement of remembrance with mindfulness often emphasize the point that meditative mindfulness sets up a “true” situation for recollection (Wayman 1992: 135), or causes the practitioner to remember (Gethin 1992: 39; Anālayo 2013: 30–38). This view, of course, is supported by some Buddhist texts. The *Mahāvastu Avadāna* claims, “... the monk, having purified morality, being respectively mindful with awareness, recollected his former dwellings ...” (Wayman 1992: 135). The interpretation can even be applied to such a

²For example, the central idea of John Locke’s theory of personal identity is the recognition of the sameness of self in different times and places through one’s memory of past actions and thoughts. See Locke 1996: 138. Cf. Griffiths 1992: 109, 116; Lopez 1992: 35–36.

³See Shulman 2010. Also see articles in Gyatso 1992.

statement from the Pali Nikāyas, which just juxtaposes remembrance and mindfulness as two parallel qualities of noble disciple: “Here, *bhikkhus*, the noble disciple has *sati*, he is endowed with perfect *sati* and intellect, he is one who remembers, who recollects what was done and said long before” (*Samyutta-nikāya*, Gethin 1992: 36). However, a recent critical examination of the famous *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (the Chinese equivalent *Nianchu Jing* 念處經) by Eviatar Shulman strongly argues that, more than being a by-product of *samādhi*, memory or remembrance actively participates, is integrated into, and even conditions mindfulness. The detailed passages on the mindfulness of body, feeling, mind and *dhamma*, the so-called four foundations or applications of mindfulness (Chinese *sinianchu* 四念處), in this *sutta*, indicate that “one must learn to analyze one’s experience in terms of Buddhist categories in order to see them spontaneously occurring” (Shulman 2010: 405). For example, “one would need to practice the contemplation of the five hindrances in order to learn to see them more immediately.”⁴ If one succeeds in the process of meditation, one is able to understand the content of one’s present experience “in terms of internalized Buddhist knowledge” (Ibid.: 407). In other words, this process or practice not only requires the remembrance of basic Buddhist teaching, but is also shaped by the internalization of memory and knowledge. Only when the gap between mindfulness and memory is eliminated, can one “directly, and possibly nonconceptually,” understand and see things as they are—the actual working of the Four Noble Truths through one’s mind and its functioning (Ibid.: 408).

Although I am not in a position to pursue a full discussion of Shulman’s argument, I think the main point about the complicated intertwining (not one-sided) relationship between mindfulness and remembrance can be supported by many later Indian Buddhist texts. For instance, Collett Cox found the following definition in Abhidharma texts that describe the modes of traditional Buddhist mindfulness praxes: “[M]indfulness is reflection, remembering, recollection, the non-removing, the nonlosing, the nonleaving, the nonflowing away, the state of the nonlosing of factors, the state of the nondrifting (or fixing or noting) of the mind.”⁵ Alex Wayman cited “a verse on the maturation of adroit memory (*medhā*)” from Chap. 8 of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (*Ornament for Mahāyāna Sūtras*; Chinese *Dasheng Zhuangyan Jinglun* 大乘莊嚴經論), which pairs *smṛti* with another Sanskrit word *medhā* for memory. He then quoted Asaṅga’s comment on the verse:

... [P]urity of maturation consistent with adroit memory is the instrumental cause. The nature of mature adroit memory is that of mindfulness to which belongs the non-theft of what was heard, pondered, and cultivated, done long ago or said long ago, and the good understanding of the meaning of the well said and the badly said. Its activity is the fitness to arouse supramundane insight (*prajñā*). (Wayman 1992: 136)

Here clearly, for Asaṅga, understanding, reflection, cultivation and mindfulness all involve remembering. Skillful memory or remembrance in the sense of good

⁴Ibid. Five hindrances refer to sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt in the *Sati-Paṭṭhāna-Sutta*. See Nāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 151.

⁵Cox 1992: 78. Cox cited two similar passages from the Pali Abhidharma and Northern Indian Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma texts in his paper; here I cite only the latter.

awareness of what is right and wrong in terms of Buddhist teaching is not only the part and parcel of mindfulness, but is also the nature of mindfulness. Moreover, skillful remembrance is as crucial as an instrument and cause, and therefore is required for, and would lead the practitioner to, the attainment of Buddhist wisdom.

The same point can also be seen through Paul Harrison's examination of the Buddhist theory and practice of *buddhānussmṛti*, which could be translated as "recollection, remembrance or commemoration of the Buddha," "calling the Buddha to mind," or "meditation on the Buddha." In the Pali Nikāyas, *buddhānussati* is one of a series of ten *anussati* or "recollections," which are part of a standard list of 38 or 40 subjects of meditation.⁶ Each *anussati* consists of the recitation of a short formula. The first six *anussati*, by performing the recitation in a meditational context, encourage the practitioner to recall or call to mind the virtue of the Buddha, the superiority and profundity of the Buddhist teaching, the merits and worthiness of the Buddhist order, the superiority and commitment of their own moral training as demonstrated in the practice of Buddhist precepts, and so on (Harrison 1992: 216). They are "the deliberate focusing on what is accounted spiritually wholesome and beneficial," and the "mental preparation for advanced trance meditation (Skt. *dhyāna*, Pali. *jhāna*)" (Ibid.: 217). For example, contemplation of the virtues of the Buddha displaces the "three poisons" of lust, hatred and delusion, and overcomes the five hindrances so as to enable "applied" and "sustained" thought on those virtues. Such thought produces rapture; rapture leads to tranquility; tranquility to bliss; and in the state of bliss, concentration of the mind on the Buddha's virtues is achieved (Ibid.: 217–218).

In a somewhat different direction, the recitation of the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha also became a popular ritual device for seeking benefits such as ensuring safety, restoring health and receiving protection or good rebirth in Theravada Buddhist communities (Ibid.: 218–219). One of the further developments of the *buddhānussmṛti* in Mahayana Buddhism is the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi Sūtra* (*Scripture on the Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*), translated into Chinese by the Indo-Scythian monk Lokakṣema (Ch. ZHI Loujiachan 支婁迦讖, fl. 178–189 AD) in 179 as *Banzhou Sanmei Jing* 般舟三昧經.⁷ It not only instructs to combine the traditional practice of "recollection" with an emphasis on the direct encounter with the Buddha through visualization, but also to subject the practice to the realization of emptiness. "In this way the Buddha as meditation object is seen not as an end in itself, but as a

⁶These ten recollections are (1) the Buddha, (2) the Dhamma, (3) the Sangha, (4) morality or virtue, (5) liberality or generosity, (6) deities, (7) respiration, (8) death, (9) the parts of the body, and (10) peace (i.e., *nibbāna*). See Harrison 1992: 216. Also cf. Shaw 2006. The sequence of the last four recollections in Shaw's book is a little different.

⁷The original Sanskrit text of this scripture has not survived, except for one small fragment found in Khadalik in Central Asia. However, a Tibetan translation made before the ninth century is extant. See Harrison 1978.

means to a correct understanding of the true nature of phenomenal reality” (Harrison 1992: 222). It is no longer “the passive experience of a remote or separate ‘other,’ but a direct encounter leading to self transformation in the image of that ‘other,’ and to a radically new way of seeing” (Ibid.: 224). Obviously, the theory about this kind of practice can no longer be subsumed under the traditional category of “thematic recollections” and seen as “preliminary low-level subjects,” which produce “no recognized level of higher awareness.”⁸ The *sūtra* greatly influenced both Pure Land Buddhism and the Chan meditation of reciting Buddha’s name, the so-called *Nianfo Chan* 念佛禪 in China. Harrison has defined these practices of *buddhānussmṛti* as “acts of commemoration,” a unique mode of communal or collective remembrance intensified by the use of text and ritual, different from simple recollections of what was personally experienced in the past.⁹

It is significant to note, from the above survey, the distinction and categorization of wholesome or skillful (Skt. *kuśala*, Pali *kusala*) versus unwholesome or unskillful (Skt. *akuśala*, Pali *akusala*), which is applied to memories or acts of remembrance by early and later Indian Buddhist texts. The distinction and pairing of what is wholesome and unwholesome, or what is skillful and unskillful, and its accompanying strategy of cultivating the former and letting go of the latter, is a general pattern displayed through the Pali texts, their Theravadin interpretations such as Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification*), and some later texts. This distinction itself reinforces the point that Buddhist mindfulness is more than just a bare attentiveness towards any objects.¹⁰ It involves an overcoming of unwholesome memory by wholesome memory, an overcoming unskillful uses of memory by skillful uses of memory, while replacing ordinary conditioning of vision with a new conditioning of vision that is profoundly in tune with the basic Buddhist understanding of reality as impermanence, dissatisfactoriness and no-essential-self (Shulman 2010: 403). This is quite clear from one of the Pali texts:

When he is speaking, he speaks in accordance with *dhamma*, not with what is not. When he applies his mind he applies it only to thoughts in accordance with *dhamma*, not thoughts that are not. By avoiding both speech and thought that are not in accordance with *dhamma* he abides with equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending.

...

As he recollects the *dhamma*, he does not fall away from it.

When walking or standing, sitting or lying down,

His heart is inwardly settled, and he attains to tranquility.

(From the *Itivuttaka*, Shaw 2006: 120)

Contrary to the affirmation and requirement of wholesome and skillful remembrance in Buddhist practice, unwholesome and unskillful remembrance is negated and should be abandoned. The *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* plainly declares that through the practice of mindfulness, “one abandons remembrance and intention rooted in

⁸ See King 1980: 33. Also Harrison 1992: 215–216.

⁹ Harrison, *ibid.*: 228–229. For the unique nature and structure of commemoration, see Casey 2000, Chap. 10, “Commemoration.”

¹⁰ Robert Sharf contributed a good discussion on this point, in Sharf 2014.

ordinary life and becomes inwardly stilled, concentrated.”¹¹ Unwholesome and unskillful memories or acts of remembrance thus become the targets of the Indian Buddhist critique of memory or remembrance.

The *Visesacintibrahmapariprcchā Sūtra* (Ch. *Chixin Fantian Suowen Jing* 持心梵天所問經, translated by Dharmarakṣa [ZHU Fahu 竺法護 265–313 AD]¹², Sanskrit original not extant) states: “No [unwholesome] consciousness and no [unwholesome] recollection ... means the stopping of four [unwholesome] mental states [through the four applications of mindfulness]. One will then not stick to anything nor will to any [unwholesome] thought.”¹³ As these various Indian Buddhist texts elaborate, unwholesome and unskillful memory or remembrance is structured in the ordinary ignorance of true reality as impermanence and dependent co-existence, and serves individual persons’ craving for, and attachment to, self and things, or to the self-identity of a person and things, often leading to the three root evils and continuous sufferings, and therefore is definitely not conducive to the soteriological goal of Buddhism. Epistemologically, Buddhists consider invalid the ordinary recognition and identification of something perceived in the present with something perceived in the past in terms of personal memory or recollection. Such recognition and identification disregards underlying flux, change, momentariness, and other conditions, superimposing an essential and enduring self or essence of things on the reality of “ever running stream.”

One crucial aspect of the Buddhist critique of such recognition and identification based on personal recollection of past experiences is memory’s involvement with discursive thought and conceptual or discriminative language, which deviates from the goal of direct understanding or “seeing” things as they are in meditation practice. As commonly known, the Pali canon describes the second of four stages of *jhāna* (Skt. *dhyaṇa*, meditative concentration) as “devoid of initial and discursive thought.”¹⁴ The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Ch. *Apidamo Jushe Lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍論) considers the recollecting of discursive thought in the practice of mindfulness to be merely producing “unsteady insight” (Wayman 1992: 137). This suggests that even some “wholesome” memories, produced in mindfulness practice, if involving discursive thought, are not at the highest level of meditation yet, not to mention unwholesome recollections of discursive thought. In Mahayana Buddhism, this critique of discursive thought and related conceptual discrimination is further developed by the doctrines of emptiness, mind-only and non-duality especially through the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) literature, the Mādhyamika treatises and other somewhat syncretic texts, which combine the mind-only doctrine with the *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha-nature) thought. One such text is the *Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa*

¹¹ Translated by Collett Cox, in Cox 1992: 69. Also see Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 954.

¹² For a study of Zhu Fahu, see Boucher 2006.

¹³ T15, 586: 7a. These expressions have been seen as one of the earliest Indian sources for the concept of *wunian* (often translated as no-thought), which dominated the ideology of Chan Buddhism. Cf. Jan 1986: 23.

¹⁴ Translation from the *Majjhima Nikāya* by I. B. Horner, in Horner 1954: 27–28. Also cf. King 1980: 41.

Sūtra (*Scripture of the Teachings of Vimalakīrti*), which states: “(External) disturbance and (inner) thinking are a [pair of] duality; when disturbance subsides, thinking comes to an end and the absence of thought leads to non-discriminating; reaching this state is initiation into the non-dual Dharma.”¹⁵ The *Diamond Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*) includes the following statements: “This dharma which the Tathagata has fully known ... cannot be talked about it, it is neither a dharma nor a no-dharma.” “[T]he Tathagata ... does not dwell anywhere; that is why he is called a dweller in Peace.”¹⁶ In these texts, binary categories, such as dharma/no-dharma and dwelling/no-dwelling, are placed in almost identical relationships in terms of an enlightened perspective.

These paradoxical, often apophatic, expressions of enlightenment and their non-dualistic views on traditional dichotomies have a huge impact on many Mahayana texts’ understanding and interpretation of the traditional Buddhist theory of mindfulness and meditation. For example, the *Chishi Jing* 持世經 (translated by Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 [344–409], Sanskrit original not extant) elaborates: “No recollection and no thought are named the ‘correct thought’ (Skt. *samyak-smṛti*, Pali *sammā-sati*, Ch. *zhengnian* 正念).”¹⁷ This conveys the point that the negation of unwholesome remembrance and the affirmation of wholesome remembrance, the two aspects of practice, can be synthesized into one or identified with each other. It also implies an unconventional interplay of memory and no-memory, or wholesomeness and unwholesomeness, from an ultimately non-dualistic perspective. This perspective deconstructs or subverts traditional conceptual hierarchies such as memory/no-memory, thought/no-thought, wholesomeness/unwholesomeness, displaying a thoroughgoing non-attachment and a complete transcendence of all discriminations. The Chan interplay of remembrance and forgetting did not fall from the sky, but precisely grew out of this inherited Indian Buddhist tradition, especially from the heritage of Mahayana ideology, although heritages of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are operative through Chan teachings and practices, and so are indigenous cultural traditions.

2 A Rediscovery of Chan Teachings on Remembrance and Critique of Memory

2.1 Daoxin and Shenxiu

Contemporary scholars generally agree that the institutional history of Chan Buddhism, or the school of Chan in a sectarian sense, began with Daoxin 道信 (580–651), the attributed fourth patriarch, and his disciple Hongren 弘忍

¹⁵T 14, 476: 550c. Translation by Charles Luk, in Luk 1972: 93. Words in square brackets are added by me.

¹⁶Translation from Edward Conze, in Conze 2001: 30, 40.

¹⁷T 14, 481: 661c. Cf. Jan 1986: 23.

(601–674), the fifth patriarch. Both are founders of the East Mountain Teaching (*Dongshan Famen* 東山法門, also called the Northern school). Daoxin's *Rudao Anxin Yao Fangbian Famen* 入道安心要方便法門 (*The Expedient Teaching of the Essentials of Entering the Path and Pacifying the Mind*), a work included in Jingjue 淨覺 (683–ca. 750)'s *Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Lankā[vatāra]* (*Lengqie Shizi Ji* 楞伽師資記), is a good source for the study of Daoxin's teaching and early Chan, despite the fact that it was composed retrospectively by the East Mountain followers (McRae 2003: 36–38). One of the prominent characteristics of Daoxin's approach to meditation is the emphasis on “maintaining the one without wavering (*shouyi buyi* 守一不移),” which is identified with “One-Practice Samādhi (*eka-vyūha-samādhi* 一行三昧)” to attain undifferentiatedness (Yanagida 1971: 241, 186). By borrowing the Daoist term “*shouyi*,” probably from the Daoist scripture *Taiping Jing*,¹⁸ he advises the student to contemplate on the object of meditation with steady attention until the realization of emptiness or the true nature of things. Once the practitioner attains this realization of emptiness or sees the non-dualistic nature of all things, there will be no object of meditation.

His interpretation of *buddhānusmṛti* (meditation on the Buddha) further illustrates this point:

What does “being without an object of contemplation” mean? This very mind that contemplates the Buddha is what is known as “being without an object of contemplation.” Apart from mind there is no Buddha, apart from Buddha there is no mind. To contemplate the Buddha is to contemplate the mind ... The Buddha has no form or appearance. If one understands this principle, one is able to pacify the mind. If one constantly remembers and contemplates the Buddha (*chang yinianfo* 常憶念佛) without grasping at objects, then all things will be utterly without marks, equal and non-dualistic. Once one enters into this stage, the mind that is recollecting the Buddha will also disappear, and won't need to be sought out.¹⁹

While following the *Banzhou Sanmei Jing* (discussed above) to combine the traditional practice of recollecting or contemplating Buddha with the Mahayana teaching of emptiness, Daoxin also blends it with the mind-only doctrine and the Buddha-nature theory, to interpret recollecting or contemplating Buddha as a mind-transforming experience of realizing the inherent non-differentiating nature of all things through meditation. Skillful remembrance or commemoration as a means or gate to the experience of realization is fully acknowledged, but its dichotomized presupposition is deconstructed in terms of the perspective of enlightenment. It is interesting to note here that Daoxin's identification of the mind of Buddha with the mind of practitioner, based on an inherent Buddha-nature in everyone, is already a forerunner of the well-known Hongzhou Chan dictum of “mind is Buddha (即心是佛)” and “the ordinary mind is the way (平常心是道).”

Compared with the above-mentioned aspect of Daoxin's teaching, Shenxiu 神秀 (ca. 606–706)'s view in the *Guanxin Lun* 觀心論 (*Treatise on the Contemplation of*

¹⁸ Cf. Faure 1986: 112–113; Yang 1999: 73–80.

¹⁹ T 85, 2837: 1287a; Yanagida 1971: 192. This translation consulted Robert Sharf's in Sharf 2002: 304. The last sentence was not translated by Sharf in his paper.

the Mind)²⁰ seems to comply more with the traditional Buddhist practice of wholesome or skillful remembrance. While proposing the contemplation of the mind as the single most important practice to cultivate and realize the Buddha-nature of true suchness (真如佛性), the *Guanxin Lun* includes, rather than excludes, the meaning of contemplating the Buddha:

“Contemplating the Buddha (念佛)” means that one must make wholesome thought into one’s rule, and consider the lack of understanding of the Tathāgata’s teaching false. ... “Buddha” means “awakening.” It means to become aware of the source of mind and not allow evil to arise. “Contemplating” means remembering (念者憶也). It is to firmly maintain the practice of precepts and not to forget to diligently seek to understand the Tathāgata’s teaching (謂堅持戒行不忘精勤了如來義). This is called “correct thought [or remembrance] (正念).” (T 85, 2833: 1273a)²¹

Shenxiu makes it clear that correct contemplation requires the practitioner to remember the precepts and morality, to remember working hard and making efforts, and to remember the understanding of the Buddha’s teaching, which is consistent with his delineation of a gradual path through “controlling the mind and becoming internally illuminated (攝心內照) [by the Buddha-nature].” (Ibid.) Except its Mahayana framework, nothing in this work differs greatly from early Buddhism’s practice of wholesome or skillful remembrance in connection with mindfulness meditation, morality and wisdom.

2.2 *Shenhui and the Platform Sūtra*

Contrary to the cataphatic and dualistic rhetoric of Shenxiu’s teaching, the texts of Shenhui 神會 (684–758) and the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* 六祖壇經 use more apophatic and non-dualistic rhetoric to explain their central teaching of *wunian* 無念 (no-thought).²² No-thought in these texts means that the mind does not abide in, or fix on, any thing or thought, is able to see all things as they are, free from obstructions, and therefore is identified with the reality of true suchness (*zhenru shixiang* 真如實相). The apophatic, paradoxical and non-dualistic rhetoric is not the invention of the texts of Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra*. It has existed in Indian Mahayana texts as I have mentioned above. These Indian Mahayana scriptures are frequently quoted by the texts of Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra*. However, Shenhui shows an extensive and excessive use of apophasis or negativity, making it his signature rhetoric. “No-thought” becomes one link in a great verbal chain of negativity,

²⁰ I follow many leading scholars to see the *Guanxin Lun* as related to Shenxiu’s teaching, although there have been different arguments about the authorship of this work. For an available survey of the textual study of the *Guanxin Lun*, see McRae 1986: 325–327; Han 2013: 67–91.

²¹ This translation consulted Sharf’s in Sharf 2002: 305.

²² Here my grouping of the recorded saying texts of Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra* together acknowledges Shenhui’s influence on the text of the *Platform Sūtra* and some common teachings they share. This does not deny their subtle differences concerning the interpretation of no-thought and other related teachings.

which includes “no-form (*wuxiang* 無相),” “non-abiding (*wuzhu* 無住),” “no-thinking (*wusi* 無思),” “no-knowing (*wuzhi* 無知),” “no-seeing (*wujian* 無見),” “no-verifying (*wuzheng* 無證),” “no using the mind (*buyongxin* 不用心),” “no contemplating the mind (*bukanxin* 不看心),” “no contemplating purity (*bukanjing* 不看淨),” “no contemplating emptiness (*buguankong* 不觀空),” and numerous others. It even includes “no relying on cultivation and practice (*bujia xiuxi* 不假修習).”²³ This kind of apophatic rhetoric and the negation of all dualistic formulas in explaining the so-called teaching of sudden enlightenment of the Southern school entails or increases tension in the relationship between the non-attachments to established procedures and formulas and ongoing practices based on these procedures and formulas.

As a result of this tension, both the texts of Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra* demonstrate two contrasting features. On the one hand, the traditional critique and negation of unwholesome thought and remembrance seems to be more easily accepted into this new scheme and fits in with its overall apophatic rhetoric. For example, the *Platform Sūtra* states: “If you awaken to this Dharma you then have no thoughts, no recollections, no attachments. You do not give rise to deceptions and errors, and then this very self is the nature of true suchness.”²⁴ The traditional overcoming of unwholesome thought and remembrance finds its place here in the transformation from delusion to true reality. On the other hand, the traditional affirmation of practicing wholesome thought and remembrance, in connection with traditional morality and meditation, seems less fitting in the apophatic rhetoric, and is marginalized. The affirmation of wholesome thought and remembrance in general stays only as background in these texts. It stays there like an undercurrent, only occasionally surfacing, to signal the remaining internal tension, showing some reluctance to marginalization and serving almost as a reminder or a warning to forgetting. In the *Platform Sūtra*, one can sporadically find such reminders as “Work hard to practice the Way; do not be absent-minded”²⁵ and “diligently following the dharma to cultivate and practice.”²⁶ When instructing on “formless repentance,” Huineng (ca. 638–713) says: “‘Repentance’ is knowing [one’s] previous wrong doings and evil actions.”²⁷ “Knowing” here is in perfect accordance with the traditional sense of mindfulness and wholesome remembrance. The texts of Shenhui involve even fewer of such reminders. Shenhui rarely talks about “cultivation and practice,” or learning and remembering, in the traditional sense, except for two occasions. On one occasion he seems to agree on the importance of the reading and reciting of the *Diamond Sūtra*,²⁸ which falls into the traditional sphere of cultivation and wholesome remem-

²³ *Nanyang Heshang Wenda Zazhengyi* 南陽和尚問答雜徵義, in Yang 1996: 121–122.

²⁴ Cf. Yampolsky 1967: 148–149, and 12 (of the appended “Tun-huang Text”). I made modifications to Yampolsky’s English translation. Also cf. Yang 2001: 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Yampolsky 1967: 155, and 15 (of the appended “Tun-huang Text”).

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*: 168, and 21 (of the appended “Tun-huang Text”). Translation is mine.

²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*: 144–145, and 10 (of the appended “Tun-huang Text”). I modified Yampolsky’s translation.

²⁸ *Nanyang Heshang Wenda Zazhengyi* 南陽和尚問答雜徵義, in Yang 1996: 78.

brance. On the other occasion, he agrees to maintain conventional precepts and stresses the manifestation of unconditioned morality and wisdom through conditioned morality and wisdom.²⁹ The irony to these texts' many apophatic expressions, such as "no relying on cultivation and practice," is that they were uttered specifically in a conventional ordination ritual and at an ordination platform (*jietan* 戒壇). Without these constructed practices and cultivation, apophasis, no matter how much it is preferred, cannot even be played out—a very strong revelation to this inherent tension.

2.3 *Wuxiang and Wuzhu*

The far-reaching influence of the texts of Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra* on later Chan schools is hard to overestimate, and the problems it causes also spread and continue. Controversy about issues of remembrance and forgetting in interpreting the teaching of no-thought occurs in the post-Shenhui era. Two Chan masters, Wuxiang 無相 (684–762) and his disciple Wuzhu 無住 (714–774), respectively the founder of the school of Jingzhong 淨眾 and the school of Baotang 保唐 in the area of Sichuan, are involved in this controversy. It starts with the central tenet of Wuxiang's teaching: the three phrases (*sanju* 三句) of no-recollection (*wuyi* 無憶), no-thought (*wunian* 無念), and no-forgetting (*mowang* 莫忘). The ninth century survey of Chan schools by the great Chan scholar-monk Zongmi 宗密 (780–841) includes his elaboration of Wuxiang's three phrases, which is considered to be accurate by most modern scholars:

Three phrases ... mean: do not recollect past sense objects; do not anticipate and worry the future events of success or failure; constantly being yoked to this wisdom, never darkening, never erring, is called no-forgetting. In other words, no remembering external sense objects, no thinking of internal mind, dried up with nothing to rely upon. "Precepts, concentration, and wisdom" correspond respectively to these three phrases.³⁰

As shown by these phrases, Wuxiang absorbs the teaching of no-thought from Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra*, and connects it with the traditional "three trainings" of morality, concentration and wisdom, while accommodating and subsuming them all under the practice of no-thought. Since it accommodates all traditional trainings, the traditional critique and negation of unwholesome remembrance, on one hand, and the affirmation of wholesome remembrance through mindfulness and wisdom, on the other hand, are integrated into the overarching gate of no-thought.

²⁹ Nanyang Heshang Dunjiao Jietuo Chanmen Zhiliao Xing Tanyu 南陽和尚頓教解脫禪門直了性壇語, in Yang 1996: 6. Cf. Adamek 2007: 200.

³⁰ Zongmi, *Yuanjue Jing Daoshu Chao* 圓覺經大疏鈔, in HTC 14: 278c. My English translation consulted the following works, Broughton 2009: 181; Adamek 2011: 38. The same paragraph also appears in a note on the Jingzhong school in Zongmi's *Zhonghua Chuanxindi Chanmen Shizi Chengxi Tu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖. See Kamata 1971: 305.

Wuzhu reportedly changed the last term of his teacher's three phrases from "no-forgetting (莫忘)" to "no-delusion (莫妄)" with one character difference, and claimed that Wuxiang's other disciples misconstrued their teacher's oral tenet. According to Wuzhu's justification of this change, "no-recollection and no-thought" are based on reality; remembering thoughts is deluded in the sense of attachment. "Remembering thoughts is not allowed. Therefore it is said 'no-delusion'."³¹ No-delusion is thus the essence and consequence of no-recollection and no-thought. It is hard to reject the logic Wuzhu used here to justify his revision. Especially when comparing Wuzhu's "no-recollection, no-thought, no-delusion"³² with the sentence of "no-thought, no-recollection, no-attachment, not giving rise to various delusions (無念無憶無著莫起雜妄)" in the *Platform Sūtra* (Yang 2001: 31–32), their similarity is striking. The close resemblance can also be found between Wuzhu's connecting no-delusion to "three trainings" and Shenhui's.³³ This indicates that Wuzhu was influenced by Shenhui and had taken some ideas from the *Platform Sūtra*. Nothing seems seriously heretical. However, the other reason Wuzhu used to justify his dispute has been proven untenable, as Zongmi confirms the truth in his historical survey that Wuxiang's original three phrases are no-recollection, no-thought and no-forgetting, not those of Wuzhu's version.

The controversy lost public attention for about a thousand years after Zongmi's testimony. No one was interested in commenting on it, not to mention reopening the case. This could be partially due to the loss of the *Lidai Fabao Ji* 歷代法寶記, the record of Wuzhu and his Baotang school, for a long time, and due to the fact that both parties involved in this controversy, and their lineages, were relatively short-lived, geographically isolated, and never the mainstream of Chan Buddhism. In modern times, especially following the discovery of the *Lidai Fabao Ji* in the Dunhuang documents, this controversy and its participants started to be included in books of Chan history, but the significance of this controversy and its broader context are hardly ever explored. The controversy is basically seen as a historical incident that occurred outside of mainstream Chan, and inessential to the concerns that have dominated Chan Buddhism since the mid-Tang Dynasty. A recent visit to Wuzhu and the *Lidai Fabao Ji* only acknowledges that "[t]his dispute over subtly different forms of a single character reflects a sense of unease and uncertainty about how to give basic teachings to ordinary practitioners." (Adamek 2011: 39) The controversy's important reference to the issue of remembrance and forgetting in Chan has not been noticed.

If we do not limit the significance of this controversy to the issue of difficulty in teaching formless dharma, but connect it to the broader and subtler differences of the two masters' approaches underlying this controversy, we can see that this controversy is not merely about personal preferences for a better way of formulating the

³¹ Ibid., HTC 14: 278d. Translation consulted Broughton 2009: 183; Adamek 2011: 38. Also cf. Kamata 1971: 306.

³² *Lidai Fabao Ji* 歷代法寶記. T 51, 2075: 189a. Cf. Adamek 2007: 336, 338.

³³ *Nanyang Heshang Dunjiao Jietuo Chanmen Zhiliao Xing Tanyu* 南陽和尚頓教解脫禪門直了性壇語, in Yang 1996: 6. Cf. Adamek 2011: 38.

teaching, but also involves the issue of the conflict and tension between the use of apophatic rhetoric and the use of cataphatic rhetoric, between radical (or iconoclastic) and less radical (or relatively more traditional) approaches, and between positive and negative attitudes toward cultivation and remembering. The apophatic rhetoric is often related to the non-dualistic perspective of Mahayana discourse as discussed earlier. However, a thoroughly non-dualistic dimension is not just negative. It often involves a denegation, a negation of negation itself, in order to avoid creating a new duality. It is neither negative nor positive. Nothing ceases to be affirmed as it is in the Buddhist dialectic of double negation.³⁴ Shenhui's excessive use of apophasis in promoting the teaching of *wunia* falls precisely short of this thorough non-duality. He never elaborates on the necessity of the ultimate negation of no-thought itself, which would avoid excessive negativity and be open to the preservation and transformation of dualistic formulas within the Buddhist dialectic of non-duality. Wuzhu might have sensed this problem, and therefore acknowledges the necessary detachment to no-thought, when he says: "It is because sentient beings have thought that one provisionally teaches no-thought, but at the time of true no-thought, no-thought itself is not."³⁵ This enhances the *Platform Sūtra's* statement—"If there were no thinking, then no-thought would have no place to exist"³⁶—by clearly appealing to the provisionality and non-substantiality of the teaching of no-thought.

However, Wuzhu did not follow this thoroughly non-dualistic perspective in all his teachings. Rather, his often excessively apophatic rhetoric and radical resistance to all established forms of practice, including rituals, precepts, reading of scriptures, contemplation of the Buddha and sitting meditation, won him the name of "bound by neither [traditional] teachings nor praxes (*jiaoxing buju*)."³⁷ Wuzhu's problem is not just rhetorical, or endowing old precepts with new flexibility, he and his followers actually abandon traditional precepts and other forms of practice (Adamek 2011: 36–37, 40). As a consequence, Wuzhu does not merely follow in Shenhui's footsteps of obsessing with negativity, but goes even farther to an extreme. His practice of "sitting in idleness/emptiness (*kongxian zuo*)"³⁸ and refusing to carry out any recognizable Buddhist activity was not sustainable, and therefore his school had only a short lived history. This whole picture tells us that what stands behind Wuzhu's apparent preference of "no-delusion" over Wuxiang's "no-forgetting" is a more substantial preference for apophatic rhetoric and for a radical iconoclastic form of Chan.³⁹

³⁴ For a discussion of denegation in non-Western context, see Wang 2003: 153, 215 note 8.

³⁵ 為眾生有念，假說無念。正無念之時，無念不自。 *Lidai Fabao Ji*. T 51, 2075: 189b. English translation from Adamek 2007: 361. I made a minor change. Also cf. Yanagida 1976: 200, 203.

³⁶ 若無有念，無念亦不立。 English translation from Yampolsky 1967: 139.

³⁷ Zongmi, *Yuanjue Jing Daoshu Chao*, in HTC 14: 278d. Cf. Adamek 2011: 44; Broughton 2009: 183; Kamata 1971: 306.

³⁸ T 51, 2075: 187a. Cf. Adamek 2011: 40; Yanagida 1976: 170, 175.

³⁹ For the definition of iconoclasm or "iconoclastic" with regard to Chan Buddhism, see Wang 2012: 22–23.

Wuxiang's "no-forgetting," on the contrary, means to remember. Unlike the early two apophatic terms of Wuxiang's three phrases, this last term is not apophatic. It strikes a balance between apophatic and cataphatic. It affirms the importance of wisdom to which the state of consciousness should be yoked through constant mindfulness and remembering. As I pointed out above, Wuxiang's three phrases integrate the negation of unwholesome thought and remembrance with the affirmation of wholesome thought and remembrance, making them correspond to the traditional "three trainings," while placing them within the new interpretative framework of no-thought. This substantial difference between Wuzhu's and Wuxiang's attitudes toward the traditional cultivation and practice is exposed even more clearly when one reads Zongmi's detailed description, in his survey of the Jingzhong school, of how Wuxiang publicly leads the practice of ritual, precepts and sitting meditation.⁴⁰ If one pays attention to their distinct styles and characteristics, one can conclude that Wuxiang's Jingzhong school and Wuzhu's Baotang school are not the same despite some shared similarities (Jan 1990: 55). Wuzhu's dispute over one word is more about whether the traditional cultivation and practice, in which remembering plays a role, should be accommodated or abandoned. Since this is a recurring theme, these two contrasting approaches of Wuxiang and Wuzhu are destined to find their respective mirrors in the ensuing development of classical Chan, as internal tension continues, and different attitudes toward the traditional cultivation are continually expressed through Chan recorded sayings and other texts.

2.4 *The Hongzhou School and Afterwards*

Wuxiang was the one-time teacher of Mazu Daoyi (709–788), who later became the most famous representative of classical Chan. Modern scholarship, based on the Song narratives of classical Chan, has treated Mazu and his Hongzhou school, as a revolutionary, or iconoclastic, movement that breaks away from previous Buddhist traditions and overturns established norms and practices. In this view, the Hongzhou masters would have to be seen as the successors to the radical development from Shenhui to Wuzhu. Contemporary scholarship on the Hongzhou school seriously challenges this view by revealing that the radical iconoclast image of the Hongzhou masters portrayed by the stories of Chan "encounter dialogues" was basically a Song editorial revision and addition to the raw materials of the "recorded saying (*yulu*)" texts originally circulated. By critically analyzing and separating those more reliable parts of the Hongzhou texts, such as Mazu's sermons, from those later produced and less reliable materials, especially those "encounter dialogues" attributed to these masters, contemporary scholars demonstrate that Mazu and his major disciples are not radical enough to be called iconoclasts. Instead of spontaneously reacting, obsessing with apophatic rhetoric and using unconventional pedagogical means, in these more reliable texts the masters straightforwardly instruct students,

⁴⁰ *Yuanjue Jing Daoshu Chao*, in HTC 14: 278c. Cf. Kamata 1971: 305.

use both apophatic and cataphatic rhetoric, and frequently quote and allude to scriptural passages (Poceski 2004).

Mazu advises students to “comply with monastic precepts, increase cultivation [or wholesome influence], and accumulate pure karma.”⁴¹ These plain reminders, in traditional Buddhist terms, are uttered right after his mentioning of no-cultivation and no-sitting-meditation (*buxiu buzuo*). It is an excellent balance between the cataphatic and apophatic rhetoric. Mazu also expresses a thoroughly non-dualistic perspective on cultivation and no-cultivation: “The Way does not belong to cultivation ... [but] if you speak of no-cultivation, then you will be the same as an ordinary man.”⁴² This thoroughly non-dualistic perspective helps his students understand that his apophatic rhetoric only serves to target the confusion of meditation with enlightenment, or means with the goal. It was never meant to abandon the practice of sitting meditation and other cultivations; rather, it presupposes the ongoing practice of the Buddhist path. Moreover, by elaborating on the teachings of “this mind is Buddha” and “the everyday mind is the Way,” Mazu’s strictly relational and non-dualistic perspective, and his new “middle way” approach, are in a much better position to solve the tension between the ordinary and the enlightened, form and formlessness, immanence and transcendence, or cataphatic and apophatic. As Adamek correctly observes when she compares Mazu’s more balanced approach with Wuzhu’s extreme approach:

[T]aking immanence (“everyday mind”) rather than formlessness as a foundation made the Hongzhou approach more flexible than the Bao[t]ang approach. Unlike Wuzhu’s denial of formal precepts and practices, the notion of “everyday mind” neither privileged nor precluded monastic ordination. It allowed for adaptation of existing monastic institutions and allowed teachers to rework conventional practices. Wuzhu’s insistence on abandoning forms was bound to fall back to dualism, because it depended on rejecting symbolic practices (Adamek 2011: 60).

Mazu and his major disciples are innovative, but not iconoclastic; they reformulate central teachings and use new idiomatic expressions for old concepts, to revitalize the tradition, but not to break with it.

It is within the Hongzhou framework of this new “middle way” approach that Xingshan Weikuan 興善惟寬 (754–817), Mazu’s successful disciple at the capital Chang’an, in his conversation with the famous Tang poet Bai Juyi, made crystal clear the necessity of cultivation and remembering in Chan soteriological practice. Weikuan states: “As to true cultivation, one should not move [one’s mind], nor should one forget. Moving means attachment, while forgetting means falling into ignorance. These are the essential principles of mind [cultivation].”⁴³ Weikuan’s words do not sound much different from Daoxin’s and Shenxiu’s teachings of early Chan as I have introduced above and from the inherited Buddhist tradition in gen-

⁴¹ HTC 119: 407a. Also cf. Jinhua Jia, “Annotated Translation of Mazu Daoyi’s Discourse,” Sermon 4, in Jia 2006: 126.

⁴² HTC 135: 652a. English translation from Jia 2006: 126. Brackets are added by me.

⁴³ Bai Juyi, *Chuanfatang Bei* 傳法堂碑, in Bai 1979, vol. 3, fascicle 41, 912. English translation see Poceski 2007: 65. I made a minor modification.

eral. “Forgetting” is related to ignorance or the loss of wisdom, as remembrance or mindfulness is to wisdom or the working of wisdom. True cultivation unmistakably involves remembering. This is Weikuan and the Hongzhou school’s great contribution to the Chan Buddhist discourse on wholesome remembrance, an important view that represents the true face of Chan Buddhism and the continuity with Buddhist tradition.

During the transition from the single prominence of the Hongzhou school to the co-existence of the “five houses” of Chan, the second generation of Mazu’s disciples continued to play a pivotal role. The period of the mid- to late Tang, Five Dynasties and early Song witnessed the return of iconoclastic rhetoric as a new fashion, marked by emerging texts of numerous Chan “encounter dialogues,” and an increasingly popular hierarchy of forgetfulness over remembrance. But within the second generation of Mazu’s disciples, Guishan Lingyou 馮山靈佑 (771–853), the founder of the Guiyang school, one of the “five houses,” noticeably articulates a view consistent with the Hongzhou school’s “middle way” approach and with the traditional Buddhist emphasis on wholesome remembrance in connection to mindfulness, morality and wisdom. A written treatise on ethical guidelines for Chan monastic practitioners attributed to Guishan Lingyou, named *Guishan Jingce* 馮山警策 (*Guishan’s Admonitions*), has been deemed a reliable text in the study of the Hongzhou school’s basic attitude towards traditional Buddhist cultivation and practice (Paceski 2006). Perhaps more popular than this treatise were Guishan’s recorded conversations with his teacher and students, as presented by the *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* and other Chan texts of encounter dialogues, which demonstrate a sharp contrast with the more conservative style of the *Guishan Jingce*, excepting a few excerpts of Guishan’s sermons that directly corresponded to the Hongzhou teaching and the *Guishan Jingce*. One example is Guishan’s showing no preference for either the notion of cultivation or no-cultivation, seeing them as the language of polarity (*liangtou yu* 兩頭語) to be overcome, and therefore accommodating both sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation.⁴⁴ This position closely follows Mazu’s thoroughly non-dualistic perspective on cultivation and no-cultivation, and Baizhang Huaihai (749–814, Guishan’s teacher)’s advice for cutting off all sentences of duality (*geduan liangtou ju* 隔斷兩頭句),⁴⁵ to avoid any one-sided view.

The other example is Guishan’s quoting of Baizhang’s statement about realizing one’s Buddha-nature: that when the [right] time comes, it is like the deluded one suddenly becoming awakened, and like forgetting suddenly becoming remembering (*rumi huwu, ruwang huiyi*).⁴⁶ Here interestingly, delusion is analogical to forgetting, and awakening to remembering, in the framework of recovering one’s original Buddha-nature. This statement and Guishan’s explanation involve several meanings worth noting. First, beyond its form of analogy, it is a case of the reaffirmation of the positive role of wholesome remembering and recollection with regard to awak-

⁴⁴ *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* 景德傳燈錄, fascicle 9, T 51, 2076: 264c.

⁴⁵ *Baizhang Guanglu* 百丈廣錄, in *Chancong Jicheng* 11: 7316a.

⁴⁶ 時節既至, 如迷忽悟, 如忘忽憶. *Jingde Chuandeng Lu*, fascicle 9, T 51, 2076: 264b.

ening or the realization of Buddha-nature, the soteriological goal of Buddhism, from the third generation of the Hongzhou school.

Second, for Guishan, Baizhang and other Hongzhou masters, every sentient being has original Buddha-nature. When one's mind is deluded, one loses sight of this original nature as one loses wisdom; in this sense it can also be said that one forgets one's original nature. Awakening, in the context of Guishan's accommodating of sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation, means to restore, rediscover or realize this original nature through the cultivation of wisdom, morality and concentration, including regaining awareness, being mindful and remembering. Being deluded or losing sight of one's original nature is considered very close to losing the memory one originally had, but one can regain one's memory as the result of one's cultivation of wisdom, morality and concentration, even though it comes back suddenly and is not led by a direct and external path. The instantaneousness of awakening and remembering does not preclude gradual cultivation and the overcoming of forgetting. This point is strongly echoed by the *Guishan Jingce*, in which practitioners are reminded to carefully study and follow Buddhist scriptures/precepts (*dianzhang* 典章) and principles of teaching (*jiaoli* 教理) in speaking and behavior, and various unwholesome ways of speech and behavior are sharply criticized.⁴⁷ As the Song commentator Shousui 守遂 (1072–1147) rightly observes, Guishan asks practitioners not to forget the fundamental and violate one's belief (*wangben guaizhi* 忘本乖志).⁴⁸ Remembering and practicing what is fundamental to Buddhism is thus essential to realizing one's own Buddha-nature.

Third, forgetting and remembering, like delusion and awakening and all other pairs of duality, are placed in a strictly relational perspective and treated in the process of the change and transformation of the human mind. Forgetting and remembering, as seen by this perspective, are not just opposite entities or categories, isolated from each other, static and immune to change. Rather, they are part of the flowing human experience, not only interrelated, but also presupposing and conditioning each other, and are mutually involved and exchangeable. This perspective provides solid grounds for the possibility of transformation from forgetting to remembering, or from delusion to awakening, and therefore justifies and facilitates the practice of Buddhism. It sheds light on our rethinking and reexamination of the relationship between forgetting and remembrance in Buddhist practice and in human existential experience.

In addition to his positive attitude towards remembering, Guishan does also address the issue of forgetting in the *Guishan Jingce*, where he states: "Detach oneself from both mind and environment (*xinjing jujuan* 心境俱捐); do not remember and recollect (*moji moyi* 莫記莫憶)."⁴⁹ On another occasion he says: "Resting consciousness and forgetting [external] conditions (*xiyi wangyuan* 息意忘緣) . . .

⁴⁷ *Guishan Jingce* 鴻山警策, in Daopei 道霈 (1615-1702)'s *Fozu Sanjing Zhinan* 佛祖三經指南, fascicle 3, in HTC 59: 185c-191c.

⁴⁸ *Guishan Jingce Zhu* 鴻山警策注, X 63, 1239: 3. I use the edition of 2005, 中華電子佛典協會 (CBETA) <http://www.cbeta.org> wherever I quoted from X.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 13.

Emptying mind and pacifying environment (*xinkong jingji* 心空境寂).⁵⁰ These statements are among the earliest teachings on forgetting both subject and object, mind and environment (*xinjing/renfa liangwang* 心境/人法兩忘) in classical Chan, as “forgetting” increasingly became a popular theme at that time. The aim of these teachings is to advise practitioners to attain a state of freedom from discriminative/preferential mind (*xinkong*) and its attachment to external things/objects or environment/conditions, seeing them as they are, going with flow without being disturbed by them (*jingji*). It in fact extends the traditional Buddhist critique and negation of unwholesome remembrance, promotes the requirement for its abandonment, and presents them in Chinese idiomatic terms. What is distinctive to Guishan’s teaching is his synthesis and careful balance between the traditional affirmation of wholesome remembrance and the negation of unwholesome remembrance, which are masterfully woven into Chan ideology and rhetoric.

The Hongzhou school’s “middle way” approach and its integration of both sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation has had enduring influence on the ensuing development of Chan Buddhism, especially in the sphere of Chan institutional practice. As a result, the traditional cultivation and practice of wisdom, morality and concentration is well kept in the majority of Chan monasteries, as it can be spotted in the Song text of *Rules of Purity of Chan Monasteries* (*Chanyuan Qinggui* 禪苑清規). (Cf. Yifa 2002) Rhetorically, though, things are different. The emergence and popularization of many encounter dialogue texts of radical iconoclasm marginalized any conservative discourse on wholesome remembering and its role in cultivation, as the apophatic rhetoric of “forgetting” became the days’ new normal, and more and more Chan masters adapted themselves to it. This can already be seen from the case of Guishan I presented above. However, as the tension between the cataphatic and the apophatic, or between the reminder of the tradition and the radical break with it, never ends, the affirmation of wholesome remembrance nonetheless expresses itself even implicitly in a few texts that address problems in Chan practice. An illustrative text is the *Zongmen Shigui Lun* 宗門十規論 (*Treatise on Ten Regulations of the [Chan] School*) attributed to Fayen Wenyi 法眼文益 (885-958), the founder of the Fayen school, one of the “five houses” of Chan in the Five Dynasties.⁵¹

The treatise proposes to regulate Chan Buddhists and overcome ten kinds of perverse conducts in the environment of competing Chan lineages, although the formation of these lineages itself is not seen as negative. One of the ten corruptions is “not to fully understand the classics of Buddhist teachings but to quote them incorrectly.” Contrarily, “The true followers who thoroughly understand the ancient [masters] ... while always remembering speeches and words, pick up only treasures ... This is called the special transmission beyond [scriptural] teachings (*jiaowai*

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 11.

⁵¹ The extant edition of this work is of a much later time. A postscript to this edition indicates a print of 1346, but the text was not mentioned by any other Chinese sources. It is reasonable to be cautious in use of this work. But scholars have not found strong evidences of a later forgery. Cf. *Shinpan Zengaku daijiten* 新版禪學大辭典 1985: 495d; Schlütter 2008: 188, note 47.

biechuan) ... Never say that we do not rely on wholesome influence and cultivation.”⁵² These statements contain at least two aspects of significance. First, as the correct use of the knowledge of scriptural teachings presupposes and requires the correct understanding and remembrance of scriptural teachings, this stress on the correct understanding and use of scriptures, again, reaffirms the traditional practice and cultivation including wholesome remembrance. Second, it conveys a central Chan perspective that wholesome or skillful remembrance is not just remembering words and concepts. The practice of mindfulness and wholesome remembrance goes beyond the limitation of words and concepts, aiming at a direct understanding or “seeing” things as they are in terms of living experiences themselves. If one only remembers words and concepts, one can never get the real treasure behind or beyond words and concepts, which is the existential-practical transformation of the human mind and personhood to an awakened one. In this sense, the treatise accommodates a popular Chan teaching of non-relying on provisional means (*bujia quanti*) to achieve awakening, which also corresponds to the above-mentioned Indian Mahayana critique of conceptual language and discursive thought, and borrows vivid expressions from the influential Daoist text the *Zhuangzi*.⁵³

What is more insightful here is the treatise’ interpretation or clarification of the Chan teaching “*jiaowai biechuan*.” The so-called Chan “special transmission (*biechuan*)” of the dharma, according to this treatise, is not *outside* of, or *separate/independent* from, the traditional scriptural teachings, which would imply a radical exclusion or abandonment of the scriptural teachings, but rather is *beyond* the scriptural teachings—beyond the limitation or possible misleading of the scriptural teachings—which means overcoming their limitations, or not being fettered by their fixed words and concepts.⁵⁴ This interpretation supports Zongmi’s and Yongmi Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975)’s syncretic perspective of uniting Chan and the scriptural teachings (*chanjiao yizhi* 禪教一致), and despite its unpopularity in the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty, it finally became a dominant view starting from the Ming Dynasty down to modern times.⁵⁵

⁵² “不通教典，亂有引証。” “博古真流 ... 從來記憶言辭，盡是數他珍寶 ... 乃是教外別傳 ... 無謂不假薰修。” X 63, 1226: 4.

⁵³ “不假筌蹄。” Ibid., 3. Cf. *The Zhuangzi*, chapter 26 “External Things 外物,” in *Zhuangzi Yinde* 1966: 75; Watson 1968: 302.

⁵⁴ Cf. “Special Transmission beyond Teachings,” Wang 2017: 209–211; Foulk 1999. For the overcoming of the limitation of conceptual/discursive language in Chan Buddhism, see Wang 2003, Chap. 7, “The Chan Contribution to the Liminology of Language,” 109–121.

⁵⁵ For Chan syncretism between Chan practice and scriptural teachings, cf. “Introduction: A Concise History of Chan Buddhism,” in Wang 2017: 30, 34.

3 Summary and Reflections

3.1 *Indian Buddhist Context*

The mainstream (both Pali and Sanskrit) Buddhist texts⁵⁶ treat the issue of remembrance within Buddhist soteriological context, connecting it closely to the practice of mindfulness meditation, morality and wisdom. The representative view of these texts regards remembrance and mindfulness as instrumental and necessary to the attainment of wisdom and enlightenment. One of the characteristics of the traditional Buddhist treatment is to distinguish wholesome or skillful remembrance from unwholesome or unskillful remembrance, and to cultivate the former and overcome the latter. This negation and overcoming of unwholesome or unskillful remembrance is also the focus of the traditional Buddhist critique of mundane memory and remembrance in terms of the central Buddhist teaching of impermanence and non-essential-self. Mahayana bodhisattva path does not abolish the traditional trainings of concentration, morality and wisdom, but supplements them with new emphasis and provides new frameworks, such as the perspectives of emptiness, mind-only and Buddha-nature, and the wide application of non-dualism. These new frameworks and perspectives help to further develop the traditional Buddhist critique of memory and remembrance, pointing out more acutely its involvement with discursive thought and discriminative language. Although one can find reasons for seeing this development as the continuation of the traditional critique of unwholesome or unskillful remembrance, with some of its more paradoxical and apophatic rhetoric and its more active use of non-dualism, one cannot deny that the original distinction of wholesome/unwholesome and all other conceptual hierarchies are greatly challenged for the sake of facilitating the ultimate achievement of the soteriological goal of Buddhism. Both the mainstream category of wholesome/unwholesome remembrance and the new framework of Mahayana ideology including its non-dualistic rhetoric are inherited and appropriated by Chinese Chan Buddhism.

3.2 *Chinese Chan Appropriation*

In early Chan Buddhism, some masters, such as Daoxin, Shenxiu and Wuxiang, display an excellent integration of the traditional teaching of wholesome remembrance into the Mahayana framework of emptiness, mind-only and Buddha nature, and into the domesticated or colloquialized ideology of “*shouyi* 守一,” “*guanxin* 觀心” and “*wunian* 無念.” Contrarily, Shenhui and Wuzhu, show a more radical appropriation of Mahayana legacy and an extreme attitude towards the Buddhist tradition, preferring either the excessive use of apophatic rhetoric or experimenting

⁵⁶The term “mainstream” refers to all non-Mahayana Indian Buddhist schools. Cf. “Mainstream Buddhist Schools,” in Buswell and Lopez 2014: 516–517.

with the abandonment of all traditional forms of practice including wholesome remembrance. The problem is that, for lack of self-deconstruction, Shenhui and Wuzhu's excessive apophasis and extreme attitude deviates from true Mahayana spirit and its authentic non-dualism since that authentic non-dualism is none other than the Buddhist middle way, which aims to stop all opposite extremes. The influence of this more radical approach increases the tension between necessary detachments to established formulas and the necessary continuation of traditional practices, between the attempt to keep the tradition and the attempt to break with it, and between the cataphatic and the apophatic. The rise of the Hongzhou school, including Mazu and his disciples such as Xingshan, promotes a new "middle way" approach to the issue of remembrance and its critique. They strike a new balance between the cataphatic and the apophatic, between the affirmation of wholesome remembrance and the negation of unwholesome remembrance, and between the conforming to the tradition and the cancellation of it, by reworking and reformulating of the tradition. The survey of the Chan teachings on remembrance in early and classical Chan indicates that the issue of remembrance and its critique is very much related to the issues of the treatment of the traditional cultivations and practices and the attitudes towards them. It cannot be fully examined apart from these issues.

3.3 *A Unique Mode of Chan Remembering*

The basic meanings and modes of remembering in the Chan practice of concentration, morality and wisdom, as we observed from the Chan texts, involve various kinds of mindfulness, calling to mind, memorizing, holding in mind, recollection, reminding, recognition, commemoration, and so forth.⁵⁷ They are similar to the meanings and modes of remembering in Indian Buddhism, bearing the common feature of being structurally irreducible to just personal recollections or representations of past events or objects. This feature of irreducibility is especially manifest in the Chan Buddhist meaning and mode of remembering with regard to the realization of Buddha-nature, as we have seen from the teachings of the Hongzhou masters Xingshan and Guishan. Their teachings can be distinguished even from most Indian Buddhist modes of remembering insofar as the realization of Buddha-nature is never a paradigm central to Buddhist modes of remembrance in Indian Buddhism. The distinctive mode of Chan remembering focuses on an individual Chan practitioner's recovery and retention of his or her own original Buddha-nature from forgetting by overcoming ignorance, delusion or lack of wisdom. The Buddha-nature is the internal cause and aspiration for enlightenment. Meanwhile, this original

⁵⁷ For various meanings and modes of remembering in Buddhism, cf. Gethin's analysis of the meanings of remembering in terms of *sati* and *smṛti* in Indian Buddhist texts in Gethin 1992: 36–44; Gyatso 1992: "Introduction," 5. For a phenomenological study of different modes of remembering outside Buddhist context but still methodologically inspiring, see Casey 2000, Part Two and Three.

Buddha-nature or Buddha-mind in every human being is also seen as the ground of all existence. As primordial awareness (the storehouse consciousness), it makes possible all acts of awareness and remembrance.

From such a metaphysical perspective, every practitioner's realization, remembering or recovery of the originally "owned" Buddha-nature is the natural function and realization of this self-referential Buddha-nature or primordial awareness itself. This kind of naturalization of enlightenment runs the risk of mystifying enlightenment experiences by denying the accessibility of intellectual and practical efforts to enlightenment. In this respect, the remembering or recovery of Buddha-nature seems similar to early Christian theologian Augustine's notion on the knowledge and memory of self and of God, as it is noted that "Augustine extends the scope of *memoria* so as to include all that we are capable of getting to know explicitly that does not come to us through sense-experience ... *memoria* is not confined to past experience but embraces all that is latent and *present* [*italic original*] as such in the mind." (Markus 1964: 90; Augustin 1887: 190–192) The resemblance of distinguishing special religious/soteriological remembrance from the typical "intentional character" and "temporal reference" of secular remembrance in Christian mystics' contemplation and in certain types of Buddhist meditation has attracted contemporary scholars' attention.⁵⁸ However, in addition to their differences with Augustine's monotheism and faith-based approach, Hongzhou Chan Buddhist teachings differentiate them from any onto-theologies, including Augustine's and most mystic traditions like his, by performing the deconstruction of the Buddha-nature and subverting its metaphysical presuppositions. The Indian Mahayana texts of the *tathāgatagarbha* thought involve both the tendency to metaphysically appropriate Buddha-nature as essence or foundation and the tendency to de-substantialize it by identifying it with the chain of interdependent arising (*dvādaśāṅga pratītyasamutpāda*), emptiness or the middle way and seeing it as expedient means (*upāya*).⁵⁹ These two tendencies exist in Chinese Buddhism, in general, and Chan Buddhism, in particular, without exception. They are not necessarily all related to sectarian oppositions or divisions among famous masters. Many times, the tendency of substantializing Buddha-nature that Chan masters criticize is from within their students.

A prominent contribution of the Hongzhou masters' teachings to the deconstruction of Buddha-nature is their identification of Buddha-nature or Buddha-mind with the ordinary unenlightened mind or everyday activities, or the whole of the Buddha-mind (*ti* or *xinti*) with everyday functioning (*yong*), in following the Mahayana

⁵⁸ For example, Kapstein compares the "mnemonic engagement" and the recovery of *dharmakāya* in the Great Perfection (Rdzog-chen) tradition of the Rnying-ma-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism with Augustine's notion. See Kapstein 1992: 258–259. To comment on the Great Perfection tradition of Tibetan Buddhism here is beyond my capacity, but in what follows I will clarify the differences between Hongzhou Chan Buddhism and Augustine or any theistic mystic traditions.

⁵⁹ For a survey of these two tendencies in Indian *tathāgatagarbha* thought, see "Context: the necessity of deconstruction," in Chap. 4 "The Deconstruction of Buddha Nature in Chan Buddhism," in Wang 2003: 55–65.

paradigm of non-duality.⁶⁰ This identification especially sheds light on their mode and treatment of remembering. By this identification, the ultimate goal of the recovery, remembering or retention of Buddha-nature, which lacks or transcends ordinary intentional character and temporal reference characteristic of mundane acts of remembering and recollection, is not exclusive to, but rather embraces, the latter. It directs and structures the ordinary function of remembering, as the latter is always involved in various Buddhist practices of mindfulness and retention of teachings, such as the learning of doctrines, memorization of linguistic formulas or images, and cultivation of meditative skills. Such a direction and structure helps the practitioner to avoid attributing the realization of Buddha-nature to just recollecting his or her prior training, since what he or she has learned, remembered or been trained only informs his or her present experience, and awaits further internalization as the transformation of the mind and personhood, in order to recover his or her original Buddha-nature. Remembering and cultivation becomes aids or means to achieve this ultimate goal. In terms of this enlightened perspective of non-duality and relationality, although all acts of remembering and cultivation are nothing but the function of Buddha-nature, the Buddha-nature is not “independent of” them,⁶¹ as the Hongzhou masters make clear that apart from the ordinary mind there is no Buddha-mind. The hierarchy of non-ordinary-remembering over ordinary remembering, or non-temporal over temporal, is thus subverted, and the opposites are synthesized for the soteriological purpose of non-attachment and going with flow. The identification invalidates any ontological assertion on a domain of pure transcendence and atemporality outside of the world of ordinary activities,⁶² which is defined as the independent source of knowledge and memory. It is particularly this aspect of the Hongzhou teaching that distinguishes the Hongzhou mode of remembering from other onto-theological views and modes of remembering, and enables the masters to integrate the traditional cultivations and practices into the framework of realizing Buddha-nature.

⁶⁰ For a full analysis of the Hongzhou school’s deconstruction of Buddha-nature, see Wang, “No root, no foundation, no mind, no Buddha—deconstruction in the Hongzhou Chan,” *ibid.*: 72–80.

⁶¹ This paragraph benefited very much from Gyatso’s “Introduction,” in Gyatso 1992: 6, although here I do not conceal my disagreement with some of the interpretations.

⁶² This position can be verified by the above-mentioned Guishan-Baizhang statement that when the [right] time/moment/season comes, it is like the deluded one suddenly becoming awakened, and like forgetting suddenly becoming remembering. The statement shows the masters’ understanding of a quote from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*: “If you would see Buddha-nature, you should contemplate on time/season and causal conditions (*dangguan shijie yinyuan*).” See T 12, 375: 777a. It indicates the importance of temporal conditions for the realization of Buddha-nature, and therefore is appropriated by the Honzhou masters to demonstrate their view of placing the realization of Buddha-nature within, not without, temporal conditions.

3.4 *The Ethical Dimension of Chan Remembering (A Brief Comparison with Ricoeur's Ethics of Memory)*

In his phenomenology of memory, Ricoeur pays special attention to the pragmatic aspect of remembering, based on his observation that the cognitive or objective approach cannot exhaust the phenomenological description of remembrance. He proposes a pragmatics of memory, which focuses on uses of memory, exercises of memory, or acts of remembering. This pragmatics investigates the good use of memory and the abuse, misuse, excessive or lack of use of memory in the broad context of three levels or aspects: the pathological-therapeutic (individual), the pragmatic (praxis in relation to time and otherness) and the ethical-political (institutional). These investigations allow him to configure an “ethics of memory” or address ethical issues involved in various acts of remembering,⁶³ which have stimulated many discussions. From my reading of Ricoeur's works, I see a striking “family resemblance” between his pragmatic-ethical focus on acts of remembering and the focus of Buddhism and Chan. The therapeutic acts of treating human suffering, including problems with memory, is an integral part of Buddhist and Chan teachings and practices, which have been examined and absorbed by many contemporary Western scholars and psychotherapists. What Ricoeur terms as the reconciliation with one's memory by accepting wounds, realizing “the orders dictated by reality” or “the principle of reality against the principle of pleasure (Ricoeur 1999: 7),” quite strongly echoes the Buddhist teaching and practice of non-attachment or “letting go” by realizing the nature of things and human sufferings, although the former is in the secular framework of psychotherapy, and the latter a soteriological one.

In the second aspect of Ricoeur's ethical analysis of remembering—the praxis in relation to time and otherness—he includes the problematic of using memory to enhance fragile individual and group self-identity threatened by temporality and the other (or others), and how it is related to intolerance, violence and exclusion (Ricoeur 2004a: 80–82). A similar kind of problematic is also at the center of the Buddhist critique of unwholesome remembrance in terms of Buddhist teachings of impermanence, non-self, emptiness (as being devoid of self-nature or self-identity) and interdependent co-existence. Ricoeur's categorization of good exercises for remembering and misuses of remembering is very close to the traditional Buddhist differentiation of wholesome and unwholesome remembrances. The unwholesome acts of remembrance, as we have examined, base themselves on the everyday ignorance of true reality, serving individuals' craving for the self-identity and constancy of persons and things, which leads to three evils—greed, hatred and delusion—the root of all individual and social sufferings. It is true that unwholesome acts are often considered not conducive to the achievement of the soteriological goal

⁶³ See Ricoeur 2004a: 4, and Chap. 2: “The Exercise of Memory: Uses and Abuses.” Also, Ricoeur 1999; 2004b. For recent studies on Ricoeur's phenomenology of memory, see Duffy 2009, especially Chap. 3: “Reconciled Being: Narrative and Pardon.” Also, Barash 2010; Junker-Kenny 2004.

of Buddhism, but the meanings and contents of these critiques involve an undeniable ethical dimension.

The third aspect of Ricoeur's ethical analysis of remembrance is more institutional and political, and concerns the so-called duty or imperative to remember and its relation to social justice. This is a complicated issue for Chan Buddhism. On one hand, although many important Buddhist teachings on interdependent co-arising, emptiness, compassion, and other moral perfections lay a foundation for Buddhist social ethic, historically Chan Buddhism did very little to develop such an ethic until the modern times of secularization and activism.⁶⁴ This shows, without doubt, the limitation of Chan tradition. On the other hand, unlike Ricoeur's ethics of memory, which adopts both Aristotelian and Kantian approaches and assigns them to different tasks (Junker-Kenny 2004: 24), the Kantian deontological ethic can hardly fit in with Chan. Ordained members of communities do have obligations to comply with, to the extent that Chan institutions such as monasteries have to establish ethical codes and regulations to sustain the practice of moral precepts. However, as far as Buddhist and Chan teachings are concerned, the duty to remember moral codes and comply with them is not so much emphasized as it is being a virtuous person through transformation along the path. Buddhist and Chan discourse on *sila* is mainly a moral action-guide and its justification. Ethics and morality in this sense can be substituted with other words such as virtue and good conduct, which can involve various specific virtues such as compassion, generosity, courage, selflessness, friendliness, endurance with hardship, accumulating good karma and wearing out bad karma, and so on (Cf. Keown 2001: 19). Being critically aware of the limitation and the misleading role of discursive thought and conceptual language, Chan masters always ask students not to just remember words and concepts in their ethical and soteriological practice, but to internalize moral guidance with the mindfulness of everyday acts and experiences, build it into their character and their own being, and become virtuous persons—one of the central meanings of Chan stresses on the transformation of the mind and personhood. As a virtuous person, one then acts habitually and spontaneously in one's skillful responsiveness to flowing circumstances without obstruction, as demonstrated by the Chan moral teaching of *suiyuan xiaojiuye* 隨緣消舊業 (wearing out one's karma merely according to circumstances).⁶⁵ In this way, morality is not seen as something external and imposed by institution. Moral rules and principles must adapt themselves to changing circumstances and avoid neglecting the singularity of each individual, event and situation. Buddhist and Chan ethics is more a special kind of combination of situation ethics, virtue ethics and consequentialist ethics than just an ethics of duty conforming to a universal law.

⁶⁴ Cf. "Introduction: A Concise History of Chan Buddhism," section on "The Trend of Secularization, Activism and Modern Reform in Chan," in Wang 2017: 37–39. The fact that Chan Buddhist teachings can accommodate socio-ethical engagements does not mean that Chan Buddhists have done enough in developing both socio-ethical theories and practices.

⁶⁵ For a further explanation of this teaching, see Wang 2007, section III, "The Ethical Consequence of Deconstruction: Wearing out Karma Merely According to Conditions as They Are," 87–95.

Even Ricoeur himself sometimes expresses his doubt on the appropriateness of the expression “duty to remember,” as he says on one occasion: “I insist on the term ‘work of memory,’ which I prefer to that of ‘duty to remember.’”⁶⁶ One of the reasons for his reservation is the abuses of remembering under the name of the duty of memory, even the name of justice, as he observed from those acts that legitimize authority, power and domination, and suppress the other by selective, distorted, manipulated, forced and customized remembering and commemoration. These acts are not limited to a few totalitarian regimes but are, more commonly than we think, taken by various social groups and individuals with various privileges, and in various forms of ideology and narrative (Ricoeur 2004a: 68–92). Ricoeur’s critical examination of these abuses contributes to our postmodern conscience about how bad things happen under the name of the good. Under the name of the goodness of memory or remembrance, various bad, evil or unjust acts of “remembering” take place. Notwithstanding its political significance, one of the implications one can derive from his description is perhaps that the relationship between what is right and what is wrong, between good and bad, is very complicated, influenced by human bias, and that the distinction between the two is not always easy to make, not always self-evident and clear-cut, but rather confusing, continuously changing, and subversive to available conceptions. If this observation makes sense, it then offers us not only an opportunity for a rethinking of ethics, but also sheds new light on our understanding and explanation of the so-called “transcendence thesis” in Chan.

It is a widely spread notion that Buddhist enlightenment goes beyond good and evil.⁶⁷ Many famous Chan masters’ sayings are considered to be the strongest advocacy of this view. For example, when Shenhui answers the question: “What is no-thought (*wunian*)?” he says: “It is that one does not think about existence and non-existence (*bunian youwu*); one does not think about good and evil (*bunian shan’e*) ...”⁶⁸ Mazu criticizes various ordinary discriminations including “grasping good and rejecting evil (*qushan she’e*)” (Jia 2006: 126). This notion of the transcendence of good and evil is also related to the transcendent aspect of the Buddha-nature and the Mahayana perspective of non-duality, which reinforces the transcendence thesis in Chan ideology. This teaching has been repeated and reminded generation after generation in Chan tradition to ensure that Chan students would remember and understand it. In other words, students are reminded that they should remember to forget about the distinction of good/evil as far as the realization of Buddha-nature or enlightenment is concerned. The questions it entails seem to be: Doesn’t remembering to forget about good/evil contradict itself from all wholesome acts of remembrance in Chan practice? Isn’t this ultimate transcendence a state of being amoral or antinomian? These similar questions puzzled some Chan Buddhists a long time ago. However, if we examine Chan teachings carefully, the answer would be a definite no. A more clear expression of this Chan notion is “do not abide in [or fix on] either good or evil things (*yu shan’e shishang buzhi* 於善惡

⁶⁶ Ricoeur 2004b: 15. Also cf. Junker-Kenny 2004: 28.

⁶⁷ Cf. Keown 2001: 92 and the whole Chap. 4.

⁶⁸ *Nanyang Heshang Wenda Zazhengyi* 南陽和尚問答雜徵義, in Yang 1996: 73.

事上不滯)” (Ibid. Translation modified). In connection to the above-mentioned Chan emphasis on wearing out one’s karma (or practicing morality in general) merely according to circumstances, this teaching of “not-to-fix” on good/evil (or morality in general) demonstrates a critical awareness of the limitedness, relativity and (inter) changeability of human moral distinctions, categories or principles in the face of shifting circumstances and varied situations. The problem is not that we humans are making moral distinctions; it is rather that we are confined by them, that we attach to them, make them rigid and inflexible, and isolate them from constantly changing living reality. The transcendence and overcoming of the limitation of human morality is always called for by the practice of morality, and the Chan masters take this limitation issue seriously.

The transcendence at stake is not “transcendence over morality, but transcendence of and within morality, just as it is transcendence of and within immanence—a unique contribution of Chinese thought” (Wang 2007: 94). Here,

[M]orality is not transcended by an otherworldly state of being that the masters have attained. Through relocating morality in everyday flowing reality, morality itself is conceived of as an ever-evolving process of human moral concerns and decisions in an equally evolving existential context ... Changing conditions call for adjusting human morality, revising the original moral norm or rule, and replacing the old limit with a new one ... [A]s infinite process, morality brings out its own transcendence within itself. (Ibid.)

This transcendence as the immanent infinite process of the overcoming of morality’s own limitedness and shortcomings is more profoundly ethical than just following available ethical categories and principles. “It addresses the condition of the possibilities of the ethical, reminding Buddhists of what makes the ethical possible, and what conditions the good and the right in human existence and human actions.” (Ibid.: 92–93) While looking beyond temporary distinctions of good and evil or right and wrong, it opens to the ethical, paves the way for it, and links the transcendence of limitedness to the engagement of improving moral practices. Once the practitioners attain the awareness of this immanent transcendence, they can pay more attention to shifting circumstances and the limits of moral norms and rules, be more sensitive in their moral judgment to the singular situation of any individual or group, more flexible and active concerning the revision of norms and rules, and become “less apt to apply labels rigidly to people and events, which implies less self-righteousness and condemnation of others.” (Ives 1992: 50) They can be more willing to “move critically away from certain arbitrary or socially determined delineations of good or evil that do not support emancipation in its various senses,” and to “rid oneself of destructive bias, whether personal, ethnic, class, national, or anthropocentric.” (Ibid.) The problematic of various human unethical acts including abuses of remembrance that Ricoeur analyzed in his recent works can be integrated into this Chan ethic of immanent transcendence without losing its critical force. To better characterize it, let me quote from Baizhang Huaihai’s following statement: “Neither abiding in any side of good and evil, nor to understand it as non-abiding [in any side of good and evil], this is called the awakening of bodhisattva. Neither abiding, nor to understand it as non-abiding [in any phenomenon], this is

then called Buddha's awakening."⁶⁹ In this statement, Baizhang reasserts the Chan Buddhist "middle way" and the dialectics of non-duality between the transcendence of temporary distinctions of good/evil and the continuous engagement in ethical practices. In terms of this understanding, the soteriological dimension, the goodness of final freedom and liberation, is inseparable from the ethical dimension, the moral/ethical goodness, in Chan Buddhism. It follows that there is a unity and ethical compatibility between remembering to forget about distinctions of good/evil and all other practices of wholesome remembrance.

3.5 *Forgetting: the Other Side of Chan Remembering*

The above examination of Chan practices of remembering raises critical questions to our conventional treatment of remembering and forgetting as two separate domains or categories, and inspires us to reflect upon their subtle interrelationship. My preliminary reflection involves the following aspects. First, we learn that forgetting is an important condition and presupposition of remembering. When the Chan masters advise their students to remember and to be mindful, they presuppose, and target at, already occurred or "having been" phenomena of forgetting and mindlessness, and the return of these phenomena.⁷⁰ The ongoing reoccurrences of forgetting and mindlessness also make reminding and more practices of mindfulness necessary.

Second, the advice of remembering and mindfulness given by the Chan masters often accompany instructions on not-to-remember or what does not need to be remembered, which means to forget. The students are often asked to forget about something in order to be able to remember something else. For instance, the master Wuxiang asked the students to forget the sense objects to which they attached them-

⁶⁹ *Dajian Xiasanshi Yu Zhi Yu* 大鑑下三世語之餘, "既不依住善惡二邊, 亦不作不依住知解, 名菩薩覺。既不依住, 亦不作無依住知解, 始得名為佛覺。" *Guzunsu Yulu* 古尊宿語錄, fascicle 2, in X 68, 1315: 12. This *Supplements to the Recorded Sayings of Baizhang Huaihai* is outside of the more reliable *Baizhang Guanglu* text, and seen by contemporary scholars as a production of later time and not reliable. But the passage I quote here is almost a reiteration of the same passage from the *Baizhang Guanglu*. I therefore think it is safe to quote it.

⁷⁰ In contemporary Western philosophy, an illuminating account of how forgetting conditions remembering can be found in Heidegger's *Being and Time* where he examines how the forgetfulness of Being marks the inauthentic way "to be" and constitutes the everyday superficial care. However, this forgetting preserves and becomes the condition of possibilities of "remembering" as the disclosure of the authentic way to be. A comparison between Heidegger's and Chan Buddhist views of forgetting as the condition of remembering, and of the transformation from the former to the latter, is an interesting topic, and deserves serious exploration. As Ricoeur rightly commented on Heidegger, "It is not clear whether the disavowal of forgetting entails the work of memory in its *Verfallen* ..." But Chan Buddhism has been elaborate on the pragmatic transformation from ignorance or forgetting to awakening or remembrance in everyday situations, as I have outlined above. A detailed study and comparison is beyond the limit of this current project. See Heidegger 1962: 388–389; Ricoeur 2004a: 593–594, note 23.

selves, and to remember wisdom and Buddhist teachings. The critique and negation of unwholesome remembrances sometimes takes place in a form of advice for forgetting. Forgetting is the companion of remembering, or the integral part of remembering. This point could be further supported by the observation that remembering or memorization as intentional action is highly selective and focused in order to be efficacious in serving its pragmatic purpose.⁷¹ The traces of memory that are not selected are left to the devouring regime of forgetting.

Third, in addition to the mutual involvement of remembering and forgetting, they are interchangeable. It is possible for one to replace the other, based on the underlying mutual involvement. If there is a hierarchy of either remembering over forgetting or vice versa, it could be subverted in the flowing reality of human experience under various physiological, psychological and social-cultural conditions. This aspect may need more scientific descriptions, but it has been a perspective offered by the Hongzhou Chan masters' analogical description of the transformation of the human mind, as I discussed in section 2.4 of this chapter.

Finally, remembering might be necessary to forgetting too. Any advice, suggestion, recommendation, encouragement, or reminding for forgetting is asking someone to remember forgetting in the first place. If the people who are asked or suggested to forget are willing to respond to it seriously, they must first realize the need or remember to forget. But a sufficient account of this subtle relationship between remembering and forgetting from the angle of Chan teaching and practice cannot be fully obtained before we finish our investigation on the modes and nature of forgetting in Chan, a task that must be taken on by another paper.

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⁷¹ For example, Ricoeur refers to the selective function of narrative memory. See Ricoeur 2004a: 85.

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Part II
Intersections: Interacting with Indigenous
Traditions

Chapter 5

The Daoist-Buddhist Discourse(s) on Things, Names, and Knowing in China's Wei Jin Period



Hans-Rudolf Kantor

1 Introduction

The pre-modern translations of Indian Buddhist scriptures and treatises into Chinese precipitated a process of interaction between the Chinese proponents of the doctrines transmitted in these texts and those who adhered to the indigenous traditions. The modern academia in East and West has tried to approach this process of adoption of Buddhist viewpoints into the world of ancient East Asian thought in various ways, which after all indicate a certain degree of similarity. For instance, in an attempt to assess the extent of transformation and further development of Buddhism in China, the use of the Western neologism “sinification” seems to convey implications similar to that of the Chinese term “*geyi*” (格義) which modern Asian scholars have borrowed from the ancient sources, usually translated as “matching the meanings.”¹ Meanwhile, those two terms have been criticized for also similar reasons, namely for their lack of historical accuracy and the questionable assumption that there is something essentially Chinese that has caused Buddhist thought to change in a typical way during its course of reception.

Much more continuity with its Indian heritage has been attested to the Buddhist traditions in Tibet, as is obvious from the common use of the expression “Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.” By contrast, a term, such as “Indo-Sinic Buddhism,” sounds as unsubstantiated as would “tibetification of Buddhism.” In other words, the process of transformation that Buddhist thought has underwent in its transmission in China

¹The term “sinification of Buddhism” appears in the title of Peter Gregory’s *Tsung-Mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Gregory 1991); for a review of the use of that term and its idea in English, see the introduction in Lin and Radich 2014, and in Chinese, see Teng 2015: 121–139. For a review of the use of the Chinese term “*geyi*” in English, see Mair 2010: 227–264.

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is perceived as comparatively strong, and one of the crucial reasons for this is the indigenous textual tradition of Chinese philosophy which has shaped the integration of Indian Buddhist ideas. The most noticeable influence comes from Daoism, articulated in the texts of the *Dao De Jing* (道德經), the *Zhuangzi* (莊子), and their commentators, such as WANG Bi (王弼 226–249) and GUO Xiang (郭象 252–312) known as the historical figures who gave the initial impetus for the development of “the Dark Learning” (Xuanxue 玄學). Over the centuries, the Daoist and Buddhist masters in China mutually influenced each other. The Chinese Sanlun (三論), Tiantai (天台), and Chan (禪) schools borrowed a lot from the Daoist classics and their Xuanxue commentaries, while later commentators of the *Zhuangzi*, such as the Daoist priest CHENG Xuanying (成玄英 fl. Mid seventh century) from the Tang dynasty as well as others, conversely draw upon Tiantai and Sanlun texts.

The problem of chronological classification aside, this article focuses on those philosophical topics which reveal a common concern of the authors of the Daoist classics, their commentators, as well as the Buddhist masters borrowing from the indigenous sources in the fourth and fifth century of China. This period marks the initial stage of the Daoist-Buddhist interaction—a period in which the early translations of the *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtras*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*, the *Lotus-sūtra*, as well as Nāgārjuna (c.150–250)’s and Āryadeva (c. third century)’s most important Madhyamaka treatises introduced by Kumārajīva (343–413) have already become known to the literati circles in China. One of the most influential among those Buddhist masters, who frequently draws on the Daoist classics and their commentators, is the Kumārajīva disciple Sengzhao (僧肇 374–414). He is the first Chinese master who presents in his four treatises—the *Zhao Lun* (肇論)—not only Madhyamaka thought in a Daoist and Xuanxue guise but who has also composed a commentary to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* which has preserved his master’s viewpoints.

Sengzhao’s work contributes a lot to the development of the exegetical categories which the Chinese Mādhyamika, such as Sanlun master Jizang (吉藏 549–623) and Tiantai master Zhiyi (智顗 538–597), as well as many others in later centuries use in their own commentaries and treatises. Jizang develops his notion of the “two types of wisdom” (*erzhi* 二智), along with his interpretation of Buddhist liberation and Indian Madhyamaka thought, on the terminological basis of Sengzhao’s works. Similarly, Jizang’s contemporary Zhiyi, the principal founder of the Tiantai school, adopt the binary “traces and roots” (*jiben* 迹本) from Sengzhao’s sūtra commentary to present his own system of Mahāyāna doctrines and his textual interpretation of the *Lotus-sūtra*. It is beyond controversy that, through Sengzhao’s works, Daoist as well as Xuanxue terminology have found a doorway into the tradition of Chinese Madhyamaka exegesis and its philosophical views.

In what follows, I shall introduce and explain those epistemological, ontological, and linguistic issues which the Daoist texts, GUO Xiang’s commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, and Sengzhao’s Buddhist treatises discuss on the grounds of a common terminology. The topics of that discourse can be defined through a series of conceptually interrelated key-terms: “*wu*” (物) for thing, “*ming*” (名) for name, “*zhi*” (知) for “knowing/understanding”, and “*xing*” (性) for nature. Sengzhao’s treatises often quote from GUO Xiang’s work and also adopt some of its concepts. Hence, I shall

also show that Sengzhao's, Jizang's, and Zhiyi's understanding of Buddhist "liberation" (*jietuo* 解脱) is conceptually related to the Daoist term "*ziran*" (自然), often translated as "spontaneity."

2 Buddhist and Daoist Notions of the Indeterminable

In an attempt to understand and characterize what constitutes the identity of each distinct thing in this world, Daoists as well as Buddhists distance all the differences, which exist between things, from what entails and sustains that differentiation.² Such a source of individuation is considered the root of any specific thing that exists. It is the root in the functional form of an immanent, cohesive, and pervasive force, itself devoid of any distinct identity and not a thing. Hence, it evades the focus of our conventional knowledge, which usually discerns or identifies qualities characterizing things.³ Root and things must be differentiated from each other as two epistemological fields; at the same time they are inseparable, neither can be fully understood apart from the other. To see the non-duality of and mutuality between these derivative and foundational aspects means to complete a dynamic and multi-perspective understanding of what features all being in the world.⁴

Hence, if the Daoist and Buddhist discourses are to be understood in a way that the same type of knowing by means of which we identify distinct things also accounts for the understanding of the root that sustains such distinctiveness, their approach would be contradictory. For, to distinguish all distinct things from what is neither distinct nor a thing is to mistake what is not a thing for a thing, (or to mistake what is not distinct for something distinct). However, in the Buddhist as well as the Daoist case, this source, or immanent force, is considered indeterminable, that is, neither distinct nor non-distinct, and the understanding of this cannot be put on a level with our usual and distinctive knowing of things. This also implies that the Buddhist and Daoist approach to the indeterminable root must employ the rhetorical

² See the subsequent paragraphs of this section and the section *The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things*.

³ See the sections "A Daoist Observation of Knowing" and "Sengzhao's Reflection on Names, Things, and Knowing" in this chapter. Chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi* explains that the knowing of things and forms does not apply to the *dao* which is formless. The knowing of the *dao* belongs to a different kind. Chapter 22 says: "The *dao* cannot be heard; whatever is heard is not it. The *dao* cannot be seen; whatever is seen is not it. The *dao* cannot be spoken of; whatever is spoken of is not it. [How can one] know the formlessness that forms [all] forms? The *dao* is not congruent with a name," (translation modified, see Ziporyn, 2009: 90; for the Chinese text, see Guo 1991: 757). The Buddhist *prajñā*, translated as wisdom, is a Sanskrit compound derived from the prefix *pra* and the verbal root *jñā* (to know). *Prajñā* accounts for an understanding, which differs from any knowledge based on sensory perception and conceptual thinking.

⁴ See the end of the section "A Daoist Concept of Knowing" and the section "The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things" in this chapter.

means or language of paradox⁵—a language which is used in contradistinction to the description of what belongs to the realm of distinct things, and which yet does not feature a transcendent entity going beyond or separating from that realm.

Again, “neither distinct nor non-distinct” adumbrates the paradox of immanence, which characterizes the Buddhist and Daoist accounts of what constitutes and sustains the ever-changing world of distinct things. The paradox in these discourses expresses indeterminacy rather than contradiction, because the Buddhist and Daoist ways of distinguishing between root and things correlate with two contrary yet complementary levels of knowing and understanding.⁶ Although there are two referent points which must be distinguished due to the different levels of knowing that complement each other, in an ultimate sense, these two are not separate entities. Consequently, the aspect of difference that marks the individuation of all things is ambiguous: “difference” indicates a sense of equality which (all different) things share in common—all have equal status of being a distinct thing (*wu*). Although entailing difference, such equality denies that things rank each other.⁷ Equality, the immanent root and cohesive force that enables each thing to be different, is indeterminable, because it is neither distinct nor non-distinct from all the differences that exist between things.⁸

According to the chapter “Equalizing Assessments of all Things” (*Qiwu Lun* 齊物論) in the *Zhuangzi*, worldly things can be considered alike in the sense that each thing differing from all the others equals all things just in this differing.⁹ This is to say, despite its distinct way to exist in this world, as regards its becoming and growing, each thing must equally be released from those obstructive factors, which prevent it from aspiring its destiny in accordance with its respective disposition. Again, this is equality, which is the cohesive force that enables each thing to be different, and yet reaches beyond any definable norm. Guo Xiang’s commentary to the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* explains that equality allows for differences among all things, because it is that by means of which each thing functions freely and unforced,

⁵ See the end of the last section.

⁶ See footnote 3.

⁷ In the article “What is a thing (*wu* 物)?” Franklin Perkins explains: “In spite of the fact that each *wu* [thing] is different, things have a kind of equality in the very fact of being a *wu*.” Perkins further mentions the parable of Carpenter Shi and the giant tree in Chapter four of the *Zhuangzi*: “After the carpenter dismisses the tree for being useless, the tree appears to him in a dream and offers a defense that concludes by saying: ‘You and I are each *wu*—how can *wu* rank each other?’ (Guo 1991: 4/172).” See Perkins 2015: 59.

⁸ A vivid illustration of this thought provides chapter two of the *Zhuangzi*, which describes the self-same wind that blows through all kinds of holes producing all kinds of sounds. “So the piping of the earth means just the sounds of these hollows. And the piping of man would be the sound of bamboo panpipes. What, then, is the piping of Heaven? [...] It gusts through all the ten thousand differences, allowing each to go its own way. But since each one selects out its own, what identity can there be for their rouser?” (Ziporyn 2009: 9–10).

⁹ The English translation of this chapter title follows Brook Ziporyn’s translation, (Ziporyn 2009: 10).

once it is released into the position of its “natural/self-so fulfillment” (*zide* 自得), incomparable with any other position and devoid of any ranking.

Although things differ in terms of tiny and huge, if released into the position of natural/self-so fulfillment (*zide*), [each] thing goes along with its natural disposition, and all affairs are in accordance with its capacities. Each matches what is respectively allotted to it. Wandering far and unfettered, all are one. How can we then distinguish between them in terms of higher and lower ranks? (Guo 1991: 1).

“Natural/self-so fulfillment” in the functioning of a distinct thing accounts for that performance which fits a specific thing’s inner tendency or disposition to interact and engage with all the extrinsic factors that allow it to grow and exist within its specific bounds and thus allot its position in this world. Such fulfillment of natural interaction characterizes the variegated and highly complex functioning of all worldly things as a whole and implies equality, which allows for all differences that exist.

Similarly, Buddhists explain that what must be comprehended in all phenomena of “conditioned co-arising” (*yuanki* 緣起) is emptiness implying a sense of “equality among all kinds of things” (*zhufa pingdeng* 諸法平等). This requires the practice of wisdom, called *prajñā*, which nonetheless reasserts differences between things, instead of excluding them. To see emptiness and equality is to respond in a variegated manner to things that appear to us as being different among each other. For example the *Dazhi Du Lun* (大智度論, Sanskrit: *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*), translated by Kumārajīva, explains:

When the Bodhisattva practices *prajñā*, she/he may attain the stage of forbearing equality (*pingdeng* 平等).¹⁰ Although her/his practice follows the sense of emptiness, she/he is capable of generating the four types of the measureless mind, [mind of benevolence, mind of compassion, mind of joyfulness, and mind of abandonment] [...] as well as the universal knowledge of all kinds of distinct things, (T 25, 1509: 601a11-15).

The chapter “Equality” (*Pingdeng Pin* 平等品) in the same treatise explains its topic in terms of the “unobtainable” (*bu kede* 不可得), which is one of the Buddhist expressions that implies the sense of indeterminable.

The Buddha states: If there is no dharma (thing), nor non-dharma, then we do not speak of a distinct mark/sign of equality among all things. [Hence] once [the image of] equality is removed, there is no longer a dharma left which could further persist in separation from equality among all things. Equality is what cannot be practiced nor attained, regardless

¹⁰ This is normally called “forbearing the dharma of non-arising” (*wusheng faren* 無生法忍) and corresponds to the Sanskrit “*anupatīkadharmakṣānti*.” It is described as forbearing, as it is a state unaffected by preferences and aversions, and thus resistant against temptations as well as aversions. It corresponds to the eighth of ten Bodhisattva stages, according to the larger *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. The *Da Zhi Du Lun* 大智度論, which exists only in Chinese, is a commentary on this sūtra. The Chinese “*pingdengxing*” (平等性) corresponds to the Sanskrit “*śamatā*” which, according to the *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings, accounts for the true sign or mark of all dharmas (things) and literally implies the meaning “same.” Another closely related term that is often used in Chinese Buddhist texts is “*zhufa shixiang*” (諸法實相); it corresponds to the Sanskrit “*sarvadharmānām bhūtalakṣaṇam*” and is often translated as “real sign/mark of all dharmas,” or “mark/sign of reality.”

whether [the practitioner] ranks with an ordinary person or with the noble. [...] Within equality among all things nothing can be obtained. [...] Therefore, Subhūti, you should realize that in virtue of his grace, the Buddha differentiates all kinds of things, although he remains unmoved within equality among all things, (T 25, 1509: 725b1-3).

The interdependent arising of all things excludes any sense of independent existence and thus implies that things are empty of an intrinsic nature. This emptiness wherein all things are equal is foundational. To further see that even such equality of all things is empty of an intrinsic nature means to realize and forebear an equality which is indifferent to and imperturbable amidst different things, such as honor and humiliation, or joy and sorrow etc. Yet, our understanding and realization of that equality, (which is even empty of a distinct nature and mark/sign of equality), does not really deny all the differences that occur between things. Hence, the Buddhists stress forbearance and non-clinging, and the Daoists propose a stance of equanimity. Moreover, for both, equality and indeterminacy are considered foundational, while things and their differences are secondary and derivative; most importantly, the derivative and the foundational are inseparable.¹¹

For the Daoists, it is the *dao* (道) which is foundational and the indeterminable way, that is, the natural and spontaneous course that consummates the coming and going of each event and distinct thing temporally present in the world we inhabit.¹² The Chinese character “*ziran*,” literally “self-so,” adumbrates the *dao*’s spontaneous and natural efficacy, and resonates with “*wuwei*” (無為), translated as “consummating without force,” and also with “*wu*” (無) denying a fixed identity of the *dao*, which thus expresses “non-presence” of distinct qualities. All of these terms account for, or hint at, the *dao*’s ultimate indeterminacy. The realm that encompasses all the ephemeral, distinct, as well as determinate things present in this world is the opposite of *wu*, called “*you*” (有), which literally means “having” (distinct features) and therefore is translated as “presence.” The *Daodejing* expresses the inseparability of these two aspects as “presence and non-presence mutually generating” (*youwu xiangsheng* 有無相生), which denies any sense of a transcendent entity.¹³

According to the Buddhist point of view, indeterminacy pertains to what sustains the endless arising and cessation of different things, which is the ultimate nature of

¹¹ See the end of the section “A Daoist Observation of Knowing” and the section “The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things” in this chapter.

¹² Chapter 21 of the *Dao De Jing* according to the WANG Bi edition most explicitly points at the *dao*’s indeterminacy: “Dao [if taken] as a thing, how indefinite, how confusing!” (Lou 1992: 52). The Mawangdui versions omit the character *wei* 為 in the phrase “*dao zhi [wei] wu*” (道之為物). In his translation based on the Mawangdui version, Hans-Georg Moeller explains: “The Dao is that which has yet not taken on shape, it is the ‘uncarved wood’ (*pu*, see chapter 15, 28, 32, and 37, also translated as ‘simplicity,’ see the chapters 19, and 57). [...] That which has taken on forms and shapes is that which is named. [...] The realm of ten thousand things is the realm of the named, of that which has taken on form from the formless. The Dao is, in this respect, the ‘father of all’.” (Moeller 2004: 52) This resonates with the quote from chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi* in note 3, on which Guo Xiang comments: “There is the name ‘*dao*’, yet ultimately there is no such thing; therefore a name cannot be congruent with it,” (Guo 1991: 758).

¹³ See chapter 2 of the *Dao De Jing* according to WANG Bi, (Lou 1992: 6).

reality, called “real mark/sign of all things” (*zhufa shixiang*) or “dharma-nature” (*faxing* 法性).¹⁴ All this is “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*, *kong* 空) in a multiple sense—emptiness of an intrinsic nature of any thing, emptiness of any arising and cessation, as well as emptiness of inherent existence. Madhyamaka sources point out that only “non-arising and non-cessation” (*busheng bumie* 不生不滅) captures the real and ultimate nature of all things¹⁵; therefore, anything that nonetheless figures a kind of arising and cessation (*sheng mie* 生滅) is at most illusively existent. This illusion is not to be mistaken as nonexistence, because the unreality of namable things is still existentially relevant for us either in an instructive or deceptive way.¹⁶ The ontological status of such falsehood has been indicated by the Chinese Buddhists with the character *you*, which, however, in this context means existence (of unreal things) rather than presence of distinct features considered to be real, while the opposite *wu* could then be translated as nonexistence (of real things). As we will see in the subsequent discussion, the true nature and ontological status of emptiness, (along with all unreality that it sustains), remains ultimately indeterminable, since whenever we intent to point at what we assume to be real, we inevitably construe an unreality which evades the immediate awareness of our epistemic-propositional references.

In an epistemological sense, the Buddhist and the Daoist type of indeterminacy share a common feature—the two evade our conceptual understanding and defy any linguistic representation; moreover they do not account for a transcendent entity. However, as to their ontological implications, the two are almost contrary. Although contravening any notion of a really existent thing, Mahāyāna emptiness is the true or indestructible nature of any worldly thing, as it really is what sustains this unreality which is not the same as nonexistence. In contrast, the *dao*, conceived of as a form of spontaneous and natural efficacy, is the immanent and cohesive force of what causes things to really come into existence and then to disappear again throughout an incessant process of circular change and alternation. For the Daoists this process is really and actually existent, whereas the Buddhists believe that all forms of arising and cessation are images full of falsehood. Nevertheless, Mahāyāna Buddhists generally adhere, in a limited and provisional sense, to a very specific concept of arising and cessation, which is soteriologically necessary, even while, from an ultimate point of view, it proves to be ontologically untenable.¹⁷

¹⁴ See also the section “The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things” in this chapter.

¹⁵ See the first verse of the first chapter in the *Zhong Lun* (中論, Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*) enumerating the eight negations (*babu* 八不). “No arising no cessation, no duration no discontinuity, no sameness no separateness, no coming no going,” (T 30, 1564: 1b14–15).

¹⁶ For instance, in the *Zhao Lun* (肇論), Sengzhao explains: “Therefore the *Sutra of the Shining Wisdom* says: ‘All Dharmas [things] are false/provisional signs and untrue. This is like the illusory person magically produced, which does not mean that there is no person magically produced, but rather that the person magically produced is not a true person.’” (T45, 1858: 152c18–153a3). This refers to a passage from one of the earliest Chinese translations of the larger *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtras* accomplished by Mokṣala in 291.

¹⁷ This is what the first chapter of the *Zhong lun* intends to express. After introducing the “eight negations,” it starts refuting and dismissing all the non-Buddhist concepts of “arising,” and then continues to criticize the viewpoints of Abhidharma Buddhism, considered as the Small Vehicle.

3 A Daoist View on the Nature of Things

In his discussion about the ontological status of namable things, Buddhist master Seng Zhao distinguishes real things evading linguistic reference from unreal yet not completely nonexistent things, which are considered to be congruent with names.¹⁸ In contradistinction to this, the Daoist descriptions speak of things that actually exist and can be referred to by means of names, while the unnamable and indeterminable *dao* is the root of all distinct things. As to their epistemological stance to the world, Buddhists and Daoists share a similar viewpoint. All individuated and namable things are objects of our conventional and conscious form of knowing, innumerable, countable, as well as classifiable in categories either sentient or insentient. They are also often addressed by means of evaluations that are assumed to correlate with the properties of those things. Consequently, the issue in reference to which the Buddhist and Daoist elaborations reveal differences concerns the notion and ontological status of a particular nature that qualifies something as a distinct thing.

In his commentary to the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*, Guo Xiang, for instance, considers this nature (*xing* 性) as real. A thing's nature is what classifies, distinguishes, individuates, and determines a certain thing. It informs a thing's identity, by constituting the natural disposition of that thing to adapt itself to those environmental factors dependent on which it can exist among other things. The Chinese "*xing*," translated as nature or natural disposition, expresses determinative "dependency" (*dai* 待) on certain extrinsic conditions which allow anything furnished with the capacity for adaptation to exist as a specific thing in the boundaries of its kind. Hence, each distinct thing that exists is endowed with a nature that defines its identity by its specific scope of interaction, thereby allocating its position within the world of all things. The inner nature of a distinct thing implies that its identity takes shape only in reference to its extrinsic relationships. Guo Xiang's interpretation of the first chapter in the *Zhuangzi* seems to point at this notion of nature, saying: "Each thing has its natural disposition (nature); each disposition has its bounds," (Guo 1991: 11).

Guo Xiang explains that a thing, whose functioning is in accordance with its particular nature and disposition, follows its natural course and spontaneously consummates its contingent form of being in the world. This consummation does not require an accumulation and fixed canon of conventional knowledge, nor the explicit awareness or conscious knowing of this natural way. What advances the efficacy in its spontaneous course of fulfillment is the unawareness (or non-knowing, or forgetting) of what informs this natural way, which is devoid of any deliberation, conscious endeavor, or intentional acting. The self-so fulfillment and functioning according to the inner nature and disposition of a thing performs a

In the light of this Madhyamaka critique, those views are validated as conventional truth, which must be differentiated from the sense of ultimate truth.

¹⁸ See the section "The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things" of this chapter.

course of spontaneity (*ziran*) which evades any normative and prescriptive, or conscious and reiterative form of knowing and understanding, and thereby achieves a maximum efficaciousness that cannot deliberately be generated. Paradoxically enough, any intention that aims at such efficacy entails the contrary effect, undermining the purpose which it attempts to achieve. Commenting on the first parable of the first chapter in the *Zhuangzi*, Guo Xiang explains:

The two creatures are referred to as Peng, [the fabulous bird of an enormous size], and the cicada. [Peng's size] is enormous relative [to the cicada], which again is tiny relative to [Peng's size], and this is what equally destines both of them for respectively different aspirations. [Considering] what makes their aspirations different, how could it be that they are different as a result of being aware of that difference? Each is just self-so (*ziran*) without being aware of what makes it what it is. To be just self-so is to consummate without force, which is the main sense of what [the *Zhuangzi* understands as] wandering far, (Guo 1991: 10).

“Self-so” or “spontaneity” seems to point at the paradox of intention—that is the attaining of the goal by abandoning the intent to attain it—since any deliberation or calculation interferes with the complex dynamic and spontaneity of the actual and contingent moment in which an event happens or a thing arises. The proper and efficacious way to exist as a human in this world does not deviate from that observation. This just means that all human performances bear the potential to dissolve any type of obstruction, which may arise from the contingent way humans in fact exist. Instead of seeking a way to overcome contingency by means of anticipative calculations, one should rather find a dynamic form of performance in accordance with one's capacity for natural adaptation and unfettered response to the ever-changing circumstances.

Fulfilling this sense of spontaneity and efficacy, all functioning is unobstructed by anything else and comes to rest independently in itself, called “fitting the inner disposition (or nature)” (*shixing* 適性). Guo Xiang explains:

Once the huge [phoenix] bird takes off for its half-year journey, it does not rest until it reaches the celestial pond. When the small bird soars up for a flight only for half a morning, it stops where it hits the bushes and timber. If compared in terms of what each of them is capable of, there is indeed a difference; yet as for the manner in which each fits its natural disposition (*shixing*), there is oneness, (Guo 1991: 5).

“To fit one's natural disposition” is to go along with one's nature of determinative dependency to the effect that all interaction enacts the opposite—“independence” (*wudai* 無待). This is a state “free of distortion” and marks particularly the exalted person, called the noble (*shengren* 聖人). Given the incessant changing of our world, the noble's adaptation is boundless (*wuji* 無極) and inexhaustible (*wuqiong* 無窮), although the natural dispositions of distinct things or persons, (also considered as things), imply the contrary sense—bounds and dependency. Guo Xiang explains:

Each thing has its natural disposition; each disposition has its bounds. [...] However, the person who embraces all this in virtue of her/his independence abandons any thing and forgets her/his self; she/he indistinctly submerges into the manifold forms of differences, and all different sides equally gain [their benefits], yet her/his self remains without any fame and honor. Therefore, the one who embraces both huge and tiny is without [any

ranking of] huge and tiny. Once there is [the ranking of] huge and tiny, all things equally become a burden. [...]. The one who assesses death and life in an equalizing manner is without [the worries of] death and life. Once there are [the worries of] death and life, everything breaks equally off within shortness [...]. Therefore, the one who is wandering in the realm devoid of what ranks huge and tiny realizes the inexhaustible. The one who indistinctly submerges in what is without [the worries of] death and life enters the boundless. [However] once the unfettered and far is bound to a [certain] direction, there is exhaustibility even if one releases oneself to wandering; [such wandering] is yet not ready for independence, (Guo 1991: 11).

Independence, described in this passage, resonates with the previous sense of unawareness, which characterizes spontaneity.

Nonetheless, Guo Xiang also says that all spontaneity leaves a “trace” (*ji* 迹) which delineates the “shape” (*xing* 形) that a particular and concrete “actuality” (*shi* 實) adopts when it comes into being. But the condition under which spontaneity arises to form a particular instant of actuality is a state of unawareness or non-knowing (*buzhi* 不知). This amounts to forgetting (*wang* 忘) and abandoning all the categories that our cognitions may have devised to classify actualities into lists of recognizable items. For, in the irreversible and incessant flow of time, the world of distinct things consists of ever changing actualities no one of which is replicable. Each emerges due to another aggregation of an overwhelming multitude of conditions and then disappears again in oblivion, leaving space for the next instant of spontaneity which generates different actualities.¹⁹ “Forgetting” means disappearance in oblivion and entails “non-knowing,” stressing the absence of iteration which such spontaneity requires. In this sense, “forgetting” specifically outlines the condition for any act of accomplishment in the realm of human existence.

Seen from this point of view, a social role model, such as the mythic emperor Yao (堯), reaches beyond any type of representation. Yao’s performance as a role model consists of acts of spontaneity, none of which can be iterated or emulated. His virtuosity and skill in accomplishing all the uncountable things which matter in his interaction with the ever changing world are unfathomable. Hence, his engagement is dynamic, universal, and never fails, constantly modifying itself. Entangled with always differing things and matters, he is the noble who fully submerges into this world and remains shapeless or invisible (*ming* 冥), which allows him to adopt whatever shape the actual state of circumstances requires. To fulfill this spontaneously, a fixed distinction between his/her own mind and the world outside of it must be abandoned or forgotten.

Such forgetting and non-knowing dismantles the evaluative ranking of things, without denying differences. Fitting her/his particular disposition, the noble masters the skill of varied adaptation and responds in constantly differing ways to the effect that her/his dynamic performance enacts indeterminacy wherein she/he achieves independence. This culminates in seeing equality in all the differences that exist in

¹⁹Guo Xiang explains: “Never ceasing for a moment, we found ourselves constantly thrown suddenly into newness. There is no moment when all things between heaven and earth are not moving along. ... The moment is lost in each gesture between us, disappearing in oblivion,” (translated according to Ziporyn 2009: 195; for the Chinese see Guo 1991: 249).

the world of contingent things and events—an equality which is the cohesive yet indeterminate (indefinable) force by virtue of which each distinct thing comes into being. For the sake of such performing, fixed roles or identities must be abandoned or forgotten. Noble performance is independent and natural (self-so) insofar as it is free of deliberations and anticipations interfering with its spontaneous fulfillment. Suggesting a predictable or iterative course of events, deliberations and anticipations fail to realize spontaneity, which is what gives rise to the ever changing actualities in the irreversible flow of time. Ironically, calculations ultimately tend to undermine the purpose that they aspire. They increase the complexity and contingency of the actual moment in which things or events emerge. Hence, in addition to the inexhaustible multitude of determinative circumstances, each calculation is yet another factor that makes the contingent emergence of things and events even more complex and unpredictable.

Therefore, according to the *Zhuangzi* and GUO Xiang's commentary, any specific thing that unlocks the adaptive and responsive potential of its natural disposition is capable of freely (independently) roaming within the inexhaustible realm, which embraces the contingent and ever changing way things exist. This account of independence suggests a stance to the world which affirms contingency and yet allows for a state of being that is not overwhelmed by it. The title of the first chapter in the *Zhuangzi* addresses such a state as "wandering far and unfettered" (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊). GUO Xiang furthermore explains that "wandering far and unfettered" describes the degree of functioning and fulfillment wherein all things and persons can become alike and yet maintain their differences, if each completely and perfectly comes to fit its particular nature and its own specific way of being in the world. A more concrete account of such likeness or equality of all worldly things is the major topic of the subsequent chapter called "Equalizing Assessments of Things" (*Qiwu Lun*).

Most importantly, noble performance does not really distinguish determinacy from indeterminacy, nor excludes the other. Embodying the sense of equality, such performance enacts independence within all kinds of dependencies.

Embarking upon what comes across, how could this account for dependency! This is what is far and unfettered of the person with the highest degree of virtuosity and that wherein things and self become alike in a most profound fashion. [...] Only the one, who indistinctly intermingles together with things [that come across] (*yuwu ming* 與物冥), and who follows the great changing [of them], consummates the skill of independence and constantly passes through [smoothly]; [...]. As to the state in which anything rests in its natural disposition, all heavenly secrets open up naturally; receiving this without consciously knowing is what we cannot access in a differentiating fashion. Independence cannot even be differentiated from dependencies, not to mention the huge and the tiny of those who are full of dependencies! (Guo 1991: 20).

Besides non-exclusion between dependencies and independence, this passage also implies inseparability of what can be known from what remains unknown in any process of accomplishment and transformation. Knowing and non-knowing are the previously mentioned contrary types of understanding which are constitutive to any action performed by persons or other sentient beings.

4 A Daoist Observation of Knowing

The realm of dependency is the world of differences between all kinds of things and thus embraces what can consciously be known, while the domain of the noble who masters the skill of independence evades any conscious form of knowing. This yet requires an understanding accomplished along with the highest degree of a person's practical skill and performance, called virtuosity (*zhide zhi ren* 至德之人)—another expression characterizing the noble. Perhaps, the parable of the cook Pao Ding at the beginning of the third chapter of the *Zhuangzi* illustrates this type of understanding most vividly. The cook explains that he has come to master his skill to smoothly dismember and divide up an ox after he had stopped consciously seeing the image of an ox.²⁰

The motif of forgetting or not-knowing both the agent and the object of one's activity is considered a crucial constituent of any process of accomplishment and act of consummation. It appears in many parables and observations of the *Zhuangzi* and seems to be linked to what features the generating potency of heaven. According to the *Zhuangzi* and Guo Xiang, a person's performance can take part in this, yet only in a modified manner which fits man's natural disposition. In the sixth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, the two types of knowing are distinguished and yet considered inseparable:

To know what is done by heaven, and also to know what is to be done by man, is the utmost. To know what is done by heaven is just to be heaven, namely to be what produces [all things]. To know what is to be done by man is to use what is known in one's knowing to nurture what is still unknown by one's knowing. The one who lives out one's natural years without being cut down half way is the one with richest knowing, (Guo 1991: 224).²¹

Man and things belong to what is done or produced by heaven, which means that man is not itself heaven. Nonetheless man's acting and knowing might become fully inspired by heaven, yet only within the limited scope and form of dependency determined by man's nature. According to this passage, the knowing of what is done by heaven is indistinguishable from the action performed by heaven. As the agent of that action is then the object of this knowing, the knowing cannot be considered complete until it has become equal to the action. Again, in the case of heaven, knowing and acting are indistinguishable. Therefore, to know heaven's acting is to act in accordance with heaven's knowing. Heaven's acting, indistinguishable from its knowing, consists of producing all things; hence in its scope of knowing nothing remains unknown.

Heaven's knowing is therefore devoid of the distinction between the known and unknown. By contrast, such a distinction is what characterizes man's conscious way of knowing. Therefore, the two types of knowing must be distinguished although

²⁰ See Guo 1991: 119, and Ziporyn 2009: 22.

²¹ This is a modification of Brook Ziporyn's translation; for the part that differs from mine, see: "To understand what is done by the Heavenly: just in being the Heavenly, as the way all beings are born, what it does is bringing them into being." (Ziporyn 2009: 39)

they are not really separable from each other. According to GUO Xiang's commentary, conscious knowing of man is the derivative of the spontaneous, non-conscious, and self-so knowing of heaven, also called "non-knowing." He explains:

To know what is done by both heaven and man means being self-so (*ziran*). If, from the inside, one releases oneself [from one's self] and, from the outside, submerges indistinctly into things [which come across], then one becomes alike with all manifoldness in the most profound way; maintaining this, nothing goes beyond it. 'Heaven' is what expresses the sense of self-so. The one, who intends to perform an action actively, cannot accomplish any action; instead all action accomplishes itself as self-so acting (*ziwei* 自為). The one, who intends to accomplish knowledge actively, cannot accomplish any knowledge; instead all knowledge accomplishes itself as self-so knowing (*zizhi* 自知). Self-so knowing is not [a conscious act of] knowing (*buzhi*). If devoid of [a conscious act of] knowing, knowing emerges from non-knowing. Self-so acting is not [a conscious act of] acting. If devoid of [a conscious act of] acting, acting emerges from non-acting. [...] (Guo 1991: 224)

Guo Xiang's explanation that knowing emerges from non-knowing, (like acting from non-acting), implies a certain pattern of interrelation: non-knowing (non-acting) is foundational, and knowing (acting) is derivative. Given the overwhelming complexity of all the factors that aggregate into an event of knowing and acting, the actual emergence of our knowledge and action must evade our conscious control. What forms and accomplishes our action and knowledge cannot be enforced by means of conscious knowing and volitional acting.

According to the famous parable of the butterfly dream in the second chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, the same applies to any act of consummation, all experience of change and phenomena of transformation, as well as any thing that emerges. The butterfly in the dream does not know that it is ZHUANG Zhou when awake. After awakening, ZHUANG Zhou does not know that he has been a butterfly in the dream. Only the butterfly's forgetting and non-knowing of ZHUANG Zhou allows it to be and to know what it is in this dream; similarly, only ZHUANG Zhou's forgetting or non-knowing of the butterfly allows him to be and know what he is when awake. Non-knowing is foundational or constitutive, because it enables each of the two to actually be what they respectively are, and also to be aware of this actualized identity.²²

This sense of non-knowing is what conditions our experience of incessant change in the world of distinct things. Thus it is also foundational for the process that entails a limited degree of awareness in the shape of our knowledge about those transitory things and their transformations. Such awareness is derivative and limited compared to all the manifold sources from where it emerges. We can never consciously know what we actually are in full complexity. This is true for everything we consciously know. At the moment wherein we become aware of a thing that actually exists, we

²² This interpretation of the parable follows GUO Xiang's reading; the passage in the *Zhuangzi* text is perhaps a little bit ambiguous. Brook Ziporyn translates: "Suddenly he [ZHUANG Zhou] awoke. [...] He did not know if Zhou had been dreaming he was a butterfly, or if a butterfly was now dreaming it was Zhou," (Ziporyn 2009: 21). This could perhaps imply that ZHUANG Zhou, after awakening, is not completely unaware of the butterfly. However, GUO Xiang explains: "Now, [when awake] the non-knowing of the butterfly does not differ from the non-knowing of Zhou in the dream," (Guo 1991: 113).

must reduce complexity of its foundational actuality (*shi* 實). The difference between the foundational and derivative, actual and knowable, or *dao* and things (*wu*) is also one of complexity. Chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi* explicitly explains that the *dao* cannot be known in the same way a thing can be known.²³ Therefore, the knowing of what is done by heaven is different from the type of knowing accessible to man. Compared to the foundational and actual, the derivative and knowable is deficient.

Guo Xiang uses the term “footprint” or “trace” (*ji* 迹), which also occurs in the *Dao De Jing*, Wang Bi’s commentary, as well as the *Zhuangzi*, to describe the knowable and derivative forms and shapes which emerge from actualities (*shi*). Those in turn are instances of “self-so knowing” indistinguishable from heavenly action and beyond the reach of conscious knowing or volitional acting. They constitute the foundational and indeterminate realm into which the noble submerges in “invisible entanglement” (*ming*). That sense of foundational actuality is contrasted with the derivative “traces” which embrace what is known, named, and has become visible in the conventional realm of limited shapes and forms. Most importantly, only the noble performance in its self-so accomplishment and invisible state of oblivion can capture and embody the true sense of what heavenly action actually is. In contrast, the Confucian tradition portrays the works and deeds of the ancient emperor-sages, Yao and Shun, as visible, and also as examples of noble performance which can be iterated. In other words, Guo Xiang tries to emend such an image, stressing the difference between “traces” (*ji*) and “actuality” (or “oblivion,” “invisible entanglement,” *ming*), as well as between “name” (*ming* 名) and “namelessness” (*feiming* 非名). He employs those terms as polarities to elaborate on the contrary yet inseparable relation of the indeterminate foundational and the limited derivative:

[In the ancestral sacrifice] the cook and the priest respectively rest in their differing roles entrusted to them. All things, including birds and beasts, are content with what they receive. [...] This is the utmost of actuality under heaven. Since each [variously] achieves his/its actuality [in the *dao*], what else need to be done? This is nothing but self-fulfillment. [...] Yao and Shun are only names for worldly matters. What has made [those] names is actually nameless. Hence, how could it be that what Yao and Shun implies is only “Yao” and “Shun”? What it certainly implies is the actuality (*shi*) of the person inspired [by the *dao*] (*shenren* 神人). What we now call Yao and Shun is only named after worldly dirt and dust. [...] Yao himself is actuality [of the *dao*] (*shi*) and invisibly entangled [with everything] (*ming*), while the traces of this is [what is named] “Yao.” [...] (Guo 1991: 26, 33, 34).

In this passage, “actuality” (*shi*), used in contradistinction to “traces,” is another term for “self-so” (spontaneity), “self-so knowing,” “non-knowing,” “self-fulfillment” etc. All these are collective names which account for the complex actuality that allows conscious knowledge or any intentional and referential act to arise. The actual implication of those expressions however must contravene any approach through names and knowledge. Like a blind spot, this actuality remains “invisible” (*ming*), and no name can ever be congruent with it. It is like the invisible eye that enables us to see without ever being seen in any act of seeing and therefore never fits

²³ See the translation in footnote 3.

any image. Names and knowledge arising from this must similarly fail in their attempt to name and fully comprehend the source or root that enables their arising. Although names, such as “Yao” and “Shun,” are the traces of actuality, they are deficient in the sense that their signifying function can never attain congruence with the actuality that enables that function.

Therefore, GUO Xiang holds that the traces even have a counterproductive effect in our approach; instead of revealing what causes them to emerge, the traces occlude the access to that foundational and complex sense of actuality. Brook Ziporyn explains: “Traces are what is left by one peculiar self-so event on another, which come to inspire conscious esteem and emulation, thereby interfering with the self-so process that functions in the absence of cognitions, ideals, and explicit values,” (Ziporyn 2009: 222).²⁴ Self-so events instantiate heavenly action and non-knowing which is actuality; this is the root (invisible entanglement, *ming*) which, in its entire complexity and dynamic force, is indeterminable and thus cannot be accessed by man’s conscious knowing, while the object of the latter is the deficient form of the traces. Again, although non-knowing must be distinguished from the traces that can be known, the latter is rooted in and inseparable from the former.

Inspired by the Daoist and Xuanxue discourse, the Buddhist masters, Sengzhao, Jizang, and Zhiyi develop a multivalent scheme of relation, which covers a set of conformal polarities, such as the foundational and derivative, root and traces, hidden and visible, liberation and teaching, or silence and speech etc. But unlike GUO Xiang, they assign a positive function to the “traces,” which bear the potential to reveal their root. As a Buddhist binary “traces and root” (*jiben* 迹本) explains mutuality between the Buddha’s teaching and his ineffable and inconceivable liberation. The Buddha’s ineffable liberation is considered to be the actual root and hidden source of his teaching; this again embraces all his traces expressed and transmitted in word and speech of *sūtras* and *śāstras*. Hence, apart from the constitutive aspect of liberation the revealing side of the teaching is devoid of any real foundation. Likewise, apart from the revealing aspect of the teaching, the constitutive side of liberation cannot genuinely be manifested. In the Chinese Madhyamaka discourse, “traces and root” implies that the linguistic strategies in the textual transmission of the Buddha’s teaching (traces) give us access to the sense of “liberation” (*vimokṣa*, *jietuo* 解脫) which reaches beyond language (root). “Traces and root” accounts for the concurrence of speech and silence, which means non-duality of teaching and liberation according to Chinese Madhyamaka thought.²⁵

²⁴ Criticizing the Confucian values and ideals, Guo Xiang emphasizes that the root cannot be actualized by adhering to the traces. Guo Xiang explains: “The [Confucian] concept of ‘Humanity’ is the trace left behind by an instance of unbiased love. The [Confucian] concept of ‘Responsibility’ is the effect left behind by an instance of bringing something to completion. Love is not Humanity, but the trace of Humanity comes from love. Completing things is not Responsibility, but the effect of Responsibility emerges from the act of completing things. Maintaining Humanity and Responsibility is insufficient to bring about an understanding of real love and real benefit, which come from intentionlessness.” (Ziporyn 2009: 204) For the quoted passage in Chinese, see Guo 1991: 283.

²⁵ See the passage from Sengzhao’s commentary to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* which is frequently quoted throughout the works of Zhiyi and Jizang: “Without the root there is nothing that

Guo Xiang's explanation of the knowing that emerges from non-knowing (or the acting that emerges from non-acting) tries to hint at the foundational and primordial actuality that the Daoists designate as "self-so" to characterize the pervasive efficacy of the *dao*. "Self-so" accounts for the actual, spontaneous, immanent, as well as complex yet cohesive force and dynamic in virtue of which each thing, person, and any other creature is capable of consummating all functioning and performances in conformity with its respective inner nature. Anything that emerges as an actual event and distinct thing owes its very existence to this. In his commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, Guo Xiang clearly and obviously elaborates on this foundational sense of the *dao*. However, unlike Wang Bi, the famous commentator of the *Dao De Jing*, he does not refer to it by using the Chinese character "root" (*ben* 本).²⁶ Guo Xiang's account of "invisible entanglement" (*ming*) rather expands on the complex yet cohesive character of the dynamic force that stretches out into this primordial actuality; hence, at the same time, he emphasizes also the opposite characteristic of its inner unity.

His discussion does not indulge in cosmological speculation; it rather deals with the question of what guides the functional course that consummates and stabilizes the actual existence of distinct things in this world. Aware of all complexity and contingency in the way things and events emerge, he recommends cultivating a stance to the world, which instead of aspiring to control their functional courses advances a responsive form of adaptation to their incessant change. He circumscribes this dynamic yet stable way to interact with the world in phrases such as "embarking upon what comes across" (*suoyu si sheng* 所遇斯乘), "indistinctly/invisibly submerging into things" (*mingyu wu* 冥於物, *yuwu ming* 與物冥), "going along with all things" (*shun wanwu* 順萬物), or "to make those and myself become equal in a most profound fashion" (*xuantong biwo* 玄同彼我). Hence, to separate

hands down all the traces, and without the traces there is nothing that reveals the root. Although root and traces must be differentiated, they are one with regard to the inconceivable." (T 38, 1775: 327a27-b5). In the first chapter of the earliest extant Chinese translation of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* accomplished by Zhiqian (支謙 222–252), the two terms "traces" and "root" appear in combination (T 14, 474: 519b2–3). However, they do not bear the sense of non-duality which Sengzhao, Jizang, and Zhiyi have later ascribed to this binary. Kumārajīva's and Xuanzang (602–664)'s later translations (as well as the extant Sanskrit version) of the same sūtra do not contain these terms and moreover agree with one another regarding the passage in question. Buddhist scholarship in ancient China adopted those two terms from the indigenous Xuanxue tradition.

²⁶Wang Bi explains chapter 1 of the *Dao De Jing* as the following: "Everything which is there begins from non-presence" (Lou 1992: 1); and chapter 40: "All things under heaven are born from what is there; and the beginning of what is there takes non-presence as the root (*ben* 本)" (Lou 1992: 109). In his commentary on the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), he explains the *Fu*-hexagram (*fugua* 復卦), which symbolizes circular recurrence: "Any kind of motion will end so that there is calmness; but calmness is not opposed to motion. Each speech will end so that there is silence; but silence is not opposed to speech. Although heaven and earth are great, and embrace all things, [such as] thunder and wind, as well as all courses of transformation and change, the root [of all these] is stillness and ultimate non-presence," (Lou 1992: 336).

the inner world of one's mind from what seems to be outside and appears as the outer world is what enhances the destabilizing or harmful effects on oneself in one's contingent encounters with other things. Such separation undermines the cultivation of the stance that GUO Xiang proposes as the proper interaction with this world.

Therefore, "emptiness of one's mind" (*wuxin* 無心) or "emptiness of oneself" (*wuji* 無己) correlates with "going along with [all] things" and accounts for what realizes equanimity. He further describes such indeterminacy in noble interaction with the world as "stimulation and response" (*ganying* 感應)—which is also a key term in Sengzhao's, Jizang's, and Zhiyi's accounts of the transformative interaction of the deluded beings with the Buddha. GUO Xiang explains: "Only emptiness of [one's] mind and invisible response is what follows after stimulation," (Guo 1991: 24). According to GUO Xiang, the inner and outer world are not separate, because our observing is not outside the world that is observed; hence such observing must come to see itself as being part of what is observed, and realize that it shapes the world in the same way as this world forms all observing.

5 The Madhyamaka Discourse on the Nature of Things

There certainly are points of intersection in the Daoist and Buddhist elaborations on the salutary or proper interaction with the world; however regarding the ontological status of worldly things the two hold contrary views. For GUO Xiang and probably others influenced by Daoist thought, the world of distinct things actually and really exists, and all those things are determined and differentiated by their natural dispositions or inner natures. From the Mahāyāna Buddhist point of view, particularly, that of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school, worldly things are unreal and devoid of an intrinsic nature, although they are not completely nonexistent. The world of things illusively exists; illusions are existentially relevant.²⁷

The ultimate goal of the various Buddhist teachings consists of the liberation from all deceptions and all suffering originating from those. The Mahāyāna way to attain this requires a transformation which turns the state of delusion into an awakening, triggered by the proper understanding of what conditions and grounds all forms of change. The center of the Buddhist teaching is therefore the doctrine of

²⁷ For GUO Xiang's elaboration on the nature of things, see Sect. 3 "A Daoist View on the Nature of Things" in this chapter. According to Madhyamaka, the nature of all things consists of emptiness, which is foundational for all the other views that this Buddhist teaching articulates. This section shows that the ontological implication in Madhyamaka thought is the opposite of what GUO Xiang's commentary explicates in his account of the nature of things. Nevertheless, Sengzhao, one of the earliest indigenous promoters of Nāgārjuna's views in China, resorts not only to Daoist and Xuanxue rhetoric but seems also to be inspired by the Daoist "spontaneity," or "self-so" (*ziran*), when he interprets the nature of all things in terms of "self-so emptiness/unreality" (*zixu* 自虛).

conditioned co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*, *yuanqi*) which accounts for our experience of incessant change; the proper understanding of this is called “wisdom” (*prajñā*, *zhi* 智). Any view that holds that there are things which do not arise from conditions is considered non-Buddhist, because such a view excludes liberation via transformation and thus is a factor which increases delusion and suffering, obstructing wisdom and awakening.

Particularly Nāgārjuna’s *Madhyamaka* teaching stresses that without the correct understanding of that doctrine liberation cannot be accomplished. In chapter 15 of his major work, the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (Chinese: *Zhong Lun* 中論), he explains that the notion of conditioned co-arising is not coherent, if it includes the concept of an intrinsic nature of things. According to him, only emptiness of an intrinsic nature allows for a consistent sense of this crucial Buddhist doctrine, which further entails emptiness of inherent existence. This again is not tantamount to non-existence, which means that things rooted in conditioned co-arising are neither really existent nor completely nonexistent (*feiyou feiwu* 非有非無). The indeterminacy of the ontological status of worldly things is called the “middle way” (*madhyamaka*, *zhongdao* 中道). The initial six verses of chapter 15 from the *Zhong Lun* express this view:

- (1) It is untenable that there is an [intrinsic] nature within what arises from numerous conditions. The nature of that which emerges from numerous conditions is called constructed dharma.
- (2) How could an [intrinsic] nature be what consists of construction? [Intrinsic] nature is what is called unconstructed, and what does not depend on something else to be complete.
- (3) If dharmas (things) are devoid of a self-nature, is there a nature of something else? Seen from the nature of something else, self-nature is also called nature of something else.²⁸
- (4) How is it possible that dharmas (things) could exist apart from a self-nature, or a nature of something else? If there were a self-nature or a nature of something else, all dharmas (things) would be complete.²⁹
- (5) If there is no thing that [really] exists, then there is no nonexistence either. Only when there is a dharma (thing) that [really] exists, then the annihilation of such existence can be called nonexistence.

²⁸ From the standpoint of the other (something else), the other can be considered the self, while the self appears to be the other; therefore self and other are opposites which imply and define each other. The two designations are correlatively dependent. However, that also means the two are equally empty of a real foundation, which is the reason why the very definition of an intrinsic nature (self-nature) is ultimately untenable.

²⁹ The identity of each distinct thing suggests that there is an intrinsic nature or irreducible element that constitutes the particular way in which that thing exists; only under this condition can we speak of distinct things that really exist; however since this condition is missing, (which is the implication of verse 3), we must conclude that distinct things do not really exist. Verse 5 explains that nonexistence is equally untenable as existence, since the two are correlatively dependent opposites—if either side must be denied, the other must so too.

- (6) The person, who sees [real] existence and nonexistence as well as the self-nature and the nature of something else, does not see the true and real sense of/ in the *Buddhadharma*, (T 30, 1564: 19c19–20a29).³⁰

Nāgārjuna's understanding of conditioned co-arising implies that the identity of a distinct thing is a construction built on extrinsic relationships, which involve patterns of correlative dependency (*xiangdai* 相待). For instance, apart from a result no thing can be called "cause"; likewise, no other thing can be called "result" if there is no cause. Similarly, opposites such as length and shortness, or this and that, as Piṅgala (Third century a.d.) explains in his commentary, are similarly interdependent. Since there is no thing that can be constituted apart from such interdependency, the notion of an irreducible core contradicts the concept of conditioned co-arising.³¹ Conversely, if things were not empty of a real core, relations built on correlative dependency, such as causal and referential relations, could not be constituted. All things are embedded in extrinsic relationships and ultimately rooted in emptiness. Emptiness as the ultimate root of things means that the denial of an independent and intrinsic nature in fact embodies an affirmative sense—only in such ambiguous and paradoxical manner can this expression account for what constitutes and sustains all interdependent arising.³²

Consequently, what appears to be a distinctive and singular entity is not intrinsically or inherently existent and thus is not ultimately real. Nevertheless, at the conventional level in our daily interaction, we cannot avoid ascribing a distinct identity to those things at which we point. In our intentional acts, we must construe a non-contingent core that constitutes such identity, or, sets up the way a distinct thing exists, because only under this condition can we speak of distinct things that really exist. The Sanskrit term for this nature is "*svabhāva*" and literally means "self-being" or "self-existent." The Chinese translation "*zìxìng*" (自性) means "self-nature." The quoted passage expands on a sense of "self-nature" (*zìxìng*, *svabhāva*), which occurs whenever we take the reference point of our intentional acts to be an entity that really exists. Again, the whole discussion tries to prove that, in the context of "*pratītyasamutpāda*," this assumption of "*svabhāva*" is not coherent. This is to say, in our attempt to point at something real, we must construe the *svabhāva* of things which are unreal. "*Svabhāva*" indicates an inevitable type of

³⁰ For the Sanskrit version and English translation of this, see Siderits & Katsura 2013: 154–159.

³¹ Interestingly enough, a very similar observation about correlative dependency or interdependent relations is expressed in chapter two of the *Zhuangzi* and Guo Xiang's commentary; see Guo 1991: 109, and Ziporyn 2009: 12, 20.

³² Verse 14 in chapter 24 of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Zhong lun* explains: "[Only] because there is the sense of emptiness, can all dharmas [interdependently arising] be complete(d)," (T 30, 1564: 33a22). The Sanskrit meaning of this verse differs a little bit from Kumārajīva's Chinese translation. Similarly, the chapter on "Sentient Beings" in the Kumārajīva version of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* expresses the constitutive and sustaining significance of emptiness: "All dharmas are constituted/set up owing to the root of non-abiding" (T 14, 475: 547c22). The "root of non-abiding," which, (according to Zhiyi's as well as Jizang's commentaries), also means "devoid of root and abiding," designates the constitutive significance of emptiness.

reification or hypostatization that, like a blind spot, evades the awareness in our epistemic-propositional references. Hence, “emptiness of *svabhāva*” (*śūnyatā*, *asvabhāva*, *wu zìxìng* 無自性) expresses that there is no ontological equivalent of the semantic construction that we cannot cease to produce in our language use.³³

Furthermore, this also applies to the expression “emptiness” itself, because emptiness of *svabhāva* implies that there is no *svabhāva* of “emptiness.” To avoid any reification, this expression must become paradoxical and ambiguous. It must show that its true sense defies all conventional forms of linguistic signification: neither apophatic nor kataphatic forms can really capture the ultimate sense of emptiness. The paradoxical and ambiguous form enacts its ineffability, which conversely means that all univocal forms of linguistic expression generate falsehood. In other words, “emptiness” reveals inseparability of truth from falsehood: true emptiness is the root that constitutes the interdependent arising of all things in our illusory and ephemeral world. It is what sustains unreality in all referential and causal relations construed at the conventional level, while such unreality is what refers back to and reveals the constitutive root of emptiness. Hence, the paradoxical form of “emptiness” is used as a linguistic means to unveil an unreality, which pervades all epistemic-propositional references and therefore evades our conventional awareness like a blind spot. Without insight about emptiness this blind spot remains undetected, and what is conventionally valid is mistaken for ultimate truth.

As a result of this observation, Nāgārjuna concludes that the interdependent arising of things pertains to the conventional realm of our existence, which contains nothing but unreality and therefore is not the same as ultimate truth. To prevent us from mistaking falsehood of the conventional for ultimate truth in our discourse of emptiness, the *Zhong lun* explains that we must differentiate between the conventional and ultimate realms. This differentiation of two truths (*erdi* 二諦) advances a proper understanding of the *Buddhadharma*, since it reveals an insight into the inevitable falsehood (blind spot) of the language that we must rely on even while explicating the sense of true emptiness.³⁴ Our awareness of the fact that we must rely on such falsehood in our speech allows for a limited and provisional sense of truth within the constraints of the conventional realm.

The differentiation of two truths is crucial to the strategy which Madhyamaka thought employs to arouse an awareness of falsehood in our language use. In a pragmatic sense, this differentiation is meant to prevent our understanding from falling prey to our usual and delusive type of differentiation which entails not only the clinging to a notion of reality separated from unreality but also reifies the duality of

³³ From this point of view, it might sound misleading to examine the ontological and epistemological dimension of this concept in the Madhyamaka understanding. For a discussion that nevertheless expands on those topics, see Westerhoff 2009: 19–53.

³⁴ The *Zhong Lun* (*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*) states: “On the grounds of the two truths, all the Buddhas expound the dharma for the sentient beings, which are, first, the conventional truth, and, second, the truth of the ultimate meaning. The one who does not know to differentiate the two truths does not understand to fathom the true and real sense in the deep Buddha-dharma. Without relying on the conventional truth, the meaning of the ultimate is unattainable; the one, who fails to achieve the meaning of the ultimate, cannot achieve nirvāṇa,” (T 30, 1564: 32c16–33a3).

those opposites. Contrastingly, the Madhyamaka differentiation expresses non-duality of the conventional and ultimate. In this paradoxical fashion, it inspires our understanding of the Buddha's teaching to develop self-referential observation which sees the inseparability of truth from falsehood in all of its own operational moments. Prone to observe all its own limitations, the Buddha's teaching constantly distinguishes the ultimate sense of liberation (emptiness) from the contingent and provisional forms through which it presents the same at the conventional level. Thanks to such differentiating, our understanding realizes that the inexpressible and inconceivable sense of the ultimate is what consists only in a deferred manner. Chinese Madhyamaka masters, such as Jizang, stress that the doctrine of the "two truths" accounts for the core and foundational design of the Buddhist teaching, yet it is nothing but a strategic device used to dissociate or liberate our cognitions and reifying conceptualizations from their own deceptions.

6 Sengzhao's Reflection on Names, Things, and Knowing

According to the Chinese Madhyamaka sources, the nature of all things is emptiness, which disclaims the notion of an intrinsic nature in distinct things. This nature of ultimate reality is also called "dharma-nature" (*faxing*, *dharmatā*), "real mark" or "mark of reality" (*shixiang*)—a Chinese term used for the Sanskrit *bhūtalakṣaṇa*, *tattva*, *abhūta*, *yathābhūta*, *śūnyatā*, *dharmatā* etc.³⁵ Emptiness accounts for what is ultimately true or real, and yet denies that a really or actually existent thing is congruent with a name. By contrast, according to traditional Chinese thought, as developed by the Confucian and Legalist schools, "actualities" (*shi* 實) are considered to be what is, or should become, congruent with names, titles, or social roles (*ming* 名). In the *Zhuangzi*, the socio-political ethics of this view is criticized and unmasked as a source of hypocrisy and forgery.³⁶ For the Buddhists, namable "actualities" (*shi*) are empty and unreal, while the "real mark" or "mark of reality" (*shixiang*) adumbrates what evades linguistic signification and embodies ultimate truth beyond language and thought. In the Buddhist context, "*shi*" accounts for reality in the sense of emptiness.

For instance, in his treatise *Emptiness of the Untrue* (also: *Untrue Emptiness*, *Buzhen Kong Lun* 不真空論), Sengzhao explains: "A name is not congruent with reality/actuality, and reality/actuality is not congruent with a name (*shi bu dang ming* 實不當名). If there is no congruence between names and reality/actuality, where are all the things?" (T 45, 1858: 152c22–23). Guo Xiang uses the same character "*shi*" for his notion of primordial actuality which is also nameless but accounts for the self-so nature and efficacy of the *dao*. After quoting from chapter 22 of the *Zhuangzi*: "The *dao* is not congruent with a name (*dao bu dang ming* 道不當名),"

³⁵ See the Chinese article of CHENG Gongrang on Kumārajīva's translation of *shixiang* and the Tiantai use of that term in Cheng 2012: 97–143.

³⁶ See the chapter "Incongruence of Names and Forms" in Moeller and D'Ambrosio 2017.

Guo Xiang explains: “There is the name ‘*dao*’, yet ultimately there is no such thing; therefore a name cannot be congruent with it.”³⁷ The high degree of similar wordings in these quoted passages suggests that Sengzhao uses the language of the *Zhuangzi* and its commentator GUO Xiang to explain the Madhyamaka thought of emptiness as ultimate reality defying linguistic signification.

Moreover, Sengzhao’s two treatises, *Emptiness of the Untrue* and *[Real] Things Never Move* (*Wu Buqian Lun* 物不遷論), use the Chinese “*wu*,” translated as “thing,” in an ambiguous fashion: similar to “truth” which must be interpreted differently depending on its conventional or ultimate sense, the character “*wu*” could either mean “real thing” or “unreal thing”—namable things are unreal, and real things evade linguistic expression. This distinction is also derived from both Daoist and Buddhist sources. The realm of conventional truths encompasses namable things which are unreal yet not nonexistent. In his treatise, *Emptiness of the Untrue*, he extensively discusses this, while the treatise, *Real Things Never Move*, elaborates on the ontological status of things seen from the viewpoint of emptiness or ultimate truth.

To illustrate this distinction of two types of things in that treatise, Sengzhao draws on the topic of “motion and stillness” (*dong jing* 動靜) which has been discussed by many previous thinkers of the indigenous traditions, including GUO Xiang and WANG Bi. Sengzhao observes that language construes universals and tends toward reification, which is tantamount to construction and falsehood. In our use of language, we equalize and identify unequal or differing things by overseeing and nullifying the temporality of particulars. In his treatise, *[Real] Things Never Move*, he describes the temporal aspect of particulars in terms of a “stillness” (*jing* 靜) which does not exclude the sense of unceasing change but which, like emptiness (*kong*), evades our conceptual understanding.³⁸ Only with regards to its respective point in time, a particular thing unchangingly and really is this thing. Viewed from another point in time, there is no longer the same thing any more, as things unceasingly change during the irreversible course of time. Consequently Sengzhao claims that a particular thing, though unceasingly changing even in a single moment of time, constantly stays (*changcun* 常存) in its respective point in time.

This stillness denies duration in the flow of time, but not continuity of real things. Those can never be represented or referred to in a genuine way, given that neither the real thing nor the image representing it would be the same when viewed from another point in time. Due to this sense of temporality, we cannot talk about really existing things; and, contrary to our ordinary assumptions, names too are impermanent—we never actually use the same name at different times.

In contrast to this sense of a real thing which never moves, our daily speech must presuppose the opposite view according to which namable things may move in space and time without any essential change. In our use of names, we assume that we can refer to the self-same thing from different points in time, which character-

³⁷ See footnote 3 and 12.

³⁸ Some parts of the subsequent paragraphs expanding on Sengzhao’s argument have been published in Kantor 2010: 297, 298.

izes the viewpoint of conventional truth postulating that names and things must be congruent. Viewed from the vantage point of ultimate truth, addressed by that title, this assumption entails constructions and falsehood. However, Sengzhao's discussion is in accordance with the Madhyamaka differentiation of the two truths expressing non-duality. He tries to present and display the paradoxical relation of the two truths by illustrating this with the inseparability of the opposites "motion and stillness", which is an image that he might have adopted from WANG Bi's works.

Again, what appears to us like a thing's limited journey in the continuous and irreversible flow of time is called "motion." In fact, this is nothing but the incessant change of unequal things which themselves remain still and unchanged in their respective point in time. The overwhelming abundance of such stillness is what an instant of time amounts to, and further explains why real things cannot be objects of our references. In our attempt to hint at such stillness, only motion is what appears to us, although there is nothing that really moves. In other words, stillness is no more beyond apparent motion than motion is beyond true stillness. On this level motion turns out to be stillness in the same way that on the conventional level stillness appears to us as motion. This is not a contradiction, since the motion that Sengzhao addresses is that of unreal things, while stillness only concerns real things; apparent motion and true stillness do not exclude each other. We must rely on the image of the motion of unreal things to achieve an understanding of the stillness of real things.³⁹

This is non-duality qua differentiation and analogous to the conventional without which we cannot accomplish the ultimate according to Madhyamaka thought. Though there is no real motion as there is not a real thing that moves, we cannot abandon the image of a non-real motion when we are trying to comprehend the stillness of real things. Sengzhao's Buddhist interpretation of the traditional concept "motion and stillness" is an attempt to illustrate the inseparability of truth and falsehood in the Madhyamaka concept of the two truths. At the end of his treatise Sengzhao says that real things, though evading us, constantly abide and never leave, while unreal things to which we cling always leave and never abide. For Sengzhao, motion and stillness relate to one another like the conventional and the ultimate. The conventional and motion match each other in terms of unreality, while the ultimate and stillness correspond to each other in terms of truth and emptiness.

The same ambiguity that characterizes Sengzhao's use of "thing" applies also to other terms borrowed from Daoist and Xuanxue sources. His second treatise "*Emptiness of the Untrue*" takes "you" (有) as both really existent and illusively

³⁹ Sengzhao's treatise quotes a passage from Guo Xiang's commentary, which is also translated in footnote 19 of this chapter. Although Sengzhao takes Guo Xiang's observation of incessant moving as his point of departure, he comes to the opposite conclusion: real things never move. For Sengzhao's quote from Guo Xiang's commentary, see T 45, 1858: 151b1–6. As Jizang pointed out, Sengzhao's treatise is meant as an illustration of the second chapter, "Contemplation of Coming and Going," of Nāgārjuna's *Kārikā* (*Zhong Lun*), which expands on the last couple of the "eight negations" (*babu*) (see footnote 15), "no coming no going" (*bulai buqu* 不來不去), from the first chapter in the *Kārikā*; see Jizang's commentary on the *Kārikā*, (T 42, 1824: 54a28-b16).

existent, while “wu” (無) as emptiness and nonexistence.⁴⁰ Even the title of this treatise, “*Emptiness of the Untrue/Untrue Emptiness*” (*Buzhen Kong Lun*), is ambiguous, since the deconstructive sense of emptiness applies to this very expression itself. “Emptiness” reveals its true meaning by denying what it signifies and thus manifests, in this paradoxical manner, the incongruity of names and reality. In his third treatise, *Wisdom as Non-knowing* (*Bore Wuzhi Lun* 般若無知論), he explains the Mahāyāna sense of wisdom, or *prajñā* (*bore* 般若), contrasted with our common knowledge, and uses “zhi” (知) as both true wisdom of the noble and false knowledge of the common. He explains:

If there is something that is known, then there is also that which is unknown. Since the noble’s mind is devoid of [such] knowing, it is also devoid of the unknown. [Thus] the knowing of his non-knowing is called universally knowing. [...] The noble’s response [to worldly matters and ordinary sentient beings] is capable of full efficiency yet devoid of inherently existent [things]; in this fashion, it is self-aware (自知 *zizhi*, self-so knowing) while/in/of (its) non-knowing (*buzhi*), (T 45, 1858: 153a27-b17).⁴¹

The later commentators of the *Zhao lun* interpreted this passage differently. Perhaps the Yuan commentary by Wencai (文才 1241–1302) comes closer to the root text than Yuankang’s earlier explanations (元康 ca 627–649) from the Tang Dynasty. These differences aside, the two commentaries equally realize that the passage talks about “knowing” (*zhi*) and “non-knowing” (*buzhi*) in an ambiguous sense.⁴² The two types of knowing (and non-knowing) that Sengzhao addresses are those of the noble (*sheng* 聖) and the common (or ordinary) person. The latter is only implicitly addressed in the passage. To mention this explicitly, Seng Zhao would need to have used the character *fan* (凡) for the ordinary or common.

The passage means that what is known by the common/ordinary person (who abides in the realm of conventional truth) never occurs apart from its correlative opposite, which is the unknown, since without the previously unknown there could be no event of present knowing. Conversely, only with regard to present knowing can we retrospectively identify the previously unknown. A teaching manual designed for students, for instance, fulfills its purpose only if the designer takes both the aspect of what is known and that of the unknown into account. In this circular fashion, the known and unknown mutually form, shape, and construe each other. But, according to Madhyamaka thought, correlatively dependent things, constituting each other, are devoid of an intrinsic nature and thus empty of inherent existence. Consequently, the known and unknown do not really exist, and thus true awareness of this cannot be referred to in terms of knowing or non-knowing. However,

⁴⁰ See also the article “Textual Pragmatics in Early Chinese Madhyamaka” (Kantor 2014: 759–784).

⁴¹ This passage obviously borrows from chapter six of the *Zhuangzi* and Guo Xiang’s commentary, (Guo 1991: 224), and probably also from another passage of chapter 22 in the *Zhuangzi*, (Guo 1991: 757). Liebenthal’s translation and understanding of this seems to differ from this interpretation; he is not aware of the ambiguity in both *zhi* and *buzhi*; see Liebenthal 1968: 64–81.

⁴² See T 45, 1859: 177b12–19 and T 45, 1860: 214a22-b5.

contrasted with the common knowing, true awareness can still be circumscribed as the noble sense of "self-so knowing," which entails paradoxical language.

Having achieved such an insight about emptiness, the noble's way of knowing is truly aware of this falsehood, which evades the ordinary way of knowing and thus exerts a deceptive influence on that ordinary way. Awareness of this blind spot is what distinguishes the noble from the common person. Hence, there is a knowing and non-knowing in both the ordinary/common and noble/universal sense. The noble's knowing is non-knowing in the sense that it is devoid of the false known and unknown that usually characterizes ordinary knowing, while the knowing of the common person is non-knowing in the sense that it lacks the genuine awareness that specifies the universal knowing of the noble.

Conversely, the non-knowing of the noble is a kind of universal knowing which always knows the persistency of the blind spot that the ordinary knowing never knows. Whether one side appears either as knowing or as non-knowing depends upon whether the other is regarded as either knowing or as non-knowing. To really know that there ultimately is no real knowing can thus be called "universal knowing," which is at the same time non-knowing. Therefore, to really know that there ultimately is no real knowing and non-knowing can thus again be called "universal knowing" which is non-knowing.

It is important to see that Sengzhao uses the two expressions "knowing and non-knowing" deliberately in an ambiguous sense (based on the distinction between the two truths) to create paradoxical language. This use of language highlights precisely what evades the ordinary knowing but qualifies the noble "knowing/non-knowing." While it becomes evident to us that there is no real knowing and non-knowing, we realize that this unreality, nonetheless, is a factor without which our understanding cannot accomplish that insight. Therefore, without the means of paradoxical language the noble/universal knowing would again decline into the ordinary/common mode.

If all this is to be understood in the sense that the universal knowing of the noble invalidates the blind spot, or ordinary form of knowing, then this understanding again falls prey to the self-same blind spot that it tries to invalidate. Such an understanding only confuses the ordinary with the noble and therefore does not reach beyond the former. Indeed, to distinguish the noble from the ordinary in this manner is to rely on the same type of "correlative dependence" (*xiangdai*) that also qualifies the distinction of what is known and unknown in the ordinary sense. This is why such understanding is liable to exactly the same unawareness of falsehood (blind spot) that marks the ordinary/common.

Since what is known or unknown does not really exist, noble non-knowing, fully aware of this, is a kind of universal knowing that does not really eliminate or exclude the common way of knowing. The absurd intent to eliminate what is not really existent would contrariwise turn it into an inversion which mistakes the unreal for real. Noble non-knowing, that is universal knowing liberated from all inversions, fully sees that it falls captive to the blind spot, or the falsehood of the ordinary knowing, if it intends to exclude the same. Non-exclusion means, then, that there is no one-

sided clinging to that sense of the noble which is the correlative opposite of the common. Sengzhao's sense of non-exclusion is in accordance with the Madhyamaka view of the non-duality of the two truths which must nevertheless be manifested by differentiating the two.

7 A Chinese Madhyamaka Understanding of Liberation

Sengzhao's elaboration on non-knowing/knowing resonates with his distinction of real and unreal things rooted in the concept of the two truths. Although he bases his view of the noble and common knowing on this Indian Madhyamaka doctrine, the rhetoric and language which he uses seems to be inspired by Guo Xiang's commentary on the *Zhuangzi*.⁴³ The same observation seems also to fit his conclusion that perceived congruence between names and things does not entail actual congruence between names and reality. The way he expresses this reminds of the passage in the *Zhuangzi* saying that the *dao* is incongruent with any name, or to Guo Xiang's statement that actuality is nameless. However, Sengzhao also considers the significance of congruence between names and (unreal) things, which is in agreement with the Mahāyāna understanding of conventional truth, while incongruity between names and reality hints at the sense of ultimate truth.

He points out that perceived congruence accounts for the falsehood, which pervades all epistemic-propositional references and thus is like a blind spot that evades the awareness in our conventional form of cognition (common knowing). But at the same time, he also takes it as a postulate, which cannot completely be dismissed at the conventional level of our interaction (conventional truth). Without the congruence between things and names our conventional use of language and speech would not be possible. He does not deny that it accounts for the condition in virtue of which we are capable of performing interaction; therefore this falsehood is existentially relevant. However, our approach to the realm of ultimate truth and emptiness consists of the noble knowing/non-knowing called *prajñā*, which requires an insight into the actual incongruity of names and reality (*mingshi wu dang* 名實無當).

In his second treatise, *Emptiness of the Untrue* (*Buzhen Kong Lun*), he expounds the view that perceived congruence between names and things does not entail actual congruence between names and reality. The statement expressing this is embedded in a modified quote from the *Zhuangzi*, which argues for the stance of indifference and equanimity toward the world of distinct things. The passage in the *Zhuangzi* reads: "[One should use] things just as things without making oneself become a thing controlled by [those] things, how could this ever entail any burden?"⁴⁴

⁴³ See the previously quoted passage of Guo Xiang's commentary (Guo 1991: 224) in the section "A Daoist Concept of Knowing" in this chapter.

⁴⁴ See chapter 20 of the *Outer Chapters* in the *Zhuangzi*, (物物而不物於物，則胡可得而累邪? Guo 1991: 668).

Sengzhao's wording, in Chinese very similar to that of the *Zhuangzi*, modifies the meaning by relating it to the Buddhist context of linguistic signification:

If using [the name of] a thing to present as a thing what is a thing, then what is presented as a thing can be considered to be a thing. If using [the name of] a thing to present as a thing what is not a thing, then, although presented as a thing, it is not a thing. Therefore, things do not become real [just] owing to their inseparability from names; and names do not become true [just] on account of their inseparability from things. However, ultimate truth [emptiness], which remains solely in silence, is what reaches beyond names and teachings. How could this ever be featured in virtue of speech and written text?⁴⁵

The passage addresses correlative dependence in conventional linguistic signification, which entails congruity between things and names: our daily speech assigns names to things in a way that the two constitute a relationship of mutually dependent elements; no name, so it seems, persists without the thing that this name indicates, and no thing occurs apart from the name which represents that thing. However, we cannot conclude that this implies actual congruence of names and reality, as names and things are correlatively dependent constituents in a referential relation, which is nothing but a construction without any real foundation. Insight into this non-congruity is what advances the vantage point of ultimate truth and consists of the non-knowing of wisdom, called *prajñā*.

Although the shift of context is fairly obvious, with regard to content, there is a point of intersection between the two quoted passages, which could be outlined by what Sengzhao phrases as “smoothly passing through without departing from things” (*jiwu shuntong* 即物順通)—a phrase that reminds of Guo Xiang's “passing along with things” (*shunwu*).⁴⁶ However, the two are almost contrary in terms of their approach. Sengzhao emphasizes that, in order to accomplish a state of impermutability, it is important to see the unreality of things which is not the same as nonexistence. The *Zhuangzi*, on the other hand, maintains a stance of indifference and equanimity that does not require scrutinizing the ontological status of things referred to by names, because it is simply referring to a state of mind devoid of any enforced relation toward the world of distinct things. This perspective aligns one's mental state with the self-so course of all things.

Perhaps, Sengzhao attempts to see Daoist serenity in the Buddhist sense of liberation, when he describes it in Kumārajīva's and his own words in his commentary to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* as “the state in which the mind is undistorted and in control of itself, not fettered by its own disabilities ... and [therefore] gives free rein to [change and contingency] without obstruction and without being restrained by any affliction,” (T 38, 1775: 327c19–26). The passage further explains that libera-

⁴⁵ See Sengzhao's *Emptiness of the Untrue/Untrue Emptiness* (*Buzhen Kong Lun* 不真空論): 夫以物物於物，則所物而可物。以物物非物，故雖物而非物。是以物不即名而就實，名不即物而履真。然則真諦獨靜於名教之外；豈曰文言之能辨哉？(T 45, 1858: 152a24–27).

⁴⁶ See Sengzhao's *Emptiness of the Untrue/Untrue Emptiness*, (T 45, 1858: 152b3). This is reminiscent of Guo Xiang's commentary to chapter 6 “Its Great Source as Teacher (Dazong Shi 大宗師)” of the *Zhuangzi* (Ziporyn 2009: 39): “Smoothly passing along with what is there by virtue of a mind that is empty [of all this].” (*wuxin shunyou* 無心以順有; Guo 1991: 268)

tion does not separate from the world of distinct things, although it must be accomplished by realizing that emptiness is the ultimate nature of all those things.

The “non-departing from things” (*jiwu* 即物), which is a phrase that occurs in the treatise *Emptiness of the Untrue* several times, expresses that there is no need to enforce the denial of any thing given that all things are self-so empty and unreal. The enforced denial of what has originally or always been empty and not really existent turns into the opposite, suggesting, contrariwise, realness of the thing to be denied. Hence, such denial entails inversions and creates a clinging to the unreal along with all afflictions arising from this. In other words, to dismiss and discard the unreal world of conventional things in order to realize emptiness and ultimate truth is as absurd as the attempt to cut a bold man’s hair that does not exist.

To really see emptiness in the nature of all things entails the insight that unreality is existentially relevant, and also liberates from all deceptions distorting the understanding of ultimate truth. All this validates the unreality of worldly things as conventionally existent, which Sengzhao calls “non-departing from things” (*jiwu*), closely related to Guo Xiang’s “passing along with things” (*shunwu* 順物). Although the two seem to express a similar stance to the world, their ontological implications are contrary. Sengzhao admits an ontologically indeterminable form of existence that consists of the unreality of worldly things. This is a view which is inspired by the Madhyamaka concept of the two truths, while Guo Xiang’s stance is an affirmation that does not call the world of distinct things into question.

Nonetheless, Sengzhao’s sense of non-enforcement, which is also stressed in Jizang’s and Zhiyi’s elaborations on liberation, seems to owe some of its inspiration from the Daoist sources. For instance, he repeatedly uses the binary *zixu* (自虛) which does not originate from the Indic scriptures and treatises, but looks like a combination of the Daoist “self-so” (*ziran* 自然) and the Buddhist sense of unreality and emptiness, expressed by the character “*xu*” (虛). He states:

Hence, the reason, why the noble embarks on all kinds of transformation and yet remains unchanged, and also why he enters the realm of all delusions and yet constantly passes through [unharmd], is that he never departs from all the things in their self-so emptiness/unreality (*zixu* 自虛), and that he never falsely resorts to a superimposition of emptiness to empty those things (*bujia xu er xuwu* 不假虛而虛物), (T 45, 1858: 153a1-3).

To comprehend “self-so emptiness/unreality” (*zixu*) of all things requires emptying such comprehension from any reifying conceptualization of emptiness. Devoid of any conceptual enforcement, this understanding is fully aware of the existential relevance of unreality and thus never dissociates itself from the world of incessant change. All this is in harmony with non-deliberation (non-knowing, forgetting) as a prerequisite for realizing the Daoist spontaneity (self-so) and its natural interaction with the world of distinct things. Sengzhao further refers to this as “embarking on all kinds of transformation,” and this again reminds of Guo Xiang’s “embarking on what comes across.”

Moreover, Sengzhao’s “self-so emptiness” and “non-departing from things” strikingly resonates with the Tiantai view of “liberation that does not separate from

words and letters” (*buli wenzi zhi jietuo* 不離文字之解脫)—a concept which Zhiyi develops to explain the meaning of “inconceivable liberation” (*busiyi jietuo* 不思議解脫, *acintya-vimokṣa*) in the Indic *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*. In his commentary on the same sūtra, Zhiyi explains the paradoxical sense of this. He observes that all names and linguistic expressions are things which do not differ from any other thing that is construed on the basis of our epistemic-propositional references. Words and letters themselves are namable things; they are reifications like all the things that are assigned to names. Therefore, none of these is a really existent entity. Again, the enforced attempt to eliminate words and letters, which do not really exist, is to mistake the unreal for real. There are no really existent words and inversions to which we could cling, nor is there any clinging, nor suffering resulting from it. Consequently, no liberation from all those can be accomplished. Paradoxically enough, to assume that there is a state of liberation to be achieved is what undermines liberation, and to realize precisely this is wherein true liberation and awakening consist. Realization of liberation culminates in deconstructing the concept of it, and this is not accomplished until there is full awareness of that paradox.⁴⁷

The paradox is called “inconceivable liberation” which is in harmony with the previously mentioned Daoist paradox of intention and conforms also to Jizang’s explanation of liberation as “non-duality” (*buer* 不二). In his commentary on the *Śrīmālā-devī-siṃhanāda-sūtra*, he describes paradoxical non-duality as that which is “neither linguistic expression, nor emptiness of linguistic expression.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Zhiyi explains: “If the understanding of the conceivable principle liberates from the ties to all conditions, such a state is referred to as conceivable liberation. If the understanding of the inconceivable principle liberates from the ties to all conditions, that state is called inconceivable liberation. Conceivable liberation is liberation that separates from words and letters. Therefore Śāriputra responds to the Goddess in the *Vimala-sūtra*: ‘When I learned about liberation, it was devoid of linguistic expression’. As to inconceivable liberation, this is liberation that does not separate from words and letters. Therefore, the Goddess says: ‘When presenting the mark of inconceivable liberation, we do not separate from words and letters, since once separated from an [intrinsic] nature of words and letters, we are liberated.’” (T 38, 1777: 550a12–17) “Conceivable liberation” is the conceptualized sense of liberation, which is trapped by its own conceptualization. It reifies linguistic expression and emptiness, lacking a sense of self-referential observation. “Inconceivable liberation,” freed from its own reifying conceptualizations, sees all the paradoxes inextricably bound up with self-referential observation. This conforms to Jizang’s formula “linguistic expression yet emptiness of linguistic expression.” For Zhiyi “inconceivable” indicates the paradox that the liberated understanding is aware of.

⁴⁸ See Jizang’s explanation of non-duality: “Therefore, one should not arouse the view of duality regarding the relation of teaching and principle (=liberation). This is what we intend to elucidate: Principle which has become manifest suspends linguistic expression. Linguistic expression that manifests principle is always that which performs/enacts such suspending. Therefore, linguistic expression fills the ten directions without [really] spelling out a single letter. [...] Linguistic expression, yet emptiness of linguistic expression, is a denial of the invariable sense that there [really] is linguistic expression. Emptiness of linguistic expression, yet linguistic expression, is a denial of the invariable sense that there [really] is emptiness of linguistic expression. Therefore, ‘neither linguistic expression nor emptiness of linguistic expression’, as well as ‘neither principle nor teaching’ is called the mind devoid of reliance, which knows the [real] meaning of both teaching and principle [non-duality].” (T 37, 1744: 5b19-c2)

He develops an understanding of liberation which must turn into a salutary practice of non-duality that reconciles speech with silence. Jizang believes that mastering the speech of the Buddha's teaching equals realizing the silence of his liberation. Apart from the other, no one of the two can be accomplished. Hence, the liberated understanding embraces a change of aspects, by performing a dynamic within which speech turns into silence of liberation, and, conversely, silence into the various forms of speech according to the teaching. Jizang believes that, in this way, the practitioner can achieve his/her own awakening and, thereby, also causes others to awake.

Again, Sengzhao's "self-so emptiness," Zhiyi's "inconceivable liberation," and Jizang's understanding of "non-duality" resort to the same paradox: to understand emptiness, or to accomplish liberation, requires suspending the concept of it. This dismantles the antagonism of speech and silence. Apart from linguistic expression, which is what generates falsehood evading our epistemic-propositional references (blind spot), there is no access to the inexpressible, because apart from language there is no such thing that really is a blind spot. This is the Buddhist paradox of linguistic signification. Inconceivable liberation separates no more from words and letters than emptiness reaches beyond the world of distinct things. In full awareness of this paradox, the practitioner may reconsider her/his interaction with this world and engage with it to the effect that its contingency entails no distortion in her/his course of practice.

The Daoist paradox of intention entails a stance to the world that is similar to that implicit in the Buddhist paradox of signification, although the ontological backgrounds of the two are contrary. In Chinese intellectual history, Buddhism and Daoism never completely merged into one another, yet the development of each cannot be considered as separate from the other.

8 Conclusive Remarks

The previous discussion shows that Daoist and Xuanxue concepts and terminology played a crucial role in the development of Chinese Madhyamaka and Prajñā-pāramitā thought during the Wei-Jin period in China. Most of the key terms (nature, thing, name, knowing) that are relevant in the Daoist and Xuanxue discourse about epistemological, ontological, and linguistic topics have been adopted in the Buddhist discussions of that time. Hence, this article traces Sengzhao's further development with the intent to outline an early stage of Daoist and Buddhist interaction, which continued to extend during the subsequent periods in Chinese intellectual history. Most importantly, this paper tries to detect some of the crucial philosophical conditions by virtue of which such process of terminological and conceptual adoption could have taken place at this early stage of Chinese Buddhism.

There is a conceptual affinity between the two traditions that could be described in the subsequent way: The Daoist and Xuanxue views on the ineffability of the *dao* entail the bifurcation into two epistemological fields which nonetheless are

inseparable. Similarly, the Buddhist discourse on the true sense of emptiness, which reaches beyond word and thought, distinguishes *prajñā* from conventional knowledge, although the realm of ultimate truth cannot be set apart from conditioned co-arising. Both Daoists and Buddhists elaborate on what constitutes the ever changing world of distinct things. They distance all the differences, which exist between things, from what sustains such differentiation and thereby outline the paradox of immanence, which expresses indeterminacy rather than contradiction: differences among things point back to the cohesive force of equality (indeterminacy), and such equality again is what allows for the sense of a distinct thing.

The epistemological significance of this paradox consists in disclosing two contrary yet complementary levels of knowing and understanding, neither of which alone can fully comprehend our being in this ever-changing world. Despite this structural similarity in Buddhist, Daoist, as well as Xuanxue epistemological discussions, there is a major difference in terms of their ontological positions, as has been shown in the sections about the nature of all things according to Guo Xiang and Madhyamaka thought. The Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness entails the illusiveness of the world of distinct things, whereas the Daoist and Xuanxue texts affirm the reality of the *dao* and all the things that come into being by virtue of its efficacy.

Nevertheless, Sengzhao incorporates not only Daoist and Xuanxue rhetoric but also the sense of “spontaneity” or “self-so” (*ziran*) into his account of how we can accomplish an understanding of true emptiness. This resonates further with Zhiyi’s and Jizang’s elaborations on Buddhist liberation. Based on such observations, the present article tries to show that Daoist and Xuanxue thought, which propounds an imperturbable stance to the ever changing world and its contingency, has conceptually influenced the Chinese Madhyamaka discussions about that crucial concern in Buddhist soteriology.

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Chapter 6

The Epistemology and Process of Buddhist Nondualism: The Philosophical Challenge of Egalitarianism in Chinese Buddhism



Sandra A. Wawrytko

The nondualistic foundation of Buddhist philosophy logically entails an egalitarianism that not only acknowledges the Buddha-nature of all human beings, but speaks of Buddha wisdom as “embracing all species” (Watson 1993: 32). Thus, unlike the New Testament scenario in which the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25: 32–33), no one is relegated to the unrighteous category of goats destined for eternal damnation. More importantly, there are no sheep in need of herding nor is there a shepherd who must protect and manage them. A Buddha or Tathāgata (*rulai* 如来) merely inspires our aspiration to become a Buddha as well. This role as facilitator is clearly set forth in the *Lotus Sūtra* when the Buddha describes a four stage process of opening the door to inherent Buddha wisdom, showing it to beings, causing them to awaken to it, and finally inducing them “to enter the path of Buddha wisdom” (Watson 1993: 31).

As Buddhism expanded across Asia, it encountered numerous challenges when ingrained cultural mores were threatened by its doctrines. Peter N. Gregory asserts that to the Chinese “Buddhism was very much an alien religion that violated many of the most central values of Chinese culture” (Gregory 1983: 232). Confucians assailed the ideal of a celibate lifestyle for undermining family values, more specifically the duty to procreate. Monastics also were castigated as parasites living off the labors of others. Xenophobic attacks condemned the Buddha as a mere barbarian measured against Chinese cultural standards (evidenced by his strange speech and dress). Indeed, one may well ask what did it have to offer such a well-entrenched and vibrant civilization?

The foundational doctrines of Buddhist philosophy were much less problematic. Since the experience of suffering (*duḥkha*) or dysfunction is a common part of human life, Buddhism resonated with Chinese audiences. Li Zehou 李泽厚

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describes the condition of China as Buddhism became ascendant: “the grim reality was that for four hundred years, from the disintegration of the Eastern Han empire to the reunification of the country in the Tang Dynasty by the House of Li, society as a whole was in a constant state of war, famine, plague, and disorder, with only intermittent spells of peace and regional stability” (Li 1988: 147).¹ By directly addressing the ubiquitousness of suffering, Buddhists offered ways to cope that were not available in either Confucian or Daoist philosophy.

Moreover, the Buddhist doctrines of impermanence (*anitya*; *wu-chang* 無常) and interconnectedness (*pratītya-samutpāda*; *yuan-qi* 緣起) were compatible with the proto-science of yin 陰 and yang 陽 energies embedded in China’s cultural core.² The characters for yin and yang presumably depict two different sets of causes and conditions under which a landscape could be viewed—a mountain 𡵓 basking in the sun 易 for yang, compared to yin’s cloud-covered 云 mountain. The *Yijing* 易經 tracked the natural patterns of change produced by the complementary yin and yang energies, constituting the Great Ultimate or *Taiji* 太極. The sun and moon succeed each other in the daily cycle just as winter follows summer and summer follows winter in the ongoing cycle of the seasons.

Change or impermanence also involves interactions—movement from potential energy (yin) to kinetic energy (yang), the heart’s rhythm of diastolic action (blood flowing in) and systolic action (blood spurting out), even the apparent effortlessness of breathing in and breathing out. Martin Luther King Jr. acknowledged the same web of interrelationships: “all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality” (King 1967).

A “natural” hierarchy also was imposed upon these primal energies of yin and yang, extending to human beings. Confucians distinguished between the *junzi* 君子 and the *xiaoren* 小人, respectively the profound person qualified to be a leader and the petty person relegated to the role of follower. Four of the Five Relationships are hierarchical: the minister is presumed subordinate to the ruler just as the wife is to the husband, the son to the parent, and the younger sibling to the elder; equality was recognized only between friends. Neo-Confucian ZHU Xi 朱熹 designated yang as “positive spiritual force,” relegating yin to the role of “negative spiritual force” (Chan 1963: 644). Even the Daoists distinguished an elite minority that emulated

¹Li compares viewing early Chinese Buddhist art to “reading a tragic poem or a tale of suffering.” Unfortunately he assumes Buddhist philosophy to be escapist. The Buddhist “gods” depicted are judged to be devoid of emotional engagement, possessed of “an air of contempt for the world of reality, expressed in sagacious smile as if it had seen through everything. Thus the figures displayed composure, aloofness, grace, and wisdom amid the miserable world of terror, bloodshed, and chilling brutality portrayed in the surrounding murals” (Li 1988: 148, 150).

²Without the cultural equivalent of an *ātman*, the *an-ātman* doctrine was subject to modifications in China. “Instead of the Hinayanist no-self or no-soul (*anatman*), Mahayana finally revealed the ‘self’ or ‘great soul’ that is the Buddha-nature. Ultimate reality was not just empty (*sunya*) of self-nature but, in a more important sense, also not-empty (*asunya*) of the infinitely positive attributes of Buddha” (Lai 2003: 8).

Dao 道 from the majority estranged from Dao. Laozi 老子 contrasts the ideal Sage-Ruler with the pompous worldlings. Zhuangzi 莊子 symbolizes Great Knowledge as the overarching Peng Bird and Small Knowledge as the limited little dove and cicada, casting himself as a tranquil ox while his argumentative friend Huizi 惠子 is identified as a self-destructive weasel. Even Mozi's 墨子 famous doctrine of Universal Love (*jian ai* 兼愛) allowed for a distinction between worthies who should be elevated and obedient followers.

This chapter investigates ways in which Chinese Buddhists grappled with the philosophy of nondualism that radically redefined reality and then contributed to an understanding of the epistemological process of living nondualism. The egalitarian implications of nondualism had been challenging even within Indian culture. Among the Buddha's own disciples the divisiveness of caste distinctions lingered. Some who had been born into brahmin families were denigrated as traitors to their caste:

The Brahmin caste is the highest caste, other castes are base; the Brahmin caste is fair, other castes are dark; Brahmins are purified, non-Brahmins are not, the Brahmins are the true children of Brahma, born from his mouth, born of Brahma, created by Brahma, heirs of Brahma. And you, you have deserted the highest class and gone over to the base class of shoveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahma's foot! It's not right, it's not proper for you to mix with such people! (Walshe 1995).

Unsympathetic to their distress over a deluded view of caste consciousness, Buddha responds by debunking the mythological origin story. He points out that, like every other human being, self-identified Brahmins are born not from the mouth of Brahma but from the uterus of their mothers.

New challenges arose for Buddhist nondualism in China as a transformative insight into one's own identity, an identity shared with others as the very ground of reality/Suchness (*tathātā*; *zhenru* 真如). Pedagogical and meditational practices facilitated a move beyond mere intellectual understanding of Suchness to an "existential" realization of Suchness. Three dimensions of this process are discussed here:

1. "Provoking an Epistemological Shift"—The *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*; *Miaofa Lianhua Jing* 妙法蓮華經) and the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; *Jingang Bore Boluomiduo Jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜多經) were key texts that stimulated philosophical discussion concerning universal buddhahood. The arts also were employed to promote the necessary shift in thinking by helping Chinese practitioners visualize egalitarian scenarios. The *icchantika* [great desire, one steeped in desire] controversy focused on debates about who, if anyone, was excluded from awakening reflects the difficulties encountered in this process.
2. "Hierarchical Tendencies in Daoist and Confucian Philosophies"—The Buddhist goal of a non-discriminating mind was largely at odds with Chinese views of Nature as a model for innate hierarchies. Confucian philosophy's humanism was avidly anthropocentric. Despite Daoism's resonance with many Buddhist principles, Laozi and Zhuangzi recognized distinctions in both human and non-human relationships.

3. “Nondualism and the Hybrid Brain”—Once hierarchical distinctions are recognized as mental constructs, Buddha Wisdom and awakening are universally accessible, the “wisdom embracing all species.” This Wisdom Gone Beyond (*prajñā-pāramitā*; *bore boluomiduo* 般若波羅蜜多) manifests Compassion grounded in Wisdom, reflecting the integrated functioning of the hybrid brain. Neuroscientific models provide a contemporary context for understanding the epistemological process of nondualism through the Five Ranks (*wu-wei* 五位) of Chan philosophers. The universal and particular dimensions correspond to the ventral (allocentric) and dorsal (egocentric) attentional systems by which the brain processes data and engages with reality.

1 Provoking an Epistemological Shift

Buddhism’s nondualism follows from the historical Buddha’s Middle Way (*madhyamā-pralipad*; *zhongdao* 中道) between hedonism and asceticism, which evolved into Nāgārjuna’s profound Middle Way Between Affirming and Denying (*Mādhyamaka*; *zhong guan pai* 中觀派). Kenneth K. Inada succinctly conveys the radical intent of this doctrine: “the Buddhist middle path is not simply a refined balancing act. Its essence is the achievement of that insight which crushes all views (*dr̥ṣṭi*) that might become obstacles to the normal flow of life, whether of the two extremes or even of the middle itself” (Inada 1969: 117). *The Great Wisdom Gone Beyond Heart Sūtra* (*Māha Prajñā Pāramitā Hridaya Sūtra*; *Bore Boluomiduo Xin Jing* 般若波羅蜜多心經) refers to such views or cognitive obstacles as “thought-coverings” (*a-citta-āvarah*), which bodhisattvas have seen through to glimpse the true nature of reality (Conze 2001: 101).

Buddhist nondualism created an opportunity for Chinese philosophers to critically examine their own thought coverings, thereby expanding their philosophical horizons. Over the course of many centuries some of the most brilliant minds applied themselves to the challenge of first grasping and then propagating this radical revisioning of reality, predicated on an epistemological revolution. One’s core sense of identity, as well as the identity of all presumed dharmas, is transformed. The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* forcefully refers to this as an “overturning” (*parāvṛitti*) of existence (*bhave*) (Red Pine 2012: 28–29).

The anxiety-inducing “good news” of universal Buddhahood is perhaps most clearly set forth in the *Lotus Sūtra*, a text vastly popular in China both for its exceptional literary style and awe-inspiring scenes of exotic worlds and beings. The second chapter, “*Upāya*” (*fang bian* 方便) reveals the Buddha’s use of the Three Vehicles to prepare his followers for the otherwise inconceivable One Buddha Vehicle. The gradualist options of voice-hearer (*shengwen* 聲聞), pratyekabuddha (*yuanjue* 緣覺), and bodhisattva practices were nothing more than skillful means wielded to provoke the necessary shift from a dualistic to a nondualistic epistemology. Yet the audience members are filled with doubt, unable to accept their potential for Buddhahood.

As the chapter opens, Buddha proclaims that Buddha wisdom is unattainable for voice-hearers and pratyekabuddhas, stirring doubt and confusion in the minds of the audience members. Rather than dismissing their potential for awakening, the Buddha is encouraging them to think outside their self-imposed limitations, to see their true identity as potential buddhas. Of those assembled five thousand labeled as “overbearingly arrogant” are so deeply entrenched in their narrow misidentification that they walk out en masse (Watson 1993: 30). The core message is delivered directly in an often overlooked passage:

... at the start I took a vow,
hoping to make all persons
equal to me, without distinction between us,
and what I long ago hoped for
has now been fulfilled.
I have converted all living beings
And caused them all to enter the Buddha way (Watson 1993: 36).

All practitioners are already bodhisattvas, even if they mistakenly assume they are following another vehicle (Watson 1993: 43, 45). And every bodhisattva is poised on the threshold of Buddha wisdom.

In chapter 8, “Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples,” the arhats referred to in the title joyously voice their realization of their past error: “although we were capable of attaining the wisdom of the Thus Come One, we were willing to content ourselves with petty wisdom” (Watson 1993: 150). Chapter 10, “The Teacher of the Law,” offers encouragement in the form of the Digging for Water Parable directed at bodhisattva Medicine King. In digging for water, signs of dampness and mud strengthen a thirsty person’s determination to persevere. Similarly, the message of the *sūtra* facilitates realization: “if the person is able to hear, understand, ponder and practice the sutra, then you should know that he can draw near to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi [supreme perfect enlightenment]” (Watson 1993: 166). More specifically, we are instructed to “enter the Thus Come One’s room” (the mind of compassion), “put on the Thus Come One’s robe” (the mind of gentleness and forbearance), and “sit in the Thus Come One’s seat” (emptiness) (Watson 1993: 166–67). The Thus Come One and the practitioner are in reality not two, nondual. Artistic depictions of this chapter aim at the same effect—“we are prompted to experience a perceptual double take: we may see the same Buddha image both as Śākyamuni preaching the Lotus Sutra and as a believer-turned-Buddha ... who has entered the Buddha’s ‘room’ to preach the same sutra after Śākyamuni’s nirvana,” inviting the viewer to do the same (Wang 2005: 242).³

Artists sought to shape and provoke “interior visualizations” in viewers by depicting stories of empowerment drawn from the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, but especially from the *Lotus Sūtra*, by means of a “collective ‘protopicture’.” (Wang 2005: 75). This would include a visualization of oneself as an awakening being or potential

³Wang reports that, due to the perfection of “pictorial illusionism,” there was a widespread belief in the Tang Dynasty that one could literally enter into a well-crafted mural. This painting style imported from India can be seen in the famous Buddhist caves at Dunhuang.

Buddha, thus fostering an epistemological shift from dualistic to nondualistic awareness. Mirrors also were used to establish the connection between buddhas and practitioners. Images of bodhisattvas and buddhas carved on the surface of a bronze mirror allowed one to literally see oneself as an awakening or awakened being (Wang 2005: 249).

Addressing a more sophisticated audience of monastics in the *Diamond Sūtra*, the Buddha skillfully redirects Subhūti's focus from the Bodhisattva vehicle to Buddhahood. What is required transcends mere philosophy or intellect, derived "from the experience of some definite turning in the activity of the mind" (Suzuki 1999: 105). The process resembles Triple Loop learning, "an 'epistemo-existential strategy' for profound change on various levels ... The (cognitive) processes and attitudes of receptivity, suspension, redirecting, openness, deep knowing, as well as 'profound change/innovation from the interior' turn out to be core concepts in this process" (Peschl 2007: 136). Three interrelated cycles of stopping and shifting epistemological perspectives are implemented. Thus "the understanding of learning as a process of transferring more or less stable chunks of knowledge from one brain to another is replaced by a more dynamic perspective: learning as a continuous and active process of adaptation and construction in which knowledge is developed in permanent interaction between the cognitive system and its environment" (Peschl 2007: 137).⁴ Three such loops can be discerned in the exchanges between Buddha and Subhūti, as summarized below.

Single loop	Double loop	Triple loop
STOP "inefficiency" of shared epistemological resources fixation on the Bodhisattva Vehicle is questioned	STOP "insufficiency" of shared epistemological resources <i>upāyic</i> doctrines are inadequate to convey reality	STOP "inadequacy" of epistemological resources there is a workable option: the Buddha Vehicle
SHIFT change how we think about the role of a bodhisattva: no savior no one to be saved no salvation	SHIFT change how we talk about Buddhist practice: X is not X and therefore is called X	SHIFT reject "instituted imaginary" ("thought coverings") and change how we live: remain non-abiding or unsupported

Subhūti's initial request to learn how those on the Bodhisattva path should "stand [*pratiṣṭhita*; *zhu* 住], how progress, how control their thoughts" (Conze 2001: 13) is gradually deconstructed through an intricate dialectical dance driven by cognitive dissonance. The discussion then turns to the actual identity of a bodhisattva, wherein Buddha rejects the common assumption of a dualism between a being who is a savior distinct from beings in need of salvation. Any conception of self or being, soul or personhood, must be relinquished. In other words, the bodhisattva "savior"

⁴Confucius seems to apply a similar pedagogical approach when he presents one corner and expects his student to find the other three on their own initiative (*Lun Yu* 7:8).

and the one saved are not two, nondual. The applicability of standard Buddhist terminology is repeatedly questioned using the formula X is not X, and therefore has been called X. Multiple passages emphasize the need to liberate oneself from perceptions/conceptions (Conze 2001: 51–54, 56–57):

- 14 “true perception, that is indeed no perception”
 “the Buddhas, the Lords have left all perceptions behind”
 [especially concepts of self-identity—I, human being, living being, soul]
 the bodhisattva “got rid of all perceptions”
 “All supports have actually no support”
 “Those all-beings of whom the Tathagata has spoken, they are indeed no-beings.”
 practitioners are “seen, Subhuti, by the Tathagata with his [non-discriminating] Buddha-eye”
- 15 “unthinkable and incomparable is this discourse on Dharma”
- 16 “the Tathagata has taught this discourse on Dharma as unthinkable, so just an unthinkable karma result should be expected from it.”
- 17 “He who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle he is not one of the dharmas.”
 “There is not any dharma by which the Tathagata, when he was with the Tathagata Dipankara, has fully known the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.”

The Buddha’s ultimate response to Subhūti’s ill-conceived query overturns its erroneous premise that any support is needed: “the Bodhisattva, the great being, should produce an unsupported [*apratisthita*; *wu-zhu* 無住] thought, i.e., a thought which is nowhere supported, a thought unsupported by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or mind-objects” (Conze 2001: 45). The profound impact of this dynamic learning process on Subhūti is attested to by his tears of joy, signaling the existential depths that have been plumbed. This is triple loop learning at its best, which “touches the person on his/her fundamental level of being and, in many cases, concerns the domain of wisdom” (Peschl 2007: 138).

Significantly the passage declaring the bodhisattva’s “unsupported” status has been identified in some versions of the *Platform Sūtra* (*Liuzu Tanjing* 六祖壇經) as the catalyst to the awakening of the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng 慧能.⁵ During a late night session with the Fifth Patriarch: “When he came to the phrase, ‘One should activate one’s mind so it has no attachment,’ I was suddenly and completely enlightened, and understood that all things exist in self-nature” (Addiss et al. 2008:

⁵ See Red Pine 2006: 111. While fully acknowledging the scholarly skepticism concerning the life of Huineng and the legitimacy of his title as Sixth Patriarch, it is nonetheless the case that the teachings ascribed to him exerted a sweeping influence on the evolution of the Chan school. Hu Shi attributes the entire phenomenon to an “internal revolution” sparked by Huineng’s enterprising disciple: “Shen-hui himself was a product of a revolutionary age in which great minds in the Buddhist and Ch’an schools were, in one way or another, thinking dangerous thoughts and preaching dangerous doctrines” (Hu 1953: 13).

26). Subsequently Huineng expounded his core doctrines of “no-thought” *wu-nian* 無念, “no-form” *wu-xiang*⁶ 無相, and most importantly “no-attachment” or “non-abiding” *wu-zhu* 無住.

Thought must be emptied out due to our fixation on intellectual constructs, which we mistake for reality (e.g., Plato’s Forms). However this does not entail the futile attempt to eradicate thinking: “‘No’ negates dualities and afflictions. And ‘thought’ is thought about the original nature of reality” (Red Pine 2006: 13). Form or phenomenon poses a problem due to our fixation on experience, our past interactions with what appears to be external reality. Attachment or abiding arises from our obsession to find the place to take a stand. This promotes dogmatism while blocking awareness of the actual impermanence of reality. Accordingly, Huineng instructs his students “Don’t create a bunch of delusions. You yourself are the nature of suchness. View all dharmas with wisdom. Neither grasp nor reject them. This is the way to see your nature and become a buddha” (Red Pine 2006: 174–75).

Huineng’s egalitarian perspective is demonstrated when he does not distinguish between great people and small people, merely between those with “great capacity” and those with “small capacity.” Although the latter have easily disrupted “shallow roots,” their underlying potential remains intact: “they all possess the wisdom of prajna, the same as people who are truly wise.... It’s because all these beings have deluded themselves into looking for a buddha through external practices and haven’t yet realized their own nature that they remain people of small capacity” (Red Pine 2006: 23). He quotes a supportive sentiment from the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (*Weimojie Suoshuo Jing* 維摩詰所說經) that characterizes his own practice of Chan: “Suddenly all at once you rediscover your own mind” (Red Pine 2006: 24).

Hu Shi identifies a three stage learning process in Chan pedagogy resembling the Triple Loop process identified in the *Diamond Sūtra* above. Countering D. T. Suzuki’s emphasis on the irrationality of Chan/Zen, Hu states a “careful and sympathetic examination of the comparatively authentic records of the Ch’an schools and of the testimony of contemporary witnesses and critics has convinced me that beneath all the apparent madness and confusion there is a conscious and rational method which may be described as a method of education by the hard way, by letting the individual find out things through his own effort and through his own ever-widening life-experience” (Hu 1953: 21). As in the *Diamond Sūtra*, cognitive dissonance is employed to stop habitual patterns of thought and thereby provoke the shift signaling epistemological revolution. The process is outlined here (Hu 1953: 21–22).

⁶The term *xiang*, Sanskrit *lakṣaṇa*, is often translated as “form.” Other translations, such as “perception” or “conception,” highlight the cognitive processing involved in the mind’s experience of form or phenomenon. Red Pine renders *xiang* as “memory,” aligning thought, memory, and attachment with future, past, and present respectively, as well as the Three Poisons of greed, anger, and delusion (Red Pine 2006: 175).

Stage one “never tell too plainly” <i>bu shuo po</i> 不说破 [change how we think]	Stage two “eccentric methods of answering questions” [change how we speak]	Stage three “traveling on foot” <i>xing jiao</i> 行脚 [change how we live]
“It is the duty of the teacher never to make things too easy for the novice; he must not explain things in too plain language; he must encourage him to do his own thinking and to find out things for himself.”	“Wen-yen 文偃 (died 949), founder of the Yün-men School, was asked ‘What is the Buddha like?’ he answered: ‘A dried stick of dung.’ ... Such an answer is not nonsensical at all; it harks back to the iconoclastic teachings of his spiritual grandfather, Hsüan-chien”	“He sees the world and meets all kinds of people. He studies under the great minds of the age and learns to ask better questions and have real doubts of his own. He befriends kindred souls with whom he discusses problems and exchanges views. In this way, his experience is widened and deepened, and his understanding grows. Then, one day, he hears a chance remark of a charwoman, or a frivolous song of a dancing girl, or smells the quiet fragrance of a nameless flower-and he suddenly understands!”

Wing-tsit Chan has a similar understanding of the Chan methodology as a means “to broaden a person’s vision, sharpen his imagination, sensitize his mind so he can see and grasp truth instantly any time and anywhere” (Chan 1963: 429).

The incredulous response of Chinese practitioners to nondualistic claims of universal Buddhahood is demonstrated by the vehemence of the *icchantika* controversy. This apparent effort to reinstate some semblance of hierarchical order into the awakening experience parallels attempts by competing Buddhist schools to devise a hierarchical ranking of various *sūtras*. One category of *icchantika* 一闍提 (一闍提迦) is defined as “utterly depraved, abandoned, and blasphemers of Buddha-truth” (Soothill and Hodous 1934: 9). Their exclusion from awakening was based on such factors as age, gender, or species, or even career choice. Another kind is essentially a bodhisattva, someone who has vowed to forego awakening until all beings can do likewise, referred to as “the *icchantika* of great mercy” 大悲闍提 (Soothill and Hodous 1934: 28). A third group was deemed to be “without a nature for final nirvāṇa” 無性闍提, (Soothill and Hodous 1934: 73).

How can we reconcile what seem to be contradictory categories of exclusion? Ming-Wood Liu suggests “that the *icchantikas* are not just ordinary sinners who happen to violate the ways of thinking and rules of conduct of the Buddhist religion. Rather, they are renegade Buddhists, who purposely disclaim all the principles to which they have formerly sworn allegiance; and the extreme severity of the assaults against the *icchantikas* in the MNS [*Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*] testifies indirectly to the intense internal conflict and spiritual crisis the Buddhist saṅgha was confronting at that time” (Liu 1984: 62). In the *Lotus Sūtra* we find evidence of such renegades in the five thousand “overbearingly arrogant” monastics and laypeople who stage a walkout after the Buddha asks the assembly to “listen attentively and carefully ponder” why voice-hearers and pratyeka-buddhas cannot comprehend his message

(Watson 1993: 30). The preaching of the Three Vehicles subsequently is revealed to be an *upāyic* strategy, now replaced by the One Buddha Vehicle taught for bodhisattvas, who thereby “will be released from all entanglements of doubt” (Watson 1993: 45). The implication is that all practitioners are in fact bodhisattvas, despite their deluded self-identifications.

Each *icchantika* category is not only explicitly rejected in many Buddhist texts, but also philosophically indefensible. Wing-Cheuk Chan argues “in complying with the principle of indeterminacy, no sentient being is fixed in nature. In particular, no sentient being is condemned to be an *icchantika*. This shows that in granting Buddha-nature to all sentient beings, the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* commits to antiessentialism” (Chan 2010: 279). The thought covering of essentialism seems to be precisely the kind of *drṣṭi* that Inada banishes from the Middle Way, as mentioned above. Each of the three types of impediments associated with an *icchantika*—past behavior, a deluded self-sacrificing commitment to the bodhisattva path, and alleged inferior nature—is countered by specific cases of those least likely to succeed at awakening who do in fact succeed. Quite often these buddhas-to-be are found outside the presumed Buddhist norm of monastic practice. In the early Theravādan texts we encounter the serial killer Angulimāla, who not only redeems himself by becoming the monk Ahimsā, but also earns his own eponymous *sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya*). Devadatta, who devised multiple plots to assassinate the historical Buddha, receives a prophecy of future awakening in *Lotus Sūtra* (chapter 12). The same chapter chronicles the instantaneous awakening of the dragon king’s young daughter, which is initially rejected by Śāriputra due to her gender, age, and species. Śāriputra also demonstrates a sexist bias when he questions the goddess in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. Despite the highest recommendation from the Buddha, Vimalakīrti’s own expertise in the Dharma elicits skepticism due to his lay status. The *sūtra*’s theme of nondualism is in fact reflected in the melding of the two expounders of Dharma, Buddha and Vimalakīrti. Even the notorious demon Rāvaṇa is portrayed in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as having “felt an awakening and transformation of his consciousness, as he realized what appeared was nothing but the perceptions of his own mind, and he found himself in a realm free from such projections” (Red Pine 2012: 31). In the *Diamond Sūtra* the Buddha redirects Subhūti’s attention from Bodhisattvahood to Buddhahood by challenging the misconception that Bodhisattvas are saviors of other beings: “If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a ‘being’ should take place, he could not be called a ‘Bodhi-being,’” due to the erroneous dualism of self vs. other (Conze 2001: 16).

A unique Chinese example of the least likely to succeed was crafted in the “autobiography” of Huineng, casting him as the Cinderella of Chan. Against all odds and in defiance of logic, this illiterate barbarian layman became the Sixth Patriarch. The *Platform Sūtra* is storytelling at its finest, designed to engage as well as empower its readers. Themes of alien identity, unworthiness, and rejection are interwoven with anecdotes concerning the hero’s resoluteness, ultimate vindication, and compassion in triumph. Hui-neng explicitly rejects the *icchantika* hypothesis, citing a passage from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*; *Dabo Niepan Jing*

大般涅槃經) in which the Buddha states that “buddha nature is neither permanent nor impermanent.” Hui-neng concludes “what cannot be cut off is what is meant by ‘beyond duality.’ ... those who are wise understand that their nature is beyond duality. The nature that is beyond duality is the buddha nature” (Red Pine 2006: 123–124). The same message was set forth by his predecessor, the attributed Third Patriarch of Chan, Sengcan 僧璨 (*Trust in Mind; Xinxin Ming* 信心銘):

To abide in this world
Just say “Not two.”
“Not two” includes everything,
Excludes nothing (Addiss et al. 2008: 17).

2 Hierarchical Tendencies in Daoist and Confucian Philosophies

What accounts for the persuasiveness of the *icchantika* doctrine in Chinese Buddhism, despite ample evidence of a nondualistic philosophy espoused by influential masters? Why did Buddhist practitioners believe in the existence of “scorched seeds” unable to sprout under any circumstances? (Liu 1984: 66). As noted above, the primal complementarity of yin and yang in the *Yijing* seemed to make Chinese culture receptive to nondualism on many levels. Harmony often has been hailed as the keynote of Chinese philosophical wisdom, in contrast to an abiding dualism that has permeated Amero-eurocentric philosophies. Thomé H. Fang has contrasted the destabilizing pendulum swings of ancient Greek and modern European civilization with China’s “search for harmony,” citing Nietzsche’s critique of a clash between Apollonian “righteous Reason (*Dike*)” and Dionysian “Feeling,” causing the decay of both. Fang uses the figure of Faust to represent the emergence of science, whereby the “artistic passion” of the Renaissance seeking to revitalize Greek tradition becomes contravened by the Baroque era’s flourishing “scientific intellect,” paving the way for extravagant escapism of the Rococo period. Fang credits the humanistic orientation shared by Laozi 老子, Confucius 孔子, and Mozi 墨子 with insuring that theirs is “the only sound mode of philosophizing” (Fang 1937). Wing-tsit Chan concurs: “Taoism is essentially humanistic, for, like Confucianism, its ideal person is the sage, who brings about social order and good government. The *Tao-tê-ching* and the *Chuang Tzu* are both chiefly concerned with how to live in this world and how to govern” (Chan 1957-58: 107).

The lingering impediment to nondualism may reside in this humanism extolled by Fang, which blocks the Buddhist recognition of “wisdom embracing all species.” As Inada warns us, the Buddhist Middle Way is not a mere harmonizing “balancing act,” but rather an “insight” that rejects fixation on all set doctrines (Inada 1969: 117). Hierarchical ordering inherently undermines egalitarianism. Non-discriminating mind must “crush” the anthropocentric perspective that privileges the human, and hence relinquish an exclusionary humanism.

Laozi, apparently describing Dao, advocates a centered approach in chapter five of the *Dao De Jing* (道德經):

Between Heaven and Earth it looks as if it were a bellows:
 Vacuous and yet inexhaustible,
 The more it is worked, the more it brings forth.
 Excessive words tend toward self-exhaustion.
 Rather, better to hold onto (*shou* 埊) the middle (中 *zhong*)
 (Fu and Wawrytko 2009: 100).

However, in chapter 28, Laozi instructs us to adhere to yin rather than yang: knowing or being aware of (*zhi* 知) the male, the white, glory while holding fast to or abiding in (*shou* 埊) the female, the black, and obscurity. This may be read as a rebalancing of cosmic energies, which in human civilization have allowed yang and its *wei* 為 machinations to estrange us from Dao. The cunning intellect that blindly narrows our grasp of reality (the discriminating function of the human mind) must expand to recover the default of the Dao's eye view (allocentric responsiveness to the full scope of *zi-ran* 自然).

Nondualism is implied when Laozi casts Dao as the Mother and the Ten Thousand Things (*wan-wu* 萬物) as her multiple species children. Nonetheless a dualistic flavor emerges in his depiction of the Sage Ruler. Emulating Mother Dao, one must care for the masses. However, there is no vow "to make all persons/equal to me, without distinction between us," such as Buddha reveals in the *Lotus Sūtra* (Watson 1993: 36). Furthermore, no claim is made that cunning intellect will cease to exist under the rulership of the Daoist Sage, only that under those circumstances "the cunning dare not act" (Fu and Wawrytko 2009: 109).

Zhuangzi 莊子 appears to be more aligned with Buddhist nondualism and egalitarianism than Laozi. Kim-chong Chong challenges a humanist, anthropocentric characterization of Zhuangzi's philosophy, arguing that he advocated "nonhierarchical and pluralist values," inclusive of non-human species, even plants, such that his work "has a liberating effect" (Chong 2016: 18–19). What seems to be lacking, however, is the compassion that ought to arise from wisdom once we grasp the underlying dynamic of *duhkha* and the deluded construct of ego-self.

Paralleling a reference to "petty wisdom" in the *Lotus Sūtra*'s (Watson 1993: 150), and Huineng's mention of "small capacity" (Red Pine 2006: 23), Zhuangzi distinguishes between "small knowledge" and "great knowledge" in his opening chapter, "Leisurely Strolling" (*Xiaoyao You* 逍遙遊) (Fu and Wawrytko 2009: 167, 165). In each case this would seem to leave open the possibility of expanding one's knowledge base. Yet the examples provided by Zhuangzi suggest the innate limitations of those with small knowledge. Can the cicada and little dove ever match the size and scope of the Peng Bird, or an ordinary person aspire to the longevity of Pengzi? Distinct gradations also are noted among those moving toward useful uselessness—the selfless perfect person, the meritless spiritual person, and the nameless sage. Moreover, there is no indication that Zhuangzi assumed his friend and sparring partner Huizi could abandon his weasel existence to live as Zhuangzi's ox.

Zhuangzi's second chapter, provocatively titled "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" (*Qiwu Lun* 齊物論) would seem to support nondualism. We are

introduced to several examples of reconciling, or at least coping with, extremes. The monkey trainer mollifies his outraged charges not by increasing their allotment of acorns, but by merely reversing the order in which provisions are dispensed—going from ‘three in the morning and four at night’ to ‘four in the morning and three at night.’ While we are informed that this delights the monkeys, it does nothing to enlighten them. This is presented as the Daoist Middle Path of “Heaven the Equalizer” (Watson 1968: 41). A similar fatalistic streak is apparent in Zhuangzi’s analysis of the futility involved in deciding rightness and wrongness in an argument. We are advised to leave others to their own errors and safeguard oneself: “Harmonize them all with the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years” (Watson 1968: 48). In contrast, Laozi proclaims “Heaven [’s Dao] protects with compassion,” listing courageous compassion as the first of his three treasures, by which “one triumphs in battle;/And is secure in defense” (*Dao De Jing* 67; Fu and Wawrytko 2009: 148).

A pan-species note is most clearly sounded in the famous Butterfly Dream (*meng die* 梦蝶) passage expounding on “the Transformation of Things” (*wu hua* 物化). Zhuangzi poses provocative questions about the fundamental identity of a human or a non-human. If each can dream the existence of the other, are they one or two? Nondual or dual? No definitive answer is given, although our philosopher does declare “Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there must be some distinction!” (*Zhou yu hudie ze biyou fen yi* 周与蝴蝶则必有分矣) (Watson 1968: 49). Given Zhuangzi’s critique of language, the distinction could be merely verbal. A mutual fluidity does seem to be implied, consistent with other observations by Zhuangzi, such as a warning against “trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same” (Watson 1968: 41).

There is also a certain resonance between the *Zhuangzi* text and the *Diamond Sūtra* regarding the role of language in imposing human constructs on reality. Zhuangzi notes “What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable. A road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called” (Watson 1968: 40). But while Zhuangzi casts the sage as content in “walking two roads,” Inada characterizes the Middle Path as ultimately ‘no path’ (Inada 1969: 117). The *Diamond Sūtra*’s multiple variations on the formula: “x is not x, and therefore is called x,” demonstrate a refusal to surrender to what is acceptable or unacceptable within consensus reality. Hence the Buddhist is not merely content to recognize the problem posed by the human language, but perseveres by implementing skillful means (*upāya*; *fang bian* 方便) to circumvent it for oneself, as well as showing others how to do the same.

As for the Confucian middle path, among the Four Books of primal Confucianism we have the *Zhong Yong* (中庸), commonly referred to as *The Doctrine of the Mean*. It adopts the phraseology of Confucius in the *Lun Yu* (論語) 6.29: “The Master said, ‘The excellence (*de* 德) required to hit the mark [*zhong yong*] in the everyday is of the highest order. That it is rare among people is an old story’” (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 110). In ZHU Xi’s commentary to the *Zhong Yong*, *zhong* is explained as “not one-sided” and *yong* as “unchangeable” (Chan 1963: 97). In this same vein, James Legge translates the term as “Constant Mean” (Legge 1935: 194). Wing-tsit Chan

renders *zhong* as “Equilibrium” (Chan 1963: 98). In the *Lun Yu* Confucius characterizes the moral ideal of the *junzi* as the very balancing act Inada specifically excludes from the Buddhist Middle Path: “the qualities of resolution, firmness, and dignity are balanced by others which are quite different. The gentleman is conciliatory, modest, humble, even mild. Indeed, as one looks closely at the descriptions of the gentleman, one finds a veritable *contre-danse* of opposites and balanced qualifications” (Morton 1971: 72). Hence Confucius advises (6:18) a proper balance between “basic disposition” (*zhi* 質) and “refinement” (*wen* 文) (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 107).

Aside from WANG Yangming 王陽明, who was influenced by Buddhism, there seems to be little room here for “wisdom embracing all species” among Confucian philosophers.⁷ The ideal of the Profound Person (*junzi* 君子), derived from a term for the aristocracy, has been rendered as “superior man” by early translators such as James Legge. Although Confucius speaks of a common nature being shared by all (*xing xiang jin ye* 性相近也), he also recognizes that practice creates divergences (*xi xiang yuan ye* 習相遠也) (*Lun Yu* 17:2). The *Lun Yu* contains numerous passages distinguishing between the abilities of elites and commoners (6:21, 8:9, 13:4), the wise and the good (6:23). While Confucius does not want to miss an opportunity to speak with a person who has potential, he also warns against wasting one’s words on those “who cannot be engaged” (15:8) (Ames and Rosemont 1998: 186).

Although restricted to human beings, Meng Zi’s 孟子 doctrine of the “original heart/mind” (*ben xin* 本心) often has been compared to Buddha nature. Nonetheless he upholds the “love with distinctions” (*ai yu qu bie* 愛與區別) doctrine criticized by the Mohists, moving from love for nonhuman species (*ai* 愛) to humaneness (*ren* 仁), while reserving intimate feelings (*qing* 情) for one’s family (7A:45; Lau 1970: 192). He also distinguished among the potentials of his students. While the Buddha is said to teach “for one great reason only,” namely guiding others to their Buddha wisdom (Watson 1993: 31), Mengzi provides five reasons for teaching, reflecting an inherent inequality among those seeking instruction:

Because some, as with parched earth after timely rain, are transformed by his teaching,
Because some perfect their virtue by his teaching,
Because some develop their talents by his teaching,
Because, for some, questions are thereby answered,
And because there are some who, indirectly, glean from it (Dobson 1969: 56).

Among the early Confucian philosophers, Xunzi is the most avid proponent of the discriminating mind. He offers the antithesis of Laozi’s *wu-wei* 無為 or “unpruned shrub” (*pu* 樸) in the exercise of human artifice (*wei*), which we might compare to an elaborate topiary. In fact, he insisted on a clear distinction between humans and Nature, which he considered a separate realm. For Xunzi order could be achieved only by the human imposition of *fen* 分, that is, by distinguishing social rankings, roles, and associated duties, as a corrective to our innate evil nature (*xing* 性). Like

⁷WANG Yangming’s concern extends beyond humans to include, birds, animals, plants, tiles, and stones; he declares “even the mind of the small man necessarily has the humanity that forms one body with all”(Chan 1963: 660).

warped wood, that nature must be “laid against the straightening board, steamed, and forced into shape before it can become straight” (Watson 1967: 157). Although, like Mengzi, Xunzi theoretically assumes anyone can transform themselves into a *junzi*, this cannot be compared with the promise of universal Buddhahood.

3 Nondualism and the Hybrid Brain

When nondualism is duly recognized, humanly-crafted and human-biased hierarchies succumb to sweeping egalitarianism. Chinese Buddhists made a lasting contribution to nondualistic philosophy by tracking how the seeming opposites of epistemological processing coalesce. In doing so they were able to address unresolved issues in Daoist nondualism: the relationship between yin and yang that remains opaque in Laozi’s text as well as ongoing speculations about the distinction between Zhuangzi and the dreamed/dreaming butterfly. Master Sessan explains the simplicity of reconciling seeming opposites: “The secret of seeing things as they are is to take off our coloured [sic] spectacles. That being-as-it-is, with nothing extraordinary about it, nothing wonderful is the great wonder. The ability to see things normally is no small thing; to be really normal is unusual” (Schloegl 1976: 56). This epistemological process can be clarified through neuroscientific studies of the complementary systems of attention in our bilateral brain.

The corresponding epistemological framework is contained in the Five Ranks *wu-wei* 五位, traced to Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价, which espouse both “the marvelous being of true emptiness” as well as “the true emptiness of marvelous being” (Dumoulin 1988: 225). This crowning philosophical achievement of the Chinese Buddhist embrace of nondualism developed by a succession of Masters has been characterized as Chan’s “most important dialectical formula” conveying “the quintessence of the enlightened view of reality” (*prajñā-pāramitā*) (Dumoulin 1988: 224–25). It outlines five epistemological stages in the awakening process through the interaction between our conceptions of universal and particular, noumenal and phenomenal, emptiness and being, clear and distorted, dynamic and stagnant, straight and bent. By questioning our simplistic distinction between these seeming opposites, the mind awakens to their complex complementarity and interaction.

Building on Xunzi’s reference to the warped wood of human nature, one pairing seems especially relevant—straight (*zheng*) and bent (*pian*). Epistemologically, they represent the awakened mind and mind that remains asleep, the mind that has shifted to an allocentric perspective and one that remains mired in an egocentric perspective. The five stages in the process of the shift are set forth as a series of realizations encapsulated in five poems:

1. The Bent within the Straight
2. The Straight within the Bent
3. The Coming from within the Straight
4. The Arrival at the Middle of the Bent
5. Unity Attained (Dumoulin 1988: 225–26).

Neuroscientists speak in terms of two attentional systems or networks: stimulus-driven ventral attention complementing task-oriented dorsal attention. Like the Straight, ventral attention is encompassing while dorsal attention is narrowly focused like the Bent. The ventral/Straight is considered the default mode of processing; the dorsal/Bent evolved later. In simplified terms, if you can see the forest by engaging ventral attention, then you can see the trees as well. However, if you apply dorsal attention to fixate on the trees, you lose awareness of the forest. Psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist explains this with references to ventral attention as right lateralized in the brain and dorsal attention as left lateralized (more accurately bilateral): “The right hemisphere prioritises [sic] whatever actually *is*, and what concerns us. It prefers existing things, real scenes and stimuli that can be made sense of in terms of the lived world.... the left hemisphere is more at home dealing with distorted, non-realistic, fantastic - ultimately artificial – images. This may be because they invite analysis by parts, rather than as a whole” (McGilchrist 2009: 56). Such distortions can be compared to the thought coverings of deluded or discriminating mind.

These neuroscientific findings may help us decipher the process underlying the Five Ranks. In “1. The Bent within the Straight” the Bent represents constructs of deluded mind, its thought coverings, distortions of the Straight—like the coiled rope misperceived as a snake. By narrowly focusing our attention on ego we lose touch with reality, constructing a virtual reality based on our fears and expectations. When the nondualistic link between the dorsal and ventral systems is disrupted, “perseveration” results in “an inability of the dorsal system to receive reorienting signals” (Fox et al. 2006: 10050).⁸ Nonetheless, “2. The Straight within the Bent” reveals that the Straight continues to reside within the Bent, even if it fails to be recognized. Hence the sleepy old woman cannot recognize her own face in the [mirror] mind. The ventral system’s “‘circuit-breaking’ signals ... provide an interrupt to the dorsal system, reorienting it toward salient stimuli,” thus broadening the scope of our perception (Fox et al. 2006: 10046). As Sengcan advises:

The more you think and talk,
The more you lose the way.
Cut off all thinking
And pass freely anywhere (Addiss et al. 2008: 15).

Once nonduality is realized (at least intellectually), one can discover “3. Coming from within the Straight” is “a path/Leading away from the dusts of the world” that can reconcile the apparent opposition (Dumoulin 1988: 26). Seeing through consen-

⁸Ventral attention is also prone to its own malfunction, “distractibility.” When the link to dorsal attention is broken, “an inability of the ventral system to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant stimuli” occurs (Fox et al. 2006: 10050). Buddhist practice prevents this by providing a focused grounding in Wisdom that ensures the highest possible allocentric emotions—benevolence *metta/maitrī*, compassion *karuṇā*, joy *muditā*, equanimity *upekṣā*. In the *Kalama Sutta* Buddha assures his audience that these Four Exalted Dwellings (*brahma-vihāras*) result from being “devoid of coveting, devoid of ill will, undeluded, clearly comprehending and mindful.” (Thera 1981)

sus reality, as does the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the *Heart Sūtra*, one realizes “form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form” (Conze 2001: 86). Hence the poem speaks of “the lotus blooming in the fire.” Moving on to “4. The Arrival at the Middle of the Bent” the two meet, like crossed swords, yet “There’s no need to withdraw” (Dumoulin 1988: 226). When contentiousness is removed the dorsal and ventral systems maintain a “functional interaction” (Fox et al. 2006: 10046). The dualistic either/or mindset is replaced by a both/and nondualism, reflected in Sengcan’s lines “Outside, don’t get tangled in things. /Inside, don’t get lost in emptiness” (Addiss et al. 2008: 14).

One more step remains, “5. Unity Attained”—“the oneness of unrestricted interpenetration in a freedom that surpasses all opposition” (Dumoulin 1988: 228). Heeding Sengcan, it is more precisely “Not two” (Addiss et al. 2008: 17). The capacities of both ventral and dorsal attention intertwine in the hybrid brain, insuring full access to reality. In fact, “flexible attentional control can only be implemented by dynamic interactions of both systems” (Vossel et al. 2013: 157). Studies suggest “the brain is active even in the absence of task, primarily driven by internal dynamics, with external events modulating rather than determining the activity of the system tasks or stimuli are not needed to observe the functional organization of the brain, rather it can be seen through patterns of ongoing spontaneous activity” (Fox et al. 2006: 10046).

James H. Austin, a neuroscientist who also is a seasoned Zen practitioner, serves as a guide in this discussion. He reports on an interview with Kobori-roshi in Japan “who emphasized that Zen is not a theology. It is a *living* system. It is oriented toward ego consciousness, not toward egocentricity. The sudden shift of consciousness that realizes this is called *prajna* ... the basic, central undivided knowledge-wisdom of enlightenment.” The roshi explained Zen as the default system of the mind, “the return to the basic simplicity of the undyed fabric,” with Zen practice as a deconditioning process, because the discriminating mind (task-driven dorsal attention) is easily confused by abstractions (Austin 2000: 61). The basic simplicity of the Straight, the default of ventral attention, nondualistically embraces the Bent just as plain fabric accepts a dye.

The Five Ranks can assist us in clarifying the nondualistic potential of Daoist philosophy. Laozi warns us about cunning intellect’s yang energy, the task-oriented system focused on spatial relationships among objects, including the dualistic relation of self and other. Its voluntary, intentional dorsal attention seeks to dominate through top down “executive control.” Laozi argues for reversion to the primal receptivity of yin energy aligned with Dao and life. This default system of stimulus-oriented, bottom up reflexive ventral attention allows for “orienting to exogenous cues; reorienting to unexpected events” and responding to “contextual cues” (Vossel et al. 2013: 157). This would reinstate the original relationship between the two attentional systems by prioritizing yin. McGilchrist imagines the left brain as an emissary or functionary for the right brain who has attempted a *coup d’état*, reversing the natural order. Laozi might well agree that “relentless growth of self-consciousness” has engendered “increasing difficulties in cooperation.” Moreover, McGilchrist judges the relationship to be asymmetrical: “the left hemisphere is ulti-

mately dependent on, one might almost say parasitic on, the right, though it seems to have no awareness of this fact” (McGilchrist 2009: 6). This accounts for Laozi’s advice to know the male/yang while holding fast to the female/yin (chapter 28 of the *Dao De Jing*).

As for Zhuangzi’s abstruseness concerning his relationship to the dreamed/dreaming butterfly, we may perhaps locate him at one of the higher stages of the Five Ranks. He appears to recognize: (1) the butterfly within himself, as well as (2) himself within the butterfly. By questioning whether there is some difference between the two, he may have arrived at (3) “a path/Leading away from the dusts of the world.” But does his doctrine of “the Transformation of Things” move him further along, such that he has arrived at (4) “the Middle of the Bent”? The evidence for (5) “Unity Attained” is less clear. An acquaintance with the Five Ranks’ epistemological process may have allowed him to unravel the quagmire of nondualism. However his is a transformation of things, not by things, advising us to “Leap into the boundless and make it your home!” (Watson 1968: 49). There is no imperative to “go down the mountain” or “enter the marketplace” to compassionately guide others to realization. As such, he does not qualify as the one who “comes back/To sit among the coals and ashes” (Dumoulin 1988: 226).

We have seen how Buddhism brought to China a new set of strategies to provoke an epistemological shift among philosophers. Inspired by the pedagogy of cognitive dissonance woven into Sanskrit texts, Chinese practitioners deployed their own “circuit-breakers” of ventral attention to disrupt the dogmatic “perseveration” of dorsal attention. The resulting epistemological reorientation reveals the nondualism of reality. Human tendencies toward hierarchical categorizations, particularly anthropocentric assumptions, remain difficult to overcome, as seen in both Daoist and Confucian philosophers. By unleashing the hybrid brain, Buddhist philosophy offers “a middle way which has ‘no path,’ where the goal is the fullest development of man, in which wisdom and compassion ultimately become one and the same reality” (Inada 1969: 117). Such wisdom “has gone beyond everything earthly, or sensory, and yet ... has left none of it behind” (Conze 2001: 83).

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Chapter 7

Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism: From Zongmi to Mou Zongsan



Wing-cheuk Chan

1 Introduction

Historically, Chinese Buddhism was a product of the interaction between Indian Buddhism and Chinese philosophy. As is well-known, the rise of Chan 禪 Buddhism was due to the influences from Daoism. More generally, Chinese Buddhism would be entirely different apart from the Confucian background. In Indian Buddhism, Mādhyamaka School centred on the idea of emptiness, whereas Yogācāra School focused on the concept of *alaya*. By contrast, the fundamental notion of Chinese Buddhism is Buddha-nature. In other words, Chinese Buddhism is basically Buddhism of the *tathāgatagarbha*. This is why *The Awakening of Faith* has been regarded as the most important text in Chinese Buddhism. More precisely, similar to Mencius' thesis that everyone can become a sage, Chinese Buddhism affirms that every sentient being has the potentiality of becoming a Buddha. Like Confucius' claim that "To practice humanity depends on oneself," Chan Buddhism especially stresses the possibility of enlightenment in terms of "self-power" (Chan 1963a: 38). Chinese Buddhism is predominately Mahayānā. This reminds us of Confucius' position that "A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others" (Chan 1963a: 31). With the *Heart-sūtra*'s thesis of the identity between *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, Chinese Buddhism emphasizes the importance of this-world. This might also echo the Confucian insistence that "If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?" (Chan 1963a: 36). Insofar as the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism is concerned, no one can ignore Zongmi 宗密 (780–841). As Peter Gregory observed, "his conversion to

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Buddhism did not entail a rejection of his early Confucian training” (Gregory 1995: 34). Although Zongmi himself did not found any new school in Chinese Buddhism, he was a major figure in the sinification of Buddhism. In committing to the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*, his doctrine of the true mind not only signifies a peak in the sinification of Buddhism, but also exercises a great influence upon the rise of Song-Ming 宋明 Neo-Confucianism. As FENG Youlan 馮友蘭 points out, Zongmi’s thesis of the opposition between mind (心 *xin*) and force (氣 *qi*) anticipated the thesis of the opposition between principle (理 *li*) and material force in the School of *Li* (Principle) as represented by CHENG Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), while Zongmi’s position that “there is nothing outside of mind” was further developed by the School of Mind (*Xin*) as represented by LU Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1193) and WANG Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) (Feng 1984: 789–799; see also Gregory 1995: 205). In articulating his own system, Zongmi nonetheless developed a comprehensive critique of Confucianism.

On the other hand, as a major founder of modern Confucianism, MOU Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) was an important expert in Buddhist research. In developing his moral metaphysics MOU Zongsan even employed the pattern of “one mind and two gates” in *The Awakening of Faith* as the philosophical framework. Starting with a transformation of the Tiantai 天台 Buddhist perfect teaching, he also achieved a Confucian theory of the highest good. Thus far, MOU Zongsan’s Confucian system might be the most prominent example in the hermeneutical application of Buddhism.¹

This paper primarily aims to explore a new chapter in the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism by bringing Zongmi and MOU Zongsan into a dialogue. In order to attain such a goal, this paper starts with pinpointing the structural parallel between Zongmi’s and MOU Zongsan’s doctrine of the true mind. This will help us to see in what way Zongmi’s doctrine anticipates the rise of MOU Zongsan’s subjectivist Confucianism. Furthermore, after outlining Zongmi’s critique of Confucianism, it will examine the possible responses from MOU Zongsan. In this context, one will discover some gaps in MOU Zongsan’s Confucianism. As a remedy, it will show how MOU Zongsan could draw support from other Confucians’ approach. This helps to explore the effect of Zongmi’s critique for the development of modern Confucianism. As will be seen, it can function as an indicator for the synthesis of different Confucians’ works. Finally, in recent years Japanese Critical Buddhism has challenged the authenticity of Chinese Buddhism. For Critical Buddhism, the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* is pseudo-Buddhist. It will show that in MOU Zongsan one can nonetheless find a way out in defending Zongmi’s Buddhism. As a result, the comparison of MOU Zongsan’s and Zongmi’s doctrine of the true mind will also deepen our understanding of their respective contributions to the development of Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism.

¹For another more recent study on this subject, see Clower (2010).

2 Zongmi's Buddhism and Mou Zongsan's Confucianism

Zongmi's status in Chinese Buddhism is comparable to that of ZHU Xi in Confucianism. As a disciple of Shenhui 神會 (684–758), he was a follower of the Southern School of Chan Buddhism. And as a successor of Chengquan 澄觀 (738–839), he was regarded as the fifth patriarch of Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism. In interpreting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, under the influences of Chengguan, he unified the fourfold *dharmadhātu* as one true *dharmadhātu*, and further identified it with the one true mind.² In this way, he subjected the whole Huayan doctrine of the fourfold *dharmadhātu* to the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* in *The Awakening of Faith*. In short, in Zongmi's eyes, the idea of true mind-only is the most important defining characteristic of Huayan Buddhism. As Gregory observed, this signifies a turn in the development of Huayan Buddhism (See Gregory 2002: 14). For Faxang 法藏 (643–712), as the primary founder of Huayan Buddhism, merely saw the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* in *The Awakening of Faith* as the starting point, but not the end-point of Huayan Buddhism. In other words, it is the doctrine of the “dependent origination of *dharmadhātu*,” rather than the doctrine of the “dependent origination of the *tathāgatagarbha*,” that is the essential characteristic of Huayan Buddhism. But in Zongmi the centrality of the doctrine of the “dependent origination of *dharmadhātu*” gives way to that of the doctrine of the “dependent origination of the *tathāgatagarbha*.” The major reason for Zongmi's higher appreciation of *The Awakening of Faith* is that here he can show the “true mind” simultaneously as the ontological source of all *dharma*s and as the condition of possibility of becoming enlightenment. This enables him to find a way of synthesizing Huayan and Chan Buddhism. As he said, “This true nature is not merely the source of the Chan gate, but the source of all *dharma*s as well” (Broughton 2009: 102). In this way, his doctrine of the true mind constitutes a practical-philosophical turn in the development of Huayan Buddhism. This also explains why Zongmi devoted his exegetical activity primarily in producing various commentaries on *The Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra* (*Yuanjue Jing* 圓覺經) (See HTC 14). For him, *The Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra* shows the teaching of sudden enlightenment along the lines of the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* in *The Awakening of Faith*.

Although Mou Zongsan denied any Buddhist influences upon the rise of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, his moral metaphysics followed the framework of *The Awakening of Faith*. As he pointed out,

The Awakening of Faith tries to explicate the fundamental position of Mahāyāna Buddhism in terms of the framework of “one mind and its two gates:” ... “One is the gate of Mind in terms of the Absolute (*tathāta*, Suchness), and the other is the gate of Mind in terms of phenomena (*samsāra*, birth and death)” (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 580; see also Hakeda 1967: 31).

To be sure, Mou Zongsan only followed this pattern in a formal manner. As a Confucian, he understood “the true mind” as moral consciousness, rather than as the

²See Zongmi, *Zhu Huayan Fajie Guanmen* 注華嚴法界觀門 (An Exegesis of the Gate of Insight of *Dharmadhātu* in Huayan) T 45, 1884: 684b; see also Jan (1988: 73-92); Gregory (2002: 178).

mind of the *tathāta*. In Kantian terms, MOU Zongsan further identified the “Mind in terms of the Absolute” with intellectual intuition, and the “Mind in terms of phenomena” with understanding (*Verstand*). While the former corresponds to things-in-themselves, the latter corresponds to phenomena. In a Hegelian manner, MOU Zongsan accounted for the possibility of phenomena in terms of self-negation of the true mind. For him, not only things-in-themselves are created by the true mind, the rise of phenomena must also depend upon it. In short, like Zongmi, MOU Zongsan claimed the true mind to be the ontological source of all things. For MOU Zongsan, the true mind in the Buddhist sense, however, cannot be the “creative” ontological substance. That is to say, the Buddhist concept of the true mind is not *ti* (體 substance) in the genuine sense (See Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 647). It is mainly because the Buddhists fail to recognize the ontological significance of morality (More on this point see below). Despite this difference, MOU Zongsan’s interpretation of Huayan Buddhism lends support to Zongmi’s founding Huayan teachings upon the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* along the lines of *The Awakening of Faith*. As MOU Zongsan said,

From a doctrinal standpoint, Huayan Buddhism is grounded in the transcendental analytic of *The Awakening of Faith*. It aims at an articulation of the great dependent origination of *dhāraṇī*... such dependent origination of *dharmadhātu* is transcendently grounded in the mind of the *tathāgatagarbha*” (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 617).

This signifies that Huayan Buddhism is only an analytic consequence of the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* in *The Awakening of Faith*.

Historically, the Song-Ming Neo-Confucian School of Mind’s similarity with the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* might have paved the way for the rise of the affinity between MOU Zongsan’s and Zongmi’s sticking to *The Awakening of Faith*. First of all, LU Xiangshan’s *xin* (mind) and WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* 良知 (innate knowledge) are comparable with Zongmi’s true mind. All of them are strictly pure. *The Awakening of Faith* stated, “The Mind in terms of the Absolute is the one World of Reality (*dharmadhātu*) and the substance of all phases of existence in the reality” (Hakeda 1967: 32; I replaced “essence” with “substance”). Likewise, in expounding LU Xiangshan’s thesis that “The universe is my mind, and my mind is the universe,” WANG Yangming declared, “The soundless, odorless moment of solitary, self-knowledge contains the ground of Heaven, Earth, and all things” (Chan 1963a: 579; Wang 1992: 792; I follow the translation in Ching 1976: 164). Accordingly, similar to *The Awakening of Faith*, the School of Mind commits to idealism. That is, like Zongmi’s true mind, LU Xiangshan’s *xin* or WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* functions as the ontological source of all things. In parallel to Zongmi’s assertion that “the true mind is the [*dharmā*] nature,” WANG Yangming proclaimed that “The mind is principle” (Broughton 2009: 133; Chan 1963a: 667). In contrast to ZHU Xi’s static conception of *li* (principle), LU Xiangshan and WANG Yangming’s *li* (principle) is fundamentally dynamic. This is consistent with FENG Youlan’s observation that there is a correspondence between WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* and Zongmi’s *lingzhi* 靈知 (spiritual knowledge) (Feng 1984: 786). In modern terms, as WU Rujun 吳汝鈞 underscored, both Yangming’s *liangzhi* and Zongmi’s *lingzhi* function as transcendental subjectivity (Wu 2000: 537). *The Awakening of Faith* viewed the pure

mind of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a self-arising cause for the attainment of Buddhahood. In the same vein, WANG Yangming insisted that “enlightenment, and wisdom, is present seminally in *liangzhi* itself” (Hakeda 1967: 42; Ching 1976: 153).

As is well-known, Zongmi stuck to Shenhui’s famous thesis that “The one word ‘Knowing’ is the gate of all excellence (知之一字眾妙之門)” (Broughton 2009: 123). What Zongmi meant by “Knowing” is certainly nothing sensible. Similar to Zongmi’s speech of the true mind as “spontaneously Knowing,” MOU Zongsan further characterized the self-knowledge of *liangzhi* as “retrospective awareness” (Broughton 2009: 123; Mou 1975: 78). As for Zongmi, for MOU Zongsan, it is possible to certify the reality of the true mind in terms of such non-sensible “Knowing.” In the eyes of MOU Zongsan, WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* is a counterpart of the Kantian “intellectual intuition.” He thereby argued that the reality of *The Awakening of Faith’s* *tathāgatagarbha* and of WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* can help Chinese philosophy to transcend Kant in granting intellectual intuition to human beings. This implies that freedom of the will is an intuitive presentation, rather than a mere postulate (See Mou 1975: 70ff). More importantly, in terms of the creativity of the Kantian “intellectual intuition” MOU Zongsan is able to justify the identification of *liangzhi* as the substance (*ti*). It is true that MOU Zongsan denied any influence of Zongmi’s *lingzhi* upon WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi* (Mou 1979: 221). However, from a historical standpoint, no Confucian was able to declare that “there is nothing outside of mind (心外無物)” before the import of Buddhism. Undeniably, this slogan is the defining characteristic of the School of Mind in Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. As a follower of this school, MOU Zongsan might even be regarded as a Confucian counterpart of Zongmi. For, like Zongmi, he explicitly employed the framework of *The Awakening of Faith* in articulating his system.

3 Zongmi’s Critique of Confucianism

On the way of articulating his own doctrine, Zongmi nonetheless developed perhaps the most comprehensive critique of Confucianism in history. In criticising Confucianism, Zongmi began with attacking its metaphysics. As Jan Yun-hua points out, Zongmi first argued that Confucian *Dao* 道 is noneternal and nonuniversal.³ Secondly, Zongmi questioned the fairness of the mandate of heaven. Finally, Zongmi tried to uncover the limitations of the doctrine of the primal force. In brief, Zongmi starts his arguments with the claim that “If a thing is capable of producing, the thing itself is certainly non-eternal.”⁴ For him, “the four great physical elements of earth, water, fire, and air are capable of producing all things, but are impermanent

³ See Jan (1980b: 495–504, 1980a: 301–318). Below I mainly follow these two excellent expositions of Zongmi’s critique of Confucianism. See also: Gregory (1995: 81–104).

⁴ Zongmi, *Yuanjuejing Dashu Chao* 圓覺經大疏鈔 (Extracts from the Great Commentary on the Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra). HTC 14: 352d. Here I follow Jan Yun-hua’s translation (Jan 1980b: 497).

in themselves” (HTC 14: 352d; I follow the translation in Jan 1980b: 497). Therefore, as a producer, the Confucian *Dao* is non-eternal. The non-eternity of the Confucian *Dao* also implies its non-universality.

Indeed, the *Book of Historical Documents* stated, “The way of Heaven is to bless the good and to punish the bad” (Legge 1970: 186). But Zongmi argued that if the mandate of heaven is responsible in blessing the good and punishing the bad, then Confucianism can hardly explain why some evil people are rich, while some good people are poor (HTC 14: 415b; Jan 1980b: 498). This shows the injustice of the mandate of heaven.

For Zongmi, all this indicates that there is a lack of the idea of causation in Chinese philosophy. In particular, the karmic causality was missing in Confucian account of the birth and decease of life. As a consequence, Confucianism cannot explain the possibility of man’s knowledge inherited from the past life purely in terms of its theory of the primal force (Gregory 1995: 95; see also Jan 1980a: 308–309).

Finally, on the practical level, Zongmi blamed Confucianism for failing to develop effective means in soteriology (HTC 14: 353d; see also Jan 1980b: 498).

How would Mou Zongsan respond to Zongmi’s challenge?

4 Mou Zongsan’s Meeting With Zongmi’s Challenge

4.1 From Cosmogony to Moral Metaphysics

Like the majority of the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians, Mou Zongsan insisted on the ontological difference between *xin* (mind) and *li* (principle), on the one hand, and *qi* (force), on the other: while *xin* and *li* are super-sensible, *qi* is material. As a result, Mou Zongsan stressed that there is an essential distinction between moral metaphysics and cosmogony (Mou 1962: 273). In Heideggerian terms, moral metaphysics concerns the *Dao* as Being, whereas cosmogony deals with beings as material causes. In addressing the problem of the ontological status of the producer, the Buddhists are blind to the “super-sensible” characteristics of the Confucian *Dao*. This is the reason why they fail to see its eternity and universality. By focusing only on the causes and conditions within the realm of beings, they mistakenly maintain that what is capable of producing things must be impermanent. In particular, they only limited the scope of producers to material beings such as earth, water, fire, and air. In this context, Mou Zongsan could draw upon ZHANG Zai’s 張載 (1020–1077) observation:

The Buddhists have false ideas about our Heaven-endowed Nature and do not know how to shape and bring into completion the functioning of Heaven. On the contrary, they regard such small things as the Six Sense Organs to the cause of the universe (ZHU Xi and LU Zuqian 1967: 286).

Moreover, in order to justify the universality of the Confucian *Dao*, Mou Zongsan could turn to ZHU Xi for help. As Mou Zongsan recognized, when ZHU Xi

articulated of *li* (principle) as “the reason for which things and affairs are” and “the reason according to which they should be,” he aimed to express “an absolutely universal, ontological, purely unified supreme principle” (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 90; Chan 1963a: 611). In clarifying the universality of principle, ZHU Xi said, “principle is one but its manifestation is many” (Chan 1963a: 635). Despite the limitation of ZHU Xi’s static approach, his doctrine of principle can contribute to showing the possibility of the universality of the Confucian *Dao*.

In addition, MOU Zongsan would reject Zongmi’s claim that Confucians lack the idea of causation. MOU Zongsan wrote,

Origination, flourishing, advantage and firmness are the process of creation, and the process of completion. [On the one hand,] Origination and flourishing represent beginning and creation. They are “efficient cause.” [On the other hand,] Advantage and firmness represent completion. They are “final cause” (Mou 1998: 24).

This indicates that the idea of causality is operative in Confucianism. What is missing in Confucianism is only the Buddhist idea of “emptiness” defined in terms of causality.

4.2 From Karmic Causality to Theory of the Highest Good

Indeed, MOU Zongsan rarely addressed the concept of the karmic causality. But this gap might be filled by returning to his master XIONG Shili’s 熊十力 (1883–1968) critique of Yogacara Buddhism. As is well-known, XIONG Shili was at first a follower of Yogacara Buddhism. His Confucianism mainly results from a critique of this school. This is clearly reflected in the title of his *magnum opus*: *Xin Weishi Lun* 新唯識論 (New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness).⁵ In distinction from the Song-Ming Neo-Confucians’ categorical rejection of Buddhism, XIONG Shili nonetheless granted a relative validity to Buddhism. He agreed that the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination can contribute to overcoming our attachment to the world and the self. However, he maintained that Buddhism alone cannot provide an original picture of fundamental reality.

As a school in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Yogācāra Buddhism recognized emptiness as fundamental reality. However, Xuanzang’s 玄奘 (569–664) Yogācāra School also posited seeds as the ontological cause of all things. As a result, as XIONG Shili underscored, it gives rise to the difficulty of a double fundamental reality for Yogācāra Buddhism. For XIONG Shili, the only way out is to abolish the idea of “postulating the *alaya* as the fundamental basis of the phenomenal world and conceiving of the body and the world as the manifestation of the *alaya*” (Xiong 1985: 654; see also Xiong 2015: 124). Furthermore, as the idea of karmic retribution gives a preference to the past, the Buddhists overlook the aspect of creation of things. As

⁵This text was published in 1932 in classical Chinese and in 1944 in modern Chinese (See Xiong 1985, and Xiong 2015).

a consequence, the Buddhists ignore the creative character of life. In reality, the present action is never entirely determined by the past. Since the Buddhists only focus on the cosmogonic dimension, they fail to recognize the creativity of life is at the same time the ontological creativity. In order to capture the creativity of the Confucian *Dao*, XIONG Shili characterized it as a constant shift of *xi* 翕 (contraction) and *pi* 闢 (expansion) (See Xiong 1985: 306ff; Xiong 2015: 46ff). Following the *Yijing* 易經 XIONG Shili understood the *Dao* as a process of perpetual change. While *pi* signifies its aspect of generativity, *xi* represents its aspect of accomplishment. Their interaction gives rise to the whole cosmos. In this way, XIONG Shili helps to explain the origin of humanity in terms of the creativity of the primal force, rather than the karmic causality.

It is true that for MOU Zongsan, “doing good deeds will end up with happiness” (Mou 1985: 199). Like Kant, MOU Zongsan identified the highest good as the necessary synthesis of virtue and happiness. However, in developing a Confucian theory of the highest good, he did not appeal to the role played by the mandate of heaven in blessing the good, and blaming the bad. Originally, in Kant the necessary synthesis of virtue and happiness is guaranteed by a personal god. MOU Zongsan disagreed with Kant’s solution. For him, the notion of a personal god is illusory. As it is meaningless to see god as the guarantee for the possibility of the highest good, it is an empty wish to wait for the mandate of heaven to bless the good and to blame the bad (See Mou 1985: 244; 332). Instead, MOU Zongsan employed the Tiantai Buddhist concept of perfect teaching as a starting point. He maintained that the necessary synthesis of virtue and happiness is nothing but their “paradoxical identity” in the Tiantai sense. In brief, when there is a “paradoxical identity” between A and B, then A as such is entirely B, and B as such is entirely A, despite their difference (See Mou 1985: 273). In terms of such a notion of “paradoxical identity,” MOU Zongsan argued that HU Wufeng’s 胡五峰 (1100–1155) thesis of “Heavenly principle and human desire are of the same substance but different in function” is a Confucian counterpart of the Tiantai position that the momentary mind is the mind of ignorance and *dharmatā* (true nature of existents) (Mou 1985: 326). But in seeing that the possibility of the paradoxical identity of virtue and happiness is ultimately grounded in the sage as an infinitely intellectual mind, which is a modern version of WANG Yangming’s *liangzhi*, MOU Zongsan chose WANG Lungxi’s 王龍溪 (1498–1583) axiom of “four nothingness” as the candidate for developing a Confucian theory of the highest good. According to MOU Zongsan, it is solely by means of the power of the sage as the infinitely intellectual mind in transforming existence that the necessary synthesis of virtue and happiness can be guaranteed.⁶ Thus the speech of the sage as the infinite intellectual mind does not imply that the Confucian *Dao* is like a personal god; rather, it only means that the Confucian *Dao* is to be manifested by the sage. Generally, every human being has

⁶Critically, this signifies that MOU Zongsan’s concept of perfect teaching does not entirely go beyond the Huayan tradition.

the infinite intellectual mind, though only the sage can manifest it perfectly (See Mou 1985: 307). Given such “immanence” of the infinite intellectual mind in the human being, MOU Zongsan tries to solve the problem of the highest good without postulating a transcendent personal god (as in Kant’s approach), nor appealing to the karmic causality (as in the Buddhist approach). As a whole, for MOU Zongsan, the necessary synthesis between virtue and happiness is founded upon the sage’s transformation power. This is the reason why he no longer grants the role of blessing the good and blaming the bad to the mandate of heaven. In this way, Zongmi’s critique of the injustice of the mandate of heaven would lose its target.

One might not agree with MOU Zongsan’s Confucian theory of the highest good. But it is important to note that here he stressed the necessary role played by the sage. This indicates that the possibility of the highest good depends upon the sage’s transformation of the world. In this context, MOU Zongsan also claimed that the concept of *ming* 命 (fate) becomes an empty term for the sage (See Mou 1985: 326–327). For, in guaranteeing the necessary synthesis of virtue and happiness, the sage (as an infinite intellectual mind) is able to free himself from any determination by the fate.

Historically, ZHU Xi has already started to transform the meaning of *ming*. ZHU Xi said:

Material force cannot be called the nature or mandate [*ming*]. They exist because of it, this is all. When the nature of Heaven and Earth are spoken of, it refers to principle only; when the physical nature is spoken of, it refers to principle and material force combined. Material force is not to be referred to as nature or mandate (Chan 1963a: 613; with modification).

In particular, “at the very time when a person is born, Heaven has already given him his nature. Man’s nature is nothing but principle. It is called nature because it is endowed in man” (Chan 1963a: 612–613). Here the term *ming* rather refers to the *a priori* nature of human beings granted by Heaven. In concrete terms, *ming* signifies the moral imperative. Nonetheless, as MOU Zongsan observed, ZHU Xi also said, “Nature refers to what is stabilized whereas *ming* refers to what is operating” (Chan 1963a: 613; with modification). In this context, the term *ming* is understood as the *a posteriori* limitation in fulfilling one’s nature. The rise of such a kind of limitation is mainly due to the specificity of one’s material nature and the boundary of the situation in praxis. In this way, ZHU Xi actually made a distinction between *liming* 理命 (mandate of principle) and *qiming* 氣命 (mandate of material force) (Mou 1969: Vol. 3, 429). Although ZHU Xi admitted that “Essentially in both cases it is imparted by Heaven,” only *liming* (mandate of principle) is identical with the mandate of heaven (Chan 1963a: 627). Surely, *qiming* (mandate of material force) might determine wealth and poverty, fortune or misfortune; but what is important for a Confucian is to observe that “man ought to fulfill his duty, and then whatever mandate he meets with is correct mandate” (Chan 1963a: 627). In this way, ZHU Xi can help to explain why MOU Zongsan finally reaches the thesis that “*Ming* in the context of moral nature does not refer to the fate, but rather to the imperative. It is a moral demand” (Mou 1998: 32). The mandate of heaven, as MOU Zongsan understood, primarily refers to *liming* (mandate of principle).

4.3 TANG Junyi's Supplementary Approach

MOU Zongsan's new understanding of the mandate of heaven can further be illustrated in terms of TANG Junyi's 唐君毅 (1909–1978) topology of Buddhism. In his *magnum opus* *Shengming Cunzai Yu Xinling Jingjie* 生命存在與心靈境界 (*Life-Existence and Horizons of Mind*), TANG Junyi provided a phenomenological description of the correlation between life-existence and reality (See Tang 1977). In brief, there is a three-fold distinction of life-dimension: (1) the life-dimension of objectivity; (2) the life-dimension of subjectivity; and (3) the life-dimension of transcending the subjectivity-objectivity dichotomy. Each of these life-dimensions is further divided into three horizons. All together it gives rise to nine horizons. The highest three life-dimensions include: (1) the horizon of returning to monotheism; (2) the horizon of the dual emptiness of the self and *dharma*; and (3) the horizon of the prevalence of Heavenly virtue. For TANG Junyi, Buddhism belongs to the horizon of the dual emptiness of the self and *dharma*. The Buddhist view that things are dependently originated and hence empty is valid for this horizon. Buddhism is, however, limited in failing to appreciate the existence of heavenly virtue. Therefore, despite its thesis that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, Buddhism is blind to the original good of human nature (See Tang 1977: Vol. 2, 871). In reality, it is by following the mandate of heaven as the ontological principle that Heavenly virtue can be achieved. Man is unique in being capable of fulfilling the mandate of heaven. In fulfilling the mandate of heaven, man is at the same time fulfilling human nature as well as the nature of things. It is primarily in terms of the self-legislation of morality that man is able to fulfill the mandate of heaven. Given the specificity of the situation and the limitation of material nature, one might encounter different obstacles in achieving moral virtues. Perfect fulfillment might be difficult to be attained for the majority. But one should not hence give up the effort in fulfilling one's nature. In sum, ethically, the mandate of heaven refers to what ought to do, while ontologically, it is linked to human nature and the nature of things (See Tang 1977: Vol. 2, 879). This helps to justify MOU Zongsan's understanding of the mandate of heaven along the lines of *liming* in ZHU Xi's sense.

In view of Zongmi's critique, TANG Junyi also introduced a new argument to undermine the Buddhist doctrine of the karmic causality. While understanding the *manas* as the conscious mind, TANG Junyi interpreted the *alaya* as the unconscious mind. For him, the existence of the past and the future lives are beyond the experiential verification of the present life. Furthermore, the idea of karmic causality and the identification of the past life as the pre-condition of the possibility of good deed and the present life would confine human beings into an illusionary dimension. As a result, this would displace the present world into the future world. Particularly, morality would be degraded into a means for attaining benefits in the coming life. But such utilitarian considerations would give rise to a more radical kind of attachment and evil, rather than salvation for human beings (See Tang 1977: Vol. 2, 836). This shows that the doctrine of the karmic causality suffers from being limited to the dimension of benefits. Accordingly, Buddhism fails to recognize the intrinsic value

of the present life. By contrast, Confucianism is able to discern “a transcendental, metaphysical origination of the existence of life” (Tang 1977: Vol. 2, 871). This might help explain why MOU Zongsan does not refer to the karmic causality in his Confucian theory of the highest good. To be sure, TANG Junyi agreed with Buddhism that suffering is deserved for an evil man. But he primarily understood suffering as a result of the limitation of the life’s capacity in action. More importantly, he stressed that even in suffering an evil man is capable of taking it as a stepping stone for the future performing of good deeds (Tang 1977: Vol. 2, 871). Such a view confirms the possibility of the transforming power of the infinite intellectual mind in MOU Zongsan’s sense.

4.4 *From Personal Cultivation to Political Praxis*

MOU Zongsan himself did not introduce any innovative ideas on personal cultivation. But given the fact that the issue of personal cultivation has already been extensively addressed in Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, it is possible for him to simply follow the School of Mind’s theory of moral praxis. In short, this approach shares a structural similarity with what is propounded in the Southern School of Chan Buddhism. As is well-known, the Southern School of Chan Buddhism undermines the role of learning scriptures. In the same vein, LU Xiangshan loudly declared, “If in our study we know the fundamentals, then all the Six Classics are my footnotes” (Chan 1963a: 580). For both of them, the key point in personal cultivation is to uncover the “original mind.” It is by returning to the original mind that one becomes a Buddha or a sage. In advocating the easy and simple way of praxis, like the Southern School of Chan Buddhism, LU Xiangshan believed in the possibility of sudden enlightenment. Meanwhile, as he emphasized,

As human mind is sick, it is necessary to overcome it. Once it is overcome, there is a period of clarity. Afterward it arises again. It needs another overcoming and then there results in clarity. It is necessary to clear all of them exhaustedly (Lu 1980: 458).

Structurally, LU Xiangshan’s position is reminiscent of Zongmi’s thesis of “sudden enlightenment followed by gradual path” (Gregory 2002: 193). That is to say, although it is possible to grasp the *li* (principle) in terms of sudden enlightenment, it is still necessary to follow a gradual path of praxis in becoming a sage or a Buddha. In illustrating this point, Zongmi employed a sunrise-metaphor and a child-metaphor. He said,

If we speak in conformity with cutting off of hindrances, this is like the sun’s rising all-at-once but the frost’s melting step-by-step. If we speak in conformity with the perfecting of attributes, this is like the fact that, upon birth a child all at-at-once possesses four limbs and six senses and as it matures step-by-step perfects its will and functions (Broughton 2009: 153).

In praising LU Xiangshan’s approach in achieving “inner sagehood,” MOU Zongsan might agree with Zongmi’s similar practical view (Mou 1979: 185; 212).

In going beyond Buddhism, by linking personal cultivation to the political praxis, MOU Zongsan also innovatively extended the scope of Confucian soteriology. Like ZHU Xi, he inherited the idea of “eight steps” from *The Great Learning*: (1) the investigation of things, (2) extension of knowledge, (3) sincerity of the will, (4) rectification of the mind, (5) cultivation of the personal life, (6) regulation of the family, (7) national order, (8) world peace (See Chan 1963a: 86). But, in contrast to the past, MOU Zongsan construed the transition from step (6) to step (7) as “mediated.” To be more precise, this transition has to be mediated by the process of democratization. In this manner, Mou Zongsan paves a new way in modernizing the Confucian soteriology (See Mou 1991). This also reinforces the superiority of Confucianism over Buddhism in transforming existence.

All this indicates that in order to meet Zongmi’s challenge, it is necessary for MOU Zongsan to integrate relevant ideas from other Confucians. Zongmi’s critique, to this extent, also functions as an indicator for the synthesis of different Confucian approach.

5 The Authenticity of Chinese Buddhism

Like the *tathāgatagarbha* in *The Awakening of Faith*, Zongmi’s “true mind” is seen as a substance. Such “substantialistic” mode of speech is indeed a general characteristic of Chinese Buddhism. For Critical Buddhists, it is, however, evidence showing the pseudo-Buddhist character of the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. As MATSUMOTO Shirō claims, “The theory of Buddha-nature or *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is a form of *dhātu-vāda*, which itself is none other than the monism of Hinduism” (Matsumoto 1996: 301). Etymologically, *dhātu* means “the place or locus on which something is placed” (Matsumoto 1997: 224–225). In *dhātu-vāda*, the *dhātu* is the essence (*ātman*) of *dharmas*. All *dharmas* are produced from the *dhātu*. Like the *Brahman-ātman*, the *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha-nature functions as the *dhātu*. In identifying the true mind as the ontological source of all things, Zongmi’s doctrine can hardly differ from being a *dhātu-vāda*. The true mind is here clearly identified as the basis or supporter of *dharmas*. However, the Critical Buddhist maintains, “*Dhātu-vāda* was the object of Sākyamuni’s criticism. Buddhism (*qua pratītyasamutpāda*) must of necessity reject *dhātu-vāda*” (Matsumoto 1991: 172). For Critical Buddhism, there is no distinction between Zongmi’s thesis of the true mind as the ontological source of all things and the Brahmanist view of *Ātman* as the creator of the cosmos. In fact, following *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, Zongmi also spoke of the “non-emptiness” of the true mind (See HTC 14: 210b; Gregory 2002: 218–223). The speech of the “non-emptiness” of the true mind seems to be contradictory with Nagarjuna’s doctrine of emptiness. In characterizing the true mind as “permanent,” Zongmi seems to be deviant from the Buddhist *Dharma* of impermanence as well (See HTC 14: 209d). Finally, it is evident that in competing with Confucian cosmogony, Zongmi identified the true mind as the “creator” of the cosmos (See Jan 1988: 171). At this juncture, Zongmi’s Buddhism seems to be a counterpart of Brahmanism.

Nevertheless, in MOU Zongsan one can find a way out for defending Zongmi's Buddhism. First of all, MOU Zongsan wrote,

The speech of "emptiness" merely means the elimination of all the distinctions caused by illusions. But in the elimination of all the distinctions caused by illusion, it at the same time gives rise to positive virtues. This is the "non-emptiness" of the true mind (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 582).

When *The Awakening of Faith* characterizes the true mind as "eternal, permanent, immutable, pure, and self-sufficient," it seems to be contradictory with the Buddhist ideas of "impermanence" (*anitya*), "dependence upon the other," and "emptiness" (Hakeda 1967: 35–36). Nonetheless, as MOU Zongsan emphasized, the "permanence" of the true mind here "is not the substantial permanence of the Brahman-Ātman, rather it refers to emptiness in the supreme sense of the middle path, the Dharma-body in *nirvāṇa*" (Mou 1982: 477).

Secondly, according to MOU Zongsan, such a quasi-substantialist formulation of the true mind is necessary, for the doctrine of emptiness might give rise to a nihilist interpretation of Buddhism. In reality, after Enlightenment, the Buddha as the true mind is full of undefiled and excellent virtues. This helps to discern that Zongmi's point is to affirm the inseparableness of the Buddha and the world. As MOU Zongsan further remarked, it is from the standpoint of "potentiality" that the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be "endowed" with innumerable infinite undefiled and excellent virtues. That is, only when one attains Buddhahood as the fruit (after the completion of praxis) that the true mind is actually endowed with these virtues (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 582). In contrast, there is a limitation in the Mādhyamaka. For Zongmi, "this teaching merely destroys feelings of attachment but does not yet clearly reveal the nature that is true and numinous" (Gregory 1995: 174). In attaining the Buddhahood one does not thereby destroy the world, but rather witnesses the suchness of things. Zongmi hence stressed,

If the mind and its object are both non-existent, then who is it that knows they are illusionary? Again, if there are no real things whatsoever, then on the basis of what are the illusions made to appear? (Gregory 1995: 74; with modification)

Here the so-called "real things" are nothing but the dependently originated *dharma*s. In being empty, they are actually experienced by the true mind. As a matter of fact, even the Mādhyamika cannot deny that the dependently originated *dharma*s are not non-existent. This confirms that Buddhism is not nihilism. More importantly, going beyond the Mādhyamika's descriptive approach, Zongmi opts for the primacy of praxis. As a follower of the *ekayāna* (One Vehicle), Zongmi also declared, "all sentient beings without exception have the intrinsically enlightened, true mind" (Gregory 1995: 178). In sum, the true mind as the ontological source of all things is at the same time the condition of the possibility of enlightenment (See Jan 1988: 171).

To say that the true mind is the ontological source of all *dharma*s, however, does not imply that it functions as a "producer" in the Brahmanist sense. Rather, as TANG Junyi observed, the concept of "production" in *The Awakening of Faith* merely aims to explicate the truth that "our practical mind concretizes itself in all that which is

encountered. While presenting all of them in front of itself, this mind interacts with them, so that their defilement can be transformed into purity” (Tang 1968: 242). In other words, to say that the true mind is capable of “producing” all things means that it is able to actually “experience” the suchness of all things, so that they are given in their purity. The true mind is, accordingly, capable of “producing” all things only in the sense that it can let them become the virtues of the Buddha’s *dharmakāya*. All this indicates that neither the true mind nor the *tathāgatagarbha* in Zongmi’s sense is a creator in the Brahmanist sense. TANG Junyi’s clarification lends a strong support to MOU Zongsan’s claim. But this is also the reason why MOU Zongsan objects to identifying such a true mind as a “substance” (*tī*) in a genuine sense. In addressing the “dependent origination of *dharmadhātu*,” MOU Zongsan wrote,

It is true that all results from the turning and transformation of the one mind only. Nature-origination is equipped with virtues, thereby everything is mirroring with others, in both an implicit and explicit manner. Even so, such a true mind cannot be understood as a creative substance which is capable of exercising a great function in producing the dependently originated *dharmas* ... In such a virtually connecting non-obstructive state of perfection, the concepts of substance and function are inapplicable. At best, they are only understood in a metaphorical sense. That is, they are terms belonging to the virtual mode of discourse. All this indicates that such a true mind of the *tathāgatagarbha* is not any substance capable of producing the dependently originated *dharmas* (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 642–643).

In contrast, MOU Zongsan maintains that only the Confucian *Dao* can be *tī* (substance) in the genuine sense, for “the creative becoming of cosmos is identical with the moral creativity” (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 473). Undeniably, Zongmi interpreted the Confucian “five constant virtues” in terms of the Buddhist five precepts (See Gregory 1995: 117). However, the true mind in the Buddhist sense is primarily non-moral. That is, it is not *eo ipso* a moral consciousness. From a Kantian standpoint, the Buddhist five precepts might remain “heteronomous,” whereas the moral mind (in the sense of the Confucian School of Mind) is “autonomous.” In Zongmi the true mind also lacks the power of creativity. All this indicates that despite Zongmi’s substantialist mode of speech, his doctrine of the true mind is not a *dhātu-vāda*. Accordingly, it would be mistaken to see the mind of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a substance in the Brahmanist sense.

6 Concluding Remarks

Now one can see in what sense is there a structural similarity between MOU Zongsan’s and Zongmi’s doctrine of the true mind. In employing *The Awakening of Faith* as their respective theoretical framework, Zongmi can be described as a Buddhist MOU Zongsan, whereas MOU Zongsan can be understood as a Confucian Zongmi. Moreover, in order to meet Zongmi’s critique, it is necessary for MOU Zongsan to draw assistance from other Confucians. Generally, as a follower of the School of Mind, he still sticks to LU Xiangshan’s attack of the Buddhist withdrawal

from the world. He especially agrees with LU Xiangshan's thesis that "I use these two words, righteousness and profit, to distinguish between Confucianism and Buddhism. I also use the terms 'public-spiritedness' and 'selfishness'" (Chan 1963a: 575; see also Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 646). Furthermore, he accepts WANG Yangming's critique of Buddhism: "The Buddhists are afraid of the burden in the relationship between father and son and therefore escape from it" (Chan 1963b: 205; see also Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 651). For MOU Zongsan, like for WANG Yangming, "Being attached to the non-distinction of good and evil, the Buddhists neglected everything and therefore are incapable of governing the world" (Chan 1963b: 64; see also Mou 1968: Vol.1, 651). Armed with these charges, like XIONG Shili and TANG Junyi, MOU Zongsan proclaims the priority of Confucianism over Buddhism.

Ironically, MOU Zongsan provides a possibility of saving Chinese Buddhism from the critique raised by Critical Buddhism. This particularly helps to clarify that Zongmi's doctrine of the true mind – despite its cosmogonic claim – is only an apparent *dhātu-vāda*. This signifies that what Zongmi has achieved is nothing but providing a practical channel in concretizing the anti-nihilist implication of Nagarjuna's thesis, "All things are there because of *emptiness* (*sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate*)" (Inada 1970: 147; with modification). MOU Zongsan's de-limitation of the Buddhist doctrine of *ti* (substance), in effect, confirms the genuine character of Zongmi's Buddhism.

More generally, despite his critique that "Buddhism can only justify the suchness but not the compassion" (Mou 1989: 168), MOU Zongsan recognizes its contribution in freeing sentient beings from suffering. For him, the uniqueness of Buddhism is shown to be "a way of life" that leads to inner harmony (Mou 1968: Vol. 1, 645). In this way, MOU Zongsan helps us to see that the relation between Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism is not a zero-sum game.

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Part III
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Sanlun School 三論宗

Chapter 8

The Nonduality of Motion and Rest: Sengzhao on the Change of Things



Chien-hsing Ho

1 Introduction

Traditional Chinese culture typically affirms and highlights the changing nature of things. For non-Buddhist Chinese thinkers in general, the myriad things are both real and ever-changing, and there is no unchanging reality lying beyond or behind. They might readily agree on the Indian Buddhist teaching of impermanence. Yet in contrast to this general trend, in his essay “Things Do Not Move” (*Wubuqian Lun* 物不遷論; henceforth *WL*),¹ Sengzhao 僧肇 (374?–414 CE), a prominent Chinese Buddhist philosopher of Mādhyamika leanings, appears to argue for the thesis that the myriad things do not move in time (henceforth, the nonmoving thesis). To say that things do not move in time is to say they do not change, and so Sengzhao appears to dismiss as unreal all changes of the world.

The nonmoving thesis runs counter to the tradition, as well as being counter-intuitive. For some, it even goes against the Mahayana doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *kong* 空). Nevertheless, Sengzhao takes the nonmoving thesis to be a direct corollary of certain statements in Mahayana sutras and Mādhyamika treatises to the effect that things do not come and go. Moreover, he seems to think that ideas similar to the nonmoving thesis were already espoused by Confucian and Daoist sages.²

¹ This essay and three others were, long after Sengzhao’s death, compiled to form the main core of the treatise known as the *Zhao Lun* 肇論. For an acceptable English translation of the essay, see Chan 1963. Sengzhao also wrote a commentary on Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, the *Weimojie Suoshuo Jing* 維摩詰所說經, which forms a significant portion of the *Zhu Weimojiejing* 注維摩詰經 traditionally attributed to him. In this paper, traditional Chinese Buddhist texts are cited according to the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*.

² See *Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151b5–6 and b21–24, for the reference to Confucius and Zhuangzi. We discuss this issue in Sect. 4.

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Sengzhao wrote the essay with the intent of clarifying and defending these statements. We also know that the topic of motion and rest was a much-debated issue in the Chinese philosophical circles of his time. Still, a number of questions need to be addressed in this context. Are Sengzhao's arguments for the nonmoving thesis sound, or at least *prima facie* persuasive? What is his true stance, in the *WL*, on the change or nonchange of things? What are the main problems that beset the stance or the nonmoving thesis? Herein, I attempt to address these questions, with a view to elucidating Sengzhao's thought on the relationship between change and nonchange.

It may be said at the outset that Sengzhao's discussions in the *WL* are not very consistent, which leads easily to misunderstandings of his overall stance on the change/nonchange of things. Instead of holding that permanence is real, and change is an illusion, Sengzhao thinks that the myriad things are both changing and unchanging. For him, the nonmoving thesis follows from the discernment that things change continuously without there being any enduring stuff against the background of which change takes place. Consequently, he contends that one must not leave change to seek for nonchange. Further, although Sengzhao's emphasis in the *WL* is on the thesis that things do not move in time, there is no definitive denial of the view that the myriad things somehow move in time.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In Sect. 2, I offer some conceptual clarifications as well as preliminary observations. In Sect. 3, I examine, attempt to reconstruct, and evaluate Sengzhao's arguments for the nonmoving thesis. In Sect. 4, I elucidate his overall stance on change/nonchange and discuss the main problems that face the stance or the thesis. Section 5 concludes.

2 Conceptual Clarifications

A pressing issue is why, in the *WL*, Sengzhao wants to argue for the nonmoving thesis, i.e. that the myriad things do not move in time, so they do not really change. It is evident from the text that he thinks the nonmoving thesis is implied by the statements from Mahayana sutras and Mādhyamika treatises that he cites herein. He cites a line from a *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* that states that things do not come or go and are motionless. He attributes to a Mādhyamika treatise the claim that things are changeless and have nowhere to come from or go to (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151a10–11 and b16–17). These statements suggest that the myriad things do not move in time. Then, we can reasonably assume that a main motive for Sengzhao's writing the *WL* is to clarify and defend these statements.

In the Indian context, such statements concern mainly the ultimate illusoriness of all things. For instance, for Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 CE), founder of the Madhyamaka school of Mahayana Buddhism, since all things are dependently originated, all things are empty (*śūnya*) in the sense of having no inherent, independent and unchanging existence or nature (*svabhāva*, *zixing* 自性). The emptiness of things strips them of any substantial ground and allows their deeply illusory character to be

recognized. Consequently, all changes, such as coming and going, are illusory and ultimately unreal.

However, as we shall see, Sengzhao's defense of the nonmoving thesis is based on a different rationale. In the *WL*, he does not mention such terms as "empty" (*kong* 空) and "void" (*xu* 虛); nor does he speak of things as illusory. Further, although he uses both the terms "real" (*zhen* 真) and "conventional" (*su* 俗), which suggest, respectively, ultimate truth and conventional truth in the Mādhyamika doctrine of twofold truth/reality, what is said to be real in the *WL* differs palpably from what he says about ultimate truth in the other essays of the *Zhao Lun*.³ Indeed, the defense proceeds with little or no regard to the Mahayana or Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness. We may say that the *WL* is the product of Sengzhao's own reflections on the change of the myriad things rather than concerning the doctrine of emptiness, even though both the reflections and the doctrine of emptiness serve to affirm, in a certain sense, the nonmoving thesis.

Before examining Sengzhao's ideas in detail, it will be prudent to elucidate, in brief, the concept of time and its cognates with which we will be dealing. For Buddhists, time (or the stream of time) consists of three periods: past, present, and future. In the *WL*, Sengzhao does not refer explicitly to the future period of time. This may well be because for him, things in the future are simply nonexistent. Rather, he speaks of the past and present and appears to take things in the two time periods to be existent.

Buddhism in general refuses to confer on time any ontologically independent, *sui generis* existence. Nāgārjuna, in particular, asserts that time depends upon things and in consequence does not really exist at all.⁴ He presumably considers the concept of time as arising expediently and conventionally on the evidential basis of the flow of things. In his writings, Sengzhao does not explicitly comment on the ontological status of time, so we are unable to say anything conclusive in this regard. It is quite likely that he agrees with the general Buddhist denial of independent reality to time and views the past and present as conceived expediently on the basis of past and present things. In light of the foregoing, although our analysis refers, expediently, to the notions of time, past, present, etc., this should not be construed as our ascribing to Sengzhao any realist conception of time.

We can conceive that the myriad things flow in time in two opposite directions. On one hand, we can think of things as moving in time from the past toward the future. After all, we all seem to move from our past (when we were younger) to the

³For Sengzhao, ultimate truth is formless, ineffable, and realizable only by the quiescent mind of a Buddhist sage. None of these characteristics apply to what is said to be real in the *WL*. Herein, in T 45, 1858: 151a28, Sengzhao regrets that people have the real before their eyes without their knowing it. This indicates that the real in the *WL* is available to our eyes. Thus, the Tang dynasty commentator Yuankang 元康 is not wrong when he comments that the *WL* "clarifies [the notion of] existence to expound the teaching of conventional truth." See *Zhaolun Shu* 肇論疏, T 45, 1859: 166c16.

⁴Nāgārjuna writes in the last verse of the 19th chapter of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*: "If time depends on things (*bhāva*), where is there time apart from things? As things do not really exist, where would time exist?" See Saigusa 1985: 548.

present, to what we are now. The myriad things, then, flow in time in the future-bound direction (henceforth FD). On the other hand, given that present things will be in the past almost immediately, we can also think of them as moving from the present to the past, i.e. in the past-bound direction (PD). Of the two directions, modern conventional wisdom prefers FD to PD. However, not only does PD make sense, it is close to the claim of the Buddhist Sarvāstivāda school that things move from the future to the present and then from the present to the past.⁵ Sengzhao is familiar with the claim, so he writes in the *Zhu Weimojiejing*: “If things abided permanently, [they would move] from the future to the present, and from the present to the past. If things thus pass through the three time periods, they would have coming and going. Since things do not abide permanently, they have no coming and going.”⁶ This passage suggests that if Sengzhao is to take the myriad things to move in time, he may favor the PD view over FD. He is aware of the two ways of conceiving the flow of things, so when we consider his arguments for the nonmoving thesis in the next section, we need to take into account both FD and PD.

Meanwhile, we can divide the stream of time conceptually into an infinite number of temporal moments. Correspondingly, we can think of a thing that moves in time as consisting of an indefinite number of *moment-things*. In this context, let us distinguish a *moment-thing* from a *continuum-thing*.⁷ A moment-thing is a thing that exists only in, or relative to, one temporal moment, which is, so to speak, its present or immediate moment. By contrast, a continuum-thing is an ever-changing thing that proceeds in time for two or more temporal moments. It normally consists of an indefinite number of preceding and succeeding moment-things. Since these moment-things are of one and the same causal continuum (*qua* continuum-thing), we can conventionally take them to be the same thing, similar to the way we take baby Obama, Senator Obama, and President Obama to be the same person.

As is well known, some Buddhist schools endorse a theory of momentariness to the effect that a thing arises and perishes in one and only one temporal moment. However, Indian Mādhyamikas generally do not accept this theory, and Sengzhao concurs with them in holding that, from the perspective of ultimate truth (*zhendi* 真諦), things do not really arise at all. Yet whereas Sengzhao does not in the *WL* refer to the notion of moment, he does so elsewhere where he seems to think that the myriad things are momentary.⁸ Arguably, a proper understanding of his stance on

⁵For this claim, see *Apidamo Jushe Lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍論, T 29, 1558: 104b28–c29.

⁶*Zhu Weimojiejing*, T 38, 1775: 347a14–17. It is here, but not in the *WL*, that Sengzhao speaks of the future. We shall come back to this passage in Sect. 4.

⁷The two terms, “moment-thing” and “continuum-thing,” are coined by me, and are not present in the *WL*. However, Buddhist thinkers generally view a person as a psychophysical continuum, and some of them take all things to be momentary. It will be seen that this terminological distinction works quite well for our analytical exposition of Sengzhao’s stance.

⁸A line in the *Weimojie Suoshuo Jing* (T 14, 475: 541b25–26) reads “just like a magical illusion or a lightning flash, things do not wait for each other and do not even abide for one moment (*nian* 念).” Sengzhao comments thereon: “Things are ever changing and new, like a lightning flash; they arise and perish without waiting [for things of the succeeding moment]. Sixty moments pass away in one finger snap. When things do not even abide for one moment, how can one expect them to

the changing of things requires that we take him to recognize the momentariness of things, without ascribing to him a full-fledged theory of momentariness. In our view, a moment-thing is what is said to be real in the *WL*; namely, herein the word “real” refers to moment-things (or some state of affairs involving them). Nonetheless, the notion of moment-thing is rather intricate, and we cannot dwell on it in this paper. For our purposes, suffice it to say that since Sengzhao implies that the real is available to our eyes, we should understand a moment-thing as an object of perceptual experience rather than as an abstraction like a mathematical point.

Since a continuum-thing proceeds in time from moment to moment, we can reasonably hold that a continuum-thing is, while a moment-thing is not, moving in time. This provides a way to understand Sengzhao’s nonmoving thesis. In addition, a given thing, *X*, at a certain moment of time can be viewed either as a moment-thing or as (part of) a continuum-thing. Thus, in a sense, *X* is both moving and not moving.

3 Sengzhao’s Arguments

As I see it, there are, in the *WL*, two explicit arguments for the nonmoving thesis: I call them the *main argument* and the *causality argument*. In addition, a passage in the text can be read as involving two supportive arguments for the main argument.

The main argument (A) can be formulated as follows⁹:

A1: Past things are present in the past and do not exist in the present.

A2: Past things do not come to the present.

A3: Likewise, present things do not go to the past.

A4: Therefore, things do not move in time.

As said before, we can think of things both as moving from the past toward the future (FD) and as from the present to the past (PD). Consequently, when we consider the flow of things in time, we need to take into account both FD and PD. In this argument, if premises A2 and A3 hold, we would have to accept the truth of the conclusion A4, and so of the nonmoving thesis. However, even if we take premise A1 to be true, it remains questionable whether we can derive A2 from it.

abide any longer? As things do not abide, they are like a magical illusion. Being like a magical illusion, they are not real. Not being real, they are empty” (*Zhu Weimojiejing*, T 38, 1775: 356b12–15). Herein, the temporal nonabidingness of things indirectly implies their emptiness; it is in this manner that Sengzhao’s thought in the *WL* may be connected to the doctrine of emptiness. Still, we need to bear in mind that Sengzhao’s point in the *WL* is that things (*qua* moment-things) do not last for more than one moment, but not that things do not even abide for one moment.

⁹*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151b1–6. Immediately before this, Sengzhao writes in T 45, 1858: 151a28–b1: “People already know that past things do not come [to the present. Yet, they] hold that present things can go [to the past]. If past things do not come [to the present], where can present things go?” Elsewhere he notes that “because things do not come [from the past to the present], they do not go from the present to the past” (T 45, 1858: 151c7). It is clear that premise A3 is based analogically on premise A2.

Both A2 and A3 seem counterintuitive and problematic, so they require supporting arguments.

Here is the supporting argument (B) for premise A2 (Zhao Lun, T 45, 1858: 151c14–15):

B1: If past things come to the present, they exist in the present.

B2: Past things do not exist in the present.

B3: Therefore, past things do not come to the present.

At first sight, this modus tollens argument looks sound, presumably because we take it to show that past things do not come to the present *as they were* on the ground that past things do not exist in the present *as they were*. Yet, this is not sufficient to support A2 and the nonmoving thesis. On our general understanding of the thesis, in order to show the thesis to be true, A2 should mean that past things do not come to the present *in any way*, that is, neither as they were nor in a changed form. Then, to support A2 and the nonmoving thesis, one needs to show this revised argument (B*) to be sound too:

B1*: If past things (changing themselves) come to the present, they exist in the present *in a changed form*.

B2*: Past things do not exist in the present *in a changed form*.

B3*: Therefore, past things do not (changing themselves) come to the present.

Common sense tells us, and many of us would agree, that B2* is false. Yesterday's Barack Obama must somewhat differ, physically and psychologically, from today's Barack Obama. Even so, it makes perfect sense to say that yesterday's Obama exists today in a new and changed form. Given the implausibility of B2*, both B3* and A2 remain problematic.

The inference from A2 to A3 is based on analogical reasoning: as things do not come from the past to the present, they, analogically, do not go from the present to the past. Plainly, such reasoning is far from persuasive. However, we detect in the text this supporting argument (C) for A3 (Zhao Lun, T 45, 1858: 151c14–16):

C1: If present things go to the past, they exist in the past.

C2: Present things do not exist in the past.

C3: Therefore, present things do not go to the past.

Again, this modus tollens argument looks sound. What exist in the past are past things, not precisely present things. Given the change of things moving in time, there must be differences between present and past things or between a thing in the present and the same thing in the past. Yet once again, this is not sufficient to support A3 and the nonmoving thesis. On our general understanding of the thesis, in order to show the thesis to be true, A3 should mean that present things do not go to the past *in any way*. Then, one needs to show this revised argument (C*) to be sound too:

C1*: If present things (changing themselves) go to the past, they exist in the past *in a changed form*.

C2*: Present things do not exist in the past *in a changed form*.

C3*: Therefore, present things do not (changing themselves) go to the past.

C2* is implausible. The present Obama would be in the past a minute later, at which time the Obama who was in the present a minute ago is then in the past. We can say that the (just) present Obama is now in the past in a changed form in the sense that he now belongs to the past, not the present.¹⁰ In addition, it is experientially evident that no present things can always stay in the present, which would here mean they go to the past and stay there in a changed form. Given the implausibility of C2*, both C3* and A3 remain problematic.

Since A2 and A3 are both problematic, the main argument fails to be convincing. Let us now look at the causality argument (D) (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151c23–25):

D1: A present effect and its cause do not exist at the same time.¹¹

D2: The effect arises by dint of the cause.

D3: The cause does not cease in the past.

D4: The cause does not come to the present.

D5: Therefore, the cause does not move in time.

Here, Sengzhao appears to consider only the flow of things from the past to the present; this is why he says that the past cause does not come to the present. D1 and D2 seem acceptable. D3 is derivable from D2 in that the cause must exist (in a certain moment or period) in the past to have the power to give rise to the effect in the present. D4 is derivable from D1. Then, given that D5 hinges on the truth of D3 and D4, if we accept D1 and D2, we may have to concede that, for any present effect, its cause exists in the past and does not move in time to the present.

Suppose a past seed functions as the cause to give rise to a present sprout as the effect. The sprout arises by dint of the seed (and certain causal factors), and the two do not exist simultaneously. However, the seed and the sprout can be viewed as two different stages of the same plant. The plant exists in the past as seed, yet it also exists in the present as sprout. The seed and the sprout do not exist simultaneously as two distinct things. Still, the plant *qua* cause somehow comes to the present and exists then in a new and changed form as effect. Then, D4 is not tenable, because the cause does come to the present, though in a changed form. Moreover, to really support the nonmoving thesis, the argument D should allow that we take a given seed at a certain moment, say, T₁, to be the past cause and the *same* seed of the immediately succeeding moment, T₂, to be the present effect. Clearly, we can say that the seed at T₁ comes to the present as the seed at T₂; namely, the past cause comes to the present. Thus, D4 is untenable. In consequence, the causality argument fails to be convincing too.

¹⁰ Even if the two time periods, past and present, as conceptual constructs, are not real, it remains true from our experiential perspective that the two Obamas differ from one another while conventionally being the same person. Meanwhile, if one insists that the two Obamas are precisely identical, then, given the implausibility of C2, it would appear that present things *do* go to the past, which falsifies the nonmoving thesis.

¹¹ In *Zhu Weimojiejing*, T 38, 1775: 346b28, Sengzhao distinguishes a cause (*yin* 因) from a causal factor (*yuan* 緣) by noting that a cause gives birth to an effect that follows it, while a causal factor provides assistance to an effect that exists simultaneously with it. Thus, as stated in D1, an effect and its cause do not exist simultaneously.

4 Sengzhao's Stance on Change/Nonchange

We have shown that Sengzhao's main argument and the causality argument are unsound or unpersuasive. However, we should not be too quick to conclude that the failure of these arguments means that the nonmoving thesis is false. Remarkably, it is very likely that Sengzhao does not take the arguments to be conclusive. Whether or not he takes them to be conclusive would depend on his overall stance on the change (and nonchange) of things. In this section, I elucidate Sengzhao's stance and discuss problems that it faces.

As noted at the beginning of the paper, Sengzhao holds that the myriad things are both changing and unchanging. That this is so is clear from the following passage from the *WL* (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151a11–14):

Concerning the intent of [the scriptural saying that things are] not moving, does it mean [that one should] discard motion in order to seek rest? [No.] One must seek rest within moving things. As one must seek rest within moving things, things are at rest while being in motion. As one must not discard motion in order to seek rest, things are moving while being at rest. Thus, motion and rest are from the beginning not different, yet the deluded think they are distinct.

Given that one seeks rest within moving things, what is at rest should at the same time be in motion. For Sengzhao, motion and rest are nondual in that they are two intertwined aspects of one and the same actuality, which can be characterized as changing or unchanging, depending on the perspective one takes. This view is in perfect accord with the paradoxical character of Sengzhao's conception of the myriad things as revealed throughout the *Zhao Lun*. For him, the myriad things are paradoxically both one and many, real and nonreal, formless and endowed with forms.¹² In a sense, it is only natural that Sengzhao would view things as both moving and not moving.

Notably, no logical contradiction is involved here. Sengzhao is not treating an item as both X and not-X precisely in the same manner and the same sense at the same time. The myriad things are much like the famous duck-rabbit figure. The figure is not self-contradictory, yet we can say that it is both duck and rabbit, and neither duck nor rabbit. It looks like a duck or a rabbit, depending on the perspective we take. It is neither duck nor rabbit insofar as it is *not* exclusively a duck or a rabbit. To further clarify this issue, we may say a few words on Sengzhao's understanding of language as provisional.¹³

In our ordinary understanding and use of nominal words, we may tend to *entify* their referents, taking the latter to be self-identifying and distinctly demarcated entities. We may further take the words to connote the determinacy of their referents such that the latter are seen as possessing determinate properties. We believe that

¹² For Sengzhao's paradoxical conception of the myriad things, see Ho 2013.

¹³ For more discussions on the topic, see Ho 2013. Connected with this provisional understanding of language is Sengzhao's thesis of ontic indeterminacy to the effect that given anything X, no linguistic term can truly and conclusively be applied to X in the sense of positing a determinate form or nature therein. See also Ho 2014 for discussions of Sengzhao's ontological stance.

something that can reasonably be expressed by the word “existent” is definitively existent, while that expressed by “nonexistent” is definitively nonexistent. We may further suppose that existence and nonexistence are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive, and that a given thing must be either existent or nonexistent, but not both or neither.

Sengzhao dismisses this ordinary understanding of the way nominal words function. In his view, we should understand and use words *provisionally* such that they are not taken to connote any determinacy of their referents. In the provisional use of words, nominal words apply to their referents without ascribing to them any determinate and exclusive properties. The provisional use of the word *X* for a thing does not mean that the thing is definitively *X* or has a determinate *X*-property. The thing can be non-*X* too, and as such can be expressed provisionally by the word *non-X*. For instance, applying the word “existent” to a thing does not mean that the thing is definitively and exclusively existent. It is only, let us say, provisionally existent, which does not exclude its being expressed by the word “nonexistent.” These words do not denote anything definitively and exclusively existent or nonexistent. Likewise, we can provisionally, and without contradiction, apply “moving” and “not-moving” to the myriad things. Contradictions only arise when we take them to denote determinate and mutually exclusive entities, which Sengzhao would not.

In this vein, we can understand this passage in the *WL* (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151b13–18):

Thus, [when the Buddhist sage] said that things go, he did not mean that they definitively go; [his intent is] to prevent people from adhering to the idea that things are permanent. When he said that things stay, he did not mean that they definitively stay; [his intent is] to dispense with what people call the passing of things. How can “going” mean definitively passing, and “staying” definitively abiding? ... The two expressions [“going” and “staying”] refer to one and the same thing.¹⁴ How can it be the case that as they differ in letters, they must refer to different things?

Given common people’s non-provisional understanding of words, what they call the passing of things is definitively passing, and nothing can be both definitively passing and definitively staying at the same time. On Sengzhao’s view, we must not construe the Mahayana texts that way. In the provisional use of words, we can apply the terms “passing” and “staying” to the same things at the same time without contradiction. Overall, things are, provisionally, both moving and not moving, but, definitively, neither moving nor not moving.

Still, one would ask on what specific grounds things can be said to be both moving and not moving. Here let us consider the notions, introduced above, of “moment-thing” and “continuum-thing.” A given thing, *X*, at a certain moment of time can be viewed either as a moment-thing or as part of a continuum-thing. If we view *X* as a moment-thing, then, existing only relative to its immediate moment, *X* is not moving in the sense of passing through different moments of time. In contrast, if we view *X* as part of a continuum-thing, then we can say it is moving on the ground that

¹⁴ It is said in T 45, 1858: 151c11–12 that “although *going* and *staying* are distinct [concepts], they refer to the same thing.”

the continuum, of which it is a part or phase, proceeds in time from moment to moment. Consequently, X is both moving and not moving.

For Sengzhao, it seems, a thing originates by depending on a cause and various causal factors, and all moment-things are immediately preceded by their causes. He most likely recognizes the causal relationship between the preceding and succeeding moment-things of a continuum-thing. Given the ever-changing nature of things, a preceding moment-thing as the cause differs significantly from its succeeding moment-thing as the effect. Still, we can say that the preceding moment-thing gives rise to, or changes itself to become, the succeeding moment-thing. The two moment-things can, indeed, be conventionally taken to belong to one and the same continuum-thing. Such a continuum-thing appears to be conceived on the basis of preceding and succeeding moment-things. It would seem, then, the continuum-thing is *less* real than its constituent moment-things because it is more conceptually and conventionally conceived in dependence on our conceptual scheme than the moment-things are.¹⁵ This explains why Sengzhao contends that the Buddha's talk about things not being moving is talk concerning the *real*, whereas his talk about things being moving is talk concerning the *conventional*.¹⁶ Precisely in this sense, we can say, for Sengzhao, the unchanging aspect of the myriad things is ontologically higher than their changing aspect.

Now, if Sengzhao thinks that the myriad things are both moving and not moving, he would not mean to take the arguments that we discussed above to be conclusive, definitively showing the exclusive truth of the nonmoving thesis, and the problems that we identified with his arguments would not seriously count against the value of the WL. This being so, we should instead see the arguments as heuristic, intended to induce one to recognize an important point about the myriad things, the point that is expressed by the nonmoving thesis.

There is another way of reading Sengzhao's arguments in the WL. As cited above, Sengzhao elsewhere avers that since things do not abide permanently, they do not move in time and thereby have no coming and going. If so, to hold that things move in time is to endorse the view that things pass through different time periods with an enduring stuff. By contrast, the nonmoving thesis amounts to merely saying that things do *not* move in time with an enduring stuff. However, this reading does not tally well with our text, so it can hardly make Sengzhao's arguments any more persuasive. Nonetheless, it is very likely that the view that things abide constantly

¹⁵ In Sengzhao's ontology, it seems to me, the more an item is conceptually presented or presentable, the less it is real. For a related exposition, refer to Ho 2014.

¹⁶ Zhao Lun, T 45, 1858: 151c2–3. As noted before, the terms “real” and “conventional” here do not stand for ultimate truth and conventional truth of the standard Mādhyamika doctrine of twofold truth. It is not uncommon for a Mādhyamika philosopher to propose a multileveled theory of twofold truth. For instance, Jizang 吉藏 (549–623 CE), the leading Chinese Mādhyamika after Sengzhao, set forth the doctrines of “three levels of two truths (*sanchong erdi* 三重二諦)” and “four levels of two truths (*sichong erdi* 四重二諦).” Therefore, we can understand *moment-thing* and *continuum-thing* to belong to, respectively, the ontologically higher (hence *real*) and lower (hence *conventional*) levels of Sengzhao's conventional truth, which is, for him, basically the myriad things. For the further discussion of Jizang's these doctrines, see chapter 8 of this anthology.

without change remains a main target of criticism in the *WL*. We now consider this issue in some detail.

To say that things move in time is ambiguous, in that it can mean either that things move in time with an enduring stuff or that things move in time with no enduring stuff. This, coupled with the nonmoving thesis, gives us three different views of things in time:

View 1: Things move in time with an enduring stuff.

View 2: Things move in time without any enduring stuff.

View 3: Things, being momentary, do not move in time.

According to view 1, while things move and change in time, there is an enduring core that remains the same through all changes. This view was generally held by Hindu thinkers in India but was dismissed by Indian Mādhyamikas. Common people are inclined to accept the view. Thus, Sengzhao writes in the *WL*: “people think that a person possesses the same substance in youth and in maturity, that the same stuff persists over a hundred years” (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151b24–25). Sengzhao would repudiate this view without hesitation.

I take view 2 to mean that though things move in time, they are ever-changing in their entirety, such that nothing in them endures for more than one moment. Such a moving thing is what we have referred to as a continuum-thing. View 3 says what the nonmoving thesis states, and it is true of all moment-things. Significantly, view 2 and view 3 together constitute the stance we have attributed to Sengzhao, namely, that the myriad things are moving and not moving in time.

We can further appreciate the intimate relationship between view 2 and view 3 by considering an hermeneutical puzzle in the *WL*. In that text, Sengzhao mentions both Confucius and Zhuangzi. He writes as if the two non-Buddhist sage thinkers, at least implicitly, endorsed view 3, whereas the directly relevant lines and ideas attributed to them in the *WL* at best affirm only view 2.¹⁷

I think that this problem of interpretation can be resolved insofar as we recognize that, for Sengzhao, view 3 arises naturally from view 2. If one discerns that a thing changes moment by moment over a period of time without there being any enduring stuff in the process, one may conclude that the thing at a given moment of the process exists only relative to the moment and does not exist in any preceding or succeeding moments. Such a moment-thing has no coming or going, and this accords well with view 3. Given that Sengzhao takes Confucius and Zhuangzi to embrace view 2, it is natural for him to think that they implicitly endorsed view 3.

Views 2 and 3 concern the same phenomenon, but approach it from different perspectives: respectively, the perspective of a continuum and that of a moment.

¹⁷ *Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151b5–6 and b21–24. Tan refers to a parable in the *Zhuangzi* that involves Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui 顏回 and observes that while the *Zhuangzi* uses the parable to illustrate the ongoing change of things, “Sengzhao uses it to justify his argument that past things stay in the past, and present things stay in the present” (Tan 2008, 200). He claims that Sengzhao criticizes the *Zhuangzi*’s understanding of motion. However, it is most likely that Sengzhao exploits the understanding to reinforce his nonmoving thesis.

Indeed, we can say the two views are mutually dependent. On the one hand, if things move in time with an enduring stuff, namely, if view 2 is false, there would be no moment-things and view 3 would not hold. On the other hand, if there are no moment-things, which do not move in time, things would always move in time with an enduring stuff. The two views require, imply and complement each other, which, for Sengzhao, indicates the nonduality of motion and rest. Overall, in the *WL*, Sengzhao dismisses view 1, accepts view 2, and highlights view 3.

Meanwhile, there are two main problems that beset Sengzhao's stance in the *WL*, especially the nonmoving thesis.

The first problem is that since moment-things do not move in time, any present moment-thing should remain at rest in the present. Hence, Sengzhao contends that present things stay in the present. Yet this clearly goes against our everyday experience. As we know well, no present thing or moment-thing can persist in the present. If a given present moment-thing does not persist in the present, it is reasonable to think that it has, in the moment following its appearance to us, gone into the past. Thus, a moment-thing moves in time and the nonmoving thesis is false. This seems to me to be the toughest problem for Sengzhao. However, a response can be formulated on Sengzhao's behalf.

Above, we spoke of a moment-thing existing only in, or relative to, its present or immediate moment. From our own perspective, a present moment-thing is observed to pass into the past. However, we can conceive a notion of time such that, from the moment-thing's own perspective, it always stays in its own present or immediate moment. Then, when contending that present things stay in the present, Sengzhao means to state that present moment-things always stay in *their* own present moments, but not in *our* present time; just as phenomenologically, we can never escape our own present. By contrast, in contending that past things stay in the past, he stresses that past moment-things, which exist in their own present moments, always stay in what is, from our constant present perspective, our past. This implies that we can have two different perspectives of the notion of time: our perspective and that of other things. To some, this way of resolving the problem may not be quite satisfactory. However, it should be noted that Sengzhao's fundamental contention is that (moment-)things do not move in time, and this is indeed the case for both present and past moment-things in respect of their immediate moments of time.

The second problem is that the *WL* was traditionally criticized by some Buddhists for taking things to be permanent, for the reason that things are held to always stay in a period of time, past or present.¹⁸ If things are permanent, they would be endowed with an inherent existence or nature and would thereby be *nonempty*. Consequently, Sengzhao's stance runs counter to the central teaching of Madhyamaka. Against this criticism, we remark that, on Sengzhao's view, a moment-thing is unchanging in relation to its own immediate moment, but not to the three time periods. In addition, his nonmoving thesis hinges on the idea that a continuum-thing changes in time moment-by-moment without any enduring stuff. Thus, neither a moment-thing nor a continuum-thing abides through time without changing.

¹⁸ For a recent study on this and related issues, see Liu 2010.

The view that a moment-thing stays in its own moment might suggest that a moment-thing has the inherent nature of thus staying and thereby fails to be empty. However, for Sengzhao, to say that a thing stays in a period of time does not mean it definitively stays in that period. The intention of speaking in such terms is to steer people away from the idea that things definitively move in time. Given Sengzhao's provisional understanding of language, we should not take him to posit any inherent or determinate nature in moment-things.

This second problem arises partially because, in the *WL*, Sengzhao adopts a more or less conventional position concerning the ontological status of the myriad things: he does not speak of them as illusory or empty. This leads him to claim that past and present things *exist* in their own time periods. Above, we took this to mean that moment-things exist only relative to their own moments. Yet Sengzhao can go one step further and, as he does in the *Zhu Weimojiejing*, maintain that the myriad things do not even abide for one moment. This nonabidingness would strip the myriad things of any substantial ground and reveal them to be illusory and empty. However, Sengzhao does not take this additional step explicitly in the *WL*, with the result that one may mistakenly take him to posit inherent nature in the myriad things.

Sengzhao does not present the notion of emptiness in the *WL*, even though it plays a major role elsewhere in his thought. This is probably because in the *WL* he is concerned to stress the nonduality of motion and rest. His intent may also be to highlight the importance of every living present. Sengzhao notes that the completion of a mountain lies in the first basket of soil, but the fact is that for the completion every basket is important. The text implies that whatever we do in our day-to-day life, virtuous or vicious, the deed would always exist relative to its immediate moment (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 151c19–23). The view then arises immediately that we need to value every moment of our life as we live it, and live and act the best way we can. This is difficult to achieve, and may be rendered even more difficult if we are too quick to think of the myriad things, our life included, as illusory.

5 Conclusion

I have investigated the *WL* to examine Sengzhao's arguments for the thesis that things do not move in time. I have also elucidated his stance on the change/non-change of things and discussed related problems. Although Sengzhao apparently attempts to show the plausibility of the thesis, he makes it clear that one must not leave change to seek for nonchange. Indeed, the thesis follows from the discernment that things change from moment to moment without there being any enduring stuff in the process.

Philosophers such as Parmenides, Plato and Śāṅkara were inclined to think that change is an illusion of the senses, and that only permanence is real. Indian Mādhyamikas would speak of change as ultimately illusory, yet while rejecting permanence as well. However, Sengzhao, in the *WL*, takes our eyes to have direct access to the real and views the myriad things as both changing and unchanging,

resulting in the affirmation of the nonduality of motion and rest. Among philosophical works that confer a higher ontological status on nonchange over change, Sengzhao's essay, the *WL*, is unique and well worth pondering.

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Chapter 9

Po: Jizang's Negations in the Four Levels of the Twofold Truth



Ellen Y. Zhang

1 Introduction

One of the prominent features of the Madhyamaka (Middle Doctrine) philosophy since Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE) is the use of the non-affirming negation. The method of negation as a linguistic construct, however, does not point to affirmation-*qua*-negation since for the Madhyāmikan any affirmation pointing to conceptual fixation and determination should be relinquished as well. As a synthesizer of the Māhayanīc *Prajñāpāramitā* tradition in the early development of Chinese Buddhism, and one of the most important systematizers of the Sanlun School 三論宗 (*aka.* The Three-Treatises School), Jizang 吉藏 (Chi-tsang, 549–623 CE) follows the same method of negation of his predecessors, Nāgārjuna and Aryadeva (third century CE), maintaining the fundamental doctrine of emptiness while at the same time trying to avoid stepping into a nihilistic or skeptical terrain.¹ This paper concerns the

¹The Sanlun School, known as the “School of Emptiness” (*Kong Zong* 空宗) and the School of Wisdom, (*Bore Zong* 般若宗) is one of the earliest Buddhist schools in China during Sui and early Tang periods. The Sanlun School is also known as the Chinese representative of the Indian Madhyamaka school of Nāgārjuna. It was introduced to China by a half-Indian missionary-scholar names Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什 344–413 CE) who translated into Chinese three Madhyāmika texts, namely, the *Zhong Lun* 中論 (*Treatise on the Middle Doctrine, Madhyāmika Śāstra*) by Nāgārjuna, the *Shiermen Lun* 十二門論 (*Treatise on Twelve Gates, Dvadasamukha Śāstra*) by Nāgārjuna, and the *Bai Lun* 百論 (*Treatise on One Hundred Verses, Satasastra Śāstra*) by Aryadeva 提婆. See the section on “The Philosophy of Emptiness: Chi-Tsang [Jizang] of the Three Treatise School” in Chan 1973. The five Sanlun precursors whose works influence Jizang’s philosophy include Nāgārjuna, Kumārajīva, Sengzhao 僧肇 (Seng-Chao 364–414 CE), and Falang 法朗 (507–

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unfolding of the deconstructive strategies in Jizang's rendering of the four levels of twofold truth, exploring how Jizang's method of negation (*po* 破), as a form of "critical philosophy," is utilized to correspond to the Sanlun appropriation of the Madhyāmikan understanding of emptiness supplemented by the Sinicized conceptualization of the Middle-Way-as-Buddha-Nature. The paper submits that in line with the Māhayāna spirit of Chinese Buddhism, Jizang's Sanlun negative maneuver exhibits a more positive attitude toward the conventional, including the use of language in comparison to its Indian predecessors, which is demonstrated through the Sanlun's more dependence upon affirmative expressions than negative ones to promulgate its argument.

As the most important figure of the Sanlun School, Jizang is a prolific writer, and a large number of his writings survive, containing one of the earliest efforts to systematize the fundamental Māhayāna doctrine accessible to the Chinese reader. His major works include the *Zhonglun Shu* 中論疏 (*Commentary to the Treatise on the Middle Doctrine*), the *Bailun Shu* 百論疏 (*Commentary to the Treatise on One Hundred Verses*), the *Shiermenlun Shu* 十二門論疏 (*Commentary to the Treatise on Twelve Gates*), the *Sanlun Xuanyi* 三論玄義 (*Profound Meaning of Three Treatises*), the *Dasheng Xuanlun* 大乘玄論 (*Profound Exposition of Māhayāna*) and the *Erdi Yi* 二諦義 (*On the Twofold Truth*). His understanding of Buddhism shows a clear influence of his Indian predecessors through "Three Treatises", as well as Sengzhao 僧肇 (Seng-Chao 364–414 CE), a precursor of Sanlun philosophy whose writings are frequently cited in Jizang's works. Since Jizang thematizes the notion of negation-qua-deconstruction in connection with his interpretation of Nāgārjuna's twofold truth, we need to examine his theory of "the four levels of the twofold truth" (*sichong erdi* 四重二諦) first before the discussion on his idea of negation and negativity.

2 The Four Levels of the Twofold Truth

One cannot talk about Madhyāmika Buddhism without discussing the doctrine of the twofold truth (*erdi* 二諦). They are the conventional truth (*samvṛ-tisatya*; *sudi* 俗諦) and the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*; *zhendi* 真諦). In the *Erdi yi*, Jizang keeps citing the account of the twofold truth from Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (*Zhong Lun* 中論, henceforth MMK), maintaining the Madhyāmika argument that all things in the world are devoid of self-nature (*svabhāva*) in the sense of being dependently or causally (*pratītya*) originating (*samutpāda*).² Meanwhile, Jizang

581 CE), Jizang's mentor. While some scholars have pointed out that there was no Sanlun School existed before Jizang, others contend that the Sanlun thought represented by Kumārajīva and his disciples are called in the Buddhist history of China "The Old Sanlun of Central Gate" (*Guanzhong Jiulun* 關中舊論) or "The Old Sanlun of West Gate" (*Guanxi Jiulun* 關西舊論). The two names here indicate the places where the group transmitted Mādhyamika. For a more detailed discussion, see Yang 2008: 251–252.

²The Sanskrit word *bhāva* denotes a metaphysical existence which Nāgārjuna rejects. See Kalupahana 1986: 32.

points out that the doctrine of the twofold truth functions as a pedagogical means, aiming to achieve two major purposes: (1) to put forth a critique of both nihilist and absolutist interpretations of emptiness; and (2) to resolve certain obscurities and inconsistencies in the teachings within the Buddhist tradition. Jizang's view is pretty much in line with Nāgārjuna's interpretation of the doctrine of the twofold truth. According to Nāgārjuna's explication, the so-called conventional truth and ultimate truth are only two different ways of looking at the same thing and they are mutually interdependent, as he states in the MMK:

The teaching of the doctrine by the Buddha is based upon two truths: truth relating to the conventional and truth in terms of the ultimate. Those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound truth emphasized in the Buddha's message. Without relying upon the conventional, the ultimate is not taught. Without understanding the ultimate, freedom is not attained (MMK 24.8–10, Kalupahana 1986: 333).

In his study of Buddhism, T.R.V. Murti insists that any philosophy that makes a distinction between the ultimate of the absolute and the conventional of everyday experience inescapably gives rise to a doctrine of two truths and a theory of illusion (Murti 1955, p.104). Murti then argues that Madhyāmika's negation implies that the ultimate transcends the discursive thought in the sense that it is unreachable through the use of "rational judgment (Tuck 1990: 52). This means that the Madhyāmikan "no-doctrine-about-the-real" position should not be taken as a "no-reality" doctrine. Although Murti tries to defend Madhyāmika against the charge of being nihilistic, this reading of the twofold truth merely as a duality between an unlimited Reality and a limited appearance-only world seems to be problematic, for it creates a new dichotomy between the two truths. Yet, on the other hand, is it logically impossible to have full reality of ultimate and the full reality of the conventional? A. L. Herman thinks so when he talks about what he calls "the dilemma of māyā," the argument of which is as follows:

1. If māyā is real, then Brahman is not the sole reality, and the advaita metaphysics is destroyed.
2. If māyā is unreal, then it could not be efficacious in producing the appearance of the world, the Gods, and the Self.
3. But māyā must be either real or unreal.
4. Therefore, either the advaita metaphysics is destroyed or māyā is not efficacious (Herman 1976: 220).

This is exactly the dilemma facing Śāṅkarā (700–750 CE) of the Vedānta School, and what he does is to reject the third premise mentioned above, asserting that māyā, is neither real nor unreal. I am using the example of "the dilemma of māyā" here because many scholars, including Murti, believe that the problems confronted by the Madhyāmikan are identical to those by Śāṅkarā. Jizang seems to leave the problem behind by focusing on the twofold truth as it is presented as the conventional. For Jizang, the doctrine of the twofold truth itself belongs to the conventional truth that functions as a pedagogical means. Jizang follows Nāgārjuna's teaching and further expounds the relationship between two truths, insisting that "the conventional cannot be determined by the conventional (*su buding su* 俗不定俗)" and "the ultimate cannot be determined by the ultimate" (*zhen bu ding zhen* 真

不定真), since what is called the conventional is from the perspective of the ultimate and what is called the ultimate is from the perspective the conventional. As such, the conventional truth is a “teaching method” (*jiaomen* 教門) or a “teaching truth” (*jiaoli* 教理) instead of the “ontological principle” (*jingli* 境理). In other words, the twofold truth is nothing but two levels of discourse not two realities. Therefore, Jizang says, “Nāgārjuna explains that tathāgatas always have recourse to the twofold truth on preaching the *Dharma*: first the conventional truth and second the ultimate truth. Hence, the two truths are just a means of instruction (i.e., a teaching method) and are not concerned with truth of principle (T 45, 1852:15a15–17).³ Jizang also claims, “One who speaks the real speech relies upon the ultimate truth. One who speaks the true speech relies on the conventional truth. Hence the Buddha gives these two speeches and propagates the dharma which relies upon the two truths.” (T 33, 1699: 116a18–20)⁴

According to Jizang, those who misunderstand the doctrine of the twofold truth either deny the twofold truth or fail to acknowledge that the twofold truth is a pedagogical and soteriological means for edification purposes rather than truth in itself as “objects and principles.” If the ultimate or higher truth is viewed as a certain determinate or absolute essence (*svabhāva*), it would become a “lower” or “ordinary” truth. So a truth can be higher or lower, and whether it is high or low depends upon one’s mental awareness. This notion of the twofold truth is well explicated by Jizang in his theory on the three levels of twofold truth (*sanchong erdi* 三重二諦) which can be rendered as follows:

Conventional Truth	Ultimate Truth
(1) <i>you</i>	(1) <i>wu</i>
(2) both <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i>	(2) Neither <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i>
(3) Both affirmation and negation	(3) Neither Affirmation nor negation

At all the three levels, we see affirmation of negation as duality. At the level three, we see the duality of duality/two and the nonduality of duality/two (i.e. the negation of duality). The former is called “affirmation” (*shou* 收) while the latter “negation” (*po* 破). Jizang’s detailed explanation of the three levels of twofold truth can be seen as follows:

1. At the first level, ordinary people believe that what appears to us through the senses is the true nature of things. They affirm the reality of all things and hold that *dharma*s, all things, are real and possess self-nature [*you*]. But the sagacious

³ Also see Liu 1994: 140. Liu also contends that Jizang’s negative argument aims at making “nonattachment” the common thread for the Sanlun school in order to ultimately overcoming existence/nonexistence duality.

⁴ The citation is from *Jingang Bore Shu* 金剛般若疏. Also see Shih Chang-Wing 2004: 99.

or the enlightened do not accept this naive view with an understanding that all *dharma*s are empty in nature [*wu*]. The former is regarded as the conventional truth and the latter as the ultimate truth.

2. At the second level, both existence and non-existence belong to the conventional truth, whereas non-duality (neither existence nor non-existence) belongs to the ultimate truth. Both the conventional and the ultimate truths of the first level, when viewed from a higher standpoint, can be ascribed only to the sphere of the conventional truth on the second level, for the affirmations of either existence or non-existence are two extremes [*Neither you or wu*]. The middle way is to refute these extremes and hence non-duality is the ultimate truth.
3. At the third level, both duality and non-duality are the conventional truth whereas neither duality nor non-duality is the ultimate truth [either affirmation or negation of both *you* and *wu*]. The two truths of the previous level are two extremes from the standpoint of this level [neither affirmation of both *you* and *wu* nor negation of both *you* and *wu*]. The avoidance of them is regarded as the Middle Way or ultimate truth.⁵

The last level is the one that cannot be put into words and concepts. That is, it is beyond verbalization and conceptualization. This dialectical three-step negation is also called the “Middle Way of the Twofold Truth” (*erdi zhongdao* 二諦中道). Jizang’s negative method is also formulated as the “four levels of twofold truth” (*sichong erdi* 四重二諦) in the format of fourfold negation, known as the method of *tetralema* (*siju* 四句) or “four points of argumentation” that presents the “four possibles” (*catuskoika*) to show propositional possibility: (1) X is Y, (2) X is not-Y, (3) X is both Y and Not-Y, and (4) X is neither Y nor not-Y” (Magliola 1984: 105). The fourfold negation can be divided into a single negation and a double negation:

1. The single negation (*dan siju* 單四句) is shown as follows:

(1) <i>you</i>	not <i>you</i>
(2) <i>wu</i>	not <i>wu</i>
(3) both <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i>	not (both <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i>)
(4) Neither <i>you</i> nor <i>wu</i>	not (neither <i>you</i> nor <i>wu</i>)

2. The double negation (*fu siju* 複四句) is shown as follows:

- | |
|---|
| (1) <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i> → <i>you</i> (existence) |
| (2) <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i> → <i>wu</i> (non-existence) |
| (3) <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i> → both <i>you</i> (existence) and <i>wu</i> (non-existence) |
| (4) <i>you</i> and <i>wu</i> → neither <i>you</i> (existence) nor <i>wu</i> (non-existence) |

⁵The quotation is cited from Cheng 1981. The English translation has been modified for the sake of consistency, and those in [] are added by me.

In both single and double negations, *you* and *wu* as two conceptual entities are not ones with substantial references. Namely, they are nothing but provisional names (*jiaming* 假名) wherein there is no identity, nor difference. The same thing can be applied to the two entities with regard to two truths that are subject to a process of negation as well. Both the conventional truth and the ultimate truth here belong to the category of “teaching method” (i.e., a skillful and pedagogical means) rather than “ontological truth” (a determinative thesis). At several occasions, Jizang speaks of a difference between a “teaching method” (*jiaomen* 教門) or a “teaching truth” (*jiaoli* 教理) and a determinative “ontological truth” (*jingli* 境理).⁶ This distinction leads Jizang’s argument on twofold truth in terms of a verbal teaching (*yuejiao* 約教) and a fixed principle (*yueli* 約理).⁷ Hence, the twofold truth is also expressed by Jizang as truth-as-instruction (*jiaodi* 教諦) and truth-as-viewpoint (*yudi* 於諦). Accordingly, the fourfold level of negation can be rendered as follows:

1. Twofold truth (I):

Conventional truth: *you*

Ultimate truth: *wu*

2. Twofold truth (II):

Conventional truth: both *you* and *wu*

Ultimate truth: neither *you* nor *wu*

3. Twofold truth (III):

Conventional truth: both CT and UT⁸

Ultimate truth: neither CT nor UT

4. Twofold truth (IV):

Conventional truth: All the above three levels of discourse

Ultimate truth: It is beyond conceptual language

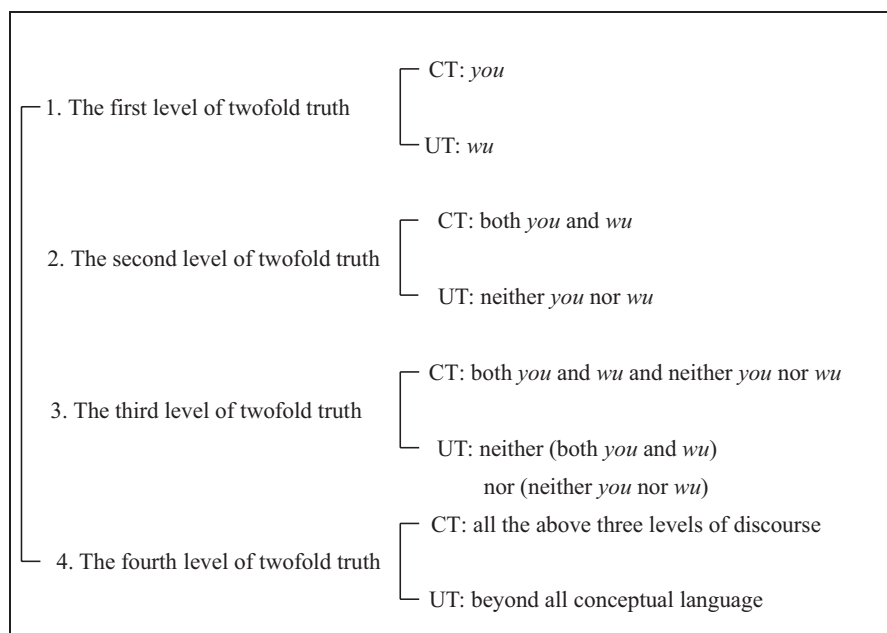
As illustrated above, each level from one to three involves the twofold truth, that is, the conventional and the ultimate, as well as a conjunction and a disjunction. The fourth level indicates that the language of “two” (i.e., the twofold truth in terms of C and U) at the first three levels of discourses should be perceived as different levels

⁶ *Dasheng Xuanlun*. T45, 1853: 15a17.

⁷ In the article “Once More on the Two Truths: What Does Chi-tsang [Jizang] Mean by the Two Truths as ‘Yueh-chiao [Juejiao]’?” Whalen Lai contends that the distinction between the verbal teaching and a fixed principle is critical for Jizang’s non-attached position on the hermeneutical understanding of the *Madhyāmika* notion of emptiness. For a detailed analysis, see Lai 1983: 505–521. Also Nagao 1989.

⁸ CT here refers to conventional truth and UT refers to ultimate truth.

of the conventional or conceptual truth. The ultimate one at the fourth level, in contrast to the first three, is “beyond” any discursive discourse, that is, the discourse in which the fabrications of *you* and *wu*, and the conventional and the ultimate cannot be avoided. Jizang clarifies his method by speaking of four specific ways of negation: (1) a single negation (*danpo* 單破), (2) a single affirmation (*danshou* 單收), (3) both negation and affirmation (*shuangyi* 雙亦), and (4) neither negation nor affirmation (*shuangfei* 雙非). Such kind of logical apparatus employed in Madhyāmika is an important argumentative tool to explain the very core Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. The method of fourfold negation is accomplished by a process of “gradual negations” (*jianshe* 漸舍) with a ascending order of “neither...nor” (*liangfei* 兩非). The whole deconstructive inquiry in terms of different “levels,” therefore, points to a theoretical framework that can be seen as follows:



The fourfold progression in an ascending order involves a gradual negation at each level characterized by a “double strategy” of affirmation and negation. The first level of the ultimate truth focuses on a single negation whereas the second and third levels of the ultimate truth are expressed through a typical Madhyāmikan negation in the form of neither...nor, that is, neither two (*you* and *wu*) nor not-two (neither *you* nor *wu*). At the forth level, all the distinctions made in the previous levels of discourse are repudiated because any kind of point of view, no matter how useful and effective it is, cannot be said to be ultimately truth. The ultimate truth, as shown above, cannot be put into words and concepts, and as such it “ends with *tetralemma*.” So here we have the level of “speech-forgetting and thinking-terminating” (*wanguan juelu* 言忘慮絕. T45, 1852: 1b5–6), also known as the level of “sacred silence.” In “The Non-duality of Speech and Silence: A comparative Analysis of

Jizang's *Thought on Language and Beyond*," Chien-hsing Ho pays a particular attention to the notion of "sacred silence," contending that there are two kinds of "silence" in Jizang's method of negation, namely, silence or non-speech as a peculiar form of expression that implies the interdependence between speech and silence, and silence as a way to indicate ineffability. Ho also speaks of these two kinds of silence in terms of silence-qua-teaching and silence-qua-principle.⁹ In other words, one has to speak of truth from the perspective of the conventional such as "the fourfold truth" and "the twofold truth" while recognizing that the fourfold level built on the double talk must end with a dissolution of the hierarchical structure.

It should be noted then that the notion of "beyond" in the ultimate truth at the fourth level does not mean an absolute "separation" (*li* 離) between the discourse at the first three levels and the ultimate; otherwise it would violate the principle of emptiness in the sense of dependent origination. Therefore, the final silence, from a logical perspective, also depends upon the conceptual constructs on the basis of the previous three levels. Even though Jizang does not deliberately make a distinction between these two kinds of silence as Ho has acknowledged, the latter's distinction is helpful for us to understand an "ambiguity" in the thesis given by Madhyāmikans in general and Jizang in particular. Namely, the Madhyāmika discourse on silence is a kind of word-bound silence that simultaneously points to the possibility of "sacred silence," a non-dual silence.¹⁰ In other words, Jizang does not simply employ negativity to posit another reality that is to be affirmed transcendently. Negation thus means the self-subverting of oppositional hierarchies. What Jizang aims to show by the strategy of negation is that self-existing and self-sustaining truth is a logical impossibility in a conventional world constructed of complex interrelations. In this sense, the dialectic of the four-level includes a process of establishing words and their meanings and then deconstructing and erasing their meanings. The conceptual meaning, *a la* Jizang's view, is a fixed and determinative entity to limit the infinity of the transcendent. Yet at the same time, the conceptual meaning is "meaningful" as a "skillful means" (*upaya*, *fāngbian* 方便) for the conventional world.

To explicate the nondual position of the twofold truth, Jizang has borrowed the Chinese concepts *ti* 體 (substance) and *yong* 用 (function) in his analysis of the two aspects of truth. That is, the substantially corrective one (*tizheng* 體正) or truth-qua-substance and the functionally corrective one (*yongzheng* 用正) or truth-qua-function (Yang 2008: 192). The former refers to the non-dual silence

⁹In his insightful essay "The Non-duality of Speech and Silence: A comparative Analysis of Jizang's *Thought on Language and Beyond*," Chien-hsing Ho points out that there are two kinds of silence implied in Jizang's notion of silence even though Jizang has not spelt it out explicitly for the sake of avoiding a dualistic distinction. That is, silence as a principle and silence as teaching, and the latter belongs to the level of conventional truth. See Ho 2012: 13.

¹⁰I need to point out here that the notion of non-conceptual religious/spiritual knowledge qua silence has been the subject of some debate in past decades among scholars. Stephen Katz, for example, questions the claim of a pure, unmediated experience, that is, a non-conceptual, mystical experience maintained by Buddhism. Katz insists that the mystical experience or direct awareness spoken by Buddhism must be conceptually-laden. See Katz 1978: 22–74.

(viz., the principle) whereas the latter to the linguistic/conceptual distinction between the ultimate and the conventional. Meanwhile, Jizang also maintains that the bifurcation of substance and function is not meant to operate. Without knowing function, substance cannot be brought out. Consequently, both substance and function, and both “one” implied in the paradigm of substance and “two” implied in the paradigm of substance/function should be negated:

What is called “truth-qua-substance” is neither the ultimate nor the conventional. The ultimate and the conventional are designated to be “truths-qua-function.” It is so because the true character of *dharmas* defies description and is beyond thought, and is never to be considered as the ultimate and the conventional. Thus, we call it “substance.” Since it transcends all forms of one-sidedness and falsehood, we designate it “truth.” Thus, we speak of “truth qua substance.” (T45, 1852: 7b9–12)

As a matter of fact, Jizang's key concern in the twofold truth is to show the limits of all argumentative parities and linguistic dualities. Hence, he contends,

The twofold truth is meant to make explicit the nondual; the intention of the twofold truth is not of duality, but to enable others to access the nondual. Thus, we take the nondual to be the “substance” of the twofold truth. (T 45, 1854: 108b24–25)¹¹

Jizang's effort of not making two truths as two realities can be seen also when he emphasizes a relation of conceptual interdependence or the mutual identity (*xiangji* 相即) of the twofold truth in a conceptual discourse. Specifically, Jizang has outlined three kinds of mutual identity to supplement the four levels of the twofold truth: (1) the horizontal identity (*heng xiangji* 横相即), (2) the vertical identity (*shu xiangji* 竖相即), and (3) the identity of gain/acquisition and loss (*deshi xiangji* 得失相即). These threefold identity can be illustrated as follows:

1. Horizontal identity: The identity between *kong* and *you*
 - *Kong* means the emptiness of *you*, and *you* means the existence of *kong*;
 - *Kong* is *you*, and *you* is *kong* (The existence is empty, and emptiness is existent).
2. Vertical identity: The identity between two and not-two
 - Two means the two of not-two (non-dual two), not the two of the two;
 - Not-two is two.
3. Identity of gain/acquisition and loss: The identity between enlightenment and delusion
 - The gain as enlightenment (*wu* 悟) is the loss as delusion (*huo* 惑);
 - Gain is loss and loss is gain.¹²

¹¹ See Ho 2012: 11. In fact, Ho in his essay renders *ti* as “body” rather than “substance” in order to avoid substantiating Jizang's position and thus making the principle of the twofold truth dualistic.

¹² The concept of “mutual identity” is another way for Jizang to express his idea of non-duality of the twofold truth.

The threefold identity expounded by Jizang is meant to prevent people from treating the two truths as another set of duality. The negation of duality is thus explained *via* an affirmative notion of “identity.” The third identity, i.e., the identity between enlightenment and delusion is a direct response to the Buddhist middle path in that *samsāra* is *nirvāṇa*, and *nirvāṇa* is *samsāra*, or “emptiness is the form” (*kongjise* 空即色) and “the form is empty” (*sejikong* 色即空). In line with the notion of dependent-arising, Jizang asserts the codependence between all argumentative parities by using the idea of identity. For Jizang, the twofold truth has to be self-negated in order to avoid to be locked in a self-created structure. In other words, what is called “truth” here should be taken as “truth-as-instruction rather than “truth-as-viewpoint” since the ultimate truth is beyond the fourfold levels (*lichao siju* 理超四句) and ineffable (*bukesi yi* 不可思議).

3 *Po*: Negation as a Deconstructive Method¹³

There are three key doctrines postulated by Sanlun Buddhism perceived as the cornerstone arguments for the school. They are: (1) the doctrine of deconstructing what is false/misleading and manifesting what is corrective, (2) the doctrine of the twofold truth in terms of the ultimate truth and the conventional truth, and (3) the doctrine of the middle way of eightfold negation. The first claim, “deconstructing what is false/misleading and manifesting what is corrective” (*po xie xianzheng* 破邪顯正. T 45, 1852: 7a5) is a special argumentative technique employed by Jizang to defend the Sanlun understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of *śūnyata* (emptiness). It is characterized by a strategy of “double negation” where both affirmation and negation should be negated, as Jizang puts it, “When the two affirmations are gone, the two negations should be relinquished as well. ... Having affirmation or negation is called ‘false/misleading’ whereas having neither affirmation nor negation is called ‘corrective’.” (T 45, 1852: 7a14).

Obviously, the word “deconstructing” (*po* 破) here directly points to a negative gesture, which denotes the ideas of refuting, marking off, and negating. According to Jizang’s understanding, negation without asserting a thesis and expounding without pointing a determinative reference is an effective technique to cut off the attach-

¹³I am using “deconstructive method” or “deconstruction” in my presentation, as I acknowledge a “family resemblance” between Mādhyamika philosophy and the deconstructive project of Jacques Derrida. As a matter of fact, looking at Buddhism from a perspective of Western Deconstruction is nothing new. Robert Magliola in *Derrida on the Mend* pioneered an effort to put together the Mādhyamika tradition inspired by Nāgārjuna and deconstruction (See Magliola 1984). Cai Zongqi discusses how Derrida and Sengzhao perform what he calls “lexical-syntactical deconstructions” in their philosophical writing. (See Cai 1993: 389–404). Alan Fox has observed a parallel between Jizang’s fourth level of double discourse and the method used in Jacques Derrida’s texts. (See Fox 1992: 1–24). Due to the scope of this paper, I avoided any in-depth comparison although Derrida and deconstruction have been mentioned at several occasions.

ment to conceptual duality. Like Nāgārjuna's use of negation in his argument on emptiness, Jizang's use of the method of "deconstruction without assertion" (*po er buzhi* 破而不執) plays a decisive role within the framework of Sanlun's formulation of the doctrine of the twofold truth, which aims to show that an affirmative truth-claim is situated with regard to a radical negative gesture that precedes it. This is to say, negation performs the deconstruction of what is conceptually construed while at the same time points to "something extra" in a process of a repetitive circulation of deconstruction. This "something extra" is expressed in the phrase "manifesting what is corrective (*zheng*)" which seems to involve a second-order truth-claim about how a corrective view about Buddhist teachings is. The key words in the phrase are *zheng* 正 and *xie* 邪, both of which have a broad range of meaning in Chinese. The word *zheng* means orthodox, correct, and true whereas the word *xie* means heretic, erroneous, and false. But what is the point for Jizang to speak of the polarized concepts in terms of *zheng* and *xie* or true and false, if any conceptual distinctions are "empty" according to Madhyāmika philosophy? It is crucial to understand what Jizang means by *zheng*. Traditional interpretations tend to give *zheng* a more substantial weight. For example, *zheng* in terms of correct person (*renzheng* 人正) and *zheng* in terms of "correct dharma" (*fazheng* 法正, Li 1999: 165). When *zheng* and *xie* are used as a contrasting parity, it seems that Jizang considers *zheng* as truth vis-à-vis *xie* as falsehood. Such interpretation, however, would be contradictory to the Sanlun thesis that any conceptual construct via language is limited and subject to negation.

In "Self-reflection in the Sanlun Tradition: Madhyāmika as the 'Deconstructive Conscience' of Buddhism," Alan Fox offers an alternative but intriguing interpretation of Jizang's strategy of *po* to elucidate the Sanlun method, arguing that the word *zheng* should not be understood merely as "true" or "correct," but rather "corrective" or "appropriate." It is so because the Madhyāmika argument "largely represents the attempt to overcome obsessive commitment to such dualistic distinctions, found commonly in Chinese Buddhist literature, as 'emptiness and being [existence]' and worldly and authentic discourse."¹⁴ This idea of overcoming "obsessive commitment" to dualistic distinctions reminds one of a statement in the *Dasheng xuanyi* where Jizang makes it abundantly clear that the very purpose of "deconstructing what is false or misleading" is to suspend any attempt that leads to an "absolute acquisition" (*you suode* 有所得) since non-dual thinking derives from an "absolute non-acquisition" (*wu suode* 無所得). Thus, Fox's observation is crucial for he raises the question regarding the very nature of Madhyāmika negativity. Namely, whether one should take negation ontologically as a truth-claim or methodologically as a teaching method? In fact, Jizang puts forth the question himself by asking: If there are no affirmation and no negation, and no *zheng* and *xie*, why is that we talk about 'deconstructing what is *xie* and manifesting what is *zheng*'?

Here, we run into an epistemological question in Buddhism concerning the argument on non-conceptualizability and non-expressibility of reality or truth. If "the correct/truth viewpoint" can be established through negation, then negativity is

¹⁴ See Fox 1992: 6 and Yang 2008: 117–118.

merely a matter of affirmation via another form of conceptualization. Then does Jizang claim that there is no horse while riding a horse at the same time? In order to avoid such kind of confusion, Jizang's idea of being "correct" (*zheng*) must be understood differently from the meaning of the word normally used. By adopting the word "corrective" instead of "correct," Fox keeps himself away from adopting polarized pairs like falsity vs. truth, heresy vs. orthodox. In so doing, Fox propounds the notion that Jizang makes his argument explicitly that his deconstructive project is NOT to establish another absolute reality but to facilitate a thought-provocative way to disrupt a dualistic way of thinking as emphasized in the Madhyāmika tradition. Negation is then a cancellation of an illusion that conceptual names leads to truth.¹⁵ Along this way of thinking, *po* means a deconstruction of what is incorrect, i.e., the one-sided view as a result of a conceptual attachment. This also explains why Jizang maintains that for the ultimate gate of the Dao (*Dharma*), there should be no conceptual opposites between *zheng* and *xie*.

Jizang puts forth truth-as-teaching and truth-as-viewpoint/principle, contending that the twofold truth belongs to the former.¹⁶ That is to say, truth-as-teaching is meant to be pedagogical that functions as a mediator between what is said and what is unsaid. The idea of "manifesting what is corrective" operates in a similar way in that it performs concept-splitting through deconstruction whenever a concept is confined to a dogmatic cage. For instance, the conceptual parity of *you* (有) and *wu* (無) cannot be taken as a pair of opposite concepts; rather their identity and difference exist simultaneously through constant negation, as one sees as follows:

<i>you</i> (existence)	↔	<i>feiyou</i> (not existence)
<i>wu</i> (non-existence)	↔	<i>feiwu</i> (not non-existence)

Such kinds of concept-splitting and concept-doubling argument are skillfully used by Sengzhao to explicate the Sanlun position on non-duality, which is further developed by Jizang to show the limit of conceptual argument. Paul Swanson, however, suggests that the notion of twofold truth in the formula of "neither existence (*you*) nor non-existence (*wu*)" is problematic for the Sanlun School and Sengzhao in particular, for not existence (*feiyou*) and not non-existence (*feiwu*) are not appropriate terms to explicate the idea of Nāgārjuna's theory of twofold truth, albeit good for Sengzhao to refute the views held by "mental non-existence", "identical with

¹⁵ Jizang sometimes follows traditional interpretations. For example, he takes *sāstras* (論 論) upon which his own Sanlun theories have formulated as a "*zheng*" to a variety of inconsistency existent in *śūtrās* (經 經). This is Jizang's way of operating *panjiao* (判教) through which different teachings and doctrinal issues can be harmonized by reclassification.

¹⁶ The terms truth-qua-instruction (*jiaodi* 教諦) and truth-qua-viewpoint (*yudi* 於諦) are used to refer to the conventional truth and the ultimate truth by the Sanlun School exclusively. See Hong 2009: 137.

form”, and “original non-existence.”¹⁷ Since the formula of “neither existence nor non-existence” or “neither non-existence nor not non-existence” may not be sufficient enough to explain the relationship between the conventional and the ultimate in terms of the two truths, it is important for Jizang to explain the “corrective” dimension of Sanlun philosophy. In other words, the “corrective” is not merely an affirmation of an opposite view but a negation of any entities that are held self-existing and determinative. The negation thus leads to an ontic indeterminacy and the point of which is to eliminate absolutist interpretations of a conceptual name that is taken as an independently existing reality. This kind of non-affirming negation is best illustrated by Nāgārjuna when he speaks of the impossibility of conceptualizing causality in terms of (1) an effect produces itself, (2) an effect is produced by something other than itself, (3) an effect both produces itself and produced by something other than itself, and (4) an effect is produced without a cause. He tells us in the opening chapter of MMK:

No existence whatsoever are evident anywhere that are arisen from themselves, from another, from both, or from a non-cause (MMK 1:1. Kalupahana 1986: 105).

By negation Nāgārjuna points to the contradiction for a cause-effect relationship as either identity (selfness) or difference (otherness). What a causal relation or a causal process actually is points to a conceptual impossibility due to the intrinsic lack of no self-nature (own-being or substance) between cause and effect. Nāgārjuna intends to show that the common-sense view of causality involves logical contradictions. If causality can be exposed to be self-contradictory, then the “thing” or “things” that are assumed to participate in the chain of causality either have no self-nature or do not participate in the causal process at all. If the existence of causality were understood in term of identity and difference, then without these two aspects causality itself would be meaningless. That is to say, causality is not logically comprehensible in terms of identity and difference.

Without taking into consideration the fact that Jizang focuses his attention to the essentialist understanding of the conceptual relationship between existence (*you*) and non-existence (*wu*), one would think that he is playing a linguistic game simply by placing the categories of existence and non-existence under the executioner's block. However, the intent for Jizang's method of *po* is not to get rid of all conceptual categories for the sake of the transcendent ultimate but show that “something new arisen from nowhere” does not exist. When speaking of the doctrine of emptiness, Jizang takes thusness (*tathatā*), the true nature of all things, as the referent of the Madhyāmikan view of emptiness, insisting that all things (*dharmas*) or existents with their conventionally fabricated nature (*bhāva*) are ultimately empty. Meanwhile, emptiness as the true nature of all things is beyond conceptual schemes. Thus any

¹⁷ Here the first view, “mental non-existence” (*xinwu* 心無), refers to the idea that one has no awareness of things, but the things are not non-existent. The second view, “identical with form” (*jise* 即色), refers to one that identifies emptiness with form (or matter) even though it agrees to the idea that form does not cause itself to form. The third view, “original non-existence” (*benwu* 本無), refers to a position that takes “non-existence” as the non-existence of existence. All these views are rejected by Sengzhao. See Swanson 1985: 35–36.

concept-splitting effort has to be erased and negated. Jizang insists on a non-dual relationship between emptiness (*śūnya*) and non-emptiness (*aśūnya*) by denying an absolute distinction between existence (*you*) and non-existence (*wu*).

Jizang cautions against a dualistic mode of thinking, pointing out that there are two kinds of way to conduct deconstruction: one is called *jiuyuan po* 就緣破, showing the validity of contradiction; another is called *duiyuan po* 對緣破, namely, argument or proof by showing what the corrective is (Yang 1991: 202–204). The first method is adopted from the Madhyāmikan technique of negation, known as the method of *prasāṅgika*, namely, a refutation by reducing adversaries to absurd consequence to show invalidity of their views (i.e., proof by contradiction). Or, sometimes, it is not necessarily an argument by using *reductio ad absurdum* in a technical sense, but a proof by showing a dilemma that prevents the opponent from getting the planned conclusion. Refutation can be done by either direct negation (*duopo* 奪破) or negation by presumption (*zongpo* 縱破). This method is used by Nāgārjuna to establish a contention in a manner of deriving an absurdity from its denial, thus showing that a thesis must be accepted because its rejection would be untenable. In other words, the refuter does not posit any thesis to argue against his opponents; instead by way of a fitted question, he reveals the absurdity of his opponent's own proposition. This method is often called “negative dialectic.” When speaking of Nāgārjuna's negation, Robert Magliola observes that it “usually aims at the entrapment of the opponents by way of dilemma, with dilemma understood in the most specialized sense: an argument which shows that the opponent is limited by his premises to two conclusions, each fatal to his case” (Magliola 1984: 104).

The second method of deconstruction can also be divided into two sub-methods: (1) to use what is misleading or one-sided to reveal the misleading or one-sided view, i.e., the method of “using the poisonous to attack the poisonous,” or “borrowing the false to negate the false (*jiewang powang* 借妄破妄), and (2) to use what is corrective to manifest the misleading or one-sided view. If we say that the negation *via* the poof by contradiction establishes no affirmation, negation *via* revealing what is corrective is not entirely negative and as such another negation is required to avoid an absolutist and ontic determinacy. Certainly, Jizang has his opponents' views to be deconstructed in mind, both outside and within Buddhism. He thus classifies what he calls “misleading views” (*xie*) into four categories: (1) the non-Buddhist theories of substantiality and intrinsicity of self and things, (2) the Abhidharma notion of “existence” (*you*) in terms of the existence of the objective self, (3) the Satyasiddhi notion of emptiness (*kong*) by emphasizing absolute emptiness, and (4) the acquisitive mind of a practitioner of the universal vehicle. The purpose of negation is, therefore, to refute the opponents' arguments mentioned above.

It should be mentioned that the category one, that is, the “misleading views” by non-Buddhist schools includes Neo-Daoism (with its view of the substantiality of *you*) with which Sengzhao once was identified prior to his conversion to the Buddhist faith. Thus Jizang writes in *Sanlun Xuanyi*:

After [Sengzhao] has read the *Dao De Jing*, he exclaimed: "Beautiful it surely is, but it seems as if the realm has not yet been found where our spirits may rest and worldly sorrows be overcome." When later he read the old translation of *Vimalakitisūtra* he was filled with joy and admiration. ...So he decided to become a monk" (Liebenthal 1968: 6)¹⁸

Obviously, Jizang uses Sengzhao's words to make his own remarks on the philosophy of Laozi's Daoism. Nevertheless, his critique of the Abhidharma notion of "existence" as the second kind of "misleading views" is more challenging. One needs to ask whether Jizang's deconstruction has to be "parasitic" in that it is based on something (existent) to be deconstructed. To answer this question, we should remember that Jizang's operation of deconstruction (*po*) is indeed "dependent on" what he perceives as "wrong views" or "falsehood" of Buddhist teachings in his time. Fox contends that Jizang's use of affirmative language to defend his view makes him "guilty of a kind of circular reasoning" since when he criticizes other traditions for their dualistic positions he seems to claim a special privilege for his own (Fox 1992: 18). My defense to Jizang's strategy of negation is that negation enables him to transform negation to un-negation rather than a pure affirmation.¹⁹ Given the centrality of the precept of non-attachment (*wuzhi* 無執) or non-abiding (*wuzhu* 無住) in Jizang's teaching, the negative method suggests that there should be none other than the principle of non-attachment or non-abiding.

In fact, Jizang attempts to answer his opponents' question by redefining the meaning of "existence" or "the existent view" given by his opponents. Therefore whenever he starts his argument, Jizang first steps into his opponents' shoes, claiming that if there is the means of deconstructing, there must be things to be deconstructed. Therefore, things exist and the claim that all things are empty cannot be true. Or, if there is nothing to be deconstructed, what does one use to deconstruct? If there is no deconstructive existent, then our thesis must be affirmed. Or, if one uses emptiness to do negations, emptiness then must be a thing that really exists. One can tell that Jizang is fully aware of the fact that his opponents attempt to establish a false dilemma in those questions: If nothing exists, neither Madhyāṃikan negation nor Madhyāṃikan affirmation is possible, and if something does exist, the Madhyāṃikan position on nonexistence would be invalid. Jizang then responds to such kinds of questions by manifesting fallacies embedded in those questions. By the means of deconstruction of each question, Jizang negates each fixed concept and illusory substantial existence of things behind each concept.

Let's look at an example to show how Jizang responds to the opponents' claim that if all things are negated, emptiness should be negated as well. The claim seems to be the one accepted by the Madhyāṃikan, as the notion of "emptiness of emptiness" (*śūnyata-śūnyata*; *kongkong* 空空) maintained by Nāgārjuna. But Jizang quickly points out that the opponents have already altered the meaning "emptiness"

¹⁸ Some changes have been made to his translation for the sake of consistence in terms and concepts.

¹⁹ The word "un-negation" here refers to Jizang's notion of *weiwu* 非無, a method of negation. At the same time, it has a similar meaning to Derrida's idea of "de-negation" which I use in the paper as well. It is a method of a negation that "denies itself" rather than a pure negation of negation. See Coward and Foshay 1992: 25.

when they make the claim that no things exist for they make “emptiness” to be a substantial non-existence instead of dependently existent, and when they claim something exists, they make existence to be a substantial existence instead of dependently existent. It is upon this observation that Jizang posits a specific deconstructive method called “question-and-answer *qua* emptiness” (*yikong wenda* 依空問答), by which a question is asked, assessed and refuted by another question followed by an answer. This is the method used by Nāgārjuna for his argumentative thesis. According to Nāgārjuna’s method of refutation, in a situation when an argument is advanced on the ground of emptiness, if someone were to offer a reply and this reply will fail since it will presuppose exactly what is to be proven. Through this kind of sequential dialogue, the opponents’ misleading views are deconstructed and refuted, but the respondent does not necessarily establish a new thesis as a final and correct answer. This is a practical exercise of removing the old illness but not developing any new disease.²⁰ Here is an example of this kind of dialogue:

Question “The ultimate and the conventional truth are one substance.” What error is this?

Answer If the ultimate and the conventional truth are one and the same is being true, then the ultimate truth is true and the conventional truth also truth. If the ultimate and the conventional truth are one and the same is being conventional, then the conventional truth is conventional so is the ultimate truth. If the ultimate truth is true and the conventional truth is not truth, then the conventional truth and the ultimate truth are different. If the conventional truth and the ultimate truth are not conventional, then the ultimate truth and the conventional truth are different. Therefore, both ways are blocked and the two cannot be one.²¹

As the dialogue indicates, Jizang’s deconstructive strategy intends to show that if one’s questions do not rely upon the emptiness of duality, they will not be appropriate questions and therefore cannot refute the erroneous. Likewise, if one’s answers do not rely upon the emptiness of duality, they will not be suitable answers and thus cannot manifest the corrective. The principle of emptiness in terms of “neither... nor” produces an effective means to deconstruct the opponents’ propositions. Emptiness in this sense functions as a provisional name in a meta-system to indicate that things-deconstructed are always dependently existent as part of the conceptual argument. It follows that Jizang’s negation or deconstruction relies on things/views that have been previously (mis)affirmed. Thus, “deconstructing what is misleading

²⁰ Here Jizang also uses water and fire metaphors, pointing out that emptiness is like water and the purpose of it is to extinguish fire (of attachment). But “if water itself were to catch on fire, what would one use to distinguish it? Both nihilism and eternalism are like the fire, and emptiness is capable of extinguishing them. But if one persists in becoming attached to emptiness, there is no medicine which can extinguish this.” (T45, 1852: 7a14).

²¹ *Sanlun Xuanyi*. Quotation is from De Bary and Bloom 1999: 438–9. Minor changes in translation are done for the sake of coherence in wording for this paper.

or one-sided and revealing what is corrective” cannot be accomplished without some kinds of affirmation. In the same manner, one has to negate what has been affirmed by one’s own views, that is, one must continually deconstruct previously established ideas in order to avoid such sedimentation of thought. Ultimately, one should not be attached to the conventional by accentuating on existence nor attached to the ultimate by accentuating on non-existence or emptiness. The double gesture of negation can be described as “tacit acceptance” on the one hand and “critical deconstruction” on the other.

In doing so, Jizang intends to tell us that one should not hold any particular viewpoint or perspective, even one that is considered as a “higher level of discourse.” Conceptual distinctions as the conventional truth should not be an object of attachment and fixation. *Po* as means of correction then is a way of cancellation, that is, what is NOT. If we say Nāgārjuna’s *pratītyasamutpāda* is not only a doctrine of dependent-origination but also an account of non-dependent-non-origination, Jizang’s “corrective” (*zheng*) as such is not about what is a truth-claim but a description of what is not a truth-claim. This is why Jizang maintains a “non-existence” (*bu cuanzai* 不存在) of the conceptual thesis of the Buddhist doctrines in an absolute sense.

In order to avoid *duanjian* 斷見 (a limited view), *pianjian* 偏見 (a biased view or one-sidedness), *huojian* 惑見 (a delusional view), and *changjian* 常見 (a fixed/permanent view) within the Buddhist tradition, Jizang postulates three categories of being “corrective”:

1. Corrective as a response to one-sidedness (*duipian zheng* 對偏正)
2. Corrective as a response to the exhaustion of one-sidedness (*jinbian zheng* 盡偏正)
3. Corrective as a response to the suspension of being corrective (*juedai zheng* 絕待正)²²

As shown above, one-sidedness is viewed as “false” (*xie*). Clearly, Jizang is engaged in a process of deconstruction through a gradual and progressive negation. The corrective here functions as a pedagogical means for one to relinquish one-sided attachment. The corrective in the third category denotes that the very concept of “corrective” should be cancelled out. Jizang says, “As for the third kind of corrective, once the illness of one-sidedness has departed, no trace of a corrective is left behind. There is neither one-sidedness nor a corrective. However, no one knows how to describe this magnificent situation, so one is forced to use the word ‘corrective’” (T 45, 1854: 108c17–23). What Jizang attempts to show here is that even though there is ultimately no bifurcation between the illness and the cure, and that

²²Fox argues that Jizang’s threefold category of being corrective can be recapitulated as three methods of negation: (1) the method of refuting competing points of view in terms of independent criteria; (2) the method of using opponent’s own logic against himself (*reduction absurdum*), and the method of putting to rest of obsessive intellectualized and discursive discourse. See Fox 1992: 17.

the word “corrective” should be cancelled out too (*zheng yi buliu* 正亦不留), one still uses the word only for the practical reason. Thus Jizang’s negativity as paradigmatic transformations has a lot to say on the topic of apophasis and the inquiry of wordplay for it has offered an alternative way of looking at the function of language that both encompasses and negates the categories of ineffability simultaneously.

Some scholars note that the method of Madhyāmika negation in terms of “neither...nor” points to a position that “the correct view is no view,” and that the corrective position is “being positionless” (Tuck 1990: 82). But neither “no view” nor “positionlessness” would be a problem for Jizang’s argument against conceptual determinacy since for him if something can be “revealed” or “manifested” in a deconstructive process through conceptual dependent-origination, then “no-view” or “positionlessness” is a view or position in itself. Like Nāgārjuna, Jizang accepts that there are more than conceptually constructed *dharma*s and his negativity as such entails un-negation and de-negation which aim to disrupt any conceptual determinacy. Jizang’s negativity audaciously shows how one can “skillfully” employ conceptual words to play against conceptual words, and how any view by discursive argument can lose its immediate signification through each execution of negative references.

One of the most important Chinese scholars critical of Jizang’s method of negation is Wing-Tsit Chan who points out that the reason for the decline of the Sanlun School “is not so much its metaphysics as its approach to it” (Chan 1973: 358). Here, Chan refers to Jizang’s method of negation of all erroneous views as a way of elucidating the corrective views. He then continues, “It is obvious that this approach is as nihilistic as it is destructive. The school had little new substance to offer and nothing constructive. It is truth that Emptiness as the Absolute is pure and perfect as anything conceivable, but being devoid of specific characters and divorced from mundane reality [the conventional], it becomes too abstract for the Chinese” (Chan 1973: 359). Chan’s critique involves two points: (1) the Sanlun negation is too nihilistic, and (2) the Sanlun method is too abstract to appeal to a Chinese mind. The first one is not uncommon, given that it is a long-standing argument in Buddhist studies on whether the Nāgārjuna’s negation is nihilistic. It is my contention that Jizang’s negative strategy is not an expression of nihilistic excess, because he not only admits the pedagogical function of the conventional but also accepts the possibility of attaining the ultimate via direct awareness (*prajñā*). Although Jizang keeps lamenting that the “corrective *dharma*s” are beyond verbal expressions and conceptualization, he has an urge to speak of them and his deconstructive project depends upon verbal expressions and conceptualization.²³ As a matter of fact, the true object of

²³ It should be noted that sometimes it is ambivalent that Jizang’s suspicion of concepts is due to their intrinsic limitations or confusions caused by the fact that there is a problem of having a clear definition in Chinese Buddhism. Alan Fox has pointed out the Sanlun tradition, including Jizang, seems to ignore the problem of definitions such as the concept of “self-nature” that so occupied Candrakīrti and others in the Indian Madhyāmika tradition. Fox is correct on this difference since the Chinese tradition as a whole does not pay much attention to conceptual definitions. For more detailed discussion on Jizang’s view on language, see Ho 2012: 1–19. Ho insists that Jizang does not hold a clear-cut distinction on conventional speech and sacred silence as one would see in the works of Nāgārjuna.

Jizang's critique is the idea of inherent self-nature (*svabhāva*) because of the human tendency of harboring one-sided, concept-bounded views, and clinging to the concept of truth of any determinate content. Thus Jizang keeps reminding us of the limitations of a conceptually construed meaning and a dichotomous framework of thinking. The twofold truth is meant to be a remedy to cure the disease of attachment. Yet anyone who is "clinging to the meaning of the concept" (*shouyan zuojie* 守言作解) is back to the illness instead of emancipation.

As for the second points, I think that Chan is partially correct in that some of Jizang's presentations tend to be "abstract", "schematic", and "highly summary" particularly if compared to those allusive and imaginative stories and dialogues used by Ch'an masters. Nevertheless, Jizang is more faithful to the Buddhist teaching from India and his deconstructive spirit is preserved in the Ch'an tradition in China, especially the Hongzhou Ch'an 洪州禪, part of the "Southern Ch'an 南宗" represented by Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788 CE), Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749–814 CE), Huangbo Xiyuan 黃蘗希運 (–d. ca. 850 CE), and Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (–d. ca. 867 CE. Wang 2003: 72–78).²⁴

4 Po: Negation in Light of the Middle Way

The Sanskrit word "madhyāmika" means "one who holds to the middle." The middle denotes the idea of avoiding one-sidedness. In Nāgārjuna's theory of the middle, the concept of the "middle" is connected to the concept of the "provisional." Whereas the ultimate is referred as the "middle" the conventional is as the "provisional." Jizang also uses "going-in" (*ru* 入) in contrast to "getting out" (*chu* 出) to explain the idea of the corrective and the middle. However, the truth of the middle way, in Jizang's opinion, is the one that embraces both the middle and the two-sided, and "going-in" and "going out" as well as negates both the middle and the two-sided, and "going-in" and "going out." Such language of double conjunction and double disjunction is the same used by Jizang in his fourfold levels of the twofold truth.

Furthermore, the Chinese Sanlun School speaks of the Middle-Way-Buddha-Nature (*zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性). In other words, the notion of "Buddha-nature" is expressed through the context of the Madhyāmika doctrine of the "middle" by its critique of both the extreme view of essentialist existence and the extreme view of nihilistic non-existence. In fact, Jizang considers the "middle way" and the

²⁴ Although the Hongzhou Ch'an lineage is the subject of some contention, the descended line, namely, the lineage in the order of Mazu → Baizhang → Huangbo → Linji is traditionally accepted according to the dialogical history of Ch'an Buddhism. For a comprehensive and systematic study of the method of negation in Ch'an, see Wang 2003: 52–80.

“Buddha-nature” synonymous, that is, the “middle way” is another name for the “Buddha-nature.” Thus, we have the following equation:

$$\boxed{\text{Middle Way} = \text{Buddha} - \text{Nature}}$$

Compared to “emptiness” with its negative and apophatic gesture, the term “Buddha-nature” suggests a definitely affirmative and kataphatic tone. Some Sanlun scholars, such as Yang Huinan, point out, Jizang’s acceptance of the concept of the Buddha-nature has something to do with various influences of the Māhāyanic tradition other than Mādhyamika, which include the Buddhist texts such as *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*Daban Niepan Jing* 大般涅槃經), *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka sūtra* (*Fahua Jing* 法華經), and concepts such as “One-vehicle” (*yisheng* 一乘), “permanent abiding:” (*changzhu* 常住), the “Dharma-body” (*Dharmakāya*, *fashen* 法身), and the “Buddha-embryo” (*tathagatagarbha*, *rulaizang* 如來藏). He continues to argue that because Jizang accepts the idea of the Buddha-nature, he is somehow not faithful to the Mādhyāmika doctrine of emptiness.²⁵

The term of the “Buddha-nature” (Buddha-dhātu or Buddha-gotra) was first made popular in China in the early fifth century with the translation of the Māhāyanic *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtrā* (*Daban Niepan Jing* 大般涅槃經). Sometimes, the term Buddha-Dhātu” (*fojie* 佛界) is also used to refer to the idea of Buddha-nature. The Chinese term “Buddha-nature” (*foxing* 佛性) is the translation of a number of closely related Sanskrit terms such as *buddhadhatu*, *buddhagotra*, *buddhagarbha*, *tathagatagarbha* and so forth. Despite that there is no univocal interpretation of the term there exists within Māhāyana a debate if the Buddha-nature should be viewed as something transcendent and eternal. Jizang’s concept of the Buddha-nature is mainly elucidated in his *Dasheng Xuanlun* where he accepts the claim that “the middle-way is called the Buddha-nature” in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtrā* and associates the Buddha nature with the idea of the “middle way” (*zhongdao* 中道) defined as “neither the ultimate nor the conventional (非真非俗).” But this does not mean that Jizang directly accept the following equation:

$$\boxed{\text{Middle Way} = \text{Buddha} - \text{Nature} = \text{Emptiness}}$$

Jizang never claims that the Buddha-nature itself is empty, yet he does criticize other schools’ for their dualistic and essentialist views on the Buddha-nature. Based upon the notions of “non-abiding” Jizang critically analyzes the claims made by other schools on the idea of Buddha nature and negates all the pre-Sanlun concepts of Buddha-nature, particularly those who substantiate the impermanent mind with the permanent Buddha-nature. Although Jizang does not explicitly enumerate the concept of Buddha nature, his point of view is presented through his threefold deconstruction (*sanchong po* 三重破) to what he has classified as the three categories of Buddha-nature-as-correct-cause by various schools: (1) the Buddha nature as

²⁵ See Yang 1991 and 2007.

the sentient beings via the five aggregates, (2) the Buddha nature as mind-consciousness, and (3) the Buddha nature as the objective existence.²⁶ The first two speak of the Buddha nature in terms of the subjective, whereas the last one speaks of the Buddha nature as an objective existence. For Jizang however, the Buddha-nature should be neither mind nor matter. In this way, Jizang combines Madhyāmika doctrine of *śūnyata* or emptiness with the Chinese appropriation of tathāgata or the Buddha-nature to manifest what is the corrective. Like emptiness that requires self-deconstruction, so does the Buddha-nature.

Jizang's critique of the previous position on the Buddha-nature can be summarized in three aspects: (1) the duality between *you* and *wu*, (2) the essentialization of time (past, present, and future), and (3) the duality between being identical and separated. Among these three erroneous views, (1) and (3) are refuted in lieu of the non-dual position that Jizang expounds in his arguments on the twofold truth. As for the issue of time, Jizang here follows the argument by Sengzhao in latter's essay *Wubuqian Lun* 物不遷論 ("Things Do Not Move").²⁷ According to Sengzhao's reading of the Madhyāmika philosophy concerning the concept of time, the entities of both "movement" (*dong* 動) and "stillness" (*jing* 靜) are devoid of inherent self-nature (*svabhāva*).²⁸ For both the Sanlun School, any attempt to substantiate the idea of Buddha-nature as eternality would be problematic. This is the reason Jizang rejects the concept of "Buddha-nature as three periods of time" (*shanshi foxing* 三世佛性) because the essentialist view of time implied in the concept.

It is based upon the fundamental Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyata*) in terms of no inherent self-nature that Jizang formulates his theory of the Buddha-nature-as-a-middle-way. The middle way, however, does not indicate that there is something which is called "middle way"; nor is it a center in a circle. But how does one approach the meaning of the middle? For Jizang, the center is that there is no "center" since the "center" should not be taken as a fixed entity. Jizang argues that duality is one-sided while nonduality is central. But at the same time, one-sidedness and centrality are two extremes, and as such they are called the conventional truth. Such Madhyāmikan rejection of any "centered" conception is also inherited by Ch'an Buddhism developed later in China which claims that "there is no mind and no Buddha," which means the mind of non-abiding (Wang 2003: 72–73). Here is a well-known *gongan* (ko'an, 公案) in the Ch'an tradition which records a dialogue between Nanquan Puyuan 南泉普願, a Ch'an master, and a monk:

²⁶ For example, before the arising of the Sanlun school, one of the most popular notions of the Buddha-nature is the "Buddha nature of a correct cause" (*zhengyin foxing* 正因佛性) which puts an emphasis on the existence of a subjective mind. See Yang 2007: 259–260. Yang argues that Jizang in his late life held more affirmative views such as the idea of the Buddha-nature due to his interaction with masters of other schools such as Zhiyi 智顗 (Chih-i 538–597 CE) of the Tiantai School 天台宗). At the same time, Zhiyi's theory on emptiness-provision-middle-way (*kong-jia-zhong* 空假之中) shows the influence of the Sanlun School. For a more comprehensive study of the relationship between the Sanlun School and the Tiantai School with regard to the doctrine of emptiness, see Ng 1993.

²⁷ Cf. Chap. 7 of this anthology for the discussion of Sengzhao's *Wubuqian Lun*.

²⁸ Also see Chapter Six on Sengzhao in Robinson 1967: 123–155.

A monk asked Nanquan, “Is there a truth which no one has taught? Nanquan replied, “There is.” “What is this truth?” said the monk. “Which one no one has taught so far?” Nanquan answered, “It is not mind; it is not Buddha; it is not things” (Blyth 1966: 193).

Here Nanquan’s negation of the mind, the Buddha, and things functions exactly the same as what one sees in Jizang’s argument when he upholds the view that the spirit of the middle way is having no acquisition and attachment to a fixed and closed standpoint (Wang 2003: 109–121). Like Nāgārjuna, Jizang considers the middle way as a successful way of escaping from centering. The Buddha is Tathāgata, “he is who comes/goes thus” because he is forever coming and going” (Magliola 1984: 104).²⁹

When Fox makes the observation that for Sanlun philosophers “there is no central standpoint or perspective which may be viewed as the uniquely correct standpoint,” he intends to show that “the idea of a correct standpoint implies the positing of an incorrect standpoint over and against which the ostensibly correct viewpoint seeks to distinguish itself. This, then, necessarily involves dualistic thinking, and the condition of dualism is a form of extremism, involving as it does such distinctions as up/down, right/wrong, and so on.”³⁰ In Jizang’s view, all truth-claims, as provisional names, are essentially pragmatic in character and eventually have to be abandoned. In accordance with his deconstructive spirit, Jizang speaks four approaches to the interpretation of the idea of the middle way that includes: (1) interpretation-qua-names, (2) interpretation-qua-teaching, (3) interpretation-qua-mutuality, and (4) interpretation-qua-no-confinement. The first one is names which refer to real (*shi* 實) and the corrective (*zheng* 正). The second one relies upon the teachings of the Buddha, specifically, the doctrine of the middle which is, in fact, neither middle nor not-middle. The third one denotes a mutual dependence between the corrective and one-sidedness since either name is provisional and relative to each other. The last one means that the middle exists everywhere that involves the phenomenal (*se* 色) and the mind (*xin* 心), both of which denote the notion that “all *dharma*s are one *dharma* and one *dharma* is all *dharma*s.” The twofold truth as such embraces mutual dependence in terms of a teaching method and a teaching principle which, in turn, correspond to “what can depend upon” (*nengyi* 能依) and “what is depended upon” (*suoyi* 所依). A teaching method plays the role of “what can depend upon” while a teaching principle plays a role of “what is depended upon.”

Meanwhile, Jizang bases his idea of the middle upon the doctrines of the “middle way of eightfold negation” (*babu zhongdao* 八不中道), that is, no origination, no extinction, no permanence, no impermanence; no identity, no difference; no arrival, no departure. This is also the opening verse of Nāgārjuna’s MMK. Along the line of eightfold negation, Jizang establishes his fivefold progression (*wuju* 五句) which can be formulated as follows:

²⁹ Mogliola plays with the Buddhist notion of coming/going, pointing out that emptiness is BETWEEN “easy come and easy go” and “hard to come by.”

³⁰ See Fox 1992: 8.

1. The ultimate: Neither origination nor extinction
2. The middle way of the conventional: Both origination and extinction in a provisional sense
3. The middle way of the ultimate: Neither origination nor extinction in a provisional sense
4. The middle way of the unity of the conventional and the ultimate: Neither [both origination and extinction] nor [neither origination nor extinction]

The middle way then means absolutely non-abiding (*wuzhu* 無住), which also means the unity of the “two gates” (*ermen* 二門), namely, the conventional and the ultimate (i.e., the twofold truth). At the same time, the middle way indicates the middle of neither *you* nor *wu*, which is also the provisional of both *you* and *wu*. As such the threefold middle way can be rendered as follows:

1. Middle way as a response to one-sidedness
2. Middle way as a response to the exhaustion of one-sidedness
3. Middle way as a response to the suspension of being absolute

Given that the notion of the “middle” implies the crucial idea of Buddhism in its whole system of thought, it is important to see the necessity to the suspension of being attached to one particular concept within its linguistic context. Although the affirmation is expressed in a positive concept of the Middle-Way-as-Buddha-Nature, the purpose of the middle is to dismantle fixed positions, including one-sidedness (*duipian zheng* 對偏中), the exhaustion of one-sidedness (*jinbian zheng* 盡偏中), and the suspension of being absolute (*juedai zheng* 絕對中). To certain extent, the Sanlun philosophy is quite “radical” on this view when it insists that even the duality between duality and non-duality should be dropped ultimately.

For Jizang, affirmation in the concept of the Middle-Way-as-Buddha-Nature combines the Mādhyamika necessity to maintain the principle of emptiness in terms of no inherent self-nature and the need of Chinese Buddhism to have something more positive in its verbal expression. Nevertheless, the purpose of the middle is to dismantle all dualistic way of thinking, and Jizang sometimes sounds quite “Nāgārjunian,” insisting that even the duality between duality and non-duality should be dropped ultimately:

It is because of duality [the twofold truth] that one realizes non-duality. Duality is the teaching of the principle (*lijiao* 理教) and non-duality is the principle of teaching (*jiaoli* 教理). Duality is identical with the “provisional which is the middle” (*zhongjia* 中假), and non-duality is identical with the middle which is the provisional” (*jiazhong* 假中). Duality is identical with the function of substance (*tiyong* 體用) and non-duality is identical with the substance of function (*yongti* 用體)... (T45, 1854: 82b26–c6)

Such distinctions between substance and function, principle and teaching made by Jizang do not seem to be very different from Nāgārjuna's distinction between the provisional (*jia* 假) and the middle (*zhang* 中). However, if one takes Jizang's distinction as something determinate or fixed, one will fall prey to dualistic thought. I think that Nāgārjuna avoids this possibility by emphasizing the idea of being "neither identical nor different," so does Jizang when he speaks of the non-dual principle of *buliji* (不離即) that was later adopted by the Ch'an tradition as well through its well-known principle of *buji buli* (不即不離).³¹ After all, what the Sanlun School and Jizang aim to do is to free the Buddhist soteriology from essentialist notions characterized by the dualistic way of thinking which, as he sees them, obscure the Buddhist Middle Way.³² From an epistemological perspective, non-acquisition in terms of "neither...nor..." also denotes the notion that enlightenment is not an object of acquisition through conceptual discourse. Given that "acquisition" should not be taken as an opposite of "loss" in its absolute sense, what is being negated by "non-acquisition" is not merely the determinacy of conceptual articulation but all dualistic way of thinking associated with one's mental activities. When asked why there is a distinction between two kinds of truth, Jizang answers that the reason for differentiation between the two truths in terms of "acquisition" (for sages) and "loss" is only a provisional one for ordinary people to realize that they can be sages as well. Jizang continues his argument on the non-dual relation between "acquisition" and "loss" by spelling out the tenfold thesis in which one approaches the interplay between "acquisition" and "loss", attachment and non-attachment:

1. the fixed nature of the twofold truth as "loss" and the provisional name of the conditionality of the twofold truth as "acquisition;"
2. the thesis of existence and non-existence;
3. the thesis of ultimately existence and ultimately non-existence;
4. what is revealed and what is conceals explains "acquisition" and "loss";
5. the thesis of principle and teaching explains "acquisition" and "loss";
6. the thesis of what is shallow and what is profound explains "acquisition" and "loss";
7. the thesis of within and without the principle explains "acquisition" and "loss";

³¹ It should be noted that whether Nāgārjuna's ultimate truth in his twofold truth theory points to something absolutely transcendent is a question under the debate. T.R.V. Murti, for example, has pointed out that for Nāgārjuna the ultimate truth transcends discursive thought in a sense that it is unreachable *via* rationality, either empirical investigation or philosophical speculation. Yet this does not mean that Nāgārjuna is a nihilist or negativistic thinker, for "[t]he dialectic should not be taken, as it is done by the uniformed, as the denial of the Real – Nihilism" See Tuck 1990: 52.

³² Of course, whether or not Jizang dichotomizes *ti* and *yong* is debatable. Wing-Tist Chan argues that in Jizang "substance and function are sharply contrasted" in comparison with Sengzhao who identifies substance with function. See Chan 1973: 358. Aaron K. Koseki holds the same opinion. See Koseki 1982: 58. Ho, on the other hand, shows a different viewpoint. I concur with Ho on this point. I think one of the major differences between Sengzhao and Jizang is that the former tends to use more conjunctions (both...and) whereas the latter more disjunctions (neither...nor), yet both expressions can lend to the idea of nonduality.

8. the thesis of absence of fixed nature explains “acquisition” and “loss”;
9. the thesis of interdependence explains “acquisition” and “loss”; and
10. the thesis of extinction of the distinction between “acquisition” and “loss”.³³

It should be pointed out, adopting the language of “acquisition” and “loss” or “non-acquisition” is critical for Jizang to explicate the doctrine of the twofold truth and how the method of negation is played out.³⁴ The parity of two concepts also corresponds to truth as a teaching method and truth as a principle. According to Jizang, in a conceptual discourse, truth as a teaching method is marked by “acquisition” whereas truth as a principle is marked by “non-acquisition” or “loss.” But ultimately, the distinction between “acquisition” and “non-acquisition” or “loss” should be negated as shown in the last one of the tenfold thesis. Jizang’s idea of “loss” or “non-acquisition,” along with all other negations used in the Sanlun thought, is a “corrective” method, or another way of discourse instead of a definite view (*jueding jian* 決定見) or a definite understanding (*jueding jie* 決定解). All *dharma*s are empty in that they are devoid of self-nature.

Meanwhile, Jizang tries to explicate the idea of the middle through a linguistic play that highlights the perspective of “non-acquisition.” This very idea of A is non-A reflects the fundamental Buddhist teaching of avoiding the two extreme. It should be pointed out that although Jizang uses such a kataphatic term as the Buddha-nature, he by no means makes it an absolute truth. For this standpoint, Jizang faithfully follows the Madhyāmika position on emptiness. Meanwhile, another feature that characterizes Sinicized Buddhism is that the Sanlun thinkers tend to have a more positive attitude toward language than their Indian predecessors did, which is also demonstrated through the Sanlun’s more dependence upon kataphatic or affirmative expressions than apophatic or negative expressions to promulgate their arguments. The best example of this kataphatic practice is the Sanlun idea of the middle-way-as-Buddha-nature.

5 Conclusion

In *Māhayānic Buddhism in China* 中國大乘學, Fang Dongmei (Thomé H. Fong 方東美) observes that Jizang’s Sunlun system turns out to be a form of “critical philosophy” although it is meant to be a form of “speculative philosophy” (Fang 1986: 309–311). The critical dimension that Fang speaks of is characterized by Jizang’s method of negation (*po*), that is, the deconstruction of all kinds of views that lend to a dualistic way of thinking: This world vs. the other world, delusion vs.

³³ For Jizang, “loss” or “non-acquisition” is another word for “emptiness.”

³⁴ Shih Chang-Qing, who has offered a historical overview of the development of the Sanlun School, points out that Jizang’s emphasis on the relationship between acquisition and loss is due to the influence of Falang, his mentor. To establish the relationship between these two concepts enables Jizang to contend his argument on nonduality between the wisdom of the sage and the mind of the ordinary people. See Shih 2004: 337–338.

enlightenment, the conventional vs. the ultimate, and *samsāra* vs. *nirvana*. Fang's use of "critical philosophy" is helpful to understand Jizang's approach to the two-fold truth since the primary task of critical philosophy is criticism through negation rather than justification of knowledge. Jizang's negativity is a "negative play" via language-construction and language-deconstruction.³⁵ As things-deconstructed, emptiness (*śūnyata*), is always an open entity, or concept *sous rapture*. Thus, it does not assert itself as an absolute principle as what it has said, but what kind of effects it may evoke by the said or the unsaid. Rather than a nihilistic attitude that does not believe in anything, Jizang's emptiness points to emancipation and enlightenment. By erasing the possibility of the conceptual truth as a closed system, Sanlun Buddhism leads one to the sphere of the impossible and the unrepresentable. From a Buddhist perspective, this is also a transformative process from a limited view (*duanjian* 斷見) to an unlimited view (*wuliang jian* 無量見). The soteriology of emptiness as such is characterized by a cultivation of a direct (unmediated) perception/awareness with perfect wisdom, i.e., the state of *tathatā* or what Jizang calls the state of "existence of no-existence" (*buyouyou* 不有有). What Madhyāmika and Sanlun philosophers intend to say is that there is an alternative way of knowing and experiencing if one can give up the attachment of various kinds, which as Jizang sees it, are "false" or "misleading" views (*xie*) that are subject to deconstruct.

Therefore, there is a double nature of the Jizang's deconstructive maneuver: a negation of affirmation yet operates within schematic (affirmative structure) at the same time. Jizang's negativity implies the argument that negation of other view-points cannot be recuperated by a pure affirmation in its absolute sense, since there is always a conceptual overflow (excess) that remains undefined and unfixed. This position of rejecting any kind of doctrinal determinacy and conceptual reification so as to avoid being self-totalized is well-expressed by the Madhyāmikan notion of emptiness and Jizang's argument for the need of deconstruction. Yet at the same time, Jizang's negativity should not be taken simply as "nothing but negative" either; its aim never stops at "no, no" albeit his frequent use of the formula of "neither...nor." In its own way, Jizang's negation is also affirmative, pointing to something possible yet something different, the *toute autre*, and, perhaps, the wholly other. If for Sengzhao, the language of the "no-doctrine-about-the-ultimate" claim from a conventional perspective is a tacit to suggest something ineffable and transcendent, for Jizang the notion of "sacred silence" in terms of speech-forgetting and thought-ceasing cannot be totally dismissed as just another form of linguistic utterance. Nevertheless, what makes Jizang's philosophy intriguing for us is that at the very moment when we think that Jizang is going to draw a line between what is ineffable or apophatic and what is speakable or kataphatic, he walks across the line and even subverts the two.

³⁵ When speaking of a Derridean deconstruction, John Caputo makes a remark that deconstruction is a "religion without religion" that points to a moment of transcendence yet not "transcendence" in a traditional sense, since it means "excess," the exceeding of the stable borders of the presently possible." See Caputo 1997: xix. I think that the same thing can be said of Sanlun Buddhists in China.

As for Sanlun's connection to the Chinese culture, it should be mentioned that despite that Jizang is determined to maintain the authentic (Indian) Buddhism and avoid the method of "matching terms" due to its risk of Sinicization, he cannot completely do away with the Chinese tradition.³⁶ The Sanlun rendering of the Buddhature is the best example of this dilemma. Nevertheless, a skillful use of both the negative and the affirmative enables the Sanlun School to maintain the position that the doctrine of emptiness should not be limited to a finite and closed system while at the same time keep it from falling into a nihilistic or skeptical territory. The Sanlun thought has a significant impact on the later development of Chinese Buddhism as one sees in the Tiantai school's doctrine of Emptiness-Provision-Middle and the Chan Buddhist teaching of non-abiding, both of which fully utilize Sanlun's method of deconstruction yet with more flexibility and simplicity.

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³⁶ Scholars like Wing-Tsit Chan, however, argues that Sanlun thought is not Chinese enough which accounts for its failure to survive in China. He says, "Ironically, Chi-tsang's (Jizang) success was at the same time the failure his school, for it became less and less Chinese. As a systematizer and transmitter of Indian philosophy, he brought about no cross-fertilization between Buddhist and Chinese thought." See Chan 1973: 358.

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Part IV
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Faxiang School 法相宗

Chapter 10

In What Sense Jñeyāvaraṇa Is a Mahāyāna Idea? According to Xuanzang's Vijñānavādan in the *Cheng Weishi Lun*



Lawrence Y. K. Lau

1 Introduction

The theory of Two Obstructions (*dvi āvaraṇa*) is one of the unique doctrines in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is composed of the obstructions of defilement (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and knowledge (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). Although Mahāyāna's interpretation on defiled obstruction is different in various traditions, the concept itself is not an entirely new invention. Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda and other systems of Sectarian Buddhism¹ had developed their own theories of defilement respectively; Mahāyāna is to re-summarize the heritages received. On the other hand, the concept of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, or “the obstruction of knowledge,” translated as “*shes bya'i sgrib pa*” or “*shes sgrib*” in Tibetan, is supposed to be a new invention of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The term “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” neither can be found in other non-Buddhist intellectual systems of the classical India,² nor in pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. Theravāda, the self-claimed successor of Early Buddhism, would occupationally use “*jñāṇa-nīvaraṇa*” (obstruction of knower), but not the “*jñeyāvaraṇa*”.³ Furthermore, Dhammapāla, the famous Theravāda monastic scholar in the sixth Century, had used “*jñāṇa-nīvaraṇa*” and “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” in both of his major works. They are *Paramatthamañjūsā* (*The Casket of Supreme Meaning*), with the sub-title of *Visuddhimagga-mahāṭīka* (*Great Commentary on the Path of Purification*), the commentary on the fifth century scholar Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi-magga* (*The Path*

¹ Sectarian Buddhism is a term used by the modern scholarship to predicate the transitional period in Indian Buddhism, between the Early Buddhism of 600–300 B.C. and Mahayana tradition began at 100 BC. Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, etc., are the major scholastic traditions of Sectarian Buddhism.

² Although the later traditions of Jainism also have the concept of *Jñeyāvaraṇa*, modern scholarship argues that it was adopted from Mahāyāna Buddhism. See Singh 2001: 4311, 4318.

³ Jayatilleke 1963: 166, 419.

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of Purification) and *Cariyāpiṭaka Aṭṭhakatha* (Exposition the Meaning on the Basket of Proper Conduct). However, neither of the terms is the invention of Sectarian Buddhism. Theravāda adopted it from Mahāyāna Buddhism later on.⁴ Therefore, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is the one among a series of key concepts that distinguish Mahāyāna from the Early Buddhism.

The *jñeyāvaraṇa* is an important idea that deserves extensive academic attention. Yet, it is not the case in modern scholarship. The quantity of research on *jñeyāvaraṇa* is low. Other than a handful number of articles, which were published in Japanese and English, there is not even one book chapter, let alone a book volume research, on *jñeyāvaraṇa*. However, for the scholars, such as Charles Muller⁵ and Paul Swanson,⁶ who recognized the apparent tension between significant importance of the doctrine, and ignorance and neglects of subject in Buddhist scholarship, they explicitly confessed that they are confused by the incoherence content of the concept *Jñeyāvaraṇa*.

It is due to two major reasons. Firstly, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is universally adopted by all Mahāyāna tradition, but with competitive interpretations. Secondly, in some situation, even within the same system, *jñeyāvaraṇa* can be approached from several perspectives. Furthermore, the multiple layers of its major concern keeps on shifting, according to the progress in the discourse about the development of spiritual cultivation, in terms of path (*mārga*) and stages (*bhūmi*). It seems that the relationship among the various components is far from clear. In some situation, it may even be incoherent, or discontinued, with each other, which makes the concept incomprehensible. The highly diversified translations for the term “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” in various Western languages also reflect the multiple, or even “uncertain”, meanings of *jñeyāvaraṇa*.⁷

Other than the academic community of Buddhist studies, another circle related to the current discussion on *jñeyāvaraṇa* needs to be briefly mentioned. In contemporary Chinese Buddhism, most of the representative monastic leaders consistently explain the idea “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” as the soteriological obstruction caused by knowledge. Thus, accordingly, more knowledge one has gained, more *avidyā*⁸ and attachment one has, and worse obstruction to enlightenment it is as well. The other side implied by the same logic is, removing *jñeyāvaraṇa* is primarily by abandoning

⁴Endo: 2009: 5.

⁵Muller 2000: 322–326.

⁶Swanson 1983: 51.

⁷Lawrence Lau provided a comprehensive review and analysis on Western scholarship’s English and German translations of the term; see Lau 2013: 115–122.

⁸In modern scholarship of Buddhist studies, *avidyā* is always translated as “ignorance” in English, which is not precise and even misleading. *Avidyā* means knowing something in a way which is not what it is, thus, with distortion and mistaken, rather than just simply without knowledge on something. In this article, I keep *avidyā* simply untranslated, and “ignorance” is used to translate *ajñāna*. I will have a further discussion on the distinction between *avidyā* and *ajñāna* in the second half of this chapter.

knowledge as much as possible. Monastic leaders such as Ven. Hsing Yun (星雲)⁹ and Ven. Sheng Yen (聖嚴)¹⁰ in Taiwan, Ven. Xuecheng (學誠)¹¹ in China, are consistently and publicly holding this interpretation. The problem derived from this explanation may cause confusion, in the sense that if it is the case, by what reason, can jñeyāvaraṇa be generally accepted as a unique idea of Mahāyāna Buddhism? Furthermore, based on what argument that we acknowledge is it one of the major theories that make the doctrinal distinctions between the systems of Universal (Mahāyāna) and Individual/Inferior Vehicle (Hīnāyāna)?

Against the questions addressed above, the purpose of this article is to provide a concise, yet comprehensible, explanation for the concept of jñeyāvaraṇa, mainly based on East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda (*youxiang weishi* 有相唯識). The major text of this intellectual tradition is the *Cheng Weishi Lun* (成唯識論, hereafter the *CWSL*), which is said to be translated, and compiled, by Xuanzang (玄奘, 602–664 A.D.), the attributed founder of Chinese Sākāra-vijñānavāda in the seventh Century, from various Indian commentaries. The present article primarily focuses on East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda's version of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, since among the existing materials in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, very likely the *CWSL* is one of the, if not yet the *only* one, major textual sources able to provide a clear, detailed and comprehensible interpretation on *jñeyāvaraṇa*, along with significant aspects about *jñeyāvaraṇa* that other traditions may lack.

2 Double Meanings of *Jñeya* and *Jñeyāvaraṇa*

The term *Jñeyāvaraṇa* is composed of two nouns, namely, known (*jñeya*) and obstruction (*varaṇa*). Based on the morphology of Sanskrit (*sat-samasaḥ* 六離合釋),¹² the two nouns that formulate a new term can be connected according to different morphological principles. Thus, different combination according to different morphological rules would imply different semantic implication, although with the same items of components.

No matter how different traditions ancient East Asian monastic scholars are from, such as Kuījī (窺基 632–682 A.D., China), Shōnin (良遍上人 1195–1252 A.D., Japan) and Wōnhyo (元曉 617–686 A.D., Korea), and no matter how different modern scholars are, such as P. Swanson, C. Muller, K.L. Dhammajoti,¹³

⁹ Hsing Yun 2005.

¹⁰ Sheng Yen 2001. It is said that what had learn from “book, rationality, conceptuality, personal experience, subjective position and word” is *jñeyāvaraṇa*. He talked about the issue for several times.

¹¹ Xuecheng 2007.

¹² *Dasheng Fayuan Yilin Zhang*, Fascicle 1. T 45, 1861: 254c–255c.

¹³ Dhammajoti 1998: 65.

Ikeda Michihiro (池田道浩),¹⁴ Matsushita Shunei (松下俊英),¹⁵ and Shi Jien-hong (釋見弘),¹⁶ all of them commonly emphasize that, it is necessary to make the distinctions, morphologically, between the readings of Determinative Compound (*tat-puruṣa* 依主釋) and Descriptive Compound (*karmadhāraya* 持業釋) of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, and then semantically, that between Obstruction to Known/Knowledge vs. Obstruction by Known (P. Swanson),¹⁷ Hindrance to the Known vs. Hindrance by Known (C. Muller),¹⁸ or being obstructed vs. being an obstruction.

Philosophically speaking, the distinctions made at above would further imply that, there are competitive double meanings for *jñeya* and *jñeyāvaraṇa*. According to *thetat-puruṣa* (dependent determinative compound) reading in Sanskrit grammar, *jñeya* (所知), the object of cognition, is applied in a positive or affirmative sense, namely, the cognitive object is the truth that supposed to be fully recognized or achieved by the cognizer. Based on this explanation of *jñeya*, what *jñeyāvaraṇa* means is the known or the truth, as the object, and is covered or hidden; thus, in C. Muller and P. Swanson's term, it is the obstruction to the known. In this context, *jñeya* as the truth, it cannot be realized correctly and completely.

However, in case *jñeyāvaraṇa* is read according to the principle of *karmadhāraya* (descriptive compound), namely, compound words that have a noun as the second constituent and a descriptive adjective as first constituent, *jñeya*, the object of cognition, would be understood as a negative sense, namely, *jñeya* is a cognitively distorted object that misleads, and blocks, the perceiver away from the truth. *Jñeyāvaraṇa* being interpreted along this reading is the obstruction by the known, as C. Muller and P. Swanson's expression has taken.

Some modern scholarship in Buddhist Studies has argued that, the two readings are logically contradictory, and are incompatible. While some other scholarship holds that this is still debatable, based on the argument that, although the two readings have different emphasis, they are not necessarily logically, and hermeneutically, incompatible. They can be mutually supportive.¹⁹ Due to the complexity caused by the multiple layers of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, it is impossible to provide a full-scale explanation on whether these two readings are definitely incompatible or contradictory with each other in present essay.

Yet, there is still one helpful point that can be made. Several researches strongly suggested that, the two readings, in certain degree, is corresponded with different

¹⁴ Ikeda Michihiro (池田道浩) publishes articles on *Jñeyāvaraṇa* in Japanese, under the double contexts of Indian Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. See his 2003: 361–358; 2000: 298–327.

¹⁵ Matsushita Shunei (松下俊英)'s research on *jñeyāvaraṇa* is mainly according to *Madhyānta-vibhāga* and *Madhyānta-vibhāga-ṭīkā*.

¹⁶ Shi Jien-hong (釋見弘)'s research, in Chinese and Japanese, on *Jñeyāvaraṇa* is mainly based on later period of Indian Mādhyamika tradition, such as Candrakīrti.

¹⁷ Swanson 1983: 64.

¹⁸ Muller 2000: 322–326.

¹⁹ The argumentation is based on analysis of the direct and indirect logical implications of the concept; and counter cases, from various intellectual traditions of East Asian and Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. See Lau 2015: 119–184.

intellectual traditions in Indo-Tibetan, and Indo-Sina, Mahāyāna Buddhism, respectively. The *tat-puruṣa* reading of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, Obstruction to Known, is extensively adopted by Sarvāstivāda, Early Yogācāra, Nirakāra-vijñānavāda (e.g. Sthiramati's *Trimśikā-vijñapti-bhāṣya*²⁰), Sākāra-vijñānavāda (e.g. East Asian traditions), and Svātantrika-Mādhyaṃika, while the *karmadhāraya* reading of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, Obstruction by Known, is never adopted, until Candrakīrti in the seventh Century, one of the key figures of the later period of Indian Mādhyaṃika, and said to be the founder of Prāsangika-Mādhyaṃika.²¹ Furthermore, as P. Swanson has suggested, quasi-Mādhyaṃika in Chinese tradition, e.g. Tiantai Buddhism, his understanding of *jñeyāvaraṇa* is close to *karmadhāraya* reading,²² rather than the other one.

Although not entirely without controversy, it may be still reasonable to make a conclusion that, *tat-puruṣa* reading, Obstruction to Known, is the mainstream model to understand the concept of *jñeyāvaraṇa*. While Yogācāra's interpretation is always along with this line,²³ key figures in East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda, e.g. Xuanzang, Kuījī,²⁴ Shōnin²⁵ and Mei Guang-xi (梅光羲, 1879–1947),²⁶ consistently confirm the connection between the *tat-puruṣa* reading of *jñeyāvaraṇa* and Vijñānavāda's position.

Other than the direct and explicit expression in the text, the *thetat-puruṣa* reading of *jñeyāvaraṇa* was also indirectly, but significantly, supported by the unique presentation of *jñeya* provided by East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda. In the CWSL's ontological frame of Three Nature (*tri-svabhāva*), *jñeya* is composed of perfected nature (*parimispāṇna-svabhāva*) and dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*). For the East Asian Sākāra-vijñānavāda, two types of dependent nature, namely, defiled and purified, are proposed. Based on this classification, further step is taken to make a clear-cut distinction between the purified dependent nature and the imagined nature (*parakapita-svabhāva*).²⁷ For most other traditions of Yogācāra, no matter whether it is Indian or East Asian one, it is much more indefinite on this point, and both the natures of perfected and dependent are clearly indicated as co-existing, and as essential aspects of *jñeya*. This fact clearly suggests that, Sākāra-vijñānavādaian idea of *jñeya* is always giving equal weight to the complete domain of concrete knowable objects, namely all existents,²⁸ and, those of particular attribute, which are always indicated by semi-abstracted concepts, originally abstracted from concrete objects.

²⁰ For Sthiramati, check with his *Trimśikā-vijñapti-bhāṣya*, 1980: 31–32; Also Hakuju Ui 1952: 4.

²¹ Michihiro Ikeda 2003: 361–358.

²² Swanson 1983: 64.

²³ Muller 2004: 207–208.

²⁴ *Dasheng Fayuan Yilin Zhang*, T 45, 1861: 254c–255c; *Cheng Weishi Lun Shuji*, T 43, 1830: 230.

²⁵ *Kanjin kaku-mu-shō*, T 71, 2312: 78a–b.

²⁶ Mei 2008: 52–53.

²⁷ CWSL, Fascicle 7 (T 31, 1585: 39b), Fascicle 8 (T 31, 1585: 46b).

²⁸ *Fodi Jing Lun (Buddhabhūmi-sūtra-śāstra*, T 26, 1530: 310c).

Although the term “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” can be frequently found in early Yogācāra scriptures, such as *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*,²⁹ and in treatises (*śāstra*) such as *Yogācārabhūmi*³⁰ and *Mahāyānasamgraha-śāstra*,³¹ none of them presented a simple, yet clear and coherent, definition about what exactly *jñeyāvaraṇa* is. Among the existing texts, the *CWSL* for certain is one of the most important materials for us to understand the idea of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, in the sense that the *CWSL* provided a systematical interpretation for *jñeyāvaraṇa*.

3 Three Meanings of *Jñeyāvaraṇa*

In the *CWSL*, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is explained from three perspectives. Firstly, the argumentation countering epistemological realism, from Idealistic standpoint, is presented in Ch.1 of the *CWSL*.³² Secondly, the theoretical description about the relationship between the Vijñānavāda doctrine of eight consciousnesses (*viññāna*) and *jñeyāvaraṇa* is presented in Ch.2 of the *CWSL*.³³ It focused on the issue that I would like to predicate it as the “consciousness structure of *jñeyāvaraṇa*”. Thirdly, various levels of *jñeyāvaraṇa* on the path (*mārga*) and stage (*bhūmi*) are explained within the frame of ten obstructions (*āvaraṇa*), in Ch.9 and 10 of the *CWSL*.³⁴ In the following discussion, I will use the expression of *jñeyāvaraṇa*-I, -II and -III, respectively, to indicate the three different meanings of *jñeyāvaraṇa* in the discourse of ten obstructions.

***Jñeyāvaraṇa*–I: Inborn Attitude of Cognitive Realism** According to the Sākāra-vijñānavāda presented in the *CWSL*, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is composed of three different layers of issues. The first layer is the ordinary sentient being’s inborn attitude of cognitive realism. According to Yogācāra-vijñānavāda’s idealistic point of view, what reflected by our cognition is the cognizer’s personal experience, expectation and desire, rather than the objective reality in the external world. Furthermore, the present cognition is projected from previous cognition and experience. Therefore, the object of cognition is constructed and projected by the cognizer.

However, for ordinary sentient being, they would mistakenly assume that, our cognition is merely a direct reflection of the objective reality, while the object cognized is separated, or independent, from the perceiver, and “free from” any mutual relationship with the subject. From Yogācāra-vijñānavāda’s perspective, this mistaken assumption of the cognizer-cognized, or subject-object dichotomy of

²⁹ *Jie Shenmi Jing* (*Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, Fascicle 4, T 16, 1988: 703b–704a, 704b–c).

³⁰ *Yujia Shidi Lun* (*Yogācārabhūmi*, Fascicle 78; T 30, 1579: 729b–c, 730a–b).

³¹ *She Dasheng Lun* (*Mahāyānasamgraha-śāstra*, T31, 1594: 145b–c).

³² *CWSL*, Fascicle 1 (T 31, 1585: 2b–6c).

³³ *CWSL*, Fascicle 2 (T 31, 1585: 6c–7b).

³⁴ *CWSL*, Fascicle 9 and 10 (T 31, 1585: 52b–53c).

cognition, is a special form of *avidyā*. The dependant arising in the context of subject-object relationship is denied, and the non-substantial condition of both items is also ignored respectively, by this position. Due to this problematic assumption, both the subject and object are perceived as if they are epistemologically separated, and also ontologically self-sufficient.

The point of view described above is in direct conflict with Buddhist basic philosophical standpoint that all existence is impermanent, non-substantial and dependant arising. Thus, from Buddhist perspective, the inborn realist attitude is a distortion about the basic nature of cognition and the reality. According to Xuanzang's Sākāra-vijñānavāda, *jñeyāvaraṇa* at this level is the elementary obstruction that generally shared by all sentient beings, while the Buddhist practitioners at the paths of accumulation (*sambhāra mārga*) and preparation (*prayoga mārga*), who had not yet directly realized the emptiness of the subject and the object, are included as well. Furthermore, the textual sources from Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan traditions commonly supported that the realist attitude of cognition, or the objective, yet distorted, assumption about the external status of the cognitive object, is the basic definition of *jñeyāvaraṇa*.

Another approach to *Jñeyāvaraṇa-I* is the analysis under the title “the mental or consciousness structure of *jñeyāvaraṇa*” mentioned above. The analysis begun with the concepts such as *avidyā*, imagined nature (*parakapita-svabhāva*), two grasping (*grāhadvaya*) or grasping-grasped (*grāhya-grāhaka*), and the grasping of substantial phenomena (*dharmātmagrahā*).³⁵ And then, it gradually moved on up to the theory about the operational pattern within the complicated structure, which is composed of mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*), defiled consciousness (*kliṣṭa-vijñāna*) and store consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*). Finally it would also provide an explanation on how defiled obstruction (*kleśāvaraṇa*) is related to *jñeyāvaraṇa*.³⁶ This perspective particularly focused on the structure of eight consciousnesses that the *jñeyāvaraṇa-I* is relied on. Namely, how the *avidyā* at empirical and self-aware level, which is operated by the mental consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*), is connected with the unaware and deep *avidyā* at the uninterrupted and subtle level, operated by the mental mechanism composed of *kliṣṭa-vijñāna* and *ālaya-vijñāna*.³⁷

Therefore, *jñeyāvaraṇa-I*, the elementary level of the obstruction of knowledge, distressed all sentient beings and the junior Bodhisattva from the first to third stages³⁸ on the Mahāyāna path of spiritual cultivation.

Jñeyāvaraṇa-II: Unable to Balance the Two Truths The second layer of *jñeyāvaraṇa* is shifted from the subject-object dichotomy of cognition, to the

³⁵ Dharmātmagrahā is one of the major conditions to cause *jñeyāvaraṇa*. CWSL, Fascicle 2 (T 31, 1585: 6c).

³⁶ According to the explanation presented in the CWSL, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is more or less related to, or the extension of, *kleśāvaraṇa*. It is because both obstructions (*avaraṇa*), namely *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *kleśāvaraṇa*, share the same groups of basic *kleśa*, see CWSL, Fascicle 9 (T 31, 1585: 48c).

³⁷ CWSL, Fascicle 2 (T 31, 1585: 6c–7b).

³⁸ CWSL, Fascicle 10 (T 31, 1585: 52b–53a).

intermediate Bodhisattva's inability to keep balance between conventional and ultimate truths. For the intermediate Bodhisattva at the fourth to seventh stages (*bhūmi*) on the path,³⁹ the Mahāyāna aspiration to achieve universal enlightenment is one of the essential principles, as the guideline for the practitioners to keep their major orientation on the right track.

Although this is supposed to be the case, theoretically speaking, yet, in reality, it is not uncommon for even the Bodhisattva at the intermediate level on the Mahāyāna path, to be temporarily attached, or even addicted, to the individual experience on emptiness, or the horizon of the ultimate truth that has previously achieved on the path. In case the practitioner doesn't have the self-awareness on the limitation of one's horizon, he would be overridden by the personal experience on the ultimate truth. It would cause the Bodhisattva losing the balance between the ultimate and conventional truths on the path of further cultivation. This is the *jñeyāvaraṇa*-II.

The major issue of *jñeyāvaraṇa*-II is the practitioner's over-emphasizing the superior ontological status of emptiness, the ultimate truth and the transcendental dimension in religious practice. The problem that derived from this over-emphasizing causes a dualistic tension and unbalance with the domain of dependent-arising, the conventional truth and the dimension of engagement in religious practice.

Jñeyāvaraṇa-II is the unique type of shortcomings for the Bodhisattva at the middle level of the path, namely, at the fourth to seventh stages. It is not a problem for ordinary sentient beings who have not yet achieved this level of spiritual cultivation.

***Jñeyāvaraṇa*-III: Incompleteness of Knowledge** The third layer of *jñeyāvaraṇa* is the advanced Bodhisattva's inability to achieve Omniscience (*sarvajñā*), which is the Buddha's special intellectual virtue of all-knowing. According to the explanation presented in Yogācāra treatises (*śāstra*), especially the *Mahāyāna-sūtrā-lamkāra*, the *jñeyāvaraṇa* at the last three stages on the path of Mahayana cultivation should be grouped as one single issue,⁴⁰ which is different from the previous seven obstructions in its nature. They are unable to conceive, articulate and actualize⁴¹ five sciences (*pañca-vidyā*)⁴² as completely as possible, thus unable to fulfill the practical need to support other beings to remove their *avidyā*, attachment and suffering.

Without exposition on omniscience (*sarvajñā*) and five sciences (*pañca vidyā*), *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III is hard to gain credible comprehension. But before expounding these two ideas in detail, we need to discuss the possible connection between *jñeyāvaraṇa* and the Universal horizon first. The issue of *sarvajñā* and its relationship with *jñeyāvaraṇa* will be put aside for a while.

³⁹ CWSL, Fascicle 10 (T 31, 1585: 53a–b).

⁴⁰ *Dasheng Zhuangyan Jing Lun* (*Mahāyāna-sūtrā-lamkāra*, Fascicle 5, T 31, 1604: 614b–c).

⁴¹ CWSL, Fascicle 9, 10 (T 31, 1585: 53b–c).

⁴² For details of five sciences, see Sect. 10.4 and page 15–19 below.

According to above analysis based on the *CWSL*, *jñeyāvaraṇa* has three different meanings in Bodhisattva's cultivation of the path and stages, Their relationships with the Universal (Maha-) horizon are not the same. Among these three, *jñeyāvaraṇa* at the highest stages of the Bodhisattva path, namely the incompleteness of knowledge in the five sciences, has the direct and deep relationship with the Mahāyāna horizon. The *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III is referred to Bodhisattvas who are unable to help other beings to understand the truth and reality successfully through verbal communication, to overcome various difficulties in an effective way, and to remove their *avidyā* and suffering, due to the lack of enough and effective knowledge in the five sciences.

According to Mahāyāna's universal horizon, it is other being's *avidyā*, rather than the Bodhisattva's own, is his primary concern at the advanced stages. The shortage of knowledge may also produce indirect, but negative, impact on Bodhisattva's ethical practice of compassion, namely, the intended consequence of compassion and its full actualization may be frustrated by the shortage of knowledge. Therefore, *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III, as the shortage of knowledge, in fact does logically imply the possible consequence that the ethical action towards other beings cannot achieve its end. It would be reasonable to make the claim that, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism, without sufficient knowledge, compassion cannot be fully practiced in the social reality, thus, the unsuccessful ethical action is implied.

Philosophically speaking, all the three different levels of *jñeyāvaraṇa* are more or less related to cognitive or intellectual defect, albeit in different sense. *Jñeyāvaraṇa*-I is about the inborn attitude of epistemological realism; *Jñeyāvaraṇa*-II is the Mahāyāna practitioners being temporarily obstructed by individual religious experience. *Jñeyāvaraṇa*-III is the advanced practitioners' shortage of knowledge in the five sciences. In a certain degree, these are three different problems. But they are combined as if they are one issue, under the same title of *jñeyāvaraṇa* by Xuanzang. This combination aroused confusion for some modern scholars. It seems that the content of *jñeyāvaraṇa* keeps on changing without coherence and continuity.

For Xuanzang, this problem is partially solved by the theory of paths and stages, namely, for practitioners at different stages, they face with different types of cognitive obstructions. *Jñeyāvaraṇa* described above is articulated in the Bodhisattva's developmental sequence according to the Mahāyāna theory of spiritual cultivation in terms of path (*mārga*) and stages (*bhūmi*). It provides a full picture about the processing of religious practice. Its narration of cultivation starts from how an ordinary sentient being (*sattva*), who is still heavily drawn by *avidyā*, is gradually to become a bodhisattva of different levels or "ranks" through religious practice, and to finally achieve the complete enlightenment after a long-term according to Mahāyāna definition.

Xuanzang's unique interpretation on *jñeyāvaraṇa* is different from that of the other traditions in the sense that the three meanings of *jñeyāvaraṇa* combined as one and the same issue as described above. However, various issues within the category "*jñeyāvaraṇa*" described above still can be found in other intellectual traditions of Mahāyāna, although their interpretation is far less comprehensive, systematical and

sophisticated than Xuanzang's.⁴³ In other words, most Mahāyāna traditions, in fact, would more or less handle various issues or contents of *jñeyāvaraṇa* described above, but do not integrate all aspects into a structured system of theory about *jñeyāvaraṇa*. Some traditions do not even explicitly designate the issue as *jñeyāvaraṇa*, but keep it semi-anonymous.

4 Sectarian Origins of Jñeyāvaraṇa

It is generally agreed that as a terminology, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is an unique concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Other than a few exceptional cases, the term “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” almost cannot be found in the pre-Mahāyāna text. However, it should be noticed that the lack of the terminology is not the same as the entire lack of the content that the terminology refers to. At the pre-Mahāyāna period, although the terminology “*jñeyāvaraṇa*” is rarely used, yet, deputed over related issues among scholastic communities in sectarian Buddhism had been recorded in Abhidharma. These disputes later on were integrated and transformed as the major content of *jñeyāvaraṇa* in the early period of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the sectarian Buddhist doctrine, there are at least four different issues that can be perceived as the possible major components for the *jñeyāvaraṇa* of Yogācāra in particular, and Mahāyāna in general. A brief explanation on the several issues of Sectarian Buddhism respectively, would be helpful for us to understand different elements and their relationship for the concept of *jñeyāvaraṇa* explained above.

State of Object It is generally assumed that Yogācāra is the only tradition in Buddhism that would explicitly take the position of idealism, which denies the independent existence of the external object. But the arguments for quasi-idealism or anti-realism can also be found in one of the Sectarian forerunners of Yogācāra.

According to the description in Volume 56 of the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā* (*Apidamo Da Piposha Lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆娑論), it is said that once upon a time, the Buddha delivered a dharma talk in the main hall of a monastery, where hundreds of monastic and lay audience attended. During the talk, a gorgeous lady entered the hall, all people's attention had been drawn to her. Different individuals in the audience would have various attitudes towards the lady. Her son is with respect, rival in love with strong jealousy, amorist with desire, and an arhat with detachment. The paragraph concludes by saying “thus, it is understood that the object is not real” (故知境非實).⁴⁴ The purpose of this paragraph apparently is not going to argue that the object, namely the lady, does not exist. Rather, its end is to indicate that our cognition is shaped and overshadowed by our attachment. Without reflection, we are not aware of this barrier.

⁴³ Hopkins 2003: 718–719, 791–792; D. Cozort and Preston 2005: 34.

⁴⁴ *Apidamo Da Piposha Lun* (*Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*, Fascicle 56, T 27, 1545: 288b).

Latent Attachment by Intended Objects (*ālaṃbanato 'nuṣerate*) There is a term “*ālaṃbanato 'nuṣerate*” in Sanskrit, which Xuanzang translated as 所緣隨增 (*suoyuan sui zeng*). In English, it can be translated as a kind of attachment that “is latent by way of intended objects”. The concept provides a phenomenological description on the subject-object relationship of attachment. When the mental consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*), or the sixth consciousness, is associated with a defiled (*kleśa*) mental factor, the mental consciousness is then under a defiled condition.

For Vijñānavāda, when consciousness is aware, it is always conscious of something. Therefore, the intention is always associated with an intended object. By the same reason, when the consciousness is defiled, the object associated by the subject is also defiled. In case the consciousness is to desire, hate or grasp on something, what has been associated by that mental action then is a desired, hated or grasped object. Since the object is a projection of the defiled consciousness, it seems that it relies on, and is also subordinated to, the consciousness.

However, at this point, Sectarian Buddhism takes a further step to argue that, the object desired or hated can reverse as a factor to reinforce or strengthen the defiled consciousness. In other words, the intended object able to become the agent to intensify the *avidyā*. This mutual interaction between subject and object on attachment is called “being latent by way of intended objects” (所緣隨增).

Behavioural Tendency (*vāsanā*) In Abhidharma, the Sectarian scholastic treatises, there is a discussion, or even debate over this topic. It is said that some people in the saṃgha were confirmed by the Buddha that they have achieved the enlightenment. However, according to the text, there were several cases among these enlightened people showing that one still maintains a certain behavior or habit, which is conventionally not felt comfortable by the community, although the habit does not cause any damage on the quality of enlightenment. For instance, it is said that there was an Arhat; in one of his previous lives before achieving enlightenment, he was a monkey. After his enlightenment, he naturally maintains the scratching habit and does it in front of the public just like what a monkey does. This behavior was perceived by the society as an entire lack of decency. It does not have any damage on the nature of his enlightenment, but because of this negative image caused by his unpopular behavior, some people lost confidence to Buddhist teaching and gave up the practice. The question followed that is, whether the enlightened one should have knowledge, which is soteriologically irrelevant; yet, without the knowledge it may cause embarrassment in the social convention.

Whether the Buddha Is All-Knowing? The omniscience (*sarvajñā*) of the Enlightened One is affirmed by most, if not all, intellectual systems of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, China and Tibet, although their interpretations may have slight differences. But it is not an invention by Mahāyāna. Its original can be traced back to Sectarian Buddhism. However, there are essential differences between Mahāyāna and pre-Mahāyāna's discussions on omniscience.

Before the Sectarian period, the question whether the enlightened one is omniscient is not the Early Buddhism's concern at all. Modern scholarship suggests that this idea is not internally initiative from Buddhism. Rather, it is a response to the challenge from other śramaṇa group,⁴⁵ such as Jainism, in the doctrinal confrontation.⁴⁶ Some Buddhists have difficulty to face the question that the founder of the other śramaṇa group claims to be omniscient, while Buddhism seems rarely make similar claim. The consequence of this doctrinal stimulation to Buddhism is the initiative of the internal debate on whether the enlightened one is omniscient, within the scholastic circle at the Sectarian period.

Since the issue is not derived from the internal need of Buddhism doctrine, Sectarian Buddhist traditions neither achieve any consensus on whether it is a necessary question for Buddhism, nor reach any agreement on the answer. There are several different positions for the issue.

The first position is a simple denial of the question. They argue that, if the historical Buddha is omniscient, it cannot explain out why according to the description in the early text, episodes such as monks under the historical Buddha's leadership, once did go astray in the jungle and were threatened by beasts, when they were on their way back to the resident place after receiving food donation from the community. The reasonable conclusion drawn from this episode is, the historical Buddha does not have omniscience anyway, otherwise he will not let his team expose to such danger.

The second major group holds that the enlightened one has omniscience. Yet, based on different attitudes towards the issue, omniscience can be further classified into different types. First, according to various grammatical principles, the readings on the meaning of omni- (*sarva*) are different. The omni- can either be read as "all in the soteriological context", or as "all existence".⁴⁷ Second, omniscience is just a potentiality to be actualized, or as an already actualized capability in reality.⁴⁸ Third, the knowledge is achieved either by reasoning or by direct perception. This is related to the different understandings about the relationship between omniscience and attention in the enlightened mind. Since the object for omniscience is multitude, but attention in cognition is on one single object, how these two can be reconciled is a question. Based on various attitudes towards above issues, a spectrum of competitive models of omniscience can be found in traditions of Sectarian Buddhism.⁴⁹ The diversity and internal conflict among Sectarrians is far greater than that of Mahāyāna.

The purpose for tracing the possible intellectual origin and heterogeneity in the component of *jñeyāvaraṇa* here is not merely for a historical survey. Rather, it provides a "map" about how different issues had been combined as one and the same idea of *jñeyāvaraṇa* in the *CWSL*. To a certain extent, *jñeyāvaraṇa*-I, namely, the obstruction of knowledge as an inborn attitude of cognitive realism, is the

⁴⁵ śramaṇa, non-Brahmanistic religious-intellectual traditions.

⁴⁶ Jaini 1974: 79–82.

⁴⁷ Nāgapiya: 6–7; Jayatilleke 1963: 380, 468–469.

⁴⁸ Jaini 1974: 83–84.

⁴⁹ McClintock 2010: 31–34.

combination of the first two issues described and deputed in Sectarian Buddhism, namely, the problem on the state of object and that of the latent attachment by intended objects, as stated above. The *jñeyāvaraṇa*-II, the obstruction of knowledge as an inability of balancing the Two Truths, is partially related to the fourth issue above in Sectarian Buddhism; meanwhile *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III, the incompleteness of knowledge (or being not yet able to gain the omniscience), is partially related to the third issue and has a direct and full connection with the fourth issue in Sectarian Buddhism. In this brief description on the intellectual evolution of the idea, we can see that these different, and separated, issues in the sectarian traditions, later on had been implicitly but critically taken over by the Mahāyāna Buddhism's creative interpretation, with certain theoretical re-structuring.

5 Three Mahāyāna Ideas Related to Jñeyāvaraṇa

After the review of the background against the Sectarian intellectual context and doctrinal evolution of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, the third meaning of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, the incompleteness of knowledge, can be re-approached along with two other indispensable concepts, namely the five sciences (*pañca vidyā*) and omniscience.

Five Sciences (*panca vidyā*) The five sciences are Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism's unique ideas of systematical knowledge and scholastic tradition. Neither Early Buddhism, nor Brahminism adopted this conception. It is composed of Buddhist Philosophy and religious doctrine (*abhyatuma-vidyā*), Logic-Epistemology (*hetu-vidyā* and *pramāṇavāda*), Medical Science (*cikitsa-vidyā*), Science of Language (*śabda-vidyā*), and various technologies (*śilpa-vidyā*).⁵⁰ The five sciences are supposed to be a thorough list and systematical classification on all the domains of human knowledge and cultural-intellectual activities, which as a whole, is integrated into religion, and becomes part of Buddhist tradition. Its text is mainly in the form of *śāstra*, the standard genre of scholarly treatise in classical Indian civilization.⁵¹

Five sciences are always perceived as vague concepts, without much significance in the context of Chinese Buddhism. This problematic, yet common, impression causes serious underestimation on their role. In fact, five sciences are not just institutional concepts of systematic knowledge, but are also concepts of intellectual community or scholarly tradition. In terms of Yogācāra Buddhism in particular, and Mahāyāna of Indo-Tibetan or Indo-Sina in general, developing knowledge and

⁵⁰ *Dasheng Zhuangyan Jing Lun* (*Mahāyāna-sūtrā-laṅkāra*, Fascicle 5, T 31, 1604: 616a, 641c); *Yujia Shidi Lun* (*Yogācārabhūmi*, Fascicles 13 (T 30, 1579: 345a), 38 (T30, 1579: 500c), 43 (T 30, 1579: 528c), and 52 (T 30, 1579: 587c).

⁵¹ Regarding the definition of scholarly treatise (*śāstra*), and its role in classical Indian Civilization, Sheldon Pollock has detailed discussion on it. See a number of article: S. Pollock, 1989: 17, 301; 1985: 502.

building civilization under the frame of *pañca vidyā* is the common, or even institutional, aspiration for Bodhisattva of advanced stages.

This “institutional” aspect is applied to Buddhist scholasticism as its foundation.⁵² For example, *pañca vidyā* provides the basic rule to classify and organize *bstan ’gyur*, the translation (’gyur) for the academic treatise (*bstan, śāstra*), which is one of the major textual complex in the Tibetan version of Sanskrit scripture.⁵³ Furthermore, *pañca vidyā* is the fundamental principle applied to organize the formal scholastic curriculum, disciplinary classification, and faculty division in the Buddhist monastic education.⁵⁴ Buddhist scholasticism, such as that of the Dge-lugs-pa and Sa skya pa orders, is the typical live tradition in Buddhist civilization that still energetically maintain the systematic knowledge of *pañca vidyā*.

Instead of early Buddhism’s weird illustration of mundane knowledge, Mahāyāna’s new and unique illustration is the five sciences, a new form of Buddhist scholasticism. In contrary to the early Buddhist attitude that there is a relative stable and clear cut boundary between soteriological and mundane knowledge, scholasticism in the Mahāyāna context has gradually developed another pattern of relationship for soteriological and mundane knowledge.

This transformation started with a mild model by the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and turned out to be a thorough model in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*.⁵⁵ The *Yogācārabhūmi* perceives four branches in the *pañca vidyā*, except Buddhist philosophy, as mundane knowledge, and therefore, they are irrelevant with soteriology. Yet, it is still important and necessary for advanced Bodhisattvas to comprehend these branches of knowledge, for the purpose to actualize compassion and benefit other beings effectively.⁵⁶ The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* takes a further step to make a strong statement: “In case a Bodhisattva does not understand the five branches of knowledge, the Holy by no means able to gain the omniscience.”⁵⁷ It argues that all knowledge does have soteriological implication.⁵⁸

According to this short but famous paragraph quoted above, with the thorough model, there is an obvious and direct continuity, or even causal relationship, between the five sciences and omniscience. The thorough development of five sciences is omniscience, which is the ideal outcome of, and also the criteria for, the five sciences. Without the completeness of knowledge marked by omniscience and served

⁵² For the explanation and extensive application of the concept of “Buddhist Scholasticism” in modern scholarship, see Cabezón 1994: 4–5, 19–24; also Cabezón 1998: “Introduction”, 4–6; Willemen, *et al.*, 1998.

⁵³ Wilson 1996: 125.

⁵⁴ Mullens 1994: 148–181. The institution of monastic education of Nālandā Mahāvihāra is according to the description of *pañca vidyā* in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.

⁵⁵ Krasser 2004: 129–130.

⁵⁶ Yujia Shidi Lun (*Yogācārabhūmi*, Fascicle 72, T 30, 1579: 696a).

⁵⁷ The original text read as “*vidyāsthāne pañcavidhe yogam akṛtvā sarvajñatvaṃ naiti kathaṃcit paramāryaḥ* ||” (MSA 11.60). See Lévi 1907: 14–18.

⁵⁸ Griffiths 1990: 99–101, on five sciences and omniscience.

as criteria, any shortage under five sciences will be seen as only a fact, but not something unacceptable in value and should be overcome.

The essential difference between the mild and thorough models is the role of mundane branches in five sciences. Both Yogācāra texts mentioned above are different from those of early Buddhism. In Early Buddhism, mundane knowledge is not merely irrelevant with enlightenment, but is also an obstruction for enlightenment and cultivation. For *Yogācārabhūmi*, mundane knowledge is important in terms of being a necessary means for ethical practice.

However, for the thorough model of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, other than the ethical aspect, mundane knowledge does have ontological significance along with soteriological implication. It is because from the perspective of Universal Vehicle (Mahāyāna), the ultimate truth or emptiness (*Śūnyata*) does not construct any systematical knowledge to comprehend the domain of phenomena, on which it relies. Merely recognizing the ultimate truth is far from a complete and innovative comprehension of the reality.

For the Bodhisattva at the advanced stages, other than the ethical application of the mundane knowledge, they also have the aspiration to enrich the detail, scale or coverage, and precision of mundane knowledge, under the openness achieved from the insight into emptiness, for both ethical and ontological purposes. The ethical or compassionate purpose is to continuously improve the effectiveness in benefiting other beings, while the ontological purpose is to enrich understanding about the content of dependent arising, the inseparable other side of emptiness, in the domain of phenomena, since the phenomenal world is what the emptiness predicated itself upon.⁵⁹ Therefore, as *pañca vidyā* explicitly indicated, being a Bodhisattva at advanced stages, with intellectual and cultural growth, and under the insight of emptiness, facilitating other beings to remove their *avidyā* and suffering by systematical knowledge becomes a major religious mission.⁶⁰

Buddhist attitude towards omniscience is entirely changed at the turn of early and Mahāyāna Buddhism. One of the possible key factors is the new attitude to the role, definition and boundary of mundane knowledge. For the pre-Mahāyāna period, Buddhist attitude towards mundane knowledge, such as medical knowledge, is passive. At best it is soteriologically irrelevant, while at worst, it is obstruction for spiritual cultivation and enlightenment.

On the other hand, the illustration of mundane knowledge that Sectarian Buddhism mentioned in their discussion on omniscience is something trivial, strange and even nonsensical. For instance, questions such as whether the enlightened one knows the number of hair on someone's head, or that of the sand in River Ganga, had been discussed. Examples of this sort are unable to reveal the deep meanings of the problems of mundane knowledge, and that of omniscience as well. It is no wonder that most Sectarian traditions do not take "whether the enlightened one is omniscient" as a serious issue.

⁵⁹ *Yujia Shidi Lun (Yogācārabhūmi)*, Fascicle 43, T 30, 1579: 529a).

⁶⁰ *Dasheng Zhuangyan Jing Lun (Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra)*, Fascicle 10, T 30, 1604: 641c).

For the early Buddhism, as indicated above, inappropriate examples of mundane knowledge have ruined possibilities to bridge the gap with soteriological knowledge. The further consequence logically derived from it is that the possible philosophical meanings seriously implied in the idea of omniscience are also not taken seriously.

It should be notice that, the crucial, but somehow implicit problem underlying the debate of Sectarian Buddhism on the omniscience issue is whether there is a clear-cut boundary between soteriological and ordinary, or transmundane and mundane knowledge. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the attitude towards so-called mundane knowledge gradually went through substantial transformation, by which, previously unaware aspect of “mundane” knowledge along with its relationship and boundary to the soteriological knowledge has been redefined under the new horizon of religious aspiration in Mahāyāna.

Here I would make an additional remark before our discussion shifting from *pañca vidyā* to omniscience. Although *pañca vidyā* is an unique terminology of Mahāyāna, both textual evidences and the actual usage in the live tradition clearly indicate that the later successor of various sectarian systems, such as Sarvāstivāda⁶¹ and Theravāda, more or less, also shared the similar principle, regarding the content and the role of mundane knowledge in the Buddhist civilization established through scholasticism.

Omniscience (*sarvajñā*) Generally speaking, the unique term in Sanskrit applied by Yogācāra Buddhism to predicate Enlightenment is *āśraya-parivṛtti* or *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, which literally means the transformation (*parivṛtti*) of the support (*āśraya*). The term “support” here is referred to the basis consciousness for seeds of all (*sarva-bījaka-vijñāna*), namely the store consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) or the eighth consciousness.

According to the CWSL and other Yogācāra texts, store consciousness is defiled and attached, because it was distortedly grasped by the defiled consciousness (*kliṣṭa-manas*) or seventh consciousness as a subtle yet substantial and permanent self. Although, according to Chapter 2 of the CWSL, it is clear that the store consciousness is a collective noun for all seeds (*bīja*) as a whole, or a particular seed as an individual unit in the store consciousness, neither of them is substantial and permanent as mistakenly suggested. Both the store consciousness and the seeds that the former is composed of are never beyond the basic nature of dependent arising; they are non-substantial and impermanent.⁶² Therefore, *āśraya-parivṛtti* can be understood as the support transformed away from being attached.⁶³

For the term *āśraya-parivṛtti*, a straightforward English translation is “transformation of support”, and the Chinese translation is *zhuan yi* 轉依. The CWSL instead

⁶¹ *Apidamo Da Piposha Lun* (*Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*, T 27, 1545: 885b, 905a).

⁶² CWSL, Fascicle 2 (T 31, 1585: 9b–10a).

⁶³ There has been disagreement and debate on whether the terms *āśraya-parivṛtti* and *āśraya-parāvṛtti* have significant difference epistemologically, and ontologically as well, among Jikido Takasaki (高崎直道), Lambert Schmithausen and Shen-chon Lai (賴賢宗).

provided an interpretative, rather than literally, translation for *āśraya-parivṛtti*, which is “transforming the consciousness (*viññāna*) to wisdom (*prajñā*)” (*zhuan shi cheng zhi* 轉識成智). Its full description is “transforming eight kinds of consciousness to gain four wisdoms”.⁶⁴ Here the doctrine of four wisdoms is the CWSL's unique interpretation on the enlightened one, which focused on the mental faculties of the personality,⁶⁵ rather than other aspects. Instead of taking four wisdoms, this article prefers taking omniscience (*sarvajñā*), a concept universally accepted by all major Mahāyāna intellectual traditions as the subject matter to discuss the Buddhahood or the enlightened one's intellectual capability.

Although the literal meaning of omniscience in Sanskrit “*sarvajñā*” seems emphasizing the quantitative completeness or the scale of a domain (*sarva* means “all” or “every”), yet in the doctrinal content of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the concept omniscience (*sarvajñā*) always involved several essential aspects described as following.

Ontologically speaking, omniscience is the intellectual capability to understand the fundamental quality, or basic nature, along with the essential structure of the reality. It is known that the reality involves ultimate and conventional truths, a domain connecting the phenomena of dependent arising with emptiness, under a balanced and inseparable relationship. The idea of omniscience has an aspect of quantitative completeness as the term “*sarva-*” literally suggested, yet, since the completeness is the domain of phenomena of dependent arising, the details, especially the distinctions, among phenomena of various levels, are also covered by the aspect of completeness in the scale. The significance of phenomena in this regard is as much as its ultimate nature. Regarding the cognitive pattern of omniscience, although it is primarily referred to direct perception or special form of intuition, which is beyond conceptual knowledge, it does not necessary imply that conceptuality should be entirely excluded, since conceptuality is still a preparing factor which finally is able to lead the understanding of omniscience up to the intuitive level.

There is ethical implication in the idea of omniscience. Aspiration to achieve enlightenment to benefit other beings is the major factor for approaching the omniscience all along. It is for the compassionate purpose of helping all beings effectively, Bodhisattva takes omniscience as a necessary condition. Soteriological transformation is also another essential dimension of the omniscience. Knowing the truth or reality is not merely to understand knowledge conceptually, but has soteriological promising. It is able to cause profound transformation internally on the practitioner's fundamental mentality, and change his understanding about the reality of oneself and that of the world. This transformational ability implies creativity and innovation. Omniscience is not merely to know the reality without transformation the reality. Rather, it also implies engagement and innovation, by which, attachment and suffering would be reduced, and the well-being would be improved. Finally,

⁶⁴ CWSL, Fascicle 10 (T 31, 1585: 54b–55c).

⁶⁵ CWSL, Fascicle 10 (T 31, 1585: 56a–57a).

Omniscience is a not a static entity. It is a dynamic flow of intellectual processing in the comprehension of the dependent arising network of phenomena. These are basic characteristics in the Mahāyāna version of omniscience.

Because of the new re-definition and re-illustration of knowledge, by *pañca vidyā*, in the Mahāyāna horizon, it also throws new light on the idea of omniscience, to let the topic be re-approached with fresh eyes. The concept of *pañca vidyā* is far more meaningful and reasonable than the example of mundane knowledge once mentioned by the sectarian scholars. This idea also provides one of the possible hints on the reason why when comparing with the Sektarian forerunners, omniscience can be consistently accepted by nearly all intellectual traditions in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Countless Eons (*Asaṃkhyeyakalpa*) There is a temporal dimension in the soteriological doctrine framed by *jñeyāvaraṇa*, *pañca vidyā* and *sarvajñā*. According to the *CWSL*, and other Mahāyāna texts as well, it takes three countless eons (*Asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, *aseng zhijie* 阿僧祇劫) of cultivation, to transform oneself from ordinary being to an enlightened one. Each eon has an immeasurable length of time, such as hundreds of billion centuries.

According to the *CWSL* and other texts related, it takes the first eon to grow oneself from an ordinary being, who is heavily driven by *avidyā* and suffering, to a Bodhisattva of junior stages on the path. The “junior” stage is defined by the state of realizing the path (*darśana mārga*), namely, the first time directly perceive the emptiness of subject and object, or the non-essentialness of the perceiver and the cognized.

The second eon begun from the junior Bodhisattva at first stage up to the seventh stage. The major task for the first and second eons is to reduce, suppress and remove one’s own *avidyā* and attachment to trans-mundane objects. It takes the third eon to go through the last three advanced stages of Bodhisattva cultivation on the path, from the eighth to the final stages, until achieving the Buddhahood, namely being enlightened.

For the last eon, the major difficulty that obstructs a Bodhisattva is not his own *avidyā* and attachment, but the ignorance (*ajñāna*), or lacking of the knowledge, in helping other beings. He is unable to benefit other beings effectively, because of his ignorance (*ajñāna*) in knowledge, skill or approach accordingly. Therefore, for the Bodhisattva practice at this eon, the major overcoming of obstructions for him is to learn to benefit other beings, by developing systematical knowledge as extensively as possible, for the purpose of removing other beings’ *avidyā* and attachment.⁶⁶

Since this is a project of such an unbelievably grand and extraordinary length, we can imagine the difficulty and obstruction on the path is so easy to frustrate the practitioner’s confidence and ruin his aspiration on each step of the path all along. Therefore, Maitreya’s Pureland doctrine and the faith in it became another resource for the practitioners to look for, and gain the continued aspiration to persist in his

⁶⁶ *CWSL*, Fascicle 9 (T 31, 1585: 52b); *Yujia Shidi Lun* (*Yogācārabhūmi*, Fascicle 48, T 30, 1579: 556b–564c).

tough and nearly endless journey, not just in this life, but also future lives after then. In this mission impossible, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is gradually rooted out, by growing knowledge system of various branches. Hence, the bodhisattva is able to remove other's *avidyā* in a more effective way. In this sense, the faith in pure land can encourage the Bodhisattva to nurture a strong dynamic to push forward the Bodhisattva's knowledge construction of five sciences, even though during the processing he will come across numerous *jñeyāvaraṇa*.

Another issue that earns *jñeyāvaraṇa* the confused image in the modern scholarship is whether it is defiled. Such uncertainty is due to the *CWSL* or other Yogacara *śāstras* that so easily give a "contradictory" impression to careless readings of the text, since both defiled (*kliṣṭa*) and non-defiled (*akliṣṭa*) are used to predicate the *jñeyāvaraṇa*. But the problem is, defiled obstruction (*klesāvaraṇa*) is directly derived from *avidyā*, which is the major cause of reincarnation (*saṃsāra*), while the *Cheng Wei Shih Lun* clearly indicates that non-defiled ignorance (*akliṣṭ-ajñāna*) does not cause reincarnation. How could such a pair of incompatible ideas co-exist in *jñeyāvaraṇa*? Is *jñeyāvaraṇa* *avidyā* or non-defiled ignorance (*akliṣṭa-ajñāna*)? Is it defiled or non-defiled?

For Buddhism, the Sanskrit terms "*avidyā*" and "*ajñāna*" are two different concepts. Although the textual contexts of both terms are partially overlapped, in most cases, their meanings are not exchangeable. *Avidyā* is referred to wrong understanding or distorted assumption, about the reality. Thus, *avidyā* is what the reality is not. *Ajñāna* mostly referred to the lack of knowledge on something. It is close to the general understanding of ignorance in English. Therefore, "ignorance" is used to express *ajñāna* here.⁶⁷

As explained above, *jñeyāvaraṇa* in the *CWSL* has three different meanings, which are organized according to the progression on the path and stages in cultivation. The *jñeyāvaraṇa*-I, the inborn attitude of cognitive realism, in fact is the other side of the same coin for the attachment to the cognizer as the substantial self. The *jñeyāvaraṇa* in this sense is closely, and mutually, related to the defiled obstruction, while both are directly derived from *avidyā*, and also are essential component in the causation of reincarnation.

On the other hand, *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III, the incompleteness of knowledge, is non-defiled ignorance (*akliṣṭa-ajñāna*), which is the lack of knowledge necessary for benefiting other beings. But this type of shortage is not due to distorted assumption about the reality. It is neither caused by *avidyā*, nor related to reincarnation. That is why it is called ignorance (*ajñāna*), yet that of the non-defiled (*akliṣṭa*).

The issue of whether *jñeyāvaraṇa* is defiled/*avidyā* or not, is also related to the Hīnāyāna and Mahāyāna controversy. The distinction is drawn out along the line of the soteriological horizon. For Hīnāyāna and Mahāyāna, both are holding the same position that the non-defiled ignorance is irrelevant with *avidyā*. But for Mahāyāna, non-defiled ignorance is still a shortage of knowledge to be overcome through learning knowledge under the framework of five sciences, while for Hīnāyāna,

⁶⁷ For a detailed discussion see Lau 2011: 107–125.

namely, the Śrāvaka and Pratyeka-buddha, it is not a shortage of whatever sense.⁶⁸ Therefore, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is both partially defiled and non-defiled, or partially *avidyā* and *ajñāna*, for sākāra-vijñānavāda according to the CWSL, and different from the Indo-Tibetan Mādhyamika's interpretation for *jñeyāvaraṇa*. All the way along is *avidyā*.⁶⁹

6 A Kantian Reading on Jñeyāvaraṇa

As for the doctrinal implications and the relationship among *sarvajñā* (omni-science), five sciences and *jñeyāvaraṇa*, since some Buddhist practitioners simply treat them as religious faith of Mahāyāna Buddhism, they would dismiss any important philosophical implications behind them. But in this article, I try to use several Kant's ideas to argue for the possible philosophical implications of *pañca vidyā*, *jñeyāvaraṇa* and *sarvajñā*.

In Kant's philosophy, on the one hand, the idea of completeness (*Vollständigkeit*) cannot be fully actualized in empirical experiences. Thus, no system or domain of knowledge can make the claim that completeness has been achieved as reality.⁷⁰ On the other hand, it is also equally wrong to say that, the idea of completeness should be entirely given up, or seen as unnecessary, due to its impossibility to be fully actualized in reality. Kant argued that, the idea of completeness neither produces any concrete knowledge directly, nor the completeness can be fully actualized in the reality. What the idea of completeness provides is a necessary imagination of a dynamic completeness,⁷¹ to lead the systematical knowledge moving forward along the direction to extend its territory as extensively as possible, to approach the possible but not yet actualized completeness of human knowledge.

Furthermore, the idea of completeness also provides an imagined unity and focus, or maximum, for systematic knowledge,⁷² to integrate the flow of inputting knowledge into the system, and to ensure that the systematic knowledge established has enough openness to absorb the new element through spontaneous and continuous adjustment of its own established structure.⁷³ In Kantian terminology, the idea of completeness served as a regulative principle for the growing of systematical knowledge.⁷⁴ Its major function is to synthesize or integrate knowledge, but not producing knowledge, which mainly relies on sensation, perception and understanding at various levels, in Kant's system.

⁶⁸ CWSL, Fascicle 9 (T 31, 1585: 8b, 52b); *Yujia Shidi Lun* (*Yogācārabhūmi*), Fascicle 43 (T 30, 1579: 478c, 573b); further analysis see Lau 2011: 119–138.

⁶⁹ Lau 2011: 53–81.

⁷⁰ Kant 2007, A327B383.

⁷¹ Kant 2007, A568B593.

⁷² Kant 2007, A568B596.

⁷³ Kant 2007, A508–509B536–537.

⁷⁴ Kant 2007, A569B597.

Based on the full recognition of the essential differences between Kant and Mahāyāna systems, it is no intention for the author here to make any arbitrary and rush claim that both systems are “similar” to each other. Yet, based on Kant’s concept of completeness as a regulative principle, the Kantian model of relationship among completeness, regulative principle and systematic knowledge, inspires our reading on the philosophical implications closely related with the *jñeyāvaraṇa* issue.

In the Mahāyāna soteriology, it is said that the enlightened one’s omniscience should be, and can be, fully actualized as experience in the reality, after extraordinarily prolonged time of cultivation during the three eons as discussed before. This is apparently different from Kantian position on completeness. It seems that there is no comparability between the ideas of completeness in two systems.

However, in the Mahāyāna context, considering the extraordinary length of time in cultivation, the claim that omniscience (*sarvajñā*) is empirically or experientially based, is exclusively for the enlightened one only, not even can be applied to a bodhisattva of the advanced stages, let alone those on the junior stages of the path (*mārga*), or all the rest in the domain of ordinary beings.

Therefore, literally for all Buddhist practitioners, omniscience in fact is a necessary ideal, far from being fully actualized. Its purpose is to encourage and drive the communities to grow systematical knowledge as completely as possible, in terms of both quality and quantity. Yet, omniscience certainly is not an empirically or experientially based concept for simply all of these practitioners.

However, this doesn’t mean that the completeness indicated by omniscience (*sarvajñā*) is entirely meaningless or groundless for the practitioners. On the contrary, this ideal out there has provided necessary criteria, to expose the underdevelopment of knowledge, namely *jñeyāvaraṇa*-III, within the five sciences.

The role of omniscience (*sarvajñā*), along with its idea of completeness, in the knowledge growth is to disclose the possible new horizon for knowledge, thus indirectly reflect its continuous, yet dynamic, development, no matter how much new knowledge that the Bodhisattva had gained on the cultivation progression along the path.

Therefore, *jñeyāvaraṇa*, or put it in another word, underdevelopment or shortage of knowledge in the five sciences, became a “regular” or “normal” condition, under the light of omniscience. Out of continuously pressure and spontaneous drive, it alerts that the shortage of knowledge would influence the consequence of compassion negatively. This also becomes another “regular” and “normal” condition for the Bodhisattvas. According to the dynamic need of completeness set by the idea of omniscience, the Bodhisattva all the time realizes that, the scale and the quality of knowledge that had gained previously, can rarely be enough, since other beings’ *avidyā* and suffering always evolve. It thus exposes the shortage, vulnerability and falsification of any established knowledge system.

However, omniscience as the ideal of completeness does not produce real knowledge of any sense. The strong aspiration of achieving omniscience is a coordinator and propeller, to motivate the Bodhisattva devoted to the development of knowledge in its various branches. The knowledge growth in itself is primarily through the

down-to-the-earth gradual accumulation, which is mainly based on step by step construction such as perception, conception and reasoning, rather than any shortcut or sudden enlightenment. Therefore, omniscience as the completeness of knowledge may be possible in future, but not yet at present, and its key contribution to the actualization processing is to offer the direction heading towards the wholeness of systematical knowledge, through the openness implied by the insight on emptiness.

7 Final Remarks

As one of the unique doctrines of Mahāyāna, *jñeyāvaraṇa* is primarily referred to the shortage or lack of knowledge, in helping other beings to remove their *avidyā*, attachment and suffering. Furthermore, it also indirectly refers to the frustration caused by being unable to practice the universal compassion derived from the aspiration based on *Bodhicitta*, because of the shortage of knowledge. Therefore, one of the major aspects to overcome *jñeyāvaraṇa* is devoting oneself to the learning of knowledge within the frame of five sciences, in which mundane knowledge is intergraded into, and also transformed as part of the Buddhist scholasticism with soteriological promising as one of the core values of Buddhist civilization.

Finally, based on the analysis and argument presented above, we can reasonably suggest that the interpretations of *jñeyāvaraṇa* provided by the representative monastic leaders of contemporary Chinese Buddhism as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, do contradict those major Buddhist texts discussed above. Their interpretation point to what *jñeyāvaraṇa* is not. Further clarification is thus necessary, since their explanation obviously faces textual and doctrinal challenges.

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Chapter 11

How to Attain Enlightenment Through Cognition of Particulars and Universals?

Huizhao on *Svalakṣaṇa* and *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa*



Chen-kuo Lin

Abbreviations

PS *Pramāṇasamuccaya* of Dignāga
PSV *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* of Dignāga

In the Chinese heritage of Buddhist logic, the philosophical contribution of Huizhao (慧沼 648–714) has been overshadowed by the popularity of Kuiji (窺基 632–682)’s *Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa* (*Yinming Ruzhengli Lun Shu* 因明入正理論疏), although not all of us know that the last half of this *opus magnum* was completed by Huizhao, Kuiji’s disciple.¹ Nor do all of us know that Huizhao is the author of the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge* (*Erliang Zhang* 二量章), one of the earliest Chinese works on Buddhist epistemology. In order to fill in the gaps of our

¹This paper was presented at the International Workshop on “Ontology of Asian Philosophy: Perspectives from Buddhist Study and Analytic Philosophy” organized by Kyoto University and Ryukoku University on April 13–14, 2013. I am grateful for the comments by Shōryū Katsura, Mark Siderits, Tom Tillemans, as well as for the proofreading by Ernest Brewster. Mark Siderits reminds me to pay attention to the broader background in which the motive for attaining the enlightenment is not merely found in Buddhist epistemology, but also found in non-Buddhist theories of knowledge. Shōryū Katsura points out that in Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* (Collected Works for Investigating the Means of Valid Knowledge, hereafter PSV) I.2, non-eternality (*anityatā*), one of the sixteen features (*ākāra*) of Four Noble Truths, is mentioned as the object of perception. This indicates that Dignāga was aware of the fact that, as the Abhidharma literature has shown, the analysis of cognition should be conducted within the context of meditation. Dignāga did not fully elaborate this issue, which he might not consider it the priority of his philosophical project for the reason that most of the Buddhists do not lack such kind of knowledge. By contrast, Dharmakīrti and his followers never lost sight of the soteriological agenda of Buddhist epistemology.

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knowledge about Chinese Buddhist logic and epistemology, this article attempts to explore Huizhao's theory of *svalakṣaṇa* (particular) and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* (universal) on the basis of his works, the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*, the *Continued Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa* (*Yinming Ruzhengli Lun Xushu* 因明入正理論續疏), and the *Verdict on Buddhist Logic* (*Yinming Yiduan* 因明義斷).²

Before we investigate Huizhao's theory, it is important to note that the intellectual context in seventh-century China is significantly different from that found in India of the same period. In Medieval China the Buddhists were almost exclusively devoted to doctrinal studies. Although they were also trained to be acquainted with the non-Buddhist doctrines, such as those in Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsa, and Nyāya, Chinese Buddhists learned Indian philosophy without the pressure of directly confronting the Indian interlocutors.³ Taking the issue of universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) as an example, the debate between the realists (i.e., Naiyāika-s, Vaiśeṣika-s, Mīmāṃsaka-s) and the nominalists (i.e., Buddhists) in India lost its appeal, because the East Asian Buddhists were not pressed by the realist challenge as the living agenda of philosophy.

In the seventh-century China, under the strong influence of Xuanzang (玄奘 602–664)'s translation and promotion, Yogācāra idealism became dominant among the indigenous Chinese Buddhist discourses and practices. These primers on logic, such as Dignāga's *Nyāyamukha* (*An Entrance to Logic*, *Yinming Zhengli Men Lun* 因明正理門論) and Śāṅkaravāmin (商羯羅主)'s *Nyāyapraveśa* (*Introduction to Logic*, *Yinming Ruzhengli Lun* 因明入正理論), constituted a crucial part of the curriculum in Xuanzang's school and formed the required discipline to justify their philosophical stance. Indian Realism, which always stood as the interlocutor for Buddhist idealists, however, did not flourish in Medieval China. Accordingly the questions in the commentarial texts are often raised only within the framework of Chinese Yogācāra scholasticism. Those commentaries are more tempted to solve the hermeneutical deviances found in the various Yogācāra texts than to directly engage in the philosophical debate with the opponents. In comparison, this hermeneutical situation is different from what is found in Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (*Collected Works on the Means of Valid Knowledge*, hereafter PS), where we see Dignāga was at pains to refute both Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents. As we will see below, in addition to the *Nyāyapraveśa* and the *Nyāyamukha*, Chinese Buddhist logicians attempted to systemize the theories of particular and universal with reference to the Yogācāra texts, such as the *Fodi Jing Lun* (佛地經論 *Buddhabhumyūpadeśa*, *Treatise on the Buddha Realm*) and the *Cheng Weishi Lun* (成唯識論, *Treatise on the Establishment of Consciousness-Only*). Another key source in shaping the Chinese understanding of logic (*hetu-vidyā*) is the Abhidharma literature, especially the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣa* (*Great Exposition of Scholasticism*, *Abidamo Da Piposha Lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論). This form of text-tradition (to adopt Parimal

²Huizhao is regarded as the second patriarch of the East Asian Yogācāra School (Faxiang/Hossō School). For the study on Huizhao's biography, see Nemu 1987: 161–168.

³For the problem of universal in Indian philosophy, see David 1972; Motilal 1986: Chapter 11 & 12.

Patil's phrase) inevitably led the Chinese version of Buddhist logic and epistemology down a more scholastic route than that evinced by Dignāga's works.

1 Dignāga on Particular and Universal

When we come to Dignāga's works, we find that he did not explain much about this conceptual pair. In the *Nyāyamukha*, Dignāga explains why there are merely two means of valid cognition, perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*), by referring to the ontological premise that there are only two aspects of object to be cognized, particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). Hence no other means of valid cognition is needed to account for the cognition of object. Verbal testimony (*śadha*) and analogy (*upamāna*) are subsumed under the category of inference (T 32, 1628: 3b; Tucci 1930/1976: 50). Apart from the above brief statement, Dignāga did not add any more explanation to his theory of particular and universal, nor explain further why they are the only two aspects of the object of cognition.

In the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, which was translated by Yijing 義淨 (635–713),⁴ yet unfortunately no more extant, Dignāga does not explain much about the theory of particular and universal either:

There are two valid cognitions, perception and inference, because the object of cognition has two aspects. There is no other valid cognition in need for the combination (*sandhāna*) of [two aspects, particular and universal].⁵

Dignāga goes on to further explain the above statement through analyzing the perceptual experience of a shade of color. For instance, when one sees a leaf, one senses the inexpressible color first. Then one applies the concept in mind (*manas*), e.g., “impermanence,” to compose a statement: “The color of leaf is impermanent” (Hattori 1968: 24; Pind 2009: 47). At this point, however, we still do not know the ontological status of the universal (concept). Is the universal a real entity? Is it some sort of mental state? Or is it just a name? As we will know later, Dignāga proposes a theory of universals that cannot be understood unless referring to another theory of *anyāpoha* (exclusion of the other), which is discussed in Sect. V of the PSV. What deserves to note here is that the example employed above by Dignāga can also be found in the Abhidharma literature. For instance, it says in the *Abhidharmakośa*: “Visual cognition is capable of cognizing blue only, but not capable of cognizing ‘this is blue.’ Mental cognition (*mano-vijñāna*) is capable of cognizing both ‘blue’ and ‘this is blue’.”⁶ As far as the context is concerned, the analysis of this sort often

⁴Xuanzang spent a month to learn the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* from a Brahmin when he traveled to Kosalā. See Huili's biography of Xuanzang, T 50, 2053: 241b.

⁵*pratyakṣam anumānam ca pramāṇe lakṣaṇadvayam / prameyam tasya sandhāne na pramāṇāntaram*. See Steinkellner, *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1*. Also cf., Hattori 1968: 24.

⁶眼識但能了青,不了是青。意識了青,亦是了青。(T 29, 1558: 52c)

refers to the practice of meditative contemplation for the realization of the basic Buddhist tenets, such as “All dharmas are impermanent, suffering, and no-self,” that is required for spiritual enlightenment. It is not clear to us whether or not Dignāga had the same practical intent in mind. All we know is that he did not spell it out in the PS explicitly. However, when we come to the Chinese commentarial literature, the question we like to ask is: Did Chinese commentators make this implicitly intended agenda explicit? What would be Huizhao’s view on this issue?

2 Epistemology in Practice

In the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*, Huizhao presents three theories of particular and universal by citing from the *Fodi Jing Lun* (*Buddhabhumyūpadeśa*). The cited passage was adopted by Huizhao from Kuiji’s *Cheng Weishi Lun Shuji* (成唯識論述記 *Commentary on the Cheng Weishi Lun*), which provides the better context to explain how these theories can be understood within the Yogācāra course of cultivation. According to both the *Cheng Weishi Lun* and the *Fodi Jing Lun*, the final goal for Yogācāra practice is to achieve the transformation of the basis (*āśraya-paravṛtti*) for attaining enlightenment. Accordingly, cognition as the basis of experience is said to be transformed from the defiled state to the pure state. In the *Cheng Weishi Lun*, as in the other Yogācāra texts, a complex system of meditative practice is employed for the yoga-practitioner to attain valid cognition through eliminating two kinds of hindrances: afflictive hindrances (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and cognitive hindrances (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). We have to keep in mind precisely in this context of cultivation the epistemological issue of *pramāṇa* is brought in discussion in the Yogācāra system.

In the context of cultivation, the first question regarding the nature of cognition is addressed as such: Is the cognition of general object (*zongyuan* 總緣) or the cognition of individual object (*bieyuan* 別緣) capable of eliminating the hindrances? This question is about the nature of *ālambana* (support-object of cognition), the object that should be thoroughly discerned in the course of cultivation. According to the Abhidharma teaching, a practitioner should be instructed to contemplate on the nature of objects either in the categories of five aggregates (*skandha*), twelve fields (*āyatana*), or eighteen realms (*dhātu*).⁷ This form of meditation is designed to lead the practitioner to realize impermanence, suffering, and no-self of phenomena, which will in turn help him free from ignorance and defilement. The impermanence, suffering, and no-self are called “general aspect” or “universal character” (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) of object. The individual objects in the categories of five aggregates, twelve fields, and eighteen realms are taken as “particular aspect” of object,

⁷Five aggregates: physical form, feeling, conception, volition, consciousness. Twelve fields: six faculties of cognition plus six corresponding objects of cognition. Eighteen realms: twelve fields plus six types of consciousness. These categories are employed by the Buddhist to depict the totality of phenomena.

which is also called “*svalakṣaṇa*”. Now, one has to push the question further and ask: Which kind of cognition of the object in meditation, cognition of particular or cognition of universal, leads to the *final* elimination of defilements? According to the Abhidharma, universal is the correct answer to the question. This stance is clearly stated in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā*: “Only in the path which takes universal as the object one is able to eliminate the defilements.”⁸

Regarding this Abhidharma answer, however, there are disagreements in the Yogācāra School. For those Yogācārins and logicians who followed Dignāga, universal is the object of inference (*anumāna*), while particular is the object of immediate perception (*pratyakṣa*). For Dignāga and his followers, one is aware of the real particular through direct perception, while universal is merely mental and conceptual construction, which can be referred to through “the exclusion of other” (*anyāpoha*) only. For those Buddhist practitioners who use the knowledge of universals to eliminate the cognitive and psychological defilements, taking the universals as the final truth (*tathatā*) would end up being at odd with the Buddhist logician’s ontology that universals are conceived as the mental and conceptual constructs. The Abhidharma explanation also inevitably entails another question: Is truth a particular? Or is it a universal? This question is about the ontological status of truth, which is pivotal to the final attainment of enlightenment.

In response to this question, both Kuiji and Huizhao cited three theories of interpretation from the *Foḍi Jing Lun*. According to Huizhao’s *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*, the first theory holds that in the Abhidharma both particular and universal can be cognized by perception in the concentrated state of mind, whereas in the logical treatises (*hetuvidyā*) (i.e., *Nyāyamukha* and *Nyāyapraveśa*) particular and universal are cognized by perception and inference respectively in the non-concentrated state of mind.⁹ On this issue, Kuiji comments that in the Abhidharma theory universal is also cognized by perception because the cognition of universal takes place in the concentrated state of mind.¹⁰ This is equivalent to saying that universal is cognized by yogic perception in the meditative state. It should be noted that Kuiji’s interpretation is based on the orthodox theory of meditation, affirming that cognition in the concentrated state of mind is more advanced than cognition in the non-concentrated state of mind, for the reason that the universals (concepts) are also cognized intuitively (*abhisamaya*) in the concentrated state of mind.

⁸ 唯共相境道能斷煩惱 (T 27, 1545: 820a)

⁹ Huizhao, *Erliang zhang*: “One theory holds that in the concentrated state of mind both particular and universal are cognized by perception, whereas according to the logical treatises (*hetuvidyā*) [e.g., *Nyāyamukha* and *Nyāyapraveśa*] it is in the non-concentrated state of mind that the characters of particular and universal are taken as the object of cognition.” 一云, 定心通緣自共二相, 並是現量, 而因明論中, 約緣自共二種相者, 據散心說。 (X 55, 882: 162c)

¹⁰ Kuiji, *Cheng Weishi Lun Shuji*: “The cognition of general character is also included in [the category of] perception by which the defilement can be definitely eliminated. The mind in the concentrated state is called ‘perception’ because due to concentration it illuminates the universal in the thing itself”. 由此總緣智亦現量攝, 斷惑無失, 即由定照共相自體故, 說定心為現量也。 (T 43, 1830: 584b)

The second theory holds that only particular is cognized in the concentrated state of mind. In the progress of meditative cultivation, however, universal is used as an expedient means (*upāya*) to help the practitioner to cognize the truth/principle (*li* 理) in the form of universal. Hence, provisionally speaking, the universal is also cognized in the concentrated state of mind. For this reason, some consider “suchness”, “emptiness” or “no-self” to be the universal of objects, while others, considering “suchness” to be disclosed in the emptiness of self and things, do not see it as a concept (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*).¹¹ In short, this theory mainly argues that what is cognized in the concentrated state of mind is particular only, which is also the *content* of *tathatā* as the ontological disclosure of emptiness. As to universal, it is rather taken as the conceptual truth that functions as an expedient means to help practitioner fully realizing the disclosure of emptiness.¹² Kuiji comments that this theory disagrees with the Abhidharma claim that taking the cognition of universal as the key method to eliminate the defilements is a provisional method (*upāya*) only.

The third theory attempts to elaborate the positions favored in the Buddhist logic and the *Fodijing lun* (*Buddhabhūmyūpadeśa*). First, the logicians draw a clear distinction between particular and universal. Particular refers to the real entity of existents, while universal is the concept that is applied to the common feature of objects through the establishment of class (*japti*) in the way similar to assembling the flowers into a garland by thread. This distinction is valid only on the level of ordinary state of mind. In the concentrated state of mind, however, since the mind is free of conception, the object of cognition is particulars which are given in perception (*pratyakṣa*) only. Even if the practitioner is aware of impermanence, suffering, and so forth, as the object of discernment, he perceives these universals *in* the individual object. Hence these universals are also taken as particular on the level of concentrated state of mind, for they are not separate from the individual object. Accordingly, *tathatā* should be also viewed as particular, instead of being viewed as universal. This theory is opposed to the Abhidharma teaching by which only the cognition of universal is taken to be capable of eliminating the defilements.

Among three theories, the third is favored in the *Fodi Jing Lun* and probably by Kuiji and Huizhao. Here we have at least three groups of textual source with regard to the theory of particulars and universals: (1) Abhidharma, (2) Hetu-vidyā (logical treatises), and (3) *Cheng Weishi Lun* and *Fodi Jing Lun*. As regards Buddhist episte-

¹¹ Huizhao, *Erliang Zhang*: “The second theory holds that the mind in the concentrated state only takes the particular as the object of cognition, because cognition as such is induced by means of [the cognition of] universal and by the cognition of the truth/principle manifested in the various characters of universal. “Cognition of universal” is thus named when it is viewed as provisional condition (*upāya*). It is called “cognition of particular” when it is not so viewed. For this reason, some consider “suchness” (*tathatā*), “emptiness” (*sūnyatā*) or “selflessness” (*nairātmya*) to be the universal of existents. The others consider “suchness” to be manifested by the two kinds of emptiness (of self and things), and therefore it is not the universal.” 二云, 定心唯緣自相, 然由共相方便所引, 緣諸共相所顯理故, 就方便說, 名知共相。不如是者, 名知自相。由此道理, 或說真如, 名空、無我, 是法共相。或說真如, 二空所顯, 非是共相。(X 55, 882: 162c22–163a1)

¹² This theory is also found in the Maitreya Chapter of the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Lin 2010: 2, 261–275).

mology, Huizhao's interpretation is consistent when he explains Dignāga's notions of particular and universal in the *Continued Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa*:

Dignāga establishes only two means of valid cognition in accord with two aspects [of the object of cognition]. Now I will briefly define these two aspects. Particular refers to all individual principles, which are innate in every entity of all dharmas, such as suffering, impermanence, etc., in the matter (*rūpa*), etc. They are the innate self-nature (*svabhāva*) [of dharmas], which is not conceptually constructed. Therefore they are particulars. This definition of particular is different from that which is said in the Scripture. [According to the Scripture,] universal refers to that (i.e., concept) which is provisionally constructed by the conceptual mind to put other similar things in a category in the way like one uses the thread to string the flowers together. It exists because it is constructed by cognition.¹³

According to Huizhao's explanation, Dignāga equates *svalakṣaṇa* with *svabhāva*, which is further defined as the intrinsic nature of existents, such as impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self. At the first blush, Huizhao's explanation seems at odds with the general understanding of Dignāga's definition of particular as being free from conceptual construction (*kalpanāpoḍha*), while impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self are regarded as universals in the Abhidharma. How could impermanence, etc., be taken as particular? A plausible explanation might be that in the course of advanced meditation the impermanence of particular object is intuitively perceived without the conceptual superimposition, which is called "particular," the object of direct perception.¹⁴

The question remains: do the Buddhist logicians accept the view of the non-conceptual perception (*pratyakṣa*) in the non-concentrated state of mind, or do they accept the view of the non-conceptual perception in the concentrated state of mind only? According to the first theory cited in the *Fodi Jing Lun*, the Buddhist logicians confined their theory of perception in the non-concentrated state of mind. Although Dignāga did discuss the issue of yogic perception in PSV, the definition of *pratyakṣa* in Huizhao's *Commentary* does not specifically include yogic perception. Hence *pratyakṣa* in this context could either refer to five sensory perceptions or mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*). The latter is most likely the candidate for cognizing impermanence as particular. The other possible explanation is that Huizhao understood Dignāga's theory of particular as that which applies to the concentrated state of mind only. This explanation can be supported by the following discussion.

In the subsequent exegesis, Huizhao repudiates the theory that heat is the particular of fire and what is signified by words is universal. As Huizhao explains, if this

¹³ 陳那依此二相，唯立二量，其二相體，今略明之。一切諸法，各附己體，所有別理，如於色等上苦、無常等，不由安立，本有自性，即名自相。不同經中所說自相，以分別心，假立一法，貫通諸法，如縷貫華。由智安立，方說為有，此名共相。(X 53, 852: 791b–c)

¹⁴ Cf., Katsura 2011: 271–279. Dignāga's notion of *svalakṣaṇa* needs to be further clarified. Since Dignāga stands for the position of Sākāravijñānavāda, it is reasonable to construe *svalakṣaṇa* as sense-data. Dan Arnold's interpretation is worthy of note: "On this reading, the only 'unique particulars' that can be the direct objects of knowledge are (as Dignāga had argued in his *Ālambanaparīkṣā*) finally something like internal sense-data—mental events (such as "representations") our acquaintance with which is uniquely immediate" (Arnold 2005: 25).

theory were the case, one will be burned by heat when one contemplates fire during the concentrated state of cultivation. However, this is not the case. Further, if one cognizes the truths/principles in the teaching in the concentrated state of mind, since the signified object of teaching is universal, cognition as such in the concentrated state of mind is based on inference only. However, as stated in the *Fodijing lun*, this is not the case either (Huizhao, X 53, 852: 791c).

The fact that Huizhao repeatedly refers to the *Fodi Jing Lun* in his exegesis shows that the *Fodi Jing Lun* plays a crucial role in the Buddhist epistemology in the Xuanzang School.¹⁵ In other words, Xuanzang and his disciples were highly concerned with the religious dimension of the Yogācāra system, because they sought to shore up faith in the Buddha realm, which was described through the theory of “pure *dharmadhatū*” and four types of transformed cognition.¹⁶ Unlike Dignāga, who seems to be less interested in metaphysics, the authors of the *Fodijing Lun* extend epistemology to the analysis of transformed cognition, which is assumed to be the crucial part of the Buddha’s intellectual capacity. It should be noted that epistemology in this extended sense was not a new development. For, within the Xuanzang School, it rather represents the orthodox Buddhist teaching revealed in the longstanding Abhidharma tradition.

In the *Fodi Jing Lun*, the problem of particular and universal is mentioned in the theory of Profoundly Discerning Cognition (*pratyavekṣanā-jñāna*; *miaoguanchazhi* 妙觀察智), the transformed cognition of *mano-vijñāna* (cognition of thinking). According to this theory, only in the concentrated state of mind particular is cognized by the transformed *mano-vijñāna*, i.e., *pratyavekṣanā-jñāna*, but not by five types of sensory perception. In this respect, it seems that *mānasa pratyakṣa* or *pratyavekṣanā-jñāna* plays a crucial role in Huizhao’s theory of universal.

3 Ontology of Universals

What is the ontological status of universal? In Huizhao’s *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*, the question is raised as follows: Is universal an entity (*youti* 有體)?¹⁷ Or, is it a non-entity (*wuti* 無體)? In other words, is universal ontologically

¹⁵ “Faxiang zong” (法相宗) is used as a general label for the whole East Asian Yogācāra tradition. In this paper, however, I use the phrase “Xuanzang School” to emphasize the contribution of Xuanzang as the founder of the school. This view is different from the traditional ascription of Kuiji as the first patriarch of the school.

¹⁶ Four types of transformed cognition refer to those purified forms of cognition which are transformed from the eighth consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*), the seventh consciousness (*manas*), the sixth consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*) and five kinds of sensory consciousness respectively. They are called “mirror-like cognition”, “cognition of equality”, “cognition of profound observation”, and “cognition of unrestricted activities”.

¹⁷ The Sanskrit equivalent of *youti* 有體 could be *tādātmya* (see Wogihara 1936: 44, line 17–20), meaning “sameness or identity of nature”. It could also refer to *bhava* (existence).

real or not real? According to Huizhao's theory, generally speaking, universal cannot be viewed as entity. It is ontologically unreal. One can continue to ask: if universal is not real, what *is* it? In Dignāga's logical system, the universal is the conceptual construct, which can serve as the object of inference only. According to Huizhao's interpretation, the universal as the object of inference is provisionally designated by the conceptual mind. In other words, universal is not real, for it is signified by verbal expression (*prajñapti*) X from which -X in the same class are excluded. In this sense, Huizhao takes a nominalist position with regard to the ontological status of universal.

However, the question can be pushed further: if the universal is not real, what causes the conceptual mind to arise? The conceptual mind cannot arise from something unreal, for its arising must be caused by something real as the object of inferential cognition. But what is this *something*? According to the Buddhist causal theory of cognition, the universals cannot serve as the cause of the conceptual mind, because they are *prajñapti* (verbal expression) in the sense that they are not causally real. Following Kuiji's Yogācāra-vijñaptimātra system, Huizhao claims that the conceptual mind takes the noematic part (*xiangfen* 相分) as its object, an internal object in the mind. The internal noema is further divided into two kinds: noema qua image (*pratibimba*; *yingxiang xiangfen* 影像相分) and noema qua original stuff (*bimba*; *benzhi xiangfen* 本質相分). The noema qua image serves as the content of cognition, which is named "direct object of cognition" (*qing suoyuanyuan* 親所緣緣), while the noema qua original stuff is named "indirect object of cognition" (*shu suoyuanyuan* 疏所緣緣), which cannot be directly known by the seeing part of mind (*noesis*). As Huizhao explains in *The Lamp for Illuminating the Definite Meaning of the Cheng Weishi Lun* (*Cheng Weishi Lun Liaoyideng* 成唯識論了義燈), universal refers to the conceptual construct, which is created and superimposed by the conceptual mind upon the noema qua original stuff.¹⁸ This type of superimposed conceptual construct is not real in itself, for it is *parikalpita* (conceptually constructed) in view of the theory of threefold nature (*trisvabhāva*). Cognition in the mental structure of three or four parts (*bhaga*), including the seeing part (*noesis*) and the image part (*noema*),¹⁹ is real in the sense of *paratantra* (phenomena as the

¹⁸ "If *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* (universal) lacks substance, under what condition does the cognition arise? Answer: Although *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* superimposes appearance (*siyou* 似有) upon the *svalakṣaṇa* qua *bimba* (*benzhi zixiang* 本質自相), as far as the conceptual mind cognizes, it transforms the original stuff (*bimba*) into the object part of mind (*xiang-feng* 相分). Both *bimba* and *xiang-feng* lack the substance of universals. Cognition merely takes the object part of mind (*xiang-feng*, noema) as its object. It cannot take the *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* of that [*xiang-feng*] as the object." (Huizhao, T 43, 1832: 716a) 共相體無，智緣何起？答：共相雖依本質自相增益似有，假智緣時，還依本質以變相分，質相俱無彼共相體，智但緣相，不能緣著彼之共相。

¹⁹ According to the interpretation in the Xuanzang School, Dignāga proposes a theory of the threefold structure of the mind: the seeing part (*jianfen* 見分), the image part (*xiangfen* 相分), and the part of self-cognition (*svasaṃvedana*; *zizhengfen* 自證分). Based on this model, Dharmapāla adds one more part: the cognition of self-cognition (*zhengzizhengfen* 證自證分). For details, cf., Yao 2005: 145–146.

causally arising), while concept is not real in the sense of *parikalpita*. Hence, universal as *prajñapti* or *parikalpita* is said to be not real for being lack of substance.

Huizhao's explanation in the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge* is somehow different.²⁰ He says that universal can still be qualified as something real when it is in view of the noema qua image as the direct object of cognition. Nevertheless, it is void of substance when it is in view of original stuff (*bimba*). This explanation aims to account for the cognition of impermanence, suffering and so on in the concentrated state of meditation, for impermanence, suffering and so on are vividly perceived as the direct object of cognition, and therefore they cannot be said to be not real at all. If impermanence, suffering, etc., can be taken as universals, as the *Abhidharmamāhāvibhāṣā* holds, then they cannot be something entirely unreal. Again, meditation in this context is taken into account with regard to the ontological issue of universal.

If Huizhao takes a nominalist position, he will be forced to answer another question: How is it possible for universal to be cognized when it is not real? If he takes a conceptualist position, on the contrary, he will also need to face with another difficulty to explain Dignāga's theory of *anyāpoha* (exclusion of others). According to the latter, the universals can be cognized only through the exclusion of the rest of members in the same class, e.g., "blue" means the exclusion of the other colors that are not blue. As we will see in the following account of semantics, due to Huizhao's ontological commitment to the Yogācāra idealism, he is inevitably forced to compromise with the positions between nominalism and conceptualism.

²⁰ "Question: In this treatise, under which category of hundred dharmas is subsumed the universal and the noematic part (*xiangfen*) [of cognition] carried by the mind in the concentrated state when permanence, impermanence and so forth are cognized? Answer: There are two [explanations]. First, owing to the non-substantiality [of universal and the noematic part] they are not subsumed under any category of hundred dharmas. According to the second explanation, they are subsumed under [the category of] commonality (*sabhāga*) of existents. Now we classify [universal and the noematic part] under the category of commonality [of existents] for the reason that they can be classified under the same category to which the five aggregates belong. In other words, they follow the mind of transformation (隨能變心) and cannot be separated from it. Commonality is established on the basis of the similarity of various existents. It completely lacks substance. The universal character of this sort can be said to have substance if it refers to the noematic part as the result of transformation of causal conditions. The direct object of cognition must exist as real entity. It [i.e., universal] is also different from the noematic part, which is substantially real, being the result of the same seeds of the noetic part, and serving as the object of the intended part. It is non-substance if it is viewed from the "original matter". Awareness of permanence, impermanence and so on, in the concentrated state of mind is merely to directly perceive the transformation of mind. If the universal is taken [as the object of cognition] by the mind of inference, it is provisionally established by the mind of reference." (Huizhao X 55, 882: 163a) 問:此論共相及定心緣常無常等所帶相分,百法何攝?答:一云,以無體故,百法不取。一云,法同分攝。今謂可通五蘊所攝,隨能變心,不可離心,判屬同分。同分依相似眾多法立,而全無體。此之共相,若據緣所變相分,可言有體。親所緣緣,定應有故。亦不同於相分體實,與見同種,義分所緣。若據本質,即是無體。定心所緣常無常等,但現觀心變。若比量心所緣共相,但比量心假所安立。

4 Universals and Particulars in the Verbal Expressions

Regardless of taking either a nominalist or a conceptualist position, Huizhao was also obliged to explain the relationship of language and universal. As mentioned above, in the Abhidharma literature, the issue of particular and universal is brought up in the context of cultivation. Here I will cite another passage from the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣa* to show how verbal expression is used as the vehicle for acquiring the knowledge of particular and universal:

Question: What is the feature of cultivating the Applied Practice (*parayoga*), [which is the second stage in the five stages of path,] in the sub-stage called “Warm”?

Answer: Its feature is characterized by three kinds of knowledge: the knowledge established through hearing, the knowledge established through thinking, and the knowledge established through cultivation.

Question: How does one cultivate the knowledge established through hearing?

Answer: A practitioner either follows the master’s instruction on the essentials of dharma in eighteen realms, twelve fields, and five aggregates, or studies by self-learning the collection of Scriptures (*sūtra*), the collection of Abhidharma, and the collection of *Vinaya*. As far as he learns [those texts] thoroughly, he tells himself in mind: The texts and meanings in three collections are so vast. They will make one tiresome if one needs to memorize all. The essentials in the three collections can be seen in eighteen realms, twelve fields, and five aggregates. After having thought of this, he investigates the eighteen realms first. When he investigates, he employs three categories: name, particular, and universal. Name is employed to refer to this as the visual realm and so on up to the thought realm. Particular is employed to refer to the particular of the visual realm, and so on, up to the particular of the thought realm. Universal refers to the sixteen aspects of phenomena. One cultivates Insight and Calming by taking eighteen realms and sixteen aspects of phenomenal as the object of investigation (T 27, 1545: 34a–b).²¹

This passage clearly describes the pragmatic function of language in the course of cultivation, which needs no further explanation. Of course, we have to understand that the Abhidharma Schools established various theories of language (syllable, word, sentence), which was critically adapted by the Yogācāra systems. Accordingly, the Yogācāra logicians were fully aware of the context of religious practice when they pondered upon the problem of meaning in language.

For the Chinese Yogācāra scholars, language is always employed as a metaphoric means (*upacāra*) to attain enlightenment. This is the fundamental stance of Yogācāra philosophy of language, which is stated in the first verse of Vasubandhu’s *Thirty Verses* (*Triṃśikā*): “The metaphors (*upacāra*) of “self” (*ātma*) and “things” (*dharma*), which develop in many different ways, take place in the transformation of consciousness (*vjñāna-pariṇāme*).”²² Here the transformation of consciousness is

²¹ 問:修煖加行,其相云何?答:以要言之,三慧為相。謂聞所成慧、思所成慧、修所成慧。問:云何修習聞所成慧?答:修觀行者,或遇明師,為其略說諸法要者,唯有十八界、十二處、五蘊。或自讀誦素怛攢藏、毘奈耶藏、阿毘達磨藏,令善熟已,作如是念:三藏文義甚為廣博,若恒憶持,令心厭倦。三藏所說要者,唯有十八界、十二處、五蘊。作是念已,先觀察十八界。彼觀察時,立為三分:謂名故、自相故、共相故。名者,謂此名眼界,乃至此名意識界。自相者,謂此是眼界自相,乃至此是意識界自相。共相者,謂十六行相。所觀十八界、十六種共相。彼緣此界,修智修止。(T 27, 1545: 34a–b)

²² Cf. Anacker 1984: 186.

taken as the ontological ground of language, including the verbal expression of particular and universal. As Huizhao points out, there are two approaches with regard to this problem. The first is to view the problem of particular and universal from the perspective of cognition. The second is to view the same problem from the perspective of language. In the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*, the question is stated as follows: “What is the difference of taking particular and universal as the object by the mind of perception and the mind of inference, on the one hand, and expressing the same two aspects [i.e., particular and universal] through noun and sentence, on the other hand?”²³ The answer to the first question is that particular is verbally inexpressible, while universal is verbally expressible. The answer to the second question is that noun (*nāma*) is used to designate the particular subject, such as “angel”, “human”, “eye”, “ear”, etc., while sentence (*pāda*) is used to state a proposition, such as “all conditioned beings are impermanent,” “all sentient beings must die,” etc. Noun is the word applied to the particular nature of being (*svabhāva* 自性), which is often taken as the subject of statement, while sentence (*pāda*) is used to differentiate the properties of subject (*viśeṣa* 差別), which is the function of predicate.²⁴ In view of the Buddhist logical syntax, *svabhāva* is also called “dharmin” (the possessor of property, the locus of property), while *viśeṣa* is called “dharma” (property, attribute). For instance, in the statement “sound is impermanent,” “sound” as the subject of statement is called *svabhāvaldharmin*, while “impermanence” as the property of the subject is called *viśeṣaldharma*. As far as the logical syntax is concerned, particular is referred to *svabhāvaldharmin*, which is expressed by noun, while universal is referred to *viśeṣaldharma*, which is expressed by sentence.

Now, there arises another question. Since particular is verbally inexpressible, how could it be expressed by noun? It is absurd to verbally designate a particular, because it is against the definition of particular as inexpressible. To answer this question, Huizhao explains: “As a matter of fact, noun is used to express *sva-lakṣaṇa* (the intrinsic character of entity), while sentence is used to express *viśeṣa* (property/distinction). Both are grounded in the transformation (*pariṇāma*) of mind without real substance. They function with the universals.”²⁵ That means, the verbal expression, such as “sound is impermanent,” which is composed of noun and sentence, subject and predicate, functions on the ground of universals (concepts), which are in turn based on the transformation of consciousness. On the level of

²³ 問:現比量心緣自共相,與名句詮二相何別? (X 55, 882: 163a).

²⁴ Cf. *Sthiramati's Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya* §8B (2): *svabhāvādhivacanam cakṣuḥ śrotram devo manuṣya ityevamādi / viśeṣādhivacanam sarvasaṃskārā anityāḥ sarvasattvā marīṣyantīty evamādi //*. For Xuangzang's Chinese translation, see T 31, 1606: 700c. This passage reminds us of what Bertrand Russell said: “When we examine common words, we find that, broadly speaking, proper names stand for particulars, while other substantives, adjective, propositions, and verbs stand for universals” (Russell 2008, 63).

²⁵ 實之,名詮自相,句詮差別,但依心變,無實體性,共相而轉。(X55, 882: 163b) To be noted, in the Zokuzōkyō version, the phrase “wubien tixing” 無變體性 makes no sense. In Zhizhou 智周's *Cheng Weishi Lun Yanmi* 成唯識論演秘, the same phrase is cited as “wushi tixing” 無實體性, which makes much better sense. See T43, 1833: 850c.

verbal expression, noun serves as the linguistic register of particular whereas sentence is the register of *viśeṣa*. It should be noted that *viśeṣa* means the function of predication, such as predication of the conditioned things by impermanence. The distinction of noun and sentence, particular and predication, is possible only on the ground of nominal universals. In other words, verbal expression is possible only on the ground of universals. All objects of verbal expression are universals, which are constructed by the conceptual mind. Hence there is no contradiction to say that the inexpressible particular can be expressed by noun. Can a practitioner cognize the universals in the concentrated state of meditation? In the concentrated state of mind, one is supposed to have direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) only. The same question is also addressed to the cognition of the Buddha, the enlightened one. Does the Buddha have knowledge of universals? Those questions are raised within the context of meditation practice too.

Huizhao answers the above questions as follows: In the state of concentration one is able to *perceive* both particular and universal. This theory has already been seen in the Abhidharma literature. For example, a yogic practitioner is said to meditate upon the statement, “sound is impermanent,” in the state of concentration that both “sound” and “impermanence” are *perceived* as particular without further superimposing conceptual distinction. However, if he steps out the concentrated state of mind and starts to talk, then his mind changes from the state of concentration to the state of conceptual understanding (*xingjie* 行解). The mind of conceptual understanding is also named “conceptual mind” (*jiazhì* 假智), which functions with verbal expressions within the realm of universals.

Finally, we have to discuss Huizhao’s understanding of *apoha* with reference to the theory of universals. In the *Continued Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa*, Huizhao explains the difference between his theory and the opponent’s theory of universals. The opponent’s theory is presented as follows: particular refers to the heat of that fire, while universal refers to that which is verbally expressed by words. Huizhao disagrees by arguing that fire perceived in the concentrated state of mind should be considered as universal, because its heat is not perceptually experienced. According to the opponent’s theory, the truths (*lǐ* 理) expressed in the teachings, which are also expressed by words, should be considered as universal in the concentrated state of meditation. If this were the case, Huizhao argues, the cognition in the concentrated state is inference (*anumāṇa*), because it does not take the particular as the object of cognition.²⁶ However, it is absurd, because, as explained above, the cognition in the concentrated state is perception only.

²⁶ Huizhao, *The Continued Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa*: “Some says that ‘particular character’ refers to the character of heat in fire, etc. When particular character is expressed by words, it is called ‘universal character.’ This theory is wrong, because it is in opposition to what is said in the *Buddhabhūmyūpadeśa*. If [we agree that] the heat of fire and so on can be called ‘particular,’ [we have to agree that] when the mind in the concentrated state cognizes fire without perceiving the heat, it must cognizes the universal character. [However, this is not the case.] Further, when the mind in the concentrated state cognizes the truth/principle expressed by the teaching, which is also expressed by the words, [the truth] must be the universal character. If this is the case, the mind in the concentrated state should be called ‘inference’, because it does not cognize the particular

In Huizhao's argument, the reference to the practice of meditation is employed as the experiential evidence to falsify the opponent's thesis: In the concentrated state of mind, since a practitioner does not perceive the heat of fire, which is supposed to be a particular, he should perceive the universal of fire. According to the experience of meditation, however, this cannot be the case. In the same concentrated state of mind, since one cognizes the truth of teaching, which is supposed to be the universal, he should cognize in inference. This is also absurd, because all cognition in the concentrated state of mind is perception only. Huizhao's counter-argument shows again that the context of meditation is pivotal to the Chinese Yogācāra theory of particular and universal.

As the debate moving on, the non-Buddhists contend that all words refer to the particular of object. For instance, when one says, "bring the fire," one gets the light of fire, which is the particular of fire. However, if words refer to universal alone, as the Buddhist argues, one will get water when he asks for fire. That is, if words do not refer to particular, how could one correctly understand the meaning of word qua particular? (X 53, 852: 791c).

Huizhao replies that according to the Mahāyāna Buddhist interpretation, all verbal expressions have two functions: negation (*zhe* 遮) and affirmation (*biao* 表). When one says, "fire," the word "fire" negates those which are not fire. Though he does not get the particular of fire, nevertheless he gets fire because the function of affirmation. Though Huizhao did not explain further the exact meaning of affirmation, it could be understood as an illocutionary or performative function. This explains why one gets the fire by *saying* "fire" (X 53, 852: 791c). Here Huizhao follows Kuiji to adopt Dignāga's theory of *apoha*.²⁷

In the *Continued Commentary on the Nyāyapraveśa*, Huizhao explains the semantic function of negation and affirmation:

Briefly there are two ways of establishing the thesis (*parkṣa-dharma* 宗法): (1) Negation only, without affirmation. For instance, the statement "the Ātman does not exist" means to negate the existence of Ātman, but not to affirm the non-existence [of Ātman]. The example (*drṣṭānta*) is also used for negation, but not for affirmation. (2) Both negation and affirmation. For instance, the statement "Ātman is permanent" not only negates impermanence of Ātman, but also affirms the permanence of Ātman. The example (*drṣṭānta*) is also used for both negation and affirmation.²⁸

Here we see that Huizhao's theory of negation might not be completely faithful to Dignāga's theory of *apoha*, because *pratiṣedha* (negation) is not the same as *apoha*

character. [However, this is not the case.]] (X 53, 852: 791c) 有說自相,如火熱相等,名為自相。若為名言所詮顯者,此名共相。此釋不然,違佛地論。若如火熱等,方名自相者,定心緣火,不得彼熱,應名緣共。及定心緣教所詮之理,亦為言所詮,亦應名共相。若爾,定心應名比量,不緣自相故。

²⁷ For Kuiji's theory of *apoha*, see Katsura 2014: "Kuiji is well aware of the fact that ...Dignāga and other Buddhist logicians define it [i.e., universal; *gongxiang* 共相] as the 'exclusion/negation of others'. Kuiji says that when we use the word 'fire', we exclude non-fire (*zhe feihuo* 遮非火), and that the exclusion of non-fire shared by all fires."

²⁸ 夫立宗法,略有二種。一者但遮而無有表。如言我無,但欲遮我,不欲立無。喻亦但遮而不取表。二遮亦表。如說我常,非但遮無常,亦表有常。體喻即具遮表。(X 53, 852: 788a)

(exclusion of others). Nevertheless he was correct when he applied the method of exclusion to account for the nature of universal.

5 Universals in the Buddha's Cognition and Utterance

The role of universals in the Buddha's cognition and speech forms the basic question that Huizhao addresses in the final section of the *Treatise on Two Means of Valid Knowledge*. Since the enlightened one is supposed to be omniscient, logically speaking, he should be able to cognize everything, including universals, which are the basis of expressions. However, there is another theory, claiming that the Buddha knows everything through direct perception only, because he is free of conceptual construction. So, one still needs to answer the question: Does the Buddha use universals in utterances? Huizhao proposes two explanations: (1) The Buddha does speak with the aid of universals. However, as stated in the *Fodijing lun*, the Buddha does not take universals as the object of cognition. (2) In the cognition of post-enlightenment (*prṣṭha-labdha-jñāna*) the Buddha employs universals to communicate the truths for freeing the sentient beings from ignorance. Of two interpretations, Huizhao stands for the latter.

Some argues that according to the *Fodijing lun* all of the Buddha's cognitions are perception. He neither does logical reasoning, nor takes universals as the object of cognition. Huizhao replies that the Buddha does not need logical reasoning. However, since the Buddha is omniscient, he knows the minds of all sentient beings, including their reasoning which is based on universals. In other words, though the Buddha does not have conceptual knowledge (*parikalpita-lakṣaṇa*), he knows it in sentient beings' mind thoroughly. Otherwise, how could the Buddha help people to eliminate ignorance, if he does not have inferential knowledge? Here again we see the soteriological intent in Huizhao's investigation of particulars and universals.

6 Conclusion

In this study I have presented the divergent hermeneutical agendas proposed by South Asian and East Asian Buddhist philosophers in their pursuit of the grounds of valid knowledge. As far as the issue of particular and universal is concerned, the Indian side is more devoted to the debate among different philosophical theories, such as realism, nominalism, and conceptualism, whereas on the Chinese side more interests were directed to contextualizing the issue within the practice of cultivation. In the case of Huizhao, he grounds the ontology of universal in the doctrinal framework of Yogācāra idealism, which leads him to compromise between nominalist and mentalist positions. It should be noted that the exegetical arguments he employed are largely based on the distinction of cognitive experiences in the states of concentration and non-concentration. For the Chinese Buddhist logicians, including Kuiji

and Huizhao, returning to the mental experience in both the concentrated state and the non-concentrated state serves as the phenomenological guideline in their epistemological enterprise. They neither confined the object of their investigations within the mundane experience only, nor compromised the soteriological quest in their Buddhist epistemology.

Historically speaking, the Chinese Buddhist logicians in the seventh and eighth century did not have chance to get full access to the knowledge of Dignāga's logic and epistemology, let alone Dharmakīrti's and other Hindu systems. Their basic understanding of epistemology and logic was grounded in the Abhidharma literature, the *Fodi Jing Lun* (*Buddhabhumyūpadeśa*), the *Cheng Weishi Lun*, the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, the *Nyāyapraveśa* and the *Nyāyamukha*. Nevertheless, they created a unique form of Buddhist epistemology and philosophy of language within the idealist framework of Chinese Yogācāra philosophy. For them, the epistemological analysis becomes part of the Yogācāra project of the "transformation of the basis". Only under such perspective are we able to understand the reason why the investigation on cognition in the enlightened state, which is thoroughly examined in the *Cheng Weishi Lun* and the *Fodi Jing Lun*, is so crucial in medieval Chinese Buddhist epistemology. As far as this unique feature in the history of Buddhist epistemology is concerned, Huizhao's writings on *pramāṇa* deserve serious attention.

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Part V
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Tiantai School 天台宗

Chapter 12

Dynamics of Practice and Understanding – Chinese Tiantai Philosophy of Contemplation and Deconstruction



Hans-Rudolf Kantor

1 Introduction

“Deconstruction” (*po* 破) accounts for one of the crucial philosophical components in Zhiyi’s (智顗 538–597) Tiantai teaching (天臺) of “contemplation” (*guan* 觀). The deconstructive practice of contemplation unveils a hidden and persistent type of falsehood that shapes the way we relate to our world. Contemplation, furthermore, discloses to us the instructive value and significance of all illusions so that we can use such illusiveness in a salutary manner. Fully aware of the ambiguity of all falsehood, we see and realize that deceptiveness and instructiveness are inseparably bound up with one another in the conventional realm of our existence. In this way, all discernments rooted in contemplation entail a type of “wisdom” (智 *zhi*) in virtue of which we may realize our “turn” (*zhuan* 轉) from the non-awakened into the awakened state of being and thus “transform” (*hua* 化) the way we exist in this world.

Hence, the Tiantai meaning of contemplation implies that ontological, epistemological, and soteriological issues coincide with one another. Contemplation engages in self-observing discernment, realizing that it is the “inseparability of truth and falsehood” that characterizes the specific way in which we relate to our world.¹ This epistemological nature of our understanding embraces also the ontological implication that reality in the sense of what constitutes this world and the way we exist in it

¹ Chinese Buddhist masters, such as the Huayan masters, Dilun masters, and later Tiantai masters often use the term “conjunction of truth and falseness” (*zhenwang hehe* 真妄和合), which refers to the inseparability of the “pure mind,” *tathāgatagarbha*, and the defiled *ālāya*-consciousness. Tiantai-master Zhiyi uses another phrase to denote his concept of inseparability, called “ignorance is dharma-nature; dharma-nature is ignorance,” (*wuming ji faxing, faxing ji wuming* 無明即法性, 法性即無明). See the subsequent sections.

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incorporates falsehood. In a soteriological sense, contemplation signifies “liberation” (*jietuo* 解脫) as it severs all bondages to deceptiveness and thus eradicates the root of our suffering; yet this does not completely terminate all illusions. Rather, our practice of contemplation achieves full awareness of all falsehood, turning deceptiveness into instructiveness, just as medicine is made from poison.

To realize such awareness, we must invalidate all the deceptive effects arising from that falsehood. For this purpose, we must cultivate wisdom and contemplation according to the varying levels of “deconstruction” (*po* 破). The deconstructive practice of contemplation prevents our understanding from clinging onto constructions and reifications resulting from our epistemic-propositional references to this world. The Chinese character *po* literally means to destruct, dissolve, disperse, nullify, invalidate, and also refute. However, the specific Tiantai use in the chapter *Deconstructing Dharmas Thoroughly* (*Po fa bian* 破法遍) of Zhiyi’s *Great Calming and Contemplation* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀) implies a dynamic sense of deconstruction, which, in some respects, seems to show a certain degree of similarity with the post-structuralist use of the Western term. *Po* promotes the ongoing and self-modifying course of our contemplation and thus dynamically integrates in that course. In an analogous way, this may parallel that sense of deconstruction, which impels historical progression (or continuity) and is embedded in a process of becoming, according to the understanding developed by Derrida and DeMan. Hence, both deconstruction and *po* incessantly change and thus evade any kind of fixation, even though they generate sense. Contravening reiterations, the two defy an ultimate or irrevocable form of definition and exclude the sense of a broadly applicable method. Yet, in the Tiantai context of contemplation, *po*, tentatively translated as “deconstruction,” may bear a certain sense of strategy, as epitomized in Zhiyi’s “threefold contemplation” (*sanguan* 三觀).²

This Tiantai doctrine unifies two contrary yet complementary ways of invalidating the reifications that arise from our intentional acts and epistemic-propositional references. One side of our contemplation aims at realizing true “emptiness” or “ultimate truth” untainted by falsehood; and this is primarily based on observations and examinations that invalidate any kind of linguistic and conceptual construction of truth. The other side invalidates a reified sense of emptiness as nonexistence, while upholding and exemplifying the instructive significance of a falsehood that is ineradicably rooted in our epistemic stance to this world. In other words, each side upholds what the other invalidates and denies; the two are correlative opposites and exclusively refer to one other. They restrict and complement each other at the same time; thus their mutual negation is tantamount to mutual affirmation. In this sense, *po* or “deconstruction” also incorporates a sense of “setting up,” “upholding,” and “sustaining,” expressed by the character (*li* 立), which literally means “to erect.” Hence, the deconstructive practice of Tiantai contemplation is dynamical, since it

²The way in which I use “deconstruction” for *po* comes close to Youru Wang’s explanation of the Chan strategies of “deconstruction”: “Deconstruction here is regarded as a contextual strategy or a situational operation of overturning oppositional hierarchies with the characteristic of self-subverting,” (see Wang 2003: 24).

reveals reciprocity and mutuality of “two contrary forms of invalidation” (*shuangzhe* 雙遮), which, paradoxically, turns into the opposite state of “mutual validation” (*shuangzhao* 雙照). Such a dynamics, called the “middle way” (*zhongdao* 中道), is what instantiates and constitutes both of them. If fully realized in this deconstructive practice of contemplation, each of the two equally presents and unfolds the whole dynamic of the middle way. Therefore, Zhiyi emphasizes that each of the three aspects, called “emptiness” (*kong* 空), “false/provisional” (*jia* 假), and the “middle-way,” incorporates, embodies, and reveals all three of them. This is called the “threefold contemplation,” which applies to the cultivation of “mind-contemplation” (*guanxin* 觀心) or introspection, the exegetical interpretation of Sūtra texts, and also provides the structural framework for classifying all the differing doctrines transmitted in the Indian Buddhist texts.³ Thus, the “threefold contemplation” combines soteriological, epistemological, and hermeneutical issues with one another. However, what is most important is the dynamics or the “inseparability of deconstructing and sustaining” (*jipo jili* 即破即立), which features the epistemological nature of what is called “subtle awakening” (*miaowu* 妙悟) and thus signifies our full realization of the threefold contemplation.

Referencing the parable of the butterfly-dream in the *Zhuangzi* (Moeller 1999), Zhiyi explains that subtle awakening means that our “dreaming” (*meng* 夢) does not completely extinguish; instead, it “becomes fully aware” of itself (*jue* 覺). When dreaming without awakening, we mistake falseness for realness, called “inversion” (*diandao* 顛倒), while our subtle awakening, not completely terminating our dreaming, realizes both all the falseness in our dreams and the realness of that dreaming. Constantly differentiating between realness and falseness while dreaming, the subtle awakening realizes the inseparability of the two. It is the deconstructive practice that sets up and sustains all this, since, while dreaming, contemplation realizes awakening, just as it becomes aware of the dreaming, while awakening. We fully realize inescapability from our own constructions, discerning both our epistemic stance to the world we inhabit and the existential relevance of this for our being. The *Great Calming and Contemplation*, traditionally ascribed to Zhiyi, is the crucial Tiantai work that extensively expands on that topic.

Hence, after delineating the semantic field of the term “contemplation” in Sect. 2, this chapter proceeds with Sect. 3 on the Madhyamaka concept of emptiness and its implicit ambiguity of “deconstructing and sustaining,” followed by discussions about the significance of contradiction in Madhyamaka and Tiantai in Sect. 4, the relevance of both speech and silence in Sect. 5, the meaning of ontological

³The Chinese term *panjiao* (判教) means “classifying the doctrines.” Zhiyi’s model, called the “four teachings of the transforming dharma” (*huafa sijiao* 化法四教), is conceptually related to the threefold contemplation or truth, since the dialectical progress in which the “threefold truth” evolves follows those four levels. The first level embraces the “*tripitika* of the Small Vehicle teachings” (*sanzang jiao* 三藏教), the second comprises the “common teachings of the Small and Great Vehicle” (*tong jiao* 通教), the third refers to the “particular teaching of the Great Vehicle” (*bie jiao* 別教), and the highest culminates in the “round/perfect teaching” (*yuan jiao* 圓教) embracing the previous three yet going beyond them. The last of the four represents the tenet and core of the Tiantai thought and is, therefore, the focus in the present chapter.

indeterminacy expressed by the Tiantai interpretation of “Buddha-nature” and the dynamic “middle way” from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* in Sect. 6, the Tiantai view of hermeneutics and its specific relationship with the compositional structure of the *Lotus-sūtra* in Sect. 7, and the Tiantai understanding of “mind” based on the *Garland-sūtra* in Sect. 8. All these sections try to reveal the soteriological, epistemological, and ontological issues, as well as the aspects of the philosophy of language implicit in the deconstructive practice of Tiantai contemplation. Moreover, the whole chapter also shows that Tiantai thought is deeply rooted in the textual sources of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

2 The Tiantai Notion of “Contemplation”

The terminological root of the crucial Tiantai expression *zhiguan* (止觀), translated as “calming and contemplation,” can be traced back to the Sanskrit *śamatha-vipaśyanā*. The Chinese *zhǐ* (止) for the Sanskrit *śamatha* denotes the ending of distortions and deceptions via “concentration,” which has the effect of “calming the mind.” Such a “calming” supports *guan* or *vipaśyanā*, our “contemplation” which realizes “wisdom,” the insight into the true nature of everything that comes into the focus of our observing mind. Zhiyi, the principal founder of the Tiantai school, considers the binary *dinghui* (定慧), “concentration and wisdom,” as a synonym for *zhiguan*. Moreover, without “moral discipline” in one’s life, the calming of one’s mind cannot be realized, nor can be contemplation. Therefore, the Chinese *lǜ* (律) corresponding to the Sanskrit *śīla*, translated as “moral discipline/precepts,” is a prerequisite of Zhiyi’s view. In other words, the Tiantai binary *zhiguan*, “calming and contemplation,” fully represents and denotes the “path of the Buddha” in the sense of cultivation and transformation, which is traditionally referred to as the combination of “discipline (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).”

Expounded in the Tiantai classic *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, the crucial concept “contemplation” accounts for both a complex system, which presents all the Tiantai doctrines as a coherent whole, and an epitome, which embraces all the varying practices of cultivation described by Zhiyi. Most importantly, it stresses the inseparability between these two aspects. On the doctrinal level of theoretical reflection, Tiantai master Zhiyi develops a system which combines, integrates, and reconciles the diversity of Buddhist perspectives on soteriological, hermeneutical, ontological, epistemological, and linguistic issues mentioned and developed in all the canonical sources and differing exegetical traditions known in his time. On the practical level of cultivation, he elaborates on ritual and devotional practices as well as techniques of meditation and concentration, which matches the systematic framework of his teaching. The Tiantai term *yuandun zhiguan* (圓頓止觀), “perfect/round and sudden calming and contemplation,” sums up and accounts for such a synergy of systematic thought and practices of cultivation. Ultimate wisdom achieved through self-reflective observation and insight enacts the practical aspect of contemplation to the same extent as the highest level of our cultivation realizes the cognitive understanding that is codified in the doctrinal system of the

Tiantai works. Tiantai-terms such as “understanding and practice supporting each other” (*jiexing xiangzi* 解行相資), or “eyes and feet are mutually complementary” (*muzou xiangzi* 目足相資) explicitly point at this non-duality of practice and understanding.

The first phrase of the introduction to the *Great Calming and Contemplation* composed by Zhiyi’s disciple, Guanding (灌頂 561–632), who recorded and posthumously edited his master’s lectures from 594 in the shape of the present text, describes *zhiguan*, “calming and contemplation,” as “brightness and silence,” explaining the qualities of “wisdom and concentration.” The subsequent passages further state that the way Zhiyi’s text unfolds those virtues represents the “dharma-gateways” (*famen* 法門) which the Tiantai master has preached on grounds “his own practice and realization in his mind.” For Guanding the *Great Calming and Contemplation* reveals, in this sense, an unprecedented view of the Buddha-dharma; and Zhanran (湛然 711–782), the Tang-dynasty commentator of that text, endorses this, explaining that the genuine dharma can only be transmitted if it is truly realized by the practitioner himself.

Hence, although grouped into the line of the dharma-transmission of the Indian masters, Zhiyi is said to have taken his inspiration from Nanyue Huisi (南岳慧思 515–577) who is the Chinese master and highly devoted practitioner who had passed down the three types of “calming and contemplation” to his famous disciple. Characterizing the differing levels of all Mahāyāna-teachings, the three are called “the gradual” (*jian* 漸), “the indeterminate” (*buding* 不定), and “the perfect/round and sudden” (*yuandun* 圓頓) types of calming and contemplation. According to the introductory chapter, Zhiyi’s work, called the *Gateway to the Six Subtleties* (*Liumiao men* 六妙門), unfolds “the indeterminate calming and contemplation”; his early work the *Gateway to the Meditation in a Sequential Order* (*Cidichan men* 次第禪門) represents “the gradual calming and contemplation”; and the *Great Calming and Contemplation* accounts for the last and highest level, called the “perfect/round and sudden.”⁴ With respect to the foundational Buddhist doctrine of the “four truths,” Guanding explains the meaning of the last type:

[Practicing] the perfect/round and sudden incorporates, from the outset, the discernment of the real mark and the formation of all the realms that are indivisibly linked to the middle, hence there is nothing that is not true and real. When we focus on [true] dharma-realm to a degree that each single instant of our awareness itself becomes [true] dharma-realm, then each single instant of visible form as well as each single instant of fragrance appears to be nothing but the middle way. This also applies to the realm of oneself as well as that of the Buddha and all the other sentient beings. Both the aggregates, [which constitute the person], and all the [sensory] entrances are alike, [1] hence there is no [real] suffering to be cast away. Ignorance and all delusions are not beyond bodhi-wisdom, [2] hence there is no [real] origin [of suffering] to be eradicated. The exclusive/extreme and false views do not really deviate from the middle and the right, [3] hence there is no [real] path to be cultivated. Saṃsāra is nothing but nirvāṇa, [4] hence there is no [real] extinction to be realized.⁵ If there is no [real] suffering and no [real] origin, then the worldly realm does not [really]

⁴ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 3a4–a10).

⁵ [1] =suffering (*ku* 苦), [2] =origin (*ji* 集), [3] =path (*dao* 道), [4] =extinction (*mie* 滅) signify the referents of the four truths. This passage also implies that the deconstructing and setting up of those referents is inseparable.

exist; if there is no [real] path and no [real] extinction, then the realm beyond that world does not [really] exist. There simply is the single real mark beyond which no dharma [really] exists. Dharma-nature is quiescence, called calming. Quiescence yet constant brightness is called contemplation. Even though we may expound [the practice of such calming and contemplation] in terms of the [sequential] first and after, there is no real duality and no real difference; hence, we call it the perfect/round and sudden calming and contemplation.⁶

“Real mark” (*shixiang* 實相) is the referent of that insight which the present passage specifies as the “middle way” (*zhongdao* 中道). By contrast, the “exclusive/extreme views” are erroneous, failing to realize that opposites, such as suffering and bliss, or *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* etc. cannot be set up or constituted apart from one another. Similarly, the “false views” cling either to the exclusive and illusory image of a permanent world and self, or to the opposite that implies discontinuity. However, non-excluding insight rooted in the middle way discerns the real mark and hence is detached from such an error and exclusion. It realizes that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* etc. are correlative opposites mutually dependent. Constituted via mutual negation, they depend on and refer to each other; both are devoid of a core of self-sustaining reality. There is no real suffering beyond bliss, nor real *saṃsāra* beyond *nirvāṇa* and vice versa. Hence, the referents of the “four truths” are not real in an intrinsic sense. Even the term “real mark,” cannot be taken literally, since it would lack realness, if it were understood as correlatively opposed to the erroneous views. Based on this non-exclusive sense of the middle, the text stresses, in a paradoxical way, that even the exclusive/extreme and false views (*bianjian* 邊見) do not really deviate from the middle and the right.

Hence, as previously mentioned, reality in the sense of what constitutes the way we exist incorporates falsehood. This means that epistemological and ontological issues coincide with one another, since our epistemic stance to the world we inhabit gives rise to the constructive force that shapes this world and all the things existing in it. Therefore, the term “real mark” cannot be understood as “ultimate reality” in the metaphysical sense. There is no realm of truth that transcends our world, and goes beyond, or is separated from our delusions. According to this passage, the metaphysical understanding of the “real mark,” would even intensify our delusive views. “Real mark” rather signifies an immanent and soteriological connotation regarding the way we truly exist in this world.⁷

The soteriological implication of “real mark” just means that suffering, *saṃsāra*, falsehood inversely refer back to their opposites which are bliss, *nirvāṇa*, truth etc. Thus, these negative qualities could also be understood positively, namely, as an inverse form of instructiveness; the text uses paradoxical statements to express this, such as ignorance is bodhi-wisdom etc. In a dynamic way, each of the two poles indicates its respective opposite. In other words, to really understand the salutary side means to thoroughly know and discern the harmful counterpart of it, which also

⁶ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 1c23–2a2).

⁷ Neal Donner and Daniel Stevenson translate “*shixiang*” (實相) as “ultimate reality,” interpreting this term in a metaphysical way, see Donner and Stevenson 1993: 112.

includes the reverse. Hence, our insight into the middle realizes this dynamics, by taking the two opposites simultaneously and equally in account. All this is deeply rooted in the early Mahāyāna scriptures, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā*-, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*-, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*-, *Mahāparinirvāṇa*-, *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, and has been further developed by the early Madhyamaka treatises, which all have influenced the Tiantai teaching.⁸

Again, suffering pointing back to its opposite, like sickness to healing, is an inverse mode of manifestation; thus there is no real suffering in an intrinsic or ultimate sense. Our insight into the “middle” realizes this, by simultaneously and equally considering the two sides, which are correlative opposites, interdependent, and indivisible. In other words, such an insight realizes that each of the two equally embodies the unity of their opposition as a whole; thus they are not really what they apparently, or *prima facie* seem to be; this is to say there are not real qualities that exclude each other. Such a view really sees the inverse nature and falsehood of what we conventionally consider or conceive of as real. We discern and realize not just falsehood in all patterns of interdependency but also the inevitability of using them in the “conceivable realm” (*siyijing* 思議境). Fully aware of this, such discerning may dissociate our understanding from all the errors of the conceivable without really or completely nullifying that realm. It is exactly this form of self-observing examination that is called “contemplation.” Since truth and wisdom realized through contemplation cannot be discussed in terms of parameters rooted in the conceivable realm, they are called “inconceivable” (*busiyi* 不思議) even in a sense that goes beyond the opposition of conceivable and inconceivable. Devoid of correlative opposites, such as beginning and ending, or arising and cessation, contemplation accomplishes the “perfect/round and sudden.”

This inconceivability also conforms to the true nature of all dharmas. “Dharma-nature” (*faxing* 法性) is what truly sustains the realm of all things, that is, all kinds of “interdependency and correlative opposition” (*xiangdai* 相待) as well as all “arising and cessation” (*shengmie* 生滅), which, from the conventional point of view, are opposites that seem to exclude each other. Hence, the true nature of all things – “dharma-nature,” which is pure and untainted by any such deception – goes beyond those forms of mutually exclusive apparitions. Its “non-arising and non-cessation” (*busheng bumie* 不生不滅) embodies “quiescence” (*ji* 寂) in the same way as the “perfect/round and sudden contemplation,” devoid of beginning and ending, realizes “calming.” Again, the full and true awareness of a falsehood that pervades the conventional realm of our existence is inconceivable. It is this inconceivability that features the “round/perfect and sudden contemplation,” which realizes that inverse instructiveness and ambiguity of falsehood is the true “nature of all dharmas” and the “real mark.”

⁸See Zhiyi’s quotations from these scriptures in the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 9 a7–a13).

3 Ambiguity of Deconstructing and Sustaining

Terms, such as “real mark,” “dharma-nature,” and “middle way,” are expressions Kumārajīva (334–413) frequently uses in his translations of the early Madhyamaka works and also in his explanatory notes to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, transmitted in Sengzhao’s (374–414) commentary to the same scripture. Moreover, Guanding’s introductory chapter mentions that Zhiyi’s master Huisi was a follower of the dhyāna-master Huiwen (慧文 ?–557) who elaborated on the famous Madhyamaka work *Dazhi du lun* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, 大智度論), translated, or probably, even composed by Kumārajīva. This is a commentary to one of the larger *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, traditionally ascribed to the Mādhyamika Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250), who is revered to be the 13th of the 24 Indian masters forming the lineage of the dharma-transmission. From Zhiyi’s frequent references to the *Dazhi du lun* and to Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, it is obvious that the early treatises of Madhyamaka thought, all translated by Kumārajīva, provided a major source of inspiration for his teaching; and Guanding as well as Zhanran particularly stress that Nāgārjuna is the “founding ancestor” (*gaozu* 高祖) of the Tiantai-line.

Guanding reinforces this view in the initial passages of the introductory section, quoting the famous verse 18 in chapter 24 from the *Kārikā* translated by Kumārajīva, called *Zhong lun* (中論).⁹ According to this crucial chapter, only our insight into the foundational nature of “emptiness” (*kong* 空) enables us to correctly understand and deal with all the changing in our world, which also includes our own transforming into an awakened being. To achieve insight into emptiness is to realize what embraces the sense of the “three jewels” and the “four truths” and thus constitutes the course of our transformation.¹⁰ Without such insight, we cannot realize what truly grounds and constitutes the causes and conditions that entail our salutary transformation.

Hence, “emptiness” primarily signifies the sense of “setting up,” “sustaining,” or “constituting” the essentials of the “Buddha-dharma” (*fofa* 佛法). This is the law or principle that configures the whole path of our turn from the non-awakened into the awakened state of being within the framework of those causes and conditions that evoke such transformation. Yet, as exemplified in the entire text of the *Zhong lun*, our actual understanding of emptiness requires our deconstructing, invalidating, or nullifying of all reifications that arise from our linguistic references and intentional acts. Kumārajīva’s translation seems to suggest that our understanding must con-

⁹The Chinese *Zhong Lun* (中論) is Kumārajīva’s translation of Nāgārjuna’s (ca. 150) *Mūlamādhyamaka-kārikā*, transmitted together with Piṅgala’s (third century) commentary. The Chinese tradition considered the *Zhong Lun* (along with this commentary) as a unitary and homogeneous text. Together with the *Dazhi Du Lun* 大智度論 (Sanskrit: *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*) — a commentary on one of the large *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, also translated by Kumārajīva — this specific text of the *Zhong Lun* (including Piṅgala’s commentary) belongs to those early Madhyamaka sources only known and transmitted in the Chinese tradition. These two texts were fundamental for the development of the Chinese Sanlun, Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan schools.

¹⁰See the initial verses of that chapter stating this meaning, (T 30, 1564: 32b13–22). The three jewels are called Buddha, dharma, saṅgha.

stantly alternate between the nullifying and sustaining aspect. This “change of aspects” in our comprehension of true emptiness brings about a certain dynamics: We cannot understand the sustaining nature of emptiness, without realizing the aspect of deconstruction, which also applies in reverse: If we do not comprehend the sustaining nature of emptiness, we cannot really accomplish the aspect of deconstruction. Our understanding of either side involves that of the other, which is not a linear and finite process.

According to Zhiyi, Guanding, and Zharan, this dynamics of “sustaining and deconstructing” of our understanding completely fits the Tiantai view of contemplation, and the quoted fourfold verse from the *Kārikā* fully embodies this. Hence, the verse provides a source of canonical evidence, which justifies, proves, characterizes, and outlines the peculiar feature of Zhiyi’s “calming and contemplation.” The *Zhong lun* says: “(1) Whatever dharma arises through causes and conditions; (2) that I declare to be inseparable from emptiness. (3) It is also a false/provisional designation. (4) This, furthermore, is the meaning of the middle way.”¹¹

Zhanran’s commentary explains that (1) “causes and conditions,” (3) “false/provisional designation,” and (4) “the middle way” signify the sense of “setting up” or “sustaining,” while (2) “emptiness” means, in this particular context, “nullifying” or “deconstructing.”¹² According to the Tiantai interpretation, the whole phrase culminates in the “perfect/round teaching” (*yuanjiao* 圓教) which simultaneously contemplates “emptiness,” “false/provisional designation” (*jiaming* 假名), and “the middle way” in each single moment of our awareness, called the “threefold contemplation in/as/of one instant of awareness” (*yixin sanguan* 一心三觀). In the section “contemplating mental activity as the inconceivable realm” (*guanxin jishi busiyi jing* 觀心即是不思議境), Zhiyi explains that the “indivisibility of sustaining and deconstructing” (*jipo jili jili jipo* 即破即立, 即立即破) must be performed via the dynamical “threefold contemplation” (*sanguan* 三觀).¹³

However, in which specific sense does the passage from the *Zhong lun* express an understanding of emptiness that realizes the dynamics of “deconstructing and sustaining”? Given the fact that there is no worldly thing that exists apart from extrinsic relationships and arises independently, “emptiness” accounts for the absence of inherent existence. Yet it is such “emptiness of inherent existence” that is the ground sustaining all patterns of interdependent arising. Therefore, emptiness is not at all the same as nonexistence, but rather has the foundational, sustaining, or positive significance of “true emptiness” (*zhenkong* 真空), “the real mark of all dharmas” (*zhufu shixiang* 諸法實相), and “the nature of all dharmas” (*faxing* 法性).

¹¹ Based on the quotation in the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, see T 46, 1911: 1b29–c1; the verse in the *Zhong lun* differs a little from this, see T 30, 1564: 33b11–12.

¹² See Zhanran’s commentary on the *Great Calming and Contemplation* (T 46, 1912: 149c10–12).

¹³ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation* (T 46, 1911: 55a19–21) and (T 46, 1911: 55b18–19). The “threefold contemplation” also correlates with the “threefold truth” (*sandi* 三諦) which is a Tiantai extension of the Madhyamaka view of the “the two truths,” (conventional truth and ultimate truth, *erdi* 二諦). For many modern scholars, it represents the core of Zhiyi’s and Zhanran’s Tiantai thought, see Swanson, 1989. Slightly different from this, Wu Rujun, or (Ng Yu-Kwan) stresses the concept of Buddha-nature, (see Ng 1993). Furthermore, Paul Swanson’s study as well as Ziporyn’s (Ziporyn 2004) stress the ontological significance of the “threefold truth.”

In a positive sense, emptiness grounds and sustains the interdependent arising of all things; but this is true only because it also bears a negative side, which denies that any of those things abides in an “intrinsic nature” (*wuzixing* 無自性). The negative side, furthermore, implies that none of the particular things, which we identify in virtue of our intentional acts and to which we refer by means of linguistic expression, is intrinsically, ultimately, and really the thing it appears to be, nor is it self-identical given the irreversible and unceasing changing in/through time. No thing or object of our observation, intentional acts, or any linguistic referent is intrinsically existent or real; those are all reifications and constructions. This also applies to “emptiness,” which, like any other name, is nothing but a “provisional/false designation” (*jiaming* 假名).¹⁴ Our clinging to reifications inseparably bound up with our linguistic references to the world we inhabit entails “inversions” (*diandao* 顛倒) confusing falseness with realness.¹⁵ Hence, the *Zhong lun* mainly focuses on deconstructing those inversions and reifications, emphasizing the negative implication of emptiness.

Yet, this does not really exclude the positive, foundational, and ultimate sense of “true emptiness,” which goes beyond words and thought. Chapter 24 highlights that aspect. Setting up and sustaining all patterns of interdependency and correlative opposition, emptiness is not correlatively dependent upon an opposite non-emptiness.¹⁶ Instead, “true emptiness” rather implies that terms such as “emptiness” and “non-emptiness,” like all correlatively dependent opposites, are “ultimately empty,” that is, “empty of any intrinsic nature” (*wuzixing* 無自性). Hence, “ultimate emptiness” (*bijingkong* 畢竟空) devoid of correlative opposites, such as being and non-being, emptiness and non-emptiness, as well as falseness and realness (*feixu feishi* 非虛非實), is what this foundational sense truly implies. Ultimately, true emptiness is irreducible, “inexpressible” (*bukeshuo* 不可說) and “inconceivable” (*bukeshi* 不可思議). By contrast, all cognizable things of our intentional acts as well as all referents of our names and linguistic expressions are built upon patterns of “interdependency and correlative opposition” (*xiangdai* 相待). These always imply falsehood that occludes our insight into true emptiness on/of the conventional level of linguistic expression. Hence, when we intend to explicate our understanding of true emptiness, we must become aware of the difference between the ultimate and conventional, according to the crucial chapter 24.

¹⁴ Unlike the semantics of the Chinese translation “*jiaming*,” the Sanskrit *prajñapti* does not explicitly reveal the meaning of “falsehood.” See the *Zhong Lun*, (T 46, 1911: 55b18–19).

¹⁵ One of the larger versions of the *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtras* translated by Xuanzang (玄奘 602–664) explains the term “inversion” (*diandao* 顛倒): “All kinds of deluded beings variously produce attachments; in virtue of their differentiations and inversions the thought of real existence arises where there is no real existence; ... unreality is said to be reality in virtue of deceptive differentiations and inversions within the realm of all constructed *dharma*(s),” *Da Bore Boluomiduo Jing* (大般若波羅蜜多經) (T 7, 220: 418c25–419a4).

¹⁶ See the *Zhong Lun*: “If there is a *dharma* which is not empty, then there is the *dharma* of emptiness, too. In fact there is no *dharma* which is not empty; how then is it possible that there is the *dharma* of emptiness?” (T 30, 1564: 18c7–8).

Such understanding, furthermore, realizes that unreality and non-realness does not equal nonexistence. The unenlightened or non-awakened way each of us exists in this world proves the existential relevance of falsehood. While ascertaining the ontological status of “false existence” (*jiayou* 假有) or “illusory existence” (*huan-you* 幻有) in the conventional realm, we must also realize that the emptiness of inherent existence, in an ultimate sense, is ontologically indeterminable. Madhyāmika specify such indeterminacy as the “middle way” (*zhongdao* 中道), denying both “real existence” and “complete nonexistence” (*feiyou feiwu* 非有非無) of things rooted in patterns of interdependency. This also includes ontic indeterminacy, as there is no “invariant or definite identity” (*jueding xiang* 決定相), which really characterizes those things.

Presenting such a view of ontic-ontological indeterminacy, the previously quoted verse from the *Zhong lun* outlines the foundation for a pragmatic sense of truth, which characterizes the Buddhist soteriology of detachment and liberation. For example, a given person may appear to be a teacher in certain circumstances and a student under other conditions; however, ultimately, this person must be empty of both, to be constantly ready to adopt either role contingent upon the ever changing circumstances. Each specific or particular thing only acquires a “provisional/false identity,” which points back to its ultimate emptiness devoid of any identity. Conversely, devoid of any real identity, quality, or characteristic, the foundational sense and nature of ultimate emptiness cannot be explicated or “characterized” beyond the falsehood that hints at this nature in an inverse way. In order to fully realize and enact this sense of ultimate truth or true emptiness, our understanding must become aware of such inevitability and therefore engage in an operation of self-observing examination. This implies a linguistic pragmatics that performs non-clinging via the dynamics of “deconstructing and sustaining” and, thereby, accomplishes the insight into the inseparability of truth and falsehood.

4 The Rhetorical Significance of Contradiction

Falsehood sustained by emptiness pervades and shapes the conventional realm of our existence to a degree that the true sense of ultimate emptiness, also called ultimate truth, is occluded by such falsehood. Among the Indian commentators of the *Kārikā*, Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650) is the one who particularly stresses the concealing significance of the conventional.¹⁷ He realizes that we must resort to linguistic expressions to disclose the world we inhabit; thus we can hardly avoid clinging to the reifications that result from our epistemic-propositional references; we are generally unaware of these “inversions” on the conventional level. By creating these inversions, our linguistic reference must constantly conceal the fact that they are nothing but inversions. When we perform or utter a certain act of linguistic reference, we cannot be aware of this inversion in the very moment we perform it. This evades us even at the very moment that we attempt to point to it due to the falseness implicit in any linguis-

¹⁷ See Garfield’s article (Garfield 2011a, b: 23–39).

tic expression. Consequently, chapter 23 of the *Zhong lun* denies the realness of what is signified by the term “inversion.”¹⁸ Therefore, it really is an “inversion” if we ascribe realness to what is signified by that term. This paradox just shows that, in our linguistic pointing, we cannot evade the type of falsehood which is concealed to us like a blind spot. In other words, we must use or rely on the rhetoric or linguistic strategy that construes such a type of paradox to become aware of this.

Hence, in signifying the foundational and inexpressible sense of “true emptiness,” Madhyamaka thinkers realize the “performative contradiction,” which arises from that signification and thus features the falsehood of this operation. Such an expression is like a “self-referential paradox”: By denying realness in all linguistic references, the term “emptiness” also denies what it signifies. Conversely, if used as a signifier denoting falseness in all significations, it also includes itself. The notion of falseness represented or signified by this term is false due to this self-inclusion. What is signified is not really falseness, since that signifying operation is actually false. Hence, the contradiction of this expression embodies a self-falsifying feature, which is not the referent of the signifying operation, but a characteristic that in fact marks this signification. Thus, viewed from the Buddhist sense of linguistic pragmatics, the contradiction may function as a performative by means of which this self-observing examination of our understanding exhibits falsehood of the expression “emptiness” in a genuine way, that is, beyond its reifying or signifying operation. If seen in this way, it may really highlight the inevitableness or persistence of a falsehood, which usually evades our awareness on the conventional level of our linguistic expression. Only this contradiction may really cause us to become fully aware of such a blind spot, which is the source of all deceptiveness.

To denote the root of our deceptions – the blind spot, Buddhists generally use the expression “ignorance” (*wuming* 無明). But the Tiantai masters particularly emphasize that it is the true nature of all dharmas, called “dharma-nature,” that embraces what “ignorance” predicates about the way we truly exist in our world. *Dharma-nature*, that is, the true nature of all things, in which they are equally empty and unreal, does not reach beyond the ignorance that is the source of that unreality. Conversely, such ignorance cannot be separated from the nature of things, in which they truly are empty, which sustains the interdependent arising of all unreal things.

However, our genuine awareness of the “blind spot” enables us to dissociate our discernments from all deceptions and reifications, without really or completely eradicating all constructions and falsehood. The Tiantai masters refer to this level of awareness as the “inconceivable realm” (*busiyijing* 不思議境). Zhiyi also calls it the “severing [of deceptiveness] without [really] severing [falsehood]” (*duan er buduan* 斷而不斷). This is the summit of our contemplation only accomplished by the awakened mind which, in each moment of its awareness, realizes that “dharma-nature” is “ignorance,” just as “ignorance” is “dharma-nature.” To thoroughly discern the true nature of all dharmas is to truly understand all falsehood of our ignorance, which is a circular and dynamic process implying the reverse: to truly understand all falsehood of ignorance is to thoroughly discern true dharma-nature.

¹⁸ See the *Zhong Lun*, (T 30, 1564: 32a8–9).

When Tiantai Buddhists state that “*dharma-nature*” is [identical to] “ignorance,” they usually mean that the two terms point to the same referent, yet the respective meanings of the two – truth and falsehood – are perspectives that are not the same but opposed to one another.¹⁹ In other words, the awakened mind, which has completely internalized the dynamic perspective of the middle way, observes or contemplates identity in the sense of the common referent that only seems to split into contrary realms excluding each other. Only if *dharma-nature* and ignorance equally reflect the correlative dependency of truth and falsehood as a whole, has our mind realized that point of reference. This just means that the contemplating mind (=ignorance) and the realm that is contemplated (=dharma-nature) are not separate entities differing from each other in an essential sense. Fully accomplished contemplation just realizes that *dharma-nature* and ignorance completely embrace each other, while the same falsely displays the separation of the two if seen from the viewpoint that lacks the accomplishments of our contemplation. This deceptive image does not cease to prevail in our understanding until we accomplish the subtle awakening to a degree that even contemplation and non-contemplation do not appear as essentially different. This is the way in which the Tiantai masters realize the epistemological nature of our ultimate understanding, which implies the insight into the inseparability of truth and falsehood.²⁰

Hence, viewed from this Tiantai perspective, the contradiction that features the term “emptiness” is just a semantic characteristic, which does not imply any metaphysical significance; it simply reveals the inevitable falsehood of this term. Nevertheless, Jay Garfield and Graham Priest uphold the contrary view. On the basis of Tibetan and Sanskrit Madhyamaka sources, the two develop the understanding that Nāgārjuna’s “ultimate truth” represents the idea of “true contradictions at the limits of thought.”²¹ However, according to the Chinese Madhyamaka

¹⁹ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 21c16).

²⁰ Unlike the present article, the philosopher and scholar Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) understands this Tiantai view of “inseparability” (*ji 即*) in a metaphysical and ontological sense, which is criticized by Wu Rujun (see Ng 1993 and Mou Zongsan 1977, 1993). For another recent English article coming close to Mou Zongsan’s view of ontological interpretation, see Kwan 2011: 206–223. For an English critique and evaluation of Mou Zongsan’s interpretation, see my article (Kantor 2006: 16–69).

²¹ This further implies that the Madhyamaka notion of the two truths has a metaphysical or ontological significance. That is to say that although two truths doctrine is coherent in terms of rationality, it leads to inconsistency regarding the nature of reality; there must be “two realities”, one indicated by each of the conventional and ultimate respectively, and this is called “dialetheism.” Such an ontological interpretation of “true contradictions” subsumes the Madhyamaka concept under one of the modern views of logic called “paraconsistent logic,” (Deguchi, Garfield and Priest 2008: 395–402; Garfield 2002: 86–109). Priest explains the ontological implications of this contradiction: “Nāgārjuna’s enterprise is one of fundamental ontology, and the conclusion he comes to is that fundamental ontology is impossible. But that is a fundamental ontological conclusion—and that is a paradox” (Priest 2002: 214). For a critical discussion of Garfield’s and Priest’s interpretation, see Tillemanns 2009: 83–101. Moreover, the Chinese exegetical tradition of the early Madhyamaka works does not conform to this interpretation; Sengzhao’s *Emptiness of the Unreal/Unreal Emptiness* (*Buzhen Kong Lun* 不真空論) explicitly denies the understanding of the two truths as two realities, or the inconsistency of the nature of reality.

sources – Kumārajīva’s translations, Sengzhao’s treatises, as well as Jizang 吉藏’s (549–623) and Zhiyi’s commentaries on the canonical scriptures – the contradictory expression “emptiness” mainly fulfills a rhetorical function. Thanks to the falsehood that it manifests, we are capable of detaching our understanding from deceptive reifications and thus can truly disclose the path to the realm of liberation. Thus, it plays an important role in the textual pragmatics, which constitute a crucial part of the soteriological practices developed by the Mahāyāna Buddhists.²² According to this point of view, the metaphysical interpretation of that contradiction oversees ontological indeterminacy and thus entails a reification that, in fact, undermines our awareness of falsehood. It is just a view which again falls prey to our clinging and inversions.

Hence, the deconstructive practice of contemplation is an operation of self-observing examination in which the contradictory and self-falsifying term “emptiness” fulfills a twofold purpose. First, it evokes our awareness of a persistent form of falsehood, which, on the conventional level of our linguistic expression, is concealed to us like a blind spot. Second, the contradictory feature of this expression also demonstrates the instructive and positive value of falsehood, deconstructing and invalidating all deceptions rooted in linguistic reifications. The Chinese *jiaming* (假名), used for the Sanskrit *prajñapti* and translated as “provisional/false designation,” expresses this ambiguity of falsehood, since it literally signifies both “borrowing” and “false.” Hence, falsehood is ambiguous with regard to the existential relevance that it bears for us: If revealed to a degree that its actual and true nature (=dharma-nature) becomes fully evident to us, falsehood is instructive and salutary, whereas, if veiled and hidden like a blind spot, it is a source of deception (=ignorance), which entails harmful consequences. Closely bound up with the meaning of emptiness, the ambiguity of falsehood and inverse instructiveness are those viewpoints that feature the epistemological content in the Mahāyāna discussions about truth. However, the specific use of the terms “dharma-nature” and “ignorance” is a characteristic of the Tiantai teaching, which is deeply rooted in Kumārajīva’s translations.

5 Speech and Silence

The differentiation that characterizes the self-observing manner in which we contemplate the meaning of inversion or falsehood also applies to the Madhyamaka contemplation of truth, since this operation, too, involves a sense of deconstruction. According to chapter 24 in the *Zhong lun*, we must differentiate between the notion we falsely construe on the conventional level and the sustaining or foundational significance of true emptiness on the ultimate level. Hence there are “two truths”

²² For an analysis of the linguistic strategies in Chan Buddhism and Daoism, see Wang 2003; also, my article (Kantor 2014).

called “conventional truth” and “ultimate truth.”²³ The conventional embodies truth in a provisional sense; it is a modification of the ultimate or true meaning of the Buddha-dharma and cannot be taken literally; ultimately, it is even false. The manner in which we reveal the sustaining sense of true or ultimate emptiness invalidates and deconstructs all inversions on the conventional level. Hence, to realize ultimate truth (=true emptiness) is to achieve complete transparency of all conventional falsehood; therefore, it is crucial to differentiate between two truths.

The relationship of the two is complex and reciprocal, as is demonstrated in the Chinese discussions of Sengzhao, Jizang, and Zhiyi. On the one hand, the two are equally empty, on the other they are opposites. Detached from reifications arising from our linguistic references, the understanding corresponding to the ultimate sense realizes true emptiness, while the conventional lacks an awareness or even conceals the sense of emptiness due to its clinging onto linguistic referents. Construing the notion of a separate ultimate, the conventional understanding has not yet fully realized emptiness and thus fails to recognize the conventional nature of this operation. In fact, it confuses the two, mistaking that which is merely conventional for the ultimate, whereas the true understanding of the ultimate, fully aware of emptiness and its inseparability from the conventional, differentiates between the two in an operation of self-observing examination. Hence, though equally empty, the two are opposed to one another. Yet, they do not exclude each other; there is no contradiction between them, nor is the nature of reality truly inconsistent.

The realm of the ultimate beyond thought and speech is not transcendent to, but coextensive with the conventional realm of the conceivable and expressible. The two relate to each other like speech and silence, according to Zhiyi’s explanation.²⁴ Not completely terminating the use of language, silence embodies a para-linguistic mode of awareness achieved through self-observing examination. Paradoxical rhetoric, performative contradiction, and ambiguous language are the linguistic means and strategies used to deconstruct reifications and deceptions arising from our literal understanding of words, names, and statements. Based on these rhetorical means, we may accomplish the para-linguistic effect of silence amidst our speech, which means that our deconstructive practice turns into a process of constituting or setting up. Silence and speech are indivisible in this specific use of language (*jipo jili jili jipo* 即破即立, 即立即破), which, again, mirrors inseparability of truth and falsehood in our understanding.²⁵

Enacting the ambiguity of falsehood, the conventional fulfills the function of a “skilful means” (*fangbian* 方便). This is an instructive sign or heuristic means,

²³ Piṅgala’s and Bhāviveka’s commentary (*Prajñāpradīpa*, *Boredeng Lunshi* 般若燈論釋), which are only extant in Chinese, explain that the two truths represent two contrary understandings of truth – one which characterizes the common or non-awakened and the other which represents the noble, or awakened view. The conventional, common, non-awakened understanding is nothing but an inversion of the insight of the noble. See the *Zhong Lun* (T 30, 1564: 32c20–23) and the *Boredeng Lunshi* (T 30, 1566: 125b8–11).

²⁴ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 55a15–21).

²⁵ This represents the Tiantai interpretation of the relationship between the two truths which expands the view expressed in the *Zhong Lun* without contravening it.

which is essential in disclosing to us the sense of ultimate truth, as explicated by the *Zhong lun*.²⁶ Hence, according to Piṅgala's (c. 300-c. 350) and Bhāviveka's (c. 500–c. 578) commentaries on chapter 24, the conventional accounts for the adaptation to the “inverse understanding of truth” characterizing all non-awakened beings. As previously expounded, the “provisional/false term emptiness,” for instances, represents a false yet instructive form, which inversely points back to the ultimate or true sense of emptiness. Only with regard to the instructive functioning of these inverse forms can we speak of “conventional truths.” Again, this is truth in a pragmatic sense: Conventional truths are provisionally indispensable, yet, ultimately, they must be abandoned. Only on grounds of such inverse instructiveness and ambiguity of falsehood can the conventional be regarded as a temporary and contextually limited form of truth.

The concept of “dependent co-arising” (*yuanqi* 緣起) is another example of the same meaning: From a Madhyamaka point of view, the Buddhist notion of “arising” (*sheng* 生) involves patterns of interdependency; but interdependent arising is sustained by emptiness, which denies the reality and inherent existence of things rooted in those patterns.²⁷ Hence, ultimately, there is no real arising. “Dependent arising” is just a conventional truth which inversely points back to that which ultimately is “non-arising” (*busheng* 不生) or “emptiness.” Therefore, the *Dazhi du lun* explains: “A ‘mark of arising’ is not really comprehensible; therefore, it is called ‘non-arising’.”²⁸ Yet, this statement does not imply that arising and non-arising are identical in the same respect, nor are the ultimate and conventional. Piṅgala commenting on Nāgārjuna's *Kārikā*, explains that the first verse of the first chapter commences with “non-arising,” to clarify the true or ultimate meaning of “dependent co-arising,” which is true emptiness or ultimate truth.

“Arising” and “non-arising” relate to one another like the two truths, provisional designation and ultimate emptiness, or ignorance and dharma-nature etc. All these polarities are interchangeable and present a dynamic relationship. Due to the inevitable falsehood in all of our linguistic references and intentional acts, we must constantly renew or adjust our awareness to cope with such persistency. Hence, according to the Madhyamaka teaching, the two truths represent the code for that dynamics, which enacts or characterizes the self-observing examination in our understanding of emptiness; we must lay out the inseparability of realness and falseness in our understanding via our constant differentiating between mere conventional truths and the ultimate truth.²⁹ Our continuous differentiating does not

²⁶ Chapter 24 in the *Zhong Lun* says: “If we do not rely upon the conventional truth, we cannot realize the ultimate; without realizing the ultimate, we cannot accomplish nirvāṇa.” (T 30, 1564: 33a2–3).

²⁷ The first chapter of the *Zhong Lun* explains that “arising” implies the sequence of “cause and result”; however, without a result, no thing could be identified as a cause and vice versa, which demonstrates that the two emerge only in patterns of interdependency devoid of self-sustaining reality.

²⁸ See the *Dazhi Du Lun*, (T 25, 1509: 319a13).

²⁹ See chapter 24 in the *Zhong Lun*: “If a person does not understand to differentiate between the two truths, he/she does not understand the true meaning of the profound Buddha-dharma,” (T 30, 1564: 32c18–19).

strengthen our clinging to reifications, but rather undermines it. It is crucial to see the whole relationship from the perspective of the Buddhist linguistic pragmatics. Equally rooted in emptiness, none of the two has any significance apart from the other. According to Jizang's commentary to the *Zhong lun*, the denial of one side entails that of the other, just as the affirmation of one side requires that of the other. On the linguistic level, the two are "provisional/false designations," that is, "opposite terms correlatively dependent" (*xiangdai er jiacheng* 相待而假稱).³⁰

Hence, like the ultimate sense of emptiness, "non-arising" denies not only the realness of its opposite but also the literal sense of the very same term; both arising and non-arising are devoid of inherent existence or empty of an intrinsic nature. If understood in this non-literal way, such a term may be helpful in conveying the sense of ultimate truth. Its negativity mainly functions as a linguistic means used to nullify our reifying tendencies and to differentiate between the two truths. In the initial verse of the *Zhong lun*, this negativity particularly appears in the shape of the "eight negations" (*babu* 八不): "(1) non-arising, (2) non-cessation; (3) non-permanence, (4) non-discontinuity; (5) non-separatedness, (6) non-identity; (7) non-coming, (8) non-going." Thus, it also is a linguistic symbol for silence amidst speech, accomplishing the para-linguistic understanding of true emptiness, which is full awareness of the inseparability of truth and falsehood.

6 The Dynamic Sense of Buddha-Nature

Besides the *Dazhi dulun* and *Zhong lun*, the Southern version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* has also played a crucial role in the formation of Zhiyi's Tiantai teaching. The Sūtra regards the "supreme meaning of emptiness" (*diyi yi kong* 第一義空) as both the "middle way" and the "Buddha-nature" (*foxing* 佛性). It discusses this, by specifying the dynamic relationship of "emptiness and non-emptiness" through a complex set of polarities embracing "impermanence – permanence, non-self – self, sorrow – bliss, impurity – purity." Viewed separately and apart from its respective opposite, none of these terms can account for the ultimate or "supreme meaning of emptiness." Each of them is an inversion deeply rooted in reifications. However, in combination, those polarities represent a set of non-dual and mutually complementary viewpoints that relate to each other in an equal and dynamic manner. When we explicate the "supreme meaning," we must realize the inverse form of this explication, which requires our self-observing examination enacted in such a dynamic way. Hence, according to this Sūtra, this fourfold set of coupled terms can be used in contrary ways: If regarded as separate or discrete qualities, they are called the "four inversions" (*si diandao* 四顛倒); yet as polarities including non-duality, they are

³⁰ Jizang states in the first chapter of his *Treatise on the Profoundity of the Great Vehicle* (*Dasheng Xuanlun* 大乘玄論): "The two truths are an explanatory device universally valid for all doctrines linguistically expressed. They are provisional/false designations based on correlative dependency... The two truths are only the doctrinal gateways, but do not really enclose the ultimate realm and principle in themselves." (T 45, 1853: 15a14–a17).

referred to as the “four virtues/characteristics” (*si de* 四德) of nirvāṇa and liberation. The dynamic sense of these “four virtues” also embodies “Buddha-nature” (*foxing* 佛性) which is the ultimate or “supreme meaning of emptiness.” The Sūtra explains:

Buddha-nature is called supreme meaning of emptiness. Supreme meaning of emptiness is called wisdom. Emptiness we talk about means not to view emptiness and non-emptiness [as mutually excluding]. The wise person sees emptiness and non-emptiness [without contradiction], permanence and impermanence [without contradiction], sorrow and bliss [without contradiction], self and non-self [without contradiction]. (...) Seeing emptiness but not non-emptiness cannot be called Middle-Way; (...) Middle-Way is called Buddha-nature. For that reason, Buddha-nature is permanent and does not [really] change.³¹

Impermanence, non-self, sorrow, and impurity (=emptiness) are the characteristics of the worldly realm, called saṃsāra, while permanence, self, bliss, and purity (=non-emptiness) embody the four virtues of liberation and nirvāṇa. However, our biased understanding and clinging to one side, while excluding the other, entails two types of inversions. Worldly sentient beings one-sidedly attached to permanence, self, bliss, and purity mistake this unreal feature of saṃsāra for reality and non-empty; in that sense, these four are worldly inversions. By contrast, the Śrāvaka and Pratyeka-buddha surpassing the worldly realm one-sidedly cling to the opposite, regarding the four virtues of liberation and nirvāṇa as falsehood and emptiness.³² In this specific case, emptiness epitomizing impermanence, non-self, sorrow, impurity of saṃsāra turns out to be a source of inversion for those dwelling beyond the worldly realm. Again, the view tainted by worldly inversions considers falsehood as truth, while that beyond the worldly realm falls prey to inversions mistaking truth for falsehood.

Only the supreme Buddha wisdom, accomplishing the “middle way” of the Buddha-nature, realizes the supreme meaning of true emptiness in a dynamic way, since it truly embodies emptiness of any clinging. To fully observe the feature of all falsehood in the saṃsāric realm (=emptiness) is to realize the four indestructible virtues of true liberation and nirvāṇa (=non-emptiness), which also applies in reverse. Non-emptiness accounts for the sustaining aspect in the changing but continuing process of transforming from the non-awakened into the awakened state of being, while emptiness, in this specific context, represents the nullifying aspect. Complete nullification of all reifications in our understanding realizes full insight into the sustaining aspect and vice versa. Emptiness that nullifies or invalidates all

³¹ See the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, (T 12, 374: 523b12–19).

³² Śrāvaka and Pratyeka-buddha are Sanskrit terms for the accomplished person following the Small Vehicle, while the Bodhisattva and the Buddha, according to the Tiantai teaching, represent those of the Great Vehicle. The Śrāvaka (literally “voice hearer”) realizes awakening based on his listening to the Buddha’s sermons, while the Pratyeka-buddha seeks accomplishment in “solitary awakening.” Altogether, those four are called the “noble persons beyond the three realms,” whereas the six destinies of saṃsāra embrace the “common persons within the three realms.”

deceptiveness discloses non-emptiness, which truly is what sustains our becoming a Buddha in this specific way.

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* occasionally quoting from the *Zhong Lun* characterizes our insight into the middle way as the dynamic oscillating between emptiness and non-emptiness. However, such an understanding differs from the *Zhong Lun*, since the Sūtra tries to describe the sustaining significance of emptiness in terms of the indestructible Buddha-nature. Furthermore, it specifies the dynamic sense of emptiness through the middle way and also regards this as the epistemological nature that characterizes our understanding of ultimate truth. We realize all this, by constantly oscillating between the opposite yet mutually complementary perspectives, which feature our mind's self-observing contemplation. Even though this epistemological view of the middle way differs from the *Zhong Lun's* meaning of ontic-ontological indeterminacy, the two are not unrelated, nor do they contradict each other. In fact the Sūtra's view implies that of the *Zhong Lun*, since realizing the dynamics of the middle requires insight into ontological indeterminacy. Hence, the Sūtra also stresses that the supreme meaning does not reach beyond ultimate emptiness.

The section *Deconstructing Dharmas Thoroughly* in Zhiyi's *Great Calming and Contemplation* thus develops a strategy in virtue of which we can deconstruct the two types of inversions and, at the same time, achieve the insight into the true meaning of the four virtues. According to Zhiyi, this strategy is deeply rooted in his concept of the threefold truth and the intermediating force of the "supreme truth of the middle way" (*diyi yi zhongdao di* 第一義中道諦), which realizes the dynamics of "deconstructing and sustaining." Hence, Zhiyi's "middle way" comes close to the meaning of this Sūtra. His use of the term emptiness is also similar to that of the scripture, which mainly stresses the nullifying aspect. Moreover, the important Tiantai compound "Middle-way Buddha-nature" (*zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性) seems also to be derived from the same text.

The Sūtra discusses the crucial term "Buddha-nature" according to a variety of viewpoints, one of which resorts to the paradigm of "causes and results" (*yinguo* 因果). The causes include those practices that entail our awakening and yet belong to a realm prior to our accomplishment, while the result accounts for our full accomplishment surpassing the worldly realm. "Buddha-nature" not only encompasses all factors relevant for our transforming from a non-awakened into an awakened being but also sustains the whole process and its continuity. Hence, the complex sense of "Buddha-nature" ramifies into differing and contrary segments of meanings and conditions. There is our ignorance, which leads to our suffering; this entails our dislike of the worldly realm, and leads to our wish, inspiration, and effort to explore the blissful path to liberation and nirvāṇa, based on which we finally realize the Buddha-dharma and also liberate others. Sustaining an inexhaustible sequence of causes and results, Buddha-nature cannot be understood in terms of impermanence, sorrow, impurity, non-self, and emptiness, even though all worldly things are featured in this way. In contrast to those, it embodies the opposite, yet it must pervade the worldly

realm, otherwise the notion of our transformation would not be consistent and intelligible.³³

Hence, permanence of Buddha-nature in the worldly realm of impermanence is accessible to us via our insight into inverse instructiveness and ambiguity of falsehood. The false and ever changing world of *saṃsāra* inversely embodies the indestructible realm of *nirvāṇa* and liberation like sickness pointing back to health. The Tiantai rhetoric calls this, “*saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa*,” “suffering is bliss,” “delusion is wisdom,” “evil is good,” or “ignorance is dharma-nature.” All this expresses the pragmatic sense that apart from its opposite neither side can be fully understood, since the negative is the inverse mode of the positive, just as the positive is the transformed mode of the negative.³⁴

Hence, for the inspired yet non-awakened state of mind within the worldly realm, Buddha-nature takes shape in those causes that evoke this mind’s turn into the awakened state going beyond that realm. Based on the terminology drawn from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, Zhiyi distinguishes three interconnected aspects of Buddha-nature. This is a combination of causes, which matches his threefold pattern of the middle/emptiness/provisional. (1) Buddha-nature as the “right cause” (*zhengyin* 正因) is constantly present, indestructible, and thus correlates with the dynamic sense of the middle. This aspect represents both the nature and the realm of our contemplation and discerning, which combines epistemological with ontological issues. (2) As the “cause of our full understanding” and awareness (*liaoyin* 了因), it is the wisdom of emptiness realized by contemplation. (3) As the “cause of auxiliary conditions” (*yuanyin* 緣因), it embodies an inverse form of instructiveness matching the aspect of the false/provisional.³⁵ This refers to our skills of responding to the contingency and ever changing circumstances during contemplation. Again, the three causes are dynamically related. Furthermore, this pattern can be extended to a series of “ten threefold dharmas” (*shizhong sanfa* 十種三法), which mainly embraces the two poles of “ignorance” and “dharma-nature,” and demonstrates that, from opposite perspectives, each of the two fully presents the common referent of both of them, which is Buddha-nature.³⁶

³³ Mou Zongsan stresses the ontological significance of Buddha-nature, by saying that it is the Buddha-nature that sustains all dharmas interdependently arising, which is correct, as long as we are aware of the fact that those dharmas are not really but illusively existent. Indeed, the existential relevance and ontological status of falsehood is undeniable, even while the ontological ground of this is ultimately indeterminable. Therefore, the ontological significance of Buddha-nature cannot be explained in terms of a metaphysics that seeks the realm of truth beyond all falsehood, (see Mou 1993: 26).

³⁴ Unlike the present chapter that stresses the epistemological and pragmatic sense of these paradoxical statements, Brook Ziporyn’s view on Tiantai “value paradox” also sees a metaphysical significance (see Ziporyn 2000: 352–358).

³⁵ See Zhiyi’s *Profound Meaning of the Sūtra of the Subtle Dharma of the Lotus-Blossom*, *Miaofa Lianhua Jing Xuanyi* (妙法蓮華經玄義) or *Fahua Xuanyi*, (T 33, 1716: 743c17–18) and (T 33, 1716: 744c12–24).

³⁶ See Zhiyi’s *Fahua Xuanyi*, (T 33, 1716: 744a21–24), *Weimo Jing Xuanshu* (維摩經玄疏) (T 38, 1777: 553c27–554a1), and the lengthy section in the *Jingguangming Jing Xuanyi* (金光明經玄義) commencing with the term “ten threefold dharmas” (*shizhong sanfa* 十種三法), (T 39, 1783: 3a14). See also Mou 1993: Vol. 2, and Toshio 1973: 35–54.

7 Subtlety: The Hermeneutic Significance of the *Lotus-sūtra*

This threefold pattern accounts for the dynamics that is also called the “subtle dharma” (*miaofa* 妙法) by Zhiyi – a binary borrowed from the Chinese title of the *Lotus-sūtra*, translated by Kumārajīva. According to Zhiyi’s extensive treatise on the meaning of this Sūtra title, called *The Profound Meaning of the Sūtra of the Subtle Dharma of the Lotus-Blossom* (*Miaofa Lianhua Jing Xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義), the term “subtle” (*miao* 妙) embodies the essential meaning of the Buddha-dharma (*fofa* 佛法), integrating the whole complex of Buddhist doctrines into an all-inclusive system.³⁷ Based on his quotation from the *Garland-sūtra* (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, *Huayan Jing*), Zhiyi further emphasizes that “dharma” embraces the meanings of “Buddha, sentient beings, and mind,” which do not differ from each other in an essential sense.³⁸ Moreover, “subtle” (*miao* 妙) is also a synonym for both “suspending” (*jue* 絕) and “inconceivable” (*bukesiyi* 不可思議).³⁹ Hence, the “subtle” sense of the “dharma” reaches beyond our conceivability, “suspending all patterns of interdependency” (*juedai* 絕待). In fact, it cannot be adequately discussed in terms of correlatively dependent opposites such as “conceivable and inconceivable.” This, indeed, is ultimately inconceivable and yet does not completely exclude the provisional use of the conceivable. The conceivable realm embraces all patterns of interdependency and correlative opposition, and it is the subtle and inconceivable force that instantiates this provisional use of the conceivable. Hence, our constantly changing and adjusting manner in which we use the various forms of the conceivable explores the dynamic sense of the inconceivable and thus reveals the “sustaining force” (*ti* 體) of such subtlety.⁴⁰

In the section *Subtlety of the Dharma* (*famiao* 法妙), the *Profound Meaning of the Lotus-sūtra* specifies the dynamic subtlety. “Dharma” literally means “law,” both in Sanskrit and in its Chinese translation “*fa*” (法), which is the norm or rule that must or can be followed. Hence, Zhiyi explains the “subtle dharma” in terms of the “threefold track” (*sangui* 三軌) encompassing three links called “the track of true nature” (*zhenxing gui* 真性軌), “the track of contemplative illumination” (*guanzhao gui* 觀照軌), and “the track in support of accomplishment” (*zicheng gui*

³⁷ The entire text of this treatise expounds the Tiantai view on the doctrinal system of the Buddha-dharma, interpreting the meanings of all the characters in the Chinese Sūtra-title. The longest part of this lengthy Tiantai work focuses on the first character “subtle” (*miao* 妙), divided into the sections “Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Traces” (*jimen shimiao*, 跡門十妙) and “Ten Subtleties of the Gateway to the Root” (*benmen shimiao*, 本門十妙). These two parts basically contain the whole doctrinal system of the Tiantai-teaching. Moreover, among the three extant Chinese translations of this early Mahāyāna-sūtra, (in Sanskrit called *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*), the first character “subtle” (*miao* 妙) in the Sūtra title occurs only in the Kumārajīva version (406 AD), while those of Dharmarakṣa (286 AD) and Dharmagupta (601 AD) use the term “right, true” (*zheng* 正), which comes closer to the Sanskrit meaning.

³⁸ See the Sūtra text, (T 9, 278: 465c29) and Zhiyi’s *Fahua Xuanyi* (T 33, 1716: 693a28–29).

³⁹ See Zhiyi’s *Fahua Xuanyi*, T 33, 1716: 697a11 and b9.

⁴⁰ See Zhiyi’s *Fahua Xuanyi* (T 33, 1716: 697a3–b1).

資成軌).⁴¹ The first link is that which sustains the other two and thus reveals its very sense in the functioning of them. Therefore, the second link is also called “wisdom” (*zhi* 智) and the third “practice” (*xing* 行), while the first turns out to be the “realm” (*jing* 境) that is accessible to us via accomplishing the “functioning” (*yong* 用) of the two. Again, the “true nature,” which is the “sustaining force” (*ti* 體) in the “functioning” of “wisdom and practice,” is also called “realm,” because, when accomplished, those two fully reveal this force as their inner nature. Hence, the dynamic relationship of the “sustaining force” and “functioning” (*ti yong* 體用) can be further specified as that of “nature” and “cultivation” (*xing xiu* 性修), “fruit” and “cause” (*guo yin* 果因) etc. Most importantly, the two sides in this unity relate to each other like the two truths, which form a polarity rooted in non-duality.⁴²

Analogous to the “non-arising” of ultimate truth and emptiness, Zhiyi expounds the “sustaining force” or the “true nature” in terms of “non-moving and non-putting forth” (*budong buchū* 不動不出). This embodies the inconceivable realm, which suspends all patterns of correlative opposites and interdependencies. By contrast, the functioning of “contemplative illumination” (=wisdom) and “support of accomplishment” (=practice) accounts for the “capability of moving and putting forth” (*neng dongchū* 能動出), since there is also a certain sense of “conveying” (*yun* 運) the meaning of the Buddha-dharma via the “vehicle” (*sheng* 乘) of “teaching and transforming” (*jiaohua* 教化). However, this sense only conforms to the false/provisional form of “arising,” which features the conventional level of the conceivable realm. In the *Profound Meaning of the Lotus-sūtra*, Zhiyi explains the whole relationship:

Why did we previously explain “vehicle” in terms of “conveying”? If we apprehend the true nature, then there is no moving and no putting forth; hence there is neither conveying, nor is there non-conveying. If we apprehend the contemplative illumination and support of accomplishment, then there is the capability of moving and putting forth, and we call this conveying. Hence, [in the ultimate sense], moving and putting forth is nothing but non-moving and non-putting forth, just as non-moving and non-putting forth is moving and putting forth [in the provisional sense]. If we discuss the sustaining force which [provisionally] takes shape in the functioning, then it is moving and putting forth that turns out to be the sense of non-moving and non-putting forth. If we discuss the functioning which [ultimately] is the sustaining force, then it is non-moving and non-putting forth that appears in the shape of moving and putting forth. The sustaining force and functioning are non-dual, yet we differentiate them as two.⁴³

This just reiterates and exemplifies Zhiyi’s understanding of the dynamic relationship of the two truths, which implies his view of the threefold truth and Buddha-nature. He similarly states that the supreme meaning of the ultimate truth must be

⁴¹ See Zhiyi’s *Fahua Xuanyi* (T 33, 1716: 741b7–c1). Furthermore, Zhiyi explains that, under deceptive influences, the “three tracks” take the shape of the “three obstacles” (*sanzhang* 三障) which can be removed by the “threefold contemplation” that realizes the “three dharmas”: “dharma-kāya, prajñā, liberation.” The whole section of the *Subtlety of the Dharma* from page 741 to 746 in the *Taishō* edition seems to reveal the core of the Tiantai view on the “subtle.”

⁴² Based on this section and observation of the “subtle,” Zhanran composed his famous Tiantai work of the ten non-dualities, called *The Gateway of the Ten Non-Dualities* (*Shi buermen* 十不二門, T 46, 1927: 702c17–18).

⁴³ See T 33, 1716: 742c25–29.

enacted through the constant change and provisional use of the conventional truths, while realizing that none of those conventional truths really reaches beyond the interdependency that constitutes all of them.⁴⁴ In other words, only if we completely know the nature of the conventional, can we really know the ultimate and vice versa, which does not mean that this is a knowledge of two separate things. The same applies to suffering – bliss, *saṃsāra* – *nirvāṇa*, delusion – wisdom, and all the previously mentioned polarities, such as “arising” and “non-arising,” “moving” and “non-moving,” “putting forth” and “non-putting forth.” To fully realize one side is to perform and enact the turn into the other, which perpetuates the dynamic and circular “change of aspects” in our understanding of the ultimate and inconceivable level of the “perfect/round teaching.”

All this means that, in addition to the two poles, the third position of the ambiguous and indeterminate middle must also be taken in account, which reflects their reciprocity as a whole. Indeterminacy of the middle means inconceivableness and inseparability, which is non-duality and yet polarity. To present this sense of the middle is to show that each of the two poles fully embraces that which instantiates or sustains the two of them; thus we differentiate between the two in a manner that each of them equally reveals or enacts the dynamic and indeterminate unity of that differentiation. It is the threefold pattern that truly accomplishes this, fulfilling the dynamic sense of this reciprocity as a whole. Consequently, Zhiyi stresses that the “true nature” correlates with the middle, the “contemplative wisdom” with emptiness, and the “support of accomplishment” with the false/provisional.⁴⁵ According to the threefold pattern, each of the three reveals and presents all three of them as a dynamic whole.

Zhiyi tries to prove that all crucial Buddhist doctrines ultimately culminate in the dynamic understanding of the subtle dharma, assorting the array of “ten threefold dharmas.” This consists of Buddhist terms drawn from the whole range of Mahāyāna scriptures.⁴⁶ However, among all sūtras, the *Lotus-sūtra* accounts for that sermon of the Buddha which realizes the meaning of the subtle dharma in the most elaborated and most authentic way. Zhiyi refers to the “subtle dharma” of the *Lotus-sūtra* as the “manifesting of the root via/qua disclosing the traces” (*kaiben xianji* 開跡顯本). In this use of language, the binary “root/traces” (*benji* 本跡) codifies the whole doctrinal content of the subtle dharma and also applies to that Sūtra in a twofold sense: it denotes both the Sūtra’s inner compositional structure and its intertextual relationship with all the other Sūtras. None of the other Sūtras unfolds such a meaning, according to the Tiantai.

Originally, the expression “root/traces” is borrowed from Sengzhao’s introduction to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* and, most likely, derived from the indigenous Chinese Daoist and Xuanxue traditions. The “root” (*ben* 本) is invisible, hidden, and foundational, whereas the visible “traces” (*ji* 跡) are the secondary endings and branches such as twigs and leaves, which both refer back to and rely on this root. In this Buddhist understanding, the “traces” represent the visible but untrue

⁴⁴ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 55 a15–19).

⁴⁵ See the *Fahua Xuanyi* (T 33, 1716: 743c17–18).

⁴⁶ See footnote 45.

apparitions and skillful means of the Buddha both relying on and pointing back to his invisible but permanent “root.”⁴⁷

Again, for the Tiantai masters, the “root/traces” binary parallels the compositional structure of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The “traces” are expressed through the skillful means and the parables narrated in the first half of the text where the Buddha makes his pronouncement that all the apparitions and visible marks presented to sentient beings are neither real nor the ultimate embodiment of his nature. The root is addressed to in the second half of this text elaborating on the meaning that the Buddha “has already been becoming a Buddha a far distance of ages ago,” which, in other words, refers to Buddha-nature – the Buddha’s permanent yet hidden presence in the false world of ignorant beings; this is also called “root-time” (*benshi* 本時).⁴⁸

Zhiyi particularly stresses the mutuality between those two aspects, as this expresses the same dynamics that constitutes the relationship of the two truths: Without the root, the manifesting potential of the traces cannot be sustained; without the traces, the sustaining force of the root cannot be manifested. Therefore, on a hermeneutical level, this mutuality also characterizes the intertextual relationship between the *Lotus-sūtra*, which is the root, and all the other Sūtras, which function as the traces. To fully understand the *Lotus-sūtra* is to understand all the other Sūtras and vice versa, as the *Lotus-sūtra* sustains what all the other Sūtras together manifest. Applied to the intertextual relationship of the *Lotus-sūtra* and all the other Sūtras, the root/traces binary signifies the hermeneutical circle, in which the practitioner’s understanding must engage, to realize and discern the subtle dharma.

Due to this dynamic pattern of mutuality, none of these texts can be neglected in the practitioner’s course of studying the Buddha-dharma. Yet the accomplished understanding even apprehends or anticipates all the other differing texts, even while reading only one of them.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the true or genuine text of the *Lotus Sūtra* corresponds to this level of understanding (=subtle awakening); and the *Sūtra* embodies the root only in that specific sense. Hence, the text of the *Lotus Sūtra* sublates itself as a specific text in space and time, embodying and realizing the “root-time” (*benshi* 本時) of the “subtle dharma.” In this sense, the *Lotus Sūtra* not only differs from but also embraces all the other Sūtras, which only represent the “traces” and do not reach the “root,” since they neither differentiate between the root and traces, nor realize the non-duality of them. The *Lotus Sūtra* is the text that enacts the non-duality of root and traces qua differentiation. For Zhiyi, the Sūtra title just codifies these two dimensions that embrace the entire doctrinal content of the Buddha-dharma, which he tries to unfold in his work *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra*.

⁴⁷ Parts of this section are taken from my article (Kantor 2011: 274–293). Sengzhao uses this binary in his introduction to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* (T 38, 1775: 327b1–5). Like Zhiyi, Jizang uses it in his commentaries to the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* (T 38, 1780: 872b2–873a2).

⁴⁸ See the *Lotus Sūtra*, (T 9, 262: 42c19–20).

⁴⁹ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation* (T 46, 1911: 3b8–b9).

8 Mind

The inconceivable and suspending sense of the subtle dharma also shapes Zhiyi's discussion of mind and contemplation, as is expounded in the chapter "contemplating the mind as the inconceivable realm" in the *Great Calming and Contemplation*. Buddhist texts often address the mind as the potential that, on the one side, brings about deceptiveness and suffering and, on the other, true insight and liberation. However, there are differing accounts of the nature of mind: *Tathāgatagarbha* scriptures, such as the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra*, hold that the mind that sustains both the defiled and undefiled realms is "intrinsically clear and pure," while Yogācāra texts, such as Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha Śāstra*, regard the defiled *ālāya*-consciousness as our foundational mental bondage to the circular system of self-perpetuating falsehood. Even though the two equally advocate our transformation based on our mind's awakening, they represent almost contrary viewpoints regarding our mind's nature.

By contrast, Zhiyi's understanding, mainly influenced by the Madhyamaka view, stresses that our mind does not abide in an intrinsic nature.⁵⁰ It is empty of inherent existence, and arises dependent upon conditions and within patterns of extrinsic relationships. Therefore, he does not call upon Yogācāra and *Tathāgatagarbha* sources to develop and justify his own view. Instead, he resorts to Buddhābhaddra's translation of the *Garland Sūtra*, which stresses the mind's potential of generating. The mind's nature, according to this sūtra, neither differs from the awakened state of the Buddha nor from the unawakened sentient beings in an essential sense. "Mind" just refers to the potential that we must disclose when we transform into an awakened being. Each single moment of our mental activity and awareness contains the potential to transform itself into any of the existential possibilities implicit in the "tenfold dharma-realm" (*shi fajie* 十法界), which embraces the whole range of all beings, from those dwelling on the lowest stage of ignorance up to the highest Buddha-wisdom.

Moreover, transformation rooted in our contemplation and cultivation implies self-transformation. The notion of mind that Zhiyi discusses embraces both the object and the agent of our contemplation and transformation; it is the sixth among six types of sensory consciousness, called "intentional consciousness" (*yishi* 意識).⁵¹ As arising in correlation with the intentional objects, referents, or sensual realms extrinsic to itself, "mind" (*xin* 心) could be better called "mental activity" or "awareness" (*xinnian* 心念). However, the intentional consciousness consists of three components, which all pertain to the mental realm. This is to say that its awareness arises when its faculty and the referential realm corresponding to it join together; this referential realm is a mental aspect, since it embraces our conceptual constructions and images. By contrast, the sensual realms extrinsic to the other five

⁵⁰ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, (T 46, 1911: 54b18–19).

⁵¹ See Zhanran's commentary to the *Great Calming and Contemplation*, hinting at this, (T 46, 1912: 318c14–15).

types of sensory consciousness are visible form, sound, smell etc., which must be distinguished from the “mental aspect” (*xin* 心) as the “physical form” (*se* 色). Yet, neither does our awareness arise without the specific realm to which it refers, nor does any of these realms appear apart from its corresponding consciousness that is aware of it. Moreover, the intentional consciousness defines or delineates the respective focus, object, or realm whenever one or more of the other five types of sensory consciousness is active.⁵² Hence, none of those five fulfills the function to identify sensual forms in the physical world apart from the sixth intentional consciousness. This is a view that Zhiyi most probably adopted from Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma Kośa*, according to Zhanran’s explanations.⁵³

Given the fact that mental activity and all the respective realms arise interdependently, the world of physical form and the realm of mental activity are equally empty and unreal. Hence, as long as we falsely assume that there really exists the present instant of mental activity that sustains our awareness, the whole range of all realms of beings, both awakened and non-awakened, is, in the same way, included. However, again, neither awareness in form of mental activity nor all the referents extrinsic to it are really existent. Yet all those illusory forms are existentially relevant for us. The famous Tiantai formula “one single instant of awareness [inseparably bound up with] the three-thousand worlds” (*yinian sanqian* 一念三千) expressing this has often been falsely understood as a cosmological concept in both modern Asian and Western studies.⁵⁴

Hence, Zhiyi, like Sanlun master Jizang, denies the reality of what is signified by the name “mind.”⁵⁵ Though he denies the existence of a real mind, he points out that we cannot deny the existential relevance of this false view, as it ineradicably shapes the way we perceive and think of ourselves and our world. We cannot avoid thinking that all things that concern our life, existence, and awareness are comprehended, understood, and judged by an entity that we believe to be our real mind. He therefore holds that, in our practice of contemplation and introspection, the “false/provisional mind” may provide a point of departure for the realization of the full awareness of that falsehood, which constantly pervades the way we relate to our

⁵² This thought is clearly explicated in the third chapter of the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* (解深密經), see the passage in T 16, 676: 692b19–28. There are two of four Chinese translations one of which has been accomplished prior to Zhiyi and the other by Xuanzang in a later period.

⁵³ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation* (T 46, 1911: 63c23–64a4) and Zhanran’s commentary on this (T 46, 1912: 318c10–14), quoting the *Abhidharma Kośa*.

⁵⁴ See the *Great Calming and Contemplation* expressing the meaning of this formula, (T 46, 1911: 54a7–9); however, the formula (*yinian sanqian* 一念三千) seems to be coined by Zhanran.

⁵⁵ See Jizang’s argument in his commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra*: “Why is it called the inverted mind? Because no mind can be found if we investigate it with respect to the three temporal marks [consisting of the past, the present, and the future]; yet according to the viewpoint of the sentient beings, the mind does exist. However, this is just an ascription of existence to something that does not [really] exist; therefore it is called inversion” (T 33, 1699: 120b12–13). Similarly, Zhiyi comments on the *Golden Light Sūtra* (*Suvarṇaprabhāsottama*): “Mind arises from conditions, therefore it is empty. Since we only say that mind exists in a forced sense, it is provisional/false. This does not extend beyond the [true] nature of all *dharma*(s), therefore it is the middle” (T 39, 1783: 8a1–4).

world. Zhiyi's "contemplating the mind as the inconceivable realm" examines and uses "mind" as a provisional means or useful fiction, by means of which we can reveal the persistent falsehood that would otherwise evade our conventional awareness like a blind spot.

In the dynamic performance of the "threefold-contemplation within/of/qua one-instant-of-awareness" (*yi xin san guan* 一心三觀), mind recognizes itself as the source of all delusions and falsehood, and at the same time, thereby realizes that this same delusion is precisely identical to the true potential for our transformation. The object and the agent of/in this contemplation are not really distinguishable: "contemplation of emptiness" (*kongguan* 空觀) realizes truth beyond language, by invalidating falsehood in all referents of our intentional acts; "contemplation of the false/provisional" (*jiaguan* 假觀) realizes the instructive value of all falsehood, restoring the use of language; "contemplation of the middle" (*zhongdaoguan* 中道觀) realizes the reciprocal relationship of the previous two restricting and complementing each other. Hence, in the "threefold contemplation" each of the three realizes all three of them. This is regarded as the ultimate skill in dealing with all types of contingency in a soteriologically salutary manner. Achieving the insight that this ambiguity or ontological indeterminacy of mental activity is irreducible – that it is neither mere falsehood nor mere truth – is precisely what is referred to, in the chapter title "the mind contemplated as the inconceivable realm," (see Kantor 2009: 347).

Hence, from a summarizing point of view, the Chinese Tiantai teaching seems to follow the constructivist paradigm that understands reality and truth as a system of mutually constituting views and aspects of observation. In the deconstructive practice of Tiantai contemplation we realize that our cognitive system is not capable of distinguishing between the conditions of real objects and the conditions of our cognition, because our cognition does not have independent access to a reality extrinsic to that cognition. Without this fundamental insight into the nature of our cognition, which shapes the way we exist in our world, the Tiantai sense of awakening, as well as its soteriological significance, cannot be fully realized.

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Part VI
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Huayan School 華嚴宗

Chapter 13

The Metaphysics of Identity in Fazang's *Huayan Wujiao Zhang*: The Inexhaustible Freedom of Dependent Origination



Nicholaos Jones

1 Mutual Identity in the Huayan Tradition

Fazang 法藏 (643–712) ranks among the preeminent Buddhists of medieval China. History records him as a court politician during the reign of empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (625–705), an adept shaman and wonder-worker, an accomplished engineer, a prolific translator, as well as a popular expositor of what we now refer to as Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism (see Chen 2007). While the *Treatise on the Golden Lion* (*Jin Shizi Zhang* 金獅子章) contains Fazang's most famous pedagogical metaphor, the *Treatise on the Five Teachings* (*Huayan Wujiao Zhang* 華嚴五教章) is his most highly regarded work (Cook 1970: 107). In addition to its provocative metaphors – such as the net of Indra, the ten coins, and the framed building – the *Treatise on the Five Teachings* also contains Fazang's arguments for why mutually reliant *dharma*s are mutually identical (*xiangji* 相卽) and mutually inclusive (*xiangru* 相入).

Fazang's arguments about mutual identity and inclusion amplify Dushun's 杜順 (557–640) teachings about non-obstruction between principle and phenomena (*lishi wuai* 理事無礙) and between phenomena themselves (*shishi wuai* 事事無礙). Dushun and Fazang find common inspiration in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (*Huayan Jing* 華嚴經). This scripture teaches that “[o]ne is many, many are one,” that “the small [is] in the large and the large in the small, free in all ways, with no obstruction whatsoever,” and that “all things are nondual, beyond duality, all equal, inherently pure as space, not distinguishing self and nonself” (Cleary 1993: 397, 517, 1011). It illustrates these teachings with rich and suggestive imagery. For example, the bodhisattva Forest of Virtues proclaims that

Buddha emanates great light illumining the ten directions; all see the Honored One of heaven and earth freely, and without obstruction. Buddha sits in the Suyana palace yet

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pervades all worlds in the cosmos; this phenomenon is most extraordinary, wondered at by the world (Cleary 1993: 442).

The pilgrim Sudhana praises the night goddess Samantagambhirashrivimalaprabha for her inclusiveness:

I see your body in all realms, in a variety of manifestations; and in your pores I see the moon and stars. ... Infinite bodies, as many as living beings, emerge from your pores; they fill all the worlds in the ten directions, and purify beings by various means (Cleary 1993: 1294).

Inspiring and suggestive as such images are, their meaning is not entirely clear. Fazang's arguments in the *Treatise on the Five Teachings* provide for them a philosophical foundation, an analysis that reveals their metaphysical basis. This chapter focuses on one of Fazang's central arguments in that treatise, namely, his argument that mutually reliant *dharma*s are mutually identical. Specifically, this chapter presents the background context for Fazang's argument, reconstructs the argument's logical structure, interprets the central concepts appearing therein, and explains why Fazang would have found plausible his argument's premises. (This chapter sets aside soteriological concerns in order to focus on the motivating metaphysics; but see Herschok 2013.) Those who find the chapter's methodology inappropriate or otherwise objectionable should consult the [Appendix](#).

2 Fazang's Analysis of Dependent Origination

Fazang's argument about mutual identity occurs in Chapter 10 of the *Treatise on the Five Teachings*, in a section titled "The Dharma Teaching of the Freedom of the Ten-Fold Profound Dependent Origination." Dependent origination, or *pratityasamutpada*, is axiomatic for all Buddhist traditions. Mahayana Buddhism, the tradition of which Fazang is part, takes it to mean that everything originates in dependence upon causes and conditions – that, as the bodhisattva Diamond Banner says, "[a]ll worlds are born from conditions—things cannot be seen apart from causality" (Cleary 1993: 558). The most common and general formula for this doctrine states:

When this is present, that comes to be;
from the arising of this, that arises.
When this is absent, that does not come to be;
on the cessation of this, that ceases (Kalupahana 1986: 90).

The term "that" here refers to an effect; the term "this," to a nexus of cause and conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the effect (see Kalupahana 1986: 93–95). According to this doctrine, both causes and effects dependently originate: effects, because they originate from causes and conditions; causes, because they depend upon conditions to originate their effects.

Focusing on this second kind of dependent origination (of causes depending upon conditions) in the second section of Chapter 10, "The Six Meanings of Dependent Origination in the Causal Aspect," Fazang identifies two "meanings" of

causation. These meanings, in contemporary parlance, are fundamental properties of any cause that depends upon conditions to originate its effect. The first meaning concerns **existence**: causes that depend upon conditions to originate their effects are existent, because although causes are not as real as, say, *atman* or God (were they to exist), they are real enough to join with conditions – so they retain a semblance of existence. The second concerns **emptiness**: causes that dependently originate their effects are empty, because depending on conditions for originating power entails lacking self-nature (*svabhava*). These meanings are the two aspects Fazang attributes to the dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhava*) in the opening section of Chapter 10 of the *Treatise on the Five Teachings* (see Cook 1970: 406). Fazang takes these meanings to be complementary:

Even though “semblances of existence” appear with the coming together of causes and conditions, these “semblances of existence” are definitely “without self-nature”, for all that which arise from conditions are “without self-nature” (Liu 1979: 360; see also Cook 1970: 463).

His warrant for this complementarity is twofold: on the one hand, lacking self-nature does not entail being void (existing in no way at all); on the other hand, having a semblance of existence does not require having self-nature. Table 13.1 summarizes Fazang's analysis.

Many traditions of Mahayana Buddhism accept similar meanings of causation. Indeed, the Madhyamaka tradition takes them to support a denial of causality. Nagarjuna, for example, seems to invoke a distinction between causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*pratyaya*) – such that causes possess a power to bring about their effects by virtue of their self-nature but conditions merely explain their effects by virtue of regularity-like association with those effects – in order to argue that causes, were they to exist, would and would not depend upon their conditions. For, as existing, causes would dependently originate their effects; but as empowered, causes would possess self-nature. There would be, accordingly, no causes; only conditions would exist, and the meaning of this existence would be compatible with causes being empty (see Garfield 1994).

While Fazang speaks of causes and powers in his *Treatise on the Five Teachings*, he does not reject arguments like Nagarjuna's. He avoids them by distinguishing two kinds of causal power. The first originates from self-nature, allowing a cause to evolve on its own and to produce its effect without relying on conditions. The second originates from association with conditions, allowing a cause to work with conditions in order to produce an effect that resembles the cause. Fazang maintains that all causes possess this second kind of causal power (see Cook 1970: 447–450). Yet he also argues that causes lack the first kind (originating from self-nature), because they require conditions for their productivity and evolve continuously in

Table 13.1 Fazang's Two Meanings of Causation

Meaning	Existent	Empty
Analysis	having semblance of existence	lacking self-nature
Basis	joining with conditions	depending on conditions for power

dependence on those conditions (see Cook 1970: 449–451). This allows Fazang to accept Nagarjuna’s argument while retaining, in good faith, causal-power language about creating, forming, and so on.

For causes that work together with conditions, Fazang identifies three complementary “functions” (see Cook 1970: 446–465). These functions, in contemporary parlance, are ways in which causes manifest their power. The first function is “total power:” causes produce their effects in a way that is distinct from the power of other causes, and yet they do so without having a self-nature. The second function is “power and no power:” causes with particular qualities produce effects with similar qualities and depend for their existence and identity upon those effects. The third function is “no power at all:” causes do not produce their effects apart from conditions, and their evolution continuously depends upon those conditions. For example, an acorn produces an oak tree only in the presence of sun and soil, and these conditions guide the evolution of the acorn into the oak tree. Hence, the acorn has no power at all. If the acorn is healthy, a healthy oak results; if diseased, a diseased oak results; and no matter its quality, the acorn’s being the particular acorn it is necessitates that it produce the specific oak it in fact produces. Hence, the acorn has power and no power. Accordingly, the acorn produces its oak tree in a way no other acorn does, and it does so despite relying upon sun and soil. So the acorn has total power.

Fazang uses these functions to frame his subsequent discussion of mutual identity (see Cook 1970: 471–472). He argues, first, that causes are mutually identical to their conditions because of their different essence (*yiti* 異體) – that is, by virtue of having no power at all and thereby (mutually) relying upon their conditions. (When discussing mutual inclusion, “different essence” refers to causes (mutually) relying upon their effects by virtue of having power and no power.) Fazang then argues that causes are mutually identical to their conditions because of their common essence (*tongti* 同體) – that is, by virtue of having total power. English-language analyses of Fazang’s arguments typically discuss only the first argument (mutual identity by virtue of different essence), and this chapter follows suit. The next section reconstructs the logical structure of Fazang’s argument on the basis of seven interpretive assumptions. An explanation of the premises in this reconstruction, accompanied by an interpretation of key concepts, follows. The subsequent section identifies and illustrates several foundational metaphysical presumptions revealed by the reconstruction, while a concluding section explains some corollaries about the inexhaustibility of dependent origination.

3 Reconstructing the Logic of Fazang’s Argument

Consider, then, Fazang’s first argument for why causes that originate their effects in dependence on other conditions are mutually identical to those conditions. Fazang argues from the meaning of different essence and “from the point of view of self-essence” (Cook 1970: 471–473). Different essence means (mutual) reliance on conditions to produce effects; the point of view of self-essence presents causes as

existent despite being empty of self-nature. Accordingly, Fazang's argument centers around three claims about causes: that causes exist, that such causes are empty, and that they rely upon conditions to produce their effects. The argument itself is characteristically dense.

[B]ecause when "A" [the cause] exists, the others [conditions] necessarily do not, the others are identical with "A". Why? Because as a result of the others being without self-nature, they are created by "A".

Second, because at the time "A" is empty, the others necessarily exist, "A" is identical with the others. Why? Because as a result of "A" being without self-nature, it is created by the others.

Because each of the two existences and the two emptinesses are never simultaneous, ["A" and the other] never fail to be identical with each other.

Because ["A"] existing and [the others] not-existing, on the one hand, and ["A"] not existing and [the others] existing, on the other hand, are non-dual, thus they are forever mutually identical.

(This translation combines Cook 1970: 473–474 with Ziporyn 2003: 508.)

3.1 Interpretive Assumptions

Seven interpretive assumptions guide my reconstruction of the logical structure of Fazang's argument.

Assumption 13.1 The first concerns Fazang's claims about non-existence. In the first subargument, Fazang seems to rely upon an unstated premise: that the others have no self-nature if they do not exist. "Does not exist" cannot mean "does not exist in dependence on conditions," because Fazang himself would reject such a premise. If, however, "does not exist" means "does not exist independently of conditions," Fazang would have established the unstated premise in his *Treatise's* prior section. Moreover, this meaning would explain why Fazang mentions "two emptinesses" (as never being simultaneous) and yet predicates emptiness only once (in the second subargument): not existing (in the first subargument) is synonymous with being empty. Finally, the Mahayana tradition generally accepts that not existing independently of conditions entails being empty. Accordingly, I interpret Fazang's claims about lacking existence as claims about being empty (see also Liu 1979: 407). This amounts, in effect, to embedding an inference into my reconstruction.

Assumption 13.2 A second interpretive assumption concerns existence and emptiness as properties. Although Fazang initially seems to treat them as non-relational, his mention of simultaneity midway through his argument indicates that being existent and being empty are relational, relative to time or to something alterable with respect to time. I assume, accordingly, that existence and emptiness are relative to some alterable respect. The next section, devoted to the semantic content of Fazang's claims, returns to the interpretive issue concerning the nature of this alterable respect (see Sect. 13.4.3.1 of this chapter).

Assumption 13.3 A third interpretive assumption concerns how to individuate the parts of Fazang's argument. The entire argument seems to have two levels (see Ziporyn 2003: 508). The first, basic level establishes two relations between A and the others, namely, that A is identical to the others and that the others are identical to A. I take each of these relations to be the conclusion of a subargument. But Fazang's argument also has a second level, in which Fazang reasons about relations among the properties appearing in the basic level. This meta-level further contains two subarguments about the significance of claims from the argument's basic level. The first subargument concludes that A and the others "never fail to be identical with each other;" the second, that A and the others are "forever mutually identical." Since there is no textual evidence that properties uniquely mentioned in the meta-level of Fazang's argument are also relative to some respect, I assume for simplicity that they are not so relative.

Assumption 13.4 A fourth interpretive assumption, related to the second, concerns the nature of other properties – such as having a self-nature, being created by, and being identical with – mentioned in the basic level of Fazang's argument. Presuming that existence and emptiness are relational, and given that Fazang's argument takes existence and emptiness to entail further properties, it is natural to suppose that properties entailed by tacitly relational properties are also tacitly relational. It is also charitable. For if these other properties are not relational, then insofar as *being created by* is an asymmetric relation, the intermediate conclusions of Fazang's first and second subarguments – that A creates the others and that the others create A – are jointly inconsistent. Accordingly, I assume that these properties are relational and thereby tacitly relative to a respect. For simplicity, I also assume that these respects are inheritable: if one property entails another and the former is relative to a specific respect, the latter is relative to the same respect.

Assumption 13.5 A fifth interpretive assumption, related to the third and fourth, concerns the nature of the properties mentioned only in Fazang's meta-level argument. There are three such properties: non-simultaneity, non-duality, and mutual identity. Consider each of these in turn. Fazang appeals to non-simultaneity in order to relate properties that appear in the basic level of his argument – A's existence relative to some respect and the others' existence relative to some respect, A's emptiness relative to some respect and the others' emptiness relative to some respect. When Fazang attributes these properties to A and the others, he does not make explicit their relativity. I assume that Fazang's mention of non-simultaneity is an attempt to make explicit such heretofore implicit relativization. I also assume that this mention is Fazang's attempt to specify, first, that the respect relative to which A exists is not the same as the respect relative to which the others exist, and second, that the respect relative to which the A is empty is not the same as the respect relative to which the others are empty. Simultaneity, according to this interpretation, is the meta-level property of identity of respect. If Fazang relativizes existence and emptiness to the respect of time, this interpretation fits our familiar understanding of simultaneity, implying, for example, that A's existence is not simultaneous with the others' if A does not exist at the same time as the others. If, however, he relativizes them to a

respect other than time, this interpretation should be considered as generalizing our familiar (temporal) understanding of simultaneity. The next section revisits this interpretive issue (see Sect. 13.4.3 of this chapter).

Fazang uses non-duality to relate claims that appear in his argument's basic level. So duality, like simultaneity, seems to be a logical relation. The Mahayana Buddhist tradition, of which Fazang is a part, denies that the duality relation obtains between the properties of existence and emptiness. Specifically, when an object's existence and emptiness are said to be non-dual, the tradition means to assert that an object's existence and emptiness are jointly consistent: possessing one property does not exclude possessing the other. I defer to this tradition, interpreting duality as a relation of joint inconsistency and thereby taking "P and Q are not dual" to mean "P and Q are jointly consistent."

The property of mutual identity modifies the subjects of the claims from the basic level of Fazang's argument, namely, A and the others. The claim in which mention of forever mutual identity occurs is the ultimate conclusion of Fazang's argument, following from the basic level arguments together with the meta-level ones. Presuming that the meta-level arguments establish relations between claims rather than additional relations between A and the others, the mutual identity of A and the others should be a consequence of conclusions Fazang reaches at the basic level of his argument. Since mutuality suggests a kind of conjunction, I interpret Fazang's claim "A and the others are mutually identical" as the claim that A is identical with the others and the others are identical with A.

Assumption 13.6 A sixth interpretive assumption concerns how to relate premises within Fazang's subarguments from the basic level. The first claim within each such subargument is a nested conditional. I take the antecedent of these conditionals – itself a conditional – to be a premise in an argument for the consequent of the nested conditional. The second claim within each argument from the basic level is also a conditional, and I take these to be premises as well. Since the premises of each subargument, so understood, are unrelated to each other, I add an appropriate connecting premise to each subargument. The result of these assumptions is a pair of hypothetical syllogisms, with the consequent of the last conditional in each subargument predicating a relation of creation between A and the others. Presuming that the conclusion of each subargument predicates an identity relation between A and the others, I also add a connecting premise to each subargument of the form "if y creates x, then x is identical with y." Since in each subargument the resultant series of conditionals entails its conclusion only if the antecedent of the initial conditional is a premise, I add these antecedents. Finally, I add quantifiers, as appropriate, in the way that least obtrusively guarantees argument validity.

Assumption 13.7 A seventh interpretive assumption concerns the premises in the meta-level of Fazang's argument. There are two meta-level subarguments, each with a conclusion that in some way addresses identity relations between A and the others. I treat these conclusions as distinct, and I treat the explanations offered for each as premises. There is, upon analysis, no need to add missing or unstated premises to these arguments.

3.2 *Basic Level Reconstruction*

The preceding interpretive assumptions about the logical structure of Fazang's argument support a four-part reconstruction. Consider, first, the basic level of Fazang's argument.

Subargument #1 (Basic Level)

- 1.1 There exists a respect R such that A exists with respect to R.
- 1.2 For any respect R, if A exists with respect to R, then the others are empty with respect to R.
- 1.3 For any respect R, if the others are empty with respect to R, then the others lack self-nature with respect to R.
- 1.4 For any respect R, if the others lack self-nature with respect to R, then A creates the others with respect to R.
- 1.5 For any respect R, if A creates the others with respect to R, then the others are identical to A with respect to R.
- 1.6 Therefore, there exists a respect R such that the others are identical to A with respect to R.

Subargument #2 (Basic Level)

- 2.1 There exists a respect R such that A is empty with respect to R.
- 2.2 For any respect R, if A is empty with respect to R, then the others exist with respect to R.
- 2.3 For any respect R, if the others exist with respect to R, then A lacks self-nature with respect to R.
- 2.4 For any respect R, if A lacks self-nature with respect to R, then the others create A with respect to R.
- 2.5 For any respect R, if the others create A with respect to R, then A is identical to the others with respect to R.
- 2.6 Therefore, there exists some respect R such that A is identical to the others with respect to R.

The term "A" in these arguments refers to a(n arbitrary) cause, while "the others" refers to the conditions on which that cause depends in originating its effect. From the point of view of self-essence, the cause is both existent and empty. The first premise in each reconstructed subargument reflects this point of view. The second and fourth premises in each subargument appear explicitly in Fazang's text (apart from their respect-relativity), while the third and fifth ensure that the reconstructions are deductively valid: each subargument is an extended *modus ponens* mediated through a series of hypothetical syllogisms.

3.3 *Derived Principles*

The subarguments, so reconstructed, exhibit three noteworthy features. The fourth, fifth, and sixth claims in the first subargument “mirror” their counterparts in the second subargument, in the sense that the final three claims of the second subargument are the final three claims of the first with the terms “A” and “the others” transposed. (Compare, for example, the fourth claim in each subargument: “if *the others* lack self-nature with respect to R, then A creates *the others* with respect to R” versus “if A lacks self-nature with respect to R, then *the others* create A with respect to R.”) Abstracting from the subjects of these claims thereby yields two principles:

Lacking Self-Nature entails Being Created

For any pair of cause and conditions, and for any respect R, the one from among this pair that lacks self-nature with respect to R is thereby created by the other with respect to R.

Being Created entails Being Identified

For any pair of causes and conditions, and for any respect R, the one from among this pair that is created by the other with respect to R is thereby identical to this other with respect to R.

The second claims in each subargument also resemble one another, in the following way: the second argument's second claim can be constructed from the first argument's second claim by transposing “A” and “the others” and forming the converse of the resulting conditional. (Begin with “if A exists with respect to R, then the others are empty with respect to R;” transpose to obtain “if the others exist with respect to R, then A is empty with respect to R;” then convert to “if A is empty with respect to R, then the others exist with respect to R.”) Abstraction thereby yields a third principle:

Existence and Emptiness Co-Vary

For any pair of causes and conditions, and for any respect R, the existence of the cause with respect to R entails the emptiness of the conditions with respect to R *and* the emptiness of the cause with respect to R entails the existence of the conditions with respect to R.

Finally, the second and third premises of the first subargument entail the following conditional: for any respect R, if A exists with respect to R, then the others lack self-nature with respect to R. This just is a “mirrored” version of the third premise from the second subargument (that A lacks self-nature with respect to R if the others exist with respect to R). Abstraction therefore yields a fourth principle:

Existence excludes Self-Nature

For any pair of causes and conditions, and for any respect R, if one from among this pair exists with respect to R, then the other lacks self-nature with respect to R.

Alternatively, the second and third premises of the second subargument entail the following conditional: for any respect R, if A is empty with respect to R, then A lacks self-nature with respect to R. This just is an instance of the third premise from the first subargument, with “A” replacing “the others.” Abstraction, accordingly, yields a fifth principle:

Emptiness entails Lacking Self-Nature

For any pair of cause and conditions, and for any respect R, the one from among this pair that is empty with respect to R thereby lacks self-nature with respect to R.

The preceding five principles provide adequacy constraints for interpreting key concepts from Fazang's argument and explaining Fazang's premises: an adequate interpretation of concepts should not render any of these principles analytically false, and an adequate explanation of Fazang's premises should reveal why Fazang might endorse these principles.

3.4 *Metalevel Reconstruction*

The meta-level of Fazang's argument provides further constraints. I reconstruct that level with two additional subarguments.

Subargument #3 (Meta-level)

- 3.1 The respect relative to which A exists is not the same as the respect relative to which the others exist.
- 3.2 The respect relative to which A is empty is not the same as the respect relative to which the others are empty.
- 3.3 For any respect R, if A exists with respect to R and A is empty with respect to R, then the others exist with respect to R.
- 3.4 Hence, for any respect R, if A exists with respect to R, there exists a respect $S \neq R$ such that A is empty with respect to S.
- 3.5 For any respect R, if A is empty with respect to R and A exists with respect to R, then the others are empty with respect to R.
- 3.6 Hence also, for any respect R, if A is empty with respect to R, there exists a respect $S \neq R$ such that A exists with respect to S.
- 3.7 Therefore, for any respect R, if the others are identical to A with respect to R, there exists a respect $S \neq R$ such that A is identical to the others with respect to S; and for any respect R, if A is identical to the others with respect to R, there exists a respect $S \neq R$ such that the others are identical to A with respect to S.

The first and second premises of this argument are interpretations of Fazang's claim about non-simultaneity (see Assumption 13.5 in Sect. 13.3.1). The third and fifth premises in this argument follow from the second premise of Subargument #2 and the second premise of Subargument #1, respectively (see Sect. 13.3.1). The fourth claim, and intermediate conclusion, follows from the argument's first and third premises; likewise, the sixth claim follows from the argument's second and fifth premises. The seventh, concluding claim follows from these intermediate conclusions together with the conclusions of the first two subarguments from the basic level.

While this reconstruction is logically valid, it does not exactly capture Fazang's reasoning. For it lacks the "never fail" aspect of Fazang's conclusion. Restricting

the number of respects to exactly two remedies this fault, and the next section proposes an interpretation of Fazang's central concepts that does just this (see Sect. 13.4.2 next). Nonetheless, on its own the reconstruction imposes an interpretive constraint that, whatever the notion of a respect happens to refer to, there should be at least two of them. The reconstruction of Fazang's final subargument imposes the additional constraint that these respects, whatever they are and however many there happen to be, should always obtain together.

Subargument #4 (Meta-level)

- 4.1 "A exists with respect to some R and the others are empty with respect to some R" and "the others do not exist with respect to some $S \neq R$ and A is not empty with respect to some $S \neq R$ " are jointly consistent.
- 4.2 There exist distinct respects R and S such that the others are identical to A with respect to R and A is identical to the others with respect to S.
- 4.3 If there exist distinct respects R and S such that the others are identical to A with respect to R and A is identical to the others with respect to S, then A and the others are mutually identical to each other.
- 4.4 Therefore, A and the others are mutually identical to each other.

The second premise of this argument reinterprets the conclusions of Fazang's basic level subarguments in light of the conclusion in Subargument #3, making explicit that the respect in which A is identical to the others differs from the respect in which the others are identical to A. The first premise, an interpretation of Fazang's claim about non-duality, asserts that the reinterpretation does not yield a contradiction; and the third premise is an interpretation of Fazang's claim about mutual identity (see Assumption 13.5 in Sect. 13.3.1). This reconstruction, like the prior one, is not entirely adequate. For it does not capture the "forever" aspect of Fazang's conclusion. But restricting the number of respects to exactly two remedies this fault, by excluding the possibility of a respect relative to which A is not identical to the others and the others are not identical to A (also see Sect. 13.4.2).

4 Interpreting the Content of Fazang's Argument

Reconstructing Fazang's argument requires more than reconstructing logical structure. Central concepts – self-nature, existence, emptiness, creation, and identity – require interpretation. Insofar as these concepts are relational, Fazang's meta-level arguments (Sect. 13.3.4) provide two constraints for a proper interpretation: first, the respects relative to which these concepts instantiate should be exactly two in number; second, these two respects always should obtain together. Fazang's basic level arguments (Sect. 13.3.2) provide one further constraint: the relations among the concepts should satisfy five general principles (Sect. 13.3.3). This section provides a historically sensitive interpretation that meets these three constraints without substantive use of metaphors (in contrast to Liu 1979: 407–409).

4.1 The Ti-Yong Paradigm

The basis for this interpretation is the so-called *ti-yong* 體用 paradigm. I conjecture that this paradigm specifies the respects relative to which central concepts of Fazang's argument come to be instantiated, and that it provides guidance for how to understand the meaning of the concepts themselves. (In the same way that intuitions concerning the distinction and relation between *reality* and *appearance* form the basis for many philosophical systems throughout European history, intuitions concerning the distinction and relation between *ti* and *yong* form the basis for the many philosophical systems throughout East Asian history. This is not to say that the intuitions are the same: identity of epistemological role does not entail identity of conceptual content.)

The *ti-yong* paradigm stretches into the distant past of East Asian philosophizing, descending from the older "root-function" paradigm. For example, Xunzi 荀子 (312–230 BCE) characterizes a thing's essential core as "root" and its usefulness as "function," and the historian Sima Tan 司馬談 (165–110 BCE) characterizes non-being as "root" and cause-effect as "function" (Zhang 2002: 242). During the Western Jin, the political theorist Yuan Zhun 袁準 (3rd cent.) characterizes inner nature as "stuff" and outer matter as "function;" and the Imperial Secretary Zheng Xianzhi 鄭鮮之 (364–427), styled Daozi 道子, characterizes form's stillness and spirit's motion as "root" while characterizing as "function" both form's causing spirit and spirit's causing form. Responding to Zheng Xianzhi, Fan Zhen 范縝 (c.450–c.510) characterizes a knife as "stuff" or "form" and the knife's sharpness as "function" or "spirit" (Zhang 2002: 244).

The actual terminology of *ti* and *yong* seems to originate when Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), styled Fusi 輔嗣, characterizes *wu* 無 (non-existence) as *ti* and *you* 有 (existence) as *yong* in his commentary on Chapter 38 of the *Laozi* (Zhang 2002: 243; Chan 1963: 791; Suh 1997: 51). But this terminology seems not to have become popular until the Southern and Northern dynasties (Koseki 1982: 58, reporting research by Shimada Kenji). The paradigm is especially popular among Buddhists. Instances occur prominently within the Sanlun 三論宗 tradition, with Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) characterizing *prajñā* (wisdom) as *ti* and *upāya* (skillful means) as *yong*, *wu* as *ti* and *you* as *yong*, supreme truth as *ti* and worldly truth as *yong*, the middle path as *ti* and the two truths as *yong* (Shih 2004: 156–174). Within the Huayan tradition, Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668) characterizes Buddha as *ti* and *dharma* as *yong* (Park 1993: 112); and Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) characterizes a text's xylographic printing as *ti* and its reading as *yong* (Chen 2007: 212). Huineng 慧能 (638–713), from the Chan 禪 tradition, characterizes meditation as *ti* and *prajñā* (discernment) as *yong*, true suchness as *ti* and thinking as *yong*, a lamp as *ti* and the lamp's light as *yong* (Zhang 2002: 248); and he emphasizes the inseparability and non-duality of *ti* and *yong* (Park 1993: 36).

These precedents establish four paradigmatic features for the *ti-yong* relation. First, a thing's *ti* and *yong* aspects are necessarily complementary: nothing is absolutely *ti*, and nothing is absolutely *yong* (see also Kong 1979: 52). Whence, for example, a lamp is *ti* with respect to its nature but *yong* with respect to its light, and

Table 13.2 The *Ti-Yong* Paradigm

Aspect	<i>ti</i>	<i>yong</i>
Analysis	Deep, fundamental, internal	Apparent, manifest, external
Examples	nature	behavior
	lamp	light
	knife's stuff	knife's sharpness
	meditation	<i>prajñā</i>
	<i>prajñā</i>	<i>upāya</i>
	form	spirit
	spirit	form

a knife is *ti* with respect to its form but *yong* with respect to its sharpness. Second, nothing is ever both *ti* and *yong* in the same respect. Whence, for example, *prajñā* is *ti* with respect to *upāya* but *yong* with respect to meditation, and form is *ti* with respect to its stillness but *yong* with respect to its causing spirit. Third, the *ti* aspect is deeper and more fundamental than the *yong* aspect. Whence, for example, *ti* is inner while *yong* is outer, and a knife's substance is responsible for the knife's sharpness. Fourth and finally, these aspects of distinct things are exchangeable if those things are mutually reliant in some way. Whence, for example, form is *yong* with respect to causing spirit and spirit is *yong* with respect to causing form. Table 13.2 summarizes these elements of the *ti-yong* paradigm and their precedents.

(These paradigmatic features survive into the Song period. ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) characterizes hands as *ti* with respect to their pointing motions but *yong* with respect to their bodies (Zhang 2002: 252). CHENG Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) characterizes *ti* as hidden and *yong* as apparent (Zhang 2002: 249). Commenting on the *yin-yang* relation, ZHU Xi claims, “If one is speaking of *yang* then *yang* is substance [*ti*] and *yin* is function [*yong*]; if one is speaking of *yin* then *yin* is substance and *yang* is function” (Zhang 2002: 252). Muller (1996, 1999) also reconstructs many pre-Han concept pairs as having these features.)

4.2 Appropriation of the *Ti-Yong* Paradigm

I conjecture that Fazang's analysis of mutually reliant *dharma*s involves a creative appropriation of the *ti-yong* paradigm (see also Oh 1976: 167–170; Kong 1979: 50–51; Odin 1982: 23–26; Jones 2010b: 227). Following well-established precedent in the Buddhist tradition, Fazang analyzes each collection of mutually reliant *dharma*s into a cause (“A”) and a plurality of remaining conditions (“the others”). For ease of reference, call this a **coordinate frame** for the collection. Fazang indicates that no such frame is privileged: for any collection of mutually reliant *dharma*s, there are as many ways to distinguish cause from conditions as there are ways to segregate the collection into distinct groups (see Ronkin 2005: 206; Liu 1979: 398–399 and 405–406). So, for example, one coordinate frame for a tripod of three

mutually supporting sticks analyses the one stick as cause and the other two as conditions; another coordinate frame, ontologically on par with the first, analyses a different stick as cause and the remaining others as conditions; and so on.

Fazang's approach allows each collection of mutually reliant *dharmas* to have many coordinate frames, such that each frame has two elements: a cause (A) and a plurality of conditions (the others). Applying the *ti-yong* paradigm, it follows that each of these elements has two aspects: a *ti* aspect and a *yong* aspect. Since, according to the *ti-yong* paradigm, nothing is ever both *ti* and *yong* in the same respect, each coordinate frame seems to have four possible respects:

- cause as *ti* and conditions as *ti*;
- cause as *ti* and conditions as *yong*;
- cause as *yong* and conditions as *ti*;
- cause as *yong* and conditions as *yong*.

For ease of reference, call each of these possibilities a **presentation** (for a particular coordinate frame). Since *yong* mutually relies upon *ti* according to the *ti-yong* paradigm, and since cause mutually relies upon conditions according to Fazang's argumentative assumptions, only two of the preceding respects – cause as *ti* and conditions as *yong*, cause as *yong* and conditions as *ti* – are genuine possibilities. For only these possibilities present a *yong* element and a separate *ti* element. Thus, each coordinate frame for a collection of mutually reliant *dharmas* has exactly two *actual* presentations.

4.3 Interpretation with the Ti-Yong Paradigm

Suppose, then, for the sake of interpretive explanation, that the *ti* aspect of each *dharma* presents as existent while the *yong* aspect of each *dharma* presents as empty. Then it is natural to interpret the properties mentioned in Subargument #1 (Sect. 13.3.2) as obtaining with respect to the presentation in which the cause is *ti* and its conditions are *yong*, and the properties mentioned in Subargument #2 (Sect. 13.3.2) as obtaining with respect to the presentation in which the cause is *yong* and its conditions are *ti*. Since there are no other actual presentations, this interpretation thereby guarantees that there are exactly two respects relative to which the properties mentioned in those arguments can obtain.

4.3.1 Existence and Emptiness

This interpretive assumption also explains why *Existence and Emptiness Co-Vary*: causes (conditions) exist by virtue of presenting as *ti*, and the necessary complementarity of *ti* and *yong* entails that causes (conditions) present as *ti* if and only if their conditions (causes) present as *yong* and are thereby empty. Suppose also, following standard Mahayana doctrine, that *Emptiness entails Lacking Self-Nature*.

Then it follows that *Existence excludes Self-Nature*: since *Existence and Emptiness Co-Vary*, causes (conditions) exist just if conditions (causes) are empty; but since conditions (causes) are empty only if they lack self-nature, causes (conditions) exist only if conditions (causes) lack self-nature.

4.3.2 Creation

This *ti-yong* interpretation also explains why *Lacking Self-Nature entails Being Created* and why *Being Created entails Being Identified*. The explanation, however, is less straightforward and requires briefly analyzing Fazang's concepts of creation and identity. (The concepts of existence, self-nature, and emptiness are fairly straightforward, or at least clear enough to warrant no significant interpretive disagreement among recent commentators: to be existent is to have a semblance of existence, "self-nature" refers to *svabhava*, and to be empty is to be lacking *svabhava*. See Table 13.1 in Sect. 13.2.)

Consider, first, the concept of creation and some paradigmatic examples. A perfume's essential oil creates an odor by determining the characteristics the perfume imparts to air; a lamp creates light by determining the characteristics of the wavelengths emitted into the air; and a knife creates sharpness by determining the characteristics of the blade's edge. (There are modern examples, too. A computer's electrical charges create its software performance by determining the software's output (see Rickles Sect. 13.1).) In each of these cases, creation is a kind of property determination (or supervenience), such that one thing **creates** another by determining the characteristics of the other. Moreover, in these and similar cases, that which does the creating is *ti* while that which is created is *yong*: knife creates sharpness, lamp creates light, oil creates odor. If this analysis is correct, the *ti-yong* interpretation explains why *Lacking Self-Nature entails Being Created*. Since causes (conditions) lack self-nature by virtue of presenting as *yong*, the necessary complementarity of *ti* and *yong* entails that conditions (causes) present as *ti* when their causes (conditions) present as *yong*. Since, further, the *ti* component creates the *yong* component for any *ti-yong* pairing, causes (conditions) lack self-nature only if they are created by their conditions (causes).

4.3.3 Identity

Consider, next, the concept of identity. Because Fazang often asserts that *dharma*s are identical with each other despite having different properties, Fazang's concept clearly is not numerical. Beyond this, interpretive disagreement reigns (at least among English-language commentators). Some interpret it as a kind of symmetric relation: "identity and interdependence are simply two different ways of looking at one situation" (Cook 1977: 373); "the identity relation is ... merely necessary coexistence" (Liu 2006: 259). (For similar interpretations, see King 1979: 390 and Jones 2009: 205.) Others interpret Fazang's concept of identity as a kind of asymmetric

relation: M.W. Liu translates phrases of the form “x is identical with y” as “y determines x” (Liu 1979: 427, note 25), while Park understands such phrases to mean that the identity of y “makes possible” the identity of x (Park 2008: 164–165).

Each of these interpretations is inadequate. According to *Being Created entails Being Identified*, a principle abstracted from Subarguments #1 and #2 (Sect. 13.3.2), that one *dharma* is created by another suffices to establish that the former is identical to the latter. Because *being created by* is an asymmetric relation, and because asymmetric relations alone never suffice for symmetric relations, interpreting identity as a kind of symmetric relation thereby amounts to attributing an invalid inference to Fazang. This is uncharitable. Moreover, Fazang seems to distinguish between identity and mutual identity: his basic level arguments (Sect. 13.3.2) establish relations of identity between cause and conditions, while his meta-level arguments (Sect. 13.3.4) establish a relation of mutual identity between cause and conditions. Since symmetrically related *dharms* are already mutually related but asymmetrically related *dharms* are not, interpreting Fazang’s concept of identity as a kind of asymmetric relation is more promising. But extant candidates for such an interpretation also are inadequate.

M.W. Liu’s interpretation does not distinguish between *being identical with* and *being created by*. Since Liu does not illustrate his notion of determination with examples other than Fazang’s, his interpretation does not clarify Fazang’s meaning. Since he does not interpret the creation relation, his interpretation also does not help to explain why Fazang might endorse *Being Created entails Being Identified*. Park succumbs to similar problems. Although she illustrates her notion of possibility-making, her example obfuscates the meaning of the identity relation. Supposing that each letter of the English language cannot have meaning outside of the English linguistic system, Park writes,

When one says “apple,” each letter, “a,” “p,” “l,” and “e,” exists within the structure of the English linguistic system. An “a” cannot exist by itself, nor does it have any extrinsic meaning. Hence, when the word “apple” is articulated, an “a” or a “p” and other letters in this word have the same value, which Huayan Buddhism calls “mutual identity”: the identity of “a” makes possible the identity of “p” and vice versa; the identities of “a” and “p” arise simultaneously through mutual indebtedness (Park 2008: 165).

This example is confusing, for several reasons. First, many letters in the English-language alphabet also appear in the alphabets of other languages (such as French, Spanish, and German). Second, if the English linguistic system contains words in addition to letters, it would be more comprehensive than the English language alphabet and thereby a more plausible candidate for what makes possible the identity of English language letters; yet Park’s example does not make clear why the identity of “a,” rather than (or in addition to) the English linguistic system, makes possible identity of “p.” Finally, because the loss of English language letters for “æ” (ash), “œ” (ethel), and “Þ” (thorn) has not obviously affected the identity of the letter “a,” Park’s example does not make clear the sense in which some letter identities make possible other letter identities: for instance, if the identity of “Þ” once made possible the identity of “a,” it seems that “a” should not exist in a language missing “Þ” from its alphabet and that any language with “a” in its alphabet also should

contain “P.” Moreover, apart from worries about Park’s example, her interpretation does not help with understanding the difference between creation and identity; nor does it help to explain why Fazang might endorse *Being Created entails Being Identified*. (This is not a criticism of Park’s work, which is not intended to provide an analysis of Fazang’s argument.)

Despite their individual shortcomings, M.W. Liu’s and Park’s interpretations of the concept of identity provide guidance for a more adequate one. Liu’s interpretation suggests that identity is a kind of asymmetric determination; Park’s, that the relata for the concept are identities of some kind. These suggestions combine to yield an interpretation according to which *x is identical with y* just in case the identity of *y* (asymmetrically) determines the identity of *x*. This interpretation explains why *Being Created entails Being Identified*, insofar as a *dharma*’s identity is a (proper) subset of its characteristics. For being created by another amounts to having one’s characteristics determined by that other and thereby having one’s identity determined by that other; and if identity (the relation) is asymmetric determination of identity (the characteristic), having one’s identity determined by another entails being identical with that other. So understood, the class of things identical one with the other is a subclass of the things created one by the other.

The *ti-yong* paradigm provides examples that illustrate and confirm this interpretation. For every *ti-yong* pairing involves an identity relation whereby the *ti*, in creating the *yong*, thereby imparts a characteristic identity to that *yong*. A perfume’s essential oil, in creating the perfume’s odor, thereby imparts a characteristic identity to that odor; a person’s nature, in creating the person’s behavior, thereby imparts a characteristic identity to that behavior; and so on. The identity so transmitted in these cases is qualitative rather than numerical: oil remains distinct from odor, nature remains distinct from behavior. It is also non-reciprocal: because a perfume’s odor does not create its oil, the odor does not impart a characteristic identity to the oil; and because the person’s behavior does not create their nature, behavior does not impart a characteristic identity to that nature.

4.4 *Justification of the Interpretation*

The preceding interpretation acknowledges the paradigmatic features of the *ti-yong* relation (Sect. 13.4.1). Because it takes *dharma*s to present as both *ti* and *yong*, the interpretation acknowledges that neither *ti* nor *yong* is absolute. Because *dharma*s are existent when presenting as *ti* and empty when presenting as *yong*, and since being existent is not the same as being empty, the interpretation acknowledges that nothing is both *ti* and *yong* in the same respect. Because it deems the *ti* aspect of each *dharma* to be creative, and insofar as that which creates is more fundamental than that which is created, the interpretation acknowledges that the *ti* aspect is more fundamental than the *yong* aspect. Finally, because it allows the *ti* and *yong* aspects of distinct but mutually reliant *dharma*s to be exchanged, it acknowledges the relevant constraint on *ti-yong* exchangeability.

From a scholarly point of view, perhaps the most significant optional element of the preceding interpretation is the choice to characterize the *ti* aspect of *dharmas* as existent and the *yong* aspect as empty. This choice coheres with the many other precedents that treat the *ti* aspect as creative and fundamental, because Fazang takes emptiness to entail being created and identified by (see Sect. 13.3.2). However, some precedents seem to favor an alternative interpretation, according to which the *ti* aspect of *dharmas* is empty and the *yong* aspect is existent. For example, both Wang Bi and Jizang claim that *wu* (non-existence) is *ti*. But it is not clear that Wang Bi regards *ti* as deeper or more fundamental than *yong* (Suh 1997: 52). Nor is it clear that Jizang's precedent would be binding, given the notion, introduced by Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), that there is no privileged ordering of existence and emptiness by virtue of each embodying the significance of the other (see Liu 1994: 228). Moreover, I am not aware of any solid evidence about whether Fazang associates *ti* with existence or, instead, with emptiness (or with neither). So this chapter's interpretive choice remains speculative, and the primary support I offer in its favor is the insight it lends regarding why Fazang might endorse various principles about existence and emptiness (see Sects. 13.3.3 and 13.4.1).

Nonetheless, I conjecture that Fazang's familiarity with the *tathāgatagarbha* literature would influence him to associate *ti* with existence and *yong* with emptiness. That literature often portrays *tathāgatagarbha* as precious and concealed, and that which conceals *tathāgatagarbha* as impure or filthy. For example, the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* likens *tathāgatagarbha* to pure honey surrounded by a swarm of bees, grain covered by husk, treasure buried in the dirty ground, a golden statue inside a scorched and blackened mold, and a Buddha statue wrapped in a worn-out rug (Zimmerman 2002: 110–144). These analogies present *tathāgatagarbha* as deeper and more fundamental than that which conceals, in the way that *ti* is deeper and more fundamental than *yong*. If there is a sense in which *tathāgatagarbha*, so portrayed, is existent rather than empty, the *tathāgatagarbha* literature would therefore provide some basis for associating *ti* with existence rather than emptiness.

For the most part, the *tathāgatagarbha* literature does not associate *tathāgatagarbha* with either existence or with emptiness (see Wang 2003: 55–65). Some passages seem to portray *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha-nature) as existent. For example, the *Buddha Nature Treatise* (Foxing Lun 佛性論) notes that “the five virtues of overcoming the five manifest errors manifest the existence (*yu*) of Buddha-nature” (quoted in King 1997: 183). In the context of the text, these associations of *tathāgatagarbha* with existence are entirely pedagogical, soteriological devices for encouraging Buddhist practice (King 1997: 183–184). Fazang, however, seems to depart from this strict soteriological approach. For example, in his *Treatise on the Golden Lion*, Fazang contrasts the golden substance of a lion statue with the outward aspects of the statue. Fazang claims that “the gold (metal of the lion) lacks any inherent nature of its own,” that “the (outward) aspect of the lion is

void,” and that “the lion is not (really) existent, whereas its gold substance is not non-existent” (Fung 1983: 341–342). Insofar as not being non-existent entails being existent in some sense, Fazang seems to associate the lion’s golden substance with existence and its outward aspects with emptiness. Because the golden substance is akin to *tathāgatagarbha* while the outward aspects are akin to discriminations that conceal the unified substance, and because *tathāgatagarbha* is deeper and more fundamental than that which conceals, Fazang’s analogy seems to provide at least one instance in which he explicitly associates *ti* with existence and *yong* with emptiness. Unfortunately, exploring this possibility further is beyond the scope of this chapter.

From a philosophical point of view, perhaps the most significant contention by the preceding interpretation is the claim that an element can present as both *ti* and *yong* relative to some other element (albeit with respect to a different presentation). While there is a tendency prior to Fazang to treat *ti* and *yong* as non-dual and complementary, there is also a tendency to provide examples in which an element presents as *ti* relative to one element and *yong* relative to a distinct (third) element (see Sect. 13.4.1). Nonetheless, ZHENG Xianzhi 鄭鮮之 provides a relevant precedent in characterizing as “function” (an ancestor to *yong*) form’s causing spirit and spirit’s causing form. Moreover, this kind of example is not an isolated phenomenon. ZHU Xi characterizes *yin* and *yang* as *ti* and *yong* relative to each other in one respect but as *yong* and *ti* relative to each other in a different respect (see Sect. 13.4.1). If my interpretation is correct, these cases strongly resemble Fazang’s characterization of cause and condition, especially insofar as *yin* and *yang*, like Fazang’s cause and conditions, are mutually reliant.

Moreover, there is a theoretical reason for why Fazang, if not all Buddhists, should endorse the exchangeability of *ti* and *yong* among mutually reliant elements. Consider, as the causal nexus of interest, the collection of all *dharmas*. There is a coordination of this nexus in which one particular *dharma* is cause and all of the remaining *dharmas* are conditions. There is, further, a presentation of this coordination relative to which the cause is *ti* and the conditions are *yong*. Suppose, for the sake of argument and contrary to my interpretive contention, that *ti* and *yong* are not exchangeable. Then there is no second presentation relative to which the conditions are *ti* and the cause is *yong*. Fazang’s Subargument #1 (Sect. 13.3.2) thereby entails that the cause creates the conditions but the conditions do not create the cause. Since, apart from the cause and the conditions, there are no other *dharmas*, the preceding argumentative supposition entails that the cause is *uncreated*. This entailment violates Fazang’s commitment to the mutual reliance of cause and conditions, and it contravenes the Madhyamaka injunction against *dharmas* with self-nature (see Sect. 13.2). Hence, it is reasonable to suppose that Fazang endorses the exchangeability of *ti* and *yong* among mutually reliant elements (in order to avoid such unsavory results) even if precedents available to him tend not to do so.

5 Foundation and Application of Fazang's Reasoning

5.1 *Metaphysical Scheme*

The *ti-yong* paradigm, together with various interpretive assumptions, supports a charitable, historically sensitive, textually grounded, and analytic reconstruction of Fazang's argument that mutually reliant *dharmas* are mutually identical. This reconstruction reveals several foundational presumptions for Fazang's reasoning. These presumptions concern how to understand the nature of *dharmas* when those *dharmas* are components of a mutually reliant causal nexus. If the reconstruction is correct, Fazang abstains from privileging any particular view about which *dharmas* in such a nexus qualify as cause and which qualify as conditions. Instead, he accommodates all such views by relativizing his reasoning to what I have called *coordinations* (Sect. 13.4.2). Specifically, Fazang seems to presume

Cause-Condition Coordination

For any causal nexus N of mutually reliant *dharmas* a, b, \dots, n , there exist many coordination frames such that, for each frame C_x , *dharma* x is the cause and the remaining *dharmas* $N \setminus \{x\}$ are the conditions.

Since (I conjecture that) Fazang maintains that everything has both *ti* and *yong* aspects, and since these aspects are necessarily complementary, it follows that each coordination frame has a *ti* aspect and a *yong* aspect. The *ti* aspect is that which determines the characteristics of another, while the *yong* aspect is that which is characteristically determined by another (see Sect. 13.4.1 and Table 13.2). If my reconstruction is correct, Fazang abstains from viewing the cause or conditions of any coordination frame as uniquely *ti* or uniquely *yong*. Whence he claims that all *dharmas*, by virtue of their mutual identity, are such that “as one is presented as the chief, the others become the retinue” (Cook 1970: 502). Insofar as a *dharma* has the capacity to present itself as privileged cause (the “chief”) in one respect but also as one among many conditions (the “retinue”) in another respect, Fazang accommodates all possible views about privileging by further relativizing his reasoning to what I have called *presentations* (Sect. 13.4.2). In doing so, Fazang presumes

Coordination Presentations

For any coordination frame C of a causal nexus N , there are exactly two presentations: one which presents the cause (according to C) as *ti* and the remaining conditions (according to C) as *yong*, another which presents the cause (according to C) as *yong* and the remaining conditions (according to C) as *ti*.

These presentations are the respects relative to which *dharmas* have or lack various properties. Fazang seems to presume that some of these properties are fundamental, others derived. The fundamental properties, with which Fazang begins his reasoning, are *being existent* and *being empty* (see Sect. 13.3.1 and Table 13.1). Fazang understands these properties in a fairly straightforward manner: to be existent is to have a semblance of existence, while to be empty is to lack self-nature (*svabhava*). The derivative properties, possession of which Fazang takes to follow from possession of the fundamental properties, are *being creative of* (and its inverse *being*

Table 13.3 Fazang's metaphysical scheme

	Aspect	Fundamental property	Derivative properties
x	<i>Ti</i>	Existent	Creative of, identifying for
y	<i>yong</i>	Empty	Created by, identical with

created by) and *being identical with* (and its inverse *being identifying for*). These properties have less straightforward meanings, but Fazang seems to hold that to be creative of is to determine the characteristics of, and that to be identical with is to have one's characteristic identity determined by (see Sects. 13.4.3.2 and 13.4.3.3). Table 13.3 summarizes this metaphysical scheme, with the variables x and y ambiguously representing, respectively, a cause and its conditions (according to one presentation of a causal nexus' coordination frame) or the conditions and their cause (according to the other presentation of a causal nexus' coordination frame).

This scheme explains why Fazang claims that the existence of a cause entails that the cause creates and identifies its mutually reliant conditions (Subargument #1, Sect. 13.3.2), why he claims that the emptiness of a cause entails that the cause is created by and identical with those conditions (Subargument #2, Sect. 13.3.2), why he claims that a cause and its mutually reliant conditions never fail to be identical with each other (Subargument #3, Sect. 13.3.4), and why he claims that a cause and its mutually reliant conditions are forever mutually identical (Subargument #4, Sect. 13.3.4).

5.2 The Ten Coins Analogy

This metaphysical scheme also helps with understanding Fazang's analogy of the ten coins – a metaphor he offers to illustrate the doctrine of mutual identity among mutually reliant *dharma*s. Fazang considers the relation between a collection of ten coins and one of the coins within that collection. This “one,” as he calls it, “is not the common-sense ‘one’ [but rather] the one formed by conditions, without a [self-] nature” (Cook 1970: 484). The one coin, in other words, is part of a mutually reliant collection of coins, and the remaining nine coins in the collection are the conditions for this coin. His metaphor, then, maps “the one” as “A” and “the ten” (the other nine coins) as “the others.” Fazang develops this analogy in two ways: first, in a “progressive order” illustrating that the one determines the characteristic identity of the ten; second, in a “descending order” illustrating that the ten determine the characteristic identity of the one.

The first [progressive order] has ten [coins]. The first is one. Why is that? Because it is formed by conditions. [Finally,] one is ten. Why is that? Because if there were no one, there would be no ten. One has an essence and the others are all empty, so for this reason, this one is ten. In this way, each of the [coins] of the progressive order up to ten can be understood in the same way.

When we speak of the descending order, there are also ten [coins]. The first is ten. Why is this? Because of its formation by conditions. [Finally,] ten is identical with one. Why is this? Because if there were no ten, there could not be a one. Because one is empty and the others all exist, therefore, the ten are identical with the one. In going down this way to one, you can understand everything in the same way as the foregoing. As a result of this concept, you should know that each coin is many coins (Cook 1970: 481–482).

Extant discussions of this metaphor are less than fully satisfactory. Cook and Park paraphrase Fazang's reasoning; but they do not explain how the analogy is supposed to illustrate mutual identity (see Cook 1977: 374–375, Park 2008: 167–168). Liu offers an explanation rather than a paraphrase (see Liu 1979: 413–414, Liu 1982: 62–69). However, he inverts Fazang's explanatory order, taking the coins' mutual identity to explain their existence and emptiness: “[s]ince the totality of dharmas and the individual dharma each determines the other's essence, we can say that the totality of dharmas is ‘empty’, the individual dharma is ‘existent’ (Liu 1979: 414). My reconstruction of Fazang's argument about mutual identity suggests a better explanation.

I conjecture that the metaphor presupposes a coordination frame in which ten mutually reliant coins divide into one coin acting as cause and nine others (misleadingly named “ten”) acting as conditions. This frame has two presentations: a “progressive” one in which coin one is *tī* and the remaining coins are *yong*, and a “descending” one in which coin one is *yong* and the remaining coins are *tī*. Coin one is “first” relative to the progressive presentation, because it presents as *tī* and *tī* is more fundamental. So presented, coin one exists, creates the remaining coins, and determines the characteristic identity of those coins. But since, relative to the progressive presentation, the remaining coins present as *yong*, they are empty, created by coin one, and determined in their characteristic identity by that one. Similarly, the remaining nine coins are “first” relative to the descending presentation, because they present as *tī*. So presented, these coins exist and determine the characteristic identity of coin one. And since, relative to this presentation, coin one presents as *yong*, it is empty, it is created by the other coins, and it is determined in its characteristic identity by those coins. Different coordination frames, of course, privilege different coins as cause. But since the same reasoning applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for these other coordination frames, each separate coin both determines the identity of, and has its identity determined by, the other coins in the collection (relative to different presentations, of course). Whence Fazang remarks that “each coin is many coins.”

6 The Inexhaustible Freedom of Dependent Origination

6.1 *Profundities of Mutual Identity*

Fazang culminates his *Treatise on the Five Teachings* with a series of ten “inexhaustible” profundities. Three of these concern mutual identity. First, because mutually identical *dharmas* are “simultaneous related and form one dependent origination,” “[t]here are no distinctions of prior and subsequent, first and last, etc.” (Cook 1970: 496). Generally, no *dharma* has absolute privilege over the others; specifically, each

is cause (relative to one coordination frame) and condition (relative to another). Second, dependently originating *dharma*s are

mutually identified freely. All [the *dharma*s of dependent origination] are [such that] one is identical with all and all are identical with one, and they are perfectly free and unhindered in their interfusion (Cook 1970: 498).

This perfect freedom follows from the complementarity of presentations: existing relative to one presentation does not hinder being empty relative to another; being created relative to one presentation does not hinder being creative relative to another; and so on. Such freedom is a corollary of the *ti-yong* paradigm (Sect. 13.4.1 and Table 13.2). This paradigm also explains a third profundity, the “mystery of the simultaneous formation of the hidden and revealed.” Fazang claims that the one and the many “simultaneously exist in their obscurity and manifestation” (Cook 1970: 515). He uses the metaphor of the ten coins to illustrate:

the ten coins in the first coin, above, are said to be manifested, while the second coin, from the point of view of the ten coins within the one, is said to be hidden. Why is this? Because if you see these [ten coins in the one], you do not see the others [such as the second, third, etc., coins], because there is no connection between them. Even if there is no connection between them, however, because when one is formed the others are formed, both are said to be formed (Cook 1970: 516).

According to the *ti-yong* paradigm, the *ti* aspect of a thing is hidden, while the *yong* aspect of a thing is manifest. When the one coin determines the characteristic identity of the remaining coins, the one coin presents as *ti* and the other coins present as *yong*. Hence, when the one coin determines the characteristic identity of the remaining coins, the one coin is hidden while the others are manifest. Fazang's claim follows if we suppose (as Fazang seems to do) that one thing (or collection of things) includes another whenever the latter determines the characteristic identity of the former. Moreover, since coin one presents as *ti* relative to the presentation by which the other coins present as *yong*, revealing the nine coins simultaneously conceals coin one.

Fazang discusses further “inexhaustible” profundities, primarily concerning the relation of *dharma*s to the *tathāgatagarbha*. These, however, are a topic for another occasion (but see Liu 1979: 460–482; Jiang 2001: 460–468; Vorenkamp 2004: 254–258). So, too, are extensions of this chapter's analysis to Fazang's arguments about mutual inclusion and his other metaphors (such as Indra's net). Despite these limitations, this chapter's results have implications beyond the narrow confines of scholarship on Huayan Buddhism.

6.2 Absolute Substances and Ontological Foundations

One prominent doctrine of contemporary Anglo-American metaphysicians is that being a substance is absolute. Lowe, for example, defines a substance as

an object which does not depend logically for its existence upon the existence of any object distinct from itself (other than its own proper parts, if it has any) and does not depend logically for its identity upon the identity of any object distinct from itself (Lowe 1994: 534).

Heil uses a similar definition to argue that substances are the only objects that legitimately bear properties (Heil 2012: 12–27). Lowe and Heil disagree on examples. For Lowe, composite concrete individuals – such as this horse or that clock – are substances (Lowe 1994: 536–537). Yet for Heil, the only substances are simples – such as electrons, bosons, and fields (Heil 2012: 18). Despite these disagreements, both seem to allow that substances change: the same clock can move its hands and have its parts replaced (Lowe 1994: 545), and presumably the same electron can have its spin altered or jump from a ground state to an excited state. Most importantly, both Lowe and Heil seem to presuppose that substances are substances *simpliciter*.

Fazang's doctrine of mutual identity, however, challenges this presumption. If my reconstruction is correct, Fazang holds that all *dharma*s are substances (of a sort) relative to some coordination frame or other. For suppose that all *dharma*s mutually rely upon each other. (There are reasons to think Fazang accepts this supposition; further discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Cook 1979.) *Cause-Condition Coordination* (Sect. 13.5.1) thereby entails that, for each *dharma*, there is a coordination frame in which that *dharma* is cause and the remaining *dharma*s are conditions. *Coordination Presentations* (Sect. 13.5.1) further entails that, for this frame, there is a presentation in which the causal *dharma* presents as *ti* and the other *dharma*s present as *yong*. Fazang's argument concerning mutual identity through different essence (Sect. 13.3) demonstrates that, while the other *dharma*s depend for their existence and identity upon the causal *dharma* (by virtue of being empty and created by the causal *dharma*), the causal *dharma* does not so depend upon the others. Such dependence, moreover, does not violate Lowe's constraint that existential and identity dependence are asymmetric relations (Lowe 1994: 534–535). For Fazang's notion of dependence remains an asymmetric relation, by virtue of being relativized to presentations and coordination frames. Hence, insofar as a substance does not depend upon others for its existence or identity, Fazang's metaphysical scheme entails that, for any *dharma*, there is a presentation for a coordination frame relative to which that *dharma* is a substance and yet there also is a separate presentation, for a different coordination frame, relative to which the same *dharma* is not a substance. Fazang's argument, accordingly, seems to make of *substance* what Einstein made of *motion*: objects (*dharma*s) are not substances *simpliciter*, but rather substances only relative to some coordination frame chosen as a point of reference. (This interpretation of Fazang's approach to substance is neutral regarding whether, so understood, substances have parts or undergo changes. Fazang seems to hold that parts mutually rely upon their wholes but that wholes cannot survive changes to their parts (Jiang 2001; Jones 2010b). If wholes – such as buildings – qualify as *dharma*s in the sense relevant to Fazang's argument about mutual identity, it is reasonable to infer that some Fazangian substances are composite and, in some sense, beyond change.)

Fazang's metaphysical scheme offers a similar challenge for a second doctrine prominent among contemporary Anglo-American metaphysicians, namely, ontological foundationalism. This doctrine, closely related to the first, maintains that there must be foundational, independently existing objects on pain of vicious

infinite regress. Schaffer supports this doctrine with a representative version of the ontological regress argument:

There must be a ground [foundation] of being. If one thing exists only *in virtue of* another, then there must be something from which the reality of the derivative entities ultimately derives (Schaffer 2010: 37; also see Lowe 1994: 548–549).

There are, of course, challenges to this argument within the Anglo-American tradition. For example, Priest (2009) invokes non-well-founded set theory to construct a model of a non-vicious ontological regress. Fazang's metaphysical scheme offers an alternative criticism: although regresses of being always end, these endings are not foundations *simpliciter*. If all objects (*dharma*s) mutually rely upon each other, being foundational relative to one coordination frame does not entail being foundational relative to all coordination frames – indeed, whatever is foundational relative to one frame is not foundational relative to many others. For there are many coordination frames, none of which are privileged, each of which coordinates a different object as cause (or substance, or foundation). Such, in any case, is a sketch of how one might use Fazang's metaphysics to critically engage contemporary metaphysical debates.

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Appendix: Notes on Methodology

Several kinds of English-language scholarship examine Fazang's claims about mutual identity. Some are expository, focused on paraphrasing claims, reorganizing argument presentation, and adding illustrative examples (see Cook 1977 and Cleary 1983). Others are comparative, contrasting Fazang's claims with similar theses from other philosophical traditions and cultural contexts (King 1979 and Fahy 2012). Some are heuristic, providing warrants for Fazang's claims without regard for their textual basis (see Jones 2009 and Jones 2010a). Others are anachronistic, interpreting Fazang's claims with distinctively modern resources such as set theory or Jungian psychology (see Priest 2009 and Odin 1982). Some, finally, mystify Fazang, taking his use of paradoxical-sounding language to indicate an embrace of genuine contradictions (see Wright 1982).

This chapter's approach to reconstruction and interpretation differs from each of these efforts in (at least one of) four ways. First, it is charitable rather than mystifying: it presumes that Fazang does not endorse contradictory claims. Second, it is historically sensitive rather than anachronistic, restricted to principles and warrants with which Fazang likely would have been familiar. Third, it is textually grounded rather than heuristic, focused on claims and arguments as they actually appear in Fazang's writings. Fourth and finally, it is analytic rather than expository or comparative, honoring four prescriptions for rhetorical style:

1. Presume that claims admit of adequate formulation in logically manipulable sentences.
2. Prioritize precision, clarity, and logical coherence.
3. Avoid substantive use of metaphor and other devices the propositional content of which outstrips their semantic content.
4. Work with well-understood primitive concepts, and concepts analyzable with reference thereto (Rea 2013: 574).

In this chapter, respecting these prescriptions involves interpreting central concepts, identifying warrants and missing premises, reconstructing argument structure, and explaining inferential transitions within arguments.

Analytic reconstructions have their limitations. For example, they risk obscuring narrative insights, weakening metaphorical content for methodological rather than substantial reasons, and rationalizing the ineffable (see Cho 2002). In some cases – perhaps including this chapter – they also place high demands on reader attention. Perhaps such costs are less important in a philosophical context than they would be in a context oriented toward theology, praxis, or aesthetics. In any case, shouldering them makes possible several benefits: analytic reconstructions enhance cross-cultural understanding by restricting themselves to propositional contents the meaning of which do not depend upon specific experiences or practices; they help to reveal the extent to which semantic contents are irreducibly non-propositional; and, by virtue of their style being familiar and popular among contemporary European and Anglo-American philosophers, they make philosophy from non-European cultures and traditions more accessible.

This chapter displays many of these benefits. Consider, first, the reconstruction of the logical structure of Fazang’s argument (Sect. 13.3). The reconstructed argument is logically valid: each subargument’s conclusion follows from respective premises in accordance with familiar and well-understood rules of good deductive reasoning. In this respect, the reconstruction improves upon Cook’s analysis, which relies heavily upon examples and metaphors (Cook 1977: 64–66); and it improves upon Liu’s analysis, which inverts the inferential relations between Fazang’s premises and conclusions (Liu 1979: 407–409). Moreover, no premise in the reconstruction is *prima-facie* self-contradictory and the premise set taken together is jointly consistent. In this respect, the reconstruction improves upon Wright’s approach, which presumes that Fazang “violates the logical rule of non-contradiction” (Wright 1982: 325). Finally, each premise in the reconstructed argument is semantically precise. In this respect, the reconstruction improves upon Park’s analysis, which relies heavily upon examples and unexplicated technical concepts (Park 2008: 164–166).

Consider, next, the interpretation of the content of Fazang’s argument (Sect. 13.4). It avoids appealing to metaphors such as merging (Chang 1971: 139) and inside/outside (Ziporyn 2003: 508). It avoids “scare-quoting” concepts (see Ziporyn 2003: 509). It also relies upon a small set of primitive concepts (such as *determination*) and illustrates those concepts with several intuitive examples. Further, the interpretation recognizes that Fazang relativizes property possession to specific

respects (Sects. 13.3.1 and 13.4.2). This departs from several other analyses (such as Cook 1970 and Liu 1979). While Ziporyn adopts a similar approach, this interpretation departs from Ziporyn's by identifying the respects as presentations rather than times, subjective perspectives (how "we happen to be viewing"), or some combination thereof (see Ziporyn 2003: 508). In doing so, the interpretation shows that certain criticisms of Fazang's argument – for example, that if Fazang is correct, the others cannot be identical with A because the others do not exist when A exists and yet identity requires that each relatum exists – are misplaced (see Ziporyn 2003: 509–510). Moreover, the interpretation identifies relatively precise, clear, and logically manipulable principles that support Fazang's reasoning. This differs from analyses that take Fazang's reasoning to be based upon a vague "ideal of the round" (see Liu 1979: 217–219; Liu 1982: 62, 65, 69; Jones 2010b: 227). It also reveals that Cook's analysis, according to which mutual identity among *dharma*s follows from their common emptiness, is only partially correct (see Cook 1977: 373). For although each *dharma*'s emptiness entails that *dharma*'s creation by and identity with others relative to the same presentation as well as its creation and identifying of those others relative to another presentation, these entailments obtain only by virtue of the *ti-yong* paradigm (Sect. 13.4.3). Finally, because the interpretation points toward foundational presumptions of Fazang's reasoning (Sect. 13.5.1), it makes Fazang's metaphysics accessible and relevant to contemporary Anglo-American metaphysicians (see Sect. 13.6.2).

These benefits do not, of course, establish this chapter's methodology as superior to alternatives. The chapter does not address soteriological issues, such as the way in which Fazang's choice of language might help to induce particular experiential states or the way in which his conclusions might illuminate or rationalize particular Buddhist practices (see Wright 1982). Nor does it contextualize Fazang's argument relative to other Buddhist traditions (see Liu 1979). Nor does it reveal the way in which Fazang's doctrine of mutual identity through different essence coheres with his other distinctive metaphysical theses (see Cook 1977). However, the chapter's benefits provide good *prima-facie* reason to suppose that the underlying methodology is appropriate and legitimate for facilitating cross-cultural understanding and engagement.

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Chapter 14

Temporality and Non-temporality in Li Tongxuan's Huayan Buddhism



Jin Y. Park

Huayan Buddhism (華嚴佛教) is often understood as Chinese Buddhism's effort to bring phenomena to the forefront of Buddhist discourse. The Huayan fourfold worldview (華嚴四法界), a trademark of the Huayan School, well illustrates this aspect of the school. Developed by the Huayan patriarchs, Dushun (杜順 557–640), Fazang (法藏 643–711), and Chengguan (澄觀 738–839), the paradigm was meant to demonstrate the harmonious interpenetration of all phenomena. Compared to these Huayan thinkers, the lay Buddhist Li Tongxuan (李通玄 635–730) has been known as an unorthodox thinker in Chinese Huayan Buddhism, although the applicability of expressions such as *orthodox* and *unorthodox* in this context is debatable. By examining some of the major concepts in Li's Huayan thought, we find what Li shares with those thinkers in the orthodox tradition with regard to the Huayan Buddhist vision and where he diverges from other Chinese Huayan thinkers.

This chapter examines Li's Huayan Buddhism with special attention to his concept of time, which I characterize as “non-temporality.” I will first discuss the concept of non-temporality in the context of perennial Buddhist themes of existence and non-existence in relation to Li's doctrinal classification, and then in relation to the Huayan theory of nature-arising and subitism which I consider as the core of Li's Huayan Buddhism. I conclude with a consideration of the ontological and existential implications of Li's Huayan phenomenology.

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1 Existence and Non-existence in Buddhist Philosophy

Fazang, the third patriarch of Huayan Buddhism, has been credited as a major architect of the Huayan Buddhist philosophy. In his *Essay on the Five Teachings of Huayan Buddhism* (*Huayan Wujiao Zhang* 華嚴五教章), he offers a fivefold doctrinal classification of the Buddha's teaching. To put it simply, the five categories are (1) Hīnayāna Teaching (*xiaochengjiao* 小乘教), (2) Mahāyāna Inception Teaching (*dasheng shijiao* 大乘始教), (3) Mahāyāna Final Teaching (*dasheng zhongjiao* 大乘終教), (4) Sudden Teaching (*dunjiao* 頓教), and (5) Complete Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教).¹ Complete Teaching refers to the Huayan School, and through this classification Fazang tries to demonstrate the superiority of the Huayan teaching over the teachings of other Buddhist schools. In offering this doctrinal classification, Fazang did not take much time to explain why this should be the case.²

Li Tongxuan offers his own classification of the Buddhist teachings in his *Exposition of the Eighty Fascicle Version of the Flower Ornament Scripture* (*Xin Huayan Jing Lun* 新華嚴經論; henceforth *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*). The Huayan school has a tendency to consider ten as the perfect number,³ and Fazang employed ten as the entirety of the imaginary numeric system in explaining major Huayan concepts. Li was even more faithful to the idea of ten being the perfect number and the number representing Huayan Buddhism. Most of his hermeneutical devices elaborating Huayan philosophy take the form of ten. Hence we find a tenfold doctrinal classification proposed by Li Tongxuan.⁴

Like other doctrinal classifications in Chinese Buddhism, Li's classification claims the superiority of Huayan Buddhism over all preceding Buddhist teachings. It is also true that the layout of the ten different teachings is suggestive of some of

¹Fazang, *Huayan Wujiao Zhang* (Essay on the Five Teachings of Huayan), T 45, 1866: 481b.

²For a discussion of Fazang's doctrinal classification, see Liu 1979.

³T 45, 1866: 503b.

⁴One source of Li's biography appears in Robert M. Gimello's essay "Li T'ung-hsüan and the Practical Dimensions of Hua-yen" (Gimello 1983). In the Appendix of his essay, Gimello offers "A Translation of the Earliest Surviving Hagiography of Li T'ung-hsün," which is a translation of "A Record of the Life of the Elder Li" (*Li Zhangzhe Shiji* 李長者事跡) by Mazhi 馬支 around 770 (X 4, 225-B: 832a–833a).

Extant records on Li's biography offer mixed information: some say that Li was from Beijing and was member of the royal family of Tang China, and others record him merely as a person from Cangzhou. The year of his birth was also recorded either as 735 or 746. See Inaoka 1981. For a list of existing records of Li Tongxuan's biography, see Yim 2008. For a discussion of Li's biography, also see Koh 2011.

According to a hagiographical record of Li Tongxuan, Li began his study of the 80 fascicle *Huayan Jing* around 709, at the age of 74. For the next 13 years he would peruse the scripture in seclusion, and only after that did he begin writing the exposition. The exposition was discovered at the Shidou hermitage in 774, several decades after Li's death, by a monk named Guangchao (廣超), who then distributed it to his own disciples. Not much is known about Li's biography before he began his study of the 80 fascicle *Huayan Jing*, which was translated into Chinese in 699. Both Zhiyan and Fazang based their discussions of Huayan Buddhism on the 60-fascicle version translated in 420.

the main themes of Li's Huayan thought. At the first level of the tenfold classification, Li locates (1) the Hinayana precept scriptures (*Xiaosheng Jie Jing* 小乘戒經), which Li claims are teachings directed at the capacity of sentient beings. The main aim of these teachings is to edify sentient beings. At the second level, Li places (2) the *Sūtra of the Bodhisattva Precepts* (*Pusajie Jing* 菩薩戒經). The goal of this stage of teaching is to make truth visible to sentient beings while at the same time keeping to the goal of the first level. At the third level lie the teachings of (3) the *Prajñāpāramitā* (般若教). This is the stage at which the Buddha teaches emptiness in order to demonstrate reality. After the teaching of emptiness through the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature comes the stage of (4) *The Sūtra Explaining the Underlying Meaning* (*Jie Shenmi Jing* 解深密經), in which the Buddha teaches neither emptiness nor existence. The fifth stage is assigned to (5) the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (*Lengqie Jing* 楞伽經), whose main teaching Li defines through the Five Laws, Three Self Natures, Eight Consciousnesses, and Twofold No-self. (6) The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* complements the teaching of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* by emphasizing the nonduality of purity and impurity and the state of inconceivability. Following the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* in Li's classification are the teachings of (7) the *Lotus Sūtra*, which offers a way to reach truth through skillful means. Li assigns (8) *The Great Collection Scripture* (*Daji Jing* 大集經) to the eighth stage, the goal of which is to protect the teachings of the Buddha. (9) The *Nirvana Sūtra* (*Niepan Jing* 涅槃經) reveals the Buddha-nature in sentient beings, and finally, (10) The *Huayan Jing* comes at the final stage, its main teachings characterized by the ideas that "the cause is perfect and effect complete, one and many are mutually interpenetrating, principle and phenomena in the realm of reality are self-reliant, and there is no obstruction in dependent arising. Therefore it is called the Buddha-vehicle."⁵

The tenfold doctrinal classification offers a structure that is suggestive of the philosophical foundation of Li's Huayan Buddhism. Being a non-substantial mode of thinking that rejects the existence of unchanging essence as an underlying reality and a reference for epistemological and ontological reality, Buddhism has long been aware of the problems that it faces in demarcating appearance and reality. In appearance things exist with seemingly visible duration, whereas in reality, beings do not have an enduring essence. The vision is counterintuitive: if things do not maintain enduring identity, how do they attain identity at all? Moreover, the use of language and discourse to impart the Buddha's teaching ironically challenges the fundamental thesis of Buddhist thought. A linguistic system and a discourse become possible through the sustainability of their constituents, whereas Buddhism negates such durable identities. The evolution of Buddhist schools in the history of Buddhist philosophy reflects this dilemma that Buddhist thinkers of the past had to deal with: how can one construct and present a discourse using language when what is being presented through that medium challenges the sustainability inherent in the

⁵Li Tongxuan, *Xin Huayan Jing Lun* (Exposition of the 80 Fascicle Version of Flower Ornament Scripture), T 36, 1739: 721c. From now on, citations from this text will be marked in the text. Translations from Classical Chinese in this essay are mine, unless otherwise noted. For a Korean translation of the work, see Li 1996.

construction of a discourse? One noticeable technique that different Buddhist thinkers have employed in the effort to overcome this problem of the gap between what has come to be called, in the Buddhist tradition, “conventional” and “ultimate realities,” is an alternating emphasis on existence and non-existence. The Buddha’s claim for non-self opposes the idea of emphasizing the existence of the self in the form of Atman; the Abhidharma discourse, especially that of the Sarvāstivāda School, makes efforts to present something that exists in the Buddha’s theory of no-self (*anatman*) and consequently claims that dharmas exist, whereas the self does not; Madhyamika philosophy reveals the emptiness of all dharmas, warning of the risk that Sarvāstivādin’s efforts introduce, and so on.

Li’s tenfold doctrinal classification well reflects this back-and-forth movement with regard to existence and nonexistence in Buddhist philosophy. At the first stage of teachings in the Hīnayana precepts, the Buddha teaches what is right and what is wrong, and which acts should be performed and which should not. Li explains that this is because the goal of the teachings at this stage is directed at the capacity of sentient beings who understand reality in the dualistic way of good and bad, and right and wrong. This stage, however, contains its own limitations. The discourse relies on the dualistic postulation of right and wrong, and good and bad as if these binary opposites have their own substance. The bodhisattva precepts discussed in *The Sūtra of Brahma’s Net* also say what to follow and what to avoid in Buddhist practice. But compared to the precepts in the Hīnayana tradition, Li claims, bodhisattva precepts aim at practitioners with a greater capacity. Both the first and second levels, however, risk the danger of reification: practitioners might consider the precepts and Buddhist teachings to exist independently of their environments, which could lead practitioners to a misconception of the reality of the world and their own existence.

The third-stage teaching of emptiness is introduced for the purpose of preventing any reification of established thought at the first two stages. The core of the teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature claims, in Li’s words, that “[t]hree treasures, four noble truths, and three worlds are all empty, and emptiness itself is empty” (T 36, 1739: 722a). From Li’s perspective, however, the teaching of emptiness at this stage cannot be the final and perfect teaching, because in this teaching, construction and destruction are constantly repeated: a discourse is set up, and then in order to prevent the reification of categories established by the discourse, a discourse emphasizing emptiness should follow. The discourse of emptiness, according to Li, presupposes subject-object dualism in that first there should exist the object to be destroyed; then the discourse of emptiness should destroy it. The question of whether emptiness can be understood as a synonym for destruction calls for further elaboration. However, since Li’s major goal is to elaborate the Huayan vision—and he was not very sympathetic to the discourse of emptiness—Li does not dwell on this issue. What is noteworthy in this context is the temporality involved in the evolution of the first three stages. The way that construction and destruction are demonstrated through the teachings of these stages follows a temporal scheme: the first two stages occur before the third stage. Li dissociates Huayan teaching from this scheme of temporality and claims that Huayan Buddhism is different from the

teaching of *Prajñāpāramitā*, which understands that “construction and destruction occur at different time periods, and thus [in this teaching] cause comes before and fruition after” (T 36, 1739: 722b). Li claims that Huayan Buddhism is not based on temporality as is employed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* teaching; instead, the ground of Huayan Buddhism is the concept of non-temporality (*wushi* 無時).

In the course of the evolution of Buddhism, different claims have been made by different Buddhist schools, which sometimes contradict one another. There are, however, some fundamental ideas shared by most Buddhist schools. One such idea is the understanding of the world as non-substantial reality. Buddhism holds that the fundamental structure of the world is interaction. There is no unchanging ground that serves as the source or beginning point of the world. The same applies to the existence of a being, be it a living organism or an insentient being. This structure, which, however, is not the source of the world, is known as dependent-arising.

Dependent-arising is a causal theory and is thus inevitably connected with the temporal dimension of existence. The substantialist worldview presupposes an unchanging foundation as a starting point in explaining the world and beings. The non-substantial stance underscores change as the fundamental structure of the world. The three marks of existence as taught in early Buddhism—no-self, suffering, and impermanence—are all marked by the existence of the temporal dimension in the structure of the being. However, Li points out that if the theory of dependent-arising is understood as a temporal causal theory, a blind spot exists in that approach to causality. Dependent-arising as a causal theory does not indicate linear progress from cause to effect (or its fruition). Dependent-arising does not assume that cause A will produce effect B. The understanding of dependent-arising as a single-line temporal process also generates a theory of karma based on a simple logic of accounting, which postulates that a good deed is rewarded and a bad deed is punished. On an ultimate level, this might not be a misunderstanding, but the actual accounting should be understood as much more complicated. One way of avoiding this simplistic understanding of dependent-arising and karma is to underscore the conditionality involved in the Buddhist theory of causality. Things occur on the basis of both causes and conditions. For example, if one adds a spoonful of salt to the water in a coffee mug, the water will definitely become saltier. If one adds the same amount of salt to the ocean, the increase in the degree of saltiness in the ocean water would not be recognizable by the human palate. The example demonstrates the fundamental ambiguity involved in the Buddhist concept of causality. Buddhist causal theory, in this sense, functions in a way opposite to what one might expect: it acknowledges a relationship between cause and effect, but to the degree that there are certain underlying structures of existence and that individuals are responsible for their own actions, it also indicates that the exact details of this structure are beyond one's grasp.

Li Tongxuan's Huayan thought challenges the temporal understanding of existence, even in the context of causal theory, and claims the simultaneity of cause and

effect, which Li proposes as the fundamental difference between the teachings of the Huayan School and those of other Buddhist schools. Li states,

If there were cause, which was followed by effect, the cause itself could not be established, and therefore effect also breaks down. That is because, in the law of dependent-arising, there exists no continuity; there is immediate eradication; there is no self and others. When counting one cent, if other coins that come after that one cent are not counted, because there are no two cents, [the concept of] one cent cannot be established. ... It is necessary to wait to count the second coin in order for the first count to take meaning; cause and effect are like that as well. It is necessary to realize that because there is no gap in temporality, the relationship of cause and effect come to be established. If that is the case, it is like when counting two coins, two are counted simultaneously and there is no before or after [in counting]. Which one will be the first and which the second? Likewise, in indicating two with fingers, which finger is the cause and which one the effect? Between the two fingers, following the counting in one's mind, one finger will be the cause, and the finger counted afterward will be effect. If, like this, there exists before and after, there should be the middle. In turn, there exists a disconnection between moments. If there is a disconnection between moments, cause and effect cannot be established. If simultaneity means like counting two with fingers, without before or after, what would be the cause and what the effect? Neither can be established (T 36, 1739: 740b).

Li's interpretation of causality and temporality requires further discussion. The theory of causality presupposes a temporal process of events happening; the present event cannot exist without the action that caused it. Li notes that the seeming temporal scheme involved in causal thinking is not logically sustainable, as a cause does not function in this way until its effect becomes apparent. For example, if one throws a ball and it breaks a window, throwing the ball is the cause, and the broken window is the effect. However, throwing the ball cannot be considered the cause until the window is broken. Similarly, when numbering 1–10, 1 comes before 2, 2 before 3, and so on. But the sense of before and after is delusive because the concept of 1 does not exist without the concept of 2 even when 1 comes first. If one insists on appealing to the idea of temporality here, time seems to move backward; the effect becomes the cause of the cause.

Logical problems also arise from the designation of cause and effect as separate units, according to Li. If cause comes at the beginning and effect at the end, there must be something in between, which indicates an interruption in events. If a gap exists between the cause and effect, the causality cannot be sustained, as the effect is influenced by what happens in between. These issues with temporality and identity occur because of the non-substantial nature of Buddhist thinking; that is, no being has an identity of itself. In his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li pays special attention to this issue and the simultaneity of cause and effect. The concept of time that aligns with the Buddha's teaching is not temporality but non-temporality, which becomes the basis of Li's Huayan soteriology.

Li was not the only person to highlight the inconsistency between causal theory and temporality in Buddhism. In his *Essay on the Five Teachings*, Fazang also uses a series of 10 coins to explain the fundamental philosophy of Huayan Buddhism, especially with regard to the Huayan concept of identity. When counting the coins, each number attains its identity because of the existence of the other numbers. As in Li's interpretation, the first of two coins counted gains its identity of "1 cent" only

when the meaning of the second coin is established. In the structure of 1–10, the relationship of each number is characterized by a “reliance on dependent-arising.” Neither 1 nor 10 exists by itself, and each has an identity dependent on the 1–10 system. For Fazang, this mutual dependency is key in the relationship between the part and the whole and the coexistence of existence and emptiness. Number 1, the part, exists in separation from the other nine numbers, but its identity also has emptiness to it because it only exists in relation to the 1–10 system, or the whole. Because an entity includes the nature of both existence and emptiness, or identity and non-identity, Fazang calls this “mutual identity” (*xiangji* 相即). The concept of the part and the whole in this case differs from the common understanding of the whole as the collection of individual parts. For the collective whole, each constituent exists separately, and the whole contains these fragmented individuals. In Fazang's Huayan Buddhism, a part cannot establish its identity without already encompassing the whole in it. Fazang calls this “mutual inclusion” (*xiangru* 相入).

Mutual identity and mutual containment are also explained through the concepts of “simultaneous sudden arising” (*tongshi dunqi* 同時頓起) and “simultaneous mutual containment” (*tongshi hushe* 同時互攝), respectively. Through these, Fazang demonstrates the Huayan concept of interpenetration between noumena and phenomena and that among phenomena.⁶

It is useful to compare simultaneous sudden arising and simultaneous mutual containment with the simultaneity of cause and effect. For Fazang, simultaneity is employed mainly to address two issues: the relationship between the part and whole and between existence and emptiness. These ideas are important to Fazang's explanation of the dependent-arising of the realm of reality (*fajie yuanqi* 法界緣起). Li rarely mentions the relationship between the part and whole in his discussion of Huayan Buddhism. He discusses existence and emptiness, but they are not his main concern. For Li, the non-temporality of the temporal dimension of dependent-arising is important because it demonstrates the relationship between the Buddha and the sentient being.

2 Non-temporality and Nature-Origination

Philosophical discourses generally take one of two positions with regard to time. For convenience, I will loosely identify them as inclusive and exclusive stances toward temporality. The former considers time to be an element inseparable from a being's existence. The latter assumes that a being is intact from a temporal dimension. Buddhism belongs to the first category. In the Buddhist worldview, existence means change, and existence is inevitably temporal and spatial. Non-temporality, which Li Tongxuan takes as the core of his Huayan thought, is distinguished from both positions.

⁶ See especially Fazang, T 45, 1866: 503a–505.

In his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li refers several times to the concept of non-temporality as he emphasizes the differences between the teaching of “the three vehicles” and that of “the one vehicle.” According to the teaching of the three vehicles, Li claims, one attains enlightenment temporally; in teaching of the one vehicle, temporal duration does not apply. Li understands temporality as an aspect of subject-object dualism because the idea of temporal movements is anchored on the assumption of separable identity. In a temporal understanding of causality, the cause comes before the effect, and the effect after the cause. The negation of temporal duration in Li’s philosophy, however, does not negate time and create a static reality. Rather, temporality without duration represents the constellation of all the time schemes of past, present, and future at a single moment. The world, or existence, according to Li, does not move toward a goal for its completion. It is complete as it is at each moment.

One way of explaining the difference between simple temporality and the non-temporality of temporality is to compare Li’s concept of nature-arising (*xingqi* 性起) with the doctrine of dependent-arising (*yuanyi* 緣起). Dependent-arising contends that things arise by depending on other things. This concept rejects the identity principle, as identity in this case is possible only by virtue of the existence of non-identity. The concept of “A” becomes possible through the participation of “non-A”; by this logic, the alleged independent status of “A” loses its ground.

If we apply the same idea to the doctrine of dependent-arising, we find that both the “arising” and the “others” on which the dependency takes place are, in fact, provisional concepts. There are no independent “others” to be dependent upon, and by the same token, no arising is taking place to lead to the identity of that which is arising. “Arising”—as the gerund form of the word suggests—indicates a process, a happening, rather than a simple arising to generate a fixed identity. This means that even though arising happens dependently, in the ultimate sense, there is no arising. In this sense, Huayan Buddhism understands dependent-arising as non-arising, and this non-arising is called nature-arising. Zhiyan, the second patriarch of Chinese Huayan Buddhism, states, “Nature-arising clarifies the ultimate sense of dependent-arising of the realm of reality in the one vehicle. A thing is originally in its ultimate state, and this is not something that can be attained through cultivation. Why is it so? It is because things do not have forms... By virtue of the nature of dependent-arising, it is called ‘arising,’ but this arising is non-arising, and non-arising is nature-arising.”⁷

Dependent-arising, non-arising, and nature-arising can thus be understood as three aspects of the same phenomenon. Dependent-arising explains the structure of a being from the perspective of existence, whereas non-arising looks at the movement from the ultimate perspective and sees no arising in the sense of the occurrence of a separate identity. However, the impossibility of establishing the identity of the event of arising is the very nature of things, whose existence is subject to dependent-arising, and hence nature-arising.

⁷Zhiyan, *Huayan Kongmu Zhang*, T 45, 1870: 580c.

In theory, the source of the doctrine of nature-arising can be traced to the chapter “Appearance of Tathāgata (Rulai chuxian pin 如來出現品)” of the 80-fascicle *Huayan Jing* or the chapter “Arising of the Nature of Tathāgata, the Jewel King (Bao wang rulai xing qi pin 寶王如來性起品)” of the 60-fascicle *Huayan Jing*.⁸ Like the doctrine of dependent-arising, the concept of nature-arising risks assuming a certain reified concept of “nature.” When nature is understood as the specific characteristics that exclusively belong to Tathāgata, the theory of nature-arising becomes an idealist and essentialist philosophy that assumes a certain quality beyond phenomenal reality and takes this as the foundation for the understanding of other beings. Li challenges this potentially idealist twist to the theory of nature-arising and identifies it with “great wisdom” and also with “the Buddha of the Unmoving Wisdom” (*Budong zhifo* 不動智佛), another important concept of his Huayan Buddhism.

At the core of Li's Huayan thought lies the contention that there is no difference between the Buddha and the sentient being. For Li, the sentient being and the Buddha are fundamentally made of the same material, which he calls wisdom, fundamental wisdom, or the unmoving wisdom. This wisdom is the ground of both the Buddha and the sentient being. Li states, “Between the Tathāgata and all the sentient beings, there is originally no difference. They are both one mind and one wisdom. All the Buddhas, with the wisdom in the mind of sentient beings, attain the correct enlightenment. All sentient beings are confused about the wisdom of all the Buddhas and make themselves sentient beings” (T 36, 1739: 853c).

Li repeatedly emphasizes that no ontological difference exists between the Buddha and sentient beings; the alleged difference arises from epistemological confusion about the ontological reality of one's existence. Li presents the Buddha of the Unmoving Wisdom as the grounds of his claim for this identity. The Buddha of the Unmoving Wisdom is one of the ten Buddhas of Wisdom who appear in the chapter “The Tathāgata's Epithets (Rulai minghao pin 如來名號品)” in the *Huayan Jing*

⁸ *Huayan Jing* exists in three different translations which are also three different versions: (1) the 60-fascicle version was translated by Buddhahadra 佛駄跋陀 around 420; (2) the 80-fascicle version was translated by Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 around 699; and (3) the 40-fascicle version was translated by Prajñā 般若 around 800. The 60-fascicle version is also known as the *Old Sūtra* (*Jiujing* 舊經) and the 80-fascicle as the *New Sūtra* (*Xinjing* 新經). The 40-fascicle version contains only the “Entering the Realm of Reality” (*Ru Fajie Pin* 入法界品) chapter, which is the 34th chapter of the 60-fascicle *Huayan Jing*, and the 39th chapter of the 80-fascicle *Huayan Jing*. It is important for our discussion to be aware of the existence of three different versions of the *Huayan Jing*, since Li Tongxuan's discussion of Huayan Buddhism is based on the 80-fascicle version.

For a discussion of the composition and circulation of the three versions of *Huayan Jing*, see HAEJU sunim 1999: 23–24. Haeju points out that the *Huayan Jing* was not composed as one unified *sūtra*, but must have been created over a period of time; also see Kyehwan 1996: 17–37; and Cook 1977. In Cook's book, see especially Chapter 2, which discusses the translation of the *sūtra*, and Chapter 3, which discusses the Indian background of Huayan Buddhism. It seems that scholars generally agree that at least two chapters of the *Huayan Jing* exist in Sanskrit: the chapter on “Ten Stages” (*Shidi Pin* 十地品 *Daśabhūmika*) and the chapter “Entering the Realm of Reality” (*Ru Fajie Pin* 入法界品 *Gaṇḍavyūha*). For major themes of Huayan Buddhism, see NAKAMURA 1960; KAMATA 1988; KIMURA 1992 and, in English, Chang 1971.

(both in the 60-fascicle and 80-fascicle versions).⁹ For Li, the Buddha of the Unmoving Wisdom is the body or essence of the Buddha's wisdom, and this is the original wisdom of universal bright light (*genben puguangmingzhi* 根本普光明智) of the Buddha. Here, "unmoving" means that "the wisdom of one's mind recognizes the differences [in the world] but is not affected by it, and thus does not move" (T 36, 1739: 766b). Li understands wisdom, the content of this unmoving reality, as the essence of the Buddha, which also means that, for Li, wisdom is the essence of the sentient being. Wisdom is the essence of both the Buddha and the sentient being, but this "original wisdom" is not a certain essence with substantial features. As Li emphasizes, the wisdom that is the foundation of the Buddha and the sentient being has no self-nature. Li's identification of nature-arising with fundamental wisdom, which does not have self-nature, negates any possibility of reifying "nature" in "nature-arising" as an essence of some sort. Li explains this absolute non-substantiality of wisdom through its relation to ignorance, the cause of the sentient being's unenlightened status. One might think that upon attaining awakening, ignorance would be completely removed. However, Li states that awakening does not eradicate ignorance because ignorance itself does not have self-nature and cannot be removed.

Li contends that in the teachings of the three vehicles, one demonstrates that it hates suffering and attachment and embraces cessation and the path leading to the cessation. In the teaching of the one vehicle, one realizes that suffering and path, attachment and cessation are the same, since none of them has self-nature. Wisdom, which is the fundamental element of both the Buddha and the sentient being, is for Li the same as ignorance, the cause of the sentient being's delusion. Wisdom does not have self-nature and thus cannot have any binding effect to lead the sentient being to enlightenment.

The non-temporality of temporality, nature-arising qua non-arising, is the theoretical foundation of Li's claim for the simultaneity of cause and fruition. This simultaneity is important for Li because it is the grounds of the absolute identity of the Buddha and the sentient being. Here lies the difference between Li Tongxuan's Huayan thought and that of "orthodox" Huayan thinkers. For Fazang, Huayan is about the dependent-arising of the *dharmadhātu* (or the realm of reality), which, for him, demonstrates the unobstructed interpenetration among phenomena by virtue of each phenomenon's sharing the same principle, which is emptiness. For Li, phenomena are important in order to demonstrate the sameness of identity between the Buddha and the sentient being.

Li's analysis of the structure of the *Huayan Jing* also demonstrates Li's emphasis on the absolute identity of the Buddha and the sentient being and his claim that the *Huayan Jing* is about this sameness so as to lead the sentient beings to the realization of their original nature. The 80-fascicle *Huayan Jing* consists of 39 chapters, with the chapter "Entering the Realm of Reality" at the end. In his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li claims that there is one chapter missing in the existing 80-fascicle *Huayan Jing*, and therefore, the *Huayan Jing* should have 40 chapters instead of the

⁹ *Huayan Jing*, T 9 no 278, p. 418b; *Huayan Jing*, T 10 no 279, p. 58a.

current 39. He bases this interesting claim on passages from the *Bead-Ornamented Primary Activities of Bodhisattvas* (*Pusa Yingluo Benye Jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經). Li addresses the section in the *sūtra* in which the Buddha states that he would teach the eleventh stage, after having taught the Ten Stages. The eleventh stage would be the stage involving entering the realm of reality, in which the Buddha would teach how to open up the minds of sentient beings to the teachings of the Buddha. Li proposes that this chapter on the eleventh state of equal awakening should be called “Chapter on Buddha Flowers” (*Fohua Pin* 佛華品) and should have been placed after the chapter “Ten Stages” (T 36, 1739: 761c–762a).

This claim accords well with another of Li's claims regarding the structure of *Huayan Jing*. In his structural analysis of *Huayan Jing*, Zhiyan proposes three sectional divisions of introduction, main body, and distributional sections.¹⁰ Based on the 60-fascicle *Huayan Jing*, Zhiyan identifies the sections following the “Chapter on Vairocana” as the main body of the *Huayan Jing*. In other words, the first chapter serves as an introduction, and chapters 2–34 variously discuss the main themes of the *sūtra*. Zhiyan states that the *Huayan Jing* does not contain a dissemination section.¹¹ Fazang follows Zhiyan's structural division in his commentary on the *Huayan Jing* and declares that the first chapter is the introduction and the second chapter and onward is the main section of the *Huayan Jing*.¹² In his own structural analysis, Li Tongxuan suggests a division that is radically different from those proposed by Zhiyan and Fazang. Li claims that “Entering the Realm of Reality,” the last and 39th chapter of the *Huayan Jing*, is the main section of the scripture and that the rest are accompanying chapters. This difference between Zhiyan and Fazang's structural analysis of the *Huayan Jing*, and that of Li, is not a mere structural issue but directly relates to the difference in their understanding of the essence of Huayan Buddhism. In the following section, we will discuss Li's interpretation of the “Entering the Realm of Reality” chapter in more depth and will examine how this last chapter of the *Huayan Jing* demonstrates the core concepts in Li's Huayan philosophy.

3 Non-temporality and Sudden Enlightenment: Dragon Girl and the Youth Sudhana

Li Tongxuan interprets “Entering the Realm of Reality” as the core of the *Huayan Jing*, which places Li in a different position in his reading of the *Huayan Jing* in comparison with Zhiyan and Fazang. In the *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li emphasizes that “Entering the Realm of Reality” is the main chapter of this scripture and that the youth Sudhana, the main character of the chapter, is the “primary

¹⁰Zhiyan, *Souxuan Ji* (Record of Searching the Profound Meaning [of the Flower Garland Scripture]) T 35, 1732: 16a.

¹¹Zhiyan, T 35, 1732: 16b.

¹²Fazang, *Huayan Tanxuan Ji*, T 35, 1733: 125a.

marker that demonstrates the teachings of this scripture” (T 36, 1739: 731c). In discussing the “Entering the Realm of Reality” chapter and Sudhana’s pilgrimage, Li compares Sudhana with the dragon girl who appears in the *Lotus Sūtra*. For Li, both Sudhana and the dragon girl demonstrate the subitist nature of enlightenment, the primary teaching of the one vehicle of Huayan Buddhism.

The story of the dragon girl in the *Lotus Sūtra* has recently attracted scholars’ attention, mostly in the context of “gender trouble” in the Buddhist tradition. Whether the body transformation discourse of Mahāyāna Buddhism, including that of the dragon girl, supports the idea that women can attain Buddhahood has been at the center of scholars’ interpretation of the Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. As expected, gender was not what sparked Li’s interest in the dragon girl’s story. However, his repeated mentioning of the dragon girl in comparison with the youth Sudhana suggests the importance of this story in Li’s philosophical paradigm. In his tenfold doctrinal classification, the *Lotus Sūtra* is located at the seventh level, which comes after the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and before the *Nirvana Sūtra*. Though the *Nirvana Sūtra* is located at the ninth stage, just before the *Huayan Jing*, Li pays more attention to the *Lotus Sūtra*, and more specifically, to the story of the dragon girl. The *Nirvana Sūtra* confirms that the Buddha-nature exists in all sentient beings. For Li, the confirmation of the existence of the Buddha-nature is not sufficient to inspire the practitioner, since what needs to be confirmed is the happening of this Buddha-nature, which Li sees taking place in the dragon girl in the *Lotus Sūtra* and in Sudhana in the *Huayan Jing*.

The dragon girl of the *Lotus Sūtra* is a figure who combines various unfavorable conditions for enlightenment: She is a female, she is a child of only 8 years, and she is a sub-human creature. These features promote the efficacy of the *Lotus Sūtra* for attaining sudden enlightenment. Asked about a case that proves the speedy enlightenment taught by the *Lotus Sūtra*, Mañjuśrī presents the story of the dragon girl, stating that “at the very moment she aroused the mind to achieve enlightenment, she attained the state of non-retrogression and unimpeded eloquence.”¹³ Hearing this story of the marvelous enlightenment of the dragon girl, Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation, the dialoguer of Mañjuśrī, expresses his suspicion about the idea that enlightenment can take place in such a short time, when various scriptures mention the kalpas of time that Tathāgata had to go through before attaining enlightenment. At that moment, the dragon girl herself makes a sudden appearance and confirms through a gatha that she has attained enlightenment. Having heard the dragon girl’s confirmation of her achievement, Śāriputra, the wise disciple of the Buddha, expresses his doubts. Śāriputra says, “You state that in no length of time you attained the supreme Way. This thing is hard to believe. Wherefore? [Because] the body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel of the Law. How can she attain supreme Bodhi? The Buddha-way is so vast that only after passing through innumerable kalpas, enduring hardship, accumulating good works, and perfectly practicing the Perfections can it be accomplished.”¹⁴

¹³ *Miaofa Lianhua Jing*, T 9, 262: 35b.

¹⁴ *Miaofa Lianhua Jing*, T 9, 262: 35c; English translation by Katō et al. 1975: 213.

Śariputra, though number one in wisdom among the Buddha's disciples, is an arhat who follows the gradual teaching. In Śariputra's view, a certain gender has the capacity to attain enlightenment—the male gender—and the female gender does not; and enlightenment cannot but be a gradual process that requires kalpas of time for completion.

According to Li Tongxuan, these views were exactly what the *Lotus Sūtra* is challenging. Li states,

That the dragon girl is only eight years old indicates that her knowledge is attained only this life time, but not that which was accumulated in previous lives; that she was a sub-human creature means that she has not accumulated practice in the past. This indicates that the principle of the law that she believes in this life is straightforward and without stagnation, that the essence of the realm of reality is not reaped through three worlds, but that when one thought corresponds to truth, then the discrimination of the three worlds is all exhausted. Wisdom neither appears nor disappears, which is the fruition of the Buddha. (T 36, 1739:768b–c)

For Li, the dragon girl is the very manifestation of the absolute suddenness of enlightenment. The dragon girl's enlightenment, for Li, is the enlightenment of a moment (*chana chengfo* 刹那成佛). The idea that enlightenment can be attained not through gradual progress over kalpas of time, but in a moment, is counterintuitive. If enlightenment can be attained in a moment, why has everybody not already attained enlightenment? The moment (*chana* 刹那) is the shortest measure of time in Buddhism. The moment, however, does not imply actual length or duration of time here, because the dragon girl is 8 years old; however short these 8 years might be compared to the “innumerable kalpas,” 8 years is not a “moment” either. Hence the moment designates, rather than the length of time, the non-temporality of time in Buddhist enlightenment.

Like the dragon girl, who attained enlightenment in a moment, the youth Sudhana represents the idea that enlightenment can be attained in this lifetime, rather than only through kalpas of practice. The dragon girl's enlightenment is the enlightenment of a moment, and the youth Sudhana's enlightenment is enlightenment in a single lifetime (*yisheng chengfo* 一生成佛). In identifying Sudhana's pilgrimage as the attainment of Buddhahood in a single lifetime, Li explains the meaning of “a single lifetime” as follows: “Once an unenlightened person raises faith, at the beginning of the ten stages, the person accords with no-life. In other words, this is a single lifetime based on the wisdom of the realm of reality not based on one's karma” (T 36, 1739: 768c). Both the one moment of the dragon girl's enlightenment and Sudhana's enlightenment of a single lifetime challenge the common sense concept of time and introduce Li's vision of non-temporality. This is the concept of temporality in which the shortest measure of time (a moment) has the same meaning as non-temporality with duration. Sudhana's enlightenment is attained in a single lifetime, in the sense that there is only one and not two, three, or four lifetimes, and in the sense that this single lifetime is eternal, as is demonstrated in the journey of Sudhana in “Entering the Realm of Reality.”

In the chapter “Entering the Realm of Reality,” a young truth seeker named Sudhana is determined to learn to practice the bodhisattva path, having been encour-

aged by Mañjuśrī's (Manjushri's) recognition that he has accumulated the roots of goodness. Sudhana asks Mañjuśrī,

Noble One, please give me a full explanation of how an enlightening being [bodhisattva] is to study the practice of enlightening beings, [of] how an enlightening being is to accomplish this. How is an enlightening being to initiate the practice of enlightening beings? How is an enlightening being to carry out the practice of enlightening beings? How is an enlightening being to fulfill the practice of enlightening beings?... How can an enlightening being fulfill the sphere of the universally good practice?"¹⁵

Instead of offering answers, Mañjuśrī directs the young pilgrim to a monk named Maghaśrī. Mañjuśrī tells the young truth seeker,

Go to him and ask how an enlightening being [bodhisattva] should learn the conduct of enlightening beings, and how to apply it; how one is to fulfill, purify, enter into, carry out, follow, keep to, and expand the practice of enlightening beings; and how an enlightening being is to fulfill the sphere of universally good action. That spiritual friend will tell you about the sphere of universally good conduct.¹⁶

When he heard this, Sudhana was "pleased, enraptured, transported with joy, delighted, happy, and cheerful, laid his head at the feet of Manjushri in respect, circled Manjushri hundreds and thousands of times, and looked at him hundreds and thousands of times, with a mind full of love for his spiritual friend, unable to bear not seeing his spiritual friend; and with tears streaming down his face, he wept and left Manjushri."¹⁷ This description might be exaggerated, but it is clear that the young pilgrim was joyful at the thought that he might finally complete his search for truth and learn about the way of the bodhisattva practice "once and for all."

When he meets Maghaśrī, however, Sudhana realizes that Maghaśrī is not the only teacher he needs to learn from. Each of Sudhana's teachers, beginning with Maghaśrī, refers him to yet another, after sharing the truth about spiritual practice that he or she has learned. In Sudhana's pilgrimage to find the bodhisattva path, meaning and truth are continually deferred, so that no final goal is promised, unlike in a teleological progression that always moves toward a fixed destination. The youth Sudhana, who was directed to monk Maghaśrī by Mañjuśrī, is then referred to the monk Sagaramegha; Sagaramegha refers him to the monk Supratishthita; and so on until Sudhana has met 53 dharma teachers. Interestingly, his spiritual benefactors are not exclusively monks and nuns. They include a grammarian (Megha), a distinguished man (Muktaka), a laywoman (Asha), a seer (Bhishmottaranirghosha), a girl (Maitrayai), a boy (Indriyeshvara), a perfumer (Samantanetra), a king (Anala), a mariner (Vaira), a nun (Sinhavijumbhita), a bodhisattva (Avalokiteshvara), and an earth goddess (Sthavara) in addition to Manjushri, Maitreya, Vairocana, and Shamantabhadra, the spiritual benefactors of traditional Buddhism. Using a modern expression, one might call this list politically correct: it includes monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, kings, goddesses, girls, boys, and regular workers.

¹⁵ *Huayan Jing*, T 10, 279: 333c. English translation by Cleary 1993: 1178.

¹⁶ *Huayan Jing*, T 10, 279: 334a; English translation by Cleary 1993: 1179.

¹⁷ *Huayan Jing* T 10, 279: 334; English translation by Cleary 1993: 1179–1180.

Both the dragon girl and the youth Sudhana represent the enlightenment of non-temporality. Li, however, claims that there is a significant difference between the two, and this, for him, is why Huayan teaching is the complete teaching despite the fact that both the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Huayan Jing* demonstrate the teachings of the one vehicle. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the dragon girl goes to the world of purity in the “southern quarter,” as she attains the correct enlightenment,¹⁸ and the whole gathered assembly is “watching” her attain enlightenment. Li interprets this process as a gap between the dragon girl, who attains the sudden enlightenment, and other beings who are yet to attain enlightenment. In this reading, the dragon girl’s story demonstrates its own contradiction: Enlightenment is sudden, and no temporality is involved, which for Li is because the Buddha (the enlightened) and the sentient beings (the unenlightened) are both grounded on the Buddha of the Unmoving Wisdom. In the dragon girl’s story, however, the duality between the two remains until the end of the chapter.¹⁹

The case of Sudhana, in Li’s view, is exactly the opposite. One reason Li claims that “Entering the Realm of Reality” is the main chapter of the sutra is that the earlier chapters are addressed to bodhisattvas, voice-hearers, and the lords of the world, but in this chapter the teaching is finally open to lead the sentient beings to enter the realm of reality (T 36, 1739: 948c).

At the beginning of the *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li defines the *Huayan Jing* as follows:

The Great Essential and Extensive Flower Garland Scripture illuminates the original reality of the sentient being and demonstrates the source of fruition of all the Buddhas. The original reality cannot be accomplished through meritorious deeds; the source [of the fruition of all the Buddhas] cannot be attained through practice; when meritorious deeds are removed, the original reality would be attained; when the practice is exhausted, the source will be accomplished. (T 36, 1739: 721a)

Huayan Buddhism is usually understood as a gradualist paradigm that suggests a step-by-step cultivation toward Buddhahood. The five positions of bodhisattva practice offered in the scripture explain the advancement of bodhisattva practice through Ten Faiths, Ten Abidings, Ten Practices, Ten Dedications of Merits, and Ten Stages. These are the stages at which causes and the fruition of causes take place in the bodhisattva’s path toward enlightenment. However, another aspect of the *Huayan Jing* contradicts and challenges the temporal progress innate in the Huayan Buddhist soteriology. One passage frequently cited as the epitome of the Huayan vision reads, “At the first moment of arousing of the bodhisattva mind, correct enlightenment is immediately attained” (*chu faxin shi biancheng zhengjue* 初發心時便成正覺).²⁰ At the beginning of the *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li presents this idea as the fundamental tenet of the Huayan teaching, and thus locates the *Huayan Jing* at the tenth level of his tenfold doctrinal classification (T 36, 1739:731a). The passage demonstrates the subitist nature of enlightenment. But how do these two visions, the

¹⁸ *Miaofa Lianhua Jing*, T 9, 262: 35c.

¹⁹ For further discussion of Sudhana and the dragon girl in LI Tongxuan, see Park 2012/2013.

²⁰ *Huayan Jing*, T 9, 278: 449c.

one gradual and the other subitist, work together? If correct enlightenment is attained at the very first moment of arousing the mind to practice the bodhisattva path, why are all 52 stages necessary?²¹

In the case of Li's Huayan Buddhism, it is possible to answer this by referring to his emphasis on phenomena. In his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li declares: "The *Huayan Jing* demonstrates the law through phenomena; there is no phenomenon that does not represent the law" (T 36, 1739:752a). The orthodox Huayan thinkers underscore the relationship between noumena and phenomena. The fourfold worldview, which is the hallmark of Huayan Buddhism, calls for unobstructed interpenetration among phenomena. Li rarely mentions noumena, but he constantly emphasizes phenomena as the basis of Huayan teaching. As his concept of non-temporality demonstrates, the phenomena are the reality and there is no principle that exists apart from them. However, each phenomenon is itself a representation of the noumenon—if we insist in using that expression. Phenomena are characterized by their multiplicity and diversity; unlike the noumenon, which can subsume all diversity into one principle that represents its manifestation, phenomena are innumerable.

Li interprets Sudhana's journey as opening the way to lead sentient beings into the realm of reality, which consists of diverse sentient beings. The bodhisattva's vow recognizes the innumerableness of the sentient beings for whom bodhisattvas should exercise their vows. This can only be an endless journey, because, as the vow says, there will be no end to the existence of sentient beings, and thus no end of the bodhisattvas' work.

In this case, sentient beings should be understood not simply as unenlightened beings, and the "end" is not meant in the sense of a teleological linear paradigm. Instead, it is the awareness of the phenomenality of reality, in which no phenomenon ever has a closed identity and no two are ever the same. Sudhana's pilgrimage is a journey through the phenomenal world in which each phenomenon must be understood in its own context, new contexts are always created by different causes and conditions, and there will be no end to new conditions and causes. Apart from contexts generated by conditions and causes, there is no essence of a being in the Buddhist paradigm of ontology. In other words, phenomena are subject to absolute openness. Fazang characterizes this open context through its "inexhaustibility" (*chongchongwujin* 重重無盡).

The Huayan Buddhist subitist-gradual paradigm insists that each moment is complete as it is; this is meant in the sense that each phenomenon represents the law. At the same time, each moment is also subject to change, and these changes represent the nature of existence in Buddhism. Each moment of life is complete as it is, but it also immediately opens to changing reality. The sense of completion here does not last to turn it into a realm of reification.

²¹ The 52 stages of the Huayan practice includes Ten Faiths, Ten Abidings, Ten Practices, Ten Dedications of Merits, Ten Stages, and Perfect Enlightenment (等覺 the 51st stage) and Marvelous Enlightenment (妙覺 the 52nd stage).

4 Returning to the Phenomenal World Once Again

In Li Tongxuan's Huayan philosophy, one finds that the Buddhist concept of nonduality and Huayan Buddhism's emphasis on phenomena reach their apex. For Li, the fundamental value of these theories lies in illuminating to sentient beings their ontological foundation, which is the sameness between them and the Buddha: There is no difference between the Buddha and sentient beings, and this is so ontologically. The existential reality, however, is that, because sentient beings are constantly and consistently generating dispositional discriminations, a gap exists between the ontological and existential realities of the sentient beings who fail to face their own reality that they are Buddhas as they are. If sentient beings and the Buddha are absolutely identical, but also in reality, the sentient beings make themselves into sentient beings, how do sentient beings become awakened to their ontological reality? How does this transformation occur? Li answers this question by resorting to the idea of nonduality and at the same time no-self, the two fundamental concepts in Buddhism. The following dialogue between Li and his questioner helps us understand this issue.

Question: All sentient beings originally possess the unmoving wisdom. Why then do they not naturally follow truth and always maintain clarity? Why do they tend toward defilements?

Answer: All sentient beings have this wisdom and thus give rise to the three realms. Wisdom does not have self-nature, and thus it is not possible to know by itself correct or wrong wisdom, good and evil, pain and pleasure. The essence of wisdom does not have self-nature; in accord with conditions, it appears, as echoes in the air make sounds in response to things. (T 36, 1739: 813a)

This portion of the dialogue explains why even though sentient beings possess the same quality as the Buddha, the quality does not seem to be activated in the sentient being. What is called wisdom—the original wisdom, or the unmoving wisdom, which Li time and again emphasizes as the foundation of both the Buddha and the sentient being—does not have a self-nature. The linguistic illusion that so naturally attaches a positive or even moral connotation to the word *wisdom* needs to be put on hold in order to understand Li's concept of wisdom. Buddhism dictates that nothing in the world has an unchanging essence. The rule also applies to wisdom: wisdom does not have self-nature. This might not be a surprising claim in the context of Buddhist philosophy. However, such a claim could still be confusing. Having no character of its own, "wisdom" cannot generate a guiding power for the subject. The familiar concept of "should" or "should not" that edifies individuals and forces them to move toward a certain direction in their soteriological and existential journeys cannot apply, because in the case of Li's wisdom, it lacks such regulatory power. After having emphasized that all sentient beings always possess the unmoving wisdom, Li warns, referring to the passage from the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (*Dacheng qi xin lun* 大乘起信論), which states that wisdom generates both suffering and joy:

This passage means that all sentient beings are deluded by the original wisdom, and thus there exists suffering and joy in the world. Since wisdom does not have self-nature, in accordance with conditions, when one does not attain awakening, suffering and joy are created. Since wisdom does not have self-nature, suffering fetters [one]. In the meantime one comes to be able to realize that there is originally no self-nature, and all *dharma*s [things] are quiet. As the person who falls on the ground stands up with the support of the ground, so do all the sentient beings fall because of the original wisdom in their minds; and because of the original wisdom in their minds, they arise. (T 36, 1739: 812b-c)

Wisdom does not have self-nature and cannot function as an active guiding force. Various environments of the subject's reality create pains and pleasures following the conditions generated by the situation. Pain and pleasure occur because wisdom, which is the inner state of sentient beings and marks the quality and character of their minds, has no self-nature and thus stays neutral. This non-quality or non-characteristic character of wisdom also makes it possible for sentient beings to overcome the state called the sentient-being. That is because if wisdom is marked by wisdom-ness, which sentient beings possess, this wisdom-qua-sentient-being-ness should be removed in order for sentient beings to move toward Buddhahood. However, in Li's Huayan Buddhism, the movement from the status of sentient being to Buddhahood occurs with great suddenness because no wisdom-ness or sentient-being-ness exists: what caused the fall of the sentient being (the wisdom that lacks the regulatory power to guide the sentient being because of its lack of self-nature) is also what makes the rise possible (the wisdom that lacks the self-nature; hence, that the sentient beings do not need to newly acquire). Since there exists no essence of sentient being or of the Buddha, Huayan Buddhism claims that, at the moment when one first arouses the mind to attain enlightenment, one attains perfect enlightenment.

How does the sudden turning point from the sentient being to the Buddha occur? How do sentient beings come to realize the original nature of all things, which is no-self-nature? In answering this question, Li resorts to the fundamental theme of Buddhist philosophy: the awareness of existential suffering. Li states,

With life and death, the suffering of the sentient being is endless. Since suffering is endless, one comes to search for the way of no-suffering. If one is confused and is not aware of suffering, one is not capable of arousing the mind [to overcome suffering and thus to attain enlightenment]. If one is aware of suffering and searches for truth, one returns to this original wisdom. Realizing the conditions of suffering [or the conditionality of suffering], one is capable of knowing suffering; not realizing the conditions of suffering, one is not capable of knowing suffering. Knowing the conditions of suffering, one becomes capable of arousing the mind and searching for the unsurpassed path [to enlightenment]. (T 36, 1739: 813a)

After all, Li's Huayan thoughts are anchored to the very first teaching of Buddhism, the first noble truth of suffering. The sequence of life and death occurs according to the 12 chains of the dependent-arising of Buddhism and as a consequence of one's failure to see the reality of the non-self of things. This is the source of suffering, and Li claims that this suffering should enable sentient beings eventually to turn around the flow of their habitual life and search for the way to overcome suffering. It is not just suffering per se that makes this transition possible, but the realization that suffering itself does not have its own independent identity. When subjects become

aware of the existence of suffering in their lives, they search for a way to overcome it and come to realize that suffering, the object that they try to avoid and remove from their lives, in fact does not have an essence to be removed, but arises in accordance with conditions. Knowing the conditions and conditionality of suffering leads subjects to the very conditionality of their own existence and that of other things in the world.

Does this mean that we need to experience a maximum level of suffering before turning around the flow of life as an unenlightened being? How much suffering is enough to facilitate this turning point? Li's emphasis on non-temporality also applies here. The intensity of the suffering that Li mentions as being the facilitator of a turning point does not involve the actual quantity of suffering one has to deal with in life. Rather, one can interpret Li's position as a claim that a certain form of inner transformation of the subject is required for an awakening to take place. This is the fundamental requirement for awakening in Li's Huayan Buddhist philosophy. This is why, as has been recognized, Li's Huayan thought has been well received by Chan Buddhists, rather than by the Huayan Buddhists in the orthodox tradition. This is also why Li emphasizes that awakening is not a matter of the cultivation of the kalpas of time, but is rather an occurrence in a moment of life.

Another fundamental element is required in Li's paradigm of awakening through internal revolution. Li calls it "faith." Faith for Li is a gate that leads the sentient being to the awareness of the ontological sameness between the Buddha and the sentient being. For Li, faith does not indicate faith *in* external objects; faith is an awakening or happening in the individual's ontological reality, and in this sense, it should be distinguished from the concept of faith that requires external power as the object of one's faith.²² Robert Gimello describes the meaning of faith according to Li as follows:

The grounds for such confidence [on the identity between the Buddha and the sentient being] ... lie in the realization that what is called "faith," even its merest incipience, is in fact not just a means to a distant end but rather the proleptic presence of that end within the very precincts of ignorance and suffering. "Faith" or confidence in the possibility of enlightenment is nothing but enlightenment itself, in an anticipatory and causative modality. Were sentient beings themselves incapable of successful pursuit of the goal, were that capability not resident in their very natures, there would, on standard Buddhist premises, be no external agency to endow them with that capability.²³

Another characteristic of Li's Huayan thought is "absolute nonduality." Nonduality between cause and effect (fruition) is the foundation of his concept of simultaneity of cause and effect, which appears as the non-temporality of temporality. Nonduality between the Buddha and the sentient being is also the foundation of his Buddhist soteriology, and this nonduality is the grounds of individual salvation or enlightenment. If sentient beings are not the Buddha themselves, there is no way for them to attain enlightenment in the process of causation, upon which the Buddhist world-view relies.

²² For a discussion of faith in Li's Buddhism, see Inaoka 1980.

²³ Gimello 1983, p. 337.

Within this context, we can summarize two major issues as the core of Li's inquiry. First is the existential awakening of the subject to the reality that unmoving wisdom is the foundation of both the Buddha and the sentient being, the realization of which Li characterizes as sudden enlightenment. The second is the emphasis that each phenomenon is the very mark of the law. As an example of the former, Li presents the dragon girl and the youth Sudhana, and for the latter, he describes Sudhana's pilgrimage through the realm of reality where he encounters the 53 dharma teachers. The former made it possible for Chan Buddhists to adopt Li's theory in the Chan vision of sudden enlightenment, which is grounded in the identity between the mind of the sentient being and of the Buddha. The latter connects Li with more orthodox Chinese Huayan thinkers, whose fourfold worldview accentuates the unobstructed interpenetration among phenomena.

With regard to the awakening of sentient beings to their original wisdom, one might still ask whether the realization of suffering actually generates faith in the identity between the Buddha and sentient beings, and leads the sentient beings to arouse their minds. Or, more specifically, one might ask whether that turning point occurs as naturally as Li believes it would. Chan Buddhists must have felt that Li's theory falls short of being practical, even though they welcomed Li's claim about the identity between the sentient being and the Buddha. The thirteenth-century Korean Sŏn Master Pojo Chinul (普照知訥 1158–1210) provides an example for looking at the Chan/Sŏn/Zenist position on this issue. As has been well recognized, Chinul adopted Li Tongxuan's philosophy of Huayan Buddhism, especially that articulated in his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, and employed it as a philosophical grounds for his Sŏn Buddhism.²⁴ However, despite all his admiration for Li's Huayan Buddhism, Chinul does not contend that the sentient being's awareness would naturally occur through the realization of suffering, as Li proposed. Instead, in a treatise introducing Kanhua Chan,²⁵ Chinul emphasizes that Huayan and Chan schools are not different in their teachings but Huayan Buddhism demonstrates the law of the world from the perspective of the one who has already attained the law, whereas Chan/Sŏn Buddhism tells the sentient being how to get to that world of the enlightened.²⁶

From the Chan Buddhist perspective, the subitist nature of awakening that claims the sentient-being-quia-the Buddha does not change the status of the sentient being until the "moment" of inner transformation actually takes place. This "moment" of transformation requires either a significant duration of time with constant and consistent practice or a radical measure such as *gong'an* (公案), as was developed by

²⁴ See Ch'oe (2002), Yi (2009).

²⁵ Kanhua Chan is a branch of the gongan Chan tradition. Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲 1089–1163) is credited to have developed this form of meditation. The Gong'an Chan employs the case story (*gongan*) for meditation. In the Kanhua Chan, practitioners employ one word or a phrase in a *gongan* and relying on that word or phrase in meditation practice. The Korean Sŏn master Chinul adopted this meditation at the later period in his life and credited it as the most effective form to attain awakening. For a discussion of LI's Huayan Buddhism and Chan Buddhism, see Kozima 1984.

²⁶ Chinul, *Kanhwa kyŏrŭi ron*, p. 733c.

the Chan Buddhist tradition. Compared to the fourfold worldview and the vision of the unobstructed interpenetration of the realm of reality proposed by other Huayan thinkers, Li's Huayan Buddhism focuses more on the sentient being and how the Huayan emphasis on phenomena illuminates the sentient being's ontological reality so it can provide the grounds for the sentient being's awakening. However, throughout his *Exposition of the Huayan Jing*, Li rarely addresses the issues of differences and diversities among different beings. Phenomenal diversity for Li, as for other Huayan thinkers, is addressed only to be remolded into a frame of harmony. The ontological claim of the sameness of all beings, which negates even the differences between the sentient being and the Buddha, might offer an ultimate case of an egalitarian vision if we translate Li's Huayan Buddhism into the language of modern philosophy. However, such a claim could also serve as a source of conformity that negates individual differences. In the case of Li's Huayan Buddhism, such a leveling of diversity and differences without addressing the existence of difference generates contradiction, given Li's emphasis on the *Huayan Jing*'s celebration of diversity in the chapter "Entering the Realm of Reality" and Sudhana's journey. Unlike the vision in which principle, or noumenon, dominates and functions as a controlling power that generates a seemingly unified vision from diverse phenomena, when phenomena are the focus of a discourse, one expects more awareness of diversity than of unity. Li's concept of "non-temporality" and the idea of the "enlightenment in a moment" challenge the very idea of unification by control. The fact that Li singled out the "Entering the Realm of Reality" chapter as the core of Huayan thought, out of the 39 chapters of the vast *Huayan jing*, as well as his consistent focus on Sudhana and his pilgrimage, reveal the specific way that Li looks at existence, a being's position in the community of existence, and how Huayan envisions it.

If we consider the existential meaning of Li's non-temporality, we are led to the idea that existence, for Li, is a non-replaceable fullness. This is so without moral or ethical connotation involved. Not surprisingly, social and political levels of human existence are not explicitly addressed in his philosophy, even though one might construct them based on his Huayan thought.²⁷ Whereas the Huayan fourfold worldview addresses the world of things, or the world of objects, through its emphasis on phenomena, Li's Huayan Buddhism sees phenomena from the position of each subject—the individual—like each knot in Indra's net, which requires embracing the entire net within one's own existence. If the Indra's net, the hallmark image of Huayan Buddhism, envisions, through spatial imagination, the inter-subsumption of all the causes and conditions of existence, Li's non-temporality offers a temporal (through non-temporality) equivalence to the Indra's net. By the same token, whereas Indra's net envisions the inseparable relationship between the part and the whole in the identity of a being, Li's non-temporality, without ignoring this part-whole relationship, still focuses on each being, and thus illuminates the ontological and existential reality of the sentient being. In this sense, Li's Huayan Buddhism can be considered an existential phenomenology, in which each phenomenon (the

²⁷ For a discussion on social and political dimensions of Huayan Buddhism, see Park (2008).

sentient being) represents the very reality of existence: There is no outside. Non-temporality as the nature of this existence indicates the non-substantiality of existence, when each moment is the accumulation of all the moments without a final goal to achieve. In Li's Huayan Buddhism, no sense of direction is visible. There are only two points in the journey of the life of a being: one, the Buddha, and the other, the sentient being, and they are not two dots in one line, but a pair, like the simultaneity of cause and effect in Li's non-temporality. Life is full, and at the same time, empty, in Li's Huayan philosophy, and this is so in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist senses. The issues of how we should deal with the problems of the world in which sentient beings live and how those problems might delay their awakening to ontological reality remain to be resolved.

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Part VII
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Chan School 禪宗

Chapter 15

Redefining Enlightenment Experience: A Philosophical Interpretation of the Dunhuang Version *Platform Sūtra*



Jinhua Jia

1 Introduction

This article uses the Dunhuang version of the *Platform Sūtra* (*Tanjing* 壇經) to discuss its philosophical implications. Although this earliest version already contains different voices and seemingly scattered, variant concepts, a central theme runs through the sūtra and loosely strings those voices and concepts together. This theme is a new interpretation of enlightenment, or more exactly, of enlightenment experience for Chan Buddhism. This article aims at a philosophical discussion of this central theme.

As scholars have noted, there are at least seven distinct versions of the *Platform Sūtra* extant now, among which only the Dunhuang version (several complete and incomplete copies have been rediscovered, but they are basically identical) was produced during the Tang dynasty (618–907) (Yanagida 1967/2001: 252–278; Yampolsky 1967: 91–110; Schlütter 2007: 379–410).¹ This version basically does not contain the terminology of classical Chan Buddhism from the mid-Tang to the Five Dynasties (756–960). Therefore, this article only use this version to study earlier Chan thoughts.

The *Platform Sūtra* describes itself as containing the autobiography and teaching of Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the traditionally recognized Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism. Modern scholars in general do not accept this attribution at face value and have indicated that even the Dunhuang version already presents different voices, such as the ideas and terminology similar to or different from that of Shenhui 神會

¹Also see Yanagida 1985/2001: 206–227; Yang 2001: 3–5, 293–314; Fang 2003: 43–49. In addition, the rediscovered fragments of the Tangut translation of the *Platform Sūtra* are also regarded as based on the Dunhuang version. See Kawakami 1938: 61–66; Yang 2001: 314; Fang 2003: 47.

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(684–758), and had possibly gone through a process of creation and modification by different Chan individuals and groups with different agendas. There have been various nominees for the authors of the *sūtra*, and the debate has not been concluded yet (HU Shi 1934/1995: 15–35; Yampolsky 1967: 1–110).² Since there is no space for this article to discuss the complicated issue of authorship, I simply cite the text as the *Platform Sūtra*.

Studies on the *Platform Sūtra* have often picked up its major theoretical terms and concepts to discuss them respectively, such as “self-nature” (*zìxìng* 自性), “original nature” (*běnxìng* 本性), “self-mind” (*zìxīn* 自心), “original mind” (*běnxīn* 本心), “no-thought” (*wúniàn* 無念), “no-abiding” (*wúzhù* 無住), “no-form” (*wúxiāng* 無相), “seeing the nature to attain Buddhahood” (*jiàn xìng chéng fó* 見性成佛), “sudden awakening” (*dùn wù* 頓悟), “identification of *samādhi* (meditation) and *prajñā* (wisdom)” (*dìng huì deng* 定慧等), and an unbroken genealogy of dharma transmission.

This article presents a new argument that all these concepts loosely serve to the construction of a central project in the *Platform Sūtra*, namely a new interpretation of enlightenment, the ultimate goal of Buddhists. Since traditional Chinese thinkers were usually more interested in the question of “how to do” than “what it is,” however, the *Platform Sūtra*’s new interpretation is not attempted to redefine what enlightenment is but instead to focus on why an ordinary person can attain enlightenment and how enlightenment is experienced. The *sūtra* answers these questions from ontological, soteriological- methodological, and metaphorical perspectives. The following sections will discuss these perspectives respectively.

2 Ontological Paradox: Why Ordinary People Can Attain Enlightenment

The *Platform Sūtra* presents a sophisticated interplay of ontological paradox by integrating *tathāgatagarbha* thought with *prajñāpāramitā* and Mādhyamika theories to answer the soteriological question of why enlightenment is possible for ordinary people.

The *Platform Sūtra* follows the *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures and earlier Chan texts to claim inherent Buddha nature in all sentient beings, and takes one step further to redefine the relationship between nature (Buddha nature) and mind (human mind). The *sūtra* states:

Therefore we know that the myriad things are all within our own minds. Why do not from the self-mind make the original nature of true reality suddenly appear? The *Pusajie jing* says: “In ordination, from the outset self-nature is pure.” If we perceive the mind to see the nature, then of ourselves we have achieved the Buddha Way. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says: “At once, suddenly, we regain our original mind.” 故知一切萬法盡在自身心中。何不從于

²Also see Ui 1939/1966: 100–14; Yanagida 1967/2001: 181–212; Yanagida 1985/2001: 206–227; Jorgensen 2002: 399–438; Jorgensen 2005: 1–18; Jorgensen 2012: 25–52.

自心，頓見真如本性。菩薩戒經云：“戒，本源自性清淨。”識心見性，自成佛道。淨名經云：“即時豁然，還得本心” (Yang 2001: 35–36; Yampolsky 1967: 151).³

Here we see different but interconnected or mutually identical expressions of self-mind, self-nature, original mind, and original nature. Same expressions are seen throughout the *sūtra*.⁴

The relationship between nature and mind are complicated in both Indian and Chinese Buddhist texts and contexts. The Sanskrit words for nature such as *svabhāva* and *prakṛti* mainly mean the essence or substance of all things, and for mind such as *citta* and *manas* basically refer to mental activities of thought, consciousness, and feeling. Thus, originally nature and mind denote different things. In the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha-nature is described as the essence of enlightenment, which is prior, transcendental, universal, constant, pure, and objective, while human mind is empirical, existential, individual, inconstant, defiled, and subjective (Feng 2005: 237–52). However, since Buddha-nature is prescribed as intrinsic in all sentient beings, in many *tathāgatagarbha* and other Mahāyāna texts, the term “mind-nature” (Skt. *citta-dharmatā*; Chi. *xinxing* 心性) or “pure mind of self-nature” (Skt. *prakṛti-pariśuddha-citta*; Chi. *zixing qingjingxin* 自性清淨心) is used to refer to the self-nature or pure mind of sentient beings, usually characterized as immutable and interpreted as equivalent to Buddha-nature (i.e. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* T 6, 220: 87b; 408: 45a; *Avatamsaka Sūtra* T 12, 279: 66a; *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* T 16, 762: 66a).⁵

In earlier Chan discourses, the dual opposition of pure Buddha nature and defiled human mind is defined as the opposition of true nature (*zhenxing* 真性) or true mind (*zhenxin* 真心) and deluded mind (*wangxin* 妄心). True nature/mind is established as *ti* 體, the substance or essence, and the efforts of eliminating deluded mind is defined as *yong* 用, the function of true nature/mind. By eliminating deluded mind and returning to and maintaining true nature/mind, one can attain enlightenment (*Erru Sixing Lun*, X 63, 1217: 1a–b; *Zui Shangsheng Lun* T 48, 2011: 377a–379b). This dual division and the Chan enlightenment experience based on it are basically transcendental, conceptual, and analytical.

The *Platform Sūtra* distinguishes itself from earlier Chan tradition by transcending this dual division. Although it has not yet clearly identified ordinary human mind that contains both purity and defilement as Buddha nature as later Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788) and his followers did (Jia 2006: 67–73; Jia 2010: 154–66), the *Platform Sūtra* blurs the line between empirical human mind and transcendental Buddha nature, integrates the two into a unity, and directly points to people’s “own Buddha” or “Buddha mind” in their mind-nature unity:

³All the translations of the *Platform Sutra* passages in this article are adjusted from Yampolsky 1967.

⁴According to YANG Zengwen’s statistic, in the *Platform Sutra*, Buddha nature only appears six times, while self-nature appears fifty-three times, original nature eighteen times, original mind thirteen times, and self-mind nine times. See Yang 2003: 35–36.

⁵Also see *Ratnagotravibhāga* T 31, 1611: 813b, 837a, 842b; *Awakening of Faith* T 32, 1666: 576c, 585b.

In our mind itself a Buddha exists,
 Our own Buddha is the true Buddha.
 If we do not have in ourselves the Buddha mind,
 Then where are we to seek Buddha?
 我心自有佛，自佛是真佛。自若無佛心，向何處求佛。(Yang 2001: 73; Yampolsky 1967: 180)

In this way, the *Platform Sūtra* clearly endows empirical human mind with the attribute of Buddhahood, and grounds enlightenment on the existential, pragmatic, and empirical basis of the phenomenal world and human life, as seen in the following verse from the *sūtra*:

From the outset the Dharma has been in the world;
 Being in the world, it transcends it.
 Do not leave the world
 To seek the transcendental world outside.
 法元在世間，於世出世間。勿離世間上，外求出世間。(Yang 2001: 48–49; Yampolsky 1967: 161)

As a result, the *Platform Sūtra* more convincingly illustrates the possibility for an ordinary person to attain Buddhahood. Furthermore, the *sūtra* tells Huineng's story as an illiterate who enlightened when he was still a laborer before becoming an ordained monk. This story also serves as a metaphor for the possibility of ordinary people's enlightenment in daily life. Following this direction, later Mazu Daoyi and his followers further defined that ordinary mind is the Way/enlightenment, and Buddha nature manifests in the functions of daily activities (Jia 2006: 76–79; Jia 2012: 171–76).

Based on this possibility, the *Platform Sūtra* emphasizes that enlightenment relies on knowing and believing in one's own mind-nature. The realization of enlightenment should no longer be sought outside and require cultivations through ages of *kalpas*. Ordinary people only need to perceive their own empirical mind, see the intrinsic Buddha-nature integrated with it, and believe they are originally enlightened. The *Platform Sūtra* repeatedly emphasizes the cognitive act of “perceiving” (*shi* 識), “seeing” (*jian* 見), “comprehending” (*wu* 悟), “believing” (*xin* 信), and justifying (*zheng* 證 or *cheng* 成) one's mind-nature:

If you do not perceive the original mind, studying the Dharma is useless. If you perceive the mind to see the nature, you then comprehend the cardinal meaning. 不識本心，學法無益。識心見性，即悟大意。(Yang 2001: 13; Yampolsky 1967: 132)

Those who comprehend this Dharma have comprehended the Dharma of *prajñā* and are cultivating the *prajñā* practice. 悟此法者，悟般若法，修般若行。(Yang 2001: 31; Yampolsky 1967: 148)

When this Dharma is to be handed down, it must be attained by a person of superior wisdom, one with a deep faith in the Buddhadharma, and one who embraces the great compassion. 如付此法，須得上根智，深信佛法，立於大悲。(Yang 2001: 78; Yampolsky 1967: 182)

The Chinese term “wu” 悟 in above first and second citations deserves particular attention. “Wu” is generally translated as awakening or enlightening. However, this

term mainly connotes two senses. The first is “lingwu” 領悟 or “zhixiao” 知曉, meaning “comprehending,” “knowing,” or “understanding.” The second is “juewu” 覺悟 or “juexing” 覺醒, meaning “enlightenment” and “awakening.”⁶ Both senses are evident in the *Platform Sūtra*, and in above two citations “wu” refers to comprehending and knowing. The knowledge attains from all these perceiving, seeing, comprehending, and believing is the result of an inner experience of cognition, which is individual, subjective, empirical, and justifiable. The knower and the known are the same, and knowledge and belief are inseparable. It is the mental state of self-awareness of one’s original Buddha-nature/enlightenment. Thus, the *Platform Sūtra* draws the pursuit of attaining Buddhahood from the other shore (in Chinese translations, *prajñāparamita* or perfection of wisdom is often translated as “dao bi’an” 到彼岸, to the other shore) back to human’s subject and empirical mind, and emphasizes self-believing, self-understanding, self-enlightening, self-accomplishing, and self-justifying of enlightenment experience, so as “to accomplish and complete by oneself the Way/enlightenment of the Buddha” 自作自成佛道 (Yang 2001: 22; Yampolsky 1967: 141).

On the other hand, in the actual experience of human existence, the perceptive, empirical human mind functions as a continuing flow of thought and consciousness from moment to moment and never stops perceiving, contacting, and grabbing external objects. Therefore, the self-mind also presents the state of ignorance and defilement. To deal with this state, the *Platform Sūtra* applies the *prajñā* theory to indicate the empty nature of the conscious mind and to end the attachment to it. The sūtra mainly uses the three concepts of no-thought, no-form, and no-abiding, which are grounded in the *prajñāparamita* and Madhyamika literature, to deal with this issue. The sūtra states:

In this teaching of mine, from ancient times up to the present, all have set up no-thought as the main doctrine, no-form as the substance, and no-abiding as the basis. 我此法門，從上已來，(頓漸)皆立無念爲宗，無相爲體，無住爲本。 (Yang 2001: 19; Yampolsky 1967: 137–38)

About the significant implications of these three concepts, scholars have already had numerous discussions. Generally speaking, among the three, no-thought is the most fundamental. It is neither to be understood as discontinuation of thought nor to be identified with the unconsciousness of modern psychology (Suzuki 1969: 60). Indeed, the sūtra warns that the discontinuation of thought means death and rebirth (Yang 2001: 19; Yampolsky 1967: 138). Peter Gregory indicates that, in the *Platform Sūtra*, “thought” (*nian*) is used in two different senses: the first refers to the entire spectrum of mental activity, and the second the mental act of interrupting the natural flow of thoughts and taking one of those moments of thought as an object to “think on” or “dwell on.” As a result, he defines no-thought as “no-thought means not to think in the midst of thoughts” (Gregory 2012: 100–101). “Not to think in the midst of thoughts” means not to “dwell on” and attach to any external objects and

⁶Peter N. Gregory has indicated that in the *Platform Sutra*, “wu” denotes “a certain kind of cognitive act that might be best translated as ‘to realize’ or ‘to understand.’” See Gregory 2012: 94.

situations the thoughts perceive and think through, or in other words, not to objectify or stain the thoughts, as the *sūtra* states:

To be unstained in all situations is called no-thought. If on the basis of your own thoughts you separate from the situations, then, you do not produce thoughts from objects. 於一切境上不染，名為無念。於自念上離境，不於法上生念。 (Yang 2001: 19; Yampolsky 1967: 138)

The Dharma of no-thought means that you perceive all things but do not attach to them” 無念法者，見一切法，不著一切法。 (Yang 2001: 37; Yampolsky 1967: 153)

No-thought is often likened with the classical image of the mirror, which successively reflects objects but is never stained by or attached to any of them. The other two concepts, no-form and no-abiding are basically used to present the same state of nonattachment. No-form is “right in the forms and yet free of any form” 於相而離相, because “all forms are illusive” 凡所有相，皆是虛妄. To know the forms of the myriad things are all illusive means to acquire the *prajñā* wisdom of emptiness and to relinquish attachment to all phenomenal forms while perceiving and experiencing them. No-abiding is the state that “the thoughts successively go through all the things without abiding, and this is no-binding (於一切法上，念念不住，即無縛也)” (Yang 2001: 19; Yampolsky 1967: 138). The term “zhu” 住 or “abiding” means “attachment” in Buddhist texts. One does not attach to and make any value judgments on all the objects and situations one’s thoughts go through, because one understands all these are without any permanent substance and therefore is freed from them. Based on the *prajñā* theory of emptiness, all the three concepts, no-thought, no-form, and no-abiding, describe the practice and state of detachment from the conscious flow of perceiving the illusive phenomena. The key notion is the nondualism of “neither standing apart from them [the six dusts] nor being stained by them (不離不染)” or “neither grasping nor throwing away (不取不捨)” (Yang 2001: 38, 32; Yampolsky 1967: 153, 149; Ng 1993: 33–38, 46). The six dusts (i.e. the six types of sense objects) refer to *samsāra*, the phenomenal world. Staying in empirical daily life and successively perceiving all the phenomena yet without attaching to and grasping anything, one’s mind-nature forever remains the state of pure and free. This is the true liberation and enlightenment.

The *tathāgatagarbha* thought has been questioned whether it represents a metaphysical tendency of reifying *tathāgatagarbha*/Buddha nature as ontological substance and essence and therefore deviating from the Buddhist principle of no-self or lacking of inherent-existence/nature in all *dharmas*/things (Matsumoto 1997: 165–73). Wang Youru retorts this question by a deconstruction of Buddha nature. Wang analyzes the *tathāgatagarbha* texts and indicates their authors apply some kind of restriction on the concept of *tathāgatagarbha*/Buddha nature to avoid reification and substantiation, including defining it as an expedient means (Sans. *upāya*, Chi. *fangbian* 方便), as a non-substantialized causal element or relation, and to identify Buddha nature with emptiness or with the Middle Way. Wang further discusses how the authors of the *Platform Sūtra* followed their Indian predecessors in the deconstructive operation of self-nature with certain innovation and flexibility (Wang 2003: 52–72).

Wang's discussion is insightful and convincing, and we can further develop it with the observation of a deliberate application of ontological paradox in the *Platform Sūtra*. Since both theories of Buddha nature and emptiness are discussions concerning the nature and true reality of human beings and other things, they touch the issue of ontological inquiry, even though in a non-substantiated manner. As discussed above, the *Platform Sūtra* explores the possibility of enlightenment from two aspects. In the first aspect, based on the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, the *sūtra* integrates transcendental Buddha-nature with empirical human mind and uses the concepts of self-mind and self-nature to endow human mind with the attribute of Buddhahood/enlightenment, drawing the attainment of Buddhahood from the other shore back to the internal mind and existential situation. In the second aspect, based on the *prajñāpāramitā* theory of emptiness, the *sūtra* eliminates out any attachment to self-mind with the wisdom of no-abiding in the successive flow of thought and the empirical process of life journey, in order to realize the attainment of Buddhahood in this life and this moment. Here "seeing the nature to attain Buddhahood" and "no-abiding in the successive thoughts" are proceeded simultaneously and inseparably, because only when the mind-nature reaches the state of no-abiding can the true enlightenment and liberation be realized. Although both self-nature and no-abiding are endowed with their own attribute and are described as True Suchness/true reality, self-nature itself does not have any "substance" but with no-abiding as its true nature, because self-nature is in fact the no-abiding state of *prajñā* wisdom, the absolute insight into the nature of true reality of emptiness. As the *Platform Sūtra* repeatedly emphasizes: "In the original nature itself the wisdom of *prajñā* exists (本性自有般若之智)" (Yang 2001: 33–34; Yampolsky 1967: 149); "*Prajñā* is always there, and is not apart from self-nature (般若常在, 不離自性)" (Yang 2001: 31; Yampolsky 1967: 148). Human mind and Buddha nature, or "conscious mind" and "self-nature," reach unification in the practice of no-abiding in successive thoughts, and human beings are truly able to attain enlightenment dynamically in the phenomenal world and empirical daily life. Self-nature and no-abiding thus form an ontological paradox of defining and deconstructing one another. This paradox is the reason why, despite that its central concern of self-nature is developed from the *tathāgatagarbha* thought, the *Platform Sūtra* stresses again and again that *mahāprajñāpāramitā* is "the most honored, the supreme, the foremost (最尊最上第一)" and "all the Buddhas of the three worlds issue from it (三世諸佛皆從中出)" (Yang 2001: 31; Yampolsky 1967: 148).

3 Soteriological Methodology: How Ordinary People Experience Enlightenment

The relationship between ignorance and enlightenment is always the central concern of Buddhist soteriology, as the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to lead sentient beings out of the bondage of ignorance to the liberation of enlightenment. After

answering the question why an ordinary person can attain enlightenment, the *Platform Sūtra* further discusses the soteriological and methodological question of how an ordinary person experiences enlightenment.

In the *Awakening of Faith*, these two interrelated soteriological categories of ignorance and enlightenment are explained as the famous “two aspects of one-mind” (*yixin ermen* 一心二門). The first aspect is the mind as True Suchness (*xin Zhenru* 心真如), the true reality, and the second aspect is the mind subject to birth-and-death (*xin shengmie* 心生滅), the defiled condition. As the relationship of these two aspects of one-mind is “neither one nor different,” their difference is just a matter of perception. The sentient beings, in their delusion, perceive the mind as being defiled. When they see it from the perspective of true reality, then they realize that it is originally pure and enlightened (T 32, 1666: 576a–c; Gregory 1986: 72; Buswell 1989: 82–83).

Following this theory, the *Platform Sūtra* advocates to perceive the originally enlightened mind-nature from the perspective of true reality with the famous slogan of “seeing the nature to attain Buddhahood” (*jianxing chengfo* 見性成佛), as it states:

Hearing the sudden teaching and not placing your trust in external practice, you only in your self-mind always raise correct views in regard to your own original-nature. Then, all sentient beings with heterodox views, afflictions, and troubles will at once gain awakening. It is like the great sea which gathers all the flowing streams and merges together the small waters and the large waters into one. This is seeing the nature. 聞其頓教，不假外修，但於自心，令自本性常起正見，一切邪見煩惱塵勞眾生，當時盡悟。猶如大海納於眾流，小水大水合為一體，即是見性。(Yang 2001: 34; Yampolsky 1967: 150)

If you illumine all things by wisdom, neither grasping nor throwing away, then you can see the nature and attain the Buddha Way. 用智慧觀照，於一切法不取不舍，即見性成佛道。(Yang 2001: 32; Yampolsky 1967: 149)

Prior to the *Platform Sūtra*, the phrase “seeing Buddha nature” (*jian Foxing* 見佛性) had appeared in many Mahāyāna scriptures and Chinese Buddhist essays, including discourses attributed to Hongren 弘忍 (i.e. *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* T 12, 374: 372a, 405a, 411b, 697b; *Mohe Zhiguan* T 46, 1911: 10b, 15a, 87c; *Zui Shangsheng Lun* T 48, 2011: 378a), but it usually referred to realizing Buddha nature or “true mind” in its transcendental, universal sense (Hong 2000: 296–99). In the *Platform Sūtra*, however, “seeing the nature” has a new precondition of “perceiving self/original-mind,” because the pure self-nature or Buddha nature is integrated with and inseparable from the empirical mind. With this precondition the sūtra touches the soteriological dilemma of ignorance and enlightenment and tries to solve it in the existential, empirical domain. The sūtra instructs people to first perceive their mind. This would raise correct views to see the originally pure nature and realize that they are intrinsically endowed with the wisdom of the Buddha, which can be used to illuminate the illusory character of defilement/ignorance and all things in the world. Since defilement/ignorance and all things are illusory, the mind-nature unity has nothing to grasp or throw away, and right at this nondualist point enlightenment is directly achieved by oneself.

The *Platform Sūtra* also explicitly adopts the concept of “original enlightenment” (*benjue* 本覺) from the *Awakening of Faith* to justify the soteriological doctrine of seeing the nature:

What is meant by “saving yourselves by your self-nature?” Despite there are heterodox views, afflictions, ignorance, and delusion in your bodies, you have in yourselves the attributes of original enlightenment. 何名自性自度? 自色身中邪見煩惱, 愚癡迷妄, 自有本覺性. (Yang 2001: 26; Yampolsky 1967: 143)

Original enlightenment is identical with both self-nature and *prajñā* wisdom. All the heterodox views, afflictions, ignorance, and delusion in one’s body-mind are just adventitious, and the attribute of original enlightenment innate in one’s self-nature enables one to understand all those are merely illusory creations of deluded thought and as a result liberates oneself from the bondage of ignorance. In addition, as discussed above, the ontological doctrines of no-thought, no-form, and no-abiding are also of soteriological function and can be used to see through the empty nature of ignorance. Thus, assuming the perspective of true reality to see one’s mind-nature unity and assisted by the *prajñā* wisdom of emptiness, the *Platform Sūtra* provides a solution for the soteriological dilemma of ignorance and enlightenment.

Methodologically, the *Platform Sūtra* criticizes earlier Chan practice of formulated procedures of sitting in meditation or the removal of defilement, and advocates the approach of suddenness, which is based on the soteriological doctrine of “seeing the nature to attain Buddhahood.” Peter Gregory makes a statistic of how the term “dun” 頓 or “sudden” is used in the *Platform Sūtra*, and finds that it is used fifteen times to refer to a teaching, four times in conjunction with “jian” 漸 or “gradual,” two times to refer to practice, and only two times to form the term “dunwu” 頓悟, which is often translated as sudden enlightenment. According to this statistic and in connection with his interpretation of “wu” as “to understand” or “to realize,” Gregory contends that the conventional translation of “dunwu” as sudden enlightenment is misleading and the primary reference of “sudden” is to a teaching or more generally an approach rather than to “enlightenment” (Gregory 2012: 93–95). As discussed above, since the character “wu” denotes both senses of comprehending/understanding and awakening/enlightenment, the term “dunwu” can still be translated as sudden awakening according to its certain context in the *Platform Sūtra*, as seen in the following first citation. However, Gregory’s argument that the primary reference of “sudden” is to an approach is insightful. The *sūtra* repeatedly emphasizes that its teaching is a sudden one, because it is methodologically connected to the doctrine of seeing the nature:

Good friends, when I was in Venerable Hongren’s place, hearing it [the *Diamond Sūtra*] just once, I immediately gained the great awakening and saw suddenly the true reality of my original nature. Therefore, I have taken this teaching, passing it on to later generations, in order to make students of the Way suddenly awaken to enlightenment, and let each of you perceive your own mind, and suddenly awaken to your own original nature. 善知識, 我于忍和尚處一聞, 言下大悟, 頓見真如本性. 是故將此教法流行後代, 令學道者頓悟菩提, 各自觀心, 令自本性頓悟. (Yang 2001: 36; Yampolsky 1967: 151–52)

Just this is the sudden teaching;
 Another name for it is Mahāyāna.
 Having been deluded throughout a multitude of *kalpas*,
 One gains enlightenment within an instant.
 此但是頓教，亦名為大乘。迷來經累劫，悟即剎那間。(Yang 2001: 49; Yampolsky 1967: 161)

Since self-nature is originally pure, there is no need to sit in meditation and contemplate purity gradually. Since self-nature is identical with Buddha-nature, there is no need to cultivate gradually. If one directly recognizes, sees, and believes one's mind-nature unity, in an instant one realizes that it is originally fully endowed with true reality and there is no difference between oneself and the Buddha; as a result, one can suddenly awaken to enlightenment.

Base on this sudden approach, the *Platform Sūtra* further reinterprets the concepts of *samādhi* (concentration, meditation) and *prajñā* (wisdom). About the traditional practice of sitting in meditation, the *sūtra* redefines it with these words:

What is it in this teaching that we call "sitting in meditation?" In this teaching all things are without any obstruction. Outwardly and under all circumstances, sitting means not to originate thoughts, and meditation means to see into the original nature and not become confused. 此法門中何名坐禪？此法門中一切無礙，外於一切境界上，念不起為坐，見本性不亂為禪。(Yang 2001: 22; Yampolsky 1967: 140)

The one-practice *samādhi* means to practice straightforward mind by walking, staying, sitting, and lying at all times.... If sitting in meditation without moving is good, Vimalakīrti should not have scolded Śāriputra for sitting in meditation in the forest. 一行三昧者，於一切時中行住坐臥，常行直心是。...若坐不動是，維摩詰不合呵舍利弗宴坐林中。(Yang 2001: 17; Yampolsky 1967: 136–37)

The *Platform Sūtra* does not reject meditation itself but only rejects formulated, motionless meditation procedures that aim at the mental state of devoid of thoughts (Yampolsky 1967: 117). The *sūtra* re-explains sitting in meditation as the free and unrestrained practice of no-thought and seeing the mind-nature in daily activities such as walking, staying, sitting, and lying. As discussed above, the *sūtra* also re-explains wisdom as the practice of no-attachment in successive thoughts and as the empty self-nature.

With these new definitions of meditation and wisdom, the *Platform Sūtra* advocates the practice of "identification of meditation and wisdom." The *sūtra* uses the traditional Chinese notions of substance (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用) to explain the relationship between meditation and wisdom:

Good friends, my teaching of the Dharma takes meditation and wisdom as its basis. Never under any circumstances say mistakenly meditation and wisdom being different. Their substance is neither one nor two. Meditation is the substance of wisdom; wisdom is the function of meditation. When there is wisdom, meditation is in wisdom; when there is meditation, wisdom is in meditation. 善知識，我此法門，以定慧為本。第一勿迷言定慧別。定慧體不一不二。即定是慧體，即慧是定用。即慧之時定在慧，即定之時慧在定。(Yang 2001: 17; Yampolsky 1967: 135)

Good friends, how then are meditation and wisdom identical? They are like the lamp and the light. If there is a lamp there is light; if there is no lamp there is no light. The lamp is the

substance of light; the light is the function of the lamp. Thus, although they have two names, in substance they are not two. The method of meditation and wisdom are also like this. 善知識, 定慧猶如何等? 如燈光. 有燈即有光, 無燈即無光. 燈是光之體, 光是燈之用. 名即有二, 體無兩般. 此定慧法, 亦復如是. (Yang 2001: 18; Yampolski 1967: 137)

The identification of meditation and wisdom is also discussed in almost the same way in the records of Shenhui's discourses and sermons (Yang 1996: 6, 9, 10–11). However, this concept was not invented by Shenhui or the authors of the *Platform Sūtra*; it came from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, which states: “When meditation and wisdom are identical, one sees all things” (T 12: 547a; Yampolsky 1967: 135). The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* indicates that the purpose of meditation is to realize the wisdom of seeing emptiness, the true reality of all things. What unique in the *Platform Sūtra* is that it uses the ontological pair of substance and function to explain this relationship. In the metaphor of the lamp and the light, the lamp is the substance of the light, and the light is the function of the lamp. In the relationship between meditation and wisdom, meditation is described as the substance of wisdom, and wisdom the function of meditation. As the Chinese tradition always emphasizes more on function than on substance, this identification implies a criticism of meditation for the mere sake of practice with the expense of wisdom and a reemphasis on the most important thing—the enlightenment experience of *prajñā* wisdom. In addition, the traditional practice usually follows the order of meditation first and wisdom second, using meditation to inspire wisdom. The identification of meditation and wisdom in the *Platform Sūtra* stresses that there is no order of priority and the two methods should be practiced simultaneously and inseparably. Moreover, since wisdom is just “all living beings’ original nature of *prajñā* wisdom,” the method of identification of meditation and wisdom results in the same sudden enlightenment experience as “seeing the nature to attain Buddhahood.” Thus, because of the identification of meditation and wisdom, Chan or *dhyāna*, originally a term denoting meditation, becomes the synonym for enlightenment experience. D. T. Suzuki highly appreciated this identification in the *Platform Sūtra* and praised it as “revived the enlightenment-experience” and represented “the essential character of Zen.” He also indicated that this concept later led to Mazu Daoyi’s doctrine of “ordinary mind is Dao/enlightenment” and “Buddha-nature manifests in function” (Suzuki 1953: 27).

4 Symbolism of Enlightenment: Transmission Genealogy, Ordination Platform, and the *Platform Sūtra*

One of the central concerns of the *Platform Sūtra* is an unbroken genealogy of dharma transmission. The construction of a Chan genealogy can be traced back to the end of the seventh century as seen in Faru’s 法如 (638–689) epitaph written in 689 (Yanagida 1967: 335–46; McRae 1986: 85–86; Faure 1997: 27). In the whole eighth century almost all the Chan lineages and groups participated in the project of

creating and perfecting their legendary history in order to establish the identity and orthodoxy of their tradition within the Buddhist movement. The *Platform Sūtra* presents an embellished version of the Chan genealogy with seven Buddhas, twenty-eight Indian patriarchs, and six Chinese patriarchs. In addition, it also uses the transmission of the Buddha's robe and the *gāthā* (ji 偈 or song 頌, verse) of transmitting Dharma as metaphors of transmission and genealogy. This new version later became the "standard" one with certain adjustment made by Mazu Daoyi's disciples in the *Baolin Zhuan* 寶林傳 (Yampolsky 1967: 3–57; Yanagida 1967/2001: 35–148, 253–380).⁷ In this genealogy, the patriarchs transmitted Buddhist mind/wisdom from generation to generation, and all of them attained the same full enlightenment as the Buddha did. Therefore, this genealogy embodies a metaphorical interpretation of enlightenment experience: because the enlightenment experience of each patriarch in the genealogy was identical with that of the Buddha, all patriarchs acquired the same authority as the Buddha.

In addition, the "platform" in the title of the *Platform Sūtra* refers to ordination platform, and the central part of the *sūtra* is a sermon that is described as presented from an ordination platform by Huineng. An ordination platform is a physical manifestation of the Vinaya tradition's emphasis on an unbroken genealogy going back to the Buddha himself. In Indian Buddhism, as early as about one century after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, there were already accounts of different genealogies descending from immediate disciples of the Buddha, and these were considered to be sacred issues for monks because tracing a genealogy back through a series of preceptors and disciples was an acknowledged way of proving the orthodoxy of a person's ordination (Hirakawa 1990: 83–86). During the period of schism, genealogies further became means of sectarian disputation, as various schools developed genealogies tracing back fictitiously to immediate disciples of the Buddha in order to claim legitimacy and authority for their doctrines (Lamotte 1988: 517–23). Thus, from generation to generation all the ordination genealogies must be traced back to the Buddha himself as the first Vinaya preceptor. Ordination platforms are the material presentation of the ordination genealogy, and they have also been transmitted from the Buddha's first ordination platform through generations. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the ordination platform further symbolized the place of the Buddha's enlightenment (*daochang* 道場 or *bodhimanda*), in which the assembly were bestowed with Bodhisattva precepts (*Pusajie* 菩薩戒) and inspired to generate the mind of enlightenment (*putixin* 菩提心 or *bodhicitta*; McRae 1998: 56–59).

In the Chinese Buddhist tradition, the construction of the earliest ordination platform was allegedly attributed to Dharmakāla 曇柯迦羅 (fl. 250) in Luoyang in the mid-third century. Later ordination platforms were established over different places of China, but the style and structure were variant and were not in large scale. In the early Tang dynasty (the seventh century), the Vinaya master Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) initiated an "ordination platform movement." In 667 he built a grand ordination platform and claimed that its structure was in accordance to the revealed design

⁷Also see Mizuno 1960: 22–41; Jorgensen 1987: 89–133; Jia 2006: 84–89; Adamek 2012: 109–133.

of the Buddha's own ordination platform at Jetavana. Following Daoxuan, other renowned masters such as Yijing 義淨 (635–713), Yixing 一行 (683–727), and Vajrabodhi 金剛智 (671–741) also established grand ordination platforms. They all invested their platforms with profound religious significance and through symbolic structures implied the presence of the Buddha and his teachings (McRae 1998: 47–49).

It was from this context of “ordination platform movement” that the *Platform Sūtra*, as well as Shenhui's *Platform Sermon* (*Tanyu* 壇語), emerged. Both texts are basically described as records of Huineng's and Shenhui's sermons on the ordination platform. In the *Platform Sūtra*, the image of Huineng as the enlightened preceptor/teacher on the sacred platform presented his teachings with the authority of the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Indeed, the *sūtra* often presents Huineng's teachings with the tone of the Buddha. For example:

Good friends, those in later generations who obtain my teaching will always see that my Dharma body is not apart from where they are. Good friends, take this doctrine of sudden teaching and look at it and practice it together, fix your resolve on it, and receive and guard it, just like serving the Buddha's teaching. 善知識，後代得吾法者，常見吾法身不離汝左右。善知識，將此頓教法門于同見同行，發願受持，如事佛教。(Yang 2001: 39; Yampolsky 1967: 153)

“Dharma-body” (Dharmacāya) refers to the Dharma-body Buddha. Huineng is presented as naming himself the Dharma-body Buddha and identifying his own teaching as the Buddha's teaching. The *sūtra* also allegedly cites the audience's words: “Lingnan (South China) is so fortunate as to have a living Buddha here (嶺南有福，生佛在此)” (Yang 2001: 50; Yampolsky 1967: 162). Here the *sūtra* openly acknowledges Huineng as a living Buddha. In the ordination ritual, the *Platform Sūtra* innovatively advocates a “formless ordination of three refugees (無相三歸依戒)”, for taking refuge in “the three treasures of self-nature (自性三寶)”, which reinterprets the Buddha as enlightenment, the Dharma as truth, and the Saṅgha as purity, and ascribes all three into self-nature (Yang 2001: 29; Yampolsky 1967: 145).

Furthermore, the *Platform Sūtra* sets up another transmission lineage with itself as the scripture to be transmitted through generations. The *sūtra* titles itself as “*jing*” or “*sūtra*” and repeatedly claims that the possession of a copy of itself is a proof of transmission (Yang 2001: 6, 50, 65, 78–79, Yampolsky 1967: 91, 126, 162, 173, 182). This proof also symbolizes that Huineng's sermons represent the same authority as the Buddha's teaching and the lineage that transmits this *sūtra* is the orthodox Chan lineage.

Through the symbolism of transmission genealogy, ordination genealogy, ordination platform, ordination ritual, and the *Platform Sūtra* itself, the *sūtra* symbolizes Huineng as a living Buddha, the role model for ordinary people's enlightenment experience in this life and this world, as well as Huineng's sermons as representing the teaching of the enlightened one, the Buddha. This is the reason why the *Platform Sūtra* is the only Chinese work to be named *sūtra* or scripture, which was only named after the teaching or alleged teaching of the Buddha in the Indian Buddhist tradition.

5 Conclusion

The *Platform Sūtra* presents a variety of concepts and even seemingly different voices, but in the deeper plane all these concepts and voices can be roughly induced as a reinterpretation of enlightenment, the ultimate concern of the Buddhist tradition, and a description of Chan's distinctive experience of enlightenment.

Through a sophisticated display of ontological paradox, the *Platform Sūtra* innovatively integrates *tathāgatagarbha* thought with *prajñā* wisdom to illuminate why enlightenment is possible for ordinary people in their existential life experience. Following the claim of *tathāgatagarbha* and earlier Chan texts that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, the *sūtra* further blurs the line between empirical mind and pure nature and endows the mind-nature unity with the transcendental implication of original enlightenment. At the same time, the *sūtra* points out the emptiness and nonattachment of the mind-nature with the doctrines of no-thought, no-form, and no-abiding, which are grounded in the *prajñāpāramitā* and Madhyamika literature.

For the soteriological concern, the *Platform Sūtra* applies the *Awakening of Faith*'s theory of "two aspects of one-mind" to advocates seeing one's originally enlightened mind-nature directly from the perception of true reality. This perceptual experience of enlightenment, enhanced with the *prajñā* wisdom of "no-abiding in successive thoughts," solves the dilemmatic relationship between the two key soteriological categories of ignorance and enlightenment in the Buddhist tradition. Methodologically, the *Platform Sūtra* criticizes earlier practice of formulated meditation procedures or the removal of defilement, and emphasizes the approach of sudden awakening, which is the application of seeing one's mind-nature to attain Buddhahood. The *sūtra* also reinterprets *samādhi* (meditation) and *prajñā* (wisdom) as both identically, simultaneously, and inseparably representing the experience of enlightenment.

An unbroken genealogy of transmission of Dharma, one of the central concerns of the *Platform Sūtra*, embodies a metaphorical/symbolical interpretation of enlightenment experience. The enlightenment of each generation in the genealogy is identical with that of the Buddha, and therefore it is interpreted as a mind to mind transmission. In addition, an ordination platform is a physical manifestation of the Vinaya tradition's emphasis on an unbroken genealogy back to the Buddha himself. The platform also symbolizes the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, in which the assembly are bestowed with Bodhisattva precepts and inspired to generate the mind of enlightenment. The enlightened preceptor/teacher on the platform presents his teachings with the authority of the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Through metaphors of transmission of Dharma genealogy, ordination genealogy, platform, and even the *Platform Sūtra* itself, Huineng is presented as a "living Buddha," who inspires ordinary people to attain Buddhahood in the daily life of the phenomenal world.

Thus, with enlightenment experience as the central thread, we can string up the seemingly scattered themes and concepts in the *Platform Sūtra*, in order to help readers understand this most important work of Chinese Chan Buddhism.

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Chapter 16

Philosophical Interpretations of Hongzhou Chan Buddhist Thought



Youru Wang

In this chapter I will examine some of the most important perspectives of Hongzhou 洪州 Chan Buddhist thought in terms of contemporary philosophical insights.¹ My interpretation of these Hongzhou Chan perspectives will involve the re-contextualization of the classical Chan thought, which will inevitably involve the fusion of various, historical and contemporary, horizons. In borrowing contemporary philosophical insights and vocabularies to interpret Hongzhou thought, I will attempt to define the meaning of these terms and concepts, revealing their “family resemblance” and their applicability to the Chan soteriological contexts. To avoid reading contemporary perspectives into the classical ones, I will also base my interpretation on the solid grounds of critical reading and examination of the classical Chan texts. The relatively reliable texts of the Hongzhou school include its founder Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一’s sermons, the sermons of Mazu’s major disciples from several generations, such as Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海, Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海, and Huangbo Xiyun 黃檗希運, and materials from other written or recorded texts, which are relatively consistent, in their contents and styles, to the texts I have mentioned here, and different from much of the standard Song editions of “encounter

¹ This chapter contains some materials that have appeared in a scattering of my previous publications under different themes. As someone suggested that it would be more convenient to readers if I could pull these scattered materials together with a focus on the contemporary interpretation of the principal aspects of Hongzhou thought, I thought it made sense to do so, especially for a chapter to serve as an introduction to the philosophical study of Hongzhou thought in this *Dao Companion to Chinese Buddhist Philosophy*. However, these materials have undergone some reorganization and revision as I have seen fit. Special acknowledgements go to parts of Wang 2001, and parts of “Deconstructing Karma and the *Aporia* of the Ethical in Hongzhou Chan Buddhism” in Wang 2007.

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dialogues” and the *gong'an* (*koan*) texts.² I will utilize recent studies of these Chan texts done by historians and philologists, although my interpretation is not limited to their views and conclusions.

1 The Trans-metaphysical Perspective—On the Deconstruction of Buddha-Nature³

It should be noted that the original uses of many Buddhist terms and concepts, such as *nirvāṇa*, *paramārtha*, *śūnyatā*, are soteriological and functional, not metaphysical. The concept of Buddha-nature is one of them. However, like the other terms, the word “Buddha-nature” can be easily reified or substantialized into a conceptual closure, denoting something like an essence independent from the everyday world of sentient beings, since the word, after all, comes out of the conventional vocabularies of binary discrimination. This section will investigate the inner struggles of Chan thought between the reification and the deconstruction⁴ of Buddha-nature.

A main target of the Hongzhou school’s deconstruction would seem to be Shenhui 神會’s teaching of “establishing awareness and cognition (*li zhijian* 立知見)” (*Lidai Fabao Ji*. T 51, 2075: 185b)⁵ in relation to his understanding of the Buddha-nature. We may define some elements of his thought as quasi-reifying or quasi-logocentric, since the context of Shenhui’s teaching is soteriological. However, these elements make the difference between the Hongzhou and Shenhui’s teachings and make a deconstructive operation indispensable.

²The Hongzhou texts I am referring to in this study, based on some recent historians’ works, include Mazu’s sermons instead of his dialogues from the *Mazu Yulu*, Dazhu Huihai’s *Discourse Records of Dazhu and Visiting Students from All Quarters* (*Zhufang Menren Canwen Yulu* 諸方門人參問語錄) instead of his *Essential Teachings of Sudden Enlightenment* (*Dunwu Yaomen* 頓悟要門, see Jia’s critical examination of Dazhu’s texts, in Jia 2006: 61), Baizhang Huaihai’s *Extensive Records* (*Guanglu* 廣錄) instead of his *Recorded Sayings* (*Yulu* 語錄, see Poceski 2004: 56), and Huangbo Xiyun’s *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind* (*Chuanxin Fayao* 傳心法要) and *Wanling Records* (*Wanling Lu* 宛陵錄). In cases where I still use materials from some unfavorable texts, I base my use on their consistency with the more reliable texts. For example, when using materials from the *Linji Lu* 臨濟錄, which has been considered a historically unreliable text, I follow the same principle of consistency with the materials and ideas of the reliable texts.

³I use the term *trans-metaphysical* to denote the intellectual maneuvers that utilize certain vocabularies and concepts of metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical (in the sense of reifying or substantializing functional terms) traditions to subvert the original hierarchies of those traditions, to transform those traditions.

⁴Deconstruction here is regarded as a contextual strategy or a situational operation of overturning oppositional hierarchies with the characteristic of self-subverting. Its main target is reification or substantialization. This is my definition of deconstruction from which I will start to examine Hongzhou deconstruction. The broad meaning of deconstruction is not limited to Derridean deconstruction.

⁵Also see Yanagida 1976: 154.

Two major interrelated problems exist in Shenhui's teaching. First, he privileges a kind of awareness or intuitive knowledge over ordinary, discriminative cognition. The former is called "empty tranquil awareness (*kongji zhi zhi* 空寂之知),"⁶ and the latter refers to ordinary activities of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing (*jian wen jue zhi* 見聞覺知) with respect to discriminative consciousness. All such ordinary activities must be emptied or transcended in the state of *wunian* (無念) according to Shenhui (SL: 10).⁷ This separation from ordinary cognitive activity is overemphasized by his interpretation of awareness. As he states, "This awareness does not have any causal link, since it is the *prajñā* wisdom of the original whole [or essence] of emptiness and tranquillity itself that is aware." (SL: 67)⁸ By cutting off this causal link, Shenhui shows his tendency to isolate this awareness from all everyday activities. He equates the achievement of this awareness with the attainment of Buddhahood. In Zongmi 宗密's terms, he considers "the one word awareness [or intuitive knowledge] the gate to all wonders." (T 48, 2015: 403a).⁹

Second, in using the category of *ti* (體) and *yong* (用) to explain awareness, Shenhui favors the *ti* and sees awareness as the *benzhi zhiyong* (本智之用), that is, as the function of the wisdom of the *ti* itself that relies on no other conditions. For instance, he states: "In the whole (*ti*) of emptiness and tranquillity, there is the original wisdom, the illuminating function (*yong*) of which is called awareness." (SL: 119)¹⁰ It is true that this view involves the identification of the *ti* and the *yong*, since the *yong* is only the *yong* of the *ti* and the *ti* is that which functions (*yong*). However, upon closer examination, I find that in fact he cancels out *yong* in favor of *ti*. Zongmi's explanation is revealing on this point. He asserts: "[Shenhui's notion of] the awareness of tranquillity points to the *ti*." (HTC 14: 279d)¹¹ It is the *ti* that is aware of itself and of all things. This *ti* is also equivalent to the mind of non-abiding, the Buddha-nature or self-nature. Since this *ti* does not rely on any causal link or causal condition, it is clearly distinguishable from the mind in *samsāra*.

Shenhui's privileging of the *ti*, it seems to me, falls back on Shenxiu 神秀's notion of true mind (*zhenxin* 真心), which he criticizes before, and to that of the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* (大乘起信論). There seems to be no fundamental difference between Shenhui's *xinti* and Shenxiu's *zhenxin* in their quasi-reifying aspect. Although Shenhui shows the non-objectified feature of this "mind of emptiness and tranquillity" by relating it to wisdom and to the function of awareness, it is not clearly distinguishable from an absolutized subjectivity—an inverted substance.

The Hongzhou school overturns Shenhui's position in both of these respects. First, the Hongzhou school strongly opposes any characterization of the realization of the Buddha-nature or enlightenment as *zhijian* (知見) or *zhijie* (知解). It

⁶ Here I follow Peter Gregory tentatively in translating *zhi* as awareness. See Gregory 1991: 215.

⁷ Shenhui, *Nanyang Heshang Dunjiao Jietuo Chanmen Zhiliaoqing Tanyu*.

⁸ "...*bujia yuanqi* (不假緣起)." *Nanyang Heshang Wenda Zazhengyi*.

⁹ "*Zhizhiyizi zhongmiao zhimen* (知之一字眾妙之門)." Zongmi, *Chanyuan Zhuquanji Duxu*. Also see Kamata 1971: 95. Cf. Yun-hua Jan's translation in Jan 1972: 40.

¹⁰ *Nanyang Heshang Wenda Zazhengyi*.

¹¹ "*Jizhi zhiti* (寂知指體)." Zongmi, *Yuanjue Jing Dashu Chao*. Cf. Jan 1972: 49.

challenges two opposed positions: equating enlightenment with ordinary cognition and equating enlightenment with awareness or intuitive knowledge isolatable from ordinary cognitive activities. The second position seems to be Shenhui's. The Hongzhou position is best represented by the following exposition found in the texts of Huangbo Xiyun.

[Y]ou students of the *dao* ... will realize your original mind only in the realm of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing. Although the original mind does not belong to seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing, this mind cannot be separated from them. You should not simply start your cognitive maneuver from them, nor allow them to give rise to any conceptual thought; yet nor should you seek the mind apart from them or abandon them in your pursuit of the *dharma*. Do not let your mind be identical with them nor separated from them ... be free everywhere, and nowhere is a place where the *dao* cannot be practiced. (CF, in CJ 13: 8975a)¹²

The point of the Hongzhou school expressed here by Huangbo is evident: although enlightenment cannot be pursued through mere cognition, it cannot be isolated from all activities that may be related to a further cognitive maneuver. The prerequisite for enlightenment is the cessation of one's cognitive maneuver—the illusory grasping of the object of self-identity. However, of equal importance is not separating oneself from everyday activities. For the Hongzhou school holds that seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing are part of our everyday activities. All everyday activities are opportunities or necessary conditions for the realization of enlightenment. This understanding is due to the Hongzhou school's belief in the Mahāyāna dictum that without *saṃsāra* or *saṃvṛti* there is no *nirvāṇa* or *paramārtha*, a strictly relational perspective. Enlightenment is only the establishment and function of the attitude of non-clinging within ordinary activities. As authentic followers of the Middle Way, the Hongzhou masters see Shenhui's isolation of awareness from ordinary activities as another kind of attachment or fixation. From the relational perspective, it must be overturned.

Second, the Hongzhou school invalidates Shenhui's logocentric hierarchy of *ti* and *yong*. Shenhui's *ti* is independent of all conditions (*yuan* 緣). Zongmi defines Shenhui's hierarchy as "the original [or self] function of the self-nature (*zixing ben-yong* 自性本用)," while the Hongzhou position is criticized by him as only "the application [of the self-nature] in various conditions (*suiyuan yingyong* 隨緣應用)." (HTC 110: 437d)¹³ Since Shenhui's *ti* or self-nature is independent of all conditions, its own *yong* is abstracted from everyday activities and all circumstances. Shenhui and Zongmi prefer this kind of self function. However, without that "application in conditions," how can there be any real function at all? There is no doubt that Shenhui's view results in the cancellation of *yong* in favor of *ti*. From the Hongzhou perspective, on the contrary, there is only "application in conditions," and there is no such thing as the "self function of the self-nature." The Hongzhou position, as formulated by Zongmi, is as follows.

¹²Cf. Ui 1990: 14–6. Also cf. Blofeld 1958: 36–7.

¹³Zongmi, *Zhonghua Chuanxindi Chanmen Shizi Chengxi Tu*. Also see Kamata 1971: 336.

If one examines the nature of this whole [or essence], he will find that ultimately it can neither be perceived nor realized just as the eye cannot see itself, and so forth. If one considers its application, he will see that every move and every action that he takes is the Buddha-nature, and that there is nothing else that can either realize it or be realized. (Ibid.: 435b)¹⁴

The stance of Hongzhou Chan here is to restore more completely the existential-soteriological and pragmatic-behavioral concern of Buddhism in the Chinese context. It strives against any quasi-metaphysical or quasi-reifying use of the Chinese category of *ti* and *yong*, including Shenhui's. The Hongzhou Chan does not oppose the use of the term *ti* itself. What the Hongzhou masters are concerned with is how one should use it. It is all right for them to use the *ti* as equivalent to the realization of the Buddha-nature or enlightenment. However, it must be used in the perspectival, relational, dynamic, pragmatic-behavioral sense and as temporary expedient only. Since the *ti* or the Buddha-nature is not any kind of substance or entity, we can neither perceive nor grasp it.

If we consider the *ti* as a dynamic whole or a web of relativity in which we live and act every day and with which we attempt to live and act in harmony, then every move or action is connected to, or a part of, that whole. Precisely for this reason the Hongzhou masters emphasize that all everyday activities are nothing but the function of the Buddha-nature. The *ti* (or the Buddha-nature), the *yong* (function or application) and the *yuan* (temporal conditions) cannot be separated. This identical relation favors *yong* and subverts Shenhui's privileging of the *ti*. One may object that this seems to be the cancellation of *ti*. However, if the *ti* is only a temporary expedient and is understood in the sense of action, application and relation, there is no need to cancel it out. The *ti* cannot exist in and by itself, and cannot be independent of this practical-behavioral context.

Although Zongmi's formulation of the position of the Hongzhou school is fair, his interpretation of it is definitely wrong. For example, Zongmi explains the Hongzhou position as follows: "[T]he blackness itself is the bright pearl, and the substance of the bright pearl is ever invisible. If one wants to know the pearl, blackness itself is brightness." (Ibid.: 436d)¹⁵ Metaphorically, Zongmi means that the Hongzhou school mixes the ordinary activities of the unenlightened person with the activities of the enlightened person. In that case, Hongzhou Chan runs the risk of denying the necessity of Buddhist practice, which is a complete misunderstanding of Hongzhou. The central point of the Hongzhou teaching is, of course, not to cancel Buddhist practice, but to further remove all hindrances to this practice.

One such hindrance is the tendency toward reification. As is indicated in Zongmi's own description, Hongzhou Chan takes as its motto "let the mind be free (*renxin* 任心)."

Dao is the [ordinary] mind itself, and one cannot use the [Buddha] mind to cultivate the [ordinary] mind; evil is also the mind itself, and one cannot cut off the [evil] mind by means

¹⁴Also see Kamata, *ibid.*: 307. For the English translation see Gregory 1991: 237. I have made some changes.

¹⁵Also see Kamata, *ibid.*: 326. For the English translation see Jan 1972: 52.

of the [other] mind. Do not cut and do not produce; letting the mind follow along with all circumstances and letting it be free, this is called liberation. (HTC 14: 279b)¹⁶

Thus, the Hongzhou identification of all activities of the ordinary mind with the Buddha-nature is intended to deconstruct the dualistic distinction of the ordinary mind and the Buddha-nature, to recover enlightenment as the existential-practical transformation of the ordinary mind. The Hongzhou view is not to demolish the existential changeability of the sentient being, but to reaffirm it through overturning the original hierarchy of the Buddha-nature and the ordinary mind.

The Hongzhou view must be understood in terms of this relational perspective. As mentioned earlier, everyday activities, for the Hongzhou school, are the necessary condition for enlightenment in the first place. Without *samsāra*, there is no *nirvāṇa*; therefore, the ordinary mind is the *dao*. I call this the pre-enlightenment aspect. The Hongzhou view also involves a post-enlightenment aspect, which reminds us that we must verify our own enlightenment in everyday activities. After realizing enlightenment, we are still ordinary people doing ordinary tasks. The only difference, as pointed out by the Chan masters, is that we now have an attitude of non-attachment and that attitude always works in everyday activities. To an enlightened eye, then, every action is or can be seen as a function of the Buddha-nature. The relational perspective, therefore, is an enlightened perspective, not an unenlightened one.

However, the disclosure of, and emphasis on, this enlightened perspective is extremely important for unenlightened practitioners, leading them in the right direction—to resist any separation of enlightenment from everyday activities. Here our distinction of pre- and post-enlightenment aspects is only intended for the purpose of analysis. Generally speaking, the Hongzhou view advises students to realize the mutual conditioning and mutual involvement of the enlightened and the unenlightened. This does not confuse the two, but rather sees them in the living reality of change and flux. The promotion of Buddhist practice is possible only within this living reality of change and flux.

To flow together with this ever-changing reality is called *renyun* (任運) in the Hongzhou school. The result of their deconstructive maneuver is not to replace all old binary distinctions or logocentric hierarchies with new ones. Rather, its standpoint or its strategy is to eschew or detach from any dualistic oppositions. In other words, the Hongzhou masters keep themselves busy moving with all things and circumstances, staying with neither the Buddha nor the sentient being, neither the extraordinary nor the ordinary, neither grasping nor rejecting, neither nihilistic nor permanent, neither knowledge nor non-knowledge, and so on. This elusive position is referred to by the Chinese words *renyun zizai* (任運自在), meaning “following along with the movement of all things or circumstances and being free.” (Ibid.) It constitutes both part of the deconstructive strategy of Hongzhou and the underlying thesis that this deconstructive strategy ultimately serves. In the recorded sayings of

¹⁶Zongmi, *Yuanjue Jing Dashu Chao*. For the English translation, cf. Jan 1972: 47.

famous Hongzhou masters, we find frequent use of these words and similar expressions.

... following along with the movement of all things and in this way living out your time.
(JCL, fascicle 6, in T 51, 2076: 246a)¹⁷

At all times ... never attach yourself to one thing; just follow along with the movement of all things the whole day long. (WL, in CJ 13: 8987b)¹⁸

Following along with the movement of all things without any restriction is called liberation.
(Ibid.: 8996b)¹⁹

Merely according to circumstances as they are, use up your past *karma*; following along with [the change of] circumstances, put on your [different] clothes. (LY, in CJ 11: 7351a)²⁰

In view of these understandings, the soteriological goal of Buddhist practice, for Hongzhou Chan, should by no means be static or isolatable. The goal is to keep us moving or flowing with all things or circumstances. The masters know very well that the living process of change and flux will ruthlessly undercut every fixed position and every attachment to self or self-identity without ever stopping. Reality itself is deconstructive. Enlightenment cannot occur *outside* this flow. Enlightenment is nothing but being harmonious with change and flux. An enlightened person would find inexhaustible wonders by living a life in harmony with change and flux. This is the exact content and context of the Hongzhou teaching of realizing the “self-nature” or “self-mind,” insofar as the Hongzhou masters do use these words sometimes. They have nothing to do with an *ātman* or a logocentric privilege of self over the other. Moreover, the profundity of this soteriological motif pushes their deconstruction completely home, just as their deconstructive strategy helps to reveal the profundity of this motif.

A remarkable characteristic of the Hongzhou deconstruction is its self-cancellation or self-effacement. This self-deconstruction is as compelling as its deconstruction of the position of others. One famous case is Mazu Daoyi’s self-effacement of his notion of “the mind is Buddha.” When the notion is first taught by Mazu Daoyi, it involves an attempt to oppose the misunderstanding of the Buddha-nature as something outside or separable from the ordinary mind. It is itself a kind of deconstructive operation upon the reifying view of the Buddha-nature. However, after he teaches this notion for a certain period, it is inevitably sedimented or abstracted from the original context. His students display a tendency to attach themselves to this notion. Then Mazu starts to teach a different notion that apparently runs counter to his original teaching, a notion now emphasizing that there is neither mind nor Buddha (GY, fascicle 1, in CJ 11: 7310b).²¹ In this way Mazu keeps him-

¹⁷ “*Renyun guoshi* (任運過時).” The saying of Mazu Daoyi.

¹⁸ “...*zhongri renyun tengteng* (終日任運騰騰),” by Huangbo. Also see Ui 1990a: 78–9. Cf. Blofeld 1958: 90.

¹⁹ “*Renyun buju fangming jietuo* (任運不拘方名解脫).”

²⁰ “...*renyun zhuyishang* (任運著衣裳).” Also see Yanagida 1972: 79. Cf. Watson 1993: 26; Sasaki 1975: 9–10.

²¹ Cf. Cheng 1992: 78. I am aware that Jia has pointed out that the teaching of “neither mind nor Buddha” appears in the dialogue part of Mazu’s *Yulu*, not in any of Mazu’s sermons, and therefore is a later creation (in Jia 2006: 56). Poceski also agrees that this dialogue appears in later sources.

self moving with different situations, avoids misleading students and helps them to eschew sedimentation, fixation and reification. This self-effacement indicates that for Mazu, there is no need to establish any logocentric hierarchy. He does not privilege any notion at all. He is able to use any kataphatic terms in his soteriological teaching, whenever the situation requires; but he is always also able to deconstruct the terms he has used.

2 The Liminological Perspective—On Playing at the Boundaries of Language

This section will take a ‘liminology of language’²² approach to the Hongzhou Chan Buddhist view of language and its linguistic strategy. Liminology in contemporary thought has been inspired by the works of philosophers and thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, Blanchot, Heidegger, and the later Wittgenstein. The central idea of the liminology of language is the relativization of any limits of language. The justification for this relativizing is the revelation of the dynamic interrelationship between the supposed two sides of the limits of language. The consequence of relativization is the development of exploratory linguistic strategies as play at the limits of language. These ideas form the framework for a liminological analysis that is applicable to different views of language and different linguistic strategies. For instance, a liminological analysis will allow us to see what is beneath the claim of linguistic inadequacy. It will allow us to see the interchangeability of two sides of the limits of language such as silence and speech. Different linguistic strategies are then possible due to the claim of linguistic inadequacy.

(2a) The Context for the Hongzhou View of the Inadequacy of Language

The Hongzhou Chan attitude toward language has its doctrinal or ideological foundation in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nāgārjuna specifically negates the appropriateness of a cognitive, entitative, or descriptive language in Buddhist practice, as well as a correspondence relation between language and object. According to Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, noun words such as *nirvāṇa*, *paramārtha*, or *śūnyatā*, in the Buddhist discourse, are not entities, and, therefore, not the objects of any cognitive

However, Poceski has argued, “[a]lthough it is uncertain whether it is a record of an actual conversation, in light of the other pertinent sources..., there are no compelling reasons to doubt that it presents a summary of Mazu’s view on the subject.” (Poceski 2007: 190) Poceski’s extensive use of the reliable historical sources from the records of Mazu’s disciples, including Baizhang, Ruhui, Funiu, Nanquan and others, strongly supports this position (Ibid.: 173–182). In addition, Poceski’s analysis on the Hongzhou texts’ doctrinal content in his 2007 book moves in a direction that helps to look at the internal logic and underlying connection between this more apophatic teaching and Mazu’s other teachings. His argument and analysis justifies my use of this notion here and more complete quotation in section 4 of this chapter.

²² For more details, see Wang 2003: chap. 5—“What Is a Liminology of Language?”

activities (Sprung 1979: 155). Words, sentences, and speeches, are, in fact, prescriptions for curing people's illness by merely recommending the attitude and behavior of non-clinging to things. The Mādhyamika critique of language provides great insight into the intrinsic link between descriptive, imputative language and cognitive reification, which is a hindrance to Buddhist liberation.

The inadequacy of language is also addressed by many Mahāyāna scriptures. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* offers an explicit negation of the imagined correspondence relation between language and objects, and, therefore, of a descriptive, entitative, or cognitive use of language. It stresses the inner realization of supreme wisdom mainly by meditational practice and experience. This kind of "inner realization" cannot be achieved by any cognitive activity using discriminative language and dualistic thinking, since no such objective, isolated state of mind exists, to which a cognitive language can refer (Suzuki 1932: 124).

The Hongzhou Chan masters align themselves with the Mahāyāna critique of the descriptive, entitative, or cognitive use of language. While the Chan masters claim that language is inadequate, this claim is inseparable from their denial of the appropriateness of a cognitive maneuver (*zhijian*, or *zhijie*). For instance, Baizhang Huaihai states:

You must stop all cognition of being or of non-being, stop all desires and pursuits ... Nowadays there are cognitions or opinions about the Buddhas. But what people know about, what they seek after, or what they attach themselves to, all can be called the waste of the illusory knowledge produced by cognitive language. They can also be called "coarse language" (*cuyan*) or "dead language" (*siyu*). (GY, fascicle 2, in CJ 11: 7324b)

Why are cognitive discourses coarse (not refined) or dead (not living) language? Because they are the pitfalls of a deceptive correspondence relation between language and reality. The Chan masters often advise their disciples that the Buddhist reality "is not something that can be obtained through [descriptive] words and language."²³ "Those who search for written words, and thereby look for the corresponding reality, become even more impeded by them."²⁴

A more forceful critique later on appears in the recorded sayings of Linji. Linji repeatedly points out: Words like *Buddha*, *dharma*, *dao*, "all are empty names and designate no true reality" (LY, in CJ 11: 7359b; cf. Yanagida 1972: 160–1). They are "simply medicines to cure diseases of the moment" (Ibid.: 7361b). His simile—"All sounds, names, words, phrases are like changes of robes"—expresses his belief that language, like other useful things or tools, serves only practical purposes and is always in the process of change due to different contexts and situations. Similarly, one person can wear and change different robes, but you cannot claim that a robe defines the reality of the person (Ibid.: 7359b). Thus the Hongzhou Chan emphasis on non-reliance upon words, or, in Baizhang Huaihai's terms, on non-restriction of

²³ "*Buke yiyanyu qu*." CF, in CJ 13: 8976a. Cf. Ui 1990a: 22–3.

²⁴ "*Xunwen quzheng zhe yizhi*," by Dazhu Huihai, see JCL, fascicle 6, in T 51, 2076: 248a. Cf. Ogata 1990: 199.

words,²⁵ aims particularly at freeing Chan Buddhists from the restriction of the descriptive, entitative, or cognitive use of language. The result of asserting “the inadequacy of language” is not to turn completely away from language, but to turn “within language.”

(2b) Addressing the Necessity or Inevitability of Using Language

When analyzing the twofold truth—*saṃvṛti* (worldly convention) and *paramārtha* (higher meaning or truth)—Nāgārjuna explains: “Unless worldly convention is accepted as a base, the higher meaning cannot be taught; if the higher meaning is not understood, *nirvāṇa* cannot be attained” (Sprung 1979: 232). Candrakīrti clarifies that one of the meanings of *saṃvṛti* is “the world of ordinary language” (Ibid.: 230). Thus, for Mādhyamika, to accept worldly convention as a base is to accept conventional language as a base. Nāgārjuna’s verse unmistakably shows his insight into the need to use language. Sengzhao, the Chinese Mādhyamika thinker who had a great impact on Chan, grasps Nāgārjuna’s point very well. He writes: “Though language cannot fully express the nameless *dharmā*, without using language, the *dharmā* cannot be conveyed” (*Zhao Lun*, T 45, 1858: 153c).

The situation a Mahāyāna Buddhist faces here is how to find a way out between the conventional use of language and complete silence. The Middle Way maintains a nirvanic dimension in the everyday world without presupposing a transcendental realm. By the same token, it pinpoints the insufficiency of conventional language without postulating any sacred language (whether a meta-language or complete silence). This position is like a thread running through the Buddha’s teaching, Mādhyamika discourse, and Hongzhou Chan practice, advising Buddhists to avoid sliding into any extremist attitude toward language.

The Hongzhou Chan masters express their concern about the necessity of language use from a heuristic or pedagogic perspective. The *Jingde Chuandeng Lu*, fascicle 7 records:

One day Mazu Daoyi asked Zhizang: “Why don’t you read sutras?” Zhizang said: “What is the difference between a sutra and me?” Mazu said: “However that may be, you should get it in the future for the sake of other people.” (T 51, 2076: 252a-b. Cf. Ogata 1990: 224)

This use of language, including reading scriptures and preaching, “for the sake of other people,” in Huangbo Xiyun’s terms, is using “words for accommodating and guiding people” (*jieyin zhici*) (CF, in CJ 13: 8979a). The Chan masters are fully aware that they cannot avoid using language to accommodate and guide people: “When host and guest meet each other, there cannot but be exchanges of words and remarks.” Therefore, they ask their disciples to “pay strict attention” to the use of language (LY, in CJ 11: 7357b; Watson 1993: 55). Baizhang specifically teaches his

²⁵ Baizhang Huaihai’s saying “not being restricted by words (*buju wenzi*),” GY, fascicle 1, CJ 11: 7313a.

students to use “the sentences that cut off the connection with two opposites”²⁶ – a kind of paradoxical language that better serves the Chan practice of non-attachment, and shapes the later development of Chan. On this brief account, the Chan critique of the conventional use of language is by no means tantamount to the rejection of language. It is better understood as an effort to find an alternative way of communication, an alternative way of using language.

(2c) Unveiling the Non-Duality between Speech and Silence

Detachment from dualistic thinking is one of the chief characteristics of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nāgārjuna’s famous eight negations – the negations of four pairs of opposites – in the dedicatory verses of his *kārikā* set a pattern for subsequent development of non-dualistic discourse in various schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Kalupahana 1986: 101; Sprung 1979: 32). It is logical to include the pair of speech and silence in the Mahāyāna reflections on non-duality. The *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* seems to be on the verge of addressing this topic, when it touches upon the relation between speech and silence in the discussion of “the *dharma* gate of non-duality.” However, it leaves the impression that the best entrance into non-duality is silence, and therefore may lend itself to the privileging of silence over speaking.²⁷

Despite this, the *Prajñāpāramitā* tradition and other Mahāyāna scriptures provide provocative views in blurring an absolute demarcation between speaking and non-speaking. For example, in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (or *Diamond Sūtra*) we read: “What do you think, Subhuti, is there any [*dharma*] which the Tathāgata has taught?—Subhuti replied: No indeed, O Lord, there is not” (Conze 1958: 52; Also T 8, 235: 751c). This view contradicts the conventional opinion that the Buddha taught or spoke something. The distinction between what is spoken and what is not spoken, between speaking and non-speaking, is obscured. This idea is further articulated by the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*: “It is said by the Blessed One that from the night of the Enlightenment till the night of the [*parinirvāṇa*], the Tathāgata in the meantime has not uttered even a word, ... for not-speaking is the Buddha’s speaking” (Suzuki 1932: 123–4). All these expressions imply the non-duality of speech and silence, or the dynamic, interchangeable relation between them. However, in most cases, these implications are not fully developed. Only when we delve into Hongzhou Chan discourse do we find clear-cut statements about the non-duality of speech and silence.

In his *Wanling Lu*, Huangbo Xiyun unequivocally states: “Speaking is silence (*yu ji mo*); silence is speaking (*mo ji yu*); speaking and silence are non-dualistic (*yumo buer*)” (WL, in CJ 13, 8994a; Blofeld 1958: 121). Another Hongzhou master, Dazhu Huihai, construes Vimalakīrti’s silence as being beyond speaking and non-

²⁶ “*Geduan liangtong ju*.” *Baizhang Guanglu*, in CJ 11: 7316a. Cf. Cleary 1978: 34. Cleary’s translation misses the meaning of “*ju* (sentence);” and, therefore, Baizhang’s instructions about the special use of language.

²⁷ *Weimojie Suoshuo Jing*, T 14, 475: 551c.

speaking, a silencing of the duality between silence and speech—a strategy very similar to Mādhyamika’s emptiness of emptiness.²⁸ By these statements, the Chan masters demonstrate that they apply the principle of *pratītyasamutpāda* (interdependent arising) to the issue of speech and silence, presenting a non-isolated, truly relational understanding of speech and silence. Speech and silence thus no longer have their self-identity, for one always functions in relation to the other, and always has its absent presence in the other. Each always retains traces of the other. Sengzhao’s saying—“Speech always has something unspoken”—might be a good footnote to the Hongzhou view of the speech-silence relation.²⁹ The Chan masters might add one more point to Sengzhao’s saying: silence always speaks.

As soon as the Chan masters bring speech and silence within the reach of relational, non-dualistic understanding, the functions of speech and silence are liberated from the conventional fixation. As a consequence, the Chan masters acquire a better grasp of the Buddha’s strategy and better guidance for their own soteriological practice. On the one hand, silence is no longer considered mere silence. “The Tathāgata’s silence speaks just as his speech does (*yu yi shuo mo yi shuo*).” “The Tathāgata always speaks—there has never been such a time the Tathāgata does not preach” (Huangbo, WL, in CJ 13: 8994a). One of the examples used to illustrate this point is the Buddha’s silence in the face of fourteen metaphysical questions, signifying the Buddha’s refusal to take a stand in metaphysical debates. This case, as well as Vimalakīrti’s silence mentioned above, indicates that silence, in certain Buddhist contexts, is close to a special kind of negative expression that brings into effect the negation of dualistic thinking.

On the other hand, speech does not always or necessarily mean speaking. “Though the Buddha has preached for forty-nine years, he virtually does not say a word” (Huangbo, WLL, T 48, 2012B: 385c). The Chan master here is clarifying that the Buddha’s words are only intended to accommodate and guide people. Words simply cannot replace the realization of enlightenment, which involves going through one’s own existentio-spiritual transformation. There is no reality to which the words correspond. In the entitative, reifying, or metaphysical sense, the Buddha says nothing. Therefore, the Hongzhou masters regard their saying as non-saying and practice a sort of self-erasing saying, to avoid being entangled by saying or misleading people.

(2d) The Liminological Play of language: A Saying as Non-Saying or A Self-Erasing Saying

Insight into the non-duality of speech and silence is significant to the Hongzhou Chan liminology of language. Once the absolute, impassable demarcation between silence and speech is obscured, the path for playing on the borders of language is opened. In other words, the liminological play of language is based upon, and made possible by, a trans-conventional attitude toward the limit of language. This in turn

²⁸ DY, in JCL, fascicle 28, T 51, 2076: 442b. Cf. Ui 1990b: 106–7. Also cf. Blofeld 1962: 81.

²⁹ “*Yan yousuo buyan*.” Sengzhao, *The Reply to Liu Yimin*, T 45, 1858: 157a.

is cultivated by the philosophy of the Middle Way, by the non-static, relational understanding of speech and silence, by the detachment from any duality, and so forth. However, freedom from fixation on either silence or speech enables the Hongzhou masters, first of all, to relocate (or redefine) the positive role of language within the framework of the liminology of language.

While addressing the necessity or inevitability of using language still leaves the role of language somewhat negative, the Hongzhou sect sheds light on the more positive relation between the Buddha mind and language. The everyday activities of ordinary mind and the realization of the Buddha-nature or Buddha-mind are non-dualistic. Accordingly, using language, as an everyday activity, is certainly relevant. When someone asked: “How can we recognize our own mind (as the Buddha-mind)?” Huangbo Xiyun replied: “That which speaks (namely, asks the question) is your mind” (WLL, T 48, 2012B: 386b). In other words, you should not attempt to attain enlightenment outside everyday activities. Speaking and writing, just like other everyday activities, can definitely be useful for triggering enlightenment. “Speaking, silence, move, rest—all sounds and forms—are the Buddha’s business” (Ibid.: 385c). Dazhu Huihai also points out: “If separated from language, there would be no Buddha-mind” (DY, in JCL, fascicle 28, T 51, 2076: 444a). Therefore, “The Buddha-mind, having no fixed form and characteristic, can neither be separated from nor tied to language (*feili yuyan feibuli yuyan*)” (Ibid.: 444b). This is the best characterization of the Hongzhou position concerning language.

Hongzhou Chan further claims:

- (a) The Tathāgata’s preaching is the *Dharma* (*rulai shuo jishifa*); the *Dharma* is the Tathāgata’s preaching (*fa jishishuo*); the *Dharma* and the preaching are non-dualistic (*fashuo buer*). (Huangbo, WL, in CJ 13, 8994a)
- (b) You just speak anytime and can speak of either events (*shi*) or the principle (*li*) without being hindered. The fruit of enlightenment is also like this. (Mazu, JCL, fascicle 6, T 51, 2076: 246a)
- (c) The enlightened person’s letters and words all come from the great wisdom and serve the great function right now and right here, having never been trapped by emptiness. (Dazhu, JCL, fascicle 6, T 51, 2076: 247b)

The enlightened person “always speaks in terms of function (*suiyong er shuo*), having no fixation whatsoever on either affirmation or negation” (DY, in JCL, fascicle 28, T 51, 2076: 441b).

These statements reveal, first of all, that the Hongzhou masters’ central concern is not whether silence or speech is preferable, but how to become enlightened. Once enlightened, hence free from any fixation, one is then a master of using language, a master of playing on and around the limit of language. There is no necessity to remain silent forever. Second, when a logocentric hierarchy of silence and speech is completely abandoned, the function of language, or how to use language, in the soteriological practice, becomes fundamental. We should not misunderstand the Hongzhou Chan masters’ view as a return to the logocentrism of speech. After noting: “The Tathāgata’s silence speaks just as his speech does. While the Tathāgata speaks all day long, no word is actually spoken,” Huangbo Xiyun further comments: “Though it is the case, we consider silence essential” (WL, in CJ 13: 8994a). Here

“essential” does not mean something metaphysical, but functional. Given the context, what Huangbo Xiyun refers to as silence is surely not complete silence as opposed to speech, but a saying as non-saying or a self-erasing saying, a strategy of silencing or negating the duality between speech and silence. This is a unique Hongzhou Chan usage against conventional usage, a liminological play.

The Hongzhou’s saying as non-saying, or its self-erasing saying, also involves two major aspects. On the one hand, fully aware of the necessity of using language for guiding people as well as the risk of misleading them, the Chan masters invoke an interplay between speech and silence. By sustaining the position that their words are not different from silence, and that no word has been spoken about any hypostatizable reality, the Chan masters move away from entifying and thereby help people to detach from their words. On the other hand, by underlining the non-saying or silence, by treating their saying as something like the finger pointing to the moon (as they always say), pointing to what is absent within language, pointing to what has not been spoken or what cannot be adequately spoken, the Chan masters actually say a great deal. In this way, the Chan masters play on and around the boundary of language without being obstructed.

3 The Ethical Perspective—On the *Aporia* of Chan Ethicality

This section will address the ethical meaning, motif and consequence of subverting conventional moral distinctions in the Hongzhou school, and reveal the complicated paradoxical relationship between the ethical and non-ethical in Chan practice. I will utilize the most recent insights into the *aporia* of the ethical from the contemporary discussion of Derridean ethic.³⁰ Although Derridean and Chan Buddhist undertakings are deeply different, those contemporary insights, in my view, will offer us a new paradigm for the rethinking or reinterpreting of the ethical dimension of Hongzhou Chan.

The early Buddhist tradition assumes various distinctions between what is wholesome and unwholesome, between moral deeds and karmic fruits, and between the cultivation of virtues or practice of meditations and the realization of enlightenment. These distinctions are necessary for Buddhist teaching and practice. However, the early tradition also involves warning about the dangers of attachments to moral cultivation, karmic fruits, meditative experience and so on (Keown 2001: 47–8, 101–2). This kind of warning reminds Buddhists of the inevitable task of overcoming fixation and attachment. It anticipates the upcoming struggles within Buddhism.

The Hongzhou masters’ deconstruction of various conventional distinctions and conceptual hierarchies includes moral ones. An example is the discourse of karma. The Buddha himself distinguishes good and bad karma in terms of the relationship between deeds and volition and between deeds and consequences. For example, he distinguishes “black” and “white”, namely bad and good, karma in terms of the rela-

³⁰ Cf. Wang 2007: Introduction.

tion between deeds and consequences. Based on the same relation, he also proposes a category of “neither black nor white” deeds. These deeds, represented by the noble eightfold path, lead to the consumption of all past karma, without producing deleterious new karma, and thus ultimately lead to nirvana. Although they are called “neither black nor white,” these deeds are ultimately good, since they are characterized by selflessness and lead to nirvana (Mitchell 1987: 72–3; McDermott 1980: 180–1). Under these divisions of good and bad, black and white, the deeds included in the noble eightfold path – namely, intellectual understanding, discipline, meditation, cultivation and purification – are obviously on the side of good karma or ultimate goodness. Conversely, the opposite side includes wrong views or wrong understanding, violation of discipline, impurity, and so on. The same line of division also separates karmic bondage and final freedom – the soteriological goal of Buddhism. The separation is clear-cut. In each pair, one is in sharp contrast with the other and the order cannot be reversed. These distinctions and categories are shared by almost all Buddhist schools including Chan.

The Hongzhou masters de-familiarize this traditional Buddhist theme. What was traditionally placed on the side of good karma or ultimate goodness is instead seen as bad karma, deleterious to the final goal. In the eyes of these masters, purification, observing precepts, following the path, studying, devoting, seeking Buddha and the Dharma – all kinds of practices of Buddhism – are simply creating bad karma or the karma of birth and death. Even seeking the final goal – nirvana, realization of enlightenment, or verification of attainment – creates bad karma.³¹ Huangbo calls it the “karma of demons” (Blofeld 1958: 91). Here the Chinese word “*mo* (demons)” designates evil spirits, or *Mara*, the embodiment of death, desire and the hindrance to enlightenment (*Ci Hai*, Vol. of Vocabulary: 2275). “*Moye* (karma of demons)” symbolizes all bad karmas. Thus, these Chan masters overturn the traditional distinction and conceptual hierarchy of good and bad karma, the privileging of good karma over bad, and even the soteriological goal over karmic bondage.

Why should this kind of distinction be overturned? This question would lead us to investigate the context of the overturning. When the Buddha makes those distinctions of good and bad karma and teaches the noble eightfold path, he bases these distinctions on practical situations and uses them to serve soteriological purposes. One of these purposes is to guide people, or get people on to the path. The Buddha must adapt himself to different people and different situations for that purpose. A meaning of this adaptation is to accommodate himself to the capacity of unenlightened people. For these unenlightened people and their capacity, the making of these distinctions and the establishment of means and goal are very necessary and can help them to understand his soteriological message. However, the Buddha is an enlightened one and holds an enlightened perspective in which he can clearly see the fluidity of situations, the possibility of sedimentation and attachments to these distinctions and teachings, and the need to overcome them. Therefore, he warns people about these things. One form of attachment, among others, is to reify these

³¹ For Dazhu and Huangbo’s overturning of the concept of karma, see Blofeld 1962: 63 and 1958: 91. Also see Wang 2007: 83.

distinctions, making them into the closure of conceptual hierarchy, taking them out of evolving practical context, and separating them from all living connections.

The Hongzhou masters agree that the Buddha's teachings and his definitions of good/evil are all related to and function in this everyday world. Separating them from the dynamic world and everyday activities makes them into a kind of conceptual closure. Apart from the transformation of the ordinary mind through everyday activities, no "good" deeds, disciplines, cultivations, understanding of teachings, or seeking of attainments would do any good for Buddhists. None of them deserve our pursuit, since they are all based on mental constructions or projections. They are reified, cut off from real connections.

In terms of this analysis, what people ordinarily consider being good karma has unmistakably turned out to be bad. The analysis clarifies why the reified and privileged concepts of good karma, discipline, cultivation, and realization – including all reified concepts of Buddhist goals and practices – must be overturned. The suspension of these fixed distinctions aims exactly at de-reification and detachment. The overturning is a deconstructive strategy used by the masters to shock people away from these mental constructions and to free their minds from the entanglements caused by these concepts.

However, this analysis has not answered the remaining questions: Does the Hongzhou school advocate a soteriology without its own ethic? Are these masters indifferent toward, or little concerned with, the ethical? Are moral discipline and cultivation completely neglected by these masters? What are the ethical consequences of Hongzhou's subversion of moral distinctions?

Historically, criticisms of Hongzhou Chan not only come from outside sources, such as the Neo-Confucianists, but also from sources within the Chan tradition. Take, for example, Zongmi's formulations on the Hongzhou position. As he puts it, "[T]he blackness itself is the bright pearl, and the substance of the bright pearl is ever invisible. If one wants to know the pearl, blackness itself is brightness." (*Zhonghua Chuanxindi Chanmen Shizi Chengxitu*, in HTC 110: 436d; Kamata 1971: 326)³² The accusation here points to Hongzhou's claim that all everyday activities, including affliction and evil, are the manifestation of Buddha nature or true suchness, and hence to what Zongmi believes to be the mistake of mixing right and wrong, good and evil. The fundamental point of Hongzhou's claim, as I have stated, lies in the belief that we should neither separate the categories of enlightened/unenlightened, true/deluded, good/evil from each other, nor should we privilege the former over the latter. This kind of privileging goes against Hongzhou's relational and non-dualistic perspective and ultimately pulls Buddhist practice out of the everyday world. For Hongzhou, this is none other than denying the condition of the possibilities of the ethical. However, Zongmi's accusation and misunderstanding reminds us that unless we offer more convincing answers to these critical questions, the Hongzhou position will not be properly understood.

In an attempt to answer these questions, I would first draw attention to a rarely examined fact with regard to Mazu's sermons. Mazu's sermons are famous for his

³² For the English translation, see Jan 1972: 52.

overturning of various fixed distinctions, including the ordinary mind and Buddha-mind, right and wrong, grasping and abandoning, termination and permanence, worldly and holy, cultivation and non-cultivation, sitting meditation and non-sitting, and so on (HTC 119: 406a–407a). To our surprise, at the end of one of his sermons, Mazu returns from his de-familiarization to the familiar theme of good karma: he advises his disciples to comply with morality, increase purifying influence, and accumulate pure karma (Ibid., 407a). This advice plainly reveals that the Hongzhou school's deconstruction of the conceptual hierarchy of good and bad karma neither abolishes the Buddha's teaching of karma nor neglects the ethical dimension of Buddhism. It rather, in my view, reinforces the ethical dimension and the practice of morality in a very profound and unique way. However, to see this point more clearly and to understand how it could happen, I would first examine the underlying consistency between the Hongzhou school's deconstruction and its return to morality, despite the seeming contradiction between them.

The key to this consistency lies in the Hongzhou masters' thesis that Chan Buddhists should wear out karma merely according to conditions as they are. Central to this thesis are the Hongzhou notions of "the ordinary mind is the *dao* (*pingchangxin shi dao*)," "follow along with the movement of all things (*renyun*)," and "follow conditions as they are (*suiyuan*)."

Mazu's well-known dictum "the ordinary mind is the *dao*" underlies his overturning of all fixed distinctions and anticipates his return to morality in everyday situations. As he explicates, the "ordinary mind," on one hand, is a deconstructive mind that privileges neither right nor wrong, it is non-clinging, non-abiding, and free-flowing. On the other hand, because the person does nothing special, he or she is able to understand that "just like now, whether walking, standing, sitting, reclining, responding to situations or handling things for people, all is the *dao*" (HTC 119: 406a). The only difference between the ordinary person and the Chan master is that while the Chan master eats, sleeps, moves, or rests like any other ordinary person, he or she does these actions with an attitude or mind of non-attachment and this attitude or mind always works throughout his or her life.

These two aspects in Mazu's notion of "the ordinary mind is the *dao*" clearly show the intrinsic link between a deconstructive mind and the practice of Buddhism in the everyday world. With the mind attached to mental constructions, one isolates and separates Buddhist practice and enlightenment from everyday activities, which ultimately leads to creating more bad karma. With the mind of non-clinging and de-reifying, one practices Buddhism and realizes enlightenment in all everyday situations. Mazu indicates that only in the latter sense can one really stop "creating bad karma," and instead "accumulate pure karma" and attain the final goal. The everyday world and its activities are the only realm in which morality as part of the soteriological path makes sense and becomes indispensable. Thus acknowledging that "the ordinary mind is the *dao*" inevitably leads to also acknowledging that morality or discipline in everyday situations is the *dao*. As one may ask, how can one "respond to situations" and "handle things for people" without involving morality? Without moral practice, how can one get on to the path and be led to the final liberation, since the realization of inter-dependent arising and emptiness itself

involves profound ethical significance? Although this profound ethicality of enlightened perspective is not reducible to ethical norms or rules – an issue to which I shall soon return, the ethical dimension or concern is internal to Buddhist teaching and Chan spirituality. I think Mazu deeply understands these intrinsic connections among the Buddhist soteriological goal, everyday activity, morality, and deification. Therefore, after deconstructing the reified concept of good and bad karma, it is just a very logical move for Mazu to re-emphasize the importance of karma in a right fashion.

This right fashion is also embodied in the way in which Hongzhou masters relate their discourse of karma to the notions of *renyun* and *suiyuan*. I have examined the Hongzhou notion of *renyun* in the first section of this paper.

Close to the term *renyun* and almost as its synonym is the term *suiyuan* (隨緣). *Suiyuan* does not exclusively belong to Chinese Chan vocabulary; it was taken from Huayan terminology, especially Fazang's interpretation of the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* and the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition. Fazang characterizes the two aspects of the mind, the mind as true suchness (*xin zhenru*) and the mind subject to *samsāra* (*xin shengmie*), as *bubian* and *suiyuan*. The term *bubian* involves the meaning of non-changing or permanence (*chang*). However, this permanence designates the constancy and infiniteness of impermanence itself, the perpetuality of change and lack of self-nature of all things (*Huayan Yisheng Jiaoyi Fenqizhang*, in T 45, 1866: 500b).

The Hongzhou masters are concerned with how we can realize this conditionality (*bubian*) apart from, if not along with, the conditioned phenomena of the everyday world (*suiyuan*). The Hongzhou masters do not deny the aspect of *bubian* as the constancy of impermanence and conditionality, nor do they utterly negate the distinction between the realized conditionality and the unrealized conditioning. However, responding to others' privileging of the *bubian*,³³ the Hongzhou masters highlight the necessity of *suiyuan* to rectify Chan practitioners. Together with the notion of *renyun*, the masters' emphasis on the *suiyuan* most explicitly conveys the Hongzhou point that there is no way to realize the conditionality, emptiness, or true mind apart from conditioned phenomena, events, and activities of the everyday world.

It is precisely from this position that the Hongzhou masters come to express an important opinion about karma: one should wear out karma, or increase pure karma, merely according to conditions as they are. Huangbo conveys this opinion very clearly:

According harmoniously with the conditions of your present lives, you should go on, as opportunities arise, reducing the store of old karma laid up in previous lives (*suiyuan xiaojiuye*); and above all ... avoid building up a fresh store of retribution for yourselves (*gengmo zaoxinyang*)! (Blofeld 1958: 91–2)

³³ One of the examples would be Shenhui's approach. See section one of this paper, and Wang 2007: 91.

Later on Linji expresses the notion in a similar vein, and his words have become very well-known:

Merely according to circumstances as they are, be able to use up your past karma (*danneng suiyuan xiaojiuye*); following along with [the change of] circumstances, put on your [different] clothes (*renyun zhuyishang*). If you need to walk, just walk. If you need to sit, just sit. But never for a moment set your mind on seeking Buddha-hood. (LY, in CJ 11: 7351a; Yanagida 1972: 79)³⁴

Mazu's teachings on complying with morality and accumulating pure karma convey the same message. In his sermon, Mazu's advice on complying with morality and accumulating pure karma comes right after the instruction that one should pass one's life according to one's opportunity. This instruction amounts to his saying of "following along with the movement of all circumstances, live out one's time (*renyuan guoshi*)."

(JCL, fascicle 6, T 51. 2076: 246a) Obviously, he is advising that, as part of one's everyday life, one should practice morality according to shifting conditions as they are.

This common teaching of practicing morality in accord to everyday conditions or situations is ethically significant and demonstrates the profundity and distinctiveness of the ethical dimension of Hongzhou Chan. Although these masters themselves do not elaborate on this dimension, I can analyze its significance and implications in the following three aspects.

1. The relational and non-dualistic perspective, in terms of which the masters maintain the inseparableness of the *bubian* and *suiyuan* and attempt to place moral cultivation back into everyday existential situations, is the same perspective of inter-dependent arising and lack of self-nature (emptiness). Although this perspective itself does not provide straightforward norms and standards for moral judgment, this view is more fundamentally ethical than any available ethical rules. On one hand, it addresses the condition of the possibilities of the ethical, reminding Buddhists of what makes the ethical possible, and what conditions the good and the right in human existence and human actions. To understand and realize this condition, this larger context, it is necessary to look beyond temporary distinctions of good and evil or right and wrong. This transcendence beyond distinctions may look like the non-ethical or the lack of the ethical, but it is precisely this non-ethical or this lack of the ethical that opens to the ethical and paves the way for the ethical. Therefore, I characterize it as trans-ethical or para-ethical in the sense that it plays at the boundary of the ethical, at the borderline between the ethical and non-ethical, but nonetheless connects the non-ethical and ethical.

On the other hand, if ethic is understood more broadly and more fundamentally as *ethos*, as dwelling place, or as the larger context of being-in-the-world and being-with-others, not merely as available procedures or norms, then, the ethical dimension of inter-dependent arising or emptiness becomes very visible. Only when a person fully understands and realizes this basic context/condition

³⁴ Cf. Watson 1993: 26; Sasaki 1975: 9–10.

of inter-dependent arising can he or she be fully responsive to, responsible, and compassionate for others. It is in this sense that I think ethical dimension is internal to Buddhist teaching and Chan spirituality.

2. This teaching on practicing morality in accord to shifting conditions corresponds with the Buddha's teaching of impermanence and his advice about avoiding attachments to moral rules. The Buddha allows the accommodation of moral principles and rules to changing circumstances and new situations. In the Buddha's view, moral values or principles are subject to impermanence and to interdependent arising (Kalupahana 1995: 90–5).³⁵ In this regard, the Hongzhou teaching signifies a remarkable return to the Buddha's view, although it is presented in a Chinese context and with Chinese characteristic. The teaching demonstrates these Chan masters' great insight into the limits of moral norms or rules. Placing them in ever-shifting circumstances and situations, the masters see these moral norms and rules as nothing but contemporary configurations contingent upon infinitely interactive, interdependent factors and conditions. No norm or rule can ever be above and prior to the flowing reality of concrete, everyday existence. Rather, these rules and norms are the products of these flowing conditions or circumstances. Too many times, however, these norms or rules have become the obstacle and blockage to the free flow of our lives and our opening to changing situations after they are produced in terms of the conditions.

The Hongzhou position is neither moral relativism nor anarchism, neither antinomian nor amoral. Rather, it is a position that takes the limits of moral norms and rules seriously. It is to go with the flow, which means to recognize the limits, to detach one from the naive embellishment of and fixation on the norms and rules. This unique ethical dimension better serves the ethical by exposing the intrinsic limit or inadequacy of the ethical in terms of the larger context or process of human existence. What it offers is definitely more than what Whitehill has observed that Chan Buddhists lack ethics and only occasionally demonstrate moral courage, noble self-discipline, empathic compassion or continuous reliance on general Buddhist precepts (Whitehill 1987, 9–10). Its ethic is aporetic and unusual but more profound than, if not canceling out, normative ethics, since it provides a foundationless foundation for such ethics.

3. This teaching on practicing morality according to shifting conditions not only indicates the motif of the Hongzhou deconstruction of karma, but also shows the ethical consequence of this deconstruction. The consequence is very clear: after deconstruction, one simply returns to morality in this everyday world of good and evil, right and wrong, back to one's business of "responding to situations" and "handling things for people," with a better-equipped mind of detachment and de-reification. With this mind, one can practice morality in the following ways. First, since the categories of good and bad karma, right and wrong deeds, and the distinction of Buddhist practice and conventional existence are no longer con-

³⁵Also cf. Harvey 2000: 93, about how the Buddha makes a rule according to particular situations.

ceived of as separate, isolated from each other and fixed, but rather as mutually conditioned, relational, and inter-changeable, one would no longer need to designate any special moment, place, or procedure, disconnected from ordinary living, for practicing Buddhism or seeking Buddha-hood. In this manner, one can avoid turning so-called good karma into bad by detaching one from the former.

Second, since one pays careful attention to shifting conditions and circumstances and to the limits of moral norms and rules, one can be sensitive in one's moral judgment to the singular situation of any individual or group. One can be more flexible and active concerning the revision of norms and rules and become "less apt to apply labels rigidly to people and events, which implies less self-righteousness and condemnation of others." (Ives 1992: 50) One can be more willing to "move critically away from certain arbitrary or socially determined delineations of good or evil that do not support emancipation in its various senses," and to "rid oneself of destructive bias, whether personal, ethnic, class, national, or anthropocentric." (Ibid.) In my view, all these practices are authentic ways of wearing out one's past karma and increasing pure karma, which are implied in the Hongzhou teaching of practicing morality according to conditions. Only by following this teaching can a Chan Buddhist effectively make use of moral concepts/distinctions and norms/rules in ever-renewing soteriological practices without falling prey to human fixation and damaging Chan's fundamental ethicality.

4 The Counter-Institutional Perspective—On Being “With and Against” the Institution and Institutionalization

This last section will focus on the re-interpretation of Hongzhou's attitude toward institution. Classical Chan Buddhism, stated with the Hongzhou school, has often been described as iconoclast. The term “iconoclast” or “iconoclastic” denotes those people or actions of radical or even revolutionary nature, namely, people or actions that radically break with or destroy conventions and institutions without compromising. The use of iconoclasm, in the sense of radical breaking or destroying, presupposes and implies philosophically an either/or logic, or a dichotomy, between convention and non-convention, institution and non-institution, and so on, without any ambiguity, self-contradiction, deferring or re-turn. It excludes paradoxicality.

It is such a model of iconoclasm that was used by the twentieth century scholars, both in the West and in East Asia, to characterize the classical Chan, especially Hongzhou's, attitude toward conventions and institutions. One of the twentieth century's most prominent transmitters of Chan Buddhism in the West, John Blofeld, in his 1974 publication, plainly acknowledged that “[t]he recent widespread Western interest in Ch'an owes much to the appeal of ... the sect's seeming iconoclasm ... as exemplified by the anecdote applauding a monk who chopped up a wooden image of the Buddha to provide a fire against the cold of a winter's night” (Blofeld 1974:

118). This is very true to many of the twentieth century's Western books on Chan, portraying enlightened Chan masters as radically rejecting all institutionalized teachings and practices. Chinese and Japanese scholars, on the other side, did almost the same. HU Shi unhesitatingly characterized classical Chinese Chan as "revolutionary" and "iconoclastic," as "a great liberation of thought and belief from the old shackles of tradition and authority" (Hu 1975: 679). YANAGIDA Seizan, the leading Japanese scholar in Chinese Chan, whose interpretations of classical Chan were widely accepted in the West, thought that Mazu Daoyi and the followers of his Hongzhou school broke with previous Buddhist tradition, and started a new type of religiosity that rejected all established forms of Buddhist practices, including the practices of meditation and scriptural exegesis (Yanagida 1969: 40).

Recently, scholars have started to question the appropriateness of this iconoclasm model to classical Chan, especially to the schools like Hongzhou. Problems, such as whether the Hongzhou school is qualified for being iconoclast, and whether Chan iconoclasm is more a later addition to the Hongzhou school by some Song Dynasty Chan Buddhists or a familiar modern Western theme favored by modern interpreters of Chan than it originally was, are exposed by recent studies of classical Chan, even though the studies are done more by historians or philologists than by philosophers.

In the previous section I have referred to something extremely important that at the end of one of Mazu's famous sermons Mazu plainly reminded his students of observing precepts and accumulating good karma, the traditional moral teachings of any Buddhist institution. This is a prominent evidence that lends strong support to the recent questioning of the appropriateness of the iconoclasm model. The Hongzhou masters' attitude toward institution is much more complicated than an iconoclasm model can characterize. The Hongzhou masters never intend to abolish institutionalized teachings and practices, nor do they prefer a full break with the traditions and conventions.

If the so-called iconoclastic attitude cannot be proven true to the Hongzhou Chan masters, can a traditionalist attitude be their true portrayal? Here I define the meaning of being traditionalist as someone who adheres to, gets stuck with, or tends to stabilize the established system of doctrines and practices. It is exactly the opposite of the iconoclastic. The two attitudes are polarized, as one cuts itself off from the institution and the other encloses itself within the institution. They both conform to a kind of extremism and conceptual hierarchy.

This question occurs to me for good reasons, as I see recent studies on classical Chan by some historians have run the risk of falling on one side instead of the other. For instance, such terms as "traditional teacher," "conventional format," "standard Buddhist ideas," "conservative image" and "conservative disposition" have been used to characterize Mazu and his sermons. It has been emphasized that nothing in Mazu's sermons is "unique to the Chan school," nor even "unique to Chinese Buddhism." "[M]uch of the sermons' contents is little more than a string of canonical quotations and allusions, accompanied by Mazu's further elaboration of the cited passages" (Poceski 2004: 60–62, 67, 70). This kind of quick conclusion leaves the impression that Mazu and the early followers of his Hongzhou school are not

iconoclastic but rather traditionalist. This impression could be equally misleading and would not do justice to the text itself.

My argument is that Mazu and the early followers of his Hongzhou school are neither iconoclasts nor traditionalists. The fact that Mazu and his early followers are not iconoclasts does not necessarily entail that they are traditionalists. An either/or logic or an oppositional distinction simply does not work here. It is true that the Chan masters retain the institution, but they describe and interpret the institutionalized teachings and practices in heterogeneous terms. They do various things that de-stabilize and de-familiarize the tradition. They interrupt or suspend the traditional conceptual hierarchies, displace the established norms and forms, and challenge the conventional understandings at the very moments they give sermons. Here I limit my discussion to the sermons or the so-called more traditional forms of Chan discourse, to distinguish them from most of the encounter dialogue texts that have been considered by the historians the Song Dynasty Chan re-fashioning of early masters as iconoclasts. In short, although the Hongzhou Chan masters do not go thus far as to disconnect themselves from the institution and be qualified for iconoclasts, they do perform a kind of deconstructive operation upon the system to make it open to the changing circumstances, to connect the inside and the outside, and to transform the institution, as I have discussed in the previous sections of this chapter.

These detailed discussions from the previous sections have shown the very complicatedness, the internal tension, contradiction and paradoxicality of the Hongzhou masters' attitude toward institution. The Chan texts present the Hongzhou masters' attitude in such paradoxical terms that it makes difficult pinning down their attitude into our categories of either iconoclastic or traditionalist. It is very difficult to elude this paradoxicality if we attempt to summarize and define their attitude. The Hongzhou masters typically say certain things or do certain things, and then contradict themselves, saying or doing something opposite to what they have said or done, not just at different times but even at one and the same time. They never attempt to solve the contradiction, nor do they indicate the need to overcome it. This tendency is not just typical of the encounter dialogue texts but is also inherent in the more traditional forms of sermons and other recorded texts.

My question is: do we need to elude this paradoxicality? Is it a problem of these texts, a problem created by the Chan masters, or perhaps a problem caused by the projection of our own mentality? If we find the Chan masters are opposing the tradition or challenging the institution, we tend to think they behave like iconoclasts. But next we might find they retain the institution and never abandon the tradition, and then we tend to think they behave like traditionalists. Perhaps too often we swing between these opposites in terms of our principle of identity. Perhaps too many times and too quickly we impute our principles or our favorite theories to the Chan masters in our characterization without re-thinking why the Chan masters don't. It seems quite true that in order to overturn the iconoclastic image, we tend to lean on its opposite, the traditionalist. We are driven by our way of oppositional thinking. But does this way of critiquing the false model of iconoclasm lead us any closer to the historical truth of the Hongzhou attitude toward institution? The answer seems

quite obvious that we need to re-think the way we represent this attitude. We need a new model, a paradigm, which can reflect the profound paradoxicality of that Chan attitude as it is, including the issue of the paradoxicality of institution itself.

This new paradigm is de-institutionalization or the counter-institutional, with the insights from Derrida's discourse on the counter-institutional. In my reading of Derrida, institution or institutionalization is seen as an ever-renewing process of differentiation and deconstruction. But how could one deconstruct the institution? Derrida does not believe in non-institution or non-institutionalization. Even in his early writings, Derrida does not believe in any decisive rapture or any unequivocal breaks with the tradition or institution. Nor does Derrida believe in any full closure of institution as a locked box. For Derrida, if any institution tends to remain alive, it would inevitably struggle to be open to the outside, and transform itself toward what is called the *other* institution. To characterize this paradoxicality of institution or what he calls the "paradoxical institution," Derrida coins the term "counter-institution" or "counter-institutional." The word "counter" has a double gesture of being "with and against." For Derrida, to counter not only means to oppose or contradict, but also, inseparably, to engage, to meet, to make contact. This is the double meaning of what it means to be "against" when one "counters" something or somebody. An institution is thus a place both to divide, distinguish, discriminate, and to link, relate, conjoin; a site where values, terms, and tokens are exchanged (Wortham 2006: 20–21). This paradoxical, double gesture of being "with and against," turning toward and away from institution, this internal movement and structure of institution, this ambivalent relationship "between the critique of institutions and the dream of an *other* institution" is what Derrida calls the counter-institutional, the most permanent motif that has guided him in his works (Derrida 2001: 50–51).

The notion of the counter-institutional prevents Derrida's deconstruction from being radical iconoclast. Derrida acknowledges that deconstruction is an institutional practice. Deconstruction is parasitic on philosophy. Deconstruction inhabits philosophical culture and is inseparable from the latter (Derrida 2002: 15). But the counter-institutional or deconstruction makes sure the institution is not totally closed or totally determined. It prohibits conformism. It borrows language from the institution or tradition, but then abuses it, taking it and then leaving it, in order to make the institution remain open to the outside. It works at an angle with or to the institution, an angle that allows the institution to take a distance from itself, in order to be open to institutional transformation (Derrida 1995: 346). The counter-institutional is therefore neither inside institution nor outside it, neither conformism nor iconoclasm, neither this category nor that. This logic of "neither-nor" sounds so familiar that no one can deny its striking resemblance to the ambivalent classical Chan attitude toward institution. It inspires us to re-discover or take a fresh look at the Hongzhou Chan attitude toward institution despite the huge differences between Derrida's project and the Hongzhou's.³⁶

The Hongzhou masters do not anticipate that a Derridean notion of the counter-institutional would justify the appropriateness of their attitude. Their paradoxical

³⁶ For my early discussions of these differences, see Wang 2003: 29.

attitude toward institution reflects a kind of relational perspective that has its own roots in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy and Daoist philosophy. It is a commonly acknowledged fact that Mahayana doctrines such as emptiness, skillful means, and two levels of truth all have a wide influence on Chan thought. The teachings of emptiness and skillful means imply a critique of institution or institutionalization. The notion of the two levels of truth most clearly elaborates on the relationship of being “with and against” institution. When Nagarjuna states that unless worldly convention is accepted as a base, the higher meaning cannot be taught (Sprung 1979: 232), he clarifies that although the nirvanic or enlightened perspective involves a critique or transcendence of conventional views, institution, convention or tradition needs not to be abandoned. This relational perspective on being “with and against” institution is further developed later on by Chinese Buddhism, especially Chan, in the Chinese context. The Hongzhou notions of “ordinary mind is the *dao*” and “mind is Buddha,” with their emphasis on the interrelatedness and interdependence between the attainment of enlightenment and activities of the everyday world, underlie the Hongzhou masters’ attitude toward the institution. When Mazu states in one of his sermons: “That which speaks is your mind and this mind is called Buddha” (T 48, 14: 492a; Jia 2006: 121–122), he is far from asserting that Chan Buddhists must terminate all uses of institutional language.

On a less visible level, the Daoist critique of institution or institutionalization and its insights into the paradoxical relation with institution also influence the classical Chan attitude toward institution greatly. Zhuangzi’s attitude of being “with and against” institution or institutionalization can be seen clearly in his dictum “walking on two roads” (Watson 1968: 41)—to harmonize seeming conflicting sides: not only working with the institution, borrowing things or language from it, but also de-stabilizing and undoing the closure and making its transformation possible. Zhuangzi’s influence on classical Chan is profound. “Walking on roads” has been one of the most favorable metaphors used by the Chan masters. Huangpo Xiyun puts this metaphor in his famous saying “walking all day long without touching a piece of road” (WL, in CJ 13: 8996b), which shares the same spirit of detaching oneself from fixation on any one-sided view.

Nevertheless, the Hongzhou masters make their own contributions to the recognition of the paradoxicality of institution and to the understanding of the relationship of being “with and against” institution. I characterize their attitude and effort as de-institutionalization. De-institutionalization is not non-institutionalization in the sense of the absence of institutionalization. I define de-institutionalization as an internal movement of institution to interrupt institutionalization, to de-stabilize institutionalization, to expose the limits of institutionalization, and to make the institution remain open to transformation. De-institutionalization distinguishes itself from the extremes of either iconoclasm or conformism. It is a relational perspective on institution and a practice of the middle way. The following are some of its most important significances.

First, the Hongzhou masters’ de-institutionalizing effort is to de-stabilize the effect of generalization, formalization and hierarchical structuring inevitably

involved in the institutionalization of original Buddhist teachings. The de-institutionalization calls attention to the violence these generalization, formalization and hierarchical structuring have done to the singularity of all individual existential situations. It results in a kind of resistance to this violence and the reinterpretation/rediscovery of the teachings in terms of different circumstances. The following story about Mazu and his famous disciple Damei Fachang illustrates this point very well.

When Mazu Daoyi heard that Master Damei Fachang lived in the mountain, he sent a monk there to ask, "What have you learned from Master Mazu so that you live in this mountain?" Damei answered, "Master Mazu taught me that mind is Buddha; accordingly I have settled here to live." The monk said, "Nowadays Master Mazu teaches a different Buddha-dharma." Damei asked, "What is the difference?" The monk said, "In these days he also teaches that there is neither mind nor Buddha." Damei said, "This old man confuses people without an end. No matter how you insist on saying 'There is neither mind nor Buddha,' I will pay attention only to 'Mind is Buddha.'" When Master Mazu heard the story after the monk's return, he remarked, "Oh brothers, the plum is now ripe." (For the Chinese word *damei* means big plum). (JCL, fascicle 7, T 51, 2076: 254c; Ogata 1990: 240)

Note that Mazu and Damei do not think there should be no teaching at all. It is still institutional, not non-institutional.

Second, the Hongzhou masters' de-institutionalization brings about the greater disbelief in any meta-institution or meta-narrative by placing a Sinitic emphasis on the expedient nature of all institutionalized teachings and practices. It highlights the theme that all institutions, teachings or practices are situational and have their limitations, even though the masters do not intend to cancel the institution. The following conversation with Mazu is a good example of this tendency.

Question: Why do you say that mind is Buddha (*jixin jifo*)?

Answer: To stop children's crying.

Question: What do you say when they have stopped crying?

Answer: It is neither mind nor Buddha (*feixin feifo*).

Question: When there comes someone who belongs to neither of these two kinds, how do you instruct him?

Answer: I tell him that it is not even a thing (*bushiwu*).

Question: How about when you suddenly meet someone who has been on the Path?

Answer: I teach him to experience and realize the great *dao* (*tihui dadao*). (GY, fascicle 1, CJ, 11: 7310b-7311a; Cheng 1992: 78)

As we can see that there is a fluidity of both the teachings and situations. The masters favor a kind of harmony with the flow of things and circumstances. In this sense they prefer fluidity to immobility.

Third, the Hongzhou de-institutionalization aims to make the institution remain open to the outside, to the changing circumstances, and to institutional transformation. This open attitude can be seen very clearly through their discourse on "following along with the movement of all things (*renyun*)," a central motif that underlies all of Hongzhou's deconstruction of conceptual hierarchies, including the highly established teachings of good karma and morality, as I discussed in the previous sections of this paper. Here I would quote another well-known passage from the

Hongzhou master Baizhang Huaihai's recorded sayings.³⁷ Once Baizhang faces a question of whether an enlightened master would still fall into the circle of cause and effect (*luo yinguo*). As suggested by the text, the answers of both "yes" and "no" are rejected by Baizhang and considered the distortion of Chan. His answer is "*Bumei yinguo*." It is commonly translated as "the master is not ignorant of cause and effect" (GY, fascicle 1, CJ 11: 7312; Cleary 1978: 22–23). Here the Chinese word "*mei*" means "being ignorant." It also involves the meaning of "being covered up" or "being concealed." Much can be said about this story. Basically it refers to Baizhang's attitude toward the traditional Buddhist teaching of karma. But it can also symbolize or represent his and the Hongzhou school's attitude toward the Buddhist institution in general. Baizhang's attitude is neither single-minded conforming to the institutional nor rejecting the institutional, but is open to the third possibilities of the institutional. "Not being covered up" implies a kind of openness, being open to the possibilities of different interpretations of karma and other institutional teachings and practices. This is the central point of the Hongzhou school's general attitude toward institutional transformation.

It should be noted that the perspectives and dimensions I have examined and interpreted in this chapter barely exhaust the rich intellectual legacy of the Hongzhou school. A more comprehensive philosophical study of Hongzhou thought is still ahead of us. Despite the limits of this chapter, the perspectives we discussed above have clearly shown their varied implications for contemporary discourse in the areas such as metaphysics/ontology, philosophy of language, ethics, and critical theory about institution. Contemporary philosophical discourse might find inspirations or useful strategies from these ancient Chan texts. One must acknowledge, however, a thread running through these perspectives is Hongzhou Chan's soteriological concerns. The articulation of these perspectives originally serves Hongzhou Chan's soteriological purpose only.

Abbreviations

- CF *Huangbo Chanshi Chuanxin Fayao* 黃檗禪師傳心法要 (*Essentials of the Transmission of Mind by Chan Master Huangbo*). CJ 13
- CJ *Chanzong Jicheng* 禪宗集成 (*The Collection of the Chan School*). 1968. Collected and Reprinted from HTC. 25 vols. Taipei: Yiwen Yinshu Guan.

³⁷ Although contemporary Chan historians have thrown doubt on its historical accuracy, I think the spirit of the story I cite below is consistent with his attitude toward language and institution as is recorded in the more reliable text of his *Guang Lu*.

- DY *Yuezhou Dazhu Huihai Heshang Yu* 越州大珠慧海和尚語 (*Recorded Sayings of Monk Dazhu Huihai at Yuezhou*). JCL, fascicle 28, in T 51, 2076.
- GY *Guzunsu Yulu* 古尊宿語錄 (*Recorded Sayings of Ancient Worthies*). Ed. by Ze Zhangzhu 蹟藏主. 48 fascicles. In CJ 11–12.
- JCL *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* 景德傳燈錄 (*Records of the Transmission of the Lamp During Jingde Era*). Ed. by Daoyuan 道原. 30 fascicles. T 51, 2076.
- LY *Zhenzhou Linji Huizhao Chanshi Yulu* 鎮州臨濟慧照禪師語錄 (*Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Linji Huizhao at Zhenzhou*). GY, fascicle 4. In CJ 11.
- SL *Shenhui Heshang Chanhua Lu* 神會和尚禪話錄 (*Chan Recorded Sayings of Monk Shenhui*). Ed. by YANG Zengwen 楊曾文. 1996. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- WL *Huangbo Xiyun Chanshi Wanling Lu* 黃檗希運禪師宛陵錄 (*The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun*). CJ 13.
- WLL *Huangbo Duanji Chanshi Wanling Lu* 黃檗斷際禪師宛陵錄 (*The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Duanji*). Ed. by Pei Xiu 裴休, in T 48, 2012B.

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Chapter 17

Character Is the Way: The Path to Spiritual Freedom in the *Linji Lu*



Tao Jiang

Linji Yixuan (臨濟義玄, d. 866), a famed Chan Buddhist master, personifies the climax of Chinese Chan Buddhism that has come to define later iconoclastic representations of Chan/Zen in Chinese and other East Asian cultures. He has been revered as the last, arguably the most famous and certainly the most colorful, Chan patriarch in the “orthodox” Hongzhou lineage (洪州宗) during the so-called “golden age” of Chan Buddhism in Tang dynasty (618–907). Linji was living in an increasingly tumultuous time as the once powerful Tang dynasty was sliding toward eventual demise, which might have contributed to his martial pedagogical style. He is legendary for his blasphemous and iconoclastic teachings as well as unconventional teaching methods, such as shouting at his disciples and hitting them with a stick, all of which have now become part of the stock images of Chan enlightenment. In the *Linji Lu* (臨濟錄: *Recorded Sayings of Linji*),¹ we can see a lively portrayal—or construction—of such an image. In constructing such an iconic figure, the Chan tradition has cultivated a particular representation of enlightenment and spiritual freedom, and a careful study of the *Linji Lu* can reveal a great deal about the tradition that has constructed and idolized the image of Linji as one of its most celebrated messengers. In this essay, we will look into a salient aspect of the teaching in the *Linji Lu*, the representation of spiritual freedom (or enlightenment) and the central role character plays in its realization.

The *Linji Lu* has been traditionally recognized as the collection of Linji’s authentic teachings and the record of his various activities. The text is divided into three

¹ There are three major English translations of the *Linji lu*: Burton Watson’s *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi: A Translation of the Lin-chi Lu* (1999), Ruth Fuller Sasaki’s *The Record of Linji* (2009), and Jeffrey Broughton and Elise Yoko Watanabe’s *The Record of Linji: A New Translation of the Linjilu in the Light of Ten Japanese Zen Commentaries* (2013). I use Sasaki’s translation in this essay, with modifications where necessary.

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segments: discourses (*yulu* 語錄), critical examinations (*kanbian* 勘辨) and record of pilgrimages (*xinglu* 行錄). However, recent scholarship has seriously challenged the traditional wisdom about the text, questioning whether or not it represents the “original” and “authentic” teachings of the patriarch and disputing the “pure” and “spiritual” nature of the teachings. Such scholarly discussions have on the one hand vastly increased our knowledge about the complicated history of Chan Buddhism and the contested nature of well-known Chan texts like the *Linji Lu* while seriously calling into question the viability of a philosophical inquiry into those texts on the other. We will discuss this aspect of the Chan scholarship in more detail.

A further challenge to Chan/Zen philosophy in modern scholarship came from what was known as Critical Buddhism that arose in Japan and garnered a great deal of attention in western scholarship in the 1980s and 90s. The main challenge posed by Critical Buddhism was that the core East Asian Buddhist notion of Buddha Nature 佛性, characterized in Mahāyāna texts like the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 大般涅槃經 as permanence 常, bliss 樂, self 我, and purity 淨,² is inconsistent with the Buddhist orthodoxy that highlights impermanence, emptiness and no-self of existence. As part of the Buddha Nature tradition, much of the Chan/Zen teaching could not escape Critical Buddhism’s scathing critiques of its being antithetical to Buddhist orthodoxy in its alleged reification of Buddha Nature. Whether or not the Chan tradition is guilty of reifying Buddha Nature or whether there is indeed a so-called Buddhist orthodoxy are legitimate but separate questions that require careful examinations of each Chan masters’ teachings in their respective context as well as an investigation into the very construction of Buddhist orthodoxy in the history of Buddhism and in modern scholarly discourse. Nevertheless, the popularity of Critical Buddhism contributed to the decline of Chan philosophy in recent scholarship.

Under the dual challenge of historicist scholarship and Critical Buddhism, the contemporary discourse has trended away from philosophical inquiries of Chan texts. Therefore, before our philosophical inquiry into the notion of spiritual freedom in the *Linji Lu*, let us take a brief look at some recent development in the scholarly discussions on the text and Chan Buddhism more generally in order to have a better appreciation of its stake on a philosophical discourse on Chan Buddhism.

²For example, in Fascicle II of *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Buddha is portrayed as declaring:

These [errors] are known as “inversions” and it is by means of them that written letters may function in the world yet their [true] meanings remain unknown. And what are those meanings? “Nonself” [actually] denotes “saṃsāra.” “Self” denotes “tathāgata.” “Impermanence” denotes “śrāvakas” and “pratyekabuddhas.” “Permanence” denotes the “dharma a body of tathāgatas.” “Pain” (*duḥkha) denotes “all other paths.” Bliss (*sukha) denotes “nirvāṇa” itself. “Impurity” denotes “created dharmas.” “Purity” denotes “the true teaching of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.” All these are what I call the “noninversions.” It is by means of what is not inverted that one can understand the meaning of letters. If you want to separate yourself from the four inversions, you must understand permanence, bliss, purity, and self in this way. (Blum 2013: 59–60)

We will not deal with Critical Buddhism here as it has been covered extensively,³ whereas the historicist challenge posed to philosophical scholarship by issues concerning textuality and authorship has received inadequate attention.

1 Textual History, Authorship and Chan Philosophy

Contemporary western scholarship of Chan Buddhism has moved away from the earlier Romanticist (and often Orientalist) impulse to idealize the teachings of masters collected in Chan texts through philosophical constructions. Rather, the contemporary discourse has become overwhelmingly historicist, preoccupied with issues pertaining to the partisan and political—as opposed to “true” and “spiritual”—aspects of Chan Buddhist teachings as well as the historical construction of “orthodoxy” in the hands of Chan historiographers and followers of particular lineages. This discourse is dominated by historians who approach Chan texts like the *Linji Lu* with historicist frameworks and methodologies. Such a historicist approach to Chan texts has left very little room for the philosophical discourse in contemporary scholarship that tends to be more presentist and normative, historical contextualization notwithstanding.

In this connection, we can see the seed of historicism sowed in the important debate in the 1950s between Hu Shi 胡適 and D.T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 on the proper way to understand Chan/Zen. The debate was carried out in the April 1953 issue of *Philosophy East and West*. It began with HU Shi’s article, “Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method,” followed by Suzuki’s “Zen: A Reply to HU Shih.” The central issue was historicism versus experientialism in understanding the nature of enlightenment portrayed in Chan.⁴ In that debate, Hu forcefully advocated a distinctly historicist approach to the understanding of various Chan representations of enlightenment by situating them within the history of Chinese Buddhism and Chinese thought more generally whereas Suzuki passionately criticized the inadequacy of such an approach for its negligence of the experience of Zen enlightenment as non-dual and history-transcending. Clearly, despite Suzuki’s ubiquitous influence in modern Chan/Zen scholarship, more recent Chan/Zen discourse has aligned more with Hu’s historicism, to such an extent that there is little scholarly interest in pursuing philosophical inquiry on Chan texts which might not even make scholarly sense any more. Let us look into this interesting phenomenon more closely.

The primary reason for the lack of scholarly interest in Chan Buddhist philosophy has to do with the problematic nature of Chan texts, and this can be seen in two aspects: the lack of an explicit philosophical system in the texts which does not so easily lend themselves to philosophical inquiries without heavy constructions, and

³To get some ideas about the debate and responses from some western scholars, see Hubbard and Swanson 1997; King 1995.

⁴I recount this debate in some detail in Jiang 2004.

more seriously the historicist approach to the study of Chinese texts which can effectively explain away the scholarly object of a philosophical inquiry. The first aspect is in line with much of the Chan rhetoric that is disparaging to linguistic expressions and antithetical to scholastic discourses. It is a serious challenge to philosophical explorations of Chan teachings, although that did not prevent earlier scholars from engaging in such an endeavor since anti-language and anti-scholasticism can certainly be philosophically illuminating. However, it is the second challenge that has posed the gravest threat to philosophical inquiries of Chan texts in contemporary western scholarship. As we will see in the following, the historicist approach to Chan texts has essentially left the philosophical project without its scholarly object.

The discovery of Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts in early twentieth century has provided a treasure trove of previously unknown historical materials pertaining to Chinese Buddhism from fifth to eleventh centuries including Chan, and its significance to the study of the history of Chinese Buddhism has been increasingly recognized in recent scholarship.⁵ In fact, the importance of Dunhuang materials to the study of Chinese Buddhism is comparable to, if not greater than, the significance of Mawangdui 馬王堆 and Guodian 郭店 texts to the study of classical Chinese history and thought. Such a discovery has helped scholars to challenge the established narratives of Chan Buddhism by reconstructing a much more complex and nuanced historical development than what the orthodox Chan history has presented. Furthermore, the methodologies of textual criticism and historical analysis pioneered in modern biblical scholarship have also powerfully influenced contemporary Chan scholarship that attempts to unveil the multilayered and obfuscated nature of texts like the *Linji Lu*.

Contemporary *Linji* scholarship has been significantly shaped by the works of the famous Japanese scholar YANAGIDA Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006). In his seminal work, *Rinzai roku* 臨濟錄, Yanagida carefully reconstructs the life of Linji and the evolution of the *Linji Lu* based on available documents at the time.⁶ Subsequent scholarship has largely followed Yanagida's lead. The most recent and comprehensive effort to critically examine Linji and the *Linji Lu* is Albert Welter's book, *The Linji lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: the Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature*. As Welter's careful study of the *Linji Lu* convincingly demonstrates, the image of Linji in the text is a myth created by the followers of the Linji faction during the Song dynasty. He outlines four stages in the evolution of what would come to be known as the *Linji Lu*:

In the first place, there is the activity of note taking, a process removed from our view but known to us through the criticisms it generated. This is followed by the compilation and editing of the notes, assumed in the *Linji lu* to be the product of Sansheng Huiran and Xinghua Cunjiang. This stage presumably included the incorporation of different versions,

⁵ Interested readers can check out the International Dunhuang Project website (<http://idp.bl.uk/idp.a4d>) for further details.

⁶ Readers can see the English translation of Yanagida's Introduction to his *Rinzai roku* (Yanagida 1961) in Sasaki 2009: 59–115.

or versions of notes assembled by different hands. The third stage, the first stage for which we have concrete evidence, involves the publication of excerpts or extracts of the edited compilations into *denglu* 燈錄 collections. ... The fourth and final stage is the formation of the *Linji lu* proper, a comprehensive *yulu* either as incorporated in the *Sijia yulu* 四家語錄 or as in Yuanjue Zongyan's 圓覺宗演 reedited, standardized version. (Welter 2008: 161)

This clearly shows the complex history of the *Linji Lu* that was not out of the hands of a single person. Nor was it a simple *record* of Linji's teachings and activities. Instead, the text was the result of a long process of textual construction that involved many people across several generations with their complicated motivations and interests.

As a result, we can now see with a much higher degree of clarity that the *Linji Lu* was compiled, fabricated, and redacted at various points in its history. Such scholarly endeavors have convincingly demonstrated the continuing evolution in the construction of Linji's collected sayings as a result of catering to different interests and considerations and addressing different issues and audiences before achieving canonical status in Song dynasty. More specifically, it has shown that political and partisan motivations were often at play in the creation of myth surrounding prominent Chan figures like Linji. This conclusion challenges the "pure" and "spiritual" nature of Chan teachings which has been enshrined in famous Chan rhetoric that portrays the tradition as "mind-to-mind transmission" (以心傳心) and "special transmission outside established doctrines" (教外別傳), etc.

In this connection, Welter observes that Chan's preference for oral over written instruction signaled a shifting locus of spiritual authority in the Chan tradition:

In effect, the Chan master displaces the classical Buddhist texts, the scriptures and treatises, as the prime arbiter of Buddhist wisdom. The teaching of past buddhas is displaced by that of present Chan patriarchs; Chan oral transmission privileges the living tradition over the received record (i.e., past tradition). (Welter 2008: 162)

Such a shift in turn influenced the way Chan identity was reshaped and Chan orthodoxy was constructed:

... the dynamic quality of the oral transmission trope, especially as seen in Chan encounter dialogues, provided a new sense of what it meant to be Buddhist. This identity was inscribed in *yulu*, where it became the basis of a new Chan orthodoxy that endures to the present day. The *Linji lu* epitomizes this orthodoxy and illustrates the process through which it came into being. (Welter 2008: 163)

The political implications in all these moves should be abundantly clear, although such an analysis does not necessarily explain away the spiritual lure of Chan teachings in the *Linji Lu*.

The historicist discourse on Linji and the *Linji Lu* has vastly enriched and complicated our understanding of the creation of the text as well as the evolving image of the Chan icon (or iconoclast) portrayed in it. However, it also raises critical questions concerning the viability or even legitimacy of a philosophical approach to a text like the *Linji Lu*, given the fact that it was not the product by a single author but rather the product of people across several generations who brought with them their own intentions and interests. The increasing disassociation between Linji and the

Linji Lu raises profound questions for the possibility of a philosophical discussion of the text due to the central importance of authorship in the philosophical approach to a text that bears his name. As I have argued elsewhere,⁷

Authorship is more than a matter of whether or not someone is the actual author of a text. Rather, the assumption of a single author makes possible a particular interpretative strategy. That is, when we approach a text, the implicit or explicit assumption of its being composed by a single author sets the boundary of interpretative strategies, in terms of its textual unity and coherence, grounded in the unity of authorial intent and agency, however nebulous they turn out to be. (Jiang 2016: 44)

That is, authorship is not simply a matter of whether someone is the actual author of a text historically, but, perhaps more importantly, also as a function that provides the ground and sets a boundary for philosophical inquiries. Without the ability to attribute a unified intention to a single authorial agent, a text becomes more scattered and its philosophical exploration is rendered groundless.

Accordingly, the image of Linji as an iconoclastic and confrontational Chan patriarch is central to the philosophical understanding of the text that bears his name. Explaining away Linji from the *Linji Lu* would make the text anchorless as a philosophical text. While a historian uses a text to study history, a philosopher is more interested in exploring ideas in it that are grounded in certain historical and cultural context but not reducible to it. This irreducibility can, at least partially, account for the continuing lure of the text beyond its specific historical production and particular cultural milieu.

In order to solve the problem of authorship and textual coherence that is required for a philosophical inquiry, I have proposed (Jiang 2016) that we distinguish historical author from textual author and authorial intent from textual intent when interpreting historically important works like the *Linji Lu*. Historical author and its corollary authorial intent belong to the historical discourse whereas textual author and its corollary textual intent fall within the domain of philosophical discourse. Furthermore, on the related issue of textuality, I propose that we differentiate inherited texts from original texts when studying historically significant texts like the *Linji Lu*, in order to provide an intellectual space for the philosophical approach to pre-modern Chinese texts that focuses on the normative aspect of received texts while respecting the historian's interest in discovering the original texts and all the entailments such endeavors warrant.

Consequently, we have two methodologies to achieve conceptual coherence of a text when confronted with internal tensions: philosophical and historical. Philosophical interpretations of a classical text almost always involve some kind of conceptual reconstruction to produce a coherent philosophical system in order to encapsulate the complexity of the text and find a philosophically compelling way to accommodate its conflicting elements within a larger system by attributing (textual) intent to it. This is viable only when the text is assumed to have a single (textual) author. By contrast, a historian's training and interest more likely incline her to

⁷The rest of the discussion in this section of the current essay is based on the *Dao* article, adapted for the Chan context.

treating the conceptual incoherence as representing voices of different people under different contexts in the history of the text, hence historicizing away the tensions involved. Put simply, in approaching classical texts philosophers tend to build on the idea of a unified authorial agent whereas historians tend to problematize that very idea. Clearly historicizing a text and philosophizing it can be at odds with each other such that the former can deprive the latter of the opportunity to engage philosophically a text that has a complicated compositional history.

In this connection it is important to recognize the fact that historians also utilize the notion of compilers' intent or motivations (e.g., Welter 2008: 9) but frame them primarily in political and partisan terms rather than philosophical and normative ones. Such an approach does not address the issue of the continuing philosophical and spiritual lure of these texts that has taken on a life of their own, independent of their historical originations.

The roles played by historians in the contemporary philosophical interpretations of classical texts like the *Linji Lu* can be summed up in terms of the following three kinds. First, it offers important historical, intellectual and linguistic contexts to the texts, and let us call this the preparer. Second, it questions the premise of the philosophical approach by challenging the coherence and the authorship of the texts, the challenger. Third, and somewhat ironically, it sometimes also offers scholars of philosophy an easy escape when faced with difficult conceptual tensions in a text, the jailbreaker. That is, historical maneuvers can offer a useful or even convenient tool when scholars of philosophy are confronted with philosophically difficult issues since they can always appeal to historical specifics, like historical vicissitudes of the text, to explain away the problems. The latter two roles played by the historical discourse can undermine the integrity, or even legitimacy, of the philosophical approach to Chan texts and scholars of Chan Buddhist philosophy need to have a clear-eye view of the stakes involved.

It is, nevertheless, important to recognize the constructive role of historical discourse in the philosophical exploration of Chan texts, as the preparer. That is, historical knowledge prepares the necessary historical, intellectual and linguistic contexts for the philosophical approach to Chan texts. It is neither possible nor desirable for scholars of Chan philosophy to completely ignore historical scholarship, due to the peculiar status of Chan Buddhist philosophy in contemporary discourse, situated between history and philosophy. There is no escape from history if one wants to study the Chan texts philosophically with proper cultural and intellectual sensibility, even though a scholar of Chan philosophy does not have to engage in the historicist *discourse* per se. The more historical knowledge a scholar has, the more culturally rich and grounded her philosophical interpretations of inherited Chan texts can be. But scholars of Chan Buddhist philosophy should not keep their eyes off the primary objective of their endeavors, namely the philosophical integrity and implications of a large body of texts whose conceptual universes have shaped the Chinese Buddhist cultural and intellectual outlooks. Given the dominance of historicism in the contemporary scholarly discourse on Chan Buddhism, scholars of Chan philosophy need to carefully weigh historical evidence

against the potentials for philosophically creative explorations of a text such that philosophical interests are not completely marginalized by historical concerns when it comes to the interpretations of Chan texts.

In recent years, contemplative studies has emerged as an innovative way to explore contemplative theories and practices in the world's spiritual traditions, especially their phenomenological and experiential dimensions, within the context of contemporary secular academic setting. Chan Buddhist tradition, with its singular focus on meditation, certainly has a good deal to contribute to such a discourse. It would be unfortunate that the rich Chan resources are explored only in its political and historical dimensions but not its philosophical and phenomenological aspects, doing injustice to both the tradition in Asia and its modern practitioners in the west.

With these considerations in mind, let us now turn to the second task of this essay, namely a philosophical inquiry into Linji's teaching on the relationship between spiritual freedom and personal character. At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that the primary audience of Linji's teaching was Buddhist practitioners, mostly Chan monastics, who had already embraced the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment (and its various expressions) as the ultimate goal of their practices. Only within such a context can the radical aspect of Linji's teaching make sense and be properly evaluated. The rest of this essay treats the *Linji Lu* as an inherited text and is an attempt to construct a coherent understanding the relationship between personal character and spiritual freedom in the *Linji Lu* by attributing a unified textual intent to the textual author of Linji as portrayed in the text.

2 Character Is the Way in the *Linji Lu*

Linji is known for his teaching on the true person with no rank or position (無位真人), an enlightened person of genuine spiritual freedom (自由, 自在 or 解脫) who is unfettered by various traps in both the mundane (凡) and sacred (聖) realms.⁸ The main challenge to achieving spiritual freedom for Linji is the overcoming of attachment, which is a major theme within the larger Buddhist tradition. However, it is interesting to note that Linji does not appear to target our attachment to the

⁸Contemporary scholarship has questioned the veracity of such Chan/Zen rhetoric of freedom by pointing out the all-pervasive hierarchical structure of the traditional Chinese society as well as Buddhist monasteries. As Dale Wright points out, "Collective labor, collective meditation, collective meals, collective *dharma* discussions, collective sleeping arrangements – all of these came to be institutionalized with the new codes [namely, the 'Pure Regulations' of Chan monastic life (清規) adopted in the Song Dynasty], thus possibly giving Zen a more thorough 'collective' character than any previous form of Buddhism. Virtually no dimension of Zen monastic life depended upon individual preference and personal decision making. Freedom, in the form of autonomy at least, was not an important consideration. ... Nevertheless, in the midst of this 'community of constraint,' 'freedom' came to be an essential defining feature of the community's purpose" (Wright 1998: 123). I will not get into the institutional aspect of Linji's teachings in this essay.

(illusion of) self. The “signature” Buddhist doctrine of no-self (*wuwo* 無我) does not feature prominently in his teaching. In fact, the word *wuwo* (P. *anattā*; S. *anātman*), ubiquitous in Buddhist texts, does not even appear in the *Linji Lu*.⁹ His main concern is often discussed in terms of the struggle between a host (*zhu* 主) and a guest (*bin* 賓 or *ke* 客)¹⁰ or between a person (*ren* 人) and the surroundings/circumstances (*jing* 境).¹¹

My argument here is that for Linji the key to overcoming attachment lies in building a strong character. That is, only those Chan practitioners with a strong character can weather the grueling demand of the arduous spiritual journey prescribed in the Buddhist teachings. This aspect of Linji’s teaching resonates strongly with the saying, “character is destiny,” traditionally attributed to Heraclitus. Therefore I describe Linji’s teaching as advocating that “character is the Way,”¹² wherein the Way (*dao* 道) refers to the path of enlightenment, so as to highlight this unique dimension in his teaching that clearly stands out within the Buddhist tradition.

Character in everyday parlance usually means a set of mental and moral qualities that distinguish one person from another. In the context of this essay, character refers to the part of personal quality that manifests itself spontaneously when a person is under pressure or caught in an unexpected situation, since a spontaneous response to an unexpected challenge is the most revealing indicator of one’s character traits. The *Linji Lu* is full of vivid descriptions of unexpected situations Linji creates by putting his disciples on the spot when he demands an immediate response to a question arising on that occasion. What is interesting is Linji’s demand of immediacy in response without giving the disciple time to think it through.

Within the Chan context, immediacy is almost always associated with the teaching of sudden enlightenment (*dunwu* 頓悟), enshrined as the Chan orthodox. However, such an automatic linkage can stifle other lines of inquiry, hence limiting and impoverishing the potential for us to explore other possibilities. Here we explore the significance of immediacy in a different direction by probing its connection with a Chan practitioner’s character. The kinds of character traits that are typically

⁹This can be explained either as a case of the shift away from being primarily preoccupied with self-attachment (*wo zhi* 我執) to being more concerned with attachment to *dharma* (*fa zhi* 法執) in Mahāyāna Buddhism to which Linji belongs or as an instance of the rather complicated history of the doctrine of no-self in Chinese Buddhism which did not feature prominently until much later, unlike its preeminence from the very beginning in Indian Buddhism (cf. Zürcher 2007: 11–12). The *Linji Lu* is clearly more concerned with attachment to *dharma* even though the terms of neither self-attachment nor attachment to *dharma* is explicitly invoked.

¹⁰This is what later came to be known as the “Fourfold Relation of Guest and Host” (*si binzhu* 四賓主) in Linji’s teaching.

¹¹This is the focus of Linji’s famous pedagogy laid out in the text that deals with the intricate relationship between a person (*ren* 人) and *jing*, known as the Four Classifications (*si liaojian* 四料揀 or 四料簡).

¹²This is also a way to differentiate Linji’s teaching from his Dharma predecessor Mazu Daoyi’s 馬祖道一 famous teaching “ordinary mind is the Way” (*pingchang xin shi dao* 平常心是道) while appreciating their continuity.

shown, when one is challenged, include tepidity, resignation, passivity, defiance, confidence or forcefulness, etc. In this connection, Linji's demand for an immediate response from his disciples under any circumstances can be interpreted as Linji's prodding of them to demonstrate how much of the Buddhist learning has been integrated into their character such that their learning could be demonstrated in the way they perform spontaneously and confidently in the face of any challenge.

This line of inquiry that links immediacy with character is reminiscent of Mencius' teaching on our spontaneous compassion toward a child who is on the verge of falling into a well as an indication of our natural moral inclinations. Immediacy in one's response to a situation reveals the most authentic aspect of the person, one's true character. Similarly, for Linji true Buddhist learning and practice is one through which a practitioner's character is transformed, reflected in the very way one carries oneself under unexpected or trying circumstances. His goal is to train his disciples so that they can develop a strong character and engage the world confidently and dynamically under challenge or duress.

Within the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, to which Chan Buddhism belongs, such a quality is one of six major virtues cultivated in the spiritual practice, namely the perfection of vigor or energy (S. *vīryapāramitā*; C. 精進波羅蜜), the others being the perfections of generosity, morality, tolerance, meditation and wisdom. This particular virtue has a special place among the virtues celebrated in Mahāyāna Buddhism. As Dale Wright explains,

The first three – generosity, morality, tolerance – are appropriate practices for anyone. The final three, however, – energy, meditation and wisdom – operate at a higher level of spiritual awareness and therefore tend to be the focus of monks, nuns, and others who given priority in their lives in spiritual practice and insight. At this point in the practice, high levels of energy are required to undertake the practices of concentration and meditation prescribed in the fifth perfection, and in order to sustain the transformation in personal orientation experienced through insight and wisdom in the sixth. (Wright 2009: 137)

In other words, *vīryapāramitā* is situated right at the pivot to the more demanding and spiritual phase of the Buddhist practice, especially for those monastics who are singularly devoted to achieving spiritual freedom promised in Buddhism. *Vīrya* used to mean the power and virility of a warrior in the earlier Brahmanic context, and the Buddhists appropriated it for their spiritual project:

Early Buddhist texts referred to the Buddha himself as a *vīra*, a great hero, the one who was victorious over the forces of evil–Mara–and whose spiritual achievements would transform the world. For Buddhists, therefore, *vīrya* meant the energy of accomplishment, the effort, courage, and power to see spiritual endeavor through to its completion. *Vīryapāramitā* is the perfection of this energy, the power of unyielding commitment to the ultimate goal of universal awakening. (Wright 2009: 138)

Linji's apparent touting of *vīryapāramitā* (without using the term) is a clear indication that he treats the Buddhist project of spiritual freedom as a fierce battle against illusion and attachment that demands a forceful character and vigorous practice. The martial quality of Linji's teaching has been duly noted within the Chan/Zen

tradition,¹³ which might explain Linji's singling out *vīryapāramitā* in his discussion of character training, rather than treating it as part of the six virtues acclaimed in the Mahāyāna tradition.

Linji's eagerness to help his disciples build a strong character is palpable throughout the text. The following passage is one such example:

Followers of the Way, if you want to accord with *fa*, just be men of great resolve. If you just shilly-shally spinelessly along, you're good for nothing. Just as a cracked jug is unfit to hold ghee, so he who would be a great vessel must not be taken in by the deluded views of others. Make yourself master everywhere, and wherever you stand is the true [place]. (Sasaki 2009: 16, with modifications)

Here Linji speaks like a general who is training his disciples to strengthen their resolve and stiffen their spine so that they can engage in the demanding endeavor of spiritual practice. The Buddhist enlightenment project requires vigor and firmness in a practitioner's understanding and practice such that one would not be easily swayed by others. The expression "make yourself the master everywhere and authenticate your stand anywhere" (隨處作主, 立處皆真) is a crucial teaching in the *Linji Lu*, as it is repeated in the following passage:

Just make yourself master of every situation, and wherever you stand is the true [place]. No matter what *jings* come they cannot dislodge you [from there]. Though you bear the influence of past delusions or the karma of [having committed] the five heinous crimes, these of themselves become the ocean of emancipation. (Sasaki 2009: 12, with modifications)

Here Linji is unequivocally clear that a Chan practitioner's firmness can transform delusion or karma into emancipation. Within the context of Linji's teaching, this means that practitioners need to cultivate a confident and forceful character that enables them to confront their attachments on both the mundane and the spiritual dimensions, instead of being bulldozed by powerful karmic forces or deceptive illusions. In this connection, Linji's main targets are the entrapments of a practitioner by *jing* 境¹⁴ and by reified spiritual icons represented by the Buddha 佛, patriarchs 祖 and *fa* 法.¹⁵ Let us take a closer look at these two entrapments as they are discussed in the text.

¹³ As YAMADA Mumon observes:

Rinzai Zen is distinguished from the other Zen schools by its brusque and somewhat martial disposition. Its central concern is "the person who is master in all places," whose effortless activity is a giving and taking away, creating and annihilating absolutely at will, with the "sword that kills, and the sword that gives life." This is one reason the school has been given the label "Shōgun Zen," and no doubt also accounts for the great success it enjoyed in the past among the samurai classes of Japan. (Yamada 2009: vii.)

¹⁴ The Sanskrit term for *jing* is *viṣaya*, meaning sphere or object.

¹⁵ *Fa* is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit term *dharma* (Pāli: *dharmā*). *Dharma* is a ubiquitous term in Buddhism (as well as in Indian religious and philosophical traditions). It can mean the teachings of the Buddhism, objects, or the irreducible constituent of the world, to name just a few. Within the *Linji Lu*, *fa* usually refers to the Buddha's teachings and the reality they depict. We will discuss this in greater detail later in the essay.

The first major trap Linji constantly refers to is *jing*, usually translated as circumstances, conditions, or surroundings. It can be divided into two broad categories: past and present. Past *jing* refers to karma; it points to the fact that we are the products of karma and continue to be conditioned by the past (Sasaki 2009: 12). Present *jing*, which is the focus of the text, refers to the psychophysical constituent of the human existence:

The grosser part of you is at the mercy of [the four elements:] earth, water, fire, and wind; the subtler part of you is at the mercy of the four phases: birth, being, decay, and death. Followers of the Way, you must right now apprehend the state in which the four elements [and four phases] are formless, so that you may avoid being buffeted about by *jing*. (Sasaki 2009: 14, with modifications)

The four elements of earth, water, fire and wind are the traditional categories in the Buddhist discourse on the physical world. Here they refer to the constituents of the human body as well as its different phases. To overcome the entanglement by the four elements, a practitioner should strive to see their formlessness, synonymous with the famous Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness that points to the insubstantiality and the thoroughly conditioned nature of all existence, including human existence.

In the next passage, Linji expands the four elements to encapsulate mental activities by correlating them with specific mental phenomena:

Someone asked, “What is the state in which the four elements [and four phases] are formless?”

The master said, “An instant of doubt in your mind and you’re obstructed by earth; an instant of lust in your mind and you’re drowned by water; an instant of anger in your mind and you’re scorched by fire; an instant of joy in your mind and you’re blown about by wind. Gain such discernment as this, and you’re not turned this way and that by *jing*; making use of *jing* everywhere—you spring up in the east and disappear in the west, spring up in the south and disappear in the north, spring up in the center and disappear at the border, spring up at the border and disappear in the center, walk on the water as on land, and walk on the land as on water.

“How is this possible? Because you have realized that the four elements are like dreams, like illusions. Followers of the Way, the *you* who right now is listening to my discourse is not the four elements; this *you* makes use of the four elements. If you can fully understand this, you are free to go or to stay [as you please]. (Sasaki 2009: 14–15, with modifications)

The four elements are expanded to include both the physical and the psychological constituents of human beings. Therefore, *jing* in the *Linji Lu* refers to both bodily and mental aspects of human existence. According to Linji, the key to dealing with the *jing* is to cultivate a strong character that can withstand our emotional volatility and train one’s mind to be so agile and detached that it is not ensnared in any state associated with the four elements, i.e., the mental state of doubt with the element of earth, lust with water, anger with fire, and joy with wind. Indeed, a person with such a mind and character is the master of one’s *jing*, not its slave. A practitioner with such a strong character and a nimble mind is a person of freedom—free to go or stay as one pleases—who does not reify or attach to any of those states and is in the state of formless (無相境).

The second trap problematized in the *Linji Lu* pertains to various forms of spiritual attachment in a Chan practitioner’s practices, i.e., scriptural studies and

meditation. With regards to scriptural studies, to be a Chan Buddhist obviously requires one to follow the examples set by the Buddha and the patriarchs as well as their teachings. However, those Buddhist icons and ideals can themselves be reified and become objects of attachment, as is argued brilliantly by Nāgārjuna in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. From Linji's perspective, committed Chan followers can become slavish to Chan teachings, which is antithetical to the Buddhist project of enlightenment and spiritual freedom. Linji dismisses reified Buddhist teachings as "the words of some dead old guy" (Sasaki 2009: 27) and ridicules those who are attached to them as "blind idiots" (*ibid.*). Clearly, for Linji rote learning and scholastic deftness are inadequate as far as achieving spiritual freedom is concerned. The cognitive and discursive approach to Buddhist teachings reifies those teachings by turning them into objects to be studied and memorized. Learning in such a fashion might enable practitioners to engage in sophisticated conceptual games but they would inevitably fall short in performing enlightenment in a pressing real-life context.

Indeed, a striking feature of Linji's teaching in the text is that he, more often than not, privileges character over cognition. He devotes much of his teaching to training his disciples how to act spontaneously, rather than how to think thoroughly. The rationale for such a focus on the performative, instead of the cognitive, aspect of spiritual freedom is laid out in the following passage:

The moment a student blinks his eyes he's already way off. The moment he applies his mind, he's already differed. The moment he arouses a thought, he's already deviated. But for the man who understands, it's always right here before his eyes. (Sasaki 2009: 252)

From Linji's perspective, to think is to objectify. That is, the cognitive approach to Buddhist teachings easily results in objectifying those teachings, which can mislead practitioners in their pursuit of spiritual freedom. In light of our argument here, we can interpret Linji as stating that as long as one has to think about how to handle a situation in light of some Buddhist doctrines, those teachings have not yet been integrated into one's character. One's character is indicative of one's way of being in the world that spontaneously manifests itself in the way one performs in any situation. This means that for Linji enlightenment is more than enlightened cognition. Rather, it is enlightened performance, grounded in an enlightened character, marked by courage, confidence and detachment, that spontaneously manifests itself in a Chan practitioner's engagement with the world, especially under challenging circumstances.

Such a singular focus on the practitioners' character is also evident in Linji's teaching on meditation. The practice of meditation is widely recognized as being central to the Chan project of spiritual freedom. However, as Linji sees it, the misunderstanding of meditation is rampant among Chan practitioners. Accordingly, many people mistake all the prescribed postures of the seated meditation—sitting down cross-legged with one's back against a wall, tongue glued to the roof of one's mouth, completely still and motionless—as the quintessential practice of Chan. He dismisses all of them as misguided as they direct practitioners toward obsessing over the external form (Sasaki 2009: 24–25). For him, Chan practice is about

transforming a practitioner's character, not the particular bodily posture or meditation-induced visions. Linji's emphasis on the cultivation of a set of forceful character traits through meditation is an interesting contrast with the traditional Buddhist teaching that focuses more on the cognitive aspect.

Focusing on the cognitive dimension of meditation in one's Chan practice, for Linji, can easily lead to the reification of various kinds of visions. Linji sternly warn Chan practitioners of the grave danger posed by meditation-induced hallucinations (S. *māra*; C. 魔). In certain advanced meditative states, a practitioner can sometimes have a powerful experience of catching a glimpse of Buddhist icons like the Buddha or Chan patriarchs. Given the intensely meaning-charged nature of these icons for a Chan Buddhist, a practitioner can easily mistake such experiences in a meditative state as signs of enlightenment whereas they are actually manifestations of subtler reification and attachment at a more advanced level of the spiritual journey.

Clearly, the extraordinarily demanding nature of Chan meditation practice means that it is not for those with a weak character since they can be easily seduced and misled by certain images seen in meditation, especially those of the Buddha or Chan patriarchs, whereas all such images should be dismissed as *māra*. This is critical in cultivating detachment to Buddhist icons that is at the heart of Linji's teaching against attachment to Buddhist icons and images, a particularly potent kind of attachment for a committed Chan follower:

Someone asked, "What is Buddha-*māra*?"

The master said, "One thought of doubt in your mind is *māra*. But if you realize that the ten thousand *fas* never come into being, that mind is like a phantom, that not a speck of dust nor a single thing exists, that there is no place that is not clean and pure—this is Buddha. Thus Buddha and *māra* are simply two states, one pure, the other impure.

"In my view there is no Buddha, no sentient beings, no past, no present. Anything attained was already attained—no time is needed. There is nothing to practice, nothing to realize, nothing to gain, nothing to lose. Throughout all time there is no other *fa* than this. 'If one claims there's a *fa* surpassing this, I say that it's like a dream, like a phantasm.' This is all I have to teach. (Sasaki 2009: 12–13, with modifications)

Interestingly Linji appears to take two conflicting positions on the relationship between Buddha and *māra* here. In the first paragraph Linji characterizes the Buddha and the demon (*māra*) as two states of mind, pure and impure respectively. On the other hand, he dismisses even the Buddha and argues that all is empty in the second paragraph. One way to account for the apparent inconsistency is, following Nāgārjuna's famous teaching of two truths (二諦) widely known among Chinese Buddhists, that the first passage explains Buddha-*māra* from the perspective of conventional truth, which separates the Buddha from *māra*, whereas the second passage explains it from the perspective of ultimate truth since both Buddha and *māra* are conventional constructs (all constructs are conventional) and are ultimately empty. In other words, any image experienced in meditative state is *māra* and only imagelessness and formlessness is the state of enlightenment wherein all reifications, gross and subtle, are overcome.

Such an interpretation is consistent with Linji's advice to cut off representations of spiritual enlightenment, i.e., the Buddha, the patriarchs and arhats, as well as

objects of mundane affection, i.e., parents and kinsmen. The following signature passage cements Linji as the ultimate iconoclast¹⁶ in the Buddhist tradition:

Followers of the Way, if you want insight into *fa* as it is, just don't be taken in by the deluded views of others. Whatever you encounter, either within or without, slay it at once. On meeting a buddha slay the buddha, on meeting a patriarch slay the patriarch, on meeting an arhat slay the arhat, on meeting your parents slay your parents, on meeting your kinsman slay your kinsman, and you attain emancipation. By not cleaving to things, you freely pass through. (Sasaki 2009: 22, with modifications)

In other words, the two hurdles, i.e., attachments to both mundane and spiritual objects, need to be overcome in order to attain spiritual freedom promised in Linji's Chan teachings. Given the centrality of meditation in Chan practice, misunderstanding meditative experiences is an easy trap to fall into. It is critically important for Chan practitioners to be unwavering and resolute in the recognition that true enlightenment is formless and cannot be reified or attached to: "true buddha has no figure, true *fa* has no form" (Sasaki 2009: 20, with modifications). The rather violent rhetoric in the above passage is obviously not to be taken literally, but should be taken as reflective of Linji's wariness of the seductiveness of meditation-induced experiences that can be easily reified and clung to as signs of enlightenment. As I have argued elsewhere,

What is central to Linji's teaching is that true awakening is to transform this very *structure* of attachment, not just to substitute one set of attached objects for another. An attachment to "spiritual" objects does not, ultimately speaking, make the attachment better, since what is changed is simply the object of attachment while the underlying structure of attachment remains firmly entrenched and intact. Much of Linji's teaching, as recorded in the *Linji Lu*, is geared toward helping his devout disciples to transform this structure of attachment. (Jiang 2011: 259)

To overcome attachment to spiritual ideals and to transform the underlying structure of attachment have to be extraordinarily difficult for Buddhist practitioners since those Buddhist icons and ideals represent the very fabric and structure of Buddhist spiritual universe that gives meaning to the Buddhist practices.

Therefore, to transcend a practitioner's attachment to the representations of Buddhist enlightenment and mundane affection requires a strong character that can persevere in the course of the inevitably traumatic spiritual transformation, analogous to the overturning of one's world: "Heaven and earth could turn upside down and he wouldn't have a doubt; the buddhas of the ten directions could appear before him and he wouldn't feel an instant of joy; the three hells could suddenly yawn at his feet and he wouldn't feel an instant of fear" (Sasaki 2009: 20). Here Linji is pointing out that Chan practices are riddled with terrifying as well as seductive experiences wherein one's established sense of self and the world would be turned upside down.

¹⁶Youru Wang, in his 2012 article "Paradoxicality of Institution, De-Institutionalization and the Counter-Institutional: A Case Study in Classical Chinese Chan Buddhist Thought," critiques the characterization of Chan as iconoclastic in contemporary scholarship. He introduces a new paradigm of de-institutionalization to interpret the Chan attitude toward institution, inspired by Derrida's idea of the counter-institutional. Here I am not problematizing the category of iconoclasm in characterizing Linji's Chan teaching.

Without a strong character a Buddhist practitioner can be easily overwhelmed by such grueling and demanding practice. A strong character provides a secure anchor for a practitioner to explore perilous aspects of spiritual practices that are unavoidable in one's spiritual journey. Clearly, enlightened character, marked by courage, confidence, and detachment, is at the heart of Linji's project of spiritual freedom.

3 Conclusion: Chan's Character Turn

In this essay we have attempted to explore an alternative interpretation of the core teaching in the *Linji Lu*, namely spiritual freedom, by reframing it in terms of its connection with a practitioner's character. In so doing, we hope to highlight a unique aspect of Linji's Chan teaching. That is, enlightenment is more about a practitioner's character than just their cognition.

Cognition occupies much of the Buddhist scholastic discourse in both India and China. Much of scholastic Buddhism is devoted to highly sophisticated, meticulous, and at times tedious, deliberations on the nature and activities of the deluded mind in terms of its various reifying operations. Discussions on the transformation of a practitioner's character are marginalized by the overwhelming emphasis on the cognitive aspect of the mind from delusion to enlightenment. The essay is meant to redress the inadequate attention given to this important dimension in the Buddhist practice, most saliently represented in the *Linji Lu*. In other words, Chan practice, at least in the case of *Linji Lu*, can be more fruitfully understood as focusing on the transformation of a practitioner's character rather than highlighting the cognitive aspect of the spiritual pursuit.

In an important sense, the person of Linji as portrayed and constructed in the *Linji lu* is the very message of the text. As we pointed out at the beginning of this essay, Linji is an iconoclast in the Buddhist tradition. His character is that of courage, confidence, and detachment. The teachings presented in the text bear an unmistakable mark of a person with such a character. By contrast, much of the received Buddhist tradition puts a higher premium on the cognitive aspect of enlightenment. In this respect, Linji can be seen as solidifying a new direction in the history of Chinese Buddhism, already signaled in the (constructed) figure of Huineng 慧能, the famous sixth patriarch of Chan, in the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. That is, Linji and the Chan discourse of spiritual freedom he engaged in crystalize a character turn already underway in the Chinese Buddhist tradition, against the heavily cognitivist and intellectualist orientation in the more traditional Buddhist scholastic discourse. By putting an emphasis on character in his discussion of spiritual freedom, Linji highlights the central role character plays in the Buddhist project that sees spontaneous and confident performance in dealing with trying circumstances as the best indicator of an enlightened person, rather than the ability to engage in sophisticated conceptual deliberations that dominates much of Buddhist scholasticism. This reorientation toward character would have far-reaching consequences in the subsequent Chinese intellectual development beyond the Buddhist circles. But that topic would have to be left for another occasion.

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Part VIII
Schools, Thinkers, Ideas, and Texts: The
Jingtu Thought 淨土思想

Chapter 18

Pure Land and the Environmental Movement in Humanistic Buddhism



William Yau-nang Ng

1 Introduction

Pure Land (Jingtu 淨土 in Chinese or *Jōdo* in Japanese)¹ Buddhism is a broad branch of Mahayana Buddhism and one of the most widely practiced traditions in East Asia Buddhism. The term Pure Land is generally believed to originate from a Sanskrit word, *sukhavati*,² which refers to an ideal Buddhist “paradise” of *nirvana*. Pure Land Buddhism builds mainly upon the Pure Land Sutras,³ which were carried to China around 150 CE by the monks An Shigao (安世高 fl. c. 148–180 CE) and Lokaksema (b. 147 CE).⁴ The *Amida Sutra* (Skt. *Smaller Sukhāvātīyūha Sūtra*)

¹The term “Pure Land” commonly refers to a world of perfection and happiness comparable to “Heaven” in the Christian world. The idea appears simple and straightforward but is complicated by the fact that there are different Pure Lands presided over by different Buddhas. The one under discussion in this article is mainly the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha. For a brief introduction to Pure Land Buddhism, see Fujita 2005: 7502–7503.

²There is uncertainty about the origin of the term “Pure Land” itself. Nobody can be definitely sure which term is its equivalent in the original Sanskrit *Sūtra*. There are even suggestions that “Pure Land” may be a term coined by Central Asian or Chinese followers. Fujita Kotatsu thinks that the *Amida Sutra* consists of two different parts. The first half is an ancient text and the second half was added later. See Fujita 1970: 121–132.

³Three sutras form the core of Pure Land Buddhism. They are the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* (Skt. *Larger Sukhāvātīyūha Sūtra*), the *Meditation Sutra* (Ch. *Guan Wuliangshou Jing*), and the *Amida Sutra* (Skt. *Smaller Sukhāvātīyūha Sūtra*). As Amida is also known as Amitābha or Amitāyu and therefore the *Smaller Sukhāvātīyūha Sūtra* is also called the *Amitābha Sūtra*. It is generally agreed that the *Meditation Sutra* does not originate from India but was written in either Central Asia or China.

⁴Lokaksema translated the *Pratyupanna Samādhi Sūtra*, which contains the first known mentions of Amitābha Buddha and the Pure Land. Nattier 2008: 76.

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center upon the Amitābha Buddha (Amida in Japanese) who, according to Pure Land narrative, presides over this Pure Land which is brought about by the will power of his compassionate Great Vow to save sentient beings. With the founding of a monastery on Mount Lu (廬山) in 402 CE by Huiyuan (慧遠 334–416), who is commonly regarded as the founder of the Pure Land School according to its legendary narrative, Pure Land Buddhism came to prominence. It was later systematized by Master Shantao (善導 613–681) and eventually spread all over East Asia. Along with Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism remains one of the two major Buddhist branches in China and East Asia in general. While the ideas of Pure Land Buddhism might not be easily comprehensible to ordinary people, its way of practice is easy to follow, making it extremely popular.⁵

This paper seeks to show, with special reference to Master Sheng Yen (聖嚴法師 1931–2009)'s teaching, that Humanistic Buddhism (*Renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教) in Taiwan developed hand in hand with a new understanding of Pure Land and that this new understanding not only challenges traditional Pure Land teaching, but also provides a theoretical grounding for the social engagement of Buddhism in general, and environmental protection in particular. Two most popular interpretations of Pure Land are widely accepted in the school of Pure Land and that of Ch'an Buddhism. Simply put, the first one takes Pure Land as actual places in the external world created by different Buddhas. The second one take Pure Land as an inner stage of mind resulted from spiritual cultivations. This paper argues that the Pure Land teaching of Sheng Yen demonstrates a three-dimensional understanding of Pure Land Buddhism that not only continues the two main interpretations of Pure Land, but also adds a socially engaged dimension to it. This paper also attempts to demonstrate that this is done through a creative interpretation and employment of the Pure Land ideas that seeks to include the traditional two dimensions while creating a new and socially engaged orientation of Humanistic Buddhism that is peaceful and educational instead of confrontational.

But before going into the discussion of these two interpretations, I will begin by explaining the common or traditional understanding of Pure Land Buddhism. I will then explore modern Humanistic Buddhism, which turns the other-worldly oriented idea into a this-worldly oriented one through a creative re-interpretation of Pure Land, and how this new interpretation paves the way for social participation, especially through environmental protection. As Dharma Drum Mountain (Fagu Shan)⁶ is representative of those advocating environmental protection by using Buddhist and Confucian spiritual resources in general and Pure Land concepts in particular, relevant ideas of Sheng Yen, the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain, will be discussed in detail.⁷ After that, this paper will offer theoretical reflections on such

⁵A report records that between 1941 and 1960 the Taiwanese built more temples to Amitābha Buddha than any other deity (Thomson 1989, 326). For an overall understanding of the development of Buddhism in Taiwan, see Heng Ching 1992: 417–434.

⁶Dharma Drum Mountain is an important school of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan. It was founded by the late Master Sheng Yen. See official site: <http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=111>

⁷To include the environmentalist campaign of Shen Yen and Dharma Drum Mountain in a broader context of Chinese Buddhist environmentalism and the relationship between spirituality and environmentalism, see Clippard 2012.

issues as self-power and other-power, immanence and transcendence, the nature of this new form of Pure Land Buddhism and its possible weaknesses.

2 The Characteristics of Traditional Pure Land Buddhism

2.1 *Other-Worldly Orientation*

Traditional Pure Land Buddhism,⁸ especially Amitābhisim, is other-worldly oriented and emphasizes the “salvation/liberation” power of Amitābha Buddha. The main emphasis is on leaving this world of suffering and obtaining rebirth in the Pure Land. While the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, such as the ideas of emptiness and conditioning origination are also mentioned in Pure Land Buddhism, the most important goal of spiritual cultivation in this branch of Buddhism has always been the direct liberation from *samsara*, the cycle of life and death, in this lifetime and rebirth in the Pure Land. What is especially noteworthy is the goal of migrating to the Pure Land in this lifetime instead of going through an extended process of seeking life after life. The quick liberation to the Pure Land is made more attractive by the promotion of the “easily practicing path” (*yixingdao* 易行道).

2.2 *The Easy Path of Cultivation*

Traditional Pure Land Buddhism is widely accepted for its teaching of the “easy path” in one’s spiritual cultivation. The most popular path among Pure Land practitioners is the faithful recitation of praise to Amitābha, known as *nien-fo* 念佛, which in one sense is an act of invoking grace from the Buddha and thus trying to bring about one’s rebirth to the Pure Land after death. *Nien-fo* represents a strong faith in the “salvation/liberation” power of Amitābha.⁹ Therefore, the reliance on other

⁸For a brief introduction to Pure Land Buddhism, consult Oxtoby 1996: 274–276, 299–301. For a short introduction to the practices of Pure Land Buddhism and some translations of its important texts, see also Daniel Stevenson, 1995. Modern English works on Pure Land usually deal with Pure Land Buddhism in Japan while disregarding its development in China and Tibet. However, both Chinese and Japanese scholars published on Pure Land Buddhism in China. See Chen 2000. A classic in the field is Mochizuki Shinko’s *Shina jōdo kyōri shi* (1975). Recently, the situation has improved. Works have been written, which cover different developments and manifestations of this branch of Buddhism in the region. See Payne and Tanaka 2004.

⁹The teaching of Pure Land focuses on Amitābha Buddha, emphasizing the compassionate will power of his “Great Vows” to release the suffering of all sentient beings, especially by taking people to a world of ultimate happiness and thus putting an end to the cycle of rebirth. Japanese Pure Land Buddhism tends to emphasize the dependence on Amitābha and, thus, the total respect or submission to Amitābha. See Haneda 2016.

power has been a widespread understanding of this branch of Buddhism.¹⁰ Since it features a heavy, if not complete, dependence upon the power of Amitābha, Pure Land Buddhism is often referred to as an “easy” path of cultivation.

In sum, traditional Pure Land Buddhism teaches a quick liberation from suffering through a very focused goal of achieving rebirth in the Pure Land right after the end of this lifetime by relying heavily upon the power of the Amitābha Buddha, invoked usually through chanting the name of the Buddha. The main aim of this branch of Buddhism is to leave this earthly world as soon as possible, and therefore there is not much interest in this world. Any concerns about this world can easily be taken as attachment that leads to nothing except suffering. Therefore, there is almost a complete lack of interest in social and political philosophy in traditional Pure Land Buddhism. In sum, the general orientation of traditional Pure Land Buddhism as reflected in the belief in Amitābha is devotional and soteriological in nature and seldom engages in social participation.

3 Two Traditional Understandings of “Pure Land”

However, Pure Lands are understood differently in different Buddhist schools and according to different sutras. Some take Pure Lands as a purified state of mind cultivated through practice, while others regard them as actual places.¹¹

According to the *Amida Sūtra*, the Pure Land exists far away to the West of our Earth. There is a Pure Land of ultimate happiness where a Buddha, Amitābha, gives sermons (T 12, 364: 270a and T 12, 366: 346c). It is clear that the Pure Land referred to in this sutra is an actual place. Such a Pure Land is, thus, a reality that is ontologically independent of our conceptual schemes, perceptions, belief or linguistic construction. In philosophical terms, this is a kind of understanding of Pure Land that is close to realism.

However, according to the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, if any Bodhisattva wants to obtain a Pure Land, he should purify his mind. And following the purification of his mind, there comes the purification of the Buddha Land (隨其心淨, 則佛土淨) (Huimin 1997: 25–44). Pure Land, in this sense, is actually the outcome of a spiritual cultivation. However, it is important to note that the Pure Land in this scriptural context allows for different interpretations. It can still refer to an actual place created mystically through in-depth spiritual cultivation of a Bodhisattva’s mind. This concurs with the general idea prevalent in the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, which takes Pure Land as the place created from the Great Vow of a Buddha. As there are many Buddhas, there are different Pure Lands. However, the Pure Land in this text can also be taken symbolically to mean a thoroughly purified state of mind. It is not

¹⁰ Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki (among others) has spread this kind of understanding through his introduction of Buddhism to the West. Suzuki 1925: 285–326.

¹¹ Tanaka points out that there are two conflicting interpretations of the Pure Land, which he refers to as “objective” and “subjective.” Tanaka 1987: 36–45.

an actual place in the West, but a particular stage of purification of one's mind. It is noteworthy that, according to the Sutra, this purified stage is achieved by a Bodhisattva and is not achieved by ordinary people.

If Pure Lands are stages from one's mind, then, they are mental or mentally constructed. This kind of understanding is close to idealism in the philosophical sense, meaning that it is a subjective creation and does not exist independently in the physical world.

The above two understandings represent two major interpretations of Pure Land in Chinese Buddhism. People refer the first as Pure Land in the Other-world (*tafang jingtu* 他方淨土) and the second as Pure Land of the Mind (*weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土). The latter interpretation is usually emphasized in Ch'an Buddhism. (Tanaka 1987: 37–38) Such a Pure Land does not exist in the external world; rather, it is a state of a cultivated mind. Therefore, in this sense, Pure Land is the manifestation (*xian* 見) of a purified mind and exists only within a purified mind.

However, if one takes the two interpretations as subjective and objective understandings, one must be careful to avoid viewing them as necessarily contradictory. In fact, some make use of the Mahayana concept of two-fold truth, namely *paramartha-satya*, “ultimate truth”, and *samvrti-satya*, “conventional truth”,¹² and see the objective and subjective understandings of Pure Land as reflecting the conventional dimension and ultimate dimension respectively. The objective understanding that takes the Pure Land as an actual place that exists is only a conventional truth, while the subjective understanding, which refers to the purification of the mind, can contribute to the attaining of enlightenment. This understanding takes the “mind” over the “land.” It results in over-emphasizing the “mind” or even replacing the Pure Land with a Purified Mind. This may reflect the Ch'an position, which puts emphasis on the mind. However, this kind of attempt to subsume Pure Land within one's mind actually means the nullification of Pure Land for Pure Land followers. Pure Land followers also make use of the two-fold truth, but not to interpret the actual place of Pure Land as conventional; rather, they still believe in the existence of such a reality. The tension between the two understandings continues and the two schools influence and assimilate with each other without any significant breakthroughs until, perhaps, the coming of Humanistic Buddhism.

¹² The key notion of emptiness implies that all dualities, like existence and nonexistence, are ultimately false. The two-fold truth system in Mahayana Buddhism seeks to resolve this apparent conflict by stating that ultimately things do not exist as such. In other words, they do not exist as they seem to exist, substantially. Therefore, ordinary reality is ultimately nothing more than convention. Understanding ultimate truth also includes understanding the nature of ordinary reality as nothing more than conventional. See Silk 2015.

4 Humanistic Buddhism

Chinese Buddhism has made great advances in the last 30 years, centering predominantly on the idea of “Humanistic Buddhism,” a new form of Buddhism initiated first by Master Taixu (太虛 1889–1947) and later developed by different leaders including Masters Yin Shun (印順 1906–2005), Xing Yun (星雲 Hsing Yun 1927–), Sheng Yen (聖嚴 1931–2009) and Zhengyan (證嚴 Cheng Yan 1937–). These leaders, though they do not come from the Pure Land School, have offered new understandings of the Pure Land teachings. To understand this new development, it is important to look at Yin Shun, one of the most learned twentieth century Chinese scholar-monks and an authoritative figure of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan. Here we will turn to examine his interpretation of the Pure Land and its implications.

Yin Shun writes:

I continued the idea of Master Taixu of a Buddhism of Human Life that is free of ghosts and demons, went one step further and laid the foundations for a Buddhism without deifications. (Yin Shun 1993: 69.)

He goes on to remark that:

“Land” is *ksetra* in Sanskrit, which means a world or a place. ‘Pure Land’ refers to a world of purity. ‘Pure’ means filth-less and without unclean elements. (Ibid.)

Accordingly, what is pure is understood to be the opposite of what is impure in a way that highlights its positive meaning, such as getting rid of unclean elements. A “land” is a place or a world. As a consequence, a “Pure Land” is a place of pureness or a world of beneficence. Yin Shun’s idea of Pure Land reflects his emphasis on the realm of humanity. He thinks that the common emphasis on ghosts or deities is a deviation from original teaching of the Buddha, and, thus, is an impure skillful means (Yin Shun 1987: 6). Before Yin Shun, Taixu had criticized the over-secularization of those Buddhist monks who focused wrongly on liberating the dead towards Sukhavati, the “paradise” liked place for the deceased to go, according to a popular belief of many Chinese Buddhists and providing funeral service in order to make a living. Yin Shun, as well stated by Stuart Chandler, argued that “by devoting too much attention to Sukhavati,” “the Chinese Buddhists have allowed their practice to become associated with death, blind faith, and otherworldly matters. Rather than merely hoping to be reborn in Sukhavati, Buddhists should model themselves on Amitabha, Bhaisajya-guru, Aksobhya, and Maitreya, all of whom created pure lands through their great vows and practice.” (Chandler 2004: 57–8; Yin Shun 1992: 20–39.) Accordingly, one should aim at not just getting rebirth to a purified world but also follows the examples of the Amitabha to purify oneself and create a pure land to help to others.

In sum, the word “Pure” has two meanings here: one is objective; the other, processual. The objective refers to the degree of the purity and beneficence of the Land, while the processual refers to the purifying process or movement for the mind and the world. Yin Shun’s interpretations of the term do not run counter to these mainstream understandings, but it is noteworthy that his interpretations of the teachings

have actually opened the door for new practices of Pure Land Buddhism in Humanistic Buddhism.¹³

It is clear that this reinterpretation not only emphasizes having a pure mind, but also strives to make the world a Pure Land in the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism. Such an effort to change the world and human mind represents a movement of purification to clean up internal and external pollution. In this context, the word “pure” becomes a verb, which is “to purify,” instead of being a noun meaning “genuineness and spotlessness” or an adjective meaning “clean, spotless, and unpolluted.” Whether this movement of purification is in individuals’ minds or in the world, it is always a purifying practice according to Yin Shun’s interpretation.

5 New Understanding and Practices in Humanistic Buddhism: A Case Study of Master Sheng Yen

5.1 *Humanistic Buddhism*

Among the many temples, monasteries and religious foundations within this-worldly Buddhism in Taiwan, four are most famous. They are the *Foguangshan* (Buddha Light Mountain), the *Fagu* (Dharma Drum Mountain), the *Chung Tai Ch’an* Monastery (Zhongtai Chan Monastery), and the *Tzu Chi or Ciji* Foundation (Buddhist Compassion Relief Foundation). (Jones 1999: 178–218) They are the largest and most influential Buddhist organizations in Taiwan. Even though each of them has its own characteristics in terms of teaching style and concrete practice, all of them share a this-worldly orientation that is based on the humanistic movement initiated by Master Taixu in the 1930s, with its strong emphasis on social and political engagement and involvement.¹⁴ However, new ideas and modes of practice have developed since then.

Taixu criticised traditional Chinese Buddhism as “teaching Mahayana Buddhism but practicing Hinayana Buddhism”. (Yin Shun 1987: 178) It is a popular misunderstanding among Chinese Buddhists to criticize the followers of the “Hinayana” tradition as selfish as they care for their own liberation only. In contrast, the Mahayana Buddhists follow the path of the Bodhisattvas that aims not only for self-liberation but for the liberation of all sentient beings. Taixu was upset by the Chinese

¹³ For a brief introduction to Humanistic Buddhism, see *Bingenheimer* 2007: 141–161.

¹⁴ In fact, the four are closely related. Master Sheng Yen wrote, “These four organizations are often called the four mountains of Buddhism in Taiwan, but they do not oppose one another. Rather, we interact. The founder of Zhongtai Mountain, Master Weijue, and I had the same master, Lingyuan. Master Xingyun, the founder of the Buddha’s Light, was a student of Master Dongchu, so we are also Dharma brothers and very good friends. Master Zhengyan was a student of Master Yinshun, who was a student of Taixu. My late master Dongchu was the Dharma brother of Master Yinshun, so we are part of the same lineage.” See Sheng Yen 2009: 194–195. Quotation here is adapted with slight modifications from this English version after consulting the original Chinese version. See Sheng Yen 2014: 311–312.

Buddhists' selfishness in that they care for one's earthly well-being when alive and the rebirth into a better life after death. The Humanistic Buddhist organizations in Taiwan almost without exception emphasize social engagement and the active promotion of Buddhism in society, rejecting the long-term life of reclusion and devoting themselves to active concern for and practical relief of the sufferings of people in society. Health services, education and emergency relief, among other services, are commonly provided by these Humanistic Buddhist non-governmental organizations.

5.2 *Master Sheng Yen's Idea of Pure Land*

5.2.1 Master Sheng Yen and His Social Movement

Dharma Drum Mountain was established by Master Sheng Yen. Although he received the Dharma lineage from both the *Lingji* 臨濟 School and the *Caodong* 曹洞 School of Ch'an Buddhism, he dedicated himself to establishing a Pure Land in the human realm. The vision of this school is shown by its slogan, "to uplift the character of humanity and build a pure land on the earth", which the Master announced at the age of 60.¹⁵ He put it directly and clearly by announcing that "The Pure Land on the earth advocated by the Dharma Drum Mountain is the comprehensive promotion and universal actualization of Humanistic Buddhism." (Sheng Yen 2003: 10) It is clear that the idea of Pure Land is central to Master Sheng Yen in his promotion and implementation of Humanistic Buddhism.

In 1992, Master Sheng Yen systemized his early environmental ideas and practices and named the year "the Environmental Protection Year", promoting modern environmental concepts such as "to reduce," "to replace," "to recycle," and "to reuse." However, all are built upon the "environmental protection of mind-and-heart" (*xinling huanbao* 心靈環保). His proactive combination of Buddhist concept and environmental movement pointed to a new direction for understanding and practicing the idea of Pure Land. (Lin 2004: 22).

Master Sheng Yen proposed the "Environmental Protection of Rite" in 1994 and a "Four Securities Movement", including security of spirituality, security of body, security of family and security of career, in 1995. In 1999, Dharma Drum Mountain promoted a "Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign".¹⁶ Since then, Master Sheng

¹⁵ In September 1989, Sheng Yen elaborated this vision in detail in a sermon for the first time. This sermon was later revised and published as "Fagushan de Gongshi" (Sheng Yen 1999: 83–84). Yet the vision was certainly mentioned briefly before 1989. For instance, Master Sheng Yen mentions the vision in "The Pure Land on Earth in the Humanistic Buddhism," [人間佛教中的人間淨土], in Sheng Yen 2003: 151. For an explanation of the vision of Dharma Drum Mountain, see the official website: <http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=110>

¹⁶ The so-called "Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign" aims to "transform the abstruse and difficult terminology and doctrines of Buddhism into a set of ideas and methods that the average person can understand, accept and use in their daily lives." The campaign includes the following:

Yen has developed a grand systemic discourse, which incorporates the thinking, mind, practices of people and social problems, and integrates them into a great environmental purification movement.

5.2.2 The Internal and the External Aspects of Pure Land

It is noteworthy to see how Master Sheng Yen himself depicts his kind of environmental protection:

We promote what we call environmental protection in several ways. We protect our daily living environment by keeping the buildings and surroundings simple and tidy, and we promote practical, clean living both at DDM [Dharma Drum Mountain] and in the homes of our followers. We protect our social environment through proper etiquette, and compassionate manner, and act with respect and gratitude, without coming into conflict with others. We protect the natural environment by not wasting resources. Finally, we protect our spiritual environment. Our followers are taught to use the concepts and methods of Ch'an to help themselves when they feel vexed or disturbed, instead of putting themselves in opposition to their environment. Ch'an helps you open your mind, accept every situation, serve everyone, and use compassion and wisdom to handle whatever arises. (Sheng Yen 2003, 195)

The meaning of environmental protection for Master Sheng Yen goes beyond the scope of its conventional understanding. He promoted four kinds of environmentalism, namely, the protection of the spiritual environment, the protection of social environment, the protection of the living environment and the protection of natural environment. According to Sheng Yen, "a person's body and mind are direct karmic retribution and the environment she lives in is circumstantial retribution. Direct and circumstantial retribution form one's place of practice. Every person uses her direct retribution to practice within her circumstantial retribution. Thus one must care for the environment just as one would for her own body. Thus the fundamental essence of each of the four kinds of environmentalism is Buddhism."¹⁷ In fact, these four kinds of environmental protection can be classified into two aspects. In the internal aspect, Master Sheng Yen's concept of environmental protection promotes the personality and spirituality of individuals. In the external aspect, it tackles the practices of individuals and societal problems. Protection of the natural environment, the core

A. Four Fields for Cultivating Peace: (i) Mind, (ii) Body, (iii) Family, (iv) Activity. B. Four Guidelines for Dealing with Desires: (i) Need, (ii) Want, (iii) Ability, (iv) Propriety. C. Four Steps for Handling a Problem: (i) Face it, (ii) Accept it, (iii) Deal with it, (iv) Let go of it. D. Four Practices for Helping Oneself and Others: (i) Feeling grateful, (ii) Feeling thankful, (iii) Reforming yourself, (iv) Moving others through virtue. E. Four Ways to Cultivating Blessings (i) Recognizing blessings, (ii) Cherishing blessings, (iii) Nurturing blessings, (iv) Sowing the seeds of blessings. As is evident the campaign contains five dimensions and each dimension has four elements. See information on official website: <http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=112> Online: 12 September 2016.

¹⁷ See Dharma Drum Mountain official website at: <http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=112> Online: 25 July, 2017.

of environmental protection in its common sense, only comes out at the very end of his program. Master Sheng Yen states:

Although I coined the term ‘environmental protection of spirituality’, its content is just a correction of concept, which promotes the quality of men. It does not solely prevents men from developing a blow of mind due to the impact of external environment, but also keeps a healthy attitude to face the reality and resolve problems. (Sheng Yen 2001: 5)

Therefore, it is not surprising to see in the opening chapter of his *Pure Land on Earth* that the Master introduces the work of the Dharma Drum Mountain in the following words:

... for many years just like all orthodox Buddhists with rightful faith has been doing works to purify the human mind; purify the work in the society. (Sheng Yen 2003: 13)

It is very clear that Master Sheng Yen did not limit the act of purification within one’s mind. Rather, he advocated social movement so as to purify society. Internal purification is an old concern and emphasis of Buddhism in general and Chan in particular. Apart from the natural focus of purifying one’s mind, Master Sheng Yen brought the focus of cultivation outwards and emphasized the transformation of the society.

5.2.3 The Mind Is the Starting Point of Purification

It is Master Sheng Yen’s strong belief that:

In order to purify the world, one must first emphasize the purification of the human mind; in order to save the human world, one must first save the human aspiration. Śākyamuni Buddha taught for 40 years with the aim of saving the human mind. We, the Dharma Drum Mountain, also put forwards one movement of environmental protection of the mind. (Sheng Yen 2003: 12)

The connection of the internal state of mind to the external state of the social and natural environment rests upon a belief that takes the former as the premise of the latter’s purification or improvement. It is with the mind that one should begin one’s efforts for a Pure Land.

5.2.4 Re-examination of the Nature of Pure Land in the Eyes of Sheng Yen

To legitimize his Buddhist discourse of environmental protection, Master Sheng Yen skillfully employs Buddhist sutras to obtain the necessary scriptural support. The most-cited verse for the discourse is “because of his pure mind the Buddha land is pure.” in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*. (Luk 1972: 13). He also suggests that the purity of an individual’s spirituality prevents people from developing the feeling of annoyance, improves their behavior and, thus, affects others (Sheng Yen 2003: 20). Clearly this ideal way of salvation/liberation starts from the individual awakening through learning and practicing the Dharma. Therefore:

the goal of developing the Pure Land on the earth is not to move the universal Kingdom of Buddha to the human world or demonstrate the Pure Land of the Amitābha Sutra, the Medicine Buddha Sutra, the Akshobhya Sutra and the Maitreya Bodhisattva Sutra on the earth. It is to purify people's spirituality by employing the Dharma and to purify the society by the living pattern of Buddhists. Many a little makes a mickle. Through the purification of thinking, living and spirituality to accomplish the purification of the social and natural environment. (Sheng Yen 2003: 9.)

Therefore, the Pure Land on Earth is neither objective nor subjective in the traditional senses mentioned above. It does not refer to the "Pure Land in the other world" and the "Pure Land of Mind" within one's mind. Rather, it is an "ideal world" sought to be developed and actualized on the earth. In this sense, the Pure Land of Humanistic Buddhism as interpreted by Master Sheng Yen provides not only the vision but also the concrete instructions for Buddhist social participation using a much extended and redefined framework of environmental protection. The goals of Pure Land Buddhism are multiple. They include not only the purification of the inner world of one's mind and the transmigration to the external Kingdom of Buddha, but also the improvement of the quality of humanity and the establishment of a better world on the earth.

In the past, a philosophical question central to Pure Land Buddhism was whether the Pure Land is an empirically existing Kingdom of Buddha in the 'other world', or whether it is an ideal state of mind. While the former is an "objective reality", the latter is a "subjective state of mind." However, the Pure Land on the earth is to be achieved in the empirical world on this earth. Such a Pure Land is different but related to the Pure Land above the human realm and the Pure Land within the inner mind-and-heart. In contrast to the Pure Land within a cultivated mind, the Pure Land on the earth is external. In contrast to the Pure Land in the Kingdom of Buddha, the Pure Land on the earth is earthly.

Traditional Chinese Buddhism emphasizes spiritual cultivations such as meditation and chanting in one's life as a means of attaining the Pure Land within oneself and the rebirth into the Pure Land after death. Neither places emphasis upon the social and political participation in society. The belief in a Pure Land on the earth does not only provide the soil for social participation between the transcendent heaven and the internal spirituality. This Pure Land is the right impure or even dirty place in which one can carry out socio-political participation. The Pure Land on this earth is inhabited by both the saints and the ordinary people; the pure and the impure. (Sheng Yen 2003: 136–138.) It is also a zone for spiritual cultivation, not just in traditional ways like meditation or chanting but also through concrete social action. Active social action, just like passive meditation and chanting, is not ordinary social engagement but rather a kind of spiritual cultivation. Consequently, the practices used in establishing the Pure Land on the earth are actually directed to both internal and external cultivations aiming for a better human world. The cultivation intends to improve human ability and quality. And the improvement in human quality, in turn, enhances the establishment of Pure Land on the earth.

In retrospect, Sheng Yen's idea of environmental protection begins with the spirituality of the individual, progressing to society, and finally to the natural world. It connects concern for the natural environment to the traditional Buddhist ideal and

practice. Since the “Pure Land” in Sheng Yen’s interpretation is both internal and external, the followers of Buddhism, accordingly, should not only show compassionate concern towards sentient beings and the environment where these beings live; they should at the same time maintain the religious aspiration for the spiritual cultivation of their own minds so as to attain the goal of enlightenment.

6 Reflection

Master Sheng Yen offered a creative interpretation of Pure Land in trying to bring about a peaceful social movement. His major attempt was to persuade the government and society to support a new form of living with a purified mind, harmonious family and social relationship, and a special concern for the natural environment. This attempt to transform society still continues by the Dharma Drum Mountain, although the Master passed away already. In the previous section, we briefly introduced his idea of Pure Land. In the following, we shall reflect upon this and attempt to offer a critical evaluation of his idea.

6.1 *Immanent and Transcendent*

Pure Land, in a sense, is a domain of “divine nature.” It is interesting to examine Pure Land by employing the conceptual pairing of immanence and transcendence. One of the key understandings of this pair of concepts is to see if the divine is beyond or excel of the world. Those metaphysical positions that take the divine as encompassed or manifested in the mundane world can be seen as upholding the view of immanence. It is often contrasted with theories of transcendence, in which the divine completely transcends the mundane world. In the traditional discussion of the philosophy of religion, transcendence usually refers to the basic characteristic of monotheistic, such as the Judeo-Christian tradition, while immanence applied to pantheistic or panentheistic faiths so as to highlight how the spiritual world permeates the mundane.¹⁸ Yet, the different understanding of the Christian God has provided ground for interpretations that emphasize upon the relationship and interaction between God and the mundane world.¹⁹

¹⁸ There are different understandings of this pair of concepts, and different interpretations of the nature of Christian God also made it difficult to categorize the Christian God as only transcendence. See Hartshorne 2005: 9281–9286.

¹⁹ Some scholars think that the Christian God is both immanent and transcendent or He is panentheistic. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, emphasizes upon the indwelling of God. He said, “In the end, however, the new heaven and new earth will become the ‘temple’ of God’s indwelling. The whole world will become God’s home. Through the indwelling of the Spirit, people and churches are already glorified in the body, now, in the present. But then the whole creation will be transfigured through the indwelling of God’s glory. Consequently the hope, which is kindled by the experience of the indwelling Spirit, gathers in the future, with panentheistic visions. Everything ends with God being ‘all in all.’” See Moltmann 1993: 104–105.

However, the traditional understandings of Pure Land can be close to either the immanent side or the transcendent side. Pure Land if interpreted in the realist sense refers to a transcendent world that exists in reality. In contrast, if it is taken to be a stage of a cultivated mind, then Pure Land is necessarily immanent. The Pure Land on the earth as interpreted by Master Sheng Yen is both immanent and transcendent. It begins with cultivation within, and the purification of one's mind is a form of Pure Land. This form of Pure Land is immanent. However, Master Sheng Yen also respects the realistic position of the Pure Land school, and he avoids to deny the existence of the Pure Land in the other world. (Sheng Yen 1997: 25–34.) Yet, what he wants to emphasize is that the Pure Land may be established in this world through different kinds of purification that he groups under an umbrella term, environmental protection. In his agenda, Sheng Yen took the purification of the human mind as the premise for the purification of other domains, including social and natural environments. The cumulative result of purification is the establishment of the Pure Land on the earth.

It seems that Sheng Yen presupposes a specific Mahayana metaphysic in his discourse. Theoretically, any purification necessarily involves an evolutionary process from impurity to purity. However, to better understand Sheng Yen's idea of Pure Land, it is necessary to analyze it further. Purification here is not a process of transforming the nature of one's mind from impurity to purity since, according to mainstream Zen/Chan Buddhism, the nature of the mind (known also as Buddha nature) is always pure. Therefore, purification in Sheng Yen's discourse refers to cleaning up all those negative elements that hinder the proper functioning of one's mind. The nature of the mind remains unchanged. Simply put, the purpose of such a purification is not to change the nature of the mind of an individual, but to restore the proper functioning of one's mind so that the mind can transform one's attitude towards the environment and make efforts to transform the earthly world. This belief in the original purity of the mind is, perhaps, best illustrated by Master Yueh of Chaling's poem on "Bright Pearl," which reads as follows (Wu 2003: 248):

There is a bright pearl within me,
Buried for a long time under dust.
Today, the dust is gone and the light radiates,
Shining through all the mountains and rivers.

It is common in Buddhist text to use a bright pearl as a metaphor for the purity of Buddha nature. One important tradition of Chinese Buddhism is the general acceptance of the existence of an innately pure luminous mind (*prabhasvara citta*), commonly depicted as a bright pearl in Buddhist literature, which is only covered over by defilements. In fact, Master Sheng Yen called such a mind of purity a "Pure Land." Traditionally, there is a kind of Pure Land referred to as the "Pure Land of Self-nature," which means precisely a Pure Land of the nature of one's self. Here, the Pure Land is not an actual space. Rather, it is referred to as a particular stage of mind that is purified and such a purified mind is the manifestation of the self-nature that can be in time polluted but can be a strong inner source that is capable of supporting one's spiritual cultivation towards liberation.

In this sense, the Pure Land on the earth is the actualization of one's internal Buddha nature in the external world. Therefore, while showing faith in the saving power of the Amitabha Buddha, Sheng Yen's teaching emphasizes very much the practitioners' self-determination and efforts in obtaining spiritual achievement. This is a reflection of the belief in the presence within all sentient beings of Buddha nature, which provides the grounding of self-power in one's spiritual pursuit. Thus, Sheng Yen's teaching on Pure Land Buddhism demonstrates a balance between self-power and the other power. This dual-emphasis is a continuation of the mainstream understanding of Pure Land Buddhism in China.²⁰ Yet, it is very much different from that of Japan, which places emphasis solely on the power of the Amitabha Buddha. But what Sheng Yen taught is not merely a continuation of the old spiritual tradition: the very concept of Pure Land changes under his new interpretation.

6.2 *A New Understanding: Pure Land in the Human Realm*

Sheng Yen strives to be open enough to different interpretations of Pure Land. But he is innovative enough to offer a new understanding of Pure Land in the human realm. However, he does not reject all traditional understandings. In his works, Sheng Yen groups them into four categories, referring to four different kinds of Pure Land (Sheng Yen 1997). His understanding of Pure Land is therefore not based upon rejecting any traditional interpretation; rather, Sheng Yen attempts to accommodate all of them. He accepts the assertion of the existence of Pure Land as advocated in particular by the Pure Land followers, yet he also continues the Chan interpretation of Pure Land by taking Pure Land not so much as an external world to be transmigrated but as an inner state of mind to be achieved through practicing Chan. This is a syncretic approach that seeks to reconcile the teachings of the Chan and Pure Land schools.²¹ This approach developed mostly during the Ming and Qing periods and was also the topic of Sheng Yen's doctoral dissertation. It is therefore natural that Sheng Yen followed this approach when constructing his own teaching.

Yet, in contrast to these two traditional paths of spirituality, Sheng Yen advocates a renewed interest in the earthly world, seeking to establish a new Pure Land on the

²⁰ Chen Chien-huang 陳劍煌 provides detailed explanations of the related spiritual cultivation in this context. He explains the concepts of "continuous Pure Mindfulness to obtain Samadhi" and "entered the flow through hearing and forgot objectives states" and argues the importance of these concepts in Sheng Yen's teaching of "building a Pure Land on the earth." See Chen 2013.

²¹ Cf. Heng Ching 1992. However, it is important to note that Robert Sharf argues that "Pure Land cosmology, soteriology, and ritual were always part-and-parcel of Chinese Buddhism in general and Ch'an monasticism in particular. Accordingly, there was no need for a "synthesis" of Pure Land and Ch'an. The modern conception of a Chinese Pure Land school with its own patriarchate and teachings, and the associated notion of Ch'an/Pure Land syncretism, are inordinately influenced by historical developments in Japan and the enduring legacy of sectarian polemics in contemporary Japanese scholarship." See Sharf 2002.

earth. This is a creative attempt by a faith-based community to engage with issues of practical concern in a modern society. Under such a new perspective, the emphasis is not merely on improving this world so that it becomes a better mundane world, which will still be abandoned for the Pure Land in the future. Rather, Sheng Yen calls for the transformation of this mundane, earthly world into a Pure Land. As mentioned in the previous section, according to the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, if any *Bodhisattva* wants to obtain a Pure Land, he or she should purify his/her mind. It is very often quoted in Buddhist sermons that the world can be purified by following the purification of the mind. However, it should be noted that the mind referred to in the Sutra is that of the *Bodhisattva* rather than the contaminated minds of ordinary people. In this light, what Sheng Yen is proposing is to transform the mind of ordinary people so that they can become a *Bodhisattva* themselves. With the compassionate will and power of the *Bodhisattva*, this mundane world, according to Buddhist teachings, can be turned into a Pure Land. Consequently, the Pure Land is not a distinct world totally different from this mundane world. It is not a new creation that is far from this earth. Rather, this mundane world will become the Pure Land in the future.

The mundane world serves as a place where people are challenged for spiritual advancement. Therefore, it is not necessary to escape the earthly world, rather, in order to challenge oneself sufficiently for spiritual growth, one should be engaged in the mundane world. This shows a clear spirit of social engagement in Humanistic Buddhism, which is drastically different from traditional Pure Land Buddhism that places emphasis on chanting and obtaining rebirth in the Pure Land after one passes away.

6.3 Framing of Pure Land Discourse

Sheng Yen's socially engaged discourse is a creative integration of environmental protection and the Buddhist idea of Pure Land. It reflects an attempt to make the old doctrine relevant for modern society. The discourse, indeed, provides an important path for the Buddhist to engage in social issues. Conversely, it is also an important means of assisting the non-believer in understanding Buddhism. Strategically, the success and sustainability of social movement depends on the connection and expansion of its framework. The Buddhist environmental protection movement adopts a new theoretical framework to explain problems and provide solutions. Sheng Yen did not limit his discourse to the individual level and tried to organize social movements such as the "Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign" (Lin 2004) or "The Six Ethics of the Mind Campaign",²² promoting his ideas for social

²²The main goals in advocating the Six Ethics of the Mind campaign are to "uplift the character of humanity and to build a pure land on the earth." Through six kinds of ethics, the Dharma Drum Mountain seeks to "achieve purification, peace, happiness and health throughout society in Taiwan and in the people's hearts and minds." See official website: <http://www.dharmadrum.org/content/about/about.aspx?sn=113> Online: 12 September, 2016.

changes. I believe that Pure Land discourse provides an integrative framework that allows Buddhists to deal with different social issues together. Pure Land is a covering framework connecting traditional Buddhist practices, such as the purification of the mind, to other social issues. It allows Buddhist beliefs to explain and engage with modern social problems through a creative hermeneutic. Through such connective efforts, Humanistic Buddhism attracts people interested in environmental issues to join hands with Buddhist organizations in pursuing their common goal in relevant social movements. Consequently, through this creative hermeneutic of Pure Land and the socially engaged framework for social movement, Sheng Yen empowers traditional Buddhist groups, which are often indifferent to practical social problems. The new framing also attracts and absorbs the activists and power of social movements and, thus, broadens the social foundation of Buddhism. Under these circumstances, Dharma Drum Mountain gains more and more support from the public and becomes one of the four largest bases of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan.

6.4 Problem of Over-Simplification

However, one must be critical enough not to paint too rosy a picture of the movement. Rather, one must note the weaknesses of Sheng Yen's framing. Sheng Yen links up spiritual cultivation with the protection of the social and natural environment. The former is the condition that makes the latter two possible. Spiritual cultivation lays down the inner foundation for external protective measures for both society and the natural environment. For instance, people may lead a life of simplicity that will help solve the environmental crisis resulting from over-consumption. Therefore, in the four kinds of environmental protection, that is the protection of the spiritual environment, protection of social environment, protection of the living environment and the protection of natural environment, the Dharma Drum Mountain stresses purification. Purification starts from the mind of people with the objective of leading a simple life and resisting excessive consumption. Sheng Yen says: "our needs are few; our wants are many" (Sheng Yen 2009: 3). These ideas are clearly against excessive consumerism, which creates a lot of unnecessary garbage. In addition to the general concepts of "4R" (reduction, replacement, reuse, and recycling), the Master extends them to cover the concept of world purification. In addition to the cleaning of the natural environment, it stresses the purification of the individual's spirituality and the reduction of the excessive desire for consumption. He teaches people to lead a simple life and thereby advocates the idea of reduction in consumption. He also urges people to treasure the things we possess and thus helps people to accept concepts such as reuse and recycle. All these help people to understand and accept modern environmental ideas and practices backed up by a new interpretation of Pure Land and Buddhist doctrines.

However, Sheng Yen never challenged modern capitalism, which encourages over-consumption. He urged people to distinguish need and want but his discourse

is limited to the individual or psychological aspects, such as one failing to control one's desire. My reservation is that changes in individual perception and attitudes, even though they may contribute to solving the problem, are far from adequate. Sermons on changing the individual mind-set alone can never solve all environmental problems. This can be explained through the relationship between agent and structure.

Anthony Giddens has put forward what he calls the "duality structure" in an attempt to solve the debate between agent and structure. Simply put, he understands social structures and action theories as two sides of the same coin: structures make social action possible, but social action creates the structures.²³ It is revealing to employ this dualistic stance in assessing Sheng Yen's systematic discourse. Sheng Yen's attempt to transform society is no doubt a social action, or to be more precise, a social movement. Through preaching and education, Sheng Yen seeks to show the meaning of the social actions he intends to achieve and to convince the public to follow. If people were more knowledgeable about the moral, environmental and spiritual meanings of the social movement, Sheng Yen believes that they would change the thought and habits that will eventually not only improve the quality of life but also establish the Pure Land in the mundane world. However, I think Sheng Yen places far too much emphasis on the individual's ability to change social structure merely through gaining new knowledge and meaning, and acting differently from the rest of the society. Social and environmental problems cannot be solved by merely changing the worldview of the people alone.

Sheng Yen seems to overemphasize the power of the agent while not paying enough attention to that of the social structure and institution. He does not offer a structural analysis, not to mention a critique, of collusion between government and capitalists. Simply put, the problem of too much pollution is reduced mainly to a problem of an impure mind without paying enough attention to social structure and institution. There is a lack of understanding of the relative autonomy of social and economic structure. Master Sheng Yen addresses the problem of over-consumption by urging us to distinguish between want and need, which can never be tackled without understanding the logic behind. Modern consumption in a capitalist society is built precisely on stimulating unnecessary want instead of producing to satisfy minimum need. The logic of modern production attempts to employ instrumental rationality thoroughly to maximize profit. Mass production is one common way to meet that end. It, however, can only be sustained through the creation of an ever-growing market by stimulating more and more consumption. Whether this consumption is necessary or not is not the primary concern. The problem lies not merely on the individual preference in his or her consumption but also the structure of the capitalist production in pushing for the increase of production and consumption. However, Sheng Yen did not offer any systematic analysis of such a structure of modern capitalistic economy and the resulting consuming mentality.

²³ Giddens says, "By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems." See *Giddens 1979*: 69.

Sheng Yen follows the traditional Buddhist discourse by putting the emphasis upon the so-called three root evils. This is a reduction approach in the sense of reducing social problem to an individual level. The problem lies exactly in the inadequacy in addressing many social problems from merely the corruption of individual mentality and practice. The root evils and market capitalism are simply not just one and the same issue. Therefore, many socio-economic problems cannot be solved by reducing to an individual problem.

6.5 *Difficult Mission*

Sheng Yen's social movement focuses upon education. He insisted on peaceful social engagement and never advocated protest and revolution. As the core concept of this education is to purify the mind through Buddhist teaching in general and Chan practice in particular, the focus has become more and more on the internal world, i.e. the mind. If the mind is the source of the problem, this focus is understandable. Yet, for the general public, it is difficult to cultivate the mind. The environmental movement of Sheng Yen, though it has a noble goal, seems to be more or less a mission impossible.

Sheng Yen's social movement of establishing a Pure Land on the earth shows a strong attempt to rationalize Buddhism. However, not all Buddhists are capable of pursuing rationalization, which requires educational and cultural capital. Instead, the supernatural, healing and other mysterious forces are easily accepted. Social issues like environmental protection are not the primary concern of the majority of monasteries. People from the lower levels of society in particular generally lack not only the interest but also the comprehension of these creative interpretations. Therefore, it is doubtful that the general public, outside of the middle-classes and intellectuals, would participate in this highly rationalized social movement.

7 Conclusion

Chinese Buddhism experienced a long period of decline from the late nineteenth century and the rise of Humanistic Buddhism advocated by masters like Tai Xu tried very hard to modernize and save the religion. Sheng Yen follows this line and stresses the modernization of Buddhist doctrines. He tries to show the relevance of the resources of the old tradition in dealing with social issues through a creative interpretation and employment of the Pure Land doctrinal resources to prevent Buddhism from being marginalized in the modern world.

Clearly, Sheng Yen tries very hard to provide a Buddhist discourse to justify the movement. Buddhist terminology and concepts are widely used in his discourse. Moreover, Sheng Yen makes references to Mahayana Sutras, especially those of the Pure Land and Chan schools, in constructing his discourse. His new understanding

of Pure Land demonstrates a continuation of the syncretic tradition of the two schools of Buddhism. Consequently, on the one hand, Sheng Yen follows the tradition of the Pure Land school and maintains the objective sense of Pure Land, the belief of the existence of actual purified place created by the power of the great vow of various Buddhas. On the other hand, Sheng Yen also follows the tradition of the Chan school, keeping the subjective sense of Pure Land, and emphasizing the purification of the internal mind. Therefore, this chapter concludes that the dual emphasis of Sheng Yen's teaching on Pure Land shows a syncretic approach. As a result, if one thinks in terms of the paired concepts of immanence and transcendence, this paper suggests that the Pure Land as interpreted by Sheng Yen is both immanent and transcendent. It is a teaching that places dual emphasis on self-power and other-power, a continuation of the mainline understanding of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism.

But this chapter also points out that Sheng Yen is innovative enough to highlight the path of establishing the Pure Land not in a place far away or in a purified state deep inside one's mind. Rather, he suggests transforming the mundane world into a Pure Land. This concept of Pure Land differs sharply from the old syncretic tradition. This ideal can be described as "this-worldly Pure Land". It is a new orientation of Humanistic Buddhism, which deviates drastically from the traditional idea of leaving the mundane world for a world of ultimate happiness. Together with the two traditional understandings of Pure Land, this paper suggests that there are three dimensions of Pure Land teaching. In spatial terms, the inner dimension emphasizes the purification of one's mind, the vertical dimension emphasizes the transmigration to the other world, the Pure Land of Amitabha, and, lastly, the horizontal dimension emphasizes the establishment of Pure Land on the earth. Even though Tai Xu had proposed the idea of a Humanistic Buddhism that emphasized this-worldly Buddhism, Sheng Yen is the first to build a systematic discourse on this new understanding of Pure Land. Tai Xu criticized the renunciation of this worldly concern and advocated compassionate concern over the mundane world. Yet, Sheng Yen does not just place emphasis on concern for this world, he makes it explicit that the motto of his Dharma Drum Mountain is to establish a Pure Land on the earth.²⁴ The earth is not taken to be a place where we prepare and wait for the ultimate transmigration to the Pure Land. Rather, the earth itself can be turned to a Pure Land. Since Sheng Yen teaches all three dimensions of Pure Land, it is appropriate to call Sheng Yen's understanding of Pure Land "three dimensional".

²⁴ Therefore, Sheng Yen wants to transform the world and thus advocates peaceful social movement through education. Sheng Yen's creative interpretation actually deviates from traditional Pure Land belief. His Pure Land ideal on Earth does not resemble the Amitābhist tradition which emphasizes the transmigration to the other world, the Pure Land of Amitābha. There are signs to show that Sheng Yen makes use of the tradition of the Future Buddha, Maitreya. *The Sutra of Maitreya's Descent* talks about the descent of the future Buddha, Maitreya, to this earthly world and works towards the building of a Pure Land on it. Therefore, Maitreya, instead of Amitābha, Buddha is commonly used by people to provide a Buddhist justification for social changes or even revolution.

Although earlier masters advocated such a this-worldly turn, it is Sheng Yen who provides a systematic discourse with a practical plan of actions seeking to actualize this ideal. Sheng Yen's discourse has a clear intention to promote a Buddhist peaceful social movement based upon the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism through a creative hermeneutic and reinterpretation of Pure Land, making use of the emphasis on the cultivation of the mind in Chan and connecting this Chan training with the goal of purifying this earthly world.

Doctrinally, this brings together the two major Buddhist schools. Sheng Yen's creative interpretation follows the syncretic tradition and advocates the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism. This has two major implications. Firstly, the merging of Chan elements into Pure Land belief carries a strong emphasis upon the cultivation of the mind, which is based upon the belief in the universality of Buddhist nature in all sentient beings. Secondly, the idea of purifying the world leads to a socially engaged Buddhism, or, in spatial terms, the horizontal dimension of Pure Land Buddhism.

Sheng Yen's Pure Land discourse is the first systematic framing of a socially engaged Buddhism. He begins his grand system of peaceful social movement with the environmental protection of one's mind and incorporates different social, ethical and environmental issues together under the umbrella concept of Pure Land. This approach overemphasizes the power of the agent while not paying enough attention to that of the social structure. A structural analysis of society is not provided, let alone a critique of the collusion between government and capitalists. Therefore, the limitation of this kind of socially engaged Buddhism is clear. Its reliance on preaching and teaching the public to restore and keep a moral and religious inner life and, thus, be friendly to other people and the environment, though engrossed with very noble aims, seems to be inadequate to cope with the problems in society today.

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