

Ch'an Hermeneutics: A Korean View

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The Concerns of Ch'an Hermeneutics

The Ch'an contributions to the hermeneutical debate in East Asian Buddhism present the scholar with a unique set of interpretive problems. The Ch'an tradition has always claimed to be a "separate transmission outside the scriptures"¹ focusing on direct spiritual experience rather than philosophical analysis. Indeed, when scriptures were dismissed as inferior conceptualization and the nonverbal expression of truth was considered to be the paramount level of discourse, it is hardly surprising that Ch'an discussions skirted most of the major issues confronted by text-based Buddhist hermeneuts, such as the *nīārtha/neyārtha* problem. In a process somewhat paralleling the evolution of hermeneutic philosophy in the West, such as some of the work of Heidegger and Ricoeur, Ch'an hermeneutical considerations can be seen evolving toward gnoseological and ontological concerns.²

Ch'an hermeneutics directly confronts two of the most fundamental problems in Buddhist spiritual culture: first, what is the process through which enlightenment is achieved, and second, what is the precise content of enlightenment? As we will see, the examinations of these two questions undertaken by Ch'an exegetes were intended to prove their own claim that Buddhist religious development culminated in Ch'an, and not in the scholastic schools (*chiao*, Kor *kyo*) as their Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai rivals had contended. Hence hermeneutical principles were developed that would help to distinguish Ch'an's descriptions of practice and enlightenment from seemingly parallel descriptions in the sūtras, and thereby corroborate its claim of being a unique system. Ch'an hermeneutics developed in direct response to pressures from polemicists in the scholastic schools, and by examining the interaction

between these rivals, we may adduce much about the ways in which the Ch'an school selectively employed sacred texts in order, first, to uphold its own sectarian position and, second, to counter aspersions cast on it by its rivals. At the same time, however, Ch'an explicitly subordinated this hermeneutic of control to a hermeneutic of recollection, and the school's perspectives are as much a theory of understanding as a system of interpretation. Rather than remaining complacent with a hermeneutic that described the principles by which truth was to be explained, Ch'an adepts insisted on taking the extra step to a direct, personal experience of that truth. In their description of precise techniques by which that realization was to be effected, Ch'an hermeneutics takes on a larger significance, as yet only glimpsed in western treatments of the topic. Hence, a study of the Ch'an approach to the discipline will contribute many new perspectives and significant data for a general theory of hermeneutics.

In this inquiry into Ch'an hermeneutics, I intend to focus on the exegesis given in the Korean Ch'an school (there, known as Sŏn), and specifically on the analysis of Chinul (1158–1210), who presented one of the most provocative and comprehensive examinations of Ch'an hermeneutics found anywhere in East Asia. At the outset, it is worthwhile to point out that treating the Korean approach as emblematic of Ch'an as a whole does not lead to a distortion of the greater tradition as one might suspect. As the successors to a vigorous critical tradition in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism, one that produced the likes of Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (780–841) and Yung-ming Yen-shou (904–975), the Koreans provide trenchant synopses and cogent critiques of the contributions of many of the seminal thinkers of the East Asian Buddhist tradition. From the Korean vantage point, then, we have a ready overview of the entire hermeneutical debate within the East Asian Ch'an school. The Korean hermeneutical system forged by Chinul, in particular, presents a graphic example of the ways in which a hermeneutic of control was designed to culminate in a hermeneutic of recollection. Hence, by examining Chinul's treatment of this topic, as supplemented by other relevant material from Chinese and Korean sources, we should be able to make fairly precise assessments of the presuppositions underlying the Ch'an hermeneutical debate, the challenges it faced in establishing its perspective, and the insights arrived at by the Ch'an hermeneuts.

The Treatment of Ch'an in Hua-yen Hermeneutics

Since the time of Tsung-mi, a fundamental concern in Ch'an hermeneutics was the effort to counter the placement of Ch'an in the doctrinal taxonomy of the rival Hua-yen school. Beginning with Fa-tsang (643–

712), Chinese Hua-yen exegetes developed an interpretive system in which the most simplistic form of Buddhist doctrine was identified as the kataphasis, or "radical pluralism,"³ of the Hīnayāna (specifically the Sarvāstivāda) school (*Hsiao-sheng chiao*). This approach was considered to be superseded by the apophasis of the Mahāyāna inception teaching (*Ta-sheng shih-chiao*), including both the idealist perspective of Hsuan-tsang's variety of Chinese Yogācāra, which did not accept the existence of the Buddha-nature in all beings, and the Madhyamaka doctrine of śūnyatā. This apophasis was countered by the Mahāyāna final teaching (*Ta-sheng chung-chiao*), founded upon the tathāgatagarbha doctrine of the *Awakening of Faith* (*Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*), which combined the preceding two partial teachings in a comprehensive fusion of absolute and phenomenal (*li-shih wu-ai*). Implicit in the final teaching, however, was a conceptual bias that in its turn was overcome by the sudden teaching (*tun-chiao*), which "revealed" (*hsien*) rather than verbalized the teaching.⁴ This approach was exemplified by Vimalakīrti's celebrated silence, offered as his answer to the meaning of nonduality.⁵ The last and culminating phase of the doctrinal progression outlined by the Hua-yen school was of course the complete, or perfect, teaching (*luan-chiao*) of the *Avatamsakasūtra*, which reaffirmed without qualification the importance of each individual element of existence in creating and sustaining the universe (*shih-shih wu-ai*). As Peter Gregory has demonstrated, in Hua-yen hermeneutics "we thus see a move from a naive kataphasis through a thoroughgoing apophasis to a new and higher kataphasis."⁶

The major failing of this elaborate taxonomical system lay in its treatment of the so-called sudden teaching. As Hui-yuan (fl. 673–743) first pointed out, the sudden teaching that Fa-tsang described was not an innovative interpretation of doctrine but instead a more advanced method of instruction, as far as content was concerned, it was identical to the Mahāyāna final teachings and did not deserve a separate classification.⁷ Since subitism in this scheme clearly referred to a method of exposition, it was not consistent with the other categories of Fa-tsang's taxonomy of the teachings, which were all classified according to their content. This inconsistency between the description of suddenness as involving a style of instruction (*hua-i chiao*) and suddenness as a unique doctrinal category (*hua-fa chiao*) was also noted by the T'ien-t'ai reformer Chan-jan (711–782) and reiterated by Tsung-mi and later Chinul.⁸

It was Ch'eng-kuan (738–840), traditionally regarded as the fourth patriarch of the Hua-yen school, who attempted to answer Hui-yuan's critique of this conception of the sudden teaching. The distinguishing feature of Fa-tsang's characterization of the sudden teaching was its

focus on the calm and extinguished noumenal nature of the mind (*chi-mieh li-hsing*) and on nonconceptual descriptions of that principle. While both the inception and final teachings of Mahāyāna are gradual in that they are concerned with successive stages of development, Fa-tsang considered that “as far as the sudden teaching is concerned, [it involves] such [descriptions as] ‘words and speech are suddenly cut off,’ ‘the noumenal-nature suddenly manifests,’ ‘understanding and conduct are suddenly perfected,’ and ‘if one thought does not arise, that is Buddhahood’ ”⁹ Despite the apparent similarities to the language of Ch’an in these descriptions, Fa-tsang himself seems to have had in mind such teachings as were found in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* and *Lankāvātarasūtra* in defining this class of doctrine, there is no evidence that he was at all aware of the nascent Ch’an movement. Nevertheless, the Ch’an parallels were quick to be noted by Fa-tsang’s successor in the Hua-yen school, Ch’eng-kuan, the first Chinese exegete who attempted to incorporate the Ch’an tradition into a doctrinal classification scheme. Ch’eng-kuan, who seems to have had considerable associations with the Ch’an tradition of his time,¹⁰ proposed that the sudden teaching actually referred to Ch’an.

The mind-to-mind transmission of Bodhidharma corresponds precisely to this teaching. If one does not point to this one word [the mind] and therewith directly explain that mind is Buddha, then how else would [that mind] be transmitted? Therefore, they speak (*yen*) while relying on the ineffable, and directly verbalize (*ch’uan*) that principle which is separate from verbalization. This teaching is also clear. Therefore, the Southern and Northern schools of Ch’an are indistinguishable from the sudden teaching.¹¹

However this interpretation might have helped in Ch’eng-kuan’s attempt to vindicate Fa-tsang’s description of the sudden teaching,¹² its placement of the Ch’an teachings as inferior to the complete teachings of Hua-yen created a sometimes bitter and always prolix sectarian controversy between later Ch’an and Hua-yen exegetes.

As Ch’an burgeoned in China and then throughout all of East Asia, Ch’eng-kuan’s equation of all of Ch’an with the sudden teaching came to be seen as a drastic oversimplification. Ch’an had become a complex tradition propounding a variety of conflicting approaches to practice and enlightenment. Relating Ch’an to any one teaching was no longer tenable. Ch’eng-kuan’s own successor in the Hua-yen school, Tsung-mi, summarily rejected this treatment of the Ch’an tradition. In his *Yuan-chueh ching ta-shu ch’ao* (Autocommentary to the *Complete Enlightenment Sūtra*), Tsung-mi explicitly refers to seven major Ch’an schools popular during his day, and there are passing references to still more

schools in his other works.¹³ In addition to his Hua-yen affiliations, Tsung-mi was also considered to be the fifth patriarch of the Ho-tse school of Ch'an, a middle Ch'an school founded by Shen-hui (684-758) with close ties to the so-called Southern school of Ch'an. Given the inherent antipathy between his own lineage and the Northern school of Shen-hsiu (606?-706), it is difficult to conceive that Tsung-mi would have permitted a classification in which the Southern and Northern lineages were treated identically. Moreover, Tsung-mi's own eclecticism, which prompted him to look for parallels between Ch'an and the scriptural teachings, would have precluded any assertion that there were qualitative differences between the Ch'an and scholastic schools of his time.¹⁴

Because of these factors, Tsung-mi rejected Ch'eng-kuan's interpretation of the sudden teaching and proposed instead two complementary interpretations of its meaning: first, he reverted to Chan-jan's description of the sudden teachings as referring to a method of exposition (*hua-i*) rather than to a distinctive doctrinal viewpoint; second, he saw Ch'an as a teaching specifically adapted to the spiritual propensities of the superior cultivator.¹⁵ Going back to earlier *p'an-chiao* precedents,¹⁶ Tsung-mi classified the *hua-i* sudden teaching as a complete and sudden teaching (*yuan-tun chiao*), involving such stereotypically Hua-yen doctrines as the perfect interpenetration of all phenomena.¹⁷ This expansion of the scope of the sudden teaching would prove to be of considerable importance in the exegeses of later Ch'an commentators, such as Yen-shou and Chinul.

Chinul, as is so often the case in his thought, attempts to respond to some of the specific problems which the interpretations of his Chinese predecessors had created for the Ch'an tradition. First of all, Tsung-mi's syncretic perspective, in which explicit correspondences had been drawn between specific scholastic doctrines and the teachings of certain Ch'an schools,¹⁸ left little room for Ch'an's claim of being a unique tradition distinct from the teachings of the sūtras. Second, Tsung-mi's prominent bias in favor of the Ho-tse school of Ch'an, which died out soon after his death, came at the expense of the Hung-chou lineage and it left Tsung-mi's arguments open to attack by the numerous apologists of the burgeoning new schools deriving from that latter line, especially in the Lin-chi school, who felt betrayed by Tsung-mi's analyses.¹⁹ It became Chinul's aim to resurrect whatever was of value to Ch'an practitioners in Tsung-mi's syncretism while merging it with what Chinul regarded as the consummate Ch'an approach of Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089-1163). Hence, by employing the correspondences Tsung-mi had observed between Ch'an and *chiao*, Chinul attempted to prove that Ch'an was not simply a variety of sudden teaching but instead had

explicit parallels with the complete teaching of Hua-yen, the pinnacle of the scholastic doctrine. At the same time, however, Chinul did not stop short with demonstrating the points of convergence between Ch'an and the teachings, as Tsung-mi had done, he also tried to prove the inherent superiority of the Ch'an school over the scholastic schools, on the basis not only of descriptive concerns such as the mode of doctrinal expression but also of soteriological issues such as the higher quality of its religious practice. Hence, in Korean Buddhist hermeneutics, it was Ch'an, and not Hua-yen, that emerged as the only "true" complete and sudden teaching, because its practice resulted in the consummation of the complete teaching, but through a process of sudden, not gradual, realization.

Distinguishing Ch'an from the Sudden Teaching

The seeming parallels we have observed between the Ch'an approach and the Hua-yen description of the sudden teaching were a constant source of irritation to Ch'an theorists. These correspondences implied, of course, that Ch'an was inferior to the complete teaching, the fifth of the five teachings. Moreover, in the Hua-yen description Ch'an emerges as a system solely concerned with the speed at which enlightenment is achieved, rather than with the full perfection of all the phenomenal aspects implicit in the state of Buddhahood. Because such perfection in the phenomenal realm was the goal of the Hua-yen school, as epitomized in its teaching of *shih-shih wu-ai*, Hua-yen would loom superior in any comparisons with Ch'an.

To vindicate Ch'an from these claims of inferiority, there were two approaches that could be followed. First, and most directly, the differences between the description of the state of enlightenment achieved through Ch'an practice and that which was attained via the sudden teaching could be explicated, thereby attacking the reputability of the sudden teaching's gnoseology and demonstrating the distinctiveness of Ch'an. Second, following the Chinese penchant for the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*), the sudden teaching could be redefined in order to refute Fa-tsang's description of its content. Ch'an exegetes could thereby prove that, even if Ch'an were identical to the sudden teaching, the sudden teaching was in fact the ultimate approach to Buddhist spiritual cultivation. As we shall see, Chinul and the Korean school adopted both approaches in their attempt to vindicate the Sōn orientation.

The Differences Between Ch'an and the Sudden Teaching

To demonstrate the uniqueness of the Ch'an lineage, it was first incumbent on the Koreans to disprove all presumed parallels between

the sudden teaching, as it was conceived by the scholiasts, and Ch'an. The fundamental point of difference they focused upon was the inadequacy of the description of the state achieved through the sudden teaching's soteriology. The abandonment of all thought, which the sudden teaching described as the state of Buddhahood, was said to be "merely the Buddhahood achieved through realization of the noumenon, it can be called the undeveloped dharmakāya"²⁰ While such a state brings about proleptic awareness of the noumenal essence of Buddhahood—that is, the inchoate potentiality of Buddhahood—it does not result in any understanding of the fundamental identity between that noumenal essence and the phenomenal realm. Accordingly, there could be no development of any of the capabilities of that noumenon to adapt expediently to the relative, conceptual sphere. In such an interpretation, the sudden teaching would actually emerge as inferior even to the Mahāyāna final teaching in the quality and content of its understanding.

In contrast to the apophatic one-sidedness of this conception of the sudden teaching, Ch'an makes use of meditative topics such as the *kung-an* (Kor *kongan*) and the *hua-t'ou* (Kor *hwadu*) as well as of radical techniques such as shouting and beating in order to bring about a personal realization. Through investigating the *hua-t'ou*, for example, an existential doubt (*i-hsin*, Kor *ūsim*) is created that ultimately leads Ch'an adepts to a sudden understanding of the dharmadhātu.

That the doubt about the *hwadu* is broken and in an instant he activates one moment of realization means that he has a personal realization of the unobstructed *dharmadhātu* (*muae pōpkye*). If they suddenly activate one moment of realization, then the *dharmadhātu* which is perfectly interfused by nature and completely endowed with meritorious qualities is clearly understood. As the patriarch of Ts'ao-ch'i explained: "The self-nature contains the three bodies, / Its discovery perfects the four wisdoms"²¹

Ch'an, therefore, is not simply an approach that exposes the quiescence of the noumenon, instead, it reveals all the unfathomable qualities immanent in that essence by penetrating to the suchness that is the unifying stuff of noumenon and phenomena. This correspondingly opens to the student the ability to use all the phenomenal, adaptable qualities of Buddhahood, as is the case for Ch'an adepts who "have investigated the word [the *hwadu*], broken the doubt, had a personal realization of the one mind, displayed *prajñā*, and engaged in wide propagation of the teachings of Buddhism"²² The Ch'an stress on seeing the nature, therefore, is in no way deficient in regard to the complementary aspect of function (*yung*, Kor *yong*). "If, due to one word of a master, a person looks back on the radiance of the self-nature and suddenly forgets words and understanding, the differences in the condi-

tionally arisen secondary and primary karmic aspects throughout the ten realms will all appear brilliantly in the mirror of his own mind. There the *dharmadhātu*'s unimpeded conditioned origination can be perceived."²³

There are many accounts in Ch'an literature which indicate the fullness of the realization brought about through Ch'an meditation. We see this in a well-known story concerning Hung-chou Shui-liao (fl. eighth century), a student of Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788)

While they were out gathering rattan, Master Shui-liao asked Ma-tsu, "What is the real meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?"

Ma-tsu replied, "Come closer and I'll tell you."

When Shui-liao was quite close, Ma-tsu kicked him in the chest, knocking him to the ground. In a daze, Shui-liao got up, clapping his hands and laughing loudly.

Ma-tsu asked, "What insight did you have that has made you laugh?"

Shui-liao said, "Hundreds of thousands of approaches to dharma (*fa-men*) and immeasurable sublime meanings (*miao-i*) are on the tip of one hair, today I have completely understood their source."²⁴

A careful comparison of descriptions of the state of enlightenment achieved through Ch'an practice with Hua-yen accounts of the interfusion of the *dharmadhātu* yield some remarkable similarities. One of the best-known examples of the type of realization brought about through Ch'an techniques—which, despite being apocryphal, is no less telling—is the exchange between the sixth patriarch Hui-neng (638-713) and Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh [alt. Chen-chüeh] (665-713), which catalyzed the latter's enlightenment.

When the Great Master Yung-chia Chen-chueh arrived at Ts'ao-ch'i carrying a gourd bottle and wearing a bamboo hat, he circumambulated the master's seat three times, struck his walking staff down once, and remained standing arrogantly before him. The Sixth Patriarch said, "Śramanas must keep the three thousand departments and the eighty thousand minor rules of conduct. From where does the venerable one come that he is so conceited?"

Chen-chüeh replied, "The matter of birth and death is great, impermanence [death] is fast closing in."

The patriarch asked, "Why don't you experience the unborn and understand that which is not swift?"

Chen-chueh answered, "The experience is the unborn, understanding is originally without swiftness."

The patriarch said, "That's right. That's the way it is." After a moment Yung-chia took leave, and the patriarch asked, "Aren't you leaving a little too fast?"

Chen-chueh replied, "Originally I am unmoving, so how can it be fast?"

The patriarch asked, "Who knows that he is unmoving?"
Chen-chueh answered, "It's you who gives rise to such discriminations"

The patriarch said, "You have understood well the meaning of the unborn Stay over for one night"²⁵

Chmul interprets this story in the following manner

the Great Master Yung-chia Chen-chueh broke straight out of the barrel²⁶ simply by hearing the Sixth Patriarch ask, "Why don't you experience the unborn?" He suddenly had a realization of the *dharmadhātu* and only answered, "The experience is the unborn, understanding is originally without swiftness" All this accords with the fact that at the point of realization there is no need for an excess of words In this sort of experience there is an awakening to the original mind which produces, in the mirror of one's mind, a perception of the inexhaustible *dharmadhātu* which is like the multilayered net of Indra Such experiences are so common in the biographies and records of the Sōn school that they cannot be counted Deluded people do not know the source of these experiences

Consequently, when they hear a Sōn adherent explain that mind is the Buddha, they assume that this means nothing more than the Buddhahood of the nature's purity From these statements [of Hsuan-chueh], we know that the Sōn transmission which is beyond thought is the sudden realization of the *dharmadhātu* It is certainly not the same as the sudden teachings The sudden teachings do not explain the characteristics of dharma and advocate that the mere perception of the true nature where one thought does not arise is Buddhahood This is utter foolishness²⁷

The next morning, after leaving Ts'ao-ch'i, Hsuan-chueh is said to have composed the celebrated ode *Ch'eng-tao ko* (Song of Enlightenment) Hsuan-chueh sings of his experience

The shining of the mirrorlike mind is unimpeded in its
brightness
Its bright luster radiates throughout worlds as numerous as
grains of sand
All the phenomena in creation reflect within it,
In the one ray of perfect light there is neither inside nor
outside
One nature completely penetrates all natures,
One dharma fully contains all other dharmas
One moon universally appears in all bodies of water,
All the moons appearing in those waters are merged in that one
moon
The dharmakāya of all the Buddhas enters into my own nature,
And my nature reunites with that of all the Tathāgatas²⁸

Chinul comments on the realization expressed in Hsuan-chueh's song

Then, once outside the temple gate, he broke out in song about his state of realization and said, "One nature completely penetrates all natures . . ." Thus we know that this master's universal-eye state showed all phenomena to be in perfect interfusion. Sentient beings and Buddhas were perfectly interfused. All the stages of the bodhisattva path were perfectly interfused. The eighty-four thousand approaches to dharma were perfectly interfused. In this manner, the *dharmadhātu's* inexhaustible qualities and functions were brought to complete accomplishment in a snap of the fingers.²⁹

As Chinul explains, Ch'an practice is not simply concerned with the removal of the discriminative processes of thought, it also involves the positive reinforcement of wholesome qualities of mind, which can then be applied in the conditioned realm for the benefit of all sentient beings. Hence, Ch'an meditation purports to overcome limited perspectives concerning the absolute realm of the *dharmadhātu* and, at the same time, to produce both the capacity to transfer the merit deriving from one's understanding to other beings as well as the ability to use the power inherent in that merit as an expedient means of guiding others.³⁰ Simply because the mind-nature perceived through investigating the *hwadu* is originally tranquil, inherently divorced from conceptual discrimination, and free from relative signs does not mean that it is identical to the undifferentiated noumenon that the sudden teaching calls Buddhahood. Hence, any intimation on the part of the scholiasts that Ch'an is nothing more than the inferior sudden teaching was summarily rejected by the Koreans, and Ch'an's affinities with descriptions found in the complete teaching of Hua-yen were explicitly pointed out.

Redefining the Sudden Teaching

Simultaneous with disproving the affinities between the traditional outlook concerning the sudden teaching and Ch'an, the Korean Sōn exegetes attempted to redefine the fundamental purport of the sudden teaching. As mentioned above, if Fa-tsang's contention were correct—i.e., that the sudden teaching involved simply the realization of the noumenal-nature which was separate from thought—then the content of the sudden teaching would be comparable to the even more inferior Mahāyāna inception teachings. A convenient foil for a refutation of this contention was found in the *Tā-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*, which proposed

The suchness of the mind is the essence of the teaching of the great general characteristic (*ta-tsung hsiang*) of the one *dharmadhātu*—that is to say, it is the mind-nature which neither arises nor ceases. It is only due to deluded thoughts that all dharmas are differentiated. If one leaves behind the

mind's thoughts, then all the signs of the sense-spheres are nonexistent. For this reason, since the beginning all dharmas have been separate from the signs of words and speech, and, ultimately, are undifferentiated, immutable, and indestructible. They are only the one mind. Therefore it is called suchness.³¹

In this passage, no-thought is said to result in a realization not merely of the quiescence and nondiscrimination of the noumenon, but also of the general characteristic—that is, the totality—of the dharmadhātu. Once that characteristic is realized, there is no longer any need to maintain a condescending attitude toward relative objects, because all objects would then be understood to be the sublime functioning (*miao-yung*, Kor *myoyong*) of the essence of the dharmadhātu. Hence, the sudden teaching can be seen as an expedient expression of the need to give up attachment to all relative signs—whether skillful or unskillful, defiled or pure—and was intended for cultivators who grasped at characteristics that were ultimately empty. As I shall discuss in more detail below, through the state of no-thought engendered by this teaching, the student achieves the access to realization (*chūngip*) which the Koreans, following the exposition of Hua-yen doctrine found in the *Hsin Hua-yen chung lun* (Exposition of the New [Translation] of the *Avatamsakasūtra*) by Li T'ung-hsuan (635–730), have considered to be equivalent to the first abiding-stage (the formal inception of the bodhisattva path) achieved after the completion of the ten levels of faith.³² Through the realization-awakening (*chūngo*) achieved on that first abiding-stage, the student is finally able to leave behind his initial understanding of the emptiness of all things and enter into suchness. Hence, although the achievement catalyzed through the sudden teaching “is called the Buddhahood achieved through realization of the noumenon, this suchness is the nature of all dharmas as well as the fountainhead of the manifold supplementary practices [of the bodhisattva] (*manhaeng*)”³³ In this way the Ch'an tradition sought to define the content of the sudden teaching not in terms of the Mahāyāna inception teaching, but in relation to the complete teaching of Hua-yen.

Distinguishing Ch'an from the Complete Teaching

As we have seen, one of the major premises of Ch'an hermeneutics was that its gnoseology had more in common with the synthetic doctrines of the complete teaching than with the radical apophysis of the sudden teaching. At the same time, however, if the uniqueness of Ch'an was to be upheld, its apologists also had to distinguish Ch'an from that pinnacle of the scholastic doctrine and ultimately prove its own unassailable superiority. The logic used by Ch'an exegetes to demonstrate this claim

was much shakier than that employed to refute the school's affinities with the sudden teaching. As outlined above, the Ch'an enlightenment experience was analyzed as being closely allied to that of the unimpeded interfusion of the dharmadhātu as taught in the complete teaching. Another evocative element was that the initial level of Ch'an discourse, which I will discuss in detail below, used explanations similar to those found in the Hua-yen school to instruct beginning students in Ch'an practice. Given these admitted parallels, it was not the content of the complete teaching that was called into question—the approach Ch'an scholastics had followed in refuting the validity of the sudden teaching—but its inferiority as a vehicle for spiritual cultivation when compared to Ch'an. Thus, while clarifying the points of correspondence between Ch'an and Hua-yen doctrines and practices, the Koreans attempted to demonstrate that, despite their affinities, there were indeed specific distinguishing features that could not be overlooked in assessing these schools. Ultimately, when all the evidence had been weighed, Ch'an was to be considered superior to the complete teaching because its approach brought it closer to the absolute itself at all stages of the marga.

The key to the analysis of the relationship between Ch'an and the complete teaching was provided by Li T'ung-hsuan's exegesis of Hua-yen doctrine. In Li's assessment, which became the standard interpretation of the Korean tradition after Chinul's time, the essence of the dharmadhātu, namely, the one mind,³⁴ is realized by awakening to the fundamental wisdom of universal brightness (*p'u kwang-ming chih*)³⁵. Since it was posited that all plurality derives from that perfect essence, its realization brings in turn the consummation of the unimpeded interpenetration between all phenomena (*shih-shih wu-ai*), the *raison d'être* of the Hua-yen teachings.³⁶ Ch'an advocates saw a close affinity between Li's interpretation of this wisdom of universal brightness and the penchant in Ch'an practice to remain always focused on the one mind, as the following passage from Chinul's writings demonstrates:

From the stage of an ordinary man, therefore, until he first gives rise to the *bodhicitta*, practices the bodhisattva path, and finally reaches the stage of fruition, all of Vairocana Buddha's great compassion, wisdom, and vows, as well as each and every thought, each and every action, each and every dharma, each and every moment, and each and every place, are all the operation of his own mind's wisdom of universal brightness.³⁷

For Chinul, however, the crucial flaw in Li T'ung-hsuan's outline of practice was its inherently conceptual nature. While Li's system aims to present a viable analysis of the process of spiritual development, it neglects to describe the import of this experience from the standpoint of

the person who is actually engaged in the practice. Purely theoretical descriptions are therefore denounced by Sōn exegetes as being ultimately a hindrance to the meditator, because, rather than helping the student to abandon intellectual knowledge and to experience the mind-essence directly, such descriptions vitiate the real essence of that truth by enclosing it within a framework that merely provides more grist for the mind's conceptualizing mill. Hence, in the development of its students, the complete teaching of Hua-yen relies on acquired knowledge (*śrutamayīprajñā*) and conceptual understanding (*cintamayīprajñā*) rather than on direct meditative experience (*bhāvanāmayīprajñā*).

The inadequacies of this approach are apparent when the state preceding enlightenment is examined. According to the Korean interpretation of Li T'ung-hsuan's and Tsung-mi's analyses of the process of enlightenment, the first moment of awakening is catalyzed by an understanding-awakening (*haeo*), which is the initial comprehension of the fundamental identity between the individual's ignorance and the Buddhas' wisdom. This understanding is said to take place at the first of the ten stages of faith (*ch'osim-chi*), preliminary to the formal entrance to the bodhisattva path itself. But, after continuing to "infuse their learning and training with the Hwaōm explanation of the unimpeded conditioned-origination of the *dharmadhātu*, then on the level of the ten faiths, their minds are filled with its influence and they perfect both understanding and conduct."³⁸ At this point, the adept has fulfilled the ten stages of faith and is ready to enter the bodhisattva path formally at the first abiding-stage (*vihāra*) of the arising of the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicittotpāda*). This is accomplished through the access to realization (*chūngip*). However, as "the access to realization is achieved through thoughtlessness (*munyōm*), it also involves abandoning words and cutting off thought."³⁹ The realization-awakening (*chūngo*) achieved at the first abiding-stage can therefore be achieved only after the student has been established in no-thought. By implication, only after the knowledge and conceptualization inherent in the descriptions of the complete teaching of Hua-yen are transcended—thereby obviating the need for those teachings—can the meditator attain the state of no-thought and thus gain true realization. Hence, the approach of Hua-yen "is vitiated by acquired understanding via words and meaning, so its adherents have not yet attained the indiscriminative wisdom (*mubunbyōl-chi*). These people must first pass through their views and learning, their understanding and conduct, only then can they enter into realization. At the time of this access to realization, their experience will correspond to the no-thought of the Sōn approach."⁴⁰

Of course, masters in the Ch'an school sometimes employed descriptions that parallel those found in the complete teaching—an incon-

gruency from the standpoint of the Ch'an adage that the school "does not establish words and letters" Some of the more syncretic Ch'an schools, like the Fa-yen, even adapted Hua-yen terminology such as "unimpeded interfusion" in order to explain the enlightenment experience of Ch'an Nevertheless, despite the apparent similarities between the descriptions used in the two schools, Ch'an exegetes maintained that there was a fundamental point distinguishing them Hua-yen was concerned with a theoretical explication of the truth while the Ch'an accounts were intended solely to catalyze awakening—that is, to bring about direct, personal experience of that state of interfusion Not only were the Ch'an descriptions terser (Ch *sheng-lueh*, Kor *saengnyak*) than the prolix explanations of Hua-yen, they also were expedient expressions propounded with a completely different purpose in mind—immediate realization Hence, the Ch'an descriptions are actually much closer to the ultimate nonconceptual reality As Chinul says

From the evidence, we can see that, compared with the [ten] mysterious gates in the scholastic schools, the theory of Sōn is much broader and its realization-wisdom more encompassing Consequently, the Sōn approach values only the breaking of grasping and the manifestation of the source, it has no use for a profusion of words or the establishment of doctrines We should know then that the doctrine of unimpededness as explained by masters of the Sōn school might be identical to that in the complete teachings, but their descriptions are more concise Consequently, they are nearer to the actual access to realization ⁴¹

Resolving Misconceptions about Ch'an

In the preceding sections, I have attempted to show that the three primary thrusts of Ch'an hermeneutics were, first, to distinguish Ch'an from the sudden teaching, second, to demonstrate the affinities between the Ch'an enlightenment experience and the doctrine of the unimpeded interpenetration of the dharmadhātu as found in the complete teaching of Hua-yen, and third, to corroborate Ch'an sectarian claims that the school was finally superior even to that apex of the scholastic teachings Having set forth these principles, I will now examine some of the misconceptions fostered in previous scholarly treatments of Ch'an which distort the true place of Ch'an within the East Asian hermeneutical tradition

One misconception has been that Ch'an is somehow closely akin to the Indo-Tibetan Prāsangika-Madhyamaka school,⁴² which the East Asians would have classified as part of the Mahāyāna inception teaching As we have seen, Ch'an hermeneutics began as a response to the evaluation of Ch'an as an inferior teaching by Hua-yen, and is a devel-

opment on, rather than a radical departure from, the perspectives of the indigenous East Asian tradition. Perforce, Ch'an has stronger affinities with the kataphatic hermeneutics of the Chinese tradition as a whole and the Hua-yen school in particular than with the apophasis that characterized the Chinese perception of the Madhyamaka approach. A fundamental difference between Ch'an practice and that of the Mahāyāna inception teaching is Ch'an's orientation toward instilling in its students not so much an understanding of śūnyatā as a realization of the unimpeded interpenetration of the dharmadhātu. This point is brought out most clearly in the quintessentially Ch'an *Ch'eng-tao ko* by Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh, which I have quoted from earlier. While some Ch'an descriptions in the *kung-an* collections and the discourse-records (*yu-lu*) of the patriarchs, when taken in isolation, can be construed as being allied in intent and method with those used by the Madhyamakas,⁴³ such parallels are consistently rejected by exegetes within the Ch'an school, who frequently vilify the latter's doctrine of emptiness.⁴⁴ The underlying ontological and soteriological purposes of Ch'an were in fact considered to be quite distinct from those of Madhyamaka, which most of the mature East Asian schools regarded as an inferior teaching, hence, to equate the two is a fundamental misrepresentation of the doctrinal presuppositions of the Chinese tradition.

A less crucial misconstruction is the implication that Ch'an statements, such as those implying the inherent identity between Buddhas and sentient beings, should be considered equivalent to the Mahāyāna final teaching.⁴⁵ This is, in fact, a misrepresentation of the distinction Fa-tsang himself drew between the final and complete teachings—namely, that the final teaching refers to the unity of existence and emptiness while the complete teaching refers to the identity of all elements of the phenomenal world.⁴⁶ In sum, Ch'an should be regarded as a synthesis of the nonconceptual emphasis of the sudden teaching and the perfected kataphasis of the complete teaching, indeed it was this synthesis that allowed Ch'an to call itself the only true “complete and sudden teaching.”

Ch'an Hermeneutical Devices

Levels of Ch'an Discourse: The Three Mysterious Gates

Having examined the polemical motives prompting the development of Ch'an hermeneutics, we may now turn to specific interpretive tools used in the Ch'an school to uphold its sectarian point of view.

A nascent hermeneutical principle vital to distinguishing the various levels of Ch'an discourse and clarifying their differences from scholastic descriptions is the three mysterious gates (*san-hsuan men*, Kor *samhyōn-*

mun)⁴⁷ In the three mysterious gates, the basic or entry level of Ch'an discourse is to use theories such as mind-only (*wei-hsin*) or mere-representation (*wei-shih*) in order to explain the principle of the unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena. At this level, rhetoric that is reminiscent of the complete teaching, such as the fundamental identity of sentient beings and Buddhas, is used to explain the first mystery, the "mystery in the essence" (*t'i-chung hsuan*, Kor *ch'ejung-hyōn*). After establishing the student in the kind of all-inclusive, nondiscriminative understanding engendered through such kataphatic teachings, the teacher continues on to the explicitly apophatic approach of *hua-t'ou* (Kor *hwadu*) investigation, known as the "mystery in the word" (*chuchung hsuan*, Kor *kujung-hyōn*). The process of gradually disentangling the student from the conceptual workings of his mind that the *hua-t'ou* brings about eventually culminates in the "mystery in the mystery" (*hsuan-chung hsuan*, Kor *hyōnjung-hyōn*), involving completely nonconceptual expressions such as striking or shouting, which are intended to remove all of the defects implicit in conceptual understanding (*p'o-ping*, Kor *p'abyōng*). However, once this misapprehension is resolved, those very same expressions become not weapons to remove the defects of conceptual understanding, but "complete expressions" of truth (*ch'uan-t'i*, Kor *chōnje*)⁴⁸ Hence, Ch'an discourse finally culminates in an experientially based kataphasis that authenticates the conceptually based kataphasis of the mystery in the essence. Here we see once again that Ch'an discourse is not intended to be merely an imitation of the Mahāyāna inception or final teachings, but instead mirrors the progression of Chinese hermeneutical structures from naive kataphasis, to radical apophasis, to perfected kataphasis. For this reason, Ch'an discourse is distinguished by a gnoseological perspective that allows it to encompass the whole of Chinese hermeneutics by expanding the narrow exegetical and sectarian interests of the scholastic schools into a larger concern with the spiritual well-being of each individual adept.

Live-word/Dead-word

One of the most distinctive hermeneutical tools developed in Ch'an is that of the "live-word" (*huo-chu*, Kor *hwalgu*) and "dead-word" (*ssu-chu*, Kor *sagu*)⁴⁹ As these terms are used by Ch'an teachers, any type of theoretical description, whether found in Ch'an or in scholastic writings, would be considered a "dead-word," while any teaching that is intended not to explain but to enlighten would be a "live-word." "In the Sōn approach, all these true teachings deriving from the faith and understanding of the complete and sudden school which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are called dead-words because they induce people to create the obstacle of understanding."⁵⁰ The live-word,

however, permits no conceptual understanding at which the deluded mind might grasp, as it has been described by Ta-hui Tsung-kao, "This one word is the weapon which smashes all types of wrong knowledge and wrong conceptualization"⁵¹ By the same token, however, if the processes by which this live-word brings about realization were themselves to become the subject of theoretical interpretation, that "live-word" would automatically become instead a "dead-word" To warn his students about this inveterate tendency to reflect on the principles involved in contemplation, Ta-hui said, "Students of Ch'an must investigate the live-word, do not investigate the dead-word If you stay fixed on the live-word, you will not forget it for an eternity of kalpas, but if you stay fixed on the dead-word, you will not be able to save yourself"⁵² If there be any doubt about where Ch'an and Hua-yen expressions fit into this scheme, we need only recall the statement by Chinul's eminent Yi-dynasty successor in the Chogye school, Sōsan Hyujōng (1520-1604) "The shortcut approach [of Sōn] is the live-word, the complete and sudden approach [of Hwaōm] is the dead-word"⁵³

By resorting to the device of the "live-word," Ch'an exegetes justified their use of conceptual ideas—provided of course that such ideas were intended to catalyze awakening—without belying their claim that such descriptions differed fundamentally from those used in the scholastic schools The distinction between the explicit purposes of Ch'an and scholastic doctrine adumbrated in the live-word/dead-word principle was also drawn by Tsung-mi, in a passage from his *Ch'an-yüan ch'u-ch'uan chi tu-hsu* "The teachings of the Buddha are intended to support tens of thousands of generations, hence their principles have been demonstrated in detail The admonitions of the patriarchs involve an immediate crossing-over to liberation, they aim at producing mysterious penetration"⁵⁴

Tsung-mi's position suggests that Ch'an's claim of being a separate transmission outside the scriptures inevitably relegates the scholastic teachings to an extremely constricted role the continuity of the ecclesiastical structures of the church and the preservation of its dogma Ultimately, the scriptures have nothing to do with realization Even though the Buddha surely must have uttered "live" words, in the sense that they were intended to prompt personal liberation, once those words were recorded and transmitted from generation to generation, they became dead This caveat would seem to apply as well to the teachings of the patriarchs of the Ch'an school when they came to be recorded in the many and varied anthologies that the school's adepts compiled Finally, all such transmitted words are dead, because they only serve to sustain the faith of the religious adherents of the Buddhist church, they do not lead to no-thought, which is the access to realization For

Chinul, the only live-word was the *hwadu*, because it, and not scholastic explanations, helped to break down the conceptualizing tendency of the mind, resulting in no-thought ⁵⁵

Of course, theoretical descriptions of the processes involved in *hwadu* practice, such as Chinul himself made, are themselves dead-words. Nevertheless, Chinul regarded them as vital to the successful development of the vast majority of Ch'an students, for without the correct understanding about his practice and his status on the spiritual path that is engendered by such accounts, it would be the rare student indeed who would be able to make consistent progress in his training. So, while the analysis of Ch'an practice made by Chmul and other exegetes might be "dead," its inculcation in Ch'an students at the inception of their practice is the factor that largely determines their later success in attaining true realization.

I might add, however, that it would seem that even the dead-words of the scriptures can come alive, provided that they are read with the purpose of bringing about realization. Such was the case with Chinul's own enlightenment experiences, which took place while he was reading texts—specifically, the sixth patriarch's *Platform Sūtra*, Li T'ung-hsuan's *Hsin Hua-yen ching lun*, and Ta-hui's *Ta-hui yu-lu*. Chinul, in fact, was one of the few Korean masters who never made the incumbent pilgrimage to study under eminent Chinese Ch'an masters. Moreover, Korean Sōn during his own time was so degenerate that he was unable to find a master who was competent to teach him about orthodox Sōn practice. Given those circumstances, Chinul fell back on the only reliable source of instruction available to him—the sūtras attributed to the Buddha and the words of the Ch'an patriarchs ⁵⁶. While Chinul never says so explicitly, I am sure he would not deny that those texts were as alive for him as any nonverbal expression of truth, if not in fact brought alive through his "perfect reading" of them.

Circular Graphics

Another hermeneutical device of particular importance in the Ch'an school was that of circular graphics. Such symbols were used to describe different levels of spiritual understanding and practice, but without resorting to the bane of verbalization. This use of circles as an expedient means of teaching in the Ch'an school seems to have begun with Nanyang Hui-chung (677–744), who is said to have transmitted a set of ninety-seven such forms. The book listing them, however, was destroyed by one of his students, Yang-shan Hui-chi (803–887), cofounder of the Kuei-yang school of the classical Chinese Ch'an tradition. Despite Hui-chi's apparent antipathy toward Hui-chung's symbols, circular graphics became one of the most distinctive features of the Kuei-yang teaching technique. Later Chinese masters who employed such

symbolism included Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807–869), whose five rankings are probably the most well known usage, and Kao-feng Yüan-miao (1238–1295), who used circles to represent rational Ch'an, Tathāgata Ch'an, and patriarchal Ch'an.⁵⁷

In Korea, circular symbols were introduced by Sunji (fl. 858), a contemporary of Tung-shan, who studied in China under Hui-chi. Given Sunji's chronological proximity to Hui-chung, it is possible that his graphics closely mirror Hui-chung's own circles, which are no longer extant. Sunji developed several different sets of circles to symbolize various aspects of Buddhist ontology and practice, for example, he used eight symbols in four sets to explain the noumenon and five symbols in four sets to explain the process of spiritual maturation. It is his second group of four symbols in two sets, however, that is explicitly hermeneutical, it is designed to "negate falsity and reveal truth" (see figure 1). Symbol 1a is the logograph for man inside a circle, with the ox-logograph above. This is the sign of "abandoning the doctrine but retaining conceptual thinking." This graphic symbolizes the teaching of the one Buddha vehicle of T'ien-t'ai, which was considered to allow a person to attain some measure of liberation, but without freeing him from his dependence on verbal teachings. The ox-logograph (symbolizing conceptual understanding) remains outside the circle (representing the noumenal wisdom), indicating that while scriptural teachings may provide the support necessary to induce initial awakening, they do not lead to the complete perfection of the noumenal wisdom. Its complement, symbol 1b, has the logograph for man inside a circle, which is the sign of "cognize the root and return to the source." Because conceptual understanding has been transcended and the noumenal wisdom achieved in this sign, the ox-logograph is removed but the man-logograph is retained. This graphic refers to the meditative practices of Sōn as well as to the teachings found in the *Vajrasamādhisūtra* (T no. 273). Symbol 2a is the man-logograph inside a circle with the ox-logograph underneath, this is the sign for "losing one's head and recognizing only one's shadow." This refers to Pure Land adherents who do not have faith in their own innate Buddhahood, but instead seek rebirth in some distant Pure Land where they believe it will be easier for them to attain enlightenment. By seeking externally for enlightenment rather than looking for the Pure Land that is within their own minds, such people only sustain their own delusion. The complement to this, symbol 2b, is again the man-logograph inside a circle, representing the sign "turning one's back on one's shadow and recognizing one's head." In this sign, one reflects internally on the light emanating from the source of the mind, as would the Sōn adept, and realizes that the Buddha and the Pure Land are innate in one's own mind.⁵⁸

While circular graphics seem to have been neglected after Sunji's



Figure 1 Sunji's Circular Graphics

time and were not employed by Chmul, they enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in Korea during the Yi dynasty and found numerous explicators, including Hamhō Tūkt'ong (1376–1433) and Paekp'a Kūngsōn (d. 1852). The explanations of the meaning of the symbols used by Sunji and other Sōn adepts drew heavily upon Hwaōm (Hua-yen) teachings, and exemplify the affinities that existed between the hermeneutical approaches of the two schools.

The Value of Ch'an to a General Theory of Hermeneutics

From the preceding discussion, it should be clear that the Ch'an school developed interpretive approaches that employed unique hermeneutical principles. While these principles pertained implicitly to scriptural interpretation, they were more fundamentally concerned with ordering the broad range of spiritual experience, and then with catalyzing direct realization of those levels of experience. This orientation suggests that there is a pronounced soteriological thrust to Buddhist, and especially Ch'an, hermeneutics that is not found in the interpretive methods developed, for example, in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The live-word/dead-word notion and the use of circular graphics provide an approach to Ch'an interpretation that allows greater fidelity to the historical and doctrinal contexts of that tradition than would the inevitably culture-bound concepts of western hermeneutics. At the same time, however, such alternate approaches to hermeneutics provide interesting material for a comparison of exegetical principles, which should offer significant input toward developing a truly cross-cultural theory of religious interpretation.⁵⁹ Indeed, in any development of a general theory of hermeneutics, we cannot afford to ignore the unique contributions that Ch'an has made to the discipline.

Notes

1 According to a famous gnome on Ch'an practice attributed by the tradition to Bodhidharma: "A separate transmission outside the scriptures, / No reliance upon words and letters, / Directly pointing to the human mind, / See

the nature and achieve Buddhahood" For the textual history of this passage, see the discussion in D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, vol. 1 (1927, reprint ed., London: Rider and Co., 1958), 176

2 I am thinking specifically of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), and Paul Ricoeur's "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 11-24

3 Theodore Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word "Dharma"* (1923, reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), 73, this analysis has been accepted by most subsequent Buddhologists. For a critique, however, see David J. Kalupahana, *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1975), 69-88

4 See Peter N. Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics: The Case of Hua-yen," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983): 238, quoting Fa-tsang, *Hua-yen i-sheng chiao-i fen-ch'i chang* (alt. tit. *Wu-chiao chang*), T 45:495b5

5 *Wei-mo-chieh so-shuo ching* (*Vimalakīrtinirdesaśūtra*) 2, T 14:551c23-24, Robert A. F. Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 77, Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics," 246 n. 5

6 Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics," 239. For general surveys in English of the Hua-yen doctrinal taxonomies, see Junjirō Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1947), 114-117, Liu Ming-wood, "The P'an-chiao System of the Hua-yen School in Chinese Buddhism," *T'oung Pao* 67 (1981): 18-47, Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics," 238-245

7 Hui-yuan, *Hsu Hua-yen lueh-shu k'an-ting chi*, ZZ 1/5/12a4-6, quoted in Liu, "P'an-chiao System of Hua-yen," 33, Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics," 239, and Peter N. Gregory, "The Place of the Sudden Teaching within the Hua-yen Tradition: An Investigation of the Process of Doctrinal Change," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 6 (1983): 39

8 See Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Korean Approach to Zen: The Collected Works of Chinul* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 355 n. 125, which also includes other relevant references, this volume is hereafter cited as *KAZ*. See also discussions in Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 52, and Gregory, "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics," 239-240. For the treatments by Tsung-mi and Chinul, see *KAZ*, 291-294

9 *Wu-chiao chang* 1, T 45:481b16-18, see *KAZ*, 241, 244. See also Liu, "P'an-chiao System," 34, and Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 34

10 See Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 57 n. 24, summarizing the research of Kamata Shigeo, who suggests that the Ox-head (Niu-t'ou) school of middle Ch'an exerted the most influence over Ch'eng-kuan's thought

11 *Ta-fang kuang fo hua-yen ching sui-shu yen-i ch'ao*, T 36:62b1-4. See Liu, "P'an-chiao System," 34, and Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 42

12 See Gregory's discussion in "Sudden Teaching," 42-43

13 See *KAZ*, 90-91 nn. 184, 185, the relevant passages from Tsung-mi's works are excerpted in Jan Yun-hua, "Tsung-mi: His Analysis of Ch'an Buddhism," *T'oung Pao* 58 (1972): 41-50. See also the discussion in the introduction to *KAZ*, 39, and nn. 183-185

14 See summary in Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 44-45

15 *Ch'an-yuan chu-ch'üan chi tou-hsü* 3, T 48:407b-408a, excerpted by Chinul in *Pöpchip pyörrhaengnok chöryo pyöngip sagi*, in *KAZ*, 292, see also Chinul's discussion in *KAZ*, 292-304

- 16 Compare Gregory's "Sudden Teaching," 49-50
- 17 *Ch'an-yüan chu-ch'uan chi tou-hsu* 3, T 48 407c6-12, Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 48-49
- 18 For these links see Gregory, "Sudden Teaching," 45
- 19 See, for example, the searing criticism of Tsung-mi by Chueh-fan Huihung (1071-1128), the noted Sung historiographer and third-generation master in the Huang-lung lineage of the Lin-chi school, in his *Lin-chien-lu*, translated in *KAZ*, 347-348 n 69 Note also the traducement of Tsung-mi by Le-t'an K'owen (alt Chen-ching) (1025-1101), who called Tsung-mi "a rank-smelling guy who brings ruin on ordinary men" (*p'o fan-fu sao-ch'ou han*), quoted with approval by Ta-hui in *Ta-hui yu-lu* 30, T 47 941a3-4
- 20 *KAZ*, 241
- 21 *KAZ*, 249, and 242, quote is from *Liu-tsu t'an ching* (Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch) T 48 356b, and cf *KAZ*, 242-243, where the dharmadhātu is equated with the one mind For a full discussion of this process see *KAZ*, 247-249, and Robert E Buswell, Jr, "Chinul's Synthesis of Chinese Meditative Techniques in Korean Sōn Buddhism," in Peter N Gregory, ed, *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no 4 (Honolulu University of Hawaii Press, 1986)
- 22 *KAZ*, 252-253
- 23 *KAZ*, 217
- 24 *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (Transmission of the Lamp, Compiled During the Ching-te Reign-period) 8, T 51 262c, quoted in *KAZ*, 247
- 25 *Liu-tsu t'an ching*, T 48 357c, quoted in *KAZ*, 247
- 26 "Barrel" refers to the "lacquer barrel" (Ch *ch'i-t'ung*, Kor *ch'ilt'ong*), an expression first used by Hsueh-feng I-ts'un (822-908) It is used as a symbol for ignorance, which is like a black-lacquer barrel that allows no light to enter Breaking the lacquer barrel is enlightenment See *Pi-yen lu* (Blue Cliff Record) 1, case 5, T 48 144c
- 27 *KAZ*, 248, and 213-214
- 28 *Ch'eng-tao ko*, T 48 396a-b, quoted in *KAZ*, 212-213, and 162, 172, 248
- 29 *KAZ*, 248
- 30 See Chinul's discussion in *KAZ*, 249
- 31 *Tā-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*, T 32 576a, cf Yoshito S Hakeda, trans, *The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* (New York Columbia University Press, 1967), 32-34 Quoted in *KAZ*, 243
- 32 See *KAZ*, 241-242, and cf *KAZ*, 295-296, and my discussion at *KAZ*, 358-359 n 143, for Tsung-mi's view
- 33 *KAZ*, 244
- 34 *KAZ*, 203
- 35 "Universal brightness is the essence of the fruition wisdom of the dharmadhātu" *Hsin Hua-yen ching lun* 7, T 36 762b3
- 36 Note Chinul's summary "We know that the sea of characteristics of the ten bodies of Vairocana Buddha, the perfected fruition wisdom, is entirely the Buddha of the mind's own wisdom of universal brightness According to what an individual's faculties can bear, it manifests what appear to be external characteristics, the regalia of his world and his person are, however, originally not external things Since the measure of the mind's own wisdom of universal brightness is equal to the *dharmadhātu* and the whole of space, that wisdom's forms and functions are by nature free they may be one or many, great or small, sentient beings or Buddhas" *KAZ*, 208
- 37 *KAZ*, 208

- 38 KAZ, 241
- 39 KAZ, 242, and note Li T'ung-hsüan's comment "First, enter in faith through acquired understanding, later, unite [with the unimpeded *dharmadhātu*] through thoughtlessness" *Hsin Hua-yen ching lun* 17, T 36 834b, quoted in KAZ, 242, 250
- 40 KAZ, 249-250
- 41 KAZ, 251, and 213 See also Chinul's discussion at KAZ, 321-322
- 42 See Robert A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1978) 35-37 Calling the Mahāyāna inception doctrine apophatic does not of course mean that the Chinese portrayed Prāsangika-Madhyamaka doctrine correctly Indeed, a solid case might be made that Indo-Tibetan Prāsangika places as much emphasis upon kataphatic affirmation (*mahākarunā*) as it does upon absolute negation (*śūnyatā*) Within all Chinese doctrinal taxonomies, however, any such parallels between the Mahāyāna inception teaching and Hua-yen or Ch'an would have been summarily rejected, and to claim otherwise is a distortion of the primary thrust of the East Asian Buddhist tradition David Kalupahana's related claim (*Buddhist Philosophy A Historical Analysis* [Honolulu University Press of Hawaii, 1976], 170-176) that Ch'an Buddhism developed under the influence of the Hīmayāna teachings of the Chinese *Āgamas* may, for similar reasons, be ignored
- 43 See, for example, the samples of Ch'an dialogue cited by Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," 36-37 Perhaps the prime exemplar of a "Madhyamaka" approach to Ch'an would be Niu-t'ou Fa-jung (594-657), for his records, see Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism Selected from The Transmission of the Lamp* (New York Pantheon Books, 1969), 17-26 I should note, however, that for the purposes of this essay, I am discussing Ch'an as it has been covered in theoretical treatments by Ch'an exegetes, not according to the teachings of the *kung-an* collections and discourse-records Given the style of these latter genres of Ch'an literature, they can support virtually anything one might wish to claim about Ch'an when taken out of their traditional praxis context
- 44 Ta-hui criticizes the doctrine of emptiness as involving "interpretations based solely on maintaining the void-calmness of indifference—that is, to teach people to rest until they attain a nescience wherein they are like earth, wood, tile, or rock" *Ta-hui yu-lu* 19, T 47 891a, quoted in KAZ, 337
- 45 This misconstruction is found in Liu ("P'an-chiao System," 35), who does acknowledge elsewhere the parallels between Ch'an and the complete teaching
- 46 *Hua-yen yu-hsin fa-chieh chi*, T 45 650b19-23, this passage is quoted in Liu ("P'an-chiao System," 39) and should have cautioned him about the difficulties inherent in his earlier statement
- 47 The "three mysterious gates" were methods of instruction first used by Lin-chi I-hsuan (d. 866) and subsequently adopted by Fa-yen Wen-i (885-958), Yun-men Wen-yen (862?-949), and Fen-yang Shan-chao (947-1024) See *Lin-chi lu*, T 47 497a19-20, Ruth Fuller Sasaki, trans., *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), 6, and Lin-chi's biographies in *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 12, T 51 291a14 and 300b24 For their use by Fen-yang Shan-chao, see *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 13, T 51 305a17, and *Hsü ch'uan-teng lu* 1, T 51 469b20 For Fa-yen and Yun-men, see KAZ, 250 For their treatment by Chinul, see KAZ, 214-215, 244-245
- 48 See KAZ, 240-241 for discussion of these two aspects of *hwadu* investigation
- 49 The terms "live-word" and "dead-word" are attributed to Tung-shan

Shou-ch'u (d. 990), a disciple of Yun-men Wen-yen (862?-949), see Chang, *Original Teachings*, 271. The terms are also used by Ta-hui, from whom Chmul and the later Korean tradition adopted them, see, for example, *Ta-hui yu-lu* 14, T 47 870b et passim, note also Chinul's discussion at KAZ, 240. For a Vajrayāna version of the live-word/dead-word notion, see Michael Broido, "Does Tibetan Hermeneutics Throw Any Light on *Sandhābhāsa*?" *Journal of the Tibet Society* 2 (1982) 16-20

50 KAZ, 240

51 *Ta-hui yu-lu* 26, T 47 921c, quoted also in KAZ, 338

52 *Ta-hui yu-lu* 14, T 47 870b, quoted in KAZ, 252

53 Sōsan Hyujōng, *Sōn'ga kugam* (Guide to the Sōn school), trans. Pōpchong (Seoul Chōngūmsa, 1976), 41. See also the discussion by Yōndam Yuil (1720-1799), *Pōpchip pyōrhaengnok chōryo kwamok pyōngip sagi* (Taehūng-sa xylograph, dated 1916, in the Tungguk University archives), fol. 29a12-29b6

54 Tsung-mi, *Ch'an-yuan chu-ch'uan chi tou-hsu* 1, T 48 400a, quoted in KAZ, 251, 321-322. Note also the distinction between scholar and meditator monks (*ganthadurassa bhikkhu* and *vipassanadhurassa bhikkhu*) in the Pali commentarial tradition, Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: An Anthropological and Historical Study* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 168-169

55 Robert Gimello's hypothesis ("Li T'ung-hsuan and the Practical Dimensions of Hua-yen," in Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen*, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 1 [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983], 346-350) that Chinul may have intended to include Li T'ung-hsuan's writings in the second mystery because he "used language in just such a way as to inspire the transcendence of language" (p. 349) is something of an overstatement of Chinul's generous attitude toward Li, actually, Chinul valued Li's thought principally for the support it lent to orthodox Ch'an soteriological methods. According to Chinul's tripartite division of Ch'an discourse, even the words of this highly regarded commentator would have been relegated to the first mysterious gate because they still involved conceptualization, thus they could not establish the student in thoughtlessness (the access to realization), which occurred through the second gate, the "mystery in the word." This is not, however, to deny Gimello's primary thesis in his essay "that it was the merit of Li T'ung-hsuan's thought to have preserved the insights of Hua-yen in forms that would allow their integration into religious contexts quite unlike those in which Hua-yen was born" (p. 149).

56 For Chinul's enlightenment experiences and the role of texts in bringing them about, see the introduction to KAZ, 20-29

57 These different usages of circular graphics in Chinese Ch'an and Korean Sōn are outlined in Kyung-bo Seo (Sō Kyōngbo), *A Study of Korean Zen Buddhism Approached Through the Chodangchip* (cover title *Han'guk Sōn pulgyo sasang*) (Seoul: Poryōn'gak, 1973), 253-312

58 Sunji's different sets of circles are discussed in his biography in *Chodang chip*, fasc. 20. I have summarized the gist of Sunji's biography in a plain narrative in Peter H. Lee, ed., *Sources of Korean Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming). The "translation" of Sunji's chapter in *Chodang chip* made by Seo in *Korean Zen Buddhism* is filled with errors and should be consulted only in conjunction with the original Chinese text. The section has also been summarized with somewhat greater success in Han Kidu, *Silla sidae ūi Sōn sasang* (Iri Wōn'gwang University Press, 1974), 90-100

59 See Ninian Smart's comments concerning the role of tradition-specific theories of interpretation in the development of a general theory of herme-

neutics, in his essay "Comparative Hermeneutics An Epilogue about the Future," in Michael Pye and Robert Morgan, eds., *The Cardinal Meaning Essays in Comparative Hermeneutics Buddhism and Christianity, Religion and Reason* 6 (The Hague Mouton and Co., 1973), 195-199

Glossary

- Chan-jan 湛然
Ch'an-yuan chu-ch'uan chi tou-hsu 禪原諸
 詮集都序
 ch'ejung-hyön 體中玄
 Chen-chueh 眞覺
 Ch'eng-kuan 澄觀
 cheng-ming 正名
Ch'eng-tao ko 證道歌
 chiao 教
 ch'ilt'ong 漆桶
 chi-mieh li-hsing 寂滅理性
Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu 景德傳燈錄
 Chinul 知訥
 ch'i-t'ung 漆桶
Chodang chip 祖堂集
 chönje 全提
 ch'osim-chi 初心地
 ch'uan 詮
 ch'uan-t'i 全提
 chu-chung hsuan 句中玄
 Chueh-fan Hui-hung 覺範慧洪
 chüngip 證入
 chüngo 證悟
 fa-men 法門
 Fa-tsang 法藏
 Fa-yen 法眼
 Fa-yen Wen-i 法眼文益
 Fen-yang Shan-chao 汾陽善昭
 hao 解悟
 Hamhō Tükt'ong 涵虛得通
 Ho-tse 荷澤
Hsiao-sheng chiao 小乘教
 hsien 顯
Hsin Hua-yen ching lun 新華嚴經論
Hsu Hua-yen lueh-shu k'an-ting chi 續華嚴
 略疏刊定記
 hsuan-chung hsuan 玄中玄
 hua-fa chiao 化法教
 hua-i 化儀
 hua-i chiao 化儀教
 hua-t'ou 話頭
Hua-yen i-sheng chiao-i fen-ch'i chang 華嚴
 一乘教義分齊章
Hua-yen yu-hsin fa-chieh chi 華嚴遊心法
 界記
 Hui-neng 慧能
 Hui-yuan 慧苑
 Hung-chou Shui-liao 洪州水潦
 huo-chu 活句
 hwadu 話頭
 hwalgu 活句
 Hwaöm 華嚴
 hyöjung-hyön 玄中玄
 i-hsin 疑心
 Kao-feng Yuan-miao 高峰原妙
 kongan 公案
 Kuei-feng Tsung-mi 圭峰宗密
 Kuei-yang 僞仰
 kujung-hyön 句中玄
 kung-an 公案
 kyo 教
 kyöngjöl-mun 徑截門
 Le-t an K'o-wen [Chen-ching] 沝潭克
 文[眞淨]
 Li T'ung-hsuan 李通玄
 Lin-chi I-hsuan 臨濟義玄
Lin-chi lu 臨濟錄
Lin-chien-lu 林間錄
 li-shih wu-ai 理事無礙
Liu-tsu t'an chung 六祖壇經
 manhaeng 萬行
 Ma-tsu Tao-i 馬祖道一
 miao-i 妙慧
 miao-yung 妙用
 muac pöpkye 無礙法界
 mubunbyöl-chi 無分別智
 myoyong 妙用
 Nang-yang Hui-chung 南陽慧忠
 p'abyöng 破病
 Paekp'a Küngsön 白坡互璣

p'o fan-fu sao-ch'ou han 破凡夫臊臭漢
 p'o-pmg 破病
 p'u kwang-ming chih 普光明智
 Pi-yen lu 碧嚴錄
 Pöpchip pyörhaengnok choryo kwamok
 pyöngip sagi 法集別行錄節要科目並
 入私記
 Pöpchip pyörhaengnok chöryo pyöngip sagi
 法集別行錄節要並入私記
 saengnyak 省略
 sagu 死句
 samhyön-mun 三玄門
 san-hsuan men 三玄門
 Shen-hsiu 神秀
 Shen-hui 神會
 sheng-lueh 省略
 shih-shih wu-ai 事事無礙
 Sön 禪
 Sön'ga kugam 禪家龜鑑
 Sösan Hyujöng 西山休靜
 ssu-chu 死句
 Sunji 順之(支)
 Ta pan-nieh-p'an ching chi-chieh 大般涅槃
 經集解
 Ta-fang-kuang fo hua-yen chung sui-shu
 yen-i ch'ao 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演
 義鈔

Ta-hui Tsung-kaio 大慧宗杲
 Ta-hui yu-lu 大慧語錄
 Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun 大乘起信論
 Ta-sheng chung-chiao 大乘終教
 Ta-sheng shih-chiao 大乘始教
 ta-tsung hsiang 大總相
 t'i-chung hsuan 體中玄
 tun-chiao 頓教
 Tung-shan Liang-chieh 洞山良介
 Tung-shan Shou-ch'u 洞山守初
 üsim 疑心
 wei-hsin 唯心
 wei-shih 唯識
 Wu-chiao chang 五教章
 Yang-shan Hui-chi 仰山慧寂
 yen 言
 Yöndam Yuil 蓮潭有一
 yong 用
 yuan-chiao 圓教
 Yuan-chueh ching ta-shu ch'ao 圓覺經大
 疏鈔
 yuan-tun chiao 圓頓教
 yu-lu 語錄
 yung 用
 Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh 永嘉玄覺
 Yung-ming Yen-shou 永明延壽
 Yun-men Wen-yen 雲門文偃