


ORTHODOX CHINESE BUDDHISM

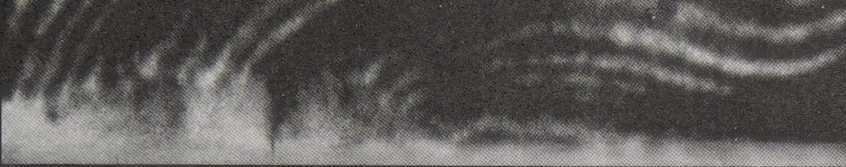
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to
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questions



CHAN MASTER
SHENG YEN



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Orthodox Chinese Buddhism

Other English Publications by Chan Master Sheng Yen

Getting the Buddha Mind

Faith in Mind

The Poetry of Enlightenment

The Infinite Mirror

The Sword of Wisdom

Zen Wisdom

Dharma Drum

Complete Enlightenment

There Is No Suffering

Subtle Wisdom

Illuminating Silence

Hoofprint of the Ox

Song of Mind

Attaining the Way

Orthodox Chinese Buddhism

A Contemporary Chan Master's
Answers to Common Questions



CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN



Translated by Douglas Gildow and Otto Chang
Edited and Annotated by Douglas Gildow



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Sheng Yen interviews meditators at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, New York.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

At the invitation of a Buddhist magazine, I wrote *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism* in the early 1960s while on a solitary retreat in Meinong, a mountainous area in southern Taiwan. Based on early Buddhist scriptures, especially the *Āgama Sūtras*, I addressed topics one by one in a question-and-answer format. Given the vague, confusing semblance of Buddhism which prevailed in Taiwanese society at that time and which had long been prevalent among ordinary Chinese laypeople, my efforts were directed at explaining and clarifying what Buddhism really is. All together, writing this book required slightly over one year's time. My original intention was to write one hundred entries, but because I had a considerable number of meditation and ritual practices to carry out while on retreat, I laid my pen to rest after having completed seventy entries.

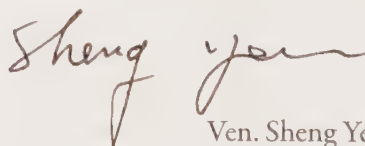
For a time after the book was published in 1965, it did not evoke much attention, for at that time there were very few readers among Taiwanese Buddhists. Furthermore, people eager to read about Buddhism were a lonely group, especially considering that in those days most Chinese literature on Buddhism tended to be abstruse and difficult. But after some ten years, this book of mine gradually became popular among the Chinese-reading public in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. At present, in addition to having been published in Taiwan, numerous copies have been distributed throughout Hong Kong, Singapore, and the People's Republic of China. In total, it is estimated that over three million copies have been issued.

Due to the enthusiastic reception this book received among Chinese readers, people eagerly suggested that it be translated into English so that a larger readership could enjoy its perspectives. In fact, the book was translated into Vietnamese as early as sixteen years ago, and it succeeded

in capturing the attention of Vietnamese readers to become a highly welcomed book in Vietnamese society. As author, I am now very happy to see that an English translation is also coming out. Now the target audience for this edition has changed considerably: no longer directed at a Chinese readership, the book is now meant for an international English readership. Because of the different geographic and historical background of this new readership, I have reconsidered and revised a few of the arguments I made, namely critiques that were reflective of the social environment in which Taiwanese Buddhism was situated when I wrote the book. However, the fundamentals of the Buddha's Dharma will never change.

It required the collective effort of many women and men for this English edition of *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism* to be translated, revised, and supplemented. There are many places where the content of this edition differs from what I originally wrote in Chinese, but within the translated text I have gone over each correction, deletion, or addition one by one in order to approve the final draft. Therefore, although I did not produce the translated English text myself, the text is still my own.

Finally, I give my heartfelt thanks to those who gave considerable time, effort, and thought in producing this translation, namely the translators, proofreaders, editors, and publishers. I hope that this book's publication will be a small contribution to English readers worldwide.



Ven. Sheng Yen
January 2007

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The Venerable Sheng Yen is one of the best-known Buddhist monks in both the West and the Chinese-speaking world. Since his life history has already been told in many other places,¹ here we will provide only a brief biographical sketch, after which we will explain the historical background of this book and the process by and assumptions under which it has been translated into English.

Born in a rural area near Shanghai on 22 January 1931, Sheng Yen became a novice monk at a local monastery at age 12.² By 1949 the Nationalist government was in disarray and by October was overthrown by the Chinese Communist Party. In that year Sheng Yen, by then living in a monastery in Shanghai, enlisted in the Nationalist army and was transferred to Taiwan, to which the Nationalist Party retreated and has been confined to the present day. He served in the military until he left and received tonsure in 1960 to become a novice monk under the Venerable Dongchu. In October of the following year he was ordained as a full monk.

From November 1961 until February 1968, other than teaching for the 1966–67 academic year in a Buddhist seminary, Sheng Yen spent virtually all of his time in Chaoyuan Monastery in southern Taiwan. Here he devoted his efforts to his personal studies and meditation practices. He also underwent two extended periods of solitary retreat while in the monastery, during which he performed ritual repentances, meditated, and wrote articles and several books [see photographs on pages 129–131].³ Following these retreats and some teaching in Taiwan, from 1969 to 1975 he stayed in Japan to earn his master's and doctoral degrees from Risshō University, Tokyo, for research done on Buddhist history and doctrine. After graduation and with the encouragement of Bantetsugyū Rōshi, a

Japanese Zen master under whom he had practiced while in Japan, in 1976 Sheng Yen went to New York City under the sponsorship of the Chinese Buddhist Association of the United States and began to teach Chan Buddhism. From 1978 to the present, Sheng Yen has divided his time equally between his monasteries in New York and Taipei, Taiwan. He is well known as a Chan master, author, educator, and participant in interreligious dialog worldwide.⁴

This book is a translation of *Zhengxin de fojiao* (lit. “correct belief Buddhism”), which was first published as a book in May 1965. Sheng Yen originally wrote the entries for the book while in solitary retreat in Chaoyuan Monastery in southern Taiwan.⁵ *Zhengxin de fojiao* is one of his best known books: over three million copies have been printed. In addition, it is widely available on the Internet and has been translated into Vietnamese.⁶ Although first published in 1965, to this day *Zhengxin de fojiao* is read in Buddhist reading and discussion groups and is distributed to participants in activities sponsored by Dharma Drum Mountain, the Buddhist organization that Sheng Yen founded.

The original target audience for the book was Taiwanese intellectuals in the 1960s. Yet the questions Sheng Yen raises have continued to be engaging to Chinese-speaking people, both Buddhists and those interested in Buddhism, to the present day. We sincerely hope that this translation will be interesting and useful to English-speaking individuals as well. In particular, this translation should be welcomed by English speakers who are interested in Buddhism either because they themselves practice Buddhism or simply because they would like to learn more about it. While many introductory books on Buddhism are available, this one is different in that it focuses on modern Chinese Buddhism from the perspective of a monk who is both a distinguished meditation instructor as well as a scholar. We hope that it not only dispels ignorance and confusion about Buddhism, but also stimulates readers to consider new questions and approaches to Buddhism. We also hope the book, perhaps in conjunction with the Chinese edition, will prove helpful to students who are learning the conventions of what is sometimes called “Buddhist Hybrid English,” a kind of English that contains liberal doses

of foreign and newly coined words in order to more accurately translate Asian Buddhist writings.

We have translated the title as *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism* because on one hand the book does focus on Chinese Buddhism, meaning here the Buddhism of the Chinese-speaking world both in China and in ethnic Chinese communities around the globe. On the other hand, the Chinese term *zhengxin* in the book's title corresponds very well to the English word "orthodox," which here means "sound or correct in opinion or doctrine, especially theological or religious doctrine."⁷ *Zheng* and *ortho-* both mean "correct," and *xin* and *-dox* both mean "belief." For doctrines or beliefs to be orthodox means that they are in accordance with certain texts that a religious community, in this case various orders of East Asian Buddhist monastics, consider authoritative.

In the Chinese-speaking world, Buddhists who label themselves "orthodox" often make efforts to confirm that their beliefs are based on authoritative texts. In large part their hope is to distinguish truly Buddhist beliefs and practices from folk customs and from Daoism. The word orthodox does not, however, imply that there is a separate denomination or branch of "orthodox Buddhists," or that Buddhists who label themselves orthodox are necessarily more conservative than other Buddhists. In fact, in Taiwan the opposite is often the case: many Buddhists who call themselves orthodox tend to be involved in rational discussion about beliefs and practices, and even tend to be more progressive than Buddhists who follow customary traditions unquestioningly. So unlike Orthodox Judaism, to cite a term the reader may be more familiar with, the term "orthodox Buddhism" is much less formalized and does not indicate a distinct branch of Buddhism or imply a conservative approach.

Otto Chang, a professor at California State University, San Bernardino, translated the first draft of this book in the year 2000 while on a sabbatical at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Ting-hua Chou, librarian at the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association Library in Singapore, had told him that many young Singaporeans had trouble reading Chinese and that they hoped to have *Zhengxin de*

fojiao translated into English. Chang's translation was a generous gift intended to help propagation of the Dharma. In addition to translating the core text, he reorganized the entries into five sections, a format we have kept, albeit the content and order of the entries within each section have been modified.

In the fall of 2000, I was recruited to work as a translator in the Dharma Drum Mountain's International Affairs Office, located in Nongchan Monastery, Taipei. One of my jobs was to revise Chang's translation. In consultation with my colleagues and supervisor, it was decided that I would perform an extensive revision such that the translation would mirror the Chinese original more closely.

Since the original was written for Taiwanese intellectuals in the 1960s, and there was a huge gap in the background knowledge between the original audience and our new target audience, I added annotations to help bridge this gap. These annotations are intended to provide additional facts and context to help the reader better understand the text. I also corrected factual mistakes and inconsistencies in the original; such changes have been directly approved by Sheng Yen or by his trusted disciples. Finally, I made sure that references were provided for all the passages Sheng Yen had cited and also composed appendixes, a glossary, a bibliography, and a list of the Han characters that correspond to the romanized Chinese and Japanese words that appear in the translated text.

In the summer of 2005, by which time I had already left Taiwan for two years and was completing an M.A. thesis at Harvard University on Taiwanese Buddhism, Iris Wang of Dharma Drum Publications asked me to work out a final version of the text. Wei Tan served as reader and brought to my attention passages in which the accuracy or clarity of the translation could be improved. Wang and Tan also believed that some parts of the text, although translated accurately, should be changed or deleted in order to broaden the potential audience of the book. Therefore, in consultation with the author, a number of short passages were modified or deleted, and one technical entry of little interest to people who are not literate in Chinese was deleted.

Otto Chang would like to give his thanks to the following for their assistance in facilitating or assisting his initial translation: his wife Corinna Chang, Sheng-hwa Chou, Ting-hwa Chou, Lily Chin, Sam Chin, Guogu, Ven. Guoguang, Gilbert Gutierrez and his students, Rosa Kung, Stan Kung, Jane Lin, Paul Lin, and Siew-geok Oh. He also thanks Ven. Sheng Yen for giving him this opportunity to learn the Dharma and to benefit others.

In addition to Otto Chang, Wei Tan, and Iris Wang, whose roles were mentioned above, I would like to thank my supervisor, Ven. Changzhi, and my colleagues, Antonio Hsieh and Justin Ritzinger, from the International Affairs Office of Dharma Drum Mountain. I often consulted with them and we discussed at length how to translate technical Buddhist terms into English. I also thank Wei-jen Teng for looking over most of the translation and searching for mistakes involving Sanskrit, Pali, and literary Chinese, and manuscript editor Howard Goodman for improving the readability of the book as a whole. Finally, I give my thanks to the following individuals, whose help ranged from advice on the translation of one or more terms to general advice about translation and publishing: Marcus Bingenheimer, Ven. Chang Wen, Yirong Fang, Rupert Gethin, Peter Gregory, Ven. Guoche, Ven. Guoguang, Ven. Guoxing, Bear Hsiung, Debin Huang, John Kieschnick, Jan Nattier, Richard Payne, Charles Prebish, Ven. Shuyu, Daniel Stevenson, Min Ting, Mingmei Yip, and Brook Ziporyn. Finally, I thank Ven. Sheng Yen for granting me three personal interviews and several rounds of correspondence via email to discuss general policies regarding the translation methodology and corrections or clarifications in thirty-some passages. I am fully responsible for any mistakes in translation that may remain.

Douglas M. Gildow
January 2007

CONVENTIONS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND NOTES

1. Unlabeled Indic words in the text are in Sanskrit, rather than Pali, with the exceptions of the Pali words *bhikkhus* and *Tipiṭaka*. A rough guide to Sanskrit pronunciation for the general reader follows: pronounce *c* as “ch” as in “church,” *ś* and *ṣ* as “sh” as in “ship,” *th* like the “th” in “hot-head,” and ignore all other diacritical marks. For an excellent guide to the pronunciation of Sanskrit, see Coulson 1976, 4–21.
2. A small number of the Sanskrit words, such as *Kumārajīva*, *Mitrakīrti*, and *Śrīgupta*, are actually *assumptive* Sanskrit words; that is, hypothetical reconstructions made by retranslating back into Sanskrit from other languages. To reduce visual distractions, such assumptive Sanskrit words have not been denoted as such, except in the bibliography, where they are marked with an asterisk. For more on assumptive Sanskrit words, see Hirakawa 1997.
3. Chinese words have been romanized according to the Hanyu Pinyin system, but are displayed without marks for tones, except in the endnotes, bibliography, and character list. A one-sentence guide to some potentially perplexing letters of Pinyin follows: pronounce *c* as “t’s” as in “it’s,” *q* as “ch” as in “chat,” *x* as “s” as in “sure” and *zh* as “dg” as in “dredge.” For more on pronouncing Pinyin, including audio files, see Jordan n.d. and Hu 1997.
4. Japanese words are romanized according to the Hepburn system.
5. Foreign-language glosses are indicated by the following abbreviations:

C. Mandarin Chinese	P. Pali
J. Japanese	S. Sanskrit.

All unlabeled foreign-language glosses are in Mandarin Chinese.
6. Unless labeled otherwise, in the translated text all words enclosed in parentheses other than dates and foreign-language glosses are Sheng Yen’s, and all words enclosed in square brackets are Gildow’s.

7. Notes by both Sheng Yen (labeled *Author*) and Gildow (labeled *Trans.*) appear together as endnotes. To distinguish substantive notes, which the general reader may wish to consult, from citation notes (notes that refer to sources or provide cross-references but do not provide other information), which many readers may choose to ignore, an asterisk appears after each notation number that refers to a substantive note.

8. Terms that have entries in the glossary are in semi-bold letterfaces the first and sometimes the second time they appear.

9. References to texts in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–1932) are referred to by a T followed by serial number, a colon, volume number, a period, page number, register, and line number. So the citation *T 1442: 23.871b25–27* refers lines 25–27 in register b on page 871 of volume 23 of the *Taishō*, and this citation is in the text with serial number 1442.

10. References to texts in the *Dàzàng xīnzuǎn wàn xùzàngjīng* 大藏新纂卅續藏經 (Baima jingshe yinjing hui 1989), or the *Xùzàngjīng* for short, are indicated by XZJ and otherwise follow the same format as references to the *Taishō*: so *XZJ 1565: 80.111a9–12* refers to lines 9–12 in register a, page 111, volume 80, in text number 1565. These references are to the reprint edition that the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) has used to digitize selected texts from the *Xùzàngjīng*.

11. Note that all texts which are cited from the *Taishō* and the *Xùzàngjīng* are available online from the CBETA website (<http://www.cbeta.org>).

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

1.1 What Are Orthodox Buddhist Beliefs and Practices?

In **Buddhism** itself, there is no distinction between orthodox and superstitious, since the fundamental teachings are the same everywhere. Buddhism flows out from the sea of wisdom and compassion that was engendered by Śākyamuni, the enlightened Buddha. Its teachings are full of wisdom, kindness, radiance, comfort, freshness, and coolness. Buddhism as a religion is alive in the communities that have been established based on the Buddha's teachings.

The term *orthodox Buddhism* implies correct faith, proper vows, right understanding, upright behavior, and genuine trust. Such authentic faith should be placed in teachings that are (1) timeless, (2) universal, and (3) necessary.¹ In other words, the teachings should have always been true in the past, should be true everywhere in the present, and should infallibly be true in the future.

Faith or reliance on a principle or a thing that fails to meet these three criteria is not correct faith and is therefore superstition. If a religion's doctrines cannot stand the test of time, are incompatible with the environment, or cannot further develop in the face of change, the religion is superstitious.

It cannot be denied that in regions where **Mahāyāna** [lit. "Great Vehicle"] Buddhism is practiced, especially in China, authentic Buddhism has largely been the privilege of isolated, eminent monks and

small numbers of gentry-scholars. Buddhism has seldom been correctly understood and practiced by the general populace, whose religious practice is actually a potpourri of **Confucianism**, **Daoism**, and Buddhism. For instance, practices such as worshipping gods and ghosts, and beliefs that people automatically become ghosts after death, are not Buddhist teachings.

1.2 Is the Buddha the Creator?

No. Orthodox Buddhism does not have the idea of a world-creator. The Buddha is an enlightened one among humans, and although he is capable of knowing all the truths in the world, he cannot change what has already occurred. And although the Buddha can help all sentient beings reach liberation, only those who make efforts can succeed. He is the best doctor to diagnose sentient beings' suffering: anybody who takes his prescriptions will be delivered [released from adversity]. But he cannot help those who are unwilling to take his medicine. He is the best guide: anyone who follows his guidelines will be liberated from the world's sea of suffering. But he cannot help those who do not take his advice. The Buddha never thought of himself as a creator, and he never wanted his believers merely to worship him in rituals. Anyone who lives his teachings has truly seen him and is paying him the highest respect. Otherwise, one has not truly seen the Buddha, even if he or she personally greeted him in ancient India. So we see that the Buddha is not the Creator, nor is he an omnipotent, sovereign God.

Rather, the Buddha is only an instructor who teaches people the methods to relieve themselves of suffering and gain happiness. The Buddha himself has done this, but he cannot do it for us. He is a great educator, the teacher of gods and humans, not a magician or an illusionist. He didn't claim that he could "redeem people's sins," and he insisted that we are responsible for our own conduct and the consequences it brings, just like the old Chinese proverb says: "If you plant squash, you will harvest squash; if you plant beans, you will harvest beans."

1.3 What Does the Word Buddha Mean?

The word *buddha* comes from Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language. It means enlightened or awakened: awakened not just oneself but also awakening others; awakening to the knowledge and truth of all things at all times. Thus, a Buddha is sometimes called an omniscient human being or a “fully enlightened one.”

The historical Buddha was born to this world as Prince Siddhārtha Gautama of Kapilavastu more than 2500 years ago in 623 BCE.² After he became enlightened, he was referred to by the epithet Śākyamuni. *Śākya* was his clan’s name, and *muni* was a respectful term for a sage in ancient India. Śākyamuni was the founder of Buddhism.

Śākyamuni is the only Buddha in historical records. But in his teachings, we see that there were other Buddhas long ago in the ancient past, that there will be Buddhas in the future, and that even now there are Buddhas in other worlds. So **Buddhists** do not proclaim Śākyamuni Buddha to be the one and only Buddha; rather, they recognize the existence of infinite Buddhas in the past, present, and future. They even believe that all sentient beings (which include humans and animals), regardless of whether they believe in Buddhism or not, have the potential to become Buddhas. Buddhist teachings proclaim that “a Buddha is an enlightened sentient being, and a sentient being is a Buddha who has not yet become enlightened.” An **ordinary person** and a **noble one** differ in their levels of spiritual development, but both are equal in possessing **buddha-nature**, the potential to become a Buddha. Therefore, Buddhists do not worship the Buddha as the one and only God, nor do they believe in the existence of any creator-god. So [in this sense], a Buddhist is an atheist.

1.4 Where Did the Universe and Life Come From?

While Buddhists do not believe in the existence of a creator-god, the existence of the universe cannot be doubted, nor can the existence of life be denied. According to Buddhism, the most basic elements that

comprise the universe are **empty** of **self-nature**, and the elements that comprise life are also devoid of self-nature. This lack of a separate self-nature, called **emptiness**, is the only unchanging truth in the universe. That it is an unchanging truth implies that emptiness has no beginning and no ending: emptiness is the true state in which the universe and life have always existed.

Buddhists believe that all phenomena, including change in the universe and the cycle of birth and death, are consequences of the **karma** [intentional actions] of sentient beings. **Karmic energy** refers to the causal force produced by sentient beings' behavior, good or bad, which continually permeates or "colors" the field of consciousness (*shitian*)—the primary element of life. Karmic energy waits in the field of consciousness for the right external conditions to induce it to sprout and grow. This process is similar to planting seeds in the soil: the seeds wait for the inducement of sun, air, and water to sprout and grow. In Buddhism, this process is called the activation of karmic energy. Performing karmic action is the cause for activation of karmic energy, whereas the activation of karmic energy is the fruit of karma. The adage "There are always consequences to doing good or evil" describes this principle.

Karma can be done individually, or collectively enacted by a group of people. Some karma, though individually performed, may be the same as other people's karma. And some, though collectively performed, may vary in degree among the group members. Thus, karma can be understood in two general categories: collective, or shared, karma and individual, or non-shared, karma.

Due to collective karma, beings receive the same karmic recompense. For example, the earth is engendered by the karmic energies of the countless past, present, and future beings of our world. Infinite worlds exist throughout the universe, each formed according to the distinct collective karma of different groups of beings. So if it turns out that there really are human beings on Mars, a Martian would not necessarily take the same physical form as a human living on Earth. Even the stars

and planets without life are the karmic consequences of sentient beings, as these celestial bodies serve as the backdrop to the stage in which sentient beings live. In short, each and every thing in the universe exists for some reason. For example, the Sun could not possibly support life. But without the Sun, life on Earth could not survive. Although there are a lot of things whose reason for existing cannot be proved scientifically, Buddhists believe they are engendered by sentient beings' karmic energy, which is the reason they exist.

As for the first appearance of life on Earth, Buddhists believe that all living beings, from single-celled organisms to human beings, first emerged on this planet through **spontaneous birth**.

After the earth was formed, beings from the sixth heaven in the **realm of form**, the Heaven of Light-Sound, flew down to Earth and became the first human beings.³ But on Earth they fell into bad habits, craving for and becoming attached to a certain natural food. This food made them so heavy that they could no longer fly, so they settled here.⁴ Actually, this was just the consequence of their karma: after they had exhausted their karmic rewards of staying in the heavens, they had to descend to Earth to receive retribution for previous actions. Similarly, since Earth was engendered by collective karma of sentient beings, it is inevitable for these beings to experience the karmic result of life on Earth. After the karmic energies that lead one to live on Earth dissipate, other, new, karma may cause one to live on other worlds.

Because of non-shared karma, sentient beings on the same Earth take forms of differing status, from insects to humans. Among humans, some are born poor, others rich; some are intelligent, others foolish—they differ in countless ways.

In fact, from a broad perspective shared karma can itself be a kind of non-shared karma. For example, the karma shared by all the sentient beings on Earth is not shared by sentient beings in other worlds. Similarly, non-shared karma can itself be shared karma. For instance, to be born as a black African or a yellow Asian is the result of different karma; yet both share the karma to be humans on Earth. By reasoning

through analogy, we can see that people within one country differ in countless ways, and even siblings have different personalities, achievements, and feelings toward life experiences.

This entry describes how Buddhism views the existence and the origin of our universe and life.

1.5 What Is the Fundamental Doctrine of Buddhism?

That there are a vast number of Buddhist **scriptures** is well known. So no one can say definitively which **sūtra** or sūtras are representative of Buddhism. Largely for this reason many schools of Buddhism emerged in China, each based on the perspective of particular sūtras or treatises.

Nonetheless, there is a fundamental doctrine common to all Buddhism—what the Buddha discovered about life and the universe—the truth of **conditioned arising**, also known as dependent origination.

Simply put, conditioned arising means that things originate from **causes and conditions**, or alternatively, combinations of different factors produce all phenomena. For instance, for an article to be written, reach the hands of a reader, and help the reader understand something about Buddhism, the sequence of causal relations (causes and conditions) may appear simple but is actually exceedingly complex. First, a writing system must be developed and the author must master it. The author must absorb and accumulate knowledge. Then the author must have good health, enthusiasm, and understanding. Other necessary factors include the manufacture and use of stationery; proofing, typesetting, and printing; and handling and delivery of the mail. Finally, to satisfy the author's purpose in writing the article, the readers need to be interested, intelligent, and motivated to read. This example of conditioned arising is only the simplest and the most obvious. If we investigate further, we will see that any single relationship is necessarily connected to innumerable other relationships. Such interdependency among relationships is what is meant by "causes and conditions." Things arise when causes and conditions come together, and things pass away

when causes and conditions disperse. This is the doctrine of dependent origination and extinction.

Because everything in the universe arises and passes away according to conditions, everything is impermanent and constantly changing; hence, Buddhists consider all phenomena provisional, temporary, and illusory.⁵ From a tiny bubble to the whole Earth, or even the stars, nothing is everlasting. If nothing is permanent and substantial, this proves that everything is empty. This is what is meant when it's said in Buddhism that all phenomena are "dependently originated and [therefore] empty of [inherent] nature" (*yuansheng xingkong*).

Because of this doctrine, Buddhism is often known as the "way of emptiness." But many people gravely misunderstand the true meaning of emptiness. Emptiness means that nothing is fixed or unchanging. It means non-substantiality rather than non-existence. Many people misinterpret emptiness to signify that nothing exists. Buddhists use the concept of conditioned arising to analyze things and to demonstrate their lack of substance. For instance a car, if analyzed from the perspective of a chemist, is no longer a car but a compound of various elements and the bonds among them. Viewed from its outside appearance, a car is still a car, unless it has been damaged to the point that it is ready to be recast in a smelting furnace.

Buddhists say that everything arises from conditions and hence is empty of self-nature in order to analyze and shed light on the essential nature of things. It reminds us that we are living in a world of non-substantiality and illusion, and therefore had better not become captive to transitory fame, wealth, or desire for objects. To realize this is to see through the illusory nature of phenomena or to drop the endless greed for fame, wealth, and objects. The existence of phenomena is never denied. Although Buddhists say that phenomena are devoid of substance, they recognize that their lives do not exist apart from illusory phenomena, because those not liberated from birth and death still produce karma and receive karmic results. Karmic force is also illusory, yet it can propel beings to higher or lower states to experience happiness or suffering.

At this point, please be reminded that the illusory manifestation and existence of all phenomena stem from the karmic forces engendered by sentient beings. So if one thoroughly realizes the conditioned and empty nature of phenomena, one will not be lured and burdened by illusory phenomena, becoming their slave. One will be at ease and free from afflictions and delusions. This is the fulfillment of the practice of liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Anyone who is no longer pushed around by external phenomena can stop producing karma, which binds us to the cycle of birth and death. He can leave behind birth and death, or he can choose to control his own birth and death.

1.6 What Are the Basic Dogmas of Buddhism?

In principle, Buddhism has no dogmas. What are closest to being dogmatic are the precepts. But precepts for Buddhists are not a covenant with God, so they are not mysterious as in some religions. Precepts in Buddhism come from principles of ethics and are hence purely rational.

The basic rules of conduct for Buddhists are the five precepts and the ten good deeds or virtues, although the specific precepts someone takes vary according to what class of practitioner he or she is. For example, for laypeople, there are the five precepts, the ten good deeds, and the eight precepts; for monastics, there are the ten precepts, the *bhikṣu* precepts, and the *bhikṣuṇī* precepts; and in the *Mahāyāna* tradition, there are the *bodhisattva* precepts. All these precepts, however, are based on the five precepts and ten good deeds. In other words, other precepts are extensions and detailed sub-branches of the five precepts and ten good deeds. Therefore, if one can keep the five precepts and carry out the ten good deeds, the rest will not be so difficult to follow.

The five precepts are abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct (unchastity),⁶ verbal misconduct, and drinking alcohol. The ten good deeds are extensions and expansions of the five precepts, and require one to perform good deeds as well as abstain from misdeeds, as shown in figure 1.

In summary, the Buddhist precepts are to commit no evil and to perform all good. Any act harmful to one's physical or mental health, family, society, country, to humanity, or to any sentient being falls under the scope of five precepts, and therefore should not be committed.



FIGURE 1. THE FIVE PRECEPTS AND THE TEN GOOD DEEDS

Anything truly beneficial to one's own or to another's welfare should be carried out with all effort. To commit evil violates the precepts, and not to perform good deeds violates the precepts, too.

However, Buddhism is broad-minded. If someone is unaware that certain behavior violates the precepts, such behavior does not count as an infraction.⁷ Also, if someone has no intention to violate the precepts, even if she breaks them she is not guilty [that is, does not generate the negative karma] of the transgression. On the other hand, if someone harbors the intention to break the precepts, even if she ends up not breaking them, she bears some guilt [produces negative karmic energy]. For instance, if a woman is raped, she is still considered pure and not guilty of violating the precepts as long as she does not feel lustful pleasure during the rape, even though physically she was involved in an improper act. One is guilty of fully transgressing the precepts only when one actually, intentionally, and successfully carries out the violation.

1.7 What Are the Truths of Buddhism?

In the “*Tattvārtha*” chapter of the *Yogācārabhūmi Treatise*, truth is called “reality” (*S. tattva*; *C. zhenshi*).⁸ Four broad categories of reality are discussed:

- 1 *Reality according to worldly consent* refers to reality as understood by ordinary beings who understand things based on categorizing and on common sense arising from habit. This reality is further divided into two groups: (a) reality as understood by unenlightened, non-human species; and (b) reality as understood by unenlightened humans, whose illusory understanding stems from what they observe in nature and from habit.
- 2 *Reality accepted according to logical reasoning* refers to reality expressed as theories which scholars arrive at by research and/or reasoning. It includes four kinds: (a) truths scientists reach by experimentation; (b) truths philosophers reach by intellectual inquiry; (c) truths theists reach through contact with a God or gods; and (d)

truths reached through meditation by those who practice mental stabilization and concentration.

3 *Reality of cognitive activity purified of the afflictive hindrances* refers to the reality realized by the transcendent noble ones through liberating insight. This reality is subdivided into two categories: (a) the truth of the emptiness of **self** (S. *pudgala-nairātmya* or *ātma-nairātmya*; C. *wokong*) realized by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas of the **Nikāya** path; and (b) the truth of the emptiness of self partially realized by Mahāyāna noble ones.

4 *Reality of cognitive activity purified of the noetic hindrances* refers to the reality of the emptiness of phenomena (S. *dharmā-nairātmya*; C. *fa-kong*) realized by the full **enlightenment** of Mahāyāna noble ones. This reality is also subdivided into two categories: (a) the reality of a bodhisattva's partial realization of the emptiness of phenomena; and (b) the reality of the emptiness of phenomena realized by a completely enlightened Buddha.

Buddhists do not arbitrarily form opinions, and do not rashly deny the truths of others. Instead, they categorize and rank various kinds of truth, putting each in its appropriate place and giving each the value it deserves. One kind of theistic religion frequently rejects the value of anything different from its own beliefs, calling such things “satanic.” Buddhists will never act in such an imperious manner. They accept all four types of reality discussed above as truths: it is just that some truths are more lofty and profound than others.

Among the so-called truths in this world, those least able to stand up to testing are the truths of common sense. What's accepted as common sense in the past often becomes today's joke, and what people believe is common sense in one place is often a topic of humorous gossip elsewhere. Truths discovered by students of various disciplines—whether discovered through experiment, reasoning, mystical experiences from contact with a God or gods, or cultivation of body and mind through breathing exercises and meditation—may be true to a certain extent, but such truth is always temporary, illusory,⁹ partial, and provisional; it is not eternal and unchanging.

Attaining the highest truth of Buddhism is a result of having realized the emptiness of self and of phenomena. Upon realizing the emptiness of self, one breaks off the afflictive hindrances and is liberated from *saṃsāra*; upon realizing the emptiness of phenomena, one breaks off the noetic hindrances and will not abide in *nirvāṇa*. The *Diamond Sūtra* explains [how an enlightened one perceives] the emptiness of self with the phrase “there is no conception of a self, an individual identity, a being, or a personal soul.”¹⁰ Moreover, the expression “afflictions are precisely bodhi (enlightenment), and *saṃsāra* is precisely *nirvāṇa* (perfect quiescence)”¹¹ describes the state of having realized the emptiness of phenomena. The subtle principle of the middle path, not falling into either extreme of nonexistence (*S. abhāva*; *C. kong*) or [inherent] existence (*S. bhāva*; *C. you*), can only be attained by those who have realized the emptiness of phenomena.

The ultimate truth in Buddhism—the realization of the two emptinesses—is beyond mundane phenomena and beyond description. This truth that is said to be “separate from verbalization and conceptualization”¹² is the final truth; if we insist on labeling it, we could call it the One True Dharma Realm (*yizhen fajie*) or the Substance-Principle of Suchness (*zhenru liti*). The ultimate reality in Buddhism, though ineffable, is not separate from worldly phenomena. Each of the myriad phenomena of this world is one part of the ultimate reality. Therefore, Chan Master Huineng said that “the **Dharma** is of the world; enlightenment is not realized apart from the world. If one seeks bodhi [enlightenment] outside the world, it is like searching for the horns on a rabbit.”¹³ The reason Buddhism talks about emptiness is so that both the afflictive hindrances of self-attachment and the noetic hindrances of attachment to **dharma**s can be dissolved or “emptied”—it is not to deny the existence of worldly phenomena. The truth in Buddhism lies in enlightenment. Only after one has enlightened oneself can the cycle of birth and death be transcended. Only after one has enlightened oneself and can preach the liberating Dharma to others can one deliver sentient beings. Only after one has completed an enlightened course of action to perfection can one become a Buddha.

SECTION TWO: ORTHODOX BUDDHIST BELIEFS

2.1 Do Buddhists Believe the Cycle of Birth and Death is Real?

The answer to this question is affirmative. According to Buddhism, except for those who are liberated from birth and death (such as arhats on the Nikāya path) and those noble ones who can control their own birth and death (such as bodhisattvas at advanced stages of the Mahāyāna path), every sentient being is subject to the cycle of birth and death, or *saṃsāra*.¹

The round of birth and death actually involves upward or downward rebirth in different [relatively fortunate or unfortunate] destinies, not rebirth along a circular path as around a wheel. Sentient beings transmigrate through a total of six modes of existence, called the “six destinies” or “six paths” (S. *ṣaḍ-gati*; C. *liuqu*, *liudao*). From highest to lowest, these are destinies as a deity, human, asura,² animal, hungry ghost, or hell-dweller. Rebirth into any of these destinies is based on one’s adherence or non-adherence to the five precepts and the ten good deeds, and on one’s commission or non-commission of the **ten evil deeds** (the opposites of the ten good deeds) and the **five heinous crimes** (killing one’s father, mother, or an arhat; destroying the harmonious unity of the **Saṅgha**; and shedding a Buddha’s blood). Results from practicing the five precepts and the ten good deeds are classed into three levels—upper, middle, and lower—leading to rebirth as a deity, human, or asura, respectively. The ten evil deeds and the five heinous crimes are

similarly classified into three levels of offense, and lead to rebirth as an animal, hungry ghost, or hell-dweller, respectively. Good deeds lead to birth in the three higher destinies, while evil deeds result in birth in the three lower destinies. After one has exhausted the good and/or bad retributions in one particular life, that lifetime will end, and another cycle of birth and death will commence. This transmigration within the six destinies, being born then dying, dying then being born again, is called the cycle of birth and death, or *samsāra*.

Although sentient beings can be born into any of the six destinies, Buddhists believe good or bad karma is mainly performed in the human destiny. In other words, only humans are equally capable of both producing new karma and receiving the results of previous karma; in other destinies, beings generally just receive karmic results. As deities or asuras, sentient beings mainly enjoy karmic rewards, and they have virtually no time to perform new karma. In the lower three destinies, sentient beings mainly experience suffering, and cannot distinguish good from evil. So it is only in the human destiny that we can experience both happiness and suffering, and distinguish good from evil. According to Buddhism, producing karmic energy depends on one's state of mind. So if one lacks the opportunity or ability to distinguish good from evil, then one's action cannot produce much karmic energy. Thus, Buddhism strongly emphasizes the moral responsibility of human beings.

Because karmic energies are generated primarily by humans, beings that ascend or descend to a particular destiny all have a chance to ascend or descend again. One doesn't just ascend to a higher destiny and continue ascending forever, or descend to a lower destiny and continue descending forever.

As humans we produce various kinds of karma—some good, some bad; some light, some heavy. Which karmic results will we experience first, and to which destiny will we go first? After death we gravitate toward one destiny or another based on three possible forces. The first force is activated if we have generated some particularly strong good or evil karmic energy during life. If our good karma outweighs our bad karma, we will go to the higher destinies. And within the higher

destinies, if our karma for the heavenly destiny outweighs other good karma, we will be reborn as a deity first. On the contrary, if our bad karma outweighs good karma, we will be reborn in the lower destinies. And if our karma for hell outweighs other bad karma, we will be born as hell-dwellers first.’ After the results of the heaviest karma are experienced, results of the second-heaviest karma will be experienced, and so on.

The second force that determines place of rebirth is habitual tendencies. This force is predominant if we have not performed any particularly good or evil deeds, but have maintained an especially strong habit. Under such circumstances, after death we will be attracted to a certain place based on the habit. Therefore, progress in doing good and practicing Buddhism mainly depends on our day-to-day efforts.

The third force determining rebirth is a being’s state of mind at the moment of death. At that moment, if negative states such as fear, anxiety, craving, or vexations occupy the mind, it is difficult to avoid rebirth in a lower destiny. So Buddhists believe that when someone is dying, his family members should not overreact with moans and tears. Instead, they should practice generosity and cultivate merit for him, and let him know what they are doing. In addition, they should remind him of all the good deeds he has done during his life, and make him feel comforted and willing to let go. They should also recite a Buddha’s name and help focus his mind on this particular Buddha’s merit and pure land. If the person has not committed any gross misconduct, and his mind focuses on these thoughts, he will not be reborn in the lower destinies. In fact, because his mind is attuned and receptive to the power of the vows of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, he can even be reborn in a Buddha’s pure land. Therefore, Buddhists advocate reciting a Buddha’s name around a dying person to help the dying focus his attention on such thoughts.⁴

According to folk belief, one becomes a ghost immediately after death. According to the Buddhist theory of rebirth, this is untrue. To become a hungry ghost is only one of the six destinies, so it is only one of six possibilities after death.

2.2 Do Buddhists Believe in the Existence of the Soul?

No, Buddhists do not believe in the existence of an eternal, unchanging soul. Someone who believes in the reality of an eternal soul is not truly a Buddhist, but rather an outer-path adherent maintaining the existence of the self (*shenwo waidao*).

Most people except materialists believe that everyone has an eternal, immutable soul.⁵ In America and Europe, the recently popular Theosophical Society also investigates the soul. Such soul-belief is also more or less prevalent in Christianity, **Hinduism**, Islam, and Daoism. These religions claim that when one dies, one will be judged for his good or bad deeds by God or **King Yama**, and will be sent to heaven or hell based on his behavior.

Belief in the soul is even more deeply rooted in popular Chinese culture. There is a grossly wrong belief that upon one's death one's soul becomes a ghost. "Soul" and "ghost" are inseparably entangled in Chinese folklore. More ridiculously, because some ghosts possess minor supernormal powers, some people think the soul is composed of three distinct "cloudsouls" (*hun*) and seven distinct "whitesouls" (*po*).⁶

Actually, though, ghosts just constitute one of the six destinies in *samsāra*, as do humans. And just like humans, ghosts are born and also die. (Humans are born from a womb, whereas ghosts come to existence through spontaneous birth.) As discussed below and in entry 3.8, when someone dies, she does not automatically become a ghost.

There are many ideas about the soul (*linghun*) in Chinese folk belief. The soul is often conceived as bridging one life and the next. In this view, "birth" occurs when the soul enters an embryo, and "death" occurs when the soul leaves behind a corporeal body. So the body and soul are analogous to a house and its owner: when the house gets old, the owner moves to a new one. The houses can be changed frequently, but the person living in them is the same. Put differently, a person is a soul plus an external body; the corporeal body is changeable, but the soul is immutable. In this view, the soul is the entity that experiences various births and deaths.

This concept of the soul is not an orthodox Buddhist concept because it contradicts the doctrine of dependent origination and extinction. From an understanding of impermanence, we know that phenomena are constantly arising and passing away, and that nothing, whether physical or mental, is everlasting. Observed with the naked eye, things present us with the illusion that they do not change. But if we examine them with precision instruments, we see that nothing remains still for even a split second. The process of “production and reproduction” discussed in the *Classic of Changes* also implies the phenomenon of “continual destruction,” which in essence means that everything is in a state of constant change and transformation.⁷

While physical phenomena undergo an endless succession of change, it is even easier to observe the transience of mental states. Psychological changes engender mental states, which bring about good or bad actions. Actions, in turn, influence our mental inclinations. Our future is actually shaped by this circular interaction of mental states and behavior.

If this is the case, is it possible for an eternal, never-changing soul to exist? Of course it is impossible. A fixed soul doesn’t even exist when we are alive, not to mention after we die: our bodies and minds exist in a state of incessant change. So if Buddhists don’t believe in a soul, what is the fundamental substance that transmigrates among the six destinies and can transcend mundane existence?

The answer to this question exemplifies the exquisite nature of Buddhist philosophy in de-emphasizing the value of a permanent self, but at the same time recognizing the value of self-improvement and self-transformation.

Buddhists believe that “phenomena arise dependent on conditions” and “things inherently lack self-nature.” In accordance with this view, the physical world exists dependent on causes and conditions, as does the spiritual [mental] domain. Things arise when the right causes and conditions are present, and they disintegrate and disappear when causes and conditions disperse. Something as large as a celestial body or even the whole universe, or as small as a blade of grass, a particle, or a single atom, all exist because of the right combination of an internal cause and

external conditions. Without causes and conditions, nothing would exist. Thus, in a sense, we can say that nothing really exists.⁸ Scientists studying physics and chemistry can easily support this observation.

And what of the spiritual domain? Although Buddhists do not believe in a soul, they are by no means materialists. Buddhists describe the spiritual domain with the term “consciousness.” In Nikāya Buddhism, six consciousnesses are discussed, with the sixth consciousness serving as the entity that integrates the life process. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, two more consciousnesses are mentioned, for a total of eight consciousnesses.⁹ The eighth consciousness is the entity that integrates the life process [providing coherence and continuity within one life and between lives]. I will use the Mahāyāna tradition rather than the Nikāya tradition to describe consciousness, below.

The first six consciousnesses in the Mahāyāna tradition have the same names as the six consciousnesses in the Nikāya tradition. In the Mahāyāna tradition, however, the functions of the sixth consciousness are further analyzed and broken into three parts which are labeled the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousness.

All the eight consciousnesses are actually one entity: they are given different names in accordance with their eight different functions. Residue from all the activities of the first seven consciousnesses, good or evil, is deposited and registered in the eighth consciousness, which serves as the depository of all **karmic seeds**. The supervisor of this warehouse is the seventh consciousness, and the sixth consciousness works like a warehouse clerk handling the in and out of inventory. The first five consciousnesses execute actions.

So the function of the eighth consciousness is storage. But the storage is not that of a one-way depository. It takes deposits from outside and makes withdrawals from inside. What is deposited is the psychological residue of behavior, which is imprinted on the field of consciousness and called karmic impressions or **seeds**; what is withdrawn are psychological impulses that later develop into behavior and the results of behavior, called karmic fruits or **active dharmas**.¹⁰ In this manner, things move in and out, out and in, seeds becoming active

dhammas, and active dhammas leaving behind more seeds. The same pattern is repeated throughout this life, the next life, and infinite future lives. The flow of cause and effect from seed to active dharma and active dharma to seed goes on and on, from countless lives in the past until countless lives in the future. This flow of causality comprises the coherence we experience in one life and the continuity between different lives.

Because seeds and active dhammas incessantly move in and out of consciousness, the eighth consciousness itself is ceaselessly changing. This consciousness is qualitatively different not only between two lives, but even between two fleeting thoughts. Exactly because thoughts arise and pass away moment to moment, and every thought is different from all other thoughts, we are capable either of sinking and rising in the sea of saṃsāra or of going beyond it. The eighth consciousness, therefore, exists in the continuum of momentarily changing karmic seeds and fruits. Besides this changing continuum of karmic seeds and fruits, there is no such thing as the eighth consciousness itself. An analogy to a current of water is illustrative. A current of water is nothing but water flowing in continuous motion. Besides the flowing water, there is no such thing as a current itself. The objective of Buddhist practice toward liberation is to disrupt this current of birth and death induced by karmic seeds and fruits. When the function of the eighth consciousness ceases, that is, when nothing is deposited and nothing is withdrawn, that is the complete realization of emptiness. In Buddhism, this process is called “transforming the (defiled) consciousness into (purified) wisdom,” after which one will not be dominated by birth and death and will be free within the domain of birth and death.

From the above discussion, we see that the eighth consciousness is not equivalent to an eternal soul. If an eternal soul did exist, then the transformation of an ordinary person into a noble one, that is, liberation from the cycle of birth and death, would be impossible.¹¹ Buddhists reject the concept of an eternal soul, and their ultimate goal is to negate the eighth consciousness altogether. Only after the defiled, delusion-ridden, provisionally-manifest eighth consciousness is negated is com-

plete liberation attained. After the negation of the eighth consciousness, however, it does not mean that nothing exists. Instead, one experiences the illuminating wisdom of “neither emptiness nor inherent existence”¹² (*feikong feiyou*) rather than the entanglements of ignorance and vexations.

2.3 Do Buddhists Firmly Believe in the Law of Karmic Cause and Effect?

Yes, Buddhists believe in the law of karmic cause and effect, or the law of karma, just as they believe the infallible, simple truth that after one eats, one’s hunger will be satisfied.

Most people question the certainty of the law of karma because they view things from the limited vantage point of the present life only. They see unfair karmic rewards and retribution in this life: some people endure hardship and do good deeds all their lives only to receive no reward, not even a good death! Others pervert justice for bribes and commit every injustice imaginable, but nevertheless live a life of ease through legal loopholes, enjoying good fortune and longevity.

However, the law of karma operates through the **three times**. Besides one’s current life, one has already passed through countless previous lives, and one will pass through countless lives in the future. This current life, compared with the continuous stream of lives from the past into the future, seems as short and miniscule as the duration of a spark produced by striking a stone. Karmic results, which take place in an order determined by the relative size and weight of karmic forces, can be carried over from the remote past to the present or into the distant future. Good or evil deeds in this life may not bear karmic fruit during this lifetime, and the happiness or suffering that one experiences may not be caused by actions performed in this life. Rather, karmic forces generated in previous lives cause the majority of this life’s tribulations. Likewise, the consequences of this life’s actions are more likely to be felt in future lives. If one understands that the law

of karma operates in all the three times, one will feel more convinced and accepting of its truth.

Furthermore, the law of karma is not the same as fatalism or determinism, as many people wrongly imagine. Buddhists believe that, except for certain heavy, unchangeable karma, people can change karma from previous lives by their efforts in following lives. For example, if in previous lives someone acted in a way to cause himself to be poor in this life, he can still work hard and thereby change his financial situation in this life. In other words, causes from the past plus causes [behavior] in the present jointly determine results in the present. This is why the law of karma is not fatalism or determinism, but rather one hundred percent “endeavor-ism.” If Buddhism were to fall into the quagmire of fatalism or determinism, then the theory that sentient beings can attain enlightenment could no longer hold. If one’s fate has already been determined in previous lives, wouldn’t all good deeds in this life be done in vain?

We see that the law of karma does not deviate from the principle of conditioned arising. From causal seeds sown in previous lives to the fruits harvested in this life, many auxiliary factors play a role in determining the results. Examples of these auxiliary factors include one’s striving or sluggishness and one’s good or bad behavior in the present life. As an analogy, although sugar-water is basically sweet, if we add lemon or coffee to the glass, the taste will change.

In summary, the law of karma in Buddhism runs through all three times and thus links together the past, present, and future. In the present life, we receive the effects of karma done in previous lives. Our behavior in this life can develop into karmic seeds that sprout in future lives, or it can interact with previous karma to produce results in this life.

The principle of karmic cause and effect seems simple but really isn’t so. Buddhism is like that also: it appears simple, but it is actually a very sophisticated religion.

2.4 Do Buddhists Believe in Heaven and Hell?

Yes, Buddhists have no doubt that both heaven and hell exist, because they are within the scope of *saṃsāra*; everyone may experience heaven or hell, and in fact, everyone has been to heaven or hell at one time or another.

Those who practice the five precepts and the ten good deeds [see entry 1.6] to a superior degree will be reborn in the heavens, and those who commit the great wickedness of the ten evil deeds or five heinous crimes will go to the hells. When their karmic retribution of suffering ends, hell-dwellers have the potential to be reborn in the heavens, and after their good rewards have been exhausted, sentient beings in the heavens could potentially descend to the hells. For Buddhists, heaven is an enjoyable place but not an everlasting paradise, and hell is a place of agony but is not eternal.

Because people perform varying degrees and amounts of good and evil deeds, heaven and hell have different levels, too. The heavens, according to Buddhism, are comprised of twenty-eight levels, which extend throughout the **three realms**. Closest to the human realm are the six heavens in the realm of sense desire. Above these are the eighteen heavens in the realm of form, and further up are the four heavens in the realm of formlessness.¹³ Actually, by merely performing good deeds, at most one can be reborn in the six heavens within the realm of sense desire. The top five heavens in the realm of form are called the **pure abodes**; practitioners of the *Nikāya* path who have attained the third “fruit,” or level of enlightenment, stay in these abodes. Other than these five, the remaining heavens in the realms of form and formlessness are for those who attained high levels of concentration through meditation.

According to Buddhism there are infinite hells, large and small, differentiated by the degree of suffering experienced in each. They are classified into three major groups: the principal hells, the peripheral hells, and the solitary hells. The hells most frequently mentioned in the *sūtras* are the principal hells, which include the eight vertically stacked

great hot hells and the eight horizontally spread great frigid hells. The hell to which one goes depends on the type and amount of evil one has committed. According to folklore, people are arrested and dragged to hell by demonic jailers, but in truth, whether one goes to heaven or hell depends solely on one's karma. If one has "divine" karmic energy, one will be reborn in a heaven; if one has "infernal" karmic energy, one will end up in a hell.

2.5 Do Buddhists Believe in the Existence of God?

The word God or god has many definitions. There is the God of religionists and the God of philosophers. In fact, there are many different "Gods" in religion, and many different "Gods" in philosophy. [In the following discussion, "God" generally translates *shangdi*, which here signifies an especially powerful god, and "god" generally translates *shen*. Following the logic of the Chinese passage, *shangdi* is sometimes translated into the unconventional plural form, "Gods."] Depending on the standpoint taken while viewing God, God changes according to the requirements of that standpoint.

Some Christians say the Confucian *tian* or *shangdi* is the same as the Christian God.¹⁴ But in fact, the supreme Confucian God is only a philosophical, pantheistic god loved by humans but without the capacity to reciprocate. It is similar to the God of the agnostics. In contrast, the Christian God has a human personality, and he is the Creator, existing separately from the cosmos he created; he is the omnipotent sovereign of everything that exists.¹⁵

Regarding the origin of the universe, most early religions and philosophies believe it was created by God or gods. The Greeks considered Zeus the ruler of the gods; for Romans, the chief god was Jupiter. Ancient Indian gods are very complicated, and they frequently changed their relative positions. The primeval Indian god was first called Dyaus, whose name is cognate with the Greek god Zeus and the Roman god Jupiter. But in the *Vedas*, the most powerful god in the divine realm is Varuṇa (god of justice). In the sky-realm, Indra (god of thunder) is

the supreme deity, and in the earth-realm, Agni (god of fire) is supreme. The god of hell [according to the later *Vedas*] is Lord Yāma (who, however, resides in heaven). We see that ancient India was basically polytheistic. In later Hinduism, some people said the creator god was **Brahmā**, others said **Maheśvara**, and others said Nārāyaṇa. [These three gods are also named Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu, respectively.] Eventually, the three gods were combined into a trinity (*S. trimūrti*) with Brahmā regarded as the creator, Nārāyaṇa as the preserver, and Maheśvara as the destroyer. Actually, they are three facets of the same god.¹⁶ In modern Hinduism, the names Ambā, Śiva, and even Buddha signify “God.” As Swami Dayanand writes in his book *The Light of Truth*: “We have her[e] explained the meanings of only one hundred names, but there are millions of other names of God besides these. His names are without number, because His nature, attributes and activities are infinite.”¹⁷

The Daoist supreme deity is the Jade Emperor, who is a different God from those of Confucianism, Christianity, and Hinduism. From the Buddhist cosmological perspective, God in both Daoism and Islam is equivalent to the Lord of Trayastrimśā Heaven, the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods.¹⁸ The Christian God (from Moses, Jesus, St. Paul, to St. Augustine, the status of God was elevated several steps) is equivalent to the Lord of the Great Brahmā Heaven. And the Hindu God is equivalent to Maheśvara, the ruler of the Heaven of Ultimate Form. The Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods is the second heaven in the realm of sense desire, so it is very close to the human world. The Great Brahmā Heaven is in the First Dhyāna Heavens in the realm of form. The Heaven of Ultimate Form is the highest heaven in the realm of form. These comparisons are not made without evidence; further exploration, nevertheless, has to be cut short here due to length.¹⁹ Anybody interested in gaining a thorough understanding of this issue is urged to compare the concept of God in different religions to the twenty-eight heavens of the three realms in Buddhist literature. It should be an interesting undertaking.

The ruler in each heaven has some propensity to arrogance, and likes to tell his ministers and subjects that he is the one and only creator

or sovereign god. This is similar to an earthly monarch [in ancient China] who, despite calling himself “this person of little virtue” (*guaren*), nevertheless thinks he is the greatest king on the earth second to none. For example, the First Emperor of Qin (259–210 BCE) believed that “his virtue exceeded that of the three sage-monarchs and his achievements surpassed those of the five sage-kings.”²⁰ Since he considered himself to rank among these ancient rulers both as the fourth sage-monarch and as the sixth sage-king, he called himself the “First Monarch-King” or “First Emperor.” The same attitude motivates the lords in various heavens to call themselves the one and only sovereign-creator. Some of them even bragged to the Buddha.²¹ Is any one of these gods really the creator of our universe? Hardly so—it is impossible for a single god to have the power to create the universe. Rather, the universe is engendered by the karmic energies of sentient beings and takes its form according to multiple conditions.

From what is written above, we can see that Buddhists do recognize the existence of Gods, but not as the creators or rulers of our cosmos. As for the Gods of philosophers, Buddhists do not believe in their existence, because such Gods are only theoretical constructions based on suppositions and inferences without empirical verification.

Some theists might ask, Aren’t Buddhists afraid of Gods because of their power to punish and reward people? Since Buddhists do not even worship Gods, of course they are not afraid of them! According to Buddhism, all the good deities in the three realms—including Gods (*shangdi*), who are rulers in the twenty-eight heavens—are believers in and protectors of Buddhism.²² Buddhists view all good deities in the same way that employees at a military base regard the guards at the gate to the base. The guards have the authority to perform a security check, and they will stop and cross-examine suspicious persons. As for the orderly, regular military personnel, the guards will leave them alone—so why should they be afraid of the guards?

Buddhists do not believe any God is the creator, nor do they think any God has the authority to control the fortunes of sentient beings. To Buddhists, a God is merely one kind of being within the six destinies.

Gods live happily in the heavens because of their good karma from previous lives. Although they might have some influence on the fortunes of human beings, this influence is ultimately a result of people's own karma. The sayings "People who help themselves will be helped by others" and "Those who disgrace themselves will be disgraced by others" also express this principle.

2.6 Do Buddhists Believe in King Yama?

In general, Buddhists believe in the existence of King Yama [the king of hell] because many sūtras mention him.²³

King Yama was not first discovered by Buddhists. Rather, Buddhism simply took this concept from an ancient Indian religious tradition and "Buddhified" it.

In the ancient Indian *Ṛgvedas*, the universe was divided into three realms: heaven (*S. svar*), air or sky (*S. bhuvas*), and earth (*S. bhūr*), each of which had its respective deities. Perhaps the Buddhist conception of the three realms—of sense desire, form, and formlessness—was partially inspired by this threefold Vedic conception. In the *Ṛgvedas*, King Yama (*yanwang*) first appears as a god in heaven (*S. yāma*; *C. yemo*), but later becomes the first ancestor of all humans—the first human being to die, who after dying persisted in heaven. The *Ṛgveda* tells that after a person dies, the first gods one encounters and to which one pays respect are Yama and Varuṇa, god of justice. The subsequent *Atharvaveda* states that Yama controls people's deaths and also passes judgement on them after death. This Yama in heaven is a bit like the Christian God. After being incorporated into Buddhism, *Yāma* (*yemo*), as the ruler of the third heaven in the sense desire realm, became a separate figure from King Yama (*yanluo wang* or *yanwang*), the king of hell.

King Yama oversees the judgment, supervision, and punishment of the dead. His position in hell is equivalent to God's position in heaven. Since Buddhists do not worship God, they naturally do not worship the king of hell, either. Moreover, although Buddhism provisionally accepts the existence of King Yama as an expedient means to teach and deliver

people who believe in him as part of their culture, Buddhism does not accept that King Yama can act independently. Thus, some Buddhist schools from the period of **sectarian Buddhism** believe that Yama and his demonic jailer-assistants are merely created by the karmic energies of all sentient beings in hells, and this accords with the Buddhist view that phenomena are ultimately just products of consciousness.²⁴

Orthodox Buddhism does not teach that one must face King Yama's judgment after one dies; it only accepts that, by and large, King Yama has some authority over those beings born as hungry ghosts and hell-dwellers. The belief that Yama sends demonic jailers to arrest dying persons is popular folklore. But from the perspective that phenomena are merely products of consciousness, Buddhists do not oppose such folklore. This folklore comes from activity in people's consciousnesses, and so there are similar accounts in Buddhist scriptures.

The famous Qing dynasty writer Ji Xiaolan (1724–1805) did not doubt that hells and King Yama existed but was quite puzzled that all accounts of the netherworld only involved Chinese people, while in this world there are people of many countries. Could it be, he wondered doubtfully, that the netherworld of Chinese and foreigners is divided into two separate administrative zones, just like the world is? Had Ji Xiaolan understood the principle in Buddhism that phenomena are merely products of consciousness, his doubt would have been resolved with great ease. In the minds of Chinese there is only a Chinese netherworld, so of course a United Nations netherworld cannot manifest from their minds. [For an illustrated depiction of King Yama, see page 132.]

2.7 Do Buddhists Believe That Repentance Is Effective?

Yes, Buddhists definitely believe in the effectiveness of repentance.²⁵ While completed acts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and major deception (falsely claiming that one is a noble one) will definitely bring about retribution for the perpetrator, other misdeeds, such as attempted offences, unintentional breaking of the precepts, and failures to follow the rules of dignified conduct [for monastics] can all be repented with

all retribution dissolved in accordance with the methods prescribed by the Buddha.

The function of repentance is to initiate a relentless process of self-reflection and self-discipline, to develop vigilance based on self-awareness, and to purify one's mind with self-respect, so as to prevent the occurrence of the same mistake. As long as one has the determination to start afresh, and realizes that the past is gone and there is no point in dwelling on it, one's mind will be relieved from the feeling of guilt and will regain serenity. This is the function of repentance. The wrongdoing has to be honestly revealed (to the community, or to several persons, or to one person, or to one's own conscience, in accordance with the category and degree of wrongdoing, followed by genuine regret and a resolution not to repeat it).²⁶ Otherwise the shadow of the misdeed will be hidden permanently in the mind, and will develop into karmic seeds that invite retribution later. Repentance immediately dissolves from one's consciousness the seeds produced by the misdeed.

However, the purpose of repentance is to cleanse one's mind to prevent reoccurrence of wrongdoing. If one repeatedly misbehaves, repents, and then misbehaves again, then the efficacy of repentance will be lost. Moreover, the repentance of Buddhists is quite different from that of Christians, who pray to God for absolution. Buddhists do not believe any god has the power to absolve sin. To Buddhists, the real meaning of repentance is to cleanse the contaminated mind in order to restore its purity.

2.8 Does Buddhism Teach the Efficacy of Delivering the Dead?

Needless to say [for a Taiwanese person], Buddhism teaches the effectiveness of delivering [performing actions to help] the dead.

However, the efficacy of delivering the dead is limited. It is only useful as a supplementary aid, and is not the primary force influencing one's destination after death; therefore, the best time to practice good deeds is when one is still alive. After someone dies, the living may generate merit through a deliverance ritual and through doing good

deeds, and then transfer the merit to the deceased. But according to the *Sūtra on the Primordial Vow of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva*, the deceased can receive only one-seventh of the benefit, the remaining six-sevenths going to the living persons [who sponsor and/or perform the ritual].²⁷

Moreover, the methods of deliverance practiced by orthodox Buddhists are quite different from those of ordinary folks. Deliverance means to free the dead from unhappy destinies and help them be reborn in a land of bliss. The deliverance is effective because of the sympathetic resonance induced by the good karmic deeds that family members and friends of the deceased have performed.²⁸ It is not the monks' and nuns' ritual chanting of sūtras that in itself has power to deliver the dead; rather, the deliverance is effective because of the sympathetic resonance or response brought about by the karmic energy from the good deeds of those sponsoring the deliverance, and the spiritual practice of the monastics performing the sūtra chanting.²⁹

So in orthodox Buddhist practice, the leading persons in the deliverance ritual are the family members of the deceased, not monks or nuns. When someone is approaching death, if her family members can donate things she cherishes to a Buddhist monastery or to the poor, and let the deceased be aware these acts of charity were done in her name, the deceased will benefit tremendously after death. The benefit occurs because of the sympathetic resonance induced by having virtuous thoughts, and because of the peaceful and consoled state of mind that the dying will then feel at the moment of death. Therefore, her karma-conditioned consciousness will take rebirth in a happy destiny. This view is not superstitious—rather, it illustrates the principle “Things of a kind converge together.”

If children and relatives sincerely and reverently perform charitable acts, such as sponsoring vegetarian meals for monastics and other donations, doing so out of concerned filial piety, this can initiate sympathetic resonance and thereby help the deceased take rebirth in a better place. But the effect will not be as great as it would be if the deceased had performed such good actions herself before death. To induce spiritual

energy to connect to the deceased so that her negative karmic energy is reduced or even eliminated, one must rely on the energy produced by making a great compassionate vow. One must feel filial piety from the bottom of one's heart, just like the bodhisattva Earth Treasury (*S. kṣitigarbha*; *C. dizang*) did when, in order to save his mother from hell, he swore a great, compassionate vow to save sentient beings from the bitter sea of saṃsāra in all his future lives. This is not irrational superstition. Rather, the power of the deliverer's immense filial piety and vow creates resonance, linking up with and transforming the karma of the deceased, permitting a free flow of energy between the deliverer and the deceased and thereby producing the effect of deliverance. Therefore according to orthodox Buddhism, to help a deceased family member, people should make donations to monasteries and to the poor, and should not necessarily request monastics to perform sūtra chanting services. Monastics accept donations of vegetarian meals in order to give their best wishes to the donors. For monastics, chanting sūtras is just a daily practice, something that helps them understand the meaning of the sūtras, and is not intended to deliver the dead. Making offerings is meritorious because it supports monastics in their practice of the Dharma, not because it is a payment for the labor of chanting sūtras. Although Buddhist scriptures indicate that chanting sūtras can deliver the dead, the intention is for each person to do the chanting himself. Only when a person cannot chant sūtras or when she thinks she cannot recite enough times should monks or nuns be asked to help chanting. Monks and nuns exist to carry on the Dharma and teach it to the laity, not just to deliver the dead. Chanting sūtras creates merit because it helps people to develop faith in and practice the Dharma. It is not something only monks and nuns can do, or an activity to do only after someone dies.

It is best to deliver the deceased within forty-nine days after death. According to Buddhist belief, after death ordinary people first undergo a forty-nine-day transition period during which various karmic conditions mature before they take rebirth. Exceptions include people with an especially large amount of good karma, who immediately take

rebirth in one of the six heavens in the **realm of sense desire**; those with great amounts of karma from meditative concentration practices, who immediately take rebirth in a dhyāna heaven; and those with excessively heavy negative karma, who will immediately descend to hell. During this forty-nine-day period, if family members make offerings to monasteries or sponsor vegetarian meals for monastics, and dedicate the merit of these deeds to the deceased, the deceased will receive assistance through sympathetic resonance initiated by the merit from these good deeds. Specifically, this process fosters the karmic causes and conditions that incline the deceased toward rebirth in a happy destiny, such as the human or heavenly destinies. After forty-nine days, the deceased will be reborn in accordance with his own karma, and deliverance rituals are too late to influence where the deceased takes rebirth, although they can increase his fortune or reduce his suffering within a particular destiny.

There is an exception. If someone dies through some injustice or in a tragic manner, she will still linger around due to her pent up hatred, even though she may have already been reborn in the [hungry] ghost destiny. This is why there are haunting ghosts. If this is the case, the living should chant sūtras and deliver the ghost (explain the Dharma and tell the ghost where it should go), thereby utilizing the Buddhas' power to lead it to a happy destiny. In Buddhism, sentient beings in the ghost destiny are usually called "hungry beings" or "hungry ghosts." So to pacify haunting spirits, rituals for producing and offering food for ghosts such as the [Releasing] Burning Mouths ritual or the Meng Mountain ritual, in conjunction with the power from Esoteric Buddhist mantras, are especially effective.³⁰ Other religions, that is, theistic religions, simply have no means to deal with such problems.

Of course, the viewpoints above are from a Buddhist perspective. But many Chinese people in the past who have requested Buddhist deliverance services were not necessarily Buddhists, and some were even full-fledged Confucians. In modern times, for example, the famous **New Confucian** scholar Tang Junyi (1909–1978) went to a Buddhist monastery in Hong Kong to request a deliverance service for his

deceased mother, where he erected an ancestral tablet for her. He regretted that with all his learning in philosophy, there was nothing he could do to help his mother. So motivated by the traditional Confucian teaching to make offerings to one's deceased relatives [with the attitude and state of mind] as if their spirits were actually present, he ordered the service, following the Confucian dictate "to be thoroughgoing in funeral rites for parents and to pay respects to ancestors."³¹ There are numerous instances such as this, in which it would be very difficult to convince people to follow precisely the correct Buddhist concepts regarding deliverance of the dead. This is a major problem to be resolved in Chinese Buddhism.

2.9 Do Buddhists Believe That Merit Can Be Transferred to Other People?

Buddhists certainly believe that one can transfer merit accumulated by oneself to another person.

Transference (S. *pariṇāmana*; C. *huixiang*) means to take something from oneself and direct it toward another or others. This operates through sympathetic resonance, which was mentioned in the previous entry. In the transfer of merits, one's mental power is transmitted, via the power of Buddhas' and bodhisattvas' vows, toward the specified recipient(s). This process is analogous to sunlight traveling through the air, striking a reflective object (such as a mirror or metallic object), and thereby illuminating a dark room. Although the dark room is not directly exposed to sunlight, the reflected or "transferred" light can illuminate it.

At the same time, although one transfers merit, one's own merits do not decrease one iota. An analogy from the Buddhist sūtras compares this process to an oil lamp lighting other lamps—although one lamp may light many other lamps, the original lamp in no way becomes less bright.

Therefore, after performing meritorious action, an orthodox Buddhist will aspire to transfer the merit gained toward all sentient beings. Such behavior springs forth naturally from a compassionate mind.

2.10 Do Buddhists Believe in the Efficacy of Prayer?

Yes, Buddhists firmly believe in the efficacy of prayer.

When someone prays, his faith engenders a mental state of supernatural, unified concentration, by which he can stimulate or arouse (*gan*) the compassionate vow-energy of the beings (such as Buddhas or bodhisattvas) to whom he prays, and thereby receive a response. That is, the mental energy resulting from the supplicant's concentration tallies and interacts with the energy of a Buddha's or bodhisattva's vows. This interaction, in turn, gives rise to an inconceivable, extraordinary power, which produces the special experiences and efficacious results of prayer. In Chinese societies, where Mahāyāna practice prevails, praying to the bodhisattva Guanyin (S. *avalokiteśvara*) brings about the most miraculous results. However, a benevolent deity or spirit actually already protects a reverent devotee of the Three Jewels. If she suddenly encounters misfortune, even if she doesn't pray at that very moment, her ill luck will be averted, provided that she has firm faith. Prayer works because of firm conviction. If someone has unyielding faith, she is constantly under the protection of prayers.

Although Buddhists believe in the power of prayer, they do not emphasize that praying can solve every problem. For example, if a Buddhist becomes ill, prayer is very important, and if she has confidence, then in certain cases, through pious, sincere prayers she can induce a sympathetic response and be cured. Therefore, we find Buddhist scriptures mentioning cases of people being cured through expounding or hearing the Dharma.³² But if the sick person lacks conviction and experience in (successful results from) prayer, she should see a physician. So even during the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, when a bhikṣu became sick, he was normally treated with medicine.

Therefore, it is generally believed that the Dharma is primarily for treating the spiritual illness of birth and death.³³ For physical illness, one should use medicine. The ill should pray but also seek medical treatment: this is the view of an orthodox Buddhist.

2.11 Does Buddhism Claim That Human Nature Is Innately Good?

This is a philosophical issue in Chinese Confucianism. Mencius (fourth c. BCE) said human nature is good; Xunzi (fl. third c. BCE) that it is evil; Yang Xiong (52 BCE–18 CE) that it is a mixture of both; and Gaozi (fl. fourth c. BCE) that it is neither good nor evil. Who is closest to the truth? In general, people in later times have sided with Mencius, since the thought of Confucius and Mencius is central to orthodox Confucianism.

One could say that Buddhism subscribes to the theory that human nature is originally good, because the Buddha stated: “Every sentient being on the earth possesses the Tathāgata’s wisdom and meritorious characteristics.”³⁴ That is to say, all sentient beings have buddha-nature. Based on these statements, we could claim that Buddhism advocates the goodness of human nature.

But in fact, Buddhism could be said to claim either that human nature is good or that it is evil. In its essence, Buddhist views regarding human nature cannot be fully described by either position.

The fact that all sentient beings have buddha-nature tallies with the view of innate human goodness. But the fact that beings are all obstructed from attaining Buddhahood due to their beginningless ignorance supports the view that humans are evil by nature. Actually both of these viewpoints have the same function: advocates of innate goodness encourage people to guard against evil and to return to goodness, while advocates of innate evil encourage people to dispel evil and therefore achieve goodness. Buddhism takes advantage of both views to achieve optimal results under different circumstances.

The Confucian theories of human nature, be they of innate goodness or evil, all pass judgments on the issue of human nature merely from the perspective of the present life. Confucians lack the ability to investigate the good and evil actions, the karma, done in past lives. Nor can they investigate the effects of good and bad behavior after one’s present life. Mencius overstressed our values that arise from our ethical

nature (*lixing*) and so proposed innate goodness, whereas Xunzi focused on transforming our physical nature (*wuxing*) and so proposed innate evil.³⁵ In fact, they both saw only one side of human nature and ignored the other. From this perspective, Buddhism agrees with neither theory. Buddhism looks at sentient beings from the infinite past until they reach the final goal, attainment of Buddhahood. One cannot pass judgment on human nature merely by observing the present life. For sentient beings, buddha-nature (goodness) and ignorance (evil) are close, inseparable companions, having coexisted from the very beginning. They are two sides of the same coin, which is ignorance while in saṃsāra and buddha-nature after it leaves saṃsāra. Physical nature is an outgrowth of ignorance, whereas ethical nature sprouts from buddha-nature. So it is incorrect to say that human nature is either good or evil. If we limit our observation to one lifetime, then good and evil, or ethical nature and physical nature, are both present at birth. If one follows the good, ethical nature, one becomes good, and if one follows the evil, physical nature, one becomes evil.³⁶

Does this mean that Buddhism agrees with Yang Xiong's theory of mixed human nature? No, because Buddhism maintains that the affliction of ignorance can be gradually reduced and removed step by step. When ignorance is completely wiped out, buddha-nature is fully achieved. This is called "breaking off affliction and realizing enlightenment" or "ending the cycle of birth and death and entering nirvāṇa." For ordinary people in the cycle of birth and death, affliction is evil and buddha-nature is good, but after they attain enlightenment and enter into nirvāṇa, there is no goodness or evil. The concepts of good and evil are worldly concepts, and when one transcends the world, there is no good or evil. Good is distinct from evil, and if good is present, evil must be present also. So the goal of Buddhism cannot be labeled as either evil or good. Actually, good and evil are relative even within the mundane world. For example, poisons can kill but can also save lives, and medicines can heal but can also kill. Noble bodhisattvas cannot be labeled as good or evil, nor do they perceive sentient beings according to such categories. One must reach this kind of perception in order to

deliver sentient beings without discrimination. Goodness and evil are just concepts grasped by the ordinary sentient beings because of their self-attachment. However, the Buddhist view of human nature should be distinguished from the neither-good-nor-evil view of Gaozi, because as a practical matter for ordinary beings, we cannot say that human nature has neither good nor evil. Only after the worldly is transcended can the labels of good or evil be dropped.

Because the Buddhist view of good and evil is that they are provisional and eventually to be eliminated, if one has to coin a term for the Buddhist view of human nature, then a barely satisfactory term would be the “doctrine of liberation beyond both good and evil.”

2.12 How Does a Buddhist View All the Buddhist Scriptures?

The **scriptures** of both Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism are extensive. Records show that the first large-scale compilation of Buddhist scriptures occurred several hundreds years after the Buddha’s **parinirvāṇa**. Although from vinaya texts we can see that there were written scriptures during the Buddha’s time, such scriptures must have been scarce. For example, scrolls 44 and 48 in the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda*, and scroll 4 in the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Miscellaneous Matters*, all contain accounts of people reading or copying scriptures.³⁷ The earliest Buddhist “scriptures,” the teachings of the Buddha, were for the most part actually transmitted orally. From ancient times in India, sacred texts were passed from master to disciple orally. (In fact, it was forbidden to put the earliest Brahmanic scriptures, the *Ṛgvedas*, into writing.) This practice made Indians accustomed to and proficient at memorization. It was not unusual for a scholar to memorize several hundred thousand verses, and even today, some Burmese bhikkhus are called Tipiṭaka Masters because they have memorized the entire [Pali] canon. Hu Shi (1891–1962) wrote that “Those Indian monks were quite unusual. As they swayed their heads back and forth while memorizing scriptures, they could commit twenty or thirty thousand stanzas to memory.”³⁸

But orally passing down scriptures from master to disciple through recitation cannot guarantee error-free transmission. In addition, the tradition of transmission from master to disciple among Indians encouraged disciples to have absolute faith in their individual tradition. Thus, after a long time, several accounts or versions of the same event could develop. Each lineage held to its own version, believing it to be accurate, and did not interfere with other groups. As a consequence, it is possible that ancient Indian myths and legends were unintentionally incorporated into Buddhist scriptures. This is especially probable given that research and verification of historical events has never been important to Indians. Consequently, Buddhist scriptures contain many discrepancies, contradictory accounts, and even events in reversed chronological order, especially in the treatises. (The Tripiṭaka, or Buddhist canon, is comprised of the “three baskets” [the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *tri-piṭaka*; in Pali the word is *ti-piṭaka*]: sūtras, vinaya texts, and treatises.³⁹ To draw an analogy with Christian writings, the sūtras and vinaya texts are similar in nature to the New and Old Testaments, while treatises are similar to theological writings.) Since treatise masters from various schools wrote most of the treatises, they contain greater disparity of views than do other texts.

So while an orthodox Buddhist should pay the highest reverence to Buddhist scriptures, he need not uncritically accept every last word. A Buddhist should search for the correct Dharma in Buddhist scriptures, but as for the historical accounts given in the scriptures, each person may investigate their truth for himself (assuming that he has this ability).

Overall, scriptures currently circulating today which have a verified history are worthy for people to have faith in, accept, and take as a basis for practice, because the central ideas in these sūtras are all correct. Occasionally in the scriptures we find discrepancies in terminology, numbers, views, and legends, but these all concern trivial details, not fundamental issues. So as far as the average person is concerned, she should not harbor doubts about the reliability and veracity of the Buddhist scriptures. Although Buddhism encourages everyone to learn the

Dharma directly for herself, if you encounter something that you don't fully understand, it is best to consult with an accomplished monastic. In no such case should you rashly jump to your own conclusions about the meaning of Buddhist doctrine. Since many terms and ideas in scriptures refer to states of spiritual realization, if you have not read many scriptures or don't have actual experiences resulting from practice, then many scriptures will be difficult to penetrate.

There are so many Buddhist scriptures. The scriptures were translated into Chinese over a period of about a thousand years.^{+o} No one knows for sure how many tens of thousands of scrolls of scripture have been translated. Extant Buddhist scriptures, including commentaries written by Chinese, total more than three thousand works in over fifteen thousand scrolls (this excludes scriptures transmitted in Japan, Tibet, and Theravāda countries). As a result, to this day no one has been able to compile an accurate, definitive list of all the principal scriptures. For a beginner who wants to read scriptures, it is also necessary to read introductory books on the essentials of the Dharma and the history of Buddhism. Such introductory books will tell us what to study next. Guidance for further research exceeds the scope of this basic and superficial introduction to Buddhist scriptures.

2.13 Are Buddhist Scriptures Really Difficult to Read and Understand?

This question should be divided into two parts: the answer to the first part is no, and to the second part, yes.⁴¹

Young people today complain a lot about difficulty in reading and understanding Buddhist scriptures. That is because they have read too few books on Buddhism and have never been exposed to the major sūtras. For example, they probably have never seen the *Mahāprajñāparamitā Sūtra*, *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, *Lotus Sūtra*, or *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. Still fewer people have read the *Āgamas*. Actually, if someone is really interested in studying Buddhist sūtras, he should begin with the *Āgamas*, followed by the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*,

Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, and *Mahāprajñāparamitā Sūtra*. If he does that, I can assure him he will not feel Buddhist sūtras are more difficult and frustrating to read than the New and Old Testaments.

The unique strength of Buddhist literature lies in its ability to set forth Buddhist thought and states of realization through narrative, using concrete descriptions and allegories to express abstract, metaphysical concepts. So Hu Shi wrote that Chinese translations of Buddhist sūtras are much more direct and sincere than writings in classical Chinese parallel prose (*pianwen*): “The emphasis in Buddhist sūtras is faithfulness and accuracy of translation, not flowery expression. The style emphasizes ease of understanding, not classical elegance. Therefore, the great sūtra translators encouraged one another ‘to avoid literary dressing, to make it easy to understand, and not to miss the original meaning.’” Hu further commented, “Among the sūtras translated by Kumārajīva, the most important was the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, but the most popular and influential for literature were the *Diamond Sūtra*, *Lotus Sūtra*, and *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.” Mr. Hu Shi especially praised the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, regarding it as “half novel and half drama, with the greatest impact on literature and fine arts.” Hu also noted, “Although the *Lotus Sūtra* is not a novel, it is a book rich in literary expression. Several parables in the sūtra can be considered the most beautiful parables in world literature. Its impact on Chinese literature was substantial.” He also commented, “The *Acts of the Buddha*, the masterpiece of the great Buddhist poet Aśvaghōṣa, is a poetic narrative of Śākyamuni’s life,” and “The last chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, ‘Entering the Dharma Realm,’ occupies more than a quarter of the whole book. It describes the youth Sudhana’s journey in pursuit of the Dharma, in city after city, with master after master. Eventually it developed into a long novel.”⁴² We know that Hu Shi was not a Buddhist, and we cannot unquestioningly agree with his comments on the Dharma. But in modern Chinese history, he is one of the founding members of the vernacular literature movement, and if he thought that Buddhist sūtras have great value as works of vernacular literature, I would like to ask the following question: are Buddhist sūtras really

difficult to understand? Unless you have long-standing biases, you could not nod your head in affirmation.

On the other hand, you may get a big headache if you read Nikāya or Mahāyāna treatises, especially treatises of the School of Inherent Existence (*youzong*). Those unfamiliar terms, elaborate structures, and profound ideas are incomprehensible unless you are well trained in Buddhist studies. These writings will even be way over the heads of seasoned Buddhists of thirty or forty years' learning unless they are trained in philosophical reasoning and scientific methods. The same would happen if a fan of martial arts novels one day started reading a book by Immanuel Kant or Georg Hegel—I'm sure he would have a lot of trouble understanding those books, too. So the question becomes, Are these kinds of scriptures still worth keeping and studying? Unless you do not care to develop yourself in higher culture, you should not answer "No."

Many people think Christian books are easy to read. But as a matter of fact, if you take a look at their books on theology or scholasticism, you may end up totally lost, too. Clergymen during medieval times coated mythology with a veneer of philosophy in an attempt to "reconcile divine revelation with human reason." To put all questions under God's authority, philosophy had to become subservient to theology. The result is a body of knowledge plagued by convoluted, incoherent, and extremely confusing arguments, which led the term "scholasticism" to become associated with hairsplitting pedantry.

In my opinion, the writing styles of a few writers in Chinese Buddhist circles nowadays contribute to the problem of making Buddhist writing difficult to comprehend. Some Buddhist scholars read ancient scriptures without understanding the meaning of passages in their proper context—such people seem to have acquired a functional disorder in their philosophical "digestive system." What they read does not pass through their brains, and when they write, they copy quotations from disparate scriptures and use them out of context to compose articles about which they feel really smug and proud. Even the authors cannot understand these articles, much less the readers. Fortunately,

based on my observations, this kind of article is dwindling in number because these “Buddhist scholars” who know the ancient scriptures so “well” but modern scholarship so little have reached the age when they know they must retire.

Buddhist philosophical essays are written for researchers, not for a general audience. It is unreasonable to ask them to be written like [the popular Chinese novels] *Journey to the West* or *Tales of the Water Margin*. Although recently Japanese Buddhists have tried to express Buddhist thought using terms from Western philosophy, not everything can be described using Western terms. Otherwise, Buddhism may lose its character and no longer look like Buddhism at all.

In brief, from the perspective of increasing circulation, we should make Buddhist writings more artistic and easy to read. But writings that deal with philosophical theory must be profound and elaborate. So on one hand we want to popularize Buddhism, but on the other hand we should not curse those writings that are difficult to understand.

SECTION THREE: ORTHODOX BUDDHIST PRACTICES

3.1 If One Has Faith in Buddhism, Does One Need to Become a Monastic?

No. Admittedly, the goal of Buddhist practice is to transcend birth and death, and the monastic lifestyle is the most conducive to achieving that goal. But if a monastic does not really practice or practices incorrectly, she cannot transcend saṃsāra. On the contrary, if a layperson practices correctly, she might be able to transcend life and death. According to Nikāya Buddhism, whose chief goal is liberation, a layperson can achieve the third fruit [of the Buddhist path]. Although this third stage of sainthood is still within the three realms, such a person is effectively free from saṃsāra, since after death she will be reborn in one of the **pure abodes** in the realm of form, where she will subsequently attain the fourth fruit, arhatship, and be liberated. So if a layperson achieves the third fruit, she is almost liberated.

According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattvas manifest themselves in differing forms in order to facilitate their mission of delivering sentient beings. And except for the bodhisattvas Earth Treasury and Maitreya, most of the famous bodhisattvas appear as laypeople. For instance, despite being laypeople, in ancient India Lay Disciple Vimalakīrti and Queen Śrīmālā could both expound the Dharma in place of the Buddha.¹ So it is clearly not necessary for a true practitioner of the bodhisattva path to leave the household life.

Monastics have an exalted status in Buddhism because they uphold the Buddhist community and thereby assure that Buddhism is sustained and propagated, and also due to the system of conventions regulating social interactions within Buddhism. Simply put, monastics are the skeleton of Buddhism, whereas the laity make up its skin and flesh. In terms of the basic structure, monastics are important; in terms of function, laity are important. So Buddhists can leave the household life, but are certainly not required to do so.

3.2 How Many Kinds of Buddhist Practitioners Are There?

In principle, Buddhism asserts equality. Hence, everyone can become a devotee, and everyone has the potential to become a Buddha. But devotees do differ in their levels of practice and spiritual attainment. And furthermore, according to the type of precepts they take, Buddhists are classified into the following nine ranks: upāsaka (Buddhist layman disciple; C. *jinshinan*), upāsikā (Buddhist laywoman disciple; C. *jinshinü*), layman upholding the upavāsa precepts (*jinzhunan*), laywoman upholding the upavāsa precepts (*jinzhunü*), śrāmaṇera (novice monk; C. *shami*), śrāmaṇerikā (novice nun; C. *shamini*), śikṣamāṇā (probationer; C. *shichamona*), bhikṣu (monk; C. *biqu*), and bhikṣuṇī (nun; C. *biquini*).²

Laypersons who have sought refuge in the Three Jewels and have taken the five precepts are upāsakas. Laity who keep the eight precepts or live in the monastery are said to be upholding the upavāsa precepts. Clergy who have taken the ten precepts are śrāmaṇeras or śrāmaṇerikās, and clergy who have received the full precepts are bhikṣus or bhikṣuṇīs.³ As described in the Buddhist vinayas, a śikṣamāṇā is a two-year, transitional stage for female clerics who are advancing from śrāmaṇerikā to bhikṣuṇī, but which in Chinese Buddhism has been long forgotten. The purpose of this stage was to verify that a woman was not pregnant and that she could adapt to life as a nun.

Practitioners who have taken the bodhisattva precepts do not necessarily belong to any of the nine groups, because anyone, even non-human sentient beings such as animals, can keep the bodhisattva precepts.

3.3 How Does One Become a Buddhist?

All Christian denominations, new or old, emphasize the importance of baptism. It is only after baptism that one formally becomes a Christian. For many Christian sects, the beliefs behind this ritual are similar to those of some Indian religions that superstitiously claim that bathing in a sacred river can cleanse one's sins.^{4*}

If one wants to become an orthodox Buddhist disciple, one must **take refuge** in the Three Jewels. The significance of this ritual is very much the same as that of a royal coronation, the inauguration of a president, or the admission of a new member to a political party. It is an expression of loyalty from the bottom of one's heart, a zealous promise, a prayer out of admiration, a new life, and a pious taking of sanctuary. Therefore, Buddhism stresses the importance of taking refuge. Without taking refuge, even if one believes in and worships the Buddhas one remains a noncommitted student of Buddhism, an auditor who never registered for classes. This ritual functions to solidify one's faith and commitment.

In the ritual of taking refuge, a monk or a nun is invited to witness and lead the recitation, which goes as follows:

"I, (name), pledge to the end of my life to take refuge in the Buddha, to the end of my life to take refuge in the Dharma, and to the end of my life to take refuge in the Saṅgha (recite three times).

"I, (name), having taken refuge in the Buddha, would rather lose my life than take refuge in Māra or in deviant spiritual teachers.

"I, (name), having taken refuge in the Dharma, would rather lose my life than take refuge in **outer paths** or deviant teachings.

"I, (name), having taken refuge in the Saṅgha, would rather lose my life than take refuge in deviant groups following outer paths."

The ritual, simple but solemn, is designed to cause one to wholeheartedly take sanctuary in the Three Jewels, to rely on and revere the Three Jewels, and to bring forth pure, staunch faith and confidence. The first jewel is the Buddha, the second is the Buddha's teachings, and the third is the community of monastics who spread the Buddha's

teachings. Taking refuge in these three can lead one to the jewels of peace of body and mind in the short term and liberation from saṃsāra or even to Buddhahood in the long term. That is why the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha are called jewels, and why having faith in Buddhism is called “taking refuge in the Three Jewels.”

3.4 Why Do Buddhists Have Faith in the Three Jewels?

Having faith in the Three Jewels is certainly the most characteristic feature of a Buddhist. Followers of other, theistic religions either believe only in God (i.e., Jews and Muslims), or in the Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit (i.e., [Protestant] Christians), or in this trinity plus the Holy Mother (i.e., Catholics). Because Buddhism is an atheistic religion, Buddhists do not worship the Buddha as a deity, nor do they regard him as the one and only Buddha or as the creator of everything who can absolve all the sins of humankind.⁵ Rather, the Buddha is a teacher who can help students change their dispositions, acquire knowledge, and cultivate their bodies and minds; he cannot, however, learn for the students or take entrance examinations for them.

So for these reasons, we can see that faith in Buddhism is purely rational and ethical. Buddhists' worship of the Buddha is much like the filial reverence children give their parents: it is motivated by a desire to repay kindness. An orthodox Buddhist would certainly not worship the Buddha in order to seek prosperity or avoid misfortune. Although the power of a Buddha's vows may be stimulated by the mental power produced by prayer and thereby bring about a miraculous response, this mainly depends on the person praying. If the person who prays has fixed karma that ripens, even if he or she prays, the Buddha can do nothing to help. If one can practice in accordance with the Buddha's Dharma—for example, developing the perfections of giving, keeping precepts, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom—then one's karmic energy from previous lives can be changed: heavy negative karma might result in only light karmic retribution, and light negative karma may be dissolved entirely. This is because the maturation of

karma is analogous to the sprouting and growth of a plant, which require favorable conditions. A seed given sunlight, air, water, soil, fertilizer, and appropriate care by gardeners will grow very fast to its full size. On the contrary, if these conditions are lacking, the same seed will grow slowly into a frail plant, and might not even germinate at all. The same principles apply to karma and retribution in Buddhism. So the Buddha's greatness is not due to his creation of the universe or absolution of sins (no one can really absolve another person's sin), but because he personally realized the Dharma of liberation and taught it to others. Those who practice accordingly can also achieve liberation and can even help others become Buddhas, just as the Buddha did.

So, many Buddhists are unwilling to be addressed as "Buddhists" and prefer to be called "disciples of the Three Jewels." This is because although the Buddha developed Buddhism, it is the Dharma that is the most essential part of Buddhism. The Buddha cannot liberate anyone, but the Dharma allows people to emancipate themselves. To worship the Buddha is to show our adoration for him for his kindness in teaching us the Dharma he realized. Before his realization, the Buddha spent three **immeasurable kalpas** cultivating the bodhisattva path, and after his realization, he offered all he had learned to us without holding anything back. The greatness of his kindness is a billion times greater than all the meritorious worldly deeds combined—indeed, a billion times is really an understatement, as it really is beyond comparison or conception.

Propagation of the Dharma has to rely, however, on the Buddha's cadres, the members of the Saṅgha. The Saṅgha consists of bodhisattvas (such as Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Guanyin, and Earth Treasury), śrāvakas (including arhats such as Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Mahākāśyapa), and ordinary monastics (i.e., all monks and nuns who keep the precepts, practice the Dharma themselves, and expound the Dharma to others).⁶ Due to the Saṅgha, the Buddha's Dharma of liberation and enlightenment has been propagated and handed down to us, and so the kindness of the Saṅgha is also immeasurable.

The task of spreading the Dharma is not limited to monastics, since laypeople can do this also. But only monastics can uphold the Dharma. What we mean by uphold the Dharma is to act as a representative and symbol of the Dharma, to maintain a Buddhist presence in the world. This is because if the average person on the street sees a monastic, he will think of Buddhism, but if he sees a lay Buddhist, he will not think of Buddhism. (Unless the layperson explicitly identifies himself as a Buddhist—but it would be awkward to do so every time he meets somebody.)

Summing up, we see that the Buddha uncovered the Dharma, that the Dharma is the core of Buddhism, and that the Saṅgha upholds the Dharma so that it remains in the world. That's why between the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, the Three Jewels, the jewel of the Dharma is of primary importance. This Dharma that leads us away from suffering to happiness was realized and taught by the Buddha, and is upheld and transmitted by the Saṅgha, so the Buddha and Saṅgha are also called jewels.

When the Buddha was in our world, taking refuge primarily meant seeking refuge in the Buddha; after he passed away, it has meant to seek shelter in the Saṅgha. The purpose of taking refuge is to learn the Dharma, and to learn the Dharma one must rely on the wise guidance of the Saṅgha; such guidance is given through the Saṅgha's transmission of ideas and influence on one's behavior. So after the Buddha's passing away, the Saṅgha became the primary recipient of offerings to the Three Jewels. Buddhism teaches that we should "rely on the Dharma, not on an individual,"⁷ and so taking refuge in and transmitting the correct Dharma is of utmost importance. Consequently, the behavior of monastics is their personal business, and as long as they have correct views and can preach the Dharma, even if they break the precepts, laity should still give them respect and offerings. This respect should be given because of the principles of human relations between people of different social roles (*lunli*); just as the common saying goes, "There are no unvirtuous parents in the world" [implying that even if one's parents commit wrong acts, one still must honor and respect them as parents]. The

respect owed to imperfect monastics is also comparable to the respect a college graduate should have for his or her former elementary school teacher who has no college degree.

So, to an orthodox Buddhist, the Buddha is worshipped because of the Dharma, and the Saṅgha is paid reverence due to one's faith in and acceptance of the Dharma. Worshipping the great bodhisattvas is one way of paying reverence to the Saṅgha. While of course we should revere and make offerings to spiritually realized monastics, great bodhisattvas, and arhats, we should also do the same for ordinary monks and nuns who keep precepts and teach the Dharma. In fact, such respect should even be extended to monastics who do not keep the precepts but have right view and can preach the Dharma correctly (what is essential is that they have right view and can teach the true Dharma). In fact, in these days long after the Buddha has left us, noble monastics [i.e., monks and nuns enlightened to the noble (*S. ārya*) level] are hard to find, so we generally pay our respect to ordinary monks and nuns. The sūtras mention that making offering to ordinary monastics is no different from supporting noble monastics, and supporting either brings one inconceivable and immeasurable blessings.

The magnificence and grandeur of Buddhism are fully embodied in the Three Jewels, so to have faith in Buddhism is to have faith in the Three Jewels. Respect for the Saṅgha was unquestioned during the Buddha's time and is likewise unquestioned even today in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka. But in Chinese areas, reverence to the Saṅgha has never been accepted as a universal practice, perhaps because some monks and nuns are of dubious virtue. Generally, only a few eminent members of the Buddhist clergy are revered. Some people respect these eminent clerics for their virtue, yet others blindly worship them as if they were gods. And because of this custom of worshipping eminent monastics, some despicable clerics put on acts of strange behavior in order to attract the blind faith of the masses of ignorant people. These are all concepts urgently in need of correction, and an orthodox Buddhist would never behave in such a manner.

3.5 Can a Baby Take Refuge in Buddhism?

Buddhism does not accept the Christian notion of original sin, so Buddhists do not think infants are inherently sinful. If an infant carries any sin, it is because its behavior, or karma, in previous lives has made impressions on the infant's eighth consciousness, the primary entity of life. So babies do not invariably inherit some "original sin of mankind" simply because they are born.

As infants, people do not yet have the ability to make judgments for themselves. And to perform the ceremony of taking refuge to become a Buddhist, one must make vows out of one's own volition; otherwise, the ceremony is invalid. Children are required to reach the age of seven before they can become Buddhist monastics; taking this as a point of reference, we could say that people should be at least seven years old and have the ability to make judgments for themselves before they participate in a ceremony to take refuge.

On the other hand, Buddhists strongly believe in the ability to transfer merit. So people should make merit through activities such as sponsoring vegetarian meals for monastics, giving donations and charity, reciting a Buddha's name, or reciting sūtras both before and after the child's birth and in order to celebrate occasions such as the child's completion of one month and one year of life. People should perform such activities along with prayers for the child's good fortune, longevity, and wisdom.⁸

3.6 What Methods of Spiritual Practice Do Buddhists Carry Out?

This is certainly a very important question. If one believes in Buddhism without practicing it in daily life, the only benefit one will acquire is the planting of a seed for future Buddhahood. Such a person will hardly gain any benefit in this life.

Buddhist practice is the realization of a Buddhist lifestyle. The four major aspects of practice are faith, precepts, meditative concentration, and wisdom.

Without faith, one has not even entered the gate of Buddhist practice. So, faith is the first requirement to practice Buddhism. And taking refuge in the Three Jewels is the first step to establishing faith.⁹⁷

There are many classes of precepts. As a basic requirement, it is enough if one can adhere to the five precepts and ten good deeds. Of course, it is even better if one can take the eight precepts and/or the bodhisattva precepts. For Buddhists, precepts function very much like defensive fortifications do to soldiers holding a garrison during a battle. If someone cannot keep the five precepts and the ten good deeds, she will not even have the disposition of a Buddhist. And if one practices meditative absorptions without keeping the precepts, the meditator will fall into demonic states.

Meditative concentration is the practice of collecting and focusing the mind so that external surroundings will not disturb it. This is a common practice emphasized by many religions, including all the “outer-path” religions in India. The Daoist technique of abdominal breathing called *tuna* and the Christian practice of praying are also kinds of meditation to develop concentration. The purpose of such meditation is to allow the mind to settle on one object. Only when the mind can become absorbed in one object can one truly appreciate the lofty, great value of religion and attain physical ease and mental contentment—an experience clearly superior to sensual pleasure. Once someone experiences this concentrated state of mind, his religious faith will grow progressively faster. It is impossible for such a person not to have faith.

But the practice of meditative concentration is not something unique to Buddhism. What is unique to Buddhism is wisdom, which serves as a guide to meditation and an antidote to craving for meditative absorptions. Because concentration makes one’s mind undisturbed by external surroundings, when someone enters into an absorption state and experiences joy, it is very easy to become attached to the ecstasy and not want to leave the absorption. Upon dying, this kind of person will be reborn in a dhyāna heaven. According to Buddhist cosmology, the dhyāna heavens are divided into eight general levels, corresponding to the four absorptions of form and the four absorptions of formlessness.

All these heavens are in the realms of form and formlessness within the three realms, where one's life expectancy is long; however, one is still unliberated from the cycle of rebirth. So Buddhists regard meditative concentration as one means of practice and not as an end in itself. The Chan school in China therefore stresses enlightenment over meditative concentration even though meditation is central to its practices. Enlightenment is the blossoming of wisdom. Only when one gains the wisdom that penetrates into the true nature of all dharmas can one transcend *saṃsāra* and leave behind the three realms.

For questions regarding practice, it is best if one can associate with a knowledgeable and skillful practitioner to help show one the way. This entry is only a summary of the basics, and is not intended to be comprehensive.¹⁰

3.7 Can Prostitutes, Butchers, Fishermen, Hunters, and Liquor Vendors Become Buddhists?

Yes, they can. The kindness of Buddhism is as vast as the ocean. Anyone, as long as he or she has faith, can enter the gate of Buddhism and become a disciple of the Three Jewels.

The five precepts forbid sexual misconduct, killing, and drinking alcohol, and so the occupations mentioned above are called immoral, deviant, or improper occupations. However, people living on an island may have to rely on fishing for their livelihood. Likewise, those living in the mountains may have to hunt to satisfy their hunger. Poor women may have to sell their bodies or work as dance partners to maintain a minimum standard of living. And many butchers or liquor vendors inherit their business from parents; they are proficient in no other trades. If what they do is for survival, such people are not required to give up their trades before they become Buddhists. But as soon as they become Buddhists, Buddhism strongly encourages them to change their occupations if possible. A core tenet of Buddhism is that people should be engaged in beneficial, proper occupations, not to mention avoiding sinful occupations. Although someone who has not taken

the precepts and is engaged in such an occupation will not incur the demerit of breaking the precepts, one still produces the negative karma inherent in the nature of the acts themselves.

If circumstances prevent such people from altering their occupations, they will not be regarded as violating the precepts. This is because the first step for a Buddhist is merely to take the three refuges. Although accepting and keeping the precepts is desirable and meritorious, it is not required. If one has no intention to keep the precepts, accepting precepts is unnecessary; if one did not receive the precepts, one has no precepts to break, and therefore no additional demerit for breaking precepts will accrue. If at a later time one wants to receive the precepts, one can do so anytime. People also have the option to receive only some of the five precepts. Moreover, after people have received the precepts, they are allowed to relinquish the precepts later. If the precepts have been relinquished, even if one performs negative karma, one has not violated the precepts. And after relinquishing the precepts, they can be taken again at any time. But if the precepts were violated before being relinquished, it constitutes an offense.

Buddhism is very charitable. Although someone may be unable to maintain the five fundamental precepts, as long as he has the slightest respect for or faith in the Three Jewels, he still has great merit, and has planted the seed for future Buddhahood—so much the more so if he has actually taken the three refuges. After taking the three refuges, it is mandatory that one not then place one's faith in another religion, but keeping the five precepts is not mandatory. So Buddhism does not turn away anyone who is willing to believe in it.

3.8 Do Buddhists Worship Deities and Ghosts?

The answer is obvious: an orthodox Buddhist worships only the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha—not spiritual beings. But an orthodox Buddhist does not deny the existence of spiritual beings, either, because gods and ghosts are two of the six destinies within the cycle of birth and death. Gods (*shen*) in Buddhism,

therefore, are very different from the God in theistic religions, just as ghosts (*gui*) are not the Devil [*mo-gui*, lit. “demon-ghost”] spoken of in theistic faiths. In Buddhism, gods are one kind of sentient being in the mundane world, whereas *mo* [which in Buddhist Chinese means *Māra*, the evil one, lord of the realm of sense desire] lives in the sixth heaven of the sense desire realm. Actually, there exist four kinds of *Māras* in Buddhism: (1) the deity *Māra*, (2) the *Māra* of the five aggregates, (3) the *Māra* of afflictions, and (4) the *Māra* of death. Besides the deity *Māra*, the other three *Māras* are products of our individual physiology and psychology.

In Buddhism, *shen* usually have a status below that of the heavenly deities (S. *deva*; C. *tian*) but above the ghosts.¹¹ Ghosts with great blessings are *shen*, and the attendants of heavenly deities are often *shen*. Ghosts are of many varieties, including ghosts with great fortune, ghosts with little fortune, and hungry ghosts. Ghosts with great fortune and great blessings, although they are still ghosts, enjoy some blessings as if they were in heaven. Most of the *shen* worshipped by ordinary people are actually ghosts with great blessings. *Shen* can be categorized as heavenly-*shen*, sky-*shen*, and earth-*shen*.¹² *Shen* can also be divided into heavenly-*shen*, animal-*shen*, and ghost-*shen*. The various *shen* that people worship such as animal spirits, plant and tree spirits, and mountain and river spirits are all earth-*shen*, animal-*shen*, or ghost-*shen*.

In Buddhist sūtras, the “eight classes of spiritual beings” frequently mentioned consist of the following: heavenly-*shen*, dragons (S. *nāga*; C. *long*), yakṣas (flying ghosts), gandharvas (heavenly musicians), asuras, garuḍas (birds with golden wings), kiṃnaras (heavenly singers), and mahoragas (great boas). These beings can be either benevolent or malevolent, and the benevolent ones have generally been reformed by Buddhism and have become its protectors. So orthodox Buddhists do not worship spiritual beings; Buddhists merely give them a certain amount of respect. If an orthodox Buddhist were to worship such beings, in principle it would be demeritorious. Also, the benevolent *shen* voluntarily protect and support whoever has taken refuges in the Three Jewels, so they do not feel comfortable being worshipped by

Buddhist devotees. And because of the benevolent *shen*'s protection, malevolent spiritual beings are afraid to toy with or molest Buddhist believers who have already taken the three refuges.

3.9 If One Has Faith in Buddhism, Does One Need to Become Vegetarian?

No. Although Buddhism encourages vegetarianism, it does not require all Buddhists to be vegetarians. Vegetarianism is a unique feature of Mahāyāna Buddhist practice, motivated by great compassion for all sentient beings. In countries where Theravāda Buddhism prevails a vegetarian diet is not required, even for the monks. In Tibet, lamas are not required to be vegetarians either, but they cannot personally kill living beings.

Since the first of the five precepts is not to kill, after becoming a Buddhist it is best if one can become vegetarian. But if for family or social reasons being a vegetarian is difficult, one can be excused for eating meat. In no case, however, is one permitted to directly kill or instruct others to kill. Buying the meat of previously slaughtered animals to bring home is permitted.

3.10 What Is the Buddhist View toward Smoking, Drinking, and Gambling?

There is no regulation prohibiting smoking in the Buddhist precepts, and when done to prevent tropical diseases, the Buddha permitted bhikṣus to smoke. But to promote good habits and dignified conduct, Chinese Buddhists have always discouraged smoking. Buddhism does forbid the use of harmful narcotics or stimulants, which is why the fifth precept prohibits the consumption of alcohol. Drinking itself is not evil, but the effects of alcohol often lead to evil behavior. For the same reason, Buddhism does not permit people to use harmful substances such as opium and heroin. As for gambling, it is strictly prohibited in the Buddhist sūtras because it is basically a waste of money and energy,

and often leads to depression and bankruptcy.¹³ Gambling by its very nature involves deceitful behavior, and sometimes leads to evil deeds such as murder, theft, slander, and harsh speech. It is therefore strictly forbidden in Buddhism.

3.11 Does Buddhism Advocate Burning Mock Paper Money and Mock Precious Metals?

No, there is no such superstitious requirement in Buddhism.

The custom of burning mock paper money began in the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).¹⁴ The *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* states that “starting in the Han dynasty, money was buried along with the dead. Later generations gradually began to use token paper money to attend to the ghost’s [spirit of the dead’s] needs.”¹⁵ This indicates that beginning in the Han dynasty, the practice was to bury money along with the deceased. Since ancient times Chinese have believed that when someone dies, he or she immediately becomes a ghost (*gui*). Therefore, the oldest extant Chinese dictionary, the *Explanations of Simple and Compound Graphs*, defines *ghost* with the sentence “a ghost is that to which a person returns,” which indicates [the belief that] upon dying, people become ghosts. The Chinese of long ago conjectured that the world of ghosts was separate from yet similar to our own world, and as it was assumed that the dead also needed money to get along, it was interred with them. Later, some people felt it was a pity to bury real money, so they cut paper into the shape of money and burned it to transmit it to ghosts. Since in modern times paper currency is widely used among the living, the paper ghost currency issued by the “Bank of the Underworld” (*mingguo yinhang*) also now circulates in great volume. [For a photograph of Taiwanese burning mock paper money at a funerary ritual, see page 133.]

This kind of low-class superstition, leading to the burial of vessels, utensils, money, jewelry, textiles, and even people and livestock along with the deceased, existed in practically all the religions of primitive peoples. As to burning objects, it may be related to the Zoroastrian

religion, which believed that the fire deity could transmit burned objects to spiritual beings. The Hindu god of fire Agni, described in the *Rgveda*, was also believed to have such power.

In addition to burning paper money and colored tinfoil as substitute currency and mock gold and silver ingots, some Chinese also burn models of various items made of paper glued to thin strips of bamboo. Such items include furniture, miscellaneous articles, houses, automobiles, airplanes, and steamships. It is believed that the ghost of the deceased can obtain these items after they are burned.

In fact, Buddhists do not believe the dead automatically become ghosts, since ghosthood is merely one of six possibilities. Nor do they believe that either the large quantities of mock paper money or the colored tinfoil [folded to look like ingots of precious metals] that are burned will be received by ghosts for their use. Buddhists believe only that the family of the deceased can acquire merit through practicing giving, making offerings to Buddhas, or sponsoring meals for monastics, and can then transfer this merit to the deceased to assist his or her deliverance. Everything else is useless superstition. Buddhists not only oppose burying objects with the dead, but furthermore advocate frugality in funerals. The coffin should not be too expensive, the deceased should not wear costly clothing, and the funeral should not require an excessive amount of labor or resources. Instead, the deceased should wear one of his clean, ordinary, old outfits, and his fancy clothes and possessions should be donated to the needy. If the family is well off, they should earn merit by giving charity to the poor and making offerings to the Three Jewels. These are the only practices that benefit the departed. Anything else, such as burying or burning perfectly good objects, is very ignorant behavior and is certainly not the behavior of an orthodox Buddhist.

Sadly, many monks or nuns nowadays do not understand the aforementioned reasoning. In fact, some Buddhists who emigrated from China to Taiwan created a kind of mock paper money called “rebirth money.” It is a small piece of yellow paper with the Mantra of Rebirth printed in red Sanskrit letters, and it is intended to be used as currency

by ghosts. In fact, the effect of reciting mantras and the effect of burning ghost money are two entirely different things. According to Buddhist sūtras, sūtras [or parts of sūtras] should not be burned, and to do so is a misdeed.

These days, monks and nuns chant sūtras, do repentance prostrations, and perform ghost-feeding rituals such as the Releasing [hungry ghosts which have] Burning Mouths (*fāng yānkou*) and the Great Assembly for [the deliverance of beings who have died on] Water or Land (*shuǐlù dàbù*), all of which are performed for patrons.¹⁶ During such rituals, a memorial petitioning Buddhas or bodhisattvas is composed with the patrons' names and other identification included, and this piece of paper is read aloud before being incinerated. This practice of reading memorials comes from imitating Daoists of the School of Talismans and Registers, who perform superstitious activities such as presenting memorials to the gods they worship and exorcising ghosts through talismans.¹⁷ None of these practices has any basis in Buddhist teachings, which teach that sympathetic resonance is induced by a pious mind. If you have the required mental power, you can get results without burning anything. Otherwise, even if you burn thousands of papers and mystical scripts, it will all be in vain.

3.12 Do All Buddhists Wish to Be Reborn in the Land of Utmost Bliss?

Clearly no orthodox Buddhist will aspire for rebirth in a heaven as his ultimate goal, because rebirth in one of the heavens will not free one from saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death, unless he is reborn in one of the five pure abodes or in the inner court of Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven. Instead, clearly every orthodox Buddhist hopes to transcend birth and death, the only way to eternal peace and happiness.

The Land of Utmost Bliss (*S. sukhāvatī*; *C. jīle shǐjiē*) is a Buddhist pure land created by the power of Amitābha Buddha's vows. It is only one among the numberless pure lands of Buddhas in the countless universes, and so some Buddhists do not wish to be reborn in the Land

of Utmost Bliss. For example, Master Dao'an (312–385) of the Eastern Jin dynasty, Master Xuanzang (600–664) and Master Kuiji (632–682) of the Tang dynasty, and the recent Master Taixu (1889–1947) all wished to be reborn in Maitreya's inner court in a Tuṣita Heaven of our billion-world universe.

There are also Buddhists who, with unfathomable compassion and sturdy faith, do not wish to be reborn in any of the buddha lands in other places, but rather wish to be reborn time and again in our world in order to deliver people from suffering.

Theravāda Buddhists don't even know the Land of Utmost Bliss exists. The highest goal of most Theravāda monastics is to attain the fruit of arhatship and thereby transcend saṃsāra in this very life. If they fail, they hope to continue practice in their next life. They know nothing of the Land of Utmost Bliss, nor do they believe in it. If Mahāyānists told them about it, some might believe in its existence, but they would think it is one of the heavens.¹⁸

In contrast, the existence of the Land of Utmost Bliss is a deeply rooted belief in the **Truly Eternal Mere Mind system** of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Based on Amitābha Buddha's compassionate vows, nine grades of lotus flowers grow forth from the lotus pools in that land. Even those who have committed the five heinous crimes and the ten evil deeds can be reborn, still carrying their negative karma, into the lowest grade of lotus flower in this pure land, if as they approach death they recite with utmost sincerity "Amitābha Buddha" (*amituofo*) continuously ten times. After twelve **great kalpas**, the lotus flower will blossom, and such people will hear the two bodhisattvas Guanyin and Mahāsthāmaprāpta give discourses on the principle that the true mark of all dharmas is to be conditionally arisen and empty of [inherent] nature.¹⁹

As soon as one gains insight into the true nature of all phenomena, that everything arises dependently and inherently lacks any fixed nature, one can break through all conceptions of good and evil and shake off all karma, whether good or evil. This is called the dissolution of karmic obstacles, after which one will no longer be pinned down by

karmic forces nor continue sinking into the morass of saṃsāra. Instead, one will follow one's compassionate vows to return to the human world, this time in control of one's own birth and death, and will carry out the bodhisattva path, "entering into the **Universe of Tribulation** without being separated from the Land of Peace and Nourishment [another title for Amitābha's pure land]." Seeking rebirth in Amitābha Buddha's pure land is surely the safest, easiest, and most reliable kind of faith, and is a great comfort and kindness bestowed upon those unsure of their own abilities.

On the other hand, the *Amitābha Sūtra* states that no one can be reborn in the Land of Utmost Bliss with only weak karmic capacities for virtue and with little merit.²⁰ So although the energy of Amitābha's vows is enormous, you still need to practice good deeds and accumulate merit in daily life. Otherwise, at the brink of death, you might not even have the energy to recite Amitābha Buddha's name. At that time, although Amitābha would like to help, he might be unable to do so.

3.13 Does Buddhism Emphasize Miracles?

In Buddhism, miraculous events are ascribed to **spiritual powers** or miraculous powers.²¹ Buddhism acknowledges the existence of spiritual powers and their effects.

Buddhism divides spiritual powers into six general categories, as follows: (1) unimpeded bodily action [such as the ability to fly, transform oneself, move through walls, etc.], (2) divine vision, (3) divine hearing, (4) awareness of the minds of others, (5) knowledge of previous lifetimes, and (6) extinction of impurities or "outflows."

Buddhists believe that all spiritual beings possess a number of special powers due to their karmic recompense. Accomplished seers, Daoist immortals, and even ordinary people can develop such spiritual powers through practicing the dhyānas, namely, meditative states of absorption. (Christian prayer can also induce meditative absorption when one's mind is in a concentrated, unified state.) But ordinary people and spiritual beings can only manifest to lesser or greater degrees

the first five spiritual powers. Only noble ones who have transcended birth and death through the Nikāya or Mahāyāna paths are equipped with an additional power—the extinction of impurities—and can have all six powers.

On the other hand, Buddhists do not think one can accomplish everything with spiritual powers. In accordance with the law of karmic cause and effect, the destinies of sentient beings come about because of their own karma. While spiritual powers can be great, they cannot nullify the law of cause and effect. For fixed, heavy karmic retribution, even the Buddha himself cannot completely alter the results with his spiritual power. Otherwise, the law of cause and effect would not be valid. So although the Buddha demonstrated his spiritual powers during his life, he was very judicious about showing them. Many of his great arhat disciples also had spiritual powers, but the Buddha did not allow them to manifest their powers in the presence of ordinary people.²² This is because the Buddha knew that displaying spiritual powers had to be done in right proportion; while spiritual powers may create a sensation, if used unwisely they might also bring devastating results.²³

3.14 Do Buddhists Worship Idols?

It is quite true that Buddhists show great respect to images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. However, the respect and prostrations given to these sacred images are not so naïve and sinful as some Christians think.

No orthodox Buddhist would mistake a sculpted, painted, or engraved image for a real Buddha or bodhisattva.²⁴ Hence, showing reverence to the Buddha should be distinguished from the fetishism of primitive faiths.

Orthodox Buddhists worship sacred images as a means to channel and connect the power of their faith to the compassionate vows of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is analogous to a marksman at a shooting range, who first aligns both sights of the gun and aims them toward the bull's-eye. Although the target is the bull's-eye, he relies on the sights

to hit it. Of course, a first-rate sharpshooter would not have to follow this procedure of aiming. Similarly, an enlightened Buddhist will find that the Buddha permeates everything in existence, and that no image is necessary to reach and experience his energy. This is why we have the *gong'an* [*kōan* in Japanese; a method of Chan/Zen practice] regarding Patriarch Danxia (738–824) of the Tang dynasty, who burned a wooden Buddha statue on a cold day to warm his hands.²⁵ But for unenlightened Buddhists, how could they not venerate images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas?

3.15 Do Buddhists Oppose Suicide?

Yes, it is clearly stated in the vinayas that Buddhists are not to commit suicide. If they do, it is a transgression.^{26*}

Suicide here refers to an act of killing oneself motivated by hatred for one's existence and by the belief that suicide will emancipate one from suffering.

Because Buddhists believe in the law of karmic cause and effect, they see that unless one has realized the true nature of all dharmas, unless one has liberated oneself from birth and death through spiritual practice, then suicide is useless. Since one's karmic results have not been exhausted, even if one commits suicide, one will still begin another period of birth and death. This situation is like that of a debtor who, to escape his creditors, moves his household from one place to another. He will not succeed because sooner or later some of the creditors will find him. For this reason, Buddhists oppose suicide; Buddhism encourages people to live constructively, taking advantage of this life to practice doing good so that present and future destinies will be improved.

On the other hand, Buddhism is not a religion that encourages selfishness. For the sake of saving the lives of others, one can sacrifice one's own life; for the sake of one's sacred faith, when necessary one can choose to become a martyr. Furthermore, someone who is really and truly treading the bodhisattva path is willing to relinquish anything, including his head, eyes, or bodily flesh. For example, in his previous

lives as a bodhisattva, Śākyamuni gave away his life repeatedly. This is illustrated in the *Lotus Sūtra*, in which Prajñākūṭa Bodhisattva says that “observing the entire billion-world universe, [one finds] no place even as small as a mustard seed where the Bodhisattva [i.e., Śākyamuni in his previous lives] has not sacrificed body and life for sentient beings.”²⁷ And in scrolls 39 and 47 of the *Za ahan* sūtras, it is recorded that three arhats committed suicide, and the Buddha actually sanctioned it.²⁸

3.16 Does Buddhism Endorse Asceticism?

Before we can answer this question, we should understand what asceticism means.

Asceticism (*kuxing*) generally refers to the practice of austerities as a means to achieve liberation. In principle, there is nothing wrong with this idea, but motivations for asceticism vary considerably: some people practice it blindly, while others practice it with some aim. Blindly practicing austerities means practicing without understanding or goal, and is like trying to extract oil by crushing gravel: the behavior lacks any theoretical basis. Practices of asceticism with an aim include both superstitious and rational methods. Superstitious austerities include following the “cow precepts” and eating grass, the “dog precepts” and eating excrement, or the “fish precepts” and soaking in water, and believing that through these practices, after death one will be reborn in heaven. Rational austerities are of two kinds: the first is to use rational means to seek enlightenment for oneself, and the second is to help others attain liberation.

Except for rational austerities, all other austerities are outer-path asceticism.

These days some people think that Buddhism does not endorse asceticism and instead encourages a middle path between asceticism and hedonism. Admittedly, the Buddha became enlightened after he gave up the ascetic practices he had pursued for six years and recovered from his weak, haggard condition.²⁹ But we have to understand that

although the Buddha gave up blind, superstitious asceticism, he subsequently promoted rational asceticism. Seeking liberation for oneself is the asceticism of **Hīnayāna** practitioners, while helping others reach liberation is that of **Mahāyāna** practitioners.

In scroll eight of the *Chang ahan* sūtras,³⁰ we find the following account in which the Buddha told the ascetic Nyagrodha (P. *nigrodha*) that

What you [ascetics] practice is lowly and base. You go around naked, using your hands to cover your private parts. . . . Some of you eat cow dung, deer dung, roots, branches, leaves, or fruit. . . . Some keep their hands constantly raised, or refuse to sit on beds and mats, or remain constantly in a squatting posture. . . . Some lie down on thorns . . . and some lie naked on cow manure. Some bathe three times per day, and some bathe three times per night. With innumerable austerities you inflict pain upon your bodies!³¹

The Buddha strongly opposed such asceticism that merely causes oneself suffering and is simply meaningless. It neither nourishes the body for long life nor tunes the mind for meditative absorptions, nor does it bring about any benefit to others.

The Buddha then told the ascetic Nyagrodha about the practice of Buddhist asceticism:

Such an ascetic [i.e., a proper Buddhist ascetic] does not think that, “by doing these practices, I will gain offerings, honor, and attendants.” . . . After he receives offerings, he does not become attached to them. He understands renunciation and the way to leave behind the world. . . . When he hears the good doctrines of others, he rejoices and gives his approval. . . . He does not praise himself or disparage others. . . . He does not kill, steal, have sexual contact, slander others, use harsh language, lie, gossip, grasp after things, feel jealousy, or hold deviant views. . . . He is diligent and steadfast, actively practicing meditation and cultivating wisdom. . . . He is not proud, arrogant, or conceited. . . . He is trustworthy and upright, practicing repeatedly and continuously. He can uphold the pure

precepts and diligently learns when instructed. He associates with the good as his companions, and he accumulates merit. . . . He does not harbor hatred, nor is he crafty, deceitful, or obstinate in his opinions. He does not look for others' shortcomings, and does not harbor deviant views (disbelief in karmic cause and effect) or extremist views (views which are not in accordance with the middle path, i.e., that one has an eternal soul that is immutable, or that after death one does not have another existence). This is the way to practice asceticism so as to leave behind impurity.³²

After reading this passage about Buddhist asceticism, we should feel very much at home. It is nothing more than keeping precepts, meditation, and wisdom—the path to liberation. It is both the way to live properly in the world and yet is also a way of rational asceticism for liberation. But in the Mahāyāna sūtras, we are encouraged to go further and practice great giving and self-sacrifice, to endure what is hard to endure and do what is hard to do. These sūtras encourage us to be willing to sacrifice everything to save sentient beings, and to vow to save others and sacrifice ourselves for lifetimes to come, until “in the entire billion-world universe, there is no place even as small as a molecule where the bodhisattva [practitioner] has not sacrificed body and life.”³³ Could anyone deny that this kind of bodhisattva practice is not a great ascetic practice?

So any orthodox Buddhist must practice restraint of body and mind, be hardworking and striving, generous to others yet live frugally. Only after one's desires for material enjoyment are lessened can one raise one's spiritual level, be diligent in cultivating and developing the bodhisattva path, and make contributions to the public good. To make the great aspiration [to become a Buddha], to serve all humanity, and to be the unsought friend of all sentient beings, even sacrificing oneself to save others: this is Buddhist asceticism. If someone distinguishes herself with unusual and eccentric practices such as not eating cooked food or living in nonhuman conditions, she is practicing outer-path asceticism, not Buddhist asceticism.

3.17 Do Buddhists Fail to Practice Filial Deference?

Indeed, some people in our country criticize Buddhism in this way. Seeing that monks and nuns cannot “deepen the socially prescribed web of cordial relations” (*dunlun*)³⁴ like ordinary people, and because of their narrow-minded concepts of family and clan rules, they regard leaving the family to become a monastic as extremely unfilial. An important Confucian book states: “There are three violations of filial piety, and to go without posterity is the most grave.”³⁵ Although this is not an idea central to Confucianism, to this day some Confucian extremists criticize Buddhism as a religion opposed to filiality.

Actually, teachings about filial deference in both the Nikāya and Mahāyāna scriptures are too numerous to mention. Anyone who reads even a few sūtras will come to understand that Buddhism is not only not opposed to filiality, but that it in fact very much supports this virtue. For example, in the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Mind Ground* the Buddha says: “Father is kind to us, Mother is compassionate to us. I could not finish speaking of the compassion of a mother even if I spoke for an entire **kalpa**.”³⁶ The Buddha continues to say: “If throughout one kalpa a virtuous son or daughter were every day to cut off flesh from their body as offerings to feed their parents, he or she would still not have repaid even one day’s kindness from their parents.”³⁷ He goes on to say: “So you should diligently practice filial piety and support your parents, and the merit you will acquire is the same as if you were making offerings to a Buddha. This is how you should return their kindness.”³⁸ In scroll 11 of the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, the merit of making offerings to parents is compared to the merit of making offerings to a bodhisattva who will become a Buddha in his next life.³⁹ Scroll 20 of the *Monastic Code in Five Divisions* contains the following story. An arhat disciple of the Buddha named Pilandavatsa wanted to support his poor parents with clothing, but was not sure whether it would be appropriate, so he went to Buddha for guidance. The Buddha convened his bhikṣu disciples and told them: “Suppose that for a hundred years someone were to carry his father on his right

shoulder and his mother on his left shoulder, and they urinated and defecated while on his shoulders. Furthermore, this person supported his parents with precious and exotic clothing and foods. This person would still not have returned one moment of his parents' kindness. From now on, all bhikṣus must support their parents with all their hearts and for all their lives. Failure to do so constitutes a gross transgression."⁴⁰ Similar teachings can be found in the *Zengyi ahan sūtras*, scroll 11.⁴¹ Furthermore, the *Vebhalinga Sūtra* of the *Zhong ahan* mentions a poor worker in the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa named Ghaṭikāra, who accepted the Buddha's teachings and lived just as a monk would live. However, in order to support his two blind, elderly parents, he worked as a potter rather than leave home to become a monk.⁴²

To practice Buddhism it is not compulsory to become a monastic, even though the monastic lifestyle of renunciation is considered worthy of respect and honor. In fact, in the monastic codes there are even explicit rules against becoming a monk or nun without parental permission. Or if their parents are poor and lack support, monks and nuns need to support them; failure to do so is a gross transgression. It is also written in scroll 4 of the *Summary Verses and Origin Stories of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School* that "even if you have left home, you must still provide for your parents."⁴³ How can Buddhists be accused of opposing filial piety? Of course, if narrow-minded and immature people still insist that one must get married and have children to be filial, then the case is closed—it's no wonder that ordinary people today are too busy raising their children to support their parents properly. This may be the result of foolishly believing that "to go without posterity is the most grave [violation of filial piety]."

People who erroneously believe that the worst offense is to go without posterity can hardly understand the Buddhist concept of filial piety. Buddhists believe that in the cycle of birth and death, one not only has parents in this life, but also has had and will have countless parents in numberless previous and future lives. One should not only support one's parents in this life, but should also give charity to past

and future parents. In the eyes of a bodhisattva, “All men have been my father; all women have been my mother. I have been born of them in multiple lives.”⁴⁴ So practitioners of the bodhisattva path, by working to save all sentient beings, are in a sense respecting and being filial to their parents through their efforts. Of course, this approach to filial piety should be distinguished from the one practiced by Mozi, whom Mencius criticized—because to regard others’ fathers as the same as one’s own father is to have no father. Buddhist filial piety starts primarily with one’s parents in this life, and later extends to parents of the past and future. Hence, deliverance of sentient beings is an extension of returning parents’ kindness. This is called “returning the kindness of sentient beings,” starting with one’s parents and later extending to include other sentient beings. So a Buddhist should first support his parents, and then help other beings through methods such as giving charity, releasing captive animals into nature, and making offerings to the Three Jewels.

According to worldly customs, people usually commemorate their birthdays with joyful banquets or parties to celebrate their birth or longevity. Actually, this reveals an incorrect way of thinking. For a Buddhist, one’s birthday is his mother’s day of suffering. On this date, one should raise his feelings of appreciation for his mother to a higher level, think of all the kindness his parents have done in raising him, and increase his filial devotion by a factor of ten or even one hundred. One should not remember one’s day of birth with a hedonistic celebration. If one’s parents have passed away, one should, as one’s ability allows, perform charity, release captive animals into nature, and make offering to the Three Jewels, transferring one’s merit from these activities to the spirits of one’s parents. By so doing, one also sows the seeds for personal happiness and long life. But if instead one feasts on slaughtered chickens, ducks, pigs, and sheep in an extravagant feast, it is not a celebration of longevity but rather a discount on future happiness.

3.18 Is There Gender Discrimination in Buddhism?

In the Theravāda tradition, because of its emphasis on bhikṣus [fully ordained monks], unconsciously there arose a tendency to discriminate against women. This tendency can be seen from the Buddha's frequent warnings about the fearsome threat posed by the female body, which was compared to Māra and to a snake.

In fact, treating men as superior to women might not have been the Buddha's original intention, judging from the fact that both men and women have sexual desires. If we say the female body is to be detested by male practitioners, shouldn't we also say the male body is to be detested by female practitioners?

In terms of their ability to achieve the fruits of enlightenment, men and women are equal. The only exception is that a female must transform her body into that of a male before she can become a Buddha.⁴⁵ Other than that, men and women have equal potentials, and both can become arhats or bodhisattvas. For example, the bodhisattva Guanyin often manifests in a female body. And the characteristic disposition of women is closer to the compassionate bodhisattva spirit. What women often lack is strong, decisive vitality, and therefore the sūtras say that a universal sage-monarch (*S. cakravarti-rājan*) who unifies and rules the world will not be a woman.

3.19 Is Buddhism against the Family System?

No. Buddhism does not force anyone to change his mode of living. The monastic lifestyle is just one way to live a Buddhist life, and it is families that are the real foundation of Buddhism. If Buddhism opposed the family system, monks and nuns would be unable to maintain their livelihood.

On the contrary, Buddhism actively encourages the establishment of families according to correct principles. For example, the *Śiṅgālaka Sūtra*⁴⁶ is a guide to family life, directing lay people to lead ethical lives by living in accordance with the following guidelines: Children should

repay their parents' kindness and practice filial deference, and parents should rear and educate their children and help them find a spouse. Students should respect and support their teachers; teachers, in turn, should teach with devotion and select wise tutors and friends for their students. Wives should serve their husbands with respect and take care of household affairs faithfully; in return, husbands should provide wives with clothing and food, and treat them with love and affection. Masters should provide servants with food and be considerate; the servants should be loyal and obedient. Between relatives and neighbors, there should be mutual respect, love, assistance, honesty, exhortation, and kind words. Laypeople should respectfully arrange seats for monastics and make offering to them, whereas monastics should teach the laity to study and have faith in what is good.⁴⁷

3.20 Can a Buddhist Marry a Heathen (Non-Buddhist)?

Heathenism (*yijiao*) is a contemptuous term used by Christians and Jews to refer to peoples outside their religions. Here we use this term in place of [the corresponding Buddhist term] **outer-path adherent**, but without disdainful connotations.

Unlike those religions with strong national or clannish colorings, Buddhism does not discriminate against other races or religions. Religious faith and family life clearly have strong connections, and marriage is the foundation of the family, but it is not required that a Buddhist first convert his or her fiancé before getting married. Yet an orthodox and well-cultivated Buddhist would certainly be able to induce his or her spouse to give up his or her original faith and convert to Buddhism after marriage.

This viewpoint is documented in Buddhist scriptures. For instance, the younger sister of a Buddhist was married to Śrīgupta, a devotee of a group of ascetics who practiced nudism. Originally this layman opposed Buddhism vehemently, and even plotted to murder the Buddha. In the end, however, he gave up supporting the nudist ascetics and took refuge in Buddhism.⁴⁸ Another Buddhist woman named Sumagadhā

also married a devotee of nudist ascetics but eventually converted her spouse to Buddhism.⁴⁹

Following the principle of intermingling (*tongshi*), which is one of the **four methods of inducement**, an orthodox Buddhist will not ask his or her spouse to give up prior religious beliefs. Instead, he or she will first cater to the spouse's faith, but after marriage will gradually and subtly induce the spouse to become a Buddhist. In other words, he or she first conforms to the spouse, then later leads the spouse to conform to him or her.

Of course, marriage is an important event in one's life and the foundation of family happiness. A beginning Buddhist does not need to use marriage as a means of proselytizing and perhaps later suffer unfortunate consequences. The main requirement for marriage should not be religious faith but love and affection between the two people.

So, if one is not sure whether one can influence the spouse to convert, one had better marry someone from the same religion and form a Buddhist family. Otherwise, it would be very sad if religious differences were to lead to a tragic marriage.

Although forming a Buddhist family is the responsibility of a Buddhist, there are times when the spouse persists in his or her different beliefs and is unlikely to change in the short term. In such situations, religious tolerance is necessary so both people can practice their own beliefs in mutual respect. Correct faith is undeniably better than superstitious faith, but faith in something is better than no faith. In circumstances like this, religious belief should be separated from the marriage: faith is faith, religion is religion, spouse is spouse, church (monastery) is church (monastery), and family is family. Buddhism was never intended to be a family-based religion, but a free religion. The Buddha did not obstruct others from believing in outer paths, nor did he oppose their making offerings to non-Buddhist ascetics (*S. tīrthikas*). He even told a disciple, "If the Nirgranthas [Jaina ascetics] whom your family has been respectfully supporting for a long time come, then you should make offerings to them according to your ability."⁵⁰

3.21 Do Buddhists Need to Hold a Buddhist-Style Wedding?

No specific reference to Buddhist weddings can be found in the scriptures. Accordingly, Buddhism does not stress the importance of having a Buddhist wedding, and any public ceremony will be recognized. What is strictly prohibited in Buddhism is unchastity, which is labeled “sexual misconduct” and is a violation of the precepts.⁵¹

But a Buddhist wedding is necessary if one wants to establish a Buddhist family. Holding a Buddhist wedding indicates that both parties are disciples of the Three Jewels, and the new family formed after the marriage will be a Buddhist family. A Buddhist family is one that believes in the Three Jewels and practices the Dharma, and at the very least they keep the five precepts and practice the ten good deeds—it is a family that will be full of love and happiness.

So any orthodox Buddhist should hold a Buddhist wedding and also encourage friends and relatives to have Buddhist weddings.

Because there is no specific reference to Buddhist weddings in the scriptures, to this day no uniform ceremony has been stipulated. But the main rituals should include taking refuge in the Three Jewels, pledging mutual love and respect, declaring one another husband and wife under the radiance of the Three Jewels, and making the commitment from love to help each other, and from their Buddhist fellowship to encourage each other.

The precepts for bhikṣus forbid monastics from serving as matchmakers, but are silent as to whether or not they can serve as witnesses at a wedding. From the perspective of the path of liberation, monastics had better not serve as witnesses in a wedding. But from the perspective of the bodhisattva path, serving as witnesses can be seen as a means of building a Buddhist society.

3.22 Can a Buddhist Divorce?

No specific reference to divorce can be found in the Buddhist scriptures. However, Buddhists are encouraged to take responsibility for maintaining happy marriages. Since husband and wife have married one another, they should care for, love, and respect one another, each fulfilling his or her appropriate role and taking care of corresponding responsibilities. Buddhism strictly prohibits sexual misconduct (unchastity); a majority of marriages break up because the husband or wife is unfaithful. If both spouses can uphold the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct, it is unlikely for a marriage to fall apart. And even if a marriage does fall apart, Buddhism supports the reunion of estranged couples. Therefore, although the Buddha forbade *bhikṣus* from having anything to do with matchmaking or arranging marriages, he did permit them to help if “the man and woman have had relations but have broken up and want to get together.”⁵² This is because divorce has negative psychological consequences for both spouses; furthermore, the parents must take moral responsibility for the impact of divorce on the children’s upbringing. Based on this line of reasoning we can say that Buddhism opposes divorce.

On the other hand, no Buddhist scripture says that divorce violates the precepts. So for reasons such as emotional conflict, lack of common interests, abuse, or other factors that lead a marriage to become unbearable, divorce is permissible. But if one wants a divorce in order to fulfill one’s love-sex desires, it would be immoral and not permitted by Buddhism, and hence it would be a transgression. This is because when spouses separate, the most unfortunate victims are the innocent children.

According to ancient Chinese customs, a widower may remarry; such remarriage was called “re-stringing” [a word also used in reference to musical instruments] and was considered moral. But a widow was expected to remain a widow for her entire life, which could earn her public recognition as a virtuous woman. This particular concept of chastity was certainly connected with ingrained customs promoting

gender discrimination. It was different in ancient India, where according to the Hindu *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, if a woman's husband had gone away to another place and she had heard no news of him for six years, she could have sexual relations with another man.⁵³ Buddhist scriptures state that when a layman leaves home to become a monk he must renounce his wife and give her freedom. So, Buddhism permits a woman who has lost her husband to remarry, and such a marriage is moral.

3.23 Is Buddhism against Birth Control?

This issue has yet to be discussed widely in Buddhist circles. In accordance with the basic principles of Buddhism, as long as one does not break the precept against killing a person by having an abortion, there is no reason to oppose birth control. Birth control is moral if it is done to improve the children's quality of life and education, or to avoid financial burden.

Abortion is strictly forbidden in Buddhism and is considered equivalent to killing a human being. It does not matter whether the aborted fetus has developed recognizably human features or not; any abortion is the same as killing a person. So Buddhism is opposed to birth control through abortion.

So we need to investigate the various techniques of birth control.

Mahāyāna Buddhists believe that the **intermediate-state** body (*zhongyin shen*) (the spirit-body in the stage of existence between death and rebirth) enters into the mother's womb while its parents are copulating. Seeing its future parents united, the spirit becomes deluded; if it feels passion for the father, it enters the womb to become a female, and if it feels passion for the mother, it will become a male. It also clings to the father's ejaculated sperm and the mother's ovum as its "self." But as we can deduce from embryology, this concept of self should not arise until the ovum is actually fertilized—that is, at conception—which does not necessarily occur while the parents are copulating. And this account cannot explain how artificial insemination occurs. So this

traditional view must be an explanation that was expedient under certain circumstances.⁵⁴

It follows then, if one wishes to use birth control, it should be done before the sperm fertilizes the ovum in order to avoid abortion, which constitutes killing. It may be moral if prior to sexual intercourse one takes anti-pregnancy pills or installs anti-pregnancy devices and/or medication inside the uterus or vagina. Such treatments will prevent the sperm from reaching the ovum or cause the sperm and eggs to lose their potency. But one must be absolutely sure that one is not killing the fertilized ovum. Otherwise, it's best not to use birth control at all, and to instead use the method that Buddhism praises most highly—to practice sexual restraint.

SECTION FOUR: BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AND TERMINOLOGY

4.1 What Does Pusa (Bodhisattva) Mean?

The Chinese word *pusa* is an abbreviated transliteration of the Sanskrit word bodhisattva. The complete transliteration should be *putisaduo*. “Bodhi” means “awakened” or “enlightened” and “sattva” means “sentient being,” so bodhisattva means “awakened sentient being.” The term sentient being refers to any form of life that can feel love and other emotions, mainly animals. Bodhisattvas are enlightened sentient beings who are aware of all sentient beings’ sufferings, feel sympathy for others’ plight, and act to succor them. Therefore, we often speak of a person who is altruistic and helps those in difficulties as “having the heart of a bodhisattva.”

The basic meaning of the word bodhisattva is very different from what most Chinese people understand. The clay or wooden statues of various spirits or gods such as the neighborhood locality god or city god are definitely not bodhisattvas. Rather, bodhisattvas are those who have faith in the Buddha’s teachings and seek to practice them, who then vow to liberate themselves and others, and who can even disregard themselves in order to save others.

To become a Buddha, a sentient being must pass through the stage of being a bodhisattva, and he or she must make and take to heart great vows, especially the Four Great Vows: “To deliver innumerable sentient beings, to cut off endless vexations, to master limitless approaches to

the Dharma, and to attain supreme Buddhahood.”¹ We can see how difficult it is to be a real bodhisattva.

But in another sense of the word, anyone who aspires to become a Buddha, from the time the vow is first generated until the eventual attainment of Buddhahood, can be called a bodhisattva. Hence, there is a difference between ordinary bodhisattvas and noble bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas mentioned in the sūtras are mostly noble bodhisattvas. According to the *Sūtra on the Deeds of Bodhisattvas as Necklaces of Gems*, bodhisattvas can be classified into fifty-two levels, and only the top twelve levels (from the first ground to the tenth ground, plus the ground of equivalent enlightenment and the ground of wondrous enlightenment) are noble stages. Actually, a bodhisattva in the wondrous enlightenment stage is a Buddha, and a bodhisattva in the equivalent enlightenment stage will become a Buddha in his next life. The bodhisattvas we know of, such as Guanyin, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, and Earth Treasury are bodhisattvas at the stage of equivalent enlightenment.²

4.2 What Do Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Refer To?

During the Buddha’s time, there was no distinction between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. The Dharma is of one flavor; it’s just that different listeners understand it differently and attain different levels of realization.³

To listeners with shallow karmic capacity, the Buddha taught basic human ethics such as keeping the five precepts and practicing the ten good deeds, the so-called human and heavenly vehicles. To listeners who felt great repugnance for life, the Buddha taught the lesser vehicle of the śrāvaka, the means to liberate beings from cyclical existence. And to those with deep karmic capacity and the compassionate wish to transform the world, he taught the greater vehicle of the bodhisattva.

In fact, there are a total of five vehicles in Buddhist practice: the human, heavenly, śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva vehicles. Those who practice the five precepts and ten good deeds in a superior

manner ascend to the heavens, while those who practice them in an average manner are reborn as humans. Together, these two vehicles are called the human and heavenly path. Śrāvakas are practitioners who have transcended life and death after hearing the Dharma and practicing it. Pratyekabuddhas are practitioners who have transcended life and death after practicing themselves, without having heard the Dharma from a teacher. The practices of these two, śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, are collectively called the path of liberation. The bodhisattva path is a practice that seeks liberation without renouncing human and heavenly activities. Thus, the Mahāyāna bodhisattva path integrates both the liberation path and the human and heavenly path.

Those who only practice the five precepts and the ten good deeds of the human and heavenly path are still ordinary people. In contrast, individuals who have attained liberation and are hence no longer subject to birth and death are called noble ones.⁴ Noble ones who are only interested in practicing the Dharma for liberation, with no intention to come back to liberate other sentient beings, are referred to as followers of the Hīnayāna, meaning “small or lesser vehicle.”

Bodhisattvas aim to attain supreme Buddhahood and liberation on one hand, and to save numberless sentient beings from suffering on the other. Therefore, they are called followers of the Mahāyāna, or the “great vehicle.”

Buddhism can also be divided into the Northern and Southern traditions according to its geographic distribution. According to one system of classification, the Northern tradition is based on Sanskrit scriptures and is Mahāyāna Buddhism; China is central to this tradition, which also spread to Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Tibet. The Southern tradition is based on Pali scriptures and is Hīnayāna Buddhism; Sri Lanka is central to the tradition, which also spread to Thailand and Burma.⁵ Actually though, this is just the Northern tradition’s classification system, and the Southern tradition completely rejects it: as we can see in scroll 45 of the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda* and in sūtra 769 in scroll 28 of the *Za ahan* sūtras, the term *dasheng* [meaning “great vehicle,” which could translate back into the Sanskrit

word *mahāyāna*] is used to label the practice of the **Eightfold Noble Path**.⁶ Also, in sūtra 669 in scroll 26 of the *Za ahan* sūtras, the term *dashi* [meaning “great person,” which could translate back into the Sanskrit word *mahāsattva*] is used to describe practitioners who practice the four methods of inducement.⁷ Finally, in scroll 19 of the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, the six perfections (*liudu*) of the Mahāyāna are clearly mentioned.^{8*}

In terms of theoretical development the Northern tradition is superior to the Southern tradition. But in terms of actual practice, people in the Northern tradition do not necessarily follow the Mahāyāna path, nor do those in the Southern tradition necessarily follow the Hīnayāna path. And except for vegetarianism, the Northern tradition in China has no practices superior to those of the Southern tradition. During the Wei-Jin period (220–420), the practice of **pure talk**, which was centered on the abstruse philosophy called **dark learning** or “studies of the abstruse” that developed from the Daoist thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi, was prevalent. Mahāyāna Buddhism was received in a similar vein: elite scholar-gentry during that period discussed Buddhist ideas as an idle pastime, as a part of their “pure talk.” In fact, the theoretical underpinnings of the Chinese Tiantai and Huayan schools somewhat reflect this trend. Therefore, the modern Japanese scholar Kimura Taiken (1881–1931) has criticized Chinese Buddhism as the Buddhism of scholarship, not the Buddhism of practice. His critique is not totally unfounded.

In fact, the philosophical structures of the Tiantai and Huayan schools largely emerged from the enlightenment experiences of eminent Chinese monks; these structures lack sufficient basis in Indian Buddhist thought. Therefore the true spirit of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism has not yet been disseminated among the people, much less become a refuge for the common Chinese people. Consequently, some have said that Chinese Buddhism is Mahāyāna Buddhism in philosophy, but Hīnayāna Buddhism in practice.

4.3 How Long Does It Take to Become a Buddha?

To become a Buddha is a very difficult and remote goal. To transcend birth and death is not so difficult: at most, it takes one hundred kalpas, and at least four lifetimes, to become a pratyekabuddha. And one can become an arhat in one life, three lives, or within one hundred kalpas at most. Mahāyāna practitioners with sharp karmic roots can attain the stage of purity of the six sense faculties (a stage toward the end of saṃsāra, close to entering the noble stages [according to the stages of the Tiantai school's Perfect Teachings; see figure on page 101]) within one life. But to become a Buddha is not easy at all. It is commonly said that starting from the time one first develops faith in Buddhism, it takes [at least] three immeasurable kalpas ("immeasurable" does not mean without number, but simply difficult to count) to attain Buddhahood.⁹ One kalpa is already a long time, not to mention three immeasurable kalpas! During this very immense period of time, one has to practice the bodhisattva path to benefit all sentient beings. If one is particularly diligent, the time needed may be less, but if one is lax, it might take longer. In any case, one has to attain perfected merit and wisdom, and teach and succor sentient beings everywhere before one can become a Buddha.

In fact, time and space are concepts of ordinary people with discriminating minds. Noble bodhisattvas have no such conceptions, because time and space are merely conventional designations of the physical world. In the world of pure mind, concepts such as the length of time or the size of space cannot even be established. Even the dreams of ordinary people are unfettered by the limitations of ordinary time and space—how could noble ones who have transcended the world be bound by such limitations? A sūtra states that a long kalpa "enters" a short kalpa and a short kalpa enters a long kalpa, that one kalpa enters all kalpas and that all kalpas enter one kalpa, that a moment of thought enters the **three times** and the three times enter a moment of thought, that a billion-world universe enters a particle and a particle is the

same as a billion-world universe, and even that one skin pore contains countless worlds (see the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*).¹⁰ While these statements may at first seem to be mind-boggling myths, after deeper and objective analysis we discover they are not without truth. Of course, an ordinary person cannot personally realize such exalted modes of perception.

4.4 Can One Become a Buddha Instantaneously?

It is true there is the Buddhist admonition “The moment a butcher puts down his knife, he becomes a Buddha right on the spot.”¹¹ The message is similar to the old saying “The return of a prodigal son is worth more than gold.”

However, the value of a prodigal son’s return lies in his ability to change and reform. Only if he actually rebuilds his life can we say that he has “returned” and so is “worth more than gold.” In the same vein, the Buddhist statement “The moment a butcher puts down his knife, he becomes a Buddha right on the spot” is really just an affirmation of the good side of the butcher’s nature, his buddha-nature. It does not really mean he immediately attains true Buddhahood, the supreme, perfect enlightenment.

According to the Perfect Teachings (*yuanjiao*) outlined by the Tiantai school, there exist six kinds of Buddhahood, called the Six Identities.¹²

The first kind of Buddha or Buddhahood in figure 2 refers to all sentient beings. The Buddha said: “All sentient beings have buddha-nature.”¹³ The fact that all sentient beings on the earth possess the Tathāgata’s wisdom and meritorious characteristics is Buddhahood in Principle. The second level consists of people who have heard the Dharma and already know they intrinsically possess buddha-nature, the potential to become a Buddha. People who are practicing the Dharma and can subdue (but not sever) the afflictions occupy the third level. Those at the fourth level have purified their six sense faculties and are fast approaching entry into the noble stages. The fifth level comprises noble bodhisattvas who have reached the first abiding stage or beyond.

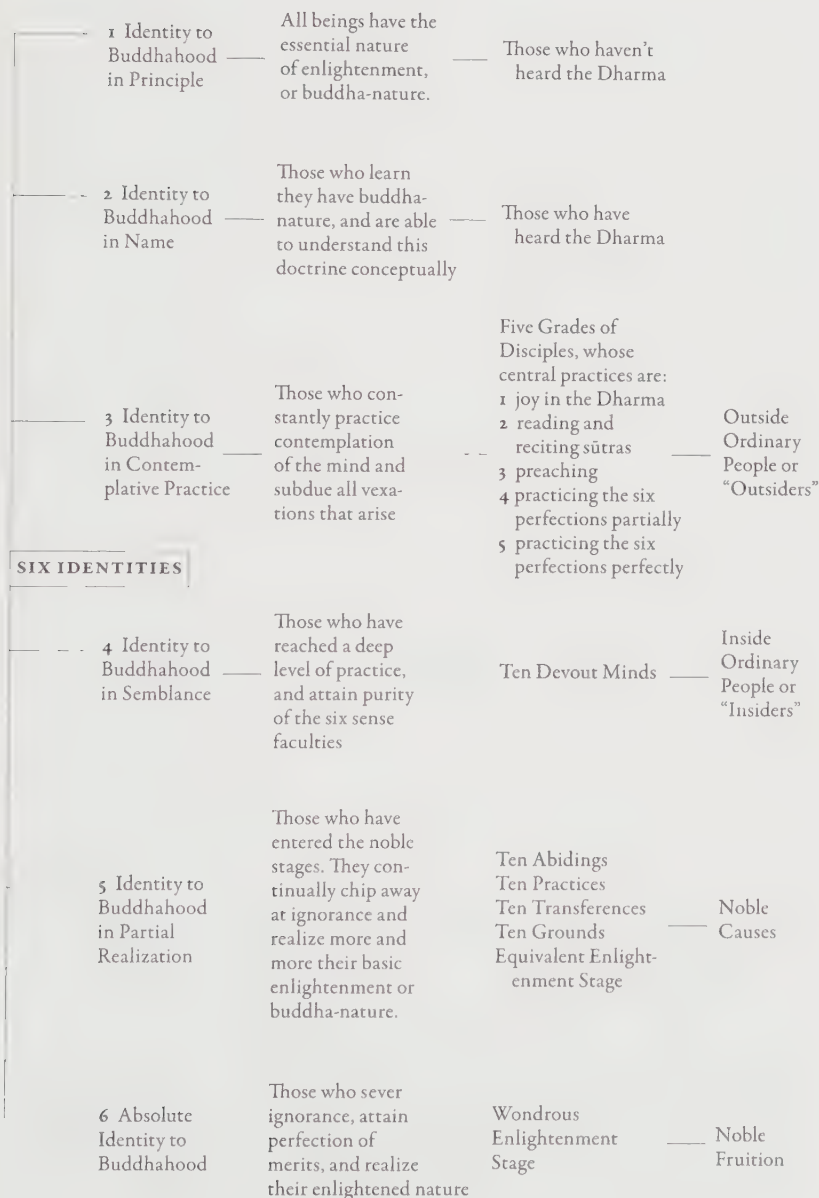


FIGURE 2. THE SIX IDENTITIES

The sixth level consists of true Buddhas, who have achieved the perfect fruition of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.¹⁴

From the discussion above, we can infer that the word Buddha in the phrase “becomes a Buddha on the spot” must refer to Buddha in Principle (first level) or Buddha in Name (second level), not the ultimate Buddha (sixth level). When one drops his butcher’s knife, one has set out on the path to perfect his buddha-nature, and the saying that one “becomes a Buddha on the spot” is equivalent to the saying “The shore is right there if you turn your head.” So, dropping the knife does not make the butcher a Buddha immediately, just as turning back from the sea of suffering does not immediately bring one back to the shore.

Knowing these principles helps us to understand by inference the meaning of enlightenment in Chan Buddhism. Many people believe that to realize [the content of Chan teachings such as] “this very mind is Buddha,” “the illuminated mind is Buddha,” “no-mind is Buddha,” or “one’s original face before emerging from one’s mother’s womb,” and other such expressions means to attain Buddhahood. They also think that as soon as they are enlightened, “suddenly breaking through the blackened lacquer bucket,” they immediately become Buddhas.¹⁵

As a matter of fact, experiencing an awakening or enlightenment (*C. wu*; *J. satori*) is not identical to attaining Buddhahood, and is not necessarily the same as “seeing the path” (*S. darśana-mārga*; *C. jian-dao*). For example, Song dynasty Chan Master Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1238–1295) said that he practiced very energetically throughout his life, attaining eighteen major awakenings and even more minor awakenings. So we can see that enlightenment is not Buddhahood. If it is said to be Buddhahood, the Buddhahood attained is the Buddhahood in Principle or even the stage up to Buddhahood in Semblance, but certainly not Absolute Buddhahood. At most, enlightenment in Chan Buddhism is something like attaining the “pure Dharma-eye” (*S. dharmacakṣu-viśuddha*; *C. fayanjing*) that is, seeing the path (*jian-dao*), which corresponds to the first fruit [stream-entry] in Nikāya Buddhism.¹⁶ So a Chan practitioner has to break through [what the Chan school calls] the three barriers—the initial barrier to investigation [into one’s original nature], the obdurate barrier, and the final unyield-

ing barrier—even to begin to be truly liberated from the stream of birth and death. In terms of the Tiantai school's sixfold Buddhahood system of the Perfect Teachings, the stage of a Chan practitioner after breaking through the last barrier corresponds only to the fourth identity, Buddhahood in Semblance. For this reason, after the Chan patriarchs had found an "entrance point" [into enlightenment]—abruptly breaking through the blackened lacquer bucket—they often hid away in a secluded place to "grow and nurture the sacred embryo," since they had not reached the noble stages yet.¹⁷

Based on the information above, we can see that it's time for some Chan practitioners who just blindly practice with misconceptions about enlightenment to clear up their minds. Even if they have broken through all three barriers, they are still just ordinary people who have reached the stage of having become "insiders."

4.5 What Is a Kalpa?

The word kalpa was not coined by Buddhists but rather was a general term to measure time in ancient India. It can signify a long time or a short time, from as long as eternity to as short as an instant.¹⁸

But in most cases, kalpa refers to an eon in our **Universe of Tribulation**.

Three categories of kalpas are mentioned in Buddhist scriptures:

1 *Small kalpa*: The duration of a small kalpa is determined by reference to the lifespan of humans on the earth.¹⁹ The time required for a human lifespan of 84,000 years, which then decreases one year every one hundred years, to reach a lifespan of only ten years is called a kalpa of decrease. Similarly, the time required for a human lifespan of ten years, increasing at an increment of one year every one hundred years, to reach a lifespan of 84,000 years is called a kalpa of increase. One small kalpa equals a kalpa of decrease plus a kalpa of increase.²⁰

2 *Medium kalpa*: A period of twenty small kalpas is called a medium kalpa. According to Buddhist scriptures, the existence of our planet can be divided into the four periods of formation, stasis, dis-

solution, and nothingness, with each period lasting twenty small kalpas. Only during the stasis period is the planet suitable for human habitation. In the formation period, gases coalesce into liquids, and then some liquids coalesce into solids, so Earth is not suitable for living. In the dissolution period, Earth is destroyed by violent catastrophes, and is likewise unsuitable for human life. It is said that after a great fire [during the dissolution kalpa], our Earth will vanish, and that during other cycles of the universe, the world is sometimes destroyed by water or wind rather than by fire. The kalpa of dissolution is followed by the kalpa of nothingness, during which absolutely nothing exists. After twenty small kalpas of nothingness, another Earth will be formed, and another period of formation will begin. Each of the four stages of formation, stasis, dissolution and nothingness is called a medium kalpa, and they are named the formation kalpa, stasis kalpa, dissolution kalpa, and nothingness kalpa, respectively.

3 *Great kalpa*: One great kalpa consists of the four medium kalpas of formation, stasis, dissolution, and nothingness. In other words, from the formation of one billion-world universe, through its destruction, until the beginning of the formation of its replacement billion-world universe is a great kalpa. Each of the big fires during a dissolution kalpa will spread from the Hell of Unintermittent Torture through the First Dhyāna Heavens in the realm of form. Each of the big floods will destroy the areas from the Hell of Unintermittent Torture through the Second Dhyāna Heavens. The last windstorm [at the end of a cycle of sixty-four great kalpas] will destroy everything from the Hell of Unintermittent Torture through the Third Dhyāna Heavens. The impacted areas during the dissolution kalpa of a great kalpa therefore can include everything within the three realms, except for the Fourth Dhyāna Heavens of the realm of the form and the four heavens in the **realm of formlessness**. Every living being will want to escape from such catastrophes. Don't feel sad, however: before the dissolution kalpa comes, the sentient beings in this world will have been reborn into another universe or

into one of the higher, safe dhyāna heavens of this universe. Everyone will have found a safe place.

In Buddhist scriptures the word kalpa generally refers to a great kalpa unless it is labeled a small or a medium kalpa. The lifespan of a sentient being can be as short as a moment, such that the being dies immediately after birth, or as long as that of a sentient being who practices the four formless concentrations and is reborn into the realm of formlessness. The longest life expectancy, for beings reborn into the Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception, is 84,000 great kalpas. The length of their lives therefore equals the duration of 84,000 cycles of the formation and destruction of the earth. Such beings may think they have already reached the state of deathlessness, but in reality, they will be subject to death and rebirth again after 84,000 great kalpas. From the vantage point of a Buddha, 84,000 great kalpas is but an instant. Only by cultivating the path of liberation and seeing the emptiness of self can one enter nirvāṇa—the state of no birth and no death. And only by going one step further and dissolving one's attachment to dharmas can one become a bodhisattva, liberated from birth and death and yet not abiding in nirvāṇa, manifesting in different guises according to the needs of other beings as he or she walks along the path to Buddhahood.

Some of you may ask, “How many years remain before our Earth is destroyed?” For this question, I will answer with an analogy. If we were to regard the stasis kalpa as lasting one hundred years, then today our Earth is about forty-five years old. The stasis kalpa contains twenty small kalpas, and at the moment we are in the kalpa of decrease in the ninth small kalpa. So everyone should feel at ease, and not be scared by the Christians' claim that “the end of the world is fast approaching.” But in the decreasing kalpa of every small kalpa, as the human life expectancy approaches ten years of age, pestilence, famine, and war will break out due to the increasing decadence of the human mind. These three catastrophes are, however, temporary and limited in scope, so many will die but the human race will survive. On the positive side, there is good news to share with everyone: a total of 996 bodhisattvas

will come to our Earth and achieve Buddhahood here during the remaining ten and one-half small kalpas. The first one to come will be Maitreya Buddha, which is why he is called “the coming, revered Buddha Maitreya.” Maitreya will be reborn on Earth to attain Buddhahood in the kalpa of decrease during the tenth small kalpa when the human lifespan is 80,000 years, about 8.8 million years from now.²¹

Regarding the truth of increasing (and decreasing) human life expectancies, as high as 84,000 years in the kalpa of increase, we might as well accept it as true, because both Mahāyāna and Nikāya scriptures record such claims. A sūtra states: “People’s life expectancy will gradually decrease to ten years. When people live only ten years, a girl will be marriageable when she reaches five months of age; no sweet things such as ghee, ground sugar, or molasses will be heard of in that era.”²² It also states: “When the human lifespan is 80,000 years, a female will be marriageable when she reaches 500 years of age; at that time, the earth will be even and flat, without ditches, pits, hills, mounds, brambles, or thorns. Nor will there be mosquitoes, gadflies, snakes, lizards, or poisonous vermin. Tiles, stones, and grains of sand will become lapis lazuli. The people will be strong and healthy; the five grains abundant and inexpensive; and the world happy and rich without limit.”²³

4.6 What Is a Billion-World Universe?

In the Buddhist sūtras, a sun/moon system is called a world-system or “small world” (*xiao shijie*). **Mount Sumeru** is the center around which a sun and a moon orbit, so a world-system can also be called a “Mount Sumeru world.” The reality of Mount Sumeru is still an unresolved issue in Buddhist scholarship. Some progressive Buddhists (such as some Japanese scholars) think the idea originated from ancient Indian legends, and that the Buddha just borrowed it for his discourses. They believe that whether or not the legendary Mount Sumeru exists is unrelated to the Buddha’s goal in teaching. Such scholars claim that the Buddha’s goal was to awaken and succor sentient beings through the Dharma, and that in doing so he utilized the legendary Mount Sumeru in his teachings.

This explanation certainly has its merits. But if one is to discuss Buddhist cosmology, one inevitably has to discuss Mount Sumeru. So then, where *is* Mount Sumeru? This writer dares not deny its existence, yet has no way to affirm its existence, either. Before we know for certain, it's safest just to stay with our uncertainty. Therefore, I will leave aside the issue of Mount Sumeru in the following discussion.²⁴

Since a single world-system is defined as a sun/moon system, it must refer to a solar system.²⁵ Because each star has satellites, the star is the sun and all the satellites are "moons." So in our solar system, not only our moon but all the nine planets could [in Sheng Yen's interpretation] be considered moons. The sūtras say that the scope of a world-system extends from the deepest hell, the Hell of Unintermittent Torture, through the Great Brahmā Heaven in the realm of form.

A thousand world-systems form a thousand-world universe (*xiao-qian shijie*). The scope of each thousand-world universe extends through the Light-Sound Heaven in the realm of form.

One thousand thousand-world universes form a million-world universe (*zhongqian shijie*), which extends through the Heaven of Universal Purity.

A thousand million-world universes form a billion-world universe (*daqian shijie*, or *sanqian daqian shijie*). Each of the billion-world universes extends through the Heaven of Ultimate Form.²⁶ The ruler of a billion-world universe is the deity Maheśvara, who lives in the Heaven of Ultimate Form (*S. akaniṣṭa*).

Each billion-world universe has its Maheśvara, and since there are countless billion-world universes, there are countless Maheśvaras. Our billion-world universe is called the Universe of Tribulation. Each billion-world universe is the domain in which a single Buddha teaches the Dharma. Therefore, sometimes Śākyamuni, the World-honored One, is called the "lord of the teachings in the Universe of Tribulation."

The planet we inhabit is an insignificant part of our billion-world universe. In order to be able to spread the Dharma throughout his domain, Śākyamuni Buddha produces vast numbers of identical

manifestations of himself, which are called manifestation bodies or **emanation bodies**. Although he produces vast numbers of such bodies, they all remain within the confines of our billion-world Universe of Tribulation.

From the discussion above, we can see Buddhist cosmology is an enormous and expansive system that resembles modern astronomy.

4.7 What Does “Purity of the Six Sense Faculties” Mean?

Most people who don’t understand the Dharma have a superficial or even ridiculous understanding of the term “purity of the six sense faculties” (*liugen qingjing*). They think all monks or nuns are pure with respect to the six faculties. If a monastic evinces any habit that suggests desire for sex or money, newspaper reporters hunting for scandals will blow it out of proportion, criticizing the monastic for being “impure with respect to the six faculties.” As for the meaning of the “six faculties” and “purity of the six faculties,” they don’t know or even want to know.

Actually, the phrase “purity with respect to the six faculties” has many principles behind it.

The six faculties represent the entire physiological field. Buddhists view the universe and life not from the perspective of a materialist, idealist, or theist, but as proponents of conditioned arising. Thus, Buddhists analyze the human being from three perspectives: psychological, physiological, and physical. The six faculties are physiological, whereas the six objects are physical and the six consciousnesses are psychological. Together, they form a complete human being. The six faculties [*liu gen*, “six roots”], six objects [*liu chen*, “six dusts”], and six consciousnesses (*liu shi*) are together called the eighteen elements (*shiba jie*). These three divisions of the eighteen elements are like the three legs of a tripod; if one leg is lacking, the other two will be unable to carry out their functions. The six objects and six consciousnesses cannot interact without the six faculties serving as a medium. The six objects and the six faculties rely on the distinguishing function of the six con-

sciousnesses to be of value. And the six faculties and the six consciousnesses function only if the six objects are present to be reflected.

To draw an analogy, the six faculties are mirrors, the six sense objects are images reflected in the mirrors, and the six consciousnesses are people who distinguish the images in the mirrors.

What are the six faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses? The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect, in their capacity as media between the psychological and the physical, are called the six faculties.^{27*} These six can be identified with the functions of certain nerves. The eyes have optic nerves; the ears have auditory nerves; the nose has olfactory nerves; the tongue has gustatory nerves; the body has tactile nerves; and the intellect has various cerebral nerves. Because they are the fundamental or root preconditions for interaction between the mind and objects, these six faculties are called the “six roots” in Chinese.^{28*}

Each of the six faculties receives a particular class of object, and these objects are the six sense objects, or the various kinds of matter described by physics. These are the colors and forms seen by the eyes, the sounds heard by the ears, the scents smelled by the nose, the flavors tasted by the tongue, the tactile sensations sensed by the body, and the thoughts of the intellect. Here “thoughts” mean what in Buddhist terminology are called *dharma*s, which in this context refer to things that are extremely subtle and difficult to grasp [i.e., objects of perception that are not perceived through the five basic sense faculties].

The six faculties receive the six sense objects, initiating the processes of distinguishing and memory called the six consciousnesses. A person with the six faculties and six objects but no six consciousnesses would be a corpse, not a living being. So the six consciousnesses control the six faculties, whereas the six faculties are the tools used by the six consciousnesses to detect the six sense objects.

Why then do we say “purity of the six faculties”? Because the six faculties are tools of the six consciousnesses, and although the six consciousnesses direct one to do evil or good, the six faculties actually carry out these behaviors. People cycle around in the bitter sea of birth and

death because their six faculties have never been pure. The misdeeds they have committed since beginningless time have been performed by the six faculties. For example, the eyes crave for forms, the ears long for sounds, the tongue desires flavors, the body yearns for tender and smooth sensations, and the intellect hungers for happy states of mind. When craving is present, anger is also inevitable. Craving and anger originate from the affliction of ignorance. Together, the three poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance aggravate and exacerbate one's wrongdoing. Under their influence, one may commit more evil than good, eliminating one's chance to escape from the sea of *samsāra*.

The path of liberation is embodied in the threefold practice of precepts, concentration, and wisdom. But the sources of wisdom are precepts and meditative concentration, so beginners should work to cultivate body and mind. To cultivate the mind is to eliminate bad thoughts, and this is mainly achieved through meditative concentration. To cultivate the body is to eliminate bad behavior, which is achieved mainly by upholding the precepts. The purpose of keeping the precepts is to guard the sensory doorways to the field of consciousness so that nothing bad slips in and plants the seeds for misfortune and rebirth.

An ordinary person always has delusive thinking unless he or she is in a state of meditative absorption (*S. dhyāna*). Delusive thinking is the fuse triggering karmic action on the part of the six faculties, and Buddhist precepts serve as safety fuses or fire extinguishers between delusive thinking and the six faculties. Only under the protection of precepts can the six faculties gradually be purified. As soon as one achieves purity of the six faculties, one is close to entering the noble stages of practice.²⁹

Most monks and nuns are ordinary people who, under the protection of the monastic precepts, are doing their best to guard the six sense faculties. But their six faculties are far from pure. Many people think monks or nuns have purity of the six faculties as long as they don't engage in debauchery, crave for wealth, or involve themselves in self-centered disputes and arguments. But actually, any craving for material things indicates lack of purity of the six faculties, whether it be craving

for sights, sounds, scents, foods, clothing, entertainment, or something to use. As long as craving or grasping is present, the six faculties are impure. Unlike sexual and financial wrongdoings, however, clinging to other things is subtle and difficult to detect, and few people notice it.

According to the Tiantai school's classification of stages for the Perfect Teachings, purity of the six faculties is attained during the first ten stages of the fifty-two stages on the bodhisattva path, the ten devout minds (*shi xinwei*). During these stages, one will sever the afflictions of view and thought (*jiansi huo*), which in the **Consciousness-only school's** terminology correspond to the discriminative afflictive hindrances (*fenbie fan'nao zhang*) and discriminative noetic hindrances (*fenbie suozhi zhang*).³⁰ This attainment should occur when an outside ordinary person (*wai fanfu*) enters the virtuous stages (*xianwei*) to become an inside ordinary person (*nei fanfu*).³¹

According to the *Lotus* and *Parinirvāṇa* sūtras, purity of six faculties enables one to substitute one faculty for another, that is, to use one sense faculty to do the work of any of the other five faculties. For example, the eyes can see, but also hear, smell, taste, etc.; the ears can hear, but also see, smell, taste, etc.; and so forth for the nose, tongue, body, and intellect.

The general reader may consider the multi-functioning of the six faculties a fantastic myth. In fact, it is just that we are unable to do this because we limit our sense faculties. In other words, we use our six faculties to grasp and fetch the six sense objects, and these six objects plug up the six faculties, obstructing them. The six faculties become enslaved to the six sense objects, carrying out their every prodding like sycophants. When color and form appear, the eyes react; when sound comes, the ears react; if scent is present, the nose reacts; and so forth for the tongue, body, and mind.³²

If instead the six faculties do not grasp sense objects—if they are not controlled or seduced by sense objects—they will be emancipated from sense objects. Emancipated faculties are free faculties, free to substitute for one another without limitation. These free sense faculties are called pure sense faculties because although they still interact with

SIX SENSE FACULTIES	SIX SENSE OBJECTS	SIX CONSCIOUSNESSES
EYE	SIGHTS	VISUAL CONSCIOUSNESS
EAR	SOUNDS	AUDITORY CONSCIOUSNESS
NOSE	SMELLS	OLFACTORY CONSCIOUSNESS
TONGUE	TASTES	GUSTATORY CONSCIOUSNESS
BODY	TACTILE SENSATIONS	TACTILE CONSCIOUSNESS
INTELLECT	NON-PHYSICAL OBJECTS OF PERCEPTION	INTELLECT CONSCIOUSNESS

FIGURE 3. THE SIX FACULTIES, OBJECTS, AND CONSCIOUSNESSES

sense objects, they are not seduced by sense objects and do not produce the tainted karma leading to rebirth in *saṃsāra*.

To clarify once again, purity of the six sense faculties does not imply that they cease to exist. It means that our physiological faculties will no longer be manipulated by the illusory phenomena in the external environment. To reach this state is to be “untainted by even a single speck of dust [sense object]”—and one can’t reach this state by casual effort.

To help readers remember, the six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses are listed in figure 3.

The six consciousnesses activate the six faculties and thereby contact the six sense objects. After sense objects are reflected into the six faculties, the six consciousnesses discern and store them in memory. Next, these memories emerge from the six consciousnesses, leading the six faculties to crave and grasp at the six sense objects. These interactions lead to the stream of rebirth and redeath, and purity of the six sense faculties breaks and transcends this continual cycle.

4.8 What Does “Emptiness of the Four Greats” Mean?

In the phrase “the four greats are all empty” (*si da jie kong*), exactly what are the four “greats” that need to be dissolved or “emptied”?

People who don’t understand the Dharma will blurt out: “The four ‘greats’ to be emptied are liquor, sex, money, and anger!”³³

That answer doesn't correspond at all to the four greats in Buddhism. The four greats discussed by Buddhists are the four great material elements: earth, water, fire, and wind.

Buddhists did not invent the concept of the four elements; rather, it was a conclusion drawn from humanity's early investigations into the fundamental composition of the universe. Similar formulations are evident in the history of both Western and Eastern philosophy. For example, the Chinese *Classic of Documents* mentions five elements: water, fire, metal, wood, and earth, and the ancient Indian *Vedas* assert that the universe was formed based on five natural elements: earth, water, wind, fire, and space. In a similar vein, the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles (ca. 495–ca. 435 BCE) claimed that air, water, earth, and fire are the four unchanging primary elements in the universe.

In summary, these systems of four or five elements all point to the fundamental elements in the physical world. If one's view of reality is limited by such a perspective, one will develop into a materialist, and indeed these systems are the predecessors of materialism.

The four elements discussed in Buddhism are taken from ancient Indian thought but are understood in a deeper and Buddhist manner. The four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are the primary elements of the physical world, and can be paired with a variety of phenomena. In terms of the outer world, mountains and earth pertain to the earth element, oceans and rivers pertain to the water element, sunlight and heat pertain to the fire element, and the air and air currents pertain to the wind element. If the four elements are used to describe human physiology, then hair, bone, and flesh pertain to the earth element; the blood and secretions pertain to the water element; body heat pertains to the fire element; and breath pertains to the wind element. If the four elements are paired with their physical characteristics, then solidity pertains to the earth element, moisture pertains to the water element, warmth pertains to the fire element, and fluidity pertains to the wind element. No matter how the four elements are analyzed, they describe only the physical world, not the spiritual or mental world. So whereas materialists claim the four elements are the root source of the universe, Buddhists do not agree with this claim at all.

Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism interpret the four elements differently. Generally speaking, Nikāya Buddhism takes the four elements to be the primary causes of material phenomena, and hence they are also called the “four great seeds.” This label implies that the four elements are the seeds which bring forth all other matter, so that all material phenomena result from the interactions of the four elements. If the four elements are in harmony, then things will flourish; if the four elements are in contradiction, then destruction will occur. Such thinking is applied not only to the outer world but also to physiology, so according to Buddhism, sickness is said to result from disharmony among the four elements. Nikāyists contemplate the four elements in order to see the emptiness of the physical body by observing that the body is merely a transient combination of the four elements. Hence, they see that the physical body is not a substantial “self,” and therefore they do not produce the saṃsāric karma that results from grasping the physical body as self. As soon as they realize the emptiness of self, they enter into the nirvāṇa of Nikāya Buddhism and no longer cycle through birth and death.

According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the four “elements” are not the primary constituents of matter, but just material phenomena—provisional constructions, not substantial entities; mirages, not substances. The elements are merely the facilitating conditions and not the foundational causes of physical phenomena. So although the four elements are called the seeds of physical phenomena, they are not regarded as the true face behind such phenomena. In contrast, Nikāyists dissolve the self [by seeing the emptiness of self] but do not dissolve the dharmas, and so although they view gross physical phenomena as empty, they believe the four elements exist substantially [i.e., posses inherent nature] in the form of ultimate particles (*S. paramāṇu*; *C. jīwei*). But the Nikāya Buddhist view of existence is not materialism, but pluralism, because in realizing emptiness of self, all Buddhists see that the self consists of five aggregates, and the four elements are just one of these five aggregates.³⁴

And what are the five aggregates? They are forms, feelings, perceptions and ideas, mental formations and volitions, and [discrete moments

of] consciousness.³⁵ Forms pertain to the physical realm and the remaining four aggregates pertain to mental phenomena. The four elements make up the aggregate of forms.

Detailed discussion of the five aggregates exceeds the scope of this entry. We can only summarize as follows: the five aggregates are saṃsāric dharmas within the three realms, and to transcend rebirth within the three realms, one must realize that the five aggregates neither individually nor collectively constitute a self. In addition, we should note that in Mahāyāna Buddhism not only the four elements but all five aggregates are regarded as empty. And among the five aggregates, Buddhism focuses on the aggregate of consciousness, not on the four elements of the aggregate of forms. The three aggregates of feelings, perceptions and ideas, and mental formations and volitions are simply supporting functions of consciousness, and they serve to show us the vast and expansive functioning of the spiritual realm. So we can see that what Buddhism advocates is not materialism, but conditioned arising.

4.9 How Many Schools of Buddhism Are There?

The proliferation of Buddhist schools was inevitable. This is because although there is only one Buddhism, there are many interpretations of the Dharma due to differences in people's capacities or karmic roots, historical backgrounds, and living environments. The sūtras that state: "The Buddha expounded the Dharma in one voice, but sentient beings understood the Dharma differently in accordance with their capacities"³⁶ illustrate this point. From the Buddha's perspective, all Buddhist doctrines lead to the same nirvāṇa, but from a disciple's perspective, each Dharma path is different and practiced by different people. So for example each of thirteen of the Buddha's most famous disciples had a unique personality that made him outstanding in his area of expertise, and each also had his own group of companions.³⁷ This situation can be considered the first portent of the eventual profusion of Buddhist schools.

Four to five hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, Nikāya Buddhism within India alone divided into as many as twenty schools.

Practitioners formed a new school or faction more often than not because of disagreements over petty issues.

As Nikāya Buddhism was fragmenting and losing its power as a unified, standardized approach, Mahāyāna Buddhism, established by Aśvaghoṣa (ca. early second century) and Nāgārjuna (ca. late second century) and emphasizing the wisdom that realizes emptiness, arose in India in response to the needs of the time.

About one thousand years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, because the philosophy that "only consciousness exists" promulgated by Asaṅga (ca. fourth century) and Vasubandhu (ca. fourth century) and later by Bhāvaviveka (ca. sixth century) and Dharmapāla (ca. sixth century) gained prominence, Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism split into the School of Emptiness (*kongzong*) and the School of Inherent Existence (*youzong*).³⁸ A bit later when Esoteric Buddhism became popular, Mahāyāna Buddhism was further divided into Exoteric Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism.

The above is a short account of Buddhism in India.

When Buddhism was first introduced to China, there were no separate schools. As the translation of Buddhist scriptures gained momentum and large quantities of scriptures became available in Chinese, Buddhist philosophers started to classify and rank the Buddha's teachings. This led to the emergence of distinct schools.

The first Chinese Buddhist school was the Three Treatise school (sometimes called the Four Treatise school) based on translations by Kumārajīva (mid-late fourth/early fifth centuries) during the Eastern Jin period (317–420). This school continued the tradition of the Emptiness school from India and reached its height under Master Jiaxiang (549–623) [also known as Master Jizang]. Meanwhile, based on the Nikāya Buddhist *Establishment of the Truth* treatise (*chengshi lun*), the Chengshi school was established; based on the (Nikāya) Sarvāstivādin *Treasury of Abhidharma* treatise (*jushe lun*), the Jushe school was founded. Based on the *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the Nirvāṇa school was started, and based on the *Treatise on the Ten Grounds* (*shi di lun*), the

Dilun school was founded. Based on the *Compendium of the Mahāyāna* (*she dasheng lun*) the Shelun school was established. After Bodhidharma came to China to transmit the mind-seal of the Buddhas, the Chan school was established. Master Daoxuan of the Tang dynasty propagated the *Monastic Code in Four Divisions* and founded the (Nanshan) Disciplinary (S. *vinaya*) school. Based on the *Lotus Sūtra*, synthesized and further developed by Master Zhizhe [also called Master Zhiyi, 538–598], the Tiantai school was founded. After he returned from India, Master Xuanzang (602?–664) created the Faxiang [lit. “characteristics of dharmas”] school (also called the [Chinese] Consciousness-only school) based on his *Treatise on the Establishment of Consciousness-Only* (*cheng weishi lun*). Based on ideas from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, which were further synthesized and extended, ultimately Master Xianshou [also named Master Fazang, 643–712] established the Huayan or Avatamsaka school. From essential beginnings in Master Huiyuan’s (334–416) Lotus Society, which was taught to practice exclusively the recollection of a Buddha’s name, and through the later efforts of Master Shandao (613–681), the Pure Land school was established. Finally, during the Kaiyuan period (713–741) of the Tang dynasty, Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735) and two other eminent Esoteric monks arrived in China via Central Asia. They translated Esoteric sūtras and ritual texts into Chinese, establishing the Esoteric school.

In total, as many as thirteen schools of Buddhism developed in China. Except the Nikāya Chengshi and Jushe schools, all the schools can be classified as Mahāyāna.

Later, some of the schools merged after a period of interaction and competition, and the thirteen schools became ten schools. The Nirvāṇa school merged into the Tiantai school; the Dilun school combined with the Huayan school; and the Shelun school was absorbed by the Faxiang school.³⁹ The inclinations of these schools toward the School of Emptiness or the School of Inherent Existence are indicated in figure 4.

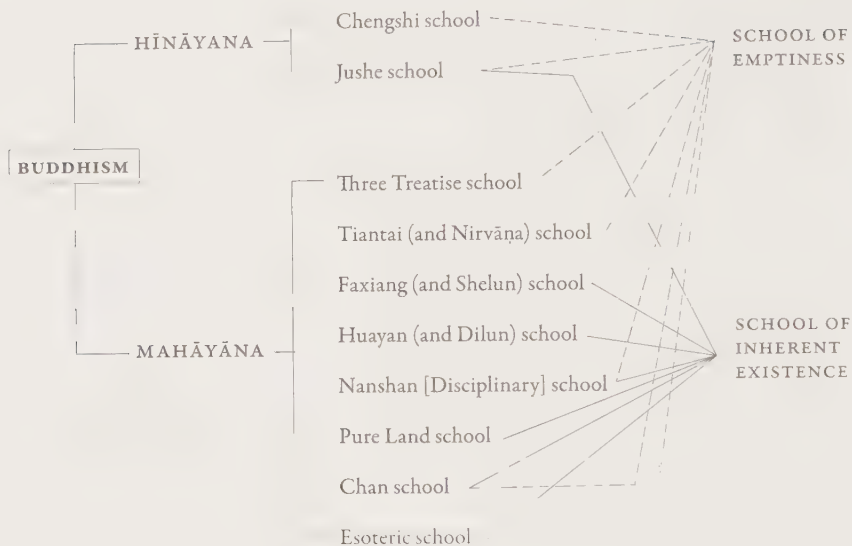


FIGURE 4. DOCTRINAL SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

We can see that Chinese Buddhism was expansive in scope and rich in diversity. But from the late Tang dynasty onward, Nikāya Buddhism did not receive much attention, and few studied the Three-treatise or Consciousness-only doctrines. The Esoteric school lasted only a brief time in China. After Tang dynasty Emperor Wuzong's persecution of Buddhists beginning in the fifth year (845) of the Huichang period (841–847), the Esoteric school disappeared from China but survived in Japan. The geography and social mores of China made strict enforcement of the monastic discipline difficult, so the Disciplinary school now barely survives. The most thriving school today is the Chan school. After the Chan school's sixth patriarch, Huineng, the school further divided into the "five houses," among which the Linji and Caodong (J. *rinzai* and *sōtō*) have developed the furthest to this day. Almost all the Chinese monks and nuns today come from these two Dharma lineages. As for schools that stress doctrine, only the

Tiantai and Huayan schools now survive, struggling to maintain their existence. During the Song and Ming dynasties there emerged several eminent monks who championed the joint practice of both Chan and Pure Land, such as Yongming Yanshou (904–976). As a result, basically the only Buddhist methods of practice still surviving are recitation of a Buddha's name (*nianfo*) and Chan methods (*canchan*).⁴⁰

During the late Qing and early years of the Republican period, Chinese reacquired many Buddhist scriptures that were in circulation in Japan. As a result the Three Treatise school, the Faxiang school, the Disciplinary school, and the Esoteric school have shown some signs of revival. It is regretful that Buddhist education and training have been neglected in China for several hundred years. Whether this trend of revival can be continued and extended is uncertain—we are still making efforts in that direction!

Besides schools in China, there are many schools of Buddhism in different regions of the world.

The Theravāda school is, in Thailand, divided into the Mahanikaya and the Thammayut sects.

The Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet is divided into the Gelug, Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu schools.

Schools of Buddhism in Japan are similar to those of China, but the True Pure Land school (J. *jōdo shinshū*) and the Nichiren school are unique to Japan. Ven. Yin-shun (1906–2005), a contemporary Buddhist scholar, has the following comment regarding Japanese Buddhism: “Japanese-style Buddhism did not produce households molded by Buddhism; rather, it produced a kind of Buddhism molded by [secular] households. It is not lay Buddhism but rather a degenerate form of monastic Buddhism.”⁴¹ This is the special character of Japanese Buddhism.

Lastly, I would like to summarize with the following statement: the division of Buddhism into schools represents disagreement on minor issues rather than differences in fundamental philosophy. For this reason, I expect that a united Buddhism shall emerge in the near future.

4.10 Is Consciousness-Only the Same as Idealism?

No. Although Consciousness-only doctrine emphasizes mind, it does not deny the existence of either matter or objective phenomena. If these were negated, then everything should be negated, including consciousness, and there would be no consciousness to emphasize.

In fact, philosophical **idealism** can be interpreted to encompass almost everything except materialism. For example, George Berkeley (1685–1753) can be considered a subjective idealist. Georg Hegel (1770–1831) may be regarded as an objective idealist, and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) a volitional idealist. William James (1842–1910) may be considered an empirical idealist, and Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941) an intuitive idealist. And Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) can be classified as a skeptical idealist.⁴²

In brief, any form of idealism will require the specification of some normative standard to serve as the basis for its theories. Once they select some adored criterion or ideal, philosophers inevitably make the mistake of over-generalizing from a partial truth. The skeptical idealists are more open-minded, but they cannot provide an ultimate answer for guidance, leaving people feeling anxious and paralyzed.

The Consciousness-only school of Buddhism does say that “the three realms are merely consciousness,” meaning all phenomena within the three realms are manifested by the eighth consciousness. That is to say, all physical phenomena, everything in the non-sentient world (*qijie*), are the objective aspect (*xiangfen*), or active dharmas, of the eighth consciousness. The theory does not, however, deny the existence of sentient beings outside the individual self. The claim that “the three realms are merely consciousness” only says that all phenomena within the three realms are jointly produced by the eighth consciousnesses of all sentient beings within the three realms; that is, phenomena are produced by sentient beings’ collective karma. The eighth consciousness mentioned here comprises not just the present mind, but is also that consciousness **perfumed** from beginningless time by karmic forces. From the active dharmas of karma-conditioned consciousness are formed the objective aspect of the eighth consciousness, the phenomena

of the three realms, and the world in which we live. Matter in our world is formed by the joint activities of each eighth consciousness of the sentient beings in our world. Likewise, sentient beings and their interactions are manifestations of the eighth consciousnesses of all the sentient beings in the same world.

The cosmology of the Consciousness-only school can be described as “conditioned arising from the ālaya-vijñāna” (*laiye yuanqi*). Ālaya-vijñāna is Sanskrit for “eighth consciousness” and means “storehouse consciousness.” It stores all karmic seeds [karmic impressions]. Considering things from a noumenal [*benti*, “fundamental embodiment or substance”] perspective, when karmic seeds become active they bring about karmic recompense; hence, we can say that everything is produced by consciousness. When viewed from the phenomenal (*xian-xiang*) perspective, we can describe the process as “conditioned arising induced by karma,” because the karmic recompense (i.e., the phenomena) produced by the eighth consciousness results from the individual’s karma. From a methodological viewpoint, both “conditioned arising from the ālaya-vijñāna” and “conditioned arising induced by karma” are in accordance with the principle of conditioned arising, which claims that phenomena come into existence only via the combination of multiple conditions. Accordingly, conditioned arising is the basic truth of Buddhism. The ultimate goal of Buddhist [inquiry] is [to understand or realize] emptiness. Because it is unnecessary to posit any metaphysical object of adoration, Buddhism does not fall into the quagmire of over-generalizing from partial truths. And because conditioned arising implies emptiness of nature—emptiness of both the self and dharmas—people are not left feeling anxious, rudderless, and paralyzed. Most philosophers cannot realize the emptiness of self, not to mention the emptiness of dharmas (metaphysical standards or ideals which are adored).⁴³ If they were to see the emptiness of the philosophical bases to which their egos cling, they would lose the foundation for their ideas and become lost, wandering souls.

Therefore, philosophical idealism cannot measure up to the Buddhist doctrines of Consciousness-only.

4.11 Are Meditative Absorptions Necessarily Related to the Chan [Meditation] School?

No, they are not necessarily related. Although the Chan school definitely advocates practicing meditation to reach absorption states, not all meditative absorptions are those of the Chan school.

The name Chan school (*chanzong*) was coined in China. During the Buddha's time there was no such label, there were only meditation theories and practices. The Buddhist path to liberation begins with precepts, is centered on concentration, and aims for wisdom. Precepts, concentration, and wisdom are called the three undefiled practices. These three are interrelated and complementary, and must all be present together for one to make progress on the path. Together they lead the practitioner on an upward spiral toward enlightenment—keeping the precepts leads to concentration, concentration generates wisdom, and wisdom takes one up to the next level of practice. Of the three practices, concentration is the one related to meditative absorptions.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese Chan school stresses enlightenment [wisdom] rather than concentration [meditative absorption].

Moreover, there are many forms of absorption. One is the Buddhist supramundane absorption, called the “absorption of cessation (ending affliction).” There are other mundane absorptions practiced by outer-path practitioners, ordinary people, and even animals, and are called the eight levels of meditative absorption. These absorptions are intermediate steps to achieve supramundane absorption. For **outer-path ascetics**, the purpose of practicing concentration is to be reborn in the heavens, whereas Buddhists practice in order to enter supramundane absorption. So the meditation practiced by non-Buddhist ascetics is called mundane meditation and that of Buddhists is called the meditation of fundamental purity.

Buddhist meditation can be further divided into Nikāya meditation and Mahāyāna meditation. The purpose of Nikāya meditation is liberation from the cycle of birth and death, whereas Mahāyāna meditation aims at transforming all activities in life into a kind of art. For example,

Chan practitioners regard trivial chores such as carrying firewood and water as meditation, and eating and sleeping as concentration practice. The Chan school stresses quietude and equanimity of mind and does not cling to conceptions that the physical body must sit alone, doing nothing.

The Chinese word *chan* is a transliteration of the first syllable of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* (C. *channa*). Since *dhyāna* means “quiet contemplation,” it can also be translated into Chinese as *ding*.⁴⁴ But there is a difference in usage between the words *chan* and *ding*. *Chan* [which often corresponds to the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* or the Pali word *jhāna*] refers to states of mind in the realm of form, which is why planes of existence in the form realm are called the “four *chan* [S. *dhyāna*] heavens.” The Chinese word *ding* [often corresponding to the Sanskrit word *saṁādhi*] refers to a state of mind in which the mind is focused on one object—such a state is possible anywhere in the three realms of sense-desire, form, or formlessness, or even in the supramundane absorptions beyond the three realms. So the term *chan* has a more limited range of usage than the term *ding*, and *chan* is actually one form of *ding*. However, these conventions are not consistent in Chinese: some texts refer to the supramundane absorption (*chushijian ding*) as the “supramundane, supreme *chan*” (*chushijian shangshang chan*), and some label the low-level absorptions (*ding*) practiced by outer-path ascetics “wild fox *chan*” (*yebu chan*).⁴⁵

There are many Sanskrit words that describe concentration. Besides *saṁādhi*, seven others are: *saṁādhāna*, *saṁāpatti*, *saṁāhita*, *dhyāna*, *śamatha*, *ḍṣṭa-dharma-sukha*, and *cittaikāgratā*. Because both ordinary and noble practitioners can achieve concentration, some Indian practitioners consider sexual intercourse a form of *saṁāpatti*—what is called “female-male equilibrium.” This is because during sexual union, one’s mind is concentrated and one’s body is permeated with carnal pleasure, an experience similar to meditative absorption. Practitioners who speak of methods such as the “integrated cultivation of spiritual nature and bodily life” or the “joint cultivation of body and mind” want to cultivate concentration through the carnal pleasure arising

from male-female relationships.⁴⁶ It's sad and pathetic that the meaning of concentration is misinterpreted and confused with something so obscene! But this fact also tells us how broadly concentration was defined in India. Such ideas are further from the true intent of Chinese Chan meditation as the heavens are from the bottom of the deepest sea trench.

So we see that meditative absorption is not necessarily related to the Chan school. In fact, all mystical experiences in religions around the world arise from the effects of meditative absorption, regardless of which method is used to reach it, including mantra recitation, prayer, worship, or chanting scriptures.

So anybody, be it an ordinary person or even an animal like a fox, can have paranormal experiences or spiritual powers if the person (or animal) practices concentration well. But that's not what Chan Buddhism is about—Chan Buddhism, quite to the contrary, does not advocate developing spiritual powers.

4.12 What Are the Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment?

Many people misunderstand the issue of the sudden and gradual teachings, believing the two are completely different methods of practice. And many practitioners who are looking for an easy way to practice one-sidedly delight in the sudden teachings and presumptuously scoff at the gradual approach. Everyone knows that Chan Buddhism stresses sudden awakening, advocating non-reliance on words and letters and directly pointing to the mind's source. Chan doctrine says that if we are deluded in one moment, in that moment we are ordinary sentient beings, and if in the next moment we are enlightened, then in that moment we are Buddhas. No school is so direct and straightforward in its approach as the Chan school. Hence many Chan practitioners criticize those practicing the gradual teachings, calling them students of [merely intellectual and not actualized] knowledge and understanding.

In fact, the sudden and gradual approaches are two sides of the same coin. The sudden comes from the gradual, and the gradual is gradual because of the sudden. Without the gradual there would be absolutely no sudden, and if there is the sudden, it must have been preceded by the gradual. The gradual is the cause that forms the sudden, and the sudden is the result of the gradual.

Regarding this issue, I wrote the following in 1958:

So-called sudden awakening is nothing but the breakthrough at the last moment or the maturation of the last condition. . . . It's similar to a chicken egg that has been incubated for twenty days. If the chick is unable to break the shell, the hen will lightly tap the shell with her beak. The chick will then suddenly emerge full of vitality. This tap by the hen's beak helps the maturation of the last condition. In the same vein, there are Buddhists who have practiced in previous lives for a long time and have developed great, deep karmic roots [for the Dharma]. During this life, they only need to receive what the Chan school calls "an acute stimulus at the right moment" (*jifeng*) and in an instant they can have a breakthrough, a sudden, transcendent flash of insight into the noble realm. So we can see that there is nothing mysterious about sudden awakening.⁴⁷

From the vantage point of a Buddha, all sentient beings possess the wisdom and meritorious characteristics of a Tathāgata. Since they all have the potential to become Buddhas, a Buddha regards all sentient beings as Buddhas: this is the [basis of the] sudden teachings. Looking at a Buddha from the sentient beings' standpoint, even though sentient beings have the potential to become a Buddha, they have to go through fifty-two stages of long practice to attain Buddhahood: this is the gradual teachings. When the gradual practices are completed, the fruit of Buddhahood will suddenly appear—as one attains full enlightenment under a bodhi tree.

Conversely, the sudden can be viewed as the starting point of the gradual, and the gradual as the actualization of the sudden. The sudden may initiate the gradual, and the gradual may be the continuation of the sudden.

In Chinese Chan Buddhism, a sudden awakening means a sudden apprehension of a Buddha's perception of reality. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the realization of a Buddha's perception of reality is divided into four phases: opening, showing, awakening, and entering. Opening and showing are the tasks of Buddhas—Buddhas open and show sentient beings the treasure vault of buddha-nature within themselves. The phases of awakening and entering are done by sentient beings themselves. Sentient beings come to understand that they have the inherent potential to become Buddhas—that is awakening. After awakening, they have to practice accordingly before entering the Buddha's perception of reality. In terms of stages on the bodhisattva path, awakening to the Buddha's perception of reality occurs when one is still an ordinary bodhisattva who has not yet entered the stage of the first ground. Entering into a Buddha's perception of reality occurs when one reaches the level of a noble bodhisattva of the first ground or above, for only such a bodhisattva is able truly to eliminate ignorance bit by bit and attain enlightenment bit by bit.⁴⁸ Practices before the first ground are just preparatory work.

We see that sudden awakening is just the beginning of the awareness regarding the underlying, essential principle of all dharmas, or buddha-nature, and is not the same as becoming a Buddha. Gradual practice is the cultivation of merit through concrete actions. Only through accumulating merit through gradual practice can one actually become a Buddha: so “sudden awakening to principle but gradual practice with regard to actions” is another way to clarify sudden and gradual. This explanation shows us what sudden awakening in Chan Buddhism means.

The interpretation above is based on interpretation of doctrine. Some Chan practitioners may disagree, and claim that the sudden awakening they speak of is simply sudden awakening, and is basically unrelated to any stages or gradual practice. In this conception, when a practitioner is suddenly awakened, she sees the fundamental, real nature of **Suchness** right then and there. To do this, however, is beyond the capability of most people.

Chan practitioners believe that if they practice well, even though they cannot immediately enter the first ground stage of a noble bodhisattva, they can temporarily suspend the functioning of the sixth and seventh consciousnesses at the moment of sudden awakening. Not falling into stupor, scatteredness, or nonreactive but turbid mindstates, they enter into a crystal-clear state and perceive things with direct, unmediated awareness (with things in their original, undistorted condition). An analogy would be that of a dark, cloudy sky suddenly clearing up without a single cloud left hanging anywhere within ten thousand miles. Although the realization experience (of the reality of Suchness) is extremely short because moments later one's view will again be covered by the dark cloud of ignorance, the practitioner still briefly saw the reality of Suchness. Compared to those who have never seen it, naturally such people are very different. This is a sketch of the sudden awakening discussed in Chan Buddhism. But after the sudden awakening, a practitioner must still follow up with diligent practice. Although she has briefly experienced the buddha-mind, her provisions of merit and wisdom—the capital to become a Buddha—are still insufficient.

4.13 Which School of Buddhism Is Best for Practice?

As mentioned previously, schools of Buddhism developed in response to differences in historical conditions and in the capacities of practitioners. So from the fundamental perspective of Buddhism, schools and sects are unnecessary additions. If someone takes only one and disparages the rest, it's not only his own personal loss, but also a misfortune for all Buddhism. Just as the folks from Ningbo City in Zhejiang Province favor strong-smelling food, people in Hunan Province love spicy dishes, those in Shandong Province like pungent food, and those in the Shanxi Province fancy sour cuisine: Which should you choose? Which should you reject?

There is nothing that Buddhism does not encompass. It is not science, but it does not contradict science. It is not philosophy, but it transcends philosophy. It is not literature, but it certainly has literature.

It is not aesthetics, but it contributes greatly to aesthetics. It is not religion, but it does not lack the qualities of a religion.

Therefore, if we are interested in learning about Buddhism, as a starting point we had better choose something in line with our capacity and interests. Among the eight Mahāyāna schools in China, the approach of the Consciousness-only school resembles science, and that of the Three Treatise school resembles philosophy. The Huayan and Tiantai schools' approaches resemble literature, and the approaches of the Mantra [Esoteric] and Pure Land schools resemble aesthetics. The Chan school embodies the core teaching of Buddhism. Master Taixu once said, "The defining characteristic of Chinese Buddhism lies in [its emphasis on] *chan* [meditation]."49 The essence of any of the other schools can be reduced to the spirit of Chan. The Disciplinary school is the common foundation for Buddhism, and its importance to Buddhism is analogous to that of a corpus juris [a comprehensive compilation of national laws] to the whole country. So strictly speaking, the Disciplinary school should not be a separate school; instead, it should be incorporated into all other schools. As for the qualities of religion, all schools possess such qualities.

Since the late Tang, the Chan school has been especially popular. Subsequently, some masters integrated the practices of the Chan and Pure Land schools. More recently, Master Jichan (1852–1912) and Master Xuyun (1840–1959) distinguished themselves as great Chan masters. Other recent, eminent practitioners include Master Yinguang (1862–1940) of the Pure Land school, Master Hongyi (1880–1942) of the Disciplinary school, Master Dixian (1858–1932) of the Tiantai school, Master Yuexia (1858–1917) of the Huayan school, and Mr. Ouyang Jian [1871–1943; courtesy name: Jingwu] of the Consciousness-only school. But overall, Chan and Pure Land are the two most influential lineages among the general populace, whereas the Consciousness-only school is the most influential in academic circles. Although the Esoteric school is also quite popular, it is very scattered and disorganized.

Most noteworthy is that Master Taixu and his disciples did not restrict themselves to a certain school. Instead, they took a comprehensive view based on the fundamental spirit of Buddhism and

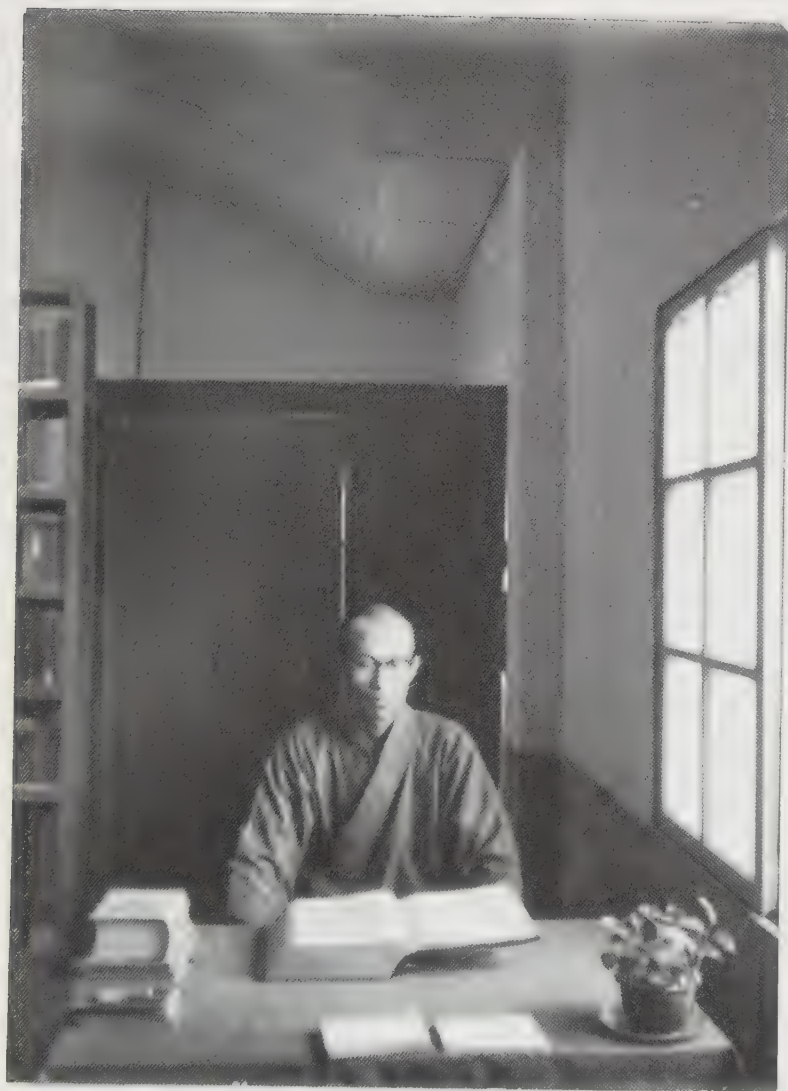


TOP PHOTO: Ritual for the commencement of Sheng Yen's second solitary retreat at Chaoyuan Monastery, Gaoxiong County, southern Taiwan. The door to the retreat quarters has been sealed with two strips of paper. Sheng Yen is visible through the small opening in the wall. (This photograph was taken on 10 June 1967 and has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)

BOTTOM PHOTO: Altar and bookshelves in Sheng Yen's solitary retreat quarters. (This photograph was taken in the 1960s and has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)



Neng Jing, Buddhist nun, wearing traditional Chinese Buddhist robes, standing in a traditional Chinese corridor in the temple of the Buddhist nun Neng Jing, in the Temple of the Buddhist nun Neng Jing, in the Temple of the Buddhist nun Neng Jing.



Sheng Yen reading in his solitary retreat quarters. (This photograph was taken in the 1960s and has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)



Traditional Taiwanese funeral scroll depicting King Yama overseeing the judgment and punishment of the dead. (This photograph was taken in Taipei by Douglas Gildow on 24 March 2006.)



TOP PHOTO: Mock paper money being burned during a ritual at a traditional Taiwanese funeral in Taipei. (This photograph was taken by Douglas Gildow on 25 March 2006.)

BOTTOM PHOTO: Image of the arhat Dragon Subduer in a monastery in Nantou County, central Taiwan. (This photograph was taken by Douglas Gildow on 15 August 2004.)



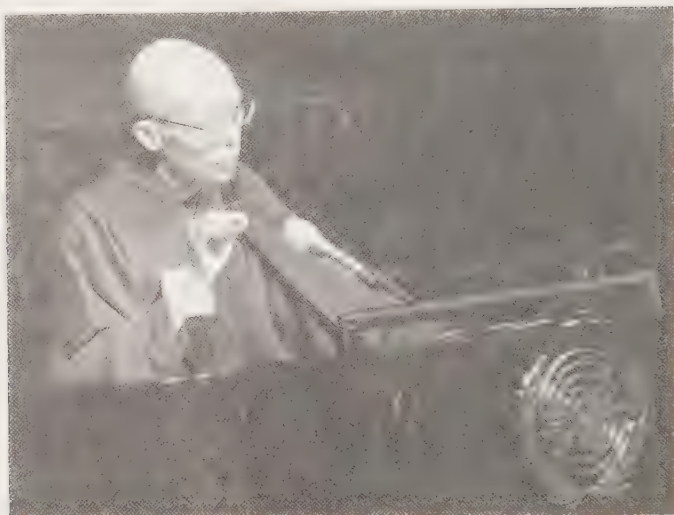
TOP PHOTO: A Buddhist monastery in Miaoli County, central Taiwan. (This photograph was taken by Douglas Gildow on 18 August 2005.)

BOTTOM PHOTO: Images in the main hall of Nongchan Monastery. From left to right, the statues depict the following: Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, Amitābha Buddha, and Guanyin Bodhisattva. (This photograph has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)



TOP PHOTO: Nun and students circumambulating a large bronze statue of the bodhisattva Guanyin on Dharma Drum Mountain, Taipei County, northern Taiwan. (This photograph was taken on 6 June 2005 and has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)

BOTTOM PHOTO: Ven. Sheng Yen conducting a meditation retreat in the Vysokoye Guesthouse, Russia. Ven. Guoyuan, a senior monastic disciple of Sheng Yen, is to the right; Douglas Gildow, serving as interpreter, is to the left. (This photograph was taken by Hanliang Chen on 14 May 2003.)



TOP PHOTO: Sheng Yen delivering a speech for the Millenium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in the United Nations, New York City. (This photograph was taken in August 2000 and has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)

BOTTOM PHOTO: Sheng Yen and his disciples in front of the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture, Taipei. The nun dressed in brown and seated to the left of Sheng Yen is Ven. Jianxin, who like Sheng Yen was a disciple of the late Master Dongchu (1907–1977). (This photograph has been provided by the Cultural Center, DDM.)

thereby broke down limiting divisions between schools and sects and returned each school to its original position. Master Taixu reclassified all schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism into the following three systems: the Dharma Characteristics Mere Consciousness school, the Dharma Nature Wisdom of Emptiness school, and the Dharma Realm Perfect Enlightenment school. According to this scheme of classification, the Consciousness-only school and the Three Treatise school each constitute a separate system, while the remaining schools are all lumped into the Dharma Realm Perfect Enlightenment school. Venerable Yin-shun, a disciple of Master Taixu, changed the classification and renamed the three systems as follows: the **Empty Nature Mere Name system**, the **False Imagination Mere Consciousness system**, and the Truly Eternal Mere Mind system.⁵⁰ Master Taixu regarded the Dharma Realm Perfect Enlightenment system as the most perfect form of Buddhism, whereas Ven. Yin-shun believes the Empty Nature Mere Name system is the ultimate teaching of the Buddha. The former championed the *Treatise on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* all his life. The latter based his ideas on doctrines from the *Āgamas* and interlocked his teachings with the philosophy of emptiness from the Prajñā sūtras. Some people say Ven. Yin-shun belongs to the Three Treatise school (*sanlun zong*), but he denies this, because the Three Treatise school in China has incorporated some Chinese philosophy and no longer maintains the original hue of the School of Emptiness from India.

In fact, regardless of what you name it and where you put it, a rose is still just as fragrant. The various classifications of the teachings developed by distinguished Buddhists in both ancient and modern times help us to clarify the content, research systems, and methods of Dharma. For the purpose of practice, any approach will do, because “all Dharma paths lead to the city of nirvāṇa.” Buddhist doctrines can be categorized as shallow or deep, partial or complete, but they cannot be labeled good or bad, right or wrong. The shallow practices are foundational for deeper practices, and the deeper practices are extensions of the shallow practices. Likewise, partial practice is a part of complete

practice, and the complete is the whole of the partial. For research purposes, however, the sequence and development of ideas should be clear, so it is necessary to classify doctrines into a systematic framework.

We should note that in modern times, the eight Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist schools have been reclassified into three schools, and that the boundaries among these schools should no longer be maintained. Even the boundary between Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism should be eradicated to restore Buddhism to a whole. If someone still wants to fight against the times and call himself the *n*th patriarch of this school or that sect, he is advised to forget it. As a matter of fact, the eminent monks throughout history were not necessarily patriarchs of any school. Conversely, the official “Dharma heirs” of a school, who held a certificate of succession, were not always enlightened, eminent monks. As for the distinction between Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Theravāda school does not welcome such a distinction at all. The Chinese refer to them as the Hīnayāna [*xiaosheng*, lit. “small vehicle”], and Theravādins say Mahāyāna Buddhism is not Buddhism. Who can say that this artificial division and its mutually demeaning consequences are rational?

Of course, someone who has just become or is about to become a Buddhist must choose a starting point. My opinion is as follows. Monastics who have recently become bhikṣus or bhikṣuṇīs should first learn the monastic code, but they do not have to enter the Disciplinary school. Laypersons who become Buddhists at an old age should focus on chanting a Buddha’s name, but they do not have to belong to the Pure Land school or devote themselves to Amitābha Buddha. Maitreya Buddha in the inner court of Tuṣita Heaven, the Medicine Buddha, and Akṣobhya Buddha in the East are other alternatives. If one wants to approach Buddhism from an academic perspective, then the two great systems of Prajñā/emptiness and Consciousness-only/inherent-existence are rich treasures to be explored.

Regarding the paths of practice, there are two types: the difficult path and the easy path. One starts the difficult path by invoking bodhi-mind and follows up by practicing the bodhisattva path life after life,

sacrificing one's self to benefit sentient beings. The traveler on this path relies heavily on the power of his vows to support his work of delivering others life after life. It is a very difficult approach. If his vow-power is not strong enough, the practitioner will frequently withdraw from the path because of frustrations and setbacks. But this path is faster than the easy path, as one will achieve the goal of becoming a Buddha much sooner. The easy path is to rely on rebirth in one of the pure lands that has been created by a Buddha's vow-power, where practitioners can nourish their wisdom. In other words, the practitioners are reborn in a buddha land as ordinary people, but will cultivate wisdom under the facilitating environment there. After they reach the stage of non-retrogression⁵¹ or even the noble stages, they will enter the ordinary world to practice the bodhisattva path to deliver sentient beings. So this path is safer and more stable, but winding and slow.

People without self-confidence or strong aspiration should take the easy path. The religious value and function of the easy path is similar to the path Christians take in seeking to be born in heaven: while they are described differently, the two paths work pretty much the same. Although the practices involved are not comparable, the emphasis on the power of faith is almost identical. Christianity speaks of faith, hope, and love. Buddhism stresses the three-pronged approach of faith, vows, and practice. The difference is that in Buddhism the sentient beings are the leading actors, while in Christianity God is primary. In Christianity, one's starting point and goal are both related to God's authority: one obeys God and relies on him for salvation. In Buddhism, sentient beings rely on their own efforts to induce resonance with and influence a Buddha so they can be reborn in a buddha land where a particular Buddha is present. So in addition to having wholehearted faith, Buddhists must synergize with the energy of a Buddha's vow (this is different from the Christian idea of grace) in order to be reborn in a buddha land. Buddhas make two kinds of vows, shared and distinct. The shared vows are made by all Buddhas; namely, the Four Great Vows: "To deliver innumerable sentient beings, to cut off endless vexations, to master limitless approaches to the Dharma, and to attain

supreme Buddhahood.” The distinct vows differ for each Buddha, such as the forty-eight vows of Amitābha Buddha and the twelve great vows of the Medicine Buddha. Only after we have invoked the shared vows do we have the opportunity to enter a buddha land, and only after we synergize with a particular Buddha’s vows can we enter his land. People who practice chanting a Buddha’s name to be reborn in a pure land rarely notice this fact today. Moreover, when we practice the pure land method of the easy path, we have to put our faith and utmost sincerity into action by behaving accordingly. The sentient beings of a pure land are pure with respect to behavior, speech, and thoughts. Although we ordinary folks cannot be perfect in purity, we should do our best to purify our body and minds. The moral guidelines to follow are the five precepts and the ten good deeds. If one wishes to be reborn in a pure land, but spends little effort to purify oneself, it is doubtful whether such a person will be reborn in a buddha land after she dies.

In principle, Buddhism emphasizes wisdom. But from a religious point of view, wisdom is more accurately described as the objective of practice than as a means to practice. Some people first gain knowledge of Buddhism, develop faith, and then put it into practice. But there are even more people who have faith in Buddhism and practice accordingly without going through the rigorous process of learning Buddhist doctrine. By following the path of faith, vows, and practice, one is able to achieve the same goal, and one does not necessarily need to understand doctrine for support. Hence, people who do not or cannot understand Buddhist doctrine can still believe in and practice Buddhism. Although they know very little about theory, they reap benefits just the same. For example, the Pure Land school has practitioners with upper-, middle-, or lower-level karmic roots, and has no dearth of learned practitioners. But overall, Pure Land devotees lack knowledge of doctrine and rely on faith, vows, and practice. Similarly, the Chinese Chan school claims that its teachings are “not established on [the authority of] words and letters,” and it advocates “allowing the train of language and thoughts to stop, and the activity of the mind to cease.” Chan practitioners do not need sophisticated knowledge, because they are able to see the light

of wisdom, or have an awakening, through sincere practice. For this reason, the Chan school fits very well with the Chinese disposition to seek tangible benefit rather than deep understanding. But this faith beyond the vines and creepers [entangling complications] of knowledge is no silly superstition, and all the words spoken by the eminent Chan monks in the **recorded sayings** are crystals formed by wisdom.

The Chan and Pure Land schools have been the most welcomed by the Chinese for over one thousand years because these schools do not require sophisticated knowledge or intellect as a precondition for practice. For the same reason, however, at times corrupt practices have developed. Some practitioners with shallow karmic roots and heavy karmic obstacles easily become deluded by ignorance, or blindly practice the wrong method, clinging to their own views and rejecting others' views without any awareness of what they are doing.

4.14 What Do the Terms Dhyāna Master, Vinaya Master, and Dharma Master Mean?

In scroll 13 of the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda*, bhikṣus are classified into five categories: sūtra master, vinaya master, treatise master, Dharma master, and dhyāna (or meditation)⁵² master (C. *jingshi*, *lǚshi*, *lunshi*, *fashi*, and *chanshi*).⁵³ A bhikṣu who was good at chanting sūtras was called sūtra master. One who excelled in keeping the precepts was called a vinaya master; one good at discussing doctrine was called a treatise master; one proficient at expounding the Dharma was called a Dharma master; and one who practiced meditation well was called a dhyāna master. But in Chinese Buddhism, sūtra master and treatise master never became distinct categories. Only vinaya master, Dharma master, and dhyāna master have been widely used as titles.

The term dhyāna master originally referred to a bhikṣu who practiced meditation, as in the following definition from scroll 1 of the *Guide to the Meaning of the Three Virtuous Properties [of Nirvāṇa]*: "One who cultivates the mind and practices concentration is called a dhyāna master."⁵⁴ But in China, the title was used in two different

ways. First, rulers gave it to monks as an honorific title. For example, in the first year (569 CE) of the Dajian period of the Chen dynasty, Emperor Xuan bestowed the title Great Dhyāna Master on Venerable Huisi of Nanyue, and in the second year (705 CE) of the Shenlong period of the Tang dynasty, Emperor Zhongzong gave the posthumous title Great Penetrating Dhyāna Master (*datong chanshi*) to honor Venerable Shenxiu. Second, junior monastics practicing meditation could call their seniors dhyāna masters. In later usage, any bhikṣu in the Chan school with a bit of a reputation was called a dhyāna master [and for this usage, we might translate *chanshi* as “Chan master”].

A vinaya master is a bhikṣu who knows the monastic code well. He is required to study and observe the precepts, and to explain and resolve all manner of questions regarding the monastic code. His position in Buddhism is analogous to that of a legal scholar, judge, or grand justice.⁵⁵ Ordinary bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs are required to keep the precepts, but they do not necessarily know the whole collection of vinaya texts. Thus, it is not easy to become a true vinaya master.

A Dharma master (*fashi*) is someone who understands and expounds the Dharma well. Some people think this term must refer to a bhikṣu, but in Buddhist scriptures the title is used in many contexts, and is not limited to monastics.⁵⁶ In scroll 1 of the *Guide to the Meaning of the Three Virtuous Properties*, the following definition is given: “One who masters the sūtras and treatises is a Dharma Master.”⁵⁷ And the first scroll of the *Great Commentary on Buddhist Logic* (*yingming dashu*) provides this definition: “A Dharma master is one who carries out the Dharma.”⁵⁸ Some say a Dharma master refers to anyone who takes the Buddhadharma as one’s own teacher and teaches others according to it. Thus, a lay Buddhist disciple could be qualified to take the title of Dharma master. In fact, even an animal proficient at expounding the Dharma can be called a Dharma master, such as the jackal that called itself a Dharma master before the deity Śakra.

Based on this reasoning, Daoists influenced by Buddhism also call Daoist priests who are proficient at using talismans and registers (*fulu*)⁵⁹ “*fashi*.”⁶⁰ And also under Buddhist influence, the recently established religion of Li-ism calls their religious workers “*fashi*.”⁶¹ It can be seen that *fashi* is not a title used only for Buddhist bhikṣus.

Consistent with the Buddhist vinayas, I think monastic practitioners should all refer to themselves as Bhikṣu (or Śrāmaṇera) or Bhikṣuṇī (or Śrāmaṇerikā) before laypersons, or they can all use Śramaṇa (C. *shamen*, “renouncer”). Laypeople should address all monastics as Ācārya (*asheli*) or Master (*shifu*), and refer to themselves as Disciple (*dizi*). If they are unwilling to use the title Disciple, they can refer to themselves by their full name. Some laypersons refer to themselves as Learners (S. *śaikṣa*; C. *xueren*), but this term is actually used in sūtras to signify noble ones who have attained one of the first three fruits [the first three of the four stages of enlightenment on the Nikāya path]. Within a monastic community, a senior bhikṣu should be addressed as Venerable Elder (*zhanglao*). Bhikṣus equal in seniority can address each other as Venerable or less formally as Brother Such-and-such or Master Such-and-such. During the Buddha’s time, bhikṣus were allowed to address each other by name. Bhikṣus may address bhikṣuṇīs as Sister. When bhikṣuṇīs address senior nuns, they could use the same title a bhikṣu would use to address a senior. Bhikṣuṇīs equal in seniority can address one another as Sister. Non-Buddhists can address bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs according to regular customary etiquette. If a bhikṣu truly has the qualifications to be called a dhyāna master, vinaya master, or Dharma master, of course he can be addressed as such by Buddhists as well as by non-Buddhists. On the other hand, it is inappropriate to address every monk and nun as Dharma Master regardless of their level of practice and qualifications, as is done in Buddhist circles today.⁶²

4.15 What Do the Terms Arhat, Bodhisattva, and Buddha Mean?

Without a doubt, many Chinese people do not know the meaning of the words arhat, bodhisattva, or buddha. Even seasoned Buddhists have problems grasping the meanings of these terms.

Buddhist approaches to reach the Dharma, according to the Northern tradition, include the Mahāyāna and the Nikāya. Nikāyists only practice the path of liberation, whereas Mahāyānists practice the bodhisattva path, which is a combination of the human-heavenly vehicle and the liberation path. In other words, practitioners on the bodhisattva path seek to unshackle themselves from saṃsāra but voluntarily undergo rebirth in order to deliver as many sentient beings as permitted by karmic causes and conditions.

The highest stage in the liberation path is the arhatship. An arhat (P. *arāhant*) is a noble one in the Nikāya practice. Actually, there are two kinds of highest stage in the path of liberation. The first is that attained by śrāvakas ["listeners"] who hear the Dharma and then realize the Four Noble Truths (suffering and its cause; cessation and its path) and cultivate the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (S. *bodhipāṅśika*; C. *putifēn*) to attain liberation: these are the arhats. The other stage is achieved by practitioners who live in a universe without a Buddha. Without guidance, they meditate on the twelve links of conditioned arising (ignorance, volitional action, consciousness, name and form, the six sense faculties, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, aging and death), become enlightened, and transcend birth and death: these are the pratyekabuddhas ["solitary Buddhas"]. Both the śrāvakas and the pratyekabuddhas are Nikāyists, and they practice the śrāvaka vehicle and pratyekabuddha vehicle, respectively. Therefore, the Nikāya vehicle is sometimes called the Two Vehicles. Practitioners of the Two Vehicles seek their own emancipation from rebirth so they can enter nirvāṇa. They completely reject the human-heavenly vehicle, which entails rebirth, and so they are unwilling to return to help deliver sentient beings. Hence, they cannot be called bodhisattvas, nor can they attain Buddhahood.

To become a Buddha, one has to cultivate the bodhisattva path. The main practices for the bodhisattva path are the six perfections and the three sets of precepts:

SIX PERFECTIONS

1. Giving: to give money, Dharma, and fearlessness
2. Keeping the precepts: to do no evil and to do all good
3. Patience: to endure and tolerate that which is difficult to endure, and to do that which is difficult to do
4. Diligence: to go forward bravely, undaunted by obstacles
5. Meditative concentration: to fix the mind unwaveringly on one object
6. Wisdom: to have limpid, shining insight into oneself and others

THREE SETS OF PRECEPTS

1. To uphold all the pure precepts, without exception
2. To cultivate all good qualities, without exception
3. To deliver all sentient beings, without exception

By invoking the supreme vow of great bodhi-mind, great compassion, and the wisdom of emptiness, and passing through three immeasurable kalpas, one may attain the goal of Buddhahood. Only bodhisattvas, not Nikāyists, walk upon the bodhisattva path of the Mahāyāna. Therefore, it is also called the One Vehicle.

The human-heavenly vehicle is for people who practice good deeds for the purpose of being reborn in either the human or heavenly mode of existence. Though Nikāyists do not crave the rewards of the human-heavenly vehicle, neither do they deny the value of this vehicle. The human-heavenly vehicle teachings are elevated and surpassed by the Nikāya path of liberation, and they are also the foundational teachings for the bodhisattva One Vehicle path. So the wholesome teachings of the human and heavenly vehicles—the five precepts and the ten good deeds—are also included in both the Two Vehicles and One Vehicle teachings. For this reason they are called the teachings common to the Five Vehicles (the human, heavenly, śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva vehicles).

The liberation path of the Nikāya, or Two Vehicles, includes teachings common to the bodhisattva path. If bodhisattvas did not practice teachings from the liberation path, the bodhisattva path would be nothing but the human-heavenly vehicle. Therefore, the teachings of the liberation path are called teachings common to the **Three Vehicles** (*śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva vehicles).

Only the bodhisattva path involves teachings unique to the Mahāyāna or One Vehicle.

To help readers remember the differences between the Five Vehicles, they are displayed graphically below.

From figure 5 we can see that although the bodhisattva path is identified with the One Vehicle, actually the teachings common to the Three Vehicles and the teachings common to the Five Vehicles

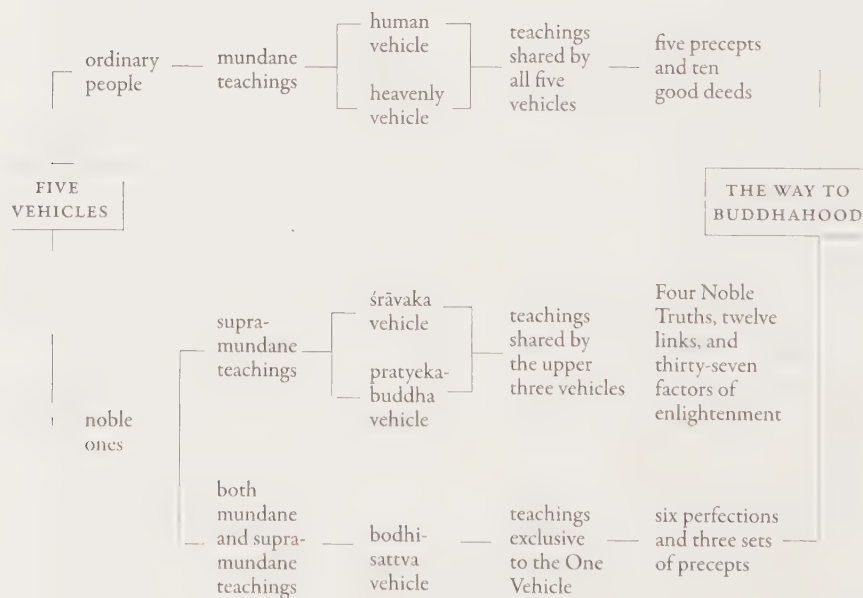


FIGURE 5. THE FIVE VEHICLES

all converge into the One Vehicle. The Nikāya, though referred to as the teachings common to the Three Vehicles, is the sublimation of the teachings common to the Five Vehicles. And the teachings common to the Five Vehicles, although they carry the label “Five Vehicles,” are limited to the basic virtues of the human and heavenly vehicles.⁶³

The human-heavenly vehicle consists of mundane teachings, which do not lead one beyond saṃsāra. That is, these teachings and practices have “outflows” or “leaks” which prevent one from navigating out of the bitter sea of life and death—so these teachings are also called “defiled” or “leaky” teachings (S. *sāsrava-dharma*; C. *youlou fā*). Although Nikāyists seek only personal liberation, their path can free them from saṃsāra and lead them to become supramundane noble ones, so the supramundane teachings they follow are also called “undefiled” or “teachings without leaks” (S. *anāsrava-dharma*; C. *wulou fā*).

Bodhisattvas can be either ordinary people or noble ones. The bodhisattva path consists of fifty-two stages, consisting of the ten devout minds, ten abidings, ten practices, ten transferences of merit, ten grounds, and the final two stages of equivalent enlightenment and wondrous enlightenment.⁶⁴ Bodhisattvas on any of the first forty stages before the ten grounds are ordinary beings, whereas those on any of the last twelve stages are noble ones. The bodhisattvas on the bodhisattva path in figure 5 refer to noble bodhisattvas, because bodhisattvas mentioned in the scriptures are generally those who have reached at least the first ground, unless they are specified as “bodhisattvas below the first ground.”

A Nikāya noble one does not strive to attain Buddhahood, but to enter nirvāṇa. The nirvāṇa achieved by both Nikāyists and Mahāyānist is essentially the same. However, after Nikāyists enter nirvāṇa, they abide in nirvāṇa and do not come out to deliver sentient beings. In contrast, Mahāyānist enter nirvāṇa but do not then dwell in nirvāṇa, and they perceive that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa share the same basic nature. Therefore, they proclaim that “saṃsāra is identical to nirvāṇa,” and their nirvāṇa is called the “non-abiding nirvāṇa.”

A Nikāya arhat who enters nirvāṇa does so after severing attachment to self (S. *ātma-grāha*; C. *wozhi*), or afflictive hindrances. Therefore, in terms of their degree of liberation, arhats reach the level of bodhisattvas at the seventh or eighth ground. Noble ones on the bodhisattva path enter the first ground after they sever one portion of attachment to dharmas (*fazhi*), or noetic hindrances, and one portion of attachment to self/afflictive hindrances, and therefore personally realize one portion of the **Dharma-Nature of Suchness**. So in terms of their severing the afflictive hindrances, arhats have the same achievement as a seventh- or eighth-ground bodhisattva, but in terms of their severing of noetic hindrances, arhats have the achievement of bodhisattvas at only the fourth abiding stage. When one severs the afflictive hindrances (realizes emptiness of the self), one is liberated from saṃsāra; when one severs the noetic hindrances (realizes emptiness of dharmas), one will not depart from saṃsāra. To be liberated from saṃsāra is to enter nirvāṇa, and not to depart from saṃsāra is to deliver sentient beings. Attaining liberation is an act of wisdom; delivering sentient beings involves acts of merit—and the dual practice of both wisdom and merit is the activity of a bodhisattva, who will become a Buddha when wisdom and merit are brought to perfection. So in terms of the amount of merit-making activity he has done, an arhat is only at the level of a bodhisattva who has reached the fourteenth stage after first generating the intention to tread the bodhisattva path, which is twenty-six stages away from a bodhisattva who has entered the first ground. A bodhisattva at the first ground has completed one-third of the course of his career (the first of three immeasurable kalpas), and a bodhisattva at the eighth ground has completed two-thirds of his journey (the second immeasurable kalpa). In contrast, a bodhisattva at the ten abidings stages has just begun the first of three immeasurable kalpas in his career to Buddhahood!

So if an arhat wants to become a Buddha, he has to leave the Nikāya and enter the Mahāyāna, practicing step-by-step starting from the stage of the fourth abiding. But after entering nirvāṇa, in the short term it is very difficult for an arhat to renounce the Nikāya and enter the

Mahāyāna. Therefore, those who practice the Nikāya have practically broken any possible karmic connection with the path to Buddhahood. Hence, some Mahāyāna scriptures go so far as to regard the Nikāya as no better than outer paths, and heap unbridled criticism on it. But according to the *Lotus Sūtra*, a real arhat will certainly convert to Mahāyāna practice. Among the audience listening when the *Lotus Sūtra* was preached were great bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī arhats who once practiced the Nikāya but later entered the Mahāyāna.

There are two types of people who renounce the Nikāya and enter the Mahāyāna. The first type is a practitioner who has always practiced the Nikāya—if such a practitioner turns to Mahāyāna practice after attaining arhatship, he has to start at the fourth abiding stage of the bodhisattva path. Another type is a practitioner who had practiced the Mahāyāna before he regressed into Nikāya practice and attained arhatship. For such a practitioner, his previous Mahāyāna practice can be added to determine the starting point for his renewed Mahāyāna practice. For example, in his previous lives Śāriputra had attained the seventh abiding stage in the Mahāyāna path before he regressed into Nikāya practice. After he became an arhat, he returned to the Mahāyāna. As a general rule, if one practiced the Mahāyāna before and returns from Nikāya practice, the moment he returns he can immediately enter the first abiding stage. Or if the person had a deep foundation in Mahāyāna practice before, he may enter a noble stage of the first ground or higher immediately upon resolving to return. Of course, when an arhat turns to Mahāyāna practice, he only needs to catch up with the accumulation of merit to enter the sacred stages of the bodhisattva path—his level of wisdom will not be reduced below the level of the noble stages.

Buddhahood is the ultimate goal of the bodhisattva path, so we can say that a Buddha is a perfect bodhisattva. Buddhahood is also the ultimate goal of the liberation path, so a Buddha can be called a perfect arhat, too. “Arhat” means someone who is worthy of offerings and is a “field of merit”⁶⁵ for deities and humans. Therefore, “worthy of offerings” is one of the ten great epithets of a Buddha. “Buddha”

refers to one who has completely awakened self, awakened others, and has supreme, universal knowledge and enlightenment. “Bodhisattva,” meaning “enlightened being,” refers to one who has awakened self and others and has universal knowledge and enlightenment. “Nikāya śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas” refer to those who have awakened themselves and who are enlightened. An ordinary human or deity is an ignorant being who has not yet achieved enlightenment. Figure 6 below compares practitioners of the Five Vehicles by their degree of enlightenment.

There is one point to clarify regarding the lifestyles of arhats as portrayed in Chinese folklore. In the histories of Chinese Buddhism, we can read about unconventional and eccentric practitioners such as Hanshan, Shide, Fenggan, and the Budai Heshang. We also know of Chan Masters Nanchuan and Guizong, who are known for slashing a cat and chopping a snake, respectively, as skillful and helpful mani-

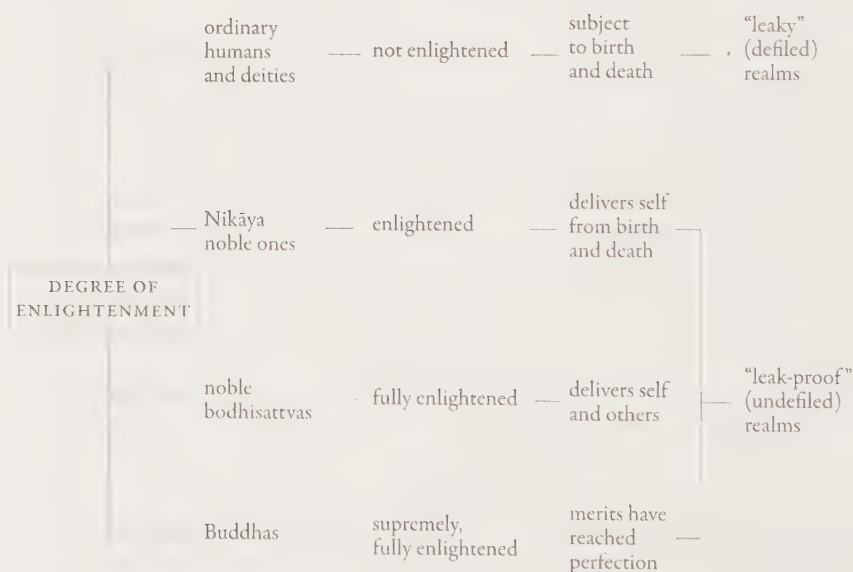


FIGURE 6. DEGREES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

festations [*dayong xianqian*, lit. “manifestations of **Great Functioning**”] of their wisdom. Some unusual practitioners lived on riverboats; some lived all alone, by steep cliffs on isolated islands; some hung around marketplaces. Other erratic acts of Chan masters include wielding weapons, imitating women prostrating, and chomping on big chunks of fatty meat—such are believed to be the Chan school’s unbridled behavior by which to “transcend the Buddhas and patriarchs.” So some Chinese consider lazy, filthy, slovenly, undisciplined monastics as arhat-like, and regard them as manifestations of arhats. In Chinese Buddhist paintings and sculptures, the sacred arhats are represented with strange demeanors, slovenly dress, grimacing mouths, and repulsive faces [see photograph on page 133].⁶⁶

In fact, arhats as described in Nikāya scriptures placed great emphasis on following the monastic code. Only members of the **group of six bhikṣus** (the naughtiest among the monks) would behave like the arhats in Chinese folklore. If this distorted impression is not corrected, it is really a great insult to arhats.

In contrast, Chinese often imagine a bodhisattva as serene, poised, dignified, and adorned with precious jewelry. In reality, this dignified appearance as a human or deity applies only to the **reward body** of a bodhisattva. To guide different kinds of sentient beings with various karmic capacities, the emanation bodies of a bodhisattva often manifest in many different identities. So the “arhat-like” figures in Chinese legend are really more like the emanation bodies of bodhisattvas. An arhat has to be a monk or nun—the upholders and symbolic representatives of the Dharma. So arhats cannot be sloppy and undisciplined, or the reputation of Buddhism will be damaged. In contrast, bodhisattvas have no fixed identity—their goal is to edify sentient beings, but they do not necessarily reveal their true identities. Some may manifest as majestic, virtuous humans or gods. But if necessary, bodhisattvas may also manifest as outer-path practitioners, butchers, or even demon kings without jeopardizing the reputation of Buddhism.

We can see that Chinese Buddhists should correct their distorted ideas about arhats and bodhisattvas.

SECTION FIVE: BUDDHISM AND THE MODERN WORLD

5.1 Are Buddhists Prohibited from Reading the Literature of Other Religions?

In principle, not only are Buddhists not prohibited from reading the literature of other religions, but they are even encouraged to do so. Since Buddhists believe that faith in Buddhism accords with reason, it is impossible to convert any Buddhist who really understands the Dharma to another religion. For such a Buddhist, while propaganda from other religions may test his faith, it will not succeed in converting him. Moreover, Buddhists are not imperious toward other religions and do not deny their value. Buddhism divides the methods of transforming the world into five approaches or vehicles, and the teachings of the human and heavenly vehicles are foundational to all five vehicles and common to all other beneficial religions and philosophies in the world.¹ Therefore, Buddhism affirms the value of the scriptures of other religions, except for the arbitrarily judgmental, superstitious, and unreasonable parts.

While affirming the value of other religions, an orthodox Buddhist ought to be a propagator of the Buddhadharma. To enhance his skills in propagating the Dharma, to convert believers of other faiths to Buddhism, and to help people undecided between Buddhism and other religions, it is very important to gain some knowledge of comparative religion. If a Buddhist cannot demonstrate the superiority of Buddhism over other religions, how can he persuade others to submit

gladly to faith in Buddhism? So an ideal Buddhist should have a certain degree of knowledge concerning other religions:²⁷

Of course, there is no need for a beginning Buddhist to study the doctrines of other religions. As a general rule, if a Buddhist has spare time, she is advised to spend no more than one-third of her time studying the writings of other religions. Otherwise, if she lacks the time to read about Buddhism, how could she have the spare time to peruse the literature of other religions?

5.2 Do Buddhists Regard Adherents of Other Religions as Sinners?

No. Although Buddhists call other religions **outer paths** (meaning that they do not teach people to seek inwardly for the true nature of mind, but to seek outwardly for bestowals from spiritual beings or deities), Buddhists do not deny the value of other religions. Buddhist teachings divide religious practices into five levels or “vehicles” as mentioned earlier, and all five vehicles are good. While practitioners of the lower vehicles, the human and heavenly vehicles, cannot become liberated from birth and death, they do practice the five precepts and ten good deeds. Judged according to Buddhist standards, all religions besides Buddhism belong to the human and heavenly vehicles. So if people practice good deeds and thereby create karma to be reborn as humans or deities, Buddhists definitely cannot regard them as sinners.

Thus, although orthodox Buddhists do believe that the religious value of Buddhism surpasses that of other religions, they do not discriminate against other religions or deny their value. If believers of other religions create the conditions for a fortunate rebirth and act constructively, aren't these people better qualified to be the friends of Buddhism than those scoundrels who destroy human happiness?

Although Buddhists encourage believers of other religions to convert to Buddhism, Buddhists have never ostracized or persecuted other religions. This is clear from the last 2,500-plus years of world history.

5.3 Is the Buddhist Concept of Suffering Equivalent to the Christian Concept of Sin?

Nonreligious scholars certainly may take this view. They consider that since both Buddhism and Christianity encourage people to do good, they are basically the same. Starting with their perception that both religions encourage good deeds as their basis, they then reason that the Buddhist concept of suffering must be the same as the Christian concept of sin.

Since Buddhism regards birth and death within the three realms as a sea of suffering, all the feelings sentient beings experience are, without exception, suffering.³ Therefore, the purpose of practice is to cast off suffering. Christianity says that all humans are sinners, because the first human couple, Adam and Eve, ignored God's warning and ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. So in gaining wisdom humans also offended God, and as punishment God made all offspring of Adam and Eve suffer. This sin that people have inherited from the first generation of humans is what is called "original sin." The reason Christians have faith in God is that he sent his only son Jesus to be crucified in order to redeem the sins of his believers.

In fact, suffering in Buddhism and sin in Christianity are two completely different things. According to Buddhism, suffering is caused by the karmic results of a sentient being's own actions. Karmic results are caused by the hindrance of beginningless ignorance, and are strictly each individual's responsibility: they have nothing to do with God or ancestors.⁴ Because of their affliction of ignorance, sentient beings perpetrate the karma to remain in saṃsāra, and hence must bear the suffering of birth and death. While they are suffering in the cycle of birth and death, they mire themselves even more deeply in ignorance. Thus from affliction, karma is produced; from karma, suffering is brought about; and from suffering, more affliction arises. Affliction, karma, and suffering succeed one another in an ever-flowing, uninterrupted stream of birth and death. Affliction is the seed of suffering,

and karma is the sunshine, air, and water that nurture this seed. Suffering itself is the fruit derived from affliction and karma, and it is only when this fruit is formed that we truly experience feeling. So Buddhists call the stream of birth and death the “destiny of suffering” or the “sea of suffering,” and they seek to transcend the stream of death and birth, to be free from the bondage of *saṃsāra*—to attain the state of liberation, in which one is free within *saṃsāra*, in control of one’s birth and death, in the state of no birth and no death.

However, in seeking liberation, Buddhists do not only rely on succor from Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Buddhas and bodhisattvas can only teach us how to liberate ourselves: they cannot do it for us. This is fundamentally different from the Christian approach, in which Jesus redeems the sins of his believers. Buddhists do not believe that sentient beings are given sin as a punishment from God, and they strongly deny the view that we have inherited sin from our ancestors. This is as easy to understand as the saying “A man’s crimes should not implicate his wife and children.” And God cannot redeem the sins of people—this is as clear and easy to understand as the saying “If I eat, I can’t thereby make you full.” The basic methods to remove suffering in Buddhism are the three undefiled practices: precepts, concentration, and wisdom. Precepts prohibit Buddhists from doing what they should not do and oblige them to do what they should do. Concentration is collecting the mind, keeping it away from self-indulgence and indolence. Wisdom is clear insight, which guides the direction of one’s efforts and endeavors. Hence, liberation from suffering in Buddhism is certainly different from seeking God’s mercy to redeem one’s sins.

By the way, many people think Buddhism puts too much emphasis on suffering, and exhibits an attitude of extreme disgust toward life. In our daily life, we can find happiness as well as suffering. Moreover, if the living environment is not satisfactory, it can be changed by human efforts. Therefore some people conclude that the Buddhist view of life is mistaken. Regarding this point, while taking the stance of ordinary existence in the present life, Buddhism does not necessarily

have to make people accept that all feelings are suffering. The Buddha's teachings on suffering are based on his compassionate and wise meditative observation, and it is not easy for ordinary people to have the same realization.

When the minds of different beings are at differing levels of attainment, things cannot be forced. Having transcended beyond the stream of birth and death, the Buddha saw that in the stream of birth and death there is only suffering. Occasionally, transient happiness might be found, but such happiness is like scratching a scab. While pleasurable sensations arise during scratching, pain will follow as soon as the scratching stops.

5.4 What Are the Contributions of Buddhism to China?

To this day, some narrow-minded Confucian scholars with closed eyes have vehemently criticized Buddhism to the point that their voices have grown hoarse and their strength depleted. The reality is that tints of Buddhism have blended into almost all aspects of Chinese culture except those recently imported.

The translation of Buddhist scriptures stimulated a revolution in Chinese literature. From new themes in poetry to changes in literary form, substantial changes occurred throughout the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern eras (220–589). Also during this period, the direct transliteration of Sanskrit into Chinese (as was done when translating the arapacana syllabary or mystical “Huayan alphabet” of forty-two syllables into Chinese⁵) prompted the development of the *fanqie* system to indicate the pronunciation of a Chinese character. Following the *fanqie* system, the four tones of the Chinese language of that era were defined. Then through rules that utilized the four tones, the traditional Chinese poems with five or seven syllables per line were refined to become regulated quatrains (*lüjue*). To learn composition, Chinese have always encouraged people to read as much as possible, for “With ten thousand scrolls worn out by reading, [one] will write as if inspired by a god,”⁶ and “Thoroughly learning the three hundred Tang

poems makes one a reciter, if not a poet.” The reason for this emphasis on reading as a means to learn composition is that the Chinese had developed no [formalized] grammar. But during the Tang dynasty, extensive translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures introduced Indian grammar to China. For instance, the “six methods of analyzing compound words” (S. *ṣaṭ-samāsāḥ*; C. *liu lihe shi*) discussed in Buddhist scriptures came from Sanskrit grammar. Many people today think Ma Jianzhong’s grammar book *Comprehending Language* was the first writing on Chinese grammar.⁷ But studies of grammar had been composed during the Tang dynasty, though they were not successfully disseminated into common use. Another instance of Buddhist influence on literature is evident in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, a timeless classic on literary genres and criticism and on the process of writing. Its author, Liu Xie (whose Dharma name was Huidi, “Wisdom Ground”), was brought up in a Buddhist temple and in his later years became a monk. This work shows considerable influence and inspiration from Buddhism.⁸

Influenced by Buddhist literature, beginning in the Tang period there emerged many genres of writing characterized by realism and easy readability. From the Sui and Tang dynasties to the Song dynasty, a Buddhist genre called transformation texts [*bianwen*, a narrative form with prose and verse interspersed, used by professional storytellers and accompanied by pictures] contributed to the emergence of stories put into rhyme and accompanied at times by music from string instruments [*tanci xiaoshuo*, or “stories intoned and accompanied by plucking,” a kind of balladry], and of historical tales composed in a mixture of the classical and vernacular language [*pinghua*, or “plain narrative”]. The poems in the Tang and Song period that were written in a form close to the vernacular, such as poems by Bai Letian (772–846) and Su Dongpo (1038–1101), were influenced by the verses that Chan Buddhists wrote to help convey the teachings of the ancient masters (*songgu*) and by the profound yet simple style of Hanshan’s and Shide’s new poems. And Liang Qichao⁹ even claimed that Āśvaghoṣa’s *Acts of the Buddha* influenced the first long poem in China, “Southeast the Peacock

Flies.”¹⁰ Chan masters in the Tang dynasty started to use the spoken language to record their discourses on the essentials of the Dharma, and when, subsequently, Neo-Confucians during the Song and Ming dynasties also produced works in the **recorded sayings** genre, they were directly imitating the Chan school’s style of writing. The novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties evolved from the plain narrative genre mentioned above and from short stories written in that style. In novels, the use of verse to elaborate on a point, the summarizing of a prose passage with rhymed verse, and in balladry the interfusion of prose narrative with chanted or sung narrative were all clearly inspired by the dual use of prose and verse in Buddhist scriptures. Finally, 35,000 new words were added to the Chinese language through the translation of Buddhist scriptures.¹¹

As for the arts, the Buddhist architecture of the Wei and Jin dynasties has had a permanent influence on the form of Chinese buildings. Buddhist architecture, though not as practical as modern Western styles, is rich in artistic expression because of the need to depict the beauty and splendor of heavenly palaces and pure lands depicted in sūtras. The layout, decorations, dignity, and majesty of Buddhist architecture were also present in Buddhist architecture of India. The introduction of Buddhist stūpas inspired innovation in Chinese architecture. In addition, Buddhism brought with it developments in the art of figure sculpture. Tang sculptures were extremely exquisite and include many top-of-the-line masterpieces of this art. Several decades ago, some Japanese discovered a Tang dynasty sculptured wall in a temple in Suzhou, and Cai Yuanpei¹² petitioned the government to keep and preserve it. The magnificent Buddha statues in the Longmen caves in Luoyang and in the Yungang caves in Datong are known for their massive scale, superlative craftsmanship, ethereal beauty, and lifelike postures. These places are not only treasure vaults of Chinese art, but artistic wonders of the world. In the art of painting, the frescos of the Mogao caves in Dunhuang are famous the world over. Mr. Mo Dayuan writes the following: “The stone chambers of Longmen, Dunhuang, and Yungang are basically three major Buddhist art galleries in

northern China.” He also writes: “After the Latter Han dynasty, Buddhism entered and transformed Chinese art from aristocratic art into religious art. Chinese architecture changed from palaces and towers into monasteries and stūpas. Portraits and sculptures of emperors and ministers were replaced with images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Representative handicrafts changed from utensils, containers, and clothing to Buddhist ritual implements. This artistic style has continued until today. . . . It was a significant development in the history of Chinese art.”¹³ Preservation of many Buddhist steles saved priceless treasures of Chinese calligraphy, and many great works of famous Chinese calligraphers were disseminated among the populace through the propagation of Buddhism. The “chants from Fish Mountain” (*yushan fanbai*) are Chinese musical compositions that developed under the influence of Indian Buddhist music. From the stone chambers in Dunhuang, we have discovered that before the [purported] invention of printing by Feng Dao (882–954), Buddhists in the Sui-Tang era had already printed literature for widespread circulation using wood-blocks.¹⁴

Regarding science, although before the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) thinkers such as Deng Xi (6th? c. BCE), Hui Shi (380?–305? BCE), Mozi (fl. 479–438 BCE), and Xunzi (fl. 298–238 BCE) produced writings similar to philosophical logic (i.e., study of “names” or language), logic was not a full-fledged discipline. The study of logic in China did not fully develop until after the Han dynasty, when Buddhists brought in the science of Indian logic (S. *hetu-vidyā*; C. *yinming*). In addition, from the Tang dynasty to the Ming dynasty, the Chinese used a calendar system developed based on Indian astronomy by Dhyāna Master Yixing.¹⁵

In philosophy and religion, Buddhism met strong resistance from Daoism when it first entered China. But by the Wei and Jin dynasties, Buddhists quoted Laozi and Zhuangzi in their Dharma talks, and the Daoists quoted Buddhist scriptures in their talks, too. Afterwards, Daoists took a great deal of material from Buddhism as they composed more scriptures to make their canon complete. For example, Daoists

gladly adopted the idea of the hells and of King Yama into their teachings, whereas before Buddhism was introduced, the concept of the King Yama had never existed in China. The Daoist **Complete Perfection** school in the Song dynasty was nothing but a “Buddhified” Daoism. And the Confucians during the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties developed the School of Principle or **Neo-Confucianism**, which is basically just a “Chan-ified” Confucianism. Due to their need to defend Confucianism, Neo-Confucian scholars criticized Buddhism a lot, but they were actually “sitting on a Chan platform while criticizing Chan.” Chan Buddhism is only one branch of Buddhism, but the Neo-Confucians were afraid to study Chan teachings deeply lest they lose their own standpoint if they delved too far. Zhu Xi (1130–1200), who had read more Buddhist scriptures than most, had such misgivings. Although they might not have been Buddhists themselves, in modern times Buddhism has been an inspiration for thinkers such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Tan Sitong (1865–1898), Zhang Binglin (1868–1936), Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Hu Shi (1891–1962), and Liang Shuming (1893–1962). Most recently, the Chinese philosopher Fang Dongmei (1899–1977, a.k.a. Thom   H. Fang) delivered a speech on the spirit of Mah  y  na Buddhism and the ideal religious world from a Buddhist perspective at the Fourth East-West Philosophers’ Conference (June–August 1964) held in Hawaii. The historian Qian Mu (1895–1992), has great respect for Buddhism, and the philosopher Tang Junyi (1899–1978) claims he was greatly inspired by s  tras such as the *S  tra of Complete Enlightenment*. It can be seen that Buddhism has contributed significantly to China, continues to do so in the present, and will certainly contribute in the future. In fact, Buddhism’s contributions are substantial not just for China, but for all humanity!

As for customs among the people, the Confucianism that originally existed in China emphasized constructive attitudes in this life, ignoring issues regarding existence before birth and after death. For this reason Confucius said, “If you do not yet understand life, how can you understand death?”¹⁶ Any issue about one’s condition before birth, after death, or about the ontology of the universe was not discussed.

Hence the *Analects* states: “When making sacrifices to the gods, do so as if they are present.”¹⁷ And when the issue of reward for virtue or retribution for sin was mentioned, it was discussed only in terms of the impact of one’s behavior on one’s descendants, as we can see from the *Classic of Changes*: “A family that accumulates goodness will be sure to have an excess of blessings, but one that accumulates evil will be sure to have an excess of disasters.”¹⁸ But judging from the historical record, to place one’s hope in the karmic effects on one’s descendants is not reliable. So after Buddhism came to China, people learned the concept of karmic cause and effect, that “If you plant squash you’ll get squash, and if you plant beans you’ll get beans,” bringing them a new and powerful hope. Buddhism shows us the problem of *saṃsāra* and the principle of karmic recompense, and tells us that we are personally responsible for all our behavior, that our karmic rewards belong to us, and that our karmic retribution also belongs to us. If the reward or retribution does not come in this life, it will certainly come in future lives. This concept encourages people to actively refrain from evil, and its impact on people’s morality and on the stability of Chinese society over the centuries has been too profound to be calculated.

5.5 Is Buddhism a Religion That Encourages Rejection and Transcendence of the World?

The answer to this question is yes and no. Judging by appearance, the answer is yes; looking deeper and holistically, the answer is no.

The principal aim of Buddhists is to liberate themselves from birth and death. Things in the mundane world are subject to birth and death, whereas in the supramundane realm there is no birth and no death. Because birth and death occur in the world, there exists more suffering than happiness. Everything is transitory, not worth hankering after. Buddhism describes a worldling’s yearning for the pleasures of money and sex by analogy: he is like an ignorant child longing to lick the honey off the edge of a dagger. The amount of honey consumed is insufficient for even one meal, but his tongue will definitely become lacerated.¹⁹

The pleasure one gets from the five desires (wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep) is like scratching a scab. When scratching, one feels a pleasant sensation, but as soon as one finishes, pain comes. So worldly happiness is momentary, whereas worldly suffering is enduring.

Because they feel disenchanting with and want to disengage from this world in which suffering outweighs joy, Buddhists seek liberation from *saṃsāra*. So in this sense, Buddhism rejects the world and seeks to transcend it.

However, Buddhism is not a religion that promotes selfishness. Besides freeing oneself, a Buddhist will also think of ways to help all beings free themselves. So if you want to become a Buddha, you must walk the bodhisattva path. And to really carry out this path, you must deeply and extensively perform activities in the mundane world. Only after you have worked your way into the crowd can you guide and transform others. To guide the public, you have to actively affirm the value of human actions and lead a moral life. Otherwise, without exceptional contributions and outstanding service or achievements, why would the public readily submit to your guidance? Therefore, all orthodox Buddhists consider involvement in the world a necessary means. So we can say that rejection of worldly life inspires one to enter into [participate actively in] the world, but the goal of entering the world is to leave it behind.

Some of the Nikāya noble ones are arhats who have achieved liberation and have no intention of returning to the world after entering *nirvāṇa*. But the *Lotus Sūtra* states that any true arhat will eventually turn to Mahāyāna practice and cultivate the bodhisattva path.²⁰

5.6 Do Buddhists Have National Consciousness?

Buddhism is a religion that reveres kindness and gratitude. Parents, sentient beings, the country, and the Three Jewels are called the four kindnesses (*si en*). Buddhists filially support their parents, extensively deliver sentient beings, love and protect the country, and venerate the Three Jewels not out of desire for gain but from the wish to repay

kindness. Thus, the national consciousness of an orthodox Buddhist should be beyond question.

After his enlightenment, the Buddha Śākyamuni, the World-honored One, traveled widely to teach and seldom returned to his own country of Kapilavastu. During his old age, the young king of Śrāvastī, Virūdhaka the Great, mobilized his immense army and marched toward Kapilavastu. He swore to eliminate the Śākya clan of Kapilavastu as revenge for humiliation he had received there during his youth. When the Buddha heard this news, he seated himself under a dead tree on the way through which King Virūdhaka's army would pass, exposing himself to the scorching sun. When King Virūdhaka arrived he asked the Buddha why he didn't sit under the shade of a tree with leaves. The Buddha's reply was touching: "The shelter of one's kinsmen is greater than that of outsiders."²¹

King Virūdhaka mobilized and led his army three times, and the first two times he saw the Buddha sitting under the dead tree, he subsequently withdrew his army. By the third time, the Buddha realized the invasion was a result of the collective karma of the Śākya clan, a fixed karmic recompense that could not be altered. Although he was very sympathetic and felt pity, he realized he couldn't prevent it. So when King Virūdhaka marched his army the third time, the Buddha finally gave up his effort to save his homeland.

In the history of Chinese Buddhism, Master Xuanzang (600–664) and others showed the splendor of Chinese culture to India during their sojourns there. Although Xuanzang was highly respected in India, he never forgot his intention to return to his fatherland. And during his visit to Sri Lanka, Master Faxian (340?–ca. 421) was offered a white, Chinese silk fan. When he saw this item from his fatherland, he was so moved that his eyes filled with tears. Such love of fatherland was actually an outflow of his Buddhist cultivation.

During the Tianbao period (742–756) of the Tang dynasty, the national treasury was running very low due to the An Lushan Rebellion. So Master Shenhui assisted General Guo Ziyi by raising extensive funds through ordination ceremonies; money obtained was used to

support military operations.²² Consequently, the notorious Rebellion of An and Shi was pacified.

The founder and first emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), overthrew the Mongolian rulers [of the Yuan dynasty; 1271–1368] to reestablish a regime controlled by Han people. And it is well known that this valiant, talented national hero was not only an orthodox Buddhist but had even been a monk during his youth.

More recently, Ven. Zongyang, a close friend of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), made numerous contributions to the Republican Revolution [which overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911].

Of course, if we discuss an ideal Buddhist society, it would certainly not be narrow-minded and imperialistic. Rather, it would be thoroughly anarchist, or characterized by harmony and equality, or even by a limitless sense of brotherhood between everyone in the universe, because an ideal Buddhist loves all people and all sentient beings. On the other hand, love of one's country and nation is the stepping-stone for reaching such universal brotherhood. To become the citizen of the whole universe, one has to start by loving one's own country and nation; otherwise, the goal is not rooted in reality.

5.7 Can Buddhists Engage in Military or Political Activities?

Buddhism is not a politicized religion, so Buddhists do not have political ambitions. But politics concerns administration of public affairs, and as members of the general public, Buddhists cannot live independently of politics.

Politics includes both political rights and the power to govern; political rights belong to the people and the power to govern pertains to the government. Buddhists are at least entitled to all their political rights, and should exercise their rights of election, recall, initiative, and referendum.²³ In recent Chinese history, the words of the eminent Master Taixu that [monastic] Buddhists should “concern themselves with political affairs but not hold [appointed] office” are worthy of

consideration.²⁴ Monks' and nuns' responsibilities are to practice and teach the Dharma, so it is not appropriate for them to hold and execute political power. But they should exercise their political rights, especially when it concerns matters of their immediate concern. According to this principle, monastics should be allowed to vote and to run for elected office in order to offer the opinions of Buddhists regarding national development. Otherwise, Buddhists' rights and interests would be ignored. Similarly, we can see that Śākyamuni himself often gave valuable advice to kings and ministers. Of course, for those monastics who are urgently seeking to escape from the three realms, even political rights can be forsaken. Unfortunately, in today's society, you can hardly escape obligatory service to the government even if you go to secluded places deep in the mountains!

Lay Buddhists, on the other hand, may engage in military or political work. A lay Buddhist with ideals, aspirations, and enthusiasm should contribute what she can in any way at any level.

But according to the precepts formulated by the Buddha, monks and nuns may only expound the Dharma to people serving in the military, and cannot themselves join the military. If the law forces monastics to join the military, it is equivalent to coercing them to return to lay life. At this time [1965], the law does not exclude monks from compulsory military duty.²⁵ This is because Chinese Buddhists have not stood up for themselves. Although there is a Buddhist association, it is not well organized,²⁶ and no minimum qualifications have been set for becoming a monastic. No concrete proposals or sincere requests have been presented for the government to consider. In Thailand, this kind of problem was resolved long ago with laws that exempt monks from military service without allowing people to avoid military service by posing as a monk. In the United States, Christians from two denominations opposed to military service, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Society of Friends [Quakers], have been exempted from military duty. Instead, they have served as chaplains in the military or as volunteers in important civil services.²⁷

5.8 Is Buddhism a Pacifist Religion?

Judging from either its fundamental teachings or the historical record, we can see Buddhism is definitely the most peace-loving religion in the world.

Buddhism advocates a doctrine of loving kindness and compassion (*cibei zhuyi*). To provide sentient beings with happiness is loving kindness, and to relieve sentient beings from suffering is compassion. To someone carrying out “loving-compassion-ism,” there are no hated or despicable people, only wretched and pitiable people. So to a Buddhist, war is the utmost cruelty, and he would rather give his life to divert violence or win peace than engage in warfare with a “tooth-for-a-tooth” kind of attitude. Over the history of Buddhism, Buddhists have been frequently persecuted by other religions or by political regimes, but they have never engaged in violent resistance, and sometimes have calmly become martyrs. For example, during the Buddha’s time, King Virūḍhaka from the kingdom of Śrāvastī invaded the Śākya clan in the kingdom of Kapilavastu. The ruler of Kapilavastu at that time was the Buddha’s cousin Mahānāma, a devout Buddhist. The military power of the Śākya clan at that time was sufficient not just to resist the enemy for a period of time, but even to defeat King Virūḍhaka. However, they did not want to shed others’ blood, so rather than resisting, they opened the gate of the city and surrendered. But despite their surrender, King Virūḍhaka would not spare the lives of the Śākyas. Under these circumstances, Mahānāma requested King Virūḍhaka to allow him to dive into the water and to let the Śākya clan flee during the time he remained underwater. After he resurfaced, Mahānāma said, King Virūḍhaka could kill all the clansfolk who had not escaped. King Virūḍhaka accepted this request. But after Mahānāma dove into the water, he never resurfaced. As all members of the Śākya clan were escaping, King Virūḍhaka sent his ministers underwater to take a look, and discovered that Mahānāma had tied his hair to the root of a tree and had already drowned some time ago. So in accordance with their religious faith and to maintain the pacifist principle of not killing, the

Śākyas chose to surrender and be killed. And to save the lives of his clansfolk, Mahānāma courageously chose to sacrifice himself by drowning.²⁸ From this story, we can see that Buddhism is a pacifist religion.

Buddhist scriptures mention summoning up the mindstate of a wrathful deity to destroy the power of evil demons, but such imagery is used to describe a strategy for inner spiritual cultivation and is not meant as a description of an actual practice in the real world.

On the other hand, a bodhisattva may manifest in flexible [and even uncharacteristic] forms to adapt to various environments and to accommodate the differing capacities and needs of sentient beings. For example, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* recounts that during his fifty-three consultations with spiritual guides, Sudhana visited a bodhisattva who conducted wars and who [appeared to] mete out cruel tortures as punishments for evildoers.²⁹ And one of the thirty-three emanation bodies of the Guanyin is a great military general. According to the *Yogācāra Bodhisattva Precepts*, a bodhisattva is allowed to kill if he encounters robbers planning to kill many people for money or people who intend to murder Nikāya or Mahāyāna noble ones. To prevent the potential murderer from committing these crimes and thus being reborn in the Hell of Unintermittent Torture, a bodhisattva may kill the person, causing himself to descend to the hells instead.³⁰ This kind of killing, motivated by compassion rather than by greed or hatred, is permitted in Buddhism.

5.9 Is Buddhism a World Religion?

Yes, because the Buddha is not the protector-deity of a particular nation. Rather, he is the fully enlightened one, and he belongs to the entire universe. His universal awakening encompasses the whole cosmos, and the light of his compassion illuminates everything. Therefore, Buddhism by its very nature is global and even universal.

Therefore, for over 2,500 years, Buddhism has been gradually spreading to all parts of the world.

About three or four hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, Buddhism was divided into two branches due to different opinions. The conservative elders' faction was called the Sthaviravāda ["teaching of the elders"], and the younger, more progressive faction was called the Mahāsaṅghika ["those belonging to the great saṅgha"]. The Sthaviravāda later spread southwards into Ceylon [renamed "Sri Lanka" in 1972]. Its scriptures were written in Pali, an Indian regional language, so this form of Buddhism was later labeled Pali Buddhism. The Mahāsaṅghika spread northward, and although it did not directly evolve into Mahāyāna Buddhism, the areas where it prevailed were where Mahāyāna Buddhism arose.

This is a rough division of Buddhism based on its present geographic distribution. Yet according to historical and archeological evidence, the first kind of Buddhism to reach Ceylon and Burma was actually Sanskrit-based Mahāyāna Buddhism, and hence Mahāyāna Buddhism also entered southern China via sea routes. And history tells us that Nikāya Buddhism had been successful in its spread to the north.

Mahāyāna Buddhism can be traced back to the Buddha's time, but after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, the bhikṣu community did not emphasize or spread it. So Mahāyāna teachings existed as an undercurrent for four or five hundred years, when convoluted disputes between schools during the period of sectarian Buddhism made the time ripe for the Mahāyāna school to take its place. Through their collection, organization, and promotion of new scriptures, people such as Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu established Mahāyāna Buddhism. Because its scriptures were recorded in the elegant, ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, Mahāyāna Buddhism is also called Sanskrit Buddhism.

Buddhism was introduced into China during the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), which corresponds to the beginning of the Christian era.

Most of the Buddhist scriptures in Chinese were translated from original Sanskrit texts. Although eventually the Mahāyāna came to dominate in China, many Nikāya scriptures were also translated into

Chinese. All important Nikāya scriptures can also be found in Chinese translation.

After the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties came the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) period, the golden age of Chinese Buddhism. Eminent monk after eminent monk emerged, and interaction between China and India was frequent and continuous. In this period, Chinese Buddhism blossomed and bore fruit. All together, there evolved thirteen schools of Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism, which gradually were consolidated into eight famous schools: the Tiantai, Huayan, Three Treatise, Consciousness-only, Pure Land, Disciplinary, Chan, and Esoteric schools. In the period of the Five Dynasties (907–960), due to political persecution and social ostracism, Buddhism left the cultural centers and entered the mountains and forests. The monks and nuns grew their own food and no longer had use for the study of doctrine. Therefore, the Chan school, as it was “not founded on words and letters, a separate transmission outside the teachings” became most prominent. During the Tang and Song dynasties, some truly enlightened Chan masters could still be found. Through their simple and unadorned teachings and actions, they inspired and transformed many followers. The practice of discounting the scriptures, nevertheless, became the distant cause for the rise of “Benighted Buddhism” (*yumei fojiao*), and after the Song dynasty, Buddhist temples and monasteries could be found everywhere, but most of them were just empty shells without souls. Paying no attention to education, monastics just mechanically followed routines in the monastery and practiced meditation blindly. It was difficult to find not only eminent monks, but even monastics who knew much about Buddhism at all. If the monastics themselves just ignorantly followed routines, how could they teach others? As a result, the quality of the clergy declined everywhere and, exacerbated by its rejection by [resurgent] Confucianism, Buddhism quickly became something that most people knew very little about.

Beginning in the late Qing period, Chinese Buddhism began to show signs of revival due to efforts and promotion of Lay Disciple Yang

Wenhui (1837–1911; courtesy name: Renshan), Master Taixu (1889–1947), Master Yinguang (1862–1940), Master Hongyi (1880–1942), Master Xuyun (1840–1959), and Ouyang Jian (1871–1943; courtesy name: Jingwu). But because there are so many things to be done, Taiwanese Buddhism up to the present is still like an infant learning to take its first steps.

Buddhism in Japan came from China through Korea starting from the sixth century CE. Therefore, Japanese Buddhism is fundamentally the same as the Chinese form of Buddhism. But for the last hundred-plus years, the Japanese have employed Western research methodology to study Buddhism. They have not only surpassed the Chinese, but have become world leaders in Buddhist studies. Reasons for their spectacular successes in research include their abilities to utilize the whole range of Chinese scriptures, to understand early Buddhism through reading scriptures in Sanskrit and Pali, and to employ modern research methodology. On the other hand, Japanese Buddhism is now far behind the Theravāda countries when it comes to practice for pure and perfect liberation.

During the ninth and tenth centuries, Hinduism grew in strength, and Buddhism was mercilessly destroyed. To accommodate popular demand at that time, the Hindu concept of Brahman was incorporated into the Mahāyāna Buddhadharma. In addition, superstitions and folk beliefs, including the sexual arts of the bedchamber, were mixed into the purity of Buddhism. This was the dawning of the mystified, esoteric Mahāyāna teachings, the third stage of Buddhism in India. Ironically, Hinduism grew stronger after adopting some of the better teachings from Buddhism, but after absorbing some of the inferior teachings from Hinduism, Buddhism deteriorated even more! So starting from the end of the tenth century, Buddhism began to disappear from India under the double assaults of Hinduism and Muslim invasions!

Historical records show that from the time Buddhism disappeared in India, that nation's power has declined steadily, and the life of Indian people has become increasingly difficult. The territory of India was divided and fragmented until 1947 when it gained independence

from British rule, yet new nations such as Pakistan and Nepal have been established on ancient Indian territory. Although Buddhists in India now enjoy legal protection and respect from the government, and their numbers have increased significantly since 1951 (from 108,000 to 3,250,000), the proportion of Buddhists in the whole population of almost 400 million is pitifully negligible.³¹ These facts are important to note because some people accuse Buddhism of being the cause of India's weakness.

Tibetan Buddhism, though somewhat related to Chinese Buddhism, was for the most part directly introduced from India. Although it is a branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism, it places Esoteric Buddhism at the apex of Buddhist practice. When the northern Indian Guru Padmasaṃbhava (fl. 8th c.) first introduced Buddhism, Tibet was culturally backward and polytheistic. The mysterious but spiritually efficacious Esoteric teachings were received very enthusiastically by the Tibetans, especially since Guru Padmasaṃbhava himself was an eminent practitioner known for his miraculous powers. He and the three great men who introduced the Esoteric school into China during the Kaiyuan period (713–741) of the Tang dynasty, Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra, were students of the tradition of [the famous southern Indian guru] Nāgabodhi. Tibetan Buddhism later evolved into four major schools that have survived to the present day. They are the Nyingma school, the Sakya school, the Kagyu school, and the Gelug school. The Esoteric schools in Mongolia, Nepal, and other regions [in the Himalayas and Inner Asia] are all branches from Tibetan Buddhism.

The development of Indian Buddhism after the Buddha's passing away can be roughly divided into three periods. The first period of Sthaviravāda Buddhism, from the Buddha's parinirvāṇa to three or four hundreds years later, is represented by the Buddhism in today's Sri Lanka and other regions [mainly in Southeast Asia]. The second period was from three or four hundred years after parinirvāṇa and lasted for five to six hundred years, in which Exoteric Mahāyāna Buddhism

developed—representatives of this form of Buddhism are in today's China and Japan. The third period, during which Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhism arose, began about nine hundred or one thousand years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. Today this form of Buddhism is represented by Tibetan Buddhism. So-called Exoteric Buddhism places great emphasis on the study and exposition of Buddhist doctrine, whereas Esoteric Buddhism stresses adherence to ritual protocol, recitation of mantras, and reliance on the spiritual assistance of deities. Alternatively, we can describe the first period as Buddhism of the śrāvakas, the second period as Buddhism of the bodhisattvas, and the third period as Buddhism of the deities. What we need today should be a fourth period, the Buddhism of the human realm.

Buddhism in the West first came to Germany. It is well known that the philosophy of Schopenhauer (1788–1860) was deeply influenced by Indian philosophy, as he drew many of his thoughts from the Upaniṣads and early Buddhist scriptures. Today, France, England, Belgium, Austria, the Soviet Union, the United States, Argentina, and Brazil all have some traces of Buddhism, but in terms of future growth potential, Buddhism in Germany and United States is most promising. This is especially true of the United States, in which there are active programs run by Buddhists from the Southern tradition, Northern tradition, and Tibetan tradition. But based on the content of the Buddhist culture in Europe and the Americas, the Southern tradition has a decisive advantage.³² This advantage derives from the fact that between 1505 and 1948, Sri Lanka [known as Ceylon until 1972] was successively occupied by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, providing monastics in Sri Lanka with the opportunity to spread Buddhism to the Western world. The introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism to the West has primarily been the contribution of Japanese Buddhists. Chinese Buddhists have fallen far behind others in disseminating Buddhism abroad. Even the Tibetan lamas are several steps ahead of Chinese Buddhists in this regard. Although overseas Chinese in the United States have faith in Mahāyāna Buddhism, they do not know its teachings.

5.10 Do Buddhists Have a Unified Administrative Organization?

During the period of **fundamental Buddhism**, the religious community was fully anarchist, meaning that among members of the Saṅgha there were no relations such as leader/follower or superior/subordinate. Under the principles of the Dharma everybody was equal, and within the scope of the Dharma everyone was autonomous. Even the founder Śākyamuni Buddha, as he was approaching parinirvāṇa, told the Venerable Elder Ānanda: “The Tathāgata does not say that he governs the assembly, or that he commands the assembly.”³³ The Buddha also often said, “I am within the Saṅgha,” and he never considered himself leader of the Saṅgha. The Buddha sometimes referred to himself as the “Dharma King,” but the word “king” here means “carefree in the Dharma,” not “commander.” So since Buddhism has been established, it has never been politically organized: saṅgha members are not given different ranks, and no one is considered more important than anybody else. Any monastic community with at least four members is legally recognized and to be respected as long as it follows the monastic code of conduct. Even when a monastic community split into two groups due to differences in opinion, the Buddha recognized both groups. For example, in the *Monastic Code in Five Divisions*, scroll 24, the Buddha stated: “The two groups should be respected and supported equally. Why is this so? Like pure gold, when it is broken in two, the two parts are no different,”³⁴ because both parts are still gold. From this we can see that the fundamental spirit of Buddhism does not call for a tightly controlled, hierarchical form of organization. Christianity happens to be opposite in this regard: Christians have had strong political consciousness from the very beginning, and hierarchical structure and centralized authority characterized the early Christian churches. Because of this long history of organization, Christian churches have much more power to govern their members than do Buddhist groups. So even within Protestant groups, which consist of numerous independent denominations, excellent organization is characteristic of each group.

So far we Buddhists have not developed a worldwide church organization. Even within a single country there exist different sects, which

are themselves disunited. This is especially true of China, where although historically governments have appointed monk-officials to governmental positions, such officials were appointed to control monks, nuns, and their property, and so they were not serving in strictly Buddhist organizations. Today the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China [the BAROC] has been established and has branch offices for different provinces, counties, and cities, but it lacks real governing authority. It does not own the property of the various monasteries throughout the country, nor does it have authority to make staffing decisions for these monasteries.³⁵

Therefore, although the Buddhist population in Taiwan exceeded six million people or 52 percent of the total population by the end of 1964, it has not become a strong, active force in terms of developing Buddhist programs and activities. In contrast, the population of Catholics in Taiwan is only about 265,000 and that of Protestants is about 293,000, but judging from appearances they seem to be more active than Buddhists. And because they are united and organized while Buddhist groups just do their own thing, even the 40,000 Muslims receive more respect from the government!³⁶

The number of adherents of five world religions was listed in *The Lion's Roar Magazine* as follows. Christianity with 900 million believers ranked first, while Buddhism with 600 million adherents ranked second. Islam with 450 million devotees was the third largest, Hinduism was fourth with 380 million adherents, and Judaism fifth with 50 million adherents.³⁷ If the 600 million Buddhists could unite together, they would bring immeasurable light to the world.

Here I need to question the accuracy of the statistics in the newspaper article "Buddhism in Asia," published by the *Central Daily News* in its weekly geography column on 14 December 1964. This article stated that there were only 300 million Buddhists in the world, 50 percent less than the number reported by the previously mentioned source. The problem may be that the newspaper article estimated the number of Buddhists in Mainland China to be only 100 million, or 13 percent of the total population: this estimate is questionably low. In addition, this article labeled India and Ceylon [Sri Lanka] as Mahāyāna

Buddhist countries. This is a serious mistake, especially since Ceylon is definitely not a Mahāyāna Buddhist country. And in the case of Vietnam, both Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism exist together there [and so it does not fall squarely into either category]. Finally, the article perhaps neglected to count Buddhists outside of Asia. In the United States today, for example, there are 170,000 Buddhists and 150 Buddhist temples distributed throughout the various states.³⁸

Buddhism [as a whole] does not have a structured, political organization, so as of today no unifying Buddhist church analogous to the Vatican for Catholics exists. But there is a symbolic organization—the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB)—the idea for which was first proposed by the late Venerable Master Taixu in 1928. He had two hopes: to eliminate the divisions between Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism so as to further develop Buddhism as a whole, and to unite Buddhists of all countries to cultivate friendship and promote eternal peace. But it was not until after twenty-two years of fermentation that the inaugural conference of the WFB was held in Ceylon on 6 June 1950. Sponsors of this meeting included the king and the saṅgharāja [the “supreme patriarch,” or holder of the highest office in the national saṅgha] of Thailand, the president and saṅgha leaders from Burma, the prime minister and saṅgha leaders from Ceylon, the Dalai Lama from Tibet, the king and saṅgha leaders from Cambodia, saṅgha leaders from Vietnam, and Emperor Hirohito (r. 1926–1989) from Japan. The Chinese representative was Ven. Fafang, who was a visiting lecturer in Ceylon at the time. It was resolved at the meeting to hold biennial meetings afterward, and the next seven meetings were held successively in Ceylon, Japan, Burma, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, and India. Although the organization now has members from sixty countries and regions, fifty-three of which attended the seventh conference, the fellowship’s impact on Buddhism and the whole world has been very limited. As the word fellowship in its name implies, the organization is primarily for promoting friendship among its members. During its fourteen years of existence, the organization has had only two visible accomplishments. First, a resolution adopted at the third conference,

held in Nepal in 1956, set the Buddha's birthday on the full-moon day in May. The second significant resolution, proposed by the representatives from Ceylon at the 1952 meeting in Japan, was to adopt a five-color flag designed by the American Colonel Henry Steele Olcott (1832–1907) as the official Buddhist flag.³⁹ Nothing else worthy of mention has been achieved.^{40*}

A global Buddhist administrative organization, though not required by the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, is badly needed to meet the demands of the present and future. If we are to develop such an organization from the currently existing fellowship, I'm afraid we'll have to make efforts for some time!

5.11 Is Buddhism Pessimistic about the Future of Humanity?

For all orthodox Buddhists, the answer to this question is an adamant “No.”

Buddhists believe that after a very long time, about 5.6 billion years from now—certainly before the earth has been destroyed—another Buddha, Maitreya, will come to the human realm. At that time, because of humanity's moral and material development, the earth will be a peaceful, majestic, beautiful, pure, level, unified, and free place, and populated by people who are kindhearted and mutually supportive. In terms of transportation, housing, clothing, food, ponds, gardens, fruit trees, flowering plants, birds, recreation, education, and culture, everything will be perfected, enriched, beautified, and purified. People's physical bodies at that time will be huge, and life expectancy will be long. They will have properly proportioned and dignified faces and will be brimming with energy. The world will be unified, people's thinking will be unified, and everyone will treat one another like brothers as they pass their lives in health and happiness. Except for feelings such as coldness, heat, hunger, thirst, the urge to urinate and defecate, lust, sensations while eating and drinking, and the experiences of birth and death, people will feel almost as if the Western Land of Utmost Bliss had been transported to the earth.⁴¹

Buddhists believe that all people who have taken refuge in Śākyamuni Buddha's Dharma will be reborn in our world when Maitreya Buddha comes. They will learn the Dharma from Maitreya, and each will receive a *vyākaraṇa*, a prophecy of when and how he or she will become a Buddha.

Although the coming of Maitreya Buddha is far in the future, orthodox Buddhists have no doubt that that time will come. To welcome that great and bright future, orthodox Buddhists should take responsibility by doing things to help society progress.⁴²

APPENDIX A

MODES AND PLACES OF REBIRTH

The following charts and descriptions are based primarily on scroll 31 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* and partially on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*.

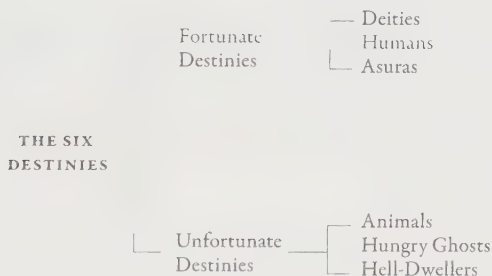


FIGURE 7. THE SIX DESTINIES (SIX MODES OF EXISTENCE)

Deities, or gods, live in the twenty-eight heavens, outlined later in this appendix.

Humans live on the island-continents located in the ocean surrounding the seven ranges of mountains that surround Mount Sumeru, which is situated in the center of a world-system. Some humans, living on island-continents other than Jambudvīpa (the lands known to the ancient Indians who composed the texts on which Buddhist cosmology is based), have physical dimensions and lifespans that are multiple times larger and longer than do the humans of Jambudvīpa.

Asuras live in the sea that surrounds Mount Sumeru. Sometimes the category of asuras includes all minor spiritual beings, some of whom

live on the lower reaches of Mount Sumeru under the jurisdiction of the Four Heavenly Kings.

Animals live on earth and in the oceans and sky.

Hungry Ghosts dwell in a subterranean abode below Jambudvīpa.

Hell-Dwellers live in the numerous hells, which are also located deep in the ground below Jambudvīpa.

REALM OF FORMLESSNESS. Meditators who successfully cultivate one of the four formless absorptions are reborn in one of these four heavens. The name of each heaven describes the object of perception of the inhabitants. The gods dwelling in these realms are devoid of bodies, and these heavens are not physical places.

The Four Formless Heavens of the Realm of Formlessness

Neither Perception nor Non-Perception (fēi fēi xiǎng chù 非非想處)

Nothingness (wú suǒyǒu chù 無所有處)

[*Infinite*] *Consciousness* (shì chù 識處)

[*Infinite*] *Space* (kōng chù 空處)

REALM OF FORM. Meditators who attain one of the four absorptions of form are reborn in one of the heavens in this realm. The bodies of these gods are immense, ranging from several kilometers to tens of thousands of kilometers in height. However, their bodies are “without the forms of male or female, all of one kind” (T 49.309b4). The highest five heavens in the realm of form are the pure abodes: these are the heavens in which the noble ones called anāgāmins (or “non-returners”), who have attained the third fruit of the Nikāya path to liberation and are destined to achieve arhatship, are reborn.

Fourth Dhyāna Heavens

Ultimate Form (sè jiūjìng tiān 色究竟天): The highest place for those domains in which material form is present.

Skillful Manifestation (shàn xiàn tiān 善現天): Deities here are supremely proficient at manifesting themselves as they wish.

Skillful Vision (shàn jiàn tiān 善見天): Obstacles to samādhi here are very weak, so one can see clearly and penetratingly.

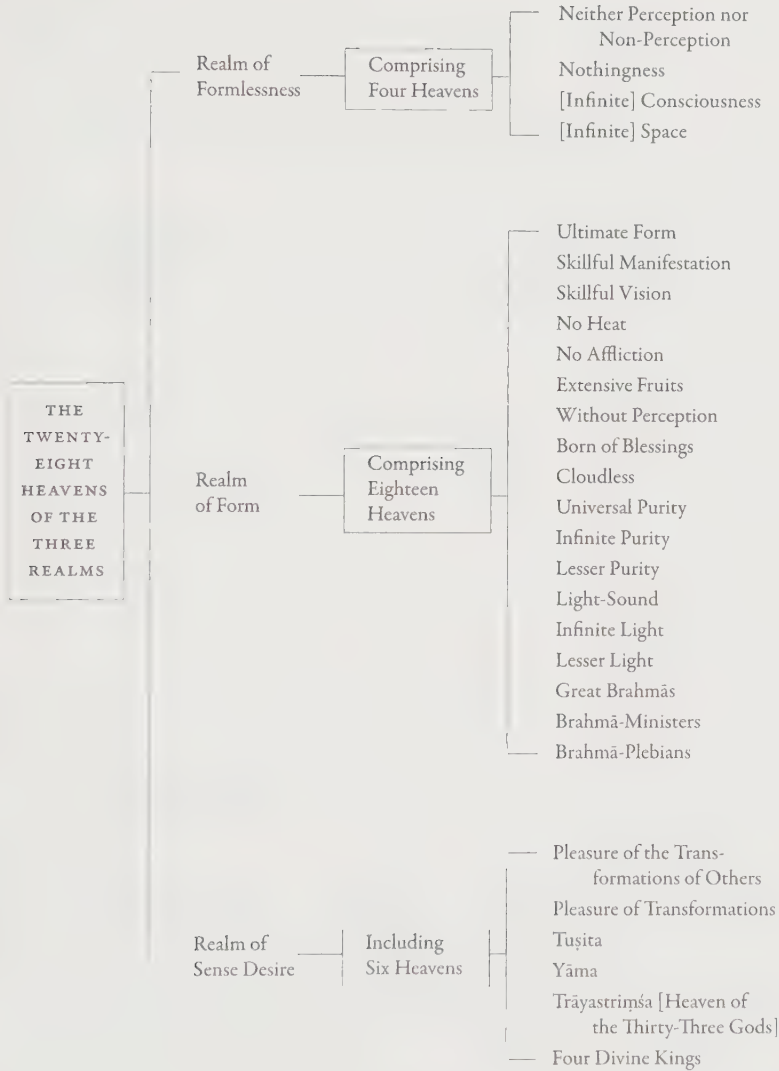


FIGURE 8. THE TWENTY-EIGHT HEAVENS OF THE THREE REALMS

No Heat (wú rè tiān 無熱天): There is no “heat” of misery and distress here.

No Affliction (wú fán tiān 無煩天): There are no afflictions here.

Extensive Fruits (guǎng guǒ tiān 廣果天): For those with extensive karmic rewards, the fruits of previous action.

Without Perception (wú xiǎng tiān 無想天): Those born here are without the functioning of mental perception, the goal of some non-Buddhist ascetics. But after enjoying a stay here of five hundred kalpas, the inhabitants develop deviant views and descend into the hells.

Born of Blessings (fú shēng tiān 福生天): For those of superb blessings.

Cloudless (wú yún tiān 無雲天): This heaven is beyond (unsupported by) clouds. All the aerial heavens below this one are supported by clouds; this heaven and those above it rest on space alone.

Third Dhyāna Heavens

Universal Purity (piàn jìng tiān 遍淨天): Gods here commit no impure deeds.

Infinite Purity (wúliàng jìng tiān 無量淨天): Gods here are even greater in degree of purity than those in the preceding heaven.

Lesser Purity (shǎo jìng tiān 少淨天): Purity in the sense of renouncing sense pleasures; “lesser” in contrast to the heaven above it.

Second Dhyāna Heavens

Light-Sound (guāng yīn tiān 光音天): In this heaven, words come out from the gods’ mouths not as sound but as light, through which they communicate.

Infinite Light (wúliàng guāng tiān 無量光天): Great light pervades this heaven.

Lesser Light (shǎo guāng tiān 少光天): A lesser amount of light pervades this heaven.

First Dhyāna Heavens

Great Brahmās (dà fàn tiān 大梵天): The deities here are called great Brahmās; they act as rulers.

Brahmā-Ministers (fàn fǔ tiān 梵輔天): The Brahmās here act as ministers to the great Brahmās.

Brahmā-Plebians (fàn zhòng tiān 梵眾天): These Brahmās serve as the commoners among the hierarchy of Brahmās.

REALM OF SENSE DESIRE. This realm includes the lowest six heavens as well as the humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers. The chart above does not show the modes of rebirth below the heavens. Beings in this realm are, to a greater or lesser degree, bound by desires of the five senses.

Pleasure of the Transformations of Others (tā huà zì zài tiān 他化自在天): A heaven where one can fulfill desires by one's magical transformations and by others' magical transformations. In addition, the god Māra lives here.

Pleasure of Transformations (huà lè tiān 化樂天): A heaven where one can fulfill desires by magical transformations.

Tuṣṭita (dōushuài tiān 兜率天): A heaven of contentment in regard to sense desires. A bodhisattva in his life prior to the one in which he attains Buddhahood dwells in this heaven.

Yāma (yè mó tiān 夜摩天): The “auspicious” heaven, where the gods are continually singing. This heaven and those above it are called aerial heavens, as they are located above ground. Layers of clouds support them from below.

Trīyastrimśa (dāoli tiān 忉利天): This where the god Śakra (also called Indra) rules, along with his thirty-two ministers, as well as their subjects. It is located on the square, flat summit of Mount Sumeru. Śakra lives in the Palace of Victory in the center of the city Lovely View, and his thirty-two ministers live in separate palaces outside the city walls.

Four Divine Kings [and their subjects] (sì tiānwáng tiān 四天王天): This “heaven” actually comprises four different locations, and is sometimes divided into four different heavens. The highest of the four is that of the four divine kings; the lower three are for the servants of these kings. These heavens are located on terraces along the slopes of Mount Sumeru.

Note: Some contemporary Buddhist teachers do not believe that the cosmography of the universe exists as described in classical texts. Some interpret texts metaphorically. On the other hand, some Tibetan Buddhists claim that the classical texts do describe the universe correctly, but that we can perceive it accurately only after we attain enlightenment. In entry 4.6, Sheng Yen puts aside the issue of Mount Sumeru and interprets metaphorically several other features of traditional Buddhist cosmography.

APPENDIX B

NESTED CATEGORIES OF WORLD-SYSTEMS

The chart on the following pages shows the scope of a world-system and of the three kinds of universes mentioned in entry 4.6. For diagrams illustrating many of the places listed below, see Sadakata 1997.

Note that the four heavens of the realm of formlessness are not physical locations, and so cannot be shown on the chart. According to scroll 31 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, there exist countless billion-world universes. The billion-world universe we live in is called the Universe of Tribulation, which is said to be the shape of “space.” Other billion-world universes are said to be shaped like a turtle shell, a swastika, a half-moon, a square, an octagon, a tower, and other shapes.

SEE FOLLOWING SPREAD

FIGURE. 9. UNIVERSES AND WORLD-SYSTEMS

ONE WORLD-SYSTEM	ONE THOUSAND- WORLD UNIVERSE	ONE MILLION- WORLD UNIVERSE	ONE BILLION- WORLD UNIVERSE
	One of each of the following heavens: Light-Sound Infinite Light Lesser Light	One of each of the following heavens: Universal Purity Infinite Purity Lesser Purity	One of each of the following heavens: Ultimate Form Skillful Manifestation Skillful Vision No Heat No Affliction Extensive Fruit Without Cognition Born of Blessings Cloudless
		1,000 thousand-world universes	1,000 million-world universes
			1,000,000 thousand-world universes



FIGURE 9. UNIVERSES AND WORLD-SYSTEMS

APPENDIX C

STAGES OF THE BODHISATTVA PATH

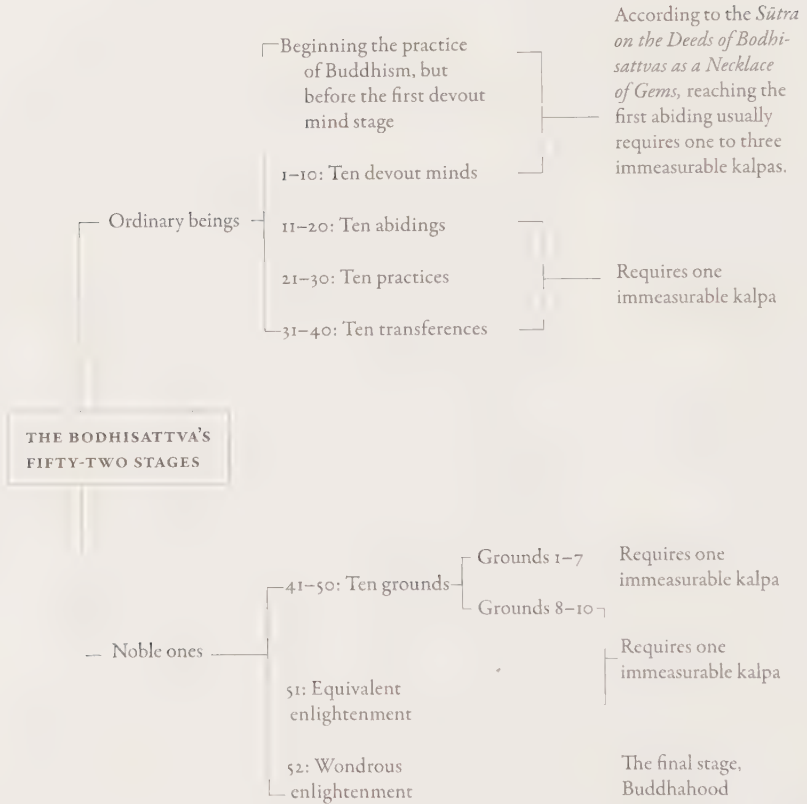


FIGURE 10. THE BODHISATTVA'S FIFTY-TWO STAGES

This chart delineates the set of stages described (with minor discrepancies) in many Buddhist sūtras and which correspond to the stages of the Tiantai school's Distinct Teachings. These are the stages that Sheng Yen refers to throughout most of this book, except when he refers to the stages of the Tiantai school's Perfect Teachings, for which see entry 4.4.

APPENDIX D

SHENG YEN'S FIRST PREFACE TO THE CHINESE EDITION

Buddhism is exceptional among the various major world religions and philosophies. Such religions piously believe in a God who is the creator and sovereign [of the universe], but Buddhism is thoroughly atheistic.^{1*} Materialist philosophy is atheistic, yet Buddhism steadfastly opposes the fallacies of materialism. Buddhism resembles a religion, but it is not a religion; it looks like philosophy, but is not philosophy; it is consistent with science, but is not science. These are the most salient features of Buddhism.

Nineteen hundred years have passed since Buddhism entered China from India, and the entire culture of China has been uplifted by Buddhist culture. Yet the fundamental spirit of Buddhism became submerged and lost in longstanding folk customs and in bizarre myths of gods and demons. So in recent times, many Chinese with a bit of modern education regard Buddhism as nothing but lower-class superstition full of preposterous myths about ghosts and goblins. They believe Buddhism as it now exists is nothing but the leftover remnants of the old [imperial] society, like the hollow tail of a snake that has not finished molting.

This situation impelled me to pose seventy seemingly simple but very important questions about Buddhism that I hope will reveal its true face to the reader. The answers to these questions are based on my own research and are written in accord with the demands of the contemporary age. I have also consulted some of the views of Venerable Master Taixu and Venerable Yin-shun in formulating my responses.

Intellectuals who do not yet believe in Buddhism are the primary intended audience for this book. Yet this book also contains basic Buddhist teachings that any Buddhist disciple today should understand. After the entries in this book were published serially in the magazine *Bodhedrum*, they received excellent reviews, and readers suggested that they be published together as a book. This book is a response to that

request with some revision and additions. I especially want to express my gratitude to Venerable Hsing Yun (*xīng yún* 星雲) for his support to publish this book through his Buddhist Cultural Services Center.

Preface written at Yīngluò 櫻珞 Solitary Retreat Quarters, Cháoyuán 朝元 Monastery [in Gāoxióng 高雄 County, southern Taiwan], on January 1st in the 2,509th year after the parinirvāṇa of the Buddha [1965].

APPENDIX E

SHENG YEN'S SECOND PREFACE TO THE CHINESE EDITION

This book was originally published serially in the monthly magazine *Bodhedrum* during 1964 and 1965. It was first published as a book in May 1965 by the Buddhist Cultural Services Center.^{2*} In the seventeen years since then, it has been well received by readers both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, both in Taiwan and overseas. Many sūtra-printing associations and Buddhist-affiliated bookstores in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia have reproduced this book through photocopying, phototypography, or reprinting after typesetting. Most of the books have been distributed for free, but some have been sold at a fixed price, and in total, over 100,000 copies have been produced.

Among the twenty-some books that I have written, this is the most widely circulated. In December 1978, both the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture and Heavenly Lotus Publishing reprinted this book. The only difference between these two printings is that seventeen notes were added to the 3,000 copies reprinted by the Institute of Buddhist Culture. Although the book was priced for sale, a majority of copies were still distributed on a complimentary basis. It is consoling enough that after so many years this book has not been forgotten. But judging from the total number of copies distributed, the book still cannot be counted among the bestsellers. From this, we know that, in general, reading habits are still not very extensive and that there are still not enough Buddhists with a strong desire to seek knowledge.

In August 1975, in my capacity as an overseas scholar I attended the Symposium on National Reconstruction, where I met Mr. Chén Lǚ'ān 陳履安, who was then serving as a deputy minister in the Ministry of Education.^{3*} He proposed to interview me over several days and to ask me one hundred questions regarding the Buddhist faith and Buddhist studies frequently raised by modern intellectuals, and to publish the

results. I agreed that it would be a worthwhile undertaking. Unfortunately, I left the country again after the symposium, and Mr. Chén has also not found the time to realize this idea. So before the new set of one hundred questions has been completed, I can only offer readers the seventy questions in this book.^{4*}

Preface written on 10 October 1981, at the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture, in Běitóu 北投 [a district of Taipei].

NOTES

FRONT MATTER

- 1 For instance, in English see Stevenson 2001b. *Trans.*
- 2 Sheng Yen's date of birth and date he became a novice monk: Lin 2000, 43 and 53, respectively. Lin 2000 is the most comprehensive and well-documented biography of Sheng Yen available, and I have relied primarily on this book for the dates and events in his life. *Trans.*
- 3 The two solitary retreats took place from 30 September 1963 until 7 August 1966 and from 10 June 1967 until 20 February 1968 (Lin 2000, 173, 195, 198, and 205). During the retreats, the door to his retreat cell was literally sealed shut from the outside by strips of paper. For more on such solitary retreats or "[periods of] sealed confinement" (*biguān* 閉關) in twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism, see Welch 1967, 321–22. *Trans.*
- 4 For more on Sheng Yen, including bibliographical information and photographs, as well as the organizations he has founded and their current activities, see the website "Fagu shan," <http://www.dharmadrum.org/>. *Trans.*
- 5 See appendix D and appendix E for Sheng Yen's earlier prefaces to the Chinese edition. *Trans.*
- 6 The Vietnamese edition was published in 1991 by a Buddhist association in Ho Chi Minh 胡志明 City (Lin 2000, 1088). *Trans.*
- 7 Random House 1999, s.v. "orthodox." *Trans.*

SECTION ONE

- 1 "Necessary" here is used as a philosophical term in contrast with "contingent." "Necessary" implies that the truths expressed by Buddhism are never subject to change based on changing conditions. That is to say, reality could not be otherwise. *Trans.*

2 Dating the historical Buddha, who was said to have a lifespan of eighty years, is extremely difficult. Another traditional system gives the Buddha's lifespan as 566–486 BCE. Many scholars in recent times tend to believe that the date of the Buddha's passing away was closer to 400 BCE than to 500 BCE. For more details, see Gethin 1998, 13–14, and Williams 2000, 23–24. *Trans.*

3 For a chart displaying the planes of existence according to Buddhist cosmology, see appendix A. *Trans.*

4 See the *Chronicle of the World Sūtra*, the *Daloutan Sūtra*, and the *Sūtra on the Arising of the World*. *Author.*

The Chronicle of the World Sūtra, which describes early Buddhist cosmology, is not available in Pali as one sutta, but some of its contents can be found in the following suttas from the *Dīgha Nikāya*: *Mahāgovinda Sutta* (no. 19), *Pāṭika Sutta* (no. 24), *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda Sutta* (no. 26), and *Aggañña Sutta* (no. 27). *Trans.*

5 Notice the special usage of the word illusory here: it does not signify that phenomena do not exist; rather, it means that phenomena exist provisionally and temporarily, in a way we do not usually (fully) perceive. *Trans.*

6 Technically, the meaning of the word unchastity (*sītōng* 私通) in Chinese includes (1) adultery (sexual intercourse by a married person with someone other than a spouse) and (2) fornication (sexual intercourse by an unmarried person), but it does not include sex related to prostitution. For men, sex with prostitutes was also considered permissible in Indian Buddhist precepts. To get a more historical perspective on Chinese Buddhist views of sexual morality, see the tables from the Yuan dynasty listing the amount of demerit incurred for various sins, translated in Van Gulik 1974, chapter 9.

In accordance with modern Chinese mores, Sheng Yen states that Buddhists should not patronize prostitutes (see 1999c, chapter 3, sec. 1, subsec. 5, which is an in-depth discussion of the third precept). Perhaps adapting to his audience and contemporary mores, in a discourse to Taiwanese university students in 2001, he indicated that Buddhists could have sexual relations with one, fixed partner (not necessarily a spouse), but not with anyone else. For his presentation of this and other precepts to Westerners, see Sheng Yen 2001a, 63–70. Welch (1967, 365) shows that Buddhist laymen during the mid-twentieth century also had a range of interpretations regarding this and other precepts. *Trans.*

7 Committing immoral deeds—defined in the Buddhist tradition by the first four precepts (S. *prakṛti-sīla*; C. *xíngjiè* 性戒, “natural precepts”)—generates

negative karmic energy for everyone, regardless of whether or not they have taken the precepts or have even heard of the precepts. To take the precepts is good karma, but to take them and then violate them generates additional negative karma, to which Sheng Yen refers here. See Sheng Yen 1999c, chapter 3, sec. 1, subsec. 2. *Trans.*

8 Before delving into “truth” (or “reality”) in Buddhism, we might want to clarify what we mean by this word in English. We often use the word truth to mean “the actual fact or facts of a matter” or “a quality of a statement indicating its conformity to actual facts.” Here, however, since Sheng Yen primarily discusses what may be called truth in a religious or spiritual sense, it seems that truth is used to mean something else. Frederick Streng (1987, 63) defines religious truth as follows: “. . . religious truth can be defined as the knowledge and expression of what-is for the purpose of achieving the greatest well-being possible (i.e., salvation, absolute freedom, or total harmony). . . . In knowing the truth a person becomes authentic because he or she places his or her self-consciousness in a comprehensive context of what-is. The object of religious knowing is not simply information about another thing or person; it is recognition of the deepest reality or resource for fulfillment of life. Such an object, called God, the Dharma, the Tao, *tathata* (thusness), or *nirvana*, is not a conventional object in a subject-object relationship, but the original source, the nature, or quality of all conventional objects as they really are. This understanding of truth cannot be limited to a conception of truth as a relationship between words or between ideas and things. . . . Religious truth entails the continuing development of a valid relationship between self-consciousness and one’s most extended and most profound environment (reality).” It would seem that Streng’s definition of religious truth comes close to the meaning of truth or reality (*S. tattva*) in the “Tattvārtha.” *Trans.*

9 “Illusory” (*S. māyā*; C. *huànyóu* 幻有) here means ultimately deceptive or misleading due to our failure to perceive reality perfectly. *Trans.*

10 From the *Diamond Sūtra* (T 235: 8.750b16, 19–20). These four conceptions (*S. saṃjñā*) are taken to correspond to the Sanskrit terms ātman, pudgala, sattva, and jīva, respectively; the order of these terms in the Sanskrit text differs in the Chinese translation, perhaps for euphonic reasons. In his oral teachings, perhaps based on the Chinese term, Sheng Yen has interpreted the “personal soul” (*S. jīva*; C. *shòuzhě* 壽者) to signify an unchanging entity that persists over time. *Trans.*

11 This expression, often separated into two phrases, appears throughout Chinese Buddhist commentarial literature. *Trans.*

12 This is not a direct quote from the Chinese Buddhist canon (Taishō edition), but many similar expressions are found therein, especially in the commentaries written by Chinese. The *Treatise on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* says more or less the same thing; see T 1666: 32.576a12. *Trans.*

13 From the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*, T 2008: 48.351c9–10. “Horns on a rabbit” is a common phrase in Chinese to refer to something that does not exist. *Trans.*

SECTION TWO

1 To avoid using the pejorative term Hīnayāna (Lesser Vehicle), the Chinese term *xiǎoshèng fójiào* 小乘佛教 is generally translated in this book as “Nikāya Buddhism,” which in this newly coined usage means the Buddhism which purported or purports to be centered on those early sūtras which were eventually organized into collections called nikāyas or āgamas (C. *āhán*). Whereas today the Theravāda school is the only extant representative of Nikāya Buddhism, in ancient India there were many Nikāya schools, each with its own set of scriptures. Therefore, Nikāya Buddhism cannot be narrowly identified with the contemporary Theravāda school nor with its set of Pali scriptures. Following this decision, the word *xiǎoshèng* as an adjective is translated as Nikāya, and followers of this form of Buddhism are called Nikāyists. For more on terminology relating to what is traditionally called “Hīnayāna,” see the entries **Hīnayāna** and **three vehicles** in the glossary. *Trans.*

2 *Asura* is sometimes translated “demigod,” “titan,” or even “demon.” Sheng Yen glosses this term with the Chinese word *shén* 神, indicating that various spiritual beings that do not fit into other categories can be lumped into the asura category, as he elaborates in entry 3.8. When asked if the popular Chinese deities, including Guāngōng 關公, Māzǔ 媽祖, etc. are included in this category, Sheng Yen replied, “Not necessarily. The asura destiny is for relatively unvirtuous divinities; if the divinity is highly virtuous, we can consider him or her as pertaining to a higher destiny, to being one of the heavenly deities” (interview by translator, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 April 2002). *Trans.*

3 *Diyú* 地獄 (hell) could also be translated as “purgatory” or “purgatorial hell,” since in some Christian conceptions, a stay in purgatory is temporary and has a purifying effect, in the same way that a stay in a Buddhist hell

“burns off” bad karma. The Chinese word *diyu* consists of the characters meaning “earth” (*di*) and “prison” (*yu*), and is popularly conceived of as a place in the earth where sinners are punished by inhospitable environments and sadistic demons. We still choose to render *diyu* as “hell” since it is a more common word and the Buddhist *diyu* resembles popular conceptions of hell: subterranean and filled with torture and demons. Actually, this terminology is complicated by the fact that in popular Chinese religion, as opposed to orthodox Buddhism, the term *diyu* can refer to either (1) a set of underground courts through which all the dead must pass, or (2) the hells to which some of the dead are assigned after passing through these courts (Teiser 1994, 2).

As manuscript reader Wei Tan noted, in Buddhism hell is not ultimately purifying. Rather, it is merely a place where a set of negative karmic retributions is received until it is exhausted. One does not emerge from hell purer as far as the mind is concerned. *Trans.*

4 Typically, Amitābha Buddha’s name would be recited. See entry 3.12 for more on this belief. *Trans.*

5 We need to be cautious about what is meant by “soul.” The English word has multiple meanings in Western religions, and there are other words in both China (such as *shén* 神) and India (such as S. *jīva*, translated into Chinese as *mìngzhě* 命者 or *shòuzhě* 壽者) that might also be translated into English as soul but which Indian and Chinese Buddhists did not necessarily deny. The word soul that Sheng Yen denies here corresponds to the Sanskrit words *ātman* or *puruṣa*, which can also both be translated as “self.” For more on possible confusion resulting from the mistaken assumption that *ātman* corresponds exactly to one of the Christian concepts of soul, see Williams 2000, 56–57, and Gombrich 1996, 15–16. *Trans.*

6 Early in the ancient Zhōu 周 dynasty (ca. 1045 BCE–256 BCE), the idea developed that aristocrats have two souls, the *hún* 魂 (or “cloudsoul”) and the *pó* 魄 (or “whitesoul”). In one conception, the cloudsoul is *yáng*-oriented and rises to heaven after death, whereas the whitesoul is *yīn*-oriented and, after the body decays, descends to the Yellow Springs, a netherworld below the ground (also see glossary, *yīn-yáng*). Such ideas developed further, so that eventually everyone was believed to have these two souls. Still later, people such as Daoist alchemists maintained that all people have ten souls, three cloudsouls and the seven whitesouls, a belief to which Sheng Yen refers here (see Tu 1987; Schipper 1993; and Bokenkamp 1997). Belief in these ten souls is still current in Taiwanese society and is especially prevalent among Daoists, geomancers, fortune-tellers, etc. *Trans.*

7 This phrase is found in in the following sentence in part 1, section 5 of the “Appended Statements” commentary (*xici zhuàn* 繫辭傳) of the *Classic of Changes*: “In its [the Dao’s] capacity to produce and reproduce we call it ‘change’” (translation from Lynn 1994, 54). The two parts of the “Appended Statements” comprise two of the ten commentaries or “wings” (*yi* 翼) that are often included along with the core text of the *Classic of Changes*. *Trans.*

8 Note how the word “exist” is used in this particular way by Mahāyāna Buddhists. In Buddhist writings, claims that nothing really “exists” (or “exists inherently”) in many cases boil down to mean that nothing is permanent or uncaused. *Trans.*

9 In fact, some Mahāyāna thinkers such as Paramārtha (490–569) proposed that there was a ninth consciousness, the *amala vijñāna* or “immaculate consciousness,” which would emerge after the eighth consciousness was nullified. *Trans.*

10 This conception of seeds and active dharmas comes from the Consciousness-only school of Buddhism. Active dharmas include many kinds of phenomena and events, including the afflictions, karmic activity, and the results of karma (see *Treatise on the Establishment of Consciousness-Only*, T 1585: 31.18c28). Among these dharmas, it is the dharmas categorized as the first seven consciousnesses or as the mental activities that give rise to new seeds (see T 1585: 31.10a). For more information about seeds and active dharmas, see Cook 1999. (Cook titles the relevant treatise *Demonstration of Consciousness Only*.) *Trans.*

11 The reasoning here being that if a person is identified with his or her soul, and the soul cannot change, how could the person change? *Trans.*

12 Sheng Yen understands the word emptiness (*kong* 空) in the phrase “neither emptiness nor inherent existence” to refer to an incomplete, imperfect understanding of emptiness. In his view, experiencing the final, absolute emptiness (*jiùjìng kōng* 究竟空) is the same as experiencing the “neither emptiness nor inherent existence” mentioned here (interview by translator, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 April 2002). In the Chinese Buddhist tradition, a number of famous masters (such as Zhìyì 智顗 [538–597] and Jízàng 吉藏 [549–623]) taught that a practitioner passes through incomplete understanding(s) of emptiness before reaching a final, perfected understanding of reality. *Trans.*

13 For a graphic depiction of these various realms, see appendix A. *Trans.*

14 *Shàngdì* 上帝 (meaning “god above” or “high/supreme ancestor/god”) was originally the chief god of the Shāng 商 dynasty (ca. 1700–ca. 1045 BCE),

whereas *tiān* 天 (meaning “sky” or “heaven”) was originally the chief god of the Zhōu 周 dynasty (ca. 1045–256 BCE). Later, both *shàngdì* and *tiān* came to be thought of as the same deity. *Trans.*

15 In the Judeo-Christian conception, this creator, sovereign, omnipotent God differs from the gods of many other religions in the following ways: (1) he is the first cause of everything in the universe, since he created everything in existence out of nothing; (2) he remains essentially distinct from the universe he created; (3) he created the laws by which the universe operates; and (4) his power is unlimited (except that, according to some traditions, he must follow the natural laws he created). In contrast, according to both Buddhist and indigenous Chinese beliefs, gods are just part of the universe, and people can sometimes control gods or can even become gods themselves. *Trans.*

16 This “same god” is sometimes called Brahman, the neuter, absolute god from which the other three are said to derive. *Trans.*

17 Dayanand 1970, 17.

Ven. Yin-shun writes the following about the intermixing of the concepts of *buddha* and *brahman*: “The philosophy of the first three *Vedas* (S. *trayividyā*; C. *sānmíng* 三明) was incorporated into Buddhism, as were the esoteric mantras of the fourth *Veda*, the *Atharvaveda*. And Vedantists incorporated the Buddha into their concept of Brahman, making Śākyamuni into an **emanation body** of God” (Yin-shun 1992, chapter 15, sec. 3). *Author.*

18 The lord of this heaven is called Sakka in Pali and Śakra in Sanskrit. He is the same as the Brahmanic god Indra, lord of heaven, who was mentioned in the previous paragraph as a thunder god. *Trans.*

19 Sheng Yen stated that he made these comparisons himself by reading about various religions and comparing their descriptions of God with those of the Buddhist heavens and gods (interview by translator, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 April 2002). He further emphasizes that he has never denied the existence of God(s), and that the views expressed in this entry represent his views of several decades ago (written correspondence with translator, 17 August 2005). For Sheng Yen’s more recent statements on interreligious issues, see Sheng Yen 2001b and Sheng Yen 2003. *Trans.*

20 This is not a direct quotation from the First Emperor. Rather, the second half of this phrase appears in the *Records of the Historian* (*shǐ jì* 史記) in reference to the First Emperor, and similar expressions appear in later Chinese historical records. The “three monarchs and five sage-kings” (*sānhuáng*

wūdi 五帝) are legendary rulers in Chinese prehistory. Sources differ considerably as to the identities of these eight figures, so we cannot provide a definitive listing. *Trans.*

21 See the *Za ahan* sūtras, scroll 44, nos. 1195 and 1196, T 99: 2324b–c. *Author.*

The Pali *Samyutta Nikāya*, “Brahmasamyutta” (chapter 6, p. 231 in the Bodhi translation) also includes many sūtras involving such Brahmas (C. *fāntiān* 梵天), a category of powerful gods. For instance, three suttas in the first subchapter of chapter 6 (nos. 4, 6, and 9) correspond to the Chinese sūtras Sheng Yen mentions here in that they portray Brahmas bragging about their powers. *Trans.*

22 Since not all deities or “gods” (*tiān* 天, sometimes *shén* 神) are rulers in the heaven in which they live, not all are “Gods” (*shàngdì* 上帝) according to Sheng Yen’s interpretation. *Trans.*

23 For example, Yama is mentioned throughout the *Divine Messengers Sūtra*. *Author.*

The *Divine Messengers Sūtra* corresponds to two Pali suttas: (1) the *Dera-dūta Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 130, and (2) sutta no. 35 in chapter 4 in the Book of Threes in the *Ānguttara Nikāya*. *Trans.*

24 For Sheng Yen’s explanation of what it means for phenomena to be “products of consciousness,” see entry 4.10. For historical analysis of King Yama in Chinese popular belief, see Teiser 1994. For discussion of recent representations of hell in Taiwan, see Jordan 2004. *Trans.*

25 This entry assumes that the individual has taken certain precepts and is repenting his or her infraction of these precepts. *Trans.*

26 Here Sheng Yen refers to the formal rules for monastics. Laypeople can perhaps draw similar conclusions based on these rules. *Trans.*

27 See the *Sutra on the Primordial Vows of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva*, scroll 2, T 412: 13.784b11. *Author.*

28 The concept of *gǎnyīng* 感應, meaning “sympathetic resonance,” “stimulus-response,” or sometimes “sympathetic or miraculous response,” was developed explicitly in pre-Buddhist China during the Hàn 漢 dynasty. It was first used to explain interactions between *yīn* 陰 and *yáng* 陽 and the five phases or “elements” (*wùxíng* 五行). Later, Chinese Buddhists used the concept to explain a number of Buddhist ideas, including karmic recompense and the response of Buddhas and bodhisattvas to supplicants. For example, if a devo-

tee performs a ritual and makes a pious request to a bodhisattva, that behavior constitutes a “stimulus” (*gān*); the miraculous assistance of the bodhisattva is the “response” (*yīng*). *Gānyīng* has never been a strictly Buddhist concept. Daoists, for instance, have explained and still explain divine response in terms of *gānyīng*. Today in Chinese religions, *gānyīng* is most commonly used to describe the mechanism by which a devotee can interact with a supernatural being.

The underlying ideas behind *gānyīng* originated in ancient Chinese ways of explaining the universe called correlative thinking. The basic idea behind this worldview is that things can be grouped into categories, and that things in the same category have affinity for one another. The development of the concept that some things with mutual affinity “resonate” with one another was a step toward the concept of *gānyīng*. The “Words on the Text” (*wényán* 文, 言) commentary of the *Classic of Changes* expresses notions of correlative thinking and resonance: “Things with the same tonality resonate together; things with the same material force seek out one another. Water flows to where it is wet; fire goes toward where it is dry. Clouds follow the dragon; wind follows the tiger. The sage bestirs himself, and all creatures look to him. What is rooted in Heaven draws close to what is above; what is rooted in Earth draws close to what is below. Thus each thing follows its own kind” (from the first hexagram [*qián* 乾], fifth line statement; translation from Lynn 1994, 137).

The sympathetic resonance Sheng Yen mentions here occurs because certain good deeds and thoughts are in tune with the powers of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and can therefore stimulate their energies and consequently bring about a change in the deceased’s condition. Sheng Yen briefly discusses the mechanism of this process in entries 2.9 and 2.10. For more on *gānyīng* in Chinese culture and Buddhism, see Sharf 2002, 77–133. *Trans.*

29 Scroll 15 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* in the biography of Ven. Yōupéng 有朋 records the following story:

The Xuē 薛 clan of the Hú 湖 region had a daughter-in-law who died an early death, and whose spirit could not be delivered. [She was stuck in the ghost destiny, explains Sheng Yen (interview by translator, Taipei, Taiwan, 8 April 2002).] They sponsored a vegetarian feast for one thousand monks, who [at the feast] chanted the *Diamond Sūtra* [to help deliver the spirit], and the family requested Ven. Yōupéng to lecture on the core meaning of the sūtra. Then the spirit of the daughter-in-law spoke through someone else’s body and said, “Thank you, Father-in-law and Mother-in-law. I was freed by the chanting of just one scroll.” [The *Diamond Sūtra* is only one scroll

long. However, given that one thousand monks recited the sūtra, it should have been considered that one thousand scrolls were chanted, if calculated in terms of the spiritual efficacy of the ritual.] The father-in-law asked her, “One thousand monks chanted in unison. Why did you say that [you were freed by the chanting of] just one scroll?” The spirit answered, “It was the scroll chanted by Ven. Yǒupéng. For when he chanted, he transcended the worldly meaning of the [sūtra’s] words and penetrated into the true meaning; hence, his chanting was superior” (T 2035: 49.228a10–14). [Interpolations in brackets within the above passage were added by the translator.] *Author.*

30 The Releasing [hungry ghosts which have] Burning Mouths ritual (*fàng yànkǒu 放焰口*) was brought to China by the Indian Esoteric (or “Tantric”) monk Amoghavajra (705–774). For more on the history and liturgical texts for this ritual, see Orzech 1996. The Meng Mountain ritual of food bestowal (*dà méngshān shīshí 大蒙山施食*), intended to succor orphaned souls, was developed during the Sòng 宋 dynasty by Master Gānlù 甘露 by combining parts from preexisting rituals, especially from the Releasing Burning Mouths ritual. An abbreviated version of the Meng Mountain ritual is performed as part of the daily evening liturgy in many Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries. *Trans.*

31 From the *Analects of Confucius*, book 1, saying 9. *Author.*

32 For example, see the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 6, T 125: 2.575c23, and the *Za ahan* sūtras, scroll 5, T 99: 2.30c6. *Author.*

The sūtra from the *Za ahan* corresponds to the Pali *Khemaka*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya* no. 22.89. The English translation of this sutta can be found at Bodhi 2000, 942–46. Although this Pali sutta and the Chinese sūtra from the *Za ahan* correspond closely, the Pali version does not mention that the Venerable Khemaka’s physical illness was cured. *Trans.*

33 The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* states the following: “The Buddha is the greatest among all doctors, able to cure all the diseases of affliction, able to relieve people from all the great sufferings of birth and death” (from scroll 75, “Entering the Dharma Realm” chapter, no. 39.16, T 279: 10.411a21). *Author.*

34 This is not a direct quotation from a sūtra, but rather a conclusion drawn from parts of some sūtras. See related references in entry 4.4, n. 13. *Trans.*

35 “Ethical nature” (*lǐxìng 理性*) here means “nature [that accords with] principle.” “Physical nature” (*wùxìng 物性*) is the nature of *yīn* and *yáng*, the five elements, and other things that derive from these. Chinese philosophers

such as Zhāng Zài 張載 (1020–77) and Zhū Xī 朱熹 (1130–1200) wrote on such issues. *Trans.*

36 Scroll 35 of *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* mentions Yáng Xióng's 楊雄 view of human nature as a mixture of good and evil, and cites Sīmà Jūnshí's 司馬君實 commentary on Yáng Xióng, which affirms the view that Mencius (*mèngzǐ* 孟 子) and Xúnzǐ 荀 子 both looked at only one side of human nature (T 2035: 49.336a25–b18). *Author.*

37 See T 1442: 23.871b25–27 and 892a17, and 1451: 24.223b15–19, respectively. *Author.*

Early Chinese scriptures were often written on scrolls (*juàn* 卷). Although today scriptures usually circulate as bound volumes or parts of volumes, for reference purposes they are still divided into sections called scrolls. *Trans.*

38 Hú Shì 胡適 (1891–1962) was a famous Chinese scholar and diplomat. Quotation from Hu 1986, 154. *Trans.*

39 Most earlier schools of Buddhism would label this third category of the Tripiṭaka the abhidharma, or “higher teachings,” and, narrowly defined, this category is limited to those abhidharma texts regarded in earlier Buddhism as “canonical,” meaning here “attributed to the historical Buddha, or approved by the Buddha, and therefore considered authoritative for doctrine and religious practice.” Modern Chinese Buddhists generally do not consider abhidharma texts canonical in this sense, and combine the earlier abhidharma texts along with important later commentaries, essays, and treatises into one category, *lùn* 論, which is often simply translated as “treatises.” So in a sense, not everything in what is sometimes called the “Chinese Buddhist canon” (or the “Chinese Tripiṭaka”) is “canonical” in the sense of being authoritative—a situation different from the Pali Tripiṭaka, in which theoretically everything (with the possible exception of one of the seven abhidharma texts, the *Kathāvatthu*) is considered authoritative, the “word of the Buddha.” For more on the abhidharma in early Indian Buddhism, see Gethin 1998, 202–23.

On the other hand, in many actual modern and contemporary Theravāda Buddhist communities—including monastic communities—not everything within the classical Pali canon is necessarily read, taught, or even available, and many texts from outside the classical canon (including stories, blessings, and incantations) are read and taught extensively. See McDaniel 2002 for an overview of recent scholarship regarding the term canon in Theravāda Buddhism and for the role of different kinds of religious texts in northern Thailand and Laos. *Trans.*

40 Based on extant translations, we can see that these translations into Chinese began during the second century CE. For more information on the Chinese Buddhist canon and the process of its creation, the reader may wish to consult Mizuno 1982 and Ch'en 1964. *Trans.*

41 Keep in mind that here Sheng Yen is writing about the Buddhist scriptures written in Chinese. Most people who understand modern Chinese have difficulty reading Buddhist scriptures due to the archaic language and numerous technical terms, as the sūtras were translated into Chinese over one thousand years ago, and so the language differs from modern Chinese. *Trans.*

42 Quotations from Hu 1986, 154, 163–65, 176, 182. *Author.*

SECTION THREE

1 Technically we should call Śrīmālā a princess-consort (*wángfěi* 王妃) rather than a queen (*bóu hī*), since she was not the main wife of her husband, King Mitrakīrti (*yǒuchēng wáng* 友稱王). *Trans.*

2 The upavāsa precepts are the eight precepts, which in addition to the basic five precepts include prohibitions against the following: any sexual activity; eating after noon; using perfumes, garlands, or ointments; performing or watching/listening to songs, dances, or dramas; and use of high, luxurious beds or couches. Generally, the eight precepts are taken for only one day, and one may make a commitment to observe them on several specified days of each month. In India people taking such precepts were simply called laypeople undergoing the “fast” (S. *upavāsa*), and did not constitute a distinct category of Buddhist. More common than the nine-fold division given here is the division of Buddhists into the four “assemblies” (*zhòng* 眾) of male monastics, female monastics, laymen, and laywomen, or division into the seven assemblies, consisting of the nine listed in the text minus the two categories for people undergoing the upavāsa. For more details on the different classes of Buddhists (based on the precepts they take), especially lay Buddhists, see Pruden 1988, 580–606. *Trans.*

3 In contemporary East Asian monastic Buddhism, the vinaya that monks and nuns follow is the *Monastic Code in Four Divisions*. According to this vinaya, monks have a total of 250 precepts, nuns 348 precepts. *Trans.*

4 The *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 6, “Lìyǎng 利養” chapter, records the following incident: A brahmin urged the Buddha to go bathe at the banks of the Sundaravati River to cleanse his sins. The Buddha told him he should cleanse

his sins by not taking what is not given, by not killing, by not lying, and by treating all people impartially (T 125: 2.574c10–24). *Author*.

The “Liyǎng 利養” chapter corresponds to the Pali *Vatthūpama Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 7. *Trans*.

5 Buddhist texts are not merely nontheistic (lacking reference to an omnipotent creator God), but also atheistic in one sense of the word. To be atheistic can mean rejecting the existence of either (1) an omnipotent creator God, or (2) all Gods and gods. Buddhism is atheistic in the first sense of the word, in that (1) the doctrine of conditioned arising implies that no being could be omnipotent, and (2) the claims of gods who claim to be creator or eternal gods are explicitly rejected. For example, see the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 1; and the *Brahmanimantanika Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 49. Translations of these two are available in Walshe 1987, 67–90 (see esp. pp. 75–77) and Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 424–30. But as Sheng Yen points out in other entries such as 2.5 and 3.8, Buddhism does not deny the existence of various spiritual beings, including some that we translate into English as “gods.” *Trans*.

6 Whereas in the West the word Saṅgha has been used to include ordinary lay Buddhists, this is not how the word is generally used in Asia. For more, see the glossary entry for **Saṅgha** and **saṅgha**. *Trans*.

– See the *Great Extended and Universal Great Collection Sūtra*, scroll 29, T 397: 13.205a3. *Trans*.

8 See for example the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 25, “Wúwáng lì f.” chapter, no. 2, T 125: 2.683c14–22 [in which the elder Candraprabha sponsors a meal for the Buddha and monks for the sake of his newly born son]. *Author*.

9 Faith in Buddhism implies assent to certain beliefs and, perhaps more importantly, a sense of confidence in following the teachings and the motivation to do so. For comments on faith in Buddhism, see Gethin 1998, 166–69. *Trans*.

10 Readers interested in more information might like to read the author’s article “Zěyàng xiūchí jiětuō dào 怎樣修持解脫道” (How to practice the path of liberation), contained in Sheng Yen 1999a. *Author*.

11 Here Sheng Yen (drawing on older Chinese traditions) explains how the Chinese *shén* 神 can be understood in the Buddhist system, a problem that Indian Buddhists obviously did not have to confront. This process is analogous to that of a Western Buddhist who believes in angels trying to fit angels into the Buddhist worldview. For a description of how Chinese deities were

integrated into Buddhist cosmology for a Chinese Buddhist ritual, see Stevenson 2001a, 50–54.

The term *shén* is a pre-Buddhist, Chinese term, which in the sense used here can be translated as deity, god, or benevolent spirit. Perhaps as a way of distinguishing Indian gods (*devas*) from indigenous Chinese *shén*, the Chinese translated the Sanskrit term *deva*, the word for the virtuous gods living in one of the twenty-eight “heavens,” with the Chinese word *tiān* 天, which also means “heaven.” In this book, words such as “deity” or “god” usually refer to *devas*, but in this entry they generally refer to the spiritual beings below the level of the “heavenly deities” (*devas*). *Trans.*

12 See entry 2.5 for more on such gods. Note that in entry 2.5 we called such beings “gods” rather than using the Chinese *shén* 神, and such gods would correspond to the heavenly deities or *devas*. The Chinese word *shén* can sometimes refer to all manner of spiritual beings, including *devas*, *asuras*, ghosts, and, in modern Chinese, to the Christian God. Linguistic categories for spiritual beings in Sanskrit do not correspond exactly with Chinese categories, and the problem of correspondence between words is exacerbated further when translations into English are introduced. Another option would be to translate *shén* as “demigods,” yet this is not always correct, since sometimes *shén* refers to the heavenly gods or even to God. For a good discussion of the concept of *shén*, see Teiser 1996. *Trans.*

13 See the *Sīṅgālaka Sūtra*, in the *Chang ahan sūtras*, T 1: 1.70b25–26 and c7–11. *Author.*

This Chinese sūtra corresponds to the Pali *Sigālaka Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 31; in the Walshe translation, references to gambling are on pp. 464–65. *Trans.*

14 Mock paper money is made from paper, often with a square, thin layer of gold-colored foil (for offerings to deities) or silver-colored foil (for offerings to ghosts and ancestors) on one side. *Trans.*

15 See the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 33, “Record of the Manifestation of the Light of the Dharma,” “token money” entry, T 2035: 49.322b24–c9. *Author.*

16 The Shuǐlù dàhuì 水陸大會 is a large, expensive ritual lasting seven days and seven nights, intended to deliver all those beings who have died on either land or water. For more on Chinese Buddhist mortuary rituals, see Welch 1967, chapter 7, and for more on the Shuǐlù dàhuì (also called the Shuǐlù fǎhuì 水陸法會) in particular, see Stevenson, 2001a. *Trans.*

- 17 For information on talismans and registers, see entry 4.14, n. 59. *Trans.*
- 18 For example, see Huiwen 1964. *Author.*
- 19 See the *Sūtra on the Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*. *Author.*
- 20 T 366: 12.347b10. *Trans.*
- 21 Other phenomena we might think of as “miracles” in Chinese Buddhism are the results of *gǎnyīng*, a concept mentioned in entry 2.8 and elsewhere. For history and accounts of miracles in early Chinese Buddhism, see Kieschnick 1997, 67–111. *Trans.*
- 22 See the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda*, *Miscellaneous Matters*, scroll 2, T 1451: 24.213c10–22; and the *Compendium of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Precepts*, scroll 9, T 1458: 24.576b3. *Author.*
- 23 If you would like to learn more about spiritual powers, you may refer to another publication of the author, titled “Shéntōng de jìngjiè yǔ gōngyòng 神通的境界與功用” (The classes and functions of spiritual powers), contained in Sheng Yen 1999a. *Author.*
- 24 Scroll 28 of the *Zengyi aban* sūtras states that contemplating emptiness is a way to pay respects to the Buddha: see T 125: 2.708a19–20. *Author.*
- 25 See the *Summary of the Five Lamps*, XZJ 1565: 80.111a9–12. *Author.*
- 26 See the *Monastic Code in Four Divisions*, *tiàobù* 調部 [an addendum], T 1428: 22. 983a11–19, and scroll 3 in the *Compendium of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Precepts*, T 1458: 24.538b19. *Author.*
- Such rules about suicide are part of the regulations for monastics. *Trans.*
- 27 From T 262: 9.35b25. *Author.*
- 28 See *Za aban* sūtra no. 1091, T 99: 2.286a2–b21; sūtra no. 1265, T 99: 2.346b7–347b13; and sūtra no. 1266, T 99: 2.347b14–348b1. *Author.*
- 29 See the *Zengyi aban* sūtras, scroll 23, “Zēngshàng 增上” chapter, no. 8, T 125: 2.670c–672b. *Author.*
- This sūtra corresponds to the second half of the Pali *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 12. *Trans.*
- 30 See sūtra no. 8, T 1: 1.47a–49b. This sūtra corresponds to the Pali *Udumbarika-sīhanāda Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 25. *Trans.*
- 31 From T 1: 1.47c15–48a3. *Author.*
- 32 From T 1: 1.48b3–b27. In these two quotations, the notes in square

brackets are the translator's and the notes in parentheses are Sheng Yen's. *Trans.*

33 This is a paraphrase of the passage from the *Lotus Sūtra* given in entry 3.15, with a slight shift in meaning. *Trans.*

34 This word also means "to have sexual intercourse with one's spouse." *Trans.*

35 From *Mencius*, chapter 14. *Author.*

36 From scroll 2, T 159: 3.297a14–16. *Author.*

37 From scroll 2, T 159: 3.297b14–15. *Author.*

The idea is that even if one were to make such a huge sacrifice as offering flesh to one's parents, it would not be enough to repay them; hence, this example could be understood metaphorically. Yet the thought of offering one's flesh to parents would have been less foreign to traditional Chinese than to contemporary Westerners, since non-Buddhist, classical Chinese texts also portray exemplary filial sons as making sacrifices at the expense of their physical bodies. For instance, one exemplary son left his body uncovered at night and allowed mosquitoes to feed on his blood so in order to prevent the mosquitoes from bothering his sleeping parents. Another exemplary son pressed his body against ice so it would melt so that he could catch carp for his mother (see Jordan 1986). Furthermore, as late as the Sòng 宋 dynasty, government policies actually awarded public praise to children that cut off pieces of their flesh (often from their thighs) as medicine to give to their parents, provided that the parents had a sickness that human flesh was believed to have been able to cure (Huang 2005, 117–18). Contemporary sentiments in Taiwan and China, however, tend to ignore or be critical of such extreme forms of expressing filiality. *Trans.*

38 From scroll 2, T 159: 3.297c6–8. *Author.*

39 See T 125: 2.601a3–5. *Author.*

40 From T 1421: 22.140c17–20. *Author.*

41 See T 125: 2.601a10–20. *Author.*

42 See T 26: 1.500b12–16. The *Vibhalinga Sūtra* corresponds to the *Ghaṭī-kāra Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 81. *Trans.*

43 From T 1452: 24.428c12. *Author.*

44 See the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, scroll 2, T 1484: 24.1006b10–11. *Author.*

Note that this sūtra is entirely different from the Pali sutta with the same name, the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 1. *Trans.*

45 The sex transformation mentioned here does not involve a transsexual operation but rather an instantaneous transformation from a female body into a male body by means of special, karma-acquired powers. Many Buddhist scriptures say that a woman cannot become a Brahmā king, a Śakra god, a Māra, a universal sage-monarch, or a Buddha; these restrictions are called the five obstacles of women (*nǚzǐ wúzhàng* 女有五障). However, there is no doctrine barring a woman from becoming one of these beings in a *future* rebirth as a male. However, these five beings always have a male body and hence, barring sex transformation, a woman cannot become one of these beings in her present existence. For mention of the five obstacles of women and a famous case of sex transformation in a Buddhist sūtra, see chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sūtra* (T 262); in Watson's English translation the section on the sex transformation is mentioned or described on pp. xviii–xix and p. 188. *Trans.*

46 Corresponds to the Pali *Sigālaka Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 31. Another version of the same sūtra is available in Chinese translation as part of the *Chang ahan* at T 1:1.70a. *Trans.*

47 These guidelines are paraphrased selections from the sūtra. For more details, you may also consult my article “Zèyàng zuò yíge jūshì 怎樣作一個居士” (How to be a good lay disciple) contained in Sheng Yen 1999a. *Author.*

48 See the *Summary Verses and Origin Stories of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School*, scrolls 7 and 8, T 1452: 24.442c25–445b28. *Author.*

49 See the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 22, “Xūtúo 須陀” chapter, no. 3, T 125: 2.660a–665b. *Author.*

A parallel story appears in the *Dhammapada Commentary* (P. *dhammapadattakathā*) to verse no. 304, in which the daughter's name is Cūḷasubhaddā. See the English translation in Burlingame [1921] 1990, 3:184–87. *Trans.*

50 From the *Zhong ahan* sūtras, scroll 32, no. 133, T 26: 1.630b9. *Author.*

This sūtra corresponds to the *Upāli Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 56. The quotation corresponding to the one above appears on p. 484 in Nāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995. *Trans.*

51 The Chinese word *sītōng* 私通, rendered here “unchastity,” refers to all sex outside marriage other than with prostitutes. Traditionally (and in a less official capacity to this day), marriages could involve polygyny. For more information, see note 6 in entry 1.6. *Trans.*

52 From the *Monastic Code in Four Divisions*, scroll 3, T 1428: 22.584a11. *Author*.

53 See the *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, chapter 18, no. 15 (translation in Bühler 1879, 272). Also cf. the *Laws of Manu*, chapter 9, no. 74–76 (also available in English in Bühler 1886). *Trans*.

54 For a somewhat different explanation, see Sheng Yen 2001a under the entry “Buddhism and Abortion.” *Trans*.

SECTION FOUR

1 The Four Great Vows can be found explicitly, albeit with slightly different wording, in many Chinese commentaries, and in the *Precious Mirror of the Lotus School of Mount Lu* they appear in the same form given here: see T 1973: 47.335c22–23. *Trans*.

2 See entry 4.4 and appendix C for more on these stages. *Trans*.

3 In this entry, we have retained the term “Hīnayāna” rather than changing it to “Nikāya” as we have done elsewhere. See entry 2.1, n. 1. *Trans*.

4 Technically speaking, according to early Buddhist texts, individuals who have reached a certain level of enlightenment, after which final liberation will occur within a limited number of lifetimes, can all be referred to as “noble ones,” regardless of whether they have attained final liberation or not. *Trans*.

5 Many scholars today would divide contemporary Buddhism into the following traditions: Southern Buddhism (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos; and parts of southern Vietnam, southern China, and eastern Bangladesh), with Pali the principle scriptural language; Eastern Buddhism (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam), with Chinese the principal scriptural language; and Northern Buddhism (Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan; and parts of Nepal, Russia, western and northern China, and northern India), with Tibetan the central scriptural language. Because the vast majority of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures came directly from India and not from China, and indeed many Indian missionaries went directly to Tibet, we can distinguish the Eastern from the Northern tradition. See Harvey 1990, 1–8. *Trans*.

6 See T 1442: 23.875b22 and T 99: 2.200c26–201a1, respectively. *Trans*.

7 At T 99: 2.185a27. On the other hand, these terms in Chinese could be translated back into any number of Sanskrit terms. For instance, *dàshèng* 大乘

could translate any of the following: *mahāyāna*, *agrāyāna*, *jinayāna*, *parama-dharma*, *varayāna*, and others. *Dāshi* 大士: could translate *mahāpuruṣa*, *mahāsattva*, *kula-putra*, *puruṣa*, *bodhisattva*, and other words. *Trans.*

8 See T 125.2.645a28–b25. Since Sheng Yen would categorize these three texts as “Hīnayāna” texts, and given that he drew his conclusions based on what he read in Chinese texts, it seems that he assumes the Mahāyāna-ish terms in the Chinese translations (i.e., *dàshèng* 大乘, *dāshì* 大士, and *liùdù* 六度) have Pali equivalents. Pali texts are the only canonical texts of the so-called Southern tradition, which signifies only the Theravāda school and not all “Hīnayāna” schools. Many Pali texts do correspond to Chinese texts. The corresponding Chinese texts are not, however, translations of contemporary Pali texts. Rather, scholars believe that both the Pali and Chinese “Hīnayāna” texts diverged from a common ancestral canon of scriptures. Of the four references Sheng Yen cites, only sūtra no. 769 of the *Za ahan* has a corresponding Pali sutta, namely sutta no. 45.1.4 in the *Samyutta Nikāya* (translation in Bodhi 2000, 1525). And in this sutta as it exists today, although mention is made of the “divine vehicle” (P. *brahmayāna*) and the “vehicle of Dhamma” (P. *dharmayāna*; S. *dharmayāna*), no “great vehicle” (P. *mahāyāna*) is mentioned.

Many Theravāda Buddhists today would reject this classification system not by claiming that their own tradition already is “Mahāyāna” in a different sense of the word, but by rejecting the legitimacy of all non-Pali Buddhist scriptures, which they regard either as having become distorted over time or as thoroughly spurious from the beginning. *Trans.*

9 There are many variations on these stages in Buddhist texts. In one standard account in the *Sūtra on the Deeds of Bodhisattvas as Necklaces of Gems*, it is said to take three immeasurable kalpas starting from the first abiding stage, which is already quite an advanced stage compared to that of most people. In fact, it says that if an ordinary person begins practicing Buddhism, it will take one to three immeasurable kalpas just to reach the first abiding stage. *Trans.*

10 The idea of “[mutual] entering” ([*bù*]rù 入) is closely related to ideas such as “mutual penetration” (*hùtōng* 互通) and “mutual identity” (*hùjī* 互即). For an accessible introduction to Huáyán 華嚴 (S. *avatamsaka*) thought in English, see Cook 1977. The theme of the relative nature or equivalence of measurements can be found throughout the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. For instance, in chapter 17 of the Śikṣānanda’s translation (T 279), statements similar to those in the quotation above are found at T 10.89c. Thomas Cleary (1993)

translated Śikṣānanda's rendition into English, and chapter 17 is located in vol. 1 of Cleary's three-volume set. *Trans.*

11 This phrase appears in the *Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Dahui Pujue* (*dàhui pūjué chánshī yǔlù* 大慧普覺禪師語錄, T 1998A: 47.933b8). This Chán master is better known as Dàhui Zōnggāo 大慧宗杲. *Trans.*

12 Note that the bodhisattva's stages according to the Tiāntái 天臺 school's Perfect Teachings differ from the stages described in many scriptures, which the Tiāntái school labels as the stages of the Distinct Teachings. Besides the bodhisattva stages delineated in this entry, which are all those of the Perfect Teachings, all stages in this book (unless otherwise mentioned) refer to the mainstream Mahāyāna system of stages, those of the so-called "Distinct Teachings." See appendix C for an outline of these stages. For extended comparisons and discussion on the various Tiāntái systems of the stages to Buddhahood, please refer to Sheng Yen 2002. *Trans.*

13 This sentence appears, with more or less the same wording, in various Chinese Buddhist commentaries and histories. It can be traced to similar statements in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; for example, see T 278: 9.624a13–20. *Trans.*

14 Note that in figure 2, the "eight positions of the Perfect Teachings" refer to the following eight "positions": the third identity, the fourth identity, each of the five substages (abidings, transferences, etc.) of the fifth identity, and the sixth identity. *Trans.*

15 For the Chán 禪 school, a "lacquer bucket" (*qītòng* 漆桶) symbolizes a benighted sentient being whose originally pure nature has been stained by ignorance, or it can represent the state of ignorance itself. In China, lacquer is an opaque varnish derived from the sap of a lacquer tree. After the sap has been strained, pounded, stirred, and heated, it is stored in a wooden bucket, the so-called lacquer bucket. Since the sap eventually turns dull black after exposure to air, such buckets for lacquer would become stained black. *Trans.*

16 Note that the "pure Dharma-eye" mentioned here is different from the Mahāyāna "Dharma-eye" in the system of five eyes (physical eye, divine-eye, wisdom-eye, Dharma-eye, and Buddha-eye). The "pure or purified Dharma-eye" (*fǎyǎnjīng* 法眼淨 or *jīngfǎyǎn* 淨法眼), according to Master Jízàng 吉藏, corresponds to the insight of a stream-enterer (for a Nikāyist) or a first ground bodhisattva (for a Mahāyānist), whereas the "Dharma-eye" (*fǎyǎn* 法眼) corresponds to the insight of a more advanced bodhisattva and gives

one the ability to see the true nature of all phenomena as well as to guide all sentient beings with the most appropriate methods for each being. *Trans.*

17 In Chinese Buddhist doctrine, relatively advanced stages of practice that are still below the noble stages are labeled the “sacred embryo” or “noble embryo” (*shèngtāi* 聖胎), meaning they are the embryo of the noble stages that follow. On the other hand, for Daoists “sacred embryo” signifies the developmental stages of a purified, spiritual body that is developed within the practitioner’s physical body. For discussion of creating a perfect embryo within one’s body according to the Shàngqīng 上清 tradition of Daoism, see Bokenkamp 1997, esp. pp. 284–87. *Trans.*

18 For more information on topics relevant to this entry, including various kinds of kalpas and the 3,000 Buddhas of the past, present, and future kalpas, please refer to scroll 30 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, T 2035: 49.297c–302c. *Author.*

Note that most of Sheng Yen’s information for this entry comes from this scroll, in which some details differ from those of the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. For readers interested in this topic, the translator recommends Sadakata 1997, which gives a detailed description of Buddhist cosmology, including graphs and diagrams, based on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. *Trans.*

19 According to traditional Buddhist accounts, the various events described in this entry apply not only to our planet, but also to the entire billion-world universe we inhabit. *Trans.*

20 According to the method of calculation given here, one small kalpa would equal 16,798,000 years. *Trans.*

21 Note that the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* records different accounts of when Maitreya will come. It mentions that various sūtras and treatises say Maitreya will come in 5.67 billion years, 5.0706 billion years, 5.6 billion years, or 8,809,200 years after the Buddha Śākyamuni’s passing away (T 2035: 49.301a5–7). This fourth figure agrees with the method of calculating the length of a small kalpa that Sheng Yen describes at the beginning of this entry. In entry 5.11, Sheng Yen relies on the account that claims Maitreya will come in 5.6 billion years.

How did Zhìpán 志磐, the compiler of the thirteenth-century *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* upon which Sheng Yen draws, confront these differing accounts? In a similar context in which he sees numerous discrepancies, Zhìpán gives us his understanding on why there are so many discrepancies between various sūtras and treatises: “First, Buddhas say

different things according to [the needs of sentient beings in] different situations; second, the various compilations [of scriptures] differ; third, earlier and later translations [into Chinese] differ. Therefore it is difficult to bring [the contents of the various scriptures] into agreement. (There are a great many cases like this.)” (T 2035: 49.301C4–6). *Trans.*

22 *Chang ahan* sūtras, T 1: 1.41A12–14. *Author.*

23 *Chang ahan* sūtras, scroll 6, T 1: 1.41C22–28. This and the preceding quotation come from a sūtra that corresponds to the Pali *Cakkavatti-sihanāda* sutta, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 26. Regarding the passages cited above, the Pali version differs from the Chinese in one detail: it states that when people have a lifespan of ten years, girls will be marriageable at the age of five years, not five months. *Trans.*

24 For more on Buddhist cosmology, please refer to the “Record of Names and Places in the Cosmos,” scroll 31, in the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, T 2035: 49.302–311. *Author.*

25 Here Sheng Yen is attempting to explain accounts of Buddhist cosmology in terms of modern ideas. For a more detailed account of Buddhist cosmology in English, see Sadakata 1997. Note that because Sadakata’s book is based primarily on the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, whereas the version in this book is primarily based on scroll 31 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, Sadakata presents a slightly different version of Buddhist cosmology than what is presented here. Nevertheless, these two sources are extremely similar, and in fact the *Complete Chronicle* often cites the *Treasury of Abhidharma*. An example of a discrepancy between these two texts is that the number and order of Fourth Dhyāna Heavens differ. For a chart of the planes of existence according to the *Complete Chronicle*, see appendix A. *Trans.*

26 For a chart outlining the scope of a world-system and the various kinds of universes, see appendix B. *Trans.*

27 Intellect (*S. manas*; C. 意 意) might also be translated as “cognitive faculty” or “mind organ.” See Donner and Stevenson 1993, 272, for a note on this and related terms. *Trans.*

28 The term *liù gēn* 六根 can be translated as either “six organs” or “six faculties.” Either translation has advantages and disadvantages, but in this book “faculties” has been chosen since here Sheng Yen identifies the *liù gēn* as the functions of certain sensory nerves rather than as the organs or nerves themselves. *Trans.*

29 This claim is made for someone following the stages of the Tiantai school's Perfect Teachings; see figure 2 in entry 4.4 for these stages. *Trans.*

30 According to Sheng Yen's other writings on the topic, which are largely based on Míng 明 dynasty commentaries, Consciousness-only doctrine describes four categories of hindrance: discriminative afflictive hindrances, discriminative noetic hindrances, innate afflictive hindrances, and innate noetic hindrances. The discriminative (*fēnbié* 分別) hindrances are acquired in one's present lifetime, and are easier to remove than the innate (*jùshēng* 俱生) hindrances. *Trans.*

31 See figure 2 in entry 4.4. *Trans.*

32 Interestingly, we now know that different kinds of sense data enter the brain in the same form, as electrochemical impulses. And the phenomena of one sense faculty perceiving multiple sensory stimuli has been described by psychologists and labeled synesthesia, which is said to occur in roughly one in 25,000 people: see Cytowic 2002. This is not to claim that what Sheng Yen describes is identical to synesthesia, but merely to point out an interesting correspondence. *Trans.*

33 The translator has seen this interpretation in recent Chinese-language books and magazine articles written by non-Buddhist Taiwanese intellectuals. *Trans.*

34 Pluralism here contrasts with monism in the following sense. Ontologically speaking (i.e., in terms of what it means to “exist” and what classes of things “exist”), materialism can be labeled as a form of monism, meaning that the primary elements of the world all belong to one basic substance, matter. In contrast, according to Sheng Yen's understanding of the Nikāya worldview, phenomena are reducible to a plurality of basic elements, or dharmas, which [for the most part] can be classified as pertaining to one of the five aggregates. *Trans.*

35 Some translators render the aggregates in the singular, i.e., form, feeling, etc. as opposed to forms, feelings, etc. Such translations can be misleading because each aggregate is, in and of itself, a collection or aggregation of many things. *Trans.*

36 Such as the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (at T 475: 14.538a2). *Trans.*

37 See the *Za ahan*, scroll 16, sūtra no. 447, T 99: 2.115a24–b23. *Author.*

38 Here, by “school,” we simply mean “school of thought,” *not* an institution. As Ven. Yin-shun defines the terms, *kōngzōng* 空宗 and *yòuzōng* 有宗 can

refer to different things depending on context (2000, 4–6). For instance, relative to non-Buddhist systems of thought which are *yóuzōng*, all Buddhism is *kōngzōng*; within early Buddhism, the Vātsīputrīyās and Sarvāstivādin are classed as *yóuzōng* and the Mahāsaṅghikas and Vibhajyavādins are classed as *kōngzōng*; and relative to the Hīnayāna which is *yóuzōng*, Mahāyāna sūtras are *kōngzōng*.

In comparing Mahāyāna schools, Yin-shun classifies the following schools of thought as follows:

- (1) False Imagination Mere Consciousness system (i.e., **Yogācāra**): *yóuzōng*
- (2) Truly Eternal Mere Mind system (i.e., **Tathāgatagarbha**): *yóuzōng*
- (3) Empty Nature Mere Name system (i.e., **Madhyamaka**): *kōngzōng*

Applied to Mahāyāna schools, in Yin-shun's conception *yóuzōng* refers to all schools which claim that some thing or things “exist inherently” or possess “inherent nature” (S. *svabhāva*; C. *zìxìng* 自性), be it dharmas, consciousness, or the *tathāgatagarbha*. In contrast, the *kōngzōng* denies that anything at all can possess inherent nature. For a discussion in English of the philosophies behind these terms from the perspective of the School of Emptiness, see Yin-shun 1998, 302–27. In entries 1.5 and 2.2, Sheng Yen seems to take the same basic approach to these issues as Yin-shun does. *Trans.*

39 For more insight into the nature of these “schools” in Chinese Buddhism, see Weinstein 1987. *Trans.*

40 The “five houses and seven clans” of Chán 禪 Buddhism differ not in their theories, but only in their approaches to practice, which follow from people's different ways of understanding based on their natural endowments. Some teachers have gentle natures, so their teachings are gentle. Others have strong characters, so their teachings are forceful. Depending on the gentleness or forcefulness of their teachings, the styles of Chán practice vary, and hence there are different subschools of Chán. Therefore, differences in doctrine among the Chán subschools are not nearly as clearly defined as, for example, the differences between doctrines of the Tiantái school and the Huáyán school. *Author.*

41 See Yin-shun 1953, 4. *Author.*

For an insightful description of modern Japanese Buddhism which focuses on issues such as celibacy and the families of Japanese clerics, see Jaffe 2001. *Trans.*

42 This typology of idealism is drawn from Taixu 1970a. *Author.*

43 Note that “dharma,” which include every thing/process/event/state—physical or mental, real or imagined—is sometimes translated as “phenomena.” In this entry Sheng Yen is discussing philosophical doctrines, so the dharmas here refer more specifically to those esteemed doctrines and norms to which philosophers are apt to cling. *Trans.*

44 Numerous translators of different nationalities translated Buddhist scriptures into Chinese from Sanskrit, Pali, and various Indian and Central Asian languages over a period of roughly one thousand years. Therefore, we can find many differences in translation methodology. Furthermore, some Indian Buddhist terms have a broad range of meanings that do not correspond to any of the Chinese characters, which also have their own broad range of meanings. Therefore, it is difficult to establish one-to-one correspondence between Sanskrit and Chinese terms. We can see this from Hirakawa’s *Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary* (1997), which shows us that the word *ding* 定 has been used to translate fifty-nine different Sanskrit words, including *samādhi*, *saṃāhita*, *saṃāpatti*, *dhyaṇa*, *niyāma*, *yoga*, and *śamatha*, and that the word *chán* 禪 has been used to translate six terms: *dhyaṇa*, *dhyaṇa-suvkhyā*, *dhyaṇīn*, *yoga*, *samādhi*, and *saṃāpatti*. Therefore, for Chinese terms such as *ding*, *chánding* 禪定, or *chán*, this translator advocates translation according to the word’s meaning in context and not according to any strict formula which pairs them with Sanskrit or English words in some fabricated one-to-one relationship. *Trans.*

45 In his *Prolegomenon to the Collected Explanations on the Source of Chan*, Dhyāna Master Zōngmì 宗密 writes:

“Therefore, if practitioners of the three vehicles wish to seek the noble Way, they must practice meditation. Other than meditation there is no gate, no road. As for those who recollect a Buddha so as to be reborn in a pure land, they likewise must practice the sixteen contemplations meditation, as well as the *samādhi* of recollecting a Buddha and the *pratyutpanna samādhi*. . . . There are deep and shallow kinds of meditation, of all different levels. Those who practice with wrong conceptions, delighting in the high and detesting the low, practice outer-path meditation. Those who have correct belief regarding cause and effect but who still practice with delight and detestation practice the meditation of ordinary people. Those who understand the emptiness of self but have a lopsided view of the true principle practice *Nikāya* meditation. Those who understand the emptiness of both self and phenomena that reveals the true principle practice *Mahāyāna* meditation. . . . Those who realize that

their own mind is originally pure and without affliction, that they fully possess the inherent nature of wisdom, that their own mind is absolutely no different from Buddha—those who practice based on this understanding practice the meditation of the supreme vehicle, which is also called the pure tathāgata meditation, the one-practice samādhi, or the samādhi of Suchness” (T 2015: 48.399b9–20). *Author*.

46 See Yin-shun 1998, 159. *Author*.

47 From Sheng Yen 1999b, 78–79. *Author*.

48 The stages Sheng Yen refers to here pertain to those of the mainstream Mahāyāna system, which the Tiāntái 天台 school labels the stages of the Distinct Teachings (*biéjiào* 別教). According to the stages of the Tiāntái school’s Perfect Teachings (*yuánjiào* 圓教), which share the same names but which differ in content from the stages of the Distinct Teachings, a bodhisattva becomes a noble bodhisattva at the stage of the first abiding. See appendix C for a diagram of the mainstream Mahāyāna bodhisattva stages, and figure 2 in entry 4.4 for the stages of the Tiāntái school’s Perfect Teachings. *Trans*.

49 The Chinese phrase here is not an exact quotation, but rather a close paraphrase, yet both sentences translate the same into English. Taixu presented a lecture series titled “The Uniqueness of Chinese Buddhism Lies in Meditation [*chán* 禪]” which repeats more or less this cited phrase throughout the introductory parts. Taixu explicitly states that *chán* here is not limited to just the Chán 禪 school. What Taixu means is that throughout the history of Buddhism in China, the Chinese have generally emphasized meditation, a trend he attributes to both the type of foreign missionaries who came to China and to the habits of the Chinese scholar-gentry class who determined the character of Chinese Buddhism. Taixu writes that the scholar-gentry did not like excessive analysis, and that the geography and climate of China differed substantially from that of India. Hence, scholastic analysis and monastic discipline were not emphasized in China, but meditation was. In contrast to Chinese Buddhism, Taixu believed that the defining emphasis in Theravāda Buddhism is its emphasis on monastic discipline and that of Tibetan Buddhism its emphasis on mantras. For a transcript of the lecture, see Taixu 1970c. *Trans*.

50 For discussion of Taixu’s various doctrinal classifications, see Ritzinger 1999, 36–52. For more on Yin-shun’s doctrinal classification, see Yin-shun 1998, 302–27. *Trans*.

51 The stage of non-retrogression is labeled in different texts inconsistently, as corresponding either to the seventh abiding, or to the first transference, or to the first ground. *Trans.*

52 The term dhyāna (C. *chán* 禪) sometimes refers specifically to states of meditative absorption, and sometimes to all meditative practices in general. See entry 4.11. *Trans.*

53 At T 1442: 23.695b16–22. *Trans.*

54 From XZJ 662: 37.310b11–12. *Trans.*

55 A “grand justice” is an office in the ROC (Taiwanese) government, which roughly corresponds to a US Supreme Court justice. *Trans.*

56 In contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist circles, the title “Dharma Master” (*fǎshī* 法師) is frequently employed to address all monks and nuns. It is often translated into English as “Venerable,” so for example “Yin-shun fashi” could be translated as “Ven. Yin-shun.” *Trans.*

57 From XZJ 662: 37.310b11. *Trans.*

58 This quotation could not be found, so the identity of the “*Yīnmíng dàshū* 因明大疏” text cannot be confirmed. *Trans.*

59 A *fú* 符 is an esoteric symbol written on paper that represents something such as a god’s secret name, a portion of cosmic energy, or energy within the Daoist master’s own body. Typically the *fú* is written on a strip of yellow or red paper that serves as a talisman, and this strip of paper is also called a *fú*. *Fú* have many uses; for example, they can be used for protection from evil spirits during a ritual, for protection from traffic accidents, as a kind of “passport” with which one can travel to the netherworld, and as a “membership card” for members of a Daoist community. A Daoist priest might give a devotee a *fú* as a cure for some illness. The devotee might then carry the *fú* around until he feels better, or he might ingest the *fú* in one of various ways, such as by burning it, stirring the ashes into a container of water, and then drinking the mixture.

A *lù* 錄 or “register” generally refers to a list of divinities. The person possessing it has powers to call on these divinities to serve or protect him. A special *fú* and its corresponding *lù* are also given to a disciple by a Daoist master when the disciple advances to a certain rank (from Schipper 1993, esp. chapter 4, and translator’s personal observations while in Taiwan). *Trans.*

60 *Fǎshī* 法師 is the Buddhist term for Dharma master, but for this different sense of the word we could translate *fǎshī* as “ritual master” or “magician.” *Trans.*

61 Li-ism is the translation for Lǐjiào 理教, “teachings of principle.” Information on Li-ism can be found in Republic of China 2004, chapter 22. *Trans.*

62 Update: it seems that no one followed this recommendation, and in many monasteries to this day, most monks and nuns are still addressed as “Dharma Master,” even in the monasteries that Sheng Yen leads (translator’s personal observations in Taiwan, 1997–2005). *Trans.*

63 Note that this ordered classification scheme of the correct path from human to Buddha, in which the categories “teachings common to the Five Vehicles,” “teachings common to the Three Vehicles,” and “teachings exclusive to the Mahāyāna” are taken to encompass all the Buddhadharma, was created by Venerable Master Taixu. *Author.*

64 See appendix C. *Trans.*

65 Meaning that giving offerings to an arhat brings one great merit. *Trans.*

66 [Some examples of eccentric monks are given below]:

(1) During the final years of the Táng 唐 dynasty, there lived a monk from the capital area [in modern Shǎnxī Province 陝西省] nicknamed “Monk Shrimp.” After receiving Dharma-transmission from [Master Liángjiè 良价 (807–869) of] Dòng Mountain 洞山, he wandered incognito in Fújiàn Province 福建省, feeding himself with shrimp and small clams taken from along the bank of a river. At night, he slept on a heap of paper money [mock money which is burnt as an offering to gods and ghosts] in White Horse Temple (paraphrased from the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 42, T 2035: 49.390a23–24).

(2) During the Later Liáng 梁 dynasty (907–923) of the Five Dynasties period, there lived a “Monk Cloth-bag” (*bùdài bésāng* 布袋和尚) in the Fèngguà 奉化 area in the Símíng 四明 region [in modern Zhèjiāng Province 浙江省]. In his cloth bag were things such as bowls, cups, wooden sandals, fish and rice, vegetables and meat, tiles and stones, among other things (paraphrased from the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 42, T 2035: 49.390c4–12).

(3) During the reign of Emperor Zhēnzōng 真宗 (998–1022) of the Sòng 宋 dynasty, there lived a renunciant Zhìméng 志蒙, surnamed Xú 徐, in Wù Prefecture 婺州 [in modern Zhèjiāng Province 浙江省]. He dressed in embroidered silk clothes and liked to eat the heads of pigs. His predictions about coming disasters or good fortune always turned out to be true. He addressed others as “Little Uncle,” and called himself “Brother-in-Law Xú 徐.” He died in a seated position, and his final words were, “I

am the Buddha Lamplighter (S. *dīpaṃkara*).” People then enshrined his body, which did not decompose. From then on, prayers to his body received miraculous responses. He was known to the world as the “Monk Pig-head” (paraphrased from the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 44, T 2035: 49.403a5–9). [This body which “did not decompose” probably refers to what in contemporary Taiwan is called a “flesh-body bodhisattva,” a mummified and enshrined body worshipped more or less as a deity. For articles on such mummies in contemporary Taiwan, see Gildow and Bingenheimer 2002 and Gildow 2005.]

(4) During the Northern and Southern dynasties period, [in the 460s] there lived a bodhisattva named Bǎozhì 寶誌. He wore embroidered silk robes and went barefoot, and traveled with a ruler, mirror, whisk, and scissors hung over the top of his staff, which he carried over his shoulder. When children saw him, they made a clamor and chased after him. Sometimes he drank a bit of alcohol, and sometimes he skipped meals for many days. Once, he met someone who was eating Chinese herring. He requested some herring, put them into his mouth, and then spit them into the water. All the fish came to life (paraphrased from the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 36, T 2035: 49.346b1–4).
Author.

SECTION FIVE

1 See entry 4.15 from more on these five vehicles. *Trans.*

2 In the *Monastic Code in Ten Recitations*, scroll 38, the Buddha says: “From now on, in order to defeat outer-path ascetics, you may chant and read books of the outer paths” (T 1435: 23.274b10). [Note that the Buddha made this statement after an outer-path practitioner won the upper hand in disputes with newly ordained Buddhist monks.] In the *Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Miscellaneous Matters*, scroll 6, the Buddha says: “Those who are ignorant, of little wisdom, or do not discern clearly should not study outer books. Only people who know themselves to be intelligent, learned, with sharp memories, and capable of defeating the outer-path advocates should study them. . . . You should divide your time into three periods. Read Buddhist scriptures for two periods, and outer-path scriptures in the third period. . . . In the first period of the day and in the period after noon, you can read Buddhist scriptures. When the evening period arrives you should open the outer-path scriptures” (T 1451: 24.232b5–13). *Author.*

3 The word “suffering” (S. *duḥkha*) is presented in Buddhist scriptures in both a literal as well as in a more abstract sense. In the abstract sense,

“suffering” actually refers to basic underlying conditions of worldly existence which incline present states of happiness to eventuate in future suffering, primarily because all phenomena are constantly changing. In this abstract sense of the word, *duḥkha* is sometimes translated as “unsatisfactoriness,” meaning that all worldly states, no matter how stable and joyful they may seem, are still in an “ultimate” sense (i.e., in comparison to the state of *nirvāṇa*) unsatisfactory. *Trans.*

4 The view that ancestors affect the destiny of their descendants, while not an orthodox Buddhist belief, still exists among many Chinese. Two examples from history follow: (1) Daoists, possibly influenced by the Buddhist concept of karma, developed the concept of “transmission of burden” (*chéngfù* 承負), according to which the good or evil done by ancestors will influence the destiny of descendants for better or for worse. (2) During the Míng 明 dynasty (1368–1644), even a Buddhist monk wrote a tract stating that if one’s demerits outweigh one’s merits at the time of death, then one’s offspring will suffer (see Ch’en 1964, 52, 70, and 438). I have found evidence of this belief among many contemporary Taiwanese, such as in a man who expressed his pleasure that former president Chiang Kai-Shek has been “punished” for his misdeeds because many of his descendants have died young or been unsuccessful. In a similar vein, Yīguàndào 一貫道, a prominent, syncretic religion in Taiwan which draws heavily from Buddhism and Daoism, teaches that certain religious attainments can lead to the salvation of up to nine generations of ancestors. *Trans.*

5 To see the arapacana as it appears in a Buddhist scripture, see Conze 1961, 148–50. For analysis of the origin of this syllabary, see Salomon 1990. *Trans.*

6 A quotation from the poem “Twenty-two Rhymes Presented to His Excellency Wei Zuocheng,” by the famous Chinese poet Dù Fǔ 杜甫 (712–70). Translation of this poem available in Davis 1971, 29. In earlier times, Chinese books were composed on mounted scrolls of paper or silk. *Trans.*

7 Mǎ Jiànzhōng 馬建忠 (1845–1900) was a linguist during the Qīng 清 dynasty who had studied in Europe. *Trans.*

8 Secretarial Receptionist Liú Xié 劉勰 was greatly valued by Prince Zhāomíng 昭明, who asked him to compose all the commemorative words in monasteries, stūpas, and steles (some of these walls, statues, and steles are still extant). [These words within parentheses are a note added by Zhipán 志磐, who compiled the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* between 1258 and 1269.] In the fourth year of the Dàtóng 大同 period (538) of the

Liáng 梁 dynasty, Liú Xié submitted a request to become a monk, and Emperor Wǔ 武 bestowed upon him the Dharma name “Wisdom Ground” [paraphrased from scroll 37 of the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, T 2035: 49.351a26–29. Note that in some periods of Chinese history, people were required to have permission from the government to enter the Buddhist clergy.] *Author*.

9 A scholar and political reformer, 1873–1929. *Trans*.

10 Composed some time between the third and fifth century CE. English translation available in Waley 1946, 78–87. *Trans*.

11 For more on the history of the influence of Buddhism on Chinese, see Hu 1986. I have not been able to find a reference to the “35,000 new words” that Sheng Yen mentions here. *Trans*.

12 A scholar and academic administrator, 1867–1940. *Trans*.

13 See Mo Dayuan n.d. *Author*.

14 Féng Dào 馮道 was prime minister of the Latter Táng 唐 dynasty (923–935) when he initiated a large-scale project to print the Confucian classics in 932. However, according to Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, Féng Dào’s project utilized woodblocks, which had previously been used for printing, and the development of movable type did not occur until the middle of the eleventh century (1985, 152, 201). For more on the history of printing in China, see Tsien 1985, 132–291. *Trans*.

15 The famous Tantric monk Yixing 一行 (682–727) was also a mathematician and astronomer. For more on his Dànyǎn calendar 大衍曆 of 728, his links to Indian astronomers, his contributions to Chinese astronomy, and a legend about him, see Needham 1959, 37–8, 202–3, 270–1, and 283, respectively. In 1267 the emperor Khubilai Khan invited to court the Persian astronomer Jāmal al-Dīn, who brought with him a new and more accurate calendar which the Chinese called the wǎnnián lì 萬年曆 (Rossabi 1994, 451). *Trans*.

16 From the *Analects of Confucius*, book 11, saying 12. *Trans*.

17 From the *Analects of Confucius*, book 3, saying 12. In other words, the question of whether the gods actually exist or not is not addressed. *Trans*.

18 Translation from Lynn 1994, 146. This sentence appears in the “Words on the Text” commentary, under the first line statement of hexagram no. 2, kūn 坤. *Trans*.

19 See the *Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections*, T 784: 17.723a25–26. *Trans.*

20 The arhat Mahākāśyapa speaks for himself and a number of arhats who, after hearing the Buddha's Mahāyāna teachings and a prophecy of Śāriputra's future Buddhahood, says that they have become "true arhats" (T 262: 9.18c21; translation at Watson 1993, 94) after converting to the Mahāyāna. *Trans.*

21 See the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 26, "Děngjiàn 等見" chapter, no. 2, T 125: 2.691a5–6.

A parallel version of this history, which includes part of the story of King Virūdhaka (P. *viḍḍabha*), appears in the *Dhammapada Commentary* (P. *dharmapadatthakathū*) book 4, verse 3, but these two stories differ considerably. An English translation of the Pali version is available in Burlin-game [1921] 1990, vol. 2; the reference to kinsmen appears on p. 43. *Trans.*

22 Starting in the year 756, the Táng 唐 dynasty government stipulated that potential monks and nuns first had to pay a fee (*xiāngshuǐ qián* 香水錢) to buy an ordination certificate (*dùdié* 度牒) before they could be ordained as monastics. *Trans.*

23 These are the four rights guaranteed by article 17 of the ROC (Taiwanese) constitution. For an online English translation, see <http://www.gio.gov.tw/info/news/constitution.htm#sec2>. *Trans.*

24 In an article published in the July 1946 issue of the *Jianjueshe Weekly* (vol. 1, no. 1), titled "The Saṅgha and Politics" (*sēngqié yǔ zhèngzhì* 僧伽與政治), Taixu makes the statement above in reference to monastics. In Taixu's view, monastics should participate in political affairs as all citizens are entitled to do, and even serve as elected representatives that perform advisory and legislative functions. However, Taixu believed that monastics should not hold appointed office (performing judicial or executive functions), which among other things would be too time-consuming and might require them to directly violate monastic precepts, e.g., in punishing criminals or using military force. His article is reprinted in Taixu 1970b. *Trans.*

25 Previously, all Taiwanese men who passed health requirements were required to perform military service. But starting in 2000, it became permissible to apply to do other forms of national service for reasons of religious belief. By 2003, such nonmilitary service typically involved performing social, environmental, medical, or educational work for a period of thirty-three months. (Men performing military service did so for only twenty-two months.) Applications for nonmilitary service required at least two years'

commitment to a religion, extensive documentation, certification from a registered religious institution, and an interview. However, recently Taiwan has been moving in the direction of ending all mandatory military service. As of November 2006, military service was only sixteen months, and nonmilitary service, which was also possible for reasons other than religious faith, was only sixteen to twenty months. For current policies, see the webpages of the Conscription Agency on the Ministry of Interior's website (<http://www.moi.gov.tw/home/>). *Trans.*

26 This association is the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC). For details, see Jones 1999, 137–77; Sheng Yen's critique of the BAROC is given on p. 175. *Trans.*

27 For more on the situation in America regarding alternatives to military service, see Rosten 1955. *Author.*

28 See the *Zengyi aban sūtras*, scroll 26, “Děngjiàn 等見” chapter, no. 2, T 125: 2.690c17–692a16. *Author.*

For the Pali version of this story, in which Mahānāma is rescued by a nāga king, see the *Dhammapada Commentary* (P. *dharmmapadatthakathā*) in book 4, verse 3; English translation available in Burlingame 1990, vol. 2. *Trans.*

29 This bodhisattva is King Anala as described in the Indian monk Prajñā's 40-scroll translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*: see T 293: 712b–719b. In the two complete translations of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* into Chinese by Buddhahadra (60 scrolls) and by Śikṣānanda (80 scrolls), the passage on King Anala is much shorter and does not mention his involvement in wars. Cleary's translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* into English (1993) is based on Śikṣānanda's version. *Trans.*

30 See the [*Yogācāra*] *Bodhisattva Precepts*, T 1501: 24.1112a6–13. *Author.*

31 According to data from the Census of India, not including Jammu and Kashmir State, the total population of India in 1991 was 838,567,936, of which 6,387,500 (or 0.76%) were Buddhist. The 2001 census indicates a total population for India of 1,028,610,328, of which 7,955,207 (or 0.77%) were Buddhist. See Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2001, Table C-15 (Religious community by age-group and sex). Data for 1991 came from this same website but was cited in December 2002 and was no longer on the website by December 2005. *Trans.*

32 Given the rapid growth of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the West during the late twentieth century, the “decisive advantage” that Sheng Yen mentions may be less relevant today than it was in the 1960s when this entry was written. *Trans.*

33 From the *Chang aban* sūtras, *Youxing jing* 遊行經, T 1: 1.15a28–29. *Author.*

This sūtra corresponds to one section in the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 16. The corresponding statements translated from the Pali are at Walshe 1995, 245. *Trans.*

34 T 1421: 22.160c9–10. *Author.*

35 For more information on the BAROC, including Sheng Yen’s analysis of the organization, see Jones 1999, 137–77. *Trans.*

36 In December 2000 Taiwanese government figures indicated that the country as a whole had a population of 22,276,672, and believers of these four faiths comprised the following: Buddhists 3.6–3 million (16.49%), Catholics 298,000 (1.34%), Protestants 593,000 (2.66%), and Muslims 54,000 (0.243%) (Republic of China 2002, 453).

Yet official figures supposedly updated for June 2001 show the number of believers of these four faiths as follows: Buddhists 5.486 million, Catholics 298,000, Protestants 605,000, and Muslims 53,000 (Republic of China 2003, 376). Note that supposedly the number of Buddhists increased by 1,813,000, a 49% increase in a mere six months! And if we believe these statistics, then the numbers of Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims were exactly the same in December 2002 as they were in June 2001 (Republic of China 2004, 351–52). But since neither the Government Information Office nor the Civil Affairs Department of the Ministry of the Interior specifies exactly how the statistics were gathered or estimated, like many statistics about religion, these figures have very limited value. The purported 49% increase in the number of “Buddhists” is certainly more reflective of changes in the methodology government agencies used to estimate religious affiliation. Calculating how many “orthodox” Buddhists there might be is even more problematic. A 1984 survey estimates there were about one million people who could be categorized as “pure Buddhists,” which probably means something like what we have called “orthodox Buddhists” in this book (Republic of China 1990, 5–1). *Trans.*

37 See Vinitha 1964, 4. *Author.*

According to the estimates on the website “Adherents.com,” the number of believers in each of these religions listed as of November 2006 was as

follows: Christians 2.1 billion, Buddhists 376 million, Muslims 1.3 billion, Hindus 900 million, and Jews 14 million. The top five religions in terms of number of believers, according to this website, are as follows: (1) Christianity 2.1 billion, (2) Islam 1.3 billion, (3) Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist 1.1 billion, (4) Hinduism 900 million, (5) Chinese traditional religion 394 million (see Hunter, n.d.). Based on a 1997 source, in one chart this same website lists 9,150,000 Buddhists for Taiwan, or about 2.5 times as many Buddhists in Taiwan as listed in the Taiwanese government's source cited above for the year 2000. From looking at these widely varying statistics, the reader should understand the need to be cautious about taking statistics at face value without knowing how they were gathered and how the categories measured are defined. "Adherents.com" does provide basic explanations on how these statistics were gathered and their limitations, and provides statistics for the same categories from a number of sources. *Trans.*

38 See "Yāzhōu fójiào," 1964. *Author.*

39 For more information and a picture of this flag online, see See, n.d. *Trans.*

40 In 1880, Colonel H. S. Olcott and Mrs. H. P. Blavatsky traveled from the United States to Ceylon to censure Britain's tyranny against Buddhism and to support the Buddhists there. *Author.*

41 For different claims regarding the time of Maitreya Buddha's arrival, please refer to the *Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs*, scroll 30 (T 2035: 49.301a5–7). *Author.*

42 For more details, please consult the three principal Maitreya sūtras (T 452, 453, and 456); also see the *Chang ahan* sūtras, scroll 6, no. 6, T 1: 1.39a–42b [which corresponds to the Pali *Cakkavatti-sihanāda Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 26]; the *Zhong ahan* sūtras, scroll 13, no. 66, T 26: 1.508c–511c; and the *Zengyi ahan* sūtras, scroll 44, "Shí bù shàn 十不善" division, no. 3, T 125: 2.787c–789c. *Author.*

APPENDIXES

1 Sheng Yen uses the term atheist to mean that Buddhists deny the existence of an omnipotent God, not that Buddhists do not believe in any form of deity. See entries 1.2, 1.3, 2.4, 3.4 n. 5, and 3.8 for information pertinent to this issue. Williams (2000, 3–6) touches upon this issue in relation to Indian Buddhism. *Trans.*

2 See *Bodhedrum* no. 140 (8 July 1964) through *Bodhedrum* no. 149 (8 April 1965) for the original articles from which this book was composed. This book was first published in May 1965, not January 1965, as some sources state: see Lin 2000, 190. *Trans.*

3 The full name of this symposium was the Symposium on National Reconstruction for Overseas Scholars (*hǎiwài xuérén guójiā jiànshè yánjiùhuì* 海外學人國家建設研究會). One hundred twenty participants attended from 26 July to 12 August, 1975 (Lin 2000, 270, 276, and 278). *Trans.*

4 This translation contains only sixty-nine entries, since one of the seventy entries, a long, technical entry (titled “What are *héshàng* 和尚, *nígū* 尼姑, and *jūshì* 居士?”) which focused on the meaning and origin of three Chinese terms, has been deleted. Sheng Yen left Taiwan for Japan on 21 August 1975. But he eventually published a new set of seventy-six questions and answers in November 1988 as the book *Inquiries into the Dharma* (*xuéfó qúnýí* 學佛群疑). He writes in the preface to *Inquiries into the Dharma* that the book is like a sequel to *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism*. For the dates given above, see Lin 2000, 279 and 1134. *Trans.*

GLOSSARY

This glossary provides definitions of terms whose meanings may be unclear in the text itself. It is hoped that this glossary will help the reader to understand the text better and avoid common misunderstandings. For more complete listings of Buddhist terminology, the translator recommends Charles Muller's online *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* (ongoing), Damien Keown's *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (2003), and the glossary in Luis O. Gómez's *The Land of Bliss* (1996).

One caveat regarding the definitions of Buddhist terminology is in order. First, if one looks long enough in the vast Buddhist canon, the reader is likely to find a different or even contradictory meaning given (or just implied) for many terms. Buddhologist Robert Sharf even goes so far as to write that "I can think of no single Buddhist tenet that is not explicitly denied or contradicted somewhere in the canon itself" (2002, 289). And as tenets change, so do the meanings of the terms comprising them.

A major reason for this multiplicity of meanings is that the Buddhist canon grew continuously for centuries. If we include contemporary writings on Buddhism, we see that the mass of Buddhist texts continues to grow. In this process, relatively unpopular texts are not eliminated (unless they are physically lost); they are merely neglected or reinterpreted. Since sūtras rarely define the technical terms they include, there are no defined constraints on such reinterpretation. Therefore, it is impossible to pin down the precise meanings of Buddhist terminology for all texts and all times.

The following glossary is based on a number of sources, including the writings of Buddhist monks such as Sheng Yen, Yin-shun, and

Taixu; the various works listed in the bibliography; and the *Foguang Buddhist Dictionary*.

NOTES AND CONVENTIONS

1. Headwords are given in alphabetical order. Diacritics are ignored for alphabetization.
2. Sanskrit and Chinese words, respectively, are included in parentheses after some headwords. Chinese headwords are given in Hanyu Pinyin, and are followed by Chinese characters.
3. While both Sanskrit and Chinese words are provided in parentheses, note that often there is not a one-to-one correspondence between these words; the Sanskrit words provided are those which tend to correspond more closely to the Chinese. For instance, the Chinese word for buddha-nature, *fóxing* 佛性, could actually be a translation for any of the following eight Sanskrit words: *buddha-dhātu*, *tathāgata-dhātu*, *buddhatva*, *gotra*, *dhātu*, *buddha-garbha*, *buddha-gotra*, or *buddha-vamśa* (Hirakawa 1997, 117), but only *buddha-dhātu* and *buddha-gotra* are listed here. For more on the methods and difficulties of establishing correlations between Chinese and Sanskrit words, see Hirakawa 1997, 3–19.
4. Just as establishing one-to-one correspondences between Sanskrit and Chinese words is often impossible, sometimes multiple Chinese and Sanskrit words could be correlated with English words. For instance, the word Buddhism could correspond to any of several Sanskrit and Chinese words or to none, depending on how it is used in context, and for this reason Sanskrit or Chinese equivalents are not provided for some headwords.
5. All headwords are nouns unless identified as adjectives (*adj.*) or verbs (*v.*), although many of the noun-headwords can function attributively as adjectives.
6. Comments in parentheses that follow the entry proper describe potential misunderstandings or alternate translations or definitions of the headword.

7. Titles of texts are not listed in this glossary. These have been included in the bibliography.
8. Glossary headwords are in semi-bold letterfaces the first time they appear in the translated text and each time they appear within glossary entries outside of their respective entries, except that the words Buddhism and Buddhist are not in semi-bold letterfaces when they appear in this glossary.

ACTIVE DHARMA (abhisamṣkāra; xiànxíng[fǎ] 現行[法]) In doctrines of the **Consciousness-only school**, a conditioned **dharma** whose properties are in operation, as opposed to a **seed**, from which an active dharma arises.

AFFLICTIVE HINDRANCE: See **two hindrances**.

BRAHMĀ (fàntiān 梵天) 1. In **Hinduism**, a major god who is a member of the trimūrti (“trinity”) and functions as the creator god. The other two members of the trimūrti, Viṣṇu and Śiva, function as the preserver and destroyer gods, respectively. 2. In Buddhist texts, a class of deities who occupy the heavens in the realms of form and formlessness.

BRAHMANISM (bōluóménjiào 波羅門教) The mainstream religious beliefs and practices in ancient India from about 1000 BCE (give or take two hundred years) through roughly the time of the Buddha, for which the *Vedas* are authoritative texts and members of the brahmin (priestly) social class officiate at religious rituals. Other forms of this mainstream Indian religious tradition, all of which take the *Vedas* as authoritative, are called Vedism (for the pre-Brahmanic phase) and **Hinduism** (for the phase beginning early in the Common Era and continuing to the present).

BUDDHA-NATURE (buddha-dhātu or buddha-gotra; fóxìng 佛性) 1. The potential to become a Buddha. 2. The positive qualities a being possesses that are the preconditions or distant causes for its eventual attainment of Buddhahood.

BUDDHISM (fójiào 佛教) 1. The body of doctrines and practices described in texts that are labeled by some community as Buddhist. Such texts (a) are generally attributed to a Buddha, usually Śākyamuni Buddha, or were spoken by one of his disciples and later validated by him, or (b) are directly based on or inspired by such texts. 2. A set of the shared beliefs and

practices of a given category of people labeled Buddhist. 3. The social institutions of Buddhists.

(Failure to distinguish between the different meanings of the word Buddhism and to specify the set of texts or the community in question leads to frequent confusion.)

BUDDHIST(S) (fójiàotú 佛教徒) Criteria for determining who is a Buddhist vary widely; some include: 1. Anyone who identifies himself as a Buddhist. 2. Anyone who has formally taken the three refuges (*sān guīyī* 皈依) in the Buddha, **Dharma**, and **Saṅgha**. (Educated Chinese monastics often use this criterion.) 3. Anyone who undertakes one or more religious practices considered Buddhist. 4. According to the famous Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa, anyone who, in filling out the registration form for admittance to a hospital, writes “Buddhist” on the dotted line for religious affiliation (Prebish 1999, 56).

(The criteria one uses to determine whether or not someone is Buddhist should perhaps vary depending on why this determination is necessary. For example, those who advocate posting the Ten Commandments on US government property seem to define Buddhists (and Hindus, atheists, etc.) narrowly, so that it appears that almost every religious person in America is either Jewish or Christian. In a similar vein, those in America who want to find diversity and multiculturalism everywhere seem to define Buddhists broadly.)

CAUSES AND CONDITIONS (hetu-pratyaya; yīnyuán 因緣) States and events leading to the production of a result, effect, or “fruit.” A cause is the direct or “internal” thing or condition leading to a fruit, whereas conditions are indirect or “external.” An example often heard in Taiwanese Buddhist circles is that if a tree is a “result,” then the seed from which it grew is the cause and the soil, sunlight, and rain that facilitated its growth are the conditions. A less common example is that if a piece of burnt wood is taken as a result, the previously existing unburnt firewood was the cause and the fire a condition.

COMPLETE PERFECTION SCHOOL (quánzhēn pài 全真派 or quánzhēn dào 全真道) A school of **Daoism** founded in the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) by Wáng Zhé 王喆 (1122?–1170?). Ordained a Daoist priest, Wáng Zhé nevertheless preached the unity of the three teachings (**Confucianism**, **Buddhism**, and **Daoism**) and had a particular affinity for Chán 禪 doc-

trines and practices. The Complete Perfection school established a celibate clergy whose practices included asceticism and purification of the mind.

CONDITIONED ARISING (pratītya-samutpāda; yuánqǐ 緣起 or yuánshēng 緣生) The doctrine that all conditioned **dharma**s or “phenomena” come into existence and cease to exist depending upon **causes and conditions**. No thing exists or occurs unless conditions permit it; phenomena exist interdependently, depending on other phenomena for their arising and cessation.

(Other translations include “dependent origination,” “conditioned genesis,” “dependent co-arising,” “causal dependence,” and “conditioned co-arising.”)

CONFUCIANISM (rújiā 儒家 or rújiào 儒教) 1. The teachings of Confucius and his disciples and others who consider themselves students of Confucian teachings. Defined narrowly, Confucianism could be limited to the actual teachings of Confucius; defined broadly, it could include the ideas in various ancient books associated with Confucius and with the writings of scholars such as Mencius (ca. 371–289 BCE), Xúnzǐ 荀子 (d. 215 BCE), and even Dǒng Zhòngshū 董仲舒 (ca. 179–104 BCE). Confucianism advocates a hierarchical society, well-defined social roles, and the virtues of filial piety and benevolence. 2. The institutions (cults, education and testing systems, etc.) established by private individuals as well as by various Chinese emperors starting from the Hàn 漢 dynasty that placed great emphasis on Confucian texts and teachers.

CONSCIOUSNESS-ONLY SCHOOL (wéishì zōng 唯識宗) See **Yogācāra**.

DAOISM (dàojiào 道教 or dàojiā 道家) 1. The philosophy developed in and inspired by pre-Common Era texts such as the *Dàodé jīng* 道德經 of Lǎozǐ 老子 and the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子. A theme common to many such texts is that a complex society is corrupting and that a return to simpler forms of life is purifying for the individual. 2. The religious texts, beliefs, practices, and movements that developed beginning in the late second century CE that drew on such texts. Such Daoist movements also produced new texts in which Lǎozǐ is deified. An important goal for these Daoists is the attainment of immortality or at least longevity.

DARK LEARNING (xuánxué 玄學) A philosophical movement associated with commentators such as Wáng Bì 王弼 (226–249) and Guō Xiàng 郭象 (d. 312). The movement had an affinity for the ideas of philosophical

Daoism and probed into questions such as the origin and nature of the world. For Wáng Bì, nonexistence (*wú* 無) is the source of all existence (*yǒu* 有), whereas for Guō Xiàng, nonexistence is a mere negation. Scholars of dark learning agree that verbal expression cannot adequately describe the reality or source of all things, which is labeled “darkness” or “mystery” (*xuán* 玄).

(Could also be translated “School of Mystery” or “studies of the abstruse.”)

DHARMA (fǎ 法) 1. (Dharma) The way things are; sometimes translated “law.” 2. (Dharma) The teachings of a Buddha that describe the way things are and which teach beings the wisest means of responding to it; sometimes translated “doctrine.” 3. (dharma) A member of a category or a category itself that is perceived as distinct from other categories. Various translated “thing,” “event,” “basic element,” “phenomenon,” “existent,” etc. Examples of dharmas from Tàixū 太虛, a prominent Chinese monk in the twentieth century, include the following: any thing that exists, any property of things that can be conceived, anything that can be imagined (including nonexistent things such as the hairs of a turtle or horns on a rabbit), the concept of nonexistence itself, etc. (Taixu 1970a). 4. (dharma) A primary existent from which everything else derives. Such a dharma resists further reduction. Schools of Buddhism had differing lists of these “primary elements.” 5. (dharma) An **object of perception** of the sixth sense organ, the intellect.

DHARMA-NATURE OF SUCHNESS (zhēnrú fǎxìng 真如法性) The unchanging way things are as perceived through the purified, undistorted perception of a Buddha; ultimate truth or reality.

EIGHTFOLD NOBLE PATH (āryāṣṭāṅgika-mārga; bāzhèngdào 八正道) The fourth of the Four Noble Truths; the concepts and practices the Buddha taught his disciples to carry out in order to escape from all suffering. The eight categories of this “path” include correct, perfected, or “right”: (1) view, (2) aspiration, (3) speech, (4) action, (5) livelihood, (6) effort, (7) mindfulness, and (8) concentration.

EMANATION BODY: See **three bodies**.

EMPTINESS (sūnyatā; kōngxìng 空性) 1. The condition of lacking something. What is lacking depends on context. In this book, emptiness generally signifies the lack of a substantial, unchanging, permanently non-

suffering **self** in individuals or the lack of **self-nature** in **dharma**s. Yet there are different referents to this definition of the word. For instance, according to the Chinese scholar-monk Yin-shun, Yogācārin's label ultimate reality (that is, the "perfected aspect" of reality [*yuánchéng shíxìng* 圓成實性]) "emptiness" not because it is in fact **empty**, but rather because this reality manifests when the **empty** nature of the constructed aspect of reality (*piànjì suǒzhí xìng* 遍計所執性) is perceived. Yin-shun also distinguishes another meaning of emptiness: for the **Tathāgatagarbha** school, emptiness means that one's pure mind or **buddha-nature** is **empty** of defilements (see Yin-shun 1995, 24–27). For a similar but slightly differing analysis of the meanings of emptiness in English, see Williams 1998 and Williams 2000, 131–66. 2. The lacking of something when regarded as a property of something else. 3. Ultimate reality or truth; a synonym of **Suchness**.

(Sometimes translated "voidness," but **emptiness** better indicates that "something is missing." Using the word voidness could lead people to conclude that Buddhism teaches that "nothing exists in any sense of the word 'exist' at all," which is not a Buddhist view.)

EMPTY 1. (*sūnya*; *kōng* 空) adj. Lacking something. See **emptiness**. 2. (*kōng[qù]* 空[去]) v. To perceive the **emptiness** of; to dissolve away conceptions of.

(In non-Buddhist English, the adjective **empty** means "containing nothing." In Buddhist English, the word often means something like "containing no substance or essence.")

EMPTY NATURE MERE NAME SYSTEM (*kōngxìng wéimíng xì* 空性唯名系) A term coined by Yin-shun (1906–2005) for the **Madhyamaka** school of thought in **Mahāyāna** Buddhism. Yin-shun believed that this school, which teaches that all **dharma**s are **empty** of **inherent nature**, expresses ultimate truth directly. In his opinion, other views that imply a certain **dharma** or **dharma**s possess **inherent nature** are only skillful means of the Buddha, designed to reach sentient beings who would otherwise be unreceptive to Buddhist teachings (Yin-shun 1998, 302–27).

(Compare with **False Imagination Mere Consciousness system** and **Truly Eternal Mere Mind system**.)

ENLIGHTENMENT (*kāiwù* 開悟 or *juéwù* 覺悟) 1. A mental event during which one perceives reality as it truly is and which transforms one's mind;

see entry 4.4. 2. The mental condition of a **noble one**. 3. Liberation from **saṃsāra**. 4. Attainment of Buddhahood.

(Also translated as “awakening.” This is a term that, due to its multiple meanings, leads to great confusion.)

FALSE IMAGINATION MERE CONSCIOUSNESS SYSTEM (xūwàng wéishì xì 虛望唯識系) A term coined by Yin-shun for the **Yogācāra** school of thought in **Mahāyāna** Buddhism. According to Yin-shun’s interpretation, the Buddha preached **sūtras** pertaining to this system as a skillful means to attract people who are unable to understand the difference between the doctrines that “all **dharma**s are **empty** of **inherent nature**” and that “nothing exists.” For more, see Yin-shun 1998, 307–15.

(Compare with **Empty Nature Mere Name system** and **Truly Eternal Mere Mind system**.)

FIVE HEINOUS CRIMES (wǔ nù 五逆) Five acts that destine one to be reborn in the deepest hell, the Hell of Unintermittent Torture, namely: (1) murdering one’s mother, (2) murdering one’s father, (3) murdering an arhat, (4) intentionally drawing a Buddha’s blood, and (5) causing a schism in the **Saṅgha**.

FOUR FRUITS (sì guǒ 四果) On the **Hīnayāna** Buddhist path to liberation from **saṃsāra**, the four levels of attainment of a **noble one**. Liberation occurs with the fourth fruit, arhatship.

FOUR KINDS OF BIRTH (catasro-yonaya; sìshēng 四生) Ancient Indian Buddhist way of classifying sentient beings based on the manner in which they were conceived to be born, namely (1) womb-born (tāishēng 胎生): born live from the mother’s body (examples: various mammals, hungry ghosts), (2) egg-born (luǎnshēng 卵生): hatched out of eggs (examples: various birds), (3) moisture born (shīshēng 濕生): born “oozing out” from the elements such as earth, etc. (examples: worms, bugs, butterflies), and (4) spontaneously-born (huàshēng 化生): born through metamorphosis, spontaneously (i.e., suddenly appearing, with all organs fully developed) through the power of **karma** from the previous life (examples: deities, hell-dwellers). Examples come from the *Treasury of Abhidharma*; for English, see Pruden 1988–1990, 380).

FOUR METHODS OF INDUCEMENT (catvāri saṃgraha-vastūni; sì shèfǎ 四攝法) Methods by which a bodhisattva wins the trust of others and is

thereby in a position to guide them to walk on the Buddhist path, namely: giving, speaking lovingly, acting beneficially, and intermingling.

FUNDAMENTAL (OR FOUNDATIONAL) BUDDHISM (gēnběn fójiào 根本佛教) A term coined by modern Japanese scholars, generally meaning one of the following: 1. Buddhism during the time when Śākyamun Buddha was alive. 2. Buddhism from the time of Śākyamuni Buddha until about thirty years after his passing away.

GREAT FUNCTIONING (dà yòng 大用) In a Buddhist context, the skillful means by which a bodhisattva leads sentient beings to liberation.

GREAT KALPA: See **kalpa**.

GROUP OF SIX BHIKṢUS (ṣaḍ-vargīka-bhikṣu; liùqún bǐqū 六群比丘) A group of six bhikṣus living during the Buddha's time, notorious for their undignified and base conduct. Sources differ as to the members of this group, so a definitive listing of their names cannot be provided.

HĪNAYĀNA (xiǎochéng or xiǎoshèng 小乘) A label used by Mahāyāna Buddhists to distinguish themselves from Buddhists of other schools or aspirations. In this book, the word **Nikāya** has generally been used in place of Hīnayāna. 1. A category of Buddhist school for which the ultimate objective is the attainment of arhatship rather than Buddhahood. 2. A category of Buddhist practitioner whose goal is the attainment of individual liberation from **saṃsāra** rather than the supreme Buddhahood.

The term Hīnayāna is, at least etymologically, a denigrative term used by Mahāyānists: *hīna* can mean “lesser,” “inferior,” “poor,” “little,” “defective,” “faulty,” “vile,” “bad,” “base,” “mean,” etc. (Monier-Williams 1899, 1296). Sometimes it is translated euphemistically as “Small Vehicle” based on its rendition in Chinese, but “small” in Chinese (*xiǎo* 小) is often denigrating as well (for example, *xiǎorén* 小人 means “petty or inferior person”).

Today, in circles in which interreligious respect and dialog are valued, Mahāyānists sometimes use the term Śrāvakayāna in place of Hīnayāna, which is for the most part equivalent to Hīnayāna in denotation (although Śrāvakayāna does not include the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and is still a term used by Mahāyānists rather than by the non-Mahāyānists it labels).

One pair of relatively politically correct terms used in Taiwan is Northern tradition or transmission (*běichuán* 北傳) for Mahāyāna, and

Southern tradition or transmission (*nánchuán* 南傳) for the Theravāda, the only surviving “Hīnayāna” school. These terms are acceptable if not confused with another set of terms used by some scholars for contemporary Buddhist traditions, namely: southern Buddhism for the Buddhism common in South and Southeast Asia, eastern Buddhism for that of East Asia, and northern Buddhism for that of Inner Asia. Some Mahāyānists claim that Hīnayāna should really only be used to describe those individual people (not entire schools) who seek individual liberation rather than liberation for all beings. According to this view, Theravāda Buddhists who nevertheless aspire to Buddhahood (such as those mentioned in Spiro 1970, 62–63) would not be labeled “Hīnayānists.”

Besides the term **Nikāya Buddhism**, other terms for early non-Mahāyāna Buddhism include **fundamental Buddhism**, “foundational Buddhism,” and “original Buddhism.” Since evidence increasingly suggests that historically, **Mahāyāna Buddhism** was generally if not always a minority movement within India, in a primarily Indian context non-Mahāyāna Buddhism has also been called “mainstream Buddhism.”

HINDUISM (yìndùjiào 印度教) The diverse body of mainstream religious beliefs and practices of India, which developed from **Brahmanism**. The majority of people in contemporary India and Bali (an island of Indonesia) are Hindus.

IDEALISM (wéixīn lùn 唯新論) In Western philosophy, the view that the physical word is in some sense mental or derivative of the mental.

IMMEASURABLE KALPA: See **kalpa**.

INHERENT NATURE: An alternate term for **self-nature**, definitions (1) and (2).

INTERMEDIATE STATE (antarā-bhava; zhōngyǒu 中有一) The state of existence of a being after death, said to last for a maximum of forty-nine days, during which it possesses a spirit-like body. Not all Buddhist schools accept the existence of the intermediate state: in contemporary times, whereas traditional Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists believe in it, Theravāda Buddhists deny the existence of such a state.

KALPA (jié 劫) A generic term for a period of time in ancient India. There are many kinds of kalpas, including small, medium, great, and “immeasurable” kalpas. Based on the description of kalpa given in entry 4.5 of this book, a short kalpa (antara-kalpa; xiǎojié 小劫) is 16,798,000 years, a

medium kalpa (also antara-kalpa; zhōngjié 中劫) 335,960,000 years, and a great kalpa (mahā-kalpa; dàjié 大劫) 1,343,840,000 years. And according to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, one immeasurable kalpa (asamkhyā kalpa; wúliàng jié 無量劫) is 10^{59} great kalpas, or $1,343,840 \times 10^{62}$ years (Pruden 1988–90, 479–80).

KARMA 1. (yè 業 or yèyīn 業因) Intentional action, activity, or behavior of body, speech, or mind. Depending on whether the activity is good or bad, it leads to karmic results that can be pleasant (karmic rewards or blessings) or unpleasant (karmic retribution). 2. (yè 業 or yèlì 業力) Also translated karmic energy or “karmic force.” The power produced as a result of actions or behavior that subsequently brings about pleasant or unpleasant consequences.

KARMIC ENERGY: See **karma**, definition (2).

KARMIC SEED (yèzhǒng 業種) Equivalent to **seed**.

KING YAMA (yama rāja; yánluó wáng 閻羅王) In popular Chinese belief, a king and judge of the dead who dispenses punishments to the recently deceased while they reside in a transitional, purgatory-like netherworld awaiting their next rebirth. According to orthodox Buddhism, a netherworld of this kind does not exist. For King Yama’s role according to Sheng Yen, see entry 2.6.

MADHYAMAKA (zhōngguān pài 中觀派) A school of thought in Indian Buddhism for which Nāgārjuna’s philosophy of **emptiness** is central.

MAHĀYĀNA (dàchéng or dàshèng 大乘, “Great Vehicle”) Forms of Buddhism in which the ultimate goal is the attainment of Buddhahood and which are characterized by the worship of great bodhisattvas who are not present in non-Mahāyāna Buddhist worship. The origins of the Mahāyāna are the subject of studies and theories too numerous to outline here. It was the Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism that were transmitted most successfully to East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) and to northern South Asia and Inner Asia (Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, parts of Russia and northern India).

MAHEŚVARA (dàzìzài tiān 大自在天) In Buddhist texts, a deity who is the ruler of a billion-world universe; another name for Śiva.

MOUNT SUMERU (xūmí shān 須彌山) In traditional Buddhist cosmology, a massive mountain in the middle of a world-disk. One world is

conceived of as an immense disk with Mt. Sumeru in the center, surrounded by seven mountain ranges interspersed with seven seas. Outside the seventh mountain range is the outermost sea, in which four large island-continents are located, one in each of the cardinal directions. Humans like us live on the southern island-continent of Jambudvīpa. According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Mt. Sumeru lies in the middle of a deep ocean and is a giant rectangular solid. The top half of the mountain that emerges from the ocean is cube-shaped and each side of this cube is 80,000 yojanas (or about 1.12 million kilometers) long. For more, see Sadakata 1997, 26–30.

NEO-CONFUCIANISM (xīn rújiā 新儒家; equivalent to lixué 理學, School of Principle) A general name for the Confucian movements during the Sòng 宋, Míng 明, and Qīng 清 dynasties. The most prominent feature of these movements was new developments in metaphysical theories.

NEW CONFUCIANISM (xiàndài xīnrújiā 現代新儒家) Also called “Contemporary **Neo-Confucianism**.” The philosophy of the New Confucians, the twentieth and twenty-first century Confucian thinkers who inherited or adopted the intellectual tradition of **Neo-Confucianism** but who also are also concerned with Western philosophical traditions. A brief description of the movement follows: “The New Confucian Movement was born in the 1920s. Its program has been to reclaim for Confucian thought a leading role in Chinese society, to rebuild the Confucian value system, and on the foundation of it to absorb and master, and finally amalgamate Western Learning, in order to pursue the modernization of Chinese culture and society.” (Citation from Bresciani 2001, iii–iv, which takes and translates this definition from Fang 1997, 453.) For more on New Confucianism, see Bresciani 2001 and Makeham 2003.

NIKĀYA: adj. A term used in this book to label more respectfully what **Mahāyāna** texts traditionally called **Hīnayāna**. Nikāya here is used as an adjective and describes forms of Buddhism which are centered on those early **sūtras** which were organized into collections called nikāyas or āgamas. Translating **Hīnayāna** “Nikāya Buddhism” is becoming increasingly common due to concerns about offending people. See for example Strong 1995, 86–87, and Pittman 2001, 317.

NIRVĀṆA (nièpán 涅槃) A state of existence in which a being is no longer subject to birth or death. According to many Buddhist **scriptures**,

attainment of or “entry” into this state is the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice. Over the centuries, different schools of Buddhism have produced numerous theories, interpretations, and even classifications of different kinds of nirvāṇa. For this book, the following three kinds of nirvāṇa are most relevant: 1. “Nirvāṇa with remainder” (sopādiśeṣa-nirvāṇa; yǒuyú nièpán 有餘涅槃): According to early Buddhist **scriptures**, the state of a being who is fully liberated from birth and death but who is still physically alive. 2. “Nirvāṇa without remainder” (anupādiśeṣa-nirvāṇa; wúyú nièpán 無餘涅槃): According to early Buddhist **scriptures**, the postmortem state of a being who is fully liberated from birth and death; a synonym for **parinirvāṇa** as used in this book. 3. “Non-abiding nirvāṇa” (apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa; wúzhùchù nièpán 無住處涅槃): According to certain **Mahāyāna** commentaries, either the state of an advanced bodhisattva, or the state of a Buddha.

NOBLE (ārya; shèng 聖) adj. Of or pertaining to a **noble one** or to the stages of practice of a noble one. For example, a noble bodhisattva is someone who has made bodhisattva vows and has reached an advanced level of practice.

NOBLE ONE (ārya; shèngrén 聖人) A Buddhist “saint,” spoken of in contrast to the **ordinary person**. In early Buddhism, anyone who has attained one of the **four fruits** qualifies as a noble one, while in **Mahāyāna** Buddhism, those who have entered the first ground, the forty-first of the fifty-two stages to Buddhahood, qualify as noble ones. But note that in the Tiāntái 天台 school’s formulation of the bodhisattva path according to the Perfect Teachings, the stage when one is considered a noble one differs (see entry 4.4).

(In a Chinese Buddhist context, also translated “sage.”)

NOETIC HINDRANCES: See **two hindrances**.

OBJECT OF PERCEPTION 1. The content of a perception; this term can translate any of several Chinese Buddhist terms. 2. (xiàngfēn 相分) A technical term for the **Consciousness-only school** of Buddhism, meaning the reflected image of the external world in one’s mind, one of the four aspects of perception.

ORDINARY PERSON (prthag-jana; fánfū 凡夫) Someone who is not a **noble one**.

(Also translated “worldling.” An ordinary person may have had one or more **enlightenment** experiences (see entry 4.4). Therefore, it can be misleading to translate *fán* 凡 as “unenlightened” and **noble one** (*shèng* 聖) as “enlightened.”)

OUTER PATHS (*wàidào* 外道) Non-Buddhist religions. In his discourses, Sheng Yen sometimes explains this term as meaning [religions or doctrines that] “seek for the Way/path (*dào* 道) outside (*wài* 外) of the mind,” such as through a God or gods, etc.

OUTER-PATH ASCETICS or **ADHERENTS** (*tīrthika*; *wàidào* 外道) Practitioners of **outer paths**. As it appears in Buddhist **sūtras**, this term generally refers to non-Buddhist religious ascetics in ancient India.

(Also translated “non-Buddhist ascetics.”)

PARINIRVĀṆA (*bān nièpán* 般涅槃 or *yuánjí* 圓寂) While in Sanskrit this word has several possible meanings, in accordance with the word’s traditional use in Buddhist English, in this book *parinirvāṇa* refers specifically to the postmortem state of a being who is not subject to rebirth.

PERFUME (*vāsanā*; *xūn* 薰) v. In Consciousness-only theory, to create or to influence the growth of **seeds** through the actions of body, speech, or mind. Good actions either create or facilitate the growth of **seeds** that will mature into good **dharmas**, and vice-versa for bad actions.

PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM (*yuánsǐ fójiào* 原始佛教) A term coined by Japanese scholars meaning one of the following: 1. The Buddhism existing from the historical Buddha’s first teaching until one to two hundred years after his passing away. 2. Buddhism as it existed between the periods of **fundamental Buddhism** and **sectarian Buddhism**.

(Also translated “early Buddhism” or “original Buddhism.”)

PURE ABODES (*jìngjū tiān* 淨居天) The top five heavens in the **realm of form**, also called heavens of the pure. See appendix A.

PURE TALK (*qīngtán* 清談) A kind of witty, philosophical conversation and debate in third and fourth century China, in which semantic and metaphysical topics were addressed. **Dark learning** was frequently one of those topics.

REALMS OF SENSE DESIRE, FORM, and FORMLESSNESS: See **three realms**.

RECORDED SAYINGS (*yǔlù* 語錄) A genre of Chinese literature in which the verbal teachings, or often just pithy statements from the teachings,

of a teacher are recorded. The expression *yǔlù* was coined by Chán 禪 Buddhists but works of famous teachers that are written in a similar style appeared as early as the *Analects of Confucius*.

(Also translated “discourse records.”)

REWARD BODY See **three bodies**.

SAMŚĀRA (lúnhuí 輪迴 or shēngsǐ 生死) 1. The continuous cycle from birth to death to rebirth, etc. which all unliberated beings are subject to undergo. Saṃsāra ends when a being achieves liberation and thus enters into **nirvāṇa**, a peaceful state of no birth and no death. 2. The conditioned world in which beings undergoing cycles of birth and death dwell, in which all phenomena are characterized by the “three marks” of impermanence, suffering, and not-self.

SAṄGHA 1. (Saṅgha) (sēngqié 僧伽) A collective term for all members of the Buddhist clergy. 2. (saṅgha) (sēngqié 僧伽 or sēngtuán 僧團) A community of monastics. 3. (saṅgha) In Western Buddhism, sometimes used to mean a community of (generally lay) Buddhist practitioners. 4. (saṅgha) (adj.) of or pertaining to a saṅgha or the Saṅgha.

SCRIPTURES (BUDDHIST) (fódiǎn 佛典; sometimes jīngdiǎn 經典 in a sense) Buddhist writings that have been included in a Buddhist canon, including **sūtras**, vinayas, treatises, etc. Also see entry 2.12, n. 39.

(Some translators reserve the word **scripture** to translate **sūtra**.)

SECTARIAN BUDDHISM (bùpài fójiào 部派佛教) A term coined by Japanese scholars, referring to Buddhism in the period after the **Saṅgha** began to divide into different sects, from the end of the period of **primitive Buddhism** until the beginning of the Common Era. This period was characterized by many competing sects with different understandings of abhidharma (Buddhist philosophy).

(Sometimes called abhidharma Buddhism.)

SEED (bīja; zhǒngzǐ 種子) In Consciousness-only doctrines, a dormant **dharma** in the eighth consciousness. A seed is the cause for the arising of an **active dharma**.

SELF (ātman or puruṣa; wǒ 我) As a Buddhist technical term, something that is unchanging, able to be fully controlled, and unsusceptible to suffering. Most schools of Buddhism deny that anything is self and advocate the doctrine of no-self or anātman.

(Sometimes translated either “soul” or “ego,” both of which have multiple explanations in theology or psychology, and none of which correspond exactly to the Buddhist notion of *ātman*. “Self” with a capital *S* is a good translation for *ātman*, and in some ways more clear, but it obscures an important point: according to Buddhism, people instinctively believe they have a “self,” whether or not they formally hold this doctrine. So we want the English for *ātman* to be something that most English-speaking people believe they possess, and “self” fulfills this criterion better than “Self.” Of course, we pay a price for this lower-case translation: people confuse the Buddhist *ātman* with the Freudian ego, etc.

Some people might prefer to just use the word *ātman* outright, without translation. This is also problematic: at times, the English word “self” (or the Chinese word *wǒ* 我) actually translates a different but similar Sanskrit word such as *puruṣa*.)

SELF-NATURE (*svabhāva*; zìxìng 自性) 1. The intrinsic, inherent, or independent existence of things, or the property of things that makes them not dependent upon the conceptualizing activity of the mind or on **conditioned arising**. According to the **Madhyamaka** conception of self-nature, if something has self-nature, it is permanent and immutable, beyond causality. The **Madhyamaka** concept of **emptiness** entails that nothing has self-nature, not even the most basic components of experience. 2. Buddhist schools such as the Sarvāstivāda and **Yogācāra** affirmed that some things do have self-nature (*svabhāva*). But in this sense of the word, they mean that such things are not dependent on conceptual construction and are hence “irreducible,” i.e., cannot be analyzed into component parts. The Madhyamakas, in contrast, believe that if something is irreducible then it must be uncaused, and that it therefore could not exist. 3. A synonym for **buddha-nature**, which depending on one’s school of thought may or may not be equivalent to **emptiness**.

(Also translated “inherent nature” or “own nature.”)

SPIRITUAL POWERS (*abhijñā*; shéntōng 神通) In Chinese translation, literally “spiritual penetrations”; see entry 3.13.

SPONTANEOUS BIRTH: See **four kinds of birth**. (Also translated “apparent birth.”)

SUCHNESS (*tathatā*; zhēnrú 真如) The unchanging, underlying reality behind phenomenal appearances. Different Buddhist texts contain dif-

fering conceptions of Suchness: for example, for some it is the central Buddhist principle of **conditioned arising**, and for others it is an ineffable essence that undergirds everything else.

(Sometimes translated “Thusness.”)

SŪTRA (jīng 經; Pali: sutta) A category of Buddhist texts or a text belonging to this category, usually containing the teachings of a Buddha, generally in the form of a discourse in which the location and audience are described at the beginning and the audience’s reaction described at the end. Other sūtras were spoken by disciples of a Buddha and later validated by him (such as several suttas in the *Majjhima Nikāya*), by a bodhisattva (such as the *Heart Sūtra*), or by a Buddhist master (such as the *Platform Sūtra*).

(Note that not all texts which we label **sūtras** actually have the word **sūtra** in a Sanskrit title. For example the Sanskrit edition of the *Heart Sūtra* is simply titled *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*, and the *Platform Sūtra* was composed in Chinese and lacks a Sanskrit version. Furthermore, some Sanskrit vinaya texts have the word **sūtra** in their titles but are not **sūtras** in the sense described here, that is, a transcription of a purported discourse.)

TAKE REFUGE (śaraṇa; guīyī 皈依) v. To take the three refuges in the Three Jewels (Buddha, **Dharma**, and **Śaṅgha**). That is, to seek safety in the Three Jewels and take them as one’s guide to leave behind suffering; see entry 3.3.

TATHĀGATAGARBHA (rúláizàng 如來藏, “womb or matrix of the thus-come one”) 1. According to some **Mahāyāna scriptures**, a pure, immutable essence present in each sentient being that provides the basis for his or her eventual attainment of Buddhahood. 2. A Buddhist school of thought centered on concepts of the Tathāgatagarbha.

TEN EVIL DEEDS (daśākuśala-karmāni; shí è 十惡) Ten deeds or behaviors which lead one to rebirths in unpleasant destinies, namely: (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) divisive speech, (6) harsh speech, (7) frivolous speech, (8) greed, (9) hatred, and (10) deviant view. Abstention from these ten is called the ten good deeds; see entry 1.6.

THREE BODIES (tri-kāya; sānshēn 三身) There exist a plethora of terms and explanations for the various “bodies” of a Buddha; a simplified explanation common in contemporary Taiwan follows. There are three kinds of

“bodies of a Buddha”: (1) **Dharma** body (dharma-kāya; fǎshēn 法身), a synonym for ultimate reality or truth personified, equivalent to **Suchness**, **emptiness**, or **Tathāgatagarbha**; (2) reward body (saṃbhoga-kāya; bàoshēn 報身), a Buddha’s magnificent, wonderful body obtained as karmic recompense for his immense virtue, equipped with all the standard marks of a Buddha and often living in a pure land (examples: Amitābha, Medicine Buddha); and (3) emanation body (nirmāṇa-kāya; huàshēn 化身), a Buddha’s physical body that manifests where it can be of most benefit to sentient beings (example: Śākyamuni).

THREE REALMS (trai dhātuka; sānjiè 三界) The realm of sense-desire (kāma-dhātu or kāma-loka; yùjiè 欲界), the realm of form (rūpa-dhātu or rūpa-loka; sèjiè 色界), and the realm of formlessness (arūpa-dhātu or arūpa-loka; wúsèjiè 無色界). Each realm contains within it a number of destinies or “planes of existence,” as displayed in appendix A. The three realms are also understood to correspond to the different states of mind characteristic of the beings in each realm.

THREE TIMES (tri-kāla; sānshí 三時) The past, present, and future.

THREE VEHICLES (trīṇi yānāni; sānchéng or sānshèng 三乘) According to **Mahāyāna scriptures**, the three sets of teachings or means of practice appropriate to people of three different capacities. A simplified, formulaic explanation of the three vehicles according to Chinese **Mahāyāna** Buddhists follows: (1) The śrāvaka vehicle (śrāvakayāna; shēngwén chéng 聲聞乘, “vehicle of the hearers”), the teachings of the Buddha centered around the Four Noble Truths and whose objective is arhatship. (2) The pratyekabuddha vehicle (pratyekabuddhayāna; yuánjué chéng 緣覺乘, “vehicle of those enlightened by [contemplating] conditions,” also called the dújué chéng 獨覺乘, “vehicle of those enlightened alone”), the practices of one destined to become a pratyekabuddha or “solitary buddha,” someone who achieves **enlightenment** on his own, without assistance from a Buddha, and who lives isolated from human society. (3) The bodhisattva vehicle (bodhisattvayāna; púsà chéng 菩薩乘), the teachings of the Buddha centered on development of the six perfections and whose aim is the achievement of Buddhahood. The first two vehicles are considered **Nikāya** vehicles and the third vehicle equivalent to the **Mahāyāna**.

TRULY ETERNAL MERE MIND SYSTEM (zhēnrú wéixīn xì 真如唯心系) A term coined by Yin-shun for the **Tathāgatagarbha** school of thought in

Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to Yin-shun, **Tathāgatagarbha** teachings are the Buddha's skillful means of attracting theists and other non-Buddhists into the Buddhist fold. Yin-shun advocated the view that in actuality, unknown to many adherents of this school, the **Tathāgatagarbha** is none other than **emptiness** as understood by the **Madhyamaka** school (Yin-shun 1998, 315–23).

(Compare with **Empty Nature Mere Name system** and **False Imagination Mere Consciousness system**.)

TÙNÀ (吐納) A Daoist breathing exercise to expel stale air/energies and inhale fresh air/energies.

TWO HINDRANCES (èrzàng 二障) According to the terminology of the **Consciousness-only school**, two obstacles to spiritual practice, namely: (1) afflictive hindrances (*kleśa-āvaraṇa*; fánnǎo zhàng 煩惱障), afflictions stemming from clinging to **self** which hinder one's realization of **nirvāṇa** and lead to involuntary rebirth within the **three realms**, and (2) noetic hindrances (*jñeya-āvaraṇa*; suǒzhī zhàng 所知障), misperceptions of reality stemming from clinging to one's previous understandings of **Dharma**, which hinder one from achieving full omniscience or Buddhahood.

UNIVERSE OF TRIBULATION (sahā-lokadhātu; suōpó shìjiè 娑婆世界) The billion-world universe we inhabit, which is also the universe in which Śākyamuni Buddha came to preach the **Dharma**; see entry 4.6.

(We have translated this term as **Universe of Tribulation** in order to capture the sense that *sahā* refers to a place where great suffering must be endured. It can also be translated "Sahā World.")

YĪN-YÁNG (陰陽) An indigenous Chinese concept. 1. The two complementary, opposite, and relative modes of existence for any phenomenon. These two modes can be described with lists of correlated qualities: *yīn* is passive, feminine, dark, and still, whereas *yáng* is active, masculine, bright, and moving. Chinese have used and continue to use *yīn* and *yáng* to explain phenomenon in many fields of knowledge, including astrology, divination, geomancy, agriculture, medicine, and religion. *Yīn* and *yáng* are relative: any phenomenon is both *yīn* and *yáng* to some degree, but when paired with something else, one item may be called *yīn* and the other *yáng*. So the actual denotations of *yīn* and *yáng* are relational and vary greatly according to context. For instance, in Chinese medicine we can say that *qì* 氣 (energy) is *yáng* and blood is *yīn*, that the back of the body is *yáng* whereas

the front in *yīn*, and that the parts of the body above the waist are *yáng* whereas those below the waist are *yīn*. We cannot, however, label the chest in isolation: we can only say that relative to the back, the chest is *yīn*, but that relative to the thighs it is *yáng*. 2. The two primordial energies in the universe from which all phenomena evolved.

YOGĀCĀRA (yúqiéxíng pài 瑜伽行派) A school of thought within Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, according to which the Buddha's teaching that all **dharma**s are **empty** is a skillful means (a provisional tactic for guiding students), whereas in truth the **dharma** of consciousness is not **empty** (because it possesses **inherent nature**). Yogācāra as it evolved in China is sometimes called the **Consciousness-only school**.

(Other Sanskrit names that point to the same basic set of ideas as Yogācāra include Vijñānavāda and Cittamātra.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a list of all literature cited by either the author or translator, as well as recommended English translations of some of the non-English works cited. This list is by no means a complete record of all works consulted in the writing, annotation, and translation of this book. Standard reference works such as dictionaries, for instance, are not listed unless they have been explicitly cited. When Sheng Yen cites a modern Chinese book for which an English version could be found, the translator has listed the English version in place of the Chinese and has adjusted citations to correspond to the English version. For the method of citing texts from the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (T) and the *Xùzàngjīng* (XZJ), see page 17.

CLASSICAL ASIAN WORKS

Works are listed alphabetically according to title given in the text. For some of the works, an abbreviated title has been given. For example, the title of the *Jīn'gāng bānrùo bōluómì jīng* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 (Diamond sūtra on the perfection of wisdom) has been shortened to the name by which it is frequently referred to in East Asia, the *Jīn'gāng jīng* (Diamond sūtra). An asterisk appears before assumptive Sanskrit titles, which were explained on page 16.

Acts of the Buddha (S. *buddhacarita*)

Fó suǒxíng zàn 佛所行讚, T 192: 4.1–54.

Translation by Beal listed below.

A biography of the Buddha in verse.

Āgamas (or Āgama Sūtras)

Listed according to their Chinese names: *Chang ahan* (*cháng āhán* 長阿含), *Za ahan* (*zá āhán* 雜阿含), *Zengyi ahan* (*zēngyī āhán* 增一阿含), and *Zhong ahan* (*zhōng āhán* 中阿含).

Amitābha Sūtra (S. sukhāvatīvyūha)

Āmítuó jīng 阿彌陀經, T 366: 12.346–348.

Translated in Gómez 1996 and titled the *Shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*. Another translation, titled the *Smaller Sutra on Amitayus*, is available in Inagaki 1995. There exists a different, longer sūtra which in Sanskrit has the same title as this sūtra.

Analects of Confucius

Lúnyǔ 論語. Attributed to Kǒng Qiū 孔丘 (Confucius, 552?–479 BCE)

Translation by Ames and Rosemont listed below.

Probably compiled in the third century BCE, this work consists of conversations between Confucius and his disciples.

Anguttara Nikāya (a collection of several thousand short Pali suttas)

Translation by Lee and Hare listed below.

Arising of the World, Sūtra on the

Qǐ shì jīng 起世經, T 24: 1.310–365.

Avatamsaka Sūtra, also called the Flower Ornament Sūtra or Flower Adornment Sūtra

Huáyán jīng 華嚴經, T 279: 10.1–444.

Translation by Cleary listed below.

Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith, Treatise on the

Dàshèng qǐxìn lùn 大乘起信論, T 1666: 32.575–583.

Translation by Hakeda listed below.

Brahmā's Net Sūtra

Fǎnwǎng jīng 梵網經, T 1484: 24.997–1010.

Translation by Sūtra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada listed below.

Chang ahan (S. dīrghāgama)

Cháng āhán jīng 長阿含經, T 1: 1.1–149.

A collection of thirty sūtras, now extant mainly in Chinese translation.

*Chronicle of the World Sūtra**Shiji jing* 世記經 [contained in the *Chang ahan*, scrolls 18–22]

T 1: 1.114–149.

Classic of Changes (also titled *I Ching*, or *Zhōuyi*)*Yi jing* 易經.

Translation by Lynn listed below.

A manual for divination and repository of ancient Chinese philosophical concepts, probably composed in different sections over many centuries. It may have reached something approaching its current form around the third century BCE.

Classic of Documents (also titled *Classic of History* or *Book of Historical Documents*)*Shū jing* 書經.

Translation by Legge listed below.

The oldest Chinese historiographical work, containing documents that purport to date from the third millennium BCE until 630 BCE. Tradition says that Confucius (552?–479 BCE) compiled and edited this work, but evidence suggests that editors after Confucius wrote some of the introductions to the documents within the work.

Compendium of the Mahāyāna (S. *mahāyāna-sāmparigraha*)*Shè dàshèng lùn* 攝大乘論, T 1593: 31.112–132.

Translation by Keenan listed below.

*Compendium of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Precepts**Genběn sàpóduōbù lǚshè* 根本薩婆多部律攝, T 1458: 24.525–617.*Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs**Fózǔ tǒngjì* 佛祖統紀, T 2035: 49.129–475.*Complete Enlightenment, Sūtra of**Yuánjué jing* 圓覺經, T 842: 17.913–922.

Translation in Sheng Yen 1997, listed below.

May have originally been composed in Chinese.

*Contemplation of the Mind Ground, Sūtra on the**Dàshèng běnshèng xīndìguān jing* 大乘本心心地觀經, T 159: 3.291–331.

Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, Sūtra on the
(S. **amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*)

Guān wúliàng shòufó jīng 觀無量壽佛經, T 365: 12.340–346.

Translated in Inagaki 1995 and titled the *Sutra on Contemplation of Amitayus*, listed below.

May have originally been composed in Chinese.

Daloutan Sūtra

Dàlútàn jīng 大樓炭經, T 23: 1.277–309.

Deeds of Bodhisattvas as Necklaces of Gems, Sūtra on the

Púsà yīngluò běnyè jīng 菩薩瓔珞本業經, T 1485: 24.1010–1023.

Diamond Sūtra (S. *vajracchedika-sūtra*)

Jīn'gāng jīng 金剛經, T 235: 8.748–752.

Dīgha Nikāya

Translation by Walshe listed below.

A collection of thirty-four Pali suttas.

Divine Messengers Sūtra

Tiānshǐ jīng 天使經 [contained in the *Zhong ahan*, scroll 12]

T 26: 1.503–506.

Establishment of Consciousness-Only, Treatise on the

Chéng wéishì lùn 成唯識論, T 1585: 31.1–60.

Translation by Cook listed below.

Establishment of the Truth (S. *satyasiddhi-śāstra*)

Chéngshí lùn 成實論, T 1646: 32.239–373.

Explanations of Simple and Compound Graphs

Shuōwén jiězì 說文解字. By Xǔ Shèn 許慎, written ca. 100 CE.

Forty-Two Sections, Sūtra in

Sìshíèr zhāng jīng 四十二章經, T 784: 17.722–724.

Translation by Sharf listed below.

Great Extended and Universal Great Collection Sūtra

(S. *mahā-saṃnipāta-sūtra*)

Dà fāngděng dàjī jīng 大方等大集經, T 397: 13.1–407.

Guide to the Meaning of the Three Virtuous Properties [of Nirvāṇa]

Sān dé zhǐguī 三德指歸, XZJ 662: 37.308–626.

Journey to the West

Xī yóu jì 西遊記. By Wú Chéng'ēn 吳承恩 (?–1582).

Translation by Yu listed below.

Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra (S. *pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*)

Móhē bānrúo bōluómì jīng 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, T 223: 8.217–424.

Also frequently called the *Dàpǐn bānrúo jīng* 大品般若經.

Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, The

Wénxīn diāolóng 文心雕龍. By Liú Xié 劉勰, late fifth/early sixth century.

Translation by Shih listed below.

Lotus Sūtra (S. *saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*)

Fáhuá jīng 法華經, T 262: 9.1–62.

Translation by Watson listed below.

**Mahāprajñāparamitā Sūtra*

Dà bānrúo bōluómìduō jīng 大般若波羅蜜多經, T 220: vols. 5–7.

Majjhima Nikāya (a collection of 152 Pali suttas)

Translation by Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi listed below.

Mencius

Mèngzǐ 孟軻. Attributed to Mèng Kē 孟軻 (Mencius, fl. 4th c. BCE)

Translation by Legge listed below.

Monastic Code in Five Divisions (S. *mahīśāsaka-vinaya*)

Wǔ fēn lǜ 五分律, T 1421: 22.1–194.

Monastic Code in Four Divisions (S. *dharmaguptaka-vinaya*)

Sì fēn lǜ 四分律, T 1428: 22.567–1014.

Monastic Code in Ten Recitations (S. *sarvāstivāda-vinaya*)

Shí sòng lǜ 十誦律, T 1435: 23.1–470.

Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda (S. *mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*)

Gēnběn shuōyīqièyǒu bù pīnàiyé 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, T 14+2:

23.627–905.

Monastic Code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, Miscellaneous Matters

(S. *mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu*)

Gēnběn shuōyīqièyǒu bù pīnàiyé záshì 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事,

T 1451: 24.207–414.

Parinirvāṇa Sūtra (S. *mahā-parinirvāṇa-sūtra*)
Dà bānnièpán jīng 大般涅槃經, T 374: 12.365–603.

Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch
Liúzǔ tánjīng 六祖壇經, T 2008: 48.345–365.
 Translation by McRae listed below.

Precious Mirror of the Lotus School of Mount Lu
Lúshān liánzōng bǎojiàn 廬山蓮宗寶鑑, T 1973: 47.302–354.

Primordial Vows of Earth Treasury Bodhisattva, Sūtra on the
Dizàng púsà běnyuàn jīng 地藏菩薩本願經, T 412: 13.777–790.
 Translation by Heng-ching, et. al., listed below.

Prolegomenon to the Collected Explanations on the Source of Chan
Chányuán zhū quán jí dūxù 禪源諸詮集都序, T 2015: 48.397–413.

Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Dabui Pujue
Dabui pǔjué chánshī yǔlù 大慧普覺禪師語錄, T 1998A: 47.811–942.

Samyutta Nikāya (a grouped collection of Pali suttas)
 Translation by Bodhi listed below.

Sīṅgālaka Sūtra
Shànshēng zǐ jīng 善生子經, T 17: 1.252–255.

Summary of the Five Lamps
Wǔ dēng huìyuán 五燈會元, XZJ 1565: 80.28–442.

Summary Verses and Origin Stories of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School (S. *mūlasarvāstivāda-nidānamāṭṛkā*)
Gēběn shuōyīqīyòu bù nítuó nà mùdéjiā 根本說一切有部尼陀那目得迦,
 T 1452: 24.415–455.

**Śūraṅgama Sūtra*
Léngyán jīng 楞嚴經, T 945: 19.105–155.
 Translation by Luk listed below.

Tales of the Water Margin
Shuǐhú zhuàn 水滸傳.
 Translation by Buck listed below.

“Tattvārtha” chapter

Yúqié zhēnshí yì pīn 瑜伽真實義品 [in scroll 36 of the *Yogācārabhūmi Treatise*], T 1579: 30.486–491.

Translation by Willis listed below.

Ten Grounds, Treatise on the (S. *daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra*)

Shìdì lùn 十地論, T 1522: 26.123–203.

Treasury of Abhidharma (S. *abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*)

Āpídámó jùshè lùn 阿毘達磨俱舍論, T 1558: 29.1–159.

Translation by Pruden, of a French translation of a Sanskrit edition of this treatise, listed below.

**Vebhalinga Sūtra*

Bēipólíngqī jīng 鞞婆陵耆經 [contained in the *Zhong ahan*, scroll 12]

T 26: 1.499–503.

Vimalakīrti Sūtra (S. *vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*)

Wéimójié suǒshuō jīng 維摩詰所說經, T 475: 14.537–557.

Translation by Watson listed below.

[*Yogācāra*] *Bodhisattva Precepts*

[*Yúqié*] *púsà jièběn* [瑜伽]菩薩戒本, T 1501: 24.1110–1115.

Yogācārabhūmi Treatise

Yúqiéshī dì lùn 瑜伽師地論, T 1579: 30.279–882.

Za ahan (S. *saṃyuktāgama*)

Zá āhán jīng 雜阿含經, T 99: 2.1–373.

A grouped collection of sūtras, now fully extant only in Chinese.

Zengyi ahan (S. *ekottarikāgama*)

Zēngyī āhán jīng 增一阿含經, T 125: 2.549–830.

A grouped collection of sūtras, now fully extant only in Chinese.

Zhong ahan (S. *madhyamāgama*)

Zhōng āhán jīng 中阿含經, T 26: 1.421–809.

A collection of 222 sūtras, now extant mainly in Chinese translation.

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CHARACTER LIST

Most of the following terms are Mandarin Chinese words that are romanized according to the Hanyu Pinyin system. Simplified Han characters, if they differ from the traditional characters, are provided in parentheses after the traditional forms. Japanese terms are indicated by the word “Japanese” in parenthesis after the characters. The terms are listed in strict alphabetical order, with the names of individuals, schools of Buddhism, geographic locations, and Chinese dynasties and reign periods capitalized.

PINYIN & BRIEF TRANSLATION

Āmítuófó (Amitābha Buddha)

Ān and Shǐ [Rebellion of]

Ān Lùshān (a Chinese general)

āshélí (master)

Bái Lètiān (a Chinese writer)

Bantetsugyū Rōshi (a Zen master)

běntǐ (fundamental substance)

biànwén (transformation text)

bǐqiū (monk)

bǐqiūní (nun)

HAN CHARACTERS

阿彌陀佛 (阿弥陀佛)

安史[之亂] (安史[之乱])

安祿山

阿闍黎 (阿闍黎)

白樂天 (白乐天)

伴鉄牛老師 (Japanese)

本體 (本体)

變文 (变文)

比丘

比丘尼

Bùdài Héshàng (a Chinese monk)	布袋和尚
Cài Yuánpéi (a Chinese scholar)	蔡元培
cānchán (to practice chán, esp. huàtóu)	參禪 (参禅)
Cáodòng (a lineage of Chán)	曹洞
chán (meditation; a school of Buddhism)	禪 (禅)
chánà (dhyāna)	禪那 (禅那)
chánshī (meditation master)	禪師 (禅师)
chánzōng (Chán school)	禪宗 (禅宗)
Chaóyuán (a Taiwanese monastery)	朝元
Chén (a Chinese dynasty)	陳 (陈)
chéngshí lùn (<i>Establishment of the Truth</i> treatise)	成實論 (成实论)
chéngwéishì lùn (<i>Treatise on the Establishment of Consciousness-Only</i>)	成唯識論 (成唯识论)
chūshìjiān dìng (supramundane absorption)	出世間定 (出世间定)
chūshìjiān shàng shàng chán (supramundane, supreme concentration)	出世間上上禪 (出世间上上禅)
cíbēi zhǔyì (doctrine of kindness and compassion)	慈悲主義 (慈悲主义)
Dàjiàn (a reign period of the Chén dynasty)	大建
Dānxiá (a Chinese monk)	丹霞
Dào'ān (a Chinese monk)	道安
Dàoxuān (a Chinese monk)	道宣
dàqiān shìjiè (billion-world universe)	大千世界
dàshèng (great vehicle; Mahāyāna)	大乘
dàshì (great person; mahāsattva)	大士

Dàtóng (a Chinese city)	大同
Dàtōng Chánshī (Great Penetrating Dhyāna Master)	大通禪師 (大通禪師)
dà yòng xiàn qián (manifestation of Great Functioning)	大用現前 (大用現前)
Dèng Xī (a Chinese philosopher)	鄧析 (鄧析)
dìng (concentration; absorption)	定
Dìxián (a Chinese monk)	諦閑 (諦閑)
Dìzàng (a bodhisattva)	地藏
dìzǐ (disciple)	弟子
Dōngchū (a master of Sheng Yen)	東初 (东初)
Dūnhuáng (a Chinese city)	敦煌
dūnlún (deepen the socially prescribed web of relations)	敦倫 (敦伦)
Fǎfǎng (a Chinese monk)	法舫
fākōng (emptiness of phenomena)	法空
Fāng Dōngměi (a Chinese philosopher)	方東美 (方东美)
fàng yàn kǒu (Releasing [hungry ghosts which have] Burning Mouths)	放焰口 (放焰口)
fǎnqiè (a method to show pronunciation of Chinese characters)	反切
fǎshī (Dharma master)	法師 (法師)
Fǎxiǎn (a Chinese monk)	法顯 (法显)
Fǎxiàng (a Buddhist school)	法相
fǎyǎnjìng (pure Dharma-eye)	法眼淨 (法眼净)
Fǎzàng (a Chinese monk)	法藏
fǎzhí (attachment to dharmas)	法執 (法执)
fēikōng fēiyǒu (neither emptiness nor inherent existence)	非空非有

fēnbié fánnǎo zhàng (discriminative afflictive hindrances)	分別煩惱障 (分別烦恼障)
fēnbié suǒzhī zhàng (discriminative noetic hindrances)	分別所知障
Féng Dào (a Chinese statesman)	馮道 (冯道)
Fēnggān (a Chinese monk)	豐干 (丰干)
fúlù (talismans and registers)	符籙 (符箓)
gǎn (stimulate or arouse)	感
Gāoxióng (a county in Taiwan)	高雄
Gàozi (a Chinese philosopher)	告子
gōng'àn (a method of Chán practice)	公案
Guānyīn (a bodhisattva)	觀音 (观音)
guǎrén ("person of little virtue"; emperor)	寡人
guǐ (ghost)	鬼
Guīzōng (a Chinese monk)	歸宗 (归宗)
Guō Zǐyí (a Chinese general)	郭子儀 (郭子仪)
Hàn (a Chinese dynasty)	漢 (汉)
Hánshān (a Chinese hermit)	寒山
Hirohito (a Japanese emperor)	裕仁 (Japanese)
Hóngyī (a Chinese monk)	弘一
Huáyán (a school of Buddhism)	華嚴 (华严)
Huìchāng (a reign period of the Táng)	會昌 (会昌)
Huìdì (Dharma name of Liú Xié)	慧地
Huìnéng (a Chinese monk)	慧能
Huì Shī (a Chinese philosopher)	惠施
Huìsī of Nányuè (a Chinese monk)	南岳慧思
huíxiàng (transference)	迴向 (回向)

Huìyuǎn (a Chinese monk)	慧遠 (慧远)
hún (cloudsoul)	魂
Húnán (a Chinese province)	湖南
Hú Shì (a Chinese scholar)	胡適 (胡适)
jiàndào (seeing the path)	見道 (见道)
jiànsī huò (afflictions of view and thought)	見思惑 (见思惑)
Jiāxiáng (a Chinese monk)	嘉祥
Jichán (a Chinese monk)	寄禪 (寄禅)
jīfēng (acute stimulus at the right moment)	機鋒 (机锋)
jìlè shìjiè (Land of Utmost Bliss)	極樂世界 (极乐世界)
Jìn (a Chinese dynasty)	晉 (晋)
jīngshī (sūtra master)	經師 (经师)
Jìngwú (courtesy name of Ōuyáng Jiàn)	竟無 (竟无)
jìnshínán (Buddhist layman disciple)	近事男
jìnshìnnǚ (Buddhist laywoman disciple)	近事女
jìnzhùnnán (layman upholding the upavāsa precepts)	近住男
jìnzhùnnǚ (laywoman upholding the upavāsa precepts)	近住女
jíwéi (smallest particle)	極微 (极微)
Jì Xiǎolán (a Chinese writer)	繼曉嵐 (继晓岚)
Jízàng (a Chinese monk)	吉藏
Jōdo Shinshū (a Buddhist school)	淨土真宗 (Japanese)
jùshè lùn (<i>Treasury of Abhidharma</i>)	俱舍論 (俱舍论)
Kāiyuán (reign period of the Táng)	開元 (开元)

Kāng Yǒuwéi (a Chinese scholar)	康有為 (康有为)
Kimura Taiken (a Japanese scholar)	木村泰賢 (Japanese)
kōng (nonexistence; empty)	空
kōngzōng (School of Emptiness)	空宗
Kuījī (a Chinese monk)	窺基 (窥基)
kǔxíng (asceticism)	苦行
làiye yuánqǐ (conditioned arising from the alaya-vijñāna)	賴耶緣起 (赖耶缘起)
Lǎozǐ (a Chinese philosopher)	老子
Liáng Qǐchāo (a Chinese scholar)	梁啟超 (梁启超)
Liáng Shùmíng (a Chinese philosopher)	梁漱溟
líng hún (soul)	靈魂 (灵魂)
Línjì (a lineage of Chán)	臨濟 (临济)
liùchén (six dusts)	六塵 (六尘)
liùdào (six paths)	六道
liùdù (six perfections)	六度
liùgēn (six sense faculties)	六根
liùgēn qīngjìng (purity of the six sense faculties)	六根清淨 (六根清净)
liù líhé shì (six methods of analyzing compound words)	六離合釋 (六离合释)
liùqù (six destinies)	六趣
liùshì (six consciousnesses)	六識 (六识)
Líu Xié (a Chinese official)	劉勰 (刘勰)
lǐxìng (ethical nature)	理性
lóng (dragon)	龍 (龙)
Lóngmén (a group of caves in China)	龍門 (龙门)

lǜjué (regulated quatrain)	律絕 (律绝)
lúnǐ (ethics)	倫理 (伦理)
lùnshī (treatise master)	論師 (论师)
Luòyáng (a Chinese city)	洛陽 (洛阳)
lǜshī (vinaya master)	律師 (律师)
Měinóng (a rural district in southern Taiwan)	美濃 (美浓)
Miáoli (a county in Taiwan)	苗栗
Míng (a Chinese dynasty)	明
míngguó yínháng (Bank of the Underworld)	冥國銀行 (冥国银行)
mó (demon; Māra)	魔
Mògāo (a group of caves in China)	莫高
móguǐ (demon-ghost; the Devil)	魔鬼
Mòzǐ (a Chinese philosopher)	墨子
Nánchuán (a Chinese monk)	南傳 (南传)
Nánshān (a Buddhist school)	南山
Nántóu (a county in Taiwan)	南投
nèi fánfū ("inside" ordinary people)	內凡人
niànfó (to recite a Buddha's name)	念佛
Nichiren (a Buddhist school)	日蓮 (Japanese)
Níngbō (a city in China)	寧波 (宁波)
nǐ píng huà (imitation plain narrative)	擬平話 (拟平话)
Nóngchán (a Taiwanese monastery)	農禪 (农禅)
Ōuyáng Jiàn (a Buddhist lay disciple)	歐陽漸 (欧阳渐)
piántǐwén (parallel prose)	駢體文 (骈体文)
píng huà (plain prose)	平話 (平话)

pò (whitesoul)	魄
púsà (bodhisattva)	菩薩 (菩萨)
pútífēn (factors of enlightenment)	菩提分
pútísàduǒ (bodhisattva)	菩提薩埵 (菩提萨埵)
Qián Mù (a Chinese historian)	錢穆 (钱穆)
qìjiè (non-sentient world)	器界
Qīng (a Chinese dynasty)	清
Rénshān (courtesy name of Yáng Wénhuì)	仁山
Rinzai (a Buddhist school)	臨濟 (Japanese)
Risshō (a Japanese university)	立正 (Japanese)
sānlùn zōng (Three Treatise school)	三論宗 (三论宗)
sānqiān dàqiān shìjiè (billion-world universe)	三千大千世界
shāmén (renouncer)	沙門 (沙门)
shāmí (novice monk)	沙彌 (沙弥)
shāminí (novice nun)	沙彌尼 (沙弥尼)
Shàndǎo (a Chinese monk)	善導 (善导)
Shāndōng (a Chinese province)	山東 (山东)
shàngdì (god above or high god; God)	上帝
Shànghǎi (a Chinese city)	上海
Shānxī (a Chinese province)	山西
shè dàshèng lùn (<i>Compendium of the Mahāyāna</i>)	攝大乘論 (摄大乘论)
shén (deity; god; supernatural being)	神
Shèngyán (Sheng Yen)	聖嚴 (圣严)
Shénhuì (a Chinese monk)	神會 (神会)

Shénlóng (a reign period of the Táng)	神龍 (神龙)
shénwǒ wàidào (non-Buddhist ascetic maintaining existence of a [divine] self)	神我外道
Shénxiù (a Chinese monk)	神秀
shíbā jiè (eighteen elements)	十八界
shìchāmónà (probationer)	式叉摩那
Shídé (a Chinese monk)	拾得
shí dì lùn (<i>Treatise on the Ten Grounds</i>)	十地論 (十地论)
shīfù (master)	師父 (师父)
shìtián (field of consciousness)	識田 (识田)
shí xìn wèi (stages of the ten devout minds)	十信位
shuǐlù dàhuì (Great Assembly for [the deliverance of beings who have died on] Water or Land)	水陸大會 (水陆大会)
sì dà jiē kōng (the four greats are all empty)	四大皆空
sì ěn (four kindnesses)	四恩
Sòng (a Chinese dynasty)	宋
sònggǔ (a form of Chán verse)	頌古 (颂古)
Sōtō (a Buddhist school)	曹洞 (Japanese)
Sū Dōngpō (a Chinese writer)	蘇東坡 (苏东坡)
Suí (a Chinese dynasty)	隋
Sūzhōu (a Chinese city)	蘇州 (苏州)
Táiwān (Taiwan)	台灣 (台湾)
Tàixū (a Chinese monk)	太虛
táncí xiǎoshuō (a kind of balladry)	彈詞小說 (弹词小说)
Táng (a Chinese dynasty)	唐

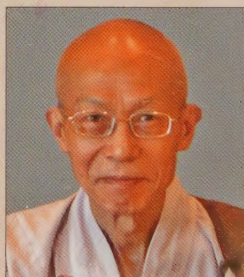
Táng Jūnyì (a New Confucian scholar)	唐君毅
Tán Sìtóng (a Chinese scholar)	譚嗣同 (譚嗣同)
tiān (sky; heaven; heavenly deities; God)	天
Tiānbǎo (a reign period of the Táng)	天寶 (天寶)
Tiāntái (a school of Buddhism)	天台
tóngshì (intermingling)	同事
wàidào (outer path or non-Buddhist religion)	外道
wài fánfū (“outside” ordinary people)	外凡夫
Wèi (a Chinese dynasty)	魏
wǒkōng (emptiness of self)	我空
wǒzhí (attachment to self)	我執 (我執)
wù (an awakening or enlightenment)	悟
wúlòu fǎ (undefiled teachings)	無漏法 (无漏法)
wùxìng (physical nature)	物性
Wǔzōng (a Chinese emperor)	武宗
xiāngfēn (objective aspect)	相分
Xiánshǒu (a Chinese monk)	賢首 (贤首)
xiánwèi (virtuous stages)	賢位 (贤位)
xiànxàng (phenomenal)	現象 (现象)
xiǎoqiān shìjiè (thousand-world universe)	小千世界
xiǎoshèng (small/lesser vehicle)	小乘
xiǎo shìjiè (world-system)	小世界
Xuān (a Chinese emperor)	宣
Xuánzàng (a Chinese monk)	玄奘
xuéren (learner)	學人 (学人)
Xúnzǐ (a Chinese philosopher)	荀子

Xūyún (a Chinese monk)	虛雲 (虚云)
Yáng Wénhuì (a Buddhist lay disciple)	楊文會 (杨文会)
Yáng Xióng (a Chinese philosopher)	揚雄 (扬雄)
Yán[luó]wáng (King Yama)	閻[羅]王 (阎罗王)
yěhú chán (wild fox chán)	野狐禪 (野狐禅)
Yémó (Yāma)	耶摩
yìjiào (heathenism)	異教 (异教)
Yìnguāng (a Chinese monk)	印光
yīnmíng (Indian logic)	因明
yīnmíng dàshū (<i>Great Commentary on Buddhist Logic</i>)	因明大疏
Yíxíng (a Chinese monk)	一行
yīzhēn fǎjiè (One True Dharma Realm)	一真法界
Yǒngmíng Yánshòu (a Chinese monk)	永明延壽 (永明延寿)
yǒu (existence)	有
yǒulòu fǎ (defiled teachings)	有漏法
yǒuzōng (School of Inherent Existence)	有宗
Yuán (a Chinese dynasty)	元
yuánjiào (Perfect Teachings)	圓教 (圆教)
yuánshēng (conditioned arising)	緣生 (缘生)
yuánshēng xìngkōng (dependently originated and empty of nature)	緣生性空 (缘生性空)
Yuèxiá (a Chinese monk)	月霞
yúmèi fójiào (Benighted Buddhism)	愚昧佛教
Yúngāng (a group of caves in China)	雲岡 (云冈)
yúshān fábài (chants from Fish Mountain)	魚山梵呗 (鱼山梵呗)
zen (Japanese word for chán)	禪 (Japanese)

Zhāng Bǐnglín (a Chinese scholar)	張炳麟 (张炳麟)
zhǎnglǎo (venerable elder)	長老 (长老)
Zhèjiāng (a Chinese province)	浙江
zhèngxìn de fójiào (title of this book)	正信的佛教
zhēnrú lǐtǐ (Substance-Principle of Suchness)	真如理體 (真如理体)
zhēnshí (reality)	真實 (真实)
Zhìyǐ (a Chinese monk)	智顗
Zhìzhě (a title for the monk Zhìyǐ)	智者
zhōngqiān shìjiè (million-world universe)	中千世界
zhōngyīn shēn (intermediate-state body)	中陰身 (中阴身)
Zhōngzōng (a Chinese emperor)	中宗
Zhuāngzǐ (a Chinese philosopher)	莊子 (庄子)
Zhū Xī (a Chinese philosopher)	朱熹
Zhū Yuánzhāng (a Chinese emperor)	朱元璋
Zōngyǎng (a Chinese monk)	宗仰

Do Buddhists believe in the existence of the soul?
Do Buddhists believe in the efficacy of prayer?
Is Buddhism against birth control?
Can Buddhists engage in military or political activities?
Is Buddhism pessimistic about the future of humanity?

In *Orthodox Chinese Buddhism*, Chan Master Sheng Yen addresses these and many other spiritual and worldly problems in a simple question-and-answer format. He clarifies common areas of confusion about Buddhist beliefs and practices, and gives practical advice on leading a life that is "full of wisdom, kindness, radiance, comfort, freshness, and coolness." In addition to a translation of the original text, this edition provides new annotations, appendixes, and a glossary designed to give the reader a fuller understanding of Buddhism as practiced in the contemporary Chinese world.



Born in 1931, Master Sheng Yen received Dharma transmission in both of the major branches of Chan Buddhism from his teachers, Master Lingyuan (1902–1988) of the Linji lineage and Master Dongchu (1908–1977) of the Caodong lineage. He has authored many books on Buddhism and holds a doctorate in Buddhist literature from Risshō University in Japan. Sheng Yen is the founder and spiritual director of Dharma Drum Mountain, an international Buddhist educational and cultural foundation, with centers in Taiwan and New York.

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