

Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 17 • Number 1 • Summer 1994

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Anti-Chan Polemics in Post-Tang Tiantai

Introduction: Historical Background

The period following the death of the sixth Tiantai patriarch Jingxi Zhanran (711-782) has been described as the second “dark age” of Tiantai.¹ It was a prolonged state of crisis extending from the Tang into the Five Dynasties and Northern Song, an age marked internally by the deterioration of distinctive Tiantai ideas and marked externally by the loss of crucial texts and monastic institutions, especially after the persecution of 845 (a period that saw the increased influence of Chan). Zhanran’s reconstitution and revival of Tiantai had succeeded in part on the strength of his incorporation of Huayen “nature-origination” (*xingqi*) thought² into the further development and schematization of the “nature-inclusion” (*xingju*)³ conceptions that Zhanran saw in classical Tiantai. Zhanran seems to have regarded this incorporation as a method by which Tiantai nature-inclusion could be reinstated while sublating the Huayen strains of thought which had been gaining ground.⁴ After the persecution, however, with the dispersion of texts and loss of institutional supports, the Tiantai school found itself in need of reconstitution. The non-dialectical and idealistic trend of “tracing principle and cutting off the nine realms of delusion” had come to dominate the world of Chinese Buddhist scholasticism by this time, making inroads into Tiantai thought as well. This influence is evident already in the teaching of Zhanran’s disciple Dao Sui,⁵ and becomes more pronounced in syncretist figures such as Zhi Yuan (768-844) (who studied first at Mt.

1. Andō Toshio, *Tendai seigu shisiō ron*, trans. Yenpei fashi (Taipei: Tianhua chubanshe, 1989) 174.

2. The doctrine that phenomenal dharmas “arise from” the buddha nature, but are not inherently included in it, such that it remains forever pure and undefiled by any determinate phenomena.

3. The doctrine that all phenomenal dharmas are inherent to the buddha nature. Both of these conceptions will be explained in more detail below.

4. Andō Toshio 185.

5. Andō Toshio 178.

Tiantai and then at Mt. Wutai, combining Heze Chan with Tiantai teachings⁶ and Daochang Ningfen (754-828) (who also combined Chan and Tiantai tendencies, and made his home at Mt. Tiantai).⁷ After the persecution, the Chan elements of this synthesis came into prominence. Even Deshao (881-972), renowned in his time as a reviver of Tiantai, was closely associated with the Fayen branch of Chan.⁸ His student Yongming Yenshou (954-974) took this syncretic tendency even further, attempting to unify Tiantai, Huayen and Yogācāra teachings under the auspices of a form of Chan theorizing emphasizing the “one pure formless mind,”⁹ a notion owing much to the *Awakening of Faith*, the *Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra*, and especially Guifeng Zongmi’s (780-841) adaptation of the “numinous awareness” of the Heze school of Chan. Zongmi’s infatuation with Heze Chan had all but eliminated the Tiantai influences, especially the notion of the evil inherent in the buddha nature (*xing e*), evident in the thought of his teacher, the fourth Huayen patriarch Qingliang Chengguan (738-839), who had spent some time studying under Zhanran himself and whose work incorporates elements of both Chan and Tiantai traditions. Zongmi moved the pure undefiled buddha nature, identified with undifferentiated and objectless awareness, to center stage.¹⁰ Indeed, as Peter Gregory has shown, Zongmi radically reinterpreted the Huayen tradition, taking away the centrality and ultimacy of “the non-obstruction of phenomenon with phenomenon” (*shi shi wu ai*) characteristic of Fazang’s (643-721) teaching and replacing it with an ultimacy of “the non-obstruction of phenomenon with principle” (*li shi wu ai*).¹¹ For Zongmi, “principle” was identical with “mind” or rather the “numinous awareness” of the Heze line of Chan. In earliest proto-Huayen thought, as found in the works attributed to Dushun, on the contrary, principle equals emptiness.¹² Fazang at times identifies principle with the mind as suchness, and phenomena with the mind of birth and death (a distinction deriving from the *Awakening of*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.* 179.

8. *Ibid.* 181. Deshao however appears to have been highly critical of the Chan claim to have a “special transmission outside the teachings,” as can be seen from *Shimen Zhengtong*, *juan* 5, and Ando 181-2.

9. *Ibid.* 182-3.

10. *Ibid.* 184.

11. Peter N. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 157-165.

12. *Ibid.* 7.

Faith),¹³ thereby beginning the trend toward *tathāgatagarbha* idealism that would come to culmination in Zongmi's Chan-friendly teaching. In Tiantai, principle is equivalent to the three truths and practice is centered, as we shall see, on contemplation of not the mind but of the *nature* of mind (*xin xing*) as identical with this principle. In Zongmi's own classification of teachings, this Tiantai system was made to appear quaint and cumbersome, falling short of a new trend which seemed to have carried the day: the emphasis on the undefiled numinous awareness. To further complicate matters, alternate versions of crucial texts attributed to Zhiyi were being recovered, mainly from Japan, giving normative authority to sometimes diametrically opposed doctrines and assertions.¹⁴

It was in this atmosphere that an embattled Tiantai tried to reconstitute itself. Two opposite paths were taken to meet these challenges. One approach tacitly admitted the superiority of these new elements (the one pure mind, the original absence of defilement, etc.) by claiming that these were originally Tiantai doctrines. The other approach held that the view of the Tiantai tradition was different from and superior to the Zongmi / Chan view. The first approach was that of what was later polemically designated as the "Shanwaijia" (Masters Outside [Tiantai] Mountain, i. e., the heterodox), while the second was taken by the "Shanjia" (Home Mountain Masters, i. e., the orthodox). It is in the polemics between these two opposed representatives of the Tiantai tradition that some of the most developed Tiantai critiques of strains of thought identified with Chan are to be found, as they battled each other for the mantle and the name of "Tiantai."

The texts left in the wake of such disputes present interpreters with many daunting difficulties. Present day readers may well wonder, when making their way through these writings, what exactly is at stake in these convoluted debates. It is clear from examining the social and institutional setting in which these texts were produced that abbotships, donor patronage, and official imperial support, for example (which were often directly dependent on a monk's prestige and reputation) were at stake. A monk's scholastic reputation was also instrumental in gaining

13. *Ibid.* 157.

14. The direct impetus of the debates hinged on the long and short versions of Zhiyi's *Jinguangming xuan yi*, which seemed to imply different attitudes toward the contemplation of the mind. The former versions (embraced by the Shanjia) called for detailed contemplation of all the deluded phenomena of mind, while the latter recommended, for those of highest ability, the direct contemplation of the true mind, ignoring the deluded phenomena. See the account in the *Fozutongji*, *juan* 8 (T. 49.192b), and also Andō, *op. cit.* 186.

entrance to the dharma-lineage of a particular tradition, which, once gained, brought material advantages in this life. There were post mortem benefits from such a position in the lineage as well, for one would be sacrificed to and cared for as part of a dharma line, if, of course, one was considered not to have already achieved enlightenment in this lifetime. Furthermore, the authority granted by the tradition's validation of one's achievement (represented by one's final place in the gallery of dharma-ancestors) would fulfill one's "filial" obligations to one's teachers as well as one's vows on behalf of one's "descendants." All of this was something worth fighting for, especially if the prestigious dharma-heirship of a particular line of transmission that carried with it a certain degree of prestige became a matter of scholastic dispute. By means of a highly arcane discourse, the members of a particular class of monks were able to define themselves and maintain their positions by excluding those who had less perfectly mastered its literary conventions, thereby maintaining their position, their niche in the food-chain, and their monopoly on their particular type of power.

Their texts, of course, represent the stakes of these disputes very differently. According to their own declarations, the participants in these debates were seeking the accurate transmission of the experience of truth discovered by Śākyamuni, clarifying the highest teaching, contributing to the salvation of all sentient beings. They claimed to be seeking and explicating the truth, a truth which had soteriological significance. Understanding and practicing in accord with this truth would lead to enlightenment and liberation from samsāra. In their endeavor to clarify this salvific truth, these polemicists systematically developed philosophical positions, which they were forced to explicate in much more rigorous detail than was the custom under less contentious conditions in China. These claims have a considerable philosophical interest in their own right. Yet even from this perspective, the import of the texts is far from clear, and it takes some patience and induction to unravel the implications of some of the Song and post-Song Tiantai polemics against certain aspects of the Chan tradition.

Most of these polemics emerged as a kind of overflow from the infighting between the two contending branches of the Tiantai tradition referred to above. According to the texts that passed between representatives of these two branches, the Shanjia felt the Shanwai had been unduly influenced by Huayen and Chan, especially by Zongmi (with his Huayen-flavored version of Chan "doctrine" or Chan-flavored version of Huayen doctrine), thereby polluting and diluting the distinctive, and

moreover, true and salvific Tiantai tradition. Almost all of the attacks on Chan “doctrine” discussed below appear in the context of this Tiantai in-fighting, focusing particularly on Zongmi’s version of this doctrine, a version especially influential among the Shanwai exegetes. Where Chan is attacked directly (for example, in the works of Siming Zhili [960-1028], the most eminent and vitriolic advocate of the Shanjia position), it is typically presented as a counterattack, with allusion to Chan sympathizers having disparaged Tiantai as inferior to the teaching of Zongmi and his sympathizers.¹⁵ The Chan tradition itself is accepted by Zhili as a legitimate part of the Buddhist heritage, and thus has its place, like other teachings, in his *jiaopan* (classification of teachings): it is part of the “special teaching” (*biejiao*). Zhili seems to have no particular vendetta against Chan per se;¹⁶ he is annoyed only when claims are made that it surpasses the Tiantai “perfect” or “rounded” teaching (*yuanjiao*).

Main Points of the Tiantai Critique

The critique put forward by Zhili and his followers attacks Chan on a number of distinct but related fronts, which may be summarized as follows:

1. The excessive emphasis on meditation at the expense of doctrine, allegedly advocated by many Chan masters, was disparaged. The Tiantai polemicists claim to value doctrine and meditation equally. This issue has little real content; it was for the most part a mechanical comparison of the slogans of the two traditions, with little interest in the actual content of these slogans. Indeed, there was far greater attention given to the precise mechanics of sitting meditation in Tiantai than there was in Chan.
2. The Tiantai exegetes were harshly critical of Chan’s alleged rejection of words, which grew, they said, out of a failure to see that words are a *necessary* vehicle to enlightenment. Although it can be argued that Chan writers advocated nothing of the kind (or at least had more

15. See for example Zhili’s correspondence with Chan Master Tiantong Ning in *Siming jiaoxing lu*, (*Taisho* 46, 891-897 [=T. 46.891-897])

16. Indeed, as Wang Zhiyuan has pointed out, there is evidence that Zhili’s teaching technique was deeply influenced by methods we would now associate strongly with Chan, e. g., shouts and blows leading, according to the hagiography, to sudden enlightenment experiences. See Wang, *Sungchu Tiantai Foxue qinmao* (Beijing: Zhongguo jianshe chubanshe, 1989) 63-64.

subtle understandings of it than what was portrayed in Tiantai this polemic), many in the Chan tradition did seem to take the famous slogan about “a special transmission outside the teaching, not depending on words and letters” in a way that would not have been satisfying to a Tiantai exegete. Also involved here is a charge of a fundamental misunderstanding of the whole concept of *upāya*, which is central to the Tiantai view of the ultimate reality. In traditional Tiantai, the truth to be realized itself includes both the means to its realization and the process of realization. The three-fold buddha-nature described in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* are the three causes of enlightenment: (1) the cause proper (*zhengyin*), that is, the objective truth to be realized, (2) the “revealing” cause (*liaoyin*), the process of coming to know this truth, and (3) the “conditioning” cause (*yuanyin*), the process of coming to act according to this truth, and in such a way that furthers one’s knowledge of it. These cannot be subtracted from the final effect, buddhahood, without causing a misapprehension of its fundamental nature. Indeed, the term “buddha-nature” must be taken to include all three of these aspects. The doctrine of *upāya* as expressed in the *Lotus Sūtra*, as interpreted by Zhiyi, the *de facto* founder of the Tiantai tradition, is also important here: the perfect teaching is typically distinguished from the special teaching in that the former “opens up” all previous *upāyas* to “reveal” their ultimate truth (*kaiquan xianshi*). This is taken to mean that the perfect teaching sees all the *upāyas* as necessary parts of the ultimate truth and its realization, inseparable from it and indispensable, such that all of them are “*upāya* which are intrinsic to the entity (of truth) itself (*tinei fangbian*).” Part of what enlightenment consists in, according to this view, is an understanding of the entire Buddhist tradition itself (i. e., *panjiao*), in other words, how all the teachings, sūtras, *upāyas*, fit together into one coherent whole with one single flavor of enlightenment throughout. Such an understanding obviously depends strongly on the existence and understanding of specific texts.

3a. The Shanjia exegetes were critical of Zongmi’s version of Chan doctrine (putatively representing the Heze line of Shenhui), which cast this doctrine in terms of Huayen thought, because it depicted all phenomenal reality as included in buddhahood, but only *indifferently*. In other words, for Zongmi, all that is, *whatever it is*, is the ultimate reality, the unchanging dharmakāya, subject to various conditions (*suiyuan*) (the finite determination of which is external to the dharmakāya). The various differentiated things in the world are the dharmakāya.

kāya. Here the fundamental model of wave and water is stressed. All waves are water, but the specific shapes of the different waves is not what is “watery” about them. It is irrelevant what shapes there are; it would be equally water whether or not there were waves. For the Shanjia, however, all that is, *as it is specifically*, is the ultimate reality, the dharmakāya. It is the nature of ultimate reality, not merely to assume any shape at all, but to be precisely these ten realms,¹⁷ these three thousand suchnesses.¹⁸ Buddhahood inherently includes all the other realms, all the other finite determinations in the universe. This makes the Shanjia in one sense much more firmly attached to traditional Buddhist cosmology; it is the Buddha’s nature to be these ten particular realms, with their ten particular suchnesses, etc. We are told not only that anything is the Buddha, nor only that everything is the Buddha, but rather that Buddha is *this* everything that can be delimited into three thousand suchnesses. We are told *what* Buddha is, not only that he is whatever there is. The absolute is not to be conceived as an indifferent, indeterminate blank, capable of taking on any finite determination that happens to come its way, as Zongmi’s mirror analogy and mind metaphor suggest. Its nature is determinate; it is precisely the world that is the absolute, nothing more and nothing less. Distinctions and determinations are not merely an effect of delusion; they do and should exist. They are, in fact, part of the substance of the dharmakāya, which differentiates itself and comes to know itself in all its finite determination, by means of this process of delusion and sub-

17. The realms of purgatory, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, devas, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and *buddhas*.

18. There are ten “suchnessness” (*rushi*) to each realm: appearance, nature, entity, power, activity, primary cause, secondary cause, effect, response, and consistency from beginning to end. The terms come from Kumarajiva’s translation of the “*Upāya*” chapter of the *Lotus*, and come to be applied to each realm by Zhi Yi in the *Fahuaxuanyi* and elsewhere. There are said to be three thousand suchnesses because each realm contains all the others (10 x 10), each of which has the ten suchnesses (X 10), all of which is applied to the world as *skandhas*, as sentient beings or as physical environment (X3). 10 X 10 X 10 X 3 = 3,000. The “three-thousandness” in particular is stressed by Zhili, as his renegade disciple Renyue derisively noted after going over to a modified Shanwai position. The specificity of this three thousand in the thought of Zhi Yi is much more problematic, as can be seen by his treatment of the Ten Thusnesses in the *Fahua xuanyi*, where they are treated as one scheme among many for categorizing what exists. Zhi Yi says, in effect, that all things can be integrated into one dharma (mind), or two (name and form), or three, or four, or a hundred million, as you wish, but the *Lotus* does it according to these ten (T. 33.732).

sequent enlightenment, which do not fall outside of it. As Zhili puts it, "Our teaching makes clear that the substance with its three thousand dharmas follows various conditions to give rise to the Function (phenomena) with its three thousand dharmas. When it is not following these conditions, the three thousand are still there just the same. Thus the differentiated dharmas and the substance are not two, because *even when delusion is eliminated, the distinctions remain.*"¹⁹

3b. Strenuous exception was taken to Zongmi's version of the Chan doctrine of the status of mind, which Zhili considers to have been a corrupting influence on the so-called Shanwai Tiantai monks. The point of contention is whether mind, however construed, has some special ontological status among all dharmas, as their source or ultimate ground, or whether it is in principle on equal footing with any other given dharma. The latter is Zhili's position, and he interprets the statements about the primacy of mind in Zhanran and Zhiyi to refer to a particularly effective meditation technique, selected because mind happens to be what is closest to the practitioner. Mind, here, is the ordinary, deluded mind of one who has not yet practiced meditation, rather than a purified or original mind. The mind is indeed the "source" of all other dharmas, to which everything can be reduced and by which everything else can be explained, but the same could be said of any other dharma, including any speck of dust or sound or smell. To contemplate mind is the easiest way to come to this understanding. Zhili alleges that the Shanwai have adopted the provisional "special teaching" (*biejiao*) of the Huayen school, which is also Zongmi's version of the underlying doctrine behind Chan's "special transmission." Indeed, the "mind" that is transmitted through the Chan lineage is this pure, ontologically ultimate mind, according to Zongmi.

4. The Chan lineage claimed a special authority deriving directly from Śākyamuni himself and forming a special transmission of the buddha-mind outside of that recorded in the sūtras. The Tiantai polemicists hold this claim to be historically unfounded and religiously misguided.

Siming Zhili's Critique of Guifeng Zongmi:

Three Types of Identity Between Saṃsāra and Nirvāna

Let me explicate these points now in greater detail. Zhili explicitly targets Zongmi and his version of the Chan lineage and doctrine in the fol-

19. Zhili, *Shi buermen zhiyao chao*, T. 46.715b. Emphasis added.

lowing passage from the *Shi buermen zhiyao chao* (“Notes pointing to the essentials of [Zhanran’s] ‘The Ten Gates of Nonduality’”):

Question: It has been passed down to us that three of Bodhidharma’s disciples attained the dharma, but at different depths. Nizongchi said, “[Your teaching is] to cut off defilements and realize enlightenment.” The master said, “You have got my skin.” Daoyu said, “Deluded, it is defilements; enlightened, it is enlightenment.” The master said, “You have got my flesh.” Huike said, “Fundamentally there is no defilement; it is originally enlightenment.” The master said, “You have got my marrow.” [Your] present [thesis], that “Defilement is identical with enlightenment,” and so on, seems to be the same as the “skin” and “flesh” views. How can it be called unsurpassably perfect and sudden?

Answer: Scholars of our teaching, because of these words, are confused by names and miss the meaning. To use *that* to make determinations about *this* entraps and dissipates our teaching. Truly, it is because they do not exhaust the meaning of the character *ji* (“identical”). It should be made known that our understanding of “identical” is forever different from that of all the [other] teachers. This is because [for us] it is not a matter of two objects joined together, nor of two sides of something turned over. Rather, to be called “identical,” this very substance [before us, just as it is] must be completely [the other] (*dangti quanshi*). And why? Defilement and *samsāra* are manifested [lit., practiced] evil (*xiu e*); their whole substance is the dharma gate of inherent evil (*xing e*). Hence there is no need to cut off and excise them, nor to turn them over. Since the other schools do not understand inherent evil, they need to turn evil into good, or cut off evil and realize good. Thus even the “extremely sudden” still say, “Fundamentally there is no evil; it is originally good.” Since they are not able to take the complete [manifested] evil as [inherent] evil, none are able to perfect the meaning of “identical.” Thus (Zhanran) says in the *Miaofa xuanhua jing xuanyi ji*, *juan 7*, “Since in their carelessness they have never even heard the name ‘inherent evil,’ how could they believe there is such a thing as the practice of inherent meritorious properties (*xingde zhi xing*)?”

[Question]: In that case, why not say “Defilement is identical to defilement,” and so on? Why do you speak instead of enlightenment and *nirvāṇa*?

Answer: Truly it is not a separate meaning; it is just because *inherent evil is all-penetrating and all-fusing, and quiescent, that it itself is given the names enlightenment and nirvāṇa*. These names are set up [for this inherent evil] from the point of view of the ultimate truth. How is this similar

to the "skin" and "flesh" views? Moreover, since defilement and so on are completely inherent evil, how could one just say categorically, "Fundamentally, there is none"?

But this story you have quoted, where Bodhidharma gives his seal [authorizing genuine dharma transmission] to Master Ke, with his "Fundamentally, there is no defilement, it is originally enlightenment" and so on, is all Zongmi's heretical explanation, which has led later people to take this as the ultimate, thus abandoning the three [evil] paths²⁰ and only contemplating the "true mind." The *Zutangji* just says, "The second patriarch bowed three times, and stood in his position."²¹ Where does he say that defilement exists and enlightenment does not? Thus we should not use Zongmi's heretical explanations to make determinations about our school's marvelous doctrines.²²

20. The "three paths" (*san dao*) is a peculiar Tiantai expression, used by Zhi Yi to refer to *duḥkha*, karma and *kleśa*, and thus to defiled, unenlightened samsāric existence as such. These three are meant to cover the entire nidāna chain, with ignorance, attachment and appropriation comprising "*kleśa*," dispositions and becoming comprising "karma," and the rest comprising "*duḥkha*." The three paths are identical to the three tracks and finally to the three virtues of enlightenment (dharmakaya, prajñā and liberation). They are not to be confused with the three lowest paths of samsara (usually called *santu* in these contexts), i. e., purgatory beings, hungry ghosts and animals. Zhili's point here is that evil, deluded existence, the deluded mind, must not be abandoned in meditative praxis; rather, it is to be the focus of that praxis, the nature of which is to be revealed and realized rather than left behind.

21. The extant version of the *Zutangji* includes neither version of this story. Instead, Bodhidharma simply states that these three disciples had attained his skin, flesh and marrow respectively, and moreover prophesies that his dharma heirs will begin to get worse and worse after six generations. (See Feng Minzuo, *Chan yulu*, vol. 2 (Taipei: Xingguang chuban she, 1982) 551. In the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *juan 3*, the story appears as follows: "Bodhidharma said to his disciples, 'The time is at hand; let each of you speak of what you have attained.' Daofu said, 'As I understand it, to neither cling to language nor leave language behind is the function of the way.' The master said, 'You have attained my skin.' Nizongchi said, 'As I now comprehend it, it is like beholding with joy the buddha-land of Akṣobhya, which one sees only once and then never beholds again.' The master said, 'You have attained my flesh.' Daoyu said, 'The four great elements are all empty, the five skandhas do not exist, and so, as I see it, there is no dharma that can be attained.' The master said, 'You have attained my bones.' Finally, Huike bowed, and then stood in his position. The master said, 'You have attained my marrow.'" This version of the story seems to derive from that which was available in Zhili's time.

22. In the *Taisho* the original version says: "This transcends even the explanation that 'got the marrow.' Even if the intention behind Master Ke's view was based on this, the way of expressing it was imperfect. Question: In your present explication of the perfect teaching, how could it be that you do not speak of cutting off delusion to realize principle, and of turning over delusion

Now we speak of “cutting off” from the point of view of this identity, so there is nothing to be extinguished. We speak of enlightenment from the point of view of this, so there is nothing to turn over. Defilements and saṃsāra are the dharmas of the nine realms [of hell beings, hungry ghosts, asuras, animal, humans, devas, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas]. Since [the teaching] is only called perfect if the ten realms [of the above nine plus the realm of buddhas] mutually inhere and contain one another, how could the buddhas destroy or transform the nine [other realms]? Only thus can [the Buddha] be said to “have mastery within evil” and only then can it be said that “The realm of the demons is itself the Buddha.” Thus the perfect teaching’s cutting off, realization, delusion, and enlightenment are spoken of only with respect to [subjective] taint [i. e., attachment] and purity, not with respect to [objective] good, evil, purity, or impurity. Since the other teachings do not understand that the [buddha-] nature inherently possesses all ten realms, they lack the perfect [teaching’s understanding of the] meaning of cutting off and enlightenment. Thus they have attained the word “identical” but not the sense. This is the great path of the whole teaching of our school.²³

This passage sets forth the doctrinal foundations of the Shanjia case against Zongmi’s version of Chan, but it will be necessary to untangle Zhili’s own doctrinal position to get a sense of what exactly he is objecting to here. Zhili’s dilemma is that one of the positions that Zongmi’s Chan (represented here by Huike) claims to have transcended sounds very much like the Tiantai position. Zhili must in effect prove, first of all, that there is no genuine scriptural authority for the story that Bodhidharma approved of this evaluation of the relative merits of the teachings. The fact that he bothers to do this suggests that Bodhidharma

to approach enlightenment? If you do speak of these things, how is it any different from Chiyu’s explanation? Answer: How could it be, even with Master Ke, that there is no cutting off or overturning of delusion? And yet how could that make his view the same as that of the former two? Thus we can know that whenever there is talk of divisions between gradual and sudden, it is a matter of the motivations and methods of the cutting off and overturning.” According to the *Siming zunzhe jiaoxing lu* (T. 46.896c), Zhili replaced this passage from the original version with the passage beginning, “But this passage you have quoted . . . ” after Zhili’s correspondence with the Chan master Tiantong Ning. The new passage identifies the source of the quotation, which had been contested, and at the same time more specifically targets Zongmi. The target of the attack is not Bodhidharma, Huike, or the other luminaries of the early Chan lineage, but rather Zongmi’s later misconstrual thereof. Zhili claims that Zongmi put forth the version refuted here in his *Guifeng houji*.

23. T. 46. 707.

was to him a figure whose authority mattered, while Zongmi was not. This is important, for it indicates the underlying ambivalence of Zhili's polemic against what we are here calling "Chan." For it seems that he is not targeting the entire Chan tradition and everyone in it, nor even every explicit doctrine of those included in this lineage, which are quite multifarious.²⁴ Rather, it is Zongmi's authority and doctrine which are questioned. He has no authority to speak for the tradition, Zhili asserts, and moreover his own doctrine is fundamentally wrongheaded. It is he who arbitrarily characterized and ranked the teachings in this way, and he is not to be trusted.²⁵

Zhili's Critique of Zongmi's Concept of Mind

In particular, Zhili objects to the influence of Zongmi's idea that "The one word 'awareness' (*zhi*) is the gate to all marvels," and that "What Bodhidharma transmitted was just this numinal awareness (*lingzhi*) and nothing more."²⁶ Let us look at this objectionable doctrine of Zongmi's in more detail. In the *Chanyuan zhuquanji du xu, juan 2*, he writes:

All sentient beings have the empty, quiescent, true mind, the nature of which is naturally pure from beginningless time, bright and undarkened, clear and ever aware. Ever dwelling undestroyed throughout future time, it is called the buddha-nature. . . . This awareness is not the same as that involved in coming to realize or know something. The point [of calling it awareness] is to make clear that the true [buddha] nature is not the same as empty space or trees and stones; hence it is called 'awareness.' It is not the consciousness of following objects and making distinctions, nor is it the wisdom which reflects on the essence and fully comprehends it. It is simply the single nature of true suchness, which is spontaneously always aware. Thus the bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa said, "True suchness is in its own substance true and substantial, conscious and aware." . . . Wisdom and

24. Indeed, the authority of Yongjia Xuanjue (675-713), a figure associated with both Tiantai and Chan teachings, is respected elsewhere in this same text, and great pains are taken to show that Zhili is not contradicting him. *Zhiyao chao*, T. 46.709b.

25. Indeed, Zhili's contemporaries also noticed that this rejection of Zongmi did not entail a refutation of Chan as a whole. The Chan master Tiantong Ning, in his correspondence with Zhili, seems, if I understand him correctly, freely to admit that Zongmi's works contained many contradictions, and moreover that he had unjustly exalted Heze Chan and underemphasized the teachings of Niutou Chan. See *Jiaoxing lu*, T. 46.895.

26. Both statements can be found in *Chanyuan zhuquanji du xu, juan. 2* (T. 48.405b). Tiantong Ning seems to be in complete agreement with Zhili on this objection to Zongmi.

awareness differ in that wisdom is restricted to the sages and does not reach to the ordinary, whereas awareness is possessed by everyone, sage or ordinary. . . . The *Ratnagarbha Śāstra* says, “Knowing being is perishable, knowing non-being is corruptible”—this is all merely the wisdom which knows being and non-being—“but knowing true awareness does not recognize being or non-being”—since it does not recognize being and non-being, it is the non-discriminating awareness of the self-nature. The mind of numinous awareness thus revealed is the true [buddha] nature, no different from the Buddha. . . . This is the “third type” of Chan in its entirety, directly revealing the mind-nature. . . . Why then do the partisans of “destroying marks” [such as Mādhyamika] only speak of quiescence and disallow the teaching of true awareness, while the specialists in “explaining marks” [such as Yogācāra] cling to the notion that the ordinary differ from the buddhas, and will not allow the teaching that [ordinary beings] are identical to the Buddha? . . . This teaching uses the single true mind-nature to transcend and also to encompass all tainted and pure dharmas. It transcends all as discussed above: it is concerned only with the substance, directly pointing to the numinal awareness, which is the mind-nature. Everything else is delusion. Thus it is said, “It is not cognized by consciousness, not an object of the mind,” and so on, up to, “not a nature, not a mark, not the Buddha, not sentient beings, apart from the four possible propositions, cutting off all negations.” It encompasses all in that all the tainted and pure dharmas are mind. When mind is deluded, it delusively gives rise to karma, thus leading to the four types of birth and the six paths of existence, and all the impure lands and realms. When mind is enlightened, it gives rise to function in accord with its substance, the four virtues [kindness, pity, joy, and equanimity] and the six perfections, and on to the four differentiations and ten powers, marvelous bodies and pure lands, all manifest in it. Since this mind manifests all dharmas, all dharmas are entirely identical (*quan ji*) to this true mind. It is just as when a person dreams: all the things he manifests in the dream are that person himself. When vessels are made from gold, all the vessels are gold; when images appear in a mirror, all the images are the mirror.²⁷

This awareness, also called the true mind, for Zongmi transcends being and non-being, good and evil, all of which however it manifests or “creates” as the objects of its awareness. At the same time, it is carefully distinguished from ordinary discriminating consciousness, the apprehension of external objects, logical thought, and from the specifically enlightened consciousness of the Buddha. All these particular forms

27. T. 48.404c-405a.

and characters are manifested in and by it, but by clinging to or concentrating on them, one misses the awareness itself, which is at the base of them all. The absolute nature itself is characterless and quiescent, differing in substance from all phenomena, and hence neither sacred nor profane, good nor evil, and so on. Deluded thoughts and enlightenment are both equally manifestations of this mind, equally dependent on it and transcended by it.

As Zongmi puts it, "The dao is the mind itself. . . . Evil is the mind itself." The mind is ever aware and this alone is important; *whatever* the object of awareness is, it is illusory compared to the mind. The object derives its importance and its reality solely from the fact that it is manifested in the mind, which alone is the Buddha. It is true that all phenomena are thus nothing but the absolute nature, that is, the mind, but this is not because of what they are in particular, but only because *whatever* they are, they are actually just this mind, which is the absolute. This is Zongmi's interpretation of "understanding that all characters are no characters"—all specific characteristics are reduced to illusory configurations of the mind, which alone is real. Objects are real in their substance, which is mind, but unreal in their qualities. As Peter Gregory puts Zongmi's point, "[T]his doctrine meant that all phenomenal appearances (hsiang [*xiang*]) only had reality insofar as they were seen to be manifestations (ch'i [*qi*]) of the nature (hsing [*xing*])."²⁸ Thus one can see the Buddha everywhere, not so much because the Buddha "is" everywhere, but more importantly because seeing itself is the Buddha. The Buddha is seen equally in each object, the same operation is repeated over and over. Hence he can say, "Originally there is no defilement." for impurities, the differentiations of things, the suffering of finitude, are all illusory manifestations of the true mind itself; all of them are only real in that they are mind, which is in reality all they have ever been from the beginning. Hence, "Originally it is enlightenment." The true awareness, the mind, is in and of itself devoid of all characters, but all characters are manifest in it.

This mind is to be understood directly from one's constant experience of it. Intellectually, however, "mind" is not a simple concept, but rather a complex of ideas, and this way of speaking, saying that all things are the manifestation of the true awareness, suggests how the world is to be encountered. The fact that the absolute is characterized as "mind" implies that its relationship to all finite things is analogous to the rela-

28. Gregory 251.

tionship between a perceiving mind and the things it perceives. The single perceiving mind is complete in each of its many perceptions. It “negativizes” (i. e., de-absolutizes) them, “transcends” them as Zongmi puts it (“not a nature, not a mark,” etc.), for whatever it perceives is only a perception, rather than the mind or the thing itself; everything in mind is a relation; a perception is a manifestation of the relation between the object and the mind; everything in it refers to something outside itself. It is always aware, and yet always must be aware *of* something. The mind, in ordinary perception, both is and is not all the things it perceives, and those perceptions are both it and something else. In Zongmi’s description of the situation, all objects are both posited and superseded by the absolute, in the same way that objects are both posited and superseded by the perceiving (but not the cogitating) mind. The mind can abstract from any of its perceived objects and still be the mind, and yet all the objects are in the mind. In order to be itself, the mind is therefore not dependent on any of its objects, and yet it must have *some* object. However, the objects retain their independence—that they appear is due to the mind, but not *what* they appear as. This is understandable in the case of the metaphor, the ordinary perceiving mind, but in the case of the absolute, we are left to wonder where these particular determinations come from. The principle of relativity is here constricted to the dependence between mind and objects; the *mutual dependence of objects*, which gives them their particular characters, is left out of the account. Zongmi of course claims that the absolute, the mind, produces the individual forms it manifests, due to “deluded thoughts from beginningless time”; the mind is itself neither enlightened nor deluded, but can be enlightenment or delusion. Still, the manifestation of enlightenment is “the arising of function in accord with substance,” while the manifestation of delusion is the “confused production of karma.” There is some sense in which the substance is *more* similar to the enlightened manifestation than it is to the deluded manifestation, although it is the same mind in either case. The inner nature of the absolute bears a closer resemblance to some of its manifestations than to others, and this would seem to suggest that it is in fact “marked” by certain characteristics, leaving the deviations from these original characteristics inadequately explained.

For Zhili, this is not the ultimate teaching, although it does have a place among the legitimate doctrines of Buddhism. It is one form of the “special teaching,” the second highest of the four general divisions of the Buddha’s teachings, according to Zhiyi’s classification of teachings. It falls short of the perfect teaching for two main reasons. First, it gives

special status to something called mind or awareness. True, the claim is made that this mind has no characteristics, i. e., is not a "something" at all, is no particular dharma. Nonetheless, it is described as manifest in certain types of activity, for example, in the sentience of sentient beings, as perceptivity, which is a certain type of dharma, although perhaps a peculiarly problematic one, as discussed above. This distinction goes back to Zhanran's doctrine (put forth in the *Jingang Bei*) that inanimate objects possess the buddha nature, a doctrine which would seem to present difficulties for this identification of the buddha nature with the activity of awareness.

For the Tiantai school, as Zhili interprets it, the buddha nature is not to be identified with the any dharma simply called "mind" or "awareness." It is conceived first and foremost as the three truths: emptiness, provisional positing, and the mean (*kong, jia, zhong*). These are interpreted in different ways in each of the four teachings. In the perfect teaching, these three truths are claimed to be of equal value, none more "ultimate" than the other two. Each is said to imply the other two, and any two can be reduced to the other one. Emptiness signifies the lack of self-nature due to conditioned arising. Provisional positing signifies the conditioned arising due to lack of self-nature. The mean signifies the harmonious conflict or non-obstruction of these two opposed points of view, the fact that they express exactly the same thing, while still being opposites.

The special (or separate) teaching is said to cling to "only the mean" (*danzhong*), a view of the union, and thus transcendence, of these opposites. The absolute is understood in the perfect teaching, on the other hand, to be "not only the mean" (*budanzhong*), a unity of opposites in which the opposed pair remain opposed although reconciled, "sublated" rather than left behind. Any one of the three truths brings with it the other two; one cannot speak of emptiness without thereby admitting provisional positing, and its harmony with emptiness. One cannot speak of provisional positing without thereby admitting emptiness and its harmony with provisional positing. According to Zhili, the truth of provisional positing in the perfect teaching signifies, more specifically, neither the conditioned arising nor merely the "establishment" or positing of dharmas, as in the lower teachings, but rather "inherent inclusion," (*ju*), the integration of all dharmas by each dharma, the fact that each dharma "avails itself" (*jia*) of all other dharmas

to become what it is.²⁹ This is the basis of the claim, found in Zhiyi's *Sinianchu* and derived from the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, that "all dharmas go to [i. e., are reducible to] form, to scent, to each speck of dust," etc., so that we can speak of "form only, scent only, sound only" as well as the more usual "consciousness only." Consciousness is emphasized only because of its greater utility for purposes of contemplation and cultivation. As Zhili puts, any dharma, chosen at random, is the totality, the single unifier of all dharmas (*Suiju yifa jie de wei zong*).³⁰

Any given dharma is thus to be regarded as (1) thoroughly negated (other-referenced, passive, dependent), and also as (2) provisionally posited as a certain particular entity with specific characteristics, and at the same time, one is to see (3) the perfect harmony, indeed mutual implication of these two views of the same dharma. To view the perfect harmony is to preserve the particular characteristics of a given dharma while seeing that this phenomenon is the center and essence of everything else, a self-creative power, the one explanatory principle to which everything else can be reduced, availing itself of everything else (self-sufficient, independent, irreducibly what it is).

These three truths are correlated in Tiantai with "the three tracks" (*sangui*), i. e., the track of subjective consciousness (*guanzhao*, contemplation), action (*zicheng*, literally, what is depended on for becoming and completion, i. e., practice) and objectivity (*zhenxing*, the true nature). In Zhiyi's *Jinguangming xuanyi*, ten triads are correlated, representing ten stages along the three tracks.³¹ Each triad, therefore, contains one member correlating with each of these three general ideas: subjectivity, action and objectivity. These range from the "three paths," i. e., karma (action), defilement-vexations (subjective consciousness) and suffering (objectivity, i. e., the truth about what exists), to the three buddha natures: the active cause (*yuanyin*) of the achievement of buddhahood, the revealing cause (*liaoyin*) and the objective cause (*zhengyin*), and finally to the three virtues: liberation (action), *prajñā* (subjective consciousness) and dharmakāya (objectivity).³² Here we see all phenomena analyzed into an omnipresent trinity of action, subjectivity and objectivity. The moment of negation, of emptiness among the three truths, is correlated with subjectivity, provisional positing is correlated

29. See Zhili, *Siming shiyi shu*, T. 46.836a.

30. *Zhiyao chao*, T. 46.708b.

31. The ten triads are also discussed in the *Fahua xuanyi*, T. 33.744a.

32. See Wang Zhiyuan, *Sungchu Tiantai Foxue qinmao* (Beijing: Zhongguo jianshe chubanshe, 1989) 16-25, for a fuller discussion of these ten trinities.

with action. Their mutual non-obstruction and inclusion, the mean, is the element of objectivity, the ultimate truth about them. The three truths give us the inner structure of all the terms in the three tracks, understood in terms of the root idea of conditioned arising.

The status of mind is conceived very differently here than it had been by Zongmi. The phenomenon of awareness as manifested in human beings and other sentient beings is a form of one of the three tracks, subjective consciousness, necessarily bound up with and implying the contrary tracks of objectivity and action, each of which also implies the unification of the other two. All of these are regarded as unfoldings of the implications of the simple doctrine of conditioned arising. Hence consciousness has no special or prior status relative to physical form, or to anything else. It is indeed the absolute itself, but this is equally true of any other given dharma. Indeed, the only consciousness experienced is not a "numinal awareness," but something thoroughly conditioned, and it is precisely this fact that makes it "marvelous"; it is this conditionedness that is the basis of all the three truths as manifested in everything. The momentary joining of object and sense organ in the deluded consciousness makes *this* consciousness a useful object of contemplation. Zongmi says of the numinal awareness, "the mind is self-knowing, not dependent on conditioned arising, not arising due to the object. The one word awareness is the gate to all marvels."³³ But this would make it a useless object of contemplation for Zhili, since what is to contemplated is precisely conditioned arising and the necessary implication of all three truths and all they entail. The goal of all practice and contemplation is to see the three truths, not to see mind, which is just a special instance thereof.

This is a point of great importance for Zhili: Zongmi's doctrine is pernicious because of its negative effect on practice. To enjoin beginners to contemplate the true mind is to cut off their entry into the truth, for the purpose of completed contemplation and practice is finally to perceive this true mind, which is necessarily also to perceive true form, true scent, true skandhas and so on. This absolute is indeed everywhere, as "even a child knows," but this is merely the "identity of name," (the first and lowest of Zhiyi's six levels of identity between samsāra and nirvāna) not the final identity of realization (the last). Zongmi describes the cultivation of this "awareness":

33. Zongmi, *Chanyuan zhuquanji du xu, juan. 2.* (T. 48.405b)

Non-cutting, non-cultivating, freely following [the mind-nature]—only this is called liberation. The nature is like space, neither augmented nor diminished; what need is their to add to or repair it? Simply extinguish karma in all times and places and nourish the holy embryo, and it will increasingly manifest, naturally divine and marvelous. This is true awakening, true cultivation, true realization. . . . Awareness is without any [determinate] thought or form—where then can there be any mark of self or other in it? When one realizes that all marks are empty, the mind is without thought. When a thought arises, one becomes immediately aware of it, and once one is aware of it, it becomes nothing. The marvelous gates of practice all depend on this. . . . After one realizes that all marks are no marks, one naturally cultivates without cultivation . . .”³⁴

The essence of cultivation is here portrayed as seeing that any determinate form or thought that might arise in consciousness is actually nullified because it can be seen as simply the mind itself, rather than that particular form. The mind itself is without any determinate character. To see that all determinations are manifestations of this indetermination (marklessness) is enlightenment; this is to reduce the particular determinations to indetermination, giving them value only in that determination per se is in fact a manifestation of indetermination, and hence is the absolute. This absolute is equally accessible through any perception, and the procedure in any case is the same: to ignore the determination itself (see it as “no determination,” “no mark”) and reduce it to the markless mind. What particular thing it is simply does not matter. The recognition of this ever-present awareness is, according to Zongmi, what all the Chan patriarchs up to Shenhui had been obliquely indicating, and it was what Shenhui openly proclaimed, because he could not find anyone of sufficient karmic acuity to understand it through silent direct pointing.³⁵ In the elaborate meditation techniques advocated by the Tiantai patriarchs, attention is directed specifically to particular types of phenomena, dealing with them in their finite determination and offering a different analysis of each, showing how this particular dharma is a manifestation of the structure described by the three truths. To claim that one need only be constantly mindful of this mind is to imply that these techniques are unnecessary. Such an implication is unacceptable to Zhili.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

The authors of these polemics, both Tiantai and Chan, accepted many of the same texts, but interpreted them according to their school's individual doctrines. Thus, Zhili and Zongmi would agree on the identity of defilement and enlightenment. Zhili's point in his critique of Zongmi is the mere claim of identity tells us very little because it can be taken in a wide variety of ways. When Zongmi claims that all things, every scent and sight, are the absolute, he is, according to Zhili, taking this to mean that since they are all actually mind, and mind is the absolute, scent and sight are the absolute. That is, they are mediated by another term, mind, in attaining their status as absolute. This speck of dust is absolute, not in that it is a speck of dust, but in that it, like everything that manifests, is manifested in mind, has no being other than that of the mind, and hence is absolute. There is nothing absolute about "dustness" per se. As Zhili says of the Zongmi-influenced Shanwai scholars:

They directly point to the dharma of mind and call it principle [i. e., the absolute]; they do not point to [all] phenomena as being identical with principle. Only because the two phenomena, sentient beings and buddhas, are reduced to mind do they call them identical to principle. For them, each dharma does not immediately, right here, possess the three thousand dharmas [comprising the universe]. Thus we know these teachers, although they quote [Zhiyi's] dictum about "form only," twist it so that it only means [an instance of] "only the true mind."³⁶

Here we have the problem of what identity means for these various exegetes, as discussed by Zhili in his discussion of Bodhidharma's three disciples. This identity is conceived by Zhili as consisting in the fact that the three thousand dharmas, the determinate features of the entire universe as seen from every point of view, are implicitly contained in every particular dharma, both in principle and in phenomena. Any given dharma, for example, a speck of dust, is the universal totality (*zong*), and every other dharma is its particular manifestation or part (*bie*) in two senses:

1. *In principle*, all the three thousand, including all the phenomena in the experience of buddhas and hell beings, mutually inhere in any given speck of dust—its nature is the three-thousandness of the three thousand, including all their mutual connections and determinations; they are what make it what it is, they are its innermost essence. To

36. Zhili, *Zhiyao chao*, T. 46.709a.

look at this one dharma is to look at all actually existing dharmas. To speak of this dharma is to speak of the entire totality of the universe as manifested here and now, with this particular aspect forming the focal point and all the others forming the background. To speak of another dharma is to speak of this same totality, but with a different focal point highlighted. This relationship is what is elucidated by the three truths, the simultaneous being-itself and being-others of every dharma, and the ten tracks that grow out of them. This is the “root of non-dwelling,”³⁷ the mean which is neither emptiness nor positing-by-availing (*jia*), but is both. Without this speck of dust, the absolute (which is itself three thousandness) would not be the absolute; part of what it is to be the absolute is to include this speck of dust, which has a particular place in the system of the three thousand dharmas. As such this dharma, even if it is an experience of a being in the lowest hell, can never be eliminated.

2. Each dharma is equal to the totality *in phenomena* in the sense that, as the *Vimalakīrtinirdesā Sūtra* says, the defilements are the seeds of buddhahood.³⁸ That is, this speck of dust can develop into any other of the three thousand; it has the potential to become any of them without exception, it is the starting point from which any other can be attained, merely by developing, in actual fact, (some of) the potentialities of its own inner nature, which is in fact just this three-thousandness. For a buddha-dharma to become a hell-dharma, or for a hell-dharma to become a buddha-dharma, does not require any perversion of its own inner essence as such, nor even a relinquishing of its particular finite determination; it is merely a change in focus in the totality. From this point of view, defilement is identical to enlightenment in that whatever determination is in defilement, in the phenomenal world, all the three thousand phenomena, is also in enlightenment, and in the absolute which is neither and both, in the essence of things, and can never be eliminated. The absolute includes the realms of both hell being and buddha, both ultimate and provisional teachings, and in fact these all include each other, since the totality is the essence of each. Any particular dharma, with all its characteristics and distinctions, is

37. See Mou Zongsan, *Foxing yu Bore*, vol. 2 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1989) 675-760, for a full discussion of the importance of the concept of the “root of non-dwelling,” a notion taken from the *Vimalakīrtinirdesā Sūtra*, in Tiantai thought.

38. See Zhili, *Shiyi shu*, T. 46.835b.

fully accounted for in the essence of any other particular dharma. Dustness per se is an essential part of the absolute itself, which cannot be correctly conceived without dustness, without this particular speck of dust. Moreover, dustness (or better, *this* dustness) is an essential part of deluded mind, of buddhahood, of asura experience, of deva experience, of hell being experience, and vice versa, they are all essential to this dustness. This finite determination is itself an exemplification of the essential threefoldness, of the three tracks, of the three truths, of the mutual implication of negation and positing, of the moments of subjectivity, objectivity and action, all of which are involved in a specific way in each particular dharma. Thus by comprehending thoroughly (via contemplation of the three truths in meditation) the nature of this speck of dust or this moment of thought per se, of its *particular determinations*, we understand the absolute.

Whatever may be the problems involved in this line of thought, it is clearly very different from that embraced by Zongmi. We can now understand the criticism of the latter view quoted at the beginning of this essay. Zhili speaks of three types of identity. First, there is the union of two separate things. According to Zhili's follower Kedu,³⁹ this corresponds to Nizongchi's position that delusion is to be cut off in order to realize principle, that is, that the two are joined together in everyday experience, and one can be eliminated, leaving the other intact. Next there is turning over of a single thing which has two sides, which Kedu says corresponds to Daoyu's view that when one is deluded, all is delusion, but when one is enlightened, it is the way—that is, one object is seen from now one angle, now another, but the object itself apparently has these two distinct aspects, which can be seen in separation from one another. It is this position which sounds dangerously close to the Tiantai view; the difference is that for Tiantai both versions must be present and visible simultaneously, with no change in the object. This means that Zhili did not say what kind of identity was implied by the position put forth by Huike, i.e., the position of Zongmi himself. He merely says that this type of identity is unable to take (manifest) evil as (inherent) evil, and hence does not reach the complete meaning of identity, that is, the total identification of this thing just as it is with its opposite.

39. In his *Shibuermen zhiyao chao xiangjie*, ZZ 2-5-2. (*Xuzang jing*, vol. 100 [Taipei: Xinwenfeng] 339-341).

It would seem then that the Zongmi / Huike view would involve an identity where one of the terms was asserted to be a complete illusion, or a misperception of the other thing, as if one were to mistake a rope for a snake; the rope and snake are identical in that there is no snake, and what you were perceiving as the snake was in fact precisely the rope. Here the misperceiving supplies the determination "snake," and this falls outside the rope itself, in the observer, who somehow stands apart. For Zhili, on the contrary, it is part of the nature of the rope that it be perceived as, and manifest itself, as a snake. This snakesness itself is in fact part of what the rope is, and in fact, if thoroughly understood through correct practice, contains the whole nature of the rope; to understand the snake is to understand the rope. The nature of snakesness is the nature of ropeness, and this nature is not a blank marklessness, but includes the determinations of both snake and rope.

Zongmi uses the metaphor of the *maṇi* jewel in his critique of the Hongzhou school of Chan. The jewel represents "the one numinous mind; its perfectly pure luminous reflectivity, empty tranquil awareness; and its complete lack of coloration, the fact that awareness is intrinsically without any differentiated manifestations."⁴⁰ The colorless jewel reflects any color it comes into contact with, as the mind "follows conditions." For Zongmi, the Hongzhou doctrine that all ordinary activities are manifestations of the original mind is like seeing a jewel that is next to a black object, and concluding that blackness is the jewel's marvelous reflectivity. Consequently, the Hongzhou take any similar black object to be the jewel, and can never apprehend its true colorless state, reflecting nothing, as in the mind's state of "no thought."⁴¹ Zhili's position differs from both the putative Hongzhou position (with its potential anti-nomian consequences) and Zongmi's critique thereof. For Zhili, there can never be a time when the jewel is reflecting nothing; it is always colored. To apprehend its "colorlessness" means rather just to see the whole array of contrary colors it is capable of reflecting, all of which, in their particular differences from one another, are intrinsic to the notion of reflectivity. "Reflectivity as such" makes no sense; to understand reflectivity is to understand all that can be reflected, including blackness. To understand that the color seen in the jewel is only a reflection is to see that the jewel, even in its blackness, is capable of whiteness with no change at all in its nature, such that, since *all* black is reflected black,

40. Gregory 245.

41. *Ibid.* 246.

black has white intrinsically “in it” and white has black intrinsically “in it.” Neither white nor reflectivity need be sought outside the blackness presently being reflected. There is still a premium set on whiteness here, rather than on reflectivity as such (as in Zongmi) or the putative *wertfreiheit* of the Hongzhou school, which values neither whiteness nor blackness nor reflectivity above anything else. For Zhili, it is simply that this whiteness is intrinsic to blackness, and vice versa, and when this is realized, the blackness is identical to whiteness (not only to “reflectivity”).⁴² This is taking evil as evil, and seeing complete identity in the thing just as it is.

This is why Zhili lays such stress on the doctrine of inherent evil (*xing e*), or the evil inherent in the buddha nature, for only this makes the particular evil determinations themselves the whole absolute. This evil phenomenon itself is inherent in the absolute, and it may thus be called inherent evil; since this inherent absolute includes all the three thousand dharmas, penetrating even to the buddha-dharmas, it is “marvelous” in its own right. Indeed, the Buddha is only the Buddha due to his having realized his identity with the other nine realms; he could not relinquish them without destroying his own nature, and ceasing to be the Buddha. They are eternal parts of the essence of the Buddha himself, who can never eliminate his inherent evil. Moreover, each of these parts contains the whole, and hence every evil dharma is itself, just as it is, the absolute. Elsewhere Zhili elaborates on the importance of inherent evil in his conception of identity:

We discern the difference between different types of identity by means of whether or not there is inherent inclusion [of all, including evil, determinations]. How is this? If the dharmadhātu about which one is deluded does not in itself inherently possess the three obstacles [karma, defilement and retribution], and only has these three obstacles because of [one’s own] tainted [understanding, *ran*], then even if we speak of the one [buddha] nature following along with conditions, the taint and delusion are still considered self-sufficient (*zizhu*), and the poison and harm are creative of something new; to go back to the source, the three obstacles must be destroyed, and thus the meaning of identicalness is not complete. This cannot yet be called the poison which is identical to principle and the [buddha] nature, and thus this doctrine belongs to the special teaching. . . . If, however,

42. From this we can see how Zhili might have criticized the Hongzhou school, which in spite of its historical ascendancy within Chan was never as influential among Shanwai theorists as Zongmi’s ideas, and hence is not directly confronted in these polemics.

the dharmadhātu about which one is deluded originally and inherently includes the three obstacles, which manifest because of one's tainted [understanding, which is itself inherently included therein], then the taint and delusion are dependent [on the buddha nature], and the poison and harm create nothing that was not already there. When one returns to the source, the taint and poison are still there as always. Only this perfects the meaning of identity. . . . Thus we should know that the substance inherently possesses the three obstacles, and when it gives rise to the function of the three obstacles, it still functions in accordance with substance. . . . In the perfect teaching, since inherent evil has been explained, delusions of view and thought, large and small, are poisons which are identical to the [buddha] nature. This being the case, these poisons themselves are that which is capable of overcoming and destroying [poisons]. Since the poisons are what can destroy poisons, they can be absolute just as they are—where is there any differentiation between that which destroys and that which is destroyed, that which traces and that which is traced? Poison and harm are identical to the mean, all dharmas are reducible to harm, the awareness that negates it and posits it are mutually identical. . . .⁴³

Here Zhili goes so far as to assert that the defilements, in that they are “identical” to buddhahood and other defilement-conquering dharmas, contain in themselves their own conquest. This conception can be traced back to Zhiyi's comparison of evil to a piece of bamboo, which includes in its own nature the potential for fire (good), which, when manifested, in fact consumes the bamboo; moreover, when the bamboo is gone, the fire also vanishes.⁴⁴ In practical terms, there is no need to go in search of something *outside* of the defilements to overcome them; in meditation, one merely concentrates on the deluded mind itself, not by contemplating it by means of or in terms of some other pure mind, but merely by seeing what is only implicit in this suffering, that is, the true nature of this suffering, which will become manifest through this practice of concentration. Implicit in this suffering and delusion are the three tracks, grounded on the three truths. When fully manifest, these three tracks are called dharmakāya, prajñā and liberation. When still implicit, they are called samsāra, delusion and karma. In either case, the entire sequence

43. Zhili, *Shi Qing Guanyin shu zhong xiaofu san yong* (T. 46.872c, *Jiaoxing lu*, juan 2).

44. *Fahua xuanyi*, T. 33.743c-744a. Cf. also Zhanran's statement: “Not only are the substance and nature of ignorance and dharmata one in what is contemplated; the consciousness doing the contemplating is itself ignorance.” (Quoted by Zhili in *Ibid.*)

of implicit and explicit states are inherent in each, and the final stages, when fully explicit, are not to be understood apart from the prior implicit ones, nor from the entire process of revelation of what had been implicit. According to Zhili, only this relationship between phenomenal suffering and ultimate liberation can be called a relation of identity.

Zhili thus asserts that the resemblance between his teaching and that which is transcended in Zongmi's story is only superficial. There is a crucial difference in understanding between the two doctrines in question: what is lacking in the rejected views of Daoyu and Nizongchi is, in sum, the peculiarly Tiantai doctrine of inherent evil. Without this notion, in Zhili's view, all understandings of the relationship between the opposites of delusion and enlightenment, and specifically what is meant by their identity, are superficial and fall short of the perfect teaching.

The Status of Upāya and the Nature of Dharma Transmission

This notion is closely linked with the Tiantai doctrine concerning *upāya*. For just as the Buddha contains within himself all the other realms, and would not be the Buddha if hell beings and hungry ghosts did not also inhere in him, so the ultimate truth cannot be separated from provisional truth, and would not be itself without the lesser teachings that precede it. The provisional truth can never be eliminated or left behind, because the ultimate truth would then fail to be the ultimate truth; it is only ultimate by virtue of its mutual inherence in the provisional truth, which is also, therefore, ultimate. In Tiantai, *upāya* is seen as having a profound ontological significance as the most perfect manifestation of the three truths. Hence the *Lotus*, with its focus on *upāya*, is honored by them above all other scriptures. Huaize, a Yuan dynasty follower of Zhili's, in his *Tiantai Chuan Foxinyin ji*, quotes the *Lotus* as saying, "The real ultimate mark of all dharmas is none other than provisional *upāya* and real ultimacy." (*zhufa shixiang buchuan quanshi*), which he glosses by saying:

"All dharmas" are the good and evil active cause and revealing cause [or buddha natures, that is, the second and third causes of buddhahood, corresponding to the second and third of the three tracks, provisional positing and emptiness], sharing the same substance within *upāya*; the real-mark is the good and evil objective cause [or buddha nature, the first of the three causes of buddhahood, i. e., the objective cause proper, corresponding to the first of the three tracks, the mean] sharing the same substance within ultimacy."⁴⁵

45. *Xuzangjing*, vol. 101 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng) 802.

Here the real nature of all phenomena is asserted to be none other than the principle of *upāya* itself, of a provisional positing which is perpetually exposed as false and superseded. The truth, in other words, is the process of falsehood [partial truth] leading to truth.⁴⁶ All dharmas are here characterized as *quan*, provisional, *upāya*, a term used originally to apply to types of teaching; the application of this concept thus overflows from the pedagogical into the ontological. The logic behind this overflow is seen in the notion that the phenomenal world is a “cause” of buddhahood. Technically, it is two of the three causes (identified in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*) associated with consciousness and action. These two causes pertain to the moral sphere of practice, as opposed to the “object” of cultivation, the truth to which one is to become awakened. In both cases there is necessarily “good and evil,” since these are all considered necessary conditions for the accomplishment of buddhahood.⁴⁷ Indeed, the direct cause, the truth, the real mark, turns out to be nothing more than the two other causes. The provisional steps along the path, seen in their necessary totality in their mutual non-obstruction as the third truth (the mean), is nothing but the relationship of the other two truths. Thus Huaize is able to speak of “Universally manifesting the form body from the position of the fruit [of buddhahood], hanging down and forming the nine realms, playing in the six paths of existence.” Here the nine realms (everything there is besides the Buddha) are depicted as something put forth by the Buddha as a teaching device, on the model of the provisional teachings described in the *Lotus*. Moreover, Huaize insists that this “putting forth” is not a deliberate miraculous act by the Buddha, but is rather a direct and natural expression of his own innermost nature, for

46. If taken seriously, and put, for example, into mathematical terms, this suggests a very strange situation, since one of the two terms is said to be equal to itself plus something else. That is, if X =ultimate truth and Y =provisional truth, we are here told that $X=X+Y$. This reduces to, $X=Y+(Y+(Y+(Y+(Y\dots))))$, and so on ad infinitum. If we were to be so foolish as to “solve” this equation, we would find only that $Y=0$, and that X = this infinite structure of mutually superceding zeroes, and this, indeed, reveals something important about the Tiantai notion of the absolute. The provisional phenomenal world is nothing more than the absolute, nothing in addition to it, and thus nothing in a sense, in that it is nothing in its own right; but at the same time it is an intrinsic part of the definition of the absolute itself.

47. Huaize goes on to specify that the good causes are the ten thusnesses of the buddha realm, while the evil causes are the ten thusnesses of the nine other realms, all of which necessarily mutually inhere.

the real-mark includes provisional positing within itself. This, he explains, is what is meant by “non-creation” and “non-doing.” The world is thus to be experienced as a teaching device, something that is in itself false if taken literally but true in that it is manifested by and in fact inherent in the truth itself. The world is a means devised skillfully to lead one to the truth, which will turn out to be this principle of truth and half-truth itself, fully elaborated.

This doctrine is important in the Tiantai attitude toward Chan, and toward the attitude toward *upāya* expressed in Chan rhetoric. Indeed, Huaize’s work ends with an extended critique of the Chan tradition concerning the transmission of a special doctrine to Mahākāśyapa. Interestingly, it does not deny that Mahākāśyapa received the transmission of the dharma, for this had been declared at the beginning of Zhiyi’s *Mohe zhiguan*, with Mahākāśyapa identified as the first patriarch of the *Tiantai* lineage. Instead, he denies that what was given to this patriarch was a “special transmission outside the teaching.” Huaize reasserts the ultimacy of the *Lotus*, the importance of the doctrine of inherent evil as a cause of realized buddhahood,⁴⁸ and thus defines “transmission” as what was given to all those about whom the Buddha prophesied in the *Lotus*, which ultimately includes all sentient beings. Those who receive the transmission are described as:

diligently studying the buddha-vehicle and broadly transmitting the holy transforming [teaching]; or in the presence of their teacher, earnestly receiving instruction—this is known through meeting with him; or studying the subtleties and searching out the secrets of the sūtras and commentaries—this is known through hearing him. Between the meeting and the hearing, the two minds shine on each other, with a mysterious comprehension and silent tallying—this is called transmission. My mind originally possesses it, it is not attained from others—this is called non-transmission. Although mind originally possesses it, it only becomes known when indicated and shown. This is called transmitting this non-transmitted marvel, like a seal stamped on the mind—this is called the mind-seal.

48. As he says later in the same text, “The man of the perfect teaching inherently includes both good and evil, just as ‘The superior man is not a specialized vessel’ [*Analects* 2:12]. He is capable of both good and evil, his substance and function are not two. But the man of the special teaching does not inherently include both good and evil, just like a purely good man who is unable to create evil. Only when he is fettered by delusion can he create evil.” *Ibid.* 833.

Huaize goes on to say that this mind-seal is associated with enlightenment from the side of self-practice, and that it was passed on to all the bodhisattvas in the *Lotus Sūtra*, which he quotes in support of his claim. He goes on to assert that a special charge was indeed given to Mahākāśyapa, but that it concerned only “transformation of others,” that is, the spread of the teaching, the beginning of a lineage, and quotes many texts in support of this distinction. This charge was given generally to the whole assembly and also especially to Mahākāśyapa. The latter received a special charge for a number of specific reasons. For example, his ascetic practices would make the dharma long endure, and that by attaching this charge to someone with small (Hīnayāna) attainment, it would lead more easily to practice and transformation of others. In other words, this transmission of the dharma to Mahākāśyapa was wholly a matter of *upāya*, which according to Tiantai doctrine is always necessarily both provisional and ultimate, like all other parts of the doctrine. It was not that he had some special realization that the others lacked, but just that he was the one who could pass on the dharma to later ages—in other words, his selection had to do solely with the transformation of others. Huaize asks, “How could it be that the transmission of the seal of the buddha-mind was given to Mahākāśyapa alone, and all the others did not comprehend it? The people of the world, being unclear about this, have cheated the saints and sages, and deludedly given rise to pernicious doctrines, unable to know the meaning of transmission of self-practice and transformation of others.” This parry, like Zhili’s attack of Zongmi, is, by Huaize’s own account, a response to a critique of the Tiantai doctrine by Chan sympathizers, and seeks to turn the tables. In his description of the transmission of the mind seal, aspects like self-practice and the transformation of others are carefully distinguished and their textual referents identified. The stress is clearly on long study and specific practices, a characteristic of the Tiantai approach that stands in stark contrast to Chan rhetoric on this issue.

For the Tiantai tradition, this relationship between self-practice and transformation of others, stressed in the last line quoted above, is of crucial importance; the two have a specific, determinate relationship, corresponding to particular stages on the Buddhist path and supported by specific texts, and must be clearly distinguished. At the same time, according to Tiantai notions of the ontological status of *upāya*, the two are in fact mutually inherent. Both sides of this relationship, their distinction and their identity, are to be kept in view; only then is their true structure understood. This is analogous to the conception of the three

truths, where the true structure of emptiness and provisional positing is understood only by seeing their distinction *and* simultaneously seeing their mutual non-obstruction, the mean—this is to see “not only the mean.” Hence the transmission of a “direct pointing,” which purportedly did away with *upāya*, separating self-practice from the transformation of others and treating the latter as inessential, is not the transmission of the whole truth. By a familiar Tiantai paradox, dispensing with *upāya* is just what marks it as *upāya*, as holding to “only the mean,” the “special” or “separate” teaching. The rounded or perfect teaching is characterized by “not only the mean,” which must include *upāya*, the means for teaching others, within itself. Thus Huaize does not mean to denigrate Mahākāśyapa; rather, he undercuts the Chan tradition by saying that he was indeed great, but only in that he alone understood the importance of *upāya*, the mutual inherence of self-realization and transformation of others. He alone realized that true enlightenment was inseparable from the process of going on to teach others employing the full range of *upāya* used by the Buddha throughout his career. It is for this reason that he is credited with founding the lineage. Thus, the tables are turned on the Chan tradition: what made Mahākāśyapa the patriarch was not that he had some special transmission outside the teachings which could dispense with *upāya*. Rather, he was the patriarch precisely because he mastered all the teachings, that he alone, of all who had become enlightened, understood and utilized *upāya* exhaustively.

This line of attack is perhaps even clearer in the Southern Song monk Fadeng’s work, *Yuandun zongyen*, the central concern of which is just this issue. Fadeng’s work begins as follows:

The [*Mohezhi*guan] says, “[The dharma that was preached] first in the Deer Park, next on Vulture Peak and finally in the Crane Grove [where Śākyamuni died]—this dharma was given to Mahākāśyapa.” This shows that the Tathāgata’s treasury of the true dharma-eye was given to Mahākāśyapa, which was then passed on [to his dharma-heirs] in sequence and never cut off. The reason it was given to Mahākāśyapa was because of his advanced years and eminent virtue, his ascetic practice of cleansing disciplines (*dhuta*), which made him able to propagate [the dharma]. It was also because the proper karmic conditions were with him. But wherein lies [the essence of] the dharma passed on to him? How was it passed on? What was its size [i. e., its place in the classification of teachings, from “small” (Hinayāna) to “large” (Mahāyāna)]? Here I will try to put forth [the answers to] these [questions].

Some say, "At the dharma meeting on Vulture Peak, the World-honored one held up a flower, and Kāśyapa smiled; this is the mark [of the dharma he received]." But this theory has no basis at all in the Indian scriptures, and must be considered merely a metaphor created by later people.

Some say, "In the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras there is preaching through another [that is, the Buddha speaks through one of his disciples]; this is the passing on of the dharma." But this theory still does not specify what it is that is transmitted. Moreover, in the *prajñā* sūtras it is Subhūti and Śāriputra who receive [the Buddha's miraculous power in this way], not Kāśyapa.

Some say, "The Tathāgata was giving out [the dharma] constantly, everywhere he went; how could it be restricted to one time and place?" This theory is extremely vague and unfocused. . . .

But if the explanation of the passing on of the dharma is not made clear, we do not know what dharma it is that is being transmitted, nor how it is that the patriarchs passed it on to each other. Not knowing its essentials, it is difficult to [further] transmit it. In this way, we have only the words "transmitting the dharma," but not the actuality. Alas! To "hear it on the road and then immediately go speaking of it in the streets" (A reference to *Analectis* 17:14) was already ridiculed by the ancients; how much more [would they ridicule those] who do not even know the reason? The glory of the teaching of the buddhas and patriarchs is flourishing especially in the present age; how could there be no reason for it?

People of later ages gave rise to heretical views, and thus we have the "special transmission outside the teaching," also known as "[The transmission is] simply holding up a flower and that is all." But among students of the Buddha, although there is a difference between Chan [meditation] and doctrine [teachings], since they all depend on the Buddha, they must all take the buddhadharma as their standard. The buddhadharma is precisely that which was transmitted to Kāśyapa. *What was transmitted to Kāśyapa was nothing but that Dharma that was first [preached] in the Deer Park, next on Vulture Peak and finally in the Crane Grove*; when was there an additional "special transmission"? If we seek out the reason [for this erroneous theory], it is that [these people] did not comprehend the source, and fearing that Chan and doctrine would be mixed together, they came up with this theory of the "special transmission," not knowing that the "special" [teaching, in the Tiantai classification] is itself unacceptable. . . . Some say, "We transmit the mind with the mind." *But I would like to know, how is it that they know this mind can be transmitted? Is it not through the explanations given in the teachings? How much more so in that "Words and letters are free of any self-nature; they are identical to liberation"?* (Quoting from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.) From this we know that Chan and doctrine both point to what was given on Vulture Peak.

How could what Kāśyapa transmitted be in conflict with the buddhas and patriarchs? . . .

The transmission of the dharma is the transmission of the essence of the buddha-mind. You should know that this essence can be looked at in its wholeness or in its division into parts. *Its parts are all the teachings that were preached throughout the Buddha's career. . . . In its wholeness, it is the Lotus Sūtra's "opening of the provisional to reveal the real," which explains the Buddha's wisdom and vision, and reveals the source and self-nature of all dharmas. All earlier preaching was upāya. But now that the real has been revealed, it all becomes Buddha's wisdom and vision.* Kāśyapa did not understand the first time. The next time, it was explained with the parable of the "high, vast, great cart" and Kāśyapa heard it and rejoiced in his heart, and thus truly received it. *Truly it is because this wisdom and vision of Buddha includes and integrates all knowledge and all views that it is said, "The unexcelled correct dharma is given to Kāśyapa."*⁴⁹ . . . This shows that the mark of passing the dharma was right there on Vulture Peak, and has no other explanation. It just refers to the Buddha's wisdom and vision. Although the dharma includes Hinayāna and Mahāyāna, at this point they all revert to a single path. . . . When the ancients said the World-Honored One held up a flower and Kāśyapa smiled, was it not this [wisdom and vision of the Buddha conveyed in the *Lotus*] they were symbolizing?

This wisdom and vision of Buddha—what person does not possess it? What dharma is not thus? The essence of what was given on Vulture Peak lies in this alone. What the patriarchs transmitted was just this dharma. What Zhiyi was greatly enlightened to was just this dharma, and the vast river of his discerning explanation was all the explanation of this dharma. The ultimate truth propagated by Nāgārjuna with words and letters was this dharma. The inconceivable three contemplations with the one mind in [Zhiyi's] *Mohe zhiguan* is simply reflection on this dharma. Riding the bejeweled chariot straight to the *bodhimaṇḍa* is to realize this dharma. When Bodhidharma exclusively transmitted the mind-seal, he was transmitting this dharma. How great this dharma is! It is the source of both Chan and doctrine. Although its streams differ, the source is the same. The essence of what all [these streams] reduce to is also only one. Those who chase after the streams and lose the source are ignorant of the essentials of what is transmitted. This is to betray the Buddha's appearance in the world, since the enlightenment he transmitted will be destroyed by this.⁵⁰

49. A reference to the Buddha's commendation of Kāśyapa in the "Prophecies" (*shouji*) chapter of the *Lotus*, after Kāśyapa has recited the verse version of the story of the "prodigal son."

50. *Xuzangjing*, op. cit., 399-400. Emphases added.

There is much that is noteworthy in this passage. Leaving aside for the moment the typical Tiantai interpretations of other figures in Buddhist hagiography, we notice that, again, the transmission to Kāśyapa is recognized as legitimate; it is the nature of what was transmitted that is contested. Kedeng wishes to assert that what Mahākāśyapa and all who followed him (including, presumably, Bodhidharma) transmitted was none other than the buddhadharma as recorded in the scriptures; it is not a special transmission outside the doctrine. The acknowledgment of Kāśyapa in the *Lotus* ensures that this transmission is indeed legitimate. Nonetheless, it is only one of the many forms that this teaching took, one of the “parts” (*bie*) of the Buddha’s teaching, the totality of which is given in the *Lotus*, which in fact revealed that the parts were all parts of a whole. The parts are naturally no different from the whole; the whole, divided, is the parts and the parts, together, are the whole. But no one part can replace the whole. The error of these Chan exponents is to take Kāśyapa’s transmission as sufficient unto itself; in truth it must be considered in its proper context with all the other teachings, compared to the discourse in the scriptures, which, Kedeng asserts, are utilized by the Chanists themselves quite freely for their fundamental conceptions. For Tiantai, the intellectual acquisition of these conceptions, although not the ultimate realization of truth, are a necessary and integral part of the process of that realization.⁵¹ Hence words and letters cannot be considered external to the ultimate truth transmitted, as Chan rhetoric seems to claim. Indeed, the career and teaching methods of the Buddha are intrinsically not separable from the content of the ultimate truth that is transmitted. The truth that is transmitted includes the determinations of being “first [preached] in the Deer Park, next on Vulture Peak and finally in the Crane Grove.” It must include all parts of the teaching, even those that have been superseded; these are not to be left behind, but included in the final realization of truth. Thus the ultimate is described as “the Buddha’s wisdom and vision,” characterized as the integration and inclusion of all knowledge and views, that is, the points of views of all other sentient beings. These are constitutive of the Buddha’s wisdom, which is simply the integration of all of them, overcoming their mutual exclusivity while omitting none. The content of the Buddha’s wisdom includes the views of all beings, which serve as the conditions

51. It is, for example, classified as the second of the “six identities,” i. e., the identity of name. This consists simply in hearing or reading the words that tell one that one is in fact identical with the Buddha.

for the various distinct teachings he put forth during his career. Hence Kedeng says, "All earlier preaching was *upāya*. But now that the real has been revealed, it all becomes Buddha's wisdom and vision."

The Tiantai view is inherently syncretic, since it claims that the truest teaching is the one that excludes no other. It is no surprise, then, that here, as in Zhili, there is no attempt to place Chan completely outside the pale of Buddhism; rather, it must be "put in its place." But there are many ways of putting all the parts together, and many types of syncretism. Although Kedeng's rhetoric and tone may be more accommodating than Zhili's, both probably advocated the same position for Chan in the overall system of teachings.

Tiantai in Zongmi's Classification of Teachings

But there are other ways of accommodating Tiantai and Chan. Almost every school of Chinese Buddhism that employed a classification of teachings included competing teachings but relegated them to a non-ultimate status. It is instructive to consider Zongmi's own treatment of Tiantai, which he seems to consider a particular type of Chan. Zongmi, contrasting the "three truths" of the Tiantai school, as representative to the "nature teaching," with the "two truths" of the Mādhyamika, representative of the "emptiness teaching," to show the superiority of the former, writes:

The emptiness teaching says that all worldly and superworldly dharmas do not escape the two truths. . . . The nature teaching integrates all natures and marks and own-substances into the three truths. All physical form and other dharmas arise through conditions; this is the worldly truth. Causally arisen dharmas have no self-nature, and thus all dharmas are empty; this is the supermundane truth. . . . *The one true mind-substance is neither emptiness nor form, but is capable of being either emptiness or form.* This is the middle way, the ultimate truth. It is like a bright mirror, which also can be viewed from three perspectives. Of the images reflected in the mirror, we cannot call the green yellow; the beautiful and ugly are naturally distinguished. This is like the worldly truth. These images have no self-nature, each of them is completely empty. This is like the supermundane truth. The substance [of the mirror] is always bright, and is neither empty nor green or yellow, but is capable of being empty and of being green or yellow. This is like the ultimate truth. . . . Thus the Tiantai school cultivates the three types of concentration and insight according to these three

truths, in order to accomplish the three virtues [of nirvāṇa, i. e., prajñā, liberation, and the dharmakāya].⁵²

The characterization of the mean here is especially worthy of notice: it is called the “one true mind-substance” (*yizhen xinti*). Thus Zongmi integrates the Tiantai way of thinking into his own; the ultimate truth is characterized as specifically “mind,” and conceived on the model of a mirror which can reflect all forms without itself being attached to or stained by any of them. This teaching is honored by Zongmi as a non-ultimate form of the ultimate teaching, the content of which is identical to that advocated by Zongmi’s version of Huayen and Chan, but expressed in a less felicitous way.

It was this conception of the mean as “mind” that so irked Zhili, who insisted that the “mind” mentioned by Zhiyi in connection with the contemplation of the mean referred to the ordinary unenlightened mind, and was not meant as a characterization of the mean itself. The mean could be described equally well by any dharma; mind itself is to be considered no more than a dharma among dharmas, with no greater or lesser a claim to ultimacy than any other. To call the absolute “mind” is to link it intimately to one particular type of dharma, the dharma of mind, at the expense of all others. Even if this mind is asserted to be fundamentally different from the phenomenal dharma we ignorantly call “mind,” this use of the term “mind” indicates at least a kind of root metaphor by which the absolute is to be conceived. Zhili stresses that in coming to understand the absolute, there is no choice but to start from what is nearest in ordinary experience. The process of understanding and transcending and integrating these dharmas of direct experience are part of what enlightenment is.

Zongmi’s conception of the absolute, as something which is neither X nor not-X, but capable of performing as either X or no-X, echoes a conception that goes back at least to the *Huainanzi*, and probably much further. This is the conception that the Tiantai exegetes would characterize as “only the mean,” characteristic of the “special teaching.” The determinations themselves fall outside the absolute; the X that the absolute is not but is capable of being could be anything at all. The metaphor of the mirror is taken originally from Zhili’s *Mohe zhiguan*. There, however, we find the following:

52. *Chanyuan zhuquan jidu xu*, juan 3 (T. 48.407b). Emphasis added.

It should be known that one moment of thought is identical to emptiness, to provisional positing, to the mean. All of these are ultimate emptiness, all are the *tathāgatagarbha*, all are the real mark. They are not three and yet three, three and yet not three. They are neither joined nor separate, and yet joined and separate, and not not joined and not not separate. They cannot be identical or different, and yet they are identical and different. It is like a bright mirror: the brightness symbolizes being identical to emptiness, the image symbolizes being identical to provisional positing, the mirror symbolizes being identical to the mean. These are neither joined nor separate, and yet their togetherness and separateness are there as always. They are not one, two or three, and yet their twoness and threeness is not impeded.⁵³

The mirror simile here serves to illustrate the relationship between the three truths, asserting their mutual implication and identification. The idea being stressed is that, although these three aspects can be picked out and isolated in thought, they are in reality inseparable. There can be no talk here of "only the mean," that is, only the mirror is real. The simile is meant to suggest that, when considering any particular image in the mirror (the context here has to do with meditating on a particular moment of thought in the mind), one cannot separate the image itself from the light reflected by the mirror or from the substance of the mirror which is doing the reflecting; when looking at this image, it would be absurd to ask, "Which are you looking at, the image, the light, or the mirror?" To look at any is to look at all three. Nonetheless, one can understand what is meant by the question, keeping the three meanings distinct in one's mind. Hence the three are joined and not joined, separate and not separate. This is the point of Zhiyi's simile.

Zongmi takes it in a very different sense, stressing the sole ultimacy of the mirror (the mean), and identifying it with the mind. There is nothing intrinsically yellow or green about the mirror; the fact that these particular forms appear in it is dependent on something other than the mirror. The absolute is a kind of pure potentiality, which remains unchanged and unstained by any of its accidental differentiated actualizations. Hence the two earlier aspects remain one-sided here, and neither in itself seems to imply the other two; they must wait for the third truth to be integrated and related, and once that third truth is reached, they are no longer in force. Zongmi was thus able to take the Tiantai teaching of three truths as characteristic of the teaching he wished to advocate, a step that was to have, from Zhili's point of view, disastrous results among

53. *Mohe zhiguan, juan 1* (T. 46.9a).

scholars who claimed to belong to the Tiantai tradition itself, who would confuse this version of the Tiantai teaching with that of the Tiantai patriarchs.

Conclusion

From the above, we can perhaps come to understand some of the complex issues involved in the Chan / Tiantai confrontation, a confrontation which left its traces in the texts and elsewhere. Many other relevant issues and texts will have to be left unexplored for the moment. When pressed to do so, Tiantai exegetes criticized Chan claims to a special kind of transmission superior to any other, and were highly critical of a particular formulation of Chan doctrine, which also claimed a special pre-eminence over highly exegetical and doctrine-specific teachings, such as those favored in Tiantai circles. The conception of the absolute advocated by this formulation of Chan doctrine, and indeed underlying the claim to a special transmission of the buddha-mind outside the teachings, was criticized by the Tiantai writers for its lack of specificity, and for its ability to be conceived apart from the whole of the Buddhist tradition and teachings, and apart from the specific universe of three thousand particular types of dharmas that conditioned the process of gaining enlightenment. From this we can see, in a wider perspective, that of all Buddhist schools the Tiantai was perhaps more deeply committed to certain aspects of the mythological Buddhist universe, the *a priori* necessity of which they worked into their general theory of the absolute with great subtlety and sophistication. For these exegetes, the realization of the absolute necessarily involves the understanding of asuras, hungry ghosts and so on; without these, the absolute cannot be what it is. For other schools, it would be easier to say instead that whatever there is, the absolute is not that but is capable of functioning as that; the essential thing about the absolute is its ability to be neither this nor that, and also both this and that, whatever the this and that might be. The Tiantai writers prided themselves on a more richly determined conception of the absolute, but ironically this may have limited their appeal, and allowed the competing doctrines to make inroads with the many educated people who were sympathetic to an articulated theory of the absolute such as this, but were not convinced of the literal truth of the Buddhist description of the cosmos. The durability of the Tiantai doctrine over years of changing social conditions and increased knowledge of the world would thus perhaps have been limited by the thoroughness and profundity of their doctrine.

The Chan tradition profited from opposite features; ties to specific practices, world-pictures, and even doctrines were systematically minimized, a condition which made it both versatile and durable. Zongmi's version of Chan doctrine was one of the more definitive and influential formulations (although it had its Chan critics) and therefore served as the most common target of Tiantai polemics. Yet it is important to remember that Zongmi did not exhaust the positions and practices of the traditions called Chan. In practice, the "absolute" in Chan was even more indeterminate than Zongmi's version of it. Zongmi's was a definite doctrine that openly proclaimed itself, but even his version was much too indeterminate for the Tiantai writers. What the Chan writers were definite about, however, was their lineage and their special transmission. This was the source of their authority. Thus the Tiantai attacks on the doctrinal presuppositions behind the Chan view of a special transmission, and its implications for *upāya*, may be considered the most enduring aspect of the polemics considered here.

CHARACTER LIST

bie	別
biejiao	別教
budanzhong	不但中
dangti quanshi	當體全是
danzhong	但中
guanzhao	觀照
Guifeng Zongmi	圭峰宗密
ji	即
jia	假
jiaopan	教判
Jingxi Zhanran	荆溪湛然
ju	具
kaiquan xianshi	開權顯實
kong, jia, zhong	空假中
li shi wu ai	理事無礙
liaoyin	了因
lingzhi	靈知
panjiao	判教
qi	起
quan	權
quan ji	全即
ran	染
rushi	如是
sandao	三道
sangui	三軌
santu	三途
shi shi wu ai	事事無礙
Siming Zhili	四明知禮
suiju yifa jie de wei zong	隨舉一法皆得為總
suiyuan	隨緣
tinei fangbian	體內方便
xiang	相
xing	性
xing e	性惡
xingju	性具

xingqi	性起
xin xing	心性
xingde zhi xing	性德之行
xiu e	修惡
yizhen xinti	一真心體
yuanjiao	圓教
yuanyin	緣因
zhengyin	正因
zhi	知
Zhi Yi	智顓
zhenxing	真性
zhufa shixiang buchuan quanshi	諸法實相不出權實
zicheng	資成
zizhu	自住
zong	總