

Ch'an and Chih-kuan

T'ien-t'ai Chih-i's View of "Zen" and the Practice of the Lotus Sutra

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Opening Comments

The contrasting objects of investigation in this essay—the Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra and Chan/Zen Buddhism—presents some problems in subject matter. The "Lotus Sutra" is sufficiently precise and concrete (though there may be disagreements as to what exactly the Lotus Sutra teaches) so that we can assume that we all have the same "object" in mind, but "Zen" can mean many things to many people. Do we mean "Zen" as the Japanese pronunciation of "Ch'an" 禪, the Chinese transliteration of *dhyāna*, the Sanskrit term that is one of many terms used in the Chinese Buddhist tradition for "meditation" in general? Or are we referring to the more technical sense of *dhyāna* as an altered state of consciousness brought about through specific practices of concentration and calming the mind and heart, and resulting in well-delineated stages of altered consciousness (such as the four stages of *dhyāna*) leading to enlightenment? Or are we referring to the practices and teachings of the tradition that is based on the legend and lineage of Bodhidharma, and developed historically in specific ways in China, Korea, and Japan. Do we include the promiscuous uses of the term in "pop Zen," inspired by the works of D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts, as it has developed in the later half of the 20th century in the West? Do we include the "funerary (Zen) Buddhism" that is the dominant activity of modern Japanese Zen (Soto and Rinzai) temples?

To limit the focus of discussion, in this essay I will examine T'ien-t'ai Chih-i's use of the term *ch'an*, generally understood as the transliteration of *dhyāna*. Chih-i (based, to a great degree, on his understanding of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra) is critical of an unbalanced emphasis on "meditation alone," portraying it as a possible "extreme" view and practice, and offering instead the binome *chih-kuan* 止觀 (calming/cessation and insight/contemplation, *śamatha-vipaśyanā*) as a more comprehensive term for Buddhist practice. It is ironic that Chih-i (538–597), the founder of Lotus-centric T'ien-t'ai

Buddhism, abandoned a narrow focus on *ch'an* meditation to promote the vast and catholic array of teachings and practices that aimed to be all-inclusive, a prescription for every ill; whereas then, in turn, “Zen” developed in Japan as a more simple and focused choice, offering an escape from the all-embracing clutches of the T'ien-t'ai/Tendai womb. The relationship between Lotus Sutra Buddhism and Zen Buddhism is indeed complicated.

Further, although Chih-i and Bodhidharma were contemporaries, there is no indication that their paths ever crossed. There was no “Zen school” in Chih-i's time, at least not in the sense of the later tradition that traces its lineage through Bodhidharma.¹ Chih-i's comments on “Zen/*ch'an*” refer to *dhyāna* meditation, or to unidentified “Zen masters” 禪師 who apparently taught a form of Buddhism that emphasized the sole practice of meditation and thus were criticized by Chih-i as proponents of an “extreme” form of Buddhism. I will first trace how Chih-i's use of the term *ch'an* evolved, from his conspicuous use of the term in his early writings to his shift away from the term in favor of *chih-kuan*, then present his discussion of “sitting in meditation” as one of the four general types of Samadhi (his categorization of all types of Buddhist practice), and finally examine his criticism of “Zen masters” in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (T 46, no. 1911).

Chih-i's Early Use of *Ch'an* and His Shift to *Chih-kuan*

Buddhist Practice as *Ch'an*: The *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men*

At the relatively young age of thirty (in 568), having accomplished a certain level of “enlightenment” through study and practice under various masters on mountain centers throughout southern China, Chih-i began a series of lectures on Buddhist practice in the capital city of Chin-ling that continued for at least seven years (until 575). These lectures were compiled and edited by Kuan-ting into the massive *Shih ch'an p'o-lo-mi tz'u-ti fa-men* 禪波羅蜜次第法門 (Treatise on the gradual practice of *dhyāna-pāramitā*; T 46, no. 1916, 475-548), more commonly known as the *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men* 次第禪門 (The gradual practice of *ch'an/dhyāna*). In this treatise Chih-i gives a comprehensive presentation of Buddhist practice under the rubric of *ch'an*. Although considered Chih-i's first masterpiece, the content is less creative than his later, mature work (such as the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*), being more a grand summary than a creative rethinking of the Buddhist tradition.

¹ It is clear that Chih-i's work influenced the early development of the Ch'an tradition, especially his *T'ien-t'ai hsiao chih-kuan* 天台小止觀 [T 46, no. 1915], which served as the model for almost all subsequent meditation manuals (e.g., see Carl BIELEFELDT's discussion of this point in his *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, 1988, esp. pp. 71–72), though I would not be so bold as to claim that Ch'an “derived” from T'ien-t'ai. For details on this matter see SEIKIGUCHI Shindai 1957; YANAGITA Seizan 1967; John MCRAE 1986; and YAMAUCHI Shun'yū 1986.

The *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men* consists of ten sections (of which the last part of the sixth, and the last three sections remain unfinished) in ten fascicles,² beginning with a definition of *ch'an* (*dhyāna-pāramitā*) and the preparations (the famous “twenty-five *upāya*”) required before beginning the practice of meditation. The rest of the text, more than half the content, consists of the explication of *dhyāna-pāramitā* (based to a large extent on the content of the *Ta chih tu lun* [T 25, no. 1509]), beginning with the four stages of *dhyāna*, continuing with a discussion of various categories associated with meditation (such as the “four boundless demeanors” 四無量心, “four concentrations on emptiness” 四無色定, “nine considerations” [of decaying corpses] 九想, and so forth), and finishing with various kinds of *samādhi*.³

The point I wish to make here is that for Chih-i, at this stage in his career, *ch'an* was synonymous with “Buddhist practice.” It was not long, however, before Chih-i became dissatisfied with the limits of defining Buddhist practice in terms of *dhyāna*.

Buddhist Practice as *Chih-kuan*: The *Hsiao chih-kuan*

Chih-i's shift from discussing Buddhist practice in terms of *ch'an* to *chih-kuan* can be seen clearly in his concise and influential meditation manual, the *Hsiao chih-kuan* 小止觀.⁴ This short text is a summary and update of the *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men* (not, as commonly misunderstood, of the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*). It was probably compiled while Chih-i was sequestered on Mt. T'ien-t'ai (from the age of 38 [575] to 48)—a time when he had a “great awakening” into the threefold truth—since the threefold pattern (of emptiness, conventionality, and the Middle)⁵ forms a conspicuous part of the exposition in this text.

This text is an introductory manual for “sitting in Zen meditation” 坐禪, yet it is clear that the key operating concept here is *chih-kuan*, and *ch'an* is subsumed into the *chih* (calming, cessation) part of the equation. The text opens with a lucid exposition of the

² This is a pattern that will be repeated in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*.

³ For details on the *Tz'u-ti ch'an-men* see Satō Tetsuei 1961 (reprint 1979), pp. 103–26.

⁴ Technically, the *Hsiu-hsi chih-kuan tso-ch'an fa-yao* 修習止觀坐禪法要 (The method for practicing cessation-and-contemplation by sitting in meditation), T 46. no. 1915. There is also a variant, and probably closer to the original, version known as the 略明開矇初學坐禪止觀要門 (A brief clarification of the essential teachings on sitting in meditation and cessation-and-contemplation for beginners to open their blind eyes). For details and a critical edition of this text, see SEKIGUCHI Shindai 1954.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the threefold truth and threefold contemplation as the key pattern or framework of Chih-i's work, see my *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism*, 1989.

ideal balance of *chih* (*ch'an* meditation and the concentrated and quiescent state attained thereby) and *kuan* (contemplation and the wisdom attained thereby):

There are many ways to enter the true reality of nirvāṇa, but none that is more essential or that goes beyond the twofold method of cessation-and-contemplation . The reason is that “cessation” is the preliminary gate for overcoming the bonds [of passionate afflictions] 婁溪; “contemplation” is the proper requisite for severing delusions 止觀. “Cessation” provides good nourishment for nurturing the mind; “contemplation” is the sublime technique for arousing spiritual understanding 神解. “Cessation” is the preeminent cause 勝因 for [attaining] dhyanic concentration 禪定; “contemplation” is the basis [for the accumulation of] 由籍 of wisdom 智慧. If one perfects the twofold aspects of concentration (samādhi 定) and wisdom 慧, then one is fully endowed with the aspects of both benefiting oneself 自利 and benefiting others 利他.

Therefore it says in the Lotus Sutra (T. 9.8a23–24),

The Buddha himself dwells in the Mahāyāna,
And in accordance with his attainments
Is adorned with the power of concentration and wisdom,
With which he saves sentient beings.⁶

The text continues with the famous analogy of the necessary balance of the wheels of a cart and the wings of a bird:

It should be known that these two aspects are like the two wheels of a cart, or the two wings of a bird; if one side is cultivated disproportionately, then one falls prey to mistaken excess. Therefore it says in a sutra,

One who disproportionately cultivates the blessings and virtues of dhyanic concentration and does not study wisdom is called “foolish” 愚.
One who disproportionately studies wisdom and does not cultivate the blessings and virtues of dhyanic concentration is called “crazy” 狂.⁷

The excessive faults of foolishness and craziness are different only in a minor way, and there is no difference between them in the sense that [they contribute to] mistaken views and [further] transmigration. Unless they are balanced and equal, then one’s practice is not perfect and complete.⁸

The text goes on to explain the “twenty-five means” 方便 to prepare for meditation, with very precise instructions on how to sit and actually practice meditation. Chih-i has obviously not abandoned *ch'an/dhyāna* meditation, but has rather assigned it as a proper practice for a beginner to cultivate a calm mind, control distractions, and remove passionate afflictions and delusions, to prepare for the realization of wisdom. There are two types of *chih-kuan*, says Chih-i (T 46. 466c28-29): that of sitting in meditation 坐, and

⁶ See the *Hsiao chih-kuan*, T 46.462b5-11.

⁷ The source of this quote is unknown.

⁸ See the *Hsiao chih-kuan*, T 46.462b11-16.

that of “responding to objects in accordance with conditions” 歷緣對境, that is, maintaining a calm and insightful mind under any and all conditions of life. Chih-i adds: “First is to cultivate cessation-and-contemplation while sitting. The path can be practiced within any of the four types of activity 四威儀 [of going 行, stopping 住, sitting 坐, and laying down 臥],⁹ but sitting [in meditation] is the most superior [condition]. Therefore I will first clarify cessation-and-contemplation in terms of sitting” (T 466c29–467a2). Sitting in meditation is an important step, since that is the easiest way to begin the process of concentrated quietude, but it is not the final goal.

“Zen” as One of the “Four Types of Samadhi” in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*

Chih-i’s most important exposition on Buddhist practice is undoubtedly the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* 摩訶止觀 (T 46, no. 1911), based on lectures Chih-i gave in 594 after he returned to the capital of Chin-ling from Mt. T’ien-t’ai (in 585).¹⁰ In this text Chih-i categorizes all Buddhist practice under the comprehensive rubric of “four types of samadhi” 四種三昧: constantly-sitting samadhi, constantly-walking samadhi, both-walking-and-sitting samadhi, and neither-walking-nor-sitting samadhi. Zazen, or sitting in mediation, is the content of “constantly-sitting samadhi,” which is summarized as follows (T 46.11b29):

One should constantly sit and should avoid walking, standing, or lying down. Although it is possible [to do this practice] in a place with other people, it is better to be alone. Sit alone in a quiet room, or in an open and peaceful place [outside], apart from all the tumult and clamor [of daily life]. Sit on a coarse cot, without any other seats [or other clutter] by your side. Ninety days make up one period. Sit properly in a cross-legged position, with your neck and backbone perfectly straight; do not move or waver or stoop or lean on anything. While sitting, vow to yourself that your ribs will not [so much as] touch the poles, let alone that you would sprawl [face-up] like a corpse, prance about, or stand up, except for walking meditation, eating, and going to the toilet. Face in the direction of a single Buddha [image], sitting erect face to face [with the Buddha], continuously for a fixed time without faltering.

“Just sitting” 專坐 is what should be done, and one should not do anything that hinders this purpose. Do not deceive the Buddha; do not burden your mind [with extraneous distractions]; do not fool [other] sentient beings.

Even this practice, however, consists of more than “just sitting.” Chih-i adds (T 46.11b10-12):

if during sitting [in meditation] one becomes extremely weary, or tormented by disease, or overcome by drowsiness, or if internal or external obstacles intrude upon and displace

⁹ Or, “walking, standing, sitting, reclining,” the totality of the types of human movement or activity.

¹⁰ For an excellent translation of the first part of this text, see Neal DONNER and Daniel B. STEVENSON, 1993.

correct [concentrated] mindfulness so that one is not able to dispel [these distractions], then one should singularly chant the name of a single Buddha, and with humility and repentance trust in the Buddha as if one's life depended on it.

Although clearly still considered a very important part of Buddhist practice, it is also clear that “Zen/*ch'an*” (*dhyāna*) for Chih-i is only one of many important means for cultivating Buddhahood and practicing the Dharma.

The Practice of the Lotus Sutra as Part of the “Both-Walking-and-Sitting Samadhi”

As part of the more general theme of the “Lotus Sutra and Zen,” I should point out that the “Lotus Samadhi”—a form of meditation focused on the Lotus Sutra—is explained in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* as part of the both-walking-and-sitting samadhi.¹¹ The method for cultivating this practice are outlined in ten steps (T 46.14a7–):

1. Adorn and purify the meditation chamber;
2. Purify the body;
3. Make an offering of your physical, verbal, and mental deeds;
4. Petition the Buddhas;
5. Pay homage to the Buddhas;
6. Repent [of the offenses] of the six senses;
7. Circumambulate [the Buddha image];
8. Recite the [Lotus] Sutra;
9. Sit in meditation 坐禪;
10. Realize the [true] aspects [of reality]

Note that “sitting in meditation” (*zazen*) is part of this practice, with the implication that one sits and contemplates the teachings of the Lotus Sutra that one has just finished reciting.

Once again, it is clear that *ch'an* meditation is a very important part of Buddhist practice for Chih-i, and yet it is also clear that *ch'an* is not the only, and not necessarily the most important part of Buddhist practice.

Chih-i's Criticism of “Zen Masters” 禪師 in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*

It would be too vast a study to take up and analyze all the occurrences of the term *ch'an* in Chih-i's work, and although a full study of the section on *dhyāna* in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (T 46.117a–131c)—where Chih-i criticizes those who are “addicted to the flavor of *ch'an*”—

¹¹ Chih-i provides a number of detailed instructions for practices based on the Lotus Sutra. See, for example, the *Fa-hua san-mei ch'an-i* 法華三昧懺儀, T 46. no. 1941, 949–955.

would be most appropriate, I will limit my attention here to a single case study: Chih-i's criticism of "Zen masters" 禪師 in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*.

The term "Zen masters" appears eleven times in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, referring usually to unidentified people who seem to teach a form of Buddhism that relies solely or one-sidedly on the practice of meditation. Chih-i is critical of these figures, claiming that their teaching and practice is unbalanced and perhaps even dangerous (except for the first use of the term [T 46.1b23] in a reference to "the meditation master Hui-wen," the teacher of Chih-i's teacher Hui-ssu).

1) In the section on "incomplete and perfect" types of cessation-and-contemplation, Chih-i claims that the most superior type of "Mahayana cessation-and-contemplation" is "not the same as that of the Dharma masters 法師 and meditation masters 禪師 of this world" (T 46.32c19). It is not clear whether these "meditation masters" are Buddhist or not, since Chih-i goes on to criticize not other Buddhists, but the teachings of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu as not "of the same order as the Buddha Dharma, and their meaning is not the same," just as the light of a firefly is of a different scale as that of the sun, and a mountain is incomparably larger than a hair.

2) The five items of "regulating one's life," the fourth set of five in the twenty-five means of preparing for meditation, are said to be based on the teachings of "meditation masters" (T 46.36a8). Again, it is not clear who these "meditation masters" are, though it is likely to be a generic term, since the content of this section includes the very concrete and specific instructions on how to sit in meditation.¹²

3) In his introductory comments to the "ten modes of contemplation" 十乘觀法, Chih-i claims that these modes are "models for beginners and an incentive for practitioners to attain omniscience (*sarvajña*)," but that "this is not something that can be known by meditation masters with an enlightenment that is darkened [by lack of learning] 闇證禪師, or by masters who merely read or chant the texts 誦文法師 [and do not practice meditation]" (T 46.52b15–16). This statement echoes the stance Chih-i took in the introduction to the *Hsiao chih-kuan* on the importance of a balance between meditation and learning. Chih-i is critical not only of "Zen masters" who ignore learning, but also of scholarly types who ignore their meditative practice.

4) In his summary of the section on "Skillful means for a Peaceful Mind" (T 46.56b12–59b7), the third of the ten modes of contemplation, Chih-i again attacks "meditation masters" who emphasize one aspect of *chih-kuan* to the detriment of the other:

¹² This section in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* is relatively short (T 46.47a24–48a12), especially as compared to the detailed exposition of the same topic in the "short" *Hsiao chih-kuan* (T 46.465b4–466c4). It leaves out the concrete explanation of how to sit in meditation, probably because these instructions had already been given many times already in previous works.

There is a type of meditation master 禪師 who exclusively utilizes cessation-type practice and does not allow for the practice of contemplation. Such a person quotes a verse that says, “Thinking and thinking, one follows one’s own thoughts. Thinking and thinking, one brings suffering to oneself. To still this [conceptual] thinking is the path. As long as there are [conceptual] thoughts, one cannot perceive [the path].”¹³ There is also a type of meditation master who exclusively utilizes the practice of contemplation and does not allow for the practice of cessation. Such a person quotes a verse that says, “Stopping and stopping, one brings about cessation; this is darkness without any support. The stopping of cessation is the path. One encounters the principle [of reality] through the insight of contemplation 觀觀.”¹⁴ Both of these types of teachers follow only one of the methods for realizing [enlightenment], and teach other people on the basis of the benefit they have received from [their one-sided practice]. Those who study [under them] are not aware of their [one-sided] intentions. [It is like the story in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*,] “one who exclusively drinks milk will have difficulty getting a drink [of cream], not to mention ghee.”¹⁵ If people rely exclusively [on either cessation or contemplation, or on only one teaching or practice] to attain understanding, then what was the reason for the Buddha to offer such a variety of teachings? The heavens are not always clear; a doctor does not rely exclusively on powdered medicine; one does not always eat rice. (T 46.59a16–23)

5) In his summary of a discussion on ten ways of “adapting the Buddha Dharma” 融通佛法, Chih-i says that “I am not in agreement with either the textual scholars 文字法師 of this world,¹⁶ or in agreement with meditation masters practicing dhyāna. There is a type of

¹³ The source of this quote is unknown.

¹⁴ Again, the source of this phrase is unknown.

¹⁵ Chan-jan, the sixth T’ien-t’ai patriarch, in his commentary on the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (see the 止觀輔行傳弘決, T 46, no. 1912; also included in *Bukkyō Taiki* 佛教大系, *Makashikan* 摩訶止觀, 5 vols. Tokyo: Nakayama Shobō [reprint], 1978 [hereafter “BT”]) refers to a story in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12.621c12–24 (see BT—III, p. 382–83). Although the story contains the same phrase that Chih-i uses, the point of the story seems quite different:

The Buddha said to Kāśyapa, it is like a rich man who had many cows. Though they were of many colors, they were of the same herd.... This great rich man raised these cows, and did not seek to any milk and curds but only ghee. He said, “I will now establish my holdings in all directions to attain this [ghee]. Ghee is called the greatest flavor in the world. But I have no vessels or facilities or a place to keep the milk.” He discussed it with others, saying, “There are skins for keeping [the milk], and though there is thus a way to keep it, we do not know how to stir it [in order to make ghee]. *It will be difficult to attain a drink [of cream], not to mention the next stage of curds.*” Then the hoodlums, in order to obtain ghee, added water [to the milk]. Because they added so much water, the milk, curds, and ghee was all lost. Ordinary [ignorant] people are like this....

The use of these terms (milk, cream, curds, butter, ghee) also reflects Chih-i’s common use of the analogy of five “flavors” in the gradual refinement of milk for the graded refinement of Buddhist teachings (from the Tripitaka to the Lotus Sutra). For details see David W. CHAPPELL, et al., 1983.

¹⁶ Does this mean other Buddhist textual scholars, or non-Buddhist scholars? The context would indicate that he is referring to other Buddhist scholars.

meditation master who is concerned only with the single intent of contemplation. Or, some are shallow and some are spurious [even with regard to meditation], and are completely lacking with regard to the other nine [issues of how to adapt the Buddha Dharma]. This is not a false charge. Those who have the eye of a later [stage] of erudition 購溪 should realize and know this” (T 46.98a8–10).

6) In the section on “Patient Forbearance” (T 46.99a29–99c14), Chih-i again complains about meditation masters who are concerned only with virtuoso practice, as well as warning against a premature attempt to help others before one is properly prepared:

In the past there were meditation masters in Yeh 業¹⁷ and Lo-yang whose names were known throughout the land. Wherever they went [the people] crowded around them like clouds from all directions to venerate them; and when they left, hundreds and thousands would follow them. Such roaring and rumbling; what benefit is there in this!? They will all regret it at the time of death. Wu-tsin 武津¹⁸ lamented, “In my life I sought to realize [the stage of] the copper wheel 銅輪,¹⁹ but I started directing [other] people too quickly, and was not able to prevail in what I sought [for myself].”²⁰ In the [*Establishment of Vows*] he wrote, “pick and choose, pick and choose” 擇擇擇擇.²¹ You should use the example of this lofty and superior [teacher] as a mirror. When your practice advances to this level, examine yourself and carefully consider [these things]. If your power of wisdom is strong and vigorous, you should broadly benefit [other beings], as a great elephant pushes [and leads] the herd. If your [wisdom] is not like this, then you should rest in patient forbearance 安忍 [of your limited attainments] and deeply cultivate samādhi. It is not too late to teach others after you have perfected your practice and made manifest your power [of wisdom]. (T 46.99b15–22)

7) In his summary of the section on “Contemplating the Sense Realms while Responding to Objects as Conditions Arise” (T 46.100b16–101c23), Chih-i again warns against a one-sided approach to Buddhist practice, this time in great detail:

¹⁷ Chan-jan (BT-IV, p. 576) writes, “Yeh is in the province of Hsiang 相州, the capital of the Ch’i 齊 and the Wei 魏. The Buddha Dharma prospered greatly there, and one of the Ch’an patriarchs governed [or, “had a civilizing influence”] over this land. In order to protect the intentions/feelings of the people of that time I will not give the names.”

¹⁸ That is, Chih-i’s teacher Nan-yüeh Hui-ssu.

¹⁹ That is, in terms of the T’ien-t’ai classification system of the “Six Identities,” equivalent to the level of “partial realization of the real truth.”

²⁰ See the biography of Hui-ssu in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks, Part 2*, T 50.563b, which contains only the phrase “I attained the level of the ten levels of faith, [the stage of] the ‘steel wheel’.”

²¹ This is the last line of Hui-ssu’s *Establishment of Vows*, T 46.792b5.

If you are able to diligently practice as outlined above, you will certainly not pass your single life in vain. On the other hand, if you hear [these teachings] but do not put them to use, you are like a black snake clutching a [precious] jewel.²² What benefit is this [jewel] to a snake? Now I will give three analogies to illustrate the [possible] benefits and drawbacks [of this practice]. [1] Suppose there is a brave husband who is trained in the use of a sword and an arrow, slays one or two bandits, and receives as a reward a piece of gold or a piece of silver, and uses this compensation to support his wife and child. Such a person merely uses his skill with a weapon to go forth and risk his life to earn cash. What need is there for him to be broadly learned in the military arts? [2] If there is a man who wishes to become yeast 麴蘖, a boat and oar 舟楫,²³ seasoning 鵝梅, and bountiful rain 霖雨²⁴ for the sake of his country, he should be well-versed in the literary and military arts, and make plans behind curtains to negotiate a “great distance” 萬里. That which he learns is profound, that which he destroys is also great, the rewards he obtains are weighty, and his compensation can support very many [people]. [3] [Finally there are those who,] although they have knowledge do not use it, or use it but are frequently defeated. Such [people] are not able to save their own bodies, much less assist other people.

Those who learn the contemplation of dhyāna meditation 禪觀 are also of three types: [1] Those who know only one method, [such as] either cessation or contemplation, can arrange to destroy a little evil, quiet the mind/thoughts and practice the path, and attain a little meditative concentration 禪定, and gather together a few followers. One who is satisfied with this [or, “thinks that this is sufficient”] is like the man who fights [alone in a limited way]. [2] Those who wish to become a great meditation master, destroy a great amount of passionate afflictions, make manifest immeasurable good dharmas, and benefit immeasurable conditions[, that is, sentient beings], should learn the ten modes of cessation-and-contemplation 十法止觀. With penetrating insight into the inclinations of the mind 意趣 (*ābhiprāyika*), [such a person will] be able to apply their practice 行用 and appropriately respond to the six conditions 六緣 and the six types of sense experience.²⁵ As soon as a passionate affliction arises, this is immediately contemplated [for what it is], and this contemplation subdues the delusion; thus one can bravely persevere over difficult

²² The image of a black snake clutching a pearl is from the *Ta chih tu lun*, T 25.119b15–16. See Étienne LAMOTTE, 1944–1980, vol. I, p. 492–93, for the full context.

²³ Or, “the rudder of a boat.” As MATTHEWS (*Matthew’s Chinese-English Dictionary*, 1943, p. 181) points out, this refers to “one who comes to assist in a crisis of State.”

²⁴ Lit., “a long raining spell.” IKEDA Rosan (1996–1997, p. 419) points out that these four are a classical group of terms from the 書經 indicating people who make notable contributions to governing the country.

²⁵ The “six conditions” refers to the “six types of actions” (walking, standing, sitting, laying down, speaking, and general movement), and the “six sense experiences” refer in general to the totality of experiences that involve the six senses.

matters, and “release the knot and attain the jewel” [of enlightenment].²⁶ [3] If you “release” 解 [and understand] yet do not use this [understanding], or use it unsuitably and instead take deluded thoughts as your teacher, how can you triumph on the path?

Again, [1] it is like a rustic shaman 野巫²⁷ who only understands/masters 解 one technique. He may be able to save some person and gain a side of meat 脯胖 [in compensation],²⁸ so why should he learn Shen Nung’s 神農 [Catalogue of] basic herbs 本草 [and prescriptions].²⁹ [2] If you wish to be a great physician, you should widely examine various remedies, broadly heal all diseases, ... frequently using [one’s knowledge and skill] and frequently making examinations, so the favor of his saving [activities] is widespread. Those who learn dhyāna meditation are also like this. They focus exclusively on one method to subdue delusions and make them go away, so there is only a temporary and miniscule benefit; this ultimately is not the all-encompassing intent of the great path [of Mahāyāna]. Again, they are not able to destroy the passionate afflictions and realize the patient forbearance of [the idea that dharmas are] non-arising. Even though the medicine is good, if it is not applied as prescribed how can the disease be cured? The performance 讀誦 of cessation-and-contemplation is very beneficial, but if your thoughts are not applied to your practice 行用, [the realization of a patient forbearance of] non-arising will not be manifested.

Again, it is like [specialized scholars] who study the meaning [of texts], merely wishing [to pursue] one question and one answer [at a time] and momentarily show off [their knowledge]; why should they broadly seek [and study] the sūtras and treatises? [On the other hand,] if you wish to become a lord of the Dharma 法主 (*dharmasvāmin*), you should be well versed in [many] different texts. However, even if you are acquainted with

²⁶ This image is from a parable in the fourteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra (T 9.39a–b) about the king with a priceless pearl tied up in his top-knot. Hurvitz (*Lotus Sūtra*, p. 220) translates the context:

If there is a brave and stout fellow
Able to do difficult things,
The king *separates from his top-knot*
A *bright pearl*, which he gives to him.

²⁷ Chan-jan (BT–IV, p. 605) explains that this term refers to a male shaman, and that the term 覡 is used for a woman. IKEDA Rosan (1996–1997, p. 506), following the explanation in NAKAMURA (1981, p. 1374d), translates as “a town magician or sorcerer.” NAKAMURA adds that this term in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, pronounced *yabu* in Japanese, is the origin of the common put-down *yabu-isha*, or “medical quack” (“incompetent doctor”).

²⁸ For the second character the Taishō edition has 𦍋, but I follow Ikeda’s suggestion that this be substituted with 胖. Ikeda also suggests that this refers to the “half-side” of meat left from an animal’s sacrifice, presumably used as payment for the shaman.

²⁹ Shen Nung was the legendary founder of medical arts in China and the compiler of the *Catalogue of Herbs* 本草綱目 that set the standard for herbal prescriptions. See also the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* at 78a15 and references to this figure at 78b17–21.

and understand 諳解 many passages, but do not go out in public,³⁰ you will be timid and weak and not be worthy of any reward/compensation.³¹ If you are not afraid, you can give a hundred responses in accordance with the opportune situation, not being limited to a set answer, and answer all sorts of questions. This is what it means to be a great Dharma master. It is the same for those who practice contemplation 觀行. If your practice of contemplation is clear, you are able to respond to objects as conditions arise 歷緣對境 and function in response to objects as you come in contact with them 觸處得用. If you are not able to do this, how will you destroy the demonic hordes? How will you remove the heavy disease of passionate afflictions? How will you manifest the profound meaning of Dharma-nature? If you cannot accomplish these three matters, you will be vexed by trifling matters. This is [the fate of] an ordinary ignorant being in saṃsāra, and it is not the carrying out of the means of the path of learning 學道方便.

8) The final mention of the term “meditation master” 禪師 comes almost at the very end of the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, in Chih-i’s final comments on “cultivating cessation-and-contemplation” for the section on “contemplating the objects of mistaken views” (T 46.131c22–140c19). Here he takes a final jab at “‘Nose-focused’ meditation masters” 鼻隔禪師³² who “realize the view of emptiness but fall into the trap of other mistaken views, and are not able to escape with their own power” (T 46.139a29–b1).

Summary in Terms of the Threefold Truth

Finally, I would like to summarize the position of Chih-i in terms of the threefold pattern mentioned briefly above, that is, (1) emptiness 空 (that all things arise through a variety of causes and conditions and lack an ongoing substantial Being), (2) conventionality 假 (a reaffirmation of the importance of the mundane world, that is, though all things are empty,

³⁰ To share your knowledge through giving lectures, participating in debates, and so forth.

³¹ Ikeda (*Gendaigoyaku-hen*, p. 548) translates, “you will not be able to answer questions.”

³² Chan-jan (BT-V, p. 552; T 46.445a7–10) explains that “‘Nose-focused’ refers to those who do not practice contemplation deeply, but merely stop their thoughts or calm their mind 安心. By contemplating in this [limited] way, they can attain [a limited] view of emptiness 空見. But these people are not aware of [even the meaning of] the real truth [at the level] of the Hīnayāna 小乘真諦; how are they able to contemplate the view of emptiness [in a more profound way, that is, the emptiness of emptiness and the reaffirmation of the conventional?] that will lead them to realize the sublime realm [of full awakening/enlightenment]? They merely follow this view [of one-sided emptiness] and fall into the chains of [mistaken] views.” The phrase is included in NAKAMURA, p. 1136d, but refers only to this use in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* and takes its definition from this passage, that is, “zen practitioners who close off their six senses, are alienated from the objects of the six senses, and thus remain stuck in the view of emptiness.” The phrase also appears in the *Ch’eng-shih lun*, T 32.272c22.

they still have conventionally and provisionally reality), and (3) the Middle, a simultaneous affirmation of the emptiness and conventional reality of all things. For Chih-i, Buddhist practice follows the same threefold pattern, as seen in the binome *chih-kuan*: *Chih*/cessation involves a stopping and “emptying” of the mind of all delusions and passionate afflictions; *kuan*/contemplation involves insight into the true features of conventional reality, an understanding of the multifarious aspects of existence, thus leading to bodhisattva-like activity in this world. Together (*chih-kuan*) this is a harmonious tension in which emptiness is realized and the mundane world correctly perceived, thus leading to bodhisattva-like activity in the world and an attainment of Buddhahood. These points can be arranged as in the following chart:

1	空	止 (禪定)	“Zen”, practice of meditation/ <i>dhyāna</i> emptying the mind; withdraw from mundane stopping (ceasing) distracting thoughts denial of words, concepts; realize “emptiness” wisdom in quietude
2	假	觀 (智慧)	“wisdom”, practice of contemplation/insight bodhisattva action in this mundane world reaffirming conventional reality reaffirming words, concepts wisdom in action
3	中	止觀	balance of cessation and contemplation both “Zen” and “Lotus Sutra” recognize reality as-it-is the wisdom of Buddhahood

Simply put, Chih-i is critical of an “unbalanced” Buddhism that puts too much emphasis on one or another aspect of the Buddha Dharma or of Buddhist practice, whether it be an over reliance on Zen meditation, an empty scholasticism, or acting altruistically in the world without proper preparation. Although he accepts the Lotus Sutra as the highest expression of the Buddha’s teaching, this does not mean that *ch’an* meditation is to be disparaged; on the contrary it is recognized as a crucial part of Buddhist practice. Thus Chih-i does not “reject” *ch’an* meditation in favor of the teachings and practices of the Lotus Sutra, but recognizes the importance of both, incorporating both “Zen” and “Lotus Sutra” Buddhism in his vast scheme of Buddhist “means.”

In Closing...

What can we learn from Chih-i's views on "Zen" (*ch'an*)? For one thing, it may give us pause to consider again the role and meaning of "Zen/*ch'an/dhyāna*" for Buddhism, or for individual Buddhists. Is Zen (*dhyāna* meditation) the central (or perhaps only) practice—and even the goal itself—of a Buddhist, or is it only one (and not necessarily even the most important) of many means for practicing and realizing the Buddha Dharma? For Chih-i and Lotus Sutra Buddhism, the answer is clearly the latter. The question is, what is the answer for "Zen Buddhism"?

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