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Language and Logic in the Lotus Sūtra：

A Hermeneutical Exploration of PhilosophicalUnder pinnings

Sandra A. Wawrytko

Professor, Dept. of Asian Studies,San Diego State University

Summary

Over many centuries, the Lotus Sūtra has been hailed as one of the most seminal texts in the voluminous catalogue of Buddhist literature. Among the most read and most frequently recited of all the Sūtras, it is the focus of daily practice for Buddhists around the world. Yet how much of its philosophical profundity is truly understood? Is the message of the text being heard clearly amid the fervor of prosaic study and rote chanting? Or

has there been a fundamental misapprehension of both the form and content of the Lotus Sūtra? To answer these questions, the following discussion adopts a hermeneutical approach to the Lotus Sūtra. I suggest that the author or authors of the Lotus Sūtra set themselves the fifth stage task of Creative Hermeneutics in “critically inheriting and creatively developing” the message of primal Buddhism. To justify that claim our ensuing discussion addresses (I) the place of the Lotus Sūtra within Buddhist philosophy; (II) Creative Hermeneutics and primal Buddhism: stages 1 through 3; (III) the Lotus Sūtra as a work of Creative Hermeneutics: stages 4 and 5; (IV) the logic of the Three Gates, and (V) Buddhism beyond the Lotus Sūtra.

關鍵詞：1.Creative Hermeneutics　2.Lotus Sūtra　3.Language　4.Logic　5.upāya

I. The Challenges and Possibilities of Creative Hermeneutics

Over many centuries, the Lotus Sūtra has been hailed as one of the most seminal texts in the voluminous catalogue of Buddhist literature. Among the most read and most frequently recited of all the Sūtras, it is the focus of daily practice for Buddhists around the world. Yet how much of its philosophical profundity is truly understood? Is the message of the text being heard clearly amid the fervor of prosaic study and rote chanting? Or has there been a fundamental misapprehension of both the form and content of the Lotus Sūtra?

To answer these questions, the following discussion adopts a hermeneutical approach to the Lotus Sūtra. Taking the term hermeneutics in its original sense, as derived from the Greek messenger god Hermes, we will explore the text as messenger to uncover its complex layers of meaning. In doing so I will attempt to establish how the Lotus Sūtra could come to be regarded as the highest, ultimate teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha, and how the text

upāyically facilitates the ongoing adaptation of Buddhism to new social and temporal contexts.

The methodology of Creative Hermeneutics is a valuable tool that seeks to bridge the gap between scholarly investigation and original philosophizing.[1] The investigator must begin with the basic text, (1) the superficial verbal encoding of what the authors did say. One's role here is to report accurately the actual words in which the message was originally encoded. Generally one can

assume that the oldest available versions are the most reliable. For example, Taoist scholarship experienced a break through with the discovery of the so-called Ma-wang-dui manuscripts, copies of the Lao Tzu or Tao Te Ching dating from the early Han dynasty in the second century B.C. Of course, an even more valuable find would be a copy of the text written by the reputed author himself.

A text is merely a written document, and so one must move on to the next stage, (2) decoding its underlying message, what the authors intended to say. What is it that the words seek to convey? At this point our role becomes more complicated as we assume the function of an interpreter of the text. Many scholars readily take on such a role in an attempt to make sense of a text and explain it to others. Accordingly, each of us comes to our own understanding of what Master Hui-neng meant when we read the Platform Sūtra.

Nonetheless, as scholars we cannot rest content with a single interpretation of a given text. Due consideration must be given to the full range of possible interpretations, (3) what the authors could have meant to say. A comparative study of texts or translations must be undertaken, exploring the specific contexts of the text in terms of social, cultural, economic, political, and other factors. Hence, a text such as the I Ching has been approached variously as a book of divination, an historical record of the Chou Dynasty founders, a moral manual, a means to cosmic concordance, and so on.

Thus far, the hermeneutical process resembles an archeological dig. But mere scholarly expertise is insufficient to do justice to a living message. To

justify its appellation as creative, Creative Hermeneutics requires informed conjecture on (4) what the original authors should have said to allow for the fullest communication. What are the most effective means of delivering the intended message? At this juncture one assumes the role of a commentator, editor, or translator working on behalf of the authors. Difficult passages may need to be clarified or revised to make the message

more comprehensible or to make the work as a whole more consistent. Words may need to be sacrificed in the interest of underlying meanings. Wang Yang-ming assumes this function with respect to the Ta Hsueh by amending various passages of the text in his "Inquiry on the Great Learning."[2]

Finally, to carry forth the unending task of messenger to unknown future generations, it is incumbent on the creative hermeneutician as creative thinker to venture to suggest (5) what must be said now, in our present temporal and cultural context, to convey the original meaning.

From the standpoint of creative hermeneutics, interpretations vie with one another, and in doing so give rise to creative thinking. The categories of could and should require the highest level for their justification. A clear-cut division between various levels must be made, with a dynamic, hierarchical movement characterized by dialectical open-endedness.

Creative hermeneutics qualifies as creative only because the hermeneutician, as a creative thinker, living under new historical conditions, must continue to raise new issues and new questions concerning the theories of the past . . . .We must encounter the texts with a creative spirit, introducing new viewpoints and new understandings beyond stages two through four.[3]

Adjustments to the original message may be required to accommodate contemporary conditions. One now becomes a co-creator with the authors, a critical inheritor of their message. It is very likely, for example, that Confucius would modify his political theories, originally

based on hierarchical models, in view of the widespread access to education in today's world, resulting in a reconsideration of the assumption of a "chün-tzu" moral elite as distinguished from a "hsiao jen" majority. One can even argue that the essential Confucian message is not in conflict with feminist values.[4]

The methodology of Creative Hermeneutics resonates with the "Four Rules of Textual Interpretation" recognized in Buddhist tradition. Important priorities are set by these rules:

1.the doctrine (dharma) over the person (puruṣa) presenting it;

2.the spirit (artha) of the text over the words (vyañjana) in which it is presented;

3.the precise meanings (nitārtha) over our interpretations (neyārtha) thereof;

4.direct or immediate knowledge (jñāna) over mediated, discursive consciousness (vijñāna).[5]

The convergence between Creative Hermeneutics and Buddhist scholarly practice bodes well for the application of the former to the latter, as an open-ended exercise to better fulfill Buddhist goals.

I suggest that the author or authors of the Lotus Sūtra set themselves the fifth stage task of Creative Hermeneutics in "critically inheriting and creatively developing," as Dr. Fu would say, the message of primal Buddhism. To justify that claim our ensuing discussion addresses (II) The Place of the Lotus Sūtra Within Buddhist Philosophy; (III) Creative Hermeneutics and Primal Buddhism: Stages 1 Through 3; (IV) The Lotus Sūtra as a Work of Creative Hermeneutics: Stages 4 and 5; (V) The Logic of the Three Gates, and (VI) Buddhism Beyond the Lotus Sūtra.

II. The Place of the Lotus Sūtra within Buddhist Philosophy

Noted contemporary scholar William R. LaFleur succinctly sets forth the problematic nature of the Lotus Sūtra, philosophically considered:

> It is still commonly regarded as a literary gem and it was the stimulus for much later literature. Rich and varied, it functions on what Umehara Takeshi calls a level of high drama. A number of its extended metaphors and parables are widely admired for their vividness of narrative and finesse of detail. The work is, in fact, so colorful and picturesque that modern readers have occasionally wondered if it is not mostly froth, with really no substantial or philosophical dimension. Though the question is a valid one, the suspicion is, I think, unfounded. This sutra is both a literary tour de force and expressive of a fundamental philosophical perspective in Mahayana Buddhism.[6]

The text has had many strong supporters over the centuries. Of these Zen Master Hakuin (1685~1768) is perhaps the most noteworthy. Master Hakuin cryptically declared: "Outside the mind there is no Lotus Sūtra and outside the Lotus Sūtra there is no mind."[7] Elaborating on his claim, he states:

> Outside the 10 stages of existence [extending from hell world to the Buddha realm] there is no mind and outside the ten stages of existence there is no Lotus Sūtra. This is the ultimate and absolute principle. It is not limited to me, but all the Tathāgata of the three

> periods [past, present, and future], and all the learned sages everywhere, when they have reached the ultimate understanding, have all preached in the same way. The essential purport of the Lotus Sūtra . . . is the fundamental principle of Buddhism . . . the 5,418 texts of the Tripitaka, that detail the limitless mysterious meaning spoken by Shakamuni [sic] Buddha . . . the sudden, gradual, esoteric, and indeterminate methods . . . their ultimate principle is reduced to the 8 volumes of the Lotus Sūtra.[8]

The reduction process is further outlined by Hakuin as follows:

Approximately 64,360 Characters of the Lotus Sūtra

▼

Five Characters of the Title

(Myōhōrenge kyoo)[9]

▼

Two Characters

(Myōhō; Wondrous Law)

▼

One Mind

(the Original Face of Zen)

Thus, the Lotus Sūtra can be seen as holding up a mirror to the Mind's awakening process, as one moves from the pre-awakening state of delusory dreams to semi-consciousness, and thence into fully liberated consciousness. It is not merely an example of text as messenger, but rather the creatively encoded message itself. The form of the presentation, a logical unfolding of the enlightenment process, illumines its complex contents, embellished with upāyic language.

Three key components of the Lotus Sūtra's message, repeated throughout the chapters, can be discerned:[10]

1. This is the Buddha's full, unedited, and undiluted Dharma.
2. Buddhahood is open to all, without impediment of age, caste, gender, species, etc.
3. There is no where that the Buddha is not.

Although widely regarded as Mahāyāna tenets, passages in the earliest Buddhist texts link each of these three doctrines to the teaching Śākyamuni Buddha.[11] For example, the prospect of universal buddhahood is referred to in the following passage:

A Tathāgata arises here in the world, . . . He speaks thus: "Come, this is the Way, this is the course I have followed until, having realized by my own

super-knowledge the matchless plunge into the Brahma-faring, I have made it known. Come you too, follow likewise, so that you also, having realized by your own super-knowledge the matchless plunge into the Brahma-faring, may abide by it." It is thus that the Teacher himself teaches Dhamma, and others follow for the sake of Suchness. And moreover these number many hundred, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands.[12]

The ubiquitous quality of the Tathāgata also is recognized early on:

Since a Tathāgata, even when actually present, is incomprehensible, it is inept to say of him——of the Uttermost Person, the Supernal

Person, the Attainer of the Supernal——that after dying the Tathāgata is, or is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not.[13]

While doubt may exist as to whether the "Lotus Sūtra" sermon was actually delivered by the historical Buddha under the conditions described, the underlying message appears to be consistent with primal Buddhist philosophy. The validity of the claim that the Lotus Sūtra is the Buddha's full, unedited, and undiluted Dharma requires more detailed discussion and will be argued for below. The task of Creative Hermeneutics charges us with examining how and why influential masters such as Hakuin would have held the text in such high esteem, regarding it as the very essence of Buddhism. Moreover, the Lotus Sūtra can function as a model for future metamorphoses of Buddhist philosophy in future encounters with new cultures and conditions.

III. Creative Hermeneutics and Primal Buddhism:Stages 1 through 3

Our creative hermeneutical task must begin with (1) the Buddha's actual words, (2) underlying his intentions, and (3) possible interpretations thereof. With due recognition for the practical problems of ascertaining any of these points, along with the added burdens of multiple translations from the original source, an attempt will be made to outline the basic philosophy of Buddhism in very simplified form.

It may be helpful to begin with what Buddhism is not; it is not a philosophy which purports to disclose the hidden "Truth" of the cosmos nor a revelation of some "divine" plan. In this regard, Buddhist philosophy differs markedly from the orientation and practice of European and American philosophical traditions, which

are rooted in an essentially monotheistic (one god)/monoveritistic (one truth) mindset. These same assumptions have permeated science and have come to be accepted by many as "common sense":

> A physicist is a cryptographer who tries to discern the laws of the universe. That would be a hacker's fantasy as well: cracking the ultimate code, created by the ultimate Enigma.[14]

Significantly, Buddhism arose as a challenge to precisely this kind of metaphysical and epistemological disposition, as well its attendant social and political consequences.[15] In Buddhism, traditional metaphysics merges into epistemology by assigning the central role to Mind, although this should not be conflated with western models of idealism.[16] The powerful doctrine of the Twofold Truth forestalls any attempts to mono-ize reality, thereby preventing the temptation to claim privileged access to reality. Most importantly, the dual nature of truth is not perceived as hierarchical, but rather as interpenetrating:

> Given the Buddhist expression, "the higher truth is immanent and transcendent simultaneously in the lower truth," one may hypothesize that the dual truth structure underlies pre-linguistic and post-linguistic processes of the mind. This is supported by the fact

> that Buddhist thinkers, Indian as well as Chinese, asserted that these dual dimensions act in perfect harmony, without any obstruction or discordance existing between them (tathābhūta, tathata, or paramārtha on the one hand and loka-samvṛti or vyavahāra on the other).[17]

As a consequence, Buddhism is ultimately both trans-epistemological and trans-cultural.[18]

Several important points emerge from the above characterization of Buddhism that are crucial for applying Creative Hermeneutics to the Lotus Sūtra:

1. distinguishing the actual message from often mistaken perceptions /conceptions
2. non-fixation on language or cognitive constructs (upāya)
3. openness to trans-linguistic and trans-logical modes of communication
4. an appreciation of emptiness

Such is the message that seems to be encoded in Lotus Sūtra. I will briefly cite passages from early Buddhist literature to substantiate the veracity of these dimensions of the message shared with the Lotus Sūtra.

1. distinguishing the message from perceptions/conceptions

Whoever . . . should speak thus: " . . . the recluse Gotama teaches Dhamma on (a system of) his own devising beaten out by reasoning and based on investigation" ——if he does not retract that speech, Sariputta, if he does not retract that thought, if he does not cast out that view, he is verily consigned to Niraya Hell according to his

deserts.[19]

2. non-fixation on language or cognitive constructs (upāya)

Now I know well that when I approached various large assemblies, even before I had sat down there or had spoken or begun to talk to them, whatever might have been their sort I made myself of like sort, whatever their language so was my language. And I rejoiced them with a talk on Dhamma, made it acceptable to them, set them on fire, gladdened them.[20]

3. trans-linguistic and trans-logical communication

Words are often used by Śākyamuni Buddha to go beyond words and mundane logic. For example, in preparation for his death, he observes:

Āananda! whosoever has thought out, developed, practised, accumulated, and ascended to

the very heights of the four paths to Iddhi, and so mastered them as to be able to use them as a means of (mental) advancement, and as a basis for edification, he, should he desire it, could remain in the same birth for a kalpa, or for that portion of the kalpa which had yet to run. Now the Tathāgata has thought them out, and thoroughly practised and developed them [in all respects as just more fully described], and he could, therefore, should he desire it, live on yet for a kalpa, or for that portion of the kalpa which has yet to run.[21]

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The same words are repeated two more times, yet Ānanda can only hear what he chooses to hear, namely that the Buddha would endure for a kalpa (a deluded stance that the text attributes to the interference of Mara). The true message can not be encompassed by words, nor does it seem to follow the norms of logic, for the Buddha is in fact preparing his followers for his pending departure.

4. an appreciation of emptiness

By passing quite beyond the plane of no-thing-ness, he [a monastic] enters into and abides in the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. By passing quite beyond this plane, he enters into and abides in the stopping of feeling and perceiving. He has now crossed over the entanglement of the world . . . .[22]

And what is the freedom of mind that is empty? As to this, a monk forest-gone or gone to the root of a tree or to an empty place reflects thus: This is empty of self or of what belongs to self. This is called the freedom of mind that is empty . . . . To the extent that the freedoms of mind are immeasurable, are of no-thing, are signless, of them all unshakable freedom of mind is pointed to as chief, for it is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of confusion.[23]

IV. The Lotus Sūtra as a Work of Creative Hermeneutics:Stages 4 and 5

The Lotus Sūtra is not merely an example of text as messenger, but rather the creatively encoded message itself, an expression of the fourth and fifth levels of Creative Hermeneutics. The author or authors found themselves with a formidable task——communicating the essential message of

Śākyamuni Buddha, the message of the

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One Mind, the awakened mind, the Buddha-mind. They were charged by the values of compassion to deliver this message, to speak about the unspeakable. Moreover, they had to address an audience far more diverse than any the Buddha had encountered, due to the greatly expanded range of Buddhism over the intervening centuries. Thus, it was necessary to give full rein to the possibilities of the Twofold Truth, layering mundane pageantry that appeals to the senses with profound transcendental insights.[24]

A logical unfolding of the awakening process is presented, embellished with upāyic words that challenge the limits, while maximizing the potentials, of language. I believe this is what led Hakuin to equate the Lotus Sūtra with mind itself, as quoted above. Form was upāyically mutated to more effectively communicate the same content. As specified by Buddhism's "Four Rules of Textual Interpretation," doctrine prevailed over the person of the historical Buddha, the spirit over the linguistic formulation, immediate intuition over mediated discursiveness.

The practical solution to this challenge was ingenious. The very title reference to the lotus harks back to the Buddha's reference to himself in terms of the lotus plant, as he denies any "normal" or superficial sense of his identity:

Brahmin, those outflows whereby, if they had not been extinguished, I might have been a deva, gandharva, yakkha, or a human being—those outflows are extinguished in me, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump that can come to no further existence in the future. Just as a blue, red or white lotus, although born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands there unsoiled by the water—just so, brahmin,

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although in the world, I abide unsoiled by the world. Take it that I an Buddha, brahmin.[25]

In other words, the Lotus Sūtra contains not merely another lecture by the Buddha. It IS the Buddha, the very manifestation and repository of the Buddha-mind, which is to say, our own true mind.

We are warned that "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter."[26] Such wisdom, can be neither perceived, as a physical object, nor conceived, as a mental construct. Ultimate wisdom is empty (śūnya), devoid of percepts as well as concepts. To access this wisdom, the human fixation on both material entities and ideas must be removed. The world constructed by the human mind must be deconstructed for the wisdom of the Buddha-mind to emerge from "the dense forest of mistaken views" and "the filth of frivolous debate."[27] Not coincidentally, by the time the Lotus Sūtra appeared on the scene, numerous distortions and misinterpretations had seeped into Buddhist discourse, threatening to supplant the original existential orientation with mere scholasticism.

Since neither the five senses (perception) nor the sixth sense of the mind (conception) are adequate for the task of awakening, other means are required. These are evoked through creative uses of language, including similes and parables, as expressions of upāya (Chinese, fang pien; Japanese, hōben). Seven parables are presented within the text, each structured to intone the same message: those who suffer do so out of ignorance, which is relieved due to the intervention of a helper (often a relative) who makes use of upāyic

devices as a compassionate means to the end of awakening.[28]

Such linguistic devices allow us to access the otherwise inaccessible, by supplementing discursive intellectual resources of abstract thought with more primal currents of imagination, whereby we re-image ourselves within the respective concrete situations. They also have a universal, mass appeal, since no special education or skills are required to envision the simple scenarios. This is reflected in the make-up of those assembled to hear the Sūtra, a cross-section of various human and non-human groups.[29] Furthermore, the active participation of the audience is required to unravel the meaning of the message/massage. The Lotus Sūtra is an interactive text,

whose meanings cannot be fathomed by merely reading or hearing the words.

Śākyamuni is revealed to be the consummate hermeneutician as he skillfully casts his message in the form best suited to engage his diverse audience. The Lotus Sūtra flows logically from the preceding text, the Immeasurable Meanings Sūtra.[30] The latter sets the stage

for the momentous Lotus Sūtra by emphasizing meditation in the context of fantastic occurrences, a portent of the great teaching to be imparted in the Lotus Sūtra, such that even the unbelievable can be believed. Moreover, we are told that meanings are immeasurable, that is open-ended. Given the flux characteristic of our "normal" state of comprehension, we should not limit ourselves to any one meaning or set of meanings.

The "miraculous" events mentioned in the Lotus Sūtra have tended to been interpreted literally, riveting the attention of most readers on the "supernatural" power of the Buddha. However, these "miracles" can be taken as manifestations of the strategy to convey profound teachings that defy human cognitive abilities. These dream fragments allow the Awakened One to communicate most effectively with the diminished capacities of dreamers and sleepwalkers, while clearing the way for enhanced, clear comprehension.

However, Creative Hermeneutics cannot be restricted to a past period of time. For today's audiences it is necessary to demythologize what had been intentionally, and upāyically, mythologized at the time. For example, in the opening chapter of Lotus Sūtra, a wondrous scene unfolds. Magical flowers rain down from heaven upon the meditating Buddha, who is surrounded by a rapt audience composed of humans and various fantastic beings. An all-penetrating ray of light emanates from between the Buddha's eyebrows, illuminating multiple worlds, from the highest heaven to the lowest hell. Choruses of Buddhas are then heard preaching the Sūtras like lions, emitting "brahma sounds." Bodhisattvas "numerous as Ganges sands," are observed making offerings of rare gems and other precious goods, even offering their bodies and families.[31] Other bodhisattvas are seen practicing meditation, while "Buddha sons" expound the Law and others bear the abuse of

"persons of overbearing arrogance."[32]

This surreal scenario is the medium that is both the message and the massage, to borrow from Marshall McLuhan. The means (medium) by which the message is communicated resonates with that message. Self-deluded beings require a presentation suited to their narrow vision, just as children require simplified versions of reality, comic books and cartoons for example. Simultaneously, that same means/medium massages the audience, skillfully (upāyically) manipulating us to make us more relaxed and thus receptive to the intended message. The efficacy of this means/medium is demonstrated by the repeated references to the assembly's ecstatic response to the auditory and visual spectacle, as they are "filled with joy and delight."[33]

The forces of cognitive literalism then intervene. This "unfathomable event" elicits questions and doubts in the mind of Bodhisattva Maitreya and the others in attendance.[34] Finally Mañjuśri interprets it as a sign that the great Dharma is about to be set forth by the Buddha. This parallels a past event when Śākyamuni Buddha, Mañjuśri, and Maitreya were incarnated as Buddha Sun Moon Bright, Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright, and Bodhisattva Seeker of Fame respectively. In both cases a connection is drawn to the parinirvāna of the Buddha, that is, to the temporal point of his passing out of this world. While the mere thought of "losing" the Buddha horrifies the assembly, preparations are being made for the revelation that buddha-nature neither enters nor leaves the world, that the Tathāgata as the Thus Come is simultaneously the Thus Gone. In the same way the external world can intrude on our reveries during sleep, only to be mutated into dream elements, until we finally awaken. For example, we might

hear the ringing of a bell in a dream sequence, then gradually come to realize it is in fact the sound of our alarm clock. Hence, the horizons of the Historical Buddha expand into the infinity of the omnipresent Buddha as cosmic ground of reality. And the tiger raised as a sheep is lured a bit closer to the edge of the lake, where its true nature is to be revealed.

Chapter two explicitly expounds the linguistic strategy of "Expedient Means" (upāya), which has been hailed as the "pivot of the Buddha's teaching in the first half" of the text.[35] Aroused from samadhi, the Buddha shocks the assembly by proclaiming that neither voice-hearers nor pratyekabuddhas are capable of comprehending "the wisdom of the buddhas"; only other buddhas have that capacity.[36] This is actually not a pessimistic pronouncement, but a highly optimistic one, given the doctrine of the universal potential for buddhahood. The main obstacle to realization is the stubborn stance of the "overbearingly arrogant," the self-assumed possessors of "Truth" who are unwilling to expose their own ignorance.[37] Fixated on the partial truths offered in other Sūtras, such individuals have invested their egos in that narrow vision. Hence they cannot risk exposure to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about to be imparted. Accordingly 5,000 in the assembly stage an abrupt walk-out.

With the withdrawal of the unreceptive audience members, the Buddha resumes his role as facilitator to self-awakening (as distinguished from all-powerful savior who must rescue all beings). In this respect he offers four techniques to assist in the removal of the ignorance that blocks the Four Perceptions of Buddhawisdom:[38]

1. "to open the door of Buddha wisdom of all living beings, to allow them to attain purity"
2. "to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings"
3. "to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom"
4. "to induce living beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom"

These four techniques are implemented over and over in the course of the other chapters of the Lotus Sūtra. The goal is to fulfill the Buddha's closing promise to the assembly that:

You will have no more doubts or perplexities,

but, your minds filled with great joy,

will know that you yourselves will attain [realize] Buddhahood.[39]

V. The Logic of the Three Gates

The structure of the Lotus Sūtra demonstrates how meaning emerges as our mental constructs are gradually deconstructed and we enter a logical succession of gateways opening us to a full vista of reality. We must undo, unravel, the entangling net of damaging delusions woven by unawakened mind, and reinforced by social conditioning. We must deconstruct even science (Latin scientia, knowledge), for it too is a human devise:

> Science is the century-old endeavor to bring together by means of systematic thought the perceptible phenomena of this world into as thoroughgoing an association as possible. To put it boldly, it is the attempt at the posterior reconstruction of existence by the process of conceptualization.[40]

The deconstruction process is symbolized by the Three Gates or

Dharma Seals.[41] Each represents a point of entry into an ever deeper understanding of Buddha's message and a corresponding realization of awakening. The structure of the text reflects this progression, with each section building on and reflecting back on previous insights until the point of closure, or final break through, arrives. This represents our breaking through metaphysical and epistemological delusion, as well as through the limitations of language. Accordingly, the third and final gate, representing the profoundest experience of reality, is associated with a single chapter. Here indeed we have arrived at a "Gate of No Gate," a use of language to obliterate language and enter into action.

1.the branch gate: signlessness/animitta (chapters 1-14)

The process begins by clearing the ground. One needs to get beneath the dualisms and limitations imposed by perception and conception. This allows for true, immediate "seeing," in contrast to the filtered, interpreted seeing "as" experienced by deluded beings. Those who fail to recognize the existence of this gate are likewise incapable of recognizing the intrinsic value of the Lotus Sūtra. This includes even young Master Hakuin, later to

become one of the Sūtra's staunchest supporters. His autobiographical of "awakening" to the message of the text is instructive here:

I left home to become a Buddhist monk when I was fourteen . . . . I happened to hear that the Lotus Sūtra was the king of all the scriptures the Buddha had preached. It was supposed to contain the essential meaning of all the buddhas. I got hold of a copy and read it through. But when I had finished, I closed it with a heavy sigh. "This," I told myself, "is nothing but a collection of simple tales about cause and effect . . . on the whole it is what Lin-chi dismissed as 'mere verbal prescriptions for relieving the world's ills.' I'm not

going to find what I'm looking for here."[42]

Only many years later, at age forty, was Master Hakuin able to traverse into Signlessness, and thus a true assessment and appreciation of the text, as he himself reports:

One night, I decided to take another look at the Lotus Sūtra. I got out my only lamp, turning up the wick, and began to read it once again. I read it as far as the third chapter, the one on parables. Then, just like that, all the lingering doubts and uncertainties vanished from my mind. They suddenly ceased to exist. The reason for the reputation as the "king of Sūtras" was now revealed to me with blinding clarity. Teardrops began cascading down my face like two strings of beads—they came like beans pouring from a ruptured sack. A loud involuntary cry burst from the depths of my being and I began sobbing uncontrollably.[43]

Passing through this gate, we leave signs behind and enter into WISDOM (prajñā), represented in the Lotus Sūtra by the bodhisattva Manjuśri. He is, in fact, the perfection of wisdom, wisdom that has gone beyond the mundane truth of logic and language. Thus, in the opening chapter, as Śākyamuni Buddha remains deep in samadhi, Bodhisattva Maitreya begins to question Manjuśri "To settle his doubts."[44] In the second chapter Śāriputra, the wisest of the disciples, assumes the role of questioner. His doubts and misunderstandings, despite his highly-touted wisdom, expose the limitations of intellect.

2.the root gate: emptiness/śūnyatā (chapters 15-27)

The insufficiency of wisdom is made even more clear as we progress to the next gate, the root of the previous superficial branch, which is none other than emptiness. Entering this gate brings a recognition that no independent existence is possible, only relational, interdependent existence. Once distinctions and discriminations have been emptied, attachment also ends, allowing COMPASSION (karunā) to arise.

Numerous examples of the meaning of compassion are given in this second set of chapters. One case is the compassion of the father, the skilled (upāyic) physician, for his dependent and deluded children, a compassion that leads him to feign his own death to instill self-reliance and cure his recalcitrant children. Just so, the text seeks to wean the audience from dependence on its mere words, so the underlying message may be revealed. A close-minded attachment to the father, or the historical Buddha as "father of this world," is denounced as an expression of "arrogance and selfishness."[45] We need to empty out our narrow sense of identity, along with dualistic conceptual schemes of self and other, superior and inferior, past and present, savior and saved.

The erroneous savior/saved duality is particularly targeted in Chapter 25, "The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound," referring to Avalokiteśvara (Chinese Kuan-yin; Japanese, Kannon). The text begins with the common perception of this bodhisattva as a savior figure who listens and responds to the sounds of suffering in the world. However, as the theme is developed, glimmers of the deeper message appear. The bodhisattva is revealed to have multiple incarnations, upāyically manifested in accordance with the needs of the supplicant: pratyekabuddha, King Brahma, householder, chief minister, monastic, wife, child, or one

of many non-human creatures. In fact, anyone can be an incarnation of this powerful bodhisattva. The actual message, then, points to an internalized

Bodhisattva predicated on the pre-existing resources of compassion available to all beings. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound is not simply a source of inspiration for the suffering, but an empowering model for our aspiration. Both Perceiver and Perceived, this bodhisattva has the ability to "surpass those [suffering] sounds of the world," to drown them out, as do we.[46]

The bodhisattva Maitreya, the buddha of the future, embodies this development. In these chapters he takes the lead in questioning the Buddha, a role previously played by Śāriputra (Wisdom). The proliferation of buddhas, in violation of temporal and spatial constraints, is itself a sign of the higher wisdom of compassion. Contrary to simplistic appearances, Śākyamuni assures his audience "All that I preach is true and not false . . . . There is no ebb or flow of birth and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering extinction."[47]

3.closure (gate of no gate): aimlessness/appaṇihita (chapter 28)

Beyond the limitations of language and logic (exorcized by the awakening to Signlessness) and the snares of ego (annihilated by the awakening to Emptiness), full liberation comes with the realization that there is nothing to "get" and nowhere to "go." PRACTICE now becomes possible in the fullest sense, as embodied in the bodhisattva Universal Worthy (the focus of the next and final of the texts in this trinity of Sūtras, Sūtra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy).

In chapter 28, the emptying of language signals the beginning of practice. The audience is then offered visual manifestations of

"transcendental powers, dignity and virtue,"[48] on the part of the Bodhisattva, but little cognitive substance (precisely as it should be at this stage). The focus is on encouraging the audience to take that final step, to move from being Buddhist practitioners to realizing practice as a natural expression of their own Buddha-nature. The key element is "to acquire this Lotus Sūtra," which is made possible by four conditions:

1. "they must be protected and kept in mind by the Buddhas"
2. "they must plant the roots of virtue"

3. “they must enter the stage where they are sure of reaching enlightenment”
4. “they must conceive a determination to save all living being.” [49]

The sequence of these requisite conditions is noteworthy. It begins with a seeming reference to the other power of the protecting Buddhas, where we are “kept in mind.” However the second condition is clearly based on self power, on taking the initiative to “Plant the roots of virtue.” The theme of self-reliance continues as we enter into the enlightenment path, culminating in the Bodhisattva vow to save all beings. Thus, we are assured, one acquires the Lotus Sūtra. Obviously it is not the language of the text that is being referred to here, but rather its underlying message, the message of the awakened Mind that has been hidden beneath delusory slumbers. To acquire the Lotus Sūtra is nothing less than to embody the message of the Buddha. That point is further underscored later in the chapter when Śākyamuni Buddha himself declares:

. . . those who accept, uphold, read, and recite this Lotus Sūtra, memorize it correctly, practice and transcribe it, you should know that such persons have seen Shakyamuni Buddha. It is as though

they heard this sutra from the Buddha’s mouth. . . such persons have been covered in the robes of Shakyamuni Buddha.[50]

In other words, by means of this Sūtra, one sees the Buddha, one hears the Buddha, one assumes the garb of the Buddha. But there is more. Near the end of the chapter, and the end of the Sūtra, the metamorphosis becomes complete, as Śākyamuni charges Universal Worthy:

If you see a person who accepts and upholds this Sūtra, you should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha.[51]

Those who truly comprehend the message are themselves not different from Buddha. The first condition, being protected and kept in mind by the Buddhas, can now be seen as self-referential.

In passing through these three “gates,” a temporal as well as enlightenmental movement is seen from the Historical Buddha Śākyamuni,

under Signlessness and Wisdom, to the Original Buddha, the Dharma-kāya, who is transcendent yet immanent.[52] The primary manifestation of our inherent buddha-nature, which obviates the need for an external savior, is Compassion derived from Emptiness, which evolves into the Practice characterized by Aimlessness.

Those who fail to grasp the all-encompassing importance of this message are given due warning in chapter 3, where fourteen "sins" of slandering this Sūtra are listed. One sins not against the Sūtra as a written text, but against it message. Indicative of the deep existential basis of the awakening process, one must not merely

deconstruct one's cognitive structures, but also modify one's speech and behavior accordingly. Both an inner and an outer transformation is required to live in accordance with one's pre-existing buddha-nature. The movement from sin one through fourteen reflects an increasingly active involvement and corresponding culpability on the part of the sinner, as mere omission evolves into straightforward commission:

1.intellectual arrogance (as in the case of the 5,000 who walk out)

2.laziness

3.egotistical self-involvement

4.failure to preach the Lotus Sūtra (hence disregard for its message)

5. "shallow understanding"

6.attachment to desire

7.lack of comprehension of the Sūtra

8.scowling "with knitted brows" (that is, reacting angrily)

9.harboring doubt (while doubt is recognized as a useful condition under certain circumstances, the secret harboring of doubt is self-destructive)

10. slandering the Sūtra

11. despising those associated with the Sūtra

12. hating those associated with the Sūtra

13. envying those associated with the Sūtra

14. bearing a grudge against those associated with the Sūtra.[53]

To abjure these sins is to turn from misinterpretations of Buddhist doctrine, and back toward the original message: “Separating oneself from falsehood and delusion──/this alone may be called emancipation.”[54] The entire text of the Lotus Sūtra promotes these dual, intertwined goals in myriad ways, using an infinite diversity of upāyic tools.

VI. Buddhism Beyond the Lotus Sūtra

Of course, the life of Buddhist philosophy does not end with the Lotus Sūtra. Subsequent generations will submit that philosophy to their continuing applications of Creative Hermeneutics, recasting it for ever new audiences, cultures, and conditions. Yet the Lotus Sūtra may serve as a renewable source of inspiration and aspiration due to its high level of creativity in combination with linguistic dazzle and logical competence.

Where might the trail lead next? The “Information Age” of the much-touted New Millennium requires its own creatively hermeneutical multi-media recasting of the message. It would need to be both deeply engaging and profound, alluring and enlightening, speaking to multiple audiences on multiple levels eloquently about the essential illusoriness of eloquence itself. We will take a moment to contemplate what Śākyamuni might have wrought had he been given access to the internet. How would he proceed so that “whatever their language so was my language,” causing them to rejoice and be “gladdened”?[55]

A glimmer, however faint, of what might be anticipated is found in the popular film “The Matrix” (1999). I am aware of at least one meditation Master in Taiwan who has used this film as a teaching tool. Not out of any sense that this is a “Buddhist” work, but rather to illustrate in appropriately high tech format the notion of “reality” as a mental projection. Liberation is the main theme of “The Matrix,” as in Buddhism, largely as a matter of one’s removing a delusory identity. upāyic elements are also found to assist

in the “awakening” process (which, however, requires the use of drugs). Finally, self-sacrifice and love are recognized as powerful resources.

My own students first brought the film to my attention as

seeming to resonate with the Buddhist concepts we had discussed in class, although when pressed to be more specific the many dissonances with Buddhist philosophy readily emerged as well. Multiple websites have been spawned by the film, including “The Matrix as Messiah Movie,” with such essays as “The Matrix ── A Cyberpunk Parable?” Astounding special effects and riveting emotional manipulation have drawn young audiences to the film. Unfortunately these are achieved largely attained through the use of fear and violence, the very antithesis of Buddhist ahiṃsā.

Numerous other anomalies exist vis-à-vis Buddhism. The virtual reality is created by the intervention of alien beings in the film, motivated by their desire to exploit humans as an energy source. In contrast these are our own self-delusions in Buddhism, which traces the problem to a kind of self-exploitation generated by ignorance. Most importantly, the underlying reality revealed in the film has no resemblance to Buddhist “bliss,” but is in fact devoutly to be avoided. One of the characters even betrays his friends in order to escape reality and reinstate himself into illusion. The film’s fixation on the physical body also is at variance with the Buddhist sense of our original nature as unborn, hence deathless. In sum, “The Matrix” encourages dependence on “The One,” who is possessed of special powers and is destined to “save” the world, unlike the doctrine of universal and abiding buddhahood.

High tech tools undoubtedly have potential for transmitting the Dharma, at least on the mundane level, by preparing a common ground for deeper insights, as in the Lotus Sūtra. Conflicting cultural constructs must be removed before the message can be heard. However, we need to confront cultural differences in values along with alien mythic structures used to present those values. Some myths can help transmit the Buddhist message; others serve only to misappropriate the message, by pandering to vastly different, but more comfortable, perceptions and conceptions of reality.

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What, then, can we conclude about language and logic in the Lotus Sūtra, and its lingering lessons for Buddhist practice? We have applied the methodology of Creative Hermeneutics to Primal Buddhism as well as the Lotus Sūtra.In the process we have argued that the Lotus Sūtra is itself a work of one or more creative hermeneuticians seeking to retool and update the essential message of Śākyamuni Buddha, what Master Hakuin recognized as One Mind. The special use of language and logic in the text has been discussed and illustrated, with Signlessness as the point of entry to Emptiness, and thence to Aimlessness──branch, root, and closure respectively. In accordance with the open-ended task of Creative Hermeneutics, some suggestions also have been made to future incarnations of Buddhist discourse, what Buddhists must say to today's audiences to communicate the essential message and corresponding efficacious modes of communication.

Perhaps the last word is best left to one who was both a logician and a Buddhist philosopher, Fedor Ippolitovich Stcherbatsky (1866~1942). In a book purporting to define the concept of Buddhism as well as the word Dharma, Stcherbatsky concludes very inconclusively, intellectually speaking. Any seeming contradictions dissolve, however, in light of Buddhism's Twofold Truth, as language and logic, conceptualization and even philosophy, are all ultimately recognized as superficial accoutrements.:

> although the conception of an element of existence has given rise to an imposing superstructure in the shape of a consistent system of [Buddhist] philosophy, its inmost nature remains a riddle. What is dharma? It is inconceivable! It is subtle! No one will ever be able to tell what its real nature (dharma-sabhāva) is![56]

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《法華經》中的語言與邏輯──在哲學基礎下的詮釋學探究

華珊嘉
聖地牙哥州立大學亞洲研究所教授

提要

許多世紀以來，《法華經》在眾多佛教文獻中一直被譽爲是最具影響力的作品之一。在最常被被閱讀與念誦的經典當中，它一直是世界各地佛教徒日常修行的焦點。但是，它的哲學深度大家又真正瞭解了多少呢？經義是否在一片反覆讀誦的熱情中被清楚掌握了呢？抑或是大家根本就誤解了《法華經》的形式與內涵了呢？要回答這些問題，本文嘗試以詮釋學的角度來探索《法華經》。筆者認爲此經的作者或作者們對原始佛教思想做出了「批判的繼承與創造的發展」，這是五階段的「創造性詮釋學」（Creative Hermeneutics）任務。爲了證成上述觀點，試分別論述：(1)《法華經》在佛教哲學中的地位；(2)「創造性詮釋學」與原始佛教：階段一～三； (3)作爲「創造性詮釋學」作品的《法華經》：階段四與五；(4)無相、空、無願「三門」（Three Gates）的邏輯；(5)《法華經》之外的佛教。

關鍵詞：1.創造性詮釋學　2.《法華經》　3.語言　4.邏輯　5.方便

[1] This five stage model of Creative Hermeneutics was developed by the late Dr. Charles Wei-hsun Fu (1933~1996), to promote the revitalization of various philosophical traditions in Asia, including Buddhism. See for example: “A Creative-Hermeneutical Investigation into the Formation and Development of the Pratitya-samutpada Thought,” Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, 4, Taipei, 1991, 169-99 and “Creative Hermeneutics: Taoist Metaphysics and Heidegger,” Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 3, 1976, 115-43.

[2] Wang Wen-ch'eng Kung ch'uan-shu, 26:1b-5a. For an English translation see Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang-Yang-ming (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp.271-77.

[3] Charles Wei-hsun Fu, "Creative Hermeneutics Applied to the Great Learning," unpublished essay; p. 6.

[4] See Sandra A. Wawrytko, "Kong Zi as Feminist: Confucian Self-Cultivation in a Contemporary Context," forthcoming in the Journal of Chinese Philosophy.

[5] See 'Etienne Lamotte, "The Assessment of Textual Interpretation in Buddhism," included in Buddhist Hermeneutics, Donald S. Lopez ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), pp.11-27.

[6] William R. LaFleur, The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.84.

[7] Hakuin, "Letter in Answer to an old Nun of the Hokke [Nichiren] Sect," December 26, 1747, in The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings, Philip B. Yampolsky trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p.87. In his letter Master Hakuin notes that he is quoting from one of his own lectures.

[8] Hakuin, "Letter," p. 87.

[9] Chinese, Miao Fa Lien Hua Ching.

[10] Nikkyō Niwano, Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1990).

[11] The convergence of basic Theravāda and Mahāyāna doctrines has been explored by Thich Nhat Hanh in his exemplary work of Creative Hermeneutics, Old Path White Clouds: Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1991). Through a skillful culling and combining of texts, he seeks "to demonstrate that the more expansive ideas and doctrines associated with Mahāyāna can all be found in the earlier Pali Nikāya and Chinese Āgamas. One need only read these

sūtras with an open mind to see that all sūtras are sūtras of Buddhism, whether they belong to the Northern or Southern Tradition"; p. 576.

[12] Anguttara-nikāya I, 168-69. I. B. Horner trans., included in Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, Edward Conze, J. B. Horner, David Snellgrove, and Arthur Waley eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp.37-38.

[13] Samyutta-nikāya III, 118. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.106.

[14] Edward Rothstein, "Cracking That Enemy Code: A Romantic Prototype for the Hacker," discussing Neal Stephenson's novel Cryptonomicon (Avon), New York Times, August 21, 1999, A15.

[15] For a fuller discussion of this point, see Shohei Ichimura's insightful essay , "Buddhist Dharma and Natural Law: Toward a Trans-Cultural, Universal Ethics," in Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society: An International Symposium, Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko eds. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp.383-405. See especially "The Fundamental Ethical Motive of the Buddha," pp. 394-98.

[16] The Idealism of a Plato or a Berkeley is unable to function without some presumed source of an Over-Mind. In this respect it is very similar to early Indian philosophy, as forth in the Upaniṣads. One cannot fail to note that a contributing factor here is the common heritage of Indo-European language structures.

[17] Ichimura, p.390.

[18] Ichimura discusses structures paralleling Buddhism's Twofold Truth in the work of the American philosopher and historian of science Thomas Kuhn and the Japanese philosopher Kumataro Kawada; pp. 391-94.

[19] Majjhima-nikāya I, 71. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.111. The most famous metaphor in this category is found in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra (196), where we are warned not to confuse the object (meaning) for the pointing finger (words).

[20] Dīgha-nikāya II, 109. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.103.

[21] Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta III, 1-5; in T. W. Rhys Davids trans., Buddhist Suttas (New York: Dover, 1969), pp.40-42.

[22] Majjhima-nikāya I, 160. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.64.

[23] Majjhima-nikāya I, 297-98. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.91.

[24] Burton Watson argues that the text can be dated to around the middle of the third century c.e., and was originally written in either a local Indian dialect or a Central Asian language. See Watson trans., The Lotus Sutra (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.ix.

[25] Anguttara-nikāya II, 38-39. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.105.

[26] Watson, Chapter 2, p.23. All subsequent quotations from the Lotus Sūtra are taken from this translation.

[27] Chapter 2, p.37; chapter 4, p.86.

[28] The seven parables are:
1.the burning house (chapter 3)
2.the lost son (chapter 4)
3.the medicinal herbs (chapter 5)
4.the phantom city (chapter 7)
5.the hidden jewels (chapter 8)
6.digging for water (chapter 10)
7.the skilled physician (chapter 16)
In each case the helper initially plays into the delusions of the sufferer, temporarily displacing logical truth with a more effective and efficient psychological ministering.

[29] The list includes 12,000 arhats (including the 10 major disciples), 2000 practitioners, Mahā-prajāpatī leading 6000 nuns, 80,000 bodhisattvas /mahāsattvas, Indra leading 20,000 sons of gods, 30,000 other sons of gods, 8 dragon kings, 4 each of kimnara, gandharva asura, and garuda kings; Chapter 1, pp.3-5.

[30] The Threefold Lotus Sūtra texts include the Immeasurable Meanings Sūtra as prologue, the direct implementation of the Lotus Sūtra itself, and an epilogue in the form of the Sūtra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy.

[31] Chapter 1, pp.8-9.

[32] Chapter 1, pp 10-11.

[33] Chapter 1, p.7.

[34] Chapter 1, pp.6-7.

[35] Niwano, p.41. LaFleur suggests that upāya be rendered as “modes” to avoid a sense of duality in that “different modes are the consequence of s genius for adaptability that translates the dharma into a variety of forms for a variety of people”, The Karma of Words, p.85.

[36] Chapter 2, pp.23-24.

[37] Chapter 2, p.30.

[38] Chapter 2, p.31.

[39] Chapter 2, p.46.

[40] Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion,” in Quantum Questions, Ken Wilber ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), p.107.

[41] See “Three Wondrous Gates,” trans. Thich Nhat Hanh and included in Old Path White Clouds, pp.456-62.

[42] Norman Waddell, The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin: A Translation of the Sokkō -roku Kaien-fusetsu (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), p.33.

[43] Waddell, p.33. Kazuaki Tanahashi mentions a chirping cricket as the catalyst for Hakuin’s break through as he read the chapter on parables in the Lotus Sūtra. See Penetrating Laughter: Hakuin’s Zen & Art (New York: The Overlook Press, 1984), p.14.

[44] Chapter 1, p.7.

[45] Chapter 16, p.231.

[46] Chapter 25, p.306.

[47] Chapter 16, p.226.

[48] Chapter 28, p.219.

[49] Chapter 28, p.320.

[50] Chapter 28, p.323.

[51] Chapter 28, p.324.

[52] The pivotal chapter in this movement is located near the “entrance” to the second gate, chapter 16, “The [Eternal] Life Span of the Thus Come One” (Watson’s translation). Niwano renders the title as “Revelation of the [Eternal] Life of the Tathagata,” hailing the chapter as “the living spirit of the entire Lotus Sutra,” p.211.

[53] Chapter 3, pp73-74.

[54] Chapter 3, p.72.

[55] Dīgha-nikāya II, 109. Horner trans., Buddhist Texts, p.103. Text quoted above.

[56] Th. Stcherbatsky, The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word “Dharma” (Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1970), p.75.