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# Chih-i's System of Sign Interpretation

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p. 495

## Summary

As the founder of the first Buddhist school — T'ien-t'ai Buddhism in China, master Chih-i's indispensable contribution toward the establishment of Chinese Buddhism is reflected mainly in his ingenious interpretation of one of the most important Buddhist scriptures — the Lotus Sūtra (Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra). This is because such an interpretation is not simply the interpretation of the scripture, but more significantly, through his systematic exposition of the Lotus Sūtra, Chih-i expresses his own philosophical thought. Precisely speaking, the interpretation itself is a concrete demonstration of Chih-i's own philosophical system of understanding Buddhism. In this paper, I will deal with Chih-i's system of sign interpretation, which is discussed under eight categories. The source

work of this study is based on Chih-i's gigantic work The Abstruse Meaning of the Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Fine Dharma (Taishōvol. 33, no. 1716). This study reveals how Chih-i creatively interprets the Lotus Sūtra, and how his perfect harmonization philosophy is at work through his system of sign interpretation.

**關鍵詞**：1.Sign interpretation 2.Lotus Sūtra 3.Hsüan-i 4.Perfect harmonization philosophy 5.Middle Way-Ultimate Truth

p. 496

## Contents

### [Introduction](#)

[1. The interpretation of sign to investigate different meanings of a word](#)

[2. The interpretation of sign to decode the structure of a character](#)

[3. The interpretation of sign to reason out meanings of the black ink as form](#)

[4. The interpretation of sign to read a phrase](#)

[5. The interpretation of sign to use analogies](#)

[i. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Objects \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Ching-miao用蓮華譬境妙\)](#)

[i.i Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Ten Suchnesses \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Shih-ju-ching用蓮花譬十如境\) in terms of the Buddha-realm](#)

[i.ii Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Twelfefold Causality \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Shih-erh Yin-yüan-ching用蓮花譬十二因緣境\)](#)

[i.iii Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Four Noble Truths \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Ssu-ti-ching用蓮花譬四諦境\)](#)

- [i.iv Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Twofold Truth \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Erh-ti-ching用蓮花譬二諦境\)](#)
- [i.v Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Threefold Truth, One Truth, and No-truth \(Yung-lien-hua P'i San-ti-ching, I-shih-ti, Wu-ti Wu-shuo用蓮花譬三諦境、一實諦、無諦無說\)](#)
- [ii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Knowledge \(Yung-liem-hua P'i-chih-miao用蓮花譬智妙\)](#)
- [iii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Practice \(Yung-lien-hua P'i-hsing-miao用蓮花譬行妙\)](#)
- [iv. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Positions \(Yung-lien-hua P'i-wei-miao用蓮花譬位妙\)](#)
- [v. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of the ThreefoldDharmaas the vehicle \(Yung-lien-hua P'i San-fa-sh'eng Miao用蓮花譬三法乘妙\)](#)
- [vi. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Empathy and Response \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Kan-ying Miao用蓮花譬感應妙\)](#)
- [vii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of supra-mundane Powers \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Shen-t'ung Miao用蓮花譬神通妙\)](#)
- [viii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Expounding theDharma\(Yung-lien-hua P'i Shuo-fa Miao用蓮花譬說法妙\)](#)
- [ix. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Retinues \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Chüan-shu Miao用蓮花譬眷屬妙\)](#)
- [x. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Merit and Benefit \(Yung-lien-hua P'i Kung-te Li-i Miao用蓮花譬功德利益妙\)](#)
- [6.The interpretation of sign to explain what the Buddha intends to convey through his manifestation of supra-mundane powers](#)
- [7.The interpretation of sign made by discussing the meaning contained in theLotus Sūtra](#)
- [8.The interpretation of sign to use numbers](#)

[8.1.The use of the category number ten](#)

[8.2.The use of the category number six](#)

[8.3.The use of the category number five](#)

[8.4.The use of the category number four](#)

[8.5.The use of the category number three](#)

[8.6.The use of the category number one](#)

[Conclusion](#)

p. 497

## **Introduction**

Master Chih-i (538~598) is the founder of the first Chinese Buddhist school — T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. T'ien-t'ai Buddhism is distinctively colored with Chinese epistemology and paves the way to the development of different Buddhist schools in China. The key figure to this significance is its founder Chih-i — one of the greatest Buddhist masters, or "the greatest of all Chinese Buddhist philosophers."<sup>[1]</sup> His theory of classifying the teachings of the Buddha resolves what seemingly contradictions among various Buddha's teachings, and offers a holistic view of the whole Buddhist canon. All Buddhist scriptures are provided with rational explanations for their different theories. With Chih-i's system of classification, all divisions in Buddhism, be it Lesser Vehicle (Śrāvakayāna) or Greater Vehicle (Mahāyāna), occupy an important place along the course of the Buddha's teaching career, since they are all considered as the means leading living beings to attain final Buddhahood. Chih-i's theory of the Middle Way-Ultimate Truth (Chung-tao Shih-hsiang 中道實相) is the identification of the three aspects of reality -- Emptiness, the Provisional Existence, and the Middle Way. This theory not only incorporates different views about reality, but also affirms that the empirical world is the ultimate

place to practice and to attain liberation. Emptiness (K'ung 空; Skt., *sūnyatā*) is spoken of in terms of the illusory nature of existence, since one entity originates depending on other entities. The Provisional (Chia 假; Skt., *prajñapti*) conveys the characteristics of phenomena from the angle of their conventional existence. Although phenomena are illusory, they do bear certain names and exist temporally. The Middle Way (Chung-tao 中道; Skt., *madhyamā pratipad*) identifies Emptiness with the Provisional, and vice versa.

p. 498

When people hold onto either the view of Emptiness or the view of the Provisional Existence, for Chih-i, either side is extreme and does not reflect the true characteristic of the phenomenon. Only the Middle Way that incorporates both views by identifying one side with the other transcends both extremes. However, this transcendence is not to remove oneself from two sides, instead, it embraces both of them, representing the perfect perception of comprehensiveness.[2]

Although there are some studies on the life of Chih-i, authorship of his works, his theories, his thoughts, and so forth,[3]

p. 499

there is another important perspective of Chih-i's accomplishment that has not yet been paid attention to, that is, his system of sign interpretation. Here, we are focusing on his major work *The Abstruse Meaning of the Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Fine Dharma* (Miao-fa Lien-hua-ching Hsüan-i 妙法蓮華經玄義)[4] as the basis of this investigation.

The definition of sign is generally understood as something standing for something else, i.e., signifier and signified.[5] "Sign" in Chih-i's system of interpretation refers to words, characters, phrases, images, numbers, and analogies that signify truth, ideas, concepts, and thoughts. Generally speaking, Chih-i's interpretation of the title of the Lotus Sūtra is the interpretation of signs. However, as we look closely, we find that Chih-i has a unique system of sign interpretation by means of using numbers and analogies, and by means of deciphering words, characters, and so forth, to

signify his ideas and thoughts. His philosophical thought in turn enhances the depth and the power of his interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra.

Chih-i's concept of sign interpretation is concerned with conveying the meaning of signs in nature, because sign is the manifestation of the principle embedded in nature. Chih-i gives examples about mundane inventions that are derived from emulating natural phenomena. The invention of the fishing net is due to one's understanding of the principle that is manifested by

p. 500

the sign as the spider web, in which the principle represents the means of catching things. The invention of the vehicle is due to one's understanding of the principle that is manifested by the sign as the flying bird, in which the principle represents the means of delivery. The invention of the boat is due to one's understanding of the principle that is manifested by the sign as the floating raft, in which the principle represents the means of transportation. The invention of characters is due to one's understanding of the principle that is manifested by the sign as the bird track, in which the principle represents the means of written communication.<sup>[6]</sup>

Basically, there are two levels of signs, each of which, in Chih-i's interpretation, contains one layer of arbitrary language. The first level of sign refers to natural signs (i.e., legible images in nature), which contain what nature attempts to express. This intention of nature is the first layer of arbitrary language, which is illegible and is to be discovered. The second level of sign is related to the author who, by means of interpreting natural signs, attempts to convey certain themes. The words and sentences the author uses is legible language, forming artificial signs. The theme contained in the artificial sign is the second layer of arbitrary language, which has to coincide with the first layer of arbitrary language. The overlapping of these two layers of arbitrary language strongly supports the discourse of the author. Given that, in Chih-i's interpretation, the central image of the Lotus Sūtra is the image of the lotus (that belongs to the natural sign), this natural sign can in turn represent the authentic nature of reality. This demonstrates that nature speaks through the image of the lotus to reveal the Buddhist Dharma. The conclusion is that the discovery of what the lotus (as natural sign) signifies must be the Ultimate Truth (or Reality), since the arbitrary language of the lotus expresses the true nature of the phenomenal

world. Therefore, Chih-i's sign interpretation in the

p. 501

Hsüan-i is a means to penetrate the True Reality or the Ultimate Truth (Shih-i 實相), and to make this layer of arbitrary language legible. This intention of Chih-i to reveal the abstruse truth through visible sign is evident. As he states it:

Like one's facial feature that is replete with all good and bad, when one's outer appearance is viewed, one's inner [quality] is at once known.<sup>[7]</sup>

In short, by penetrating the Ultimate Truth that is signified by lotus (as natural sign), Chih-i's discourse (as artificial sign) is substantiated. By revealing the Ultimate Truth as perfect harmonization, correspondingly, Chih-i's own philosophical thought is also proved to be perfect harmonization, and the body of his interpretation stands out to be the embodiment of his perfect harmonization philosophy.

According to our study of the work Hsüan-i, Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy (Yüan-jung Che-hsüeh 圓融哲學) can be characterized by its nature of reconciliation, flexibility, completeness, comprehensiveness, functionality, dynamism, perfection, and by its all-embracing nature, whereby the inconceivable profound state of Buddhahood is displayed.

(i) Reconciliation refers to reconciling differences of phenomena and views in reaching a harmonious taste of all empirical existence. The existence of all entities and phenomena are viewed as interdependent entities that can only depend upon their relation to each other.

(ii) Flexibility refers to an integral mode of thinking and reasoning, with which one's outlook of the world is not rigid and limited, but is multi-dimensional, non-dual, non-extreme, and through which one obtains a comprehensive view of certain objects connected and identified with various other objects.

p. 502

Since Chih-i's mode of thinking bears profound Taoist influence, what Roger T. Ames describes as the function of Te 德 in Taoism is quite appropriate for articulating the

characteristic of this flexibility:

It [Te] functions to constitute a determinate and identifiable harmony -- a regularity and rhythm. But then, given that it cannot be abstracted from context, it is fluid with no fixed determinateness.[8]

(iii) Dynamism refers to the techniques Chih-i employs that are dynamic in producing strong arguments and views perfectly. This dynamism also lies in his method of interpretation, which is without restriction and consists of open and flexible patterns. This is partially exemplified in Chih-i's interpretation of the formulation of different Chinese characters, from which Chih-i's theory of identifying each single entity in its relation to the whole is expressed. This indicates that any entity is identical to the whole, and the whole is contained within any single entity.[9] This dynamism is also reflected in Chih-i's way of portraying reality in terms of the interactive relationship among various categories of objects and knowledge, whereby they are correlated in a pattern of interpenetration and integration.

(iv) Functionality refers to various hermeneutical strategies Chih-i applies which function to present an organic unity of his system of thought.

(v) Completeness refers to the nature of Chih-i's system of thought in general, which is reflected in his way of structuring the Hsüan-i, his way of incorporating all teachings of the

p. 503

Buddha, his way of reasoning by exhausting all possible categories related to the issue, and his theory of the Ultimate Truth that penetrates the depth and the vastness of the Dharma-realm.

(vi) Comprehensiveness refers to non-partiality, non-distinction, and non-separation of the subtle state of integration, in which all things are harmoniously existent and are of the same reality.

(vii) Perfection refers to Chih-i's system as a whole, whether in terms of his system of interpretation, or presentation, or categorization, or formulating ideas, thoughts, and concepts. Chih-i's endeavor to exhaust all possible related issues or categories is overwhelming, and renders his system of thought in a tapestry of perfection.

(viii) The all-embracing[10] nature reflects Chih-i's positive view towards the empirical world in the sense that the Ultimate Truth is embedded in all entities, underlining its unlimited pervasiveness. In the context that the Ultimate Truth pervades everything in the world, an entirely positive and unique view of perceiving the mundane world is presented. The mundane world as a place of birth and death is identified with the eternal realm of



enlightenment. With this view, a negative outlook of the mundane world is transformed into a positive affirmation. Instead of the traditional view of negating the mundane world as something harmful that hinders one's path to liberation, Chih-i's all-embracing approach towards the world is rather revolutionary, and is epistemological and soteriological.

p. 504

The above-stated various characteristics of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy are revealed in Chih-i's system of sign interpretation. We can distinguish eight types of sign interpretation in his system. First, the interpretation of sign investigates different meanings of a word, from which certain systems and concepts Chih-i intends to convey are unraveled. Second, the interpretation of sign decodes the structure of a character. This decoding reveals Chih-i's theory of one dharma in relation to all dharmas. Third, the interpretation of sign reasons out meanings of the black ink as form, with which Chih-i demonstrates how truth is embedded in all dharmas. Fourth, the interpretation of sign reads a phrase in different ways, whereby Chih-i shows how, with different readings, one can discover different aspects of truth. Fifth, the interpretation of sign employs analogies to discuss certain issues, with which truth and concepts can be better apprehended. Sixth, the interpretation of sign explains what the Buddha intends to convey through his manifestation of supra-mundane powers. Seventh, the interpretation of sign correlates with the meanings Chih-i intends to convey with the phrases of expression that are formulated as signs by Chih-i himself. Eighth, the interpretation of sign employs numbers to symbolize Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

In short, all of these eight types of sign interpretation are concerned with natural or artificial language. What a natural object such as lotus represents can be regarded as natural language. What is conveyed by written language (including words, strokes that form a word, black ink that forms strokes, different ways of reading a phrase, phrases of expression, and numbers) or by the language that is derived from the Buddha's supra-mundane power can be regarded as artificial language. Such an intensive sign interpretation focusing on language is Chih-i's means to convey the Ultimate Truth (or True Reality), as truth is embedded in all types of language whether artificial or natural.

## 1. The interpretation of sign to investigate different meanings of a word

This type of sign interpretation, e.g., investigating different meanings of a word, is seen by one example in deciphering the meanings of the words Chi and Ying. In order to see what the word Chi 機 (capacity of living beings) means, Chih-i considers the word "Chi" as containing three meanings. The meaning "slightness" (Wei 微) is what Chi originally indicates. Chih-i, thus, interprets it as "about to slightly move" (Wei-wei Chiang-tung 微微將動). Chih-i relates this definition to wholesomeness, stating that "wholesomeness could be produced" (K'o-sheng Chih-shan 可生之善) within living beings. However, Chih-i asserts, the origination of this potential wholesomeness depends on the response of the sage (i.e., the Buddha). This condition initiates the second meaning of Chi "concerning" (Kuan 關), suggesting good and evil of living beings are connected to the kindness and compassion of the sage. Related to the meaning, "concerning", the third meaning of Chi "suitable" (I 宜) is designated. This is to say that the compassion of the sage is suitable for removing living beings from the suffering of ignorance; the kindness of the sage is suitable for bestowing on living beings the joy of the Dharma-nature (Fa-hsing 法性; Skt., dharmatā). Basically, only the first meaning Wei (slightness) is directly indicated by the word Chi, but this meaning is used by Chih-i as a medium in order for other meanings to be assessed. Therefore, the word Chi is defined soteriologically with three meanings. The process of the interpretation starts with the soteriological reference to the first meaning of Chi, which engenders the second meaning of Chi, from which the third meaning of Chi is subsequently derived.

As for the word "response" (Ying 應), Chih-i also designates three meanings. The meaning "approach" (Fu 赴) is derived from the correspondence with the above-mentioned reference to the meaning Wei (slightness). This is to express the situation that, at the moment when Chi is

"about to slightly move", the sage approaches

p. 506

Chi and enables the wholesomeness within living beings to be engendered. The second meaning of Ying, "to comply with" (Tui 對), is the original meaning of Ying, but is treated as a mere fact associated with the preceding meaning, stressing that the purpose of the sage to approach living beings is to comply with the capacities of them. The third meaning "response" is the primal meaning of the word Ying. Using this meaning to interpret Ying seems repetitious, but is conclusive of the situation between Chi (the disposition of living beings) and Ying (the sage's response), for only the meaning "response" defines whatever circumstantially suitable method the Buddha uses to respond to sentient beings. Chih-i explains:

Since Chi [capacity of living beings] is spoken of in terms of being treated suitably, what then is the suitable method in terms of response? The method of kindness and compassion is suitable to treat good and evil, for compassion is suitable to save beings from suffering, and kindness is suitable to bestow on [them] joy. Following whatever the method [circumstantially] means to respond suitably. Therefore, the [meaning] Ying is used to explain the [word] Ying.[\[11\]](#)

Another case of deciphering the meaning of a word as sign interpretation is the interpretation of the word "Ching" 經 (literally meaning "warp" in Chinese; Skt., sūtra),[\[12\]](#)through which a detailed analysis and description of Ching is developed. The character "Ching", though rich in semantic associations, is associated here only with the Buddhist Dharma (i.e., truth addressed in Buddhism) and constancy (Ch'ang 常). This denotes the following meanings, which are confined in terms of the nature of

p. 507

the teaching of the sage: (i) foundation for the dharma (Fa-pen 法本), (ii) slight emanation (Wei-fa 微發), (iii) gushing up spring (Yung-ch'üan 湧泉), (iv) a chalk-line (Sheng-mo 繩墨), (v) garlands tied together (Chieh-man 結鬘), (vi) tallying with (Ch'i 契), (vii) thread (Hsien 線), and (viii) teaching of wholesome words (Shan-yü-chiao 善語教). In fact, Ching is treated merely as a semantically empty sign that is not arbitrarily linked

with these meanings, but as a symbol for these meanings to be charged, in order to form a discourse of reasoning for what Buddhist scripture is intended to be. The primal meaning "warp" is directly shown by the character, but is read to be associated with its counterpart -- the meaning "weft" (Wei 緯), indicating that Buddhism is constituted by two aspects -- doctrine and practice, and thus only complete when they are woven by warp and weft. Warp refers to the Worldly Siddhānta[13] the Buddha employs to expound sūtras, waving horizontal lines as doctrinal

p. 508

aspect; and weft refers to the practice of the bodhisattva in the world, waving vertical lines as practical aspect.

From the above first case of investigating the meanings of the words Chi and Ying, the concept of empathy and response and how this concept works out are exposed. As for the second case, the discussion of the meanings of Ching draws a picture of the definition of Ching as to the system it forms in Buddhism, and how it functions to benefit living beings. Obviously, this type of sign interpretation is a type of discourse in conveying Chih-i's ideas and concepts of Buddhism. This method of imbuing a word with various meanings to reveal Chih-i's own ideas reflects the functional nature of his perfect harmonization philosophy.

## **2. The interpretation of sign to decode the structure of a character**

For Chih-i, sign interpretation can be made by studying the meaning of a word, but can also go so far as to decipher the strokes of a character. From the development of each stroke, a new character is formulated and a new meaning is suggested. Such a detailed and fine touch of deciphering the development of each stroke is a unique and sophisticated method of sign interpretation. This method is based on the principle of ideograms as characteristics of the Chinese written language. Chih-i's analysis of the formation of characters is to find their meanings represented by each stroke, which is exemplified in a lengthy analysis of the "black ink as form" (Hei-mo-se 黑墨色). It vividly depicts Chih-i's theory that all dharmas are

developed from one single dharma. Since they are one entity, Chih-i holds that one dharma can penetrate all dharmas, and all dharmas are embodied in one dharma. According to Chih-i's system of identification, there is absolutely no discrepancy between one phenomena and another.

Let us quote Chih-i's passage concerning what is said in the Prajñāsūtra:  
"All dharmas tend toward form, and such tending is

p. 509

nothing else but [form]."[\[14\]](#) Chih-i then remarks:

Form can interpret all dharmas. It is like the black ink as form. With one stroke [i.e., horizontal stroke], it means "one" (I 一). With two strokes, it means "two" (Erh 二). With three strokes, it means "three" (San 三). Adding the vertical stroke (on the three horizontal lines), it means "king" (Wang 王). Adding one stroke on the right, it means "the period from 1 to 3a.m." (Ch'ou 丑).[\[15\]](#) Adding one stroke on the left, it means "field", (T'ien 田). If the middle vertical line goes over the top, it means "due to" (Yu 由). When this line goes over the bottom, it means "to explain" (Shen 申). With such a bending and turning, the meanings that are signified are endless. It could be that one word interprets immeasurable dharmas, or immeasurable words commonly interpret one dharma; either immeasurable words interpret immeasurable dharmas, or one word interprets one dharma. With one dot of black ink slightly bending and turning, its interpretation differs greatly. Bending to the left, it is interpreted as "evil" (Erh 惡); bending to the right, it means "good" (Shan 善).[\[16\]](#) Writing the dot on the top means no-outflow (Wu-lou 無漏) [of defilement]; writing the dot on the bottom means outflow (Yu-lou 有漏) [of defilement].[\[17\]](#) Being killed or alive, being prosperous or robbed, being ruined or honored, being in suffering or in joy, they are all in the form of ink. There is no dharma that is beyond ink. In short, black ink

p. 510

interprets immeasurable Teachings, Practices, and Principles. Black ink is also the foundation for Teaching, Practice, and Principle.[\[18\]](#)

By pointing out how the "black ink as form" (Hei-mo-se 黑墨色) can possibly work out in the development of various strokes in formulating various characters (with their different meanings), Chih-i presents an ontological concept about one dharma containing all dharmas, and all dharmas being identical to one dharma. "One dharma contains all dharmas" is demonstrated by Chih-i from the black ink (as form) that functions to draw multitude strokes, from which various characters are formed. Since all characters are derived from strokes and all strokes are derived from the black ink (as form), this demonstrates that all dharmas are identical to one dharma. Therefore, this second type of sign interpretation vividly depicts the dynamic nature of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

### **3. The interpretation of sign to reason out meanings of the black ink as form**

A Chinese character is interpreted by Chih-i in such a way that its various connotations are associated with his theory of Buddhism. First of all, its connotations correspond to Chih-i's interpretation of the word Ching 經 (sūtra). Second, its connotations are the expression of various principles in Buddhism and various categories of the Subtleties in Chih-i's interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra. This interpretation is an extension of the above analysis of strokes. Chih-i's analysis goes so far as to get to the foundation of the characters; not only to the strokes that form the structure of the characters, but also to the black ink that draws the strokes. Through Chih-i's skillful reasoning on the executive development of the black ink, the semantically empty black ink as form is charged

p. 511

with endless meanings. Let us continue to quote Chih-i's whole analysis discussing the multiple connotations that the "black ink as form" could possibly signify.

(i) The black ink as form is interpreted to signify the meaning "slight emanation" (Wei-fa 微發) that is associated with teaching, practice, and doctrine (concerning the principle) in Buddhism. In terms of the Buddha's teaching that is recorded in written language, this written form in fascicles and volumes is derived from the development of an initial dot. In

terms of practice, because of the teaching that is in the written form of dots, words, and sentences, one is able to practice according to the teaching. One begins to carry out small practice, and eventually proceeds to carry out great practice. In terms of the doctrine that expresses the principle (or truth), because of the teaching that is in the written form of dots and words, one is able to perceive the principle from the teaching. One begins to perceive the shallow principle, and eventually perceives the profound principle. Chih-i says:

Black ink develops from an initial dot to immeasurable dots, from a dot to a word, from a word to a sentence, from a sentence to a verse, from a verse to a fascicle, and from a fascicle to a volume. Furthermore, from one dot, one word, and one sentence, small practice is initially established; later, great practice is carried out. From the dot and the word, [one] initially perceives the shallow principle, and later the deep principle. This is called the black [ink as] form in terms of Teaching, Practice, and Doctrine as three kinds of slight emanation.[19]

(ii) The black ink as form is interpreted by Chih-i to signify the meaning "gushing up spring" (Yung-ch'üan 湧泉):

p. 512

From black ink, there gush up infinite dots, words, sentences, and verses; there gush up infinite practices; and there gush up infinite doctrines. This is called the black [ink as] form embracing three kinds of gushing up spring.[20]

(iii) Since the black ink as form is the beginning of things as indicated above, Chih-i interprets it as the cause (Yu 由):

Again, form [as black ink] is the cause. Because of the form [as black ink], there is the bond that leads to life-death in the six worlds. Because of the [black ink as] form, there is liberation that forms four kinds of sagehood.[21]

This is to say that the black ink as form leads one to see emptiness of things, from which liberation results.

(iv) Truth is embedded in the black ink as form, and therefore, the latter is regarded by Chih-i as the Buddhist Dharma. As indicated above, since the form is the foundation for the dharma, the three major components in Buddhism (Teaching, Practice, and Principle) are established. This is to say that in order to lead beings to perceive the illusory nature of form, teaching is implemented by the Buddha to bestow on beings knowledge and wisdom. Following the teaching, practice must be carried out to sever delusions. At last, after

delusions are severed, a person is able to perceive the principle and realize the truth.

(v) Since the black ink as form contains the teaching of the Buddha, it can be translated as sūtra (Ching 經). Chih-i explains:

If [one] sees the form as scripture (Se-ching 色經), [one]

p. 513

recognizes that form is [the cause from which] false views and wrong attitudes [arise]; form is the doctrine of Dependent Origination; form is identical to Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle [Way]; and form is identical to the Dharma-realm that contains all entities.[22]

This is to say that form can be treated as sūtra. Why? This is because form can teach one to realize that, if one is attached to the form, form is the source of false views and wrong attitudes. Form also teaches the doctrine of Dependent Origination, because form is originated from causes and conditions. Form can also reveal the Threefold Truth of Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle Way. Form is empty, because it comes to existence due to the combination of causes and conditions. Form is provisional, for it bears temporary existence. Form is the Middle Way, for it is simultaneously empty and provisional. Since the Threefold Truth is the characteristic of all dharmas, this truth designates the all-embracing nature of the Dharma-realm. Since form expresses this Threefold Truth, form is thus identical to the Dharma-realm (that is all-embracing).

(vi) Since the black ink as form is taken as the Buddhist scripture, so are the characters formed by the black ink, which can be taken as the foundation for the dharma or truth.

First of all, from the character written in ink (Mo-tzu 墨字), one is able to realize the Four Noble Truths. Thus, the character written in ink is the foundation for śrāvakas. Chih-i points out:

If [one] realizes that the character [written in ink] is the effect and retribution with no mark, then no-mark is the Truth of Suffering.[23]

p. 514

Being tainted by the form of retribution is the Truth of Accumulation.[24] Knowing that the character is originated by causality, and that it expresses Suffering, Emptiness, and No-selfhood, this is the Truth of Path.[25] Since [one] recognizes that the character is not the character, [one] will not have false views about [the nature of] the character, and all



afflictions will be extinguished. [Therefore,] this is the Truth of Extinction.[26]

Second, from the character written in ink, one realizes Twelfefold Causality, and thus, the character written in ink is the foundation for pratyekabuddhas:

If one does not understand [the nature of] the character, this is called Ignorance. [If one] arouses love and hatred from the character, this is Volitional Activity. Distinguishing the character as beautiful or ugly is Cognition. Knowing the name of the character is Name-and-Form. When the character enters eyes, this is called Six Senses. When the character as object is against the faculty, this is called Contact. Receiving and being tainted is identical to Sensation. Lingering and being attached is Desire. Rack one's brain trying to seek is Attachment. The attachment arouses karman, and this is called Existence. Existence can lead to effect, which is called Rebirth, Old Age, Sickness, and Death. The wheel of suffering runs endlessly, which is the foundation for the Twelfefold Causality. If one is able to perceive that the character is not the

p. 515

character, ignorance will be put to rest, and there will be no volitional activity, and one will not be lead to old age-and-death. [If] ignorance is extinguished, old age-and-death is extinguished too. [One] should know that this character is the foundation for bodhisattvas.[27]

Third, the perception that the nature of the character is inherently empty is the foundation for bodhisattvas, for this perception is what inspires them to carry out actions in order to save living beings. Chih-i explains:

If [one] understands that the character is identical to emptiness, and is not empty due to extinction, the nature of the character is inherently empty. By emptiness, there is no love and hatred, and no deviance and correctness. [Since] the character cannot be obtained [due to emptiness], who is the person who knows the character? Why is it that living beings falsely generate attachment or abandonment? [The bodhisattva] makes the vow with kindness and compassion and practices the Six Perfections to save living beings. By entering the reality of suchness, [the bodhisattva bears in mind that] there are [actually] no living beings who attain extinction and

liberation. [One] should know that this character is the foundation for bodhisattvas.[28]

Fourth, the character is the foundation for Objects as truth. This is because by perceiving the character in a certain manner, one is enabled to realize the One Ultimate Truth (that is identical to the Threefold Truth). Since this One Ultimate Truth embraces all dharmas, for Chih-i, it is the state of Buddhahood, and one's attainment of Buddhahood is endowed with the four characteristics: constancy, bliss, selfhood, and purity. Chih-i asserts:

p. 516

If [one] perceives the character as not the character, and neither the character nor not the character, this perception which does not belong to either of the two extreme views [of negation or affirmation] is called Purity.[29] Purity does not bring any karman, and this is called Selfhood.[30] This Self has no suffering, which is called Bliss. Without suffering, there is no life and death, and this is called Constancy. Why is that? [Knowing] the character [as the character] is the Worldly Truth; [knowing the character as] not the character is the Absolute Truth; and [knowing the character as] neither the character nor not the character is the One Ultimate Truth.[31] This One Truth is identical to the Threefold Truth, and the Threefold Truth is identical to the One Truth. This is called the foundation for Objects.[32]

Fifth, the character is the foundation for Knowledge. This is because from what is signified by the character written in ink, one is able to perceive the identity between emptiness and existence. Chih-i stresses:

If [one] knows that the character written in ink is the [product of] combination of paper, pencil, mind, and hand, [one] can get no character [as a whole if] one examines every single character; [one]

p. 517

can also get no character [as a whole if] one examines every single dot. Therefore, nothing can be obtained. Since one's mind and hands can grasp nothing [as they appear to be], nothing is capable of [existing independently]. [Since there is nobody who can grasp something that is

capable of existing independently], who would be [the one who] knows what is incapable of [existing independently]?[33] This [kind of reasoning] is the foundation for Knowledge.[34]

Sixth, the character is the foundation for Practice. It is evidenced by the bodhisattva's action of sacrificing himself for the characters that express the truth. Chih-i emphasizes:

[The bodhisattva who] gives away his precious body just for eight characters, this is the foundation for Practice.[35]

Seventh, the character is the foundation for Positions. This is evidenced by the level of attainment the Buddha realizes through his understanding of characters. Chih-i reiterates:

"As soon as I [the Buddha] understand one sentence, even just a half sentence, I am able to perceive the Buddha-nature and to enter into great nirvāṇa." This is [an indication that the word is] the foundation for Positions.[36]

p. 518

Eighth, the character is the foundation for the Vehicle on which one can ride to attain enlightenment. This is evidenced by the enlightenment the Buddha attains through hearing sūtras constituted by characters. Chih-i explains:

"The reason I [the Buddha] obtained the Triple Bodhi[37] is through hearing sūtras and praising them." [This means] the character is the foundation for the Vehicle.[38]

Ninth, the character is the foundation for the Response. This is to say that even if one happens to forget the characters in the scripture, the Buddha will cause one to regain one's sharpness with samādhi and dhāraṇī.[39] Therefore, this is concerned with the response of the Buddha. Chih-i maintains:

"If one forgets periods in sentences, [I] will make one able to penetrate and to be sharp again with one's accomplishment of samādhi and dhāraṇī." This is identical to the foundation for the Response.[40]

Tenth, the character is the foundation for Supra-mundane Powers, for one attains supra-mundane powers through the power of truth contained in Buddhist scriptures. Chih-i explains:

Because of the text [constituted by the characters], [one] acquires supra-mundane powers. This is identical to the foundation for

p. 519

Supra-mundane Powers.[41]

Eleventh, the character is the foundation for Expounding the Dharma. Chih-i explains:

Because of the characters, speech is formed. This is identical to the foundation for Proclaiming the Dharma.[42]

Twelfth, the character is the foundation for Retinues. Chih-i asserts:

[The Buddha] pronouns the characters to teach others, and this is identical to the foundation for Retinues.[43]

Thirteenth, the character is the foundation for Benefits. Chih-i comments:

[If one] diligently learns certain characters and gains benefit from them, this is identical to the foundation for Benefits.[44]

The above full account in terms of the black ink as form and in terms of the character written in ink is Chih-i's endeavor to demonstrate his theory of any single dharma containing all dharmas, and all dharmas being represented by any single dharma. This analysis is a concrete example of how Chih-i's theory can work out in practice, which serves as an educational purpose. From the above given instance, one should also be able to draw inferences about other cases. In other words, any single element in the world expounds the truth. Any form of sign, whether visual, or auditory, or verbal, could be read as Buddhist scriptures. We can discern from this third type of sign interpretation that it reveals the functional and dynamic nature of Chih-i's

perfect harmonization

p. 520

philosophy.

#### 4. The interpretation of sign to read a phrase

This is to uncover different aspects of the truth by reading a phrase in different ways. The case refers to Chih-i's changing of the syntactical structure of the original phrases of the Ten Suchnesses, i.e., suchness of its appearance (Ju-shih-hsiang 如是相), nature (Ju-shih-hsing 如是性), substance (Ju-shih-t'i 如是體), power (Ju-shih-li 如是力), function (Ju-shih-tsoo 如是作), causes (Ju-shih-yin 如是因), conditions (Ju-shih-yüan 如是緣), effects (Ju-shih-kuo 如是果), retributions (Ju-shih-pao 如是報), and beginning-and-end-ultimately-alike (Ju-shih Pen-mo Chiu-ching Teng 如是本末究竟等) in three ways, depending on what aspect one stresses, the three aspects of truth are put forward accordingly.<sup>[45]</sup> The three different readings are as follows:

(i) In terms of the Ten Suchnesses that contain the meaning of Emptiness, the character Shih (likeness) should be put in the beginning of these phrases: Shih-hsiang-ju 是相如, Shih-hsing-ju 是性如, Shih-t'i-ju 是體如, Shih-li-ju 是力如, Shih-tsoo-ju 是作如, Shih-yin-ju 是因如, Shih-yüan-ju 是緣如, Shih-kuo-ju 是果如, Shih-pao-ju 是報如, and Shih Pen-mo Chiu-ching Teng 是本末究竟等. By addressing the state of suchness, the emptiness of all dharmas as such, without substantial Being, is emphasized.

(ii) In terms of the Ten Suchnesses that contain the meaning of Provisional Existence, the character Ju (suchness) should be put in the beginning of these phrases, such as suchness of its appearance, suchness of its nature, and so forth, indicated above. This is because phenomenal appearances bear different marks and they can be summarized by the characteristics (such as appearance, nature, and so forth) stated in the end of these

p. 521

ten phrases. By addressing different aspects of suchness, the provisional aspect of all dharmas is conveyed. This is to say that although entities bear different marks as existence, they are by nature empty. Therefore, all dharmas or entities are not real, but of provisional existence.

(iii) In terms of the Ten Suchnesses that contain the meaning of the Middle Way, the characters (such as "appearance", "nature", and so forth) should be put in the beginning of these phrases. These ten phrases are read in this way: "appearance is suchness" (Hsiang-ju-shih 相如是), "nature is suchness" (Hsing-ju-shih 性如是), "substance is suchness" (T'i-ju-shih 體如是), "power is suchness" (Li-ju-shih 力如是), "function is suchness" (Tsuo-ju-shih 作如是), "causes are suchness" (Yin-ju-shih 因如是), "conditions are suchness" (Yüan-ju-shih 緣如是), "effects are suchness" (Kuo-ju-shih 果如是), "retributions are suchness" (Pao-ju-shih 報如是), and "beginning-and-end-ultimately-alike" (Pen-mo Chiu-ching Teng 本末究竟等). This is to state that the character Shih embodies the true reality as it is. The true reality is represented by the Middle Way that contains both Emptiness and the Provisional existence.

From the analysis of these different readings, we discern that this fourth type of sign interpretation is akin to Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy in terms of its nature of flexibility and dynamism.

## **5. The interpretation of sign to use analogies**

In Chih-i's system of interpretation, the most prominent case of using analogies, as the force to sustain his system of thought, is by interpreting lotus, as such, that the lotus is taken as various analogies. By drawing analogies from multi-dimensional images of the lotus flower in various states, the rich meanings it symbolizes are brought into light, rendering the doctrines, which Chih-i intends

p. 522

to express, substantial and powerful, since the lotus as the natural sign is the symbol of force.

The image of the lotus is powerful due to the fact that Chih-i first presents the lotus as a picture, and a picture is the direct representation of the content. Michel Foucault regards the picture as "the first example of a sign", and explains: "This is because the picture has no other content in fact than that which it represents, and yet that content is made visible only because it is represented by a representation."[\[46\]](#)

When the lotus as the dharma is taken as a representation, i.e., a depicted image of a lotus, it is possible to draw an analogy from it, since the semantic meaning of the image is made legible. The power of the image of a lotus reinforces the analogy of the lotus. This is because the lotus, as the natural sign, constitutes a semantic field that exerts an infinite dynamic force, and allows various possible interpretations without restrictions. In the meantime, the direction of its interpretation cannot be deviated either. In other words, the image of a lotus is depicted pointing to the aspects of positiveness, purity, ultimacy, and supreme level of attainment. What the natural sign is supposed to denote should be considered as the first layer of arbitrary language. Analogies belong to the artificial sign, and what analogies convey is the second layer of arbitrary language, owing to the fact that it is the idea of the author. Of course, the idea of the author (i.e., the second layer of arbitrary language) has to correspond to the first layer of arbitrary language in order to be sustained. As Foucault points out: ".....the artificial signs owed their power only to their fidelity to natural signs."[\[47\]](#) The following is the description of Chih-i's use of the lotus to analogize his system of thought presented in his interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra.

p. 523

First of all, the lotus is generally presented as forming six analogies. The sequence of appearance of the lotus flower and the seedpod of the lotus in different times are portrayed as the allegorical expression of the doctrine of the Relative Truth and the Ultimate Truth, or the doctrine of the Traces and the Origin. The three analogies for the door of the Traces indicate that the Buddha employs expedient means as the beginning stage to teach beings, and eventually leads them to attain perfect enlightenment.

(i) The first analogy uses the flower, existing for the sake of the seed, to analogize that the Relative Truth contains the real intention of the Buddha (i.e., the Ultimate Truth): "When the flower grows, it has to be followed by the seed. The flower blooms for the formation of the seed, but the seed is not visible. This analogizes that the exposition of the Relative [Truth] contains the Ultimate [Truth], and [the Buddha's] intention is for the revelation of the Ultimate [Truth], but nobody is capable of knowing it."[\[48\]](#)

(ii) The second analogy uses the seedpod that must depend on the flower to be nurtured to analogize that the Ultimate Truth depends on the Relative Truth to be revealed: "Because

the flower blooms, the seedpod is manifested. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the flower to nourish the seed. This analogizes that the Ultimate [Truth] is contained in the Relative [Truth], but it is not known. Presently, the opening of the Relative [Truth] and the revelation of the Ultimate [Truth] depend on the Relative [Truth]. A wide recognition of the Buddha-dharma as the sand of the Ganges River is only for the accomplishment of the Ultimate [Truth], and for [living beings] to deeply recognize the Buddha's knowledge and insight."[\[49\]](#)

(iii) The third analogy uses the falling flower that ripens the

p. 524

seedpod to analogize that by abolishing the Three Vehicles (*śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattvas*), the One Vehicle of Buddhahood is revealed: "When the flower falls, the seed is formed. This analogizes the abolishment of the Three [Vehicles] and the revelation of the One [Vehicle], [because] there is only one single Buddha-vehicle that arrives directly at the *bodhimāṇḍa*."[\[50\]](#)

**The three analogies for the door of the Origin indicate that the cause and the effect of Buddhahood are complete at the time of the Origin.**

(i) The first analogy uses the flower that must be accompanied by the seedpod to analogize that the Traces must contain the Origin (though the Origin is not yet known): "The flower that contains the seedpod analogizes that the Traces certainly contain the Origin, and are contained in the Origin. Although the intention [of the Buddha] is for the Origin, the purpose of the Buddha is difficult to be known."[\[51\]](#)

(ii) When the flower opens, the seedpod is displayed. This is to analogize that the recognition of the Origin is to realize that the Traces as expedient means are extremely important, for the Traces can lead one to realize the Ultimate Truth the Origin represents: "When the flower blooms, the seedpod is revealed. This analogizes that the opening of the Traces and the revelation of the Origin is for the sake of the Traces, for this can cause the *bodhisattvas* to recognize the expedient means [employed by] the Buddha. Since the Traces have been recognized, [one] returns to recognize the Origin, by which the Path is enhanced and the life [of birth-and-death] is

p. 525

decreased."[\[52\]](#)

(iii) The third analogy indicates that when the Origin is manifested, the Traces should be



abandoned, so that one is no longer attached to the Traces, and is able to progress to attain perfect enlightenment: "When the flower falls, the seed is ripe. This analogizes the abolishment of the Traces and the revelation of the Origin. Since the Origin has been recognized, [one] is no longer ignorant about the Traces. [One] abides in the dharmakāya only, cultivating the Path, and ascending the supreme stage of perfection."[\[53\]](#)

Second, in Chih-i's scheme of interpretation, the lotus is painted in greater detail. Correspondingly, detailed analogies are drawn from this picture, symbolizing the meanings of the Ten Subtleties in the doors of the Traces and the Origin. The lotus is charged with multiple meanings that take on theoretical significance (expressive of Chih-i's systematic exposition of the Lotus Sūtra). Basically, lotus is taken as a semantically empty symbol that can be imbued with various new meanings. Hence, while lotus is charged with meanings, it, in turn, becomes a semantically constituted sign. The following is the description of various analogies of the lotus Chih-i presents.

## **i. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Objects**

### **(Yung-lien-hua P'i Ching-miao 用蓮華譬境妙)**

This is to use the lotus to analogize the first category of the Ten Subtleties in the door of the Traces. Various analogies for various Objects are presented by Chih-i as follows:

#### **i.i Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Ten**

**Suchnesses (Yung-lien-**

hua P'i Shih-ju-ching 用蓮花譬十如境) in terms of the

## Buddha-realm:

(i) Suchness of its Appearance of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-hsiang 佛界如是相):

It is like the seed made out of a [dark] stone, because of its darkness, it cannot be tainted; because of its hardness, it cannot be broken. Its shape is neither square nor round, and it neither originates nor extinguishes. [This is because] it had no seed since the beginning of the kalpa, and therefore, it is not originated. Presently, it is not different from the beginning, and therefore, it will not extinguish. This is called the appearance of the lotus seed. The pure and tranquil mind of self-nature of all living beings is like this too, and is not tainted by the external dust. With accumulated life and death, the nature of mind neither abides nor moves, and neither originates nor extinguishes. This is Suchness of its Appearance of the Buddha-realm.[\[54\]](#)

"Suchness of its appearance" is analogous with the stone seed, which is always like what it is without being affected by or depending on any external conditions, and neither originates nor extinguishes, for its existence is not due to causes and conditions. This suchness of its appearance is taken by Chih-i as the internal enlightenment (bodhi) possessed by all living beings. Thus, this analogy indicates that "all living beings are identical to the appearance of bodhi" (I-ch'ieh Chung-sheng Chi P'u-t'i-hsiang 一切眾生即菩提相).

(ii) Suchness of its Nature of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-hsing 佛界如是性):

Like the lotus root, though covered with dark skin in the mud, the white pulp does not change. The wisdom of the [Buddha-nature as] the Understanding Cause [of Buddhahood] of all living beings is like

p. 527

this as well. Although abiding in the mud with the five aggregates, and with the effects and retributions of life and death, all kinds of knowledge and vows are still present without

missing. This is called Suchness of its Nature of the Buddha-realm.[55]

"Suchness of its nature" is analogous with the white pulp of the lotus root, which embodies the wisdom that is possessed by all living beings. This wisdom is the Buddha-nature as the Understanding Cause of Buddhahood (Liao-yin Fo-hsing 了因佛性), which allows one to realize one's inherent nature for attaining Buddhahood. Although living beings are bound in the presence of various kinds of defilement and the afflictions of life and death, this inherent wisdom is always therein. Thus, in Chih-i's view, this analogy indicates that "affliction is identical to bodhi (Fan-nao Chi-p'u-t'i 煩惱即菩提).

(iii) Suchness of its Substance of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-t'i 佛界如是體):

Like the lotus root in the mud, its body does not rot. This is called [Suchness of its] Substance of the Lotus Root. The Buddha-nature as the Fundamental Cause [of Buddhahood] of all living beings is like this too: constancy, bliss, selfhood, and purity -- it neither moves nor decays. This is called Suchness of its Substance of the Buddha-realm.[56]

"Suchness of its substance" is analogous with the indestructible body of the lotus root, which embodies the Buddha-nature as the Fundamental Cause of Buddhahood (Cheng-yin Fo-hsing 正因佛性) possessed by all living beings. This Buddha-nature is the inherent nature, which determines one's possibility to attain Buddhahood, and is characterized by constancy, bliss, selfhood, and purity. These four characteristics are related to the state of

p. 528

nirvāṇa the Buddha abides in, which neither moves nor decays.

(iv) Suchness of its Power of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-li 佛界如是力):

It is like the lotus root that is enveloped by the shell-skin and submerged by mud, but the seed is surrounded in the middle, and is nourished to grow by essence. The mind of all living beings is like this too. Although bound by the effect of suffering and drowned by the delusion of Accumulation, [it] can, in the midst of this, bring forth a resolve to the Bodhi-mind, which is really great and vigorous.[57]

"Suchness of its power" is analogous with the seed inside the lotus root, which embodies the bodhi-mind brought forth by living beings in the midst of suffering and defilement. This bodhi-mind is so powerful that it enables one to eventually reach enlightenment.

(v) Suchness of its Function of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-tso 佛界如是作):

Like the lotus seed, though small and inside the dark skin, it enables root, flower, leaves, stamen and seedpod to grow out of it, and is [therefore] replete with all functions. This is called Suchness of its Function of the Lotus Seed. All living beings who bring forth an initial resolve to the Bodhi-mind are like this too. With wisdom, understanding, and determination, and with compassion and vows, [they] strive to cultivate practice upwardly, and to transform [living beings] downwards. They vow to make achievement without any exhaustion and retrogression in will. This is called Suchness of its Function of the Buddha-realm.[58]

"Suchness of its function" is analogous with the lotus seed that

p. 529

functions to allow all other related things to grow, which embodies the initial bodhi-mind of all living beings. This is because, with one's initial resolve to the bodhi-mind, one is able to carry out practices in order to strive for Buddhahood.

(vi) Suchness of its Causes of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-yin 佛界如是因):

Like the lotus seed, the root dwells in mud, but the flower leans in air. With the blowing wind and the shining sun, [the lotus] grows day and night, and is endowed with full glory. All living beings are like this too. From the time of ignorance, [one] brings forth a resolve to the Bodhi-mind, cultivates bodhisattva practice, departs from life and death, enters into the nature of dharmas, and accomplishes through practice as the cause. When [one] meets the Buddha-day, [one] is benefited by the wind of [Buddha's] supra-mundane powers, and [one's] every thought flows into the sea of sarvajñā [all-embracing wisdom]. This is called Suchness of its Causes of the Buddha-realm.[59]

"Suchness of its causes" refers to the causes that bring about effects similar to themselves, and is analogous with the lotus root that dwells in mud that gives rise to the flower leaning in air and enjoying glory. This embodies the bodhi-mind (i.e., root) of living beings that is brought forth from ignorance (i.e., mud). With this bodhi-mind as the cause, one is able to proceed to cultivate bodhisattva practice, from which one eventually enters the sea of all-embracing wisdom.

(vii) Suchness of its Conditions of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-yüan 佛界如是緣):

Like the lotus, the stamen is enveloped by the flower, but it surrounds the seed. This is called Suchness of its Conditions of the

p. 530

Lotus. The bodhisattva is also like this. He, with the real cause, is replete with thousands of practices of the Six Pāramitās. One action contains all actions, which contributes to the causes. This is like the stamen inside the flower. If the fruit is obtained, all actions are at rest. This is like the stamen outside the seed. This is called Suchness of its Conditions of the Buddha-realm.[\[60\]](#)

"Suchness of its conditions" refers to indirect or conditional causes, and is analogous with the lotus that is equipped with stamen, flower, and seed, which embody various bodhisattva practices. These practices are the conditional causes that can lead one to attain fruition.

(viii) Suchness of its Effects of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Ju-shih-kuo 佛界如是果):

It is like the lotus. When the flower is formed, it gives rise to the formation of the seed. When flower and leaves wither, the seedpod and seed come into completion. This is called Suchness of its Effects of the Lotus. The bodhisattva is like this as well. He is inspired by the real cause, attains the unsurpassed bodhi and perfection of the great effect -- the ultimate attainment. This is called Suchness of its Effects of the Buddha-realm.[\[61\]](#)

"Suchness of its effects" refers to the effects that are the same as their causes, and is analogous with the formation of the lotus seed and the ripening of the seedpod and the seed that result from the existence of the flower and the withering of the flower and leaves respectively. This embodies the attainment of the bodhisattva. Based on his resolve to the bodhi-mind as the real cause, the bodhisattva is able to attain unsurpassed enlightenment as the effect.

(ix) Suchness of its Retributions of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh

p. 531

Ju-shih-pao 佛界如是報):

It is like the lotus seed enveloped by the seedpod, which is called Suchness of its Retributions of the Lotus Seed. The bodhisattva is like this as well. His perfection of the great effect is replete with the unsurpassed retribution [in a sense that this retribution results in unsurpassed enlightenment]. The effect that is related to the habitual effect [i.e., suchness of its effects] depends upon the retributive effect [i.e., suchness of its retribution], which is like the seed relying on the seedpod.[\[62\]](#)

"Suchness of its retribution" refers to the effects resulting from the deeds one has done in one's previous incarnations, and is analogous with the lotus seed enveloped by the seedpod, embodying the retributions of the bodhisattva. The wonderful practice of the bodhisattva results in unsurpassed retributions that determine the ultimate attainment of the bodhisattva.

(x) The Ten Suchnesses of the beginning-and-end-ultimately-alike of the Buddha-realm (Fo-chieh Shih-ju Pen-mo Chiu-ching Teng 佛界十如本末究竟等):

Like the muddy root empty in four directions, and the seedpod that leans in air, being empty in four directions, the first and last [stages] do not differ. This is called Beginning-and-end of the Lotus Seed. All living beings are like this as well. [They] are originally endowed with the four virtues. When hidden, [the four virtues] are called the Secret Storehouse of the Tathāgata; when the cultivation of the four virtues is accomplished, [they] are manifested, and are called the dharmakāya. [Whether it is] the virtue by nature or the virtue by cultivation, [they] are constancy, bliss, selfhood, and purity, forming one [reality], but not two [realities]. This is called the Ten Suchnesses of the Beginning-and-

p. 532

end-ultimately-alike of the Buddha-realm.[\[63\]](#)

"Suchness of its beginning-and-end-ultimately-alike" is analogous with the lotus root (as the beginning stage) and the seedpod (as the final stage), both of which are empty in four directions, embodying the four virtuous qualities of Buddhahood. If the four virtuous qualities refer to what is inherently possessed by living beings as the beginning stage, then the four virtuous qualities of nirvāṇa is the final stage. Although the beginning is hidden and the end is manifest in terms of these four virtuous qualities, they are not different. Therefore, the beginning and the end are ultimately alike.

## i.ii Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the

### Twelvefold Causality (Yung-lien-hua P'i Shih-erh

Yin-yüan-ching 用蓮花譬十二因緣境):

[The root] that is enveloped by the dark skin in mud and is covered by water and grass, is identical to the link of ignorance [as the seed]. The power of origination is the link of volitional activity. What is in the middle of the leaf, equipped with flower and stamen, is identical to the links of cognition, name-and-form, six senses, contact, and sensation. [The root], crooked and bent without being able to come out, is identical to the link of old age-and-death. If the sprout is able to germinate by going through and breaking the dark skin, this is identical to the extinction of ignorance. [The sprout], that no longer grows inside the dark skin, indicates the extinction of all volitional activities. Getting out of the egg shell indicates the extinction of the old age-and-death.[64]

p. 533

## i.iii Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Four

Noble Truths (Yung-lien-hua P'i Ssu-ti-ching 用蓮花譬

四諦境):

The dark skin analogizes Suffering within the three realms. The white pulp analogizes the Accumulation within the three realms. Mud analogizes the Accumulation beyond the three realms. Water analogizes Suffering beyond

the three realms. The Path and Extinction can be likewise inferred [from the above analogies].[\[65\]](#)

#### i.iv Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Twofold

Truth (Yung-lien-hua P'i Erh-ti-ching 用蓮花譬二諦境):

The lotus root, stem, and leaves analogize the Worldly [Truth], and the hollow holes of the lotus root analogize the Absolute [Truth].[\[66\]](#)

#### i.v Using the lotus to analogize Objects as the Threefold

Truth, One Truth, and No-truth (Yung-lien-hua P'i

San-ti-ching, I-shih-ti, Wu-ti Wu-shuo 用蓮花譬三諦

境、一實諦、無諦無說):

The [analogies for the] Absolute and the Worldly [Truths] are the same as the previous ones. [The lotus root that] is empty in four directions analogizes constancy, bliss, selfhood, and purity. This analogizes the Supreme Truth of the Middle Way. This association analogizes five types of the Threefold Truth.[\[67\]](#)

In association with the One Truth, Chih-i says: "Being empty in four directions without origination and extinction analogizes the One Ultimate Truth."[\[68\]](#)

In association with the No Truth, Chih-i goes on to say: "[The lotus] that is without origination in the beginning of a kalpa and



without extinction in the present time, analogizes No-truth and No-speech."[\[69\]](#)

## **ii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of**

### **Knowledge (Yung-liem-hua P'i-chih-miao 用蓮花譬**

**智妙):**

The above first group of analogy is the most detailed description associated with various objects enumerated in the Subtlety of Objects. The following is the second group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe the Threefold Knowledge enumerated in the Subtlety of Knowledge:

The nature of origination that is contained within [the lotus seed] analogizes the Subtlety of Knowledge. The nature of origination of the curled flower analogizes the Subtlety of the Knowledge of Emptiness. The nature of origination of the stamen and the leaves analogizes the Subtlety of the Knowledge of the Provisional. The nature of origination of the void seedpod in four directions analogizes the Subtlety of the Knowledge of the Middle Way. These three kinds of nature of origination analogize the Subtlety of the Threefold Knowledge contained in the single mind.[\[70\]](#)

### iii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of

#### Practice (Yung-lien-hua P'i-hsing-miao 用蓮花譬行

妙):

This is the third group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe various practices enumerated in the Subtlety of Practice:

Although the lotus seed is small, it is equipped with the root, stem, flower, and leaves. This analogizes the Subtlety of Practice. The root is identical to kindness and compassion; leaves are identical to knowledge and wisdom; stamen is identical to samādhi; and blossom is identical to liberation. Moreover, leaves are used to

p. 535

analogize three kinds of kindness. The green leaves that cover the water analogize the kindness of having affinity with living beings. The yellow leaves that cover the water analogize the kindness of having the Dharma-affinity. The leaves that lean over the water analogize the kindness without conditions."[\[71\]](#)

In correspondence with the Six Pāramitās, the lotus that is used as an analogy is as follows:

The root, flower, seed, and leaves that are beneficial to human beings and bees are identical to T'an 檀 (giving); the fragrance [of the flower] is identical to Shi 尸 (precepts); [the seed that] grows in mud without feeling humiliated is identical to Jen 忍 (patience); the [lotus that] grows is identical to Ching-chin 精進 (vigor); [the leaves that are] soft and damp are identical to Ch'an 禪 (dhyāna); [the flower that is] not tainted is identical to Hui 慧 (wisdom)."[\[72\]](#)

### iv. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of

## Positions (Yung-lien-hua P'i-wei-miao 用蓮花譬位

妙):

This is the fourth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe various levels of attainment enumerated in the Subtlety of Positions:

The lotus analogizes the Position [of realizing that all living beings possess the Buddha-nature, and therefore they are] by principle [identical to the Buddha] (Li-chi-wei 理即位).[73] The sprout that

p. 536

drills through the skin is the Position of the Coarse Dwelling (Ts'u-chu-wei 粗住位).[74] The sprout that comes out of the skin is the Position of the Fine Dwelling (Hsi-chu-wei 細住位).[75] The [stem] that drills through mud implies the position that is going to be determined (Yü-ting-wei 欲定位).[76] The [stem] that levels with

p. 537

mud implies the position that has not yet reached the goal (Wei-tao-wei 未到位).[77] The [stem] that grows out of mud in water indicates the Positions of the Four Stages of Dhyāna (Ssu-ch'an Wei 四禪位).[78] because meditation is like water that can wash off the dust of desires. [The stem] that grows in water analogizes the Position [in the realm of] formlessness (Wu-se Wei 無色位).[79] [The stem] that levels with the surface of the water analogizes the Lotus Position of the Practice of Contemplation (Kuan-hsing Lien-hua-wei 觀行蓮花位).[80] [The stem] that grows out of water analogizes the

p. 538

destruction of the false views and wrong attitudes, which is the Position of the Ten Faiths of the Lotus Alike (Hsiang-ssu Lien-hua Shih-hsin-wei 相似蓮花十信位).[81] [The lotus] that leans in air and is about to bloom

analogizes the Position of the Ten Dwellings (Shih-chu Wei 十住位).[82]  
The stamen and seedpod that can be

p. 539

seen analogize the Position of the Ten Practices (Shih-hsing Wei 十行位).[83] The flower that blooms and closes in accordance with the sun analogizes the Position of the Ten Merit-transferences (Shih-hui-hsiang Wei 十回向位).[84] The completion of the blossom and the bearing of bees and butterflies analogize the Position of the Ten Stages (Shih-ti Wei 十地位).[85] The leaves that wither and fall, and

p. 540

the seedpod that is left alone, analogize that all actions are at rest, the subtle enlightenment is perfect harmonization, and contains no-action, which is real, constant, and crystal clear.[86]

## **v. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of the**

### **Threefold Dharma as the vehicle (Yung-lien-hua P'i**

#### **San-fa-sh'eng Miao 用蓮花譬三法乘妙):**

This is the fifth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe the Three Tracks enumerated in the Subtlety of the Threefold Dharma:

The lotus root that is empty in four directions analogizes the Track of the Real Nature. The seedpod that is hollow inside and the stem that is empty in the middle, analogize the Track of the Illumination of Wisdom. The seedpod that surrounds the seed analogizes the Track of the Accomplishment.[87]

## **vi. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of**

## **Empathy and Response (Yung-lien-hua P'i Kan-ying**

### **Miao 用蓮花譬感應妙):**

This is the sixth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe

p. 541

the four phases in terms of empathy and response[88] enumerated in the Subtlety of Empathy and Response:

When the lotus is completed, it leans in air. Its shadow that is reflected in pure water analogizes manifest capacity and manifest response. The shadow that is reflected in muddy water analogizes hidden capacity and hidden response. The shadow that is reflected in water with stormy waves analogizes the capacity and response that are both hidden and manifest. The shadow of the tree in the dark and the night shadow that is reflected in water, analogize the capacity and response that are neither hidden nor manifest.[89]

### **vii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of**

## **Supra-mundane Powers (Yung-lien-hua P'i**

### **Shen-t'ung Miao 用蓮花譬神通妙):**

This is the seventh group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe different auspicious phenomena derived from the Buddha's use of supra-mundane powers that are enumerated in the Subtlety of Supra-mundane Powers:

If the wind sways the lotus, the lotus holds itself high to the east and down to the west, and faces the south and reflects the north. [The lotus] closes when a breeze passes by and opens when a breeze blows on it. This

analogizes that [the lotus] arises in the east and submerges in the west, arises in the middle and submerges on the edge. This analogizes the auspicious moving of the earth. At sunset, the flower closes. This analogizes the auspicious samādhi [entered by the Buddha]. When the sun rises,

p. 542

the flower opens. This analogizes the auspicious teaching of the dharma. When looking from a distance, [the lotus] is red in color; when looking from nearby, [it] is white in color. The red flower and green leaves that gloriously reflect each other, analogize the auspicious emitting of the ray of light. The fragrance that pervades the fields analogizes the auspicious breeze of the white sandalwood. The powder of the stamen that floats analogizes the auspicious heavenly flowers being rained down.[90] The wind and rain that swirl around and the rolling dew on the flower, analogize that the heavenly drum naturally signifies the auspicious sign.[91]

### **viii. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of**

### **Expounding the Dharma (Yung-lien-hua P'i Shuo-fa**

#### **Miao 用蓮花譬說法妙):**

This is the eighth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe various doctrines in the teaching of the Buddha that are enumerated in the Subtlety of Expounding the Dharma:

The flower that is still closed before opening, analogizes that [the Buddha] hides the One Vehicle and separately teaches the Three Vehicles. The flower and leaves that are in blossom analogize, the integration of the Three [Vehicles] and returning to the One [Vehicle] are for the sake of only expounding the One Vehicle. When the flower falls, the seed remains. This analogizes that upon the extinction of the teaching, the principle remains hidden.[92]

## ix. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of

### Retinues (Yung-lien-hua P'i Chüan-shu Miao 用蓮花

譬眷屬妙):

This is the ninth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe different categories of retinues that are enumerated in the Subtlety of Retinues:

On the side of one lotus root, there re-produces another flower. Spreading and originating from one to another, measureless lotuses come into being. This analogizes the Subtlety of Retinues that are formed by karmic connection. From the one seedpod, there drops the seed in mud that re-produces lotus. Spreading and re-originating from one to another, measureless lotuses come into being. This analogizes the Subtlety of Retinues that are formed by individual supra-mundane powers. Digging and moving that lotus root, and picking that lotus seed to plant in this pool, the lotus flowers flourish. This analogizes the Subtlety of Retinues that are formed by individual vows. Flying from another pool like floating thread and thin fog, and entering into this pond to cause the lotus flowers to flourish, analogizes the Subtlety of Retinues that are formed by [the Buddha's] response.[\[93\]](#)

## x. Using the lotus to analogize the Subtlety of Merit

### and Benefit (Yung-lien-hua P'i Kung-te Li-i Miao 用

#### 蓮花譬功德利益妙):

This is the tenth group of analogy Chih-i presents to describe multiple benefits that are enumerated in the Subtlety of Benefits:

Fishes and turtles that swim under the lotus, and bees and butterflies that gather above it, analogize the Subtle Benefit of the Pure and Cool effect and retribution. The one who rejoices in seeing [the lotus], analogizes the Benefit as the Cause. Picking and using its leaves analogizes the Benefit of three kinds of Herbal

p. 544

Grass.[94] Picking and using its flower analogizes the Subtle Benefit of the Small Tree.[95] Picking and using its seed analogizes the Benefit of the Big Tree.[96] Picking and using its root analogizes the Subtle Benefit of the True Fact.[97]

Furthermore, the lotus is used to analogize the Ten Subtleties in the Origin. Chih-i describes:

Like the lotus flower in one pool that have just ripened, the flower that has ripened falls down in mud and water, reproducing [the lotus] which grows until it ripens again. Such spreading and reproducing and ripening, [the lotus is] accumulated as the time passes by, and [the lotus flowers] pervade the big pool. The fields of flowers are everywhere. The Buddha is like this too. Having at the very beginning accomplished the cultivation as the Cause and the realization as the Effect at the time of the Origin, for the sake of living beings, [the Buddha] further applies the expedient means. In the cycle of life and death, [the Buddha] shows the initial mind of aspiration [to attain enlightenment], and proceeds again to demonstrate the attainment of the



Ultimate [Truth]. Repeatedly, [the Buddha] goes through life and death, numberless as hundreds and thousands of times. [He] manifests himself to respond to sentient beings from the place of the Origin, and identifies himself

p. 545

with ignorant beings in the mundane world. Furthermore, [he] cultivates Five Practices. The dark root that reproduces stem and leaves analogizes [the Buddha's] further cultivation of Noble Practice. The lotus roots that are empty in four directions and grow a little bit analogize [the Buddha's] further cultivation of Divine Practice. The lotus leaves that begin to grow analogize [the Buddha's] further cultivation of Pure Practice. The lotus seed that falls in mud analogizes [the Buddha's] further cultivation of Practice of Sickness-alike, which is to identify with all evils. The root that starts to sprout analogizes [the Buddha's] further cultivation of Practice of Infant-alike, which is to identify with small wholesomeness.[\[98\]](#)

The above lengthy quotation of Chih-i's use of the lotus in analogizing the Ten Subtleties in the Traces and in the Origin is further evidence of the dynamic nature of his perfect harmonization philosophy. The lotus is freely portrayed to draw various pictures in signifying various meanings. Beside this type of analogy that is derived from the image of the lotus, there is a different case of using analogy, in which the analogy is directly taken as a semantically rich sign, denoting ideas Chih-i intends to convey, in order to sustain his argument and views.

For instance, in the discourse of the Substance, he uses three analogies to distinguish the proper or improper Substance, from which he intends to imply that the Triple Dimension of Buddhism is embraced by the proper Substance, namely, Teaching (Chiao 教) is reflected by the first analogy; Practice (Hsing 行) by the second one; and Realization (Cheng 證) by the third one.

(i) The first analogy is concerned with three kinds of animal (a rabbit, a horse, and a big elephant) going across the river. The rabbit and the horse are not so strong, and thus, they swim

p. 546

through the water without penetrating its depth, or without reaching the bottom, though all of them reach the other shore. The rabbit and the horse analogize the Two Vehicles (*śrāvakas*, and *pratyekabuddhas*). The water analogizes emptiness, and the bottom analogizes no-emptiness. Since the Two Vehicles have less knowledge and cannot penetrate deeply to the bottom, they can only perceive emptiness but cannot perceive no-emptiness. The big elephant is strong and can reach the bottom. This analogizes the *bodhisattva*, for the *bodhisattva*, whose knowledge is profound, cannot only perceive emptiness but also no-emptiness. In the case of touching the bottom, there are two levels that symbolize the perception of the Separate Teaching, and that of the Perfect Teaching in terms of the Ultimate Truth. The bottom, in this case, is also the analogy for the Ultimate Truth. In the procedure of reaching the other shore, the small elephant can only touch the mud in the bottom, which analogizes that, even though the *bodhisattva* can perceive no-emptiness, this Knowledge of the Separate Teaching is still not the Ultimate. The big elephant, that can penetrate deeply to the firm ground in the bottom, analogizes that this perception of no-emptiness with the Knowledge of the Perfect Teaching is the Ultimate. From the dimension of the Teaching, this analogy singles out the Knowledge of the Perfect that contains the Ultimate Truth as the only Substance.[99]

(ii) The second analogy is concerned with two kinds of gem P'o-li 頗梨 (a crystal) and Ju-i 如意 (wish-granting gem).[100] Although

p. 547

both of them are called gem, the former as a crystal cannot rain down treasures, which analogizes the emptiness (that is a one-sided view). For Chih-i, the one-sided emptiness refers to the attainment of a *śrāvaka* who is only concerned about the salvation of himself, but not of others; and the treasure refers to the *bodhisattva* practice of helping others. Since emptiness does not involve the functional aspect of saving living beings, the gem P'o-li that cannot rain down treasures is taken as analogy. The wish-granting gem, on the other hand, analogizes the Middle Way. Since the Middle Way signifies the comprehensive view of affirming both emptiness and the provisional existence, it involves the *bodhisattva*'s actions of saving living beings in the phenomenal world. Therefore, the gem Ju-i that can rain down treasures is taken as analogy. From the practical dimension, this analogy is meant to say that the Substance of the Lotus Sūtra synonymous to the wish-granting gem Ju-i, which is dynamic, functional, and impartial.

(iii) The third analogy is concerned with gold that is contained in a yellow rock. The gold symbolizes the Ultimate Truth possessed by all living beings. Chih-i describes:

It is like the gold that is contained inside the yellow rock. The foolish man does not know and thinks that it is only a piece of rock. He throws it in the manure pit, and does not even take care of it. When the appraiser gets it, he melts the rock and gets the gold out, but only keeps its value. When the goldsmith gets it, he makes various kinds of ornaments. When the immortal gets it, he makes a golden elixir, with which he can fly to the sky and enter the ground, reach the moon and the sun, and assume whatever shapes as he wants. The foolish man analogizes all common men: though embracing the Ultimate Truth, they do not know how to practice. The appraiser analogizes the Two Vehicles, who only sever the affliction, and keep the value of emptiness, but do not do anything

p. 548

with it. The goldsmith analogizes the bodhisattva of the Separate, who is skillful in using expedient means. Knowing that emptiness is not empty, he enters the Provisional, adorns the Buddha-land, and accomplishes living beings. The immortal analogizes the bodhisattva of the Perfect. By perceiving the Absolute that is contained in the Facts, he immediately attains the proper enlightenment as soon as he brings forth the Bodhi-mind. With one body, he gains immeasurable bodies, and universally responds to all. The present [Lotus] Sūtra only takes the Ultimate Truth that is the golden elixir as the Substance of the Sūtra.[\[101\]](#)

This analogy indicates that, in respect to commonality, the Ultimate Truth is possessed by all beings, from the common men to the disciples of the Perfect Teaching. However, in respect to difference, the rock differs from the gold; the gold differs from the jewelry; and the jewelry differs from the elixir. This symbolizes differences among disciples of the Four Teachings in terms of their capacities and dispositions of realizing the truth.

Moreover, the above three analogies are further taken to analogize the Subtleties of the Substance, the Function, and the Purport (Ti Yung Tsung 體、用、宗). The Ultimate Truth embodies the Subtlety of the Substance. Since this Substance always exists, it entails the characteristic of indestructibility, which can thus be related to the firm bottom the big elephant reaches. The Subtlety of the Function suggests the action of benefiting others. The benefits that are derived from the function are thus equivalent to the treasures that are rained down by the round gem Ju-i. The Subtlety of the Gist means that when the person gains insight into the principle, he is able to attain Buddhahood. This Purport that enables one to attain the realization of truth is thus tantamount to the one who achieves the immortality with skillful knowledge.

p. 549

Chih-i reiterates:

Presently, the Ultimate Truth of this [Lotus] Sūtra is exposed like the big elephant getting to the bottom, so firm and indestructible, that it is the analogy for the Subtlety of the Substance. The round gem [Ju-i] that universally rains down treasures analogizes the Subtlety of the Function. With the skillful knowledge, one becomes immortal. This analogizes the Subtlety of the Gist.[102]

From what is revealed in these analogies, we may infer that what Chih-i intends to imply can be taken as the first layer of sign, and what these analogies are further taken to connote construes the second layer of sign. Given that these two layers constitute a sign, the ultimate connection between the first Triple Dimension of Buddhism, i.e., Teaching, Practice, and Realization, and the second Triple Subtlety, i.e., Substance, Function, and Purport, is revealed. What the Teaching derives from is the Substance, for the latter is fundamental for all dharmas. Only if the Teaching tallies with the Substance, can it convey the real intention of the Buddha and express the Ultimate Truth. What the Practice relates to is the Function, for the goal of practice is not only to benefit oneself, but more importantly is to benefit others. If this practice does not function to benefit others, Chih-i does not consider it as sufficient. What the Realization and the Purport concern are the Ultimate Truth. This is because, for Chih-i, if one realizes the truth of the three teachings (the Tripiṭaka, the Common, and the Separate), this realization is not ultimate. Only if the Purport that concerns the Ultimate Truth is reached, one's realization can be perfect.

In addition, Chih-i uses analogies in another way in order to make the doctrine more understandable and clear. For instance, in order for us to understand what the Perfect Teaching is, Chih-i discusses various names for the Ultimate Truth and summarizes

p. 550

four cases of what these names indicate (in terms of three aspects): name (Ming 名), meaning (I 義) and substance (T'I 體), and employs four

analogies to discuss them. These analogies concern one's name, skill, and body, corresponding to these three aspects respectively. Through these analogies, it is easier for one to understand that the last case represents the Perfect Teaching, and the first three cases signify the Separate Teaching. [\[103\]](#)

(i) With regard to the first case, various names for the Truth in discussion indicate that the three aspects (name, meaning, and substance) are the same things. This is like a person, whose name is gold master, who can forge gold, and whose body is yellow. Since this person's name, skill, and appearance are all associated with the same thing of yellow gold, this is taken to analogize the three aspects that signify the same thing.

(ii) With regard to the second case, various names for the Truth in discussion indicate that the three aspects (name, meaning, and substance) are different things. This is like the person, whose name is blue-green, who can make paint, and whose body is white. It can also be the case of a person whose name is dark, who can make red color, and whose body is purple. Since the person's name, skill, and appearance are associated with different colors, this is taken to analogize the three aspects that signify different things.

(iii) With regard to the third case, various names for the Truth in discussion indicate that the name and the meaning are the same thing, but the substance is a different thing. This is analogous with one hundred people, who have the same name, and are good at the same skill, but their individual bodies are different.

(iv) With regard to the fourth case, various names for the Truth in discussion indicate that the name and the meaning are

p. 551

different things, but the substance is the same. This is analogous with the person, who, because of family disaster, changes his name from place to place, and assumes various official titles. Changing names is analogous with the names that are different, and assuming various official titles is analogous with the meanings that are different. Nevertheless, the body is the same, i.e., the substance is the same. To prove his point, Chih-i quotes a passage from a scripture, saying that an imperial guard can alone combat thousands of people. Chih-i comments that the guard may not be able to combat thousands of enemies, but with his various skills, he is superior to thousands of people. Therefore, the guard is considered to be able to combat thousands of people.

The analogy, as the direct use of sign, is also applied to clarify certain issues. For example, to reveal the meaning of the Substance as the Ultimate Truth

and its relation with the Purport as the Cause and the Effect of Buddhahood, different parts of a house are taken as an analogy:

As with pillars and roof beams, houses are neither beams nor pillars but the empty space inside the house. Pillars and beams analogize Cause and Effect; neither beams nor pillars analogize the Ultimate Truth. The Ultimate Truth is the Substance but not the beams and pillars. If a house has no empty space, it cannot contain anything. If Cause and Effect have no Ultimate Truth, they cannot be founded.[\[104\]](#)

This analogy distinguishes different functions the Substance and the Purport exert. Yet, the significance of both is indispensable. The Substance is what the Purport can be founded upon, and the Purport is what can display the Substance.

p. 552

In addition, to stress that there is only one Substance possible, Chih-i analogizes the Substance with the empty space of the sky, and with the Emperor. Regardless of whether there is a sun or a moon in the sky and regardless of whether there are many subjects assisting the Emperor, there can only be one sky and one Emperor. Chih-i emphasizes:

Again, it is like the sun and the moon in the vast sky, and the subjects assisting the Emperor. The sun and the moon can be two, but the empty space of the sky cannot be two. [Likewise], the subjects and generals can be many, but the Emperor cannot be many.[\[105\]](#)

This fifth type of sign interpretation that concerns the application of analogies reflects Chih-i's skill in formulating the power to support his field of discourse, and his in enhancing the profound clarity of his presentation.

## **6. The interpretation of sign to explain what the Buddha intends to convey through his manifestation of supra-mundane powers**

In his discourse of the Subtlety of Supra-mundane Powers, Chih-i holds that the ten kinds of auspicious signs that are displayed by the Buddha's power are the indication of the Ten Subtleties.

"The earth that is all adorned and pure" signifies the Subtlety of [Objects as] the Principle. "[The Buddha who] emits the ray of light from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows" signifies the Subtlety of Knowledge. "[The Buddha who] enters into samādhi" signifies the Subtlety of Practice. "Heaven raining down four kinds of flowers" signifies the Subtlety of Positions. "The breeze of fragrance from caṇḍana [sandalwood]" signifies the Subtlety of [the

p. 553

Threefold Dharma as] the Vehicle. "All four groups of disciples who have doubts" indicates the Capacities of living beings [Chi 機]; "illuminating eighteen thousand lands" indicates the Response [Ying 應 of the Buddha]. These two [Chi and Ying] signify the Subtlety of Empathy and Response. "[Everywhere] the Buddha-world quaking and trembling in six different ways" signifies the Subtlety of Supra-mundane Powers. "The heavenly drum beating by itself" and "[the Buddha] expounding the dharma" signifies the Subtlety of Expounding the Dharma. "Heavenly beings, dragons and all multitudes who are filled with joy" signifies the Subtlety of Retinues. "Witnessing disciples of the Buddha who cultivate all kinds of practice" signifies the Subtlety of Benefits.[106]

The above passage concerns signs that are derived from the Buddha's supra-mundane powers, and convey the Ten Subtleties in the door of the Traces. (i) The Subtlety of Objects is obviously transcendent of impurity and affliction. Therefore, objects as truth is symbolized by "the earth that is all adorned and pure". (ii) The Subtlety of Knowledge is compared with light, because knowledge as light can guide sentient beings extinguishing the darkness of suffering. Therefore, knowledge is symbolized by "the Buddha who emits the ray of light from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows". (iii) The Subtlety of Practice is embodied in Samādhi, for a being's ability to enter into Samādhi is the sign of accomplishment. Therefore, practice is symbolized by "the Buddha who enters into Samādhi". (iv) The Subtlety of Positions results from one's practice, and is therefore symbolized by flowers. The four kinds of flowers (that are rained down by

heaven) stand for the

p. 554

four levels of attainment in the Four Teachings.[107] (v) The Subtlety of the Three Tracks is taken as the vehicle on which one rides to arrive at the place of enlightenment. The breeze that blows symbolizes the movement of the vehicle, and the fragrance from flowers symbolizes that the vehicle is formed after one's attainment of the true position of the Perfect Teaching. Therefore, the Subtlety of the Threefold Dharma as the vehicle is parallel to "the breeze of fragrance from caṇḍana sandalwood". (vi) The Subtlety of Empathy and Response is seen as an interaction between the empathy of sentient beings towards the Buddha and the Buddha's response approaching sentient beings. Only if sentient beings reach out, is the Buddha's response necessary. The capacities of living beings are parallel to the "disciples who have doubts", and the response is manifested by the Buddha, who "illuminates eighteen thousand lands" to clear the doubts of his disciples. (vii) The Subtlety of Supra-mundane Powers, which is embodied in the quaking and trembling of the Buddha-world, is seen as to shock and awaken sentient beings. (viii) The Subtlety of Expounding the Dharma indicates powerful sound, which is parallel to the beating of the heavenly drum. (ix) The Subtlety of Retinues is seen as living beings that are benefited by the teaching of the Buddha, and this is embodied in the event of the listeners who are filled with joy. (x) The Subtlety of Benefits is taken as practices that are carried out by the disciples, as the result of hearing the teaching of the Buddha. Only if they practice, can they obtain accomplishment as the benefit of this practice.

## **7. The interpretation of sign made by discussing the meaning contained in the Lotus Sūtra**

There is another type of sign interpretation made by Chih-i, i.e.,

p. 555

discussing the meanings contained in the Lotus Sūtra. For instance, in the case of discussing the ten meanings in each of the doors of the Traces and of



the Origin, these ten meanings are treated as signs denoting the functions of the Ten Subtleties in each of the two doors.

The ten meanings that are contained in the Traces denote the following ten functions that are the expression of the Ten Subtleties:[108]

(i) The function "Refuting the Three and Revealing the One" (P'o-san Hsien-i 破三顯一) refutes the Relative Truth of the Three Vehicles and reveals the Ultimate Truth of the One Buddha-vehicle. Since this function indicates the importance of knowledge that functions to destroy a disciple's attachment to the Three Vehicles, it denotes the Subtlety of Knowledge.

(ii) The function "Abandoning the Three and Revealing the One" (Fei-san Hsien-i 廢三顯一) further abandons the Three Vehicles (since the three have been refuted in the previous category) in revealing the One Buddha-vehicle. Since this function stresses the significance of the Buddha's teaching that leads to the abandonment of the three teachings, it denotes the Subtlety of Expounding the Dharma.

(iii) The function "Opening the Three and Revealing the One" (K'ai-san Hsien-i 開三顯一) makes clear that the Buddha's real purpose of presenting the Three Vehicles is to lead beings to attain the One Buddha-vehicle. Since this function is referred to in terms of the teaching and principle that are related to the Ultimate Truth, it denotes the Subtlety of Objects.

(iv) The function "Converging the Three and Revealing the One" (Hui-san Hsien-i 會三顯一) unifies the three aspects, i.e., person, dharma, and practice, in order to reveal the one path of Buddhahood. Since this function stresses the importance of

p. 556

bodhisattva practice on the path to Buddhahood, it denotes the Subtlety of Practice.

(v) The function "Abiding in the One and Revealing the One" (Chu-i Yung-i 住一顯一) states that the Buddha always abides in the One Buddha-vehicle upon revealing the One Buddha-vehicle. Since this function stresses the fundamental knowledge of the Buddha as the One Buddha-vehicle, it denotes the Subtlety of the Vehicle.

(vi) The function "Abiding in the Three and Revealing the One" (Chu-san Yung-i 住三顯一) states that the Buddha uses the Relative Truth of the Three Vehicles in revealing the One Buddha-vehicle. The Relative Truth is associated with the Buddha's response in relation to the capabilities of living beings, and due to the Buddha's response, this category of function is brought forth. Therefore, this function denotes the Subtlety of Response.

(vii) The function "Abiding in Neither the Three nor the One and Revealing the One"

(Chu-fei-san Fei-i Hsien-i 住非三非一顯一) indicates that the Three Vehicle and the One Vehicle are neither the three nor the one (since, principally speaking, they are empty). Conventionally speaking, the Buddha teaches the human and heavenly vehicle, which is also neither the three nor the one. Because of the Buddha's supra-mundane powers, the Buddha is able to abide in this inconceivable state of neither the three nor the one in revealing the One Buddha-vehicle. Therefore, this function denotes the Subtlety of Supra-mundane Powers.

(viii) The function "Covering the Three and Revealing the One" (Fu-san Hsien-I 覆三顯一) states that the Three Vehicles are skillfully covered by the Buddha in revealing the One Buddha-vehicle. By covering the Three Vehicles instead of abandoning them, the Buddha is able to use them in the future (if it is necessary), and this results in different levels of attainment.

p. 557

Therefore, this function denotes the Subtlety of Positions.

(ix) The function "Abiding in the Three and Employing the One" (Chu-san Yung-I 住三用一) asserts that the existence of the Three Vehicles (i.e., abiding in the Three) is the manifestation of the dharmakāya (i.e., employing the One). Since this function is spoken of in the context of the disciples that are formed by the response of the Dharma-body, it denotes the Subtlety of Retinues.

(x) The function "Abiding in the One and Employing the Three" (Chu-i Yung-san 住一用三) indicates that the employment of the Three Vehicles (i.e., employing the Three) is derived from the Buddha's original vow (i.e., abiding in the One) of expounding the Three Vehicles in the degenerate world. Since this function emphasizes the Buddha's vow of proclaiming the Three Vehicles, which results in benefiting various beings, it denotes the Subtlety of Benefits.

**Besides the above stated ten functions in terms of the Ten Subtleties in the Traces, the following are the ten functions in the door of the Origin, which express the Ten Subtleties in the Origin. Basically, these functions are spoken of in terms of the recent enlightenment attained by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni in the Traces and the initial enlightenment attained by the Buddha (as the eternal Buddha) in the Origin.[\[109\]](#)**

(i) The function "Refuting the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (P'o-chi Hsien-pen 破迹顯本) indicates that by refuting a disciple's view of mistaking the Buddha's recent enlightenment in the Traces as ultimate, the Buddha's initial enlightenment in an

incalculable past in the Origin is revealed. Since this function reveals the original cause linking to the Buddha's initial enlightenment, it signifies the Subtlety of the Original Cause.

p. 558

(ii) The function "Abandoning the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (Fei-chi Hsien-pen 廢迹顯本) states that in the Lotus Sūtra, the Buddha abandons the teaching of the Traces, and brings forth the teaching of the Origin. Since this function serves to trace back to the Buddha's Original Preaching, it signifies the Subtlety of the Original Proclamation of the Dharma.

(iii) The function "Opening the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (K'ai-chi Hsien-pen 開迹顯本) states that the purpose of the Buddha's teachings in the Traces is to reveal the Origin as the principle. Since the Buddha's initial enlightenment at the time of the Origin is the effect of Buddhahood, this function signifies the Subtlety of the Original Effect.

(iv) This function "Unifying the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (Hui-chi Hsien-pen 會迹顯本) states that all Buddha's activities in the Traces can be traced back to the Origin. Whereas this function reveals the original source (i.e., the Buddha's initial enlightenment as the effect of Buddhahood) from where the Traces is derived, it signifies the Subtlety of the Original Effect.

(v) The function "Abiding in the Origin and Revealing the Origin" (Chu-pen Hsien-pen 住本顯本) indicates that the eternal Buddha always abides in the original land of Sahā [110](where he initially attained Buddhahood) in revealing his original dharmakāya body. Therefore, this function signifies the Subtlety of the Original Land.

(vi) The function "Abiding in the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (Chu-chi Hsien-pen 住迹顯本) indicates that the historical Buddha Śākyamuni is able to reveal the original land (where his initial enlightenment took place) while abiding in his physical

p. 559

body in the present time of the Traces. Since this function is linked to the original land, it signifies the Subtlety of the Original Land.

(vii) The function "Abiding in neither the Traces nor the Origin and Revealing the Origin" (Chu-fei-pen Fei-chi Hsien-pen 住非迹非本顯本) indicates that the Buddha's original response is inconceivable, for the Origin belongs to the past, but it is revealed in the present teaching of the Lotus Sūtra; and the Traces belongs to the present, but it has been displayed in the past teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha is able to reveal the

Origin by abiding in neither the Traces nor the Origin. Since this function is derived from the Buddha's original response, it signifies the Subtlety of the Original Empathy and Response.

(viii) The function "Covering the Traces and Revealing the Origin" (Fei-chi Hsien-pen 覆迹顯本) states that the Buddha is able to use his supra-mundane powers to cover the Traces in order to lead disciples to perceive the Origin. Therefore, this function signifies the Subtlety of the Original Supra-mundane Powers.

(ix) The function "Abiding in the Traces and Employing the Origin" (Chu-chi Yung-pen 住迹用本) signifies the Subtlety of the Original Life-span and the Subtlety of the Original Retinues. This is because by abiding in the Traces, the Buddha is able to manifest birth and death numerous times, and this life-death is only possible because it is derived from the Original Life-span of the eternal Buddha. Moreover, the Traces are represented by the disciples of the Three Vehicles, and these disciples are actually Original Retinues. Therefore, this function is linked to the meanings of Original Life-span and Original Retinues.

(x) The function "Abiding in the Origin and Employing the Traces" (Chu-pen Yung-chi 住本用迹) signifies the Subtlety of the Original Nirvāṇa and the Subtlety of the Original Benefits. The

p. 560

function of abiding in the place of the Origin is linked to the meaning of Original Nirvāṇa. The function of benefiting living beings is linked to the meaning of Original Benefits.

With the above description of the ten meanings of the Traces and of the Origin, Chih-i demonstrates how these ten phrases of expression signify the functions of the Ten Subtleties in the Traces and in the Origin. This type of sign interpretation underlies Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy in terms of its nature of flexibility and dynamism.

## **8. The interpretation of sign to use numbers**

Numbers are abstract concepts of the phenomenal world. When the phenomenal world is perceived, knowledge is reflected by means of categorization with numbers. Numbers are abstract; nevertheless, they are connected to concrete demonstrations of how the universe is generated. The categorization by numbers is extremely important, because without it the

description of the regularity of things is not possible. Numbers reflect the way Nature works and they can represent the world in a simple manner. The use of such function of numbers started as early as in the Book of Changes, in which each of the Eight Trigrams is made of three lines, and each of the sixty-four hexagrams is made of six lines. All these lines are based upon two kinds of patterns -- divided and undivided, the former denoting weak or yin, and the latter denoting strong or yang. The combination of different lines suggests specific meanings. In general, Eight Trigrams imitate the formation of a myriad of things as well as that of heaven and earth; sixty-four hexagrams reflect the movements and changes of heaven and earth. The formations, movements and changes of nature are regulated by these categories of numbers. The connotation of the categories of numbers is expressed explicitly in the famous passage by Lao Tzu:

p. 561

Tao produced the One. The One produced the two. The two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of the material force (ch'i) they achieve harmony.[\[111\]](#)

The category one is equipped with the Tao -- the beginning of the universe. The category two indicates the two basic forces that construe everything in the universe, i.e., the opposite elements of Yin and Yang. The category three is the minimum number representing the multiplicity in the world. Categorization of numbers is apparently the result of how humankind understands the phenomenal world in a representative way.

In the case of Chih-i's work, the use of numbers is not simply to abbreviate certain terms, but is to intentionally express his own philosophies by means of using numerical categories as signs. By a carefully planned use of numbers, Chih-i strengthens his discourse and integrates his own theory with the theories he interprets, through which his perfect harmonization philosophy is vividly depicted. If we say that the previous seven types of Chih-i's interpretation of sign reflect various characteristics of his philosophy, then this type of sign interpretation (made through using numbers) is Chih-i's attempt to portray conceptually and visually what his

perfect harmonization philosophy is. This idea is highly original and inspiring. The following is an illustration of how Chih-i uses various numerical categories. We arrange the discussion of these numerical categories in an ascending order, starting with number ten, and ending with number one. Our

p. 562

intention is to follow the system of Chih-i, in which number one stands out to be the ultimate reality, and represents the Buddha's final teaching.

## 8.1 The use of the category number ten

Number "ten" symbolizes the completion of a concept or the infinity of the universe in Buddhism. The traditional view in Buddhism of the ten directions: east, west, north, south, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, above, and below, are intended to encompass the whole space. The concept of the Ten Dharma-realms (i.e., the realms of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, heavenly beings, śrāvakās, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas and Buddhas, that are arranged hierarchically), is formulated by Chih-i, and is Chih-i's system in encompassing the whole universe. Completeness is an important character of Chih-i's philosophical system. Correspondingly, that the Hsüan-i consists of ten volumes can be seen as this symbol of completeness.[112] Visually speaking, completeness is constituted by horizontal and vertical dimensions. While the Threefold Track (i.e., Track of the Real Nature, Track of the Illumination of Wisdom, and Track of the Accomplishment) penetrates the ten categories of the Triple Dharma[113] (i.e., Triple Course of Suffering, Affliction, and Karman;[114] Triple Consciousness of Amalavijñāna, Ālayavijñāna

p. 563

Adanavijñāna;[115] Triple Buddha-nature as the Fundamental Cause, the Understanding Cause, and the Conditional Cause;[116] Triple Prajñā of the Ultimate Truth, the Illumination of Wisdom, and the Written Language;[117] Triple Bodhi of the Ultimate Truth, the True Knowledge, and the

Expedience;[\[118\]](#) Triple Great Vehicle of the

p. 564

Principle, Conformity, and Beneficence;[\[119\]](#) Triple Body of Dharmakāya, Saṃbhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya;[\[120\]](#) Triple Nirvāṇa of the Purity of Nature, the Perfect Purity, and the Purity of Expedience;[\[121\]](#) Triple Treasure of the Dharma, the Buddha, and the Saṃgha;[\[122\]](#) and Triple Virtuous Quality of Dharmakāya,

p. 565

Prajñā, and Liberation),[\[123\]](#) these ten categories are authorized to horizontally represent different Buddhist notions with regard to the Threefold Dharma in wide range. When the Threefold Track penetrates the Ten Suchnesses (i.e., suchness of its appearance, nature, substance, power, function, causes, conditions, effects, retributions, and beginning-and-end-ultimately-alike) in the Ten Dharma-realms, these ten categories are authorized to vertically represent the whole phenomenal world in depth, considering that the ten realms are arranged hierarchically in space. Moreover, the Ten Subtleties in the Origin that Chih-i proposes are certainly his attempt to embody all categories of the subtlety in Buddhism. This is because, the Origin (as the very beginning when the Buddha's initial enlightenment took place) denotes eternity, and can include everything in terms of space (i.e., horizontal dimension); and the Traces (as the manifestation of this eternal Origin) is concerned with various corporeal lives of the Buddha in kalpas, and can certainly include everything in terms of time (i.e., vertical dimension). Hence, in Chih-i's system of interpretation, number ten stands for a visual image of completion constituted by horizontal and vertical dimensions.

## **8.2 The use of the category number six**

Number "six" plays an important role in the system of hexagrams in the Book of Changes. Wing-tsit Chan remarks:

[Each hexagram] embraced those three powers [Heaven, Earth, and

p. 566

man] and doubled them. Therefore in the system of Change a hexagram is complete with six lines. They are distinguished as yin and yang and the weak and the strong are employed in succession. Thus in the system of Change there are six positions and the pattern is complete.[124]

This suggests that what "six" represents is the completion of the pattern of the universe represented by a hexagram, which is constituted by the doubled three powers (heaven, earth, and man). The pattern of the hexagram is formulated by the elements of Yin and Yang, each of which is employed in succession, forming six lines. It is interesting to note that Chih-i uses a similar way to define the Origin and the Traces in terms of using the numerical category of six and in terms of the two elements being employed in succession. This indicates that Chih-i defines the Traces and the Origin in six groups in terms of the six polar concepts (i.e., "principle" and "phenomenal appearances", "principle" and "teaching", "teaching" and "practice", "substance" and "function", "ultimate" and "relative", "present" and "past"), and each of the following groups of definition takes the meaning of its preceding one.[125] With the employment of these six polar concepts, the

p. 567

Traces and the Origin are defined in succession. Such a way to define the Traces and the Origin denotes a complementary relation between these two entities. Moreover, instead of the two elements of Ying and Yang that constitute the hexagram as the representation of a complete pattern of the universe (possibly intended by Chih-i himself), this pattern is also completed with number six. However, since this pattern is defined in the Buddhist context, it is spoken of in terms of time (embodied by the Traces) and space (embodied by the Origin).

Coincidentally, or perhaps intentionally, there are also six groups of analogy in total in Chih-i's use of the lotus flower to analogize the door of the Traces and the door of the Origin (in the light of the polar notion -- the Relative and



the Ultimate Truth). There are three analogies for the Traces and for the Origin respectively.[126]

In terms of the door of the Traces, the first analogy (concerning the flower that exists for the sake of the seed) indicates that the Relative Truth (as expediency) is used only to reveal the Ultimate Truth. The second analogy (concerning the seedpod that must depend on the flower to be nurtured) indicates that, although the Relative Truth is trivial in comparison with the Ultimate Truth, the revelation of the Ultimate Truth that depends on the Relative Truth proves the indispensability of the Relative Truth. The third analogy (concerning the falling flower that ripens the seedpod) indicates the necessity of abandoning the Three Vehicles, i.e., śrāvaka (disciples of the Buddha), pratyekabuddha (self-enlightened), and bodhisattva

p. 568

(future Buddha), since they are not yet the ultimate goal. They must be abandoned in order for the disciples to attain the final goal of the Buddha-vehicle.

With regard to the door of the Origin, the first analogy (concerning the flower that must accompany the seedpod) indicates an interdependent relation between the Origin and the Traces. The second analogy (concerning the opening of the flower and the displaying of the seedpod) affirms the necessity of the existence of the Relative Truth, for without the Relative Truth, the superiority of the Origin as the Ultimate Truth will not be known. The third analogy (concerning the falling of the flower and the ripening of the seed) is to address the necessity to be free from the Traces (as the Relative Truth) in order to reach the final goal. This is to correct disciples' false views who are attached to the Traces and mistaken it as the final liberation. In order for them to perceive the Origin, the Traces have to be abandoned.

Both groups of the three analogies are general descriptions of the evolution between the Relative Truth and the Ultimate Truth concerning the door of the Traces and the door of the Origin. Therefore, six analogies together again represent the completion of the Relative Truth and the Ultimate Truth in succession. Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy unfolds itself in this image of a pattern of succession.

### 8.3 The use of the category number five

Number "five" in Chinese culture elaborates the change of worldly phenomena. This is to say that the fundamental set of five is composed of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. They are the five basic elements that construe the world, and each of them is connected to one another in sequence and rotates one after another in a full circle (i.e., wood produces fire, fire produces earth, earth produces metal, metal produces water, and water produces wood).

p. 569

These Five Elements (Wu-hang 五行) incorporate all other sets of five things, in a sense that all of them correspond to the Five Elements, such as five directions (east, west, south, north, and center), five musical notes (Kung 宮, Shang 商, Chüeh 角, Chih 徵, Yü 羽), five internal organs (heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys), five grains (rice, two kinds of millet, wheat and beans), and so forth. Although these numerical categories of five represent different phenomena, since all of them correspond to the Five Elements, each of them is simply a different name for the same principle the Five Elements denote. That is, the universe (whether as microcosm or macrocosm) is presented as a complete circle of change among five elements (each of which is related to one another). Therefore, any set of these five phenomena forms a circle of correspondence among each other, and symbolizes completion and perfection.

It is interesting that Chih-i's Five Sections (five categories of analysis or five layers of the abstruse meaning), i.e., name, substance, purport, function, and teaching, are arranged for the interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra. Whether intentionally or not, this number five corresponds to the number of words "Miao-fa Lien-hua Ching" that constitute the title of the Lotus Sūtra. While these five words as the title of the Lotus Sūtra underlie the profound principle, the Five Sections are designed to explore the abstruse meaning that is contained in each word. Furthermore, the Five Periods (Wu-shih 五時) in Chih-i's system of classifying the teaching of the Buddha (P'an-chiao 判教) are able to incorporate the whole of the Buddha's teachings chronologically. In addition, the five flavors of dairy products are employed

to analogize these five periods,[[127](#)] denoting

p. 570

the perfection of the complete circle of the Buddha's teaching career.

## **8.4 The use of the category number four**

Number four is extremely important in Chih-i's system of classification. The well-established Buddhist notions, such as the Four Noble Truths (suffering, the cause of suffering, the extinction of suffering, and the path to the extinction of suffering) and the Twelfefold Causality are corresponded by Chih-i's own theory of the Fourfold Teaching. Coherently, his theories of the four types of the Four Noble Truths[[128](#)] and the four types of the Twelfefold Causality[[129](#)] are formulated corresponding to the Fourfold Teaching. In my opinion, the number four that is embodied by the Fourfold Teaching is consciously or unconsciously significant to Chih-i. Number four represents the four seasons of a year, signifying a complete cycle of succession. With different seasons,

p. 571

different kinds of plants are able to grow. Our understanding of Chih-i's use of number four is that, like the function of all four seasons which allow all plants to grow and to ripen, the Fourfold Teaching is designed by Chih-i to signify that it addresses all sentient beings with different capacities.

Moreover, the notion "four" is related to the square shape, as the four directions of east, west, south, and north in four corners of the square form its shape. In Chinese traditional cosmology, Heaven is said to be round, and Earth to be square. The number four is significant in its relation to the square shape. In the case of Chih-i, he understands the number four as the representation of a complete cycle of succession, such as his theory of the Fourfold Teaching, which represent the whole teachings of the Buddha in terms of the doctrine. The Buddha's teachings are classified beginning from the Tripiṭaka Teaching, gradually ascending to the Common Teaching, the Separate Teaching, and finally to the Perfect Teaching. Like the square earth

(with the four seasons as a complete cycle of succession) that is all embracing and enables all things to grow and ripen, the Fourfold Teaching is also considered by Chih-i to have the capacity to embrace all the Buddhist doctrines. This all-embracing feature is made evident as Chih-i takes the Fourfold Teaching to form the theoretical discourse in the Hsüan-i.[130]

The number four is not only important as a Chinese concept, but also in Buddhism. The four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are said to be the basic elements that construct all

p. 572

phenomena. The Four Noble Truths are representative of the basic principle of Buddhism. Correspondingly, Chih-i's theory of the four types of interpretation of the Four Noble Truths and the four types of interpretation of the Twelffold Causality are considered as representative of the four types of capacities of living beings, i.e., the dull, the middle, the sharp, and the superior faculties.

## **8.5 The use of the category number three**

Number "three" in Chinese epistemology embodies the unity of Heaven, Earth and Man. The significance of "three" is indicated in a famous passage in Lao Tzu:

Tao produced the One. The One produced the two. The two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things.[131]

Apparently, "three" is the basic unit that represents all phenomena in the universe in Chinese philosophy. This symbolic meaning is confirmed by the fundamental role "three" plays in the Book of Changes, as Wing-tsit Chan summarizes in his footnote:

The texts consist of sixty-four hexagrams and judgments on them. These hexagrams are based on the Eight Trigrams, each of which consists of three lines, divided or undivided, the divided representing the weak, or yin, and the undivided representing the strong, or yang. Each of these eight corresponds to a direction, a natural element, a moral quality, etc.[132]

Significantly, the Threefold Truth in Chih-i's system represents an integration of three aspects: Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle Way. Heaven, Earth, and Man are perceived as inseparable, and this inseparability is also the characteristic of the Threefold Truth. Of course, Chih-i's Threefold

p. 573

Truth is far richer in content. If anything, the Threefold Truth implies not only an inseparable aspect, but it embodies a perfect harmonization organic entity. If the concept of Heaven, Earth, and Man as a whole is emphasized more in terms of mutual influence, the Threefold Truth functions more as the comprehensive view of dharmas, with the Middle Way that synthesizes two conceptions of dharmas as Emptiness and the Provisional. Moreover, the Threefold Truth also reflects a positive view of affirming the mundane world. According to Ng Yu-Kwan's study, Chih-i's theory of the Middle Way in the context of the Threefold Truth of the Perfect Teaching, is spoken of in the context of the meritorious functions and of embracing all dharmas. The all-embracing characteristic refers to the affirmation of all existing entities in the world of phenomena, since the Ultimate Truth is embraced by any of the entities in the world. The functional characteristic refers to the bodhisattva's teaching and the transformation of sentient beings in the empirical world.[\[133\]](#) This bearing of worldly implication coincides with the Taoist world-view, as Wing-tsit Chan puts it in his comment:

The Taoist goal is to become one with all things and to coexist with Heaven and Earth. It is obviously not a philosophy of life negation. One does not reject the world. Instead, he enlarges it to include the whole universe.[\[134\]](#)

The positive undertone of this philosophy is displayed throughout the Chinese tradition, beginning from the Book of Changes, as Wing-tsit Chan comments on it:

p. 574

It is a universe of constant change, and whatever issues from it is good.[\[135\]](#)

The affirmation of the mundane world is more known to be associated with Confucian ideology, which is concerned with more or less the fulfillment of one's moral duty as a person in society. Though the contents of this affirmation of the mundane world in Taoism, Confucianism, and Chih-i's philosophical system are quite different, their positive attitudes towards phenomena are the same. One is reminded of Chih-i's well-known statement that underlies his affirmation of worldly phenomena: "Every color and fragrance is none but the Middle Way." If every worldly entity manifests nothing else but the truth of the Middle Way, it is of course not to be negated, but to be affirmed.

Last but not least, the most important system that lays the foundation for T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, the system of classifying the teaching of the Buddha (P'an-chiao 判教) is also coincidentally formed by the threefold aspects in terms of the period, the method, and the content. The period conveys the Buddha's teaching career in terms of time and place; the method conveys the Buddha's employment of expedient methods in transforming audiences with the most effective ways to enlighten them; the content is concerned with the type of doctrines the Buddha teaches to suite the capabilities of his audiences. With these three aspects together, Chih-i forms a most comprehensive system of classification, and expresses the Buddhist canon in the most systematic way of his time, as well throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism. What the number three symbolizes -- the comprehensiveness and the representation of major categories in the universe -- seems to work out perfectly in Chih-i's system.

p. 575

## **8.6 The use of the category number one**

As mentioned above, One is equated with Tao -- the ultimate unity of Heaven, Earth and Man. Similarly, the number "one" in Chih-i's system is the representation of the Ultimate Truth. This Ultimate Truth is absolute, in as much as it reveals the authentic nature of reality. Therefore, this Ultimate Truth refers to the one vehicle of Buddhahood, the ultimate goal for all

living beings to strive for, which is the theme expressed in the Lotus Sūtra. The Three Vehicles (śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva) are all unified under the Buddha-vehicle (Fo-ch'eng 佛乘; Skt., buddhayāna).

From the above brief description, we may say that Chih-i uses numbers as signs to express his own idea of a perfect harmonization philosophy, i.e., as characterized by non-separation, non-differentiation, mutual identification, affirmation of all existing things, integration, comprehensiveness, and so forth. These are the qualities that contribute to his achievements of perfection and holistic views. It is interesting to notice how various numerical categories work out in different patterns in expressing Chih-i's own ideas.

Chih-i's use of numerical category of "ten" is usually arranged in an ascending order such as in the case of the Ten Dharma-realms. According to Chih-i, each realm is inclusive of the other nine realms, forming one hundred realms. Furthermore, each realm contains ten different characteristics (Ten Suchnesses), rendering one thousand worlds in all. Each of these thousand worlds has three divisions -- sentient beings, the five aggregates, and the space we live in. In total, this accounts for three thousand worlds. And these three thousand worlds are all possessed by one single mind. If one mind contains different worlds, this is a pattern of extension, starting from a single beginning point (one mind), but one mind can expand to the whole universe. From the vast perspective of the three thousand worlds to the point of a single

p. 576

mind, there occurs a pattern of contraction, returning from the end of the phenomenal world to the beginning of the phenomenal world. Such a pattern of extension and contraction supports Chih-i's theory of one single mind embracing three thousand worlds (I-nien San-ch'ien 一念三千), and the whole universe is realized as nothing but the act of mind. This theory leads to a further conclusion Chih-i intends to draw, that is, liberation is possible for all living beings, because it is the mind that plays the key role and determines one's destination. From the realm of Buddha to the realm of hell, there is only the substance where one's mind abides.[136]

Chih-i's use of the numerical category of "three" is reflected in his theory "Threefold Contemplation in a single mind" (I-hsin San-kuan 一心三觀). That is, the three aspects Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle Way are contemplated together, in that they are mutually identified with each other and are realized simultaneously. This simultaneous realization is termed by Chih-i in the phrase Chi-k'ung Chi-chia Chi-chung 即空、即假、即中.[137] This can be seen from the round circle the phrase forms, for the three aspects are the simultaneous existence of one reality and are mutually identified with each other (see diagram A).[138] Chih-i's remark "Three are one, and one is three" (Chi-san Erh-i, Chi-i Erh-san 即三而一，即一而三) indicates the relationship between the whole and its parts. A whole is manifested in each of its parts, and each part is the representation of the whole. Non-differentiation is

p. 577

obviously one of the characteristics of the Threefold Truth, and can also be considered as the characteristic of heaven, since heaven is regarded as round-shaped in the Chinese view of cosmology. The pattern of a circle is thus given a significant meaning by Chih-i of signifying the dimension of reality as the integrated unity.

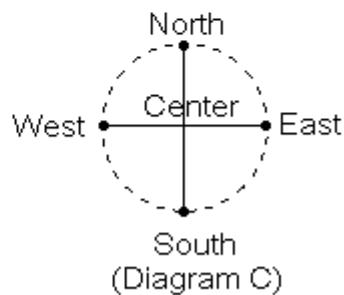
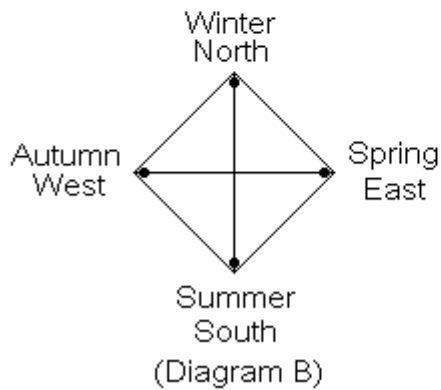
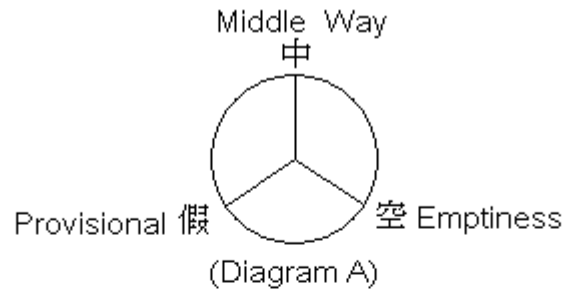
While the above non-differentiation is shaped in the feature of the round form, revealing the fundamental nature of existence as the integrated unity, Chih-i's use of the numerical category of "four" indicates the characteristic of the Buddha's teachings in terms of multiplicity. It is worth noting that "four" is shaped in the feature of the square form, such as the four directions of east, south, west, and north. In Chinese culture, corresponding to these four directions is the cycle of four seasons -- spring, summer, autumn, and winter respectively (see Diagram B). Therefore, "four" is used by Chih-i to represent cycles of sequence. Chih-i's Fourfold Teaching in terms of contents is set up in sequence, and could, therefore, occupy the four different places like the four directions or the four seasons, forming a square-shape. The shape of a square is the description of earth in Chinese cosmology, indicating various phenomena in a cycle of sequence. Since the Fourfold Teaching is the product of the Buddha's teaching career on earth, representing varieties of the doctrines in Buddhism, it is not far-fetching to associate the underlying theme of Chih-i's use of number four with the features of earth.



Similar to the pattern number three, the category number five also forms a circle. The five directions including the center and the other four directions revolving around it (see Diagram C), symbolize the supremacy of the central point, but at the same time are all-encompassing with all directions equally in their own positions. Likewise, we may consider that the center of the five periods of the teaching is occupied by the Lotus Sūtra, symbolizing the period of apogee and the supremacy of this doctrine. However, the supremacy of the period of the Lotus Sūtra does not negate the

p. 578

importance of the other four periods. Without the relative doctrines expounded in the four periods to prepare the audiences for the revelation of the final doctrine, the audiences would not be able to comprehend the message delivered in the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sūtra. With the previous four periods revolving around the last period of the Lotus Sūtra, the former periods are affirmed, in a sense that they have their own unique positions, and are thus embraced by the last period. The pattern of this circle that consists of five divisions affirmatively renders the characteristics of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy in an all-embracing manner. Forming a coherent unity, all existing things are gathered together under the leadership of the central point.



p. 579

## Conclusion

This study of Chih-i's use of technique of sign interpretation aims at exploring Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy. We have explored eight types of sign interpretation that are used to concretize his perfect and merging philosophy by means of what images, words, strokes, black ink, phrases, analogies, supra-mundane powers, meanings of phrases, and numerical categories can signify.

1. By examining the first type of sign interpretation, investigating different meanings of a word, we have discovered that is a type of discourse that reflects the functional nature of Chih-i's perfect and merging philosophy, in the sense that it functions to convey Chih-i's ideas and concepts of Buddhism.
2. By examining the second type of sign interpretation, decoding the structure of a character, we have concluded that it is the method that vividly depicts the dynamic nature

of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

3. By looking at the third type of sign interpretation, reasoning out the concepts the "black ink as form", we have uncovered how Chih-i's theory of one dharma containing all dharmas and vice versa can work out in practice with the analysis of the black ink. This method shows the functional and dynamic nature of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

4. By scrutinizing the fourth type of sign interpretation, reading into phrases, we have discerned that this method is to define the flexible and dynamic nature of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

5. By analyzing the fifth type of sign interpretation, using analogies to portray various states of subtleties, we have highlighted Chih-i's skill in forming the force to support his field of discourse and to enhance the power of his presentation, from which truth and concepts can be better apprehended. This method

**p. 580**

reflects again the dynamic nature of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy.

6. By inspecting the sixth type of sign interpretation, explaining what the Buddha intends to convey through his manifestation of supra-mundane powers, we have noted that this method is to provide a justification for Chih-i's own categories of the Ten Subtleties, so that his interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra is authorized.

7. By investigating the seventh type of sign interpretation, revealing what the phrases of expression denote, the flexible and dynamic nature of Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy is again made legible.

8. The last type of the sign interpretation of using numbers is the most important method of all eight types of sign interpretation. As we have stated previously, this method of using numbers is Chih-i's attempt to directly portray his perfect harmonization philosophy conceptually and visually. With different numerical categories, different patterns are formed to concretely express Chih-i's idea of what a perfect harmonization philosophy should be. Firstly, the use of the category number ten stands for the visual image of completeness in terms of horizontal and vertical dimensions. Secondly, the use of the category number six is to unfold Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy with the image of the circle of succession that denotes the nature of completeness. Thirdly, the use of the category number five draws a pattern of a circle akin to the five periods of the teachings of the Buddha that can be considered as occupying the five directions. We discern that Chih-i's use of numerical category five denotes the affirmation of all teachings of the Buddha, while emphasizing the supremacy of the Lotus Sūtra as the centralizing force.

Fourthly, the use of the category number four depicts a pattern of a square, with which all the Buddhist doctrines are legitimated. Fifthly, the use of the category number three draws a pattern of a circle, denoting an

p. 581

integrated reality, in which all three aspects of the Threefold Truth are mutually identified. Sixthly, the use of the category number one is to bring forth the Ultimate Truth as the representation of the single reality of Buddhahood. We come to the conclusion that these six numerical categories depict Chih-i's perfect harmonization philosophy in terms of non-separation, non-differentiation, mutual identification, affirmation of all existing things, and integration of all aspects of reality.

Through this study, we come to realize the unique contribution of Chih-i in terms of sign interpretation. That is, truth can be penetrated by means of correctly understanding the arbitrary language of nature. Truth can be exposed by means of interpreting various signs. For Chih-i, the interpretation of sign becomes a means to demonstrate his own philosophy, whereby his thought is proved to be akin to the principle of the Ultimate Truth. This indicates that Chih-i's interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra is not just the discourse for speculative philosophy, but can be considered as the embodiment of Chih-i's own philosophy in practice, through which his own system of understanding Buddhism as a whole is presented. What Chih-i concerns about is no longer an idea or a metaphysical problem that remains in the domain of discourse, but the methodological and hermeneutical approaches that can demonstrate his philosophy in practice. Ultimately, the goal of his sign interpretation is educational and soteriological. That is, Chih-i strives to convey visually what the Ultimate Truth is, how we can better conceive and understand profound Truth, and how we can approach the attainment of Truth through the revelation of his perfect harmonization philosophy.

p. 582

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## 智者大師之符號詮釋體系

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### 提要

本文是以智者大師之《妙法蓮華經玄義》為藍本，從符號學的角度對智者大師詮釋《妙法蓮華經》的方法作初步的探索。大師以靈活多樣的手法，不僅通過詮釋符號的方法，對《法華經》作出解釋，而且在解釋的同時，也闡述了自己的理論思想。更確切地說，這一符號詮釋的過程，就是大師自身佛學思想的具體展現。並且，由於大師創造性的才能，而使佛教中國化臻於爐火純青的地步。本文將大師詮釋符號的方法分為八大類，意在從中窺見大師是如何創造性地解釋《法華經》的，又是如何揮灑自如地將其圓融哲學具體地展現在詮釋過程中的。

**關鍵詞：**1.符號詮釋 2.《法華經》 3.玄義 4.圓融哲學 5.中道實相

[1] David Chappell, "Forward", *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, Paul Swanson, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989, p. vii.

[2] There is a great dispute over the meaning of the Middle Way. Swanson considers the Middle Way as the synthesis of Emptiness and the Provisional (cf., Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*). Ng Yu-Kwan is not satisfied with Swanson's view. His study proves that Chih-i's Middle Way is spoken of in terms of the Buddha Nature, which forms the compound word Middle Way-Buddha Nature. He disagrees with Swanson's view of taking the Threefold Truth as the central concept of Chih-i, arguing strongly that "the Middle Way cannot be properly understood without reference to the Buddha Nature" (p. 45). This is because, if the Middle Way is spoken of in terms of Buddha Nature, it embraces the "unique force by which one can act upon and transform the phenomenal world." Cf. Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*, p. 60. He criticizes Swanson's description about Chih-i's understanding of the Middle Way as the synthesis of Emptiness and

Conventional Existence of things as being limited, for the latter did not relate Chih-i's Middle Way to Buddha Nature. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 200, note 68. According to Ng Yu-Kwan, the key concept of truth for Chih-i is the compound word Middle Way-Buddha Nature that is characterized as being permanent, functional, and all-embracing. This argument is valid. See his book *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*.

[3] The major reference books concerning the studies of Chih-i, his works, and his thoughts are: Leon Hurvitz, *Chih-i (538~597) An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk*; David Chappell, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism: An Outline of the Fourfold Teachings*; Paul Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism*; Ng Yu-Kwan, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*; Mou Tsung-san, *Fo-hsing Yü Po-jo* 《佛性與般若》; Andō Toshio, *Tendai shōgu-shisō ron* 天臺性具思想論; Zeng Qihai, *T'ien-t'ai-tsung Fo-hsüeh Tao-lun* 《天臺宗佛學導論》; Zhang Fenglei, *Chih-i P'ing-chuan* 《智顓評傳》; Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation*; Pan Guiming, *Chih-i P'ing-chuan* 《智顓評傳》; Ch'en Ying-shan, *T'ien-t'ai Yüan-ch'i Chung-tao Shih-hsiang Lun* 《天臺緣起中道實相論》; Li Chih-fu, *Miao-fa Lien-hua-ching Hsüan-i Yen-chiu* 《妙法蓮華經玄義研究》; Thomas Cleary, *Stopping and seeing: a comprehensive course in Buddhist meditation*; and Ziporyn, *Brook, Evil and/or/as the good: omniscience, intersubjectivity and value paradox in Tiantai Buddhist thought*.

[4] See *Taishō* vol. 33, no. 1716, 681~814.

[5] For a study of the definition of sign, see David Lidov, *Elements of Semiotics*, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999.

[6] Hsüan-i, T.33, 771c21-24.

[7] Mo-ho Chih-kuan 《摩訶止觀》, T.46, 53a14-15.

[8] Ames, "Putting the Te Back into Taoism", in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, J. Baird Collicott and Roger T. Ames, ed., p. 129.

[9] For further details, see "Interpretation of sign to decode the structure of a character" on pp. 86~87.



[10] Ng Yu-Kwan has analyzed the term "embrace" (Chü 具) in Chih-i's theory. According to his study, "embrace" could mean that the Middle Way-Buddha Nature is possessed by all dharmas and could also mean that the Middle Way-Buddha Nature embraces all sorts of methods, which may be used for educational and soteriological purposes, for the liberation of sentient beings. See Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*, p. 79, and p. 81. Our use of "all-embracing" is to describe literally the characteristics of Chih-i's way of thinking.

[11] Hsüan-i, T.33, 747a14-16. See Hsüan-i, T.33, 746c18-747b18 for Chih-i's explanation of Chi and Ying.

[12] Traditionally, one of the meanings of Ching 經 in China, before being used for Buddhist scriptures, refers to the Confucian classics.

[13] Hsi-t'an 悉檀 (Siddhānta) means an establishment conclusion, used by the Buddha as a way of preaching. There are Four Siddhāntas as the four methods that employed by the Buddha to cause living beings to achieve accomplishment of attaining Buddhahood, or they can be the four viewpoints of perceiving the truth, including "Worldly Siddhānta" (Shih-chieh Hsi-t'an 世界悉檀), "Siddhānta for Each Person" (Ko-ko Wei-jen Hsi-t'an 各各爲人悉檀), "Siddhānta of Counteraction" (Tui-chih Hsi-t'an 對治悉檀), and "Siddhānta of the Supreme Truth" (Ti-i-i Hsi-t'an 第一義悉檀). The characteristics of the "Worldly Siddhānta" (Shih-chieh Hsi-t'an 世界悉檀) concern the basic theory of causality (Yin-yüan 因緣) in Buddhism, and differentiate what is real and what is unreal. What is unreal (provisional 假) refers to all things in this spatial-temporal world that arise through Dependent Origination (Yüan-ch'i 緣起; Skt., *pratīyasamutpāda*), rendering the fact that all things lack substantial Being (Wu-tzu-hsing 無自性), and are illusory. The unreal is spoken of in terms of the five aggregates bearing their existence in name. Names are not substantial, and thus, five aggregates are only illusory and provisional. What is real (Shih 實) refers to the body that is constituted by the five aggregates, which really exists. In short, the Worldly Siddhānta distinguishes between phenomenon and noumenon, between real and unreal, between good and bad, and between different levels of religious practice and achievement. The teaching suits those beings that are capable of understanding the doctrine of the Worldly Siddhānta.

[14] T.8, 333b.

[15] Ch'ou 丑 is also the second character of the "branches" 地支.

[16] How the character can be interpreted as evil and good is not clear. We presume that left and right as the counterpart are taken as an allegorical term for evil and good.

[17] Chih-i does not specify a character dealing with the dot on the top and on the bottom. We presume that what he intends to portray is the state of non-outflow of defilement and outflow of defilement. If the dot is on the top of the character, it draws a picture of non-dripping, descriptive of "non-outflow"; if the dot is on the bottom of the character, it draws a picture of dripping, descriptive of "outflow".

[18] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777a12-22.

[19] Ibid., p. 777a22-27.

[20] Ibid., p. 777a27-29.

[21] Ibid., p. 777b2-3. Four kinds of sagehood refer to the four levels of accomplishment in terms of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva, and Buddha.

[22] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777b6-8.

[23] No-mark (Wu-chi 無記) means that one cannot distinguish what the causes are that can lead to certain effects, and therefore, no-mark is suffering, signifying the Truth of Suffering.

[24] The form of retribution means that since form is the source of false views and wrong attitudes, retribution results. Therefore, the form of retribution is the cause of suffering, signifying the Truth of Accumulation.

[25] This means that if one understands the doctrine of Causality, Suffering, Emptiness, and No-self (that is embedded in a character), one is able to reach the extinction of suffering. Therefore, this is the Truth of Path.

[26] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777b14-18.

[27] Ibid., p. 777b19-27.

[28] Ibid., p. 777b27-c3.

[29] This means that since one is free from being attached to the extreme views of either negation or affirmation (i.e., neither negation nor affirmation), one does not distinguish phenomena in terms of duality. This state of non-distinction is purity.

[30] This means that purity is a state of tranquility with no deliberate action and no thoughts. Therefore, one no longer creates any karman. The self without karman is the real self, for one is no longer in a cycle of transmigration.

[31] This means that the view of affirmation is the Worldly Truth (for one only sees what appears to exist in the phenomenal world); the view of negation is the Absolute Truth (for one sees the empty nature of all things); and the view of neither affirmation nor negation is the Middle Way-Ultimate Truth (for one does not distinguish existence from emptiness).

[32] Hsüan-i, T.33, 7773-7.

[33] This is to say that since everything comes into being due to the combination of causes and conditions, all existence is empty including oneself.

[34] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777c7-10.

[35] Ibid., p. 777c15-16. "Eight words" refers to the account of the Buddha in one of his lives as a bodhisattva. One time, the bodhisattva heard a deity reciting half of a verse: "All dharmas are impermanent, and this is the dharma of origination and extinction. (諸行無常，是生滅法)." In order to hear the other half of the verse that constitutes also eight words, i.e., "when birth and death extinguishes, quiescence and extinction is bliss," (生滅滅已，寂滅爲樂), the bodhisattva was willing to offer his body to the deity. Cf. Nirvānasūtra, T.12, 450a-c.

[36] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777c16-17.

[37] Triple Bodhi refers to the Bodhi of the Ultimate Truth, Bodhi of the True Knowledge, and the Bodhi of Expedience.

[38] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777c17-18.

[39] Dhāraṇī is the mystic syllables, similar to the mantra in esoteric Buddhism. It is regarded as the quintessence of a sūtra, and is usually recited at the end of a chapter. It plays the role of actualizing the mystical power of a sūtra by being able to invoke the power of divine beings.

[40] Hsüan-i, T.33, 777c19-20.

[41] Ibid., p. 777c20.

[42] Ibid., p. 777c21.

[43] Ibid., p. 777c21.

[44] Ibid., p. 777c22.

[45] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 693b.

[46] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 64.

[47] Ibid., p. 61.

[48] Hsüan-i, T.33, 773a2-4.

[49] Ibid., p.773a6-9.

[50] Ibid., p. 773a9-10.

[51] Ibid., p. 773a13-14.

[52] Ibid., p. 773a15-18.

[53] Ibid., p. 773a18-20.

[54] Hsüan-i, T.33, 773b10-15.

[55] Ibid., p. 773b16-19.

[56] Ibid., p. 773b20-22.

[57] Ibid., p. 773b24-27.

[58] Ibid., p. 773c2-6.

[59] Ibid., p. 773c7-11.

[60] Ibid., p. 773c15-19.

[61] Ibid., p. 773c20-23.

[62] Ibid., p. 773c24-27.

[63] Ibid., pp. 773c28-774a4.

[64] Ibid., p. 774a6-12.

[65] Ibid., p. 774a13-15.

[66] Ibid., p. 774a16-17.

[67] Ibid., p. 774a18-19.

[68] Ibid., p. 774a19-20.

[69] Ibid., p. 774a20-21.

[70] Ibid., p. 774a22-24.

[71] Ibid., p. 774a24-28.

[72] Ibid., p. 774b1-3.

[73] This is the first level of the Six Identifications. The Liu-chi 六即 (Six Identifications) is Chih-i's system of realizing the truth, indicating six gradual ascending levels of attaining Buddhahood. These levels are all identified with the uniformity of the principal substance. They represent six levels of attainment in the fifty-two stages of the Perfect Teaching. i. Li Chi-fo 理即佛: all sentient beings by principle are Buddhas, for they inherently possess the Buddha-nature, even if they have not heard the Buddha-dharma. ii. Ming-tzu Chi-fo 名字即佛: this is to understand that all dharmas contain the Buddha-dharma, and this understanding is derived from hearing the Buddha's teaching that all sentient beings by principle are Buddhas. This is the stage when beings have just heard the teaching of the Buddha. iii. Kuan-hsing Chi-fo 觀行即佛: this is to contemplate that all

dharmas contain the Buddha-dharma. This is the stage of the Five Preliminary Grades of Disciples (Wu-p'in Ti-tzu Wei 五品弟子位). iv. Hsiang-ssu Chi-fo 相似即佛: this is the attainment of śrāvaka enlightenment, which resembles true enlightenment of the Buddha upon severing false views and wrong attitudes within the three realms. This is the stage of the Ten Faith (Shih-hsin Wei 十信位). v. Fen-cheng Chi-fo 分證即佛: this is the stage in which one realizes the Middle Way more and more, and has less and less ignorance, which is the stage from the Ten Dwellings (Shih-chu Wei 十住位) to the Preliminary Enlightenment (Teng-ch'eh Wei 等覺位). vi. Chiu-ching Chi-fo 究竟即佛: this is the ultimate stage of Buddhahood, and the stage of Perfect or Subtle Enlightenment (Miao-ch'eh Wei 妙覺位). Cf. San-tsang Fa-shu 《三藏法數》, p. 259, s.v. 六即佛; Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, p. 294, note 104. For further details, see Chappell, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism*, pp. 160~161, and Hurvitz, *Chih-i*, pp. 363~368. These six identities are discussed in detail by Chih-i in the *Mo-ho Chih-kuan*, T.46, 10bff. See Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, pp. 207~214.

[74] Position of the Coarse Dwelling refers to the initial level of the First Dhyāna, in which a practitioner can only concentrate for a short period of time. Cf. Ch'en Chien-min, *佛教禪定* (Meditation in Buddhism), translated by Wu Yo-tzu, Taipei, 1980, vol. 1, p. 208; Ting Fu-pao, Fo-hsüeh Ta-ts'u-tien 《佛學大辭典》, p. 809, s.v. 四禪定, which is the initial stage of the Four Dhyāna (Ssu-ch'an 四禪) in the realm of form. First Dhyāna is the initial stage of the Four Dhyāna. For an explanation of the Four Dhyānas, see Book II, pp. 204~205.

[75] Position of the Fine Dwelling refers to the second level of the First Dhyāna, in which a practitioner experiences purity in both mind and body. Cf. Ch'en Chien-min, 《佛教禪定》 (Meditation in Buddhism), translated by Wu Yo-tzu, Taipei, 1980, vol. 1, p. 208; Ting Fu-pao, Fo-hs'eh Ta-ts'u-tien 《佛學大辭典》, p. 809, s.v. 四禪定.

[76] Position of Concentration refers to the third level of the First Dhyāna, in which a practitioner can extend the period of his concentration, and experiences purity and joy. However, one is still aware of the existence of one's material body and mind.

[77] The Position that has not yet reached the goal refers to the fourth level of the First Dhyāna, in which a practitioner experiences an expansion of his body to the point of resembling empty space. Internally, one no longer sees one's body; and externally, one sees nothingness. However, one still has some obstacles that prevent one from realizing the First Dhyāna. Cf. *ibid.*

[78] This might refer to the position belonging to the Four Stages of Dhyāna (Ssu-ch'an 四禪). The Four Dhyāna concern the initial dhyāna (Ch'u-ch'an 初禪) that is achieved by practicing technique of breath control, which enables one to eventually progress to obtain samādhi experience in the realm of desire (Chin-te Yü-chieh Ting 進得欲界定); the second dhyāna (Erh-ch'an 二禪) that is achieved by making an effort to remove oneself from the former dhyāna, for it is considered as suffering, coarse, and hindrance, the third dhyāna (San-ch'an 三禪) that is achieved not only by practicing meditation in one's samādhi experience, but also by practicing meditation when one exits samādhi (Ch'u-ting 出定), and the fourth dhyāna (Ssu-ch'an 四禪) which is the stage when one is skilled in practicing meditation. As a result of this skill, not only misery but also joy is eliminated, and not only suffering but also pleasure is removed. Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 717b.

[79] This might refer to the position belonging to the Four Types of samādhi of Emptiness (Ssu-k'ung-ting 四空定). They are designed for a practitioner who intends to gain freedom from delusion of forms. It is called four types of emptiness, because one's deluded view of forms is extinguished, but one's mind is still in existence (Mieh-se Ts'un-hsin 滅色存心). Cf. *ibid.*

[80] This position might refer to the Four Types of Mindfulness

(Ssu-nien-ch'u 四念處; Skt., *catvāri smṛtyupasthānāni*) in the Tripiṭaka

Teaching. For an explanation, see the description on pp. 236~237, Book II. As the Four Types of Mindfulness eliminates false views in relation to all things, i.e., all things are impure, suffering, impermanent, and non-selfhood, and eliminates false views in relation to individual entities i.e., observing that the body is impure (Kuan Shen-pu-ching 觀身不淨; Skt.,

*kāyasmṛtyupasthāna*), sensation is suffering (Kuan Shou-shih-k'u 觀受是苦;

Skt., *vedanāsmṛtyupasthāna*), the mind is impermanent (Kuan

Hsin-wu-ch'ang 觀心無常; Skt., cittasmṛtyupasthāna), and dharmas have no independent reality in themselves (Kuan Fa-wu-wo 觀法無我; Skt., dharmasmṛtyupasthāna), this position is equivalent to the position of the Ten Faith in the Separate Teaching. The Ten Faiths is the first group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva. For an explanation of the Ten Faiths, see Book II, p. 147, note 202. As the Separate Teaching concerns bodhisattva practice, which is superior to the Tripiṭaka and the Common Teaching, its position is also superior to the latter. Thus, in the following analogy, Chih-i analogizes the Position of the Ten Faiths with the stem growing out of water.

[81] This might refer to the position of the Six Purified Sense-organs (Liu-ken Ch'ing-ching Wei 六根清淨位) of the Perfect Teaching, seeing that it is equivalent to the Ten Faiths of the Separate Teaching. The Ten Faiths is the first group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva, who subdues delusions of false views and wrong attitudes within the three realms (Chieh-nei Chien-ssu-huo 界內見思惑). They include: (1) faith (Hsin 信), (2) mindfulness (Nien 念), (3) exertion (Ching-chin 精進), (4) wisdom (Hui 慧), (5) concentration (Ting 定), (6) non-retrogression (Pu-t'ui 不退), (7) merit-transference (Hui-hsiang 回向), (8) dharma-protection (Hu-fa 護法), (9) precepts (Chieh 戒), and (10) vow (Yüan 願). Cf. Chappell, T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, p. 131; Hurvitz, Chih-i, p. 363.

[82] The Ten Dwellings (Shih-chu 十住) are the second group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva who cuts off delusions of lacking innumerable kinds of knowledge of saving beings (Ch'en-sha-huo 塵沙惑) within the three realms, and subdues these delusions beyond the three realms. The Ten Dwellings include: (1) bringing forth a resolve to attain enlightenment (Fa-hsin 發心), (2) putting things in order (Chih-ti 治地), (3) cultivating practices (Hsiu-hsing 修行), (4) nobility of spiritual rebirth (Sheng-gui 生貴), (5) perfection of expedient means (Chü-tsu Fang-pien 具足方便), (6) rectification of the mind (Cheng-hsin 正心), (7) non-retrogression (Pu-t'ui 不退), (8) childlike goodness (T'ung-chen 童真), (9) prince of truth (Fa-wang-tzu 法王子), and (10) coronation (Kun-ting 灌頂). Chappell, T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, pp. 132~135; Hurvitz, Chih-i, pp. 363~366.



[83] The Ten Practices (Shih-hsing 十行) are the third group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva, who cuts off delusions of lacking innumerable kinds of knowledge of saving beings beyond the three realms. They include: joy (Huan-hsi 歡喜), (2) benefit (Jao-i 饒益), (3) unobstructed (Wu-wei-ni 無違逆), (4) unswerving (Wu-ch'ü-jao 無屈擾), (5) unconfused (Wu-ch'ih-luan 無癡亂), (6) attractive (Shan-hsian 善現), (7) unattached (Wu-chuo 無著), (8) hard-won (Nan-te 難得), (9) exemplary (Shan-fa 善法), and (10) true (Chen-shih 真實). Cf. *ibid.*

[84] The Ten Merit-transferences (Shih-hui-hsiang 十回向) are the fourth group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva who subdues fundamental ignorance and practices the contemplation of the Middle Way. They include: (1) saving all beings yet free from the form of all beings (Chiu-i-ch'ieh Chung-sheng Li-chung-sheng Hsiang 救一切眾生離眾生相), (2) not destroying (phenomenal distinctions while realizing the non-substantiality of all distinctions) (Pu-huai 不壞), (3) equality with all the Buddhas (Teng I-ch'ieh-fo 等一切佛), (4) reaching every corner of the universe (to pay homage to all the Buddhas) (Chih I-ch'ieh-ch'u 至一切處), (5) a treasure of inexhaustible merit (accumulated from the above practices to be used for the salvation of others) (Wu-chin Kung-te-tsang 無盡功德藏), (6) entering into the "good root" of non-differentiation (Ju I-ch'ieh P'ing-teng Shan-ken 入一切平等善根), (7) treating all beings as equally deserving (Sui-shun I-ch'ieh Chung-sheng 隨順一切眾生), (8) (seeing) the form of suchness (underlying all phenomenal distinction) (Chen-ju Hsiang 真如相), (9) being liberated without restraints or attachments (through realizing that all things are one) (Wu-fu Wu-chuo Chieh-t'o 無縛無著解脫), and (10) penetrating into the infinitude of the Dharma-realm (as one reality of non-distinction) (Ju Fa-ch'ieh Wu-liang 入法界無量). Cf. *ibid.*

[85] The Ten Stages (Shih-ti 十地; Skt., *daśa bhūmayāḥ*) are the fifth group of the ten stages in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva, on which the bodhisattva severs fundamental ignorance, and realizes the Middle Way. They include: (1) joyful stage (Huan-hsi-ti 歡喜地; Skt., *pramuditā*), (2) free from defilement (Li-kou-ti 離垢地; Skt., *vimalā*), (3) light-giving (Fa-kuang-ti 發光地; Skt., *prabhākārī*), (4) brilliant wisdom (Yen-hui-ti 焰慧地; Skt., *arciṣmatī*), (5) hard-to-conquer (Nan-sheng-ti 難勝地; Skt., *sudurjayā*), (6) facing true-reality (Hsien-ch'ien-ti 現前地; Skt., *abhimukhī*),

(7) thoroughgoing practice (Yüan-hsin-ti 遠行地; Skt., *dūraṃgamā*), (8) immovable (Pu-tung-ti 不動地; Skt., *acalā*), (9) wonderfully wise (Shan-hui-ti 善慧地; Skt., *sādhumatī*), and (10) dharma-cloud (Fa-yün-ti 法雲地; Skt., *dharmameghā*) that reveals all things through the Middle Way. Cf. *ibid.*

[86] Hsüan-i, T.33, 774b4-12. This paragraph of description of the last stage of the lotus indicates the last position in the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva, that of the Stage of Subtle Enlightenment (Miao-chüeh-ti 妙覺地) of Buddhahood.

[87] Hsüan-i, T.33, 774b12-14. The Three Tracks refer to the Track of Real Nature (Chen-hsing Kui 真性軌) which is real nature of beings characterized by non-illusion and non-differentiation; the Track of Illumination of Wisdom (Kuan-chao Kui 觀照軌) which is the wisdom that destroys delusions and reveals the true nature of beings; and the Track of Accomplishment (Tzu-ch'eng Kui 資成軌) which concerns performance of deeds required to realize this wisdom of the Buddha.

[88] These are four primary phases of correspondence between Chi and Ying: (i) Ming-chi Ming-ying 冥機冥應 (hidden capacity and hidden response), (ii) Ming-chi Hsien-ying 冥機顯應 (hidden capacity and manifest response), (iii) Hsien-chi Hsien-ying 顯機顯應 (manifest capacity and manifest response), and (iv) Hsien-chi Ming-ying 顯機冥應 (manifest capacity and hidden response).

[89] Hsüan-i, T.33, 774b14-17.

[90] This refers to the four kinds of flowers fallen down from heaven, which is one of the miraculous signs signifying the beginning of the Buddha's preaching of the Lotus Sūtra, T.9, 2b10-12. See Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, p. 320, note 349.

[91] Hsüan-i, T.33, 774b18-24.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 774b25-27.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 774b28-c6.

[94] Three kinds of Herbal Grass refer to Hsiao-yao-ts'ao Wei 小藥草位 (position of inferior herbal grass), which is an analogy for the position of human and heavenly vehicle; Chung-yao-ts'ao Wei 中藥草位 (position of intermediate herbal grass), which is an analogy for the position of the Two Vehicles; Shang-yao-ts'ao Wei 上藥草位 (position of superior herbal grass), which is an analogy for the position of the bodhisattva of the Tripiṭaka.

[95] Hsiao-shu Wei 小樹位 (Position of small tree) is an analogy for the position of the Three Vehicles of the Common Teaching.

[96] Ta-shu Wei 大樹位 (Position of great tree) is an analogy for the position of the Separate Teaching.

[97] Hsüan-i, T.33, 774c6-10. Benefit of the True Fact is related to the position of the Perfect Teaching.

[98] Hsüan-i, T.33, p. 774c12-21.

[99] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 781c12-22.

[100] Ju-i-chu 如意珠 (Wish-granting gem) is a mythical gem in which the entire world could be seen and which would respond to grant one's wishes. It is said to be obtained from the dragon-king of the sea; the head of the great fish, Makara; or the relics of the Buddha. Cf. Chappell, T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, p. 164, note 23; Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary, p. 224, s.v. Nyoishu.

[101] Hsüan-i, T.33, 782a3-13.

[102] Ibid., p. 782a24-26.

[103] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 782c.

[104] Ibid., p. 780a7-11.

[105] Ibid., p. 780a12-13.

[106] "地皆嚴淨" (T.9, 2c) 表理妙。"放眉間光" (T.9, 2b) 表智妙。"入於三昧" (T.9, 2b) 表行妙。"天雨四花" (T.9, 2b) 表位妙。"旃檀香風" (T.9, 2c) 表乘妙。"四眾咸有疑" (T.9, 2b-c) 表機；"見萬八千土" (T.9, 2c) 表

應，此二明感應妙也。"地六種動" (T.9, 2b) 表神通妙。"天鼓自鳴" (T.9, 4c) 及 "而爲說法" (T.9, 5a) 表說法妙。"天龍大眾歡喜" (T.9, 2b) 表眷屬妙。"又見佛子修種種行" (T.9, 3a) 表利益妙。Hsüan-i, T.33, 751a23-29.

[107] The four levels of attainment in the Four Teachings refer to the positions of the Tripiṭaka, the Common, the Separate, and the Perfect Teachings.

[108] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 797b-798a.

[109] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 798b-799c.

[110] According to Chih-i, the original land of Sahā where the eternal Buddha attained initial enlightenment in an incalculable past is not the same land of Sahā where the historical Buddha attained recent enlightenment, though both lands are called Sahā.

[111] "道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以爲和。" Lao-tzu 老子, Tao-te Ching 道德經, chapter 42. Wing-tsit Chan tr., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 160. Chan comments on this passage, explaining: "It is often understood that the One is the original material force or the Great Ultimate, the two are yin and yang, the three are their blending with the original material force." Ibid., p. 161.

[112] Chih-i's awareness of what the number "ten" symbolizes is evident from this passage: "Although dharmas are immeasurable, their number does not exceed ten" ("法雖無量，數不出十"). See T.34, 42c-43a. This means that the number ten can be taken as the maximum numerical category to represent immeasurable dharmas.

[113] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 744b.

[114] These three courses are considered by Chih-i as the key conditions for living beings to strive for liberation. Without these courses, there is also no attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, the triple course is identified with the triple virtuous quality (the quality of the Buddha): the Course of Suffering is identified with the Dharma-body (the spiritual body of the Buddha that is immanent throughout the universe), the Course of Affliction with Prajñā (perfect wisdom), and the Course of Karman with Liberation.

[115] The Amalavijñāna (An-mo-luo Shih 庵摩羅識) is the foremost and deepest layer of consciousness that is pure and uncontaminated, and is therefore called the wisdom of non-differentiation or pure consciousness, which can eventually lead one to the highest achievement in Buddhist practice. The Ālayavijñāna (A-li-yeh Shih 阿黎耶識) is the second layer of consciousness above the Amalavijñāna, which acts as the storehouse for storing seeds: either birth-death seed or wisdom seed. The Adanavijñāna (A-t'uo-na Shih 阿陀那識) is the third layer of consciousness above the Ālayavijñāna and differentiates things. This function of differentiation is derived from the birth-death seed stored in the consciousness of Ālaya, and keeps one in the cycle of transmigration. Chih-i asserts that the consciousness of Ālaya plays a key role for the other two kinds of consciousness. One could either be in the state of the Amala consciousness (that strives to practice to attain Buddhahood) or Adana that keeps one in the cycle of transmigration), depending on which seed is being activated. Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 744b-c.

[116] This Triple Buddha-nature are the three factors of attaining Buddhahood. Buddha-nature as the Fundamental Cause of Buddhahood (Cheng-yin Fo-hsing 正因佛性) is the inherent nature that determines one's possibility to attain Buddhahood. Buddha-nature as the Understanding Cause of Buddhahood (Liao-yin Fo-hsing 了因佛性) refers to wisdom that illuminates this inherent nature. Buddha-nature as the Conditional Cause of Buddhahood (Yüan-yin Fo-hsing 緣因佛性) refers to one's wholesome deeds enabling one to develop one's potential and to generate one's wisdom.

[117] Prajñā of the Ultimate Truth (Shih-hsiang Po-jo 實相般若) is the wisdom with which Reality or the Ultimate Truth is perceived. Prajñā of the Illumination of Wisdom (Kuan-chao Po-jo 觀照般若) is the wisdom related to the concentration and contemplation. Prajñā of the Written Language (Wen-tzu Po-jo 文字般若) is the wisdom related to the language, with which Buddha uses to skillfully expound the dharma.

[118] According to Chih-i, there are three types of enlightenment. Bodhi of the Ultimate Truth (Shih-hsiang P'u-t'i 實相菩提) is the innate enlightenment that is endowed with the Ultimate Truth. Bodhi of the True Knowledge (Shih-chih P'u-t'i 實智菩提) is the enlightenment concerning one's attainment of the true knowledge reflecting the Ultimate Truth. Bodhi of the Expedience (Fang-pien P'u-t'i 方便菩提) is the expedient

enlightenment, such as the recent enlightenment of historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Since the initial enlightenment of the Buddha took place in an incalculable past of the Origin, this recent enlightenment in the Traces is only expedient enlightenment for the sake of liberating living beings.

[119] This Triple Great Vehicle is what the Buddha acts upon as a result of his enlightenment. The Vehicle of the Principle (Li-sheng 理乘) refers to the true characteristic of things, i.e., the principle inherent in the nature of entities, and the Buddha abides in this principle. The Vehicle of Conformity (Sui-sheng 隨乘) refers to the Buddha's wisdom of using expedient means to liberate living beings. The Vehicle of Beneficence (Te-sheng 得乘) refers to the benefits bestowed upon living beings by the Buddha when the Buddha proclaims the dharma.

[120] Triple Body refers to the three bodies possessed by the Buddha. The Dharmakāya (Fa-shen 法身) refers to the spiritual body of the Buddha that is immanent throughout the universe. The Saṃbhogakāya (Pao-shen 報身) is the reward body resulted from the Buddha's tireless religious cultivation in many kalpas. The Nirmāṇakāya (Ying-shen 應身) is the transformation body (or material body) existing to respond to the needs of living beings.

[121] Nirvāṇa of the Purity of Nature (Hsing-ching Nieh-p'an 性淨涅槃) is the Nirvāṇa derived from the pure nature (i.e., principal nature) of the Buddha concerning realization of the truth: nothing is originated nor extinguishes. Nirvāṇa of the Perfect Purity (Yüan-ching Nieh-p'an 圓淨涅槃) is attained as the result of the Buddha's religious practice concerning annihilation of illusion by wisdom. Nirvāṇa of the Purity of Expedience (Fang-pien-ching Nieh-p'an 方便淨涅槃) is what the Buddha manifests on earth when his corporeal life has ended as the means of teaching and transforming living beings.

[122] These are the three basic elements in Buddhism. According to Chih-i, Treasure of the Dharma (Fa-pao 法寶) refers to the principle or truth expressed in Buddhism; Treasure of Buddha (Fo-pao 佛寶) refers to the Buddha who attained enlightenment due to his perception of the principle;

Treasure of Saṃgha (Seng-pao 僧寶) refers to the close connection between the principle and the facts that is represented by Saṃgha.

[123] The three virtuous qualities are what the Buddha possesses. The Virtuous Quality of the Dharmakāya (Fa-sheng-te 法身德) is derived from the Buddha's spiritual body, specifically referring to the Ultimate Truth. The Virtuous Quality of Prajñā (Po-jo-te 般若德) is derived from the Buddha's perfect wisdom, confirming that all expedient means in his teachings contain the perfect wisdom. The Virtuous Quality of Liberation (Chieh-t'uo-te 解脫德) is derived from the Buddha's enlightenment, aiming at liberating living beings.

[124] Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 269.

[125] These six definitions are given by Chih-i as (i) spoken of in terms of "principle" and "phenomenal appearances" (Li-shih 理事), the Origin refers to the single principle as the Ultimate Truth, and the Traces the rest of phenomena; (ii) spoken of in terms of "principle" and "teaching" (Li-chiao 理教), the Origin is extended to mean the principle and phenomenal appearances themselves, while the Traces is defined as the teaching of the principle and phenomena; (iii) spoken of in terms of "teaching" and "practice" (Chiao-hsing 教行), the Origin refers to the teaching of the principle and phenomena, and the Traces refers to the cultivation of practice according to this teaching; (iv) spoken of in terms of "substance" and "function" (T'i-yung 體用), the Origin is defined as the substance, for practice according to the teaching can lead one to realize this substance; the Traces refers to the function, for the function is derived from the substance; (v) spoken of in terms of "ultimate" and "relative" (Shih-ch'üan 實權), the ultimate attainment of the substance and the function is defined as the Origin; the tentative implementation of the substance and the function is defined as the Traces; and (vi) spoken of in terms of "present" and "past" (Chin-i 今已), what is presently exposed by the Buddha in the Lotus Sūtra is taken as the Origin, and what was explained in the past in other sūtras is taken as the Traces.

[126] Cf. Hsüan-i, T.33, 773a.

[127] Chih-i divides the Buddha's entire preaching career into five chronological periods, including the Avataṃsaka period (Hua-yen-shih 華嚴時) that concerns the Perfect and the Separate Teachings, and corresponds to the milk flavor, the Mṛgadāva period (Lu-yüan-shih 鹿苑時) that only concerns the Tripiṭaka Teaching, and corresponds to the cream flavor, the Vaipulya period (Fang-teng Shih 方等時) that concerns the Tripiṭaka, the Common, the Separate, and the Perfect Teachings, and corresponds to the curdled milk flavor, the Prajñāpāramitā period (Po-jo-shih 般若時) that concerns the Common, the Separate, and the Perfect Teaching, and corresponds to the butter flavor, and the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-Mahāparinirvāna period (Fa-hua Nieh-p'an Shih 法華涅槃時) that only concerns the Perfect Teaching, and corresponds to the ghee flavor.

[128] The four types of understandings of the Four Noble Truths include (i) Four Noble Truths of Origination and Extinction (Sheng-mieh Ssu-ti 生滅四諦), (ii) Four Noble Truths of Neither Origination Nor Extinction (Wu-sheng-mieh Ssu-ti 無生滅四諦), (iii) Four Noble Truths of the Immeasurable (Wu-liang Ssu-ti 無量四諦), and (iv) Four Noble Truths of No-function (Wu-tso Ssu-ti 無作四諦).

[129] The four types of understandings of the Twelfefold Causality include (i) Twelfefold Causality of Origination and Extinction of the Conceivable (Ssu-i Sheng-mieh Shih-erh Yin-yüan 思議生滅十二因緣), (ii) Twelfefold Causality of Neither Origination Nor Extinction of the Conceivable (Ssu-i Pu-sheng Pu-mieh Shih-erh Yin-yüan 思議不生不滅十二因緣), (iii) Twelfefold Causality of Origination and Extinction of the Inconceivable (Pu-ssu-i Sheng-mieh Shih-erh Yin-yüan 不思議生滅十二因緣), and (iv) Twelfefold Causality of Neither Origination Nor Extinction of the Inconceivable (Pu-ssu-i Pu-sheng Pu-mieh Shih-erh Yin-yüan 不思議不生不滅十二因緣).

[130] The Fourfold Teaching is a standard principle applied to scrutinize every part of the interpretation. An evident example is reflected in Chih-i's elaboration of Objects as the Twelfefold Causality and as the Four Noble



Truths. These two categories of objective reality are understood in four types corresponding to the Four Teachings. As a result, Chih-i presents four means of understanding the Twelfold Causality, and four means of understanding the Four Noble Truths.

[131] Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 160.

[132] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[133] Ng Yu-Kwan has demonstrated how the Middle Way is identified with the Buddha Nature and how the concept of Middle Way-Buddha Nature is characterized as permanent, functional and all-embracing. Cf. Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*, Chapter IV, pp. 62~89.

[134] Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 186.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[136] Ng Yu-Kwan has discussed the issue of the mind in Chih-i's system of thought in terms of the mind and its acts, and pointed out that our ordinary mind is the most concrete and intimate subject matter to start with in our soteriological pursuit. See Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika*, pp. 173~177.

[137] For a discussion of the Threefold Contemplation, see also *ibid.*, pp. 140~144; Pan Guiming, *Chih-i P'ing-chuan*, pp. 184~207.

[138] This diagram owes to the inspiration derived from Swanson's diagram of the Threefold Truth. See Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, p. 6. See also his discussion of Chih-i's Threefold Truth, *ibid.*, pp. 6~8.