

Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Tiantai Doctrine of Evil as the Good:
A Response to David R. Loy

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In a recent issue of this journal (vol. 54 [1]:99–103), David Loy has done me the honor of publishing his sympathetic and thoughtful review of my book *Evil and/or as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). Loy has done an excellent job of bringing to the forefront some of the most troubling and distinctive aspects of the Tiantai Buddhist position on evil, as expressed in particular in the works of Siming Zhili, the focus of my book. Inevitably, with the nit-picky vanity that perhaps assails every reviewee, I feel some points have been imperfectly understood or represented, but in general I want before anything else to express my gratitude to Loy for the insight and acuity with which he has handled this material, the care he has taken in reading and responding to the book, and the candor, lucidity, and forcefulness with which he has expressed a very reasonable, non-Tiantai Mahāyāna response to some of the more radical and counterintuitive Tiantai ideas.

But one particularly great service Loy has done is to present a very important and necessary challenge: what would these Tiantai writers, with their bizarre ideas about the interpenetration, nay, identity, of good and evil have to say about Hitler and the Holocaust? Putting this particular topic up as a casual example to be employed in an academic discussion, in effect “making use of” the mountains of corpses in the context of an ivory-tower discussion of subtle logical and ontological hairsplitting, perhaps will strike some as being in more than questionable taste. But there are points to be made here, and it is a valid question, one that needs to be addressed—indeed, that we cannot help addressing—even when it is played as a card all the meanings of which have already been determined. Loy is quite right: these mountains of corpses are always already in play in the background of our discussions of moral doctrines, perhaps even in the interstices of our casual entertainments, and we let ourselves off too easily if we leave them in the background, as unexamined, prepackaged moral tokens, or stock bugaboos whose “use-value” in the culture has already been nonnegotiablely and comfortably mapped out. This is the extreme test case that anyone who wants to talk seriously about values and ethics must face head-on. For these reasons I want to take this opportunity to extend the thought experiment and respond to this challenge, speaking for the sake of argument in the name of the Tiantai doctrine, in the hopes that this will perhaps initiate a dialogue with specialists in other systems of moral theory, who might attempt a similar experiment.

To do this, however, it will be necessary to take up a few of the more general theoretical questions raised in Loy’s review. The first of these concerns the relation between ultimate truth and provisional truth. Loy acknowledges that, as argued in

the book, the Tiantai position gives a higher status to provisional or conventional truth than most Mahāyāna Two Truths doctrines, accurately paraphrasing the conclusion that “for Tiantai, however, the provisional ends up being equal to the ultimate truth.” But, on the other hand, he wishes to point out as a potential shortcoming of the Tiantai position that it seems to overstress the “highest point of view.” This assertion comes in the context of a grudging attempt to make sense of the Tiantai affirmation of evil from the point of view of the general Mahāyāna Two Truths theory, thereby, in my opinion, fatally distorting the point. Loy is willing to admit “the fact that *from the highest point of view* every possible apprehension—including evil ones—is neither a distortion of reality nor subject to invalidation by some other more privileged perspective.” This strikes Loy as problematic, and he offers his own solution: it lies in “realizing that this ‘ultimate’ point of view is insufficient by itself—that it always needs to be supplemented by the ‘provisional.’ . . . The highest point of view is not really the highest point of view—at least, not by itself. It does not ‘work’ for us without a ‘lower truth’ according to which we can distinguish between evil and good acts. . . .”

Both Loy and the Tiantai writers, then, wish to assert something about the inseparability of provisional and ultimate truth. The crucial difference, however, is that, as Loy has already correctly stated, in Tiantai thought conventional truth and ultimate truth are actually *identical*, not merely, as in Loy’s version here, distinct but necessarily complementary, paired and interdependent. We will return to the question of the “identity” as opposed to the mere “interdependence” of contrasted entities in a moment. But the implication—in spite of Loy’s clear statement earlier in the review to the contrary, that the Tiantai position asserts some sort of transcendental indifference that discards or goes beyond conventional truth, with all its dualities and differentiations—is a bizarre inversion of the facts and requires a response.

What perhaps leads to this confusion is precisely the thoroughgoingness with which Tiantai accepts provisional, conventional truth. For in contrast to many forms of Indian Mahāyāna, Tiantai asserts that there is not only one set of conventional truths (e.g., ordinary speech plus Buddhist ethics and values) but an infinite number of alternate sets; quite literally, all possible assertions, beliefs, and positions count as conventional truths. All of these assertions and belief systems in some way make a distinction between what they consider good and evil acts, but in various partial and idiosyncratic ways. “Lower” truth, in other words, includes both Hitler’s worldview (where good might be defined as, say, the dominance of the Master Race and the extermination of the Jews) and Śākyamuni’s (where good might be defined as wisdom, compassion, and liberation for all beings), without denying a possible hierarchy between them when viewed relative to some particular goals or situations. We have here a nesting or stairstepping inverted pyramid of wider and wider sets of conventional truths, although even this hierarchy is not to be conceived as unidirectional and fixed for all time.

But the point here is that Tiantai does not assert, for example, that “in higher truth” Hitler and Śākyamuni are equal, in that both are “Empty,” but that in conventional truth Śākyamuni is right and Hitler is wrong, or that the two are interdepen-

dent. Rather, the point is that Hitler's and Śākyamuni's value systems, qua determinate value systems, *both* belong in the realm of conventional truths, as relevant to particular situations. Both can be harmful, both can be helpful. Śākyamuni's value system has a *wider* range of applications and hence a (much) more *frequent* claim to be considered a "higher" *conventional* truth, only because of its ability to encompass, utilize, and sublimate—that is, to "interpenetrate with"—the former. In this sense, I have no quarrel with Loy's contention that "some perspectives are indeed more open, unifying, and encompassing than others." But Zhili's claim is never that we should discard the conventional level of right versus wrong in favor of some higher realm where there is neither right nor wrong.

Loy admits that Mahāyāna Buddhism as he understands it holds that all entities imply and depend on each other. However, he says, "I have difficulty accepting (or following) the next move: that this implies that good and bad are *identical*. That they imply each other and depend on each other, yes, but to assert that they are the same negates too absolutely the necessary function that duality serves within ordinary discourse and life." I have addressed this question, adequately in my opinion, in the book under discussion, but I will briefly reiterate the Tiantai approach to these matters, trying to restate the thesis for clarity. According to Tiantai thinking, the idea that two entities might be mutually implicative and dependent, not adventitiously but in their nature, and yet not identical, is logically impossible. For this would mean that they have some "identity" other than their relations to one another, which is just what the doctrine of dependent co-arising qua Emptiness denies. It is not possible to make a hard-and-fast distinction between "the identity of X" (i.e., what it is) and "the implications and relations of X" (i.e., how it is, what it does) without thereby positing some self-nature, some substance *of which* these implications and relations are predicates; we cannot divide "that which depends" from "its relation of dependence" or, for that matter, "that which it depends on" in any nonarbitrary, once-and-for-all way without denying dependent co-arising.

So it will not do to understand this Buddhist doctrine as meaning simply, "Each thing is what it is, but they are made so by their interdependence, such that what happens to one affects all the others"—a commonplace platitude, in fact, of all consistent materialist and naturalist theories, both European and Asian. Being affected and being X are not two different facts, and in a Tiantai perspective it is not adequate to assign entities a fixed identity that happens also to be interdependently constructed for "conventional truth" and to save up their Emptiness for "ultimate truth." In Tiantai we have not Two Truths but Three (Provisional Positioning, Emptiness, and the Mean); Emptiness is not ultimate truth but rather one more type of conventional truth. In the Tiantai view, each possible way of viewing "what a given entity is" is seen necessarily to entail alternate ways of viewing it, alternate versions of what it is. For an object to be real, rather than a mere figment of my imagination, means after all that it is viewable not only from my own perspective but from other perspectives as well, and hence that it, the selfsame object, can simultaneously be appearing in a multitude of alternate ways, can be viewed from other angles besides the one that beholds it presently. According to this view, to see this object as a cup and to

see it as Empty are merely two among an infinite number of ways in which it insists on being seen.

It is not that it is “cup,” or even “cup qua interdependent with all other entities,” in conventional truth and “Empty” in ultimate truth, and that this is the end of the matter. Rather, it is intersubjectively determined at all times by all possible mutually entailing views of it. The view that it is “cup here in my living room, useful for holding my coffee” is, as Zhanran likes to say, a *small part* of provisional truth (*sudi zhi shaofen*); this object is also, say, an instrument of torture (to a hell-being), a reminder of thirst (to a hungry ghost), and so on, up to a disclosure of salvific Emptiness because dependently co-arisen (to a certain kind of Buddhist disciple), an instrument by which to save sentient beings (to a Bodhisattva), and a direct manifestation of all entities interpervasively present as the entirety of the Buddha-nature (to a Buddha). Interpenetration lies in the unclosability, unfinalizability, of each and any of these views, including the view that it is Empty, which is itself merely the view belonging to one perspective. Each of the identities provisionally assigned to this object is “a small part” of conventional truth. The relation between provisional and ultimate truth is not merely one of instrumentality, transcendence, and contrasted negation; rather, provisional truth is a portion of ultimate truth, in a peculiar omniscient sort of whole/part relation in which each part in fact contains the whole. Interpenetration is not only a truth (whether conventional or ultimate) about things; it applies also to partial truths themselves, to views, to existential positions.

So in terms of one part of conventional truth, this is a “cup”; in terms of conventional truth considered as a whole, it is all these different things, each separately and disjunctively. In terms of the pivotal but still one-sided view of the truth of Emptiness, any putative identity assigned to it is seen to be inadequate, ambiguous, misplaced. In terms of the truth of the Mean, it is each of the original “provisional” identities, but now seen to have always been interpenetrating aspects of one another, such that it was always all of these as each of them. These Three Truths are further seen themselves to be interchangeable, interfused, identical. It is on this basis that we say that all these identities are identical; in mentioning any one of them, we have already actually said all there was to say about all of them. The identity of this object as fixed from within any of these perspectives is experienceable only as subject-to-question, as necessarily having more to its identity than is disclosed at any time or in any finite set of predications. Every identity is always already being construed in alternate ways, and this is not added on to its being construed in one particular exclusive way, but is rather constituent of it.

Stated another way, the interfusion of the Three Truths signifies that all possible identities are only locally coherent (i.e., appear to have just this identity only because of an arbitrary narrowing of relevant contexts). But to be *locally* coherent is to be globally *incoherent*; if all relevant contexts are taken into consideration, the originally imputed identity is seen to have been ambiguous, readable in alternate ways. This further entails that all local coherences include one another, or rather are readable as each other. This means that the identities assigned *within any system of conventional truth* are always already ambiguous, undecidable, unfinished, inter-

penetrating; they are ceaselessly in a process of eliding into one another, and in such a way that this apparent change is not the leaving behind of one identity and adopting another, but simply the revelation of further aspects of the unchanged original putative identity, when recontextualized. Contextualization and the constant process of further recontextualization are not optional, but constitutive. Their putative identity, however constructed, has always already entailed dependence on a particular set of contexts, which require further contextualizations, and so on; hence, these original putative identities always entail and subsume all other putative identities.

It is on the basis of such premises that Tiantai thought asserts that there is in reality no choice between “eradicating” and “recontextualizing” evils. To attempt to act upon any object, even with the goal of eradicating it, is to presuppose its prior existence, to admit it already as a brute fact. That we can become aware of it as an object at all already means that it is in the past and can no longer be removed from the totality of all that is and from what must therefore be interpenetrating ceaselessly with every subsequent moment of experience. It cannot be erased; it can only be added to, and thereby reconfigured, alternately understood. The question, when confronted with an evil deed, event, or intention, is not how to get rid of it but what we are to do with it now. It is idle speculation simply to wish it had never occurred. It is transformed, then, not by the futile attempt to avoid it or erase it but through emptying it of its putative self-nature and allowing the other, contrarily valued aspects of this original entity to shine forth. Good and bad are identical only in this sense, that is, not as brute self-natured entities but as mutually entailing. The *identity* of evil includes the characteristic of “entailing the Good,” and vice versa; this is not merely a temporary or accidental characteristic that might be added onto them. Hence, Zhili says that evil (or good) is to be “realized,” “cut off,” and further “neither realized nor cut off”—not as three options, as Loy seems to take it, but as alternate names for the same procedure. To realize the nature of X is to cut off its putative identity as only-X, or X that excludes non-X. This conclusion can, of course, be assailed in various ways from outside Mahāyāna Buddhism, but it is difficult to see how it can be avoided once the basic premises of Nāgārjunian Emptiness doctrine are accepted and then, importantly, thought through.

Hence, I am a little bemused to find Loy stating, “Yet one does not become a Buddha by continuing to act on evil impulses with the intention of ‘contextualizing’ them. Rather, when such impulses arise in the mind one lets them go.” “Letting go” is, in the Tiantai view, another word for a certain species of “contextualizing.” Letting them go is one way in which one “acts upon them.” For to let go means no longer to attempt to fix an entity within a single, privileged frame of reference, but to allow all other horizons of relevance to unfold, thereby allowing the entity in question to transform, manifesting its alternate identities, which are not added to it but have been what it was all along. Even to let go in the sense of allowing some thought to remain unrenewed, to let it fade out, to sit as it were in its position in the past, is nothing but a recontextualization; for time, impermanence itself, is, in the Tiantai understanding, nothing but constant recontextualization. Letting go does not mean that the past is “gone” in the annihilationist sense, *for this would in fact*

entail a reverse self-nature view. Rather, it means the that past remains as it is, and yet thereby constantly new meanings are ceaselessly emerging from it, or as it. Indeed, one way of “recontextualizing” a previous deed—although not the only way—is “to cease to do it.” This makes neither “wanting to do the deed” nor “having done the deed” go away; these are already eternal facts. Rather, it is a way of dealing with the fact that this deed and this impulse are already there to be responded to.

In the case of “evil” actions, “not to do it again” is indeed the type of recontextualization that Tiantai writers will most frequently recommend. As I note in the book, Tiantai *upāya* theory is such that in almost no circumstance would the inter-pervasion of good and evil be used as a teaching device when faced with a practical question about “what to do about evil” from a novice practitioner or outsider. Rather, the advice would normally be: “cut off evil and practice only good.” It would only be on a much later and very different occasion that the peculiar Tiantai meaning of “cut off” and “practice” might be fleshed out. But these would be presented not as alternatives to the “cutting off” or “practicing” that had already occurred, but rather as the recontextualization of *them*, the “cutting off” and “practicing,” to show further aspects of what their identities had always already been, what one was doing when one “practiced” and “cut off” goods and evils.

But I write this reply not to split hairs in reiterating Tiantai doctrine in the face of general pre-Tiantai Mahāyāna theory (much less the form of Buddhism that Loy cites in reminding the reader of the story of Angulimala from the Pāli canon, to establish the hardly controversial thesis that early Buddhism did not approve of murder, but rather regarded it, and other evils, as something to be renounced). Sectarian Tiantai writers (e.g., Zhili himself), after all, love nothing so much as emphasizing how much their position, particularly with regard to the question of evil, differs from run-of-the-mill Mahāyāna Buddhism. Rather, my purpose here is to take up Loy’s fruitful question about the Holocaust. For here we have a true signpost by which to understand the real implications of various moral doctrines, one that too often lurks awkwardly in the background. I propose that we embrace the question head-on.

Loy quotes my question and answer, “How does this apply if I am, say, a cannibalistic serial killer converted to Zhili’s version of Tiantai? ‘First, I should not strive to discard my tendency to kill and eat strangers; rather, I should contemplate it as identical to the Three Truths’”—after which follows a brief reprise of the Tiantai doctrine that evil is overcome not through being discarded, but rather through a peculiar form of its own expansion. Loy comments, “What Ziporyn describes is a meditation practice that can be valuable as a way to address many of our delusive thoughts and feelings, but that is not a satisfactory way for serial killers to resolve their own peculiar problems, much less those of a Hitler or a fanatical terrorist hijacker. ‘Mr. Hitler, you do not need to discard your tendency to kill all Jews; rather, you should contemplate it as identical with enlightened wisdom. . . .’” “What punch line could ‘redeem’ the Holocaust?”

In response to this, I would like, first, to submit as axiomatic that no moral response yet proposed to the Holocaust has been “adequate,” or, some may feel,

even decent. This may give rise to questions about how useful it is to ask any moral position to justify itself in the face of this particular event, since it has never been accomplished and, according to some interpretations, may not even be thinkable. It has been suggested, indeed, that the only truly moral response to the Holocaust is a recognition of its incommensurability to any well-meaning moral ameliorism, or to any facile truisms about how evils are to be dealt with. There is simply no way of answering this question that is not in a certain sense a profound desecration of the memory of the victims and the experiences of the survivors, from the comfort of our own well-meaning position of sitting-here-with-the-leisure-to-make-proclamations-about-it-because-we're-not-being-tortured-and-murdered. That said, however, and for this very reason, this question can perhaps serve as a limit case that can bring out the unstated implications of our moral reasoning. So I would like to try to answer Loy's question.

But an illegitimate shift has occurred in the ostensible "restatement" of the question posed in my book concerning the serial killer, as given in Loy's parody. I had asked "[what] if I am, say, a cannibalistic serial killer converted to Zhili's version of Tiantai?" And Loy has a proselytizing Tiantai advocate saying to our "Mr. Hitler" that he need not discard his tendency to kill all Jews. This shift is by no means inconsequential; on the contrary, it is the very crux of the matter. For if we assume a Hitler already "converted" to some moral position other than his own original National Socialist morality, we have already won half the battle. The real question is how one accomplishes this conversion, and this is where the *upāya* question and the relation between various levels of truth again enter the picture. My original hypothetical circumstance involved a murderer who, by some chance, had already encountered and accepted Tiantai theory, but still found his old habitual obsession with murder unabated in himself. The end result of his reconsideration of the meaning and nature of this obsession was not that he continued murdering exactly as before, but that he saw all possible activities as ways to "murder," and hence, although still capable of his original "literal" murder, was no longer compelled to seek his satisfaction of that impulse in *only* that way. "Expanded" or "thoroughgoing" murder in a Tiantai context means a transformation from literal murder to metaphorical murder, or the realization that literal murder had always already been metaphorical to begin with, the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical being just what Tiantai epistemology seeks to demolish.

True, this would still in some very special circumstances allow for "literal" murder to take place, but these would be statistically insignificant if the force of the obsession were no longer in effect. It is as if someone felt compelled to obey a mysterious inner directive to wear fried eggs on his head because he believed this alone would make him look dignified. When the identities of "egg" and "head" are exploded in the Tiantai manner—"egg," it turns out, cannot help but mean "any object," and "head" turns out to mean "any part of the body"—he would come to see that the compulsory directive he had previously been interpreting to mean this, and only this (although still fully present and still absolutely compulsory), actually meant, say, "wear some object somewhere on your body," and could be satisfied in all sorts

of less cumbersome ways. While there would be nothing to prevent him from sometimes wearing fried eggs on his head, and indeed he could still fulfill his directive by doing so, and, for that matter, there might even conceivably be occasions, within some strange communities, when this alone would be necessary for his dignity (hard though they might be to imagine), these occasions would certainly be very rare. The motivation for this action has been removed, which is the only truly efficient way to keep it from recurring with regularity.

But of course there is considerable sleight of hand involved in asking a theorist of any kind, "How would you have dealt with Hitler?" The key qualifications are left out of this way of posing the question. Hitler of what year? Knowing how much about what would subsequently transpire? Having what degree of influence, and in what form? Is the question, "How would a near-omniscient Bodhisattva, magically transported back in time to 1939, have dealt with Hitler?" Or to 1929? Or 1919? I can state categorically that when dealing with this sort of question, Tiantai writers have no hesitation in regarding even the murder of evil dictators as a species of compassionate Bodhisattva action. Zhili's comments on the story of King Anala from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* are a rather startling example: in the original story, the king had displayed all sorts of cruel punishments of prisoners to his people, but in the end he reveals that these are mere magic-show displays of violent punishment to frighten and correct the populace. The victims were not real, living creatures, but mere stage effects. Zhili goes so far as to assert that while, in this particular case, it was all a magical show, in some cases a Bodhisattva can perform real violence on the bodies of sentient beings. So the strenuous use of force to combat evil is one way in which Tiantai doctrine might address this problem. This is another consequence of Tiantai *upāya* theory, presupposing, of course, a somewhat mythical degree of omniscience of future acts and consequences, but well-supported by Mahāyāna literature. Hence, far from implying that one must not fight evil, however conceived, since it is identical to the good, Tiantai theory can at times be almost shockingly gung ho about doing so.

This type of Tiantai response to the "what to do about Hitler" question would then seem on the surface very much like the response that might be given by the most axiologically dualistic moral fundamentalist: eradicate the evil and promote the good, by any means necessary. But the difference is that Tiantai theory recognizes that the fighting of evil is itself inevitably an evil—one that is, like all other evils, licit and to be encouraged in certain circumstances. Any notion that we could keep our hands clean in the fight against evil, that any possible struggle against Hitler, from the Gandhian to the Eisenhowerian, would not involve us in various ways in being Hitlers ourselves, is according to this view pernicious self-deception. If, as Bodhisattvas, we decide to murder Hitler to save millions of lives, we are, like Hitler, dehumanizing our opponent, seeing his life as expendable in the interest of a greater good, objectifying him and propagandizing him abstractly so as only to take heed of certain of his aspects and not others, claiming the wisdom and right to decide the life and death of others, and so on. Even if we employ passive resistance, we would have to be morally obtuse not to see that this also involves a sort of passive-

aggressive violence—a desire to infuriate, humiliate, and shame the other, to inflict our will upon him—and a display of our own superior strength and moral fiber that can serve our megalomaniacal vanity. All these qualities are essential to what makes Hitler Hitler, but we cannot fight Hitler without them. To fight Hitler by being Hitler is, in fact, one way in which Hitlerism's own interpenetration with the good is made manifest, that is, by revealing that Hitler is "more than just Hitler *simpliciter*," and in fact necessarily implies his own overcoming, if "fully expressed" in the Tiantai sense.

The concern here is, of course, with the question of what motivates this strenuous resistance to a perceived evil. Loy's worry is perhaps that if everyone accepted the Tiantai premise that Hitler need not abandon his own value commitment but merely expand it, there would be no reason for the Allies to oppose him, nor for conscientious objectors within the Reich to resist the implementation of the Final Solution. Instead, they might say, "Well, in any case, what Hitler is doing is his own form of Bodhisattva practice, so let him continue; who am I to judge him?" But the fallacy here is the assumption that either the Allied nations or the conscientious objectors began with a blank slate, with no value commitments or propensities of their own. The Tiantai position is not that I must abandon my own value commitment and instead adopt Hitler's. It is that every sentient being starts where he is, and in all cases already has some implicit value commitment (which is always a partial conventional truth), which can be more or less fully developed, but which always has its origins in the biased, self-interested perspective of that being. A Bodhisattva has seen that his original interest in his own personal freedom from suffering came to entail the saving of all sentient beings. He is free to work toward that end. Were the Allies motivated by a disinterested, objective concern for goodness, or by some expanded, more developed form of self-interest?

The point is that the former has come to be seen as an aspect of the latter, to be interpenetrative with it. A conscientious objector resists because that is consistent with his own value system, whatever it might be; a righteous Christian objector, for example, on conversion to the form of Tiantai we are discussing, would not abandon his commitment to dichotomous Christian values any more than Hitler would abandon his commitment to genocide. In both cases, they would simply recontextualize, expand, develop their initial beliefs. This would not entail the abandonment of the effort to resist, any more than it would entail the abandonment of the effort to kill the Jews. It would simply allow it to branch out into alternate forms and methods of expressing itself, until it reached the point where its original hard-and-fast meanings and denotations had collapsed into undecidability and interpenetration.

It is true that when thoroughgoing insight into interpenetration is reached, this effort to resist could in some circumstances take the form precisely of total compliance. But the point is that this would never be unilateral, total, compulsive, "self-natured" compliance; it would be compliance that always carried within it the ability to transform back into explicit resistance at the crucial moment. Furthermore, if both Hitler and the resister achieved full interpenetration, their murder of one another would no longer have to entail literal murder. It would be coextensive with their mutual acceptance and tolerance, which according to this view would be the

only real solution of the problem at its roots: the elimination of the necessity and motivation for mutual extermination, not because it is no longer wanted (for taking a realistic view, we can be confident that such aggressive notions will likely tend to be regenerated, and in the Tiantai view, they are actually hardwired into the nature of reality itself), but because alternate “metaphorical” means are found for its satisfaction. While shaking hands, each would be sure he was “murdering” the other in so doing, but, by the same token, the murderousness of murder would be effaced, as it is pervaded by, identical to, mutual acceptance.

But of course this “kill Hitler” approach is applicable only when no other alternative is available, and is, moreover, rendered rather moot when considering the actual ethical choices confronting us mortal agents, in that it is justified by a superhuman degree of both power and wisdom. Knowing that Hitler was to do such evils, the Bodhisattva might zap him in advance, and, if necessary, suffer the unpleasant karmic consequences himself. But what indeed would a sincere Tiantai thinker say to Hitler if he had met the latter as, say, a hotheaded rabble-rouser in 1923, or even after he had come to power in 1933? If persuasion rather than force were to be used, as is the *preferred* method in Tiantai and most other forms of Buddhism, what would be the approach to be taken? Here we come closer to Loy’s original trope. Assuming, then, that one is going to speak to Hitler at all, rather than simply slitting his throat, what should one say? There is the alternative that Loy ascribes to me, namely, “You don’t have to discard your tendency to kill all Jews,” which I suppose would have to be followed by, “Rather, let me show you an even more effective way of doing so—or ‘doing so.’” Or there is the perhaps more conventional alternative, which, I am assuming, perhaps wrongly, Loy considers preferable: “Listen, you’ve got it all wrong, what you are proposing is evil and must be stopped.” Here we are in the realm of motivational psychology rather than ethics, but the point is still worth discussing.

The Tiantai approach to moral persuasion rests on the premise that no one can be persuaded to adopt a new desideratum except through appeal to some preexisting desideratum, some value to which he is already committed, that can serve to motivate him. This premise is, I think, uncontroversial. We never begin with a blank slate; all interlocutors come to the table with some set of values or desiderata already in place. Now perhaps Hitler has some other, more ultimate, desideratum than the extermination of the Jews; perhaps that is only an instrumental value to him, useful to obtaining what he really wants—whether it is world domination, German glory, a psychological sense of justification, importance, or revenge, or the Platonic Good. In this case, we could, of course, try to make a case for separating the ultimate from the instrumental good and talk him into abandoning the latter, the better to obtain the former. This is, of course, the traditional Buddhist approach: what you really want ultimately is freedom from suffering, which is what motivates your present course of action. However, your method of achieving this goal is unskillful, based on mistaken premises, doomed to failure; here’s a better way of getting what you (really) want. It is in this context that we can imagine taking the second of the two alternatives outlined above: “This killing of the Jews you propose is evil—that is, it is un-

skillful; that is, it creates suffering for yourself and others, does not really obtain your real desideratum, and is based on wholly erroneous premises. Ceasing to do so will, oddly enough, actually achieve what you had hoped to achieve by doing so.”

It would be wonderful if this were an effective form of moral persuasion. Occasionally it is. But in the vast majority of cases it is not, and I think it is reasonable to assume that it would have been utterly ineffectual in the case of Hitler. May we not assume that Hitler was well aware that there existed some people who did not share his conviction that the Jews were the root of all evils and had to be eliminated? Or that his method was not the best means to achieve the amelioration of the world he sought? We must assume a systematic fusion of ultimate value and this nonnegotiable instrumental value in Hitler’s case—systematic because it already had, as it were, its own ideological antibodies: anyone voicing an opposed opinion was thereby convicted of having been infected by insidious Jewish propaganda, decadence, or weakness of the will. So let us assume for the sake of this discussion that after a certain point no possible argument could have dislodged Hitler’s anti-Semitism. We must accept it as an unchangeable initial condition for the task before us. What then?

The Tiantai approach to this situation has precedents in the Confucian tradition, from which, I think, it is partially derived. We may consider here Mencius’ response to King Xuan of Qi when the latter pleaded incompetence to be a true king on the basis of his consuming lust for wealth, heroics, and sex. Rather than asking him to discard these propensities, Mencius accepted them as a premise, the desiderata in appeal to which a new desideratum had to be established. This could be done only by expanding the meaning of these desiderata, to the point where their enjoyment is shared with others, on the premise that this would in fact secure a more robust enjoyment of them for the king himself, just as, Mencius argues elsewhere, one enjoys the pleasure of music more intensely when it is shared. Mencius asks the king not to eliminate his lusts, but to enlarge them. You must lust for wealth and sex to such a degree that you can’t bear to see anyone without them—and, indeed, your own possession of these desires is what allows you to empathize effectively with the similar desires of others; your lust for heroics must be so intense that you cannot stand to have any wrong unrighted in your kingdom. Confucius is depicted as using a similar technique when trying to transform Robber Zhi in the *Zhuangzi* chapter of the same name (comically and unsuccessfully, of course).

In the Tiantai case, we have the further Buddhist attention to the question of self-nature, to the identity of the putative objects, the meaning of the original terms, allowing them to break up into a “moving army of metaphors,” a tissue of tropes. This is the utility of the Buddhist concern with the question of the self-nature. What is sex, after all? What is wealth? Upon examination, these entities turn out to have no self-nature, to be composed entirely of something-elses. To want them is to want something other than them.

Turning back to Hitler, and assuming for the sake of argument that his anti-Semitism is sincere and not mere propaganda, the only way to approach the problem would then be to say, “What is a Jew? What is murder? What is the Reich? What is triumph of the will?” Assuming that his anti-Semitism is unchangeable, we must

then convert it to a “higher” metaphorical anti-Semitism. “Jew” for Hitler might mean many things; the range of its connotation must be expanded to the point of altering its denotation. “Jew” might mean for him evil parasite, defiler of the purity of blood, exploiter of the innocent, conspirator against the good. If this meaning can be expanded, to the point where it is seen everywhere, even in his own attempt to fight it, where the paranoid obsession with Jewish influence reaches its zenith, the nature of the case will have changed decisively. If Hitler can come to see the idea of amelioration of human civilization (one of his stated goals) as a vast Jewish conspiracy, or German nationalism as itself a devious ploy created by the Jews, or the concept of the national borders he wants to expand as a legalistic Jewish imposition on pastoral Aryan purity and natural relations to the land (or, conversely, his “blood and soil” ideology as a version of a twisted Zionist delusion), so that he can come to see his own project as itself a case of being an unwitting dupe of Jewish cunning, he will, in making himself a more extreme anti-Semite, have to abandon his original form of struggle against the Jews. Perhaps he can be made to believe that by martyring the Jews he will be contributing to their power, or that his interest in the Master Race shows his contamination by the Jewish invention of the concept of race as derived from the concept of Chosen People.

These are just random examples, to give a general idea of what we have in mind here; the actual range and content of these casuistic connections would depend on the ingenuity—one almost wants to say audacity—of the Bodhisattva on the case. One must try to shift Hitler’s attention from the literal Jew to some metaphorical Jew—the Christian anti-Semitic trope of the unredeemed “Jew” within one’s own heart, for example. When he rants about the Master Race, we must take an even more fanatically Nazi position from which to chide him—you are talking like a Jew! Struggle against this Jewish idea that has infected you! However unlovely all this may sound to Jewish ears (including my own), this is what we have to work with, and is the lesser evil. We cannot simply dream this anti-Semitism away; it existed, it exists—it will exist. The question again is what to do with it. Can a constructive use, or at least a harmless outlet, be found for it? In the short term, we might be able to neutralize the harm of the belief by diffusing it.

But more importantly in the long run, if Mr. Hitler continues his practice in this way and really succeeds in it, it would be Zhili’s position that he would then become “the genocidal racist bodhisattva.” This is, of course, hard to swallow, but needs to be understood. It means that, although the word “Jew” and the initial commitment to the Jew’s extermination would still be axiomatic for this person, the meaning would have changed to the point where his praxis and indeed the significance of his words and concepts were genuinely indistinguishable from the wisdom and compassion of a Buddha. It would provide a means of preaching to and converting all future anti-Semites in their own language. “Jew” would now mean precisely greed, anger, delusion, self-view, non-interpenetration, and so forth; “exterminate” would mean liberate (not only liberation from, but liberation of), and so on. Further, greed, anger, and delusion would be seen to be identical with Buddhahood, in accordance with precisely this Tiantai doctrine of the interpenetration of good and

evil. Hence, the word “Jew” for this Hitler-Bodhisattva would have come to be synonymous with the word “Buddha”—by way of its identity with “demon.” The word would still denote in the same way, but the connotation of this denotation would have expanded to refer universally, such that the very distinction between denotation and connotation would necessarily be effaced.

We perhaps see a similar moral reconfiguring of an originally socially oppressive term in, for example, Confucius’ use of the terms *junzi* and *xiaoren*, or the Buddha’s use of the term Brahmin, not as the name of a privileged social class but as signifying a metaphoricized nobility. A concrete human being who called himself a Jew would perhaps be, for this Bodhisattva, simultaneously (as Tiantai epistemology requires) an unfortunate suffering sentient being and a heroic fellow Bodhisattva taking on the form of a hell-being for the sake of the liberation of all creatures. If pressed, of course, he would say that “Jew” is just a metaphor—there is no such thing as a Jew, even in the case of the concrete human being. One could just as legitimately use the term “Christian” or “Buddhist” or “Spaniard” or “plumber” to designate greed, anger, and delusion—and likewise to designate Buddhahood—for, indeed, all these terms are interpenetrative and end up meaning each other. He would retain this particular designation, however, to communicate with a certain type of sentient being, with whom he has a special karmic connection due to his own past commitment to this particular one-sided mode of speech and thought.

We have a situation here that somewhat resembles the usurping of Jewish identity accomplished by Christian theology, and it will perhaps feel just as offensive. We know from experience that when a symbolic or metaphysical meaning, positive or negative, is attached to a particular ethnic group, this is a subtle and insidious form of racism. Anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism are two sides of the same coin, easily transmutable into one another. Nonetheless, it might be the best we can hope for. If it is true that prejudice in one form or another will always exist (and on Tiantai premises this is undeniable; it, like all other entities, is inherent in the absolute, and once it has occurred even once, is always present, if only “in the form of” the past, relinquished racism of our forefathers, which remains present to us as something that must be incorporated into each new present moment), then this bound form of racism, anti-Semitism, which can at least serve the ends of philo-Semitism, is the best of a bad situation, and is, moreover, a skill that we would do well to maintain and cultivate even if we thought that racial prejudice had temporarily vanished. It is a psychological truism that certain kinds of benevolence are rooted in reaction formations to a violent hatred and envy, and we must think of Bodhisattva activity in the same way. Randy Newman’s satires of racial prejudice are a good example of this: they contain, and probably spring from, a virulent racism—perhaps a part of the author’s own psyche, which he recognizes and then deals with; but this is precisely what provides them with their power in serving to undermine racism. We might think here also of those American evangelical Christians who fervently await the judgment day when all the Jews will be slaughtered and sent to their damnation, but staunchly support Jewish interests in Israel in order to hasten the arrival of that day.

Understandably, as a Jew, or a member of another positively or negatively fetishized racial group, we may wish to say, “Stop projecting your own *meshugganah* metaphysics on me, and recognize me for what I am: not a symbol of pure evil, or pure goodness, but a human being, an individual!” We want hermeneutic rights over ourselves, the right not to have alien interpretations of our being foisted onto us. But, unfortunately, this is probably asking too much. It may not delight us to hear the whoops of laughter of onlooking strangers when we trip and fall down the stairs, but do we really have a right to demand that what is tragic for ourselves cannot be comic for others? Compassion demands commiseration with the victims of tragedy, and a capacity to see and feel as they do—but must this exclude also an ability to see and feel otherwise as well? Might the one not rather imply the other? And is a world utterly devoid of *shadenfreude* really desirable? In any case, according to Tiantai premises, it is not even really thinkable; for both compassion and *shadenfreude* are just particular species of the ability to see and think and feel any given thing *otherwise*, to recontextualize, which is, according to this view, what it means to be a sentient being. We are all seen as well as seeing, objects as well as subjects, partial as well as whole, and cannot help being symbols of various kinds for one another; all these significances we carry are inevitably one-sided, biased, unfair.

By the same token, it is a consequence of nonself and Emptiness doctrine that sentient beings are not always masters of themselves, that they are not autonomous, transparent, unconditioned souls, that there is much about themselves that they cannot directly control with their wills; we may find all sorts of strange monsters swimming around in the soup of our habits and prejudices, which are as much a part of our “selves” as the prettier creatures there. Most forms of Buddhism, as Loy likes to note, prescribe means for gradually starving or discarding these monsters; but Tiantai is unique among Buddhist schools in asserting that, as a consequence of its reading of the Emptiness doctrine and what this implies about any form of ultimate control, these monsters cannot be annihilated even for a Buddha. They can only be re-directed, reinterpreted, recontextualized, made into servants and exemplars of the good, which is made possible precisely by *their* emptiness, the ambiguity of their putative identities, and the susceptibility to rereading that this entails. What we can hope for, then, is not the utopian dream of eliminating all prejudice, but rather the development of a multifariousness of symbolic valence that annuls the restricting power of the fetishized identification. To exist is to be misunderstood, snap-judged, unjustly categorized. Our hope here is to expand every snap judgment so that it is seen to have included all other judgments, hence annulling its one-sided character. For we must not shrink from perhaps the most offensive consequence of the Tiantai view: all racial prejudices are, in the sense we have outlined above, “true.” That is, if all putative characteristics are discoverable in all putative objects, the claim that “the ethnic group X has the negative characteristics a, b, and c” (rapaciousness, stupidity, greed, laziness, what have you) cannot fail to be true.

What is wrong with this claim is not the claim that all X-people are a, b, and c, but three further unspoken premises that absolutize this partial truth: first, that they are a, b, and c *because* they are X; second, that their being a, b, and c excludes their

being equally non-a, non-b, and non-c; and third, that every other group is not equally a, b, and c. The advantage of accepting the strange Tiantai reconfiguration is not at all negligible, for it addresses one of the most insidious effects of racism: the subtle infiltration of racist stereotypes into the minds of the members of the very groups it targets. A member of group X, upon hearing it said that Xs possess characteristic a, is put in an impossible double bind. Looking within, he either discovers or does not discover some explicit example of quality a. If he does not discover it in himself, he finds himself with the burden of trying to disprove the stereotype and is obliged to avoid in an exaggerated way any behavior that smacks of quality a. If he does discover it in himself, he is in danger of collusion with the stereotype, self-hatred, an attempt either defiantly to accentuate it or fearfully to disguise it. Either way, he has been infected by the stereotype, forced to compensate for or deny himself. The advantage of the Tiantai view is that he can then recognize and accept himself in whatever form he finds himself. It is no longer a problem for him to say either "Yep, I, this X-person, certainly am a, b, and c" or "No, I swear, no a, b, or c here!" For these interpenetrate; my a-ness and my non-a-ness are alternate forms that express each other. The found presence or absence of either one can never prove my "self-nature" as "an X who is a." In spite of the undeniable presence of a-ness in me, an X, I am not trapped by my a-ness or my X-ness, nor obliged to deny or suppress either. And the same is true for the members of other groups, most obviously for those who are making the attribution of characteristic a to group X—for the attribution of a is itself an expression of one's a-ness.

The metaphoricization of racist tropes is admittedly a dangerous business, and I have already noted that I, too, feel that it would be nicer for everyone if the other path, say, the indiscriminate teaching of racial equality and education in freeing the mind of all prejudices, could expect to meet with success in most cases. The danger lies in the way in which this form of metaphoricizing, even if meant as a local solution to a particularly tightly woven prejudice at a particular time and place, becomes part of a discourse for public consumption, applied throughout history in other contexts. I think it is probably true that both the villainized symbolic Jew of the Gospel of John and the idealized symbolic Jew of the Pauline epistles ("circumcision of the heart," and so on) have contributed equally to perpetuating anti-Semitism. The same may be said of Marx's notorious essay "On the Jewish Question," where "Jew" is metaphoricized to mean "capitalist" instead of the concrete Jewish people as such. One could give Marx the benefit of the doubt and see this as an attempt to diffuse a preexisting anti-Semitism by turning its symbolic energies toward capitalism, but it cannot be denied that this served to perpetuate a particular stereotype about the Jews, which, given the canonical status this text later assumed—and the same can be said of the New Testament texts just mentioned—came to infect many later generations, even communities who may originally have had no special opinion about any of these matters. In such cases it is hard not to feel that it would have been preferable—assuming again the premise that these writers were actually trying to eliminate anti-Semitism, which is admittedly highly doubtful—to practice a kind of Rortyan "changing of the subject" rather than engaging these prejudices in any way,

simply letting them lie untouched like an old scab and instead disseminating new symbolic forms that might one day take their place.

On the other hand, it is at least arguable that this ignoring of the problem, while allowing this particular manifest content to fade out eventually due to lack of renewed interest, would allow exactly the same structures to remain unchanged, to be recreated in other ways, although perhaps with different protagonists and objects, a constant stream of new pariah groups always regarded and treated in more or less the same ways, since the deadlock of racism had never been truly exploded from within, as, by our present hypothesis, can only be done via such a metaphoric self-expansion. History would be a parade of the same forms of caste oppressions, the same systematic sequestering, scapegoating, and bullying of outcaste groups, with only the names of the protagonists changing in each time and place. The obsessive focus on a few particular groups over long spans of cultural transmission can perhaps be seen as a way of getting at the root of the more general problem, a case of invasive surgery to extricate a tumor rather than an aspirin to relieve the headache the tumor causes.

But be that as it may, it must be observed that the damage here comes from an unskillful reapplication of a provisional truth indiscriminately into new contexts, where it is allowed to serve as an absolute truth. In a text for public consumption, a trope such as Marx's, if composed by a Tiantai Bodhisattva, would have to be carefully girded in hypotheticals and conditionals: *if* you mean by Jew such and such, the Jewish question can only be solved by eliminating capitalism, because the only ones who fit that definition are not those you now call the Jews, but you capitalist anti-Semites yourself. This is a bit closer to Nietzsche's approach to anti-Semitism, that is, the adoption of the anti-Semitic premise, but with the proviso that in reality it is you, you Christian anti-Semites, who are the true "Jews" in the sense that you mean it. Of course, none of this applies directly to the Hitler question as we are discussing it here; in that case, as in all these cases, the ideal Tiantai Bodhisattva we are constructing would be careful not to allow private communications used in the attempt to metaphoricize Hitler's anti-Semitism for Hitler himself, using a particular set of metaphorical tropes, aimed at a particular heuristic or persuasive goal, to stand as general statements of theory released for public consumption.

There is another shift in the course of Loy's discussion, from "How should one have dealt with Hitler" to the very different question "How should we deal with the memory of the Holocaust now?" The latter is what is at stake when Loy states that although "evil" may work to enlighten us, "that is not likely to be convincing to someone who lost his family in the Nazi Holocaust. . . . What punch line could 'redeem' the Holocaust?" This is another question entirely, and here, too, I would like to ask again: what are the alternatives? The issue presumably concerns how we are to treat the memory of the dead, how we are to educate future generations about what happened, what attitude we are to take to the fact that it happened at all. Loy's comment ascribes a callous moral transcendentalism to me that I feel calls for a response. The implication seems to be that the Tiantai writers I am describing would want to say, "Stop your whining; it may look bad to you, but really the murder of

your family was the setup to an excellent punch line—enlightenment—so you really ought to be happy about it.” I took pains in the early sections of the book to distinguish the omniscient position from the unicentric position to avoid just this sort of conclusion. For in the unicentric holist position, which I see as typical of, say, Augustinian theodicy, it would indeed be reasonable to say to a sufferer of any kind, “It looks bad to you, but your perspective is false; the truth is the whole, the God’s-eye view, and from that perspective it’s all very, very good, indeed—all part of the master plan.” The point of the set-up / punch line paradigm is rather that each perspective serves as a punch line to every other perspective, not that any one, even that of the whole or of enlightenment, is to be privileged, thereby reducing the status of some other point of view to mere set-up status, to mere illusion. This is indeed the entire thrust of the Tiantai *upāya* theory, discussed briefly above.

So, first, to the question of what could redeem the Holocaust, I answer: lots and lots of things, all the time, in all sorts of ways, over and over—for example, seeing a film of Hitler on TV and finding it vaguely amusing; this “redeems” the Holocaust for that particular late-night History Channel viewer, for those few seconds. I am not being entirely facetious with this example, although obviously I am deliberately choosing an excessively trivial case the better to make this point, which is that this particular experience of “redemption” is manifestly far from final, far from privileged, far from in any way eradicating the increased horror of the opposite perspective, of the concentration camp victim whose tragedy is inevitably being trivialized into amusing footage for millions of other perspectives and moments throughout the future of sentient experience. Each of these is “punch line” to the other, and this is precisely the manner in which they “interpenetrate.” This is, I would claim, just the way it is, and something that has to be dealt with; all moments, all perspectives, incorporate, integrate, reinterpret, utilize, and recontextualize one another.

The moral question is, how shall we deal with this fact? Denying that it happens will not do. Chuckling at a Hitler film is one way of recontextualizing the Holocaust, one that of course itself stands eternally open to further recontextualizations; the question is not how to redeem the Holocaust, for no matter what attitude we take to it, we are in some way “redeeming” it—always unsatisfactorily, partially, with bias. Even if we say “There can be no redemption for it; it is pure evil and it is an insult to the victims to try to attribute any positive effects to it; all we can do is make sure it never happens again,” this is itself a way of recontextualizing, utilizing, redeeming the fact that it has happened—and again, a very meager and unsatisfactory redemption it is. It is not that there can be no redemption of the past, but that we cannot help redeeming—recontextualizing—the past, in terms of whatever values and desiderata happen to be holding sway at the present moment, however frivolous and fleeting. The past is always being callously cannibalized by the present, pillaged for whatever uses the present can find for it.

But the question before us now is what would be the most skillful recontextualizations available, if one were a Tiantai Buddhist bent on promoting enlightenment in the Tiantai sense? For whatever is proposed that we do with the fact that the Holocaust happened, we have the problem of recontextualization on our hands again.

How we answer this question again depends on what we hope to accomplish with our recontextualizations. Do we want to have a maximum justification for outrage? Do we want to be able to lay blame somewhere? Do we want to prove our own moral superiority? Do we want to ensure that this event is spoken of with a certain degree of indignation? Do we want to eliminate the naturalization and comprehension and commensurability of this event? Do we want to provide a comforting metaphysics that explains it away? Do we want to *avoid* a comforting metaphysics that explains it away? Do we want to promote reconciliation with the fact that this has happened? Do we want to dissuade reconciliation with the fact that this has happened? Do we want to comfort the victims with respect for their unredeemable suffering or with a grand narrative that manufactures some kind of bright side—or both, or neither? Do we want to learn from it? Do we want to see how it is related to other human activities, including our own? Do we want to avoid seeing how it is related to other human activities, including our own? Do we want to make sure that it never happens again? All of these might be things that a Bodhisattva, for example, would have a reason to want to do in certain circumstances. How this memory should be treated, and how it should be presented to future generations, would then depend on which of these goals was before us at any given time.

But let us take the least controversial, and probably most frequently useful desideratum: how can we make sure it doesn't happen again? How can we prevent future Hitlers? If we are starting from a blank slate, educating a generation that has no prior commitment to fascism, genocide, or anti-Semitism, Loy would, I think, admit that education in the Tiantai principle of the nonduality of good and evil would be a good way to prevent such ideas from arising. For, as Loy himself puts it, "the antithetical duality between [good and evil] sometimes contributes greatly to the world's suffering; Hitler and Stalin were trying to redeem the world by purifying it of its evil elements." I think we agree that elaborate, programmatic evils of this kind require a fanatical commitment to some concept of the good, and presuppose some concept that at least that particular good for which one is working—a Jew-free world, a socialist utopia—is in no way interpenetrative with its opposite, the evils we are working so hard to eliminate. If the inherent entailment of evil in the absolute is understood, there can be no more attempts to redeem the world by purifying it of its evil elements, for it becomes manifest that the latter simply can never be done.

If these fascist or genocidal concepts of the good are already in place, however, education concerning the ways in which they interpenetrate with their opposites—how these endeavors to create the good bring about evils, even in terms of their own value systems—can also serve to deflate them. Loy's worry is perhaps that, in showing that the evils of the Holocaust were also goods, we would be encouraging a prospective Hitler to think, "Well, even though what I am planning is very evil, there will always be some Tiantai guy around in the future to justify it and prove that it was really also a form of good, so why not just go ahead and do it?" But this is a misconception of what motivates such endeavors. A Hitler does not think that what he is doing is evil; he thinks it is good. He is not being insufficiently strict in his opposition to evil, but rather excessively fanatical in his commitment to the good,

as he conceives it. The belief in the nondualism of good and evil thus does not function to eliminate his qualms about the evils he is proposing—most likely he has none—but rather serves to undercut his conviction that what he proposes is unambiguously good, *even according to his own standards*.

Now we might also imagine a case where someone is thinking, “Gee, I’d really like to do these things—rape, pillage, massacre—but I have to restrain myself because I know these things are evil.” Here it would seem that the belief in the dichotomy between good and evil is the strongest bulwark against the commission of evils. But the problem, once again, is the lack of thoroughgoingness in the application of the principle. Such a person has not one set of values but two conflicting sets of values. He believes in one sense that it is good to rape, pillage, and massacre—this is entailed in his “wanting” to do them—and in another sense that it is good to refrain from doing so. If he believes in the value dichotomy applying to one of these sets, he will believe in it for the other as well. Of course, it would be disastrous if the principle of nonduality of good and evil were applied only to the second set and not to the first. But education in Tiantai principles would entail that the same principle be applied for both sets. He would learn to see not only that “doing the good of refraining from murder is really no different from the evil of not refraining from murder” but also “doing the good of murdering is really no different from the evil of not-murdering.” Once again, we must ask what the alternatives are. Maintenance of the dichotomy of good and evil, for either or both of these sets of conflicting values, will maintain their coexistence and conflict within him. If we can accept the premise that such a conflict causes him pain, and, moreover, that the doomed attempt to escape such pain can lead to all sorts of rash and desperate behaviors, this protracted struggle with himself is arguably one of the strongest possible motivations for the eventual commission of these and other evil acts, as alternating frenzies of self-righteous persecution of oneself and others on the one hand and of defiant self-indulgence on the other, in a futile attempt to break the deadlock. As Nietzsche remarked, the sting of conscience teaches one to sting.

The Tiantai moral theory, with its insistence that the most horrible evils are ineradicable, built into the absolute, unchangeable nature of all existence, and fully and eternally present even in Buddhahood, may appear gloomy and discouragingly pessimistic, or, from the other side, in that it affirms the utilizability of these ineradicable evils, absurdly optimistic. But after considering the alternatives, we may feel inclined to say of it what Churchill said of democracy, namely that Tiantai ethics is indeed the worst possible response to the Holocaust—with the exception of all the others. It may be disheartening to know that Hitler, rabid racism, genocidal rage, and the Holocaust are eternally with us and can never be extirpated from the nature of reality. But this discouragement derives, I think, from a misunderstanding of what “eternally present” means in a Tiantai context. For to say of the Holocaust “Never again,” vigilantly and unceasingly, is itself a form of this eternal presence, and in the best-case scenario this would be the mode in which these evils are forever with us.

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