Is Tendai Buddhism Relevant to the Modern World?

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Since this year marks the 1200th anniversary of the establishment of Tendai in Japan from China, there is no question that Tendai is old. However, its long history naturally prompts the question about Tendai's present and future. Is it frozen in outdated forms from the past, or is it still changing and growing? Having taken root in Japan, can it take root in the West? Has it made its major contributions, or does it have anything new to offer to the world? That is to say, what is the modern relevance of Tendai Buddhism?

Although Tendai (Chin., T'ien-t'ai)[1] has the reputation of being a major denomination in Japanese history, and the most comprehensive and diversified school of Chinese Buddhism, it is almost unknown in the West.[2] This meagre presence is in marked contrast to the vision of the founder of the movement in China, T'ien-t'ai Chih-i (538–597), who provided a religious framework which seemed suited to adapt to other cultures, to evolve new practices, and to universalize Buddhism. This essay will survey a few of these principles and then focus on the T'ien-t'ai idea of fourfold religious stages as a topic which could serve as a bridge between Japanese Tendai and the West.

Specifically, T'ien-t'ai Chih-i proposed that all Buddhist teachings can be grouped into four different orientations called the Four Teachings — the Tripiṭaka, Shared, Distinct, and Complete. Although these four teachings sometimes use the same words, values, and practices, these take on different meanings within each of these four separate orientations. For example, Buddhahood, ignorance, meditation, and compassion have different meanings, different causes, and different consequences in each of the Four Teachings. Secondly, there is a sequence of the Four Teachings, so even though one

[1] Although this essay is addressed to contemporary Japanese Buddhism, when the analysis is focused on the classic sources of Tendai written in China by Chih-i we shall use the Chinese pronunciation of "T'ien-t'ai."

[2] The first Tendai temple established outside of Asia was the Tendai Mission of Hawaii founded in 1973 by Bishop Ryōkan Ara and Assistant Bishop Masao Ichishima.

may leapfrog from the second to the fourth, and on occasion one may regress back to the earlier stages, generally speaking there is a progression from the first to the fourth.

Recently Lawrence Kohlberg, the Director of the Center for Moral Education, Harvard University, has found that there are various stages in moral development from childhood through adulthood which have characteristics similar to the Four Teachings of Chih-i: (1) there are recognizable and distinct stages in the moral development of people; (2) the same words, concepts, and actions have different meanings, causes, and consequences at different levels of development; (3) basically the stages are progressive, and because the new stages are more convincing or satisfying there is little retrogression to earlier stages; (4) discussion about moral action will be confused and conflicting if people are operating or speaking across different levels of development; (5) even though the content of specific decisions may differ across cultures, the principles of each stage of moral development are universal and cross-cultural.

If the theories of Chih-i and Kohlberg are similar, then they will serve to validate, enlarge, and refine each other. No matter what the outcome, the comparison itself should serve to test the possible relevance of Chinese T'ien-t'ai and Japanese Tendai to a major new system in Western thought. Part I will survey the classic T'ien-t'ai motives and principles for outreach to others, and Part II will analyze the Four Teachings of T'ien-t'ai and the stages of moral development of Kohlberg.

I. Universal Vision of T'ien-T'ai

MOTIVATION FOR UNIVERSALIZATION

The grand vision of T'ien-t'ai is perhaps best expressed by the creation of the Four Great Bodhisattva Vows:

> Sentient beings are limitless in number.
>   I vow to save them all.
> Defilements are endless in number.
>   I vow to end them all.
> The teachings are infinite (in number).
>   I vow to know them all.
> Buddhahood is utterly supreme.
>   I vow to attain it.[3]

Rhodes has recently reminded us in an important article (1984) that these Four Great Bodhisattva Vows were first formulated by T'ien-t'ai Chih-i in the sixth century. However, Westerners are aware of these vows almost

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[3] This is a paraphrase of the original vows formulated by T'ien-t'ai Chih-i based on the Four Noble Truths. See his *Shih ch'an p'o lo mi ts'u ti fa men* 釈禅波羅蜜次第法門 , T. 46, 476b14–18.

exclusively through their central role in the practice of Zen Buddhism, beginning with the eighth century *Platform Sutra* (Yampolsky 1967, p. 143) and spreading into America as a key element in the daily vision of almost all Zen missionaries (Suzuki 1960, p. 14). Robert Aitken remembers how Senzaki Nyogen used to address his students as "bodhisattvas" to remind them of their true identity:

> There would be no American Zen as we know it today, including no Diamond Sangha, if it were not for Senzaki Sensei, who lived quietly with a small group of students, first in San Francisco, then in Los Angeles, for more than fifty years in the early part of this century. Senzaki Sensei gave his life fully to all of us. He was a true Bodhisattva . . . . Unless we too develop as Bodhisattvas, there will be no Buddha Dharma here and now—it will only be a memory in books in time to come.
> The universe is one. How can you be enlightened unless all others are enlightened too?

When people complain that they cannot recite these vows because they cannot hope to fulfill them, Aitken replies that "we vow to fulfill them as best we can. They are our path."

> As the world is going, the Bodhisattva ideal holds our only hope for survival or indeed for the survival of any species. The three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance are destroying our natural and cultural heritage. I believe that unless we as citizens of the world can take the radical Bodhisattva position, we will not even die with integrity (1982, pp. 61–62).

As a Zen teacher, Aitken has seen these Bodhisattva Vows as celebrating our oneness with the universe and as a necessary ideal for the survival of life. Similarly, if T'ien-t'ai practitioners vowed "to save all beings, to resolve all difficulties, and to learn all knowledge" in their quest for enlightenment, it seems hard to imagine that they would not be impelled to journey to the West, as well as to the rest of the world, and to increase their knowledge so as to truly modernize and universalize T'ien-t'ai.

PRINCIPLES FOR UNIVERSALIZATION

Perhaps one reason for the failure of Tendai to universalize is the way in which institutional Tendai has narrowed its practice to a small number of rituals, and has neglected the intellectual breadth and subtlety of its founder, Chih-i. Certainly he developed a curriculum of practice summarized in the Four Samadhi, especially the Lotus meditation and the *Fang-teng* repentances, which were later supplemented in Japan by the *goma* fire ritual. But Chih-i also celebrated the innumerable methods and forms which can arise in response to the interaction between seekers and teachers of Buddhism. In particular, Chih-i's theory of how Buddhism should be adapted

to meet the needs and capacities of seekers is articulated in terms of the Four *Siddhānta*, the Four Kinds of Response, and the Five Causes and Conditions for teaching the dharma (T. 46, 4c-5a; Donner 1976, pp. 108-114).

Strictly speaking, these are not principles of universalization, but of *localization*, or in the words of Christian theology, principles for the "contextualization" of Buddhism. There are innumerable claims for the universal validity of Buddhism, but these claims can easily be used as a kind of "religious imperialism" which demands that everyone should join Buddhism and its institutions. In contrast to this, Chih-i is arguing that the Buddha adapted his message to the particularities of his listeners, which makes all the teachings and practices culturally conditioned and relative. Classical Buddhist languages and thought-forms are not absolute. Just as the message of the Buddha could be expressed in Indian cultural forms and then adapted to Chinese and Japanese culture, so Buddhism should be able to respond to and adopt non-Asian forms as well.

Specifically, Chih-i reflected on how the quest for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) arises, and he argued that it is the interaction of the practitioner's receptivity (*kan* 感) and the Buddha's response (*ying* 応). "It is comparable to a child falling into water or fire, and his parents frantically rescuing him" (T. 46, 4c15; Donner 1976, p. 108). After quoting a few scriptures by way of illustration, Chih-i then summarizes the Four Kinds of Response from the *Dhyāna Sūtra*:

> (1) (At first) in order to win over their minds, he preaches by delighting their minds. (2) Taking cognizance of their karmic habits accumulated from past lives, he makes it easy for them to accept and practice. (3) Seeing the gravity of their illness, he provides them with the appropriate amount of medicine. (4) When in the course of time their capacity for the Way has ripened, then as soon as they hear the Ultimate Truth they awaken (fully) to the Way. How could this be anything but the benefit of the receptivity-and-response appropriate to the capacities (of beings) [*sui-chi kan-ying* 随機感応]?(T. 46, 4c14-22)

Chih-i then refers to two categories from the *Ta chih tu lun*: the Four *Siddhāntas* and the Five "Moreovers." Like the Four Kinds of Response listed above, the Four *Siddhāntas* are a list of principles by which the Buddha is said to have taught. (1) First of all, the Buddha used ordinary or mundane modes of expression, (2) then he individualized his teaching and adapted it to the capacities of his listeners, (3) he further altered it in order to respond to and diagnose the spiritual defects of his hearers, and (4) finally all his teaching was based on the perfect and highest wisdom. The first three are conditioned and finite, whereas the last is inconceivable and ineffable.[4] The Five

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[4] In the *Mo ho chih kuan*, T. 46, 4c (cf. 22a26-29 and 54c9-55a14), based on the *Ta chih tu lun* (T. 25, 59b17-61b18); see translation by Lamotte (1944, p. 27-46). Rhodes (1985, p. 75) notes that Chih-i used the theory in his earlier works, such as the *Shih ch'an po lo mi tz'u ti fa men* (T. 46, 482c, composed in 568-575), but that his fullest treatment of the idea is in the *Fa*

"Moreovers" are basically the same as these two lists.

The key idea is expressed by the phrase "receptivity-and-response appropriate to a person's capacities" (*sui-chi kan-ying*), or "communication based on receptivity-and response" (*kan-ying tao-chiao* 感応道交 ; T. 46, 4c14, 21–22). That is to say, not only the form of the teaching, but also the quest for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) arises during an interaction involving a response to the capacities and needs of a person.

The consequence of these principles is that to bring Tendai to the West, or to relate it to the modern world, means that all of its rituals and doctrinal schemes need not be adopted without change by contemporary people. Rather, those who are knowledgeable and sincere Tendai practitioners should interact with the modern world, and then based on the Four *Siddhāntas* develop new teachings appropriate to the situation. Obviously these will not be the same as many of the traditional formulations, because these older teachings arose in response to the needs of medieval China and Japan. Today there are different problems: delusion and attachments appear in new forms and require new medicines.

Accordingly, I am arguing that contemporary Tendai thinkers should follow the *methods* of Chih-i—which means a creative response to the individuals and needs of our time—and not be limited to the *forms* that Chih-i created for his time and place. Chih-i faced a bewildering variety of Indian Buddhist scriptures, ideas, and practices, and he created many new lists and categories to organize and integrate them so that their benefits could be accessible without them conflicting and being obstacles to each other. Today we not only have many new kinds of Buddhism, but we also have a new sense of history which shows how Buddhism has been culturally conditioned, and how it is but one of a variety of world religions. Today the question is how the underlying truth of Buddhism can relate to the modern world as a response to the pluralism inside and outside Buddhism.

If Buddhism is to come to the West, I doubt that it will come as a form of "cultural imperialism" by conquering and driving out the other religious traditions. The world would be much poorer if it lacked the special insights and values of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Rather, based on the principles of Chih-i, Buddhism could arise in the West as a response to Western thought and needs. Instead of being imperialistic, Chih-i taught that Buddhism is "responsive" and that its teachings arise "dialogically."

Accordingly, the second part of this paper involves an experiment in which I try to bring Tendai into interaction with a Western psychologist (Lawrence Kohlberg) as a means for evolving new expressions of Buddhism. I am arguing that a comparison of developmental stage theories from Western psychology with Tendai (or of sin and repentance in Christianity and

hua hsüan i (T. 33, 686b–691a).

Tendai) is not just an exercise in Western comparative thought. Rather, it is also a modern attempt at "receptivity-and-response" (*kan-ying*) which follows the example of Chih-i who applied Buddhism in new ways during his time.

II. T'ien-T'ai Developmental Stages and Western Thought

THE T'IEN-T'AI SYSTEM

No school in Chinese Buddhism was as successful as T'ien-t'ai in providing an overall integration of the vast diversity of Indian Buddhist materials, while at the same time offering a structure of accessible methods which Chinese could find meaningful for their personal practice. The core ideas underlying Chih-i's massive writings are the doctrine of the Threefold Contemplation 三 観 and Threefold Truth 三 諦 ,[5] the Fourfold Teachings 四 教 ,[6] the Subtle Dharma 妙 法 and Nonconceivable Discernment 不 可 思 議 心 (=Inconceivable Mind)(see Ikeda 1986, pp. 221-252).

For Chih-i, the scriptural foundation for the Threefold Truth, or "Three Truths," was a verse from Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*:

> All things arise through causes and conditions.
> That I declare as emptiness.
> It is also a provisional designation.
> It is also the meaning of the Middle Path. (24:18; T. 30, 33b11)

As Swanson has shown in his study of the "Threefold Truth Concept" (1985), Chih-i agrees with scholars and Indian commentators by identifying "conditioned co-arising" with "emptiness," which then is identified with "provisional designation," and in turn with the "Middle Path." The Three Truths are really One Truth.

These Three Truths become differentiated in the context of practice, however, as the disciple works to internalize the Three Truths through the method of Three Contemplations. In this situation, Chih-i notices that for the practitioner the understanding of each element mentioned in the verse may be a separate event. Thus, there may be a time when there is an understanding of "conditioned co-arising" and "emptiness" but not of "provisionality" or the "Middle Path." As a consequence, Chih-i sometimes uses this verse

[5] After studying Tendai for over fifty years, the eminent scholar Satō Tetsuei agreed with Sekiguchi Shindai that the Threefold Truth and Threefold Contemplation are the core doctrines of Chih-i, not the five Periods and Eight Doctrines (Satō 1978, p. 430). Swanson (1985) has recently concluded a definitive study of the Chinese background to Chih-i's development of the doctrine of the Threefold Truth, along with Chih-i's understanding of Two Truths, One Truth, and Subtle Dharma as seen in Chih-i's *Fa hua hsüan i*.

[6] Summaries of these Four Teachings can be found in the classic outline by Chegwan, *T'ien-t'ai ssu chiao i* (Chappell 1983, pp. 83-173; summarized in Hurvitz 1960-62, pp. 248-271). The best account by Chih-i is in his *Ssu chiao i* (四 教 義 , On the four teachings) currently being translated by Rhodes (1985 and 1986).

and the theory of Three Contemplations and Three Truths to imply (1) a process of religious development, and (2) a hierarchy of progressive levels of insight. For example, in the *Ssu chiao i* Chih-i asserts that the Four Teachings of T'ien-t'ai are based on the Three Truths and Three Contemplations:

> The Four Teachings explained here arise from the threefold contemplations which were discussed above. They (i.e., the Four Teachings), in turn, actualize the threefold contemplations. First, the contemplation for entering emptiness from provisional existence includes two different methods of entering emptiness, analytical and experiential, which are clumsy and skillful (methods of entering emptiness, respectively). Because one can enter emptiness through the analysis of provisional existence, there arises the Tripiṭaka Teaching. Because one can enter emptiness through experiencing provisional existence (as empty), there arises the Shared Teaching. From within the second (contemplation) for entering provisional existence from emptiness, there arises the Distinct Teaching. From the third correct contemplation of the Middle Way in one mind, there arises the Complete Teaching (T. 46, 724a5–18; based on Rhodes 1985, pp. 60–62).

The Three Contemplations are dynamic in contrast to the Threefold Truth. The first contemplation involves *moving* from the world of provisionality to seeing its emptiness, which is a different process from the second contemplation in which we *move* beyond emptiness and back into an acceptance of the role of provisional existence. Only in the third contemplation do we find the balance involving the previous two insights based on the Middle Path of the One Mind.

Chih-i argues that to bring about these three contemplative processes, there arose four different teachings: the Tripiṭaka, the Shared, the Distinct, and the Complete. When asked what gave rise to the Three Contemplations, he created a circle by saying they came from the Four Teachings. When pushed to account for the source of both the Three Contemplations and the Four Teachings, Chih-i goes on to say that they both arose from the four line verse of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* 24:18. Thus, the Threefold Truth, Three Contemplations, and Four Teachings are all parallel structures based on the four lines by Nāgārjuna.

The progression implied in the Three Contemplations disappears when the Middle Path is reached. Similarly, distinctions of the four-line verse disappear when traced to its source:

> The four-line verse (which begins) "All things arising from causes and conditions . . ." is the mind. The mind is the inconceivable liberation of the Buddhas. The inconceivable liberation of the Buddhas is ultimately unobtainable. That is to say, it is inexpressible. Therefore, Vimalakīrti shut his mouth and remained silent, saying nothing.
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> (That the four inexpressibles) can be expressed because there are causes and conditions (which allow them to be expressed), means to

preach the four-line verse (which begins with) "All things arising from causes and conditions . . ." of the mind using the four *siddhāntas*. It is preached to accommodate with the sentient beings of the four kinds of innate faculties . . . (T. 46, 724a; based on Rhodes 1985, pp. 60-62).

This is a helpful passage to show the ultimate source of all things, namely, the inconceivable and ineffable "mind." This "inconceivable mind" is perhaps best understood as the "perceptual process," which is labelled "nonconceivable mind" 不思議心 (*pu ssu i hsin*). At the heart of the "perceptual process" (= mind) all reality impinges, all things are possible, or as Chih-i said, we are aware of the "subtle dharma" (*miao-fa*) which contains the "three thousand dharmas," so that all Three Truths are identical (*Mo ho chih kuan*, T. 46, 52b18-55c25).

These doctrines represent the highest truth for Chih-i. The various developmental schemes used by him all culminate in the Complete Teaching (represented as One Truth, the Middle Path, the subtle dharma, and the nonconceivable mind). Thus, the distinctions of Chih-i's various developmental stages are counterbalanced from the point of view of this "complete and sudden teaching" which is the source and goal of all teachings.

Although it is important that we have some understanding of this Complete Doctrine, I shall restrict discussion to the more mundane aspects of Chih-i's system where he applies the One Truth to the needs of the religious practitioner through the developmental structure of the Three Contemplations and the Four Teachings. For example, when Chih-i attempted to explain a basic Buddhist teaching like the Four Noble Truths, he created a new scheme of four categories as a way of interpreting this teaching. He proposed that each of the Four Noble Truths can be seen as:

1. arising-and-perishing
2. non-arising
3. innumerable
4. without contrivance[7]

Chih-i derived these four categories from the same verse of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* 24:18 when he said:

In the verse of the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, "All things arise by causes and conditions" is arising-and-perishing. "That I declare to be empty" is non-arising non-perishing. "It is also called a provisional designation" is the innumerable. And "it is also called the meaning of the Middle Path" is being without contrivance (T. 46, 5c27-6a1).

Accordingly, we find that Chih-i presents us with a scheme involving (1) four phrases from the Chinese translation of Nāgārjuna's verse, (2) the Three

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[7] Extended descriptions of these four ways of interpreting the Four Noble Truths are contained in the *Fa hua hsüan i*, T. 38, 700c-702a (transl. by Swanson 1985, pp. 578-609) and in the *Mo ho chih kuan*, T. 46, 5b-6b (transl. by Donner 1976, pp. 114-124).

Truths and Three Contemplations, (3) the Four Teachings, and (4) the four
interpretations of the Four Noble Truths:

1. arising-and-perishing	= Tripiṭaka	= analytical emptiness
2. non-arising	= Shared	= experiential emptiness
3. innumerable	= Distinct	= provisionality
4. no contrivance	= Complete	= Middle Path

In order to correlate the Three Contemplations with the fourfold schemes,
Chih-i sometimes splits the third contemplation rather than the first. Thus,
the Contemplation of the Middle path is seen as a two-stage process, begin-
ning with "the middle alone" (in between emptiness and provisionality) and
ending with "the middle which embraces emptiness and provisionality. Thus,
there is some fluidity in Chih-i's schematization since he experiments with
ways to fit his various lists together.

One last observation is that T'ien-t'ai organized and interpreted the
Buddhist materials in terms of (1) developmental models and (2) a subtle
consciousness which allowed for interplay between the stages of development
and oneness, between process and tranquility. Examples of developmental
models are the lists above, the Fifty-two Stages of a Bodhisattva, and the Six
Identities 六即 , which Chih-i assigned to the "gradual method" of practice.
In the perceptual experience of the practitioner, however, these stages are
dynamic and interrelated, which is vividly expressed in the final stage of the
Three Contemplations which involves the creative balance of the first two
contemplations. Accordingly, T'ien-t'ai assigns the Middle Path to the
"indeterminate method" (which is often dialectical) or the "sudden method"
(which is totalistic and available at all stages)(*Mo ho chih kuan*, T. 46, 1c).

THE FOUR TEACHINGS AS PARADIGMS

Chih-i begins his *Ssu chiao i* by asserting that "the potentials (*chi* 機) and
conditions (*yüan* 縁) of sentient beings (to achieve enlightenment) are not
the same" (T. 46, 721a6). Accordingly, Chih-i believed that even though the
Buddha's teaching was internally consistent, when he taught different people
in different circumstances, he had to say different things.

> Now, the Way transcends dualities, and the Ultimate is eternal and
> blissful. There is only one taste to the Dharma and quiescence (nirvāṇa)
> is to revert to the Absolute. However, how can it be that the words of
> the Deer Park and Crane Grove, and the teachings of the seven sites
> and eight assemblies, do not contain differences such as those between
> the sudden and gradual teachings, and distinctions such as those be-
> tween the variable and secret teachings? (T. 46, 721a6−9; Rhodes 1985,
> p. 34)

Earlier Buddhist thinkers had argued that some of the differences between
Buddhist scriptures could be explained by saying that the Buddha used

different *methods* of teaching different people in different circumstances. Sometimes the situation required a "gradual" approach; at other times there was the opportunity for a "sudden" realization so the Buddha taught in that way. At still other times, people needed a more "undetermined" (versatile) or "secret" method of learning.

Having outlined these four methods, Chih-i then announced that he was going to account for the differences in the Buddhist teachings *by a new device which had not been used before*, and which would supplement these four *methods* of teaching. This new device is his scheme of four teachings (*chiao* 教), the Tripiṭaka, Shared, Distinctive, and Complete.

Among his various works, Chih-i has many schemes and stages of practice, such as in the *Tz'u ti ch'an men* (T. 46, 475–548). However, I would argue that these differ categorically from the Four Teachings, which are constellations of many elements. For example, the Tripiṭaka Teaching includes a *worldview* (arising-and-perishing among the ten realms of existence), *values* (detachment as defined by the ideal of the arhat), and *practices* (the thirty-seven conditions for enlightenment, austerity, precepts, intellectual analysis of emptiness, the Six Perfections, and meditation). In contrast, the Shared Teaching embraces the worldview, values, and practices of the bodhisattva at an elementary level. This involves the Ten Stages of Buddhahood, different practices, and a different worldview. However, since it shares some elements with the Tripiṭaka and the Distinct Teachings, it must be seen as transitional. The Distinct Teaching is based on "not only emptiness" (*pu tan k'ung* 不但 空) because it sees the emptiness of emptiness, thus moving back into provisionality. This involves many new practices summarized by Chih-i into Fifty-two Stages of a Bodhisattva. Lastly, the Complete Teaching moves beyond stages to see the identity and interpenetration of all the various practices, ideas, and values based on Suchness, Buddha-nature, and the Inconceivable Perceptual Process. Nevertheless, it also has its own set of unique practices such as the Five Repentances.

Chih-i claims that these four should be called "teachings" because they "convert and transform" the minds of beings: (1) by transforming evil into good, (2) by transforming delusions and bringing about enlightenment, and (3) by transforming common beings into sages. Therefore, "teaching" means "that which discloses the principle and converts beings" (T. 46, 721a23–25). Thus for Chih-i the distinguishing features of his four new categories (which prompted him to name them "teachings") are that each one implies (1) moral development, (2) cognitive development, and (3) character development.

Throughout his writings Chih-i links morality with knowledge. Upholding the precepts and repentance for wrongs involves not just a change of behavior, but also a change in understanding. For example, repentance has two

polarities in the thought of Chih-i. At one end of the spectrum is repentance for specific harmful deeds, then for wrong attitudes and attachments, and finally repentance for incorrect understanding. Thus, the ultimate repentance involves regret for holding an inadequate understanding based upon a growth into a new understanding. The final stage of this process is when the practitioner reaches the Complete Teaching and realizes that the distinctions between purity and defilement are also empty because all things are *dharmadhātu*. For example, when describing the Lotus Repentance, Chih-i compares the explicit ethical practices advocated by the *Lotus Sūtra*, Chapter 14, with the statement in the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sūtra* that "Since one's own mind is void of itself, there is no subject (in which) sin or merit (could inhere)," which he calls "featureless repentance":

> What is called "practise with features" is merely a preliminary, by passing through the Worldly and practising the repentance of the six sense-organs, to the practitioner's (true) entering of realization. What is called the "featureless (practise)" is the expedient consisting of contemplating directly the emptiness of all dharmas (T. 46, 14a; Donner 1976, p. 256).

Moral defects are based not just on misdeeds and bad habits, but also at a more basic level on incorrect understanding. Thus, we need to repent errors of behavior (= features) and of understanding (= featureless). These two levels are also interpreted by Chih-i as referring to the Two Truths, Worldly and Ultimate (*shih* 事 and *li* 理). It is important to see how Chih-i places morality and worldview on a continuum, rather than isolating them into separate categories. It is also worth noting that Chih-i concludes by saying that "At the time of the marvelous realization both of these (methods) may be discarded." The implications of this idea suggest that the teaching of T'ien-t'ai is not confined to these categories either, since the capacity of enlightenment moves beyond these particular distinctions of form and formless, morality and cognition.

Paul Tillich, the Christian theologian, made a major distinction between "sin" and "sins." The innumerable kinds of wrong actions are finite transgressions which we call "sins." However, the "state of sin" does not involve just mistaken acts, but the condition of self-estrangement and alienation from others and from life. "Sin is estrangement; grace is reconciliation" (Tillich 1957, p. 57). In a similar way, Chih-i has proposed that repentance involves a movement beyond correcting wrong actions to rectifying wrong attitudes and attachments, and culminates in "featureless repentance" which involves an awareness of the oneness of all things in the *dharmadhātu*.

Chih-i created his scheme of Four Teachings essentially to acknowledge and integrate the diverse Buddhist teachings inherited from India by the Chinese. Each Teaching contains its moral precepts, worldview, practices, and stages of religious growth illustrated by its representative scriptures.

However, when Chih-i integrates the Four Teachings, he argues that what the Tripiṭaka Teaching considers as the Śrāvaka stage, is only the stage of the ten faiths in the Distinctive Teaching, and only the Five Preliminary Grades in the Complete Teaching. Similarly, what the Tripiṭaka and Shared Teaching consider to be Buddhahood, is only at the level of the seventh abode for the Distinctive Teaching, and at the level of the seventh degree of faith for the Complete Teaching (see complete chart in Chappell 1983, p. 33). This means that the ideas, practices, and accomplishments of one Teaching are not rejected, but are reinterpreted and reevaluated from the perspective of teachings at later stages of development.

The historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, has argued that advances in science are not merely based on the accumulation of more and more data. Rather, he argues that more profound advances are made when the data do not fit into the accepted theories of interpretation but constitute anomalies. At this point, one is forced to look for new explanations, which may stimulate creation of a different interpretive framework to better account for all the data including the anomalies. This new framework, or paradigm, often is accompanied by new procedures, and may even be related to new values, since each paradigm is a "constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (1970, p. 175).

Kuhn compares this broader sense of the word "paradigm" with the more limited idea of a paradigm as "one sort of element in the constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles" (1970, p. 175). Similarly, "teaching" can be understood as a whole religious framework or as single element in a larger framework. I am arguing that Chih-i's scheme of Four Teachings uses the term *chiao* to refer to the first, larger use of the term: namely, a total constellation representing a life-encompassing framework of meaning. Furthermore, I now will suggest that because the Four Teachings represent major paradigms of understanding, they can be favorably compared to the idea of stages of moral development in the research of Lawrence Kohlberg.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT STAGES

The three aspects of Chih-i's Four Teachings (moral, cognitive, and character development) compare favorably with the writings of Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg asserts that moral development does not consist merely in acquiring a "bag of virtues" (honesty, responsibility, cleanliness, kindness, etc.) as suggested by earlier thinkers and the Boy Scouts (1981, pp. 31–36). Instead of just adding on new moral skills, his research proposes that moral growth also and more fundamentally involves changes in understanding. Learning is revolutionary rather than just accumulative, since a person must develop new perspectives and new frames of reference.

Logical positivists and behaviorists had mistakenly considered learning only in quantitative terms as the increase in new data, whether or not it was true or false, good or bad. But if learning involves understanding, then issues of validity and knowledge are involved. For Kohlberg "Piaget's fundamental contribution to developmental psychology has been to observe children's development in terms of the categories (space, time, causality, and so on) that philosophers have deemed central to knowing" (p. 102). Moral development is based on learning about some universal patterns, not just a"conditioned avoidance reaction to certain classes of acts or situations" as Eysenck wrote, or just "evaluations of action believed by members of a given society to be 'right' " as claimed by Berkowitz. Morality involves knowledge and understanding, and is a philosophical issue, not just a behavioral concept (p. 102–103).

Kohlberg insists that research demonstrates that there are universal stages of development found cross-culturally, and that moral reasoning is not just culturally relative. This implies that there is some shared, integrated process of human development, comparable to the idea of a unified Dharma. Although the details of moral judgments are relative to the culture and situation, the form of the reasoning processes and the kinds of principles involved, as well as the sequence of stages, have been confirmed in the cross-cultural research that Kohlberg has done.

The stages that Kohlberg has outlined minimally are (A) preconventional morality, (B) conventional morality, and (C) postconventional morality. These have been further refined into six stages which I shall summarize:

A. PRECONVENTIONAL MORALITY

1. *Stage of Punishment and Obedience*
   Actions are judged quantitatively and in terms of physical consequences rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Authority's perspective is confused with one's own.

2. *Stage of Individual Instrumental Purpose & Exchange*
   The main motive is to serve one's own needs which is seen as separate from the views of authority. It is recognized that other people have needs too, so interests are balanced and exchanges are made to gain goodwill.

B. CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

3. *Mutual Interpersonal Expectations and Conformity*
   Based on shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, the reasons for trying to do right are needing to be good in one's own eyes and those of others, caring for others, and because if one puts oneself in the other person's place one would want good behavior from oneself (Golden Rule), rather than conformity to an overall system.

4. *Stage of Social System and Conscience Maintenance*
Right is based on seeing the point of view of society as a whole, not just on interpersonal agreements or motives. Doing right now involves a duty to upholding the social order and institutions for the welfare of the group, and individual relations are considered in terms of the needs of the system.

B/C TRANSITIONAL

Duty, conscience, and social authority is seen as arbitrary in a pluralistic context. Decisions are postconventional, but without clear principles, being based on personal and subjective factors such as emotions. "At this stage, the perspective is that of an individual standing outside of his own society and considering himself as an individual making decisions without a generalized commitment or contract with society."

C. POSTCONVENTIONAL BUT PRINCIPLED MORALITY

5. *Stage of Prior Rights and Social Contract or Utility*
Moral decisions are generated from values concerned with fair and beneficial practices for all people. Being right involves awareness that people hold a variety of values, usually relative to their group, which are balanced by more primary values such as life and liberty. Social relations are entered freely as one's own responsibility, and doing good is to abide by laws for the welfare of all and to protect the rights of oneself and others. Thus, the law may sometimes be changed by larger moral views.

6. *Stage of Universal Ethical Principles*
Particular laws or social agreements are valid when they rest on principles which all humans should follow. The equality and dignity of all humans is the end, not the means, and are values used to guide decision-making. This is the highest and last stage of moral development according to Kohlberg (1981, pp. 409–412).

In his chapter "Moral Development, Religious Thinking, and the Question of a Seventh Stage," Kohlberg explored the possibility of a developmental level beyond his six stages of moral reasoning (pp. 310–372). This idea was suggested by Christian critics, among others, who argued that universal love transcends even our highest ideals of universal justice by involving willing self-sacrifice and a source to motivate one to be moral.

Even awareness of universal principles of justice, typically attained in young adulthood, does not remove the possibility of despair; indeed, it may enhance the sense of the difficulty of finding justice in the world. As we would phrase the problem, after attaining a clear awareness of universal ethical principles valid against the usual skeptical doubts there still remains the loudest skeptical doubt of all: "Why be moral? Why be

> just, in a universe that is largely unjust?" At this level, the answer to the question "Why be moral?" entails the question "Why live?" and the parallel question, "How face death"?

Kohlberg argues that this question is finally not a moral issue but an ontological or religious one. "Nevertheless, we use a metaphorical notion of a 'Stage 7' to suggest some meaningful solutions to this question . . ."

> The characteristics of all these solutions is that they involve contemplative experience of a nondualistic variety. The logic of such experience is sometimes expressed in theistic terms of union with God, but it need not be. Its essence is the sense of being a part of the whole of life and the adoption of a cosmic, as opposed to a universal, humanistic Stage 6 perspective (pp. 344–45).

This "contemplative experience of a nondualistic variety" involving a shift in perspective "from figure to ground" and the "sense of being a part of the whole of life" resonates with the T'ien-t'ai view of the Middle Path and the "three thousand worlds in a single moment of consciousness." Kohlberg examined various religious writings and found this "sense of connectedness between the individual human mind and heart and the larger cosmic whole or order, which they call almost equally God, Nature, Life, or *ultimate reality*." It is this "sense of connectedness" which supports and inspires ethical action, Kohlberg argues (pp. 355–356), even though it may remain an ideal which is not yet realized fully.

> This act of insight is, however, not purely cognitive. One cannot see the whole or the infinite ground of being unless one loves it and aspires to love it. Such love, Spinoza tells us, arises first out of despair about more limited, finite, and perishable loves. Knowing and loving God or Nature as the ground of a system of laws knowable by reason is a support to our acceptance of human rational moral laws of justice, which are part of the whole. Furthermore, our love of the whole or the ultimate supports us though experiences of suffering, injustice, and death (p. 371).

Kohlberg favorably compares Stage 7 with the New Testament view of *agape* (universal love) because it is (1) nonexclusive and (2) it is without regard to merit. "Rather than replacing principles of justice, *agape* goes beyond them in the sense of defining or informing acts of supererogation (acts beyond duty or beyond justice), acts that cannot be generally demanded or required of people, acts that freely give up claims the actor may in justice demand." "Acts of *agape* cannot be demanded or expected by their recipients but are, rather, acts of grace from the standpoint of the recipient" (pp. 347, 351). This provides a striking parallel with the bodhisattva ideal expressed by the Four Great Vows discussed earlier in this paper.

THE STAGES OF KOHLBERG AND T'IEN-T'AI

It is interesting to propose the correlation of Kohlberg's Moral Development Stages with the Four Teachings, Three Contemplations, and four kinds of Four Noble Truths of T'ien-t'ai in the following manner:

Stages 3-4   =   Tripiṭaka Teaching, arising-and perishing
Transition B/C   =   Shared Teaching, all is empty, non-arising
Stages 5-6   =   Distinct Teaching, provisional, innumerable
"Stage 7"   =   Complete Teaching, Middle, no contrivances

Although Chih-i sometimes identified the Tripiṭaka Teaching with analytical emptiness, when we look at this stage as the first of his four kinds of Four Noble Truths, it can also involve a naive realism based on cause-and-effect. Here the structures of the conventional worldview are still intact, and one seeks nonattachment and purity in life in order to advance to a better rebirth and finally to the goal of arhatship. This conforms to Kohlberg's Stage 3 and Stage 4.

A fundamental shift occurs when the Shared Teaching involves an experiential encounter with emptiness, which in Kohlberg's scheme throws all conventional assumptions into question. For Buddhism and for Kohlberg, this means a clear departure from ordinary society where everything is taken at face value following common social values and ideas. Upon facing a sense of emptiness, however, our traditional rules are questioned as arbitrary, our major institutions are seen as limited and unjust, and not only is our capacity to do good challenged, but also our ability to know what is good is brought into question. Thus, we see all things as non-arising. For Kohlberg, this Transition from Conventional Morality to Postconventional Morality (Transition B/C) involves a major personal crisis in which the value of our interpersonal relations and conventional society is questioned. However, since Buddhism is a "counterculture" movement which proposes an alternate to worldly wisdom, this doctrine of emptiness is a Shared Teaching and not seen by Chih-i as striking.

The more difficult stage for Chih-i to legitimize as a Buddhist monk was the movement beyond emptiness and back into conventional, provisional existence. As Kohlberg outlines this process in Stage 5, individuals struggle to find new reasons for making moral decisions based on their own experience, since they feel betrayed by the false authority of the conventional rules of friends and society. This involves a stage of experimentation and outreach. Appropriately, Chih-i highlights this as limitless openness to new possibilities by calling it the "innumerable" in his four kinds of Four Noble Truths. It is fitting that at this level Chih-i places all Fifty-two Stages of a Bodhisattva in the Distinct Teaching, even though at this stage they are not completely realized. Similarly, for Kohlberg Stage 6 involves the evolution of universal prin-

ciples to integrate moral action in a total way beyond the limitations and relativity of particular societies.

Chih-i's Complete Teaching involves a movement which transcends morality and principles in a religious vision of totality, of the inconceivable mind, of the Middle embracing all dialectics which is seen as expressed in all of the previous stages. This is akin to Stage 7 exemplified for Kohlberg by the transcendence of justice by love based on the sense of oneness with the whole of life.

Conclusion

In spite of living in different worlds, there is a striking resemblance between the stages of Kohlberg and of T'ien-t'ai Chih-i. I have tried to argue that for Kohlberg and Chih-i each stage was being presented as a different worldview involving its own values and actions. To clarify this idea I appealed to Kuhn's theory of paradigms, which explains a paradigm as a "constellation" involving at least a distinct (1) worldview, (2) values, and (3) practices of a given community.

As the Director of the Center for Moral Education at Harvard University, Lawrence Kohlberg evolved his ideas in that context. To apply his theory of stages he developed testing methods to identify at what stage students and adults may be functioning. This is especially helpful to people in the field of psychotherapy and corrections institutions since it enables them to respond to students and patients within their frame of reference and to suggest ideas and practices that would make sense at their level. Furthermore, devices have been found to provide appropriate issues and challenges to evolve the person beyond their limitations and onto the next higher stage, but not to make unrealistic demands that they skip stages by jumping, for example, from Stage 2 to Stage 5.

If there are parallels between Kohlberg and T'ien-t'ai, then it seems worthwhile for contemporary Tendai to experiment with Kohlberg's findings as a way to help people grow from lower stages to higher ones.

More pointedly, the tests that Kohlberg used to locate the progress of people could be applied to Tendai practitioners themselves in order to check their own level of development. As in most institutionalized environments, it would be natural in Tendai temples for personal relations and the welfare of the institution to take priority over all other considerations. My guess is that one could expect that many Tendai priests and temple members would find themselves at Kohlberg's Stages 3 and 4, which I have identified as the Tripiṭaka Teaching of Chih-i.

Lastly, it is important to recall that even these Four Teachings of T'ien-t'ai were seen as a response to circumstances and only the Complete Teaching was elevated to the level of the highest truth which is subtle and inexpres-

sible. Accordingly, if Tendai is to be universal and relevant to the modern world, based on Chih-i's principles Tendai should interact with modern people and ideas, and only in terms of the interchange will new Tendai teachings arise to be relevant to the modern situation. According to Chih-i, there is no a priori reason to justify the propagation of older T'ien-t'ai formulations and practices which were devised in response to situations long past. If Tendai remains attached to the old forms, and forgets its primary principles of Inconceivable Mind, the Three Contemplations, and Four *Siddhāntas*, then it is in danger of forgetting the moon and clinging to its reflection.

Today the idea of all Buddhist teachings being contained within Four Teachings is treated by scholars of intellectual history as an important acculturation device for systematizing Indian Buddhism to facilitate its assimilation into China. Nonetheless, today it is difficult to imagine the Four Teachings as an adequate scheme to explain the teachings of the Buddha, nor to represent the diverse twists and turns of Buddhist history and thought as it evolved in India. However, I am arguing that when we see these Four Teachings as stages for the religious development of the individual, then they suddenly come alive as possible frames of reference not only to organize ancient scriptures, but also to map our present religious life. This interpretation will perhaps then be useful for going out into the community and engaging in psychotherapy and teaching so that these stages can guide and stimulate the spiritual growth of contemporary people.

I have confidence that Lawrence Kohlberg would have been interested to learn of the possible confirmation of his ideas from the ancient world of medieval Chinese T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. I can only hope that modern Tendai practitioners will be equally curious to see how their sacred heritage might relate to contemporary thought, and be refurbished and applied to aid people in their religious growth in the modern world.

Even if the Four Teachings of Tendai are too remote to apply to contemporary people, the Inconceivable Mind, the Three Contemplations of emptiness-provisionality-middle, plus the Four *Siddhāntas*, imply that Tendai thinkers should not be disheartened because they also teach the finitude and partiality of their own religious expressions as temporary responses to particular historical and personal situations. As a consequence, Tendai practitioners should feel comfortable to move beyond their ancient cultural and religious forms in order to "dialogue" with the new circumstances of the modern world. Based on its vision of compassion and wisdom, the universality and freedom of a bodhisattva, Tendai can extend itself and be "responsive" to the modern world and thereby help create a new and better future for all.

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