

## **Chih-i's Interpretation of the Four Noble Truths in the *Fa hua hsüan i***

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### Introduction

The following is an annotated translation from Chih-i's *Fa hua hsüan i* [T 33, 700c15–702a13].<sup>1</sup> It is the third part of the section which forms the heart of the *Fa hua hsüan i*, a section in which Chih-i discusses the “subtlety” of the objective world. By this Chih-i means that the objective world is something beyond adequate verbalization or conceptualization, yet something which can be validly described by such terms and concepts as “four noble truths”, “conditioned co-arising”, “twofold truth”, “threefold truth”, and “one truth”.

A basic knowledge of the four noble truths, that of suffering, the causes of suffering, the extinction of suffering, and the Path, is taken for granted. Instead Chih-i interprets the four noble truths as open to being understood on four levels, which correspond to the Fourfold Tripiṭaka, Shared, Distinct, and Perfect Teachings.<sup>2</sup> This fourfold pattern, which can be reduced to the four phrases or concepts of “conditioned co-arising, emptiness, conventional existence, and the Middle,” is a key to Chih-i's philosophy and provides the structure for his mature work in the *Fa hua hsüan i* and *Mo ho chih kuan*.<sup>3</sup>

The following annotated translation is offered as a complement to Robert Rhodes' article “The Four Extensive Vows and Four Noble Truths in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism” in this journal last year [Volume 2, 1984].

## ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

### 3. The Four Noble Truths [700c15]

Third,<sup>4</sup> the clarification of objects as the four [noble] truths consists of four parts. [i] Clarification of [the content of] the four truths; [ii] Classification into crude and subtle; [iii] Exposing the crude and manifesting the subtle; and [iv] Contemplating the mind.

#### [i] Clarification of the Four Noble Truths [700c16]

The first section [on the content of the four truths] consists of two parts: [a] transcending other interpretations, and [b] the four ways of understanding the four truths.

#### [a] Other Interpretations of the Four Truths [700c18]

Some masters<sup>5</sup> interpret the [teaching of the] “unlimited noble truths” in the *Śrīmāladevī Sūtra*<sup>6</sup> as manifesting ultimate Buddhahood in contrast to the limited attainment of those of the two vehicles. The Four Noble Truths are [understood as] “deliberate.”<sup>7</sup> “Deliberate” refers to the four noble truths which can be measured. The “spontaneous” four noble truths are the four noble truths which cannot be measured.<sup>8</sup> “Deliberate-spontaneous” refers to practice, and “limited-immeasurable” refers to doctrine. Since those of the two vehicles contemplate the [four] truths and realize the dharma, but not exhaustively, they still have things to do,<sup>9</sup> therefore [their understanding of the four noble truths] is called “deliberate.”<sup>10</sup> Since they have not attained the dharma exhaustively, it is within the limits of being measurable. The knowledge of “knowing through others” in the *Sūtra*<sup>11</sup> is a conditioned [“deliberate”] activity. “Knowing through others” is not omniscience, and is not a knowledge of the immeasur-

able dharma.<sup>12</sup> Therefore it is called conditioned [“deliberate”] and measurable. The inexhaustible knowledge of the Buddha is spontaneous and immeasurable. There is nothing left to accomplish, therefore it is called “without activity.”<sup>13</sup> This “knowledge of all there is to know through one’s own power”<sup>14</sup> is spontaneous activity. “All” refers to the immeasurable Dharma. This interpretation has four parts [deliberate, spontaneous, limited, immeasurable], but only two meanings [deliberate/limited and spontaneous/immeasurable]. This [interpretation] is not utilized here.

[b] Chih-i’s “Four Understandings  
of the Four Noble Truths” [700c28]

The four ways [of understanding] the four truths are <1> as arising-and-perishing [生滅], <2> as neither-arising-nor-perishing [無生滅], <3> as immeasurable [無量], and <4> as spontaneous [無作]. This interpretation is taken from the Chapter on Noble Activity [聖行品] of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.<sup>15</sup> It is divided into four classifications in terms of the partial and the perfect [偏圓], phenomenal appearances and reality [事理].

<1> The Four Truths as Arising and Perishing [701a1]

Arising-and-perishing refers to [the understanding of the four noble truths by those who are] heavily deluded concerning the real [眞], because it is understood [“named”] in accordance with phenomenal appearances [事].<sup>16</sup> [The first two truths of] “suffering” and “cause of suffering” are actually one dharma; they are divided into two in the sense of cause and effect. [The last two truths of] “the path” and “extinction” are likewise.<sup>17</sup> Verses in the *Samyuktābhidharmaśāstra* say that the truth of suffering [*duḥkha-satya*] is taught as “the nature of the result of all volitional activity”; the truth of the causes [of

suffering: *samudaya-satya*] is taught as “the nature of causes”; the truth of extinction [*nirodha-satya*] is taught as “the fact that all conditioned things ultimately perish”; the truth of the path [*mārga-satya*] is taught as “all activity [practice] which is lacking in [passionate] outflows [*anāsrava*].”<sup>18</sup> The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*<sup>19</sup> says that the truth of suffering refers to the heavy burden, oppression, and bondage of the senses and their objects [*skandha-āyatana*]. The truth of the causes [of suffering] refers to that which is able to attract the results of various mental and emotional delusions and passions. The truth of the path refers to that which is able to remove the basis of suffering: the precepts, meditation, and wisdom [*śīla-samādhi-prajñā*] and [insight into the truths of] transiency, suffering, and emptiness.<sup>20</sup> The truth of extinction refers to severing the bonds of causes and results in [this samsāric world of] twenty-five modes of existence.<sup>21</sup> The *I-Chiao* says that “the causes [of suffering] are true causes, and there are no other causes...The path to extinguish suffering is the true path.”<sup>22</sup> All of these passages refer to the marks of the Four Noble Truths as arising-and-perishing. Their order advances from the crude to the fine. The mark of suffering is crude, so it comes first. Though [the truth of] extinction is not the real [truth],<sup>23</sup> the real is revealed through extinction.<sup>24</sup> The mark of extinction is also crude, so it is mentioned first [before that of the path]. Also, by mentioning the resultant suffering in the world, this leads people to despise the causes [of suffering] in the world. Through extinction [of the causes of suffering] one is able to attain the fruit of transcending the world [and attaining Buddhahood]. Therefore this sequence [of the four truths] is utilized.

“Noble” [聖 *ārya*] is in contrast to and destroys heretical teachings [邪法], therefore it is called “correct and noble [正聖].” “Truth” [諦, *satya*] has three



interpretations. <1> It is called the “truth” because its self-nature is not nothingness. <2> It is called “truth” because by having insight into these four [truths] one attains the enlightenment which is not mistaken. <3> It is called “truth” because by means of this truth one can manifest [the truth] to others.<sup>25</sup> The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says, “Ordinary people have suffering but not the truth. Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have suffering and [know] the truth of suffering.”<sup>26</sup> It should be known that ordinary people do not perceive the noble [truth of] reality [聖理, as it truly is], do not attain wisdom [得智], and are not able to explain it [能說]. They only have suffering without [knowing] the truth of suffering. The Śrāvakas are endowed with these three [meanings of the truth] and therefore it is said that they possess the truth. This interpretation is harmonious with the Sūtra [*Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra?*].

#### <2> The Four Truths as

##### Neither Arising nor Perishing [701a20]

Non-arising is [the understanding of the four truths] by those who are lightly deluded concerning the real [眞], because it is understood [“named”] in accordance with reality [理, the “principle” of emptiness]. [According to this understanding,] suffering has no mark of oppression, the causes [of suffering] have no mark of fusing, the path has no mark of duality, and extinction has no mark of arising.<sup>27</sup> Also, one learns through practice that suffering is empty; the other three [truths are empty] in the same way.<sup>28</sup> Also, “non-arising” refers to [the fact that the concept of] “arising” defines the causes [of suffering] and the path.<sup>29</sup> Since the causes [of suffering] and the path are empty, there is no [substantial] arising of the causes [of suffering] nor the path. The cause [of suffering] and the path do not arise, therefore there is no [substantial] suffering

nor extinction [of suffering]. This is true reality which is integrated with phenomena; it is not a reality which appears after extinction.<sup>30</sup> The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says, "All Bodhisattvas understand suffering as non-suffering. Therefore they do not have suffering, but do have [an understanding of] the real truth."<sup>31</sup> The other three [truths] are also likewise. Therefore it is called the four noble truths [understood] as non-arising. The meaning of 'noble truth' is as explained above.

〈3〉 The Four Truths as Immeasurable [700a27]

"Immeasurable" [is the understanding of the four truths by] those who are heavily deluded concerning the middle [中], because it is understood ["named"] in accordance with phenomenal appearances [事]. [In this understanding] ignorance has immeasurable marks, because the fruits of the ten dharma realms [from hell to Buddhahood] are not the same. The causes [of ignorance] have immeasurable marks because the passions of the five levels [of deluded views and attitudes and ignorance] are not the same. The path has immeasurable marks, because the Buddha-dharma, [immeasurable as] the sands of the Ganges River, is not all the same. Extinction has immeasurable marks, because all of the perfections of virtue [*pāramitā*] are not the same. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says, "To know all *skandhas* as suffering is called a mediocre wisdom [中智]. If one discriminates all the *skandhas*, they have immeasurable characteristics. This is not something known by Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. I, in these [other Hīnayāna] Sūtras, have not completely explained this."<sup>32</sup> The other three [truths] are also likewise. This is called [the understanding] of the four noble truths as immeasurable.

〈4〉 The Four Truths as Spontaneous [701b4]

“Spontaneous” [is the understanding of the four truths by] those who are lightly deluded concerning the middle, because it is understood in accordance with reality. When one is deluded concerning reality, [to misunderstand the fact that] enlightenment is passions is called “the truth of the causes [of suffering]”; and [to misunderstand the fact that] Nirvāṇa is *samsāra* is called “the truth of suffering.” When one has understanding [concerning reality], [to know that] passions are actually enlightenment is called the “truth of the path”; and [to know] the identity of Nirvāṇa and *samsāra* is called the “truth of extinction.” The integrated nature of phenomena [with reality] is the Middle [the true nature of ultimate reality]. There is no conceptualization [思], no thought [念], no one who creates or makes [anything: 無誰造作]; therefore it is called “spontaneous.” The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says, “The worldly truth is the truth of supreme meaning...These are good expedient means which are [taught] in accordance with the capacity of sentient beings, so it is explained that there are two truths... One who has transcended this world knows the truth of supreme meaning.”<sup>33</sup> The One Real Truth, [or, Truth of One Reality, 一實諦] is not an empty delusion nor a deception. It is eternal, blissful, selfhood, and pure. Therefore this is called [the understanding of] the four noble truths as spontaneous.

However, in the explanation of the spontaneous four truths [無作四諦] in the *Śrīmalādevī Sūtra*,<sup>34</sup> it differentiates the truth of extinction as the ultimate teaching of the Buddha as eternal [常], true [諦], and a refuge [依]. The other three [truths are called] transient [非常], not true [非諦], and not a refuge [非依].<sup>35</sup> The reason is that these three are characterized as conditioned, therefore they are transient. They are transient, therefore they are false

delusions and thus not true. They are transient, therefore they are not peaceful and thus are not a refuge. The truth of extinction is detached from conditions, therefore it is eternal. It is not false delusion, therefore it is true. It is supreme peace, therefore it is a refuge. Therefore it is called the truth of supreme meaning. It is also called "beyond conceptual thought [inconceivable]."

Dharma-uttara<sup>36</sup> challenges this position [by pointing out that] the Sūtra says, "The path of the Buddha's enlightenment is eternal for three reasons: <1> It is eternal because it exhausts delusions. <2> It is eternal because it arises without depending on passions. <3> It is eternal because it is complete liberation. It is analogous to all rivers returning to the sea."<sup>37</sup> How can it be said that the truth of the path is transient? Answer:<sup>38</sup> This explanation [of the three transient and one eternal truths] in the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* [should be understood in the sense] that this first truth of the extinction of suffering does not refer to the extinction of dharmas which are [really] destroyed. Buddha dharmas without beginning, spontaneous, and more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River are perfected [by one who attains Buddhahood]. It is explained that the Tathāgata's Dharma Body is not detached from the store of passions [*kleśagarbha*?]. It is taught that the truth of suffering is the hidden name for the *tathāgata-garbha*. The manifestation is named the "Dharma Body." The wisdom concerning emptiness of those in the two vehicles is still in the realm of the four misconceptions [concerning transiency, suffering, impurity, and non-selfhood]<sup>39</sup> and they cannot perceive or know [the ultimate truth]. Now a clear explanation is needed. The one [truth of extinction] is eternal, real, and a refuge. It involves the healing [of diseases: 對治], the removal of obstacles [除障], and the manifestation of the [Dharma] body [身顯]. Therefore it is explained

that the [other] three are not eternal and not real. The one [truth of extinction] is proclaimed eternal and real!

Now I will criticize [this interpretation]. If one posits one truth [of extinction] as manifesting [the ultimate truth] and as the spontaneous truth [無作諦], and the [other] three as not yet manifesting [the ultimate truth] and not the spontaneous truth, then the one truth is complete and the other three are not complete. It should be known that the explanation of the *Śrīmāladevī Sūtra* is a sequential explanation from the shallow to the profound. It makes differentiations and has not yet integrated [the parts]. Therefore this corresponds to [an interpretation of] “spontaneous” from within [the understanding of] the four truths as immeasurable.<sup>40</sup> It is not [the interpretation of the truths as] spontaneous which is of the mind aspiring [for enlightenment], ultimate, and without dualistic differentiations. As the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says, “All four noble truths are true and real.”<sup>41</sup> Thus it should be known that all four are “true,” “real,” and “eternal.”

[ii] Classification into Crude and Subtle [701c3]

The Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna treatises which discuss the truths do not go beyond these four [understandings of the four noble truths as arising and perishing, non-arising, immeasurable, and spontaneous]. Some discuss teachings, practice, and enlightenment [教行證] which are not integrated. These are crude. [Some discuss] teaching which is integrated, but the practice and enlightenment are not integrated. These also are crude. For all to be integrated is to be subtle.

If classified in terms of the five flavors,<sup>42</sup> the two types [of understanding the four truths as immeasurable and spontaneous] in the milk teaching is not

understood by those of the two vehicles. The Mahāyāna is detached from the Hīnayāna, therefore it is one part crude [four truths as immeasurable] and one part subtle [four truths as spontaneous]. The cream teachings are of one type [of understanding the four truths as arising and perishing = Tripitaka Teaching], and the Mahāyāna is not utilized. The Hīnayāna is detached from the Mahāyāna; their roots are destroyed and they are as deaf and dumb. Therefore this is crude. The curds teachings are of [all] four types. One [the four truths as spontaneous] supplants the other three; two [four truths as arising and perishing, and neither arising nor perishing] do not enter the one [middle way?]; two [four truths as immeasurable and spontaneous] both enter the one [middle way] but one has teachings which are not integrated.<sup>43</sup> Therefore this has three parts which are crude and one part subtle. The butter teachings are of three types [four truths as non-arising, immeasurable, and spontaneous]. One [four truths as spontaneous] supplants the other two. One [spontaneous = Perfect Teaching] enters the one [middle way]. One [non-arising = Shared Teaching] does not enter the one [middle way]. One [immeasurable = Distinct Teaching] enters the one [middle way] but its teachings are not integrated. Therefore this has two parts which are crude and one part subtle. The ghee teachings are of only one type of the four truths [as spontaneous]. It is only subtle and has no crude parts.

This is a relative classification of clarifying the subtle in contrast to the crude.

[iii] Exposing the Crude  
and Manifesting the Subtle [701c12]

First I will summarize the intent of all the Sūtras. The *Pañcaviṃśati-*

*sahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* stops at clarifying three types of [understanding] the four truths [and does not include that of “arising and perishing”]. It says that “Visible form is itself emptiness; it is not emptiness through the perishing of form.”<sup>44</sup> This is the meaning of “non-arising.” “All dharmas have visible form as their content [趣] and do not transcend this content.”<sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of “immeasurable.” “Visible form is unattainable.”<sup>46</sup> How can one speak of content or no content? This is the meaning of “spontaneous.” The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* verse [24:18] also contains three understandings,<sup>47</sup> and the explanation of Hīnayāna methods of contemplation in the last two chapters<sup>48</sup> corresponds to the meaning of “arising and perishing.” The *Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings* clarifies that immeasurable [meanings] emerge from the one [Dharma].<sup>49</sup> This means that the [the real meaning of the first] three types of [understanding] the four truths is exposed and emerges from [開出] the [understanding of the four truths as] spontaneous. The *Lotus Sūtra* clarifies that the immeasurable enters the one.<sup>50</sup> This means that the [first] three types of [understanding] the four truths meet and ultimately merge with [會歸] the one type of [understanding] the four truths [as spontaneous]. The chapter on Noble Practice in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* [T 12, 673b-639b] finally discriminates [the teachings of] all Sūtras. Therefore it contains the explanation of the four types of [understanding] the four truths. In the chapter on the Virtuous King [德王: of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*], [the teachings of] all Sūtras are finally put to rest [追泯: outlined and finally summarized], along with the four understandings of the four noble truths. The text says, “The arising of arising is unexplainable. The arising of non-arising is unexplainable. The non-arising of arising is unexplainable. The non-arising of non-arising is unexplainable.”<sup>51</sup> The Sūtra

comments on this first phrase saying, "Why is the arising of arising unexplainable? Arising arises, therefore it arises. Arising arises, therefore it does not arise. [Neither of these is conceptually understandable as to how or why anything arises,] therefore it is unexplainable." [T 12, 733c13-15] According to the text, merely [the understanding of] arising and not arising [is enough] to interpret the arising of arising [the Tripiṭaka Teaching]. But if this [understanding of the] "arising of arising" is included in [the understanding of] "the arising of non-arising,"<sup>53</sup> then what necessity is there to teach the "arising of arising?" The Buddha presents one [position] to stand for all for the sake of clever people. If they can grasp the meaning [of ultimate truth through, for example, the Tripiṭaka Teaching], then [they realize that] the arising of arising is identical with the arising of non-arising, and is also identical with the non-arising of arising, and also identical with the non-arising of non-arising. Why should he one-sidedly preach the one phrase of "the arising of arising?"<sup>53</sup> Because if [clever people] grasp the meaning [of the ultimate truth contained in the correct understanding of "the arising of arising"], the other three lines are understood likewise.

Question: Why does the Buddha make a one-sided interpretation [such as the Tripiṭaka Teaching]? Answer: This is for the sake of clever people. Also, because there are [various] causes and conditions [and capacities to understand], therefore it should be simplified in this way. The people of the times [of the Buddha]<sup>54</sup> are like the clever horse which, upon seeing the shadow of the whip, [enters the stable or starts running] without actually being whipped. If finally summarized [追泯] in this manner [in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*], what teaching is not satisfactorily explained [寂: "put to rest"]. At times three of the



explainables are crude and one is subtle. At times three unexplainables are crude and the one unexplainable is subtle. At times all four explainables are crude, and all four unexplainables are subtle. At times the four explainables and the four unexplainables have both crude and subtle elements. At times the four explainables and the four unexplainables are all neither crude nor subtle.

In these various ways, all are complete and partake in subtlety; the conventional is exposed and the real is made manifest. For all four [understandings of the four noble truths] to be unexplainable is of a high level [位高]. For all four to be explainable shows the vastness of their essence [體廣]. For the four to be both explainable and unexplainable shows the length of their function [用長]. For the four to be neither explainable nor unexplainable is for them to be neither high nor vast nor long nor short nor One nor differentiated; they are all the same in being called “subtle.”

[iv] Contemplating the Mind

You should already know about contemplating the mind, so I will not repeat myself.<sup>55</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> T refers to the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku, *et. al.*, eds., Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934, Volume 33, page 700, column c, line 15, to page 702, column a, line 13.

<sup>2</sup> For details on Chih-i’s doctrinal classification scheme see David Chappell, ed., *T’ien-t’ai Buddhism: An Outline of the Fourfold Teachings*, Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1983, and Leon Hurvitz, *Chih-i (538–597): An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk*, *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*,

Vol. 12, 1960–62.

<sup>3</sup> For details see my article, “Chih-i's Interpretation of *Jñeyāvaraṇa* : An Application of the Threefold Truth Concept,” in *Annual Memoirs of the Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute*, Vol. 1, 1983, 51–72, and my Ph.D. dissertation *The Two Truths Controversy in China and Chih-i's Threefold Truth Concept*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> This is the third part of the section on the subtlety of the objective realm [境妙, T 33, 698b–707a], which consists of an analysis of the ten “suchlike characteristics” [十如是], conditioned co-arising [十二因緣], the four noble truths [四聖諦], the two truths [or twofold truth: 二諦], the threefold truth [三諦], and the one truth [一諦].

<sup>5</sup> Chan-jan, the sixth T'ien-t'ai patriarch and authoritative commentator on Chih-i's major works, identifies these as anonymous “*Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* Masters.” This refers to scholars who specialized in the study of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, as other scholars specialized in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* or *Mahāyāna Saṃgraha*. See *Bukkyō Taikei*, Bukkyō Taikei Kankōkai, ed., Tokyo: Nakayama Shobo. (reprint) 1978, *Fa hua hsüan i* Vol. II, 73–77 [hereafter referred to as *Bukkyō Taikei: Fa hua hsüan i*].

<sup>6</sup> This refers to the sixth section in the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* on “The Unlimited Noble Truths”: T 12, 221a20–b7. See Alex Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974, 95 [hereafter referred to as “Wayman: *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*”]. This section emphasizes that although Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have severed certain passions and delusions, they have not severed them all, and thus the term “noble” applies only to the Tathāgata who has severed all obstacles to perfect enlightenment.

<sup>7</sup> 作 [*krta?*]: created, conditioned, conscious, deliberate; in contrast to 無作: uncreated, unconscious, unconditioned, spontaneous. This refers to the eighth section of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, T 12, 221b22ff. Wayman: *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, 96–97, translates these two terms as “Create” and “Uncreate.” Diana Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal. Queen Śrīmālā and the Tathāgatarāgī*, Missoula: Scholar’s Press, 1980, 191, translates them as “conditioned” and “unconditioned.” Though all of these English terms are inadequate, I have chosen to translate these terms as “deliberate” and “spontaneous” based on Chih-i’s interpretation. In Chih-i’s fourfold classification of ways to understand the four noble truths, the fourth category is the “four noble truths as spontaneous.” As we shall see, this refers to reality as it is, uncreated and without being deliberately conceptualized. The term “spontaneous” takes on important meaning in the realm of practice, where the ultimate practice is the spontaneous contemplation and insight into reality. The Buddha’s wisdom is not a deliberate analysis of, but a spontaneous and omniscient insight into, reality. Also, the Buddha’s soteriological activity is not a deliberate attempt to save beings but a spontaneous outflowing of compassion. The *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*’s use of 作 and 無作, on the other hand, is closer to the meaning of “created” and “uncreated” or “conditioned” and “unconditioned.” The passage in question reads: “The meaning of the conditioned [deliberate] noble truths is explained as the four truths which can be measured [有量]. Why? Because it is not by depending on others that one can know all suffering, sever all causes of suffering, realize all extinction, and cultivate the entire path. Therefore, World Honored One, there is both conditioned *samsāra* and unconditioned *samsāra*, and Nirvāṇa is also likewise, being with remainder and without remainder. The

meaning of the unconditioned [spontaneous] noble truths is explained as the four noble truths which cannot be measured [無量]. Why? Because he can, with his own power, know all suffering, sever all causes of suffering, realize all extinction, and cultivate the entire path." [T 12, 221b22–29] In other words, as the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* itself says, the Buddha's wisdom and activity is spontaneous and immeasurable because he depends only on himself and his own power. The Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha depend on others [the Buddha]; therefore their activity and understanding is conditioned, limited, and deliberate.

<sup>8</sup> *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, T 12, 221b23. See previous note.

<sup>9</sup> 所作: They still have something to attain, some practice to accomplish. In this case the meaning of the Chinese term 作, meaning "act, do, or create," is being used as a play on words.

<sup>10</sup> 有作: In this case meaning "having more work to do, or more practice to accomplish." It is impossible to make a consistent and readable English translation in cases such as this which depends on the various meanings and nuances of the Chinese characters themselves.

<sup>11</sup> See *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, T 12, 221b23–24. See translation of this section in note 3 above.

<sup>12</sup> In other words, Śrāvakas hear of the four noble truths through the teaching of the Buddha, but this is a "limited" understanding of the truth, not the infinite immeasurable truth which is beyond verbalization.

<sup>13</sup> 無作, which I usually translate as "spontaneous." In this case it means "having no more practice which needs to be accomplished."

<sup>14</sup> This is a paraphrase of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, T 12, 221b27–29. The full

phrase reads: the Buddha “can, with his own power, know all suffering, sever all causes of suffering, realize all extinction, and cultivate the entire path.”

<sup>15</sup>The classification is based loosely on the long discussion of the four noble truths in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 676b–387b. The fourfold classification *per se* is not given in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. Rather, Chih-i extracts these phrases, such as “arising and perishing” and “immeasurable” from the Sūtra. To this extent the classification is original with Chih-i.

<sup>16</sup>This refers to those of the Tripiṭaka Teaching who have a partial or one-sided [偏] view in the sense that they realize the conditioned arising and perishing [*pratītyasamutpāda*] of dharmas without realizing the emptiness of all dharmas.

<sup>17</sup>In other words, the first two truths of suffering and the causes of suffering are one category in the sense that they refer to the cause and effect [of suffering] in this saṃsāric world. The last two truths of the Path and extinction are also one category and refer to the cause and effect of liberation and the transcendence of this saṃsāric realm.

<sup>18</sup>The *Samyuktābhidharmahr̥daya Śāstra*, 雜阿毘曇心論, T 28, No. 1552, 869–965, is a Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma text by Dharmatrāta [法救], an expansion of the *Abhidharmahr̥daya Śāstra* of Dharmaśrī [法勝], T 28, No. 1550, 809–832. It is extant only in Chinese translation. This text was translated into Chinese by Saṃghavarman [僧伽跋摩] in 434 or 435 A.D. The passage paraphrased by Chih-i is in the eighth chapter of the *Samyuktābhidharmahr̥daya Śāstra*, T 28, 936b23–c5, which says, “Question: The [four] truths have what characteristics? Answer:

The nature of the results of all volitional activity

With [passionate] outflows is taught as suffering.

The nature of causes is the causes [of suffering].

The exhaustion of all suffering is the truth of extinction.

'The nature of the results of all volitional activity with [passionate] outflows is taught as suffering' means that all volitional activity with [passionate] outflows has causes and the nature of bondage; therefore it is taught as 'suffering.' 'The nature of causes is the causes [of suffering]' means that these volitional activities with [passionate] outflows have the nature of causation; therefore it is taught as 'the causes [of suffering].' Therefore suffering and its causes are one thing. The causes and results are established as two truths. 'The exhaustion of all suffering is the truth of extinction' means that all dharmas with [passionate] outflows are ultimately quiescent and extinct. This is taught as 'the truth of extinction.'

If all volitional activities are without [passionate] outflow,

This is taught as the truth of the path.

Because of these two causes and conditions,

The minute [phenomena] appear one after the other.

'If all volitional activities are without [passionate] outflow, this is taught as the truth of the Path' means that all volitional activity that is lacking in [passionate] outflows is taught as the truth of the path."

<sup>19</sup>The following definitions given by Chih-i are based on the section on the four truths in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 676b8ff., but the analysis is actually a rather free paraphrase and says more than the original. This section in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* begins as follows [T 12, 676b8–15]: "Next, Kāśyapa, there are noble practices, that is, the four noble truths of suffering, its

causes, extinction, and the path. Kāśyapa, ‘suffering’ refers to the mark of oppression. ‘Causes [of suffering]’ refers to the mark of being able to arouse and expand [this suffering]. ‘Extinction’ refers to the mark of quiescence. ‘The path’ refers to the mark of Mahāyāna...Also, good sons, suffering has three marks: <1> the suffering of suffering, <2> the suffering of activity, <3> the suffering of destruction. The ‘causes [of suffering]’ are the twenty-five modes of existence. ‘Extinction’ refers to the extinction of the twenty-five modes of existence. ‘The path’ refers to the cultivation of the precepts, meditation, and wisdom...”

<sup>20</sup>These are usually given as the four “signs” or basic teachings of the Buddha dharma: transiency, suffering, nonsubstantiality [emptiness], and non-selfhood [*anitya-duḥkha-śūnya-anātmatā*].

<sup>21</sup>二十五有：This is a classification of the samsāric realm of existence into twenty five levels: the four continents, the four evil destinies, the six heavenly realms of desire, the four *dhyaṇa* stages, the four stages of formlessness, the realm beyond conceptualizations, and the realm of the *anāgāmin*. For details see Hurvitz: *Chih-i*, 339–342.

<sup>22</sup>遺教：This refers to the *Fo ch’ui pan nieh p’an liao shuo chiao chieh ching* [佛垂般涅槃略說教誡經], T 12, No. 389, 1110–1112]. The text is not extant except in this one translation attributed to Kumārajīva. Its content purports to be the last words and testament of the Buddha before his entry into *parinirvāṇa*, hence the title. It was considered as an appendix to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. Chih-i’s paraphrase is from the last part of the Sūtra, T 12, 1112a25–28, which reads, “The truth of suffering which the Buddha explains is a truly real suffering. The causes [of suffering] are true causes, and there are no different causes. If

suffering is extinguished, then the causes are extinguished. If the causes are extinguished, then the results are extinguished. The path for extinguishing suffering is a real path, and there is no other path.”

<sup>23</sup>This is in contrast, for example, to the position of the *Ch'eng shih lun* scholars, who taught that the real truth [*paramārthasatya*] is to be identified with, or corresponds to, the third Noble Truth of extinction. It is also the position of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, which Chih-i discusses in more detail below.

<sup>24</sup>The exact meaning of this phrase is not clear, which is reflected by the long discussion on it in the commentaries: see *Bukkyō Taikai: Fa hua hsüan i* II, 90–98. I believe it means that for Chih-i [contrary to the position of some scholars who teach that Nirvāṇa is extinction and that the final goal of Buddhism is to attain complete extinction, and that therefore the truth of extinction is identical with the highest truth] complete extinction is not the final goal but only an expedient teaching at the level of the Tripiṭaka Teaching. The arising and perishing of dharmas is not the real, ultimate truth. However, it is a means and a practice—the extinction of passion and delusion is a necessary step—through which one attains insight into reality and through which the ultimate truth is revealed.

<sup>25</sup>In other words, the truth has three meanings or functions. <1> The ontological sense in that the truth is such because it refers correctly to a reality which is truly there, and is not nothingness. <2> The existential sense in that it is through realizing this truth that one attains enlightenment. <3> The practical sense, in that the realization of this truth gives one the authority and power to teach it to others. These three meanings of the truth are later concisely outlined as <1> “noble reality” [聖理], <2> the “attainment of



wisdom” [得智], and <3> the “ability to teach” [能說]. I do not know if this analysis of the meaning of “truth” is original with Chih-i or if it is based on some text, or if he is outlining the general interpretation of the term prevalent in his day.

26T 12, 682c7–14. The full passage reads, “All ordinary people have suffering and not the truth. Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have suffering and [know] the truth of suffering, but not true reality [真實]. All Bodhisattvas understand suffering as no-suffering, therefore they do not have suffering but have the real truth. All ordinary people have the causes [of suffering] but not the truth. Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have the causes [of suffering] and [know] the truth of the causes [of suffering]. All Bodhisattvas understand the causes [of suffering] and are lacking in the causes [of suffering], therefore they do not have the causes [of suffering] but have the real truth. Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have extinction but not the real [or, “it is not real”?]. Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas have extinction and have the real truth. Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have the path but not the real [or, “it is not real”?]. Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas have the path and have the real truth.”

27In other words, since all is empty of substantial Being, there is no real suffering nor causes of suffering, and so forth. These phrases denying the substantial arising and perishing of the four truths are found in scattered passages of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Viśeṣacinta-brahmapariṣcchā Sūtra*. For example, the *Viśeṣacinta-brahmapariṣcchā Sūtra* T 15, 39a2–6 says, “One should know that the noble truths are neither suffering nor the causes [of suffering], nor extinction, nor the path. The noble truths mean: knowing that suffering does not [substantially] arise is called the noble truth of suffering.

Knowing that the causes [of suffering] do not fuse is called the noble truth of the causes [of suffering]. Knowing that ultimately in the extinction of dharmas there is neither arising nor perishing is called the noble truth of extinction. That all dharmas are equal and that one attains the path by means of the non-duality of dharmas is called the noble truth of the path.”

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, the section on “learning through practice” [習應] in the *Ta chih tu lun*, T. 25, 329c1ff.

<sup>29</sup>In other words, these two truths are the causes, or basis, for the arising of suffering and release from suffering.

<sup>30</sup>In other words, phenomenal appearances are empty of substantial Being and thus identical and integrated with ultimate reality. Reality [Nirvāṇa] is not separate from and transcendent of concrete everyday phenomena.

<sup>31</sup>T 12, 682c9–10. See note 22.

<sup>32</sup>This is an abbreviated quote from the same section on the four truths in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 684a23–28. The full quote reads: “Good son! There are two types of wisdom in knowing the four noble truths. The first is mediocre and the second is superior. The wisdom of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas is mediocre and the wisdom of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is superior. Good son! To know that all *skandhas* involve suffering is called a mediocre wisdom. To discriminate all *skandhas* as having immeasurable marks and that they all involve suffering is not something known by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. This is called superior wisdom. Good son! I did not explain these meanings in the [other] Sūtras.” It might be worth pointing out here that in this context 中智 means “mediocre wisdom” and does not refer to the “wisdom of the middle” which in the T'ien-t'ai system is considered the highest

wisdom.

<sup>33</sup>This is an abbreviated quote from the same passage on the four truths in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 684c13–18. The full quote reads: “‘Good son! The worldly truth is the truth of supreme meaning.’ ‘World Honored One. If so, then there are not two truths.’ The Buddha said, ‘Good son! There are good expedient means which are [taught] in accordance with the capacities of sentient beings, so it is explained that there are two truths. Good son! If we follow [conventional] verbal explanations, there are two kinds [of truths]: first, the worldly dharma, and second, the transworldly dharma. Good son! That known by those who have transcended the world is called the truth of supreme meaning. [Note: Chih-i’s version is slightly different here.] The knowledge of the worldly man is called the worldly truth.’”

<sup>34</sup>The *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* discusses the four noble truths in two categories which in this context are better translated as the “conditioned” or “created” noble truths [作聖諦] and the “unconditioned” or “uncreated” noble truths [無作聖諦]. See T 12, 221b16–222a3; Wayman: *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, 96–98. For a translation of this section see note 3 above.

<sup>35</sup>The tenth chapter of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* on “The One Truth” says: “Of the four noble truths, three are transient and one is eternal. Why? Because three are characterized as conditioned [有為相]. To be conditioned means to be transient. To be transient means to be a false and deluded dharma [虛妄法]. To be a false and deluded dharma means to be not true, not eternal, and not a refuge. Therefore the truths of suffering, the causes [of suffering], and the path are not the truth of supreme meaning, because they are neither eternal nor a refuge. The one truth of the extinction of suffering is detached from being

conditioned. To be detached from being conditioned means to be eternal. To be eternal means that it is not a false and deluded dharma. To not be a false and deluded dharma means that it is true, eternal, and a refuge. Therefore the truth of extinction is the [one truth of] supreme meaning. The truth of extinction is beyond conceptual thought [*acintya*].” [T 12, 221b25–222a5]

<sup>36</sup>達摩訶多羅: the identity of this man is uncertain, although Chih-i often refers to him as an authority. See my article on *jñeyāvaraṇa*, *Annual Memoirs...*, Vol. I, 198, 69, note 22.

<sup>37</sup>It is not clear which Sūtra this refers to, or if this is a general analysis of the meaning of all the Sūtras by Dharma-uttara. The *Fa hua hsüan i shih ch'ien* says that this is from the *Śrīmalādevī Sūtra*, but the *Shakusen Kōgi* points out that the *Śrīmalādevī Sūtra* contains no such explicit passage. See the *Bukkyō Taikei: Fa hua hsüan i* II, 111.

<sup>38</sup>The following section is very difficult to decipher. It is not clear whose or what position is being defended. Perhaps this is the response of *Śrīmalādevī Sūtra* scholars to Dharma-uttara's challenge, for Chih-i then proceeds to criticize it.

<sup>39</sup>四不顛倒: usually this technical term is used in the positive sense of 四顛倒, which refers to the misconceptions of ordinary people who do not realize that the world is transient, full of suffering, impure, and without substantial Being. The negation of these categories must refer to the idea, as discussed by Chih-i above, that Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are attached to these four negative concepts and do not realize the ultimate truth that reality and Nirvāṇa is eternal, blissful, pure, and selfhood.

<sup>40</sup>Thus the teaching of the *Śrīmalādevī Sūtra* corresponds to the Distinct

Teaching and the understanding of the four noble truths as immeasurable, even though it utilizes the term “spontaneous noble truth” [無作聖諦].

<sup>41</sup>有諦有實: This phrase modifies each of the four noble truths in the last part of the section on the four noble truths in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 685b7. The context, a discussion of the meaning of the “real truth” [實諦] reads: “Mañjuśrī said to the Buddha, ‘World Honored One. If the truly real [眞實] is the content of the real truth, then the dharmas of the truly real are identical with the Tathāgata, emptiness, and Buddha nature. If so, then there are no distinctions between the Tathāgata, emptiness, and Buddha nature.’ The Buddha said to Mañjuśrī, ‘There is suffering, which is true and real. There are causes [of suffering], which are true and real. There is extinction, which is true and real. There is the path, which is true and real. Good son! The Tathāgata is neither suffering nor the truth, but reality. Emptiness is neither suffering nor the truth, but reality. The Buddha nature is neither suffering nor the truth, but reality...’” [T 12, 685b3–9]

<sup>42</sup>The “five flavors” is another of Chih-i’s classification schemes. This one is based on an analogy in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 690c28–691a8, which compares the attainment of Nirvāṇa to five progressive stages in the refinement of milk. In T’ien-t’ai philosophy the analogy is used to illustrate the stages in the development of the Buddha Dharma. The five flavors are milk [乳], cream [酪], curds [生酥], butter [熟酥], and ghee [醍醐].

<sup>43</sup>For example, the threefold truth in the Distinct teaching is an understanding of emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle as distinct, gradual, and successive concepts. The threefold truth in the Perfect teaching is that they are synonymous, identical, and integrated.

<sup>44</sup>The phrase “visible form is itself emptiness” is found frequently in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. The second part of the phrase, “it is not emptiness through the perishing of form” was not found. However, see the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, T 8, 221c1–5, and the *Ta chih tu lun*, T 25, 327c22–328a18, which reads, “Visible form is itself emptiness, and emptiness is itself visible form...All dharmas have the nature of reality and do not arise, do not perish, are not defiled, and are not pure...”

<sup>45</sup>T 8, 333b12–13. I have translated 趣 as ‘content’ but it literally means ‘leans toward’ or ‘tends to.’ A literal translation would thus read, “All dharmas tend toward visible matter and do not transcend this tendency.” This phrase occurs in a passage in the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* where this pattern is repeated for numerous concepts. For example, it is repeated for all the five *skandhas* [T 8, 333b14–15]; for the six *pāramitās* [T 8, 333b17ff.], that “all dharmas have emptiness as their content...” [T 8, 332c26], that “all dharmas have the ten powers and all the wisdom of the Buddha as their content...” [T 8, 333c12–13], and so forth.

<sup>46</sup>The “unattainability” [不可得] of anything is a common phrase used in the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* to illustrate emptiness. See, for example, T 8, 260c, or T 8, 369–397a.

<sup>47</sup>The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* chapter 24, verse 18 provides the basis in Chih-i's philosophy for the threefold truth, as well as the fourfold pattern discussed in my introduction. Kumārajīva's translation of this verse, which served as the basis for Chih-i's understanding, reads:

All things which arise through conditioned co-arising  
I explain as emptiness.

Again, it is a conventional designation.

Again, it is the meaning of the Middle Path. [T. 30, 33b11–12]

The first line of the verse on conditioned co-arising corresponds to the understanding of the four noble truths as arising and perishing. The second line on emptiness corresponds to the four truths as neither arising nor perishing, the third line on conventional existence to the four truths as immeasurable, and the fourth line on the Middle to the four truths as spontaneous. For an analysis of this pattern and the interrelationship of T'ien-t'ai technical terms and concepts, see the first chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation.

<sup>48</sup>See the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, Chapter 26 on “Contemplation of Twelfold Conditioned Co-arising” and Chapter 27 on “Heretical Views,” T 30, 36b39c. The last line of chapter 26 says, “This is the meaning of the twelfold conditioned co-arising as arising and perishing as explained in detail in the Abhidharma and Sūtras.” [T 30, 36c23–24]. Chapter 27 opens with, “We have now heard the Mahāyāna dharma which destroys heretical views. Now we wish to hear of the Śrāvaka’s dharma which destroys heretical views.” [T 30, 36c25–26]

<sup>49</sup>The *Wu liang i ching*, T 9, 385c, says, “Good sons! There is one doctrine [法門: ‘dharma-gate’] which leads Bodhisattvas to attain *anuttara samyak-sambodhi* quickly...This one doctrine is called ‘immeasurable’...As natural desires are immeasurable, the preaching of the dharma is immeasurable. The preaching of the dharma is immeasurable so its meanings are immeasurable. Immeasurable meanings emerge from the one dharma...” See also Katō, *et. al.*, *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, New York: Weatherhill 1975, 12.

<sup>50</sup>This is not a quote from the *Lotus Sūtra* but speaks of the general teaching

of the *Lotus Sūtra* that all are included in the one Buddha-vehicle.

<sup>51</sup>The following section is based on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T 12, 733c9–13, which discusses the idea that all positions are ultimately beyond explanation, verbalization, and conceptual understanding. The text reads, “Good son! The non-arising of arising is unexplainable. The arising of arising is unexplainable. The arising of non-arising is unexplainable. The non-arising of non-arising is unexplainable. Arising is also unexplainable. Non-arising is also unexplainable. One is not able to explain them because they are due to causes and conditions [*pratītyasamutpāda*].” Chih-i takes the first four of these “unexplainables” and classifies them with his other fourfold classifications. Thus the “arising of arising” corresponds to the Tripiṭaka Teaching and the four truths as arising and perishing; the “arising of non-arising” corresponds to the Shared Teaching and the four truths as neither arising nor perishing; the “non-arising of arising” corresponds to the Distinct Teaching and the four truths as immeasurable, and the “non-arising of non-arising” corresponds to the Perfect Teaching and the four truths as spontaneous. The main point here is that they are all ultimately beyond description and conceptual understanding.

<sup>52</sup>Thus the Shared Teaching is needed to bring out the true meaning and implications of the Tripiṭaka Teaching.

<sup>53</sup>In other words, why should the Buddha preach the Tripiṭaka Teaching if it is not the full revelation of the ultimate truth?

<sup>54</sup>In other words, the direct disciples of the Buddha who are clever and have a great capacity for understanding were able to realize the ultimate truth of Mahāyāna upon first hearing the Tripiṭaka Teaching, such as those who attained enlightenment upon hearing the sermon which constituted the first



turning of the wheel of the dharma. Thus the Tripiṭaka Teaching actually contains within it, for those with eyes to see, the ultimate truth later revealed more fully in the Shared, Distinct, and Perfect Teachings.

<sup>55</sup>Chih-i has already outlined his thoughts on “contemplating the mind” in the previous section on conditioned co-arising. In short, contemplating a single thought as it arises in the mind is the most accessible of all practices, and since all aspects of reality are [at least latently] contained in all other aspects of reality, one can attain insight into all of reality and gain enlightenment through contemplating a single thought. In Chih-i’s words, “contemplating the mind means contemplating that one ignorant thought is identical to enlightenment.” [T 33, 700c5]