

BOOK REVIEWS

FOUNDATIONS OF T'IENT-AI PHILOSOPHY—The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism. By Paul L. Swanson. Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, California 1989. x+399 pp. with Notes, Charts, Bibliography and Index. ISBN 0-89581-919-8.

Paul L. Swanson is already well known as a specialist of T'ien-t'ai/Tendai studies. In the *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* (Vol. 2, 1986, pp. 219-232), he surveyed recent T'ien-t'ai studies in Japan. In 1987, he edited a special issue on "Tendai Buddhism in Japan" in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Vol. 14, 2-3).

The principal aim of the present book is to give the Patriarch of T'ien-t'ai, Chih-i (538-597), his due as the constructor of "a syncretic and comprehensive Chinese Mādhyamikan philosophical system" (p. 111). The reader should not be surprised by the reference to Mādhyamika in relation to a master better known for his meditative practice and for his emphasis on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Apart from its historical importance and its impressive permanence in contemporary Japanese Buddhism, the T'ien-t'ai/Tendai School is interesting for its hybrid character. T'ien-t'ai has combined multiple Buddhist elements, all originally Indian, but belonging probably to different currents of the Mahayanist movement. Let us list here some of these elements: 1. the practice of the *sāmatha-vipaśyanā/chih-kuan* meditation; 2. the worship of the *Lotus Sūtra* which is still the foremost canon of the School; 3. Mādhyamika thought, very present in Chih-i's thought at a time when the Mādhyamika heritage was kept by a particular school, the San-lun School; 4. a strong influence of the Tathāgata-garbha doctrine attested by the surprising fact that the Mahayanist *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the foremost canon of that doctrine, is quoted even more often than the *Lotus Sūtra* in the text studied by Swanson. Last but not least we know that, after the time of Chih-i, the T'ien-t'ai school became heavily involved with Tantrism.

With a comprehensive introduction and copious annotation, Swanson presents an English translation of the lengthy passage on the Three Truths

that figures at the end of the first fascicle and in the second fascicle of the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* (T. 1716, 20 fascicles), the main work of Chih-i on the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The *Fa-hua hsüan-i* takes the form of a long scholastic elaboration on each of the terms in the Chinese title of the *Lotus Sūtra: Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, so detailed that, as Swanson observes (p. 15), "the bulk of this work is concerned with a discussion of the word 'subtle' (*miao* 妙)."

The *Fa-hua hsüan-i* is not the only work in which Chih-i discusses the Three Truths. Swanson is now engaged in an international project involving the multilingual translation of Chih-i's major work, the *Mo-ho Chih-kuan* (T. 1911). Swanson points out (p. 123) that, in both works, Chih-i follows the same pattern and conceptual framework. In the *Mo-ho Chih-kuan* dealing with Buddhist practice, especially meditation, Chih-i focussed on practical application. In the work translated here, on the *Lotus Sūtra*, Chih-i centers his attention on the doctrinal implications of the Buddhist Dharma.

The *Fa-hua hsüan-i* nowadays is used mostly as a source book for important quotations of *sūtras* and *śāstras*. What attracts Swanson to this work is Chih-i's treatment of a verse of the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikās* of Nāgārjuna (Verse 18 of the 24th chapter of the edition of the *Kārikās* by Louis de La Vallée Poussin). This very important *kārikā*, called in the Chinese tradition the "Stanza of the Three Identities" (*sanzege* 三是偈) or "Stanza of the Three Truths" (*santaige* 三諦偈), has been the object of a thorough study by J. May and K. Mimaki (s.v. "Chūdō" 中道 in *Hōbōgirin*, vol. V, 1979, p. 461-462, 464, 466). We will come back to this study.

First, we will try a short analysis of Swanson's introduction to his translation of an extract from the *Fa-hua hsüan-i*. It is a magistral survey and a worthy successor to that well-known earlier "classic": *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* by the London University bred Richard Robinson.

After a first chapter situating the problem, Swanson starts his inquiry on the Two or Three Truths with Chapter II devoted to Kumārajīva (350-409), an adept of Mādhyamika and ancestor of the San-lun School, and his disciples. Kumārajīva's doctrine was, as Robinson had made clear, that of the *Ta-chih-tu lun* (T. 1509). Besides being inspired by the Twofold Truth—conventional (*saṃvṛiti-satya*) and supreme (*paramārtha-satya*) of the *Ta-chih-tu lun*—Chih-i also bases his Three Truths theory on other sources: two apocryphal sutras, the study of which is the object of Chapter III. These apocryphal sutras are the *Jen-wang ching* (T. 245), which extolls *chen ti* 真諦, *su ti* 俗諦 and *ta-i-i ti* 第一義諦, and the *Ying lo ching* (T. 1485), which extolls a quite different and more Chinese system which feature negation (*wu ti* 無諦), affirmation (*yu ti* 有諦) and the supreme truth of the Middle Way (*chung-tao ta-i-i ti* 中道第一義諦). The presentation of these two texts is accompanied by

observations on the apocryphal Chinese sutras, a subject which now takes a well justified and prominent place among contemporary studies of the Chinese Buddhist scriptures (Robert E. Buswell, ed. *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, Hawaii U.P., 1990).

Chapter IV centers on the controversy about the meaning of the Two Truths at the court of Prince Chao-ling during the Liang Dynasty. Chapter V analyzes the content of one chapter of the self-proclaimed "Encyclopaedia of Mahāyāna," the *Ta-ch'eng i-chang* (T. 1851) by Ching-ying Hui-yüan, which is almost contemporary with the works of Chih-i. Chapter VI returns to the Liang period to analyze the theories of two *Satyasiddhi* (T. 1646) scholars. There we learn why the positive interpretation of emptiness, with its emphasis on *samvṛti-satya* and conventional existence, has been considered Hīnayāna.

Chapter VII deals with a contemporary (younger by eleven years) of Chih-i, Chi-tsang (549–623). They were on friendly terms, but it seems now that some of the ideas which editors of the T'ang period attributed to Chih-i in fact go back to Chi-tsang. Swanson shows that this new insight, recently suggested by Japanese scholars, does not bear materially on the question of the Three Truths, since the positions of the San-lun School represented by Chi-tsang and those of the T'ien-t'ai schools are different. Swanson relies on a sub-commentary (T. 2255) by the Japanese Anchō 安澄 (763–814) on the commentary (T. 1824) by Chi-tsang on the *Mūla-mādhyamaka-kārikās* (T. 1564). Anchō refers to the most eminent patriarch of early Buddhism in China, Tao-an (312–385). One wonders why Swanson does not make any reference to the thought of Chuang-tzu when dealing with Tao-an's *Treatise on Original Non-being* (*Pen-wu lun* 本無論). In the case of Seng-chao (374–414?) (Chapter II, pp. 33–37), Swanson mentions the evident influence of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu. Why neglect this aspect in the case of the earlier Tao-an? It is obvious that many of the pairs which have been related to the Two Truths—*ti* 体 and *yung* 用, *pen* 本 and *mo* 末 and, as we have already seen, *wu* 無 and *yu* 有—need to be studied in the broad context of Chinese thought and not from an exclusively Buddhist perspective. In his discussion of Chou Yung 周顛 (d.485), a representative of the San-lun tradition between Seng-chao and Chi-tsang, Swanson relies only on Whalen Lai and seems unaware of the vivid account by Willy Vande Walle in his "Lay Buddhism among the Chinese Aristocracy during the Period of the Southern Dynasties. Hsiao Tzu-liang (460–494) and his Entourage," *Orientalia Lovaniensia*, 10, 1979, pp. 281–284.

In Chapter VIII, Swanson offers a detailed, clear and unpretentious analysis of the part of the *Fa-hua hsiian-i* which he translated and annotated. Dealing with the rather obscure beginnings of the T'ien-t'ai School, Swanson emphasizes the role of Hui-wen (early 6th century), a fervent reader of the *Ta-chih-tu lun* who attained enlightenment upon reading in that book the famous

Stanza of the Three Truths. He downplays Chih-i's Master, Hui-ssu (515-577), whose interests also extended to the Threefold Truth, as we know from Paul Magnin (*La vie et l'oeuvre de Huisi—Les origines de la secte bouddhique du Tiantai*, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, 1979, pp. 188-190). It is to be regretted that Swanson did not explain why his appreciation of Hui-ssu differs from that of Magnin and Ōcho Enichi (see p. 277).

I must confess my deep admiration for Swanson's precise and modest approach to translating and commenting on an important and difficult text. The modern reader of Buddhist scholasticism, struggling with the numeral classifications typical of this literature, very often gets the impression that several categories overlap. In such cases, Swanson never tries to hide his uncertainty.

A serious shortcoming, however, of the present study is its near-complete neglect of European scholarship. We have mentioned the "Chūdō" article of *Hōbōgin*. Swanson gives the impression that he is the first to deal in a Western language with the Three Truths as understood by Chih-i. Apparently, he is not aware that Chih-i developed his ideas on the Three Truths not only in the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* and in the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* but also in his *Wei-mo-ching wen-shu*/*Yuimakyō monsho* (Z., vol. 27 and 28). It is on the *Yuimakyō monsho* that the *Hōbōgin* presentation of the Threefold Truth in the Tendai tradition is centered (s.v. *Chūdō*, p. 466). We see too often young American scholars waste their time researching matters that have already long ago received a better treatment by a European scholar. It is aggravating in this case since Swanson overlooked a short study, perfectly up-to-date, easily accessible to him, and covering some aspects of Chih-i's theory that he had not included in his inquiry. Similarly, it is a pity that Swanson's annotation (p. 293-4) on the important concept of the "Five Flavors" is so summary. He could have profited from reading the detailed and widely appreciated treatment of this term by Anna Seidel (*Hōbōgin*, VI, 1983, p. 640-651, s.v. "Daigo" 醍醐).

These omissions are deplorable in a work so well nurtured by Japanese erudition. Knowing that Swanson is working in Japan, I might also mention our constant amazement at the too frequent disregard of the *Hōbōgin* encyclopaedia in Japanese Buddhist studies where, so often, it could have been put to such good use. Does the fact that it is published on Japanese soil make it less attractive? Is this a case of "*Tōdai moto kurashi*"?

We have mentioned Swanson's omission of Vande Walle's study although this is published in English. More widespread is the blithe disregard, by English speaking scholars, of European scholarship in languages other than English. I would venture to point out that this neglect is not justified by a better attention to Japanese scholarship. One tradition of study does not exclude the other. This consideration applies especially to a man of such wide

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knowledge as Chih-i. T'ien-t'ai studies, it is true, are a comparatively new field in Western Buddhist studies but, as Swanson demonstrates very well, Chih-i is a link in a tradition and he has to be credited with using excellent Buddhist scriptures. Some of these texts quoted by Chih-i have been extensively studied and translated in Europe. Burnouf's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* during the first half of the 19th century might still be the best translation we have. The *Ta-chih-tu lun* and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* have been both translated and annotated by Étienne Lamotte. As everybody knows, a translation of a text by Lamotte is not only translation but also the most thorough study of that text. Swanson makes good use of the French translation by Lamotte of the first third of the *Ta-chih-tu lun* and refers several times to his *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* translation. As to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, we find in Swanson's footnotes frequent references to "Boin" with a page number. It is only in the Bibliography that we discover that these are references to the English translation of Lamotte's French translation of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*. Quite apart from the insult to Sara Boin's devotion to the memory of Prof. Lamotte, to quote any of Lamotte's work only by the name of its translator into English is sad illustration of the general undervaluation of French scholarship by many English speaking scholars. At least could he have used "Lamotte/Boin"? There is happy news for these scholars: more works by Lamotte are or will be published in English translation (among them, the monumental *Ta-chih-tu lun*). May the names of the pioneers not be forgotten!

On a different level, I have to confess my disappointment with the exclusively philosophical approach of Swanson's book; there is no place for history. We get the impression that all this flowering of the Two Truths theory took place in a vacuum, or on a blackboard. We must turn to historians such as Arthur Wright (absent from the Bibliography) to learn that T'ien-t'ai thought, under the short-lived but extremely important Sui Dynasty (581-618), played a considerable role in the unification of Chinese Buddhism and the reunification of China itself after more than three centuries of division during the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties period (220-581). For the biography of Chih-i, Swanson refers the reader to the pioneering book *Chih-i* by Leon Hurvitz published in 1962 in the collection of the *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* in Brussels. It was written prior to the wonderful upswing of Far Eastern Buddhist Studies in the U.S.A. and Canada, to which the new book by Paul L. Swanson is an important contribution. His "Flowering of the Two Truths Theory" is a new blossom in the garland of the "Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture."

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