

## Lecture 12

### Tiantai and Huayan Buddhism

## China, meet the Buddha

- Buddhism enters China in the 1st century CE



## Historical Perspective

- Buddha: 563-483 BCE
- Confucius: 551-479 BCE
- Laozi: 6th cent. BCE
- Mencius: 371-283 BCE
- Zhuangzi: 369-286 BCE
- Buddhism enters China: 1st cent. CE
- Nagarjuna: 150-250 CE
- Yogacara: late 4th cent. CE

## Buddhist Innovations to Chinese Philosophy

- Buddhism introduces an introspective sense of the self
- Buddhism introduces new forms of argument
- Buddhism introduces a new vocabulary

## Initial Confusions

- Mistake #1: The different forms of Buddhism are the same.
- Mistake #2: Mistranslations of key terms
  - e.g., "nirvana" as "wuwei" (doing w/o doing)
  - "shunyata" (emptiness) as "wu" (openness)

## *Hurrah!* for Mahayana

- Enlightenment in this lifetime
- Nirvana *is* samsara
- Bodhisattva Vow and collective enlightenment
- By 400 CE, Nagarjuna's Madhyamika is most preferred form of Buddhism in China

## Key Chinese Innovation

- The Bodhisattva Vow of Compassion seems to presume that all beings are capable of attaining enlightenment
- But Mahayana philosophy provides no justification for this presumption.
  - Why *all* beings?

## Buddha-Nature

- Daosheng (360-434 CE)
  - all beings can attain nirvana because all beings have **buddha-nature**
- buddha-nature = one's true self
  - *not* Atman, because *empty*



## Impact of "Buddha-Nature"

- Explains why nirvana *is* samsara
  - nirvana is a *realization* of one's buddha-nature
  - samsara is due to one's Buddha-nature being unrealized (unrealized potential)
- Makes Buddhism more optimistic
  - Indian Buddhism focuses on suffering and emptiness
  - Chinese Buddhism focuses on possibility of enlightenment for all beings

## Teaching Buddhism in China

- Chinese philosophy had been taught in sage tradition
- This makes Buddhism more communal, based in monasteries led by master teachers
- And Daoist influences



## Tiantai Buddhism

- Founded by Zhiyi (538-597 CE), who lived on Mount Tiantai
  - **Tiantai** = Heavenly Terrace
- Main Concern: Which of the conflicting Buddhist traditions is correct?



## Tiantai Buddhism

- Zhiyi's answer: They all are.
- **upaya** = skilled means
  - choosing appropriate means for bringing about a desired end
- Different teachings are due to the Buddha using upaya
  - each tradition only has a partial truth
  - but they are mutually consistent = harmony



## Tiantai Buddhism

- Zhiyi claims that Buddhist scriptures can be ordered according to their degree of completeness
  - different scriptures are appropriate to different levels of understanding
  - *Lotus Sutra* is most complete of all
  - *Lotus Sutra* is most important text for Tiantai School
- Tiantai is a superior form of Buddhism, because ...
- Tiantai emphasizes both meditation and doctrinal study

## Huayan Buddhism

- **Huayan** = Flower Splendor
- Founded by Dushun (557-640 CE)
- Made famous by third leader, Fazang (643-712 CE)



## Huayan Buddhism

- *Contra* Tiantai School, *Lotus Sutra* is not most important text – *Flower Garland Sutra* is most complete
- *Key Contribution*: Shift in idea of *pratitya samutpada* (interdependent arising)
  - Indian Buddhism: *each* thing depends on *something* else = no independence
  - Huayan: *each* thing depends upon *everything* else = total interdependence

## Fazang's Argument

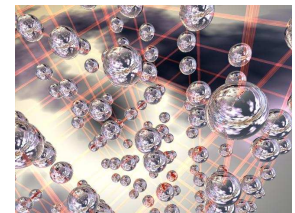
1. Each thing depends for its existence upon something else.
2. Hence, everything is interconnected *at least to some extent*.
3. So, the distinctions of processes into things is arbitrary.
4. At the most general level, everything is one huge process empty of "things".
5. At less general levels, "distinctions" are only different perspectives on one giant process.
6. Thus, at less general levels, what exists *only* exists in relation to all other things.
7. Therefore, all elements of existence are interdependent upon each other.

## Fazang's Corollary

- Each element of existence contains within itself the *entire* universe.
  - All elements of existence are interdependent upon each other.
  - So there is a sense in which each element is identical to every other element (and the universe as a whole).
    - Can be omnipotent by understanding one particular thing in excruciating detail.

## The Net of Indra

"This one jewel consists of the connections of many jewels to form the net. Why is this? It is because one is an aspect of the whole, and it is formed by containing the many. Without the existence of one, all cannot exist; therefore this net is formed from this one jewel. Along this line of reasoning you should be able to understand how everything enters into one thing."



– *Flower Garland Sutra*

## Hall of Mirrors



## Huayan and Harmony

- Incorporates Chinese emphasis on harmony of the world
  - all elements of the world are in harmony with each other



Reminders:

**Quiz #5** next Thursday, on this material and some from next lecture.

Read: Kupperman, Chapter 8