

Bridging the Gap: Zongmi's Strategies for Reconciling Textual Study and Meditative Practice*

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Abstract

There is a long-standing and deep-rooted tension that runs through the Buddhist tradition between what could be characterized as meditative practice and textual study. It emerges with the early communities, is manifested in different forms throughout the history of the tradition, and is very much alive today. This paper examines some of the ways in which this tension plays out in Zongmi's most ambitious, original, and systematically articulated work, *Comprehensive Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (禪源諸詮集都序), which was written in 833. This work is most famous for its multifaceted attempt to reconcile the doctrinal teachings of the different "philosophical" schools (such as Huayan) with the different traditions of Chan

* This paper is part of a larger, long-standing project to produce an annotated translation of and historical introduction to Zongmi's "Comprehensive Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan" (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序), which I began and almost finished in draft form during a sabbatical during the 2006–2007 academic year. I returned back to work on it after retiring from Smith College in 2014. The present paper grew out of a seminar I taught on Chinese Buddhist texts at Stanford during the spring of 2015. Earlier iterations were presented at the Center for Buddhist Studies, UCLA (May 15, 2015); the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University (May 28, 2015); the Five College Buddhist Studies Seminar, Smith College (September 17, 2015); and the Martin Marty Center, Divinity School, University of Chicago (February 25, 2016). I would like to thank Paul Harrison, John Kieschnick, Robert Buswell, Paul Copp, Brook Ziporyn, Robert Sharf, Andy Rotman, Jay Garfield, and Maria Heim, together with the graduate students in my Stanford seminar, for their helpful comments, suggestions, and encouragement along the way.

prevalent in his day, as instantiated in the divide between textualists and meditators. The paper interrogates this issue by offering a close reading of a critical passage at the beginning of the *Preface*, where Zongmi lays out his main, overarching reason for composing the text. This passage is of special interest because in it Zongmi gives an account of what might be called an “enlightenment experience” that he had, which provides the basis on which he claims unique authority to be able to resolve the central problem that the text addresses: to bridge the gap between textualists and meditators so as to make the tradition whole again.

Keywords:

Zongmi, Chan, Huayan

會通禪教

——宗密融合研教與習禪的策略

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摘要

研讀經教與習禪實修之間，在佛教傳統中長期存在一種根深蒂固的衝突。它促成早期宗派的出現，並在整個歷史上呈現許多不同的形式，且一直到今天還很活躍。本文研究宗密最具雄心、創見和系統表達的《禪源諸詮集都序》（寫於 833 年）中，所談到一些這種衝突的形式。這本著作最有名的是它多方面的嘗試，以調和不同的教派（如華嚴）與當時流行的禪宗分支的義理主張，如所舉講者與禪者之間的分歧。本文透過仔細閱讀該序言開頭的一個關鍵段落來探討這個問題，其中宗密提出了他編纂該書的主要原因。這段文中特別有意思的是，宗密敘述他本人的悟境為權威來解決該文所涉及的核心問題：會通禪教以整全佛教。

關鍵詞：

宗密、禪、華嚴

There is a long-standing and deep-rooted tension that runs through the Buddhist tradition between what could be characterized as meditative practice and textual study. It emerges with the early communities, is manifested in different forms throughout the history of the tradition, and is very much alive today. This paper will examine some of the ways in which this tension plays out in Zongmi's most ambitious, original, and systematically articulated work, *Comprehensive Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, hereafter referred to as “*Preface*”), which was written in 833.¹ In this paper I want to explore this issue by offering a close reading of a particular passage of that text as a way to illuminate some of the larger contours of the *Preface* as a whole as well as the nature and scope of Zongmi's project in writing it.

At the risk of sounding naïve, in what follows I attempt to understand the text on its own terms rather than bending it to a particular interpretative agenda. This is not to denigrate the importance of the various critical apparatuses that we wield. They are essential to our work as scholars as we construct meaning in the present out of the past. But I fear that we are sometimes in too much of a hurry to do something *with* or *to* the texts, treating them as a means to an end, that we don't take the time to read them patiently, letting them set the agenda rather than ourselves.

However we evaluate Zongmi and his text within the broader context of Chinese Buddhism, his *Preface* is undoubtedly an impressive intellectual achievement. I believe that before we can begin our important work of critical evaluation, we first need to understand the case that the text makes for itself and the ligature of the argument that it weaves. This is especially true in the

¹ I have used as my primary text the annotated Korean edition, *Tosŏ* 都序, edited by the Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyugwŏn, Puhak Yŏn'guso, Kyojae P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 大韓佛教曹溪宗·教育院·佛學研究所·教材編纂委員會. I have tried to follow this text as much as possible, but in those cases where it is problematic, I have supplemented it with the Taishō text (T 2015, 48: 398b–413c). For convenience, all references will be keyed to the Taishō edition. Where there are textual variations between the two editions, I will use my preferred reading in the main body of the quotation, giving the variant in curly brackets {}, with the edition indicated by “T” for Taishō or “K” for Korean—e.g., “知{T/如}” indicates that Taishō text uses *ru* 如 instead of *zhi* 知, “故{T-}” indicates that Taishō does not have the previous word, *gu* 故, “然{K+本}因” indicates that Korean text adds *ben* 本 between *ran* 然 and *yin* 因. In both the Chinese text and my English translation, Zongmi's interlinear notes appear in parentheses in a smaller font. All punctuation is my own. For a different rendering of this passage, see Jeffrey Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan*, 104–105.

case of translation, which is the task I am primarily concerned with here. My goal here is thus not to critically evaluate Zongmi's claims, nor do I feel that it is necessary, as I have done so in other works.² Rather, in this paper I want to try to elucidate some of the rhetorical strategies embedded within the web of allusions that Zongmi uses to define and advance the central argument of his text, including his own claim to have the unique authority to make it. I think that this aspect of his argument is particularly interesting and unusual for its time, in that his claim to authority is couched within a personal religious narrative, as exemplified in the passage at hand.

Zongmi's *Preface* claims to be a comprehensive introduction to a collection of the writings of the different Chan traditions that would have been known to him at the beginning of the fourth decade of the ninth century. He defines the scope and contents of his compilation in the opening sentence (T 2015 48: 399a16–18):

《禪源諸詮集》者，寫錄諸家所述，詮表禪門根源道理，文字句偈，集為一藏，以貽後代，故都題此名也。

I have titled this work *Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* because it records the prose and verse that express the fundamental principles of the Chan approach as related by the various traditions, which I have collected together into a single compilation (*zang* 藏, *piṭaka*) in order to pass down to later generations.

We might pause here to note that Zongmi refers to this collection as a special Chan *piṭaka* (*zang* 藏). Elsewhere in the text (I.B.2.a), he advances a novel historical theory. He claims that originally there was a Chan *piṭaka* together with those of the (1) vinaya (律) and (2) dharma (法, comprising scriptures and treatises, 經論, thereby conflating into one *piṭaka* what in the standard formulation of the three were those of the sūtra and abhidharma). Whereas the other two *piṭaka* were textual repositories, the Chan *piṭaka* transmitted the “mind” of the Buddha. In the beginning all three were passed down together, and the first five patriarchs had an equal command of each. After Upagupta, however, the saṅgha divided into five vinaya traditions, and the transmission of the vinaya teachings became split off from the transmission of the textual tradition (經論), on the one hand, and the Chan transmission of the mind, on the other. The textual tradition and Chan continued to be transmitted together until the twenty-third patriarch, Simha bhikṣu 師子比丘, after which they

² See, for example my *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*.

were transmitted separately.³ Zongmi's compilation thus seeks to reunite the study of the canonical textual tradition of sūtras and treatises with the practice of Chan. Although the details of his historical argument may seem idiosyncratic, they reveal an anxiety about rupture and conflict, and the psychological need to make a sundered tradition whole again. This underlying sense of discomfort pervades his work as a whole and is reflected in the various strategies he devises to deal with it.

Zongmi lived during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, and he was deeply involved with both the Chan and Huayan traditions of Chinese Buddhism. He is probably best known as someone who sought to harmonize the doctrinal teachings of the different “philosophical” schools (such as Huayan) with the different traditions of Chan prevalent in his day, as instantiated in the divide between textualists and meditators. His text creatively adapts Huayan thought to provide a philosophical framework in which to reconcile the major rifts that he perceived to divide the Chinese Buddhist world of his time. There are three fault lines around which these rifts occur. The first, and for him most significant, is that which divided textual scholars (*jiangzhe* 講者) from Chan practitioners (*chanzhe* 禪者); the second pitted members of different Chan traditions against one another; and the third separated textual scholars into contending philosophical traditions (such as Mādhyamika and Yogācāra). Each of these rifts is dealt with in a separate section of the text (see Outline below).

Zongmi describes “the problem” as a situation in which the advocates of different positions adamantly adhere to their own convictions with “each just taking itself to be the party in the right (但緣各皆黨己為是) while criticizing the others as wrong (斥彼為非)” (400c10–11). “It is therefore necessary to unify them together into a single whole (故必須會之為一) so as to make them all perfectly concordant (令皆圓妙)” (400c14–15). As he explains, “People often form conflicting attachments in accord with their emotionally-charged views (人多隨情互執), and once their attachments are formed they come into conflict with one another (執即相違)” (400c18–19). “The dharma,” however,

³ Zongmi gives only a summary account in the *Preface* in I.B.2.a (see T 2015, 48: 400b10–17). A more detailed account can be found in his *Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, *Yuanjuejing dashuchao* 圓覺經大疏鈔 (R 14: 276b16–c2, c14–d11). His account there draws heavily from the *Records of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasury*, *Fufazang yinyuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳 (see T 2058, 50: 313b9–16, 321c14–18), coupled with his inference based on the parallels between the wicked king of Kashmir, who decapitated Simha, and Qin shihuangdi 秦始皇帝, who persecuted scholars and burned their books.

“originally pervades everything in accord with the truth (法本稱理互通), and since it pervades everything, it is concordant with everything (通即互順)” (400c20). “Putting it in terms of what is most essential (舉要而言),” he concludes, “I would say that when taken in isolation, each of them is wrong (局之即皆非), but when taken together, each of them is true (會之則皆是)” (400c21–22).⁴

This statement neatly encapsulates the approach that Zongmi adopts throughout the *Preface*: to find a larger whole in which the various seemingly discrepant parts can be united.

Outline of Zongmi’s *Chan Preface*

Part I (卷一上): Introduction

- A. Brief Description of Compilation, Explanation of Title and Key Terms, Various Meanings of “*chan*,” etc. (T 2015, 48: 399a16–c2)
- B.1. General Reason for Assembling Compilation (T 2015, 48: 399c2–400b1)
- B.2. Ten Reasons Chan Practitioners should Study Scriptures and Treatises (T 2015, 48: 400b1–402b8)

Part II (卷一下): Correlation of Chan Traditions and Doctrinal Teachings (T 2015, 48: 402b15–405c29)

Part III (卷二上):

- A. Ten Points of Difference between Tradition that takes Emptiness as its Cardinal Principle (空宗) and Tradition that takes the Nature as its Cardinal Principle (性宗) (T 2015, 48: 406a7–407b12)—demonstrates how apparently opposed doctrinal positions (義) can be reconciled
- B. Permutations of Sudden 頓 and Gradual 漸 as Applied to Teachings 教 and Cultivation 修 (T 2015, 48: 407b13–409c1)—demonstrates how apparently opposed understandings of “sudden” and “gradual” can be subsumed within a more comprehensive theory of the path

⁴ Found in I.B.2.h, the eighth of ten reasons that Chan students should study canonical texts.

Part IV (卷二下): Explanation and Diagram of Reciprocal Relationship of 10 Stages in Process of Delusion and 10 Stages in Process of Awakening (T 2015, 48: 409c8–413c)

Part I: Introduction

B. Reasons for Assembling Compilation

1. General Reason (399c2–400b1)

The section that I want to focus on here is worth our attention for several reasons. First, it occurs at a place in the text that signals its importance. It is found close to the beginning, in the section where Zongmi explains his main, over-arching reason for assembling his collection (I.B.1), and this is clearly something that we should take seriously if we are to understand what he is trying to do in this work. Second, it is a passage that has so far not attracted much if any notice. Third, it is especially interesting because in it Zongmi gives an account of what might be called an “enlightenment experience” that he had. This is not the kind of thing that one normally expects to find in Tang-dynasty exegetical or Chan writings.⁵ Not only does such a first person account make it interesting in and of itself, but it is also particularly noteworthy as providing the basis on which Zongmi claims unique authority to be able to resolve the central problem that the text addresses: to bridge the gap between textualists and meditators so as to make the tradition whole again.

Although this section forms a tightly-knit unit, I will break my discussion of it into seven passages for clarity of presentation.

⁵ Given the various resonances between Zongmi's project with that of Zhiyi touched on in this paper, it is interesting to note here, as my colleague Dan Stevenson has pointed out in an email, that “Zhiyi's experience of awakening under Huisi, among others, is featured conspicuously in early Tiantai writings. And, like the experience of Zongmi, the claim to such experiences on the part of both Huisi and Zhiyi are foundational (along with textual erudition) to their authority. Moreover, the problem that this authority seeks to redress is framed in the same way as Zongmi, to wit, the imbalance of meditative praxis and doctrinal learning.”

———— FIRST PASSAGE ————

399c2–4: 佛說頓教漸教，禪開頓門漸門，二教二門，各相符契。今講者偏彰漸義，禪者偏播頓宗。禪講相逢，胡越之隔。

The Buddha taught the sudden and gradual teachings, and Chan developed the sudden and gradual approaches. The two teachings and the two approaches intermesh with each other. Nowadays exegetes one-sidedly advocate the gradual doctrine, while Chan adepts one-sidedly promote the sudden principle. When the two encounter each other, the gulf is like that between southern and northern barbarians.

This passage sets forth the basic problem that Zongmi addresses: the gulf that separates exegetes and Chan adepts into contending camps, a gulf so wide that it is as if they don't even speak the same language. Moreover, it suggests that what underlies this gulf is each camp's one-sided adherence to its particular point of view. As he will make clear in the final passage that we will look at, each side suffers from a different kind of imbalance: Textualists are prone to the error of emphasizing the cultivation of wisdom (*hui* 慧, *prajñā*) to the neglect of concentration (*dīng* 定, *samādhi*), while meditators are prone to the error of emphasizing the cultivation of concentration to the neglect of wisdom. Whereas the one-sided cultivation of concentration increases ignorance, the one-sided cultivation of wisdom increases pernicious views.

“Sudden” (*dun* 頓) and “gradual” (*jian* 漸) were categories that figured large in medieval Chinese discussions of how best to classify the different teachings that the Buddha was believed to have given. Such taxonomies helped to make sense out of what must have seemed like a confusing welter of disparate and sometimes even contradictory teachings by classifying them within a hierarchically-organized framework, in which each teaching could be put in its place. At the same time, these taxonomies also served to prioritize different teachings over one another, thus furnishing different schools with a basis for claiming superiority over the others. Such classificatory schemes were a defining characteristic of medieval Chinese exegetical or philosophical schools and were a primary field of contention among their proponents.

These two terms not only pertained to the classification of Buddhist doctrines, they also applied to the practice of meditation and the realization of awakening. They thus played a critical role in the formation of the Chan tradition in the eighth century, when different groups came to be defined by

the stances that they held in regard to the nature of awakening and the means of its realization. In either case, these terms came to function polemically much as did “Mahāyāna” and “Hīnayāna.”

“Sudden” (*dun* 頓) and “gradual” (*jian* 漸) were thus points of contention among (1) textual scholars in their debates over the classification of Buddhist teachings (III.A), (2) Chan practitioners in their controversies over the nature of awakening and the means of its realization (III.B), as well as (3) more broadly between exegetes and Chan adepts (II).

A major portion of Zongmi’s *Preface* (i.e., the second and third fascicles) is devoted to clarifying the different contexts in which these terms operated in Chinese Buddhist discourse.

—— SECOND PASSAGE ——

399c4 – 7: 宗密不知宿生何作，熏得此心。自未解脫，欲解他縛，為法忘於軀命，愍人切於神情。（亦知{T/如}《淨名》云：「若自有縛，能解他縛，無有是處。」然欲罷不能，驗是宿習{T/世}難改故{T-}。）

I, Zongmi, do not know what I could have done in my past life to have conditioned my mind to be the way it was—wanting to free others from bondage when I had not yet liberated myself, I was neglecting my life for the dharma and cutting off my spirituality out of pity for others. (Indeed, even though I knew that the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* said: “It is not possible to free another from bondage if one is still bound oneself,” when I look into why I couldn’t stop trying to do so even if I had wanted to, it is because the conditioning from my past life was difficult to alter.)

The first thing to note is that Zongmi begins this passage by using his own name. This is an important move, signaling that he is shifting into an autobiographical voice. It is especially noteworthy in that it is the only place in the text where he does so.⁶ In what follows, he offers a narrative that explains why he left the capital of Chang’an for his retreat in the Zhongnan mountains and describes the experience that he had there of a deepened

⁶ The same point holds for Zongmi’s commentary and subcommentary to the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, as well as his commentary on the *Yulanpen jing* 孟蘭盆經. See *Yuanjue jing dashu*, R 14: 109a12–b9, *Yuanjuejing dashuchao*, R 14: 222d9–227b3, and *Yulanpen jingshu* 孟蘭盆經疏, T 1792, 39: 505a13–21.

understanding that established the basis for his claim to be the person who was uniquely qualified to moderate between the contending camps of exegetes and Chan adepts.

The quote from the *Vimalakīrti* (T 475, 14: 545b3–4) is put in the mouth of the Buddha and occurs as the conclusion to a passage that is key to understanding what follows—a passage with which Zongmi could well expect his readership to be familiar. It thus activates a whole associational field that affects the way the passages to follow are read. It is therefore worth quoting here in full. It occurs within a broader discussion of the relationship between emptiness and compassion, in which *Vimalakīrti* explains:

彼有疾菩薩應復作是念：「如我此病非真非有，眾生病亦非真非有。」作是觀時，於諸眾生若起愛見大悲，即應捨離。

The sick bodhisattva should further give rise to the thought: “Just as my sickness is unreal and nonexistent, so too the sicknesses of all beings are unreal and nonexistent.” When he regards things in this way, as soon as he gives rise to a great compassion coming from affective views in regard to beings, he will get rid of it at once.⁷

所以者何？菩薩斷除客塵煩惱而起大悲。愛見悲者，則於生死有疲厭心。若能離此無有疲厭，在在所生不為愛見之所覆也。所生無縛能為眾生說法解縛。

Why? Because the bodhisattva must cut off all adventitious defilements (*āgantukakleśa*) in giving rise to great compassion. If his compassion comes from affective views, then his mind will become exhausted within birth-and-death. If he is able to rid himself of this, then he will be without exhaustion, and wherever he is born, he will never be beset by affective views. Being born without bondage, he will be able to preach the dharma to sentient beings, freeing them from their bonds.”⁸

As the conclusion to this disquisition, *Vimalakīrti* quotes the statement by the Buddha that Zongmi had quoted in the passage above.

⁷ T 475, 14: 545a25–28.

⁸ T 475, 14: 545a28–b3. Special thanks to Paul Harrison for sharing the draft translation of this passage (which is part of a translation of the Sanskrit text that he is doing with Luis Gomez) and for his helpful discussion of some of the key terms.

The *Vimalakīrti* passage intimates the themes of disease, the sickness of the bodhisattva, great compassion, and a misguided compassion that is driven by affective views (*aijianbei* 愛見悲) and that leads to spiritual exhaustion (what we might call “bodhisattva burnout” or “compassion fatigue”), all of which weave through and underlie the reading of what follows, creating an associational field that resonates in the mind of the reader, giving the section an underlying coherence not found in the written words alone.

Zongmi’s reference to his past life—in both the opening sentence as well as the end of his interlinear note—ties these themes from the *Vimalakīrti* together with that of karma, especially the difficulty of overcoming the subtle effects of its persistence from past lives—a theme to which he returns in the SIXTH PASSAGE below.

What I have translated as “I couldn’t stop trying to do so even if I had wanted to” (欲罷不能) in Zongmi’s interlinear note is a quote from the *Confucian Analects* (IX.11), in which Confucius’ favorite disciple, Yan Hui, expresses his admiration for the lofty character of the master’s teaching, noting how he could never give up trying to realize Confucius’ teaching in his life despite the daunting character of the task.⁹ This quote not only tells us something about Zongmi’s classical education, but it also tells something about the readership he is addressing. Not altogether unsurprisingly, Zongmi uses the quote to a different purpose, which I would take to be that *even if he had wanted to he couldn’t stop trying to liberate others before he himself was liberated due to the subtle persistence of affective views (aijianbei 愛見) from his past life that beset his compassion (bei 悲)*.

⁹ For the passage in the *Analects*, see D.C. Lau translation, *Confucius: The Analects*, 79:

顏淵喟然歎曰：「仰之彌高，鑽之彌堅。瞻之在前，忽焉在後。」

Yen Yuan, heaving a sigh, said, “The more I look up at it the higher it appears. The more I bore into it the harder it becomes. I see it before me. Suddenly it is behind me.

夫子循循然善誘人，博我以文，約我以禮。

The Master is good at leading one on step by step. He broadens me with culture and brings me back to essentials by means of the rites.

欲罷不能，既竭吾才，如有所立卓爾。雖欲從之，末由也已。」

I cannot give up even if I wanted to, but, having done all I can, it seems to rise sheer above me and I have no way of going after it, however much I may want to.”

———THIRD PASSAGE———

399c7–9: 每歎人與法差，法為人病。故別撰經律論疏，大開戒定慧門，顯頓悟資於漸修，證師說符於佛意。

I have always lamented the discrepancy between human views and the dharma, when the dharma becomes a disease to people. I have thus separately composed commentaries on sūtras, vinaya, and treatises to open wide the gate of morality, concentration, and wisdom, to clarify [the principle] that sudden insight must be supplemented by gradual cultivation, and to verify that what the [Chan] masters teach coincides with the Buddha's intent.

This passage steps back to take a broader view of the meaning of disease as the rationale for Zongmi's project of reconciliation.

In the following subsection detailing ten specific reasons that Chan practitioners should study scriptures and treatises, Zongmi begins the first of the ten reasons (I.B.2.a, 一師有本末，馮本印末故) by saying: “The scriptures are the Buddha's words (經是佛語), and Chan is the Buddha's intent (禪是佛意). What the buddhas thought and said (諸佛心口) cannot contradict each other (必不相違)” (400b10–11).

He begins the present passage with *tan* 歎, “to lament,” the word with which Yan Hui begins his comments in the passage from the *Analects* quoted above—an association that would not have been lost on an important segment of his readership.

This passage picks up on the theme of disease implicitly suggested by the quotation from the *Vimalakīrti* in the previous passage. Zongmi understands “disease” (*bing* 病) to mean a biased grasp of dharma—later in the text (I.B.2.b, 400c17ff.) he defines disease as adapting the dharma to human views or human purposes (以法就人).

The opposition that Zongmi there draws between human views (*ren* 人) and the dharma (*fa* 法) recalls the oft-cited injunction attributed to the Buddha that after his nirvāṇa his followers should rely on the dharma rather than human authority (依於法不依人, *dharmāḥ pratisaraṇam na pudgalaḥ*), the first of the so-called “four reliances” (四依).¹⁰ Zongmi writes that

¹⁰ The other three reliances are: (2) reliance on the meaning (義法; *artha*) instead of the words (文字語言; *vyañjana*), (3) reliance on the meaning known through wisdom (智; *jñāna*) instead of discursive consciousness (識; *viñāna*), and (4)

grasping the dharma in terms of human views (以法就人) is a disease that leads to discord (*nan* 難); only when human views are understood from the perspective of the dharma will there be concord (*yi* 易) (400c18). By implication, both of the one-sided views to which exegetes and Chan adepts each adhere are symptoms of such disease.

A brief word is in order on Zongmi's mention of commentaries that he had written before writing his *Preface* (別撰經律論疏): In addition to those on the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經), he had composed commentaries to the *Diamond Sūtra*, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, the *Vinaya* (四分律), and Xuanzang's *Treatise on Establishing Consciousness Only* (*Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論), to name the most salient examples.

Zongmi's mention of the principle that “sudden insight must be supplemented by gradual cultivation” (頓悟資於漸修) also merits comment. This is the position that he identifies with Shenhui 神會 (684–758), from whom he traces his own lineage. He assigns this position to the highest form of Chan, that of the Heze tradition 荷澤宗, which he correlates with the highest teaching of the Buddha: the teaching that directly reveals the true mind itself to be the nature (顯示真心即性教). It is the position for which Zongmi is best known. For him, it represented the model for how the Chan controversies over how “sudden” and “gradual” apply to cultivation and realization could best be resolved. It held that the path of spiritual development could be understood in terms of three phases, (1) beginning with a sudden insight (*dunwu* 頓悟) into the nature of mind, (2) followed by an often lengthy period of gradual cultivation (*jianxiu* 漸修) in which that insight became integrated and deepened, and (3) culminating in a final stage of full realization (*zhengwu* 證悟).

It also provides a practice model that integrates meditative insight and textual study, as one's “sudden” insight is tested and deepened in the gradual cultivation that follows so that one may become an effective teacher “by enabling one to broaden one's experience and increase one's skill so that one can use one's understanding to gather beings [into the fold], to answer their questions, and to instruct them” (為悟解了者，欲為人師，令廣其見聞，增其善巧，依解攝眾，答問教授也) (400a22–23).

reliance on sūtras of definitive meaning (了義; *nītārtha*) instead of non-definitive meaning (不了義; *anītārtha*). See Kumārajīva's explanation in *Zhu weimojie jing* 注維摩詰經, T 1775, 38: 417a10–25, an English translation of which can be found in Sara Boin's translation of Étienne Lamotte's French translation of the text, *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, 262–263n23.

————FOURTH PASSAGE ————

399c9–11: 意既本末而委示，文乃浩博而難尋。汎{T/泛}學雖多，秉志者少。況迹{T/跡}涉名相，誰辨金鍮{T/鉅}。徒自疲勞，未見機感。

Even though the [Buddha's] intent is laid out in detail throughout [the canon], the sheer vastness of its texts makes it difficult to fathom. Though careless scholars are numerous, those of resolute purpose are few. Becoming even further entangled in names and forms, how could they ever distinguish gold from brass? They weary themselves out in vain before they can discover what resonates with their spiritual capacity.

The FOURTH PASSAGE addresses the difficulties and dangers of navigating the vast scope of the canonical texts without the authoritative spiritual compass provided by a Chan master (*shanzhishi* 善知識; *kalyāṇamitra*).

The first sentence echoes a similar complaint Zongmi had earlier voiced in his *Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening* in regard to the *Avatamsaka* and the preferability of the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening*.

將欲弘闡法門，簡其要妙，圓通了義，莫尚《華嚴》。西域此方，古今三藏大德，皆判為最……然且部帙浩瀚，義理縱橫，初心之流，造次難入……即不如此經一部道頓入。

If you want to open wide the gate of the dharma, single out its quintessence, and thoroughly penetrate its ultimate meaning, do not revere the *Avatamsaka* above all others. Ancient and modern worthies and masters of the Tripiṭaka in both the western regions and this land have all classified it as supreme....Yet its principles become so confused within its voluminous size that beginners become distraught and have difficulty entering into it.... It is not as good as this scripture [i.e., *Perfect Awakening*], whose single fascicle can be entered immediately.¹¹

As Zongmi states elsewhere in the *Preface*(399c19–22), it is the “pointedness” (*zhidi* 指的) of Chan sayings that “succinctly distill” (*cuolue* 撮略)” the Buddha's intent that make them particularly useful given the difficulties of

¹¹ *Yuanjuejing dashuchao*, R 14: 226a10–14.

determining the Buddha's intent when faced with the vast scale of the scriptures and treatises bequeathed by the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Gold stands for the dharma. It is not only an entirely different substance than brass, but it is also unalloyed (hence pure and unadulterated) whereas brass is an alloy of copper and zinc (hence tainted and admixed). Elsewhere (II.B.2.c, 402a2–6) Zongmi quotes a passage from the *Ghanavyūha Sūtra* (密嚴經, T 681, 16: 747a18–20) that states: “That the pure *garbha* of the Tathāgata (如來清淨藏) is the worldly *ālayavijñāna* (世間阿賴耶) is like gold and a ring (如金與指環), which evolves out of it but is not distinct from it [in substance] (展轉無差別)” —which he glosses: “The ring illustrates the *ālaya* (指環等喻賴耶), gold illustrates suchness (金喻真如), and both designate the *tathāgatagarbha* (都名如來藏也).” In a passage quoted below, he illustrates the difference between the dharma (*fa* 法) and its meanings (*yi* 義) by comparing them to gold and the host of implements that can be fashioned out of it.

—— FIFTH PASSAGE ——

399c11–13: 雖佛說悲增是行，而自慮愛見難防，遂捨眾入山，習定均慧，前後息慮相繼{T/計}十年。(云前後者，中間被敕追入內，住城二{T/三}年，方卻{T/却}表請歸山也。)

Although the Buddha taught that practice consists in increasing compassion, worried that my affective views were too difficult to resist, I abandoned the crowd and entered the mountains to practice making my concentration equal to my wisdom, and my early and later periods of putting a stop to my worries totaled ten years altogether. (“Early” and “later” refer to the fact that during that time I was summoned back to court by imperial command and, after dwelling in the capital for two years, I petitioned, requesting to return to the mountains.)

This passage returns to themes alluded to earlier in the quote from the *Vimalakīrti*. The practice of increasing compassion (*beizeng* 悲增) with which it begins has to do with putting the liberation of others before one's own, and hence recalls the Buddha's words quoted above. It also connects with the theme touched on in the THIRD PASSAGE above, in which Zongmi laments how the dharma can become a disease by causing people to neglect their own physical and spiritual well being out of a sense of misguided compassion. It is the difficulty of overcoming such affective views amidst the

demands of life in Chang'an that led Zongmi to decide to "abandon the crowd" and "enter the mountains" in order "to make his concentration equal to his wisdom."

Zongmi's brief chronological comment provides a good place to fill in a little more about what we know of his activities during this period of his life, which, as his interlinear note suggests, can be divided into three phases.

The **first phase** covers his stay in the Zongnan mountains from the first lunar month of 821 until the fall of 828. During the course of the spring of 822 to the summer of 823, he finished the *Yuanjuejing dashu* 圓覺經大疏, his commentary to the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening* and the culmination of a vow that he had made some fifteen or more years earlier. He probably went on to compose his subcommentary and abridged commentary soon after. He must have produced the *Yuanjuejing daochang xiuzheng yi* 圓覺經道場修證儀, his massive ritual manual on the retreat for cultivation and realization of the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, sometime late in 827 or the first half of 828, for he mentions that he practiced the particular repentance, solicitation, expression of sympathetic joy, dedication of merit, and declaration of vows sequence found in the eighth fascicle of the text during the winter of 827.¹²

We should note that his writings up through the end of this period were scholastic and exegetical works aimed at a learned Buddhist audience, in the form of commentaries, annotated outlines, summaries, study guides, and compilations of essential passages from key texts. Taken together, they represent a comprehensive mastery of a wide body of scriptures, treatises, and commentaries covering the major doctrinal traditions of his time.

The **second phase** begins with his leaving the mountains for the imperial capital of Chang'an in the fall of 828 at the invitation to the court by imperial edict. Wenzong (r. 827–40), who had ascended the throne the previous year, had already attracted a number of luminaries to the court. Zongmi congratulated the emperor on his birthday in the tenth lunar month. After questioning Zongmi on the essentials of the dharma, Wenzong bestowed a purple robe on him and granted him the title "Great Worthy" (*dade* 大德, *bhadanta*).

Zongmi's two years in the capital were enormously significant ones in terms of both his own sense of personal accomplishment as well as the course of his subsequent career. His presence in court and the prestige that his imperially-bestowed honors brought afforded him the opportunity to form a

¹² *Yuanjuejing daochang xiuzheng yi*, R 128: 417a16–18.

relationship with a number of important scholar-officials serving in Chang'an at that time. Indeed, many of the prominent figures with whom we know Zongmi was later associated were present in the imperial capital during his stay there in 828–829/30: Pei Xiu 裴休 (787?–860), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), Wen Zao 溫造 (767–836) Xiao Mian 蕭俛 (d. 837), Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), and Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824).

The recognition he received at court, and the contacts that he made there, must have instilled a new confidence in him. They must also have enlarged his sense of mission, for the character of his writings changes. His style becomes more literary, reflecting his broadened audience. From this time on he turns from primarily exegetical works aimed at a learned Buddhist audience to works of wider appeal; he moves beyond the confines of Buddhist scholastic concerns to address more encompassing intellectual issues affecting the Buddhism of his day. Most of his subsequent works—often in the form of well-polished essays or letters—were written in response to requests or specific questions from prominent scholar-officials.

Although in many ways his time at court must have seemed like a pinnacle in his life, Zongmi petitioned to return to the mountains, most likely leaving Chang'an in late 829 or early 830. I believe that it was his “worries” (*lu* 慮) about getting too caught up in the busyness and demands of his life in the capital that precipitated what he felt as the need to “abandon the crowd” (*she zhong* 捨眾) and “enter the mountains (*ru shan* 入山) in order to make his concentration equal to his wisdom (*xi ding jun hui* 習定均慧).”

The **third phase** covers his stay in the Zhongnan mountains until late 832 or early 833. I believe that it must have been during this time that Zongmi had the “experience” he recounts in the next passage.

—— SIXTH PASSAGE ——

399c14–16: 微細習情起滅，彰於靜慧；差別法義羅列，現{T/見}於空心。虛隙日光，纖埃擾擾；清潭水底，影像昭昭。

As the arising and perishing of my subtle residual feelings became clear in calm wisdom, the array of the different meanings of the dharma appeared in order before my empty

mind, just as a ray of sunlight shining through a crack illumines the swirling motes of dust, or the reflected images are bright and clear in the depths of a tranquil pool.

This is the most intriguing passage in this section. It tantalizes us with the experience that it intimates yet does not fully disclose. It is extraordinarily well crafted in the way in which it weaves together the associational resonances of textual allusions that inform its meaning. It is also notable for its literary quality. We should note, for example, the carefully constructed parallelism: how interiorly the arising and perishing of his subtle residual feelings becoming clear in calm wisdom is restated exteriorly in how a ray of sunlight, shining through a crack, illumines swirling motes of dust, and how interiorly the array of the different meanings of the dharma that appeared in order before his empty mind is restated exteriorly in how reflected images are bright and clear in the depths of a tranquil pool.

Note, too, how visual imagery (whether literal or metaphorical) is central to the meaning of each of the four statements that this passage comprises: (1) becoming clear in calm wisdom, (2) appearing in his empty mind, (3) illumined by a ray of sunlight, and (4) reflected images. In each case, the mode of apprehension is visual. Indeed, we could well characterize Zongmi's "experience" as a vision, or perhaps more accurately an experience in which his vision of the dharma and its meanings came together in his mind. Still, we don't know when it happened, whether it occurred at a moment in time or as the gradual culmination of a long process, or whether something interior might have been triggered by something in his environment (such as a shaft of sunlight suddenly streaming through a crack in a wall to illuminate the motes of dust swirling in the air).

The only way we have to get a fuller sense of what Zongmi might mean is to unpack the associations and allusions that underlie and inform the surface expression of his elusive and poetic words.

— 1. Calm Wisdom 靜慧 —

I would like to begin with calm wisdom (*jinghui* 靜慧)—or more precisely, the wisdom born of calmness—that Zongmi practices. The term is found in the seventh chapter of the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, where it occurs in an explanation of *śamatha* (*shemota* 奢摩他), the practice of calming and concentration. It seems to present a model for Zongmi's description of his experience in this passage.

若諸菩薩，悟淨圓覺，以淨覺心，取靜為行，由澄諸念，覺識煩動。靜慧發生，身心客塵，從此永滅，便能內發，寂靜輕安。由寂靜故，十方世界，諸如來心，於中顯現，如鏡中像。此方便者，名奢摩他。

If bodhisattvas realize pure, perfect awakening and, with their pure awakened mind, take calming as their practice, then, by letting their thoughts settle, they become aware of the agitation of consciousness. When the wisdom born of calmness becomes manifest, the appearance of body and mind as objects is accordingly extinguished forever, and then they are able internally to generate tranquility and composure. Because of this tranquility, the mind of the Tathāgatas throughout the ten directions is revealed within them as an image in a mirror. This expedient method is called *śamatha*.¹³

As we saw in the previous passage, Zongmi states that he left the capital and returned to the mountains “to make his concentration equal to his wisdom” (習定均慧), which parallels the “taking calming as their practice” (取靜為行) in the passage just quoted from the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening*. This practice, then, “by allowing thoughts to settle” (由澄諸念), enables one “to become aware of the agitation of consciousness” (覺識煩動)—a process that would seem to match closely his description of the arising and perishing of his subtle residual feelings becoming clear in calm wisdom, as exemplified by the swirling motes of dust illumined by a shaft of sunlight. The comparison suggests that by becoming aware of such subtle residual feelings in the clarity of calmness, they become “extinguished forever” (永滅) in the wisdom born of calmness.

The “the array of the different meanings of the dharma” (*fayi luolie* 法義羅列) that appears “in order” before his “empty mind” (現於空心), then, is the content of the wisdom that is born from the deepening of his practice of calmness. The word “settle” (*cheng* 澄) in the *Perfect Awakening* passage refers to the purifying of water by allowing the sediment to settle out, which suggests the imagery of the pond that Zongmi uses (“the reflected images are bright and clear in the depths of a tranquil pool”). Through long association in Chinese Buddhist discussions of meditation, the image of a clear pond naturally implies that of a mirror, which is able to reflect all things clearly. In the Huayan exegetical tradition, for example, the Buddha’s enlightened vision is symbolized by the *samādhi* of oceanic reflection (*haiyin sanmei* 海印三昧),

¹³ *Yuanjue jing*, T 842, 17: 917c15–19.

in which the harmonious interrelationship of all phenomena in the entire universe simultaneously appeared in his mind as if reflected on a vast, tranquil ocean. The *Perfect Awakening* passage closes with “the mind of the Tathāgatas throughout the ten directions” being “revealed within them as an image in a mirror.”¹⁴

— 2. Subtle Residual Feelings 微細習情 —

Having seen how the passage on calm wisdom from the *Scripture of Perfect Awakening* seems to provide a script for Zongmi’s account of his experience, we are now ready to turn our attention to the first words of the passage: “subtle residual feelings” (*weixi xiqing* 微細習情). These refer to the finest and most subtle dregs of defilement or *kleśa* (*fannaο* 煩惱) that remain to be eliminated before the realization of buddhahood. To understand the significance that this experience has for Zongmi, we must turn to the final section of his *Preface* to see how it fits within the elaborate soteriological schema that he presents there.

In many ways, Zongmi’s scheme functions very much like the traditional twelve-link chain of conditioned origination (*yuanqi* 緣起; *pratītya-*

¹⁴ See Zongmi’s commentary on this passage in his *Commentary, Yuanjuejing dashu*, R 14: 176b15–18, c2–5:

澄念覺動者，由前以靜澄心，諸念不起。心合靜源，體非分別。故見分別之識煩勞動擾。若自是識，則不能見識，如眼不自見。今由念澄智顯。故覺識也……解曰：靜慧發生者，由前念澄覺識，慧性開明。因靜生慧，故云靜慧。比隱今顯，故云發生。身心等者，由慧發生，身心相盡，塵妄不起，名為永滅。客非本性，塵污自體。

[The sūtra’s statement] “Settling thoughts and becoming aware of agitation” [means that] having already used calming to settle one’s mind, thoughts no longer arise, and the mind merges into the source of calmness, so that they are not distinguishable in substance. Hence one sees the agitation of the vexations of discriminating consciousness. If one is oneself one’s consciousness, then one is not able to see that consciousness, just as the eye cannot see itself. Since wisdom is now manifested from the settling of thoughts, [the sūtra says] “becoming aware of consciousness.” [The sūtra’s statement] “When the wisdom born of calmness becomes manifest” [means that] having already become aware of consciousness through thoughts having settled, the nature of wisdom becomes manifestly clear. Because calming gives rise to wisdom, it is referred to as “calm wisdom.” Since what was obscure is now clear, it says “manifested.” [The sūtra’s statement about] “body and mind” and so forth [means that] from wisdom having become manifest, the phenomenal appearances of body and mind are exhausted. The illusoriness of the dust of sense objects not arising is referred to as “extinguished forever.”

samutpāda), except that Zongmi's scheme is articulated in Yogācāra terms drawn from the *Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論). In both cases, understanding how the causal chain of conditions work serially in dependence on one another in the process by which the suffering of old age, sickness, and death arises provides a map by which the process can be reversed by working back through each link in the chain in reverse order. The key lies in the fact that because the process is causally conditioned, it is bidirectional: it can either move with the flow of *samsāra* (*anuloma*; *shun* 順) or against the flow of *samsāra* (*pratiloma*; *ni* 逆). It is only by understanding how the process of conditioning works that it can be reversed.

Zongmi's scheme has ten reciprocal stages in the process that leads to bondage and that which leads to liberation. He defines the first, conforming to the flow of birth-and-death (*shun* 順 = *anuloma*), as “being deluded about what's true and following after what's false (迷真逐妄). It arises from the fine and subtle (*cong weixi* 從微細) and, moving in the direction of conforming [to the flow of birth-and-death], gives rise to [successive stages of delusion] (順次生起), and evolves toward the coarse (展轉至麤).” He defines the second—reversing the flow of birth-and-death (*ni* 逆 = *pratiloma*)—as “realizing what's false and returning to what's true (悟妄歸真). It moves from the coarse and heavy (從麤重) in the reverse direction, cuts off [successive stages of delusion] (逆次斷除), and evolves toward the subtle (展轉至細). The wisdom necessary to overturn [the successive stages of delusion] (以能翻之智) proceeds from the superficial to the profound (自淺之深). The coarse obstructions are easy to banish (麤障易遣) because a superficial wisdom is able to overturn them (淺智即能翻故). The subtle delusions are difficult to eliminate (細惑難除) because only a profound wisdom is able to cut them off (深智方能斷故).”¹⁵

Reading Zongmi's SIXTH PASSAGE in light of his description of the bidirectional process of conditioning, his “subtle residual feelings” (*weixi xiqing* 微細習情) would refer to the subtle delusions that are difficult to eliminate (*xihuo nanchu* 細惑難除), which would correspond to the third of his ten stages in the process of the arising and development of delusion, which he calls “the arising of thought” (*nianqi* 念起). This is the first subtle movement of thought, which initiates the process of phenomenal evolution by giving rise to the bifurcation of consciousness into subject and object.¹⁶ And

¹⁵ T 2015, 48: 409b22–29.

¹⁶ Which corresponds to the first of the three subtle phenomenal appearances (*sanxixiang* 三細相) enumerated in the *Awakening of Faith*, that of activity (*ye*

it is this split that the calm wisdom in the *Perfect Awakening* passage eliminates forever.

It is overturned in the ninth of the ten stages in the progress toward full awakening, which he calls “freedom from thought” (*linian* 離念). In this stage one becomes fully aware of the ultimate origin of deluded thoughts and sees that the true nature of the mind is eternal. This is the stage of ultimate awakening (*jiujing jue* 究竟覺) defined in the *Awakening of Faith* as “becoming aware of the source of the mind” (*juexinyuan* 覺心源).¹⁷ It counteracts the third stage in the process of delusion, that of the arising of thoughts (*nianqi* 念起), and it is the prelude to the tenth and final stage in Zongmi’s scheme, realizing buddhahood (*chengfo* 成佛).

So, what does this tell us? Locating Zongmi’s description of his experience within his own soteriological scheme reveals that, although it would be presumptuous for him to claim so explicitly here, he is nevertheless implicitly assuming for himself a rather exalted stage of spiritual attainment, that of ultimate awakening (*jiujing jue* 究竟覺), the penultimate stage to the realization of buddhahood. Having eliminated the subtlest traces of the karmic residue that had vexed him, and having equalized his concentration and wisdom, he can now don the authority to mediate between exegetes and Chan adepts.

— 3. The Dharma and its Meanings 法義 —

What Zongmi means by *fayi* 法義, which I have translated as “the dharma and its meanings,” begs further elucidation. How to understand these two

業) or, more fully, the activity of ignorance (*wumingye* 無明業). See *Dasheng qixinlun*, T 1666, 32: 577a8–10.

¹⁷ T 1666, 32: 576b16–17. Zongmi’s wording (T 2015, 48: 409c24–27: 九、滿足方便，一念相應，覺心初起，心無初相，離微細念，心即常住，{T+直}覺於迷源，名究竟覺。〔從初發心，即修無念，至此方得成就，成就，故即入佛位也。〕) closely follows that of the *Awakening of Faith*, which defines ultimate awakening (*jiujing jue* 究竟覺) as follows: 如菩薩地盡，滿足方便，一念相應，覺心初起，心無初相，以遠離微細念故，得見心性，心即常住，名究竟覺(576b23–26)。

When the bodhisattva stages have been completed and one has fulfilled the expedient [practices], one becomes united [with suchness] in a single moment of thought. Having become aware of the first stirrings of the mind, one’s mind is without the first phenomenal appearance [of the arising of thoughts]. Because one is far removed from the subtlest thought, one sees the nature of the mind—that the mind is eternal—and that is what is called ultimate awakening.

characters when they appear together can sometimes be a tricky business in the reading of any given passage. However, there are several important sections in the *Preface* where Zongmi makes an emphatic point of distinguishing between them and, I think, that's clearly how they are to be understood in this passage.

Probably the most important of these is found in the seventh of the ten specific reasons that he enumerates for why Chan adepts should study the canonical texts: "Because the dharma and its meanings are not the same (法義不同), it is necessary skillfully to distinguish between them (善須辨識)." As he explains:

凡欲明解諸法性相，先須辨得法義。依法解義，義即分明。以義詮法，法即顯著。

As a rule, if one wants to elucidate the nature and phenomenal appearances of all dharmas, one must first distinguish between the dharma and its meanings. If one understands the meanings in reliance on the dharma, the meanings will be clear. If one interprets the dharma in reliance on meanings, then the dharma will be made evident."¹⁸

Zongmi illustrates the difference by comparing the dharma to gold, and its meanings to the host of implements that can be fashioned out of it.

金即是法，不變隨緣是義。

Gold represents the dharma, and its unchanging and adapting to conditions represent its meanings.¹⁹

This section goes on to elaborate Zongmi's ontology of mind, derived from the *Awakening of Faith*, which identifies the dharma with "the mind of sentient beings" (*zhongsheng xin* 眾生心) or "the one mind" (*yixin* 一心).²⁰

¹⁸ T 2015, 48: 401b16–17.

¹⁹ T 2015, 48: 401b19–20.

²⁰ See *Dasheng qixin lun*, T 1666, 32: 575c20–576a1:

摩訶衍者，總說有二種。云何為二？一者法，二者義。所言法者，謂眾生心。是心則攝一切世間法、出世間法，依於此心，顯示摩訶衍義。何以故？是心真如相，即示摩訶衍體故；是心生滅因緣相，能示摩訶衍自體相用故。所言義者，則有三種。云何為三？一者體大，謂一切法真如，平等不增減故。二者相大，謂如來藏，具足無量性功德故。三者用大，能生一切世間、出世間善因果故。一切諸佛本所乘故，一切菩薩皆乘此法到如來地故。

Mahāyāna can be comprehensively explained as having two categories. What are

This mind has two meanings (*yi* 義) or two modalities (*men* 門): It is both (1) what does not change (*bubian* 不變) and (2) what adapts to conditions (*suiyuan* 隨緣). While its nature (*xing* 性) does not change, in adapting to conditions it gives rise to a multiplicity of phenomenal manifestations (*xiang* 相). He quotes the *Scripture of Innumerable Meanings* (*Wuliangyi jing* 無量義經): “The innumerable meanings (無量義者) are born from the one dharma (從一法生).”²¹ The dharma is thus one and immutable, while its various meanings are multiple and contingent.

If this is what Zongmi has in mind when he refers to the dharma and its meanings in this passage, then the vision that is arrayed in his empty mind is that of how the totality of the infinite multiplicity of all phenomena can be seen as manifestations of the one mind, as represented diagrammatically in the final section of his text.

But the dharma (*fa* 法), as distinct from the mind (*xin* 心), can also refer to the corpus of canonical writings, as when Zongmi talks about the dharma *piṭaka* (that is, the collection of scriptures and treatises) as distinct from those of the Vinaya and Chan, the latter of which transmits the Buddha’s “mind.” In this case, its meanings (*yi* 義) can refer to the spectrum of interpretative positions put forth by various Buddhist exegetes or philosophers, such as Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla.²²

Hence we could say that for Zongmi, although the dharma is one, it is refracted through various interpretations (just as the mind is one in its essential nature but is only manifested phenomenally in multitudinous, ever-changing forms). As we saw earlier, this only becomes a problem when these

the two? The first is dharma (*fa* 法), and the second is its meanings (*yi* 義). “Dharma” (*fa* 法) refers to the mind of sentient beings. That mind comprises all mundane and transmundane dharmas, and it is in reference to that mind that the meaning of Mahāyāna is elucidated. Why? Because the phenomenal appearance of the true reality of that mind reveals the essence of Mahāyāna, the phenomenally conditioned appearances subject to birth and death produced by this mind are able to reveal the very essence, appearance, and functioning of Mahāyāna. “Meanings” (*yi* 義) consists of three kinds. What are the three? The first is the greatness of its essence, because the true reality of all dharmas is equal and does not increase or decrease. The second is the greatness of its phenomenal appearances, because the *tathāgatagarbha* is fully endowed with excellent qualities whose nature is immeasurable. The third is the greatness of its functioning, because it is able to produce the excellent all mundane and transmundane causes and effects.

²¹ *Wuliangyi jing*, T 276, 9: 385c24.

²² See T 2015, 48: 404b8–26.

interpretative or philosophical positions are taken out of the context of the dharma and held onto as absolutes. In such instances, such positions (*yi* 義) are a case of adapting the dharma to human views (*yifa jiuren* 以法就人), which we saw earlier Zongmi had used to exemplify the way in which the dharma could become a disease to humans.

The passage is open enough to allow for either an ontological or hermeneutical reading (i.e., *fa* 法 as mind or canonical corpus). And the two readings are not necessarily incompatible, at least for Zongmi, for whom the Buddha's intent in preaching the dharma was to reveal the mind. In either case, the underlying model provides a template for unifying the many into the one.

— 4. Array 羅列 —

Finally, a brief comment on the term that I have translated as “array.” *Luolie* 羅列 is an array that is ordered and structured. Furthermore, given that it is an ordered and structured array of the dharma and its meanings, I would maintain that it here refers to the vision of the whole hierarchically reticulated architecture that we see evidenced everywhere throughout Zongmi's *Preface*. We have no way of ever knowing what he may have actually “experienced” while practicing calm wisdom (*jinghui* 靜慧) in his retreat in the Zhongnan mountains, but what is clear in the very architectonics of his *Preface* itself is that there was a point at which his vision of how the entirety of Buddhism (*fa* 法), with all of its contending interpretations (*yi* 義), fit together into a coherent whole in his mind.

———— SEVENTH PASSAGE ————

399c16–18: 豈比夫空守默之癡禪，但尋文之狂慧者？然 {K+本} 因了自心，而辨諸教故，懇情於心宗；又因辨諸教，而解修心故，虔誠於教義。

How can I moderate between the ignorant Chan adepts who cleave to the silence of emptiness and the unbalanced advocates of wisdom who are wholly given over to the investigation of texts? Still, because I have discerned [the meaning of] the teachings by perceiving my own mind, I feel

respect for the tradition that bases itself on mind [i.e., Chan]. Moreover, because I have understood the cultivation of mind by discerning the teachings, I have reverent regard for the meaning of the teachings.

This passage begins by contrasting “ignorant Chan adepts” (*chichan* 癡禪) with “unbalanced advocates of wisdom” (*kuanghuizhe* 狂慧者). “Unbalanced wisdom,” *kuanghui* 狂慧, is the error to which exegetes (whose concentration is not yet firm) are prone, whereas “ignorant concentration,” *yuding* 愚定 (*yu* 愚 = *chi* 癡), is the error to which meditators (whose wisdom is not yet deep) are prone. It concludes with Zongmi’s claim that because he is equally versed in both Chan (meditation) and wisdom (texts) he is able to moderate between the contending camps of Chan adepts and textual scholars.

In his *Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, Zongmi likens the word I have translated as “unbalanced” (*kuang* 狂) “to a flame in the wind or the movement of waves on water,” indicating that it lacks stability. It is the development of concentration (*samādhi*, *ding* 定) that stabilizes wisdom (*prajñā*, *hui* 慧). He explains the two adjectives in question (i.e., *kuang* 狂 and *yu* 愚 / *chi* 癡) and the errors they represent in the following passage from his *Commentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*:

無定無慧，是狂是愚。偏修一門，無明邪見。此二雙運，成兩足尊。

Lack of concentration and lack of wisdom are respectively characterized as *kuáng* 狂 and *yu* 愚 (= *chi* 癡). They are the ignorance and pernicious views that come from one-sidedly cultivating only one of these approaches. When these two are carried out together, they [enable one to] become the most honorable of two-legged creatures [i.e., a buddha].²³

His *Subcommentary* elucidates as follows:

「無定」下，明互闕之失。謂無定之慧，慧是狂慧。如風中燈，如搖動水。無慧之定，定是愚定。如悶絕無心，如枯杌無識。又偏修定，增長無明；偏修慧，增長邪見。

“Lack of concentration [and lack of wisdom]” clarifies the error of each deficiency. That is, wisdom without concentration is the wisdom

²³ *Yuanjuejing dashu*, R 14: 119c11–12.

that is characterized as “unbalanced wisdom”; it is like a flame in the wind or the movement of waves on water. Concentration without wisdom is the concentration that is characterized as “ignorant concentration”; it is like a falling into a mindless stupor or the unconsciousness of a desiccated stump. Further, the one-sided cultivation of concentration increases ignorance, whereas the one-sided cultivation of wisdom increases pernicious views.²⁴

Zongmi’s *Commentary* passage concludes by comparing his emphasis on the balanced cultivation of concentration and wisdom with the equal emphasis on the balanced cultivation of calming (*zhi* 止, *samatha*) and contemplation (*guan* 觀, *vipaśyanā*) in Tiantai (故天台修行，宗於止觀).²⁵ His *Subcommentary* goes on to quote the opening passage of Zhiyi’s *Xiao zhiguan* 小止觀, which says that calming is “the entry way to subduing the afflictions” (止乃伏結之初門), while contemplation is “the correct and essential means for cutting off delusion” (觀是斷惑之正要). As Zhiyi notes, *samatha* is the practice that leads to the development of *samādhi*, and *vipaśyanā* is the practice that leads to the awakening of *prajñā* (止是禪定之勝因，觀是智慧之由藉).²⁶ The two together are like the wheels on a cart or the wings of a bird. Zhiyi adds, “The sūtras say that to one-sidedly cultivate the blessings and merit of meditative concentration without studying wisdom is what is called ignorant, and that to one-sidedly study wisdom without cultivating the blessings and merit of meditative concentration is what is called unbalanced” (故經云：若偏修禪定福德，不學智慧，名之曰愚。偏學智慧，不修禪定福德，名之曰狂。).²⁷ Zhiyi’s text ends with a slightly reworded statement from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*,²⁸ which claims that it is due to their excessive emphasis on concentration that *śrāvakas* fail to see their buddha nature (聲聞之人，定力多故，不見佛性), and that, with their excessive emphasis on wisdom, even though bodhisattvas who have mastered the ten stages may see their buddha nature, they fail to thoroughly understand it (十住菩薩，智慧力

²⁴ *Yuanjuejing dashuchao*, R 14: 280a15–18.

²⁵ *Yuanjuejing dashu*, R 14: 119c13.

²⁶ *Xiuxu zhiguan zuochan fayao* 修習止觀坐禪法要 (alt., *Xiao zhiguan*), T 1915, 46: 462b10–11. I would like to thank John Kieschnick for allowing me to use his excellent translation, *A Primer in Chinese Buddhist Writings. Volume 3, Buddhist Texts Composed in China*, from which I have drawn in fashioning my translation of the passages quoted.

²⁷ T 1915, 46: 462b15–16.

²⁸ *Daban neipan jing* 大般涅槃經, T 374, 12: 547a12–16.

多，雖見佛性，而不明了); only buddhas who have equally mastered both concentration and wisdom can see and thoroughly understand their buddha nature (諸佛如來，定慧力等，是故了了見於佛性).²⁹

It is interesting to note that Zongmi draws on Zhiyi for the way in which he characterizes his distinction between the danger inherent in the one-sided emphasis on either textual study or meditative practice—a distinction fundamental to his project to reconcile the two sides and to establish his warrant for doing so. Zongmi was well acquainted with Zhiyi's works on meditative practice, such as his *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 and *Fahua sanmei chanyi* 法華三昧懺儀, in addition to his *Xiao zhiguan*. He includes Tiantai as one of ten houses (十家) of Chan that he enumerates in his *Preface*,³⁰ and, as an example of gradual cultivation followed by sudden realization (漸修頓悟), even paraphrases Guanding's account³¹ of Zhiyi's dramatic breakthrough while practicing the Lotus *samādhi* under Huisi's tutelage in his *Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*.³²

Returning to the *Preface* passage at hand, the second and third sentences clarify Zongmi's qualification for being able to moderate between these two contending camps: He can bridge the gulf because he has both discerned the meaning of the teachings by perceiving his own mind, and understood the cultivation of mind by discerning the teachings. Hence he does not fall into either of the errors to which each side is prone.

This passage calls to mind Zongmi's coda to his massive *Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*:

以聖教為明鏡，照見自心。
以自心為智燈，照經幽旨。

Use the teachings of the sage as a luminous mirror,
in which to see one's own mind reflected,
and use one's own mind as a lamp of wisdom,
with which to illumine the profound meaning of the scriptures.³³

²⁹ T 1915, 46: 462b18–21.

³⁰ See T 2015, 48: 400b28–c3.

³¹ See *Sui Tiantai Zhizhe dashi biezhuan* 隋天台智者大師別傳, T 2050, 50: 191c23–192a1.

³² *Yuanjue jing dashuchao*, R 14: 280c5–6.

³³ This saying is repeated three times in the text: R 14: 329b4–5, R 14: 451b15–16, and R 15: 40d16–17. Zongmi adapts it from Chengguan's *Subcommentary to the*

—to which he adds the following gloss:

法鏡照心者，法謂教法，鏡即是喻。如人有眼耳，無由親自見之，若以鏡照之即見。眾生心性亦爾，無由自見，因聞聖教，依教反照方見也。

In the statement “the mirror of the dharma illumines the mind,” the “dharma” refers to the teachings, and the mirror is its illustration. For example, people have no means to see their own eyes and ears, but if they use a mirror, they can see them reflected in it. The same holds for the nature of the mind of sentient beings. Although they have no means to see it by themselves, because they have heard the teachings of the sage, as soon as they make use of it to turn the illumination back, they will see.³⁴

This passage shows how, for Zongmi, both the mind (meditative insight) and the dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) are necessary to illuminate one another. The dharma serves as a mirror in which the mind is reflected, and the mind provides the light of insight with which the dharma is illumined. Without the dharma, there is nothing in which the mind can see itself, and without the light of the mind, the dharma cannot be understood. There is a certain type of Chan practitioner, however, “who is deluded about the true by just making use of his mind, and who does not check to see if [his experience] matches with the teachings of the sage as an authoritative means of reliable knowledge (一類禪宗但約心迷理，不勘契聖教為定量).”³⁵ This statement, quoted from Zongmi’s *Subcommentary* (40d13–14), is noteworthy for introducing the idea of *pramāṇa* (*liang* 量), “means of reliable knowledge,” as will be explored in the following section.

I.B.2.e: Means of Reliable Knowledge (*pramāṇa*)

Zongmi locates the tension between Chan practice and textual study within the larger discourse of the polarity of calming (*śamatha*) and contemplation (*vipaśyāna*) or concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). One of the

Avatamsaka Sūtra, Dafangguang fohuayanjing suishu yanyichao 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔, T 1736, 36: 16c28–17a2.

³⁴ *Yuanjue jing dashuchao*, R 14: 329a18–b3.

³⁵ Cf. Chengguan’s *Subcommentary to the Avatamsaka, Dafanfuang fo huayan jing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔, T 1736, 36: 16c28–17a2: 昔人不詳至理，不參善友，但尚尋文。不貴宗通，唯攻言說。不能以聖教為明鏡，照見自心。不能以自心為智燈，照經幽旨。

things that characterizes Zongmi's treatment—and that is not necessarily true of the larger discourse—is his subsuming of textual study under the pole of *vipaśyāna/prajñā*. Despite the deep resonances with Zhiyi, this is one area in which they differ. For Zhiyi, the practice of contemplation remains within the realm of meditative praxis. For Zongmi, however, textual study is related to the development of wisdom, and it makes up part of what is involved in the process of gradual cultivation. He emphasizes that it is necessary as a gauge to test the validity of one's insight or meditative experience, and it is here that Zongmi links his discussion with *pramāṇa* or “means of reliable knowledge.” Textual study also helps to expand and to deepen one's meditative experience, to give one a means to express it, and thereby to hone one's skills as a teacher.

Zongmi's discussion of *pramāṇa* is found in the next section of his *Preface*(I.B.2), which details ten reasons that Chan students should study texts in addition to their meditative practice. The most important of these in this context is the fifth subsection (I.B.2.e) on the three *pramāṇa*.

Pramāṇa came to play an enormously important role in the later Indian commentarial and Tibetan philosophical traditions with the development of Buddhist epistemology by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. It never emerged as a central topic for expanded treatment in Chinese Buddhist exegetics during the later Tang, however. Zongmi's discussion begins:

401a8–11: 五、量有三種，勘契須同者。西域諸賢聖所解法義，皆以三量為定。一比量，二現量，三佛言量。量者，如度量升斗量物知定也。

5. The three means of reliable knowledge (*pramāṇa*) must all agree with one another. In their interpretations of the meaning of the dharma the various worthies and sages from the western regions have all taken the three means of reliable knowledge as authoritative. The first is inference (*anumāṇa*), the second is direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), and the third is the Buddha's word (*buddhavacana*). Means of reliable knowledge (量 *liang*, lit. “measure”) is like using a scale in weighing something in order to ascertain its weight.

Despite Zongmi's claim that “various worthies and sages from the western regions have all taken the three means of reliable knowledge as authoritative,” the preponderance of discussions of the *pramāṇa* only include the first two: inference (*anumāṇa*, *biliang* 比量) and direct perception (*pratyakṣa*, *xianliang* 現量). The third, which Zongmi refers to as the Buddha's word

(*buddhavacana*, *foyanliang* 佛言量), is mentioned in two prominent Yogācāra texts translated by Xuanzang that Zongmi would have been familiar with: the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, *Yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, which uses “the true teaching” (*zhengjiao* 正教) for the third *pramāṇa*,³⁶ and the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, *Jieshenmi jing* 解深密經, which uses “the teachings of the sage” (*shengjiao* 聖教).³⁷ Zongmi defines the three as follows:

401a11–14: 比量者，以因由譬喻比度也。如遠見煙，必知有火。雖不見火，亦非虛妄。現量者，親自現見，不假推度，自然定也。佛言量者，以諸經為定也。

Inference means drawing an inference based on a cause or analogy. For example, if one sees smoke in the distance, one surely knows there is fire. Even though one does not see the fire, [this inference] is still not unwarranted. Direct perception means personally seeing for oneself, which is authoritative in and of itself without depending on inference. The Buddha’s word means taking the scriptures as authoritative.

Zongmi here repeats the standard definition of the first two *pramāṇa*. As we shall see, it is the second—direct perception—that for him can be problematic and necessitates the inclusion of the third. Zongmi goes on to consider the three cases that prove why each of the three *pramāṇa* must be corroborated by the others in order to know that one’s understanding is authoritative. He begins with why the Buddha’s word alone does not suffice.

401a14–16: 勘契須同者，若但憑佛語，不自比度，證悟自心{K-2}者，只是泛信，於己未益。

That [the three means of reliable knowledge] must agree with one another means that if one were just to rely on the Buddha’s word without inferring for oneself, then as far as the realization of one’s own mind is concerned, it would be no more than a matter of baseless faith and would be of no benefit to one.

He next considers the problem with direct perception.

³⁶ See T 1579, 30: 357a–358c.

³⁷ See T 676, 16: 709c29.

401a16–18: 若但取現量，自見為定，不勘佛語，焉知邪正？外道{T+六師}，亦{T-}親見所執之理，修之亦得功用，自謂為正{K/主}，豈知是邪？

If one were just to hold to direct perception, taking what one perceives for oneself to be authoritative without comparing it to the Buddha's words, then how could one know whether it is true or false? Non-Buddhists also directly perceive the principles to which they adhere and, practicing according to them, obtain results. Since they maintain that they are correct, how else would we know they were false [without the word of the Buddha]?

It is this passage that contains the nub of Zongmi's argument. In the course of their practice meditators may have all kinds of experiences whose intensity imbues them a reality that compels belief in them as veridical. But, as meditation manuals point out, many such experiences can be demonic (*mo* 魔). Moreover, as Zongmi points out, "non-Buddhists also claim to have a direct perception of the principles to which they adhere, and, practicing according to them, obtain results." Hence, it is only by checking whether they match with the words of the Buddha that one can know for sure whether such experiences can be relied on as true.

He goes on to consider the third case, that of inference.

401a18–19: 若但用比量者，既無聖教及自所見，約何比度，比度何法？

If one were just to use inference without [taking account of] what is seen in the sage's teachings as well as for oneself, then on what basis could one draw an inference and what dharma could one infer?

Thus, after examining the three cases of how each of the three *pramāṇa* must agree with the others, Zongmi comes to his conclusion of what "counts as knowledge that is authoritative" and his message for Chan practitioners of why it is necessary for them also to engage in textual study.

401a19–21: 故須三量勘同，方為決定。禪宗已多有現比二量。今更以經論印之，則三量備矣。

Thus we know that only when the three means agree with one another does it count as knowledge that is authoritative. Many in the Chan tradition rely on the two means of direct perception and inference; if they were now to use the scriptures and treatises to validate them, then the three means of reliable knowledge would be fully satisfied.

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In this paper I have tried to offer a deep reading of a key passage at the beginning of Zongmi's *Comprehensive Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan*, in which he explains the central reason for composing his text. In doing so, I have drawn on several passages that explicate ten reasons why Chan students should study canonical texts (specifically, the first, second, third, fifth, and eighth reasons). I have also drawn from other sections of the text (viz., his soteriological schema in Part IV) as well as from Zongmi's *Commentary and Subcommentary to the Scripture of Perfect Awakening*, which I have mined as "footnotes" to expand on ideas stated in a more concise way in the *Preface*. My reading, I hope, has demonstrated the difficulty—if not impossibility—of understanding or rendering an intelligible translation of a text like this without such archeological work. One needs to expose the resonant associational field that forms, as it were, the mycorrhizal fabric that underlies, binds together, and gives meaning to the words on the surface.

I further hope that this effort has helped to clarify the rhetorical force of the argument that Zongmi lays out in the section that I have examined. This argument is important because it provides the justification and the rationale for the architecture that he erects in Part II to correlate the teachings of the different Chan traditions with the canonical teachings of the Buddha.

We have good reason, of course, to be wary of taking at face value Zongmi's self-representation in the passage just examined. We certainly need to weigh how his claims to privileged authority position him advantageously to advance his own polemical agenda, allowing him to assume the superior position that sublates the antitheses represented by the two partisan camps of textualists and meditators that he addresses. Although his compulsion to resolve partisan controversy may seem admirable, in the end it only creates another position, succumbing to the familiar dialectical paradox inherent in

any attempt to stake out a philosophical claim to be right, even that which attempts to encompass all sides. Another interesting angle that could be further explored is the extent to which the discursive moves Zongmi makes could be seen as a ploy pitched to a newly-won literati audience. But all that is a task for a different paper. For now I am content if I have succeeded in clarifying the nature of Zongmi's claims and how he deploys them within the context of the argument that he articulates within his *Preface*.

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