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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

*Roger Jackson*  
*Dept. of Religion*  
*Carleton College*  
*Northfield, MN 55057*  
*USA*

**EDITORS**

*Peter N. Gregory*  
*University of Illinois*  
*Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA*

*Ernst Steinkellner*  
*University of Vienna*  
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*Steven Collins*  
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*Chicago, Illinois, USA*

*Robert Thurman*  
*Columbia University*  
*New York, New York, USA*

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Issues in the Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies: An Extended Review of *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory

by T. Griffith Foulk

### *Introduction*

This article began as a review of a substantial anthology of scholarly articles that appeared several years ago:

Peter N. Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*. Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 5. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

Two considerations, however, have led me greatly to extend the scope and length of the review, with the result that it now includes a broad overview of the field (East Asian Buddhist studies) and sub-field (Chinese Buddhism) to which the review volume belongs, as well as an in-depth treatment of each of its ten chapters. First, I felt that some recognition of the series in which the volume appears, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, was called for. This series, which was launched in 1983 with the publication of *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen* (edited by Robert Gimello and Peter Gregory), includes seven volumes to date, all but one of which are

multi-author anthologies.<sup>1</sup> The series has emerged as a showcase for the best of contemporary North American scholarship on East Asian Buddhism, and the list of scholars who have contributed articles to it reads very much like a who's who in the field today. Because *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* is fairly representative of the scholarship that has appeared thus far in the Kuroda Institute series, and because the series itself can be regarded as the standard bearer of East Asian Buddhist studies in North America today, this review seemed an appropriate place to assay some of the general features of that field as it has evolved over the past two decades. Secondly, I found that the individual chapters of *Sudden and Gradual*, together with the Introduction by editor Peter N. Gregory and the Afterword by Tu Wei-ming, raise a number of fundamental methodological and historiographical issues that deserve more detailed treatment than would have been possible in a short review. Taking the volume as a whole as a starting point, then, I shall proceed to lay out the general parameters of the field of East Asian Buddhist Studies as it has evolved in North America; to address various questions of methodology in Buddhist Studies and the study of religion in general; and to evaluate each of the individual chapters of *Sudden and Gradual* in light of those broader issues.

*Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*

This volume, a collection of ten articles focused on a more or less common theme, grew out of a conference on "The Sudden/Gradual Polarity: A Recurrent Theme in Chinese Thought." The conference, sponsored by the Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization of the American Council of Learned Societies, was held at The Institute for Transcultural Studies (located at the Zen Center of Los Angeles) in May, 1981. The original set of twelve papers presented at the conference was distributed by the organizers to a number of universities and research institutes with major East Asian libraries in September, 1981. According to the introductory note accompanying

that set of papers, one of the main objectives of the conference was to explore how the philosophical and polemical categories of “sudden” (*tun*) and “gradual” (*chien*), which are used in diverse ways in a variety of medieval Chinese Buddhist text, “formed part of a larger discourse in Chinese intellectual history”:

The conference thus sought to take an approach different from those of previous discussions of the significance of the sudden/gradual controversy in Chinese Buddhism. Instead of trying to locate the source of the debate within the Indian Buddhist heritage, the conference attempted to provide a new perspective on the process of Buddhism’s accommodation with some of the dominant themes in Chinese intellectual history, as well as Buddhism’s effect upon that tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Another aim of the conference, expressed in the same note, was to investigate how the sudden/gradual controversy found in Chinese Buddhism “could be reformulated as a paradigm by which to elucidate the basic tensions in other traditions of moral and spiritual cultivation.”<sup>3</sup>

The co-organizers of the conference, Peter N. Gregory (editor of the volume under review and director of the Kuroda Institute) and Robert M. Gimello, as well the majority of the other scholars who originally presented papers (including Jeffrey L. Broughton, Francis H. Cook, Neal A. Donner, Luis O. Gómez, Miriam Levering, John R. McRae, and Robert B. Zeuschner) are specialists in Chinese Buddhism and/or the historical connections between Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan Buddhism. These scholars, who are sometimes labeled Buddhologists (more on this neologism later), are representative of the growing East Asian wing of the field of Buddhist studies in North America today. Reading between the lines of the stated aims of the conference, I would venture to say that the agenda reflected the interests of this cohort, in effect acknowledging its insularity and its need to open up lines of communication with scholars outside the field of Buddhist studies. In this case, the common ground for meeting with outside scholars was defined as Chinese intellectual

history, or Sinology in general. Apart from the Buddhologists, papers were presented at the conference by a historian of Chinese art (James Cahill), a specialist in Chinese literature (Richard J. Lynn), and a specialist in Neo-Confucian thought (Rodney L. Taylor). Concluding remarks were made by Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming.

I would suggest that the stated desire for a closer association with the mainstream of Western Sinology (which, it may be observed, has inherited something of the traditional elite Confucian antipathy toward Chinese Buddhism) has another dimension to it as well. It represents a rejection of the notion, long held by many leading European scholars of Buddhism, that the study of Chinese Buddhist texts is valuable chiefly for the light it sheds on the Buddhist tradition in its native India. Here we find a new generation of East Asian Buddhologists insisting that Chinese Buddhism is worth studying in its own right as an independent, if not entirely indigenous, set of Chinese phenomena.

Editor Peter Gregory notes that the book which finally emerged from the 1981 conference has taken a shape in many ways different from the original cast of papers. Six of the original twelve papers (those by Broughton, Cook, Gimello, Levering, Taylor, and Zeuschner) do not appear, and others have been revised or completely rewritten. Other major changes were the addition of new papers written specially for the book by Whalen Lai and Robert E. Buswell, Jr., and the inclusion of translations of seminal essays by Paul Demiéville (originally published in 1947) and R.A. Stein (originally published in 1971). Despite these changes, Gregory asserts, the working assumption that inspired the conference "still operates as an underlying presupposition for the volume and provides an important context in which the various chapters should be understood" (p. 4). In other words, the volume is still intended "to place what has often been seen as a strictly Buddhist problematic within the broader context of Chinese thought and culture" (p. 1).

The volume as a whole is only partially successful in this venture. Peter Gregory's Introduction and the Afterword by Tu Wei-ming do address the issue of the "peculiarly sinitic" character of the conception of sudden enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism. However, the

chapters by Demiéville, Stein, and Gómez, which together comprise Part I (entitled “The Sudden and Gradual Debates”) focus on a rather different problem: the applicability of the sudden/gradual polarity that was formulated in the Ch’an school of Chinese Buddhism to the cross-cultural, comparative study of religion. The investigation of this issue, it will be recalled, was a stated aim of the original conference, but it is not mentioned in the editor’s Introduction to the book. Ironically, with the addition of the chapters in Part I, the book does a much better job of addressing the issue than the original conference papers. Part II, entitled “Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism,” consists of chapters by Lai, Donner, McRae, Gregory, and Buswell—all East Asian Buddhologists. Among these, only the piece by Lai touches on the question of the broader (non-Buddhist) context of the Chinese Buddhist understanding of sudden and gradual enlightenment. The other chapters in Part II focus rather narrowly on the sudden/gradual polarity as it was employed by particular Chinese Buddhist teachers or schools, and make few if any attempts to draw connections to non-Buddhist systems of thought or broader trends in Chinese culture. The remaining two chapters, by literature specialist Lynn and art historian Cahill, are relegated somewhat forlornly to a much shorter Part III, entitled “Analogies in the Cultural Sphere.” The title of this part unintentionally implies that Chinese Buddhism is somehow outside the sphere of Chinese culture. It also suggests that developments in Chinese literary and art theory that employed the Buddhist categories of sudden and gradual were extraneous to the mainstream of the Buddhist tradition, which (one might gather from Part II) was chiefly concerned with philosophical matters and a religious “practice” which neatly reflected doctrinal formulations. This is unfortunate, for the chapters by Lynn and Cahill bear witness to the fact that the isolation of East Asian Buddhist studies from the mainstream of Sinology is detrimental to both sides. Other contributions from outside the circle of Buddhologists would have been a welcome addition. Whatever the reason for their absence, the very paucity of essays in Part III undermines the claim that the sudden/gradual polarity is more than just a Buddhist problematic, and gives the

impression that few Sinologists find the topic interesting or important enough to write about.

All of this is not to find fault either with the editor's basic project or with the quality of the individual essays, which is generally high. The editor is to be commended for his vision of an East Asian Buddhist studies which is more attuned to broader Sinological issues, and better able to command an audience outside a narrow circle of specialists. If he is to be criticized, it is only for raising expectations in the Introduction which go unfulfilled in the body of the work. That, perhaps, is the price that one must pay for venturing to point one's colleagues in new directions. By the same token, it is not entirely fair to judge the individual chapters by the expectations raised in a frame that is basically extrinsic to them. Most of the chapters in Part II are models of good, sound East Asian Buddhological research—a virtue that only appears a vice in the context of a call to expand the scope of the field itself.

Editor Gregory's Introduction does an excellent job of alerting the reader to a situation that might otherwise be a cause of considerable bewilderment in the chapters that follow: the fact that the descriptive terms "sudden" (*tun*) and "gradual" (*chien*) were applied in varying ways to a number of different objects in Chinese Buddhist thought, so that no single, overarching lexical definition of their meaning is possible. Gregory notes, for example, that when applied to enlightenment (*wu*), "sudden" in some contexts means that the object of realization can only be apprehended in its entirety or "all at once," rather than piecemeal or gradually, since the object itself is a truth or principle (*li*) that is essentially one and indivisible. In other historical contexts dealt with in the essays, we find that sudden enlightenment (*tun-wu*) could mean an enlightenment in which all of the disparate qualities of Buddhahood are gained "at once," or simultaneously. Or it could mean an enlightenment that is "immediate" in the sense of being direct and intuitive rather than relying on mediating concepts or expedients (*upāya*; *fang-pien*); or an enlightenment that is inborn rather than produced or acquired through any meditative, devotional or moral exercises; or an enlightenment that



is apprehended fully in a moment of “seeing” rather than through a gradual process of self-purification; or simply an enlightenment that is endowed with all properties that are good and true (albeit unspecified) as opposed to the gradual (false, dangerous, inferior, impossible, etc.) enlightenment that is attributed to an opponent in a polemical debate. To this I would add that in some cases the categories of “sudden” and “gradual” are set up as mutually exclusive terms in a strict dichotomy, and in other cases they represent a polarity—the extremes of a continuum in which any number of intermediate positions are possible. Matters are further complicated by the fact that the various dichotomies and polarities that have been formulated using “sudden” and “gradual” as key terms do not necessarily correspond to each other in any predictable way. Thus, for example, thinkers who hold that enlightenment is innate in all living beings (the subitist or “sudden” position in the dichotomy of inborn vs. produced or acquired), have not always stressed insight (the subitist position in the polarity of seeing vs. purification) as a method of realizing or manifesting the innate enlightenment in everyday life. Furthermore, as the editor points out, the terms “sudden” and “gradual” have been applied in various ways not only to enlightenment, but to teachings (*chiao*) and cultivation (*hsiu*) as well.

One thing that is clear from the Introduction, and borne out by the evidence presented in the volume as a whole, is that from a historical point of view it is dangerous to speak loosely of “the” (singular) sudden/gradual polarity in Chinese Buddhism, or “the” subitist position. Historically, there were many different polarities and dichotomies, and many different subitist positions. These occurred at different times and places, and there is no valid *a priori* reason for assuming any thematic similarities or historical relations between them. Any such connections must be drawn on a case by case basis, following a careful study of each of the particular historical instances in which the terms “sudden” and “gradual” were actually brought into play. Several of the essays under review do in fact present detailed philological analyses of such specific instances. But nowhere in the volume as a whole do we find the sort of follow-up study necessary

to establish historical connections among them, or to prove the hypothesis that “the” sudden/gradual polarity was a recurring theme even, in the history of Chinese Buddhism, let alone in Chinese intellectual history in general.

This being the case, are the editor and certain of the other contributors to the volume making an error of historical judgment when they speak of “the” sudden/gradual polarity as if a single, underlying issue (or even a single complex of demonstrably related issues) had already been shown to exist? I would not make this charge. The problem, rather, lies in a failure clearly to distinguish research methodologies and the types of definitions being employed.

As was indicated above, the historical-philological method of dealing with technical philosophical terms such as “sudden” and “gradual” is not to assume any semantic unity, but to determine the meanings of the terms in question by examining their usage in as many different historical contexts as possible. Definitions arrived at by this method have been called lexical definitions.<sup>4</sup> Because lexical definitions are reports of actual historical usage, they can be judged true or false, and are in principle always open to critical review. Once the meanings of a term have been pinned down in a lexical definition, they can be analyzed to see if there is a semantic common denominator that underlies all of them, although there need not be: irreducible ambiguity is a common fact of actual usage, and hence a common feature of lexical definitions.

An entirely different methodological approach—one that is often taken in the comparative study of religion—is to begin with a stipulative definition of a particular type of religious phenomenon and then go looking in the world’s religions for concrete historical instances that fit the typology. Stipulative definitions function to establish the meaning of a symbol for use within a particular field of discourse, and thus in principle cannot be judged true or false on the basis of evidence of any sort. Because they are essentially arbitrary, stipulative definitions need not accord in any way with their lexical counterparts, but often they are used to eliminate ambiguity by giving priority to one of the established lexical meanings of a term.

Now, if we ask which of these two approaches informs the organization of the present volume, the historical-philological or the

comparative-typological, the answer is both—but in a rather haphazard fashion. When the editor and certain other contributors speak of “the” sudden/gradual polarity, it seems that they are making use of a stipulative definition. The definition in question, we shall see, was one originally formulated by Paul Demiéville in “Le miroir spirituel,”<sup>5</sup> the first essay in the present volume. Demiéville was not really concerned with the lexical meanings of *tun* and *chien* in Chinese texts: his aim was to present a typology for use in the comparative study of religion, and he proceeded to test that typology by applying it to texts selected from the Buddhist, Taoist, Hindu, Islamic, and Christian traditions. As he explicitly stated, “in composing this brief study I have not asked myself any historical questions . . . we may see here a comparative essay” (p. 33). Demiéville himself is more or less clear about what he is up to, but a number of follow-up studies (including ones in this volume) take him to task for philological deficiencies, as though he was presenting a lexical rather than a stipulative definition of “subitism.”

By the same token, no matter how fruitful Demiéville’s stipulative definition of the sudden/gradual polarity may be as a device for comparing different intellectual and religious traditions around the world, the similarity in thought patterns that this approach discovers in different traditions must not be construed as proof of any direct historical connection among them. The same holds true even if the different intellectual traditions being compared all fall within the Chinese culture sphere: structural similarities revealed by the comparative-typological method do not constitute proof of historical relatedness. The existence of the sudden/gradual polarity as an underlying theme or pattern of thought that exerted itself throughout the course of Chinese intellectual history can only be demonstrated by the historical-philological method.

These questions of research methodologies and types of definitions present themselves implicitly in *Sudden and Gradual*, but neither the Introduction nor any of the individual chapters address them directly. In general, it may be observed that the field of Buddhist studies has lacked sophistication in these regards, having traditionally been preoccupied with the fundamental task of sorting out and

trying to make sense of the great mass of Buddhist literature that has been preserved in several difficult Asian languages. If East Asian Buddhist studies, in particular, is to emerge from its comfortably exotic cocoon of highly specialized philological and doctrinal concerns and begin to interact in mutually beneficial ways with other areas of Asian and religious studies, it will be necessary for scholars in the field to distance themselves a bit from the normative traditions they specialize in and give more thought to such theoretical questions. As we shall see in the following section, East Asian Buddhist studies is a relatively new branch of Buddhist studies in the West, and one that has relied heavily on sectarian Japanese Buddhist scholarship in learning to stand on its own.

### *The Field of East Asian Buddhist Studies*

Like the fields of Indology, Japanology, and Sinology, Buddhist studies is not tied to any one academic discipline, and in theory can encompass any number of scholarly approaches and methods. A major difference, of course, is that Buddhist studies is not in principle delimited by any geopolitical, cultural, or linguistic boundaries either. Indeed, research in the field almost always has a cross-cultural, multi-lingual aspect. This is because as Buddhism spread from India throughout the rest of Asia (and recently to the West), it manifested itself at every place and time in a complex combination of imported and indigenous elements of belief and practice, which scholars feel compelled to sort out. Moreover, in many lands, the scriptures held as sacred and used on a daily basis by Buddhist monks and nuns have been written in foreign languages. For example, in much of Southeast Asia the Pali canon has long been regarded as authoritative, and in Korea and Japan the major Buddhist canons are written in classical Chinese. Even the study of Indian Buddhism is not free from cross-cultural, multilingual considerations, for it relies in good measure on texts translated from Indic languages that survive only in Tibetan and/or Chinese. Thus Buddhist studies, which is probably regarded by most outsiders as a rather narrow specialization, focusing as it does on a single religious tradition, is in actuality

nearly as broad in scope and potentially as diverse in methodology as the nebulous field of Asian studies itself.

In fact, the tremendous cultural diversity of the Buddhist tradition, the vast time frame that it spans, and the sheer number and difficulty of the Asian languages pertinent to its study, effectively preclude any one scholar (even one who adheres to a single disciplinary approach) from researching Buddhism in all of its historical contexts. A degree of specialization is necessary, and not surprisingly, Buddhist studies admits to the same sort of national, linguistic, cultural, and "area" subdivisions that are found in Asian studies. The most fundamental division in the field is between the Buddhism of lands that historically have fallen more within the sphere of Indian cultural influence, and the Buddhism of lands that have been more influenced by Chinese culture. That is to say, the primary division is between the Buddhism of South, Southeast and Central Asia on the one hand, where the main languages of the Buddhist canons are Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan, and East Asian Buddhism on the other hand, where the major canons have all been comprised chiefly of texts written in classical Chinese. Further subdivisions in the field tend to follow national and linguistic boundaries. Thus we speak of the Buddhism of Thailand, Cambodia, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and so on, as distinct objects of study. Nevertheless, because Buddhism itself is a cross-cultural phenomenon, the areas of specialization that individual scholars have carved out for themselves within Buddhist studies generally straddle linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Although Buddhism can, in principle, be studied from the standpoint of many different humanistic and social scientific disciplines, historically the study of Buddhism in the West has been dominated by philological concerns. As J. W. de Jong demonstrates in an article published in 1974 entitled "A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America,"<sup>6</sup> the prevailing attitude among the leading Western (mostly European) scholars of Buddhism over the past century has been that "once texts have been properly edited, interpreted and translated it will become possible to study the development of religious and philosophical ideas."<sup>7</sup> De Jong's article

was followed a decade later by an update entitled “Recent Buddhist Studies in Europe and America: 1973-1983.”<sup>8</sup> These articles are of interest not only for the valuable information they contain, but for the prejudice they display in virtually ignoring the work of the younger generation of scholars (mostly in North America) specializing in East Asian Buddhism. De Jong is not alone when he states that

Without any doubt, the study of Indian Buddhist texts deserves a central place in Buddhist studies because it forms the basis for any serious work in the study of religion, philosophy, history and art.<sup>9</sup>

There are still many scholars in the field of Buddhist studies who believe that real Buddhism is Indian Buddhism, and that the “serious” study of Buddhism is impossible without a mastery of the linguistic tools necessary to carry out the philological study of Indian Buddhist texts. First and foremost among those tools, of course, is a knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali. De Jong notes that “most Western scholars begin by studying Sanskrit and Pali and acquire later sufficient knowledge of Tibetan and Chinese to read Tibetan and Chinese texts translated from Sanskrit or other Indian originals.”<sup>10</sup> In this view, a knowledge of Chinese (or rather “Buddhist Chinese”—the idiosyncratic language of Indian texts in translation) is an important, but decidedly secondary, concern for the serious scholar, who uses Chinese texts as a window on a relatively early stratum of original Indian texts that were either lost or greatly changed subsequent to their translation. But if a knowledge of Chinese is secondary, then a knowledge of Japanese is clearly tertiary, for until modern times no Indian texts were translated directly into that language. Thus, de Jong contends, very few Western scholars of Buddhism can read Japanese, and very few have been able to make much use of the great wealth of Japanese secondary scholarship in the field. He goes on to note that Western Sinologists have recognized the importance of Japanese scholarship, and argues that “it is undoubtedly necessary for Western Buddhist scholars to follow the example of the Sinologists.”<sup>11</sup>

The irony of these remarks concerning the dearth of Western scholars proficient in Japanese is that they are true only if the image of the scholar of Buddhism as a philologist concerned primarily with the exegesis of Indian texts is held to be definitive. The most outstanding example of a scholar who did not fit that mold is Paul Demiéville (1894-1979), whom de Jong himself rightly named in his 1974 article as the leading figure in the field of Chinese Buddhist studies. Demiéville's long list of publications shows clearly that his interest in Chinese Buddhism extended far beyond texts and issues that were pertinent to the study of Indian Buddhism, although he excelled in that line of multilingual, cross-cultural research as well. As editor-in-chief of the *Hōbōgirin*, an encyclopedic dictionary of Buddhism based on Chinese and Japanese sources which was arranged in order of Japanese pronunciation and published in Japan, Demiéville not only recognized the value of Japanese scholarship, but took the lead in making its findings more widely accessible to researchers in the West. Moreover, Demiéville's study of Chinese Buddhist texts was not restricted to matters of Buddhist philosophy, but took into account the broader context of Chinese literature and culture. It is fitting that a translation of an essay by Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel,"<sup>12</sup> should be included as the first chapter in *Sudden and Gradual*, for in many ways his work is exemplary of the type of broadly Sinological approach to Buddhist studies that editor Gregory envisions.

By the 1970s, there were also a number of other established European and American scholars, such as Hubert Durt, Philip Yampolsky, Leon Hurvitz, and Stanley Weinstein, who had spent years studying in Japan, were fluent in Japanese, and were in fact making extensive use of Japanese Buddhist scholarship in their studies of East Asian Buddhism. The ranks of such specialists have been swelled since the mid-1970s by many younger scholars who have also come into their own, not by the route that de Jong describes, but by first learning Chinese and Japanese, and then (depending on individual research interests) perhaps studying enough Sanskrit to investigate the Indian precedents of ideas found in *Chinese Buddhist* texts. East Asian Buddhist studies, conceived as a more or less

independent field, has thus expanded in the West (and particularly in North America) to the point where it has a following roughly equal in numbers to Indian Buddhist studies. Similar developments, it may be noted, have been taking place in the fields of Tibetan and Southeast Asian Buddhism, where an increasing number of younger scholars are treating those traditions as worthy of study in their own right, and not merely as reflections of Indian Buddhism.

This is not the place for a comprehensive survey of recent Western scholarship in East Asian Buddhist studies, but I shall make some general observations about the sorts of topics that have been addressed in the Kuroda Institute series, and the kinds of approaches that authors represented in the series have taken.

In the first place, it may be noted that despite Demiéville's example of a Buddhology with strong Sinological (or, by analogy, Japonological) underpinnings, East Asian Buddhist studies in North America has tended to travel along avenues laid out and paved by Japanese scholarship. Buddhist studies in Japan is a thriving and diverse field, but in general it is divided along lines that are similar to those described above, with Indian and Tibetan Buddhism forming one main branch and East Asian Buddhism another. The former branch, which from the Japanese perspective deals with types of Buddhism that are relatively alien culturally and linguistically, got its start in the last decades of the nineteenth century, following the Meiji Restoration, and has from the beginning been strongly influenced by the European philological model. Not only were the methods of late nineteenth and early twentieth century European scholarship adopted, but many of the attitudes as well. Even today it is not uncommon to hear Japanese Indologists remark that it is impossible to study "genuine" (meaning "original") Buddhism without a knowledge of Pali and Sanskrit. This branch of Japanese Buddhist studies tends to look down on the academic study of Chinese and native Japanese Buddhism as peripheral and less rigorous, although a great many of the scholars involved in all aspects of the field are themselves closely affiliated (often by birth into temple families) with one or another of the major Japanese Buddhist denominations, and may dabble on the side in the history or thought of their particular school. The



ambivalence and reticence evinced by many Japanese Indologists and Tibetologists toward the study of their native Buddhist traditions is a product of divided filial loyalties —toward the first generation of Japanese scholars in the field and their European teachers on the one hand, and toward temple priest fathers and bill-paying parishioners on the other. The very proximity and familiarity of the native Buddhist traditions also breeds a certain contempt among Japanese scholars, but the personal and political risks involved mitigate against bringing innovative, critical methods of scholarship to bear too close to home. Ancient Indian Buddhism is not only “genuine,” it is relatively safe to treat in an objective manner. Needless to say, it is the other, East Asian branch of Japanese Buddhist studies that has served as an inspiration and model for scholars studying Chinese and Japanese Buddhism in the West. This branch is much older and much less influenced by Western critical methods, having developed over the centuries within the context of the Japanese Buddhist tradition itself. The leading academic research centers for each of the historically important schools (*shū*) of Japanese Buddhism, such as Zen, Jōdo, Jōdo Shin, Nichiren, Tendai, and Shingon, are universities and institutes run by Buddhist denominations which define themselves as legitimate spiritual heirs to the schools in question. Many of the faculty and research staff are members of the denomination’s clergy. Research tends to focus on the history of the parent school (understood as a spiritual lineage), with a great emphasis on the lives and teachings of founders and other revered ancestral teachers. When attention is directed to Chinese Buddhism, it is often in the context of tracing a lineage back to Chinese ancestors, or establishing the orthodoxy of doctrines and practices by elucidating the Chinese precedents for them. Schools of Chinese Buddhism that are regarded as largely defunct (having few or no living spiritual, doctrinal, or institutional heirs in Japan) receive relatively little attention, although the freedom to treat them critically is correspondingly greater. Because Japanese scholars of Chinese Buddhism tend to focus narrowly on particular Buddhist schools and patriarchs, most of them would not be regarded by Western standards as true Sinologists. Indeed, although they can read classical Chinese (*kanbun*) with great

facility in the traditional Japanese manner of grammatical restructuring *cum* transliteration (*yomikudashi*), very few can speak modern Chinese. The East Asian Buddhist scholarship that goes on in the denominational universities and research centers in Japan generally meets high standards of objective verification and intellectual honesty, and it is unsurpassed in its thorough marshaling and utilization of historically pertinent textual sources. It is constrained, nevertheless, by the fact that it is part of a normative tradition. Much of the work produced can aptly be described as having a theological dimension (more on this term below).

The influence of Japanese scholarship on East Asian Buddhist studies in the West is evident in the considerable concern with the history of schools, founders, patriarchs, and lineages that is evinced in the first five volumes in the Kuroda Institute series. Although Western scholars do not have the same vested interests as the Japanese and are generally more willing to take critical, even revisionist approaches in their research, the fact remains that the basic topics and problems addressed are often ones that have been defined by denominational interests in Japan. Moreover, the original textual sources that Western scholars consult are frequently ones that Japanese scholars have already discovered and/or identified as relevant to the topic. Often they are texts that have also been edited, annotated, and translated into modern Japanese.

Considering that the field of East Asian Buddhist studies in the West is still young, it is perhaps appropriate that it should have undergone a period of apprenticeship to Japanese scholarship and only now be starting to articulate its own unique set of interests. That a movement toward greater independence from Japanese scholarship is under way is clear from the first five volumes in the Kuroda Institute series. There is a growing awareness that reliance on Japanese scholarship, while it has been invaluable in establishing East Asian Buddhism as a legitimate field of study, has had the unfortunate side effect of isolating the field from Sinology and Japanology on the one hand, and from the mainstream of religious studies on the other.

That isolation is felt all the more keenly because the leading

Japanese specialists in East Asian Buddhism generally do not read (or if they do read, do not respond to) the work that appears in publications such as the Kuroda Institute series. Part of the problem is simply that they are not accustomed to reading in Western languages at all, and very little Western scholarship on Buddhism is ever translated into Japanese. (An interesting exception is Demiéville's "Le miroir spirituel," which appeared in Japanese translation in *Zengaku kenkyū* in 1960.<sup>13</sup>) Japanese Indologists and Tibetologists, conversely, have long made good use of publications in German, French, and English, while occasionally grumbling about the infrequency with which their own work is recognized abroad.

In any case, the sense of isolation felt by some Western scholars of East Asian Buddhism is reflected both in the desire to be part of the Sinological mainstream, and in attempts to address issues in the comparative study of religion. We have already seen how the book under review, *Sudden and Gradual*, exemplifies the former tendency. A movement toward the comparative approach is evident in the organization of the fourth volume in the Kuroda Institute series, entitled *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (also edited by Peter Gregory). That volume treats various Buddhist systems of "meditation," which (as is acknowledged in the volume itself) is a Western category—one that has been abstracted from its original historical context to serve as a basis for comparative study in the field known as "history of religions." Similarly, volume six of the Kuroda Institute series, *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (edited by Donald Lopez), uses a category that derives from the Judeo-Christian exegetical tradition as a device for focusing attention on more or less compatible strategies of scriptural interpretation that were formulated in a number of different Buddhist schools. Neither the volume on meditation nor the one on hermeneutics include articles by scholars from outside the field of Buddhist studies, or articles that treat religions other than Buddhism in any depth, but both volumes do lay the groundwork for broader comparative study. *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, moreover, cuts across cultural if not religious boundaries, for it includes contributions from scholars in many regional and linguistic branches of Buddhist studies. The same is true of the most

recent volume in the series, *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (edited by Robert F. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello). That a series originally dedicated to East Asian Buddhism should open itself up in this way is also indicative of the fact that the East Asian branch of Buddhist studies is sufficiently established for its members to reach out to and identify with the field as a whole.



### *Buddhology and Buddhist Theology*

In the preceding pages I have occasionally used the term *Buddhology* to refer to the academic study of Buddhism, and the term *Buddhologist* to refer to specialists in that study. These neologisms have entered the vocabulary of scholars both inside and outside the field, but they are plagued with certain ambiguities and connotations that render them distasteful to insiders, who generally prefer to speak of “Buddhist studies” and “scholars of Buddhism.” The issue at stake behind this seemingly trivial semantic distinction is the sensitive one of belief and objectivity. But what exactly is the definitional problem, and how might it be resolved?

In one modern dictionary, *Buddhology* is defined as “the study of Buddha and of the nature and various forms of Buddhahood.”<sup>14</sup> *Buddhology* in this definition is clearly conceived as the Buddhist counterpart of Western theology, with Buddha and Buddhahood replacing God and the divine as objects of study. Western theology can be characterized as a normative discipline which posits certain truths about the existence and nature of God and the divine as axiomatic and then proceeds to elaborate and systematize them using rational arguments and conventions of evidence and proof. Given this understanding of theology, it is not difficult to find rough parallels in the vast literature of the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, there are numerous texts in which the truths of enlightenment (*bodhi*) and the existence of enlightened beings (*buddhas*) and beings on the way to Buddhahood (*bodhisattvas*) are accepted as articles of faith and subjected to various more or less systematic interpretations which draw out their meaning and implications for the religious life. In this

sense, for example, one could speak of the Buddhology of the *Lotus Sutra*, which contains a polemical reinterpretation of Buddhahood and the path that leads to it. Similarly, the medieval Chinese Buddhist debates over the nature of enlightenment that revolved around the complex terms “sudden” and “gradual” could be viewed as prime examples of Buddhological polemics, since the one thing taken for granted by all parties to such debates was the truth and value of enlightenment itself (however it was interpreted).

This understanding of Buddhology as a sort of Buddhist theology has gained some acceptance, but it is precisely the association with theology that makes many contemporary scholars of Buddhism eschew the term as a description of their own work. Of the ten chapters that comprise the volume under review, eight focus directly or indirectly on various Chinese Buddhist interpretations of enlightenment as “sudden” and/or “gradual.” The authors of these chapters, however, all adopt a scrupulously historical, descriptive stance, and strive to avoid taking the sort of normative or apologetic positions that are characteristic of theology. To be sure, they report on Chinese Buddhist beliefs in enlightenment and attempt to explain the inner logic of Chinese Buddhist theories about the nature of enlightenment. But their own scholarship (formally, at least) is not grounded in any particular beliefs about the nature or value of enlightenment, nor is it (theoretically speaking) concerned with judging the truth or falsehood of Buddhist doctrines according to any ultimate criteria.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that these scholars and various others who have published essays in other anthologies in the Kuroda Institute Buddhism series, whether they like the appellation or not, are often called Buddhologists. Thus, if we were to accept the foregoing dictionary definition of Buddhology as a sort of Buddhist theology, we would have to describe contemporary Western Buddhologists as scholars who take the Buddhology of other, historical persons and texts as the object of study, but do not (intentionally, at least) engage in Buddhology themselves. But such a description is clearly too convoluted and confusing to serve any useful purpose.

The solution I propose is simply to refer to Buddhist treatments

of enlightenment (*bodhi*), enlightened beings (*buddhas*), the path to enlightenment (*mārga*), and so on, as *Buddhist theology* — understanding theology broadly as the study of divine things or religious truth as it is carried on within a normative tradition. This will allow us to reserve the term Buddhology for the “objective” (non-normative) study of Buddhism, including the history and present state of its social organizations, practices, literature, and systems of philosophy and theology. The scholars now called Buddhologists are, for the most part, actually engaged in this latter kind of study. Most, I believe, would be willing to accept my definition of Buddhology as broadly descriptive of their own field of research.

Of course, when it comes to the professional credentials that count the most—those that establish a person’s position in an academic department and in the humanities or social sciences in general—some scholars who work on Buddhism prefer to be identified primarily by the disciplines (anthropology, history of religions, etc.) to which they adhere, and only secondarily as experts on a particular object of study. This is an attitude shared, no doubt, by many Asianists who accept the particular “area studies” and “-ologist” labels that apply to them when in congenial surroundings such as meetings of the Association for Asian Studies, but prefer to wear a disciplinary hat to the office.

Ambivalence about the terms Buddhology and Buddhologist is especially strong among scholars in the field of East Asian Buddhist studies, for several reasons. In the first place, it is a fact that quite a few (certainly not all) of the younger generation of scholars now active in academia have at one time or another, either in Asia or North America, participated in the life of Buddhist monastic and/or lay communities. Such intimate involvement tends to raise the level of intensity in the debate over belief and objectivity, although again there is a double standard at play. An academic conference held at the Zen Center of Los Angeles, for example, will strike many scholars of religion as more “suspect” in its objectivity than one held on the same topic at the University of Notre Dame. Secondly, there is the legacy of D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966), who for more than half a century worked to win respect in the West for Mahāyāna Buddhism in

general, and the Zen (Ch'an) tradition in particular. Many of today's academic specialists would frankly admit that they were first attracted to Buddhism by Suzuki's writings, and would credit Suzuki with sowing the seeds that eventually grew into today's field of East Asian Buddhist studies; it is no accident that the study of Zen now holds such a prominent place within that field. However, it must also be conceded that Suzuki, while unquestionably a great scholar, was essentially a Buddhist missionary and theologian who tirelessly preached the truth of the experience of enlightenment (*satori*) and interpreted it in a way that he felt was best suited to his Western audience. Western scholars, to be sure, no longer rely on Suzuki's English writings. Indeed, it was at the point when scholars started to go beyond Suzuki, to investigate the primary and secondary Chinese and Japanese sources that he used, and to reach their own conclusions, that East Asian Buddhist studies in the West really began to come of age. But elements of theology, whether overt or subtle, are also common and accepted in the Japanese language scholarship on East Asian Buddhism upon which Western scholars relied in taking this step. Difficulties have sometimes arisen when the topics addressed and the conclusions reached in Japanese Buddhist theology are carried over into ostensibly critical Western scholarship without being recognized and tagged as coming from a normative tradition. For example, the Zen Buddhist claim that "enlightenment" is an ineffable something that lies beyond the grasp of intellectual conceptualization and analysis is often repeated uncritically by scholars, despite the boldly self-contradictory (not to mention self-serving) nature of this sort of apophatic religious rhetoric. Such normative elements have great appeal: they are what make many books on Zen, even those that are rather academic in style, popular. Nevertheless, their presence violates a different set of norms — those of critical scholarship — and leaves Buddhologists open to attack or condescending dismissal by critics from other disciplines.

In the pages that follow, I treat each of the chapters in the volume under review separately, discussing them in light of the main issues raised above: the development of East Asian Buddhist studies in North America and the influence of European and Japanese scholar-

ship on it; the nascent movement in the field toward broader cultural-historical and comparative approaches; and the corresponding need for greater sensitivity to methodological issues such as the problem of definition and the relation between critical Buddhology and Buddhist theology.

*Reviews of Individual Chapters in Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*

“The Mirror of the Mind,” by Paul Demiéville

Demiéville’s “Le miroir spirituel,” translated under the title “The Mirror of the Mind,” is the first chapter in Part I “The Sudden and Gradual Debates.” The debates referred to in this heading, presumably, are (1) the controversy that took place in mid-eighth century China between the competing Ch’an schools of Shen-hsiu and Shen-hui (who claimed that his teacher Hui-neng was the true sixth patriarch in the lineage of Bodhidharma), and (2) the controversy at the so-called “Council of Lhasa” in Tibet in the late eighth century, which is supposed to have pitted the Ch’an monk Mo-ho-yen against the Indian monk Kamalaśīla. However, only the lengthy essay by Gómez, which comprises the third and final chapter of Part I, actually focuses in any detail on the intellectual history of these two debates. Demiéville’s point of departure, it is true, is the famous story in the *Platform Sūtra* about the verses written by Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng in their competition to become the successor of the fifth patriarch, Hung-jen. But Demiéville is not terribly concerned with the history of the polemical dispute that is reflected in that story, nor does he trouble himself with a detailed investigation of the doctrinal meaning of the verses, which he airily declares is “clear” (it is anything but, as Gómez demonstrates). Are we to infer from this that Demiéville was a poor intellectual historian or a sloppy philologist? No, because as I indicated above, his project in this essay is not to investigate the lexical meanings of the Chinese terms *tun* and *chien*, but rather to formulate a typology for use in the comparative study of philosophy and religion. That Demiéville’s definition of the polarity is stipulative



and not lexical is apparent from the fact that he contemplates alternative names for his proposed typology — “perfectivism” vs. “imperfectivism” and “totalism” vs. “evolutionism” — before settling on “subitism” and “gradualism.” It is clear from these alternatives that finding an accurate translation for *tun* and *chien* is not a criterion, and that Demiéville’s choice of terms is essentially arbitrary.

As is generally the case with stipulative definitions, Demiéville presents his subitism/gradualism typology near the beginning of his essay, and then proceeds (in what he terms a “vagabond inquiry”) to apply it to a wide variety of test cases drawn from all of the world’s major religious traditions. (Lexical definitions, conversely, are typically formulated by way of conclusion to a historical–philological study). The typology is actually a complex, multi-dimensional one, comprised not of one polarity but a constellation of polarities that Demiéville lays out in sequence. In explaining the typology here, it will suffice to list the qualities that Demiéville lines up on the subitist side of the ledger, only naming the opposite pole occasionally. The subitist position holds that:<sup>15</sup> the seeing of the absolute in ourselves occurs “suddenly” and unexpectedly, outside all temporal conditions, causal or otherwise; the absolute is seen as a totality, “all at once”; seeing the absolute is intuitive, not analytic; it comes about in a revolutionary manner; any active effort to see the absolute is repudiated; aspiration is solely for a passive experience of the absolute; (in the Christian context) it comes via grace, not exertion (p. 31); (in Platonism) it is sufficient to resort to a wholly negative effort, a purging of the passions (p. 30); the absolute is innate and fundamental, but it is necessary to remove the veils of delusion which obscure it.

Although stipulative definitions often serve to remove the ambiguities inherent in ordinary language, Demiéville’s definition of the subitist position seems to contain at least one rather obvious inconsistency. On the one hand, he holds that subitism repudiates all effort at religious cultivation, while on the other he says that the subitist position allows for or even makes a requirement of the “negative” effort of purifying the mind. This inconsistency would

amount to a self-defeating contradiction if he were trying to establish a sudden/gradual *dichotomy*. But his subsequent application of the typology makes it clear that he is concerned rather with formulating a cluster of polarities, each of which admits to varying degrees of subitism or gradualism. Thus, if I read him correctly, Demiéville would want to say that although the most extreme subitist position is to repudiate all effort, to make a “negative” effort is still closer to the subitist pole, relatively speaking, than to make a positive effort which seeks to develop moral qualities, intellectual knowledge, or skill in meditative exercises. Actually, if Demiéville *had* been concerned with formulating a strict dichotomy, even the elimination of the obvious inconsistency indicated above would not save him from logical contradiction, because the most extreme subitist position already contains an element of gradualism (as he defines those terms). That is, to repudiate action is itself a kind of action, and to hold an aspiration for even a completely passive experience is itself a kind of seeking. In the final analysis, to maintain any sort of attitude or position whatsoever vis-à-vis the absolute, including one that is resolutely apophatic, or even to remain purposefully silent, is to be something of a gradualist.

Indeed, the logic of Demiéville’s typology is such that no historical examples of an absolutely thoroughgoing subitistic philosophy or religious stance could possibly be found: pure subitists leave no traces. This, we shall see, is treated as a problem by Gómez but it is not really a problem for Demiéville, because his stipulative typology is not based on (and cannot be challenged by) historical evidence of any sort. A stipulative typology can serve as a fruitful heuristic device even if, from the historical perspective, it turns out to be a null set. Moreover, it can serve as a tool for comparative study even if all of the historical phenomena investigated turn out to have inductable dissimilarities. In short, it can remain an ideal type, forever hypothetical, and still serve its intended function. Viewed in this light, the refutations elicited from Stein and Gómez, and indeed the very existence of the *Sudden and Gradual* volume, are testimonies to the success of Demiéville’s typology.

This is not to say that Demiéville’s essay is entirely free from

problems. Early on, having just presented his definition of subitism and gradualism, he apparently loses sight of his own project momentarily when he states that

in the eighth century in particular, all Chinese philosophy centered around the Buddhist controversy over “subitism” and “gradualism”; we can even say that this debate epitomized, though the nomenclature varied, certain themes characteristic of Chinese thought over the centuries. (p. 17)

To make such a claim, of course, is to enter into the historical and philological arena, and to open oneself up to challenge on the basis of concrete textual evidence. The issue raised, of course, is precisely the one that editor Gregory identifies as the unifying theme of the book. But as soon as Demiéville makes the claim, he changes the subject, explaining that

it is not this doctrinal question that I propose to examine here in its breadth. I would like to limit myself to commenting on the metaphor of the mirror as it occurs in the verses of the Platform Sūtra, and to exploring its Chinese and Buddhist antecedents, as well as parallels outside Asia. (p. 17)

With this, Demiéville gets back on track with his comparative enterprise, for the “antecedents” and “parallels” he refers to are basically phenomena identified on the basis of typological similarity rather than historical connection. Demiéville’s approach in the remainder of the essay is to adduce examples, culled more or less at random from different religious and philosophical traditions, of the use of a mirror as a metaphor for the human mind. Naturally, the metaphors cited work in many different ways, but there are some frequently recurring themes, such as the equation of dust or tarnish on the surface of a mirror with delusions or disturbances that obscure the essential purity of the mind or prevent the mind from reflecting things as they are. Demiéville takes this diverse data and applies his typology to it as a framework for cross-cultural comparison. Thus,

he points out ways in which each of the metaphors represents a more or less subitistic or gradualistic position.

Because Demiéville's framework is external to the data compared, he can take this approach without regard for the question of whether or not the various philosophers and theologians he cites actually used a terminology or conceptual scheme directly translatable as "sudden" and "gradual." A similar approach is taken by structural anthropologists, Marxist and Freudian historians, and indeed scholars in any discipline that attempts the universal application of a theoretical framework which has been formulated by stipulative definition.

The assumption is often made, of course, that the forces or patterns discovered in a particular culture, individual, or historical situation under investigation really exist "out there" in the object of study, and not merely in the imagination of the investigator. In the physical sciences, the ultimate test of such claims is the ability to predict (or manipulate predictably) the behavior of measurable phenomena. Epistemological problems take a back seat to pragmatic results (except, perhaps, at the cutting edge of theoretical physics, astronomy, and so on). It is more difficult to test the explanatory value of theoretical frameworks in the social sciences, where controlled experiments are harder to set up, and the gathering of data is often indistinguishable from the interpretation of data (so that the "facts" are the product of the theories they are supposed to test). When we come to the comparative study of religion and philosophy, which is greatly influenced by the social scientific method, the epistemological problems are even more acute and the recourse to quasi-scientific testing of theories against data is even more dubious.

Thus, defining it as loosely as he does, Demiéville has no trouble finding examples of subitism (in varying degrees) all over the world. But do these examples constitute data that proves the usefulness of his typology for explaining or predicting religious ideas? Obviously not, because of the circularity of the method, which amounts to a kind self-fulfilling prophecy, and does not permit objective testing. As I noted above, I do not think Demiéville would claim anything more than heuristic value for his typology, at least with respect to religions

outside of China. But if and when the comparativist does assert that the patterns or tendencies he or she discovers in the world's religious thought really exist "out there," or does claim that the theoretical framework employed has positive explanatory and predictive power and not merely an aesthetically pleasing form, on what objective basis might these claims be tested? It is at this point, I would argue, that we are inevitably drawn outside the circle of the comparative project with its stipulative definitions and artificial universal categories. It is at this point that we are forced to ask the historical question: did the people whose ideas and beliefs we are studying really make explicit, demonstrable use of the categories of thought that we, from our lofty (and thus superficial) comparative vantage point, would be inclined to attribute to them?

Actually, even if the comparativist carefully disclaims any historical validity for his or her typology (we have seen that Demiéville makes just such a disclaimer), there is no avoiding this turn toward historical investigation. In the final analysis, to say that a comparative project has heuristic value is precisely to affirm that it raises interesting historical questions, and lends focus and excitement to concrete historical research. In the real world of academic religious studies, neither the comparative-typological nor the historical-philological method ever stands alone: we are constantly moving back and forth between them. Such a turnabout in approach is immediately evident in the volume under review, for the second chapter in Part I, by R.A. Stein, is a narrowly philological study.

"Sudden Illumination or Simultaneous Comprehension: Remarks on Chinese and Tibetan Terminology," by R.A. Stein

In this chapter, Stein investigates the precise semantic range of the Chinese and Tibetan words that Demiéville translates as "sudden" (*subit*). He demonstrates that the Tibetan term *cig-char*, which is used at times to translate the term *tun* in Chinese Buddhist texts, always means something closer to "simultaneous" (*simultané*) than "sudden." From this he infers that the Chinese *tun* is ambiguous,

sometimes meaning “sudden” and sometimes meaning “simultaneous.” He argues that when *tun* means “sudden,” as in the expression *i-shih tun*, it is translated by the Tibetan *skad-cig* (= Sanskrit *ekakṣaṇa* “in one moment”). Stein was inspired to write the article, he says, by Demiéville’s “inadequate” translation of *tun* in a Chinese text which purports to record the Ch’an controversy in Tibet (p. 50). While disclaiming any expertise in Chinese Buddhist philosophy, he implies that the lexical ambiguity of the term *tun*, which Demiéville was apparently unaware of, undermines the latter’s discussion of the subitist/gradualist polarity. Stein’s philological observations are pertinent to the historical study of the sudden and gradual debates, of course, but to the extent that they are intended to be a criticism of Demiéville’s treatment of subitism in “Le miroir spirituel,” they miss the mark. Demiéville’s stipulative definition of subitism actually includes the sense of simultaneity, and in any case is in principle immune from challenge on lexical grounds.

“Purifying Gold: The Metaphor of Effort and Intuition in Buddhist Thought and Practice,” by Luis O. Gómez

This chapter, the third and final one of Part I, is basically a sustained response to the piece by Demiéville. Gómez challenges the latter’s “facile comparisons” by demonstrating the great diversity of the “two separate polemical contexts” (Shen-hui’s attacks on “Northern” Ch’an, and the so-called “Council of Lhasa”) and “three distinct cultural milieux” (India, China, and Tibet) in which the sudden/gradual controversies took place. Gómez takes as his point of departure “the hypothesis that there is a complex of doctrines and images, similarity among which points to a discrete religious and intellectual phenomenon that may be adequately described as the sudden-gradual dichotomy or polarity” (p. 68). His project, in brief, is to refute the hypothesis by showing that the actual historical controversies were too complex, and the meaning of the superficially similar metaphors that were used too diverse, to be adequately described by the sudden/gradual polarity as Demiéville defines it. Gómez brings to bear an impressive array of historical and philologi-

cal evidence in proving his point, which is that “whenever we let the texts speak for themselves we see how inaccurate are the categories of polemicists and scholars alike—‘quietism,’ ‘gradualism,’ ‘subitism,’ ‘pure calm’” (p. 111).

Gómez’s criticism of Demiéville is devastating if one accepts his assumption that the latter’s project was to accurately describe a discrete historical phenomenon. If, however, one views Demiéville’s typology as a stipulative definition, then Gómez’s criticism appears to be tilting at windmills. Gómez himself starts with what is basically a stipulative “preliminary definition” of the sudden/gradual polarity, borrowed from Demiéville. The fact that the definition ultimately proves inadequate to describe the religious and intellectual phenomena that he treats does not detract from its usefulness as a heuristic device.

Although he does not address the methodological issues directly, Gómez comes across in this chapter as an opponent of the comparative approach. The high degree of specialization required to master the linguistic and philosophical subtleties of any single religious tradition, he suggests, dooms the broad comparativist to superficiality. Gómez’s conclusions, which gain force from the very breadth and complexity of the evidence he adduces, lead one to a rather pessimistic conclusion about the feasibility of establishing a common ground for meaningful dialogue between Buddhologists and scholars in other fields. This is ironic, given the stated aspirations of the book, and Gómez’s own fundamental sympathy with the search for universals in human thought and religious life.

“Tao-sheng’s Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined,”  
by Whalen Lai

This is the first chapter in Part II, “Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism.” As Lai notes in his introductory remarks, a number of scholars have held that “the theory of sudden enlightenment—one of the main features of the Southern school of Ch’an—was first proposed by Tao-sheng (c. 360-434), who is also remembered for asserting the doctrine of a universal Buddha-

nature" (p. 169). Lai sets out to reconstruct the development of Tao-sheng's "subitism," noting among other things the influence upon Tao-sheng's thought of ideas deriving from the Hīnayāna Abhidharma and the Neo-Taoist philosophy of dark learning (*hsüan-hsüeh*). He also stresses the point that Tao-sheng's earlier formulations of the theory of sudden enlightenment were unrelated to the doctrine of innate Buddha nature, which he only came to espouse toward the end of his career.

For the reader who comes to this chapter with Stein's and Gómez's philological studies fresh in mind, the blithe manner in which Lai speaks of "the" (singular) theory of sudden enlightenment in Chinese thought cannot help but seem naive and overly simplistic. Lai apparently shares Gómez's assumption that Demiéville's typology was intended to describe an actual historical phenomenon, but unlike Gómez he raises no questions about the accuracy or appropriateness of its application to the historical data. The result is a confusing conflation of unrelated philosophical issues under the hazy rubric of the sudden/gradual debate. At one point Lai describes Tao-sheng's mature subitism as the view that enlightenment cannot occur piecemeal or in stages, since the principle (*li*) to which one awakens allows no variance (i.e., it can only be grasped all-at-once or not at all); this he traces back to the Neo-Taoist Wang-pi's concept of the oneness of principle. Elsewhere Lai describes Tao-sheng's subitism as growing out of the theory that all karmic retribution, even the reward for good deeds, is transcended in a sudden leap which occurs at the end of a nine-stage path of liberation; this he traces back to a "Hīnayāna detour" that Tao-sheng supposedly took by studying the *Abhidharma-hṛdaya* under Hui-yüan (344-416). Finally, Lai identifies Tao-sheng's subitism with the doctrine of "one vehicle" found in the Lotus Sūtra, and labels the opposing "three vehicles" position "gradualism." The problem is that three completely different notions of "sudden" are operative here. The three are brought together, perhaps, in Demiéville's typology, but that essentially arbitrary association is construed by Lai as a historical connection. In other words, Lai assumes that Tao-sheng formulated a single, multivalent theory of sudden enlightenment by drawing on the aforementioned



sources and finally, at the end of his career, tied it together with the doctrine of innate Buddhahood drawn from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*.

This historical scenario appears all the more dubious when one realizes that most of what Lai says about Tao-sheng's purported subitism derives from sources other than Tao-sheng's own writings. As Lai himself states,

nothing containing a sustained argument for subitism has been preserved in Tao-sheng's writings. We have only his allusions to it and recollections by others. (p. 173)

Indeed, so much of what we know about Tao-sheng's thought comes to us via the claims of later biographers and polemicists that even the association of Tao-sheng's name with a theory of sudden enlightenment could be nothing more than the work of later proponents of a subitist position who were seeking a suitably prestigious "founder" for their doctrine.

The connection that Lai draws between Tao-sheng's thought and Neo-Taoism is one of the few instances in Part II where Buddhist ideas are placed in the broader context of Chinese intellectual history. Unfortunately, the connection rests on little more than the fact that Tao-sheng's biographical notice in Hui-chiao's *Kao-seng-chuan* (Biographies of Eminent Monks) describes his approach to interpreting Buddhist *sūtras* by using a metaphor that also appears in a work by Wang-pi, and derives from the *Chuang-tzu*: "having caught the fish, one can forget the trap." The use of such a stock image, however, tells us little more than that Tao-sheng's biographer Hui-chiao was a literate Chinese. As the essay by Gómez demonstrates, superficially similar metaphors can often be shown to convey different meanings when one takes specific historical contexts into account and examines the deeper structures of the arguments employed. Lai further argues that "in his actions as well, Tao-sheng exemplified the freedom of spirit associated with Neo-Taoism" because he paid no regard to certain Buddhist precepts such as not sitting on high seats and not eating after midday (p. 171). But the association of such behavior with Neo-Taoism is gratuitous. Often in the history of

Chinese Buddhism there were monks who ignored or adapted rules of conduct found in the Indian Vinaya texts; it would be absurd to assume that they were all motivated by the spirit of Neo-Taoism. Many, such as the Vinaya master Tao-hsüan (596-667), were essentially conservative reformers.

“Sudden and Gradual Intimately Conjoined: Chih-i’s T’ien-t’ai View,” by Neal Donner

Donner’s project in this second chapter of Part II is to elucidate Chih-i’s (538-597) use of the concepts sudden and gradual “in the context of his thought on teaching and practice.” Because, as we learn in this essay, Chih-i’s entire corpus can be characterized as emphasizing the combined pursuit of doctrinal studies (the “gate of teachings” *chiao-men*) and the practice of meditation (the “gate of contemplation” *kuan-men*), the context that the author chooses to work with is really Chih-i’s thought in its entirety.<sup>16</sup> Undaunted by the voluminous, architectonic nature of Chih-i’s major works and Chih-i’s penchant for creating numerous complex systems of categorization, Donner manages to summarize the T’ien-t’ai master’s thought in a manner that is at once comprehensive, coherent and insightful. Indeed, quite apart from the technical issue of Chih-i’s use of the terms sudden and gradual, this chapter stands as a good general introduction to T’ien-t’ai Buddhism.

Donner deals with the question of the meaning of the terms sudden and gradual in Chih-i’s thought as a straightforward problem of lexical definition. In other words, he sets aside all preconceived notions such as Demiéville’s typology and simply investigates the meanings of the terms in the context of Chih-i’s writings. This procedure reveals that Chih-i’s use of the terms revolved around a completely different set of issues than those treated earlier by Tao-sheng or those raised later in the two “debates” involving monks associated with the Ch’an school. Indeed, as Donner cautiously notes, “the word *tun*, which we are accustomed to translating as ‘sudden,’ is not, so far as I have found, applied adjectivally by Chih-i to the word *wu*, which we usually translate as ‘enlightenment’” (p. 220).

Rather, Chih-i used the terms sudden and gradual to distinguish types of teaching and types of meditative practice.

In a nutshell, the “sudden teaching” for Chih-i (represented by the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*) was the doctrine first preached by the Buddha after his enlightenment, without the use of any expedient devices (*upāya*, *fang-pien*) or concessions to the capacities of the individuals in his audience. The “gradual teachings” for Chih-i included the entire collection of *sūtras* expounded subsequently by the Buddha, all of which were said to have made some use of expedients. Donner makes the point that for Chih-i, “sudden” was not a term of unqualified approbation, since a balance between sudden and gradual elements (i.e., a direct presentation of the highest truth coupled with the use of expedients), which Chih-i believed existed in the *Lotus Sūtra*, made for a more successful teaching. Furthermore, a purely sudden teaching, as Chih-i conceived of it, would be free from all signification and hence would not be a teaching at all: “a perfect teaching that is completely unadulterated with the provisional, or *upāya*, cannot even be spoken” (p. 218). Sudden (or, more accurately, “perfect and sudden”) meditation in Chih-i’s scheme of things is any contemplative exercise in which the object of meditation (that upon which the mind is focused) is ultimate reality itself, understood as the emptiness of all *dharma*s. “Gradual” meditation, by way of contrast, involves fixing the mind on traditional (“Hinayānistic”) objects such as the constituent elements of the body, the breathing, a circle on the ground, or various doctrinal formulae. Here again, Donner makes the point that since ultimate reality for Chih-i has no signs or features (*hsiang*) on which the mind might be fixed, a truly “perfect and sudden” meditation would not be meditation at all. As long as “ultimate reality” is made into an *object* of meditation, there is a gradual element. In short, in both doctrinal study and the practice of meditation, there was no question of completely abandoning the gradual in favor of the sudden: as Donner’s title indicates, in Chih-i’s view the two were “intimately conjoined.”

Donner’s article is a good example of the influence that Japanese scholarship has had on East Asian Buddhism in the West. Like much of the Japanese work on Chinese Buddhism, Donner focuses

on the “founder” of a lineage, viewing him as a creative genius who was steeped in, and yet gave new impetus and direction to, the Buddhist tradition. There is no attempt to deal with broader issues pertaining to Chinese intellectual history or the comparative study of religion, and little inclination to interpret the founder’s thought within its social or political contexts (it is known, for example, that Chih-i and his leading disciples actively competed for imperial patronage). Whether one views these as methodological shortcomings or simply the qualities of a certain style of scholarship that prefers to analyze Buddhist doctrines on their own terms is a matter of opinion. However one feels about its Japanese-style parochialism Donner’s article is a finely crafted, engaging piece of work that evinces a mastery of its subject matter. Unlike many other studies that are cast from the same mold, it manages to present Buddhist ideas in a manner that is eminently accessible to the non-specialist.

“Shen-hui and the Teaching of Sudden Enlightenment in Early Ch’an Buddhism,” by John R. McRae

This chapter, the third in Part II, contributes to a debate about the influence of the Ch’an master Shen-hui (684-758) that has been going on for six decades in the modern Japanese field of the history of the Zen (Ch’an) lineage (*zenshūshi*). As such, it takes for granted considerable background knowledge of the historical and doctrinal issues involved.

The debate in question was initiated by the Chinese scholar Hu Shih, who discovered records of Shen-hui’s teachings among the Tun-huang manuscripts and first published his assessment of Shen-hui’s role in the history of the Ch’an movement in the early 1930s. Hu Shih saw Shen-hui (and the Ch’an movement in general) as the champion of a “practical” Chinese mentality which although it had been temporarily “dazzled and dumbfounded” by Indian Buddhism, recovered its senses and sought emancipation from all “superstitious” beliefs in *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, magical powers, charms and spells, and from “unintelligible metaphysics” and pedantic scholasticism.<sup>17</sup> According to Hu Shih, the “first battle in the Chinese

Revolt against the Buddhist conquest” was actually fought in the fifth century by Tao-sheng, and “the war-cry was Sudden Enlightenment versus Gradual Attainment.”<sup>18</sup> This war-cry “was destined in the course of a few centuries to sweep away all worship and prayer, all constant incantation of sutras and dharanis, all alms-giving and merit gathering, and even all practices of dhyana or Zen.”<sup>19</sup> Final victory in the battle against the alien religion was gained by Shen-hui, who successfully promoted the sudden enlightenment doctrine of his teacher Hui-neng, and thereby put an end to the Indian practice of meditation (*dhyāna*). In Hu Shih’s view, “this new Chinese Zennism of Hui-neng and Shen-hui did not develop a working methodology”:<sup>20</sup> the sudden enlightenment doctrine served only to cut attachments to all views and methods, leading by a negative path to “intellectual emancipation.” With the subsequent emergence of the Ch’an masters Ma-tsu and Lin-chi, however, the Ch’an movement developed a distinctive pedagogical method, which was to force the student to discover the truth through his own efforts by withholding all explicit instructions and giving him nothing but enigmatic sayings, shouts, or blows.<sup>21</sup>

McRae remarks that “Hu Shih’s basic work on Shen-hui was widely accepted by other authorities, although usually without reference to his largely interpretive scheme” (p. 231). This is only partly true. Hu Shih’s larger interpretive scheme, we have seen, hinged on the notion of the Chinese mentality and its supposed antipathy to the Buddhist religion. The “authorities” who made use of Hu Shih’s work, with few exceptions (e.g., Jacques Gernet and Walter Liebenthal), have all been Japanese scholars. Those authorities, such as D. T. Suzuki, Sekiguchi Shindai, and Yanagida Seizan, have in fact embraced Hu Shih’s interpretation to the extent that they view the Ch’an movement as a radical reformation within Chinese Buddhism that stripped the religion of its unassimilable foreign trappings and outfitted it instead in distinctively Chinese garb. However, Japanese scholars have resisted the anti-Buddhist aspect of Hu Shih’s theory by insisting that Chinese Ch’an preserved the inner spiritual essence of Indian Buddhism (namely, enlightenment) even as it modified or rejected the external forms.

Suzuki, for example took Hu Shih to task for failing to understand that the enigmatic sayings of the Ch'an masters were profound expressions of "prajñā-intuition,"<sup>22</sup> not merely *non-sequiturs* calculated (in Hu Shih's view this was a "conscious and rational method") to rebuff students or mock Buddhist philosophizing. Hu Shih, for his part, did not hesitate to point out the "propagandist" (i.e., missionary) dimension of Suzuki's writings on Zen, and to chide him for being a "pious Buddhist" who for that reason "will never understand Chinese Ch'an."<sup>23</sup> The exchange between Suzuki and Hu Shih, which McRae mentions in passing, was at bottom a disagreement between a Buddhist theologian who insisted on the ultimate reality of a trans-historical, ineffable and inconceivable truth (enlightenment), and a skeptical historian who was educated in both the elite Confucian and Western positivist traditions.

Japanese scholars of the history of Zen (Ch'an) have certainly reacted, both favorably and unfavorably, to key aspects of Hu Shih's interpretive scheme, but they have not devoted much thought or research to the ideological or sociological content of the vague "Chinese mentality" that is supposed to have domesticated Indian Buddhism. That issue, of course, is identified by editor Gregory as a central theme of the volume under review, and Hu Shih's rather simplistic and chauvinistic views on the matter certainly cry out for critical reassessment. McRae, however, much like the Japanese, does not pursue the question of the broader context of Chinese thought and culture in any detail.

The issue that McRae is primarily concerned with is one that has long been central to the Japanese field of Zen studies: the question of the internal development of the early Zen (Ch'an) school (*Zenshū*, *Ch'an-tsung*). The Chinese word *tsung*, although commonly translated as "school," may better be rendered as "lineage" in this context. As is well known, one of the ways in which the Ch'an movement in China sought to define and legitimate itself was producing quasi-genealogical tables which purported to trace the spiritual "blood lines" or lineage of ancestral teachers through which the Buddha Śākyamuni's *dharma* (here meaning his enlightened state of mind as opposed to his verbal teachings) had been handed down. Prior to the

discovery of Shen-hui's records and other Tun-huang manuscripts dating from the eighth century which contain conflicting versions of the early Ch'an lineage, Japanese Zen historians generally accepted the version that had been handed down within the Ch'an and Zen schools uncontested since the Sung dynasty (960-1279). That was the account, contained in Sung texts such as the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (Ching-te Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame), of twenty-eight patriarchs in India culminating in Bodhidharma, six patriarchs in China culminating in Hui-neng, and a subsequent branching out into the two lineages of Ma-tsu and Shih-t'ou and the so-called Five Houses of the late T'ang and Five Dynasties. The study of Tun-huang manuscripts, however, revealed that this traditional version of the lineage was merely the last in a series of fabrications. To the Japanese this was not only a matter of detached scholarly interest: it threatened the theological foundations of the modern Zen denominations by undermining their traditional claims to transmit the enlightenment of the *buddhas* and patriarchs.

Hu Shih's theory of Shen-hui's role in the history of the early Ch'an movement, for example, severed the connection posited in the traditional lineage between the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen and the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng. Both Hung-jen and his disciple Shen-hsiu, in Hu Shih's view, still made use of Indian Buddhist methods of *dhyāna*, and hence fell into the "gradual attainment" camp that Hui-neng and Shen-hui repudiated. Hu Shih thus posited a radical disjunction between the Ch'an of the first five patriarchs and the Southern school that was championed by Shen-hui, and depicted the new pedagogical methods of Ma-tsu's Hung-chou school and the later Lin-chi school as developments that grew naturally out of Shen-hui's "revolution." Sekiguchi Shindai, a Japanese scholar with ties to the Tendai school, went even further than Hu Shih in dismantling the traditional lineage, arguing that the "Southern" lineages of Ma-tsu and Shih-t'ou had merely usurped the name and genealogy of Shen-hui's school while rejecting its teachings. In response to these challenges, scholars associated with the Zen denominations have striven to reconstruct the traditional lineage linking Bodhidharma, Hui-neng and Ma-tsu by using modern methods of philology and text criticism. The leading

postwar figure in this effort, which has produced some excellent scholarship but nevertheless has an undeniable theological and polemical dimension to it, has been Yanagida Seizan.

McRae enters into this debate by challenging several key aspects of Hu Shih's thesis. For one thing, he brushes aside the notion that the doctrine of sudden enlightenment originated with Tao-sheng, stating that it was Shen-hui who first championed it (p. 231). Such a position might seem to highlight Shen-hui's role as a pivotal figure in the development of Ch'an, but one of McRae's main points is that modern scholarship (following Hu Shih) actually "overestimates Shen-hui's significance and distorts the nature of his contributions" to the development of Ch'an (p. 231). After all, McRae argues, "the teaching of sudden enlightenment was only one of the many relevant doctrinal and practical factors involved" in the emergence of Ch'an (p. 232), not the sole defining factor, as Hu Shih would have it. Moreover, a careful examination of Shen-hui's biography and doctrinal development reveals "a much closer relationship between him and the Northern school than has previously been thought to have existed" (p. 232). Having thus disposed of Hu Shih's depiction of Shen-hui as a revolutionary who single-handedly effected radical changes within Chinese Buddhism, McRae goes on to challenge the notion that Hui-neng's doctrine of sudden enlightenment, as promoted by Shen-hui, was directly inherited and continued in the later Ch'an tradition represented by Ma-tsu, Shih-t'ou and their followers. Like Sekiguchi, McRae argues that we should not put much stock in the fact that the later Ch'an school adopted the name "Southern school" from Shen-hui: "this continuity of sectarian label obscures the single most important distinction in eighth- and ninth-century Ch'an: that between the 'early Ch'an' factions (the Northern, Southern, and Ox-head schools), and the 'classical Ch'an' beginning with Ma-tsu's Hung-chou school" (p. 229).

In this connection, McRae introduces what appears to be a scheme of periodization—"early" and "classical"—for use in the study of the history of Ch'an. He characterizes the texts of early Ch'an as works that "contain a wide variety of doctrinal formulations, practical exhortations, and ritual procedures." These works "attempt



to fuse new meanings and a new spirit of dedication into conventional Buddhist doctrines and practices” (p. 229). Classical Ch’an, by way of contrast, “is distinguished by its almost total dedication to the practice of ‘encounter dialogue,’ the spontaneous and unstructured repartee between masters and students.” Classical Ch’an texts “are more uniform in their dedication to the transcription of encounter dialogue incidents, and they delight in baffling paradoxes, patent absurdities, and instructive vignettes of non-conformist behavior” (p. 229). For McRae, the “disconformity” between early and classical Ch’an, as seen in the marked differences in their textual legacies, is such that “understanding the dynamics of the early-to-classical transition is one of the most important issues now facing Ch’an studies” (p. 229). Whereas Hu Shih assumed a direct historical connection between Shen-hui’s doctrine of sudden enlightenment and the apparent iconoclasm of the Ch’an school in the generations following Ma-tsu and Shih-t’ou, McRae sees only a weak link between the two. Shen-hui’s use of sudden enlightenment as a polemical slogan, he suggests, may have “worried subsequent [Ch’an] masters into avoiding even the hint of gradualism and the spectre of unilinear, goal-oriented logic in the presentation of their own ideas” (p. 256), and contributed to the formation of the encounter dialogue approach by “establishing a standard of rhetorical purity” that disallowed all dualistic formulations as symptomatic of “gradualism” (p. 258).

Gómez in his chapter subjects Shen-hui’s doctrine of sudden enlightenment to an abstract critique on philosophical grounds, and concludes that it embraces a number of ambiguities and logical inconsistencies. The crux of Shen-hui’s problem, according to Gómez, is that “if he does not speak” about the need to cultivate specific causes and conditions leading to the attainment of enlightenment, “any doctrine can be attributed to him, yet if he proposes a method, he has abandoned strict subitism” (p. 87). Indeed, as I noted earlier, strict subitism as Demiéville defines it is a doctrinal position that inevitably involves its proponents in self-contradiction (because the very act of advancing a doctrine about enlightenment may be criticized from the subitist standpoint as a form of gradualism.)

Gómez concludes that “Shen-hui’s inconsistencies are best understood in his own polemical context.... His position is critical rather than constructive: it is formed by a set of objections to his opponents, not by a structured system” (p. 86).

McRae stresses the polemical context of Shen-hui’s doctrine of sudden enlightenment even more than Gómez. Indeed, he offers no explanation or analysis of the doctrine, apparently because he does not view it as a systematic philosophical position at all, but rather as a rhetorical device or slogan that Shen-hui employed to refute opponents, inspire mass audiences, and gain converts. He notes that Shen-hui’s “emphasis on the idea of sudden enlightenment is greatest where his polemical tone is most strident and his overall practical and theoretical framework is most backward” (p. 256). McRae also paints an intriguing picture of Shen-hui as a proselytizer whose “chosen role of inspiring conversion to the Buddhist spiritual quest was combined with an overriding concern with the initial moment of religious inspiration” (p. 254). In other words, Shen-hui was a sort of Buddhist evangelist who used the rhetoric of subitism to deny the necessity of a long and difficult regimen of meditation and other forms of monastic discipline, and to excite a quick and fervent acceptance by his audiences of the notion that enlightenment was at hand—that they were already, as it were, saved.

McRae’s periodization scheme is helpful insofar as it draws attention to the appearance in Chinese Buddhism of a genuinely new type of sacred literature — the so-called discourse records (*yü-lu*), which are couched in the form of verbatim transcriptions of exchanges (*wen-ta*) between enlightened Ch’an masters and their interlocutors. The scheme, however, has a number of conceptual and historiographical problems that need to be addressed.

In the first place, precisely because McRae convincingly relates stresses the differences in teaching styles between Shen-hui’s Southern school and the Hung-chou school of Ma-tsu, one is left wondering what it is that justifies the association of all these schools with a single “Ch’an” tradition. The account of the Ch’an lineage found in Sung texts, of course, relates all of these schools by positing them as central

and peripheral branches in a genealogy of *dharma* transmission that is supposed to have been founded by the first patriarch of Ch'an, Bodhidharma. That, however, is a religious myth that took final shape in the mid-tenth century, more than a century after the heyday of Ma-tsu's Hung-chou school (which was, incidentally, probably the first to call itself the "Ch'an lineage"). Modern historians need to stipulate the common denominators that unify the Ch'an tradition, and/or adduce positive evidence of historical connections between the schools mentioned in the traditional (Sung) account if they wish to speak meaningfully of a "Ch'an school" that is supposed to have evolved through distinct stages (e.g., "early" and "classical") in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. McRae, we have seen, argues that the doctrine of sudden enlightenment cannot stand alone as the defining characteristic of the Ch'an tradition, but he offers no alternative definition.

Another problem with McRae's periodization scheme is that it assumes that the texts which contain the encounter dialogues of the Ch'an masters of the "classical" period (Ma-tsu *et al.*) are in fact records of a new kind of Buddhist practice that began during the T'ang dynasty, and not merely works belonging to a new genre of Buddhist literature that may have first appeared after the demise of the T'ang. As McRae himself points out, "we simply do not have any texts relevant to the earliest period of classical Ch'an that did not pass through the hands of Sung dynasty editors, who either knowingly or unknowingly homogenized the editions they produced" (p. 230). None of the texts containing "transcripts" of encounter dialogue, he notes, have turned up among the finds at Tun-huang. Nor, I would add, did many of the texts of classical Ch'an find their way to Japan prior to the thirteenth century, or into the catalogues of Buddhist texts compiled by Japanese pilgrims to China in the ninth century.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, we have no way of knowing for certain that the Sung editors of the discourse record literature were not, in large part, actually the authors of the encounter dialogues that they present in the form of "transcripts." The literature in question is not merely homogeneous, it is highly formulaic, stylized, and metaphorical — all of which points to its essentially fictional character. The encounter dialogues

are presented in the *form* of “spontaneous and unstructured repartee between masters and students,” to borrow McRae’s words, but the reality of the process by which the dialogues appear on paper before our eyes is probably one of long and careful thought, stylistic imitation and experimentation, rewriting, and editing by third parties. The “spontaneity” of these dialogues (like that of much great literature) exists within a narrowly circumscribed framework of conventions and expectations.

“Sudden Enlightenment Followed by Gradual Cultivation: Tsung-mi’s Analysis of Mind,” by Peter N. Gregory

Like the three that precede it in Part II, this chapter is dedicated to the elucidation of a single Chinese Buddhist thinker’s use of the categories “sudden” and “gradual.” The figure featured is Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (780-841), known in the Buddhist tradition both as the fifth patriarch of the Hua-yen lineage, and as a Ch’an master who belonged to the lineage of Shen-hui. Modern scholars have been attracted to the study of Tsung-mi because his writings include the earliest known attempts by any Chinese Buddhist historian systematically to summarize and compare the doctrines and practices espoused by various competing branches of the early Ch’an school. In this chapter, however, Gregory sets out to “examine the context, content, and doctrinal basis” of a position espoused by Tsung-mi himself, namely, the theory of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation (p. 280).

As Gregory explains it, the historical setting in which Tsung-mi formulated this theory was one of bitter sectarian rivalry among the proponents of the different Ch’an lineages. That rivalry had its beginnings in Shen-hui’s criticism of the Northern line of Ch’an as a mistaken “gradual” approach, and his use of the “sudden” designation to champion the Southern lineage of Hui-neng. Thus,

in Tsung-mi’s day the words “sudden” (*tun*) and “gradual” (*chien*) had become shibboleths of contending factions, whose

mutual antagonisms he described in martial imagery. Not only were Ch'an Buddhists divided against themselves, but, according to Tsung-mi, the Chinese Buddhist world as a whole was split between those who identified themselves with the scholastic traditions—such as Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai—and those who identified themselves with the practice oriented tradition of Ch'an.... He perceived the primary split as lying between the scholastic traditions of Buddhist learning (*chiao*) and the more practice-oriented tradition of Ch'an, which emphasized the necessity of the actualization of enlightenment in this very life. (p. 280)

These statements are somewhat misleading in two respects. In the first place, the term "gradual" took on such a derogatory connotation in the aftermath of Shen-hui's diatribe against the Northern school that all parties claiming to represent the "Ch'an" tradition used it to denigrate their rivals' positions, not to characterize their own. In other words, no group embraced the "gradual" label as its shibboleth. Secondly, the characterization of Tsung-mi's view of Ch'an as "practice-oriented" (as opposed to the more "scholastic" T'ien-t'ai or Hua-yen traditions) is problematic. Tsung-mi was certainly aware that the distinction between teachings and practice had originally been drawn by T'ien-t'ai Chih-i, who was not merely a scholastic, but a "*dhyāna* master" (*ch'an-shih*) who in fact placed great emphasis on practice as well as teachings. Indeed, in his *Ch'an Preface* Tsung-mi included the T'ien-t'ai lineage founded by Chih-i in a list of ten competing lineages of Ch'an.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, we know from Tsung-mi's accounts that the more radical branches of early Ch'an (e.g., the Pao-t'ang and Hung-chou schools) used the rhetoric of sudden enlightenment to *deny* the efficacy of various aspects of traditional Buddhist practice, including morality, meditation, and doctrinal study. Precisely because they stressed the "sudden" position that enlightenment was something innate, unconditioned, and thus (strictly speaking) unattainable by any means, these branches of Ch'an were portrayed by Tsung-mi as considerably *less* practice-oriented than the T'ien-t'ai branch.

The expression, “Ch’an for practice, T’ien-t’ai and Hua-yen for doctrine,” is one that became popular in Chinese Buddhism sometime after the Sung; the Ch’an it refers to was different than the types of Ch’an assayed by Tsung-mi and the distinction it embodies should not be anachronistically ascribed to him. Similarly, the idea that the T’ien-t’ai and Hua-yen schools transmit only doctrinal teachings (*chiao*) whereas the Ch’an school transmits the formless *dharma* of enlightenment itself is a feature of Ch’an school polemics that only gained widespread credence after Tsung-mi’s day. These notions—that Ch’an is more practice-oriented (*jissen-teki*) and more conducive to the personal realization (*taiken*) of enlightenment than other schools of Buddhism—are frequently reiterated in the works of modern Japanese scholars associated with the Zen school. They are typical of the sectarian biases and theological claims that can slip unnoticed from Japanese sources into otherwise critical Western scholarship.

In any case, it would be better to describe Tsung-mi’s view of the split in Ch’an as one between radicals who interpreted “sudden enlightenment” in such a way as to reject some or all forms of spiritual cultivation, and conservatives whose interpretation of the “sudden” doctrine still left room for traditional Buddhist practices. This distinction is evident, for example, in Tsung-mi’s assessment of the ten lineages of Ch’an:

Some carry out all the practices, while others disregard even the Buddha. Some let the will take its course, while others restrain their minds. Some respect the sutras and vinaya as a standard, while others consider the sutras and vinaya an obstruction to the path.<sup>26</sup>

By most accounts, the attitude toward practice evinced by the Ch’an master Shen-hui, from whom Tsung-mi claimed spiritual descent, places him on the radical side of this spectrum. Tsung-mi’s own sympathies, however, were clearly with the conservatives. As Gregory shows, Tsung-mi’s doctrine of “sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation” actually relegates sudden enlight-

enment to the status of an initial insight (*chieh-wu*); full enlightenment or complete realization (*cheng-wu*) only comes after an extended period of gradual cultivation (*chien-hsiu*) in which morality, meditation, and doctrinal study all play a vital role. At pains to attribute this position to Shen-hui, Tsung-mi was forced by the lack of textual evidence to claim that a commitment to gradual cultivation had been Shen-hui's true intention but that the necessity of combating the false Northern school position had led the master to emphasize only the initial phase of sudden enlightenment. There is no reason to doubt that Tsung-mi genuinely admired Shen-hui's use of the rhetoric of sudden enlightenment, but it seems evident that part of his project was to appropriate Shen-hui's prestige and turn it against the sort of radical no-practice Ch'an that Shen-hui's name had been associated with.

Gregory is right on the mark when he contrasts the ecumenical approach taken by Tsung-mi with the polemical style of Shen-hui. Precisely because Tsung-mi took the conservative side in the aforementioned debate, he depicted the Ch'an tradition in a manner that included all approaches and points of view, relativized extreme positions by juxtaposing them with their opposites, and favored the principles of balance and harmony as criteria of truth and legitimacy. Whereas Shen-hui used the categories of sudden and gradual recklessly and inconsistently to attack his opponents, Tsung-mi protested that the terms represented a metaphorical use of language, that they therefore had different meanings in different contexts, and that it was ignorant and abusive to wield them as slogans without taking heed of such distinctions.

Gregory does an excellent job of outlining Tsung-mi's explanation of the five different ways in which "sudden" and "gradual" can be applied to the categories of cultivation (*hsiu*) and enlightenment (*wu*). Tsung-mi makes it clear that different analogies are operative in each case. For example, the theory of "gradual cultivation followed by sudden enlightenment" (*chien-hsiu tun-wu*) is illustrated by the analogy of chopping down a tree: "one gradually cuts away at it until it suddenly falls" (p. 282). Conversely, "sudden cultivation followed by gradual enlightenment" (*tun-hsiu chien-wu*) is analogous to the

approach taken by the student of archery who aims at the bull's eye (i.e., resolves to attain supreme enlightenment) right from the start, then gradually improves his ability actually to hit it. Tsung-mi points out that the terms "cultivation" and "enlightenment" have different meanings in these various contexts. Thus, when "cultivation" is called gradual, it refers to a process of spiritual discipline or training, but when "cultivation" is called sudden, it does not necessarily indicate the instantaneous completion of such training: in the case of "sudden cultivation followed by gradual enlightenment," it is only the intentionality of the practitioner that is "sudden" (because a person aiming at a bull's eye harbors no notion of step-by-step progress toward the goal). Likewise, the "sudden enlightenment" that is said to follow gradual cultivation represents complete realization (*cheng-wu*), whereas the "sudden enlightenment" that precedes gradual cultivation is to be understood as an initial insight (*chieh-wu*).

All of these distinctions, Gregory argues, are "useful for providing a conceptual framework for making sense out of the confusion that has often marked discussions of the sudden-gradual controversy" (p. 284). In other words, Gregory holds that Tsung-mi's analysis of the meaning of the concepts sudden and gradual is still useful to modern scholars, not only as historical data, but as a framework for distinguishing the various philosophical positions actually taken by Chinese Buddhists in the seventh and eighth centuries. This is a bold claim, since Tsung-mi himself clearly had a stake in the controversies he reported on, and was not merely an objective observer. Gregory goes a little overboard in portraying Tsung-mi as an evenhanded, critical scholar in the modern mode, but on the whole I am inclined to agree with his assessment. At the very least, because Tsung-mi stressed the ambiguity and complexity of the terms sudden and gradual in actual usage, his analysis serves as a corrective to those overly simplistic modern accounts which speak in the singular of "the" theory of sudden enlightenment in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

As Gregory indicates, the theory of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation that Tsung-mi himself favored "presupposes a three-staged model of the Buddhist path: (1) initial



insight (*chieh-wu*), (2) gradual cultivation (*chien-hsiu*), and (3) final enlightenment (*cheng-wu*)” (p. 283). In Tsung-mi’s view, the first step in this process, which he calls sudden enlightenment, takes place when a good teacher explains things to an ordinary deluded person and

they at once realize that [their own marvelous knowing and seeing is the true mind, that the mind—which is from the beginning empty and tranquil, boundless and formless—is the dharmakāya, that the nonduality of body and mind is the true self, and that they are no different from all Buddhas by even a hair. (p. 286)

In other words, sudden enlightenment is the realization that one is already completely endowed with Buddhahood, and that strictly speaking it is not necessary (or even possible) to cultivate Buddhahood. Nevertheless, Tsung-mi argues, it takes time and effort for such a realization to mature and to make its full benefits felt in people’s lives. It is like the sun, which rises suddenly but takes time to melt the morning frost. Enlightenment is “sudden” in the sense that it is perceived as something innate and fundamentally inalienable, but cultivation is still necessary to uproot completely the karmic proclivities that give rise to deluded notions of self. Conversely, Tsung-mi stressed that for cultivation to be effective, it must be undertaken on the basis of sudden enlightenment. That is, the practitioner must cultivate without harboring any hopes of personal gain or any illusions that cultivation really produces or changes anything.

This being Tsung-mi’s interpretation of sudden enlightenment, I would question the aptness of Gregory’s frequent reference to it as an “experience.” When Tsung-mi speaks of the importance of “practice based on enlightenment (*i wu hsiu-hsing*), he seems to be referring to the correct understanding with which to undertake practice, an understanding that can be gained simply by hearing a teacher explain the doctrine of innate Buddhahood. If Tsung-mi had viewed sudden enlightenment as an “experience” that is a prerequisite to true Buddhist practice, it would indeed have been strange (as

Gregory suggests) that he did not advocate any sort of preparatory practice leading up to sudden enlightenment. Gregory's use of the category of "experience" to explain Tsung-mi's position leads him to make a rather awkward distinction:

Whereas *chieh-wu* is always a sudden experience of insight, *cheng-wu* can be either gradual or sudden depending on whether it is regarded from the standpoint of the process of the actualization of final enlightenment or the actual experience of that enlightenment. (p. 284)

It would be easier to explain Tsung-mi's position by saying that *cheng-wu* is gradual when it is viewed as the product of gradual cultivation (*chien-hsiu*) and sudden when it is viewed as having the identical "content" as initial insight (*chieh-wu*). To speak of the "actual experience" of *cheng-wu* is to suggest that Tsung-mi understood it as something qualitatively different from both the initial insight of sudden enlightenment and the subsequent process of gradual cultivation—an interpretation that would effectively place Tsung-mi in the ranks of those who advocated "gradual cultivation followed by sudden enlightenment." The notion that enlightenment is an ineffable experience (*taiken*), as opposed to an insight or understanding that is informed by (if not necessarily communicable through) discursive concepts, is a motif of modern Japanese (especially Rinzai) Zen rhetoric which Gregory seems to have borrowed more or less unconsciously in his otherwise astute treatment of Tsung-mi's thought. The problem with the rhetoric of "experience" is that it inevitably suggests a nexus of enabling causes and conditions, even if enlightenment is conceived as an experience that occurs "suddenly" in a temporal sense. This is inconsistent with the rhetoric of sudden enlightenment employed by Shen-hui and Tsung-mi, which tends to posit enlightenment as something innate, unconditioned, and fundamentally atemporal.

Having dealt with the historical context and philosophical content of Tsung-mi's theory of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation, Gregory devotes considerable attention to the question of the doctrinal basis of that theory. Given the stated aims of the volume,

it is surprising to find here that he makes no attempt to locate Tsung-mi's ideas within the broader context of Chinese thought and culture, but treats them as an outgrowth of a strictly Buddhist problematic that was inherited from India.<sup>27</sup> In brief, Gregory explains the theory of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation as a corollary of Tsung-mi's analysis of mind, which he argues was basically a synthesis (à la the *Awakening of Faith*, an earlier Chinese Buddhist apocryphon) of the Indian Buddhist doctrines of *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna*. This account is plausible, if a bit simplistic in its treatment of another immensely complex set of Buddhist technical terms, but the reader is left wondering if the synthesis that Gregory argues for was a uniquely Chinese development, and if it was, why the Chinese were the first to come up with it. The question of the influence of indigenous Chinese thought and culture is one which naturally arises here, but Gregory does not take the opportunity to pursue it. Gregory might also have focused some attention on Tsung-mi's training in the Confucian classics and association with Confucian bureaucrats as a means of explaining his opposition to the more radical subitists in the Ch'an camp, but he lets this opportunity pass as well. In the end the reader is left with a well written and informative, if rather conventional, piece of Buddhological scholarship.

"The 'Short-cut' Approach of *K'an-hua* Meditation:  
The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an  
Buddhism," by Robert E. Buswell, Jr.

This chapter, the fifth and final one in the Part II, represents a departure from the focus on a single Buddhist thinker that characterizes the four preceding chapters. It offers instead a bold and speculative historical reconstruction of "a long process of evolution in Ch'an whereby its subitist rhetoric came to be extended to pedagogy and finally to practice" (p. 322). Buswell's thesis, in brief, is that the contemplative technique called *k'an-hua ch'an* ("Ch'an of observing the [critical] phrase"), which first appeared in the Sung dynasty, grew out of attempts to develop a "sudden" style of

meditation that would be consistent with the subitist rhetoric and subitist pedagogy that had characterized the mainstream of the Ch'an school since the latter part of the T'ang.

The term *k'an-hua* (literally "observing phrases") has been used within the Ch'an and Zen traditions since the 13th century to refer in a general way to the contemplation of *kung-an* (Jpn. *kōan*)—those ostensibly verbatim records of exchanges between famous Ch'an masters and their interlocutors that were selected out of that vast hagiographical literature of the Ch'an school as especially dramatic, enigmatic, or pithy expressions of the awakened mind. Buswell, however, uses the term *k'an-hua* in a more restrictive way to refer specifically to the practice of contemplating (*k'an*) a single word or phrase (*hua-t'ou*) that is taken as the crux of a *kung-an*. *K'an-hua* in the latter, more technical sense was the innovation of T'a-hui Tsung-kao (1089-1163), an influential Ch'an master in the Lin-chi lineage whose interpretation Buswell takes as definitive:

In *kung-an* investigation, according to Ta-hui, rather than reflect over the entire *kung-an* exchange, which could lead the mind to distraction, one should instead zero in on the principal topic, or most essential element, of that exchange, which he termed its "critical phrase" (*hua-t'ou*). Ta-hui called this new approach to meditation *k'an-hua* Ch'an—the Ch'an of observing the critical phrase—and alleged that it was a "short-cut" (*ching-chieh*) leading to instantaneous enlightenment. (p. 347)

Buswell implies here, without presenting any historical evidence, that Ta-hui himself invented the terms *hua-t'ou* and *k'an-hua*. Whether or not that is true, the fact remains that in the centuries following Ta-hui the terms were used in an ambiguous fashion in the Ch'an and Zen traditions. The term *hua-t'ou* referred to *kung-an* in general, as well as to what Buswell calls "critical phrases," and the term *k'an-hua* indicated the general study and appreciation of *kung-an* as well as the use of single phrases as focal points for non-discursive mental concentration.

Buswell himself stresses the difference "between *kung-an* inves-

tigation as a pedagogical tool and *k'an-hua* practice as a meditative technique" (p. 347). The distinction he wants to draw is between the more literary and intellectual practice of collecting, editing, and commenting on *kung-an*, which began in the late tenth and eleventh centuries as a means of instructing students, and the use of a single *hua-t'ou* as a device for concentrating the mind and cutting off discursive thinking, which began in the twelfth century with Ta-hui and his followers. It was with Ta-hui, Buswell asserts, that *kung-an* stopped being merely pedagogical devices or "Literary foils" and emerged as "contemplative tools for realizing one's own innate enlightenment" (p. 346). This development, he suggests, was in part a reaction against the tendencies of "lettered (*wen-tzu*) Ch'an," which had drifted from the pedagogical use of *kung-an* into an ever more refined and erudite study of *kung-an* as literary artifacts.

Buswell's main point, however, is that Ta-hui promoted *k'an-hua* meditation chiefly as a kind of "'sudden' expedient, intended to catalyze an equally 'sudden' awakening" (p. 349). Using the same simile for "sudden cultivation" that had been employed by Tsung-mi centuries earlier, Ta-hui likened the repeated observation of a *hua-t'ou* to the training of an archer who aims directly at the bull's eye every time he shoots: the *k'an-hua* exercise is "sudden" in the sense that it aims directly at full enlightenment, and makes no provision for gradual progress toward the goal. One important difference between Tsung-mi's interpretation of the archery simile and that of Ta-hui, of course, is that the former used it to describe "sudden cultivation followed by gradual enlightenment," whereas the latter did not admit to gradualism of any sort. From Ta-hui's point of view, there were no degrees of success in *k'an-hua* meditation—only "hit" or "miss"—and it was enough to hit the target but once. This was because, in the words of Ta hui's teacher Yüan-wu: "If one generates understanding and accesses awakening through a single phrase [i.e., the *hua-t'ou*], a single encounter (*chi*), or a single object, then immeasurable, innumerable functions and *kung-an* are simultaneously penetrated" (p. 346). Ta-hui himself said: "Understanding one is understanding all; awakening to one is awakening to all; realizing one is realizing all. It's like slicing through a spool of thread: with one stroke all its

strands are simultaneously cut” (p. 350). According to this interpretation, enlightenment is “sudden” in the sense that all the qualities of Buddhahood are gained at once, or simultaneously.

Buswell does a good job of showing how Yüan-wu and Ta-hui promoted the contemplation of *hua-t'ou* as a direct or “short-cut” (as opposed to step-by-step) approach to enlightenment. He fails, however, to make the case that Ta-hui’s method of *k’an-hua* represented the culmination of a long process of evolution which led from subitist rhetoric to subitist pedagogy and finally to subitist practice. Buswell’s argument in support of this thesis is ingenious and plausible at first glance, but in the end it breaks down because of two flaws in its conceptual foundation and a lack of supporting historical evidence.

The first conceptual flaw is the assumption that the Ch’an School in the Sung, dominated as it was by proponents of the Lin-chi lineage, had evolved directly from the so-called Hung-chou school of Ma-tsu (709-788), which in turn had evolved from the “Southern” school of Hui-neng (which was promoted by Shen-hui). Buswell posits a continuous, more or less unilinear development from (1) the subitist rhetoric of Shen-hui in the eighth century to (2) the pedagogical technique of “encounter dialogue” (*chi-yüan wen-ta*) invented by the Hung-chou school in the mid-T’ang, to (3) the instructional use of *kung-an* in the Yüan-men and Lin-chi schools in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and finally to (4) the subitist style of *k’an-hua* meditation perfected by Ta-hui, arguably the most influential Lin-chi master of the Southern Sung. In stating his case, Buswell proposes a three part periodization of Ch’an history—“early,” “middle,” and “classical”—which is a modified version of McRae’s bipartite division of Ch’an history into “early” and “classical” periods. Basically, he accepts McRae’s definition of “early Ch’an,” but reserves the term “classical Ch’an” for “the systematizations of Ch’an lineage, doctrine, practice, and institutions that were completed during the Sung, and that descended, in large part, from the Hung-chou school...” (p. 327). This leaves the multifarious Ch’an movements that flourished from the middle eighth to the middle ninth centuries, including the Hung-chou, Ho-tse (Shen-hui’s school), Niu-

t'ou, Pao-t'ang and Ching-chung schools described by Tsung-mi, to be classified as belonging to "middle Ch'an." Buswell defends his addition of a middle period to McRae's scheme in the following way:

Given the proliferation of Ch'an schools during this period, as well as the pronounced regional character of those schools, to intimate that post-Northern school Ch'an refers solely to the Hung-chou line oversimplifies the vibrancy of Ch'an during the eighth century. Of course, identifying such a transitional period is not to deny that Hung-chou was the most important of these middle Ch'an schools in the later evolution of the tradition. Nor does it reject the notion that some of the distinguishing characteristics of Hung-chou, such as encounter dialogue, came to typify mainstream Ch'an during the Sung dynasty. But it was not until such repartee was codified into the *kung-an* form that it can be termed "classical"; in Ma-tsu's time it was still one of a number of variant forms of Ch'an, all of which had a chance at predominance. (p. 327)

Thus, Buswell assigns the Hung-chou school's practice of "encounter dialogue" to the middle period, and singles out the *kung-an* genre as a more appropriate emblem of the classical Ch'an of the Sung.

The fundamental problem with Buswell's treatment of the history of Ch'an is that it follows the Sung Ch'an school's own mythological account of its origins and development, as presented in "records of the transmission of the flame" such as the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*, while offering no concrete historical evidence that might serve to verify that account. It is true that Ch'an mythographers in the Sung traced the main branches of their spiritual lineage back through Lin-chi and the Hung-chou school to Hui-neng, but their claims cannot be accepted as valid historical evidence for the actual transmission of ideas, practices, or institutional forms along those same lines. For one thing, the Sung "flame histories" are clearly theological rather than historical documents: they deal with the mysterious transmission of something avowedly formless, signless, ineffable, and ultimately "untransmittable"—the "Buddha mind" or enlighten-

ment—and make no attempt to trace the spread or development of concrete, historically verifiable phenomena such as doctrines or practices. Secondly, the account of the early Ch'an lineage (from Śākyamuni to Bodhidharma and Hui-neng) given in the Sung "flame histories" has been shown by the study of Tun-huang materials to be a fabrication, and there is no reason to expect any greater historical veracity in the same literature's account of the lineage in the generations following Hui-neng. A primary concern of the Sung Ch'an mythographers was to create a genealogy that would allow them to claim spiritual descent from Hui-neng. The masters of the Hung-chou school could have been included in the lineage simply because they provided a convenient link in that retrospective formulation .

Buswell asserts that "classical" (Sung) Ch'an doctrines, practices, and institutions derived in large part from the Hung-chou school of middle Ch'an, but he does not adduce any evidence for this connection other than the claims of the Sung Ch'an mythographers themselves. The fact of the matter is that virtually all of the information we have on the Hung-chou school, with the exception of Tsung-mi's brief synopsis of its teachings, comes from partisan Ch'an "flame histories" and "discourse records" that were compiled in the Sung and later. As I argued above in my review of McRae's chapter, the extant texts that present themselves as transcripts of "encounter dialogues" involving masters of the Hung-chou school could very well be works of religious fiction largely composed in the Sung. Moreover, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, the only extant account of Hung-chou school monasteries dates from the Sung, and probably represents a retrospective attempt to create a Ch'an founder (the Hung-chou master Pai-chang) for Sung Ch'an monastic forms that actually derived from the mainstream of Buddhist (not uniquely Ch'an) institutions in the T'ang.<sup>28</sup> In short, the claim that classical (Sung) Ch'an evolved mainly from the Hung-chou school is in part unprovable, and in part demonstrably false.

Finally, I would argue that the very conception of the "Ch'an school" as a vast, multi-branched but nevertheless cohesive spiritual lineage (*tsung*)—a notion that informs both McRae's and Buswell's



periodization schemes—was the brainchild of Sung Ch'an mythographers. It is true that Tsung-mi, in the mid-ninth century, grouped seven (and in another list, ten) different schools under the rubric of Ch'an, but neither he nor the followers of the schools he discussed had any concept of membership in a single multi-branched "Ch'an lineage" of *dharma* transmission. Most of the schools in question did not even use the name Ch'an to identify their own particular lineages.

Because the Sung Ch'an school succeeded in establishing its own version of its identity and origins as historical "fact," and because the Sung account of the history of the Ch'an lineage still provides the framework for much of the modern scholarship in the field, it is indeed appropriate to label Sung Ch'an as "classical" in the sense of "standard" and "definitive." I heartily endorse Buswell's remark that if Ch'an ever had a "golden age," that age was the Sung, not the T'ang. By the same token, McRae's distinction of "early" and "classical" Ch'an is viable insofar as the "encounter dialogue" texts that he identifies with classical Ch'an were really the classics of Sung Ch'an.

As a scheme of periodization for the history of a homogeneous entity called "Ch'an," McRae's formula suffers from the same conceptual flaw as Buswell's, but it works rather well as a device for distinguishing two types of literature: (1) relatively discursive texts which derive from the Northern school and the Ho-tse school of Shen-hui, were largely ignored or forgotten by Sung Ch'an editors, and are known to modern scholars because they were preserved at Tun-huang; and (2) texts featuring "encounter dialogue," which were associated with the Hung-chou school and other major branches of the Ch'an lineage as it was understood in the Sung, were promoted by Sung editors as sacred records of that lineage, and were handed down to modern times within the Ch'an and Zen traditions. McRae, we have seen, notes the "disconformity" between these two types of literature and states that "understanding the dynamics of the early-to-classical transition is one of the most important issues now facing Ch'an studies." Part of the solution to this problem, I would suggest, is to realize that there may not have been any "transition" at all. Researchers today assume that there must have been some historical

continuity between the schools that produced these very different types of literature because modern scholarship itself has identified the aforementioned Tun-huang texts as works belonging to the "Ch'an school." However, in making this identification (which is not made in the Tun-huang texts), modern scholarship has actually relied on the Sung conception of the history of the Ch'an lineage.

The second conceptual flaw in Buswell's thesis is the hazy formulation of the basic categories used: "rhetoric," "pedagogy," and "practice." The notion that the development of a terse rhetoric and a radical pedagogical style represented two distinct stages in the evolution of Ch'an subitism breaks down because the two categories themselves are often coextensive. That is to say, the particular historical expressions of subitist doctrine that Buswell labels as rhetoric also had an unmistakably pedagogical function, and the ostensibly pedagogical techniques he cites clearly made use of rhetoric. Consider, for example, the following passage in which Buswell introduces his thesis:

The rhetorical purity McRae sees as one of the foci of Shen-hui's teachings was further elaborated by his contemporaries in the Hung-chou school. There, more illocutionary forms of discourse became not merely a rhetorical device but also a unique pedagogical technique: that of the "encounter dialogue" (*chi-yüan wen-ta*). The Hung-chou school attempted to use this new style of religious repartee as a means of catalyzing enlightenment in its students. The wider implications of this rhetoric and pedagogy were subsequently explored by later teachers in the Lin-chi Line, who attempted to reconcile them with Ch'an praxis as well. This attempt led to the development of a "sudden" style of meditation: that of the *kung-an* (public case) or *hua-t'ou* (critical phrase) investigation. (p. 322)

Here Buswell holds up Shen-hui as the architect of the Ch'an rhetoric of sudden enlightenment, but in the same sentence he makes it clear that Shen-hui used that rhetoric in the context of teaching. Indeed, if we are to accept Gómez's and McRae's accounts of Shen-hui's pedagogical methods, it would seem that they consisted mostly of

rhetoric and included very little practical instruction concerning moral behavior or techniques of meditation. Similarly, “encounter dialogue” may be regarded as a pedagogical technique in the sense of a teacher actually employing witty repartee, apparent non-sequiturs, scatology, etc., to shock his students and shake them out of their ordinary deluded way of thinking, or it may be viewed as “merely a rhetorical device,” namely, a fictional depiction of teachers speaking and acting in such a manner: after all, we have no historical accounts of the encounter dialogue “method” apart from the literature which purports to record actual dialogues. But even if “encounter dialogue” is to be understood as a pedagogical technique in the first sense, it is clearly a technique that relies heavily on rhetorical devices; and even if “encounter dialogue” is understood as something “merely” rhetorical, a flashy motif in a popular genre of religious literature, it still (like all fiction) can have a pedagogical function. However one looks at it, the distinction between rhetoric and pedagogy is difficult to sustain.

The distinction between Ch’an practice and Ch’an rhetoric and pedagogy is even more problematic in Buswell’s presentation. For example, at the beginning of the chapter he says that

I propose in this chapter to focus on...the development of distinctive techniques of meditation unique to Ch’an. Ch’an’s presumption of contemplative expertise—as the adoption of the name “Meditation” (*ch’an, dhyāna*) for the school implies—compelled it to create forms of meditation that it could claim exclusively as its own, by breaking away from the practices common to the earlier Sino-Buddhist schools. It accomplished this by condemning earlier Sino-Indian techniques as gradual while claiming that Ch’an taught more direct approaches to meditation. (p. 321)

The distinction between practice and rhetoric breaks down here, for as Buswell himself argues, the creation of new forms of meditation was accomplished through the rhetorical devices of “condemning” and “claiming.” One could, perhaps, try to restore consistency to this passage by arguing that the Ch’an school used the rhetoric of sudden enlightenment to create new *theories* (rather than

forms) of meditation. The more fundamental problem, however, is that the theoretical understanding with which a practitioner undertakes a particular contemplative technique is actually an integral part of the technique itself. Indeed, there are many forms of meditation in the Buddhist tradition which consist solely in the mental contemplation or review of theories and doctrines.

Another fallacy in the passage just quoted is that the term "Ch'an lineage" (*ch'an-tsung*) was not adopted as the name of a school until the ninth century, and even then did not gain much currency until the Sung. The earliest sporadic appearances of the term are in literature associated with patriarchs of the Hung-chou school, but those occurrences are ambiguous (*tsung* could mean "essential principle" rather than "school") and may well have been Sung interpolations. Furthermore, at the time when the name Ch'an was adopted as the name of a lineage, it no longer meant "meditation" (*dhyāna*). The reinterpretation of the term *ch'an* had already begun in the works of Chih-i, who used it on occasion to refer to the whole of Buddhist practice.<sup>29</sup> The reinterpretation was continued in a more radical fashion in texts such as the *Platform Sūtra* and the sayings of Shen-hui, where *dhyāna* and *prajñā* were identified. By the time the name Ch'an was adopted by the followers of Ma-tsu in the Hung-chou school (if indeed it was—I suspect the adoption was even later), it had clearly come to mean "enlightenment," not "meditation" in the original Indian sense. There were many followers of the Ch'an school in the Sung who emphatically denied that theirs was the "meditation" school. Ch'an, they argued, was a synonym for the Buddha Mind (*fo-hsin*), i. e., enlightenment, that their lineage transmitted "outside the teachings"; it had nothing to do with "practicing *dhyāna*" (*hsich'an*).<sup>30</sup> It is evident from this that the Ch'an school was not, as Buswell argues, compelled by its name to "create forms of meditation that it could claim exclusively as its own." All that was necessary was to deny that the name Ch'an meant "meditation" (*dhyāna*) at all.

The distinction between practice and pedagogy is also difficult to sustain in Buswell's presentation. For example, he describes the Hung-chou masters' "non-conceptual, illocutionary style of teaching—by beating, shouting, or virtually any other kind of physical gesture" as a "new pedagogical style" aimed at catalyzing enlighten-

ment. But from the standpoint of the student who approaches a master and asks to be enlightened (a common motif in the “encounter dialogue” literature), it is just as clearly a mode of practice. Indeed, one of the most common forms of religious practice described in Ch’an records is traveling about seeking encounters with enlightened masters. Within the Sung Ch’an monastic institution, specific times and procedures were established for the practice of entering a master’s room and receiving his instruction.

In general, Buswell’s distinction of rhetoric, pedagogy, and practice reflects a narrow conception of Ch’an practice (particularly meditation) that excludes intellectual activity. It is this conception that underlies his assertion that Ta-hui was the first to use *kung-an* in connection with a meditative technique: prior to Ta-hui, the study and contemplation of *kung-an* still involved discursive thinking, and thus did not advance from the levels of rhetoric and pedagogy to that of praxis (i.e., meditation). The ostensible exclusion of intellectual activity from the domain of meditation, it may be noted, is precisely the position taken by Ta-hui himself in his advocacy of the *k’an-hua* method. Buswell explains that for Ta-hui “the purpose of the *hua-t’ou*... is to enable the student to transcend the dualistic processes of thought in a single moment of insight.... Any kind of intellectualization of the *hua-t’ou*, any attempt to understand it in terms of ordinary conceptual thought, was repeatedly denied by Ta-hui” (p. 349). It is clear from Buswell’s account that Ta-hui denigrated all attempts to understand *kung-an* conceptually as a sort of gradualism, and that he associated subitism with the complete frustration and final abandonment of the intellectual approach to enlightenment. Ta-hui’s interpretation of *k’an-hua* as a device for cutting off discursive thinking, and the anti-intellectual rhetoric that he used to convey this interpretation, were very influential in the subsequent development of the Chinese Lin-chi and Japanese Rinzai traditions. So-called Hakuin Zen, the style of Zen which dominates the modern Rinzai school, still makes much use of Ta-hui’s mode of rhetoric. Japanese historians of Ch’an associated with the Rinzai school, such as D.T. Suzuki and his student Furuta Shōkin, have also been strongly influenced by Ta-hui’s interpretations of *kung-an* and enlightenment.

Buswell himself relies on Furuta's studies of the history of *kung-an* in this chapter, and seems to be influenced by the modern Rinzai stress on non-intellectual practice (*shūgyō*) and the nonconceptual experience (*taiken*) of enlightenment.

One of the central themes in Buswell's account of "the evolution of a practical subitism" that culminated in Ta-hui's method of *k'an-hua* is that of the sinification of Buddhist doctrine and meditation. In his view, "it was the Ch'an school that undertook the most protracted experiments at adapting Indian meditative practices to China." The major stepping stones in the development of Ch'an that led from Indian meditative models to Ta-hui were: the collapsing of the Indian distinction between *samādhi* and *prajñā*, as represented by the *Platform Sūtra*; the rejection of that Indian nomenclature altogether in favor of theories of meditation that stressed the practice of no-thought (*wu-nien*); and the development of a distinctively Ch'an rhetoric and pedagogy—"encounter dialogue"—which in turn gave rise to the *kung-an* literature. At each stage in this process of evolution, Buswell argues, Buddhist doctrine and practice moved farther and farther away from their Indian roots and became increasingly sinicized. The driving force behind the entire process was the notion of sudden enlightenment which "implies, of course, that there is a more direct means to awakening than the complex, intricate series of steps taught in Indian Buddhist texts" (p. 325). The basic problem was that

if this Chinese ideal of a sudden, immediately available approach to enlightenment was to become accessible in practice, the contemplative techniques that catalyzed awakening had also to be sinified. Buddhism has traditionally prided itself on its pragmatic outlook toward religion, in which its doctrinal positions are presumed to derive from, and be supported by, explicit meditative programs. Since it is impossible to separate the ontology of Buddhism from its soteriological schemata and meditative practices, it was inevitable that Buddhist meditation would also come within the purview of the sinification that was occurring on the doctrinal front. (p. 326)

Apart from the difficulty of positing a homogeneous "Ch'an" tradition that is supposed to have spanned the T'ang and Sung, there are several problems with this view of the sinification of Buddhism.

In the first place, it is not true that the notion of sudden enlightenment necessarily implied a "more direct means to awakening." As the present volume makes abundantly clear, sudden enlightenment was interpreted in many different ways in the history of Chinese Buddhism, and some of those interpretations explicitly deny that there are *any* recommendable or possible "means to" awakening, since awakening is something innate and present no matter what one does. Buswell himself is perfectly aware of this, and he explains Ma-tsu's interpretation of sudden enlightenment in precisely these terms. Ma-tsu's "ontology," if it can be called that, suggested no purposive cultivation at all, but rather "letting the mind be free," since there is no Buddhahood to attain other than the mind that one already possesses. It would probably be more appropriate to call this a "doctrine" than an "explicit meditative program," but even if we regard it as such a program, it must be admitted that the meditative technique being recommended consists of nothing more than taking to heart the words "do not cultivate" or "let the mind be free." In other words, Ma-tsu's doctrine either implies no method of meditation at all, or a method that is virtually indistinguishable from thinking about the doctrine itself. In either case, this interpretation of sudden enlightenment leaves no room for the notion that meditative practice, as opposed to doctrinal understanding, is necessary to catalyze an "experience" of enlightenment. Ma-tsu, as best we can tell, rejected both cultivation and any sort of special experience that it might produce, on the grounds that "the ordinary mind is enlightenment."

An interpretation of sudden enlightenment such as Ma-tsu's, of course, need not have been taken literally by monks engaged in a monastic routine of worship, study, debate, and seated meditation. After all, purposely to change one's ordinary behavior in any way upon hearing Ma-tsu's teaching would also be to engage in a sort of cultivation, and thus to mistake his advice. One might just as well understand "letting the mind be free" to mean giving up expectations

and attachments to results even as one continues to engage in ordinary forms of monkish cultivation. I would not argue, as a number of eminent Buddhologists have in the past, that Ma-tsu's teaching necessarily implies a rejection of seated meditation (*tso-ch'an*).

Indeed, the point I wish to make is precisely that an interpretation of sudden enlightenment such as Ma-tsu's has no logically necessary or historically predictable implications whatsoever for religious practice. Far from driving the evolution of Buddhist practice in China in a particular direction, as Buswell argues, sudden enlightenment rhetoric tended to undermine the theoretical bases of practice and therefore, paradoxically, to open the door to any and all practices that Buddhists felt like engaging in. Tsung-mi's account of the early schools of Ch'an bears witness to the tremendous diversity in practice that arose among Buddhists who all accepted the doctrine of innate Buddhahood but could not agree on its practical implications. Diversity and eclecticism also characterized the Sung Ch'an school, which was united not by any common practices but by a common mythology: the notion of a "Ch'an lineage" through which the Buddha's formless *dharma* was transmitted. Buswell makes it seem as if *k'an-hua* was the most important, if not the definitive, practice in Sung Ch'an, but that is not the case. Indeed, *k'an-hua* is never even mentioned in Sung Ch'an monastic codes, which lay out detailed procedures for many other religious practices and rituals.

The vast production and enjoyment of "encounter dialogue" and *k'ung-an* literature in the Sung, I would argue, was one example of a new (and, as Buswell notes, uniquely Chinese) form of religious practice that was able to flourish in the *laissez-faire* climate fostered by sudden enlightenment rhetoric. It is difficult, however, to see Ta-hui's protest against this style of intellectual, lettered Ch'an as a further stage in the sinicization process. If anything, I would describe his insistence on the practice of concentration, in which the mind was focused on a single object (the *hua-t'ou*) and brought to a stop, as a return to a more Indian style of meditation in which trance (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) function in tandem. Ta-hui's insistence on a "breakthrough" experience of awakening can also be seen as harking back to traditional Indian models of a path to liberation that admits



of clear-cut stages.

“The Sudden and the Gradual of Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Explanation of the Ch’an-Poetry Analogy,” by Richard John Lynn

This is the first of the two chapters that comprise Part II of the volume, “Analogies in the Cultural Sphere.” Lynn introduces his topic by quoting a passage from the *Ta-ching t’ang shih-hua* (Discussions of Poetry from the Hall of Him Who Always has the Classics by His Side) by Wang Shih-chen (1634-1711):

Hung Sheng, [whose courtesy name is] Fang-ssu [1646?-1704] once asked Shih Yü-shan [Shih Jun-chang, 1619-1683] about the method of composing poetry (*shih-fa*). He replied by first relating what I had once said about the main principles of poetry (*shih ta-chih*): “Your teacher says that poetry is like an exquisite and towering Pagoda that appears at the snap of the fingers or like the twelve towers of the five cities of the immortals that ephemerally exist at the edge of heaven. I do not agree. To use a metaphor, poetry is like someone building a house out of tiles, glazed bricks, wood, and stone—he must put them all together, one by one, on solid ground.” Hung then replied: “This constitutes the difference between the meaning of sudden and gradual enlightenment of the Ch’an sect” (*ch’an-tsung tun chien erh-i*). (p. 381)

Lynn says that by the time this passage was written in the seventeenth century, “it had become commonplace to discuss poetry in terms of Ch’an, to say that poetry in some way or ways ‘is like’ (*ju*) Ch’an” (p. 381). As Lynn explains it, this was a motif that first became widespread in Sung dynasty literature on poetics. There are a few intimations of the Ch’an-Poetry analogy in works dating from the T’ang, but “statements linking Ch’an and poetry on a theoretical level constitute one of the most common features of Sung poetry criticism” (p. 384). On the other hand, the Ch’an-Poetry analogy “always had detractors and opponents,” and from the middle of the

twelfth century on there were Neo-Confucian theoreticians who borrowed the Buddhist concept of *wu* (enlightenment) to talk about poetry but denied that it had anything to do with Ch'an. Lynn's stated aim in the chapter is to survey the primary sources in which the Ch'an-Poetry analogy appears, limiting himself to the Northern and Southern Sung eras. Setting aside the question of why various Sung poets and critics took the approach they did, Lynn indicates that he is content simply to take stock of "such things as who said what, when did he say it, and what other critics were subsequently influenced in either a positive or negative way" (p. 383).

It is evident from the quote that stands at the beginning of the chapter, and from Lynn's subsequent introduction of his topic, that the debate concerning the Ch'an-Poetry analogy took place on at least two different levels. In the first place, there was disagreement among critics who accepted the basic terms of the analogy but differed on the question of whether the creative process in writing poetry is best likened to sudden enlightenment or to gradual enlightenment. Whichever position such critics took, they were united in their willingness to liken the completion of a poem to the attainment of "enlightenment" as taught in the Ch'an Buddhist tradition. The second level of debate was between critics who were content to talk about poetry in terms of Buddhist enlightenment, and those who "attempted to emancipate *wu* from its Buddhist context" (p. 382), thereby challenging the validity of the Ch'an-Poetry analogy itself, including both the "sudden" and "gradual" positions. All of this is implicit in Lynn's presentation, but he does not make the distinction explicit.

Indeed, the chapter as a whole would benefit from an explicitly stated thesis or hypothesis at the outset, and a conclusion which sums up the significance of the data presented. As it stands, the examples that are cited from the works of various Sung poets and critics are interesting, but the reader is left to his or her own devices to sort out the evidence and decide what it proves. Despite the stated aim of the chapter, not all of the Sung critics cited treat the relationship between Ch'an and poetry as something analogical: some claim that great poetry must flow from a state of mind that is fostered by the actual

practice of Ch'an meditation techniques. Moreover, not all of them are concerned with distinguishing "sudden" and "gradual" approaches to the creation of poetry. In many cases, it is author Lynn himself who labels the poets in question as "gradualists" or "subitists," based on his own criteria (which are never explicitly defined). In short, there is considerable confusion in the chapter as to the issues under discussion and the standpoint from which the categories of "sudden" and "gradual" are applied. The author does a better job of distinguishing the various meanings of *wu* (enlightenment) when it is used by critics as an analogy for success in or mastery of the poetic endeavor.

Although Lynn begins his survey of primary sources with the Northern Sung era, he does offer one example of a T'ang writer who "anticipates the later craze for the Ch'an-Poetry analogy." The T'ang critic he cites is Liu Yü-hsi (772-842), who stated that Buddhists ("disciples of Śākyamuni") have gained fame for their poetry because they are accomplished in *samādhi* (*ting*) and *prajñā* (*hui*), which enables them to give rise to a verbal expression that is "marvelous (*miao*) and profound (*shen*)." Thus, Liu concluded, one should "believe in the flowers that bloom in the forest of Ch'an and shun the pear and jade that might be fished up out of the river!" (p. 384). Despite Lynn's assertion that this is an example of the Ch'an-Poetry analogy, it is evident from the passage just quoted that Liu regarded certain Buddhist monks as excellent poets whose skill derived in large measure from their cultivation of *samādhi* in communal meditation halls ("forests of *ch'an*; *ch'an-lin*). In other words, for Liu the relationship between *ch'an* (i.e., meditation) and poetry was practical, not analogical.

Incidentally, "*ch'an* forests" in the ninth century were facilities for meditation found at all Buddhist monasteries; the appearance of the term in the text does not necessarily mean that Liu was speaking of "Ch'an school" (*ch'an-tsung*) monks. Nevertheless, it is a fact that from Sung times on many Ch'an school monks composed poetry, and that the ability to do so well was regarded within the school as *prima facie* evidence of deep spiritual insight. This explains the huge number of enlightenment verses, *dharma* transmission verses, verse

commentaries on cases in the *kung-an* literature, and verses (*fa-yü*) recited in ritual contexts that survive in the annals of the Ch'an school. Lynn, however, does not concern himself with the historical phenomenon of Buddhist monks using poetry to express (or even to gain) spiritual insights. Nor does he treat the historical question of lay poets who may have gained inspiration through the practice of Buddhist meditation.

Su Shih (1037-1101), "the great painter, poet, calligrapher, writer of prose, and statesman," is the first of the Sung critics whom Lynn deals with. Lynn cites a poem by Su Shih as an example of the use of the Ch'an-Poetry analogy, but in this poem too we find that what the poet-critic is really concerned with is the way in which great poetry flows from the actual practice (or experience) of emptiness (*kung*) and quietude (*ching*). Again, the relationship between Ch'an and poetry is practical, not analogical.

Lynn concludes his discussion of Su Shih with the observation that "although he does not seem to have ever explicitly formulated a 'sudden' approach to poetic success or 'enlightenment,' the many references to freedom and spontaneity in his writings indicate that he surely would have been in the 'sudden' camp if he had to choose sides" (p. 386). He goes on to state that

by contrast, Su's contemporary Huang T'ing-chien was a thoroughgoing "gradualist." Although like Su he advocated spontaneity, he believed that spontaneity could only achieve valid results if it operated "within the rules...."

(p. 386)

With remarks such as these, Lynn departs even further from his stated aim in the chapter, and involves himself in quite a different project: using his own criteria of "subitism" or "gradualism" to label the various Sung poet-critics treated in his survey, regardless of whether the figures themselves ever used those terms. Thus, for example, in the following pages, we are told: that Huang's disciple Ch'en Shih-tao was a "gradualist" since he emphasized learning (p. 388); that the poet-critic Fan Tsu-yü (1041-1098) took a "gradualist"

approach since he recommended systematic study and practice (p. 389); that Wu K'o's poetry criticism "seems to be more like the sudden enlightenment of the Lin-chi school—not training or study but the accidental or arbitrary device will shock or startle one into enlightenment [i.e., understanding the meaning of a poem]" (p. 394); and that Yen Yü "seems to be a thoroughgoing gradualist at heart, at least in the sense that he advocates a long and arduous gradual preparation for the sudden breakthrough" of poetic attainment (p. 407). The problem in any of this is that Lynn never defines his criteria for judging the various poet-critics he treats as "subitists" or "gradualists." He apparently assumes that the terms need no clarification—an assumption that very few readers who have made it through the preceding chapters of *Sudden and Gradual* will be likely to share.

This chapter succeeds, in part by design and in part inadvertently, in raising many interesting questions about the influence of Ch'an Buddhist doctrine and practice on theories of poetic creativity in Sung China, and about the role played by poetry in the spiritual lives of Buddhist monks. Due in part to confusion in the conceptual framework of the chapter, none of the questions are treated systematically enough to lead to any clear conclusions. Nevertheless, the author does convey a sense of the range and richness of the available sources, and opens a number of different avenues for future research.

"Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's 'Southern and Northern Schools' in the History and Theory of Painting: A Reconsideration," by James Cahill

According to James Cahill, "the theory of the Southern and Northern Schools (*nan-pei tsung lun*) by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636) is . . . one of the crucial and influential formulations in Chinese painting theory." Most Chinese theorists of painting after the time of its publication in the early seventeenth century "echo it, or argue with it, or are somehow affected by it" (p. 429). The theory, as Cahill explains it, was basically an analogy: "painting of Type A is to painting of Type B as Sudden Enlightenment (Southern) Ch'an is to gradual enlightenment (Northern) Ch'an." Actually, it is clear from

Cahill's explanation that Tung was not really concerned with defining two types of painting in any clear-cut way. Rather, his aim was to distinguish two schools or lineages (*tsung*) of painters, the Northern and Southern, which he claimed parted company in the T'ang, just as the Northern and Southern schools of Ch'an had separated in the T'ang. The Northern lineage, as Tung traced it, was "that of the colored landscapes of Li Ssu-hsün and his son Chao-tao; it was transmitted to Chao Kan, Chao Po-chü and his brother Po-su in the Sung period, and on to Ma Yüan and Hsia Kuei and their group" (p. 430). The Southern Lineage, on the other hand, was "that of Wang-wei, who first used graded washes [in ink monochrome painting] and thus completely transformed the outline-and-color technique. This was continued by Chang Tsao, Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung, Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, Kuo Chung-shu, Mi Fu and his son Yu-jen, down to the Four Great Masters of the Yüan" (p. 430). Implicit in this formulation, of course, was the superiority of the "Southern" style of ink painting: anyone in the least familiar with the story of the Ch'an split into Northern and Southern lineages would have known that the former was the discredited and defunct line of the "gradualist" Shen-hsiu, whereas the latter represented the orthodox transmission of the true *dharma* from the fifth patriarch Hung-jen to the champion of sudden enlightenment, the sixth patriarch Hui-neng.

The question that Cahill focuses on in this chapter is why Tung's retrospective formulation of Northern and Southern schools of painting, based as it was on the analogy of the Northern/gradual and Southern/sudden schools of Ch'an, was "hailed as though it were a great historical truth." He proposes to analyze Tung's theory on two levels: (1) its function as a polemical device in a concrete historical setting—a Ming dynasty debate that had social and political as well as artistic ramifications, and (2) its intrinsic appeal as an analysis of artistic creativity, presented as a universal truth.

With respect to the first of these considerations, Cahill argues convincingly that it was precisely the vagueness of the Ch'an analogy that made Tung's theory such a potent polemical device. Other schematic histories of painting produced earlier in the Ming dynasty

had also arranged old masters in opposing groups or lineages, using such criteria as period (Sung painting versus Yüan painting), socio-economic status (painting by professional masters versus that done by amateur, literati artists), and style (looser, more spontaneous styles versus ones that are careful and detailed) (p. 430). In the earlier schemes, "these criteria of division ... tended to interlock into grand unhistorical patterns in which Sung dynasty professionals working in detailed, decorative, academic styles were opposed to Yüan dynasty amateurs working in free, spontaneous styles" (p. 430). The weakness of such formulations, Cahill notes, was their artificiality: very few of the old masters who were placed in a particular group actually met all of the objective criteria that were supposed to be definitive of the group. By using vague categories that were suggestive of some these distinctions but not objectively definable, Tung's Southern and Northern school theory avoided the weaknesses of its predecessors and left no room for criticism on factual, historical grounds.

Cahill does not pursue the point, but Tung's use of the sudden/gradual distinction was similar in some respects to that of the T'ang Ch'an polemicist Shen-hui, as described in the chapter by John McRae. I would also note that the success of the Ch'an school's ideology of "a separate transmission" from Sung times on was, like the success of Tung's later formulation of artistic lineages, due in large part to its vagueness. The *dharma* that the Ch'an school claimed to transmit was not only described as the essence of the Buddha's teachings (namely, enlightenment itself), it was avowedly formless and ineffable. Thus, when Ch'an genealogies were formulated, the quasi-historical claim that this or that individual monk belonged in the lineage by virtue of his inheritance of the *dharma* could not be challenged on any empirical grounds. Perhaps what led Tung to formulate the Ch'an/painting analogy was not so much the applicability of Ch'an theories of sudden enlightenment to the realm of art as the usefulness of the Ch'an concept of a historically concrete and yet indefinable lineage.

Bracketing such polemical concerns, Cahill also raises the question of what Buddhism and painting have in common that renders the Ch'an/painting analogy intelligible, and allows "recog-

nizable affinities or resemblances between beliefs and tendencies and movements in them." The answer he suggests is that

although both can be discussed in rational terms, truly significant choices in both must be made on nonrational grounds; and on these choices may hang one's spiritual fulfillment, one's very "salvation." The last term, in reference to art, is only partly metaphorical; the highest creative achievements apparently break on the consciousness of their artists as a kind of enlightenment, and failure, or partial failure, is perceived as falling short of a spiritual goal. (p. 433)

Given the wealth of information on various theories of sudden enlightenment contained in Parts I and II of the volume, it is a bit disappointing that the only similarity between Buddhism and painting that Cahill mentions here is that they both make choices on nonrational grounds. There are many more interesting parallels that could be drawn out in this context. For example, the "sudden" position, which states that enlightenment cannot be the product of any cultivation or artifice because it is something innate and unconditioned, is analogous in some ways to the notion that painting only attains perfection when it is something spontaneous and natural—the work of "liberated masters" (*i-chia*) rather than mere "fabricators" (*tso-chia*). Cahill does a better job of exploring similarities between the concept of sudden practice in the Buddhist tradition and Tung's idea that the scholar-amateur painters of the Southern school were able to "cut through the long process of technical training and reach the highest attainments in painting directly" (p. 437). Here again, however, there is little indication that the author is cognizant of the Buddhological articles that appear in Part II, such as Gregory's presentation of Tsung-mi's metaphors for sudden and gradual cultivation.

Cahill dismisses the idea of "actual Ch'an content" in Chinese painting theory, reaffirming his position that Tung's use of Ch'an in the Southern and Northern schools theory is basically analogical. "Neo-Confucian ideas," he argues, "make up a much more pertinent intellectual setting for Tung's beliefs" (p. 438). The latter assessment



may be true in the sense that Tung was more directly influenced by Neo-Confucian writings, but it is also true that the specific Neo-Confucian ideas that Cahill cites in this connection (such as the erasure of inner-outer distinction) were actually derived in good measure from the Buddhist tradition.

Cahill also dismisses the idea of Ch'an content in Tung's landscape paintings and challenges the notion that any Chinese paintings, even the so-called Ch'an paintings of the late Sung period, can be regarded as "direct expressions of a Ch'an-enlightened state of mind." After all, he argues, "their artists may not, in fact, have been Ch'an practitioners at all, enlightened or otherwise." I would add that the Ch'an tradition itself does not seem to have regarded skill in painting as evidence of spiritual attainment, although it did make such a claim for skill in composing poetry. Cahill does, however, subscribe to the notion that the so-called Ch'an paintings of the late Sung "present, through analyzable artistic means, a vision of nature and natural phenomena that is consistent with the Ch'an mode of experience." That experience he characterizes as "apprehending reality in a single, sudden act of perception, instead of reading and absorbing it part by part" (p. 439). Such a mode of apprehension, we have seen, is associated with a number of sudden enlightenment theories in the history of Chinese Buddhism, including that ascribed to Tao-sheng; there is no good historical reason to describe it as a specifically "Ch'an" motif.

Afterword: "Thinking of 'Enlightenment' Religiously,"  
by Tu Wei-ming

One would expect the Afterword to a volume such as *Sudden and Gradual* to present some sort of overview or concluding remarks regarding the issues raised and data presented by the various contributors. In the Afterword, however, Tu Wei-ming gives little more than a polite nod to "the enormous erudition . . . that the preceding chapters have demonstrated" (p. 448), after which he launches into his own idiosyncratic interpretation of the meaning of "enlightenment" in the Chinese cultural milieu. Tu's vision of

enlightenment, we shall see, is a creative amalgam of ideas drawn from such diverse sources as Confucianism, existentialism à la Jean Paul Sartre, and the Zen of D.T. Suzuki. If it were published as an independent piece, the Afterword might be evaluated as a stimulating thesis that suffers mainly from a lack of supporting textual and historical evidence. Appearing as it does at the end of a Kuroda Institute volume replete with concrete evidence from the Chinese Buddhist tradition that directly contradicts Tu's interpretation, however, the piece becomes an ironic reminder of the fact that some sinologists and students of Chinese thought still pay little heed to the legacy of Chinese Buddhism or the work done on it by modern Buddhologists.

Tu begins his discussion by harking back to the exchange between Hu Shih and Suzuki (discussed above in connection with the chapter by John McRae), noting that despite their many differences, "they both agreed that it [Ch'an] is uniquely Chinese" (p. 447). He also observes, more or less correctly, that throughout all the advances in scholarship on Ch'an over the past thirty years, "the primacy of 'enlightenment' as the ultimate concern of Ch'an spiritual training remains unquestioned" (p. 447). Arguing from these two premises, Tu then asserts that

If Suzuki and Hu were right in characterizing Ch'an as uniquely Chinese, and if our understanding of Ch'an as the quest for enlightenment is on the mark, then there must be a peculiarly sinitic mode of approaching the enlightenment experience. (p. 448)

Tu's reasoning here seems plausible enough on the surface, but it suffers from a logical flaw and numerous historical errors that could have been avoided had the evidence of the volume itself been taken into account. In the first place, although it follows from the two stated premises that the Ch'an quest for (or understanding of) enlightenment must have been uniquely Chinese, it does not follow that there must be something that can properly be caned "the" (singular) "sinitic approach to enlightenment." Indeed, one thing that the present volume makes very clear is that the Chinese Buddhist tradition has

included a number of different, sometimes contradictory, interpretations of and approaches to enlightenment. Such contradictions are nowhere more apparent than within the Chinese Ch'an tradition itself, which (as Gómez, McRae, Gregory, and Buswell all demonstrate in their chapters) was far from monolithic. At best, it could perhaps be said (following McRae and Buswell) that the various branches of the Ch'an school occupied a rhetorical or polemical common ground, to wit, that in matters of enlightenment "sudden" is always presented as superior to "gradual." We have seen, however, that the meaning and practical implications of "sudden enlightenment" have been subject to sundry and conflicting interpretations within the Ch'an tradition. Unanimity in the adoption of the slogan certainly cannot be taken as evidence for a single "sinitic approach to enlightenment."

Editor Gregory is on the mark when he observes in his Introduction that the sudden/gradual *polarity* in Chinese Buddhist thought reflected and gave form to "a deeply rooted tension in Chinese culture between effortful cultivation and spontaneous intuition ..., a tension reflected, in its broadest scope, in the respective stances of Confucianism and Taoism—or between conformity and naturalness..." (p. 8). Tu, however, speaks as if it were the subitist position alone that is representative of the "uniquely sinitic approach to enlightenment." He states, for example, that "the subitists' faith is ... deeply rooted in the indigenous traditions of Chinese thought and religion" (p. 453), and argues that subitist Ch'an, Mencian Confucianism, and Chuang Tzu's Taoism all share a "deep-rooted sinitic faith in the perfectibility of human nature through self-effort." (p. 455)

After discussing "the classical Confucian sense of learning as enlightenment" and finding it compatible with "the Taoist idea that in the pursuit of Tao we must learn to lose ourselves" (p. 499), Tu proceeds to address the case of Ch'an Buddhism:

Without a faith in human perfectibility, there is no intelligible basis for initiating the process of self-realization as a personal responsibility. Without a faith in self-effort, there is no inner strength that can be independently mobilized for the purpose.

The pivotal difference between this Confucian, Taoist, and Ch'an faith in self-effort on the one hand, and the reliance on an outside source in devotional religions on the other, lies in the perception of human nature. Confucians, Taoists, and Ch'an Buddhists all believe that, although we are not what we ought to be, what we are is both the necessary and sufficient condition for us to become what we ought to be. (p. 450)

Tu's characterization of Ch'an here adequately describes the approach taken by some historical representatives of the tradition, in particular the conservative Tsung-mi and his doctrine of "sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation." But it completely ignores the historical evidence that more radical branches of Ch'an such as the Pao-t'ang and Hung-chou schools tended to interpret sudden enlightenment in a way that denied the necessity of self-cultivation, or even portrayed cultivation as something that exacerbates delusion. In fact, these radical subitists took the position that human nature is not perfectible, precisely because it is already perfect. The whole point of the sudden enlightenment doctrine, in this latter view, is that self-realization is a kind of gnosis or intuition that involves neither a process nor any special effort, and does not change anything. By lumping Confucianism, Taoism, and Ch'an Buddhism together the way he does, Tu paints a picture of an all-encompassing "sinitic faith" that glosses over the tensions that existed in Chinese thought at large, and among Chinese Buddhists, between the ideals of purposeful cultivation on the one hand, and spontaneity and naturalness on the other.

The distinction that Tu introduces between the "Confucian, Taoist, and Ch'an faith in self-effort" and the "reliance on an outside source in devotional religions" seems to be based on the modern Japanese interpretation of Zen as a religion of "own power" (*jiriki*) as opposed to the Pure Land tradition's reliance on the "other power" (*tariki*) of Amida Buddha. It is disappointing to find this hackneyed characterization of Zen trotted out in the Afterword to a volume that so clearly exposes its superficiality and inaccuracy. The distinction between "own power" and "other power" was never a major issue in

Chinese Buddhist thought, and is scarcely germane to the sudden/gradual polarity. If one were to introduce the distinction as an interpretative criterion, however, one would have to conclude that the more radically subitist representatives of the Ch'an tradition were closer to the "other power" position than the "own power" one. The essence of the "other power" theology, at least in its more radical manifestations (e.g., the teachings of Shinran), is that one is *already* saved by Amida's vow, so no cultivation is necessary: one need only have faith in that fact. Similarly, the radical subitist position is that one is *already* possessed of Buddha nature, so no cultivation is necessary: one need only realize that fact. Both the radical Pure Land and the radical subitist positions, moreover, seem to posit a reality which, although its essence is a faith or an insight that humans have access to, clearly transcends and renders ultimately irrelevant the human capacity for self-transformation. Tu is wrong, therefore, when he claims that "subitist Ch'an" preaches enlightenment through self-effort and that in it "no reference is made to a transcendent reality that provides a real fiat for this incredible human capacity" (p. 448).

Having posited the belief that "human nature is perfectible through self-effort" as the cornerstone of all indigenous traditions of Chinese thought, Tu has little choice but to argue that

lest we should misconstrue sudden enlightenment as an easy way out of the rigorous spiritual discipline required of all serious students of Ch'an, let us assume that the sudden-gradual debate is not about the necessity of practice but, given the centrality of diligent spiritual discipline, about what the authentic method of achieving enlightenment ought to be. (p. 453)

Once again, it is difficult to see how anyone who had read the preceding chapters in *Sudden and Gradual* could deny that the necessity of cultivation was one of the main bones of contention in at least some of the historical debates that we subsume under the rubric of sudden versus gradual. Tu, nevertheless, asserts that "the subitists and gradualists alike were in favor of diligent spiritual discipline" (p. 453), arguing that they only disagreed about the

method of achieving enlightenment. The gradualists, he implies, embraced the methods of scripture, tradition, ritual and teaching, whereas the subitists did not. Given the diversity of thinkers in the history of Chinese Buddhism who have taken some sort of sudden enlightenment position, it would have been helpful if Tu had identified just who he was referring to. Most of the figures associated with subitism in the preceding chapters, including Tao-sheng, Chih-i, Tsung-mi, Ta-hui, and even Shen-hui, do not fit Tu's description of "the subitists" very well. Moreover, it is not clear what diligent practices Tu's subitists are supposed to have embraced as a method of achieving enlightenment. In the end, his account seems to be based more on clichés made popular by D. T. Suzuki (e. g., that Zen rejects texts and rituals in favor of immediate experience) than on any historical evidence. Tu's use of the category of "experience" to characterize the subitist position is especially problematic because experience implies a nexus of enabling causes and conditions, whereas the rhetoric of sudden enlightenment employed by figures such as Shen-hui, Tsung-mi, and Ma-tsu tends to posit enlightenment as something innate and unconditioned.

Tu's idiosyncratic interpretation of human nature and enlightenment also seems to be inspired in part by Sartre's existentialism. As human beings, he suggests, we are forever on a projectory that issues from and leads back to our fundamental human nature, but are always to some degree alienated from that nature. "Enlightenment," he says, is nothing other than "the light and warmth of human nature for self-disclosure, self-expression, and self-realization" (p. 450), but that self-realization is never complete:

Even though what we ought to be is what our human nature originally is, we existentially are neither. This human predicament presents a challenge: although we are born humans, we must continuously learn to be human; although our human nature has intrinsic resources for our ultimate self-realization, we must learn the way to tap them for our own "salvation." ... Evil, in this sense, does not have ontological status. It is but an

existential description of what has gone wrong. (p. 451)

This is a far cry from what anyone in the Chinese Buddhist tradition ever had to say about enlightenment, sudden or otherwise. The idea that living beings have, in a primordial moment of nescience, somehow lost sight of their own intrinsic enlightenment (*pen-chüeh*) and wandered deluded through the round of birth-and death is, of course, found in Chinese Buddhism, as for example in Tsung-mi's analysis of mind. However, unlike the Confucian tradition that Tu locates himself in, Buddhists never developed the notion of a fixed (or even dynamic) "human nature." The "nature" (*hsing*) that Buddhists speak of realizing or "seeing" (*chien*) in enlightenment is the Buddha nature (*fo-hsing*), or the "undifferentiated dharmakāya of the Tathāgata" (p. 292), within which so-called human nature exists as something conditioned, insubstantial, impermanent, and devoid of any fixed characteristics. Furthermore, Chinese Buddhists have frequently held that a complete and perfect realization of the Buddha nature—meaning a complete eradication or transmutation of the delusion that ordinarily obscures it—is possible for human beings, not only "ontologically" (to use Tu's terminology), but "existentially." Indeed, we have seen that one of the meanings of "sudden enlightenment" in Chinese Buddhism is precisely that all of the qualities and powers associated with Buddhahood are recovered "at once," completely and simultaneously.

Although Tu presents his analysis of the "uniquely sinitic approach to enlightenment" in the guise of intellectual history, his disregard for proven lexical meanings of the term "enlightenment" (*wu*) in the history of Chinese Buddhism shows that he is not really concerned with applying the historical-philological method, but is in fact proffering a stipulative definition of enlightenment. Unlike Demiéville, however, whose stipulative definition of "subitism" is posited as an aid to the comparative study of world religions, Tu evinces no interest in cross-cultural comparisons. Tu's approach, in fact, is neither historical nor comparative, but fundamentally theological in nature. That is to say, he takes a certain understanding of the divine and its relationship to human beings as axiomatic and proceeds to work out its implications using rational arguments. Thus,

for example, the reader is informed that

Human nature, as conferred by the mandate of heaven, is actually a concrete manifestation of the tacit “covenant” between man and heaven.... Each person, in the holistic cosmic vision, forms an affinity with the total environment as a filial son or daughter of heaven and earth. The particular enlightenment that is available to the person is self-discovery. Self-discovery takes the form of representing that which one originally has as one’s birthright.... The process that leads to enlightenment is always gradual, whereas the experience itself, no matter how well one is prepared, is always sudden. (p. 451).

With this kind of categorical, normative statement about the human condition, Tu stops speaking the language of intellectual history and Sinology altogether and lends a contemporary voice to the already cacophonous theological discussions of the meaning of sudden enlightenment that flourished in medieval China.

Indeed, one of the noteworthy features of the Afterword is that Tu not only adopts a theological stance himself, but criticizes the modern academic community (Western scholars of Chinese Buddhism) for failing to do so. He indirectly chides the contributors to the volume by observing that despite the general agreement among scholars that enlightenment is the ultimate concern of Ch’an spiritual training, “a concerted effort to analyze ‘enlightenment’ as a scholarly enterprise is rare” (p. 448). Moreover, he says, there is an

implicit demand that we must try to take an inside participant’s point of view if we are to make sense of enlightenment as a religious experience. Surely we do not find it convincing to say that the only respectable scholarly mode of analysis is from the perspective of the disinterested observer. But to learn to be religiously musical is one thing, to actually experience enlightenment is another—something, to say the least, extraordinarily difficult. The gradualists, in outlining the procedure by which enlightenment study is to be pursued, provide us with a way of



applying our sophisticated conceptual apparatus of classification and analysis. The subitists, without giving us any handle by which we can exert our research effort, compel us to dismiss them as unintelligible. (p. 453)

In other words, if scholars take an insider's point of view they may be able to make sense of enlightenment as explained by Tu's unnamed gradualists, but because the academic community is "dedicated to the programmatic pursuit of knowledge" it is "not at all suited to appreciate the seemingly situational and inspirational pedagogy" of subitism (p. 453). The only way to make sense of the sudden enlightenment position, Tu would have us believe, is to "actually experience enlightenment."

This claim is familiar to Western students of Ch'an and Zen Buddhism, thanks to D.T. Suzuki, and many have been bamboozled by it in the past. The contributors to *Sudden and Gradual*, however, evidently believed that they were able to get a handle on various subitists (exponents of sudden enlightenment doctrines) in the history of Chinese Buddhism and did not feel compelled to dismiss those subitists as unintelligible. To defend his assessment of the limitations of scholarship, Tu would have to maintain that when these modern scholars employ a "sophisticated conceptual apparatus of classification and analysis" to render their eminently intelligible accounts of sudden enlightenment (*tun-wu*) they are, *ipso facto*, missing the true import (or "experience") of enlightenment. Tu complains that scholars have not made a concerted effort to analyze "enlightenment," but when confronted with a volume that attempts to do just that, he lapses into theological rhetoric borrowed from modern Japanese Zen, claiming that enlightenment by its very nature must forever elude the grasp of the intellect.

The fundamental difficulty that besets the academic treatment of enlightenment in the West, I would submit, is not that scholars are blinded to enlightenment by their intellectual apparatus or constitutionally incapable (e.g., by dint of cultural or linguistic differences) of understanding East Asian Buddhists when the latter talk about enlightenment. The problem is that the language of theology,

Buddhist or otherwise, and the language of critical scholarly inquiry have different scopes and operate by different sets of rules. Although one person might be fluent in both languages, things can nevertheless be said in one that defy (grammatically, as it were) translation into the other. The scope of critical historiography, as we understand it in the West, is limited to facts of human experience that are, in principle at least, ascertainable by scientific methods. Thus, if critical historiography is to accept enlightenment as factual grist for its mill, it cannot define or interpret enlightenment in a manner (à la Ch'an and Zen theology) that places it, wholly or partially, in a miraculous or sacred realm beyond the scope of ordinary experience and rational inquiry.

Basically, critical scholarship has two approaches at its disposal. One approach is to treat enlightenment as an article of religious faith, doctrine, or ideology. In this case, the ascertainable facts open to investigation are the things that people have actually said or written about enlightenment, and the observable behavior of persons who claim enlightenment as a motivating factor- in their lives. This is the approach taken by most Buddhologists, including the contributors to the present volume, *Sudden and Gradual*. The other possible approach would be to treat enlightenment as some sort of definite, measurable, repeatable experience that human beings actually have, quite apart from the manifold ways in which they describe it. In this case, the ascertainable facts open to investigation would be the objective causes and conditions that occasion the experience, and the physiological and psychological states that attend it.

Neither of these critical approaches, of course, is likely to satisfy Ch'an/Zen Buddhist believers in enlightenment. The first approach, with its insistence on putting quotation marks around everything said in the tradition about enlightenment, and its refusal to evaluate the truth content of such statements in terms of any objective referent, may strike the believer as a *de facto* denial of the reality that corresponds to the name enlightenment. And even when the critical scholarly method of fastidiously avoiding normative judgments is correctly understood as entailing neither an affirmation nor a denial of that reality, the believer may well dismiss it as irrelevant

pussyfooting. The second approach admits that the name enlightenment refers to a real experience, but then proceeds to deny as superstition the function within that experience of any sacred or transcendent spiritual forces. It denies the validity of the religious language used to explain enlightenment, in effect reducing enlightenment to something the Ch'an/Zen tradition explicitly states it is not: a conditioned response to a nexus of physical and psychological stimuli. Thus, critical scholarship, if it plays by its own rules, is bound to disappoint the believer. Only theological discourse, because it is free to treat enlightenment as a concrete fact of human experience that is nevertheless explicable in religious language as the operation of sacred forces or principles, is equipped to communicate with believers on their own terms.

Theologians, of course, can be insensitive to or intolerant of each other's positions without breaking the rules of theological discourse, which allow dogmatic axioms to stand unchallenged as "revealed" or personally "attested" truths. Because theologians take the point of view of inside participants in their own religious traditions, moreover, it can be difficult for them to study foreign traditions in a sympathetic manner. The idea that scholars should strive to be "religiously musical," as Tu puts it, is one that I subscribe to wholeheartedly. My criticism of Tu is not that he is too sympathetic to Buddhist theology to maintain scholarly objectivity, but that he is not sympathetic enough. That is to say, he does not listen to the rich variations on the theme of enlightenment that the Chinese Buddhist tradition has produced, but drowns them out with his own song of truth—his own ideology of enlightenment. The perspective of the disinterested observer, wherein one strives to bracket one's own opinions and agendas and apply the methods of historical criticism, is in fact necessary if one is to give bygone, foreign religions and persons a truly sympathetic hearing and not merely discern in them the echo of one's own voice.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The five years that have elapsed since the publication of *Sudden*

*and Gradual* have seen a number of interesting and encouraging developments in the field of East Asian Buddhist studies in North America.

For one thing, there has been an noticeable increase in fruitful exchange between Buddhologists and humanists in other disciplines specializing in China, Korea, and Japan. Several successful conferences have brought scholars of Buddhism together with historians, linguists, art historians, and experts in Taoism and "popular" religion to read papers and discuss topics of mutual interest, and more such gatherings are currently in the planning stages. A few research projects involving principals from Buddhist studies and other disciplines are also underway. These developments, to a significant degree, have been instigated by Buddhologists who have become increasingly aware of the conceptual and methodological limitations of the Japanese scholarship with which they were trained. Impetus has also come from the "other side," however, as a growing number of younger Sinologists, in particular, have come to realize that ignorance of Buddhism (that ostensibly "alien" religion) represents a not insignificant gap in their own academic training. It is gratifying to see that among the current generation of graduate students and junior faculty, many of the old prejudices which have in the past kept Buddhologists isolated from their Sinological and Japanological colleagues seem to be dying out.

Another significant change that has occurred as East Asian Buddhologists wean themselves from traditional (Japanese) approaches to the field is an increasing experimentation with post-modernist, poststructuralist, and post-Marxist approaches to ideology. Bernard Faure's recent book, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) comes to mind as the most striking example of this tendency, but it shows up in the work of others as well. More generally, the past decade has seen movement away from the philosophical (sometimes theological) treatment of Buddhist doctrine in the abstract and toward a consideration of the specific social-historical contexts in which Buddhism as a religion (complete with institutions, cult, and doctrines) flourished. It is this tendency,

perhaps, that has led Buddhologists into areas traditionally covered by other disciplines, both humanistic and social scientific, and facilitated the increasing interdisciplinary exchange mentioned above.

In the final analysis, however, the distinctive expertise of the East Asian Buddhologist is (and should continue to be) the ability to read and interpret Buddhist texts of all genres.

## Notes

1. The following volumes have appeared in the series to date:

Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 1. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

William R. LaFleur, ed., *Dōgen Studies*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 2. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.

John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 3. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

Peter N. Gregory, ed. *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 4. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

Peter N. Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 5. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed. *Buddhist Hermeneutics*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 6. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimell, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*. The Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, No. 7. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992.

2. Unpublished cover note distributed with original set of papers from the conference on "The Sudden/Gradual Polarity," Los Angeles, 1981.

3. Ibid.

4. Richard Robinson, *Definition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 35-58.

5. Paul Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel" (1947), reprinted in *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, 131-156.

6. *The Eastern Buddhist* 7.1 (May, 1974):55-106, and 7.2 (October, 1974):49-82.

7. Ibid, 7.2:81.

8. *The Eastern Buddhist* 17.1 (Spring, 1984): 79-107. Other surveys of aspects of the field of Buddhist studies include: J.W. de Jong, "The Study of Buddhism. Problems and Perspectives," in *Buddhist Studies: Selected Essays of J. W. de Jong*, ed. by Gregory Schopen (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), 15-28; Edward Conze, "Recent Progress in Buddhist Studies", in *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1967), 1-32; Philip Yampolsky, "New Japanese Studies in Early Ch'an History," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, no. 5, ed. by Lewis Lancaster and Whalen Lai (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), 1-11; and Lewis Lancaster, "Buddhist Studies," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 2:554-560.

9. *The Eastern Buddhist*, 17. 1 82.

10. Ibid, 7. 2: 71 .

11. Ibid, 7.2 72.

12. Paul Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel" (1947), reprinted in *Choix d'études bouddhiques*, 131-156.

13. *Zengaku kenkyū* 50 (Kyoto, 1960), 158-177.

14. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Unabridged edition). New York: Random House, 1973.

15. Unless otherwise noted, the following list of subitist characteristics is based on *Sudden and Gradual*, 15.

16. Actually, much of the systematization of "Chih-i's thought" was accomplished by later proponents of T'ien-t'ai, notably Chan-jan (717-782), a fact that Donner neglects to bring out.

17. Hu Shih, "Development of Zen Buddhism in China," in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* XV (no. 4, Jan., 1932): 481 ff.

18. "Development of Zen Buddhism in China," 485.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid, 503.

21. Ibid, 504.

22. Suzuki Daisetsu, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih," in *Philosophy East and West*. 3.1 (April, 1953) 25-46.

23. Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method,"

in *Philosophy East and West* :3 (no. 1, April, 1953):16.

24. See Yanagida Seizan, "The *Li-tai Fa-Pao Chi* and The Ch'an Doctrine of Sudden Awakening," trans. by Carl Bielefeldt, in Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, No. 5. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 13-49.

25. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 48.400c, 1-2.

26. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 48.400c, 5-7. Translation by Jeffrey T. Broughton, "Kuei-feng Tsung-mi: The Convergence of Ch'an and the Teachings" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975), 117-118.

27. This omission may have been due to limitations of space, for Gregory has treated the Chinese context of Tsung-mi's thought thoroughly in other works, the most recent of which is *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

28. T. Griffith Foulk, "The 'Ch'an School' and Its Place in the Buddhist Monastic Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1987), 264-383.

29. See Donner, p. 212.

30. See, for example, the *Shih-men lin-chien lu*, *Dainippon Zokuzōkyō* 2B-21-4.295d.



## Glossary of Chinese and Japanese Terms

|                             |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| ch'an-lin                   | 禪林     |
| ch'an-shih                  | 禪師     |
| ch'an-tsung                 | 禪宗     |
| ch'an-tsung tun chien erh-i | 禪宗頓漸二義 |
| cheng-wu                    | 證悟     |
| chi                         | 機      |
| chi-yüan wen-ta             | 機緣問答   |
| chiao                       | 教      |
| chiao-men                   | 教門     |
| chieh-wu                    | 解悟     |
| chien                       | 見      |
| chien                       | 漸      |
| chien-hsiu                  | 漸修     |
| chien-hsiu tun-wu           | 漸修頓悟   |
| ching                       | 靜      |
| ching-chieh                 | 徑截     |
| fa-yü                       | 法語     |
| fang-pien                   | 方便     |
| fo-hsin                     | 佛心     |
| fo-hsing                    | 佛性     |
| hsi-ch'an                   | 習禪     |
| hsiang                      | 相      |
| hsing                       | 性      |
| hsiu                        | 修      |
| hsüan-hsüeh                 | 玄學     |
| hua-t'ou                    | 話頭     |



|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| hui               | 慧    |
| i-chia            | 逸家   |
| i-shih tun        | 一時頓  |
| i-wu hsiu-hsing   | 依悟修行 |
| jiriki            | 自力   |
| jissen-teki       | 实践的  |
| ju                | 如    |
| kanbun            | 漢文   |
| k'an              | 看    |
| k'an-hua          | 看話   |
| k'an-hua ch'an    | 看話禪  |
| kō'an             | 公案   |
| kuan-men          | 觀門   |
| hung              | 空    |
| kung-an           | 公案   |
| li                | 理    |
| miao              | 妙    |
| nan-pei tsung lun | 南北宗論 |
| pen-chüeh         | 本覺   |
| satori            | 悟    |
| shen              | 深    |
| shih-fa           | 詩法   |
| shih ta-chih      | 詩大指  |
| shū               | 宗    |
| shugyō            | 修行   |
| taiken            | 體驗   |

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| tariki            | 他力   |
| ting              | 定    |
| tso-ch'an         | 坐禪   |
| tso-chia          | 作家   |
| tsung             | 宗    |
| tun               | 頓    |
| tun-hsiu chien-wu | 頓修漸悟 |
| tun-wu            | 頓悟   |
| wen-ta            | 問答   |
| wen-tzu           | 文字   |
| wu                | 悟    |
| wu-nien           | 無念   |
| yomikudashi       | 読み下し |
| yü-lu             | 語錄   |
| zenshū            | 禪宗   |
| zenshūshi         | 禪宗史  |