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We thank Brook Ziporyn for a creative and imaginative treatment of our view in a context we had not considered, that of Tiantai theory. Ziporyn's main criticisms of our position can be summarized in the following two points:

> [T]he question about whether the contradictory statements in Mahāyāna literature are meant to be true statements or are meant merely as therapeutic *upāya* to undermine attachments while making no claims about reality is, from a Tiantai point of view, wrongly constructed.

> The Tiantai view . . . is not mere dialetheism, "the view that some contradictions are true," as Deguchi, Garfield, and Priest put it. It claims that *all* statements, claims, experiences, and entities are (implicitly) contradictions, and that *therefore* they are *all* true.

These criticisms are not a direct repudiation but rather merely a qualification of our view, because Ziporyn restricts his claims only to a Tiantai "point of view," and leaves open the question regarding whether our view makes sense of other schools of Buddhist philosophy. Nonetheless, we reject this qualification. Both criticisms are grounded in Ziporyn's claim that, in the Tiantai system, the relation between conventional and ultimate truths (or realities, as it sometimes seems better to understand this) is simply *identity*. But this interpretation is erroneous. Tiantai theorists characterize the relation among the three truths as *round fusion* (圓融). This round fusion, we will argue, is not an identity relation. We conclude that Ziporyn's critique is hence at least hermeneutically indefensible.

Let us first show how Ziporyn's first criticism is based on his interpretation of this relation as identity. Ziporyn writes: "Conventional truth is what is conducive to the end of suffering." The criterion of conventional truths is "not that they correspond to an external reality or can be consistently unpacked without self-contradiction, but that speaking and acting in accordance with them is conducive to the ending of suffering." So conventional truth is defined pragmatically, and is nothing but that which is conducive to the attainment of *nirvāṇa*.[1] On Ziporyn's reading, conventional truths are not assertions about reality, contradictory or not.

Then how about ultimate truth? Ultimate truth, Ziporyn argues, is, in Tiantai, identical to conventional truth. In his own words, "conventional truth and ultimate truth are *identical.* They have *exactly the same content.* Whatever is conventional

truth is also ultimate truth, and vice versa." Ziporyn then implicitly appeals to Leibniz' law of identity: if two things are identical, they share all their properties. So, given that conventional truth is pragmatic, ultimate truth is also pragmatic. Therefore, according to Ziporyn, *all* truth in Buddhism is pragmatic. "Buddhism is, I claim, a thousand percent pragmatic in its approach to truth."

Ziporyn also seems to take *upāya* and *pragmatic truth* as synonymous. So there is no truth in Buddhism other than *upāya.* Therefore, he argues, DGP's distinction between *upāya* and any other form of truth is unsustainable. So, he concludes, their question regarding whether apparent contradictions in Buddhist texts are *upāya* or to be taken literally suffers from a false presupposition.

His denial of the distinction DGP draw between assertions that are merely *upāya* and those that are to be taken as true is based at least in part on his pragmatic view of ultimate truth. And it is to be noted that he never gives any independent and direct argument for that thesis. Rather, his pragmatic view of ultimate truth relies essentially on his claim to the identity of these two truths. Pragmatism flows from the conventional to the ultimate by virtue of this identity.

Ziporyn's second criticism also depends directly on the identity claim. He claims that what is ultimately true is "ontological ambiguity," that is, the idea that reality itself is contradictory. Since conventional truth is identical with ultimate truth, he argues, the former is also about ontological ambiguity, and therefore admits contradictions. Contradiction flows from ultimate truth to conventional truth. Consequently, Ziporyn argues, from a Tiantai perspective all truths are contradictory. Again it is noteworthy that he provides no other reason for the contradictory character of conventional truth.[2] Thus the identity interpretation is the cornerstone of both criticisms.

But Ziporyn is simply wrong about this: the Tiantai view of the relation between the two truths cannot be interpreted as *identity.* The relation between the *two* truths is explained in Tiantai by the relation among *three* truths (三諦). These are sometimes called *ultimate* truth (眞諦), *conventional* truth (俗諦), and the *middle* truth (中諦), but also sometimes *emptiness* (空), *the provisional* (假), and *the middle* (中). The founder of the Tiantai tradition, Zhiyi 智顗, characterized the relation as *round fusion among three truths* (三諦圓融):

> 圓三諦者. 非但中道具足佛法. 眞俗亦然. 三諦圓融一三三一. (*Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義, *Taishō,* vol. 33, p. 705)
> The round doctrine of the three truths is that not only the middle, but also the ultimate and conventional truths constitute Buddha dharma. The three truths roundly fuse with one other. One is three, and three is one.

Just what this round fusion (圓融) consists of is a difficult question. Zhiyi himself admitted that it is very difficult, even impossible, to grasp it conceptually:

> 此三諦理不可思議無決定性實不可説. (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀, *Taishō,* vol. 46, p. 26)
> The characteristics of these three truths are unthinkable. Since they don't have any determinate nature, they are inexplicable indeed.

But he did his best to explicate it anyway. Here is an example:

非三而三三而不三. 非合非散而合而散. 非非合非非散不可一異而一異. 譬如明鏡. 明喻即空. 像喻即假. 鏡喻即中. 不合不散合散宛然. 不一二三二三無妨. (*Mohe zhiguan, Taishō,* vol. 46, pp. 8–9)

[The three truths are] not three but three, three but not three; neither integrated nor disintegrated, but both integrated and disintegrated; neither non-integrated nor non-disintegrated; neither one nor different, but both one and different. Let me use the metaphor of a clear mirror. Clear light is a metaphor of emptiness. Vision is a metaphor of the provisional. The mirror is a metaphor of the middle. They are neither integrated nor disintegrated, and both integrated and disintegrated. There is no difference between integration and disintegration. They are neither one, two, nor three. And there is no obstruction between two and three.

Even with this metaphor, we must acknowledge that it is difficult to understand the relation among the three truths. But one thing is clear: it is *not* identity. As Zhiyi explicitly states, it is "neither one nor different" and "both one and different."

Now, it might be tempting to read this last claim that the truths are both identical and different as one more dialetheia: the relation *is* identity, and something else as well. But here we must proceed with caution. The context makes it clear that Zhiyi is stating that the relation among the truths is like identity in some respects, and like difference in others. Most crucially, as we shall see, the relation does not support the mutual substitutivity of identicals, and so is not literal identity.

The relation may well, in fact, be the same relation, a close cousin, or at least an ancestor, of that of *ji* 即 as characterized in the Huayen tradition. This expression typically occurs in the Huayen context in phrases such as "One is/*ji* 即 all, and all is/*ji* 即 one." As among many other ancestors and descendants, we can find some family resemblances between Zhiyi's *round fusion* and Huayen's *ji.*

Huayen philosophers often distinguished two modes among *ji*: *interpenetration* (相入) and *mutual ji* (相即). While Zhiyi does not draw this distinction *explicitly,* nor does he use these terms, we can find a prototype of the Huayen distinction in his texts. Huayen thinkers indeed distinguished two modes of *ji,* but drew that distinction differently. For some Huayen theorists, *interpenetration* is the reverse of the relation of *containment* (具), whereas it is not so with respect to *mutual ji.* To put this another way, "A *interpenetrates* B" can always be rephrased as "B *contains* A." This, however, is not the case with respect to *mutual ji* (e.g., Zhiyan 智儼, 華厳一乗十玄門, *Taishō,* vol. 45, p. 514; Fazang 法蔵, 華厳五教章, *Taishō,* vol. 45, pp. 503–504).

In his characterization of round fusion, Zhiyi mentions *containment* in some places but not in others. We cited already a phrase in which he does not refer to containment, in the context of the discussion of the mirror metaphor (*Taishō,* vol. 46, pp. 8–9). But in the following passage he explicitly characterizes round fusion in terms of containment:

但以空為名. 即具假中. 悟空即悟假中. 餘亦如是. (*Mohe zhiguan, Taishō,* vol. 46, p. 7)
If one takes only emptiness to be ostensive, then it *contains* the provisional and the middle. [Hence] to enlighten emptiness is to enlighten the provisional and the middle. The rest is like this.

Zhiyi implies here that any one of the three truths *contains* the other two. This way of characterizing round fusion thus appears to be an archetype of the idea of *interpenetration* that turns up in Huayen, while the mirror metaphor may be an ancestor of mutual *ji.* It therefore may well be that Zhiyi sows seeds of the Huayen distinction between the two modes of *ji,* even though he does not explicitly thematize this distinction.

Now, we acknowledge, in the good company of Zhiyi, the difficulty of knowing whether we have got the understanding of Tiantai "identity" right, and also, indeed, the speculative character of this doctrinal history. In any case, however, it is clear that the relation among truths according to Tiantai doctrine is much more complicated and delicate than simple identity.

Another reason to think that this might be in the ballpark of a correct account of the round-fusion relation among the three truths, and an explanation of why it cannot be taken simply as identity, derives from Zhiyi's repeated emphasis on the difference between the three truths, which typically refers to their cognitive dimensions. For example:

若謂即空即假即中者. 三種 . . . 各各異有. (*Mohe zhiguan, Taishō,* vol. 46, p. 7)
If one explains in the light of either emptiness, the provisional, or the middle, . . . there is a difference among each of these three sorts of explanations.

Of course, this difference is just one aspect of the round fusion. But it is a real difference. And following Zhiyi, it had become an established view in the Tiantai tradition that the three truths are not simply identical with one another, but differ from one another in some respects. Consider this statement by Jingxi Zhanran 荊溪 湛然, a well-known figure in the tradition, who elaborated Zhiyi's idea of the round fusion among the three truths in his own way:

夫三諦者. 天然之性德也. 中諦者. 統一切法. 眞諦者. 泯一切法. 俗諦者. 立一切法. (*Shizhong xinyao* 始終心要, *Taishō,* vol. 46, p. 473)
The three truths are innate abilities given by nature. The middle truth unifies all dharmas, the ultimate truth demolishes all dharmas, and the conventional truth establishes all dharmas.

It still remains difficult to see what the differences are among the three. But it is obvious at any rate that Zhanran tries to differentiate them conceptually: the unifier, the demolisher, and the establisher of all dharmas. Thus both Zhiyi and Zhanran maintain that each of the three truths has different characteristics from the others, and that these characteristics are *not* interchangeable. We conclude that Ziporyn's claim that identity holds between the three is foreign to the Tiantai tradition.

Let us sum up. In the Tiantai view, conventional and ultimate truths roundly fuse with one another. While it may not be entirely clear what round fusion *is,* it is perfectly clear that it is *not* identity, for it does not satisfy the law of the substitutivity of identicals. In particular, it is clear that not every characteristic of any one of the truths also characterizes each of the others. So Ziporyn's interpretation is wrong. Consequently, his two criticisms of our analysis cannot be supported by citing Tiantai texts, and are therefore at least doctrinally unfounded.

We end with three final comments. Tiantai's view of the three truths may in fact support our dialetheic interpretation of Buddhism. In his attempt to conceptually characterize the round fusion among the truths, Zhiyi may well make contradictory claims. Recall the statement in his *Mohe ziguan* that we cited above (*Taishō,* vol. 46, pp. 8–9) where he refers to contradictions involving "being three," "integration," "disintegration," et cetera. The contexts in which these contradictions appear are clearly neither metaphorical nor *upāya* nor *reductio.* So they appear to be dialetheias. It might be suggested that some of these apparent contradictions can be defused by parameterization, appealing to different aspects of the situation. But whatever one says about the others, the contradiction regarding integration and dis-integration hardly appears to be like this. How can one have or lack aspects of integration? If this is so, we are happy to include this new dialetheia in our list of contradictions that are meant to be taken literally, to be accepted, and that are unambiguous. We thank Ziporyn for calling our attention to it, and we hope to examine it with care on another occasion.

Second remark: despite this, we do not agree with Ziporyn that all conventional truth is contradictory. The claim that Tokyo is the capital of Japan is a conventional truth, and there is nothing contradictory about it at all. His argument for this conclusion simply confuses the means and the end. He writes:

> Conventional truth is what is conducive to the end of suffering. The end of suffering is the end of all statements and views. So conventional truth is precisely *those views that are conducive to ending all views.* Like the raft, they are self-transcending. . . . If it did *not* contradict itself, it would not be a truth. . . . Hence, *only* those statements and beliefs that lead to their own self-cancellation are true. *Only* self-contradictions are true.

Even if we grant that the conventional truths are those that are conducive to the rejection of all views, and even if we grant that to endorse a view and to reject it are contradictory, it does not follow that the view itself is contradictory. There is nothing contradictory about a shout of 'silence,' which ends all talk, or to an assertion of 'we should all stop speaking,' which has the same effect. Clearly, a statement that brings about an effect and the effect itself can have quite different properties.

Third remark: finally, we are not tempted down the path of Ziporyn's endorsement of trivialism: all things are true. If this were so, Hindu views would be just as true as Buddhist, as would the view that all things have *svabhāva,* and so on. Most implausible. The extreme path of obstinate clinging to consistency and the extreme

path of trivialism each lead us back to *saṃsāra.* We choose the middle path of para-consistency, the highway to liberation.

Notes

1 – Actually, this view would itself seem pretty implausible, by any standards, Buddhist or otherwise. It is (conventionally) true that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, but speaking or acting in accordance with this would seem to have absolutely nothing to do with achieving enlightenment. Moreover, in contexts such as the parable of the arrow, and in some accounts of the unanswerable questions, Buddhist texts themselves indicate that some truths are soteriologically inert.

2 – And again, the conclusions seem pretty implausible. The claim that Caesar crossed the Rubicon would appear to be as consistent as can be.