



AFTER APPROPRIATION: EXPLORATIONS IN INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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phenomenology of awakening in zhiyi's tiantai philosophy

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Buddhism can be paralleled only with the highest formations of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture. From now on it will be our destiny to blend that Indian way of thinking which is completely new for us, with the one which for us is old, but which in this confrontation becomes alive and strengthened.¹

— *Edmund Husserl*

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will explore the Buddhist phenomenology of awakening as exemplified in the philosophical writings of Zhiyi (智顓, 538–597), the founder of the Tiantai School of Buddhism. The phrase “phenomenology of awakening” was deliberately coined in contrast to “phenomenology of mundane experience.” In the Buddhist context, the former may be referred

to as “phenomenology of insight,” whereas the latter is classifiable as “phenomenology of consciousness.” In both forms of phenomenology, method is required for the disclosure of truth. However, there are different articulations of truth through different methods employed in different religious and philosophical systems. This chapter will be mainly concerned with how the truth of awakened experience is disclosed through the meditative method in the Buddhist phenomenology of Zhiyi.

Before delving into the discussion proper, I would first like to highlight several preliminary methodological notes. In complying with the formative ideas of this volume, which attempts to investigate the ways in which Western philosophy and religion can be rethought through non-Western categories, I would like to raise two questions. First, in what sense can Zhiyi’s Tiantai philosophy be characterized as a form of phenomenology? Second, in what way can Husserlian phenomenology be further developed into a phenomenology of awakening as envisioned in the Buddhist tradition? For the first question, I would argue that Buddhist philosophy in general can be characterized as phenomenological and that Zhiyi’s philosophy is no exception. Viewing Buddhist philosophy in terms of phenomenology has been the trend in recent decades, and the compatibility of the Buddhist and Western ways of philosophizing has been brilliantly explored by several leading scholars, such as J. Mohanty, Iso Kern, Dan Lusthaus, Plamen Gradinarov, and Ni Liangkang. Most of them are interested in teasing out from Yogācāra Buddhism its phenomenological elements, such as the intentional structure of cognition. They insist that the mode of philosophizing with regard to our understanding of Buddhist philosophy needs to shift from metaphysics to epistemology, and then from epistemology to phenomenology. According to the phenomenological approach, both the object of cognition and the act of cognition are seen as two poles in the same structure of consciousness for the reason that consciousness is always conscious of both itself and something else. For both Husserl and Yogācāra, the structure of consciousness consists of three parts: in addition to the object and act of cognition, there also exists the *self-awareness* of consciousness. It is in the domain of consciousness that all experience occurs, including the experience of “things themselves” in both the Buddhist and Husserlian senses. Things themselves should not be regarded as something separate from our conscious experience. Hence, all we need concern ourselves with is *how* things appear in our

experience of consciousness, and what we should *not* concern ourselves with is metaphysical speculation. This is the phenomenological attitude shared by Zhiyi and Husserl.

And as we begin to appreciate the similar phenomenological trends in non-Western philosophies, including especially Buddhist philosophy, we should, however, be cautious not to fall into one-sided readings. To gloss over substantive differences in doing comparative philosophy will inevitably result in miscategorizations, such as, for example, picturing Mencius as Kant, or Zhuangzi as Heidegger. Taking hermeneutical directives from Ricoeur and Gadamer, I prefer to adopt the method of dialogical reading, hoping that the “other” can be brought into critical conversation. For this essay, therefore, I would like to see in Zhiyi’s philosophy the possibility of a contribution to the mainstream of phenomenology. And here arises the second question: Is it possible for phenomenologists to learn anything new from Zhiyi’s Buddhist philosophy? What exactly can be added to the diversity of the phenomenological legacy from the canons of Buddhist philosophy?

In order to clearly address these questions, this study has been divided into two sections. The first section will attempt to lay out the Buddhist distinction between mundane experience and awakened experience. The two forms of knowledge, mundane knowledge (識; *vijñāna*) and trans-mundane insight (智; *prajñā*) will be closely examined. For convenience, I use “knowledge” to mean “mundane knowledge” and “insight” to mean “trans-mundane knowledge.”² In the second part, I will focus on Zhiyi’s soteriological phenomenology with special attention given to the problems of truth, meditation, and insight.

II. KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT

A possible contribution to Husserlian phenomenology might be best found by way of exploring the Buddhist distinctions of *enlightened experience* and *non-enlightened experience*. The former arises from the realization of non-discriminative knowledge (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*), whereas the latter, mundane experience, results from discriminative knowledge (*vijñāna*). Through this distinction, we see the inseparability of experience and knowledge.

But before fully fleshing out the distinctions in Buddhist theory, let us look into Husserl first, who was not completely ignorant of Buddhism

as religion and philosophy. In a book review written in 1925 for Karl Eugen Neumann's German translation of the *Suttapitaka*, Husserl praised Buddhism as "a religiosity which looks purely inward in vision and deed – which, I should say, is not 'transcendent', but 'transcendental' – enters the horizon of our religious and ethical as well as of our philosophical consciousness."³ Although Husserl's remark is very brief, it nonetheless demonstrates that he did view Buddhist philosophy from the perspective of transcendental phenomenology. Here the term "transcendental" is used by Husserl to mean the attitude that is "directed itself to the life of consciousness – *in which* the 'world' is for us precisely that, the world which is present *to us* – we find ourselves in a new cognitive attitude [or situation]," whereas in the natural attitude "the world is for us the self-evidently existing universe of realities which are continuously before us in unquestioned givenness."⁴ Husserl seemed quite excited to learn that this "transcendental" insight has long been seen as the guiding principle of Buddhist meditation; that is, the constitution of the world is taken as the object of consciousness in meditative contemplation. Unlike the natural attitude in which the existence of the external world is uncritically assumed, in Buddhist meditation, a practitioner is trained to withdraw from all metaphysical assumptions about the world and reside in solitude for sober contemplation. The practitioner believes that, unless metaphysical assumptions about the existence of the world have been methodically "bracketed," she will be unable to clearly discern the way that objects appear in consciousness. This mode of thinking may be properly regarded as a shift from the "natural attitude" to the "phenomenological attitude."⁵

As mentioned above, the distinction between the enlightened experience and the non-enlightened experience is central to Buddhist philosophy. This distinction can be understood either in terms of ontology or of epistemology. As an ontological distinction, it involves the notion of two *realms* of existence. In view of epistemology, however, the distinction is rather seen as two ways of knowing, i.e., enlightenment and ignorance. According to the Buddhist theory of two truths, these two aspects are inseparable. Methodologically speaking, we should proceed from epistemological analysis to ontological exposition, asking: How does our knowledge of the world become discriminated and concealed? Conversely, what are the conditions for the possibility of unconcealed or non-discriminated knowledge? The Buddhist answer can be found in the various

analyses of cognition. Briefly, ignorance (concealment) appears as the result of discriminated knowledge, whereas enlightenment (non-concealed knowledge) is realized by non-discriminated insight. Unless fundamental transformation from the cognitive state of discriminated knowledge to the cognitive state of non-discriminated insight has been accomplished, salvific liberation remains impossible.

Regarding the Buddhist theory of cognition, which is systematically elaborated in the *Abhidharmaśābhāṣya* of Vasubandhu, *viññāna* and *jñāna* are taken as synonymous with cognition/knowledge. *Viññāna* is defined as cognition relative to each object (*viṣayampratīviññāpti*).⁶ It is also understood as *upalabdhi* (apprehension), which is etymologically derived from the root *labh*, meaning “to seize, get possession of, acquire, receive, obtain, or find.”⁷ In the usage of epistemology, *viññāna* (consciousness) refers to cognition that *seizes* something as its object (*viṣaya*) and *makes it known* to the one who cognizes. Accordingly, cognition never exists in itself; it must be the cognition *of* something. For instance, visual-consciousness never exists without form as the visual object. By the same token, visual-consciousness also needs the visual faculty as the condition for its arising. However, knowledge cannot be explained by the function of sensory *viññāna* only. It requires *prajñā* (understanding) in conjunction with sensory perception for the conditions of knowledge to obtain. In this respect, *prajñā* is defined as the discernment/examination of objects.⁸ In contrast to the longstanding misconception of *prajñā* as “mystical wisdom,” interpreting it rather as the “source of true knowledge” better coheres with the actual usage of the term in the literature. Instead of alluding to something mysterious, most Buddhist philosophers employ the notion of *prajñā* in the epistemological sense. Keeping this in mind, we should resist the tendency to mystify the notion of “insight” in Zhiyi’s philosophy.

Historically, the distinction between “insight/correct knowledge” (*samyagjñāna*) and “discriminated knowledge” (*viññāna*) as two forms of knowledge seems to make its first appearance in Yogācārin literature. In the *Yogācārabhūmi*, “insight/correct knowledge” is defined as “intuitive knowledge of things themselves (*tathātā*)” in contrast to “discriminated knowledge,” which is embedded in conceptualization and verbalization. Three kinds of insight are listed: (1) trans-mundane insight, (2) mundane insight, and (3) trans-in-mundane insight. The first refers to intuitive knowledge of the non-existence of external objects. The second refers to

abstract knowledge of things in themselves, which is acquired through conceptual thinking (*vikalpa*). The third one refers to the trans-mundane knowledge that is realized within the context of the mundane.⁹ In the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, we find another account of three forms of insight (correct knowledge) similar to those elaborated in Yogācārin literature. They are (1) insight of all phenomena (一切智; *sarvajñatā*), (2) insight of paths (道種智; *margajñatā*) and (3) insight of all modes of phenomena (一切種智; *sarvākārajñatā*).¹⁰ As we shall see below, this theory of threefold insight plays an important role in Zhiyi's philosophy.

The distinction between knowledge and insight was also further elaborated in the Yogācārin theory of the eightfold consciousness and fourfold insight. Briefly speaking, in Yogācāra's transformative phenomenology, the eightfold consciousness (five sensory consciousnesses, apperceptive-consciousness, ego-consciousness, and storehouse-consciousness) must be transformed into fourfold insight (all-accomplishing insight, intellectual discerning insight, equality insight, and mirror insight).¹¹ That is, the five sensory consciousnesses are transformed into all-accomplishing insight, apperceptive-consciousness to intellectual discerning insight, self-consciousness to equality insight, and storehouse-consciousness to mirror insight. A brief outline of the theory of fourfold insight found in Xuanzang's *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* is provided below (T.31.56.a):¹²

- (1) *Mirror Insight* (大圓鏡智; *ādarsajñāna*): "The mind associated with this insight is dissociated from conceptual constructions (*vikalpa*). Its objects of cognition and their characteristics are too subtle and difficult to be discerned.... It is pure and free of impurity.... Like a great mirror, it reflects the images of all physical objects."
- (2) *Equality Insight* (平等性智; *śamatājñāna*): "The mind associated with this insight sees the nondiscrimination of all existents, including self and other sentient beings. It is always associated with great compassion.... It is also the special support for intellectual discerning insight."
- (3) *Intellectual Discerning Insight* (妙觀察智; *pratyavekṣāñjñāna*): "The mind associated with this insight perfectly sees the particular (*śvalakṣaṇa*) and

the universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) of existence. It functions without any hindrance.”

- (4) *All-accomplishing Insight* (成所作智; *krtyānuṣṭhānañāna*): “The mind associated with this insight is capable of performing actions of body, speech, and thought for the benefits of all sentient beings.”

The above theory of insight in Yogācārin philosophy can be summarized as follows: Insight is freed from conceptual construction. Following the Abhidharma usage, the Yogācārin notion of insight refers to the cognitive function of understanding (*prajñā*), which is always associated with various forms of cognition (*vijñāna*). The key factor responsible for the distinction between insight and knowledge is conceptual construction (*vikalpa*) in association with cognition. Insight is freed from conceptual construction, whereas ordinary knowledge is embedded in conceptual construction. In most Buddhist texts, *vijñāna* and *vikalpa* are often taken as synonyms, with the latter being more appropriately understood as the “constitution of meaning” in the structure of noesis and noema. In addition to epistemic meaning, *vikalpa* also connotes a sense of psychological attachment. For Buddhism, knowing something is not merely a cognitive act. It is always associated with, or even dominated by, various non-cognitive or ideological factors. This is the reason why the fundamental form of insight is referred to as “insight freed from conceptual/ideological construction.” With insight, one is capable of correctly cognizing the aspects of the object: the particular and the universal. As Dignāga argues, these two aspects of the object are known by perception and inference respectively. Aside from this, there is nothing else one can know. According to Abhidharma, however, a yoga-practitioner is capable of directly perceiving the universal character of the object.¹³ With insight one also cognizes the equality of all existents, i.e., the truth that all existents are *equally* empty of permanent essence.

There is another crucial issue left for further investigation: Is insight, which is said to be freed from the act of conceptual construction, intentional? If the answer is affirmative, what then is the intentional structure of insight? Can we find the same threefold intentional structure (noesis, noema, self-awareness) in insight? If insight has the same intentional structure of consciousness, then the difference between the two forms of

knowledge requires an explanation. Historically, this issue was debated in the Chinese Yogācāra School. Three theories were given in response to this issue in Xuanzang's *Siddhi* (T.31.49.c-50.a): (1) Insight is void of the structure of noesis (the part of seeing) and noema (the part of the seen); (2) insight is structured in noesis and noema; and (3) in insight noesis exists only, but not noema. The last theory, held by Dharmapāla and Xuanzang, was considered the orthodox view.¹⁴ In regards to the debate, however, it should be noted that fundamental insight is generally characterized as being devoid of subject as the grasper (*grāhaka*) and object as the grasped (*grāhya*). The duality of subject as the grasper and object as the grasped is merely a mental construction, which can be eliminated due to its being void of permanent essence. However, the noesis-noema structure in insight remains without change, even if the duality of subject-object is eliminated.

In sum, the difference between mundane knowledge and insight rather lies in the function of the objectivating act, i.e., cognitive construction (*vikalpa*).¹⁵ In mundane knowledge, noesis (the seeing) is objectivated as the subject-as-grasper and noema (the seen) is objectivated as the object-as-grasped. In contrast, the act of objectivation ceases to function in the enlightened experience while the structure of noesis and noema remains intact in regard to insight. This interpretation can be justified by the Yogācārin theory of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*), although it differs somewhat from the orthodox position held by Dharmapāla and Xuanzang. According to the theory of three natures, the duality of grasper and grasped belongs to discursive constructions (*parikalpita*), whereas the structure of consciousness is seen as the ground of phenomena in dependent-arising (*paratantra*). This theory concludes that it is discursive construction, instead of phenomena themselves, that should be eliminated.

III. ZHIYI'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF AWAKENING

Let us now turn to Zhiyi. What is the enlightened experience disclosed in Zhiyi's philosophy? What is Zhiyi's conception of mind/consciousness? And what is Zhiyi's response to Yogācāra and I ādhyamika? Before addressing these questions in detail, I would like to first point out that Zhiyi was more eager than his contemporaries to take on a phenomenological

approach for disclosing the experience of “things themselves (*shixiang*; 實相; real phenomena).” However, he was not content with *ogācāra’s epistemological approach and also rejected the metaphysical idealism prevalent in certain Chinese Yogācāra sects. As to the Mādhyamika approach, Zhiyi was largely sympathetic. Unlike Indian Mādhyamika thinkers, however, he was not interested in doing logical and epistemological justification for the “thesis” of emptiness. For Zhiyi, the most important issue was the direct realization of “things themselves” through meditation (cessation and contemplation). Zhiyi maintained that, without the direct realization of “things themselves” in meditation, truth would remain abstract and speculative, and thus completely useless for realizing enlightenment. As a devoted Buddhist practitioner, Zhiyi held meditation to be the only genuine path to awakening.

Mind and Worlds

Let us now examine Zhiyi’s theory of mind/consciousness, which he holds to be the first object of meditative contemplation. In contrast to Abhidharma and Yogācāra’s dualistic conceptions of mind in two aspects (deluded mind and enlightened mind), Zhiyi urges us to return to the *experience* of mind before the metaphysical categorizations of mind as either deluded or pure. For Zhiyi, the practical implication of the dualistic conception of mind is that a certain period of *time* is required as metaphysical assumption for accomplishing the soteriological task of transformation from the deluded state of mind to the pure state of mind. Zhiyi clearly rejects metaphysical speculation about time, which, as he believes, will in the end take us nowhere. On the contrary, Zhiyi contends that the problem of time should be treated *within* the context of meditative practice. That is, time is pragmatically conceivable only in terms of the evolving process of consciousness in meditation. For both Zhiyi and Husserl, one should methodically bracket metaphysical assumptions about the existence of mind and world in order to make the experience of worlds-in-mind fully manifested. Just like Husserl, Zhiyi asks us to turn to “contemplation of mind” (*guanxin*; 觀心) in which all worlds are manifested. Let us see how Zhiyi presented his phenomenological description of mind in the famous passage on “three thousand worlds in one-instant mind”¹⁶:

A single thought exists along *with* the ten realms. A single realm exists along *with* the [other] ten realms, so there are one hundred realms. One realm exists along *with* thirty types of worlds [i.e., each of the ten realms are included in each of the three types of worlds: the world of sentient beings, the worlds of the five skandhas, and the worlds of lands]; multiplied by one hundred realms. This results in the existence *with* three thousand types of worlds. These three thousand [worlds] exist along *with* a single momentary thought. If there is no mind, that is the end of the matter. If there is even an ephemeral mind, it exists *with* three thousand [realms]. [emphasis added]

In Paul Swanson's translation, "one mind" is rendered as a "single thought" in order to "avoid the implication of a reified 'mind' as separate from mental functioning and 'objects' that are experienced."¹⁷ This clarification is quite helpful. However, I take issue with his translation of *ju* (具) as "include." Instead, I render it as "exist along with," indicating the simultaneous correlativity of mind (as intentional act) and worlds (as intentional objects). That is, whenever a single thought/mind arises, there simultaneously arises the realm of objects to which it correlates. This description ties in with the classic insight of phenomenology that holds that mind is always conscious of something as its intentional object. Hence, if we follow Swanson in translating the first sentence as "A single thought *includes* the ten dharma realms," the interpretative results will be in opposition to Zhiyi's own phenomenological intent.

How should we then interpret Zhiyi's famous statement, "Three thousand worlds exist *with* a single momentary thought"? It would be pretty easy to understand this statement if Zhiyi had claimed that a single thought arises with a single world. However, the theory of one-to-one correspondence between mind and world is subject to Zhiyi's criticism because it contradicts the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. For there is nothing called "one single thought," neither is there anything called "one single world." Everything, including mind and world, exist inter-relatively and inter-penetratively within the net of existence. Instead of being taken as an empirical description, Zhiyi's fundamental maxim should be read as a description of "real phenomena" that have been realized through phenomenological reduction. In other words, this statement should be understood

in view of insight, instead of in view of empirical knowledge. As a result of this phenomenological reduction, all phenomena are themselves shown as the objects inter-relatively constituted in the non-objectivating consciousness.

Zhiyi continues to clarify what is and what is not the proper understanding of the relation between mind and worlds. It is important to note that for Zhiyi the phenomenon of *being-with* cannot be explained by any form of metaphysics. Among various forms of metaphysics, Zhiyi rejects metaphysical idealism in particular, which includes the idealisms of both the pure and the deluded mind. In Zhiyi's own words,

If all phenomena arise *from* a single moment of mind, this is a vertical [relationship]; if a mind in one moment *encompasses* all phenomena, this is a horizontal [relationship]. But these are neither [merely] vertical nor [merely] horizontal. It is just that mind *is* all phenomena, and all phenomena *are* mind. Therefore [the relationship of mind and phenomena] is neither vertical nor horizontal; they are neither the same nor different. This is mysterious and subtle, profound in the extreme; it cannot be grasped conceptually, and cannot be verbalized. This is what is called [contemplating] "realms of experience as inconceivable." [emphasis added]

Zhiyi concludes that the only alternative way for disclosing the meaning of *being-with* is the method of meditation, but not through any metaphysical speculation. For Zhiyi clearly rejects two forms of metaphysics, namely transcendental idealism (of pure mind) and empirical idealism (of deluded mind). The former is characterized by Zhiyi as the "vertical" way of thinking by which phenomena is explained as being transcendently grounded in the absolute (pure) mind, and the latter as the "horizontal" way of thinking, which explains phenomena through epistemological analysis. Zhiyi argues that since both forms of metaphysics are rooted in representational thinking, which is also called "conceivable thinking," they are incapable of making real phenomena (things themselves) fully manifest. In this respect, we find that Zhiyi, Husserl, and Heidegger exploit similar lines of reasoning in formulating their rejection of metaphysics. For Zhiyi in particular, the truth of "real phenomena" is concealed within the conceivability of metaphysics.

Truth and Method

The motif of Zhiyi's philosophy is the disclosure of the truth of real phenomena through meditation. Ontologically speaking, truth exists prior to method. Practically, truth needs to be disclosed through method. Thus, in the Buddhist tradition, truth can be realized only through the method of meditation. Though quite complicated, Zhiyi's system of meditation can be divided into two paths: the gradual and the sudden. The sudden path of meditation is often considered the key to producing the experience of perfect and sudden awakening, while the gradual path is regarded as the preparatory step to the final goal of meditation, i.e., the aforementioned perfect and sudden awakening. Some contend that the difference between the two paths is merely pedagogical. Regarding this issue, I rather see in Zhiyi's system of meditation the gradual path as the necessary training for the superior practice of perfect and sudden awakening.

In Zhiyi's system, a practitioner aims to disclose the experience of awakening by taking threefold truth as the object of threefold contemplation. The fruit of practice is called "threefold insight." Therefore, in regard to the architectonics of meditation, Zhiyi's system consists of the structure of threefold truth, threefold contemplation, and threefold insight.¹⁸

(1) Threefold Truth (san-di; 三諦)

Truth can be viewed from three aspects, consisting of: (i) the truth of emptiness, stated as "all phenomena are empty," (ii) conventional truth, i.e., truth of phenomena, and (iii) truth as the middle way, i.e., truth as the full disclosure through double negation of the two truths. In contrast to the Mādhyamikan theory of truth, Zhiyi develops a dialectical hermeneutic to make reality fully disclosed in each aspect. That is, the enlightened experience will not disclose itself in the truth of emptiness and the conventional truth respectively; it must also be disclosed in the truth of the middle way. No aspect of truth should be separated from the other two aspects because truth can never be exhausted from a single perspective. Truth shows itself only through the holistic and dialectical contemplation. According to this pattern of threefold truth, part and whole are dialectically interrelated and holistically integrated, wherein the whole can be manifested only through the dynamic dialectic of the parts.¹⁹

(2) *Threefold Meditation* (*san-guan*; 三觀)

For Zhiyi, the meditation of cessation and contemplation is instrumental for the realization of truth. This is witnessed in Zhiyi's magnum opus, *Mohēzhibiguan* (*Great Calming and Contemplation*). The method of meditation is further divided into threefold cessation and threefold contemplation with correspondence to threefold truth and threefold insight. However, it must be noted that this system of meditation does not function mechanically. That is, the first contemplation does not merely take the truth of emptiness as the object of meditation. By the same token, the second contemplation does not merely take the conventional truth as the object and the third contemplation does not take the middle way as the object. For Zhiyi, one should practice contemplation dialectically and dynamically. The first step of meditation is to enter into emptiness from the conventional, which will lead to an insight that reveals the conventionality of all phenomena, i.e., the emptiness. This methodic move is similar to Husserl's shifting from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude. The second move is then a return to the conventional from emptiness through a reverse dialectic. Driven by salvific compassion, a practitioner takes this move to return to the mundane world (conventional world) from the state of emptiness, which results in skillful command of the knowledge of the mundane world. In comparison, the second move in Tiantai dialectical meditation is rather similar to the call for returning to the life-world in Husserl's later writings. The third move is thus to realize that the previous two moves are merely provisional for the final realization of things themselves. When one arrives at this final stage, there will be attachment to neither the first truth nor the second. The practitioner will rather be illuminated by the three truths simultaneously. This final move is called the "contemplation of the middle way," which manifests the highest form of insight, namely, the insight of all modes of phenomena.²⁰

(3) *Threefold Insight* (*san-zhi*; 三智)

According to the *Prajñāpāramitāsāstra*, the text from which Zhiyi's theory of threefold insight is borrowed, (i) "insight of paths" (*mārgajñatā*) refers to all kinds of mundane knowledge which are required for the fulfillment of religious goals, and (ii) "insight of all phenomena" (*sarvajñatā*), or

“omniscience,” refers to the *abstract* truth of all phenomena gained by the elimination of ignorance, and (iii) “insight of all modes of phenomena” (*sarvākārajñatā*) refers to the *concrete* truth that is realized in all aspects of phenomena.²¹ The sequence of practice is stated as follows: Insofar as one has obtained the knowledge of the paths beforehand, one can be said to know the *abstract* truth of all phenomena. Next, one progresses to the *concrete* knowledge of all aspects of phenomena and then proceeds to cut off all habitual defilements in the final enlightenment.²²

Thus, in view of the gradual path, the three forms of insight are taken as independent of one another. On the other hand, threefold insight can be attained within a single instant of mind via the sudden path. It is in a single instant mind that threefold truth arises simultaneously with threefold insight and threefold contemplation. Now, how could all of these occur *simultaneously*? The answer to this conundrum is found in Zhiyi’s conception of mind. In addition to the intentionality of mind as *being-with*, a notion that we have already explained above, everyday mind is also characterized as both deluded *and* pure. In Buddhist parlance, everyday mind has been in ignorance (*avidyā*) from the very beginning, which is equivalent to saying that mind is the function of mental construction (*vikalpa*). According to the Buddhist theory of emptiness, however, everything, even including ignorance, is empty in itself. Since ignorance is empty of itself, it follows that mind as ignorance is also empty of itself. Hence, mind should be conceived as both ignorance and emptiness. As a consequence, if mind as ignorance is taken as the phenomenological ground of phenomena, mind as emptiness, i.e., *prajñā*, must also be taken as the groundless ground of phenomena. Thus, in view of ignorance, mind functions in the act of objectivation, whereas in view of emptiness, mind is able to function as non-objectivating insight. Finally, in view of the middle way, mind is characterized *neither* as ignorance *nor* as emptiness. It is characterized as “inconceivable” in the sense that any form of metaphysics will fail to account for the dialectical paradox of mind. As the correlates of mind, all phenomena (the three thousand worlds) also manifest themselves as the inconceivable infinity of mutual penetration. This is the reason why Zhiyi always summarizes his system as “threefold truth within an instant mind,” “threefold contemplation within an instant mind,” and “threefold insight within an instant mind.”²³

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Summing up the above exegetical analysis in response to the questions raised at the beginning: (i) In what sense can Zhiyi's Tiantai philosophy be characterized as a phenomenology of awakening? (ii) What can be added to the diversity of the phenomenological legacy when we bring Zhiyi into philosophical dialogue with Husserl? To begin with, Zhiyi and Husserl belong to different traditions. Zhiyi is religion-oriented, and all of his philosophizing is directed toward a soteriological goal. Husserl's philosophical enterprise, on the other hand, is science-oriented, a fact attested by his dream of establishing phenomenology as the most rigorous science. Although in his later years Husserl became more devoted to ethics and religion, he rarely considered his philosophical task as a path to spiritual liberation. In spite of the historical differences, however, we do see similarities in the two philosophical systems. On the one hand, Husserl contends that truth consists in two aspects: truth as proposition and truth as evidence. The truth as proposition is based upon truth as evidence "where objects and states of affairs are given intuitively as they themselves are or as given in person."²⁴ On the other side, Zhiyi placed the theory of threefold truth within the methodical context of meditation. Truth manifests itself only in the mental experience of contemplation. Hence, Zhiyi's famous dictum, "threefold truth in an instant mind," might now be better understood in light of Husserl's theory of "evidence as the experience of truth, i.e., as an intentional act in which the intended object is presented intuitively, though in different degrees of fulfillment."²⁵

In view of Zhiyi's "classification of teachings," on the other hand, Husserl's phenomenology belongs to the gradual path, whereas Zhiyi considered his own system as the perfect and sudden path that leads to a final realization of the truth of inter-relativity and inter-penetration of phenomena, i.e., the three thousand worlds in one single thought. At the final moment of awakening, one realizes that the world of the rich, the world of the poor, the world of humanity, the world of animals, the world of plants, the world of gods, and the world of ghosts are all interrelated. And as far as any one world is manifested in the mind, all other worlds are also simultaneously manifested. As a result, the experience of awakening is never exclusionary. True awakening, which manifests the enlightened world, must be experienced *along with* all other worlds that have yet to

be enlightened. True liberation must be experienced *along with* all other worlds that are still in suffering. This is the core spirit of Zhiyi’s phenomenology of awakening.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Karl Schuhmann, “Husserl and Indian Thought,” in D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree, and Jitendranath Mohanty, eds., *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 26.
- 2 Since the term *vijñāna* has different usages depending upon context, I have translated it in various ways in this chapter. To avoid confusion, I have inserted the Sanskrit term after the translation.
- 3 Schuhmann, “Husserl and Indian Thought,” 25.
- 4 Edmund Husserl, “Phenomenology,” in Peter McCormick and Frederick Elliston, eds., *Husserl: Shorter Works* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 27. Regarding the term “transcendental” in Husserl’s usage, scholars have varying interpretations. Dan Zahavi insists that “the specific and unique *transcendental*-phenomenological question is: What are the conditions of possibility for appearance as such?” See Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 54. According to D. W. Smith’s interpretation, the term applies to “pure consciousness in abstraction from its connection with natural or cultural objects or activities.” See D. W. Smith, *Husserl* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 447.
- 5 In spite of the above “insight,” Husserl’s “oversight” can be seen in his characterization of Buddhism as “transcendental [subjectivity],” a notion which would seem to contradict the Buddhist doctrinal position of no-self. Historically, the Husserlian notion of “transcendental subjectivity” has been more or less compatible with the Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of mind-only (*citta-mātra*) or consciousness-only (*vijñapti-mātra*), though not of course with Early Buddhism.
- 6 *Abhidharmakośabbāṣya* of Vasubandhu, chap. 1: *Dhātunirdeśa*, ed., Yasunori Ejima (Tokyo: Sankibo Press, 1989), 17; Bhikkhu K L Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Hong Kong: Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), 293.
- 7 Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 205.
- 8 Cf. Bhikkhu Dhammajoti, *Abhidharma Doctrine and Controversy on Perception* (Colombo: Sri Lanka:

- Center for Buddhist Studies, 2004), 18–19.
- 9 *Yogācārabhūmi*, T.30.696.a.
 - 10 In contrast to Abhidharma epistemology, *prajñā* and *viññāna* are rather placed in opposition to each other in the Prajñāpāramitā literature. True knowledge (*prajñā*) is attainable only when one comes to realize that no knowledge is attainable. According to Prajñāpāramitā thought, just like magic, emptiness can be known through non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*). In this regard, *prajñā* obtained through *anupalabdhi* (= *nirvikalpa*) is opposed to *viññāna*, which is obtained through *upalabdhi* (= *vikalpa*). In other words, Prajñāpāramitā thinkers stand for “negative epistemology” instead of “positive epistemology.” The problem of “non-apprehension” or “negative cognition” was taken up again via the positive understanding by the later Buddhist philosophers such as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. The historical development of negative epistemology does not concern us at this stage. For *anupalabdhi* in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, see Edward Conze, “The Development of Prajñāpāramitā Thought,” in *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2000), 127.
 - 11 Louis de La Vallee Poussin, translated and annotated, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Huan-tsang* (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1928), 685f; also cf., Maitreyanatha/Aryāsanga, *The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature (Mabāyānasūtrālakṣāra)* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2004), 98–101. For analysis of *nirvikalpajñāna*, see Leslie S. Kawamura, “Nirvikalpa-jñāna: Awareness Freed from Discrimination,” in Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen, eds., *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1991), 41–67.
 - 12 For Xuanzang’s *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, also see Wei Tat’s English translation: Hsuan Tsang, *Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun: The Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness*, trans. Wei Tat (Hong Kong: The Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun Publication Committee, 1973), 766–81.
 - 13 See Bhikkhu K L Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Hong Kong: Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), 358–60.
 - 14 Shunkyo Katsumata, *Bukkyo in okeru Shinsbiki-setsu no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sankibo, 1961), 172–84, 278–80.
 - 15 Iso Kern renders “*dharsanabhāgā*” (the act of seeing) as “objectivating act” and “*nimittabhāgā*” as “objective phenomenon.” For Yogācāra, there are two levels of objectivation, one on the mental (*paratantra*) level, the other on the discursive (*parikalpita*) level. The latter is grounded in the former. Husserl himself takes “objectivation,” which is defined as “outward experience form” as the condition of objectivity of science. See Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 104. For Kern’s interpretation, see Iso Kern, “The Structure of Consciousness according to Xuanzang,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 19, no. 3 (1988): 282–95.

- 16 Zhiyi, *Mobezhiguan*, T.46.54.a.
I adapt Paul Swanson's English translation with some modifications. Swanson's translation is available at <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/welcome.htm>
- 17 See Paul Swanson, 64n94.
- 18 "Threefold truth refers to the object which is illuminated by the one instant mind. Threefold contemplation refers to the act which is initiated by the one instant mind. Threefold insight refers to that which is accomplished by [threefold] contemplation." See *Mobezhiguan*, T.46.55.c.
- 19 Zhiyi, *Fabua Xuanyi*, T.33.705.c; also cf., Paul Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1989), 252–53; Mou Zongsan, *Foxing yu Boruo* (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1977) 2:647–71.
- 20 Zhiyi, *Mobezhiguan*, T.46.24.b.
- 21 Cf., Fa Qing, *The Development of Prajñā in Buddhism: From Early Buddhism to the Prajñāpāramitā System*, PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2001, 92–95.
- 22 T. 25.258.c–260.b.
- 23 Zhiyi, *Weimojing Xuanshu*, T.38.524.c–529.b.
- 24 Dieter Lohmar, "Truth," in Lester Embree et al., *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 708.
- 25 Ibid.