THE BUDDHIST TEACHING OF TOTALITY

Garma C. C. Chang

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The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism

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PREFACE

During my thirty-five years of association with Buddhism, I have always asked this question: "Of all Buddhist Schools—Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Tantra alike—which one truly holds the highest teaching of Buddhism?" The answer is now a clear-cut one: it is the Hwa Yen School of China. The Hwa Yen School, or Hwa Yen Tsung, was established in the T'ang period, roughly in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., by outstanding thinkers such as Tu Shun (557–640) and Fa Tsang (643–712). The Chinese word Hwa Yen means "the flower-decoration" or "garland," which is originally the name of a voluminous Mahāyāna text: *The Garland Sūtra* (*The Gaṇḍavyūha* or *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*). Therefore, the teaching of this School is based mainly upon this text and draws inspiration from it.

What does this scripture say and to whom are its messages addressed? The Hwa Yen Sūtra has one central concern: to reveal the Buddha-Realm of Infinity. Its messages are therefore directed to those who appreciate the awe-inspiring Infinity of Buddhahood revealed in Buddha's Enlightenment experience, which is described briefly in the first chapter. There is no other Buddhist scripture, to the best of my knowledge, that is superior to Hwa Yen in revealing the highest spiritual inspiration and the most profound mystery of Buddhahood. This opinion is shared, I believe, by the majority of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist scholars. It is small wonder that Hwa Yen has been regarded as the "crown" of all Buddhist teachings, and as representing the consummation of Buddhist insight and thought.

Inspired by the revelation of the all-embracing Totality in this Sūtra, the pioneer Hwa Yen thinkers, notably Master Tu Shun, developed what was at that time a novel approach to Buddhist thinking. They taught that the correct way of thinking is to view things through a multiple or totalistic approach. Nothing is rejected, because in the "round" Totality of Buddhahood there is not even room for contradiction; here the inconsistencies all become harmonious. This totalistic way of thinking was first introduced in Tu Shun's epoch-making essay, "On the Meditation of Dharmadhātu," which eventually became the fountainhead of all subsequent Hwa Yen works. It was

mainly through Tu Shun's great insight shown in this essay that the "Hwa-Yen Round-Thinking" (Yüan Chiao Chien) first broke its ground. Two generations later, Fa Tsang systematized the doctrine through his profuse writings; therefore he is generally regarded as the founder of the Hwa Yen School.

The reader will notice that Hwa Yen is a synthesis of all major Mahāyāna thoughts, a philosophy of *totalistic organism*. The three major concepts of Mahāyāna—namely the Philosophies of Totality, of Emptiness, and of Mind-Only—are all merged into a unity. Far from being a concoction, Hwa Yen Doctrine represents an "organic whole" of all essential elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism. When one comes to Hwa Yen, he sees Buddhism in a completely new light. Even the tedious Mind-Only doctrine now becomes vivid and alive. The Ālaya Consciousness of Yogācāra is no more a dull and torpid "storehouse," the tyrannical Jungian Collective Unconscious is no more an ever-evasive archetypal image-projector. In Hwa Yen the "Universal Mind" is likened to a vast Ocean-Mirror in which the infinite dramas in the universe are spontaneously and simultaneously reflected. No more is the Mind-Only doctrine a one-way projection, but it becomes a kaleidoscope of multi-dimensional, mutual projections and interpenetrations. Even the Philosophy of Śūnyatā (Voidness) now appears to be different from what it was before. The Totalistic Voidness presented in Hwa Yen literature reveals many hidden facets of Śūnyatā which are not immediately clear in the Mādhyamika theses. Only in Hwa Yen do the far-reaching implications of the Śūnyatā doctrine laid down in the Prajñāpāramitā literature become transparently clear. The majority of intellectually inclined Zen monks all come to Hwa Yen because they could oftentimes find therein spiritual guidance in their bewildering Zen Path and discover sensible solutions to those abstruse Zen problems. Many "senseless" Zen koans become meaningful if one can appropriately apply the Hwa Yen Round-Thinking to these cases.

As any pioneer work, this book does not claim to be an exhaustive study of the stupendous Hwa Yen literature. But it is my humble opinion that the gist and the essential elements of Hwa Yen teachings, especially the philosophical aspects, are all included in this volume. I have tried to avoid meticulous annotations and excessive footnotes in order to make the reading easier for the general reader.

The Romanization of the Chinese characters is based on the most unsatisfactory but academically accepted Wade-Giles system, with one exception: instead of Hua Yen, I have used Hwa Yen for the simple reason that the former will be mispronounced by Westerners so as to mean "ashes-salt" (灰鹽) in Chinese, instead of its proper meaning, "garland" (華嚴). Certain Chinese words are now well known in their Japanese form in the West; therefore, instead of Ch'an, I have used Zen, and Koan instead of Kung An. Quotations from the Sūtras and Śāstras are mainly based on the *Taisho Tripiṭaka,* abbreviated in the notes as *Taisho.*

The most problematic matter I have encountered is which words or terms should be capitalized and which should not. To indicate respect and reverence, words such as *Buddha, Bodhisattva,* and the like are all capitalized, although, strictly speaking, these are general terms. Certain special qualities of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are also capitalized—for example, *Wisdom*—because of their paramount importance in Buddhist doctrines. Important terms which represent the key concepts of the Doctrine are also capitalized, but not their opposites (e.g., Buddha but not men, Nirvāna but not saṁsāra, Voidness but not form, and Wisdom but not ignorance or avidya). Certain words are both capitalized and lower-cased such as *Dharma* when it indicates Buddhist teaching or truth, but *dharma* when it refers to objects or things; *Mind* when it means the Universal or Cosmic Consciousness, but *mind* when it means the ordinary individual psyche; and *Wisdom* when it implies the unique ultimate knowledge of Buddha, but *wisdom,* the relative saṁsāric intelligence. Important terms with special significance for Hwa Yen Philosophy are also capitalized, such as Non-Obstruction (Wu-Ai), Dharmadhātu (Fa Chieh) Li, Shih, Svabhāva, Śūnyatā, and so forth. A certain amount of inconsistency seems to be unavoidable because in certain places a word can apply to both cases (such as *Mind/mind* or *Dharma/dharma*), and in these contexts the word can be interpreted in either way. Finally, there are some situations where capitalizations are rather arbitrary—for example, *Ten Stages* but the *ten mysteries.* This is because of the difference in the relative importance of these two terms.

To facilitate the task of both the general reader and the specialist, a glossary and a list of special names and terms, together with their equivalent Chinese characters, are included at the end of this book.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the Oriental Studies Foundation, whose generous financial assistance has made this book possible.

GARMA C. C. CHANG

University Park, Pennsylvania,
September, 1970

PROLOGUE

When a human being surveys the universe, and contemplates the drama of life and his role therein, he is compelled to ask himself, "What kind of play is this? What is its meaning and purpose, and what is this all about?"

Different religions give different answers to these questions, but two approaches are outstanding: the Buddhist view and that of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The former is called by some theologians non-historical, and the latter historical. Allowing for the great differences between various interpretations, it is apparent that the historical religions, by and large, depict human drama or history as follows:

1. History has a beginning and an end.
2. It is teleological; the universe is designed and the history of humanity is directed toward an end, for a definite purpose.
3. History is imbued with meaning, even though this meaning may be incomprehensible to man. History, or the human drama, is not accidental; it has exclusive significance in the fulfillment of a Divine will or plan. Nevertheless, the ultimate how, why, and when of this grand plan are beyond human comprehension; they are known only to God, the Creator.
4. Human history, as it unfolds, resembles a drama of increasing intensity. It is produced, directed, and sponsored by God in either a direct or an indirect manner. Like every drama, it has a beginning, a climax, and an end, which are analogous to the theological concepts of Genesis, the coming of a Messiah, and an ultimate Judgment Day.
5. This *unique* human drama is played exclusively upon a stage called Earth, which is accepted as the center of the universe, insofar as this unique performance is concerned.

These convictions, once accepted by most followers of Western religions, have been gradually modified, and some have even been abandoned by contemporary theologians. Yet, by and large, this is still the orientation held by a great portion of Western religious adherents, and it has decisively affected both the history and the mentality of the West, leaving indelible marks on both.

The main criticism of this viewpoint is that it tends to foster self-centeredness, narrowness, and intolerance. Because it claims the exclusive significance of human history in relation to God, it maintains a man-centered, earth-centered orientation and is therefore a limited and a closed viewpoint.

Arnold Toynbee in his book, *A Historian's Approach to Religion,* has pointed out the errors of self-centeredness: "Self-centeredness is thus a necessity of life, but this necessity is also a sin. Self-centeredness is an intellectual error, because no living creature is in truth the center of the universe; and it is also a moral error, because no living creature has a right to act as if it were the center of the universe. It has no right to treat its fellow creatures, the universe and God or Reality as if they existed simply in order to minister to one self-centered living creature's demands." [1]

In contrast to this belief, the Buddhist tradition, especially the Mahāyāna, depicts the universe and the human drama in a completely different manner. The Buddhist view is universal and all-inclusive; it does not claim the unique significance of human history as being a single-performance drama written by God. Some scholars, notably Paul Tillich and Arnold Toynbee, label the Buddhist view a non-historical religion, but I think that this is misleading. The Buddhist concept is not *non*-historical, but rather *trans*-historical, and this may be shown as follows:

1. History has a beginning and an end but in a relative, not an absolute sense.
2. History is imbued with great significance because it is a necessary process for the realization of Perfection (Buddhahood) for all living beings.
3. *Human* history has no unique significance; there are numerous histories of other sentient beings of equal significance in other universes.
4. There are innumerable universes; earth is only one tiny spot in the vast expanse of Dharmadhātu (the infinite universes), and by no means is earth the only stage upon which a unique drama, willed by an authoritative God, is performed.
5. History, human or otherwise, is not a drama schemed and produced by God; it is brought into being by the *collective karma* of sentient beings.

6. There is no definite pattern or mold into which all histories must fall. The mold of history is dictated by the nature of the *collective karma* of living beings in that particular history.

These points may be elaborated further. History does have a beginning and an end, but in a relative, not an absolute sense. The history of a particular event can be spoken of as having a beginning and an end, but this beginning and ending are not of an absolute nature. The history of men is a good example. Estimates place its beginning at approximately 600,000 years ago. But 600,000 B.C. is not the initial beginning of history in the absolute sense. Prior to this time, other events and histories had taken place. Similarly, some day in the future, there will undoubtedly be an end to human history, but this end should not be construed as the absolute or ultimate terminating point of human existence. According to Buddhism, the histories of other species may then develop; possibly the "souls" of those members of the human race who have not attained Buddhahood will then move on to other planets and start a new chapter of another history.

In the phenomenal world, the ever-flowing chains of events continuously interweave with one another, forming an immense "rimless net" rolling forward without cessation. But man, having only limited capacity and interest, cannot comprehend this vast intermeshing of events. With self-determination, he cuts off this "ever-flowing chain" and designates one point therein as the beginning and another as the end of a *particular* incident. Gradually and unconsciously, he begins to forget the fact that the very concept of a beginning and an end were first created for the sake of expediency, and make sense only when a *particular* event is referred to. Instead, he goes on from the particular to project a concept of absolute beginning, a first cause, an unmoved mover, and the like. He then further extends these ideas and elaborates them into theological and philosophical systems, thus exaggerating their theological significance to an excessive degree.

To the best of our knowledge, no one has ever experienced an absolute beginning prior to which nothing existed. The first cause, or absolute beginning, has no logical or empirical basis. The beginning of event Y is always the simultaneous end of event X. The ending of event B is always the beginning of event C. A Martian, looking at our planet, does not see any sign of a beginning or an end; what he sees is a continuous, ever-flowing chain of events. Therefore, to say that a particular event has a beginning or end is indeed meaningful, but to

say that there is an absolute beginning of all events is meaningless.

To those who are in the habit of thinking of an absolute beginning and end, the Buddhist expression, "from the very no-beginning," [2] must present an odd, if not a perplexing, concept. Yet it is because of this concept that many unprofitable theological problems are dispensed with in Buddhism.

The importance of the Buddhist concept of "no-beginning" cannot be over-emphasized. It is here that the distinction between Buddhism and the historical religions becomes clear. Because of this concept, the outstanding theological problems of "creation" and its aftermath are easily unraveled. It is also because of this concept that many theological problems concerning God simply do not exist in Buddhism. Since there is no absolute beginning, there is no Creator or creation. Since there is no omnipotent and omniscient God the Creator, the problems of evil, Divine will, salvation, and eschatology are also either non-existent or "exist" in a completely different context. Some people think that to reject the concept of creation and its first cause automatically implies the rejection or abolition of the very foundation of religion, but this is not necessarily so. The foundation of Buddhism, for instance, does not depend on the first cause—God the Creator; it depends rather on the ubiquitous Buddha-nature and its functions. A spiritual life does not necessarily depend upon God, a creator and judge, who stands above us and beyond our grasp; man's religious aspirations can truly be fulfilled by his realization of the Buddha-nature that lies within all sentient beings.

The original spirit of Buddhism was reflected in its radical emphasis upon achieving liberation and upon abolishing all philosophical speculation. This spirit was vividly expressed by the Buddha's famous silence when a set of philosophical questions was put to him.[3] Philosophical interest, however, was in ferment everywhere. A few centuries after the death of Gautama Buddha, many philosophical schools of Buddhism began to spring up, gradually giving rise to Mahāyāna Buddhism itself.

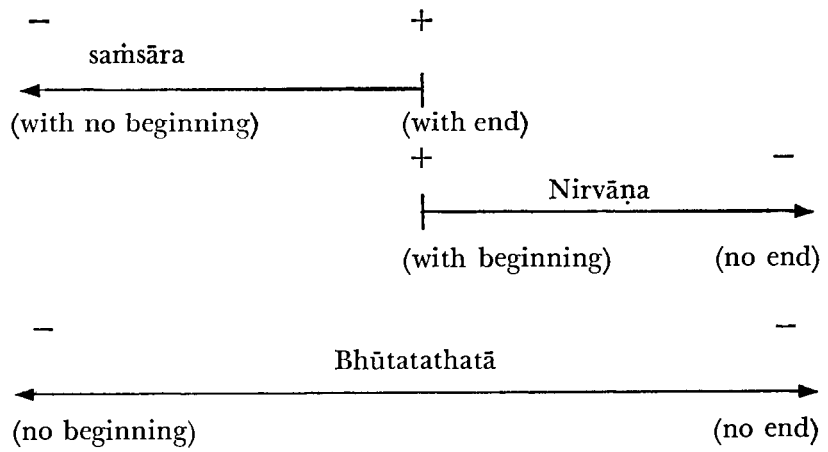
Although the doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism differs greatly from that of Hīnayāna Buddhism, they are essentially in agreement concerning the problem of "beginning and end." Their view of this problem is briefly given in the following statements.

1. Saṁsāra (the phenomenal world) has no beginning, but it does have an end.

2. Nirvāṇa (the "state" of cessation) has a beginning but no end.
3. The Reality-of-Suchness (Bhūtatathatā) has neither beginning nor end.

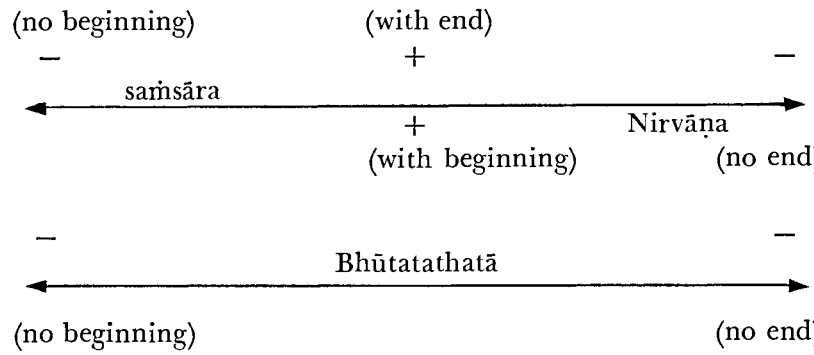
The first statement says that from the very no-beginning of time, saṁsāra has been taking place throughout the vast expanse of infinite universes without interruption. No single or particular time element in the remotest past can be designated as the absolute starting point of the universe; it follows, therefore, that history, as we know it, can have no beginning. On the other hand, an individual (or group) can terminate or transcend history if he (or it) so desires and makes sufficient effort toward that end. This terminating point of saṁsāra is also the beginning of Nirvāṇa, the state of Buddhahood which can suffer neither decay nor expiration. Therefore, Nirvāṇa has a beginning but has no end. Embracing both saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, yet not in the slightest tainted by either, is the Reality-of-Thusness (Bhūtatathatā), which transcends both purity and defilement. This is a state devoid of any designatable attributes which goes beyond all words or distinctions. It simply *is*, and remains so throughout eternity, regardless of the emergence of good or evil, ignorance or enlightenment.

The tenets of this doctrine have been simply shown in Illustration No. 1.



This diagram denotes that the times of saṁsara and Nirvāṇa each have a negative and a positive aspect, indicating either the presence or the absence of a beginning or end; whereas, the time of Bhūtatathatā is shown with a negative temporal sign at either end, indicating that it has no beginning and no end. In the foregoing diagram saṁsāra

and Nirvāṇa are represented in two lines purely for the sake of illustration; actually there is only one continuous line, as shown in Illustration No. 2.



The two positive marks here testify to the simultaneous extinction of saṁsāra and "arising" of Nirvāṇa, implying that they are the same, and that this is only a "coalescing point." It has been suggested that when saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa are seen as one continuous whole they approximate the Reality-of-Suchness which has no beginning or end. Here is the point where phenomena join the noumenon and the relative coalesces with the absolute.

Now, the main criticism of the Buddhist view leveled by Western thinkers is that this order of "cyclic" orientation takes all significance out of life. To them, saṁsāra seems to be merely a monotonous, repetitive bore, possessing neither meaning nor purpose. Professor Toynbee remarks: "This astronomical view of history provides a radical correction of the bias towards self-centeredness that is innate in every living creature; but it corrects self-centeredness at the price of taking the significance out of history—and indeed, out of the Universe itself. From this astronomical standpoint it is impossible for an historian to believe that his own here and now has any special importance, but it is equally difficult for him to believe that any other human being's here and now has ever had, or will have, any special importance either. . . ." [4]

Here the critic seems to have forgotten that meaning and significance do not depend entirely on outside circumstances. Instead, they clearly depend upon one's *attitude toward* those circumstances. A cyclic and lasting saṁsāra can also become wholly meaningful and significant if the individual's attitude and commitment in life are both constructive and altruistic. Recurrent life is, then, not necessarily a

repetitious state of boredom; instead, it can ensure one ample opportunity for acts of altruism and spiritual progress.

The meaning and purpose of life are envisioned by Mahāyāna Buddhism as a challenge and an opportunity for every man to gain his highest good through an approach to the state of Buddhahood. Life, therefore, is imbued with great significance in spite of cyclic recurrence. Furthermore, saṁsāra actually is not a cyclical but an upward, spiraling movement; for it is the basic faith of Mahāyāna Buddhism that all living beings are moving through progressive stages toward Buddhahood. History, therefore, is full of meaning and opportunity for achieving this goal.

When I first read this criticism of the meaninglessness of the nonhistorical viewpoint I was quite astonished. Why have Western thinkers failed to perceive these obvious facts? Then I realized that this criticism is not a philosophical evaluation, but a psychological one. Consider the situation of a man who is told by his doctor that he has only a year or so to live. Upon hearing this, the man's philosophy and outlook on life may change completely. He might give up his profession, sell his property, and begin traveling around the world seeking excitement and adventure. In other words, this man attempts to live life to its maximum in a minimum of time. To him time is not only precious but pressingly so; every second has become of the greatest significance. Understandably, his attitude towards and evaluation of his shortened life are entirely different from that of most men, who never seriously think of death as being imminent. Now, if a man is aware that his days are numbered, he will naturally seek to extract the utmost significance out of his life and to make it count for as much as possible. In this light, I think it is fair to say that Christians are much more energetic and enterprising than Buddhists. The psychological reasoning behind this enthusiasm is perhaps the belief that they have only one life to live; whereas, Buddhists believe that many lives await them. To a faithful Christian, salvation or damnation is determined in a single lifetime; he must do the right thing now, because there will be no second chance. A person who seriously believes in the tenets of Christianity will feel the "tremendously pressing significance" of obligations that he must fulfill during his one lifetime, and because of this religious conviction, he suffers under great pressures and tensions. But a Buddhist, experiencing frustration and disappointment, can always console himself by saying, "Well, why worry

so much about these difficulties and frustrations? I can always try again in my next life, which certainly cannot be as bad and as disappointing as this one!"

Thus we can easily see that although the concept of saṁsāra tends to make one more sober, liberal, and tolerant, it can also make one passive, inert, and even cynical. To combat this tendency, Buddhism has many exhortations on the difficulties of obtaining a human form in the next life, on one's obligation to help his fellow man, and on aspiring for rapid spiritual progress and thereby quickly achieving the state of Buddhahood. To sum up, in the Buddhist view, life in the history of mankind does not lack significance. Instead, it is broader and has a longer range; although this is sometimes obscure and difficult for those brought up with the philosophies of the Judeo-Christian tradition to perceive and comprehend.

Now, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism, human history is not unique. There are numerous equally significant histories of other living beings now taking place in an infinite number of other universes. The vastness and infinite variety of universes are repeatedly described in various Sūtras. For example, in the *Diamond Sūtra* [5] we read:

> What do you think, Subhūti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and if there were as many world-systems as there are grains of sand in all of these innumerable rivers, would these world-systems be considered numerous?
>
> Very numerous indeed, World-Honored One!
>
> Listen, Subhūti. Within these numerous world-systems there are [to be found] every form of sentient being with all their various mentalities and conceptions, all of which are known to the Tathāgata. . . .

And in the *Hwa Yen Sūtra* [6] we read:

> Oh sons of Buddha! If a man pulverizes millions and billions of Buddhas' universes [7] and reduces them to dust-motes, each of which represents another universe, and he again pulverizes these universes and holds the total amount of dust-motes acquired thereby in his left hand and walks eastward; and after passing over the same vast number of universes, he then drops one dust-mote and continues walking eastward, and each time he passes over the same number of universes, he drops another dust-mote until he exhausts

all that he held in his hand; if he then walks south, west, and north in the four directions and upward and downward, dropping dust-motes as before, Oh, Pao Shou, what do you think? The total space in the ten directions of all these universes touched or untouched by his dust-motes, is this space of a Buddha-land not vast, broad, and beyond comprehension?

Yes, indeed, this Buddha-land is infinitely vast and broad, wonderful and incomprehensible. However, if there are men who, having heard this metaphor, can have faith in and understanding of it, it is even more rare and wondrous!

The Buddha said to Pao Shou, "Yes, yes, just as you have said. I now predict that if there are good men or good women who can have faith in this metaphor, they will attain the Supreme Enlightenment and the Peerless Wisdom of Tathāgathahood.

In another chapter of this Sūtra [8] we read:

Thereupon Bodhisattva Samantabhadra addressed the assembly: [9]

"By the blessing of Tathāgata's magic power,
In the ten directions I see every place
In all the worlds and universes
Pervading the vast expanse of space . . .
Some worlds of pure light are [made],
Suspended steadily in space . . .
Some are shaped like flowers,
Lamps adorned with jewels,
Some are vast as the ocean,
Spinning like a turning wheel . . .
Some are slender, some are small,
For they have countless forms—
And spin in various ways . . .
Some worlds are like a glowing wheel
A volcano . . . lion or a sea shell . . .
Infinitely different
Are their forms and shapes . . .

[In the vast expanse of Dharmadhātu,]
Some worlds are round and others square,
Some lands are pure and some defiled,
Others joyful or distressing . . .
All were caused by karmas
Varied as the oceans . . .

Some world-systems remain for but one kalpa, while others
For hundreds, thousands, or an infinity of aeons.

In some world-systems there are Buddhas;
But in others they do not appear.
Some have only one,
But others many.

Unfathomable are the countless worlds
In the totality of universes.
Many worlds are new or are decaying,
While many others soon will cease to be.
Like leaves in a forest,
Some flourish others fall . . .
As different seeds give birth to different fruits,
Or magicians project conjurations with their spells,
So sentient beings by the power of [collective] karma
Make various world-systems that are incomprehensible . . .

As a painter draws many pictures,
A sentient beings's Mind can also create
Infinite variations of world-systems.

Because of bad karma, passions and desires,
Many world-systems are full of rock-torn earth,
Dangerous and distressing. Yet many worlds
Through good karma are wrought of jewels and contain
Rich places of great variety, where
Fruits of pleasure are enjoyed [by all] at will.

In the ocean-like world-systems all Buddhas
Give myriad teachings with the utmost skill,
To suit all men's needs and inclinations.

Inscrutable is Buddha's Dharma-Body—
Without form or image—
But to accommodate
Man, he manifests in a myriad forms.
For the benefit of sentient beings,
He may incarnate as a short-or-long-lived being,
Or one who lives for countless aeons.
To suit men's temperament and need,
He gives limitless teachings of many Vehicles,
Or teaches but one Vehicle with many variations.
By leading a few gifted men to tread the Path,

He may seem without effort
To achieve Buddhahood.

Through these indescribable ingenious ways,
The Buddhas benefit all sentient beings!"

In reading the above quotations, we can see that the Buddhist view on history is extremely flexible and all-inclusive. Since its outlook is neither god-centered nor man-centered nor earth-centered, but rather oriented upon a basis of an infinite variety of universes and sentient beings, it does not and cannot set a definite pattern which history must follow. The Buddhist view on history is, therefore, entirely fluid and open to all possibilities.

If there is one characteristic of Buddhist teaching that distinguishes it from many other religions, it is its inclusiveness. This is true from the basic doctrine of karma up to the doctrines of Śūnyāta, Bodhicitta, and the Dharmadhātu of the *Hwa Yen Sūtra*. If we compare the Buddhist teaching to that of Western religions, we sense that the tendency of the former is to adopt a pluralistic approach, whereas, the latter tends to be exclusive and holds a "singularistic" approach. There are many reasons contributing to this difference, but I believe the main one is that while the Judeo-Christian tradition preserves the exclusiveness of God and all that belongs to Him, in Buddhism this factor is entirely absent. The teaching of the Judeo-Christian tradition, regardless of its complexities and variation, is centered upon God and His relation to man. It is because of God and His overall plan that life is meaningful and that history has purpose. Behind this history and all of nature, therefore, is a consciousness and a will, that is, God's omniscient and purposeful Mind. Contrary to this belief, the Buddhist view, as we have seen above, holds that everything depends on the collective karma of sentient beings. Karma is the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of both history and the universe. Karma is a "natural" force, essentially unconscious and unplanned. So, according to Buddhism, the mold and nature of any history does not depend upon God's will or plan, but on the nature of the collective karma of the sentient beings in that particular history.

The evidence of collective karma is not lacking in our own world. For instance, the history and fate of the American Indians, of Aztecs, of Mayans, and to a certain extent, of Negroes and Jews and all those other sufferers of mankind's inhumanity cannot be regarded as having

been planned or caused even *indirectly* by God. Their fate would be inexplicable in the light of the justice and benevolence attributed to Him. Even if we give generous allowance to the wistful belief that everything will be taken care of eventually, that a happy ending is definitely in order when the kingdom of God comes, the phenomena of Auschwitz, of Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, and of the other innumerable man-made and natural disasters in human history would certainly make any sensible man hesitate to accept this alleged act of creation as both benevolent and wise. All of the enormous suffering that man has gone through in history is supposedly explained away either by original sin or by the inscrutability of the ultimate will of God, but the inner voice, arising from the depths of human dignity and good sense finds it hard to echo such perplexing pre-suppositions. Sometimes even the most pious religionists cannot help wondering, during their silent hours, about the sensibleness of the whole business of life. With the doctrine of karma, however, the problem of evil or moral justice seems to be comparatively easier to explain in the Buddhist tradition. Of course, this is not to say that it has no inherent difficulties. The doctrine of karma, coupled with the absence of God might explain why the problem of evil has never become as excruciating in the Buddhist tradition as in the Judeo-Christian.

The most difficult doctrine in Buddhism is no doubt the doctrine of karma, whose complexity and elusiveness often baffles one to the point of exasperation. To make it reasonably clear, a separate book is needed. A few words about karma however might be helpful here as a preamble to our next discussion, which deals with the Hwa Yen doctrine of Totality.

Explicitly karma means action, but implicitly it also means force. Since an action always produces a certain force, and this force in turn promotes further actions, karma is essentially a doctrine of the intricate reciprocations between forces and actions that push forward the turning wheel of saṁsāra. When expressed on a cosmological scale this force-action complex is a stupendous power that propels the universe and life; when expressed in the ethical sense, it is an unfailing, impersonal law that effectuates the moral order, "dispensing" natural rewards and retributions. Metaphysically, karma is a creative energy brought forth by the collective actions of certain groups; it sustains the order and function of a particular universe in which those groups reside. Ultimately karma is a mystery, a marvel that evades

human comprehension. All the great wonders of the world, such as the biological and astronomical mysteries are not, according to Buddhism, due to the skillfulness of God's hand, but to the ingenuity of the power of karma. In many ways, karma, in the Buddhist tradition, is almost equivalent to what general expression calls the Will of God. The difference is that Buddhism views the ultimate unknown of life's mystery from a naturalistic orientation; whereas the Judeo-Christian tradition adopts a theistic view. The mystery of karma is as imponderable as the mystery of the Will of God, no better and no worse. The great ignorance and limitation of man's mind is clearly exposed during his inquiry into any deeper problem. One must make one's peace with the ultimate unknown and commit himself to an orientation and faith that appears to be most sensible and inspiring to him.

With this brief review of the basic perspectives of the cosmic drama as they are seen in a trans-historical religion, we can now proceed to our next discussion on the Realm of Totality of Hwa Yen Buddhism.

NOTES [Prologue]

1. Arnold Toynbee, *A Historian's Approach to Religion* (New York, 1956), pp. 4–5.
2. From the very no-beginning—Chinese: wu shih i lai; Tibetan: Thog.Ma.Med. Pahi.Dus.nas.; Sanskrit: anādikālam.
3. Henry Warren, *Buddhism in Translation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947). pp. 117–28.
4. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 10.
5. *Taisho* 235, p. 751.
6. *Taisho* 279, p. 257.
7. Buddha's universe or Buddha's Domains: according to tradition, a Buddha's Domain consists of 1,000,000,000 solar systems.
8. *Taisho* 279, p. 35.
9. Bountiful descriptions of the infinite universes in the Dharmadhātu are given in many passages in the fourth chapter, the "Formation of the World," and in the fifth chapter, "The World of Flower-Treasury," of the *Hwa Yen Sūtra*. But to read them all would be wearisome and unprofitable. A selection of abridged passages is therefore given here to present a general view to the reader. For the sake of perspicuity, the translations are taken from various passages in the text but not necessarily in their original order. The selections are taken from passages on pp. 35, 36, 37, 38, 42, 51, 52, and 53 of *Taisho* 279.