

Guanding's Introduction

Part Four: The The Variable [or Undetermined] (不定止觀) Kind of Cessation and Contemplation

Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight: T'ien-t'ai Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan, SWANSON, 2017. pg 97-99.

Guanding's description of The Variable Zhiguan (不定止觀):

General Remarks:

Pg.94: “*The variable [method] involves alternating the earlier and later [stages, depending on the need], as a diamond placed in sunlight [casts a different colour depending on its position].*”

Explanatory Remarks:

Pg.97: “*The variable [or undetermined] method [of practicing cessation-and-contemplation] involves no particular [predetermined] stages. In terms of the gradual method [outlined] above and the sudden method [to be outlined] below, [the variable method] may involve the gradual method first and the sudden method later [or the other way around]. Or it may involve [at times] the phenomenal or practical and [at other times] the principle [of reality].*”

- As the name suggests, this is a method of progression without a particular order, in which stages are applied depending on the needs of the individual in question.
- The phenomenal or practical, and the principle, are the *Phenomenal* and *Principle* (事理) we discussed earlier. Zhanran makes some remarks about in this regard:

“In regards to the Phenomenal and Principle, the worldly is phenomenal, the transworldly is principle.¹ Real Truth and the Conventional Truth, [and] the three Siddhānta and the one Siddhānta are also thus.²

Pg. 97-98: “*Or [in terms of the four methods of instruction (siddhānta)], one can point to the worldly 世界³ as the supreme 第一義⁴ [truth], or one can point to the supreme [truth] as [it is presented to] each individual 為人⁵ or in its therapeutic 對治⁶ [function].*”

The *Four Siddhānta* are explained in the *Dazhidulun*, and refer most generally to methods applied in the instruction of beings. We can think of the former three as sub-types of *Upaya*, and the final *siddhānta* as the Ultimate Truth. Lamotte correctly identifies the *Four Siddhānta* as being an elaboration or extension of the *Two Truths*, with the former three being equivalent to *samvrti satya* (Worldly or Conventional Truth), and the latter as *paramārtha satya* (Ultimate Truth).

- In discussing the *Four Siddhānta* we rely on two primary texts. First and foremost is the Indian (at least in the traditional understanding) *Dazhidulun*. This appears to be the only Indian text to discuss the concept.⁷ The term *siddhānta* appears in other texts of course, but

¹ Respectively Samsara and Nirvana.

² That is, the Four Siddhānta. See below for information on these.

³ The first *siddhānta*: *Laukika-siddhānta*.

⁴ The fourth *siddhānta*: *Paramārthika-siddhānta*

⁵ The second *siddhānta*: *Prātipaurusika-siddhānta*

⁶ The third *siddhānta*: *Prātipāksika-siddhānta*

⁷ Lamotte suggest that the Four Siddhānta are equivalent to the *Four Tattva* in the *Yogacarabhumi Sastra*. I

is used there in a more general sense without the implication of a specific doctrine. In general usage Monier-Williams defines *siddhānta* as an “*established conclusion, proved fact, axiom, dogma...*”. In the *Dazhidulun* the word clearly refers to *methods* or perhaps with a little pressing *perspectives*. It occurs in the first fascicle as the sixteenth reason for the Buddha preaching the *Pancavimsati*. The second text we will make reference to is *Zhiyi’s Fahua Xuanyi* where the *Four Siddhānta* are utilised to legitimise *Zhiyi’s* exegetical categories and correlated with the four types of the Four Noble Truths.

- *Zhiyi* defines the word *siddhānta* as his Master *Huisi* is said to have done as a mixture of translation and transliteration. The word in full 悉檀 or *Xitan*, is a transliteration of *siddhān(ta)*. However *Zhiyi* often discusses it by suggesting that the former character in line with it’s standard meaning is *complete, exhaustive, universal*, while the latter is a transliteration of of *Dan(a)* (檀(那)). The full term then would mean something like *Universal/Complete Dana/Giving*.
- At first glance this might seem like a rather serious misreading. However, when one sees the context in which *Zhiyi* uses this definition, it begins to make a lot of practical sense. Given that *Zhiyi* goes on to clearly discuss the *siddhānta* as methods or types in which the Buddha-dharma may be presented, it is clear that he has understood the significance of the schema. This whole discussion is overshadowed in the Tiantai context of course, by the doctrine of *Upaya* (方便) and the great purpose of the Buddha’s work as described in the Lotus Sutra. Those who are familiar with the closing verse of chapter 16 of that work, will know that it reads:

“*Ever making this my thought:
How shall I cause all the living
To enter the Way supreme
And speedily accomplish their buddhahood?*”⁸

OR

“*Each time having this thought:
How may I cause the beings
To contrive to enter the Unexcelled Path
And quickly to perfect the Buddha-body?*”⁹¹⁰

The sentiment here expressed by the Buddha represents the perfection of the most important of the two types of *Dana*; that is the giving of the Dharma. And so, we can see why *Zhiyi* and *Huisi* may have discussed the term *siddhānta* in the way they did.

The Four Siddhānta:

As mentioned previously, the *Four Siddhānta* are outlined in the *Dazhidulun* as the sixteenth reason for the Buddha preaching the *Pancavimsati Sutra*. The sixteenth reason is in order to specifically set forth the *supreme or Ultimate* (i.e the Fourth Siddhānta).

confess that I am not familiar enough with said text to weigh in on whether they are indeed equivalents. However, I am not completely ignorant of the *Yogacarabhumi*, and the *Tattva* and *Siddhanta* do appear to mirror each other fairly well.

⁸ *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, KATO, 1975.

⁹ *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, HURVITZ, 1976.

¹⁰ Incidentally for those interested, these are my two ‘go-to’ translations when I am not referring to the Chinese original. Hurvitz is almost always very precise re the Chinese meaning, and so you get a fairly clear picture of the original *in terms of the language*. Kato has managed on the other hand to remain *fairly close* to the Chinese while capturing the beauty and devotional nature of the text that is somewhat missing from Hurvitz. Both elements are important if you are using translations rather than the original, whether you are foremostly a scholar or a practitioner. Therefore, I recommend both translations to serious readers of the text. The BDK version is also quite good, as is the Murano translation from what I’ve seen. But the two I utilise here have the added advantage of being most primarily used in Tiantai studies.

“Furthermore, the Buddha wished to teach the characteristics of the ultimate *siddhānta*; therefore, he taught the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*. There are four *siddhānta* of teaching: first, the worldly *siddhānta*; second, the individual *siddhānta*; third, the specific *siddhānta*;¹¹ and fourth, the ultimate *siddhānta*.”^{13,14,15}

Nevertheless, it is clearly asserted there that all four are true, and do not contradict each other. This is because all four are *perspectives* or *ways of viewing*; the reality which they view is one. These four *siddhānta* encompass the whole of the Buddha’s teachings.

“These four *siddhānta* of teachings [encompasses] all the twelve divisions of *sūtras* and the eighty-four thousand *Dharma*, all of which are true and do not contradict one another. Within the Buddha’s teachings, some are true in terms of the worldly *siddhānta*, some are true in terms of the individual *siddhānta*, some are true in terms of the specific *siddhānta*, and some are true in terms of the ultimate *siddhānta*.”¹⁶

The *eighty-four thousand Dharma* is a collective gloss referring to all Dharmas. The *Twelve Divisions of sutras* refers to the most prevalent traditional method for dividing the Buddhist Canon:

The Twelve Divisions of Sutras Dvadasakadharmaprayacana (十二部經):

1) *Sūtra* 契經

In the very strictest sense, this refers specifically to the prose sections of sutras.

2) *Geya* 應頌

These then, are the condensations of the prose sections in verse form. An example of these would be the verses that follow prose in many sutras and recapitulate what was previously discussed.

3) *Gāthā* 諷頌

These are also verses, but they are those verses which are essentially free-standing. In other words, they are verses which do not summarise a prose section of a work. An example of this might be the *Dharmapada* or the *Udanavarga*.

4) *Nidāna* 因緣

Literally *causes and conditions*, this refers to the accounts which explain the causes and conditions which led those in the audience to be presently listening the Buddha’s preaching. In theory sutras are supposed to begin with such accounts as a preamble to the rest of the discourse.

5) *Itivṛttaka* 本事

These are the accounts of the former lives of the Buddha’s disciples, arhats and Bodhisattvas. These stories are usually told in order to explain the causes and conditions that have brought the disciples to the circumstances in which they now find themselves.

6) *Jātaka* 本生

The *Jātaka tales* recount the former lives of the Buddha, and in so doing, explain his current achievements.

7) *Adbhutadharmā* 未曾有

These are accounts of miracles; first those performed by the Buddha, but also those that occur from texts or practices.

¹¹ Translated by Swanson as *Individual siddhānta*

¹³ Translated by Swanson as *Supreme Siddhānta*.

¹⁴ I am using here the new translation of the first five fascicle of the *Dazhidulun* by Robert Smitheram under the auspices of *Foguangshan*. However, Smitheram glosses *siddhānta* in each case as *method* or *truth*. In the interest of consistency, I have amended these glosses replacing them all with *siddhānta*. The translation details are in the following footnote. Only the first five fascicles (of 100!) have been published yet, but they intend to release the next five fascicles by the end of the year. I urge everyone to get a copy of the new translation, and support the work so that we may finally have a complete English Translation of the *Dazhidulun*.

¹⁵ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

¹⁶ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

8) *Avadāna* 譬喻

These are the parables that occur throughout the canon.

9) *Upadesa* 論義

In their earliest form, these are question and answer type dialogues between the Buddha and his disciples, although it is perhaps from such literature that the *Abhidharma* arose. Note then, that this category entails much of the *sastra*, *Abhidharma* and *Upadesa* works. This would include the *Dazhidulun* (*Māhaprajñāparamitopadeśa*) which is as the title shows, an *upadesa*.

10) *Udāna* 自說

These are sermons and teachings given by the Buddha of his own accord. That is, without being asked.

11) *Vaipulya* 方廣

This category refers to those *sutra* which are broad and extensive. The word probably meant the *Mahayana sutra*, but in the East, usually refers to the largest sutra like the *Nirvana* or *Avatamsaka*.

12) *Vyākaraṇa* 授記

These are the prophecies and predictions foretelling the future enlightenment of the Buddha's disciples, such as those found in the *Lotus Sutra* for example.

This system of division sits parallel with the more well-known *Tripitaka* division. Using *Tiantai* parlance we might say that the *Tripitaka division* is the succinct or summary division, while the *twelve divisions* are the *expansive* or *detailed division*.¹⁷

I. *The Worldly Siddhānta* 世界悉檀 (*Laukika Siddhānta*)

As hinted at in *Zhanran's* comments above regarding the correlation of the *Two Truths* and *Four Siddhānta*, the first three are best understood as elaborations of the *Worldly Truth* (*samvrti satya*), and the fourth as equivalent to the *Ultimate Truth* (*paramārtha satya*). Recalling then, our discussion of the *two truths*, the *worldly siddhānta* might *samvrti satya* as *pratīyasamutpāda*. It is the perspective from which phenomena are viewed as arising as the result of a confluence of causes and conditions. The examples in the *Dazhidulun* illustrate thus:

*“In terms of the worldly siddhānta, phenomena exist through a combination of causes and conditions without individual nature. For example, a chariot exists through the combination of things such as its frame, axle, wheel spokes, and wheel rims. There is no chariot separate [from these parts]. This is true for human beings, who exist through the combination of the five aggregates, for there is no human being separate [from these aggregates].”*¹⁸

There is no substantive *cart-ness* that exists separate from its constituent parts. In the same way, there is no *self-nature/ atman* which exists outside of the *Five Skandha*. The *Dazhidulun* then gives a number of examples.

II. *The Individual Siddhānta* 各各為人悉檀 (*Prātipaurusika Siddhānta*)

The *Individual Siddhānta* correlates with *samvrti satya* as language or social convention, because it is none other than teaching in accord with the respective mental capacity of the respective audience. This is why it is often translated as *individual* or *personal*. It is most plainly what we might think of as *Upaya*. In order to illustrate this method, the *Dazhidulun* provides two quotes from the sutra which appear to be contradictory. And by doing so, implies that the teachings must be tailored to the particular individual in question.

“[This is] teaching the Dharma to people while considering their mental state and physical actions, as a given subject matter may be readily received or rejected. Thus, a sūtra¹⁹ states:

¹⁷ These divisions are discussed in brief in Hurvitz's CHIH-I. But if you want to find primary source explanations of them, the standard authorities are the *Dazhidulun*, and the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*.

¹⁸ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

¹⁹ Lamotte suggests the *Anguttara*.

“Diverse karmic effects lead to rebirth into diverse worlds, experiencing diverse [sensory] contacts and diverse [mental] feelings.”

Then again, the Moliyaphagguna Sūtra states:

“No one experiences contact; no one experiences feeling.”²⁰

The *Dazhidulun* goes on to explain that in the latter sutra, *Phagguna*²¹ took the existence of a self as a given, and believed in an extreme notion of permanence. Therefore, the Buddha could not have spoken in the manner of the former sutra to him. This would have simply further entrenched said notions.

III. The Therapeutic Siddhānta 對治悉檀 (*Prātipāksika Siddhānta*)

This is *samvrti satya* in its capacity as *remedy* to the ailment of ignorance. The *Dazhidulun* gives examples of medicinal herbs and grasses, but in pointing out that certain medicines work for some, and not for others, Swanson points out that there is a certain level of overlap between this, and the former *siddhānta*.

“As for the specific *siddhānta*,²² phenomena exist because they can act as counteractive agents, but they do not exist in reality. For example, medicinal herbs and foods that are heavy, hot, oily, acidic, and salty are medicine for illnesses of wind but not for the other illnesses; medicinal herbs and foods that are light, cold, sweet, bitter, and astringent, and hot are medicines for illnesses of cold but not for the other illnesses. The same goes for the Dharma in treating illnesses of the mind (*cetovyādhi* 心病)”²³

The *Dazhidulun* gives a number of examples of how this works in practice, and explains how certain meditative practices beneficial for one, will not cure another.

“Meditating upon the contemplation of impurity is a good specific method for the illness of greed but is not considered good for the illness of anger, for it is not a specific method for that. Why is this so? Contemplating the faults of the human body is known as the contemplation of impurity. So, if an angry and hateful person were to contemplate these defects, it would increase his anger.”^{24,25}

IV. The Supreme Siddhānta 第一義悉檀 (*Pāramārthika Siddhānta*)

Finally we have the *siddhānta* representative of *paramārtha satya*. This *siddhānta* then, is synonymous with the *True Dharma* (真實法) and is beyond being destroyed (不可破/ *vibhakta*) or discriminated (不可散/ *bhinna*). This fourth *siddhānta* is in usual Buddhist fashion, is described in primarily negative terms.

“The ultimate *siddhānta*: the nature of all dharmas, all discourse and speech, all dharmas and non-dharmas, each can be divided, destroyed, or discriminated. However the true Dharma practiced by all Buddhas, pretyekabuddhas, and arhats cannot be destroyed and cannot be scattered. All that was not included in the three [former] *siddhānta*, is here completely included.”²⁶

The examples given to illustrate this *siddhānta* are taken from the *Arthavargīyīya Sūtra* 眾義經

²⁰ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

²¹ Lamotte gives the name as *Phālguna*. Swanson gives the name as *Phālaguna*.

²² I.e. *therapeutic*.

²³ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

²⁴ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

²⁵ It gives a few more examples following this.

²⁶ This section of the *Dazhidulun* is not as Smitheram translated it. I disagree with his translation here. He translates this final sentence for example as: “All that was not comprehensive in the three previous methods is comprehensive here.” But the key word here is 不通. Lamotte and Swanson read the passage as I do.

according to Lamotte. Although the passages don't match precisely, so it may be a paraphrasing:

*“As everyone relies on his own view,
Their frivolous debates generate disputes.
If one is able to realize such error,
Then that is realizing the right view.”²⁷*

This describes the common fault of attaching to particular views/ *drsti*. This leads to the proliferation of *prapañca* 戲論. We see here and in the following two verses, a decidedly *Madhyamika* flavour.

*“An unwillingness to accept other teachings
Is what makes an ignorant person;
Whoever engages in such debates
Is indeed an ignorant person.”²⁸*

The key to understanding this passage is the third line. Although it may not be immediately clear here, in its explanation that follows, the *Dazhidulun* suggests that this refers to those masters and teachers who dispute and debate, based on attachment to their own school's view. The implication being that the *Madhyamika* penchant for not asserting a positive position of any kind, is the ultimate or *supreme siddhānta*. This foreshadows the later debates between *Candrakīrti* and *Bhavaviveka* about whether or not it is indeed appropriate for a *Madhyamika* to put forward doctrinal positions.

*“If relying on one's own view
And therefore generating various frivolous debates-
If this is pure wisdom,
Then there would be no one without pure wisdom.”²⁹*

In response to all of this. The hypothetical interlocutor asks the following question, and receives the following answer:

*“Question: If all of these views are in error, then what is the ultimate siddhānta?
Answer: It transcends all language, is beyond all mental actions, has nothing that can be relied upon, and does not manifest any phenomena. It is the true characteristic of all phenomena (諸法實相)³⁰- without beginning, middle, and end, limitless and indestructible.”³¹*

In short, any particular position, statement or idea can be accepted, or rejected. And the very act of establishing a position in such a way, limits its truthfulness. The ultimate or supreme then, is what is left when such things are abandoned.³²

Zhiyi's use of the Four Siddhanta in the Fahua Xuanyi:

Zhiyi's use of the *Four Siddhānta* in the *Fahua Xuanyi* are somewhat specific to his discussion there; the details of which are beyond the scope of our current purposes. With this in mind, I will only talk in the most summary terms of the general usage and scope of the discussion there.

The concept is most centrally used there in pairing with one of *Zhiyi's* scriptural exegetic strategies. That is, with the *Five Types of Profundity/ Profound Meaning* (五種玄義). These five

²⁷ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

²⁸ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

²⁹ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

³⁰ You ought to note this term, which we have seen previously in *Guanding's introduction*. It is a term found in the Lotus Sutra, and extensively in the *Dazhidulun* and *Zhiyi's* own works.

³¹ *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise: 1*, SMITHERAM, 2017.

³² The text follows this with the story of *Dīrghanakha*.

types of profundity are used in most works where Zhiyi sets out to comment on and explain a sutra. They are namely:

- 1) 釋名 “Explication of the Title/Name”
- 2) 辨體 “Distinguishing the Essence”
- 3) 明宗 “Clarifying the Gist”
- 4) 論用 “Discoursing on the Usage/Applications”
- 5) 判教 “Classifying the Teachings”

In the *Fahua Xuanyi* for example, the explication of the title consumes the majority of the text (fascicles 1-8). The five Chinese characters of the title of the *Lotus Sutra* (妙法蓮華經) are interpreted at great length as descriptive of the very ‘character’ of the text.

The ‘distinguishing of the essence’ establishes the *Lotus Sutra* (again we are limiting our discussion to the *Fahua Xuanyi*) as being none other than the ultimate truth. This Ultimate Truth is defined by way of the Four Teachings, and the sutra is said to be the Ultimate Truth of the Perfect Teachings.

‘Clarifying the Gist’ is not especially distinct from the former category. They are said to nourish and sustain each other. This category discusses the causes of Buddhahood, in both the Origins and Traces sections of the Lotus Sutra. In doing so, it goes some ways to explaining the ways in which the Lotus Sutra is unique from other texts.

‘Discoursing on the Usage’ comments on the *function* of the sutra. In the case of the *Lotus Sutra*, this is the Buddha’s *Great Purpose* of leading all to Buddhahood.

‘Classifying the Teachings’ usually divides the Dharma into the three categories of *sudden, gradual, and variable/indeterminate*; a strategy with which you are now hopefully becoming familiar.³³ In this section *Zhiyi* sets the over-arching superiority of the *Lotus Sutra*.

As stated previously, a proper treatment of *Zhiyi*’s use of the *Four Siddhānta* in the *Fahua Xuanyi* would take us away from our current purposes. In brief, the *Four Siddhānta* are there employed to illustrate the way in which certain of *Zhiyi*’s concepts fit into the different teaching methods. Just as the *Four Siddhānta* can be used to categorise and explain the entirety of the *Buddha-Dharma*, the *Five Profundities* can be used to categorise and explain the contents of all sutras.

Pg. 98: “Q .A skeptic might say: “[These three methods of cessation-and-contemplation] are the same in their teaching, in the objects [of their practice], and in name, so why are they suddenly different when it comes to their actual practice?”

A. They are the same, but they are not the same; though they are not the same, they are the same. “

The skeptic is pointing out that at the very beginning of *Guanding*’s description of the *Three Kinds of cessation-and-contemplation*, it was said that “All of these are of the Mahayana, they all take the true aspect [of reality] as their object, and are alike called “cessation-and-contemplation”.” With this in mind, what might explain the disparity between their styles of practice? The answer points out that they are indeed the same in regards to the aforementioned. That is, they are the same in regards to the teaching, their object, and their name. They do however, differ in regards to the capacities of mind, for which they are utilised, and in the details of their practice. This is as explained subsequently:

Pg 98: “The gradual-and-successive [method of cessation-and-contemplation] involves six [destinies], three of which are good [asura, human, and divine/deva] and the other

³³ At least as it concerns *Zhiguan*.

three evil [hell dwellers, beasts, and hungry ghosts]. The third level, the samadhi of] no outflow [of passions] involves [transcending the] three [mental states of desire, form, and formlessness]. All together [including the three individual stages of the second, fourth, and fifth parts outlined above] there are twelve [levels of development in the gradual progression] that are not the same.”

- The six destinies and so forth are all as we have explained previously.
- What most requires our attention here is what is meant by the phrase “*there are twelve that are not the same*”. It ought to be remembered that in our discussion of the *gradual cessation and contemplation*, Zhanran suggested that the Five Stages of the Gradual-and-successive method are the summary explanation. In actuality, these Five categories contain thirteen distinct components. Those distinct components were as follows:

Pg. 96: “Herein there are Five Categories, [but] the principles [included] are thirteen. The Five are called 1) Taking Refuge in the Precepts, 2) Meditative Concentration, 3) Without Outflows, 4) Kindness and Compassion, and 5) The True Aspect. The Thirteen Principles; The First Stage has six: the Three Good [Ways], and the Three Evil [Ways]. The Third Stage has four: the Two Teachings [Triptaka and Shared] and the Two Vehicles [Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha]. Combining with the former [four], these six principles make ten (6+4=10). The remaining three [stages] without [extra] explanation make thirteen.”

The commentaries discuss this schema in great detail, although there does appear to be some uncertainty surrounding them. Zhanran’s commentary on the passage on pg.98 seems to paint a slightly different picture to the one he painted on the above passage. Nevertheless, given that there are thirteen components, and there are “*twelve that are not the same*” we might ask which of the features is common to the methods? After his above remarks, Zhanran adds this:

“Among the thirteen, the true aspect [of reality] (實相) is the object depended upon. This is the same for the sudden.³⁴ [And therefore] ought not to be counted [as a difference] as it signifies [a component] which is the same. This is why below, in the ‘questions and answers’ it is said “in the variable there are twelve points of difference”; this is the meaning. [With] this pointed out beforehand, it is easy to understand the below (That is, the discussion of the twelve points of difference).”

Zhanran’s idea here appears to be fairly congruent with the answer to the previous question given above.

Pg. 99: “This chapter [describes three methods of cessation-and-contemplation which are] the same Mahayana [teaching], the same in having the true aspect [of reality as their object], and the same in being called “cessation-and-contemplation.” Why then is this [chapter] called “On Distinctions”?”

In our current addition of the *Mohe Zhiguan* this chapter is not called *on distinctions*. However, Zhanran tells us that he is familiar with an older version/ older edition in which this title is found. The older version in question was not called the *Mohe Zhiguan* but the *Yuandun Zhiguan* 圓頓止觀 or the *Perfect and Sudden Zhiguan*. The subheading is no longer extant, but this question was retained through the editing process.

Pg.99: “They are the same, but not the same; though they are not the same, they are the same. The gradual-and-successive [method of cessation-and -contemplation] involves nine [stages] that are not the same.”

Zhanran comments on these nine stages are rather confusing to my mind, which is probably why

³⁴ *Sudden* here is synonymous with *perfect*. In other words it is pointing out that the object of contemplation for all three types of *Zhiguan*, is the same.

many modern commentators refer to the *Kōgi* for explanation here. The *Kōgi* says the following:

“The gradual-and-successive involves nine” is said to be the three good [destinies] and three evil [destinies] which make six, the dhyanas, non-outflows, and compassion which makes nine.”

In other words, the six destinies are each counted (6), the dhyanas together are counted as one (1), the non-outflows are one (1), and compassion is one (6+1+1+1=9). It should be noted that these all refer to the *Five Stages of the Gradual Cessation-and-Contemplation* with the absence of the Fifth stage.³⁵ The *six destinies* correlates with the *first stage*. The *dhyanas* correlate with the *second stage*. The *non-outflows* refers to the *third stage*. And *compassion* refers to the *fourth stage*. The omitted fifth stage would be the realization of the true aspect of reality.

As mentioned *Zhanran’s* comments are rather confusing, and I was unable to follow their precise logic. While there is some confusion about the details here, it should be remembered that these are not the methods *Zhiyi* encourages here, or for practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra*, and thus shouldn’t cause us too much consternation.

Pg.99: “The variable [method of cessation-and-contemplation] involves four [options] that are not the same.”

Again we turn to the *Kōgi* for the following explanation:

“The variable involves four” are the four of the Worldly [siddhānta] and Ultimate [siddhānta], cessation, and contemplation.”

The *Kōgi* appears to be suggesting that we take the worldly, and the Ultimate siddhānta, as well as the two components of *Zhiguan*, that is cessation, and contemplation This is how Donner and Stevenson understand the text. If we read it in this way, it suggests that we *apply* the worldly and ultimate siddhānta respectively to the two components of *Zhiguan*. This would give us four; that is 1) *worldly-siddhānta-cessation*. 2) *worldly-siddhānta-contemplation*, 3) *ultimate-siddhānta-cessation*, 4) *ultimate-siddhānta-contemplation*.

Swanson understands the passage to refer to the *four siddhānta* as the worldly and ultimate are respectively the first and last of the *siddhānta*. If we read it in this way, the term *Zhiguan* would mean something like the *zhiguan of the four siddhānta*. Both readings would make sense given the brevity of the *Kōgi’s* remarks. The Japanese punctuations added to the *Tendai Daishi Zenshu* (天台大師全集)³⁶ suggest that Donner and Stevenson’s reading is correct. That is not to say that said punctuation is infallibly correct however.

I³⁷ suspect that the reasoning behind the former reading, is that given that the *variable method* alternately applies the *gradual-and-successive* and the *perfect-and-sudden* methods, these two types correlate most closely with the *worldly* and *ultimate siddhānta*. In other words, the *variable method* is a combination of the *worldly siddhānta* qua *gradual-and-successive Zhiguan*, and the *ultimate siddhānta* qua *perfect-and-sudden Zhiguan*. In considering Swanson’s reading, I take it that he is reading the mention of first and last *siddhānta* as implying all four. What the application of the *Four Siddhānta* as a whole might mean concretely: my guess is that the *variable* constituting a ‘mix’ of everything includes *all four*?³⁸

Pg.99: “Together there are thirteen [aspects] not the same.”

That is to say, the nine that are different in the gradual, and the four that are different in the

³⁵ See our discussion on the gradual method above for a refresher on these five stages.

³⁶ In general this is considered to be the definitive edition of the works in modern Japan.

³⁷ This is purely my (Jikai Dehn) attempt at understanding the decision in the *Tendai Daishi Zenshu* to read it this way.

³⁸ If anyone is aware of Dr Swanson saying more on this matter, I’d appreciate any input.

variable together make thirteen.

Pg.99: “There are many ways expressed [for practicing cessation-and-contemplation], therefore it is said that they are not the same. [In the same way,] all Noble Ones 聖人 are concerned with [the one undifferentiated reality, which is] unconditioned (asamskrta) dharma 無為法, yet they make distinctions, and [the distinctions we make here] have this same meaning.”

All of the early Buddhist schools were in agreement about the fact that there was only one reality. However, they differed on the number of unconditioned dharmas (*asamskrta dharma*) they accepted. In the context used here, the unconditioned dharma is added by Swanson in brackets. Here, the unconditioned is none other than the one undifferentiated reality. This will be unpacked a little more shortly. Here then, given that we have discussed conditioned dharmas (*samskrta*), we ought to explain in brief, what the early schools included in the category of *asamskrta*.

Although the term *asamskrta* is usually rendered into English as *unconditioned*, the early schools disagreed in various ways about the ontological status of *asamskrta*, and the implications of said term. So much so, that it is very difficult to say in brief what is meant. Even within a school like the Sarvastivada, their were a number of competing theories presented by different camps.

In general terms though, the Sarvastivadins believed that an unconditioned is something which a) is beyond arising and ceasing, and b) possessing a unique efficacy (not a causal efficacy though). A *samskrta dharma* is something which is caused, conditioned, of the mundane order, temporal, with-outflow (*āsrava*), and impermanent. The basic assumption then, can be that an *asamskrta dharma* is that which is not subject to causes and conditions, is unchanging/eternal, inactive (i.e. without *karitra*), and free of/ devoid of outflows (*Anāsrava*). Having no causes and conditions to them, they are unable to act in a direct way, as cause or condition for any other dharma. According to the *Maha Vibhāsa*:

“A dharma is said to be unconditioned if it has no arising and ceasing, no cause and effect, and acquires the characteristics of the unconditioned.”³⁹

The orthodox/ Vaibāsika Sarvastivadins and the Sthaviravadins both accepted the existence of three *asamskrta dharmas*:

- 1) *Ākāśa* (space)
- 2) *Pratisamkhyā-nirodha* (cessation through deliberation)
- 3) *Apratisamkhyā-nirodha* (cessation independent of deliberation)

1) *Ākāśa/Space*:

The ontological status of *ākāśa* was always rather problematic for the early Abhidharmikas. This is why the early standard manual of the Sarvastivada (*Jñānaprasthāna Śāstra*) only included the two *nirodhas* and omitted *ākāśa*. Even the *MahaVibhāsa* shows disagreement about the status of *ākāśa*. The Sarvastivadins distinguished this *ākāśa* from the *ākāśa-dhātu* (the latter was considered by them to be *samskrta*). The distinction between the two is not our purposes here, so we will limit ourselves to *ākāśa*. The *Maha Vibhāsa* defines it as follows:

“Space is not rūpa...Space is invisible...Space is non-resistant (*apratgha*)...Space is outflow-free...Space is unconditioned.”⁴⁰

In simple terms, space is that which *accommodates by not resisting* other dharmas. Space is said to be lacking in activity (*karitra*). Nevertheless it can serve as the *dominant condition* (*adhipati-pratyaya*) for other dharmas in an in-direct manner, as it does not obstruct them.⁴¹

³⁹ *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, DHAMMAJOTI, 2015.

⁴⁰ *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, DHAMMAJOTI, 2015.

⁴¹ See our previous discussion of the Causes and Conditions.

2) *Pratisamkhyā-nirodha/ Cessation through Deliberation*

Pratisamkhyā refers to a type of *pure prajñā* (pure meaning that is outflow-free) that arises from the comprehension of such things as the *Four Noble Truths*. The cessation of cravings and passions that arises from this comprehension is *pratisamkhyā-nirodha*. *Nirodha* means ‘cessation’.

For the Sarvastivadin *pratisamkhyā-nirodha* is synonymous with *Nirvāna*. Both terms in simplest usage imply a separating (*visamyoga*) from *asrava* as the result of *pratisamkhyāna* (deliberation or discrimination). It must be understood however, that there is not simply a single *pratisamkhyā-nirodha*, the realisation of which, frees one from all outflows. Vasubandhu tells us that there are as many *pratisamkhyā-nirodha* as there are *asrava* (outflows). That means that for each of the outflows, one can experience a correlate *pratisamkhyā-nirodha*.

As an unconditioned, *pratisamkhyā-nirodha* may not act as a *Sabhāga-hetu* for a *samskṛta dharma*.⁴²

3) *Apratisamkhyā-nirodha/Cessation Independent of Deliberation*

Like the other *asamskṛta*, the status and definition for *apratisamkhyā-nirodha* is contentious. In contradistinction to *pratisamkhyā-nirodha*, *apratisamkhyā-nirodha* does not occur from separation from *asravas*. *Maha Vibhāsa*:

“It is called cessation independent of deliberation because it is not acquired through deliberative understanding, not being an effect of deliberation...It is on account of the deficiency of conditions (*pratyaaya-vaikayāt*). Thus, when one is focused [on an object] in one direction, all the other objects - visible, sound, smell, taste and tangible - in the other directions cease. The thought and thought concomitants (*citta+caitta*) that would have taken these objects do not arise absolutely; they do not arise owing to the deficiency in conditions. On account of this non-arising, their cessations independent of deliberation are acquired.”⁴³

Therefore, *apratisamkhyā-nirodha* is the complete extinction of the cause. In other words, while the former *nirodha* occurs through comprehension of truths, the *apratisamkhyā-nirodha* is the lack of causes for future rebirth.⁴⁴

The *Sautrāntikas* didn’t accept the ontological status of any unconditioned dharmas, while the *Mahāsāṃghikas* posited nine, and the *Theravāda* and *Vātsīputrīyas* accept only one.⁴⁵

The two most commonly repeated schema are the *Sarvastivadin* three (as above) and the *Yogacarin* six *asamskṛta*:

- 1) *Ākāśa* (space)
- 2) *Pratisamkhyā-nirodha* (cessation through deliberation)
- 3) *Apratisamkhyā-nirodha* (cessation independent of deliberation)
- 4) *Ānījya* (Unmoving Cessation)
- 5) *Samjñā-vedayita-nirodha* (Cessation of Associative Thought)
- 6) *Tathatā* (Suchness)



⁴² See our discussion on Causes and Conditions.

⁴³ *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, DHAMMAJOTI, 2015.

⁴⁴ *Analytical Study of the Abhidharmakosa*, CHAUDHURY, 1983.

⁴⁵ In both cases it is *nirvana/nibbana*. However the latter school held it to be threefold.