

***Da jingtu sishiba wen* 答淨土四十八問
(Answers to Forty-Eight Questions about Pure Land)
by Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏, 1535–1615**

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Yunqi Zhuhong (雲棲祿宏, 1535–1615) stands among the “four eminent monks” of the late Ming dynasty and was acclaimed early as the eighth “patriarch” (zu 祖) of the Chinese Pure Land tradition.¹ As a man who spent many years pursuing success in the civil examination system he entered the Buddhist monastic order at age thirty-one, later in life than most of his fellow monks. He understood life in “examination hell” and spoke Mandarin, the official language of the examination compound. Thus, the literati of his day saw him as someone with whom they could talk and sought his company and guidance. One such gentry follower, Yu Chunxi (虞淳熙, 1553–1621), provided the impetus for the production of this text. He wanted Zhuhong to formulate responses to various questions and objections related to Pure Land practice that arose from his background in gentry life and learning.

1. For example, the title of an encomium written upon the death of Zhuhong in 1615 by his follower Wu Yingbin (吳應賓, 1565–1634) is entitled “*Stūpa* Inscription with Preface of Master Lianchi, the Eighth Patriarch of the Lotus School and Restorer of the Ancient Yunqi Temple of Hangzhou” (“*Lianzong bazu Hangzhou gu Yunqisi zhongxing zunsu Lianchi dashi taming bing xu*” 連宗八祖杭州古雲棲寺中興尊宿連池大師塔銘並序). See Wu Yingbin 吳應賓, “*Stūpa* Inscription with Preface of Master Lianchi, the Eighth Patriarch of the Lotus School and Restorer of the Ancient Yunqi Temple of Hangzhou” (“*Lianzong bazu Hangzhou gu yunqisi zhongxing zunsu Lianchi dashi taming bing xu*” 連宗八祖杭州古雲棲寺中興尊宿連池大師塔銘並序), in Zhuhong 雲棲, *Lianchi dashi fahui* 連池大師法彙 (Nanjing: Jinling Scriptural Press 金陵刻經處, 1897); rpt. in *Lianchi dashi quanji yunqi fahui* 蓮池大師全集雲棲法彙, 8 vols. (Taipei 臺北: Zhonghua fojiao wenhuaguan 中華佛教文化館, n.d.), 8:5135–5157.

Zhuhong and his collaborator worked within a genre of Buddhist literature that utilized the question-and-answer (*wenda* 問答) format to settle doubts and objections to Pure Land concepts and practices. The introduction names two previous examples of this genre, the *Discourse on Ten Doubts about Pure Land* (*Jingtu shi yi lun* 淨土十疑論, T. 1961) attributed to Tiantai Zhiyi (天台智顓, 538–597), and *Questions about Pure Land* (*Jingtu huowen* 淨土或問, T. 1972) by Tianru Weize (天如惟則, 1286–1354). Zhuhong followed in their footsteps but modestly claimed to have nothing to add to their work. In order to avoid simply repeating what past masters had said, he and Yu spent some time thinking up questions that had not been previously addressed in this genre.

The result is a text that speaks very much to the interests of Buddhist gentry in the late Ming dynasty. The questions cover more than strictly Buddhist objections and questions; they refer to many works outside the Buddhist canon, including Daoist, Confucian, and White Lotus texts. One of the great challenges facing the translator was to learn enough about the references contained within the questions to understand their points and make sense of Zhuhong's answers.

In calling this work *Answers to Forty-Eight Questions about Pure Land*, Zhuhong is relating the booklet to the forty-eight vows undertaken by the Bodhisattva Dharmākara as he set out upon the path that would lead him to buddhahood as Amitābha and which provided the rationale for the practice of *nianfo* 念佛. The number is purely symbolic; in fact, there are many more than forty-eight questions here, since each of the forty-eight sections contains multiple (and sometimes unrelated) questions.²

2. I have used the following three editions of the text for this translation:

1. The Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association edition: CBETA X.1158.
2. *Lianchi dashi quanji yunqi fahui* 蓮池大師全集雲棲法彙, 8 vols. (Taipei: Zhonghua fojiao wenhuaguan 中華佛教文化館, 1983), 3:1525–1582.
3. *Da jingtu sishiba wen* 答淨土四十八問 (*Answers to Forty-Eight Questions about Pure Land*), in *Wanzi xu zangjing* (XZJ) 卅字續藏經, 150 vols. (Taipei: Xinwenfeng 新文豐, 1993), 108:383–399.

The page and volume references for the location of the first line of each section will point first to the XZJ edition, and then to the CBETA reference. All *Taishō* and XZJ references are in CBETA format in order to allow direct copying into CBETA searches.

THE TRANSLATION

Preface to Answers to Forty-Eight Questions (108:383a; X61n1158_p0504c09)

The Pure Land teaching has its causal basis in Dharmākara and its point of departure in Vaidehī (a). It was explained in the golden words of the Master of the Teachings of Vulture Peak (i.e., the Buddha Śākyamuni) and flowed out through the Lotus Society of the great master [Huiyuan] of Kuanglu (*Kuang Lu dashi* 匡廬大士, i.e., Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠, 334–416). By single-mindedly setting one's hopes [on rebirth in the Pure Land], one passes straight out of the triple world (*hengchao* 橫超). This truly is the essential ford (*yaojin* 要津) for the age of the end of the dharma (*mofa* 末法)!

However, those of superior capacities [understand that] phenomena themselves are principle; firm in truth, they believe and do not go back. Fools (*xiashi* 下士) hear and follow, but give rise to baseless delusions. Only those who are neither superior nor inferior, who occupy the middle stream, who could decide either to flow along with or to fight against, whose intention is not set, can penetrate to [Tiantai] Zhizhe [by reading] his *Ten Doubts* or be inspired by [Tianru] Zegong (*Zegong* 則公) and his *Questions* (b). Their Celestial Drum (c) [sounds] in earnest; their merciful hearts are fervent. Why expend more words? It is for that which their words do not already contain. As the shadows deepen we add more oil (d); when the illness worsens we increase the medicine. Can we add nothing to go beyond these two works?

It was the layman [Yu] Deyuan [虞] 德園居士 (e) who, on the strength of his long-standing vows, gave rise to the great mind of compassion on behalf of hundreds and thousands of living beings, and sent around (*qushen* 曲申) forty-eight difficult questions (f); I could not avoid resolving the issues in accordance with the questions. Taking them in order to settle his doubts would bring him across the river of suffering; directly resolving his qualms is what would bring him out of the cave of death and birth. Quickly putting aside mouselike timidity and in the company of these sages of old (i.e., Zhiyi and Tianru), [I] assisted the shared work of these prior sages.

Regarding the absence of the [Pure] Land outside the enlightened mind, the whole of reality (*yizhen* 一眞) becomes clear and the myriad *dharmas* vanish. Who is the “West” (i.e., the Pure Land)? Penetrating

the lack of a mind outside the [Pure] Land, then the seven jewels adorn [the Pure Land] and the nine lotuses open. What obstruction is there to original quiescence (*benji* 本寂)? Nevertheless, from his broad and doubt-free abode the layman conjured questions like wind on the water's face. I, from my silently unquestioning place, dreamed up replies like the sound of valley springs. Although the "clouds fly and the bottle empties," (g) we do not presume to be the peers of the ancient sages in their grand plan to shine a light, dispel the darkness, and remove at least a little of the film clouding the eyes of people today. Perhaps they have minds with the capacities of *icchantikas* and are stubborn as in the past, decidedly lukewarm toward Pure Land and not practicing [it]. They hold to a one-sided view of emptiness and are complacent; they do not even ask about it! What a pity!

Signed by the Monk Zhuhong of Hangzhou
in the winter of Wanli 20 (1584)

Notes:

(a) Dharmākara is the bodhisattva who made and fulfilled the vows that would lead to his achievement of buddhahood as the Buddha Amitābha. His vows and subsequent practice are therefore the causes of the Pure Land. Vaidehī was a queen whose son Ajātaśatru usurped the throne and imprisoned her along with her husband, King Bimbisāra. While in prison she implored the Buddha to come and give teachings, and thus provided the occasion for the Buddha Śākyamuni to preach about the Pure Land. Thus, if one relates these figures to the phrase "Pure Land teaching" (*jingtu jiao* 淨土教), then Dharmākara is the cause of the "Pure Land" and Vaidehī is the cause of the "teaching." The story of Vaidehī is found in the *Fo shuo guan wuliang shou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 (*Contemplation Sutra*, T12n0365_p0340c29-341b21). An English version may be found in Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, trans., *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, 2nd ed. rev. (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003), 93–95.

(b) "Ten Doubts" refers to the *Discourse on Ten Doubts about Pure Land* (*Jingtu shi yi lun* 淨土十疑論) attributed to Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顓 (538–597), T. 1961. The "Questions" refers to the *Jingtu huowen* 淨土或問, or *Questions about Pure Land* (T. 1972) by Tianru Weize 天如惟則 (1286–1354), a Chan master of the Yuan dynasty who turned to Pure Land practice later in his life.

(c) According to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (hereafter DDB, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>), *tiangu* 天鼓 is a drum that sounds of itself in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three to warn gods of their impending death, and is in other contexts an epithet of the Buddha himself.

(d) This phrase may be a reference to Han Yu's essay *Jinxue jie* 進學解, which contains the phrase *fen gaoyou yi ji gui* 焚膏油以繼晷, "to burn more oil in order to extend the day." Many thanks to Corey Byrnes of the Facebook Sinologists group for the pointer.

(e) This is Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 (1553–1621), one of Zhuhong's most important lay followers. Both Sheng Yen (Shengyan 聖嚴) and Fan Guiming state that he provided all of the questions for Zhuhong to answer. See Shi Shengyan 釋聖嚴, *Mingmo fojiao yanjiu* 明末佛教研究 (*Studies in Late Ming Buddhism*), *Zhihui hai* 智慧海 9 (Taipei: Dongchu Publications 東初出版社, 1992), 119; and Fan Guiming 潘桂明, *Zhongguo jushi fojiao shi* 中国居士佛教史 (*A History of Lay Buddhism in China*), 2 vols. (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中国社会科学出版社, 2000), 2:781–782.

(f) *Liu-ba nanwen* 六八難問. Sheng Yen interprets this as "sixty-eight difficult questions" rather than "six or eight." See Sheng Yen, *Mingmo fojiao yanjiu*, 119. Following the advice of Prof. Chün-fang Yu, however, I have interpreted it as six times eight, or 48.

(g) The phrase *Yun xing ping xie* 雲興瓶瀉 is explained in a commentary on the *Lotus Sutra* in this way: "As for [the phrase] 'the clouds fly and the bottle empties,' this is said of the two bodhisattvas. The one who asks is like clouds flying in the open sky. The one who answers is like a bottle pouring out water." See *Miaofa lianhua jing zhizhang shu shiyi* 妙法蓮華經指掌疏事義 (*A Commentary on the Matters and Meaning of the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wondrous Dharma Pointing at the Palm*), X33n0632_p0712c16-c17.

1. (108:383b; X61n1158_p0505a09)

Question: People of the world hear the words "to contemplate the Buddha is to contemplate the mind" (a) and "as the mind is pure the land will be pure" (b), and because they adhere to the interior mind and try to dust it off and make it pure, they incline toward [the teaching of] emptiness and are pleased with themselves. They deny the western quarter and say that the mind and the land are the same in principle. So they say, "My mind is firm (c); what is served by longing for the

land? The worm truly eats through mud; how could yellow dirt be the equal of the diamond realm [or *vajradhātu*]; the great sea turtle really bears mountains; how is holding the earth like wheeling in the sky?" Now they also make further analogies such as comparing an alchemical furnace (or immortal's hermitage) to the lotus-calyx, or the forty pulse meridians to the interconnected jewel-net, or the one numinous inner brightness to Amitābha's peaceful abiding. The lungs approximate to the west; crossing through the tongue is taken as the pools [of the Pure Land] (d). These are only metaphors for the dharma; there is no question of their [objective] reality. This being so, they draw in everything from the inauspicious and auspicious readings of geomancy to the flourishing or decline of one's posterity as examples of the interpenetration of dependent and proper recompense and demonstrate the unchanging nature of [the Buddha's] response to beings' capacities. This does not get to the direct cause [of a Buddha's attainments], nor does it exhaust the ten marvels [of a Buddha's capabilities]. One must seek further for clear teachings and set these evil views to one side.

Answer: The expression "as the mind is pure the land is pure" is quite correct. However, this expression has two senses. The first relates to principle. This means that the mind is that land. Outside of a pure mind, there is no pure land. The second relates to phenomena. This means that the mind is the basis of the land. The purity of the mind is the purity of the land. If one grasps at principle but discards phenomena, then would this not be like the world affirming that pure leisure is this very immortal, with the result that outside of pure leisure there is no true immortal? Now suppose one takes up part of the body and says [it is the] Pure Land. This would be a most pernicious view, and the suffering it brings is most profound. My Buddha only illuminates the unified mind, but obstinate people constantly grasp at the four elements [of the body]. For this reason they hold the network of flesh to be the jeweled net and point at vain imaginings as the real Buddha. The lungs are subsumed under the western direction and so are easy to designate as the golden earth [of the Pure Land]. The tongue secretes saliva and so is called the flowered pools. This is vulgar and false in a thousand ways; one cannot begin to enumerate them! How could one not know that the human body is impure? Its substance is illusory, not real. One wastes efforts on it, but in the end it turns to corruption and decay; still, one is fascinated with it in ignorance. People overhear the phrase "as the mind is pure the land is pure," and not only are the ignorant

masses misled by it, even the literati are led to harm. Well might one heave a sigh at this!

Notes:

In general, this first question goes directly into one of the major themes that Yu Chunxi and Zhuhong explore in this text: the proper relation of Buddhism to other Chinese religious traditions. The question bristles with classical allusions and textual citations with which most late Ming literati would have been very familiar. The question takes surface similarities between Pure Land teachings and concepts from Confucianism and alchemical Daoism and tries to correlate them. In response, Zhuhong points out that the teachings are in fact very different, and that attempting to correlate them will distort Buddhism and lead practitioners astray. Thus, whereas many literati of the time were very keen on so-called “Three Teachings” thought (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一), Zhuhong opposed this tendency and tried very hard to keep Buddhism separate.

(a) The phrase “to contemplate the Buddha is to contemplate the mind” does not come from scriptural sources. However, Zhuhong used it in the third fascicle of his *Fo shuo Amituo jing shu chao* 佛說阿彌陀經疏鈔 to describe a particular obstruction to Pure Land practice (see X22n0424_p0660b16-660b19):

As to the four obstructions, the first says, “This very mind is the Buddha; why must one abandon the self to contemplate the other?” They do not know that this very Buddha is [likewise] the mind, and so they grasp only at the contemplation of the mind and do not approve contemplation of the Buddha. Thus, [for them,] the mind and the Buddha are dual, a failed doctrine. This is “contemplating the Buddha and contemplating the mind” because the two do not [mutually] obstruct [one another].

(b) The phrase “as the mind is pure the land will be pure” is shorthand for a passage from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* commonly used to justify the idea that the Pure Land does not literally exist off to the west but manifests when the practitioner’s mind has been purified. The passage reads, “If a bodhisattva wishes to obtain a pure land, he must purify his mind. Once the mind is pure, then the buddha-land is pure.” See *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* (*Weimoji suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經), T14n0475_p0538c04-C05.

(c) The phrase “My mind is firm” (*wo xin fei shi* 我心匪石) comes from the poem “Bo Zhou” 柏舟 in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經). The literal meaning is “My mind is not a stone,” and the following line continues, “it cannot be rolled about.” See James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, 4 vols. (n.p.: n.p; repr.: Taipei: SMC Publications, 2001), 2:38–39.

(d) In Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行) correlative thinking, the lungs were associated with the west; both were assimilated under metal (*jin* 金). I am grateful to Dr. Robert Campany for this connection. The last half of the question demonstrates attempts to reinterpret Pure Land thought in terms of Daoist and alchemical concepts.

2. (108:384a; X61n1158_p0505b04)

Question: Merchants who go to sea and gentry who go to court do not need to be urged beforehand because the caps and carriages fill the eyes [of the latter] and goods and money move the hearts [of the former]. When Śākyamuni appeared in the land, he led people to choose for themselves. Sudhana ascended the tower and all the buddhas circulated the light for him to contemplate; he did not await encouragement (a). Making a good friend (*shanzhishi* 善知識) work hard (lit. “get calluses on his feet”) to intercede and lead one to faith is not as good as the light that came from Shandao’s mouth; “good guidance” indeed (b)! I have heard that [if one] practices *nianfo* in this way then the flower of the Pure Land flourishes; if one practices *nianfo* with a lax mind, then the flower of the Pure Land withers. The Buddha [Amitābha] has broadly opened expedient means; why would he not have placed this flourishing or withering of the flower right before people? In the event that they remain in the world, then whether they open or close their eyes, the lotus will be with them. When their time comes, then they can mount this lotus-wheel and catapult to rebirth there. Is there a problem that would make this false? Why would it not be as good as expedient means (c)?

Answer: Seeking reputation and pursuing profit are functions of this world, so anyone can see them. Invoking the Buddha and attaining rebirth [in the Pure Land] is actually a cause and its effect [transpiring in] adjacent lifetimes, so it is difficult for people to know. Even though the flourishing or withering of the lotus flower really takes place right before people’s eyes, those who are lost are not conscious

of it. A purified mind does what is good, so the spirit is clear and the *qi* is bright. The will thus grows and extends. A defiled mind does evil, so the *qi* is violent and the spirit is coarse, and one's inner state is dispirited. Is it not obvious [by these signs] that the flower is flourishing or withering? Moreover, Patriarch [Hui]yuan said sincerely that he personally saw the holy image [of Amitābha], the silver dais alighted on the pool in the story of Master [Dao]zhen, and one could continue to the perception of one's own body floating on the red lotus like Gao Haoxiang (d). So past generations have had such people; why say that the present generation is without [such] signs?

Notes:

(a) The statement about Sudhana refers to an episode that occupies nearly all of fascicle 79 or the *Huayan sūtra* 華嚴經 translated in the late seventh century by Śikṣānanda (T. 279). In this episode, Sudhana enters into a tower (*louge* 樓閣) that Maitreya has caused to appear. Once inside, he encounters innumerable further towers, and he goes into one associated with Vairocana. In it he is granted the power to see all the histories and activities of all the buddhas of all worlds and all times. See T10n0279_p0434c27ff. Yongming Yanshou used this in his *Zong jing lu* 宗鏡錄, fasc. 78, as an example of someone making up his own mind in an instant to seek the dharma. “Sudhana, in the *Huayan Sutra*, ascended the pavilion and in a moment's dream set his mind, and in the space of one *kṣaṇa* saw all the inconceivable work of the buddhas of the past, present, and future” (T48n2016_p0850a12-a14).

(b) Fascicle 27 of the *Continued Lives of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T. 2060) reports that whenever Shandao recited the phrase “Hail to the Buddha Amitābha” (*namo Amotufo* 南無阿彌陀佛), his mouth emitted a light that illuminated the temple gate. See T50n2060_p0684a16-a18. Presumably in this context the inquirer believes this is a sign of Shandao's own efforts at practice, and compares it favorably with a practitioner who relies on another's intercession. The subsequent phrase is a play on Shandao's name, which literally translates as “good guidance.”

(c) The inquirer wonders why Amitābha did not appear directly to propagate the Pure Land path rather than leaving it to a “good friend” to lead people to practice as indicated by the Pure Land sutras. If he had done so, then people would of their own volition rush forward to

rebirth in the same way that literati and merchants rush to evident rewards.

(d) This is a reference to the story of the monk Daozhen 道珍 and the Pure Land patriarch Huiyuan (遠公, Great Master [Hui]yuan). See *Wangsheng ji* 往生集, T51n2072_p0129a15ff. One day, Liang Daozhen had a dream in which he saw a boatman who said he was going to the buddha land of Amitābha. When Daozhen asked if he could go along, the boatman said not yet because he had not purified himself and recited the Pure Land scriptures. Daozhen accordingly began a practice that he maintained for many years, and shortly before his death he saw a vision of a dais of white silver descending onto the surface of his bathing pool. He recorded this vision. Later, when he died, the local people saw a number of lights appearing near his home and realized that Daozhen had died and attained rebirth in the Pure Land. They later found the document affirming his earlier vision. The episode concludes by pairing this story with a later account of Lushan Huiyuan's death in which he sees the Buddha Amitābha a week before he dies (see *Xu jingtu wangsheng zhuan* 敘淨土往生傳 T51n2071_p0110b18-c2) and holds these two up as examples of dignified practitioners who do not boast aloud about their extraordinary experiences. The story of Gao Haoxiang also comes from the *Wangsheng ji*, T51n2072_p0143a5-a10.

3. (108:384b; X61n1158_p0505b19)

Question: The [practice] which the Daoists refer to as the “silent approach” resembles contemplation of a buddha. Their “heavenly sovereign” is a bodhisattva, and approaching the bodhisattva [stage] could be the stage of non-retrogression. Confucius is the bodhisattva Rutong (儒童) (a). Having thought of King Wen [of the Zhou dynasty] to the extent of dimly seeing his physical form is actually similar to contemplating a buddha. King Wen is on the right or left of the [heavenly] sovereign; Confucius should abide with them. Now if [one] uses the method of thinking of King Wen to thinking of Confucius, then to think of Confucius is to think of the bodhisattva, and to approach Confucius is to approach the bodhisattva. One ought thereby to attain the stage of non-retrogression. Thus, why is it necessary to draw these two figures to the west?

Answer: Although the “heavenly sovereign” might be called a bodhisattva, the bodily form one observes is that of a king within the desire realm. Even if Confucius is called [the bodhisattva] Rutong,

he only manifests as a superior man in the human realm. To use an analogy, when a high official (*zaiheng* 宰衡) temporarily transfers [to a local post], the [local] examination selectees submit [to him]. When the sovereign suddenly goes abroad incognito, those who would go for an audience do not attend court. Thus we know that only the Buddha is the compassionate father of those born in the four ways (b), the great master of the three realms, the god among gods, the sage among sages, without peer. How can one make a “silent approach” to the desire realm or continue longing for the human path (c)? One must set one’s intentions on the western [Pure Land] outside the myriads of [other] buddha lands, and on the Lord of Conversion (*huazhu* 化主, i.e., the Buddha) from among sages and worthies [as numerous as] the sands of the Ganges. If it is not the Buddha whom the [other] two teachings reverence, then who is it that they reverence?

Notes:

(a) The idea that Confucius was a bodhisattva in India named Rutong (*Rutong pusa* 儒童菩薩) is attested in several Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Sheng jing* 生經, T. 154, and the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀, T. 2035. The latter goes so far as to identify other bodhisattvas as Confucius’ disciple Yan Yuan and Mahāmaudgalyāyana as Laozi (T49n2035_p0333b23-b29). As in the first question, it is clear that Zhuhong does not want to place Buddhism together with Daoism and Confucianism in the manner of the “Three Teachings” movement of his day.

(b) The “four ways” of birth (*sisheng* 四生) are birth from eggs, live birth, birth from moisture, and birth by transformation.

(c) The term “silent approach” (*mochao* 默朝) appears in several Daoist texts, often in describing an approach to a deity such as the Lord on High (*shangdi* 上帝) or the Jade Emperor (*yuhuang* 玉皇). It often appears in liturgical texts or in reference to a practice of visualizing the deity and having an audience with it. Many thanks to Neil McGee and Bonny Schachter of the Facebook Daoist Studies group for assistance with this term.

4. (108:384b; X61n1158_p0505c07)

Question: Perhaps one might assert that the Buddha forced sentient beings to forsake loved ones and abandon their human bodies, leave their native places close by and depart for a far away foreign country.

With spirit clear and profound one enters the realm of dreams, and within the dream one obtains a treasure. The forms [of the treasure] are not real, and one hears this with sadness; what “utmost bliss” is this (a)? Or one could say that being born is also a dream, and since everything is a dream, it is all the more lamentable. One might say that the bodhisattva wakes up first, but practices the six perfections as if in a dream. Thus, as the true recompense is arrayed, it becomes more indistinct. Do I [ultimately] return to the eternally quiescent light? The quiescent light is formless. Does one depend only on that which is vast and indistinct? This would not be as good as residing within the world among dreams so as to contribute to goodness and repudiate evil (b).

Answer: Vainly floating in the world is a dream; it is not real. The eternally quiescent light is reality; it is not a dream. People of the world mistake dreams for reality and reality for dreams. This is how they get all mixed up. It really is lamentable. Do you not know that your loved ones are the enemies, that your body is a fetter? Attain rebirth in the Pure Land, be free from sinking in disease, and recover your allotted life span (*tiannian* 天年). One is freed from prison and returns in splendor to one’s old home. This is called the “utmost bliss” (*jile* 極樂), and is it not indeed so? Although the practice of the bodhisattva path is said to be like a dream, it is like the manifestation of auspicious signs during the night when great happiness is about to appear. How can this be compared with the heavy drowsiness and loss of mental clarity [in dreams] in which the spirit beckons violent and evil omens? Now a bodhisattva is about to wake up while in the dream, while worldlings enter one dream from another dream. As to [the land of] Quiescent Light, that is clearly an awakening from a deep slumber!

Notes:

(a) “Utmost bliss” (*jile* 極樂) is another name for the Pure Land.

(b) The question draws upon Daoist legends of figures such as Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 who experienced vivid dreams that they mistook for reality. (An English version of the story of Lü Dongbin appears in Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993], 126–132). The question goes on to wonder if practitioners might accomplish more by remaining within the world instead of going to a potentially dream-like Pure Land.

5. (108:385a; X61n1158_p0505c21)

Question: The Pure Land is 10,000,000,000,000 buddha lands away from here; this is a definite number. But is this not an extreme distance, and not something reachable by boat, carriage, or human power? I think that parrots and mynah birds know how to recite the Buddha's name. If they are made to fly very fast, they may reach it, but assuming that their life span is too short, they will die in transit. Is it certain that a flying immortal could not reach it? Perhaps a flying immortal could not. But if one cultivates the supernormal power of "divine feet," then why worry that one will not reach it? This being the case, then perhaps the person who wishes to attain the West could do so by taking Maudgalyāyana as his main teacher (b).

Answer: Maudgalyāyana heard the preaching of the dharma from afar, and by following the sound he arrived at a buddha land. Having transcended *sahā* worlds without limit and without number, he wished to return to his own land but found he could not. Now, arriving there (i.e., in Amitābha's Pure Land) comes about because of that Buddha's spiritual power; it is not [within the scope of] a *śrāvaka*'s supernormal power. As to this world of Utmost Bliss, its distance is provisionally given as nominally abiding 10,000,000,000,000 buddha lands [away]. But if we seek to find the limit, it is actually beyond measurable numbers. When beings are born there, it is firstly because of the Buddha's inconceivable power to gather them in, and secondly it is because of the inconceivable power of the vows we ourselves generated. What do the supernormal powers [of individuals such as Maudgalyāyana] have to do with it?

Notes:

(a) "Divine feet" (*shenzu* 神足) is the ability to travel a great distance in a short time, one of the supernormal powers achieved by great meditators.

(b) Maudgalyāyana was one of the historical Buddha's greatest disciples and was noted for the magical powers he gained through meditation.

6. (108:385b; X61n1158_p0506a09)

Question: With regard to separating from the deluded body and seeking the dharma-body: There is no dharma-body; this very present

deluded body itself is the dharma-body, [which means that] the Buddha [Amitābha] takes this body to the Pure Land. Isn't that right? If in the Pure Land one should [be able to] manifest the body of one *zhang* and six (*yi zhang liu* 一丈六), etc. (a), without bringing the old substance of the leather bag (i.e., the present human body), then this would be a change as extensive as if a star fell as a stone, or a dove changed into a hawk. Isn't that right? Ah, me! To drift in the dark of the predawn hours and still have the bright sun fly up. The Land of Bliss and its domain of peace and calm allows for the secret escape of the ghost (*youhun* 幽魂) from the world's random flow; those who neglect the nine grades [of rebirth in the Pure Land] in favor of the seven paths [of rebirth in samsara] are beyond astonishing!

Answer: By his divine power, the Buddha [Amitābha] takes up the great chiliocosm and brings it to the Pure Land as if it were goose down. How much easier must it be, then, for him to gather in the form-body? In contrast, those in the school of spirits and immortals (i.e., Daoists) do not achieve liberation because of their infatuation with spirits of the body (b). The physical body is like bubbles and dew; this is not what goes to rebirth [in the Pure Land]. Dharma-nature pervades all of space; why would it need to go anywhere to be transformed? This mysterious transfer of the worldling's substance [to the Pure Land] surpasses the realm of the sages and achieves the same thing (i.e., universal pervasion). How does this compare with the secret deliverance of ghosts or doing the work of demons? Just seek to be reborn there [in the Pure Land], and don't bother discussing body and mind.

Notes:

(a) This image comes from the *Contemplation Sutra*, where in the thirteenth contemplation it says, "If you sincerely wish to be born in the Western land, you should first picture a figure, sixteen feet tall, on the surface of a pond." See T12n0365_p0344b25-b26. The English is from the translation by Inagaki Hisao in *Three Pure Land Sutras*, 91.

The inquirer here asserts a contradiction in Pure Land Buddhism. While there is no final distinction between the present ordinary body and the dharma-body, the Pure Land scriptures describe how the bodies of those born in the Pure Land transform. Hence their bodies seem to be in two states at once, like a star that is also a stone, a dove that is also a hawk, and like the darkness before the dawn which produces a bright rising sun. He concludes that it must amount to the

spirit or ghost secretly leaving the body for rebirth. The term *yuhun* 幽魂 refers specifically to the ghost of a deceased person that remains within the world and retains its human appearance, so perhaps the questioner thinks that this would explain why the deceased go to rebirth in the Pure Land while still appearing human.

(b) Many schools of Daoism taught that the human body was inhabited by a great number of divinities, and many practices sought to discipline and harmonize them. Isabelle Robinet gives a description of these beings in *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian Pas and Norman Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 100–103.

7. (108:386a; X61n1158_p0506a21)

Question: Those in the world who seek rebirth [in the Pure Land] are not the same as those who really want to be reborn. Even when they contemplate (or recite) [the Buddha] with correct ritual and the Buddha appears before them to conduct them to the West, they decline on the grounds that their alms-rounds are unfinished or their weddings have not been concluded, and they hope to forestall death a little while longer. Then there is the person who is different from these previously [mentioned]. He vigorously cultivates *samādhi* all hours of the day and night. Worried that he might grow weary and give it up, thus losing this critical opportunity, he throws his own body to destruction, burning himself up in the fire. Since he did not abandon the results [of his previous practice] and remained serene as if entering into meditative stability, then would the Buddha take pity on his stupidity [at committing suicide] and lead him by the hand [to the Pure Land] (a)?

Answer: This is the wise person's practice of Pure Land: In life they purify their own minds, and when their efforts come to fruition they attain rebirth by the conditions [created by their practice]. Those who do not wish to attain rebirth because of attachments to the conditions of the world are arrogant. Those who wish to hasten their rebirth and commit suicide are stupid. This kind of habit, if light, leads one into the horde of *māras*, and if heavy, will keep one drifting in the evil paths of rebirth. The light of the sun shines everywhere, but it cannot reach into a covered basin. Although the Buddha's compassion is great, he cannot rescue these people.

Notes:

(a) From the earliest inception of Pure Land practice in China, religious suicide has been a controversial topic. If one is convinced that the present world is defiled and that the Pure Land represents an ideal place in which one is guaranteed liberation, then there is a certain logic in hastening one's departure. As the inquirer indicates, those who immolated themselves often did so in highly ritualized settings and remained serene until the end. James Benn notes that miracles indicating successful rebirth in the Pure Land were often attested. He also notes that when a devotee announced his or her intention to self-immolate, public reaction could include both approval and disapproval. See James A. Benn, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism*, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 19 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 33–42, 45. Zhuhong clearly does not approve of such practice.

8. (108:386a; X61n1158_p0506b07)

Question: Suppose there is a person who practiced *nianfo* diligently in a previous life, but his capacities and feelings had not yet produced a response. Although in the present life he continues to practice wholesome deeds and keeps his intention on the Buddha [Amitābha], he gets tangled up in affairs and is not able to practice according to the dharma. After a time his karmic recompense runs out and again there is no response. This person's karmic seeds sprout in the intermediate state [between lives] (*zhongyin shen* 中陰身) and he completes ten invocations. Will he see the Buddha and attain rebirth?

Answer: In a previous life he planted the causes through diligence; in the present life he lost the fruition through procrastination. If on his deathbed he breaks through and invokes [the Buddha], then there is still time. If he generates the mind only after entering the intermediate state, then it is too late. I only hope that all humane people will exert themselves early.

9. (108:386a; X61n1158_p0506b14)

Question: [Let's say that] a person is diligent and heroic in this [practice] and for a day or a week or a full month or a whole year has the single, unperturbed mind. Later he is seized by another teacher who leads him into the two gates of Chan (*zong* 宗) and Doctrine (*jiao*

教). Although he does not master either of these, he still has not forsaken Buddhism. When the end comes, would the Buddha [Amitābha] still be willing to have mercy on him? Also, suppose he is diligent at the outset but slacks off midway, but on his deathbed repents and resumes as at the beginning, or is diligent at the outset but then turns to evil midway, but on his deathbed repents and resumes as at the beginning. Should this person enter into a lower grade (*xia pin* 下品) or into the “City of Doubt” (*yicheng* 疑城) (a)?

Answer: The contemplation [of the Buddha] is the [reality of the] Buddha (*ji nian ji fo* 即念即佛), so in what respect is *nianfo* not Chan? Contemplation through analysis of emptiness is the *tripiṭaka* teaching, contemplation through the intuitive grasp of emptiness is the common [teaching], contemplation through the stages is the separate [teaching], and contemplation through the one mind is the perfect [teaching], so in what respect is *nianfo* not Doctrine (b)? Two birds with one stone! Who asserts that there is no achievement? The former [Chan] penetrates and the latter [Doctrine] dissolves. This cannot be called “being seized.” There is no doubt that one may be reborn in the Pure Land like this. The only thing to fear is that one will give rise to distinctions and hang up the mind on two paths. This fault is produced from the self; the *buddhadharma* is not to blame. As to the matter of repentance by correcting one’s mistake, it is hard to determine the grade. Śākyamuni practiced diligently for seven days and brought his prior practice to completion in enlightenment. [The butcher] Wide Forehead laid down his cleaver and was immediately established in *bodhi* (c). Neither a lower grade nor the “City of Doubt” proved an obstacle.

Notes:

(a) The “City of Doubt” is a precinct just outside the Pure Land wherein beings are born who, though they faithfully performed *nianfo*, still harbored doubts about it. It is described as a city adorned with the seven jewels, but on the periphery of the Pure Land and away from the Buddha Amitābha. After five hundred years of practice, these beings are then free to move toward the center of the Pure Land and receive the Buddha’s teaching. See, for example, section 53 of the *Fo shuo da Amituo jing* 佛說大阿彌陀經 entitled “On Those Born of the Womb in the City of Doubt” (*Yicheng taisheng fen* 疑城胎生分), T12n0364_p0338c24-339a18.

(b) *Zang* 藏, *tong* 通, *bie* 別, and *yuan* 圓 are the four categories of doctrine in Tiantai thought, hence stand in for the questioner's use of *jiao* 教, or "doctrine."

(c) "Wide Forehead" (*Guang'e tu'er* 廣額屠兒) was a prolific butcher who was converted by Śāriputra in one day. He shows up in some Chan stories. See for example his story in *Xu deng zhengtong* 續燈正統, X84n1583_p0419a06-a17.

10. (108:386b; X61n1158_p0506c02)

Question: When ministers of court attain rebirth [in the Pure Land], they do not set aside affairs of state. When lay Buddhists attain rebirth, they do not set aside household affairs. Now when lay Buddhists practice *nianfo* single-mindedly, there are perhaps no other obstructions, but when ministers of court are working on royal business, they cannot shift their responsibilities to others as one can with household affairs. How could it be that Yang Wuwei (a) and all gentlemen who have felt the prickings of life as a single official (*guanguan* 鰥官) could at the last attain the welcome of a transformation-buddha? How could it be that armies, politics, and punishments do not obstruct the attainment of rebirth? Or is it because their every thought is in conformity with reality?

Answer: A gentleman whose mind is perfected in the midst of a heavy workload and myriad changes does not find the affairs of state complicated; he grasps the flow of circumstances. As for those who live in the realm of attachment, with a man and wife, the conditions of household [life] fairly pile up. To illustrate: a bright mirror illuminates things. It does this all day without expending effort. A deep valley transmits sounds. It transmits a great many without difficulty. Like this, the great ruler is not different from the world-honored one [i.e., the Buddha]; how are dukes and princes not the great ocean-like assembly? [Officials] vigorously discuss pros and cons (*dou yu yu fu* 都俞吁咈) and [buddhas] declare the wondrous dharma back and forth. [Officials dispense] rewards and punishments and [buddhas dispense] true compassion and equality. King's business and Buddha's business all integrate together. Why would rebirth in the Pure Land be hard?

Notes:

(a) Yang Wuwei 楊無為 was the style-name of Yang Jie 楊傑, a government official of the Northern Song dynasty who exhibited great

devotion to Buddhism while serving as an intendent of prisons. A Chan devotee at first, later in life he turned to Pure Land practice and is said to have died while seated facing west in great peace and dignity. His biography is recorded in the *Record of the Sages and Worthies of the Pure Land* (*Jingtu shengxian lu* 淨土聖賢錄), found at X78n1549_p0285b13-286a06.

Zhuhong denies the basic premise of the question, asserting that the life of an experienced official might actually be less complicated than that of an ordinary householder.

11. (108:387a; X61n1158_p0506c12)

Question: The residual karma of those who attain the lowest birth in the lowest grade is not slight, [but] if they meet an astute master who helps them to complete ten *nian*, then they attain this grade. Since they have residual karma, they should not commit evil. Even if they did commit evil, a single recitation [of the Buddha's name] eliminates myriad sins in response. It is like bringing light into long-standing darkness; instantly it lights up. The darkness did not go anywhere, nor is there anywhere whence the light came. Having attained this [elimination of guilt], they should come around to the highest birth of the highest grade. It seems we are still mired in levels and thus dwell in the lowest of the low. How is it that some guilt cannot be extinguished? Wouldn't their faults and merits balance each other out? Those in the City of Doubt have merely entertained a little doubt; they have not done any evil. It wrongs them that they are prevented from attaining any level of rebirth [in the Pure Land proper]. Who are these people, past or present, who have been born in the City of Doubt? Can you name any of them?

Answer: Among ordinary worldlings, some have evil minds that burn red-hot, but they hear of the Pure Land and do not doubt. There are also some who have fortunate karma, but although they practice a little, they *nianfo* mindlessly and do not believe. This is why one can attain rebirth in the Pure Land even though one has done evil. However, their obstructions of guilt have only begun to be extinguished, and the causes of purification are not yet extensive [enough]. Birth [in the Pure Land] is birth of course, but they should occupy a humble place. Thus we know that those who harbor inner doubts foolishly abandon their previous merit, while the mind filled with firm faith attains rebirth while carrying [past] karma. Thus, the gap between faith and doubt results in no small difference in benefit and harm accrued. Although

those born into the City of Doubt diligently practiced pure karma, they stopped because their minds were not firmly made up. Now there are people in the world who because of doubt are not diligent, and those who are diligent and so do not doubt. Only one or two out of ten thousand will doubt and yet be diligent. How could I point to specific individuals?

12. (108:387a; X61n1158_p0507a02)

Question: When releasing birds, fish, and turtles, one chants mantras and performs *nianfo* for their sakes, wishing them rebirth [in the Pure Land]. Would these creatures attain rebirth [in the Pure Land] due to the power [of these practices], or would they abandon their karmic recompense, be reborn among human beings, and study further under the person who released them, diligently practicing *nian* in accordance to the correct method?

Answer: Even the birds and beasts [on behalf of whom] these mantras and vows are made can attain rebirth [in the Pure Land] by relying on the power of dharma if their karma is light and conditions have matured. If their karma is heavy and the conditions are insufficient, then they stop short [of the Pure Land] and have their guilt extinguished so as to change their form and attain a better path [as a human or *deva*]. However, even if the birds and beasts do not necessarily attain rebirth, the merit earned by those who recite mantras, make vows, and release living beings is not wasted. In future lives they will be liberated and finally have all of their past karma come to fruition. The [story of] Maudgalyāyana liberating the bees is [an instance of this] as clear as a bright mirror (a).

Notes:

(a) The story of Maudgalyāyana liberating some bees may be found in the *Longshu's Expanded Pure Land Passages* (*Longshu zengguang jingtu wen* 龍舒增廣淨土文, T. 1970). In this story, the Buddha Śākyamuni found a particular country unreceptive to his teachings, so he dispatched his disciple Maudgalyāyana to preach to them, saying he had a karmic affinity with them. The people received Maudgalyāyana and joyously accepted his teachings. When asked why Maudgalyāyana succeeded, the Buddha explained that in a past life, Maudgalyāyana had been a woodcutter in that country. One day he encountered a swarm of bees while gathering wood. Maudgalyāyana made them a promise

that after he attained the Way he would liberate them. The present inhabitants of the country were all rebirths of those bees. Zhuhong presents this as proof that vows made on behalf of animals can gain them human rebirths and access to the teachings in later lives. See T47n1970_p0261b22-b28.

13. (108:387b; X61n1158_p0507a09)

Question: Contrasting the superiority and inferiority of pure and impure lands is to entice ordinary worldlings. What worldlings find supremely blissful (*jile* 極樂) is women; what they find extremely unblissful is no women as well as having to part from family members (a). Now you would have [me] abandon family and enter a country without women, and all [I] can do is flatly refuse to enter. How can the Buddha be so lacking in skillful means? Or one could say that with rebirth in that land one attains the six supernatural powers. The divine eye (*tianyan* 天眼) can penetrate into the women's quarters, so how is one free from this anxiety (b)? Even though one is lodged in the Pure Land, one still sees women all the time. How would this differ from having women in that land? Does that really amount to an absence of women? Also, refined gentlemen are by nature inclined toward the plain and simple and do not treasure gold and jade. Therefore, it often happens that they reject jade disks and throw away pearls, scatter gold and burn fine brocades. If they are not dazzled when they hear the name of this domain of treasure (*zhenyu* 珍域, i.e., the Pure Land), won't they fail to make vows [to seek rebirth there]?

Answer: Although the Pure Land provides enticements for ordinary worldlings, the first time its enticements were presented, the obstructions caused by the female form had already been set forth in detail through such metaphors as “flowered arrows” and “leather bags.” It is proper to say that women are taken as impure and the absence of women is taken as pure, or that women are considered as not pleasant while the absence of women is considered the supreme bliss. How could one turn around and flatly refuse to be reborn and take refuge in the West? Now as to the six supernatural powers and the ability to penetrate to a distance, these all stem from the enlightenment of the mind-ground (*xindi* 心地), and the [salvation of the] nine degrees of relation have been laid out in detail (c). This is more than just sky-flowers and glitter. Why would it be that just the sight of women would constitute an obstruction? Coming to the non-acquisitive principled

gentlemen who do not hanker after the jeweled land, they have not yet found out that [the term] “jewel” has more than one meaning. It is not really a single physical substance. Here [in the *sahā* world] “jewel” means the accumulation of good fortune, something one sees and for which one develops greed. There [in the Pure Land] “jewel” indicates something that matures from pure virtue. One abides with it for a long time without being tainted. Holding fast to the trifling matter of leading a life of few desires, one loses the glorious vista of the holy realm. This would be like detesting lewd songs by nature but giving up them up together with the lute and zither, or hating the unofficial histories in one’s mind but then burning them together with the Counsels of Yao (Yao Mo 堯謨) and the Canon of Shun (Shun Dian 舜典) (d). How is deprecating gold and jade and forsaking the western [Pure Land] different from these?

Notes:

(a) The inquirer plays on the term *jile* 極樂, or supreme bliss, with another common name for the Pure Land of Amitābha. The absence of women, he thinks, would make it supremely un-blissful for the average man. The more serious question regards a Buddha’s use of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*; Ch. *fangbian* 方便). Since the Pure Land is designed to entice people toward the goal of buddhahood, why would Amitābha create such an inherently unattractive place for rebirth?

(b) In the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra*, Dharmākara vows that all beings born in the Pure Land will have the divine eye, but will use it to see innumerable distant buddha-lands. See T12n0360_p0267c27-c28.

(c) The brief statement about the “nine degrees of family relations” (*jiu zu* 九族) in Zhuhong’s reply responds to the concern raised about abandoning family. Chinese Chan texts sometimes asserted that when a son received monastic ordination, then nine degrees of relations from great-great-grandparents to great-grandchildren would be reborn as *devas*. For an example, see *The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Dongshan Wuben of Yunzhou* (Yunzhou Dongshan Wuben *chanshi yulu* 筠州洞山悟本禪師語錄, T. 1980A): “Thus a scripture says that when one son receives ordination, nine degrees of family members are reborn in heaven” (T47n1986Ap0516b17-b18).

(d) The works by Yao and Shun mentioned in the last part of Zhuhong’s reply comprise the first two chapters of the *Shang Shu* 尚書.

However, the first chapter is actually called the *Canon of Yao* (*Yao Dian* 堯典), not the *Counsel of Yao*.

14. (108:388a; X61n1158_p0507b03)

Question: The jewels in the Land of Utmost Bliss from the first to the fourth are all of remarkable beauty; they fill space with their dazzle (a). This is wealth indeed! However, as to [the teaching that] to seek after them is not greed, let us say [we were talking about] my family's property. Aren't folks nowadays all rich people who have just lost everything or who lost everything long ago? They experience the saying that as soon as one attains any wealth, it is entrusted to others and given up. If on this side people are like Layman Pang (b), then are they not pure and lofty? Otherwise, they slave away managing [wealth] and from morning until night accumulate and grasp at it. Even recovering some antiques multiplies their greed and attachment. How much more the misers (or "prisoners of money," *shouqianlu* 守錢虜)! How are those who vow to be reborn in the Pure Land any different?

Answer: One is endowed originally with the pure mind, and thus it is said that [this] treasure is one's family fortune (*jiazhen* 家珍). The pure vow to seek birth [in the Pure Land] truly is the recovery of what was already there. Now to "desire humaneness and attain it" is not greed (c); how can my recovery of my own mind be called a taint? With regard to the magnificence of the actual [karmic] reward, this is also because the purity of the cause [leads to] the purity of the result; this is how the principle works itself out. Also, what is there to hanker after? If one cares about one's past business and also seeks rebirth in the Pure Land, then the mind's impurity is profound. How would [such a one] achieve birth in the Pure Land?

Notes:

(a) The *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra* says that many features of the Pure Land are made from seven treasures. Of these, four could be said to be bright or jewel-like: gold, silver, crystal, and ruby. The remaining three are lapis lazuli, agate, and coral, which may be decorative but lack the luster of precious metals and jewels. See T12n0366_p0347a02-a03.

(b) Layman Pang (*Pang jushi* 龐居士) was a Tang dynasty figure renowned for his level of enlightenment. According to the story told in the *Narrated Records of Laymen Dividing the Lamp* (*Jushi fendeng luxu* 居士分燈錄敘, CBETA X.1607), after his entire family was enlightened, they

left their home and threw all their wealth into the river Xiang 湘. See X86n1607_p0580b21-b23.

(c) The phrase “desire humaneness and attain it” is a reference to the *Analects* of Confucius 20:2: “Desire humaneness and obtain it—how is this covetous?” (The English translation is from Annping Chin, trans, *The Analects (Lunyu)* [New York: Penguin, 2014], 325.) Zhuhong almost quotes this verbatim, and it clearly serves his point that desiring the right things does not constitute greed.

15. (108:388a; X61n1158_p0507b13)

Question: [The bodhisattva] Dharmākara feared that because people would be afraid to go to any trouble they would not seek rebirth [in the Pure Land], so he said ten recitations would be enough. Śākyamuni feared that people would be afraid to go to any trouble and so would not seek rebirth [in the Pure Land], so he said that seven days would be enough. He saw the man and wife using grains of rice to count their recitations and taught them to join up the 360,000 times 100,000,000 names (a), and Śākyamuni also enticed people [by saying,] “hearing even the name of the Buddha’s *ūrṇā*” (b) and “invoking the name just once.” The intention was the same [in each case]. When we come to Masters [Hui]yuan and [Zun]shi, then we hear that it takes the six periods [i.e., all day and all night] and rituals of repentance to prepare [for rebirth]. Would a gentleman wince [at this] and leave? So this makes the “seven days” and the “ten recitations” incorrect. The Buddha’s words are false, and that is that! Why would the walls around the Pure Country be so high as to repel people?

Answer: When great sages [work to] convert people, their skillful teaching will not be all of one kind. They will give elaborate teachings for the sake of those who are sophisticated and give simple teachings for the sake of the simple. The “seven days” and the “ten recitations” were not said to be easy in order to flatter people. With proficiency [in the practice] increased a hundredfold, seven days is superior to seven days (c) and ten recitations surpasses 10,000 recitations. The “six periods” and the “rituals of repentance” were not put forward in order to be difficult and obstruct people. When one carries forward strong conditioning from past lives, then one cannot scrape and grind it all away in just a short time. If there is any gap, then the *samādhi* will be difficult to achieve. Longshu (i.e., Wang Rixiu 王日休, ?–1173) practiced a thousand prostrations daily and Yongming recited [Amitābha’s

name] 10,000 times through the day and night. I have nothing to say to those who “wince and leave.”

Notes:

(a) The reference to the man and wife draws from a story in the *Longshu zengguang jingtu wen* 龍舒增廣淨土文 (T. 1970). In this story, the Buddha encounters an elderly couple using a bushel of grain to count the number of times they recite the name of Amitābha. He instructs them to say with each grain, “I pay homage to 360,000 times 100,000,000 times 19,500 Amitābhas of the same name and same appellation as in the western land of bliss.” This would greatly amplify the efficacy of their recitations such that 1800 grains of rice would equal 2000 *shi* of rice (T47n1970_p0263b24-c05).

(b) There are a couple of scriptural references related to the claim that even hearing the name of the Buddha’s *ūrṇā* brings benefits such as expiating eons of guilt. For instance, the *Wangsheng jingtu chanyuan yi* 往生淨土懺願儀 (T. 1984) says, “The *Guanjing jing*...also says that even just hearing the name of the Buddha’s *ūrṇā* will eliminate immeasurable guilt; how much more would more complex visualizations?” (T47n1984_p0494c16-c17).

(c) A variant of this section appears in the 1659 anthology *Jingtu zhen zhong* 淨土晨鐘 (*The Morning Bell of the Pure Land*). In this text the confusing statement “Seven days is superior to seven days” is rendered “Seven days is superior to an entire lifetime,” which makes more sense and parallels the next clause more exactly. See X62n1172_p0073c17-74a2.

16. (108:388b; X61n1158_p0507c02)

Question: A great monk of old once called Pei Xiu by his name (a), and aroused his fierce grasping thoughts (*luocha zhi nian* 羅剎之念, lit. “*rākṣasa* thoughts”) (b). We say to place a taboo on what ought to be tabooed, but there is no taboo on calling Amitābha’s name. This is confusing to the assembly. One could say that this is what Amitābha vowed, so there is no harm. The way of sound is that, blown on the wind, it manifests and disappears. Therefore [during a funeral] we call so-and-so (i.e., the deceased) to come back in the hope that he might live again. “Naming ‘Heaven’ and calling ‘father,’ life is said to return to the source” (c). When we speak, we must use the names Yao and Shun when meeting people as a way of speaking well of them. It indicates

the same thing. Only the six-word [invocation] is respectful, while the four-word [invocation] seems like just singing the name disrespectfully (d). Niushan (牛山) uses it to expel demons, which equates to their use of the names of the demons or deities in their spells. People in the city use it as a curse the same way common people use it to swear. Can we go on repeatedly grating people's ears in this way?

Answer: Pei Xiu is a two-word name tabooed within his household; one utterance of it and it is desecrated. Amitābha is an honored name that embodies myriad virtues; repeated recitations fill the air with its beauty. Calling [someone] Yao to wish them well is metaphorical. It follows from that that just thinking [contemplating] an honorific title will become a way of returning respect. To be honest, there is no difference between the six-word invocation and the four-word invocation. It is just that because the dharma abides long, abuses arise, and these turn into disrespect and pride. [But] beating gongs and drums and [invoking the name] as singsong, expressing anger or seeking justice as something like a spell or a curse, the divine ear [of the Buddha] hears it; how could [he] not take pity? Even so, calling [the name] in jest or in anger still plants good causes; the reward will presently come to fruition. It is inconceivable! Ordinary sentiment has not learned it, but the wise know.

Notes:

The central concern of this question is names and etiquette. In Chinese social convention, one does not casually address a person of higher social status by his or her given name. After giving several examples of times in which one would not presume to address someone in this way, the inquirer wonders why Pure Land practice encourages people to address Amitābha, a buddha, by his private name. Zhuhong answers that invoking the Buddha's name even in anger or as a curse brings religious merit due to Amitābha's compassion.

(a) Pei Xiu 裴休 (797–870) was a high official of the Tang dynasty and a noted Buddhist lay devotee who studied with eminent monks and wrote texts on Buddhist topics. The first statement appears to be a reference to a well-known story of Pei's meeting with the Chan patriarch Huangbo Xiyun (黃檗希運, d. 850) in which the latter cheekily addressed him by his personal name. Dahui Zonggao recounted the story this way:

Grand Secretary Pei offered a sacred image. Kneeling before Huangbo, he said, “May I ask the master to assign me a dharma-name.” [Huang]bo said, “Pei Xiu!” Pei answered, “Yes!” [Huang]bo said “I have given you a dharma-name!” Pei bowed and said, “I thank the master for assigning a dharma-name.” (See *Dahui Pujue chanshi zhu Fuzhou Yangyu An yulu* 大慧普覺禪師住福州洋嶼菴語錄 T47n1998Ap0844a23-a26; for a loose translation of this passage, see John Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po on the Transmission of Mind* [New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1958], 100–101.)

(b) I found an instance of the phrase “*rākṣasa* thoughts” 羅刹之念 in Cai Rixin 蔡日新, *Chan yue rensheng* 禪悅人生 (Taipei: Yunlong Publishing 雲龍出版, 2001), 213, where it means thoughts of grasping. However, given that *rākṣasas* are violent demons, it might indicate something worse. This seems very strange, since in the story Pei Xiu meekly accepts Huangbo’s teaching and exhibits no untoward thoughts at all.

(c) The inquirer’s statement “Naming Heaven and calling for one’s father, life is said to return to the source” draws on a statement from the biographical section of the *Records of the Grand Historian* (史記, 列傳, 屈原賈生列傳, 3): “Now Heaven is the origin of humanity, and parents are humanity’s root. When people are impoverished then they return to their roots. Thus, who has not called upon Heaven in toil and misery? Who has not called the names of father and mother in times of illness and grief?” (Quoted from <http://ctext.org/shiji/qu-yuan-jia-sheng-lie-zhuan>). The inquirer raises this as another example of people calling out the names of deities and elders in defiance of social norms.

(d) The “six-word invocation” mentioned in the question is *Namo Amitufo* 南無阿彌陀佛, or “Hail to Amitābha Buddha,” while the “four-word invocation” is simply *Amitufo* 阿彌陀佛, or “Amitābha Buddha.”

17. (108:389a; X61n1158_p0507c16)

Question: Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are the crown princes of the Pure Land. When we call their names they must come forth. It is like the prime minister who has the right to employ men of talent and to recommend and promote them. Those who seek advancement can reach him by addressing him. I have never heard of anyone seeking out the monarch directly. With regard to the water, the birds, and the trees [of the Pure Land], they are transformations of the Buddha [Amitābha]. Seeing them at the moment of death is no

different from seeing the Buddha. That being the case, how would contemplating them during one's lifetime be any different from contemplating the Buddha? So one need not point directly to the exalted name [of the Buddha] and multiply the confusion of common people.

Answer: There are greater and lesser rights, so how could meeting thousands and thousands of prime ministers compare with encountering one enlightened monarch? There is proper and dependent recompense (a), so how could the magnificence of the court below compare to the true king within the hall? Thus, one who grasps the essential points opens his own eyes, while one who picks at leaves loses [more of] the root each time. Only lift up the exalted name and there will be no room for confusion.

Notes:

The inquirer is calling into question the propriety of invoking Amitābha directly rather than either calling the two bodhisattvas who serve him or visualizing features of the Pure Land that the sutras represent as Amitābha's transformations. This seems to him as inappropriate as an ordinary subject going directly to a king to ask admittance into the court instead of going through lower-ranking officials.

(a) The terms "proper recompense" (*zhengbao* 正報) and "dependent recompense" (*yibao* 依報) refer to past karma that gives rise to one's present body and mind and that which produces one's environment respectively. Zhuhong is saying that just as the king is superior to the halls he inhabits, Amitābha is worthier of invocation than the Pure Land, even if the land and all its contents are manifestations of him.

18. (108:389a; X61n1158_p0507c24)

Question: I could visualize the six words [of the invocation of Amitābha] arranged on the parts of my body and contemplate them one by one. This concentrates the mind just as much as *ānapāna* or counting breaths, so why do you not permit it and dismiss it as heterodox? Also, nowadays the Pure Land tradition has been damaged by such sects as the White Lotus. The *Precious Mirror* (*Baojian* 寶鑑) notes only two or three items; it does not cover everything (a). Suppose that when the Buddha was preaching the [*Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha*] *sūtra*, authenticated as it was by [the buddhas of] the six directions extending their broad and long tongues (b), he had [also] expounded the hundred varieties of demon-kings (*boxun* 波旬) with numerous auguries

like the *ding*-vessel of Yu. Evil spirits came to rest in Jambudvīpa, but he (i.e., the Buddha) did not take them into consideration (c). What then is there to say? Is it the same kind of heterodox path as those whose words today are the most inflammatory and who do the most profound damage?

Answer: *Ānapāna* is using breath to focus the mind. It is completely different from “refining *qi*” (*lianqi* 鍊氣). Successive contemplations (*linian* 歷念) [of the bodily visualizations described in the question] seek results through attachment to the body. It is definitely a heterodox tradition. The *Precious Mirror* criticizes it and other books strive to refute it in a thousand forms and myriad states; there is no way to describe them all (d). The dharma is weak but the demons are strong, as one would expect [when the age] turns toward its end. Thus, the Buddha predicted it; it is not something he had not considered. If nowadays there is something “inflammatory” and “doing damage,” it is the so-called *Scripture in Sixteen Words* and [its teaching of] sending each breath to the navel and expending one’s power directing it to the [lower] field of cinnabar (*dantian* 丹田), its misconstrual of the word “who,” and its silly understanding of “*namo*” (e). Things of this nature are like evil spirits and demons and are all devoid of content. [Not even the] ninety-five [heretical teachings] of India would receive them, and here [in China] they are not included in the two schools of Confucianism and Daoism. It blazes fiercely to the skies, but it will go out after a while. Why bother even labeling it as a heretical path?

Notes:

(a) The inquirer brings up the White Lotus sect (*Bailian zong* 白蓮宗) and one of its scriptures, the *Precious Mirror of the Lotus Tradition at Mount Lu* (*Lushan lianzong baojian* 廬山蓮宗寶鑑, T. 1973). According to Barend ter Haar, leading monks of the late Ming dynasty such as Zhuhong still read this text, but they exercised caution in citing it and tried to avoid connecting it with the White Lotus sect (see Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* [Leiden: Brill, 1992; rpt. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999], 291–292). According to Ono Gemmyō, the *Precious Mirror* was edited by Pudu 普度 in the year 1305 (see Ono Gemmyō 小野玄妙, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解說大辭典, 13 vols. [Tōkyō: Daitō Shuppansha 大東出版社, 1974–1988], 11:311c–d), a time in which the White Lotus sect still enjoyed some prestige and had not yet been condemned as a heterodox sect.

(b) The allusion to the buddhas of the six directions extending their vast tongues to support the preaching of a Pure Land sutra points to an episode near the end of the *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra* (*Fo shuo amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經, T. 366). The Buddha tells Śāriputra that the buddhas of the four cardinal directions plus the zenith and nadir extended the sign of their broad and long tongues to commend acceptance of the preaching. See T12n0366_p0347b18–348a5.

(c) The *ding*-vessel of Yu (*Yu ding* 禹鼎) refers to a sacrificial vessel (or perhaps nine vessels) cast by the legendary sage-emperor Yu the Great. On the surface he depicted all the animals so that his people would know which were beneficial and which were malignant. The inquirer seems to fault the Buddha for having pointed out only the good while neglecting to warn against the evil as Yu did with this vessel. See the *Chunqiu zuo zhuan* 春秋左傳 entry for the third year of *Xuan gong* (*Xuan gong san nian* 宣公三年, Chinese Text Project <http://ctext.org/chun-qi-u-zuo-zhuan/xuan-gong-san-nian>, accessed August 5, 2014).

(d) There is a passage in the *Precious Mirror* that seems to deplore refining *qi* as a false practice.

Today the heretical and stupid do not understand the false transmission of the *Zhenzong miaoyi jing*. It deludedly says that semen is the buddha-jewel, *qi* is the dharma-jewel, and spirit is the sangha-jewel. They hand down this practice, causing those who would enter the wholesome gate to believe their heretical words and not reverence the [true] Three Jewels (T47n1973_p0345b11-b16).

See also T47n1973_p03475c20-c22 for condemnation of evil spirits that delude practitioners. Furthermore, T47n1973_p0347b28-c03 seems to decry substituting certain Daoist practices for proper *nianfo*. There are also many other passages in the tenth fascicle that warn practitioners away from various other heterodox practices, many of them Daoist.

(e) Other Pure Land texts criticize the breathing techniques of the *Scripture in Sixteen Words*. For instance, the *Shortcut among Shortcuts and More a Shortcut* (*Jing zhong jing you jing* 徑中徑又徑) has this: “Such is the spurious *Scripture in Sixteen Words*’ [teaching of] gathering the breath in the navel and sending it directly to the lower field of cinnabar” (X62n1185_p0385a01-a2).

19. (108:389b; X61n1158_p0508a14)

Question: Those who are lost these days seem like people sitting with their backs to a candle. No one would fail to see the candle if they

just turned their heads. [Similarly] as soon as one contemplates (or invokes) the buddha with whom one shares an affinity, this should cause one to see the buddha. If one must wait until one's contemplation has ripened to see [the buddha], then one who turns his head to the candle would likewise have to stare for a while until his eye ripened enough to see it. Would he only see it after a long period [of staring]? Supposing that the Buddha has set forth a skillful expedient so that while [someone] is contemplating (or invoking) their buddha, their vision of that buddha would follow their contemplation, but when they brought this mind [of contemplation] to a halt, random thoughts would intrude and the mind would become muddled. Thus, everyone could practice *nianfo*; why would anyone be an *icchāntika*?

Answer: Every day the sun mounts the sky, but with a basin on your head you're not aware of it. A bright mirror could be constantly before a blind person's face, but that person would not know it. If a person practices *nianfo* and connects with Amitābha thought after thought, but he obscures and deludes himself, then how is this any different? If the buddha-moon fails to appear because the mind-water is not clear, then sentient beings themselves are to blame; what fault is there with the Buddha? Moreover, [even] with a bright candle at their backs, how many people will turn their heads? Giving guidance to the stiff and stubborn is futile. How does this differ from blaming the Buddha for [people's] muddled views?

Notes:

The inquirer presumes that *nianfo* works *ex opere operato*. That is, one who practices it in whatever form should have a vision of the Buddha with whom they have an affinity right away. He then observes that if this were true, it would then follow that as soon as one ceased contemplating or invoking that buddha, the vision would disappear and the mind would revert to its former delusion. Thus he leaves Zhuhong with a paradox: the practice *should* work very easily, but if it did, then its fruits would just as easily be lost.

Zhuhong responds that even when practitioners of *nianfo* are indeed successfully building a connection with Amitābha, their own ignorance prevents them from perceiving him. That is a result of their own darkened condition; it is not that the Buddha has failed to keep his vow.

20. (108:390a; X61n1158_p0508a24)

Question: The *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (*Huangdi nei jing* 黃帝內經) elucidates the “sickness of great delusion” (*dahuo zhi bing* 大惑之病) as suddenly seeing something for no reason. These days, student-practitioners will suddenly see something in the midst of primordial nonbeing (*benwu* 本無); how is this any different from seeing a ghost? It also says that at the time of death they are met and led along. This is what is called being beguiled to abandon one's body and follow ghosts when fortune ebbs. Is this not also great delusion? Moreover, these are called delusions of views (*jianhuo* 見惑) or mental disturbances (*sihuo* 思惑). Could all delusions be broken by this [medical teaching]? How could people of the world break free of delusion (a)?

Answer: How could suddenly seeing something for no reason not be heterodox? How could the present accomplishment of longstanding contemplative practice not be orthodox? This is the constant principle of cause and effect. The student-practitioner of pure karma [or Pure Land practice] ought to consider the source of cause and effect and make exact distinctions between the errant and the proper throughout the day. As to what is seen at the last moment of life, it is obvious when it is a demon and when it is the buddha; who would be confused? If you are contemplating a standing buddha but what appears is a seated buddha, then it is a demon. If the [buddha's] attributes and the surroundings do not match the descriptions in the sutras, then it is a demon. If one contemplates emptiness via emptiness but it is obscured, then it is a demon. If it is none of these, then the purity of the mind will mature, the pure realm will manifest before one, and one will be conducted to rebirth and receive teaching from [the Buddha's] golden mouth. Can this really be compared with a sudden groundless vision?

Notes:

(a) The text of the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* as found on the Chinese Text Project website contains a reference to a malady called “great delusion” (*dahuo* 大惑) defined as “chaotic inversion of the great channel wherein one takes the true for the vacuous, heterodoxy for truth,” and so on, but it is not stated in exactly the same terms used in the question, nor does it involve visual hallucinations. See chap. 27, *Lihe zhen xie* 離合真邪, v. 3 at ctext.org. Oddly, the work has a chapter called the “Discourse on Great Delusion” (*Dahuo*

lun 大惑論, chap. 80) which does not discuss this particular malady. Nevertheless, the main topic of this question is clear enough: how does one tell a genuine vision of the Buddha at the last moment of life from a hallucination? This is made clear when the inquirer describes ghosts and devils as “meeting and leading” the sufferer; the term he uses, *jieyin* 接引, is exactly the term used in Pure Land texts to describe the Buddha or one of his attendant bodhisattvas meeting the devotee at the moment of death and leading him or her to the Pure Land.

21. (108:390a; X61n1158_p0508b12)

Question: The scripture says that in that land there is still a difference between *devas* and people of the world. Since in [the Pure Land] there is no office governing sun or moon or wind or rain, then what responsibilities do the *devas* have? Also, there is none of the hard work of seeking after clothing or food, so in what activities do worldly people engage? If all of them assume the six *zhang* and eight *chi* form (*zhang liu ba chi* 丈六八尺) in witness to their status as worthies and sages, then why bring out these old names [distinguishing *devas* from humans]?

Answer: When humans or *devas* practice *nianfo*, they all reap rebirth [in the Pure Land]. In his desire to preach the causes of rebirth, [the Buddha] continued to use their former appellations. They (*devas* and humans) are companions of non-action and lead a life of meditative equanimity [in the Pure Land]. What need is there to manage celestial affairs above or strive after human affairs below as in this present world?

22. (108:390b; X61n1158_p0508b19)

Question: Dharmākara set forth his forty-eight vows saying, “If this vow is not accomplished, may I not become a buddha.” Now Dharmākara’s achievement of buddhahood took ten *kalpas*; it has been a very long time since he accomplished his vows! Nevertheless, he is especially speedy about guiding beings and bringing them [to the Pure Land]. Like [someone] trying to fill in a river or stop up a well (a), it seems as if he has not yet fulfilled his vows. Why? A vow not fulfilled cannot be said to be achieved; a vow not yet achieved should not have made him a buddha. How could it be that after becoming a *nirmāṇakāya* buddha and vowing to save beings, he achieves nirvana and reverts to his original buddhahood and [just then] begins to actually become a buddha (b)?

Answer: The bodhisattva path obtains only at the causal stage; thus, when one moves from cause to fruition, then one dwells at the stage of fruition. Moreover, one practices the causes while carrying the fruit; this is to attain one's vows while the mind abides as if they were not yet attained. The great vows [of the bodhisattva] state that one becomes a buddha, yet one does not abide as a buddha. This is the presence of true buddhahood. How could this possibly compare with the lesser practices of humans, *devas*, *arhats*, or those who lean excessively toward emptiness (c)? If one claims that the *nirmāṇakāya*-buddha (or manifest buddha, *ji fo* 跡佛) saves living beings and that only in nirvana does one become a true buddha (*zhen fo* 真佛), then the nirvana of all the buddhas of old amounts to extinction. The assembly on Vulture Peak seems not to have dispersed yet (d); how would this make sense [if the Buddha goes into extinction]?

Notes:

(a) The images of filling a river or stopping up a well come from Chinese poetry. For example, the first of the two poems entitled “Difficulties of Walking the Road” (*Xinglu nan* 行路難) by Gu Kuang 顧況 of the Tang dynasty (ca. 725–814) has the line “Have you not seen what a waste of energy it is to carry snow to stop up a well?” (君不見擔雪塞井空用力).

(b) The question points to a paradox that the inquirer perceives in the standard story of Amitābha's origin. The Bodhisattva Dharmākara made a series of vows that as a buddha he would be able to do various deeds to assist living beings and that his buddha-field would have certain features, and if he did not gain these abilities or if his Pure Land did not have the vowed features, then he would not accept buddhahood. Now as the Buddha Amitābha, he is able to do all that he vowed. The inquirer says that this understanding means that Amitābha was a buddha before he was a buddha, or that he must be a buddha to become a buddha.

(c) Zhuhong's answer invokes the Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching of nonduality with regard to the relationships of path to goal and phenomenal manifestation to true nature. The inquirer is confused only because he distinguishes the path of the bodhisattva from the goal of buddhahood too firmly, not seeing that they interpenetrate. Zhuhong adverts to one of the “four great vows” (*si hong shiyuan* 四弘誓願) that Mahāyāna Buddhists take when they embark on the path, which states

that they will achieve the unsurpassed buddha-way. Within the view of nonduality, says Zhuhong, to make this vow is to already be a buddha in some sense. Similarly, the inquirer's distinction between a "manifest buddha," i.e., one that actually appears to the practitioner, and the "true buddha," i.e., a buddha as he is in himself, is equally misleading. Nonduality thus resolves the inquirer's paradoxes.

(d) The last statement alludes to the belief that the Buddha Śākyamuni did not just preach the *Lotus Sutra* on Vulture Peak in some distant past, but abides there still preaching to the assembly.

23. (108:390b; X61n1158_p0508c06)

Question: Some say that the west is the direction in which "Heaven is exhausted and things grow old" (*tian qing wu lao* 天傾物老) (a). When people die and their thoughts come to an end, [the west] is where they attain birth. They also say: At the place where Heaven is exhausted, Earth still has some remainder (b). This remainder is thus able to accommodate the broad mass of beings that attain rebirth. They also say: "*Gengxin* 庚辛 is subordinate to gold; gold does not change or decay" in order to illustrate the meaning of the stage of non-retrogression (c). They also say the myriad things come to maturity via the west; the various kinds of fruit all go to seed in the fall. Disciples (*xingren* 行人) practice the causes in the east and realize the fruition in the west. I understand "going to rebirth" (*wangsheng* 往生) as nothing but the occasion of birth (*shengji* 生機). Why would one not enter into the place where things are born in the east rather than entering the place of desolation [in the west], or, as it is a symbol of the highest meaning, why would one not go directly to the center? Would that not be to take into consideration only a being's capacity in a single moment? Does this "west" have nothing about it that grasps the [highest] meaning (d)?

Answer: One single saying of a *tathāgata* can bring together multiple meanings, but heterodoxy and orthodoxy take different paths and one must make a choice. If one says that thoughts are cut off, [then] thoughts are cut off and who is there to take birth? If one says the land accommodates, then the land's accommodation has limits. The nature of gold is not to change; autumn's place is to ripen. These two meanings are very close, but if one discusses them according to their realities, it is not quite so. Space is inexhaustible, so how could the world use it up? If one looks at this Land of Utmost Bliss from the east, then it is in the west; if one looks at it from the west, then it is in the

east. North and south are the same. Śākyamuni advised [us to] go [to rebirth], so he said to go to the west. When other buddhas commend rebirth, they must necessarily point in other directions. Why do you cling stubbornly to the west and establish it as an immutable dogma? It isn't. When the youth [Sudhana] traveled in search of instruction, why would he take south as the [only] proper direction? When Bhaiṣajyaguru gave instruction, he decreed that the east was the direction of purity. All you need to do is take refuge in one place; focusing your thoughts is already an achievement (e).

Notes:

(a) The inquirer makes many references to Chinese traditional beliefs about the relationships between Heaven and Earth, numerology, and other occult learning. The phrase *tian qing wu lao* 天傾物老 turns up with this meaning in an appendix to the gazetteer of Mt. Qingliang 清涼山志 when reporting on a 1586 dharma-meeting devoted to Pure Land practice. The appendix, penned by Imperial Censor (*yushi* 御史) Li Shida 李世達, is called the “Record of Pure Karma at the Lion Grotto” (*Shizi ku jingye ji* 獅子窟淨業記) and says, “They strove to their utmost for the West as if the Heavens were exhausted and all things were aging. The sun set and the moon rose, and they were swift and resolute with nothing to stop them.” (See CBETA GA079n0081_p0289a12.)

(b) Regarding the inquirer's statement that in the west Earth has a “remainder,” I found a statement in a contemporaneous work, the *Zhouyi ji zhu* 周易集註 (*Collected Comments on the Zhouyi*) by the Ming dynasty figure Lai Zhide (來知德, 1526–1604) which deals with the “Circle of Nines” (*jiujiu yuan shutu* 九九圓數圖) and the “Square of Nines” (*jiujiu fang shutu* 九九方數圖):

The number of Heaven is obtained in one operation: three threes yield nine. The number of Earth is two. Two twos yield four, four yields eight, and one more is nine. [...] The Way of Heaven is used up at nine; nine is seen as Earth with remainder. The Way of Earth is used up at eight; eight is seen to be insufficient for Heaven.

This is an instance in which the earth “has remainder.” (See figure 1 from Lai Zhide 來知德, *Zhouyi ji zhu* 周易集註 [Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe 九州出版社, 2004], 883–884.)

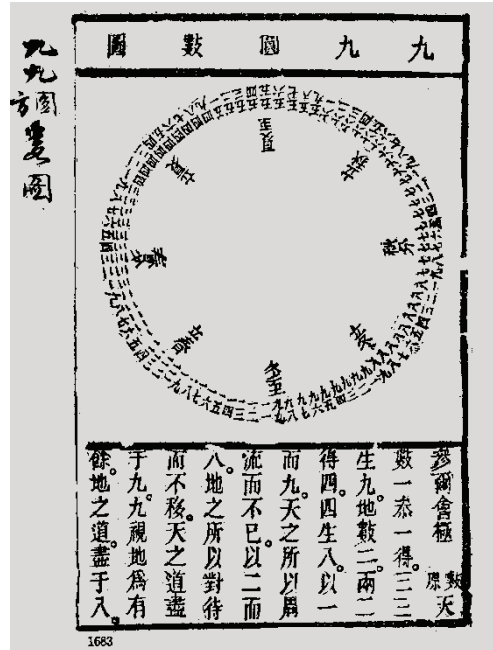


Figure 1. From Lai Zhide 來知德, *Zhouyi ji zhu* 周易集註 (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe 九州出版社, 2004), 883–884.

(c) This is based on the *Tianwen xun* 天文訓 chapter of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, number 6: “The western direction is metal/gold...its day is *gengxin*” (*Huainanzi* 淮南子, ctext.org).

(d) By appealing to traditional Chinese cosmological ideas and divination texts, the inquirer disputes the idea that the western direction can be auspicious or desirable.

(e) Zhuhong’s tactic here is to undermine the premises of the inquirer’s objections. He denies that the earth has any room for a remainder by noting that in Buddhist teaching space is infinite. He points out that in Buddhist thought, all distinctions are relative, so the idea that a direction such as the west has any fixed nature or meaning that can be discerned through numerology or divination becomes untenable.

24. (108:391a; X61n1158_p0508c22)

Question: The Tuṣita heaven is the royal dwelling of [the future Buddha] Maitreya. In the past, people often took vows to seek rebirth there and they had ritual protocols for it. Then the Tang [dynasty monk] Dao'ang (道昂) focused on cultivating the western direction, but at the time of his death [a retinue from the] Tuṣita heaven came to welcome him (a). Can one arrive at [rebirth in] the Tuṣita heaven despite not vowing it? Likewise, can one arrive in Sukhāvātī without having vowed it? Again, one might vow to obtain [the realm of a] Copper-wheel [king] but attain [the realm of an] Iron-wheel [king], or vow to attain the golden dais but instead attain a silver dais (b). Thus, one might choose the western Pure Land but receive the eastern Pure Land. Who knows?

Answer: The ten kinds of virtuous behavior, precepts, and *samādhi* are the primary causes by which one is reborn in a heaven. Setting forth vows and dedicating merit are the primary causes by which one is reborn in a Pure Land. Thus, those born in a heaven can include those not qualified by vows, but birth in the Pure Land cannot be accomplished without vows. Now [birth in] the Pure Land is not [accomplished] without the power of virtuous action, but vows must come first (c). Furthermore, one seeks birth in a heaven based on yearning, and virtue is most important for it. In the world there are those who begin cultivating practices leading to heaven, but later realize their mistake and devote themselves to the western [Pure Land]. Therefore at death the Jade Capital appears and they quickly go into seclusion there, but then it becomes apparent that it would have been proper to seek a buddha-land exclusively (d). How can one practice casually and accomplish it? Now the copper and iron [wheels] are a different matter. The golden and silver daises are just a little off; they deal with seeking the superior but only attaining the middling. However, in the end the domain [one attains] must accord with one's vows. If one makes resolutions [to attain] the West but one's merit falls short, then one attains rebirth in the good paths of humans and *devas*. If one is single-minded and generates firm and sincere vows, then [if it is for] the West then one will of necessity [attain] the West; why would one be satisfied with birth in the East?

Notes:

(a) On the Tang dynasty monk Dao'ang 道昂, see the notice in fascicle 1 of the *Wangsheng ji* 往生集 at T51n2072_p0131c27-132a14, among other places. Here he is described as a lecturer on the *Huayan Sutra* and the *Dilun* who vowed to be reborn in Sukhāvātī. His accomplishments were such that he was able to predict the time of his own death, but when the time came, the assembly of the Tuṣita heaven appeared to greet him. Declaring that the Tuṣita heaven was still within saṃsāra, he refused the grace and waited until the assembly from Sukhāvātī came, at which point he passed away peacefully.

(b) The last two sentences refer to other possibilities for future rebirth in dependence upon how and what one cultivates. For example, the *Sutra of the Benevolent Kings* (*Renwang huguo bore boluomiduo jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經, T. 246) makes reference to those who generate the great mind of *bodhicitta* and avoid the three evil paths of rebirth. Those who attain the lower or middling levels of goodness attain the rank of petty kings who owe allegiance to a greater king (*susan wang* 粟散王), those who attain the superior level of goodness attain the rank of a king of the iron wheel (*tielunwang* 鐵輪王), followed by those who practice the virtues of the copper wheel (*tonglun* 銅輪). See T08n0245_p0827b15-b16.

(c) When Zhuhong refers to “the power of virtuous action” (*shanli* 善力), he is making a reference to the *Larger Sukhāvātī-vyūha sūtra*, T12n0360_p0270a20 -a21: “By the power of meritorious deeds, sentient beings in that land dwell on the ground of karmic reward.” (其諸衆生功德善力。住行業之地。 English translation from Inagaki, *Three Pure Land Sutras*, 43.)

(d) The reference to the “Jade Capital” (*yujing* 玉京) is interesting. In Daoism, this is the name of the highest of the heavenly realms, but since the inquirer asked about rebirth in the Tuṣita heaven, it might seem that Zhuhong is changing the subject. However, there is a tantalizing statement in the preface to the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Song gaoseng zhuan xu* 宋高僧傳序) that refers to the early days of Buddhist translation when Buddhists and Daoists both dwelt on Mount Zhongnan (referred to in the text as *Taiyi* 太一), during which time the term for buddha-land (*foguo* 佛國) was taken to refer to the Jade Capital (see T50n2061_p0709c16-c19). It is impossible from the text to know whether or not Zhuhong had this passage in mind, but it would serve as another example of practitioners confusing the goal of rebirth

in the Pure Land to the west with that of attaining rebirth in a heaven and understanding the whole process in native Chinese terms.

25. (108:391b; X61n1158_p0509a12)

Question: During a repentance [ritual], one worships all the buddhas of the three times [i.e., past, present, and future], but in *nianfo*, there is only Amitābha. Do we not insist that one does not invoke the names of all the buddhas of the three times? However, Amitābha goes by many names. Can we just pick out one of the names provided by the scriptures as we please and hold to it? In the *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra* the name is translated as “Immeasurable Life” (*Wuliangshou* 無量壽, i.e., Amitāyus) and “Immeasurable Light” (*Wuliangguang* 無量光, i.e., Amitābha). However, in the *Contemplation Sutra* he is called “Immeasurable Life” (*Wuliangshou* 無量壽, i.e., Amitāyus). How can the wisdom of the one who contemplates and the light that is contemplated both be considered “light”? The buddha in the west is just one among all the buddhas of the six directions whose lifespan is immeasurable. Is this buddha [Amitāyus] just praising himself?

Answer: Actually, the *tathāgatas* have a great many names indeed, but one selects one in particular to ripen the hearing faculties of living beings; among them there is no real difference. Only his designation as “Mituo” (彌陀) is common throughout the ten directions, and thus is enjoined upon those who practice recitation so that they will all be united in one refuge. Moreover, “Wuliangshou” (無量壽, i.e., “Amitāyus”) is a Chinese term, while “Amita” (阿彌陀) is Sanskrit, and his lifespan is equal to that of space itself, while his light pervades the universe. One may use all of them, but just saying “Wuliangshou” (“Amitāyus”) is sufficient. As to the buddhas of the ten directions, an inquiry [shows] that they have had the same names. Śākyamuni’s honorifics are so many as to be uncountable. Why should the Lord of Sukhāvati be the only exception (a)? It is not a question of a buddha praising himself. These days there are people who cling to the invocation of Śākyamuni while not invoking Amitābha. They are opinionated and stubborn above all others. Ah! It is Śākyamuni [himself] that directs you to take Amitābha as your master, but you don’t follow his teaching. This is like a son violating his father’s command by not going to an illustrious teacher. Although he calls him “father” all day, how is this not called disobedience?

Notes:

(a) Zhuhong may be employing humor here; directly after asserting that people refer to Śākyamuni under many honorifics, he uses “Lord of Sukhāvātī” to refer to Amitābha as if to drive home the point.

26. (108: 392a; X61n1158_p0509b03)

Question: When Avalokiteśvara succeeds [Amitābha] (a), those in later worlds will of course know to recite the name of that buddha. I do not know what buddha’s name the monk Dharmākara recited in order to establish his Pure Land. Assuming he had no [buddha’s name] to recite (or buddha to contemplate), then he should not force that which he himself did not follow on other people. Assuming that he recited (or contemplated) all the buddhas universally, then he especially should not make others focus only on him. Again, the opening of this gate began with Amitābha, so why should all [other] buddhas only know to admire this and shut their [own] gates? Did they have no regard for the place of living beings?

Answer: The buddhas who have emerged in the world are already beyond number; who can count how many former buddhas later buddhas would have contemplated? Nevertheless, a teacher inaugurates a dharma-gate according to [beings’] capacities, and of necessity it must come from the mouth of only one buddha, as when rites, music, and military expeditions come only from the Son of Heaven. It is not that all the [other] “princes” did not speak of *nianfo*. Moreover, the sea of dharma is boundless. It is not that it stops at *nianfo* and there are no other teachings available. Do not grasp at the [various] gates of conversion (*huamen* 入門); why would one need to practice them all oneself and [only] then go and teach others? Even though Amitābha did not recite (contemplate) some other ancient buddha, why should he not direct beings to recite (contemplate) him? It is analogous to Confucius, who had no constant teacher himself; did that get in the way of him being the ancestral teacher for ten thousand generations? One need only focus one’s contemplations. Why raise so many doubts?

Notes:

(a) The idea that Avalokiteśvara will succeed Amitābha as the sovereign Buddha of Sukhāvātī (or at least achieve buddhahood and his own Pure Land) is not found in the most popularly used translations

of the three Pure Land sutras, but may be found in earlier translations of the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra*. See, for example, the *Fo shuo Amituo sanyesanfo saloufotan guodu ren dao jing* 佛說阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 translated by Zhi Qian 支謙, T. 362 (T12n0362_p0309a14-a15), and *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jue jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 translated by Lokakṣema, T. 361 (T12n0361_p0291a03-a04). See Jan Nattier, “The Indian Roots of Pure Land Buddhism: Insights from the Oldest Chinese Versions of the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*,” *Pacific World*, 3rd series, no. 5 (2003): 189–192, 200n32 (in which the translators’ attributions are reversed). Another reference is found in the *Sutra of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara’s Prediction [of Future Buddhahood] (Guanshiyin pusa shouji jing* 觀世音菩薩授記經, T. 371, at T12n0371_p0357a11ff).

27. (108:392b; X61n1158_p0509b16)

Question: The Buddha [Amitābha’s] lifespan is said to be like the “sands of the river” and like the “*kalpa*-stone” (a) tremendous, remote, and not something that the two vehicles can comprehend. [However,] if one says that the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara will succeed (*shaotong* 紹統) that buddha, then it is both immeasurable and measurable. Will the buddha have had enough of living beings? Will living beings be fed up with the buddha? A buddha who has had it with living beings is *ipso facto* not a buddha. [If] living beings become fed up with the buddha, the *Lotus Sutra* says that Avalokiteśvara’s universal gate has been open for a very long time. It does not seem that those who delight in the new will be pleased to go along with this. [Also,] after the final nirvana of Amitābha, won’t there once again be a period of the Correct Dharma, a period of the Counterfeit Dharma, and a period of the Final Dharma (b)? Would the succession of Avalokiteśvara take place at the same time as [the future Buddha] Maitreya’s descent to take birth?

Answer: There are two [kinds of] immeasurability. The first is “immeasurable immeasurability.” [An example would be] the dharma-nature (*dharmatā*) that is equivalent to space. The second is “measurable immeasurability.” This is something that continues on, but humans and *devas* cannot calculate it. Doubters claim that Śākyamuni enticed people of the deluded country [world] and so put on an appearance of impermanence while Amitābha, the lord of all the worthies in the Pure Land, correctly taught [his own] eternal life (c). His nirvana [thus] looks like dissatisfaction with living beings, but the beings in the Pure Land are already awakened to the eternally-abiding body of the

Buddha. One cannot compare them to the ordinary beings of the *sahā* world, who generally take any disappearance of the [Buddha's] traces as a real death. There is no going or coming, nor is [the Buddha] new or old. How could those born in that land not be clear about this teaching? On this principle, when a son takes over [as head of] a household, the father retires, and when a minister has virtue then the prince abdicates [in favor of him]. Since living beings do not doubt they might be without a buddha, the Buddha can provisionally appear to abandon them (or: abandon his own life) to enter into nirvana. How could this be called “being fed up [with them]”? As to [Avalokiteśvara] succeeding to [Amitābha's] place and thus being confused with the Dragon-Flower [Assemblies], the dharma [taught in the Pure Land] has no Correct, [Counterfeit], or Final, and thus it radically differs from the *sahā* world.

Notes:

(a) The first two words of the phrase *hesha jieshi* 河沙劫石 are usually part of the phrase *henghe sha* 恆河沙, “the sands of the Ganges,” a common image for a staggeringly large number. The second two characters, *jieshi* 劫石, are of more indirect derivation. As Liang Liling 梁麗令 explains in her exploration of the word “*kalpa*” in Chinese literature, the Buddha illustrates the duration of a *kalpa* in fascicle five of the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (T. 1509) by saying it is as long as the time it would take for an immortal to completely wear down a stone mountain 4000 *li* in height by wiping it once with a soft cloth every 100 years (See T25n1509_p0100c11-c14). There is also a literary reference closer in wording to the inquirer's question. The Song poet Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210) expressed a wish that the emperor enjoy “fortune like the river sands and longevity exceeding the *kalpa*-stone.” 伏願福等河沙，壽逾劫石 (Liang Liling 梁麗令, “Cong ‘chang shijian’ dao ‘da zainan’” 從「長時間」到「大災難」 (“From the ‘Long Time’ to ‘the Great Catastrophe’”), *Cong yuyan kan fojing: fojing yuyan xue* 從語言看佛經: 佛經語言學, no. 55 (1998): 44n1.

The two phrases had been linked to describe the lifespan of Amitābha prior to the Ming dynasty. Biographies of Tanluan 曇鸞 (ca. 476–542) include a record of his conversations with the Indian monk Bodhiruci (?–527). As reproduced in the *Lebang wenlei* 樂邦文類 (T. 1969A), Tanluan encounters Bodhiruci while returning from his trip to see the famed Daoist adept Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), from whom he had received a large book on the arts of immortality.

Bodhiruci laughed at this and said, “If it is long life and immortality [that you want], then our buddha-way [is for you]. What do the Daoists have to offer?” He handed [Tanluan] the *Sutra on the Sixteen Contemplations* (i.e., the *Contemplation Sutra*, T. 365) and said, “You can recite this and never be reborn in the Triple World again. [...] What do you consider long life? Is it the [time measured by the] *kalpa*-stone? Is it [the time measured in] the river sands? (其為壽也。有劫石焉有河沙焉。) Sands and stones have limits and can be counted, but the lifespan [of one reborn in the Pure Land] is beyond reckoning.” (T47n1969Ap0194a25-194b01)

(b) Buddhism has always held that the doctrine taught by Śākyamuni would decay over time until it finally disappeared altogether. In China this was schematized into three periods called the Correct Dharma, the Counterfeit Dharma, and the Final Dharma. Once the teachings had utterly disappeared, the future Buddha Maitreya would take birth and renew them in a series of teaching assemblies held under the Dragon-Flower tree, and thus they were called Dragon-Flower Assemblies (*longhua hui* 龍華會). Zhuhong asserts that this might be true in the *sahā* world, but it does not hold for the Pure Land. The three periods of the dharma’s decline take place because of the absence of a buddha or bodhisattva to preserve it intact. In contrast, Amitābha will go into nirvana simply because it is time, and Avalokiteśvara will take over directly. The dharma taught in the Pure Land will not undergo any degradation or disappearance because of the continued presence of enlightened teachers. Consequently, there will be no need for any Dragon-Flower Assemblies to renew it.

(c) Zhuhong may be alluding to the *Lotus Sutra* when he says that Śākyamuni “put on an appearance of impermanence.” In that sutra Śākyamuni explains that his seemingly short life of only 80 years was a ruse. His lifespan is actually immeasurable, but he judged that he could spur his disciples to more energetic practice by leading them to believe he was about to depart the world. See the chapter “The Life Span of the Thus Come One” in Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 224–232. By comparing Amitābha’s nirvana and Avalokiteśvara’s succession to a son taking over while the father retires (not dies) and a ruler abdicating (not dying) to make way for a worthy successor, Zhuhong implies that the nirvana of Amitābha is likewise apparent, not real. Amitābha does not really disappear, but merely recedes to make way for Avalokiteśvara. This answers the “doubters” who think that Śākyamuni goes into an illusory nirvana

for the sake of his followers while Amitābha goes into a real nirvana because he is simply tired of sentient beings.

28. (108:392b; X61n1158_p0509c07)

Question: The bliss of the [Land of] Utmost Bliss is produced from sentiments and consciousness. [Beings] above the third *dhyāna* [heaven] have already stopped indulging in pleasure, but those in the nine grades [of rebirth in the Pure Land] return to the pursuit of pleasure. Why is this? If you say that the tranquility of extinction is the highest bliss, then why is [the bliss of the Pure Land] based on the condition that clothing and food are provided spontaneously and that the various forms of suffering do not exist? If you say that the Pure Land is mind-only, [I counter that] the fundamental mind is [characterized by] constant bliss. Why say in addition that “the contemplation of the Buddha-mind is great compassion” (a)?

Answer: Although [the Land of] Utmost Bliss connects to ordinary feelings, its reality is of two sorts. The first speaks of pleasure in opposition to suffering. It is devoid of all suffering, and so one calls it “Utmost Bliss.” The second speaks of “bliss” [on the basis of the Pure Land’s] nature. Because it lacks both suffering and pleasure, it is called “Utmost Bliss.” How can this true bliss be compassed by a deluded consciousness (b)? Furthermore, *śrāvakas* take the tranquility of extinction to be bliss; the bodhisattvas (*dasheng* 大聖) take compassion to be bliss, so would the mind of great compassion not be constantly blissful? But people of the world say “compassion” (*bei* 悲) when they mean worry. How petty!

Notes:

(a) The inquirer’s last sentence quotes very loosely from the *Contemplation Sutra*. In the Inagaki and Stewart translation, this reads, “To attain this contemplation is to perceive the bodies of all the Buddhas. By perceiving these, one also realizes the Buddhas’ mind. The Buddhas’ mind is great compassion.” See T12n0365_p0343b29-b31 and Inagaki, *Three Pure Land Sutras*, 87.

(b) This section uses the term *le* 樂 in two different senses, as Zhuhong makes clear in his answer. The term can mean ordinary pleasure and enjoyment, but in Buddhist texts it can also indicate bliss, a more rarified mental state of utter tranquility that is beyond pleasure and suffering. The inquirer is confused because he conflates the

two meanings. To clarify things, I have translated the word as either “bliss” or “pleasure” as the context required. The last sentence contains vocabulary from the *Analects* that would appeal to an educated readership.

29. (108:393a X61n1158_p0509c16)

Question: Impurities are necessary as resources for skillful teaching. In the past, Master [Dao]xuan upheld the *vinaya* with deep rigor, [but] *nirmāṇa-buddhas* often broke [the rules] through impurity. I would guess that the people in a pure land were all born [there] owing to perfect precepts. For them, it is entirely appropriate that the Buddha should universally show the mark of impurity in order to break their feelings of attachment. What purpose would be served by a further show of the mark of purity? Would this not be like using water to cross over water? If you say that it is just to accord with the fixed karma of people here, then in the phrase “desiring to make the dharma-sound spread abroad, conjures it up,” who desires and who conjures (a)?

Answer: Buddhas utilize skillful teaching as appropriate. Sometimes it is fitting to run counter [to a being’s inclinations] and break [habits or false views], and sometimes it is appropriate to follow along and bring [their tendencies] to completion. They merely bring [the method] into accord with a being’s faculties. [In] the *sahā* world of suffering, they first use suffering to bend and break [beings], and then use the Land of Peace, Sustenance, and Bliss (*anyang lebang* 安養樂邦) in tandem to gather them in. What matters is to free them permanently from entrenched habits and make their good roots pure and ripe. How is it acceptable suddenly to break them with [a repeat of the experience of] impurity, leading to renewed sprouts of avarice? This is why the water, the birds, and the [wind in] the trees [of the Pure Land] all proclaim the wondrous dharma. One waits for the strengthening of one’s resolve [in the Pure Land], then returns to this polluted land to benefit beings and teach. Nowadays vulgar monks attempt all manner of difficulties before they have matured a single virtue. They are blackened by contact with the dye (i.e., contaminated by this world). They bring it upon themselves (b)!

Notes:

The inquirer indicates that people in the present world must be shown impurity so that they will not be overly attached to purity. He

illustrates this point by contrasting the pure and moral conduct of the famed *vinaya* master Daoxuan (596–667) with the way in which more enlightened *nirmāṇa-buddhas* made skillful use of impurity to break attachment to purity. He thus feels that Pure Land teachings, bristling with visions of the purity of that buddha-land, are counterproductive.

(a) The inquirer muddies his question by quoting only a sentence fragment from the *Shorter Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra*. The full quotation runs, “All these birds are conjured by Amitāyus out of his desire to make the sound of the dharma spread and flow.” In context, it simply explains why there are birds in a Pure Land that was earlier said to lack rebirth in the animal realm, but perhaps he thinks the birds ought to be real rather than conjured so that there will be some impurity in the Pure Land. See T12n0366_p0347a20.

(b) The reference to “vulgar monks” in the last sentence is probably a criticism of perceived proponents of “Crazy Chan” (*kuangchan* 狂禪), a common trope at the time. The targets of this criticism were said to break the precepts and rules of purity to demonstrate their own transcendence of dualities. Critics like Zhuhong and Yuan Hongdao found such claims spurious and self-serving (see also question 33).

30. (108:393b; X61n1158_p0510a03)

Question: When a person engages in worship of the Buddha, every one of the buddhas knows; the buddhas of the ten directions come in welcome. Why does that person have a [particular] direction to face? All buddhas are identical in their fundamental natures, identical in their particular manifestations, identical in everything. The one invoking (or contemplating) the Buddha accords with all the buddhas of the ten directions who come to meet and guide [them to the Pure Land]. If only the three holy ones of a single direction come in welcome when one invokes (or contemplates), then one’s views are one-sided and shallow.

Answer: The buddhas know everything, but they do not go forth in an unruly crowd. Since one assiduously concentrates on one buddha, then [that buddha] is automatically in accordance through sympathetic resonance (*ganying* 感應). A practitioner of Pure Land causes all the buddhas to manifest equally, but there must be a main [buddha] and attendant [buddhas]. Amitābha manifests alone, with clouds of transformation-buddhas following. The principle of cause and effect works like this; it is not that their attainment is one-sided and shallow.

31. (108:393b; X61n1158_p0510a10)

Question: The *Nirvana [Sutra]* says that Śākyamuni also has a pure land (a). How could we not accept the final heartfelt word our original guiding master gave during his last teaching? How would it not be most fitting to recite (or contemplate) only Śākyamuni during the six periods of the day and be reborn in his [buddha-] land “Difficult to Excel” (*Nansheng* 難勝)? Śākyamuni gives utmost praise to Amitābha. [But] once we have been born there [in Śākyamuni’s Pure Land] in accordance with his vows, what would stop him from sending us out to serve Amitābha?

Answer: Who among all the buddhas does not have a pure land? Amitābha also has a defiled land. The resources of these [pure and defiled] lands flow back and forth, and buddhas praise one another, as when [families] in the world bring up each others’ children.³ It is just like the flower connecting to the stalk and giving life (b). It is a wondrous function and a hidden expedient; it is inconceivable. How do you know [the land called] “Difficult to Excel” is not the same as the pure and calm countryside [of Amitābha]? Can we be sure that Gautama did not come after Dharmākara? Just obey the present teaching; don’t go looking for something else.

Notes:

(a) The inquirer is probably referring to a dialogue found in the 24th fascicle of the *Nirvana Sutra* (*Da ban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T. 374). A bodhisattva named Light Universally-Illuminating Highly Exalted Virtue King (*Guangming bianzhao gaogui dewang pusa* 光明遍照高貴德王菩薩) says that all buddhas engage in ten practices, the last of which is the purification of a buddha-land, but notes that Śākyamuni has only practiced nine, implying that Śākyamuni has no buddha-land. Śākyamuni responds that he does indeed have a pure buddha-land called “Unexcelled” (*Wusheng* 無勝) which lies as far to the west of this *sahā* world as buddha-lands as numerous as the sands of 32 Ganges Rivers. See T12n0374_p0508c14 -509a04. While the inquirer refers to Śākyamuni’s pure land as “Difficult to Excel,” the *Nirvana Sutra* calls it “Unexcelled.” See T12n0374_p0508c27.

3. Thanks to Natasha Heller and Hsiao-Lan Hu of the Scholars of Buddhist Studies Facebook group for help with some difficulties in this passage.

(b) Since the subject under discussion is the fact that all buddhas have pure lands from which they emerge to teach in defiled lands, the flower and stalk imagery is meant to evoke the lotus flower, whose stalk is in the muddy water while the flower rises above and remains pure. Buddhas connect their pure and defiled lands just as the lotus stalk connects the pure flower from the muddy roots. *Qingtai* 清泰 is another name for Amitābha's pure land.

32. (108:393b; X61n1158_p0510a18)

Question: Some say that a person who has attained a great and thorough enlightenment is not hindered from also seeing Amitābha. Without having even passed through all the stages, one becomes a buddha immediately. One [therefore] sees the Buddha as a buddha, just as by knowledge one knows knowledge. This one act of seeing is penetration and realization. The point is to provide a provisional role model. Further, perhaps through principle one achieves sudden transcendence, but one's body remains that of a worldling. Only when one masters the marvelous function will one be able to save beings.

Answer: When worldly minds first attain awakening, their perspective is equal to the Buddha's. [However], bodhisattva practices are boundless; their (i.e., the newly-enlightened) power to act is still far from that of a buddha. There is no harm in resorting again to a past buddha to hear [the Dharma] anew. Realization and deep probing happen together; how inexhaustible and endless! Of old, people said that if one left one's teacher too early, one would not plumb all their marvels; how much more would this be true of a buddha? If one clings to [the idea that it takes] three incalculable eons of being infused and tempered [by the dharma], then this is to take the small vehicle of the *śrāvaka* teachings and lose the benefit by flying about wildly with weak wings. Can one not be cautious about these things?

Notes:

The inquirer presents the Chan idea of sudden enlightenment in which one becomes a buddha instantly (*lidi chengfo* 立地成佛) upon realizing one's true nature. This is what the inquirer means by sudden transcendence by means of principle. He and Zhuhong are in agreement that one can and should continue to pursue rebirth in the Pure Land because one still has some growth and development ahead. This is what

the inquirer means by attaining the marvelous function which allows one to teach any other being with skill.

33. (108:394a; X61n1158_p0510b03)

Question: Purity is defilement, and defilement is purity. The west[ern Pure Land] and this [*sahā* world] are not separated by even an inch. Birth [there] is no-birth; going there is really non-going. [However], now we say “in a finger snap,” or “in a single thought [-moment],” or “[in the time it takes to] flex and straighten your arm.” These too are approximations of time, and so it still seems one lifts a foot and then takes a step (a). Though we could say it is extremely fast, it still is a double path (i.e., dualistic).

Answer: When grasping is dispelled and delusions dissolved, then even if a thousand mountains obstruct the road, they interpenetrate in nonduality. When feelings are closed and consciousness locked, then even at the speed of a finger-snap they judge the gap to be excessively deep. These days, people of learning try for nothing more than novelty in their speech. They love to say “defilement is purity” without knowing that their heads are submerged in the deepest (lit. ninth) abyss. They aver that there is no distinction between sky and dirt. Their bodies sink into an abalone latrine (b), and they say there is no difference between fragrance and stench. This is pathetic!

Notes:

(a) The inquirer first states the belief that there is no ultimate difference between this world and the Pure Land, but he also cites familiar Pure Land texts that talk about the brief time it takes to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. For example, the first quotation, “in a finger snap,” echoes Huaigan’s 懷感 *Treatise Resolving Various Doubts about Pure Land* (*Shi jingtu qunyi lun* 釋淨土群疑論, T. 1960): “The sutra says one is born into that land as in the snap of one’s fingers” (T47n1960_p0066a06-a07). This can be traced back further to the *Contemplation Sutra*: “One goes to rebirth in that land in the snap of one’s fingers” 如彈指頃往生彼國。 (T12n0365_p0344c25). His point is that while the identity of purity and impurity, of this world and the Pure Land, would entail no journey to take and thus no time needed to take it, the similes still betray processes that have beginnings and ends, however little separated in time or space. Thus, his question is: Is the journey to the Pure Land instantaneous or simply very fast?

(b) The first two sentences of Zhuhong's answer are almost poetic and form two parallel phrases. The phrase "sky and dirt" replaces the usual phrase "Heaven and Earth" (*tiandi* 天地) with *tianrang* 天壤. I am very unsure about the word "abalone" (*bāo* 鮑) before "latrine." It might be a typographical error, or it might signify a luxurious latrine lined in abalone.

34. (108:394a; X61n1158_p0510b10)

Question: Stop people on the road and ask them, and they all say that because *nianfo* is audible, it is oral recitation (*koucheng* 口稱), not mental contemplation (*xinnian* 心念). Ask further, and they say that in speaking, mind and mouth are mutually responsive. The mutual response of mind and mouth becomes sound. Because the mind moves this is considered thought (*nian* 念). How could sound be considered thought? Some say that the myriad things are mind-only. How is sound not mind? If that were the case, then wouldn't the sound of bells, drums, and the *qin* and *se* also be thought (a)? How confusing!

Answer: Bells and drums may contain rich harmonies, but unstruck they do not sound. The *qin* and *se* may make marvelous sounds, but they do not emerge without plucking. Bells and drums, *qin* and *se* are analogous to the outward extension of lips and tongue. The beating and the plucking are like the inward movements of the mind. If one cuts off thought, from whence will the sound come? Hence mumbling in your bed comes from dreaming. How then could the sound of "Buddha" come pouring out if not from the mind-source? However, people of the world resign themselves to just calling out [the name] without focus and without zeal. First, they turn some thoughts into sound, then follow the sound with disordered thoughts. They call this "mutual response," but it is not really mutual response. Tianru 天如 had a saying: "Mouth and mind mutually respond recitation after recitation; mind and Buddha keep pace together, step after step" (b). Practice *nianfo* like that. Wouldn't that be nearer the mark?

Notes:

(a) The *qin* 琴 and *se* 瑟 are zither-like stringed instruments.

(b) Tianru 天如 (?-1354) was a Chan monk of the Linji lineage. Later in his life he turned to Pure Land and composed the apologetic text *Jingtu huowen* 淨土或問 (*Questions about Pure Land*, T. 1972). This particular

quotation is found in the second fascicle of his *Recorded Sayings* (*Tianru Weize chanshi yulu* 天如惟則禪師語錄) at X70n1403_p0767b01.

35. (108:394b; X61n1158_p0510b22)

Question: The youth Sudhana first came to know of the dharmagate of *nianfo* during his study under Deyun, and after he journeyed southward and passed a hundred walled cities and made 54 calls he saw Amitābha. Thus he achieved *samādhi* (a). At another time Mañjuśrī manifested himself in the Bamboo Grove [Temple] and instructed people only in the contemplation of Amitābha (b). Now with Sudhana having attained the ten faiths, why would Mañjuśrī not directly point him to the vision of Amitābha, instead making him travel around through a hundred cities? Did other students jump the gun by taking refuge directly in the West without having undertaken a southward journey?

Answer: To be taught *nianfo* at the outset of practice is to flow out from the source; to travel around and then to see Amitābha is to go from the branches back to the root. It is what we mean by “There is nothing that does not flow from this *dharmadhātu* and there is nothing that does not revert back to this *dharmadhātu*” (c). Thus, how could travelling southward and then returning to the west be putting things off? How could attaining rebirth [in the western Pure Land] and then journeying everywhere be thought of as jumping the gun? The king of doctors dispenses medicines as suits the symptoms and the disease. He uses this or dispenses with that according to the subtleties of the occasion. Indeed, ordinary thoughts do not fathom this!

Notes:

(a) In the 80-fascicle translation of the *Huayan Sutra* (*Da fangguangfo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T. 279), the youth Sudhana (*Shancai Tongzi* 善財童子) journeys southward to visit and receive teachings from fifty-three sages. The first of these is the monk Deyun, who teaches Sudhana several methods for contemplating buddhas (*nianfo* 念佛). As described, these are highly complex methods for visualizing or visiting multiple buddhas in all directions. See T10n0279_p0334b22-c23. In the eightieth and last fascicle, Sudhana visits the bodhisattva Samantabhadra (*Puxian Pusa* 普賢菩薩) and attains enlightenment and equality with all buddhas. Samantabhadra concludes the sutra with a long verse describing all the buddhas that the enlightened can see and

visit, and Amitābha (under the name Amitāyus) appears as one among a great number. There is no indication that Sudhana has actually seen him. See T10n0279_p0443b16-b17.

(b) The reference to Mañjuśrī's appearance at the Bamboo Grove Temple seems to refer to a story found in the *Lebang wenlei* 樂邦文類 (T. 1969A). Among the "Biographies of the Five Further Patriarchs of the Lotus Society" (*Lianshe ji zu wu da fashi zhuan* 蓮社繼祖五大法師傳) there is a story about Fazhao 法照. In 769 he held meetings at the Hudong Temple in Hengzhou (衡州湖東寺) for the practice of *nianfo*. Amitābha and the two bodhisattvas of the Pure Land appeared to the congregation, while an old man outside the hall pointed to the appearance of Mañjuśrī in his abode at Mount Wutai to the west. The bodhisattva appeared to the assembly in the Bamboo Grove Temple there and preached the exclusive efficacy of *nianfo* practice in the latter age. See T47n1969Ap0193a16-b07.

(c) The phrase "There is nothing that does not flow from this *dharmadhātu* and there is nothing that does not revert back to this *dharmadhātu*" does not occur in the *Huayan Sutra* itself, but seems to appear in several commentaries on it. See, for example, the *Dafang guangfo huayan jing shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏 by Chengguan 澄觀 at T35n1735_p0504b01, 525b27-28, and 872a13.

36. (108:394b; X61n1158_p0510c08)

Question: Gathering all of the six sense-faculties into the practice of *nianfo* is the true speech of great power. Since contemplation (*nian* 念) is what is produced from mind and intention, then vows, transfer of merit, worship, and repentance are all summed up in this one word "*nian*." Nowhere in the world are there vows outside of mind, or transfer of merit, worship, or repentance outside of mind. Now then, single-minded *nianfo* and the wisdom generated by that Buddha [together] constitute vows. Being exclusively focused on that Buddha is transfer of merit. [Saying the word] "*namo*" (南無) is worship. That one thought cancels the guilt of samsara is repentance. The rest can be known by these examples. Where is there any deficiency in *nianfo* such that the mind would remain in constant turmoil?

Answer: We regard single-mindedness and purity as the inner illumination of the contemplation of principle. The raising and moving of the five limbs are said to be the external auxiliaries of phenomenal repentance. It is not that direct contemplation of the fundamental mind

is not the quintessence, but beings in the Final Dharma period have meager wisdom and heavy defilements and must avail themselves of [both] the contemplation of principle and phenomenal repentance. The inner and the outer must both be deployed together for the attainment of *samādhi*, the maturation of wisdom, and rapid liberation from samsara. However, people nowadays retain only phenomenal repentance; they have completely abandoned contemplation of principle. Moreover, [even this phenomenal repentance] is window dressing [lit. external decoration] and empty formality with no actual remorse in it. Instead, it just causes men and women of pure belief to have continuously turbulent minds. They turn their backs on the kingly vows of Samantabhadra (a) and act contrary to the basic strictures of Ciyun. [One] sighs at this loss; it is a malady of long standing!

Notes:

Although it is never explicitly stated, the question appears to ask whether repentance rituals can be replaced with the practice of *nianfo*, since the inquirer seems to argue that single-minded *nianfo* contains all the elements of a repentance ritual. Zhuhong does not think people of his day were capable of this. As he says, although they practice *nianfo*, their minds are not engaged.

(a) The phrase “kingly vows of Samantabhadra” (*Puxian zhi yuanwang* 普賢之願王; the latter two words could also be “kings of vows”) refers to the last section of the 40-fascicle translation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* section of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (*Dafang guangfo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T. 293) produced by Prajña 般若 around 800 CE. Called the “Chapter on the Practice of Samantabhadra’s Vows” (*Puxian xingyuan pin* 普賢行願品), it lists ten great vows of the bodhisattva. They are (1) to worship all buddhas, (2) to praise all *tathāgatas*, (3) to make offerings widely, (4) to confess all karmic obstructions, (5) to rejoice in others’ merit, (6) to ask buddhas to teach, (7) to ask buddhas to remain in the world, (8) to follow the buddhas in study, (9) to always accord with sentient beings, and (10) to transfer the merits of all one’s practices. See T10n0293_p0844b24-b28. What is more, Samantabhadra promises that those who uphold these vows will attain rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha. See T10n0293_p0846c29.

37. (108:395a; X61n1158_p0510c20)

Question: The *Contemplation Sutra* says “The contemplation of the Buddha’s mind is great compassion” (a). If people of the world can release living beings and refrain from killing, be kind to people and love animals, all the way up to bringing the nine types of living beings to nirvana without having any thought of nirvana, their minds would then be equal to that of Dharmākara. As well, they would not be in violation of Śākyamuni’s instructions on mind-contemplation. So why choose such coarse traces as contemplation of [Amitābha’s] body or vocal invocation of his name, turning away from the buddhas’ mind as [if it were] an auxiliary cause?

Answer: There are two kinds of *nianfo*. The first is to think of the Buddha’s [pure] mind-nature, and the second is to contemplate his physical body or recite his name. To contemplate the Buddha’s [pure] mind-nature is to see the *saṃbhogakāya* (*zhenfo* 真佛). It does not impede one’s approach to the Buddha possessed of the luminous major and minor marks in the West. Contemplating the body or reciting the name is seeing the *nirmāṇakāya*, but one can also see the Buddha as he is in himself outside of all imagery. The fundamentals and the traces are mutually supportive; principle and phenomena (*lishi* 理事) have the same source. The mind-nature is not an auxiliary condition at all; how can body and name be coarse traces? Nowadays, followers of the “Five Books in Six Volumes” (*Wubu liuce* 五部六冊) borrow the term “non-action” (*wuwei* 無為) and undermine the law of cause-and-effect (b). They keep people from worshipping images and sneer at those who invoke the name. The ancients had a saying: “Everyone is a Danxia; only thus can they chop up a buddha [image] (c); each and every [would-be] Baizhang can say ‘wu’ at the outset” (d). Those who are not [at their level] yet will enter the hells like arrows shot forth.

Notes:

(a) The inquirer slightly misquotes the passage from T12n0365_p0343c01-02: It should read: “The mind of all the buddhas is great compassion” (諸佛心者大慈悲是). He substitutes *guan fo xin* 觀佛心 for *zhu fo xin* 諸佛心.

(b) The term “Five Books in Six Volumes” refers to the scriptures of the Luo Teachings (*Luojiao* 羅教), a millenarian religion that arose during the Jiaping reign of the late Ming dynasty (1522–1567).

(c) Danxia Tianran (丹霞天然) was a Chan monk of the Tang dynasty. Zhuhong refers to a story about him from the fourteenth fascicle of the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (T. 2076) in which, during a cold night at the Huilin Temple 慧林寺, he took a wooden buddha-image down from the altar and burned it to keep warm. When another person criticized him for this, he said he was burning it to obtain relics (*sheli* 舍利, Skt. *śarīra*). See T51n2076_p0310c13-c16. However, Zhuhong either misquotes the story or there was a transcription error: Where his answer says “chop up” (*pu* 劈), earlier sources have “burn” (*shao* 燒).

(d) The reference to Baizhang’s “wu” is unclear. If *dao* 道 here means “to say,” and given the context of the other reference about showing disrespect to a buddha-image, then it might refer to this story from the end of the *Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai* (Baizhang Huaihai chanshi yulu 百丈懷海禪師語錄):

Once when the Master was a boy, he entered a temple with his mother to worship the Buddha. Pointing at the holy image, he asked her, “What is that thing?” His mother said, “That’s the Buddha.” The boy said, “It looks no different (*wuyi* 無異) from a man. Later, I could be like that, too!” (See X69n1322_p0007b03-7b05.)

Since this is a story from Baizhang’s boyhood and shows the impetus for his later practice, it makes sense of Zhuhong’s saying that Baizhang began by saying “wu.”

38. (108:395b; X61n1158_p0511a08)

Question: Things like sky-flowers and cloth rabbits are what the world deems illusory and confused, while it considers proper and dependent recompense real things. [If] the Buddha says that [even] real things are entirely illusory and confused, then what names would sky-flowers and cloth rabbits merit (a)? If their reality turns out to be their unreality and their appearance is clearly false, then [even] a sky-flower or a cloth rabbit would be allowable. Why would one not even begin knowing illusion and confusion until after one has reasoned to their denial? Thus, there is illusion, and there is what seems like illusion; there is confusion, and there is what seems like confusion. Is the Pure Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together an illusion? Does it just seem like confusion? Confusion is completely true; illusion is entirely the Middle. The Defiled Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together itself is the Pure Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings]

Dwell Together (b). Is the Pure Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together also the three lands above it (c)?

Answer: Sky-flowers and cloth rabbits are completely nonexistent; flesh rabbits and flowers on trees are also always illusory. They are fundamentally self-refuting without the need for inference, but one does not yet know this from within delusion. Therefore, there is no distinction between a real illusion and what seems like an illusion. What difference is there between true confusion and what only seems like confusion? The Pure Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together is both illusory and [mere] seeming, [but is also] both true and the Middle. Discuss them together, and the Defiled [Land] is the Pure [Land], the one is the three; ultimately they are all empty and quiescent; what levels and limits would there be? Even though this is so, when feelings and views have not yet been overcome, and enjoying and hating still abide, then one needs to dispel illusion and confusion and experience the true and lasting. One must abandon the defiled land and seek birth in the pure country. With respect to [the phrase] “Abandoning filth and choosing purity is the karma of birth and death,” often a Chan master’s sayings cause what has not been expressed to be present.

Notes:

(a) The simile of sky-flowers, or illusory flowers seen in a clear sky due to an eye defect, occurs several times in Buddhist literature to illustrate false perceptions projected upon the world. Cloth rabbits, that is, rabbits that appear when a piece of cloth is manipulated in the hands, are used far less frequently. I have found some usage in commentaries where the cloth stands for the basic substance and the rabbit as the appearance. For example, see *Huayan jing mingfa pin neili sanbao zhang* 華嚴經明法品內立三寶章, T45n1874_p0624c22-c25.

(b) The terms “Pure Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together” (*tongju jingtu* 同居淨土) and “Defiled Land Where [Pure and Impure Beings] Dwell Together” (*tongju huitu* 同居穢土) are part of a larger scheme for classifying buddha-fields. The former would include Sukhāvātī, since unenlightened beings live there with buddhas and bodhisattvas in a purified environment, while the latter would be the present *sahā* world during the time of Śākyamuni’s preaching, since he dwelled in it together with worldlings. These would only be two categories within what are often very complex catalogues of lands. One

finds such a cataloging in the *Jingtu huowen* 淨土或問, T. 1972 of Tianru Weizi 天如惟則 (?–1354). (See T47n1972_p0294a28-295a23.)

(c) When the inquirer speaks about the three types of lands above the Pure and Defiled Lands under discussion, he is referring to one of a number of schemes for organizing Pure Lands. The Ming writer Yuan Hongdao explains this in his *Comprehensive Treatise on the West* (*Xifang helun* 西方合論, T. 1976). In the first fascicle, the ninth scheme, derived from Tiantai literature, lists four kinds of lands:

1. The Lands Where Worldlings and Sages Dwell Together (*fan-sheng tongju tu* 凡聖同居土), which is further divided into the Defiled and the Pure as explained here. Above these are the following three:
2. Pure Lands of Expedient Means with Remainder (*fangbian youyu jingtu* 方便有餘土),
3. True Recompense Unobstructed Pure Land (*shibao wu zhang'ai jingtu* 實報無障礙土), and
4. The Pure Land of Eternally Quiescent Light (*changji guang tu* 常寂光土). See T47n1976_p0391a23-a25ff.

(d) The phrase “Abandoning filth and choosing purity is the karma of birth and death” appears in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄, T. 2076. A student asks Mazu Daoyi (馬祖道一, 709–788) how to attain nirvana. Mazu responds that one attains it by not creating the karma of birth and death. When the student asks what this karma is, Mazu answers that seeking after great nirvana is the karma of birth and death, and that “abandoning filth and choosing purity is the karma of birth and death” (T51n2076_p0247a16-a18). Zhuhong seems to have been bothered by this phrase, because he also deals with it at greater length in his *Fo shuo Amituo jing shuchao* 佛說阿彌陀經疏鈔, where he says that it is a true but not final saying, and deleterious when applied indiscriminately. See X22n0424_p0637b4-8.

39. (108:396a; X61n1158_p0511a22)

Question: If, [when] contemplating the Buddha within one’s own mind, one uses a deluded mind to contemplate an illusory Buddha, [then] what one sees is both a Buddha and an illusion. Enlightenment is like a reflection in a mirror (a) or like empty space. The substance of this illusion is completely real and one realizes entrance into the

lotus ranks (b). But suppose a demon transforms its body to that of a buddha. That would be an illusion, too. Between this illusion and the foregoing one there is no duality and no distinction. Consequently, how could this delusion not be the same as [the Tiantai three concepts of] Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle (c)? The basic substance is completely real, but we must desire to dispel it. When one dispels attachment, where does it go?

Answer: Distinguishing the real from the illusory and discriminating demons from buddhas would require an entire lifetime of instruction; it could not be otherwise. To speak in accordance with the truth, though, the real is not established, so where is delusion? Moreover, if buddhas lack [reality], then who should we consider a demon? If one does not see an existent demon, then how is there any driving it out? When one's deluded consciousness is still blocked, one cannot yet do anything that is without demonic activity. One should carefully consider what the *Śūraṅgama sūtra* teaches (d).

Notes:

(a) According to the DDB, the phrase *jingxiang* 鏡像, here translated “reflection in a mirror,” can also mean a projection of the mind. This meaning would also work in this context, as the inquirer is pointing out that both mind and Buddha are mental constructs.

(b) The term *lianpin* 蓮品, “lotus ranks,” is a term Zhuhong used elsewhere to refer to a person who attained an unspecified but high level of rebirth in the Pure Land. (See *Wangsheng ji* 往生集, T51n2072_p0144b16-b17.)

(c) In referencing the Tiantai three teachings of Emptiness, the Provisional, and the Middle, the inquirer positions his statement within Buddhist orthodoxy. In realizing that one's delusory perceptions (including contemplation of the Buddha) are unreal, one realizes Emptiness. When one finds that they are real *as illusions*, one realizes the Provisional. When one can realize emptiness and provisionality at the same time, one reaches the Middle.

(d) The last sections of the *Śūraṅgama sūtra* deal with demonic states of mind to which accomplished meditators are liable. These may mimic states of enlightenment enough to fool practitioners and their followers. The sutra speaks of them as “*deva-māras*” (*tianmo* 天魔) who dwell in the heavens, and often adds that the effects in the mind that they produce are not necessarily unwholesome, but may become so when

mistaken for achievement of the final goal. Hence, Zhuhong's reference to the sutra reinforces his point that it might take a lifetime of teaching and practice to distinguish these beings/mental states from buddhas/enlightenment properly. See the *Śūraṅgama sūtra* (*Da foding rulai miyin xiuzheng liaoyi zhu pusa wanxing shou lengyan jing* 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經), T19n0945_p0151b29ff.

40. (108:396a; X61n1158_p0511b06)

Question: People in the past said that “the Buddha is the sun” to describe buddha-nature (a). They said “like the morning sun adorning the sky” to describe the Buddha's light. They also said “like a hundred, a thousand suns” (b). These are the warrants for this contemplation of the sun. Apart from those born blind, there is no one who does not see the sun, and by using it mind-contemplation is easy to achieve. However, masters have forsaken this and are relying on doing the contemplation of the [Buddha's] *ūrṇā*. I worry that they thereby mix up the order of [the sixteen visualizations of] the *Contemplation Sutra*, and I fear that absorbing the sun's essence will muddle them (c). How could one not think that the theory of the twin gate-towers (*huangque* 黃闕) in the space between the brows or the explanation of the gate of the Bright Hall (*mingtang* 明堂) will mix me up in the midst of my contemplation (d)?

Answer: Not to contemplate the sun but the *ūrṇā* instead is to jump out of order. There is an explanation. Even though the gate of [buddha-] contemplation is broad, it symbolizes [the Buddha's] great sovereignty, and so the word “Buddha” encompasses [everything else] (e). Even though the Buddha's bodily marks are many, they symbolize the middle way [of emptiness], and so the fine hairs [of the *ūrṇā*] alone bring [the rest] together. This is put forth for the sake of men (*fu* 夫) who delight in simplicity and convenience and are daunted by complexity and effort. It looks like jumping ahead of the proper order, but in reality there is no harm. I only worry that the dharma is established only to have demons follow, mixing the heterodox in with the orthodox; I cannot give an exhaustive list of such examples. Alas! Not only do they have an absurd understanding of the sutra texts, but they go and spread it around until it brings harm to the world. Inhaling the [essence of the] sun and moon, they also absorb evil spirits (*yaosui* 妖祟) and lose themselves. Guarding the Yintang (*yintang* 印堂, another term for the space between the eyebrows), they also gather excess heat

and blind their eyes. They force *qi* into the navel and bring forth venomous worms (*gu* 蠱). They practice *yunrendu* (運任督, a kind of *qigong*) and give themselves ulcers. They bring calamity to good people and bequeath disaster to later generations (f). Can you not feel pity?

Notes:

(a) I was able to find the phrase “the Buddha is the sun” in several places serving different purposes. For example, the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀, T. 2035, uses the phrase in three places to explain the relationship between Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism: “Confucianism is the five planets, Daoism is the moon, and Buddhism is the sun. One who can arrive at this thought establishes the three teachings in their proper places” (T49n2035_p0405b25-b26). In other passages, the phrase simply points to the Buddha’s ability to illuminate all, as in the *Fofa zhengzongji* 傳法正宗記, T51n2078_p0730a27.

(b) The phrase “like the morning sun adorning the sky” is not found in Buddhist literature. The last phrase “like a hundred, a thousand suns” occurs many times to describe the effect of the Buddha’s major and minor marks. For example, see the *Śūraṅgama sūtra* at T19n0945_p0108b23-b24.

(c) The reason the inquirer worries about violating the order of the *Contemplation Sutra* is that in its series of sixteen visualizations, the first is that of the sun setting in the west. One only begins visualizing the Buddha Amitābha at the ninth contemplation, indeed beginning with his *ūrṇā*, or the white tuft between his eyes. Thus, perhaps someone who wanted to begin directly with the visualization of the Buddha would start with the *ūrṇā* and not the sun.

(d) The last few phrases voice the concern that practitioners will confuse contemplations on the body of the Buddha with Daoist practices involving visualizations of parts of the practitioner’s body. For example, some Daoist *neigong* texts describe the space between the brows (the same place where the Buddha’s *ūrṇā* is located) as guarded by twin watchtowers (*huangque* 黃闕). The “Bright Hall” (*mingtang* 明堂) is located about an inch behind this spot. Taken all together, the question revolves around various ways that Buddhist Pure Land practice may have been mixed up with Daoist practices and concepts during the late Ming dynasty.

(e) The phrase “the word ‘Buddha’ encompasses [everything else]” (言佛便周) occurs in Tiantai Zhiyi’s commentary on the *Contemplation*

Sutra. In explaining the title of the *sutra*, Zhiyi says, “Even though there are sixteen contemplations, the word ‘Buddha’ encompasses them; thus, [the title of the *sutra*] says ‘*The Sutra on the Contemplation of Amitāyus Buddha*.’” In this context, the issue is that the sixteen contemplations are not just of the Buddha Amitābha, but of his land and attendant bodhisattvas as well, but the phrase “contemplation of the Buddha” covers all of it. The phrase is identical to Zhuhong’s usage, and is also a discussion of contemplation. See *Fo shuo guan wuliang-shoufo jing shu* 佛說觀無量壽佛經疏, T37n1750_p0186c15-c16. This phrase was picked up in many later works, including Zhuhong’s other writings.

(f) In the last few phrases, Zhuhong agrees with the inquirer that ordinary people might be unable to distinguish Buddhist and Daoist visualization practices. He shows great concern that they be kept separate, as mixing in Daoist practices will only bring harm. This is in contrast to the “Three Teachings” movement (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一), popular at the time, that sought to harmonize Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism into a coherent unity. Daoism generally received a position far inferior to the other two in such thought, however, and this trend is evident here.

41. (108:396b; X61n1158_p0511b20)

Question: I am afraid this business of having no women in the Pure Land will perplex practitioners. [The Bodhisattva] Guanyin frequently emerges from the Pure Land in female form, as in that form which we call Lady Malang (*Malang fu* 馬郎婦) and so on (a). The [*Huayan Sutra with Commentary*] points out that young girls of the type that Sudhana saw (b) are also “marks of compassion” (c). Now bodhisattvas only begin to practice the compassionate deliverance of people once they have gained the [ten] grounds (*bhūmi*). Since the buddha-mind is compassionate, why does he [just] manifest his own splendor without displaying any “mark of compassion” in his own [buddha-] land (d)?

Answer: The *sahā* world is particularly stained by desire, so Guanyin turns the minds [of those within it] as a female. Sudhana had not yet clarified his ability to differentiate, and so Vasumitrā (*Poxu* 婆須) manifested as a female to impart her wisdom. It is not what one would call a transformation of compassion. In order to practice compassion, one manifests as female. One who has not yet practiced the transformation of compassion will be burned by the taint of desire. [Even] the best

practitioner of the nine lotuses will lose some of his good sprouts if there is a female [present] when he first begins to purify his mind. How inappropriate!

Notes:

(a) The story of Lady Malang appears in the *Shishi jigu lue* 釋氏稽古略, T. 2037, fascicle 3. The bodhisattva Guanyin, wishing to convert the men of Shaanxi province during the Tang dynasty, appeared as a lovely young woman. All the eligible men of the area competed for her hand in marriage, so she proposed that whoever could recite various scriptures in one night would win her. After several contests, the field was finally winnowed down to an official named Ma. Thus she became the wife of Official (or bridegroom) Ma (*Malangfu* 馬郎婦). Thus, she used sexual desire to induce several men to memorize and chant sutras. See T49n2037_p0833b02-b18.

(b) The second reference is to the *Huayan Sutra with Commentary* (*Da fangguang fo xin huayan jing he lun* 大方廣佛新華嚴經合論, X. 223), a work that combined the 40-fascicle *Huayan Sutra* with the commentary of Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (635–730). One instance of the youth Sudhana encountering a young female bodhisattva during his southward journey is found at X04n0223_p0759b17, though there are many other encounters as well.

(c) That the feminine is also the “mark of compassion” (*cixiang* 慈相) may stem from a reading of Li Tongxuan’s commentary. In fascicle 21, he mentions a woman named Poxuminü 婆須蜜女 (= Vasumitrā?) that Sudhana meets, described as a teacher of humans and *devas* (Zhuhong references her in his answer). The phrase *cixiang* does appear in her description, but as part of the longer phrase 禪體智慈相會之流, “The [single] flow of the essence of meditation and the meeting of the marks of wisdom and compassion.” See T36n1739_p0861b04-21.

(d) The crux of the question is this: The Bodhisattva Guanyin frequently assumes feminine form as a means of compassionate and skillful teaching. However, the dictum that there are no women in the Pure Land means that Guanyin, restricted by Amitābha’s vow, cannot utilize this teaching method within the Pure Land. The inquirer does not understand why a compassionate buddha would ever exclude an effective teaching method in his own domain.

42. (108: 396b; X61n1158_p0511c05)

Question: In the Age of the Final Dharma (*mofa* 末法), the *Pratyutpanna sūtra* will be the first to disappear, but the *Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* will still abide. Now in the *Pratyutpanna sūtra*, the figure one is to pray for a vision of is Amitābha. In the *Contemplation Sutra*, the figure one is to pray for a vision of is also Amitābha. It is said that the “constantly walking [meditation]” (*chang xing* 常行) is considered difficult (a), and therefore the achievement of the visualization is also difficult. It is said that seeing the buddha(s) standing before one is difficult, and so those who practice visualization nowadays can only practice the visualization of the [setting] sun with difficulty, so they go directly to the visualization of the [Buddha’s] *ūrṇā* (b). How is it possible that visualizing the [setting] sun is difficult to accomplish these days, but in the time of the dharma’s disappearance, its strength lies in its being easy?

Answer: The *Sutra on [the Buddha of] Immeasurable Life* (*Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經), or the *Larger Amitābha Sutra*, (*Da Mituo jing* 大彌陀經), is the one that will abide longer, not the *Sutra on the Sixteen Visualizations* (i.e., the *Contemplation Sutra*) (c). Now invocation of the name is easy to do; achieving a visualization is difficult. In the *Pratyutpanna* one first visualizes the wheel-marks on the [Buddha’s] feet and then moves up against the grain of one’s conditioning. Is this not in the same category as [the visualizations of] the *Contemplation Sutra*? The realm of the buddhas is transcendent and the mind of worldlings is coarse, and it is hard to approach the Three Contemplations in One Mind (d). Idleness is natural and strenuous effort goes against the grain; who would want to give up sitting for the constantly-walking practice when the six-word invocation of the name is something even a small child can manage? This sutra inclines toward the salvation of the end times; how could this be without due cause?

Notes:

(a) The “constantly walking meditation” is a ritualized practice of buddha-visualization developed in Tiantai Zhiyi’s 天台智顛 (538–597) works. It was indeed based on the *Pratyutpanna sūtra*, centered on the Buddha Amitābha, and was very difficult to accomplish, requiring an elaborate ritual space and ninety days of constant circumambulation with no breaks to eat or sleep. For a description of the practice, see Daniel Stevenson, “The Four Kinds of *Samādhi* in Early T’ien-t’ai

Buddhism,” in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter Gregory, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 58–61.

(b) On the issues relating to the visualization of the [Buddha's] *ūrṇā* versus visualization of the setting sun, see question 40 above.

(c) Zhuhong judges that the inquirer has identified the wrong sutra as the one the Buddha promises will abide a while longer after other sutras have vanished. The *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra* is known in its most often-used translation as the *Wuliang shou jing* 無量壽經, while the *Contemplation Sutra* is known as the *Guan wuliang shou jing* 觀無量壽經, which is different only in the initial character. Correcting this confusion alleviates the difficulty that the inquirer identified as competing forms of meditation or visualization. Instead, it becomes a matter of comparing oral invocation of the Buddha's name with complex visualization practices.

(d) The term “Three Contemplations in One Mind” (*yixin sanguan* 一心三觀) generally refers to a Tiantai formulation in which a meditator in one thought simultaneously grasps the emptiness, provisionality, and middle of a phenomenon. The concept had been used to explain Pure Land contemplations within a Tiantai framework for many centuries. For example, Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960–1028) made use of it in his commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra*: “If one does not utilize the Three Contemplations in One Mind to contemplate the setting sun, one will lose the Buddha's wisdom.” (*Guan wuliangshou fo jing shumiao zongchao* 觀無量壽佛經疏妙宗鈔, T37n1751_p0217c29-218a1)

43. (108:397a; X61n1158_p0511c15)

Question: Ciyun (a) divided the “one mind of principle” (*li yixin* 理一心) from the “one mind of phenomena” (*shi yixin* 事一心). Now the one mind exhausts principle and the one mind creates phenomena; these two minds give rise to each other. They are like the two poles on a scull. If they flail in the water without respite, how could one not call this chaotic? If principle is like phenomena and phenomena are like principle, then that mind is this mind, and as a result one has only a single mind to use. Is there anything inadmissible in this? As Master [Zhi] li said, “Manifest principle through phenomena” (b). Also, this single type of contemplation does not accord with so-called “contemplation of principle” and “contemplation of phenomena” (*liguan shiguan* 理觀

事觀). The whole teaching tradition of Tiantai holds firmly to this. Why are Ciyun and his successors the only ones who do not?

Answer: Wisdom is one but illuminates both the provisional and the real. One does not crack wisdom in two. The mind is one but is explained in terms of delusion and reality. One does not break the mind into two pieces. In contemplation there is both principle and phenomena; what obstructs them [from each other]? For example, a mirror and the images [reflected in it] are distinct but not separate. The moon can be reflected in several bodies of water without being divided itself. Phenomena lead one to think of their principle; principle resides within phenomena. One infers phenomena from principle; phenomena are not outside of principle. Why expect thought to arise from two places? As to what you said about principle and phenomena being chaotic like the poles of a scull being tossed about wildly, the one is the two and the two are the one. They are neither the same nor are they cut off from one another. Since [Zhili] says, “Manifest principle through phenomena,” one gets two uses from one planting (c). This is both clear and profound. How does Ciyun go contrary to Tiantai teachings?

Notes:

(a) Ciyun 慈雲 refers to the Song dynasty Tiantai monk Zunshi 遵式 (964–1032), who organized societies for *nianfo* practice and interpreted Pure Land thought and practice within a Tiantai philosophical outlook. See Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, *Chūgoku jōdo kyōri shi* 中国浄土教理史 (*A History of Chinese Pure Land Thought*) (Kyōto: Hōzokan 法藏館, 1978), 355–360. The problem here is that the inquirer believes that the mainstream Tiantai tradition erases any firm distinction between principle and phenomena, and wonders why Ciyun keeps them separate and applies different contemplations to them.

(b) The quotation from Zhili 知禮 (960–1028) comes from his *Two Hundred Questions from the Legacy of Fazhi on Contemplation of the Mind* (*Fazhi yibian guanxin erbai wen* 法智遺編觀心二百問, T. 1935). It is found at T46n1935_p0824a28-a30.

(c) Zhuhong’s response indicates that the inquirer has not properly understood the relationship between principle and phenomena within Tiantai thought. The Tiantai teaching that “principle and phenomena interpenetrate without obstruction” (*li shi wu ai* 理事無礙) means that the mind of phenomena and the mind of principle cannot

be clearly separated, but this does not mean that they collapse into a single reality.

44. (108:397b; X61n1158_p0512a04)

Question: It seems that the *Treatise on Ten Doubts [About Pure Land]* uses the contemplation of impurity as a cause for [rebirth in] the Pure Land to address the suspicion that the absence of women and family [in the Pure Land] would not be enough to spur ordinary people forward (a). Could we properly say it takes impurity as purity? Suppose one brings about an understanding of impurity and gives rise to the mind of aversion [for the present world] and the desire to leave it. How could that be a proper cause for [rebirth in] the Pure Land when the [*Mohe*] *zhiguan* says that accomplishment of the contemplation of impurity is still not enough to leave the triple world (b)? It would only amount to realizing the impurity of this world; one still does not realize the impurity of the worlds of the *devas*. Supposing that one could realize the impurity of these heavenly realms; I do not know if that would bring about birth in the Pure Land or not.

Answer: The *sahā* world is [entirely] impure; [the presence of] women is just one aspect of this. The *Treatise on Ten Doubts* speaks more broadly about impurity, but it places special emphasis on [the presence of] women. One who knows only to despise impurity without rejoicing in the Pure Land will not find it easy to gain rebirth. Even if one completes the contemplation on bones but does not contemplate the body of the Buddha, then it will be hard to come ashore in the Land of Bliss. [The contemplation of] impurity is not sufficient as the proper cause of [rebirth in] the Pure Land.

Notes:

The *Treatise on Ten Doubts about Pure Land* (*Jingtu shi yi lun* 淨土十疑論, T. 1961) is a text popularly attributed to Tiantai founder Zhiyi that addresses questions about Pure Land teachings and practices. The tenth doubt asks what practices one should employ to attain rebirth in the Pure Land if one is still subject to sexual desire and has wives and children. In response, the author states that one takes the twin paths of aversion to the present world and attraction to the Pure Land. Under the category of aversion, he lists seven contemplations of impurity (*bujing guan* 不淨觀): (1) that the present desire-body is born amidst impurity; (2) that the sexual intercourse one's parents engaged in

involved impure fluids; (3) while gestating, one dwelt in the mother's impure womb; (4) as a fetus in the womb, one consumed one's mother's blood; (5) as a fetus, one's head was constantly oriented towards one's mother's genitals; (6) only a thin caul protected one from impurity; and (7) after death, one's body will decompose and one's bones will be devoured by animals. See T47n1961_p0080b30-c25.

(b) While the inquirer claims to quote the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 of Zhiyi (T. 1911), I could not find the ideas he references in this work. I could also find nothing in Zhiyi's smaller condensation of the *Mohe zhiguan* called the *Xiuxi zhiguan zuochan fayao* 修習止觀坐禪法要, T. 1915.

45. (108:397b; X61n1158_p0512a13)

Question: In the Pure Land the water, birds, and trees proclaim the teachings of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self. This cannot be a definitive teaching. Since that Buddha [Amitābha] wishes the sounds of the dharma to flow forth, why not let them flow in one perfect sound that would enable any kind of being to attain liberation? Why must it be these [kinds of] sounds? Supposing that anyone whose nature is fixed as a *śrāvaka* were to be drawn to refuge in this land and it were to continue producing these sounds (a, b). Would that not just increase the severity of their malady?

Answer: The teachings of impermanence, suffering, and emptiness are not limited to the small [vehicle]. They extend from the greatest to the least; they are pertinent to both the partial and the complete. To contemplate that there is neither arising nor extinction is called impermanence. The non-arising of the five aggregates is considered real suffering. When bodhisattvas hear these [teachings] their minds are further expanded. When *śrāvakas* understand these sounds, then they quickly lose their small [vehicle status]. If we do not call this “perfect sound,” then what shall we call it?

Notes:

(a) The inquirer may think that *śrāvakas* are particularly attached to sound, since the Chinese term for *śrāvakas*, *shengwen* 聲聞, literally means “hearers of sound.” Thus, he thinks hearing still more sounds would only confirm them in their inferior level of attainment.

(b) The idea that a being could have a fixed nature (*dingxing* 定性) as a *śrāvaka* might come from Yogācāra (*Faxiang* 法相) thought in which beings are endowed with the seeds, or potentialities, for certain

attainments as *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, buddhas, none of the above, or any of the above. The fact that Zhuhong allows for the possibility that in the Pure Land *śrāvakas* may “lose their small [vehicle status]” indicates that he does not believe in fixed natures.

46. (108:398a; X61n1158_p0512a21)

Question: Those who are closed up in a lotus calyx for six *kalpas* or twelve *kalpas* cannot hear the dharma-preaching of the three holy ones (i.e., Amitābha and the two attendant bodhisattvas). Within [the distance of] one *yōjana* there is no lack of water, birds, and trees. [Thus,] those worldlings of the lower grades [of rebirth] (*xiapin* 下品) have only the doctrines of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self. External manifestations are before their eyes, [but] they do not grasp at them. Not having grasped at them for a long time, they should dissolve away. Why should the substance of the chariot-wheel [-sized] lotus alone remain? Also, it says that [the lotus-calyx] is as blissful as the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*Daolitian* 忉利天). Since it grants the bliss of this heaven, how does one keep from backsliding? Moreover, if at this time one does not backslide, then why not just cultivate the karma leading to [rebirth in] this heaven (a)?

Answer: That the lotus is slow to open is because one does not understand the principles of impermanence, suffering, and emptiness when one is living in this world (i.e., while still alive). If one comes to the illumination of these principles sooner, then why would one remain long within the lotus calyx? Thus, one knows that once one stops grasping at manifestations, the golden [lotus] flower will open. Once one stops grasping at [phenomenal] characteristics, then the Buddha with his wondrous features appears. Such is the reason why one abides in the lotus; what is the point of explaining that the lotus is dissolved? I am afraid that if one says that its bliss compares to that of the heavens, one will slip back and fall. You seem unaware that this is only playing on the heavens as a metaphor. Those who are reborn in the Pure Land do not hanker after celestial palaces, so even though they are in a blissful setting, they are not led astray. Why would a person whose mind is set on the great Way subsequently agree to engage in practices leading to the pleasures of the heavens? Alternatively, one might answer that since what one receives is equal to the higher heavens, how could it be that one’s status is among the lower grades [of rebirth]? Strictly speaking, this would indicate that the very highest parts of the triple

world are not as good as the lowest of the low among the nine lotuses. This shows that even though the karmic reward is inferior, the recompense is superior. A crown prince in swaddling clothes is still very different from the many officials; the sound of a *kalaviṅka* that has not yet emerged from its womb excels that of all birds. For this reason, [even] birth in the lower grades is superior to the palaces of heaven. The teaching of the ancients is evident; there is no room for argument!

Notes:

This question builds on the previous one. According to the *Contemplation Sutra*, aspirants to rebirth in the Pure Land sort into nine classes organized as three grades (*san pin* 三品), each with three levels (*san sheng* 三生). Those of the two lowest grades and levels are born within lotus calyxes in the Pure Land, the “middle of the low” remaining shut in for six *kalpas*, the “lowest of the low” for twelve. See T12n0365_p0345c26-346a26.

This leads the inquirer to raise three difficulties: First, since those confined within a lotus calyx do not hear either Amitābha or the two attendant bodhisattvas’ preaching while the birds, water, and trees are present, these beings are hearing only the inferior teachings as noted above. Second, during these *kalpas* of purification inside the lotuses, their grasp of material manifestation should fade, so the inquirer does not understand why the lotuses themselves would persist. Third, if the pleasures are like that of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, then why should aspirants to rebirth not seek rebirth there instead?

(a) The statement that those born within lotus calyxes enjoy the bliss of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three is based on a few different sources. For example, the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra*, in speaking of those born via the womb (*taisheng* 胎生), mentions that the wombs within which they abide are like palaces wherein they receive the pleasures of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (see T12n0360_p0278a17-a20). The passage does not link this abode to any particular level of rebirth, but Tianru 天如, in his *Questions about Pure Land* (which Zhuhong edited for publication), discusses this with specific reference to the lowest birth of the lowest grade (*xiapin xiasheng* 下品下生). While he quotes the *Contemplation Sutra*’s description of the manner in which such beings attain rebirth, he goes beyond the sutra in stating that they receive such pleasure during their twelve *kalpas* within the lotus calyx (see T47n1972_p0299a21-a23).

47. (108:398a X61n1158_p0512b12)

Question: People's fear of samsara is great and impermanence moves them swiftly along. Therefore, at the outset their wish to seek liberation is fierce; they dare not stop for a moment. [However,] once they hear the teaching of the "lateral exit from the triple world" (a), the explanation of the quick path of practice, [see] the literature on how *nianfo* eliminates guilt, about ten oral invocations of the aspiration to attain rebirth [in the Pure Land], then many say there is a buddha upon whom they can lean and no amount of karma produces dread. They become more leisurely and do not put in the effort, and many fall into Yama's old hands. Thus, the Pure Land tradition leads them astray. The two paths of Chan [meditation] and doctrinal study (*zong jiao er men* 宗教二門) are extremely difficult to master and do not allow one to see quick results. Having the two words "birth and death" always on one's mind is the only way.

Answer: Among ordinary practitioners of the Way, there are some who hear the word "difficult" and give up, or hear the word "easy" and go on. There are others who hear the word "difficult" and get moving, but hear the word "easy" and become lazy. When the ancient sages dispensed the teachings, they did what was appropriate to the time. The ability to put one's mind to work well rests solely with the individual (b). The path of *nianfo* directly transcends the triple world; they opened this path out of the height of their compassion. If [living beings] become degraded out of idleness, then the error is theirs; it is not because the buddhas lead living beings astray. "I wish to be virtuous, and lo! Virtue is at hand." Virtue is right before one's eyes (c). "The mad overcome their thoughts and thus become sages." Sagehood is not distant (d). Are [the Confucian classics] also leading people astray by the word "easy"? With respect to [the sayings] "sudden enlightenment with one word" (*yi yan dunwu* 一言頓悟) and "become a buddha instantly" (*lidi chengfo* 立地成佛), these represent the Chan school using the word "easy," but it is very profound (e). Would you also call this an error?

Notes:

(a) The phrase "lateral exit from the triple world" (*hengchu sanjie* 橫出三界) is a common way to describe the ease and speed of Pure Land practice, and it indicates a shortcut that eliminates the need for a long path of practice. The modern master and scholar Sheng Yen

(Shengyan 聖嚴) illustrated its meaning this way. It is as if one were inside a long bamboo tube and had to get out. One would usually have to climb the entire length of the tube “joint by joint,” but if someone drilled a hole in the side then one could go laterally and get out right away. See Shi Shengyan 釋聖嚴, *Shengyan fashi jiao jingtu famen* 聖嚴法師教淨土法門 (*Master Shengyan Teaches the Pure Land Dharma-Gate*), comp. and ed. Guoxian 果賢, *Shengyan shuyuan* 聖嚴書院 5 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua 法鼓文, 2010), 83.

(b) The phrase translated “rests solely with the individual” (*cun hu qiren* 存乎其人) alludes to the “Appended Commentary” (*Xici* 繫辭) of the *Book of Changes*. It occurs in the phrase *shen er ming zhi, cun hu qiren* 神而明之，存乎其人, which Richard John Lynn translates as “to be aware of the numinous and bring it to light is dependent on the men involved.” See Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 68.

(c) The phrase, “I wish to be virtuous, and lo! Virtue is at hand” comes from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) of Confucius, 7.30 (Legge’s translation in *Chinese Classics*). See Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org>, accessed April 1, 2015.

(d) The phrase, “The mad overcome their thoughts and thus become sages” seems to be a garbled version of a historical proverb to which allusions may be found often in Chinese Buddhist texts. According to Xu Xingmin 徐醒民, the full proverb is *wei sheng wangnian zuokuang, wei kuang kenian zuo sheng* 惟聖罔念作狂，惟狂克念作聖, which alludes to an episode in the *Shang Shu* 尚書 about the overthrow of the Shang dynasty by the Zhou. The import is that by suppressing rational thought the wise become foolish, while the foolish become sages by overcoming their (presumably foolish) thoughts. See Xu Xingmin 徐醒民, *Ruxue jianshuo* 儒學簡說 (Taichung: Qinglian 青蓮, 1999), <http://www.zhwh-djt.com>, accessed April 1, 2015.

(e) The phrase, “sudden enlightenment with one word” comes from an appendix to the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* that gives the text of an imperial epitaph for Huineng. See T48n2008_p0364a22-a23; see John McRae, trans., *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000), 128 for the English translation. The phrase “become a buddha instantly” is very common in Chinese Buddhist literature. To see one example

from a Chan text, see the *Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Yuanwu Foguo* (*Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 圓悟佛果禪師語錄), T47n1997_p0738a11.

48. (108:398b; X61n1158_p0512c01)

Question: Fenggan was an incarnation (*huashen* 化身) of Amitābha; Hanshan and Shide were Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. A manifestation of Amitābha does not [always] bring Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta along, but [may] travel with Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra to the point where these names become linked [to his] (a). Also, there are many sayings of the Chan school which take *nianfo* and buddha-contemplation (*guanfo* 觀佛) as limited; do they not turn Tathāgata Chan (*rulai chan* 如來禪) into Patriarchal Chan (*zushi chan* 祖師禪) (b)? Would they not decline to meet even inhabitants of the Land of Eternally Quiescent Light (c)?

Answer: Certainly we know Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta as the daily attendants of the guiding master (i.e., Amitābha), [but] when have Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra ever been absent from Sukhāvātī even for a short time? This is why Śākyamuni is the master teacher (*huazhu* 化主) in this *sahā* world, but may at times have [the assistance of] Avalokiteśvara. Huangbo was not a master in the Confucian lineage, [yet he] extended his teaching mat to Minister Pei [Xiu] (d). Their [teachings] interfused and mutually combined; could there be a firm distinction [between them]? As for your comments concerning Chan being contrary to Pure Land practice: Little do you realize that each branch of the nine lotuses opens to the face of Kāśyapa; or that each step along the seven-jeweled balustrades leads into the pavilion of Sudhana; or that on each of the eight sides of the *ūrṇā* one may contemplate the true meaning of the Middle Way; or that each word of the six-word invocation of the Name preaches the mysterious meaning of coming from the west (e). Why does one need to turn from the small to the great or from the limited to the encompassing before one receives superior faculties and practices the mysterious transformation? Thus, know that this path of *nianfo* is the wondrous gate that enters into principle. It perfectly assimilates the Five Houses [of Chan] (*wu zong* 五宗) and widely embraces all [Buddhist] teachings (f). It is subtle and cannot be fathomed, broad and inexhaustible. Those of dull capacities attain it and swiftly escape from the wheel of suffering; those with sharp wisdom encounter it and directly pass to the farther shore.

Appearing coarse, it is fine; seemingly easy, it is difficult. Make universal vows and ponder deeply; do not neglect it!

Notes:

(a) Based on the three major Pure Land sutras and centuries of iconography, East Asian Buddhists believe that Amitābha dwells in Sukhāvati assisted by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Fenggan 豐干, Hanshan 寒山, and Shide 拾得 were three eccentric Chan poet-monks of the Tang dynasty associated with the Guoqing Temple 國清寺 on Mt. Tiantai 天台山. They were indeed regarded as manifestations of, respectively, Amitābha, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra. The Song-dynasty *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 has the clearest and most concise statement of these equivalencies. See T49n2035_p0462b02-b03. This association of Amitābha with two bodhisattvas other than the usual ones is the basis of the question.

(b) The second part of the question takes a dig at Chan teachings that exclude Pure Land practices such as *nianfo* by asking whether such a stand turns the Chan that derives directly from the Buddha (Tathāgata Chan) into the Chan of the patriarchs from Bodhidharma on (Patriarchal Chan), reducing it to a purely human device.

(c) The Land of Eternally Quiescent Light (*changji guang tu* 常寂光土) represents the buddha-realm of ultimate reality and purity, devoid of all characteristics and inhabited by the Buddha's *dharmakāya*. Again, the inquirer implies that by cutting off buddhas and focusing on human teachers, Chan detractors of Pure Land will not attain the ultimate realm of the buddhas themselves.

(d) For information on Pei Xiu, see the comments to question 16. Zhuhong is answering the first question about the appearance of bodhisattvas in seemingly wrong contexts by pointing to other Buddhist examples of beings, both human and divine, operating outside of their normal spheres.

(e) In his response to Chan critiques of Pure Land, Zhuhong equates a series of Pure Land practices and images to well-known Chan tropes. In a famous Chan story, for example, the first instance of mind-to-mind transmission occurs when the Buddha silently holds a flower up before preaching to an assembly. No one understands the gesture except Mahākāśyapa, who smiles and elicits the Buddha's affirmation of his understanding. Zhuhong equates the nine lotuses that symbolize the nine levels of rebirth in the Pure Land to the flower that the

Buddha held aloft. The other three examples represent similar rhetorical equivalencies.

(f) The term “Five Lineages” refers to the five houses of Chan.

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