

The *Dust Contemplation*: A Study and Translation of a Newly Discovered Chinese Yogācāra Meditation Treatise from the Haneda Dunhuang Manuscripts of the Kyo-U Library

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THE PUBLICATION between 2009 and 2013 of the Haneda 羽田 manuscripts housed in the Kyo-U Library (*Kyōu shooku* 杏雨書屋) in Osaka was a momentous occasion for Dunhuang studies.¹ This collection of over seven hundred documents, assembled by Haneda Tōru 羽田亨 (1882–1955) on the basis of the famed collection of Li Shengduo 李盛鐸 (1859–1937) with further materials later added, is the world’s fifth most significant repository of Dunhuang manuscripts after those in London, Paris, Beijing, and St. Petersburg.² Now that these sources are at long last available to scholars, many exciting discoveries await historians of medieval China and medieval Chinese Buddhism in particular.³

In this article I introduce a previously unknown, late seventh-century (as I shall argue) Buddhist text from this collection: Hane[da] manuscript no. 598 (羽 598), a single scroll bearing at its conclusion the title “Method for

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¹ *Tonkō hikyū* 2009–2013.

² On the Haneda documents, see Iwamoto 2010 and Zheng 2013. For a bibliography of studies of documents from the collection, see Yamamoto 2017.

³ Studies of new Buddhist texts found among the Haneda documents include Nishimoto 2012, 2014; Kannō 2014; Li 2013; Zhang 2014; Wang 2017; and Irisawa, Mitani, and Usuda 2014. On the Daoist scriptures from the Haneda collection, see Kamitsuka 2017, pp. 362–87.

the Contemplation of Dust⁴ as Empty” (*Chen kong guan men* 塵空觀門).⁵ The *Dust Contemplation*, as I will call it, is a unique and surprisingly concrete set of instructions for the practice of Buddhist meditation based on the doctrines and technical vocabulary of the early Chinese Yogācāra tradition, particularly (but not exclusively) those often linked by modern scholars to the so-called Shelun commentarial tradition (Shelunzong 攝論宗), which drew primary inspiration from the Yogācāra scriptures translated by Paramārtha (Zhendi 真諦; 499–569) and which flourished during the late sixth and early seventh centuries.⁶

Haneda no. 598 is undated, and neither the title nor content of the *Dust Contemplation* are attested elsewhere. We can, however, infer the date of its composition with some precision because its author argues against an interlocutor framed as a self-professed follower of the “new” teachings of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664). This allows us to position the *Dust Contemplation* historically and intellectually in the mid- to late-seventh century, a time when Xuanzang and the new Yogācāra texts and doctrines he introduced to China enjoyed prestige and imperial patronage even as they were eventually sharply criticized by representatives of established Chinese Buddhist exegetical traditions. The work of these critics to defend and refine long-standing Chinese doctrinal traditions, in the face of what Xuanzang and his students promulgated as new, better, and more accurately translated Buddhist teachings, directly and indirectly birthed many of the subsequently key developments in Chinese Buddhist intellectual history.⁷ Both the Huayan 華嚴 and early Chan 禪 traditions, to take two of the most prominent examples, emerged at least in part within this polemical and historical context.⁸

⁴ I will explain my reasons for translating *chen* 塵 as “dust” below.

⁵ The *Chen kong guan men* is not listed in the catalogue of texts Li Shengduo sold in the 1930s, which was the initial core of the Haneda collection (Rong 2002, pp. 70–80). Presumably it stems from one of the other private collections that Haneda eventually acquired. Though forgery is always a possibility when dealing with poorly provenanced “Dunhuang” manuscripts (Whitfield 2002), and an in-depth codicological analysis remains a desideratum, to judge from its contents the *Dust Contemplation* is clearly a genuine medieval Chinese Buddhist text, as this article will make clear.

⁶ On the “Shelun commentarial tradition” and the various ways its central ideas were discussed and defined, see Keng 2009. The Dunhuang manuscripts have yielded a number of fragments of exegetical works seemingly related to one or more branches of this tradition (Ikeda 2010). On Paramārtha and his translations, see Keng and Radich 2019.

⁷ These developments also relied, of course, on other factors such as shifting patterns of imperial patronage (Weinstein 1973).

⁸ On Huayan as a reformulation of pre-Xuanzang Chinese Yogācāra, see Gimello 1976,

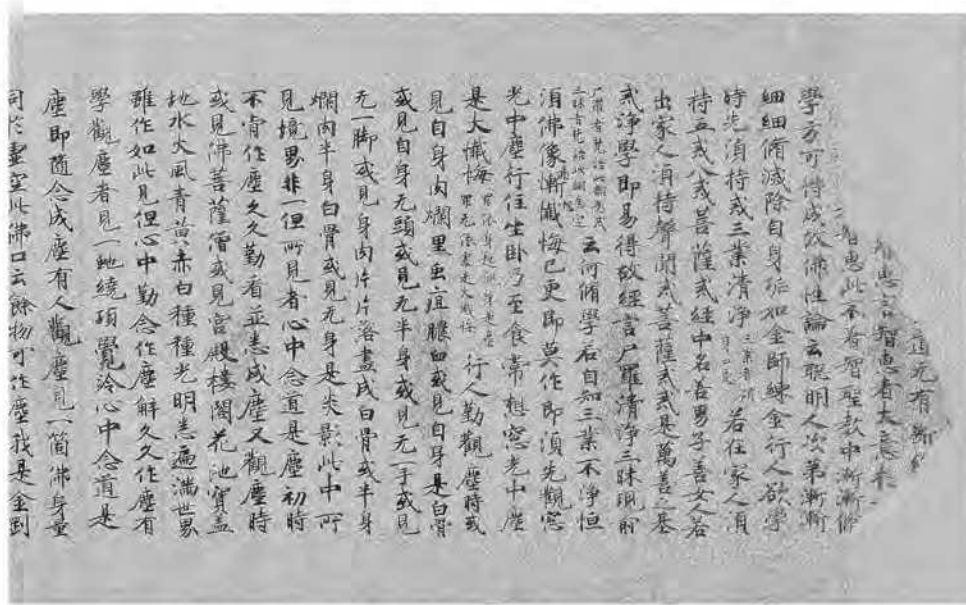


Figure 1. Opening section of the *Dust Contemplation*.
Haneda no. 598, *Tonkō Hikyū* 2012, vol. 8, p. 128.

As a late seventh-century Yogācāra-inflected treatise on the practice of meditation, the *Dust Contemplation* naturally invites comparison with early Chan writings in particular. Early Chan, as modern scholars have long known, began as a lineage of masters of the *Lankāvatāra Sutra*, a scripture of considerable importance for Yogācāra scholastics. Furthermore, many of the earliest full-fledged Chan texts draw from scholastic Yogācāra doctrines, including from the writings of Xuanzang and his followers (Yamabe 2014). To read the *Dust Contemplation* with one eye on early Chan literature indeed yields at least a few notable terminological and conceptual parallels.⁹ Still, it is a stretch too far to consider the *Dust Contemplation* an early Chan text, however we might define such a category.¹⁰ We will do best to see the *Dust Contemplation* as a product not of “early Chan,” but of the

particularly chapter 4. As for Chan, see Barrett 1990 for a compelling, if still speculative, argument to this effect.

⁹ See the notes to lines 4.27, 5.10, and 5.19 in the translations below.

¹⁰ For an up-to-date list of the sources for “early Chan,” which primarily consist of Dunhuang manuscripts, see Tanaka and Cheng 2014. Some of these sources explicitly identify themselves with one or more of the early Chan lineages. Others, however, scholars link to “early Chan” primarily on stylistic, doctrinal, or terminological criteria, evidence that does not necessarily inform us what, if any, sectarian identity the authors or readers of the texts in question would have claimed.

broader, late seventh-century Buddhist context out of which Chan emerged and with which it had much in common even when seeking to distinguish itself against it.

A full accounting of the place of the *Dust Contemplation* within this context must await another occasion. Because the *Dust Contemplation* has so far remained unknown to modern scholars, my aims in this article have been modest: to bring attention to this text, to provide an edition of the Chinese and a complete English translation, and to give a basic analysis and contextualization of the unusual techniques of meditation it proposes.

THE MANUSCRIPT AND DATING OF THE *DUST CONTEMPLATION*

The manuscript of the *Dust Contemplation* is preserved in excellent condition, apart from its missing opening lines (Fig. 1).¹¹ Written on high quality, undyed, ruled hemp paper, only one side of which was used, its eight pages of neat, regular-script (*kaisho* 楷書) calligraphy have few mistakes and are a clear example of what Fujieda has called the “standard” manuscript form of twenty-eight columns per sheet and sixteen to eighteen characters per column.¹² This format, to judge from the Dunhuang manuscripts at least, was from the late sixth century onward generally reserved for institutionally sponsored copies of canonical Buddhist, Daoist, or even Confucian scriptures. That a Buddhist text patently composed by a Chinese author would be copied in this way is highly unusual. Among the Dunhuang manuscripts, acknowledged Chinese-authored treatises, even Chinese-authored commentaries on canonical Indian scriptures, almost always employ a different mise-en-page featuring many more characters per column.¹³ It is tempting to speculate—though this must remain conjectural—that the *Dust Contemplation* here appearing in this format results from a deliberate effort, somewhere in the course of its transmission, to ascribe it a “canonical” status and authority.

¹¹ As I suggest below, the missing passages were probably not numerous, perhaps only the four or five columns needed to complete the first full sheet of paper.

¹² Fujieda 1966, pp. 16–17.

¹³ Drège 2002, p. 130. Even after the standard scriptural format became fixed in the late sixth century, canonical Buddhist scriptures were often copied in more informal formats and on lower quality paper. After 781, when Dunhuang was occupied by the Tibetans, many new manuscript formats appeared, such as the corded *pothī*-style book and the folded booklet (Fujieda 1966, pp. 24–26). But what is extremely rare from any era is the converse, which we find in the case of the *Dust Contemplation*: a Buddhist text of acknowledged Chinese authorship copied in the “canonical” scriptural format.

Haneda no. 598 has no colophon or other paratextual information. Paleographically, it aligns with Fujieda's "type C" Dunhuang manuscripts, dating from the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁴ Whenever this particular copy was made, however, the date of the *Dust Contemplation* itself can be narrowed down much further on the basis of the following passage from the first question-answer section (lines 3.5–8):

Question: According to our newly translated Buddhist teachings (*wo xinfan shengjiao* 我新翻聖教), prior to reaching the first bodhisattva stage one tames the two kinds of grasping, to self and to dharmas; but they are cut off definitively only upon reaching the first bodhisattva stage. On what textual basis do you claim that one can [by means of the contemplation of dust] eliminate the view of self even before this?

Answer: None other than the sixth fascicle of your (*ru* 汝) *Treatise on the [Mahayana] Compendium*¹⁵ [says] that the contemplation of atoms is the contemplation of non-self!

The interlocutor here questions, on the grounds that "our" newly translated texts say differently, if the soteriological benefits of "contemplating [all things] as dust" are really as great as claimed in the previous passages. The author then replies to this objection by citing, as one such new text of "yours," a text translated by Xuanzang in the year 646. The interlocutor is thus here presented as a critic for whom Xuanzang's "new" translations were the locus of an at least moderately sectarian intellectual identity.

That Xuanzang and his followers rejected the scriptural authority of anything but their own "new translations," a term they popularized to this end, was a trope that began to circulate widely by the end of Xuanzang's lifetime.¹⁶ This penchant was often presented in an unflattering light. The

¹⁴ Fujieda 2002, p. 104.

¹⁵ See n. 64 below.

¹⁶ On Xuanzang's polemics of "new" versus "old" translations, see Barrett 1990, pp. 94–96. Prior to Xuanzang's time, the expression "new translation" (*xinfan* 新翻 or *xinyi* 新譯) was rare. When it was used, it was primarily an adjective distinguishing the titles of earlier versus later translations of the same text (see, for example, *Fa hua yi shu* 法華義疏, T no. 1721, 34:451c28; and *Xiu xi zhi guan zuo chan fa yao* 修習止觀坐禪法要, T no. 1915, 46:473b1; see also Sekiguchi 1961, p. 254). The idea of "new translation" gained a new and sudden prominence in the writings of Xuanzang's followers, who contrasted his "new" renderings of texts, passages, and specific words to the "old" translations of the same, which they usually argued were inferior. "New translation," in these writings, has the same generic

biography of the monk Fachong 法沖 (589–665), composed no later than 667, thus reports that:

The Tripiṭaka Master Xuanzang did not permit lecturing on the old translations of the scriptures. Fachong said to him: “Sir, you became a monk on the basis of the old scriptures. If you do not permit the propagation of the old scriptures, you, sir, should return to being a layman and become a monk again using the newly translated scriptures! Only if you do this will I accept your opinion [on the exclusive validity of the newly translated scriptures].” Xuanzang, hearing this, relented.¹⁷

Though this biography shows Fachong as reasonably respectful of Xuanzang, it also implies that it would be wrongheaded to reject the authority of the “old” Chinese Buddhist canon, an ideology at this time evidently associated, in popular imagination at least, with Xuanzang. Fachong, according to his biography, was a master of the four-fascicle *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, in the “lineage” of Bodhidharma no less.¹⁸ The above anecdote can thus be read as a more general argument for the validity of earlier, established Chinese Buddhist doctrinal traditions and the texts they held up as authoritative, in the face of a putative scriptural dogmatism on the part of Xuanzang or his students.

This is the rhetorical and polemical context that informs the *Dust Contemplation*. Almost all its scriptural citations are thus to pre-Xuanzang sources (see table 1), including many of the most important and widely studied texts of fifth- and sixth-century Chinese Buddhism. But its author also wished to show that his teachings were compatible even with sources that a die-hard adherent of Xuanzang’s “new” Buddhism would have to accept.¹⁹

meaning as it does in the *Dust Contemplation*: not a specific newly translated text or term, but “[Xuanzang’s] new [and more accurate] translations” as a bounded scriptural corpus (see, for example, *Wei shi er shi lun shu ji* 唯識二十論述記, T no. 1834, 43:985b10–11).

¹⁷ 三藏玄奘不許講舊所翻經。沖曰。君依舊經出家。若不許弘舊經者。君可還俗。更依新翻經出家。方許君此意。奘聞遂止。(*Xu gao seng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T no. 2060, 50:666c17–19.) Fachong’s biography was among the final additions to the *Xu gao seng zhuan* before the death of its compiler Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667).

¹⁸ Fachong’s biography is, in fact, the earliest known source to mention a lineage from Bodhidharma—here, unlike in later Chan, a lineage of textual exegesis—extending to living Chinese Buddhist masters in the present (Tanaka 1983, p. 570; McRae 1986, pp. 24–27).

¹⁹ Two other Xuanzang translations are cited later (see lines 3.15 and 4.13): the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the *Heart Sutra* (see table 1). Some scholars have questioned if the *Heart Sutra* traditionally attributed to Xuanzang really was translated by him (Nattier 1992). Regardless, he was definitely attributed with such a translation by no later than 664 (*Da tang nei dian lu*

Table 1. Explicit and implicit scriptural citations in the *Dust Contemplation*.

TEXT	PASSAGES
<i>Treatise on Buddha Nature</i> (<i>Fo xing lun</i> 佛性論, T 1610)	1.4
<i>Laṅkāvatāra Sutra</i> (<i>Lengqieabaduoluo bao jing</i> 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, T 670)	2.4; 2.28; 3.16; 4.3
<i>Flower Adornment Sutra</i> (<i>Hua yan jing</i> 華嚴經, T 278)	2.14; 6.19
<i>Diamond Sutra</i> (<i>Jin gang bore boluomi jing</i> 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T 235)	3.1; 3.10; 5.21
<i>Jin gang bore lun</i> 金剛般若論 (T 1510)	3.3
<i>Treatise on the Mahayana Compendium</i> (* <i>Abhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā</i> ; <i>Da sheng Apidamo za ji lun</i> 大乘阿毘達磨雜集論, T 1606)	3.2; 4.1
<i>Vimalakīrti Sutra</i> (<i>Weimojie suo shuo jing</i> 維摩詰所說經, T 475)	3.8; 4.12; 5.11; 6.14–16
<i>Yogācārabhūmi</i> (<i>Yujia shi di lun</i> 瑜伽師地論, T 1579)	3.15
<i>Summary of the Mahayana</i> (* <i>Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya</i> ; <i>She da sheng lun shi</i> 攝大乘論釋, T 1595)	3.10; 3.18
<i>Pusa di chi jing</i> 菩薩地持經 (T 1581)	4.8
<i>Diamond Sutra</i> (<i>Jin gang bore boluomi jing</i> 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T 236a)	4.12
<i>Heart Sutra</i> (<i>Bore boluomiduo xin jing</i> 般若波羅蜜多心經, T 251)	4.14
<i>Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom</i> (<i>Da zhi du lun</i> 大智度論, T 1509)	4.16; 5.19
<i>Ren wang bore boluomi jing</i> 仁王般若波羅蜜經 (T 245)	5.12
<i>Contemplation Sutra</i> (<i>Guan wu liang shou fo jing</i> 觀無量壽佛經, T 365)	5.20
<i>Mahāyānābhisamaya Sutra</i> (<i>Da sheng tong xing jing</i> 大乘同性經, T 673)	5.25
<i>Shi di jing lun</i> 十地經論 (T 1522)	6.6; 6.10; 7.14
<i>Lotus Sutra</i> (<i>Miao fa lian hua jing</i> 妙法蓮華經, T 262)	5.26; 8.8
<i>Da banniepan jing</i> 大般涅槃經 (T 374)	7.8
<i>Ayu wang zhuan</i> 阿育王傳 (T 2042)	8.2
<i>Sutra on the Emission of Light</i> (<i>Fang guang jing</i> 放光經, T 221)	8.10

We can also see the inclusivist attitude of the *Dust Contemplation* (one that accepts the authority of the texts Xuanzang translated even as it implicitly faults his or his followers' interpretations of them) on a more explicitly doctrinal level. Most notable in this regard is a passage near the end of the text that explains the origins of the visions of the Buddha said to occur to accomplished meditators (8.3–8.8). Various possible “causes” (*yin* 因) of such visions are listed: the seeds laid down by the karmic impressions (*xunxi* 薰習; Skt. *vāsanā*) of worshipping the Buddha in the past, one's own “buddha-nature” (*foxing* 佛性), or even the “undefiled seeds [of one's storehouse consciousness]” (*wulou zhongzi* 無漏種子).

Standing out here is the last item: the “undefiled seeds.” This Chinese word was coined by Xuanzang and played a key role in the novel (relative to earlier Chinese models) Yogācāra soteriology he promulgated. According to these theories, liberation occurs as a result of the activation and then eventual ripening of the “undefiled seeds” which exist within one's storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) alongside the defiled seeds of ordinary karma.²⁰ But, according to the interpretation of these concepts that Xuanzang championed, different people inherently belong to different “lineages” (*gotra*) possessing different kinds and amounts of such seeds. Some people even lack them entirely and are, hence, categorically unable to ever attain complete liberation.²¹ This insistence that some people inherently lack the capacity to attain liberation was in direct conflict with the accepted Chinese Buddhist orthodoxy that *all* beings have “buddha-nature.” This was the most acute point of scholastic disagreement between Xuanzang's teachings and the mainstream Chinese Buddhist thought of his day.²²

Obviously aware of Xuanzang's newly introduced concept of the “undefiled seeds,” the author of the *Dust Contemplation* incorporates this idea seamlessly into a more mainstream Chinese Buddhist model by treating the

大唐內典錄, T no. 2149, 55:282c6) and the *Dust Contemplation* itself can be taken as further evidence of Xuanzang's early association with a translation of this text. Though the *Dust Contemplation* refers to Xuanzang's translation as the “newly translated” (*xinfan*) *Heart Sutra*, as a proper name this title “Newly Translated *Heart Sutra*” would in later times come to refer to a different version of this text, that translated in the late eighth-century by Prajña (Bore 般若; n.d.). See *Zhen yuan xin ding shi jiao mu lu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (T no. 2157, 55:912b6–7) and *Nittō shingū seikyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄 (T no. 2167, 55:1085b21).

²⁰ Yoshimura 2009.

²¹ *Cheng wei shi lun* 成唯識論, T no. 1585, 31:9a15–b1.

²² Gimello 1976, pp. 352–62. See also lines 3.20–21 of the *Dust Contemplation* and the accompanying notes.

undefiled seeds as but *one* possible cause of attainment, along with others such as the “buddha-nature” whose reality he also here affirms. Here, then, is further evidence that the *Dust Contemplation* was written by someone committed to the presuppositions of pre-Xuanzang, Yogācāra-inspired Chinese scholasticism who at the same time was making an effort to demonstrate the compatibility of these ideas with the “new” translations of Xuanzang.

The above context, in addition to localizing the *Dust Contemplation* from the perspective of intellectual and doctrinal history, also helps us narrow down the date of its composition. Given their relatively short-lived prominence as an exclusive tradition—a prominence indissolubly linked to the charisma of Xuanzang and the imperial patronage he commanded—that the author of the *Dust Contemplation* felt the need to depict and engage with a Xuanzang-school partisan eager to reject anything contravening “our newly translated Buddhist teachings” suggests that it dates to either Xuanzang’s lifetime or not long after his death in 664.²³ A date of between 650–700 is hence likely.²⁴

OUTLINE OF THE *DUST CONTEMPLATION*

Introduction and the Precepts (Section One)

The *Dust Contemplation* is organized around a familiar Buddhist textual model: the “path” (*marga*) to liberation consisting in the progressive “three trainings” of precepts (*śīla*), meditation (*dhyāna* or *samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). The first of these is discussed only briefly, in the opening lines which state that to set out on the path to wisdom one must first receive the precepts, maintain them purely, and purify any transgressions of them

²³ On the decline of Xuanzang’s school after his death, see Weinstein 1973, pp. 296–97. Xuanzang’s translations and the commentaries of his students did, however, continue to be widely read long after this time (Yamabe 2014, pp. 254–57). We must therefore distinguish the decline of Xuanzang’s charismatic authority, and the waning of a sectarian ideology holding exclusively to the texts and doctrines he translated, from the question of how those ideas and texts were taken up by later Chinese Buddhists as part of less exclusive projects.

²⁴ Within this range, the earlier dates may be most likely. According to the *Kaiyuan shi jiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (T no. 2154, 55:555c3–4; 556b8; 556b19), the three Xuanzang texts cited by the *Dust Contemplation* (see n. 19 above) were among his earliest, all completed by mid-649. Given its evident interest in finding at least cursory support within Xuanzang’s new translations, this suggests that the *Dust Contemplation* may have been written before Xuanzang’s later translations were widely available.

through repentance (1.6–1.11).²⁵ Attention quickly turns to the meditation proper, whose final goal is described variously as “the wisdom that is free of attachments” (1.3), “empty quiescence” (7.10), “quiescence within activity” (6.4), or even—in language reminiscent of the goals extolled in early Chan literature—the “mind of the Buddha” (5.19). We may divide the *Dust Contemplation* into the following five sections:

1. Introduction and the Precepts (1.1–11)
2. Contemplating Dust (1.11–3.23)
3. Emptiness of External Objects (3.24–4.25)
4. Emptiness of Consciousness and “Quiescence Within Activity” (4.26–6.21)
5. Conclusion and Recapitulation (6.22–8.12)

Although the *Dust Contemplation* does not formally mark these sections, their presence is implied. The three titles “dust contemplation” (*chenguan* 塵觀), “emptiness contemplation” (*kongguan* 空觀), and “quiescent activity contemplation” (*ji yong guan* 寂用觀), corresponding to my sections 2, 3, and 4, are thus named as the teachings of the text as a whole, at the end of section 4 (6.12–13; 6.21). The boundaries between these sections are furthermore signaled implicitly when on each such occasion the author, having posed and answered several questions, then states that he “cannot record” all possible objections to the previously explained ideas (3.23; 4.24; 6.21). Section 5 stands apart as an extended conclusion that summarizes and recapitulates these same three levels of practice.²⁶

Contemplating Dust (Section Two)

Section two brings us to the heart of the *Dust Contemplation*. Here we are first introduced to the notion of “dust” (*chen* 塵), a term whose polyvalence is key to the overall logic of the text. This word “dust” carries four distinct meanings within the Chinese Buddhist lexicon: (1) dust or dirt in the literal sense; (2) a “mote of dust” in the sense of an *atom*, the smallest bit of matter into which material things can be divided; (3) sensory and cognitive objects

²⁵ The remarks here on the precepts seem to be preserved in full, or nearly so. This suggests that the missing opening passages of the manuscript were not extensive. At the very least, whatever else may have preceded the surviving portions, what remains is a relatively integrated whole on the topic of the “path.”

²⁶ Line 6.25 refers back to the “dust contemplation,” lines 6.26–27 to the contemplation of “emptiness,” and lines 6.28–7.10 to the attainment of “quiescence” (*ji* 寂).

in general (as opposed to perceiving consciousness); and (4) impurity or defilement.²⁷ The *Dust Contemplation* works methodically through the first three of these meanings; the fourth lurks throughout, especially in the latter sections of the text where the repeating claim that “dust is empty” (*chen kong* 塵空) reads equally well as “there are no [external] sensory objects” and “the defilements do not [ultimately] exist.” The wide semantic range of “dust” here produces, in a mere two characters, a philosophical move characteristic of much Chinese Buddhist thought: the uniting, as different ways of saying the same thing, of the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka perspectives which Indian Buddhist philosophy more usually presents in mutual opposition.

In section two, the first major part of the *Dust Contemplation*, “dust” takes on primarily its first two meanings. The meditator is instructed to “contemplate dust” (*guan chen* 觀塵) by imagining that any concrete object he encounters is not the solid, unitary whole that it appears, but a mere agglomeration of tiny particles. This amounts to a version of the familiar Buddhist meditative method of analyzing apparently unitary objects into smaller components so as to realize their emptiness and lack of inherent identity.²⁸

The *Dust Contemplation* provides for this a concrete technique. Drawing from the most literal meaning of the word “dust,” it begins with an experience we can all recognize: the practitioner must first gaze upon the swirling pattern of floating dust visible in a beam of light through a window and then imagine (*xiang* 想) this scene—a small glimpse, it is implied, of the reality underlying all material things—throughout his waking hours (1.12). By focusing intently and continuously on this image of swirling dust, the practitioner will, we are told, eventually enter a state of trance and experience various visions, all of which he must also then imagine dissolving into dust (1.14–2.3). In its specifics, this method of gazing upon the swirling dust in a sunbeam is unique within Buddhist literature to my knowledge. But here too the *Dust Contemplation* draws on quite traditional Buddhist ideas:

²⁷ These four meanings can easily be seen in the list of possible Sanskrit equivalents given by Hirakawa (1997, pp. 301–2), which includes, among others, (1) *pāṃsu*, (2) *aṇu*, (3) *artha*, and (4) *upakleśa*. Other Indic terms that Hirakawa suggests (such as *rajas* or *kāma*) cut across some of these four meanings, but none conveys the full range of what was eventually attributable to the Chinese word “dust” (*chen*).

²⁸ See, however, lines 3.12–13, where the *Dust Contemplation* makes a point of insisting that it offers a “Mahayana” version of this practice because it instructs meditators to imagine things as “dust” only to eliminate grasping, not to thereby assert that dust (i.e., dharmas) truly exists, as would be taught, it is here claimed, in the “Hinayana.”

namely, the classical Buddhist meditative technique of using an external object, often one representing certain normative Buddhist truths (such as a decaying corpse), to generate a concrete mental image upon which one then focuses the mind so as to enter a state of trance (*dhyāna*).

After presenting this introductory method for meditation, the *Dust Contemplation* makes a first effort at what in the remainder of the treatise will be a major preoccupation: providing canonical proof-texts to justify the proposed methods (2.6). Several anecdotes are also then recounted, concerning specific but unnamed individuals who, it is claimed, “contemplated dust” as described and obtained great benefits (2.16–24). The final passages of section two declare that seeing all things as dust will destroy the practitioner’s bad karma and make him pure and ready for the ensuing, higher practices and attainments (3.16–17).

Emptiness of External Objects (Section Three)

It is to these more advanced attainments that the *Dust Contemplation* then turns. The practitioner, having seen all things in the world dissolving into “dust,” must now turn his attention toward his own body. Seeing there to be “neither eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body” but only dust, after “gazing at this place of nothingness” (*kan wu chu* 看無處),²⁹ the dust itself will suddenly disappear (3.27);³⁰ that is to say, even the minute, featureless motes of dust out of which all visible things are constructed will now vanish. In doctrinal terms, what is realized here is thus the emptiness of even the dharma, the building blocks of all gross phenomena, whose discernment, in the first step, had eliminated attachment to those phenomena.

For the *Dust Contemplation*, however, the emptiness of all “dust” does not quite negate everything. The meditator’s own subjective awareness remains, apparently, untouched by this realization that all *objects* of awareness are empty. The state gained by the meditator is hence now described as the “contemplation [discerning that there is] merely consciousness, no dust”

²⁹ These instructions to “gaze at this place of nothingness,” taken in reference to the meditator’s own body, are reminiscent of sections of the early Chan treatise *Dun wu zhen zong jin gang bore xiu xing da bi an fa men yao jue* 頓悟真宗金剛般若脩行達彼岸法門要決 (Essential Formulas and Teachings for Reaching the Other Shore by Practice of the Diamond Wisdom [Scripture] of the True Lineage of Sudden Awakening), known from several Dunhuang manuscripts (Ueyama 1976, pp. 96–98).

³⁰ The later recapitulation of this same stage evocatively says that one should at this moment “contemplate the honeycomb-like empty space between the particles of dust” (6.26), whereupon the dust will suddenly vanish.

(*weishi wuchen guan* 唯識無塵觀), with “dust” now firmly taking on the third of its four meanings outlined above: cognitive objects in general. In the ensuing pages, this realization of “mere consciousness” is elaborated with reference to key pre-Xuanzang Yogācāra scriptures, sources from which all of this Chinese terminology ultimately stems (3.28–4.3). Though presented in terms of the Yogācāra doctrine of “mere consciousness,” the attainment here is said to be equally well described as the realization of “emptiness” (*kong* 空), explained to mean both that objects of consciousness are entirely nonexistent and also that they do exist as mere mental projections (4.3–4.4).

The Emptiness of Consciousness and Quiescence within Activity (Section Four)

The final major section of the *Dust Contemplation* describes what is framed as the highest, most advanced level of meditative attainment. The practitioner, having seen the emptiness of all cognitive objects, now turns his attention back upon the subjective consciousness that perceives this emptiness. The practitioner must consider: “The Dharma is without duality, but if I am now using the mind to see emptiness, this would constitute a duality [between mind and its object]; who, then, is able to see emptiness?” (4.26–27). Realizing that the mind perceiving emptiness must itself be empty, the “mind will become still of itself and concerning this stillness [the practitioner] will not even form the idea ‘stillness’” (4.28). This nonconceptualized stillness is dubbed “quiescence” (*ji* 寂) and later, using a term characteristic of much early Chan literature, the condition of being “without thoughts” (*wunian* 無念; 5.10–11).

In “quiescence,” however, things still occur. Above all, the meditator will have further extraordinary visions—of the buddhas and their pure lands among other things (5.1–7). As each vision arises, the meditator may contemplate them as empty, thereby deepening his quiescence (5.7–12), but an alternative and superior approach is also eventually proposed: the meditator should merely behold each trance-induced vision as “undifferentiated [from one another]” (5.15–16). Actively perceiving various concrete phenomena while paradoxically remaining at the same time tranquil and without thoughts, this is called the “realization of the mind of the Buddha” (5.19) or the attainment of “quiescence within activity” (*yongji* 用寂; 6.3), a term used to name this section as a whole and one which, by joining the nominally opposing qualities of stillness and activity, gestures toward a non-dualistic transcendence of both.³¹

³¹ The term “quiescence within activity” is first attested in the writings of Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414; *Zhao lun* 肇論, T no. 1858, 45:154c15–17). Similar language occurs in some

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A full exploration of the sources, antecedents, and later influence of the *Dust Contemplation* must await future research. Here, I will limit myself to the following general observation: that the *Dust Contemplation*, while on the one hand showing a strong affinity with the so-called Shelun scholastic tradition that focused above all on the Chinese translations of fundamental Yogācāra treatises associated with Paramārtha, at the same time proposes an approach to meditation whose basic pattern is neither narrow nor sectarian and is found in many other medieval Chinese Buddhist sources. The *Dust Contemplation* is, from this point of view, best seen as a product of a generalized pre-Xuanzang scholastic Chinese Buddhism, one in which certain Yogācāra ideas had long since become widely accepted.

As discussed above, the core sections of the *Dust Contemplation* guide the meditator through a sequence in which he contemplates that:

1. All external things are merely “dust.”
2. Even “dust” (phenomenal objects) is empty and only the mind exists.
3. The mind too is empty, a realization that leads to transcendence of the mind-object duality.

Rhetorically, the second of these stages was evidently a crucial one, as the title of the text as a whole derives from it. Here, the practitioner must cultivate what the *Dust Contemplation* calls the “contemplation [discerning that there is] merely consciousness, no dust [external objects]” (3.28–4.1). The ensuing passages justify the import of such practice by citing various well-known Chinese Buddhist scriptures. Nevertheless the catchphrase “merely consciousness, no dust” appears to have a specific source: among extant canonical Chinese Buddhist scriptures, this expression occurs exclusively within Paramārtha’s translations of the foundational Yogācāra treatises, the most important of which—the *She da sheng lun shi* (**Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya*)—is cited elsewhere in the *Dust Contemplation* (3.18–21).³² Indeed in the seventh century this catchphrase was, to

early Chan documents (see *Da sheng wu sheng fang bian men* 大乘無生方便門, T no. 2834, 85:1274b5–7). The basic idea here—that the state of enlightenment is one that unites the nominally opposed categories of stillness and activity—had by the Tang dynasty long since become a common presupposition of not only Buddhist but also many Daoist exegetes (Assandri 2019, pp. 10–13).

³² The phrase “merely consciousness, no dust” (*weishi wuchen*) appears in Paramārtha’s translation of the *Vimśikā* (*Da sheng wei shi lun* 大乘唯識論, T no. 1589, 31:71a8), rendering

judge from other sources, something of a slogan denoting the central ideas taught by Paramārtha and promulgated by his Chinese students.³³

The *Dust Contemplation* is thus clearly indebted to the scholastic traditions that drew from Paramārtha's translations, traditions that in the seventh century would be important, among other sites, in the formation of both Chan and Huayan. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the *Dust Contemplation* cites as proof-texts a wide range of scriptural sources, the list of which reads as a veritable "greatest hits" of fifth- and sixth-century scholastic Chinese Buddhism (see table 1). Many if not most of these same texts are mentioned again and again within the biographies of famous sixth- and seventh-century Buddhist exegetes, who are depicted as specializing in their study, lecturing on them, and composing commentaries pertaining to them.³⁴ The *Dust Contemplation* is, in short, not an intellectually sectarian work. Its doctrinal identity is best described as "pre-Xuanzang Chinese Buddhism," an identity that emerges as such, within the broader history of Chinese Buddhism, as part of the same polemical context in which the *Dust Contemplation* was composed, as discussed above.

The *Dust Contemplation* thus drew from ideas that while distinctively "Yogācāra" from the perspective of Indian Buddhism were, by this era, widely if not universally shared in China. This context also helps make sense of the specific procedures of meditation it proposes. Of particular note is the movement between stages two and three of the three-fold sequence of insights that, as discussed above, form the core sections of the *Dust Contemplation*. Here, the reader is guided from seeing that (2) "dust" (sensory objects) is unreal and only the mind exists to (3) understanding that even the perceiving mind itself must also be empty. This sequence, by which the notion of "mere consciousness" becomes a meditative tool for transcending the subject-object duality, is in fact a central motif in many Yogācāra treatises. In the *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*, this sequence is given the name "the means of realizing the nonexistence [of

the foundational Yogācāra doctrine "consciousness [arises] not from external objects" (*viññaptir . . . nārthataḥ*; Silk 2016, p. 189). It is also a reoccurring refrain in Paramārtha's translation of the **Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* (*She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:182c3; 184c29; 185c22; 186b3), which also speaks of the "contemplation that there is no dust" (*wuchen guan*) as a step in the acquisition of samadhi (T no. 1595, 31:207c21–24).

³³ Paramārtha's seventh-century biography records that he was forced to leave the Liang 梁 capital of Jianye 建業 when rival Buddhist groups criticized his new teachings to the emperor as the putatively heretical doctrine that "there is no dust, merely consciousness" (*wuchen weishi* 無塵唯識; *Xu gao seng zhuan*, T no. 2060, 50:430b5).

³⁴ *Xu gao seng zhuan*, T no. 2060, 50:459c14–549c27.

both subject and object]” (*asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya*). As explained in Paramārtha’s translation of this passage:

Within all the triple world there is merely consciousness. On the basis of this principle, [one sees] that external dust [cognitive objects] has no substantial existence at all. When this knowledge is obtained, [one then realizes that] inasmuch as cognitive objects have no substantial existence the mere-consciousness that takes objects also cannot arise. By this means, one is able to realize the nonexistence of both subject and object.³⁵

Given its other terminological and conceptual links to the doctrinal traditions associated with Paramārtha’s translations, the *Dust Contemplation*’s evident foregrounding of something akin to the “means of realizing the non-existence [of both subject and object]” might be taken as a further indication of its debt to these traditions specifically. Without denying this debt, we must again resist the temptation to pigeonhole the *Dust Contemplation*. For indeed, as it turns out, a wide variety of Chinese meditation manuals written and used throughout the sixth, seventh, and even eighth centuries, not all of which are overtly “Yogācāra” in their orientation or sources, describe very similar methods.

We thus find such procedures in what is arguably the most influential Chinese Buddhist meditation manual of all time, the so-called *Lesser Calming and Contemplation* (*Xiao zhi guan* 小止觀) of Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597),³⁶ as the core of what he calls “correct contemplation” (*zhengguan* 正觀)—that is, the basic practice of proper “insight” (*vipaśyanā*) meditation. In correct contemplation:

One contemplates that all phenomena are without distinguishing marks. . . . Coming first to understand that all [external] objects of contemplation are empty, the contemplating mind itself then naturally ceases to arise.³⁷

³⁵ 一切三界但唯有識。依如此義外塵體相決無所有。此智得成。由所緣境無有體故。能緣唯識亦不得生。以是方便即得入於能取所取無所有相。(*Zhong bian fen bie lun* 中邊分別論, T no. 1599, 31:451c10–13.) To judge from the extant Sanskrit text of this passage (Nagao 1964, p. 20), both “external dust” (*wai chen* 外塵) and “cognitive objects” (*suoyuan jing* 所緣境) translate the same word, *artha*.

³⁶ Zhiyi’s famous manual, known informally as the *Xiao zhi guan*, circulated under several different titles and was widely borrowed from, often verbatim, in seventh- and eighth-century Chinese Buddhist writings on meditation.

³⁷ 觀諸法無相 . . . 先了所觀之境一切皆空。能觀之心自然不起。(*Xiu xing zhi guan zuo chan fa yao* 修習止觀坐禪法要, T no. 1915, 46:467b3–6.) Sekiguchi excludes these lines

Zhiyi, in writing the *Lesser Calming and Contemplation*, clearly took this method as a widely applicable one, and in several other passages and contexts he proposes a similar technique whereby the meditator must use an initial insight into the emptiness of phenomenal objects as a ground for then realizing the emptiness or ungraspability of the perceiving mind itself.³⁸

Zhiyi was not the only author of this era to take as central to the practice of meditation something structurally and conceptually similar to the Yogācāra “means of realizing the nonexistence [of both subject and object].” Similar procedures are said to be what produces “correct mindfulness” (*zhengnian* 正念) in the chapter on meditation (*zhiguan* 止觀) from the *Awakening of Faith* (*Da sheng qi xin lun* 大乘起信論), the apocryphal treatise that since its appearance in the sixth century has remained one of the most influential of all Chinese Buddhist texts.³⁹ Jumping ahead to the turn of the eighth century, as Yamabe Nobuyoshi 山部能宜 has recently shown, similar procedures are discussed in some early Chan sources. Yamabe notes in particular the collection of meditation instructions known as the *Maxims for Leading Commoners to Sagehood* (*Dao fan qu sheng xin jue* 導凡趣聖心訣), which are worth citing here at some length:

If one wishes to practice contemplation (*guan* 觀), one should begin by contemplating external [objects]. . . . One first contemplates

from his critical edition because they do not appear in the two early manuscripts to which he had access, versions that, he argues, represent the earliest form of the text. These manuscripts, however, *do* include, immediately after this, a different long passage in which very similar ideas are presented at even greater length (Sekiguchi 1961, p. 179, n. 16; pp. 340–42). Portions of these passages, meanwhile, are also found in the transmitted versions, in an earlier passage (T no. 1915, 46:467a16–28; Sekiguchi 1961, p. 174).

³⁸ *Xiu xing zhi guan zuo chan fa yao*, T no. 1915, 46:467a11–13; see also the section “practicing calming and contemplation with respect to the objects of the six senses” (*liu gen men zhong xiu zhiguan* 六根門中修止觀, T no. 1915, 46:468b28–469a16), which in places reads almost like an abbreviated version of the relevant portions of the *Dust Contemplation*. These passages occur even in the manuscript versions of the *Xiao zhi guan* (Sekiguchi 1961, pp. 193–98). The received texts, but not the two early manuscripts, in a note immediately after the above-cited explanation of “correct contemplation,” state that the sequential realization of the emptiness of perceived object followed by the emptiness of the perceiving mind is “frequently discussed throughout this text, as you should note carefully” (T no. 1915, 46: 467b5–6). The importance of this method within the *Xiao zhi guan* as a whole was thus explicitly highlighted, if not by Zhiyi then at least by later editors of the text.

³⁹ *Da sheng qi xin lun*, T no. 1666, 32:582a22–24. This passage is itself cited in the received version, but not the two early manuscripts, of the *Xiao zhi guan* (T no. 1915, 46:467a26–28). Zhiyi does not cite the *Da sheng qi xin lun* anywhere else within his oeuvre. All of this suggests that this citation was, indeed, a later addition to the *Xiao zhi guan*.

external objects so as to come to know that all phenomena are equal in their original intrinsic natures and are not distinct from one another. All [external] phenomena merely arise illusorily, caused by beginningless karmic impressions. They have no real essence. . . . When you have understood this principle, you must then carefully observe each and every cognitive object as described above and know that [in reality] they are only the mind, that there are no external objects. . . .

Having fixed the mind [thusly] for a long time, one must then turn back and contemplate the deluded mind itself. Does it exist? Does it not exist? Is it extinguished [after having first arisen]? Ultimately, however one might try to seek it out, it cannot be apprehended. . . .

When I say “turn back and contemplate,” this means merely to be constantly aware of your own contemplating. When the mind turns back and contemplates itself, there is at this moment neither subject nor object. . . . When [initially] the mind is contemplating the nonexistence [of external objects], there is that which contemplates and that which is contemplated. But at the moment of truly turning back and contemplating [the mind itself], there is no subject or object of contemplation. At this moment, one goes beyond words or tangible characteristics. Beyond all linguistic representation, the locus of [deluded] mental activity is extinguished.⁴⁰

Here, the meditator first investigates external objects and discerns that they are empty while the mind alone is real. He then “turns back” (*que* 卻) and sees that from this perspective the mind too must ultimately be ungraspable, and in this way reaches a third position that goes beyond the duality of subject and object. Though written in a freer, less technical, more “Channish” manner, the steps here closely parallel the core sections of the *Dust Contemplation* as we have seen.

⁴⁰ 若欲修觀，要須從外觀 . . . 所以先從外觀者，須知諸法本來體性平等無差別相。今所有諸法，但是無始薰習因緣幻起，無有實體 . . . 即知此理，但心所緣，皆須一一隨逐，如前觀察，知唯是心無外境界 . . . 住心得久，得久已，即卻觀此妄心。為當是有，為復是無，又是滅。種種推求，畢竟不可得 . . . 今言卻觀者，只是嘗念觀心自卻觀，更無能所 . . . 意在無觀之時，即有能觀所觀。正卻觀之時，既無能所觀。此時離言絕相，言語道斷，心行處滅。 Chinese text from Pelliot manuscript 3664, as transcribed by Yamabe (2014, p. 280); the English translation is my own.

Further examples of this basic pattern could undoubtedly be found in sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-century Chinese Buddhist writings on meditation.⁴¹ I present these ones here not to argue for any particular chain of influence or borrowing, but to suggest that whatever the idiosyncrasies of the *Dust Contemplation* and whatever doctrinal or scholastic identities its author might have claimed, at its core is a set of procedures for the practice of Buddhist meditation that were, throughout the two centuries between 550 and 750 CE, widely taught by Chinese Buddhist teachers of various stripes.

⁴¹ For some additional, similar examples from other early Chan sources, see Sharf 2014, pp. 940–41.

TRANSLATION OF THE *DUST CONTEMPLATION* ⁴²

[Section 1: Introduction]

[1.1] □□□□□□□□□□道無有斷□□□ [1.2] □□□□□□□智惠。言智惠者，大意於□ [1.3] □□□□□智惠。此不著智，聖教中，漸漸脩 [1.4] 學方可得成。故佛性論云，「聰明人次第，漸漸 [1.5] 細細脩，滅除自身垢，如金師練金」。

[1.1] . . . way is not cut off . . . [1.2] . . . wisdom. When we say “wisdom,” the general meaning . . . [1.3] . . . wisdom.

According to the holy teachings [of Buddhism], the wisdom that is free of attachments⁴³ must be gradually cultivated [1.4]. Only then can it be fully accomplished. It is for this reason that the *Treatise on Buddha-Nature* says: “An intelligent person, step by step, / carefully [1.5] and gradually cultivates / so as to eliminate his impurities, / just as a goldsmith refines gold-ore [into pure gold].”⁴⁴

行人欲學 [1.6] 時，先須持戒三業清淨。三業者謂身口意。若在家人須[1.7] 持五戒八戒菩薩戒，經中名善男子善女人。若 [1.8] 出家人，須持聲聞戒菩薩戒。When a practitioner wishes to cultivate [this wisdom], [1.6] he must first maintain the precepts and stay pure with respect to the three kinds of conduct. The three kinds of conduct are [actions of] body, speech, and mind. For a layperson, this means one must [1.7] maintain the five precepts, the eight

⁴² Page and line numbers of the manuscript (Haneda no. 598 [羽 598] in *Tonkō hikyū* 2012, vol. 8, pp. 128–32) are given below in the Chinese edition, as well as in the English translation for ease of reference. Emendations to the Chinese text are marked as [X]{Y} to mean that X is emended to Y. The *Dust Contemplation* also contains a “commentary” of unclear date written in the usual format of half-sized characters. To preserve the appearance of the commentary, I reproduce it, in both the Chinese and the English translation, in a smaller font size.

⁴³ I take *buzhuo zhi* 不著智 as a noun. I presume it is equivalent in meaning to the more common term *wuzhuo zhi* 無著智, found in Paramārtha’s translation of the **Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* (among other places), where it is explained to mean the non-discriminating wisdom (*wufenbie zhi* 無分別智) produced by insight into the nonexistence of both subject and object (*She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:214a24–28).

⁴⁴ *Fo xing lun*, T no. 1610, 31:800c22–23, which in its transmitted versions reads *shushu* 數數 (“earnestly”) rather than the *jianjian* 漸漸 (“gradually”) quoted here. Traditionally claimed to be a work of Vasubandhu translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (*Zhong jing mu lu* 眾經目錄, T no. 2146, 55:141b1), modern scholars think that the *Fo xing lun* contains much material composed by Paramārtha himself, his Chinese students, or his later followers (Funayama 2012, pp. 19–20). The *Fo xing lun* appears to be closely related to another famous apocryphon later linked to Paramārtha, the *Da sheng qi xin lun* (Ishii 2012, pp. 109–15).

[fast-day] precepts, and the bodhisattva precepts; this is what is meant when the sutras speak of “good sons or daughters.” For [1.8] a monk or nun, this means maintaining the monastic precepts and the bodhisattva precepts.

戒是萬善之基, [1.9] 戒淨學即易得。故經言,尸羅清淨三昧現前。[1.10] 尸羅者,梵語。此翻為戒。三昧者,梵語。此翻為定。云何脩學。若自知三業不淨,恆 [1.11] 須佛像前慚愧懺悔已,更即莫作。

[As it is said,] the precepts are the foundation for all good things,⁴⁵ [1.9] so when one has the purity of the precepts, practice will be easily accomplished. It is for this reason that a scripture says: “when *śīla* is pure, *samādhi* will then appear.”⁴⁶ [1.10] *Śīla* is a Sanskrit word. It is translated into Chinese as “precepts.” *Samādhi* is also a Sanskrit word. It is translated into Chinese as “meditative concentration.”

How does one cultivate [this purity]? Whenever one realizes that one’s conduct of body, speech, or mind has been impure, [1.11] one must always remorsefully repent before an image of the Buddha and then [vow to] not again transgress.

[Section 2: *Contemplating Dust*]

即須先觀窗 [1.12] 光中塵,行住坐臥乃至食常想窗光中塵。[1.13] 是大懺悔。罪依身起。觀身是塵,罪無依處。是大懺悔。

Next, having first gazed upon the dust visible in a beam of light [1.12] coming through a window, when walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and even while eating, you must constantly imagine this dust within the beam

⁴⁵ Though not presented as a direct citation, this phrase was seemingly a well-known aphorism in Tang and earlier times. The original source may be the *Sapoduo pini piposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙 (T no. 1440, 23:519a22), a *vinaya* commentary written or translated into Chinese in the fifth century. See, among other places it is invoked, *Sha mi wei yi* 沙彌威儀, T no. 1472, 24:935a22–23; *Si fen lü shan fan bu que xing shi chao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔, T no. 1804, 49:50c10; and *Fan wang jing gu ji ji* 梵網經古跡記, T no. 1815, 40:702b17.

⁴⁶ That *samādhi* is obtained only by those who are pure with respect to the precepts is a commonly expressed idea in medieval Chinese Buddhist meditation literature. The phrase “when *śīla* is pure, *samādhi* will then appear,” here attributed by the *Dust Contemplation* to a “scripture,” may in fact derive from Zhiyi’s *Mohe zhi guan* 摩訶止觀 (T no. 1911, 46:41b26–27). This same line also appears in the *Xiu chan yao jue* 修禪要訣 (X no. 1222, 63:16b22), supposedly the record of meditation instructions delivered in the year 677 by an Indian Buddhist teacher living in China (Sengoku 1986), a document that would be closely contemporary with the *Dust Contemplation*.

of light. [1.13] [To meditate thusly] is the greatest form of repentance. Sinful actions take place in dependence on the body. If one contemplates that one's body is nothing but dust, then sin has nothing upon which it can depend. [To meditate thusly] is the greatest form of repentance.

行人勤觀塵時，或 [1.14] 見自身肉爛黑蟲[疽]{蛆}膿血，或見自身是白骨，[1.15] 或見自身無頭，或見無半身，或見無一手，或見 [1.16] 無一腳，或見身內片片落盡成白骨，或半身 [1.17] 爛肉半身白骨，或見無身是炎影。此中所 [1.18] 見境界非一。但所見者，心中念道是塵。初時 [1.19] 不肯作塵，久久勤看，並悉成塵。

When a practitioner is diligently contemplating [all things as] dust, he may [1.14] experience a vision of his body with its flesh rotted, or bruised, or infested with maggots, or [exuding] pus and blood; or else he may see himself as a skeleton; [1.15] or he may see himself as a body without a head; or missing half his body; or as missing one hand; or [1.16] as missing one foot; or he may see his internal body parts each fall away leaving only his skeleton behind; or he may see the flesh of half his body [1.17] rot away revealing half his skeleton;⁴⁷ or he may see himself without a body, [as but a] mirage or reflection.⁴⁸ There are [1.18] various meditative visions (*jingjie* 境界) that one might see at this time. Concerning whatever things you see, you must merely think to yourself: "This is dust!" When you first do this, [1.19] they will not want to become dust.⁴⁹ But if you diligently gaze upon them for a long time, they will eventually all become dust.

又觀塵時，[1.20] 或見佛、菩薩、僧，或見宮殿樓閣花池寶蓋，[1.21] 地水火風青黃赤白種種光明悉遍滿世界。[1.22] 雖作如此見，但心中勤念作塵解，久久作塵。

Further, when contemplating [all things as] dust, [1.20] you may see buddhas, or bodhisattvas, or monks; or you may see palaces, towers, flower

⁴⁷ A vision of half one's body as a skeleton recalls instructions from the fifth-century meditation manual *Chan mi yao fa jing* 禪祕要法經, T no. 613, 15:243c17–18. A painting of a meditator beholding a body half-decayed into a skeleton can be seen in Toyok cave 42, near Turfan (Miyaji 1996, plate 3). See also Yamabe 1997, pp. 259–60.

⁴⁸ *Wu shen shi yanying* 無身是炎影 is grammatically awkward. Possibly we should emend *wu* 無 (无 in the manuscript) to *ji* 己, yielding "he may see *his own* body to be a mirage or reflection." The two terms "mirage" (*yan* 炎 [var. 焰]) and "reflection" (*ying* 影) are ubiquitous among the lists of metaphors for emptiness in the Chinese translations of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (see, for example, *Da zhi du lun*, T no. 1509, 25:101c8; 364a24; 675a29). I have here taken these words in this meaning.

⁴⁹ Alternatively, "but *you* will not wish to take them as dust."

ponds, jeweled canopies, [1.21] or else the entire world filled with earth, water, fire, or wind, or with various blue, yellow, red, or white lights.⁵⁰ [1.22] Even though visions such as this appear, within your mind merely keep diligently thinking of them as dust⁵¹ and eventually they will become dust.

有 [1.23] 學觀塵者，見一蛇繞項，覺冷，心中念道是 [2.1] 塵，即隨念成塵。有人觀塵，見一箇佛，身量 [2.2] 同於虛空。此佛口云：「餘物可作塵，我是金剛 [2.3] 身」。汝不須畏，但勤想塵，至十日盡變成塵。

There was once [1.23] someone who, while learning the dust contemplation, saw a snake wrapped around his neck. Though he could feel its coolness, he said to himself “This is [2.1] dust!” and following these thoughts it became dust. Someone else was once contemplating dust and saw a buddha, [2.2] its body as big as the sky. This buddha spoke, saying: “Other things can be made into dust, but I have a [2.3] body of adamant!”⁵² You must not be afraid [if you see something like this]. Just diligently imagine it as dust, and on the tenth day it will entirely transform into dust.

[2.4] 故楞伽經第一卷云：「聲聞、辟支佛、佛、及最 [2.5.] 勝子 最勝子，是菩薩。身各有幾數，何故不問此」。即此卷 [2.6] 下文言：「微塵分別事，不起色妄想。」但眼見一 [2.7] 切色，悉是事，悉是妄想。一切色，十種。謂眼耳口鼻舌身色聲香味觸。 [2.4] Indeed, as the first fascicle of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* says: “Why do you not ask how many [motes of dust] there are within the bodies of

⁵⁰ Images of towers, palaces, or flower-filled ponds strongly recall the visions of the Pure Land promised to practitioners in texts such as the *Guan wu liang shou fo jing*, and the idea of the Pure Land is explicitly mentioned in a very similar passage below (5.1). The trope of a vision of the primary elements (earth, water, etc.) or colors filling the universe alludes to the so-called “totality” meditations (Skt. *kṛtsnāyatana*; P. *kaśiṇa*) discussed in canonical Buddhist sources. In medieval Chinese-authored meditation texts, however, these images are often presented more generically as a vision that will occur during advanced states of meditation (see, e.g., *Shi chan boluomi ci di fa men* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門, T no. 1916, 46:542a2–10).

⁵¹ *Nian zuo chen jie* 念作塵解. The expression *zuo* 作 X *jie* 解, meaning “imagine/grasp/understand as X,” occurs frequently in Chinese translations of Buddhist literature where it often renders the verb *adhi+√muc*, meaning both “imagine” or “visualize” but also the magical act of using the mind to literally transform one object into another (see, e.g., *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經, T no. 99, 2:128c26, corresponding to *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, 3.340). Though the *Dust Contemplation* is not a translated text, it seems to use this expression in a similar meaning.

⁵² On the notion that the Buddha possesses an indestructible body of “adamant” (*vajra*; *jin gang* 金剛), see Radich 2011.

the voice-hearers, *pratyekabuddhas*, buddhas, and the [2.5] sons of the conqueror?”⁵³ “Sons of the conqueror” means bodhisattvas. And as it says later in this same fascicle, [2.6] “what you analyze into motes of dust you will no longer falsely imagine as a truly existing material form.”⁵⁴ All material forms that one sees with one’s eyes [2.7] are merely this kind of thing; all are merely false perceptions. “All material forms” are tenfold: namely, [the sensory organs of] eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, and [the sensory objects] of visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles.

現今 [2.8] 有人，聞道[比]{以}⁵⁵來，若老若少，悉皆觀塵，大有 [2.9] 利益。有人聞已，即私屏處觀塵。當時見自身 [2.10] 盡空，忽然驚懼，我身無去，作物計。數日忙忙，[2.11] 宛然狂亂。傍人將來見脩道，數度語話。漸 [2.12] 漸解經意，至今大安穩。

Some people these days, [2.8] upon hearing this method [of practice], whether old or young they all contemplate dust and thereby obtain [2.9] great benefit. There was one person⁵⁶ who heard about it and then, in private, contemplated dust. Right then he saw his own body [2.10] entirely vanish and he suddenly became afraid, [thinking]: “My body has vanished into nothingness! What do I do?”⁵⁷ For several days he was all in a flurry, [2.11] as if he had gone crazy. Someone came by and saw he was cultivating the path and spoke to him several times. Gradually [2.12] he was able to understand the meaning of the scriptures and is now perfectly at ease.

⁵³ *Lengqieabaduohuo bao jing*, T no. 670, 16:482a13–14. In its original context this line is a rhetorical question, not a prescription for practice as the *Dust Contemplation* takes it.

⁵⁴ *Lengqieabaduohuo bao jing*, T no. 670, 16:485c22. Cf. *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, 2.126: “When analyzed down to atoms no form at all can be discriminated” (*aṃśo bhajyamāṇam hi naiva rūpaṃ vikalpayet*). This passage, also cited at 2.28 and 3.16 below, is a key scriptural proof-text for the *Dust Contemplation*.

⁵⁵ Emendation tentative. *Bilai* 比來 (“recently” or “for a long time now”), normally a sentence-beginning adverbial phrase, would be quite awkward in this position.

⁵⁶ The scenarios introduced here and below might be intended as non-specific references (“there are some people who”), or alternatively as a specific but unnamed person (“there was one person who”). I take the latter meaning as more probable given the ensuing discussion of a moment when “someone came by.”

⁵⁷ Translation tentative. *Zuowu* 作物 is a common medieval transcription of the colloquial interrogative that later becomes *zenme* 怎麼 (Jiang and Cao 1998, p. 466). I take *zuowu ji* 作物計 as thus roughly equivalent to the modern Mandarin *zenme ban* 怎麼辦. More difficult to decipher is the preceding phrase *wo shen wu qu* 我身無去. The expression *wu qu* often means “does not go anywhere.” But here, the context suggests taking *wu* as a pre-posed locative, yielding “gone to nothingness,” that is, disappeared. I thank Christoph Anderl and Michael Radich for helping me think through the possibilities here.

經中說一切法空得空 [2.13] 稱，佛意漸漸無著，何所懼也。故華嚴經明難 [2.14] 品第六卷云：「眼耳鼻舌身心意諸情根，其性悉 [2.15] 空寂，虛妄無真實。」又畏空者，教觀釋迦佛 [2.16] 身，見佛相好，遂失空畏。

Indeed, when the scriptures say that all dharmas are to be apprehended as empty and designated as empty, [2.13] the Buddha's meaning here is that we should gradually become free of attachment—what is there to fear? As it says in the sixth fascicle of the *Flower Adornment Sutra*, in the “Clarifying Objections” [2.14] chapter, “The sensory organs of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are all, in their natures, [2.15] empty and tranquil; they are all vacuous and without reality.”⁵⁸ Further, anyone who fears emptiness should be taught to contemplate the body of Śākyamuni Buddha.⁵⁹ [2.16] Upon seeing the Buddha's bodily marks, any fear of emptiness will disappear.

又有聞說塵，當時即 [2.17] 觀，見自眼枯瞎，一過驚懼，急手向自眼摸索，雖有 [2.18] 眼在，日夜不安。傍人將來見脩道，與語話，漸漸 [2.19] 安心。即今益甚大有勝解。

There was someone else who heard this teaching about dust and when he began to [2.17] contemplate, he became blind. At once he became extremely startled and quickly felt for his eyes. Even though [2.18] his eyes were still there, day and night he was uneasy. Someone came by and saw him cultivating the path and spoke with him, gradually [2.19] easing his mind. At present, he has reached an even more superior realization!

如此傳聞即學，益 [2.20] 者非一。又有人觀塵，見一金剛身，一丈餘，當門而 [2.21] 立。口云，「我是金剛身，豈是塵也。」至四日，兩手捉 [2.22] 門闥伏地來問道。道云，「汝不須懼，但勤想塵」，[2.23] 至五日，忽變成塵。

Many are those who have benefited from⁶⁰ hearing and then practicing [the contemplation of dust] [2.20] in this way! One person, when contemplating dust, saw an adamant person, over ten feet tall, standing in front [2.21] of the door saying: “I have an adamant body; how could I be dust?” On the fourth day, [this practitioner] came to me and, prostrating to the ground with his hands clutching the [2.22] threshold of [my] doorway, asked about

⁵⁸ *Da fang guang fo hua yan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T no. 278, 9:427a27–28.

⁵⁹ Meditation on the Buddha as an antidote to fear (specifically, the fear generated by meditating on bodily impurity) is mentioned in the *Da zhi du lun* (T no. 1509, 25:218c22–219a1), which draws from earlier canonical sources (Lamotte 1944–81, vol. 3, 1335, n. 1). This passage from the *Da zhi du lun* is taken up in Zhiyi's meditation treatises (*Shi chan boluomi ci di fa men*, T no. 1916, 46:537b27–c3).

⁶⁰ Alternatively, “many are the benefits of.”

the path. [I] said: “Don’t be afraid. Just diligently imagine [that adamantine person] as dust.” [2.23] And on the fifth day he suddenly turned to dust!

又有觀塵者，忽見身成大 [2.24] 樹、大山，想塵不已，盡變成塵。又見種種差別 [2.25] 境界，皆類上，看之皆悉成塵。現今有人作白骨、[2.26] 不淨觀，經年不得，但作塵觀，白骨、不淨自來。

Others who contemplate dust will suddenly see their bodies transform into large trees or large [2.24] mountains. Imagining them as dust without cease, these visions will entirely transform into dust. Others will see various different [2.25] meditative visions like those described above. Gaze upon them and they will all turn to dust.

Nowadays, there are some people who engage in the white-bone contemplation or the [2.26] contemplation of impurity⁶¹ without reaching attainment even after many years. Yet merely by carrying out the dust contemplation, [visions of] white bones and impurity will come of themselves!

[Section 2: Questions]

[2.27] 問曰：「何處聖教有此文」。[2.28] 答曰。楞伽經第一卷云：「微塵分別事，不起色妄 [3.1] 想」。金剛般若經云：「三千大千世界碎為微塵」。大 [3.2] 乘雜集論第六卷，觀極微是無我觀。極微者，猶是微塵。[3.3] 又無著菩薩作論解金剛般若，彼色有兩種 [3.4] 方便，一者碎末方便。碎末猶是微塵。二者無所見方便。[2.27] Question: What passages in the sacred teachings [endorse the dust contemplation]?

[2.28] Answer: In the first fascicle of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* it says: “What you analyze into motes of dust you will no longer falsely imagine as a truly existing material [3.1] form.”⁶² And the *Diamond Sutra* says: “Pulverize the entire universe into motes of dust.”⁶³ And the sixth fascicle of the [3.2] *Treatise on the Mahayana Compendium* (**Abhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā*) says that contemplating atoms is the contemplation of non-self.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The “white bone contemplation” (*baigu guan* 白骨觀) is a version of the contemplation of impurity, one often discussed in medieval Chinese Buddhist sources, in which the meditator imagines or visualizes the flesh rotting away from his own body until only the white skeleton remains.

⁶² See line 2.6.

⁶³ *Jin gang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 235, 8:752b6–7. These words are taken grossly out of context. In the original passage, they are merely part of the standard Buddhist scriptural trope of describing a very large number as equal to the number of atoms in the entire world.

⁶⁴ This does not appear to be a direct citation, but the author may have in mind *Da sheng Apidamo za ji lun*, T no. 1606, 31:721c3–4, where something like this idea is expressed.

“Atom” is another word for mote of dust. [3.3] Further, bodhisattva Asaṅga wrote a commentary to the *Diamond Sutra* [which in explaining the *Diamond Sutra* passage cited above speaks of] two expedient teachings with respect to material forms. [3.4] First, “[reducing the world to] particles.” “Particle” is another word for mote of dust. Second, “non-seeing.”⁶⁵

[3.5] 問曰：我新翻聖教，地前雙伏人法二執，初地 [3.6] 方斷。汝何處得文先除人見。[3.7] 答曰：即如汝雜集論第六卷觀極微，是無我 [3.8] 觀。又維摩經調伏章中，觀四大遣我，故經云：[3.9] 「四大無主，身亦無我。」觀塵除我大，是易得。又金 [3.10] 剛般若經云：無我人等。又攝論云：先於地前得 [3.11] 人無我。

[3.5] Question: According to our newly translated Buddhist teachings [by Xuanzang], prior to reaching the first bodhisattva stage one tames the two kinds of grasping, to self and to dharmas; but they are cut off definitively [3.6] only upon reaching the first bodhisattva stage.⁶⁶ On what textual basis do you claim that one can [by means of the contemplation of dust] eliminate the view of self even before this?

[3.7] Answer: [As I have already said], none other than the sixth fascicle of your *Treatise on the [Mahayana] Compendium* says that the contemplation of atoms is the contemplation of [3.8] non-self. Further, the passages on “taming” from the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* say that one dispels [the idea of] self by contemplating the four material elements.⁶⁷ Thus that scripture says: [3.9] “The four elements have no owner, and the body too is without a self.”⁶⁸ And further the *Diamond [3.10] Sutra* says: “There is neither self nor person,” and

⁶⁵ *Jin gang bore lun* 金剛般若論 (Dharmagupta 達磨笈多 [d. 619], trans.), T no. 1510a, 25:765c3–4. The received versions of this passage differ slightly from the citation here in the *Dust Contemplation*.

⁶⁶ The “twofold grasping to [internal] self and [external] dharmas” (*ren fa er zhi* 人法二執 or *wo fa er zhi* 我法二執) is a fundamental Yogācāra concept and is much discussed in Xuanzang’s translations and the commentaries of his students. Though it is unclear what, if any, specific text the *Dust Contemplation* interlocutor here has in mind, see *Cheng wei shi lun*, T no. 1585, 31:54a6–13, which similarly states that prior to the first bodhisattva stage the two graspings are merely “quelled” (that is, their activity temporarily suppressed) but not “cut off” definitively.

⁶⁷ “Passages on taming” (*tiaofu zhang* 調伏章), a term unattested elsewhere, presumably refers to the set of passages following Mañjuśrī’s questions to Vimalakīrti about how one should “tame” the mind of a sick bodhisattva (*Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:544c26).

⁶⁸ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:545a1.

so forth.⁶⁹ And, further, the *Summary [of the Mahayana]* says that prior to the first bodhisattva stage one realizes [3.11] the non-self of persons.⁷⁰

問曰：小乘大乘俱觀塵，有何異。[3.12] 答曰：小乘心外有實塵，大乘塵從心變生，心外 [3.13] 無塵，借假塵以遣實色執。

Question: In both the Lesser and Great Vehicles there is [the method of] contemplating dust. What is the difference between these?

[3.12] Answer: According to the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle, external to the mind there really exists “dust” [cognitive objects]. In the teachings of the Great Vehicle, dust arises from the transformations of the mind itself, and even though outside of the mind [3.13] there is no dust, one makes expedient reference to dust so as to dispel grasping to material objects as truly existing.

問曰：一切物悉見 [3.14] 為塵，行住坐臥皆是塵，有何益。[3.15] 答曰：瑜伽論五十四卷云，觀極微有五種勝利。[3.16] 楞伽經云，「微塵分別事，不起色妄想」。妄想實 [3.17] 色不上心，三塗業報滅。

Question: What benefit is there in seeing all objects as dust, [3.14] in thinking “This is dust” at all times, when walking, standing, sitting, or lying down?

[3.15] Answer: Fascicle fifty-four of the *Yogācārabhūmi* says: “There are five outstanding benefits to contemplating the atoms [of which all things are composed].”⁷¹ [3.16] And the *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* says: “What you analyze into motes of dust, you will no longer falsely imagine as a truly existing material form.”⁷² When your mind is no longer beset by material forms falsely conceptualized as really existing, [3.17] your future karmic retribution in the three bad realms of rebirth will be destroyed.

問曰：何處有文。[3.18] 答曰：攝論云：「明了正理，能知諸塵過患。出世淨 [3.19] 心未起時，一切上心[或]{惑}對除」。諸塵者，一切實色。出世淨心者，小乘，

⁶⁹ *Jin gang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 235, 8:750b7 and throughout.

⁷⁰ This may refer to *She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:215c19–22, where the commentary states that prior to the first bodhisattva stage, one gradually eliminates the “obstructions that are the defilements” (*huozhang* 惑障; Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*), which is explained to mean that one realizes non-self internally, while after the first stage, one gradually eliminates the “obstructions to cognition” (*zhizhang* 智障; Skt. *jñeyāvaraṇa*), meaning that one realizes the non-self of dharmas externally.

⁷¹ *Yujia shi di lun*, T no. 1579, 30:598b2–8.

⁷² See lines 2.6 and 2.28 above.

苦忍無漏心。大乘，十住初無 [3.20] 流空心。由此見塵，不生實色執。攝論名作聞[動]{薰}習[3.21] 成四種對除，滅生後業報三塗。

Question: In what text is this stated?

[3.18] Answer: The *Summary [of the Mahayana]* says: “If one understands the truth and knows that all dust is suffering, then even when the pure, world-transcending mind [3.19] has not yet arisen, the defilements that overcome the mind will be countered and eliminated.”⁷³ “All dust” here refers to all [supposedly] truly existing material forms. As for “the pure, world-transcending mind,” in the Lesser Vehicle this means the undefiled mind associated with the realization of [the noble truth of] suffering; in the Great Vehicle, it means the undefiled mind [that comprehends] emptiness at the first of the ten [3.20] bodhisattva stages. [In other words,] because of seeing [things as] dust one will no longer grasp material forms as truly existing. The *Summary [of the Mahayana]* refers to this by saying that the “karmic impressions based on hearing [the Buddhist teachings]” [3.21] become [the means for] the four kinds of countering and removing [of defilements], by which are extinguished one’s future karmic retribution in the three bad realms of rebirth.⁷⁴

若此塵觀大 [3.22] 有疑，或問初學者，不能決疑，更生高慢，大 [3.23] 有不信。疑難不能具錄。

Those with many doubts about [3.22] this dust contemplation sometimes ask beginners about it and, unable to get their doubts resolved, become even

⁷³ *She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:174a27–174b7, is here cited with some apparent change in the order of the sentences. The meaning of *shangxin* 上心 in this passage is not fully clear. In its original context, it may simply mean “appear in the mind.” However, above (3.7) the *Dust Contemplation* uses this same term in the clearly stronger sense of “overcome the mind,” so I tentatively translate it accordingly.

⁷⁴ These explanations summarize *She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:174a25–b16, passages that immediately follow the ones the *Dust Contemplation* cites in lines 3.18–19 above. “Karmic impressions based on hearing [the teachings]” (Skt. *śruta-vāsanā*) was an important concept for pre-Xuanzang Chinese Yogācāra commentators. Basing themselves on Paramārtha’s translations and other early sources, these commentators explained that hearing the Buddhist teachings, in this or past lives, produced “pure seeds” (or “seeds of the Dharma body”) [*fashen zhong* 法身種] as they are called at *She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:173c24–25) that would eventually ripen into the counteragents to the defilements. As I discussed in the introduction (see p. 8, above), Xuanzang and his disciples controversially argued for a very different understanding: that liberation is not the fruit of “karmic impressions based on hearing” that everyone has or can acquire, but rather of the so-called “undefiled seeds” (*wulou zhongzi*) that are innate but not given to everyone in equal measure or even at all (Yoshimura 2009).

more arrogant and [3.23] lacking in faith. [I have for this reason recorded the above questions and answers.] But I cannot record here [answers to] all the possible objections.

[Section 3: *The Emptiness of External Objects*]

又有人學觀塵都 [3.24] 不見塵，一往即見一切法空。最是大好。更不須 [3.25] 觀塵。一切時一切處乃至食時，悉見是塵竟 [3.26]，即返看自身，無眼耳鼻舌身。勤看無處，忽 [3.27] 一切塵頓盡。亦有漸盡者。即見一切法空，行 [3.28] 住坐臥，使空分明。

There are yet other people who, when practicing the contemplation of dust, do not even [3.24] see any dust; from the very beginning they straightaway see the emptiness of all things. This is most excellent. Such people need not [3.25] contemplate things as dust any further.

When you have succeeded, at all times and places and even while eating, in seeing everything as dust, [3.26] then turn your gaze back upon your own person, where [you will see there to be] neither eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body. Diligently gazing at this place of nothingness,⁷⁵ suddenly [3.27] all the dust will disappear. For some people, it will gradually disappear. [In either case], having in this way seen the emptiness of all things, at all times, whether walking, [3.28] standing, sitting, or lying down, ensure that this emptiness is clear to you.

若得此心，即是唯識無塵 [4.1] 觀。大乘雜集論第六卷如此道。又十地經，佛子 [4.2] 三界唯是識。此想見空。又楞伽經云：「觀外性 [4.3] 非性」。又空有二種。一者一切內外色空。二者見一切 [4.4] 物皆是炎影。此二種並是空心。If you obtain this state of mind, this is the “contemplation [that discerns that there is] merely consciousness without [4.1] dust [external objects].” The sixth fascicle of the *Treatise on the Mahayana Compendium* speaks of this.⁷⁶ As does the *Sutra on the Ten Stages*, which says: “O children of the Buddha, [4.2] the three worlds are merely consciousness.”⁷⁷ It is by this perception

⁷⁵ On the phrase “gaze at this place of nothingness,” and its similarity to formulas from some early Chan texts, see n. 29, above.

⁷⁶ Presumably this refers to the passage alluded to above in line 3.2.

⁷⁷ Given the *Dust Contemplation*’s apparent affiliation with the commentarial traditions that focused on the Yogācāra treatises translated by Paramārtha, it is of interest that this wording of this well-known passage from the *Daśabhūmika Sutra* most closely matches not the extant Chinese translations of that text or its commentaries, but a citation of it in Paramārtha’s *She da sheng lun shi*, T no. 1595, 31:182c2–3 (see also Paramārtha’s *Da sheng wei shi lun*, T no. 1589, 31:70c24–25, which is similar).

that one sees emptiness.⁷⁸ As the *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* further says: “Contemplate all external things [4.3] as not having the nature [of external things].”⁷⁹

This emptiness, moreover, is of two kinds. First, there is [seeing that] all material forms internal and external are empty. Second, there is seeing that all [4.4] entities are like mirages or reflections [in that they appear as real while not in fact being so].⁸⁰ Both of these are [what we mean by attaining] the mind of emptiness.

[Section 3: Questions]

[4.5] 問曰：見一切物是空影，身口造作得成不。[4.6] 答曰：成與不成，汝自知。
[4.5] Question: If one sees that all entities are either empty [or like] reflections,⁸¹ do [karmic] actions of body and speech create results or not?

[4.6] Answer: Whether they do or not, you’ll find out!⁸²

問曰：學塵見空，或見 [4.7] 過去未來事，可得向他說不。[4.8] 答曰：佛不許向他說。故聖教云：「[切]{功}德覆藏，惡 [4.9] 事發露」。向他說白過生。

[Question]: When practicing [the contemplation of] dust and seeing emptiness, one might have a vision [4.7] of past or future events. Should one tell others about these things or not?

[4.8] Answer: The Buddha did not permit one to speak to others about these things. For this reason, within the sacred teachings it says: “Hide your attainments but reveal [4.9] your wrong deeds.”⁸³ This means confess your transgressions.

問曰：經中說見一切法空者，名 [4.10] 惡取空人。汝今日教人觀空，豈不同惡取空也。[4.11] 答曰：一切經中，皆遣學空。維摩經云：「五受 [4.12] 陰洞達空」。金剛般若，「一切眾生相即是非相」。[4.13] 新譯般若多心經，「無眼耳鼻舌身意無色 [4.14] 聲香味觸法」。大品經云內空 六根空 外空 六塵空。[4.15] 處處經盡說空。佛豈教人惡取也。

⁷⁸ The *Dust Contemplation* may intend to attribute the words “by this perception you see emptiness” to the *Sutra on the Ten Stages* (where it does not appear, as far as I can determine).

⁷⁹ *Lengqieabaduoluo bao jing*, T no. 670, 16:490c6–9.

⁸⁰ On *yan ying* 炎影 as “mirage and reflection,” see n. 48, above.

⁸¹ I take the referent here to be the two kinds of “emptiness” mentioned at the end of the previous passage.

⁸² Here, the problem of reconciling the conventional (karma is real) and ultimate (karma is empty) truths is evaded by haughtily turning the question back on the asker. Rhetorically, this is quite similar to the literary style that would eventually become closely associated with Chan writings.

⁸³ This appears to be a citation of *Pusa di chi jing*, T no. 1581, 30:911a20–21.

Question: The scriptures say that one who sees all things as empty is called [4.10] someone who wrongly grasps emptiness.⁸⁴ But you now teach people to contemplate emptiness! How is this not the same thing as “wrongly grasping emptiness”?⁸⁵

[4.11] Answer: The entire Buddhist canon instructs us to study emptiness. The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* thus says: “The five clung-to [4.12] *skandhas* are utterly and entirely empty.”⁸⁶ The *Diamond Sutra* says: “The [true] characteristic of all sentient beings is the absence of characteristics.”⁸⁷ [4.13] The new translation of the *Heart Sutra* says: “There are no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind, no visible forms, [4.14] sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or mental objects.”⁸⁸ And the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* says:⁸⁹ “Internally, empty. This means that the six sensory organs are empty. Externally, empty. This means that the six dusts [sense objects] are empty.” [4.15] In passage after passage the Buddhist scriptures all speak of emptiness! How could what the Buddha instructs people to do be an instance of “wrongly grasping”?

⁸⁴ The interlocutor seems to here follow up on the word “wrong” (*e* 惡) from the previous paragraph.

⁸⁵ Buddhist doctrinal sources often warn about the dangers of a wrong understanding of emptiness. The *locus classicus* for such discussions is the early discourse on the “simile of the snake” (*Alagadūpama-sutta*), which compares those who think that non-self or emptiness negates karma to someone who grabs a snake by the tail rather than the head and thereby gets bitten (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, pp. 224–26). The precise Chinese phrase “wrongly grasp emptiness” (*e qu kong* 惡取空) is first attested in the fifth-century translation of the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* (*Pusa di chi jing*, T no. 1581, 30:894c9–14), the same text implicitly cited above concerning the need to hide one’s attainment (4.8–9). The Chinese phrase “wrongly grasp emptiness” is retained by Xuanzang in his retranslation of the same passage (*Yujia shi di lun*, T no. 1579, 30:488c22–24), and he also uses this expression in the *Cheng wei shi lun* (T no. 1585, 31:39b18).

⁸⁶ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:541a18–19.

⁸⁷ *Jin gang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 236a, 8:754c13–15. This line is found only in this version (Bodhiruci’s translation) of the *Diamond Sutra*. The Kumārajīva translation, cited by the *Dust Contemplation* above (3.1), differs slightly in the corresponding passage (*Jin gang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 235, 8:750b25–27).

⁸⁸ This famous line is found in many of the Chinese versions of the *Heart Sutra*, but I presume that in referring to the “new translation” the *Dust Contemplation* intends to point specifically to the one attributed to Xuanzang (*Bore boluomiduo xin jing*, T no. 251, 8:848c11–12).

⁸⁹ This phrase “internally empty, externally empty” occurs throughout the Chinese translations of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.

[4.16] 問曰：何故道空是惡取。答曰：大智度論說 [4.17] 惡取空人，與佛法內人學異。惡取空人聞佛 [4.18] 經中說一切法空，唯貪唯瞋唯我慢多，唯 [4.19] 行染事，不脩施戒及一切善行。見脩善者，口 [4.20] 誹謗言此等悉皆慢作。如此之人，無因無果，名 [4.21] 惡取空。我今觀空為除此過，非惡取也。 [4.22] 又有人說：「下界為惡，上界為涅槃，我能如是 [4.23] 見脩」，亦是一種惡見。我今學空為除此見， [4.24] 故不同惡取。

[4.16] Question: In that case, why is it said that [to think that things are] empty is a form of wrong grasping?

Answer: The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* calls [4.17] “people who wrongly grasp emptiness” those whose practice differs from that of those within the Buddhist fold.⁹⁰ These people who wrongly grasp emptiness are those who, upon hearing that the Buddhist [4.18] scriptures teach that all things are empty, give in completely to craving, hatred, and great arrogance; they exclusively [4.19] engage in defiled activities and do not cultivate giving, the precepts, or any meritorious practices. When they see people who cultivate meritorious practices, they [4.20] disparage them, saying that all this is done merely out of pride. Because these people deny the principle of karmic causality, they are said to [4.21] “wrongly grasp emptiness.” The contemplation of emptiness that I am now talking about is, rather, for the removing of this error, so it is not a form of wrong grasping.

[4.22] There are also some people who say: “The lower realms of rebirth are bad, the highest realm is *nirvāṇa*. I will cultivate in accord [4.23] with this view.” This too is a kind of wrong view. The practice of emptiness that I am now talking about aims to get rid of this wrong view. [4.24] This is another reason why it is not a form of wrong grasping.

此中，學空不解人，大有誹謗，不 [4.25] 能具錄。

As concerns these matters, those who practice emptiness without understanding it have many objections. I cannot [4.25] make note of them all.

⁹⁰ The *Da zhi du lun* does not, in fact, use the term “wrongly grasp emptiness” though it does speak of “grasping emptiness” (*qu kong* 取空; *Da zhi du lun*, T no. 1509, 25:193c7–194b1; 337c24–29). The author of the *Dust Contemplation* is here probably thinking, rather, of the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, which as mentioned above is the earliest source for that expression (see n. 85, above). Indeed, that text explains what it means to “wrongly grasp emptiness” as the view of “those *śramaṇas* (*shamen* 沙門) and *brāhmaṇas* (*boluomen* 婆羅門) who say that everything is entirely empty” (*Pusa di chi jing*, T no. 1581, 30:894c9–11; *Yujia shi di lun*, T no. 1579, 30:488c22, is similar). The author of the *Dust Contemplation* has here perhaps tendentiously, but not completely unreasonably, interpreted this reference to “*śramaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*” as meaning *non-Buddhists*.

[Section 4: *Quiescence within Activity*]

行住坐臥乃至食時分明見空已，[4.26] 即自思尋：「法無有二。將心見空，即是二法，誰 [4.27] 能見空。」返看空心，都無空想，勤看不已，心 [4.28] 即自住，是住，不作住解。

When you have clearly seen emptiness at all times, whether walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and even when eating, [4.26] you must then reflect as follows: “The Dharma is without duality, but if I am now using the mind to see emptiness, this would constitute a duality [between mind and its object]; who, then, [4.27] is able to see emptiness?” In this way turn your gaze back onto the emptiness-[perceiving] mind itself,⁹¹ which is [in truth] entirely devoid of any conceptualization of “emptiness.” Diligently gazing without cease, the mind [4.28] will become still of itself and concerning this stillness you will not even form the idea “stillness.”

從此心中，或見一佛二 [5.1] 佛乃至微塵佛、宮殿、樓閣、種種淨土中 [5.2] 事遍滿十方。花樹、幢塔、不可思議等事，一 [5.3] 切悉見，及聞佛說法，佛問我，我問佛，因此 [5.4] 更有勝解。或自見多身，或一一佛前皆有一 [5.5] 身悉皆供養，自身光入諸佛身，諸佛 [5.6] 身光入自身。或自見無身，或自身作菩薩 [5.7]、聖僧身。

Within your [still] mind you may see a buddha, or two [5.1] buddhas, or anywhere up to buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, or palaces, towers, and various such things from the Pure Land [5.2] filling the universe. You may see all kinds of miraculous things such as flowering trees and flag-strewn stupas. [5.3] You may even hear the buddhas preach the Dharma, with the buddhas asking you questions and you questioning the buddhas, and as a result [5.4] you may gain still further realizations. Or you may see your own body multiply, or see that before each [buddha] there is one [5.5] copy

⁹¹ Here, and even more clearly below (6.28 and 7.10), the *Dust Contemplation* uses the term “gazing at the mind” (*kanxin* 看心) to describe a meditative activity in which one attends to the perceiving mind itself rather than to its conscious content. The expression “gazing at the mind,” used in this sense, is strongly associated with eighth-century early Chan writings about meditation traditionally classified as products of the “Northern school” (*beizong* 北宗; see Faure 1997, pp. 61, 88–89, 107). Though this expression occasionally occurs in earlier Chinese Buddhist texts, and is semantically similar to widely employed terms such as *guanxin* 觀心, there is little doubt that in the eighth century *kanxin* was a marked term indicating the early “Chan” style of meditation. What the *Dust Contemplation* shows us, if my dating of it to the mid-seventh century is correct, is that in the generation or two before the rise of early Chan proper, *kanxin* was already being used by some authors writing about meditation in a manner that closely anticipates its later “Chan” meaning.

of yourself, each making offerings to [its respective] buddhas, the light from your bodies entering the bodies of these buddhas and the light [5.6] of these buddhas entering your bodies. Or else, you may see yourself to be without a body, or having the body of a bodhisattva [5.7] or an eminent monk.

如此見已，即觀作空，隨心即念即 [5.8] 空，空已還入寂。寂中還見如此不思議事，還 [5.9] 即觀作空，空已還入寂。空寂相入欲使心自在。[5.10] 寂者，是無念心。聖人寂如火，凡夫寂如暖氣。故經言：「常求無念 [5.11] 實相智慧」。又是經言：「常在無為空寂行，恆 [5.12] 沙佛法一念悟」。

Having seen such things, contemplate them as empty. As you attend to them [as empty] they will become [5.8] empty. When they have become empty, you will again become quiescent. If within this quiescence you still see such kinds of miraculous things, again [5.9] straightway contemplate them as empty. When they have become empty, you will again become quiescent. Make emptiness and quiescence merge with each other until your mind gains total mastery [5.10].

“Quiescence” refers to the mind being without thoughts. The quiescence of the saint is like fire; that of the ordinary being is like [mere] warm air.⁹² For this reason a scripture says: “Seek always to be without thoughts; [5.11] this is the wisdom that knows the true nature of things.”⁹³ And this scripture also says: “When you remain always practicing empty quiescence, without purposive activity, then [5.12] in a single moment of thought you awaken to the Dharma taught by buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.”⁹⁴

又寂心者，即維摩經云：「常[5.13]在三昧」文是，若在三昧，即見諸佛國。佛者，一切佛，國者，見 [5.14] 一切淨國。不以二相，即觀一切佛及國皆空。若見佛 [5.15]

⁹² As the citation below from the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* shows, “being without thoughts” (*wunian*) is advocated as an ideal state in various canonical Chinese Buddhist texts. But to take “being without thoughts” as the ideal form of Buddhist meditation was a move that would eventually become closely associated with early Chan writings. This was not without controversy. In Tibet in the later 700s, it was one of the key points of debate between the Chinese Chan master Moheyan 摩訶衍 (n.d.), for whom it expressed the idea of “sudden” enlightenment, and the Indian master Kamalaśīla (c. 740–795), for whom it showed that Chan advocated mere “calm” meditation rather than superior “insight” (Gómez 1987, pp. 103–11). Though there is little in the *Dust Contemplation* to suggest a fully Chan context, it is noteworthy that the commentator, at least, did feel the need to insist that the “being without thoughts” of which the *Dust Contemplation* speaks is not the same thing as the mere absence of thought obtainable by ordinary beings or within non-Buddhist states of trance.

⁹³ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:554b23–24.

⁹⁴ This passage is in fact from the *Ren wang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 245, 8:827c21.

國我身及六道眾生等無異相。相無勝劣高下。即不 [5.16] 須觀作空。故經云：「供養於十方，無量億如 [5.17] 來，諸佛及已身，無有分別相」。

This “mind of quiescence” is, furthermore, exactly what is referred to by the passage in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* that says “constantly [5.13] being in *samādhi*,” [and which says] that if one enters *samādhi* one will “see all buddha lands ‘buddha’ here means all the buddhas; ‘lands’ means to see [5.14] all their pure lands⁹⁵ as without duality.”⁹⁶ This means that one should contemplate all the buddhas and their lands as entirely empty.

[On the other hand,] you might see the buddhas, [5.15] their lands, your own body, and all living beings on the six paths of rebirth each as having no marks of difference [from one another]. That is, you do not characterize them as superior, inferior, lofty, or low. Then you need not [5.16] contemplate them as empty.⁹⁷ This is why [elsewhere] the [*Vimalakīrti Sutra*] says: “Make offerings to the innumerable [5.17] *tathāgatas* of the ten directions; these buddhas and you yourself are without distinction.”⁹⁸

[Section 4: Questions]

問曰：向來所引 [5.18] 乃是諸佛境界，何關汝凡夫心事。答曰：佛 [5.19] 心證解，學人想成。大智度論名作得解 [5.20] 觀。又觀經云：「諸佛正遍知海，皆從心想生」。

Question: The passages you have been citing [5.18] pertain to the attainments reached by the buddhas themselves. Of what relevance could these things be for the mental states reachable by an ordinary being such as yourself?

Answer: The realization [5.19] of the mind of the Buddha is actually something that practitioners can reach by way of their own mental activity. The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* calls this “contemplation resulting in [5.20] realization.”⁹⁹ And, further, as the *Contemplation Sutra*

⁹⁵ The commentator is here suggesting that we read *foguo* 佛國 as “buddhas and [their] lands,” not *buddha-lands*. The main text implies as much in the next line.

⁹⁶ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:541b5–6.

⁹⁷ These comments recall the famous conclusion of the first chapter of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, where the Buddha touches the earth with his toe and shows Śāriputra that our own world is in fact as pure as the other buddha-lands.

⁹⁸ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:549c28–29.

⁹⁹ *Da zhi du lun*, T no. 1509, 25:206a24–28. I translate *dejie guan* 得解觀 according to how the *Dust Contemplation* takes its meaning. In the *Da zhi du lun* itself, it is contrasted with *shi guan* 實觀, and these two words must denote what Sarvāstivāda sources call, respectively, *adhimokṣa-manaskāra* (“mental attention directed at an imagined object”) and *tattva-*

says: “The ocean of correct wisdom of the buddhas emerges from one’s own mind and mental activity.”¹⁰⁰

問: [5.21] 經云:「若以色見我,以音聲求我,是人行 [5.22] 邪道,不能見如來」。汝今遣人取相,經中說 [5.23] 作魔事。答曰:汝讀頌經,不解經意。此語以 [5.24] 聲聞人不知有無相法身,執三十二相以為真 [5.25] 極,故以此責,大乘同性經,佛有三身。

Question: [5.21] A scripture says: “Those who see me as a visible form or seek me in audible sounds are following [5.22] the heterodox path; they are unable to [truly] see the Buddha.”¹⁰¹ Yet you now would have people grasp visible forms, which is what this scripture calls [5.23] “Māra’s doings.”

Answer: Even though you can recite the scriptures, you don’t understand their meaning. These words refer to [5.24] voice-hearers (*śrāvaka*) who do not know that there is a formless Dharma body and who cling to the thirty-two bodily marks of the Buddha as being what is truly [5.25] ultimate. That is why [the scripture you cite] gives that criticism, and why the **Mahāyānābhisamaya Sutra* says that the Buddha has three bodies.¹⁰²

此無相寂 [5.26], 大小相濫。如小乘迦葉云 法華經信解品:「我時在座身 [5.27] 體疲憊,但念空無相。於菩薩法,遊戲神通, [5.28] 淨佛國土,教化眾生,都不欣樂」。下偈云:「一切 [6.1] 法,無生無滅,無大無小,如是思惟,不生喜 [6.2] 樂」。大乘法身,亦云無生無滅。

[But in fact] the teaching of formless quiescence [5.26] is shared by both the Great and the Lesser Vehicles.

Thus, Kāśyapa the Hinayanist¹⁰³ said in the “Faith and Understanding” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*: “I remained in my seat, my body [5.27] tired and worn out, thinking only of emptiness and signlessness. In the bodhisattva activities of wielding supernatural powers with playful ease, [5.28] purifying one’s

[or *bhūta*]-*manaskāra* (“mental attention directed at a real object”). On these categories, see Dhammajoti 2009, pp. 219–22. Cf. Lamotte 1944–81, vol. 3, p. 1211. The *Dust Contemplation*, however, seems to take *dejie* 得解 to mean “attaining liberation,” and I translate it accordingly.

¹⁰⁰ *Guan wu liang shou fo jing*, T no. 365, 12:343a19–23.

¹⁰¹ *Jin gang bore boluomi jing*, T no. 235, 8:752a17–18.

¹⁰² The **Mahāyānābhisamaya Sutra* (*Da sheng tong xing jing*; T no. 673), supposedly translated by *Jñānayaśas (She`nayeshe 闍那耶舍; n.d.) in the late sixth century, was widely cited in the Tang for its teachings on the three buddha-bodies.

¹⁰³ “Kāśyapa the Hinayanist” is an unusual moniker. The *Dust Contemplation* perhaps intends to differentiate the Buddha’s famous disciple Mahākāśyapa (clearly the referent here) from the bodhisattva Kāśyapa of the Mahayana *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra*.

buddha-land, and instructing living beings, I took no joy at all.”¹⁰⁴ And then later, in verse, he says: “All dharmas [6.1] neither arise nor cease. Thinking thusly, I gave rise to neither happiness nor [6.2] joy.”¹⁰⁵ And in the Great Vehicle teachings, too, the Dharma Body is said to neither arise nor cease.

若絕想證得 [6.3] 此法，即有大用。一者體寂，二者用寂。今之學 [6.4]，久久學者，分有用寂。

By severing conceptual thought and realizing [6.3] this truth [of formless quiescence], one gains great advantage. First is the quiescence that is a matter of essential nature (*tiji* 體寂). Second, there is the quiescence within activity (*yongji*).¹⁰⁶ A small portion of practitioners these days, [6.4] if they study for a long time, achieve this quiescence within activity.

問曰：依體起用，云何 [6.5] 未得體先有用。答曰：地經云，「內正願力見法 [6.6] 身佛」，體也，「神通變化見色身佛」，用也。內正 [6.7] 願力者，是初地無分別智證真如非安立諦。[6.8] 又有人言，我得非安立諦，大自高舉，是憎上慢人。

Question: “Activity arises in dependence on essence. How, then, could [6.5] one acquire the activity [of quiescence] without first having attained the essence?

Answer: When in the *Scripture on the Ten Stages* it says “internally, by the power of correct aspiration one sees the [6.6] Buddha in the form of the Dharma Body,”¹⁰⁷ this refers to essence. When it says “[wielding] supernatural powers and transforming oneself miraculously, one sees the Buddha in the form of the material body,”¹⁰⁸ this refers to activity. “Internally by the power [6.7] of correct aspiration” refers to when first-stage bodhisattvas, through non-discriminating wisdom, realize thus-

¹⁰⁴ *Miao fa lian hua jing*, T no. 262, 9:16b15–17. The overall logic of this passage is somewhat difficult to follow. It appears as if the author of the *Dust Contemplation* is citing these lines to show that this teaching of emptiness and formlessness can be found even within “Hinayana” understanding. This arguably greatly distorts the original meaning of the *Lotus Sutra* passage, in which Mahākāśyapa is saying that he previously ignored the Buddha’s (true) Mahayana teachings in favor of the Hinayana goals of “emptiness” and “signlessness.”

¹⁰⁵ *Miao fa lian hua jing*, T no. 262, 9:18b27–29; the citation is inexact.

¹⁰⁶ Here, the contrast between “essence” (*ti*) and “function/activity” (*yong*) is used to delineate two kinds of “quiescence” (*ji*). Normally, “quiescence” would be associated only with “essence,” making “quiescence within activity” a pointedly non-dual, and hence superior, realization. See my discussion of these ideas on p. 13, above.

¹⁰⁷ *Shi di jing lun*, T no. 1522, 26:143c12.

¹⁰⁸ *Shi di jing lun*, T no. 1522, 26:143c11.

ness, which is the inexpressible truth.¹⁰⁹ [6.8] Those who hold themselves in high regard, saying, “I have attained the inexpressible truth,” are afflicted by great arrogance.¹¹⁰

問曰：今有人言，我得非安立 [6.9] 諦，汝何故不信。答曰：得非安立諦者，十地經 [6.10] 云，「能動百佛世界，神通變化遍百佛世界，教 [6.11] 化百佛世界眾生」，彼無此能，非我不信。今 [6.12] 學人，分有用寂。見塵見空，尚自不信，何況用 [6.13] 寂。如水冷相，證者自知。

Question: When nowadays people say “I have attained the inexpressible [6.9] truth,” why don’t you believe them?

Answer: When one has attained the inexpressible truth, then, as the *Sutra on the Ten Stages* [6.10] says, “one can move hundreds of buddha-lands, one’s supernatural powers and miraculous transformations fill hundreds of buddha-lands, and one can teach [6.11] the living beings of hundreds of buddha-lands.”¹¹¹ So it’s not that I don’t believe them, it’s just that they can’t do these things.

Among present-day [6.12] practitioners, only a portion acquire “quiescence within activity.” But one should not [easily] believe even that they merely see dust or see emptiness, much less [that they have attained] “qui-

¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere, the *Dust Contemplation* author is often concerned to show that the attainments he is describing are indeed possible for those who are not buddhas or advanced bodhisattvas (see 3.5; 5.18–5.20; 7.15). The point of the present passage thus seems to be, again, that the promised fruits of the “dust contemplation” (namely, “quiescence within activity”), despite their greatness, are not things restricted to buddhas or other beings of extraordinary power. “Inexpressible truth” translates *fei anli di* 非安立諦. This term, for which no Sanskrit counterpart has been definitively identified to my knowledge, is frequently used in the Chinese translations of Yogācāra sources, where it is contrasted with “expressible truth” (*anli di*). These terms go back to the translations of Paramārtha and the textual traditions associated with him. The *Fo xing lun* contrasts what is realized by the arhats and the buddhas respectively as the “expressible truth” versus the “inexpressible truth” (*Fo xing lun*, T no. 1610, 31:807a18–27). According to the *She da sheng lun shi*, the “inexpressible truth” is the realization of the emptiness of both persons and dharmas (T no. 1595, 31:208b5–6). Xuanzang uses the term in a similar meaning (*Cheng wei shi lun*, T no. 1585, 31:49c7–10).

¹¹⁰ Here, the commentator implies that while it would be arrogance to claim to have attained quiescence at the level of “essence” (*ti*), that is to say the “inexpressible truth,” claims to have attained quiescence at the level of “activity” (*yong*) are less problematic. This comment dovetails with the ensuing passage, where the author explains why claims to have attained the “inexpressible truth” are usually suspect, since that attainment implies the acquisition of great magical power.

¹¹¹ This is a loose citation of *Shi di jing lun*, T no. 1522, 26:144c12–18, discussing the abilities of first-stage bodhisattvas.

escence within [6.13] activity.” These things are like the coolness of water, which one knows only by confirming it for oneself.¹¹²

行人得空觀，後且依 [6.14] 維摩經，想菴羅樹園如來坐師子座，並分明 [6.15] 得見。又想五百長者子各獻一蓋，如來合多蓋 [6.16] 為一蓋，蓋中現大千中事亦成。又想須彌燈王佛 [6.17] 座，隨意取多少即來。又想須彌入芥子亦成。[6.18] 又想地水火風大如空界入腹並得。但經中有 [6.19] 不思議事，如嚴華經一一塵中含十方世界悉成。

If a practitioner has [really] obtained the emptiness contemplation, when he imagines [6.14] the Tathāgata seated on the lion throne in the Amra gardens as described in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*¹¹³ he will be able to see this scene with [6.15] perfect clarity. He will also be able to successfully imagine [the scene from that text in which] the five hundred sons of prominent families each present a parasol to the Tathāgata, who gathers them [6.16] into a single parasol within which appear all the things in the universe.¹¹⁴ When [the practitioner] further imagines the thrones [from the world of] the buddha named King Sumeru [6.17] Lamp [which Vimalakīrti makes appear in this world], then just as many as the practitioner wishes to make appear will appear.¹¹⁵ He will also further be able to successfully imagine Mount Sumeru entering into a mustard seed.¹¹⁶ [6.18] He will further manage to imagine that as much earth, water, fire, and wind as fills the sky enters into his own belly.¹¹⁷ Whatever inconceivable things [6.19] are described in the sutras—such as that “each mote of dust contains the worlds of the ten direc-

¹¹² That attainment is like the coolness of water, in being known only to one who experiences it, was in the seventh century a well-known aphorism. Its source, if any, is unknown, but it appears, sometimes without attribution and sometimes as from an unnamed “scripture” (*jīng* 經), in several works written by Xuanzang’s students (see, e.g., *Yujia lun ji* 瑜伽論記, T no. 1828, 42:558b1), as well as in treatises written by key seventh-century Huayan masters (*Huayan wu jiao zhi guan* 華嚴五教止觀, T no. 1867, 45:512a21–22, and *Huayan you xin fa jie ji* 華嚴遊心法界記, T no. 1877, 45:644c19–20).

¹¹³ *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:537a7.

¹¹⁴ *Weimojie suo shou jing*, T no. 475, 14:537b25–c5.

¹¹⁵ This refers to the famous scene wherein Vimalakīrti magically fills his tiny house with millions of enormous thrones (*Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:546b3).

¹¹⁶ This is a common image in Mahayana literature, but the *Dust Contemplation* here may have in mind specifically *Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:546b24–29, where Vimalakīrti explains to Śāriputra that bodhisattvas are able to do this.

¹¹⁷ This line is likely inspired by Vimalakīrti’s claim that bodhisattvas can, without harming themselves, swallow up all the wind and fire in the universe (*Weimojie suo shuo jing*, T no. 475, 14:546c18–21).

tions” from the *Flower Adornment Sutra*¹¹⁸—he will be able to successfully [see] them all.

[6.20] 此中大有疑謗，並未尋經論。不作此學，生疑 [6.21] 誹謗，有何可怪。大有疑謗，不能具錄。

[6.20] Some people are greatly skeptical about this teaching, yet they do not even look in the sutras and treatises [where it is confirmed]! Not practicing it themselves, [6.21] it is no wonder they doubt and reject it. I do not have the space to record all their many skeptical comments.

[5: *Conclusion and Recapitulation*]

上來見 [6.22] 有不信解人問，說塵觀、空觀、寂用觀，略舉一 [6.23] 二種疑。更有種種漫語，阿誰能共彼語。但 [6.24] 可慈悲深憐。

Above, in response [6.22] to the questions of those lacking in faith, when explaining the dust contemplation, the emptiness contemplation, and the quiescent-activity contemplation, I briefly raised one [6.23] or two things about which some people have doubts. There may still be others who blather on in various ways, but who has time to converse with them? For them, I can only [6.24] feel compassion and deep pity.

若有信者，不須如許語，但直觀 [6.25] 塵。見一切外色物盡作塵已，即觀塵間玲瓏 [6.26] 空處，塵或頓盡。或有漸者。學人觀塵，不見 [6.27] 塵即見一切色物皆空。得見空者，最好，更不須 [6.28] 觀塵。見一切色空竟，即返看空心。空心當體是 [7.1] 空，何須將空以看空。作此思量時，即不看心，心自 [7.2] 然寂。

For one who has faith, all the explanations [I have given] are unnecessary. Such a one should just straightaway contemplate [6.25] dust. Having seen all external objects completely become dust, then contemplate the honeycomb-like [6.26] empty space between the particles of dust and the dust itself will suddenly vanish. For some, it may vanish gradually. [In this way] the student, contemplating dust, no longer sees [6.27] dust and thus sees that all material things are empty.

If you obtain this vision of emptiness, that is most excellent. There is no further need [6.28] to contemplate dust. Having seen all material forms to be empty, turn your gaze back upon the mind [that contemplates] emptiness,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ This is not, I think, intended as a specific quotation, but as a general reference to a trope that occurs throughout the *Flower Adornment Sutra*.

¹¹⁹ These passages mirror lines 4.26–28 above.

[thinking]: “Since the mind [contemplating] emptiness is, in its own essence, [7.1] empty, what need is there to use what is already empty to gaze upon emptiness?” When you analyze things thusly, even without actively gazing upon the mind, [7.2] it will become quiescent of its own accord.

得此寂已，自然見一切佛、菩薩、僧、宮殿、[7.3] 莊嚴勝妙，世間所無。或自見一身，或自見多身，[7.4] 或見無身，或見自作佛、菩薩、僧，一念之中，供養 [7.5] 一切佛及聞佛說法，或佛問我我問佛，或有異 [7.6] 解。悉觀作空。When you have attained this quiescence, you will then spontaneously have a vision of buddhas, bodhisattvas, monks and nuns, palaces, [7.3] and marvelous adornments that do not exist within this world. Or else you will see your own body, or you will see many copies of your own body, [7.4] or you will see yourself as without a body, or you will see yourself as a buddha, a bodhisattva, or a monk or nun, and in a single moment of thought you will make offerings [7.5] to all the buddhas and hear these buddhas preach the Dharma, or else these buddhas will ask you questions, or you will ask them questions, or else you will have an extraordinary [7.6] realization.¹²⁰ All these things you should contemplate as empty.

又於中見聞種種，心皆不起，自他 [7.7] 無別，行住坐臥常遊淨國，即不須觀作空。故經 [7.8] 言，「發心畢竟二不別，如是二心先心難」。若思悟此 [7.9] 意，難中難。更又行人，不入空寂。時恆須返 [7.10] 看心，行同於空寂。如此始是學者家。

Finally, with respect to all these various things that you might see and hear, do not activate your mind at all. Do not distinguish them as being part of yourself [7.7] or not part of yourself. At all times, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, you roam the Pure Land. [If you can be like this], you do not need to contemplate things as empty. For this reason, a scripture [7.8] says: “The initial production of the aspiration for buddhahood and the ultimate [attainment of buddhahood] are not two different things. Of these two states of mind, the first is harder to achieve.”¹²¹ If you can, through meditation, awaken to this [7.9] state of mind, then you have achieved that which is hardest of all.

Some practitioners are unable to enter empty quiescence. They should simply constantly turn back [7.10] and gaze upon their own minds. This

¹²⁰ Compare these passages with lines 5.2–4 above.

¹²¹ *Da banniepan jing*, T no. 374, 12:590a21. This famous passage concerning the equality of the initial arousing of *bodhicitta* and awakening itself was widely cited in Sui-Tang Chinese Buddhist writings.

practice is equivalent to [entering] empty quiescence. Doing things thusly, one will for the first time be a real practitioner.¹²²

蓋有觀塵 [7.11] 空者, 向他說自解, 他不信伊語。漫共他諍, 大是 [7.12] 浪[與]{語}。佛說法華經, 尚有五千人不信, 何況汝語 [7.13] 欲令他信。說涅槃經時, 無量眾生不信。由不信 [7.14] 故, 表法甚深。

Now, when some who contemplate the [7.11] emptiness of dust speak to others of their understanding, these other people do not believe what they say. But to go on vainly arguing with them would truly be [7.12] a waste of words. Even when the Buddha preached the *Lotus Sutra*, five thousand people did not believe what he said.¹²³ How much less, then, could you hope to persuade [7.13] these people to believe! When the *Nirvāṇa Sutra* was preached, countless sentient beings did not believe it.¹²⁴ Their very inability to believe it [7.14] shows how profound its teaching is.

十地經有十身相作。學人分有問 [7.15] 曰: 十身相作, 乃是八地菩薩所為, 汝云我得, 汝 [7.16] 即應是八地人。答曰: 如凡夫見過去一二身宿命 [7.17] 事及見未來生死一二身事, 豈可即是佛十 [7.18] 力中宿命二力也。此通釋上難。十身者, 一眾生身, [7.19] 二國土身, 三業報差別身, 四聲聞身 [7.20], 五緣覺身, 六菩薩身, 七如來身, 八智身 [7.21], 九法身, 十虛空身。前三染分, 中六淨分, 後一不二分。

Concerning [a bodhisattva's] "manifestation of ten different bodies" spoken of in the *Sutra on the Ten Stages*,¹²⁵ a few students [7.15] asked: "Manifesting these ten different bodies is an ability only of bodhisattvas of the eighth stage [or above]. Since you say you can do this,¹²⁶ mustn't you [7.16] be an eighth-stage bodhisattva?"

Answer: It is like the case of an ordinary being who gains a vision of one or two of his past lives, [7.17] or one or two of his future lives. [Though he

¹²² I tentatively take this final sentence as logically connected to the previous three. Alternatively, taking the three preceding sentences concerning those who cannot attain "empty quiescence" as an aside, "one will for the first time be a real practitioner" could refer to someone who does enter "empty quiescence" as described in the previous paragraph.

¹²³ In the opening chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, five thousand audience members, out of pride, rise from their seats and leave before the Buddha delivers his teachings (*Miao fa lian hua jing*, T no. 262, 9:7a7–8).

¹²⁴ Like many Mahayana sutras, this text indeed frequently states that after the Buddha's death many people will not believe it to be the word of the Buddha; see, e.g., *Da banniepan jing*, T no. 374, 12:398a13–15.

¹²⁵ *Shi di jing lun*, T no. 1522, 26:182c17–26.

¹²⁶ It is unclear to me why the interlocutor thinks that the author has made this claim.

does attain this,] how could it be the same as [7.18] the knowledge of past and future lives that are two of the ten powers possessed only by buddhas? This¹²⁷ refutes all of the objections voiced above. The ten bodies are: (1) the body of an [ordinary] sentient being, [7.19] (2) the body of the earth of the land [in which the bodhisattva dwells], (3) the body that is the variegated fruits of karma, (4) the body of a *śrāvaka*, [7.20] (5) the body of a *pratyekabuddha*, (6) the body of a bodhisattva, (7) the body of a *tathāgata*, [7.21] (8) the body of wisdom, (9) the Dharma body, and (10) the body of empty space. The first three are defiled; the middle six are pure; the last one is unclassified.¹²⁸

[7.22] 問曰：現今凡夫有見塵空者，坐中或見一佛，或 [7.23] 見無量佛——佛前皆有一身供養恭敬，人聞皆 [7.24] 云，此是魔事。及聞香、得美果食、多日入定，此類 [7.25] 無量悉是魔事。

[7.22] Question: Nowadays, when an ordinary person sees the emptiness of dust and while seated in meditation sees a buddha or [7.23] innumerable buddhas before each of whom he makes offerings and performs reverence,¹²⁹ people who hear about this [7.24] say “these are Māra’s doings.” So too, any of the countless similar [meditative experiences such as] smelling fragrances, [magically] obtaining fine food, or entering trance for several days [7.25] are all Māra’s doings, [they say].¹³⁰

答曰：且論，汝之所見，一[化]{切}僧尼 [7.26] 從生已來旦暮禮佛並禮魔也。幾許鬧哉。[7.27] 如汝所見，若男若女，年滿廿欲受戒時，入於方等 [7.28] 見佛菩薩知罪相滅判聽受戒。豈可見魔而 [8.1] 得戒也。即如汝，戒亦見魔得，縱是實魔變作 [8.2] 佛身，禮作佛想，亦非魔也。此須知優波鞠多事 [8.3] 為證。 Answer: Let us discuss this for a moment. If what you say were correct, then all those monks and nuns who, [7.26] for their entire lives, have been

¹²⁷ These next passages all appear in the manuscript in full-sized characters, but from their content I strongly suspect they were originally part of the interlinear commentary. I accordingly give them, in the English translation, in smaller sized font. I have left the Chinese text unaltered.

¹²⁸ This explanation of the “ten bodily forms” derives from the *Shi di jing lun*, T no. 1522, 26:183a18–19.

¹²⁹ See lines 5.4–5 and 7.4–5 above.

¹³⁰ The interlocutor here raises the idea that unusual visionary or other meditative experiences are not signs of attainment or progress along the path, but merely “Māra’s doings” (*moshi* 魔事), what we might call “demonic interference.” That meditators are susceptible to such interference, which they might mistake for attainment, was a widely shared understanding in medieval China (Gundersen 2017). The interlocutor, however, here seems to present a more radical view: that such experiences are *necessarily* “Māra’s doings,” a position that was arguably strongly associated with early Chan.

worshipping the Buddha morning and night have also been worshipping Māra!¹³¹ This would be a quite foolish understanding.

[7.27] And, according to your view, [it would be Māra's doing] when men and women twenty or more years of age who wish to receive the precepts enter the Fangdeng 方等 [ritual space],¹³² [7.28] have a vision of the buddhas or bodhisattvas confirming the elimination of their sins, and are then judged fit to receive the precepts. But how could it be that one obtains the precepts [8.1] after having a vision of Māra [rather than the Buddha]? And even if, as you would have it, it is Māra [not the Buddha] that one sees when obtaining the precepts, though it may be Māra transformed into the guise [8.2] of the Buddha, when you worship this Māra while imagining him to be the Buddha, he will no longer be Māra. The story of Upagupta [8.3] confirms this principle.¹³³

又一生已來三業禮佛，皆言「一切諸佛」，又 [8.4] 云「我今悉於前發露諸黑惡」，念念之中薰成 [8.5] 種子，此是見佛正因。又過去亦有如此因。又佛性 [8.6] 為正因。況又有無漏種子為因。今時觀塵觀 [8.7] 空，伏五欲五蓋不令上心，即是強緣。因緣和合，定 [8.8] 中或見一多等佛而得供養。

¹³¹ The logic of the argument is not entirely clear. I take the point to be that since *any* external buddha that one might worship is also a product of one's own mind, as all things are, there is no reason to differentiate a visionary buddha from those that regular Buddhists worship.

¹³² Rituals of repentance (*chanhui* 懺悔) going by the name "Fangdeng," originally derived from the fifth-century *Fang deng tuoluoni jing* 方等陀羅尼經, were a widely practiced form of Buddhist purification in medieval China (Stevenson 1987, pp. 175–87; Kuo 1994, pp. 101–10). What precisely the author of the *Dust Contemplation* was thinking of here is not, however, entirely clear. We know, for example, that no later than the eighth century "Fangdeng" rituals, no longer specifically connected to the *Fang deng tuoluoni jing*, were prescribed as a universal pre-ordination purification for all those wishing to become monks or nuns. These rituals were carried out in a "Fandeng ritual space" (*fangdeng daochang* 方等道場) that only some temples were authorized to establish (Hao 1998, pp. 25–28; Zhanru 2003, pp. 95–97). In this passage, the *Dust Contemplation* seems to present "entering the Fangdeng [ritual space]" as something one does as part of an ordination ritual ("men and women twenty or more years" refers to the usual age when one can ordain as a monk or nun). That one must obtain a vision, indicating the successful purification of sin, prior to receiving "precepts" (*jie* 戒) of various kinds (especially the bodhisattva precepts) was a widespread idea in medieval Chinese Buddhism (Yamabe 2005), and is a prominent theme in the original *Fang deng tuoluoni jing*.

¹³³ On this famous story, in which Upagupta worships the form of the Buddha's body manifested by Māra, see Strong 1992, pp. 104–17. Chinese versions of this tale that use the same transcription of Upagupta given here in the *Dust Contemplation* include the early Chinese translation of the *Aśokāvadāna* (*Ayu wang zhuan*, T no. 2042, 50:120a18–22; cf. *Fu fa zang yin yuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳, T no. 2058, 50:307a18–20, which differs slightly) and the *Da zhuang yan lun jing* 大莊嚴論經 (**Kalpanā-maṇḍitikā*), T no. 201, 4:308c22–309b22.

Moreover, over the course of your life, by the three actions of body, speech, and mind, you have worshiped the Buddha, speaking the words “all the buddhas,” and also [8.4] saying, “I now, before you all, reveal all my sins.” The seeds created through the karmic impressions of each of these moments of thought [8.5] are the direct cause for seeing the Buddha. From previous lives you have also [accumulated seeds that] similarly serve as the direct causes [for seeing the Buddha]. And furthermore, your buddha-nature [8.6] is a direct cause. And there are even the undefiled seeds [of the storehouse consciousness] that serve as a cause. When you now, in the present, contemplate dust and contemplate [8.7] emptiness, quelling desire for the five sense objects and quelling the five hindrances [of craving, aversion, dullness, remorse, and doubt] so they do not overcome your mind,¹³⁴ this then serves as a strong conditioning factor. When the [direct] causes [of seeds from the past] and the conditioning factors [of your present meditation practice] come together, within [8.8] trance you will see one or more buddhas and be able to make offerings to them.

又法華經安樂行 [8.9] 品，以持讀誦經故夢見自身作佛。況今心在定 [8.10] 中見也。又放光經第十卷，意同於此，宜須尋之。[8.11] 又有聞即生信受學者，聖教中云此人久積善 [8.12] 根來。

Further, the “Practice of Ease and Bliss” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* [8.9] states that by chanting that sutra one will in a dream see oneself having become a buddha.¹³⁵ How much more so, then, can one expect such a vision when one’s mind [8.10] is in trance! The tenth fascicle of the *Sutra on the Emission of Light* expresses these same ideas, so you should consider this too.¹³⁶ [8.11] And, finally, within the sacred teachings it is said that someone who upon hearing [the Dharma] immediately has faith in, accepts, and then practices it has a long accumulation of [8.12] good roots [from past lifetimes, which can serve as the cause for seeing the Buddha now].¹³⁷

[8.13] 塵空觀門

[8.13] *The Method for Contemplating Dust as Empty*

¹³⁴ Quelling the five sense desires and the five hindrances are the usual preconditions for entering the first *dhyāna*. That this is the meaning is made clear in the ensuing lines.

¹³⁵ *Miao fa lian hua jing*, T no. 262, 9:39b20–22.

¹³⁶ I am not certain what passage specifically in the *Sutra on the Emission of Light* (*Fang guang jing*; T no. 222) the author has in mind here.

¹³⁷ Here the *Dust Contemplation* invokes the ubiquitous claim within Mahayana sutras that believing in, or even merely hearing the teachings of, the sutra is a sign that one has already, in a previous life, begun the bodhisattva path.

ABBREVIATIONS

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次朗 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32. CBETA electronic edition (version 5.3, October 6, 2016; www.cbeta.org).
- X *Shinsan dainihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經. 90 vols. Ed. Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照, Nishi Yoshio 西義雄, and Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–89. CBETA electronic edition (version 5.3, October 6, 2016).

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