

Renyue, Zhili, and an Occupant Without a Place: A Sublime (*zunte* 尊特) Body in Excess of the
Tiantai Buddhist Trikāya

Tyler Neenan



“One is tempted to believe that the creature [Odradek] once had some sort of intelligible shape and is now only a broken-down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; at least there is no sign of it; nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished. In any case, closer scrutiny is impossible, since Odradek is extraordinarily nimble and can never be laid hold of. [...] “Well, what’s your name?” you ask him. “Odradek,” he says. “And where do you live?” “No fixed abode,” he says and laughs; but it is only the kind of laughter that has no lungs behind it. [...] I ask myself, to no purpose, what is likely to happen to him? Can he possibly die? Anything that dies has had some kind of aim in life, some kind of activity, which has worn out; but that does not apply to Odradek. Am I to suppose, then, that he will always be rolling down the stairs, with ends of thread trailing after him, right before the feet of my children, and my children’s children?”

—Franz Kafka, “The Cares of a Family Man”

Abstract: Exactly 1000 years ago, in what is now the present-day city of Ningbo, China, a dramatic break-up unfolded between the great Song Dynasty Tiantai Buddhist thinker, Siming Zhili 四明知禮, and his brilliant disciple and de-facto Dharma-heir, Jingjue Renyue 淨覺仁岳. As legend tells it, sometime in the year 1025, Renyue became violently ill in the middle of a supplication ritual. From this point on, he “renounces all his prior convictions,” and begins to openly advocate for a doppelgänger position closely resembling that of the heretical Shanwai faction both of them had spent a good part of the last decade, and spilled a great deal of ink, refuting. In a series of four exchanged polemical texts, Renyue stages a remonstrative intervention with Zhili over the status of a strange body, unique to Tiantai Buddhist Pure Land theory, called “*zunte*” 尊特. This peculiar, errant body leaves an ambiguous, self-contradictory trace in the Classical Tiantai corpus. On the one hand, the de-facto founder of the tradition, Zhiyi (aka 智者大師) sometimes speaks of the *zunte* body as if it were its own discrete entity, to be placed within or alongside the traditional three bodies of a Buddha (i.e. the response (or born) body, the recompense (or enjoyment) body, and the dharma-body). And yet, on the other, he seems to ascribe prima facie mutually contradictory predicates to it, identifying it sometimes as a ‘response’ body (nirmāṇakāya, Ch. *yingshen* 應身) and sometimes as a ‘recompense’ body (saṃbhogakāya, Ch. 報身). The problem of this strange body and its contested status forms the fault line along which the doctrinal stakes of Zhili and Renyue’s split come into relief. Renyue and Zhili put flesh to two mutually incompatible envisionings of the *zunte* body of Amitābha Buddha; and concomitantly with each of these respective envisionings, each of Renyue and Zhili gives a wildly divergent reading of the same Tiantai tradition. Along the way, we walk an ever bifurcating path (*liangxing* 兩行) through a series of contested terrains, surrounding problems of triplicity, paradox, and the “Middle” (*zhong* 中)—as well as the “relation” between finitude and infinity, and between Nagarjuna’s Two Truths. This is a story about, among other things, two birds, a beetle, and a body “like all of space.”

A quick note to the workshop reader:

This is a chapter that will be at the heart of my dissertation. I understand few will have the time to make it way all the way through (there’s a lot here, to be sure). With that in mind, here are a couple sections that might work better as semi-independent choose-your-own-quests: **Section (4) A Body Like All of Space** tries to think through the question: what would a body be like, according to two deeply conflicted Tiantai thinkers, that is “like all of space”? **Section (7) Making the Buddha She Will Have Been** deals with Tiantai Zhili’s response to the problem of “Sudden Enlightenment”—with reference to the concrete phenomenology of a Pure Land visualization practice and the unique future perfect temporality at stake in it. If one wanted to go straight to the bit about bugs and birds, skip to **Section (8) Two Birds and a Beetle**. And for whoever might be more interested in a comparative thought experiment situated between Hegel’s Logic and Tiantai Zhili’s envisioning of this weird body, skip to the last Section **(10) The Finite and the ‘Infinite-Infinite’**. Here are just a few questions I would love to get some feedback on:

- For readers of Classical Chinese, are there places where I could make my translations (most are original) more accurate / elegant?
- Are my readings of Zhili and Renyue (the two primary voices in the exchange) convincing?
- Is my comparative methodology sound?
- Are there Tiantai Buddhist doctrines or technical terms of art I should slow down and take the time to spell out more carefully?

(1) Introduction: Something About a Body

This is a story about a body misplaced from the outset. A single sentence from the *Dazhi du lun* 大智度論¹ ascribes one strange, slippery predicate—*zunte* 尊特—to the body of a Buddha. And just like that, as if like magic, a constitutively errant body spawns in the theoretical landscape to match the name. Though I leave it untranslated, we might think of ‘*zunte*’ as a near synonym for “marvelous” (*miao* 妙). A *zunte* body, we’re first told in the *Dazhi du lun*, “displays boundless material forms and appearances [...] and is tantamount to all of space.”² It is “adorned with countless auspicious marks and fine characteristics, set ablaze with infinite radiance.”³ A *zunte* body (*zunte shen* 尊特身) is then, to be sure, a most spectacular sight to behold—a “body made *marvel*” (*miaoshen* 妙身).

But where does the *zunte* body *fit*, exactly, in the Tiantai *Trikaya* scheme? Is it a finite response body (*yingshen* 應身; *Nirmāṇakāya*) like we’re all capable of encountering? Like those skillfully deployed to take on physical form and preach the Dharma, whether in this *saha*-world or in a Joint-Residence Pure Land like Amitābha’s? Or is it an infinite “enjoyment” or recompense (*baoshen* 報身; *Sambhogakāya*) body, like the one revealed to accomplished bodhisattvas alone? Or perhaps even some strange “manifestation” of the non-manifest ground of the other two, in the dharma-body (*fashen* 法身; *Dharmakāya*)? The source of the difficulty lies in this: Zhiyi, the de-facto founder of the Tiantai school, ostensibly uses the term ‘*zunte*’ to name a distinct *body*. In his *Wenju Commentary to the Lotus Sutra* (*Fahua jing* 法華經), Zhiyi first elucidates “the superior response *zunte* body of Lushena Buddha mobilized in response to bodhisattvas, i.e. those of vast capacities.”⁴ The infinite *zunte* body stands in decided contrast, however, to an “inferior response body” (*lieying* 劣應), i.e. “a six-cubit⁵ body draped in filthy

¹ The *Dazhidulun* 大智度論, or *Treatise on the Great Prajñāpāramitā* is a deeply influential, sprawling commentary to the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Sūtra, in which the compound 尊特 also appears with the two characters reversed (世尊在師子座上坐，於三千大千世界中，其德特尊，光明色像威德巍巍，遍至十方如恒河沙等諸佛世界。), and which these Chinese Buddhists take to have been written by Nāgārjuna. Modern scholarship has cast this attribution into doubt. Large swathes of the text, at the very least (if anything can in fact be attributed to Nāgārjuna himself) are likely editorial additions made both by Kumārajīva and his translation assistants, like Sengrui 僧睿.

² 色像無邊 [...] 猶如虛空。Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō 《大正新脩大藏經》，in Takakusu Junjiro, ed., (Tokyo: Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai, 1988), Vol. 25, No. 1509, Scroll 9 [0121a]

³ 是法性身滿十方虛空，無量無邊，色像端正，相好莊嚴，無量光明 Vol. 25, No. 150, Scroll 9 [0121c]

⁴ 今明勝應菩薩，即盧舍那尊特身，大機所扣者也。Vol. 34, No. 1718, Scroll 6 [0082a]

⁵ The measurement *zhangliu* 丈六 or six “cubits” is equivalent to approximately 10-12 feet, or 3-4 meters.

rags,⁶ mobilized in response to those of lesser capacities.”⁷ Whether the Buddha manifests an “inferior” (*lie* 劣) six-cubit (*zhangliu* 丈六) or otherwise a superior (*sheng* 勝) *zunte* response body depends on how you have come to see things—depends, that is to say, on your station within a sequence of cultivation, as well as within the Tiantai “Classification of Teachings” (*panjiao* 叛教). Zhiyi furthermore warns of the danger of crossing this threshold, and confusing the inferior six-cubit with the superior *zunte* response body: “those of greater capacities should not forge a bond with [the inferior six-cubit body] and those of lesser capacities should not forge a bond with [the superior *zunte* body].”⁸ The Buddha’s responsive manifestation will always perfectly match the subjective trigger. The Buddha picks up and mirrors back to you whatever it was you were, as they say, “putting down.”

Is it not then clear enough that the *zunte* body is, as the *Foguang* Buddhist Dictionary puts it, “the second of the three (response, recompense, and dharma) bodies”—i.e. that it is a recompense body?⁹ And is it not, Renyue would ask, accordingly clear that the so-called “superior response body” is simply the more exalted of two discrete responsive emanations of a self-same, non-manifest dharma-body? The recompense body technically remains, in a manner of speaking, one of the Buddha’s two signature modalities of responsive emanation. But to say that a *zunte* body is, along these lines, a recompense body (*baoshen* 報身)—is concomitantly to say that it is *not* a response body (*yingshen* 應身).

The matter of classifying the *zunte* body by the letter of the canon, is not, however, quite so simple. Because Zhiyi elsewhere in the *Fahua wenju* splits the recompense body apart into an upper and a lower aspect. He tells us that the “superior response” *zunte* body corresponds, not to the recompense “function of the Buddha’s self-enjoyment” (*zishou yong* 自受用) in the experience of awakening, but rather to the downward hanging aspect of the recompense body “outwardly made functional for others’ sake” (*tashou yong* 他受用). And furthermore, we’re told, “the aspect of the recompense body outwardly made functional for others’ sake can,” he states in no uncertain terms, “be called *both* a recompense *and* a response body.”¹⁰ So we find ourselves back at square one. Does the *zunte* body figure the upper limit of a response body, or the lower limit of a recompense body? Or does it perhaps refer to some third thing, a threshold where each of these seems to vanish into the other, response into recompense, recompense back into response? Zhiyi, as I read him, leaves this question unanswered—and thus a gaping lacuna open in the systematic classification of bodies.

⁶ This “filthy rags” expression refers to the parable from the Fourth Chapter (*xinjie pin* 信解品) of the Lotus Sutra (which we examined in great detail in the last chapter), in which the estranged father “takes off his necklaces, his soft clothing and ornaments, and puts on coarse, torn and dirty clothes, smears his body with dirt, took a pan for dung in his right hand.” (Reeves 143) 即脫瓔珞、細軟上服、嚴飾之具，更著龕弊垢膩之衣，塵土全身，右手執持除糞之器，狀有所畏。Vol. 9, No. 262, Scroll 2 [0017a]

⁷ 劣應小乘，丈六弊衣，小機所扣者也。Vol. 34, No. 1718, Scroll 6 [0082a]

⁸ 不應結大緣於彼、結小緣於此。Vol. 34, No. 1718, Scroll 6 [0082a]

⁹ 為法，報，應三身中之第二 <http://m.fodizi.tw/f05/75169.html>

¹⁰ 他受用報亦得名報，亦得名應 Vol. 34, No. 1719, Scroll 9 [0330a]

The course of theoretical reflection on this strange Tiantai body comes to a brief, and short-lived apotheosis in the Northern Song, from the years 1021-1027, corresponding with the bookends of an intense and often melodramatic back-and-forth between the greatest Song Dynasty Tiantai master, Siming Zhili 四明知禮, 960–1028, in the last years of his life, and his renegade disciple, Jingjue Renyue 淨覺仁岳 (992-1064), who had once been Zhili’s most brilliant and loyal defendant in the Home-mountain (*shanjia* 山家) vs. Off-mountain (*shanwai* 山外) controversies, and to whom he had surely expected to be able to bestow his Dharma. During the year 1025, in the middle of carrying out the *Supplication to Guanyin Samādhi* (*Qingguanyin Sanmei* 請觀音三昧) repentance ritual with ten fellow monastics, Renyue took ill and retreated from his companions to go sit alone in a dark room, where it was as if he had “awoken from a dream” (*huangrumengjue* 恍如夢覺) that he suddenly “denounced” (*fei* 非) all “his prior convictions” (*xiangzhisuoxue* 向之所學).¹¹ From this point onward, Renyue begins to openly challenge Zhili’s doctrinal positions; and to Zhili’s great dismay, appears to have relapsed into a position homologous to many of the Off-mountain heterodox philosophical gambits they had spent the last number of years refuting.

Zhili and the post-turn Renyue (whom the tradition would come to memorialize as the heretic of heretics) diverge at a great many doctrinal crossroads. And yet everything that seems to matter to either of them comes to a head in this simultaneously under- and -over-determined figure of the *zunte* body. Zhiyi had left it in suspense, without a fixed place of its own. Zhili and Renyue draw from the same Tiantai corpus to put flesh to two divergent envisionings of the *zunte* body. The *zunte* body thus indexes a parting of ways with respect to the doctrinal crux of that tradition. Zhili and Renyue’s respective envisionings of the *zunte* bodies are together symptomatic of a powerful split that runs through every level of Tiantai thought and its history; it is present at the macro-level in the self-diremption of the Tiantai school into the aforementioned Home- and Off-mountain factions, and at the micro-level, for instance in Renyue’s violent “repudiation” (*jie fei* 皆非) of his “every prior conviction” (*xiang zhi suo xue* 向之所學) We might even think that the same split continues to bring forth effects in the real in the landscape of modern-day Tiantai scholarship.

Renyue mobilizes the *zunte* body to shore up the line of demarcation between the response and recompense bodies. The *zunte* body, in Renyue’s hands, draws the same line, by analogy, through the Two Truths, i.e. of Provisionality (*jiadi* 假諦) and Emptiness (*kongdi* 空諦) for which these bodies are avatars. Renyue’s envisioning of the *zunte* body memorializes Zhiyi’s legacy as a painstaking systematic taxonomist of dharmas.¹² Zhili, I will argue, does not re-suture the lacunae which Zhiyi had had opened up, but rather explodes the *problem* of the *zunte* body. Zhili carries out absolute fidelity, if not always to Zhiyi’s *letter*, then always to the uniquely

¹¹ The Southern Song Tiantai sectarian histories, the *Fozutongji* 佛祖統記, *Budugaosengchuan* 補讀高僧傳, and *Jingtushengxianlu* 淨土聖賢錄 all tell roughly the same causal story of Renyue’s sudden break and turn.

¹² Chinese Buddhists use this word ‘dharma’ (*fa* 法) not in the more exacting sense of a discrete existent objective component, but rather to refer to any discriminable phenomenal presence whatsoever.

Tiantai horizon of problematic triplicity he thinks now threatens to be submerged forever in the *lethe*-undertow of Renyue’s heresies.

The *zunte* body becomes an excessive incarnation, within some given finite body, of the Tiantai *trikaya* (three-bodies) *tout court*. As Zhili will understand it, the signifier ‘*zunte*’ does not pick out one among the three bodies of the *trikaya* scheme. It is something instead, we might say, *about a body*. It corresponds to a “special” (*te* 特) unconditional characteristic any body will have exhibited from the outset when viewed through the prism of the Tiantai Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教). The signifier *zunte* refers not to any one body among the three, but to the very *relation* between the three bodies. It refers to what Tiantai thinkers call “the Middle,” i.e. a point of paradoxical coincidence between the response and recompense dimensions of *any single body*, i.e. the coincidence between some body’s provisional location, on the one hand, and its being, on the other hand, gone therefrom. It emerges, I will argue, as a special supernumerary transformation of the dharma-body made uniquely possible within Tiantai theory. In the *zunte* body, the dharma-body encounters itself in the form of its own *opposite* and concrete exception, i.e. in the form of some one finite born body (e.g. Amitābha’s) with its finite marks (84,000, in Amitābha’s case), to the exclusion of all others.

(2) Who Are *You* Calling a Heretic?

Nowhere does Renyue stand on firmer exegetical ground than when he rebukes Zhili for mischaracterizing the unique body of Amitābha Buddha. Zhili, from the *Miaozong chao* 妙宗鈔 onward (a sub-commentary to [Pseudo-]Zhiyi’s own *Commentary* to the Visualization Sutra), circumvents Zhiyi’s textual precedent. Renyue constantly references an un-elaborated explanation which Zhiyi provides in his precursory comments to Chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra* on ‘the Innumerable Lifespan of the Buddha’. There, Zhiyi arranges the two determinations ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’, predicated of the lifespans of Buddhas from various scriptures, into a crypto-tetralemma framework. Zhiyi insists we “should allow for these four different possible explanations” [應具四解], each corresponding to a particular measure:

(1) **‘infinite-finite’**: “a Buddha’s lifespan [sometimes], though it is **really ‘measurable’**, is **spoken of as ‘immeasurable’**, as in the case of *Amitābha Buddha*;¹³

(2) **‘finite-infinite’**: “a Buddha’s lifespan, [at other times], though it is **really ‘infinite’**, is **spoken of as ‘finite’** —this is like [the Innumerable-Lifespan Śākyamuni Buddha who presides within] the present *Lotus Sutra* and the *Sutra of Golden Light*;¹⁴

¹³ 謂實有量而言無量，彌陀是也。Vol. 34, No.1718, Scroll 9 [0127a]

¹⁴ 實無量而言量，如此品及金光明是也。Ibid.

(3) **‘infinite-infinite’**: “a Buddha’s lifespan is [at yet other times] **spoken of as ‘infinite’** when it is **really ‘infinite’**, like in the Nirvana Sutra, which states that ‘only a Buddha together with another Buddha [can comprehend] the limitlessness of [a Buddha’s] lifespan.’¹⁵

(4) **‘finite-finite’**: “a Buddha’s lifespan is [finally also sometimes] **spoken of as ‘finite’** when it is indeed **really ‘finite’**, as in the case of Śākyamuni Buddha who enters nirvana after the eighty years of his lifespan come to a close.”¹⁶

As Renyue never tires of repeating, it’s quite clear from this that Zhiyi exclusively associates the body and lifespan of Amitābha Buddha with the measure ‘infinite-finite’; this means that, though Amitābha is sometimes *avowed* to be relatively infinite, he nevertheless remains subject to an ultimately finite measure. But Zhili, from the *Miaozong chao* onwards, begins to insist, *prima facie contra* Zhiyi’s textual precedent, that the Amitābha Buddha from the *Visualization Sutra* i.e. the *Foshuo guan wuliangshoufo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 (and not the *Longer* and *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtras*, Zhili will eventually concede), possesses a *zunte* body corresponding to an ‘infinite-infinite’ (*wuliang wuliang* 無量無量) lifespan. Ando Toshio, one of the great modern Zhili apologists, cannot but side with Renyue *on this issue alone*. Zhili diverges from the precedent of Zhiyi’s commentary text when he re-assigns Amitābha’s lifespan to the measure ‘infinite-infinite’. He does this, Ando thinks, for the purpose of “uniting the opposing determinations of finitude and infinity.”¹⁷ But, Ando thinks, Zhili’s insistence that Amitābha’s is a *zunte* body, he thinks, “cannot but come off, however [Zhili] labors to explain it, as forced and without basis.”¹⁸ As Renyue himself puts it,

when Zhiyi, in his *Commentary on the Visualization Sutra*, provides an interpretation of the phrase “Infinite Lifespan” in the Sutra’s title, he clearly invokes the ‘infinite-finite’ [body]. [And if that were not enough,] he further specifies that “Amitābha Buddha’s is a [mere] ‘infinite-finite’ [body]. If you [Zhili] continue to insist that the present [*Visualization*] *Sutra* does *not* visualize Amitābha’s ‘infinite-finite’ body, as Zhiyi’s commentary plainly indicates that it *does*, then how severely you must think Zhiyi’s teaching misleads sentient beings [from the true path]!”¹⁹

¹⁵ 實無量而言無量，如涅槃云：“唯佛與佛，其壽無量”是也。Ibid.

¹⁶ 實有量而言量，如八十唱滅是也。Ibid.

¹⁷ 結合有量與無量的相反規定 Ando p273

¹⁸ 不管怎樣解釋，都被感到無理 Ibid.

¹⁹ 《疏》釋無量壽題，顯譚有量之無量。又特示云：「阿彌陀是有量之無量。」若今經不觀此身，智者所示，何惑眾乎？X56n0948-1 岳閣梨十諫書 p9

Renyue has (among others) this text of Zhiyi’s *Commentary to the Visualization Sutra*²⁰ ready at the hip: in contrast to the ‘finite-finite’ (*youliang zhi liang* 有量之量) measure of Śākyamuni’s eighty-some years, “the measure ‘infinite-finite’ corresponds instead to Amitābha’s lifespan which, though so vast as to be incomprehensible to humans and heavenly beings, is nevertheless definitively of a finite duration.”²¹ This is irrefutable evidence, Renyue thinks, that Śākyamuni Buddha and Amitābha Buddha differ from one another in *degree*, not in kind. Though Amitābha’s is slightly *less* inferior, both Buddhas possess alike merely inferior *born* bodies (*shengshen* 生身)—and are, concomitantly *other than* the “eternal” (*chang* 常) *zunte* body. Amitābha’s comparatively slightly vaster body, adorned with 84,000 marks (in contrast to Śākyamuni’s mere thirty-two), and comparatively longer lifespan—nevertheless revert, in the end, to a *finite* measure, though this measure is nevertheless beyond the comprehensive powers of any sub-Buddha sentient-being. So though Amitābha’s ‘infinite-finite’ lifespan is much longer than Śākyamuni’s, it nevertheless comes to an end when the term of his life arrives. Renyue isn’t just going out on a limb when he insists on the inherent finitude of Amitābha’s body and lifespan. Zhiyi directly makes this identification, for all eyes to see. And he makes it not just once but *many* times.

Ando claims that Zhili’s case to reclassify the measure of Amitābha Buddha in the *Visualization Sutra* is entirely “without basis” (*wuli* 無理).²² But are we so sure that such a basis cannot be provided? At the risk of offering condolences for the demise of its strangeness,²³ I’ll argue that the *zunte* body, in Zhili’s hands, remains unbroken in its fidelity to the same tradition from which it ostensibly breaks. But in order to bring Zhili’s absolute valuation of Amitābha’s *zunte* body into focus, we’ll have to read it through a greater doctrinal constellation lit up in the crossfire of his falling out with Renyue over a series of four exchanged polemical treatises up until the year 1027: Zhili’s *Liaojian shisanke* 料簡十三科 (appended to a re-published edition of

²⁰ Though Zhili and other Song Dynasty Tiantai thinkers unequivocally attribute this commentary text to Zhiyi, modern scholarship is generally in consensus that it was likely written in the Tang. However, we have little cause to doubt the authenticity of this classificatory schema, because this particular stretch of text from the *Commentary to the Visualization Sutra* (*Guan wuliangshoufo jing shu* 觀無量壽佛經疏) is copied verbatim from Zhiyi’s *Commentary to the Sutra of Golden Light* (*Jingguangmingjing shu* 金光明經文句), which is of much more certain authorial status.

²¹ 如阿彌陀實有期限，人天莫數，是有量之無量。Vol. 37, No. 1750, Scroll 1 [0186c]

²² The great Tang Dynasty patriarch, Jingxi Zhanran, in his *Fahua wenju ji* 法華文句記 sub-comment to Zhiyi’s same *Faha wenju* comment from above, even seems (in advance) to find Zhili’s suggestion positively “laughable” (*kexiao* 可笑): i.e. that “both the present [infinite] *zunte* [marks] as well as the filthy rags [of a finite, inferior response body] are equally on display in Amitābha’s body.” 結緣亦爾；又往昔大小兩緣俱在釋迦，今尊特垢衣俱在彌陀者，更成可笑。Vol. 34, No. 1719, Scroll 7 [0279a]

²³ I’m here referencing Professor Ziporyn’s translation of the two-character compound *diaogui* 弔詭, which is the word used in Mandarin Chinese to translate “paradox,” but which occurs for the first time in the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論 Chapter of the Zhuangzi: “If you were to ‘agree’ with these words as right (*shi* 是), I would name that nothing more than a way of offering condolences for the demise of their strangeness.” Ziporyn (2009) p19 是其言也，其名為弔詭。ZZJS p84

the *Miaozong chao*, Zhili's Sub-Commentary to Zhiyi's commentary to the *Visualization Sutra*), Renyue's *Shijian shu*, Zhili's *Jiebang shu*, and lastly Renyue's *Xuebang shu*. Shortly after the *Xuebang* found him, Zhili succumbed to an illness that had long tormented him and, as we say nowadays, left Renyue on 'read'²⁴—and left, as well, the fate of Tiantai orthodoxy on the line.

Tiantai posterity continues to be haunted, not only by the ghost of Zhili's "original meaning" (which all the Home-mountain Southern Song patriarchs try to revive, each after the other), but also by the mutual deaths (*fangsi* 方死)²⁵ that Zhili and Renyue dealt to each other. Renyue himself, now totally unrecognizable as the faithful and diligent disciple he had once been, dies a figurative death, from the vantage of the Dharma lineage he had been destined to inherit. Zhili charges Renyue with "insulting and slandering the wondrous and supreme Lotus Sutra" and "threatening to let what's singularly unsurpassable in Zhiyi's teachings become submerged forever."²⁶ Renyue thus comes to be 'as if dead' to his own tradition—with all hopes of being restored burned to ashes. And yet Renyue's betrayal deals a death blow to Zhili as well. Zhili writes that when he first "heard the words" from Renyue's *Shijian shu*, "it was as if three-hundred spears had pierced his heart."²⁷ When the transference between master and disciple is broken and the *zunte* body splits in two, the only recently revived Northern Song Tiantai School is thrown into dire straits.

And yet it is only in this fatal crossfire that such a body, constitutively split in its heart of hearts, could have come into its own; each of Renyue and Zhili's contending envisionings of the *zunte* body "give birth to each other" (*fangsheng* 方生); each of the two faces of the *zunte* body bring each other into relief through their mutual counterposition and irreconcilable antagonism. This "special" (*te* 特) body, beset by a gap between two incommensurable envisionings of Tiantai theory and practice, rises up from this field of specters made undead again. Let us call this body back over the pangs of heartbreak and betrayal resounded from across the intervening millennium.

(3) A Body Out of Bounds

In contrast to Renyue's paramount evidence, Zhili's opening gambit from the *Miaozong chao* makes a decidedly shakier, and more circuitous appeal to the authority of the tradition. Zhili draws a link between two invocations of "boundlessness" (*wubian* 無邊). The first comes from the *Visualization Sutra*. The second comes from the *Dazhi du lun*:

The present *Visualization Sutra* states that "the body of Amitābha Buddha is boundless in measure." How could this be any different from the *Dazhi du lun*, which describes the

²⁴ In other words, Zhili, we can be fairly sure, likely received Renyue's second round of responses in the *Xue bang shu*, but died before he could respond again.

²⁵ ZZJS p59, Ziporyn (2009). p12 彼出於是，是亦因彼。彼是，方生之說也。雖然，方生方死，方死方生；方可方不可，方不可方可。

²⁶ 謗辱絕妙之經，埋沒智者獨拔之說 X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p11

²⁷ 吾聞此語，如三百矛刺心，何背祖違宗一至於此！痛哉痛哉！Ibid.

“material forms and appearance” of [the Buddha’s dharma-nature body] as “boundless”? Since Nāgārjuna²⁸ employs the same terminology of “boundlessness” when he directly refers to [the dharma-nature body] as the *zunte* body, how could Amitābha’s body [described as “boundless” in this *Sutra*] alone *not* accordingly be a *zunte* body? Moreover, Zhiyi’s Commentary directly cites this passage from the *Dazhi du lun*, in order to substantiate the meaning of the boundless measure of [Amitābha’s] body. This confirms, beyond all doubt, that Amitābha’s body in the *Visualization Sutra* is indeed a *zunte* body.²⁹

In the full *Dazhi du lun* passage,³⁰ the concept of the “dharma-nature body” (*faxing shen* 法性身) is introduced within the framework of a decided *contrast* to the *born* body; where the born body is subject to the contingencies of its finite, physical form, the “dharma-nature body” is *not*: “the Buddha has two bodies—a born body and a dharma[-nature] body. The born body is like that of a human being, vulnerable to the cold and heat, the contingencies of sickness and suffering, with no choice but to beg for its meals. The dharma-nature body Buddha [in contrast] displays boundless material forms and appearances; this *zunte* body is *tantamount to all of space*.”³¹

This passage is the one and only occasion on which the compound *zunte* 尊特 crops up in the sprawling textual edifice of the *Dazhi du lun*, where it appears for the first time in the extant Chinese Buddhist canon. The signifier “*zunte*” is seemingly put forth in a proxy capacity for the Buddha’s so-called “dharma-nature body”—a figure itself, in comparison with the dharma-body (*fashen* 法身), of far less theoretical resolution. “The dharma-nature body Buddha displays boundless material forms and appearances; this *zunte* body is *tantamount to all of space*.” Renyue and Zhili both make repeated references to this same short excerpt, each wholeheartedly convinced it vindicates his own hermeneutical position: Zhili means to convince his reader that the chain of signifiers this passage strings together and between which the sign of equivalence is posited—“dharma-nature body”—“boundless material forms”—“*zunte* body”—“all of space,” is wound together tightly enough that the invocation of any one of them, i.e. the predicate “boundless,” which both the *Visualization Sutra* as well as Zhiyi’s *Commentary* ascribes to the “measure” (*shenliang* 身量) of Amitābha’s body, is sufficient to attest that Amitābha’s body is *ipso facto* a *zunte* body. Unlike a *mere* born body, constrained by the physical limits and contingencies of fleshly existence, Amitābha’s *zunte* body is of the same boundless measure as

²⁸ See footnote 1 above.

²⁹ 今經明說「無量壽佛身量無邊」，與《大論》云色像無邊，有何異耶？彼云無邊，既稱尊特，此何獨非？況疏專引彼論此文，以證身量無邊之義，驗今佛身的是尊特，不須疑也。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 6 [0226a]

³⁰ The *Dazhi du lun* elsewhere advances the same concept of the Buddha’s “dharma-nature body,” again in contrast to the body born of mother and father, of flesh and blood: “a Buddha’s body admits of two types: the former is the dharma-nature body. The second is the body born of mother and father.” 佛有二種身：一者、法性身，二者、父母生身。Vol. 25, No. 1509, Scroll 9 [0121c]

³¹ 佛有生身法身，生身同人法，有寒熱病患、馬麥乞乳；法性身佛，色像無邊；尊特之身，猶如虛空。Vol. 25, No. 1509, Scroll 9 [0121a]

the dharma-nature itself, “tantamount to all of space.” But what indeed is space *like*, according to orthodox Tiantai thought?

(4) A Body Like All of Space

The Tiantai thinkers draw their basis for theorizing space from the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* or *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (henceforth abbreviated to *Nirvana Sutra*), where we find several passages like this one from the Mahākāśyapa Chapter 迦葉菩薩品: “The Buddha-nature of sentient beings has neither inside nor outside, in the same way empty-space has neither inside nor outside. Were empty space to admit of an inside and an outside, then it could be referred to as neither ‘one’ nor ‘permanent’—and thus we could not say that it pervades all places.”³² Along these lines, the dharma-nature *zunte* body would be akin not to any single spatially-embedded body alone, putatively separated off both from space and from all other bodies. *This* body of Amitābha’s with 84,000 marks, Zhili wants to claim, because its own outer boundary falters in separating it from what lies *out* of its bounds, is necessarily equally as boundless as the entirety of space itself. Space, as the horizon within which alone any relation between two points can be made intelligible, is already always *ipso facto* on both sides of any line of demarcation we could raise up to rein it in. In the same way that space is lacking for an interior, it is *ipso facto* lacking for an exterior, as the latter could be made intelligible only in contrast to the former.

The *zunte* body, we might say, shares this vanishing limit (of limitlessness) with the entirety of space. But Zhili’s *zunte* body, unlike Renyue’s *zunte* body, is *not* just some definite expansive entity of which the concept ‘infinite’ is predicated, like some kind of all-encompassing inflating balloon. Zhili does *not* mean that some one body swallows up space and all its contents into its own self-standing interiority. For such an image remains confined to the limits of an analogy to some typical body *unlike* space (even *if* a very large and expansive one); when a typical body like yours or mine either takes something in (e.g. food or medicine) or expels something (e.g. feces or saliva), it crosses the threshold between a bodily interior and exterior, i.e. goes from the inside to the outside or otherwise from the outside to the inside.³³ But how, on the contrary, how could a body that lacks for any interior depths be thought to incorporate an ‘other’? It would have to, by definition, already be there in whatever stands to be incorporated on the far side. And were you otherwise to attempt to *expel* something from a body like all of space, it would just “in” it all the more so! Such a body would therefore be incapable of any

³² 眾生佛性非內、非外，猶如虛空，非內非外。如其虛空有內外者，虛空不名為一、為常，亦不得言一切處有。Vol. 12, No. 374, Scroll 33 [0562c]

³³ Here an unexplored conceptual connection opens up to what Freud first refers to as the “objects of the drive,” i.e. breast, phallus, and feces (to which Lacan later adds the voice and the gaze). These objects function through a mechanism of incorporation and expulsion (hence the opposition in Freud between the breast, e.g. and feces); these objects are extra-corporeal or even non-corporeal “supplements” to the body which precisely operate the division into an exterior and an interior. And yet these objects *themselves*, though they effect this division between inside and out, properly belong to neither.

incorporation that was not, *ipso facto* an expulsion—and no expulsion that was not *ipso facto* incorporative.

The *zunte* body is free of any interiority or exteriority. So across any such break between incorporating subject and incorporated object, expeller and expelled, the *zunte* body would remain *undivided*. Undivided from what? We could not quite say that it would come undivided from *itself*, for (again) this would require a delimited interiority, which a body like space cannot possess. And we also could not quite say that the *zunte* body comes undivided from *others*, for in the absence of a limit *qua* determining measure of self-adequacy, it has no *self* to which it could encounter an *other*. To borrow an expression from Guo Xiang's Commentary to the *Qiwu lun*, the *zunte* body thus “stands opposed to nothing under heaven as an other” (*wei chang you dui yu tianxia ye* 未嘗有對於天下也).³⁴

But a *zunte* body is *like* the boundless expanse of space *as* some one discrete spatially-embedded body is so. What would it mean to imagine a finite body just like this one to be akin to all of space? My body, we ordinarily imagine, is surrounded by empty space. It shares no overlap whatsoever with the empty space around it. When I reach out to make contact with the surrounding empty space, it has already, by definition, retreated beyond my grasp. The empty space pressing in on every side of me *prima facie* figures my ownmost negation and beyond; where it is, I am not. But even as I will always and forever fail to make contact with the space outside me, the same space that indexes my body's ownmost negation, and retreats ever beyond me, *pervades* my body unobstructed. So my body does not displace the space that it comes to occupy, in the way that water might spill over the edges of an over-full bathtub when you lower yourself into it. My body is rather *what space is like* in this particular locus. *Truly* empty space can admit of no discrepancy between my body, on the one hand, and some separate entity called “empty space” on the other.³⁵ Because space, if it is in truth, *absolutely* empty, would have to negate and thus be freed from even this recognizable “mark of empty space” (*xukong xiang* 虛空相). Something perhaps, we might think, like Zhuangzi's “Heavenly Reservoir” (*tianfu* 天府), “poured into without ever getting full” (*zhuyan er bu man* 注焉而不滿) ladled out of without ever running out” (*zhuoyan er bu jie* 酌焉而不竭), space would have to be emptied of even the contrastive determinations ‘vacant’ and ‘full’.

Space, as this horizon of absolute continuity between any inside and out, would have to run through both the inside and the outside of *this* body. Space is continuous with itself across every such break between any inside and out. But its own continuity is nowhere outside these myriad *discontinuities*, which it just as much *effects* on the side of bodies, provisionally discriminable on their own side. A body like space itself would have to take, in the same way, as its measure, just this absolute continuity in discontinuity between the inside and the outside of each and every body.

A *zunte* body is then like space in this respect: it incarnates, for Zhili, the continuity and inter-pervasion of some finite body with its own beyond, its own negation and transcendence. A *zunte* body's inexorable being-toward its own beyond, with which it is continuous *vis-a-vis*

³⁴ ZZJS p60

³⁵ My gratitude to Professor Ziporyn for helping me to clarify this point.

discontinuity, figures its inner-most corporeal dimension. Amitābha's *zunte* body is 'infinite', Zhili wants to say, not because, like some discrete and empty blank left behind, it has effaced all borders and limits. It is 'infinite' rather in the sense that it, like the entirety of space, *has no conceivable inside or outside*. So, like space, it pervades *both* sides of whatever boundary-line is drawn up to rein it in. Such a *zunte* body conducts an originally accomplished intermelding between its own finite positionality and the transcendence thereof. A *zunte* body, like space itself, thus gives way to the thoroughfare of all bodies within each other. And yet it does not merely *contain* these bodies, because, again, lacking for any "inside" or "outside" (*feinei feiwai* 非內非外), it cannot contain any body without just *being that body*, full stop.

Amitābha's body is *not* then, Zhili will insist to his dying day, merely *relatively* finite, and yet ultimately subject to a definitive terminal limit. As it folds in a constitutive reference and unsurpassable orientation to its own outside, and thus incarnates something like the possibility of *relation per se*, a *zunte* body is *not comparable* or *relative* to any other body. So the same can thus be said of the *zunte* body as Zhiyi says of the dharma-body: "its lifespan is neither long nor short, neither protracted nor hastened. It is tantamount to the entire dharma-realm, and of equivalent measure as the entire expanse of space."³⁶ As it has no outer boundary, Zhili's *zunte* body is neither relatively vast nor relatively small. It is as limitless as space in its entirety.

Renyue, in response, cuts once more through all the convoluted inter-textual chains of equivalence, and returns us to the plain letter of Zhiyi's text, in another moment of ostensible exegetical fidelity. As Zhili himself quotes Renyue asking in the *Liaojian* Appendix:

But if [Amitābha's body in the *Visualization Sutra*] were indeed [as you, Zhili, say,] a *zunte* body—why then does Zhiyi, in his *Commentary to the Lotus Sutra*, claim that [the measure of Amitābha's body from] the *Visualization Sutra* is "spoken of as 'infinite', though it is in reality 'finite'"?³⁷

Renyue's point is straightforward. Zhiyi, we saw above, lays out a scheme of four mutually exclusive measures of a Buddha's lifespan. Amitābha's lifespan can be correctly characterized, according to Zhiyi's schema, by only the first of the four measures—i.e. 'infinite-finite'. A single measure corresponds in each case to the lifespan of a single exemplary Buddha. Amitābha is thus unlike the strictly 'finite-finite' flesh and blood body of the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, who enters into nirvana at the terminal moment of his mortal lifespan. He is secondly, contrary to Zhili's point, all the more so incomparable to the 'infinite-infinite' body from the *Nirvana Sutra*, which, unborn and undying, admits of a term-limit neither in reality nor with respect to how it is represented in the concrete straits of some particular *upaya* response.

Amitābha is thirdly, Renyue claims, unlike the 'infinite-finite' Innumerable-Lifespan Śākyamuni who, we're told in Chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*, is revealed to have feigned a limited lifespan, though he has *always* been a Buddha from beginningless time. Śākyamuni has,

³⁶ 此壽非長量。亦非短量。無延無促。疆指法界同虛空量。Vol. 39, No. 1785, Scroll 2 [0053b]

³⁷ 若是尊特，合是常身。何故《法華疏》中，判《觀無量壽佛經》云，「實有量而言無量」？Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 6 [0226a]

all this time, been in permanent residence on Vulture Peak “as well as in *all other* places” (*ji yu zhu zhuchu* 及於諸住處). And yet, “by the power of his skillful means” (*yi fangbian li gu* 以方便力故), he simulates a passage into nirvana (and thus a terminated lifespan) for the sake of awakening, within sentient beings’ hearts, the faithful pining born out alone from the lack of himself there.³⁸ Zhili thus seems *prima facie* to have no choice *but* to disavow Zhiyi’s *prima facie* unequivocal identification of Amitābha’s body with the measure ‘infinite-finite’ (i.e. ‘finite’ in reality though spoken of as ‘infinite’).

But then how can Zhili account for Zhiyi’s insistence, however it is understood, that Amitābha’s lifespan admits of some limit? Zhili remains minimally answerable to this demand by splitting Amitābha’s body up into two. First of all, Amitābha appears under the aspect of a *born* body (*rather than* his *zunte* body); this born body “reverts to a ‘finite’ measure” (*zhong gui wuliang* 終歸有量) in the concrete straits of some responsive praxis, though his lifespan is (like any Buddha’s lifespan) truly limitless. In this sense, I take it, Zhili imagines Amitābha’s born body akin to Śākyamuni Buddha’s in the Lotus Sutra, i.e. as a so-called ‘finite-infinite’ body. But under yet other stimuli, corresponding with *this* practice of the *Visualization Sutra*, Amitābha’s body appears instead, Zhili claims, under the aspect of a *zunte* body—‘infinite-infinite’:

Though practitioners of vast capacities are able to perceive the eternal *zunte* body, the myriad practitioners of ordinary capacities with narrow habituations, who achieve rebirth [in Sukhāvātī, Amitābha’s Pure Land] through the practice of merit-dedication alone, aren’t yet prepared to receive the teachings preached by Amitābha’s *zunte* body,—namely that [all dharmas] dwell eternally in [the nature *qua*] *li*. Therefore, the Buddha’s response or transformation body is instead mobilized to preach [the concept of] impermanence, and prepare them to realize lesser fruits [of cultivation]. For this reason, though Amitābha’s lifespan is in fact innumerable, it nevertheless [reverts] to a ‘finite’ measure [in accordance with the capacities of everyday practitioners]. [...] Therefore, Zhiyi’s three Commentaries (i.e. the *Commentary to the Lotus Sutra*, the *Commentary to the Sutra of Golden Light* and the *Commentary to the Visualization Sutra*) all classify Amitābha’s body as reverting to a ‘finite’ measure. However, the [present] *Visualization Sutra* responds exclusively to practitioners of the Integrated Teaching and clarifies that the body of a Buddha arises from [the concrescence of] the entire dharma-realm. It’s precisely because a Buddha’s any response has its ground [in the dharma-body] that the born body is equal to the dharma-body. Along the same lines, [Amitābha Buddha’s] dharma-nature *zunte* body [which appears in this

³⁸ As Śākyamuni Buddha puts it in the *gāthā* at the end of the “Lifetime of the Tathāgata” Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, “When the many see me as extinct. They make offerings to my remains everywhere. All long for me, adore and yearn for me. And when the living have become faithful, honest and upright and gentle, and wholeheartedly want to see the Buddha, even at the cost of their own lives, then, together with the assembly of monks I appear on Holy Eagle Peak. Then I tell all the living that I am always here, not extinct. Yet by the power of skillful means I reveal both extinction and non-extinction” (Reeves p296). 眾見我滅度，廣供養舍利，咸皆懷戀慕、而生渴仰心。眾生既信伏，質直意柔軟，一心欲見佛，不自惜身命。時我及眾僧、俱出靈鷲山，我時語眾生，常在此不滅，以方便力故，現有滅不滅。 Vol. 9, No. 262, Scroll 5 [0043b]

Sutra], as expounded in the *Dazhi du lun*, precisely corresponds [not to the measure ‘infinite-finite’, but rather] to the measure ‘infinite-infinite’.³⁹

Zhili refuses to accept Renyue’s premise that a given Buddha (Śākyamuni, Amitābha, etc.) must exclusively correspond to a single measure among the four. Zhiyi himself goes on to ask, after the above enumerated fourfold scheme, “how could any one of these Buddhas correspond to just the one [measure], excluding the other three?” (*qike shiyi er feisan ye* 豈可是一而非三耶) And we’ll note that within the fourfold scheme, a single Buddha, i.e. Śākyamuni’s body *already* admits of an obvious discrepancy: it is at times ‘finite-finite’, confined within the eighty-some odd years of his earthy lifespan, and at other times ‘infinite-finite’, as within the *Lotus Sutra* teaching of his Innumerable Lifespan and skillful evanescence. Zhili is then only extrapolating from this paradigm of intra-Buddha variance when he claims that Amitābha’s *zunte* body, from the present *Visualization Sutra*, differs from the born body he displays to preach the *Longer* and *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtras*. Zhili thus implicitly elevates the *Visualization Sutra* over the two *Longer* and *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtras* (which make up the remainder of the standard Pure Land scriptural canon).

Amitābha “reverts” to the aspect of a born body of “finite measure” (*zhong gui youliang* 終歸有量) to preach the two *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtras* for the sake of the vast majority of practitioners endowed with “everyday” (*fanfu* 凡夫) capacities, opening a short-circuit path to rebirth by means of recalling Amitābha’s name, and dedicating the merit that results from that practice. When Zhiyi predicates a ‘finite’ measure of Amitābha’s body, he is exclusively referring, Zhili is now claiming, to the born body that presides within *these two sūtras*. However, Amitābha *also* assumes a *zunte* body of ‘infinite-infinite’ measure for those with the prerequisites of cultivation to perceive it and receive its special teaching. In keeping with his re-valuation of its position in the hierarchy of scriptures and classification of teachings, Zhili repeats the unprecedented claim he had made earlier in the *Miaozong chao*—and which had provoked Renyue’s ire—that the *Visualization Sutra* “responds exclusively to practitioners of the Integrated Teaching” (*chun bei yuanren* 純被圓人). In other words, Vaidehi and all the myriad sentient beings in attendance, who are led to visualize in sequence the concrete marks of the habitat and inhabitants of Amitābha’s Pure Land (as well as anyone who now carries out the *Sutra’s* practice) *all belong* to the Perfect and Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教).

What teaching then does Amitābha’s *zunte* body preach to the myriad beings predisposed to receive it? Though Zhili’s gambit requires, in order to account for Zhiyi’s repeated invocation of a limit on the measure of Amitābha’s body, that he distinguish Amitābha’s *zunte* body within the *Visualization Sutra* from the born body of the two *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtras*, we find out now, paradoxically, that the signature teaching of Amitābha’s *zunte* body immediately refers us *back* to

³⁹ 大機雖見尊特常身，其慣習小人，洎諸凡夫，雖因迴向得生彼土，未宜尊特說常住理，故以應化說無常法，成其小果。是故佛壽雖不可數，終歸有量。[...] 三疏約此，故判彌陀在有量中。若《觀無量壽佛經》，純被圓人，明說佛身全法界起。應既有本，生即同法，的類《釋論》法性尊特，正當無量之無量也。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 6 [0026a]

the born body. The born and *zunte* figure not two separate bodies, but rather “the same” (this very sameness will come to be problematized) body of Amitābha Buddha, seen under increasingly expansive perceptive parameters. And yet Zhili’s *zunte* body is, unlike Renyue’s, *never* altogether an *other* body to the born. Amitābha’s *zunte* body preaches that a Buddha’s every last *born* body “arises from [the concrescence of] the entire dharma-realm” (*quan fajie qi* 全法界起). Here Zhili re-capitulates one of his preeminent claims from the *Miaozong chao*. As Zhili puts it emphatically early on in the *Miaozong chao* text, “there isn’t a single mentation or particle of dust, down to the most miniscule, that isn’t made (*zuo* 作) by the entirety of the dharma-realm. For that reason, take any one up at random—and *that there* is the integrated and inter-melded dharma-realm in its entirety.”⁴⁰

Here we see further ripples of a point Zhili made above in relation to the *Dazhi du lun* passage, concerning the nature of the *zunte* body as “tantamount to all of space.” The *zunte* body, like space itself, admits of no discrepancy between an interior and exterior. Zhili is now claiming, not only that a given born body is merely an inseparable *part* of the dharma-realm—but rather that it is, even in the form of *excluding* it, the *entirety* of the boundless dharma-realm, from the avici hells and their wretched inhabitants all the way up through the Buddha-realm. Just as Zhiyi had said that “a single mentation is the entirety of the three-thousand dharmas” (*yinian sanqian* 一念三千), so too is any *single body*, or any single one of its marks, the “entire integrated and inter-melded dharma-realm in its entirety” (*yuanrong fajie quanfen* 圓融法界全分). The *zunte* body is made “itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside.”⁴¹ It is in *this* sense, that coalesces at the site of an irreducibly finite born body, that Amitābha’s *zunte* body is, Zhili claims, ‘infinite-infinite.’

So when Zhili tells us here that “the born body is *equal* to the dharma-body” (*sheng ji tong fa* 生即同法) because “every response has its root [in the dharma-body]” (*ying ji you ben* 應既有本), he does *not* mean that every born body is an epiphenomenal manifestation of some underlying dharma-body *qua* essence-substrate, which alone is truly real, and in the reality of which a born body can participate only by way of proxy. Rather, each born body is “equal to the dharma-body” only because the dharma-body is itself nowhere outside the inter-subsumption of the ‘three-thousand’ (*sanqian* 三千) with and within the concrescence of some finite body. The dharma-body (*fashen* 法身) thus re-imagined as a *zunte* body is an “absolute marvel” (*juedai miao* 絕待妙)—which is to say that it is marvelous not by excluding the coarseness of some body, but by incorporating this, its *prima facie* opposite, into its unconditional aspect.

(5) With an End in Sight

Renyue, however, supplies a further, more substantive argument, beyond the sheer appeal to the authority of Zhiyi’s commentary text (though it is, again, nested within an appeal to the

⁴⁰ 一心一塵，至一極微，無非法界全體而作。既一一法全法界作，故趣舉一，即是圓融法界全分。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 1 [0198a]

⁴¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (p144)

text of *yet another* of Zhiyi's *Sutra Commentaries*), to attest for his conviction that Amitābha's body is of 'infinite-finite' measure alone. Zhili quotes from Renyue's own (no longer extant) *Sanshen shouliang jie* 三身壽量解 in the *Liaojian Appendix*:

In his *Commentary to the Sutra for Invoking Avalokiteśvara* (*qing guanyin shu* 請觀音疏), Zhiyi tells us "infinity" (無量) admits of two meanings: when used with reference to the born body (生身), it is a mere 'infinite-finite' (*youliang zhi wuliang* 有量之無量); but when referring instead to the dharma-body (法身), it is rather 'infinite-infinite' (*wuliang zhi wuliang* 無量之無量). [...] Since [the *Da zhi du lun*] calls [the *zunte* body] a "dharma-nature body," this means it is intrinsically unceasing—and only therein is it referred to as a "*zunte*" body. Now, in the ninth visualization of the *Visualization Sutra*, one visualizes the body [and marks] of Amitābha Buddha. In the tenth, one visualizes the body [and marks] of Avalokiteśvara. Since Avalokiteśvara is designated as the 'Bodhisattva Destined to Succeed the Present Buddha' (*buchu pusa* 補處菩薩), this proves beyond all shadow of doubt that Amitābha Buddha *will* indeed enter into extinction. How then could it be otherwise than that Amitābha's born body is a mere 'infinite-finite' [instead of a *zunte* body]?⁴²

Renyue presses even farther in the *Shijian shu*:

[...] Only after the first Buddha enters into extinction can the next succeed him. *Only* [given this sequence of succession] can the concept of 'Destined Succession' (補處) gain its requisite traction. How then could you misconstrue the concept of "Destined Succession" [...] to refer to a Buddha's [unceasing] dharma-nature body? [...] If [we refer instead to] the dharma-nature body of all Buddhas *qua* Lushena—this can only be the single self-same body and awareness, which is [as the *Da zhi du lun* puts it] "tantamount to all of space," and *must* be intrinsically beyond any and all differences of names and designations, marks and fine characteristics, as well as between varying lifespans. The gist of this is subtle indeed. I would ask that you, Master, carefully reflect upon it [and reconsider your position].⁴³

To bolster his claim for the 'finite-infinite' measure of Amitābha's lifespan, Renyue appeals to the concept of "destined succession" (*buchu* 補處, abbreviated from *yisheng buchū* 一生補處). This refers to the penultimate stage of a bodhisattva "destined" to become a Buddha in their next lifetime, after one final rebirth. Guanyin, whose body and marks are to be visualized in direct succession of Amitābha's in the sequence of sixteen visualizations from the *Visualization*

⁴² 《請觀音疏》云：無量有二義：若生身無量，是有量之無量；法身無量，是無量之無量。[...] 既云「法性身」，此乃不滅，方名尊特。今第九觀觀於佛身，第十即觀觀世音身。觀音既是補處菩薩，驗佛有滅，豈非生身有量之無量？Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 6 [0026a]

⁴³ [...] 前佛入滅，次佛嗣興，方有補處，安以法性身佛[...] 而論補處哉？[...] 若諸佛舍那之身同一身智，猶如虛空，必無名號、相好、壽命之異也。此義稍細，請大師鑑之。X56n0948-1 岳闍梨十諫書 p7

Sutra, is codified, in the *Sutra of the Prophecy of Avalokiteśvara's Future Buddhahood*, as Amitābha's successor. That *Sutra* has it that Amitābha's reign as the Buddha presiding over Sukhavati, i.e. the "Western [Pure] Land of Ultimate Bliss" (*xifang jile shijie* 西方極樂世界) will one day, "after the extinction of his True Dharma" (*zhengfa mie hou* 正法滅後), come to an end. He will thereafter be *succeeded* by the next-life transformation of the Bodhisattva *Guanshiyin* 觀世音 (lit: Hearer of the Cries of the World) *aka* Avalokiteśvara, who sits to the left of Amitābha in traditional depictions of his Pure Land.⁴⁴ And this ensuing Buddha, reborn from Guanyin, will encompass, Renyue emphasizes, a unique and distinct set of responsive horizons of its own.

This prophecy of succession, Renyue thinks, vindicates his contention that Amitābha's is a mere "born body" (*shengshen* 生身), exclusively characterized by the measure 'infinite-finite'. The ordered sequence of Buddhas, conceived as Renyue does, like a succession of self-contained lifespans—a *a priori* requires, before the succeeding Buddha Universal Light Merit Mountain Sovereign (i.e. the ultimate transformation of the Bodhisattva Guanyin) can assume their mantle, that Amitābha *already* have passed into nirvana, i.e. that his lifetime *already* have drawn to a definitive close. That he is thus destined to be succeeded by Guanyin is enough, Renyue thinks, to "prove beyond all of shadow of doubt that Amitābha *will* indeed enter into extinction" (*yan fo you mie* 驗佛有滅).

Renyue superimposes Zhiyi's distinction from the *Commentary to the Sutra for Invoking Avalokiteśvara* (請觀音疏) between the "two meanings" of "infinity"—namely, between the 'infinite-finite' measure of a born body and the 'infinite-infinite' measure of *the* dharma-body—onto the metaphor of space in the same passage from the *Dazhi du lun* Zhili quoted as testimony above. How, Renyue asks, could a *merely* finite born body like Amitābha's, hemmed in on both sides by a birth and a single extinction-event, be anything like the 'infinite-infinite' dharma-nature body? The latter, being like space itself, the very beginningless, endless horizon within which any finite body begins or ends, is as such constitutively *unceasing*.⁴⁵

Renyue claims that *unlike* the myriad Buddhas, who admit of discrepancies of names and bodily marks, and whose every lifespan is limited on both ends—the dharma-nature *aka zunte* body is the "single self-same body and awareness" (*tongyi shenzhi* 同一身智) in the un-arisen and unceasing space-like essence of which all these Buddhas are joined, gone beyond their constitutive differences. Renyue's doctrinal positioning of the *zunte* body seems to falter somewhere here; the *zunte* body is now *equivalent* or at least *adjacent* to the dharma-body of which Renyue had priorly deemed it to have been a mere responsive manifestation. As we saw, it

⁴⁴ "When the dawn breaks" (*fenming xiang chu shi* 分明相出時) on the morning after Amitābha passes into nirvana, Guanyin will attain to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (*cheng dengzheng jue* 成等正覺) beneath the bodhi tree, reborn as a Buddha named Universal Light Merit Mountain Sovereign (*puguang gongde shanwang rulai* 普光功德山王如來) in a Pure Land now called, no longer Sukhavati, but rather 'Adorned with Universal Gatherings of Myriad Treasures' (*zhongbao pu ji zhuangyan* 眾寶普集莊嚴). Vol. 9, No. 268, Scroll 1 [0254b]

⁴⁵ Readers will note that no hard-and-fast logical demarcation generally obtains in Tiantai thought between the registers of space and time.

remains undecided in Tiantai theory, from Zhiyi onward, whether the *zunte* body is a response (*yingshen* 應身) or a recompense body (*baoshen* 報身). The *zunte* body, in this particular connection, would seem to have thrown off its ‘response-body’ (*ying shen* 應身) determination, to merge exclusively with its ‘recompense-body’ (*baoshen* 報身) determination. Renyue had once upon a time insisted that, *because it displays any marks whatsoever*, the *zunte* body is, though a “superior born” body (*shengying* 勝生), nevertheless *but* a born body. Renyue, in different straits, gives divergent answers to this question, i.e. whether the *zunte* body is in fact (as he had once claimed) a special sort of response body (accidentally endowed with certain constitutive virtues of the recompense body), or instead (as he now claims) something like a recompense body, which pivots from the inward-facing “function of its own self-enjoyment” (*zishou yong* 自受用) to being made “outwardly functional for others’ sake” (*tashou yong* 他受用).

And yet Renyue shields himself from the charge of self-contradiction, when he concedes, in the *Xuebang shu*, that the *zunte* body admits of a single objective divergence;⁴⁶ a *zunte* body is *either* a response body with recompense-liked characteristics, or *otherwise* a recompense body with response-like characteristics. But *never* both at once. That it can only be, at some given time, *either* the one *or* the other—this much is non-negotiable for Renyue. The question—‘is it the one or the other, *this* or *that*?’—becomes *immaterial*. This question is subordinated to another meta-level question—namely, ‘is the response body “identical to” (*xiangji* 相即) the recompense body in the first place’?⁴⁷

Renyue’s decisive and prohibitive ‘no’ to this question, confines him, Zhili will claim, to the horizon of the “relative marvel” (*xiangdai miao* 相待妙). And closes him off to the “absolute marvel in which relative determinations,” like the response and recompense bodies, “are

⁴⁶ Quoted in the previous chapter: “I, Renyue, have with what little admittedly murky consciousness I can muster, passed back again through the many texts [of scriptures, treatises, commentaries and sub-commentaries], and have found that the *zunte* body [and its] marks do not go beyond these two types: The first is the Buddha whose body consists alone of the *dharm*a-nature, the flower-treasury body replete with innumerable interpenetrating marks as numerous as particles of dust. These marks belong first and foremost to the body which inhabits the Land of Real-Recompense without Obstruction. [...] The second are the *zunte* marks made to appear *on top of* and in addition to the thirty-two of Sakyamuni’s born-body, such that every mark that appears is free from all divisions [...]” 仁岳常以昧識，再研諸文，尊特之相不出二種：一者、法性身佛，華藏塵相，此相元是實報土身 [...]。二者、生身，現起尊特之相，即於三十二相之上，隨現一相，無有分齊 [...]。X56n0948-3 岳闍梨雪謗 p32

⁴⁷ It’s important that this could just as well be re-phrased as follows: is difference ‘mutually identical with’ sameness or equality? Is the truth and register of Provisional Positing (*jiadi* 假諦) or “provisionality” (*quan* 權) ‘mutually identical with’ the ‘Truth of Emptiness’ (*kongdi* 空諦) *qua* “Ultimate” (*shi* 實)? And perhaps most tantalizingly, is a finite body, confined within its own bounds, *ipso facto* ‘mutually identical with’ its own transcendence and negation?

severed” (*juedai miao* 絕待妙).⁴⁸ Despite wavering with respect to the doctrinal placement of the *zunte* body, Renyue proceeds along the lines of his signature gambit: he pulls some two items apart, each from the other—in this case, the singular self-sameness of the *zunte* body *qua* dharma-nature, gone beyond all marks and differences, on the one hand—‘infinite-infinite’; and, on the other, the myriad finite born-body Buddhas—each respectively enclosed within the differentiated bounds of its own constitutive designation, set of marks, and life-span allotment. The bodily surrogate of sameness and equality (*pingdeng* 平等) on one side—and the avatars of difference, on the other. Renyue then wields the scripturally attested concept of Guanyin’s “destined succession” as a lever to shore up the line of demarcation between the one and the other, and thus obviate all grounds for Zhili’s contention that Amitābha’s body, with its undeniable terminal limit, could ever be equivalent to all of space—could ever be characterized by the characteristic *zunte*-measure, ‘infinite-infinite’.

Renyue accuses Zhili of conflating the finitude of a body like Amitābha’s with the infinity of Lushena’s body like space. Though Renyue will concede that these two are indeed *joined* at the hip, each nevertheless belongs to its own respective side alone of their shared line of demarcation. The cogency of Renyue’s point hangs on isolating Amitābha Buddha from the “dharma-nature body” (*faxing shen* 法性身) *qua* essence of all Buddhas. He has to treat Amitābha as a discrete, individual Buddha, abiding in his own self and body alone, having just his particular life-span and no other. Amitābha’s life, unique and self-contained, remains hemmed in, on the back end, by the certain prophecy of an inevitable and definitive extinction-event. So Amitābha’s body is *ipso facto other than* the dharma-nature *zunte* body, which, like space, is not limitable to such confines.

And yet, does Renyue not refer to the “dharma-nature” *zunte* body with the name of a particular Buddha i.e. Lushena, the Buddha whose sublime recompense body preaches the Dharma in the *Huayan Sutra* (*huayan jiaozhu* 華嚴教主)? The *zunte* body of Lushena is, for Renyue, *unlike* Amitābha’s body. Lushena alone is *uniquely*, in his own right, “beyond all differences” (*wuyi* 無異); and *this* is what makes the *zunte* body special, just as unbounded space is itself unique and alone in being, unlike any body *in* space, exempted from all divisions of inside and out.

(6) This, That, and the Other

We have, in Renyue’s scheme, to borrow some Zhuangzian language, a first order ‘this’ and ‘that’, *shi* 是 *and* *bi* 彼. Amitābha’s ‘infinite-finite’ body is like *this*—like *this body* here, ultimately subject to limits; and the dharma-nature *zunte* body is exactly *otherwise* and beyond all differences of names, marks, and lifespans. This is this and that is that—and, as they say, “that’s that!”

⁴⁸ This somewhat protracted translation of the term *juedai miao* 絕待妙 attempts to capture the ambiguity of the character *jue* 絕 in Tiantai texts, which means both “absolute,” or “unsurpassable,” as in the Mandarin *juedui* 絕對—as well as literally to “sever,” as in the Mandarin *duanjue* 斷絕. On this point, see also Swanson (2017) p932.

Zhili takes recourse, in his defense, to *nearly* identical language. And yet from it he gleans something like the exact *opposite* meaning:

How could you [Renyue] profess this slander—that I have failed to make provisions for the concept of ‘Destined Succession’? [...] You should understand that, when perceived through [a Bodhisattva’s] karmic consciousness (*yeshi* 業識), as characteristic of the *Distinct* (*biejiao* 別教) and *Perfect Teachings* (*yuanjiao* 圓教), a Buddha so perceived, though it remains, to the end, a response body—is not distinct in the slightest from the singular body and awareness [of all Buddhas]. This is because, when the fruition of a Buddha’s self-practice is replete, and [even] karmic consciousness has been swept away, [each and every body] is of the very same dharma-realm essence as all the myriad tathāgatas, permanently abiding in ultimacy, and free of any and all differences between ‘this’ and ‘that’.⁴⁹

Zhili’s *zunte* body conveys a sublime portal within the very *finite* “response body” (*yingshen* 應身) of Amitābha Buddha, who is conjured before the visualizing practitioner’s gaze. The dharma-body appears in full to “karmic consciousness” (*yeshi* 業識), and yet folded into and concretized in the one unique *response* (or born) body of Amitābha in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss (*xifang ji le shijie* 西方極樂世界). In the language he had used above, “it’s precisely because a Buddha’s response body has its ground [in the dharma-body]” (*ying ji you ben* 應既有本) that “the born body is equivalent to the dharma-body” (*sheng ji tong fa* 生即同法). Zhili rephrases the same point, now with recourse to the concept of “karmic consciousness” (*yeshi* 業識) from the *Mahāyāna Great Awakening of Faith* 大乘起信論. He circles back, time and time again, all throughout the *Miaozong chao* and *Jiebang shu*, to one passage, wherein the concept of “karmic consciousness” is elaborated.

The passage in question from the *Great Awakening of Faith* introduces a distinction between “two [responsive] functions” (*er yong* 二用) of the Buddha, together with two corresponding consciousnesses that perceive them: “discriminating phenomenal consciousness” (*fenbie shi shi* 分別事識) perceives the “response body” (*yingshen* 應身) of a Buddha; and “karmic consciousness” (*ye shi* 業識) perceives the “recompense body” (*baoshen* 報身) of a Buddha. Practitioners of the Two Vehicles (*ercheng xin suo jian* 二乘心所見) perceive the Buddha’s “response body” (*yingshen* 應身) alone, as if it had transpired “from somewhere beyond” (*cong wai lai* 從外來). But they remain entrenched in “discriminating phenomenal consciousness” (*fenbie shi shi* 分別事識), and so “cling to [the Buddha’s body] in the finite separateness of its material forms” (*qu se fenqi* 取色分齊). The bodhisattva, however, sees things differently. As the *Awakening of Faith* has it,

⁴⁹ [...] 豈得謗云無補處義？[...] 應知別、圓業識見佛，雖是應身，無不同是一身一智。蓋自行果滿，業識已亡，與諸如來同法界體，究竟常住，更無彼此。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p20

[...] the second function is revealed [instead] on the basis of *karmic* consciousness. All bodhisattvas from entry-level up to the stage of ultimate realization, perceive a corresponding *recompense* body. Such a body is adorned with *limitless* material forms (*se* 色), each form unfolding infinite marks (*xiang* 相) in turn, each mark with still yet infinite fine characteristics (*hao* 號). [...] Whatever appears is [just as it is] *boundless* (*wuyou bian* 無有邊), inexhaustible, and gone beyond all marks of finite separateness [with respect to bodily measure and lifespan]. In full accordance with the responsive circumstances, [whatever appears] is [seen] to permanently dwell and persist, ineradicable and inescapable.⁵⁰

The “limitless forms within forms, marks within marks,” etc., belong not to some *other* body than a response body. What becomes perceptible, Zhili thinks, in the *zunte* body, is not some additional body or set of marks, but the unobstructed inter-subsumption of bodies within bodies and marks within marks, i.e. the “recompense body” (*baoshen* 報身). In Zhili’s eyes, these last lines from the *Awakening of Faith* forge an unquestionable link to the signature Tiantai doctrine of “inclusion in the nature” (*xingju* 性具). Whatever body appears with whatever marks, just that body “is seen,” just as it is (however it is), to “permanently dwell and persist” (*changneng zhuchi* 常能住持) ineradicable and inescapable” (*buhui bushi* 不毀不失). Bodies and marks “persist” and “dwell,” not however, in some separate quiescent dharma-nature substrate, but rather precisely *within each other*. Orthodox Tiantai thought returns the nature which includes all bodies and marks—back to these very bodies and marks themselves, (just as it refers questions about *li* back to phenomena, and vice versa); re-cast in the nature, which does not independently subsist them, each body and mark reciprocally includes and is included by all the others in turn, such that not a single one isn’t at once both includer (*neng ju* 能具) and included (*suo ju* 所具) for all other bodies and marks.

Karmic consciousness discloses a series of spontaneous un-differentiations: *this* body is un-differentiated from *that* body, ‘self’ from ‘other’, practitioner from buddha, finitude from infinity. Renyue had set the *zunte* over and against the born body, like a ‘that’ to a contradistinguished ‘this’. For Zhili instead, a Buddha’s born and *zunte* bodies are in one respect the *same* body revealed within increasingly capacious inter-expressive modalities of perception; in the *zunte* excess over Amitābha’s born body, “the same” body comes undone from any conceptual opposition between ‘this’ and ‘that’, ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘practitioner and buddha’. In the

⁵⁰ 二者依於業識，謂諸菩薩從初發意乃至菩薩究竟地心所見者，名為報身。身有無量色，色有無量相，相有無量好。[...] 隨所示現，無有邊，不可窮盡，離分齊相。隨其所應，常能住持，不毀不失。Vol. 32, No. 1666, Scroll 1 [0579b] I’ve translated this passage as I take it Zhili reads it. Here’s how Jorgensen, Lusthaus, Makeham and Strange (2019) alternatively translate the same passage: “The second is based on the karmic consciousness. That is, what is perceived by the minds of bodhisattvas from the initial intention [for awakening] right up to the final bodhisattva level is called the recompense body. This body has countless forms, the forms have countless [major] characteristics, and the characteristics have countless [minor] features. Based on the effects [of karmic action], its abode also has countless kinds of ornamentation, according to whatever form it displays. The [body] itself is boundless, is inexhaustible, is free from the characteristic of boundaries, and accords with whatever it encounters. It is able to be sustained constantly; it neither is destroyed nor disappears” (p105).

language of the *Great Awakening of Faith*, a *zunte* body is seen to be “beyond all marks of finite separateness” (*li fenqi xiang* 離分齊相). Amitābha’s *zunte* body is then firstly, for Zhili, the *same* as his response body; there is no other body that supersedes the first. As he puts it in the *Liaojian Supplement*, “the bodhisattva who avails herself of karmic consciousness perceives not only the recompense [*zunte*] body, but also [*ipso facto*] the response body. [...] every last [response body] (*bibi* 彼彼) is *limitless*, and not a single one of them *isn’t* the *zunte* body.”⁵¹ We can rephrase this with the language from the *Awakening of Faith* passage: recast in the shine of the *zunte*, every last finite body and mark, just as it is, “dwells eternally and persists” (*chang neng zhuchi* 常能住持) in the nature, “un-destroyed and inescapable” (*bu hui bu shi* 不毀不失). The “eternal dwelling” of a response body does *not*, however, supplant its finite aspect and terminable lifespan; the eternal dwelling of Amitābha’s response body is rather paradoxically *coterminous* with this very limit.

The Tiantai conceptual device of “eternal dwelling” (常住)⁵² can, I reckon, be understood within the lineage of non-dual theorization of “constancy” (*chang* 常) and “passing away” (*wang* 往) that began as early (at least in Chinese Madhyamaka) as Seng Zhao’s *Wubuqian lun* 物不遷論 or *Discourse on the Non-shifting of Things*. Seng Zhao had reasoned that “though things may be said to be constant, they do not dwell. [...] and because they do not dwell, though they remain still, they are [nevertheless] permanently going out and passing away (*chang wang* 常往). But while passing away, they do not *shift*.”⁵³ Just so, the delimited life and aspect of Amitābha’s response body are un-effaceably present, we might think, just in “permanently going out and passing away” (*changwang* 常往). The far-flung trace of *this very body’s* abolition and being-gone carries through and permanently dwells in all times and places, ever opening and being opened into the bodies and mentations of limitless sentient beings in limitless lands, pure and impure alike.

The *zunte* body, perceived by karmic consciousness, then stands just as much for the constitutive and ineliminable *otherness* of any body and any mark, i.e. each and every body and mark’s being originally *beyond* itself. As Zhili puts it, when a Bodhisattva perceives a buddha’s body through karmic consciousness, “all [its] finite separations are [seen to go at once] unseparated” (*yiqie fenqi jie wu fenqi* 一切分齊皆無分齊). Zhili’s *zunte* body concretizes the spectral excess of and over the response (or born) body itself—like a parasitic, body-less pseudo-effect that requires another (response) body in (and as) which to dawn. Amitābha’s *zunte* body is thus secondly *other* to (and different from) his response body. The *zunte* is this very perceived, objectal excess-dimension of limitless bodies within bodies, marks within marks—which

⁵¹ 依業識者，不但覩報，亦能見應。[...] 彼彼無邊，無非尊特。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 5 [0224a]

⁵² Zhiyi and Zhanran’s theorizations of the crucial concept of “permanent dwelling” set out from a line in Chapter 2 of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, which states that “this dharma dwells in the dharma-position, and all the characteristics of the world dwell eternally.” 是法住法位，世間相常住。Vol. 9, No. 262, Scroll 1 [0009b] See also Ziporyn (2013) p246.

⁵³ 以言常而不住。[...] 不住。故雖靜而常往。雖靜而常往。故往而弗遷。Vol. 45, No. 1858, Scroll 1 [0151c]

Amitābha’s response body is *seen*, by karmic consciousness, to exude.⁵⁴ The otherness of Amitābha’s *zunte* body likewise gives body to the spontaneous displacement and de-centerment, the *being beyond* of any body and mark (its “limitless overflow” *manyān* 曼衍, to use the *Qiwulun* parlance) into the transversal interface of all bodies and marks contemplating and being contemplated in turn by each other. Each and every body and mark, refracted through karmic consciousness, is a mirror for the condensation (inseparable from an infinite *displacement*) of them all.

The *zunte* body’s “transcendence of all marks of finite separateness” (*li fenqi xiang* 離分齊相) neither leaves Amitābha’s response body intact in its sameness *nor* amounts to a second consistent body *qua* other. As Zhili puts it in the *Liaojian Supplement*, “the material forms displayed by the *zunte* body are free of finite separations, such that precisely the inferior response body emits the majestic radiance [of a recompense-body].”⁵⁵ The *zunte* body’s own “being beyond the marks of finite separateness” (*li fenqi xiang* 離分齊相) is immediately said with respect to the *inferior* [born] body, which appears, recast into its own *zunte* excess, as vast and radiant *as if it were itself* a recompense body. The *zunte* body is “partial” by its nature—and in at least two distinguishable senses: firstly, in the sense that it does not itself amount to a whole body; and secondly, in the sense that any body that begins to secrete this *zunte* surplus is itself rendered “open” and incomplete. It is less than a [full] other, “but not nothing.”⁵⁶ It names the structural correlation, then, between two quantities—a lack and an excess. The *zunte* body, on the one hand, incarnates an excess over the same response body—it is something more than just the “same” body; and yet this surplus over the “same” body correlates to a lack, on the far side, of a fully constituted second body *qua* other.⁵⁷

We can, turning back now to Zhili’s *Jiebang shu* exposition, and with the special concept of “karmic consciousness” in our sights, uncover these shades of otherness implicit in the devotional phenomenology of the visualization practice—and shades as well of a sameness irreducible to the self-identity of a single countable body. Let’s take another look just at the last sentence in Zhili’s remark:

⁵⁴ In the parlance of Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*, the communication and inter-ramification of bodies and marks “replaces the exclusion of predicates” implicit in the coarse perception of *phenomenal consciousness*: “instead of a certain number of predicates being excluded from a thing in virtue of the identity of its concept, each ‘thing’ opens itself up to the infinity of predicates through which it passes, as it loses its center, that is, its identity as concept or as self” (*Logic of Sense* pp174-5).

⁵⁵ 尊特身則色無分齊，劣即堂堂。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 5 [0224c]

⁵⁶ As Lacan says of Democritus’s *den*, “when Democritus tried to designate it ... he says, It is not the *meden* [non-being] that is essential ... but a *den*, which, in Greek, is a coined word. He did not say *hen* [one], let alone *on* [being]. What, then, did he say? He said, answering the question I asked today, that of idealism, Nothing, perhaps? —not perhaps nothing, but not nothing” (Seminar XI, pp63-4).

⁵⁷ Here I have in mind a formulation from Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*: “Its excess always refers to its own lack, and conversely, its lack always refers to its excess. But even these determinations are still relative. For that which is in excess in one case is nothing but an extremely mobile empty place; and that which is lacking in another case is a rapidly moving object, an occupant without a place, always supernumerary and displaced” (p41).

[...] When the fruition of a Buddha's self-practice is replete, and [even] karmic consciousness has been swept away, [each and every body] is of the very same dharma-realm substance as all the myriad Tathāgatas, permanently abiding in ultimacy, and free of any and all differences between 'this' and 'that'.⁵⁸

When Vaidehi sees the *zunte* body through karmic consciousness, she sees this: she sees, in Amitābha's finite response body, the "single body and wisdom of all Buddhas" (*yishen yizhi* 一身一智) which abides permanently (*changzhu* 常住) in the ultimacy of complete "freedom from all differences between self and other, 'this' and 'that'" (*geng wu bici* 更無彼此). And yet she perceives this body, for which self and other, 'this' and 'that' have been "uncoupled from their opposition" (to use the phrase from the *Qiwulun*)—nevertheless at the characteristic distance of the visualization practice; in other words, she perceives the collapse of self and other, 'this' and 'that'—incarnate *in the body of an other* (*bi* 彼), a body and equally an otherness which looms over in front of her. Amitābha's *zunte* body is the object of a particular devotional practice, i.e. the object visualized ninth in the sequence of the *Visualization Sutra*. Vaidehi stands in, on the near side, as a 'this' (*ci* 此) to the 'that' of Amitābha's *zunte* body, on the far side—even though *that* body itself collapses the opposition between all 'thises' and 'thats', 'selves' and 'others'.

Amitābha's *zunte* body, though it is perceived as an other, nevertheless *itself* perceives all other Buddha's bodies as *none other* than *its* own *qua* dharma-body. And also perceives the practitioner's own body and mind visualizing and contemplating *it*—as none other than its own. So when Vaidehi, for instance, sees a *zunte* body in Amitābha's response body opposite her, she nevertheless sees, in that response body *qua* other, the dharma-body in whose gaze the very distinction between self and other, 'this' and 'that' (*bici* 彼此), visualizing subject and visualized Buddha, falters and crashes—what Merleau-Ponty calls the "dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing."⁵⁹ What Vaidehi sees looking back at her, exposed to the spectacular gaze of Amitābha's *zunte* body, is this: the non-otherness of herself from the Buddha.⁶⁰ As she follows her gaze onto the far side, the very distance that posits and maintains the *zunte* body as an object (or an "other" *bi* 彼) over and against her—collapses. A moment of passage is at stake here, and the *zunte* body figures a sort of terminal-stage (or "final boss") other (the other in its pure and empty form), which figures at once the portal for passing beyond *all* differences between self and other, 'this' and 'that'. The karmic consciousness with which

⁵⁸ 自行果滿，業識已亡，與諸如來同法界體，究竟常住，更無彼此。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p20

⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (p.153)

⁶⁰ We may again think here of certain formulations from Merleau-Ponty's experimental essay from the *Visible and the Invisible*, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm": "There is vision [...] when a certain visible [...] turns back upon the whole of the visible [...] of which it is a part, or when suddenly it finds itself *surrounded* by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility [...] which belong[s] properly neither to the body *qua* fact nor to the world *qua* fact—as upon two mirrors facing one another where two indefinite series of images set in one another arise which belong really to neither of the two surfaces, since each is only the rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them" (p139).

Vaidehi had perceived Amitābha's *zunte* body is at this moment, "swept up" into the ultimacy of the dharma-body—what Zhili calls here "the essence of the dharma-realm" (*fajie ti* 法界體).

We'll note that a crucial shift of position occurs midway through the second sentence in the last above Zhili text:

[...] You should understand that, when perceived through [a Bodhisattva's] karmic consciousness (*yeshi* 業識), as characteristic of the *Distinct* (*biejiao* 別教) and *Perfect Teachings* (*yuanjiao* 圓教), a Buddha so perceived, though it remains, to the end, a response body—is not distinct in the slightest from the singular body and awareness [of all Buddhas]. [...]⁶¹

We shift from the near side of the karmic consciousness which perceives, to the far side of "a Buddha so perceived." Vaidehi not only sees Amitābha's *zunte* body but is "seen by [it], exist[s] within it," "emigrate[s] into it," "seduced" and "captivated" by it, so that "the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen."⁶² In other words, we shift from the vantage of the practitioner, peering out and *over* at the Buddha through "karmic consciousness," to the Buddha's dharma-body itself after "karmic consciousness has been swept away" (*yeshi yi wang* 業識已亡). Karmic consciousness, though it perceives the dharma-body of a Buddha (for whom all conceptual oppositions have collapsed), dresses it in the visage of an other, a spectacular visualized object; it's for this reason that karmic consciousness must itself, in the resultant stage of Buddhahood, be left behind. The framing that sustains Vaidehi's desire, the attendant distances implicit in her devotional practice, are finally, in the resultant stage of Buddhahood, traversed and re-positing as fantasmatic presuppositions of the present moment.

And yet the *zunte* body, in all its otherness, is irreducibly what *inaugurates* this passage. Vaidehi sees, in the Buddha *qua* other, a seeing of her as *non*-other. And yet she can come to see herself as non-other only by recourse to a Buddha that remains irreducibly other than her seeing of it. In other words, there can be no short-circuiting of the interface of alterity which delivers a perception, through the portal of a *zunte* body, of the dharma-body expressed in and *as* this particular, concretized response-body. And yet it would be more accurate still to say that the passage originates, neither in the *zunte* body *qua* other, nor in the visualizing subject *simpliciter*, who assumes her own position at a constitutive remove from the other. The passage originates instead right in their tenuous intersection, at the site of which the *prima facie* isolated subjectivity merges and *passes* over—into the thoroughfare-current of selves and others represented on the far side of the dharma-body *qua* object (which remains, up to a certain point, *encrusted* with the constitutive otherness of a *zunte* body).

Implicit in Zhili's *zunte* body is an alternative configuration, not just between a 'this' and 'that', as Renyue had conceived the relation between Amitābha's response body and Lushena's *zunte* body; instead a single *zunte* body incarnates the paradoxical "mutual inclusion" (*hujū* 互

⁶¹ 應知別、圓業識見佛，雖是應身，無不同是一身一智。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p21

⁶² Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (p139)

具) of two different configurations:⁶³ the first configuration corresponds to the state, as the *Qiwulun* has it, in which there “*is indeed* a ‘this’ as opposed to a ‘that’” (*guoqie you bishi* 果且有彼是)—i.e. as in the otherness of Amitābha’s *zunte* body; and the second configuration corresponds to a state in which “there is, after all, *no* ‘this’ as opposed to ‘that’” (*guoqie wu bishi* 果且無彼是)—just as the dharma-body which shines through in the *zunte* stands to no body as an other to its own. And yet, we’ll note that the accomplished passage from the former state, i.e. ‘there *is* a this and that’, to the latter, ‘there is *no* this and that’—does not move in a straight line from the former to the latter state, as if these two states (i.e. there either *is* or otherwise *is not* a ‘this’ and ‘that’) were themselves taken to be a definitive ‘this’ and ‘that’, in their own right. Instead, the passage in question bends back around instead, from the resultant latter state of ‘there is no this and ‘that’, into full, seamless identity with the *former* state, i.e. ‘there is a this and that’. In the resultant stage, ‘thises’ and ‘thats’ are not left behind, or posited as mere provisional stepping stones on the way to some respite *independently* free from all ‘thises’ and ‘thats’. The *zunte* body purveys, instead, a paradoxical non-duality or continuity in discontinuity between these two states.

The *Qiwulun* had clarified a set of unsurpassable coordinates for this thought of “paradox” (*diaogui sixiang* 弔詭思想). The *zunte* body, in Zhili’s hands, can be made intelligible, I’m claiming, as a transformation of this thought, i.e. of the Middle (*zhong* 中) between these two states: ‘There being a this and that’ and ‘there being no this and that’—refer to two reversible and mutually inter-expressive aspects of this realization: that ‘this’ and ‘that’ are *already* gone from themselves, just as they are. Each of ‘this’ and ‘that’, left to itself, goes forth into their shared limit for its ground—and yet, once it has gotten there, finds it has been dispossessed of any self-standing consistency (independent of its other). In the *zunte* body, as Zhili put it above, “all [such] finite separations are [seen to go at once] unseparated” (*yiqie fenqi jie wu fenqi* 一切分齊皆無分齊). And yet the *zunte* body equally *circles back* from the resultant state of non-difference to reconcile with the former difference as an unsurpassable horizon. Zhili, unlike Renyue, is not left with any independently discernible unitary Lushena-body, beyond all differences between ‘this’ and ‘that’ body. Amitābha’s *zunte* body purveys the dharma-body, which is to say, concretes the entirety of the dharma-realm, into his ownmost 84,000 marks, which continue as ever to differentiate his body from other such bodies. Amitābha’s *zunte* body purveys a freedom from all selves and others, in the unsublatable mold of an other, an externally visualized object with a set of discrete marks—this will be, for instance, what differentiates it from a dharma-body simpliciter (more on this to come).

The *zunte* body inaugurates a passage beyond all ‘thises’ and ‘thats’, selves and others, but paradoxically only by way of this built-in confrontation with an *other*, perceived in its absolute *otherness*. In this passage, Vaidehi stands to pass, *by means* of the very distance between subject and object constitutive of the practice of visualization, *beyond* the same distance

⁶³ My gratitude to Professor Ziporyn for helping me to clarify this point.

—the *zunte* body *qua* other drawing Vaidehi on, to merge into the Zhuangzian pivot-locus⁶⁴ around which all selves and others, ‘thises’ and ‘thats’ go forth into and from one another, “uncoupled from their opposition to one another” (*bishi mode qi ou* 彼是莫得其偶). This dual configuration of otherness and (as?) its built-in short-circuiting puts flesh on the bones of the undecidability we elaborated above with respect to whether the *zunte* body is the ‘same as’ or ‘different from’ the response body. It also lays out the basic terrain within which we can understand the next crucial bit from Zhili’s statement:

[...] When the *Treatise on Summoning Avalokiteśvara* refers to the born body as ‘infinite-finite’, this addresses the [lesser] capacities of sentient beings [of the *Tripitaka* (*zang jiao* 藏教) and *Common Teachings* (*tong jiao* 通教)]. But when [the *Treatise*] sheds light on [the dharma-body] as ‘infinite-infinite’, this refers instead to [those who have realized] that “this mind [both] *makes* the Buddha; *and* this mind *is* [or *will have been*] the Buddha.” This is precisely the capacity corresponding to the revelation of [Amitābha’s] *zunte* body within the present [*Visualization*] *Sutra*. Even if Amitābha is *indeed* destined to be succeeded by Guanyin, nirvana is always [without exception] equally a ceasing *and* a non-ceasing. [...] This [inextricable simultaneity of cessation and non-cessation] is like what is spoken of in the *Nirvana Sutra* as [...] the two birds [from the *Nirvana Sutra*] that [both roost and] fly together.⁶⁵

There’s a great deal to unpack in this especially dense and telling stretch of Zhili’s response. Here we finally get answers to several important questions: why does Zhili stray from what Renyue rightly points out is the clear textual precedent in Zhiyi’s commentaries for identifying Amitābha’s body with the measure ‘infinite-finite’, insisting instead that Amitābha’s body (in the *Visualization Sutra*) is ‘infinite-infinite’?; relatedly, what sort of person, endowed with what powers, perceives a *zunte*, rather than just a born or response body?; and lastly, how will Zhili square Amitābha’s alleged ‘infinite-infinite’ measure with his “destined succession” (*buchu* 補處) and hence non-negotiable term-limit? In order to make Zhili’s answers to these questions intelligible, we’ll first need to carefully expand upon two tricky doctrinal figures that do much of Zhili’s work for him: the first figure is drawn straight from the *Visualization Sutra*, wherein the practitioner’s mind is said both to “*make*” (*zuo* 作) and to “*be*” (*shi* 是) the Buddha so made; the second is a parable about the two birds from the *Nirvana Sutra*, who *like* the “two

⁶⁴ I’m here referencing another moment from the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論: “When ‘this’ and ‘that’ are no longer coupled as opposites—that is called the Course as Axis (*daoshu* 道樞), the axis of all courses. When this axis finds its place in the center, it responds to all the endless things it confronts, thwarted by none.”

Ziporyn (2009) p12 彼是莫得其偶，謂之道樞。樞始得其環中，以應無窮。ZZJS p59

⁶⁵ 《請觀音疏》約有量無量為生身者，被此機也。明無量無量被，是心作佛，是心是佛，今經所顯尊特之機也。縱有補處，滅而非滅，同於[...]《大經》說，不變涅槃，二鳥雙游也。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p22 BZ FLAG

functions” (*eryong* 二用), i.e. “permanent” (*chang* 常) and “impermanent” (*wuchang* 無常), “go forth” ever “in tandem” (共俱) with one another.

(7) Making the Buddha She Will Have Been

We’re already well-situated from the immediate foregoing to make sense of this first figure:

“...When [the *Treatise*] sheds light on [the dharma-body] as ‘infinite-infinite’, this refers to [those who have realized] that “this [same] mind [both] *makes* the Buddha—and *is* [or *will have been*] the Buddha [so made].” This is precisely the capacity corresponding to the revelation of [Amitābha’s] *zunte* body within the present [*Visualization*] *Sutra*...”⁶⁶

Let’s re-set the scene that unfolds in the *Visualization Sutra*. A single ambiguous distance yawns between the Vaidehi and the visualized body of Amitābha Buddha. It at once separates her *prima facie* from Amitābha’s *zunte* body, beckons her on; and yet the same distance, once posited and traversed, collapses. This moment of collapse triggers a recoil from the far side which retroactivates the non-duality between Vaidehi on the near side and the visualized body of Amitābha Buddha, on the far side. This *accomplished* non-dual identity, that is to say, is retroactively seen to *have been* in effect from the outset. Vaidehi first conjures before her mind’s eye, in the otherness of the *zunte* body, a ‘that’ over and against her own presently situated ‘this’. In other words, and with language Zhili pulls straight from the text of the *Visualization Sutra*,⁶⁷ “this mind *makes* the Buddha” (*shixin zuo fo* 是心作佛).

And yet, this other-body “made” (i.e. envisioned), opens up passage across the same distance, once that distance has been traversed, into the characteristic freedom of the dharma-body, in which no ‘this’ or ‘that’, ‘self’ or ‘other’ obtain to the relation of two unproblematically demarcated determinations. No ‘this mind’ visualizing, for instance, set over and against *that* body so visualized, can obtain. This distance is irrevocably posited for the sake of traversing it to the point of collapse. As the *Visualization Sutra* puts it, Vaidehi sees that “this mind is [or will have been] the Buddha [so made]” (*shixin shi fo* 是心是佛). Zhili tells us here, as pointedly as he ever will, that “the revelation of [Amitābha’s] *zunte* body within the present [*Visualization*]

⁶⁶ 明無量無量被，是心作佛，是心是佛，今經所顯尊特之機也。Ibid.

⁶⁷ This proposition, with its enigmatic *duplicity*, lies at the heart of what Zhili finds so generative in thinking through the devotional practice detailed in the *Visualization Sutra*—what qualifies it, he thinks, to the highest class (i.e. the Integrated Teaching, *yuan jiao* 圓教) of the Tiantai teachings, right alongside the *Lotus* and *Nirvana Sutras*. As the text of the *Visualization Sutra* puts it, “because the myriad tathāgatas are the body of the dharma-realm (*fajie shen* 法界身), they enter universally into the minds and thoughts of sentient beings. For this reason, when, in your mind, you are given to the thought of the Buddha, this very mind is precisely identical to that Buddha’s thirty-two marks, and eighty fine characteristics. In this moment, your mind *makes* the Buddha. And your mind *is* the Buddha [so made].” 諸佛如來是法界身。遍入一切眾生心想中。是故汝等心想佛時。是心即是三十二相八十隨形好。是心作佛。是心是佛。Vol 12, No. 365, Scroll 1 [0343a]

Sutra” corresponds to precisely *this* two-way capacity, i.e. both to “make” the Buddha and “to be [or have been]” the Buddha so made. And yet, Zhili complicates the duality between these two moments—corresponding roughly to “acquired” and “original”⁶⁸ enlightenment, respectively—within the systematic framework of the Tiantai Three Truths.

In the *Miaozong chao*, Zhili reimagines the *second* moment, i.e. of “this mind’s being the Buddha” so made (*shixin shi fo* 是心是佛), on analogy not to Ultimate Truth, but rather to the *Third* of Three Truths (*sandi* 三諦), i.e. the Truth of the Middle (*zhongdi* 中諦). At the (first) level of Conventional Truth (*jiadi* 假諦), “this mind makes the Buddha” and thus cannot *already have been* the Buddha so made. In this case, a real transition is effected from a prior moment of non-identity to a subsequent, resultative state of identity. In the language of the *Great Awakening of Faith*, “enlightenment” comes to be “acquired” (*shijue* 始覺). Conventional Truth “posits” (*li* 立) the distance between Vaidehi and the Buddha she brings about—such that she can traverse this distance, and pass over onto the Buddha’s side. Conversely, at the (second) level of Ultimate Truth or Emptiness (*kongdi* 空諦), “this mind already *is* the Buddha,” without depending whatsoever on being “made to be so.” Inasmuch as ‘this mind’ (*shixin* 是心) and the Buddha are both a single self-same, indivisible Emptiness from the outset, no change can possibly occur

⁶⁸ For instance, as Ruben Habito puts it in his essay from *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (1997), “Hongaku and Japan’s Ethnocentrism,” “the doctrine of original enlightenment “expressed in its most extreme form is an affirmation of *this* ordinary human being *as such*, full of desires and delusions and imperfects, as nothing less than the perfection of Buddhahood itself” (Hubbard, et al. 376). Such a commitment to the original enlightenment of all things “just as they are” is typically thought to relegate any “gradualist” picture of “acquired enlightenment,” as the “culmination” of a linear “process of cultivation” (ibid. 174) to the status of a “provisional, inferior, and ultimately delusive” teaching. Enlightenment has already been attained from the outset, without us having to do anything about it. According to thinkers belonging to the 20th-century Japanese Critical Buddhism 批判佛教 movement like Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shiro, original enlightenment claims like these are the very proverbial weeds to be pruned from the bodhi tree; to say of all things that they participate, vis-a-vis Buddha-nature, in an original enlightenment—is to re-import, from indigenous Chinese sources, non-Buddhist “substantialist heterodoxies” into the critical basis of non-self (*anātman*) and dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which alone constitutes the true essence of Buddhism (ibid. 164). To say of enlightenment that it is so of itself is precisely to construe it along the lines of a True Self exempted from the exceptionless principle of the dependent co-arising of all phenomena. There is a clear concern on the part of some contemporary Tiantai scholars like Paul Swanson and Hans-Rudolf Kantor to inoculate orthodox Tiantai doctrine against the Critical Buddhist charge to which original enlightenment claims of the second, paradoxical equivalence type above are thought to be exposed. If we are willing to go along with the Critical Buddhists’ assessments of what is and is not (proper) Buddhism, then the burden falls on Tiantai scholars to prove that Tiantai thought is something *other* than what it looks to be—namely, the very spitting image of the weeds to be pruned from the bodhi tree. But, at least for Zhili, as I have argued elsewhere, “original enlightenment” is “identical to” (*ji* 即) and ultimately indistinguishable from “acquired enlightenment” (*shijue* 始覺). The mind never “acquires” enlightenment in the present moment; rather the mind is, at the precise moment the Buddha “enters” (*ru* 入) and not any sooner, “made” (*zuo* 作) always to “have been” (*shi* 是) the Buddha from the outset. Armed with the grammar of the retrograde leap from the modality of ‘not-yet’ to ‘always-already’ enlightened, we find ourselves in position to recuperate the philosophical defensibility of original enlightenment claims of the paradoxical equivalence sort, i.e. in and through the full identity *sive* overlap (*ji* 即) between original (*ben* 本) and acquired (*shi* 始) enlightenment(s).

from an imagined prior state of non-identity to a resultative state of identity. In other words, Ultimate Truth “negates” (*po* 破) any distance that could separate ‘this mind’ from the Buddha. Interestingly enough, critiques of Tiantai “Sudden Enlightenment” doctrine tend to assume that Tiantai thinkers are themselves claiming something like this—that because your mind is already “originally enlightened” (*benjue* 本覺),⁶⁹ no practice is required to advance on the path toward Buddhahood.

But Tiantai Buddhist thinkers famously articulate a Third Truth in the shifting locus of the “Middle” (*zhong* 中) *qua* “Identity” (*xiangji* 相即) of and interpenetration between the first Two Truths (*erdi* 二諦). What this amounts to for Zhili in the *Miaozong chao*, is this: each of the Two Truths, i.e. *both* the “positing” (*li* 立) *and* the “negation” of the distance between Vaidehi and the visualized Buddha-object, each considered in its own right as a ‘this’ to a ‘that’ or a ‘that’ to a ‘this’, are “alike re-grouped together under the first proposition that the mind ‘makes’ the Buddha” (*jie mingwei zuo* 皆名為作). What sense can we make of this counter-intuitive re-grouping? How, especially, should we make sense of Zhili’s subordination of the Contemplation of Emptiness and its corresponding negation of any distance between ‘this mind’ and the Buddha-object, to the *opposite* proposition that “this mind *makes* the Buddha”? In accordance with the “Two Contemplations of Provisionality and Emptiness” (*kong jia erguan* 空假二觀), the distance between practitioner and Buddha is “either posited” or otherwise “negated,” (*ruopo ruoli* 若破若立).⁷⁰ If Conventional Truth posits and traverses this distance, the Truth of Emptiness negates that any such distance could ever separate Emptiness from itself. But in either case, whether the distance between ‘this mind’ and the visualized Buddha-object is “posited” or otherwise “negated,” a single operation is *brought into effect* with respect to this distance. And whichever of these two operations, “positing” or “negation” is brought into effect on the distance in question, the other *ipso facto* cannot be. It’s *this* dimension, I take it, of shared mutual incompatibility or in-compossibility, that relegates both propositions, i.e. that ‘this mind’ either ‘makes’ or otherwise just ‘is’ or ‘already was’ the Buddha, to a subordinate level.

The proposition that “the mind *is* [or will have been] the Buddha” refers to a further all-important *third* step, corresponding to the Third Truth, i.e. the “Truth of the Middle” (*zhongdi* 中諦). The “Middle” between these two operations corresponds to *a* paradoxical retroactive vector; she must “*make*” the Buddha before she *will have been* this Buddha from the outset! These two operations, “making” and “being” (the same distance *either* “posited” (*ruoli* 若立) *or* “negated” (*ruopo* 若破))—are therein rendered mutually *compossible*; each is revealed as a moment of the other. As Zhili himself puts it, “acquired and original enlightenment vanishingly merge into one another” (*shiben xiangming* 始本相冥). We can think of this, once again, on analogy to the *Qiwu lun*, for which all things are “free of formation and destruction” (*wu cheng yu hui* 無成與毀) precisely when formation and destruction (or ‘positing’ and ‘negation’) “*themselves* open into

⁶⁹ For a classic discussion (in modern Anglo-American buddhology) of “sudden enlightenment” doctrines in East Asian Buddhism, see Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (2003).

⁷⁰ 以若破若立，皆名為作，空假二觀也。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 4 [0221c]

one another, connecting to form a oneness” (*fu tong wei yi* 復通為一). Zhili reads the proposition that “this mind *is* [or *will have been*] the Buddha” in a homologous turn, to suggest as much: the “contemplation of the Middle Way” (*zhongdao guan* 中道觀) contracts a distance between practitioner and Buddha which “neither negates nor posits” (*bupo buli* 不破不立) alone, but which instead posits *qua* negating and negates *qua* positing. These two operations, the positing and negation of the same distance, in Zhuangzi’s words, “*themselves* open into one another, connecting to form a oneness” (*tong weiyi* 通為一).

Vaidehi, Zhili says, “both ‘makes’ (*zuo* 作) and ‘is [i.e. will have been]’ (*shi* 是) [the Buddha so made] in the wondrous contemplation of a *single* [deluded] moment of thought” (*yu yinian miaoguan zuoshi* 於一念妙觀作是.) Zhili approaches the Middle between “making” (*zuo* 作) and “being” (*shi* 是) the Buddha—first in one direction, then in the other. Firstly, “the same mind that is ‘made’ to be [the Buddha]—‘is’ or ‘will have been’ [the same Buddha]” (*ji zuo er shi* 即作而是). I have elsewhere employed the paradoxical logic of the future perfect tense as a heuristic for understanding Zhili’s systematization of these two sentences from the *Visualization Sutra*. The retroactive vector, I’ve argued, is paramount: only once she “makes” or conjures Amitābha’s *zunte* body, *will* Vaidehi *have been* precisely that body so conjured. If we do not keep this in mind, the proposition that “the same mind that is ‘made’ to be [the Buddha]—‘is’ [the Buddha]”—is liable to being misread to suggest that the otherness of Amitābha’s *zunte* body (and the distance posited between them) *qua* means, are ultimately subordinated to some extrinsic end of sameness.

But crucially, Zhili also reverses the direction of dependency between means and end when he claims, conversely, that “the same mind that ‘is’ or ‘will have been’ [the Buddha] is ‘made to be or have been’ so” (*ji shi er zuo* 即是而作). This should not lead us to think, however, that “this mind’s ‘making’ the Buddha,” this ostensible event, simply does *not* happen at all. Something nevertheless *changes*, to be sure; Vaidehi comes to see that she will always *have been* identical to the Buddha she has now made, the ‘other’ conjured in visualization. Cast back through the gaze of the dharma-body on the far side, what appears to have just occurred, i.e. the event of Amitābha’s *zunte* body being “made” (*zuo* 作) to be, i.e. conjured in the visualization, is retroactively seen “not” to have been “made” to be so (*wuzuo* 無作). Vaidehi will only have already been (*shi* 是) non-dual with the Buddha from the outset *if* Vaidehi comes to “make” (*zuo* 作) it so! Vaidehi’s mind does not just ‘make’ (*zuo* 作) the Buddha; rather, it is made, at this moment—and *not before*—always to *have been* (*shi* 是) the Buddha. So the truth value of the proposition “Vaidehi’s mind is the Buddha” paradoxically hangs on the moment in which the proposition is stated.⁷¹ The “spontaneous” or literally “unmade” (*wuzuo* 無作), original collapse of the distance between Vaidehi and Amitābha, hangs, for its very *originality*,

⁷¹ Here I roughly follow formulations of this paradoxical “future perfect” tense like this one from *Mark of the Sacred*: “An object O possesses the property P until time t; after t, it is not only the case that the object O no longer has the property P, but also that O never had P. In that case the truth value of the proposition “The object O has the property P at instant t” would depend on the moment when the proposition is stated” (Dupuy 251).

on Vaidehi's contingent *positing* of the distance between them. Had Vaidehi not assumed the requisite distance between, and *ipso facto* her own separateness from—Amitābha's *zunte* body *qua* other, she could never have come to be non-dual with him from the outset. In contrast to either of the Two Truths of Conventionality or Emptiness—in contrast both to the proposition that 'this mind makes the Buddha' *and* that 'this mind is [or already was] the Buddha' (without having had to be made so), the Truth of the Middle neither effects a transition *qua* change of state from the non-identity to the identity of mind and Buddha *nor* denies that such a transition could in fact occur. The Middle indexes instead a crypto-transition from a conventional framework within which a change of state remains to be effected, to the retroaction of the resultative moment of this same distance once traversed, into the indefinite past.

The Middle is this ambiguous distance the positing and negating of which both "connect up to form a oneness" (*tong wei yi* 通為一). As Zhili puts it in the *Miaozong chao*, when we say "[this mind's] 'is' [the Buddha], we name the Middle identical to Emptiness and Provisional Positing, whereby [...] all obstructions are *in their entirety* [already] identical to the intrinsic powers of virtuosity" that surmount these same obstacles.⁷² We could say, along these lines, that the same distance between them, taken precisely as an "obstacle" (障 *zhang*) to their union is, "in its entirety, identical to" the "intrinsic power of virtuosity" (*de* 德) by which it is rendered inoperative. Peering back at herself through the gaze of the dharma-body, which shines through in the *zunte* excess over Amitābha's finite-response body, she sees *not just* that the once posited and traversed distance is no longer operative; she sees furthermore that *the same distance* which she had imagined *separated* her from Amitābha's *zunte* body—had all along figured, precisely as *illusorily imagined*, the locus of their most intimate—or even better, *ex-timate*⁷³—coincidence.

⁷² 即空假之中名是，則 [...] 全障即德。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 4 [0220c]

⁷³ See Bou Ali and Singh's recent collection of essays on the topic of "extimacy." As they put it in their introduction, "extimacy" (*extimité*) is "a neologism Jacques Lacan coined in 1960 but mentions no more than three or four times in his entire oeuvre. It describes an intimate exteriority, or, as Lacan himself puts it, 'the central place, as the intimate exteriority or 'extimacy,' that is the Thing . . .' Drawing on Freud, Lacan articulates extimacy as the "Thing" (*das Ding*), which designates "the excluded interior," or what is "excluded in the interior." In this sense, Lacan introduced the term 'extimacy' to describe a topological zone of unconscious formations that disrupts the binaries inside/outside, essence/appearance, subject/object" (p3).

The distance between them can no longer fulfill its strictly partitive function, i.e. fully and ambiguously separate the two parties between which it spans.⁷⁴

(8) Two Birds and a Beetle

Zhili avails of a second doctrinal figure to exonerate himself from Renyue's charge: the parable of the "two birds" (*erniao* 二鳥) from the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (Ch: *Dasheng daban niepan jing* 大乘大般涅槃經).⁷⁵ As the first great Southern Song Zhili apologist and patriarch, Keguan, puts it, "though each of the two schools (*liangjia* 兩家) [i.e. Zhili and Renyue's] gives its own reading of the two functions of impermanence and permanence *vis-a-vis* the two birds who go about in tandem, these two readings remain as impenetrable to one another as an arrow to stone. And yet nevertheless, each draws upon [these two birds], and puts them to work in service of what he himself sees in them." Where Renyue, as Keguan puts it, "seizes upon the difference between the two functions alone, and thus loses sight of their original paradoxical identity,"⁷⁶ Zhili's operative stroke instead re-incorporates 'permanence' (*chang* 常) and 'impermanence' (*wuchang* 無常) into the two extremities of an oscillating, bifid configuration. Nirvana is neither a ceasing nor a non-ceasing, but is both, each *in* and *as* the other:

"...Even if Amitābha is indeed 'destined to be succeeded' by Guanyin, nirvana is always [without exception] equally a ceasing *and* a non-ceasing. [...] This [inextricable simultaneity of cessation and non-cessation] is like what is spoken of in the *Nirvana Sutra* as the *true* permanence, like the two birds [from the *Nirvana Sutra*] that go forth [always] in tandem."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ The emphasis of Zhili's exposition in the *Miaozong chao* could be thought to fall on a yet further level of paradoxical equivalence. The "positing" and "negating" or "traversing and collapsing" which are seen to open into their middle—are in fact *no different from* each of these two functions conceived in mutual exclusivity of one another. This, I would contend, is where the Tiantai dialectic of non-duality advances beyond the insurmountable deadlock of Seng Zhao's half-digested Zhuangzian Madhyamaka. Zhili hangs tight to Zhiyi's all-important litmus test, from the *Fahua xuanyi*, for the characteristic Integrated Teaching "non-exclusive middle" (*budan zhong* 不但中) between two conceptual opposites, according to which the "Middle is nowhere outside the two extremes [of which it is the middle]" (*ji bian er zhong* 即邊而中). Once the aspect of the middle between positing and negating, traversal and collapse—has dawned, each of these on its own, imagined as an independent function, is seen, *just as it is*, to have been paradoxically identical from the outset, to its own being-towards-the-Middle. This is then the final level of paradoxical equivalence: these two functions (positing, negating; traversing, collapsing) taken precisely as independent from and mutually exclusive of each other, i.e. in the entirety of their obstruction of the Middle, are exhaustively constitutive, in just this irreducible tension and antagonism, of the Middle which breaks spontaneously out from their midst.

⁷⁵ Henceforth referred to in abbreviated form as simply the *Nirvana Sutra*

⁷⁶ 兩家雖建立。如矢石相違。然無不引而用之者。良由兩家所見。不同淨覺但取分別而說。全失二用相即。X57n0956 p4

⁷⁷ 縱有補處，滅而非滅，同於[...]《大經》說，不變涅槃，二鳥雙游也。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p22

The *Nirvana Sutra* tells of a pair of birds, a drake and a hen mandarin duck (a species once believed to couple for life). These two “go in tandem, whether flying or roosting” (*you zhi gongju* 遊止共俱) and “are never” for so much as a moment “parted from one another” (*buxiang sheli* 不相捨離). The *Sutra* goes on to claim that “in just the same way, [the three marks of existence, i.e.] suffering, impermanence, and non-self are never parted from [their conceptual opposites, i.e. bliss, permanence, and self.]”⁷⁸ The *Sutra* tells us, a little ways on, that “the Buddha-dharma” always “moves in tandem” (*gongxing* 共行), “just like these two birds.”⁷⁹ The permanence and impermanence of the Buddha-dharma, like our two birds, both fly and roost in tandem. As Wu Zhongwei convincingly argues that the *Nirvana Sutra* itself suggests something likely far less radical than any of the Tiantai exegetes will take it to mean; i.e. what the *Sutra* means when it claims that the “Buddha-dharma includes both permanence and impermanence,” i.e. is that it comprehends both the “permanence” of his residence in ultimate reality, as well as the “impermanence” of the skillful means he deploys for the sake of liberating sentient beings.⁸⁰ And yet all of this, because it “is spoken of only with respect to the *tathagata*’s already-realized realm of liberation,” thus “does not directly pertain to sentient beings.”⁸¹ On the other hand, Zhili *will happen* in fact to be making a point about the Buddha-dharma in particular. With these two birds in hand, and the non-duality they represent between “ceasing” and “unceasing” in *Nirvana*, Zhili has his rebuttal to Renyue. Of course, Zhili agrees, Amitābha is destined for extinction. But how, he asks, could that mean that Amitābha will not permanently dwell, unceasing, in this very passing away? Amitābha Buddha, we’ll see, does not merely *cease*, once and for all, in the foretold event of his nirvana and succession—his nirvana will be instead “not-two” (*bu er* 不二) with respect to “ceasing” (*mie* 滅) and “unceasing” (*fei mie* 非滅).⁸²

And yet, elsewhere, a series of Tiantai exegetes (Zhili included) significantly expanded the scope of the non-duality at stake in the birds’ parable beyond the realm of a realized Buddha. From the hands of Zhiyi’s great scribe and successor, Guanding, the birds passed through into the Northern Song controversies presently under discussion. They carried onward into the Southern Song, wherein Zhili’s successors and apologists sought not only to vindicate the “original meaning” of “mutual identity” (*xiangji* 相即), but also concomitantly to exorcise the specter of

⁷⁸ 是苦、無常、無我等法，亦復如是，不得相離。Vol. 12, No. 347, Scroll 8 [0414b] The bracketed portion represents the Tiantai interpretative gloss from Guanding onwards, but the *Sutra*’s literal meaning allows for other interpretations, e.g., merely that suffering, non-self and impermanence are themselves alone like the two birds.

⁷⁹ 佛法猶如鴛鴦共行。是迦隣提及鴛鴦鳥。Vol. 12, No. 347, Scroll 8 [0415b]

⁸⁰ 涅槃经文本原初意义的涅槃双游义凸显的是：佛法具常、无常，常为真实，无常则为方便。Wu (2007) p196

⁸¹ 这里所讲的涅槃双游义主要是针对已达解脱境界的如来而言，并未正面涉及众生。Ibid.

⁸² The same point is also put from the front end of a life, rather than just the back. What is said of “ceasing” and “unceasing” can just as well be said of “birth” and “non-birth.” The *Nirvana Sutra*, echoing claims made in the Lotus Sutra, in fact directly tells us just as much: “though he may undergo birth, in actuality no birth takes place—and this is why I call the Tathagata a permanently abiding dharma, just like the two mandarin ducks [who go about always in tandem].” 雖現受生，而實無生，是故如來名常住法，如迦隣提、鴛鴦等鳥。Vol. 12, No. 347, Scroll 8 [0416a]

Renyue’s heresies from their school. Each successive generation of Tiantai exegetes of the Nirvana Sutra, both before and after Zhili and Renyue, has flown off into fresh theoretical fancies to articulate the “non-duality” (*bu er* 不二) of these two birds. This passage is one of a few oft-mentioned examples of an Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) doctrine from the Nirvana Sutra; the Tiantai thinkers tend to relegate most other parts of the text to the penultimate Separate Teaching (*biejiao* 別教). So naturally, the question, “what about these birds, exactly, is emblematic of the Integrated Teaching?”—becomes fiercely contested terrain on which the most paradoxical strands of Tiantai thought, together with all the most powerful resistances thereto, are together given free reign. A full treatment of this passage and its contentious reception through the ages is beyond the scope of the present discussion. But with a forward-facing eye to Renyue and Zhili’s intervention, we can nevertheless train our sights on one thread in particular.

Guanding, in his *Commentary to the Nirvana Sutra*, initiates the thread when he asks incredulously, “how could it *not* be that,” not only the Buddha-dharma, but also “birth-and-death (i.e. samsara) equally includes both impermanence and permanence?”⁸³ The non-duality of the two birds, and the “two functions” (*eryong* 二用) of impermanence and permanence which they represent, obviously cannot be, given the conceptual demands of *non-duality*, sequestered on the upper of two sides, predicated of the Buddha’s *nirvana* and *not* equally of sentient beings’ birth-and-death. As he puts it, “were the two birds to move in tandem *only* on high [in nirvana], and not equally down below [in samsara], then the meaning of ‘to go about in tandem’ (*shuangyou* 雙游) could not be accomplished.”⁸⁴ When we speak of the two birds “going forth in tandem,” we must instead say that “birth-and-death (i.e. samsara) inherently includes both permanence and impermanence. Just the same as Nirvana. Whether down below or up above, [these two functions of permanence and impermanence] both fly and roost [in tandem] [...].”⁸⁵

Guanding here subtly shifts the discussion from the so-called “two functions” of “impermanence” and “permanence,” into the arch-proxy framework of the Two Truths, Conventional and Ultimate. When Guanding suddenly tells us that the Two Truths are “identical to” (*ji* 即) the Middle (*zhong* 中), which is in turn “identical to” (*ji* 即) the Two Truths—he is setting the stage to lead us beyond the “conceivable” (*kesiyi* 可思議) intra-metaphorical valence of the two birds’ (and two functions’) inseparability which still, at least to my eye, predominates in the *Sutra* text. Zhili will pick up and work through again with Renyue what he takes Guanding

⁸³ 豈非生死中具常無常。Vol. 38, No. 1767, Scroll 12 [0111a]

⁸⁴ 假令二鳥。[...] 遊高不遊下。雙遊不成。Vol. 38, No. 1767, Scroll 12 [0110c]

⁸⁵ 今言双游者，生死具常、无常，涅槃亦尔。在下在高，双飞双息 [...]。二谛即中，中即二谛。非二中而二中，是则双游义成 [...]。Guanding goes on: ... [and thus] the Two Truths are identical to their Middle, and the Middle identical to the Two Truths. [The Two Truths] are neither a fully constituted two, nor [reducible to any separate] Middle; and yet they are [nevertheless *irreducibly*] two [in such a way that they are nevertheless laid open to their shared] Middle. In this way, the meaning of [the two birds’] ‘going about in tandem’ is accomplished.” 二谛即中，中即二谛。非二中而二中，是则双游义成 [...]。

to be suggesting here, however abstractly: on analogy to the Two Truths and their Middle *qua* mutual identity (*xiangji* 相即) and inherent inter-inclusion (*huju* 互具), the two functions of impermanence and permanence are not *themselves* two unproblematically demarcated figures that would so much as stand to be externally brought together in union. The two functions of impermanence and permanence are instead, like Guanding’s Two Truths, neither an unproblematically demarcated two; nor are they reducible to any separate middle (*fei erzhong* 非二中). And yet this non-relation between the two functions of impermanence and permanence, together with the lack of any *separate* unity to ground them in, does not cancel out their irreducible two-ness *qua* split; and this unsublatable antagonistic two-ness *qua* split, that is *not* a properly constituted two in its own right, is coterminous with a “non-exclusive middle” (*budan zhong* 不但中) that just concretizes their mutual identity (*xiangji* 相即) and inherent inter-inclusion (*huju* 互具) (*er er zhong* 而二中).]

Guanding, first extrapolates his teacher Zhiyi’s theory of “inherence of evil in the nature” (*xing* 性惡) into fresh exegetical territory. Zhiyi had taught that even the *icchantica*, i.e. this most incorrigible of unbelievers,⁸⁶ “is not severed from good in the nature” (*bu duan xing shan* 不斷性善) just as the Buddha “does not sever evil in the nature” (*bu duan xing* 不斷性惡).⁸⁷ Guanding now claims, on analogy, that ordinary deluded sentient beings and the Buddha purvey *both* functions, impermanence and permanence. Whether above or below, impermanence and permanence go un-parted from one another (*buxiang sheli* 不相捨離) from beginning to end. The deluded sentient being is just as permanent as the Buddha; and the Buddha is just as impermanent as the deluded sentient being.

The emphasis for Zhili and his apologists falls, however, on a yet subtler dimension only implicit (at best) in Guanding’s reading. Both functions, i.e. impermanence and permanence, are, with Zhili, rendered fully autonomous and replete, each on its own side, whether in nirvana on high or samsara down below. The deluded sentient being, for instance, does not merely *represent* the Buddha’s permanence as *their* own unrealized potential; the deluded sentient being is rather fully permanent as such, in their own right. And likewise, impermanence is not merely, to call back some language from above, an adventitious facade for the Buddha to don in the other-oriented transformative praxis of his skillful means; it pertains instead, as we saw above, to a kernel of otherness ineliminable from the very ex-timate heart of his “self-practice” (*zixing* 自行).

As the great Southern Song Home-mountain Zhili-apologist, Shanyue puts it, other Mahāyāna Sutras all claim that ‘birth-and-death’ is in some sense identical to nirvana. But what they usually mean by this is just that “the impermanence of ‘birth-and-death’ is identical to the

⁸⁶ “In Sanskrit, ‘incorrigibles’; a term used in the MAHĀYĀNA tradition to refer to a class of beings who have lost all potential to achieve enlightenment or buddhahood. The Mahāyāna MAHĀPARINIRVĀNASŪTRA states that persons become icchantika when they refuse to accept such basic principles as the law of causality, have lost their moral compass, are no longer concerned about either present actions or their future consequences, do not associate with spiritual mentors, and generally do not follow the teachings of the Buddha.” Lopez, Buswell (2014) p370

⁸⁷ Wu (2007) p197

Buddha's 'permanent dwelling' in nirvana."⁸⁸ The implicit commitment of such a claim is this: 'birth-and-death' possesses no permanence of its own, but is permanent only by proxy of the Buddha-dharma dwelling permanently on high. What the *Nirvana Sutra* uniquely claims, Shanyue wants to say, is further that "each one [of 'birth-and-death' and *nirvana*], unchanged from its original position, is spoken of as being, in its own right, [both impermanent *and* permanent.]" (*ge dang benwei yan zhi* 各當本位言之).⁸⁹

The crucial structure to note is this one: the split between these two functions, impermanence and permanence, "walks two roads,"⁹⁰ i.e. subtends and communicates between both sides; each one of the two, nirvana and 'birth-and-death', is equally said to be, by itself and in its own right, *both* impermanent *and* permanent. For Zhili and Renyue, "the problem of the [relation between] the born and *zunte* bodies is deeply entwined with the two birds from the *Nirvana Sutra* who go about in tandem."⁹¹ As Keguan would later put it, on Zhili's behalf, "the reason the born body is identical to the *zunte* is that the 'going about together [of the two functions of impermanence and permanence] pervades all dharmas."⁹² Likewise, Renyue's invokes the two birds from the *Nirvana Sutra* to bolster his own claim that the born and *zunte* bodies, though each identical to the dharma body, nevertheless are, like the *two* (and thus undeniably separate) birds, nevertheless discriminable from one another. Renyue's set-up stands in stark contrast to Zhili's all-pervasive split between the two functions, which "walks two roads" both above and below. Renyue walks, instead, a single path that diverges exactly once:

Practitioners of the Integrated Teaching understand—there is but a single dharma-substance that gives rise to two separate functions [i.e. impermanent & permanent; born & *zunte*

⁸⁸ 以生死之无常即涅槃之常住。Ibid.

⁸⁹ This, however, does *not* imply the existence of two separate pairs of birds—one pair which keeps low, and another bound for the skies. There is not a separate drake and a separate hen, a separate permanence and a separate impermanence, both above and below. There is but a single pair which "goes together" (*shuangyou* 雙游) back and forth between birth-and-death and *nirvana*. We might think of this as a transformation (born out of wedlock, but which has always persisted in the conceptual unconscious of Chinese Madhyamaka) of what Zhuangzi in the *Qiwu lun* refers to as "Walking Two Roads" (*liangxing* 兩行). The sage from the *Qiwu lun* had "gone along with the 'thisness' of the present 'this'" (*yinshi* 因是), "affirming" (*shi* 是) and "denying" (*fei* 非) in accordance with no fixed standard beyond the contours of the two alternating poles of some intractable impasse. As the sage passes between them, each pole is alike affirmed as a 'this' and negated as a 'that'. By analogy, each of nirvana and 'birth-and-death' can be said to be permanent and impermanent in exactly the same sense. Whether above or below, each is, cast into the crossfire of their contrastive inter-determination, affirmed—'permanent' (*chang* 常), and negated—impermanent (*wuchang* 無常), of its own.

⁹⁰ This is another figure from the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論: "The Sage uses various 'thises' and 'thats' to harmonize with others and yet remains at rest in the middle of Heaven the Potter's Wheel. This is called 'Walking Two Roads'." Ziporyn (2009) p14 聖人和之以是非，而休乎天鈞，是之謂兩行。ZZJS p62

⁹¹ 生身尊特问题与涅槃双游义的议题就联系起来。Wu (2014) 《宋代天台佛学对涅槃双游义的议论》

⁹² 生身所以即尊特者。雙游徧一切法。X57n0956 p8

bodies] in turn. Because each [function] is identical to [read: *inseparable from*] (*ji* 即) the substance, not a single mark can be obtained. And yet because the substance is conversely mutually identical to [read: *inseparable from*] the functions, the myriad marks retain their discrete determinacies. You, Master, admit that even the *dung beetle*'s unique designation and marks remain unchanged in the ultimate [stage of identity (*ji* 即)]. Why then do you now insist that the designation and marks of the born body must change into those of *zunte* body before [they are regarded as ultimate]? And how, once we take this track, can we ever [again hope to] discriminate between the two functions of 'impermanence' and 'permanence', i.e. between which the two birds [from the *Nirvana Sutra*,] who go about together, [whether roosting or flying?]⁹³

Lest we forget, a younger faithful (borderline obsequious) Renyue had once brilliantly championed Zhili's dung beetle.⁹⁴ The very same Renyue once cut, with dimensionless scalpel, straight to the unchecked dualism implicit in his Off-mountain peer, Xianrun's deflated reading of Zhili's dung beetle. Xianrun claims, as Renyue once put it, that the Ultimate Stage of Identity (*jiujing ji* 究竟即) characteristic of a realized Buddha—must include “only the nature of all the ten-realms,” though it simultaneously “must remain forever estranged from the [determinate] phenomenal appearance of the dung beetle.”⁹⁵ Just as “birth-and-death” is permanent in its own right, so too Zhili's “ultimate dung beetle” *jiujing qiqiang* 究竟蛄蟻 is ultimate not *vis-a-vis* its representation of some independent Buddha-nature, but rather the permanent dwelling (*changzhu* 常住) of its very own constitutive dung-beetle marks. The beetle exemplifies a paradoxical or “marvelous” (*miao* 妙) ultimacy *vis-a-vis* finitude, wherein these two terms, ultimacy and finitude, have become fully inter-expressive and inter-changeable. Zhili's dung beetle is a *zunte* body in its own right, *without* ever *ceasing* to be a dung beetle.

Rephrased in terms of the two birds' parable, not only do permanence and impermanence “go about in tandem” (*shuangyou* 雙游) in the dung beetle's body. The body of Zhili's beetle becomes the site of a further intermelding between these two birds and their conceptual avatars, i.e. impermanence and permanence, finitude and ultimacy. In the dung beetle, the difference between the two birds “can no longer be conceived” (*bu ke siyi* 不可思議). Even the very *twoness* of the birds themselves becomes inconceivable. Renyue had once bitingly remarked that seeing Xianrun contort himself to give an account of this was like watching “a monkey dressed

⁹³ 圓人了知。只一法體。起二應用。用即體故。一相叵得。體即用故。諸相宛然。大師尚說蛄蟻名相至于究竟，何緣定改生身名相須是尊特名相耶？常、無常用，二鳥雙游，如何分別耶？X56n0948-1 岳闍梨十諫書 p14

⁹⁴ We'll recall from a prior chapter that will have been written that Zhili's ultimate dung beetle had come free (*ji li* 即離) from its own benightedness only by dwelling (*ji zhu* 即住) so deeply in its own position that its own constitutive limitation is seen to open out through the bottom, coming to penetrate and be penetrated through in turn by the entire dharma-realm.

⁹⁵ 但有十界之性，永無蛄蟻之事。X56n0948-7 附法智遺編抉膜書 p72

up in the garments of the Duke of Zhou, which can do nothing but gnaw at, tear apart, and inevitably discard them.”⁹⁶

One and the same Renyue, following his legendary turn of 1025, would now seem *prima facie* to have forgotten the word of caution he had once imparted to Xianrun many years before—that warned of sequestering the nature-substance of the beetle off from the determinate marks (*xiang* 相) of its phenomenal appearance (*shi* 事). Renyue now brings the aforementioned bug to bear *against* his teacher, in service of the allegation that Zhili has suffered a lapse in fidelity to *their own* theoretical cause, i.e. the Tiantai Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教). This dimension threatens to be effaced in the sectarian histories, into which Renyue will only ever figure as a heretic and a traitor; Renyue challenges Zhili over the very stakes of *their* orthodoxy.—Because isn’t this *precisely*, Renyue asks, what Zhili has been laboring to repeat this whole time? Just as the shit eating dung beetle, this filthiest of sentient beings, “remains unchanged in the ultimate [stage of identity],” just so the born body is *mutatis mutandis* identical from the outset to the dharma-body, without having to change one thing about it.

So little can sometimes appear to separate Renyue’s doppelgänger position from Zhili’s own emphasis on the spontaneous (*wuzuo* 無作) ultimacy of the born body. Take for instance, this formulation from Keguan, who here means to evoke, *in Zhili’s defense*, the precise dimension which Renyue had become *blind to*, i.e. the spontaneous ultimacy of any impermanent dharma seen to permanently dwell: As Keguan puts it, “we needn’t alter so much as a single dharma before the two functions (i.e. impermanence and permanence) are revealed [within said dharma] to both fly and roost in tandem.”⁹⁷ And yet here Renyue charges Zhili with neglecting *just this* dimension. Renyue thinks that just because Zhili “insists” on “changing” (*dinggai* 定改) the born body into the *zunte*, eliding them together like this—it is in fact *Zhili* who fails to appreciate his *own* point, i.e. that we needn’t nullify Amitābha’s born body, with its finite marks, elevating it to the dignity of a *zunte* body—before it is rendered into the ultimate. For, as Zhili never tires of repeating to Renyue, the born body is already identical to the dharma-body from the outset!⁹⁸ Recast into Renyue’s own doctrinal doppelgänger landscape, in which, as always, a single name (*yi ming* 一名) corresponds to a single actuality (*yi shi* 一實), Keguan’s point could just as well be recast as Renyue’s own: we needn’t undermine the born-ness of the born body, turning the born body into something it is not, i.e. the *zunte* body—before it is worthy of equivalence with the dharma-body with which it already is, vis-a-vis the two birds from the Nirvana Sutra, always necessarily identical *from the outset*. Subtle and yet all-important shades of difference, however, separate Renyue’s reading of the two birds from Shanyue’s orthodox parse of the birds’ parable from which I quoted just a moment ago. For Shanyue, “each [of ‘birth-

⁹⁶ 譬夫猿狙之身，衣以周公之服，彼必齧嚙挽裂而去之矣。Ibid.

⁹⁷ 不動一法方見二用雙遊、並息 X57n0956 p7

⁹⁸ Zhili’s compulsion to repeat this doctrinal platitude (something clearly isn’t working!) is the sign of something gone awry. We might say that the dung beetle is a testament to its own failure as an administered *upaya* (an anti-*upaya* perhaps?). Concretizing the locus of impasse between master and disciple, the dung beetle now enfurls a symptom of the mutual un-intelligibility and impenetrability (i.e. they can’t get through) of master and disciple to one another. Could something along the same lines be said of the *zunte* body itself?

and-death' and nirvana], unchanged from its original position, is spoken of as being, in its own right, [both impermanent and permanent." Renyue claims that each of the born and *zunte* bodies can alike be spoken of as, in one respect impermanent—i.e., encumbered with its constitutive determinate marks—and in another separate respect, permanent vis-a-vis markless. The "single dharma-essence gives rise to these two separate functions," the born and *zunte* bodies. The permanence of the dharma-essence dwells within both born and *zunte* bodies, such that, in its essence, "not a single mark" of either body "obtains" (*yi xiang pode*—相叵得). And yet, at the level of these bodies themselves *qua* "function", with which the dharma-substance *qua* permanent remains identical throughout, their "myriad marks" remain "fully intact in all their discrete determinacies" (*zhuxiang wanran* 諸相宛然).

This means, for Renyue, two things: (1) their shared identity with the dharma-nature does not vitiate the ineliminable difference that obtains between born and *zunte* bodies when they are conceived at the level of their distinctive phenomenal appearances; and (2) Amitābha's born body, arisen from and *ipso facto* identical all along to the "dharma-essence" that figures its ground, need not wait on being raised to the dignity of a *zunte* body, before it is rendered into ultimacy. And yet, though it bears no small resemblance to Zhili's own refrain, Renyue's second claim (born body is already *ipso facto* ultimate), *because it remains parasitic upon the first* (born and *zunte* bodies are just different from each other, full stop), precisely disavows Zhili's understanding of the "mutual identity" (*xiangji* 相即) of the two birds who "go about in tandem" (*shuangyou* 雙游).

Renyue agrees, of course, that the two birds, permanence and impermanence roost in tandem beneath, with the born body, and soar together on high with the *zunte*. But this does not mean that *up* is no longer *up* and *down* is no longer *down*! "How," Renyue asks, if Zhili insists on eliding Amitābha's born body (resident of such a lowly land of joint-residence as Sukhavati) together with the *zunte* body on high, "can we ever [hope to] discriminate between the two functions of 'impermanence' and 'permanence', i.e. between the two birds [from the *Nirvana Sutra*] who go about together, [whether in roost or in flight?]" And this furthermore does not mean that that on account of which each is impermanent is the very same as that an account of which it is permanent! As "inseparable from each other" (*buxiang sheli* 不相捨離) as they remain throughout, there are, need we remind ourselves, *two birds*, after all, a male and a female!—rather than, as Zhili would have it, just one monstrous two-faced non-binary bird! Though the two birds are always found together, and though every body is, without exception, in one respect impermanent and in another respect permanent, these two respects themselves remain, Renyue insists, unproblematically *two*. But does Renyue not now run the same risk against which he had cautioned Xianrun years before? Namely the risk of rending a dividing line between these two levels and sequestering the dharma-substance or nature (which includes) off from the marks (which are included) which bodies display and make functional and responsive at the level of their phenomenal appearances?

Such a partition, Zhili thinks, cannot but repress the signature Tiantai Truth of the Middle (*zhongdi* 中諦) between the nature and its marks, substance and its function, permanence and impermanence, ultimacy and finitude. As Wu Zhongwei puts it handily, "as soon as the slightest discrepancy has emerged between the [dharma-]body and its [responsive] marks, the meaning of

the two functions (i.e. permanence and impermanence) of the Integrated Marvelous [Teaching] threatens to become submerged forever.”⁹⁹ It is this repressed Middle which Zhili’s *zunte* body, like a special concretized dharma-body (which encounters itself as a super-numerary element within its own set), puts new flesh to. Zhili’s defense weaves these several floating threads together—the birds, the beetle, and the *zunte* boundlessness of Amitābha’s born body, taken *as is*:

A thousand realizations follow from just one; but just one such grave misapprehension spawns ten-thousand confusions. [...] When I claim, as you put it, that “the name and marks of the dung beetle reach all the way to the ultimate,” this is to clarify that the nature *qua li* inherently includes all ten realms [from the lowest of hells on up]. Since *all* ten realms are inherently included in the nature, [any being and mark within any one of these realms] must eternally dwell (*changzhu* 常住) therein. Since each of the ten realms is, by itself, the entirety of the dharma-realm, and since further, the dharma-realm has no outside, each realm [must be seen to] mutually pervade and absorb all the others in turn, such that each and every last dharma [including the dung beetle] in each and every last realm is [just as] vast and far-reaching [as any other]. [...] [For this reason,] there isn’t so much as one dharma—from the dung beetle to the Buddha, whether provisional or ultimate—that is *not*, just as it is, *permanent, blissful, self, and pure*; there is none that is not the supreme and unsurpassable [dharma of] sentient beings, the supreme and unsurpassable five skhandas. Since every last one, just as it is, is [identical to] the four virtues [i.e. is *permanent, blissful, self, and pure*], and is furthermore referred to as supreme and unsurpassable, how could there be so much as a single sentient being or dharma that is not *zunte*? [...] If one enters the gateway I’ve opened here, then the two functions of permanence and impermanence can be understood. [...] Whether it’s a Buddha’s body or the land [in which he resides], whether a person or an objective dharma—every last one, without exception, inherently includes both functions, impermanence and permanence. But the two functions of impermanence and permanence are, within every last instance—*not-two*, insofar as each mutually pervades and absorbs the other. This is just like the [two birds] from the *Nirvana Sutra*. Students [of the Tiantai School] should understand that he who obtains the function of impermanence alone thereby loses the function of permanence; when, however, you obtain to permanence, both functions [permanence and impermanence] go forth, fully intermelled, into one another. If you fail to clarify this matter, then the Integrated and Wondrous two functions (i.e. permanence and impermanence) threaten to become forever submerged.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ 设若逐现起身相辨，则圆妙二用之义永沉。Wu (2014) 《宋代天台佛学对涅槃双游义的议论》

¹⁰⁰ 解一千從，迷一萬惑。[...] 蛄蜣名相至究竟者，此明理性具十界也。既皆性具，性必常住。十皆法界，法界無外，界界遍收，法法高廣。[...] 一一無非常樂我淨，即無上眾生，無上五陰。既皆四德，復稱無上，豈一人一法非尊特耶？[...] 若入此門，則常、無常二用可識。[...] 若身若土，若人若法，一一無不具足二用。二用不二，互遍互收。如迦鄰提鴛鴦鳥等。學者應知但得無常，則失常用；得常用者，二用雙融。若也不 [...] 明之 [...]，則圓妙二用義永沈矣。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p15

Zhili launches, from the top, into a routinized synopsis of Zhiyi's doctrine of "inherent inclusion in the nature" (*xingju* 性具).¹⁰¹ The "nature" (*xing* 性) inherently includes all ten realms,¹⁰² down to the most wretched of hells, together with their filthiest and most despicable inhabitants (e.g. the dung beetle). Zhili is here as inclined as ever to redirect any and all questions regarding the *nature* which inherently includes the three-thousand dharmas onto the spontaneous inter-inclusion and inter-pervasion of the three-thousand dharmas left to their own. The including nature is wrenched from the comfortable neutrality of the background back onto the included elements themselves. So, instead of a single self-identical subject, the "nature," including three-thousand predicates, every single one of the three-thousand dharmas (all possible determinations) gives way to an oscillation between subject and predicate poles. "Each realm mutually absorbs and pervades all the others." Which is to say, each to all the others is both absorber and absorbed, pervader and pervaded, and is each of these in three-thousand different ways. It's for *this* reason that "every last dharma" is equally "vast and far-reaching," as it permanently dwells (*changzhu* 常住) in the spontaneous (*wuzuo* 無作), endless (*bujin* 不盡) displacement and inter-circulation of every last one of the three-thousand dharmas left to themselves. The dung beetle, recast in the illimitable glow of its *zunte* body, concretes the entirety of the dharma-ream into its own unique finite visage; and is furthermore born out into the very farthest reaches of the dharma-realm.

The text of the Nirvana Sutra speaks (barring some creative interpretation of the two birds parable) of the Buddha, i.e. the *tathagata alone* as a permanently dwelling dharma (*changzhu fa* 常住法). But Zhili tells us now that there is *no* dharma that does *not* eternally dwell, and is not, just however it is already, *ipso facto* identical to the four virtues of permanence, bliss, self, and purity (*chang le wo jing* 常樂我淨). But again, this is *not because* some independent nature *qua* ground permanently dwells within the beetle's impermanent encasing. As Ziporyn puts it, "the nature we increasingly manifest in the course of Buddhist practice [...] is not just buddha-hood. [...] It would be equally correct to call this nature 'the sentient beings-nature' or, in particular, 'the dung-beetle-nature'. Practice makes one's inherent

¹⁰¹ Zhili must have known, I cannot but suspect, that he and Renyue were now destined to talk past each other. He decides, nevertheless, that Renyue should have to hear it once more. Or perhaps these words are addressed, at least in part, to yet some other, beyond the strange doppelgänger child that faces him, looking back, in Renyue. Addressed, perhaps, to the Renyue he lost (and whom he might *not* have lost)? Or otherwise to the anonymous reader who stands in danger of losing their way in Renyue's heresies?

¹⁰² "In MAHĀ-YĀNA Buddhism, and especially in the East Asian Tiantai schools, the term [daśadhātu or the ten realms] was appropriated to refer to ten "realms" or "destinies" of being; in East Asian Buddhism, this denotation is by far the most common. These destinies are, from the bottom up, the six rebirth destinies (GATI) in SAM. SĀRA, viz., (1) hells (naraka; see NĀRAKA), (2) hungry ghosts (PRETA), (3) animals (TIRYAK), (4) demigods (ASURA), (5) human beings (MANUS.YA), and (6) divinities (DEVA), plus the four destinies of enlightened beings, viz., (7) disciples of the Buddha (ŚRĀVAKA), (8) solitary buddhas (PRATYEKABUDDHA), (9) BODHISATTVAS, and (10) buddhas. According to Tiantai doctrine, since these ten destinies are mutually pervasive (C. *shijie huju*), each of these realms pervades, and is pervaded by, all the nine other realms; hence, [...] buddhahood is inherent even in the most dire destiny in the hells." Lopez, Buswell (2014) p220

buddha-hood more and more apparent and functional; but it also makes one's inherent dung-beetlehood more and more apparent and functional.”¹⁰³ The arc of awakening, which leads the practitioner from the hearsay assurance of “identity [to the Buddha] in name only” (*mingziji* 名字即), through a progressively widening circuit of cultivated “identity”¹⁰⁴—terminates in the “Ultimate Identity” (*jiujing ji*) not only of the Buddha *alone*, but rather to every last one of the three-thousand dharmas, dung beetle included.

This arc does not leave the filthy and wretched, impermanent dung beetle behind at the outset. It does not go from being like ‘this’ dung beetle to being instead like ‘that’ Buddha, pure and permanent. The Tiantai practitioner and exegete does not select (*qu* 取) for purity and dispense (*she* 捨) with some separate excrescence of defilement (like the dung beetle). The arc of awakening recoils back around. As Zhili put it elsewhere, “If one is not aware of the taint and evil inherent in the nature, then one [imagines one] must definitively cut these off and destroy them [before the nature is revealed]; but how then can you speak of [these taints and evil dharmas] as being originally, in their entirety, identical [to ultimacy?]”¹⁰⁵ For this reason, the “purity” at stake (*jing* 淨) in Zhili’s Pure Land thought, at the level of the Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) amounts to the same, in Zhili’s Pure Land thought, as absolute freedom from *both* purity *and* defilement. The purity we stand to effect in “purifying a land” (*wei yu jingtu* 為於淨土) pertains to “the principle (*li* 理) of equality between purity and defilement” (*goujing pingdeng zhi li* 垢淨平等之理). But how is this any different from the fantasy of the self-contained neutrality of an all-inclusive nature, its indifference to all determinations, whether pure

¹⁰³ Ziporyn (2000) p298

¹⁰⁴ Zhiyi proposes six progressive stages of identity between the practitioner and the Buddha, which Zhili later extrapolates to describe the relation between the practitioner and any putative content X (e.g. the dung beetle): (1) Identity in *Li* or Principle (*li ji* 理即), wherein the practitioner is intrinsically identical with the Buddha, without even knowing it; (2) Identity in Name-only (*mingzi ji* 名字即), when the practitioner overhears or perhaps even comes to believe that they are identical to the Buddha; (3) Identity in Contemplative Practice (*guanxing ji* 觀行即), in which the practitioner begins to work through and realize their identity with the Buddha in meditative cultivation; (4) Identity in Semblance (*xiangsi ji* 相似即), in which the practitioner begins to resemble the Buddha with which they are identical, both in their experience and in their outward manifestation; (5) Identity of Partial Realization (*fenzheng ji* 分證即), in which the practitioner gains access to the treasure-storehouse and attains true suchness; and Ultimate Identity (*jiujing ji* 究竟即), in which the practitioner attains to ultimate, perfect and complete *bodhi*-wisdom.” Zhiyi himself offers a helpful analogy for these six levels of identity: “1. A poor person has a house with a store of [buried] treasure, but does not know about it; 2. A friend points this out, and he comes to know about it; 3. He clears away the weeds and digs; 4. Until gradually he comes near to obtaining [the treasure]; 5. He approaches and opens the treasure, and; 6. He exhaustively takes it out and uses it.” Swanson (2018) p239 [...] 譬如貧人家有寶藏而無知者，知識示之，即得知也。耘除草穢而掘出之，漸漸得近，近已藏開，盡取用之 [...] Vol. 46, No. 1911, Scroll 1 [0010c]

¹⁰⁵ 若不知性染性惡，所有染惡定須斷破，如何可論全體是耶？ Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 1 [0200a]

or defiled?¹⁰⁶ The difference is that Zhili's absolute "purity" (*jing* 淨) which is itself "neither pure nor defiled" (*bugou bujing* 不垢不淨) is fully incarnate in the *zunte* body of a dung beetle.

This all has a crucial upshot for Zhili. The "equality" in the nature or *li* 理 of the determinations pure and defiled, 'buddha' and 'dung-beetle'—amounts to the inter-penetration of *the two functions themselves*, 'impermanence' (*wuchang* 無常), and permanence (*chang* 常)—though they do not just therein become just one. What, Zhili asks, is the meaning of the "two birds" who "go about in tandem" (*shuangyou* 雙游)? The two birds (and the two functions they represent) "mutually intermeld" (*shuangrong* 雙融), re-cast in the glossy hull of the dung beetle's *zunte* exterior. But doesn't this "mutual inter-pervasion and -absorption" (*hubian hushou* 互遍互收) of impermanence and permanence amount to precisely the nightmare scenario Renyue wants, above all else, to avoid?

We have already encountered an all-important clue in a turn from above, which we traced back to Seng Zhao's strange and counter-intuitive concept of "non-moving" (*buqian* 不遷): a dharma that permanently dwells does not remain in any one place. Instead, Zhili's dung beetle "permanently dwells" (*changzhu* 常住) and is "immutable" (*bubian* 不變) in the nature—but not without simultaneously *undermining* its own determinate positioning *qua* "non-dwelling root" (*wuzhu ben* 無住本).¹⁰⁷ The dung beetle permanently dwells in the sense that its own constitutive impermanent dung-beetle marks are far gone, born out into endless displacement; the dung beetle "permanently dwells" in the far-flung and ineradicable trace of its having vanished ever beyond its own determinate locus. Its very disappearance, drawn out without limit, thus becomes indistinguishable from its ineradicable omnipresence.¹⁰⁸

We'll be careful to note what this does *not* mean, however. Take this formulation from Keguan, who expresses the non-duality of the two functions now from the opposite direction: "because the two functions [i.e. impermanence and permanence] are themselves [already] identical in their singular essence, impermanence falls entirely within permanence [from the

¹⁰⁶ Here I have Zongmi in mind, whose enormously influential Tiantai cosplay I have discussed at greater length in the previous chapter. Zongmi says things like this, for instance in the *Chan Preface* 《禪源序》: "Speaking of the [Chan] sect that direct reveals the nature of the mind—all the myriad dharmas, whether existent or non-existent, are all but the singular real nature [of the mind]. This real nature is free of all marks and conditions, such that its essences figures the negation of absolutely everything. It is itself neither ordinary nor sagely, neither cause nor effect, neither good nor evil, etc. And yet in the functions to which it, *qua* essence, is ever inseparable, it is able to give rise to anything whatsoever, and so has the capacity to appear in the guise of either the ordinary or sagely, to manifest material forms and marks. And yet it refers, within any and all of this, ever to the nature of the mind." 直顯心性宗者。說一切諸法若有若空皆唯真性。真性無相無為。體非一切。謂非凡非聖非因非果非善非惡等。然即體之用而能造作種種。謂能凡能聖現色現相等。於中指示心性。Vol. 48, No. 2015, Scroll 1 [0402c]

¹⁰⁷ Zhiyi lays the cornerstone for theorization of the "non-dwelling root" (*wuzhu ben* 無住本) by extensively ruminating, throughout many of his texts, on this line from the Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra: "All dharmas are established from the root of non-dwelling." 從無住本立一切法。Vol. 14, No. 475, Scroll 2 [0547c] For more, see Ziporyn (2018) pp216-20.

¹⁰⁸ My gratitude to Professor Ziporyn for helping me to clarify this point.

outset].”¹⁰⁹ It might seem *prima facie* that Zhili’s gambit (as Keguan represents it) runs the real risk of swallowing up the impermanent in the all-consuming maw of permanence, within which all phenomenally binding discriminations are indiscriminately liquidated.¹¹⁰ Though each is moved in the defense of the same professed cause, i.e. redeeming the finitude *qua* finitude of the dung-beetle, Renyue and Zhili must each go his own way on this point: Renyue refuses to give any ground on the position from which we stand to separately discern the respect in which a dung-beetle is *impermanent* from the respect in which it is *permanent*; Zhili insists rather on the absolute, unsurpassable permanence and ultimacy of the dung-beetle *qua* impermanent, in whose shining excrescence the dharma-realm concretes in full.

We could rephrase Zhili concept of the (non-)relation between impermanence and permanence, in Zhiyi’s language, from the section on the One-Practice Samadhi in the *Mohezhiquan* 摩訶止觀: the two birds are “freed from the duality of [their] mutual counterposition” (*li ci erbian* 離此二邊) when the dung beetle body (with its filthy dung beetle marks) is seen to permanently “dwell by not dwelling anywhere in particular” (*zhu wusuo zhu* 住無所住).¹¹¹ It’s in *this* sense that impermanence and permanence, finitude and ultimacy, are said to be “not-two” (*bu er* 不二); each falls over into the other, and the other into each. And such that the *permanence* and ultimacy of the dung-beetle belong to its own defiled, shit-encrusted marks, which are *themselves* born out into far-flung and ineradicable itineracy.

It’s with this fragile non-duality of impermanence and permanence in mind that Zhili lays emphasis on a paradoxical reversibility between “dwelling” (*zhu* 住) and “non-dwelling” (*wuzhu* 無住)—between “dwelling in” (*zhu* 住) and “being free from” (*li* 離). Zhiyi himself comes quite close already to what Zhili has in mind. Zhiyi tells us, in the section on the One-Practice Samadhi, that “since we can find nothing that is mundane and deluded, what is there to dispense with? And since we can find nothing that is sagely [and pure], what is there to cling to? [...] Neither dispensing with nor clinging to anything at all, dwell only in the ultimate limit.”¹¹² Zhili here gives a radically non-dual reading of Zhiyi’s “ultimate limit” which neither dispenses with nor clings to any dharma. It’s easy enough to imagine, as Renyue may have imagined reading these words, that some discrete, markless ultimacy draws back from taking any subjective orientation to any objective contents whatsoever, however pure or defiled, ever aloof from them all. Zhili instead articulates Zhiyi’s “ultimate limit” at the paradoxical tipping point at which either one of ‘dispensing with’ and ‘clinging to’, when driven to its *own* limit, becomes the other. ‘Clinging to’ and ‘dispensing with’, when “driven to the ultimate,” he tells us, “do not represent two different tracks.”¹¹³ In other words, go ahead and cling to or dwell in some dharma—but

¹⁰⁹ 二用既一體相即，無常全是於常。X57n0956 p6

¹¹⁰ Perhaps we might imagine for Renyue, on analogy to Schellings famous(ly misguided) quip about the later Hegel’s envisioning of the absolute *qua* “the night in which all cows are black”—a perch on which all plumages run together?

¹¹¹ Vol. 46, No. 1911, Scroll 2 [0011b], translation slightly modified from Ziporyn (2016) pp273-5

¹¹² translation modified from Ibid. 以無相法住般若中，不見凡法云何捨？不見聖法云何取？生死涅槃、垢淨亦如是。不捨不取，但住實際。Vol. 46, No. 1911, Scroll 2 [0011c]

¹¹³ 取捨若極。與不取捨亦非異轍。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 1 [0196c]

cling to and dwell in it absolutely, so that there is nowhere you will not unearth it, far-flung and gone beyond its original locus. And conversely, go ahead and try to be rid of some dharma! But just like an ex-lover about whom one is trying *not* to think, but who *ipso facto* frequents one's dreams, the very attempt to be free of them will seal their ubiquitous trace, palpable in their very absence, throughout your waking world. In either case, whether you start off trying to cling to or otherwise dispense with some dharma, the result, "if" you inflect either of these *prima facie* incongruous operations "into its limit" (*ruoji* 若極), the result is the same: that same dharma inherently included in the nature, as ineradicable (*bu ke mie* 不可滅) as it is unobtainable (*bu ke de* 不可得).

In something like the same way the "two sides" of a Möbius strip are always both *diverging from* and *converging upon* one another at once, and at every point along its surface—one is *free from* one's own finite marks only by dwelling in them so deeply that, like Zhuangzi's goblet words, they are both opened to and opened into the spillover of all the three-thousand dharmas. For this reason, as Zhili puts it elsewhere, "freedom from [some dharma] is just precisely dwelling in it." (*jili jizhu* 即離即住) There is no freedom from the dung beetle, or for that matter from the finite marks of Amitābha's *mere* born body, that is not won through dwelling fully in just these very finite marks. The "freedom" from these marks "is made ultimate" (*liji* 離極) only when these marks are "dwelt in to the ultimate" (*zhuji* 住極)—so that "the freedom is as deep as the dwelling is deep" (*lishen zhushen* 離深住深).¹¹⁴

For Renyue, however, Amitābha's 84,000 marks must remain ever in place, to fix his born, 'infinite-finite' body in its sole rightful locus at the level of distinct phenomenal appearances. The post-turn Renyue can tolerate none of the endless and limitlessly reciprocal circulation of finite bodies within bodies and marks within marks—concomitant with Zhili's reading of the "inherent inclusion in the nature" (*xingju* 性具). Though the two dimensions remain, for Renyue, in one sense "inseparable" (*buxiang sheli* 不相捨離), yoked together at the hip throughout—nevertheless, the impermanence of these bodies and marks is, for him, one thing; and the nature that dwells permanently within them is some other matter entirely. Zhili's last remark in the passage above is aimed at precisely *this* repercussion of Renyue's system: "he who obtains the function of impermanence alone thereby [*ipso facto*] loses the function of permanence; when, however, you obtain to the function of permanence, both functions [permanence and impermanence] go forth, fully intermelled, into one another."¹¹⁵

The same argument we encountered a moment ago *vis-a-vis* Zhili's envisioning of the highest-order purity as equivalent to the equality and com-possibility of impurity and purity, goes now *mutatis mutandis* for impermanence and permanence themselves. The permanence at stake for Zhili in the parable of the two birds pertains to the uncoupling of impermanence and permanence from their mutually constitutive conceptual opposition to one another, such that each one is exposed to their Middle *qua* joint constitutive "intermelling" (*yuanrong* 圓融). The transcendence on offer from this configuration is not of one term, permanence, over the other,

¹¹⁴ translation slightly modified from Ziporyn (2000) p308

¹¹⁵ 但得無常，則失常用；得常用者，二用雙融。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p15

impermanence; it is rather made infinitely *diffuse*. Impermanence and permanence—each seen to comprehend the exclusion of the other as its own internal condition of consistency—transcend *themselves* (and precisely by dwelling fully in their shared limit(s)). As will sometimes happen (e.g. the mirror from the last chapter), Zhili’s ideas register something of a warp in the metaphors within which they are brought into relief. In the *zunte* body of the dung beetle, Zhili pushes the parable of the two birds to the brink of non-sense. We don’t need to pretend that Renyue cannot make better sense than Zhili of the original metaphor. Because the two birds, in Zhili’s eyes, do not only go together in tandem (as the *Sutra* has it, and beyond the horizon of which even Guanding, it could be argued, does not think). The two birds, ‘impermanence’ and ‘permanence’, become, in Zhili, two poles of an infinite structural oscillation; this oscillation breaks out from their very notional heart of hearts, wherein each uncovers its own conceptual other at the ground of its own determinacy (which will always already *ipso facto* have beaten it to the punch of *self-determination*).

And yet the “intermelding” of impermanence and permanence should not be mistaken for an operation in which one determination is *reduced to* the other; the two obliquely coincide, without for that matter merging into one, when each recoils back from the other onto which it is, at first, thrown. Zhili does not decide for ‘oneness’ and against ‘twoness’. Keguan describes Zhili’s position like this: “though there remain two discriminable functions, these two are mutually identical, just as they are, in the singularity of their essence.”¹¹⁶ The two birds, in Zhili’s hands, further bear out the Orthodox Tiantai homology to the strand we have been tracking from the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*; there the non-duality and duality, or the ‘heavenly’ (*tian* 天) and the ‘human’ (*ren* 人), as the *Dazong shi* 大宗師 puts it,¹¹⁷ themselves coincide and intermeld. Just as the sage from the *Qiwulun* “walks two roads” (*liangxing* 兩行) between any two contradistinguished conceptual determinations, Zhili “uncouples” impermanence and permanence “from their mutual opposition” (*mo de qi ou* 莫得其偶). But we are not therein elevated above the crossfire of the two or the dual, onto some transcendent plane of oneness or non-duality. The two birds are, as Zhiyi would put it, neither “dual nor non-dual” (*fei erxiang fei buerxiang* 非二相 非不二相). The two birds are recast, in Zhili’s hands, rather as two poles in an undecidable structural oscillation. Impermanence and permanence go forth together *into one another*; the beetle’s impermanent marks *themselves* dwell permanently in the nature.

(9) *Zunte*: The Dharma-body and its “Opposite”

¹¹⁶ 雖分別二用。二用當處一體相即。X57n0956 p4

¹¹⁷ “What [the Genuine Human Beings] liked was the oneness of things, but what they disliked was also the oneness of things. Their oneness was the oneness, but their non-oneness was also the oneness. In their oneness, they were followers of the Heavenly. In their non-oneness, they were followers of the Human. This is what it is for neither the Heavenly nor the Human to win out over the other. And that is what I call being both Genuine and Human, a Genuine Human Being.” Ziporyn (2009) p42 其好之也一，其弗好之也一。其一也一，其不一也一。其一，與天為徒；其不一，與人為徒。天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。ZZJS p170

Renyue believes *he alone* stands to redeem the impermanence of Zhili's dung-beetle—and to appreciate and account for the finitude *qua* finitude of Amitābha's 'infinite-finite' born body. We might even say that this insistence can be made intelligible (if only *vis-a-vis* a tragic misunderstanding) as answering to Zhili's *own call*. But Renyue accuses Zhili of *failing* to heed *his own* stated principle:

“If it is, as you say, Master—that [the present Sutra] directly visualizes the ‘infinite-infinite’ [*zunte*] body, [...] then that would mean that the *Visualization Sutra* visualizes the habitat and inhabitants of the [penultimate] Pure Land of Ultimate Recompense Without Obstruction (*shibao wu ai tu* 實報無礙土) alone, to the complete exclusion of the habitat and inhabitants of the lowest Pure Land of Joint Residence (*tongju tu* 同居土). But if this were so, then we would fail to establish [*your own stated*] directive to ‘avail [alone of] of the habitat and inhabitants [of Amitābha's Pure Land, *Sukhavati*],’¹¹⁸

Zhili had gone out of his way in the early-going of the *Miaozong chao* to insist that a technique of cultivation is no less ultimate for its tarrying with perceived externalities (like Amitābha's unique body and land) and their marks. A signature Off-mountain (*shanwai* 山外) (i.e. the rival heretical faction) gambit, into which Renyue falls after his legendary turn, identifies the “nature of the mind” (*xinxing* 心性) as the sole desideratum for the inconceivable object of the signature Tiantai three-fold “inconceivable contemplation” (*busiyi guan* 不思議觀).¹¹⁹ Zhili's point, which he brings to unprecedented clarity by thinking through *this* Pure Land visualization practice, is this: the very presumption, on the part of the Off-mountain thinkers, that the external bodies and lands conjured in the visualization practice could ever have been anything *other than* the three-fold “nature of the mind” (*xinxing* 心性) which is itself neither internal nor external—gives it away that they had been *conceiving* of the “nature of the mind,” i.e. predicating it with

¹¹⁸ 若如大師所解，直觀無量之無量，又謂圓人皆依業識所見，是則今經唯觀實報依正，全無同居依正，不成託彼依正修觀之義也。X56n0948 岳閣梨十諫書 p9 Renyue is here referencing a claim Zhili makes in the *Miaozong chao*: “The present visualization practice does not exclusively contemplate the mind. And if one were to insist on demarcating between the inner and the outer, then it is an *external* contemplation, in virtue of the fact that it avails [alone] of the visualized habitat and inhabitants of [Sukhavati] to carry out the visualization.” 此觀不專觀心，內外分之，此當外觀。以由託彼依正觀故。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 1 [0197c]

¹¹⁹ As Wang Xuefen (aka 宏育法是) puts it, “Renyue speaks of the doctrine of inclusion on the basis of the nature of the mind, and emphasizes the relation between the nature of the mind and the three-thousand [dharma], construed such that the nature of the mind alone ‘includes’, and the three thousand alone ‘are included.’ Thus Renyue construes the three thousand, not like Zhili does, for whom every last dharma without exception [both mind and matter] inherently includes all three truths—but rather as the dharmas of the conventional truth inherently included by the nature of the mind.” 仁岳則是將「具」義由「心性」來談，強調「心性」與「三千」的關係，並以「能」、「所」表現之。此「三千」並非如知禮的法法皆具三諦，而是「三千」為心性所具的俗諦之法。Wang (2016) p143

the concepts ‘internal’ as opposed to ‘external’, ‘un-manifest’ as opposed to ‘manifest’— and even the *concept* of ‘inconceivable’ as opposed to ‘conceivable’.

Zhili refuses the forced choice to conceive of the proper object of the contemplation as either a strictly external object or a strictly internal nature. Zhili writes that “the present visualization practice perfuses (熏) the nature of the mind” with respect to “the habitat and inhabitants of Amitābha’s Pure Land *qua* objective locus.”¹²⁰ The habitats and inhabitants of Amitābha’s Western Land of “Ultimate Bliss” (*ji le* 極樂) can be conjured or “produced” (*sheng* 生), that is to say, only because “the [practitioner’s own] mind inherently includes them” (*xinju er sheng* 心具而生). “How,” Zhili asks, “could [these lands and bodies] ever have been separate from the nature of the mind?” (*qi li xinxing* 豈離心性). The so-called “nature of the mind,” Zhili is claiming, can *only* be contemplated *vis-a-vis* the mediation of some determinate objective presence—whether this be lands and bodies, or otherwise deluded mentations (*wangxin* 妄心).¹²¹

Renyue extracts Zhili’s claim from a broader set of implications: for Zhili, the point is that any determinate objective presence whatsoever, whatever kind of land or body, however pure or defiled, could never be separate from the “secret treasury” (*mizang* 密藏) of the three-fold nature for so much as a moment. Renyue displaces Zhili’s own emphasis onto the fact that it is *this* particular Buddha and his particular land, rather than any others, which the visualization practice avails of. Amitābha’s land is, no one would ever dispute, a Joint-Residence pure land, i.e. the lowest in Zhiyi’s hierarchy of four, wherein sentient beings of all sorts, from dung beetles to bodhisattvas all reside together. But Renyue never wavers of his conviction that whereas the Buddha “makes use of a *zunte* body to respond to [...] [sentient beings within] the land of ultimate recompense,” he “makes use” only of a “born body to respond within a land of Joint-Residence”¹²² So, when Zhili suggests that the body of Amitābha from the Visualization Sutra is an ‘infinite-infinite’ *zunte* body—this not only falsely exalts it to an equivalent status with the recompense body (*baoshen* 報身) of Lushena (i.e. the sole resident of the penultimate land of Real Recompense). Even more egregiously, Renyue thinks, Zhili *ipso facto* circumvents the very “habitat and inhabitants” (*yizheng* 依正) of Amitābha’s Joint-residence Land, Sukhavati. As it was Zhili *himself* who had insisted, Renyue reminds him now, that this land, Sukhavati, and *no other*, remains the inextricable objective locus of the visualization practice.

All this populates the backdrop of Renyue’s insistence that he alone can fully account for the finitude measure of Amitābha’s body and life-span. This identification is, we saw above, overwhelmingly attested in Zhiyi’s commentaries. And yet, Zhili asks, “*when* has [Zhiyi] *ever* availed of the ‘finite’ body alone[, to the exclusion of its other(s)]?”¹²³ As Zhiyi himself puts it, at one point in the *Fahua wenju* Commentary to the Lotus Sutra, “how could the response body

¹²⁰ 今觀彌陀依正為緣，熏乎心性。Vol. 37, No. 1751, Scroll 1 [0026a]

¹²¹ We could think of this as reiterating the logic of Zhili’s claim from above, to the effect that this mind’s (*shi xin* 是心) “identity to the Buddha” (*shi fo* 是佛) hangs on the mediation of the act that makes it so (*jizuo er shi* 即作而是).

¹²² 應同居。正用生身。應[...]實報。正用尊特。X56n0948 岳闍梨十諫書 p5

¹²³ 何嘗單用有量一身而解釋耶？X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p24

possibly appear in isolation from the dharma- and recompense bodies?”¹²⁴ But Renyue thinks he can redeem the finitude of Amitābha’s born body only if we resist the lure of Zhili’s path—only if we refuse to concede to Zhili that, as Keguan puts it, “impermanence” is just “identical to permanence” (*wuchang ji chang* 無常即常) and “the born body” is just “identical to the *zunte*” (*shengshen ji zunte* 生身即尊特). We can redeem the finitude of Amitābha’s body if and only if that finitude is rendered independently intelligible *as finitude*. Finitude is finite, just as impermanence is impermanent and the born body is the born body. Permanence is, on the contrary, permanent, just as the *zunte* body is *zunte*. Each is what it is—a single designation yoked to a single actuality.

Zhili insists, against Renyue, that the Integrated Teaching (which Zhili understands in his own right to be uniquely capable of appreciating the finitude *qua* finitude of finite bodies and deluded mentations) corresponds instead i.e. to the identity (*xiangji* 相即) *vis-a-vis* intermelding (*shuangrong* 雙融) of the two functions, impermanence and permanence, of the born and *zunte* bodies. *The only way* to satisfactorily account for either pole, impermanence *or* permanence, the ‘finite’ or the ‘infinite’, the born or the *zunte* bodies, is with reference to their joint intermelding—within which each falls without remainder into the other and the other into each:

“How can you, [Renyue] accuse me of excluding the ‘finite’ born body? Yet, though I do not exclude it, [this envisioning of the ‘finite’ born body] nevertheless truly differs from the same body as perceived by practitioners of the Shared (*tongjiao* 通教) and Separate Teachings (*biejiao* 別教). This is because, for practitioners of the Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教), the two functions of permanence and impermanence are mutually identical (*xiangji* 相即). On account of this, the three bodies are together and alike [manifest in] the wondrous object [of visualization], and no [single body] has ever been other than the Secret Wondrousness (*mimiao* 密妙).”¹²⁵

Zhili here makes something explicit that has remained more or less *implicit* throughout this discussion—namely that the Buddha’s three bodies mirror the structure of the Tiantai Three Truths. Resonating through Renyue’s compulsively repeated conviction that the born is the born body and the *zunte* the *zunte*—is a concomitant demand that the Two Truths be kept *separate*. The Truth of Provisionality is the Truth of Provisionality, and Emptiness Emptiness. Each and every moment of experience, we might think, will bear out *both* some differentiated “provisional” appearance, *as well as* an underlying representation of unity. Neither can ever be found without the other.

And yet Zhili means something quite different from what Renyue means when the latter says that “[the Contemplation of] Emptiness corresponds to his recompense body (*baoshen* 報身); [the Contemplation of] Provisionality corresponds to his response body; and the

¹²⁴ 豈今但應而無法報? Vol. 34, No. 1719, Scroll 9 [0330c19]

¹²⁵ 雖復不遺，實不同前二教人見，蓋常、無常二用相即，故此三身同為妙境，圓人在昔無非祕妙故也。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p24

[Contemplation of] the Middle corresponds to his dharma-body.”¹²⁶ From at least the time that Renyue declares, *even* prior to his proverbial turn, that the “three-thousand” (*sanqian* 三千) are but the “dharma of conventional truth included by the nature of the mind,” the homology between the Tiantai Three Truths (*sandi* 三諦) and three bodies (*sanshen* 三身) becomes, for him, fodder for his own signature partitive gambit. The contemplation of external and determinate marks of bodies in a joint-residence land belongs *alone* to the Provisional (*jiadi* 假諦) or Conventional Truth (*sudi* 俗諦); and is *ipso facto* confined to the perception of the born or response body that constitutively resides there. Renyue remains, from beginning to end, a Tiantai scholar—and thus must account for the “mutual identity” of the Two Truths at some level. But he fully outsources the locus of the “mutual identity” of the Two Truths onto the Third, in which *alone* the Three Truths are identical to one another.

Zhili claims Renyue has lost sight of the crux of the matter when he “fails to recognize that the three bodies are of a singular essence” (*sanshen yi ti* 三身一體), such that “any one of them taken up [at random] is all three at once” (*ju yi ji san* 舉一即三). And yet the three bodies—response, recompense, and dharma—are neither fully indistinct nor separate from each other (*buji buli* 不即不離) in this “singular essence.” The three bodies, like the Three Truths, are always all *four* of three (*san* 三), one (*yi* 一), not-three (*fei san* 非三), and not-one (*fei yi* 非一). For a “practitioner of the Perfect Teaching” such as Renyue aspires to be, to neglect this—amounts to nothing short, Zhili thinks, of an “incurable disease” (*gaohuangbing* 膏肓病).¹²⁷ Zhili’s point is rather that in the wondrous object of the visualization practice, *all Three Contemplations* (of Emptiness, Provisionality, and their Middle) contemplate *all three bodies* (born, recompense, and dharma)—*in* (and *as*) the 84,000 marks and fine characteristics of Amitābha’s body. How, indeed, could Amitābha’s body and its marks admit of so much as a modicum of separation from the Three-fold nature?

To call Amitābha’s body *zunte* is not, for Zhili, to impute to it any characteristic set and quantity of marks, by which to discriminate it from other bodies which are not his own. Amitābha’s *zunte* body, though it is in one sense *none other* than the born body with 84,000 marks, incarnates the intrinsic *otherness* of this body *to itself*, recasts it, as is, into a portal and hub for the omni-inter-circulation of all bodies and marks within each other. This is just what it means, for the Three Contemplations to perceive all three three bodies in any one body taken up at random, i.e. to perceive the identity and intermelding (i.e. Contemplation of the Middle 中觀; *fashen* 法身) between, on the one hand, the provisional aspect (*jiaguan* 假觀; *yingshen* 應身) of some particular body, and on the other, the transcendence and negation (*kongguan* 空觀; *baoshen*

¹²⁶ 空即報也，假即應也，中即法也。X56n0948 岳閣梨十諫書 p9

¹²⁷ Though Zhili just a few lines before had asked, “how could the illnesses and afflictions [of a bodhisattva] be in any way separable from the dharma-realm [of which each one is alone the entirety]? And how could any phenomenal presence be anything other than the secret wondrousness” 豈可病惱離於法界，有何一事非祕妙耶？X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p24 It’s unclear whether Zhili perceives this irony...? Musn’t Renyue’s “incurable disease” equally be in no way separable from the entire dharma-realm?

報身) of the the same body. When Vaidehi envisions Amitābha's *zunte* body, she sees, as Zhiyi might put it, "first just this one Buddha." And "then the Buddhas of the ten directions, [...] all manifest right there in front of her"¹²⁸ as if "she were looking at her own reflection in a pool's mirrored surface."¹²⁹ Vaidehi passes over onto the far side of the visualized *zunte* body of Amitābha; and on the reflected surface of that body, she passes into further limitless others, all seen at once to be none other than her own.

But this *zunte* dimension cannot be confined to a Buddha's body; it's just as crucial to see in just what sense the Three Contemplations (*sanguan* 三觀) contemplate the Buddha's Three Bodies (on homology with the Three Truths) *within* any moment of the visualization practice, without exception, from the initial contemplation of the setting sun through the contemplation of one's own body reborn atop a shining lotus flower. Every moment of *your* experience is imprinted with this three-fold character inscribed twice, once on the side of the contemplating subject and again on the side of the contemplated object. In place of Renyue's one-to-one axiom, i.e. according to which a single *zunte* designation is yoked to a single *zunte* actuality—the *zunte* body instead, in Zhili's hands, matches *three* to *three* (a subjective three-fold to a homologous objective three-fold).

The signifier *zunte* emerges from the antinomic coincidence between these two poles: (1) Amitābha's finite 84,000-marked born body remains throughout the finite born body it always was (*vis-a-vis* the Truth of Provisionality). And (2) the same 84,000 marks are intrinsically "sent away beyond themselves"¹³⁰ (*vis-a-vis* the Truth of Emptiness). But *what's more*, at the point of the Middle where these two poles coincide, which itself remains "peculiarly unfixed" to any one locus,¹³¹ these 84,000 marks permanently dwell within the very illimitable otherness into which they are born out. In this "what's more," the *zunte* body rises up from the middle of these first two dimensions, materializing the oblique continuity of "dwelling in" (*zhu* 住) and "being beyond" (*li* 離). As Zhili put it above, "since each [dharma, just as it is,] is [identical to] the four virtues [i.e. is permanence, blissful, self, and pure], and is furthermore referred to as supreme and unsurpassable, how could there be so much as a single sentient being or dharma that is not *zunte*?"¹³² And what we just said with respect to Amitābha's body can be said *mutatis mutandis* of the dung-beetle's body, and for the exact same reason: on the one hand, the dung beetle

¹²⁸ translation altered slightly from the Ziporyn, 初見一佛，次見十方佛，不用神通往見佛，唯住此處見諸佛。Ziporyn (2016) pp273-5

¹²⁹ translation altered slightly from the Ziporyn, 見佛相好，如照水鏡，自見其形。Ibid.

¹³⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic* (p120) Henceforth abbreviated to SL.

¹³¹ This expression occurs exactly twice in the Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi. The first instance comes in the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論: "Human speech is not just a blowing of air. Speech has something *of which* it speaks, something it refers to.' Yes but what it refers to is *peculiarly unfixed*." Ziporyn (2009) p11 夫言非吹也。言者有言，其所言者特未定也。ZZJS p57 And the second instance comes in the *Dazong shi* 大宗師 "Our understanding can be in the right only by virtue of a relation of dependence on something, and what it depends on is always *peculiarly unfixed*." Ziporyn (2009) p39 夫知有所待而後當，其所待者特未定也。JJZS p164

¹³² 既皆四德，復稱無上，豈一人一法非尊特耶？X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p15

remains a dung beetle through and through. The beetle never lets up from shoveling shit for so much as a solitary second; but in just this stubborn perseverance, it absorbs and pervades with the intermelled dharma-realm (*yuanrong fajie* 圓融法界) of which it is uniquely the “entire part” (*quanfen* 全分).

The *zunte* body concretizes the Truth of the Middle between Provisionality and Emptiness, between “dwelling in” and “being beyond” some given limit. And because the Middle corresponds with the dharma-body in the Tiantai trikaya scheme, we can wager a more speculative theoretical hypothesis. We’ll recall the constitutive ambiguity of the *zunte* body: does it correspond to the upper limit of the lowly response body? Or the lower limit of the recompense body on high? Is it a “superior response body” (*shengying shen* 勝應身) or a recompense body “outwardly made functional for others’ sake” (*tashouyong* 他受用)? Zhiyi leaves this question unanswered.

The *zunte* body, I reckon, is situated somewhere between the two paradoxical species from Borges’s self-purportedly all-encompassing taxonomy of animals—between the species “those included in this classification” and the species “*et cetera*”, i.e. ‘all animals who have no place in this classification’.¹³³ The *zunte* body, in Zhili’s hands, is constitutively *gone*—as it renders any finite body itself gone—from its own place. Though it alternatively classified as a response or a recompense body, it does not have any proper locality within the *trikaya* categorization schema. It incarnates, instead, an *a priori* obstacle to the systematic closure of the *trikaya* structure in Tiantai thought. Renyue had put the *zunte* body to work shoring up the boundaries of the tripartition between the response, recompense, and dharma-bodies, ensuring that each remains confined to its respective conceptual sphere. Yes, Renyue will agree, the three-bodies *are* of a singular “essence” (*ti* 體); but this just means that the dharma-body which is beyond all marks and measure, and which is neither “superior nor inferior” (*fei sheng fei lie* 非勝非劣) is itself discretely identical to each of the other two *qua* ground (*er sheng er lie* 而勝而劣). Renyue does *not* mean that the response *just is* a recompense body, or that “the born body *just is* a *zunte* body” (*sheng ji zunte* 生即尊特). Zhili counters that in the *zunte* body, “the superior is discerned” in seamless “identity with the inferior” (*jilie bian sheng* 即劣辨勝). The *zunte* gives body to what *eludes* the three-fold classification—because *it is* this very three-fold, in its entirety, indelibly fastened on, like a parasite, to the irreducibly determinate contours of some particular finite body (like Amitābha’s).

But how can the dharma-body, traditionally thought to be constitutively indivisible, split apart into an unmanifest *genus* and a *manifest* species “dharma-nature” or *zunte*? Does this self-diremption hypothesis then not precisely infringe upon the intrinsic nature of the dharma-body?

¹³³ Borges (*Otras Inquisiciones*) p111 In his essay “The Analytic Language of John Wilkins,” Jorge Luis Borges writes of a fictional “Chinese” taxonomy system called the Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge (Emporio celestial de conocimientos benévolos). Borges generates Russel’s paradox by including, among a series of categories each of which discriminates a rather arbitrary, though discriminable criterion (e.g. “those belonging to the Emperor,” “embalmed ones,” “fabled ones,” “those that tremble as if they were mad,” also two paradoxical blanket categories, “those included in this classification” (incluidos en esta clasificación) as well as “etcétera,” i.e. all those *not* included in this classification.

The dharma-body, these Tiantai writers think, admits of absolutely no intrinsic being or marks that could prevent it from splitting apart and becoming its own opposite, i.e. this discrete, finite body here. It goes forth undivided *into this division*; it is what, in the language of the *Qiwulun*, goes uniquely “undivided wherever a division is made” (*fen yezhe you bufen ye* 分也者有不分也).¹³⁴ For Zhili, the dharma-body does not merely *ground* some finite response body, only to draw back from it into some discretely non-manifest, markless respite; it fully passes over into it—such that “down to the measliest excrescence of mind or matter” (*yixin yichen zhiyijiwei* 一心一塵，至一極微), each is in itself the “intermelded dharma-realm in its entirety” (*yuanrong fajie quanfen* 圓融法界全分). The dharma-body is, like space itself, *uniquely* capable of going forth in continuity with itself across this break and into its own opposite (i.e. some one finite body like Amitābha’s, and no other). On the one hand, it can be said to *lose* itself in every such going forth; and yet precisely because its *utter* paradoxical marklessness demands that it collapse into and tarry with any and all finite marks, this loss is indistinguishable from its self-recovery.¹³⁵ As Hegel might put it, the dharma-body “wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment,” i.e. in the boundless finitude of some one *zunte* body, “it finds itself.”¹³⁶ But this dimension of the dharma-body’s *own* uniqueness belongs, recast in the module of the dharma-nature *zunte* body, just to the sublime torsion of every last body in every last land.¹³⁷ For the index of a body like space itself can only just be ‘whatever lies on both sides of any given limit’. Space just *is* this unconditional continuity with whatever lies on the other side of any break, which makes of every loss a self-recovery, and every expulsion an incorporation. All bodies are strung together into this oblique *zunte* unity in just being alike ‘toward-the-limit’, so that, as the Nirvana Sutra puts it, “there is nothing in all the world that is not space facing space.”¹³⁸

The dharma-body in Tiantai theory, even leaving the unique *zunte* phenomenon aside, is already ruptured by an internal split between genus and species; it is, on the one hand, the unmanifest ground of all bodies and thus *no-body*—as Zhiyi puts it, “the body that is *no-body*” (*feishen zhi shen* 非身之身). And yet it is, on the other hand, also one body *among* the three bodies. So which is it, then? Is the dharma-body a body or is it ‘no-body’? Renyue answers that it is a self-same *no-body at all*. He insists that the highest Pure Land of Permanent Quiescent Light (*changjiguang jingtu* 常寂光淨土), just like the dharma-body who alone “resides”¹³⁹ there, must be “free of all marks” (*wuxiang* 無相). Picking up an old cue from Seng Zhao,¹⁴⁰ Zhili

¹³⁴ Ziporyn (2009) p16 ZZJS p70

¹³⁵ My gratitude to Professor Ziporyn for helping me to clarify this thought.

¹³⁶ Hegel (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) p19

¹³⁷ I have in mind here a formulation from Merleau-Ponty’s “The Intertwining—the Chiasm”: The dharma-body which verges into its *zunte* capacity, is “not a *de facto* invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible *of* this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible [...]”

¹³⁸ 一切世間，無非虛空對於虛空。Vol. 12, No. 374, Scroll 37 [0581a]

¹³⁹ We cannot exactly say that the dharma-body “resides” in the Land of Permanent Quiescent Light, because, as both body and land are both completely indifferent to and non-dual with respect to the distinction between habitat (*yi* 依) and inhabitant (*zheng* 正).

¹⁴⁰ 以無相為無相，無相即為相

rejoins that this very attribution of the predicate of markless-ness to the markless dharma-body only ends up encumbering it *with at least this* one mark, i.e. the *mark* of ‘markless-ness’; precisely *because* he tries to siphon it off from all marks, the resultant “spurious” markless-ness is rendered inadequate to Renyue’s own notion of it. The absolutely markless dharma-body can be, instead, nowhere beyond the markless-ness *of* each and every mark of each and every body, seen to “eternally dwell” (*changzhu* 常住) of its own accord. The dharma-body is ‘no-body’, not on its own, but in the sense of giving body to the “nobody-ness” or “peculiar unfixity” (*tewei ding ye* 特未定也) of any body whatsoever.¹⁴¹

In Zhili’s hands, the *zunte* body brings the same contradiction implicit in Tiantai theorizations of the dharma-body to a point of maximal tension. In a *zunte* body, the dharma-body *qua* abstract genus encounters *itself* within its own field, in the form of its oppositional determination, as the concrete exception to its own universal marklessness; in the *zunte* body, the dharma-body finds itself *limited* to being just this one finite body among other such bodies, adorned with just these marks and not others. The *zunte* body is a “response body” (*yingshen* 應身)—and is thus the *same as* Amitābha’s 84,000 six-cubit body (*zhangliu* 丈六).¹⁴² It is equally a *recompense* body (*baoshen* 報身), presenting a spectacular surplus of otherness irreducible to the ‘same’ body. And, following a now familiar pattern, it is *neither* a response *nor* an independent recompense body—i.e. neither the same body nor an ‘other’ body.¹⁴³ In this light, what Shanyue says of the dharma-body can just as well be said of the *zunte* body: it “is both *not-recompense* and *not-response*—because it has no particular belonging of its own”¹⁴⁴ But not in the sense Renyue envisions for the dharma-body, i.e. such that it would dwell in abstract repose from the two bodies whose unity alone it represents.

The *zunte* body instead bears out and problematizes the constitutive structural role of the dharma-body, as the *third* of three in the Tiantai *trikaya* schema.¹⁴⁵ If the response body (*yingshen* 應身) corresponds to the Truth of Provisional Positing (*jiadi* 假諦), and the recompense body (*baoshen* 報身) to the Truth of Emptiness (*kongdi* 空諦), then the dharma-

¹⁴¹ 齊物論 大宗師

¹⁴² There’s reason to think, in Renyue’s defense, that Zhiyi may not have gone this far.

¹⁴³ But crucially, just as Zhiyi’s “center was fully identical to either extreme” (*ji bian er zhong* 即邊而中), its being neither ‘this’ nor ‘that’ body is itself indistinguishable from its being *either* one *or* the other of them (taken on its own). So we can equally say that a *zunte* body is *only* a response body (*weiying* 唯應) (which it will turn out cannot therein be separated from its own intrinsic otherness and infinity); and also that it is *only* a recompense body (*weibao* 唯報) (which cannot fully extricate itself from some finite base without becoming determinate in its indeterminacy).

¹⁴⁴ 法身[...]雙非報應。不偏屬故。

¹⁴⁵ There is, in fact, some scattered precedent for this claim in the classical canon. Within the same *Fahua wenju* passage from above, Zhiyi calls the *zunte* body a “dharma-body of Integrated recompense, which takes the *li* of space itself as its sole locus of residence.” 圓報法身安處空理 Vol. 34, No. 1718, Scroll 16 [0082b] Zhiyi’s scribe and successor Guanding refers to the “*zunte* body” exactly once in his *Commentary to the Nirvana Sutra* (涅槃經會疏) as “the eternal dharma-body [...] which differs from the [mere] impermanent six-cubit body.” 法身常身舍那尊特異於無常丈六。Vol. 38, No. 1767, Scroll 6 [0074b]

body brings the Truth of their Middle (*zhongdi* 中諦) (and thus all three at once) to light. The signifier *zunte* refers not to any one body among the three, but to the very *relation* between them, i.e. the “singular essence” (*yiti* 一體) of the *trikaya*. But because it incarnates, in some irreducibly finite body, the *three-fold* trikaya schema *in its entirety*,¹⁴⁶ the *zunte* body “has no particular belonging of its own” (*bu pian shu gu* 不偏屬故) within the three-fold. Again, it cannot, *qua* non-exclusive Middle (*budan zhong* 不但中), remain in place at the center; it is less an extra field than a point of transition between response and recompense bodies, between provisional locality and being-gone therefrom. For this reason, the *zunte* body (and the entire trikaya it incarnates) cannot itself be *outside* of any of the three bodies. But just because it has no discrete locus of its own (*yiwu suo zai* 一無所在), there is equally nowhere it cannot be uncovered (*wuchu bu zai* 無處不在). The *zunte* transforms and concretizes *this* structural feature of the dharma-body *qua* Middle. The *zunte* body figures the circuit, within some finite body, of the intermelding (*yuanrong* 圓融) between its provisional position and the transcendence thereof, whereby that body, being just the body it is, is *ipso facto gone* at once *beyond* it.

(10) The Finite and the ‘Infinite-Infinite’

This leads us finally back to the main question under contest (that launched us on this doctrinal wild goose hunt to begin with). We’ll recall the basic stakes. Is Amitābha’s body, as Renyue claims on behalf of the tradition, of the characteristic ‘infinite-finite’ (*youliang wuliang* 有量無量) measure of a *born* body? Or is it, as Zhili will now insist, of ‘infinite-infinite’ (*wuliang wuliang* 無量無量) measure? I’ve tried to show that Zhili’s *zunte* body figures something like a fully concretized dharma-body *qua* middle between the ‘response’ and ‘recompense’ dimensions of *any single body*, between its being-there and its being-gone, its being the same body and being an other body. One merit of this ‘concretized-dharma-body’ hypothesis is that it helps make sense of an otherwise inexplicable jump from anything Zhiyi himself ever explicitly said about the *zunte* body. Zhiyi never himself associates the *zunte* body with the measure ‘infinite-infinite’ in any classification of bodies; only a dharma-body possesses an ‘infinite-infinite’ measure. And yet we’ve seen that Zhili is now quite adamant that “when [the *Treatise on Summoning Avalokiteśvara*] sheds light on [the dharma-body as] ‘infinite-infinite’, this refers to the capacity corresponding to the revelation of [Amitābha’s] *zunte* body within the present [Visualization] Sutra.”¹⁴⁷

On the one hand, Zhili continues to refer to the same irreducibly finite body of Amitābha *as zunte*—laden with its 84,000 marks, and destined for inevitable extinction; on the other hand, this same body is nothing short of ‘infinite-infinite’. The ‘finite’ for itself is no less infinite than the ‘infinite’. And the infinite for itself is no less finite than the ‘finite’. It is *this* overzealous courting of paradox that Ando Toshio (one of the great modern Zhili apologists) reckons “cannot

¹⁴⁶ WIKI: “In Tibetan Buddhism, one common meaning of the fourth body, the svābhāvīkākāya (when understood as a different concept than dharmakāya), is that it refers to the inseparability and identity of all three kāyas.” DOES ANYONE KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS?

¹⁴⁷ 明無量無量被 [...] 今經所顯尊特之機也。X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p22

but come off as forced and irrational, however [Zhili] labors to explain it.” But if we read the two determinations ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’ through the above module of the *zunte qua* concretized dharma-body, we’ll see Zhili brings a distinctive Middle (*zhong* 中) to bear within each of them, which shines light on an often overlooked feature of the Tiantai Truth of the Middle (*zhongdi* 中諦) *tout court*.

Let us first recall, however, in its broadest outlines, the strong challenge Renyue is able to muster from Zhiyi’s Commentaries. In the *Fahua Wenju* (Commentary to the Lotus Sutra), Zhiyi had delineated *four* mutually exclusive bodily measures: some bodies, like the old monk Śākyamuni’s, are both

(I) truly and avowedly finite (‘finite-finite’);

Others are **(II) truly infinite**, though they are **spoken of as being limited** (e.g. Śākyamuni’s from the Innumerable-Lifespans Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, where he feigns passage into nirvana) (**‘finite-infinite’**);

There are, as Renyue never tires of repeating, still other bodies *like Amitābha’s*, that are **(III) truly finite**, though they are unfathomable to gods and heavenly beings alike, and are thus nevertheless **spoken of as being comparatively infinite (‘infinite-finite’)**;

And lastly, there is a (non-)body **(IV)** whose measures are **both truly and avowably infinite**, i.e. the dharma-body Buddha from the Nirvana Sutra (**‘infinite-infinite’**).

Zhili, Renyue thinks, is making a category mistake when he sorts Amitābha’s body into the fourth measure, since Zhiyi already explicitly associates it with the *third* measure, ‘truly finite—comparatively infinite’. How, Renyue asks, could Amitābha’s body belong (as Zhili now wants to insist) to both (III) and (IV)? How could the singular actuality of Amitābha’s body (corresponding to *his* name and no other) be both truly finite and truly infinite? How much clearer could it be that Zhili is imputing a contradiction to Amitābha’s body?

Elsewhere, in the *Commentary to the Sutra for Invoking Avalokiteśvara* (*Qing guanyin shu* 請觀音疏), Zhiyi mentions just two divergent ‘infinite’ measures: a born body is ‘infinite-finite’ (*youliang zhi wuliang* 有量之無量), whereas the dharma-body is otherwise, i.e. ‘infinite-infinite’ (*wuliang zhi wuliang* 無量之無量). And lest we get confused about which of these two measures Amitābha’s body corresponds to, Zhiyi elsewhere, in the *Jinguangming wenju* 金光明文句 (Commentary to the *Sutra of Golden Light*), comes right out and says that Amitābha’s body is “truly subject to limitation” (*shi you qixian* 實有齊限)¹⁴⁸—and is as such uniquely exemplary of the measure ‘infinite-finite’ (*youliang zhi wuliang* 有量之無量). Is it not then self-evident, from the text, that the measure of Amitābha’s body is not only decidedly ‘infinite-finite’ (Zhiyi says as much), but is also *ipso facto not* (as Zhili insists) ‘infinite-infinite’?

¹⁴⁸ Vol. 39, No. 1785, Scroll 2 [0053c]

What, Zhili thinks, does Renyue’s case take for granted about the two determinations ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’? A Buddha’s lifespan or bodily measure, Renyue assumes, is *either* truly ‘finite’ *or* otherwise truly ‘infinite’. But were they to stabilize into a dichotomy, these two determinations, ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’, would have to admit of a qualitative difference. And such a qualitative difference would have to draw a *limit* between one and the other, across the threshold of which the ‘finite’ would come to an end and the ‘infinite’ begin. The limit would assign to each of ‘finitude’ and ‘infinity’ its distinctive place opposite the other. Of course, Renyue will say, as always, that Amitābha’s truly ‘finite’ body is inseparable from and even co-extensive with the ‘infinite’ dharma-body which represents the identity of all determinate bodies alike, and returns to itself in each of them. The ‘finite’ and the ‘infinite’, just like the two birds from the *Nirvana Sutra*, “go about in tandem” (*shuangyou* 雙游). And neither one parts from the other’s side for so much as a moment. But the limit between them guarantees their inviolable distinction, each from the other. I’ve tried to show that Renyue mobilizes the *zunte* body to shore up the border between any two determinations like this—whether it’s a response or a recompense body (born or *zunte*), impermanence and permanence, finitude and infinity.

Zhili’s gambit instead “opens the provisional” (*kaiquan* 開權) “relative” (*xiangdai* 相待) proximity of these two determinations—‘finite’ and ‘infinite’—and inflects each into the “absolute marvel” (*juedai miao* 絕待妙) whereby each returns to itself through its other. This movement demands a more rigorous theoretical model than we find in Ando, who claims Zhili is forcing the issue to “combine [the two] opposing determinations of ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’.”¹⁴⁹ These *two* are not welded together into union. Zhili’s response to Renyue comes closer, I reckon, to the transition from finitude to infinity in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, which moves through the famous character of “spurious infinity” (which I reckon resembles Renyue’s gambit) en route to a so-called “affirmative infinity,” which approximates Zhili’s reading of the ‘infinite-infinite’ measure of a *zunte* body. Though we’ll see that this analogy runs into a snag, which casts the the disparity between Hegel’s and Zhili’s respective dialectics into telling relief.

From the outset, I’ll say this much, by way of a tentative methodological stipulation (that will surely leave some readers unsatisfied)¹⁵⁰: an unavoidable ambiguity comes to light in the notion of infinity expressed in absolutely any language given to theorize it. So long as ‘infinity’ (*wuliang* 無量) is conceived of as transcending the finite, it becomes therein bounded

¹⁴⁹ 由結合有量與無量的相反規定 Ando p273

¹⁵⁰ Chad Hansen has argued for the incoherence of the “special logic” defense for the interpretation of a Chinese text. According to this general strategy, the interpreter projects onto the text an internally consistent, yet fully heterogeneous and “incommensurable” rationality, the integrity of which is in turn distorted by any attempt to translate the “original intent of the Chinese philosopher in question” into more familiar terms of Western philosophical intelligibility. Hansen suggests that the imperative to “Think like a Chinese” is “either misleading or impossible to follow.” If we agree that such an assumption of radical incommensurability of logical schemata is methodologically if not epistemologically untenable, it’s clear that the opposite strategy—which assumes full inter-translatability between Western and Chinese philosophical schemata—is also untenable. We have no recourse, then, except to take up directly in the ever-shifting tangle of resemblances, samenesses, and differences between heterogeneous terrains of inquiry. Hansen (*Language and Logic in Ancient China*) pp10-17

by the finite, and is thus itself “de-infiniteized”,¹⁵¹ made into a finite, limited thing. Though underlying theoretic-ideological infrastructures and grammatical technologies of negation are bound to inconceivable variation across time and space, we can nevertheless make out two broadly construed trans-cultural and trans-historical strategies of reckoning with this ambiguity in the notion of ‘infinity’—two divergent programs of “acting toward otherness, ways that transform the self and shape what is viewed or construed as the ‘other’” (to use Angelica Nuzzo’s nice formulation).

The first strategy, to which the post-turn Renyue reverts, represses the problem. It insists that infinity is strictly infinite and finitude strictly finite. Only a steadfastly policed limit between the ‘finite’ and the ‘infinite’ can hold this repression in place. In the language of Tiantai Zhiyi, we could say that Renyue’s gambit remains situated in the “relative marvel” (*xiangdai miao* 相待妙). We could just as well say, using Hegel’s language, that it remains entrenched within the canon of the abstract “understanding” (*verstand*). Renyue’s conception of the transcendence at stake in the *zunte* body cannot but entail “a relationship of externality between Above (i.e. that which transcends) and Below (i.e. that which is transcended).”¹⁵²

The second strategy gives way to the same dialectic which, under the terms of this first repressive strategy, “calls to be discharged and elaborated.”¹⁵³ It reaches a zenith in Zhili’s thought, and provokes a gut-level reaction in Renyue, causing him to turn away. I’ve argued that the *zunte* body, in Zhili’s hands, secretes the concretized negativity of a dharma-body which encounters itself under the sign of its opposite, as *this* body (e.g. Amitābha’s, a dung beetle’s, etc.) *qua finite*, as delimited by these characteristic marks (84,000, shit shoveling, etc.). In this strange body, “not so much known as excessively signified,”¹⁵⁴ Renyue is exposed to the object of his anxiety incarnate. It is this “errant object and uncanny remainder” that Renyue pleads for Zhili to keep under wraps before outsiders of *their* Home-mountain sect catch wind of it. Renyue flees in the face of *this* anxiety, and deploys his own doppelgänger *zunte* body to keep the scandalous glitch that Zhili threatens to unleash into the delimited totality of the three bodies of the *trikaya* interned at the vanishing locus of the border that would keep ‘finitude’ and ‘infinity’ from “being just mixed up indiscriminately together” (*hundun bufen* 混沌不分).

The *zunte* body, in Zhili’s hands, is *both* fully infinite (*wuliang zhi wuliang* 無量之無量) *and* fully finite, and each *as* the other. Amitābha’s *zunte* body is no less ‘infinite-infinite’ for being at once irrevocably finite through and through. Though there are never any less than *two birds*, which “count as two distinct identities” (*biyou fen ye* 必有分也),¹⁵⁵ they nevertheless “go forth into one another” (*shuangyou* 雙游) whether above or below, in *samsara* or *nirvana*. A

¹⁵¹ Chiesa, Johnston (2025) p205

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Santner (2022) p88

¹⁵⁴ Santner (2022) p84

¹⁵⁵ I’m referencing the closing lines of the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論: “He did not know if Zhou had been dreaming he was a butterfly, or if a butterfly was now dreaming it was Zhou. Surely, Zhou and a butterfly count as two distinct identities!” Ziporyn (2009) p21 不知周之夢為胡蝶與，胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。ZZJS p90

doppelgänger thread runs from Spinoza through Schelling and Hegel,¹⁵⁶ according to which “the distinction between the finite and the infinite is a distinction internal to the infinite itself” [Johnston]. We saw Zhili say what amounts to roughly the same: “when you obtain to permanence, both functions [permanence *and impermanence*] go forth, fully intermelled, into one another.” Whether we follow Zhili or otherwise this Spinozist lineage in the post-Kantian aftermath, finitude and infinity are alike subtracted from their opposition, not by resolving it, but by letting this very opposition itself fully pervade both of its poles. Thinkers in disparate times and places strategically diverge when faced with this paradox, which can break forth from any notion of infinity. And this strategic divergence opens up a split axis of intelligibility: along the broad lines of the first strategy, we could track thinkers across such heterogeneous fields of research and domains of inquiry as Kant and Renyue; and along the lines of the second, we could track as unlikely of bedfellows as the Zhuangzi of the Inner Chapters, Zhili, and Hegel.

How does the Hegel analogy shed light on the relation between the two split faces of the *zunte* body, construed by Renyue and Zhili, respectively? If we elaborate either the determination ‘infinity’ or ‘finitude’ as such and in its own terms,¹⁵⁷ we find that it will have turned into its other. We’ll start on the side of Renyue’s concept of ‘infinite-infinite’ measure. So long as Renyue understands the ‘infinite’ measure of the dharma-body as the “mere beyond of the finite,”¹⁵⁸ as a sheer indeterminate being-beyond all marks, he makes of it an *other* to the finite. It is *non*-finite; and so we must take the negation of the finitude beyond which it constitutively falls into account of what the ‘infinite’ itself is. But so long as the ‘infinite’ holds itself aloft, on the far side of the finitude it negates—we confer a limit upon the ‘infinite’ which was, of course, supposed to be *free* of all limits. To exactly the degree that Renyue holds fast to infinity *qua* infinity, and “the determinacy of the beyond [...] is not let go”,¹⁵⁹ he makes of it, Hegel can help us see, into a finite thing. Such an “infinity” is “spurious” (das Schlecht-Unendliche) not, as Houlgate is right to point out, “because it is somehow morally suspect, but because it is not actually infinite.”¹⁶⁰ The ‘infinite’ cannot bear to be bounded by any limit that would purport to hold it aloft from finitude without becoming the very thing it sets out constitutively to negate, i.e. without becoming finite. This, I take it, is *precisely* where Zhili identifies Renyue’s resistance.

This is the result from the first direction of the foregoing bilateral transition: the ‘infinite’ becomes ‘finite’, just by holding fast to its determination of infinity. My modest contention is that Zhili and Hegel’s respective construals of the transition from ‘infinity’ to ‘finitude’ run alongside one another, up to the point where we reverse directions. How does the transition run in Hegel from finitude to infinity? Houlgate puts it clearly:

When Abraham sacrifices the ram, the latter is reduced to ash. As a finite thing, however, the ram is born to die, to pass into non-being. That means that it is born to become, and

¹⁵⁶ For more, see Ziporyn (2019).

¹⁵⁷ In Hegel’s presentation, limit, limitation, finitude, are all subtly different determinations, each of which turns into the next from within. Some of that subtlety cannot but be lost in my re-contextualized rehearsal of this transition from finitude to infinity.

¹⁵⁸ SL p111

¹⁵⁹ SL p113

¹⁶⁰ Houlgate (2022) p234

so is intrinsically, something else, such as ash (or an equivalent). The ash is thus not simply other than the ram, but is the realization of the latter's intrinsic nature: it is what the ram itself has become. In the other that it becomes, therefore, the ram "goes together with itself" and so continues to be, albeit in a completely new form. In this way, by continuing beyond its own demise, it constitutes unending – infinite – being.¹⁶¹

When the finite ram body is burnt to ashes, it goes forth into its other as into "something else." It is no longer ram, but rather ashes. And yet, it "goes together with itself" into this negation. But reason equivocates here, doesn't it? *What* exactly "goes together with itself"? There is infinite "un-ending" being only because one finite thing (a ram) becomes another (ashes). Infinite being is the minimal index of what remains of the ram once it has gone up in flames.¹⁶² So really what goes forth with itself across the qualitative transformation from ram to ashes is not the ram *per se*. When the ram ends and the ash begins, infinite being is what "does not end"¹⁶³ and what preserves its "identity with itself" throughout the process in which one thing passes into another. This infinity *qua* "unendlichkeit," Hegel will tell us, is but a "spurious" infinity, in contrast to what he calls "affirmative infinity." We might think, by analogy, of Renyue's insistently markless (*wuxiang* 無相) and indeterminate dharma-body (*fashen* 法身) the unity of which is merely represented in any response body, whether inferior or superior, born or *zunte*. But the same transition in *Zhili* from finitude to infinity (or impermanence to permanence) seems to circumvent this "spurious infinity," jumping straight to "affirmative infinity," into which "spurious infinity" figures as one finite moment of an infinite structural oscillation.

This is the result from the first direction of the foregoing bilateral transition: the 'infinite' becomes 'finite', just by holding fast to its determination of infinity. My modest contention is that *Zhili* and Hegel's respective construals of the transition from 'infinity' to 'finitude' run alongside one another, up to the point of a reversal in direction. From the opposite side (i.e. from finitude to infinity), we'll notice their paths diverge. How then does the transition from finitude to infinity run, first of all, in Hegel?

When Abraham sacrifices the ram, the latter is reduced to ash. As a finite thing, however, the ram is born to die, to pass into non-being. That means that it is born to become, and so is intrinsically, something else, such as ash (or an equivalent). The ash is thus not simply other than the ram, but is the realization of the latter's intrinsic nature: it is what the ram itself has become. In the other that it becomes, therefore, the ram "goes together with itself" and so continues to be, albeit in a completely new form. In this way, *by continuing beyond its own demise*, it constitutes *unending – infinite – being*.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Houlgate (2022) p230

¹⁶² Zhiyi actually accounts for this, in the *Jingguangming xuanyi* 金光明玄義, under the category of "the provisionality of continuous succession" (*xiangxu jia* 相續假), using a very similar metaphor—"referring to the fire within the firewood" (*ruzhi xin wei huoer* 如指薪為火爾). Vol. 39, No. 1783, Scroll 1 [0004b]

¹⁶³ Houlgate (2022) p230

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

When the finite ram body is burnt to ashes, it goes forth into its other as into “something else.” It is no longer ram, but ashes. As Hegel puts it, “finite things ‘are’,” but in such a way that they “send themselves away beyond themselves. [...] They *are*, but the truth of this being is their *end*.”¹⁶⁵ Expressed in Renyue’s language, we might put the same point like this: the finitude of Amitābha’s body consists in being bound at some point to cease to be, either in space (when it comes to an end—runs up against the empty space that surrounds it on all sides) or in time (given its un-outstrip-able being-toward-succession). And yet *something* in such a body “goes together with itself” into the ashes; something of Amitābha goes together into the life that succeeds his. Reason¹⁶⁶ would then, at this juncture, seem to be thinking *like Renyue*. Because really what exactly “goes together with itself” across the break? There is infinite “un-ending” being only because one finite thing (a ram) becomes an other thing (ashes). Infinite being is the minimal index of what remains of the ram once it has gone up in flames. But what really goes forth with itself across the qualitative transformation from ram to ashes is not the ram per se. When the ram ends and the ash begins, infinite being is what “does not end” and what preserves its “identity with itself” throughout the process in which one thing passes into another.¹⁶⁷ In Renyue’s language, the same unborn, undying dharma-body substrate goes forth unbroken into the life and body of Amitābha’s successor, i.e. Guanyin, who will have become a Buddha named Universal Shining Merit Mountain Sovereign (*puguang gongde shanwang rulai* 普光功德山王如來). This infinity qua “unendlichkeit,” Hegel will tell us, remains a “spurious” infinity, in contrast to what he calls “affirmative infinity.” Renyue’s insistently markless (*wuxiang* 無相) dharma-body (*fashen* 法身) is but the un-manifest *a priori* unity of any response body, whether inferior or superior, born or *zunte*.

But, as we have seen, the same transition in Zhili from finitude to infinity (or impermanence to permanence) circumvents passage through “spurious infinity”—and jumps straight to what Hegel calls “affirmative infinity,” into which infinity figures as one finite moment of an undecidable structural oscillation between finitude and infinity, impermanence and permanence. The finitude of a *zunte* body, as we’ve seen, comes to foster an infinity that does not come upon it “as an alien force.”¹⁶⁸ Infinity breaks open from the inherent logic of its finitude left to play itself out. What carries on beyond a body’s own demise is not some other unending thing, but its *own* marks *endlessly* drawn out. To quote Zhanran, “*this very* limitation is omnipresent, is identical to interpenetration, since it pervades everywhere. It is the utmost limitation, and at the same time the fullest omnipresence.”¹⁶⁹ The *zunte* marks of a dung beetle are just these same dung beetle marks “eternal dwelling” (*changzhu* 常住) in the inter-resonance (and convergence-in-divergence) of all bodies and marks within all bodies and marks. To borrow

¹⁶⁵ SL p120

¹⁶⁶ Hegel is not making this argument *per se*, but rather rehearsing the dialectic *qua* necessary internal transformation of these determinations when spelled out according to their own terms.

¹⁶⁷ SL p137

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ 此局即通遍一切故，局之極也，通之盛也。Vol. 34, No. 17, Scroll 5 [0247b] See also Ziporyn (2012) pp246-55

a handy expression from Lacan's *Seminar XX*, Amitābha's *zunte* body (which is no less the very same six-cubit born body, with its same 84,000 marks) "has a limit—and it is to that extent that it is infinite."¹⁷⁰

This, I take it, is what the Tiantai Third Truth, i.e. the Truth of the Middle (*zhongdi* 中諦) amounts to for Zhili at this moment, in this final months of his life. The 'infinite-infinite' measure of a *zunte* body is neither *more* infinite nor less finite than any other body. Finitude and infinity rather correspond to two poles of a split constellation. The *zunte* measure 'infinite-infinite' indexes, as Hegel would put it, the "incomprehensibility" of the "separation" between these two determinations, the fact that "neither" has any "truth" independently of the passage it carries out with and within other. The infinity of the measure 'infinite-infinite' is no longer set apart from its other in finitude, and so is *in this paradoxical sense* no longer finite (only by coinciding with finitude seamlessly); it is thus "the true infinite,"¹⁷¹ returning to itself *vis-a-vis* this unavoidable and constitutive detour through its own other. And equally the finite returns to itself, as each of these two determinations *qua* separate (finitude, infinity) is alike reincorporated as a *finite* moment in the oscillation that breaks out from within them.

This comparison also provides a fresh comparative vista onto the "roundness" (*yuan* 圓) of the Tiantai Integrated Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教) understanding of the Middle (*zhong* 中):¹⁷² "the image of true infinity, bent back into itself, becomes the *circle* [...] *without beginning and end*"¹⁷³ In the circle of infinity, either determination, whether 'finite' or 'infinite', 'impermanent' or 'permanent', stands to its other as if to none other than itself. It's for *this* reason that the "truly infinite [...] no longer exhibits" the "quality of limiting and being limited," as Houlgate puts it. In the *zunte* body, each of finitude and infinity (just like the impermanent and the permanent) goes forth "roundly interfused" into the other. Each becomes one of two reversible extremities of a bifid absolute,¹⁷⁴ expressed phenomenally as an undecidable structural oscillation.

Thus, like the *zunte* body itself, its 'infinite-infinite' measure is ill-suited, as I've understood it here, to figure one element among others in a mutually-exclusive hierarchy of measures ordered from least to most 'infinite', most to least 'finite'. Instead, the sense of 'infinity' which it brings to bear is no longer limited by, i.e. no longer stands in opposition to the

¹⁷⁰ Lacan, *Seminar XX*, p8

¹⁷¹ SL p137

¹⁷² We'll note that the Tiantai notion of "roundness" *qua* perfection (*yuan* 圓) *itself* has roots in Natively Chinese Daoist metaphors like the empty hub of the wheel from *Daode jing* 道德經 11, as well as the Pivot of Daos (*daoshu* 道樞) and Heaven the Potter's Wheel (*tianjun* 天鈞) from Zhuangi's *Qiwu lun* 齊物論. Zhiyi *himself* avails of the Zhuangzian notion of *huanzhong* 環中, i.e. "taking up in the center," at two crucial moments from his two great theoretical masterpieces, the *Mohezhiquan* 摩訶止觀 and *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義. I hope, in future work, to show that certain figures of absolute value in Tiantai discourse, such as the concept of the "non-exclusive middle" (*budan zhong* 不但中) and the "roundness" at stake in the highest order in the classification of teachings (*panjiao* 叛教) scheme, i.e. the "Round" or "Integrated Teaching" (*yuanjiao* 圓教) owe a great deal to this Daoist conceptual lineage.

¹⁷³ SL p149

¹⁷⁴ Lacan, *Seminar XIX*, p106: "The bifidity of the One is therefore also the 'gap [. . .] of the two'."

finite as its other. And yet this does not mean that the *zunte* body reduces the ‘finite’ to its own independently ‘infinite’ measure. It thus expands, in Zhili’s hands, to index the ‘infinite’ of any finite dharma, taken as it is. As Zhili himself puts it, “since every last dharma, just as it is, is *permanent, blissful, self, and pure*—and is furthermore itself referred to as supreme and unsurpassable, how could there be so much as a single individual or objective dharma that is *not zunte?*”¹⁷⁵

Santner provides us with a useful touchstone for the analogy when he synthesizes, in broad strokes, the difference between the Kantian and the Hegelian ‘beyond’. He writes that “what Kant located in a noumenal realm beyond phenomena becomes, for Hegel, a kind of conceptual agitation immanent to the realm of phenomena that thereby ceases to be a realm at all in the sense of a consistent whole delimited by knowable boundaries.”¹⁷⁶ Much as Hegel transforms Kant’s *noumenon* into the “indwelling pulsation”¹⁷⁷ of all finite determinations—Zhili’s *zunte* body draws Renyue’s markless dharma-body *qua* genus down into its own putative opposite, into the 84,000 marks of Amitābha’s born body (for instance), from which alone, he thinks, it can win its truth. And just as Santner describes Hegel’s transformed “noumenon” as an “agitation” that concretizes the inconsistency and constitutive, ineffaceable openness of the realm of phenomena¹⁷⁸, so too I would contend, does Zhili’s *zunte* body testify that the Mahāyāna (and more specifically Tiantai) Buddhist *trikaya* is not “delimited by knowable boundaries” between the three bodies that compose it. As it fails to observe any one place, it does *not* amount to a fully constituted fourth body, in addition to the first three. But re-cast in the strange, ex-timate lights of the *zunte*, which incarnates, in some one particular body, the singular essence (*yi* 一) of the *trikaya tout court*, the three (*san* 三) bodies are seen nevertheless to be “not-three” (*busan* 不三), though they do “not” thereby just collapse back into “one” (*buyi* 不一).

¹⁷⁵ 一一無非常樂我淨 [...] 既皆四德，復稱無上，豈一人一法非尊特耶？X56n0948-2 法智遺編解謗書 p15

¹⁷⁶ Santner (2022) pxii

¹⁷⁷ SL p442

¹⁷⁸ We might also think, in this connection, of the “zero-level” subjective position of Ziporyn’s “wild-card,” which Moeller and D’Ambrosio describe in strikingly homologous terms: “The wild-card people [...] contribute to its continuation by introducing the wild card—a card that represents the permanent openness and contingency that lie at the heart of the game and constitutes its empty center, the hub around which it endlessly revolves. The new wild card differs from all the others precisely by being the only one that can be the same as all others. It thereby manifests as a Daoist “zero perspective” on and in the game. It can playfully assume all the values represented by the surface of the cards, but it cannot be identified with any of them.” D’Ambrosio, Moeller (2017) p2