

On Skillfulness in Ways & Means

(*S. Upāya Kauśalya Parivartaḥ*, *C. Fāngbiàn Pǐn*, *J. Hōben Pon*, 方便品)

A comprehensive study of the second chapter of The Lotus Sūtra

Including a full English translation of Zhìyǐ's commentary on this chapter in his
'Words & Passages of The Lotus Sūtra' (*C. Fāhuá Wénjù*, *J. Hokke Mongu*, 法華文句)

&

And appendixes with translations of other supporting commentaries attributed to
Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Zhìyǐ & Nichiren

Introductions, translations and footnotes
By Peter Lunde Johnson

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Dedicated to An Lạc

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Part #1:

**Zhìyǐ's commentary on the meaning of the chapter's title
'On Skillfulness in Ways & Means'**

**From Volume 3 of
The Words & Passages of The Lotus Sūtra
(C. Fahuá Wénjù, J. Hokke Mongu, 法華文句)**

Part #1: Zhìyǐ's commentary on the meaning of the chapter's title 'On Skillfulness in Ways & Means' From Volume 3 of The Words & Passages of The Lotus Sūtra

Introduction

The first part of Zhìyǐ's commentary on this chapter is about the meaning of its title, 'On Skillfulness in Ways & Means' (S. Upāya Kauśalya Parivartaḥ, C. Fāngbiàn Pǐn, J. Hōbenpon, 方便品). This is a reference to skillfulness in doing the Buddha's work, which is teaching sentient beings about:

1. Awakening to life's greater purpose (bodhi, 菩提), which is the dual (provisional & transcendental) knowledge that delivers all sentient beings from suffering and affliction
2. Attaining spiritual freedom (nirvāṇa, 涅槃), which is the result of letting go of attachments to the afflictions that are innate to the very nature of sentient existence.

Other Buddhist sūtras teach about:

1. The encouragement of virtue and discouragement of evil. This was taught to ordinary sentient beings (prthagjana, 凡夫) on the six lower paths in the sphere of desire (between heaven and hell).
2. Becoming free from the habitual afflictions ingrained in the mind that have been caused by actions committed in the past (pūrvā karman, 先業); This is rooting up attachments to false beliefs and intentions beset with afflicted motivations through cultivating techniques of introspective meditation. These techniques were taught to students of the noble path (śrāvakas, 聲聞) through the words of others and realized by those awakening to the afflicted conditions of sentient existence (pratyeka buddhas, 辟支佛) through their own inner realizations.
3. Awakening to an ever-greater sense of life's purpose on the noble path (as bodhisattvas, 菩薩) and so also bestowing spiritual deliverance on fellow sentient beings.

The Lotus Sūtra is distinguished from other sūtras in seamlessly integrating these three provisional (preliminary, preparatory) methods with the timeless work of the Buddha in fulfilling a transcendental vow to awaken all sentient beings to life's greater purpose and lead them all to spiritual freedom. This supreme enlightenment goes beyond space, time and our individual lives in this world.

In explaining the difference between 'ways & means' and 'skillfulness', Zhìyǐ said that:

- * Ways & means (upāya, 方便) refers to the methodologies of teaching and practice that produce blessings of merit (that which is worthy and noble of purpose) as well as transcendental knowledge and discernment of this purpose.
- * Skillfulness (kauśalya, 善權) refers to being provisioned with the capacity for employing these ways and means, not only in one's own practice but also in the deliverance of others.

He then goes on to explain that there are different levels of skillfulness in ways & means.

In dividing them into two levels, there are:

1. Partial ways and means in which there is still a distinction between the provisional means and the ultimate, transcendental purpose
2. Perfectured ways & means in which the provisional and the transcendental are seamlessly blended.

In dividing them into three levels there are:

1. Applying teachings about the nature of life's purpose to sentient beings of different capacities in accordance with their different understandings and the circumstances at hand
2. Penetrable doors; gateways from words to that beyond words, meditations penetrating dualities
3. The sublime secret; the seamless blending of this dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge through the dialectical principle and the acceptance and employment of the Buddha's spiritual life.

In explaining this dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge that is seamlessly blended:

- * Provisional knowledge is about lesser purposes (the means), the three vehicles of spiritual awakening that are tactical, preparatory and focused on the mastery of techniques and methodologies.
- * Transcendental knowledge is about a higher purpose (the end), a universal vehicle of spiritual awakening that is strategic, focused on the ultimate goal of realization for all sentient beings.

These two are really inseparable and mutually dependent. There cannot really be one without the other:

- * Knowledge of preparatory techniques and methodologies are not really provisional unless there is a higher, transcendental aim or purpose (strategy).
- * There is no transcendental knowledge without the employment of provisional methods (tactics).

Due to the attachments inherent in the afflicted nature of sentient beings, it is necessary to understand their different capacities and limitations in order to employ the skillful means needed to increase their faith and draw their minds towards a greater sense of life's purpose. Faith entails the acceptance and employment of a provisional means (e.g., the hearing of words, the seeing of a vision) in order to realize this transcendental purpose.

One should always be mindful of the supreme purpose of the greater vehicle, even when dealing with the purposes of the lesser vehicles, just as this first half of The Lotus Sūtra reveals that, when awakened to their higher purpose, the true students of the noble path (śrāvakas, 聲聞) are really also bodhisattvas and, as explained by the principle of the mutual possession of the ten spiritual realms (S. anyonya āsritatva, C. hùjù, J. gogu, 互具), all sentient beings are endowed with the embryonic nature of enlightenment (tathāgata garbha, 如來藏). Conversely, the Buddha's spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) works through all levels of life's purpose, even those in the depths of hell.

Zhìyǐ went on to explain other, earlier understandings of skillfulness in ways & means, as well as the nature of the Buddha's gradual guidance that historically helped sentient beings awaken to the nature of duality through meditations on the dialectical principle. These gateways of meditation help sentient beings transcend words and discursive thought and penetrate the tetralemma, the limits of such thought. Ten examples or 'arenas' of provisional vs. transcendental knowledge are then described to broaden an understanding of this dual knowledge. The first of these is the duality between the dialectical principle and the phenomena of sentient existence. In each of these meditations, one goes from the interaction between the mutually dependent aspects of duality to their seamless integration as one. Through this gradual guidance, dualities are resolved until there is a seamless integration between (for example):

- * Self vs. other
- * Feelings vs. knowledge
- * Subjective knowledge vs. objective reality
- * Gradual awakening through cultivation of the noble path (bhāvanā mārga, 修道) vs. sudden awakening through attainment of a transcendental vision of this path (darśana mārga, 見道)
- * Provisional knowledge vs. transcendental knowledge

These dualities are all ultimately integrated as one through the mental resolve (samādhi, 定) found in the transcendental vow that is the essence of the Buddha's spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身).

Finally, Zhìyǐ explained the gradual evolution of the Buddha's teachings through five periods. These five periods are explained here in two different ways:

1. The historical evolution of the teachings, from the Buddha's first sermon about the four truths to his revelation of the ultimate nature of life's purpose in his final teachings before leaving this world; In this understanding, the depth of the teachings grew over time as the Buddha's perspective adapted to the conditions at hand.
2. The evolution of the narrative in the greater vehicle scriptures (mahāyāna sūtras, 大乘經) through the dialectical process of adapting to the maturing capacities of his disciples; In this understanding, the Buddha's perspective never really changed, being timeless from his very first attainment of enlightenment to his final entry into nirvāṇa, but the depth of the teachings evolved in accordance with the capacity of the audience to accept them (through faith) and employ them (through putting them into practice).

See Appendix J and Appendix K for interpretations attributed to Nichiren of the meaning of this chapter's title, as explained in The Oral Transmission of the Meaning (Ongi Kuden, 御義口傳).

Part #1: Zhìyǐ's commentary on the meaning of the chapter's title 'On Skillfulness in Ways & Means' from volume 3 of The Words & Passages of The Lotus Sūtra

An Outline of the Contents

A. The Summary

1. **An introduction to the idea of 'skillfulness in ways & means'**
 - a. *Defining skillfulness in ways & means*
 1. **The ways** (Hō, 方) are the teachings, the approaches to the true nature of life's purpose.
 2. **The means** (Ben, 便) are their applications, the different understandings of the ways.
 - b. *The two mutually dependent kinds of skillfulness in ways & means*
 1. Partial teachings, which are linear - the three provisional kinds of knowledge
 2. The perfected teaching, which is spherical - the one transcendental knowledge
 - c. *The three kinds of skillfulness in ways & means*
 1. The applications of teachings
 2. The penetrable gateways (meditations penetrating the true meaning of thoughts & words)
 3. The sublime secret
2. **A conclusion to the summary**
 - a. *The three kinds of skillfulness in ways & means*
 1. The ways & means that are the applications of teachings.
 - a. The ways & means are external to their transcendental purpose.
 - b. They are provisional knowledge for the influence of others.
 - c. They use the words and ideas of others.
 - d. There is nothing to be penetrated and nothing is penetrated.
 2. The ways & means that are penetrable gateways (of meditation)
 - a. The ways & means are external to their transcendental purpose.
 - b. They are the provisional knowledge for one's own practice & the influence of others.
 - c. They use one's own words and ideas as well as those of others.
 - d. There is something to be penetrated but there is not yet full penetration.
 3. The ways & means that are a sublime secret
 - a. The ways & means are identical with their ultimate purpose.
 - b. They are the provisional knowledge of one's own practice.
 - c. They use one's own ideas and words.
 - d. There is penetration and there is nothing left to further penetrate.
 - b. *The ways & means of the methodology vs. skillfulness in provisional knowledge*
 1. Through the ways & means of the methodology, there is correction of any lack of skillfulness in provisional knowledge.
 2. Through the ways & means of the methodology, there is the cultivation of skillfulness in provisional knowledge.
 3. The ways & means of the methodology then become identical with skillfulness in provisional knowledge.
 4. Finally, through the ways & means of the methodology, the sublime secret is revealed to be (the existential nature of the resolve in) one's own practice, and the skillfulness of provisional knowledge becomes identical with transcendental knowledge of its purpose.

B. The Elaboration

1. **Older understandings**
 - a. *An historical understanding of the five periods of teachings on provisional & transcendental knowledge about the nature of life's purpose*
 1. First there were the sūtras on the traditional teachings (āgamas, 阿含) that distinguished between the phenomena that are impermanent and the principle of impermanence.

2. Next, there were the sūtras on the transcendental nature of discernment (prajñā, 般若) that distinguished between existence (purpose) and emptiness (transcendence).
 3. Then there were the sūtras on the broader meaning (vaipulya, 方廣) that distinguished between the inner mirror of transcendental knowledge and its outer application.
 4. Then The Lotus Sūtra revealed the true nature of life's purpose (saddharma, 正法) in which the three provisional vehicles are discarded and the four-fold unity is established.
 5. Finally The Nirvāṇa Sūtra revealed the adamant resolve distinguishing between that which is impermanent & the enduring (permanent) vow of the Buddha's spiritual life.
- b. ***Other understandings***
1. Understandings about the nature of provisions
 - a. Provisions in terms of location
 - b. Provisions in terms of penetrable gateways
 - c. Provisions in terms of knowledge and capacity
 2. Understandings of the dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge
 - a. Producing faith; the duality of provisional vs. transcendental knowledge
 - b. Producing understanding; the duality of emptiness vs. existence
 - c. The influence of others; the inner stillness vs. the external application
 - d. The fruit; permanence vs. impermanence and the adamant knowledge
 3. The three turns of knowledge about the truth of its duality
 - a. Existence is the relative truth while emptiness is the absolute truth
 - b. Emptiness and existence are relative truths while that beyond existence and emptiness is the absolute truth
 - c. Duality and non-duality are relative truths while that beyond duality and non-duality is the absolute truth
2. **The Buddha's gradual guidance of sentient beings**
- a. Teaching about emptiness and transcendence - of bearing faith and leaving existence, for ordinary people on the six paths
 - b. Teaching about the dialectical principle of the middle way - that which is beyond emptiness and existence for those on the two lesser vehicles that only lead to freedom from affliction on an individual level.
 - c. Teaching about freedom from the two extremes but not being attached to the middle way, for bodhisattvas discarding attachments to both partiality and the middle way
3. **Explaining provisional & transcendental knowledge about the nature of life's purpose**
- a. ***In terms of the tetralemma***
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 2. All purposes are transcendental
 3. All purposes are both provisional and transcendental
 4. All purposes are neither provisional nor transcendental
 - b. ***Ten explanations of the mutually dependent aspects found in provisional and transcendental knowledge about the nature of life's purpose***
 1. Listing the ten examples of these teachings
 - a. On the phenomena (of sentient existence) & the (dialectical) principle
 - b. On the principle & the doctrine (in words)
 - c. On the doctrine & the practice
 - d. On attachment & emancipation
 - e. On cause & effect
 - f. On the existential reality & its application
 - g. On gradual & sudden realizations
 - h. On opening up one into many & integrating many into one
 - i. On the attainment of general & distinguished benefits
 - j. On the different means of accomplishing the objective

2. Their sequential arising
3. Describing the characteristics of these ten examples
4. Quoting literary evidence of them from the scriptures
 - a. From The Lotus Sūtra generally
 - b. From its Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means specifically
 - c. From The Discourse on The Lotus Sūtra attributed to Vasubandhu
5. Some conclusions about these ten examples of dual knowledge:
 - a. These ten in terms of the four levels of doctrine
 1. A general conclusion: on these ten examples of dual knowledge being found at all four levels of doctrine, both in one's own practice and in the influence of others
 2. Specific conclusions: on these ten being found in the four levels of doctrine, either in one's own practice or in the influence of others
 3. These ten being found in the four levels of doctrine, in terms of following one's own ideas and words and in terms of following those of others
 4. Concluding on the above three to explain the dual knowledge in terms of the perfect doctrine
 - b. These ten in terms of the five periods in the evolving narrative of the sūtras and the three kinds of ways & means
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 2. In terms of them being penetrable gateways
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 - a. Explaining these ten generally in terms of objective truth and subjective feelings
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 2. In terms of the influence of others, they are accordance with subjective feelings
 3. In terms of objective truth and subjective feelings being integrated together
 - b. Distinguishing these ten specifically in terms of objective truth and subjective feelings
 - c. Combining the general and specific explanations in terms of the four levels of doctrine
 - d. A conclusion integrating it all together in terms of the four levels of doctrine
7. Analyzing these explanations of provisional & transcendental knowledge in terms of the evolution in the narrative of the sūtras on the greater vehicle of spiritual awakening
 - a. The Sūtra on the Great Garland of Universal Enlightenment
 - b. The Sūtras on the Three Baskets of Teachings
 - c. The Sūtras on the Broad Meaning of the Greater Vehicle
 - d. The Sūtras on the Deliverance of Transcendental Discernment
 - e. The Sūtra on the Lotus Blossom of Sublime Purpose
8. Analyzing these explanations of provisional & transcendental knowledge in terms of their source and manifestation
 - a. In terms of the five different periods; the evolution of the narrative in the sūtras
 - b. In terms of the tetralemma
 - c. In terms of the Buddha & Śāriputra

Part #1: Zhìyǐ's commentary on the meaning of the chapter's title 'On Skillfulness in Ways & Means' from volume 3 of The Words & Passages of The Lotus Sūtra

The text

Chapter, Two, On Skillfulness in Ways & Means

(S. Upāya Kauśalya Parivartaḥ, C. Fāngbiàn Pǐn, J. Hōbenpon, 方便品)

On the Meaning of the Chapter's Title

To explain the meaning of this chapter's title, first there is a summary and then an elaboration.

A. *The Summary* is in two parts:

1. An introduction to the idea of 'skillfulness in ways & means'
2. A conclusion to the introduction

1. An introduction to the idea of 'skillfulness in ways & means'

a. *Defining 'ways & means'*

- * *The Ways* (Hō, 方) are the methodologies (of teachings and practices).
- * *The Means* (Ben, 便) are their (skillful) applications.
- * These methodologies are the *pathways* to spiritual awakening that are seamlessly integrated with the transcendental nature (of life's purpose) as a whole.
- * Their applications are the different *understandings* of these ways that are distinguished (by those with different levels of capacity or 'skillfulness') in putting them into practice.

b. *The two mutually dependent kinds of skillfulness in ways & means*

1. *The three provisional kinds of knowledge*⁴ are based on the different means and methodologies that are used. Like the angles of a carpenter's square, they constitute the linear ways.
 2. *The one transcendental knowledge* is based on the end to be attained. The ultimate purpose or objective is like the measure of a compass, with a perfect roundness.
- * When provisional knowledge (of life's purpose) is projected at an angle, there is the skillful application of a partial teaching about it that has been adapted to the understanding of some sentient beings.
 - * When transcendental knowledge (of this purpose) is projected as a perfectly round sphere, there is the skillful application of a complete teaching about it that has been adapted to the understanding of all sentient beings.
 - * A partial teaching about life's purpose can be compared to pointing one's finger to direct one's eye towards seeing a particular place. This describes revealing a partial knowledge of life's purpose with the eye of transcendental knowledge. *The ways* are explained as the methods used while *the means* are explained as the opportunities found to apply them.
 - * When one points everywhere by means of one's eye having a vision of the totality of life's purpose as a whole, and there are the opportunities to apply it, *the ways* are explained as being 'secret' while *the means* are explained as being 'sublime'.

c. *The three kinds of skillfulness in ways & means*

1. *The ways & means as the application of (teachings about) life's purpose:* In revealing the partial nature of life's purposes, the ways & means are explained as being teachings that *adapt to the needs and aspirations of sentient beings*. However, this was not the Buddha's original intention. As the sūtra says, to free people from their attachments to the three-fold sphere¹⁰ of sentient existence and all of its sufferings, The One Who Has Descended Into This World encouraged the attainment of skillfulness in ways & means. The meaning of this may explain other sūtras, but it is not the idea of this chapter.
 2. *The ways & means as penetrable gateways (of meditation):* And then there are skillful ways & means that are like *gateways (that penetrate the meaning beyond thoughts & words)*, letting in those who are able to enter into them. In short, provisional ways & means are used as gateways to draw one into an understanding about their transcendental nature. Because they serve their purpose through revealing it, these ways & means get their name through their ability to do so. As chapter ten of this sūtra On the Teacher of Life's Purpose (Dharma Bhāṇaka, 法師品) says:
“(This sūtra) opens up gateways through ways & means that reveal the transcendental meaning (of life's mutually dependent aspects).”
The meaning of this may explain other sūtras but it is not the idea of this chapter.
 3. *The ways & means as a sublime secret:* And the way is secret while the means is sublime. *In the subliminal penetration of the way there is the true secret.* A priceless gem was sewn inside the lining of the poor man's clothes (in chapter eight). On the top of the king's crown there was but a single gem (in chapter fourteen). These two gems were one and the same. A rich man pointed out a hired worker and adopted him as his son (in chapter four). This too was no different. In all these words there is a sublime secret. As this chapter two of the sūtra says:
“Alone I understand the transcendental meaning of all of its mutually dependent aspects, // 18a
Along with the Buddhas of the ten directions. // 18b ...
“No more, no more! There is no use in explaining this further. // 34a
The purpose that I have realized is sublime and unfathomable. // 34b”
Therefore, we explain the ways as being secret and the means as being sublime. This is the true idea of this chapter, and why it is called ‘The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means’.
2. **A conclusion to the introduction:**
- a. *In concluding on the three kinds of skillfulness in ways & means:*
 1. In the first explanation (*the applications of teachings about life's purpose*), the ways & means are external to their essential nature. They are provisions for having an influence on sentient beings (that will spiritually transform them), following the thoughts and words of others.
 2. In the next explanation (*penetrable gateways*), the ways & means are also external to their essential nature. They are provisions for both one's own practice and the influence of others and they follow one's own thoughts and words as well as those of others.
 3. In the last explanation (*the sublime secret*), the ways & means are identical with their essential nature. They are the provisions of one's own practice and they follow one's own thoughts and words.
 1. In the first explanation of ways & means there is neither penetration nor anything to penetrate.

2. In the second explanation, there is something to be penetrated but there is not yet full penetration.
 3. In the third explanation, there is full penetration and so nothing left to penetrate. And so we recognize that the name 'ways & means' is the same in each of these but their meanings are very different. Many in this world have not seen this and so they have improperly explained this chapter about skillfulness in ways & means.
- b. **Distinguishing between 'the ways & means of a methodology' (upāya, 方便) and 'skillfulness in provisional knowledge' (kauśalya, 善權)**

Question: What is the relationship between 'the ways & means of a methodology' and 'skillfulness in provisional knowledge'?

Answer: This is distinguished in four parts:

1. Through the ways & means of one's methodology, there is the correction of faults found in the lack of skillfulness in one's provisional knowledge and, in having skillfulness in one's provisional knowledge, there is correction of the faults found in the ways & means of one's methodology.
2. Through the ways & means of one's methodology there is the cultivation of skillfulness in one's provisional knowledge and, through skillfulness in one's provisional knowledge, there is cultivation of the methodology in one's ways & means.
3. Through the ways & means of one's methodology being identical with the skillfulness of one's provisional knowledge, the skillfulness of one's provisional knowledge is identical with the ways & means of one's methodology.
4. Following one's own thoughts and the essential nature of transcendental purpose:
 - * *First there are the ways & means of a methodology that corrects faults in a lack of skillfulness in provisional knowledge:* This is a reference to the four skillful ways & means (of the tetralemma)⁵ found in the sublime secret of following one's own thoughts & words. This is using the ways & means of a methodology that corrects the lack of skillfulness caused by provisional knowledge that (only) follows the thoughts & words of others.
 - * *Then there is the skillfulness of provisional knowledge that corrects faults in the ways & means of a methodology:* This is a reference to the provisional knowledge that is identical with the essence of its transcendental purpose. This is using the ways & means of a methodology that corrects the lack of skillfulness caused by provisional knowledge that is external to its transcendental purpose.

The mutually dependent aspects of cultivation and identity that are found in the skillfulness of provisional knowledge and ways & means of a methodology may be understood like this as well. The first three parts described above may explain the meaning of other sūtras, but only the fourth one (following one's own thoughts & words, and knowing the essence of their transcendental purpose) explains the idea found in this chapter. Because of this, the earlier translation of The Lotus Sūtra (正法華經) by Dharmarakṣa (法護) called this 'The Chapter On Skillfulness in Provisional Knowledge' (善權品). With skillfulness in provisional knowledge being identical with the ways & means of the methodology, they are inseparable from one another. In bowing one's head, pressing one's palms together and raising them up in worship, everywhere one grasps the nobility of intent found on the path to enlightenment, with the ways & means of one's methodology and the skillfulness of one's provisional knowledge both being identical with the essential nature of their transcendental purpose.

B. The Elaboration

1. Older understandings

a. *First, there is an historical understanding⁶ of the five periods of Buddhist teachings in terms of the provisional methods employed & their transcendental purpose:*

1. During the first twelve years while teaching *the sūtras on the traditional doctrines* (Āgamas, 阿含), the Buddha explained the impermanent phenomena (事) of sentient existence as the provisional knowledge of life's purpose and revealed the principle (理) of impermanence as its transcendental knowledge. These were analyzed in the teachings on the spiritual science (Abhidharma, 阿毘曇) and misunderstandings about them were corrected in The Commentary on The Longer Sūtra About the Deliverance of Transcendental Discernment (Mahā Prajñā Pāramita Upadeśa, 大智度論). Teaching of the nature of impermanence was only a remedial method for explaining the transcendental nature of life's purpose and, as such, it only employed the first three means of accomplishing its objective (siddhānta, 悉檀).⁷ How can it be really about the transcendental nature? These were not the skillful ways & means employed in this chapter.
2. After these first twelve years, there were *the sūtras about the deliverance of transcendental discernment* (Prajñā Pāramitā, 般若). During this period, as a provisional method the Buddha explained that the phenomena of sentient existence were really just temporary ('virtual') constructs (prajñapti, 假)⁸ and their transcendental nature was identical with the nature of emptiness. The Commentary on the Longer Sūtra also corrected misunderstandings about this. As these sūtras explain, even after letting go of all the thoughts and mental associations that are observed during introspective meditation and transcending all the purposes of the noble path that rise up and all the words that are spoken about it, with all these virtual constructs of existence being seen as identical with the nature of emptiness, there are still more mental associations that were ever rising up anew in meditations on the transcendental nature of life's purpose. And so the teachings of these sūtras also do not fully explain the skillfulness in ways & means employed in this chapter.
3. Then there were *the sūtras on broadening the meaning* (Vaipulya, 方廣) *of life's purpose by explaining the greater vehicle (of the bodhisattvas)* such as The Sūtra on the Instructions of the Layman 'Of Spotless Reputation' (Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra, 維摩詰所說經) & The Sūtra on the Distinguished Questions of Brahma (Brahma Viśeṣa Cintī Paripṛcchā Sūtra, 思益梵天所問經). These sūtras held that transcendental knowledge was a silent inner mirror (of introspection) reflecting on the non-dual object of emptiness and existence, while provisional knowledge was the stirring and transformation of others in response to their spiritual needs. Now it is seen that, because the inner mirror and the outer application are a duality in this explanation, there was still not a true penetration of the gateway into non-duality, and so it is also not the idea of this chapter.
4. Next *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, 妙法蓮華經) explained that the three vehicles of spiritual awakening (for students of the noble path, beings only awakening to the afflicted nature of sentient existence in their own lives and bodhisattvas (with a higher sense of life's purpose) were the three provisional kinds of knowledge while the four-fold unity (of the principle, the person, the practice & the doctrine) was the universal vehicle of transcendental knowledge. Now it is explained that, without the three kinds of provisional knowledge being

singly focused on an understanding of this transcendental nature, this nature is not fully involved in these three kinds of provisional knowledge. This also did not fully explain the idea of this chapter.

5. Then *The Sūtra on the Ultimately Great Spiritual Freedom* (Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, 大般涅槃經) held that the impermanence understood before realization of the adamant resolve (vajra upamā samādhi, 金剛喻三昧) is provisional while the permanence understood after realization of this resolve is transcendental. Now we reason that the transcendental nature (of its vow) is permanent even before there is realization of it, and the knowledge attained subsequently in accordance with the conditions at hand is provisional even after its realization. And so this historical understanding of the five periods of teachings on provisional and transcendental knowledge of Buddhist teachings is not now used in explaining the meaning of this chapter, and eventually the four schools of thought that used words with partial & full meanings to clarify this dual knowledge are no longer used to explain it (#1 Abhidharma, #2 Yogācāra #3 Madhyamaka & #4 the fully developed schools based on the Garland, Lotus & Nirvāṇa Sūtras).

B. Other Understandings

1. *Different understandings about the provisional knowledge of methods:*

And then there were people who understood that:

- a. With the ways & means of the methodology there is skillfulness in provisional knowledge of that before one (here & now), opposed to the transcendental knowledge (that is timeless).
- b. With the ways & means of the methodology there is a skillfulness in the provisional knowledge (that is tactical and preparatory) while transcendental knowledge and discernment is strategic and based on the ultimate objective.
- c. With the ways & means of the methodology there is skillfulness in provisional knowledge of the temporary ('virtual') constructs of sentient existence, like the three carts that are said to be found outside the door of the burning house.⁹
- d. With the ways & means of the methodology there are the opportunities at hand to teach sentient beings about the three vehicles of spiritual awakening.
- e. Skillfulness in provisional knowledge uses words as metaphors to illustrate the transcendental nature. An example is the illustration of a balance beam. First, that being measured is too heavy. Upon adjusting it, it is too light. Upon being centered on the balance beam, it is even. In being synthesized together seamlessly through the Buddha's transcendental knowledge, there is the illumination of life's purpose that is said to be 'properly measured'.

Like this they each explain a single avenue:

- * With skillfulness in provisional knowledge being a. that which is before one here and now, b. that which is tactical and c. that serving only as a 'virtual' construct of sentient existence, there are explanations in terms of *location*.
- * With skillfulness in provisional knowledge being d. the opportunities at hand, there is an explanation in terms of *a penetrable gateway (of meditation) that leads to an awakening to life's true purpose*.
- * With skillfulness in provisional knowledge being e. that which is described by metaphors such as the skillful use of a balance beam, there is an explanation of it in terms of *knowledge & ability*.

Each of these ideas is not identical with the meaning of the others and none of

them is seamlessly integrated with the sublime secret. It is therefore impossible to use any of these ideas (by themselves) to properly explain this chapter.

2. Different understandings of the duality between provisional & transcendental knowledge: Some explained four levels in discerning the nature of this duality.
 - a. First, there is one level of knowledge about provisional methods and another about their transcendental purpose.
 - b. Next, there is the dual knowledge of emptiness and existence:
 1. There is an observation of the nature of emptiness without the detachment of those on the two lesser vehicles (students of the noble path and those only awakened to the conditions of sentient existence in their own lives).
 2. There is an involvement in sentient existence that is not tainted by the afflictions of ordinary sentient beings (with attachments to the six lower paths in the sphere of desire).¹⁰
 - c. Next, there is the inner stillness of existence and emptiness that is said to be transcendental knowledge and the external application of this stillness that is said to be a provisional knowledge.
 - d. Finally, with there being the different understandings of permanence and impermanence before and after the realization of adamant resolve,¹¹ there are the kinds of knowledge that are provisional and transcendental.
 - a. The first of these discernments of duality (the one that distinguishes between provisional methods and transcendental purpose) makes one bear *faith*.
 - b. The next (distinguishing between the natures of emptiness and existence) makes one bear *understanding*.
 - c. The third (distinguishing between inner stillness and outer application) is used to *influence and transform others*.
 - d. The final one (distinguishing between having and not having the adamant resolve) is about *the ultimate fruit*.
3. The three turns of the wheel in the truth about their duality (satya dvaya, 二諦): These discernments of their duality have three (progressively deeper) turns:
 - a. First, (sentient) existence is the relative truth (samvṛti satya, 俗諦) while the nature of emptiness is the absolute truth (paramārtha satya, 真諦).
 - b. Next, the duality between emptiness and existence is the relative truth while that beyond the duality of emptiness and existence is the absolute truth.
 - c. With emptiness & existence being a duality and that beyond them being without duality, duality & non-duality are both relative truths while the dialectical principle is neither with nor without duality and the absolute truth.The different turns in the evolution of both Buddhist doctrine and knowledge of it are described like this. Why is this so? It is because through it there is a skillful means of arousing the worthy and noble spiritual capacities of individuals on a personal level (prātipauruṣika siddhānta, 為人悉檀).⁷ Those who are not spiritually awakened before hearing about the truths of duality are after getting to hear and understand them. Because of this, there were the various different understandings about these truths that were not the same. And The One Who Has Descended Into This World always relied on the teachings about these truths to explain the true nature of life's purpose. Consequently, there are these three gateways that penetrate these truths about the nature of duality. Although there have been many different doctrines of Buddhism, the essence of them did not really go beyond these three gateways.

2. The Buddha's gradual guidance of sentient beings

- a. Ordinary people (on the six lower paths in the sphere of desire)¹⁰ reason that which literally appears before their minds is the nature of reality but this is not so. Because of this, the Buddha taught that there was an absolute truth and that the true nature of life's purpose as a whole was empty and devoid of any self-centered existence.
- b. Those on the two lesser vehicles (only attaining freedom from affliction on an individual level) then renounced their attachments to (sentient) existence and instead held attachments to the nature of emptiness. Because of this, the Buddha then taught that emptiness and existence were both relative truths and that the absolute truth transcends emptiness and existence.
- c. Some discarded these two extremes but then again stagnated in thoughts about the existence of a middle way. The Buddha therefore taught that a third way was the absolute truth; being completely free from the two extremes but also not being attached to the middle way.

There are *five different vehicles* (of beings with a capacity for transcendental knowledge).

- a. First the Buddha guided *human (social) beings* (manuṣya, 人) & *gods in the heavens of meditation* (deva, 天) to bear faith and sever their attachments to (sentient) existence.
- b. Next, he guided those on *the two lesser vehicles* aspiring to freedom from affliction on an individual level, making them enter into the middle way:
 - * Students learning the noble path through the words of others (śrāvakas, 聲聞)
 - * Those only awakening to the (afflicted) conditions of sentient existence in their own lives (pratyeka buddhas, 緣覺), a realization that is beyond any words.
- c. Then he guided those also awakening other sentient beings (bodhisattvas, 菩薩) into discarding attachments to both the mean and partiality.

And for those who are training in the dialectical principle of the middle way through introspective meditation:

- * First there are the three temporary things belonging to this world (tri prajñapti, 三假) (purposes 法, feelings 受 & words 名) that constitute the mundane reality (laukika satya, 世諦) while the empty nature of these three things is the transcendental reality (paramārtha satya, 真諦). However, this is only beginning to grasp the idea.
- * Then there is the emptiness and existence of these three temporary ('virtual') things that are a relative reality (samvṛti satya, 俗諦) while the dialectical principle beyond emptiness and existence is the transcendental reality (paramārtha satya, 真諦).

We will now examine these explanations more closely. We have already introduced the idea of depending on five historical periods of the Buddha's teachings. Is not this gradual sequence of teachings like the steps of a ladder? This may explain the teachings of the other sūtras but it is not really the intent of this chapter.

- * This chapter of the sūtra speaks of 'everywhere making sentient beings see'. Whether one is at the beginning or the end (of the noble path), and whether one is revealing the knowledge and vision of enlightenment through one's own life or awakening it through another, these different moments of time are not the same.
- * It also speaks of 'simply discarding the ways and means'. How can one use a gradual sequence of teachings to make one suddenly understand the total wonder of it all?

Question: Before, we spoke about the Buddha guiding them to bear faith, understanding, transformative influence and finally attain the ultimate fruit. What connection is there between this and the intent behind ‘awakening and entering (into the knowledge and vision of enlightenment)’ that is explained in this sūtra?

Answer: It is like the thirteenth of Vasubandhu’s² seventeen names for this sūtra, which is ‘The Most Skillful Ways & Means’ (大巧方便). The Sūtra on the Ways & Means of the Greater Vehicle (大乘方便經) explains that there are ten kinds of ways & means. The ninth was called ‘skillfulness’ (kauśalya, 善巧). Guiding those on the two lesser vehicles (of only attaining freedom from affliction for themselves) and making them enter into the greater vehicle (and its greater sense of life’s purpose) is called the deliverance of skillful ways & means (upāya pāramitā, 方便波羅蜜).

And so one should recognize that this chapter is about the ways & means of The One Who Has Descended Into This World, which includes all of life’s purposes just as empty space contains all things. Just as the ocean accepts and includes the currents of all rivers, is it possible that the teachers of just one branch or one school of Buddhism could explain everything to be found in the great domain that is the transcendental sphere of life’s purpose (dharma dhātu, 法界)?

3. Now we will properly explain this dual (provisional & transcendental) knowledge of life’s purpose:

A. First, we make a tetralemma:

1. All of life’s purposes are provisional
2. All of them are transcendental
3. All of them are both provisional and transcendental
4. All of them are neither provisional nor transcendental

1. They are all provisional: This is like the words of the sūtra that say:

“These are the mutually dependent aspects found in all of life’s purposes:

Just as-it-is, being an outer appearance,
 Just as-it-is, being an inner nature,
 Just as-it-is, being an existential reality,
 Just as-it-is, being a spiritual power,
 Just as-it-is, being a force with karmic influence,
 Just as-it-is, being an immediate cause,
 Just as-it-is, being a sustaining condition,
 Just as-it-is, being an immediate effect,
 Just as-it-is, being a final reward, and
 Just as-it-is, being a perfect consistency from beginning to end.”

With these mutually dependent aspects being found in all of life’s purposes, they are all said to be provisional.

2. They are all transcendental:

This is like the words of the sūtra that say:

“The One Who Has Descended Into This World ... is skillful in explaining all of life’s purposes ... and pleasing all minds.”

All minds are pleased by entering into this transcendental nature.

And later there are two lines of verse (75a-b) in this chapter that say:

“All of life’s purposes from the very beginning
Have always been characterized by the serene nature of transcendence.”

And in chapter five On the Medicinal Plants, it says:

“The teachings of The One Who Has Descended Into This World (tathāgata, 如來) lead all to reach the knowledge about the oneness of all of life’s purposes (sarvajña jñāna, 一切智).”

And chapter sixteen On Measuring the Life of The One Who Has Descended Into This World says:

“All of it is true and none of it is false.”

And further there is the tetralemma of the ‘four things that cannot be explained’ that appears in volume nineteen of The Sūtra on the Ultimately Great Spiritual Freedom (Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, 大般涅槃經).

The four things that cannot be explained in words (四句皆不可說) include:

1. The arising and perishing of that which arises and perishes (生生不可說)
2. The arising and perishing of that which neither arises nor perishes (生不生不可說)
3. The non-arising and perishing of that which arises and perishes (不生不生不可說)
4. The non-arising and perishing of that which neither arises nor perishes (不生不生不可說)

3. *They are all both provisional and transcendental:*

On this, this chapter of the sūtra says:

“These are its (mutually dependent) aspects: just as-it-is, being an outer appearance, just as-it-is, being an inner nature, etc., etc.”

And yet it also speaks of:

“The transcendental meaning of the mutually dependent aspects found in all of life’s purposes.”

Together, these two explain that all of life’s purposes are both provisional and transcendental. As another example of this, the proper observation of that which is not pure (of affliction) involves both a reality and an illusion.

4. *They are all neither provisional nor transcendental:*

This is like the words of the sixteenth chapter in this sūtra On Measuring the Life of The One Who Has Descended Into This World that say:

“It is neither the same as the three-fold sphere¹⁰ of sentient existence nor different from it.”

And, on this, there are words of verse in chapter fourteen On the Practice That Is Secure in Contentment that say:

“And (the bodhisattva’s) practice is also
Not just at a higher, middle, or a lower level,
It is not just conditional or unconditional,
And not just transcendental or provisional.”

In not just being transcendental or provisional, there is the transcendental meaning of the mutually dependent aspects found in all of life’s purposes.”

1. *How can one deny that they are all provisional?*

Even if there were a hundred thousand teachers, with each of them making a hundred thousand different kinds of teachings, there would be no teaching that was without a provisional methodology. Even the teachings of The One Who Has Descended Into This World were provisional, much less those of ordinary human teachers. Would one rather there was a teaching that was without any provisionality? As described above, they are all ultimately provisional.

2. How can one deny that they are all transcendental?

There is only one phenomenal reality of sentient existence; any second or alternative one could not be real. And ultimately there is only one noble path; would one rather that there were ultimately a host of such paths? After refuting the fallacies found in all of the teachers' provisional methods and penetrating their ultimate transcendental purpose, would one rather that all the teachers of the different methods then returned in shame to hide in the refuge of their own nests and caves?

3. How can one deny that they are all both provisional and transcendental?

With all teachings being completely provisional and completely transcendental, how could one attain any single way that is beyond the different understandings of all the others? With everything being both provisional and transcendental in each teaching, there is no one teaching that is just one or the other.

4. How can one deny that they are all neither provisional nor transcendental?

What endless number of teachings must one be compelled to make in order to establish or disprove it?

From just listing the four positions (of the tetralemma) like this, one can make out that there is a profound vision beyond any of them that is immeasurably broad, unfathomably deep and perfectly clear. Why would one rather discourse on the nature of life's purpose with a bias towards just one of these four points of view?

B. *Now the teaching on this dual (provisional & transcendental) knowledge of life's purpose is further opened up into ten mutually dependent sets of aspects:*

There are eight explanations of these ten parts. They are:

1. Listing the names of these mutually dependent sets of aspects
2. Their sequential arising
3. Explanations of each of these ten individually
4. Quoting literary evidence of them from the scriptures
5. Some conclusions about provisional and transcendental knowledge
6. Distinguishing three levels of provisional and transcendental knowledge by illuminating their two levels of truth in three ways
7. Analyzing provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of the evolution of the sūtras
8. Analyzing them in terms of their source and manifestation

1. Listing the names of these ten mutually dependent sets of aspects:

- a. The phenomena (of sentient existence) & the (dialectical) principle (事理)
- b. The principle & the doctrine (理教)
- c. The doctrine & the practice (教行)
- d. Attachment & emancipation (縛脫)
- e. Cause & effect (因果)
- f. The existential reality & its application (體用)
- g. Gradual & sudden realization (漸頓)
- h. Opening up one into many & integrating many into one (開合)
- i. The attainment of general & distinguished benefits (通別)
- j. The different means of accomplishing the objective (悉檀)

2. Their sequential arising:

- a. All of the mutually dependent aspects in the nature of life's purpose come from a source that transcends any particular location in space and time. This undefinable source of the transcendental meaning of life's purpose is called *the (dialectical) principle*. All of the mutually dependent aspects found in the life's purposes are called its *phenomena*.
- b. Because there is this *principle* that is found within all phenomena, there is a *doctrine* (in words) that explains the transcendental nature of life's purpose.
- c. Because there is the *doctrine*, there is putting it into *practice*.
- d. Because there is the practice, there are either *attachments* or *emancipation* from them.
- e. Because there is emancipation, there is the attainment of its *cause & effect*.
- f. Because there is its effect, there are all the *applications* of *its existential reality*.
- g. Because this existential reality can be applied, there are all the different kinds of spiritual transformation that constitute its *gradual & sudden realizations*.
- h. By separating its many gradual realizations from the one that is sudden, there is *opening it up into many & integrating the many into one*.
- i. With there being this opening up into many and integration into one, there are *the general & distinguished benefits that are attained*.
- j. In distinguishing both kinds of benefits, there are *the four different means of accomplishing the objective* (catvāri siddhānta, 四悉檀).

This is the sequential progression found in these ten parts.

3. Describing the characteristics of these ten:

- a. *The (dialectical) principle & the phenomena (of sentient existence)* (理事):
 - * *The dialectical principle* is the source, the foundation for the transcendental nature of life's purpose, pure of any affliction. With or without a Buddha awakened to it, it is always unchanging, just as it is. Because of this, it is said to be 'transcendental'.
 - * *Phenomena* is a reference to the objects arising from *sentient existence* that are distinguished in consciousness (mano vijñāna, 意識) (as identities and purposes). In bringing about consequence-producing actions (karmas, 業) that can be either afflicted or unafflicted, they are forever changing and without constancy. These phenomena are therefore said to be 'provisional'. If there was no principle, there would be no establishment of the phenomena. If there were no phenomena, the principle could not be revealed. By virtue of the fact that the phenomena do exist and the principle is revealed, The One Who Has Descended Into This World (Tathāgata, 如來) praised the attainment of skillfulness in ways & means.
- b. *The principle & the doctrine* (理教): In the beginning there was the principle and its phenomena, with them being referred together generally as *the principle*. This is illustrated by the fact that the absolute and the relative realities (paramārtha satya, 真諦 & saṃvṛti satya, 俗諦) are both called 'truths'. Through the existential reality of their very lives, the Buddhas realize these truths and become noble in purpose. In being noble, there is the true meaning of that which is transcendental. In aspiring to share this nobility of purpose with the sentient beings of this world, the Buddhas established *doctrines* in words that are based upon this (dialectical) principle. Although the doctrines

themselves are provisional, without them the Buddhas would be unable to reveal the principle. Because the Buddhas have been able to reveal the principle through these doctrines, The One Who Has Descended Into This World praised the attainment of skillfulness in ways & means.

- c. The doctrine & the practice (教行): By depending upon a doctrine, those who seek to awaken to the principle can produce a proper *practice*. Because the progress in and condition of their practice can be either shallow or deep, the practice is said to be that which is provisional. Because the *doctrine* is without these differences of progress and conditions that can be shallow or deep it is said to be transcendental. Without a doctrine one will not establish a practice, but without practice one will not understand the doctrine. Because one understands the doctrine by means of practice, The One Who Has Descended Into This World praised the attainment of skillfulness in ways & means.
- d. Attachment & emancipation (縛脫): If the practice is in contradiction with the dialectical principle there will be *attachments*. Attachments are based on falsehoods and illusions and so they are said to be provisional. If a practice is consistent with this principle, it will produce *emancipation*. With emancipation one penetrates this principle and so it is said to be transcendental. Without attachments there would be no reason for one to seek emancipation. One will only attain emancipation because there was attachment in the first place. To illustrate this, only one crossing the ocean (of afflictions) has the potential to go (from the existential sphere of life & death) to the other shore (of spiritual freedom). Because of this, there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.
- e. Cause & effect (因果) (This is karma & retribution, cultivation & realization): In making a *cause* there is only a temporary and immediate application of cultivation (here and now) and so it is said to be provisional. An *effect* is the realization of an end purpose and so it is said to be transcendental. A cause would have nothing to hope for without its effect, but an effect will not reveal itself without its cause. With the ways & means of introspectively observing the nature of duality one can be freed from affliction, realize the fruits of emancipated understanding and entry into the dialectical principle of the middle way. If one was without the observation of duality in the first place, how would one be able to identify the middle way? Since there will only be an effect if there is a successful cause, there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.
- f. The existential reality & its application (體用): The previously described cause is the means for entering into and continuously abiding in the effect, which is the unafflicted observation of the mind (and its true intent). In arising from this abode of meditation, there is the application of its existential reality. The *existential reality* is its transcendental meaning that is beyond any and all distinctions. Through its *application* there is establishment of all the different expressions of it that are not the same. As an example of this, there is but one great earth, and yet there are many different kinds of sprouts that arise from it. Without the ground, they would not arise. Without all the different lives that sprout from it, the richness of the ground would not be revealed. Upon tracing a stream, its source may be discovered. Upon discerning its many different applications, one becomes aware of the mind's existential reality.

Because there are many different applications that have the merit of revealing this existential reality, there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.

- g. Gradual & sudden realization (漸頓): In cultivating a cause one will realize its effect. From its existential reality many applications arise, and so there are all of the gradual and sudden expressions of the nature of life's purpose. Now we will further explain the applications that arise. The *gradually realized* applications are provisional while a *suddenly realized* application is one that is transcendental. If the Buddha did not gradually first guide sentient beings, they would never enter into the sudden realization. Because the disciples do attain the sudden awakening by means of the gradual teachings there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.
- h. Opening up one into many & integrating many into one (開合): Gradual realizations are separated into different kinds and this way *opened up* from one sudden realization. Because gradual realizations are not consistent with one another and they are not the same as a sudden realization, they are said to be 'provisional'. When the purpose of gradual realizations is thoroughly understood and they are *reintegrated* with the sudden realization, they are said to be 'transcendental'. It is only because they are separated apart from the sudden one in the first place that they can later be reintegrated with it. In fact, it is through being distinguished apart from the sudden realization that they have the power to be reintegrated with it. And so, in understanding all of the different names of these realizations about the nature of life's purpose and distinguishing them from one other, there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.
- i. General & distinguished benefits (通別益): *General benefits* are based on half-measures that are transient and impermanent. *Distinguished benefits* are full measures that are enduring and long-lasting. Although the long-lasting benefits of the noble path produce joy, contentment and prevent backsliding in the face of adversity, one touches on the general benefits of the Magic Fortress⁹ in order to guide sentient beings into producing thoughts that are calming and reassuring. After their influence ceases to be necessary, sentient beings are guided straight to the treasure trove at the end of the path.^{9d} If they were without the half measures they would never attain an understanding of the enduring benefits. Because half measures have the merit of revealing those that are full, there has been praise for attaining skillfulness in ways & means.
- j. The (four) different means of accomplishing the objective (siddhānta, 悉檀):⁷
The first three means of accomplishing the objective are of this world and therefore provisional. They are:
1. Attaining the objective through the worldly means of adapting to the needs and aspirations of sentient beings (laukika siddhānta, 世界悉檀)
 2. Attaining the objective through the arousing of their personal capacities that are worthy and noble (prāti pauruṣika siddhānta, 為人悉檀)
 3. Attaining the objective through the correction of their errors and the healing of their sicknesses (pratipākṣika siddhānta, 對治悉檀)
- The last, attaining the objective through the ultimate meaning (pāramārthika siddhānta, 第一義悉檀) found in the dialectical principle of the middle way, transcends this world. Without the three worldly means, one would not

realize the one that goes beyond this world. Because one only realizes *the means of ultimate significance* due to *the other three*, The One Who Has Descended Into This World has praised attaining skillfulness in ways & means. One should use the four parts of the tetralemma to understand and explain all ten of these different aspects of provisional and transcendental knowledge (not just the means of accomplishing the objective). The first three parts (of the tetralemma) are based on the ideas of other sūtras while the last one is based on the idea of this chapter.

4. Quoting literary evidence from the scriptures:

These ten include all the teachings and penetrate both the lesser and the greater vehicles of spiritual awakening.

a. First, we quote generally from The Lotus Sūtra:

1. On teachings about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *the phenomena & the principle*, chapter sixteen of the sūtra On Measuring the Life of The One Who Has Descended Into This World says:
 “Unlike how those in the three-fold sphere see it, The One Who Has Descended Into This World see all such things without mistake.”
 With there being the three-fold sphere of sentient existence, there are its phenomena. In understanding the transcendental nature of the dialectical principle, it is unlike how those in this three-fold sphere see (themselves).
2. In terms of *the principle & the doctrine*, lines 137a-b of verse in this chapter On Skillfulness in Ways & Means say:
 “All of life’s purposes are characterized by the serene nature of transcendence. It is really impossible to express this in words.”
 This is a reference to the principle. Lines 137c-d then go on to say:
 “Because of this, through the power of skillful ways and means
 I taught the first five disciples about it (at Deer Park).”
 This is a reference to the doctrine.
3. In terms of *the doctrine & the practice*, chapter ten On the Master of Life’s Purpose says:
 “If one listens to the words of this sūtra, one will realize how to skillfully tread the path of the bodhisattvas”
 This is literary proof of the doctrine and its practice.
 Also, on this, the end of chapter five On the Medicinal Plants, it says:
 “You who tread this
 Path of the bodhisattvas,
 Gradually cultivating and learning it,
 Will become the Buddhas of the future.”
 Further on this, lines 75c-d of verse in this second chapter On Skillfulness in Ways & Means say:
 “Only after treading the noble path will the disciples of the Buddha
 Become the Buddhas of the future.”
4. In terms of *attachment & emancipation*: chapter one On the Introduction says:
 “I see as many Bodhisattvas
 As there are sands along the River Ganges
 Seeking the path to enlightenment
 Through various different causes and conditions.”
 Further on this, there is a verse in chapter three On the Parable of the

Burning House that says:

"They have only eliminated falsehoods and illusions
And called this 'emancipation'."

5. In terms of *cause & effect*:

On the cause, chapter three On the Parable of the Burning House says:

"Having not yet really attained all kinds of emancipation."

Further on this cause, chapter two says:

"Endlessly fulfilling all the purposes of the Buddhas."

On the effect, verse 4c of this second chapter two says

"I have attained the ultimate fruit at the seat of enlightenment."^{14a}

6. In terms of *the existential reality & its application*, lines 118d-119a of verse in this second chapter say:

"Through observation with the Buddha's eye

I see sentient beings wandering on the six paths in the sphere of desire."

7. In terms of *gradual & sudden realization*: On this, chapter fifteen On the Bodhisattvas Rising Up from the Earth says:

"First, they saw my life and heard my teaching and then, except for those who had only cultivated and learned the teaching on the lesser vehicle, they all faithfully accepted & entered into the transcendental discernment of The One Who Has Descended Into This World."

8. In terms of *opening up one into many & integrating many into one*, the fourth chapter On Understanding with Faith says:

"The prodigal son first ran away ... then shoveled dirt as a hired worker ... and later the wealth (of his rich father) was bestowed upon him."⁹

9. In terms of *general & distinguished benefits*, chapter seven On the Magic Fortress says:

"First, they stopped at the magic fortress ... but later they were led to the treasure trove at the end of the noble path."⁹

10. In terms of *the different means of accomplishing the objective*, chapter sixteen On Measuring the Lifespan says:

"Because sentient beings exhibit different kinds of natures, motivations and conduct, and because they make different kinds of mental distinctions ..."

b. We have quoted literary evidence of these ten from the sūtra generally.

Now we quote specifically from this second chapter On Skillfulness in Ways & Means only. Although they are not in the same sequential order as presented before, its words include all ten ideas.

1. On teachings about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *the principle & the doctrine*:

"The knowledge of the Buddhas is very deep and infinitely broad. The gateway into this knowledge is difficult to understand and difficult to penetrate."

All of the phenomena found within the dialectical principle are said to be transcendental, including all of the objective sphere and all (subjective) knowledge of it. The oral traditions that have been handed down as scriptures (āgamas, 阿含) offer up and establish explanations of all of this in terms of words and discursive thought (the doctrine). This is 'the gateway into this (transcendental) knowledge' (that is provisional).

2. In terms of *attachment & emancipation*:
 "The gateway into this knowledge is difficult to understand and difficult to penetrate. Students of life's purpose and those only awakened to the (afflicted) conditions of sentient existence in their own lives are unable to comprehend it.
3. In terms of *the doctrine & the practice*:
 "This is because the Buddhas have been intimately close to countless hundreds, thousands and millions of Buddhas, fulfilling their endlessly different purposes. They have been diligent and courageous, and the praise of their names has been heard everywhere."
4. In terms of *the existential reality & its application*:
 "Having realized a very deep purpose that has never been known, they have followed every opportunity to teach of it to those with prejudices that have made it difficult to understand."
5. In terms of *cause & effect*:
 "Since I have attained enlightenment and descended into this world ..."
 The realization of enlightenment is the effect, but this effect has a direct and immediate cause (cultivation).
6. In terms of *gradual & sudden realization*:
 "Explaining its different causes and conditions with various kinds of illustrations, using countless skillful ways & means to guide sentient beings and free them from their attachments"
7. In terms of *opening up the one into many & integrating the many into one*:
 "This is because The One Who Has Descended Into This World is perfectly endowed with the ways & means of delivering transcendental knowledge and vision."
8. In terms of *general & distinguished benefits*:
 "Why is it said that there is only one great work through which there are the causes and conditions for those blessed with enlightenment to appear in this world? The answer is that:
 * Those blessed with enlightenment appear in this world because they desire to make sentient beings open up the knowledge & vision of enlightenment and help them become pure (of affliction).
 * They appear in this world because they desire to make sentient beings reveal the knowledge & vision of enlightenment (through their own lives).
 * They appear in this world because they desire to make sentient beings awaken the knowledge & vision of enlightenment (through another life).
 * They appear in this world because they desire to make sentient beings enter into the knowledge & vision of enlightenment (beyond there being or not being any such distinctions of self & other)."
9. In terms of *the (four) means of accomplishing the objective*:
 "To grasp the essence of these words, the Buddha has perfectly realized all of the infinite, boundless purposes of life that have never been known"
 This is realization of *the first three means of accomplishing the objective*.
 "No more, no more, there is no use in explaining it again ..."
 This is a reference to *the means of the ultimate significance*.

10. In terms of *the phenomena & the principle*:

“The Buddha has realized the ultimate nature of life’s purpose that is most rare and difficult to understand and can only be fathomed between the Buddhas: the transcendental meaning of the mutually dependent aspects found in all of life’s purposes”:

This is a reference to *the dialectical principle*.

“Its outer appearance, its inner nature, etc. ...”

This is a reference to *the phenomena of sentient existence*.

This chapter will later elaborate on this dual knowledge in five parts:

1. The dual knowledge of all the Buddhas generally
2. The dual knowledge of the Buddhas from the past
3. The dual knowledge of the Buddhas in the present
4. The dual knowledge of the Buddhas in the future
5. The dual knowledge of the Buddha Śākyamuni

This dual knowledge of all the different Buddhas is ultimately the same.

c. Finally, we quote The Discourse on The Lotus Sūtra (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra Upadeśa, 妙法蓮華經憂波提舍 or 法華論) attributed to Vasubandhu:

Here Zhiyi shows that the discourse attributed to Vasubandhu² brings up eight of the ten explanations of provisional and transcendental knowledge just described, only omitting ‘the existential reality & its application’ & ‘opening up one into many & integrating many into one’.

In explaining the meaning of the passage “the knowledge of the Buddhas is very deep”, this discourse describes ‘the realization of that which is very deep’ in five parts:

- * The meaning of the words that is very deep (義甚深)
 - * The existential reality of life’s purpose (beyond any words) that is very deep (實體甚深)
 - * The inner realization of it that is very deep (內證甚深)
 - * The foundation on which it depends that is very deep (依止甚深)
 - * That which is most deep (無上甚深)
1. Vasubandhu’s discourse says *that which is most deep* is realization of the greatness of enlightenment (mahā bodhi, 大菩提), while ‘the gateway into this knowledge’ refers to penetrating the doctrines found in the (earliest revealed) sūtras (āgamas, 阿含), that is, *the meaning of the words that is very deep*. This (gateway) is the same as that described before as transcendental and provisional knowledge in terms of *the principle & the doctrine*.
 2. His Discourse explains ‘the Buddhas have been intimately close to countless hundreds, thousands and millions of Buddhas, fulfilling their endlessly different purposes’ as *the cultivation of practice that is very deep*, and ‘they have been diligent and courageous, and the praise of their names has been heard everywhere’ as *the development of merits & virtues that is very deep*. This is the same as teaching about them in terms of *the doctrine & the practice*.
 3. The Discourse explains “realizing a very deep purpose that has never been known” as being *the sublime & wondrous work that is very deep* and “they have followed every opportunity to teach of it, its meaning being difficult to understand” as being *that which is most deep*. This is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *the existential nature & its application*.

4. The Discourse explains “Since I have realized enlightenment and descended into this world...” as being *the realization of the merits and virtues of The One Who Has Descended Into This World*. This is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of cause & effect.
5. The Discourse explains “countless ways and means” as being *the realization of spiritual transformation through teaching about the nature of life’s purpose*. This is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of gradual & sudden realization.
6. The Discourse explains the passage “this knowledge and vision of The One Who Has Descended Into This World is broad and great, deep and far-reaching. Endowed with infinite, unobstructed power and fearlessness, perfect penetration of meditative resolve & emancipation from attachments, it deeply enters into that which is boundless...” as *realization of the benefits of illumination*, also called *the realization of the inconceivable sphere in one’s own life that surpasses that of all of the bodhisattvas*. It explains the passage “is able to make all kinds of distinctions and is skillful in explaining all these purposes and pleasing all minds...” as *the realization of benefits through using words*. This is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of general & distinguished benefits.
7. The Discourse explains “the essence of these words” and “no more, no more, there is no use in explaining this any further ...” as *the potential to spiritually transform sentient beings*. This is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of the different means of accomplishing the objective (siddhānta, 悉檀) and the possibility or impossibility of spiritually transforming sentient beings.
8. The Discourse explains “the ultimate nature of life’s purpose ... (that) can only be fathomed between the Buddhas” as *being the realization of infinite blessings*. That which the Buddhas are able to fathom is the existential nature of the spiritual life of The One Who Has Descended Into This World (dharma kāya svabhāva, 法身之體), (a transcendental vow) that never changes. Upon awakening to it there is *the ability to realize it in one’s own life and adapt to the conditions at hand and teach of it to all sentient beings*. This is “the transcendental meaning of the mutually dependent aspects found in all of life’s purposes” (sarva dharma tattvasya lakṣaṇa, 諸法實相), and it is the same as teaching about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of the phenomena (of sentient existence) & the (dialectical) principle.

Vasubandhu’s discourse explains the Buddha’s words found in this sūtra, with his commentary being in profound agreement and these two noble teachers being as one. It is vital that the scripture (sūtra, 修多羅) and commentary on it (upadeśa, 優波提舍) be in complete accord.

5. Some conclusions about this dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge:
 - a. On the ten examples of this dual knowledge in terms of the four levels of doctrine:¹²
This is in four parts:
 1. A general conclusion: These ten examples of dual knowledge are found in all four doctrines, both in one’s own practice and in the influence of others
 2. Specific conclusions: These ten are found in all four doctrines, but some are in terms of one’s own practice while others are in terms of the influence of others

3. These ten are found generally and specifically in all four doctrines, in terms of both following one's own words & ideas and in terms of following the words & ideas of others
 4. Concluding about this dual knowledge only in terms of the perfect doctrine
1. A general conclusion: These ten examples of dual knowledge are found in all four doctrines, both in one's own practice and in the influence of others: With this being so, there are forty aspects altogether.
 - a. Upon realizing these ten for oneself in the doctrine on the three baskets, there is provisional & transcendental knowledge in terms of *one's own practice*.
 - b. Upon teaching of these ten to benefit sentient beings, there is provisional & transcendental knowledge in terms of *influencing others*.
 - c. With these ten used in the influence of others, they are all *provisional*.
 - d. With these ten used in one's own practice, they are all *transcendental*. This is called provisional and transcendental knowledge (of the doctrine of the three baskets) in terms of *both one's own practice and the influence of others*. When these ten are used in the other three doctrines, they are also tied together like this.
 2. Specific conclusions: These ten are found in all four doctrines, but some are in terms of one's own practice while others are in terms of the influence of others:
 - a. There are four about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *one's own practice*:
 1. The phenomena (of sentient existence) & the (dialectical) principle
 2. The doctrine & the practice
 3. Attachment & emancipation
 4. Cause & effect
 - b. There are two about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *influencing others*:
 5. The principle & the doctrine (in words)
 6. Opening up one into many & integrating many into one
 - c. There are four about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of *both one's own practice and the influence of others*:
 7. The existential reality & its application
 8. Gradual & sudden realization
 9. General & distinguished benefits
 10. The (four) different means of accomplishing the objective

Although the terms 'provisional knowledge' & 'transcendental knowledge' are the same, in this case the meanings of them are different.
 3. These ten are found generally and specifically in all four doctrines, both in terms of following one's own ideas and words and in terms of following those of others:
 - a. Whether being general or specific, *the first three doctrines* may all be analyzed as being both provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of both *influencing others and following the ideas and words of others*.
 - b. Whether being general or specific, *the perfect doctrine* may be analyzed as being provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of both *one's own practice and following one's own ideas and words*.
 - c. *The first three doctrines* are *provisional* in terms of influencing others.
 - d. *The perfect doctrine* is *transcendental* in terms of one's own practice.

And in concluding on this in terms of the tetralemma:

- a. In adapting to the ideas & words of others, they are all *provisional*.
- b. In adapting to one's own ideas & words, they are all *transcendental*.
- c. In being endowed with both, they are *both provisional and transcendental*.
- d. In being attached to neither, they are *neither provisional nor transcendental*.

4. Concluding about this dual knowledge only in terms of the perfect doctrine:

The sūtra's words about the seat where there is (the timeless) realization of enlightenment (bodhi maṇḍa, 道場) is in terms of one's own practice and one's own ideas. The Sūtra on the Ultimately Great Spiritual Freedom (Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, 大般涅槃經) called this 'the place where there is the cultivation and realization of enlightenment'. Asaṅga's Summary of the Greater Vehicle (Mahāyāna Saṃgraha, 攝大乘論) spoke of it being where there is 'the seamless unity between transcendental principle and the knowledge that is in accord with it'. Both of these are a reference to *the perfect doctrine*,¹² a place where provisional & transcendental knowledge are in terms of one's own practice and following one's own ideas and words.

b. Conclusions about provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of the three kinds of skillfulness in ways & means and the five periods in the evolving narrative found in the sūtras:⁶ This is in three parts:

- 1. In terms of the sūtras as the applications of teachings
- 2. In terms of them as penetrable gateways
- 3. In terms of their sublime secret
- 1. The five periods in the evolving narrative of the sūtras as 'the applications of teachings': Although the Buddha was able to teach of the inexpressible nature of life's true purpose using skillful ways & means, sentient beings were not initially prepared to handle it. They became distressed when the Buddha only taught about its transcendental nature. Because of their attachments, the Buddha was unable to make them grasp it. And so the Buddha said: "It is impossible to explain, it is impossible to explain."
 - a. The Buddha then set this work aside. Applying provisional & transcendental knowledge of his own practice through *the distinguished doctrine*¹² (specifically for bodhisattvas) to the attachments of sentient beings, those with greater receptivity and sharper capacities directly realized enlightenment. Those with greater receptivity but duller capacities took a more circuitous route to its realization while those with little receptivity did not grasp it at all, regardless of whether their capacities were sharp or dull. This was the period of teaching The Garland Sūtra (Avatamsaka, 華嚴經).
 - b. Again, setting this work aside, the Buddha only applied provisional & transcendental knowledge of the doctrine on the three baskets to the attachments of sentient beings. Those with greater receptivity grasped the hidden intent of these teachings regardless of whether their capacities were sharp or dull, but they did not grasp it through the revealed teaching. Those with little receptivity, regardless of whether or not their capacities were sharp or dull, only sought guarantees of immediate benefits, clinging to a selfish kind of realization that did not result in any lasting benefit. This was the period of teaching The Sūtras on the Three Baskets (Tripiṭaka, 三藏).

- c. Again setting this work aside, the Buddha applied provisional and transcendental knowledge of *all four levels of doctrine* to the attachments of sentient beings. Those with greater receptivity realized enlightenment either directly or circuitously, regardless of whether their capacities were sharp or dull. Those with lesser receptivity, regardless of whether or not their capacities were sharp or dull, sought guarantees of realization and did not grasp it. This was the period of teaching *The Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經).
- d. Again setting this work aside, the Buddha discarded the provisional and transcendental knowledge of *the doctrine on the three baskets*, only applying the provisional and transcendental knowledge of *the three other levels of doctrine* to the attachments of sentient beings. Those with greater receptivity realized enlightenment, regardless of whether their capacities were sharp or dull. Those of lesser receptivity, regardless of whether their capacities were sharp or dull, sought guarantees of realization and did not grasp it. This was the period of teaching *The Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā, 般若經).
- e. And leaving this work aside, the Buddha discarded the provisional and transcendental knowledge of *the first three doctrines* and only applied *the perfect doctrine* and the provisional and transcendental knowledge of his own practice to the attachments of sentient beings. Those with great and small receptivity and those with sharp and dull capacities all realized enlightenment. This was the period during which there were the teachings of *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經)

There was no one that the transcendental knowledge and discernment of The One Who Has Descended Into This World could not reach. In clearly illuminating the timing and the opportunities that were at hand, the different applications of the teachings about the nature of life's purpose were given out, whether or not they could reach sentient beings. This is why, at the beginning of Zhiyi's explanation of this chapter's title, it is said:

“The Ways are the teachings about the nature of life's purpose, and
The Means are the skillful applications of these teachings.”

Because sentient beings better understood when skillful applications were employed in teaching about the nature of life's purpose, the Buddha enthusiastically praised the use of these ways & means.

- 2. *The five periods of evolving narrative in the sūtras as penetrable gateways:*
And next, with both the provisional and knowledge of the Buddha's own realization being inexpressible, out of compassion for sentient beings there were the teachings of gateways that were provisional knowledge of the Buddha's own realization. When there were not the right opportunities, sentient beings were not able to enter into it and the Buddha's realization remained inexpressible.
- a. *In The Garland Sūtra* (Avatamsaka, 華嚴經) he taught of a gateway that was a provisional and transcendental knowledge of *the distinguished doctrine* (specifically for bodhisattvas). Those with sharp capacities attained entry into it but those with dull capacities did not. When there were not the right opportunities, provision and transcendental

knowledge of this distinguished doctrine remained inexpressible.

- b. *In The Sūtras on the Three Baskets* (Tripiṭaka, 三藏), he taught of a gateway that was a provisional and transcendental knowledge of *the doctrine on the three baskets*. Those with sharp spiritual capacities secretly entered into it but those with dull capacities did not. When there were not the right opportunities, it remained inexpressible.
- c. *In the Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經), he taught of a gateway that was a provisional and transcendental knowledge of three different kinds of influence on others. Those who were sharp attained entry into it but those who were dull still did not. When there were not the right opportunities, it remained inexpressible.
- d. *In the Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā, 般若經) he taught of a gateway that was a provisional and transcendental knowledge of two different kinds of influence on others. Those who were sharp attained entry into it but those who were dull still did not. When there were not the right opportunities, it remained inexpressible.
- e. *In The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經) he finally discarded the provisional and transcendental knowledge of the three different kinds of influence on others and only taught of the provisional knowledge of his own practice. Both those who were sharp and those who were dull penetrated it.

The One Who Has Descended Into This World enthusiastically praised skillfulness in ways & means when they were used as penetrable gateways of meditation from beginning to end. The explanation in this chapter is that 'these ways & means are gateways for entering into the transcendental nature of life's purpose. This is the idea here. From the very beginning The One Who Has Descended Into This World was able to understand how to skillfully apply these ways & means and at the same time there were practitioners who were able to faithfully accept and follow them.

- 3. *The five periods of evolving narrative in the sūtras in terms of their sublime secret:* And then there was the cultivation & realization of the Buddha's very own enlightenment. In all the ways & means there was this transcendental nature, yet it was inexpressible. Although he was able to teach of it, sentient beings were not capable of identifying with this in their own lives.
 - a. *In The Garland Sūtra* (Avatamsaka, 華嚴經), through the power of ways & means, he taught of a single transcendental nature of life's purpose in a sphere where the purposes of sentient existence were not identical with it. Those with sharp capacities were able to identify with this while those with dull capacities could not.
 - b. *In the Sūtras on the Three Baskets* (Tripiṭaka, 三藏), he only taught of a lack of identity with this transcendental nature. Those who were sharp were able to secretly identify with this but those who were dull could not.
 - c. *In the Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經), he taught of a single identity with the transcendental nature of this purpose in an arena where there were three that were not identical with it. Those who were sharp were able to identify with this but those who were dull could not.

- d. In the Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment (Prajñā, 般若經), he taught of a single identity with the transcendental nature of purpose in the arena where there were two that were not identical with it. Those who were sharp were able to identify with this but those who were dull could not.
- e. In The Lotus Sūtra (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經) he finally discarded the three that were not identical with this transcendental nature and simply taught of all that was identical with it. Those who were sharp and dull were all able to identify with this. Through skillfulness in ways & means they got to see this transcendental nature.

In the two previous ideas the Buddha used ways & means that were derived from ways & means. In the ways & means of the sublime secret there is but a single purpose and the ways & means are identical with its transcendental nature. This transcendental nature is identical with *the perfect cause*, and this perfect cause is identical with the ways & means of one's own practice. With the ways & means of one's own practice being like this, one now begins to realize what it is and enter into it. The above explanation is called *the ways & means being identical with the transcendental nature*. It gets this name from being the ways and means of one's own practice. And because of this, this is called **The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means**.

- 6. Distinguishing between (objective) truth and its (subjective) illumination:
Before (in part 5) we analyzed ten explanations of skillfulness in ways & means generally and specifically (in terms of one's own practice and the influence of others) and then concluded on this by combining provisional & transcendental knowledge together. Now we explain this in terms of the objective reality of this dual knowledge and subjective feelings (that perceive it) to further clarify the meaning of this and make it easier to visualize. Again, there are four parts:
 - a. Explaining it generally
 - b. Explaining it specifically
 - c. Combining the general and specific explanations
 - d. A conclusion
 - a. Explaining this generally:
 - 1. When generally explaining the dual knowledge of one's own practice through these ten examples of provisional and transcendental knowledge, there is *illumination of this dual knowledge in accordance with (objective) reality*.
 - 2. When generally applying these ten in adapting to the (afflicted) conditions at hand in the environment, there is *illumination of this dual knowledge in accordance with (subjective) feelings*.
 - 3. When we tie these four together as two, there is the *illumination of this dual knowledge in accordance with both objective reality and subjective feelings*.
 - b. Explaining this specifically: When specifically analyzing the illumination of this dual knowledge:
 - 1. There are four that are about one's own realization and the illumination of this dual knowledge *according to objective reality*.
 - a. The phenomena (of sentient existence) & the (dialectical) principle
 - b. The doctrine & the practice
 - c. Attachment & emancipation
 - d. Cause & effect

2. There are two that are about the influence of others and the illumination of this dual knowledge according to (the subjective) feelings (of sentient beings).
 - e. The principle & the doctrine
 - f. Separation into many & integration into one
 3. There are four that are about both one's own practice and the influence of others as well as illumination of this dual knowledge according to both objective reality & (the subjective) feelings (of sentient beings).
 - g. The existential reality & its application
 - h. Gradual & sudden realization
 - i. General & distinguished benefits
 - j. The different means of accomplishing the objective

Patterned after this, they are all possible to understand.
 - c. In combining these ten both generally & specifically (in terms of the four doctrines)¹²
 1. There are thirty kinds of dual knowledge in *the doctrine on the three baskets*. This is the dual knowledge that is used in the influence of others and the illumination of these two truths in accordance with (subjective) feelings.
 2. When there are the sixty kinds of dual knowledge found in *the general & distinguished doctrines*, there is the dual knowledge of both one's own practice and the influence of others, and the illumination of these two truths in accordance with both (objective) knowledge and (subjective) feelings. *The general doctrine* is sometimes combined with *the doctrine of the three baskets*, and when this is so they share these two truths that are only in accordance with (subjective) feelings.
 3. When there are the thirty kinds of provisionality in the transcendental nature of *the perfect doctrine*, there is the dual knowledge in one's own practice that explains the truths of duality in accord with this knowledge.
 4. And whether being general or specific:
 - a. *The three provisional doctrines* are all about adapting to conditions, the dual knowledge used in the influence of others, and explaining these two truths in accordance with (subjective) feelings
 - b. *The perfect doctrine* is about the dual knowledge of one's own practice and explaining these two truths in accordance with (objective) knowledge.
 - d. The conclusion: When these are all tied together, the transcendental nature of *the three doctrines* is provisional and the provisions of *the perfect doctrine* are transcendental. This is the dual knowledge of one's own practice and the influence of others as well as explaining these two truths in accord with both (objective) knowledge and (subjective) feelings.
7. Analyzing provisional and transcendental knowledge in terms of the evolving narrative found in the sūtras:⁶
- a. The Garland Sūtra (Avatamsaka, 華嚴經)
 - * In terms of the doctrine, the words were of full meaning.
 - * It was the time of the fresh milk.
 - * There was one part that was about the Buddha's own practice and one part that was for the influence of others.
 - * It only addressed the bodhisattvas. Those on the two lesser vehicles were like the deaf and dumb. There were some bodhisattvas who were still not yet able to arouse this dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge through their own practice and adapt it to their own personal lives.

- * When depending on the words of this sūtra, chapter four on Understanding With Faith says 'the father never spoke to anyone about (losing his son).' (未曾向人說如此事)
- b. *The Sūtras on the Three Baskets* (Tripiṭaka, 三藏)
 - * In terms of the doctrine, the words only had half meaning.
 - * In terms of its purpose, it was only for the influence of others.
 - * It was the time of the cream, the coagulated milk.
 - * When depending on the words of the sūtra about this, this fourth chapter says 'The (prodigal) son stood outside the door, wearing soiled clothes and holding a shovel for discarding filth.' (住立門外著弊垢衣, 執除糞器)
 - * The people addressed were those on the two vehicles who were only realizing freedom from affliction on an individual level.
- c. *The Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經)
 - * In terms of the doctrine, there was 'Dealing with the words with partial meanings, but expressing the words with full meaning'.
 - * It was the time of the curds, the curdled milk.
 - * In terms of its purpose, there were three parts that were for the influence of others and one part that was about the Buddha's own practice.
 - * When depending on the words of this sūtra, this fourth chapter also says 'The father and son developed faith in one another and the son could enter and leave the house any time without any difficulty.' (心相體信入出無難)
- d. *The Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā, 般若經):
 - * In terms of the doctrine, there was 'Expressing words with full meaning in the arena of words with partial meanings'.
 - * It was the time of the butter, the ripened milk.
 - * In terms of its purpose, there were two parts that were for the influence of others and one part that was about the Buddha's own practice.
 - * When depending on the words of this sūtra, this fourth chapter also says 'With many people coming and going, buying and selling ... the son learned all about the father's business' (出內取與皆使令知)
- e. *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經):
 - * In terms of the doctrine, there was 'discarding the words with partial meanings and only expressing words that are of full meaning'.
 - * It was the time of the ghee, the clarified butter, the quintessence of milk.
 - * In terms of its purpose, there was only the Buddha's own practice.
 - * When depending on the words of the sūtra there was:
 - 'Opening up the provisional knowledge and revealing the transcendental knowledge.'
 - 'This is really my son and I am really his father... and he shall inherit all of the wealth of my house.'
 - 'I now bestow a prophecy of enlightenment on you.'
 - 'The earlier doctrines did not explain this but now it is all revealed.'"
 - 'Honestly and simply discarding the ways and means, I now only teach about the supreme path to enlightenment.'

Because of this, The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means is said to be about the provisional knowledge of the Buddha's own practice. The other teachings were about the dual knowledge that was sometimes about one's own practice and sometimes to influence others.

This is further explained in terms of one's own practice and the influence of others:

- a. *The Garland Sūtra* (Avataṃsaka, 華嚴經) dealt with the duality of the Bodhisattva practice, teaching one part about the Buddha's own practice and one part about the influence of others. It was not aimed at those on the two lesser vehicles focused on attaining their own freedom from affliction, who did not hear or understand it.
- b. *The Sūtras on the Three Baskets* (Tripiṭaka, 三藏) dealt with those on the two lesser vehicles focused on attaining their own freedom from affliction and taught only a single part that was for the influence of others. They were not aimed at the Bodhisattvas and so it was not about the Buddha's own practice.
- c. *The Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經) dealt with the small becoming great. For those on the two lesser vehicles focused on attaining their own freedom from affliction they taught two parts that were for the influence of others. For bodhisattvas they taught one part on the Buddha's own practice and one part on the influence of others.
- d. *The Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā Pāramitā, 般若經) dealt with three. They taught one part on the Buddha's own practice and two parts for the influence of others. For those on the two lesser vehicles focused on attaining their own freedom from affliction they taught one part for the influence of others while for the bodhisattvas they taught one part about the Buddha's own practice and one part about the influence of others.
- e. *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經) everywhere deals with the maturing of spiritual capacity. It is simply about the Buddha's own practice and is no longer about the influence of others. On this, The Lotus Sūtra says: "The bodhisattvas heard this teaching and the net of doubt was completely eliminated. The twelve hundred Arhats all became enlightened as well." And it says:
"All sentient beings penetrated the ways & means of the Buddha's own practice".

And so it is called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means'.

8. Analyzing the teachings about provisional & transcendental knowledge in terms of their source & manifestation: This is in three parts:
 - a. In terms of the five periods in the evolution of the sūtras
 - b. In terms of the tetralemma
 - c. In terms of the Buddha & Śāriputra
- a. In terms of the five periods in the evolving narrative in the sūtras:
 1. *The Garland Sūtra* (Avataṃsaka, 華嚴經) spoke about the original ground (本地)¹³ of The One Who Has Descended Into This World (Tathāgata, 如來) that has forever been cultivated and realized and is both provisional and transcendental. Because of this, it spoke about the Buddha's own practice. In the interim The One Who Has Descended Into This World has taken on countless different manifestations and so there have been all of the different teachings. Now the Buddha has taken on a manifestation in this world at Gayā, at the seat where there was attainment of the serene transcendence of spiritual freedom (nirvāṇa, 涅槃). In the arena where there were the many different kinds of influences on others there was the teaching about the Buddha's own practice.

2. Next, in *The Sūtras on the Traditional Teachings* (Āgamas, 阿含), there were teachings that were only a single kind of influence on others.
 3. Then, in *The Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經), there were teachings about the three kinds of influence on others.
 4. Then, in *The Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā, 般若經), there was the teaching of two kinds of influence on others.
 5. Finally, in *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經), there was the teaching about discarding the three and all of that which is called the provisional and transcendental knowledge of influencing others.
- In bundling them all together, the original provision of the Buddha's own practice is said to be a transcendental knowledge while its manifestations are said to be a provisional knowledge. This is the knowledge of the Buddha's own practice and influence of others that is both provisional & transcendental.

b. *In terms of the tetralemma*

1. All teachings about the knowledge of life's purpose are transcendental
2. All teachings about the knowledge of life's purpose are provisional
3. They are all both transcendental and provisional
4. They are neither one nor the other

c. *On the causes & conditions in the transmission between the Buddha & Śāriputra:*

1. *Śāriputra's own practice and original realization* were both provisional and transcendental.
2. When the Buddha first taught at *Deer Park* (Mṛgadāva, 鹿苑),¹⁴ there was only one kind of influence that was for others.
3. In *The Sūtras on the Broader Meaning of the Great Vehicle* (Vaipulya, 方等經), he refuted the fallacies of one doctrine and accepted the other three.
4. In *The Sūtras on Transcendental Discernment* (Prajñā, 般若經), he turned the wheel of the one in the arena of two others.
5. Finally in *The Lotus Sūtra* (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, 法華經), he discarded the three and awakened them to the one.

Everywhere there was provisional and transcendental knowledge of his own practice and the influence of others. In bundling them together, the source of all that was provisional was transcendental and the manifestation of all that was transcendental was provisional. This is the provisional & transcendental knowledge of one's own practice and the influence of others, which is also endowed with the four parts of the tetralemma:

1. When there was the manifestation of the Buddha's purpose, there was an influence on others that was *both provisional and transcendental*. Because of this, it was called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means'.
2. When the Buddha guided Śāriputra into entering this knowledge of life's transcendental purpose through the perfect cause of his own practice, it was *beyond being either provisional or transcendental*. It was also called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means' because of this.
3. It was also called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means' because there was a manifestation of *Śāriputra's own provisional knowledge*.
4. It was also called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means' because there was a manifestation of *Śāriputra's own transcendental knowledge*.

Because of all of these things, it is called 'The Chapter on Skillfulness in Ways & Means'.

On the words of this chapter in the context of the whole sūtra,

About this, The Words and Passages of the Lotus Sūtra then says:

- * From the beginning of this chapter to the end of the nineteen stanzas of verse found in the seventeenth chapter on Distinguishing the Merits & Virtues (Puṇya Paryāya, 分別功德品) there is the main teaching of this sūtra. Some include the prose part after this verse, which is about the disciples' four dimensions of faith in the sūtra (四信).¹⁵
- * When the sūtra is viewed as having two main teachings, first there is the main teaching about the gateway that penetrates the manifestation of enlightenment, which begins with this chapter and continues to the end of the ninth chapter on Bestowing the Prophecy of Enlightenment on the Trainees & Adepts.
 - a. At the beginning of this chapter, there is an outline of the teaching about opening up the three (vehicles of provisional knowledge) & revealing the one (vehicle of transcendental knowledge).
 - b. Later in this chapter, beginning with the words "The Blessed One then addressed Śāriputra, saying, 'You have made three earnest requests that I elaborate on this teaching'..."", there is an elaboration of the teaching about 'opening up the three & revealing the one'.

On the first part of this chapter

- a. The Outline of the teaching about 'opening up the three & revealing the one' is also in two parts:
 - 1. Beginning with "At this time the Blessed One..." (niji seson, 爾時世尊) there is the summary outline itself of the teaching about 'opening up the three & revealing the one'.
 - 2. Beginning with the words that follow right after the first stanzas of verse in this chapter, starting with the words "At this time in the great assembly...", there is a part about those who harbor doubts about this teaching.

On the first portion (of prose) in this chapter

- 1. The outline of the part on 'opening up the three & revealing the one' has both prose and verse sections.
 - a. The prose section is in two parts:
 - 1. Summoning words about the dual (provisional and transcendental) knowledge
 - 2. Going beyond the words about the dual knowledge (concluding with the ten mutually dependent aspects found in the transcendental nature of all of life's purposes).

If one did not employ words, one would be not be able to understand it. Although the sūtra again summons words of praise for the dual knowledge of the Buddhas, words are ultimately unable to fathom it, as already explained.

- 1. In summoning words about this dual knowledge, there are two parts:
 - a. Summoning the knowledge of *all the Buddhas* that is both provisional and transcendental
 - b. Summoning the knowledge of *the Buddha Śākyamuni* that is both provisional and transcendental

The sūtra praises both because the path of all the Buddhas is the same. Before, in the introductory chapter of The Lotus Sūtra, a ray of light emanated from the middle of the Buddha's brow, illuminating many other lands, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya posed a question about the meaning of this omen. The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī then cited the similarity of this with the events of long ago. The great multitude listened intently to this answer. The Buddha Śākyamuni, having exhibited all of the omens that were seen long ago, was now about to arise from his deep resolve of meditation (samādhi, 定), demonstrating that the path of all the Buddhas is the same.

1. Concerning the summoning of the dual knowledge of all the Buddhas, there are three parts:
 - a. Praising the knowledge that is both provisional and transcendental
 - b. Explaining this dual knowledge
 - c. Concluding on it
- a. Concerning this praising of this dual (provisional & transcendental) knowledge, there are two parts:
 1. First the Buddha brought up the subject (without being asked).
 2. Then there was the praise itself.