All is One: The Profound Influence of Huayan Buddhism on Chinese Philosophy, from the Past to the Present*

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Abstract: The discourse surrounding the interplay between the concepts of "one" (or "unity" [*yi* 一]) and "many" (or "multiplicity" [*duo* 多]) has been a subject of extensive debate within both premodern and contemporary world philosophy. Within the context of medieval Chinese philosophy, this discourse takes on a particularly rich and nuanced form. The introduction of Buddhism to China significantly influenced discussions on this topic, leaving a profound impact on Chinese philosophical thought. Notably, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, Flower Ornament Sūtra, hereafter *Huayan jing*) stands out as a pivotal example, epitomizing the Sinitic development of these philosophical ideas.

This study concentrates on a comprehensive examination of the concepts of "one" (*yi*) and "many" (*duo*), scrutinizing their relationship within the *Huayan jing*. Additionally, it explores the interplay between "one" and "many" in the broader context of the Huayan school (*Huayan zong* 華嚴宗) and Chinese philosophy as a whole. Emphasis is also placed on understanding the influence of the Huayan school's ideas on the broader Chinese philosophical discourse. Furthermore, the study delves into the contemporary Buddhist perspective, specifically investigating the significance of "perfect interfusion" or "interpenetration" (*yuanrong* 圓融) between "one" and "many."

Keywords: *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, "All is one" 一即一切, Huayan School 華嚴宗, Chinese Buddhism 中國佛教

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In both Eastern and Western philosophical contexts, as well as within the dichotomy of idealism and materialism, the interplay between the concepts of "one" and "many" (or, as referred to in Chinese, *yi* 一 and *duo* 多, representing concepts of "one" [or "unity"] and "many" [or "multiplicity"]) is an inherent and inescapable consideration. In Buddhism, the Huayan school's teachings delve into intricate discussions surrounding the relationship between "one" and "many" ("*yi*" and "*duo*"), resulting in noteworthy contributions to Chinese philosophy and leaving an indelible imprint on its philosophical evolution. This study, in pursuit of a comprehensive examination, unfolds in five distinct parts to elucidate this pivotal subject.

I. The Special Characteristics of "One" and "Many" and their Relationship in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經)

A prominent feature that consistently draws attention within the *Huayan jing* revolves around its use of the concepts of "one" and "many" to elucidate the myriad phenomena in the world and to address the intricate questions stemming from them. To illustrate, Huayan philosophy frequently characterizes the Buddha's teachings as "one" (or with synonymous terms like "singular," "holistic," "total," and "complete"), while sentient beings' comprehension of these teachings is deemed "many." Similarly, practitioners may engage in "one" method, yet the merits acquired are "many" or "multiple." This is likened to how a luminous pearl, which is considered "one" (a singular entity), possesses the ability to reflect "many" (a multitude of entities). Numerous such instances abound are a testament to the unique nature of theoretical discussions found within the *Huayan jing*, setting it apart from its contemporary Buddhist texts.

More specifically, the exploration of the relationship between "one" and "many" in classical Huayan texts can be observed in three distinct contexts:

豐富與發展)." The lecture was translated from Chinese to English and subsequently redacted for publication by Professor Michael Cavayero. The original lecture was part of the Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lecture Series 印證佛學系列講座, generously supported by the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation 佛教慈濟慈善事業基金會, and was virtually hosted by the Buddhist Research Center at Peking University 北京大學佛教研究中心 in January 2022.

1. passages pertaining to the content of practice or cultivation (*xiuxing* 修行);
2. scenes that illustrate the confirmation of supernatural abilities (*shentong jingjie* 神通境界);
3. allegorical narratives and stories.

In these examples, the concepts of "one" and "many" discussed in the *Huayan jing* mainly use these two categories as specific numerical values. They represent literal concepts of "one" and "many" and are not given philosophical value, nor are they discussed purely as abstract philosophical categories or concepts. In classical Huayan discussions, including later examples of the Huayan school, terms like "many" (*duo* 多),"ten" (*shi* 十), "all" (*yiqie* 一切), "unbound/unending" (*wujin* 無盡), "limitless" (*wuxian* 無限), and "immeasurable" (*wuliang* 無量), along with other quantitative nouns all bear similar semantic meanings. Consequently, the *Huayan jing*'s discussions of the relationship between "one" and "many" fundamentally concern a quantitative distinction, rather than a purely philosophical one.

II. The Special Characteristics of "One" and "Many" and their Relationship in the Huayan School and Tradition

In Buddhism, the philosophical concepts of "one" and "many" are frequently employed to address ontological concerns—pertaining to essence (*ti* 體) and phenomenal aspects (*yong* 用), correlating with wholes and parts, primaries and subsidiaries, and the like—particularly within the Huayan tradition in China.[1] Originating in the seventh century with Zhiyan 智嚴 (c. 602–668) lauded as the second patriarch of the Huayan lineage, the pivotal role of the "one" and "many" relationship in rectifying biases within Chinese philosophy has persisted since his era.

Zhiyan's *Huayan shixuan men* 華嚴十玄門 [Ten Mysterious Gates of

[1] For the most part, scholars agree that the Huayan tradition represents an indigenous school of Chinese Buddhism formed mainly based on this tradition's interpretations of the doctrines in the non-Sinitic text, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Later, this school's influence spread to many countries and regions outside of China.

Huayan] establishes this relationship as the crux of Huayan theory, employing it to differentiate the Huayan school's perspective on origins from other Buddhist traditions and their notions of "interdependent origination" (*yuanqi lilun* 緣起理論 or *yuanqi shuo* 緣起說). The "one" and "many" relationship discussed here forms the primary distinction between the Huayan concept of the "Dharma-realm of interdependent origination" (*fajie yuanqi* 法界緣起) and the conventional discussions on interdependent origination in Buddhism.

Consequently, the relationship of "one" and "many" within Huayan theory emerges as the central tenet underlying the concept of the Dharma-realm of interdependent origination. It also serves as a fundamental point of departure between the Huayan understanding of this Dharma-realm and the corresponding notion in other Buddhist traditions.

In the *Huayan shixuan men*, the first sentence expounds this clearly:

> Clarifying the meaning of the universe of the "own-being" of "interdependent origination" according to the "One-vehicle" is not the same as "interdependent origination" according to the Mahāyāna (Great) vehicle and the Dviyāna (two vehicles), by which one can only remove such errors as attachment to eternity or annihilation. The Huayan school is not thus: in the Huayan teaching, no error is not removed, no-thing is not the same [as everything else].
> 明一乘緣起自體法界義者，不同大乘、二乘緣起，但能離執常、斷諸過等。此宗不爾，一即一切，無過不離，無法不同也。[2]

Interdependent origination stands as one of the foundational concepts in Buddhism, spanning across diverse Buddhist traditions from Mahāyāna Buddhism (*dacheng fojiao* 大乘佛教 or the Bodhisattva Vehicle) to the Two-Vehicles (the vehicles of the śrāvakas, "the hearers," *shengwen cheng* 聲聞乘, and the pratyekabuddhas, "the self-realizers" or "direct disciples," *yuanjue cheng* 緣覺乘). Despite the apparent diversity in their discussions, these traditions share a common thread, namely, their explanation of the origin, transformation, and cessation of the world, life, and various phenomena. Within the traditional Buddhist doctrine of interdependent origination, there is a consistent recognition that all phenomena come into being, undergo change, and cease to exist

[2] *Huayan shixuan men*, T 1868.45.514a25–27.

based on specific conditions. However, Zhiyan introduces a novel perspective wherein the inherent value and function of this doctrine lies in dispelling people's misconceptions that phenomena are either eternal (*chang* 常)[3] or cease to exist altogether (*duan* 斷).

However, the concepts of "One Vehicle of interdependent origination" (*yicheng yuanqi* 一乘緣起) and the Dharma-realm of interdependent origination referred to by the Huayan texts are not meant as theories to explain the origin of life, the world, and various phenomena. These texts do not aim to solve questions about the universe's origins or provide a new ontology. Instead, the Huayan school's discussion of the Dharma-realm of interdependent origination aims to establish a theory about the ideal state of existence of the world, life, and various phenomena. Their doctrines' main points are to explain the intrinsic ideal relationship between things and phenomena and to elucidate the ideal state (or confirmatory vision, *jingjie* 境界) that can be achieved in practice and liberation.

While Zhiyan did not coin the names "One Vehicle of interdependent origination" and "Dharma-realm of interdependent origination," he used these terms to juxtapose and offer innovative insights into traditional interdependent origination ideologies. For instance, he introduced the idea that the concepts of "one" and "all" can be considered synonymous, as seen in the notion that "one is all."[4]

Within this perspective, the concept of "all" encompasses innumerable things and phenomena, yet no singular entity exists outside the realm of "one." Similarly, there is no "one" thing that does not form a part of "all" within the entirety of existence. Consequently, all "things" and "phenomena" can be equated with one another. These three concise statements—"One is all" (一即一切),[5] "no error is not removed" (無過不離),[6] and "no thing/dharma is not the same" (無法不同)[7]—encapsulate the core philosophical tenets of the *Huayan jing*'s teachings. Their brevity and innovative synthesis exemplify the prevailing

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3 Additionally, Zhiyan emphasizes that these phenomena (or aspects of reality) are neither extinguishable nor eternal. Rather, they arise from a series of conditions, and again cease by a series of conditions. It is this idea of conditions (*yinyuan* 因緣) that is important.

4 The phrase or concept 一即一切 is sometimes interpreted to mean, "one is [or determines the existence of] all." In this paper, the translator adopts the translation "one is all" for clarity.

5 *Huayan shixuan men*, T 1868.45.514a25–27.

6 Ibid.

7 *Huayan shixuan men,* T 1868.45.514a25–27.

characteristics of Huayan philosophy. The "Ten Mysterious Gates" (*shixuan men* 十玄門) referred to in the *Huayan shixuan men* text provide an elaborate exposition of this overarching mode.

To summarize, the relationship between "one" and "all" discussed in the Huayan teachings can be described in the following three aspects:

1. In the *Huayan jing*, the interplay between "one" and "all" illustrates the relationship between the whole and its parts. This interdependence establishes their equality, notably expressed through the abstract concept of "*yuan cheng yi*" (緣成一). The phrase "One is all" encapsulates this equivalence, underscoring the interdependence between the whole and its individual parts.[8] Even when these parts are too numerous to count, the absence of any one of them renders the entire existence void.

2. The concepts of "one" and "all" navigate the connections between "essence" and "phenomenon," "ontology" and "function," and "commonality" and "difference." Given their inseparable nature, these dichotomies are considered equivalent (i.e., "one is all"). Here, "one" embodies the abstract principles of the "*li*" (理), the "*xin*" (心), the "*ti*" (體), and the "Buddha nature" (*foxing* 佛性), representing the origin and essential condition of all phenomena.

In this context, "all" or "everything" (*yiqie* 一切) pertains to "external phenomena," "activities," or "things" (*shi* 事) as opposed to the "principle" (*li* 理); "dharma" or "mental factors" (*fa* 法) as opposed to the "mind" (*xin* 心); "use" or "function" (*yong* 用) as opposed to the "body" or "essence" (*ti* 體); and "all sentient beings" (*zhongsheng* 眾生) as opposed to the [unified] "Buddha nature" (*foxing* 佛性). The former signifies the "one" (*yi* 一), while the latter embodies "all/everything" (*yiqie* 一切), manifesting as an infinite array of "individual entities" (*geti* 個體) and phenomena (*xianxiang* 現象).

The notion that "one is all" underscores that function or purpose necessitates a body, essential vehicle, or ontology. Phenomena lack intrinsic structure without an essential foundation, and differentiation relies on the existence of commonality or shared characteristics. In this vein, the Huayan doctrines emphasize that the "noumenon" or "body" (ontological essence, *benti* 本體) signifies "function" or "purpose" (*zuoyong* 作用); the essential structure or intrinsic quality, or "nature" (*benzhi* 本質), determines the existence of "phe-

8 Ibid.

nomenon" (*xianxiang* 現象); and "commonality" (*gongxing* 共性) dictates the existence of "differences" (*chayi* 差異).

The interdependence of these aspects highlights a key feature of the *Huayan jing*'s core philosophy: the concept of "one is all." This concept is employed to underscore the non-duality between "the world of saṃsāra" (cyclical existence or transmigration, *lunhui* 輪回) and "the world of liberation" (*jietuo* 解脫), as well as the non-duality between the real and idealized worlds. Essentially, it emphasizes that one should not seek "the world of liberation" outside of "the world of saṃsāra" or "the ideal world" outside the so-called "world of reality."

3. The concept of "one" and "all" addresses the interplay among various phenomena. In this context, "one" (*yi*) designates a particular component of the "unified whole," representing a specific element within that whole. Conversely, "all" (*yiqie*) encompasses all the remaining parts of the whole, excluding the one designated as the "one." It is, literally, a comprehensive "all" or "everything."

> Take one as the main, and the remainder as its counterparts. A master decides [what is right], and [his] companions comply in dependence.
> 舉一爲主，余即爲伴。主以爲正，伴即是依。[9]

The relationship between "one" and "all" can be likened to the dynamic between phenomena and external actions, as seen in the interaction between a master and their immediate counterparts, or a principal and their subordinates. The concept "one is all" reinforces the awareness of the interdependence and inseparability of each component. It underscores the equality of all parts, regardless of their primary or secondary roles, reflecting the interdependent relationship between the parts and the whole. This relationship also underscores the coordination and harmony among these components.

The ideal world portrayed through the concept "one is all"—the idea that "nothing is left behind," and the assertion that "no thing/dharma is not the same" (*yijiyiqie*, *wuguobuli*, *wufabutong* 一即一切，無過不離，無法不同)—encapsulates the essence of the Dharma-realm of interdependent origination in the Huayan tradition. The Dharma-realm of interdependent origination, also

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[9] *Huayan shixuan men*, T 1868.45.514a25–27.

known as "the Limitless interdependent origination" (*wujin yuanqi* 無盡緣起), conveys the same fundamental meaning through these two expressions, albeit from distinct perspectives. Within the Huayan tradition, this Dharma-realm offers a profound vision—a perfect realm embodying the complete manifestation of the Buddha's own body. The existence of elements within this realm is not characterized by "derivation" (*xingqi* 興起) or "being derived" (*bei xingqi* 被興起). There exists a harmonious unity where all things operate without conflict, barriers, or hierarchical distinctions. The world within this framework forms a unified system, free from temporal and spatial differences. This portrayal encapsulates the ultimate reality expounded in the Buddhist worldview. It signifies an ideal state achievable through practice and cultivation—a "world in reality" (*xianshi shijie* 現實世界). This ideal state, emerging from the aspirations of its believers, was particularly pertinent in medieval China during the development of this worldview.

III. The Unique Characteristics of "One" and "Many" in Chinese Philosophy

Chinese philosophy traditionally leans toward emphasizing the concept of "one" while downplaying the importance of "many."[10] The significance and profound implications of "one" have always held a central place in Chinese philosophical thought. In its abstract theoretical context, the numerical value of "one" is particularly esteemed. Philosophically, "one" can represent the unchanging origin and overarching source of the universe and all its constituents—a shared essence. It signifies homogeneity, sameness, and the unity of all things.

In traditional Chinese culture, there is a pronounced emphasis on grasping, embodying, and utilizing the "one" through practices such as "holding the one" (*baoyi* 抱一), "attaining the one" (*deyi* 得一), "upholding the one" (*zhiyi* 執一), "understanding the one" (*zhiyi* 知一), and more. These examples

[10] The above section discussed the relationship of "one" and "many" in the *Huayan jing* and in the Huayan tradition. Both cases emphasised that the concepts of "one" and "many" cannot be separated from each other. They are interdependent and completely equal. However, when dealing with the relationship of "one" and "many" in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, this relationship differs significantly.

encapsulate the highest epistemological principles and guidelines for practical conduct.[11] Chapter twenty-two of Laozi's 老子 *Dao de jing* 道德經, for instance, elucidates: "[Therefore] the Sage holds in [his] embrace [the] 'one thing' (i.e., humility) and manifests it to all the world" (聖人抱一爲天下式).[12] This assertion underscores that the Sage, by embracing the source or Way (*Dao* 道) of the universe, establishes order in the world. Mastery of the universal laws, converging towards a singular source, empowers the Sage to govern the world effectively.[13]

Chapter thirty-nine of *Laozi*, "The Origin of the Law" 法本, states:

> The things which from "of old" have obtained "the One (the Dao)" are:
> Heaven which by [having obtained the one] is bright and pure.
> Earth which by [having obtained the one] is firm and secure.
> Spirits which by [having obtained the one] have powers supplied.
> Valleys [having obtained the one] are kept full/ample throughout their void.
> All creatures which through [having obtained the one] do live.
> Princes and kings who from it [obtaining the one] get the model which to all they give.
> 昔之得一者: 天得一以清，地得一以寧，神得一以靈，谷得一以盈，萬物得一以生，侯王得一以爲天下貞。[14]

In ancient times, those who grasped the concept of "one" accorded with the laws of the universe. The heavens achieved unity, resulting in clarity; the earth attained oneness, yielding tranquillity; the spirits embraced the "one," becoming spiritually effective; the river valleys embraced the "one," leading to abundance; all things on Earth embraced the "one," fostering growth and prosperity; and kings and princes who understood the "one" became leaders of the world.

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[11] Such tendencies also represent a characteristic of dealing with the relationship of "one" and "many" in indigenous Chinese philosophy, particularly before Buddhism's dissemination in China.

[12] Based on Legge's English translation, 65 (with some amendments).

[13] In this case, the concept of the "one" (source) is used to govern the "many" phenomena of the world.

[14] Based on Legge's English translation, 82 (with some amendments).

Part II of the *Xinshu xia* 心術下 [Art of the Mind] of the *Guanzi* 管子 states:

> Hold on to [the] "one" without losing it, and [you] will be able to rule all things.
> 執一而不失, 能君萬物。[15]

It is imperative to strive for a profound comprehension of the essence of things, symbolized by "the one," allowing us to wield all things according to our will. This demonstrates that the significance accorded to the concept of "one" in Chinese philosophy manifests itself across various dimensions, encompassing ontology, epistemology, and practical applications.

However, while traditional Chinese philosophy emphasizes the unified "one," it generally lacks consideration of this unified "one" as inseparable from the "many" (i.e., the whole/entirety). It does not draw attention to the point that "one" and "many" are inseparable, as seen in the Huayan tradition, which emphasizes that "one" and "many" are interdependent and completely equal. Traditional Chinese philosophy tends to fixate on "one" to the exclusion of simultaneous consideration of "one" as an inseparable facet of the "many." Zhiyan's examination of the concept that "one" underpins the existence of all, eliminating all discrepancies, and that no thing or dharma is fundamentally distinct from everything else, marked a significant breakthrough in Chinese philosophy.

This innovation was crucial in fostering a new understanding of the relationship between "one" and "many" in Huayan texts. The *Huayan shixuan men* advanced this relationship at a philosophical level, enriching and progressing Chinese philosophy discourse. Due to the absence of such bias in the Huayan tradition's philosophical approach to "one" and "many," we can conclude that Huayan concepts expanded and advanced Chinese philosophy, with the study of Huayan doctrines exerting a profound influence on Chinese thought.

IV. The Huayan School's Impact on Song Dynasty Confucianism via its discussions of "One" and "Many"

It is well-established that Buddhism during the Sui 隋 (581–618) and Tang 唐 (618–907) periods had a significant and multifaceted influence on Song dynasty

[15] *Guanzi* 37.647.

(960–1279) Confucianism. Among the Buddhist traditions, the Huayan school wielded a substantial impact on Song Confucianism, particularly in its exploration of "principle and phenomenon" (*lishi* 理事). A central concept is that "the principle is one, but its manifestations are many" (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊). In essence, this theory suggests that a universal principle or pattern underlies the phenomenal world.

The concept of *liyi fenshu* was initially introduced by Song scholar Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and further developed and advocated by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), elevating it to a prominent idea in Song dynasty philosophy. Zhu Xi, who was well-versed in Buddhist doctrines, engaged in discussions that compared his theories with Buddhist philosophy. He highlighted both their distinctions and commonalities. However, it is noteworthy that what Zhu Xi often regarded as similarities are more accurately differences, while what he classified as differences are frequently resemblances.[16]

In the ninety-fourth fascicle (*juan* 卷) of the *Zhuzi Yulei* 朱子語類 [Classified Conversations of Zhu Xi], Zhu Xi states:

> There is only one *taiji* ("Supreme Ultimate"), as everything receives from it and each thing embodies its own taiji. And just like the moon in the sky [with its light] scattered across rivers and lakes—it can be seen everywhere, but [one] cannot say that the moon is divided/scattered into pieces.
> 本只是一太極, 而萬物各有稟受, 又自各全具一太極爾。如月在天, 只一而已; 及散在江湖, 則隨處而見, 不可謂月已分也。[17]

In this context, the term "*taiji*" 太極 ("Supreme Ultimate") functions as an alternative name for "*li*" 理, representing the "veins of jade," the underlying "noumenon" or "principle," an eternal and unified existence. This serves as a vivid example illustrating the relationship between "one" (a unified whole) and "many" (its multiplicity). "*Taiji*" is used interchangeably with "*li*" and aligns

[16] Zhu Xi's assertions on the congruences and disparities between Confucian and Buddhist doctrines may warrant scrutiny, as they are not invariably precise. Several instances demonstrate the influence of Buddhism on Zhu Xi's theories, despite his explicit disavowal, asserting their Confucian origin. He often contended that shared concepts did not inherently imply Confucianism learning from Buddhism, instead suggesting that Buddhism also appreciated significant principles like "the Way" (Dao). This pragmatic rationale typified his approach.

[17] *Zhuzi Yulei* 94.2409.

with the concept of "one" as "the principle of all things," as discussed earlier. Here, the term "all things" (*wanshi* 萬事) encompasses the notion of all phenomena (or the "many"), representing the entirety of "all" things.

In fascicle eighteen of the *Zhuzi Yulei*, Zhu Xi cites the analogy of:

> One moon is reflected in all waters and all the reflections of the moon in all waters are but one moon.
> 一月普現一切水, 一切水月一月攝。[18]

Zhu Xi asserted that "Buddhists also knew this principle,"[19] linking the concepts of "principle and phenomenon" (*lishi* 理事) and "one" and "all" to highlight similarities between Confucianism and Buddhism.

In Huayan Buddhism, the tight connection between "principle and phenomena" (*lishi* 理事),[20] along with "all is one" and "one is all" expressing the essential "unity of all things," is evident. "Principle" (*li* 理) signifies "one" (a unified whole), and "phenomena" (*shi* 事) signifies "all" (its multiple parts). "One is all" refers to an underlying principle of existence—the singular source manifesting in all things—while "all is one" points to the shared essence of all things.

Zhu Xi inherited the Huayan tradition's theory of the "principle and phenomena" (*lishi* 理事) relationship and the idea that "the principle or 'reality' is unified or inseparable" (*li buke fen* 理不可分).[21] The use of *liyi fenshu* in understanding the relationship between "essence" and "function," and "intrinsic quality" and "phenomenon," aligns with the Huayan tradition's concept of many manifestations (*fen* 分) being akin to multiple phenomena (*shi* 事). The

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18 *Zhuzi Yulei* 18.399.

19 Zhu Xi's assertion that Buddhists also recognized the principle in question can be traced back to Buddhism itself, predating Zhu Xi's time. This serves as a clear instance of Buddhism influencing Confucianism. From Zhu Xi's viewpoint, these ideas were inherent to Confucian ideology, a sentiment widely embraced in typical Song Confucian theory.

20 Here these refer to the underlying principle of existence (emptiness, enlightenment, mind) as well as to the concrete affairs of daily existence in which this principle finds its expression.

21 The concept of the "unified state of the principle or reality" (*li buke fen* 理不可分) has deep roots in Buddhism, evident in examples like the moon analogy mentioned earlier. It encapsulates the notion of *li yi* 理一, signifying the ultimate teaching that reality is inherently integrated and singular, even though its manifestations are diverse.

idea of *shu* 殊, or the "diversity of manifestations," is comparable to the "difference" (*chabie* 差別) in the Huayan tradition. Although equating the ideas of "one" and "many" from the Huayan notion of "all is one" with the concepts in Confucian *liyi fenshu* is not entirely feasible due to differing soteriological goals, the undeniable influence of Buddhist ideas on Song Confucian thought persists.

V. The Relevance of Huayan Buddhism's Discourse on the "One" and "Many" in the Contemporary Context

Huayan Buddhism's conceptualization of the relationship between the "one" and the "many" holds profound relevance for the contemporary era, aligning seamlessly with current intellectual and social discourse. At its core, Huayan Buddhism urges us to discern unity within individuality, harmony amid diversity, and concord through confrontation. The ultimate objective of this philosophy is the attainment of the zenith of harmony and perfection, termed "the non-obstruction of phenomena" (*shishi wu'ai* 事事無礙)[22] in its doctrines. This philosophical stance is particularly esteemed in modern China, permeating various aspects of daily life and policy. The ensuing discussion provides some preliminary insights into this discourse.[23]

In the realm of intercultural dynamics, Huayan principles champion diverse cultural exchange, mutual learning, coexistence, and shared prosperity. Conversely, they reject the promotion of conflict, confrontation, and antagonism between different cultures and societies. Moreover, they critique ideologies neglecting real-life instances of mutual learning, harmonious cohabitation, and the shared prosperity of diverse peoples.[24]

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[22] In essence, this concept denotes a world where all phenomena exist in harmonious interrelation, free from obstruction. It aligns with the objective of Huayan Buddhism's practice, which aims for the perfect interpenetration of all phenomena without hindrance, ultimately fostering a state where all things are unimpeded, resulting in harmony in society and the larger world. This is the actual goal outlined in Huayan Buddhism's practice.

[23] Based on its doctrinal principles, the ideas presented in Huayan philosophy may offer valuable insight concerning how to navigate the world that we face today and the relationship between the various cultures manifested by humanity.

[24] It is crucial to acknowledge the factual distinctions between cultures. Nevertheless, considering Huayan ideas, the emphasis shifts from differences, contradictions, and conflicts to

The development of human history has proven that only by exchange and mutual learning—not by rejecting or repelling others—can a culture achieve its own broad and profound knowledge and have the motivation to constantly improve. Therefore, no matter what kind of culture we are discussing, if that culture adopts an attitude of superiority, such a culture will cease to develop and lose all signs of vitality. Whether it is Eastern culture or Western culture, the situation is the same. It is precisely because of the differences and distinctions of various cultures that it is possible to communicate, learn, and gain new insights from each other, and to provide impetus for mutual development. Exchange represents the most efficient path to develop the world's humanity. Historical development attests that cultures achieve profound knowledge and motivation for constant improvement through mutual learning rather than rejection or repulsion.[25] Cultures adopting a stance of superiority cease to develop and lose vitality, irrespective of whether they are Eastern or Western. The communicative potential, learning opportunities, and fresh insights gained from cultural differences and distinctions provide impetus for mutual advancement. Non-Western culture(s) derive insights from the essence of Western culture(s), while Western culture(s) benefit from the strengths of Non-Western culture(s), epitomizing the most efficient path to human development.

In contemporary human society, fostering xenophobic ethnocentricity, hostility, and cultural hatred will inevitably lead to a bleak future. Drawing on the Huayan vision of the relationship between the "one" and the "many," it can be noted that despite apparent differences, cultures fundamentally embody a state without conflict and barriers. They are interdependent, harmonious, and mutually equal, aligning with the Huayan tradition's philosophy of diversity in the relationship between the "one" and the "many." The realization of these

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fostering cultural harmony. Throughout history, different regions and ethnic groups have nurtured distinct cultures, contributing to the diversity and coexistence of civilizations. Cultural diversity, with its inherent differences and distinctions, injects vitality and dynamism into the world. Under Huayan tenets, one should endeavour to treat all cultures as equals, challenging the notion that any one culture is superior, more esteemed, or advanced. In the context of the Huayan tradition, its ideas historically embody a culture of unified prosperity, symbolizing a "prosperous age" that prioritizes harmony over strife and equality over differentiation.

[25] In a Buddhist worldview of interconnected harmony, there is no such thing as an "absolutely pure" culture; no culture exists in isolation, devoid of communication or exchange with other cultural entities.

concepts should be our collective goal as we endeavour to cultivate relationships among humanity's diverse cultures.

Abbreviation

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. See Bibliography, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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