

Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra

Chapter Fourteen, "Happily-Dwelling Conduct"

with commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

continued from Issue #208

AS NOT COMING INTO BEING. What does not come into being? Ignorance does not come into being. Wisdom does not come into being. There is no wisdom and no ignorance. What would you say that is? It is principle.¹ Because you have no ignorance, you also have no wisdom. Because you have no wisdom, you also have no ignorance. Wisdom and ignorance are opposites. Where there is no coming into being, then one does not give rise to ignorance and does not give rise to wisdom. This is the state described as "not thinking of good and not thinking of evil." If you have a "good," then you have something that is brought into being. If you have an "evil," you also have something that is brought into being. Now, if you have ignorance, then you have something that is brought into being. If you have wisdom, you also have something that is brought into being. What kind of state is it when neither wisdom nor ignorance come into being? That state is a wonderful one. That's because there being no ignorance and no wisdom is a principle, the fundamental substance of principle²—the Great Treasury of Light of one's own original nature. Thus, there is nothing which is destroyed and nothing which destroys. There is no way to destroy it, because it is merely a principle—the principle of not coming into being. The state of practice, position, cause and effect all not coming into being.

AS NOT COMING FORTH means not coming out and not going in—neither exiting or entering. That is the original substance of the Thus Come One³, the original substance cultivated by the Thus Come One until the ultimate point is reached and so there is no coming forth or entering. This also means there is no ignorance and no wisdom which can be spoken of.

AS NOT ARISING. Having become certified to the attainment of the substance and principle of the Thus Come Ones, is simply a principle. Thereupon, the expedient doctrines of the teaching principle--the provisional dharmas—are all still and quiescent⁴. They do not arise.

AS WITHOUT A NAME. Isn't there a name for them? There is no name. There is only the principle. By this we mean that there is no name or term that can represent the principle. From "As not upside down" in the text above through "As not arising," there is no name that can be their name.

AS WITHOUT AN APPEARANCE. There is also; no appearance that can be said to characterize them. In the same way, from "As not upside down" through "As not arising," there is no mark or appearance whatsoever that can describe them. They have no mark. "As without a name" refers to the emptiness of a nature. "As without an appearance" refers to the emptiness of marks.

AS IN REALITY NON-EXISTENT. This is further praise of the substance of the contemplation of the Middle Way, which does not fall into either of the two extremes of emptiness or existence. For that reason, it says "As in reality non-existent." There is nothing at all.

AS MEASURELESS. Being unlimited means no numerical measures. That there are no dharmas measured by numbers. An example of numerically measured dharmas is the five skandhas—form, feeling, thinking, activity, and consciousness. They have a set number: there are five kinds. The six sense organs are of six kinds, and there are six of the sense objects. Together they are the twelve entrances (also known as the twelve locations). So there are twelve terms in all. Between the six sense

organs and the six sense objects add the six consciousnesses, and that makes the eighteen realms. All of these are numbered. Now in the contemplation of the Middle Way, there are no numbers which can be counted. Thus there are no measures. Measurelessness is the entire measure—a measure is where there is nothing in excess and nothing lacking, and so they are said to be measureless.

AS BOUNDLESS. Being boundless means there are no boundaries, no edges or borders. In the Small Vehicle there are confines and boundaries. All their dharmas are fixed, and being fixed they have boundaries. What is not fixed does not have bounds. Here, therefore, being "boundless" means there are no fixed dharmas.

AS UNIMPEDED. What is unimpeded can pervasively enter into all dharmas. That is because through the wisdom of contemplation of the Middle Way, one can pervasively enter all dharmas. Even though all dharmas are pervasively entered, there are no impediments.

AND AS UNOBSTRUCTED. Obstructions are coverings. There is not a single dharma which can block or cover the wisdom of contemplation of the Middle Way.

Above, starting with "Contemplate all dharmas as empty" and ending with "unobstructed," the Sutra text has nineteen phrases. The first phrase, "contemplate all dharmas as empty," is the wisdom which contemplates. The following phrases, starting with "As characterized by actuality, as not upside-down, as not moving, as not retreating, as not turning," and so forth through "as unobstructed," are eighteen phrases that describe the state which is contemplated. The first phrase, "contemplate all dharmas as empty," is the general statement. The following phrases, beginning with, "As characterized by actuality," are the specific explanation in which the particulars are given.

These principles, if discussed, are infinite and unending, but now in lecturing the Sutra, only the overall meaning can be given. Or, the nineteen phrases, setting aside the initial phrase "contemplate all dharmas as empty," eighteen phrases remain. Those eighteen phrases of sutra text can be explained in terms of the eighteen kinds of emptiness from The Great Prajna Sutra.⁵ They can also be explained as the way all dharmas are.

EXPLANATION ACCORDING TO HOW ALL DHARMAS ARE

- 1) All dharmas are characterized by actuality.
- 2) All dharmas are not upside down.
- 3) All dharmas do not move.
- 4) All dharmas do not retreat.
- 5) All dharmas do not turn.
- 6) All dharmas are like empty space.
- 7) All dharmas have no nature.
- 8) All dharmas have the path of language cut off.
- 9) All dharmas do not come into being.
- 10) All dharmas do not come forth.
- 11) All dharmas do not arise.
- 12) All dharmas have no name.
- 13) All dharmas have no appearance.
- 14) All dharmas are in reality non-existent.
- 15) All dharmas are measureless.
- 16) All dharmas are boundless.
- 17) All dharmas are unimpeded.
- 18) All dharmas are unobstructed.

1. Being "characterized by actuality" corresponds to Emptiness in the Primary sense.⁶
2. "Not upside down" corresponds to Internal Emptiness.⁷ Internally the six entrances are empty: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. If one can be such that the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are empty, then there is no self, and nothing that the self attaches to. That is inner emptiness. Inwardly not being upside-down means not being turned by the six sense organs.
3. "Not moving" corresponds to external emptiness.⁸ Externally, the six sense objects are empty. Not being stirred or moved by the six defiling objects is external emptiness. Not being stirred by them is "not moving."
4. "Not retreating" corresponds to the Emptiness of neither an Inside nor an Outside,⁹ which is also Internal and External Emptiness.¹⁰ One does not retreat, not retreating to the level of an ordinary person nor to the level of those of the Two Vehicles. Inside and outside are both empty and one is non-retreating.
5. "Not turning," not being turned, corresponds to the Emptiness of Emptiness.¹¹ Emptiness can break through all dharmas. All dharmas disappear. How can there be any dharmas? All dharmas are broken through—empty. Since empty, what dharmas could there still be? But if you have emptied all dharmas and yet the dharma of "emptiness" still remains, then you haven't really broken through all dharmas. You have become attached to emptiness. Emptiness must also be empty. And that is to have broken through all dharmas. All dharmas are what is broken through, and emptiness is what breaks through all dharmas so they disappear. Then there is no attachment to self and no attachment to dharmas. There not being any attachment to dharmas is called the emptiness of emptiness. There not being any dharmas is called the Emptiness of Emptiness.

But, if when you arrive at emptiness, you don't empty out emptiness, then you still have a problem. But when emptiness is emptied, there are no problems, no problems at all. Even emptiness is without emptiness. All dharmas have been broken through. This is called "sweeping away all dharmas and leaving all appearances." All dharmas are emptied, to say nothing of all appearances. This is "not turning," not being turned—the Emptiness of Emptiness.

6. "Like empty space" corresponds to Great Emptiness.¹² If you have read the Great Prajna Sutra, you will know that it concentrates in the discussion of wisdom—Prajna. That is, it discusses emptiness, and investigates the principle of emptiness. Therefore, Subhuti spoke well on Prajna. He was foremost in understanding emptiness.¹³ He specialized in investigating emptiness. That is why he had the name "born into emptiness."¹⁴ But his birth, his being born empty, was not being born empty.

"Well," you ask, "if he wasn't born empty, what did he have?"

He had "Subhuti." To explain, Subhuti is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as "born empty."

He was called that because when Subhuti was born, all of the treasuries of his household which held the gold, silver, gems, and valuables, suddenly became empty. All the wealth in the treasuries were gone! They were empty! As soon as his father saw that, he said, "Oh, this is being born empty!" So they gave their child that name. Since all the treasuries were empty, his father wondered if they were to be poverty stricken, and so he went to a diviner to get a reading. The reading was: "Oh! Your gold, silver, and gems are all empty! Nothing could be better! There's nothing bad about that! Don't get upset. It's extremely auspicious! To have given birth to this child is exceptionally good! There couldn't be anything better." This is why the child's name was also interpreted as meaning good and auspicious!

After seven days, all the gold, silver, and gems reappeared by themselves in the treasuries. Thereupon, the child's name was further interpreted to mean "Good Appearance." Thus, Subhuti's name has those three meanings. Why did the treasuries become empty when Subhuti was born? It's because in life after life Subhuti investigated emptiness. Emptiness is not wanting anything; not having anything at all. Even gold, silver, and gems are empty. That is why at his birth there was a manifestation of emptiness. It was to show the emptiness of Prajna.

Thus, "Being like empty space" corresponds to Great Emptiness¹⁵ — nothing is bigger. How big it is, no one knows. If people could know how great it was, it couldn't be called great.

7. "Without a nature" corresponds to Ultimate Emptiness,¹⁶ that is, fundamentally being empty. There is a verse which describes this:

The Thus Come One is like the clear, cool moon,
Always roaming in ultimate emptiness.
When the water of living beings' minds is pure,
Bodhi is reflected in it.

It says the Thus Come One is like a clear, cool moon shining in ultimate emptiness. At night we perceive the moon in the sky as clear and cool and it makes us feel very comfortable. When the water of your wisdom appears, your mind will be pure. Bodhi then makes an illusive appearance. It is not very real at first. It appears like a reflected image.

Why is "without a nature" said to be ultimate emptiness? If what is without a nature isn't ultimate emptiness, what is it? All dharmas are not excessive nor deficient. There is not a little less or a little more of them. The original substance of all dharmas is like that—not the least bit too much and not the least bit too little. That is why there are ultimately empty and since they are ultimately empty, they have no nature.

8. "Having the path of language cut off" corresponds to what kind of emptiness? This kind of emptiness is easy to remember. The meaning of it is contained in the words of the Sutra passage. Not only is this emptiness like that, but the meaning of each emptiness is contained in the passage of Sutra text it represents. This one corresponds to the Emptiness of All.¹⁷ Since all is empty, there is nothing to be said. The path of language comes to an end.

9. "Not coming into being" corresponds to the Emptiness of the Conditioned.¹⁸ Conditioned dharmas come about through the combining of causes and conditions. Now, there is no combining because there is no coming into being; and since there is no combining, there is no coming into being. That is called the Emptiness of the Conditioned.

10. "Not coming forth," not coming out, corresponds to the Emptiness of the Unconditioned.¹⁹ It is said,

The unconditioned does not arise or cease to be.
Unreal, it is like flowers in space.

The Unconditioned refers to getting out from all dharmas, but here, even that "coming forth" is empty, therefore it is "not coming forth."

11. "Not arising" corresponds to the Great Prajna Sutra's Emptiness of a Beginning.²⁰ Because there is no arising, there is no beginning. If there were an arising, there would be a beginning. If you look for a beginning to them, you won't find one, because they are empty—empty of a beginning.

12. "Without a name" corresponds to the Emptiness of a Nature.²¹
13. "Without an Appearance" corresponds to the Emptiness of Appearances.²²
14. "Without a Name" and "Without an Appearance" combine to be "In Reality non-existent." But "In reality non-existent" corresponds to its own kind of emptiness—The Emptiness of Being Unobtainable.
15. "Measureless" corresponds to the Emptiness of Dharmas of Existence.²³ to have a limit is to have existing dharmas. What has a measure is a dharma of existence. Now there is emptiness of existing measures. Now the dharmas of existence have no measure and this is called the Emptiness of Dharmas of Existence.
16. "Boundless" corresponds to the Emptiness of Dharmas of Non-existence.²⁴ Dharmas of non-existence still have boundaries. But now, there are no dharmas and therefore there are no bounds.
17. "Unimpeded" corresponds to the Emptiness of Dharmas of Existence and of Non-Existence.²⁵ Both are ended and cannot be got at. They are empty and therefore unimpeded. Since there is no impediment, dharmas of existence and dharmas of non-existence are both empty.
18. "Unobstructed" corresponds to the last of the Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness--the Emptiness of Dispersion.²⁶ There is no hindrance and no obstruction. Obstructions have been ended and so this one is "unobstructed."

The Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness explain these eighteen phrases. The Buddha always cultivated these Eighteen Kinds of Emptiness and that is why this passage of the Dharma Flower Sutra can be explained using these eighteen kinds of emptiness.

¹ 理 (*li*)

² 本來理體 (*ben lai li ti*)
本來自性的大光明藏 (*ben lai dz sying de da gwang ming dzang*)

³ 如來的本體 (*ru lai de ben ti*)

⁴ 寂滅 (*ji mye*)

⁵ 大般若經 (*da bwo re jing*)
Pancha-vimshati-sahasrika-prajnaparamita
"The Prajna-paramita Sutra of Twenty-five Thousand Lines."

⁶ 第一義空 (*di yi yi kung*)

⁷ 內空 (*nei kung*)

⁸ 外空 (*wai kung*)

⁹ 不內外空 (*bu nei wai kung*)

¹⁰ 內外空 (*nei wai kung*)

- ¹¹ 空空 (*kung kung*)
- ¹² 大空 (*da kung*)
- ¹³ 解空第一 (*jye kung di yi*)
- ¹⁴ 空生 (*kung sheng*)
- ¹⁵ 大空 (*da kung*)
- ¹⁶ 畢竟空 (*bi jing kung*)
- ¹⁷ 一切空 (*yi chye kung*)
- ¹⁸ 有為空 (*you wei kung*)
- ¹⁹ 無為空 (*wu wei kung*)
- ²⁰ 無始空 (*wu shi kung*)
- ²¹ 性空 (*Sying kung*)
- ²² 相空 (*syang kung*)
- ²³ 有法空 (*you fa kung*)
- ²⁴ 無法空 (*wu fa kung*)
- ²⁵ 有法無法空 (*you fa wu fa kung*)
- ²⁶ 散空 (*san kung*)