CHAPTER TWO

The Special Features of the Avatamsaka School

The Avatamsaka Sūtra (Chinese: 華嚴經; Huayen Jing; Japanese: Kegon Kyō), also called the Garland Sūtra, is a voluminous Mahāyāna Buddhist text that many consider the most sublime revelation of the Gautama Buddha's teachings. Scholars value the text for its revelations about the evolution of thought from primitive Buddhism to fully developed Mahāyāna. This text describes a cosmos of infinite realms upon realms, mutually containing each other. The vision expressed in this work was the foundation for the creation of the Huayan school of Chinese Buddhism which was characterized by a philosophy of interpenetration. Huayan is known as Kegon in Japan.

The Avatamsaka Sūtra is fully explained in the “Mahāvaipulya Budhāvatamsaka Sūtra” which is the authoritative canon of this school. The term “Mahā” literally means “great”. Philosophically speaking, it means “infinite, boundless, all-pervading, spreading its force everywhere”. The term “Vaipulya” etymologically means “spaciousness”. Spaciousness means “limitless extension”; it signifies again that everything is included in It. That is to say, man lives and moves and has his being in it. Sun and Moon shine, stars glitter, birds sing, flowers blossom, and waters run in It.

Buddha means” the enlightened one,” and mahā and vaipulya are epithets used to describe his qualities and virtues. In other words, He (The Buddha) is
infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is the Spirit of Infinite Life, He fills the entire Universe with himself alone, so that all is from Him and in Him, and there is nothing that is outside of Him.

Avatamsaka means “ornament.” This is used to bring out the innumerable qualities and virtues which adore Buddha as ornaments.

The Avatamsaka doctrine is the representation of the Buddha’s enlightenment as it was conceived and experienced by Him. According to the Tien-Tai tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, it is considered as the first scripture preached right after His enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

The following few verses contain a beautiful description of the Characteristics of Buddha which have been stated above:

In all the worlds over the ten quarters,
O ye, sentient creatures living there,
Behold the most venerable of men and gods.
Whose spiritual Dharma body is immaculate and pure.

As through the power of one mind.
A host of thought is evolved;
So from one Dharma body of Tathāgata,
Are produced all the Buddha bodies.
In Bodhi nothing dual there existed,
Nor is any thought of self present;
The Dharma body, undefiled and non-dual,
In its full splendor manifesteth itself everywhere.

Its ultimate reality is like unto the vastness of space;
Its manifested forms are like unto magic shows;
Its virtues excellent are inexhaustible,
This, indeed, the spiritual state of Buddhas only.

All the Buddhas of the present, past and future,
Each one of them is an issue of the Dharma body
Immaculate and pure;
Responding to the needs of sentient creatures,
They manifest themselves everywhere, assuming
Corporeality which is beautiful,

They never made the premeditation,
That they would manifest in such and such forms.
Separated are they from all desire and anxiety,
And free and self-acting are their responses.

They do not negate the phenomenality of dharmas,
Nor do they affirm the world of individuals;
But manifesting themselves in all forms,
They teach and convert all sentient creatures.

The Dharma body is not changeable,
Neither is it unchangeable;
All Dharmas (in essence) are without change,
But manifestations are changeable.

The Sambodhi knoweth no bounds,
Extending as far as the limits of the Dharma-loka itself;
Its depths are bottomless, and its extent limitless;
Words and speeches are powerless to describe it.
Of all the ways that lead to enlightenment,

The Tathāgata knoweth the true significance;

Wandering freely all over the worlds,

Obstacles he encounterth nowhere.  

The Avatamsaka School marks the final development of the Buddhist philosophy. The Tien Tai and the Avatamsaka schools are regarded as the two most beautiful flowers in the garden of the Buddhisic thought. One is called the orchid in the spring and the other the chrysanthemum in the autumn; that is to say, they are the last and also the best products of Buddhist thought. It is the doctrines of these two systems, that the Chinese schools, viz. the Mantra, the Dhyāna and the Sukhāvatīvyūha, as well as the Japanese Nichiren School sought to realize by experiment and practice.

Both the Tien Tai and the Avatamsaka schools arose and developed in China where Buddhism found the most congenial soil next to that in the land of its origin, as China was already of a rationalistic temperament, The Tien Tai schools, as I have already said, developed from the doctrine of Mādhyamikavāda, the development taking place in Southern China. The Avatamsaka sprang up in the North of China as a descendant of the Yogācāra School; it claims to have been founded by the great Aśvaghoṣa himself; and they call him its first patriarch while Nāgārjuna is considered the second patriarch. The third patriarch, according to it,

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is Tu-Fa-Shun, who as a matter of fact, is the real founder of this school. He was 
born in the reign of the Choan dynasty which ruled over China between 557 and 
589 A.D., and was contemporary of Chih-che-ta-shih who founded the Tendai 
School. He wrote two famous treatises embodying his theory, namely the “Go-kio-
shi-kwan” or “The Theoretical and Practical sides of the Five Doctrines,” and, 
“The Theory of the Dharma-loka” (Hokkai-kwan-mon). The theory of this school 
was perfected by Fa-tsan who was given the posthumous title of Hhien-sheu-ta-
shih.

This school derives its name from the “Buddhāvatamsaka-mahāvaipulya-
sūtra,” which is the canon of this school. This sutra is ascribed to the Buddha 
himself; tradition says that it was preached by the Tathāgata as soon as he obtained 
Buddhahood at Gaya, and that the Buddha expressed thereby the highest truth 
realized by him. The Tathāgata is said to have declared: “Alas! Alas! All living 
beings do not know or see, on account of their ignorance the fact that they possess 
the same wisdom and virtues as the Tathāgatas. I will show them the “Holy Path” 
which shall enable them to become entirely free from false notions and 
attachment, and shall make them realize that they possess in themselves the 
boundless wisdom which is, by no means, different from that of the Buddhas.”

It is also said that most of the audience found it too difficult to follow him 
at the time; and, therefore, they behaved like the deaf and dumb. This period is 
called the “Dawn” in Buddhism.
The Avatamsaka school calls this sutra as the “Mūladharma-cakra” or the “Root Doctrine of Buddhism,” and the other sutras, with the exception of the Suddharmapundarika, as the “Branch Doctrines” (sakhadharmacakra). Suddharmapundarika, according to this school, is one “from the branches to the rood.” The three are called the Tri-dharmacakra.

Fa-tsan divided the Buddhist canons into five classes, viz; the Hīnayāna, the primary doctrine of the Mahāyāna, the later doctrine of the Mahayana, the doctrine of the Dhyāna or contemplative School and the perfected Mahayana, that is the doctrine of his own school.

We are already familiar with the first. “The Primary doctrine of the Mahayana” indicates the Mādhyamika-vāda and the Vijnānavāda. It is also called “partially developed Mahayanism.” The “Later doctrine of the Mahayana” is the name given to Aśvaghoṣa’s philosophy of Suchness and the Tien Tai doctrine of Identity. “Dhyāna doctrine” is the theory of the Contemplative school which holds that contemplation is indispensable for the attainment of enlightenment. “The Perfected Mahayana” is the epithet claimed for its own doctrine by the Avatamsaka School. The most notable feature of this theory is that it explains the relation between one phenomenon and another. The distinction is made, as has already been pointed out, with a view to give the highest place to their own Avatamsaka School. We may not accept the distinction, but it is nevertheless true
that the Tien Tai and this school represent “fully developed Mahayanism”. In his treatise, Fatsan discusses these “five kinds of the Buddhist Doctrines”.

He subdivides the Five Doctrines into “Ten Schools”, six of which are Hīnayānistic. Before proceeding to discuss the main theory of the Dharma-loka-phenomenology, it is necessary to take a brief look at these Ten Schools, as they from an introduction to the Theory of the Avatamsakas. First of these is that of the Vātsiputriyas who maintain a permanent existence of atman of persons and things, pudgalatman and dharmatman. The second propounds the existence of the mental and material things in the noumenal state, and denies the existence of the ātman of persons. The Sarvāsti-tvavādin represents this view. The third theory denies the permanent existence of the ego—soul and maintains the Šūnyāta of the noumenal state of dharmas both in the past and future. The Mahāsāṅgikas uphold this theory. According to them, things, as they appear to our senses, exist only in the present, that is, as long as they are present before our senses, and that they are void in the past and future, because the dharmas do not manifest respective operations except in the present. The next one rejects the existence of conventional dharmas even in the present. It explains that there are two kinds of dharmas alone exist in the present and in the present only. The advocates of this theory are the Prajñāpādins.

The fifth theory insists upon the real existence of dharmas in the transcendental state only, while, it denies all existence of Dharmas in the
The conventional state. The Lokottaravādins support this theory. The sixth denies all real existence of dharmas both in the conventional and transcendental states. According to it, things are only words and names. The Susukhavādivyavahārika School believes in this speculation. The above six theories belong to the Hīnayāna, the next four to the Māhayāna. The theory of the Mādhyamikavādins or the Śūnyavāda which I have already explained is the first of them. The next one accepts reality or Suchness but denies the permanent existence of phenomenal things. This is the doctrine of the Laṅkāvatatvā-sūtra and the Awakening of Faith. The Ninth theory is one which declares that Suchness is beyond description and perception. This is the doctrine of the Vimalakīrti-sūtra. The last is the theory of the Avatmsaka school itself which we shall analyse carefully in the following chapters.

a) The Chinese Buddhist Schools: Huayen

In the seventh century, the famous Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (600–64) spent sixteen years travelling in Central Asia and India. He returned to China in 645 and translated seventy-four works. Due in part to his accomplishments as a traveller and translator, and in part to the eminent favour bestowed on him by the Chinese emperor upon his return, Xuanzang became the most prominent East Asian Buddhist of his generation. He promoted an orthodox form of Yogācāra as it was then being practised in India, and students flocked to him from Japan and

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Korea as well as China. Not everyone was enamoured of the Buddhist ideology he had brought back. Zhiyan (602–68), who would later be considered one of the patriarchs of the Huayen school, was openly critical of Xuanzang’s teachings, and Fazang had joined Xuanzang’s translation committee late in Xuanzang’s life, only to quit in disgust at Xuanzang’s ‘distorted’ views.

While in India, Xuanzang had discovered how far Chinese Buddhism had deviated from its Indian source, and his translations and teachings were deliberate attempts to bring Chinese Buddhism back in line with Indian teachings. The ideas he opposed (primarily but not exclusively those that had been promoted by Paramârtha’s school) were already deeply entrenched in the Chinese Buddhist thinking. While he was alive his pre-eminence made him unassailable, but once he died his detractors attacked his successor, Kuiji (632–82), and successfully returned Chinese and East Asian Buddhism to the trajectory established by the conflationists (Wônch’ûk, a Korean student of Xuanzang, was a rival of Kuiji who fared better with the revivalists since he attempted to harmonize the teachings of Paramârtha and Xuanzang). The underlying ideology of this resurgence, which reached its intellectual apex over the course of the Tang and Song Dynasties (sixth-twelfth centuries), was neatly summarized by the label ‘dharma-nature’ (faxing), that is, the metaphysical ground of Buddha-nature qua dharma-dhātu qua mind-nature qua tathāgatagarbha.
Fazang argued that orthodox Yogācāra only understood dharma characteristics (faxiang), that is, phenomenal appearances, but not the deeper underlying metaphysical reality, “dharma-nature”. After Fazang, all the Sinitic Buddhist schools considered themselves dharma-nature schools; Yogācāra and sometimes Sanlun were considered merely dharma characteristic schools.

Four dharma-nature schools emerged. Each school eventually compiled a list of its patriarchs through whom its teachings were believed to have been transmitted. Modern scholarship in Japan and the West has shown that these lineages were usually forged long after the fact, and were either frequently erroneous or distorted the actual historical events. For instance, while Huiyuan was an active promoter of the Sarvāstivādin teachings introduced during his time by Sanghadeva and Buddhabhadra, the later Pure Land schools dubbed him their initial Chinese patriarch on the basis of his alleged participation in Amitābha rituals, allegations that were probably first concocted during the Tang Dynasty. Similarly, the lineage of six Chan patriarchs from Bodhidharma to Huineng is unlikely; the Huayen lineage (Du Shun to Zhiyan to Fazang to Chengguan) was largely an invention of the ‘fourth’ patriarch, Chengguan: his predecessors were unaware that they were starting a new lineage and rather thought that they were reviving the true old-time religion of Paramārtha. It was also during the Tang dynasty that Tantra briefly passed through China, from whence it was brought to Japan and became firmly established as the Shingon School.
Though most of Chinese Buddhist Schools reached full bloom during the T’ang Dynasty (618-907), their roots went back to developments in north China under the Northern Dynasty. Therefore, the Huayen School can be traced back to the Ti-lun group who were active during the Northern Ch’i (550-577) and Northern Chou (557-581) Dynasties. Ti-lun School with its doctrine is based on Daśabhūmika sastra, which is the commentary on the chapter describing the Ten stages of the Bodhisattva, found in book 8 of Buddhahadra’s translation or book 26 of Śikṣānanda’s translation of the Avatamsaka.

While Tathāgata-garbha thought was perceived by the Chinese as a third school of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy, the Chinese themselves developed the Huayen school, based on the Avatamsaka, or “Flower Ornament” Sutra (Ch. Huayen jing).

Like Tiantai, Huayen offers a totalistic, encompassing ‘round’ view. A lived world as constituted through a form of life experience is called a dharma-dhātu. Chengguan, the ‘fourth’ Huayen patriarch, described four types of dharma-dhātus, each successively encompassing its predecessors. The first is “shi”, which means “event”, “affair” or “thing”. This is the realm where things are experienced as discrete individual items. The second is called “li” (principle), which in Chinese usage usually implies the principal metaphysical order that subtends events as well as the rational principles that explicate that order. “Li” is often used by Buddhists as a synonym for emptiness. The first sustained analysis based on the relation of li and shi was undertaken by the Korean monk Wŏnhyo in his commentary on the
Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna, which influenced early Huayen thinkers like Fazang. The li-shi model went on to become an important analytic tool for all sorts of East Asian philosophers, not just Buddhists. In the realm of li, one clearly sees the principles that relate shi to each other, but the principles are more important than the individual events. In the third realm, one sees the mutual interpenetration or ‘non-obstruction’ of li and shi (lishi wu’ai). Rather than seeing events while being oblivious to principle, or concentrating on principle while ignoring events, in this realm events are seen as instantiations of principle, and principle is nothing more than the order by which events relate to each other.

In the fourth and culminating dharma-dhātu, one sees the mutual interpenetration and non-obstruction of all events (shishi wu’ai). In this realm, everything is causally related to everything else. Huayen illustrates this with the image of Indra’s net, a vast net that encompasses the universe. A special jewel is found at the intersection of every horizontal and vertical weave in the net, special because each jewel reflects every other jewel in the net, so that looking into any one jewel, one sees them all. Every event or thing can disclose the whole universe because all mutually interpenetrate each other without barriers or obstruction.

This form of non-dualism is not monistic because shishi wu’ai does not obliterate the distinctions between things, but rather insists that everything is connected to everything else without losing distinctiveness. Identity and difference, in this view, are merely two sides of the same coin, which, though a single coin, still has
two distinct sides that should not be confused for each other. Mutual interpenetration is temporal as well as spatial; past, present and future mutually interpenetrate. Hence according to Huayen, to enter the path towards final enlightenment is, in an important sense, to have already arrived at that destination.

b) The Position of Huayen School Among the Chinese Buddhists

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³ See Kenneth K.S.Ch’en,Buddhism in China,p.297
The reign of T'ang dynasty (618-907), during which the Huayan school of Buddhism emerged and was fully articulated, was a period of remarkable activity in Chinese Buddhism as a whole. At least 39 Indian and Central Asian monks provided Chinese translations of hundreds of Buddhist texts, while over 50 Chinese monks traveled to India in search of Buddhist learning and lore... Historically speaking, it is often said that there are four major schools of Chinese Buddhism— the T'ien-t'ai, Huayan, Ch'an, and Ching-t'u schools. The former two are usually noted for their philosophy while the latter two are noted for their meditational practices. In all four schools, however, both philosophy and practice are included with varying degrees of emphasis and complexity.

The Huayan teachings were originally projected in the Chinese field largely through the works of five eminent monks who are known as the founders or patriarchs of the Huayan school.

**Tu Shun (557-640)**

* Contemplation of the Realm of Reality (Fa-chieh kuan)
* Mysteries of the Realm of Reality of the Huayan
* Cessation and Contemplation in the Five Teachings of the Huayan
* Ten Mysterious Gates of the Unitary Vehicle of the Huayan (Huayan i-ch'eng shih hsuan men)

**Chih-yen (600-668)**

*Record of Searches into the Mysteries of the Huayan Scripture
Fifty Essential Questions and Answers on the Huayan

Fa-tsang (643-712)

*Treatise on the Golden Lion

*Record of Investigation into the Mysteries of the Huayan Scripture

*Forest of Topics in the Huayan (Huayan ts'e lin)

*Treatise on the Divisions of Doctrine in the Unitary Vehicle of the Huayan

*Treatise on the Five Teachings (Wu chiao chang)

*Record of Musings on the Realm of the Teaching of the Huayan

*Record of Doctrines Forming the Pulse of the Huayan Scripture

*Treatise on Development of the Will for Enlightenment According to the Huayan

*Treatise on the Three Treasures Established in the Book on Clarification of Method

*A Hundred Gates of the Ocean of Meanings in the Huayan Scripture

*Cultivation of Contemplation of the Inner Meaning of the Huayan:

*The Ending of Delusion and Return to the Source

Cheng-kuan (738-839 or 760-820)

*Eighteen Questions and Answers on the 'Entry into the Realm of Reality'

*Explanations of Verses on the Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies

*Contemplation of the Five Clusters (Wu yun kuan)

*Contemplation of the Merging of the Three Sages

*Teaching of the Mind Essentials of the Huayan

Tsung-mi (780-841)
A another important figure in the development and popularization of Huayan thought was the lay scholar Li TongXuan (李通玄). Some accounts of the school also like to extend its patriarchship earlier to Aśvaghosa and Nāgārjuna.

Although there are certain aspects of this patriarchal scheme which are clearly contrived, as for example, Chengguan was born 26 years after Fazang's death, it is fairly well accepted that these men each played a significant and distinct role in the development of the school. For example, Dushun is known to have been responsible for the establishment of Huayan studies as a distinct field; Zhiyan is considered to have established the basic doctrines of the sect; Fazang is considered to have rationalized the doctrine for greater acceptance by society; Chengguan and Zongmi are understood to have further developed and transformed the teachings.

After the time of Zongmi and Li Tongxuan, the Chinese school of Huayan generally stagnated in terms of new development, and then eventually began to decline. The school, which had been dependent upon the support it received from the government, suffered severely during the Buddhist purge of 841-845, initiated by Emperor Wutong, never to recover its former strength. Nonetheless, its
profound metaphysics, such as that of the four Dharmadhatu (四法界) of interpenetration, had a deep impact on surviving East Asian schools.

c) The Philosophy of Huayen

The Huayen School of Chinese Buddhism takes its name from the scriptural text on which it is based, known in Chinese as the “Huayen Sutra”\(^4\) which is the “Avatamsaka Sutra” in Sanskrit. (“Huayen” literally means “flower adornment” or “flower ornament”). It was founded as a separate lineage in the seventh century and has continued down to the present day.

In fact, Huayen is not so much a “school” of Buddhism as it is a distinct “vehicle” (Yāna) -- a complete system of doctrine and practice. In Huayen tradition, this system is called the Ekayāna or the “One Vehicle”. The word “One” here implies “universal”, for Huayen claims to be a direct and complete revelation of the Dharma, of the ultimate nature of reality. It therefore includes, within its scope, not only the totality of Buddhist teaching, but also every authentic spiritual teaching and practice, wherever it might be found. The Avatamsaka Sutra expresses this universal accessibility by saying that there are Buddha’s teachings in every atom, and that the Dharma is being communicated in every single instant of time.

\(^4\) Huayen Sūtra (Sanskrit: Avatamsaka or Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra): there are various Chinese translations of this text. The selections made for this book are taken from the translation of Śikṣānanda’s version, Taisho 279.
Huayen teaches that the mind of every single being is identical with the mind of the Buddha, and that recognition of this truth is what constitutes Enlightenment. In other words, all beings are primordially enlightened and their failure to perceive this is just a kind of illusion that needs to be dispelled. It follows that in order for Buddhist practice to be effective, it must be grounded in some degree of awareness of the enlightened mind that is already present within us. This is why Huayen says that the cause must be based on the result -- that the ethical and spiritual practices of Buddhism should be understood as having Enlightenment as their source rather than their goal.

Buddhist practice in Huayen, therefore, while not necessarily differing in form from the practices taught by other schools of Buddhism, is guided by a different understanding. Practice in Huayen is not a way to achieve Enlightenment but a way to actualize Enlightenment, to make it manifest in the world through one’s own conduct. In traditional Mahayana Buddhist terminology, this is referred to as “adorning the Buddha-realm”, or acting so as to transform this limited world of ignorance, ugliness and suffering into a limitless realm of wisdom, beauty and compassion. For this reason Huayen places great importance on awakening the aspiration to Enlightenment (bodhicitta). Perhaps the best-known saying in the Sutra itself is that “the moment the aspiration to Enlightenment arises, perfect Buddhahood has already been attained.” If we believe that Enlightenment is something separate from us, a distant goal to be aimed at, we will never achieve it. But if we can understand that Enlightenment is our own true nature, we will come
to see that all our activities should be Buddha-activities and that their sole purpose is to enable all other beings to realize this same enlightened nature. This understanding is what bodhicitta really means, and it is only in its realization or manifestation in the world through practices grounded in wisdom and compassion that Enlightenment is to be found.

The most important philosophical contributions of the Huayen School came in the area of metaphysics, as it taught the doctrine of the mutual containment and interpenetration of all phenomena: that one thing contains all things in existence, and that all things contain one.

Distinctive features of this approach to Buddhist philosophy include: Truth (or reality) is understood as encompassing and interpenetrating falsehood (or illusion), and vice versa. Good is understood as encompassing and interpenetrating evil. Similarly, all mind-made distinctions are understood as “collapsing” in the enlightened understanding of emptiness (a tradition traced back to the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna).

**Emptiness and Relativity**

To delve into the philosophy of Huayen Buddhism, it is necessary to deal with the doctrine of emptiness, which is central to Buddhism. A very simple and useful way to glimpse emptiness—usually defined in the Huayen scripture as emptiness
of intrinsic nature or own being— is to consider things from different points of view. What for one form of life is a waste product is for another form of life an essential nutrient; what is a predator for one species is prey to another. In this sense, it can be seen that things do not have fixed, self-defined nature of their own; what they “are” depends upon the relationships in terms of which they are considered. Even if we say that something is the sum total of its possibilities, we cannot point to a unique, intrinsic, self-defined nature that characterizes the thing in its very essence.

Fa-tsang expounds the essential non-difference of the two senses of the three natures. Though the real nature, going along with conditions, becomes defiled or pure, it never loses its inherent purity— that is indeed why it can become defiled or pure according to conditions. This purity is likened to a clear mirror reflecting the defiled and pure while never losing the clarity of the mirror— indeed it is precisely because the mirror does not lose its clarity that it can reflect defiled and pure forms. By the reflection of defiled and pure forms, in fact, we can know that the mirror itself is clear. So it is, Fa-tsang explains, with the principle of true thusness: it not only becomes defiled and pure without affecting its inherent purity but by its becoming defiled or pure its inherent purity is revealed. Not only does it reveal its inherent purity without obliterating defilement and purity; it is precisely because of its inherent purity that it can become defiled and pure. Here “inherent purity” means emptiness of inherently fixed nature whereas relative “defilement” and “purity” depend on action and the experiencing mind. All
mundane and holy states are manifestations of “thusness” yet the essential nature of thusness— which is naturelessness— is not affected.

This brings us to the relative nature. Fa-tsang says that although it is through cause and conditions that seeming existence appears, yet this seeming existence cannot have inherent nature or essential reality because whatever is born of conditions has no essence or nature of its own. If it is not essenceless, then it does not depend on conditions; and if it does not depend on conditions, then it is not seeming existence. Since the establishment of seeming existence must proceed from a set of conditions, it has no inherent reality of its own. Therefore, Fa-tsang continues, the Ta-chih-tu lun says: “Observe that all things are born from causes and conditions, and so have no individual reality, and hence are ultimately empty. Ultimate emptiness is called transcendent wisdom.”

By conditional origination, Fa-tsang points out, absence of inherent nature is revealed. When the Chung lun says “because there is the truth of emptiness, all things can be established,” it implies conditional production by means of absence of inherent nature. Fa-tsang then quotes the Nirvana scripture, saying, “Phenomena exist because of causality and are void because of essencelessness,” concluding that absence of inherent nature and causality are identical. Thus, the real nature and the relative nature are harmonized and seen to be different views of the same truth.
The Four Realms of Reality

The dialect of Huayen philosophy is consummated in the doctrine of the four realms of reality, comprehending both conventional and absolute reality. The four realms are the realm of phenomena, the realm of noumenon (which means the principle of emptiness), the realm of noninterference between noumenon and phenomena, and the realm of noninterference among phenomena... Tu Shun's “Contemplation of Reality-Realm” explores ten aspects of the noninterference of noumenon and phenomena:

1) aspect of noumenon pervading phenomena: emptiness is wholly present in all things; in terms of impermanence, it means that transience is inherent in all things.

2) aspect of phenomena pervading noumenon: the noumenon in any particular phenomenon is the same as the noumenon in all other phenomena. The space in one atom, seen from the standpoint of space itself and not the boundaries of phenomena, is one with the whole of space.

3) aspect of the formation of phenomenoa based on noumenon: since phenomena are conditional their existence depends on their relativity— they can only exist because of their very lack of inherent identity.
4) aspect of phenomena being able to show noumenon: for phenomena, there would be no medium of expression & perception of the principle of relativity—indeed there would be no relativity.

5) aspect of removing phenomena by means of noumenon: By bringing the awareness of noumenon or emptiness to the fore, one views the non-absoluteness or non-finality of the characteristics or appearance of things.

6) aspect of phenomena being able to conceal noumenon: the surface of things, the obvious appearances, obscure the noumenon. While we all have Buddha nature, our attachments and illusions prevent us from being aware of it.

7) aspect of the true noumenon being identical to phenomena: the noumenon is not outside of things

8) aspect of phenomena being identical to noumenon: phenomena, originating interdependently, being products of causes & conditions, have no individual reality, and in that sense are identical to the noumenon, emptiness.

9) aspect of true noumenon not being phenomena: emptiness qua emptiness is not the characteristics of form.

The appearance of discrete phenomena is an illusion; although the illusion is in reality empty, emptiness is not the illusion.
10) aspect of phenomena not being noumenon: phenomena qua phenomena are not noumenon, that characteristics or appearances are not essence. These last two aspects view noumenon and phenomena as extremes, on the basis of which they are correlative.

The Ten Mysterious Gates

These ten aspects of the mutual inclusion of all phenomena as delineated by Tu Shun were further developed by Chih-yen and Fa-tsang into the famous doctrine of the ten mysterious gates:

1) simultaneous complete correspondence: all things come from interdependent origination, simulataneously depending on each other for their manifestation.

2) freedom and noninterference of extension and restriction, or breadth and narrowness:

   all interdependent things have both these limited & unlimited aspects, in that as conditional individual phenomena they are integral parts of the whole universe.

3) one and many containing each other without being the same: the power of one phenomenon enters into all other phenomena, while the power of all other phenomena enters into one.
The doings of a society affect the individual in that society while the doings of the individual affect the society—this is but two ways of saying that each individual in a society affects, directly or indirectly, every other individual.

4) mutual identification of all things: the two aspects (one and many) are shown to merge into one suchness; this is likened to water and waves containing each other.

5) existence of both concealment and revelation: when one thing is identified with all things, then the all is manifest and the one is concealed. When all things are identified with one, then one is manifest and the many is concealed.

6) establishment of mutual containment even in the minute: even the most minute particle contains all things, like a mirror reflecting the myriad forms.

7) realm of Indra's net: The net of Indra is a net of jewels: not only does each jewel reflect all the other jewels but the reflections of all the jewels in each jewel also contain the reflections of all the other jewels, ad infinitum. This “infinity of infinities” represents the inter-identification and interpenetration of all things as illustrated in the preceding gates.

8) using a phenomenon to illustrate a principle and produce understanding: Since one and all are mutually co-produced, one can be used to illustrate all— that is to say, for example, that the relativity of one phenomenon reveals the relativity
of all. This concept is often referred as the Buddhist teaching being revealed on the tip of a hair or in a mote of dust.

9) separate phenomena of the ten time frames variously existing: The ten time frames are the past, present, and future of the past, present, and future, and the totality— that is, the past of the past, the present of the past, the future of the past, the past of the present, the present of the present, the future of the present, the past of the future, the present of the future, the future of the future, and the totality of all these times.

10) the principal and satellites completely illumined and containing all qualities: when one thing is made the focus, it becomes the “principal” while everything else is a multitude of “satellites” of the principal.

**Chih-yen**: Ten Mysterious Gates of the Unitary Vehicle of the Huayen Multiplicity within unity and unity within multiplicity are represented in this treatise not only in terms of the interdependence or mutual definition of numbers but also in terms of a holistic view in which every part includes the whole by virtue of being inextricably related. By emphasizing the relationship of teacher, teaching, and student, as well as the interdependence of phenomena and principles, Chih-yen establishes this very principle of relativity as central and pervasive to the comprehensive, unitary teaching of the Huayen. Thus the Huayen teaching subsumes all the Buddhist teachings, specifically and generally, into a whole which transcends, without obliterating, the multitude of differences in the
doctrines and practices of Buddhism. There are ten aspects of interdependent origination which are all interrelated:

1) Simultaneous complete interrelation— this is explained in reference to the interrelation.

2) The realm of the net of Indra— this is explained in terms of metaphor.

3) Latent concealment and revelation both existing— this is explained in terms of conditions.

4) Minute containment and establishment— this is explained in terms of forms and characteristics.

5) Separate phenomena of the ten time divisions variously existing— this is explained in terms of time divisions.

6) The purity and mixture of the repositories containing all virtues— this is explained in terms of practice.

7) One and many containing each other without being the same— this is explained in terms of noumenon.

8) All things freely identifying with each other— this is explained in terms of function.

9) Creation only by the operation of mind— this is explained in terms of mind.

10) Using phenomena to illustrate the Teaching and produce understanding— this is explained in terms of knowledge.

In each of these ten gates, there are also ten sub-gates, all together making a hundred. These ten are:
1) doctrine and meaning
2) understanding and practice
3) cause and result
4) person and dharma
5) divisions of sphere and stage
6) teaching and knowledge, teacher and disciple
7) principal and satellites, objective and subjective realms
8) retrogression and progression, substance & function
9) adaptation to the faculties, inclinations, and natures of beings.

Fa-tsang: Cultivation of Contemplation of the Inner Meaning of the Huayen: The Ending of Delusion and Return to the Source

The full teaching is inconceivable—when you look into a single atom it appears all at once. The complete school is unfathomable—by observing a fine hair it is all equally revealed. Functions are separated in the essence, however, and are not without different patters; phenomena are manifest depending on noumenon and inherently have a unitary form. It is like this: when sickness occurs, medicine is developed; when delusion is born, knowledge is established. When the sickness is gone, the medicine is forgotten; it is like using an empty fist to stop a child's crying. When the mind is penetrated, phenomena are penetrated; empty space is adduced to represent universality. One awakened, once enlightened, what obstruction or penetration is there? The clinging of the hundred negations is stopped; the exaggeration and underestimation of the four propositions is ended.
Thereby we find that medicine and sickness both disappear, quietude and confusion both melt and dissolve; it is thereby possible to enter the mysterious source, efface “nature” and “characteristics”, and enter the realm of reality.

Here in this work I am collecting the mysterious profundities and summing up the great source, producing a volume of scripture within an atom, turning the wheel of the Teaching on a hair. Those with clarity will grow in virtue on the same day; the blind have no hope in many lives. For those who understand the message, mountains are easy to move; for those who turn away from the source, ounces are hard to take.

Because sentient beings are deluded, they think illusion is to be abandoned and reality is to be entered; when they are enlightened, illusion itself is reality—there is no other reality besides to enter. The meaning here is the same; entering without entering, it is called entry. Why? Entering and not entering are fundamentally equal; it is the same one cosmos. The “Treatise on Awakening of Faith” says, “If sentient beings can contemplate no thought, this is called entering the gate of true thusness.”

As for the five cessations, first is cessation by awareness of the pure emptiness of things and detachment from objects. This means that things in ultimate truth are empty and quiescent in their fundamental nature; things in conventional truth seem to exist yet are empty. The ultimate and conventional, purely empty, are null and groundless; once relating knowledge is stilled, objects
related to are empty. Mind and objects not constraining, the essence pervades, empty and open. At the moment of true realization, cause and effect are both transcended. The Vimalakīrti scripture says, “The truth is not in the province of cause, nor in effect”. Based on this doctrine we call it cessation by awareness of the pure emptiness of things and detachment from objects. Second is cessation by contemplation of the voidness of person and cutting off desire. That is, the five clusters have no master—this is called void. Empty quietude without any seeking is called cutting off desire. Therefore it is called cessation by contemplation of the voidness of person and cutting off desire. Third is cessation because of the spontaneity of the profusion of natural evolution... Fourth is cessation by the light of concentration shining forth without thought. This refers to the precious jewel of the blessed universal monarch with a pure jewel net... Fifth is formless cessation in the mystic communion of noumenon and phenomena.

Sixth is the contemplation of the net of Indra, where principal and satellites reflect one another. This means that with self as principal, one looks to others as satellites or companions; or else one thing or principle is taken as principal and all things or principles become satellites or companions; or one body is taken as principal and all bodies become satellites. Whatever single thing is brought up, immediately principal and satellite are equally contained, multiplying infinitely—this represents the nature of things manifesting reflections multiplied and re-multiplied in all phenomena, all infinitely. This is also the infinite doubling and redoubling of compassion and wisdom. It is like when the boy Sudhana gradually
traveled south from the Jeta grove until he reached the great tower of Vairocana's ornaments. For a while he concentrated, then said to Maitreya, "O please, Great Sage, open the door of the tower and let me enter." Maitreya snapped his fingers and the door opened. When Sudhana had entered, it closed as before. He saw that inside the tower were hundreds and thousands of towers, and in front of each tower was a Maitreya Bodhisattva, and before each Maitreya Bodhisattva was a boy Sudhana, each Sudhana joining his palms before Maitreya. This represents the multiple levels of the cosmos of reality, like the net of Indra, principal and satellites reflecting each other. This is also the contemplation of noninterference among all phenomena.

Huayen makes extensive use of the device of paradox in argument and literary imagery. The following quote from Dale S. Wright (1982) summarizes the range of such devices a reader is likely to encounter in a first foray into Huayen literature:

The first type of paradox is modeled after paradoxical assertions found in many early Mahayana texts that emphasize the concept emptiness. Beginning with the assertion that a phenomenon, X, is empty, (that is, since X originates dependently, it is empty of own-being), one moves to the further paradoxical implication that X is not X. An example from Fa-tsang is the assertion that “when one understands that origination is without self-nature, then there is no origination,”.
A second type of paradox is derived from two doctrinal sources: the Huayan concept of “true emptiness” (chen-k'ung) and the Huayan interpretation of the dialectic of the One Mind in the Awakening of Faith. Whereas the first type of paradox worked with the negative assertion that phenomenal form is empty and nonexistent, the second type reverses that claim by asserting that any empty phenomenon is an expression of, and the medium for, the ultimate truth of emptiness. The union of opposites effected here is the identity between conditioned, relative reality and the ultimate truth of suchness. Fa-tsang's paradoxical assertion illustrates this second type. “When the great wisdom of perfect clarity gazes upon a minute hair, the universal sea of nature, the true source, is clearly manifest.” The third variation of paradox is grounded in the Huayan doctrine of the “non-obstruction of all phenomena” (shih shih wu-ai(k)). According to this doctrine, when the ultimate truth of emptiness becomes manifest to the viewer, each phenomenon is paradoxically perceived as interpenetrating with and containing all others. This paradoxical violation of the conventional order of time and space is best exemplified by Fa-tsang's famous “Essay on the Golden Lion”.

In each and every hair [of the lion], there is the golden lion. All of the lions contained in each and every hair simultaneously and suddenly penetrate into one hair. Therefore, within each and every hair there are unlimited lions.
The common element in all three types of paradox is that they originate in the tension between the two truths, between conventional truth and ultimate truth. Our task of interpreting the significance of paradoxical language in Huayen texts, therefore, will begin by working out an initial interpretation of the two truths and the relation between them.

D) The Basic Doctrine of Huayen School

To have a general background for the discussion of the Taoist influence on Huayen, it would seem appropriate to give a brief sketch of Huayen philosophy. The central teaching of the Huayen school is the dharmadhātu (fa-chieh) doctrine, or more specifically, the dharmadhātu-pratītyasamutpāda (fa-chieh yuan-ch’i). The Sanskrit term dharmadhātu⁵, which is a compound consisting of dharma and dhātu, has been variously translated as “the Element of the Elements,” “The Realm of All Elements,” “the Dharma-Element,” the “Reality or Essence of Dharmas,” “the Noumenal Ground of Phenomena,” “the Essence of Reality,” “the Ultimate Reality,” “Supreme Reality,” “Totality,” and so on. It is, in short, a designation of the “Ground of all Being.” The term ‘pratītyasamutpāda’ means “dependent co-origination.”

The idea of dharmadhātu-pratītyasamutpāda which was originally found in the Avatamsaka-sūtra or Huayen jing, was fully developed by the Huayen school.

⁵ Dharmadhātu (Chinese:Fa Chich): the realm of dharmas. Here, Dharmadhātu refers to the realm of Totality or Infinity in the light of the highest insight and spiritual perspective of Buddhahood.
into a systematic doctrine palatable to the Chinese intellectual taste. The
dharmadhātu doctrine can be said to have been, by and large, set forth by Tu-shun
(557~640 C.E.), formulated by Chih-yen (602~668), systematized by Fa-tsang
(643~712), and elucidated by Ch’eng-kuan (ca. 737~838) and Tsung-mi
(780~841).

The foundation of the dharmadhātu doctrine was definitely laid in a short
treatise, Fa-chieh-kuan-men (The Gate of Insight into the Dharmadhātu), which
has been ascribed to Tu-shun, the first patriarch of the school. In this “fundamental
text” it is recommended to have “threefold insight” into the dharmadhātu, i.e., the
insight into 1) the “true Emptiness,” 2) the “non-obstruction of li and shih” or
noumenon and phenomena, and 3) “all-pervading and all-embracing [nature of
phenomena]. This means that in our meditative insight we have to intuit not only
the two aspects of dharmadātu, form (rūpa) and emptiness (´śūnyatā), in their non-
obstructive interrelationship but we have also to see the dharmadhātu in terms of li
and shih or the noumenal and the phenomenal in their “interfusion and dissolution,
coexistence and annihilation, adversity and harmony” and their mutual
identification. Even further, we are advised to realize ultimately that “shih, being
identified with li, are interfusing, inter-pervading, mutually including, and inter-
permeating without obstruction,” It is said here that all the phenomenal things,
having been endowed with the quality of the noumenal, are now complete in
themselves, and thus they are now interrelating with each other. In this
relationship, it is further said, the universal and the particular, the broad and the
narrow, and the like, have no impeding boundaries but are freely interpenetrating each other without obstruction or hindrance whatsoever.

This last insight into the universal and inexhaustible interrelatedness of all the dharmas in the dharmadhātu was formulated as the “ten mysteries” by the second patriarch Chih-yen in his Huayen I-ch’eng shih-hsuan-men (The Ten Mysteries of the One Vehicle of the Huayen). These ten mysteries or principles, according to Chih-yen, point to the Huayen truth that the myriad things in the universe freely interrelate with each other without losing their own identities. Each and every manifested object of the dharmadhātu includes simultaneously all the qualities of the other objects within itself. Consequently all the qualities such as hidden and manifest, pure and mixed, one and many, subtle and minute, cause and effect, big and small, time and eternity, and the rest are all simultaneously and completely compatible in any given dharma.

Fa-tsang, the third patriarch and greatest systematizer of the school, having inherited this basic teaching of Chih-yen, organized it within his finely refined theoretical system. Whereas Chih-yen’s “ten mysteries” had been simply set forth without elaboration, Fa-tsang incorporated the truth of the ten mysteries in the web of his grand system. It is now no longer an isolated set of meditational items, but becomes part of an organic structure substantiated in terms of “emptiness and existence,” “having power and lacking power,” and so on. It is also due to him that the cardinal twin principles of Huayen philosophy “mutual identification” and
“interpenetration” were first clearly systematized in connection with ideas of “essence and function” (t’i-yung).

It was the fourth patriarch of the school, Ch’eng-kuan, who built up the so-called theory of “four-fold dharmadhātu” upon the basis of the teachings handed down by his predecessors, which subsequently became known as the standard formula of the Hua-yen dharmadhātu doctrine. In his Fa-chieh-hsuan-ching (The Mirror of the Mystery of Dharmadhātu), the commentary on Tu-shun’s Fa-chieh-kuan-men, Ch’eng-kuan suggests that the dharmadhātu can be seen either as 1) shih dharmadhātu, 2) li dharmadhātu, 3) dharmadhātu of non-obstruction of li and shih, or 4) dharmadhātu of non-obstruction of shih and shih. According to his explanation, the first one is the dharmadhātu particularized or phenomenalized into innumerable concrete things. The second one, li dharmadhātu, is the “essential” aspect of the dharmadhātu which is the foundation of all the manifested phenomena. The third one is the aspect of the dharmadhātu in which phenomena and noumenon interfuse each other. The fourth dimension of the dharmadhātu, according to Ch’eng-kuan, points to the truth of the “ten mysteries,” which teaches basically the twin principle of interrelationship of all phenomena: mutual identification and interpenetration. The dharmadhātu doctrine of Tsung-mi is more or less similar to that of Ch’eng-kuan.

These patriarchs have emphasized that everything in the universe is related to each other. Apart from this relatedness, or what is technically called
pratītyasamutpāda, nothing has an existence of its own. Everything should be viewed with regard to all possible relationships with all possible things. Every possible level and every available dimension should be applied to a certain thing. In other words, any given object in the world is subject to infinitely numerous and different frames of reference. Nothing can have a fixed, intrinsic, or static value nor be judged by a determined standard. Everything in the phenomenal order is fluid, flexible, and relative.

The same step is too high for a child and at the same time too low for an adult. The same step is also too wide for a child and too narrow for an adult. The same step has, therefore, according to Huayen, the qualities of being high and low, wide and narrow, and so on, all simultaneously. The truth of the “ten mysteries” lies in its pointing out these relativistic or relationalistic qualities of all dharmas. All dharmas are free from being either narrow or broad; they are both narrow and broad, and many more without obstruction. This is the so-called mystery of “the sovereignty and non-obstruction of the broad and the narrow.” The truth of “the perfect and brilliant compatibility of the qualities of being both the primary and the secondary” conclusively affirms this relativistic outlook of Huayen philosophy.

In such a transcendental insight, there can be no room for dogmatic assertions concerning any particular thing. A theoretical polarity of good and bad, right and wrong, happy and unhappy, profane and sacred, and the like is completely
removed. Static views or dogmas have no place in such a flexible and comprehensive attitude toward dharmas.

Those things which have been seen by common-sense knowledge as essentially distinctive, categorically different, and spatiotemporally separate from each other are, here in this Huayen meditative intuition of a higher level, completely dissolved into the totalistic harmony of the dharmadhātu of non-obstruction and non-hindrance. There is only “the one unique reality” in which every fixed distinction, discrimination or particularization has no room.

Huayen philosophy is in this sense a philosophy of liberation which sets a person free from all rigid and stubborn dogmatism, prejudice, and preconception. The restraint and bondage of localization, categorization, artificial restriction, conceptual construction, sentimental bias, provincialism, intolerant self-centeredness, and worldly attachment, are all broken down and there remains only absolute spiritual freedom which keeps one from partial judgment but leads to a perfect and round perspective of things.

e) Taoist Influence on Huayen School

Buddhism, which was first introduced into China around the first century C.E., developed through various stages of interaction with traditional Chinese culture before it finally emerged as an integral part of the Chinese religious tradition. After the periods of preparation (ca. 65–317 C.E.) and of domestication
(ca. 317–589), Buddhism came to the stage of “independent growth” in the Sui-
T’ang period (589–900). In this period, there flourished schools such as the T’ien-
t’ai (Lotus or Saddharmapuṇḍarīka), the Huayan (Flower Garland or Avatamsaka,
the Fa-hsiang (Dharma-Character or Dharmalak.sana), the Ching-t’u (Pure Land
or Sukhāvatī), and the Ch’an (Meditation or Dhyāna). The systems of thought of
most of these schools were characteristically “Chinese” in the sense that they were
not mere extensions of Indian ideas but the reinterpretations and restatements of
Buddhist doctrines within distinctively Chinese modes of thought and expression
to meet the intellectual and spiritual needs of the particular times and space.
Among these schools, however, the Huayan is generally considered not only as the
apex of Buddhism, but also as “the greatest”.

It is a well-known fact that since its introduction into China, Buddhism has
had a close relationship with Taoism, more specifically with Neo-Taoism. As a
result of this there developed the method of “matching the concepts” of Buddhism
and Taoism, which was known as ko-i. By this method of analogy Buddhists
adopted many Taoist terms and ideas to explain their concepts. Although this
somewhat superficial and arbitrary method of matching was discarded as useless
and misleading after the great translator and scholar Kumārajīva arrived in 401
C.E., Taoist influence on Buddhism in general was not, and could not be, totally
eliminated.
As a good example of the influence of Taoism on Buddhism during its early stage in China, one may take note of the development of the so-called “Six Houses and Seven Schools.” Even though they were dealing with the Buddhist concept of Emptiness (śūnyatā), most of their vocabularies were based on Neo-Taoist terms. Just as the fundamental problem of the Neo-Taoists was the question of being and non-being, these schools, attuned to this line of thought, called themselves “School of Original Non-being,” “Variant School of Original Non-being,” “School of Non-being of Mind,” and so on. Consequently they were aptly known as the “Buddho-Taoists.”.

However, this is not the place to trace such examples of Taoist influence throughout Buddhist history. For, although the close contact between the Taoist and Buddhist, which had an important impact on the development of Chinese Buddhist thought in general, can be an interesting topic to investigate, our task here is only to see the concrete and most discernible Taoist influence specifically on the Huayan thought in order to clarify a particular case of Syncretization of Buddhism.

Kang-nam Oh (2000: p.287) discusses how Taoism influenced Huayan Buddhism and how dharmadhātu became qualified with the Taoist term and the concept of “hsüan”:

The first Taoist element that can easily be pointed to in the Huayan system is the idea of hsüan. For Huayan the hsüan or mystery, profundity, deep truth,
darkness, subtleness and the like, is the key word used to represent the whole truth of the dharmadhātu. Chih-yen uses the word hsüan in the title of his magnum opus, Huayen jing Sou-hsüan-chi (The Record of Probing the Hsüan of the A vataṁsaka-sūtra)⁶. This implies that the aim of his probing into the A vataṁsaka-sūtra was to get into the hsüan mystery. Fa-tsang's monumental commentary on the A vataṁsaka also has the title T'an-hsüan-chi. And Cheng-kuan also calls his commentary on the Fa-chieh-kuan-men Fa-chieh-hsüan-ching. Above all, the cardinal doctrine in connection with the dharmadhātu can be had in the writings of the patriarchs of the Huayen school, the “ten mysteries” or ten hsüans.⁷