

# The Parable as a Vehicle to Elucidate the Lotus Sutra

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*The Lotus Sutra has been translated into different languages over the ages, thus illustrating how it has permeated different cultures. It is challenging to make concepts with deep theological constructs reach different social classes and age groups. However, short stories in the form of parables in the Lotus Sutra facilitate the access of common people to it. This article will explore the language of selected parables that work as a vehicle to elucidate the Lotus Sutra. These parables are brought to light by characters faced with conflicts that are resolved using skillful means. These will be elaborated for each parable. This is with the humble understanding and caveat that this rich and classical text will not lend itself to one single interpretation.*

## Introduction

THE Lotus Sutra, probably written between 100 BCE and 200 CE, is regarded as one of the important sutras in Mahayana Buddhism. The Sanskrit manuscript is said to have been translated six times into Chinese.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese version titled *Miao-fa-lian-hua-jing* was translated in 406 by Kumārajīva, a monk from the Central Asian Kingdom of Kucha. It was this version that was reputedly instrumental in spreading the Sutra's teachings in East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

The Lotus Sutra presents seven parables that are spread out in seven different chapters. Parables are common in the texts of various world religions such as in the Upanishads and the Bible. They represent the worldview of the religion and illustrate spiritual lessons.<sup>3</sup> Parables in religious contexts were originally transmitted orally before they were written down. As noted by author D.H. Shearer, all parables in the Bible were in the verbal form first before they were written down years later.<sup>4</sup> As with any oral culture, they can be recited anywhere and anyhow, depending on how a storyteller chooses to entice and engage the attention of his audience, because words are interchangeable while the plot remains unchanged. This is the beauty of oral tradition and how it

has survived from one generation to another.

### The Features of Parables

Parables are presented in the form of simple, short stories with two central characters: the protagonist and the antagonist. The *protagonist* is the central figure and is usually single while the *antagonist* can be single or in a group. And the conflict that occurs between the protagonist and antagonist is what the protagonist needs to resolve.<sup>5</sup>

Just like any story, a parable has a beginning, middle, and ending. The beginning sets the stage by introducing the main characters and the problem, the middle part elaborates the conflict faced by the protagonist, and the end presents how the protagonist resolves the conflict and concludes by implying the lesson learned.

### The Function of Parables

Fictional though they may be, parables in religious texts illustrate facts about the world and human nature. They illustrate truths through storytelling about the real world.<sup>6</sup> Abstract concepts with religious and spiritual undertones are not easy to digest, but when imbedded in easy-to-remember plots with memorable characters, both adults and children can respond to them. The simple plot is told in a language that is not superfluous and can be clearly understood by all ages. Shearer adds:

Parables are also a great teaching tool because they hold our interest. They are not long, drawn-out lectures that could easily become dry and boring. Instead, they almost have a life of their own as they draw us into them. It is hard to daydream when you're engulfed in a story, wondering how it all might end.<sup>7</sup>

In short, the lesson learned can be easily understood and recalled, therefore making parables "more memorable than other teaching tools".<sup>8</sup>

The message embedded in parables may appear simple on the surface, but is in fact more profound than it seems. The origin of the term *parable* makes it clearer how this literary device works in religious texts. Coming from the Middle English term *parable* that was borrowed from the late Latin term *parabola* and Greek *parabolē*, it refers to *allegorical speech, comparison, juxtaposition*.<sup>9</sup> *Allegorical speech* is symbolic speech that has a hidden meaning. *Juxtaposition* is when two or more things are placed side by side to enable *comparison* or contrast

of the situation. When these features are combined, characters and events in parables symbolize a particular instance of human behavior and human life at large that can be easily recognized.<sup>10</sup> In oral culture, the storyteller plays a major role in narrating moral truths so those listening can relate them to their own lives.

Consequently, interpreting parables has been the subject of scholarly debate. These messages with religious and spiritual undertones go beyond the spoken or written word. Depending on the situation, people can read parables differently.<sup>11</sup> Some scholars agree that parables are better described as “narratives with metaphorical qualities”.<sup>12</sup> According to Howe, so far there has not been any clash between any of the interpretations.<sup>13</sup> As Craig Bloomberg points out: “Far from being an inferior art form, avoided by the master teacher, allegorical interpretation is an inevitable method of explaining the parables, which even those who deny it in theory cannot avoid in practice.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet parables trigger in most cases, “something bizarre, something out of place, something unexpected and quite incredible that disrupts the normal world, indeed, something *surreal*.”<sup>15</sup> Despite their simple narrative, parables tend to be mysterious in their tone and are considered useful for teaching spiritual values.<sup>16</sup> In this way, listener participation is encouraged to discover truths on their own and apply lessons learned to situations in their own life. Basically, parables illustrate rather than preach openly the intended moral and spiritual lessons they wish to impart.<sup>17</sup> According to Buttrick, “Parables force us to think deeply. The result of our thinking can be a profound new understanding of world and God and self.”<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, the lesson learned, and the conclusions drawn become more meaningful. This is the impact parables have for those who wish to go deeper into their intended message.

## Methodology

The source of this exploratory article is the English translation of the Lotus Sutra by Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama<sup>19</sup> based on the Chinese version by Kumārajīva. No reference will be made to the Chinese translation as only the translated 2007 version will be adhered to in the analysis. According to Kubo and Yuyama, the Kasuga edition of Kumārajīva’s version was selected because it was considered to be superior to the other editions. This was attested by the foremost scholar on the various editions of the Lotus Sutra by Kumārajīva, the late Dr Shoko Kabutogi.<sup>20</sup> The published text of this English translation was also supervised and edited by Dr Kabutogi in 1979.<sup>21</sup>

In my analysis of the parables, I will focus on the language of the identified parables and refrain from making any theological interpretations. I will discuss the themes and plot of the parables in terms of the characters and events that shape the story. Excerpts from the corpus will be included to elaborate the words and phrases used to facilitate the discussion. Words and phrases will be underlined to highlight the discussed parts of excerpts. Square brackets [ ] indicate additions by the author. Any religious interpretations will be in reference to Minerva Lee's 'Seven Parables of the Lotus Sutra' and related readings.<sup>22</sup>

The selected prose versions of the parables and the chapters in which they appear are:

1. Parable of a Blazing House (Chapter 3)
2. Parable of the Father and His Lost Son (Chapter 4)
3. Parable of the Imaginary City (Chapter 7)
4. Parable of the Jewel in the Robe (Chapter 8)
5. Parable of the Precious Pearl in the Topknot (Chapter 14)
6. Parable of the Skillful Doctor (Chapter 16)

Parable of the Herbs will not be included as I have expounded on its language in an earlier publication based on Watson's 'Parable of the Medicinal Herbs'.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Plots of the Parables**

The analysis reveals that each of the selected parables has a different setting. Each begins by setting the stage early. The simple storyline unfolds with the protagonist and antagonist quickly brought to the fore. The protagonist takes the lead to resolve the conflict. The lesson implied by the parable is then left for the audience to decipher.

We begin with the identification of the protagonists and antagonists. The first set is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the role as a father is common for all of the protagonists in P1, P2, and P3. The antagonists in each parable are the children of each protagonist. In each of the parables, the thoughts and actions of the protagonists display their perpetual fatherly love and sense of responsibility for their children.

In P1, when the father sees his beloved children trapped in the burning house, he is "alarmed and terrified" and expresses *anxiously*:

[M]y children are absorbed in play within the burning house ... and

the fire is approaching them!<sup>30</sup>

**Table 1. Role of Characters (P1–P3)**

Parable	Reference	Setting	Protagonist (P)	Role (P)	Antagonist
Parable of a Blazing House	<b>P1</b>	Children trapped in a house on fire	“An aged and extremely affluent man” <sup>24</sup>	Father	“The children of this man” <sup>25</sup>
Parable of the Father and His Lost Son	<b>P2</b>	Son estranged from father	“The wealthy man” <sup>26</sup>	Father	“The impoverished son” <sup>27</sup>
Parable of the Skillful Doctor	<b>P3</b>	Children refusing to take antidote	“An excellent doctor” <sup>28</sup>	Father	The “many sons” who drank poison <sup>29</sup>

Even when they refuse to leave their toys and ignore his warnings, the forgiving father justifies it by saying that they are not disobeying him willfully but are simply “immature and still unaware”.<sup>31</sup>

In P2, the wealthy father *yearns* for the return of his vagabond son. After leaving his father’s home, “the father had looked for his son but in vain”.<sup>32</sup> Yet, he thinks about the son constantly, never giving up over the next 50 years, and keeping his *sorrow* to himself:

He brooded and grieved in his heart<sup>33</sup>

He expresses his *longing* and *hope* for this son to return,

If I could get my son back and leave my fortune to him, I would be relieved and happy, and without further worry.<sup>34</sup>

After returning from his travel, the doctor in P3 finds his children *in pain* after drinking poison accidentally. *Alarmed*, he immediately *takes action to concoct* an antidote to cure them:

Seeing his children suffering in this way, the father searches for beneficial herbs possessed of good color, aroma, and flavor, according to the medical manual.<sup>35</sup>

The phrase *good color, aroma, and flavor* is repeated four times

throughout the parable to emphasize the excellent quality of the antidote.

In the second set of parables, the protagonists have different roles as presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Role of Characters (P4–P6)**

Parable	Reference	Setting	Protagonist (P)	Role (P)	Antagonist
Parable of the Imaginary City	<b>P4</b>	Travelers wishing to give up their journey halfway	“The [caravan] leader” <sup>36</sup>	Guide	“A large group” <sup>35</sup> [of travelers] <sup>37</sup>
Parable of the Jewel in the Robe	<b>P5</b>	A close friend trying to help a poor and needy friend	“The intimate friend” <sup>38</sup>	Close friend	“The man who was drunk” <sup>39</sup>
Parable of the Precious Pearl in the Topknot	<b>P6</b>	Whom to give the most precious jewel	“A very powerful noble emperor” <sup>40</sup>	Ruler	“The soldiers who have committed brave deeds in War” <sup>41</sup>

Table 2 identifies the protagonists and antagonists in parables P4, P5, and P6. Although all of the protagonists play different roles, they have in common an advantage over the others in varying ways.

In P4, the caravan leader is portrayed as “wise and penetrating and who knows the passable and impassable parts of this dangerous road very well”.<sup>42</sup> Thus, he is indeed *competent* and *capable* of guiding the group to their destination. The group can depend on him to lead them to their treasure land.

In P5 the intimate friend who gives away a “priceless jewel” has a financial advantage over his destitute close friend. He sews the jewel in the lining of the friend’s coat and leaves without even waking up the sleeping friend. Only a person in possession of some wealth can give away a precious jewel with such ease.

Similarly, the protagonist in P6 is “a very powerful noble emperor”<sup>43</sup> who rules over his nation. His stature allows him to gather his own army to fight “the lesser kings [who] would not obey his command”.<sup>44</sup>

## Conflict Resolution Using *Skillful Means*

In all of the selected parables, the protagonist opts for *skillful means* to resolve the conflicts. Skillful means (*upaya-kausalya*) refer to the concept that emerged in Buddhist texts of “an enlightened person’s ability to tailor their message to a specific audience”.<sup>45</sup>

Depending on the situation in each parable, the protagonist applies skillful means to resolve the conflict that will then benefit the antagonist. Skillful means will be discussed in relation to the theme of each set of parables in Table 1 and Table 2.

In the first set of parables P1, P2, and P3, the theme is **love and trust**. The thoughts and actions of the fathers illustrate their bounteous love for their offspring. The children seem to be ignorant of the situation they encounter. However, the fathers persevere to save them by using skillful means. With love comes trust that both fathers and their offspring gain in the end.

In parable P1 a wealthy father has to resort to skillful means to save his children trapped in their house on fire, a predicament caused because they have been too engrossed with their toys and have not heeded his advice:

“Children! Run out immediately!”<sup>46</sup>

When the warnings fall on deaf ears the father then *decides*:

If my children and I do not get out, we shall perish in the fire. I will now use skillful means to help my children escape from this disaster.<sup>47</sup>

He decides to entice the children to leave the house *of their own will* by offering them what they like:

The toys you are fond of are rare and hard to obtain. If you do not take them you will certainly regret it later.... [O]utside the house, there are three kinds of carts. One is yoked to a sheep, one to a deer, and one to an ox.<sup>48</sup>

And he continues to *coax* them to leave the house with a *promise*:

Go play with them. Children! Run out of this burning house immediately and I will give you whatever you want!<sup>49</sup>

*Upon hearing* about the rare fancy carts, the children “pushed each other out of the way in a mad rush out of the burning house.”<sup>50</sup>

True, they are attracted to the toys but they also trust that their father will keep his word. As for the father, not only does he keep his promise, but also does more than expected. He is fair “without discrimination”<sup>51</sup> to all his children and gives each one a larger and lavishly decorated cart yoked to a white ox which is considered to be the most auspicious.

The parable concludes with the loving father successfully saving his children and building his children’s trust in him through skillful means.

In P2, the father’s problem is how to get his long-lost son to return so he can bequeath the inheritance to the son. It is a good 50 years later that the father gets the golden opportunity to do so when the son suddenly appears at the front gate of his huge mansion. Although the son does not recognize him, he recognizes his son despite catching just a mere glimpse of him.

After an attempt to capture the son fails, the father realizes that his son is “of lowly aspiration”<sup>52</sup> and cannot be coerced. So, he decides to gain his son’s trust and rebuild the son’s self-esteem. He creates many opportunities to do so. The long tedious journey begins with *hiding his identity*:

Although the father knew without doubt that the man was his son, he used skillful means and did not say to others, “This is my son.”<sup>53</sup>

Next, the father cleverly keeps his son close by hiring him as a sweeper. He even disguises himself so that the son feels comfortable with the arrangement:

You! I want you to always work here. Don’t go anywhere else and I will pay you more.... Be at ease! I am just like your father, so don’t worry about anything!<sup>54</sup>

With that, by addressing him as his son, he reassures the son and makes him feel at ease. He then *compliments* the son in order to boost his confidence:

Whenever you work you are never lazy or sullen and never complain. I never see in you the bad qualities the other workers have. From now on you will be just like my own son.<sup>55</sup>

It takes 20 years for the father and son to finally trust each other. Lastly,



he entrusts the son with the responsibility to oversee the inventory of his wealth in preparation of handing over the inheritance.

On his deathbed, the father finally divulges their true identities and *bequeaths his property* with the king and dignitaries as his witness:

This is my son, my own progeny... This is my true son and I am, in truth, his father. All of the fortune I now possess belongs to my son. He already knows about our finances.<sup>56</sup>

Through skillful means the father patiently builds the bridge of trust with his son. By assigning him tasks to complete, he helps the son regain his confidence and dignity. As with the chapter's title, *Willing Acceptance*, the son willingly accepts the father without any coercion from the father. This illustrates the father's unbounded love and more importantly, that trust can be earned through patience and perseverance as skillful means. Consequently, the father gains back his son as a reward for his patience to endure the years to slowly coax the son with lowly aspiration and confidence. Similarly, the son is rewarded for his loyalty in the most unexpected way.

In the Parable of the Skillful Doctor (P3), a doctor resorts to skillful means to cure his sons of the poison they have ingested accidentally. While the sons do not believe in the efficacy of the doctor-father's antidote, the loving doctor-father makes allowances for their doubting, only *thinking well of them*:

These children are to be pitied. The poison has completely warped their minds... I will now cause them to take this medicine through skillful means.<sup>57</sup>

The father provides them with the antidote and then leaves home, eventually tricking them into believing the false news of his demise. When it dawns on the children that they are now orphans, they take the antidote and realize it is indeed with "fine color, aroma, and flavor".<sup>58</sup> Once cured, the father returns; his skillful means of getting his children to take the antidote having proved successful.

In the second set of parables — P4, P5, and P6 — the theme is leadership, compassion, and fairness. These are developed through skillful means to fit the situation of each parable. The thoughts and actions of the protagonists in P4 and P6 illustrate their leadership qualities in guiding the travel group and the nation, respectively. In P5

the wealthy friend shows compassion toward his destitute friend and gives a gift of a precious jewel to help improve the friend's life. The emperor in P6 also displays fairness in rewarding his soldiers with equally precious wealth and honor. The selection of the most deserving soldier to receive the most precious jewelry is done only after all duties are completed.

In P4, the caravan leader uses skillful means to help a group of travelers who are tired, disheartened, and wish to turn back as the road becomes more and more treacherous. The caravan leader is concerned for their well-being and feels responsible for ensuring they complete their journey:

These people are to be pitied. How could they want to turn back and abandon the great treasure?<sup>59</sup>

Through skillful means, he magically creates an imaginary city where they can *rest* and *encourages* them to stay focused on the journey ahead:

Do not be frightened. Do not turn back! You may now stay in this great city and be at your leisure. If you enter this city, you can be comfortable and at ease. Once you are able to go on and reach the treasure site, then you can depart once more.<sup>60</sup>

Once the group is ready to travel again, he makes the city disappear and reveals its truth:

All of you, come along! The treasure site is near. I made that great apparitional city only in order to let you rest.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, with skillful means that include a surreal experience, the caravan leader rescues the travelers from abandoning original intentions and giving up half-way.

Parable P5 presents a protagonist who uses skillful means to rescue a visiting friend from misery and poverty. He sews a precious jewel into the lining of the garment of his intoxicated friend who is sleeping and leaves before the friend awakes. Unaware as to what has happened, the friend departs the home of the kind-hearted protagonist and wanders from place to place, continuing to live in hardship and grateful for any "meagre amounts" of food and clothing he receives.<sup>62</sup>

Much later, the two friends bump into each other and the protagonist is shocked that his friend's living conditions have not improved despite

him giving the jewel. He *sympathizes* and discloses the existence of the jewel. He *explains*:

O poor fellow! How have you come to this state through lack of food and clothing? Once, on such-such a day and in such-such a month and year, I sewed a priceless jewel into the inside of your garment wanting to make things easier for you and to let you enjoy the desires of the five senses as much as you wished.<sup>63</sup>

He goes on *to advise* the friend:

Sell this jewel and use it to buy what you need. From now on you will know neither poverty nor want and can live as you wish.<sup>64</sup>

The decision to give away the jewel to a sleeping friend may seem unwise, but perhaps the friend has ended up appreciating it more after having undergone much hardship. Such may be the way of skillful means.

The sixth parable, P6, tells us of a different kind of dilemma faced by “a noble emperor” who has gathered an army to fight the other “lesser kings”.<sup>65</sup> He lavishly rewards *his loyal soldiers in bountiful ways*:

[T]he soldiers who have committed brave deeds in war and, greatly rejoicing, he bestows boons according to their merit, such as estates, villages, cities, garments, ornaments, various treasures, gold, silver, lapis lazuli.... servants, and subjects ...<sup>66</sup>

Yet he does not “rashly give them the marvelous jewel”<sup>67</sup> that is kept in his topknot. The jewel separates and makes him stand apart from the other soldiers, so if he were to give it away, “his attendants would certainly be very surprised and mistrustful.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, the decision to keep the jewel in the topknot until the end is based on skillful means. Eventually, after the army completes its duties, the jewel is awarded to one exceptional and deserving soldier.

### **Juxtaposition of Human Traits in Parables**

In each of the parables, two traits of human behavior are juxtaposed for comparison and contrast. The skillful means selected by the protagonists are in response to conflicts they face. These are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3. Juxtaposition and Skillful Means in Parables**

Parable	Theme	Juxtaposition	Conflict	Skillful Means
<b>P1</b>	Love, trust, and commitment	Wisdom and Ignorance	How to save his children who refuse to leave the burning house	Through enticement to do the needful willingly
<b>P2</b>		Wisdom and Imprudence	How to make his estranged son trust him and always remain by his side	Through patience and perseverance to gain mutual respect and trust
<b>P3</b>		Trust and Doubt	How to cure his delirious children who refuse to take the antidote	Through hope and persistence to make them realize what is best for themselves
<b>P4</b>	Leadership, compassion, and fairness	Courage and Fear	How to prevent the group from giving up their journey	Through encouragement and guidance to complete their journey
<b>P5</b>		Wealth and Poverty	How to help a close, destitute friend	Through empathy and compassion to improve the friend's life
<b>P6</b>		Exceptional and Average	Whom to give away the precious jewel to	Through fairness in choosing the most deserving soldier at the opportune time

With reference to Table 3, the overall theme of P1, P2, and P3 is **love, trust, and commitment**. It begins with love to gain someone's trust and to be committed to maintain the relationship and trust for each other. It is the fathers' love that makes them persevere in rescuing their children from various dangers. In P1, Wisdom is contrasted with the children's Ignorance of the fire and in P2 with the Imprudence of the wealthy man's son. Trust and Doubt are the contrasts in P3 between the father and the children's perception of the antidote's effectiveness.

In the second set of parables, P4, P5, and P6, the theme is **leadership, compassion, and fairness**. In P4, the Courage of the caravan leader is contrasted against Fear of the travelers to proceed with the journey. Poverty in P5 is compared to Wealth, which enables the protagonist to help his destitute friend. In P6, the emperor, in his fairness to equally

reward his soldiers, chooses the end of war as the opportune time to select only the Exceptional among the Average soldiers to receive the precious jewel. In all of these parables, compassion must exist in those who want to lead and help others sincerely.

The parables also demonstrate that the ends justify the means. In P1, the father switches the toys he has promised but this is not considered to be deception:

Because by saving their lives they obtained marvelous toys. Moreover, they were saved from the burning house by skillful means.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, when the father in P3 sends false news, grieving is what makes the children come to their senses. In P2, the father keeps the truth of his identity to buy time to build trust between him and his son. In P4, the caravan leader confesses that his intention is to help them abandon their idea of turning back:

I made that great apparitional city only in order to let you rest.<sup>70</sup>

Likewise, the wealthy but concerned protagonist, who must depart for his own reasons, hides the jewel in his friend's coat to prevent its loss or theft since his friend is still asleep.

The decisions made by the protagonists appear justified to ensure the ends are met.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Parables in the Lotus Sutra facilitate the expounding of theoretical concepts that are abstract and may take time to comprehend. These parables are analogies of human behavior and human life at large that can be easily recognized by all ages and cultures. According to Lee, “[P]arables [are used] to explain and unravel the Law of Supreme Perfect Enlightenment in a simplified manner, making them accessible and easy to understand for his disciples.”<sup>71</sup> She further explicates that the protagonists refer to the Buddha and in each of the parables the antagonist(s) refer to either the disciples or the common people.

These parables present conflicts that are faced by average people from all walks of life — from royalty and the rich to the poor and the humble. They relate to normal conflicts faced in daily life. People can relate to the selected parables easily because they use characters and simple but effective plots to deliver the message of love, trust, and leadership.

This has been a study on the parables from a literary perspective and the references are far-reaching for those who try to understand the underlying meaning from their respective cultures.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Lotus Sutra: A Biography* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016). Chapter 3 discusses the Lotus Sūtra in China (pp. 43–64).
- <sup>2</sup> The British Library, ‘The Japanese Lotus Sutra’, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/lotus-sutra-eighth-chapter>.
- <sup>3</sup> D.H. Shearer, *Neighbors and Ne'er-Do-Wells: Two Parables of Amazing Love as Told by Jesus* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2013).
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>5</sup> Literary Devices Editors, ‘Character’, *Literary Devices: Definitions and examples of literary terms*, 2013, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://literarydevices.net/character/>.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas A. Howe, ‘Narrative and Parable’, *Southern Evangelical Seminary*, 25 (2017): 45–58. Accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://ses.edu/narrative-and-parable/>.
- <sup>7</sup> Shearer, *Neighbors and Ne'er-Do-Wells*, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> Samuel Suzuki and Shipra Kumar, ‘Lotus Sutra: Literary Features as Teaching Tools’, Lotus Sutra Project, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <http://lotus.obdurodon.org/about.html>; Examples of Proverbs in Literature, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://penandthepad.com/examples-parables-literature-6563977.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster, ‘Parable’, Merriam-Webster.com dictionary, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parable>.
- <sup>10</sup> Angus Stewart Fletcher, Teiji Ichiko, and Naoaki Maeno, ‘Fable, Parable, and Allegory’, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/fable-parable-and-allegory#ref1235850>.
- <sup>11</sup> David Buttrick, *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).
- <sup>12</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ‘Parables and Proverbs’, Encyclopedia.com, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/parables-and-proverbs>.
- <sup>13</sup> Howe, ‘Narrative and Parable’, 45–58.
- <sup>14</sup> Craig L. Bloomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 41, quoted in Howe, ‘Narrative and Parable’, 45–58. Accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://ses.edu/narrative-and-parable/>.
- <sup>15</sup> Buttrick, *Speaking Parables*, 17.
- <sup>16</sup> Fletcher, Ichiko, and Maeno, ‘Fable, Parable, and Allegory’.
- <sup>17</sup> Howe, ‘Narrative and Parable’, 45–58.
- <sup>18</sup> Buttrick, *Speaking Parables*, 19.
- <sup>19</sup> Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama, *The Lotus Sutra*, Rev. 2nd ed. BDK

- English Tripitaka Series, Taishō Volume 9, no. 262 (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007). Accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from [https://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET\\_T0262\\_LotusSutra\\_2007.pdf](https://www.bdk.or.jp/document/dgtl-dl/dBET_T0262_LotusSutra_2007.pdf).
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., Translators' Introduction, p. xiii.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. xiii.
- <sup>22</sup> Minerva Lee, 'Seven Parables of the Lotus Sutra', *Fundamentals of Buddhism*, May 8, 2016, accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.lotus-happiness.com/seven-parable-of-the-lotus-sutra/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Faridah Noor Mohd Noor, 'The Language of Lotus Sutra's Parable of Medicinal Herbs', *The Journal of Oriental Studies* 25 (2015): 45–58.
- <sup>24</sup> Kubo and Yuyama, *The Lotus Sutra*, 56.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 81.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 86.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 225.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 226.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 56.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 80.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 226.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 131.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 146.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 202.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 131.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 202.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Tricycle: Buddhism for Beginners, 'What is skillful means (upaya)?', accessed November 30, 2021, retrieved from <https://tricycle.org/beginners/buddhism/skillful-means>.
- <sup>46</sup> Kubo and Yuyama, *The Lotus Sutra*, 57.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 58.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., 82.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., 83.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 83–84.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 227.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 146–47.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>71</sup> Lee, 'Seven Parables of the Lotus Sutra'.

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