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The Philosophy of Taoism According to Chuang Tzu

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Recently, the modern philosophical world has been somewhat astounded by the fact that Martin Heidegger transformed his ways of thinking from the subjective and analytical to the concrete and actual. Thus, he dissolved the distinction between subject and object and began a more direct, poetic approach. In my translation of the *Tao Te Ching*<sup>c</sup>, entitled *Tao—A New Way of Thinking*, (the title has been borrowed from an expression of Heidegger's), I have pointed out that Heidegger opens up a new approach to thinking which is different from the traditional Western philosophical way of thought, and thus proclaims that this new approach has "the character of return" and is to be called "meditative thinking." At the entry of this thinking into pure simplicity is the process of the "event of appropriation." This key term, as Heidegger himself says in *Identity and Difference*, can no more be translated than the Chinese *Tao*<sup>d,1</sup>

In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger explains, "*Tao* could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think. Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word 'way' *Tao*."<sup>2</sup> In my introduction and commentaries to *Tao Te Ching* I have expounded on this mystery of mysteries in the thoughtful Saying of Lao Tzu. Now I am going to present my explanation of the thoughtful Saying of Chuang Tzu.

In early fifth-century China, when the great Buddhist Seng Chao<sup>e</sup> (384–414 A.D.) wrote his famous essay *Pan-jo Wu-chih Lun*<sup>f</sup>, or "Prajñā is Not-Knowledge," he encountered the difficulty of expounding upon what is inexpressible wisdom. Seng Chao states: "The supreme wisdom is profound and invisible. Its concealed depths can hardly be fathomed. As it is formless and nameless, no verbal forms can reach it. I simply let my mind be *wang hsiang*<sup>g</sup> (or formless and empty), and convey it through *k'uang yen*<sup>h</sup> (or most free words)."<sup>3</sup>

*Wang hsiang* and *k'uang yen* both are expressions quoted from the works of Chuang Tzu. The allegory of *wang hsiang* was that when the Yellow Emperor lost his precious pearl, he sent Intelligence to look for it, but Intelligence failed. Then, after another two attempts, he finally sent *wang hsiang*, who found it. The commentator, Han-shan Te-Ching<sup>i</sup> (1544–1623), remarked on this, saying that when the mind is free and empty then it will be able to respond to higher wisdom<sup>4</sup>. Now I am engaging in the difficult task of expounding upon the wisdom of Chuang Tzu, which also is unfathomable and inexpressible. I think that if we follow Seng Chao's principle of letting the mind be free and empty then our communication and understanding of Chuang Tzu's freest words will take place.

When Ssu-ma Tan<sup>j</sup> (died 110 B.C.) discussed the schools of philosophy in his work *The Essential Meanings of the Six Schools*<sup>k</sup>, he pointed out that Taoist teaching stresses that *hsu wu wei pen*<sup>l</sup> or "empty and nothing are fundamental."

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However, he did not elaborate upon the meaning of *hsu wu*<sup>m</sup>. Ordinarily, people interpret such a statement in its relative sense as *ch'en k'ung shih chi*<sup>n</sup> or "infatuated void and dead stillness." Therefore, I think the clarification of the real meaning of *hsu wu*, as maintained by Chuang Tzu, is of the utmost importance.

In Seng Chao's essay *Pu Chen K'ung Lun*<sup>q</sup> or "Discourse on the Un-Real Void,"<sup>s</sup> there is an attempt to prove that the empty and nothing are not really empty and nothing. Seng Chao related this to both Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. In his conclusion he refers to both a Buddhist sutra, *Ch'eng-chü*<sup>r</sup>, and to the work of Chuang Tzu in the same sentence. Richard Robinson translates this passage as follows: "Therefore, the *Ch'eng-chü* makes its statement about arbitrary names, and Chuang-tzu relies on the similes of the finger and of the horse. So is there anywhere that deep and far-reaching statements are not found?"<sup>6</sup>

Both in Yüan-k'ang's<sup>s</sup>, (fl. 627–649),<sup>7</sup> and in Te-ching's<sup>t8</sup> commentaries there are explanations that the Buddhist sutra *Ch'eng-chü* states: "All things are nonexistent. Their names are simply given." This means that all things exist and simultaneously do not exist. This is what Seng Chao refers to in the Buddhist sutra in support of his own theory. He further refers to the second chapter of the work of Chuang Tzu, where it states: "To take a finger to illustrate a finger is not a finger, is not as good as to use not-finger to illustrate a finger is not a finger. Using a horse to illustrate that a horse is not a horse, is not as good as to use not-horse to illustrate that a horse is not a horse."<sup>9</sup> The idea of this passage that Seng Chao refers to is that the finger and the horse are simultaneously not a finger and not a horse. Kung-sun Lung<sup>u</sup>, (fl. 284–259 B.C.), also tried to prove that the finger and the horse are not a finger and not a horse through logical analysis because he felt that the attribute cannot be identified with the concrete object. Thus, the attribute *chih*, which means "to point out," cannot be the same as the concrete object *chih*, which is the finger. Kung-sun Lung has his famous statement, "a white horse is not a horse," for since a white horse is a combination of 'white' and 'horse', logically it is not simply a horse.

What Seng Chao refers to when he quotes this statement from Chuang Tzu proves that the existence of finger and horse are simultaneously nonexistent. Therefore, a finger and a horse are at the same time not a finger and not a horse. To insist upon the existence of the horse and the finger and neglect the aspect of not-horse and not-finger, is to make the same mistake as to insist upon the not-horse and not-finger aspect and to neglect the existence of the horse and the finger. So, Seng Chao in his essay refers to the *Middle Treatise*<sup>x</sup> as saying: "All dharmas are not existent nor nonexistent." This is the supreme absolute truth."<sup>10</sup> Seng Chao further explains this absolute truth as follows: "So, since all things really have that which is nonexistent, we cannot say they are merely existent. Since all things have that which is not nonexistent, we cannot say they are merely nonexistent. Why? If we say they are existent their existence is nonreal existing. If we should say they are nonexistent, their images

and events are actually formulated. Having images and forms they cannot be identified with the nonexistent. Having nonreal existence is not real existence. Thus, the meaning of not real void is clearly presented.”<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Seng Chao refers to the *Middle Treatise* as saying: “Things are free from this and that, but man conceives this as this, that as that. . . . This and that cannot be determined by a single name, but those who are confused arbitrarily wish to do so. . . . When one understands this and that are nonexistent, what can one determine as existent? So we know all things are not real, but they have been called so for a long time.”<sup>12</sup>

Existence is simultaneously nonexistence and nonexistence is simultaneously existence, for as Seng Chao has said, we cannot bring something extra from without to make the things nonexistent, since the nonexistent is itself concealed in the existent. Thus, nonexistence is not really nonexistent. Hence, the existence of the horse and the finger is simultaneously the nonexistence of the horse and the finger. Kung-sun Lung did not see this ontological truth, but approached this problem from the logical point of view and analyzed only the words, whereas Chuang Tzu saw this truth as revealed in ontological experience and reaches what the Buddhists called “the First Principle of Truth,” which simultaneously covers right and wrong, this and that. Thus, the meaning of *hsü wu* becomes much more clear and important in Chinese philosophy. As Ch’an (Zen’) Buddhists would say, the flower is red and not red. The willow is green and not green. A is A and simultaneously is not-A. Unless you see not-A is simultaneously A, you can never understand A.

Recently, Martin Heidegger in his work *Discourse on Thinking*, explained what the coined words “releasement toward things” mean. He says: “Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses ‘yes’ and at the same time ‘no’, by an old word, ‘releasement toward things.’”<sup>13</sup> He commented on this expression by saying that this term was used by such early German thinkers as Meister Eckhart, in the sense of letting the world go and giving oneself to God, which is different from the common English meaning. This meaning of ‘releasement’, to let the world go and give oneself to God, recalls what is stated in chapter twenty-two of the works of Chuang Tzu. Here it states:

To identify things as things is to be free from the demarcation of things. Yet things themselves have their demarcations. That is called the demarcation of things. The demarcation of nondemarcation is the demarcation which is free from demarcation. We say fullness and emptiness, growth and decay. There are fullness and emptiness, yet they are free from fullness and emptiness. There are growth and decay, yet they are free from growth and decay. There are origin and completion, yet they are free from origin and completion. There are dispersion and compilation, yet they are free from dispersion and compilation.<sup>14</sup>

When we are free from either side of fullness and emptiness, growth and decay, it is the same as saying we let technical devices enter our life and at the same time leave them outside. This is to say 'yes' and at the same time 'no', by means of an attitude of "releasement toward things." This releasement is to identify things and thus be rid of the demarcation of things. This is the teaching of *hsü wu* of Chuang Tzu which leads to the freedom of man toward things, while at the same time provides for our not being trapped by the mere non-existence of things and thus conceiving of man's life as "infatuated void and dead stillness."

In the second chapter of the work of Chuang Tzu, the meaning of the word *chih*<sup>2</sup> has been categorized on two levels. There is *ta chih*<sup>aa</sup> or great knowledge, which is the knowledge of unlimited nondifferentiation, and there is *hsiao chih*<sup>ab</sup> or small knowledge, which is the knowledge of limited differentiation. According to the commentaries of Lin Chuang-tsai<sup>ac</sup> (fl. 1260), and Lu Fang-hu<sup>ad</sup> (fl. 1578), the man of great knowledge is he whose mind is limitless, and when in action it is always at ease. He is free from his inner ego and from outer things. In this mind no thoughts occur. When he deals with things he is spontaneous, direct, and not attached to things. However, the man of small knowledge proceeds through calculative thinking, from which the dichotomy of self and others is clearly distinguished. Thus, a barrier is set up between subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>15</sup>

*Ta chih* or great knowledge may be identified with *chen chih*<sup>ae</sup> or real knowledge, as Chuang Tzu said in chapter six of his work, "having a real man, then there will be real knowledge."<sup>16</sup> When Kuo Hsiang<sup>af</sup> commented on this real knowledge, he said that the man of real knowledge "is inwardly free from himself and is outwardly unified with things."<sup>17</sup> This parallels Lin and Lu's commentaries on great knowledge. However, Kuo Hsiang further states, "the man who works for knowledge cannot know knowledge. It is knowledge that knows knowledge itself. Knowledge knowing knowledge itself means not-knowledge (*wu chih*<sup>ag</sup>). When one understands not-knowledge, one knows that knowledge is produced from not-knowledge. . . . As knowledge is produced from not-knowledge, not-knowledge is most fundamental. Therefore, the real man gains knowledge through casting away knowledge."<sup>18</sup>

The knowledge produced by casting away knowledge is the real knowledge of the real man. In chapter four of the work of Chuang Tzu, he says: "We have heard that to fly there must be wings. No one has heard of flying without wings. We have heard that to know things there must be knowledge. No one has heard of knowing things without knowledge."<sup>19</sup> When knowledge is cast away, there is the achievement of not-knowledge; yet, it is this not-knowledge (*wu chih*) that knows. This knowing is the real knowing, which is free from the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity. Hence, we may conclude that the great knowledge is the real knowledge, and real knowledge is not-knowledge.

When Chen-kuan<sup>ai</sup> (738–839), the National Teacher of Buddhism and the

fourth patriarch of the Hwa Yen<sup>aj</sup> school wrote his instruction to the royal prince, this leading Buddhist of ninth-century China also explained that, “The real knowledge is not-knowledge.”<sup>20</sup> Shen-hui<sup>ak</sup> (686–760), the noted follower of Hui-neng<sup>al</sup>, the sixth patriarch of Zen Buddhism, and Tsung-mi<sup>am</sup> (780–841), the fifth patriarch of the Hwa Yen school, both concentrated on the teaching of *chih* as not-knowledge. In our own time, in a discussion of the meaning of Zen, Dr. Hu Shih<sup>an</sup> and Dr. D. T. Suzuki<sup>ao</sup> both recognized the word *chih* to be “the gateway to all mysteries.”<sup>21</sup> Hu Shih conceived that *chih* should best proceed through an “intellectualistic approach.”<sup>22</sup> Suzuki, however, thought “*chih* means *prajñā*-intuition and not ‘knowledge’ in its ordinary sense.”<sup>23</sup> Applying this to Chuang Tzu’s classification of *chih*, Hu Shih’s understanding fits in with differentiated knowledge or *hsiao chih* and Suzuki’s with nondifferentiated knowledge or *ta chih*. The former analyzes Zen and dissects things, the latter does not.

From this we can understand that *chih*, as *ta chih* and *wu chih*, whether in the Buddhist interpretation such as is given earlier by Chen-kuan or later by Suzuki, or in the Taoist interpretation as provided by Chuang Tzu and his later commentators, is free from the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity. If there is still a separation between the knower and the known, *chih* or real knowledge or *prajñā* intuition will not take place. However, this very *chih*, without the one who knows or that which is known, or in Kuo Hsiang’s words, “Knowledge knowing itself,” or in Chuang Tzu’s saying, “Knowledge without knowledge,” represents a way of thinking different from that of the ordinary. This is, as Heidegger says, “a new way of thinking.” Since Suzuki identifies it with *prajñā* intuition, let us see how it differs from the traditional understanding of intuition.

In the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements,” in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, the opening sentence reads, “In whatever manner and by whatever means a mode of knowledge may relate to objects, ‘intuition’ is that through which it is in immediate relation to them, and to which all thought as a means is directed.”<sup>24</sup> From this statement we can see quite clearly that when intuition takes place there must be a relation between the man who intuits and the thing intuited. However, on the highest level of intuition, such as the *chih* or real knowledge which is maintained by Chinese Taoists and Buddhists, this dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is conceived of as a hindrance to the ultimate truth. As Chuang Tzu once said. “Heaven, Earth, and I live together and all things and I are One.”<sup>25</sup> This One is the ultimate truth which is reached through the identification of Chuang Tzu, Heaven, Earth, and all things. If Chuang Tzu should explain what is this ultimate truth or One, he would immediately deviate from this ultimate truth and be separated from the One. So he further says, “Since we are one, how can I speak it? If I should speak it, it would become two, from two there would be three and even a skillful mathematician could not finish this calculation.”<sup>26</sup>

What is in the minds of both the Chinese Taoists and Buddhists concerning the meaning of *chih* is that the mind of man can do much more beyond the limitation of the differentiation and discrimination of things. When Heidegger comments on Kant's intuition in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, he classifies it according to the categories of finite and infinite intuition. As Heidegger says, "Finite intuition looks to the intuitable as something on which it depends and which exists in its own right."<sup>27</sup> This explains that the intuitable is the object on which the intuitor depends. Thus, the finite intuition of Kant must take place when the intuitor is attached to what is intuitable, so that what is intuitable limits the sphere of the intuition of the intuitor.

Infinite intuition or "divine cognition," Heidegger writes, "is that mode of representation which in the act of intuition first creates the object of intuition as such. Seeing right through the essent in advance, such cognition intuits it immediately and has no need of thought."<sup>28</sup> However, Kant's infinite intuition is not attributed to man and can only be possessed by God. Hence, this infinite intuition cannot be identified with the *ta chih* of Chuang Tzu, and finite intuition may be the same as his *hsiao chih*.

In the East, however, the highest intuition, such as *chih* in Taoism or *prajñā*<sup>aq</sup> in Buddhism, is not the intuition of either a religious god or a metaphysical absolute. It is beyond theological and metaphysical experience. It is immediate and direct inner awareness, when the mind of man is awakened and opened up. The primary term used by Heidegger to express this inner awareness of the mind opening is the Greek word *aletheia*.<sup>29</sup> Not long ago, when an Oriental student visited Heidegger in Freiburg and asked him about the meaning of *aletheia*, Heidegger replied that such a person from the East should already know the meaning, for *aletheia* is *prajñā*. Thus, we understand that Heidegger's new approach aims at what he called "Opening and Presence." In his recent work *On Time and Being*, he says, "The task of thinking would then be the surrender of previous thinking to the determination of the matter of thinking."<sup>30</sup> What he refers to as "previous thinking" is traditional representational thinking, which is always 'about' something, not the things themselves. To determine the matter of thinking means "well-founded unconcealment itself, thought as opening." So he further asks, "Does the name for the task of thinking then read instead of 'Being and Time', Opening and Presence?"<sup>31</sup>

To grasp the real meaning of *chih* or *aletheia*, as Heidegger says, "The meditative man is to experience the untrembling heart of unconcealment."<sup>32</sup> Heidegger then asks himself what precisely does this mean. He concludes that it is the opening of what is open, and then points out that in this opening rests possible radiance, which is the possible presencing of presence itself, and the identity of Being and thinking.

The importance of Opening and Presence and the belonging together of Being and thinking indicates that the dichotomy of intuition and intuitable vanishes



in the absolute moment. This absolute moment cannot occur when one fails to see the identity of the opposites of self and other, being and nonbeing. So, Seng Chao in his reply to Liu I-ming says: "When people heard that the wise possess knowledge then they called it the mind of being. When they heard that the wise are free from knowledge then they said the mind of the wise man reaches to the absolute void. To conceive of the mind as being and non-being is to follow the view of one-sidedness."<sup>33</sup> Seng Chao further illustrates how to be free from this dichotomy of opposites by pointing out that to contemplate that the form is formless, one should not deny the form in the formless, but deny the form in the form. As he said: "If we deny the form in the formless, then the void is without form. What could be revealed by the formless? If one denies the form in the form then the formless is no different from the form. Since the formless is no different from the form, form identifies with the formless. Therefore, we know that the transformations of the ten thousand things identify with the void and the void identifies with the transformations of the ten thousand things."<sup>34</sup>

What the Buddhist philosopher Seng Chao has said about the identity of the ten thousand things with the void can also be found in the last chapter of the work of Chuang Tzu. As we read there: "They (Lao Tzu and Kuan Yin) established their philosophy on real being and real nonbeing, and maintained their Supreme Identity . . . they recognized that in reality void and nothingness do not destroy the ten thousand things."<sup>35</sup> We may ask what is this reality. This reality is the identity of being and nonbeing, form and formless, knowledge and not-knowledge. In this regard we might refer to the opening sentence of Seng Chao's essay "*Prajñā* is Not-Knowledge," where it says, "*Prajñā*, empty and wondrous is the ultimate source of the Three Vehicles. It is indeed no different from the Real One."<sup>36</sup> "Empty and wondrous" or *hsü hsüan* and "Real One" are terms derived from Chuang Tzu, which further supports our view that to understand the Taoist term *chih* we may relate it to *prajñā*. Similarly, Seng Chao, in his letter of reply to Liu I-ming, who was arguing for a distinction between knowledge and not-knowledge, informs him that according to the Middle Way, not-knowledge is identified with knowledge, and knowledge is identified with not-knowledge. In other words, within the not-knowledge, knowledge is unconcealed. In the knowledge, not-knowledge is concealed. So, Seng Chao further says in his letter: "Therefore, the wise lets his mind become empty, free from consciousness and free from knowledge. He dwells in the realm of activity yet he remains in non-interference. He resides in the region of names, yet he makes his home in the country of freedom from words. Silent, vast, vacuous, and limitless, that which cannot be reached by forms and names: this is the mind of the wise."<sup>37</sup>

We may conclude that what Seng Chao has said about the meaning of *prajñā* in Buddhism is also true of Chuang Tzu's teaching that knowledge is



not-knowledge in Taoism. The significance of this *chih* may be related to the Opening and Presence of the mind in the new way of thinking, which is so strongly maintained by the present-day philosopher Martin Heidegger.

In chapter twenty-seven of the work of Chuang Tzu we find the classification of three kinds of words. The first are *yu yen*<sup>at</sup>, which are metaphorical words; the second are *chung yen*<sup>au</sup>, or orthodox words; the third are *chih yen*<sup>aw</sup>, or perfect words, which are all embracing and all pervading. Chuang Tzu's own explanation for these perfect words is: "*chih yen erh chu ho i tien nien*<sup>ax</sup>," or "Perfect words are like the sunrise and harmonize with the natural identity of things."<sup>38</sup>

Chang Tai-yen<sup>ay</sup>, (1868–1936) has expounded on *chih yen*, saying that the wise man inwardly is free from thoughts and speech; outwardly he follows the activities of the world. To be able to follow the activities of the world he harmonizes what is right and what is wrong. To be able to be free from thoughts he abides with the natural identity of things.<sup>39</sup> Chang further explains that to harmonize what is right and wrong is the action of this natural identity, that is, when one has something to say, what he says follows the natural course of things. As a Zen master once said, "When it is winter you say it is cold. When it is summer you say it is hot." Or, "When you are hungry you eat. When you are tired you lie down." This is as flowers blooming in the spring and snow falling in the winter. So, Chang praises Chuang Tzu's perfect words, which follow the natural course of things, and are like music from gold, or the vibration of jade. Their spiritual inspiration soars to the supreme void.<sup>40</sup>

We may ask how we can reach this kind of identity and express ourselves in such perfect words. In chapter twenty-seven we may find Chuang Tzu's answer, for as he says: "All things are derived from the source. Through their various forms they interpenetrate to each other. The beginning and end of this interpenetration is like a circle, of which no one knows its sequence. This is called natural identity."<sup>41</sup> *Chih yen* is the revelation of this natural identity, and therefore illustrates the all-embracing and all-prevading. Chang refers to the *Mahaprajnaparamata Sutra* which explains that a good learner speaks all kinds of words, all of which penetrate into one word. Conversely, when he speaks one word, it takes in all words.<sup>42</sup>

What Chang refers to here is that *chih yen* reaches the world of unimpeded mutual solution among all events according to the philosophy of the Hwa Yen school. Chang believes that not only does each event identify its reality itself but he also believes that each event reveals all the potentialities of all other events through their interfusion and interpenetration into a unity. Thus, according to Chang, Chuang Tzu's philosophy also contains the theory of *shih shih wu ai*<sup>az</sup> or unimpeded mutual solution among all events, which is the highest stage of enlightenment according to the Hwa Yen philosophy. The power of this *shih shih wu ai*, as Chang sees it, can be verified by Chuang

Tzu's own words: "All things are created by themselves from their own inward reflection and no one can tell how they come to do so."<sup>43</sup> Because the infinite potentiality from the unity of particularity will take place in each instance of creativity, each event identifies with all events in the great unity. So we find in the second chapter of the work of Chuang Tzu, "Heaven and Earth are nothing but a finger, the ten thousand things are nothing but a horse."<sup>44</sup> In the Zen Buddhist expression we also have, "I lift my finger and the whole universe comes along with it." What is true of the finger also is true with a word of *chih yen*. Each word is a symbol of the totality of the universe, and each expression contains the power of the all-embracing and all-pervading.

If we should relate *chih yen* with the nature of language as maintained by Heidegger, then the *chih yen* of Chuang Tzu may also be understood as what is called "Saying as Showing." As Heidegger says: "Saying is in no way the linguistic expression added to the phenomena after they have appeared . . . . Saying sets all present beings free into their given presence and brings what is absent into their absence. Saying pervades and structures the openness of that clearing which every appearance must seek out and every disappearance must leave behind . . . ." <sup>45</sup>

A Chinese poet has written the following verse:

The shadow of the bamboo sweeps on the stone steps.  
No dust is stirred.  
The light of the moon penetrates to the bottom of the chilly lake.  
No trace is left behind.

In these lines, the shadow of the bamboo and the light of the moon are no longer simply linguistic conceptualizations, they are freed into what Heidegger has called their "given presence." In the Taoist expression of this, the bamboo's shadow and the moon's light are no longer images of static entities but are images of the imageless. In other words, it is the living images of the bamboo's shadow and the moon's light which enchanted the poet and their admirer as well.

Thus, we may understand what Heidegger means by "Saying sets all present beings free into their given presence . . . ." This is one aspect of the meaning of what he refers to as "Saying is Showing." Another aspect is "to bring what is absent into their absence." When the poet announces that the shadow of the bamboo sweeps on the stone steps and no dust is stirred, he gives the impression of the present bamboo's shadow, freed into its given presence, yet, simultaneously, what inspires one is not the form of the bamboo's shadow, but what Heidegger calls an "unknown familiar something,"<sup>46</sup> which is, as he says, "All this pointing of Saying to what is quick and stirring within it . . . ." <sup>47</sup> In other words, when the poet says this verse about the shadow of the bamboo, simultaneously the linguistic expression "shadow of the bamboo"

begins to absent itself and eventually what is left within the poet and admirer are no more the shadow of the bamboo, but through all these presences and absences "Saying pervades and structures the openness of that clearing," to use Heidegger's own words. Or, as he says in another instance, it is, "The first break of dawn with which the changing cycle of day and night first begins to be possible."<sup>48</sup> This is what Chuang Tzu called "*chih yen erh chu ho i tien nien*," or "perfect words are like the sunrise and harmonize with the natural identity of things."

Thus, as we have pointed out before, Chang Tai-yen explains that *chih yen* serve to harmonize right and wrong through the action of the self-identification of things, which means, that one's words follow the natural course of things. He further explains that to abide with the natural course of things is to contemplate the self-nature of the identity of things, which means, one is not entangled with words.

To contemplate the self-nature of the natural identity of things is to proceed to the absolute reality of things. Speaking the words which follow the natural course of things and which harmonize right and wrong, takes place in daily activities. When one speaks the words, yet is free from the words, the being and saying are identified. When being and saying are identified, it is the attainment of *Tao*. In Heidegger's expression, this identification is termed "logos," which is the earliest formulation for the simultaneous naming of Being and Saying.<sup>49</sup>

In the remote past in China an unknown poet sang: "When the sun rises I start work. When the sun goes down I have my rest. I plow the field and eat. I dig the well and drink. What has the Imperial power to do with me?" Later Ch'an Buddhists often quoted this poem as an example of the free expression of the man of Ch'an. Applied to Heidegger's explanation, the poem reveals simultaneously Being and Saying, which he identifies as logos and which in Chinese is called *Tao*. The words logos and *Tao* are contained in the perfect words of Chuang Tzu, which are called *chih yen*.

Perfect words are those which are free from words. Thus, Chuang Tzu said, "*yen wu yen*"<sup>ba</sup> or "words free from words." So when one speaks words which are free from words, he speaks a lifetime of words without speaking a word. Chang Tai-yen considers these perfect words to be the same kind of words that Buddha is said to have spoken for forty-nine years, without uttering a single word. Similarly, a later Zen Buddhist, Yun-men Wen-yen<sup>bb</sup> (822–908), has said: "He may speak all day but not carry a word in his mouth. He eats and dresses every day, yet it is as if had neither tasted a grain of rice nor covered himself with so much as a thread."<sup>50</sup> When the word speaks and yet is free from words, the word itself is a "giver." What does it give? It gives Being according to the most ancient tradition of thinking.

In the last poem cited by an unknown Chinese poet, the language is no longer the house of beings but has been transformed to the house of Being.

Through this innate transformation the words, “sun rises, sun goes down, plow the field, and dig the well,” no longer simply involve the ordinary usage of words but reveal poetic experience. As Heidegger says, all poetry is a kind of thinking, and all reflective thinking is poetic. To identify reflective thinking with poetic experience is to conceive of language as the house of Being, which is the chief characteristic of the *chih yen* of Chuang Tzu.

As we all know, the words of Chuang Tzu are always praised as great poetry, although they deal with philosophy. Having discussed the meaning of *chih yen*, all-pervading and all-embracing words, we might realize that this is one essential approach of Chuang Tzu to reach the highest achievement of thinking. Heidegger, in his discussion in *On the Way to Language*, as I have mentioned earlier, affirms that “all reflective thinking is poetic and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking.”<sup>51</sup> We know that Heidegger’s philosophy has been greatly influenced by the poet Hölderlin, from whose verses he often quotes. When I was in Freiburg in August, 1972, Heidegger handed me a German translation of the work of Chuang Tzu, which we proceeded to discuss and about which he asked me questions. Thus, the ancient Taoist idea of the identity of poetic expression with preontological thinking may not be entirely unfamiliar to this modern philosopher of the West.

In the preceding discussion we have pointed out some of the fundamental principles of Chuang Tzu’s thought. These are *hsü wu* or empty and nothing, *chen chih* or real knowledge, and *chih yen* or perfect words. Within these three principles is concealed the basic dialectic of the self-identity of contradiction. According to this dialectic, what is empty and nothing is simultaneously not empty and not nothing; what is real knowledge is simultaneously not-knowledge; and what are perfect words are simultaneously not mere words. If we should trace this back to the *Tao Te Ching*, we find the root of this dialectic in many places. For example, in chapter fourteen we read, “the form of the formless, the image of the imageless.”<sup>52</sup> In chapter forty-one we find, “The great white is as if black. The great square is without corners. The great music is without sound. The great image is without form.”<sup>53</sup> Here we see that difference and identity occur simultaneously. In Nishida’s<sup>be</sup> words this is negation-qua-affirmation, or affirmation-qua-negation.<sup>54</sup> Nishida explains that, “the essential meaning of Mahayana Buddhism is to attain to absolute affirmation through absolute negation by realizing the anxiety of deep self-contradiction in the very depths of the self.”<sup>55</sup> This statement is not only true of Mahāyāna Buddhism but also holds true with the philosophy of Chuang Tzu in Taoism.

In Taoism, as we have discussed, we see that through the self-identity of contradictions, our representational thinking is transformed into essential thinking. As Heidegger says about the principle of identity, “On its way from the principle as a statement about identity to the principle as a spring into the essential origin of identity, thinking has undergone a transformation.”<sup>56</sup>

In the works of Chuang Tzu the transformation of the self-identity of contradictions would be *ming*<sup>bd</sup> or enlightenment. As he says: "To recognize that what one thinks is wrong is also right and what one thinks is right is also wrong, nothing is better than *ming*."<sup>57</sup> *Ming* is the transformation from representational thinking to essential thinking, which enables one to spring into the origin of identity. Thus, we realize the dialectics of the self-identity of the contradiction of things, or *ch'i wu*<sup>be</sup> in Chuang Tzu's words, leads to self-transformation and plays a most basic role not only in ancient Chinese classical thought but also in the development of the new way of thinking for Heidegger in the West and Nishida in the East.

In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger forewarns us: "The essence of man consists of being more than mere man, insofar as this more man is represented as a rational animal. 'More' must not be understood here in an additive sense . . . the 'more' means: more original and, therefore, in essence more essential."<sup>58</sup>

What is this more original and more essential? It is the awakening and opening up of the mind to real knowledge or not-knowledge. This may be achieved through the dialectic of the self-identity of the contradiction of things by means of the *chih yen* or all-pervading and all-embracing words of Chuang Tzu.

## NOTES

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<sup>a</sup> 莊子  
<sup>b</sup> 張鍾元  
<sup>c</sup> 道德經  
<sup>d</sup> 道  
<sup>e</sup> 僧肇  
<sup>f</sup> 般若無知論  
<sup>g</sup> 罔象  
<sup>h</sup> 狂言

<sup>i</sup> 慈山德清  
<sup>j</sup> 司馬談  
<sup>k</sup> 六家要旨  
<sup>l</sup> 虛無爲本  
<sup>m</sup> 虛無  
<sup>n</sup> 沉空死寂  
<sup>o</sup> 大正新修藏經  
<sup>p</sup> 肇論略注

<sup>q</sup> 不真空論  
<sup>r</sup> 成具  
<sup>s</sup> 元康  
<sup>t</sup> 德清  
<sup>u</sup> 公孫龍  
<sup>v</sup> 續藏經  
<sup>w</sup> 莊子郭象注  
<sup>x</sup> 中論

- |             |            |             |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| y 禪         | aj 華嚴      | au 重言       |
| z 知         | ak 神會      | aw 卮言       |
| aa 大知       | al 慧能      | ax 卮言日出和以天倪 |
| ab 小知       | am 宗密      | ay 章太炎齊物論釋  |
| ac 林慮齋      | an 胡適      | az 事事無礙     |
| ad 陸方壺      | ao 鈴木大拙    | ba 言無言      |
| ae 真知       | ap 傳燈錄     | bb 雲門文偃     |
| af 郭象       | aq 般若      | bc 西田幾多郎    |
| aq 無知       | ar 僧肇答劉遺民書 | bd 明        |
| ah 南華真經三註大全 | as 虛玄      | be 齊物       |
| ai 澄觀       | at 寓言      |             |