Tao

A New Way of Thinking

A Translation of the Tao Tê Ching with an Introduction and Commentaries

Chung-yuan Chang

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Introduction

The Meaning of Tao *and Its Reflection in Western Thought*

Tao is originally expounded in the ancient Chinese scripts, the *Tao Tê Ching*, or *The Canon of the Way and Its Attainment.* The *Tao Tê Ching* is traditionally attributed to the Taoist philosopher, Lao Tzu, who is said to have been some twenty years older than Confucius (551–479 BC). The *Tao Tê Ching* is generally believed to have been composed in the sixth century BC, in the era known as Spring and Autumn. Throughout history many commentaries have been written on the *Tao Tê Ching.* The scripts have been translated many times in numerous European languages.[1]

The *Tao Tê Ching* was first introduced into the Western world in 1788, when a Latin translation of the work was brought to the Royal Society in London.[2] By 1844, there were complete translations of the *Tao Tê Ching* in both French and German.[3] In his lectures on the history of philosophy, delivered at the University of Heidelberg in 1816, Hegel comments:

> His followers say of Lao-tsö himself that he is Buddha who as man became the ever-existent God. We still have his principal writings; they have been taken to Vienna and I have seen them there myself…
>
> Without a name *Tao* is the beginning of Heaven and Earth, and with a name she is the Mother of the Universe. It is only in her imperfect state that she is considered with affection; who desires to know her must be devoid of passions.[4]

According to Hegel, what is highest and the origin of all things to the Chinese "is nothing, emptiness, the altogether undetermined, the abstract universal, and this is called *Tao,* or reason. When the Greeks say that the absolute is one, or when men in modern times say that it is the highest existence, all determinations are abolished, and by the merely abstract

Being nothing has been expressed excepting this new negation, only in an affirmative form."[5] Hegel's interpretation of Eastern thought is based on the Western philosophical tradition, according to which *Tao* is reason or abstract Being.

In the second volume of his work, *The World as Will and Representation* (1844), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) quotes the following lines from a French translation of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> Tous les hommes desirent uniquement de se delivrer de la mort: ils ne savent pas se delivrer de la vie.
>
> All men desire solely to free themselves from death; they do not know how to free themselves from life.[6]

This English translation demonstrates the variations that occur from the original text when a work is translated from one language to another. However, the significance of the passage here is that the great Western philosopher Schopenhauer was interested in the *Tao Tê Ching*.

In the more than forty years from 1927, when *Being and Time* was published, to the publication of *On Time and Being* in 1968, Professor Martin Heidegger has developed a new way of thinking and the language to reveal it, which are not novel to Taoist philosophy. Heidegger is the only Western philosopher who not only intellectually understands *Tao*, but has intuitively experienced the essence of it as well. For this reason, the commentaries on the following chapters of this work repeatedly refer to Heidegger's philosophy.

In Heidegger's work, *Existence and Being*, we read:

> Only on the basis of the original manifestness of Nothing can our human *Da-sein* advance towards and enter into what-is. But insofar as *Da-sein* naturally relates to what is, as that which it is not and which itself is, *Da-sein qua Da-sein* always proceeds from Nothing as manifest.[7]

In the commentator's notes on this passage, the following lines are quoted from Chapter 40 of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> For although all creatures under heaven are the products of Being, Being itself is the product of Not-being.[8]

The commentator thus relates Heidegger's words, *"Da-sein qua Da-sein* always proceeds from Nothing as manifest," to the saying in the *Tao Tê Ching*: "Being itself is the product of Not-being."

In his essay, "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way* to *Language*, Heidegger writes:

> The word "way" probably is an ancient primary word that speaks to the reflective mind of man. The key word in Laotze's poetic thinking is *Tao*, which "properly speaking" means way.[9]

However, because man tends to think of the word "way" superficially, "as a stretch connecting two places," the word "way" in Western thought "has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what *Tao* says. *Tao* is then translated as reason, mind, *raison*, meaning, *logos*." Yet, according to Heidegger, "*Tao* could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, meaning *logos*, properly mean to say—properly, by their proper nature." Thus, Heidegger points out that *Tao*, "the key word in Laotse's poetic thinking," indicates "the way that gives all ways," which is the very essence of our power to think.[10]

In his recent work, *On Time and Being*, Heidegger opens up a new approach to thinking, which is different from the traditional, Western, philosophical way of thought. Heidegger maintains that metaphysical thinking has reached its completion. Completion in this sense means end. Thus, Heidegger proclaims that the present epoch marks "the end of philosophy" and the beginning of a new task of thinking.[11] This new task of thinking requires thinking which is different from rational, scientific analysis. As Heidegger says:

> Perhaps there is a thinking outside of the distinction of rational and irrational still more sober than scientific technology, more sober and thus removed, without effect and yet having its own necessity.[12]

This thinking, which has "the character of return,"[13] is called "essential,"[14]

or "meditative,"[15] thinking. It is the "other way of thought"[16] which is necessary for the task that lies before thinking. This other way of thought may be understood in terms of a comparison between Hegel's thinking, as the culmination of metaphysical thought in the history of Western philosophy, and Heidegger's essential thinking.[17]

According to Heidegger, the "matter of thinking" for Hegel is the absolute Concept or Idea, which is "the absolute self-thinking of thinking." In Hegel's system, "absolute thinking is absolute only by moving within its dialectical-speculative process, and thus requiring stages." In each stage previous thinking is taken into and surpassed by "a still higher development and systematization." This gives Hegel's thinking the character of "elevation," which "leads to the heightening and gathering area of truth posited as absolute, truth in the sense of the completely developed certainty of self-knowing knowledge."[18]

Heidegger's thinking, in contrast, no longer has the character of elevation, but is the "step back." The thinking of the step back leads to the realm of the "event of Appropriation,"[19] which "until now has been skipped over, and from which the essence of truth first of all becomes worthy of thought."[20] The entry of thinking into Appropriation constitutes "an awakening from the oblivion of Being—an awakening which must be understood as a recollection of something which has never been thought." According to Heidegger, "metaphysics is the oblivion of Being."[21] Thus, the thinking which awakens from the oblivion of Being and enters into Appropriation is thinking which steps back "out of metaphysics into the active essence of metaphysics."[22]

In Taoist terms, the step back is the method of reducing, through which one attains *Tao.* As Lao Tzu says in Chapter 48 of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> To learn, one accumulates day by day.
> To study *Tao*, one reduces day by day.

By reducing and further reducing, one reaches the state of non-interference and spontaneity, through which nothing is left undone.

The great Indian Buddhist Kumarajiva, who went to China in the fourth century, comments on this chapter, saying that "reduction and further

reduction" means to reduce all defilements and all subtleties until one reaches forgetfulness of all evil and all good. When one is free from both evil and good, one's inner potentiality identifies with the higher reality. In Heidegger's terms, the step back leads to one's nature of essential thinking, "which essentially belongs to the openness of Being."[23]

The openness of Being is "aletheia, unconcealment…which first grants Being and thinking their presencing to and for each other." Aletheia is not equated with truth thought in the history of metaphysics as "the certainty of knowledge of Being… Rather, aletheia, unconcealment thought as opening, first grants the possibility of truth."[24] Aletheia is the matter of thinking, and, thus, identifies with the event of Appropriation itself. For Heidegger, the event of Appropriation is *Tao.*

A comparison between Plato's thought and Taoist thinking may help to clarify the essence of *Tao.* In *On Time and Being*, Heidegger says: "Throughout the whole history of philosophy, Plato's thinking remains decisive in changing forms." Thus, in Heidegger's view, "metaphysics is Platonism."[25]

Plato conceives of Being as the Idea. The realm of Being, that is, the Forms, or Ideas, is the only reality. Plato's universe is a logical system of ideas, which can only be grasped by the highest faculty of reason.

The reality of *Tao*, on the other hand, is formless and can only be experienced directly and spontaneously through *ming*, or primordial intuition. Discursive reasoning cannot grasp the non-differentiated reality of things.

Further, in Plato's thinking non-being is the unreal, or matter. Non-being is inexpressible, indefinable, and unknowable. As Plato says in the dialogue *Theaetetus*:

> One cannot legitimately utter the words or speak or think of that which just simply is not; it is unthinkable, not to be spoken of or expressed.[26]

Here, according to Francis Cornford in *Plato's Theory* of *Knowledge*, "Plato is echoing Parmenides' warning against the 'Way of Not-Being,' 'to leave that Way as unthinkable, unnameable, for it is no true Way.'"[27] In this view, non-being is an object outside of experiential reality. In fact, this is non-

being in the relative sense.

In Taoist thought, however, non-being is reality itself. This reality is the unity of objectivity and subjectivity which is often referred to as the One. As Chuang Tzu says: "Since we are all One, how can we express the One?"[28] Thus, for Taoism, non-being is inexpressible and unthinkable, not because there is nothing to express or to think about, but because non-being is the higher unity of Being and thinking.

In his paper "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," Heidegger maintains that a shift in the essence of truth occurs in Plato's allegory of the cave. In the allegory, "the essence of truth does not unfold out of its own essential fullness as the essence of unhiddenness, but shifts its abode to the essence of the Idea." Further, with the shift in the essence of truth, "a shift in the place of truth takes place at the same time. As unhiddenness, truth is still a basic feature of beings themselves. But as correctness of 'looking' truth becomes the label of the human attitude toward beings." Thus, according to Heidegger, Plato's allegory "gives the aspect of what is now and always will be what really happens in the history of humanity molded in the West: man thinks in terms of the fact that the essence of truth is the correctness of the representing of all beings according to ideas."[29]

It is precisely truth as "correctness of looking," or "the correctness of representing all beings according to ideas," from which Taoists seek to liberate themselves. *Tao* is free from conceptualization and representation. As Heidegger says of Appropriation, which identifies with *Tao*: "Appropriation does contain possibilities of unconcealment which thinking cannot determine."[30]

It may also be useful to examine the theory of knowledge maintained by Kant in the light of the knowledge of not-knowledge in Taoism. Kant differentiates between divine knowledge, or divine intuition, and human, finite knowledge. Divine intuition creates the essence for itself, it "intuits it immediately and has no need of thought." Human finite knowledge, on the other hand, is non-creative and is, therefore, "dependent upon the existence of the object."[31]

Further, Kant does not believe that man can achieve divine intuition. Rather, man's imagination, as the faculty of intuitions, is reduced to a function of the understanding. Therefore, man cannot experience the

highest level of truth, but is limited to knowledge of the appearance of reality.

In Taoist thinking divine knowledge, or divine intuition, and man's thinking are identified. That is, the highest, creative intuition is an intrinsic potentiality of man, which is achieved when man is free from the dichotomies of subject and object, human and divine. Wang Lung-ch'i (1498–1583), the leading philosopher of the Neo-Confucian School of Mind, identifies man's highest intuition as *chien-tsai-hsin*, or the mind of the absolute present. As Wang Lung-ch'i says:

> Thought cannot be conceived as either Being or Non-being. It is the action of the mind of the absolute present. When causal conditions emerge, the external world is assembled. Yet, the thought of the absolute present is always tranquil. Thus, we say that it is not thought. If it were thought, it would be defilement. When causal conditions diminish, the external world disappears. Yet, the thought of the absolute present is always awakened. Thus, it is not thoughtless. If it were thoughtless, it would be dead… The sages' learning of a thousand years rests only upon the observation of one thought. Therefore, we say: One thought contains ten thousand years.[32]

The thinking of the absolute present in Wang Lung-ch'i's philosophy is the thinking which has entered into Appropriation in Heidegger's thought. The absolute present is identified with Heidegger's "Presence," which is not time as "the seriality of a string of nows," maintained by traditional, metaphysical thought. Rather, Presence is the "true dimensionality of time" in its "belonging together" with Being, by virtue of the event of Appropriation. For Heidegger, "time is the way in which Appropriation appropriates."[33]

In the philosophy of Ch'an Buddhism, time, in the sense of the absolute present, is identified with existence. That is, time is existence, existence is time. As Dogen, the founder of Soto Ch'an in Japan in the thirteenth century, says:

> The time we call spring blossoms directly as an existence called flowers. The flowers, in turn, express the time called spring. This is not existence

within time; existence itself is time.[34]

The identity of existence and time is also explained by Heidegger. In his thought, "it is precisely finitude that comes to view—not only man's finitude, but the finitude of Appropriation itself."[35] Appropriation itself is that which lets Being and time belong together, is "what brings the two into their own and, even more, maintains and holds them in their belonging together."[36] As stated previously, Appropriation is *Tao*. Thus, to maintain and hold time and existence in their belonging together is, in Taoist terms, the attainment of *Tao*.

What, then, is *Tao*? In the traditional Chinese interpretation, *Tao* is the highest attainment of primordial intuition. *Tao* is preontological experience, which is gained through the interfusion and identification of the subjectivity of man and the objectivity of things. This preontological, inner experience is the spontaneous reflection of one's being, which simultaneously transcends both time and space. This inner experience is nameless and formless, yet it is the fountain of potentiality from which all things emerge. In one's daily activities, one always discriminates among things. One distinguishes between man and the universe, action and non-action, past and present, long and short, high and low, and so forth. While it is necessary for one to be accurate and refined in one's discrimination of apparent opposites in daily life, it is even more important for one simultaneously to recognize the invisible, mutual solution of multiplicities and the perfect identification of polarities. As Chuang Tzu says:

> Because a thing is greater than other things, we call it great. Then all things are great. Because a thing is smaller than other things, we call it small. Then all things are small.[37]

The dichotomy of great and small is produced by limited, temporal discriminations. In the reality of things there is neither great nor small. Thus, Chuang Tzu further explains:

> This is that, that is also this. When this and that are not seen as relative opposites, this is called the essence of *Tao*.[38]

When one is aware of the paradox of this and that, one advances toward the identity of contraries. That is, through the conflict of opposites, the "open"[39] takes place spontaneously. In Taoist terms this is the achievement of enlightenment. Interaction among things is not limited to polarities; it also takes place in the unification of multiplicities. Taoists maintain that there is perfect, unimpeded, mutual solution among all particularities within universality. A centipede is able to move because there is immediate, spontaneous unification and identification of the action of all of its legs. The discordant parts of the action are identified in one harmonious whole. This is "obtaining the One," in Lao Tzu's expression. As Lao Tzu says in Chapter 39 of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> Attaining the One, heaven became pure.
> Attaining the One, earth became peaceful.
> Attaining the One, god became spiritual.
> Attaining the One, the ocean became full.
> Attaining the One, ten thousand things came into being.
> Attaining the One, rulers became the models of the world.
> All of them became so through the One.

The concept of the unity of multiplicities is the product of conceptualization. *Tao* must be achieved through non-conceptualization. As Chuang Tzu says:

> Heaven and earth and I live together, and all things and I are One. Since we are all One, how can we express the One? If we express the One, our expression and the One become two.[40]

The One to which Chuang Tzu refers is neither inferential nor analytic, neither abstract nor purposive. Rather, the One is direct, immediate, preontological experience, which is intuitive, concrete, and purposeless. This intuitive experience is the One, yet it is simultaneously not the One. In Chuang Tzu's words: "It is where the One emerges before the One is formed."[41] This One, prior to its formation, is "living nothingness,"[42] the fountain of creativity.

Living nothingness, as the fountain of creativity, contributes greatly to

Eastern aesthetics and opens up an entirely new road in art. Chinese aesthetics is not a rational system of thought, but a direct, intuitive experience which contains within it certain basic, profound, and subtle meanings essential to the attainment of the One. The One is the origin of art. As Heidegger maintains in "The Origin of the Work of Art": "In fine art the art itself is not beautiful, but is called so because it produces the beautiful."[43] The art to which Heidegger refers is not what is ordinarily called the work of art. This art is, rather, the origin of the work of art. According to Heidegger, the origin of a thing is the source of its essence. In his *Critique of Poetry*, Szu-k'ung T'u, of the tenth century in China, draws twenty-four essential principles of Chinese poetry. The first principle is that of *hsiung-hun*, or the power of non-differentiation, which the author explains as follows:

> Great action varies outwardly, because genuine inward reality is self-sufficient. When one returns to the void and enters into the realm of non-differentiation, one accumulates strength and becomes powerful. In the realm of non-differentiation, everything is completed. Nothing in the universe is superior to it. Its power is like the emergence of the clouds, or a blustering gale, vast and unlimited. It transcends outward forms, and obtains the reality of the void. Its maintenance is free from artificial effort. Its existence is never exhausted.[44]

The non-differentiated origin, or *hsiung-hun*, is the prerequisite to the beauty of poetry and art. Those who are familiar with Chapter 25 of the *Tao Tê Ching* will immediately realize that the basic principles of Szu-k'ung T'u's *Critique* are based on Lao Tzu's philosophy.

In *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, Jacques Maritain expounds the first of the famous six canons of art maintained by Hsieh-ho of the fifth century. In Maritain's words the first canon prescribes:

> To have life-motion manifest the unique spiritual resonance that the artist catches in Things, inspired as he is by his communion with the spirit of the cosmos.[45]

> This art is a contemplative effort to discover in Things and bring out

> from Things their own encaged soul and inner principle of dynamic harmony, their "spirit," conceived as a kind of invisible ghost which comes down to them from the spirit of the universe and gives them their typical form of life and movement.[46]

This art reflects "a cosmic faith, a sacred veneration for *Tao*, the primal source."[47] In his notes on this statement, Maritain quotes Chapter 25 of the *Tao Tê Ching.* Maritain's translation reads:

> There was something formless yet complete that existed before heaven and earth, without sound, without substance, dependent on nothing, unchanging, all-pervading, unfailing. One may think of it as the mother of all things under heaven. Its true name we do not know. *Tao* is the by-name that we give it.[48]

Another principle of Chinese aesthetics is the principle of clairvoyancism, maintained by modem Chinese painters of the Fifth Moon School. Clairvoyancism reflects the paradoxical nature of Lao Tzu's philosophy as it is expressed in the creative process of abstract painting. For Lao Tzu, something and nothing, growth and decay, increase and decrease, are merely changing phases of *Tao.* In the Fifth Moon translation of Chapter 42 of the *Tao Tê Ching* we read:

> Everything in nature carries *yin* on its back and holds *yang* in its arms.[49]

Thus, recent Fifth Moon works are painted in black, in order to leave ample unpainted white. According to the principle of clairvoyancism, this indicates the infinite seen from the standpoint of the finite, and something held in the presence of nothing. As the Fifth Moon painters further translate Chapter 28 of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> *He who knows the white but keeps to the black,*
> *Becomes the model of the world.*
> *He rests in enduring virtue*
> *And returns to the infinite.*[50]

Thus, following the spirit of Taoist philosophy, the Fifth Moon painters are "intuitively journeying toward the mysterious center of Chinese philosophy."[51]

The role of Taoist thought in the field of Chinese aesthetics may be further clarified by a brief examination of certain major Western philosophies of art. Kant's great contribution to Western aesthetics is the recognition of art as a realm of human experience on a level with the realms of cognition and morality.

The realm of art is governed by the a priori principle of purposiveness, in which the idea of a fundamental ground of unity between nature and morality is found. According to this principle, nature and morality are linked together by the aesthetic judgment, which makes it possible to move from the ordinary understanding to the higher moral ideas of reason. Therefore, the beautiful, which is the object of aesthetic judgment, symbolizes the morally good. The sensible appearance of beautiful art thus harmonizes and conforms with the morally good and does not go beyond it.

In Kant's philosophy sensible appearance is separate from supersensible reality, or things-in-themselves. Neither man's knowledge nor his experience extends beyond appearance to transcendental reality. This reality can only be *thought* by man in the higher ideas of reason.[52] Thus, the realm of art for Kant is limited to sensibility and can never reach the reality of things-in-themselves. As Benedetto Croce says in his *Aesthetic*, Kant's imagination is placed among "the facts of sensation," rather than among the "powers of the spirit."

Hegel, on the other hand, conceives of an intellectual intuition, or mental imagination, which, in Croce's words, "does not stop at the appearances of sensible reality, but searches for the internal truth and rationality of the real." Thus, Hegel's aesthetics belongs to the realm of the Absolute. Art is the interpenetration and unification of the sensible form and the spiritual content.

However, a difficulty arises when Hegel elevates art to the level of the Absolute. Art is the first and lowest of the three successive stages in the unfolding of the Absolute and is eventually superseded by religion and philosophy. According to Hegel, art can only reveal a level of truth which may be transmuted and adequately presented in sensible form, such as the

Greek gods. Neither the content nor the form of art can perfectly express the fully developed, rational Idea. Thus, in Hegel's system of development of the rational Absolute, "art in its highest form…is a thing of the past."[53]

The difficulties of Hegel's aesthetic do not arise in Heidegger's thought. Heidegger's truth is not a rational Absolute which is more adequately expressed in philosophy than in art. Rather, for Heidegger, truth and beauty are identified. In fact, art is conceived as "an origin of the establishment of truth,"[54] as well as the origin of the beautiful and of art itself. The truth of this art is not limited to the particular thing represented, but reveals the reality of everything that is.

The identity of truth and beauty in Heidegger's philosophy is similar to the identity of preontological experience and aesthetic feeling which is a major contribution of Taoist thought. A clear expression of this identity is found in the following poem by T'ao Ch'ien (373–427):

> *To build a house in the world of man*
> *And not to hear the noise of horse and carriage:*
> *How can this be done?*
> *When the mind is detached, the place is quiet.*
> *I gather chrysanthemums under the eastern hedgerow,*
> *And silently gaze at the southern mountains.*
> *The mountain air is beautiful in the sunset.*
> *And the birds, flocking together, return home.*
> *In all these things there is real meaning.*
> *Yet when I want to express it, I become lost in no-words.*[55]

When images and conceptions are dissolved in the process of diminishing the subjectivity of the poet and the objectivity of his surroundings, the identification of nature, or truth, and man takes place, and the difficulties of the dichotomy of art and truth are resolved. This is further illustrated in Heidegger's observation in "The Thinker as Poet," in *Poetry, Language, Thought.* As Heidegger says:

> When in the winter nights snowstorms tear at the cabin and one morning the landscape is hushed in its blanket of snow…

> Thinking’s saying would be stilled in its being only by becoming unable to say that which must remain unspoken.[56]

This poem indicates the fluctuation from the dark night, the primordial source of beings, to the snowstorm tearing at the cabin and from the snowstorm back to the blanket of snow covering the landscape. There is within this fluctuation that which carries events and conceptions to the depths of the heart, and back again to the non-differentiated One of the snow. It is this process that the identity of aesthetic feeling and preontological experience takes place. When one dwells in this identity, one is brought face to face with the source. This source is what Heidegger calls the "country or region" which "makes itself known in the neighborhood of poetry and thinking." Here, "neighborhood means: dwelling in nearness." Further, "the nearness that brings poetry and thinking together into neighborhood, we call Saying."[57] This Saying is what Heidegger refers to when he says: "Thinking’s saying would be stilled in its being."[58] This Saying cannot be said, but remains in the realm of the unspoken. In T’ao Ch’ien’s expression:

> Among all these things, there is real meaning. Yet when I want to express it, I become lost in no-words.[59]

In this respect, the identity of aesthetic feeling and preontological experience maintained by Chinese artists and philosophers is echoed in the Saying, which has nothing to say, in Heidegger’s thought in the West. The identity of aesthetic feeling and preontological experience is "the awakening to Appropriation" in Heidegger’s terms. This awakening "must be experienced, it cannot be proven."[60] According to Heidegger, Appropriation must be thought in relation to the "It is." As Heidegger says: "In contradistinction to the customary one, the ‘It gives,’ the ‘It is’ does not name the availability of something which is, but rather precisely something unavailable, what concerns us as something uncanny, the demonic."[61] What is this "something," which is unavailable, uncanny, and demonic? Heidegger illustrates with a passage quoted from Rimbaud’s *Les Illuminations*:

In the woods there's a bird whose singing stops you and makes you blush…
There's a cathedral coming down and a lake going up…
And then there is someone who chases you off when you are hungry and thirsty.[62]

The following two lines of Chinese poetry, compiled by Wang An-shih (1021–1086), are similar to the lines quoted above:

The wind ceases, yet blossoms fall.
Birds sing, yet the valley is profoundly quiescent.[63]

These lines indicate action negated by non-action and sound negated by soundlessness. In this absolute moment of contradiction, one's mind immediately opens. This opening itself is the process of the self-identity of contradictions maintained by Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945), a great philosopher of modern Japan. The self-identity of contradictions, in turn, is the event of Appropriation in Heidegger's thought. The attainment of both the self-identity of contradictions and the event of Appropriation is itself the attainment of *Tao*.

The Western artist Wassily Kandinsky quotes the following lines from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*:

The man that hath no music in himself
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erchus:
Let no such man be trusted.
Mark the music.[64]

In Chinese art, the soundless is more primordial than sound. As Heidegger says in *On the Way to Language*:

The soundless gathering call by which Saying moves the world-relation on its way, we call the ringing of stillness.[65]

It is this ringing of stillness that opens the mind of man to Eastern aesthetics, which is rooted in Taoist thought.

In the above discussion, the meaning of *Tao* is presented according to the interpretations of both Eastern and Western philosophers, scholars, and artists. These interpretations of *Tao* provide an essential basis for the understanding of the *Tao Tê Ching*. However, the discussion thus far is still within the realm of "knowable knowledge," which is derived from representational, rather than essential thinking. The essence of Lao Tzu's teaching is the direct, intuitive experience of *Tao*. Thus, the question remains: How does one attain *Tao*? Lao Tzu, himself, provides the answer in Chapter 38 of the *Tao Tê Ching*:

> The highest attainment is free from attainment.
> Therefore, there is attainment.
> The lowest attainment is never free from attainment.
> Therefore, there is no attainment.

In his essay *Nirvana Is Nameless*, Seng Chao, a great Buddhist philosopher of the fourth century, further expounds the method of the attainment which is free from attainment through which enlightenment is achieved:

> You may conceive of attainment as that which is able to be attained. Therefore, there is attainment. However, I consider attainment as nothing to be attained. Therefore, attainment is achieved through non-attainment… Subtle wisdom lies beyond things. Therefore, know it through not-knowing. The great image is concealed within the imageless. Therefore, see it through not-seeing. The great sound is hidden within the soundless. Therefore, hear it through not-hearing. Thus, it is able to embrace the past and the present, and to lead to all nine realms, widely cultivating all creations, neglecting none. Vast and great, indeed, everything is derived from it.[66]

This passage indicates Seng Chao's agreement with Lao Tzu's fundamental method of attaining *Tao*. For both philosophers, *Tao* is achieved through profound understanding, penetrating insight, and the attainment of non-attainment. The attainment of non-attainment may be understood in more

familiar terms as *wu-wei*, or non-action. As Lao Tzu says: "Through non-action, all things are acted upon." Lao Tzu's teaching is profound and deep, vast and without boundaries. How, then, one might ask, can one he advised to do nothing in order to attain *Tao*? The answer is given in Chapter 41 of the *Tao Tê Ching*, where Lao Tzu says:

> Understand *Tao* as if you did not understand it.
> Enter into *Tao* as if you were leaving it.

Thus, when one understands the *Tao Tê Ching*, one must remember that one does not understand it. When one enters into the *Tao Tê Ching*, one must remember that one is leaving it. In this way one will indeed attain *Tao.*

In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger says:

> Thinking is not a means to gain knowledge.
> Thinking cuts furrows into the soil of Being.

Heidegger further quotes Nietzsche's words:

> Our thinking should have a vigorous fragrance, like a wheat field on a summer's night.[67]

If one can enjoy this fragrance, even though the wheat field is no longer seen, then one's thinking is transformed, and one takes a step on the path toward a new way of thinking.

Notes to Introduction

1. Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), pp. 28–29.
2. James Legge, Translator's Introduction, *The Texts of Taoism* (New York: The Julian Press), 1959.
3. E. Max Müller, *The Texts of Taoism*, The Sacred Books of the East Series, Vols. 39 and 40, p. xiii.
4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, trans. by E. S. Haldane (New York: The Humanities Press, Inc., 1955), p. 124.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
6. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, trans. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 459.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, trans. by R. F. C Hull and Alan Crick (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1968), p. 339.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

9. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. by Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), p. 92.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 59.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
13. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 28.
14. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 357.
15. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 46.
16. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. III, ed. by William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 280.
17. The ideas in the following section appear in part in my paper, "Pre-Rational Harmony in Heidegger's Essential Thinking and Ch'an Thought," presented at the International Seminar on World Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras, India, December 1970.
18. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 49.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
21. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 41.
22. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 72.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, pp. 68–69.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
26. Francis Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc. 1957), p. 206.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
28. Chuang Tzu, *The Works of Chuang Tzu*, Chapter II, 1: 18a.
29. Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 265, 269.
30. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 50.
31. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 90.
32. Wang Lung-ch'i, *Complete Collections of the Works of Wang Lung-ch'i*, Chuan 16, p. 23b.
33. Stambaugh, Introduction, *On Time and Being*, pp. x, xi.
34. Masunaga Reiho, *The Soto Approach to Zen* (Tokyo: Layman Buddhist Society Press, 1958), pp. 68–69.
35. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 49.
36. Heidegger; *On Time and Being*, p. 19.
37. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XVII, 6: 9a, trans. in *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 32.
38. *Ibid.*, Chapter II, 1: 15a.
39. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), p. 53.
40. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter II, 1: 18b.
41. *Ibid.*, Chapter XII, 5: 5a.
42. Shinichi Hismatsu, *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol. II (Tokyo: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, 1960), p. 65.
43. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 36.
44. Szu-k'ung T'u, *Critique of Poetry* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1965), p. 3.

45. Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1955), p. 14.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
49. *Five Chinese Painters: Fifth Moon Exhibition*, ed. by the National Taiwan Arts Hall (Taipei: The Book World Company, Publishers), Section I.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1951), p. xxxii.
53. Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. by Douglas Ainslie (New York: The Noonday Press, 1968), p. 277.
54. Albert Hofstadter, Introduction, in Martin Heidegger, *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, ed. by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (New York: The Modern Library, 1964), p. 467.
55. Chang, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 190.
56. Heidegger, *Poetry*, *Language*, *Thought*, p. II.
57. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 93.
58. Heidegger, *Poetry*, *Language*, *Thought*, p. II.
59. Chang, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 190.
60. Heidegger, *On Time and* Being, p. 53.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
63. Wang An-shih (1021–1086), was a great statesman and scholar of the Sung Dynasty. Wang was deeply devoted to Buddhism in his later life. The influence of Ch'an is often evident in his poems.
64. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, The Documents of Modem Art, Vol. V (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc.), pp. 45–46.
65. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 92.
66. Seng Chao, *Chao Lun*, Chapter IV, 6: 23b, 6: 24a and b.
67. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 70.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

In the history of the study of the *Tao Tê Ching* scripts, certain criteria have been established to determine the authenticity of the many different editions of the text. First, the authenticity of a text may be judged by the date of its appearance. This criterion was applied in the case of the earliest scripts of the Lung Hsing Temple in I-chou, which were inscribed on tablets in the second year of the Ching Lung period (708 AD) of the Tang Dynasty.

Second, authenticity may be assessed according to the authority of the editor of the text. For example, Wang Pi's edition of the *Tao Tê Ching* is generally recognized and accepted by Chinese philosophers and literary people as the best edition of the text. Ho-shang Kung's edition, on the other hand, is preferred by many religious followers.

A third criterion determines the correctness of a word or a sentence by means of the rhyme of the words in each line. For instance, Ch'i Tung and Chu Ch'ien-chih trace the rhyme scheme back to ancient times in order to see if a word is in tune with other related words and to verify the adequacy of meaning in the text.

Fourth, the authenticity of a text may be determined by its literary style. Fung Yu-lan and others maintain that the *Tao Tê Ching* could not have been written before the period of warring states, because Lao Tzu's particular literary style does not appear prior to that period.

All of the above criteria may be of some assistance in determining the authenticity of a text and in clarifying ambiguities of meaning in the text. However, the most important consideration for establishing authenticity is the meaning, or content, of the scripts themselves. Various editions of the text, employing the above criteria, have been consulted in the writing of this translation. However, the main guide in clearing doubts and difficulties in the text has been the framework of Taoist philosophy maintained by Lao Tzu.

Tao

A New Way of Thinking

Chapter 1

The Tao *that can be spoken of is not the* Tao *itself.*
The name that can be given is not the name itself.
*The unnameable is the source of the universe.**
The nameable is the originator of all things.
Therefore, oftentimes without intention I see the wonder of Tao.
Oftentimes with intention I see its manifestations.
Its wonder and its manifestations are one and the same.
Since their emergence, they have been called by different names.
Their identity is called the mystery.
From mystery to further mystery:
The entry of all wonders!

Commentary

This chapter both introduces and summarizes the entire *Tao Tê Ching.* The "five thousand words" of the text are all based on this chapter. It contains a number of basic ideas which help to reveal the essence of *Tao. Tao* is conceived of as the source of the universe and the originator of all things. *Tao* cannot be determined: it is nameless and inexpressible. Further, its wonder and its manifestations, its reality and its appearance are identified. The approach to this identity is through non-intention, or "non-willing."[1]

As mentioned in the introduction, *Tao* has been identified in the past as reason or nature, eternal or absolute. These names are all one-sided and misleading. Therefore, in this translation *Tao* is called "the *Tao* itself." This means that it is the real *Tao* whose hidden meaning is revealed through non-discrimination. The real *Tao* is also used in the commentary by the great Buddhist Te-ching (1546–1623). As he says:

> The *Tao* that is explained here is the genuine, real *Tao (chen ch'ang chih Tao)* which is free from form, free from names, and cannot be expressed

by words. What can be explained or named is not the genuine, real *Tao.* Even the word *Tao* itself is not a real name.[2]

In Heidegger's work we read:

> The key word in Laotse's poetic thinking is *Tao*, which "properly speaking" means way. But because we are prone to think of "way" superficially, as a stretch connecting two places, our word "way" has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what *Tao* says. *Tao* is then translated as reason, mind, *raison*, meaning, *logos*…
>
> Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the words "way," *Tao*, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so.[3]

"The mystery of mysteries" might be seen through the eyes of Buddhism: that is, the *Dharma* Eye, which sees differentiation; the Wisdom Eye, which sees non-differentiation; and the Buddha Eye, which sees both differentiation and non-differentiation. Through the *Dharma* Eye one sees the manifestations of *Tao* in ten thousand things. Through the Wisdom Eye one sees the wonder of *Tao.* Through the Buddha Eye one sees the identity of the manifestations and the wonder of *Tao.* Thus, the three eyes lead one through the gate of all the wonders of *Tao.* Hence, in the line "oftentimes without intention I see the wonder of *Tao*," the word "see," or "*kuan*," is the key to the treasure of *Tao.* However, *kuan* is not the ordinary seeing of either the nameable or the unnameable, being or non-being. This seeing is one-sided: that is, when one sees the nameable, one neglects the unnameable; when one sees the unnameable, one neglects the nameable. The real action of *kuan* is seeing that the unnameable and the nameable are identified. Thus, when one sees nothing, one does not simply see nothing. One sees that within nothing, ten thousand things are simultaneously concealed and unconcealed. When one sees being, one is not limited to the form of being. One sees that being is simultaneously the formlessness of being and the wonder of non-being. Therefore, Lao Tzu says:

> *Its wonder and its manifestations are one and the same…*

Their identity is called the mystery.

The action of *kuan* is the mental function of contemplation. Through this contemplation, one immediately grasps the complete identity of the nameable and the unnameable, or being and nothing. What is seen in this chapter cannot be conceptualized. Originally, *yu* and *wu* were read together with *yü*, as *yu yü*, or intention, and *wu yü*, or non-intention. Then, in the eleventh century, the Chinese commentator Su Ch'ê used being and non-being as objects of *kuan.* He read *yu* and *wu* separately from *yü*, as being and non-being; he read *yü* as the verb "to wish." The ideas of intention, or *yu yü*, and non-intention, or *wu yü*, were discarded. Su Ch'ê did not understand that through *wu yü*, or without intention or non-willing, one is freed from conceptualization and released to the total identity of the seer and the seen, which is the highest stage of the mystery of *Tao.* Without this inner experience of identity, everything that has been said here would merely be the "rubbish" of conceptualization. It would be the manifestation and not the wonder of *Tao.* One must simultaneously be free from both the wonder of *Tao* as an object of study and from the idea of the mystery as subjective feeling. Then one will achieve what Taoists call "*wu o chü wang*" or "both things and myself are forgotten." Once one is free from both subjectivity and objectivity, one can enter the gate of *Tao.* With this understanding, one might better be able to grasp the meaning of the following chapters.

Notes to Chapter 1

* The meaning of this chapter varies a great deal with the different punctuations adopted by commentators. This translation follows the traditional punctuation, which is most natural to the authentic, Chinese literary style. However, in the most important sentence in this chapter, a full stop is used after the word *tung*, or identity. With this punctuation, the sentence reads, "its wonder and its manifestations are one and the same." The sentence thus carries the meaning of the middle way philosophy, according to which reality and appearance are identified.

1. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 59.
2. Te-ching, *Explanations of the Tao Tê Ching*, Commentary on the First Chapter, p. 1a
3. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 92.

Chapter 2

When beauty is universally affirmed as beauty, therein is ugliness.*
When goodness is universally affirmed as goodness, therein is evil.
Therefore: being and non-being are mutually posited in their emergence.
Difficult and easy are mutually posited in their complementariness.
*Long and short are mutually posited in their positions.***
High and low are mutually posited in their contradiction.
Voice and tone are mutually posited in their unity.
Front and back are mutually posited in their succession.
Thus, the wise deals with things through non-interference and teaches through no-words.
All things flourish without interruption.
They grow by themselves, and no one possesses them.
Work is done, and no one depends on it.
Achievements are made, but no one claims credit.
Because no one claims credit, achievements are always there.

Commentary

This chapter concentrates on the self-identity of contradictions, and the wonderful achievement to which it leads. In order to understand the dialectic inherent in Lao Tzu's thought, it may be helpful to examine the dialectical process maintained by Hegel in the West. According to Hegel, reality is a dialectical process in which things pass over into their opposites. Thus, contradiction is the basis of all motion and existence; the principle of contradiction governs the world. As Hegel says:

> In every distinguishing situation, each pole is for itself that which it is; it also is not for itself what it is, but only in contrasting relation to that

which it is not.[1]

This is close to the expression of dialectic found in the first lines of this chapter:

> *When beauty is universally affirmed as beauty, therein is ugliness.*
> *When goodness is universally affirmed as goodness, therein is evil.*

The dialectical process is the process of negation in which opposites are mutually posited. As Hegel says:

> Every dialectical negation relates real opposites, which may be distinct, different, contrary, or contradictory. Negation thus posits what it excludes.[2]

The mutual positing of opposites through the process of negation is expressed by Lao Tzu as:

> *Being and non-being are mutually posited in their emergence.*
> *Difficult and easy are mutually posited in their complementariness.*

While a comparison of the dialectics of Hegel and Lao Tzu may lead to a better understanding of Eastern dialectics, it should be remembered that there are fundamental differences in the goals of the two dialectical processes. As T. R. V. Murti says, the movement of Hegel's dialectic "is a passage from a lower concept with a lesser content to a higher concept with a greater content."[3] It begins with the idea of pure being, which has the least content, and culminates in the idea of the concrete absolute, which "is the most comprehensive unity of all."[4]

In Lao Tzu's dialectic there is no elevating movement toward the fixed goal of a comprehensive, rational absolute. Rather, there is the further step which Nishida calls the self-identity of contradiction. In the self-identity of contradiction, the opposites of being and non-being, or beauty and ugliness, are mutually identified within themselves and not in any higher synthesis. Thus, there is no progression toward an absolute beyond all contradictions.

There are two aspects of the self-identity of contradiction. The first

aspect is the simultaneous occurrence of difference and identity. This is expressed in Chuang Tzu's words:

> *Construction is destruction, destruction is construction.*
> *This is also that, that is also this.*

It is further expressed in Chapter 41 of this work, in which Lao Tzu says:

> *Great music is without sound.*
> *The great image is without form.*

Here, difference and identity take place simultaneously. However, the self-identity of contradictions is not limited to objective conditions. It further extends to the unity of the subjectivity of man and the objectivity of things. This is the second and most important aspect of self-identity. That is, one is simultaneously freed from the objectivity of the known and from the subjectivity of himself as knower. Thus, in the second part of this chapter, Lao Tzu writes:

> *The wise deals with things through non-interference and teaches through no-words.*

Through non-interference, or *wu-wei*, one is silently identified with objective reality. The inner experience of this reality may be related to the pure experience described by Nishida in *A Study of Good.* As he says:

> To experience means to know events precisely as they are. It means to cast away completely one's own inner workings, and to know in accordance with the events. Since people usually include some thought when speaking of experience, the word "pure" is here used to signify a condition of true experience itself without the addition of the least thought or reflection. For example, it refers to that moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound which occurs not only before one has added the judgment that this seeing or hearing relates to something external or that one is feeling this sensation, but even before one has judged what color or what sound it is. Thus, pure experience is synonymous with direct experience. When one experiences directly one's conscious state there is

> as yet neither subject nor object, and knowledge and its object are completely united.[5]

When this direct, or pure, experience takes place, the inner harmony of the self-identity of contradiction is achieved. Thus, the one is the many and the many is the one. This world of perfect harmony achieved through selflessness creates great things, and yet no one claims credit for them. Therefore, Lao Tzu says:

> *All things flourish without interruption…*
> *Work is done, and no one depends on it.*
> *Achievements are made, but no one claims credit.*

Thus, we have the saying:

> The four seasons follow each other in succession. The sun and the moon shine constantly. Truth suffers no fundamental alteration, and the *Tao* is not confined to a single place.[6]

Notes to Chapter 2

* The word *chih* usually means to know. It is also sometimes translated as to recognize. However, the deepest meaning of this line does not stress one's knowing, but rather the dialectical process in which, when one opposite is affirmed, the other is also affirmed. When affirmation takes place, negation simultaneously arises. In order to reveal this deepest sense of dialectics, the translation is "to affirm."

** The sentence "long and short are mutually posited in their positions" is translated according to Ho-shang Kung's edition, rather than that of Wang Pi. Ho-shang Kung uses the verb *hsing*, meaning to formulate or to posit. Wang Pi uses the verb *chiao*, meaning in comparison. Following Ho-shang Kung's use of *hsing*, the sentence means that the long and the short mutually formulate, or create, each other. This translation carries the meaning of the relativity of things maintained by Lao Tzu, that is, the idea that a thing is long because it is longer than other things or short because it is shorter than other things. Thus, what is long is established by what is short; what is short is established by what is long. Although the word *chiao*, or in comparison, may convey the idea of relativity, it is not as direct and vivid as the word *hsing*. In addition, *hsing* rhymes with other, related words in the chapter, such as *ch'ing*.

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, trans. by Gustav Emil Mueller (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 118.
2. *Ibid.*
3. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Madhyamika System* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1970), p. 302.
4. *Ibid.*

5. Nishida Kitaro, *A Study of Good*, trans. by V. H. Viglielmo (Japan: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government, 1960), p. 1.
6. Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 13.

Chapter 3

If no one esteems the best, men will be free from contention.
If no one values the precious, men will be free from illegal gain.
If men see nothing to desire, their minds will be free from confusion.
Therefore, the wise guides men by relaxing their minds and keeping their bellies firm;
By reducing their wills and letting their physiques become strong.
He always frees men from the search for knowing and demanding.
This means that the knower dares not act for the known.
When action is through non-action, no one is uncultivated.

Commentary

This chapter illustrates the non-differentiated knowledge achieved through the action of non-action. Lao Tzu does not really want people to be ignorant; he merely wants them to follow the learning of unlearning. In Chapter 48 he clearly states:

To learn, one accumulates day by day.
To study Tao, *one reduces day by day.*

Thus, increasing knowledge and simultaneously reducing it constitutes the dialectical process of *Tao.* Therefore, in this chapter Lao Tzu says to avoid learning through contention, through cunning, or through one's ambitions and desires, as this only leads to confusion. The natural way of learning is simultaneously unlearning. As Lao Tzu says in the previous chapter:

Thus, the wise deals with things through non-interference and teaches through no-words…
Work is done, and no one depends on it.

This is what Lao Tzu means by *wei wu-wei*, or to learn yet to unlearn.

Non-differentiated knowledge, or the knowledge of no-knowledge, may be looked at in two different ways. First, it may be considered the knowledge of what is, as it is. In this view, summer is hot, winter is cold. Secondly, it may be conceived of as knowledge which is prior to differentiation. The first view of knowledge may be illustrated by a passage quoted from Hegel's early work on knowledge:

> Knowledge, which is our object first of all or immediately, can be nothing other than that which itself is immediate knowledge, *knowledge* of the *immediate* or of *what is*. We must act just as *immediately* or *receptively*, that is, must change nothing in our object as it offers itself, and must keep conceptual understanding out of the reception.[1]

This direct experience which does not change the object as it offers itself illustrates knowledge of what is, as it is.

In this chapter Lao Tzu gives instruction on how to reach the second kind of non-differentiated knowledge. This state, which is prior to differentiation, may be achieved by relaxing the mind, making the belly firm, reducing the will, and making the physique strong. On reducing the will, Heidegger writes in *On the Way to Language*:

> Thirst for knowledge and agreed for explanations never lead to a thinking inquiry. Curiosity is always the concealed arrogance of a self-consciousness that banks on a self-invented *ratio* and its rationality. The *will* to know does not *will* to abide in hope before what is worthy of thought.[2]

What is worthy of thought is non-differentiation which is free from contention and simply is what it is.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. G. W. F. Hegel, Introduction to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Kenley Royce Dove (1970); Martin Heidegger, in *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, trans. by Harper & Row, Publishers (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 153–154.
2. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 13.

Chapter 4

Tao *functions through its nothingness.*
And can not be conceived of as full of things.
Profound indeed, it is the model of all things.
Dulling its sharpness,
Releasing its entanglements,
Tempering its light, and
Unifying with the earth,
Clearly, indeed, it remains.
I do not know who created it,
But it is likely that it existed prior to God.

Commentary

Nothingness, or *hsü*, does not mean simply empty space. It is the identity of form with formlessness. As Lao Tzu says, to identify form as form is to conceive of it as full of things. When nothingness is applied to things, things are freed from rigid forms. This might be understood in terms of what Chinese Buddhists call *ch'eng k'ung miao yu*, or real void and subtle reality. According to this theory, void does not mean the relative void; reality does not mean relative reality. Rather, the void is reality; reality is the void. When *Tao* functions through its nothingness and is not conceived of as full of things, its nothingness leads to the real void and subtle reality. The experience of the real void and subtle reality cannot be clearly determined by rational discrimination. Rather, this experience indicates one's inner attitude, which may be related to Heidegger's idea of renunciation:

Renunciation is in itself a Saying: self-denial…denying to oneself the

> claim to something. Understood in this way, renunciation retains a negative character: “no thing,” that is, not a thing; “the word breaks off,” that is, it is not available.[1]

The process of renunciation is expressed in this chapter in the lines “dulling its sharpness, releasing its entanglements, tempering its light.” Through nothingness, renunciation leads to the source of creativity which existed prior to God. Thus, renunciation is not one-sided negation. Rather, through negation, affirmation is attained. Or, expressed another way, negation is simultaneously affirmation. As Heidegger says:

> Renunciation speaks affirmatively. The mere refusal not only does not exhaust the essence of renunciation, it does not even contain it. Renunciation does have a negative side, but it has a positive side as well.[2]

Thus, the line, “*Tao* functions through its nothingness,” expresses both the Buddhist *ch’eng k’ung miao yu* and Heidegger’s renunciation, which is simultaneously negative and positive.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 150.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 5

Heaven and earth are not benevolent:
They treat ten thousand things indifferently.
The wise is not benevolent:
*He treats men indifferently.**
The entire universe is basically void, like a bellows:
When it is in non-action, it does not lack anything;
When it is in action, it is even more productive.
Debating with words leads to limitations.
Therefore, nothing is better than to remain in the state before things are stirred.

Commentary

This chapter focuses on the word *chung*. *Chung* commonly means center. However, it also means speechlessness and, further, the emptiness of the entire universe which is "the state before things are stirred." Therefore, in this chapter it is translated as it appears in the *Doctrine of the Mean*: "When delight, anger, sorrow, or joy have not yet emerged, this is called *chung*… *Chung* is the great foundation of the entire universe."[1] In other words, *chung* indicates the mind that is nameless, speechless, actionless, and, above all, thoughtless. When the universe remains in the quiescence of thoughtlessness, there is no need to be concerned with benevolence. When the wise is in quiescence, he does not lack anything; when he acts, his actions are genuine. Therefore, in the state of mind of tranquility, he is spontaneously benevolent.

When the state of tranquility is attained, the union of man and the universe prevails. The self and others are perfectly harmonized, and there is no need to search for moral principles. As Nishida says in *A Study of Good*:

> One must not seek the facts of morality as things existing outside of the self, for one finds only that which is within the self.[2]

The mind of tranquility is what Nishida calls the true self. As he says:

> Our true self is the basic substance of the universe, and if one knows the true self, one indeed is not only linked with the good of mankind in general but one melts with the basic substance of the universe and one is divinely united with the will of God. Both religion and morality are truly exhausted at this point. The law of knowing the true self and of uniting with God lies only in becoming aware of the force of the union of subject and object.[3]

Awareness of the union of subject and object is achieved through the process of *hsü*, or nothingness, which is the origin of benevolence and morality itself.

Notes to Chapter 5

* In the original scripts, the word *ch'u kou*, or straw dog, is used. *Ch'u kou* refers to an ancient sacrificial ceremony in China. When the ceremony ended, the straw dog was discarded, indicating an attitude of indifference. Therefore, *ch'u kou* is translated here according to the meaning of the scripts and not merely according to the literal translation of the term.

1. Tzu Ssu, *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 1.
2. Nishida, *A Study of Good*, pp. 155–156.
3. *Ibid*., p. 156.

Chapter 6

The spiritual reality of the void never ceases to exist.
We call it the mystery of passivity.
The entry to the mystery of passivity is the origin of the universe.
Unceasing, it always remains.
Drawn upon, it is never exhausted.

Commentary

The term *ku shen* is common in Taoist literature. Its literal translation is spirit of the valley, but this does not fully express its real meaning. In his *Commandment on Purity*, Kao Yi-fang of the late Han Dynasty says: "Then intelligence and thought diminishes to nothingness, the spirit of the valley unceasingly remains."[1] In other words, when idle thoughts no longer obscure the mind, the reality of the emptiness of the mind exists continuously. In *Pao Po Chih*, Ko Hung of the fourth century says: "Inhaling the sunbeams, the spirit of the valley is completely purified."[2] In a poem by Yu Hsin of the sixth century we read: "Through vacuity, the spirit of the valley comes to stay."[3] In the *Lao Tzu I*, Lü Chi-p'u says:

> *Ku* or valley, refers to form. When man achieves the One through vacuity, he reaches its fullness. *Shen* refers to formlessness. When man achieves the One through quiescence, he becomes spiritual. When man remains in tranquility, and achieves the One, the form of his physique is empty as if it were a valley. His mind of formlessness is quiescent and spiritual. Form and formlessness are united and become everlasting. The ancients unified the body with the mind, the mind with the breath, the breath with spiritual reality, and spiritual reality with nothingness, or *wu*.[4]

All of these references relate *ku shen* to vacuity, or nothingness. Thus, in this chapter *ku shen* is translated as “spiritual reality of the void.” The spiritual reality of the void cannot be reached through intellection or intentional action, but only through emptiness and passivity. The deeper the passivity, the higher the achievement of the spiritual reality of the void. Hence, *hsüan p’i* indicates the mystery of passivity. In the original scripts, *p’i* means female, passive, or yielding, in accordance with the basic principles of yoga. However hard one might search for the symbolic meaning of this chapter, one will not really grasp its essence until one has attained one’s own inner awareness through concentration and contemplation. Then one will know how this unceasing reality always remains and how it is never exhausted when one reaches it.

According to Yen Fu, this chapter is a continuation of the discussion of *chung*, or tranquility. The last line of the previous chapter reads: “Therefore, nothing is better than to remain in the state before things are stirred.” This chapter further expounds the manifestations of tranquility. As Yen Fu says:

> Because *chung* is empty, it is called *ku*, or valley. Because its actions and reactions are limitless, it is called *shen*, or spiritual. Because it never lacks anything and is productive, it is called *pu shih*, or never dying. These three are manifestations of *Tao*. However, since they are still names, they cannot be the roots. If we trace the source of the emergence of these three, then we will really find the entrance of not-two.[5]

“The entrance of not-two” may be expressed by Chuang Tzu’s poem on tranquility.

> *Like a dry skeleton in his frame;*
> *Like sparkless ashes in his mind.*
> *Genuine is his knowledge, solid and true,*
> *Not supported by reasoning.*
> *Dark and dim, he has no mind,*
> *Not accessible to discussion.*
> *O! Lo! What kind of person is he now?*[6]

The state of having no-mind indicates the void, or valley. It is the state of

samadhi in Buddhist philosophy. As we read: “Intellection and reasoning, all consciousness indeed, have vanished, and only the awareness of serenity remains.”[7] The inner awareness of serenity might be called “the origin of the universe.” Within the origin of the universe there is a fuller and deeper expression which is itself positive and powerful. In his works Chuang Tzu describes Lao Tzu as follows: “Seated, still, he is like a motionless corpse. Revealed, he is like a dragon.”[8] Thus, *ku*, or valley, indicates tile state of profundity of stillness. *Shen*, or spiritual, refers to the state of being revealed as a dragon. Both *ku* and *shen* are manifestations of the void which is reached through meditation.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. Ting Fu-pao, *Annotation of the Lao Tzu, the Way and Its Attainment*, 6: 5a.
2. *Ibid*.
3. Yu Hsin, *Collections of Yu Tzu-san’s Poems, Ssu-pu Ts’ung-k’an, Chi-pu*, Chapter II, p. 3a.
4. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, 1: 20a.
5. Yen Fu, *Commentary on Lao Tzu: Tao Tê Ching*, Chapter IV, 4a.
6. Chuang Tzu, *The Works of Chuang Tzu*, Chapter XXII, 7: 24a.
7. *Ibid*., Chapter XIV, 5: 25a.
8. *Ibid*.

Chapter 7

The existences of heaven and earth are long-lasting.
Their existences are long-lasting because they do not conceive of their existences as existences.
Therefore, their existences are long-lasting.
When the wise stays back, he steps forward.
When he forgets his self, he finds his self.
Is it not through selflessness that one achieves selfhood?

Commentary

This chapter teaches that the self becomes a self only by negating itself and identifying with the non-self. The unity of self and non-self is the self-identity of absolute contradictions through which the individual self is determined. As Nishida says:

> The individual person is determined through the dialectical determination of absolute negation which is absolute negation-qua-affirmation, i.e., through the self-determination of absolute nothingness.[1]

Thus, through the negation of the self, the self is affirmed. Or, as Lao Tzu says: “When he forgets his self, he finds his self.”

Nishida further maintains that the self is “the unity of the self of yesterday and the self of today.” It is the self of the absolute self-determining present. The absolute self-determining present is time as the “continuity of discontinuity” which is different from ordinary time. In Nishida’s words:

> The individual self exists when living is dying and dying is living. But it is not that time simply flows from past to future or is simply determined

> by the future. Time must be seen as the self-determining present, meaning that the present, which includes past, present, and future, is a self-determining present.[2]

The self of the self-determining present, which is time itself as the self-determination of absolute nothingness, is also expressed in Chuang Tzu's words: "The perfect man has no self."[3] Chuang Tzu further says: "To kill does not mean death; to give birth does not mean life."[4] Thus, it is through the self-identification of self and non-self, life and death, negation and affirmation that the self is determined as the self-determining present or the unity of past, present, and future. This is close to what Lao Tzu means when he says that the existences of heaven and earth are long-lasting, because they do not conceive of their existences as existences. The idea of the self-determining present will be further discussed in the commentary on Chapter 28.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. Nishida Kitaro, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy; The World of Action and the Dialectical World*, trans. by David A. Dilworth (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), p. 44.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
3. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter I, 1: 5.
4. *Ibid.*, Chapter VI, 3: 7b.

Chapter 8

*That which is best is similar to the water.**
Water profits ten thousand things and does not oppose them.
It is always at rest in humble places that people dislike.
Thus, it is close to Tao.
Therefore, for staying, we prefer a humble place.
For minds, we prefer profundity.
For companions, we prefer the kindness.
For words, we prefer sincerity.
For government, we prefer good order.
For affairs, we prefer ability.
For actions, we prefer the right time.
Because we do not strive,
We are free from fault.

Commentary

Lao Tzu's teaching of engaging in daily activities in due degree seems quite close to the basic Confucian principle of propriety. However, there is a fundamental difference between the man of *Tao* and the Confucian man of propriety. The man of *Tao* is free from self, free from reputation, and free from claiming credit. It is not that he has no self; rather, his self is the self of no-self. It is not that he has no name; rather, his name is the name of no-name. It is not that he has no achievement; rather, his achievement is the achievement of no-achievement, for which he claims no credit. Thus, the man of *Tao* adjusts to his daily activities just as the flowers bloom when the spring comes, just as the moon shines upon the lake at night. His adjustment to daily affairs is free from individual ambitions and thoughts of fame.

The Confucian man of propriety, on the other hand, strives to be greater

than the ordinary man. He is a man of reputation whose mission is saving the country or a career man seeking to be a model for future generations. Thus, he is not free from self or reputation or claiming credit as is the man of *Tao.*

The teaching of the first section of this chapter is how to be a genuine man of *Tao.* One must be as humble as the water, staying in a place where nothing is labeled. Although Confucianism also teaches humility, it is humility which is merely a modification of one's ambition or ego. Primarily, ambition and a strong ego persist in the center of one's being.

This chapter is very important for dispelling the common belief that Taoism is nihilistic. It teaches men how to engage in ordinary daily activities in due degree. There is a difference between the ordinary man's attitude toward work and the attitude of the man of *Tao.* The ordinary man competes with others and worries about achieving or falling behind. The Taoist attitude is that of the non-ego self which is like water. In Ch'an Buddhism this attitude is called everyday-mindedness, which is expressed in the words: "when we are hungry, we eat; when tired, lie down." Everyday-mindedness is also expressed in the works of the Western philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. As he says, when a rose blooms under a window, it blooms spontaneously. It does not bloom because it envies the beauty of other roses or because it wants to please the mistress of the house. Thus, this chapter follows the teaching of Chapter 7 on the achievement of the self through selflessness. Because of selflessness, whenever one acts, one's actions are spontaneous, direct, and always right. Every response to one's actions is naturally correct and is always there, without deliberation. Thus, in this chapter we have:

For words, we prefer sincerity.
For government, we prefer good order.
For affairs, we prefer ability.
For action, we prefer the right time.

In this case where is there need for argument? Then, naturally, there is no fault.

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* In Ho-shang Kung's commentary "the best" is interpreted as the man who is best and whose

nature is like water. Some other commentators follow this translation. In this translation, what is best is conceived of as virtue, rather than as the man who possesses virtue. Elsewhere, Lao Tzu mentions “good men” and “bad men.” If the best in this chapter were to indicate men, Lao Tzu could have simply added the word “men.”

Chapter 9

To hold things and to be proud of them is not as good as not to have them,
Because if one insists on an extreme, that extreme will not dwell long.
When a room is full of precious things, one will never be able to preserve them.
When one is wealthy, high ranking, and proud of himself, he invites misfortune.
When one's task is completed and his mission is fulfilled, he removes himself from his position.
*This is indeed the way of Nature!**

Commentary

The dialectical approach is basic to Lao Tzu's thought. The dialectical world is a world of endless movement between conflicting forces. When one extreme is reached, the dialectical process immediately reverses itself and extends to the opposite extreme. According to the Taoist teaching, when one reaches one extreme and yet is free from it, one enters the realm of the unity of opposites, in which both extremes are immediately and spontaneously identified. As Nishida says:

> That which exists in the actual world must be both subjective and objective, both universal and individual. By including both these contradictory moments within itself, the world becomes a dialectical process.[1]

One enters the realm of the unity of opposites when one transforms one's limited ego-form self into one's unlimited non-ego-form self. In Nishida's

words:

> The activity of the self means the subjectification of objectivity and the objectification of the self. But at the same time it means that the object subjectifies itself and the universal individualizes itself. Therein the self is lost, but the true self is found.[2]

When one achieves the true self, one is no longer limited to one extreme or another; one is free from all extremes. This is the way of nature.

Notes to Chapter 9

* The word *tsai* is usually placed at the beginning of the first sentence of the following chapter. However, Emperor Hsuan Tsung (712–755 AD), of the Tang Dynasty made the first word in Chapter 10 the last word in this chapter. This move was well-accepted by other commentators. Placed at the end of this chapter, *tsai* is an article expressing a feeling of awe. Placed at the beginning of the following chapter, *tsai* means "to carry." As a rule, each sentence in both chapters has four words. If *tsai* is placed at the beginning of the following chapter, then the last line of this chapter has only three words, while the first line of the following chapter has five words. Therefore, in this translation, *tsai* is placed in the last line of this chapter.

1. Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, p. 108.
2. *Ibid*., p. 77.

Chapter 10

Can you unify hun and p'o into one and not let them be divided?*
Can you concentrate on your breathing to reach harmony and become as an innocent babe?
Can you clean the dark mirror within yourself and let nothing remain there?*
Can you love the people and govern the state and do so without interference?
Can you enter and leave the realm of Non-being and let these actions take place by themselves?
Can the clear illumination radiate to all directions without your having knowledge of it?
Cultivate it, and nourish it,
Produce it, but do not possess it,
Labor on it, but do not depend on it,
Lead it, but do not manage it.
This is called the mystic attainment.

Commentary

This is one of several chapters in the *Tao Tê Ching* which deals with the theory and practice of Taoist yoga. The highest attainment of yoga is to reach the knowledge of no-knowledge and to let the illumination radiate to all directions. The approach to this attainment is to free one's self from idle thoughts and cleanse the mind of defilements. Through concentration on breathing, one frees one's self from idle thoughts and reaches harmony. This is the technique of yoga. Freeing one's self from idle thoughts is called opening the gate of heaven. The gate of heaven is nothing, as Chuang Tzu explains. This nothing is often identified as the one, or unity, because it is

through nothing that inner unity is achieved. As Lao Tzu says in the first line of this chapter, let hun and p'o, the two aspects of the soul, be unified and preserve their unity. In this chapter Lao Tzu recommends breathing exercises for concentration and purification. He further points to the mind of thoughtlessness and its illumination that is achieved through concentration and purification.

In *The Works of Chuang Tzu* we also find many references to Taoist yoga. For example, in Chapter 23 we read:

> When a man's inner universe is extremely tranquil, he radiates natural illumination. He who radiates natural illumination is aware of his real self. He who cultivates his real self grasps eternity in presence. When he grasps eternity, human elements drop away from him, but nature comes to his assistance.[1]

The utmost tranquility of one's innermost world is the unification of the two aspects of the soul to which Lao Tzu refers. The illumination which radiates to all directions is what Chuang Tzu calls the heavenly light. Through the heavenly light one sees one's real self, grasps infinity through the absolute moment, and is benefitted by the qualities of heaven. To grasp infinity through the absolute moment and to be benefitted by heaven is to achieve the mystic attainment described by Lao Tzu at the end of this chapter. As he says:

Cultivate it, and nourish it,
Produce it, but do not possess it,
Labor on it, but do not depend on it,
Lead it, but do not manage it.
This is called the mystic attainment.

Note to Chapter 10

* According to Ho-shang Kung, ying p'o is hun p'o which means two aspects of the soul of man. In *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (p. 14), the first, hun, is identified as animus and the second, p'o, is rendered as anima. Animus (hun) is the light yang-soul, while anima (p'o) is the dark yin-soul.

** According to Kao Heng in his *Revised Collation of the Work of Lao Tzu* (1956), "*lan* should be read as *chien*, because in the ancient scripts, *lan* and *chien* are used interchangeably… In the

passage ‘Hsiu Wu,’ in *Huai-nan Tzu*, we have: ‘Hold *hsuan chien* (the dark mirror) in the mind and let things be reflected clearly and distinctly.’… The intentional thoughts in the mind of man are just like dust staining a mirror. This is the illness of the mind. Therefore, we have: ‘Clean the dark mirror and let no stain remain.’ The idea is to be free from intentional thoughts.” In his recent work, *Searching for Meanings in the Work of Lao Tzu*, Wang Huai also maintains that *hsuan-lan* means dark mirror. Wang Huai refers to the famous *gatha* by the Ch’an Buddhist Shen-siu, which reads:

The body is the Bodhi tree.
The mind is similar to the bright mirror.
Constantly clean it,
Let no dust stain it.

Wang Huai concludes that “cleaning the dark mirror,” or *hsuan-lan*, means cultivating one’s mind.

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XXIII, 8: 5b.

Chapter 11

Thirty spokes are joined at the hub.
From their non-being arises the function of the wheel.
Lumps of clay are shaped into a vessel.
From their non-being arises the function of the vessel.
Doors and windows are constructed together to make a chamber.
From their non-being arises the function of the chamber.
Therefore, as individual beings, these things are useful materials.
Constructed together in their non-being, they give rise to function.

Commentary

This chapter presents the basic Taoist principle of the unity of multiplicity. The spokes of the wheel, the lumps of clay, the windows and the doors indicate particularity. The wheel, the vessel, and the chamber refer to the unity of multiplicity. When things are differentiated, they are called individual things. When things are united, none of them functions any longer as an individual being. Each being becomes a member of the unity. This is the aspect of non-being. The early Chinese commentator Hsieh Chun-ts'ai says: "In this chapter, although being and non-being are both mentioned, the purpose is to point out that through being the value of non-being is revealed. People all know the usefulness of beings, but they often neglect the function of non-being. Therefore, Lao Tzu uses the symbols mentioned in this chapter to illustrate the function of non-being."[1]

However, Chinese and other commentators on the *Tao Tê Ching* traditionally illustrate non-being, or *wu*, with the emptiness of the hub, the hollow of the vessel, or the vacuity of the chamber. For example, when Wu Ch'eng (1249–1333) comments on this chapter in the *Lao Tzu I*, he says:

> If it were not for the empty space of the hub to turn round the wheel, there would be no movement of the cart on the ground. If it were not for the hollow space of the vessel to contain things, there would be no space for storage. If it were not for the vacuity of the room between the windows and doors for lights coming in and going out, there would be no place to live.[2]

Thus, the cart relies upon the hub to turn the wheel in order to fulfill its function. The vessel relies upon its space to contain things in order to fulfill its function. The chamber relies upon the space for lights coming in and going out in order to fulfill its function. All of these functions rely upon emptiness. Therefore, we have: “Through non-being we have the function.”

Most English translations also follow this interpretation and conceive that the void of the hub, of the vessel, and of the chamber serves the function of non-being. For instance, the English translation by James Legge reads:

> Thirty spokes unite in the nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle) that the use of the vessel depends. Clay is fashioned into a vessel; but it is on their empty hollowness that their use depends. The door and window are cut out to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space that its use depends.[3]

The idea of the void which is useful as interpreted in this chapter also seems to appear in Heidegger’s explanation of the void of the jug. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, the non-being of the jug seems quite similar to that in the English translation above. According to Heidegger, the jug’s void “holds by taking what is poured in. It holds by keeping and retaining what it took in.”[4] Thus, “the effective feature of the vessel is that which does its holding, the void, as a hollow filled with air.”[5] When Heidegger’s interpretation of a void which is not a void is taken in the relative sense, it contradicts his basic concern that non-being is nowhere to be found but in being. This is the same as Te-ching’s maintaining that non-being cannot be useful by itself. It depends upon the existence of being. This function is spontaneous and direct action which is free from any artificiality, yet which reveals all the potentialities of beings. Therefore, it is called “the great function,” to which Ch’an Buddhists often refer.

Notes to Chapter 11

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Vol. I, p. 35a.
2. *Ibid.*
3. E. Max Müller, *The Texts of Taoism*, pp. 54–55.
4. Heidegger, *Poetry*, *Language*, *Thought*, p. 171.
5. *Ibid.*

Chapter 12

Numerous colors make man sightless.
Numerous sounds make man unable to hear.
Numerous tastes make man tasteless.
Racing and pursuing game make man's heart violent.
Valuing rare things makes man worry about their safety.
*Therefore, the wise concentrates on the belly and not on the temptations of the senses.**
Thus, he abides in the one and foregoes the other.

Commentary

Chiao Hung, the compiler of the *Lao Tzu I*, recorded Kumarajiva's commentary on this chapter, which reads: "Not knowing that color is colorless, and sound is soundless, one is no different from the blind man or the deaf man."[1] Therefore, an important Taoist teaching is to be free from the attractions of the senses. This great Taoist contribution on the form of the formless and the image of the imageless is presented in later chapters.

According to Chiao Hung, concentrating on the center of the belly is the same thing as "staying at one's back," as taught by the *I Ching*. In other words, one concentrates on the senseless spot in order to free one's self from the temptations of the senses. According to this chapter, searching for the truth inwardly leads to the liberation of the senses, thus freeing one from searching outwardly through the senses. This chapter stresses the knowledge of no-knowledge and the sensation of no-sensation. As Lao Tzu says, the wise abides in this and lets other things go.

In Chapter 1 of the *Lao Tzu I*, Tung Ssu-ching comments on this chapter, saying: "The eye must see; the ear must hear; the mouth must taste; the body must engage in work; and the mind must reflect. They must not be

kept in non-action. However, when they act, their action must not be separate from non-action. Then although they act, their action is not attached to objective things. Thus, the mind is pure and free from desire. If the mind is defined by attachments and pursues objective conditions, one will lose one's balance."[2] Losing one's balance is due to the "temptations of the senses," and to neglect of "the concentration on the belly."

Notes to Chapter 12

* This sentence has the same meaning as that which ends Chapter 38. The great man who acts according to reality and not appearance is the same as the wise who concentrates on the belly and not on the senses. Chapter 72 refers to the same idea, with the wise leaving behind small fear and experiencing basic dread, abiding in one and foregoing the other.

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Vol. I, p. 35b.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 37b.

Chapter 13

Honor and dishonor both move us
Because we are troubled by having a self.
*Why do we say that honor and dishonor move us?**
Because honor lifts us upward
And dishonor lowers us downward,
Thus, when we are honored we are moved.
When we are dishonored we are also moved.
That is why honor and dishonor are both said to move us.
Why do we say that the great trouble is having a self?
Because we have great trouble simply because we have a self.
If we are selfless, then where is the trouble?
If we identify our self with the world,
Then within our self there is the world.
If we love the world as we love our self,
Then within our self there is only the world.

Commentary

This chapter stresses the importance of the insight into the nature of self. Ordinarily, one has an illusory conception of self. In C. G. Jung's expression, this is the limited ego-form self. Taoism teaches the transformation of the limited ego-form self to the unlimited non-ego-form self. When a man lives according to the limited ego-form self he is easily "moved" by such things as honor or dishonor, success or failure, life or death. When a man achieves the unlimited non-ego-form self, he identifies with the universe. As C. G. Jung says: "The occurrence of satori[1] is interpreted and formulated as a breakthrough of a consciousness limited to the ego-form in the form of the non-ego-like self."[2] Through the interfusion

of the subjective reality of man and the objective reality of the universe, man is identified with the universe and the universe is identified with man. Within man, there is the universe. Thus, Lao Tzu says that within our self there is the world. When the world is identified with the self, honor and dishonor, success and failure, life and death do not move the self. *The Works of Chuang Tzu* often refers to this transformation of the self. As Chuang Tzu says, the perfect man has no self. That is, he has no ego-form self; he is identified with the universe. A famous statement by Cheng Hao (1032–1085) serves to illustrate this identity: "The changelessness of Heaven and Earth is that their minds penetrate all things while they themselves have no minds. The constancy of the sage is that his passion accords with all things, yet he himself has no passion."[3]

According to Chuang Tzu, to identify one's self with the universe is to conceal a universe within a universe. In Te-ching's interpretation, when one realizes that the self, the universe, and ten thousand things are identified as one, this great transformation through non-differentiation will conceal the formless within the formless in such a way that there will be nothing that can be lost. This is what Chuang Tzu means by concealing a universe within a universe. Chuang Tzu further says: "It may be said that a boat concealed in a gully, or a net concealed in a marsh are safe. Yet in the middle of the night a powerful man may carry it away."[4] The boat and the net indicate the ego-form self; the gully is also form. When one conceals form within form, no matter how heavy it is, the great power of *Tao* will carry it away.

Notes to Chapter 13

* There may be some mistakes in the texts of both Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung. Kao Heng quotes the following comments by Yü Yüeh (1821–1906): "It should be read as this: 'Why do we say that honor and dishonor move us? Because honor lifts us upward and dishonor lowers us downward.' The editions of Cheng Ching-yuan and Li Tao-shun may be used to correct the errors made in other editions." According to Kao Heng, the Cheng Ching-yuan (1025–1094) and Li Tao-shun (fl. 1290) editions are correct.

1. A Japanese term for awakening or enlightenment. In Chinese it is *k'ai-wu.*
2. C. G. Jung, Foreword in Daisetz T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), p. 14.
3. Chang, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 51.
4. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter VI, 3: 5a.

Chapter 14

Gaze at it; there is nothing to see.
It is called the formless.
Heed it; there is nothing to hear.
It is called the soundless.
Grasp it; there is nothing to hold on to.
It is called the immaterial.
We cannot inquire into these three,
Hence, they interfuse into one.
Above, it is not light.
Below, it is not dark.
Invisible, it cannot be called by any name.*
It returns again to nothingness.
Thus, we call it the form of the formless
The image of the imageless.
It is the evasive.
Approach it; you cannot see its face.
Go after it; you cannot see its back.
Adhere to the Tao *of the remote past,*
And apply it to the present.
This will enable you to understand the primordial beginning.
This is the essential Tao.**

Commentary

In this chapter the *Tao* is identified as the one which is formless, soundless, and immaterial. Past and present, it is the same one. It embraces both the form and the formless, being and non-being. Thus, it is the unity of duality and multiplicity. It is infinite and unceasing, without opposite. An ancient

Chinese poem reads:

The wind ceases, yet blossoms fall.
Birds sing, yet the mountain becomes more silent.

In this poem motion is the negation of motionlessness, soundlessness is the negation of sound. In other words, motionlessness identifies with motion, sound identifies with soundlessness. Applied to art, this manner of expression never tries to portray the form of objects. The aesthetic feeling enchants us through the formless, beyond form, or the soundless, beyond sound. This chapter is very important in its application to the field of aesthetics. As Kitaro Nishida says in A *Study of Good*: "In contradistinction to Western culture which considers form as existence and formation as good, the urge to see the form of the formless, and hear the sound of the soundless lies at the foundation of Eastern culture."[1] In order to understand the foundations of Eastern culture, one should thoroughly grasp the teachings of this chapter.

Note to Chapter 14

* According to Kao Heng, sheng sheng should be ming ming.

** In this chapter *chi* should be read as general essentials, or *tsung yao*. The dictionary *Tzu Hai* refers to this meaning of *chi* in the *Book of Rites.*

1. Nishida, *A Study of Good*, p. 211.

Chapter 15

In ancient times the best man of Tao* *was refined and deeply enlightened.*
His depth can hardly be measured.
Because his depth can hardly be measured,
I will try to draw a picture of him.
Prudent, as if he were wading in a cold stream in the winter;
Calm, as if he did not want to disturb his neighbors;
Respectful, as if he were a guest;
Fluid, as if he were ice melting;
Solid, as if he were an uncarved block;
Vacant, as if he were a valley;
Lacking clear discriminations, as if he were impure;
Who is able to gradually reach purity from impurity through quiescence?
Who is able to gradually grow lively from motion through motionlessness?
One who abides in Tao *never desires to reach an extreme.*
Because he never desires to reach an extreme,
He can remain in the old, yet become the new.

Commentary

This chapter reveals the profound inner experience of Lao Tzu himself. Without this inner experience, he would not have been able to express the wonder of the spirituality or formlessness of man. The qualities mentioned in this chapter, that is, prudence, calmness, respectfulness, fluidity, solidity, vacancy, lacking clear discriminations, all reflect the center of being of the man of *Tao*. According to Lao Tzu, one achieves these aspects through quiescence and motionlessness. When one reaches quiescence, one's

impurity is pure. When one reaches motionlessness, one's motion is more lively. Purity and liveliness are products of the form of the formless and the action of non-action. In order to reach the form of the formless and the action of non-action, Lao Tzu advises one to be free from extremes. When one is free from extremes, one abides with the middle way or the identity of opposites. Thus, the last words of this chapter are: "He can remain in the old, yet become the new."

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* Following the commentary of Fu I (559–639 AD), *shih* should be *Tao*. Both Kao Heng and Ma Hsü-lun strongly support this. In fact, the first sentence of Chapter 65 refers to "the best man of *Tao*." The scripts in Chapter 65 are the same as in this chapter.

Chapter 16

Contemplate the ultimate void.
Remain truly in quiescence.
All things are together in action,
But I look into their non-action.
Things are unceasingly moving and restless,
Yet each one is proceeding back to the origin.
Proceeding back to the origin is quiescence.
To be in quiescence is to return to the destiny of being.[1]
The destiny of being is reality.
To understand reality is to be enlightened.
Not to understand it, and to act wrongly, leads to disaster.
Reality is all-embracing.
To be all-embracing is to be selfless.
To be selfless is to be all-pervading.
To be all-pervading is to be transcendent.
To be transcendent is to attain Tao.
To attain Tao *is to be everlasting.*
Even when the body dies, it is not the end.

Commentary

In the previous chapter the qualities of the man of *Tao* are summarized in the basic attainment of quiescence. This chapter further expounds the essential approach to quiescence, through which one becomes all-embracing, all-pervading, transcendent, and everlasting.

Quiescence is achieved through the movement of reversal. As Lao Tzu says in another chapter: “Reverse is the movement of *Tao.*” This reverse movement is expressed in the lines: “All things are together in action, but I

look into their non-action." That is, the truth of non-being is not sought through non-being; rather, the truth of non-being is sought through being. When one searches for the truth of non-being through non-being, one entirely neglects being. This is a grave mistake. When one searches for the truth of non-being through being, one identifies being with non-being. This is the correct approach. Lao Tzu calls it returning to the roots. In Heidegger's terms, it is the destiny of being. If we do not understand the reverse movement, we deviate from the destiny of being. When we search outwardly for the truth, we only move further away from the center of being. This is what Lao Tzu calls *wang tsao*, or wrong action. The outcome of wrong action is disaster. When we proceed to return to the roots, our activities do not remain rigidly in static being. Rather, they are in the being of non-being, or the non-being of being. That is why Lao Tzu says, "Contemplate the ultimate void." To contemplate the ultimate void is to identify being with non-being, or non-being with being. This might be illustrated by Heidegger's words in *On the Way to Language*: "The sounding word returns into soundlessness, back to whence it was granted: into the ringing of stillness, which, as Saying, moves the regions of the world's fourfold into their nearness."[2] The ringing of stillness is a powerful action which Lao Tzu characterizes as all-embracing, all-pervading, transcendent, and everlasting.

Notes to Chapter 16

1. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 95.
2. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 108.

Chapter 17

*The best leader is one whom no one knows.**
The next best is one who is intimate with the people and is flattered by them.
The next is one who is feared by the people.
The next is one who is held in contempt by the people.
Therefore, when one's sincerity is not sufficient, one does not have the confidence of the people.
Be cautious! and spare words.
Then when work is done and things are accomplished,
People will say that things happened by themselves.

Commentary

According to Chuang Tzu, if the natural integrity of things is left unharmed, it is not necessary for the artisan to make things and destroy the natural integrity of jade; nor is it necessary to introduce charity and duty to one's neighbor and destroy the natural integrity of man. Chuang Tzu gives the following illustration:

> Horses live on dry land, eat grass, and drink water. When pleased, they rub their necks together. When angry, they turn round and kick up their heels at each other. Thus far only do their natural dispositions carry them. But bridled and bitted, with a plate of metal on their foreheads, they learn to cast vicious looks, to turn their heads to bite, to resist, to get the bits out of their mouths, or the bridles into them. And thus their natures become depraved—the fault of Poh Loh.[1]

The harm that the expert horseman Poh Loh inflicted on the natural

integrity of the horses illustrates the harm that the sage inflicts on the natural integrity of man when he tries to introduce charity and duty to one's neighbor. In the remote past men lived together happily. "Having food, they rejoiced; having full bellies, they strolled about."[2] When the sage became the ruler, he worried the people with ceremonies in order to guide them in their affairs. This was the mistake of the sage. Thus, Lao Tzu maintains that the sage ruler should guide the people without words, let the people work among themselves, and let things happen by themselves.

Notes to Chapter 17

* Following Chiao Hung's acceptance of Wu Cheng's edition, Sun K'uang, Chu Ch'ien-chih, and others also maintain that "the best leader is one whom no one knows" is correct, rather than "people merely know their existence."

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter IX, 4: 6a and b, trans. by Herbert A. Giles, *Chuang Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1961), pp. 98–99.
2. *Ibid.*, 4: 8b, p. 99.

Chapter 18

As soon as the great Tao *is cast aside,*
There prevails the teaching of benevolence and righteousness.
As soon as intellection and prudence are esteemed,
There is produced the great falsehood.
As soon as the members of a family are no longer at peace,
There is a demand for filial piety and love.
As soon as a nation is in confusion and rebellion,
There is a claim for loyal officers.

Commentary

Chapter 5 reads: “Heaven and Earth are not benevolent. They treat ten thousand things indifferently. The sage is not benevolent. He treats people indifferently.” To say that heaven, earth, and the sage are not benevolent does not mean that they are really not benevolent. Rather, it means that when the great *Tao* prevails there is perfect harmony among heaven, earth, and ten thousand things and between the sage and ordinary men. Thus, when the great compassion prevails in the universe there is no need to teach merely moral principles such as benevolence and righteousness. Such principles are artificial restrictions imposed from without and not the real compassion of the heart from within. This chapter clearly describes the negative effect of the discordance of the universe. As we read: “As soon as the members of a family are no longer at peace, there is a demand for filial piety and love.” This indicates that moral restrictions arise when the great harmony of the universe is discarded. Taoists are not against moral values. Rather, they see the fundamental ground from which moral behavior emerges. No matter how well moral discipline is enforced, if this fundamental ground is neglected, there will be evil effects. In his *Works*,

Chuang Tzu states that the tiger loves its cub. Thus, Chuang Tzu shows that love is deeply rooted in the ground of great harmony and not in superficial restrictions on the conscious level. In the next chapter Lao Tzu openly says that getting rid of moral principles benefits the people.

Chapter 19

Let the people be free from discernment and relinquish intellection,
Then they will be many times better off.
Stop the teaching of benevolence and get rid of the claim of justice,
Then the people will love each other once more.
Cease the teaching of cleverness and give up profit,
Then there will be no more stealing and fraud.
Discernment and intellection, benevolence and justice, cleverness and profit are nothing but outward refinements.
Hence we must seek something other than these.
Reveal simplicity,
Hold to one's original nature,
Rid one's self of selfishness,
Cast away covetousness,
*Eliminate artificial learning and one will be free from anxieties.**

Commentary

According to Lao Tzu, the man of great compassion reveals his simplicity, holds to his original nature, rids himself of selfishness, and casts away covetousness. Thus, he has no need of artificial moral claims such as benevolence and righteousness, and he is free from all anxieties. He has reached the state of the union of subject and object, or the self and the universe, which serves as the basis of the great compassion. As Nishida says in *A Study of Good*:

> Our true self is the basic substance of the universe, and if one knows the true self one indeed is not only linked with the good in mankind in general but one melts with the basic substance of the universe and one is

> divinely united with the will of Cod. Both religion and morality are truly exhausted at this point. The law of knowing the true self and of uniting with Cod lies only in the force of the union of subject and object.[1]

Nishida further says: “the acquiring of this force is the utter killing of this false self, and by once dying to the desires of this world one is reborn.”[2] Thus, as Lao Tzu says, discernment and intellection must be discarded, as well as the teaching of benevolence and justice, cleverness and profit. These outward refinements can never reach the genuine and profound peace of the great compassion, which is the universe itself. Once one has rid one’s self of these artificial moral teachings, one will realize the union of subject and object, or the identity of one’s true self and the universe.

Notes to Chapter 19

* Kuei Yu-Kuang, Yao Nai, Ma Hsü-lun, Chiang Hsi-ch’ang, and others maintain that this line should be placed here and not at the beginning of the following chapter.

1. Nishida, *A Study of Good*, p. 156.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 20

What is the difference between the respectful "wei" and the disrespectful "o"?
What is the difference between good and bad?
Where others are afraid, must I be afraid, too?
How extremely ridiculous this is!
The people are rejoicing as if they are enjoying a sacrificial feast,
Or walking up a terrace in the blossoming spring.
How quiescent I am, alone unstirred, like a baby before he knows how to make pleasant expressions.
How aimlessly I wander, with no home to turn to.
People all have many ambitions and desires.
I, alone, seem to have left all of them.
How ignorant I am! My mind must be that of a fool.
People are glorious and shining.
I, alone, am dark and dull.
People are clever and inquisitive.
I, alone, am obscure and blunt.
How tranquil I am, like the placid sea.
How loftily drifting, as if I am bound nowhere.
People all have their motives.
I, alone, am good for nothing and uncouth.
I am not like the others.
*I am nourished by the Mother.**

Commentary

This chapter expresses the self-identity of contradictions as it is experienced in actual life, which is different from the unification or synthesis of

opposites achieved through intellection. The life of man is primarily paradoxical or contradictory. Chinese moralists often maintain a strict distinction between right and wrong, high and low, good and bad. Chinese logicians see the truth of the unity or synthesis of opposites. Thus, they say: "I go to Yüeh today, but I arrived there yesterday." Neither the distinction and determination nor the unification of contraries can reveal the truth of direct, immediate self-identity. The experience of self-identity is likened to the state of an infant before he knows how to make pleasant expressions or that of an ignorant man who remains dark and dull. When one experiences self-identity, one's mind is as tranquil as the placid sea. One is loftily drifting, as if one is bound nowhere. Intellectual and moral discrimination lead to the ego self. This chapter depicts the genuine man who lives in accordance with reality. Thus, Lao Tzu says: "I am nourished by the Mother."

In his work *Psychological Types*, C. G. Jung offers his own explanation of the self-identity of contraries. He says:

> The solution of the conflict of the opposites can proceed neither from a logico-intellectual compromise as in conceptualism, nor from a pragmatic estimation of the practical value of logically irreconcilable views, but simply and solely from the positive creative which receives the opposites into itself as necessary elements of coordination, just as a coordinated muscular movement always involves the innervation of antagonistic muscle groups.[1]

Jung further maintains: "The identity of opposites is the characteristic of every psychic event that is unconscious."[2]

For Jung, the image of the mother is the symbol of the collective unconscious, which is "the source of the water of life."[3] The collective unconscious is a deep layer of inborn consciousness, which is not personal and individual, but is universal. The collective unconscious consists of "primordial types," or images, called "archetypes," which are impressed on man's mind from ancient times. Water, as the most common symbol of the unconscious, is "the valley-ghost, the water-dragon of *Tao* whose nature resembles water—a yang embraced in the yin. Psychologically, therefore, water means spirit that has become unconscious."[4] When man looks into

the mirror of the water, he "sees his own face first of all."[5] Yet the unconscious is not a closed, subjective system, but "is the wide world, and objectivity as open as the world."[6] The self is the object, identified with the world. In ordinary consciousness, one is entangled with the world, and one easily forgets one's self. In the identity of opposites of the unconscious, however, one realizes that "this self is the world." This is why we must know who we are. As soon as the unconscious touches us, "we are in it, in that we become unconscious of ourselves."[7]

In his work *Integration of the Personality*, Jung records this chapter from *Tao Tê Ching*, identifying the "lavishing mother" with the region of darkness into which one falls when one follows the process of *wu-wei*, or not-doing, expounded by Lao Tzu. This region of darkness is not empty but is the place where all potentialities are stored.

Heidegger also expounds "the region" as the source of creativity. It is the "open" which is cleared by the "primal conflict" of opposites. As Heidegger says:

> The region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Regioning is a gathering and re-sheltering for an expanded resting in an abiding. So the region itself is at once an expanse and an abiding.[8]

> Because that-which-regions regions all, gathering everything together and letting everything return to itself, to rest in its own identity. Then that which regions itself would be nearing and distancing…a characterization which should not be thought of dialectically.[9]

The region is inherently open and dynamic. It is the ground from which "everything with which man is endowed must… be drawn up."[10] In this way, "the ground is first grounded as the bearing ground."[11] All creation is such a drawing up. It is "a drawing, as of water from a spring."[12] Creation is a bringing forth of a being and placing this being "in the open" in such a way that it "first clears the openness of the open into which it comes forth."[13] This bringing forth of creation is the establishing of truth itself. The open is attained in the place of the primal conflict of lighting and

concealing, which is the occurrence of truth. The open is not separate from being, but "happens in the midst of beings."[14] It is being itself, the region, as the bearing ground of all things. For Lao Tzu this region, the bearing ground of all things, is the Mother.

Notes to Chapter 20

* "The mother" in this chapter may refer to Chapter 52, where we read: "When one is aware of its manifestations *(chih*, or son), yet abides with its origin *(Mu*, or Mother)…" Here, the original text reads: "I swallow the Mother." This means that the man of *Tao* lives in the reality of things or abides with the origin *(Mu*, or Mother). However, "I swallow the Mother" sounds unethical in the ordinary sense. Thus, when Emperor Hsuan Tsung of the Tang Dynasty edited the text, he added "to beg from," meaning to beg food from the Mother. Emperor Hsuan Tsung states in his commentary on the text that he himself added these words. Thus, recent texts read "I beg food from the Mother," thereby losing the original sense of the direct, preontological experience of identity with the origin, or reality.

1. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, trans. by H. Godwin Baynes (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1938), pp. 399–400.
2. C. G. Jung, *Integration of the Personality*, trans. by Stanley Dell (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1939), p. 225.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
4. *Ibid.* p. 68.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
8. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 66.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
10. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 76.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Chapter 21

*That which is inherent in the great attainment (void) is the echo of Tao.**
That which is Tao is indistinct and ineffable.
Ineffable and indistinct, yet therein are forms.
Indistinct and ineffable, yet therein are objects.
Unfathomable and invisible, yet therein are essences.
The essence is indeed genuine, therein is the vivid reality.
From ancient times until the present, the name of Tao *has never ceased to exist.*
Through it we see the beginning of all things.
How do we understand the beginning of all things?
It is through this.

Commentary

In his work *Existence and Being*, Martin Heidegger asserts that "the 'Nothing' is more original than the Not and negation."[1] Further, "Nothing occurs neither by itself nor 'apart from' what-is," but "reveals itself as integral to the being of what-is."[2] Yet this "nothing is neither an object nor anything that 'is' at all."[3] This is close to the idea of the *Tao* as ineffable and indistinct, yet that wherein all forms and objects are contained. In this book *On the Way* to *Language*, Heidegger discusses the word *Tao* itself. He says:

> *Tao* could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, mind, meaning, *logos* properly mean to say… Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word way, *Tao*, if only we let these names return to what they leave unspoken… Perhaps the enigmatic power of today's reign of method

> also, and indeed pre-eminently, stems from the fact that the methods, notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the run-off of a great hidden stream which moves all things along and makes way for everything. All is way.[4]

This "way" is the *Tao* maintained by Lao Tzu. All forms, objects, and essences are inherent in the void, yet the *Tao* itself is indistinct and ineffable. It cannot be determined as forms, objects, or essences. *Tao* is the reality of all these things. It is immanent in the past, present, and future, yet it transcends them. It is the creativity which is the source of all things. Thus, the learner of *Tao* must understand the unfathomable and invisible, or he will miss the essence. According to Chiao Hung, one must be aware that what is indistinct, ineffable, and without form is form itself; that what is elusive, evasive, and without objects is objects themselves; that what is dark, dim, and without essences is essence itself. Buddhists say: "If one sees that all forms are formless, this means that one sees the Buddha." Chiao Hung further explains that although one tries to see the beginning of all things, there is actually no beginning. The beginning of no-beginning is the subtlety of all things. When one conceives of things as things and does not understand the mystery between the manifestation and the subtle reality, it is because one has not yet seen the beginning. To see the beginning of all things is to be liberated from the delusions of thought. When one sees the manifestation, one is aware that all existences are really no existences. Thus, real non-existence is all existence.

Notes to Chapter 21

* Here, *Tê* means the attainment of preontological experience. In this sense *Tê* has nothing to do with ethical values, as it does in the Confucian interpretation. In Chapter 38 Lao Tzu elaborates on the meaning of *Tê*, or attainment. Therefore, the commentary on *Tê* as it appears in Chapter 38 of this translation may also serve as a reference for this chapter.

The word *yung* ordinarily means appearance, manner, and the like. However, in this chapter, *yung* means content, or that which is inherent in. Therefore, the first sentence reads: "That which is inherent in the great attainment (void) is the echo of *Tao.*"

1. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 331.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
4. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 92.

Chapter 22

To bend is to maintain integrity.
To deviate is to be direct.
To be concave is to be convex.
To be exhausted is to be rejuvenated.
To be wanting is to be endowed.
To have much is to be deprived.
Therefore, the wise identifies opposites as one,
And sets an example for the world.
He remains in concealment and spontaneously is unconcealed.
He does not assert himself, therefore he is eminent.
He does not claim credit, therefore he receives credit.
He is not vain, therefore he is the best.
Because he does not oppose anyone in the world, no one can oppose him.
Thus, the ancient saying "to bend is to maintain integrity" is the word of truth.
Indeed, integrity is attributed to this.
Through no words,
*It takes place by itself.**

Commentary

It is a traditional Taoist belief that when motion reaches its ultimate limit, quiescence emerges. When quiescence reaches its ultimate limit, motion emerges again. Thus, motion and quiescence mutually produce each other. This idea of mutual opposition and identity is also expressed in Hegel's dialectic. He says: "Position and opposition contain both their *mutual affirmation and negation* in themselves. Each finds itself in its opposed other—A becomes (Ab), B becomes (Ba)."[1] In *A Study of Good* Nishida

also expounds identity and difference.

> If there is one reality here, there is of necessity another reality opposing it. And in this mutual opposition of these two things in this way, these two things are not independent realities but must be things which are united, that is, they must be the differentiating development of one reality.[2]

In this chapter the unity of opposites as “the differentiating development of one reality” is what the wise grasps and applies to his daily activities. Thus, by not asserting himself he becomes eminent; by not claiming credit, credit is given to him.

Notes to Chapter 22

* This sentence is placed at the end of this chapter by both Yao Nai and Kao Heng. Yao Nai attributes this sentence to this chapter because, in addition to the meaning of the line, the words *ch’uan*, *yen*, and *jan* all rhyme. Kao Heng maintains that hsi yen means “to teach through no words” and tzu jan means “to deal with affairs through non-interference.” In other words, this sentence means to achieve integrity through the freedom of no-words and no-interference, as taught by Lao Tzu in the second and forty-second chapters.

1. Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, p. 120.
2. Nishida, *A Study of Good*, p. 67.

Chapter 23

*Nature rarely expresses itself in words.**
When a hurricane occurs, it does not last all morning.
Neither does a heavy shower last the whole day.
These are actions of heaven and earth.
Thus, even heaven and earth cannot maintain their actions for long.
How can man?
Therefore, the learner of Tao *identifies with* Tao.
When one achieves it, one identifies with one's achievement.
When one loses it, one identifies with one's losing.
When man identifies with achievement, achievement also willingly identifies with man.
When man identifies with losing, losing willingly identifies with man.
If one does not believe enough in this identity, then it will not take place.

Commentary

The central theme of this chapter is *tung*, or the essence of the same. Thus: "The learner of *Tao* identifies with *Tao.*" Further, "When man identifies with *Tao*, *Tao* also willingly identifies with man." As Heidegger points out in his work *Identity and Difference*:

> We must acknowledge the fact that in the earliest period of thinking, long before thinking had arrived at a principle of identity, identity itself speaks and in a pronouncement which rules as follows: thinking and being belong together in the same and by virtue of this same.[1]

Belonging together in the same and by virtue of the same is *tung*. As Heidegger explains: "We interpret sameness to mean a belonging

together."[2]

This chapter teaches "the sameness of thinking and Being," which Heidegger calls "belonging together." Customarily the word "together" is determined by belonging into a unity, "the necessary connection of the one with the other." However, both Taoists and Heidegger maintain that identity or *tung* no longer represents belonging in terms of the unity of the together, but rather experiences "this together in terms of belonging." Belonging to each other in the same refers to the identity of thinking and Being. According to Lao Tzu, the learner of *Tao* is in the same with *Tao.* To learn *Tao* means to identify the thinking of no-thinking with *Tao* in the same. Further: "When man identifies with *Tao*, *Tao* also willingly identifies with man." This means that man and being "belonging to each other in the same."

In his commentary in the *Lao Tzu I*, Lü Chi-p'u says: "freedom from words, or *hai-yen* means that *Tao* expresses itself; this is called the essence of nature. When one listens to it, nothing is heard. It is the state of namelessness and selflessness. In the selflessness of *Tao*, and its gaining or losing, there is no difference, but total identity."[3] In other words, in the state of speechlessness one's Being and one's thinking are the same. Man identifies with *Tao* and *Tao* identifies with man. This is what Taoists call mystic identity, or *hsuan tung*, or, in Heidegger's term, "belonging together."

The identity of Being and thinking cannot take place if one does not believe that it is so. When one believes that it is so, man and *Tao* are totally identified.

Notes to Chapter 23

* This sentence is placed at the end of the previous chapter by both Yao Nai and Kao Heng. Yao Nai believes that this sentence belongs to the previous chapter because, in addition to the meaning of the line, the words *yen*, *ch'uan*, and *jan* all rhyme.

1. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 27.
2. *Ibid*., p. 28.
3. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter II, 2: 38b, 39a.

Chapter 24

To lift the heel is not to stand.
To take long strides is not to walk.
To show off is not to shine.
To insist that one is right is not to be distinct.
To claim credit is to have no credit.
To be proud of oneself is not to be the best.
From the point of view of Tao*, all of these are extras which things themselves do not like.*
Therefore, the man of Tao *does not abide with them.*

Commentary

This chapter points out the importance of reality as opposed to pretense or complexities. Lifting the heel and taking long strides indicate pretense. When one shows off or is proud of himself or claims credit, one adds complexities to his life. Nishida says in *A Study of Good*:

> What kind of thing is direct reality before we have as yet added the complexities of thought? That is, what kind of thing is an event of truly pure experience? At this time there is not as yet the opposition of subject and object, there is not the separation into intellect, emotion, and will, there is only independent, self-contained, pure activity.[1]

This self-contained, pure activity is free from showing off, from being proud, from insisting that one is right, and from claiming credit. Furthermore, one is not anxious to lift one's heel and take an extra stride. In short, self-contained, pure activity is reality before complexities occur. It is the state of mind existing before the separation of emotion or will. It is the

state “wherein intellect, emotion, and the will are one.” This one is the true state in which the Taoist abides.

Note to Chapter 24

1. Nishida, *A Study of Good*, pp. 48–49.

Chapter 25

There was a thing, a "gathering" chaos,
Which existed prior to heaven and earth.
Silent! Empty!
Existing by itself, unchanging,
Pervading everywhere, inexhaustible,
It might be called the mother of the world.
Its name is unknown;
I simply call it Tao.
If I were to exert myself to define it,
I might call it great.
Great means extending to the limitless.
Extending to the limitless means reaching the extreme distance.
Reaching the extreme distance means returning to "nearness."
Thus, Tao *is great,*
*Heaven is great, earth is great, and man is great, too.**
In the universe we have four greatnesses, and man is but one.
Man is in accordance with earth.
Earth is in accordance with heaven.
Heaven is in accordance with Tao.
Tao *is in accordance with that which is.*

Commentary

This chapter is primarily concerned with the meaning of *wu*, or thing, and its fundamental role in the universe. Wu is commented on in various ways. According to Lü Chi-p'u in the *Lao Tzu I*:

> Whenever there is vapor *(ch'i)*, form and substance, the positions of

> heaven, earth, and man are clearly differentiated. This is what we can see, hear, and grasp. It is discriminated by our senses of hearing, vision, and thought. But in this thing *(wu)* "no vapor, form, or substance can be seen." It is the chaos among all of these, prior to their separation. Therefore, "look at it, nothing can be seen; listen to it, nothing can be heard; grasp it, nothing can be fathomed." Nothing can be determined, so we have no name for it.[1]

Te-ching also comments on this chapter:

> The thing *(wu)* refers to the totality of *Tao* itself. Primarily, it is unnameable. Therefore, Lao Tzu simply points out that there is the thing, chaotic and obscure, without the slightest crack to divide itself. Thus, it is called chaos. Before the separation of heaven and earth, there existed the thing. Hence, we have: it "existed prior to heaven and earth."[2]

In the *Lao Tzu I*, Su Ch'ê writes:

> *Tao* is neither pure nor impure, neither high nor low, neither departing nor coming, neither good nor evil, but is chaos itself. When it exists in man, it is man's nature *(hsing)*. Thus, we say that there is the thing *(wu)* which is chaotic.[3]

According to these three Chinese commentators, *wu* means non-differentiated chaos which is invisible, inaudible, and unnameable. This non-differentiated chaos is what Hsiung Shih-li (1885–1954), a recent Buddhist and Confucianist scholar, calls "the origin of all transformations" which is extremely great, with nothing beyond it. On the first page of his *General Explanations of Buddhist Terms*, he identifies the meaning of *wu* with the Buddhist notion of *dharma*.

In the Western tradition chaos is also defined as the origin and void from which all things are derived. In Greek mythology chaos is conceived of as "the original formless state of the universe." According to George E. Duckworth, chaos in classical cosmogony is "the gaping void which existed before earth came into being and the generation of gods started."[4] Although there are many different interpretations of chaos, it is generally conceived

of as the origin which is yet vacuity itself.

For Heidegger, “The thing” means a gathering. The presencing of a thing is a “pure, giving gathering” of the simple onefold of the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. Heidegger says:

> The thing things. Thinging gathers. Appropriating the fourfold, it gathers the fourfold’s stay, its while, into something that stays for a while: into this thing, that thing.[5]

This gathering may be understood in the light of Lü Chi-p’u’s commentary on what Lao Tzu calls *hun cheng*, or chaos. He says: “In this thing *(wu)*, no vapor, form, or substance can be seen. It is the chaos among all of these, prior to their separation.”[6] Te-ching also comments that for Lao Tzu, “there is the thing, chaotic and obscure, without the slightest crack to divide itself. Thus, it is called chaos.”[7] In Heidegger’s work we read that the thing “stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Staying, the thing brings the four, in their remoteness, near to one another. This bringing-near is nearing. Nearness is the presenting of nearness… Nearness preserves farness.”[8] In Lao Tzu we have:

> *Great means extending to the limitless.*
> *Extending to the limitless means reaching the extreme distance.*
> *Reaching the extreme distance means returning to “nearness.”*

This chapter of the *Tao Tê Ching* is so important that when Von Alexius J. Bucher wrote *Martin Heidegger: Metaphysikkritik Als Begriffsproblematik* in 1972, he quoted it in full on the first page. In Jacques Maritain’s discussion on “Poetry, Man and Things” in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, he refers to this chapter as revealing the source of the secret meanings and spirituality of things, as well as of the creative subjectivity of the artist. He says *Tao* is the “primal source” of the spirits of things, which “come down into things to hide in them and shape and move them from within.”[9] Pervaded by the spirituality of *Tao*, things themselves are real. “The spirit they conceal can be discovered and set free” by the Chinese contemplative artist. The artist himself is at one with things, and thus is able to manifest their inner spirit in his work. What Maritain conceives as the

"primal source" of the spirit of things may refer to the "subtle reality" maintained by Kumarajiva in his commentary on the thing, or *wu*, in Chiao Hung's annotations in the *Lao Tzu I*. Kumarajiva says:

> As subtle reality always exists, this is what we mean by saying that there is the thing.[10]

The thing is identified here as *Tao*, which is neither God nor soul in the Western sense. However, this thing is similar to what Meister Eckhart calls the "highest and uppermost thing," or God, and the "great thing," or soul, in the sense that none of these things are material objects. As Heidegger says: "*Thing* here is the cautious and abstemious name for anything that is at all."[11] Thus the meaning of thing or *wu* in both East and West refers to the "gathering chaos" of *Tao*.

Notes to Chapter 25

* In the editions of Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung, the word *wang*, or king, is used, rather than *jen*, or man. Therefore, the king is considered to be one of the four greatnesses. According to Fan Ying-yüan and later scholars, such as Chen Ch'u, Ma Hsü-lun, and others, the word *jen*, or man, should be used instead of *wang*, or king. In fact, Fu I uses the word *jen*, or man. The idea of the greatness of man is first expounded by Chuang Tzu. As he says near the end of Chapter 5 of his work: "Because of his human form, man belongs together with other men. Because of his freedom from passion, right and wrong cannot touch him. As he is very small, he is considered a human being. As he is immensely great, he identifies with the quality of heaven." Therefore, according to Chuang Tzu, the greatness of man is equal to the greatness of heaven. It is this idea of the greatness of man that originally appears in this chapter of Lao Tzu's work.

Chu Ch'ien-chih also maintains that *wang*, or king, should be *jen*, or man. According to Chen Chu, *ta*, or greatness, is explained by Hsü Shun in *Shuo Wen*, the first dictionary, composed by Hsü Shun in the first century AD. There we read: "Heaven is great, earth is great, man is also great. The word great is a symbol of man." Thus, Hsü Shun recognized that man is one of the greatnesses, along with heaven and earth. The commentary on Hsü Shun's entry on greatness, written by Tuan Yü-tsai, reads: "In Lao Tzu, *Tao* is great, heaven is great, earth is great, and man is also great… Man regulates himself after the greatness of earth, earth regulates itself after the greatness of heaven, heaven regulates itself after the greatness of *Tao*." Therefore, Chen Chu assures us that Tuan Yü-tsai also maintains that man is great. Otherwise, he would point out that the scripts should read that the king is great, instead of man.

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter III, 3: 11a.
2. Te-ching, *Explanations*, First Section, p. 35b.
3. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter III, 3: 1b.
4. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, p. 703.
5. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 174.
6. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter III, 3: 11a.
7. Te-ching, *Explanations*, First Section, p. 35b.

8. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 174.
9. Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, p. 13.
10. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter III, 3: 1b.
11. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 176.

Chapter 26

The weighty is the origin of the weightless.
Stillness is the fountain of restlessness.
Therefore, the ruler journeys from morning until night and never separates himself from his heavy supply cart.
Although he is in a glorious atmosphere, he remains quiescent and above it.
How can a leader "with ten thousand chariots" take himself lightly before the world?
*To take himself lightly is to lose the origin.**
Restlessness means that the fountain is lost.

Commentary

The central theme of this chapter is the contrast between *ching*, or quiescence, and *tsao*, or disturbance. *Ching* leads to tranquility. *Tsao* is the movement of thought leading to disturbance. According to the Taoist teaching, one should remain in quiescence all the time. Then when one acts or thinks, one will not disturb one's self or others. The following Taoist poem illustrates how one can return from *tsao* to *ching*.

The mind of man searches outwardly all day.
The further it reaches,
The more it opposes itself.
Only those who look inward
Can censor their passions
And cease their thoughts.
Being able to cease their thoughts,
Their minds become tranquil.

To tranquillize one's mind is to nourish one's spirit.
To nourish one's spirit is to return to nature.[1]

When one's mind searches outwardly, "the further it reaches, the more it opposes itself." This indicates *tsao*, or disturbance. When one looks inward, censors one's passions, and ceases one's thoughts, one's mind becomes tranquil. This is returning from *tsao* to *ching*. The reader may sense *ching*, or quiescence, in the following lines:

Bamboo shadows sweep the stairs, but the dust is undisturbed.
The moonlight penetrates deep into the pond, but leaves no trace in the water.

The following two poems compiled by Wang An-shih (1021–1086) also indicate the mind of quiescence.

The wind ceases, yet blossoms fall.
Birds sing, yet the valley becomes more quiescent.

In the bamboo groves, my thatched house is built by the rocks.
Through openings among the stems of the bamboo, the distant village is seen.
I take it easy all day, and receive no visitors.
But the pure breeze sweeps the path leading to my door.

These verses actually demonstrate the value of *ching* or quiescence as explained in this chapter.

Note to Chapter 26

* In Wang Pi's edition the last two sentences read: "To take it lightly is to lose the subordinate (*chen*). Restlessness means that the king (*chun*) is lost." Kao Heng's edition accepts the line "to take it lightly is to lose the subordinate." However, in the last line, restlessness means that the people (*min*), rather than the ruler, are lost.

1. Hsing-ming Chih-kuai, Chapter II, p. 6b.

Chapter 27

The best action is free from marks [either good or evil].
The best words are free from stains [either good or bad].
The best calculator is free from calculation and measure.
The best closure has no bolts, yet it cannot be opened.
The best knot has no cord, yet it cannot be untied.
Thus, the wise knows how to rescue men; hence, no one is excluded.
He also knows how to rescue things; hence, nothing is excluded.
This is called penetration to illumination.
Therefore, the virtuous is the model for the unvirtuous.
The unvirtuous is the origin of the virtuous.
If one does not appreciate the virtuous or cherish the unvirtuous,
Although one is intelligent, one is not free from confusion.
This is called the indispensable wonder.

Commentary

This chapter is usually understood according to the teaching of the action of non-action, which means that man acts, yet is free from the entanglements of his actions. Lao Tzu illustrates this in the metaphors of the closure that is free from bolts, and the well-made knot this is free from any cord. As he says: “This is called penetration to illumination.” The ideas of engaging in action, yet being free from action, and of living in the world, yet being free from the world, are further developed in *The Works of Chuang Tzu.* Chuang Tzu says: “In self-esteem without self-conceit, in moral culture without charity and duty to one’s neighbor, in government without rank and fame, in retirement without solitude, in health without hygiene—there we have oblivion absolutely coupled with possession of all things; an infinite calm which becomes an object to be attained by all.”[1] This is called *hsieh-ming*,

or being in accordance with illumination. It is the action of non-action which is free from entanglements and traces.

However, besides the above interpretation, this chapter has the deeper meaning of the Madhyamika teaching of freedom from opposites. From the sixth line on, the text stresses the identity of opposites, which does not seem to follow the first section of the text. Thus, the meaning of the entire chapter is obscured. If the first section is understood to also imply the identity of opposites, then the meaning of the whole chapter is more coherent. Therefore, in this translation, the first lines read:

The best action is free from marks [either good or evil].
The best words are free from stains [either good or bad].

This middle way of thinking leads to "the virtuous is the model for the unvirtuous, the unvirtuous is the origin of the virtuous."

Through this understanding, we further see that "if one does not appreciate the virtuous or cherish the unvirtuous, although one is intelligent, one is not free from confusion." Lao Tzu calls this "indispensable wonder," or "penetration to illumination." Penetration to illumination is the essence of the identity of opposites maintained by Madhyamika philosophy. This idea of the identity of opposites is further discussed in Chapter 28.

Note to Chapter 27

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XV, 6: 1b, Giles trans., pp. 152–153.

Chapter 28

To be aware of the positive, yet to abide in the negative is to be the abyss of the universe.
To be the abyss of the universe is to not deviate from real attainment and to remain like an innocent child.
To be aware of the white, yet to abide in the black is to be the chasm of the universe.*
To be the chasm of the universe is to have sufficient real attainment, and to remain in the state of original non-differentiation.
When original non-differentiation is differentiated, things are produced.
Yet when the wise makes use of original non-differentiation, he becomes the leader of the people.
Therefore, great governing is non-discriminating.

Commentary

This chapter is primarily concerned with the balance of opposites and returning to the state of *p'o*, or original non-differentiation. In his introduction to Richard Wilhelm's translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, C. G. Jung says:

> The Chinese have never failed to recognize the paradox and the polarity inherent in what is alive. The opposites always balance one another—the sign of high culture. One-sidedness, though it lends momentum, is a mark of barbarism.[1]

"To be aware of the positive, yet to abide in the negative," and "to be aware of the white, yet to abide in the dark" indicates the balance of opposites. To achieve this balance is to remain in the state of original non-differentiation.

In this state one is like an innocent child. Jung says:

> The Chinese have such an all-inclusive consciousness because, as in the case of primitive mentality, the yea and the nay have remained in their original proximity. Nonetheless, he could not escape feeling the collision of the opposites, and therefore he sought out that way of life in which he would be what the Hindu terms nirdvandva, free of the opposites.[2]

This freedom from opposites is what Heidegger calls “releasement toward things.” He says in “The Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking”:

> Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind.[3]

The “higher acting” of releasement “is yet no activity”; that is, it lies “beyond the distinction between activity and passivity.”[4] It is the state of original non-differentiation before things are produced, maintained in Lao Tzu’s work. Jung describes this original non-differentiation as follows:

> The beginning, in which everything is still one, and which therefore appears as the highest goal, lies at the bottom of the sea in the darkness of the unconscious.[5]

He further says:

> The reality of the opposites hidden in the unconscious, i.e., the reversal, signifies reunion with the unconscious laws of being, and the purpose of this reunion is the attainment of conscious life or, expressed in Chinese terms, the bringing about of *Tao*.[6]

When one achieves the state of original non-differentiation, one governs the people through non-discrimination. It is the higher acting which is yet no activity maintained by Heidegger. For Lao Tzu, it is the union of opposites on the higher level of non-differentiation, which is the return to *Tao* itself.

Notes to Chapter 28

* According to Chinese commentators, the twenty-three words following the word *p'o*, or white, are interpolations. The interpolations were added because of ignorance of a rare meaning of the word *jo. Jo* ordinarily means shame or disgrace. *Jo* appears in this sense in Chapter 13 of Lao Tzu's work in contrast to the word *yung*, or glory. The rare meaning of *jo* is black. When white cloth is dyed black, it is called *jo*. If one is not familiar with this rare meaning of *jo*, one will not understand how *jo* can be contrasted with white. Thus, the artificial interpolations in this chapter occurred. Reading *jo* as shame, early commentators added the word glory as the opposite of *jo*. Thus, a new contrast was added to the two original contrasts of positive and negative, white and black, given by Lao Tzu. In fact, in Chapter 33 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu*, Lao Tzu's two original statements are quoted exactly: "To be aware of the positive, yet to abide in the negative is to be the abyss of the universe, and to be aware of the white yet to abide in the black is to be the chasm of the universe." Here, the word *jo* appears in its rare meaning of black.

1. C. G. Jung, Introduction, *Secret of the Golden Flower:* A *Chinese Book of Life*, trans. by Richard Wilhelm (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1965), p. 85.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
3. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 61.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Jung, Introduction, *Secret of the Golden Flower*, p. 101.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

Chapter 29

If one undertakes the task of governing the kingdom and engages in governing it,
I see that he cannot lead it anywhere.
A kingdom is a spiritual vessel and should not be manipulated.
Manipulating it leads to failure.
To grasp it is to miss it.
Because the natures of things vary, one acts, another copies;
One breathes lightly, another breathes heavily;
One is vigorous, one is meek;
One carries on, another fails.
Thus, the wise is not excessive, overindulgent, or extreme.

Commentary

The previous chapter stresses the balance of opposites. This chapter illustrates the actual occurrence of things in the world. The sage lets objectivity happen as it happens and deals with things with non-interference, according to their own nature. This further indicates the importance of *wu-wei.*

The principle of *wu-wei* is highly praised by C. G. Jung is his work *The Integration of the Personality.*

> I have learned from the East what it means by the phrase *wu-wei:* namely, not-doing, letting be, which is quite different from doing nothing. Some occidentals also have known what this not-doing means; for instance, Meister Eckhardt, who speaks of “sich lassen,” to let oneself be.[1]

Jung explains the basic principle of *wu-wei* from a very essential psychological point of view.

> It is a still more remarkable fact that, though the new thing contradicts deeply rooted instincts as we know them, yet it is a singularly appropriate expression of the total personality.[2]

He further explains:

> What then did these people do in order to achieve the progress that freed them? As far as I could see they did nothing (*wu-wei*), but let things happen.[3]

As Meister Eckhardt says, the light circulates according to its own law, if one does not give up one's accustomed calling. Perhaps this calling may be related to Heidegger's "call of thought." J. Glenn Gray says in the introduction to *What Is Called Thinking?:*

> The call of thought is thus the call to be attentive to things as they are, to let them be as they are, and to think them and ourselves together.[4]

Thus, as Lao Tzu says, one must not be excessive, over-indulgent, or extreme. All of these are against *wu-wei.*

Notes to Chapter 29

1. Jung, *Integration of the Personality*, pp. 31–32.
2. Jung, Introduction, *Secret of the Golden Flower*, p. 90.
3. *Ibid.*
4. J. Glenn Gray, Introduction, Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954), pp. xxv–xxvi.

Chapter 30

Aiding in governing the kingdom through Tao means not depending on the superiority of arms.
Depending on the superiority of arms creates consequences.
Wherever there are armies, disorder occurs.
After a great battle, there is a year of deprivation.
*Victory is merely the outcome of a contest.**
One should not dare to claim superiority of power.
As victory is merely an outcome, one should not boast about it.
As it is merely an outcome, one should not show off because of it.
As it is merely an outcome, one should not be proud of it.
As it is merely an outcome, one cannot help but have it.
As it is merely an outcome, one should not claim superiority of power.
Claiming to be strong leads to decay.
This violates Tao.
That which violates Tao *will not last long.*

Commentary

This chapter concentrates on the cultivation of the mind in order to free it from all attachments. Buddhists call this state of mind *ta tzu tsai*, or great freedom achieved through self-liberation. Ordinarily, when things are accomplished, one is proud of one's self and claims to have superior power. When one boasts about one's achievements, one is not free from attachments and is ruined by them.

The word *kuo* has been interpreted in many ways. In Te-ching's work, it is rendered "outcome." When victory in a military operation is conceived of as merely an outcome, one's mind is free from egoism. One may have to engage in combat for self-defense, but when the military operation is over,

there is no reason for one to be proud or hostile or regretful. One simply could not help engaging in the war. When the war is over and one's task is accomplished, one must be free from it. As Te-ching says: "One must see worldly affairs and human feelings through and through, then one will deal with the world with an empty mind. There will be nothing in front of him to hinder him. Then he will see the transcendental bliss that was enjoyed by Lao Tzu. This will make his mind boundless and absolutely free, just as the man of *Tao* is liberated from any attachments. He simply cannot help dealing with worldly affairs. Thus, he does not make any effort, but quietly deals with the world through *wu-wei*."[1] According to Te-ching, this cultivation of *wu-wei* is no different from the teaching of Buddha. As he comments: "When one thoroughly understands the teaching of the refutation of attachments maintained by our Buddha, one will be immune to the confusion of words."[2]

In order to grasp the depth of meaning in this chapter, one must adequately discipline and awaken one's mind. When this discipline is thorough and ripe, one's mind will penetrate to the invisible and minute. Then, one will realize the severity of Lao Tzu's effort and hardship.

Notes to Chapter 30

* The word *kuo* has been interpreted in many ways, thus leading to confusion. This translation interprets *kuo* as the result or outcome. Therefore, victory in war is simply an outcome of combat. Before the outcome is reached, neither side is sure how the conflict will end. According to Wang Huai, *kuo* means completion. Wang Huai refers to Mo Tzu's and Huai-nan Tzu's interpretations of *kuo* as "completion."

1. Te-ching, *Explanations*, First Section, p. 3a.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 31

*Arms are implements of ill omen which are abhorred by men.**
Therefore, the man of Tao *does not abide them.*
*Arms are implements of ill omen.***
One uses them only when one cannot avoid it.
Even if one engages in fighting, one should remain quiescent and indifferent.
Even if the war is won, one should not glorify it.
To glorify it means that one enjoys slaying men.
If one enjoys slaying men, one will never be successful in the world.

Commentary

This chapter continues the teaching of freedom from attachment to things. Even when one engages in war, one should not lose one's tranquility. One should remain quiescent and detached. When Wang Yang-ming captured the rebelling Prince Hao, he said: "It was not a difference in our military strategies that made the difference between Prince Hao and myself. Prince Hao lost the war because his mind was not free from confusion."[1] Wang Yang-ming attributes his victory to his years of self-cultivation of quiescence. Prince Hao lost the war because he had no such self-cultivation. This story illustrates the importance of remaining quiescent when one engages in war. However, it does not teach the importance of remaining indifferent to the outcome of war, because Wang Yang-ming himself was not yet free from claiming credit. If he had been a Taoist, he would have won the war without claiming credit for his victory.

Note to Chapter 31

* *Wu* here means men or creatures.

** According to Ma Hsü-lun, Tan Hsien, and Lu Yun-hsien, interpolations appear after the second and third sentences in the original text. This translation follows Wang Huai's rearrangement but retains the first two sentences from the original text.

1. Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529) was one of the leading Neo-Confucianists of the School of Mind. Wang's influence in China was no less than that of Chu Hsi or Lu Hsiang-shan. In the Bakumatsu Period Wang's philosophy was brought to Japan, where it greatly influenced Japanese government and culture.

Chapter 32

Tao *is real, yet unnameable.*
It is original non-differentiation and invisible.
Nevertheless, nothing in the universe can dominate it.
If rulers and lords were able to abide with it, all things in the universe would yield to them naturally.
Heaven and earth are unified and rain the dew of peace.
Without being ordered to do so, people become harmonious by themselves.
When discrimination begins, names arise.
After names arise, one should know where to abide.
When one knows where to abide, one is never exhausted.
To abide with Tao *in the world is to be the same as mountain streams flowing to the rivers and to the sea.*

Commentary

This chapter refers to *Tao* as nameless and undifferentiated. It is the unity of multiplicities as well as the unity of opposites. As the unity of multiplicities, *Tao* cannot be dominated by any of its parts. As the unity of opposites, *Tao* produces "the dew of peace." That is, without being ordered to do so, opposites spontaneously harmonize and unite.

As the unity of multiplicities and the unity of opposites, *Tao* is the profound fountain of creativity of all things. All things are its manifestations. But the manifestations should not deviate from the reality of the source. After its emergence, each particularity should conceal universality within itself. If one does not deviate from universality, or the source, one will never be exhausted. Thus, unconcealment should never deviate from concealment. Every manifestation should itself identify with

its source. This is illustrated in the analogy of the golden lion. The reality of the gold pervades every part of the lion, and every part of the lion is gold. When names arise through discrimination, they must contain the non-differentiated reality, or source. If they were not identified with original non-differentiation, they would not exist.

Chapter 33

To know others is to be intelligent.
To be aware of one's self is to be awakened.
To overcome others is to have superior strength.
To overcome one's self is to be vigorous.
To be satisfied is to be wealthy.
To act with power is to be aspiring.
To retain one's source is to be long-lasting.
To die yet not to be deceased is to have longevity.

Commentary

In Chapter 8 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu* we read: "What I call perfection of hearing is not hearing others, but one's self. What I call perfection of vision is not seeing others but one's self."[1] Te-ching comments on this, saying:

> The perfection of hearing one's self and the perfection of seeing one's self is what Lao Tzu means in this chapter when he says that "to be aware of one's self is to be awakened." When one is awakened through self-awareness, one abides in the unity of opposites.[2]

Awareness of the unity of opposites is what C. G. Jung calls "the undiscovered way in us."[3] In classical Chinese philosophy, it is the *Tao.* As Jung says in his book *Integration of the Personality*:

> *Tao* is the right way, law-abiding ordinance, a middle road between the opposites, freed from them and yet uniting them in itself. The purpose of life is to travel this middle path and never to deviate towards the

opposites.[4]

In his introduction to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung says:

> The union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational affair, nor is it a matter of will, but a psychic process of development.[5]

This psychic process of development leads to the further integration of one's spirituality. This process is indicated in Chapter 12 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu*, which reads:

> One must learn to see where all is dark, and to hear where all is still. In the darkness one can see light. In the stillness one can hear harmony. Thus, one can penetrate to the furthest depths and grasp spirituality.[6]

To grasp the spirituality of one's self is to be aware of one's self. To be aware of one's self is to retain one's source and to be long-lasting.

Notes to Chapter 33

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter VIII, 4: 5b, Giles translation, p. 95.
2. Te-ching, *Explanations*, First Section, p. 47a.
3. Jung, *Psychological Types*, p. 151.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Jung, Introduction, *Secret of the Golden Flower*, p. 99.
6. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XII, 5: 11b.

Chapter 34

The magnificent Tao *is all-pervading.*
It may penetrate to either this side or that side.
All creatures abide with it and grow; none are excluded from it.
When its work is done, it does not demand merit.
It nurtures all things, but does not rule them.
When it is without intention, it may be called lesser.
When all things return to it, yet it does not possess them, it may be called greater.
Therefore, the wise does not endeavor to be great.
Hence, his attainment is great.

Commentary

In Chapter 25 the *Tao* is described as existing prior to heaven and earth, pervading everywhere, unfailing. Chapter 34 further stresses the all-pervasiveness of *Tao.* The opening line of this chapter reads: "The magnificent *Tao* is all-pervading." The power of *Tao* is great, yet it appears to be minute. It nurtures all things without ruling them and does its work without claiming credit. Thus, it seems humble, simple, and plain. In this way it is lesser. *Tao* never endeavors to be great. Thus, in reality it is great.

If *Tao* is translated as "Way," as it has been previously, it is understood as the way of all ways. As Heidegger says in his essay "The Nature of Language": "*Tao* could be the way that gives all ways."[1] He further says:

> Perhaps the enigmatic power of today's reign of method … notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the run-off of a great hidden stream which moves all things along and makes way for everything. All is way.[2]

For Heidegger, “the way belongs in what we here call the country or region. Speaking allusively, the country, that which counters, is the clearing that gives free rein, where all that is cleared and freed, and all that conceals itself, together attain the open freedom. The freeing and sheltering character of this region lies in this way-making movement, which yields those ways that belong to the region.”[3] This region may be identified with the region of no-region in Taoist philosophy. In the Buddhist expression, it is the circle without circumference.

The way-making movement of the region mentioned above is, for Heidegger, a poetic Saying. Poetic Saying means “to show: to make appear, set free, that is offer and extend what we call world, lighting and concealing it. This lighting and hiding proffer of the world is the essential being of saying.”[4] For Heidegger, essential Saying is “the ringing of stillness. It is: the language of being.”[5] The word is also Saying. It is itself no-thing. It is “the giver which itself is never given” which gives being to things. Thus, the word itself is *Tao*, as that which first lets things be as things. How can credit be claimed, possession be taken, or the lesser and the greater be calculated?

Notes to Chapter 34

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 92.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Chapter 35

*When one maintains the great image in dealing with the world,**
One deals with the world without harming it.
Instead, one makes the world serene, tranquil, and peaceful.
Music and delicacies may attract passersby to remain momentarily,
But the taste of Tao *is plain and without flavor.*
Look at it, nothing can be seen.
Listen to it, nothing can be heard.
Employ it, it cannot be depleted.

Commentary

This chapter is a further continuation of the discussion of *Tao*. *Tao* is the great image, the image of imagelessness which enables one to deal with the world without harming it. When one deals with the world through *Tao*, "one makes the world serene, tranquil, and peaceful." This essential source of creation may be understood in terms of Heidegger's poetic experience with the word. The word is "a prize so rich and frail,"[1] which gives being to things. Yet, as mentioned above, the word itself is not a thing. The word enables the poet to transform his relation to the word through the process of renunciation. The poet renounces the representational rule of the word, according to which the word is a mere name added on to a thing after the thing has come into existence. The poet simultaneously commits himself to the higher rule of the word which first lets a thing be as a thing. The word itself cannot be named. As Heidegger says: "Suddenly the word shows a different, a higher rule. It is no longer just a name grasp reaching for what is present and already portrayed. It is not only a means of portraying what lies before us."[2] What is this nameless, non-representational word? It might be understood through the contemplation of the Ryoan-ji Rock Garden in

Kyoto or Mochi's Six Persimmons or Ni-tsan's painting of bamboo. Few people fully appreciate these famous works, yet everyone is enchanted by them. The same hold true for ancient Chinese poetry. Even anonymous works have been preserved for over a thousand years. These poetic images give people a feeling of serenity, tranquility, and peace, without their knowing why. Within these poetic lines and artistic images, there is something that is listened to, but cannot be heard; something that is looked at, but cannot be seen. However, the joy that is derived from them cannot be exhausted.

Notes to Chapter 35

* According to Ho-shang Kung, "image means *Tao*. If the wise (ruler) abides with the great *Tao*, then the hearts of the millions of people in the world will be moved to support him." Ch'i Tung says: "*Tao* is originally formless. When we are forced to name it, we call it the great image." Thus, in Chapter 41 we have: "The great image is without form."

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 140.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Chapter 36

That which is to be condensed must first be dispersed.
That which is to be enervated must first be vitalized.
That which is to be devastated must first be produced.
That which is to be obtained must first be yielded.
This is called invisible illumination.
*The soft overcomes the unshakable;**
The weak overcomes the strong.
Just as fish stay deep in the pond,
The best arms in the nation are those that remain invisible.

Commentary

According to Te-ching, this chapter has often been interpreted as a teaching of strategic skill. This deviates from Lao Tzu's original intention. How can the contemplation and application of the *Tao* of heaven be interpreted as strategic skill? In his discussion on "The Unity of Opposites" in *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, Nishida explains: "The world of reality is a world where things are acting on things. The form and figure of reality are to be thought as a mutual relationship of things, as a result of acting and counteracting. But this mutual acting of things means that things deny themselves, and that the thing-character is lost."[1]

In this chapter the opposites of soft and unshakable, weak and strong are conceived as parts of one whole. Each of the opposites is acting on its counterpart. Through the mutual acting of things on each other, each side of the opposition denies itself. Acting and counteracting transform the mutual relationship of things. That is, the weak becomes strong, the soft becomes unshaken. As mentioned previously, Nishida calls the unity of opposites "absolute contradictory self-identity."[2] He further remarks: "Such a world

essentially moves from the formed, the product, to the forming, the creative production."[3]

Lao Tzu discovers the basic nature of opposites through his contemplation of the *Tao* of heaven. He sees that things constantly deny themselves and transform into their opposites. The same transformation of opposites occurs in the daily affairs of men. Thus, Lao Tzu says: "That which is to be condensed must first be dispersed." This is called invisible illumination.

Notes to Chapter 36

* Wang Pi's text reads: "The soft and the weak overcome the hard and the strong."

1. Nishida Kitaro, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, trans. by Robert Schinzinger (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1958), p. 163.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

Chapter 37

Tao *is real and free from action, yet nothing is not acted upon.*
If rulers abide with it, all things transmute by themselves.
If, in the process of transmutation, intention emerges, it must be overcome by the original non-differentiation of the nameless.
To experience the original non-differentiation of the nameless, one should also be free from intending to have no-intention.
To be free from intending to have no-intention is to be quiescent.
*Thereby, the world is naturally led to tranquillity.**

Commentary

According to Heidegger, "letting-lie-before-us and taking to-heart"[1] means that "we let beings, as beings, lie before us and give our heart and mind to the 'being' of particular beings."[2] This is quite similar to the Chinese principle of *wu-wei. Wu-wei* does not mean doing nothing. Rather, it means letting things be themselves without adding one's subjective bias. Therefore, when man practices *wu-wei*, he is in the state of *p'o*, or original non-differentiation. Traditionally, Confucianists have modeled men after the basic moral principles of the ancient sages. Their teachings have never let people be themselves. The Taoist teachings, on the other hand, let people be what they are. Thus, we have Chuang Tzu's description of the men of *p'o*:

> They were upright and correct without knowing that to be so was righteous. They loved one another without knowing that to do so was benevolent. They were sincere without knowing that this was loyalty. They kept their promises without knowing that to do so was to be in good faith. They helped one another without thought of giving or receiving things. Thus, their actions left no traces, and we have no records of their

affairs.[3]

This account illustrates the action of non-action. The man of *Tao* is real; thus, he acts, yet he is free from his actions. He is benevolent, righteous: loyal, and of good faith, yet he is simultaneously free from claiming to abide by these moral principles and from being proud of his moral deeds. The achievement of the action of non-action should take place by itself. If one intends to engage in the action of non-action, it is no longer true. When people are spontaneously free from intention and act according to the action or non-action, the world of tranquility is achieved.

Notes to Chapter 37

* According to Wang Huai, this chapter should be studied together with Chapter 32. Then one's understanding will be thorough and complete.

1. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 230.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
3. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XII, 5: 9b.

Chapter 38

*The highest attainment (*Tê*) is free from attainment.*
Therefore, there is attainment.
The lowest attainment is never free from attainment.
Therefore, there is no attainment.
The highest attainment never acts and is purposeless.
The lowest attainment acts and is purposeful.
*The highest benevolence (*jen*) acts and is purposeless.*
*The highest righteousness (*yi*) acts and is purposeful.*
*The highest propriety (*li*) acts and no one follows it.*
One bares one's arms and throws one's opponents away.
Therefore, when Tao *is lost, we have attainment.*
When attainment is lost, we have benevolence.
When benevolence is lost, we have righteousness.
When righteousness is lost, we have propriety.
Propriety is due to a lack of trustworthiness and is the beginning of disorder.
Anticipated knowledge is the superficiality * *of* Tao *and is the beginning of foolishness.*
Hence, the great man chooses reality and not superficiality.
He acts according to reality and not appearance.
Thus, he grasps the one and foregoes the other.

Commentary

Tê traditionally means virtue or morality. In the early days, the Confucianist teachings of benevolence and righteousness constituted morality. However, according to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu these virtues are not virtues. The real meaning of *Tê* is thus the attainment of the self-cultivation of non-

discrimination, non-differentiation, and above all, non-willing. Lao Tzu says:

> *The highest attainment is free from attainment.*
> *Therefore, there is attainment.*
> *The lowest attainment is never free from attainment.*
> *Therefore, there is no attainment.*

Chuang Tzu comments on *Tê*, saying:

> When *Tê* is achieved, one is said to have returned to one's original nature. Thus, when the man of *Tê* stays inside, he is free from thoughts. When he acts, he has no worries. In the depths of his mind, nothing is contained. In other words, the man of *Tê* has attained to a higher stage of integration through contemplation.[1]

Te is closely associated with *Tao*. According to *The Doctrine of the Mean*: "Unless there be the attainment of *Tê*, the perfect *Tao* cannot be realized."[2]

Chapter 16 provides a good illustration of the attainment of *Tê*.

> *Contemplate the ultimate void.*
> *Remain truly in quiescence.*
> *All things are together in action, but I look into their non-action.*
> *Things are unceasingly moving and restless,*
> *Yet each one is proceeding back to the origin.*
> *Proceeding back to the origin is quiescence.*
> *To be in quiescence is to return to the destiny of being.*

This is the attainment of *Tê*. Lao Tzu says:

> *Reality is all-embracing.*
> *To be all-embracing is to be selfless.*
> *To be selfless is to be all-pervading.*
> *To be all-pervading is to be transcendent.*

This indicates the application of one's attainment.

Notes to Chapter 38

* According to Wang Pi, *ch'ien shih*, or anticipated knowledge, belongs in the category of lowest attainment. Wang Huai comments that *ch'ien shih* means to see things through the intellect and to conceive of cleverness as primordial. Therefore, *ch'ien shih* is the action of one's cleverness and intellectual skill, which is primarily opposed to the teaching of Lao Tzu. Thus, *ch'ien shih* is classified as the superficiality of *Tao*, rather than as genuine reality.

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XII, 5: 5a.
2. *Ibid.*, 8b, 9a.

Chapter 39

In the remote past there were those who attained the One.
Attaining the One, heaven became pure;
Attaining the One, earth became peaceful.
Attaining the One, God became spiritual.
Attaining the One, the ocean became full.
Attaining the One, ten thousand things came into life.
*Attaining the One, rulers became the models of the world.**
All of them became so through the One.
Without becoming pure, heaven would have broken.
Without becoming peaceful, the earth would have quaked.
Without becoming spiritual, God would have crumbled.
Without becoming full, the ocean would have drained.
Without coming into life, ten thousand things would have perished.
Without becoming the models of the world, rulers would have stumbled.
Therefore, the worthless serves as the foundation of the worthy.
The inferior serves as the basis of the superior.
Thus, rulers call themselves isolated men, without merit, and worthless.
Is this not enough to prove that the worthless serve as the foundation of the worthy?
Hence, the perfect fame is no fame.
*Rulers do not want to be esteemed as tingling jade; they would rather be plain, solid rock.***

Commentary

The *Tao Tê Ching* presents a twofold meaning of the One. First, the One means the unity of multiplicity and is identified as *yüan*, or the origin of nothingness. This is discussed in Chapter 11. Second, the One means the

identity of opposites. That is, being is identified with non-being and non-being with being. Seng Chao begins his famous essay *Nirvana Is Nameless* by quoting the first three and the seventh sentences of this chapter, which concentrate on the One. Te-ching refers to the One as the identity of thought. In the latter part of this chapter the esteemed and powerful ruler is identified with the isolated man, without merit and worthless. Tingling jade is identified with plain rock. Perfect fame is identified with no fame. The self-contradiction of the worthy and the worthless, of tingling jade and plain rock, of fame and no fame is what Nishida calls self-determining reality. He says: "Self-determining reality, i.e., dynamic reality, must be self-contradictory."[1] In other words, "reality is both being and non-being; it is non-being-qua-being and being-qua-non-being."[2] This meaning of reality is further exemplified by Seng Chao.

> When the mind of the wise is not in action, it cannot be said to be in non-action. When the mind of the wise is not in non-action, it cannot be said to be in action. Not in action, all intention diminishes. Not in non-action, the mind identifies with all reality.

This reality is the One. Thus, when heaven obtains the One, or reality, its impurity becomes pure. In the same way, earth, gods, ocean, rulers, and ten thousand things all identify with the opposites from which they originate.

Notes to Chapter 39

* Lines 1, 2, 3, and 7 are quoted by Seng Chao at the beginning of his noted essay, *Nirvana Is Nameless*. Therefore, we see that the One, as universality, non-being, and reality, is fundamental in both Taoist and Buddhist philosophies.

** There are numerous interpretations of this last line. According to Kao Heng, in a biography on Fung Yen in the *History* of *Later Han*: "*Lu lu* means 'as if jade,' while *lo lo* means 'as if rock.'" According to the commentary on this line, *lu lu* is the graceful appearance of jade and is therefore conceived of as precious by men. *Lo lo*, or the form of the rock, is distasteful to men.

1. Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, p. 246.
2. *Ibid.*

Chapter 40

Reverse is the movement of Tao.
Yielding is the action of Tao.
Ten thousand things in the universe are created from being.
Being is created from non-being.

Commentary

In his *Annotations and Explanations of the Lao Tzu*, Chiang Hsi-ch'ang explains the meaning of *fan*, or reversal:

> From action and many words, reverse to non-action and speechlessness; from knowledge and intention, reverse to no knowledge and no intention. All this refers to the meaning of *fan*, or reversal.[1]

Fan, or reversal, is the most fundamental approach to *Tao*. As Lao Tzu says:

To learn, one accumulates day by day.
To study Tao, *one reduces day by day.*

In Heidegger's terms, the reduction of thought is the reversal from calculative thinking to meditative thinking. In *On the Way to Language* he quotes a poem by Stefan George which ends: "Where word breaks off no thing may be."[2] This "breaks off" means that the sounding word returns to soundlessness. This is the real step back on the way of thinking.[3]

The editor of Heidegger's most recent work, On *Time and Being*, states: "After *Time and Being*, Heidegger abandons the distinction between metaphysics as traditional philosophy and fundamental ontology, the ontology of being for which he was seeking."[4] Henceforth, metaphysics, ontology, and theology are identical for Heidegger. It is philosophy as metaphysics and ontotheology which Heidegger now wants to give up.

However, he does not consider the end of philosophy to be the end of thinking. Rather, "thinking must take the step back out of metaphysics as the history of being and pay heed to appropriation which is strictly non-metaphysical."[5] The "thinking which accomplishes the step back, back out of metaphysics into the active essence of metaphysics,"[6] is what Lao Tzu means by *fan*, or reverse. Heidegger says: "No one can know whether and when and where and how this step of thinking will develop into a proper (needed in appropriation) path and way and road-building."[7] In-answer to Heidegger's question of "whether and when and where and how," Lao Tzu says: "Yielding is the action of *Tao*." The more one yields, the nearer one's thinking will be. As Heidegger himself says in *What Is Called Thinking?*, one may have to wait a long time for this step back, perhaps even a whole lifetime.[8]

For Heidegger, the step back is the return to the origin of thinking which is prior to thought. He asks: "What is this origin?" For Lao Tzu, the origin is *wu*, or non-being. In his words:

> *All things in the universe are created from* yu, *or being,*
> *Being is created from* wu, *or non-being.*

In *Existence and Being*, Heidegger asks: "Why is there any being at all—why not far rather nothing?"[9] He says that one must let one's self go into nothing and not establish being as the ground. Nothing is the source; being is its manifestation. Lao Tzu's thought may be closely related to Heidegger's essential change of thinking. Thus, this chapter may be important to Heidegger's recent philosophy.

Notes to Chapter 40

1. Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, *Annotations and Explanations of the Lao Tzu*, p. 265.
2. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 108.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Joan Stambaugh, Introduction, in Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. viii.
5. *Ibid*., p. ix.
6. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 72.
7. *Ibid*.
8. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 172.

9. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 349.

Chapter 41

When a man of superior talent listens to Tao, *he earnestly applies it.*
When an ordinary man listens to Tao, *he seems to believe it and yet not to believe it.*
When the worst man listens to Tao, *he greatly ridicules it.*
If he did not ridicule it, it would not be Tao.
Therefore, in Ch'ien-yen we have:*
Understand Tao *as if you do not understand it;*
Enter into Tao *as if you are coming out of it;*
Move smoothly with Tao *as if you are having difficulties.*
*The highest attainment is as if it is no attainment.***
All-embracing attainment is as if it is lacking attainment.
Rigorous attainment is as if it is indolent loafing.
Real essence is as if it is empty.
*The great white is as if it is black.****
The great square is without corners.
Great capacity is successful in its later days.
Great music is without sound.
The great image is without form.
Tao *is concealed and without name.*
Nevertheless, Tao *furnishes all things and fulfills them.*

Commentary

This chapter further illustrates the movement of reversal discussed in Chapter 40. It was mentioned that in Heidegger's thought, the movement of reversal is the step back out of the realm of metaphysics into its essential origin. This origin is Saying, "the way-making movement of the world's fourfold. It is the movement at the core of the world's four regions, which

makes them reach one another and holds them in the nearness of their distance."[1] Holding the world's four regions "in the nearness of their distance" indicates the movement of reversal as it relates to the origin of Saying, or *Tao*.

According to Lao Tzu: "*Tao* is concealed and without name… Nevertheless, *Tao* furnishes all things and fulfills them." In Heidegger's thought, saying "is what remains unsaid, what is not yet shown…abides in concealment as unshowable, is mystery."[2]

Further, Lao Tzu says: "Great white is as if it is black"; "the great image is without form"; "great music is without sound." This is all attributed to *Tao*. In Heidegger's essay "Poetically Man Dwells," we read: "The poetic saying of images gathers the brightness and sound of the heavenly appearances into one with the darkness and silence of what is alien."[3] Things originate in Saying, whose movement is an "occurrence of stillness. It remains unapproachable, and is farthest from us whenever we talk 'about' it."[4] Thus, as Lao Tzu says: "Understand *Tao* as if you do not understand it." Further, "the highest attainment is as if it is no attainment."

According to the critic Yen Yü of the twelfth century, when *Tao*, or Saying, is applied to Chinese poetry, it makes the poetry resemble "the antelope hanging by its horns on the tree, leaving no traces to be found."[5] Thus, this chapter paves the way for the highest attainment of Chinese art and poetry.

Notes to Chapter 41

* According to Ch'i T'ung and Kao Heng, *Chien-yen* is the title of the ancient book. Some commentators believe that the term *chien-yen* means an established saying that is transmitted orally.

** Kao Heng maintains that "the highest attainment" should be followed immediately by "all-embracing attainment" and "rigorous attainment."

***Kao Heng also maintains that "great whiteness" should be followed immediately by "the great square," "great capacity," "great music," and "the great image."

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 104.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
3. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 226.
4. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 104.
5. Yen Yü, *Critique of Poetry*, annotated with commentary by Kuo Shao-yü (Peking: People's Literature Press, 1962), p. 24.

Chapter 42

From the Tao, *one is created;*
From one, two;
From two, three;
From three, ten thousand things.
All of them achieve harmony through the unification of affirmation and negation
Which is embraced by everything.
No one likes to be isolated (ku), *without merit* (kua), *or worthless* (pu ku),
Yet rulers refer to themselves with these names.
Thus, some things add to their value by reducing their value.
Some things reduce their value by adding to their value.
Other ancients have taught this;
I teach it too.
"The man of violence will end his life in violence."
This is a basic motto.

Commentary

This chapter indicates two basic principles of creativity maintained by Nishida. One is "living by dying." The other is the determination of the individual by the universal of universals. As Nishida says, that which exists in the universal of universals "'lives by dying,' i.e., it is the continuity of discontinuity."[1] As Lao Tzu says: "Some things add to their value by reducing their value. Some things reduce their value by adding to their value." This is what Nishida refers to as "negation-qua-affirmation."[2]

With respect to the determination of the individual by the universal of universals, Nishida says: "The concrete universal includes the universal

which determines the individual, i.e., it is the ‘universal of universals.’ This is the meaning of my idea of the determination of the universal of nothingness… That which exists in such a universal is determined from the infinite past in the sense of being determined by the ‘universal of universals.’”[3] This universal of universals, or the universal of nothingness, is the *Tao* in Lao Tzu’s thought. From the *Tao*, one is created, then two, then ten thousand individuals.

Chuang Tzu further develops Lao Tzu’s process of creativity. As he says in Chapter 12 of his works:

> In the great beginning there was non-being which was nothing and nameless. It was whence the one emerged. The one was inherent in it, but was not yet formed. Through it, things were created which were called its achievements. That is, through the formless, differentiations were produced. This process of differentiation proceeds unceasingly, and is called life. When the movement of life pauses, things are produced. When things are produced, different characteristics are created. This is the form of things. In the form of things there is a spiritual reality which is manifested into different particularities. This is called the nature of things. To cultivate this nature is to reverse the attainment. This reversal of attainment identifies with the great beginning. This identity with the great beginning is non-being which is the all-embracing.[4]

Nishida’s two basic principles of creativity are also expressed in this passage. As Chuang Tzu says: “the great beginning is formless and nameless. The One is inherent in it, but it is not yet formed.” Further, to cultivate the nature of things “is to reverse the attainment.” Reversing the attainment is identified with the great beginning. In Nishida’s expression” it is “negation-qua-affirmation.” The form of things is inherent in the formless beginning. In Nishida’s expression, things “live by dying.” That is, things are the continuity of discontinuity.

Nishida’s determination of the individual by the universal of universals is identified with Chuang Tzu’s process of the differentiation of the One and all particularities. The One emerges from formless non-being. The differentiation of all particularities takes place unceasingly from the emergence of the One. This is the creative movement of life which Lao Tzu

calls the great beginning, or non-being. It is the “universal of universals,” or the “universal of nothingness,” which determines all individual things.

Notes to Chapter 42

1. Nishida, *Fundamental Problems*, p. 7.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter XII, 5: 5a.

Chapter 43

The meekest in the world
Penetrates the strongest in the world.
As nothingness enters into that-which-has-no-opening.
Hence, I am aware of the value of non-action
And of the value of teaching with no words,
As for the value of non-action,
Nothing in the world can match it.

Commentary

This chapter stresses two fundamental principles. The first is the value of *wu-wei*, or non-action. The second is the value of teaching with *wu-yen*, or no-words. One form of non-action is expressed in Heidegger's view of thinking. As he says: "Thinking is not grasping or pretending. In the high youth of its unfolding essence, thinking knows nothing of the grasping concept."[1] Rather, "thinking means: letting-lie-before-us and so taking-to-heart also."[2] Thinking in this sense "belongs together" with the presence of what is present, of being itself. In *Discourse on Thinking* Heidegger further defines thinking as "a higher acting" which is "beyond the distinction between activity and passivity."[3] For Heidegger, the call of thinking is "the call to be attentive to things as they are, to let them be as they are, and to think them and ourselves together."[4] In Taoist terms, this is non-action or non-interference with things.

Heidegger expresses the value of no-words as follows: "Saying will not let itself be captured in any statement. It demands of us that we achieve by silence the appropriating initiating movement within the being of language —and do so without talking about silence."[5] Saying is "the soundless gathering call" which "moves all things."[6] It is "the ringing of stillness,"

"the language of being."[7] In Taoist thought, it is "non-action" and "no-words," which characterize *Tao* itself.

Notes to Chapter 43

1. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 211.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
3. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 61.
4. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. xxv.
5. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 135.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Chapter 44

Man's name or man's self—which is closer to him?
Man's self or his property—which is more valuable to him?
Success or failure—which is more harmful to him?
Things that are cherished more, cost more.
The more that is kept, the more that is missed.
The man who is easily contented is free from shame.
The man who knows the right time to stop is free from danger.
Thus, he will last long.

Commentary

According to this chapter, one is able to fulfill one's natural life span when one is easily contented. In Chapter 3 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu*, this is the teaching of the middle way. As Chuang Tzu says:

> My life has its limits. Yet things that we want to know are limitless. To pursue that which is limitless with that which is limited is naturally hazardous. To know that it is hazardous and still to strive for it is dangerous indeed. If you pursue good things, do not seek fame. If you are mischievous, do not let yourself be punished. Follow the middle way as a regular course. Preserve your physique…and live the natural span of your life.[1]

In Lao Tzu's words: "Man's name or the man's self—which is closer to him? Man's self or his property—which is more valuable to him? Success or failure—which is more harmful to him?" The quotation from Chuang Tzu is a clear expression of following the middle way. According to Chuang Tzu, there are three ways of butchering a cow: one way is by

cutting, in which case the butcher's knife lasts about one year. Another way is by hacking, in which case the knife must be changed every month. Neither of these ways is as good as the third way, which preserves the knife for many years as if it were freshly sharpened. Following the third way, the butcher inserts his knife in the spaces between the joints of the cow. Thus, the blade has no thickness, and easily penetrates between the joints. In this way it remains in good condition for many years. According to the butcher himself, this method of butchering a cow follows the way of *Tao*. That is, it follows the middle course in acting on things.

Note to Chapter 44

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter III, 2: 1a, b.

Chapter 45

When accomplishment reaches its utmost,
It is as if nothing is accomplished.
Its application is never exhausted.
When fullness reaches its utmost,
It is as if it is still vacant.
Its application leads to limitlessness.
Thus the perfectly straight is as if it were bent.
The most skilled is as if it were stupid.
The greatest ability of debate is as if it were speechless.
*Hence, quiescence surpasses movement,**
Coldness surpasses heat,
Tranquility sets the example for the world.

Commentary

This chapter concentrates on the dialectical movement of affirmation and negation. Again, reference to Hegel's dialectic may exemplify the dialectic expounded in this chapter. As Hegel says:

> In every moment it (the absolute) balances being and nothing, beginning and unbeginning, arising and vanishing. It is determined to be there and not to be there. It steps forth in simple unity with itself, but cannot arrest its step.[1]

Hegel further says:

> Everything is grounded in this unity of identity and non-identity, of one and other, of sameness and distinction, of affirmation and negation. The absolute is essentially dialectical. Dialectic is the essence of being or

> being as *essence*. Essence is the *sufficient ground* of all that seems to be non-absolute or finite. A is non-A. The absolute maintains itself in that which seems to escape it.[2]

Lao Tzu's dialectic is expressed in the lines: "When accomplishment reaches its utmost, it is as if nothing is accomplished." … "When fullness reaches its utmost, it is as if it is still vacant." … "The perfectly straight is as if it were bent. The most skilled is as if it were stupid. The greatest ability of debate is as if it were speechless." Although Hegel's dialectic may be used to clarify the dialectic maintained by Lao Tzu, it must be remembered that the basis of Hegel's system is fundamentally different from that of Taoism. Hegel's dialectic stresses being as the absolute Idea, or absolute rational thought thinking itself. The origin of the Taoist dialectic is non-being which is beyond rational thinking and conceptualization. Lao Tzu's dialectic leads to the tranquility of non-being, which "sets the example for the world." For Hegel, the final goal of the dialectic is conceptual being.

Notes to Chapter 45

* Traditionally, the text reads "movement overcomes cold, quiescence overcomes heat," which is meaningless. This translation follows Wang Huai's commentary.

1. Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, p. 105.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Chapter 46

When the world is governed according to Tao,
Horses are used to work on the farm.
When the world is not governed according to Tao,
Horses and weapons are produced for the frontier.
*No crime is greater than that of ambition.**
No misfortune is greater than that of discontentment.
No fault is greater than that of conquering.
Therefore, to know contentment through contentment
Is to always have enough.

Commentary

In the first chapter Lao Tzu clearly states: “Without intention, I see the wonder of *Tao*; with intention I see its manifestations.” Intention refers to thought. Lao Tzu’s teaching follows the thought of no-thought. As thought, intention also indicates ambition and anxiety which arise from desire or willing. The thought of no-thought, or non-intention, is non-willing which leads to contentment. As Heidegger says in *Discourse on Thinking*:

> A patient noble-mindedness would be pure resting-in-itself of that willing which, renouncing willing, has released itself to what is not will.[1]

The “noble-mindedness” of non-willing is the thought of no-thought in Lao Tzu’s terms. According to Heidegger, it leads to the nature of essential thinking which releases one to that-which-regions. Essential thinking or the thought of no-thought is the deep, underlying harmony of mankind. Through it, the misfortune of discontentment and the fault of conquering disappear by themselves.

Note to Chapter 46

* This sentence is included in Ho-shang Kung's text, but it does not appear in Wang Pi's edition.

1. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 85.

Chapter 47

Without going out of the gate,
One is aware of the world.
Without peering outside,
One sees the way of heaven.
The farther away one is,
The less one is aware.
Therefore, the wise is aware of all things
Without moving a step.
He identifies all things
Without looking at them.
He completes all things
Without action.

Commentary

When one achieves *Tao*, one's knowledge may be identified with *prajna* intuition, as maintained by Buddhist philosophers. *Prajna* penetrates everywhere, while *vijnana*, or discursive reasoning, has its limitations. In Suzuki's essay on "Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy" we read:

> *Prajna* is ever seeking unity on the grandest possible scale, so that there could be no further unity in any sense; whatever expressions or statements it makes are thus naturally beyond the order of *vijnana*. *Vijnana* subjects them to intellectual analysis, trying to find something comprehensible according to its own measure. But *vijnana* cannot do this for the obvious reason that *prajna* starts from where *vijnana* cannot penetrate. *Vijnana*, being the principle of differentiation, can never see *prajna* in its oneness, and it is because of the very nature of *vijnana* that

prajna proves utterly baffling to it.[1]

When ordinary awareness takes place, there is a relation between the one who is aware and the things of which he is aware. However, on the highest level of awareness, such as that of *prajna* intuition, this dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is a hindrance to the ultimate truth. The mind of man is able to go far beyond this limitation. When Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree and achieved enlightenment, he identified himself with the world. Therefore, the world was Buddha, and Buddha was the world. Thus, Buddha did not have to travel to any parts of the world in order to be aware of the world. He was aware of what was happening in the world because he and the world were one.

Note to Chapter 47

1. Daisetz T. Suzuki, “Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy,” *The Japanese Mind*, ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, University of Hawaii Press, 1967), p. 67.

Chapter 48

To learn,
One accumulates day by day.
To study Tao,
One reduces day by day.
Through reduction and further reduction
One reaches non-action,
And everything is acted upon.
Therefore, one often wins over the world
Through non-action.
Through action, one may not win over the world.

Commentary

Tao is achieved through the method of reduction of thought. Buddhist philosophers practice this method to reach the state of mind of *Sunyata*. It is also important to Heidegger's new approach as the "step back" to essential thinking. As we read in *On the Way to Language:* "The sounding word returns into soundlessness, back to whence it was granted."[1] That is, it returns into Saying, which "moves the regions of the world's fourfold into their nearness."[2] Heidegger calls this return of the sounding word into soundlessness the "breaking up of the word," which is "the true step back on the way of thinking."[3] In Taoist terms it is the method of "reduction and further reduction."

This method of reduction was also adopted by Buddhist thinkers. Kumarajiva comments on reduction in the *Lao Tzu I*. As he says:

> Reduction means to get rid of all *ts'u*, or defilements, until one reaches forgetfulness of all evils. Then one must further get rid of all *hsi* or

> subtleties, until one reaches forgetfulness of the good. What is evil is wrong; what is good is right. Since we reduce what is wrong and again reduce what is right, we call this "reduction and further reduction." Thus, both right and wrong are forgotten. After passion and desire are severed, *Tê* or virtue and *Tao* are identified, and reach the state of *wu-wei*, or non-action.[4]

Seng Chao further interprets reduction in his essay *Nirvana Is Nameless*, saying: "through non-action, everything is acted upon."[5] He continues:

> Through non-action, movement is always quiescent. Through action, everything is acted upon, means that quiescence is always in motion.[6]

Thus, in his *Prajna Is Not-Knowledge*, Seng Chao says:

> The Perfect Man abides in being, yet is free from being. He abides in nonbeing, yet is free from nonbeing. Although he is not entangled in either being or nonbeing, he does not discard being and nonbeing. Therefore, he harmonizes his light with worldly activities, and engages in dealing with the Five Evil Worlds. Motionless, he enters into the world. Serene, he comes back from the world. Quiescent and pure, he is free from artificial action, yet nothing is undone.[7]

In this passage it is clear that the basic principle of *wu-wei* maintained by Lao Tzu and the logical process of the four alternatives in Madhyamika thought applied by Seng Chao flow together.

Notes to Chapter 48

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 108.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *IbidIbid.*
4. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Vol. IV, pp. 31a and b.
5. Seng Chao, *Chao Lun*, Chapter IV, 6: 14a.
6. *Ibid.*, 6: 14b.
7. *Ibid.*, Chapter III, 6: 18b.

Chapter 49

The wise man is free from his own mind,
But identifies the people's minds as mind.
He considers good as good,
But he also considers not-good as good.
Thus, his attainment of non-differentiation is successful.
He considers truth as truth,
But he also considers not-truth as truth.
Thus, his attainment of non-differentiation is perfected.
In the world, the wise conscientiously non-differentiates
The minds of the people.
Because people rely on their senses of hearing and seeing,
The wise treats them as innocent children. *

Commentary

The non-differentiation of not-good and good and not-truth and truth may be clarified by Heidegger's words in "The Origin of the Work of Art." As he says:

> Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment.[1]

> Truth, in its nature is un-truth… The nature of truth is, in itself, the primal conflict in which the open center is won within which what is, stands, and from which it sets itself back into itself.[2]

This is an interpretation of the non-differentiation of opposites in modern Western philosophical terms. In the *Lao Tzu I*, the Buddhist philosopher Wang Yuan-chê comments:

> Good and not-good are produced through illusory vision. Illusory vision is produced through the ego-self. If one is open to the great *Tao,* although his eyes see good and not-good, his mind will not differentiate them. Therefore, the wise, according to the actual conditions of the world, artificially establishes praise and criticism, but his mind knows that good and not-good are primarily not real. Thus, the good of not-good is not to be pitied and forgiven, because primarily he does not realize that there is a difference. To forget the actuality of good and not-good is indeed real goodness. Hence, ten thousand things vary among themselves. They are all identified as real form. Truth and not-truth are non-differentiated as one. Those who know that all forms are nothing but illusion will be able to see not-good as good. Those who know that all forms are nothing but reality will be able to see not-truth as truth. To face illusion and to know its reality and to face reality and to know its illusion is the wisdom of the wise, which is different from that of the ordinary man.[3]

In the Buddhist interpretation of identity and difference, differentiation is illusion. The Confucian interpretation of the identity of the minds of others is expressed in the Neo-Confucianist saying:

> The changelessness of heaven and earth is that their minds penetrate all things, while they themselves have no minds. The changelessness of the wise is that his passion accords with all things, while he himself has no passion.[4]

Thus, the mind of no-mind which identifies with the minds of the people is not only essential to the teaching of Taoist philosophy, but is also applied by both Confucianist and Buddhist philosophers.

Notes to Chapter 49

* This translation folIows the texts of Kao Heng and Wang Huai.

1. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 60.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.
3. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Vol. IV, 4: 34b, 35a.
4. Chang, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 51.

Chapter 50

To live or to die:
Three out of ten men live,
While three out of ten men die.
Further, three out of ten men cling to life,
But they lose it.
Why? Because they all crave life.
He who knows how to safeguard his life
Does not encounter tigers or rhinoceroses.
In the battlefield
He does not avoid dangerous weapons.
Rhinoceroses cannot gore him,
Tigers cannot claw him,
Dangerous weapons cannot harm him.
Why? Because there is no place in him for death.

Commentary

There is no place in one for death when one has experienced the Great Death, in the Buddhist sense, whereby one enters into the reality of life. When one experiences the Great Death, or non-being itself, one goes beyond the relative dichotomy of life and death. As Keiji Nishitani, Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University, says in his interpretation of Heidegger's essay "Uber Abraham a Santa Clara":

> A man who dies before he dies, does not die when he dies.[1]

Nishitani further quotes the words of Shido Bunan, a Ch'an master of the seventeenth century, who says:

> Become a dead man, remaining alive; become thoroughly dead; then do what you like, according to your own mind; all your works are then good.[2]

"To become a dead man, remaining alive" is to achieve the state of mind of *satori*, in Ch'an's term, or the mind of *Tao*, in Lao Tzu's thought. One attains the mind of *satori* or *Tao* through the experience of the Great Death. One gives up one's craving for life and identifies with the reality of non-being. As Heidegger says in *Existence and Being*:

> Projecting into nothing, Da-sein is already beyond what-is-in-totality. This "being beyond" (Hinaussein) what-is we call transcendence. Were Da-sein not, in its essential basis, transcendent, that is to say, were it not projected from the start into nothing, it could never relate to what-is, hence it could have no self-relationship.[3]

> Only because nothing is revealed in the very basis of our Da-sein is it possible for the utter strangeness of what-is to dawn on us. Only when the strangeness of what-is forces itself upon us does it awaken and invite our wonder. Only because of wonder, that is to say, the revelation of nothing, does the "Why?" spring to our lips. Only because this "Why?" is possible as such can we seek for reasons and proofs in a definite way. Only because we can ask and prove are we fated to become inquirers in this life.[4]

Thus, through man's projection into nothing, he is awakened to the reality of the being of what-is. The projection into nothing is the experience of the Great Death, or the achievement of *Tao*. When one experiences it, one identifies with it, and achieves the state of no-mind. One does not crave life or fear tigers, rhinoceroses, or dangerous weapons. As Lao Tzu says: "Why? Because there is no place in him for death."

Wang Yüan-chê's commentary in the *Lao Tzu I* reads:

> The perfect man does not know death, nor does he know life. Therefore, nothing can cause his death, and nothing can make his life. Thus we say, he never dies and he never lives… "There is no place in him for death"

> because he is free from life. When one is free from life, one always lives transparently, yet one does not live by oneself.[5]

In short, when one is free from the dichotomy of life and death, one is in the state of always being alive. Even great danger cannot threaten one.

Notes to Chapter 50

1. Keiji Nishitani, “Two Addresses by Martin Heidegger,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1966), p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
3. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 339.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 347–348.
5. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, 4: 38a and b.

Chapter 51

Tao *creates all things;*
Tê *cultivates them.*
Things are shaped according to their natures;
Relational conditions fulfill them.
Therefore, ten thousand things all venerate the source of Tao
And value the potentialities of Tê.
Tao *is venerated and* Tê *is valued spontaneously;*
No one orders that it be so.
Thus, Tao *creates all things;*
Tê *cultivates them.*
They give them birth.
They nourish them.
They give them shape.
They give them quality.
They shelter them.
They guard them.
They create them but do not possess them.
They work for them but expect no reward.
They bring them to maturity but do not control them.
This is called invisible attainment.

Commentary

In the Madhyamika philosophy of Nagarjuna, the concept of relational conditions, or *pratitya-samutpada*, reveals the relational structure of things as well as the emptiness of their being. This idea is not novel to Taoist philosophy.

The process of creation is fundamentally based upon *Tao*. However, the

cultivation of *Tê*, formulation from substance, and completion through relational conditions are clearly paralleled with the work of *Tao*. The second part of this chapter teaches that both *Tao* and *Tê* nourish things, give them shape, give them quality, and shelter and guard them.

The principle of *wu-wei* may be applied to the process of creation expressed in this chapter. As Lao Tzu says, *Tao* and *Tê* create things but do not possess them. Further, “they work for them, but expect no reward. They bring them to maturity, but do not control them.” This indicates the principle of non-interference with things, according to which things are produced and cultivated by *Tao* and *Tê*, yet are free from them. In Lao Tzu’s words: “This is called invisible attainment.”

According to Nagarjuna’s philosophy of relational conditions, there are two kinds of truth—a practical truth and a higher truth. From the point of view of the practical truth, every created thing is self-substantiated and conditioned. From the point of view of the higher truth, the conditioning process itself is empty. For the Taoist, creation is related to both the practical and higher truths of Madhyamika thought. The practical aspect includes the cultivation of *Tê*, formulation through substance, and completion through relational conditions. This constitutes the principle of *yu-wei*. In the higher sense the process of creation is free from ulterior motives and artificial influence. This constitutes the process of *wu-wei*, through which everything is accomplished. In other words, through the action of non-action, all things are acted upon. This is the essence of *Tao*.

Chapter 52

The world has its beginning,
Which may be called the origin of the world.
When one is aware of the origin,
One knows its manifestations.
When one is aware of its manifestations,
Yet abides with its origin,
One never falls short in all of one's life.
Ceasing verbal expressions,
Stopping the entry of sensations,
One is never exhausted.
On the contrary, when one is full of words
And entangled with one's affairs,
One is never able to save one's self.
To see what is invisible is to be awakened.
To remain gentle is to be strong.
Apply illumination and return to awakening.
Then one is free from disaster.
This is called living in accordance with reality.

Commentary

In his work *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger says: "Language is the flower of the mouth. In language the earth blossoms toward the bloom of the sky."[1] According to Heidegger, to say "'words, like flowers': that is not a 'break in vision' but the awakening of the largest view; nothing is 'adduced' here, but on the contrary the word is given back into the keeping of the source of its being."[2]

As Lao Tzu says: "The world has its beginning… When one is aware of

the origin, one knows its manifestations."

For Heidegger, the word is the manifestation. The source of the being of the word is "Saying in which it comes to pass that World is made to appear… This indication of the sound of speaking and of its source in Saying must at first sound obscure and strange. And yet it points to simple phenomena. We can see them once we pay heed again to the way in which we are everywhere under way within the neighborhood of the modes of Saying."[3] In Lao Tzu's words: "to see what is invisible is to be awakened."

For Heidegger, neighborhood means "dwelling in nearness." This nearness is Saying itself, whose essential being is the "lighting and hiding proffer of the world."[4] One reaches the neighborhood of saying through the step back, which means "to turn back to where we are (in reality) already staying: that is how we must walk along the way of thinking which now becomes necessary."[5] For Lao Tzu, the step back is achieved when verbal expressions cease and sensations stop. As he says: "Apply illumination and return to awakening… This is called living in accordance with reality."

The origin and its manifestations might be further exemplified by the following lines from a poem by Hölderlin:

> *White (Light) is the moment. But those who serve the gods know*
> *The earth well.*[6]

Thus, illumination means to abide in the origin, and yet to be aware of its manifestations. When one achieves this, one identifies with the nature of reality.

Notes to Chapter 52

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 99.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
6. Friedrich Hölderlin, "Bread and Wine," in *ibid.*, p. 100.

Chapter 53

If I had even a slight awareness,
And practiced the great Way,
What I would fear would be deviating from it.
The great Way is a very level road,
But men like to take circuitous paths.
Thus, the palaces are extremely elegant,
But the people's farms are extremely desolate,
And there is no grain reserved in the storehouses.
The rulers wear expensive garments,
Carry fine swords,
Satiate themselves with food and drink,
And possess inordinate riches and precious things.
This is the greatest robbery,
And is indeed against the great Way.

Commentary

This chapter applies the basic principle of *Tao* to man's actual life in the world. The *Tao* itself is plain, fundamental, and easy to follow. This constitutes one aspect of man's nature. If man were aware of his deep, underlying harmony, he would follow it. However, man's nature is also egoistic, selfish, and evil. This is the aspect that mean men follow. The more they practice it, the more they deviate from *Tao*. Lao Tzu's essential teaching is inner awakening. With even a slight awakening, one is free from disaster and lives in accordance with reality.

Chapter 54

Nothing can be taken away if it is well-founded.
Nothing can be lost if it is well-grasped.
For generations to come, the worship will not be discontinued.
*To cultivate (*Tao*) in one's self makes attainment real.*
*To cultivate (*Tao*) in one's family makes attainment a surplus.*
*To cultivate (*Tao*) in one's community makes attainment long-lasting.*
*To cultivate (*Tao*) in one's nation makes attainment abundant.*
*To cultivate (*Tao*) in one's world makes attainment all-embracing.*
Thus, through the self, one contemplates the self.
Through the family, one contemplates the family.
Through the community, one contemplates the community.
Through the nation, one contemplates the nation.
Through the world, one contemplates the world.
How do I know the world as world?
It is through this.

Commentary

In his famous "Treatise on the Observation of Things," the Neo-Confucianist Shao Yung (1011–1077) says:

> To see things according to things themselves is to follow one's nature (*hsing*). To see things according to the ego self is to follow one's passions (*ch'ing*). Nature is unbiased and enlightened. Passions are biased and blind. Letting the ego self be free leads to passions. These passions lead to obscurity. Obscurity leads to confusion. Letting one's self identify with other beings leads to nature. Nature leads to spirituality. Spirituality leads to enlightenment.[1]

Shao Yung explains the cultivation of one's nature and ridding one's self of one's passions by what he calls *fang kuan*, or reverse seeing. Reverse seeing means not seeing things according to the ego self, but according to things themselves. When one sees things according to things themselves, one is joyful when things are joyful. When things are sorrowful, one is sorrowful with them. In other words, one's mind totally identifies with things, whether they are joyful or sorrowful. The word "things" does not mean objects. It indicates man himself, his family, his country, and the world in which he lives. In order to achieve total, perfect identification between one's self and things, one sees the self through the self. One sees the family through the family. The same holds true for the community, the nation, and the world. According to Chinese philosophers, Shao Yung's teaching to see things according to things themselves is influenced by Taoist philosophy. Perhaps this chapter is one of the sources that influenced him.

In Chapter 22 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu* there is a passage which reads:

> To identify things as things is to be free from the demarcations of things. Yet things themselves have their demarcations. These are called the demarcations of things. The demarcation of non-demarcation is the demarcation which is free from demarcation.[2]

Chuang Tzu's demarcation which is free from demarcation indicates the total identity of one's mind with the reality of things. In Shao Yung's words, it is seeing things according to things themselves. According to Lao Tzu, it is seeing one's self through one's self; seeing one's family through one's family. Thus, this chapter teaches the practice of the self-identity of the mind of man with the reality of things.

Notes to Chapter 54

1. Shao Yung, *Huang-chi Ching-shih*, or *Supreme Principle Governing the World*, *Ssu-pu Pei-yao*, Section II, Chapter VIII, p. 16a.
2. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter 22, 7: 27a.

Chapter 55

When man is enriched with Tê,
He may be identified with an innocent child.
*He is free from the stings of insects,**
Free from the claws of wild beasts,
Free from the attacks of devouring birds.
None of his bones or muscles are said to be strong,
But the grip of his hand is always firm.
Nothing concerning the union of male and female is yet known,
*But potentiality*** *is evident.*
The essence of his life is perfect.
He can cry all the time without losing his voice.
His inner harmony is supreme.
To be aware of inner harmony is to abide with reality.
To abide with reality is to be enlightened.
*However, to push life to the full leads to evil.****
The mind forcing one's potential is artificial.
When things are artificial, they lead to decay.
This deviates from Tao.
That which deviates from Tao *ends life soon.*

Commentary

In his philosophy of nature, Hsun Tzu (ca. 298–238 BC), one of the early Confucianists, maintains:

> Admiring the greatness of heaven and thinking about it is not as good as treating it as things, and controlling them. Worshipping heaven and praising it is not as good as controlling the destiny of heaven and

applying it.[1]

This theory indicates that nature was made to obey man's will. Nature has its own way, which can never be man's way. Man must control nature for his own benefit. According to the Taoists, nature leads to a deep, underlying harmony. As Lao Tzu says in this chapter, a baby can cry all the time without losing his voice. He is free from the sting of insects, free from the claws of wild beasts, and free from the attacks of devouring birds. The original nature of the baby is harmonious within itself. Further, it is harmonious with the things around it. This deep, underlying harmony leads to reality. "To abide with reality is to be enlightened." In Chapter 16 Lao Tzu develops this idea even further. As he says, to abide with reality leads to the all-embracing, the all-pervading, the transcendent, and the attainment of *Tao*. This chapter further states that obtaining the deep, underlying harmony of nature is the attainment of *Tao*.

Note to Chapter 55

* In Wang Pi's text, the phrase "wasps, scorpios, and snakes" is used. This translation follows Ho-shang Kung's text.

** The word *chun*, or male organ, is used in Ho-shang Kung's text. In Wang Pi's text, the word *ch'uan*, or totality, is used. Some commentators relate *ch'uan* and *chun*, maintaining that they both refer to the male organ. In this text, *ch'uan* is translated as potentiality. After one has read the previous statement, the meaning is obvious.

*** The word *hsiang* ordinarily means good omen. However, most commentators maintain that *hsiang* means evil omen. In the ancient dictionary, *Yü-p'ien*, *hsiang* is defined as evil spirit.

1. Hsun Tzu, *Ssu-pu Ts'ung-k'an*, *Tzu-pu*, Chapter XI, p. 23a.

Chapter 56

One who is aware does not talk.
One who talks is not aware.
Ceasing verbal expressions,
Stopping the entry of sensations,
Dulling its sharpness,
Releasing its entanglements,
Tempering its brightness,
And unifying with the earth:
This is called the identity of Tao.
Hence, no nearness can reach him nor distance affect him.
No gain can touch him nor loss disturb him.
No esteem can move him nor shame distress him.
Thus, he is the most valuable man in the world.

Commentary

This chapter discusses the identity of *Tao* and its function. To quote Heidegger on identity: "Different things, thinking and Being, are here thought of as the same… Thinking and Being belong together in the same and by virtue of this same."[1]

How can one enter into the realm of this same? In Heidegger's words: "By our moving away from the attitude of representational thinking."[2] In Lao Tzu's teaching, "moving away" from representational thinking is achieved, by "ceasing verbal expressions, stopping the entry of sensations…and unifying with the earth." In other words, one frees one's self from calculative thinking and sensational feeling, and lets one's. thought of no-thought identify with the reality of one's own being.

When one attains this, one frees one's self from nearness and distance,

gain and loss, esteem and debasement. One indeed liberates one's self from all the attachments of the world, and becomes the man of *Tao*.

Notes to Chapter 56

1. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 27.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Chapter 57

*Guide the country through tranquillity.**
Engage in war with rare operations.
Win over the world through non-action.
How am I aware that this ought to be so?
Because of this, the more restrictions and limitations there are,
The more impoverished men will be.
The more arms men possess,
The more disordered the country will be.
The more scheming and deceitful men are,
The more strange things will occur.
The more rules and precepts are enforced,
The more bandits and crooks will be produced.
Hence, we have the words of the wise:
Through my non-action,
Men are spontaneously transformed.
Through my quiescence,
Men spontaneously become tranquil.
Through my non-interfering,
Men spontaneously increase their wealth.
Through my non-willing,
Men spontaneously return to original simplicity.

Commentary

This chapter teaches those who govern the country to follow the basic teaching of tranquility. One attains tranquility through *wu-wei*, or non-action, engaging in quiescence, non-interference, and non-ambition. Thus, one is spontaneously transformed, tranquil, wealthy, and returns to original

simplicity. In the Former Han Dynasty (206–24 BC), when Ts'ao Tsan served as prime minister to King Hui (reigned 194–187 BC), he assembled many leading Confucian scholars to ask for their advice. The scholars contradicted each other, and Ts'ao could not draw a conclusion from their opinions. Then he invited Kai Kung from the west of Chiao Chou. According to Kai Kung, the *Tao* of governing the country was governing through tranquility and quiescence. In this way, the people would settle by themselves. It is said that the entire country was very well governed. Thus, through non-action, men are spontaneously transformed; through non-ambition, men spontaneously return to original simplicity. Tranquility does not mean doing nothing. It indicates the "ringing of stillness"[1] through which the ruler and the people "belong together."[2] In fact, it is not simply "belonging together." The ruler and the people are identified with each other. This is the essence of the teaching of tranquility.

Notes to Chapter 57

* The word *chen* usually means upright. However, *chen* also means *ping*, or equilibrium or tranquility. As we read in Chapter 45 of Lao Tzu's work: "Tranquility sets the example for the world." Also, in Chapter 37, we have: "To be free from intending to have no intention is to be quiescent. Thereby, the world is naturally led to tranquility."

1. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 108.
2. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 28.

Chapter 58

When the country is governed through simplicity and leniency,
The people are genuine and honest.
When the country is governed through harshness and sharp investigation,
The people are more deceitful and dishonest.
From misfortune, good fortune is derived.
In good fortune, misfortune is conceived.
Who can determine the ultimate truth?
Or is there no ultimate truth at all?
As truth often turns out to be untruth,
Goodness often turns out to be evil.
This has long confused the people.
Thus, when the wise deals with things he is firm in his principles,
Yet not sharp.
He is pure, yet not harmful.
He is straightforward, yet not violent.
He is illuminated, yet not glittery.

Commentary

According to Su Ch'ê, "the greatness of the universe cannot be grasped by the common people because they are confused and do not know. As Lao Tzu says: 'From misfortune, good fortune is derived. In good fortune, misfortune is conceived.' This is also true of old age and youth, life and death. Each continues after the other and never reaches an end. Men who are confused do not know this. The wise transcend all things in the world, yet see its beginning and end, grasp the totality of all, and leave behind minute distinctions. They see simplicity and leniency, as if they do not know any more than that. Yet the people become genuine and honest and

fulfill their utmost natures. However, the common people do not know the totality of *Tao*. They take what their hearing and vision can reach as knowledge. They think that this is their good fortune, and do not realize that therein, misfortune is conceived. They think that this is good, and do not realize that it is from here that evil is derived… When one understands that one-sided discrimination cannot cover all the truth of things, although one is able to be firm, pure, straightforward, and illuminated, he is not dependent on them. He is afraid to be one-sided and cannot be corrected."[1]

Thus, this is another chapter which discusses the basic principle of the Taoist middle way as it is applied to governing the people.

Note to Chapter 58

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter V, pp. 20a and b.

Chapter 59

In guiding people and working according to nature,
It is best to follow renunciation.
Following renunciation means returning soon.
Returning soon means accumulating attainment.
Accumulating attainment, everything can be dealt with.
Dealing with everything leads to limitlessness.
With limitlessness, one can govern the country.
Governing the country through its origin leads to endurance.
This means that to root deeply and to plant firmly leads to longevity and eternal consciousness.
Therefore, governing a large nation is as simple as preparing a dish of food.

Commentary

According to Te-ching's commentary, this chapter teaches one to return to one's original nature in order to achieve the *Tao* of the outer king and the inner sage. This means that one's outer activities are as vigorous as those of the man who governs the country while one's inner reality is serene. The key word in this chapter is *se*, or renunciation, which means returning soon to one's original nature. In the Taoist expression: "When *Tê* is obtained, it is just the same as the origin." Thus, Te-ching continues: "What Lao Tzu means by 'in guiding people and working according to nature, it is best to follow renunciation,' is that nothing is better than the cultivation of returning to one's original nature. Original nature is what Taoists mean by emptiness, quiescence, tranquility, and purity. When the ruler has the power to control all the land within the four seas, his mind is full of ambition, anxieties, worries, and fears. From the Taoist point of view, he cannot see

clearly and act freely unless he goes back to his original state of mind, which is empty, quiescent, tranquil, and pure."[1] Going back to emptiness, quiescence, tranquility, and purity constitutes the process of *se*, or renunciation, or returning soon to one's original nature. Returning to one's original nature leads to endurance, longevity, and eternal consciousness. It is very simple to govern a country through renunciation. Therefore, this chapter concludes that governing a large nation is as simple as preparing a dish of food. Some texts place this concluding statement at the beginning of the next chapter, which is not correct at all.

Note to Chapter 59

1. Te-ching, *Explanations*, Section II, p. 27b.

Chapter 60

When Tao *prevails in the world, evil loses its power.*
It is not that evil no longer possesses spiritual power.
It is that its power does not damage men.
Indeed, it is not that its power does not damage men.
It is primarily that the ruler does not become harmful to men.
When opposites no longer damage each other,
Both are benefitted through the attainment of Tao.

Commentary

When the great *Tao* prevails, all things are harmoniously united as one. In other words, one embraces all, and all embraces one. Eventually, one is all, and all is one. This is the basic philosophy of the Hua-yen School of Buddhism. When Nishida points out that "all is one," he does not mean that all is one without differentiation. Rather: "it is, as the unity of opposites, essentially that one by which all that is, is. Here is the principle of the origin of the historical world as the absolute present."[1] It is in this absolute present that the wise achieves his perfect harmony with ten thousand things and the universe. Yet, he is neither more nor less than what he is. As Nishida quotes Lin-chi (Rinzai in Japanese): "He who sees and hears in the present instance only what is to him clear and distinct, does not cling to a certain place, but moves freely in all ten directions."[2] Nishida further says: "In the depth of self-contradiction absolutely to die and to enter the principle 'all is one'—this, and nothing else, is the religion of 'it is the soul which is Buddha.'"[3] In the Taoist expression, the *Tao* prevails in the universe, in the realm of which all opposites are harmonized. Evil and non-evil, the ruler and the common man harmoniously interpenetrate into one another and no longer damage each other. These are the benefits achieved through the *Tao.*

In Heidegger's words:

> The conflict is not a rift (Riss) as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather it is the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the sources of their unity by virtue of their common ground.[4]

The source of the unity of opponents maintained by Heidegger is what Taoists call the *Tao*.

Notes to Chapter 60

1. Nishida, *Intelligibility*, p. 237.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 63.

Chapter 61

A greater nation must be humble and like a reservoir
Where all the waters join together.
It is the passivity of the universe.
Passivity always prevails over activity through quiescence.
Quiescence is humble before activity.
When a greater nation is humble before a lesser nation,
It prevails over the lesser nation.
When a lesser nation is humble before a greater nation,
It prevails over the greater nation.
Thus, by being humble one prevails over others.
Or, by being originally in a lower position,
One prevails over others.
A greater nation simply likes to bring people together
And to nurture them.
A lesser nation simply likes to participate
And work together with others.
In this way, both have what they like,
But the greater nation must be humble.

Commentary

The key word in this chapter is humility, one of the essential principles of Taoist philosophy. It was strictly practiced by Lao Tzu himself. In Chapter 67, Lao Tzu names his three treasures, all of which rest upon humility. As he says: “Never long to be the first in the world.” In Chapter 28 we read: “To be aware of the positive, yet to abide in the negative is to be the abyss of the universe… To be aware of the white, yet to abide in the black is to be the chasm of the universe.” Humility is maintained because, as we read in

this chapter, “by being humble, one prevails over others.” Further, “a greater nation simply likes to bring people together and to nurture them.” To bring people together is to be humble toward them. Thus, harmony is achieved through humility. Humility is basic to the dissolution of hostility between opponents.

Chapter 62

Tao *is concealed in the depths of all things.*
The worthy value it.
The unworthy are protected by it.
Good words may be traded for honor.
Good works may impress men.
Even if a man is unworthy,
Tao *will never exclude him.*
Although in a great nation an emperor is established,
Ministers are appointed, and
Jade and horses are all decorated,
None of these is a better offer to the nation than Tao.
Tao *has been highly esteemed since the remote past.*
*Why? Because not searching for it, one obtains it.**
Even if one has faults, one is free from them.
Thus, the Tao *is the most highly esteemed thing in the universe.*

Commentary

In Chapter 42 Lao Tzu says the *Tao* produces ten thousand things, each of which carries *yin* and embraces *yang.* Thus, in the *Lao Tzu I*, Lü Chi-p'u comments: "Since ten thousand things all carry *yin* and embrace *yang*, this means that there is nothing in the world that is not sufficiently concealed in *Tao*."[1] The worthy are concealed, but the unworthy are not cast out. Both the good and the not-good are nurtured by *Tao.* When the dichotomized elements of the *yin-yang* principle are understood, it does not seem at all strange that the unworthy as well as the worthy, the not-good as well as the good are simultaneously concealed in *Tao.* Dichotomy exists everywhere in the universe: day and night, life and death, self and others are familiar, and

their conflict is ignored. With respect to moral principles, people insist on one-sided truth and neglect the other side, that is, the privilege to be the truth. However, moral principles are primarily established by men who are not free from bias. Without bias, there is no determination of truth. The truth may be right to Confucianists, yet wrong to Mohists; right to Mohists, yet wrong to Confucianists. Furthermore, faith in the past may be untruth in the future. What is true in the East may be untrue in the West and vice-versa. Chinese Confucianists, Mohists, and Legalists all accept the truth according to their own basic principles; what contradicts those principles is wrong. The conservative man insists on what was true in the past; that which happens in the future will be wrong. For the liberal man, what happens in the future will be right; what was true in the past is wrong. The Taoists see that all contradictions or dichotomies are rooted in the basic underlying harmony of *Tao*. Contradictions are simply temporary manifestations; the underlying harmony is fundamental endurance. Thus, this chapter reads:

> Tao *is concealed in the depths of all things.*
> *The worthy value it.*
> *The unworthy are protected by it.*

Note to Chapter 62

* According to Yen Ling-feng, in the Annotations to Section 5 of *Understanding the Work of Lao Tzu*, this line should read: “Not searching for it, yet it is spontaneously obtained.”

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter V, p. 32b.

Chapter 63

*Action or non-action, work or non-work, knowledge or non-knowledge,**
Large or small, more or less:
It is just like returning hatred with love,
Contemplating the difficult with the easy,
Working on the great through the small.
Because the hard tasks in the world must be preceded by what is easy,
Great affairs in the world must begin with what is minute.
Hence, the wise never works on what is great;
He achieves what is great.
The easier it is to promise a thing,
The less one can fulfill.
The more lightly things are taken,
The more difficulties occur.
Therefore, the wise takes things as difficult;
He is always free from the difficult.

Commentary

This chapter further develops the principle of the identity of contradictories. In previous chapters Lao Tzu maintains that *Tao* is concealed in everything; it embraces dichotomized elements, the unworthy as well as the worthy, the not-good as well as the good. This chapter expounds the movement between opposites; one extreme of contradiction is attained from the other extreme. As Lao Tzu says: “Because the hard tasks in the world must be preceded by what is easy, great affairs in the world must begin with what is minute.” These words cannot be accepted without the realization of the identity of contradictories. Yet this teaching of the movement of opposites is a further application of the basic Taoist principle of the identity of

contradictories. This principle is often interpreted politically. In the logical sense, it means that A is the starting point for reaching non-A; non-A is the starting point for obtaining A. When life is conceived of as the basis of death, and death as the beginning of life, there is no doubt that the movement of opposites is a fundamental principle of Taoism.

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* According to Kao Heng, the text should read “knowledge or non-knowledge.” Kao’s text is based upon the *Treatise on the Origin of Tao* by Wen-tzu and *The History of the Later Han Dynasty.*

Chapter 64

That which is motionless is easy to maintain.
That which is prior to emergence is easy to deal with.
That which is just beginning is easy to destroy.
That which is minute is easy to disperse.
Act on what is before it occurs.
Manage things before they are in disorder.
*Big trees grow out of small shoots.**
A nine story tower begins to be built from one little lump.
A journey of a thousand miles begins from where one stays.
Those who proceed through action fail.
Those who grasp on to a thing lose it.
Therefore, the wise does not act on things and is free from failure.
*He does not grasp on to things, and does not lose them.***
People who are engaged with things often fail when they almost complete them.
Therefore, one should be as careful in the last stage of one's work as at the beginning.
Then one will be free from failure:
Hence, for the wise, willing is non-willing.
He never values things which are hard to attain.
He learns what is unlearned.
He avoids the mistakes that have been made by others.
He is in accordance with the nature of ten thousand things, yet he never interferes with them.

Commentary

In the *Lao Tzu I*, Chiao Hung comments on the teaching that the difficult

task must be preceded by the easy, saying: “When one encounters that which is difficult and immensely great, one should immediately remain in extreme tranquility and be completely free from attachment to this difficult task. In this way, the great *Tao* will be completed by itself. This is what we call achieving what is great.”[1] To immediately remain in tranquility and to be free from attachment is what is meant by learning through unlearning and willing through non-willing. As Lao Tzu says, through the learning of unlearning and the willing of non-willing “the wise does not act on things and is free from failure. He does not grasp on to things, and does not lose them.” The willing of non-willing is a kind of mental discipline, or thinking which is free from calculation and will. As Heidegger says in the “Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking”:

> Teacher: …in answer to your question as to what I really wanted from our meditation on the nature of thinking, I replied: I want non-willing…
>
> Scholar: Non-willing means, therefore: willing to renounce willing. And the term non-willing means, further, what remains absolutely outside any kind of will…
>
> Teacher: But perhaps we come nearer to it by a willing in the first sense of non-willing.[2]

The first sense of non-willing, in one respect, is the motionless, and what is prior to emergence. The motionless and what is prior to emergence are maintained even after thoughts emerge. Thus, to return to the thoughtless through renunciation is secondary. The first section of this chapter may be applied to objective situations, such as managing things before they are in disorder. However, the basic principle of learning through unlearning and willing through non-willing relies on the motionless and what is prior to emergence. As Lao Tzu says: “A nine story tower begins to be built from one little lump. A journey of a thousand miles begins from where one stays.” This is what Lao Tzu means by being in accordance with the nature of ten thousand things, yet never interfering with them.

Notes to Chapter 64

* *Ho pau* means a big tree around which two people, standing on opposite sides, may stretch their

arms and touch each other's hands.

** Ch'i Tung says that this and the three preceding lines may not have originally belonged to this chapter. In particular, the first two lines are the same in Chapter 29. Ma Hsü-lun and Yen Ling-feng also maintain this.

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter IV, p. 376.
2. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 59.

Chapter 65

In the remote past, the man who was good in Tao *did not lead his people to calculative thinking,*
But let them remain ignorant of it.
The difficulty in cultivating men is that they are full of intellectual discrimination.
Governing the nation through intellectual discrimination is harmful to it.
Not governing the nation through intellectual discrimination is a blessing to it.
Knowing the difference between these two sets a standard.
To be aware of this standard is profound attainment.
Profound attainment is deep and far-reaching.
It is the reversal of ordinary things, yet it leads to great harmony with Tao.

Commentary

This chapter concentrates on the meaning of *yü*, or ignorance. Traditional interpretations of *yü* fall into two categories. In the first category, *yü* is interpreted according to a Confucian text, which reads: “People follow you, but you do not let them know why.”[1] In this sense, *yü* means having no knowledge of what is going on in the world. People are not taught to know anything; thus, they listen and are easy to govern. In the second category, the interpretation of *yü* is based upon Chapter 20 of Lao Tzu’s work. As we read: “People all have many ambitions and desires. I, alone, seem to have left all of them. How ignorant I am! My mind must be that of a fool. People are glorious and shining. I, alone, am dark and dull.” Here, the word *yü* indicates ignorance and dullness. However, this ignorance really means being prior to discrimination, or returning to non-discrimination. Thus, it is

the movement of reversal from calculative thinking back to meditative thinking. It does not mean having no knowledge of worldly affairs. Rather, it means understanding worldly affairs, yet grasping the source from which they emerge. In this sense, *yü* means supreme wisdom, the opposite of ignorance. As Lao Tzu says elsewhere: "Great wisdom is as if it is ignorant." Thus, the last part of this chapter reads: "Knowing the difference between these two sets a standard. To be aware of this standard is profound attainment. Profound attainment is deep and far-reaching. It is the reversal of ordinary things, yet it leads to great harmony with *Tao."* To attain great harmony with *Tao* is to grasp the real meaning of ignorance, or *yü.*

Note to Chapter 65

1. Confucian *Analects*, Book III, Chapter IX, p. 211, James Legge translation.

Chapter 66

Rivers and seas become the leading powers over all the waters from the highlands
Because they place themselves in low positions before the other waters.
That is why rivers and seas become the leading powers over all the waters from the highlands.
Thus, when the ruler wishes to become the leader of his people,
He first humbles himself before them.
When he wishes to be in front of his people, he first remains in bad of them.
When he is in a high position, people do not feel his authority.
When he is in front of his people, they do not feel any obstruction.
Therefore, all the people want to support him, and no one dislikes him.
It is because he never contends with others that others are unable to quarrel with him.

Commentary

This chapter is concerned with the teaching of humility, which is also discussed in Chapter 28 and Chapter 67. Here, an actual example of humility is presented in the story of Chang Liang, taken from Chapter 10 of the *Former Han in the History of the Twenty-six Dynasties.* Chang Liang played the greatest role in helping Liu Pang overthrow the tyranny of Ch'in and govern the country. We all know that Chang Liang applied Taoist philosophy in governing the country. The following story is an account of the discipline he learned from Taoist masters, which was very important for his later success as chief officer in Liu Pang's cabinet. When Emperor Ch'in conquered the kingdom of Han, Chang Liang was in his early youth. He hired a courageous man to assassinate the Emperor Ch'in. The

assassination attempt failed, and Chang Liang was forced to hide in a town in East China. One day, he met an old man sitting on a bridge. The old man deliberately dropped his shoes under the bridge and asked Chang Liang to pick them up and put them on his feet. Chang Liang was very angry and almost hit the old man. However, because the man was old, Chang Liang went under the bridge and picked up the shoes, then knelt down to put them on the old man's feet. After he had done this, the old man laughed and went away. Chang Liang was greatly surprised. The old man walked a short distance, then came back again. He said: "Young man, you can be taught. After five days, come here early in the morning and meet me." In five days, Chang Liang went back to the bridge. The old man was very angry, saying: "You made an appointment to meet an old man. Why are you late? Come again in another five days, early in the morning." In five days, Chang Liang went again to the bridge, when the cock crowed. Again the old man was angry, saying that Chang Liang was late and must come back in five more days. Five days later, Chang Liang went to the bridge in the middle of the night. The old man arrived with a smile after him, saying: "Young man, you should behave like this." Then he handed Chang Liang a book, and said: "If you read this, you will be the teacher of the ruler." At daybreak, Chang Liang looked at the book. He saw that it was on the art of strategy. Through the teaching of this book, he was later able to help Liu Pang overthrow the Emperor Ch'in, and govern the country.[1] Thus, the principle of humility is the basic step toward great achievements, such as governing the country and uniting opposing forces. As Lao Tzu says in this chapter: "When the ruler wishes to become the leader of his people, he first humbles himself before them." Chapter 42 also maintains: "No one likes to be isolated (ku), without merit (kau), or worthless (pu ku), yet rulers refer to themselves with these names." This further indicates the humility of men in higher positions toward those who support them. The story of Chang Liang is preserved in Chinese literature and appears again and again in school textbooks. Thus, the teaching of humility is an essential aspect of Chinese culture.

Note to Chapter 66

1. Pan Ku, *History of Han*, Section of Former Han, Chapter X.

Chapter 67

*The world says that I am beyond determination.**
And cannot be identified with anything.
It is because I am beyond determination that I cannot be identified with anything.
If I could be identified with anything,
I would no longer be beyond determination.
There are three essentials that I value and maintain:
*One is compassion (*tz'u*),*
*Another is renunciation (*ch'ien*),*
The third is never longing to be first in the world.
One who is compassionate is able to be valiant.
One who renounces is able to broaden one's self.
One who never longs to be first in the world
Is able to achieve the full growth of his capacity.
In the present day, people wish to be valiant,
But they are not compassionate.
They wish to broaden their selves,
But they do not renounce.
They wish to achieve the full growth of their capacities,
But they long to be first in the world.
This indeed leads to death.
Through compassion, engaging in war, one wins.
In self-defense, one is very well protected.
[ls]
This type of person is saved by heaven.
Because he is compassionate, he is taken care of well.

Commentary

The three basic principles of *tz'u*, or compassion, *ch'ien*, or renunciation, and never longing to be first in the world constitute the essential teaching of Lao Tzu. The latter two principles are discussed in previous chapters. Never longing to be first in the world means to be humble. Although renunciation is spelled *ch'ien*, it is identified here with the notion of *se* as it appears in Chapter 59. The principle of *tz'u*, or compassion, has not yet been discussed. In *Creativity and Taoism* we read:

> Lao Tzu disregarded *jen* and proclaimed that he had instead *tz'u*, the first of his three treasures. The word *tz'u* is ordinarily translated as love, but it is not actually love itself, but, rather, the primordial, immediate source of love, the secret root of all love and compassion. It is not based on rational principles or arrived at through discrimination and differentiation. On the contrary, it is intuitively and unconsciously arrived at and nothing, good or evil, is distinguished or extended. Through *tz'u*, subject and object are totally and immediately interfused and the self is transformed into selflessness.[1]

When one deals with things with a compassionate heart, one identifies everything with one's self. There is no hostility or contradiction between one's self and others. Furthermore, others are naturally unable to overpower one's self. Therefore, Lao Tzu says: "One who is compassionate is able to be valiant."

When Buddhism was introduced into China, the idea of great compassion was identified with *tz'u* and *pei*, or *maitri* and *karuna*, the mind of compassion toward sentient beings. This is universal love without gradation. The Confucianist *jen*, on the other hand, rests upon the gradation of sympathy. As Mencius says: "As to animals, the gentleman is kind but not loving. As to persons, generally he is loving but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents and lovingly disposed to people generally. He is lovingly disposed to people generally, and kind to animals."[2]

When love is measured or gradated according to objective conditions, rational discrimination and determination destroy direct, immediate fellow feeling. Therefore, Taoists declare that when *jen*, or gradation of love, is

discarded, people will love each other once again. Taoist love is based upon *tz'u*, or compassion. It is spontaneity and sincerity derived from the concealment of love and is free from any artificial effort. When one has *tz'u*, one naturally renounces unnecessary, man-made glories and extravagances. Thus, the principle of *ch'ien* takes place. Being in accordance with the principle of *ch'ien*, one is naturally great and unlimited. Thus, Lao Tzu says: "One who renounces is able to broaden one's self." When one follows the principle of *tz'u*, one identifies with others. Thus, one neither opposes others nor longs to be first in the world. In this way, he achieves the full growth of one's capacity.

Notes to Chapter 67

* In Wang Pi's edition, the word *Tao* appears. However, a number of later editions, such as those of Ching-lung, Tun-hung, Ching-fu, and others, are all without the word *Tao*. This translation follows these later editions.

1. Chang, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 24.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Chapter 68

A good soldier is free from violence.
A good fighter is free from rage.
A good winner is free from competition.
A good leader is humble before the people.
This is called the attainment of non-contention,
Or the application of the strength of others.
It is also called identity with the ultimate
*Beyond space and time.**

Commentary

For any soldier being war-like and fierce is essential. In any war being angry is fundamental. For winning over the enemy, competition is most important. In this chapter Lao Tzu teaches that the best soldier is not war-like and fierce, that the best way to engage in war is not to be angry, that the best way to win over the enemy is not to compete. Being war-like, angry, and competitive is necessary for merely military operations. However, for winning over one's opponents, for succeeding in war, and for being a courageous soldier, it is not necessary to remain in opposition. Rather, one must humbly free one's self from haughtiness, pride, and violence. Then one identifies with one's opponent and absorbs his strength. When this strength is won, one is bound to win over one's enemy, because the enemy's strength is added to one's own. The Chinese art of T'ai Chi Chuan and the Japanese art of Aikido, apply this principle in meeting one's opponents. Thus we have Lao Tzu's saying: "A good leader is humble before the people. This is called the attainment of non-contention, or the application of the strength of others." To unify the strength of others with one's own strength is also to identify with the ultimate which is beyond space and

time.

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* In this line we have the characters *t'ien*, or heaven, and *ku*, or ancient, which are translated here as space and time. However, in the history of the study of the *Tao Tê Ching*, many commentators have been puzzled by these two characters. Some of them maintain that the word *ku* does not belong here. Others maintain that there should be a comma after the word *t'ien*, separating it from *ku*. Thus, their translation is, "this means to match heaven," which is the ultimate of all. However, according to Yü Yüeh, the rhyme of the last words in the four previous sentences, *wu*, *nu*, *yu*, and *hsia*, and of the last words of three later sentences, *te*, *li*, and *chi*, are not in tune with *t'ien* if the punctuation is placed after *t'ien*, making it the last word in the sentence. Thus, the translation "this means to match heaven" does not work. This translation identifies *t'ien* as space and *ku* as time. The meaning is that when a great leader is humble before the people and attains non-attainment, he benefits by the application of the strength of others. He identifies with ultimate reality, which is beyond space and time. In other words, this identity only takes place in the absolute moment.

Chapter 69

On military operations we have:
“I do not boldly attack others first,
But take action only after being attacked.”
“I do not boldly move forward even an inch,
But withdraw a foot.”
This is called the operation of non-operation,
Bearing the arms of non-arms,
Charging the enemy of non-enemy,
Carrying the weapons of non-weapons.
There is no more serious misfortune
Than to engage in war lightly.
*To engage in war lightly is to violate my essential teachings of compassion, renunciation, and never longing to be first in the world.**
Therefore, when two armies join in battle,
*The one that is compassionate wins.***

Commentary

This chapter further explains the application of the three treasures expounded in Chapter 67. Thus, Lao Tzu says: “When two armies join in battle, the one that is compassionate wins.” This is the application of the principle of *tz’u*, or compassion, the first of Lao Tzu’s three treasures. The words, “I do not boldly attack others first, but take action only after being attacked,” indicate the application of the principle of never longing to be first in the world. “The operation of non-operation, bearing the arms of non-arms, charging the enemy of non-enemy” indicate the principle of *ch’ien*, or renunciation. Ordinarily, this chapter is interpreted as teaching the strategy of war, When one examines it carefully, one realizes that it teaches the

application of the three treasures even in conditions of hostility. People may ask whether or not the operation of war is the operation of non-operation. The answer is that if one is interested in war, one will praise the operation of non-operation as a basic principle of the art of war. If one firmly grasps the three basic principles of Lao Tzu's teaching, the answer is that although one is forced to engage in self-defense, one still transcends one's feelings of hostility towards one's opponents. In ordinary daily life one can remain calm and serene. It is even more important for one to remain tranquil when one is forced to engage in an unusual situation of hostility; that is, one must remain free from hostility. This is a basic teaching of the *Tao* of underlying harmony.

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* Lao Tzu calls these treasures *pao*, or precious things. These treasures are discussed in Chapter 67.

** Men who are compassionate sympathize with each other, do not seek gain for themselves, and avoid loss. They even win over their enemies.

Chapter 70

It is not difficult to grasp my words or to follow them.
Yet no one in the world can grasp them or follow them.
Because words must derive from the source of words,
Action requires an actor who acts.
Since you are not aware of this, you cannot know me.
The less people know me, the more valuable I am.
Thus, the wise is covered with tattered clothes which conceal precious jade.

Commentary

The basic principles of compassion, renunciation, and never longing to be first in the world, maintained in Chapter 67, are apparently not difficult for people to comprehend. Thus, Lao Tzu says: “It is not difficult to grasp my words or to follow them.” If one lets one’s ego-self go, it is not difficult for one to achieve these principles. According to Taoists, one lets one’s ego-self go through reduction or laying down one’s load. Therefore, Lao Tzu says that his teaching is easy to follow. To lay down one’s load is to reach the source of all creativity and potentiality. However, the common people do not see this. Thus, Lao Tzu says that people cannot understand him. The common people must give up calculative thinking and not increase their burden. Then they will realize what Lao Tzu means by: “words must derive from the source of words. Action requires an actor who acts.” Thus, discarding the sublime and abandoning wisdom benefit the people a hundredfold. Giving up benevolence and eliminating righteousness make people love each other. This is different from the teaching of Confucianism. As Confucius once said: “If people do not know me, I will not be angry. Is this not gentlemanly?” The knowing of Confucius is different from that of

Lao Tzu. Confucian knowing is the accumulation of intellectual knowledge and its profundity. It is also the highest attainment of moral deeds and their dignity. Lao Tzu's knowing is entirely free from intellectual and moral attainment. It not only has no concern for intellectual accumulation and moral achievement, it is immediate identification of the non-attainment and non-interference of meditative thinking experienced by Lao Tzu. This identification achieved through immediate intuition cannot be reached by the common man. Thus, Lao Tzu says that "the less people know me, the more valuable I am."

Chapter 71

Knowing that which cannot be known is perfect.
Not being aware of this knowing is a defect.
To be aware of defects as defects is to be free from defects.
The wise is free from defects.
He is aware of defects as defects.
Therefore, he is free from defects.

Commentary

This chapter teaches the importance of the knowing of not-knowing. As mentioned above, ordinary knowing is the accumulation of knowledge. Taoist knowing is the renunciation of knowledge. According to Te-ching, the knowing of the wise is knowing which is free from attachment to things and free from attachment to relativity. It is illumination itself. People in the world are usually not familiar with this knowing; only the wise is aware of it. If one is aware of this knowing of not-knowing, one is free from defects. What is this knowing of not-knowing? Yung-chia Hsüan-chio (665–713) explains: "When the substance of knowing diminishes, it is totally open, as if it is held by the void. In that tranquil moment, one is only aware that there is nothing of which to be aware. This is the awareness of not-awareness."[1] Yung-chia further says: "What clear seeing, yet there is nothing to see, neither a man nor a Buddha."[2] This clear seeing is the knowing of not-knowing which is free from defects.

Notes to Chapter 71

1. Yung-chia Hsüan-chio, *Collected Works of Ch'an Master Yung-chia*, *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo*, No. 2013, Vol. 48, p. 389c.
2. Chang, *Original Teachings*, p. 10.

Chapter 72

When people are free from fear,
They experience "basic dread."
Because they are not limited by the places in which they stay,
They are at peace with their lives.
Because they are at peace with their lives,
Their lives are peaceful.
Therefore, the wise is aware of himself,
But does not display himself.
He cultivates himself,
But is not proud of himself.
He leaves behind small fear,
But experiences basic dread.

Commentary

According to Su Ch'ê, in his commentary in the *Lao Tzu I*, man's nature is immensely great; nothing can be added to it. It may be called "great dread."[1] The ordinary man is often afraid of life and death, success and failure. Ten thousand things can make him anxious and afraid. However, there is a basic, great dread within him of which he is not aware. If he becomes aware of it through the identity of life and death, success and failure, he will be free from fear and will abide with his own nature. He will no longer see only with his eyes nor hear only with his ears. His physical organs limit his awareness, his bodily form limits his joy. Thus, according to Su Ch'ê, fear is limited to the relative, objective conditions of "this" and "that." Dread is essential human nature, which is unlimited and free from objective conditions and is nothing itself. Su Ch'ê's interpretation coincides with Heidegger's distinction between ordinary fear and essential dread. As

he says in *Existence and Being*:

> Dread differs absolutely from fear. We are always afraid of this or that definite thing, which threatens us in this or that definite way.[2]

Ordinary fear is limited to "fear about" this or that definite thing. Thus, "the man who is afraid, the nervous man, is always bound by the thing he is afraid of or by the state in which he finds himself."[3] When he tries to save himself from the "something" he fears, "he becomes uncertain in relation to other things; in fact, he 'loses his bearings' generally."[4] For Heidegger, "no such confusion can occur" in the "key mood" of dread. Rather, "dread is pervaded by a peculiar kind of peace. And although dread is always 'dread of,' it is not dread of this or that."[5] In dread "all things, and we with them, sink into a sort of indifference."[6] This does not mean that everything around one merely disappears. Rather, the totality of what is withdraws from one. When this happens, "there is nothing for us to hold on to. The only thing that remains and overwhelms us whilst what is slips away is this 'nothing.'"[7] However, this nothing is not separate from what-is-in-totality. In Heidegger's words: "In dread, nothing functions as if *at one with* what-is-in-totality."[8]

When one experiences the nothing in dread, one transcends what-is-in-totality. According to Heidegger, this transcendence is an essential aspect of man's nature. Without it, one "could never relate to what-is, hence could have no self-relationship."[9] In going beyond what-is-in-totality, one learns to see through one's ears, and hear through one's eyes, as Su Ch'ê maintained. One achieves this seeing and hearing through the process of reducing, in which one frees one's self from what-is and at the same time is aware of the identity of nothing and what-is. This is the meaning of the experience of great dread maintained by both Su Ch'ê and Heidegger.

In the traditional interpretation, great dread means death, that is, when one violates the laws of nature, the result is death. This interpretation is too superficial to reach the profundity of Lao Tzu's teaching.

Notes to Chapter 72

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter VI, 6: 16b, 17a.

2. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 335.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

Chapter 73

Courageous but foolhardy, one perishes.
Courageous but not foolhardy, one's life is saved.
Between these two, one gains, the other loses.
Who knows what nature loathes?
Even the sage can hardly make a wise choice.
According to the way of heaven,
Without contending, one inevitably wins.
Without asking, one spontaneously receives a response.
Without invitation, success comes by itself.
Unintentionally, the heavenly way is well-devised.
The net of nature is all-embracing.
Although the spaces are large, nothing escapes it.

Commentary

In the *Lao Tzu I*, Li Hsieh-ts'ai comments:

> People all know how to be courageous but foolhardy, but they do not know how to be courageous but not foolhardy. Those who are courageous but foolhardy tread on a shining sword. Those who are courageous but not foolhardy, tread on the middle path. Therefore, we have: "It is easy to tread on a shining sword, but it is difficult to reach the middle path." Those who tread on a shining sword will be rewarded with misfortune. But people take this misfortune lightly. Those who practice the middle path will be benefitted. But people do not know of this benefit. This is the reason that the middle path is difficult to obtain.[1]

Li Hsieh-ts'ai's commentary is based upon the Confucian teaching recorded

in the *Chung-yung*, or *Doctrine* of *the Mean.* For the Taoist, the way of heaven follows the principle of *wu-wei*. As Lao Tzu says in Chapter 37:

> Tao *is real and free from action*
> *Yet nothing is not acted upon.*

Being free from contending is *wu-wei*, yet one inevitably wins. Being free from asking is *wu-wei*, yet a response is spontaneously received. Being free from invitation is *wu-wei*, yet success naturally comes. This is all due to unintentionality, which is the heavenly way. *Wu-wei* does not mean that one does not act. It means that one acts but is free from ulterior motives. One engages in his work wholeheartedly, whether or not this work is better than the work of others. Because one's efforts are wholehearted, one's work naturally prevails over the work of others. This is winning over others without contention, which is the heavenly way. The law of nature never misses it. As Lao Tzu says:

> *The net of nature is all-embracing.*
> *Although the spaces are large, nothing escapes it.*

Note to Chapter 73

1. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter VI, 6: 23a.

Chapter 74

Men are no longer afraid to die.
Why should we frighten them with dying?
If men were still as afraid of death as they used to be,
We could catch a criminal and put him to death.
Who would have the courage to commit a crime?
(In nature), there is always one who is responsible for ending the life of man.
If we take over the responsibility of killing,
It is just like taking over the great lumberjack's work of cutting wood.
If we take over the great lumberjack's work of cutting,
We can hardly help but hurt our hands.

Commentary

In the *Lao Tzu I*, Li Hsieh-ts'ai says:

> The purpose of writing this chapter is to say that the criminal law is not reliable for governing the country. The people are not afraid of death. Why should you use the death sentence to frighten them? The more people you sentence to death, the more people will violate the law. For instance, in the Ch'in Dynasty, the law of punishment was very severe and detailed. But shortly, the dynasty was overthrown. When the Han Dynasty. took over, it adopted a very simple law, and the people returned to Han.[1]

When the first emperor of the Han Dynasty entered the western region of China, formerly occupied by the Kingdom of Ch'in, he issued only three laws. The second and third emperors after him practiced the teaching of *wu-wei* maintained by Lao Tzu. Therefore, the country was very well governed.

In his introduction to the *Tao Tê Ching*, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty also comments on the lines:

> Men are no longer afraid to die.
> Why should we frighten them with dying?

As the emperor says:

> At this time, the country has just settled down. People are wicked and officials are rotten. Even though ten men are sentenced to death in the morning, one hundred men still violate the law in the evening of the same day. If this is the case, does it not prove what the *Tao Tê Ching* said? Therefore, I abolish capital punishment and arrest the violating men to engage them in work. In not more than a year, my mind is quiet and at peace. So I know that the *Tao Tê Ching* is the fundamental root of ten thousand things, and the teaching of rulers.[2]

If the country is to be well governed, there must be a deep, underlying harmony among the governed and between• the governing and the governed. Thus, the one is the many and the many are the one. In this case, what is the use of criminal law?

Notes to Chapter 74

1. Chiao Hung, Lao *Tzu I*, Chapter VI, 6: 26a.
2. *Ibid.*, 6: 26b.

Chapter 75

When men are deprived of food,
It is because their kings tax them too heavily.
Therefore, they are deprived of food.
When men are hard to govern,
It is because their kings interfere with their lives.
Therefore, they are hard to govern.
When men give up their lives lightly,
It is because their kings are anxious to live extravagantly.*
Therefore, men give up their lives lightly.
Only one who disregards his own life
Knows how to value the lives of others.

Commentary

In his commentary Te-ching maintains that if the ruler is not lovable nor his life valuable, the cancellation of his self and the tranquility of his mind result in the good governing of the world. This is what Lao Tzu means in Chapter 31, when he says:

Through my non-action,
Men are spontaneously transformed.
Through my quiescence,
Men spontaneously become tranquil.
Through my non-interfering,
Men spontaneously increase their wealth.
Through my non-willing,
Men spontaneously return to original simplicity.

Therefore, in this chapter he maintains:

Only one who disregards his own life
Knows how to value the lives of others.

The following lines from Chapter 10 of *The Works of Chuang Tzu* provide an even more explicit comment on the ill-governed country. He says:

> …unless sages (rulers) disappear, neither will great robbers disappear; nor if you double the number of sages wherewithal to govern the empire will you more than double the profits of the Robber Chê. If pecks and bushels are used for measurement, they will also be stolen. If scales and steel yards are used for weighing, they will also be stolen. If tallies and signets are used for good faith, they will also be stolen. If charity and duty to one's neighbor are used for rectification, they will also be stolen.[1]

Thus, the violation of the deep, underlying harmony between the governed and the governing causes disorder in the world.

Note to Chapter 75

* According to Yen Ling-feng, the word *shang*, or king, is missing from the text. His text is based upon the editions by Fu I, Tu Tao-chien, and Wang Pi.

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter X, 4: 11a, Giles translation, p. 102.

Chapter 76

When a man is alive,
His body is soft and frail.
After his death,
It is hard and solid.
When grass and trees are growing,
They are delicate and fragile.
After their deaths,
They are wizened and decayed.
Therefore, what is hard is close to death.
What is soft is close to life.
Thus, when troops are inflexible, they lose the war.
*When a wood board is dried hard, it cracks.**
What is strongest and most solid remains low.
What is softest and meekest remains high.

Commentary

This is one of several chapters which concentrates on the teaching of humility. Humility is expressed here as meekness and softness. As Lao Tzu says in Chapter 78:

Water is the softest and meekest thing in the world,
Yet it is best able to overcome that which is strong and solid.

Chinese commentators relate the softest and meekest to the process of *wu-wei*, or non-action. The strongest and most solid is related to *yu-wei*, or action. When one follows wu-wei, one is close to *Tao*. When one follows *yu-wei*, one deviates from *Tao*. In Chapter 48, Lao Tzu explains the difference between action and non-action as follows:

One often wins over the world through non-action.
Through action, one may not win over the world.

Thus, in this chapter, Lao Tzu concludes:

What is strongest and most solid remains low.
What is softest and meekest remains high.

What remains low is to be valued less. What remains high is to be valued more.

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* According to Ch'i Tung, the word *ping*, which is found in Wang Pi's text, should be *chê*, which means break. Ch'i Tung's text is based on Huai-nan Tzu's view that *ping*, or soldier, is a mistake, and should be *chê*, or break or crack.

Chapter 77

The course of nature is similar to the curve of a bow:
That which is at the top is pulled down;
That which is at the bottom is brought up.
That which is overfull is reduced;
That which is deficient is supplemented.
The course of nature is to reduce what is overfull
And to supplement what is deficient.
The course of man is to reduce what is deficient
And to supplement what is overfull.
Who can supplement the overfull for the people of the world?
Only the man of Tao *can do it.*
Therefore, with the wise, work is done and no one depends on it.
Achievements are made, but no one claims credit.
Is he not free from wishing to show off his superiority?

Commentary

In Chapter 11 Lao Tzu says:

Thirty spokes are joined together at the hub.
From their non-being arises the function of the wheel.

The unity of multiplicities is strongly maintained by Lao Tzu. It is identified as the deep, underlying harmony among all things. When one is in the realm of deep, underlying harmony, one is free from his ego-self. When one's work is done, one does not depend on it. When one makes an achievement, one does not claim credit for it. This is because one's self is free from selfishness. When one is free from selfishness, one shares with others when one is overfull. This is what Lao Tzu calls following the course

of heaven. Following the course of heaven means doing things according to one's original nature. One's original nature is compassionate toward others, and thus one helps others. When one lives according to one's selfish self, one tries to accumulate all the wealth in the world for one's self. This is what Lao Tzu calls following the course of man.

Chapter 78

Water is the softest and meekest thing in the world,
Yet it is best able to overcome that which is strong and solid.
This is the truth and cannot be changed.
“The meek suppresses the solid, the soft suppresses the strong.”
All the people in the world know this,
Yet they cannot apply it to their lives.
Therefore, the wise says:
“Those who can accept the blame for the entire nation
Will be the leaders of the nation.
Those who can endure the evil omens of the world
Will be the kings of the world.”
Right expression is similar to its reversal.

Commentary

This chapter further expounds the identity of opposites and the principle of remaining in one extreme in order to achieve the other extreme. As Lao Tzu says: “To be aware of the white, yet to abide in the black.” In this chapter, he says:

Those who can accept the blame for the entire nation
Will be the leaders of the nation.

This is what Lao Tzu means by: “Right expression is similar to its reversal.” In Chapter 76 Lao Tzu maintains:

What is strongest and most solid remains low.
What is softest and meekest remains high.

This also indicates the identity of opposites. Lao Tzu sees the logical dialectic of contradictions. Traditionally, however, people have interpreted this dialectic as strategy to be used in overcoming their opponents. This is not what Lao Tzu has in mind. As his three basic principles indicate, he has no intention of overpowering others. The meekness and reversal referred to in this chapter indicate the application of the teaching of Chapter 60. As Lao Tzu says:

Reverse is the movement of Tao,
Yielding is the action of Tao.

Chapter 79

When a serious resentment is reconciled,
Some resentment certainly remains.
Thus, reconciliation cannot be considered the best way.
Although the wise holds to the contract prepared by the debtor,
He never forces the debtor to fulfill his responsibility.
Therefore, the man of Tê *holds only to the contract,*
While the man without Tê *presses for taxes.*
The way of nature is free from intimacy.
Yet it constantly stays with the good man.

Commentary

In Lao Tzu's discussion of the identity of *Tao* in Chapter 56, he says:

No nearness can reach him,
Nor distance affect him.
No gain can touch him,
Nor loss disturb him.

In this chapter, he says: "The way of nature is free from intimacy." This is the fundamental principle of *Tao* as the source of things, which is not the things themselves.

In Chapter 5 we read:

Heaven and earth are not benevolent.
They treat ten thousand things indifferently.

Tao remains the source of benevolence and non-benevolence, of love and hate, yet itself it neither benevolence nor non-benevolence, love nor hate.

Lao Tzu expounds this idea in previous chapters. However, in this chapter, the last sentence reads: “Yet it constantly stays with the good man.” This seems to contradict the teaching that *Tao* never becomes one-sided. Yet if this statement is considered from the standpoint of the deep, underlying harmony, or the unity of multiplicities, it is clear that the man who holds opponents together is the man of *Tao*. The man of *Tao* is the good man referred to in this chapter. To say that *Tao* constantly stays with the good man does not mean that *Tao* is one-sided. Rather, it indicates that the good man does not deviate from *Tao*, and therefore, *Tao* constantly abides with him.

Chapter 80

There is a kingdom which is small and sparsely populated.
There are numerous implements, but no one uses them.
The people love their lives and no one wants to move afar.
Boats and carriages are available, but no one rides them.
Fine weapons are in their possession, but no one uses them.
The people are back in the times when knotted cords were used to record things.
They enjoy fine delicacies and are handsome in their dress.
They are happy with their residences and are pleased with their traditions.
Although the next state is within sight, and the sounds of cocks crowing and dogs barking are heard,
The people live their whole lives without traveling to and fro.

Commentary

This chapter refers to ancient times when the knotted cord was used to record things. Kingdoms were small, isolated, and sparsely populated. People of different kingdoms did not communicate with each other. Lao Tzu's teaching may be criticized for turning back to the remote past, when civilization should be progressing forward. However, what Lao Tzu has in mind is an ideal society in which the great *Tao* prevails. When the great *Tao* prevails, people enjoy their lives. They are well satisfied with their food, their clothes, their lodgings, and their cultural traditions. When people are really able to enjoy their lives, their being and their thinking are totally identified. It is through this deep, underlying harmony that people are freed from the intention of war. Therefore, their weapons are put aside. When people's inner harmonies are unified, they are happy without travelling afar.

Therefore, their boats and carriages are not used. In their harmonious lives, the people grasp the reality of things, not merely their appearances. Although they live in separate places, they do not need to communicate with each other, because their spiritual lives are harmonized. This idea is supported in the chapter on "Horses Hoofs" in *The Works of Chuang Tzu.* As Chuang Tzu says:

> In the days when natural instincts prevailed, men moved quietly and gazed steadily. At that time, there were no roads over mountains, nor boats, nor bridges over water. All things were produced, each for its own proper sphere… For then, man dwelt with birds and beasts, and all creation was one. There were no distinctions of good and bad men. Being all equally without knowledge, their virtue could not go astray. Being all equally without evil desires, they were in a state of natural integrity, the perfection of human existence.[1]

It is this natural integrity as the perfection of human existence toward which Lao Tzu leads. As Chuang Tzu says: "Things in their original nature are curved without the help of arcs, straight without lines, round without compasses, and rectangular without squares. They are joined together without glue and hold together without cords. In this manner, all things create one another from their inner reality. None can tell how they come to do so."[2] When the Taoist philosophy of creativity is understood, the basic structure of underlying harmony which is necessary for the natural integrity of man is revealed.

Notes to Chapter 80

1. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter IX, 4: 7a and b, Giles translation, p. 98.
2. Chuang Tzu, *Works*, Chapter VIII, 4: 3b.

Chapter 81

When words express truth, they are not refined.
When words are refined, they do not express truth.
One who is proficient does not depend on verbal disputation.
One who depends on verbal disputation is not proficient.
One who knows is not encyclopedic.
One who is encyclopedic does not know.
The wise does not accumulate.
The more he works for other people, the more he gains.
The more he shares with other people, the more he receives.
The Tao *followed by heaven is to do good and not to harm.*
The Tao *followed by the wise is to work and not to claim credit.**

Commentary

According to Heidegger, in “The Origin of the Work of Art”:

> In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. “To set” means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining. The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work. But until now art presumably has had to do with the beautiful and beauty, and not with truth.[1]

What Heidegger refers to as the truth of being is the origin of beauty, which is not beauty itself. It is to this origin of beauty that Taoist philosophers lead. Thus, in this chapter Lao Tzu says:

> *When words express truth, they are not refined.*

When words are refined, they do not express truth.

The truth is the source of the refinement of words. It is not the refinement of words itself. Further, it is not accumulation itself. When one is free from accumulation, one's mind is free from bondage. This idea may be related to the *Diamond Sutra*, which reads:

Let my mind emerge and abide nowhere.[2]

Perhaps the mind for which Lao Tzu seeks is the same mind sought by Buddhist philosophers. In the commentary by Chiao Hung we read:

> Some critics may say that the works of Lao Tzu make people absorb and appreciate his teaching. Thus, its attainment is close to beauty. His work analyzes the reality of ten thousand things to their perfection. Thus, its attainment depends upon verbal disputation. When he examines the transformations of ten thousand events, he examines every aspect of these transformations. Thus, its attainment is all-embracing. However, these critics do not know that there is a truth which is not beauty itself. There is a goodness which is not achieved through verbal disputation. There is *Prajna* intuition which is not encyclopedic. Why? Because what the five thousand words express is the *Tao* of non-accumulation. Non-accumulation is the mind which abides nowhere. Accumulation means non-accumulation, and words mean non-words… If there is a *Tao* of accumulation, and men are attached to their own biases, and contend with the world, then the more they speak, the more their speech will lead to exhaustion. These men are not followers of the course of heaven. To accord with the course of heaven is to benefit others, and not to harm them. To accord with the course of the wise is to work and not to contend. If our learners set their minds to these essentials, then their study of the works of Lao Tzu will be more than half completed.[3]

This commentary serves as a conclusion to the study of the *Tao Tê Ching*. It is brief, yet essential. It is easy to understand, yet difficult to achieve.

Notes to Chapter 81

* In Wang Huai's interpretation the meaning of this line is the same as that of the line "achievements are made, but no one claims credit," also found in Chapter 2. This sentence concludes the work of Lao Tzu. In order to understand the real meaning of this line, one must have a deep understanding of the basic philosophy of preontological experience.

1. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 36.
2. *Diamond Sutra*, Tenth Section.
3. Chiao Hung, *Lao Tzu I*, Chapter VI, 6: 42a.

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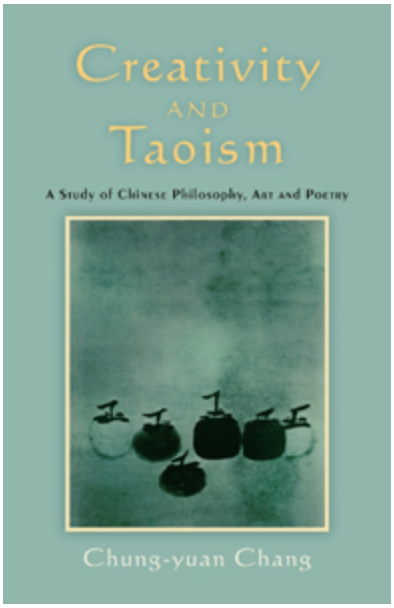

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