

Lecture 12

Non-Mainstream Thought of the Wei, Jin, and Liang dynasties and the Philosophical Significance of Buddhist "Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty": A Brief Discussion

Last time we described the principal topics in the *xuan* metaphysics of the Wei [220-265] and Jin [265-420] dynasties and their function and value. From the Wei-Jin dynasties down to the Liang dynasty [502-557] of the Northern and Southern dynasties [420-589], there were, aside from mainstream metaphysics and Buddhism, three other questions which lay outside the Chinese tradition. These were *Chong you lun* 崇有論 [Essay in Praise of Being] by Pei Wei 裴頠 [267-300], *Sheng wu aile lun* 聲無哀樂論 [On Sound Having No Joy and Sorrow] by Xi Kang 嵇康 [223-262] and *Shen mie lun* 神滅論 [On the Mortality of the Spirit] by Fan Zhen 范缜 [450-515] of the Liang dynasty. These three questions are peculiar in that they were not characteristic of traditional Chinese thought, although they did have something significant to say. We shall briefly discuss them in this lecture before going on to discuss Buddhism.

Pei Wei's *Chong you lun* [Essay In Praise of Being] was directly targeted at the *wu* [Nothing, Non-Being] of Daoism. Its point of view is intriguing but uncongenial to the Chinese mode of thought. Although Daoists such as Lao Zi stress *wu*, the *Dao De Jing* also teaches *you* [Being]--albeit one different from the *you* of Pei Wei. Pei Wei's *you*, Being, is akin to the Being of Western philosophy, especially the being of phenomenology. Ever since Plato and down to Husserl [1859-1938] and Heidegger [1889-1976] in recent times, Western philosophy has been characterized by the importance it attaches to being, a concept not stressed in Chinese philosophy. Although Lao Zi says such things as "Nothing [*wu*] is the name of the beginning of Heaven and Earth; Being [*you*] is the name of the mother of the myriad things," "All the things under Heaven are procreated by Being, and Being is procreated by Nothing",¹ this "Being" belongs to another mode of thought, and cannot be directly explained as the Western being. You may read *Essay in Praise of Being* for yourself, and see how his theory differs

from the “Being” of Daoism, and how his “Being” cannot refute the Daoist “Nothing” [wu].²

Xi Kang, who was skilled in discussion, wrote several essays, one of which was *Yang sheng lun* 養生論 [On nurturing life]. Let us pause to make a few remarks on this question. “*Yang sheng*” {nurturing life}, was an existing concern of Daoism, the purpose of *yang sheng* being to become a True/Authentic Person [*zhen ren*]. In Chinese thought, the Confucians maintain that “All men can be Yao and Shun [legendary sage-emperors, 3rd ? millennium BCE] [人人皆可以為堯舜],”³ and the Buddhists maintain that “All sentient beings can become Buddha.” Although the Daoists did not state so explicitly, one would also expect them to admit that everyone can become a True Person. The concept of becoming a True Person later developed, via such notions as nurturing life and distilling the elixir, into the search for immortality [*cheng xian* 成仙]. In his *On Nurturing Life*, Xi Kang maintained that not everyone can become an immortal.⁴ In this he was continuing the attitude of the Han dynasty [BCE 206-CE 221]. Thinkers of the Han period believed that whether one could become a sage [*shengren*] or an immortal depended on one’s innate qualities. They thought, for instance, that Confucius was “A sage set loose by Heaven” [*tian zong zhi sheng* 天縱之聖]⁵ and that not everyone could attain sagehood by means of self-cultivation.

However, to regard Confucius as “A sage set loose by Heaven” is not quite the same as the attitude of Christianity towards Jesus. In Christianity, Jesus was sent down by God, and not everyone can become Jesus by means of moral-cultivation or practice. Hence Jesus is still divine. Although there are those who, because he is “A sage set loose by Heaven,” will compare Confucius to Jesus, still, a concept like “sent down by God” is alien to the Chinese mind, and uncongenial as well. Besides, the men of the Two Han [Former and Latter Han] dynasties [BCE 206-CE 221] did not regard Confucius as someone sent down by God. If so, then how was the expression “A sage set loose by Heaven” understood by the men of the Two Han? They understood it as saying that innate qualities play a part in whether someone can become a sage, and that not everyone can learn to be one. ”Set loose by Heaven” does not mean sent by God. According to the understanding of men of the Two Han, these innate qualities are determined by material-

nature [*caixing*才性, talent-nature, natural endowment]. A person's material nature pertains to “*qi*” [material force], and not “*li*” [reason]. Where *li* is concerned, everyone can become a sage. This is the ideal. But in fact, not everyone is a sage because in reality there is a principle of limitation, which is *qi*.

Confucian thought includes the two aspects of the ideal and the actual. Ideally, everyone can become a sage, according to Confucianism. Thus it teaches that human nature is good, or what the Song [960-1280] and Ming [1368-1644] Confucians called “the human nature of morality and reason” [*yili zhi xing* 義理之性]. This is universal and the same in all men. Individuality and human differences are seen through *qi*. *Qi* is also a universal concept, but when it is realized in a person, then it becomes personality or character [*gexing*個性], or “the nature of the quality of *qi*” [*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性]. In terms of one’s talent/material-nature, there is great diversity, with everyone being different. There are natural talents and such a thing as genius. In terms of *li* 理 [reason], there is no such thing as genius. Confucius also said that “only the highest level of the wise and the lowest level of the stupid are immovable [唯上智與下愚不移],”⁶ while all those in between are malleable and changeable. With respect to *qi*, there is in reality the genius and also the idiot. Of course the genius must also work hard, although if one is without genius, it would be quite difficult to produce outstanding achievements. Nor is idiocy determined by *li*. For example, since Buddhism maintains that all sentient beings can attain Buddhahood, then even the idiot can become a Buddha. Therefore Buddhism also teaches a future life and that after generations and many *kalpas* [eons] of self-cultivation one can finally become a Buddha. Even a pigeon can become a Buddha,⁷ much less an idiot. Thus, from the perspective of *li*, an idiot can also become a sage. But in reality an idiot cannot become a sage in this life. This is because of his innate nature. Thus innate nature is not explained through *li*, but through *qi*, because being born an idiot is a matter of *qi*. It is because one is endowed with *qi* that is too muddy that one is born an idiot. When the *qi* is too muddy, the mind-orifice will not open, with the result that reason will not be able to appear. *Qi*, *xin* [mind], and *li* are a three-level concept.

Thinkers of the Two Han did not understand the idealistic aspect of Confucianism, which was also characteristic of thinkers after them, from the Wei-Jin and Southern and

Northern dynasties down to the Sui [589-618] and Tang [618-907] dynasties. That is why during this long period thinkers could not understand what was meant when pre-Qin [pre-255 BCE] Confucians such as Mencius [Meng Zi , 371?-289? BCE] and Xun Zi [fl.298-238 BCE] said “Everyone can become a sage [人人皆可以成聖],” with the result that they did not attach much importance to this aspect. Rather, they stressed *qi*.

The sage [*shengren*] is someone with a virtuous character. Just as the Stoics of the West stressed virtue, so the highest ideal of the sage is sageliness [*sheng*] (not necessarily the same sageliness as that of the Stoics), and it must begin with moral cultivation [進德修業]. The Confucians of the pre-Qin period already had this concept, and both Mencius and Xun Zi talked about it directly and clearly. When Xun Zi said “The man in the street can become Yu [legendary sage-emperor, 3rd ? millennium BCE] [途之人可以為舜],”⁸ it was the same as saying “All men can become Yao and Shun.” But examined closely, there was a difference between Mencius and Xun Zi. The “can” of Mencius had a strong basis; it was not merely a logical possibility but a real possibility. According to Xun Zi, there was only a logical possibility, for he taught that human nature was evil. Although human nature being evil and “The man in the street can become Yu” did not contradict each other, the underlying possibility was weaker, and so we say that there was only a logical possibility.

From the Two Han down to the Sui and Tang dynasties, there was little appreciation of this idealistic aspect, while the stress was on the aspect of *qi*. Only when the Song Neo-Confucians emerged to revive Confucianism did they arrive at a true understanding of the concept of *li*, reason. Moreover, this understanding was a direct and intimate one. Cheng Yichuan [1033-1108] maintained that “As to those above great wisdom we do not talk about talent/material [*cai*][大賢以上不論才],”⁹ “those above great wisdom” meaning the sagely and wise [*shengxian* 聖賢]. This statement indicates that the sagely and wise are not discussed in terms of talents. This does not mean that the sage does not need talents, but rather that the attainment of sageliness and wisdom rests on virtue, not talents. Of course it does not mean that the ordinary man does not need to practice morals, but the ideal or spiritual intensity for him is not concentrated here; rather, it lies in making a living or in professional achievement, and so here “talents” are

required. *Renwu Zhi* 人物誌 [*Biographies*] was mainly talking about talent-nature in an attempt to measure a person's talent-nature [endowments] to see what the individual person was best suited for.

The *Renwu Zhi* also gives the standard for a sage, namely “*zhong he zhi cai* 中和之才” [the material of Centrality and Harmony].¹⁰ “*Zhong he*” [Centrality/Centeredness and Harmony] is a term borrowed from *The Doctrine of the Mean* [*Zhong Yong*], although it does not have the original meaning of *The Doctrine of the Mean*.¹¹ The *zhong he* of *The Doctrine of the Mean* is understood in terms of *li*, reason, while the *zhong he* of the *Biographies* is understood in terms of *qi*, pertaining to natural endowments. The sage is not without talents, but attaining sageliness itself lies in virtue and wisdom and not in knowledge, techniques, and abilities. Likewise scientific technique cannot enable someone to possess wisdom; thus the expert and the sage are two different things. “As regards those above wisdom we do not talk about talent” is a statement made self-consciously with the ideal of the pre-Qin Confucians in mind. Because the men of the Two Han and Wei-Jin periods were deficient in moral consciousness, they invariably failed to understand the ideal side of Confucianism.

Thus “talent” [*cai*], and “virtue” [*de*] are two different concepts. The sage is a sage because of virtue and not talent. But going a step further, why is “virtue” so well expressed in the sage, and not in the ordinary person? This brings us to the “material nature” [*cai*]d by means of which the sage is able to perfectly manifest “virtue.” The ordinary man does not have sufficient “talent/material [*cai*]” of this sort, and is therefore limited in this respect. Here we are talking in terms of “*cai-zhi* 材質” [talent-calibre, talent-quality] and “*qi*.” In terms of *li*, this would not be the case, for every person could become a sage and a Buddha. And speaking in the longer term, if one cannot attain sagehood or Buddhahood in this life, one could look forward to a coming life, and then the question becomes deeper.

In discussing philosophy we should speak of both *li* and *qi*; otherwise it would be incomplete and land us in trouble. If we only stress *qi*, then the result will be “The strong oppressing the weak, the many brutalizing the few [強凌弱，眾暴寡].” This is the trouble with Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche [1844-1900], who places special

emphasis on life and espouses the Overman [*ubermann*], is unable to confront the concept of virtue. Nietzsche supposed that one whose life-force is strong will also be superior in morals and wisdom. In terms of the highest state of perfection, the morally superior person must also have strong vitality, as, for example, Confucius and Jesus. But here the “strong vitality” is not the natural strong vitality that we ordinarily mean, nor is it a strength of body or constitution. The strength we ordinarily talk about is determined by life and *qi*, where the concept of “virtue” does not appear. Thus there are two different meanings, and we should not simply emphasize one aspect. Plato’s philosopher-king belongs to the element metal. From this perspective, the philosopher-king is also innately determined, just as the slave is also innately determined. But this won’t do. In this respect Confucianism is more reasonable [通達]. Becoming a sage [*sheng*] and becoming a wise man [*xian*] depend on virtue and not on politics. Even if in reality Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu were all sage-kings, after Confucius the two were separated. According to the basic principles of Confucianism, the two must be separated, for politics is politics and morality is morality. The two should be joined in society and culture, but not concentrated in one person. If they are concentrated in one person, then it would lead to totalitarianism, which is alien to the basic spirit of Confucianism.

Thus, to be complete, a person should have both talent and virtue. This is the Confucian position. From the perspective of virtue and reason, it is necessary to affirm that human nature is good. This is the moral nature, the same in all men, and it can only be universal. However, if there were only this side, then we cannot explain human limitations or human differences. Thus there has to be also the material side, the *qi* side. *Qi* has two functions. On the one hand it is a negative, limiting principle; on the other hand it can have a positive function, namely, *qi* is an instrument for realizing *li*. Beginning from the Han dynasty only *qi* was stressed. Consequently, Xi Kang’s *On Nurturing Life* maintained that not everyone can become an immortal. Although this is incompatible with the basic spirit of the three schools of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, it may be seen as an old attitude dating from the Two Han.

Another work of Xi Kang, *On Sound Having No Joy and Sorrow*, is not an orthodox work on understanding music. Not only did Xi Kang understand music theory,

he was also a fine musician. Xi Kang sought to understand music through music, and he wrote on a very high level. In the orthodox tradition, the Chinese emphasized the moral effect of music, as the *Yue Ji* 樂記 [*Records of Music*] tells us. Xi Kang rose above this level and discussed the beauty of music as music. The concept of beauty was liberated from the useful and moral, and purified. Appreciation of all the arts should reach this level. Taking music as an example, to judge music by subjective impression alone, as if there were no fixed criteria for judging its beauty, or to appreciate music only for its moral effect, is only the first step in appreciating music. Xi Kang's *On Sound Having No Joy and Sorrow* liberates music from subjective feeling and argues that music in itself does not have such feelings as joy, anger, sorrow, or happiness. These feelings are produced by the subjective responses to music. His theory is an objectivist one, akin to Plato and alien to traditional Chinese thought, and therefore quite unique. Plato was in favor of appreciating the beauty of form, and since form is objective, his attitude falls under objectivism. According to Platonic realism, the beauty of music lies in its structural and rhythmic form; only when we eliminate subjective associations and feelings and appreciate the harmonies of music itself do we have true beauty; only then do we have pure music. To discuss music and beauty in this way represents a higher state.¹²

According to tradition Ruan Ji 阮籍 [210-263] also wrote an *Essay on Music* [*Yue Lun*]. I doubt, however, whether it was really written by Ruan Ji, because the points it makes are still the old attitudes of the traditional *Records of Music* [*Yue Ji*]. If it was indeed written by Ruan Ji, it was inconsistent, for it says that Ruan Ji objects to the ritual [*li*] of the Sage, even saying “How could ritual have been established for me? [禮豈為我設也。]” On the other hand when he discusses music he approves of the teaching of the Sage. It is inconsistent, for according to the traditional point of view, not understanding ritual meant not understanding music, ritual and music being always linked together. Thus that treatise on music is possibly not by Ruan Ji.¹³

The third question is Fan Zhen's *Shen mie lun* [*On the Mortality of the Spirit*]. This was a materialistic article directed at the Buddhism that had been introduced into China. Its target was transmigration, the flow of consciousness of the eternally immortal *ālaya* consciousness. If the spirit is extinguished, how can there be transmigration, a next

life? However, the immortal flow of *ālaya*-consciousness is still different from the immortality of the soul in the Christianity of the West. According to Buddhism, although the *ālaya*-consciousness is immortal, it can be transformed, namely “turn consciousness into wisdom [轉識成智].” Although consciousness [*shi*] is transformed into wisdom [*zhi*], “spirit” [*shen*], “mind-soul” [*xinling* 心靈], is eternal. The concept of an individual soul that is immortal does not appear in Chinese thought, either in Buddhism or in Confucianism. When Lu Xiangshang and Wang Yangming and those after them talked about mind [*xin*], they were referring to a universal, eternal mind, namely, “*liangxin*” [good mind, often translated “conscience”], and not the immortality of the soul. Hence it was still different from the West. This shows that the question of whether an individual soul was mortal or immortal soul did not occur in China.

Fan Zhen’s theory resembles naturalism, and stemmed from the Daoist concern with nature, although it was not the original Daoist meaning. Both Fan Zhen and Wang Chong 王充 [CE 27-c.100] were influenced by Daoism, but neither was Wang Chong’s thought in the form of Daoist naturalism. It was similar to Western naturalism. Lao Zi spoke of nature in a transcendental sense. Since it was not discussed in terms of *qi*, it cannot be understood in terms of Western naturalism. According to Wang Chong’s naturalism, *qi* is mutable, and does not have an immortal spirit. Fan Zhen used the relationship of the blade and the knife to elucidate the relationship of spirit and *qi*.¹⁴ This of course is materialistic thought. This is thought of the simplest and most superficial kind, which is why it is easily accepted by the average person. When the Communists came and looked at Chinese traditional thought with the criterion of materialism, all that was left to them was the thought of such people as Wang Chong and Fan Zhen, and they even bracketed Zhang Hengqu 張橫渠 [1020-1077] with them. In fact, Zhang Hengqu does not belong to *qi*-ism, while Wang Chong merely put special emphasis on *qi*. Only Fan Zhen alone really espoused a philosophy centered on *qi*. To forcibly fit Marxism over Chinese philosophy is to deny Chinese culture.

The three questions of Pei Wei’s *Chong you lun* [Essay in Praise of Being], Xi Kang’s *Sheng wu aile lun* [On Sound Having No Joy and Sorrow], and Fan Zhen’s *Shen mie lun* [On the Mortality of the Spirit] were not a question of being anti-tradition; rather, they were non-traditional. The Chinese mentality found such thought uncongenial, and

therefore tended to ignore it. Nor was such thought well understood. All the same, these works did have something significant to say. For example, the being [you] of *Essay in Praise of Being* resembled the being [you] that has been of such great concern to Western philosophers ever since Plato, but was different from the you [Being] of Lao Zi. The you discussed by Lao Zi is very lofty and intriguing. Only when it descends into reality and is fixed does it become the Being of Pei Wei, and bears a resemblance to Western thought. All three questions I have just described deserve our careful attention. (The question of the immortality of the spirit was hotly debated during the period. Writings on the debate are found in *Hong Ming Ji* 弘明集 and *Guang Hong Ming Ji* 廣弘明集)

While *xuanxue* [Dark Learning, i.e., Neo-Daoist metaphysics] constituted the mainstream of Wei-Jin philosophy, there were the three important issues I have just described which did not belong to the Chinese intellectual tradition. The Wei-Jin period was followed by the Southern and Northern dynasties and the Sui and Tang dynasties. During this long period, the emphasis of Chinese cultural development, or the main direction of the national cultural life, lay in absorbing and digesting Buddhism. This was work that spanned a long period. To understand and digest a people's cultural system requires long-term effort. It cannot be done in a short period of time. In the present cultural flow between China and the West, we may say that in terms of an overall objective understanding, Western sinologists' understanding of China is not as rich the Chinese scholars' understanding of the West, nor are they as open-minded. Because the Chinese national character is broadminded and open, the Chinese are less prejudiced and have fewer obstacles in acquiring an objective understanding. For example, the Japanese people are insufficiently inventive, which explains why they concentrate on absorbing the culture of other peoples, as if they do not have their own culture, which is not actually the case. For example, before the Meiji Reformation [1868] they concentrated on absorbing the culture of China, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. But the result of the absorption and digestion often did not agree with the original meaning of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. This indicates that this people has a foundation of natural talents that is very firmly rooted. This is not intentional but natural, the nation having its own unique style, which influences its objective understanding. In objective understanding the Chinese people is broader and more correct. This does not mean that

the Chinese understanding of the West is greater. Rather it means that compared to Westerners' understanding of China, the Chinese understanding of the West is, in terms of natural aptitude, accompanied by fewer limitations and barriers.

To take another example, there are those who like to talk about “the Sinicization of Buddhism,” or “Chinese Buddhism,” as if Chinese Buddhism were different from Indian Buddhism. But if we were to take a closer look, what exactly does this “Sinicization” mean? How and to what degree? Careful examination will reveal that this kind of discussion is misguided. There is only one Buddhism. What is known as the Chinese development is invariably the developing of the principles contained originally in the Buddhist sūtras a step further. It has not changed in nature to become a “Chinese Buddhism” different from that of India.

We shall begin to discuss the principal topic of the Southern and Northern dynasties and the Sui and Tang dynasties which followed the Wei-Jin period—Buddhism. While the content of Buddhism is particularly rich and complex, we shall continue to give an overall account of their basic concepts and principal implications. Buddhism will be discussed as a philosophy, providing us with an understanding on the most basic level. Once this level is achieved, we may then go forward step by step into cultivation of practice [*xiuxing*] and enter into the sphere of religion. As a philosophy, Buddhism is the most heuristic of philosophies, opening up new vistas of understanding more than any other philosophy in China, and involving more levels than any other. We shall not at present go into the complex details of each of the schools of Hinayana and Mahayana, but will bring up the major basic concepts of Buddhism, pointing out questions involved in the concepts. In other words, we will give a reflective account of Buddhism which will be a second-order discussion and not a basic description of its content.

We must first understand the concept of “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” [*yuanqi xingkong* 緣起性空], a basic concept common to and accepted by all the schools of Mahayana and Hinayana. In the beginning Buddhism taught the Twelve Dependent-Originations [十二緣生, twelve *nidānas*]¹⁵, everything being within cause-conditions [*yinyuan* 因緣, Skt. *hetupratyaya*], beginning from unenlightenment. On unenlightenment depends karma [unenlightenment is the condition for karma], on karma depends consciousness, etc., twelve stages that revolve endlessly. Because of the twelve

Dependent-Originations [dependent arisings or arisals], there is the statement “All karmas are without constancy, all dharmas [beings, things] are without self [] .”¹⁶ The concept of “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” is a general principle, universal principle formed by the generalization of such teachings of Śākyamuni as the Twelve Dependent-Originations, the impermanence of all thought, and all things being without self. This is the universal common ground [*gongfa*] of Mahayana and Hinayana, and without an understanding of “Dependent Origination Substance-Empty” we cannot talk about Buddhism.

With respect to Dependent-Origination, “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” is a universal concept, what we generally call causation. Western philosophy and science are fond of causality, although they do not have the concept of “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty.” This indicates that they follow a different line of thought. The Buddhist “Dependent-Origination” will necessarily imply “emptiness of substance,” whereas when Westerners talk about causality, it is precisely for the purpose of proving that “substance is not empty.” The reason why the natural laws and natural causality are laws is that they make natural phenomena intelligible. But “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” views causality from the perspective of “emptiness” precisely for the purpose of explaining that the world is unintelligible. For example, the concept of “origination” [*sheng*, arising, being born] is unintelligible, and the world of phenomena is unintelligible, which is why it is described as “illusion-like, delusion-like.”¹⁷ “All dharmas are not procreated by themselves, nor are they procreated by others. Since they are not born with these causes nor are they born without cause, we know that they are not born [are non- arising, non-originating] [諸法不自生，亦不自他生，不共不無因，是故知無生].”¹⁸ This indicates that “arising” [生, be born] is unintelligible, which is the meaning of such statements as “patient belief in non-arising dharma [*wu sheng fa ren* 無聲法忍],”¹⁹ and “understanding emptiness of substance” [*tifa kong* 體法空].²⁰ Westerners have regarded causality as ontologically real, and therefore they do not have such statements as “illusion-like, delusion-like” [*ru huan ru hua* 如幻如化] These two avenues of thought and their cultural backgrounds are obviously different.

As regards this difference, I have in the past made two pronouncements. In general the philosophies of the world---taking Western philosophies and the Western tradition as representative---have consisted of “the struggle for Being.” This is characteristic of all Western sciences, philosophies, and religions. Being is simply self-nature [*zixing* 自性 , substance], in other words, substance [self-nature] is not empty. Ever since Plato, the emphasis has been on Being, and even in recent times Heidegger continues to explain Being, all of which shows that Being is very difficult to grasp. It is great wisdom to get a grip on Being. Buddhism is just the opposite of this, having been engaged precisely with “the struggle for Non-Being.” with eliminating Being. If we eliminate being, then we are left with “emptiness of substance,” which is to say, “All beings [dharma] are without substance [諸法無自性],” “All karmas are without permanence, all dharmas are without self [諸行無常 , 諸法無我].” Being without permanence and without self is simply to be without substance [self-nature], and to be without substance is emptiness. However, to say “emptiness” does not mean that there is no phenomena, for phenomena still has “being,” although they are without substance, and to be without substance is to be “empty”. Why are phenomena without substance? Because their arisals are dependent on cause-condition. Dependent-Origination implies without self-nature [substance]. Without self-nature implies emptiness. Thus “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” is an analytic proposition, as well as an identical proposition, for Dependent Origination is simply emptiness of substance. This also represents great wisdom. While Being is difficult to grasp, “emptiness” is also difficult to grasp. When we speak of “I” every day, we are affirming the self. If we remove the substance of “I,” or, where human beings are concerned, remove the personality, then we can no longer speak of the individual soul or the immortality of the individual soul. Both the affirmation of Being and the affirmation of the emptiness of substance are great wisdom and it is from such wisdom that we judge whether humankind is worthy of our respect and esteem.

The above are questions that emerge from the concept of “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty.” This is a very significant philosophical question, and represents a philosophical realm that should be further developed in the present age, a different mode of thought that deserves to be confronted. To develop a new philosophical horizon is to

develop Chinese philosophy. I hope that all of you will apply yourself diligently, for only after you have undergone rigorous intellectual training will you be able to advance the principles of truth and the philosophical horizon a step further.

While Western philosophy has been engaged in the struggle for Being, Buddhism has been struggling for Non-Being. Then what about Confucianism and Daoism? Confucianism still affirms Being, and is also engaged in the struggle for Being, but does so from the perspective of morality. So it remains different from the West. Daoism is unique, as it does not conform to any of the above modes. I have therefore used a statement of Zhuang Zi to describe it. His words are quite sly, but they are apt in conveying the flavor of Daoism. Zhuang Zi said: “Between material [*cai* 才] and non-material [才與不才之間].”²¹ This is the Daoist mode, neither affirming Being as in the Western tradition, nor asserting the emptiness of substance as in Buddhism, nor asserting Being on the basis of morality as in Confucianism, but a mode that lies in the realm between these three. This is a philosophical question that comes out of reflection and searching, after one has attained a profound understanding of the character of each system of thought. Thus it represents a higher level. As to a ground-level understanding, you will have to attain that by studying the original texts carefully.

Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty can lead to many other concepts. From the perspective of Dependent-Origination, namely causal occasioning, causal happening as such, or “neither adding nor subtracting,”²² it is simply emptiness of substance. If it is augmented, then it becomes attachment and becomes *changjian* 常見, a permanence-view. If it is diminished, then it becomes *duanjian* 斷見, a nihility/nullity-view. Neither is the Middle Path. According to Buddhism, to “struggle for Being” is to seek permanence; it is an augmented view. To regard all as void and empty is a diminished view. Both the permanence-view and the nullity-view are deviant attachments and do not conform to the Middle Path. This is the fascinating part of the concept of “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty.”

Since there is “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty,” where do we find “permanence?” At first Buddhism spoke of such things as impermanence, suffering, emptiness, non-self. But by the time of the ideal state of Nirvana Dharma-body in

Mahayana, it also speaks of “permanence, bliss, self, and purity [常樂我淨].” Nirvana Dharma-body [*niepan fashen* 涅槃法身] is simply permanence, the great freedom [*zizai* 自在, self sufficiency], and the True Self. But this True Self is not the individual soul but the “non-ego-form self [無我相之我].” Although a paradox, this remains a mental state in Buddha, namely “permanence.” It is only when “permanence” in this sense is reached that the various phenomena characterized by “Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty” and “illusion-like, delusion-like” can be completely ensured. Using the concept of the laws of causality and going backward to pursue “first cause” and “sufficient reason,” Western philosophy arrives at God’s Creation, and uses the Creation to ensure the existence of the myriad things. Although Buddhism uses the “permanence” of Nirvana Dharma-body to ensure the Dependent-Origination of the myriad things, dependent-arising seen as dependent-arising, without adding or subtracting, is still emptiness of substance. In this way, are not the two avenues of thought the same?

Kant [1724-1804] also had some thoughts about this. He did not first bring up God. Instead he explained the concept of Dependent-Origination [*yuanqi*] and causality within the scope of understanding, for the moment not involving reason. On this level of “understanding,” he also explained all representations and appearances (phenomena) as “mere relations.” When all things appear before us as objects, they are already within relations. The phenomena that we understand are understood through these relations, that is, things can only become objects when they are part of relations. As to the supporting point of appearances and relations, namely the thing-in-itself, we cannot know it. This indicates that Kant believed that the thing-in-itself is not within a relation, while phenomena are merely relations.

The statement “phenomena are merely relations” can raise a number of questions. In his book *Appearance and Reality*, the British philosopher Bradley [1846-1924] made a formal refutation of this statement. Bradley held that if phenomena were merely relations, then relations themselves could not be possible. A relation requires relata, as when A and B form a relation, A and B themselves being relata and not relations. If all things were relations, then what are the relata? If they are still relations, then relata have to be presupposed. Thus a given thing will be forever dividing itself, and cannot hold itself to become a term. In other words, there can never ever be the final relata. Thus,

although Kant used relations to explain phenomena, in fact they have not been explained, and a relation itself cannot be understood. However, what Bradley demolished in this way was not the category of relations, but the relations of those objects determined by categories, for example, the quantity of an object determined by the category of quantity, and so forth; for according to Bradley, none of these relations can be understood.

If Bradley did not agree with Kant's explanation of objects as relations, how did he solve this question? Bradley defined appearance as self-contradictory and unintelligible. Then how is this contradiction to be resolved? He did not assert as Leibniz did that there was a monad that was the final relatum, for this explanation had already been refuted by Kant. Bradley was what is called a neo-Hegelian. His thought developed along the lines of Hegel, and he held that these contradictory phenomena are all reconciled in "the immediate this." This then is "reality," and all those contradictory phenomena are the rich contents of this "reality." The immediate this is the Absolute.

Still, Bradley's explanation was different from Hegel's. Hegel started with Absolute Being, and Absolute Being was empty. Through dialectical development this Absolute Being expanded step by step, a method that is an "expansive dialectic." And we can call Bradley's method a "reconciliatory dialectic." All contradictory and conflicting phenomena are reconciled in the immediate this. The immediate this then becomes reality. Contradiction disappears and on the contrary enriches the immediate this, becoming its rich content. This sort of reconciliatory dialectic is very significant.

Actually Kant could respond to Bradley's refutation. Bradley held that what we call appearance is fraught with conflict and contradiction. Phenomena taken in this sense is the same as what Kant called "dialectic", and "illusion"; but since Kant did not say that representation and phenomenon are illusions, then representation and phenomenon in themselves should not be contradictory. According to Kant's way of thinking, if they are explained on the level of understanding, phenomena are determined by categories, which appear only to human beings; therefore before God there are no phenomena. If so, then when we speak of "the relations of phenomena," the possibility of relations are presented through sensible forms, namely time and space, and are determined by the legislating pure concepts of understanding, namely categories. In this way, the object consists of certain phenomena appearing to the human sensibility. These phenomena are merely

relations that take the form of time and space, and are determined by legislating concepts such as categories. Relations being assured by time and space and categories, is not the question then solved? Besides, scientific knowledge can still be explained. If we accept Bradley's theory that phenomena are all conflicting and contradictory, then would not science be impossible? He did not consider how one should deal with science. Kant, on the other hand, could explain scientific knowledge. As to taking a step further and dealing with the world of phenomena as a whole, that would require going into reason. Reason supplies the idea, and following the category of causality and going backward to pursue the unconditional would bring us to another level of the problem, one belonging to the sphere of reason. The discussion of phenomena can temporarily stop at understanding and not involve reason. In this way knowledge can be explained and for the moment it will suffice.

Zhuang Zi also had thoughts similar to Bradley's on the so-called *relata* itself not being able to stand still. This was the "theory of that and this when living [彼是方生之說]" in his chapter "On the Equality of Things" [*Qi Wu Lun*]. Zhuang Zi said: "Things when living are dying, when dying are living, when can cannot, when cannot can.... That and this cannot get its mate. This is called the pivot of Tao [物方生方死，方死方生，方可方不可，，，，彼是莫得其偶，是謂道樞]." "That and this cannot get its mate" indicates that duality cannot be established. Which is why Zhuang Zi also said: "That is also a yes and no. This is also a yes and no.... Yes is also an infinity, no is also an infinity [彼亦一是非，此亦一是非，，，，是亦一無窮，非亦一無窮]." ²³ That and this both endlessly split and cannot stand still. The mate of that is this, the mate of this is that, and since neither that nor this can stand still, neither can obtain a mate, which means that the principle of duality is demolished. This is the basic meaning of "On the Equality of Things". The main text of the chapter is this long passage, which is highly philosophical, and extremely difficult to explicate. In terms of logic, "that" and "this" can be expressed as A, -A, representing the principle of duality. A cannot stand alone as A, for if you say it is A, it also splits into A-A, endlessly. Likewise -A. Therefore, "Yes is an infinity, no is also an infinity."

Zhuang Zi's "theory of that and this when living" is speaking in terms of Hui Shi 惠施's point of view, but differs from Hui Shi's philosophy of Names [*mingli* 名理]. When Zhuang Zi says that living is also dying, being is not being, he means that the two poles of living and dying, being and not being, cannot stand still, making it impossible to speak of duality. Without duality, all logic and mathematics would be impossible. Logic and mathematics are based on duality, which is why there is the rule that double negation is equal to affirmation. Here we find an important philosophical question, which is that logic, mathematics, and science all lie within the sphere of duality, whereas Zhuang Zi wants to demolish this duality in order to reach the absolute. Without demolishing duality, the absolute cannot be attained. Of course, Zhuang Zi did not demolish duality from the perspective of knowledge, but from the perspective of equalizing and leveling true and false, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, and so on. Thus he was exuberant, lively, and unfettered. This is the mind of the Chinese. Although Bradley's thought resembles Zhuang Zi's, it appears sophistical and constricted.

Thus from the concept of "Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty" we have distinguished three different strands of thought, namely the Buddhist strand, the Kantian strand, and the strand of Bradley and Zhuang Zi. Is it then not a very important philosophical question?

The principle of duality is most fundamental in logic. Only when we have the principle of duality do we have the three laws of thought: the law of identity, the law of contradiction, and the law of excluded middle. Nowadays scholars in symbolic logic and logical analysis do not attach importance to this matter, simply taking duality as a postulate or a convention. If we restrict ourselves to formalism itself and regard logic as purely a technique, then this is acceptable. However, this cannot satisfy the philosophical mind. Logic can also develop in the direction of philosophy, allowing us to talk about the philosophy of logic, which is also a proper direction for logic.

Since the principle of duality is so important, and Zhuang Zi demolishes duality with his "theory of that and this when living" so persuasively, this takes us to yet another question, which is: Under what conditions should we demolish duality, and under what circumstances should we retain duality? For if we do not retain duality, then logic, mathematics, and science would all be impossible. In the past this question did not exist,

nor did it occur to Zhuang Zi himself. But in discussing philosophy in the present age we must confront and solve this question. To solve this question, we do not have to distort Zhuang Zi's original intent; at the same time, we can deal with logic, mathematics, and science properly. This calls upon each of you to exert your philosophical faculty.

In terms of Buddhism itself, Dependent-Origination Substance-Empty is simply looking at dependent-arising as dependent-arising, without adding or subtracting. Although Buddhism did not affirm Kant's explanation, such Kantian concepts as time-and-space and categories are also found in Buddhism, namely in "dharmas of thought non-corresponding to mind [*bu xiangying xing fa* 不相应行法]", which is also called "provisional dharmas of differentiation [*fenwei jiafa* 分位假法, Skt. *citta-viprayuktasamsk*]." ²⁴ "Xing 行" here is the "xingwei 行為, action or mental activity" [Skt. *samskara*, the fourth *skandha*] of the Five Aggregates [Skt. *pañcaskandha*, five skandhas, or five components of the self], "se, shou, xiang, xing, shi 色, 受, 想, 行, 識" [form, sensation, perception, mental activity, consciousness]", not what we now call "xingdong 行動" [actions]. It has the sense of the term in psychology, where it pertains to "thought [*si* 思]," meaning to think thoughtlessly. This kind of thought is called "xing 行," as in "*zhu xing wu chang* 諸行無常 [all thinking is without permanence]." In Buddhism, dharmas-non-corresponding-to-mind are the provisionally-established dharmas [*jia li zhi fa* 假立之法], where "*jia* 假 [false, provisional]" does not necessarily mean false but that it is established according to a base and this is "*fenwei jiafa* 分位假法" [provisional dharmas of differentiation]. Of course this is not real, and so it is still "attachment", falling under "overall-calculation attachment" [*pianji suo zhi* 遍計所執], and therefore when we "convert consciousness into wisdom" it must be dissolved. But scientific knowledge is precisely committed to these provisional dharmas non-corresponding to mind. According to Kant's line of thought, these are precisely the formal conditions that make experience possible. Thus in these times, when we propagate Buddhism and wish to explain scientific knowledge, we must affirm the value of this aspect. This does not mean that we are affirming attachment; rather some attachments have considerable truth. For example, science contains truth, it being

authentic worldly/conventional truth. In this sense then, Buddhism can accommodate Kant and is not in conflict with Kant.

Still, Bradley's thought is different. Consequently his immediate this is not the Buddhist "Suchness" [*ju* 如, Skt. *tathata*]. He still belongs to the neo-Hegelian dialectical avenue of thought. Hegel's dialectics of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is a rudimentary method, which Bradley still keeps as his foundation. But Zhuang Zi's refutation of duality and the Buddhist Eight Negations of Dependent-Origination are different from this. For example, Buddhism talks about "the non-dual truth" [*bu er famen* 不二法門, dharma-door of non-duality]. If like Hegel we arrive at "the non-dual" through the synthetical unity of two opposites, then even though it has intensity, it can only be counted as a transition, and not a true "non-dual." Hence in the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* [*Weimojie-jing* 維摩詰經] the non-dual truth is explained in several ways, all of which reaches the non-dual by the dual, which is unacceptable. When Mañjuśrī [Wenshushili] said: "Not speaking is to be non-dual," Vimalakīrti immediately kept silent, which actually manifested the state of being non-dual by not even saying "Not speaking is to be non-dual."²⁵ Is this not beautiful? There was no falsity here. This was the most beautiful, most perfect, most bland, most real state. Zhuang Zi was also like this. Ultimately, you must dissolve tension and return to being unperturbed and relaxed. Only this can be called the highest state.

Because of this I have often thought that there is no illusion in Chinese philosophy. Although Western philosophy is strong in the logical and the conceptual, there is illusion, for the intellectual concept itself has its limitations. Therefore one sees tension and struggle. As soon as there is lack of lucidity, as soon as distinctions are blurred, there will appear fallacies and illusions. It was these fallacies resulting from lack of proper distinctions that Kant criticized. But these fallacies will naturally flow out of Western thought, which is why Kant said that dialectic was unavoidable and natural, and therefore must be criticized continually. Although it is very fortunate that Chinese philosophy does not have these fallacies, it suffers from a lack of conceptual framework. Thus if we in the present day wish to undertake modernization, we should set up conceptual frameworks. Of course, modernization is not the highest horizon, only a middle level, but it is necessary, just as science is not the highest state, but is necessary.

In this lecture we have sketched three important questions of the period from the Wei-Jin [220-420] to the Liang dynasty [502-557] that fell outside the mainstream of *xuan* metaphysics. These questions resembled Western thought and were therefore very special. They are not the main topic of this lecture but were introduced as an appendix to what we discussed in the last lecture. The present lecture focused on how Wei-Jin *xuan* metaphysics was continued and passed into Buddhism. We took the fundamental Buddhist concept of “Dependant-Origination Substance-Empty” and discussed various philosophies that were related to this concept, and the theories and questions that arose out of it. This is only a beginning. Later lectures will follow the development of Buddhism and discuss some of its principal thought and the questions that emerged out of this thought. This should greatly contribute to the further development of Chinese and Western philosophy

Transcribed by Yi-hsien Hu 胡以嫻

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¹ The first quote is from *Dao De Jing*, ch. 1. The second quote is from ch. 40.

² See Mou Zongsan, *Caixing yü Xuan Li [Material-Nature and Xuan Principles]* (Tauoei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1974), ch. 10, section 2.

³ *Mencius* 6B.2: "Jiao of Cao asked: 'Is it true that everyone can become Yao and Shun?' Mencius replied: 'Yes.'"

⁴ Xi Kang, "*Yang sheng lun [On Nurturing Life]*": "Immortals [*shenxian*, sometimes translated transcendents] seem to have especially received unusual *qi* 氣 [vital energy, material force] as an innate endowment and not something that can be achieved by accumulated learning." See Mou, *Caixing yu Xuanli*, ch. 9, sect. 1.

⁵ *Analects*, 9.6.1-2.: "The *taizai* [great steward] asked Zigong: 'Is Master a sage? How is it that he has so many abilities?' Zigong replied: 'Indeed Heaven set him loose to become a sage, but in addition he also has many abilities.'"

⁶ *Analects* 17.3.

⁷ See *Da zhidu lun [Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra]*, juan 11.

⁸ See *Xun Zi*, "Xing E" [Human Nature is Evil] chapter.

⁹ *Er Cheng Quan Shu* [Complete Works of the Two Cheng Brothers], *Yi Shu* 18, "Yichuan Xiansheng *Yu* [Sayings of Yichuan]", 4: "For we discuss talent [*cai*] in men of great sagacity [*da xian*], but as regards those who are above men of great sagacity, we do not discuss talent. The sage [*shengren*] is joined with Heaven in its essence, with the sun and the moon in brightness. How many skills and arts can a body of six *chi* [a measure of length] hold? The human being has a body which requires the use of skills and arts. The sage forgets to think of himself, much less of talents."

¹⁰ Liu Shao, *Renwu Zhi* [Biographies], "Jiu Zheng 九徵" number 1: " Among all the qualities of men, *zhonghe* [Centrality and Harmony] is the noblest... Therefore that which is reached through concurrent virtues [*jiande* 兼德] is called *zhongyong* [the Mean]. *Zhonghe* is the sage's category."

¹¹ For example: "*Zhong* [the Middle, Center, Mean] is the great base [ground] of all under Heaven. *He* [harmony] is where all under Heaven reach Dao. When *zhonghe* is attained, Heaven and Earth are in their places, the myriad things are born and grow."

¹² On *Sheng wu aile lun* [On Sound Having No Sorrow or Joy] see Mou, *Caixing yu Xuanli*, ch. 9, sect. 4.

¹³ See Mou, *Caixing yu Xuanli*, ch. 8, sect. 3.

¹⁴ For Fan Zhens *Shen mie lun* [On the Mortality of the Spirit] see *Liang Shu* [History of the Liang dynasty], "Fan Zhen Lie Zhuan" [Biography of Fan Zhen].

¹⁵ Also called the twelve *yuanqi* [dependent-originations, Skt. *nidānas*] or the twelve *yinyuan* [cause-conditions, Skt. *hetupratyaya*], namely unenlightenment, action or mental activity, consciousness, names-and-objects, the six sense-organs, touch, perceptions or sensations, craving, grasping, existence or becoming, birth, old age and death.

¹⁶ For example, *Da zhidu lun* [Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra], *juan* 22 says: "There are three kinds of Buddha-truths: In the first, all dharmas rise and become extinct every moment and have no permanence. In the second, all dharmas are without the self. In the third, there is extinction and nirvana." For example, *Da banniepan jing* [Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra], *juan* B says: "The impermanence of all thought is the dharma of life and death. When life and death are extinguished, the extinction becomes the joy of nirvana."

¹⁷ For example, *Da boro jing* [Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra], *juan* 499, says: "...Shan Xian 善現 answered: 'Not only me, but even Buddha-wisdom is illusion-like, delusion-like, like what appears in a dream, and they say nirvana is illusion-like, delusion-like, like what appears in a dream.'"

¹⁸ Long Shu [Nāgārjuna], *Zhongguan lun song* [*Mādyamika-karika*].

¹⁹ For example, *Da zhidu lun* [*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra*], *juan 73*, says: "Patient belief in non-arising and so forth, and even the tiny dharmas are unattainable, much less the big dharmas--that is called non-arising. When non-arising dharmas are attained and karma is non-emerging, non-arising--that is called attaining the patient belief in non-arising dharmas."

²⁰ For example, Di Guan 諦觀's *Tiantai Si Jiao Yi* 天台四教儀 [*The Four Protocols of Teaching of the Tiantai School*], *juan 34*: "Everything is unreal, every reality [substance] is also unreal, everything is not real, is not unreal--Buddha in these four statements was broadly speaking of the ultimate truth. The *Middle Treatise* [*Zhong-lun*] elucidates these four statements as naming the reality of dharmas, thus illuminating the Common Teaching [the second period of the Tiantai school's classification of Buddhist teaching into four periods, Common Teaching connecting the Hinayana period with the two later periods of Mahayana Special Teaching and Mahayana Perfect Teaching]. These were precisely the statements that cause-condition dharmas are like dreams and illusions that dissolve into echoes, and like the moon in the water merely a mirrored image, and that all things are empty."

²¹ *Zhuang Zi*, "Shan Mu" [The Mountain Tree] chapter: "The disciples asked Zhuang Zi: 'Yesterday the tree in the mountain was able to live out its years because it was not [of any use as] material [*cai*]. Today the owner's goose died because it was not [of any use as] material. Where would you, Sir, stand?' Zhuang Zi smiled and said: 'I, Zhou, will stand between material and non-material.'"

²² For example, *Bore xin jing* [*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*, *Heart Sūtra*] says: "It means that dharmas are empty, not arising and not extinguishing, not dirty and not clean, not increasing and not diminishing."

²³ The quotes are from *Zhuang Zi* 2.5, "Qi Wu Lun" [On the Equality of Things chapter.

²⁴ For example, the *Dasheng Wu Wen Lun* [*Mahayana Five Skandhas sastra*] says: "What is the meaning of thoughts non-corresponding to the mind? It is as if they are falsely/provisionally established in accordance with the object, the subject, and the subjective dharmas. Yet you cannot determine if these non-corresponding dharmas are different or not different from the object, the subject, and the subjective dharmas [云何心不相應法：謂依色心心法分位但假建立，不可施捨決定異性及不異性]。"

²⁵ *Weimoji jing* [*Vimalakīrti--nirdeśa-sūtra*], *juan zhong* 中, "Ru Bu'er Famen 入不二法門 [Entering the Dharma-door of Non-duality]" chapter, no. 9: "Mañjuśrī said: 'In my view, all dharmas say nothing and explain nothing, indicate nothing and know nothing, and are separated from questions and answers. This is to enter the dharma-door of non-duality.' Then Mañjuśrī asked Vimalakīrti: 'Each of us has given our own explanation. The humane one should explain, what does it mean to say Buddha enters the dharma-

door of non-duality [arrives at indivisible truth]?' At this Vimalakīrti was silent. Mañjuśrī said with a sigh: "How good, how good, that you go so far as to speak without words. You have indeed entered the dharma-door of non-duality."