

Contemporary Existentialism and the Concept of Naturalness in Taoism and Ch'an(Zen) *

by

Robert K. Lin

Introduction

Eminent historian-philosopher, Arnold Toynbee, after a most sweeping critical survey of human records, lists Laotse and Gautama Buddha, along with only a few others, as the world's greatest benefactors to mankind since the dawn of civilization.¹ This extremely small number of people were instrumental in shaping mankind's thought and behavior for centuries and responsible in making the human society as it is today. Laotse and Buddha, respectively, represent the two most influential philosophical systems in Asia: Taoism and Buddhism. Though arising from completely different social and cultural settings, Taoism and Buddhism (especially as expounded in its Ch'an Sect) share many common views. The affinity between Taoism and Ch'an (Buddhism) is so striking and close that questions have often been asked as to whether Ch'an(Zen) is the higher form of Gautama Buddha's true teachings or it is purely evolved out of Chinese Taoist tradition. Scholars differ sharply over this matter, and it probably will never be settled to the satisfaction of all.

*Ch'an(Zen) is used here to mean Ch'an(Zen) Buddhism exclusively throughout this paper; and Taoism is used here to mean philosophical Taoism.

Both Taoism and Ch'an Buddhism see man's salvation in *wu-wei* (i.e. non-action),² advocating the doctrine of returning man to his original naturalness (self-ness). Both are mainly a way of life, rejecting philosophising. It is believed that conceptual thinking is putting a barrier between oneself and Tao (Ultimate Reality). They both reject verbal teaching and distrust logic. Often the Taoist and Ch'an ideas are so similar that it is hard, if not impossible, to tell which is which. For example, even the doctrine of sudden enlightenment (*tun-we*, in Chinese) had already been formed during the period of Disunity (c. the 4th and 5th centuries).³ Professor Hu Shih concurs that it was Tao-sheng who first taught the idea of sudden enlightenment.⁴ Arthur Wright agrees with Demieville's that:

(Ch'an Buddhism) was a peculiarly Chinese reaction against the prolixity of Buddhist writings, their attenuated chain reasoning and their scholastic rigor of demonstration.⁵

It is no surprise that Humpreys declares that Taoism is the Godfather of Ch'an-(Zen).⁵

On the other hand, however, the Japanese view tends to consider Ch'an(Zen) to be rather a return to Gautama Buddha's authentic teachings. For example, Suzuki sees the Ch'an movement in the light that the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng, and other Chinese Ch'an masters merely revived the enlightenment experience,⁷ though he also writes:

Zen (Ch'an) is really a great revolutionary movement in the world history of thought. It originated in China, and, in my opinion, could not arise anywhere else.⁸ and,

Zen (Ch'an) movement is a logical Chinese response to the over-speculative and over-otherworldly system which is so alien to Chinese tradition.⁹

As for the doctrine of sudden enlightenment, Suzuki asserts that it is also the very essence of Buddha's teachings.¹⁰ Alan Watts sees in Vimalakirti Sutra, one of the earliest sutras translated into Chinese, the first clear and unequivocal exponent of the doctrine of sudden enlightenment, though he admits that Tao-sheng, and other Chinese masters could also have been tributaries to the stream of Ch'an-(Zen).¹¹ Vimalakirti Sutra accords well with indigenous Taoist (and Confucian idealistic wing) belief that human nature is originally good. This sutra also shares the distinct Chinese (both Taoist and Confucian) this-worldly outlook.¹² Vimalakirti says:

"Perfect awakening (salvation) is consistent with the affairs of everyday life."¹³

This same view is also expressed in another important Buddhist canon, Lanka Sutra.

"Nirvana is not to be found in contradiction to birth-and-death or Samsara. . . it is to be found where there is the identity of Nirvana and Samsara."¹⁴

In these sutras, dualism between here and thereafter, this world and other world, is denied. All these similarities and parallels only serve to add fuel to the contro-

versy over the origins of Ch'an. Prof. Ames seems to take a more neutral stand, though leaning toward the Japanese view:

"Zen(Ch'an) in China was more a slow-won recovery of essential Buddhism than a departure from it. But Chinese soil of Confucianism and Taoist naturalism help and spur this development."¹⁵

From the brief survey above, it is rather clear that as far as origins of Ch'an is concerned, the case can be made either way. But at least we can say that many important ideas shared by Taoism and Ch'an were independently developed. However, as to the development of Taoism and Ch'an after the initial stage, it was never quite independent of each other. On the contrary, these two systems of ideas were intertwined to a considerable extent after their contact around the first century A.D. There were numerous borrowings and corresponding influence between Chinese secular literati (often Taoists) and the Buddhist monks; "pamphlets were passed about, formal debates held, new views adumbrated, or old views maintained or refurbished."¹⁶ This partly explains the increasing affinity between Taoism and Ch'an in later years.

For example, the Ultimate Reality, i.e. Tao in Taoism, is all phenomena knit together and regarded as a seamless web of interacting forces both visible and invisible, and interwoven with this is the idea of ceaseless flux.¹⁷ This notion of Tao is close to that of Suchness or Buddha-nature (i.e. Tathata in Sanskrit) in Buddhism.¹⁸ Taoist view of the Ultimate Reality, Tao, is compatible with the Buddhist view of Reality as impermanence or emptiness; therefore, it is no surprise that Tao is used by Chinese Buddhists as a synonym for Voidness, Suchness or Buddha-nature.¹⁹ Accordingly, both Taoism and Ch'an see a Unity Behind all the diversities, and view man as a part of this organic whole of the Reality and recognize the inter-relatedness of all things. This outlook of Oneness more than any other thing, sets Far Eastern mind apart from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is among others anthropocentric and considers Nature as an alien, hostile being to be conquered and exploited. Taoism is to a great extent closely identified with primitivism in that individual man and society will fare better if they return to a state of primitive simplicity, with a minimum of differentiation, of intellection, of purposive activity.²⁰ And only then, it believes, can man act spontaneously and naturally. Ch'an(Zen) ever since the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng, has continued to be concerned with the same naturalness.²¹ All these seem to indicate that naturalness (self-so-ness or *tse-jan* in Chinese) is probably the most important concept in both Taoism and Ch'an(Zen) Buddhism, and hence the subject of the investigation of this paper.

The Concept of Naturalness in Taoism and Ch'an(Zen)

First of all, to be natural is to forsake conventional accumulative knowledge, which is not only regarded as artificiality but also a human bondage. This knowledge only serves to complicate things and multiply human miseries. Rejecting

knowledge, both Taoism and Ch'an(Zen) hold that Truth or enlightenment comes only by intuition rather than intellection. Both distrust the cerebral-intellectual values and powers, on the one hand, and emphasize the visceral-intuitive apprehension of Truth by direct experience, on the other.²² For Reason gives a false picture of the world and is unable to understand life, making people believe the imperfect image of the world reflected by the intellect to be the Absolute Truth.²³

It is an almost universal assumption of Western philosophy (and most Asian philosophy as well) that the solution to the great problems of human existence can be arrived at if we carry our rationality far enough, if we try hard enough and make sense of existence, uncover its intrinsic reasonableness; we have the illusion that we will escape if we can only make the system more subtle and complex.²⁴ Actually, to Taoists and Ch'an followers, human reasoning is faulty and philosophy itself is a disease. To attain enlightenment, the functioning of the totality of our psychic consciousness is required.

Anti-intellection finds ample expressions in Taoism and Ch'an. Laotse condemns conventional cleverness, and advises: "The Wise Man's policy, accordingly, will be to empty people's hearts and minds, to fill their bellies, weaken their ambition. . . to keep them uninformed."²⁵ He also says: "Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom (knowledge); then the people will benefit a hundredfold."²⁶ It should be pointed out, however, that Laotse's idea is not to reduce the human mind to a moronic vacuity, but to bring into play its innate and spontaneous intelligence by using it without forcing it. Making and studying books only serve to strangle and suppress the innate intelligence.

From a different perspective, Chuangtse warns: "Your life has a limit but knowledge has none. If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger. If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger for certain."²⁷ In Ch'an (Zen) anti-intellection is even more pronounced and drastic, and is occasionally carried to the extreme.

The Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng, probably the best known and revered figure in Ch'an sect, has been for centuries widely known as an illiterate from a barbarian region in south China.²⁸ The fact that Hui-neng, an illiterate rice-pounder, was selected over the most learned monk, Shen-hsiu, as the Sixth Patriarch clearly underscores and highly dramatizes the insignificance and irrelevance of conventional learning in achieving enlightenment, emancipation and happiness. The import of the fact that a barbarian or semi-barbarian has a potential as great as a most learned man to become enlightened can be better appreciated if viewed against the long revered tradition of learning in China, where learning and learned men had long been honored and awarded the highest place ever since Confucius' day, if not earlier.

Ch'an's anti-intellectualistic stand unequivocally expressed in one of its four

famous statements which characterize this school of thought: "Not to rely on words."²⁹ Appropriately, Ch'an is dubbed as a wordless sect of Buddhism. Hui-neng made light of all the ink in the universe and left no writings: "To write with all the ink in the universe. . . none of these can compare with a life of non-activity (*wu-wei*) and infinite love."³⁰ Non-activity (*wu-wei*) is the key concept in both Taoism and Ch'an and it is incompatible with accumulating knowledge and intellection. Understandably, eloquence and disputation are also discouraged. Laotse says: "Those who speak do not know; those who know do not speak."³¹ Chuangtse has less paradoxical statement about the futility of disputation.³² In the "wordless" Ch'an, which maintains that transmission of Truth is from mind to mind, the use of words is kept to a minimum.

When language is absolutely unavoidable, it is often used not as it means, as in *KOAN* cases, but what it does. For example, when a disciple asks his master, "What is Buddha?", the reply could be "Three pounds of flax."³³ This kind of seemingly illogical *koan* or *mondo* (question and answer) is primarily designed to jolt people out of the rut of conventional logic and faulty dualistic thinking pattern. As Alan Watts points out: "Zen (Ch'an) is above all a process of unlearning, of abandonment of ideology, of all fixed forms of thought and feeling, whereby the mind tries to grasp its own life."³⁴

What concerns Taoism and Ch'an is not the dualistic, relative, analytic knowledge, but the innate *prajna*-intuition (or Buddha-nature in Ch'an terms) which is believed to be originally existent in every sentiment. Since it lies inside oneself, he does not seek it outside; "By directly pointing into the mind one gains sudden enlightenment." Ch'an offers a way that is direct and immediate. Truth must be seized with bare hands, with no gloves on.³⁵ Broadly speaking, Ch'an masters despise those who indulge in word - or idea-mongering,³⁶ which only serves to trap life in a metaphysical net. In Taoism and Ch'an, there is a strong preference for living life rather than talking about it. This tenet is best expressed in Kaplan's statements: "The wise man does not pursue wisdom but lives his life, and therein precisely does his wisdom lie."³⁷ Naturalness means, among other things unlearning; "truly to know is not to know".³⁸

Secondly, to be natural is to follow Nature and to live in harmony with it. It is fundamental to Taoist and Ch'an (and the idealistic wing of Confucianism) belief that Nature is good and to be trusted. This concept, however, is quite alien to the Judeo-Christian beliefs and tradition. "Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions . . . insisted that it is God's will that man exploits Nature for his proper ends."³⁹ Christianity sees the world consisting of two opposing forces, the human and the non-human, and holds that the non-human world is inferior to, and existent for, the human world. It fails to recognize "the unity of life in all its forms".⁴⁰

Taoism and Ch'an had long taken an organic view of Nature (the Universe or the Reality) which rejects the human/non-human dichotomy. In Taoism, man is not the center of the world, but he is just a tiny part of the whole organic Nature.

He seeks not to dominate but to live in accord with the movement of Tao (naturalness) and keeps intimate touch with it.

Chinese people have been very much conscious of, and concerned with, myriad natural forces and sceneries; they have developed both a fear and respect for Nature, which is best manifested in their age-old belief in Feng-shui (literally, winds and waters).⁴¹ Chinese paintings, being deeply influenced by Taoist outlook, predominantly feature scenes of majestic and mysterious 'mountains and waters', and man, if included in the painting at all, is often relegated to the side, enchanted and immersed in Nature. Such paintings strongly express the theme of the unity of man and nature in Taoism (and Ch'an).

Ch'an follows Mahayana Buddhism, denying the existence of an individual soul or self. It holds that each is a part of the Great Self which is the only Reality and which inter-connects all the things of the phenomenal world. The existence of the individual is merely an illusion: "We are one with Nature; and non-I are One. Our inner nature is an extension of the outer Nature."⁴² The union of the nature within a man and the nature without is the aim of both Taoism and Ch'an.⁴³

Nature is regarded as amoral. To follow nature means being willing to accept her support (food, etc.) and her cruelty (floods, etc.) as one. The Taoist accepts death, as he does life, as part of the natural process. Laotse counsels how to live out one's natural life, whereas Chuangtse regards death as part of the continuing transformation and equalizes death with life. Therefore, he found cause to celebrate the death of his wife by beating the drums. Ch'an, on the other hand, takes life calmly as it comes, transcending life and death, and thus offers a way to live without fear and naturally. In Ch'an, life, castles, and virtually everything else in the world are recognized as impermanent or empty; and its followers do not suffer from the craving to keep forever things which are essentially empty.⁴⁵

In following Nature, we should desist from making ingenious devices to defy Nature, because such defiance will eventually, though having their short term effectiveness, backfire. For instance, medical science and the latest stunt of heart transplant which may prolong human life may also lead to over-population and increase conflicts and killings among men; other technologies ease the task of making a living, but pollute the human habitat.

As Toynbee observes, we have not increased happiness in 2000 years of 'progress'; the Palaeolithic hunter lacked all our present-day material amenities, but he was probably happier than we are.⁴⁶ The Tasadays, the recently discovered stone-aged tribe in the Philippines, offer a living testimony to Toynbee's observation. Their happy, peaceful, unharried life has nothing to do with any theories and inventions made by men in all fields in the past 2000 years in their ceaseless push for 'progress'.⁴⁷

The fact that the happy existence of the stone-aged men contrasts sharply with the myriad ills and anxieties of modern men calls into question our age-old

notion of "progress". The paradox makes the greatest mockery of human intellect. As Paul Goodman points out.

"There is now widespread conviction that beautiful advances in genetics, surgery, computers, rocketry, or atomic energy will surely only increase human woe."⁴⁸

This painful lesson seems to confirm well the validity of the doctrine of following Nature and being natural.

Thirdly, to be natural is also to mean to have no-mind or no-thought (*wu-shin* or *wu-nien* in Chinese).⁴⁹ No-mind or no-thought does not mean the absence of consciousness, neither does it mean the numbness of mind. Rather it means a non-abiding mind (i.e. *wu-chu* in Chinese) — freedom from any form of attachment. It is like a mirror rejecting nothing, showing no preference and keeping nothing.⁵⁰

"The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It refuses nothing. It receives, but does not keep".⁵⁰

No-mind does not mean not to think of anything at all, nor complete expulsion of thought. No-mind means to "move with life without trying to arrest and interrupt its flow" and it is "an immediate awareness of things as they live and move, as distinct from the mere grasp of ideas and feelings about things which are the dead symbols of a living reality."⁵¹ If life can be compared to a piece of symphony, no-mind means to hear the symphony as it is being played out and keep one's mind continuously in the same rhythm. Any attempt to analyze or dwell on certain notes would mean losing contact with reality.

No-mind is a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second mind or ego standing over it with a club.⁵² Naturalness cannot flourish until one can let one's mind alone so that it functions in the integrated and spontaneous way that is natural to it.

Fourthly, to be natural means to be, and to borrow a contemporary existentialist term, AUTHENTICALLY EXISTING. That is, one should exist as a true and whole human being, unfettered by unnatural restrictions or inhibitions of internal or external origin.

Lastly, to be natural means to be even not thinking of naturalness. This is the highest meaning of naturalness and the last stage to attain (or not to attain, according to Ch'an logic). The whole system of Ch'an disciplines is a series of attempts to be free from all forms of bondage.⁵³ If we set our minds on naturalness, then we will find ourselves clinging to the notion of naturalness and become naturalness-bound. This is not complete emancipation, non-attachment or naturalness. Total naturalness is total non-attachment and total freedom; the attempt to work on naturalness is a vicious circle -- we would be replacing one bondage with another.⁵⁴ The state of mind of a fully natural man with respect to naturalness can be described in Suzuki's words, "being unconsciously conscious".⁵⁵

Since thought is father to action (or activity), no-mind (*wu-hsin*) is, therefore, the highest sense of Laotse's doctrine of non-action (non-activity, or *we-wei* in Chinese). In other words, naturalness is simply ordinary-mindedness or doing nothing we would be unnaturally conscious of. Naturalness lies in one's going about his daily routine business (i.e. self-activity in Marxian terms). In the final analysis, naturalness is nothing other than *we-wei*: doing nothing that is unnatural. This is what Dr. Hu-Shih means by "Ch'an is no Ch'am" and "the true practice of Ch'an is no practice at all;"⁵⁶ or what a Ch'an master would mean by "to attain is not to attain". This is also exactly what Watts means by "being a Buddha without intending to be a Buddha."⁵⁷ Naturalness is finally forgetting naturalness and we have come a full circle.

*Naturalness in Taoism and Ch'an vis-a-vis Authentic Existence in
Existentialism*

The Taoism-Ch'an stance against intellection and conceptualization recalls the contemporary existentialist distrust of the intellect. Gradually and belatedly, the West has come to the realization that the power of reason and its resultant science and technology have their serious limits. As Ames observes:

Americans believe in the pursuit of happiness. They have declared independence of gloom and doom. By and by through factory they have made a high standard of living, first for a few then for many, they have more and more machines, goods, services, time off. But not more happiness. Often they have less. They have more nerves, cancer, heart trouble.⁵⁸

Reason and knowledge has not increased the happiness of mankind; on the contrary, it has endangered the habitat of man and human existence. The technologically advanced is only beginning to reap the ravages of subdued, conquered and ruthlessly exploited Nature.

Modern society with its extreme specialization only exacerbates the sense of separation and alienation among men. The contemporary existentialist movement represents a reaction to this alienation and rejects the supremacy of reason.⁵⁹ Existentialists declare that the mysteries of life cannot be fathomed or explained by rational thought.⁶⁰ Their chief spokesman, Sartre, takes a dim view of human intellect and speaks with Taoist-Ch'an ring. "Knowledge. . . is empty."⁶¹

Naturalness (self-so-ness) in Taoism and Ch'an has a close affinity with the doctrine of AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE as expounded by Heidegger, Sartre, and many others.⁶² Martin Heidegger, after reading Suzuki's works on Ch'an, remarked: "If I understand this man correctly, this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings."⁶³ Doubtless, to some extent, Taoists and Ch'an followers can certainly be called existentialists. In contemporary existentialism, one should be free to choose, to decide and to act, since the individual is the final judge.⁶⁴

In Ch'an history, the practice of appointing a Patriarch was discontinued

with the death of the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng, simply because dogmatism was not in keeping with Ch'an belief that the teachings of all the Buddhas originally exist in one's own mind.⁶⁵ As Watts puts it, "we are each the Lord in hiding."⁶⁶ In Taoism, the doctrine of *wu-wei* (non-activity)⁶⁷ condemns interference on the ground that each individual, if left alone in its natural state (self-so-ness) can take care of itself. As briefly mentioned, the notion of authentic existence denies external authority. It is, therefore, iconoclastic. But it is not iconoclastic for the sake of iconoclasm. As Paul Tillich explains it, a Deity deprives man of his subjectivity because He is all powerful and all-knowing.⁶⁸ Or as Nietzsche sees it, "God. . . is not freedom for man. He is the domestication of man, the end of the "homo creator" . . . Man is turned from a wolf into a dog, into a domestic animal."⁶⁹ and only the death of God can make possible the advent of a new humanity.⁷⁰ This humanistic and iconoclastic stance of contemporary existentialism recalls many Ch'an teachings which stress the point that every man is a potential *Buddha* (The Enlightened One). For example, Lin-chi, a renowned Ch'an master, declaimed:

"O You followers of Truth! If you wish to obtain an orthodox understanding of Zen(Ch'an), do not be deceived by others. Inwardly or outwardly, if you encounter any obstacles kill them right away. If you encounter the Buddha, kill him; if you encounter the Patriarch, kill him; kill them all without hesitation, for this is the only way to deliverance. Do not get yourselves entangled with any object, but stand above, pass on, and be free!"⁷¹

The Buddha is often spoken of as a 'dry stick of dung'; "All the Buddhist teachings as propounded in the *sutras* and *sastras* are treated by Zen(Ch'an) as mere waste paper."⁷² Hence, a famous Ch'an story relating a monk burning wooden figures of the Buddha to keep warm. Another famous 13th century Chinese painting by Liang K'ai has a monk none other than the Sixth Patriarch tearing up a *sutra*.⁷³ The message of all these iconoclasm is rather clear, that the emancipation of man and the maintaining of authentic existence demand the death of the Buddha and the abolition of all authority. Iconoclasm can be traced back to Gautama Buddha's teaching. "Be a lamp to yourself."⁷⁴

According to the existentialists including Laotse, Hui-neng and Sartre, conventional morality and institutions tend to inhibit innate spontaneity and suppress the Buddha-nature. Existentialists of almost every hue are irrationalists, rejecting the supremacy of cold reason. They never take the objective world very seriously, they make fun of the cumbersome intellect and of all forms of conventional wisdom and pomposity.⁷⁵ Karl Marx was an existentialist cousin, holding a sympathetic view of authentic existence.⁷⁶ Marx's humanism holds that man's ultimate end is simply to become fully human,⁷⁷ which cannot be so long as he remains alienated from himself in religious fantasies or self-realization.⁷⁸

The fantasy life of religion is a pseudo-self-realization. Man does not become himself, he merely dreams about it. So the life of man in religion is an acceptance of the shadow of self-realization in lieu of the substance, the seeming in lieu of the being.⁷⁹ In believing god of one kind or another, man forsakes part of his hu-

manness and autonomy, which are basic ingredients of man's naturalness and spontaneity. The more one trusts Buddha, God or any other supernaturalness and spontaneity, the less human he remains. To Marx, Hui-neng, Sartre and Laotse, especially the former, the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of man is a demand for their real happiness and their real humanness,⁸⁰ on which man's naturalness is predicated. Religion, according to Marx, is not simply a consolation for man's poverty but it is a consolation for his non-humanity, a surrogate for being man.⁸¹ Marx called religion the opium of the people, and regarded it as "the holy form of human self-alienation."⁸²

An alienated man is not wholly human, much less a natural man as understood in Taoism and Ch'an.

Marx also saw man's essence and naturalness threatened in economic life. He carried Hegel's spiritual alienation in division of labor and specialization, which is, especially in post-industrial society, increasingly man's humanness and original spontaneity. For Marx the aim of human development is that of the development of the total, universal man who holds all his faculties in harmonious balance.⁸³

Marx' concept of socialism is the emancipation from alienation, the return of man to himself as a whole human.⁸⁴ With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the worker sells his labor in a factory assembly line where he finds no outlet for expressing his personality and giving free play to his creativity. The worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object and his essence (humanness) is taken away from him (i.e. alienated) by the employer.⁸⁵

Marx envisioned a society (communist) where a man can express his individuality in his daily activities and is not forced into alienated labor or submersed in lifelong occupation.

"... in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic."⁸⁶

This Marxian vision tends to be pastoral and rustic, and free, and it accords well with the lifestyle of Taoists and Ch'an followers. The social and political conditions of such a society are conducive to one's becoming natural and permit him to lead a truly human existence. Only under such free conditions can one expect to hear of such a society are conducive to one's becoming natural and permit him to lead a truly human existence. Only under such free conditions can one expect to hear such a happy utterance from the contented resident. "In carrying water and chopping wood there lies the wonderful Tao."⁸⁷

Marx believed that the goal for man is to realize his humanity and, at the

same time, to achieve the unity of man with Nature. Fromm believes that "the thinking of Marx is closely related to the thinking of Zen(Ch'an) . . . Only when man can relate himself to Nature humanly, can he overcome self-alienation."⁸⁸ Marx's concept of socialism is a protest, as are all existentialist philosophies, against the alienation and dehumanization of man, and it is also a protest against man's exploitation of man, and his exploitativeness toward Nature. An un-alienated man, according to Marx, is "the man who does not 'dominate' Nature, but who becomes one with it, who is alive and responsive toward objects so that objects come to life for him."⁸⁹ And an alienated man works in order to live. He does not reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. The more a worker produces, the less of him remains human. It has become rather clear that a natural man is an un-alienated man (the reverse is not necessarily true), who "feels thoroughly at home with himself, enjoys a sense of voluntary self-determination to action and experiences his energies as his own."⁹⁰

Marx's central theme throughout his life had been how to de-alienate humanity.⁹¹ As mentioned before, for Marx, the aim of human development is to free the total, universal man against specialization and alienated labour (i.e. life-activity, as distinct from self-activity). However, Marx's approach had been mainly the emphasis on the need for a radical transformation of society that would return man to himself and permit him to lead a truly human existence. His argument for violent revolution could, at best, remove one half of the problem of human self-alienation — i.e. the external circumstances. Marx failed to offer cures to solve the problem at the root. After all, "the enemy of human self-alienation is egoistic need, the drive to own and possess things."⁹² To possess is, in a sense, to be possessed.

In modern society with all the comforts modern technology can offer, human 'needs' are continually created and yet man can never be satisfied.

" . . . auto, radio, TV. . . become actual needs for great number of people. . . all this makes for an extraordinary externalization of life in our time."⁹³

Through externalization of life, man loses his wholeness, his freedom, and his original naturalness (spontaneity). Admittedly, Marx did recognize that "man is alienated from himself when he produces under the compulsion of "egoistic need," but he failed to trace this egoism to its real source within the personality of the alienated individual himself. Therefore, he failed to understand that it is only there, and by the individual's own moral effort, that egoism can be undone.⁹⁴ Naturalness and humanness can only be restored after egoism is undone and the unity of inner nature and outer nature has been achieved. Until external circumstances are altered along with an inner moral revolution, human self-alienation will remain and naturalness in man will not flourish.

It is interesting to note that Ch'an seldom vigorously champions the cause of altering external circumstance while Marx failed to take sufficient note of the problem as pertaining to man's inner world. Hui-neng, on the one hand, proposed

to de-alienate the inner world of man; on the other, Marx proposed to de-alienate the outer world of man. It appears that Marx and Hui-neng complement each other in pointing out the way to a truly human existence and the attainment of his original unadulterated naturalness (spontaneity or self-so-ness). Marx, despite his avowed dialectic materialism, would readily win the hearts of Laotse and Hui-neng by his non-materialistic belief: "The man who is much and has little".⁹⁵

FOOTNOTES

¹Toynbee, Arnold J., "Civilization on trial", collected in *The Great Ideas Today* 1961 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1961), p. 335. The others are: Confucius, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad, Socrates and the Prophets of Israel and Judah. Lin Yutang even claims: "If there is one book in the whole Oriental literature which one should read above all the others, it is . . . Laotse's *Book of Tao (Wisdom of China and India)* p. 579, published by Random House, 1942.

²For the meanings of *wu-wei* see Holmes Welch's book *Taoism: the parting of the way* (Boston; Beacon Press, revised ed. 1965) p. 33.

³Chang, Lit-sen, *Zen-Existentialism the Spiritual Decline of the West* (Wenham, Mass.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1969), p.31. The author quoting Prof. Fung Yu-lan.

⁴Hu, Shih, "Ch'an(Zen) Buddhism in China: its history and method." *Philosophy East and West*, v.3, no. 1 (April 1953) p.7.

⁵Wright, Arthur F., *Buddhism in Chinese History* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p.48.

⁶Humphreys, Christmas, *Zen Buddhism* London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), p.217. Prof. Constant C.C. Chang is, however, of the opinion that Ch'an is an combination of activist Confucianism and aesthetic Taoism (see his book *The Story of Chinese Philosophy* Taipei: Wen-Chien Printing Co. 1960), p.260.

⁷Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Studies in Zen* (N.Y.: Delta, c.1955), p. 138.

⁸Ibid., p.155.

⁹Ibid., p.155.

¹⁰Ibid., p.136.

¹¹Watts, Alan, W., *The Way of Zen* (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1969), p.83

¹²The this-worldly outlook of Confucianism is well-known. As for Taoism, there is no thing otherworldly about it. Holmes and Arthur Waley both agree that though seclusion is deemed necessary, the Sage is not a hermit and is very much involved in daily affairs. See Holmes's *Taoism: the parting of the way*, p.81.

¹³Watts, *ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁴Ames, Van Meter, *Zen and American Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1962), -6.

¹⁵Ibid., p.5.

¹⁶Link, Arthur E., "The Taoist antecedents of Tao-An's prajna ontology." *History of Religions: and International Journal for Comparative Historical Studies.*, v. 9, 2 & 3 (Nov. 1969/Feb. 1970), p. 183.

¹⁷Wright, Arthur F., "A Historian's reflections on the Taoist traditions." *History of Religions*, v. 9, nos. 2 & 3 (Nov. 1969/Feb. 1970), p.248.

¹⁸Watts, Alan W., *The Spirit of Zen: a way of life, work, and art in the Far East.* (London: John Murray, 1958), p. 26.

¹⁹Creel, H.G., "The Great Clod: a Taoist Conception of the Universe," collected in Chos Tse-tsung (ed.): *Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese Humanities* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p.259.

²⁰Wright, *ibid.*,

²¹Watts, *The Way of Zen*, pp. 93-95. Also: Chung, Chung-yuan's *Creativity and Taoism* (N.Y.: Harper, 1970) p.12.

²²King, Winston L., "Eastern Religions; a new interest and influence." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, v.387, (January 1970), p.66.

²³Cohen-Portheim, Paul, *The Message of Asia* (N.Y.: Dutton, 1934), pp.150-151.

²⁴Kaplan, Abraham, *The New World of Philosophy* (N.Y.: Vintage Book, 1961), p. 311, 313 and 314.

²⁵Laotse, *The Way of Life: Lao Tzu* a translation by R.B. Blakney (N.Y. New American Library, 1955), p. 132.

²⁶Laotse, *The Way of Lao Tzu Tao-te ching*, translated by Wing-tsit Chan (N.Y.: Bobb-Merrill, 1963), p.132.

²⁷Watson, Burton, tr. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* (N.Y.: Columbia Universal Press, 1969), p. 46.

²⁸See Chan, Wing-tsit, tr. *The Platform Scripture* (N.Y.: Delta Book, 1967), p.15. The Four Statements are:

A Special tradition outside the scriptures (i.e., sutras), No dependence upon words and letters, Direct pointing at the soul of man, Seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of buddha-hood.

²⁹(Not indicated. Ed.)

³⁰Hu, Shih, *ibid.*, p.10.

³¹Laotse, *The Way of Life: Lao Tzu (Tao-to Ching)*, translated by Wing-tsit Chan, p.199.

³²Watson, Burton, tr. *ibid.*, p.43-44.

³³Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, p. 27-28.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p.11.

- ³⁵Kaplan, *ibid.*, 316.
- ³⁶Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, p. 142.
- ³⁷Kaplan, *ibid.*, p. 311.
- ³⁸Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 83.
- ³⁹Linn White as quoted in *Beyond Survival*, ed., by William S. Robinson et al (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1971), p.12.
- ⁴⁰Cohen-Portheim, Raul, *ibid.*, p. 150.
- ⁴¹Murphey, Rhoads, "Man and Nature in China," *Modern Asian Studies*, v. 1, no.4, (October 1967), pp.314-316.
- ⁴²Welch, Holmes, Taosim: the parting of the way (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 45. "Our inner nature is an extension of the nature of the universe. To follow one is to be in harmony with the other."
- ⁴³Blyth, R.H., *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics*. (Ruland, Vermont: Tuttle, 1957), p.vii.
- ⁴⁴Welch, *ibid.*, 46.
- ⁴⁵Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, pp. 22-23.
- ⁴⁶Toynbee, Arnold, *Surviving the Future*, (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.23-36.
- ⁴⁷Reported in *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 7, 1972), p.3, with the title: "Window open into Stone Age."
- ⁴⁸Paul Goodman as quoted in the book *Beyond Survival*, p. 10, cf. note 43 above.
- ⁴⁹Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 47.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- ⁵¹Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, p. 23.
- ⁵²Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 23.
- ⁵³Suzuki, D.T., *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (London, Rider, 1970), p. 27.
- ⁵⁴The genuine Ch'an values nonattachment and naturalness above anything else; the true practice of Ch'an is no practice at all. Yet in Today's Japan Ch'an followers are strictly required to sit motionless on the wooden platform of the meditation hall; inside the hall whacking and beating is a commonplace. All these seem to be a quiet departure from Hui-neng or Matsu's teachings. cf. Koestler, Arthur: *The Lotus and the Robot* (N.Y.: Harper, 1966), pp.255-257.
- ⁵⁵Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, p. 57.
- ⁵⁶Hu, Shih, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
- ⁵⁷Watts, *The Way of Zen*, pp. 93-95.

⁵⁸Ames, *ibid.* pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹Chang, Lit-sen, *ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Sartre, Jean-Paul, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, (N.Y.: Philosophical Library 1965), p.269.

⁶²cf. Takehiko Okada's article "Wang Chin and the rise of Existentialism" in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. by Wm. Theodore de Bary (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 121-142.

⁶³Chang, Lit-sen, *ibid.*, p. 116 & 115: According to Suzuki's analysis: "Zen(Ch'an) diverges from Existentialism in this: There are various brands of existentialsim but they seem to agree that the sea of possibilities opening ahead is frightening. They mean freedom and unlimited freedom means unbearable responsibility. To those thoughts, Zen(Ch'an) is a stranger, because for Zen'(Ch'an) the finite is infinite, time is eternity, man is not separated from God. Furthermore, Zen(Ch'an) does not find anything frightening in infinite possibilities, unlimited freedom, never-ending responsibilities; Zen(Ch'an) moves along with infinite possibilities: Zen(Ch'an) enjoys unlimited freedom, because Zen(Ch'an) is freedom itself; however unending and unbearable responsibility may be, Zen(Ch'an) bears it as if not bearing it at all. ."

⁶⁴Though contemporary existentialism and Taoism-Ch'an agree that the final truth is up to the individual to decide, there is a basic difference, in addition to Suzuki's comparison under note 58, that sets Taoism-Ch'an apart from the former. The difference is: in both Taoism and Ch'an there is no split between oneself and Nature (the objective world) and the nature of the individual is an extension of outer Nature. Therefore to follow one's innate spontaneity (i.e. individual decision) is to follow Tao. Yet this is not necessarily true in the contemporary Existentialism which holds a dualistic world outlook that one's decision could go against Nature. When naturalness prevails @@, the individual, in Taoism and Ch'an, manifests to, which is a microcosm of Tao, cf. Chang Chung-yuan, "Concept of Tao", *Review of Religion*, v. 17, No. 1, (March 1953), pp. 128-129.

⁶⁵Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (first series) (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1961), p.214.

⁶⁶Watts as quoted in *Zen-Existentialism*, p.5.

⁶⁷Welch, *ibid.* p.33. for a good discussion of *wu-wei*.

⁶⁸Chang, Lit-sen, *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁹Kaufmann, Walter A. ed. *Portable Nietzsche*, p. 198.

⁷⁰cf. Altizer, Thomas J.J.'s *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp.3-7, for meanings of Death of God movement.

⁷¹Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, p. 44.

⁷²Chang, Lit-sen, *ibid.* p. 13.

⁷³A reproduction of this painting can be found in, among others, *The Christian Science Monitor* (November 7-9, 1970), p. 9, with an article entitled: "Art and the meaning of Zen" by Susan Bush.

- ⁷⁴Hu, Shih, *ibid.*, p.19.
- ⁷⁵Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, p. 30.
- ⁷⁶Tucker, Robert C., *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.168., This is an excellent book on Marx's humanism and existentialism.
- ⁷⁷Marx, Karl, *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, tr. by T.B. Bottomore, (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p.i-v.
- ⁷⁸Tucker, *ibid.*, p.99.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁸⁰Levi, Albert William, *Humanism & Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1969), p.409.
- ⁸¹Tucker, *ibid.*, p.100.
- ⁸²Tucker, *ibid.*, p. 102.
- ⁸³Fromm, Erich, *Marx's Concept of Man* (N.Y.: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1968), p.42.
- ⁸⁴Fromm, *ibid.*, p.43.
- ⁸⁵The employer as well as the employee is alienated labour. cf. Tucker, p. 80.
- ⁸⁶Karl Marx as quoted in Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man*, p.12.
- ⁸⁷Tucker, *ibid.*, pp.158-160.
- ⁸⁸Fromm, *ibid.*, p.33.
- ⁸⁹Fromm, *ibid.*, p.63.
- ⁹⁰Tucker, *ibid.*, p.134.
- ⁹¹*Ibid.*, p.176.
- ⁹²*Ibid.*, p.158.
- ⁹³Barrett, William, *Irrational Man; A Study in Existential Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), p. 31.
- ⁹⁴Tucker, *ibid.*, p.240.
- ⁹⁵Fromm, *ibid.*, p.90.