

Rethinking the Truths

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(Received 16 June 1993, accepted 20 September 1993)

The article is a critical study of the field usually described as "Oriental Philosophy" and of the application of comparative methods when approaching the Other.

Through an analysis of the notions of wabi-sabi, voidness and *tu* (as cartography of spirit), it tries to show the various forms of truth, especially the one so uniquely cultivated in Japan, Truth as Beauty. Rational argumentation as such is questioned and the concepts under consideration in the Sino-Japanese philosophical realm are shown as a possibly valuable challenge for European philosophy which itself is facing an awakening into discontinuity.

The philosophical concept of *sabi* (*ji* in Neo-Confucian tradition) is the connection from its inclusion in wabi-sabi aesthetics, through the beginnings of Chinese Neo-Confucianism, back to the explanation of the Taiji diagram by Zhou Dunyi, a philosopher of *ji* (*sabi*). The notion of voidness is introduced as transcending all positions.

The article concludes with a reflection on the image of today's philosopher—contemplating the situation at hand, interpreting and disclosing the myriad forms of Truths as they appear on the horizon of today's world philosophy.

Keywords: WABI-SABI, VOIDNESS, TU, "ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY", COMPARATIVE METHODS, SINO-JAPANESE PHILOSOPHICAL REALM, CARTOGRAPHY OF SPIRIT, TRUTHS, BEAUTY, TAIJI DIAGRAM.

He who knows himself and others, will also recognize that East and West cannot be set apart. (J. W. Goethe)

Reflecting on the Philosophies of the Orient presumes the existence of a certain "center" from which East and West are defined in the realms of the mind and heart. This is only one of the possible ways of approaching this subject which should certainly start with re-questioning the problem of European Philosophical identity in the geography of the mind. Is there anything like "Europe" in a philosophical sense and if so, how does it view the Other and how does it cultivate its own philosophical identity (if any) with regard to this difference from the Other?

The above questions seem to have a certain relevance when we approach notions like **wabi-sabi** (a), **voidness** (b) and **tu** (c) that at certain times became the center of interest in the Sino-Japanese realm. Such an undertaking involves a certain challenge for European philosophical discourse that has for so long called itself "philosophy", believing itself to be thinking its Other and always insisting on thinking it without questioning the preliminary step of the whole undertaking, which in most cases constituted the "Orient" in the classical sense of orientalism. This philosophical identity unthinkingly adopted the geographical notions of East and West, ascribing to the East all which it wanted to relegate to the fringes of philosophical thought. How does European philosophy, at this moment of loss of philosophical centrality, deal with these traditions that have never been incorporated into its main

stream?

I.

There is nowhere anything lasting, neither outside me, or within me, but only incessant change. (J. G. Fichte)

According to Aristotle "change of quality and change of quantity are also due to the soul" (1). The soul itself is constant and tranquil. Aristotle also considered tranquility as a necessary condition for any action. Always when we try to do something, we have to do it from a certain **standpoint**. Any activity must have its point of both tranquility and stable beginning. Aristotle's views are instructive, since they serve as the most representative source for the traditional orientation of western metaphysics. They indicate how detrimental the undertaking of "apparent" philosophical comparison can be, especially when the Sino-Japanese philosophical schools or their concepts are in question.

Zhuang Zi (d) in his Qi wu lun (e) said:

"You and I having been made to argue over alternatives, if it is you not I that wins, is it really you who are on to it, I who am not? If it is I not you that wins, is it really I who am on to it, you who are not? Is one of us on to it and the other of us not? Or are both of us on to it and both of us not? If you and I are unable to know where we stand, others will surely be in the dark because of us. Whom shall I call in to decide it? If I get someone of your party to decide it, being already of your party how can he decide it? If I get someone of my party to decide it, being already of my party how can he decide it? If I get someone of a party different from either of us to decide it, being already of a party different from either of us how can he decide it? Consequently you and I and he are unable to know where we stand, and shall we find someone else to depend on?" (2)

It makes no difference whether the voices in their transformations have each other to depend on or not. Smooth them out on the whetstone of Heaven, use them to go by and let the stream find its own channels; this is the way to live out your years. Forget the years, forget duty, be shaken into motion by the limitless, and so find things their lodging-places in the limitless." (2)

and in the butterfly dream story:

"Last night Chuang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was he suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Chou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Chou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Chou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Chou. Between Chou and the butterfly there was necessary a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformations of things." (3)

he talks about the fact that there is no standpoint. Even our reflection about the standpoints may be illusionary.

Rereading the *Philosopher's Philosopher* (Aristotle) from the perspective of Sino-Japanese philosophical traditions does not mean only to reflect on a certain passed-by era of philosophical speculation but also to find out why the precise moment in which we are living lead to a radical critique of European philosophy's dream to attain a foundation for knowledge, an absolute basis for truth.

In the development of European philosophy to Hegelian holism, a philosophy of change and becoming, the change was taking place within a holistic rational system.

Rational argumentation itself is called into question; this obsession with whether or not something could be subsumed under the concept of Truth is irrelevant. We deal here with an autonomus happening which cannot be judged in terms of the rigid philosophical standards of Truth that are, with the inappropriate comparative method, trying to mold the Other into its own patterns and framework.

Since we are facing today a radical transformation of subjectivity, and with it the notion of rationality, the established governing theoretical position of western metaphysics as being subsumed within the everyday language we use is opening itself to wider horizons of truth, to experiences that cannot be captured in words.

It is necessary to be reminded of this since the accepted and often still considered relevant position concerning the Sino-Japanese philosophical realm is that a "philosophical" tradition was never developed. This statement would be understandable from Hegel's viewpoint—not only with regard to the notion of Truth in a rigorously Hegelian sense but also taking into account his teleological hierarchy of writings where the peak is reserved for phonetic writing of the alphabetic type, a stand which in its obsession with the letter diminishes any system that does not correspond to this demand. However, from Benveniste, if not earlier, it became clear that no type of language can by itself alone foster or hamper the activity of the mind. What are the implications of this for the philosopher's interest in the truth of meaning?

How to read an autonomous happening of *wabi-sabi* from the tradition which has been called *philosophia*, the love of wisdom, a discipline that has in its development become obsessed with the Truth and the question of how do subjects come to know and speak the truth about themselves? In the name of "Truth", the philosophy of first principles or beginnings, philosophers sought certainty in a foundation of absolute truths and principles, by seeking a 'pure' starting point. Today's philosophical moment means the possibility of another verification of the basis and assumptions of thought and rationality. Giving up ontological reduction and the metaphysics of subject and acknowledging the existence on equal terms of different perspectives and truths, European philosophical discourse is opening up to previously neglected dimensions of truth.

Aesthetic experience, so characteristic for the embodiment of truth in certain periods of Sino-Japanese tradition, offers various distinct types of Truth—all of them equally legitimate philosophically.

The notion of time becomes through the "*ichi go ichi e*" (f) dimension of the tea ceremony a permanent celebration, an appreciation of a moment that happens once and only once in life. The present moment is the only real one in one's entire lifetime. Through the tea ceremony, Zen demands the total involvement of one's

entire being in each moment. The seemingly identical rituals of the tea ceremony differ according to circumstances.

The correct approach makes space and time sacred. The performer of the tea ceremony and the guests following "wabi" aesthetic and moral principles enjoy the quiet, leisurely moments of the sacred ritual, far from everyday worldly concerns and, at the same time, appreciating the "sabi" poetic ideal reminding us of the transitoriness of life, making every and each moment unrepeatable. We can experience it only once in our lives, each of us in a unique way. This consciousness should also underlie making, undertaking and engaging in each and every event of our lives in its uniqueness.

Life is a journey essentially spent alone by each of the participants in this continuous process of change. It is by this essential mutability of life that everything comes into existence and vanishes. The only common thing to all the participants of life is transitoriness. It is not time that flows; rather everything that ever happens is merely temporal. This conviction is by no means a cause for bitterness or pessimism, but became the basis for a different approach to life and appreciation of its given moments here and now. The concept of transitoriness (*mujo*) (*g*) became related to the concept of solitude, which is not loneliness. *Sabi* is based on the awareness and acceptance of the fact that everyone is very much alone in the most crucial situations of life and death. The path of awakening has to be taken alone and everyone has to face their own situation—no one is spared this confrontation. The solitude of all beings is recognized, and one is not only resigned to it, but even finds beauty in this solitude. The gradual awakening into the reality of one's own existence assures that everything in life attains its true position. The acceptance of **change** as the only stable thing in life creates a transition to the only real way of life, growth and decay.

With the *sabi* approach growth is not valued as something positive, bringing optimism, as opposed to decay. *Sabi* aesthetics include the elements of old age, resignation and tranquility as equal components of life. Desolation becomes ground for the emergence of a special beauty, sometimes the chill beauty of dried grass, a withered moor, the wan moon in the dawn sky. The enlightened dweller in life realizes a beauty which is not man-made, but can only be appreciated from within. It is a chill, solitary beauty, absolutely pure in form and content.

The *sabi* concept (known as "*ji*" in Chinese Neo-Confucian writings) dwells on the Buddhist cosmic view and the special position of solitude within it. In the Japanese development, through Basho and his disciples, the element of beauty in *sabi* was brought to a point where the initial connotation of desolation was gone and a lonely impression overwhelmed by the active appreciation and enjoyment of a quiet life, which brought the content of *sabi* close to that of *wabi*, as expressed in the Japanese hermitic tradition and its transcendental frame of mind.

In the Japanese theory of art, the vision of communication between, artist and nature is realized on the basis of emptying the mind, which is also the essence of various Zen techniques. It is in the motivation of Japanese Zen and hermit painting that *wabi-sabi* plays an important role. In the Buddhist philosophical context a

deep sensitivity for the things and movements of life has developed, as well as the capability for an active appreciation of single, seemingly insignificant moments. It is the cultivated, but still intuitive response to life which forms the essential part of Japanese literary tradition, in which transcendence and tranquility became the central objects of creativity. This includes an approach independent of senses and emotions. Assimilation into nature should enable the artist to transcend narrow human perspectives and limitations and become intuitively immersed in the cosmic interrelatedness of each, even the most "insignificant", moment in the cosmic flow.

Intuition also becomes central to the development of the concept of **yugen** (h), an idea closely related to wabi-sabi. It is a concept which escapes any definition, suggesting a transcendental beauty, a beauty beyond appearances, existing on another level of reality and to which a text should lead the reader. **Yugen** is the expression of a rare beauty developed in a style of apparent simplicity. In the same way as **sabi**, **yugen** also demands a suitable artistic response based on a cultivated sensitivity.

When worldly desires are eliminated, immersion into the absolute void and silence takes place.

The real wabi is insufficient and incorporates no will of his own, not even any desire for perfection. It is imperfection with no thought of such. It is a conscious poverty of which we are aware and which therefore ceases to be poverty. It is self-sufficiency and awakening into the awareness of the ultimate interdependence of everything.

The solitary and tranquil sensitivity and appreciation of the moment brings **sabi** into existence. It is solitude in the Buddhist sense of non-attachment, independence, non-clinging—the revelation of things as they are and as they keep on happening in this miraculous spontaneity out of their own reasons and not according to our expectations. When, in this void, appreciation for something which at first glance appears ordinary and unimportant, is revealed in such a way that its **suchness** is achieved, the feeling might be that of **wabi**. It is the non-expected revelation of the **suchness** of very ordinary things, without the dimension of a bright future. In such a moment enthusiasm and ambition concerning plans for the "future" are brought into question.

Subtle intuition gives room for nature to apply the patina of age and appreciate all transformations as being each in itself beautiful. There is nothing which could be described as a "thing of eternity". **Sabi** aesthetics do not dwell on a distinctive love with regard to a state or status. It is an all-encompassing appreciation for the faded bloom, for the moon covered by cloud, or the withered bough, which are not symbols for the far away and deep mystical eternity. There is no uniformity, since something incomplete is even more interesting, having room for growth in it, which by itself is not a value. The way things are and the states in which they present themselves can be a source of great satisfaction and pleasure if perceived from the **sabi** view which treats all states as equally beautiful.

In regard to Buddhist philosophy and practice this also means the ability to overcome the limitations of Ego and to realize the immensity of nature and one's own transitory part in it. With Zhuang Zi one would say that the truly enlightened

person has no learning, no virtue, no accomplishment or fame, because they are above all distinctions. There is also the dimension of insufficiency present in wabi-sabi. With this, which does not incorporate a thought of insufficiency, lies the power of one's resource for real understanding. Approaching the world without the burden of the self, one is able to accept one's insufficiency and to admit an aesthetic and spiritual richness.

How does one approach wabi-sabi without referring to either side of "comparative philosophy"? If we try to apply a sort of "comparative" method to wabi-sabi, we would first have to question the initial European philosophical demand for an all encompassing reason (ratio) in the world.

Not only may the categories we possess not be applicable, but since a radically different rationality is in play here, we might even find the methods of research and analysis derived from the Greek philosophical tradition based on the splitting of "philosophical concerns" into various "disciplines" (epistemology, ontology, metaphysics) unsuitable for approaching these concepts.

With the above mentioned tools of the Greek philosophical heritage we might set into trouble when trying to characterize the "Discourse on painting" by Shi Tao (i) (born ~1641), a Chinese painter and philosopher, whose main concept is **non-differentiation**. A Daoist strongly influenced by Zen, beside his "one-stroke-theory", which is clearly connected with self-cultivation in the sense that to follow "one stroke" is to never turn from Dao (j), he was known for his demand for "liberation from all methods". Claiming that **no-method** (wufa) (k) is the best method, he would state that methods are merely hindrances, obstacles that we have to overcome on our way to creativity. The method of no-method is the only way which makes the philosopher or painter free, so that one can practice the true Way. To become a good philosopher or a good painter would, according to Shi Tao mean: first: to develop one's inner nature and innate intuition. As in the Japanese tradition, reflected also in wabi-sabi, the development of personality which is a necessary part of any "theoretical undertaking" should be in direct relation to a successful interconnectedness with nature. The unity of mind and body and an undifferentiating consciousness concerning the interrelatedness of everything forms the basis of practical experience which should always form a sound ground for any theoretical research or undertaking.

second: another condition for a good philosophical or art work is the demand for tranquility (ji-sabi) and non-attachment. Only from this spiritual setting can good work spring.

The condition for entry into the world of creative power is to attain the state of no-reflection, non-thinking.

Applying European philosophical systematization (theory of knowledge, epistemology, logic, ontology, metaphysics, ethics, moral philosophy, aesthetics) to this would mean to acknowledge the role of philosophy in its totalitarian function and to accept an exclusive path which begins with perception and after certain mental activity concludes with a decision.

Such a rigid scheme would not bring us very far when applied to the traditions

where Truth is not only a way of thinking about the world, but a way of dwelling in the world, which does not exclude bodily existence.

In the case of the tea ceremony, and wabi-sabi as a vital part of it, as well as in other arts, the stress is on cultivation. The idea of theories of artistry as methods of cultivation was formed under a strong Buddhist influence. Since the cultivation is a **method** and the basis for any philosophy, in the case of China and Japan it means basically a metaphysical problem, since true knowledge can be achieved only on the basis of bodily realization and not as merely theoretical reflection. Philosophy is therefore treated as a unity of mind-body. Through meditation, a distinctly psychophysical technique, the Truth is not recognized, but is experienced. One assimilates it not only intellectually, but also emotionally—we could even say through the body. Thence Shi Tao's demand for non-differentiation, which goes strictly beyond Cartesian duality and the modern European philosophical distinction between mind and body. Not only is the superiority of intellectual speculation denied, but also the inseparability of mind and body is established. In various forms of Japanese artistry, as well as in various postures of meditation techniques the idea of controlled functioning of the mind on the basis of constant cultivation of bodily movements is present. In bodily movements the stability and tranquility of the mind is revealed.

Philosophical reflection on certain concepts of the Sino-Japanese realm enlarges the doubt that there exists any universal character of philosophical discourse, especially not based on Aristotle's primary categories. The philosophical tradition of Buddhism in Japan, which influenced wabi-sabi in their later development, has led to demand for liberation from the "outer" and acknowledgment and discovery of the "inner". In consequence this meant that insufficiency, as soon as it is conceived as such, ceases to be insufficiency, but is transformed into a special power. The Buddhist component of the basic concepts of the tea ceremony and the incompatibility of these with the categories of the philosophical apparatus as it was formed in ancient Greece does not make them less philosophical.

The contemporary European philosophy is trying to rewrite the Cartesian model in a way that would allow it to overcome the residual Cartesian dichotomy between subject and object, the divine and human. Descartes wrote about the need to find supporting points. He wanted to reach a position from which he could measure all the rest. We can imagine the movement as a withdrawal from a certain point, although such a support is necessary when he is looking for orientation in the world and in himself so that he doesn't get lost in chaos, such a support is also questionable.

For Aristotle this support is the soul—it does not move, but still, although tranquil itself, it causes movement.

"The soul is the cause or source of the living body. The terms cause and source have many senses. But the soul is the cause of its body alike in all three senses which we explicitly recognize. It is the source or origin of movement, it is the end, it is the essence of the whole living body.

That it is the last, is clear; for in everything the essence is identical with the ground of its being, and here, in the case of living things, their being is to live, and of their being and their living the soul in them is the cause or source." (4)

The activity of thinking has to have a point of support, which is the object of thinking. Can we still recognize such a standpoint, if we reflect about the process of thinking, which is within the frame of philosophy, as well as the frame of pure theory?

How about this illusionary standpoint which is a tranquil, unmoved mobilizer in the case of *ji*? *Ji* is absolute quiet, tranquility, peacefulness, and is seldom found in the Chinese texts. The content of the character has developed as *sabi* in Japan, and gained an important place in Buddhism where its meaning is broader and reigns over the Japanese aesthetical realm as one of the central concepts.

If we try to systematize some of the common meanings of this notion we come from a broad apparent heterogeneity into a dimension of thought which approaches the tranquil support as a potential position of change, namely movement, itself remaining unmoved. In Daoists we come across the character "*ji*" in the *Dao de jing* (1), as well as in Zhuang Zi.

Dao de jing (25)

*"There was something heterogeneously formed,
Predating Heaven and Earth in its birth.
Soundless, formless, it stands solitary and does not change;
It revolves without pause.
This can be considered the mother of the universe..."* (5)

Solitary in this sense means quiet, tranquil, voiceless, spaceless. In Zhuang Zi, the same character appears in connection with the taste of quiet tranquility and peacefulness. In *Tian dao* (m) it appears in relation to "the absence of activity—quiet sitting".

In Buddhism we come across "*ji*" as peace, silence, and calm in connection with Nirvana. It is used, in a sense, to extinguish various unnecessary ruminations, so that the ultimate reality could emerge. The various complexes of meanings that appear in Buddhism could be united in the following categories:

- calm, silent, mute, sad, tranquil, deserted
- tranquility and silence of the truth
- in connection with "the true wisdom" as yoke of two virtues (truth and intelligence) that should in Buddhism lead one to salvation
- the transition into Nirvana—a state without troubles and sorrows, without the movements of time—the condition for delight in peace and Nirvana.

In the Japanese context the notion of "*sabi kokoro*" (n) is interesting. The human mind, which is released from profane engagements, far away from the noise of the world, is dwelling in the realm of mystical silence and peace. This condition is the liberation from human sorrow and gloomy rumination.

According to its meaning *sabi* is *ji*. It expresses the liberation of the human path from sorrow and torments. It is interesting that the other possible translations—silence, sadness, abandoned state, loneliness, negligence, melancholic standstill—lead us to the world of Nirvana, which in its essence isn't something joyful. It is the notion of the spiritual condition of withdrawal, liberation from perplexed reflections. As the description of the place, the character is used to designate an entirely silent,

mournful place without people. When landscapes are described, the character is used for a tranquil, silent, deserted condition without any voice or shape. In an artistic sense it reveals the impression entirely voiceless and shapeless, and as a point where everything is extinguished and there is no existence left.

In the works of early Neo-Confucians (brothers Cheng) (o) "ji" appears in connection with the demand to remove turbulent thoughts as:

- entire tranquility and peace
- one should wait until the point where everything is extinguished and absolute quiet is achieved
- one should keep the inner peace and protect oneself from inner movements
- with this experience and feeling you can reach whatever place without obstructions and remain tranquil, unexcited. This is the way to accomplish the entire world. (6)

The notion of ji as a condition emptied from everything—the point where everything is extinguished, where one can find tranquility and peace—leads us to the aim of various yogic or meditative techniques, which should lead us to the transcendence of logical, discursive patterns of searching and obtain the basis for a different approach within ourselves. It is necessary to perceive the illusionary essence of the border between internal and external worlds, which allowed us to think about the external existence of the "external" world. It is the loss of Ego and the return into the condition where the body and mind are still uniform. In the mind, the false notion about "one's" body, which cannot be separated from all the rest, is overcome. Logic starts at the point where the body and mind are separated and is related to the level of intellect, whereas the body should represent the affective side of the human personality.

To give oneself entirely without any second thought, but still stay tranquil and unexcited, is the basis from which one can reach the entire world. The condition of complete tranquility and the experience of ji is the condition for anything coming into being.

Another important dimension of the Buddhist notion of ji is important, that where the condition is reached in which there is no longer any alternative or differentiation.

These various notions can serve to support the fact that here there are no dimensions of the thought of the thought or reflection on reflection in question. Here we deal with philosophical traditions that are not less philosophical from those of European classical tradition, but can still not be subsumed under the conditions for "philosophicality" set up in the history of European traditions. It is well known that many Asian philosophical schools have, with various techniques, tried to stop thinking as a process.

We return to Aristotle and his work *Address to Philosophy* (B 65):

"If one is a rational being and one's essence directed according to his intellect, the only task one has to fulfill is just searching for the most exact truth and discovery of the truth about that which exists." (7)

We see, that he eliminates the emotional sphere of the human being on the basis of the body-mind distinction. The affective and volitive world is directly bound to

the body. At the methodological bifurcation between theory and practice, the question is posed: how with the tool of pure theory and in the Aristotelian philosophical way do we think about the directions that intentionally claim for truth in the sense of the way of existence in the world, which certainly includes bodily existence? They are namely the philosophical streams that didn't and don't adopt to the narrow frames of the yes-no philosophical position, but rather in the way of the "third word" avoid the answer and not answer with either yes or no. The experience of the body itself is, on the other hand, understood as the basis of the illusion of a "person", which leads to the distinction between subject and object.

II.

Tranquility is the basis of goodness. Voidness is the basis of tranquility. (Zhang Zai) (p)

The next realm where the notion of the other is being tested by the tradition which has been obsessed with the hermeneutics of meaning is the voidness (ku in relation to mu) (q). Does voidness exceed all concepts, all words and can thus be said to exist outside of thought? It certainly does introduce essential challenges to our dualistically educated minds, since we deal here with a completely different way of experiencing language and thought. While not entering into a full discussion of the different connotations of this concept and recognizing the impossibility of remaining fully external to it, it might be possible to claim that the problematics of voidness is inextricably connected with the question of the inexpressible.

A Daoist quotation from the concluding lines of chapter 25 in Zhuang Zi might be helpful for illustration of this metaphysics of presence, which is directing the subject to an unmediated access to reality. The Zhuang Zi's denotation of "illusory dust of the world" and the conceptualization of the same point in Zen mean the possible establishment of a metaphysical ground for the emergence and happening of the **voidness** and the transcendence of Ego. In chapter 25 of Zhuang Zi it is discussed:

"The perfection of the Way and things—neither words nor silence are worthy of expressing it. Not to talk, not to be silent—this is the highest form of debate."
(8)

For Buddhism on this level of approach the question of a venture which is akin to what Wittgenstein called a "language—game" is raised. The actual question which follows from these is the position of the critic of language in the Sino-Japanese tradition. Is a name logically independent of the characteristics of the thing named? One should be careful with regard to the difference between the use of the name for something and the way in which we give it a use in this tradition. Namely, when Zhuang Zi poses an explicit demand of "not to talk, not to be silent", he also puts into play the difference between conventional and absolute knowledge. On this basis there is a difference between knowledge as used in Zhuang Zi and Lao Zi (r) and the notion of knowledge in the European tradition, where theory of Truth means

certain claims to knowledge. The Daoist demand to "abandon knowledge" is important. The Daoist is questioning himself about the value of knowledge and not about whether or not we have it. The fact that we are supposed to abandon knowledge constitutes the basis of the Daoist theory of language and also touches upon the Daoist critic of Confucianism. To the Dao corresponds the entire system of names and distinctions. Dao actually means an actual set of deeds which corresponds to the system of discourse which is actualized in the deeds. The philosophical problematics of Zen Buddhism with regard to the notion of voidness develops together with the problem of expressing the inexpressible. The dependence on the logical and discursive function of the language, which is supposed to express the absolute Truth, is denied. In Zhuang Zi the silence becomes the only real language of **voidness**. Silence is the strongest expression of the **void** relations. It is not any silence, but **Silence** as such. It is not the silence of ignorance, hostility, intimidation, but it is **prajñā**, the wisdom, which is indifferent to the formulation and the rejection of formulation.

If the *ji (sabi)* is a discourse of solitude, in Zhuang Zi we encounter a sublime aesthetics of Silence.

When the differences among the ontological categories (Being, non-Being etc.) are denied, new problems as well as original solutions to old problems arise. European philosophical tradition always gave priority to Being and has understood non-Being as something dependent on Being. The Daoist approach to this question is a complete negation of the European approach. It means a demand for a radical negation as the basis for achievement of the Absolute Truth, which is beyond the beginning and the end, Being and non-Being, something and nothing. Being and non-Being are just two aspects of the inexpressible Dao, and voidness is a dynamic whole which evades such distinctions. As in **koan** and paradoxes in Zen, the intuitive structure of understanding assures meaning in the combination of concepts which would otherwise be understood as logically inconsistent.

Philosophically the problematics of **ontology** and **epistemology** in Zen flow into one another. That is the reason that, at this point, the limits of the comparative method—and the presentation of these philosophies only on the basis of categories of European thought experience—should be taken into consideration again. The comparative method, which should enable a smoother approach to the thoughts of China and Japan, itself sometimes makes this approach more difficult due to its way of mediation.

The communication between various cultures and philosophical traditions is possible without requiring that they be reduced to a common denominator. A new way of thinking is anticipated, which should be allowed to emerge and which is by no means utopian. The research and questioning of the notion of voidness can be very instructive for contemporary European philosophy, because it shows that thought and no-thought have the same basis.

In contact with the philosophies of the Sino-Japanese realm, European philosophy, which is starting to immerse itself in the pleasures of form and style and to heal its great obsession with "meaning", has a chance to realize that it does not possess the

totalitarian function of codifying other forms of discourse and to re-question the basis of its own identity. It is by approaching wabi-sabi, which needs an emotional response, that European philosophy might discover its own suppressed expressions of Truth—in this case as expressions of Beauty.

The examined notions present the demand for deontologization, and the notion of **voidness** is precisely the one which tests the nature of various attachments (to the Ego etc.). The demand for discovery of the nature of non-attachment is posed, which opens up new perspectives of existence. When the enlightened one would see everything in the light of voidness, protection against the appearance of ontological entities is established, which then opens up this astonishing realm of suchness of Being. Although this is a temptation, the concept of voidness can never be brought to the metaphysical level or reduced to ontology. To see things in the light of voidness does not mean to consent to metaphysics or ontology. The voidness therefore is not the antithesis to Being and also is not the position between nothingness and Being. The voidness transcends all points and positions and it is not possible to equate complete voidness with nihilism, because in Daoism and Zen we are dealing with liberation **from** thinking, and from substantiating **Self** (imprisonment in the Ego).

III.

People have a compass within themselves. The very heart is the root and origin of myriad flowers. (Wang Yang Ming) (s)

The next very instructive phenomenon where totalizing, discursive reason shows itself to be an inappropriate tool of approach which cannot exhaust the totality of human potential is a very distinct form of Truth expressed in a rich tradition of various *tus* (c) which are graphical presentations of progressive awakening to the Truth, a distinct form of Buddhist and Daoist cartography of spirit. There is a rich tradition of *tus* in Chinese philosophy, but here I would like to concentrate on only one, the *Taiji tu* (t)—Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, which was written down by Zhou Dunyi (u) in his *Taiji tushuo* (w). Without entering into any speculation on its origin, I would rather reflect here on the question of what significance it might have for Buddhists, especially with regard to aspects of their practice, considering Zhou Dunyi as a philosopher who stressed the importance of *ji* (sabi) or tranquility.

I argue that in the case of *tus* we are dealing with another mode of expressing the Truth, namely through fully elaborated techniques of the self. In the process of transformation of subjectivity to the revelation of truth, at a certain point in describing this process through the techniques of the self, the use of diagrams was introduced. This is a very important point since words were given up as a mode of expression.

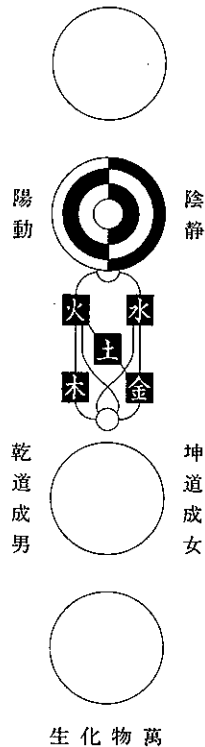
Western philosophy which uses abstractions and considers the logic and theory of language as indispensable parts of "philosophy" is challenged by practical evidence of the fact that words and verbal expressions are only practical tools of human life,

which by itself does not necessarily have a special meaning and does not necessarily acquire meaning through a certain connection to something outside of the language system. Thus it can teach us about a new relationship to that which is not limited to reason, which is just one way but certainly not the only way of approaching the Truth.

One of the possible readings of the Taiji diagram would be a Buddhist stand on a non-Ego, trans-Ego approach to the world, based on the realization of the fact that things and phenomena in the world exist and cease to exist according to their own rules and because of themselves and not because of ourselves and in accordance with our laws and expectations.

If we look at the central preoccupation of Neo-Confucians—the ways of attaining sagehood and incorporating it into their own lives, which means that it was not only a theoretical speculation based on ancient methods, but also a realizable state of existence, we might take Zhou Dunyi as an author who stressed the importance of tranquility. There are various passages by Zhou Dunyi in which he states that the original nature of human beings is pure and tranquil. The question of tranquility can also serve as a gateway to his Taiji tushuo.

Whether or not this very short work, so important for Neo-Confucian metaphysics, brought anything new to it, is not a question to be discussed here. Since it opened up a period of such broad and differentiated philosophical speculation in the Song (w) dynasty, it rather serves as an example of a text which, although loaded with



Buddhist tones, directed a different orientation in Neo-Confucian intellectual history.

When approaching the text, it might be useful to point out one passage that, although accepted as a basic conception of Neo-Confucian thought, displays clear Buddhist characteristics according to our understanding. It is a diagram deriving from and used for meditative purposes and self knowledge.

To recapitulate briefly: Taiji tushuo is an explanation of the diagram of supreme ultimate (x) deriving from the ultimate non-Being (y) and producing yang (z) and yin (a1) or the universal active and tranquil cosmic forces which, in union with the Five Elements, engender all things, of which human beings are the most intelligent. It is a cosmological scheme that has been produced by the imaginative world of this "most intelligent" of beings, who has also been endowed with the wisdom that the subtlest thoughts of the mind cannot be expressed in words. As in the Yijing (b1), where the images are a sort of steps in impermanence to the eternal end, so we deal here with a form of image where an element of human personality is already present and the image is formed by specific laws of experiencing and imagining the world and one's place in it. Thus it is already a mediated view, since objective Truth is not possible. The formation of any idea is already a shift from anything that might be called Truth.

The important point in Zhou Dunyi is that wuji is the origin of taiji. This statement can also be found in the Dao de jing (chapter 40):

"Reversion is the action of Dao.

Weakness is the function of Dao.

All things in the world come from being.

And being comes from non-being." (9)

Wuji is the great emptiness from which the original Beginning is born and which is situated before the Five Elements. In Zhou Dunyi the empty circle at the bottom and on the top of the diagram creates the middle space as a contrast to tranquility—the middle space of the diagram is a realm of change. We should, however, not forget at this point that, according to Buddhism, the notion of change is proof of unreality. The myriad changes are all man's creations. In reality there is just one thing or rather no-thing—a supreme void—symbolized by an empty circle.

The void circle might also indicate the possible dissolution of the boundary between the self and non-self, which in its consequence leads to tranquility bound to bliss and happiness. The boundary is important because it divides the "real" world from the "illusory" (phenomenal) one, which is void. The Great Void is without any physical form, a paragon of perfect impartiality and a field of complete lack of Ego-interests; the realm beyond form in which the world of changes becomes irrelevant.

However, it is the world of human beings which is the very place of purification, since, with all its resources of the impure and the obstructions it offers a person the very possibility of spiritual transformation. In this dimension of the cultivation of the mind we see the necessary dimension of tranquility so stressed by Zhou Dunyi, the master of quiescence, and often referred to as a source of a possible strain of

quietism in Song thought.

If Zhou Dunyi regarded tranquility or stillness as fundamental, and made it his main consideration, it is instructive to look at the polarity between stillness and movement in the *Yijing*, one of the books from which he drew his inspiration. He adopted the *Yijing*'s assumption of a polarity between tranquility and movement and therefore, with change, achieved continuity, and with continuity, illusionary permanence.

In Zhu Xi's (c1) commentary to *Taiji tushu*, the chapter 7 is the most representative with regard to tranquility. Here tranquility is the condition for the renovation of reality, nature. The heart should be tranquil and at rest without any desires. This heart is the heart of the superior being who, with equanimity, is able to meet life's events without being affected or overrun by them. In this sense one masters a situation. Only from such a position can any activity begin. Although activity is indispensable for any being, when one considers a human being, it is tranquility which, according to Zhou Dunyi, is central and vital.

Looking at the diagram, we realize that it is *wuji* which is the central point around which every process of cosmic life and development is centered and from which the myriad phenomena derive and to which they return. It is the graphical presentation brought to the metaphysically ontological level of the ultimate reality as perceived through the meditative experience of the enlightened mind. So the middle level represents the transitoriness of the phenomenal world in its myriad forms and appearances. It represents the level of constant change. Philosophically we see here the Buddhist notion of change contrasted with the real void nature of the world. It is the meditative experience brought into language, as a *tu*, when the mind encounters the diverse phenomena of the world. So the diagram in its form and content is a formulation for this occasion, based on the Chan (d1) notion that ultimately denied the possibility of words to adequately articulate the enlightened mind. So the Buddhist voidness is visually represented by the void circle. It is the metaphysical timeless nature of all things which is represented by *wuji* in the form of a void circle. It also represents the pivotal point of the mind, in the stage where there is no longer any feeling or awareness of anything, no notion, thought or image. It is the consciousnessless state where the universe reflects its original nature of nothingness. This is the central point of consciousness and, at the same time, also the central point of the universe represented by the *wuji* point, the infinite, beyond which there is nothing, the "no ridgepole" in Lao Zi's and Zhuang Zi's words.

This text, inaugurating Neo-Confucian metaphysics, is bound to Buddhist spiritual training, metaphysics, and religious philosophy. It is not bound to Buddhism in its "life-denying" dimension, which has sometimes been attributed to Buddhism. Meditation is far from being an other-worldly undertaking. It is the most here and now-ish practice we can imagine, but ontology based on it derives from a possibility of overcoming insatiable desires, including the desire to live and to stop the usual thinking process, which, in its western context, is connected to life itself. Therefore for some Western exegesists, the process of meditation means a threat to the essence of the life process itself, which in its original Buddhist context is rather a life attesting

than a life-denying dimension. It includes, however, a human quest for transcendence and ultimacy and spiritual development often very closely connected to the inner alchemy of Daoism. So we should be aware that with authors like Zhou Dunyi, although obviously influenced by Buddhism in spiritual dimensions and cultivation, we deal with spheres that can sometimes be autonomous Neo-Confucian cultivation levels and not just Buddhist or Daoist influences.

A view of the diagram and the wuji as the source of the manifold world which returns to it might remind us of the position of physical drives, emotions, desires and imagination in Buddhist meditation practices that form the basis of physical or spiritual internal purification and transformation. It is however not clear if Zhou Dunyi really turned these dimensions in a purely ethical direction. It is true that inner tranquility became the foundation of proper moral activity, but we might also take into consideration that Zhou Dunyi was a philosopher much too closely related to Buddhism and Daoism to limit the manifold human mind only to the ethical dimension. Only the fact that he has chosen the tu, a form of cartography of spirit describing various meanings in the spiritual sphere, as the center of this work, points to some other qualities of his mind.

This very stress on tranquility was later supplemented by Zhu Xi with his theory of mindfulness. So the first attention that Zhou Dunyi as the author of Taiji tushuo, as the cornerstone of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, deserves should always be concerned with its practical application to spiritual self-cultivation on the path to ultimate personal fulfillment. He remains the first to write an explanation to the graphical presentation starting with the empty circle and finally returning to it. So the conceptualization of reality is one with the unity of everything symbolized with the void circle representing the ultimate nature of everything—namely its voidness. So through various steps of the taiji in its multitude of forms (despite the fact that taiji has been identified with changes through the history of thought), everything returns to its basic and original nature—the voidness. The tu thus remains an object of meditation and the way of purification of mind-and-body as the very foundation of our daily experience and the presentation of this process itself.

The various tus gave priority to graphical, imaginary abstractions in regard to the characters as a form closer to “verbal expressions”. Diving into the tu meant a specific bliss, although its transmission was reserved to the enlightened one. The texts and books were a medium for transmission of the Dao, but very often it was those very books and texts that obscured it as well. On the level of creative polarity absolute quiet—change, we might read the tus as specific forms of cartography of the spirit. Being a direct non-verbal image of a spiritual experience, a tu is deprived by its very special symbolic meaning, if explained by the words. A verbal commentary to its symbol means a regression, since it causes a shift to the rational level, whereas as a tu it still has an affective note. Experience of a tu and its meaning is happening on other levels—not only on the rational one. We must take into consideration the fact that rationality as such doesn’t offer us universal, common, and generally valid positions at the meeting of various world views and philosophies. The principle of rationality isn’t a universal notion, because the thesis about thought as an equal

partner to being isn't generally valid. We should distinguish between projections of our own categories on an alien culture, which might be very important but nevertheless remain only an external critique. Therefore the analysis of Sino-Japanese philosophical statements by categories not recognized by these philosophies, or even ones refused by them, will never lead us to understanding.

The Taijitu symbol convinces us of the unavoidableness of realization of the truth in the sense of a psychophysical awareness far above the pure intellect. It is namely a spiritual construction which does not allow a bifurcation in good-evil, black-white, beautiful-ugly, but rather opens up the way of transcendence in a sense of the wisdom of ultimate reality. This, as the various *tus* prove to us, can be drawn but not spoken—it can be experienced in meditation and not understood by erudition.

Daode jing (48):

"The pursuit of learning increases daily.

The pursuit of Dao decreases daily,

Decreasing more and more

Until it reaches the point of inaction.

Inaction: then nothing cannot be done by it,

Therefore the capture of the world should always be done by inactivity.

As for activity, it is insufficient to capture the world." (10)

Learning and piling up knowledge can obscure the direction of our natural development instead illuminating it. One is accumulating wishes, passions and external ornaments, ballast and distortions. From the increasing desires and longings grow confusion and unrest that the one who is devoted to Dao is losing. This is the way of following a radical empirical experience—experience of intuitive recognition of the things in their undifferentiated unity. In the process of such an experience, the level of tranquility is reached, the absolute quiet (*ji-sabi*) and voidness that are the basis of the profoundest and most important insights are realized.

IV. Conclusion

"ō-mu-sho-jū-ni-shō-go-shin" (kongo-hannya-kyō) (gl)

What does the re-questioning of *sabi* (*ji*), voidness and *tus* mean when philosophy is confronted with the limits of its knowing and is bound to give up the unlimited treasures of its safe framework when confronting philosophical speculations which were never caught in the trap of formal analytic truth?

When encountering a text which has the status of a legitimate philosophical work (Lie Zi, for example) (e1), does European philosophy not awaken from its long and dreamy self-sufficiency?

"After nine years, I thought without restraint of whatever came into my mind and said without restraint whatever came into my mouth without knowing whether the right and wrong, benefit and harm, were mine or another's, without knowing that the Master was my teacher and the man I have mentioned was

my friend. Only then, when I had come to the end of everything inside me and outside me, my eyes became like my ears, my ears like my nose, my nose like my mouth; everything was the same. My mind concentrated and my body relaxed, bones and flesh fused completely, I did not notice what my body leaned against and my feet trod, I drifted with the wind East and West, like a leaf from a tree or a dry husk, and never knew whether it was the wind that rode me or I that rode the wind." (11)

There is the world that exists beyond the sphere of conceptualization, beyond truth and falsehood. Sino-Japanese philosophical tradition can mean a definite blow to the long lived illusion of western metaphysics that it is Reason and only Reason that can lead one to the Truth.

In Japan and China, European philosophy has been accepted as one philosophical current. On the other hand, Europe has not considered the philosophies of the Orient to have the valuable philosophical relevance that they deserve. This can be observed in the European use of the term "Oriental Philosophy" which does not even take into consideration the widely varying traditions that cannot be adequately expressed by this common denominator. This logocentric tradition is finally facing its limits—not only by encountering the Other in the form of Asian philosophies, but also by encountering its own Other—traditions of the Truth which in Europe have had a marginal existence due to their arational ways.

By critically rethinking the multiple heritages of world philosophy today without using global and totalizing modes of thought, hopefully European philosophy is recognizing that it is not the only criterion for "philosophical" undertakings. The fact that Japan has been encountering European philosophy only since the beginning of the Meiji period, does not mean that she did not have "philosophy" until that time. Even the fact of an absence of a word for philosophy cannot be taken as proof of the absence of the activity as such. In the case of China, where the concept of philosophy (zhexue) (f1) was imported only in the beginning of this century through Japanese translations of western concepts, the still dominating doubts about the existence of "philosophy" might be even stronger. Escaping the tyranny of globalizing discourse means also to see the borders of one's own philosophical discourse and in this sense encountering **sabi**, **voidness** and **tu** becomes a relevant philosophical enterprise for any philosophy that does not identify itself with the "Western" or "Eastern" spheres of the mind, but rather understands the world in its countless meanings.

In this sense the philosophizing path today resembles Boddhisattva's way which winds on the crest as on the edge of a razor—on one side the "other" world—the world of Nirvana, voidness, Buddhahood and on the other the sphere of ordinary life, the Wheel of Samsara, our everyday hell. To keep this balance and to master the vertigo at the sight of both—is the art of philosophizing. This seems to be one of the "last" tries to generate pure language—the language beyond that is able to carry all which was kept silent. To undertake this activity in the form of a renewed trust in language and its limits also means to undertake the Path of denuding of the Self from the fetters of the Ego up to the diamond essence of interior speech. This is why

philosophy can never again be reduced to a pure logic. It is a living activity, which does not admit itself to logocentric hierarchy but is rather an experience of the nameless. If the aesthetization of life in the Japanese tradition where at certain moments aesthetics tend to be privileged over theory and rationality, which does not make it less philosophical or true, is interpreted as the absence of philosophy, this discloses a certain insufficiency of the reader. As in the case of *tu* it is a transmittable form of truth, which might not necessarily be communicated through rigid philosophical concepts or categories as they were produced in the history of European philosophy ("European" as it was defined before realization of the borderless nature of philosophizing)—it might mean that the "reader" is not appropriately equipped; not literate for the form of the truth which discloses itself at a certain moment as Beauty.

In a more radical way we can express doubts that searching for Truth is The philosophical undertaking. If we look at Sino-Japanese ways of expressing human relationships to the fundamental questions of life and its basic relations, we might even consider that reflecting on Beauty is a philosophy in the full sense of the word—a cultivation and the subtle celebration of Beauty, which European traditions have only recently been radically discovering through the philosophy of discontinuity and the Eros of art.

And who is a philosopher, a philosophizing subject in this situation? The philosopher is the one who is wandering in the Universe, not living anywhere, knowing Reality as "*mujo*" (*g*) and returning to the primal heart-and-mind, where no regionalization of East and West is made. Practicing the art of life by knowing many languages among which none is "yours", by knowing various faiths and not believing in any, subscribing to a nomad thought, liberated from logical clasps, while being the eternal translator and mediator, knowing perfectly the East and West (until they merge), their customs, faiths and thoughts but being equally despised and suspected from both sides, means to choose the edge of the razor as the everlasting Path. By subscribing to this experiment in creativity and becoming, one dwells on the edge between the sea and the land in eternal movement and unrest of the heart-and-mind. This edge is also the meeting place of what has formerly been described as East and West—a place of dialogue which is drawing new maps of the world in a spiritual sense.

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a	侘 寂	s	王陽明
b	空	t	太極圖
c	圖 (圖)	u	周敦頤
d	庄 子	v	太極圖說
e	齊物論	w	宋
f	一期一会	x	太極
g	無常	y	無極
h	幽玄	z	陽
i	石濤	a1	陰
j	道	b1	易經
k	無法	c1	朱熹
l	道德經	d1	禪 (禪)
m	天道	e1	列子
n	寂心	f1	哲學
o	二程子	g1	應無所住而生其心 (金剛般若經)
p	張載		
q	空、無		
r	老子		

様々な真理の再考

マヤ・ミルシンスキー

要旨：この論文は、一般に「東洋哲学」と呼ばれる分野と、未知に接近する際の比較方法論の適用に関する批評研究である。

侘・寂や空・図の分析を通して（精神の地図作成として）真理の様々な形態、特に、日本で固有に培われたもの、美としての真理を示そうと試みたものである。合理的議論そのものや、日中の哲学の領域を考慮した概念がそれ自体の不連続性を自覚しつつあるヨーロッパ哲学への貴重たりうる課題として示されている。

寂（日本—中国間の伝統で言うところの ji—寂）の哲学的概念は、中国の新儒教の初期から、寂（ji）の哲学者周敦頤による太極図の説明まで遡って、侘・寂の美学の包含に関連するものである。空の概念は、全ての場所の超越として紹介されている。

この論文は、現代の哲学者像の考察—身近な状況を熟慮し、現在の世界の哲学の水平線に現れる無数の真理を解釈し、明らかにすることで結末を迎える。