

Problems of Tao and Tao Te Ching

Jan Yün-Hua

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PROBLEMS OF TAO AND *TAO TE CHING* *)¹⁾

BY

JAN YÜN-HUA

Hamilton, Canada

From ancient times until very recently, Lao-tzu as a man, *Tao Te Ching* as a book, and Tao as a philosophy were always problems to scholars. Now that we have come to the seventies of the twentieth century, when science and technology are so advanced, and scholarship has become more 'scientific', one may expect that the problems related to various classics in general and *Tao Te Ching* in particular should also become better understood, so that we may have a chance to do better than the scholars of the past. However, in spite of some fruit in the studies of this work, we still remain in a state of confusion, trying hard to understand what Tao is and who Lao-tzu was. Yet when one attempts to summarize the scholarly achievement on the subject, one would find that in many respects, it is always easy to raise questions, but hard to solve them.

With this frame of thinking in mind, the purpose of this paper is to discuss some of the problems in *Tao Te Ching*; and some parallels in other ancient texts that have been pointed out and debated by some scholars currently, especially Fung Yu-lan and his colleagues. This does not mean I am going to follow them nor attempt to solve some of these problems, but simply trying to point out the areas where research has come to a point of impossibility and the other areas in

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The author.

1) Unless it is noted, the translations quoted in this paper are from W. T. Chan's *The Way of Lao Tzu*, the Library of Liberal Arts, (N.Y., 1963). Two other translations of *Tao Te Ching* have been used occasionally: *The Way and Its Power* by Arthur Waley (Evergreen edition, hereafter the work will be referred to as Waley); and *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* by D. C. Lau (Penguin Books, referred to in the paper as Lau).

which scholarly debates are still carried on. Professor Creel states the difficulty very well: "If any one is apprehensive that I am going to give an answer to the question posed... let me reassure him at once. I shall not be so foolish as to try to propound a single, sovereign definition of what Taoism is." 2) However, a report with some reflections about the state of research on the book would be, no doubt, of some help to us: it would enable us to know the state where we are and what are the areas we may keep on trying to understand.

The study of the authorship and the date of compilation of *Tao Te Ching* has almost come to a stage of non-development. There are four schools of thought in the field: (1) Those who believe that Lao-tzu is identifiable with Lao Tan of sixth century B.C. and that he was a senior contemporary to and visited by Confucius. 3) (2) Those who consider that Lao-tzu was a man of the Spring and Autumn period (B.C. 770-481), but that he was not the author of *Tao Te Ching*. (3) That he lived in the period of the Warring States (B.C. 404-222), though his authorship of the book is disputable within this group of scholars. (4) That he was not a historical person at all. After reviewing all the theories, Professor Chan states: "In the final analysis, any theory about Lao Tzu is a matter of personal choice"; it depends on "a willingness or unwillingness to accept certain sources as reliable." 4) The same sentiment has also been expressed by the authority on Chinese philosophy, Fung Yu-lan. In his *New Compendium of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fung states:

The book of *Lao-tzu* is traditionally attributed to Lao-tzu. Who was Lao-tzu? What was his period? As early as in the second century B.C. there had already been different theories on these questions. Szu-ma Ch'ien, the Grand Historian, could not decide which theory is authentic, so, as a good historian, he recorded all theories available in his time, but refused to give his preference... He recorded: "Some say Tan was Lao-tzu while others say no. People today do not know who are right." 5)

He continues that "as we have not discovered anything newer than the material available to Szu-ma Ch'ien, thus it is impossible for us

2) H. G. Creel, *What is Taoism? And other studies in Chinese Cultural History*, (Chicago, 1970), p. 1.

3) Chan, *ibid.*, pp. 52, 58.

4) *Ibid.*, pp. 51.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 37.

to solve the problem that the Grand Historian was unable to." 6)

If historical study of Lao-tzu comes to a state of static; the disputes on him certainly will not stop. If scholars have debated for thousand years without any agreement, they will probably continue to put forward their wisdom and labour on the topic. Nevertheless, one would agree with Fung that unless some new materials will be discovered, no progress is possible.

The problem of *Tao Te Ching* as a book has also been debated in the last hundred years, yet no agreement has been reached. Nevertheless, the state of research does not look as confused as in the case of Lao-tzu. Generally speaking, there are two principal schools: one thinks the book was a work of a late age or the post-Spring and Autumn period; the other upholds the traditional account and believes that the work should be dated within the period. All of them do, however, agree that the present form of the book is a later revision or composition; though the exact date is very controversial.

Whatever the disputes and controversies about the book and the man might be, it is the philosophical concepts in the book that are most important to all concerned. They are, indeed, the most inspiring ideas that attracted scholars from ancient times to the present. It is these concepts that influenced Chinese civilization for a period of two thousand or more years and they have still remained attractive to us today.

What is Tao? This is a problem that has been discussed again and again. The early expositions on Tao have been dealt with by various experts in the field: summaries of various interpretations can be found in the work of Creel, Chan, Welch and Needham and it is unnecessary to repeat them. The debate on the problem by various scholars in China, especially the new works by Fung are still less known to scholars who are not acquainted with Chinese readings. Since the symposium on Taoism by Western scholars has begun to draw scholarly attention to the subject, 7) a review of recent Chinese

6) Fung, *Chung-kuo che-hsiieh-shih hsün-pien*, (Peking, 1964), pp. 249 and 250. Except for the quotation cited in note 5, the rest are my translations from Chinese text.

7) Parts of the papers contributed to the Symposium on Taoist Studies have been published in *History of Religions*, IX/2-3 (1969-70). More active publication of Taoist researches is being done in Japan under the sponsorship of the Taoist Research Society.

scholarship in the field becomes necessary. This is so because to most people who live in non-Chinese cultural areas, the problem of understanding Taoism is more or less an academic one; whereas within the Chinese tradition, the problem is more alive and crucial as well. Their affirmation or rejection, modification or continuation of Taoist Substratum in their life will have an immense effect on the tradition in its various aspects. However, because of time and space, the best I can do is to focus the discussion on Fung's new interpretation of Tao; and the view from the opposites. The problem of the possible Indian influence on Taoism will be dealt with briefly as there are some claims in this regard.

I

During the last two decades, Fung continued his writings on the history of Chinese philosophy with a Marxist viewpoint of interpretations. In spite of constant and fierce criticism from his opponents, Fung still upholds his views on Taoism. In his book, the *New Compendium* as well as in a few other papers.⁸⁾ Fung has made two contributions to the field: in the first place, he had his new interpretation of Tao; in the second place, he has explicitly explained the methodology of his research on Taoist philosophy. One may add one more item that the discussion had also extended to the other contemporary Chinese classics apart from well-known Taoist ones.

In the book and the papers, Fung has pointed out that Taoism did actually exist as a school in ancient China. Though he agrees that the Taoist school had no organisation or close connection between individual thinkers, nevertheless, such was a common feature with most of ancient Chinese schools of thought except Mo-chia or Mohism. Under that circumstance, the criterion for the study of a school should lay more stress on its central ideas rather than review it from the other angles. According to him, the central idea of Taoists in the ancient period was Self-preservation (*wei-wo*). Self-preservation means to place one's own interest above all the others; and the search for

8) Three of these articles have been noted by W. T. Chan, *Chinese Philosophy 1949-1963: An annotated bibliography of Mainland China Publications*, (Honolulu, 1967), pp. 129-130. More papers on early Taoist thought have been collected in Fung's *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh-shih lun-wen chi* ('Essays on History of Chinese Philosophy'), 1st series (Shanghai, 1958) and 2nd series (Macao, 1962?).

greatest benefit for oneself is the supreme goal of life. The relationship between Philosophical and Religious Taoism has been puzzling scholars for a longtime, since the ideas of indifference to life and death as taught by the philosophers are contradictory with the search for physical immortality as urged by Taoist priests.⁹⁾ In a recent paper by E. Marie Ch'en, some hints has been expressed on the common ground of Philosophical and Religious Taoism though she is still unable to find textual evidences from *Tao Te Ching* to support the theory of physical immortality.¹⁰⁾ Taking the passages quoted by Ch'en and comparing them with the broader definition of Taoism as made by Fung, one would find that inspite of contradictions between philosophical and religious Taoisms, their aim of 'preserving of life' was quite consistent and congruous.

Though all branches of Taoism aimed at Self-preservation, the way of achieving it varied with the branches. Fung divides the Taoism in ancient China into five branches, viz., (1) those who insisted on preservation of one's own life as represented by Yang Chu, (2) those who laid stress on the satisfaction of one's desires as represented by *Lieh-tzu*, (3) those who gave emphasis to longevity as represented by Sung and Yin, (4) those who aimed at escaping from harm by the understanding of Tao as represented by *Tao Te Ching*, and (5) those who thought that 'to forget oneself' is the surest path to preserve themselves. The last is represented by *Chuang-tzu*.¹¹⁾ Comparing this classification of philosophic Taoism with the 'contemplative' (*Chuang-tzu*) and the 'purposive' (*Tao Te Ching*) Taoism as classified by Creel,¹²⁾ Fung's grouping of Taoist thinkers is large in scope

9) Creel says that "Hsien Taoism also incorporates elements from Confucianism, Moism, and Buddhism. But there is one element that we might expect to find which is completely absent from Hsien Taoism. That is the central insight of philosophical Taoism." *Op. cit.*, p. 24. See also H. Welch, *Taoism, the parting of the Way*, (Beacon edition, 1966), pp. 88 ff.

10) E. M. Chen, "Is There a doctrine of Physical Immortality in the *Tao Te Ching*?" *History of Religions*, XII/3 (1973), pp. 231-249.

11) Most of Fung's interpretations of Tao mentioned in this paper are based on his article, "Hsien-ch'in tao-chia che-hsüeh chung-yao ming-tz'u t'ung-shih" or "General explanations of the important terms in the philosophy of Taoist schools in the pre-Ch'in times", in *Lao-tzu che-hsüeh t'ao-lun-chi* or '*A Symposium on the Philosophy of Lao Tzu*', (Peking, 1959). Hereafter, the book is referred to as *Symposium.*) pp. 83 ff.

12) Creel, *op. cit.*, pp. 5 ff.

and detailed in classification. Whether or not those thinkers other than Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu were Taoists is, of course, still open to dispute. Nonetheless, Fung's theory of Self-preservation as the central criterion of Taoism is worthy for consideration.

On the problem of methodology, Fung considers that the present stage of research on Tao is much influenced by commentaries. As far as *Tao Te Ching* is concerned, the influence of Wang Pi (A.D. 226-249) is predominant.¹³⁾ Like most commentarial works, Wang's commentary which claimed to be explanations of *Tao Te Ching*, is actually, a manifestation of his own philosophy. If one wishes to know the original form of Taoism in the pre-Ch'in period of China, the most important task is to free oneself from the commentarial interpretations as a precondition. Only after that, the Taoist and the non-Taoist materials may be collected and compared in order to analyse their descriptions of the terms in Taoist texts. From this, the differences among the Taoist schools may be reveal.

Taking the sentence: "Deep and obscure, in it is the essence. The essence is very real..." (XXI) from *Tao Te Ching* as for an example, it refers to the word *ching* only two or three times. The word has been translated as essence, substance, stuff etc. If the word is read within the textual limit of the book, it will be difficult to realize its importance as the occurrences of the word are fewer. However, if it is regarded as a technical term of the tradition and be understood in the light of other Taoist texts, the word becomes more significant. According to the "Nei-yeh" chapter of *Kuan-tzu* which is probably a piece of work belong to a branch of Taoism, the essence or the breath of life (*ching-ch'i* or *ling-ch'i*) is Tao itself. It says:

In the heart the subtle breath of life sometimes comes and sometimes disappears.

It is so small that nothing can exist within it.

It is so large that nothing can exist outside it.

We lose it by being hasty so that we suffer harm.

If the heart can be controlled and made quiescent,

The Way will become stabilized of itself.¹⁴⁾

13) For Wang's philosophy and his place in Taoist Metaphysical School, see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. II, translated by D. Bodde, (Princeton, 1953), pp. 168 ff. For selected translations of Wang's commentary on *Lao Tzu*, see Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, 1963), pp. 321 ff.

14) Translation quoted here is from W. A. Rickett, *Kuan-tzu, A Repository*

From this passage, Fung says that in the view of this branch of Taoism, Tao is the Force of life or the Breath of life, which "is what fills the body".¹⁵⁾ The "Nei-yeh" chapter further states:

Now forms are fulfilled by means of the Way,
 Yet men are unable to hold it firmly.
 Once it is gone it may not return,
 Once it has come it may not remain.
 How silent! No one hears its sound.
 How compact! It resides, then, in the heart.
 How obscure! No one sees its form.
 How bounteous! It is born together with me.
 Its form cannot be seen, its sound cannot be heard.
 Yet we may trace its achievements —
 Such we call the Way.¹⁶⁾

Comparing this passage with *Tao Te Ching*, the similarities between the two texts supports Fung's argument. The *Tao Te Ching* states:

We look at it and do not see it;
 Its name is The Invisible.
 We listen to it and do not hear it;
 Its name is The Inaudible.
 We touch it and do not find it;
 Its name is The Subtle (formless).
 These Three cannot be further inquired into,
 And hence merge into one.
 Going up high, it is not bright, and coming down low, it is not dark.
 Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name;
 It reverts to nothingness.
 This is called shape without shape,
 Form without objects... (XIV)

of *Early Chinese Thought*, vol. I, (Hongkong), 1965), p. 168. For the dates and authorship of various essays as collected in the book, see pp. 155-158. For Fung's recent views on this work, see Fung, *op. cit.*, fn. 8, pp. 287 ff. The word *ching* has been translated by Legge, Chan and Lau as "Essence", Waley as "Force", Strauss as "*geist*", Weiss and Forke as "kraft", (see, A. Ohama, *Roshi no tetsugaku* or 'The Philosophy of Lao Tzu', Tokyo, 1970, p. 30) and B. Watson as "spiritual essence" or "the vital energy of body". In a later article, "Lun hsien-ch'in tao-chia che-hsüeh szu-hsiang" ('The Philosophical Thought of Taoists in Pre-Ch'in China'), Fung still upholds his early view that these chapters of *Kuan-tzu* are Taoist works. He has however, changed his view on authorship of these papers: he now thinks that they belong neither to Sung/Yin school nor the Taoist school. He speculates that Sung/Yin were Mohists. See his 'Essays on History of Chinese Philosophy', second series, pp. 276-283.

15) Rickett, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

16) *Ibid.*, p. 159.

From this Fung thinks that in these texts, Tao has been clearly described as the Force of Essence. This force is within the human body by its own tendency, yet when man does not preserve it with care, the force would “gone it may not return... Come it may not remain”. The force is very subtle; it can not be determined as objects by sense organs. As Tao is the Force of Essence, it is naturally beyond the senses of audibility and visibility. The chapter further states:

It is ever so that the Way has no fixed place,
 Yet it will peacefully settle in a good heart.
 The heart being quiescent, the breath of life is regular.
 And thus the Way may be made to stay.¹⁷⁾

According to this school of Taoism, it is only when human mind is empty and calm, the Force of Essence will concentrate in it. The last line quoted above explains this very well.

If the above mentioned statement is acceptable, then Tao is the Force of Essence or Breath of Life. It is the subtle material, which has been defined by another work “Hsin Shu”, also a chapter of *Kuan-tzu*: “The Way lies between Heaven and earth. It is so large that nothing can exist outside it. It is so small that nothing can exist within it.”¹⁸⁾ A similar description is also available on the Spirit of Life (*ling-ch'i*): “It is so small that nothing can exist within it. It is so large that nothing can exist outside it.” Because the material is subtle and minute, it cannot be divided further; thus it is described as “nothing can exist within it”; and because it “sprinkles and fills the whole world” or “exists everywhere”,¹⁹⁾ that is why it is described as “It is so large that nothing can exist outside it.” And because it is the subtlest and minutest material, it cannot be the object of sense organs, that is why it has been described as “What is vacuous and formless we call the Way.”²⁰⁾ The “Hsin-shu” chapter describes the situation quite well. It says:

Concerning the Way, when it moves men do not see its form; when it is diffused they do not see its Power. Yet all things thereby attain to what they are and no one knows its limits.²¹⁾

17) *Ibid.*

18) *Ibid.*, p. 173.

19) *Ibid.*, p. 162.

20) *Ibid.*, p. 174.

21) *Ibid.*, p. 175.

This means that all things became themselves only because they had derived their Powers from the Tao. This description is also confirmed by a passage from the chapter "Nei-yeh" of the same book. It says:

It is ever so that the Way has neither roots nor stalks,
Leaves nor flowers.
Yet what gives life to all things and brings them to perfection,
It termed the Way.²²⁾

In short, according to Fung, all these passages meant one thing, that the Tao mentioned in *Tao Te Ching* is identical with the *ch'i* (force) or *ching-ch'i* (forces of essence) or *ling-ch'i* (spirit of life or breath of life). It is a material, subtle but basic to everything.

II

After he identified Tao with the Essence or the Breath of life, Fung comes back to the text of *Tao Te Ching*. He concludes Tao or Way as described in the text according to five characteristics.

(I) Tao is non-being (*wu*). The term non-being is an abbreviation of nameless (*wu-ming*) and formless (*wu-hsing*). The text says:

We look at it and do not see it;
Its name is The Invisible.
We listen to it and do not hear it;
Its name is The Inaudible.
We touch it and do not find it;
Its name is The Subtle (formless).
These three cannot be further inquired into,
and hence merged into one.
Going up high, it is not bright, and coming down low, it is not dark.
Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name;
It reverts to nothingness.
This is called shape without shape,
Form without objects.
It is the Vague and Elusive.
Meet it and you will not see its head.
follow it and you will not see its back.
Hold on to the Tao of old in order to master the things of the present.
From this one may know the primeval beginning (of the universe).
This is called the bond of Tao. (XIV)

Another description of Tao is found in *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*:

²²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

The Tao is what is invisible when one sees, inaudible when one listens to and it cannot be described. Now if one has the vision of invisibility, the audition of inaudibility and the form of formlessness, one is then close to the knowledge of it. The Tao is fundamental Essence. It cannot be described in form nor it is namable. If one is forced to give it a name, it is called the Great One (*t'ai-i*)²³

Here, in the book, the same question is raised as has been raised in *Tao Te Ching* XIV. The answer to the question is quite identical as well, viz., that it is the subtlest force, hence it is invisible and inaudible. It has been declared right from the beginning of *Tao Te Ching* that

The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao;
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The Named is the mother of all things. (I)

In another place, it also stated that "the Tao is eternal and has no name" (XXXII). Why is it unnamable or nameless? *Kuan-tzu* contains a passage to answer the question: it is because "things have definite forms. Forms have definite names (*ming*)."²⁴) So the names come after forms. A similar statement is also found in *Han-fei-tzu*: "In general, anything that has a form can be easily cut."²⁵) Forms meant the size and shape of things. As Tao has no such form, therefore, it has no such name. In other words, it has to be nameless.

(2) The second characteristic of Tao is that it is eternal (*ch'ang*). There are quite a number of references in this regard as found in *Tao Te Ching* where Tao is described as eternal (I, XVI, XXXII, XXXVII, LII, LV). To say Tao is eternal means that it is lasting foreve. A more precise description on the subject also exist in *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*: "The Round Tao is one, which is comparable to most noble one. Its origin is unknown and its manifestations (literarily, 'corners') are unknown and its beginning and end are unknown. Yet myriad things respect it as their ancestor."²⁶) This

23) *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* or 'the Spring and Autumn of Mr. Lü' (Szu-pu ts'ung-k'an ch'u-pein sopen edition), vol. 95, p. 30 b. Hereafter, it is refered as *Lü*. The translations are mine.

24) Rickett, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

25) *The complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, translated by W. K. Liao, (London, reprint 1959), vol. I, pp. 200. Hereafter, it is refered as the *Complete works*.

26) *Lü*, *op. cit.*, p. 22a-b.

is what "the Tao is eternal" means; and in Fung's judgement, this is the only meaning of the word.

The statement that Tao is eternal does not mean that Tao is motionless and unchanging. The *Han-fei-tzu* explains:

In general, principles are what distinguish the square from the round, the short from the long, the coarse from the fine, and the hard from the brittle. Accordingly, it is only after principles become definite that things can attain Tao. Thus definite principles include those of existence and extinction, of life and death, and of rise and fall. Indeed, anything that first exists and next goes to ruin, now lives and then dies, and prospers at the beginning and declines afterward, cannot be said to be eternal. Only that which begins with the creation of heaven and earth and neither dies nor declines till heaven and earth disappear can be said to be eternal. What is eternal has neither a changing location nor a definite principle and is not inherent in an eternal place. Therefore the eternal cannot be traced as a way. The saintly man, looking at its mysterious emptiness and dwelling upon its universal course, forcibly gave it the name Tao. Only thereafter it can be talked about. Hence the saying "The Tao that can be traced as a way is not the eternal Tao." 27)

Here, in this passage, *Han-fei-tzu* explains the first chapter *Tao Te Ching* very clearly: Tao is eternal, but it also "is not inherent in an eternal place." The same book further explains:

Tao is the way of everything, the form of every principle. Principles are the lines that complete things. Tao is the cause of the completion of everything. Hence the saying "It is Tao that rules everything." Things have their respective principles and therefore cannot trespass against each other. Inasmuch as things have their respective principles and therefore cannot trespass against each other, principles are determinants of things and everything has a unique principle and Tao disciplines the principles of all things, everything has to go through the process of transformation. Inasmuch as everything has to go through the process of transformation, it has no fixed frame. Since everything has no fixed frame, the course of life and death depends upon Tao, the wisdom of the the myriad kinds conforms to it, and the rise and fall of the myriad affairs is due to it. 28)

Here *Han-fei-tzu* explains that Tao "has no fixed frame" on the one hand; yet on the other hand, "Tao disciplines the principles of all things." Tao, therefore is formless. It is neither square nor round; yet it can make things into square and round. This is what "has no fixed frame" means. This also explains the sentence: "is not inherent in an eternal place."

27) *The Complete works*, I., pp. 194-195.

28) *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

(3) Tao is “so large that nothing can exist outside it; and it is so small that nothing can exist within it.” In the chapter “yüan-yü” of *Ch’u-tz’u* or *The Song of the South*, there is a statement:

The Way can only be received, it cannot be given.
 Small, it has no content; great, it has no bounds.
 Keep your soul from confusion, and it will come naturally.
 Unify the essences and control the spirit; preserve them inside you in the
 midnight hour.
 Await it in emptiness, before even Inaction.
 All other things proceed from this; this is the Door of Power.²⁹⁾

Here, the Power is derived from the Tao and all things obtained it from the Tao and thus became myriad things. This is why the poem states “All other things proceed from this.” “The Door of Power” as referred to in the poem probably is what *Tao Te Ching* termed “The door of all subtleties” (I) or “The gate of the subtle and profound female.” (VI)

The *Lü-shih ch’un-ch’iu* stated:

The heaven as the Law, the power as the action, the Tao as the ancestor.
 To transform within things but not to be ended nor exhausted with things.
 The Essence fills [the space between] heaven and earth inexhaustably, the
 spirit returns to cosmos and thus cannot be seen: No one knows its beginning,
 no one knows its end, no one knows its manifestations (*tuan*) and no one
 knows its source (*yüan*). It is so large that nothing can exist outside it;
 it is so small that nothing can exist within it. This is called the most noble.³⁰⁾

“The heaven as the Law, the power as the action, the Tao as the ancestor” mentioned in this passage, describe the qualities of a “scholar of Tao.” From “to transform within things...” and onward is the description of Tao itself. “This is called the most noble” refers to the Tao itself. There is no doubt that only the Tao is the most noble in Taoist minds.

²⁹⁾ D. Hawkes, translation of *Ch’u Tzu, The Songs of the South*, (Oxford, 1959), p. 83. Creel thought that the poem quoted here was not written by Ch’ü Yüan, but he agreed that the poem “Yüan-yü” or “the Far-off Journey” had “uses Tao in the Taoist sense...”, Creel, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14. It seems that all authorities on Taoism are in agreement on the Taoist nature of the poem. Cf. H. Maspero, *Le Taoïsme*, (Paris 1950 edited by Paul Demieville), pp. 202-204; and Fung’s paper in the *Symposium*, p. 87. The closest parallels in *Tao Te Ching* are “Tao is empty. It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted” (IV) and “The Great Tao flows everywhere. It may go left or right.” (XXXIV)

³⁰⁾ Lü, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Tao is the Force of Essence (*ching-ch'i*), which is the subtlest and minutest, and there is nothing smaller than it. It cannot contain anything within it nor can it be divided further. That is why the statement says: "It is so small that nothing can exist within it." However, as it fills up the whole space, that is why it has been described as "It is so large that nothing can exist outside it."

The *Tao Te Ching* has a similar statement that "Tao is eternal and has no name. Though its simplicity seems insignificant, none in the world can master it." (XXXII) The word "insignificant" is a translation of original Chinese character *hsiao* or "small"; therefore, it is parallel with the statement of "It is so small that nothing can exist within it." In chapter XXVIII of *Tao Te Ching*, it has been stated that "He will never deviate from eternal virtue, but returns to the state of the non-ultimate." The quotation seems to be another expression of "It is so large that nothing can exist outside it."

(4) Another characteristic of Tao is that "It operates everywhere." The *Tao Te Ching* states:

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete,
Which existed before heaven and earth.
Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change.
It operates everywhere and is free from danger.
It may be considered the mother of universe. (XXV)

What is meant by "It operates everywhere"? The terms 'creation' and 'disappear', which have already been quoted from *Han-fei-tzu*³¹) yield some clues. It means that originally, there was undifferentiated Original Force (*yüan-ch'i*); after the process of 'creation' it became heaven and earth that is the meaning of: "The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth." (I) However, heaven and earth are not eternal and they should have their moment of extinction. How will they be extinguished? That is the 'disappear', which means to scatter into the Undifferentiated Force again. Heaven and earth are as such, and so the myriad things produced by them. This is explained by *Tao Te Ching* as "All things flourish, But each one returns to its root." (XVI) This is also the meaning of "It reverts to nothingness." (XIV) In this manner, heaven and earth and all things within them, develop from the beginning to the end in a circular movement. In Taoist ter-

31) The *Complete works*, p. 194.

minology, it is called *chou-hsin* which Chan has translated as “operates everywhere”; Waley as “All pervading”; and Lau as “Goes round.” *Chou* means ‘circular’. Here it can be understood as revolving, or the circular movement; and it is Tao that “Goes round”: The *Tao Te Ching* states:

I know not its name,
So I style it ‘the way’.
I give it the makeshift name of ‘the great’.
Being great, it is further described as receding,
Receding, it is described as far away,
Being far away, it is described as turning back.

(XXV, Lau)

Here the words ‘receding’, ‘far away’ and ‘returning back’ are the descriptive words of *chou-hsing* or ‘Goes round’. And so is the word ‘returns’ as it has already been quoted from chapter XVI.

In the “Huan-tao” (‘the Round Tao’) chapter of the *Lü-shih ch’ün-ch’iu*, it is stated that “The essence functions in four seasons. Parts of it go up and parts down. And when they merge it is called the Round Tao.”³²) The book further states that “when a thing is in motion it begins to sprout; from sprout it produces; from producing it grows; from growth it becomes large; from large it completes; from the completion it decays; from the decay it dies; with death it disappears. This is the [motions of] Round Tao.” The Round Tao is another way or words for “Goes round.” “Goes round” is the principal function of Tao; this is the reason why the same text states: “The Round Tao is one... myriad things respect it as their ancestor.”³³)

In the chapter “Ta-yüeh” of the same book, there is another statement:

The Supreme One (*t’ai-i*) produces the Two Forms (*liang-i*), from the Two Forms there come *yin* and *yang*. When transform, *yang* goes up and *yin* down. Manifestation is accomplished when the two are in union. Undifferentiated and confusing, separated and reunited, united and separated again, this is call the eternity of heaven. The heaven and earth resemble a wheel of vehicle, it begins again when it revolved to an end; and it reverse back when it reaches to an extreme in one direction. But all transformations are right. Sun, moon and stars move with slower or faster speed, yet because of move-

32) *Lü, op. cit.*, p. 22a.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 22a-b. Cf. fn. 26.

ments of sun and moon, all functions become possible: the four seasons succeed one another, some of them hot and some cold, some longer and some shorter, some stronger and some weaker.³⁴⁾

The sentence “Undifferentiated and confusing, separated and reunited, united and separated again, this is call the eternity of heaven” means that originally, there was a state of undifferentiation and confusion, and it is through the process of creation (*p'ao-p'an*) that things become distinctive. This is the meaning of ‘separation’ or ‘separated’. Myriad things are created through the process of separation or differentiation. Though they are from separation, yet they will reunite. This is what has been described as ‘return’ in *Tao Te Ching*:

But each one returns to its root.
This return to its root means tranquility,
It is called returning to its destiny.
To return to destiny is called the eternal (Tao). (XVI)

The “eternity of heaven” as mentioned in *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* is the “Goes round” or “returns to its root” as mentioned in *Tao Te Ching*. It is not only that myriad things are under going through the process of ‘Goes round’, but even heaven and earth are also under the same process. This is the meaning of “The heaven and earth resemble a wheel of vehicle, it begins again when it revolved to an end..”

(5) And finally, the most important characteristic of Tao is that it is a combination of both being and non-being. In the first chapter of *Tao Te Ching*, the book declares that “Therefore let there always be non-being, so we may see their subtlety, and let there always be being, so we may see their outcome.” In the translation of Waley, the passage is translated as this:

Truly ‘only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences’; He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the outcomes. (p. 141)

If one follows the translations made by Waley or Lau, reading ‘desire’ with ‘rids’ and ‘never rid’ etc. together, the text would mean that if Man wishes to see the Secret Essence or Subtlety or the vacuous and non-being state of Tao, he has to get rid of his desires. It is only after his mind reaches to a state of emptiness, then he will be able

34) *Ibid.*, p. 30a.

to comprehend the Subtlety or 'Secret' of Tao. However, if Man wishes to see the state of 'all things flourish', he should have desire in his mind and then he will be able to comprehend it through distinctive conceptions; and that is the 'outcomes' of Tao. The passage explained that Tao has two aspects: Tao is empty or non-being on the one hand; and it has distinctive conceptions or being on the other. When summed up, Tao is the union of being and non-being or the differentiated and the undifferentiated.

If one wishes to read the word 'desire' separated from the other words as in the translation of Chan, there is nothing that is objectionable. *Tao Te Ching* itself has clearly stated that "Tao is eternal and has no name" (XXXII) or "the Way is forever nameless" (Lau). Non-being (*wu*) seemed to be an abbreviation of nameless (*Wu-ming*); thus "forever is nameless" can be read as "always be non-being" (*ch'ang-wu*). The statement "Only that which begins with creation of heaven and earth and neither dies nor declines till heaven and earth disappear can be said to be eternal,"³⁵) as has already been quoted from *Han-fei-tzu*, explains the same subject, namely, the being aspect of Tao. It means that Tao reveals its secret or subtlety through non-being; and its outcomes through being.

Here the terms "always being" and "always non-being" are not merely abstract concepts but rather have concrete contents: "Non-being refers to the formless and nameless Primal Force (*yüan-ch'i*) or Force of Essence (*ching-ch'i*). The word "being" also refers to concrete subjects, namely heaven, earth and myriad things, especially heaven and earth. Because of this, Tao on the one hand "there is in in the form," "in it are things" and "in it is the essence" (XXI). And on the other hand, it is also "invisible," "inaudible" and "formless" (XIV).

There are many passage in *Tao Te Ching* where being means heaven and earth. For example:

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The Named is the mother of all things. (I)

The passage, however, can also read as follows:

Non-being is the name of the origin of Heaven and World;
Being is the name of the mother of all things.

35) The *Complete works*, p. 194.

These two readings are different, but the difference is not so significant as their contents are more or less the same. The remarkable fact is that in these two different readings, heaven and earth are mentioned as the oppositions to all things. In Fung's view, those are not different meanings deduced from different texts, but both are explaining the same subject, the cosmology of Taoists. These Taoists thought that at first, there were undifferentiated Primal Forces; heaven and earth were then differentiated; and, finally, myriad things were further differentiated from heaven and earth. Therefore, heaven and earth are the mother of all things. They are the named or have names and that is why they were called as being. The *Tao Te Ching* therefore declares:

All things in the world come from being.
And being comes from non-being. (XL)

Here being means heaven and earth; "being comes from non-being" is another expression of "The Named is the mother of all things." (I) The text explicitly stated that "all things in the world come from being," but not "heaven and earth." This difference is very significant as in the original text, the two phrases have only one word different, namely *t'ien-hsia wan-wu* ('all things in the world') and *t'ien-ti wan-wu* ('heaven-earth and all things'). Though the difference is only in one word yet it is very important as many people quoted passages from chapters LI, IV and LII thus questioned the interpretation of only heaven and earth are the mother of all thing. In those chapters, it has been clearly stated that "Tao produced them" etc. There is another question against the interpretation which arises from chapter XXI which states that "It serves as a means for inspecting the fathers of the multitude" (Lau, p. 78). In Chan's translation, word "fathers" is read as "beginnings." Fung's explanation is this: if Tao produces all things, it is then the father of all things. In that case why should it be described as "for inspecting the fathers...?"

In Fung's opinion, the passage does not conflict with his interpretation. To say that this man is that man's father does not mean that the father has no father of his own. It is like one claims that this tree has grown out of that tree; yet that tree has grown from another tree. This is the reason why it is termed as a plural, fathers. However, in the case of Tao, the book stated "I do not know whose

son it is," (IV), henceforth, it is the father of fathers, but itself never the son. From the Taoist theory of "Goes round" one may claim that all things are produced from Tao, so "Tao produces them" (LI); however, Tao is formless and nameless; whereas things are with form and have names. As the Taoist holds that heaven and earth is the beginning of the named and the greatest amongst the named, so they are regarded as the mother of all things. The claim, therefore, does not conflict with fathers of each individual thing.

The formation of the concept "Goes round" in *Tao Te Ching* is a very significant contribution to the history of Chinese thought. This is so because there were theories like *yin/yang* and the Five Elements during the pre-*Tao Te Ching* period, nonetheless, there was never an explicit statement which claimed that all things were produced from *yin/yang* and the Five Elements first, and then returned to them again. The "Goes round" theory in *Tao Te Ching* is the earliest Chinese statement which declared explicitly that the *ch'i* or Forces are the fundamental material and it is identifiable with Tao. All things came out from Tao and ultimately return to Tao. In conclusion, Fung considers that the philosophy of *Tao Te Ching* fits very well with the description of primitive and spontaneous materialism as given by F. Engels.³⁶⁾

III

The conclusion of Fung and his sympathizers immediately received strong objections from the radical Marxist philosophers in China. To a large extent, the publication of *Lao-tzu che-hsüeh t'ao-lun chi* ('*A Symposium on the philosophy of Lao-tzu*') is one of the results of the controversy.

The scholars who opposed Fung's interpretation of Tao as *ch'i* or subtlest material are quite a few; and their views were listed by Jen Chi-yü when he wrote the survey of Chinese studies on Lao-tzu in 1959.³⁷⁾ These are their views:

- (1) Tao is the last, ontological and abstract concept of whole cosmos and things. It is formless and incognizable by sense.
- (2) Tao is transcendent to time, space and human experiences.

³⁶⁾ *Symposium*, p. 115.

³⁷⁾ Jen Chi-yü and Feng Ching-yüan, "Lao-tzu ti yen-chiu" ('Studies on Lao-tzu'), in *Symposium*, pp. 15 ff. also Chan, *Bibliography*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

- (3) The Tao of *Tao Te Ching* is non-being. Hence the view that non-being produces being cannot be interpreted as materialism.
- (4) As Tao is called the One, hence it is an abstract and mathematic concept.
- (5) The Tao represents the law of nature, thus *Tao Te Ching* adopts the words One (*i*) or Profound (*hsüan*) to indicate material totality. Tao is above the One and Profound. This can be testified by chapter XLII.
- (6) The pattern of materialist philosophy in ancient times was usually by take up one or a few concrete elements from the world, and regard it or them as the origin of the cosmos.
- (7) *Tao Te Ching* disregarded sense experiences, but respected profound insight (*hsüan-lan*) and tranquil observation (*ching-kuan*) as the sources of knowledge. Hence it is far away from the pattern of ancient materialisms.

Those who reject *Tao Te Ching* or *Lao-tzu* as materialist and consider it as idealistic are however, not in total agreement among themselves: some of them thought the philosophy is totally idealistic; some considered that there are certain materialistic tendencies within the framework of idealism. The latter took Taoist concept of heaven as an example to illustrate their viewpoint, and says the concept is naturalistic and therefore inclined to material elements.

The survey made by Jen Chi-yü mentioned above, summarized views of Chinese scholarship during the fifties, but their views are, perhaps, still upheld by the writers. As far as this writer's information goes, many scholars have changed their opinions on Confucian philosophy in recent campaign of anti-Confucianism; yet Taoist philosophy has been left unattacked so far.

Though some of the Chinese writers wrote their criticisms with political motives, yet some of them had criticised Fung with abundant evidences from *Tao Te Ching*. It will be scholarly unfair if one simply ignores these textual evidences as political propaganda. Yet, at the same time, any adequate presentation of those evidence will make this paper out of proportion. The only feasible way to do the work is to choose one of the most representative works of the opponents, thus to indicate how and on what grounds Fung has been criticised. For that purpose, the paper of Kuan Feng and Lin Lü-shih is typical.

In their paper "Lun Lao-tzu che-hsüeh t'i-hsi ti wei-hsin-chu-i pen-chih" or "On the fundamental, idealistic nature of Lao-tzu's system of philosophy,"³⁸) the two critics had first defined Tao as the unity of "always being" and "always non-being," as emptiness or vacuousness, transcendence of time and space, and the source of myriad things and cosmos. However, they still think Tao is not atom nor essence and thus they do not belong to the category of materials. They pointed out that the word "one," as mentioned in chapter XIV though looks close to the description of atom as it is invisible, inaudible and un-touchable; yet the "one" is not Tao. According to chapter XLII: "Tao produced the one." At the same time, one has to remember that the book also said that "All beings in the world come from being. And being comes from non-being." (XL) Therefore, the one is being and Tao is non-being. Moreover, the text also said: "Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name." (XIV) In other words, the "one" ultimately will return to non-being. If the "one" is produced from and finally returned to Tao, then it is obvious that it differs from Tao.

The two authors further pointed out that Tao is not the Force of Essence (*ching-ch'i*). In *Tao Te Ching*, only the word *ching* but not the phrase *ching-ch'i* were found. The word is mentioned in chapters XXI and LV. The text only stated: "Deep and obscure, in it is the essence. The essence is very real..." or "his essence at its height." However, in both case, the word *essence* stood alone; and the second quotation even has nothing to do with Tao itself. Under these circumstances, how can one interpret the word *ching* as found in *Tao Te Ching* with the phrase of *ching-ch'i* or Force of Essence as mentioned in *Kuan-tzu*? They thought that the word *ching* is interchangeable with word *ch'ing* (reality) as mentioned in *Chuang-tzu* (VI), which states: "The Way has its reality and its signs."³⁹) What about the chapters of *Kuan-tzu* which Fung has quoted elaborately? The two scholars considered that though these are Taoist documents of Sung/

38) The paper is in their book, *Ch'un-ch'iu che-hsüeh-shih lun-chi* ('Essays on the history of Philosophy of the Spring and Autumn Period'), (Peking, 1963), pp. 274-330. Apart from this, Kuan has another paper on the relevant topic, "Lun Sung/Yin hsüeh-p'ai" ('On the school of Sung and Yin'), *Che-hsüeh yen-chü* ('Philosophical Studies'), vol. V (1959), pp. 28-45.

39) From the translation of B. Watson, *Chuang-tzu, the Complete Works*, (New York, 1971), p. 81.

Yin school, materialistic but quite different from those of *Tao Te Ching*.

Kuan and Lin also thought that Tao is not the undifferentiated material as it has been interpreted by Fung. Though they conceded that in chapter XXV of *Tao Te Ching*, it has been stated that there are somethings 'undefined' (Legge, I. 67) or 'formless' (Waley, 174) or 'undifferentiated' (Chan) or 'confusedly' (Lau, 82), nonetheless, this is merely a description of the undifferentiated nature of Tao, but does not mean Tao is the undifferentiated material. From this, they pointed out that Tao does not belong to the materialistic category. The textual evidences put forward by the two are from chapter XXI, XLII, LX, especially XXI.

In his rejoinder, Fung pointed out that his opponent has wrongly read "The thing that is called Tao..." (Chan) as "Tao produces things." The word which Chan translated as "that," Waley as "for" and Lau as "as" is *wei*. Fung obviously understood the word as an adverb or conjunction where his opponents read it as a verb, and thus it means "to do, to make..." Fung also says apart from *ching*, the word *ch'i* or breath should not be left out. In his view, the word *ch'i* (Waley translated it as "yin, yang and blended") as mentioned in *Tao Te Ching* is identifiable with *ho-ch'i* (harmonious breath) of *Han-fei-tzu*, *'tien-ho* (heavenly harmony) of *Chuang-tzu*, and *ching-ch'i* (Force of Essence) of *Kuan-tzu*.⁴⁰

The foregoing debates have touched upon a number of problems. The most striking fact is that the papers collected in the *Symposium* did not produce any agreement. As the contributors themselves did not want or could not achieve an all-agreed conclusion, we need not pretend to present ourselves as arbitrator in the ideological controversy. However, if one considers the tendency of classical Chinese thought in general, and *Tao Te Ching* in particular as the "both-and" types as it has been termed by Charles A. Moore, I wonder how far it can be satisfactorily to interpret in terms of the Western pattern of thinking, which Moore has termed as "either-or"?⁴¹ As the book laid its emphases both on non-being and being, and it had never been exposed to the clear-cut division between idealism and materialism at

40) Fung, *Essays, op. cit.*, 2nd sr. p. 241.

41) Moore, *The Chinese Mind, Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*, (Honolulu, 1967), p. 6.

the time of its formation, and, therefore, any one-sided conclusion would be a superimposition rather than a representation of the original ideas of the book.

If however, it be looked at from other angles, the debate is important both for the assessment of the Chinese philosophical tradition as well as for an understanding of Fung's own thought. Its importance to the Chinese tradition has two respects: first, how to educate Chinese youth with the classical Taoism through Marxist terminology? Second, what will be the place of Taoism in China? The latter is particularly significant and crucial as it may affect the value and inheritance of Taoism in contemporary China. As far as our meeting at Syracuse is concerned, the information of the controversy may be useful for us to understand Tao in Western philosophical terminology; and scholarly views of the Chinese in our times.

As far as Fung's thought is concerned, his definition of Tao in his early writings are well-known: that he defined Tao as "the first all-embracing principle whereby all things are produced," "the Unnamable," "the Invariable Law of Nature" ... 42) If these early definitions are compared with the forementioned five points of the new definition, one finds his new works are more systematic, comprehensive and ideological. It is systematic because he has lately discussed Taoist philosophy in a more articulated way; it is more comprehensive because he reviewed Taoist tradition from a much broader angle and with a wider range of materials; and it is more ideological because the debates were carried out in the terms of Marxist terminology. From textual viewpoints, Fung had limited his materials to *Chuang-tzu* and *Han-fei-tzu* in his early interpretations of *Tao Te Ching*; now he has extended it to other works of the same period, the *Kuan-tzu*, the *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, the *Ch'u-tz'u* and the *Huai-nan-tzu*. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his new interpretation, one point is clear that the aging philosopher still continues his effort and contribution for the understanding of Chinese philosophy.

IV

The interpretation of Tao as the subtlest force (*ch'i*), and the

42) See Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 177 ff.; and *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. by D. Bodde, (New York), pp. 94 ff.

description of the force as quoted from *Kuan-tzu* and *the Songs of the South* raises another question, namely the origin of Taoist thought in China and the possible influence from India. Since Waley⁴³⁾ and H. Maspero⁴⁴⁾ first drew scholars' attention to the similarity between Indian Yogic techniques of breath control with those mentioned in the ancient Taoist texts, more scholars have expressed their opinions on the subject. In recent years, Liebenthal⁴⁵⁾ and Bisson⁴⁶⁾ have put forward some parallel texts between the Upanishad and the early Taoist texts. Though those scholars all put question marks at the end of their enquiry, yet all of them rather inclined to argue for an Indian influence upon Taoism. In spite of some objections to the notion made by Eliade⁴⁷⁾ and Welch,⁴⁸⁾ the problem still persists. Being part of a panel on *Tao Te Ching*, it seems to be the most appropriate place to raise the question again.

As far the the Religious Taoism is concerned, there is no doubt that it has been influenced by Buddhism in various facets. The problem is whether the ancient Taoist philosophers were influenced by Indian Yogic techniques? The situation has been summarised very well by Needham. He says that "In the realm of philosophical theory and practice, determined efforts have been made to show that early Taoism owed much both to the Indian Upanishad literature for its theory."⁴⁹⁾ Needham's statement is based on the works by Bagchi and Wieger respectively. As far as Wieger is concerned, his works are more collections of texts with his translations rather than critical scholarship,

43) Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-120, 213-214.

44) H. Maspero, "Les procedes de 'Nourrir le principe vital' dans la religion Taoiste ancienne", *Journal Asiatique*, CCXXVII (1937), pp. 177-252, 353-430.

45) W. Liebenthal, "Lord *Atman* in the *Lao-tzu*", *Monumenta Serica*, vol. XXVII (1968), 374-380. Other parallels had also been noted by S. Radhakrishnan in his *India and China*, (Bombay, 1954), pp. 97 ff. The latter however only stated that "Taoist metaphysics is close to the Upanishadic thought and its discipline to the Yoga technique". (p. 177). But he refused to go further and to claim the Indian influence on Taoism.

46) T. A. Bisson, "Some parallels in Upanisadic and Taoist Writings: Could India have influenced classical Taoism?" a paper read before the XXVII International Congress of Orientalists, Ann Arbor, 1967 though, I am unable to find relevant data of the publication.

47) M. Eliade, *Yoga Immortality and Freedom*, (Princeton, 1969), pp. 59 ff.

48) Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 71 ff.

49) J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 152-153; also vol. II (Cambridge, 1969), p. 144 fn.

and most of his opinions are out of date. In case of Bagchi, his opinion seems to be misquoted. It is true Bagchi has stated that "There is no doubt a close similarity between this conception of Tao and that of the Upanishadic Brahman" ⁵⁰); yet the same author concluded in the same book by stating: "The analogy can be carried even farther. . . . It is impossible to maintain that Tao was a borrowed conception." He further explained his reason: "There is no evidence of any contact between India and China before the first century B.C. The ancient Taoism was by then a fullen developed philosophy." His final conclusion is "Tao was a logical development of some of the old Chinese religious ideas." ⁵¹)

If Bagchi's historical argument is acceptable, what about the literary evidences as forwarded by Liebenthal and Bisson? In the first place, Liebenthal's linguistic argument is far from convincing. The parallels he and Bisson pointed out can be explained by historical reasons. Bagchi expressed himself very well by saying that on the one hand, "it quite clear that the philosophy of Lao-tseu and the Upanishadic philosophy had some striking similarities"; ⁵²) yet on the other, "It is impossible to maintain that Tao was a borrowed conception." If historical probability does not exist, why then the similarities? "The similarity was due to a natural and inevitable development of similar religious ideas of a more distant past. As in China, so also in India the old religion gave rise to ritualism (*karma*) on the one hand and philosophy (*jnāna*) on the other." ⁵³)

Apart from the historical reasons raised by Bagchi which seem to be more convincing, one may also consider the problem from contextual viewpoint. Most scholars would agree that in the first place, the date of Upanishad literature is a matter of great dispute, and non-reference to them in early Buddhist literature would place some Upanishads in a much later period. In the second place, most scholars also agree that Upanishads were more esoteric as they were transmitted from teacher to qualified disciples individually, but not open to the public. In this connection, one has to remember that it took about 400 years or more for the Chinese to understand Buddhism, the other

50) P. C. Bagchi, *India and China*, (New York, 1951), p. 189.

51) *Ibid.*, p. 190.

52) *Ibid.*

53) *Ibid.*

Indian religion, which was much more open. At the time when *Tao Te Ching* was compiled, probably somewhere around 300 B.C. when the communication between India and China was much less developed than during the time of the introduction of Buddhism, the borrowing or assimilation of Upanishadic ideas becomes even more impossible.

From a doctrinal viewpoint, the improbability is equally strong. "The Upanishads are metaphysical commentaries on the Vedas... Their strongly marked metaphysical idealism, with its conception of the unity of the *Brahman* and the *atman*, the absolute and the self, is not at all characteristic of the Taoists." 54) In any case, the present state of research and evidence does not support the contention of the Upanishadic influence on ancient Taoism. Although Needham has noticed that "the influence of Yoga practices, especially the breathing exercise ... upon early Taoism, a better case can be made out," 55) yet he also noted that "it was not universal as Chuang Tzu has a passage condemning it." 56) In spite of some similarities in techniques, "the constant and primary preoccupation of China remains indefinite prolongation of life of the material body, whereas India is obsessed by the idea of a spiritual freedom to be conquered through transfiguration, 'deification,' of the body," as it has been pointed out by Eliade. 57) The conclusions made by Needham agrees with that of Eliade though the former has more to say: he notes that the aims of Taoist concentration are entirely different from those of Indian *rishis*. He says "the Indians sought for an ascetic virtue which would enable them to dominate the gods themselves (Wilkins), the Taoists sought a material immortality in a universe in which there were no gods to overcome, and asceticism was only one of the methods which they were prepared to use to attain their end." 58) If these points are considered together with the similar objection as expressed by Welch, 59) the Yogic influence upon Taoism becomes more unlikely.

The main reason for scholars searching for the foreign origin of

54) Needham, *op. cit.*, I, p. 153.

55) *Ibid.*, and Needham also refers to J. Filliozat's paper, "Taoisme et Yoga", *Dai Viet-nam*, 3/1 (1949).

56) Needham, *ibid.*

57) Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

58) Needham, *op. cit.*, p. 153 and his assessment on Indian Yoga is based on W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, (Calcutta, 1913; p. 330).

59) Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

the Chinese tradition was that they had a static notion of Chinese civilization. Any fact incongruous with their notion would be regarded by them as 'foreign'.⁶⁰⁾ They do not see, however, that most of their knowledge on China was mainly based on fragmentary researches or on the main streams of pre-modern Chinese scholarship. There is no doubt that new researches will be shocking to a number of scholars like that of Needham's shocking to historians of science. In this connection, Fung's new theory about the source of early Taoist philosophy is worthy of noting. He suggests that it is probably that the Taoist thinkers had some benefit from the ancient Chinese medical experiences.

Fung argued it in this way: though there were different branches of early Taoism, yet the central line of thought was always the 'self'. In other words, 'I' or one's life is the most important to the Taoists. The aim of medical science is to protect life; and the way to do it is to control diseases which come from nature. Medical science is a knowledge Man obtained through his experiences against nature. Early Taoist likely derived their knowledge from medical achievement of the age, developed and systematized it, and made it their own philosophy.⁶¹⁾

According to *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu*, that "Shaman P'eng acted in medicines; and shaman Hsien acted in divination."⁶²⁾ This indicates that the Chinese medical science originated in Shamanism. To a certain extent, the religious wing of Shamanism usually distorted man's understanding of nature; whereas the medical wing of Shamanism made corrections on the distortion. For example, most medical men did not believe that diseases were punishment from god though diviners would act in other direction. Though Fung's argument on the origin of Taoist thought was based more on the sources from other Taoistic texts and does not much concern with *Tao Te Ching*, yet from religious and historical viewpoint, it is interesting. It is so because his new theory supports the contention of Eliade, who states that "there

60) Needham had a good outline on the topic. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 151 ff.

61) *Symposium*, pp. 88 ff.

62) *Lü, op. cit.*, ch. xvii, p. 116b. Creel explained the passage very well: "From an early day there were individuals known as *wu*, of ten called 'shamans', who held seances with spirits and were believed able to heal the sick. The invention of medicine is attributed to a certain *wu*...", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

were in China certain archaic techniques, shamanic in structure, the purpose of which was to imitate the respiration of animals.”⁶³⁾ Should the Taoist breath control techniques and philosophy both be based on ancient Chinese tradition, the theory of the foreign origin of Taoism would lose ground. And the un-Chinese feeling of Taoism that have been felt by some scholars, will become uncalled for.

63) Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 61.