

My Road to Ch'an

1. *Autobiography*

I was born in 1934 a farmer's only son in a small village in Ryh-Chaw, Shan Deng, China. I was never told by my parents that there was a wonderful light, miraculous events, or any visit by sages at my birth. In that aspect, I was born an ordinary person. When I was a young boy of twelve, I was forced to leave my family and subsequently was pushed around by the wars from the North at Tzing Tao to the South at Kuang Chou. During this long journey, I walked from Shong Tziung Palace to Gan Zhou in Jiong Hsi through various weather conditions without a normal or continuous food supply. The journey was a little hard for a boy, but not impossible since I made it.

In 1949, I was forced to be a soldier for about two years. After that, I went through many different jobs: laborer of various kinds, street vender, newspaper delivery boy, and policeman. Between the time I left my family until 1955, misfortune and suffering were like a shadow of mine. They were never far from me. I wrote a two-line verse which summarized the situation quite accurately. The verse is:

*Walking fast, I caught sufferings,
Walking slowly, sufferings caught me.*

Besides the normal work for making a living, I taught myself all the high school lessons to prepare for my college education. In 1954, I passed the entrance examination and was admitted into the Department of Civil Engineering, National Taiwan University. It is not far from reality to say that college was the beginning of my formal education.

I came to the United States in 1961 and obtained the Master's Degree of Science in the Department of Engineering Mechanics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute. After working one year as a designer with EBASCO in New York, I was admitted to the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Auburn University. I obtained my Ph.D. in 1967 and continued working in the same department until the Fall of 1989 when I retired.

Back in 1975, it was time for me to prepare for my promotion from associate professor to full professor. I had the ability and the know-how, but I would also have to play a little politics. Was it worth twisting my character to achieve something when I was uncertain of its value?

While I was pondering the answer, a more general question found its way into my mind, "What am I looking for?" In my life, wealth and power were two things which disgusted me very much. But then

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what was I trying to seek? Was there any real thing that I wanted under the title of full professor? I searched very hard and found that the answer was “no.” Hence, I got lost in a certain sense. The more fundamental question which had been rooted in my mind for a very long time suddenly came back: “Who am I?”

At the same time, while I was feeling lost, I was not only well prepared in the manipulations of my own field of mechanics, but also quite mature in the understanding of the basic principles and the fundamental spirit of science. For a reason that I can't explain, the universe is apparently divided into two main spheres: the sentient world of living beings and the insentient world of material objects. In order to explain the world around them and to protect themselves, people throughout history have formed and developed science. As far as the knowledge of science is concerned, science is objective. Most, if not all, people would agree that physical science is an expression of the true nature of the material world. At least we wish that it would be so. Some scientists have spent their entire lives attempting to determine the nature of the physical world, but how many people have even thought about the nature of human beings? Particularly, how many of us ask, “What is my own nature?” Having raised this question for myself marks a turning point in my life. I started to search for my self -- my intrinsic nature.

I cannot recall having done many good things through my life although I have always tried to do my best. I have always felt that what I have done could have been and should have been done better. In my past I have made all kinds of mistakes and transgressions, committed conceit and arrogance, shown envy and jealousy. Any unwholesome deed one can find in other people, I have committed in some way and to some degree. This confession may sound pessimistic and like self-negation, but actually that isn't. What happened in my past is like a dream. The experiences come to my mind sometimes, but I am never strongly attached to them. What happened, I cannot change. I always look forward to what I can do in the future; however, the shadow of the question “Who am I?” has been always on my mind. And the degree of doubt from this question increases monotonically with time. At this time in my life, it seems to have reached its peak. I have been determined to find a definite and sound answer to this question. And I hope that my results may help others with the same question.

2. My Question and Its Primitive Answer

When I recall my long hard journey from Shong Tziung Palace to Gan Chou, I can vividly see a boy, tired and covered with soiled clothes, walking on the road with an empty stomach. Many times, I wondered “Who is that boy?” The answer: “It is I.” Although the answer used to be loud and clear, it has diminished with time. When I am happy and excited at the time of answering the question, the answer reflects that joy and excitement, arrogance and pride. But when I am sad and depressed at the time, the answer always reflects my feelings that society was unjust to me and my slight desire to revenge

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that injustice. The former expresses the strong feeling of the existence of my self, while the latter expresses the faults of others. These feelings and perceptions enclose me in a well-built cocoon which divides my world into two parts: I and others. I call this cocoon which separates me from others an ego-body.

At first, I thought that the ego-body was my own invention. But through long observation and experience in society, I have found that the idea of an ego-body is not unique at all. Almost everyone has some kind of ego-body. It is universal and has no discrimination in sex, race, nationality, and age. Based on this, I concluded that the ego-body is the product of human nature. Although I have settled on this conclusion for a long time, I have not been quite comfortable or completely satisfied with the conclusion.

3. Law of Affinity of Ego-bodies

It is found that the ego-bodies interact according to the law of affinity, just as the law of gravitation governs the motions of the celestial bodies. Between any two ego-bodies, there exists a force of affinity. If the force of affinity is positive, they attract each other. If it is negative, they repel each other. If the forces of affinity among N ego-bodies are all positive, then the N ego-bodies form a system which is called an ego-family.

Let $F(E_1 \rightarrow E_2)$ be the affinity force of an ego-body E_1 toward another one E_2 . That is E_2 attracts E_1 . Some characteristics of the affinity forces are found as follows:

- 1) The affinity force is a function of time.**
- 2) $F(E_1 \rightarrow E_2) \neq F(E_2 \rightarrow E_1)$. That is: the affinity force is not symmetric.**
- 3) $F(E_0 \rightarrow E_j) \neq F(E_0 \rightarrow E_k)$ for $j \neq k$. That is: the affinity force is not homogeneous.**
- 4) $F(E_j \rightarrow E_0) > F(E_0 \rightarrow E_j)$ for $j = 1, 2, \dots (-1)$, then the N ego-bodies form a ego-family with E_0 as the center.**
- 5) An ego-family is stable if there exists one center, and it is unstable if there exists more than one center.**

The ego-family appears in many different names like my family, my club, my church, my race, etcetera, etcetera. To avoid misunderstanding, it must be pointed out that it is not the organization itself that makes an ego-family, but the notion of me-and-mine. The human world is a dynamic system consisting of many ego-families some of which are extinguishing while others are forming. It is much like the changing formations of the clouds on a windy day or the Milky Way in the universe. It is suggestive that our society is a prototype of the universe.

The ego-family and the ego-body are the same in nature. Without the ego-body, there is no ego-family. With the ego-body, there exists the ego-family because the major purpose of the ego-family is to strengthen the ego-body.

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The human world which is viewed as a system of ego-bodies and ego-families is, in many aspects, analogous to the Newtonian structure of the universe of planets. For this reason, this model of the human world is called the Newtonian human world. The law of affinity between ego-bodies is comparable to the law of gravitation between planets. The Newtonian human world is not static but dynamic. Not only is the individual ego-body continuously changing with time, but new ego-families are forming while old ones are diminishing. It is like the formation and evanescence of the stars and galaxies in the sky.

With a few exceptions, I have successfully used the model of the Newtonian human world to explain many phenomena. Those exceptions have inspired me to search for further explanations.

4. Conflicts of the Ego-bodies

I have tried in many ways during my life to attain peace, tranquility, and happiness in daily living. Sometimes I have felt that happiness and tranquility were approaching me, but I have never been in the state of perfect happiness or complete tranquility. On one hand, I realize that understanding family members and friends is essential for a happy life; but on the other hand, I know that it is impossible to attain an understanding as long as I have an ego-body. In order to protect my ego-body, I have done many things which are considered proper according to society's standard of ethics. But, by acting according to a standard of ethics that is not in keeping with my principles causes a conflict, and conflict produces affliction. With such misconduct, how can I reach a state of perfect tranquility in my mind? With affliction, where is happiness?

I want happiness and tranquility, and it is reasonable to assume that everyone wants the same. There would be world peace if everyone in the world were happy and tranquil. What I want is not just my own peace but world peace. Without world peace, it is impossible for the individual to attain a complete and perfect peace, because "the part is related to the whole." The whole is happy if and only if all of its parts are happy. The part is happy if and only if the whole is happy; otherwise, it is not a part of the whole. That is: happiness (similarly for peace, tranquility and so forth) is additive. The additivity is not a strange notion but a very important and familiar property of many quantities like kinetic energy, momentum, moment of momentum, potential energy, and strain energy of a physical body. Kinetic energy of a physical body is additive because its total kinetic energy is the sum of the kinetic energies of all its parts. The effect of the additive property can be easily understood and dramatized if one views his own body as the whole. If he is unhappy because of a tumor in his stomach, he is totally unhappy.

The ego-family is formed with ego-bodies as its foundation and source. If the ego-body is not completely abolished, the ego-family will exist. As a consequence, world peace is impossible. Therefore, the solution to obtain one's perfect happiness and world peace is to destroy his ego-body.

I have thought of preaching to the world, saying, "Dear Fellows, please destroy your ego-bodies."

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This is the only way to solve our troubles, to obtain world peace, to have harmonious living.” After the speech, I imagine myself saying, “People, either by stupidity or ignorance, cannot see the obvious solution. The only solution!” Is this the way to crush and demolish the ego-body? It is certainly not. The only result of such a strident approach would be to further strengthen the shell of my own ego-body. Therefore, I have not taken this approach.

I have reached a state of conflict. On one hand, I accept the ego-body as an aspect of human nature which makes happiness of the whole impossible. And on the other, I recognize that the individual’s happiness is unattainable without the happiness of the whole.

5. Demolition of the Ego-bodies

Let P be a property or a statement, and ∂B be a part or element of B. Then I accept the following statement as a law:

“ is assigned to B if and only if P can be assigned to all ∂B . And P is additive.”

From this law, the solution to attain the perfect happiness and tranquility is clear in my mind. It is the demolition of the ego-bodies.

The work of the demolition consists of three steps:

- 1) Inside Clean-up: Demolish your own ego-body. This is the most difficult step because habits cause an inertia that makes you see other’s faults more clearly than your own.**
- 2) Outside Clean-up: Have no thought of the ego-bodies of others. Otherwise, the thought of their ego-bodies will give birth to a new ego-body of your own. Having accomplished the outside clean-up, you will be free from the bondage of space.**
- 3) Non-clean-up: Have no thought of the demolition when the work of the first two steps has been completed. Otherwise, the memory of the ego-bodies will give birth to a new ego-body. The non-clean-up will free you from the bondage of time.**

These three steps form one solution and cannot be separated. It is essential that you understand this. The work in the first and second steps is called merit, and the work in the third step is called virtue. Merit-virtue is one process, not two. Merit without virtue will demolish the ego-body only temporarily, at one time in one situation, but as time proceeds and situations change, a new ego-body will form again. Therefore, merit without virtue causes one’s ego-body to die and be reborn in the space-time domain. We may say that performing the merit is to escape the space bondage while performing the virtue is to escape the time bondage. But to escape the space-time bondage, the merit-virtue must be completed as one process, not two. To understand this, one must think of the purpose and the formation of the ego-body. Its purpose is existence and survival, protection and prosperity. Its formation is rooted in the principle of dualism. This is not a speculation but a proven fact. Let us examine it further.

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The formation of an ego-body depends on two conditions: an internal and an external condition. The internal condition is a person's freedom or ability to choose a cause of speech or action. Once a cause is chosen, the effect is determined by the external condition, the environment. Therefore, once the cause is completed, the cause-effect or karmic relation is a dead one just like the stress-strain relation of a metal bar which can be determined in a laboratory. To say that a human being has no freedom to select the cause is, of course, contrary to our experiences. Therefore, I have realized that human beings have a nature, a human nature which consists of freedom as its most essential and indispensable element.

It has been shown above that the formation of the ego-body is basically a response of human nature to environmental changes. One may think that, since the ego-body is a consequence of environmental changes, then one must have an ego-body. To think in such a way is to deny the essential element of human nature -- freedom. Without freedom the behavior of a human being differs very little from that of a piece of wood or a piece of metal bar; at most, he is a wonderful machine, a complex robot. This approach implies that the cause-effect relation is a dead one; and, hence, the essential element -- freedom --is ruled out from human nature.

To accept the assumption that freedom is an essential part of human nature, and hence of the cause-effect relation, has two important implications:

- 1) To change the effect, one has to change the corresponding cause, not the effect itself.**
- 2) Once the cause is completed, the effect will follow in due time as an echo follows a sound.**

From this assumption, we can see that everyone has an opportunity to improve himself and thus better his future by changing the causes; and everyone needs to take responsibility for his behavior. Sometimes we may have irresponsible motives, but we don't want to have any irresponsible actions. Therefore, if we want to be responsible, we have to train our thoughts to move in a proper way, that is, to think properly. By thinking right, the right behaviors will naturally follow. But how can we learn to think properly? We must first know all the possible ways, and then have the ability to choose; this is intelligence. We gain the ability to choose by practice and many times by mistakes.

To summarize, one can use his human freedom to demolish his ego-body; this is merit. While virtue is breaking off the karmic relation or removing the attachment to environmental sources which stimulate the growth of the ego-body. Therefore, merit-virtue is one process, not two; united, not separated.

6. My Puzzle -- The Vicious Circle

At this time in my life I became awakened to the existence of my ego-body and realized that with such an ego-body, perfect happiness and complete tranquility are impossible. To attain a state of complete

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happiness and tranquility, I clearly and fully understood that I had to demolish my ego-body. But did I demolish my ego-body after I achieved my understanding? No, I didn't. I made some effort to weaken it. As to demolish it, I did not and could not do it. Why? Why couldn't I do what I thought I should do? I was greatly puzzled by this.

Since I knew the solution I kept cultivating myself to weaken my ego-body. At a time when my ego-body was weakened to a certain degree, I realized why I could not demolish my ego-body. The reason: I was afraid that I would have nothing left after my ego-body was demolished. I was startled by the reason. In addition, I recognized that the fear that I would have nothing left after the demolition of the ego-body showed a greed for something; but it was a reasonable and understandable "greed". The greed for something is one of the very sources of the ego-body's formation. Hence, the problem of finding tranquility and the solution of destroying the ego-body form a vicious circle.

The situation of the vicious circle troubled me for quite a while. It led me in three different directions:

- 1) **The ego-body is an essential characteristic of human nature and nothing can demolish it. Hence, perfect happiness and tranquility, full understanding and communication, world peace and harmonious living are simply impossible. The hope to attain such a wonderful state of mind is just a daydream, expectation without any foundation, and a false thought.**
- 2) **The ego-body is not an essential characteristic of human nature.**
- 3) **If the ego-body is an essential characteristic of human nature and one will have nothing left after its demolition, then I will sacrifice myself by willpower and break the vicious circle.**

The third way of thinking is unnatural and incompatible with my experiences and observations. Not many, hardly any, human beings are motivated by sheer sacrifice. On the other hand, many people do make sacrifices when they are motivated by the hope of gaining something else in a different form. Therefore, I will not search any further in this direction. The other two ways of thinking are based on the question: Is the ego-body an essential characteristic of human nature?

7. Is the Ego-body a Human Nature?

This question is very critical. The answer was the turning point of my life. If the ego-body is a human nature, there is nothing anyone can do to alter it. If it is not a nature, one has to find his own original nature, provided there is one. Therefore, I accept the following statement as a law:

"Man has a human nature with freedom as its essential attribute."

This statement is not a mathematical hypothesis but a physical law. It is not a philosophical theory but a reality which can be found in our hearts. We have to observe our own conduct and thoughts to prove

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to ourselves that we have human nature and that we have the freedom to alter our thoughts and conduct. We not only must have the proof but also the proof must be sound and firm. It must be so firm that, if ever questioned with a sword to your neck, you would still believe and defend it.

To see or realize the human nature is difficult, but to show that the ego-body is not the most essential quality of human nature is not difficult at all. One only has to understand the meaning of the word "nature" which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. At this time, it suffices to observe only one condition of nature -- nature is independent of time. In other words, nature remains the same while the environment changes. Since the ego-body is a product of or a response to the environment, it changes with the environment. Therefore, it is not a nature. This conclusion can also be obtained if one observes that the ego-body is formed by weaving together all the forces of affinity (positive and negative). The forces of affinity are functions of time. Hence, the ego-body is not a nature.

If one knows his own nature, he can live by it and respond to all environmental changes according to it. If, however, one does not know his nature, he will either want to follow the environmental changes and will be lost in the constant changes or he will want to be himself. If he wants to be himself, then the only purpose of his life is to see and realize his one and only nature. Otherwise, how can he be himself?

Ch'an And Self-Nature

1. What Is Ch'an?

This question has been asked by many people and has been answered in many ways, although the question should not have been asked in the first place. The reason is: Ch'an cannot be defined. It is the same situation in physics: no one has been able to give a precise definition of a physical body. Any definition one might establish of Ch'an would be either unreal or useless. However, without a definition or at least a description, we do not know where to start our path of cultivation and self-improvement. Therefore, in this chapter I will attempt to construct a definition of Ch'an through several statements that I have found to be true of Ch'an from my own experiences. First I will begin with the following definition of Ch'an:

Ch'an is one's self-nature.

This definition of Ch'an is like defining the mass center of a rigid body as a point, which is an perfect definition. However, this explanation does not give us any method or clue to find the point. If we have already seen our self-nature, we do not need a definition. If we have not, this particular definition gives us no clue to find a way to see it. Therefore, a useful definition should also include important instructions which will lead us to realize our self-nature. Such a definition was given by the Sixth Patriarch when he explained Ch'an sitting to his disciples, saying, "Inwardly, seeing the unmovement of the self-nature is called Ch'an." When the Patriarch explained the Ch'an concentration, he said, "Outwardly, separating from marks is Ch'an."

From the Sixth Patriarch's explanation, we can forge the definition of Ch'an as follows:

"Inwardly, Ch'an is the unmovement of the self-nature; and outwardly, Ch'an is the separation of the self-nature from all marks."

This definition not only identifies the self-nature as an essential entity of Ch'an with unmovement as one of its characteristics, but it also gives us a very important way to cultivate seeing our self-nature -- that is the separation from all marks. As a matter of fact, this is the only way to start our cultivation. A mark is any event or phenomenon which is not a nature. Or we may say that a mark is a part of the environment, and the environment is the totality of all marks.

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2. Human Self-Nature

Since Ch'an eludes concise definition and it would only limit our understanding of Ch'an to rely on such a definition, let us say that Ch'an is simply the entire path or way which leads us to awaken or enlighten our own nature. In other words, Ch'an is the cultivation we undertake in order to find the answer to the question, "What is my self-nature?" Or simply, "Who am I?" Therefore, the first question which must be answered firmly is, "Do I have a self-nature?" If the answer is no, then Ch'an has no meaning. If the answer is yes, then Ch'an will provide a way to discover our self-nature. This way has been shown through cultivations of many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and sages.

As we strive to construct a definition of Ch'an, I think it would be helpful to introduce descriptions of the self-nature given by the Sixth Patriarch in the Platform Sutra. While the Platform Sutra has many other passages describing self-nature, the following list contains its typical and representative characteristics. But first, let me explain that in the Platform Sutra, the following names are used as synonyms: self-nature, mind, Heart, Bodhi, Dharma body, and Buddha. The meanings of these names have different implications and connotations to suit particular situations; but in general, they represent the same reality. In this book I will often use the word "mind" as the body of the self-nature because we are used to thinking that a nature must be a nature of "something", even though this way of thinking is a crude approximation of reality. Ultimately, the word "body" has no real meaning; it is only a name for a nature. Now, let's proceed to the list of descriptions:

- 1) **"Bodhi is the intrinsic self-nature. It is originally clear and pure."**
- 2) **"See your intrinsic nature which is neither produced nor destroyed."**
- 3) **"The self-nature is originally pure of itself, is originally not produced or destroyed, is originally intrinsic in itself, is originally unmoving; and the self-nature can produce all Dharmas."**
- 4) **"Without self-nature there is no birth."**
- 5) **"The wisdom of Bodhi (self-nature) is originally possessed by all people. The Buddha nature (self-nature) of the stupid and the wise is basically the same."**
- 6) **"The capacity of the Heart (self-nature) is vast and great like empty space and has no boundary."**
- 7) **"All Prajna wisdom comes from the self-nature; it does not enter from the outside."**
- 8) **"In all environments and at all times, if realizing that all dharmas are in a state of no obstruction, the mind is the Thusness; the Thusness is the reality. If seen in this manner, the mind is the self-nature of the highest Bodhi."**

The descriptions of self-nature given in the Platform Sutra are not speculations nor hypotheses; they are experimental reports written by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and sages who have no personal motives other than to provide information and guidance for later generations. Their works are manifestations of compassion, the greatest compassion since all Buddhas know that they cannot save a single person if he does not want to be saved. One can only be saved by himself.

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From these experimental reports on self-nature, I propose the following proposition:

Mind is a field, a mind-field.

It is called a mind-field to distinguish it from other fields like gravitational and electromagnetic fields. The mind-field is intrinsic and self-sufficient. As a field, it has a field strength and may interact with other fields. There is not a particular word to express the strength of a mind-field. I use “intelligence-wisdom”, or simply “wisdom” with hopes that no confusion will arise in the expression of this single notion. During the interaction of one mind-field with other mind-fields, dharmas are produced. The mind-field like other fields permeates all space. Hence, it is vast and has no boundary.

The field-strength of a mind-field -- intelligence-wisdom -- is one word, not two. When they are used separately as they usually are, I define them as follows:

Intelligence: The function of the mind which acquires and applies, analyzes and judges the knowledge of one's environment, particularly of the physical world and other living beings. Hence, intelligence is a dharma, not a nature, which is produced in response to stimuli.

Wisdom: The capacity of the mind to understand and know the intrinsic natures of one's environment at all times. Wisdom is inherent to the mind and the two cannot be separated from each other. Wisdom is the potential of a mind-field.

Self-nature or the mind is the central entity of Ch'an, important to all cultivators. Yet there is not much one can say about it. The lack of words to describe self-nature does not mean that it is dull and useless. All dharmas come from it and go to it; hence, it is the “creator”. It is our superior, king, and god because our thoughts and conducts originate from it.

The lack of words to describe self-nature may be better understood if you try to describe a mirror. You may say, “The mirror is very shiny and bright without a dull spot. It is perfect and beautiful!” What do you say after that without repeating yourself? Of course, you may remark about the frame, but that is not the mirror itself. Finally you may add, “Well, you just have to come see it for yourself to believe me.” It is difficult to describe a perfect mirror because there are no flaws, no variations from one place to another in color or surface. For the same reason, the vast and boundless intrinsic self-nature cannot be subjected to any proper description in detail. Self-nature can only be understood once you are enlightened and can see it for yourself.

Another analogy can be made between the self-nature and the mirror. A mirror can reflect the shape and texture of a physical body placed in front of it; yet when the body is removed, it leaves no trace of that physical presence in the mirror. It is the same for self-nature. It shines clearly with its wisdom on all marks and makes them completely understandable; yet it does not attach to them. That is why the Platform Sutra says, “Outwardly, separating from marks is Ch'an.” For many of us, it may not be the case that the mind is separate from the environment which is the totality of all marks. That is because our minds are confused and not as pure and clean as they were originally.

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3. Understanding of Nature and Dharma

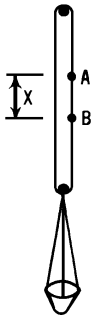


Fig. 1a

As we continue the process of defining Ch'an, we can say the following: self-nature is Ch'an and Ch'an is self-nature. They are one and the same thing. Hence, understanding the characteristics of the word "nature" is essential. Because of education's misplaced emphasis, we have trained and used our minds mainly to analyze and understand the external/physical world. That is, we have learned a great deal of knowledge about the external world, yet we understand our minds very little, almost not at all. Therefore, let's choose an example from the tangible, concrete world to illustrate the intangible, essential characteristics represented by the word "nature".

An engineer can run a uni-axial test of a metal bar on a test machine in any mechanics laboratory to demonstrate the properties of nature. However, to make this example accessible to everyone, an ordinary rubber band about five inches in diameter is used. Hang the rubber band and apply increments of load as shown in Fig. 1a. Two points A and B, one inch apart, are marked on the rubber band when the load $F = 200$ grains, where 437.59 grains is equal to one ounce in the U.S. customary unit system. This initial load is to reduce the slackness of the rubber band. We define $\sigma = F - 200$ and $\epsilon = x - 1$. Ten pairs of the values of (σ, ϵ) are carefully measured and plotted. The straight line, which is obtained by the least square method and shown in Fig. 1b, is the best curve to represent the experimental data.

The relation between σ and ϵ can be represented by the following equation:

$$\sigma = k\epsilon \tag{3-1}$$

From the experimental curve, we read that $\sigma = 1,000$ gr. (grains) at $\epsilon = 0.06$ in. (inch). Hence, $k = \sigma/\epsilon = 1000/0.06 = 16666.667$ gr/in. This value of k which is called the spring constant of the rubber band is the property or nature of the rubber band. We can choose any other pair of (σ, ϵ) from the curve, and we will obtain the same value of the spring constant k . To emphasize this important notion and make

it clearer, let us answer the following sequence of questions slowly and attentively:

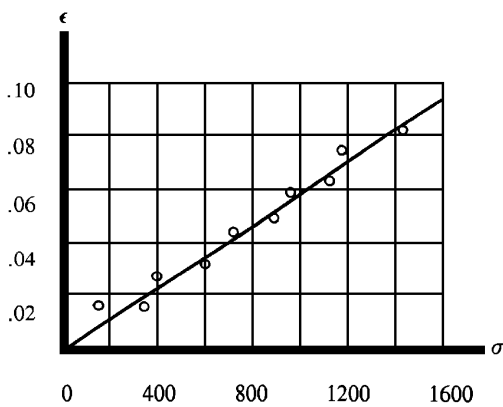


Fig. 1b

- What's the value of k as $\sigma = 1000$ gr.?
Answer: $k = 16666.67$ gr/in. That is what we just calculated.
- What's the value of k as $\sigma = 1000/2 = 500$ gr.?
Answer: $k = 500/0.03 = 16666.67$ gr/in.
- What's the value of k as $\sigma = 1000/3 = 333.3333$ gr.?
Answer: $k = 333.3333/0.02 = 16666.67$ gr/in.

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- What's the value of k as $\sigma = 1000/N$ gr. with any N as large as desired?
Answer: $k = (1000/N)/(0.06/N) = 16666.67$ gr/in.
- What's the value of k as σ approaches zero?
Answer: $k = 16666.67$ gr/in., the limiting case as N goes to infinity.

It is clear that the spring constant k , which is the nature of the rubber band, does not change when (σ, ϵ) changes. The nature is still the same even when $\sigma = \epsilon = 0$. However, the value of k cannot be determined without the values of σ and ϵ .

We call the applied force σ an influence or cause and the displacement ϵ a response or effect of the rubber band. We call the pair (σ, ϵ) an environmental disturbance to the rubber band. Since the environmental disturbance is a part of the environment, it is a mark. As the disturbance changes, or even when there is no disturbance, the value of k which is the nature of the rubber band remains the same. It is also noticed that the effect is produced not only because there is a cause, but also because the rubber band has a nature. The properties inherent to the rubber band are equivalent to those of the self-nature of human beings. For each environmental influence, because we have a self-nature, we have a response to it, such as happiness and excitement, sadness and depression, anxiety and affliction, and many other emotional expressions. We call the totality of all these responses an emotional response. Just like the pair (σ, ϵ) for the rubber band which is called the environmental disturbance, the environmental influence and the emotional response also form a pair and is called the human disturbance. A human disturbance may change continuously; yet it does not alter the self-nature just as the disturbance (σ, ϵ) will not change the value of the spring constant. This is what the Sixth Patriarch means in the Platform Sutra, saying, "The self-nature is not produced or destroyed; it is intrinsic in itself and is unmoving."

We have observed the relation as well as the difference between self-nature and environmental disturbance. These two entities have another important difference relative to time. Whereas disturbance changes with time and has a beginning and an end or birth and death, self-nature is independent of time and, therefore, has no beginning and no end or no birth and no death. In other words, self-nature is eternal; it has never been born, so it will never die. Furthermore, even when the rubber band is broken into two, three or many pieces, the value of the spring constant of each piece still remains the same. It is the same for human beings. When the heart stops beating and the brain waves cease, the person's self-nature still remains! The self-nature is intrinsic and self-sufficient because it is independent of the environmental disturbances. If one has realized his own self-nature, then he is the self-nature and the self-nature is he. He cannot die.

4. Similarities and Dissimilarities

From the experiment of the rubber band, we have learned about the most important entity -- nature. While any analogy has its limitations, there is still more for us to learn about Ch'an by using the rubber

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band even though it is such a simple object. Many similarities exist between a piece of rubber band and a human being in concern with their relations to environmental disturbances. Now let's find them out so we can better understand and realize our own self-natures sooner.

Eq. (3-1) can be rewritten in a general functional form:

$$\sigma = k\varepsilon = \phi(\varepsilon) \quad (4-1)$$

Mathematically, ϕ is a function which maps the domain of ε to the range of σ . The domain is the totality of all causes, and the range the totality of all effects. They will simply be referred to as cause (influence) and effect (response). The function which maps the influence to the response is called a dharma. The cause, response, and dharma form a single concept in reality, because a function has no physical or realistic meaning without a domain and a range.

It is noticed from Eq. (4-1) that, for $\varepsilon \neq 0$, $\phi = \sigma = 0$ if and only if $k = 0$. This explains an important statement in Ch'an: Dharma is not produced apart from the self-nature; without the mind, there is no dharma.

It is also noticed that, when $\varepsilon \neq 0$, $\phi = \sigma \neq 0$ implies $k \neq 0$. Therefore, from the afflictions and other emotional responses ($\sigma \neq 0$), we can be certain that we have a human nature. Since there is no dharma without the self-nature, if we trace the root of the afflictions, we will find that the root is the self-nature.

After realizing the existence of the self-nature ($k \neq 0$), we observe the following conclusions:

- 1) $\sigma = \phi(\text{dharma}) \neq 0$ if ε (cause) $\neq 0$.
- 2) ε is independent of the nature k .
- 3) $\sigma = \phi(\text{dharma}) = 0$ if ε (cause) = 0.

These three conclusions correspond to three important statements in Ch'an. Conclusion 1) states: Dharma is produced from the cause in one's mind. Conclusion 2) states: Cause has no nature. Conclusion 3) states: When the cause is empty, the dharma is empty. From conclusion 2), we can further see that if one is enlightened, he has no anxiety and no affliction because the self-nature is independent of them. Therefore, during the process of cultivation, one only has to quiet his wandering thoughts and lessen his attachment to his environment and even to his anxiety and affliction.

Eq. (4-1) has an inverse which can be expressed in the general form:

$$\varepsilon = (1/k) \sigma = \psi(\sigma) \quad (4-2)$$

In this equation, σ is the cause(influence) and ε the effect (response), and ψ the dharma. Therefore, a cause of one dharma may be the effect of another which in turn becomes the cause of another effect, and so on. The causes and effects are thus woven into a net by dharmas, the dharma net. A human being lives in this dharma net which he knitted by himself and for himself from beginningless time.

For a given influence, force σ , applied to the rubber band, there is a corresponding response ε

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because of the existence of the elastic nature. From this environmental disturbance (σ , ϵ), the spring constant k which is the nature of the elastic rubber band is determined. In other words, without the disturbance, the value of the spring constant cannot be known. It is similar for human beings. To the environmental disturbances, we have emotional responses: happiness or sadness, anger or forgiveness, jealousy or self-denial, etc. From our emotional ups and downs, we know that we have a human nature; however, the nature is not any one of the emotions nor the totality of all of them. Without these human disturbances, we would have no clue to find our intrinsic self-nature. For this reason, the Platform Sutra says, "Affliction is Bodhi. Lust nature originates from the root cause of purity, for once rid of lust, the substance is then just the pure nature body. Each of you, within your own nature, leave the five desires. In a flash, see your self-nature -- see the true you." Therefore, a cultivator should neither be attached to nor be afraid of afflictions or other emotional responses, since discovering their root cause is seeing one's self-nature. Hence, affliction is more than just an affliction; it can be the road to enlightenment. The difference depends on one's choices and one's understanding. If one attaches to the affliction, then affliction is merely an affliction. If one does not attach to nor is obstructed by affliction, then it becomes a road sign showing one the way to his own pure nature.

We have observed the similarities between a human being and an insentient, material object. But, there must be at least one dissimilarity, otherwise, a person would only be equivalent to a piece of wood or a rubber band. We know that this is not true. In fact, there are many differences, the essential one being FREEDOM. It is this freedom that differentiates human beings from other insentient, material things.

For a given rubber band, the relation between the influence and the response is a fixed or a dead one. In other words, for a given value of σ , there corresponds a fixed value of ϵ . For simplicity in comparison, let: k = self-nature, σ = environmental influence, and ϵ = emotional response. We have accepted that human beings have a self-nature, hence $k \neq 0$. If $\sigma \neq 0$, then the corresponding ϵ cannot be zero for an elastic rubber band. However, for human beings, both the cases $\epsilon \neq 0$ and $\epsilon = 0$ are acceptable; that is, they are both realistically possible. These two cases separate human beings into two groups: the Enlightened and the Confused. However, this should not imply that the enlightened and the confused are different in nature; only that some are enlightened to their self-nature and others are not. The invisible force which makes the two cases $\epsilon \neq 0$ and $\epsilon = 0$ possible is human freedom. Over time, this freedom will take us in either one of two directions. Wise use of the freedom will transform an ordinary person into a Buddha, but in the opposite direction, a Buddha into an ordinary person!

One has to cultivate the understanding of human freedom in order to be convinced that the two cases $\epsilon \neq 0$ and $\epsilon = 0$ are possible. Any doubt or hesitation must be removed. In every situation, one should observe his responses ($\epsilon \neq 0$) and examine their changes through the cultivation until his emotional responses ϵ equals or approaches zero has been reached. This is proof of the existence of one's human freedom. Each of us must find proof of our own freedom independently. We cannot use a proxy: not our parents, not our children, not our teachers, not even our masters or gurus.

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If $\sigma \neq 0$ and $\epsilon = 0$, we say that one does not dwell on the influence or the mark. If one does not dwell on any marks, one does not dwell on the environment. If one does not dwell on the environment, then he is liberated from space or from dualism. If one does not dwell on the environment and has no thought of his undwelling, he is liberated from both space and time; he is enlightened. If his enlightenment is complete, he is a Buddha. It must be noted that although the enlightened person has no emotional response, it does not mean that he has no response. A response that is not an emotional one is called a "natural response" to allow us to distinguish the difference between the two kinds of responses. But first, what is an emotional response?

Let a person P be influenced by another person Q. The response P makes is an emotional response if:

- 1) P dwells in space. That is, he first judges whether the influence and the person Q are good or bad, and then he chooses the response.**
- 2) P dwells in time. That is, he has memories of the influence, his response, and the person Q afterwards.**

There is another criterion to distinguish emotional responses from natural responses. Let's treat a response of P as a dharma. A response is an emotional response if its domain is limited to Q and its surrounding neighborhood. A natural response may be a response to a particular influence but the domain of the response is not restricted to, or dependent on that particular influence -- the domain of the natural response must be a universe which may or may not include the particular influence. For example, when person P sees hungry man Q on the street, he is moved and decides to help all hungry men. In this case hungry man Q is a part of the whole domain of his response. However, in another example, when P sees dead man Q, he is moved and decides to save all living beings from the birth-death cycle. In this second case dead man Q is not even included in the domain of P's response. It is essential that a natural response shows no discrimination and creates no partition among the members of its universe. When Sakyamuni Buddha arose from his Samadhi to reveal his universal knowledge and vision so that all human beings could be saved from anxiety and affliction, cupidity and stupidity, and the birth-death cycle, it was a natural response.

From a practical point of view, it is important to understand that as we cultivate, we can recognize an emotional response as one that leaves us with anxiety and affliction, while a natural response does not.

5. Human Death Lock

The ultimate goal of Ch'an cultivation is enlightenment to our self-nature which is covered by afflictions and other emotional responses as the sun covered by dark clouds, no light can shine on earth. Hence, cultivation is simply to dissolve, not suppress, the afflictions which are caused by dwelling on the environment.

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Dwelling on the environment is not only a source of anxiety, affliction, and other emotional responses, but also the root cause of death. Then, how can we not dwell on the environment? If we do not see good and bad qualities of others', if we do not favor some people and dislike others, if we do not search for fortune and reject misfortune, if we do not have the notion of me-and-mine, then what can we dwell on? If we do not have any mark in our mind, then we have nothing to dwell on. This is called no-mark and no-dwelling.

Good and bad, sages and ordinary people, likes and dislikes are marks; marks are the products of dualism. Such duality results from comparisons according to a chosen referential frame. Comparisons are thoughts; therefore, marks are produced from thoughts. Yet, the consequence of dwelling on marks also produces thoughts. Hence, thought and mark and dwelling cannot be separated as one follows the other. They form a cycle. Anxiety and afflictions, pleasantness and unpleasantness, are all manufactured in this cycle. This cycle keeps us in bondage, absorbing our human freedom and locking our clear minds to the environment. Hence, our minds are distorted and our human freedom is partially lost. The cycle binds the mind to the human body so firmly and completely that the mind cannot be freed. Thus, when the body stops functioning, one dies with his body. For this reason, the thought-mark-dwelling cycle is called the Death Lock.

The strategy to break the Death Lock of thought-mark-dwelling is non-thought, non-mark, and non-dwelling. These three are the basic pillars of Ch'an cultivation. The Sixth Patriarch says in the Platform Sutra, "Good knowing fellows, this Dharma door of mine transmitted from the past onwards was first established with non-thought as its doctrine, non-mark as its body, and non-dwelling as its basis. Non-mark means to separate from marks while in the midst of marks. Non-thought means to be without thought while in the midst of thoughts. Non-dwelling is the basic human nature."

The Sixth Patriarch further explains the solution to the Death Lock, saying, "In the world of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, friendliness and hostility, when faced with offensive, critical, or argumentative language, one should treat it as all empty without thoughts of revenge. In every thought, do not think of former environments. If past, present, and future thoughts succeed one another without interruption, this is bondage. In every thought, not dwelling on dharmas is non-bondage. This is to take non-dwelling as the basis.

Good knowing fellows, outwardly separating from all marks is called non-mark. Separating from all marks, the Dharma Body (self-nature) is then purified. Therefore, it takes non-mark as the body."

6. Non-Thought -- No Second Thought

The thought, dwelling and mark of the Death Lock are like the links of a chain. The chain can be broken at any one of the links; but some may be weaker than others and hence, easier to break. Mark is the result of thought and dwelling, while dwelling is a function originated from thought. Therefore, thought is the root of the chain of the Death Lock. We hence choose to break this chain at the link of thought by the wisdom sword of non-thought.

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In the Platform Sutra, the Sixth Patriarch also advises us, "In every thought, constantly separate from the environment and do not give rise to thought with regard to environment. If you merely do not think of anything and completely rid yourself of thought; as the last thought ceases, you die and undergo rebirth in another place. This is a great mistake of which students of Way should take heed."

Wisdom is an essential characteristic of self-nature. If a person achieves the state of non-thought, his thoughts will be the products of his wisdom's response to the environment. Therefore, if he rids himself of his thoughts he has also rid himself of his wisdom. This is the mistake of which the Sixth Patriarch has warned us because wisdom is freedom, and if a person had no wisdom or freedom he would merely be a corpse! Let us call the thought which originates directly from wisdom (self-nature) the "wisdom-thought" or the "nature-thought", and the thought which originates from dwelling on the environment the "second-thought". The wisdom-thought is a natural response, while the second-thought is an emotional response. It is the second-thought that causes anxiety and afflictions, cupidity and defilement. It is the second-thought that causes us to be unable to see the true nature of all things. It is the second-thought that prevents us from realizing and enlightening our own self-nature. It is the second-thought that causes us to dwell on our physical bodies. It is these second-thoughts that lock us in the birth-death cycle, life after life!

Words are coined to express the ideas and experiences one has. It is possible to communicate successfully with each other only if one has the same or at least similar ideas or experiences. But how do people know that they have these in common? They do not know except when they can compare their minds directly, which is an impossibility. Using language is the best method we have to compare our experiences, but communication is only an approximation. Communication is accomplished only through trial and error, and mainly through understanding and trust. I have coined the word "nature-thought" to act as a comprehensive term to express an inexpressible idea, for nature-thought is more than a combination of thought and nature. However, to understand the meaning of nature-thought completely, you have to experience it through cultivation.

You may wonder and ask: "How can I cultivate without understanding the meaning of nature-thought?" This seems to be a logical question, but it has no proper place in Ch'an cultivation. In this aspect, the Ch'an cultivator is like a person who wants to be an excellent cook; he tastes the wonderful foods while he learns and practices the recipe. During the cooking process, whether he makes a good or bad meal, eventually through persistence he will learn the art of fine cooking. Therefore, you must practice cultivating yourself, and gradually you will understand the meaning of nature-thought.

Second-thoughts are produced by associations and comparisons and may appear in many different forms; but they can be grouped into three major categories: cupidity, hatred, and stupidity. These are the three poisons and defilements of human nature. Envy and jealousy, anger and detestation, hostility and animosity, pride and arrogance, and so forth, are their off-spring. There are many others some of which even have attractive names, like assertiveness, popularity, fame, wealth, power, and authority, and so forth. Eradicate those poisonous by-products with bad names first. After that, you will find that those

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with good names have the same root as those with the bad ones. The good is singled out by comparison with the bad. Since they can be compared, they must have a common denominator which must be eradicated, too.

At this time, you may ask, "How do I know which is the right way to cultivate myself?" There are two sources:

- 1) **Read books on Ch'an cultivation particularly those written by the enlightened because they are direct experiences, not speculations or secondhand information. Just as when you travel to a foreign place and need a guidebook, you need to find the book of one who has traveled the route of cultivation before.**
- 2) **Follow an enlightened teacher. To find an enlightened teacher is a very important step in your cultivation. However, it must be remembered that the teacher cannot cultivate for you. He is not a proxy, but only a guide to show you the door.**

Ch'an (self-nature) cannot be completely understood without cultivation. This is the point where persistence and faith are required. The faith is in yourself and in your nature, not in anything or anyone else. Outside of your own mind, there is no self-nature, no Buddha. Therefore, during Ch'an cultivation if a Buddha appears in front of you and wants to show you what self-nature is like scold him off. He may be a demon with a Buddha's clothes. The cultivator has to cultivate himself and prove the ultimate self-nature for himself and by himself. A cultivator searching for his self-nature is like a hungry man searching for food; he must eat the food for himself and by himself. Talking about self-nature will not help a Ch'an cultivator as talking about food will not benefit a hungry man!

7. Dwelling and Oscillation

We have realized that anxiety, affliction and other emotional responses are echoes of our self-nature in response to external marks which are elements in the environment. Anxiety and affliction come indirectly from self-nature and environmental changes, and directly from dwelling on the environmental changes. Therefore, environmental changes will not be marks in the mind (internal marks) if one does not dwell on them. To illustrate the role and the consequence of dwelling, the oscillation of a mass-spring system is chosen.

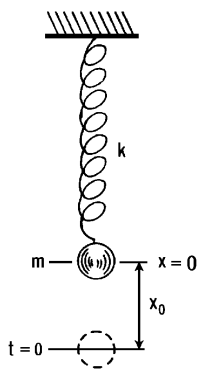


Fig. 2a

Let a particle of mass m be suspended from a ceiling by a linear elastic spring of spring constant k as shown in Fig. 2a. The system is denoted by S , and $x = 0$ is the equilibrium configuration of S . It is clear that if we move the particle down by a displacement x_0 and then release it, the system S will oscillate forever if air resistance is neglected. Let the displacement x_0 represent the environmental change and the oscillations represent afflictions. For any x_0 , there is an oscillation; hence, it seems that for any environmental change, there is an affliction with no

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dwelling process involved. This is not true even for a physical system. In science, the involvement of the human mind is omitted, because the involvement does not contribute anything important to the result of the experiment. More clearly it means that the human mind is not a variable in the mathematical equation. We all know that importance is relative to a purpose and the purpose changes with time. Now let us examine the involvement of the mind in this simple, yet representative, mass-spring system.

Let D be a physical process defined as follows: Simply closing a hand and moving it down in the gravitational direction a distance x_0 and then, opening the hand. D is an arbitrary process; it has no definite relation with the system S. If, in the process D, the closing hand grasps the particle of the system S, we say that the process D and the system S are coupled. Or S dwells on (attaches to) D. Only when S dwells on D, does oscillation occur. The displacement x of the particle at any time is given by the curve in Fig. 2b.

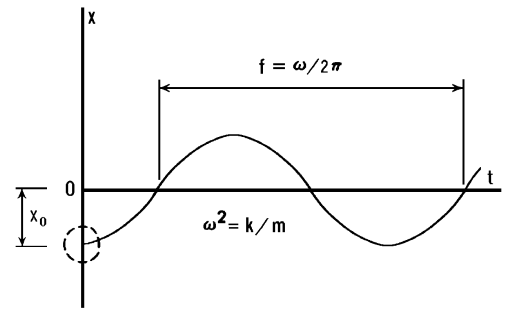


Fig. 2b

The pair (x_0, x) forms an environmental disturbance to the system S. From the curve, we see that the particle oscillates with a constant frequency f . The frequency f is independent of the disturbance; hence it is the nature of the system S. Again this example shows:

- 1) **The nature of the system is independent of the disturbance.**
- 2) **Without the disturbance, the nature of the system cannot be determined.**

Beside the above two conclusions, the example demonstrates the importance of the linkage -- dwelling. The oscillation of the system is not due to the existence of the process D, but due to the dwelling of the system on the process. This is also true for human beings. Without dwelling on the process, there is no mark in one's mind. Without a mark in one's mind, where do anxiety and afflictions come from?

The effect of the dwelling of mass-spring system on the process can be dramatized if the process is a harmonic or periodic one. This is called forced oscillation. When the frequency of the harmonic process is equal to that of the system S, the displacement x goes to infinity in theory. This is called resonance. In reality the displacement will not go to infinity but depart from its regular pattern. It is similar for human beings when a person attaches to marks, anxiety and affliction are produced; continuous attachment to them may produce violent behavior if the relationship of the person's character and marks meets certain conditions. This is behavioral resonance. We say that the person is angry, mad, crazy, and insane. To express the person's character, he is called a demon, ghost, devil, and unwholesome spirit.

The analogy between oscillation and human behavior has a subtle meaning. We take the natural

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oscillation of system S as accepted, normal behavior. When system S dwells continuously on process D, the natural oscillation is altered. If they are in phase, resonance is produced. In the same way when a person dwells on marks, his mind is distorted and his behavior departs from the norm. A person's self-nature will always try to bring his misconduct and distorted mind back to normal. However, when he dwells on the marks in phase, behavioral resonance is produced and he completely departs from his self-nature. He has lost himself and is insane.

It must be noted that even when a person is in behavioral resonance and insane, his intrinsic self-nature remains intact. It is still pure and clear; it is still in constant stillness and constant illumination. The self-nature of a person who is insane is the same as that of a sage or a Buddha.

8. Mind and Field, Mind-field

Earlier in this chapter, it has been proposed that the mind is a field. This particular field is called the "mind-field" to distinguish it from many others like the gravitational and electromagnetic fields. The mind-field is an intrinsic entity of the human being, particularly it is not a property of the human body. This is the central notion of Ch'an. It is this very intrinsic mind-field which all Ch'an cultivators search for. And it is this intrinsic mind-field from which all the Buddhas come. This idea is not just a theory, but a law. And this law is not a mathematical hypothesis but a physical reality. It is an experimental result proven and demonstrated by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with their lives.

Each field has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other fields. On the other hand, all fields have some features in common which qualify them as fields. Let us examine the human mind and see if it has common features to qualify it as a field.

- A) A field fills space. Hence it has neither shape nor boundary. This feature which is possessed by the gravitational and electromagnetic fields is also possessed by the mind. The Platform Sutra says, "The capacity of the Heart (mind) is vast and great like empty space, it has no boundary. It is not square, round, great or small. It is not above or below, long or short. The capacity of the Heart is vast and great, encompassing the Dharma realm. All Buddha lands are ultimately the same as empty space. Your intrinsic Heart is just like empty space."**
- B) A field has a field strength which interacts with its environment. Everyone can be convinced that the mind has this property, because all thoughts and conducts originate from it. The field strength of the mind is called intelligence-wisdom, or simply wisdom. The mind is not an empty space without a property or nature. The Platform Sutra says, "If you sit still with an empty mind, you will attach to the undifferentiated emptiness." Furthermore, the Sutra describes some characteristics of wisdom, saying, "All Prajna wisdom comes from self-nature; it does not enter from the outside. Have no mistaken notion about that! This is the natural function of true nature. Neither is it blue, yellow, red, or white. It is without**

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anger and joy, without right and wrong, without good and evil, and it has no head nor tail.”

- C) **A field has energy. The gravitational and electromagnetic fields both have energy which are called potential energy, or simply potentials. Although there is no particular name for the energy of the mind, we call it “wisdom”. Therefore, wisdom is the inherent nature of the mind and also the function of the mind.**
- D) **A field has functions, yet the field itself is not altered. This can be easily understood by considering the familiar gravitational field of the earth. When a material body is located in the gravitational field, the field is functioning and produces a force acting on that body. No matter how many material bodies are located in the field, the gravitational field will not be altered. Particularly, its field strength will not be altered and its energy will not be lost. Has anyone worried about the earth becoming exhausted while it acts on the many material bodies on its surface and so many planets and stars in space? It is the same for the mind: As the Platform Sutra says, “It (mind) produces all dharmas, yet itself is not altered.” This characteristic is mentioned in the Platform Sutra in many places. Only a few are quoted here:**
- **“All dharmas are within human nature.”**
 - **“All the ten-thousand dharmas are produced from self-nature.”**
 - **“How unexpected! Originally, self-nature is not produced nor destroyed.”**
 - **“And see your intrinsic nature, which is neither produced nor destroyed.”**
 - **“All is one; one is all. Coming and going freely, the Heart (mind) is unobstructed.”**
- E) **At the same position, many fields can overlap without any space problem. In other words, the impenetrability principle of a material body does not apply.**

The condition C is not independent, but a consequence of conditions B. Condition E is the consequence of the condition A, since there are numerous human mind-fields. From the above discussion, we see that the mind has all the characteristics that other fields have. Hence, the mind is qualified to be called a mind-field. Since the mind is a field, it encompasses space; it is particularly important to note that the mind is not restricted to the confines of the human body. However, due to the effects of dwelling on marks through boundless time, we have lost the freedom to use vast parts of our mind. Therefore, enlightenment is simply to restore our original mind, and liberation is simply to untie the bondage of the mind to the human body while we still have the freedom to do so. After enlightenment and liberation, we will find that we have not really attained anything new since what we have attained was originally ours.

9. Mind-field and Human Body

At this time, if my children were to ask me for only one or two sentences on how to educate themselves, I would tell them:

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“Your mind is independent of your physical body; cultivate yourself and find it, then live according to its intrinsic nature.”

For those of us who live in an industrial and technological society, we find that many of our activities are directly or indirectly focused on the service of our physical bodies. How to decorate, beautify, and comfort the physical body has become one of our primary motivations and goals during our lives. Such a motivation is so firmly planted in many people's minds that they believe that happiness and peace can be obtained and insured by wealth, power, and fame. With such a materialistic notion, many other unreal and unwholesome concepts are created. What they do not know or at least choose not to believe is that happiness and peace are affairs of the mind, and only in the mind. Since the mind is the host, responsible for one's views, thoughts, and conducts, it is only reasonable to expect that the body should serve the mind. But for many of us, this is not the case. On the contrary, the mind serves the body as a slave to find all strategies and tricks to satisfy the desires of the five senses. This service attends the superficial and the temporary, neglecting the essential and the eternal. With such an attitude, we can obtain only temporary excitements; but for happiness and peace, it is hopeless.

The independence of the mind from the human body has been clearly pointed out by the Sixth Patriarch, saying in the Platform Sutra, “People's physical body is the city; their eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates.” In other words, the human body is like an inn, you stay there temporarily and do not return to it unless it's necessary. The Patriarch also says: “The body remains when self-nature is present, and the body is destroyed when self-nature goes.”

A Ch'an cultivator should know that it is his original mind, the intrinsic self-nature, that is the master while his body is the servant and not the other way around. Since the existence of the body is restricted between its birth (t_b) and its death (t_D), the meaning of life cannot be centered on the physical body; if it is, then pondering the meaning of life is pointless. That is one of the reasons why some philosophers think that life is just a joke. From this simple argument we can conclude that the sole purpose and function of the physical body is a tool to search for some entity which is not limited to the short time interval (t_b, t_D); that is the original and/or the self-nature.

After we realize our original mind-field, how can we be unhappy? Where would afflictions come from then? If we realize that our minds are our true selves and that our minds are independent of our physical bodies, how can we die? For, after a person is enlightened, he cannot die even if he wants to, just as worldly people have to die even though they do not want to. This is human liberation. Final and complete liberation!

10. Experiments of Human Liberation

There are numerous cases which prove that the mind and the human body exist independently. The human body is like a motel room one stays in temporarily. When the trip comes to an end, one leaves the motel room without having become attached to it. If one cultivates himself and becomes

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enlightened, he can walk out of his physical body at will like some one leaving a motel. To demonstrate this point, I have chosen the three following experiments:

- 1) **When the Fifth Patriarch (Hung Jen) escorted the Sixth Patriarch (Hui Neng) to Chir Chiang courier station, he said to him, "Three years from now, I will leave the world." He actually left the world four years later instead of three. According to statistics, this is a 33.3% error, and for any scientific experiment, it is not a small error. But can any one of us make a prediction or decision about the time of our death when we are still in perfect health? It was due to other matters that the Fifth Patriarch had to delay the schedule of his extinction.**
In addition to determining the year of his extinction, the Fifth Patriarch was able to select the day. When his stupa was finished on the fourteenth day of the second month, he told his disciples, "I cannot go to Nirvana on the fifteenth of this month, because that is the day when Buddha went to Nirvana." Therefore, he waited until the twenty-second day of that month to go to Nirvana.
- 2) **The Sixth Patriarch who knew the time of his extinction ordered his disciples to build a stupa one year earlier. On the first day of the seventh month, he said to his disciple, "In the eighth month, I wish to leave this world." On the third day of the eighth month of the pre-told year (A.D. 713), he said to his disciples, "Each of you take your seat for I am going to say goodbye." He then told the disciples, "The Self-nature is True Buddha Gatha." He sat upright until the third watch; then he suddenly said to his disciples, "I am going." He was gone instantly.**
- 3) **The Third Patriarch's (Seng Tsan) extinction was more dramatic. He told his disciples, "People think that it is very strange and difficult to die in a sitting posture. My death and life are free." After saying that, he grasped a limb of a tree and went into extinction with his physical body in a swinging posture. Indeed, it may be strange and difficult. Isn't this a wonderful experiment to show that, for an enlightened man, the self-nature and the physical body are two independent entities?**

11. Thought-wave of the Mind

When the mind-field (mind) responds to external stimulation (cause), it produces a wave (effect). To distinguish this particular wave from many other types of waves in physics, we will call it "thought-wave", or simply "thought". A wave has three characteristics: amplitude, frequency, and wave-length. If we use wave-length as a reference, thought-waves can be separated into two groups: large and small. For simplicity, large ones will be called thought-waves and small ones will be called thought-turbulence. Of course, we must realize that the choice of reference is arbitrary. We can select a term to describe a particular occurrence, but terminology does not reflect any change in reality.

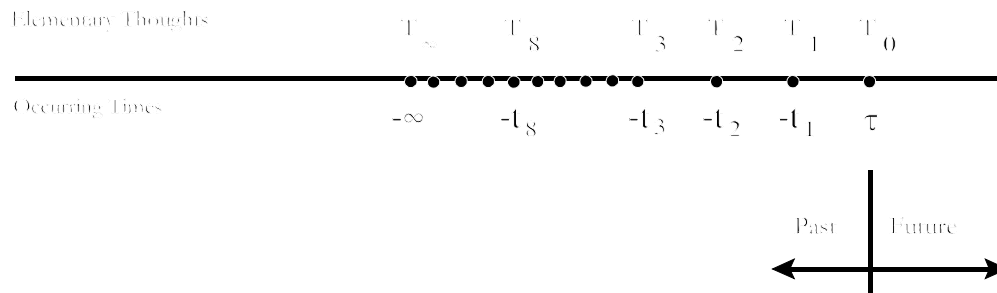
From physics we know that in addition to the nature of a material body, the present state of the body is determined by the whole history of that body's experience from beginningless time up to the

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present. This is the most general constitutive equation. Let us call the collection of all of one's thoughts at a given time a "thought-configuration", and the collection of all thought-configurations a "thought-space". We know that the present thought-configuration is influenced by past thought-configurations. Therefore, we have established the most general constitutive equation of thought-configurations as follows:

A person's present thought-configuration is determined by the whole history of his thought-configurations from beginningless time to the present. Therefore, if at one time a person stole something from another and knew that it was wrong, he may have already forgotten the incident, but the thought of stealing is permanently cast in his present thought-configuration.

At this time, it is proper to ask a probing question. Since one's past thoughts are firmly cast in his present thought-configuration, is there any thought that remains in the past? To explain this question more clearly, let us assume that a single thought can be represented by a harmonic function and any complex thought can be represented as a combination of many harmonic functions. Therefore, the present thought-configuration at time τ can be decomposed by Fourier analysis into a collection of elementary thoughts. Since the past thoughts (time $t < \tau$) are cast in the present thought-configuration, the elementary thoughts consist of all thoughts which have occurred during the time interval $(-\infty, \tau)$, where N is a very large number. Let the thoughts under consideration belong to Mr. A. If Mr. A likes, he can arrange the elementary thoughts in some manner either for a particular purpose or just a personal preference. Let T_0 be the thought occurring at the present time τ and T_j ($j = 1, 2, \dots$) be the thought occurred at the time $-t_j$. Then the elementary thoughts can be represented by points on a straight line called the thought-axis as follows:



Since the events in the future have not yet happened, the thought-axis for time $t > \tau$ is empty. After Mr. A examines his thought-axis, how can he have notions of the past and the future? Without the past and the future, what is the meaning of the present?

Now let us get back to the thought-configurations. We have experienced that some past thoughts have a stronger influence on the present thought-configuration than others. In other words, it is clear that some thoughts definitely influence us, while others do so vaguely or not at all. Therefore, we can separate our thoughts into two categories: conscious thoughts and subconscious thoughts. Since the

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terms thought-wave and thought-turbulence have been assigned arbitrarily, we can associate thought-wave with the conscious and thought-turbulence with the subconscious.

From physics, we know that a wave can be amplified or nullified by a modulating wave. It is the same for a thought-wave. Thus we can establish the following principle of amplification and nullification for thought-waves:

One thought can amplify or nullify another thought. A good (positive) thought amplifies another good thought; a bad (negative) thought amplifies another bad one. Although a good thought nullifies a bad thought the reverse is also true.

Of course, good (positive) and bad (negative) are relative terms, not absolute ones. And the choice for either good or bad is still in the wise man's hand. The judgment of whether something is good or bad may vary from person to person, but the principle of amplification and nullification is valid for all. The Platform Sutra says, "In the dark dwelling of troubles, you must always produce the wisdom sun. Deviance comes, affliction arrives; right comes, affliction goes. Proper views cast out the three poisons in the mind and transform the demon into Buddha -- this is true, not false."

The principle of amplification and nullification of thought-waves was used to its ultimate worth by the Sixth Patriarch in his final instruction when he discussed the thirty-six pairs of opposites and the two extremes with his disciples. This principle of amplification and nullification establishes the foundation of education and repentance. Without it, we could not educate or change ourselves, nor could we repent what we have done wrong. If this principle were not true, we would be in a hopeless situation; we would remain forever unchanged.

12. Thought-wave as a Surface Wave

From the previous section, we know that our present thought-configuration is determined by the whole history of past thought-configurations. We have also observed from the thought-axis: the future does not have a definite meaning since nothing has happened in it, and the past is already cast in the present. Therefore, the thought-wave is a surface wave propagating forward along the time axis. We can recognize from our five senses and straightforward reasoning, which is a process of one thought after another, that the physical world in which we are living is a three-dimensional space. With the time axis, therefore, the mind-field is four-dimensional. In other words, for ordinary people, the physical world is a three-dimensional space, Newtonian and absolute; but for enlightened people, the physical world is a four-dimensional space, Einsteinian and relative. That the physical world of the enlightened is a four-dimensional space has two effects: one in space and the other in time. In space, ordinary people cannot see things which are enclosed in a three-dimensional opaque box; but an enlightened one can. And as far as time, ordinary people cannot see events in the past; but an enlightened one can. These two effects deduced from the assumption that the mind-field is four dimensional are not just theory but verified by countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and reported in many Sutras.

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From the thought-axis, we realize that the physical world in which the mind is filled is a four-dimensional space. Therefore, the mind itself must be a five-dimensional entity if we take freedom, which is an inherent quality of the mind, as an independent variable.

Based on much evidence, people have been convinced that Einstein's relativity is not a mathematical theory but a physical one. In this section, it is concluded that the theory of relativity is not just a physical theory of the material world but can be realized or sensed directly by human beings.

13. Remarks on Mind as a Field

We have observed that dwelling distorts the mind-field so that things and events cannot be understood by the mind as they really are. There is another way to comprehend this occurrence. Wisdom is the energy of the mind. When the mind dwells on marks, the mind has an energy outflow. When one allows the outflow of wisdom to occur, the mind becomes less comprehensive; that is stupidity. On the other hand, when one reduces the degree of attachment and cuts off cupidity and anger and the feeling of hatred, the mind will become more comprehensive, so that it is purer and clearer; that is wisdom.

Dwelling is a process which transforms the energy of the mind to marks. Common people are only aware of the process of transformation and the marks, and they mistake them as the mind itself. Marks, which are parts of the environment and have no intrinsic nature, are subject to production and extinction. When the totality of marks one dwells on is extinguished, he dies. One of the marks that most people dwell on firmly is their physical body. Hence, as the body gradually becomes less functional, the dying process starts. At the end, when the body does not function at all, the person dies. The trouble is that he does not know what he really is. For an enlightened person, when his body is extinguished, he walks out of it as one moves out of his house or steps out of his car. The Third Patriarch did just that at his extinction -- walked out of his body. This is true and complete liberation.

14. Mind and Heart

For most people, "mind" is a more accessible term than "self-nature". Hence, mind and intrinsic self-nature have been used as synonyms. Ultimately they are the same thing, but they are not identical. Using them interchangeably has been done only to help the Ch'an cultivator to find a realistic step for enlightenment. After enlightenment, he will find that the mind is still a stepping stone and he has not yet found the intrinsic self-nature. Therefore, the nature of the mind should be called a relative nature, not an intrinsic nature. The relative nature of the mind has been pointed out by the Sixth Patriarch in the Platform Sutra: "When self-nature is present, the body and the mind remain; but when self-nature goes, the body and mind are destroyed." When the Sixth Patriarch was asked who received the transmission of the Right Dharma Eye Treasury, he said, "The one who has the Way obtains it; the one without a mind penetrates it." This indicates that a Ch'an cultivator uses the mind only as an

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intermediate step for enlightenment. After enlightenment, one should not be attached to the mind so he can further penetrate the realm of all Dharmas. Therefore, only the intrinsic nature, also called the Heart, is the ultimate reality. As the Heart is realized, there is no mark, no differentiation, it is intrinsic. Yet, all the dharmas or functions are produced from the Heart.

According to the development of human nature, we observe the following sequence:

$(\text{Ego-body}) \rightarrow (\text{Physical body}) \rightarrow (\text{Wave-body}) \rightarrow (\text{Mind}) \rightarrow (\text{Heart})$

The wave-body is also called the energy-body. The rectangular box which encloses the two bodies indicate their close relation. This sequence will be called the human transformation sequence which is very important in Ch'an cultivation. Hence, it will be discussed in detail in Chapter III. However, the concept will be introduced briefly in the following paragraphs.

Human beings differ from material bodies because of their human freedom. If we lose the freedom, we are only corpses. In Ch'an cultivation we want simply to transform our human freedom from one body to another. If our freedom is attached completely to the ego-body, when the ego-body is broken, we die. If our freedom is attached to the Heart, we will never die. The Heart is like a space which has never been born, so it will never die.

It is interesting to observe that the material body which is the subject of study in Physics also shows such a development sequence:

$(\text{Force at a distance}) \rightarrow (\text{Material body})$

$\rightarrow (\text{Gravitational wave})$

$\rightarrow (\text{Gravitational field}) \rightarrow (\text{Space})$

The close relation between the two sequences is not accidental, but implies a profound notion that human beings and the physical world are not two separate entities, but one with two distinct phases. The similarity between the ego-body and the force at a distance doesn't seem very pronounced, though we have observed the similarity between the law of affinity which governs ego-bodies, and Newton's universal law of gravitation which governs material bodies. Moving down along the sequences we have observed the close relation between the mind-field and the gravitational field. They are almost identical except that the mind-field has human freedom which manifests itself as wisdom and compassion. Hence, the Heart is the space with human freedom and the space is simply a part of the Heart. Therefore, from the Heart, space is produced; from the space, a gravitational field (or any other physical field) is produced; then from the gravitational field a material body is produced. It is noticed that not only do all dharmas come from the Heart, but material bodies are also its manifestations.

Basic Notions of Ch'an Cultivation

1. *Ch'an Cultivation*

We have observed in chapter two that, if a person dwells on marks in his environment, his original “understanding-all” and “knowing-all” mind becomes distorted and, subsequently confused. He then mistakes this confused mind as his original one. However, the original mind possesses a subtle restoring force which works continuously to bring this confused one back to its original state. We may recognize the existence of this original mind, but we lack the freedom to use it. So, we must contemplate the marks, trace their source, and cut off the dwelling forces acting on them in order to allow the subtle restoring force to manifest itself and bring the confused mind back to its intrinsic state. This is Ch'an cultivation. Hence, Ch'an cultivation is simply the process of finding the source of marks, particularly anxiety and affliction, so that one will see his intrinsic self-nature.

To see one's intrinsic self-nature, one has to stop dwelling on all marks, not just some. If one eliminates some dwelling and permits some to remain, his anxiety and affliction may even be intensified. If he continues cultivating until the last dwelling is terminated and does so without any thought of the termination, he will suddenly become enlightened to a state which he was not aware of before. This is why it is said that although cultivation is gradual, enlightenment is sudden. The simple, yet the best, physical example illustrating this piecewise continuous process is the buckling phenomenon of a slender rod under an axial load. When the load is less than the critical load, the rod is continuously shortened but without lateral deflection (buckling), once the load reaches the critical load, the rod suddenly buckles.

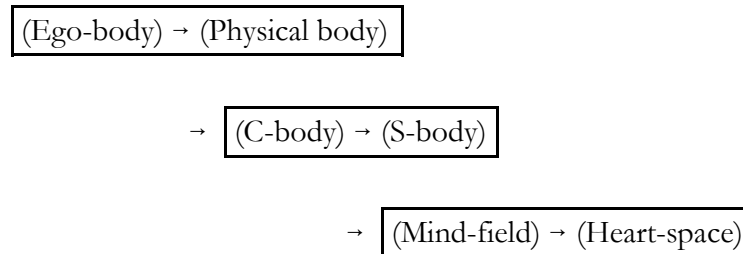
Enlightenment which is the manifestation of the subtle restoring force of the intrinsic nature, and the intensification of afflictions can be illustrated by a man hanging on a frame made by many ropes. Let us call it the death-frame. The ropes represent his dwellings on marks which become his death-frame. The gravitational field which always acts on the man to pull him down to the ground corresponds to the original mind-field which produces a subtle restoring force to save the man from the death-frame. However, if the man does not cut off all the ropes, the gravitational force will not save him at all. If he cuts off only some ropes and leaves a few, his pain will be intensified because the load is the same but the contact area decreases and thus, increases the stress or the intensity. Only when he cuts off all the ropes will the gravitational force pull him to the ground. The gravitational force may be so subtle that he is oblivious to its existence; even though we all know that, without this subtle force, he cannot come back to the ground. In short, the subtle force of the original mind is like that of the gravitational field

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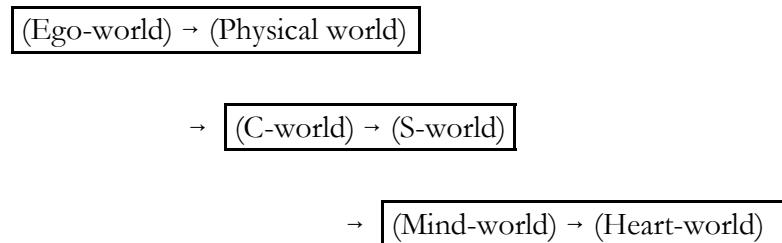
which acts on us all of the time bringing us back to our original state. Buddha is always there to help us become enlightened, it is we who do not want to be helped.

2. Life Transformation of Human Beings

It has been pointed out in chapter two that Ch'an cultivation is simply the transformation of human freedom from one body to another along the human transformation sequence. Because of its importance, it will be further examined in detail. The wave-body (energy-body) can be further broken into two parts: the conscious body and the subconscious body which will be denoted by the C-body and the S-body, respectively. Therefore, the life transformation sequence of human beings is as follows:



The collection of all ego-bodies forms an ego-world, as do the collection of all physical bodies form a physical world, etc. Therefore, we have a transformation sequence of human worlds:



The mundane world in which we live spans three worlds, each to a certain degree: the ego-world, the physical world, and the C-world. Most people may recognize the existence of the S-world, but do not have the freedom to reach it and control it. The separation of the C-world and the S-world is just for the completeness of the correspondence in the two transformation sequences. The world which contains the C-world and the S-world is called the wave-world or the energy-world. The more familiar name for the wave-world is the spirit-world or the soul-world.

The hierarchy of the transformation sequence is the following: the wave-body is the master of the physical body, the mind is the master of the wave-body, and the Heart is the master of the mind. Hence, the Heart is the real master of a human being. One usually needs to understand each level of the

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sequence before progressing to enlightenment, however, the Ch'an principles teach us that it is possible for a human being, ordinary or holy, to assume his true or ultimate master position in this life without passing through the intermediate positions. This is a physical truth or reality which has been proved by many Ch'an cultivators. But it is of little use if one has not proved it himself. Life is real and experimental; but one has to run this experiment for himself.

With the acceptance of the life transformation sequence, there is seemingly no room for doubt that the Heart is the ultimate master of a human being. But man mistakes his physical body as proof of his existence, and hence he takes his physical body as the master and his ego-body as his judicial territory or decoration. He takes his C-body as a slave, his S-body a dream, and his Heart an unknown. With such an incorrect view, he attaches firmly to his physical body and his human freedom is associated with the physical body only, and hence, limited by it. When the physical body stops functioning, he dies because he has completely lost his human freedom in the physical world. Do not wrongly believe that when one dies and loses his human freedom, his energy-body will disappear. His energy-body actually becomes a slave and his destination is determined by his past deeds because he does not have much freedom in the new world he just entered. The conducts of his energy body (soul) in the energy-world without much human freedom can only follow the causes and conditions. That is: the environment determines the pattern of his behavior. Hence, he (his soul) is not much different from a rolling stone on the mountain in this physical world. With bad karmas his pain, distress, and grief are intensified because he has no freedom and no ability to alter his environment. This unpleasant environment he lives in is called hell or prison by definition. Hell is not a fixed, confined place like the jail is in this world, but it is simply an unpleasant and painful environment in the spirit-world. Since the spirit-world is formed by thought-waves, hell is created by our minds and in our minds. Therefore, once in hell we are in that state wherever we go until our retribution is over according to the principle of intensification and nullification.

In the above paragraph, the term "soul" has been used. This word has many meanings resulting from many points of view. The following example clarifies the meaning of soul as we intend to use it in this book. Let a person in this mundane world be called Mr. A. He has been told and also believes that he has a soul, yet that he has no freedom to assume the soul. Therefore, he thinks about, and talks about himself and the soul as two separate entities. However, in the spirit-world after his death, it is inevitable that Mr. A discover the following: Mr. A is the soul and the soul is Mr. A. This is a fact which has been proved experimentally by many Ch'an cultivators. Anyone who practices Ch'an cultivation can prove this for himself. Prove it now and not wait until you die when it is too late.

It has been pointed out that if one becomes attached to his physical body and loses his freedom, with bad karmas he will live in an environment which is called hell. And in this hell his pain, distress, and grief will be greatly intensified. Let me explain this a little further for clarification.

The pain, distress, and grief may have causes in the physical world, but they are not entities of the physical body; they are the entities of the energy-body. They result from many causes but mainly from

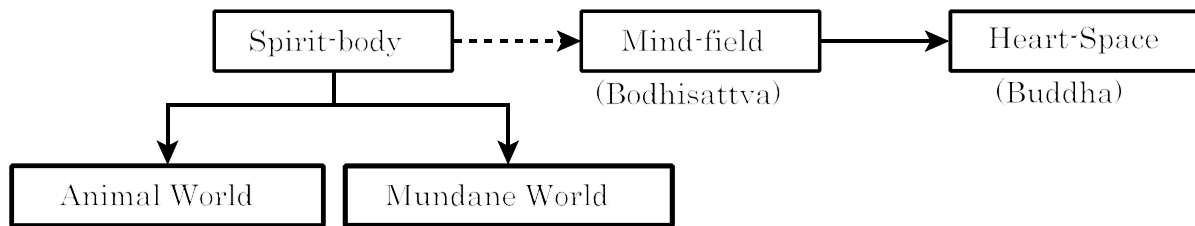
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three poisons: cupidity and greed, anxiety and anger, ignorance and stupidity. Let us take greed for an example. We know that greed is a thought; therefore, it is a conduct of the wave-body. To be specific, we assume that Mr. A is greedy for money in this mundane world, and his happiness is measured by how much money he collects from his business. We all know that greed has no upper bounds and money is limited in its availability. Hence, complete satisfaction is unattainable. We may have bursts of excitements in our lives, but genuine happiness is impossible to attain. Nevertheless, if Mr. A works hard, he may get a certain degree of satisfaction, because there is a supply of money available. When Mr. A enters the spirit-world, greed as a thought-wave enters it with him. But in that world there is no material object called money; therefore he can never obtain it no matter how hard he tries. Hence, his greed cannot be satisfied in any degree and his unhappiness is intensified. He lives in his own hell.

3. Life Transformation of Living Beings

In the previous section we learned that in our present life, we can transform our freedom to any body in the life transformation sequence, or spread the freedom over several bodies. For example, most people are unions of the ego-body, the physical body, and the C-body, with the human freedom being distributed to each body in certain degrees. When we ponder the transformation sequence, we may have certain false thoughts and determine that Ch'an cultivation is not urgent or even necessary. Our reasoning may be similar to the following example: Mr. A enjoys his present life with all the money he wants. Hence, there is no reason to transform himself to another body and live in another world. After shedding his physical body, he automatically enters the spirit-world. Even though his life in the spirit-world is hard, the cause and condition will carry him back to this world again. Then he can live another "happy" life, since he has learned all the tricks of making money.

It is a false and dangerous thought to conclude that returning to the physical world is the only route. Many possible routes exist for a spirit-body after he leaves the spirit-world. They are shown as follows:



A route to the mind-field is called the Bodhisattva's route. The dotted line on the diagram indicates that the spirit-body can arrive at the mind-field is much harder than we can, since we all enjoy more freedom to choose our path. After death, the behavior of a spirit-body is determined by the cause and condition and his nature. If we cannot break the bondage to the five sensual desires and take the Bodhisattva's route in this world when we have complete freedom, how will we take the route in the spirit-world

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when we have less or no freedom? Now you must make a choice: to take the Bodhisattva's route in this life or to wait until after death. Think it over and make a decision. Your decision should be firm without hesitation. If this is not the case, you are still tangled in your sensual desires. While our sensual desires dissipate our life energy, we kill ourselves gradually without any warning.

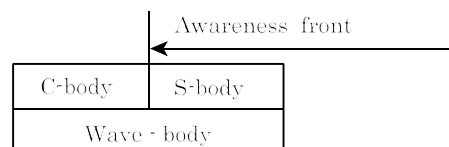
A spirit-body can take the Bodhisattva's route only if he knows of its existence. Therefore, anyone who reads this book has learned the Bodhisattva's route and should practice it diligently so that, if he is not enlightened in this life, he will not forget the way of cultivation after his death. This requires very strong determination. Otherwise, he will be scared to death when death comes, and forget all the methods of Ch'an cultivation.

At this point, one may think that it is impossible for a human spirit-body to be transformed into an animal. This doubt results from dwelling on forms and the false belief that form determines nature. We should realize that, when the spirit-body is transformed into a physical body, it is the nature of the spirit-body which determines the form of the physical body, not the other way around. Therefore, if a spirit-body has a dog-nature, he will be transformed into a dog.

4. Functions of the Energy-body.

From the life transformation sequence we can see that if one wants to assume the mind-field he has to shed the ego-body, the physical body, and the energy-body. This is sudden enlightenment. It is in your power and under your control to shed your ego-body and physical body. That means if you want to do it you have the complete freedom to do so. It is difficult in practice, but possible in theory. Its success depends on your determination and the expedients you use. But shedding the energy-body is much more difficult than shedding the ego-body, because one has no freedom over the S-body which is part of the energy-body. One can cut off all the attachments to the C-body, yet cannot do so to the S-body which is the subconscious part of the energy-body. Then, how can we cultivate, so that we can cut off the attachments to it?

The energy-body is a "physical" union or collection of thoughts. The part of this collection of which one is aware is the C-body; and the other part which has been accumulated in this life and all past lives and one is not aware of is the S-body. The C-body and the S-body are divided by one's awareness. Let us call the boundary between the C-body and the S-body the "awareness front" like a wave front. The concept is shown in the following figure.



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The awareness front is not fixed but can be shifted toward the S-body through Ch'an cultivation. In other words, if one does not become attached to the C-body, his awareness will be increased. As the awareness front is pushed to the ultimate position of the S-body a simple suggestion or an otherwise meaningless sound might awaken the cultivator to the source of the thoughts -- the mind itself. This is sudden enlightenment. The Ch'an cultivator Shiang Yian is a typical example. He was a very quick and intelligent person and had ten answers for every question until one day when the Ch'an Master Gwei Shan asked him if he knew anything about himself before his birth. He was stunned and could not say a single word. Then he made up his mind and gave up all the learned principles, retired to Nan Yang Jur Temple and passed his time without a single thought. One day when he was sweeping the yard, a piece of broken tile struck a bamboo trunk and produced a strange and sharp sound. This mere sound enlightened him, and just this sound transformed a common monk into a great Ch'an master. One may try to find the sound which will enlighten him. It may or may not be possible, but it is definitely not recommended or even suggested. The bamboo sound struck by the broken tile is only a small part of the whole, or only the final touch to a great artistic piece. Without the long, hard, and sincere cultivation, the final touch would not have made Shiang Yan a great Ch'an master.

To understand how the awareness front can be shifted toward the S-body so that the condition for the enlightenment can be well perceived, we will examine the functions of the wave-body. It is known that the wave-body is separated into the C-body and the S-body. The C-body is further divided into the fifth and the sixth consciousness; and the S-body is further divided into the seventh and the eighth consciousness. The eighth consciousness is the part which consists of all thought-turbulence accumulated in this life and all previous ones. The fifth consciousness receives information directly from the environment through the five senses and sends it to the sixth consciousness. Hence, its function is like a faithful transformer which transforms the information without any distortion. The sixth consciousness processes all the information received and performs activities like thinking, reasoning, associations, and judging. The function of the seventh consciousness is like a two-way transformer which carries the information of the sixth consciousness to the eighth, and the subconscious information of the eighth consciousness to the sixth. These relations are depicted in the following diagram:

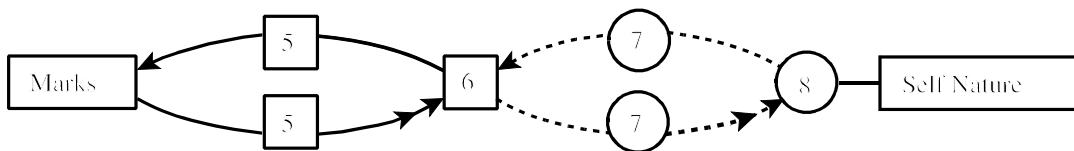


Fig. 3

The solid lines form an external operation cycle or an external bio-feedback process which we have the freedom to use. The dotted lines represent the internal operation cycle or the internal bio-feedback process which we have no or very little freedom to use.

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Arcs with one arrow denote the commanding routes and arcs with two, the storing routes. It is these two cycles that direct and adjust our conducts (of the physical body) and thoughts (conducts of the energy-body) to produce the desired results. Because we have been deeply attached to the desired results for a long time, we have lost the awareness of the mind itself. If we are mindful of the turning points that occur in each consciousness of the cycle and do not become attached to either the results or the processes which have no nature, we will be able to realize the mind itself.

From Fig. 8, we can see that the six consciousness obstructs the flow of information from the environment to the eighth consciousness and distorts its real nature or meaning. For an enlightened person, the mind operates in the following unobstructed cycle:

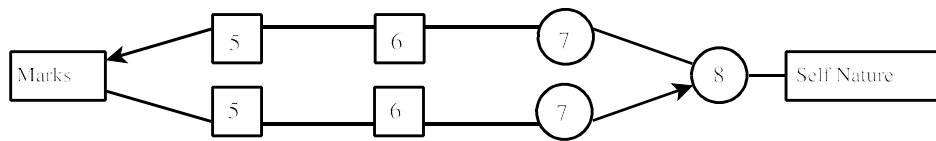


Fig. 4

Since the awareness of an enlightened person is present throughout the whole mind, the separation of the mind into many divisions is no longer necessary. And therefore, the names of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and the eighth consciousness no longer represent a reality. The Sixth Patriarch explained these cycles and the method for cultivation very clearly in the Platform Sutra, saying:

**“Five, eight, six, seven
Effect and cause both turn;
Merely names to be used
These are without real nature.
If, in the place of turning,
Emotion is not kept,
You always and forever dwell
In Naga Concentration.”**

I have divided the mind of an ordinary person into many divisions based on a variety of sources. According to the persons's awareness, the mind is divided into the consciousness and the subconsciousness; according to the size of the thought-waves, it is divided into the thought-wave and the thought-turbulence; and according to the functions, it is divided into the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth consciousness. But for an enlightened person, these separations are meaningless; they do not exist. Since ordinary people are attached to their senses, the functions of the mind have many divisions. And therefore, these people can only realize the functions of the parts, not the function of the whole. If one does not become attached to the functions of the parts, he will realize the essence of the part; and from this realization, he can realize the whole. When he realizes the essence of the whole mind, he is enlightened. Hence, the functions of the mind are no longer divided; the eyes can hear, and the nose can see, and so forth. Therefore, a person will alter his entire perception of the world.

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Generally, when one encounters his environment (external or internal), he will attach to it or parts of it. Attachments are thought-waves which carry energy -- the life energy. Therefore, the mind has a out-flow of energy. The consequences of this out-flow are many: one becomes less intelligent, the mind is confused and has stress, the life span is shorter, and so forth. If one removes these attachments through cultivation, instead of losing life energy, it is conserved. When this conserved life energy reaches a certain level, heat will be produced. This heat produced by the thought-waves can be easily felt by the cultivator during Ch'an sittings. When one reaches an advanced level, internal luminosity will result. It was said by many Ch'an masters, "When the internal luminosity occurs, the door to the great vehicle opens."

5. Ch'an and Science - I

Ch'an is basically the study of the self-nature of human beings. This is a static definition of Ch'an or simply replacing one word for another. As long as we are not enlightened to our self-nature, this definition is useless. Therefore, it is necessary to include an approach to realize our self-nature. A parallel situation exists in science. Science is basically the study of the nature of the physical world. In order to know the nature of the physical world, it is also necessary to include, in the domain of science, methods to reveal this nature. Therefore, both science and Ch'an are searching for the nature of something, albeit, different "physical" objects. Since these objects are in the same universe, they are obviously not isolated. Hence, if we want to show the relationship of these two studies, we can broaden the definition of science and Ch'an, widening their domains in the following way: Ch'an is a branch of science whose main concern is the nature of the human mind; and science is a branch of Ch'an whose main concern is the nature of the material world. With these domains broadened, we can develop a definition where Ch'an is science and science is Ch'an. There is no separation, and there is no need to separate them.

Through this book, we have observed many similarities between Ch'an doctrines and physical science. The Karmic Law in Ch'an is equivalent to those of the constitutive and field equations in science; and the mind-field is equivalent to the gravitational field, and so forth. These equivalences are not accidental, but natural consequences as stated in one of the Ch'an doctrines: "All three realms are from the Heart, and all dharmas are from the consciousness." In other words, the whole universe is created from the Heart, because consciousness is simply thought-waves of the mind, which is the distortion of the Heart. Due to this relationship, these two branches -- Ch'an and science - are even more closely related from a practical point of view. The importance of Ch'an for a psychologist is very obvious. Without understanding the mind itself, how can a psychologist understand his patients' behaviors?

There are many important teaching methods used in Ch'an schools which are invaluable in today's education. The major function of a Ch'an master is to stimulate and guide his students to become

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independent thinkers, researchers, and experimenters. There are plenty of expedients used in Ch'an schools which would benefit the teaching and learning in colleges. Of course, the reverse is also true. An understanding of basic scientific theories, methods, and developments would also nourish the understanding of Buddha's doctrines.

Let me mention one of the scientific developments which inspired me to start exploring the Ch'an doctrines. We know that Newton proposed a law of motion which is valid in a reference frame which is "fixed in space", the so-called inertial frame. But on the other hand, it can be shown that Newton's law of motion is also valid in other frames which move with a constant velocity relative to the fixed one; hence, they are also inertial frames. Therefore, Newton has divided the inertial frames into two kinds: those fixed in space and those moving with a constant relative velocity. This is an internal contradiction or an impotence because by using Newton's law of motion, there is no way to distinguish a fixed frame from the one moving with a constant velocity. This internal contradiction did not bother anyone, except Einstein. Furthermore, there is another contradiction. Newton's law of motion is invariant under the Galilean transformation but not under the Lorentz transformation; while Maxwell's electromagnetic field equations are invariant under the Lorentz transformation but not under the Galilean transformation. Invariant property is a very basic requirement for all physical quantities and laws. Therefore, if the Lorentz transformation is accepted as the basis, Newton's law must be modified. If the Galilean transformation is accepted as the basis, Maxwell's equations must be modified. Since the Lorentz transformation contains the Galilean as a special case, no one can modify Maxwell's equations such that they are compatible with the experimental results and at the same time invariant under the Lorentz transformation. It is again Einstein who modified Newton's law of motion into the relativistic equation of motion which is invariant under the Lorentz transformation. The special theory of relativity was born and the meanings of space and time have been overwhelmingly altered.

According to relativity theory, the space in which we are living is not Euclidean, but Riemannian. Many phenomena and facts verified and pointed out by Buddhas are unacceptable and unbelievable according to Newton's viewpoint; yet they become natural consequences according to the theory of relativity. For example, an enlightened person can see past events. According to Newton's viewpoint, this is impossible. But according to the theory of relativity, this phenomenon is just like being able to see a person standing in front of us either at one yard or a hundred yards. One may ask, "Why can't I see?" There are two possibilities: One is that the relativity theory is wrong, and the other is that you have a poor set of instruments -- your eyes. Since the relativity theory is a well-established theory according to all experimental indications and theoretical considerations, it is most likely that the eyes which we have are poor. You may ask: Is it possible that Ch'an cultivators told a lie? Nothing is impossible. This is the last question you have to investigate yourself because it concerns your own life. After this investigation you should take firm action; otherwise, the problems of your life can never be solved.

I have reported this scientific development in detail with a hope that you may wonder about your own life problems. There are two particular points which I want to point out:

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- A) The reason that Newton's law of motion was modified is not because it was not practical or useful, but because it had internal contradictions. By removing these contradictions, Einstein's special theory of relativity which is closer to reality was established. Similarly for human beings, each person lives according to a set of codes or principles. Over a period of time examine these principles for all matters in your life and see if there is any contradiction. If there is, then your set of codes does not represent reality, and consequently, confusion and suffering result. The Ch'an doctrine is the set of principles without internal contradiction.**
- B) Any physical law or quantity must be an invariant under a wisely chosen coordinate transformation. In other words, a law or any quantity which is not an invariant does not represent reality, perhaps it is an approximation at best. Now each of us should examine our set of living codes and see if it is an invariant in all environments and over all time. Otherwise, the code is unreal. The Ch'an doctrine is the set of principles which are invariant in all environments and over all time. And that invariant is self-nature or the Buddha Nature, the Heart or the Buddha Heart.**

6. Ch'an and Science - II

Many people claim that science is objective and Ch'an is subjective; and therefore, Ch'an is not a science. These people can be divided into two groups: the first group contains those who are scientists but do not understand Ch'an; the other group contains those who are Ch'an cultivators but do not understand the basic principles of science. There is a third group which contains people who are neither scientists nor Ch'an cultivators. Many people who belong to this group claim that Ch'an is superstitious. However, their opinions will not be addressed here, because it is of no use and even harmful to argue a theory with people who cannot understand even a part of it. If a person does not know but wants to learn, he can be taught. However, if a person does not know but wants to argue, just bow to him but do not argue with him because if you bow to him, he will be happy. He may change his mind and want to learn later. But if you argue with him, he will be angry; and he may never come back even to think of that problem.

Now, let us examine the extent of objectivity in science. Let's take Newton's law of motion as an example. Newton did not have any special recipe to formulate his well known law of motion. He took a set of M experiments, abstracted the common nature of all these M experimental results, and wrote down, by his wits, the relation $F = dp/dt$. If another person had been given the same experimental results, he may not have been able to write down the law of motion. Therefore, from the M experiments to the relation $F = dp/dt$, Newton's mind is in operation and links these two together. This is a subjective process. If another person called N_j checks Newton's relation and finds that it is true within certain allowable experimental error, then Newton's relation is not only true to Newton (denoted by N_0) but also true to N_j . If (N_j) is a set which contains all persons $N_0, N_1, N_2, \dots, N_m$, then Newton's relation

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is said to be objective relative to this group of people. If m goes to “infinity”, then Newton’s relation is objective. If Newton’s relation is not only valid for the M experiments but also expected to be valid for many others, then the relation becomes a law. We now notice that the objectivity of scientific laws is only subjectivity relative to a larger group of observers or believers. Absolute objectivity is unobtainable.

With an understanding of the meaning of subjectivity, objectivity, and their relation, it is not difficult to see that Ch’an principles are subjective and also objective relative to a group of people because Ch’an principles are experimental results obtained by all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and many sages. Therefore, Ch’an and science are both subjective and objective in the same sense.

Another topic I would like to discuss is the belief that Ch’an is irrational. This belief was first raised by D. T. Suzuki and widely spread by his followers with misunderstandings. This kind of statement only makes Ch’an a little mysterious. Without a true understanding of this statement, it is more harmful than helpful. If one takes Ch’an to be self-nature, then Ch’an is a reality and has no relation whatsoever to rationality and irrationality because rationality and irrationality are simply the judgment made according to a chosen set of propositions. Self-nature is a “physical” reality, so how can a physical entity become irrational? Does anyone say that the gravitational field is irrational? Does anyone think that the chair which he is sitting on is irrational?

One may take Ch’an as a set of principles observed by many experimenters, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. Even in this case, one still cannot say that Ch’an is irrational because these principles are simply the representations of experimental results. Experimental results are observed facts; they can be relative but can not be irrational. A similar case happened in science.

In the eighteenth century, light was primarily treated as a beam of particles according to the Newtonian point of view. This treatment of light is called the geometrical optics. It was later discovered that, according to Maxwell’s equations, light is a wave. Many people were frustrated about these apparently contradictory characteristics of light, but they were soon consoled by the following belief: the characteristic of light as a beam of particles is simply an approximation of a wave as its wave length is very short. That is: a wave behaves as a particle when the wave length is short. This belief did not last very long, because both the particle and wave characteristics of light are approximations of the quantum nature. Does quantum theory represent the ultimate truth of nature? No one can or will say yes. Because such an affirmation has no place in science, it can only hinder the progress of science. We do not know what the ultimate truth is; we can only remove or modify the falsities.

It is the same in Ch’an. From the above example, we have learned not to say that one theory is more rational than the other. We can only say that each theory in science or Ch’an has its own domain of application. This is particularly important for Ch’an cultivators because of the following bad habit. People like to quote or interpret a speaker’s statement with no attention to the audience. This is a big mistake even in daily conversation and very dangerous for Ch’an cultivation because all Dharmas spoken by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and sages are prescriptions for a particular group of Ch’an cultivators

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who have a specific mental disposition and disease. If one does not understand the domain of application of that particular prescription but takes the medicine, he will get sicker.

In addition to Ch'an being a set of principles representing experimental results, it is also possible to take Ch'an as a cultivation method. In this case, one may say to a particular group of cultivators with great care that Ch'an is irrational in order to correct a specific mistake. For example, if a cultivator tries to understand his own intrinsic self-nature by pure reasoning which is based on his learned logic system without running his own experiment, he should be told that Ch'an is irrational to encourage him to practice and not to reason. This is a correct usage to break the cultivator's mental bondage. However, it does not imply that Ch'an is irrational in comparison to other logic systems. One should keep in mind that all logic reasoning and systems have their own limitations and impotence.

7. Ch'an and Mathematics

Many mathematical expressions and equations have been found to represent physical realities in different branches of science. This part of mathematics is called applied mathematics. It has also been found that mathematics helps a Ch'an cultivator understand many concepts more clearly and easily. In this section, the meaning of a function will be explained and its implications in our lives will be shown.

In mathematics, a function is a mapping which relates one set of objects to another set in a specific manner. One of the two sets is called the domain and the other the range. The function or mapping is an independent concept. This may not be clear to laymen or even to engineers who usually write $y = y(x)$ as the standard, instead of $y = f(x)$ as it should be. For example, both curves $y = (1/4)x^2$ and $y = \sin(\pi x/4)$ may have the same domain and range, say $(0, 2)$ as the domain and $(0, 1)$ as the range. However, they represent two different curves because the relations between the domain and range are different. Therefore, a function is a concept which is independent of the domain and range, even though they are closely related to each other. Untrained people do not understand how the above mathematical concept relates to their lives; consequently, confusion and suffering result. So let me translate this concept into a familiar situation. Most people will agree that love is an essential and important concept of human beings. For an individual, love is a particular way in which he relates himself to other human beings. Therefore, we can call it a function. If love is a particular given function, then the statements: "Mr. A loves his children," and "Mr. A loves all human beings" have an equivalent meaning because the function is the same and the only difference is the range. In other words, "For any member of the human race, Mr. A loves that member," is a meaningful statement. From what we have just learned we know that "love" is a function and an independent concept. However, this is not the case for mundane people. When one says, "I love X", the X does not mean any member of the human race, but a particular member or a restricted group based on his personal choice. Therefore, the entities "love" and "X" cannot be separated, and love is not an independent concept. Mundane people, then, do not know how to love, but only know how to love X, a particularly chosen group, at a certain time. The range of

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love for the mundane person is only restricted to those whom he classifies as good and useful according to his own reference. Therefore, the word love uttered from many people's mouths is simply an extension of I-and-mine. A Ch'an cultivator should only nourish the love whose range embraces all living beings. This love is an independent entity, a nature. This love without a restricted range is called "great love" or compassion. Helping all living beings to be enlightened so that they will have no suffering and no birth-and-death is indeed the great love, a nature, the Buddha nature. Anyone who wants to be enlightened must realize the Buddha nature. Hence, he should practice this great love (compassion). Otherwise, he can never be a Buddha.

At this place, I will point out that this great love is a nature and not a responsibility imposed by others or by the society as a whole. Therefore, all Buddhas love and help everyone without any partiality. The Buddha helps you as much as when you do not believe his principles as when you do. And Buddha helps those of you who do not believe in him as much as those of you who do. But if you believe in his principles and cultivate, you will be enlightened. If you do not believe his principles and, of course, do not cultivate, you cannot be enlightened. If you feel that there is any incomparability, think it over and over again.

Now I will discuss a property of a continuous function which may help those who search for sensual pleasure in this mundane world. Let $f(t)$ be a continuous function in a given interval. There is a theorem which states, "If there is a maximum of the function in the interval, there is also a minimum." Let us look at the relation between this theorem and human life. A human being has feelings and those feelings have variations. If we represent the feelings by a continuous curve, then some parts of the curve are associated with happiness and others unhappiness or sufferings. By use of the above theorem, we obtain the following conclusion: "Whenever there is happiness, there is unhappiness." Happiness and unhappiness are like the positive and negative charges of a dipole, or the north and south poles of a magnet. We may call this principle the dipole-principle of happiness.

One may object to this principle by saying that when one is happy, he is obviously not unhappy. Although this is true, one must realize that the maximum and the minimum of a function do not occur at the same time. When the happiness shows, the unhappiness is already hidden in one's mind. This is because the happiness is formed by comparison with other experiences which are classified as unhappiness. At the time of happiness, one may not realize the existence of the unhappiness. But this hidden unhappiness will bubble up at some other time; it cannot just disappear since it is in one's own mind. One may think that this is a painful theorem to know, and it is. But one must realize that it is always painful to discover the truth when the truth is undesirable. We often hear the phrase, "I don't want to know the truth." Knowing the truth is indeed painful sometimes, but it is always beneficial to know the truth in the end.

The dipole-principle of happiness may be considered in the following way. Happiness is caused by marks which are parts of the environment. But the environment always changes, hence, happiness varies accordingly. When happiness varies to a certain degree, happiness becomes unhappiness. Therefore, the

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only way to attain eternal happiness is to not be attached to the environment. In such an environment, one free from attachments, happiness comes from one's own self-nature. Self-nature is an invariant, and so is happiness. In this case, happiness and unhappiness have no demarcation; they are just names but refer to the same reality. Such a non-differential happiness is usually referred to as a peace or serenity.

8. Ch'an and Psychology

I have pointed out that Ch'an is a psychological science; however, it is not the kind of psychology offered at a university. A Ch'an cultivator searches the mind itself by direct cultivation, while a psychologist studies human behavior and mental processes. If a Ch'an cultivator is enlightened to his own mind, he is his mind and his mind is he. He is an invariant relative to all environmental transformations. However, this is not the case for a psychologist because the human behavior and mental processes which he studies are human responses to the environment which change from person to person and time to time. Thus, psychology cannot have any basic principle for all human beings or for all time. That means that psychology cannot have true field equations. On the other hand, psychology is concerned with the mental processes, yet it has no knowledge about the nature of the mind itself. Therefore, it cannot have correct constitutive equations. In order to establish a correct constitutive equation, psychologists must be Ch'an cultivators. In this way, psychologists can have direct knowledge of the nature of the mind and its processes. And only in this way, can a psychologist help others in the right way.

The success and glory of physical science has been witnessed not only by scientists but also by laymen. The moon landing is understood by everyone. Other achievements like the discovery of new elementary particles in modern physics, DNA in bio-chemistry, and so forth, may not be understood by everyone. Yet, the advances in these areas cannot be doubted. Then what is the status of psychology? Progress, yes; glory, no. Many intelligent psychologists admire the glories enjoyed by the physical scientists. Thus, they have also borrowed some mathematical and scientific methods to apply in psychology with a hope that they would perform the same miracle. But they fail to understand the basic difference between a physical body and a human mind. Thus, their approach is, at best, a gamble. Useful results for limited cases may happen, but general constitutive and field equations can never be obtained. Eternal truth has no affinity with gambling.

In physical science the subjects of investigation are material bodies. Human beings are only observers, and their relations to the subjects of investigation can be assumed negligible. While in psychology human beings are not only the observers but also the subjects of investigation. If the observer and the subject of investigation are the same person, he is basically a Ch'an cultivator. If the observer and the subject are two different persons, the results of observation cannot be a basic psychological law, because the human freedom of the subject does not play a direct role in the experiment, and also the relation between the observer and the subject cannot be neglected any more.

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There is a similar case in mechanics.

The linear constitutive equation of a homogeneous, isotropic, and thermoelastic materials can be written in the following well-known form:

$$\sigma_{ij} = \lambda e_{kk} \delta_{ij} + 2\mu e_{ij} - \gamma T \delta_{ij} \quad (8-1)$$

where σ_{ij} and e_{ij} are the stress and strain tensors, respectively,

T is the absolute temperature,

λ , μ are the Lamé' moduli,

$\gamma = (3\lambda + 2\mu)\alpha$ and α is the coefficient of linear thermal expansion.

The above equation is only valid for linear thermoelastic materials. At one time, some people proposed to modify the above equation in the following form so that the equation would also be valid for nonlinear thermoelastic materials:

$$\sigma_{ij} = \lambda(T) e_{kk} \delta_{ij} + 2\mu(T) e_{ij} - \gamma(T) T \delta_{ij} \quad (8-2)$$

where λ , μ , and γ are not constants any more but functions of temperature. This approach did yield some useful results for a limited range of temperature, but it could never provide a general nonlinear constitutive equation, because the temperature loses its character as an independent variable as it should be. It is the same for the methods currently employed in psychology -- human freedom does not play a direct and independent role in the experiments. Thus, the results can only have limited uses and cannot lead to a general law. Sometimes, even the usefulness of such results is questionable; many times the results are even harmful to the understanding of ourselves.

There are some psychologists who use animals as subjects of investigation and then generalize their conclusions to apply to human behavior. It is an insult to human dignity. The basic differences between a human being and a rat are many, but the major ones are wisdom and compassion which are the manifestations of human freedom. It should be clear that the psychological law, if any, obtained from such an approach cannot be applicable to human beings. Any psychologist who applies such an approach either satirizes his fellow man as unwise and uncompassionate or is just ignorant of the existence of the human freedom which is a key variable in the human constitutive equation.

There is an example in mechanics which we should pay attention to and from which we may learn a lesson. It is the simple-tension test. In linear theory of elasticity, the constitutive equation for a homogeneous and isotropic material contains only two material constants -- Young's modulus and Poisson's ratio. Under a simple-tension test, measurements of the elongation and contraction of a rod are sufficient for the determination of the two constants. There are many other loading conditions which can be used for this purpose. The reason for choosing the simple-tension test instead of others is because it has the simplest loading condition.

Let's look at the analogy between the simple-tension test and Ch'an cultivation. We know that thoughts are waves of the mind. Wave propagation performs momentum and energy transfers, and thus, stresses are produced. Therefore, thoughts are stresses of the mind which are responses to external

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events. Under a stressed condition, a corresponding “deformation or strain” of the mind occurs. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the mind correctly under a complex loading condition (environment). Suggested from the simple-tension test in mechanics, we should study the mind by simplifying the environment and eliminating thoughts so that the mind is reduced to its simplest configuration. That is the single-minded state. Only when one reaches such a single-minded state, is an understanding of the mind itself hopeful. In analogy, this may be called a simple-thought test of the mind. However, this is not the road which the psychologists take. The road they take is like determining the material constants in mechanics by twisting a torus. It cannot be said that it is impossible, yet no one has been able to yield an exact solution due to the complexity of the geometry. Ch'an cultivators are simply those psychologists who perform the simple-thought test of their minds. Even further, they have to remove the last thought so that the mind will reveal itself. This is enlightenment.

9. Ch'an and Religion

It has been emphasized that Ch'an is the science of the human mind. Hence, it concerns everyone of us. And all of us can cultivate Ch'an to find the true self so that we will not be lost in the ever changing environment. However, there are many who hesitate to practice Ch'an principles merely because of their religious designations. Therefore, I again clearly state that Ch'an is not a religion according to the following definition:

Religion is a system of beliefs conferring on a supernatural being who is called God. After death, human beings will be judged and punished or rewarded by God according to his will. God is all-powerful, just, and loving; and a human being can never become God.

This is not a general definition of religion. As a matter of fact, a general definition just does not exist and should not exist. My purpose is not to formulate a general definition of religion, but to try to convince those people with such a religion that Ch'an is not a religion. Therefore, they can practice Ch'an with a peaceful mind. Through cultivation, if he finds the truth in his own mind, that is the only truth. After reaching this stage, he is an independent person. He has then freed himself from his religion and all religions. He can call the truths he finds from his own mind Ch'an or any other name. Name? Who cares about the name? It is the reality behind the name that counts. At that moment, he can just gaze at and read from his own mind in which the whole universe is embedded.

10. Meaning of Reality

If a person senses or knows that he may sense the effects of an event through his five sense organs then the event is real, relative to that person. If an event is real to all persons in a universe then the event is real in that universe, and it is absolute. Let the universe contain many worlds. An event which is not real in one world may be found real in another world. That is: reality is relative. Therefore, one has no reason to argue the validity of another person's reality. They are simply in two different worlds at that

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time. The only real argument that may occur would be a result of these peoples' honesty, not the reality of that event itself. One must realize that reality relative to a person may also change from time to time due to the change of his understanding. An event which one does not believe at one time may be found real at another time. Therefore, a scientist should never claim that his finding is the ultimate truth of reality. The well-known example of this kind of mistaken claim is Newton's law of motion. This law was believed to represent the truth of the real world for two centuries, yet it was modified by Einstein's special theory of relativity and its basic concepts of space and time was completely cast away by Einstein's general theory of relativity. From this lesson, no one including Einstein himself has claimed that the theory of relativity is the ultimate truth of the real world. Instead, we can only say that relativity theory is a better approximation.

There are people who believe that life is terminated at death. They think that the only thing they have to do is to struggle through this life and after death there are no more problems. These people mistake the physical body and life as the same and do not believe that they have a human nature which is independent of the physical body. If one believes or proves that he has a human nature, how can a nature die? If a "nature" can die, it is simply not a nature because a nature must be an invariant. An example is the gravitational field which may be considered a nature for all material bodies. When a material body changes its shape and composition, its gravitational field will not vanish or die. When a giant star becomes a "black hole", we may say that the star dies, yet its gravitational field still exists.

Here it is appropriate to present proof that life and the physical body are two different entities, not one. If they are one, then they cannot have any different characteristics, but this is not the case. Although the physical body can be divided into pieces, we all know that life is not divisible. For example, a person's legs could be cut off but his life would still be intact. Therefore, life and the physical body are two, not one.

Some people claim that all phenomena are false and unreal and, therefore, no cultivation is needed. According to this false belief, they enjoy themselves by using every means to entertain their physical bodies in this world. These people are called hedonists; they are not only ignorant but also dangerous. They will find that after death their energy bodies are still tortured between happiness and suffering. The existence of the energy body in another world has been proven by many Ch'an cultivators. You must prove it to yourself by following Ch'an cultivation. Because it is your own life, no one else can live it for you; likewise no one else can die for you.

Let me give some simple examples to demonstrate the relative meaning of reality. In the physical world, when a person bumps into a wall in the dark, it hurts. Although he cannot see the wall, it is real. The reality or the existence of the wall is due to the obstruction of his motion. But if he sheds his physical body and assumes his energy body, the wall will not obstruct his comings and goings. Therefore, the wall will no longer be real to him.

The relativity of reality can also be illustrated by another example which is familiar to all parents. When parents watch their children playing house, one child pretends to be the husband and the other

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his wife. They imitate their parents in a very vivid manner. Fascinated by their vividness, the mother tells the father, "Look, how genuine and interesting it is." The father answers without taking his eyes from the television, "It is just child's play, it's not real." Yet, to those children, it is real, as real as when one bumps into the wall. They have happiness and sadness. They argue and they laugh. Only when they grow up will they realize that playing house is child's play indeed. Similarly, an ordinary citizen may not be able to understand a politician's activities and think that a politician's life is just play, a game, and not real. But to the politician, it is real, as real as yours and mine.

Another example which we have all experienced is dreaming. In a dream, all the human emotional excitements may be replayed: happiness and suffering, sweating and screaming. We cannot say that it is not real during the time of dreaming. Yet, when we wake up we forget the dream. If a scene of the dream does occur in our mind occasionally during the day, we may then tell ourselves, "Oh, it was just a dream. Why bother!" However, if a person attaches to the scenes of his dream, he will be maneuvered or affected by his dream. If this is the case, we say that the person is living the dream.

It is a proper time to stop and reflect on some of the things we may have acquired during our lives: fame, power, and wealth. Everyone knows that no one can take these with him at the critical moment which we call death. Therefore, life in this physical world is also a dream, a longer dream compared with the ones we have had at night. If we become attached to the events in this life, we will never be able to wake up to see the truth. If we want to wake up and find the whole picture of life, there is a way -- Buddha's Way. Buddhas and Budhisattvas were just ordinary people like you and me a long time ago. They have awakened and shown us the Way by which everyone else can also awaken from this long dream. Buddha has shown us the Way, but we ourselves have to walk through it. Everyone has to live and die by himself; there can be no proxy.

11. Habit and Environment

To search for the ultimate truth, a Ch'an cultivator must be completely free. If he is restrained and conditioned, the truth he finds is also restrained and only valid under that condition. Such a restrained truth cannot be the ultimate one because the restraints come from the environment which is always changing. There are many kinds of constraints, but the major one is one's own physical body. Mundane people take life and the physical body to be one and the same thing. Therefore, when the body stops functioning, they think they will die. They have been consciously and subconsciously prisoned to their physical bodies for uncountable years; they have made their physical bodies the main center of interest.

For survival and security, society and organizations are formed. Therefore, an individual's conducts and thought patterns are shaped by the trend and the norm of society. And, in turn, the trend is forged by people's desires. Thus, one learns and then he teaches. This is called education. He may deviate from the norm of the society because of human freedom, yet he is not completely free because he attaches to his physical body which is tied to the physical world. His freedom is constrained and limited, he is

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confined in the physical world which is recognized by his five senses as three dimensional and Newtonian.

It is not my intention to devaluate education at all. But after being educated to a certain point or age, one should stop and ponder on the real meanings of what he has been taught and what he has learned, the sooner the better. One should, particularly, examine the restraints and conditions under which he was taught. In other words, one should start to unlearn. A Ch'an cultivator must have the determination to examine and reexamine himself thoroughly from time to time with all restraints demolished. Only under such a void-environment, can the ultimate truth be found. In such a void-environment, a cultivator may first feel insecure and uncertain. This is not unusual. And it is at this time one has to strengthen himself to break the cultivation barrier. This is also a time at which one needs a Ch'an teacher or a learned Ch'an friend for guidance and encouragement. The cultivation barrier may be short or long; this depends on one's vigor in cultivation. The cultivation barrier is dangerous because it may cause the Ch'an cultivator to retreat from cultivation. On the other hand, it is also a good indicator of one's progress in cultivation. After each cultivation barrier, one will find that he enters another new state of life. He sees and feels things in this world differently, though the things haven't changed. In general, a cultivator becomes more alert and calm after each cultivation barrier. After he has passed the last barrier to enlightenment, he can then live under any condition, good or bad, happy or sad, without a slightest trace of obstruction. It is just like water flowing freely along the river bed. Detours, yes; headache, no.

To examine oneself in a void-environment is not just for anyone, it requires courage, wisdom, and compassion. A sage is a sage because he has corrected all his errors. A Buddha is a Buddha because he has removed all the impurities of human nature. A man who claims or thinks that he has no error nor any impurity is a foolproof fool.

The constraints from society are easily recognized by the cultivator because they are considered the externals. But the constraints from his own habits can easily cause him to deceive. Thus, the major difficulty a Ch'an cultivator has to overcome is conquering himself. This is because the entity which is named as himself is actually false and unreal.

A habit is a personal preference of doing certain things or thinking in certain patterns repeatedly so that it becomes autonomous and the doing and thinking can be done without conscious analysis and guidance. In most cases, a person's habits are done without regard to other people. Unless a habit bothers others, one may not even realize that he has a particular habit. Needless to say that he has never considered the habit having anything to do with Ch'an cultivation. However, on one hand, a Ch'an cultivator must be free in order to find the ultimate truth, and a habit is a very strong dwelling force in one's environment which restricts the freedom of the cultivator. And on the other hand, the unawareness of one's habit is the most dangerous foe a Ch'an cultivator can have. Therefore, a cultivator must be mindful of every word he utters, and every act he does. In this way, the cultivator trains himself to be his own master and aware of his existence at all times.

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When one realizes his habits and decides to change them, although it is difficult it is not an impossible thing to accomplish. If one cannot change his habit, it is, in most cases, because he really does not want to change it. In this case, he really does not want to be his own master, free from the constraints, and independent of the environment. In sum, he is confused and has internal contradiction. As a consequence, he suffers.

To be a slave is not desirable, but it does offer some short-term comforts to the human weaknesses which we all have. To be a master is great, but it does take responsibilities which may not be always pleasant or desirable. That is one of the reasons why we do not want to be the master of our doing, speaking, and thinking; instead, we complain and place blame on others.

A personal experiment on habit is reported here for reference. I used to be a heavy coffee drinker, at least two cups in the morning and three cups in the afternoon during every working day. As a result of this, my hands started shaking. On an early day in May, 1977 when I was drinking coffee as usual in my office, the question suddenly floated into my mind: "Why do I drink so many cups of coffee a day?" The answer after much pondering was, "I need it because of my diabetes mellitus." But then I thought, "That is not the real reason. If it was, then just plain water would be sufficient. Therefore, coffee must taste good." I then started to verify my conclusion. One sip after another, I tasted it with my lips and tongue slowly and thoughtfully. The conclusion after many trials of this experimentation, not from reasoning and habit, was: coffee tastes a little bitter, very acrid, and rough; and can hardly be considered good. Since that day, I have not sipped a single drop of coffee.

A physical habit is difficult to change, but it is much more difficult to change one's thought pattern which is a thinking or mental habit. A thinking habit is formed by repetitive use of a certain "logic" system. This logic system is abstracted from one's experiences during the whole history of his life. One may not be able to state explicitly the relation between these two, or even to be able to define his logic system. However, the existence of such a logic system cannot be denied, since any reasoning process is based on a logic system as its foundation. Different logic systems produce different results and consequences. It is well known that changing the basic hypothesis of the parallel axiom in Euclidean geometry leads to various Non-Euclidean geometries which were established by Guass, Bolya, and Labatschesky; and later they were united by Riemann as the Riemann geometry. If one lives in a logic system of Euclidean geometry as the eternal truth, there is no way that he can see the validity of the Riemann geometry. Therefore, if one finds himself in a logic system which is unsatisfactory, of internal contradiction, and even has a dead end, he should be brave and open-minded enough to explore other logic systems. We all have experienced the logic system of the mundane world as unsatisfactory, full of internal contradiction, and having a dead-end. It leads to affliction, suffering, and death. The main purpose of this book is to offer another logic system for everyone to examine and ponder. Examining and pondering can lead to better understanding, but they cannot directly benefit one's real life; one has to live accordingly. There are many brave men in this world fighting and killing for power, fame, and wealth; but when they face the gate of death slowly and suffering, brave men are very few. An

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enlightened Ch'an cultivator takes death as a release, a natural phenomenon; he leaves this world in a manner as he pleases. Is this type of death desirable?

Method of Ch'an Cultivation

1. A General Understanding

The intrinsic self-nature is originally pure and clear, it does not need to be enlightened. But through uncountable years of contamination, it has been soiled and covered by lust, desire, and many other kinds of attachments. All our activities and thoughts have turned toward the external world. Therefore, we have lost direct contact to our intrinsic nature. Because of our past good causes and matured condition, we have been able to meet the Buddha Dharma which will lead us back to our intrinsic nature. Since each of us has soiled our nature in different ways, the returning roads are, of course, different. Hence, there is no fixed method which can be prescribed and is suitable for everyone. Each cultivator must exercise his intelligence to modify the proposed procedure to fit his own inclination and situation. If he can find an enlightened teacher, he is very fortunate. How to find an enlightened teacher when he himself is not enlightened is another problem.

The purpose of Ch'an cultivation is simply to be enlightened to our own intrinsic nature. You do not gain anything from the external world. When you are enlightened, you will have no affliction, no defilement, and even no death because you have never been born. Since self-nature is intrinsic, it has no dissipative relation with the external world. You should only contemplate inwardly and not search for any gain, and you shouldn't ask for other people's approval. Therefore, as a Ch'an cultivator, you must be content with your present standard of living. Furthermore, you must be willing to lower that standard when the condition requires. That is, a Ch'an cultivator must be content at all times and in all situations. Without such understanding and commitment, you cannot practice Ch'an. If you try, you will be deeply disappointed and frustrated when you find that your salary is less than others', and you are not promoted as you think you should be. Even worse, you may be unemployed. However, you need not be scared away from cultivation by this warning because it does not take much food to maintain a healthy body and it costs little. And, particularly, it takes less food to maintain a healthy body of a Ch'an cultivator because he does not engage in any idle talk and argument and he refrains himself from anger and jealousy -- this is energy conservation. Those emotional activities require a great amount of energy. Also, anyone with a sound mind can conclude that a hard and honest worker, without pulling any strings or playing any tricks, can and should earn enough money to provide the minimum nutritional requirement for a healthy body in a normal situation. Otherwise, it is not his fault; it is simply that he is not in the right position or not in the right organization. He should find another one.

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One may wonder about the situations under which a hard and honest worker cannot make a living. These are two kinds: natural disasters and man-made wars. In both of these situations, money does not only lose its usual buying power, but it also may bring misfortune. Now, I could sell an insurance policy insuring that any hard and honest worker can find a job and make enough money for his body in a normal situation. This is like saying that any beautiful and thoughtful woman can find a husband if she is not very choosy and just wants a plain husband. Of course, she may get divorced very soon because there are many bad couples. Yet, there is no bad wife or bad husband, so she may remarry another one in a short time.

It should not be mistaken that the purpose of being a Ch'an cultivator is for saving food and money. Ch'an cultivation does help us improve our health. But to maintaining a healthy body is not the purpose of Ch'an cultivation at all. The physical body is only a tool to which we attach and with which we see our own intrinsic nature. After our intrinsic nature is found, the body has no other use to us, except as a tool to help others. Then the physical body is just like a car, when it is no longer functioning as it should, we merely get out of it and get rid of it. Or we may get another car if we prefer.

All Ch'an cultivators search for enlightenment. Enlightenment can be defined according to the life transformation sequence. When you transform your human freedom from the ego-body to the mind-field, you are enlightened. When you attach to an object, which may be a thing or a person or an event or a concept, that object becomes a constraint and, thus, a life-carrier, causing you to lose your freedom to that object. Using a physical term, you lose a certain amount of energy to that object; you have an outflow of life energy. Therefore, to be enlightened, you have to shed your ego-body, your physical body, and your energy-body. The attachment to the physical body is a result of incorrect beliefs which are basically thoughts. And we also know that the energy-body is formed by thoughts and the ego-body is formed by defiled thoughts. Hence, if we have no thought, we will shed all three bodies at the same time and be enlightened to our mind-field. Hence, no-thought is the key to enlightenment. And no-attachment is the road to the state of no-thought. All the methods for Ch'an cultivation are simply expedients which are particularly designed for the cultivator to lead him to the state of no-thought. This state of no-thought can be neither imagined nor rationalized because imagination and rationalization are themselves thoughts. It must be understood by actual practicing the no-attachment in daily living. When a Ch'an master was asked what Ch'an is, he said, "Ch'an is the plain heart and simple mind in daily living." Thus, if we do not attach or dwell on any mark of the environment for all time, we will reach the state of no-thought, since thought is produced by attachment. Therefore, for all Ch'an cultivators, the motto is:

Non-Thought, Non-Attachment.

In the subsequent sections, the shedding of the ego-body, the physical body, and the energy-body will be discussed separately for clarity. The reader should not be misled to think that shedding one body is actually separate from shedding the other. They are all interrelated.

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Before a discussion of the methods of shedding the three bodies, we must first understand that the term enlightenment is just a word which is used as a marker to establish the relative relationship to our confusion. Since our intrinsic self-nature is originally pure and clear and self-sufficient, if we were not confused, then we would not need enlightenment. Because we do not abide in our original nature, we have lost our freedom in our surrounding environment. Our knowing-all and understanding-all wisdom has been soiled by wrong views and defiled thoughts which is called thought-dust. In some aspects, the self-nature with its luminous wisdom is like a perfect mirror which may lose its luster because it is covered by the dust. Therefore, if we can cleanse all the accumulated thought-dust, our intrinsic nature will reveal its original luminosity. This is enlightenment. Thought-dust results from thoughts which form a surface wave propagating along the time axis. Hence, if we can have no-thought at one time, we have cleansed the thought-dust for all time. An old proverb says, "When you put down the slaughtering cleaver, you become a Buddha at that very moment." Even a person holding a slaughtering cleaver can become a Buddha with a sudden change of mind. How true it must be for others who commit lesser crimes.

2. Phase I of Cultivation -- Shedding the Ego-body

The ego-body cannot be detected through the five senses, yet its existence cannot be denied by any thoughtful observer. Just as no scientist can detect the gravitational field itself by any of the five senses or any scientific instrument, no scientist will deny its existence. Though the ego-body is not sensible, we attach to it strongly and firmly because of the countless years of habit. Hence, it is quite difficult to shed the ego-body.

One morning, Mr. J. got up from his bed perfectly calm and relaxed. He was in a peaceful state of mind. He then picked up the newspaper and found that his name appeared in the paper as a headline. His eyes opened wide and his heart began beating heavily, he even began breathing hard. If the news happens to be good, he will be happy. However, if the news happens to be bad, he will be sad, even mad. How can a piece of paper with printed symbols affect his emotional and physiological functions? Because his ego-body has been hurt. As a result of his ego-body's existence, the energy-body receives external information through the physical body's five senses; he then processes the information as a cause or influence and obtains the result which is transmitted back to the physical body as an effect or response. That is the normal external bio-feedback cycle. If one does not attach to external marks nor has an ego-body, how can the external information affect one's physical body? Has anyone ever heard that a piece of bad news had damaged somebody's car?

Almost everyone has an ego-body. But, in the field of abstract ideas, a farmer's ego-body is probably much smaller and weaker than that of an intellectual who is imprisoned in the logic systems constructed by himself and his peers. Actually there is nothing wrong about the logic system itself if it is taken as an expedient. But people attach to the logic system and take it as reality. Therefore, their

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concept of reality is twisted. A logic system should be supported by physical evidence and only used as a guideline for new experimentation. When people find that their logic system is incompatible with new findings, it is the logic system that they should modify or demolish. And they will find that a new logic system is formulated. This method of reasoning implies that the physical or real world itself is the ultimate, true logic system. Thus, any system which truly represents the physical world must be logical. And any system which has internal contradictions cannot represent the ultimate truth of the physical world because the real world has no contradictions. A system with internal contradictions is, at most, an approximation. This kind of observation is in keeping with the scientific spirit.

If you live in a system which contains internal contradictions, your life is bound to be full of anxiety, affliction, and pain. Stop and examine yourself, how many times do you apply a self-contradictory system in your daily living? Do you apply one standard for yourself and another one for others? One for yourself and one for your children? If you do, this is contradictory and it causes anxiety and affliction.

The ego-body is formed by false views and deviant thoughts. They are not isolated but interrelated to each other because all of them are rooted in our mind, which is our inner universe. If a deviant thought is isolated, it is not in our inner universe; if it is in the inner universe, it is not isolated. Therefore, if we can demolish one of our false views and deviant thoughts without leaving any residue, theoretically, all of our false views will then be demolished. But this is not a practical approach because we do not know all the interrelations among the false views and deviant thoughts in our mind. As an expedient of cultivation, these false views have been grouped into the following four categories:

- **Taking Words as the Reality.**
- **Taking a Part as the Whole.**
- **Taking Me-and-mine as an Absolute Reference.**
- **Taking Time as an Absolute.**

Let us examine each category in detail.

2.1 Taking Words as the Reality

Names, labels, titles, etc., are chosen to represent things, persons, events, and functions for communication. In science, there exists, for most cases, precise rules for distinguishing between the word and the entity which the word represents. Thus, there is no serious problem understanding the difference between the two. But words which people use in daily life do cause trouble and confusion because there is no precise rule of definition. Even if there is a rule of definition, this rule changes from person to person, and from time to time. There are words which are used as titles to represent a person's educational background or financial status. They are very troublesome, and a cultivator should be aware of them.

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For example, if a man thinks of himself as a scholar and is respected as such for his scholarship, he will have difficulty adjusting himself when he loses the characteristics which the word “scholarship” represents. This case is one of the simplest because only one person is involved; but this case is also a difficult situation to correct because we all want to be “good”. Once you become a scholar, you want to remain one forever. Once you are influential, you want to remain so forever. Once you are told that you are beautiful, you want to remain beautiful forever. When you finally realize that what you want is unattainable, you get frustrated or depressed.

There are collective names which represent a group of people with common characteristics, like the terms lower, middle, and upper class. These names are strange and false because they are born from the internal contradictions that exist in a person’s mind. Let us take a strata from the “social class” as an example to clarify this point. A person of the middle class who searches for a higher social class tries, on one hand, to depart from one group of people called group P (poor). On the other hand, he tries to gain the approval of another group of people called group R (rich). He consciously and subconsciously assigns certain characteristics to the people in each group. Let us call these characters P* and R*, respectively. Anyone who has the characteristics of P* is classified in P, and similarly anyone who has the characteristics of R* is in R. This reasoning sounds clear and logical. But, actually, it is false in theory and confusing in practice. We all know that a person is much more complex compared to, for example, a material body. Any scientist in mechanics knows that no one is able to define a material body in scientific precision. Then, how can anyone define a human being? Therefore, such a scheme for classification is fundamentally false. And, in practice, since the people in the two groups are not fixed, the one who strives to improve his social class is bound to be unhappy and confused because, from time to time, he finds that some people he disliked becomes those he admires and others he admired becomes those he dislikes. How confusing! As a matter of fact, what do we mean by social class? Is it just a term with no real or definite content? Yet, how many people are driven crazy by that term?

It may be that you have never been trapped in the confusion of identifying with one social class or another. However, if you have, after the above explanation, you may be enlightened and not be trapped by it any more. But you must be careful because there are numerous such traps in all societies; some may even have very attractive names. The diploma which you are proud of is a trap. The honors and praises you have received or just the pleasant words you hear every day are all traps if you attach to them. You may not be able to stop the honors and praises from coming in, but you can stop attaching to them. A Ch’an cultivator must be able to distinguish the name of something from the reality it represents. Every time you hear a word, you should always ask yourself, “What is the definition of that word?” If the definition is not clear, do not let the word leave a false image in your mind because overlooking a minor image, may seem harmless at the beginning, but it will grow into a false notion and a false logic system which will eventually put you into a mental prison. You will lose your freedom because of your carelessness.

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2.2 Taking a Part as the Whole

Taking a part as the whole can be best illustrated by an example. When a lusty old man looks at a young girl, Miss K, and exclaims, "She is beautiful!", this statement is based on two pieces of information: (A) The exposed part of Miss K's physical body which is only a part of her body's boundary. (B) The period of observation which is only a part of the time of Miss K's whole life span. If the old man takes an anatomical analysis or just thinks of her bones and excrements, he will hesitate to say that she is beautiful. If it takes the old man ten years to say one letter of the above exclamation, he will change his mind before he finishes the sentence. You may think that this way of looking at a young girl is too scientific and lacks romance. That is correct. But you have to ask and answer the question, "Can any romantic imagination or fantasy lead to truth or any scientific law?" Does any scientific law contain romance as an element? We all know that scientific knowledge, which represents the truth of the physical world, is accumulated wisdom of all people over a long time. If there is any way which will lead to truth, it is the scientific way. Ch'an is the scientific way which will lead us to the truth of our minds and our hearts, the truth of our inner universe. When you are able to look at your external and internal environments from a scientific point of view, you are a Ch'an cultivator. When a Ch'an cultivator examines his mind and heart by a scientific approach, he follows the Way, the way which all Buddhas have walked through.

A Ch'an cultivator searches for the ultimate truth of his own self-nature, he cannot afford to take a part as the whole because that is only part of the truth. There is no partial truth, nor can truth be a temporal event. Therefore, we should examine everything to which we are attached to see if it is only a part of the whole. If it is, we must find the whole. When we find the whole, we will realize that there is not one thing in this mundane world, and all worlds, which we need to dwell on. Our own Heart is the complete universe; it is self-sufficient, pure and clear, luminous and all-knowing. There is no pain, no anxiety, no affliction, no birth and death.

2.3 Taking Me-and-mine as an Absolute Reference

A person's environment can be considered as a collection of material bodies, living beings, events, and the relationships (dharma) among them. By definition, any part of the environment is called a mark. When we confront a mark, we evaluate and make judgments according to our own limited knowledge. The result of such judgments is partition and classification; and hence, the principle of dualism is established. Good or bad, sage or common label each mark. These identifications are treated as final and absolute. Many of us never realize that our judgment is conditional and its truth is relative to our own limited knowledge as a reference, and that even our own reference changes with time. We have omitted the references for all our judgments in our entire lives. Therefore, we think that our judgment has to be the best, the truth. This is what is meant by taking me-and-mine as an absolute reference. As Ch'an cultivators we must completely abolish such a notion. There is no conditional truth

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which can be ultimate and long lasting.

Before a cultivator makes a judgment, he should first ask himself: Is it really necessary to make such a judgment? If it is not necessary, he shouldn't make one. It is surprising to observe that many judgments, if not all, made during a coffee break and daily conversations are unnecessary. If one has to make a judgment because of his profession, he must realize that the judgment he makes is only a measure relative to a particular reference which happens to be his own. And this reference is simply one's thought-configuration which changes with time. That is, judgment is relative by definition. When one finds his judgment controversial, he should accept other's thought-configuration as valid as his own. Judgment is simply a response of one's thought-configuration to a mark. Since different people have different thought-configurations, different judgments about the same mark are bound to result. This is normal and as it should be. A person doesn't need to be defensive when he finds that another's judgment is against his own. If he takes an attitude of understanding, he will find that he has saved himself many frustrations.

A Ch'an cultivator should understand the sources of the formation of the notion of me-and-mine. Its formation has an obvious reason. Since a mundane person firmly attaches to his physical body and even takes it to be what he is, he sees himself as completely separate from other people. The notion of "self" and "others" is naturally born in his mind. For survival, security, and a longer and better existence in this physical world, he tries to increase his circle of influence so that he can manipulate the environment according to his own needs. When one confronts a mark and classifies it as good or favorable, a positive emotional response is produced such as admiration, desire to possess, or a feeling of friendship. On the other hand, if he sees a mark and classifies it as bad or unfavorable, a negative emotional response is produced in his mind such as repulsion or hostility. These types of emotion become strong forces isolating him from others. He always thinks that this is me and this is mine. Hence, the concept of me-and-mine is firmly planted in his mind.

The simplest way to remove the notion of me-and-mine is to strengthen his effort to search for the truth. A Ch'an cultivator only searches for the ultimate truth. Hence, anything which is not true should be discarded without any hesitation and reservation. Furthermore, he should not make judgments on any unessential matters. Judgment is simply a response of one's thought-configuration; the thought-configuration changes with time, so does the judgment. Therefore, judgment is an event or a mark, not something permanent. One who searches for the ultimate nature should not attach to any mark; otherwise, he can never find it.

Since the intrinsic nature embraces all dharmas and has no partiality, a Ch'an cultivator should constantly examine his views and thoughts to remove all those which are produced by the notion of me-and-mine, self-and-others. And in a deeper state of cultivation, a Ch'an cultivator should not have any view and thought which are the products of the principle of dualism.

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2.4 Taking Time as an Absolute

Most people may never think of the real meaning of time in their lives; instead, they take it as an absolute quantity registered by the clock. This is the Newtonian point of view which is formed from the observations of the external physical world by the five senses. Since people depend on the five senses as major instruments to gain knowledge, they take the absoluteness of time as an eternal law. It is known that the measurement of time is obtained by comparing two events with a known periodic motion. If there were no periodic motion, then time would not have much meaning. Therefore, the choice of the referential periodic motion which is used to measure time is very critical.

In science, the time reference is the periodic motion in the external world, say a pendulum. But one must realize that periodic motion alone does not give any meaning of time if he has no memory. Thus, the thought-configuration plays an indispensable role. As far as the thought-configuration is concerned, the events which are used as the time reference are not those which happened in the external world but those which occur in one's own mind. The events in the mind are of two kinds: The apparent events and the deduced events. Corresponding to an external event, the apparent event is the direct image occurred in the mind through the five senses; it is like a xerox copy. While deduced events are those which correspond to the apparent event and are obtained through the sixth sense by a mental mapping according to one's logic system, or process of association or just habit. Since the mental mapping system which maps the apparent event into the deduced events cannot be clearly defined, the deduced events are numerous and undependable. They are, in most cases, illusory and deviant.

Because there are many relations between the external events and the deduced ones, the inner world formed by all deduced events is thus false and full of contradictions. Due to these contradictions, the energy body is distorted and strained. Such distortions introduce mental problems: anxiety and depression, to mention a few as examples. Furthermore, they affect the physical body, particularly, the nervous system and then the endocrine system. As a consequence of these internal causes, mental and physical illnesses result. Thus, if we want to maintain a peaceful mind and healthy body, we should constantly examine our logic system so that there is no internal contradiction for all time and in all occasions. For this to be possible, the logic system must be independent of the external environment. In other words, the logic system must come from the intrinsic self-nature. This is the Ch'an logic system. When one reaches such a stage, his responses to the external events will be natural, spontaneous, and unobstructed. He is then an enlightened person.

In order to have the Ch'an logic system, a cultivator first has to reach the state of no logic system which is the state of no-thought. He must completely give up all his previous logic systems and learned knowledge. He should completely abolish his existing mental mapping system so that the false and illusory inner world of his mind will be destroyed and cleansed without any residue. Only when the mind reaches such a void state, can a new logic system find room to get in. Then the Ch'an logic system will naturally spring from one's intrinsic self-nature. This is the reason why non-thought and non-attachment are the mottos for Ch'an cultivators.

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Now let us consider the effect of time on a Ch'an cultivator. Time is measured by a sequence of events in the physical world which are assumed to be periodic. These periodic events form a sequence of apparent events in the mind. Furthermore, these apparent events form a sequence of deduced events as the final mental time reference. There are two errors in this mental time reference.

The first error occurs when the order of the events of the mental time reference may be preserved, but the scales between two deduced events are exceedingly distorted. For example, a happy time is always too short and a sad time, too long.

The second error affects us more deeply than the first. Since the thought-configuration is a surface wave in a four dimensional space, all the events in the mind occur on a hyper-plane. Hence, there is no past and no future. And consequently, the present is only a name without a fixed location. When one attaches to a particular event, he uses this particular event to divide the mental time reference into three parts: the past, the present, and the future. He takes these three periods of time as real. He recalls events in the past with enjoyment or regret. And he also dreams of the future as good or bad. A Ch'an cultivator cultivates his own mind, not others, to find the ultimate truth, so how can he allow such a false notion to stay in his mind? Therefore, a cultivator should not recall the past, nor dream of the future. He should completely abolish the false notion of the three periods of time. One's mind is not in the past, nor in the future. It is only in the present. Without the past and the future, where does the present come from?

Since we have discussed four of the major false views and deviant thought that form the ego body, let's now discuss shedding the ego body. We have contaminated our intrinsic self-nature for a long time with lust and desires, and craving for satisfaction from the outside world. We cannot expect to shed the ego-body completely within a short period of time without a determined effort. But on the other hand, one should not be too eager to shed the ego-body without an understanding either because the very eagerness is only the yeast for the formation of the ego-body. And the eagerness may also cause the cultivator to enter into a depressed state and to withdraw completely from the cultivation. Eagerness may even cause the cultivator some psychological and physiological difficulties.

In the first phase of cultivation, a Ch'an cultivator usually has a period in which he shows uneasiness and doubt; he may even lose his temper. This period is transitory and may be called the period of uncertainty. Its cause is: Due to cultivation, his mental mapping system has been modified; yet, it has not reached an unobstructed and stable state. On one hand, he takes pride in his new system, but on the other, he still resides in his old system because of mental habit. This contradictory mental situation produces this new syndrome of uncertainty. A cultivator should be aware of it as a normal phenomenon and not fear it. The syndrome will gradually fade away. The period of uncertainty, short or long, may occur in any phase of cultivation. During this unpleasant period, one should strengthen his faith and purify any false view and defiled thought in his mind. One must realize that a truth seeker is always alone and sometimes lonely. But in a certain depth of cultivation, he will find that the feeling of loneliness does not occur in his mind at all because loneliness does not have a nature. Anything

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which has no nature is a mark; a mark cannot last long.

Once beyond the period of uncertainty, a cultivator will feel content and relaxed. His craving for material gain, fame and prestige, and social influence will gradually diminish to a degree that he thinks he is free from the bondage of desires. However, his desire may change directions, searching for satisfaction in other ways. He may develop a new hobby, for example. Particularly, he will find that it is very easy to doze away his time and that his appetite for food and sex increases. When a person's profession and social functions do not bother him as much as before, it is just right for a nap at almost anytime. With the physical vigor after the nap, there is nothing more natural than having a good dinner, and then a little harmless sex. These behaviors do not violate the moral standard of the society; and just because of this, this state is more dangerous. A cultivator may be drowned, without even being aware of it, in the sea of desires which are closely related to the physical body. If one sheds his ego-body on one hand and attaches more firmly to his physical body, how can he be enlightened? Now we are entering the second phase of cultivation -- shedding the physical body.

3. Phase II of Cultivation -- Shedding the Physical Body

A worldly person takes his physical body as the essential entity for his existence. If the body does not function any more, he believes that he dies. Because of this false belief, all his activities are performed with the physical body as the center, protecting it when it is in danger and comforting it when it is sick. He tries all possible means to entertain his physical body through the five senses. His eyes like to see enjoyable and beautiful things. His ears like to hear good music and compliments. His nose likes to smell pleasant odors. His tongue likes to taste good flavors. And his hands and body like to touch pleasant mollifying objects. A person is not himself when manipulated by his five senses, but is like a prisoner living in a sea of desires.

To satisfy his desires, he has to be aggressive toward the outside world in order to bring sufficient wealth into his possession and to gain enough power to influence others to work for him. But all that one acquires is never sufficient, nor enough because the desires are endless and the outside world either does not have enough or does not want to furnish it. The natural consequences are anxiety, frustration, and anger, then arguments, fights, and finally wars.

When a person is intensely greedy for something, he cannot see that there are many other people who are wanting just the same thing. When he succeeds in his pursuits, he becomes more greedy. When he fails, he becomes angry. With greed filling his mind, he can only see the things he is craving for. He is a very narrow-minded person; a narrow-minded person cannot see the truth, nor the whole picture. His wisdom is limited. With anger filling a person's mind, he cannot think rationally and wisely. One who cannot think rationally and wisely is stupid by definition. That is why greed, anger, and stupidity are called the 3-poisons -- poisons to our wisdom. Just these 3-poisons alone cause us to drift away from our intrinsic, pure, and all-knowing nature.

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Most people attach to marks, particularly to their physical bodies and defiled views. Marks are parts of the whole environment which is changing all the time. If a person attaches to them, he has to change continuously to be compatible with them. A perfect compatibility is unobtainable since he cannot predict the changes with precise accuracy. On the other hand, a person's habit and inertia will not allow him to change as required by the environment without discomforts. Thus, the feeling of insecurity is created. Even worse, he often feels he has lost himself.

The reason for the incompatibility has a deeper meaning. The human being has a self-nature which is intrinsic and invariant. No matter how strong a person's desire is for things in the outside world, this self-nature is always trying to draw him back to his original intrinsic state and to keep him there unchanged. These two opposing forces, self-nature and desire, put the person into a state of constant conflict and contradiction. Contradiction is just another name for anxiety and agony. It is clear that the only way to remove such anxiety and agony is to demolish the 3-poisons and return to one's own nature. A cultivator should thus control and guide his desires into the right channel.

From the physical point of view, we can say that desire is a type of energy flux. One should reverse the direction of the desires toward his self-nature, instead of allowing them to flow outward to the world. This is the way to preserve his life energy, thus his life. When one cultivates in this way to a certain depth, he will have no outflow, and his wisdom will start shining. In such a state, he will be astonished to find that he is compatible with any environment. Why? Because the environment is formed in the mind by dharmas like a net, dharmas have no self-nature. One who is enlightened to his own nature cannot be obstructed by dharmas which are not in the nature.

The 3-poisons, greed, anger, and stupidity, are not separate. They form a closely linked chain which locks a human being from complete freedom. If a person has one of them, he has them all. If he eradicates one of them without leaving any residue, then he eradicates them all. A person can start his cultivation by lessening his greed in general, and controlling his anger in particular. People are greedy for many things. But wealth and sex are two major objectives in people's searching. Wealth can bring all the physical enjoyments and sex can put one into a state of physical ecstasy, forgetting all unpleasant things temporarily. Searching for wealth and sex is a firm expression of a person's strong attachment to his physical body. With such a strong attachment, he cannot be enlightened to his original mind. Therefore, in order to detach from the physical body, a cultivator should not search for wealth, sex, or any other object for satisfying his sensual desires.

When a cultivator lessens his desire, he mitigates his attachment to his physical body. Up to a certain degree of reducing the attachment he will see his own physical body just as a corpse. It is a corpse; this is true, not false. But everyone has to prove it to himself. Otherwise, they are just words with no reality, having no actual effect on his cultivation. And it is difficult to believe, though it is true. Prove it. It is your own life, and it is also your own problem of life-and-death.

A Ch'an cultivator must realize that greed is a relative word in the sense that it requires a reference. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines greed as "a rapacious desire for more than

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one needs or deserves, as of goods, wealth, or power.” To know which thought or conduct is a greedy one, one has to choose a reference to compare it with. It is greedy relative to one reference and it may not be greedy relative to another one. For a Ch'an cultivator, it is not how greedy he is but if he is greedy or not. Thus, a Ch'an cultivator should judge his thought and conduct with a sequence of references, each one being more strict than the previous one. Let us call this sequence of references a “tightening ring”. Correct every conduct according to a chosen “tightening” reference; this method will not only help remove all the grasping, greedy behavior, but also the greedy thoughts and their very root -- desire.

One may ask, “Is Ch'an cultivation itself a desire?” This is a commonly asked question raised by those who do not really want to lessen their greed. To this question, there are many answers which depend on the questioner's motivation and his notion of the word desire. I will not make a list of all possible answers but instead answer it by a question, “Do you want to cultivate Ch'an to get rid of the birth-death problem?” If you do not want to cultivate at this time, I will wait for you another year, ten years, or even to your next life until you decide to cultivate. If you do want to cultivate, cultivate according to the doctrines taught by all Buddhas and Budhisattvas. It is your own problem and your own decision. Why do you ask other people about such an important life issue? When one cultivates Ch'an to a deeper state, he will feel and know all the time that there is an internal force driving him from one state to another. At one state, he does not know exactly what the next state will be. But with the guidance of the internal force he has no doubt, no hesitation about his destination. This inner guide force is so distinct and natural that no Ch'an cultivator can be misled after he has passed a certain stage. Because this force does not come from the outside but from his own self-nature, just like a wanderer who begins the journey back home, he knows where he is going.

Ch'an cultivators who search for enlightenment are not the only ones who should reduce their desires. Everyone who just wants a happy life and a peaceful mind should also cultivate to reduce their desires. Otherwise, a happy life and a peaceful mind are unobtainable because on one hand desire is quite arbitrary, having no upper limit and no curfew which is impossible to satisfy. On the other hand, the attainment of the objectives or goals which one desires is strongly governed and constrained by the external environment. Therefore, one who has more desires is bound to be more unhappy. For this simple reason, desire should be curbed by everyone, Ch'an cultivator or not.

Besides the craving desires for wealth and sex which are closely related to the physical body, two others should also be listed: sleeping and food. These two are necessary for maintaining a healthy body; but many times, they are overdone. A Ch'an cultivator should be an analytical dietician who plans his menu only from a point of view of nutrition and health. Regardless of the tastes of the food, a cultivator should keep the amount of intake fixed and vary it only according to the requirement of his physical activities. As far as sleeping is concerned, no specific rule can be given. But with a little alertness, anyone is able to discriminate the case when he is physically tired and falls into sleep from the other case when he just has nothing to do and dozes. As one cultivates into a deeper state, he will find that he breathes

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very lightly. And his breath may even stop completely during the meditation. This indicates that his metabolic process is slowing down or stops. This is because his deviant thoughts and craving desires have been diminished; and consequently, the tremulous activities of all the cells have also been diminished accordingly. Therefore, his metabolic requirement is lowered. At this time, a Ch'an cultivator can start to reduce his sleeping time and the amount of food intake. But he should always be careful so that his physical body will not be harmed. The physical body is just like a car, though it is an important one. Misuse it, it is a burden; use it wisely, it gives us a chance to become a Buddha.

4. Phase III of Cultivation -- Shedding the Energy Body

The energy body is a conglomerate of thoughts. Thought is born from the environmental stimuli, and its existence is maintained by continuous attachment. If one can detach from the environment, particularly from his ego-body and physical body, he will feel no stimulus, and hence have no corresponding thought. If he has no thought under all conditions and at all times, he has completely shed his energy body. He is then enlightened to his mind and thus, a Bodhisattva. But, in reality, this usually does not happen because one does not know when he has completely shed his ego-body and physical body. When he thinks that he has shed his ego-body, physical body and energy body, yet he is not enlightened, it is because the minute thoughts accumulated from the past lives are hidden deeply in the eighth consciousness and cannot be easily removed from it. When this happens, one should search for a well learned teacher for proper diagnosis and prescription. For those who are not fortunate to have a good teacher, the following two methods are very beneficial for all cultivators: (1) remorse and repentance, and (2) reciting mantras.

Remorse is a deep regret for one's misconduct and defiled views in all his lives, though he may even not know what they are. Repentance is the expression given or conduct done in compensation for his mistakes. Remorse and repentance are not separate but two phases of one entity. Remorse without repentance is neither deep nor sincere. Repentance without remorse is false and useless. Therefore, remorse and repentance should be written as remorse-repentance, rather than two separate words. Remorse-repentance, which is a manifestation of the intrinsic human nature, distinguishes us from other animals. It should be recognized that remorse-repentance is a strong centripetal force with which a cultivator can detach himself from marks and return to his own origin -- the Heart. Also, remorse-repentance is a collection of thoughts which can remove or nullify the minute thoughts of stupidity in the subconscious accumulated as a result of the misconduct and defiled views in all of one's lives.

We may also simply define remorse as finding out the roots of our mistakes and repentance as determining to ensure that the same mistakes will not happen again.

There are many ways of repentance, but the best one can only be worked out by the cultivator himself. The following are just a few examples which have been practiced by many Ch'an cultivators: (1) bowing to the Buddhas, (2) reciting sutras, (3) practicing austerity, and (4) practicing giving with no

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mark.

When one bows, he should bow from his heart and back to his heart. Only through one's own heart, can he recognize the Buddha in himself. For, there is no real Buddha outside of one's heart. Do not ask for anything. Bow without any desire and any thought, even the thought of bowing. This is no-thought bowing. No-thought bowing is pure bowing and sincere bowing. Only when one bows with pure and sincere bowing, will there be a response from the Buddhas. There are many reasons for bowing to Buddhas. The first is to plant good roots for affinity with the Buddhas. The second, is to reduce one's arrogance. And the third, is to do the best exercise for a healthy body.

The main purpose of reciting sutras is to increase one's wisdom and hence, reduce one's confusion. Therefore, recitation without understanding is useless for this purpose. But understanding without practicing the learned principles is only an intellectual game which is toyed with by the so-called Ch'an scholars and has no use for Ch'an cultivators. The principles uttered from a scholar's mouth are called "oral ch'an" or "mouth ch'an." Oral ch'an can make one a scholar but can never lead him into enlightenment. Thus, for enlightenment it is not how many sutras one can recite, but how many principles from the sutras one has understood, practiced in his daily living, and incorporated in his view of life as a whole.

According to Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of the Ch'an School of Sudden Teaching, monk Shan Syung could recite all sutras in the twelve divisions, yet he still had to follow the birth-death cycle. Only true understanding and sincere practicing will produce a real force which can drive the cultivator towards the gate of enlightenment. Do not misunderstand me by thinking that practicing means accomplishment. If one practices a principle which he learned from a sutra and feels that he has accomplished something, he completely misunderstands the sutra. Otherwise, if that is what he is doing it must not come from the Buddha's sutra. Buddha has never accomplished anything. He has neither saved anyone nor spoken any Dharma. Viewed externally, Buddhas and Budhisattvas are busy doing things and speaking Dharmas, yet they do not have a slight thought of doing and speaking. The doing and speaking are just the natural responses of the causes and conditions, not intentional actions. To the ultimate, all things are just compositions of nothing. Dharmas have no nature and hence, no existence.

Practicing austerity is mainly to remove the notion of self, the physical and the conceptual habits which are the accumulated results of the attachment to one's physical body and environment. What kind of austerity one should practice depends completely on the individual. I am even reluctant to suggest the practice of austerity because, without a thoughtful mind, such a practice may turn out to be just a waste of time and torture. If one does want to practice austerity, he should keep in mind the following question: Is such a practice beneficial to others? If the answer is negative, choose another kind of austerity practice. After one has made up his mind and started the practice, he should never let anything interfere with the practice even if he has to give up his life.

Repentance is just a natural consequence of remorse. If there is no remorse, there is no genuine repentance. Furthermore, if there is remorse, there should be repentance. Otherwise, the remorse is not

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genuine. Yet remorse is a deep feeling; it may occur in different manners and at any phase of cultivation. As a matter of fact, many Ch'an cultivators pass through a blue period at the beginning of their cultivation when they actually find out that the real world is much larger than the one they knew before. During this blue period, cultivators may have the feeling of worthlessness because of their past mistakes, and want to devote their lives solely to others. Some may weep and some cry. This is a sign which indicates the change of the cultivator's temperament.

Besides remorse-repentance, reciting mantras is another effective way to cleanse the minute thoughts of the subconscious. Just as waves can nullify other waves, mantras can neutralize other thought-waves. A mantra is also a direct vehicle, a carrier of the message asking for help from the Buddha who owns and protects the mantra. However, a cultivator should not ask for personal gains, nor depend on a mantra for enlightenment because such a selfish and dependent characteristic will blind one's wisdom eye. Searching for the ultimate truth, a cultivator has to be independent and unselfish.

When one has selected a mantra to recite, he should recite it on a regular basis. Otherwise, the neutralizing action of the mantra does not have a chance to develop its full power. Regular recitation is also a test of one's sincerity. If one recites a mantra 108 times when he has nothing to do and misses a couple days when he is occupied by other mundane matters, he does not have much merit. For he is not really reciting a mantra but is merely entertaining himself with the recitation.

How deeply the recitation of a mantra goes into the mind can be tested by altering the environment of recitation. Try to recite the mantra silently in a noisy place, at a disturbing time, or in an emergency situation. As a routine test, one should try to recite the mantra when he is very tired and sleepy. If he can recite it in such a sleepy condition, his recitation has gone deeply into the subconscious. Recitation in a sleepy condition is not only a test, but also a very effective method of cultivation. When one is in a sleepy condition, his wandering thoughts on mundane matters are diminished. In such a condition, if he can only subdue his desire for sleep, he may reach the state of no-thought and no-dwelling. He will then have a taste of Ch'an. This taste is so wonderful that one cannot find it in any other dishes.

5. Synthesis of Ch'an Cultivation of the Sudden School

Ch'an cultivation has been separated into three phases. In each phase, effort has been made to detach from a particular body so that one can be elevated to another body which is more real in the sense that it is closer to his intrinsic self-nature. However, one must realize that such a separation is just an expedient for understanding. In actuality, the ego-body, physical body, energy body, and the mind are always "mingled" together; they act and function together as one unit which is called a human being. Therefore, if one can shed any one, say the ego-body, he has shed all the others and is enlightened. For this reason, a Ch'an cultivator need not learn all the doctrines about Ch'an; he only has to practice the essential ones. These essential doctrines are the doctrines of the Ch'an School of Sudden Teaching which was established by Bodhidharma, who is honored as the First Patriarch of the School. They were

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handed down through five generations to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. From Sakyamuni Buddha through twenty-eight generations down to Bodhidharma, and then five generations to Hui Neng, they all were transmitted from Heart to Heart. This is the Heart Seal, and the process is the Heart Dharma. The Heart Dharma is the essential Dharma, the Buddha Dharma. Only the Buddha Dharma is the real Dharma and all others are just expedients which have been established to fit people's born-nature and their different backgrounds.

The following paragraphs are the essential doctrine of the Sudden School as I have perceived and understood it. This is the guide which I have used in the road of my cultivation and it is presented here for reference. Each cultivator should write his own motto, because this is a prescription to cure one's own illness in his mind. Different cultivators have different illnesses. However, all prescriptions should contain the essential points: Do not attach to marks, external and internal, and do not attach to the principle of dualism. Other prescriptions are just added to help the cultivator reach this goal or to cure his individual illness. The following is my motto:

- **If one wants to practice the Heart Dharma, what he has to do is to perceive his own mind and reside in his own heart. The Heart is the universe which contains all dharmas. To the environment, do not attach to any mark. In the mind, depart from the principle of dualism."**
- **See a sage as a commoner, and see a commoner as a sage. The sage and commoner are different, yet their original natures are the same. If one attaches Marks, he is a commoner. If one resides in his original self-nature, he is a sage. Once the notions of sage and commoner are dissolved, there is no boundary where one can reside. The ultimate intrinsic nature has no name, even the name of Buddha is just for identification purposes.**
- **The environment and marks are changing all the time just like dreams and lightening. But the ultimate intrinsic nature is always the same. Therefore, when the situation is good, one need not be happy; and when the situation is bad, one need not be sad. The good and the bad are established relative to each other; they alter with people and time. Since they are not the intrinsic nature, how can a Ch'an cultivator afford to attach to them! When facing a harsh situation, just treat it with a peaceful mind. When all obstacles are overcome, Buddha will appear in the heart.**
- **Handling all matters to his best abilities, a cultivator has no need to worry about the success or failure which is determined by the conditions. If he does not attach to the principle of dualism, nor take a part as the whole, there is no success nor failure, no sage nor commoner. One can realize his intrinsic self-nature in a flash of thought. When he recognizes that thing, it is not a thing. And that thing even has no repugnance for the sensual objects.**
- **If anyone wants to walk this Buddha road, give him a hand. If no one wants to, it is just not the right time.**

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6. *Ch'an Sitting*

The goal of Ch'an cultivation is to reach the state of no-thought. Only after one has reached the null thought-configuration, will the wisdom of the intrinsic nature be revealed. Ch'an cultivation is to improve one's understanding so that he will detach from all marks. It has nothing to do about one's postures: walking, stopping, sitting, and reclining. But through many people's experimentation, it has been found that sitting in a quiet place is the most expedient way to begin one's cultivation. It is like a bucket of water which will be disturbed when the bucket is set in motion. In this disturbed state, one looks at the water and cannot even see his face. When the bucket is still, the water will soon be still. One can then see his face clearly in the still water, if there is light of course. It is the same for Ch'an sitting. However, one should not think that Ch'an cultivation is just Ch'an sitting. If one just sits alone, isolated from others, he may easily enter a state which is called the undifferentiated or stupid emptiness. Such a cultivator may be freed from anxiety and afflictions, but he lacks wisdom and compassion. If a person who lacks wisdom and compassion could become a Buddha, then all rocks and dead wood would be Buddhas. Furthermore, the stupid emptiness cannot produce any dharma. Ch'an cultivators are warned not to enter such stupid emptiness by the Sixth Patriarch, saying, "Good Knowing Fellows, when you hear my explanation of emptiness, do not become attached to emptiness. It is of utmost importance not to attach to emptiness. If you sit still with an empty mind, you will attach to the undifferentiated emptiness."

Before starting a session of sitting, one should have a right mind which is no mind or no thought. Particularly, one should neither expect any event to happen in the sitting nor ask for any spiritual power. One should not bring any problem he has not solved into the sitting and hope that the problem may be solved. On the contrary, he should put down all his relationships with people and his roles in society. He should just feel and perceive himself as an independent entity, an entire universe. Ch'an sitting is a complete experiment which includes everything needed in the experimentation. The cultivator is both the subject of the experiment and the observer too. Thus, he should not try to control or manipulate the experiment because any manipulation will change the setting of the experimentation.

During the sitting, one just has to let everything go and observe whatever may happen. Whatever happens is the truth which needs no theory, no logic, no rationale, and no philosophical interpretation. Theory and interpretation can be constructed, if one desires to do so, after the sitting, but absolutely not during it.

The place of sitting should be a quiet location where the cultivator feels secure. The place should have plenty of fresh air and be comfortable. If one intends to stay in the place for a long time, then meals and lodging must be well arranged and prepared so that these matters will not deviate the cultivator's attention.

With a right mind and in a quiet place, one can sit upright on a cushion in either a half-lotus or a full-lotus posture. The body can be balanced more easily if the cushion is slightly sloped forward. For a half-lotus posture, pull the right foot close to the body and put it under the thigh of the left leg, and

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then move the left foot on top of the thigh of the right leg. For a full-lotus posture, first complete the half lotus posture. While keeping the left foot in place, pull the right foot out and put it on top of the left thigh. After the posture is set, one should sway a little and then move forward and backward with a diminishing magnitude until he reaches the most comfortable position. Then, put the right (left) hand on top of the other with both palms upward, resting them naturally on top of the legs, and pulling them close to the body. Keep the spine straight but do not overdo it. Keep the head in a natural position, neither up nor down. Now with the mouth slightly closed, let the tongue gently touch the palate. And finally close the eyes gradually without any strain.

At the beginning of a Ch'an sitting, the mind is usually restless. Many forgotten things are bubbling up and it seems that there is no way to stop them. This is a natural phenomenon because during the sitting, the direct stimuli of the five senses from the environment are reduced, thus the mind has more freedom to process its stored information. When this happens, do not force the thoughts to stop, nor try to rationalize them. Just observe where they come from, where they go, and how they change. Give it time, all thoughts will fade away. Then the mind will clear up. At that time, you will see, actually see, the light shining from your own self-nature.

Contrary to the restlessness of the mind, one may fall into a drowsy state which is very dangerous. In this state, one feels relaxed and pleasant. He may mistake this state as a natural state of Ch'an, which it is not. To correct it, take one or two of the following measures:

- 1) Slowly, deeply, and consciously breathe in and out a few times until the drowsiness is over.**
- 2) With your eyes still closed, try to look in front of you about 15 feet away.**
- 3) Recite a mantra or the favorite section of a Sutra.**

The above methods are not only useful when one is drowsy, but also valuable tools when the cultivator has many wandering thoughts which he cannot put at rest.

During the sitting, one will experience some events which may be even out of his imagination. Because of different karmas, no two cultivators will experience exactly the same adventure. Therefore, no one should anticipate the events in the Ch'an sitting. When a cultivator sees some special, and sometimes, shocking events and he does not know how to handle them, the following is the best motto: No-thought and no-attachment. He must remember that he is an independent experimenter. And, in time, he will be an independent, wise, and compassionate person -- a Buddha.

Precepts

A law of life: Life is non-conservative and irreversible.

Non-conservative means: the result is the natural and unique product of the living process; in other words, the process determines the result. Different processes will lead to different results, though many times the differences may not be distinguishable to a naive mind on a superficial level. If one wants to be a millionaire, not just a million dollars but how he gets it will make him a different millionaire.

Irreversible means: any part of the living process cannot be erased without leaving a trace of the erasing. If one makes a mistake, he cannot just forget it or hide it away. The mistakes must be compensated for in other ways.

If this law is not valid, then all of the efforts in which people strive to be good and unselfish lose their foundation and meanings. And particularly, if there was, is, and will be a sage, then he is the most stupid person in the world. The sage does not know that he is a sage. People respect and honor him so that they call him a sage. If the sage were stupid, then all these people would be stupid and confused, too. This is against the experimental reports in history; and more important, against what we know in our hearts. A sage must be a sage; though we may disagree about who is a real sage. Consequently, one must live his life in a right way. And any mistake he makes, he himself has to compensate and pay for it sooner or later. Different ways lead to different places. The way which will transform a man into a Buddha is Buddha's precepts.

There are many precepts: 250 bhiksu (male monk) precepts, 348 bhiksuni (female monk) precepts, ten major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts. Regardless of the different kinds of precepts, they are all based on and derived from the four cardinal precepts and the two protective precepts.

The four cardinal precepts are:

- 1. Do not kill, and do not have any intention to kill.**
- 2. Do not steal, and do not have any intention to steal.**
- 3. Do not engage in foolish speech, and do not have any intention to engage in foolish speech.**
- 4. Do not have sexual misconduct; do not have any intention to have sexual misconduct, and finally do not have sexual conduct.**

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The two protective precepts are:

- 1. Do not take any intoxicant which may cause physical and mental harm, and loss of rational ability.**
- 2. Do not gamble which may cause financial risks, indolence, and reliance on vices.**

Let us examine the rational bases of the six precepts. The First Cardinal Precept: "Do not kill, and do not have any intention to kill." At the first sight, you may think that you have observed this precept all your life because you have never killed anybody. But have you ever smashed the mosquito when he punctures your skin and sucks your blood? If you include the mosquitoes and other small animals in the precept, it may not be the case that you have observed the precept. Practicing this precept is practicing the compassion which is a fundamental element of self-nature. Do not think that a mosquito is too small to consider. As far as killing is concerned, there is no difference; the difference is in size and power. If you kill someone because he is weaker than you, then where is your compassion? You may defend yourself, saying that you kill him not because he is weaker but because he has caused you some harm, such as sucking your blood. This argument is not valid because, in the first place, if he weren't weak, you couldn't have killed him by the definition of "being not weak." It may be true that, if the mosquito had not sucked your blood, you would not have killed him. But in this case, your compassion is not tested and hence, questionable. Therefore, you should thank the mosquito for his kindness to give you an opportunity to practice your compassion. He is your teacher. Many of you may not agree with my reasoning and think that I have gone too far off. If you think this way, it is fine; but you are not a Ch'an cultivator. A Ch'an cultivator cultivates only the mind, his own mind. Thus, if you respect the mosquito as a teacher, he is a teacher and you have learned the lesson, regardless whether or not the mosquito thinks that he is your teacher. That is the mosquito's problem, not a Ch'an cultivator's.

The Second Cardinal Precept: "Do not steal, and do not have any intention to steal." Anyone, including those who steal, will agree with this precept when he talks about it with others. The message of this precept is very clear. Anything, if it is not yours, do not take it. If anyone questions me, "Have you observed this precept?" My answer is, "I did not observe it before September 9, 1977. This is the day when I vowed to take the Bodhisattva precepts. After that date, the thought of stealing has not occurred in my mind; yet I cannot, and need not to, make any conclusion because the karmic law will repay me according to what I have done."

The active aspect of this precept is giving: giving one's material possessions, Dharma knowledge, and even one's body. When practicing giving, one should have no discrimination about the receivers, and have no attachment to the action of giving which is only a dharma or function. If there is not a single thought of the giving in one's mind, then there cannot be any domain (giver) and range (receiver). Thus, both giver and receiver are empty. This is the no-mark giving. And only no-mark giving can yield real merit which will lead one to the road of enlightenment.

The Third Cardinal Precept: "Do not engage in foolish speech, and do not have any intention to

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engage in foolish speech". There are four types of foolish speech: lying, decorative speech, abusive speech, and double-tongued speech. There may be many excuses, but the root of the foolish speech is to cover up the truth and one's weakness, and to fortify his ego-body. Therefore, when one decides to shed his ego-body and to strengthen his search for truth, all types of foolish speech should be eliminated.

We all know that physical objects, for example, a material body, cannot be defined or faithfully described by words, either orally or in writing. Description can be designed only for a particular purpose. When that purpose changes, the description becomes false. The only true description of a physical object is no description. Therefore, for a Ch'an cultivator, the less he speaks, the better. If he has spoken all with no word, he has attained the ultimate truth.

The Fourth Cardinal Precept: "Do not have sexual misconduct; do not have any intention to have sexual misconduct, and finally do not have sexual conduct." The sexual misconduct means any sexual activity with anyone other than one's spouse. All precepts not only refer to actual conducts but also refer to thoughts. One must realize that conducts are the activities of his physical body, while thoughts are the activities of his energy-body. Thus, thoughts are also conducts, the conducts of the energy-body. To distinguish these two, we will call them the physical conducts and the thought-conducts. If one wants to shed his physical body, he has to purify his physical conducts and then detach from the purified conducts. Similarly, to shed the energy-body, he has to purify his thought-conducts and then detach from the purified conducts. This is the real meaning of the proverb which says, "Do with no conduct and think with no thought."

Thought-conduct will produce physical conducts when the conditions are mature. Therefore, keeping precepts all the time and in all conditions means that you will not violate them even by any thought-conduct. This is called "keeping a pure precept." To keep pure precepts is what a Ch'an cultivator should practice.

To keep pure precepts requires much effort in cultivation, it is particularly true for this fourth precept. In our modern society, if one expresses a thought of killing somebody, he will not obtain any sympathy or approval from his friends and relatives. But if he tells his friends that he has a sexual desire toward an attractive girl, they may just laugh it off, or even express the same wish. For this reason, a cultivator should guard this precept more strenuously than any other one. To shed the confinement of the physical body, one has to remove all the desires which are directly or indirectly related to it. Within all the desires, the sexual attraction is the strongest one, and it challenges a cultivator all the time. Sakyamuni Buddha once said, "If one person had two sexual desires, no one would be able to cultivate the eternal truth." I have to confess that I have difficulty to overcome only this one sexual desire. It is difficult but not impossible.

There is another reason for Ch'an cultivators to observe this precept with more effort. In the mundane world, desires and thoughts cannot be judged if they have not been expressed as conducts. But in the energy or spiritual world, thoughts are conducts and they will be judged accordingly. If one

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has many dirty ideas in his mind and thinks that no one knows about them, he assumes he need not pay for them. Then he mistakes a payment by installments for his thought misconducts as not paying. This is no mystery, but simply the natural consequence of the karmic law.

As one cultivates to a deeper stage, he may see strange scenery in the energy-world during his meditation. The most common one is the sexual attraction. This may be a trap or a test for Ch'an cultivators. When such an erotic scene appears, one should think of its impermanence just like the morning dew. Do not follow it, and do not attach to it. Then it will soon disappear.

The Protective Precepts:

- 1. Do not take any intoxicant which may cause physical and mental harm, and loss of rational ability.**
- 2. Do not gamble which may cause financial risks, indolence, and reliance on vices.**

One element of enlightenment is the revelation of the knowing-all and understanding-all wisdom of one's self-nature. How can a cultivator intoxicate his already confused mind? How can a cultivator gamble for his destination? Many intoxicants are served as catalysts to foster other wrong behaviors and transgressions. For example, alcohol is often used as an initiative for sexual misconduct.

Taking intoxicants and gambling indicate one's dependent and irresponsible character. The drinker or gambler is unsatisfied with his present situation, yet he has no incentive and no ability to change it; so he escapes from it. He gets intoxicated for temporary relief and gambles for a chance. Either person has made two basic mistakes. The first one is that he has attached to marks, his present situation. Anyone who fights with the outside world to satisfy his insatiable desires is bound to be disappointed; it is an impossible mission. The second mistake is that, when he finds out that it is impossible to satisfy himself, he goes on the wrong path. Instead of understanding the truth about himself, he escapes from it. This is due to his stupidity.

The four cardinal and the two protective precepts have been very briefly explained. If one cultivates his conducts according to these precepts in detail, he has laid out the way to enlightenment. This is the right way and the only sure way.

Experimental Results

Science has two parts: (1) theoretical rationalization and hypotheses, (2) experimental observations and verification. They are just like a person's two legs, separated at the lower parts but merged into one body at the upper level.

Ch'an is a science, and hence, it also has two parts. In this chapter, I will report particularly those experimental results of mine which strengthen my determination to tread the Buddha Way. These experimental results have reshaped my life toward a brighter direction, the direction of truth. If anyone has been helped by this book, let us join together heart to heart to help other human beings also cross the river of desires and the birth-death wheel.

A theoretician requires wisdom to abstract the common nature from the observations available to him. He does not and should not accept all observations because there might be bad ones. While an experimenter requires absolute honesty to report what he observes, he should never mix his observations with his interpretations. Thus, in this chapter, I will list my experimental results with no interpretation, no anticipation, and no prediction.

If I had to describe the motivation behind all of the activities in my life in a short sentence, I would say, "It is to search for the ultimate truth." Putting it another way, I want to improve or alter what I am doing to make my life more meaningful and beneficial to me and others. Particularly, I want to find the real purpose of life, not from a philosophical, but from a practical point of view. I would also like to have a set of sound rules which I can live by. These rules should not have internal contradictions; they should be flexible enough to meet the changes of the external world.

To search for the rules, I first studied Christianity with several Catholic priests and protestant ministers, and also discussed it with many Christian laity, young and old, naive and sophisticated. From many years of observations and experiences, I have made the following conclusions:

- 1) Most of the people who told me their principles do not live by the principles. They always quote directly from the Bible and lack independent thinking and personal experiences. In this group of people I have to exclude the Catholic priests whom I know.**
- 2) The principles they told me are just rules to believe, to accept, and to follow. And the system of rules contains many internal contradictions. Furthermore, the system promises many things after death but ignores the vast data of the people's present and direct experiences.**

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- 3) The system does not give any trace and method for one to verify what it is promised in this very life.**
- 4) The system provides no diagnosis and remedies for people's sufferings in this life.**

Observation 1) is not critical because it is probable that my sampling is not representative. On the other hand, I should practice the rules if they are right, regardless of other people's behavior. But the other three observations are unacceptable to me. If all kinds of books had to be burned and I could save only one kind, I, educated as a scientist and trained as an engineer, would have no hesitation to save scientific books. Not only because in the scientific books the truths are recorded, but also because in these books there are methods with which the truths can be tested by us directly or indirectly. Furthermore, the truths can yield some results beneficial to human life, this very life. Thinking along this way, I conclude that observations 2), 3), and 4) are incompatible with the scientific spirit. That is the reason why I was not, am not, and will not settle as a Christian even though I did try very hard to be one several times.

After the unsatisfactory search from the outside about the meaning of life, I returned back to myself and searched from the inside of my own mind. From 1973, I formed my own "religion"; I established my own principles, one after another, and tested them with my own conducts. All the principles are centered on the removal of selfishness and greedy desires. Whenever I had a chance, I always tried to sell them to my friends in the office and at technical conferences. The general picture I obtained from such efforts was that they all agreed that the principles were sound, but not practical. I told some of my friends, "It is not practical because you do not practice it; if you practice the principle, it will be practical." So I continued my practice.

I was not disappointed when I found that no one followed my steps, but I did feel alone and sometimes, lonely. However, I obtained some comfort from the realization that most scientists and all engineers practice Newtonian mechanics rather than Relativity, even though the latter is much closer to the truth than the former. My feeling of isolation was suddenly melted one Sunday evening in 1975.

It was a Spring quarter. One evening, I visited the elder Mr. Cho and talked to him about what my principles of life were and asked what he thought about them after he had spent about 70 years in this world. He told me that what I said was very similar to the Ch'an doctrines he studied with a monk. He gave me a copy of the Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra which he had brought with him. I went home immediately and started reading. When I finished reading, it was the next morning and I had to go to class. From that day on, I was very excited to find out that many of the principles I worked out from my own experiences and observations were just what the Sixth Patriarch had said. And many views that the sage had spoken were just what I would want to say but could not say well.

However, the excitement I derived from the Platform Sutra could not keep its peak when it flashed in my mind that the Patriarch had died more than a thousand years and was just a well-known figure in history. History is always colored by the writers, particularly in religion. But I did not relinquish my practice because of my argument that: If I had to believe someone, I chose to believe the sage. And at

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the same time, I started looking for a living sage in this mundane world if there was one.

At the end of April in 1977, I went to Vancouver to present a paper at the Third Canadian Congress of Applied Mechanics. On my way home, I spent one night at the Gold Mountain Ch'an Monastery in San Francisco on May 4, 1977, visiting the Abbot, Ch'an Master Hsuan Hua. I had seen Buddhist monks before in mainland China, yet this was the first time to see one face to face. When we faced each other, I could feel the warmth from him without exchanging one word because he was somehow like my grandfather who loved me without conditions.

It was not an easy and comfortable matter for a university professor to kneel down and bow to another person; I had to give him a test before accepting him as my Father-Teacher. I had prepared many questions but now all of them, except two, were forgotten.

I asked, "Are you enlightened?" Before he answered, I added the explanation, "I know that I should not ask such a question, but I just have to."

The Master said, "If you are hungry, go and eat. Whether I am enlightened or not does not help you." I accepted the answer because this was the typical answer I anticipated.

Again, I asked, "What will happen to society if all people become Buddhist monks?"

The Master said, "Can you let all Buddhist monks become laymen?" Looking at him and observing the kindness, the warm and genuine smile, and the determination on his face, I said to him, "No." After a pause, I requested him to be my Father-Teacher. On that day, May 4, 1977, I took refuge with the Triple Jewel.

I bowed to that monk and was transformed at that moment. It was, of course, not the bowing which transformed me; but the heart which wanted to bow that was transformed. That heart, yes, just that heart, was what I had missed all the years. After I took refuge, I sat on the bench in the Buddha Hall, feeling that this place was very familiar. Other than that feeling, my mind was empty like a blank. At that moment, my Father-Teacher came and sat beside me without saying anything for quite a while. At last, he said, not said but roared, "Cut off the desire." He left.

When I went back home from the trip, my wife and my daughter immediately sensed my sudden transformation. My wife cried many times for fear that I would leave my home life. Though I knew that was the way of life I wanted to live, I also knew that I was not ready yet. Following my wife, all my friends noticed my transformation. One lady even suggested to my wife that I should visit a psychiatrist. Her argument was very interesting. She said, "He is a professor and I am just a kitchen helper. Even I do not want to leave the home life, so he must have something wrong with him." When I heard her argument, I realized that then I was really alone among the people around me. But I no longer had any feeling of being lonely because there was at least one person in this world who understood me -- my Father-Teacher. An old Chinese proverb says, "If you have one friend who understands you, you can die with no regret." I then felt that I understood the sage who had uttered these words.

During the summer quarter of 1977, I taught two courses at the University; I concentrated on meditation at night. I put down all my hobbies: wire arts, wildcatting, ceramics, driftwood crafts, and

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photography, all of which I liked very much. I even cut short my favorite time playing with my daughter, Anne. But for the whole summer, my meditation did not reveal anything interesting, except that my arthritic legs could sit in a half-lotus posture for about fifteen minutes long. This was a big accomplishment because, at the beginning, I could not even put one leg on top of the other. My daughter and son had to help me to push one leg up and the other one down.

On August 4, 1977, I had a dream which made me wonder. I was in an old building which had several rooms. An unknown person chased me with something like a spear and intended to kill me to make me into a wax statue. I stepped backward farther and farther until I felt I had no place to go. I was terrified and then I suddenly saw a bright beam of light shining from behind. The person stopped chasing me; I felt released and when I looked back, I saw a door leading into a room. In that room there was a golden Buddha statue on a table. I rushed to him and knelt down with my arms holding him, crying. I soon found that the statue was changing into a statue of my Father-Teacher. I woke up.

Though I had no apparent progress in my meditation, I was not all disappointed because I knew that I had not completely followed the prescription my Father-Teacher told me -- cutting off the desire.

I knew there was something blocking my mind from progress. I remembered that, when I had studied Einstein's Relativity, I had experienced a similar obstacle to appreciating the theory. I found out later that the difficulty was that I still kept firmly in my mind the notions of absolute space and time which I had learned in Newtonian mechanics. Without throwing away the basic concept of Euclidean space, one just cannot appreciate the beauty of the theory of Relativity, because within the system of Euclidean space there is no room for Riemann space to squeeze in. As a parallel, without throwing away the concepts and experiences accumulated from our six senses, we cannot understand and appreciate the meaning of life in Buddha's realm.

With this understanding and experience, I decided to live in a monastery for two weeks so that I could put down all I had learned in the past and concentrate on the meditation without any outside disturbance.

On August 28, 1977, I arrived at the Gold Mountain Ch'an Monastery in San Francisco in the early morning. I walked through the door of the Monastery just like a scientist who went into his laboratory without prejudice and without anticipation. The following is only a record of those happenings in the laboratory which have been very important to my life. The complete effects on my life is just beyond the power of words.

August 31, 1977

During dinner time, I suddenly felt that I did not deserve the food in my bowl because I had no idea when I would be enlightened and then able to help others. And my Father-Teacher was old and he might not be able to wait for me very long. I burst into tears, crying loudly. I tried, but failed, to stop until my Father-Teacher came and rubbed my head. He kept smiling and said, "It takes patience. This is the change of your temperament." I said, "You get old and I have a family

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to support.” “It is all right,” he said and kept smiling.

During the meditation at night, I could not feel my body as usual, but only felt a rough shape which was similar to, but much larger than, the actual physical body.

September 1, 1977

During the meditation in the morning, I saw many people shuffling around in the Buddha Hall. There was no mistaking that they were human beings, except that I could not see their legs and the details on their faces. They were just floating in the air.

Riding in a car on the way to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas with three other people, two monks and one layman, I heard a clear and loud voice saying, “Ah Mi To Fu,” several times. I asked the others in the car if they heard the voice, no one did.

When meditating at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas at night, I saw many people dancing hand in hand around a post in a place like a busy city. I could not see their legs and their faces had no details. After this scene vanished, a big white bird with a long beak appeared in front of my left side. I could see all the vivid details of the bird. A short moment after the bird appeared, I saw the face of my six-year-old daughter, clearly and lively and a little bit chubby as she used to be at the age of three. Seeing this scene, my heart was slightly moved. And then her face was becoming aged and warped, and finally changing back to the childish face but without life. The lifeless face was like the one in a wax museum. I was deeply disturbed and could not continue my meditation. I stood up, walking and chanting the Buddha’s name in the room with many questions and wonderings filling my mind.

At night, I dreamed and felt that somebody was pushing me on my chest with a great pressure. Feeling pain and suffocating, I tried to call my Father-Teacher, but could not open my mouth to make a sound. I then tried to call Amata Buddha’s name with the same difficulty. I was very scared. With all my strength, I finally burst out one word “Fu”, the sound of Buddha in Chinese; the pressure was released. I woke up and still felt suffocated.

September 2, 1977

As a routine after the Dharma Master Hua finished his lecture at night, we joined together to recite the sutras. That evening, however, I did not pay any attention to these activities but kept meditating. I felt that I was separated from the whole world; and this feeling of separation was so strong that it could not be mistaken as my imagination or given any other psychological interpretation. A while later, my whole body, particularly my arms and neck, started oscillating severely. I was puzzled and a little scared, and did not know what to do. I decided to let it keep vibrating without doing anything. Later, when the oscillation stopped, I stood up to bow to the Buddha. My hands were vibrating again; it was so violent that I could not even hold the palms together. I then left the hall and went to sleep earlier than usual.

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September 3, 1977

I woke up and got out of bed at 12:30 a.m. When I turned around and found someone lying on my bed, I was puzzled and thought who is that person? I took a closer look and found that it was me. When the notion of "It is I" appeared in my mind, I returned to my physical body and then immediately got out of bed with my physical body as usual.

September 4, 1977

When I was bowing to the Buddha that night, suddenly a bright light shone all over the space and everything else disappeared. I felt embraced in something; yet it was not a thing because I could not tell any discrimination in that thing. A very short moment later, all things reappeared and I returned to usual, except feeling a deep sense of wonder.

The next few days, my feeling in meditation was different from the usual. I felt that I was separated from the external world. I told my Father-Teacher about the feeling; he understood. He said that this was the feeling of no-attachment. It could not be expressed in words. Yet we both understood each other.

September 6, 1977

I woke up in the early morning and could not go to sleep again. So I meditated on the bed and saw many strange scenes. It was like a dream, yet I knew that it was not the same. I went to some place with my daughter to look for my lost wife. Later, my daughter was lost too. It seemed that I knew where they were, so I went on searching for them. On the way searching, I encountered many difficulties and dangers. At one time, a beautiful naked woman appeared and wanted to make love with me. I had the intention to do so, but immediately recollected my wandering thoughts on my motto "no thought, no attachment", the scene disappeared.

My meditation was improved in the sense that the feeling of no attachment became much stronger than ever before.

Today was my birthday -- I vowed to observe the 10 major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts. During the ceremony, my Father-Teacher said, "A person has been chasing you for a long time. When you were a general in the Han Dynasty, you wrongly killed a person. In the Tang Dynasty, you were the Secretary of State and also did some wrong things." I responded, "All the wrong conducts I have done is due to greed, desire, and lust. From now on, I will cultivate according to the motto: no attachment, no thought, and no mark." My Father-Teacher said, "Very well. You are very hopeful."

I vowed that I would cultivate and teach others the Doctrines of the Sudden Teaching of the Ch'an School. If any human being had not crossed, I would not enter the utmost equal and right enlightenment. I knew at that time that I could not finish the work in this life; I would come back life after life on my own will to finish it. The work must be completed.

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September 8, 1977

After the routine at night, I meditated in my own room. Finally, being too tired to continue, I laid down on the floor and fell asleep. Then, I dreamed that somebody came into the room and tried to kill me. I stood up to defend myself and suddenly saw somebody lying on the floor. I knew that the intruder wanted to kill "him", but he just laid on the floor and had no preparation to protect himself. So I tried to help him to stand up. When I bent down to try, I failed to move him. At this moment, I saw his face and realized that it was my own; I returned to my physical body.

My Father-Teacher wrote a stanza on the cover of my copy of the Bodhisattva Precepts. It says,

"Emptiness, it is originally not empty.
Existence, it is originally not existent.
Not empty, it is empty.
Not existent, it is existent.
What is not empty?
What is not existent?
Search!"

In the afternoon, I was very tired and thus took a nap on the floor. When I woke up, I saw that somebody was still lying on the floor. Thinking that he had slept too long today, I tried to wake him up, but I could not move his body. At the moment I saw his face -- again it was mine. I returned to my physical body and stood up as usual.

September 10, 1977

I decided to bow to Kwan Yin Bodhisattva for 99 times. On the ninety-ninth bow, I fell down on the ground, unconscious. When I woke up, my hips were in pain but my whole body felt very warm and comfortable. It seemed that all the organs in my abdomen were slightly rearranged.

Today was the last day of my two-week stay in the monastery. I wrote a stanza expressing my feeling of my two week cultivation. It says,

"When I came in this door,
I was called James Yu.
When I went out of this door,
he was called James Yu.
Looking outwardly,
they have the same head and the same toes.
Looking inwardly,
I know that they wear different pairs of shoes."

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Returning home from the monastery, I continued my cultivation with all my strength, besides my normal functions as a professor, a father, and a husband. In many aspects, I could feel the progress and improvement due to the cultivation. Many of them cannot be expressed in words because these kind of feelings are not experienced in this mundane world. But some of the physical changes that occurred were beyond my anticipation. For example: My chronic headache and constipation are gone. A sore throat and blisters on my lips present at the time of anxiety have not appeared anymore. And particularly, my diabetes mellitus has been cured. These physiological changes are not the purpose of Ch'an cultivation. But it does verify a truth of common sense: Besides nutritional requirements, a healthy body needs a healthy mind.

One of the most important experimental results I want to report at last is the finding of an inner light emitting from my mind. The emitted light has different colors, intensities, and shapes which vary with thought-configurations. There is no accurate way I can describe the detail and effects of this inner light on my way of life and living. It is not that important anyhow for a Ch'an cultivator to do so. However, as a scientist I consider my finding as equally important, if not more, as an experimental physicist had found the location of a black hole in space.

My Ch'an cultivation is very shallow, but the findings in this shallow layer are sufficient to answer my inquiry about the real meaning of life. I know that this life is just like my school time to learn and to prepare for the future. The work which I am going to do in this life and life after life are compiled as "Kuo Kung Seven Vows." Kuo Kung is my dharma name and these are the vows I made for myself:

- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows not to search for any sensual pleasure and physical comforts.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows not to search for any worldly respect, fame, prestige, wealth and power.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows to leave home life as early as possible to become a Buddhist monk, a Ch'an Master, for cultivating and practicing Buddha's doctrine of the Sudden Teaching of the Ch'an School.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows to gain the five eyes and the five spiritual penetrations as expedients for helping others.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows to attain the utmost equal and right enlightenment only through the one vehicle -- the Buddha Vehicle.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows to help all human beings to practice Buddha's doctrines and attain their Nirvana. If there is one who has not entered his Nirvana, he himself will not enter the utmost equal and right enlightenment.*
- *In this life and all lives, Kuo Kung vows to take Kean Yin and Di Tang as his models to help human beings, ghosts, gods, and all others in hells. If these two Bodhisattvas have not entered the utmost equal and right enlightenment, he himself will not enter the utmost equal and right enlightenment.*

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It will be hard and there will be plenty of difficulties to fulfill these vows, but I have no doubt and no hesitation that I am going to finish the work.

I have left home so long that I even do not remember when I did, but now it is time to go back home! Where is the real home?