

## 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?