

CHUANG TZU AND GENERAL SEMANTICS

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CHUANG Tzu AND GENERAL SEMANTICS

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## PREFACE

In the fall semester of 1970 I took a course entitled "Semantics in Journalism" of which Professor Walter J. Ward was the instructor. While reading Wendell Johnson's People in Quandaries, the assigned general semantics textbook of the course, I at times associated it with a fascinating Chinese philosophy classic, Chuang Tzu. I have discovered that many concepts in general semantics, such as the changing reality and the inadequacy of language to describe fully the reality, have long since been hidden in the pages of Chuang Tzu, a book over two thousand years of age.

One day after class, Professor Ward, who has also been my academic advisor and the advisor of this thesis, talked with me, encouraging me to do study comparing the semantic behaviors of different peoples who speak different languages. He further mentioned that I might make this kind of study the theme of my master thesis.

However, I believed that such a comparative study is too great a task for me to achieve in a limited time. I finally decided to compare instead Chuang Tzu and general semantics -- the content of this research.

General semantics, as many humanities do, owes its basic construct to the wisdom of the ancient minds, but was developed into a new branch of academics hardly half a century ago, Alfred Korzybski being its founder.

At a time when general semantics is gaining more and more recognition from the academic arena (in effect, many Journalism schools have taken up general semantics courses for instruction) and exerting more and more influence upon the practical world of communications, commercial business, and psychiatry, etc., I, though mindful that such a topic would be deemed not very conventional so long as I am a student of Journalism, surely take great pleasure to examine how the ancient Chinese philosopher shared the views with the present day general semanticist. This is one theme of my thesis.

The interpretations of Chuang Tzu have been a matter of academic diversity -- a matter with which this thesis deals in terms of general semantics principles. This is the other theme of my paper.

A brief introductory note of Chuang Tzu and its author heads the thesis that is concluded with a discussion of Chuang Tzu, general semantics and the sanity of man.

There are at least four complete English translations of Chuang Tzu: chronologically, Herbert A. Giles, Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer (London, 1889); James Legge, The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism: The Writings of Kwang-tsze (Chuang Tzu) (Oxford, 1891); James R. Wares, The Sayings of Chuang Chou (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1963); and Burton Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu (Columbia University Press, 1968). Partial translations of Chuang Tzu include Yu-lan Fung, Chuang Tzu (Shanghai, 1933); those in Arthur Waley, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China (London, 1939); those in Yu-tang Lin, The Wisdom of Laotse (Modern Library, 1948); and those compiled by existing translations in Thomas Merton, The Way of Chuang Tzu (New York, 1965).

This year, Clae Waltham arranged the translation by James Legge and published it under the title of Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd (New York, Charter Communications Inc., 1971).

I have adopted in this thesis the translation by Burton Watson mainly because Professor Watson has "chosen to render the wording of the original as closely as possible," and I think he did. Nevertheless, I have frequently consulted the other translations and quoted them when necessary. Unless otherwise noted, all excerpts of Chuang Tzu in this thesis are from Professor Watson's translation.

As to the original Chinese text, Ma Chien's Chuang Tzu Tsuan Chien (Chuang Tzu Annotated) (Hong Kong: South East Press, 1951) is my basic source of reference.

I would like to thank Professor Ward for his inspiration on the subject matter of this thesis, also for his advice on my graduate study. My thanks also is due to Professor Harry E. Heath, Jr., director of Oklahoma State University School of Journalism and Broadcasting, whose granting me a graduate assistantship made my study in Stillwater possible. I am grateful to Professor C. T. Hsia of Columbia University for borrowing books for me from the East Asian Library of Columbia University. My friend Mr. Bing-cho Chan sent me a copy of Waltham's Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd, probably the latest English publication on Chuang Tzu, from Madison, Wisconsin. Mr. Ming-sun Poon, another friend of mine, prepared materials drawn from the Far Eastern Library of the University of Chicago for my reference. Both of them deserve my special gratitude. Finally, my greatest thanks goes to Mr. Robert Mullaney who kindly made his apartment in Brooklyn, New York, my residence during the month of March when I was intensively working on this paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON <u>CHUANG TZU</u> AND ITS AUTHOR . . . . .	1
II. IMPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF GENERAL SEMANTICS IN <u>CHUANG TZU</u> . . . . .	7
Principle of Relativity and the Concept of Change . . . . .	7
Non-identity and Non-allness . . . . .	13
Language and Reality . . . . .	17
Standpoint as Evaluational Criterion . . . . .	19
Tao: A Description . . . . .	24
Tao: The Real Existence . . . . .	26
Tao: The Theme of Taoism . . . . .	32
III. APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF GENERAL SEMANTICS TO <u>CHUANG TZU</u> . . . . .	34
Confucianism Attacked vs. Confucianism Favored . . . . .	35
Confucius the Taoist vs. Confucius the Confucian . . . . .	37
Non-identity and Non-allness . . . . .	39
Who Is Chuang Tzu? . . . . .	43
Self-reflexiveness . . . . .	51
Defects in Terms of General Semantics: Unsystematic Organization . . . . .	53
Defects in Terms of General Semantics: <u>Over</u> Under Defined Terminology . . . . .	55
Defects in Terms of General Semantics: Etc. . . . .	62
IV. <u>CHUANG TZU</u> , GENERAL SEMANTICS, AND SANITY OF MAN (A CONCLUSION) . . . . .	64
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY (ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS) . . . . .	69
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY (CHINESE PUBLICATIONS) . . . . .	71

## CHAPTER I

### AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON CHUANG TZU AND ITS AUTHOR

Chuang Tzu, one of the two doctrinal classics of the Chinese Taoism,<sup>1</sup> has since ancient times circulated under the name of Chuang Tzu (c. 300 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> Containing thirty-three chapters which consist of approximately 100,000 (Chinese) words, the present book is considered an anthology of the ancient Taoist works based primarily on the thoughts and writings of Chuang Tzu.

Since Kuo Hsiang, Chuang Tzu's great compiler and commentator of the third century A.D. when the book was edited into its present version, to this classic have been contributed many controversial arguments and studies mainly on its authorship and on the philosophical issues it poses. While consensus on the authorship has ever hardly

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<sup>1</sup>For the philosophy of Taoism, see Yu-lan Fung, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), Chapters 6, 9 & 10. Available also in paperback edition, 1966. See also the section under the subtitle of "Tao: The Theme of Taoism," in Chapter II of this thesis, for a brief but probably oversimplified description of the theme of Taoism.

<sup>2</sup>His approximate dates being 370-300 B.C., Chuang Tzu was born about one-and-an-half centuries after Confucius (551-479 B.C.), contemporary with Mencius (c. 372-289 B.C.), and also with Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the great Greek philosopher. As to his name, the full name is "Chuang Chou," "Chuang" being his last name and "Chou" being his first name; "Tze" is actually a title approximately equivalent to the Western "Esquire."

been reached,<sup>3</sup> different scholars and critics, approaching the book from various angles, have held vastly diversified opinions on what the philosophy of Chuang Tzu is really like.

Examining Chuang Tzu through the light projected by general semantics, the author discovers that Chuang Tzu has long since hidden the principles of general semantics in its pages. To point them out is thus one theme of this study.

Also, being fascinated by such a great diversity in the interpretations of the classic, the author attempts to explain this phenomenon in terms of, again, the principles of general semantics.

In the time of Chuang Tzu, China enjoyed a civilization of considerable prosperity. Techniques of crafts included weaving, pottery, casting, carpentry, painting, sculpture, jewelry, spinning, smelting, as well as some simple machine operations, though systematic knowledge of physics and chemistry, etc., was totally lacking. The era from the sixth through the third centuries B.C. saw the blooming of ancient Chinese philosophy and scholarship, comparable to the Golden Age of Greece. There were various schools of thoughts preaching, with different ideals, to save the world because the era of cultural achieve-

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<sup>3</sup>Kuo Hsiang edited the thirty-three chapters into three parts: 7 "inside-chapters," 15 "outside-chapters," and 11 "miscellaneous chapters." Chapters 1 to 7, the so-called seven "inside-chapters," are believed by the majority of scholars the genuine work of Chuang Tzu, while authorship of the rest remains a matter of academic controversy. James Legge has summarized, probably first in the English language, the controversies on the authorship of Chuang Tzu. See James Legge, tr., The Sacred Books of China; The Texts of Taoism (Oxford, 1891), Introduction, pp. 4-12.



ment also witnessed devastating wars and other political disasters. In a time of feudalism, predatory states swallowed weaker states and were in turn swallowed by stronger ones. This, in addition to struggles for political powers among the ruling classes, resulted in murders, killings, wars and all sorts of violence. People suffered from the disaster of wars and the tyranny of sovereigns who, constantly expanding armament and engaging in warfare, embittered their subjects with heavy taxation and never-ceasing drafting. Confucianism, practically an orthodoxy, advocated the doctrine of humanism which is based on moral virtues such as benevolence and righteousness and social proprieties, i.e., ritual ceremonies and music. Mohism, enjoying no less popularity than Confucianism, denounced warfare and insisted on universal love and saving of money on funerals and music. There were also the Sophists who spoke of logics; the Legalists who maintained the enforcement of juridicial powers as a means and an end of rulership. As coined by historians, it was the period of the "Hundred Schools."

Chuang Tzu, from his personal experience and studying historical records, recognized the fallacies and sufferings of his generation. He preached - very differently from his contemporary philosophers whom he severely criticized - in a romantic style which leads to the enlightenment of the individual self, the way of self-salvation through the understanding and attaining of "Tao."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See the last three sections of the following chapter for interpretations of the concept of "Tao."

However, not much is known of Chuang Tzu's life. Ssu-ma Chien, the great historian who authored Shih Chi (The Record of History), wrote in about 100 B.C. as follows:

Chuang Chou (Tzu) was a man of Meng (a village in the ancient district of Lu, Confucius's native state, now southwestern Shantung) and was once official in charge of a subdivision thereof called Chi-yuan. He was a contemporary of King Hui of Liang and King Hsuan of Chu (370-335 B.C.). His study was all-embracing, but in essentials he went back to the teachings of Lao Tan (Lao Tzu). Therefore, his writing (over 100,000 words) was, for the most part, symbolic. He composed "A Fisherman," "Robber Chih," and "Safebreaking" to criticize the followers of Confucius and elucidate the recipes of Lao Tan. Such compositions of his "Hsu Wu-kuei" and "Keng-sang Chu" are purely imaginative and have no basis in fact. He was, however, competent in composition and in the use of phrases with new meanings. He attacked specific matters and practices advocated by Confucianists and Mohists, and even the serious students of his day could not extricate themselves from the toils of his argumentation, for his language, in its vastness and freedom of concept, fitted very well his own ideas.

Nobody, from kings, dukes, or officers on down, was able to get him into his employ. When King Wei of Chu (339-329 B.C.) learned of Chuang's competence, he sent an emissary with rich gifts and an offer to make him chancellor. Chuang laughed and replied: "With its impressive emolument of a thousand in gold, a chancellorship is a position of honor. But are you the only one never to have noticed the ox destined to become the sacrificial victim? It is fed for several years and then decked with embroideries when introduced into the ancestral temple. At that moment, although it wishes to become an orphaned calf, can it do so? Go away immediately! Don't soil me! I prefer to enjoy myself wallowing in the mire rather than to be bridled by some ruler. Never in my life will I engage in government service. I will enjoy myself right where I am."<sup>5</sup>

This brief biography with exactly 235 (Chinese) words records mainly the thoughts and writings of the philosopher, his contempo-

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<sup>5</sup>This translation is quoted from James R. Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou (New York: The New American Library, 1963), Introduction, pp. 11-12.

raneity with King Hui of Liang and King Hsuan of Chu, his serving as a low-ranking officer and his refusal to be employed by the political regime, leaving much of his life obscure.

Some further materials regarding his biography might be drawn from Chuang Tzu the book itself. However, because there are abundant parabolical stories in the classic, we should be aware of the possibility of stories narrating life of Chuang Tzu being part of the parables. Keeping this in mind, we may approach the following stories of the philosopher as extracted from the text.

(Unless otherwise noted, all excerpts from Chuang Tzu hereafter quoted are drawn from Burton Watson's translation, as the author has mentioned in the Preface.)

A man of Sung, one Tsao Shang,....went to see Chuang Tzu and said, "Living in poor alleyways and cramped lanes, skimping, starving, weaving one's own sandals, with withered neck and sallow face -- that sort of thing I'm no good at."  
(Chapter 32, p. 356.)

This remark, directed to Chuang Tzu and connotatively scornful, vividly portrays the philosopher leading a life of material poverty. There is another story:

Chuang Tzu's wife died. When Hui Tzu (Chuang Tzu's friend) went to convey his condolences, he found Chuang Tzu sitting with his legs sprawled out, pounding on a tub and singing. "You lived with her, she brought up your children and grew old," said Hui Tzu, "It should be enough simply not to weep at her death. But pounding on a tub and singing -- this is going too far, isn't it?" (Chapter 18, pp. 192-193.)

This is just part of the story whose philosophical significance will be discussed later. Nevertheless, we can learn from this episode that Chuang Tzu was a married man, that he had children and that his wife died before him. Again, here is a scene where the shade of death permeates:

When Chuang Tzu was about to die, his disciples expressed a desire to give him a sumptuous burial. Chuang Tzu said, "I will have heaven and earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade discs, the stars and constellations for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousand things for my parting gifts. The furnishings for my funeral are already prepared -- what is there to add?"

"But we're afraid the crows and kites will eat you, Master!"

Chuang Tzu said, "Above ground I'll be eaten by crows and kites, below ground I'll be eaten by mole, crickets and ants. Wouldn't it be rather bigoted to deprive one group in order to supply the other?" (Chapter 32, p. 361.)

Here we learn that Chuang Tzu had disciples, but the more important thing to realize is his attitude toward death as the author will elaborate, together with other issues, in next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### IMPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF GENERAL SEMANTICS IN CHUANG TZU

#### Principle of Relativity and the Concept of Change

Among the many philosophical issues encompassed by the Taoist classic, the principle of relativity is important because it is fundamental for the understanding of Tao. (Before the discussion of Chuang Tzu's philosophy, due to the problem of authorship, the author should make it clear that hereafter, when he speaks of Chuang Tzu, he does not necessarily refer to Chuang Tzu the specific individual as known in history, but to the mind or a combination of minds, revealed in the book entitled Chuang Tzu.)

Chuang Tzu set up his arguments on relativity as follows:

"That" comes out of "this" and "this" depends on "that."  
Where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability;  
where there is unacceptability there must be acceptability.  
Where there is recognition of right there must be recognition of wrong;  
where there is recognition of wrong there must be recognition of right. (Chapter 2, pp. 39-40.)

Though relativism (which stems from the principle of relativity and postulates that there is nothing absolute in the universe) is commonplace in both ancient and modern philosophy, it is the tendency toward its opposite, absolutism, that splits people into prejudices of extremism and leads them to miscomprehension of the reality. Once the prejudices and miscomprehension have formulated, people are bound to misorientation

and misevaluation which the general semanticist attempts to correct and prevent.

While it might be stated that, in a sense, general semantics emerged from the argument between absolutism and relativism, it seems appropriate to start here comparing the principles of general semantics and these principles as implied in Chuang Tzu with the discussion of the principle of relativity.<sup>1</sup>

A generalization of the relativistic theories reveals that values and judgments are not eternal, that they are man-made and subject to change, and that they are always relative to a given culture at a given date.<sup>2</sup> Since Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950), father of general semantics, non-identity, non-allness, and self-reflexiveness, etc; have been regarded as the basic principles of general semantics. The underlying philosophy of these principles can be summed up as a scientific language orientation which views reality -- distinguished from words -- as dynamic and process-like, subject to change in a given culture at a given date. Obviously, the relativist and the general semanticist share the concept of change as vital to their theories.

The general semanticist, who is relativist to a certain extent, views thing, event, quality, value, etc., as always changing. He contends that reality, like the river of Heraclitus, constantly changes.

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that Chuang Tzu, though in many occasions showed extremely relativistic ideas, was not a thinker of relativism because he believed in Tao. That is the absolute to him.

<sup>2</sup>This sentence is a paraphrase of a statement on relativism made in Harry L. Weinberg, Levels of Knowing and Existence (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1959), p. 145.

Heraclitus said that one cannot step into the same river twice; the general semanticist would say that one cannot have the same reality twice. He finds that "everywhere is change, flux, process,"<sup>3</sup> understanding that he lives in a world of transformation and differences. The human history is a record of change, and society an institution of transformation. Scientific theories are always reviewed and revised; they are "subject to change without notice." To cite some light examples, while in London the skirt moves up and down between mini and midi, the New Yorker adjusts the changing width of his tie according to the fashion climate of Manhattan. If the love scene of "Yesterday"<sup>4</sup> did not so rapidly change, the Beatles would not sing out the troubles and sorrow of today; nor Peter, Paul, and Mary needed to lament the lost love under the "Lemon Tree."<sup>5</sup> It is the sudden death of the young and charming girl that changes dramatically the "Love Story"<sup>6</sup> so romantically and sadly depicted by Erich Segal.

The general semanticist's belief that change is constant is shared by Chuang Tzu, the ancient philosopher. In the very beginning of the book (i.e., the first paragraph of the first chapter) he narrated a

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<sup>3</sup>Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1946), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>"Yesterday," a song, words and music by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, copyright 1965 by Northern Song Ltd., London.

<sup>5</sup>"Lemon Tree," a song, by Will Holt, copyright 1960 & 1961 by Dolfi Music Inc., and Boulder Music, Inc., U.S.A.

<sup>6</sup>Erich Segal, Love Story (New York: The New American Library, 1970), a more-than-ten-months Number 1 Bestseller on the New York Times Bestseller List.

story of biological transformation: a fish transforming into a bird, thus commencing his many arguments and contentions on change and transformation. In a total of seven chapters where the word "change" ("pian") or "transformation" ("hua") is frequently seen, these two words together appear at least 38 times.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, the concept of change was not originated by Chuang Tzu. Yi Ching (The Book of Change), a classic of Confucianism, postulated long before Chuang Tzu the theory of change and transformation and has interpreted its relations with the universe. Even so, Chuang Tzu might be considered the first Chinese philosopher elaborating this concept to its broader aspects.

Chuang Tzu has claimed that every existence on earth is in an ever-changing process, the beginning or ending of it being unknown to people. In a world of dynamics,

The life of things is a gallop, a headlong dash -- with every movement they alter, with every moment they shift. What should you do and what should you not do? Everything will change of itself, that is certain!  
(Chapter 17, p. 182)

....Transforming, changing, never constant....  
(Chapter 33, p. 373)

Chapter 13 which is entitled "The Way (Tao) of Heaven" includes the following passage:

Spring and summer precede, autumn and winter follow -- such is the sequence of the four seasons. The ten thousand things change and grow, their roots and buds, each with its distinctive form, flourishing and decaying by degree, a constant flow of change and transformation. (p. 146)

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<sup>7</sup>The figure is based on Chapters 2, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, and 33.



This is the process of change of the natural world. Man himself is also always changing; first, physically. In the variation of growth and decay, birth, agedness, disease, and death seen by Buddhism as the four great pains of mankind happen inevitably. In days when medicine was not developed, the changes from healthiness to disease and from life to death occurred more frequently and shocked men more terribly. A story in Chapter 6 tells the sudden sickness of a man. One man in a group of four friends who shared common views on life suddenly fell sick. His back looked like a hunch-back and his vital organs were on top of him. His chin was hidden in his navel. His shoulders were above his head, and his pigtail pointed at the sky.<sup>8</sup> One friend asked whether he resented the sickness. He answered with a definite "no" because he thought it was the way of the Heaven (pp. 84-85). Though it probably represents the most extreme form of ill physical transformation, we would recall Job all at once falling sick in the Bible, a very horrible sickness too. It is the unpredictability of such a change that concerns us. In this era of space adventure, the success in heart transplantation does not imply that the advance of medical technology can predict the occurrence of (and thus prevent and cure) certain diseases, which mean drastic change from life to death. Jenny, the heroine of the Love Story, for example, died of a form of leukemia;<sup>9</sup> nobody, including herself, could predict the mischievous change.

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<sup>8</sup>He was believed to have anthrax probably. See Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup>Segal, Love Story, p. 107.

Furthermore, man changes -- and should change as necessary, according to Chuang Tzu and the general semanticist -- spiritually and intellectually. Chuang Tzu, in a dialogue with his friend Hui Shih, said, "Confucius has been going along for sixty years and he has changed sixty times." (Chapter 27, p. 305) Though no detail is given of how he changed -- and we have the very reason to doubt that the number sixty is factual -- it points out the fact that Confucius was always under spiritual and intellectual development and change. To express in Johnson's terminology, Confucius was by no means a man of "evaluational rigidity." He did not persistently maintain his "verbally expressed beliefs, attitudes, etc."<sup>10</sup> "What at the beginning he used to call right he has ended up (or, might end up) calling wrong;" (Chapter 27, p. 305) and vice versa.

Nature changes, man changes, and so does the society. After a discussion on the applications of different traffic vehicles and social systems to different environments, the speaker in Chapter 14 concluded that the rules of propriety, righteousness, laws, and measures "change in response to the times." (p. 160.) The concept of time as related to the substance of the reality which Chuang Tzu introduced here is essential in modern physics. Einstein, the greatest physicist of the 20th century, has claimed that, in physics, the time of any occurrence is one of its characteristics.<sup>11</sup> Korzybski has adopted this concept

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<sup>10</sup>Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 252.

<sup>11</sup>Weinberg, Levels of Knowing and Existence, p. 49.

and preached the four dimensions of language.<sup>12</sup>

In a world of infinite complexity and dynamics, where constant is the passage of time, everything is always changing. Thing<sub>1</sub> is not the same as Thing<sub>2</sub>; Thing<sub>1</sub><sup>today</sup> is not the same as Thing<sub>1</sub><sup>yesterday</sup>. It is on this ground where Korzybski established the first principle of his "non-aristotelian system": the principle of non-identity.

#### Non-identity and Non-allness

In S.I. Hayakawa's words, "general semantics is the study of the relations between language, thought, and behavior: between how we talk, therefore how we think, and therefore how we act."<sup>13</sup> The author would add that general semantics is an effort to distinguish the reality from the language, to help save people from being blinded by the magic and tyranny of words. Since Thing<sub>1</sub> is not the same as Thing<sub>2</sub> and Thing<sub>1</sub><sup>today</sup> is not the same as Thing<sub>1</sub><sup>yesterday</sup>, and since the word which describes the generalization of thing is static or even rigid because the present language is, to borrow Maddocks' phrase, "old and overworked,"<sup>14</sup> the word is not the object. This is the rationale of the non-identity principle. That the word is not the object, also can be explained simply by saying the word does not represent all of the object.

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<sup>12</sup>Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian System and General Semantics (Connecticut: The Institute of General Semantics, 1962), 4th ed., p. 93.

<sup>13</sup>S. I. Hayakawa, ed., The Use and Misuse of Language (Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1962), Foreword, p. vii.

<sup>14</sup>Melvin Maddocks, "The Limitations of Language," a Time Essay, Time, March 8, 1971, p. 36.

Regardless of how much one says about the object, one cannot say all about it. Thus, the basics of the non-allness principle, second in the non-aristotelian system, is just that fundamental.

To compare Chuang Tzu with the general semanticist, one might say that the principles of non-identity and non-allness already have been implied in the Taoist's contention of the concepts of change and relativity. It is true, nevertheless, we need to find evidence to verify his statements on the principles of non-identity and non-allness.

In Chapter 2 entitled "Discussion of Making (Viewing) All Things Equal," there is a remark that "the man (who sat) leaning on the armrest now is not the one who (sat and) leaned on it before." (p. 36) This statement is conspicuously of the principle of non-identity, but the significance of the story behind it goes far beyond this point. The story begins with depicting a sage-like man who "sat leaning on his armrest, staring at the sky and breathing -- vacant and far away -- as though he'd lost his companion (or, his own body)." (p. 36) The man was so concentrated in his contemplation that he almost lost his consciousness. The scene of a man leaning on the armrest appears once again in Chapter 17. He was again sage-like and involved in the discussion of language and knowledge. These pictures immediately bring us to the association with Johnson's technique for learning silence on the non-verbal level<sup>15</sup> which is detailed further in Weinberg's Levels of Knowing and Existence. It is worthwhile to quote in full

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<sup>15</sup>Johnson, People in Quandaries, pp. 493-494.

the description of the technique and its significance in penetrating into the non-verbal level of abstraction, as far as general semantics is concerned:

A number of techniques have been devised by general semanticists for learning silence on the non-verbal level. One, suggested by Wendell Johnson in his People in Quandaries, is a sort of game you play with yourself. Seat yourself at a desk or table in a quiet room. Pick up an object and feel its texture, look at it from various angles, smell it, and say nothing to yourself. Concentrate on the sensations. The moment you find yourself saying, "It is a pencil, it is red, it is smooth," drop it. The object of the game is to see how long you can stay on the non-verbal and keep from moving to the verbal level of abstraction. At first it may appear impossible to keep from talking. If you persist, however, after a few weeks you may be able to up your time from a few seconds to minutes.

Another technique is even simpler. Start feeling things, closing your eyes to concentrate as much as possible on the varieties of textures your fingers will communicate to you when you stop verbalizing. Or concentrate on the taste of some food. You may have been eating it for years yet never really savored the multitude of textures, odors, and tastes because you have been so busy talking and thinking while eating. Try being a gourmet a few minutes each day. Try listening to instrumental music, closing your eyes and concentrating on the flow of pattern and sound without trying to verbalize its significance and meaning.

It is useless to think about performing these experiments, talk about their usefulness or absurdity, or theorize about their significance. All of this is verbalization and can tell you nothing about what you will experience if you actually perform them. If you do work at them faithfully a few minutes or more a day, you will begin to discover a world you never knew existed -- or at best only hazily. Literally, a new world is discovered, a new set of semantic reactions becomes possible. There is nothing magical about this, though sometimes the results seem to be; it's not hypnosis or hallucination or anything abnormal. Rather, it is the discovery of powers of abstraction only dimly experienced previously because they had been buried under a smothering blanket of words. This is the world of the artist and poet, the portal to mystic experience and transcendental vision which great works of art, literature, and music can evoke. This is the level

of abstraction which we live our most intimate and personal life. It is the most important level of experience, for it is the level of feeling and sensation and emotion.<sup>16</sup>

Though we cannot tell exactly whether the man in Chuang Tzu was practicing the technique of silence, we are told that he was so concentrated in his contemplation that he lost his consciousness. As we shall encounter later, there is a device of approaching Tao, a device of "sit-down-and-forget-everything." It is explained as to forget mainly virtues, labels of things, conventional values, etc. The similarity between the technique of silence and the "sit-down-and-forget-everything" is great, and obviously, the latter is made possible through the state of the man leaning on his armrest, staring at the sky and losing his consciousness. The general semanticist maintains that only through penetrating into the world of real experience that we can transcend the blanket of language. Evidently, Chuang Tzu advocated it more than two thousand years ago. The author will investigate Chuang Tzu's concern about language and reality after a brief review of his words related to the principle of non-allness.

In Chapter 33 entitled "The World," there is a remark that "if you select, you do not reach all;" or, in another way of translating, "selecting results with partiality."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Weinberg, Levels of Knowing and Existence, pp. 57-58.

<sup>17</sup>The former is James Legge's translation; see Clae Waltham arranged, James Legge translated, Chuang Tzu: Genius of The Absurd (New York: Charter Communications Inc., 1971), p. 375. The latter is the author's own translation.

If we add that "verbalization is a process of selecting and decreasing details of the object" to the head of Chuang Tzu's sentence, and that "the word does not represent all of the object" to the end of it (thus the whole remark reads: "Since verbalization is a process of selecting and decreasing details of the object, and since selecting results with partiality, the word does not represent all of the object."), the remark would become similar to the non-allness principle of general semantics.

Holding the non-allness principle, Chuang Tzu, then, within the same chapter, criticized the men in the world who applied themselves to doctrines and policies "each think (thought) the efficiency of his own method leaves (left) nothing to be added to it;"<sup>18</sup> also that "many in different places got one glimpse of it (Tao) and plumed themselves on possessing it as a whole."<sup>19</sup> Here Chuang Tzu was applying the principle of general semantics to the real world (of thoughts, as the content of the chapter indicates).

### Language and Reality

The memo of the general semanticist is: The maps are not the territories, or, the language is not the reality; therefore, be vigilant of the tyranny of words! Chuang Tzu, in effect, has doubted and, in a sense, denied, the capacity of language in transmitting the reality:

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<sup>18</sup>Walthan & Legge, Chuang Tzu: Genius of The Absurd, p. 368.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

Men of the world who value the Way (Tao) all turn to books. But books are nothing more than words. Words have values; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has something it is pursuing, but the thing it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down. (Chapter 13, p. 152.)

The "thing" here is the reality, or, in Korzybski's term, the non-verbal level in the process of abstracting. This "thing," according to the ancient Taoist, cannot be described fully and exactly by words. Chuang Tzu has extended his attack at words through the tongue of a wheelwright that represents people who are closer to the reality, the non-verbal level of abstracting, instead of those who lean on the words, the high-verbal level abstracting. The story bearing the attack goes like this:

Duke Huan was in his hall reading a book. The wheelwright Pien, who was in the yard below chiseling a wheel, laid down his mallet and chisel, stepped up into the hall, and said to Duke Huan, "This book Your Grace is reading -- may I venture to ask whose words are in it?"

"The words of the sages," said the duke.

"Are the sages still alive?"

"Dead long ago," said the duke.

"In that case, what you are reading there is nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old!"

The duke after hearing the comment was angry and threatened to take the wheelwright's life:

"Since when does a wheelwright have permission to comment on the books I read?" said Duke Huan. "If you have some explanation, well and good. If not, it's your life!"

Wheelwright Pien said, "I look at it from the point of view of my own work. When I chisel a wheel, if the blows of the mallet are too gentle, the chisel slides and won't take hold. But if they're too hard, it bites in and won't budge. Not too gentle, not too hard -- you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind. You can't put it into words, and yet there's a knack to it somehow. I can't teach it to my son, and he can't learn it from me. So I've gone along for seventy years and at my age I'm still chiseling wheels. When the men of old



died, they took with them the things that couldn't be handed down. So what you are reading there must be nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old." (Chapter 13, pp. 152-153.)

Though the entirely negative attitude toward the capacity of words tends to extremism, the warning against taking the static and dogmatic words for granted is still valid and urgent today. Recognizing that the word is not the object, Chuang Tzu ultimately despised labeling, making Lao Tzu his spokesman, who said, "If you'd called me an ox, I'd have said I was an ox; if you'd called me a horse, I'd have said I was a horse." (Chapter 13, p. 150.)

#### Standpoint As Evaluational Criterion

However, if what Chuang Tzu has argued sounds too remote from the word-bound and label-bound crowd, we have discovered the more acceptable facets of his remarks on language and its evaluational functions. He has set up "standpoint" as the evaluational criterion. Chuang Tzu would say, we might label what is right, what is wrong; what is big, what is small; what is pretty, what is ugly; etc; but, while labeling, beware of where we stand! Chuang Tzu, in the disguise of a god, brought a proud man to a broad view, the infinite vision of nature, then, to the state. Finally, the focus fell upon man himself. Emphasizing judging by comparing, he said:

Compare the area within the four seas with all that is between heaven and earth -- is it not like one little anthill in a vast marsh? Compare the Middle Kingdom with the area within the four seas -- is it not like one tiny grain in a great storehouse? When we refer to the things of creation, we speak of them as numbering ten thousand -- and man is only one of them. We talk of the Nine Provinces where men are most numerous, and yet of the whole area where grain and

foods are grown and where boats and carts pass back and forth, man occupies only one fraction. Compared to the ten thousand things, is he not like one little hair on the body of a horse? (Chapter 17, pp. 176-177.)

Being asked immediately after this speech, "Well then, if I recognize the hugeness of heaven and earth and the smallness of the tip of a hair, will that do?" he answered:

No indeed! There is no end to the weighing of things, no stop to time, no constancy to the division of lots, no fixed rule to beginning and end.... Looking at it this way, how do we know that the tip of a hair can be singled out as the measure of the smallest thing possible? Or how do we know that heaven and earth can fully encompass the dimensions of the largest thing possible?" (Chapter 17, pp. 177-178.)

Notably enough, these are words from the philosopher at the time when people were totally ignorant of astrophysics and atomic physics. For example, as anyone would do, the author contemplates: Now he is in an apartment in Brooklyn, a borough of New York City, which belongs to the State of New York, which is one of the fifty states of United States of America, which is lying as one of the nations on the earth. The earth is one of the nine planets of the solar system which in turn is a member of the tremendously large family of the Milkyway. Human knowledge has yet been able to tell how many Milkyway-like units are there in the universe; nor has it been able to define the size of the universe. The atom was discovered as the smallest particle in the world and was then denied as such. Actually, how small is the smallest? How large is the largest? Chuang Tzu couldn't tell; we neither. He has concluded on big and small that,

Looking at them in their differences from one another, if we call those great that are greater than others, there is nothing that is not great -- and in the same way there is nothing that is not small.

We thus know that heaven and earth are but as a grain of the smallest rice and that the point of a hair is a mountain — such is the view by relative size.  
(Chapter 17)<sup>20</sup>

Though part of this passage somewhat puzzles us literally, its theme of relativity, which is a consequence of comparing things from different standpoints or views, deserves our acceptance.

The principle of relativity, as pointed out in the beginning of this chapter and being elaborated here, is applied furthermore to judging right and wrong. Again, the god said in Chuang Tzu's disguise:

From the point of view of preference, if we regard a thing as right because there is a certain right to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not right. If we regard a thing as wrong because there is a certain wrong to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not wrong. If we know that Yao (a sagely emperor) and Chieh (a tyrant) each thought himself right and condemned the other as wrong, then we may understand how there are preferences in behavior.  
(Chapter 17, p. 180.)

So, "big" and "small", "right" and "wrong", etc., are matters of comparison.

The image of Western beauty has been shaped and standardized first by the Greek mythology, then by paintings especially those of the Renaissance, and now by the screens of movie and television. There are commonly accepted criteria of judging "Queen" and "Miss" in beauty contests, while the "Mr. America" must be "strong," "handsome," and "sexy." However, Chuang Tzu has told us two stories

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<sup>20</sup>Waltham & Legge, Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd, p. 194.

about men who were pleased with people judged "normally" as very "ugly" and changed their views on normality and comeliness. A man who had no lips, whose legs were bent so that he could not walk on his toes, and who was otherwise deformed, talked to a duke. The duke was so pleased with him that he looked on a normal man as having a lean and skinny neck. Another story is about another man, who had a large goiter like an earthenware jar, talking to another duke. The duke was so pleased with him that he looked on a normal man as having a lean and skinny neck. (Chapter 5, pp. 74-75) -- Are these two stories fictitious? Not necessarily, though there are numerous parabolical stories in Chuang Tzu. It is not impossible that "comeliness" might be viewed as "ugliness" and vice versa.

Korzybski has maintained that "every human being is born into a neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic environment from which there is no escape."<sup>21</sup> As psychologists claim, a person judges and evaluates according to his preoccupied "evaluational orientation" (a key term in general semantics)<sup>22</sup> which the linguistic and semantic environment participate greatly in shaping. Americans are familiar that the White have been charged of selling "white beauties" on the screens by the Black who say that "Black is beautiful." Discussion of justification or unjustification of this charge is beyond the scope of this

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<sup>21</sup>Quoted by Irving J. Lee, Language Habits in Human Affairs: An Introduction to General Semantics (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. ix.

<sup>22</sup>See Johnson, People in Quandaries, Chapter XVI, pp. 391-438, passim. Johnson states that people judge according to their general orientation, of which evaluational orientation is one.

study. Suffice it here to say that, as long as a person judges and evaluates according to his preoccupied "evaluational orientation," when the orientation changes, the evaluation changes too.

Standards of evaluation are established, but they are not absolute and, therefore, subject to change, though the "Establishment" hates to see them shifted. As Johnson, the psychologist and speech therapist, admits, it is hard to define what is "normal."<sup>23</sup> And this -- the difficulty in defining "normality" -- subscribes to the shifting, or, at least, the tentativeness, of standards. Probably, the climate of permissiveness which is so prevailing in this society is indebted to the principle of relativity and the difficulty in defining "normal." While, as people agree, males are aroused sexually by females, the avowed homosexual evangelist Troy Pery has admitted that he has been sexually aroused by the muscular.<sup>24</sup> If only man (spiritually and physically) loving woman or woman (spiritually and physically) loving man is of human nature, how do we explain the phenomena of homosexuality and lesbianism, which are still considered taboo by many people? Some people denounce them as "perverted" or "abnormal." But Britain has legalized this "abnormal" behavior.

In a summary statement, Chuang Tzu has concluded his contention on the principle of relativity and its related arguments, saying:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 336, ff.

<sup>24</sup>See Owl, biweekly, (New York: Columbia University, March 17, 1971).

<sup>25</sup>Confucius stated the words to be quoted below. However, Chuang Tzu, who made Confucius to utter the words, was the real speaker.

If you look at them (the things) from the point of view of their differences, then there is liver and gall, Chu and Yueh (two places far apart). But if you look at them from the point of view of their sameness, then the ten thousand things are all one.  
(Chapter 5, p. 69.)

Here "sameness" refers to the concept that Tao is co-existent with everything and is inside everything in the universe. From the point of view of Tao, the Taoist has argued, "things have no nobility or meanness;" there is no big and small, no right and wrong, no beautiful and ugly, and, no life and death.

Then, what is Tao?

#### Tao: A Description

Tao is the translation by sound of the Chinese character 道. Its most common lexical meaning is "way" into which it has been translated by Burton Watson, for example. Other scholars interpret it as "nature" or even "God" as in the translation by James R. Ware (who has further defined "God" as "Life" and written the formula: "God = Life").<sup>26</sup>

Since the author thinks none of the translations competently expresses what is Tao thoroughly, he chooses to use the word "Tao" as the equivalent of the Chinese character in his discussion. (Some scholars in the English language, e.g., James Legge and Thomas Merton, have also simply adopted this sound translation: "Tao.")

Taoism and Taoist are derivatives of the word Tao; the former means the school of philosophy which is characterized by the doctrine

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<sup>26</sup>Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, Introduction, pp. 7-8.

of Tao, while the latter refers to its philosophers among whom Chuang Tzu is one of the two greatest, the other being Lao Tzu.

The word Tao appears approximately 314 times in Chuang Tzu;<sup>27</sup> Tao is discussed on more than 60 occasions.<sup>28</sup> Yet it has been nebulous to many people, including students of Chinese philosophy. In Chuang Tzu's own words -- Tao

has its reality and its signs but is without action or form. You can hand it down but you cannot receive it; you can get it but you cannot see it. It is its own source, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed it was there, firm from ancient times. It gave spirituality to the spirits and to God; it gave birth to Heaven and to earth. It exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it lofty; it exists beneath the limit of the six directions, and yet you cannot call it deep. It was born before Heaven and earth, and yet you cannot say it has been there for long; it is earlier than the earliest time, and yet you cannot call it old. (Chapter 6, p. 81.)

Tao is described in most detail in the foregoing passage:

To analyze, or, to infer from, it, we find that Tao seems --

- (1) To be a reality: "Tao has its reality...."
- (2) To be invisible: "You cannot see it."
- (3) To be a self-fulfillment being: "It is its own source, its own root."
- (4) To be eternal, or, at least, with extremely long duration: "Before Heaven and earth existed it was there, firm from ancient times."
- (5) To be mother of the nature and the supernatural: "It gave spirituality to the spirits and to God; it gave birth to Heaven and

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<sup>27</sup> According to Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, A Concordance to Chuang Tzu, (Peking, 1947,) pp. 274-277.

<sup>28</sup> According to Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, Index, p. 395; and the author's own speculation.

to earth."

(6) To be very permeating: "It exists beyond the highest point, ....it exists beneath the limit of the six directions...."

However, this analysis is not exhausted, because the quoted passage is not so. In addition to all these characteristics, Tao is further described, appearing in other chapters, as:

(7) To be without beginning or end:

"The Way (Tao) is without beginning or end." (Chapter 17, p. 182.)

(8) To be omnipresent:

Master Tung-kuo asked Chuang Tzu, "This thing called the Way (Tao) -- where does it exist?"

Chuang Tzu said, "There's no place it doesn't exist."

"Come," said Master Tung-Kuo, "You must be more specific!"

"It is in the ant."

"As low a thing as that?"

"It is in the panic grass."

"But that's lower still!"

"It's in the tiles and shards."

"How can it be so low?"

"It is in the piss and shit!" (Chapter 22, pp. 240-241.)

(9) To be all-embracing:

"The Way (Tao) covers and bears up the ten thousand things -- vast, vast is its greatness!" (Chapter 12, p. 127.)

(10) To be inaudible:

"The Way (Tao) cannot be heard; heard, it is not the Way (Tao)." (Chapter 22, p. 243.)

(11) Ironically, if not finally, to be undescrivable:

"The Way (Tao) cannot be described; described, it is not the Way (Tao)." (Chapter 22, p. 243.)

#### Tao: The Real Existence

The above description of Tao (despite the paradox that Tao cannot be described) seemingly suggests that it is the Christian God in



Chinese version (actually, Chuang Tzu was born some three hundred years before Jesus). No, it is not that God; not even the Creator. Though from the quoted passage in Chapter 6, we know that it gave birth to Heaven and earth, strangely enough, Chuang Tzu does not mention that Tao created human beings. It merely says that all things are embraced in Tao. Certainly, embracement is not synonymous with creation. Tao does not prescribe ethics to human beings either; but the Christian God does.

To infer from the sayings of Chuang Tzu -- especially that of the concept of life and death, as we shall see later -- human being is an entity of self-birth, self-evolution, and self-change. Moreover, not only is human being, everything -- including Tao itself -- is also such an entity. All things have their respective principle of existence, since Tao, the principle and the "real existence," as Mitsuji Fukunaga has termed it,<sup>29</sup> exists everywhere and in everything. Man has man's principle, and so do animals, plants, and other things -- the only difference being that man exists as man, and animals, plants, and other things grow or exist as animals, plants, and other things. Though the principles all things possess might be various, the fact that each possesses its own principle is just one. That is why Chuang Tzu has said, "The ten thousand things differ in principle, but the Way (Tao) shows no partiality among them." (Chapter 25, p. 290.)

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<sup>29</sup>Kuan-hsueh Chen, tr., Chuang Tzu: Ancient Chinese Existentialism, by Mitsuji Fukunaga, (Taiwan: San Min Shu Chu, 1969), Chapter 4, which is entitled "The World of the Real Existence," pp. 110-136. Chen's translation is in Chinese; the author here re-translates the term into English.

But man does show partiality among things. Man distinguishes himself from animals, plants, and all other things, and regards himself unique and supreme (except under God, as far as the non-atheist is concerned). He sets up all sorts of standards and criteria to differentiate big and small, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, etc. Though the self-pride he enjoys in being unique from and supreme over other creatures might be deemed innocent, and the intellectuality he manifests in differentiating and establishing standards is a natural product of the development of mind, the partiality thus resulting might lead man, himself, far apart from the very reality, i.e., involving him into the abstract world of language.<sup>30</sup>

In Tao, according to Chuang Tzu's contention, everything rests in peace and harmony, difference, standard, contrast, and so forth, all being forgotten and eliminated. It is a world of unity, of allness, of absolute, and of infinity. In such a world, as of success and failure, or completeness and impairment, "no thing is either complete or impaired, but all are made into one." (Chapter 2, p. 41.) As of big and small, beautiful and ugly, "whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar, a leper or the beautiful Hsi-shih, things ribald and shady or things grotesque and strange, the Way (Tao) makes (views) all into one."

Perhaps the most seemingly startling argument is that which eliminates the borderline between life and death. Chuang Tzu has

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<sup>30</sup>The author follows, though not very closely, the ideas of Fukunaga while writing these two paragraphs. See Chen, tr., Chuang Tzu, pp. 112-123.

claimed that "when birth (life) takes place, death begins; when death takes place, birth (life) begins."<sup>31</sup> (Chapter 2) As stated by Erich Fromm, the German-born psychoanalyst and social philosopher, "the most fundamental existential dichotomy is that between life and death."<sup>32</sup> However, this most fundamental existential dichotomy has been dissolved by Chuang Tzu in terms of the process of nature.

First of all, in a parable, Chuang Tzu has brought us to a dialogue between the living and the dead.

When Chuang Tzu went to Chu, he saw an old skull, all dry and parched....He dragged the skull over and, using it for a pillow, lay down to sleep.

In the middle of the night, the skull came to him in a dream and said, "...Would you like to hear a lecture on the dead?"

"Indeed," said Chuang Tzu.

The skull said, "Among the dead there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons. With nothing to do, our springs and autumns are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this!"

Chuang Tzu couldn't believe this and said, "If I got the Arbiter of Fate to give you a body again, make you some bones and flesh, return you to your parents and family and your old home and friends, you would want that, wouldn't you?"

The skull frowned severely, wrinkling up his brow. "Why would I throw away more happiness than that of a king on a throne and take on the troubles of a human being again?" it said. (Chapter 18, pp. 193-194. Dots indicate omissions from the text.)

The "teaching" of this parable makes the point that there should be at least no fear about death. In effect, the skull enjoyed the

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<sup>31</sup>The author's own translation.

<sup>32</sup>Erich Fromm, Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1947); here quoted from A Fawcett Premier Book, (Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1970), p. 50.

happiness of being "dead." Though the story can be interpreted as a ridicule of the living world where -- in contrast with the world of death -- rulers above were exploiting the subjects who suffered below, it is the ruling out of the fear of death that prepares people to approach the reality of death.

In the introductory chapter the author quoted also from Chapter 18, the story of the death of Chuang Tzu's wife as part of the philosopher's possible biography. Here the story continues. (The wife of Chuang Tzu died. But he sang and seemed happy; his friend wondered whether such behavior was going too far. Chuang Tzu replied:)

You're wrong. When she first died, do you think I didn't grieve like anyone else? But I looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. Not only the time before she was born, but the time before she had a body. Not only the time before she had a body, but the time before she had a spirit. In the midst of the jumble of wonder and mystery a change took place and she had a spirit. Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, winter.

Now she's going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I were to follow after her bawling and sobbing, it would show that I don't understand anything about fate. So I stopped." (Chapter 18, p. 192.)

Chuang Tzu viewed life and death as reality, a natural process of change, like the change of the four seasons. Other passages also demonstrate the philosopher's emphasis on life and death as a natural process of change, e.g., "Life and death are fated -- constant as the succession of dark and dawn, a matter of Heaven." (Chapter 6, p. 80.) A man suddenly grew ill. Gasping and wheezing, he lay at the point of death. His wife and children gathered in a circle and began to cry. A friend, who had come to ask how he was, said, "Shoo! Get back! Don't disturb the process of change!" (Chapter 6, p. 85.)

Therefore, "when birth (life) takes place, death begins; when death takes place, birth (life) begins" is more than an epigram. It is a truth in the way that -- in the ever-lasting process of change -- the very moment birth (life) takes place, it begins to approach death, since death is natural and inevitable. The interpretation of the other half of the sentence is more difficult, but we can reason as: (1) Because nobody knows what happens after death, it is not impossible that there is a kind of "birth" or "life" after it. (2) Chemically speaking, after death, the substance of the body transforms into other forms of existence. (3) In the reckless universe of unaccountable creatures, when the death of a body takes place, the birth (life) of another body immediately begins. We are reminded that "when we refer to the things of creation, we speak of them as numbering ten thousand -- and man is only one of them." (Chapter 17, p. 176.)

As a natural process of change, death should threaten no man.

In Chuang Tzu, death does not threaten man, but man challenges death.

When Chuang Tzu was about to die, his disciples expressed a desire to give him a sumptuous burial. Chuang Tzu said, "I will have heaven and earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade discs, the stars and constellations for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousand things for my parting gifts.... (Chapter 32, p. 361.)

If the use of the word "beautiful" to describe the death and its burial does not annoy Chuang Tzu, it is really "beautiful," beautiful in its conventional sense.

Chuang Tzu believed that Tao is the real existence in the realm of which there is no difference, no standard, and the like; everything is in unity, in allness, and in infinity. Some critics have related

the concept of Tao to atomism, either scientifically or philosophically. Maybe from the viewpoint of general semantics, Tao, as the real existence, can be compared to the submicroscopic level of the abstracting process. Korzybski and his followers contend that the full description of the non-verbal level (including the submicroscopic level) is beyond the capacity of our words. The best way to realize the reality is to go all the way down to the empirical reality. According to the Taoist, Tao is much more than the submicroscopic phenomenon. But he has declined the competence of words in the realm of Tao with no less passion than the general semanticist does in the realm of the non-verbal level. Though the ultimate steps differ radically -- to observe the reality and then tell the difference in terms of non-identity and non-allness, for one; and to return to the reality with all the simplicity and forget all the differences and standards, for the other -- they both urge for a return to the real existence. Words are not trustworthy, at least to a certain extent. This is the consensus of Chuang Tzu and the general semanticist.

#### Tao: The Theme of Taoism

Despite the many different interpretations of Chuang Tzu which we shall see in the next chapter, the conventional explanation of the "orthodox" Taoism, as adopted by most writers of Chinese philosophy history, concedes that it is a sermon of humans' return to the nature. It denounces the civilization of systematization and institutionalization which offers to the human race nothing but bondage and restraint. To free from the chaotic world of words and artificiality and all sorts of sufferings, it has introduced Tao -- which is to be achieved by

means of the "fasting-of-the-mind," "sit-down-and-forget-everything," "be-still-and-empty," etc. which we shall encounter also -- as an attempt to accomplish a state, mentally at least, marked by quietude, harmony, repose and inaction.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>The interested reader is referred to Fung, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy; and Chu Chai, The Story of Chinese Philosophy (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1961).

### CHAPTER III

#### APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF GENERAL SEMANTICS TO CHUANG TZU

The previous interpretation of the principles of general semantics, as implied in Chuang Tzu, appears to show that Chuang Tzu's writings are scientific. Regardless of whether we agree with its premise on Tao, the book has inferred the principles of non-identity and non-allness, etc., from the underlying philosophy that the reality is dynamic, ever-changing, and process-like, and concludes with the doctrine of the all-embracing Tao, where all things of the universe rest in a mode of peace, harmony, and spontaneity, a state of identity and allness. So far, we have seen a scientific-minded Chuang Tzu. However, the above quotations are all extracted and rearranged from the aged classic. On the one hand, it appears systematic and logical, but on the other hand, this is not so.

Chuang Tzu is a book of peculiarity that owes to its excessive use of metaphors and parables, "odd and outlandish" phrasing, and its sometimes rejection to certain conventional values of words. Hence, in addition to other reasons, such as the intrinsic difficulty of Chuang Tzu's thought and textual corruption that has emerged during transmitting a difficult text as such, it seems that the author is too audacious to pronounce its logical flaws and semantic defects. Yet the author is willing to run the risk because -- judging the



present text of Chuang Tzu as it is -- he has discovered such flaws, which, as far as his knowledge goes, have not been pointed out with considerable effort as a contribution to the study and understanding of Chuang Tzu.

This chapter is devoted to investigating the other phase of the cardinal Taoist classic, with an attempt to answer its cause and explain the reason of long since academic controversies on the interpretation of it. This will be in light of the principles of general semantics as exemplified by non-identity, non-allness and self-reflexiveness.

#### Confucianism Attacked vs. Confucianism Favored

The principle of non-identity says that A is not A, or, more clearly,  $A_1$  is not  $A_2$ , and  $A_1$  today is not  $A_1$  yesterday, etc. On many occasions, we have found in Chuang Tzu that two ideas concerning the same topic are contradictory. In terms of the non-identity principle, Idea<sub>1</sub><sup>here</sup> is not Idea<sub>1</sub><sup>there</sup> and thus, to put it another way, to describe a philosopher by his consistency in thinking, Chuang Tzu<sub>in pas-</sub> sage 1 is not Chuang Tzu<sub>in passage 2</sub>.

Chapter I of this thesis briefly stated that there were many schools of thoughts in Chuang Tzu's time and the Taoist attacked them with the charge that they were no more than dogmatic and artificial institutions which led to human bondage and social chaos. He has urged the emancipation of mind from the corrupt civilization. Confucianism and Mohism -- especially the former -- were severely under fire. Chuang Tzu accused the Confucian sage,

....limping and wheeling about in the exercise of benevolence, pressing along and standing on tiptoe in the doing of righteousness, then men universally began to be perplexed. Those sages also went to excess in their performances of music and in their gesticulations in the practice of ceremonies. Then men began to be separated from one another.

The assault continues,

....If the attributes of the Tao had not been disallowed, how should men have preferred benevolence and righteousness? If the instincts of nature had not been departed from, how should ceremonies and music have come into use?

and continues,

....the injury done to the characteristics of the Tao in order to practice benevolence and righteousness was the error of the sagely men.

and finally goes to the end when the chapter which attacks entirely on Confucianism characterized by "benevolence," "righteousness," "ceremonies," and "music" concludes:

....But when the sagely men appeared, with their bendings and stoppings in ceremonies and music, hanging up their benevolence and righteousness to excite the endeavors of all to reach them in order to comfort their minds -- then the people began to stump and limp about in their love of knowledge and strove with one another in their pursuit of gain. There was no stopping them. This was the error of those sagely men. (Chapter 9)<sup>1</sup>

Assaults on the Confucian sages are seen elsewhere; e.g., the spokesman in Chapter 29 denounced almost all the Confucian sages for their wrong doings and unexcusable vice. Even Chapter 2, which is a general manifestation of his philosophy, does not fail to catch up with the criticism of Confucianism and Mohism (p. 39).

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<sup>1</sup>Waltham & Legge, Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd, pp. 119-120.

However, his attitude toward Confucianism here is not his attitude toward Confucianism there, as we shall see below. Chuang Tzu in Chapter 33 has recognized the Confucian gentleman who is next in virtue to the Confucian sage. He wrote favorably:

To make benevolence his standard of kindness, righteousness his model of reason, ritual his guide to conduct, and music his source of harmony, serene in mercy and benevolence -- one who does this is called a gentleman. (p. 362.)

The Taoist further reacted positively toward the Six Classics of Confucianism (p. 363) and extended his endorsement to the Confucian theme that is "sagely within and kingly without." (p. 364.) In Chapter 12, the deeds of Confucian sages are included, portraying the "filial son" and the "loyal minister" (p. 138) which are just in accordance with both the letter and spirit of the Confucian classics as exemplified by the Analects.

#### Confucius the Taoist vs. Confucius the Confucian

The profile of Confucius in one passage is contradictory with that of another, probably an inevitable consequence of the paradoxical presentations of Confucianism. This is another evidence of logical flaw.

Confucius was frequently fictionalized to preach the Taoist doctrine, his image being manipulated at Chuang Tzu's pleasure. To illustrate his concept of change, Chuang Tzu told his friend that "Confucius has been going along for sixty years and he has changed sixty times." (Chapter 27, p. 305, quoted in Chapter II of this thesis.) Confucius was made to say: "If you look at them from the point of view of their differences, then there is liver and gall,

Chu and Yueh. But if you look at them from the point of view of their sameness, then the ten thousand things are all one." (Chapter 5, p. 69, also quoted in Chapter II of this thesis.) This is really a strong support of Chuang Tzu's vision of the all-embracing Tao, and he is a great ventriloquizer, indeed! To cite another instance, Confucius spoke in the very spirit of Taoism -- the theme of "sit-down-and-forget-everything" (Chapter 6, p. 90) which falls into the sphere of mysticism as some critics claim.

However, Confucius, at times, wiped off the facade and returned to preach his own morality. For example, in Chapter 13, while conversing with Lao Tzu, the other great Taoist, Confucius insisted upon his doctrine of benevolence and righteousness. (p. 149.) Again, in his own way, he spoke of the Confucian filial piety and loyalty, saying:

That a son should love his parents is fate -- you cannot erase this from his heart. That a subject should serve his ruler is duty -- there is no place he can escape to between heaven and earth. These are called the great decrees. Therefore, to serve your parents and be content to follow them anywhere -- this is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your ruler and be content to do anything for him -- this is the peak of loyalty. (Chapter 4, pp. 59-60.)

Nevertheless, within this very chapter, Confucius appeared to play the role of a Taoist sage again. He was instructing one of his disciples the device of the "fasting-of-the-mind," which, together with that of "sit-down-and-forget-everything" and that of "be-still-and-empty" (Chapter 23, p. 259) -- some critics consider these three devices synonymous -- are basic approaches to the Taoist mysticism.

We have found ample evidence to demonstrate that in Chuang Tzu, Confucius<sub>in passage 1</sub> is not Confucius<sub>in passage 2</sub>, and that Con-

fucius<sup>the Taoist</sup> is not Confucius<sup>the Confucian</sup>. Neither the image of the "Perfect Man" (who is the ideal sage of Taoism) is self-consistent. While in Chapter 1, the "Perfect Man" is said to have "no self," (p. 32) corresponding with the device of "sit-down-and-forget-everything," where having forgotten one's own self is the final step in the forgetting process, in Chapter 4 the "Perfect Man" is one who "made sure that he had it (Tao) in himself before he tried to give it to others." (p. 54.) The latter version of the "Perfect Man" is self-conscious as such! If we have read the Analects, it is obvious that this "Perfect Man" is like the Confucian sage or gentleman.

#### Non-identity and Non-allness

In Chuang Tzu, the ideas that run astray from the main stream of the Taoist thoughts are innumerable. While on the one hand, Chuang Tzu spoke to "cut off sageliness, cast away wisdom (knowledge), and then the great thieves will cease," (Chapter 10, p. 110) and the world will recover peace; on the other hand, he looked down upon those whose wisdom (knowledge) was not sufficient to understand the words of the Taoist himself. (Chapter 17, p. 187.) In effect, Chuang Tzu, the philosopher, was a man of erudition, as illustrated in Chuang Tzu: recordings of historical personalities that require knowledge of history; criticism of philosophers that requires knowledge of philosophy; descriptions of the sick that require knowledge of medicine; and so on. As the author of The Record of History stated, "his study was all-embracing." More than knowledge, Chuang Tzu was a man of wisdom. The judgment that Chuang Tzu is a book of wisdom is generally upheld, despite the question of what his wisdom is really

is. But he spoke of casting away wisdom! Is it not logically unsound that there were a Chuang Tzu who was against wisdom and a Chuang Tzu who stood for wisdom?

There are still other serious ironies which mean, again, inconsistency. In his view, life and death are a matter of natural process and the borderline between them is eliminated. Judging from the pains of sufferings of life in his time, he has been pessimistic enough to denounce life "as a swelling tumor, a protruding wen," and death "as the draining of a sore or the bursting of a boil." (Chapter 6, p. 87.) However, within the same chapter, his tune suddenly changed to an optimism that "to live well my life is to die well."<sup>2</sup>

The inconsistency is shown in other aspects as well. The structure of Chapters 29 to 32 is almost entirely different from the rest of the book, especially the first seven chapters. And Chapter 30 has little or nothing to do with the main stream of Chuang Tzu's philosophy. Actually, how do we treat such inconsistency in dealing with the philosophy of Chuang Tzu? This is indeed a difficult question!

To answer this question, we have to answer first of all whether Chuang Tzu was consistent with himself. And this inquiry is, unfortunately, unanswerable. Even though we might have well defined "what is the main stream of Chuang Tzu's philosophy?" and stated that "consistent" means not contradictory with this stream, we are helpless

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<sup>2</sup>Chapter 6; this is the author's own translation.

because we are not able to ask Chuang Tzu which thoughts in Chuang Tzu are his, and which are not. We can only approach the question with some assumptions.

Assuming that Chuang Tzu was consistent with his philosophy, we might infer that Chuang Tzu, the book, is not Chuang Tzu, the man, since we have found inconsistency in the text. Assuming, then, that Chuang Tzu was inconsistent with his own philosophy, we might infer that Chuang Tzu, the book, represents Chuang Tzu, the man, since they are both inconsistent. But this answer is very dangerous because, despite inconsistency, the book might not represent all of Chuang Tzu the man. In effect, a contemporary scholar has learned that there are some 120 quotations (claimed words of Chuang Tzu) appearing in other Chinese ancient books, but not seen in the present version of Chuang Tzu.<sup>3</sup> There is still one more possible legitimate answer, based on this assumption. Due to interpolations and corruption of the text, Chuang Tzu's inconsistency might be different from Chuang Tzu's inconsistency, and therefore, Chuang Tzu, the book, is not Chuang Tzu, the man.

So it is safe to say that Chuang Tzu the book is not Chuang Tzu the man, or, Chuang Tzu the book does not represent all of Chuang Tzu the man. Furthermore, Chuang Tzu the man as recorded in the book bearing his name and in history (in The Record of History, as quoted in the first chapter of this thesis) is not Chuang Tzu the man who lived empirically in a certain culture at a certain time, or, the former does not represent all of the latter.

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<sup>3</sup>See Hsu-lun Ma, Chuang Tzu I Cheng (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1930).

The author has come quite a long way to reach conclusions which might be considered simple or even childish. Perhaps they really are, because the principles of non-identity and non-allness are not complicated and difficult to understand. Korzybski wrote several hundred pages to find that the principles are "childishly simple," saying:

Curiously enough, the principles involved are often childishly simple, often "general known," to the point that on several occasions some older scientists felt "offended" that such "obvious" principles should be emphasized. Yet my experience was that no matter how much these simple principles were approved of verbally, in no case were they fully applied in practice.

Actually, how many people -- mostly scholars -- have been aware of such "childishly simple" findings and have applied them fully in the study of Chuang Tzu and its author, and in the study of other similar ancient books and their authors which are difficult and inconsistent? More than a few critics have just evaluated Chuang Tzu from a narrow angle or even a biased stand and judged it as so. They have labeled Chuang Tzu with whatever titles they have chosen, and have considered the labelings unmistakable. So have they treated other similar writings and personalities. Their flaw is that they consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or not deliberately, ignore the vital principles of non-identity and non-allness, though they might approve these principles wholeheartedly.

The ensuing part of this chapter will survey briefly the extremely diversified labelings attributed to Chuang Tzu by both Oriental and

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<sup>4</sup>Korzybski, Science and Sanity, p. 539.



Western scholars, followed by an attempt to answer, by means of approaches of general semantics, why the interpretations are so widely divided.

### Who Is Chuang Tzu?

Who is Chuang Tzu? -- Almost everyone who coins, from Chuang Tzu the book, a token for Chuang Tzu, casts his individual profile of the controversial philosopher. A summary of these profiles would seem to say that he is everybody or nobody, since his images range from a Taoist hermit to a Christian God, from a poet to a social reformer, from a mystic to an existentialist, etc. His philosophy ranges from Buddhism to Confucianism (and Taoism of course), from idealism to materialism, and so forth. The author will start from the ancient Chinese descriptions.

Ssu-ma Chien (about 100 B.C.) recorded Chuang Tzu in The Record of History briefly and objectively, without giving him any label, except remarks such as that "his study was all-embracing," and that "his language, in its vastness and freedom of concept, fitted very well his own ideas."

Kuo Hsiang of the Chin Dynasty (265-316 A.D.) compiled and commented on the book of Chuang Tzu and, together with another contemporary scholar, interpreted it in the light of metaphysics which was to become very popular during the ensuing centuries. Thus Chuang Tzu was a metaphysician in the eyes of Kuo Hsiang and his followers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Kuo-ching Yeh, Chuang Tzu Yen Chiu (A Study on Chuang Tzu) (Shanghai; Commercial Press, 1936), p. 112.

From the third to the nineteenth centuries, when Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were the three dominant schools of thought of China, Chuang Tzu had become one of the most prominent figures in the Chinese philosophy, comparable to Confucius, Mencius (the great Confucian next to Confucius), Lao Tzu, and Buddha, and the like. Thousands of words had been poured onto his philosophy. However, only with a very few exceptions, his doctrines were explained by different schools of critics mostly to fit their own ways of thinking. The variety of interpretations can be categorized into four groups.<sup>6</sup>

First, Chuang Tzu was explained to support Confucianism. For example, a Confucian scholar of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) argued that "Free and Easy Wandering" (the title and theme of Chapter 1 of Chuang Tzu) means to be happy and free. Since, he continued, the disciples of Confucius described in the Analects their Master with only the word "happy," and the Book of Poems (also a Confucian classic) also describes the gentleman with only the word "happy," it was appropriate to conclude that "what 'Free and Easy Wandering' means is identical with what is meant by 'happy' in the Book of Poems and the Analects."

Second, Chuang Tzu was regarded as the sacred book of the religious Taoism, which is distinctly separate from the philosophical Taoism. The latter, as referred to in this thesis, is one of the three major

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<sup>6</sup>The author follows the categorization made in Yeh, Chuang Tzu Yen Chiu; the materials of the ensuing four paragraphs are also based on his book. See pp. 110-132.

schools of thought -- we usually speak about in Chinese philosophy. The religious Taoists believed in the existence of the "Holy Man" who "sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas," (p. 33) as depicted in Chapter 1 of Chuang Tzu. The book was interpreted at their pleasure to fit their territory of mysticism.

Third, there was the Buddhist version of Chuang Tzu. For example, a Buddhist scholar of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) made a comparative study on Chuang Tzu and the Buddhist classics, recognizing many similarities between the two philosophies. Another Buddhist scholar of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911), specializing in the study of Zen Buddhism, evaluated and commented on Chuang Tzu in the light of Zen Buddhism.

Fourth, there was the miscellaneous group who made phonographic, bibliographic, etymologic, and annotative, etc., studies on Chuang Tzu.

As to modern China, in the first half of the twentieth century before the Communist take-over -- and especially since the May-fourth (1919) New Cultural Movement -- the scholarship on Chuang Tzu shifted to the comparative studies between the Taoist classic and Western philosophy and thought as exemplified by writings such as "A Comparison of Hegel's Metaphysics of Change and Chuang Tzu's Metaphysics of Change,"<sup>7</sup> "Dialectics in the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu,"<sup>8</sup> etc. In this

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<sup>7</sup>Chun-yi Tang, "A Comparison of Hegel's Metaphysics of Change and Chuang Tzu's Metaphysics of Change," Chung Shan Institute of Culture and Education Quarterly, Oct., 1936.

<sup>8</sup>Pai-tsan Chien, "Dialectics in the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu," Chung Shan Institute of Culture and Education Quarterly, Oct., 1935.

period, Chuang Tzu was also treated as an artist and a writer of literature; while he was criticized for his ideas on negative revolution.<sup>9</sup> The trend in the study of Chuang Tzu has changed with the times, illustrative of the philosopher's own contention of change. Such variation on Chuang Tzu in this period is understandable when China the grand old kingdom was challenged unprecedentedly by the Western civilization.

The criterion of Marxist dialectic materialism has been applied to the study of Chuang Tzu by the Communist scholars in Mainland China since the government's establishment in 1949. Opinions differ on whether Chuang Tzu was a idealist or a materialist. Some critics argue that his philosophy is materialistic, because of his ideas of the transformation of things, his refusal to believe in spirits, his anti-religious sentiment, and his fundamentally materialistic view of the universe.<sup>10</sup> However, the effort to defend his philosophy as consistent with the Marxist orthodoxy seems a lost battle due to the overwhelming criticism that Chuang Tzu was a "degenerating reactionary," representing the "declining slave-owner aristocrat" and "feudalistic ruling class" (though some maintain instead that he reflected the peasant

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<sup>9</sup>Ting-chu Hsiung, "Chuang Tzu as Artist," Chung Yang University Bimonthly, v. 1, issue 10, March, 1930.

Chang Shih, "A Critique on Chuang Tzu's Value of Literature: From the Viewpoint of Current-rising Literature," Chung Yang University Bimonthly, v. 1, issue 10, March, 1930.

Yu Wu, "The Negative Revolution of Lao (Tzu) and Chuang (Tzu)," New Youth, April, 1917.

<sup>10</sup>As represented by Chi-yu Jen, "Chuang Tzu's Materialistic World View," A Symposium of the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu (Peking: Chung Huah Shu Chu, 1962), pp. 160-177.

and the small producer), and that his pessimistic view of life was "negative in class struggle," etc.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it is interesting to note here that Yu-lan Fung, a scholar of philosophy -- who translated Chuang Tzu into English in the thirties and wrote his History of Chinese Philosophy before the Communist conquest of Mainland China with an attitude at least neutral toward the thoughts of Chuang Tzu -- has changed his mind to say that Chuang Tzu's "idea is but an imaginary utopia" and "should be cast away."<sup>12</sup>

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, Chuang Tzu is taught at high school and college levels as part of Chinese great literature and philosophy. He is regarded as one of the Chinese great minds, though without much particular academic attention. However, he has been considered by some scholars -- predominantly the young with knowledge of modern Western thoughts -- as the ancient Chinese existentialist, in the 1960's when the cult of Existentialism, represented by Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, was almost a mode of the young generation in the two islands. Probably it is the element of anti-establishment and that of stressing the subjectivity, instead of the conventional outside-imposed values, in the philosophy of Chuang Tzu, that made him an existentialist hero. Coincidentally or not coincidentally, Mitsuji Fukunaga, a Japanese scholar, has authored a book entitled Chuang Tzu: Ancient Chinese Existentialism (Tokyo, 1964).

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<sup>11</sup>As represented by Feng Ko, "The Real Nature of Relativism in Chuang Tzu's Philosophy," A Symposium of the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu, pp. 322-328.

<sup>12</sup>See Yu-lan Fung, "A Treatise on Chuang Tzu," *ibid.*, pp. 115-128; also "Third Treatise on Chuang Tzu," *ibid.*, pp. 326-339.

In the Western world, Chuang Tzu has been labeled as differently as a social reformer and as a hippie. Social reformer and hippie might be identical in the realm of Tao. However, the gap between them exists as long as the concept of Tao is far from being accepted, if not rejected, at present. Following is a bird's-eye review of the Western critics' descriptions of the Taoist.

The English translator Herbert A. Giles expressed his evaluation on Chuang Tzu in the title of the book, the 1889 translation, which reads: "Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralism, and Social Reformer." It is conspicuous that Giles was aware of his multi-sided characters and thoughts.

James Legge, in the second complete English translation published in 1891, did not audaciously label Chuang Tzu anything; rather, he was interested in the bibliographical study of the classic.

Arther Waley, renowned for his tremendous contribution to translating Chinese literature, viewed Chuang Tzu as a splendid poet. This judgment made in 1939 in his Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China (p. 255) has been agreed to by Burton Watson, whom we shall encounter later.

In the mid 1960's, two books authored by Chuang Tzu's admirers both compare Chuang Tzu with Christianity. While James Ware, in the Introduction to his 1963 translation, has stated that Chuang Tzu "describes for his contemporaries the almighty, all embracing, everlasting God (Tao) comparable to the One defined in the Judaeo-Christian tradition by the equation God = Life." Thomas Merton in his The Way of Chuang Tzu, published in 1965, noted an analogy between Chuang Tzu and St. Paul, the early sage of Christianity, which is Chuang Tzu's

"teaching about the spiritual liberty of wu wei<sup>13</sup> and the relation of virtue to the indwelling Tao" and "St. Paul's teaching on faith and grace, contrasted with the 'works of the Old Law.'"<sup>14</sup> Ware and Merton also linked Chuang Tzu with Confucianism: as in Ware's remarks, "In Chuang Chou (Tzu) we meet a progressive, dynamic wing of Confucianism that strove to maintain the spirit, not the letter, of Confucius;"<sup>15</sup> as in Merton's, "the relation of the Chuang Tzu book to the Analects of Confucius is not unlike that of the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans to the Torah."<sup>16</sup>

As a professor of Chinese, Burton Watson, in agreement with Waley's poetic portrait of Chuang Tzu, wrote in his Introduction to the 1968 complete translation<sup>17</sup>: "In the broadest sense of the word, his (Chuang Tzu's) work is in fact one of the greatest poems of ancient China." (p. 19) Recognizing the brilliant and original mind of Chuang Tzu, Watson has rejected Chuang Tzu as a social reformer who draws "some concrete plan of action designed to reform the individual, to reform society, and eventually to free the world from its ills." (p. 3.) Watson has concluded that Chuang Tzu's solution is: "free yourself from the world;" and he has summed up the theme of Chuang Tzu in a

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<sup>13</sup>"Wu wei" is usually translated into "non-action" or "inaction" in the English language.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Merton, The Way of Chuang Tzu (New York: New Direction, 1965), p. 25.

<sup>15</sup>Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Merton, The Way of Chuang Tzu, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup>Watson published his Basic Writings of Chuang Tzu in 1964.

single word: freedom. (p. 3) However, Watson has admitted that "the philosophy of Chuang Tzu, like most mystical philosophies, has seldom been fully understood and embraced in its pure form by more than a small minority." (p. 4.)

Finally, in probably the latest English publication on the classic, Clae Waltham has described Chuang Tzu as "Chameleon of the Warring States who was part psychologist, part philosopher, part mystic, and part hippie."<sup>18</sup> Now that the hippie movement is popular, hippie, Zen Buddhism, and the philosophy of Chuang Tzu are netted together because they all believe in simplicity, spontaneity, and a kind of enlightenment, etc.

To a layman of Chuang Tzu, such a vast difference of opinions among the critics is more than diversified. It is confusing. Did, in Chuang Tzu's own words, these critics "in different places get one glimpse of it (Chuang Tzu) and plume themselves on possessing it as a whole?" Or, even worse, the wisdom of these critics "was not sufficient to understand the words of Chuang Tzu?" -- They might have not comprehended thoroughly the sayings of the Taoist; they might have comprehended with bias; they might even have been scholastically incompetent to comprehend; they are responsible for this academic chaos for, in short, to quote Korzybski's words, "their work is the product of the working of their nervous systems,"<sup>19</sup> and their nervous systems differ. However, Chuang Tzu itself should share the responsibility, no less than the critics, of creating the chaos.

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<sup>18</sup>Waltham & Legge, Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup>Korzybski, Science and Sanity, p. 1xix.



### Self-reflexiveness

It is the concept it carries, and the style in which it was written -- that is, the existing reality of the book as it is -- that invite diversity in criticism. Curiously enough, the intelligent Taoist seemed to be able to predict such a controversy and provided in the text, when it was being written, an explanation for it.

In the last chapter of Chuang Tzu, most philosophies of that "Hundred Schools" period were criticized. Chuang Tzu made a self-evaluation which includes a brief discussion of the philosophy of Tao, a comment on his writings, and an evaluation of his life and philosophy. The criticism on his writings is statements about statements which constitute the content of the book. In terms of general semantics, it represents a kind of self-reflexiveness. The self-reflexiveness of the language made by Chuang Tzu himself is very helpful in understanding the literature of Chuang Tzu and very effective in explaining the cause of the long-lasting dispute.

The following remarks which are included among the self-evaluation passage in the last chapter of the book are ascribed mainly to his writings:

He (Chuang Tzu) discussed them (the mysteries of Tao), using strange and mystical expressions, wild and whirling words, and phrases to which no definite meaning could be assigned.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Waltham & Legge, Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd, p. 378. However, the phrase "wild and whirling words" is not the translation of Legge; it is borrowed from Watson's.

He constantly indulged his own wayward ideas,<sup>21</sup>  
not looking at things from one angle only.<sup>22</sup>

He believed that the world was drowned in turbid-  
ness and that it was impossible to address it in sober lan-  
guage.<sup>23</sup>

Though his writings are spectacular, they are soft  
and tender and do no one harm.<sup>24</sup>

Though his language is both factual and fanciful,  
his wit is worthy to be observed.<sup>25</sup>

They (both his writings and thoughts) are obscure  
and confusing, but cannot be ever exhausted.<sup>26</sup>

Though the text of Chuang Tzu consists of "factual," logical, and  
rational elements, the abundance of "mystical expressions," "wild and  
whirling words," and so on, which are "fanciful," non-logical (or,  
illogical), and non-rational (or, irrational), permeating everywhere,  
has "obscured and confused" the comprehension of the Taoist classic.  
The ideological inconsistency, as disclosed in previous sections, would  
simply be explained, according to the self-criticism, with the sophistic  
excuse of "not looking at things at one angle only."

The self-evaluation reflects a number of semantic characteristics  
opposed by the general semanticist in the scientific thinking and  
writing. These defects in general semantics, including unsystematic  
organization of the text, lack of extensionalization, self-projection,  
and the like, will be discussed in the ensuing sections.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>22</sup>Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, p. 372.

<sup>23</sup>Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, p. 373.

<sup>24</sup>The author's own translation.

<sup>25</sup>Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, p. 229.

<sup>26</sup>The author combines the translations by Legge, Ware, and Watson  
into this one.

## Defects in Terms of General Semantics:

### Unsystematic Organization

General semantics is rooted in, and thus cannot be separate from, scientific orientation. One basic requirement in writing with scientific orientation is systematic organization. The works of Marx and Einstein, for instance, are famous for their difficulty in reading. Nevertheless, chapter by chapter, page by page, themes are emerging from the text which was written in a way not inconsistent with the scientific requirement. The voluminous and erudite, if not lofty, Science and Sanity by Korzybski is not an easy book to digest; however, it is so well organized and orderly structured that it sets a model of scientific writing for subjects not directly related to the narrower sense of science.

Chuang Tzu, lacking systematic organization, reveals a disordered composition of ideas and anecdotes in most parts of the text. An idea is always treated in one passage with some length and then discarded; it reappears, if it is important, but the location of it is always many pages -- sometimes many chapters -- apart from the initial appearance. Anecdotes which serve to clarify the ideas related are also scattered here and there. The quotations from the concept of change, the contention of life and death, etc., as have seen in the previous chapter, are illustrative.

The format of a typical, modern, non-fiction publication includes an introductory chapter at the beginning and a concluding one at the end. Needless to say, this format does not exist in Chuang Tzu.

As mentioned before, the classic in its present appearance was compiled and edited by Kuo Hsiang whose work has probably saved the classic from more seriously structural disorder. Kuo Hsiang's placing of the first chapter and the last chapter has been viewed as quite appropriate, though other patterns of opening and closing the book might also be justified.

The first paragraph of the first chapter reads as follows:

In the northern darkness there is a fish and his name is Kun. The Kun is so huge I don't know how many thousand li (a Chinese measure unit) he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is Peng. The back of the Peng measures I don't know how many thousand li across and, when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky. When the sea begins to move, this bird sets off for the southern darkness, which is the Lake of Heaven.

In this paragraph, the concept of change and images such as "flying," "sky," "heaven," and "move" appear. While this spectacular picture connotes a vision of vastness and infinity, which is effective in depicting Chuang Tzu's writing and the concept of Tao, it also includes a paradox, a kind of literary technique prevailing in the whole book. "Kun" means fish roe. Therefore Chuang Tzu begins with a paradox that the tiniest fish imaginable is also the largest fish imaginable.<sup>27</sup>

Some other key ideas of Chuang Tzu, e.g., judging by comparison, the nature of the "Perfect Man" and the Taoist sage, and the free and easy wandering, constitute the rest of the content of the first chapter. But, there are many more ideas introduced and discussed in Chapter 2. If we agree that the more issues it introduces the better it serves as

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<sup>27</sup> See Mu Chien, Chuang Tzu Annotated (Hong Kong: South East Press, 1951), p. 1. Also Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, p. 29.

an introduction, then the second chapter should head. Actually, in most of the seven "inside-chapters," which are believed by the majority of scholars as genuinely authored by Chuang Tzu, many Taoist ideas appear in each chapter. Each of these chapters can stand alone and can be put at the beginning as an introductory chapter.

The placing of Chapter 33 at the end also is considered appropriate, mainly because it is unique in criticizing the contemporary schools of philosophy (five in total) and serving as a critical history of the philosophies. Such a unique chapter should be placed separately, advisably at the end. Another supporting reason is that it includes a self-evaluation and such a self-evaluation is better located at the end. These reasons seem sound, yet the other side of the argument would be that, should Chuang Tzu be a modern philosopher, before launching attacks against his contemporary thinkers, he would have first of all displaced and reviewed the philosophies to be assaulted at the beginning part of his book.

#### Defects in Terms of General Semantics:

Over  
Defined Terminology  
Under

The concept of operational definition was introduced by semanticists in scientific writing to replace the ambiguous phrasing. General semanticists have adopted the concept of "operationalism" and evolved it into that of "extensionalism," as opposite of "intensionalism." As an attempt to approach scientific living, general semantics appeals to extensional orientation. To achieve the extensional orientation, the first attack is aimed at language. Korzybski has pointed out that in our daily language, many words are either over-defined or under-defined;

and they are blockades at the first step to the sanity of man. By over-defined terms, Korzybski meant terms which are intensionally over defined, and under-defined terms, extensionally under defined.<sup>28</sup> This is best illustrated by Chuang Tzu's definition of Tao.

Intensionally speaking, Chuang Tzu himself has overdone the work of describing and defining the concept of Tao. (Just count the number of its appearances and the number of words poured upon it! Refer back to the section under the subtitle of "Tao: A Description" of the previous chapter.) However, the general semanticist would find that, extensionally, Tao is under-defined. For instance, the extensional definition (or, operational definition)<sup>29</sup> of atom in science includes detailed description of it that leads to experiments to prove the validity of such a definition. Though atom cannot be seen or touched or heard even on the microscopic level, experiment of proving its quality -- e.g., the impact of splitting atom -- can be conducted. But, as to Tao, all its descriptions in Chuang Tzu do not lead to any valid experiment of proving the existence of it and the state of attaining it. Even though we might boldly assume that the states of repose, quietude, and harmony can be measured by the psychologist, the degrees of these states required to show that Tao is attained remains unanswered.

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<sup>28</sup>Korzybski, Science and Sanity, p. 1ii, ff.

<sup>29</sup>It seems that Korzybski has employed the term "extensional definition" to identify with the "operational definition." Since operational definition is included in the overall process of extensionalization, and an operational definition must at length lead to some sort of observation or experiment extensionally, here the author follows the usage of the two terms (operational definition and extensional definition) as identical.

Furthermore, the concept of "wu wei" (inaction), also a state of Tao, has puzzled many critics. Still further, we are not sure how many total conditions are necessary and sufficient to attain Tao. The more questions we ask, the more we would seem to agree that Chuang Tzu's ideal is but an imaginary utopia. We further would seem to agree that the concept of Tao falls into the category of mysticism. Thus, it is not unsafe for a general semanticist to remark that the framework of Chuang Tzu's philosophy is intensional -- it is merely for talks, but not for demonstrations. If "sober language" (which he abandoned; see his self-evaluation passage) refers to the modern scientific language which the general semanticist fosters, then it is his own choice of intensionalizing his writings. The scientific-minded general semanticist will never be satisfied with Chuang Tzu's own description of his philosophy. Neither will he forgive his intensionalism.

While the concept of Tao represents the most intensionalized definition in the Taoist classic, a bundle of such intensional definitions can be drawn quite easily -- for example -- the definition of the Taoist ideal man. In Chapter 1 Chuang Tzu has set up his criteria of the ideal man as these:

The Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit;  
the Sage has no fame. (p. 32.)

Then, in the last chapter, the rhetoric of the ideal man is:

He who does not depart from the Ancestor is called  
the Heavenly Man;

He who does not depart from the Pure is called  
the Holy Man;

He who does not depart from the True is called  
the Perfect Man.

To make Heaven his source, Virtue his root, and Way  
(Tao) his gate, revealing himself through change and  
transformation -- one who does this is called a Sage.  
(p. 361.)

When each definition stands, i.e., e.g., "The Perfect Man has no self;" it is a very high-verbal level abstraction. We might ask: "What do you mean by 'no self' and how to achieve it?" Although answer to this question could be found sporadically in the pages, such as the famous "sit-down-and-forget-everything" (including "self" of course), the suggested answer again is very highly abstracted. The over-all intensional definition is, inevitably, an over-simplification of the reality. Advertizing slogans today like "Dristan Does It All," "Kent Puts It All Together," "Viceroy Gives You All the Taste, All the Time," "Coke. A Real Thing," etc., though concise and appealing, are over-simplified, and tend to be misleading. It seems ironic that Chuang Tzu, the philosopher, who was so opposed to the institutionalized culture "sold" his "product" as the intensionalized commercial culture does today.

Some scholars believe that no matter what the terminology is: "Perfect," "Holy," "Heavenly," or what, they refer to only a single man: the Taoist ideal sage.<sup>30</sup> It is a sound argument, apart from the reason that the descriptive words are all morally of high value, because in the realm of Tao, everything rests in allness and identity. Assuming that they all refer to only one man, then, Chuang Tzu has over-complicated his rhetoric. Melvin Maddocks, while attacking, on the one hand, the over-simplification of our daily language, has accused the scientist -- Maddocks has picked up a economist for instance -- as over-complicator for "not that he fuzzes (the language) but that

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<sup>30</sup>See Mu Chien, Chuang Tzu Annotated, p. 269; Also see Watson, The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, p. 32.



he fudges."<sup>31</sup> This charge seems to be applicable to Chuang Tzu for the same reason. He has fudged his language of the ideal man -- and Tao as well -- and it has become a showcase of rhetoric.

Such a showcase of rhetoric tries to say that Chuang Tzu is a philosopher with imagination. And we can see that he is. The following is a frequently quoted story of the enjoyment of the fish:

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, "See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That's what fish really enjoy!"

Hui Tzu said, "You're not a fish -- how do you know what fish enjoy?"

Chuang Tzu said, "You're not I, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?"

Hui Tzu said, "I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you're certainly not a fish -- so that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy!"

Chuang Tzu said, "Let's go back to your original question, please....I know it by standing here beside the Hao." (Chapter 17, pp. 188-189.)  
(Dots indicate omission from the text.)

In his self-evaluation passage, Chuang Tzu has admitted he "constantly indulged his own wayward ideas," and it is clear that his imagination, "his own wayward idea," had been projected on the fish before he made the remark that "that's what fish really enjoy." While even the most "objective" journalist cannot completely avoid subjectivity and, to agree with Korzybski, his work is the product of the working of his own nervous system, it is not surprising at all that Chuang Tzu has cast his self-projection on his book.

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<sup>31</sup> Maddocks, "The Limitations of Language," Time, March 8, 1971.

The theory of a scientist can be brought to laboratory for controlled observation and experiment and finally be confirmed or negated. However, that of a philosopher, especially a metaphysician, cannot be tested because his language is invalid for scientific experiment. Chuang Tzu's Tao is such a concept that is invalid for scientific experiment. We cannot accept Tao as true or false, but can only believe it or not to believe it. As to Chuang Tzu, himself, the concept of Tao is at best his belief, if not a merely imaginary self-projection.

How did Chuang Tzu shape his belief, his philosophy of Tao? In the formulation of his belief, to what extent did his self-projection work? Curiously enough, such a point of interest has attracted few, if any, critics. The conventional view, as I have described in the previous chapters, is that Chuang Tzu stood up to preach his doctrine of Tao amidst the chaotic time of the "Warring States" in order to free his generation from sufferings and bondage. However, is there any -- and, if any, to what degree -- of his personal experience involved in the shaping of his thoughts? A scholar in Mainland China, in a comment made in the 1960's, has assumed the role similar to that of a psychoanalyst to study the formulation of his philosophy. The scholar has maintained that Chuang Tzu's "nihilism, skepticism, fatalism and pessimism, together with his negativism and inactionism" "is nothing but a reflection of the nature of the declining slave-owner aristocrats."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Feng Ko, "The Real Nature of Relativism in Chuang Tzu," A Symposium on the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu, pp. 322-328.

Chuang Tzu, to infer from this charge, experiencing and lamenting the passage of glory as a slave-owner aristocrat, consoled himself that the reality is always changing, that the difference between the past glory and the present misery is nothing in the realm of Tao, etc. However, the scholar has not been exact and specific in identifying Chuang Tzu as such a "declining slave-owner aristocrat."

We can neither prove the concept of Tao nor that Chuang Tzu was a "declining slave-owner aristocrat;" so, Tao slides down into the deep dark cavern of mysticism.

Mysticism is always associated with myths, parables, and other subjects contradictory to conventional beliefs and values. Taking only Chapter 1 as a sample, we can demonstrate quite sufficiently the mysticism in Chuang Tzu. The lead story, as the author has quoted, is a parable about the transformation of a fish into a bird. Note the following description of the flying. Is it not an exhibition of "wild and whirling words" which produce a profusion of vivid imagination?

When the Peng journeys to the southern darkness, the water are roiled for three thousand li. He beats the whirlwind and rises ninety thousand li, setting off on the sixthmonth gale. Wavering heat, bits of dust, living things blowing each other about -- the sky looks very blue. Is that its real color, or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue too. (p. 29.)

Then, comes the dialogue between two little birds which is ensued by another speaking little bird. A mythical character makes his appearance by riding the wind and soaring around with cool and breezy skill. Then a god is introduced:

There is a Holy Man living on faraway Ku-she Mountain, with skin like ice or snow, and gentle and shy

like a young girl. He doesn't eat the five grains, but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his spirit, he can protect creatures from sickness and plague and make the harvest plentiful. (p. 33.)

And then, two conversations, both parabolical narratives in nature, conclude the chapter.

#### Defects in Terms of General Semantics: Etc.

The system of punctuation was not introduced to China until the early twentieth century. It is needless to say that punctuation was completely lacking when Chuang Tzu wrote his book. The extensional devices of general semantics fostered by Korzybski -- indexes, dates, and the etcetera (working devices); quotation marks and the hyphen (safety devices) -- are not to be found in Chuang Tzu.

Although the final state of Tao is allness and identity, and although the principle of relativity is stressed, Chuang Tzu is not free from the expressions of two-valued orientation. Again, taking Chapter 1, we see its comment on "little wisdom" and "great wisdom;" on the "short-lived" and the "long-lived": "Little wisdom cannot come up to great understanding; the short-lived cannot come up to the long-lived." (p. 30) There is nowhere inbetween. Actually, the strict rule of "semantic differential"<sup>33</sup> should not be applied to the judging of Chuang Tzu's writings since it was not introduced to the academics until the late 1950's.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Stephen Ullmann, Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 68 ff.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

To conclude from the foregoing discussion, the author, mindful of running a risk of over-simplification, might say that, with regard to the long since critical diversity of Chuang Tzu, if the complexity of the content of Chuang Tzu, as embodied by the words, allows critics to extract ideas from the text at their pleasure to fit their own ways of thinking and interpreting, it is its defects in terms of general semantics that make possible that the critics defend their interpretations as justified.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHUANG TZU, GENERAL SEMANTICS, AND SANITY OF MAN

#### (A CONCLUSION)

The irony that sprouts from this study of Chuang Tzu in the light of general semantics is that Chuang Tzu connotes the principles of general semantics but, at the same time, violates these principles. It developed the concept of change and heralded the doctrine of relativity in the early Chinese philosophy; it has urged people's heed to differentiate the language and the reality; it has made remarks similar to the principles of non-identity and non-allness postulated by the general semanticist; whereas, its structural unsystematicism, its indulgence in intensionalism, its logical flaws of ideological inconsistency, and its final fall into mysticism have vitally violated the general semantic principles and seriously shadowed its merits of contributing to the science of language.

However, despite all its faults and merits, there is at least one undisputable point: Chuang Tzu, with no less eloquence than the general semanticist, appeals to the sanity of man. Though their approaches are only in parts similar, and their ultimate goals far apart, they attempt in common to save people from anxiety, fear, neurosis, maladjustment, etc.

Readers of Johnson's People in Quandaries are acquainted with the IFD disease: from idealism to frustration to demoralization.<sup>1</sup> The ideals of an individual who eventually becomes demoralized or maladjusted are usually high or unrealistic or both. He is usually blinded by the veil of some elusive desire or some noble goal. To put it another way, he is blinded by the words. While failing to distinguish the words and the reality, he sets up his ideal which, unfortunately, turns out to be unreachable, or, at least, beyond his capacity to reach. The failure of reaching the goal frustrates him and demoralizes the victim.

Words of all sorts of ideologies are floating on the society, deluging people who are obsessed with the ambiguous "right and wrong," "success and failure," "superiority and inferiority," etc., etc. They are anxious to succeed and fear that they may fail; they are anxious to be superior and fear that they are inferior. People in such verbal cocoons tend to feel uncertain. This is the mental picture of many "normal" -- but in a sense neurotic, depending on how "neurosis" is defined -- people in today's society; they are still considered "normal" because they are not yet explicitly victimized by the IFD disease.

After quoting a list of statistics of mental illnesses, Johnson has concluded in his book that "about the best summary statement one can make is that roughly 1 out of every 10 persons in the United States

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson, People in Quandaries, pp. 4-14.

undergoes at some time in his life a relatively serious personality derangement."<sup>2</sup> By the ever-increasing brands and quantities of drugs manufactured to "cool down" people's nerves, we can infer that the figure of mental illnesses is in no case decreasing.

Today people are talking about peace: peace on the battlefield and peace in mind. Mass killings and massacres in wars are doubtlessly symbol of human insanity. As to peace in mind, the author personally knows a professor who, teaching Oriental literature and philosophy, is not free from worrying about this and that. He seems to belong to the establishment; and he is seeking peace, he said. As a public figure, the ABC co-anchor man Harry Reasoner has admitted in an interview that: "I've seen people who seem to have found peace with themselves. I haven't really."<sup>3</sup>

What actually is worrying man?

Maybe absolute peace in mind is impossible, as well as unnecessary at all. People always encounter struggles and dilemmas, and they are kept active and alive -- the story of Goethe's hero, Faust, might help to illustrate this -- and struggles and dilemma naturally invite fear, anxiety, and neurosis.<sup>4</sup> But are the fears, anxieties, and neuroses, etc.,

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<sup>2</sup>Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 376.

<sup>3</sup>"An Anchor Man Answers Some Questions," TV Guide, March 20, 1971, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>A psychologist claims that anxiety is "helpful": "Anxiety, like the sensation of pain, is an experience which helps us to cope not only with external dangers, but also with threats which come from within...." See G. M. Carstairs's Foreword to Charles Rycroft, Anxiety and Neurosis (England; Penguin Books, 1968), p. viii.



desirable in a sane society? The answer is a definite negative -- the general semanticist would very likely be among the first to say so.

The general semanticist urges people to differentiate the maps and the territories; not to be confused with different levels of abstracting. Unlike the moralist and priest, he doesn't set any moral goal, but only asks the individual to "know thy self," as Socrates asked two thousand years ago, and to know the reality, since any ideal should be set according to the balance between the individual self and the reality. The conventional evaluational orientation has hurt people -- people are hurt by words! So the general semanticist proposes a program of evaluational re-orientation -- the scientific orientation -- to save them from being hurt by words. In the scientific orientation, values should be judged by the dynamic, ever-changing, process-like reality; maps should be checked against the territories. Values, beliefs, etc, should be accepted critically by the individual's own self, but not be imposed on him by the society.

For the present discussion, it is clear that existentialism shares the resemblance with general semantics, for its emphasis on subjectivity which means primarily the individual's own judgment and acceptance of values. Chuang Tzu has been opposed perhaps with more vehemence than the existentialist and the general semanticist to the dogmatic and rigid imposition of conventional values and beliefs on the individual. He has called also, with no less passion and eloquence, for an re-orientation to free from bondage of the world. But the road on which Chuang Tzu, the general semanticist, and the existentialist have walked hand in hand divides right here.

The maladjusted individual accepts values imposed on him by the society, without any critical judgment. Both the general semanticist and the existentialist critically judge the values before accepting them, and they eventually become values of their own. Yet the Taoist, while being opposed rigorously to the imposition of values upon him, finally rests on the plain of Tao where all values vanish. The existentialist regards action as the only method to prove and justify his existence (Jean-Paul Sartre has declared that "there is no reality except in action."<sup>5</sup>; whereas the Taoist has deemed "wu wei" (non-action or inaction) and "sit-down-and-forget-everything", etc., means to achieve Tao, the highest goal.

Though Korzybski has claimed what he has set up is a non-aristotelian system, the principles of general semantics are exactly within the framework of the Western tradition: science (and we know that Aristotle was one of the greatest Western minds in science). By means of scientific orientation, people will achieve sanity -- this is the very theme of Korzybski and his followers. Judged by the Western criterion of science, the concept of Tao is basically non-scientific. Chuang Tzu, with his "wild and whirling words," in a romantic style, has preached to free people from the world of dogmatic beliefs, outside-imposed values, and all kinds of artificiality. And, as far as the discussion of the sanity of man is concerned, the comparison between Chuang Tzu and general semantics -- the language of science -- would better stop here.

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<sup>5</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism," The Limits of Language (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), p. 66.

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