

AWAKENING OF SPIRITUAL AWARENESS (PHILOSOPHICAL TAOISM)

In the *Tao-te-ching* the “Tao” is interpreted as first Principle, previous to heaven and earth. It is without name or description; it is the mother of all things; it makes everything surface, without acting himself. Its power, the “te”, it is what the phenomena receive from the Tao and makes them what they are. In order to achieve the goal of the ones who preach philosophical Taoism: realizing unity with the Tao, the <saint> must realize in himself the common law of all entities: the return to the origin (fu). This is reached by making your own the void (wu) and the ease (simplicity, natural candor) of the Tao and remaining in the act without design (wu-wei).

The return to the origin (fu) is a concept of the *Tao-te-ching*, which describes the essential movement of the Tao: <the return is the movement of the Tao> (chapter 40). The return of all the things to their origin is the law that underlays the totality of the phenomena: all things come from the Tao and must return to it. <Going back to the root> means, in the methods of Taoist meditation, having attained enlightenment (ming). In the *Tao-te-ching*, silence is the return to the origin. By adhering to silence, all internal or external events enter into rest, all limitations and conditionings disappear. *Chuang-tse* says (23, 2) that then the light of the sky radiates allowing us to contemplate our true sameness and realize the Absolute.

The void (wu) is one of the fundamental concepts of philosophical Taoism: the absence of perceptible sensory qualities. “Wu” is the essential characteristic of the Tao; but it is also used to designate the mode of being of the Taoist sage, who, entirely interpenetrated by the Tao, is free of appetites and passions, that is to say, is empty.

To act without design or not to act (wu-wei), that is, to act spontaneously or by mere act of contemplation or presence, is a concept of the *Tao-te-ching* with which it refers to the attitude of non-intervention in the natural course of things; a spontaneous act, totally undeliberated and devoid of design, but adequate in itself to the given situation. This attitude is that of the Taoist <saint>.

On the other hand, tso-wang (sitting and forgetting) is the meditation exercise that constitutes the highest degree of Taoist meditative absorption. In it, the practitioner does not help himself with any object of meditation, but lets his mind float freely, without deliberate intervention. This is how one attends to non-acting (wu-wei) and realizes unity with the Tao. Leave behind all limitations and forms and is free of wishes and desires. The method is described in *Chuang-tse* (6,7/14):

<I, Hui -replies-, I have come to settle in oblivion-. Confucius, asks astonished: - What is that of settling into oblivion? -. Yen Hui replies: -It is to detach myself from the members of my body, suppress cognition (intelligence), disassociate myself from the form (my body) and (eliminate) the acquired knowledge, and join the Great Universality. This is settling into oblivion. -Confucius answered: -The union is in the lack of the wants, and the change is the lack of stability. Have you really come to this wisdom? Let me, Confucius, follow you, making me your disciple>.