

All Else Is Bondage

NON-VOLITIONAL LIVING

Wei Wu Wei



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Foreword

There seems never to have been a time at which sentient beings have not escaped from the dungeon of individuality. In the East liberation was elaborated into a fine art, but it may be doubted whether more people may not have made their escape from solitary confinement outside the organised religions than by means of them.

In the West reintegration was sporadic, but in recent years it has become a widespread preoccupation. Unfortunately its technical dependence on oriental literature—sometimes translated by scholars whose knowledge of the language was greater than their understanding of the subject—has proved a barrier which rendered full comprehension laborious and exceedingly long. Therefore it appears to be essential that such teaching as may be transmissible shall be given in a modern idiom and in accordance with our own processes of thought.

But this presentation can never adequately be given by the discursive method to which we are used for the acquisition of conceptual knowledge, for the understanding required is not conceptual and therefore is not knowledge.

This may account for the extraordinary popularity of such works as the *Tao Tê Ching*, and in a lesser degree for that of the Diamond and Heart Sutras and Padma Sambhava's *Knowing the Mind*. For despite the accretion of superfluous verbiage in which the essential doctrine of some of the latter has become embedded, their direct pointing at the truth, instead of explaining it, goes straight to the heart of the matter and allows the mind itself to develop its own vision. An elaborately developed thesis must always defeat its own end where this subject is concerned, for only indication could produce this understanding, which requires an intuitional faculty, and it could never be acquired wholesale from without.

It may be doubted, however, whether an entirely modern presentation of oriental or perennial metaphysics would be followed or accepted as trustworthy at present. Probably an intermediate stage is necessary, during which the method should be a presentation in modern idiom

supported by the authority of the great Masters, with whose thoughts and technical terms most interested people are at least generally familiar. Moreover the question is bedevilled by the use, which has become a convention, of terms, mostly of Sanskrit origin, the colloquial sense of which, accepted by the early translators, is still employed. Often this sense is considerably different from the technical meaning given these terms in the Chinese texts, and it occasionally implies almost exactly the opposite. These misleading terms are still used, which is a matter of no importance to those few who understand to what they refer, and for whom any word whatsoever would suffice, but are a serious hindrance to the pilgrim struggling to understand.

The inadequacy of the short paragraphs that follow is due to the insufficiency of their expression. They are offered in the hope that the verity which underlies them may penetrate the mist of their presentation and kindle a spark that shall develop into the flame of fulfilment.

Please be so good as to believe that there is nothing whatever mysterious about this matter. If it were easy, should we not all be Buddhas? No doubt, but the apparent difficulty is due to our conditioning. The apparent mystery, on the other hand, is just obnubilation, an inability to perceive the obvious owing to a conditioned reflex which causes us persistently to look in the wrong direction!

W.W.W.

There is no entity to exercise volition, there is no entity to suffer the results of volition.

There is neither a causal nor an effectual entity.

Phenomenally

Phenomenal subject-object are themselves results of temporality.

Phenomenal cause-effect are themselves dependent on the apparent seriality of time.

Phenomenal subject-object are never apart, are not independent entities: they are one whole concept revealing the mechanism of manifestation.

Phenomenal cause-effect are never separate, each is both, dependent on time, describing the temporal operation of the manifested universe.

Phenomenal subject-object and cause-effect not only are each a single concept divided by the temporal illusion, both are aspects of a single concept and are identical.

Therefore they can be called 'causal subject-effectual object', and causation is a name for the process of objectivisation whereby the sensorial universe is produced.

I repeat: only an object can suffer, for it requires an object to experience suffering, and only an object can suffer the effect of a cause.

Therefore only objects can be involved in causation and conditioning, for phenomenal subject becomes object at the instant of any such occurrence.

Noumenal subjectivity must be eternally unaffected by causation. Noumenal subjectivity is eternally unconditioned and unbound.

ZERO

Enlightenment and the Extinction of 'Me'

DOING AWAY with the I-notion is the same as not desiring the personal attainment of enlightenment.

Not desiring that (the 'last desire', the 'last barrier') is 'having it', for 'having it' is in any case merely being rid of that which concealed what is forever that which alone we are.

Therefore not desiring personal attainment of that is at the same time the elimination of the I-notion which constitutes its concealment.

The *idea* of liberation automatically inhibits the simple realisation that we are free.

Note: Free, we are not number One, the first of all our objects, but *Zero*—their universal and Absolute Subject. This is illustrated by the famous 'TENTH MAN' story.

I

Thought

The Masters' exhortations to abjure 'thinking' do not imply the suppression of thought but the reorientation, by articulation, of the impetus that results in dualistic thought into its im-mediate expression.

Suppressed thought is the negative aspect of the dualism 'thought-no-thought', another mode of thought itself and 'one half of a pair', whereas what the Masters mean is *wu nien*, which is the absence of both counterparts, thought and no-thought, which is the presence of the suchness of thought, and that is expressed in spontaneous Action (pure action arising from Non-action: *Wu wei*).

WU NIEN is the presence of the absence of no-thought.

All we can say is that the nearest we can get to indicating anything that is not an object—for even subject becomes an object for us when it is objectified as such in thought or its verbal expression—is to refer to it as non-object.

So, since objects are *not* objects at all they might perhaps be considered as non-objects, and 'an ego' (or 'a self') as being non-ego (or no-self). But what is non-object or non-ego (or no-self)?

II

The Corral

WHAT IS IT? Is it not the object, ego, self, when that is not an object, ego, self? Is that not why the Masters of Ch'an as of Vedanta, that is of all *Advaita*, occasionally shake us up by remarking that phenomena are real, that even concepts are real? After all, nothing is either more or less real than anything else—for reality too (being a concept, an object), is not at all 'real' (since it is objective), and can only be such in its negation.

Then all that is left to us to ask is what is anything, what are all things, 'material' or 'psychic', when they are not THAT, when they are 'devoid of all trace of objectivity' (Huang Po)? Obviously since they are not any thing objective at all we could not, in the seriality of time, find a name for what they are, for whatever name we found would make them that which they are not. So an answer as such, can only be negative from our dualistic standpoint.

Colloquially might we not say that it is misleading to *think* that 'all things are nothing', but revelatory to *perceive* that 'every thing is no-thing, i.e. not a *thing*'? Why? Because this non-conceptual non-objectivity which they, all things, ARE—is THIS, not that.

How obvious the answer is! But how frustrating!—since we cannot think it, much less give it a name, make a word of it, without thereby turning it back into the object which it is not!

But does that matter? Does it not suffice to insee it? Does not that inseeing itself destroy all need, together with

all possibility, of conceptualising it? And that just because the inseeing itself is the answer? The eye which cannot see itself knows neither need nor regret for the non-eye that it is.

Note: Let us be careful not to draw conclusions that the premises do not warrant. Let us remember that 'that which is perceived cannot perceive', as Hung Po told us. The perceived is the 'object' which, as such, cannot perceive—only this which it is—non-object—can do that. And that because object is subject and subject is object.

In short: the sensorially-perceived universe is *not at all* objective.

And THIS is not the see-er of that, but the looking at it.

It is thought and no-thought, mind and no-mind, action and non-action, self and no-self, object and no-object, as concepts, each one and all regarded conceptually, that *are not* as such, and their so-called suchness, isness, quiddity is the presence of their phenomenal and conceptual, absence.

XIII

Seeking the Seeker

THAT WHICH you seek and cannot find—is the Seeker.

The reason why the 'Dharmakāya' cannot be found or described is that ultimately IT is the Seeker, the Describer, which is seeking—and so would be *the Subject making an object of Itself*.

Every time you try to name THIS-HERE-NOW you are an eye trying to see itself. You cannot objectify THIS-WHICH-YOU-ARE, and that which you can objectify is THAT-WHICH-YOU-ARE-NOT.

THIS which is seeking is THAT which is sought, and THAT which is sought is THIS which is seeking.

'Dharmakāya' is just Mind (which cannot be found because, sought, it is the Seeker); and 'Shūnyatā' (void) is what an eye does not see when it tries to look at itself.

But there is no 'Dharmakāya', no 'Mind', no 'Shūnyatā'—no thing whatever to be sought. And there is no 'thing' whatever to seek any other 'thing'.

Nor is there anyone to experience their total absence which is also his own.

When Bodhidharma told Hui K'o to bring him his mind so that he might tranquillise it, and Hui K'o failed to find it, Bodhidharma said 'There you see—I have tranquillised it for you', what then enlightened Hui K'o? He saw that the sought was the Seeker, and that the seeker was the Sought.

When Huang Po said 'You cannot use Mind to seek Mind, the Buddha to seek the Buddha, or the Dharma to seek the Dharma', he pointed at the same essential truth. The sought cannot seek, for the sought can only be the seeker.¹

Padma Sambhāva, the supreme Master, said 'There are no two such things as sought and seeker (also practice

¹ For a fuller treatment of this see my *Why Lazarus Laughed*, N. 93.

and practiser, thought and thinker, action and actor); when fully comprehended, the sought (practice, etc.) is found to be one with the seeker (practiser, etc.). If the seeker himself, when sought, cannot be found, thereupon is attained the goal of the seeking (practising, etc.) and also the end of the search itself. Then nothing more is there to be sought, nor is there any need to seek anything.' He adds 'Inasmuch as from eternity there is nothing whatsoever to be practised, there is no need to fall under the sway of erroneous methods.'

Here again, and in all these statements, this understanding is the understanding of all that is to be understood, of all that need be understood, perhaps of all that can be understood—for is anything else fundamentally and entirely true? Here again the integral understanding of this is itself the Awakened state.

And the only practice is seeing this, which is Awareness, which is this which an eye cannot see when it looks at itself.

Practice is deepening understanding, for understanding is first an intuitional glimpse of the truth of this, then the obtaining of this intuitional glimpse at will, and, finally, the permanent installation of this inseeing when 'walking, standing, sitting and lying', in public and in private, asleep and awake.

III

There are no sentient beings to be delivered by the Tathāgata. If even self has no objective existence how much less has other-than-self! Thus neither Buddha nor sentient beings exist objectively. —HUANG PO, Wan Ling Record 5, p. 70.

There is no such 'thing' as a dream (or a mirage, an illusion, an hallucination), the dream as a thing-in-itself is not such. There is a phenomenon, an apparent dream-ing, just as there are ten thousand phenomena due to apparent see-ing, apparent hear-ing, feel-ing, smell-ing, taste-ing, apparent know-ing, but the objects apparently perceived by the senses are not entities at all. There is only a perceiv-ing of apparent objects mov-ing in apparent space in the apparent seriality of time.

In daily 'life' the apparently 'other' sentient beings who sensorially perceive the same phenomena that we perceive, synchronised in the same apparent time, are themselves also phenomena, mutually perceived or mutually not-perceived, but there is nothing but the perceiv-ing, as in a dream there is nothing but the dream-ing. If the dreamer awakes the dream-ing ends, and there is no question regarding the 'beings' or other phenomena in the dream, as to whether 'they' are still pursuing their dream activities or are awake also. So in liv-ing, the awakened does not consider whether his fellows in the 'living'-dream are now awake or are carrying on their 'liv-ing'-dream, for he now knows that neither these nor that one of them which appeared to be himself was anything but a phenomenal object of the supposed dream-er. In both cases the apparent reality of the event dreamed has disappeared forever.

Where second-degree dreaming is concerned this is obvious to all of us, for we were the supposed dreamer and we are now awake, but in the first-degree or 'living'-dream, which is essentially identical, we have difficulty in seeing it, for we are still participants in our dream and, as such, we are unaware that we are being dreamed.

However, in our first-degree or 'living'-dream we have the possibility of becoming aware of this, and then each of us who does so can recognise that he is not the apparent entity in his particular dream that he believed

himself to be, but the apparent dreamer of his own dream. That recognition too is called 'Awakening'. But he cannot then awaken the 'others' in *his* late dream—for they were only his objects and were not entities in their own right any more than he was in the dream.

Therefore each dreamer can only awaken from his own dream, from the dream in which he himself participated as 'himself', for even if his 'liv-ing' friends appeared in his dream they did so only as his objects—which is as he happened to visualise them. 'Others', therefore, are nothing but our objects; *as we know them* they are not entities in their own right, and they only *appear* to be such each as dreamer of his own dream, that is subjectively.

Awakened, however, each dreamer finds that he was the apparent subject of all the objects in his late dream of 'living', but now is still not an entity—for *he no longer exists as an object except in the 'living'-dream of 'others'*. He is the pure unconditioned subjectivity by means of which he was dreamed, as all other apparently sentient beings are dreamed, and whose apparent sentiency is nothing but that.

When the dreamed awakened from his sleeping-dream he was never the dreamer but was himself still being dreamed. There has never been a dream-er at all: there is just a phenomenon of dream-ing.

That, then, is what the 'living'-dream is, i.e. an objectivisation in Mind in which the apparent entities are not such, and whose dreamer has never existed as an object and can never be an object in his own right—for there could never be any such 'thing'.

Objets Perdus

Do you exist?

Noumenally I feel that I am, but I cannot find myself. And the same goes for you and for every living being.

Why is that?

For the same reason that prevents us from seeing our own face.

But you can see my face, and I can see yours.

Nonsense, perfect nonsense! We see nothing of the kind. What we see when we look at one another and at anything we can see at all, including our own feet, is just our object. And our object is part of ourself as its subject.

Nobody else can see us, because we have no objective existence whatever, and we cannot see anybody else because they have none. All of us can only see our own objectivisations—whatever they may be.

We do not exist as objects?

Of course not! No thing exists as an object. That is why there is no such thing as an entity. How could there be? Space and time are purely mental, concepts in mind. Where else could an entity extend itself?

Then no object is independent?

None is dependent either. 'Others' are yourself as whatever you 'both' are, and their apparent otherness as your objects is entirely a part of your phenomenal mind.

Phenomenal existence or being, noumenally is not-being. Absolutely, it may be called as-it-isness.

I begin to understand!

Of course you do! 'Is that all it is?,' as the T'ang dynasty monk said, laughing, to his Master when he suddenly understood, or 'found himself awake', as they put it.

II

No thing is—in its own right? Not even us?

No thing. Therefore there is no 'us'—for 'we' are only one another's objects as 'us'.

Then in what way are we?

Just total objective absence, which is the presence of that-I-amness, which is what-I-amness, which is this-I-amness.

All of us are that?

All of us are not 'that', not 'this', not any concept at all. Nothing mysterious about it. Nothing holy. Just phenomenal notness, and the absence of the concept of that (notness).

Then we have no positive being whatever?

Positivity and negativity are phenomenal concepts. We are not conceivable at all.

Then who lives?

You cannot find the doer of any deed, the thinker of any thought, the perceiver of any perception.

The unfindable is all that we are, and the unfindable is the found.

If you still cling to the notion that something, even if it be as small as the hundredth part of a grain, might exist objectively, then even a perfect mastery of the entire Mahāyāna canon will fail to give you victory over the Three Worlds. Only when every one of those tiny fragments is seen to be nothing can the Mahāyāna achieve this victory for you.

—HUANG PO, Wan Ling Record 24, p. 86.

There is no 'self' and no 'other'. There is no 'wrong desire', no 'anger', no 'hatred', no 'love', no 'victory', no 'failure'. Only renounce the error of conceptual thought-processes and your nature will exhibit its pristine purity—for this alone is the way to attain enlightenment.

—HUANG PO, Ibid. p. 88.

Personally to You

IF ONE HAS understood this, profoundly understood it, is there any longer a reason why one should go on living in subjection to an identification with a psycho-somatic 'I' which one now clearly knows is not what one is? Has one not realised that a 'self' is only one's object, perceptual and conceptual, and that it could not be what we are?

If so, one is free to snap out of that fixation and to live as one is—for one 'is as one is', and one must always be that, from whatever illusory notions one may suffer. Can one not just 'live free'—like Elsa the lioness—without abandoning one's 'lifelong' associations, the 'state of life to which it has pleased God to call us', though now without affective attachment? Can one not go on playing one's part in the play of everyday life, as the actor does in his, living out one's living dream, simply and worthily, though without remaining identified with it or 'without taking it seriously' as one says? Envy, hatred and malice will be no more, vengeance will no longer seem desirable, we shall be invulnerable, and we know why—for we have said it again and again in the foregoing pages—and so there is no one to hurt any 'us'. Love and hatred are replaced by universal benediction, manifested as kindness and good nature towards the world around us which we now recognise as ourself.

We may regard this simply as living noumenally instead of phenomenally, though it may be that pure noumenal living represents a further degree of insight, such as that in which Maharshi and the great sages lived out their 'lives'. But degrees are conceptual, and every living thing is only Buddha-mind (which is all a Buddha is) whatever his degree of attachment, and recognising 'degrees' is living phenomenally.

The Sages did not consistently conform to any pattern of saintliness, their phenomenal manifestations were on occasion quite ungodly. Their phenomenality was not confined to their corporeal functions. Sai Baba was often violent, though such manifestations were momentary and

rootless, perhaps deliberate. Our notions concerning the behaviour of Sages are only concepts; and anyhow they are not to be copied. We have only to live noumenally—and that implies an awareness which is not aware of itself and which has no room for conceptuality.

Let us do this. Let us live gladly! Quite certainly we are free to do it. Perhaps it is our only freedom, but ours it is, and it is only phenomenally a freedom. 'Living free' is being 'as one is'. Can we not do it now? Indeed can we not-do-it? It is not even a 'doing': it is beyond doing and not-doing. It is being as-we-are.

This is the only 'practice'.

Some reviews of *All Else is Bondage*

Under the singular pseudonym of Wei Wu Wei is hidden an impassioned Taoist, who sees Taoism, Tao, Buddhism, Ch'an Buddhism and therefore Ch'an Taoism, and lastly the Shresthayana, from the point of view of immediate application, necessary for the man who intends to find his own essence and the meaning of life. The 'non-volitional' element underlined by the author is what should preserve the teachings of Buddha and Tao from turning into affirmations of contingent individuality which would be the opposite of the Taoist spirit. Thus the thirty-three meditations that he gives in the present book converge towards a single movement of internal simplification down to that essential solitude; which is the meditator's chance to finally participate in the truth of things and of beings.

East and West

It presents the view that man remains anxious about his existence due to his failure to see that he, as a separate individual, does not exist as such; and therefore he cannot do what he wants to do simply by making a decision to do it. This understanding, the author insists, is not mysterious; rather it is self-evident. The difficulty in knowing this comes about simply by 'an inability to perceive the obvious owing to a conditioned reflex which causes us persistently to look in the wrong direction' (p. ix). In part, the 'wrong direction' entails limiting the search for truth about existence to empirical observation and discursive thinking.

Consistent with this epistemological viewpoint, the book is not a systematic presentation of 'non-volitional living' or 'emptiness'. It is a series of thirty-three brief essays which seek to incite understanding. Various terms that are used in the Chinese text of Taoism and Buddhism are explained in the context of personal experience. Yet *All Else is Bondage* is not an 'introduction' to Taoist and Buddhist thought. Though no previous training in Chinese thought is required to be influenced by it, it does require pondering and self-reflection. For those who want to wrestle with the possibility of finding truth in non-discursive modes of knowing, it is an excellent 'non-discussion'.

The Personalist

Volition, says Wei Wu Wei, 'is the psychic chain which holds the phenomenal individual in apparent bondage, for volition is the pseudo-subject attempting to act independently of the force of circumstances. The absurdity of this performance should be sufficiently evident'.

All the teachings of all the Masters of all schools of liberation, 'consists in attempts by means of knowledge, practices, and manoeuvres to free the pseudo-individual from the chains of volition, for when that is abandoned no bondage remains'.

Release from bondage is the theme of this book. It is an attempt to capture the spirit of Tao, 'the ultimate background of all true religions'.

Tao is the pathless Way which has a gateless Gate. Just as the Equator separates the Northern from the Southern hemisphere. Tao 'illusorily separates and unites the phenomenal and the noumenal, Samsara and Nirvana. It is the open road of escape from solitary confinement in the dungeon of individuality'.

World Buddhism