

POETICOTHERAPY:
SIGMUND FREUD, MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND LAOTZU

Suncrates
James W. Kidd

*We are too late for the gods
and too early for Being.
Being's poem, just begun,
is man.¹*

Martin Heidegger

Introduction

This paper focuses on one topic, one idea: creative imagination as the primordial structure for poeticotherapy which addresses the dialectic of Creativity and Reality. Our study begins with Freud's metaphysical structure of the human *hsin* (heart-mind). These conceptions are then put into dialogue with Heidegger's view, especially on the poetic as Truth revealing and Truth as Revelation of Being. Discussions of poetic imagination include its impact through the work of art as well as looking at the metapsychological structure of the poet as creative artist. Despite their apparent variances in position there is noticeably a sort of uniting bond that exists between Freud and Heidegger: the poetic kind of imagination for the one and the spontaneous, creative kind of poets for the other. The Unknown for Freud and the Open for Heidegger are nevertheless, merged through the dialectic of creativity and reality as Tao in the making. Paradoxically, in Laotzu's work we find a bridge for both Freud and Heidegger, a meeting ground that provides a kind of proto-structure of thought for this comparative study.

I. Freud and the Artist

Turning first to Freud we find that poetic imagination and creativity are usually presented in terms of phantasy, day-dreams and nocturnal dreaming. These phenomena are related to the pleasure-principle. Freud says that poetic imagination is a form of substitution and can be seen in the play of childhood. Phantasy is playfulness. Phantasy is the adult's potential for play. As such it involves a flight from reality. Freud's distinction of the play of a child and the play of the daydreaming adult shows that each comes from a different motivational context. Child's play is determined by one wish: to be grown up. By contrast, the adult already knows what is expected of adults and is therefore bound by the reality-principle. Therefore, adults must keep some wishes secret.² Adults are often ashamed of many of their

wishes and day-dreams. Freud says that these secret wishes stem from the adult's dissatisfaction with the way things really are:

... happy people never make phantasies, only unsatisfied ones. Unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind phantasies; every separate phantasy contains the fulfillment (sic) of a wish, and improves on unsatisfactory reality.³

Primary wish fulfillment, says Freud, undergirds psychical activity whether it be play, day-dreaming or nocturnal dreaming. Dissatisfaction with the way things are emanates from one's fertile unconscious. Pleasure-oriented imaginings escape from one's unconsciousness. With an analogous method Freud uses poetic works to illustrate this process. Freud relies on unfolding the poet's insights in terms of psychological complexes to amplify primary connections with the poet, the work of art and the reader. Freud uses a double method by describing an emotional/unconscious identification which happens with poets and the reader's experience of the work. These complexes are revealed in the work of art. Expression of these universally experienced psychological complexes is the work of poetic imagination. Thus one's unconscious wish touches another's. The poet reveals to others configurations of deeply dark secret wishes in the work. This contact with unconscious wishes provides a release of energetic emotional investment on the part of the reader. As this happens, the reader becomes attracted to the poet's sensitive and softened treatment of personally experienced moments of truth. In the work of art the poet becomes the agent for expression of this truth and self-reveals these truths to others in the process of emotional identification. A bond develops and a "release of tensions in our minds."⁴ ensues. According to Freud this happens in one of two ways. First, a poet softens egotistical characteristics in the work of art through some form of disguise, presenting materials in such a manner that they are experienced as aesthetic. Second, a poet presents material in such a way that the audience is able to enjoy personal day-dreams without shame or guilt.

The underlying assumption is that one resists revealing the contents of one's unconscious. Secretly one day-dreams. Secretly one wishes for the unthinkable. Through the works of a poet others are helped to participate in personal day-dreaming. Through the process of unconscious wish fulfillment in tragedy or heroics the poet's skill comes to be measured by an ability to slide past repulsion by one's unconscious. This allows others to day-dream shameful wishes and think unthinkable thoughts. These processes are unthinkable thoughts. These processes are universal psychological complexes worked out by the poet. Readers participate in poetic images and are allowed to do, in phantasy, what is secretly wished. Phantasy in the work of art gives respite from the harsh edge of the reality-principle. Flights of fancy often make available to the person the release of tension that holds one fast to what should or must be. The condition known as neurosis awaits any

who choose not to return to reality. The poet, in the work of art, provides a compromise by choosing to favor one over the other and to be able to make it work, to create something new through this tension. The neurotic person is unable to utilize this tension creatively. The poet is thus saved from neurosis by an ability to give expression to this tension in the work of art. By turning away from reality the poet is also turning toward an unknown, mediating the two. Quite often, a poet's artistic temperament displays possible neurotic tendencies. A poet may be the genius who lives in another world, one that seems too solitary, yet beyond where others dare not enter. Freud's thought leads to alternatives of turning toward as well as turning away but only pursues the one side, turning away, i.e., from reality in the sense of petty realities. Thus reality must contain unpleasant or undesirable elements, things which one feels one must face. Through neurotic patterns one keeps trying to escape these facets of reality. According to Freud:

The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then is fantasy like allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes.⁵

As artists, poets bring back from the world of phantasy new aspects of possible realities, symbolic in nature. Audiences provide justification for that particular creation through personal agreement that the work reflects actual like possibilities. Through the poet's works, says Freud, people feel permitted to become heroes, kings, queens and creators while remaining free from responsibility for altering everyday reality:

But this he can only attain because other men feel the same dissatisfaction as he with the renunciation demanded by reality, and because this dissatisfaction, resulting from the displacement of the pleasure-principle by the reality-principle, is itself a part of reality.⁶

Following out a turning away from reality, the poet escapes from and yet returns to it with revelations of other possibilities. Freud points out that these possibilities contain very little of the egocentric qualities personalized day-dreams or unconscious wishes. Many of these images are said to shed light on common structures in psychological conflicts experienced by humankind. Through a poet's flight from reality comes visible structures of other human possibilities. The poet's skill is measured by the ability to catch others unaware.

Freud's statements about human development, vicissitudes of instincts, childhood memories and fixations as certain developmental stages show the importance of time upon the unique development of creative people. For Freud, an experience happens in the present, stirring up

childhood memories of the past. This experience takes on the form of wish fulfillment in expression of the poet's work. Freud says that the recent event and the old memorable aspects are discernible. But as this experience happens latent meaning becomes conscious to that person. Past meanings link up with the meaning of the present and are pursued into the future. Freud's formulations emphasize the meaning and power of the past to guide, direct and control the present. Our past seems to create the personal future of each of us.

The poet's work of art stands for the satisfaction of instinctual wish fulfillment. For some, remaining unfulfilled these wishes, desires and repressed childhood dreamings may become a psychological prison of neurosis. Fixations become walls over which the person cannot move and develop. One must transcend from the uniquely personal or particular to the relatively universal. These are the tendencies of each person that the poet must slide by in the work to be successful. According to Freud, poetic treatment is impossible without softening and disguise.⁷ In poetics, personal presence of the poet is absent as structural forms in human conflict stand out focally. Articulating these universal structures is the work of the poet.

Freud distinguishes two different ways of being a poet. First, there is the poet who takes over materials ready made for the work to be created. Second, there is the poet who creates material for the work spontaneously. Although there are exceptions where the poet can be no less creative even working on materials taken over from the already made, e.g., Goethe's *Faust* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the generality of Freud's observation would not be invalidated. This distinction is important in our discussion as it points to two different forms of creative work in process. The first poet uses phantasy materials that have come down through time as fairy tale, legend, story and myth. This poet maintains a certain form of independence from the eventual work by utilizing materials already in existence and shaping the work's completion by choice of material.

The second poet, who creates material spontaneously, is involved in another kind of creative activity. Freud indicates here that something quite different is happening. The process involved in this creative work is distinguished by the uniqueness of the work in expression. Something new is revealed by these poets who venture into the dark unknown unconscious, bringing light to shine upon some universal experience of human conflict. In the poet's skillful way of softening and disguise, images are embellished and matured until they have grown into thematic constructs in the work of art. The poet's work reaches others through these *common* unknowns. In the spontaneous creation of work there is by the poet remembrance of a deep and unfathomable space devoid of personalized form. This is imaged by the work of the poet. In Freud's eyes to be humanized implies foregoance of the id and its instinctual satisfaction. The individual ego mediates between the

instinct (animal) and abstract (morality) and undergoes trauma of these transformations. Poets are thus able to revivify dynamic structures involved in human development and fixation of potentialities. They do this in their work. From this view, the past is known, the future unknown and the present a possibility for both. Although poets may often lack integration of the known and unknown in personal life, they are able, through their work, to provide this link for the audience. Audiences respond to this work as “I am what the poet sees.” Here in the “I” we find the unity by fusion of Creativity and Reality.

II. Freud and Heidegger In Dialogue

A brief summary of Heidegger’s formulations regarding the poet as artist will provide a framework within which to more clearly see the dialogue. Heidegger understands the poet and the work of art to be a co-constituted structure of Being. The poet and the work of art are one expression. Heidegger presents two forms of creativity by distinguishing poetic imagination from imagination. Poetic imagination expresses horizons of the unknown revealed as new dimensions of Being. The poetic image is dynamic and expands consciousness by revealing something new. In this revealing there is a conserving. Heidegger’s way of looking at the work of the poet is revelation. Truth is revealed by the poet in the work of art. The work of art is alive in its symbol. Poetic images are charged with power, gathering meaning through time. In expression, comes a stepping down of its moment of origin. Imagination is simply poesy, the words and language of the poet. There is in the creative process this stepping down of the creative urge in expression. Imagination contained in the work of art as poesy is not the alive, dynamic poetic work of the image which founded a possibility by lighting up Being:

... “poetizing” designates poetry in the broad sense and “poesy” in the narrow sense . . . whereas “poetry” should be considered as prescinding from (hence encompassing) both.⁸

Whereas, poetic imagination is dynamic. The poetic image that works in the work of art evokes a sense of truth for those who read it. Other people are caught by the image’s effectiveness in lighting up new aspects of living.

For Heidegger, then, poetic imagination is a great downpouring of light. It channels this light. The poet is one who stands in the clearing which is lit by Being. For Heidegger the poet stands facing this Open, this unknown, waiting for that which is to be revealed as Being. Heidegger says that this process of revelation demands self-sacrifice by the poet. This means that the poet must sacrifice the smallness of the personal self by standing open for truth. This self-abandonment provides an opening up, “In

a work of art, (then), comes-to-pass this opening-up, sc. the revealing, sc. the truth, of beings.”⁹

We are now looking at creativity from Heidegger’s existential view on human consciousness rather than Freud’s conceptualization of being conscious with its attendant metapsychological constructs of: conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious. Heidegger speaks of nothing other than consciousness, nothing above, below or beyond. Freud’s conceptual framework including phantasy, wish fulfillment and unconscious as a major factor in determining experience describes the conflict in becoming conscious. The driving force to become conscious meets with and conflicts with the force resisting movement toward becoming conscious. From the standpoint of time, Freud’s emphasis is upon the unknown of the past, childhood, primary instinctual dissatisfaction. By contrast, Heidegger’s emphasis is upon facing the unknown of a future yet to be given expression. For Freud one’s unconscious is unknown and uncanny as the Open is for Heidegger. Again the thought parallels, especially when we ask, from where does the poetic image emerge? Freud differs from Heidegger by looking at the turning away from reality, an escape and flight from the reality-principle. Heidegger moves to the other side by looking at turning toward that unknown in self-abandonment waiting revelation of Being. It should be remembered that we are speaking about the contrast of poetic action. In other dimensions of Freud and Heidegger’s thought it appears that these structures would also be similar. For Heidegger, the poetic, the unknown, is a timeless dimension. That timeless dimension is not a structure of human existence. Turning toward the Open means that the poet is also open, receptive, to that which is revealed in the poetic moment further opening up the prospect of new vistas virtually impossible otherwise. Hovering above both Freud and Heidegger, as one perceives, is the spirit of Laotzu the “Old Boy.”

While Jose Ortega y Gasset argues for the “de-humanization of art,”¹⁰ both Freud and Heidegger see creative work as free from personal qualities of the poet. For Freud, the poet disguises the conflict of unconscious forces and gives expression to universal, primary wish fulfillment; hence, eluding and evading the natural repulsion by unconscious forces. For Heidegger, the poet awaits patiently, empty of self. The poet thus becomes a vessel for the light of Being. In this way of thinking the poet sacrifices the self to be filled anew by dwelling in the *Inbetweeness*¹¹ of different worlds, the worlds of mortals and the worlds of gods. Although the two theories give different ways of understanding, the thought of Freud and Heidegger share some common characteristics, beginning with the unknown. For Freud one’s unknown is the unconscious; for Heidegger it is the Open. Both distinguish two forms of creativity each saying that one is dynamic. Each sees that truth is revealed whether something escapes from one’s unconscious as Freud says or whether it is revealed in the clearing lit by Being as Heidegger

describes. Truth is revealed in the work by the poet's moment of facing an unknown. The work of art is not as important as the work of the poetic image it expresses. The poet flees from becoming conscious (Freud) or moves toward expanding consciousness (Heidegger) through turning away from the known. This way of thinking shows that in these moments something new emerges. For Thomas Langan, "Being comes to be when an existing Da-sein within its transcendental horizon illumines the things that are."¹²

A poetic image in the work of art expands horizons of the known (conscious) by inclusion of the alien in the familiar. This is, says Heidegger, the work of the poetic image:

This is why poetic images are imaginings in a distinctive sense: not mere fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar."¹³

This means that the truly poetic image is a founding, an originary kind of work in the language of the poet. Poetic images are primordial structures of human experience. Images which are poetic bring things to awareness. For Heidegger, the poet languages the truth of Being in the work of art. "Only image formed keeps the vision. Yet image formed rests in the poem."¹⁴ Recalling the previous discussion on Heidegger and Freud, we see that both present distinctions of the poetic work. Freud points out that not all phantasy is qualified to be a work of art. Usually a person is repulsed by another person's freely described day-dreams. Often this is experienced as objectionable or presents information suggesting that which must remain repressed in the darkness of one's unconscious. But the true artfulness of one's work done by the poets is measured by the ability to circumvent and disguise this repulsion. Freud distinguishes two kinds of poets, those who take over materials from myth, story and fairytale and those who spontaneously create their own materials. Similarly, Heidegger distinguishes two kinds of imagination. In both Freud's and Heidegger's thought the poetic is not mere fancy but describes the process of bringing into light something new. For Freud the poetic image escapes from one's unconscious. For Heidegger it is a revelation of Being. Yet in both instances for whichever reason, poetic works light up a void in awareness, they reveal something new. What is revealed for both Freud and Heidegger is truth. As this truth is revealed, horizons of the known retire even further into the beyond of an unknown. In this connection Flaubert's famous dictum on style as "by itself an absolute way of perceiving things" (*Correspondences*, II, 86) is found to be all the more true of what we call the poetic. For it is precisely the poetic that constitutes the metapsychological structure of perception and makes any style possible in the proper sense of the term.

Heidegger points out that in a poetic work truth is not only revealed but is at the same time conserved. It is further enriched by appealing mutely to a creative, imaginative leap by the audience. It is conserved in the work of art that appears to be closed; it is enriched in the world of *hsin* that stands open. As Goethe says of his *Faust*, the reader “will even find there more than I could give.”¹⁵ Being is gathering up in the poet’s work. The impact of the work of art upon others shows to them the meaning of standing in truth or standing open for truth, letting-things-be-as-they-are. For Heidegger, this is *Dasein*’s essence, revealing things as they are. In Freud’s eyes the work of art is the outcome of a process of necessary human conflict. It is expression of repressed wish fulfillment by the poet. The impact of the poetic work depends upon its ability to light up truth in others, to catch them unaware. The poet’s work must touch the unconscious of others without being repulsed. In Freud’s way of thinking, one’s unconscious finds a means of expression and connection with another’s unconscious. It is the poet, as artist, who turns away from the harsh edge of the reality-principle and flees from demands to renunciate instinctual desires. By turning away the poet opens doors to primary wish fulfillment. Freud points out that it is most often the day-dreaming adult who admires the honesty and playfulness in the child’s world of imagination. The poet is forced to disguise and soften innermost wish fulfillments. Poets day-dream possibilities. Heidegger speaks to this dimension of the not-yet-fulfilled as an advancing truth to which the poet responds, “in his word boldly presents what he has glimpsed, so as to fell in advance of the not-yet-fulfilled.”¹⁶

It is the temporal human aspect of poetic images which provide structures for the layering of universal possibilities in their expression. While from Freud’s view, the work of art comes through the poet as an expression of turning away from reality. This is understood to be working out of primary instinctual wish fulfillment. Without this expression the person would not be recognized as a poet but would probably be imprisoned by the conflicts in conditions of neurosis. According to Freud, poets are saved from neurosis through expression of themselves in the work of art. Their works reflect universal human conflict. The work of the poetic image reveals secrets long held by humanity, shedding new light upon the darkness of the unknown. According to Heidegger, “The world’s darkening never reaches to the light of Being.”¹⁷

III. Laotzu as a Link for Freud and Heidegger

We now attempt in this concluding section to consummate the above Freud and Heidegger in Dialogue by reference to Laotzu as a higher synthesis, a uniting bond for both.

It is William Barrett who is responsible for the spread of Heidegger’s remark on the works by D.T. Suzuki: “If I understand this man correctly,

this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings.”¹⁸ But how far this undocumented statement, as it stands, is true is hard to ascertain. On the other hand, Heidegger’s acquaintance with Laotzu’s thought is a case so clear that it can be safely established beyond doubt on the strength of the first hand witness as available, though apparently less so in the case of Freud. Paul Hsiao (Shih-yi) knew Heidegger for more than thirty years. They collaborated in 1946 on a new translation of the works of Laotzu into German to the effect that eight chapters had turned up as the end-result. Heidegger was said to be particularly impressed by the opening paragraph of Chapter One, “The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao,” which leads him to the view that the six traditional ways to prove the existence of God in the West are all erroneous. Next, he was fascinated by Chapter Fifteen, two lines of which at his request were calligraphed in the archaic-styled Chinese characters to be hung on his study wall as a motto!¹⁹ This whole chapter reads as follows:

Those of Old, well cultivated in Tao,
 Are subtle, mysterious, profound, and penetrative,
 Hence, unfathomable—too deep to comprehend,
 Too deep to comprehend,
 perforce must they be described roughly thus:
 cautious as one crossing wintry torrents;
 watchful as one sensitive to dangers all around;
 courteous and gracious as a guest at a reception;
 self-effacing and self-abandoning as an ice-berg melting;
 integral and pure as uncarved block [i.e., untouched nature];
 receptive and open as great valleys;
 fused and blended as the muddy mud;
 profound and boundless as oceans;
 spontaneous and flexible as winds and clouds.
 How to deal with the dark properly?--by light;
 How to clear the muddled properly?--by tranquility;
 How to restore the lifeless properly?--by activity.
 In sum, by Tao the Invisible and Ineffable,
 Yet nonetheless the generous hand that lends to all,
 The needy, and completes them wholly!²⁰

The whole system of Laotzu, as Thomé H. Fang sees it, can be differentiated into four dimensions: ontological, cosmogenetical, phenomenological, and characterological.²¹ The above cited text may well be considered as one of the world’s earliest attempts at a phenomenological description of the Taoist Personality, i.e., with Tao as concretely exemplified by humankind in the ontic, actual world of existence. Tao, in the words of Karl Jaspers, “remains the Encompassing.”²² It is simply that which accounts for the primordial unity of Substance and Function. What impressed

Heidegger most, as noted above, are the two lines adopted as his motto, which suggest ample insight and import for modern—psychotherapy:

How to clear the muddled properly? – by tranquility;
How to restore the lifeless properly? -- by activity.

The gist of this epigraph is epitomized in the dialectical unity of tranquility and activity, static and dynamic modes in the modulation of life, summed up in the duct of rest and motion, generating thereby the human practical wisdom.²³ We are further delighted to find that, in our foregoing discussion of Freud and Heidegger, the key terms of value-orientation such as “sensitive, subtle, deep, unfathomable, softening” have already been echoed and vividly and concretely amplified, by Laotzu’s own words: “cautious and watchful, courteous and gracious, de-egocentric and self-abandoning, natural and genuine, receptive and open, fused and blended, profound and boundless, spontaneous and flexible.” Such utterances of Laotzu may be interpreted as suggesting some guidelines for what modern psychologists and psychotherapists call “the program of self-actualization” in the process of personality development. It suggests a working pattern for the cultivation of the mature, healthy and wholesome persons for our present day’s society. To put it in a Jasperian phrase, it represents a Taoist version of “the paradigmatic individuals.”²⁴ They are the persons taoicized, as well as the Tao personified.

Nevertheless, we are here more concerned with the opening paragraph of the same chapter as it contains, in a nutshell, a proto-structure in the form of a threefold unity that may best serve to bridge the positions of both Freud and Heidegger. For Laotzu, the truly Taoist person is one who is identified with Tao: with “subtle” and “mysterious” as referring to *Reality* Itself; “profound” and “penetrative-integrative” to *Creativity* Itself; and “unfathomable, too deep to comprehend” to the *Unknown* Itself. On the basis of such a correlation grounded in the principle of primordial unity, we are enabled to see the “Unknown” for Freud and the “Open” for Heidegger in a new light as interpenetrative, interfusing, mutually implicative and ultimately transcended through the dialectics of *Creativity* and *Reality* as Tao in the making. In Tao the Encompassing, they are merged by the primary fusion, hence the dissolution of the polarity and tension that often exists between the reality-dimension on the one hand and the creativity-dimension on the other, as treated above.

Of philosophers in the modern West, Bertrand Russell may be regarded as one of the pioneers who perceived the psychological and psychotherapeutic imports of the Taoist philosophy. He distinguishes two kinds of impulse in human nature: the creative and the possessive. The former is adopted as the master principle that runs throughout all his

writings on social and political problems.²⁵ Similarly, he has cited Laotzu's powerful expression for an epigraph on the title page of *Roads to Freedom*:

Creation without possession;
Action without self-assertion;
Development without domination.²⁶

With these few words, simple and sublime, Laotzu has formulated in epitome a phenomenological description of Tao and its operations to be suggested as a model for the wise ways of human life. "I think," says Russell:

That one could derive from these words a conception of the ends of life as reflective Chinese see them, and it must be admitted that they are very different from the ends which most white men set before them. Possession, self-assertion, and domination are eagerly sought, both nationally and individually.²⁷

Even with Carl Rogers, what is of crucial importance in psychotherapy depends on the release of what is most basic in the person, that is one's creativity, manifesting itself in the form of primary consciousness or, as Wang Yang-ming calls it, *liang-chih*:

Basic human Nature is to be trusted. ...It's been very much my experience in therapy that one does not need to supply motivation toward the positive or toward the constructive. That exists in the individual... If we can release what is most basic in the Individual... it will be constructive.²⁸

How to release the most basic, creative, constructive in the person is a central experience of psychotherapy that can be further corroborated by what we choose to term specifically as *poeticotherapy*. For it is chiefly with the will to expression, to creation, to meaning and to fulfillment that any form of therapy is concerned. Aristotle in *Poetica* was the first to develop the theme of tragic *catharsis*; Cassirer has reinterpreted it as the relief of material, emotional burdens covering both the tragic and comic poetry;²⁹ and, as we see it, the cathartic can be said of all forms of creation as artistic process, both from the creation and the appreciation perspectives. For example, Lafcadio Hearn the great exponent of English literature in Japan told his disciples:

The lover of literature has a medicine for grief that no doctor can furnish; he can always transmute his pain into something precious and lasting. . .Better than any advice about methods or models is, I think, the simple counsel: Whenever you are in

trouble and do not know exactly what to do, sit down and write something.³⁰

Poetizing is, with Freud, an adventure into the Unknown; while with Heidegger, it is the fundamental letting-dwell. In either case it is a path-way that leads to discovery. The poetical is truth-revealing; and truth, for Heidegger, is the self-revealing of Being. Even Cassirer, though diametrically opposed to Heidegger in temperament and position, especially concerning Kant and the problem of metaphysics, would subscribe to the Heideggerian view of poetry and of art in general as revelation, hence a form of knowledge in itself as well. Thus observes Cassirer:

While he seeks merely to express himself, every great lyricist gives us knowledge of a new feeling for the world. He shows us life and reality in a form in which we feel we have never known it before. A song by Sappho, an ode by Pindar, Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Petrarch's sonnets, Goethe's *Sesenheimer Lieder* and *West-ostlicher Divan*, Hölderlin's or Leopardi's poems—they give us more than a series of flitting emotions, which unfold before us only to vanish again and lose themselves in nothingness. All this 'is' and 'endures'; it discloses to us a knowledge which cannot be grasped in abstract concepts, which stands before us, nevertheless, as the revelation of something new, something never before known or familiar. As its great achievement, we owe to art the fact that in its particulars it allows us to feel and to know what is objective; that it places all its objective creations before us with a concreteness and individuality which floods them with a life of strength and intensity.³¹

Poetry, and art in general, serves as a sort of magic link that connects the subjective with the objective, the particular with the universal, the part with the whole and thus enables us

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower.

--William Blake

The Heideggerian Open and the Freudian Unknown seen as one are to be unverbalizable Tao. A person who is not healthy or one who is not whole enough; not poetic is not creative. To be is to be poetic! Poeticotherapy provides a Totalistic perspective; but it takes the insight of an Abraham Maslow to recognize and rephrase it as the "Taoistic attitude."³²

Great poetry, we are convinced, remains such an inexhaustible source of inspiration for great philosophers that it sparks and quickens what is the poetic within themselves: Wordsworth for Whitehead, Goethe for Cassirer, and Hölderlin for Heidegger, to mention just a few. The reason is not far to find. “It is typical of the West,” thus testifies Hermann Keyserling, “that its poets are profounder than its philosophers.”³³ But it is no less true of the East, too. In China, her great philosophers are, as a rule, great poets in disguise; they “are artists before they become thinkers”³⁴—from Fu Hsi and King Wen to Confucius, Laotzu, Chuangtzu, and Thomé Fang. In India, her great philosophico-religious masterpieces are all enshrouded in her great poetry, from the *Vedas* to the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita* in Hinduism, and from the *Buddhacarita-Kavya-Sutra* to the *Maha-Prajna-Paramita-Sutra* and the *Avatamsaka-Sutra* in Buddhism; there is a poet in the unknown authors of the Hindu classics as well as in the Buddha, Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, and even their Chinese spiritual comrades like Tu Shun and Huei Neng. In Japan, to be sure, there is more philosophy to be found in her poets than in her conscientious philosophical-workers, such as her lyric-epic poet Murasaki Shikibu, her Haiku poet Boshō, and her great poetic Zen exponent D.T. Suzuki. In the West, for Santayana, great religion is “a whole world of poetry descending among men”; for Whitehead, “philosophy is akin to poetry”; for Cassirer, “history as well as poetry is an organon of our self-knowledge” and “art can embrace and pervade the whole sphere of human experience”; for Heidegger, “the thinker” is treated as “a poet.”³⁵ The uniting bond in all these cases, East and West, is the poetic, *par excellence*, at work.

To conclude, let us present a few lines from Su Tung-po (1036-1102), an eminent poet, painter, and statesman of 12th Century China, as well as a rare combination of the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist temper of mind:

Oh, my great mountain Lu!

Thy true face remains unknown to me.

T’s simply because, it is true,

Here I am, right within thee!

(不識廬山真面目,

只緣身在此山中！)

The Mountain Itself echoes:

Oh, my great poet Su!

My true face remains unknown to thee.

T's simply because, it is true,

Here I am, right within thee!

(不識廬山真面目,

只緣山在此身中！)

Notes

- 1) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Ferrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 37.
- 2) Sigmund Freud, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," (1908), in Philip Rieff, ed., *Character and Culture* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), pp. 34-43.
- 3) *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 4) *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 5) Sigmund Freud, "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning," in John Rickman, ed., *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), P. 44.
- 6) *Ibid.*
- 7) Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (1928) in Philip Rieff, ed., *Character and Culture* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), p. 286.
- 8) William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), second edition, p. 410, fn., 24.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 405.
- 10) Cf. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948).
- 11) The Writing Caruso, "Inbetweeness," *Migrant Echo*, vol. X, no. 2 (January-April 1981), p.79.
- 12) Thomas Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 117.

- 13) Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row Publishing Inc., 1971), p. 226.
- 14) D. F. Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, p. 143.
- 15) J. P. Eckemann, *Conversation with Goethe*, dated January 3, 1830, cited in W. H. Bruford, "Introduction," *Goethe's Faust*, tr. Sir Theodor Matin (London: Everyman's Library, 1954), p. vi.
- 16) Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," tr. Douglas Scott, in Werner Brock (ed.), *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949), p. 287.
- 17) D. F. Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed., p. 91.
- 18) Cf. William Barrett, "Zen for the West," in W. Barrett, ed., *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki* (New York: A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1956), p. xi.
- 19) Cf. Paul Shih-Yi Hsiao, "Meeting with Heidegger," *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, (Vol. III, no. 9, September 1976), pp. 4-8.
- 20) Based on the new edition of *Tao Teh Ching (Tao and Its Manifestations)* by Yen Ling-feng (Taipei: Chinese Culture Publishing Inc., 1954, 1965), vol. I, p. 81, trans. Suncrates.
- 21) Cf. Thomé H. Fang, *Creativity in Man and Nature: A Collection of Philosophical Essays* (Taipei: Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 1980), pp. 40-43.
- 22) Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Laotzu, Nagarjuna* in Hannah Arendt, ed., *The Great Philosophers*, vol. II, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York: A Harvest Book, 1966), p. 90.
- 23) Cf. Parul A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1968); Catherine Gilbert, "Cassirer's Placement of Art," pp. 620-624; Harry Slochower, "Ernst Cassirer's Functional Approach to Art and Literature," pp. 647-652.
- 24) Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus* in Hannah Arendt, ed., *The Great Philosophers*, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York: A Harvest Book, 1966), vol. I, p. 3.
- 25) Cf. Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconsimtion* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916); *Roads to Freedom* (London: George

- Allen and Unwin, 1918); *The Problem of China* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1922, 1966).
- 26) *The Works of Laotzu or Tao and Its Manifestation*, Chapter 51.
- 27) Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China*, Chapter XI, "Chinese and Western Civilization Contrasted," p. 194.
- 28) Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 179-180.
- 29) Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 150-151.
- 30) Lacadio Hearn, *Complete Lectures on Art, Literature and Philosophy*, eds. Ryuji Tanabe, Teisaburo Ochiai, Ichiro Nishizaki (Tokyo, 1932), Chapter IV, "On the Relation of Life and Character to Literature," pp. 66, 68.
- 31) Ernst Cassirer, *The Logic of the Humanities*, tr. Clarence Smith Howe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 84-85.
- 32) Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 271.
- 33) Hermann Keyserling, *The Creative Intelligence* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1929), p. 13.
- 34) Thomé H. Fang, *The Chinese View of Life* (Taipei: Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 1980), p. 42.
- 35) Cf. George Santayana, *Interpretation of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), pp. 86-90; Alfred North Whitehead, *The Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 174; Ernst Cassirer. *An Essay on Man*, pp. 157-158, pp. 157-158, P. 206; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), pp. 1-14.