

The Middle Path of No Abiding and No Leaving in the "Immutability of Things" by Seng-chao

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This paper deals with the "Immutability of Things (物不遷論)", the first of the four treatises of chao-lun (肇論) written by Seng-chao (僧肇), when he was working on Kumārajīva's (鳩摩羅什) translation projects from A.D. 402 to 413. I examine the middle path of no abiding(不住) and no leaving(不遷), which is the framework of the "Immutability of Things", according to the middle path teaching of the mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā (中論). The aim of the paper is to show that the middle path of no abiding and no leaving is the only possible proposition of the existence of things in their relation to time. Thereby it will be confirmed that the middle path of no abiding and no leaving is a synthesis of the doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā 空) and the teaching of dependent arising (pratitya-samutpada 緣起), the basic Buddhist tenets.

The concept of emptiness is a logical extension of the doctrine of no self (anātman 無我), the fundamental teaching of the Buddha. The essential message of both concepts is that all existence in the world is neither an eternal being (有) nor a temporary non-being (無). In regard to this matter, Seng-chao investigates the distorted mind of ordinary people. So in the "Emptiness of the Unreal", the second part of chao-lun, he deals with the false views of ordinary people regarding their understanding of the existence of things in the phenomenal world and

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demonstrates that all things, including ourselves, are neither being nor non-being.

In the "Immutability of Things" Seng-chao's argument then delves further into the teaching of dependent arising. To demonstrate this basic idea of Buddhism, he refutes the common thought that things are changing over the course of time. On the contrary, he argues, the past thing abides in the past and does not enter into the present, while the present thing belongs to the present and does not recede into the past. Regarding a thing from the past, we may say that it arose in a past moment in relation to its present existence. A thing of the past cannot exist alone separated from a past moment or from the presence of a present thing. The same thing can be said of a thing in the present. It cannot exist on its own, outside of the present moment or its relationship to its future existence. What we think of as a thing is, in fact, in a flux of continuous change from one moment to another moment. What actually exists is a succession of each thing at each moment. Thereby each thing belongs to its own time and does not change. The things of the phenomenal world neither abide nor do they leave.

In the *chao-lun* we can see that Seng-chao's argument is in accordance with Buddha's teaching of no self and dependent arising as well as the emptiness concept of Nāgārjuna (龍樹). With this confirmation, we can refute the argument that mahāyāna Buddhism has deviated from the Buddha's original teaching, supported by Rahula's denial of such claim (W. Rahula, 55). Seng-chao's writings, known to be the first indigenous philosophical works of Chinese Buddhism, are the cornerstone of native Chinese schools such as three-treatise school (三論宗), tien-tai (天台) and hua-yen (華嚴).

I . Introduction

Known as an excellent disciple of Kumārajīva, Seng-chao was considered the finest exegete of the mādhyaṃika school (中觀派) and could even compete with his teacher. So, after having read "Prajñāparamitā as Non-knowledge (般若無知論)", Kumārajīva praised Seng-chao, saying "My understanding does not differ from yours, and in phrasing we might borrow from each other".¹ Chinese mādhyaṃika is represented by the three-treatise school, however the basis for the strong influence of mādhyaṃika teachings upon the three-treatise school was as a result of the works of Seng-chao. Before Seng-chao, there were various understandings of the Buddhist teachings, though, none of

1 吾解不謝子。辭當相把。(T.50, 365a25-26).

them provided an authentic or accurate picture of the basic concepts such as emptiness, middle path(中道) and twofold truth(二諦). Seng-chao's writings, however, presented logical arguments in less negative terms while freely citing both Buddhist sūtras and Taoist texts. His was a new approach to the difficult mādhyamika concepts. As evidenced by numbers of cited phrases in *chao-lun*, he possessed a profound knowledge of *prajñā-pāramitā-sūtras*(般若波羅蜜多經類), *vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*(維摩經) and the *lotus-sūtra*(法華經), and, needless to say, vast comprehension of the mādhyamika texts like *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*. The strong influence of mādhyamika teachings on the development of the East Asian Buddhist tradition is as a result of Seng-chao's insight into and explanations of the middle path doctrine of Nāgārjuna.

The primary themes of *chao-lun* do not contradict the mādhyamika teachings of non-ātman and the teachings of emptiness and dependent arising. So while in the "Emptiness of the Unreal" false views on emptiness are criticized, the correct understanding of emptiness is properly presented from the middle path perspective on being and non-being. And in the "Immutability of Things" the doctrine of dependent arising is examined in relation to the middle path concept of no abiding and no leaving. Besides the fact that for the first time in China the doctrine of emptiness and the teaching of dependent arising are presented in accordance with the teachings of Buddha and Nāgārjuna, what is also accomplished by Seng-chao is that the presentation of the basic teaching is drawn from the experience of our phenomenal world. As a result, it is revealed that the phenomenal world itself manifests the *ultimate truth*(*paramārtha-satya* 真諦). It is of great importance for accepting the secular world without any devaluation, as represented in Zen Buddhism.

With that background information, the remainder will focus upon the following three points:

First, Seng-chao's understanding of emptiness as expressed in the "Emptiness of the Unreal" in relation to the *eightfold negation*(八不中道) of the *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* by Nāgārjuna.

Second, his refutation against the false views of various emptiness schools at that time, which falsely believed in the self-nature of things and misunderstood the two truths as confronting opposites.

Third, his understanding of the existential state of things in relation to time, i.e. the middle path of no abiding and no leaving debated through the teaching of dependent arising in the "Immutability of Things".

II. Emptiness through the Middle Path of No Being and No Non-being

The Buddha's teaching of no self is in contrast to the false notion of 'I'. It teaches that that which we call 'I' or 'self' is nothing but a composition of five aggregates(五蘊) and behind them there is no unchanging abiding substance. The emphasis on no self aims at the extinction of thirst and suffering which results from a false belief in ātman(自我), soul. The Buddha's teaching, however, doesn't end with this concept. The doctrine of dependent arising also posits that the self is not non-existent, since the self arises from conditions. This existential state of no self and no non-self is grasped by Nāgārjuna through the doctrine of emptiness. In the opening verse of the *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* known as the eightfold negation we can find the origin of the middle path of being and non-being:

I offer salutation to the best of preachers, the Buddha,
who has taught that dependent co-arising has no ceasing, no
arising, no nullification, no eternity, no unity, no plurality, no
arriving, and no departing, that it is quiescent of all fiction,
that is blissing. (R.H. Robinson, 83)

anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāsvatam anekārtham
anānārtham anīrgamam anāgamam yaḥ pratītya samutpādaṃ
prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam deśayāṃ āsa sambuddhas taṃ vande
vadatāṃ varam

The teaching of dependent arising is here defined as four pairs of negation, whose essence can be expressed by the words 'middle path'.

While the teaching of no self concentrates on the existential state of self, the doctrine of dependent arising deals with the existential state of things in regard to time. Represented by the first pair of no ceasing and no arising, which is not much different from the doctrine of no self, the remaining three pairs are all concerning with the changing of things through the course of time. So in the second pair of no nullification and no eternity, what matters are things of the past and present or cause and effect. From the viewpoint of a present thing there is no past thing, so it can be said that there is no eternity. However without the presence of the past thing there can be no present thing, so we can't nullify the past thing. The same can also be said about the pair of no unity and no plurality. The present thing is not the same as the past thing, so there is no unity. But since the present thing is as a result of the past thing, they are not two completely different things, and so there is no plurality. As relates to the last pair of no arriving and no departing, from the viewpoint of the present, the past thing doesn't enter the present, so there is no arriving, nor did it depart the past, because otherwise there could be no present thing which arises from the past thing. Therefore, there is also no departing.

In short what is said here is that there is no possible way to find a thing which can exist permanently unchanged and independently separated from others. A thing is in a ceaseless movement from one moment to another moment. Each existence in each moment cannot exist independently of other existences of other moments. So a thing of the past cannot exist without regard to a thing of the present. Their existence can arise only in relation to each other at a corresponding moment. Their conditionality, relativity and interdependence affirm the emptiness of their self-nature. The teaching of dependent arising and the doctrine of emptiness are not contradictory to each other, but complementary to one another. From the viewpoint of emptiness, we can say that things are empty because they are impermanent due to their lack of intrinsic substance. Therefore they must depend upon other causes and conditions for their arising. In reverse, on the basis of

dependent arising, it can be said that things are dependent on each other, since they cannot arise separately from each other. This means that things don't have their own self-nature, there is no self, it is empty. However from the teaching of dependent arising could be drawn not only the doctrine of no self but also the opposite argument of no non-self, as written in the *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* which also attracted Seng-chao:

The *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* says:

"Things exist by conditionality. Hence, they are considered as non-existent. Because things arise through dependent arising, thus they are not non-existent." (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T45, 152b29-c01)

中觀云。物從因緣故不有。緣起故不無。

From the one single teaching of dependent arising can be gleaned the two entirely different and ostensibly contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, things are 'not existent'(非有), since they arise from conditions and are impermanent, and are thus not real. On the other hand, things are 'not non-existent'(非無), because they do in fact arise though not from their own nature but rather dependent on certain conditions. This contradictory result of not existent and not non-existent is the reality of things. Supporting the middle path of not existent and not non-existent, Seng-chao solved this problem in his own way.

If the myriad things were non-existent, then they should not arise. If they arise, then they are not non-existent. Thus we know that because they arise from conditions, they are not non-existent. (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T.45, 152c6-7)

萬物若無。則不應起。起則非無。以明緣起故不無也。

Why? If you would say that [things] exist, their existence arises non-absolutely. If you would say that they do not exist, their forms have taken shape. Since they have forms and shapes, they cannot be the same as "inexistent". So, this explains the idea of the 'emptiness of the unreal'. (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T.45,

152c16-18)

何則。欲言其有。有非眞生。欲言其無。事象既形。象形不卽無。非眞非實有。然則不眞空義。顯於茲矣。

If the existence of a thing were absolutely real, it would then be self-existent and independent of conditions. But things are dependent on conditions. So things cannot be self-existent and absolutely real. On the other hand, if things were non-existent and absolutely nothing, there would be no thing and no phenomenal world. But we see that myriad things arise from their conditions, so they cannot be absolutely unreal. Thus the doctrine of emptiness is a middle way, which explains the 'emptiness of the unreal'. It cannot be equated with eternalism or with nihilism. From the viewpoint of common people it seems incompatible. They can only accept either existent or non-existent. But the reality is the middle path of not existent and not non-existent. There is no other form of existence in the world. In comparison to ordinary people, for the enlightened one there is no contradiction in this reality.

It can only be apprehended by the spirit, and is hard to discover in ordinary things. Thus, when the Sage affirms that things leave, he does not necessarily mean that they leave, but he so asserts merely to correct the ordinary people's thought of permanence; and when the Sage affirms that things abide, he does not necessarily mean that they abide, but he so asserts merely to dismiss what the ordinary people call the passing. (*Chao-lun*, Part I, T.45, 151b13-15)

可以神會。難以事求。是以言去不必去。閑人之常想。稱住不必住。釋人之所謂往耳。

The middle path explanation of no being and no non-being is intended to correct both of the distorted views of ordinary people, regarding the acceptance of permanent existence and the denial of any existence.

III. Seng-chao's Critique of Emptiness Schools and the Middle Path of Twofold Truth

In the following, Seng-chao's critique of various emptiness schools will be examined. Through refuting the false views on emptiness, his critique has contributed to a proper understanding of the concept of emptiness which lead to the establishment of the middle path of the two truths. The emptiness concept of the *prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* was already known in China prior to the fifth century. The concept of *śūnyatā* was understood in conjunction with the Taoist concept of *wu* (無), 'nothingness.' Among the Taoist statements the following by *Lao-tzu* (老子) edited by Wang Pi (王弼) would be the most influential on the development of Chinese Buddhism: "All things in the cosmos arise from being (*yu* 有) / Being arises from non-being (*wu* 無)"². The concept of *śūnyatā*, understood according to this formula, becomes a kind of origin from which all things originated. It was not until Nāgārjuna's writings became available by Kumārajīva that Seng-chao could grasp the concept of *śūnyatā* and opened a debate and clarified the differences between *śūnyatā* and nothingness, *wu*. At the time of Seng-chao, among various views on emptiness, three schools were representative: *mental non-existence* (心無), the *school of matter* (即色) and *original non-existence* (本無).

In the "Emptiness of Unreal" we can find Seng-chao's critique of each school in brief but precise terms. To begin with his critique of the advocates of the original non-existence school, his arguments are in response to their misunderstanding of emptiness as original nothingness. Represented by Chu Fa-tai (竺法汰) (Te-ching, Part II, 7) they consider things empty, because things evolve into *being* from an *original nothingness* (本無). Their source of origin is therefore nothingness, emptiness. It is a representative model for the Tao-Buddhist understanding. Through fixing a moment of origination it depicts a kind of cosmology, which has nothing to do with Buddhism (W.W. Lai, 142).

² 天下萬物生於有 有生於無。Tao Te Ching, translated by Charles Muller 1991 revised 1997, <http://www.human.toyogakuen-u.ac.jp/~acmuller/contao/laotzu.htm21>.

Based on this concept of emptiness they tried then to define the two truths of ultimate truth and conventional truth. For them the original nothingness(本無) was the ultimate truth, and the 'resulting being'(末有) the conventional truth.³ According to this definition the two truths are two different things. While the ultimate truth indicates nothingness as the origin of the world, the conventional truth denotes the phenomenal world as its outgrowth. Mixed with the Taoist basis, after all, the phenomenal world emerges as an object which should be overcome to return to the origin of nothingness(H. Park, 62).

Seng-chao's attack on the original non-existence school in *chao-lun* is focused on its interpretation of *not existent*(非有) and *not non-existent*(非無). According to him the followers of the school give too much priority to nothingness, so they are inclined to apply nothingness to any opportunities. So if they come in touch with the word not existent, then they think, being is not existent. And when they are dealing with the word not non-existent, then they assume, even non-being is not existent.⁴ In opposition to their position, Seng-chao presents the middle path concept of no being and no non-being. The expression of no being or not existent indicates the emptiness of the self-nature of things. Though things exist in the phenomenal world, they are not really existent, because they have no inherent self, no permanent substance. Meanwhile, the formulation of not non-existent means that being is not really non-existent, because being appears, depending upon various causes and conditions (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T. 45, 152a21-23).

Further, his argument proceeds to the twofold truth, which is closely related to the middle path concept of no being and no non-being. Introducing the passages from the *fangguang-sūtra*(放光經), Seng-chao points out that the ultimate truth is not different from the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya* 俗諦) (T.45, 152b16). The ultimate truth is related to no being and the conventional truth is concerned with no non-being. So the term 'ultimate truth' implies that there is no being, no absolutely real thing, while the provisional term 'conventional truth'

3 諸法本無 墜然無形 爲第一義諦 所生萬物 名爲世諦。安澄, 『中論疏記』, T. 65, 93b.

4 本無者。情尚於無。多觸言以賓無。故非有。有卽無。非無。無亦無。(Chao-lun, Part II, T.45, 152a19-21).

differentiates no non-being. The names of the two truths are different, though, what they describe is really the same. Both the ultimate truth and the conventional truth describe the reality of things, the middle path of neither being nor non-being.⁵ From this realization Seng-chao comes to the same conclusion as the *mūla-madhyamaka-kārika*: "the ultimate truth is that all things are neither existent nor non-existent".⁶ This statement does not contradict the above explanation of ultimate truth, which intimates no being, because the ultimate truth and the conventional truth are not different. The reciprocal nature of composition of no being and no non-being, i.e. the unity of ultimate truth and conventional truth must also be true. What is indicated through each truth is always the same.

Seng-chao's critique of the other two groups, the mental non-existence school and the school of matter, is basically not different from his analysis of the original non-existence school. Similar to the critique of the original non-existence school, his critique of them is focused on two aspects: their understanding of emptiness is incorrect and accordingly their view of the twofold truth is also incorrect. The following is his critique of the mental non-existence school(心無) on its unawareness of emptiness of self-nature.

There is the view of mental non-existence, which maintains that one should not have a deliberate mind towards myriad things. Myriad things are, however, not non-existent. What it realizes is the calming of the mind; what it misses is the emptiness of things. (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T.45, 152a 15-16)

心無者。無心於萬物。萬物未嘗無。此得在於神靜。失在於物虛。

Here Seng-chao criticizes the advocates of mental non-existence represented by Tao-gang(道恒) (Te-ching, Part II, 5) due to their unawareness of the emptiness of things, i.e. the lack of self-nature.

5 眞名故。雖眞而非有。僞號故。雖僞而非無。是以言眞未嘗有。言僞未嘗無。二言未始一。二理未始殊。故經云。眞諦俗諦謂有異耶。答曰無異也。此經直辯眞諦以明非有。俗諦以明非無。豈以諦二而二於物哉。(T.45, 152b13-18, (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T.45, 152a19-21).

6 中論云。諸法不有不無者。第一眞諦也。(Chao-lun, Part II, T.45, 152a29-152b01).

What they deal with are not the things of the outside world whose real existence they admit, but the mind, which should be freed from myriad things. The conventional truth is for them the phenomenal world of things, and the ultimate truth is the tranquil mind attained by denying the phenomenal world. In regard to the fact that they pursue the ultimate truth beyond the phenomenal world, they are not different from the adherents of the original non-existence school.

Likewise, what is characteristic in the school of matter(即色) represented by Tao-lin(道林) (Te-ching, Part II, 6) is that its adherents knew that things manifest themselves before we give them a name. However, as Seng-chao noted, what they didn't know was that things have no inherent self. On that point they fell into the same error as the mental non-existent school and accordingly they believed the eternal nature of things (*Chao-lun*, Part II, T.45, 152a17-19).

As seen above, before Seng-chao there were many different understandings of the concept of *śūnyatā*. Though none of them represented a correct understanding in accordance with the teaching of *mādhyamika*. Although their views on emptiness are different, they are unanimous in their understanding of the twofold truth. For them the ultimate truth is apart from the conventional truth and to gain the ultimate truth they should leave the phenomenal world of conventional truth. Contrary to his predecessors, Seng-chao didn't seek the ultimate truth apart from the conventional truth. For him the ultimate truth and the conventional truth are the same. Though their names are different, what they refer to is exactly the same, the middle path of no being and no non-being. On the one hand, things are not being, because they don't have any self-nature, which is permanent. This is expressed in the doctrine of emptiness. On the other hand, things are not non-being, because things arise when certain conditions are satisfied. This is related to the teaching of dependent arising.

IV. Dependent Arising through the Middle Path of No Abiding and No Leaving

Based on the presentation of middle path of no being and no

non-being in the "Emptiness of the Unreal", Seng-chao's reflection goes further to the middle path of no abiding and no leaving in the "Immutability of Things". The frame for the presentation of no abiding and no leaving is in fact not different from that of the middle path conception of no being and no non-being. The explanation of no abiding and no leaving rather focuses on the notion of interdependence and relativity, while that of no being and no non-being is orientated to the concept of no self. In presenting his argument, Seng-chao begins with the belief of ordinary people that things are changing, like the pattern of life and death and the succession of the four seasons. Based upon the *fangguang-sūtra*, he denies then the idea of the mutability of things.

The *fangguang* says, 'Dharmas have no coming and going, and do not have moving.' Investigating the meaning of 'not moving', how can it mean the casting aside of moving in order to seek 'stillness'? In fact, it teaches that stillness must be sought right in the state of moving. As stillness must be sought right in the state of moving, things, though moving, are yet forever still. (*Chao-lun*, part I, T.45, 151a10-12)

放光云。法無去來。無動轉者。尋夫不動之作。豈釋動以求靜。必求靜於諸動。必求靜於諸動。故雖動而常靜。

The meaning of 'not moving' in the *sūtra* as understood by Seng-chao is the inseparability of moving and stillness. To confirm this declaration we need to consider section II of *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, which deals with the "Examination of the Moved and the Not-Moved". Therein the perception of change was examined by the example of movement, which is subdivided into its components of motion, the mover, and the span within which motion occurs. Though, through the following argument it will be demonstrated that none of them are logically defensible. It means, all three components should be considered together. None of them should be taken in isolation, independent of the others. The following will prove it.

A movement requires a temporal extension in which the process

of the disappearance of one thing and the appearance of a new thing takes place. To speak of motion in the present, it requires isolating the present moment. But it is impossible to decide, when the motion of the currently moving object starts. Prior to starting it didn't move, but immediately upon moving it no longer functioned as the initiator of the present movement. The exact starting moment of motion can never be perceived, because no matter how minutely time is subdivided, it is impossible for our perception to catch the starting moment of movement. "When the starting of movement is not being perceived in any way, what is it that is discerned as the moved, the present moving, or the not yet moved?"⁷ Without distinction of time, the activity of movement also becomes unreal.

Then there is another problem of identifying the mover from the movement. Following Nāgārjuna's argument, as is the case of the middle path of no being and no non-being, it turns out that the mover is neither the same as nor different from its movement. "The view that movement is identical with the mover is not proper. The view that the mover is different from movement is also not proper."⁸ So what we can say about movement is limited to the statement that "neither movement, nor the mover, nor the space moved in is evident."⁹ As a result, the argument of Nāgārjuna makes it clear that the dividing of time into past, present and future cannot take place. Also the identification of each component of the mover, movement and its spatial extension is not possible. The only tenable view is that all things, which arise dependent on others, can be identified only in relation to other things.

To return to the cited passages of Seng-chao, now we can understand it from the viewpoint of Nāgārjuna. When Seng-chao argues that "stillness must be sought right in the state of moving", his argument is in accordance with Nāgārjuna's understanding of movement. The states of stillness and moving can not be separately observed as

7 無去無未去 亦復無去時 一切無有發 何故而分別. (Karika, T.30, 04b29-c01).

8 去法即去者 是事則不然 去法異去者 是事亦不然. (Karika, T.30, 05a22-23).

9 是故去去者 所去處皆無. (Karika, T.30, 05b28).

two different things each with their own existence. Being neither the same nor different, they should be examined together, sought in each other, as Seng-chao says. Seng-chao investigated further the grounds for the false view of ordinary people and determined that they come from unawareness of the inseparability of things from their corresponding moment.

What other people mean by moving is that because past things do not reach the present, they move and are not still. What I mean by stillness is that because past things do not reach the present, they are still and do not move. [According to others] they move and are not still, because they do not come down [to the present]. [According to me] they are still and do not move, because they do not leave [the past]. So, our starting-points are not different, and yet our opinions are not the same. (*Chao-lun*, Part I, T. 151a22-26)

夫人之所謂動者。以昔物不至今。故曰動而非靜。我之所謂靜者。亦以昔物不至今。故曰靜而非動。動而非靜。以其不來。靜而非動。以其不去。然則所造未嘗異。所見未嘗同。

When other people say, "past things move and are not still", they don't realize that past things cannot exist separated from their corresponding time. It's impossible for them to come to the present, because their existence is so deeply connected with the past, so they cannot leave the past. For Seng-chao, it is clear that "they do not leave the past." To break the false view of ordinary people Seng-chao then attempts to follow their belief and show how groundless their view is:

If present [things] reach [back to] the past, there should be present [things] in the past. If past [things] reach the present, there should be past [things] in the present. As there are no past [things] in the present, we know that [past things] do not come down [to the present]. As there were no present [things] in the past, we know that [present things] do not go [back to the past]. As past [things] do not reach the present, and present [things] likewise do not reach [back to] the past, things, each according to its nature, are bound to one period of time. How can there be anything which goes and comes?"

(*Chao-lun*, Part I, T.45, 151c14-151c17)

今若至古。古應有今。古若至今。今應有古。今而無古。以知不來。
古而無今。以知不去。若古不至今。今亦不至古。事各性住於一世。
有何物而可去來。

Here we can see that Seng-chao, based on the teaching of emptiness of self-nature, declares clearly "how can there be anything which goes and comes!" Likewise based on the doctrine of dependent arising, he demonstrates that "things, each according to its nature, are bound to one period of time." What we see as a thing is a succession of infinite things bound to infinite times. A thing is not the same for two consecutive moments. It is in a flux of momentary arising and disappearing. Seng-chao's conclusion about the movement of things is formulated as follows, which may be called the middle path of no abiding and no leaving:

Since [things] do not alter, they are always still even though going away and since [things] do not abide, they always go away even though being still. Since [things] always go away even though being still, they do not alter while going away; and since [things] are always still even though going away, they are not abiding while being still. (*Chao-lun*, Part I, T.45, 151b19-21)

不遷。故雖往而常靜。不住。故雖靜而常往。雖靜而常往。故往而弗遷。雖往而常靜。故靜而弗留矣。

On the one hand, things are in a flux of momentary arising and disappearing. In that case we can say that they are not abiding, they are not still for two consecutive moments. On the other hand, things do not move from one moment to the other moment. In relation to things of past and future, the present thing does not move anywhere. Each appearance of things is bound to its corresponding moment and does not move anywhere. As such we can say that things are not going away. They remain still. Therefore what we can say about things is that they do not alter, while they neither abide nor leave. That is the only

possible state of their existence. According to the teaching of dependent arising, while they are continuously appearing and disappearing, they manifest themselves in the middle path of no abiding and no leaving.

Before Seng-chao finishes his reflection on "Immutability of Things", he brings up the theme of the immutability of cause and effect in connection with the virtue of bodhisattvas. Seng-chao is deeply aware of the unfathomable nature of sayings by bodhisattvas. "It can only be apprehended by the spirit, and is hard to discover in ordinary things."¹⁰ Contrary to common people, when the Sage preaches about the moving or stillness of things, it is only to correct their false view of permanence or impermanence. It is just an expedient to bring them to the realization of reality. From the viewpoint of the ultimate truth of the Sage, there is no distinction between abiding and leaving. "So, even though permanence is mentioned, it does not mean abiding; and even though leaving is spoken of, it does not mean alteration."¹¹ While Seng-chao is contemplating on the profound meaning of the teaching of the Sage, he cannot but think about the inexhaustible virtue of the bodhisattva's cultivation:

Since the virtue of [bodhisattva's] cultivation is not decayed, [the cause of the cultivation] does not change, although it is in the past. Since it does not change, it does not move [to the effect]. Since it does not move, it is obvious that it is serene. (*Chao-lun*, Part I, T.45, 151c20-22)

功業不可朽。故雖在昔而不化。不化故不遷。不遷故則湛然明矣。

The bodhisattva obtains enlightenment by virtue of his cultivation, which does not perish even after his enlightenment. Since the cause of cultivation as well as the effect of enlightenment does not change, they are equally calm, even in the moment of the upheaval of the whole universe. Seng-chao's deliberation is now directed to the immutability of cause and effect, which follows the similar process of the immutability

¹⁰ 可以神會。難以事求。(T.45, 151b13).

¹¹ 是以言常而不住。稱去而不遷。(Chao-lun, Part I, T45, 151b18-19).

of things:

The effect is not simultaneous with the cause, and [it is] due to the cause that the effect [comes into being]. Now, since [it is] due to the cause that the effect [comes into being], the cause did not perish in the past. [Since] the effect is not simultaneous with the cause, the cause does not come down to the present. [Since the cause] did not perish [in the past] and does not come down [to the present], the truth that it does not move is obvious. (*Chao-lun*, Part I, T.45, 151c23-25)

果不俱因。因因而果。因因而果。因不昔滅。果不俱因。因不來今。
不滅不來。不遷之致明矣。

Seng-chao's argument for the unperishable nature of a past cause is that the effect comes into being due to the cause. What is presented here is the relation between cause and effect in regard to a corresponding moment. For better understanding, we need to consider Nāgārjuna's implication of cause and effect in section I of *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*. There Nāgārjuna demonstrates that neither the cause nor the effect exist independently of the time when it is brought into being. The two elements of the equation, the cause and its effect, can come into being only in dialectical relation to each other, and neither can be isolated and examined separate from its dialectical component (J. Winters, 14). The problems regarding cause and effect only arise when we attempt to separate them and examine each component in isolation.

Based on Nāgārjuna's presentation, the only possible conception of cause is that it is a component of a composite, which consists of the four elements of cause, effect, past and present. The cause is in direct relationship to both effect and past and in indirect relationship to the present. To return to the above statement of Seng-chao, now we can see that Seng-chao's understanding of cause and effect is exactly the same as that of Nāgārjuna: "since it is due to the cause that the effect comes into being, the cause did not perish in the past." Here Seng-chao demonstrates the direct relationships of cause both to the effect and to the past. The cause can not be free from this twofold relationship.

Therefore while the effect comes into being due to the cause, the cause was inseparably connected to the past, since it could not leave the past. And then the next sentence "since the effect is not simultaneous with the cause, the cause does not come down to the present" indicates the indirect relationship of cause and the present. What is in the direct relationship with the present is the effect, not the cause, so the cause does not enter the present. Through direct relationship to the past and indirect relationship to the present it becomes clear that the cause neither leaves the past nor enters the present. The cause does not move. Likewise, by inferring the same process, we can see that the effect does not leave the present and does not recede into the past. The conclusion is clear: cause and effect do not move, just as things do not move.

V. Conclusion

The doctrine of emptiness and the teaching of dependent arising are the most important teachings of Buddhism. Before Kumārajīva's translation and Seng-chao's writings, however, it was not easy for Chinese people to understand these basic tenets. The monk scholars of the Tao-Buddhist era tried to grasp the doctrine of emptiness according to the Taoist concept of wu, nothingness. So they considered emptiness a kind of origin, from which all beings (yu) of the phenomenal world originated and to which they should pursue return. Accordingly they understood the two truths as two separate things. The things of the phenomenal world are real, self-existent, though they believed that they should overcome this world of conventional truth to reach the ultimate truth of emptiness, the origin. To the various emptiness schools, as a whole, it can be said that their understanding of emptiness and twofold truth was established on the dichotomy of yu and wu as well as that of conventional truth and ultimate truth.

To correct their false view, Seng-chao presents his view on emptiness in the "Emptiness of the Unreal". For him emptiness is the middle path of no being and no non-being, finding the support in the

eightfold negation of Nāgārjuna. Thereby no being is concerned with the doctrine of no self which denies any permanent substance of things, while no non-being confirms the existence of things emerging from conditions according to the teaching of dependent arising. This existence of things never can be established separated from other things. Based on the middle path of no being and no non-being, Seng-chao understands further the two truths as two different names for one and the same thing. The ultimate truth emphasizes the aspect of no self, while the conventional truth stresses the arising of things from conditions. What they reveal, however, is not different but the same. That is, the reality of things, which are neither being nor non-being. His understanding of the two truths as equivalent had a great effect on the Buddhist tradition of East Asia which considers the phenomenal world the same as the world of ultimate truth and seeks enlightenment not beyond the empirical world but right in the world of the phenomenal truth.

In the "Immutability of things" Seng-chao declares that things do not change, contrary to common thought. His argument is based upon the unification of the doctrine of no self and the teaching of dependent arising. In regard to the current view of changing of things, if we examine a past thing, then we know that it has no enduring substance, because a past thing is different from a present thing. If a thing has a permanent self-nature, it should not change. Since things do change we know that things have no self-nature. However, we cannot really say that a 'thing' has changed, because it is impossible to find anything, which can be called a 'thing' apart from its conditions. To phrase it more succinctly, what we think of as a thing is really a sequence of infinite things, which manifest themselves at corresponding infinite moments. The composition of a thing derives from infinite other things in infinite other moments. In its relation to other things each thing is bound to each moment. So the past thing abides in the past and does not enter the present, just like the present thing belongs to the present and does not recede into the past. As a result, contrary to common sense, Seng-chao cannot but say that things do not change.

Thereby on the relation between the things of past and present we can say that they are neither different nor the same. They are not different, because the present thing comes from the past thing. They are not the same, because they have different form and different properties, as the example of a seed and its leaf demonstrates. The existence of a thing can be identified only in the relationships of its components. Things arise in every moment in relation to their past and future. In the course of time what we can say about their existence is that things are neither abiding nor leaving.

Glossary

ātman 自我

being 有

Chao-lun 肇論

Chu Fa-tai 竺法汰

conventional truth, *saṃvṛti-satya* 俗諦

dependent arising, *pratītya-saṃutpāda* 緣起

eightfold negation 八不中道

emptiness, *śūnyatā* 空

fangguang-sūtra 放光經

five aggregates 五蘊

hua-yen 華嚴

Immutability of Things 物不遷論

Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什

Lao-tzu 老子

lotus-sūtra 法華經

mādhyamika 中觀派

mental non-existence 心無

middle path 中道

mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā 中論

Nāgārjuna 龍樹

no abiding 不住

no leaving 不遷

non-being 無
 no self, anātman 無我
 not existent 非有
 not non-existent 非無
 original non-existence 本無
 original nothingness 本無
 Prajñāparamitā as Non-knowledge 般若無知論
 prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra 般若波羅蜜多經
 resulting being 末有
 school of matter 卽色
 Seng-chao 僧肇
 Tao-gang 道恒
 Tao-lin 道林
 three-treatise school 三論宗
 tien-tai 天台
 twofold truth 二諦
 ultimate truth, paramārtha-satya 真諦
 vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra 維摩經
 Wang Pi 王弼
 wu 無
 yu 有

Abbreviation

'T' refers to the Taishyō-shinsyū-daizōkyō (大正新修大藏經), Japanese Edition of the Buddhist Canon, ed. Takakasu-Junjirō, 100 vols, Tokyo, 1924-1935.)

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