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Comparison between Hegel's Being-Nothing-Becoming and I-Ching's Yin-Yang-I (Change)

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The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces a cross-cultural comparative study on Hegel's Western triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming and I-Ching (including Tao-Teh-Ching, TTK)'s Eastern triad of Yin-Yang-I (Change). The study exposes the similarities and differences between the two triads in three aspects: concept, internal motivation, and external manifestation. Results include: (1) Hegel's "Tao" is not identical to that of the Yin-Yang paradigm; (2) Hegel's envision of Becoming is intrinsically far away from the essence of I-Ching's I.

Keywords: *Being; nothing; becoming; I-Ching; Yin; Yang; Tao, I (Change).*

1. INTRODUCTION

From the perspective that "world history travels from East to West; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning" [1], Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) took advantage of non-European culture to establish a Eurocentric system of philosophy [2]. The non-

European components, especially those from Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy, were used not only in his lectures on the history of philosophy, the philosophy of world history, aesthetics and religious philosophy [3], but also in his philosophical masterpieces like the Greater Logic (GL) [4] and the Lesser Logic (LL) [5].

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2. SINO-WEST CULTURAL INTERCHANGE AND HEGEL'S TOUCH OF CHINESE SOURCES

In the pre-Hegelian era, world history was featured by three direct contacts between China and the West. They aimed at the spread of Western Christianity over the Eastern world. The first event happened in 635AD when the Eastern Roman Empire sent the first group of Christian missionaries, Nestorians, to China. The mission work survived for 150 years [6]. The second contact began in 1294. A Roman Catholic missionary and an Italian Franciscan priest, John of Monte Corvino, arrived in Beijing and built a church in the city [7]. The evangelization lasted until his death in 1328. In 1552 the Jesuit Chinese mission was initiated by the Society of Jesus. The famous Italian Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was sent to China in 1582 [8]. Although the dissemination of Western science and technology (such as, astronomy, mathematics, geography, and publishing) was not resisted in China [9], Christianization failed again after Ricci's death due to the unshakable cohesion of Confucianism and Taoism among the Chinese people.

On the contrary, the mysterious Chinese civilization attracted missionaries to rush to the fore in the introduction of Chinese culture to the West. During the 17th and the 18th centuries, the Westward spread of Chinese literature and ancient philosophy came to a peak in Europe. According to textual investigations, Hegel was inspired by a number of publications on China, including [10]:

- (1). Missionaries' 16-volume collection of *Mémoires concernant l'Histoire, les Sciences des Chinois*, published in 1776-91 and 1814;
- (2). Abbe Grosier's 7-volume book, *De la Chine: on Description générale de cet empire* (3rded.), published between 1818 and 1820;
- (3). Joseph de Mailla's 13-volume product, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, in 1777-1785, as well as [11]
- (4). Ignatius da Costa's *Sapientia Sinica, kienchamkian-Si* in 1662;
- (5). Philippe Couplet's *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* in 1687; and
- (6). Francois Noel's *Sinensis Imperii Libri Classici Sex* in 1711.

All these works included the most prominent Chinese Canons of Four Books & Five Ching by Confucius (551–479 BC) & Mencius (372-289 BC). One of the Five Ching is I-Ching. Specifically, Couplet's version was considered as the first known mention of the I-Ching in a Western publication [12]. It discussed the 64 Yin-Yang hexagrams and their divinatory interpretations [13]. Following Leibniz (1646-1716), Hegel used this source as reference [14]. It was translated from the Chinese original, Chou-I Pen-Yi, attributed to an eminent Confucian, Zhu Xi (1130-1200) [15].

In addition, Jesuit missionaries introduced Tao-Teh-Ching (TTK) to the West in 1788 to show "the Mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Incarnate God were anciently known to the Chinese nation" [16]. It was written by Lao Tzu (~571--471 BC), inspired by I-Ching. TTC is regarded as the Canon of Chinese indigenous Taological philosophy and Taoism. Since its appearance in Europe, the Yin-Yang philosophy had drawn exceptional attention because it deals with "a famous puzzle which everyone would like to feel he had solved" [17]. In 1814, the first Chair of Sinology was created at the College de France. The chairman was a French sinologist, Jean-Pierre Abel-Remusat (1788-1832), from whom Hegel learned Lao Tzu's Tao [18].

3. HEGEL'S "TAO" OF BEING-NOTHING AND LAO TZU'S TAO OF YIN-YANG

Following Abel-Remusat, Hegel believed that Tao is equivalent to "Absolute vacuity", "the way, the direction, and the process of things, or the basis of the existence of all" due to "the combination of two creative principles" [19]. Enlightened by the Proverbs that "Tao of Heaven is determined by Dark (Yin) and Light (Yang); Tao of Earth is determined by Yielding (Jou) and Firm (Kang); and, Tao of Man is determined by Benevolence (jen) and Righteousness (Yi)" [20], Hegel claimed that (1) Tao is nothing else but "the rationality of primitive thought which produces and dominates the universe, just as the mental domination over the body" [21]; and, (2) in no way as a whole philosophy has got further "beyond its most elementary stage" due to Tao's "colorlessness (called Yi), soundlessness (called Xi), and formlessness (called Wei)" [22] with the claim that "it begets one, one begets two (Yin and Yang), two begets three, and three begets everything which cognates Yin and Yang, while the two keep acting upon each other to allow all

continuously changing and unifying themselves" [23].

Particularly, in view of TTC's first Chapter which describes exactly the concepts of "Being" and "Nonbeing" [24], Hegel unambiguously noticed "something which might be similar to what happened at the initial stage of Western philosophy": the highest and the ultimate origin of all is "Nonbeing" or "Nothing" or "Emptiness" or "the altogether undetermined" or "the abstract universal", which was called Tao or Reason [25]. In his view, Tao's "Nonbeing" or "pure Nothing" or "Emptiness" did not refer to the usual meaning of either "nonexistence" or "vacuum"; instead, it referred to the pure, self-identical, nonstandard, and abstract unity which "is far from all concepts and all objects"; and thus this "pure Nothing is at the same time also affirmative (i.e., pure Being)" [26]. Hegel obviously identified Tao with his own infinite, objective, rational or spiritual concept, "Absolute Idea", which was used in his manuscripts. However, Hegel misunderstood two elements connected with the Being-Nothing concept: (1) He considered the extrinsic feature of Tao as the Tao itself; and (2) he positioned Tao with his notion of Reason or Absolute Idea.

According to Chou-I Pen-I [15], the Chinese original of Couplet's version which was used as a reference by Hegel, we know that (1) the unity that consists of two basic continuously alternating but complementary opposite components, Yin and Yang, is called Tao; (2) Tao resides in Yin and acts in Yang: on the one hand, sustaining the Tao of Yin-Yang for all things is the duty of Yang in the accomplishment of transformation and cultivation; on the other hand, achieving the Tao of Yin-Yang for all things is the duty of Yin in the nourishment of promotion and diversity [27]. Here, Tao's couple of Yin and Yang are abstract being (or pure being) rather than real being, i.e. they are the conceptual being beyond spatial-temporal norms, rather than the existing being in space and time. The being is divided into Yin and Yang in qualities to differentiate themselves from each other; however, they have no quantities which are able to be measured: On the one hand, they are the existence, being, with quality but no quantity and no measure; if they do have a measure, their nature is this measure: they define themselves via themselves, and, at the same time, to be separated from the other; on the other hand, they have no existence due to the formless nature in the absence of quantity and measure; that is, they are nothing, pure empty, or nonbeing.

Unlike Hegel's pair, Being and Nothing, where the two elements are independent of each other and one of them is unable to give birth to the other, the pair Taoist Yin / Yang are united into Tao, the endless alternating transformation (called "I", i.e., Change) of Yin and Yang into the opposite, hence to generate and regenerate the world, characterized by the following [28]:

- (1). It is the Tao that is "both pure being and pure nothing as a whole". On the one hand, "it behaves as the pure being to demonstrate the performance of the alternating transformation"; on the other hand, "it behaves as the pure nothing to provide the basis for the performance".
- (2). "Outside Tao there is no more brightness and inside it there is no more darkness". It is thus "vague to defy any description", but "represents the true self of pure being or nothing".
- (3). Tao is termed "Hu-Huang" (i.e., seemingly visible but invisible) to describe "a shape without shape and an image without image". "When facing Tao, we cannot see its front; when following it, we cannot see its back".
- (4). "The continuum movement of Tao starts from the original nothing and can be perceived in the present Being". It "signifies the evolution of our Universe" through "the endless alternating transformation of Yin and Yang".

Clearly, Tao (or, exactly, Hu-Huang) can be described in the same terms as Hegel's Absolute Idea or Reason to some degree: "Essentially a dynamic, historical process of necessity that unfolds by itself in the form of increasingly complex forms of being and of consciousness, ultimately giving rise to all the diversity in the world and in the concepts with which we think and make sense of the world" [29].

However, the essence of Tao lies intrinsically in the endlessly continuous alternation and/or transformation of Yin and Yang. It gives rise to the external behavior which Hegel had been aware of. That is to say, the kernel of Tao is the innate changes of its two elements which are featured by both Being and Nothing. Unfortunately, this speculative thinking is not present in Hegel's concepts of the "speculative" triadic dialectics [30]:

- (1) in itself (thesis, an intellectual proposition);
- (2) out of itself (antithesis, a reaction to the proposition); and

- (3) In and for itself (synthesis, conflict solved by reconciling the common truths of thesis and antithesis to form a new thesis, starting the process again).

Note that the antithesis in (2) is the direct opposite, the annihilation/negation, or at least the sublation, of the thesis in (1); and the synthesis in (3) is the updated thesis of (1) in a higher, richer, and fuller form to return to itself after the antithesis in (2).

Consequently, there are three differences between Yin-Yang's Tao and Hegel's absolute Idea/Reason:

- (1) Concept: Tao describes an endlessly continuous process, while the Idea/Reason is the highest stage of synthesis or concreteness reached by the thought (or being) which "marches forward from the category of Being" and "reconciles all the contradictions and oppositions encountered in its periodical triadic developments" [31];
- (2) Internal motivation: The motivation of the process in Tao is contributed by the contradictive motion and competition of Yin and Yang, while the major force that propels Hegel's triadic motion forward is provided by Hegel's thought itself, in view of the dynamic rather than the static property of the motion, while the thought was considered powerful enough to be able not only to manifest itself in its opposite, but also to become other than what it is by overcoming the contradiction between itself and its "other" or the "opposite" [32];
- (3) External manifestation: Tao describes an open exuberant universe in which Yin and Yang are continuously changing, so that there is always a prevailing one and a yielding one, and at any extremities one begins to recede or ascent, leading to the origin of the Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) which, in turn, "with the integration and union of all of the preceding processes to bring to light the production and evolution of all things. By contrast, the absolute Idea holds that, after human beings evolve as one of the things and are able to react to the external phenomena thus created, the distinction between good and evil emerges in their thought and conduct because of the development of consciousness" [33]. The process thus continues, while as the

unattainable "ideal", Absolute Idea denotes a closed philosophical system by "including all the stages of Logic leading up to it; it represents the whole of Nature which has developed to that point where it is conscious of itself, or the concept of Nature developed to such a degree of concreteness that it has returned to itself, i.e., an absolutely comprehensive, practical and concrete concept of the world" [34], i.e., the "World Spirit". Any further developments are neither possible nor necessary.

As a result, some contexts in Hegel's GL or LL are hard to understand without any prior knowledge of TTK; more seriously, the Taoist concepts or explanations given by Hegel deviated from the originals of TTK. Below are the 10 examples from GL or LL, compared with TTK [35]. The similarities and differences between the original Chinese texts and Hegel's usages can be easily identified [36]:

- (1) TTK-§1: Nonbeing is the chaos for all; being is the origin of all ... the both become the same but diverge in name as issuing forth. Mystery upon mystery, the gateway of all subtleties; LL-§88: Nothing, if it be thus immediate and equal to itself, is also conversely the same as Being is. The truth of Being and of Nothing is accordingly the unity of the two: and this unity is Becoming... Becoming is the unity of Being and Nothing.
- (2) TTK-§2: Being and nonbeing produce each other; LL-§89: A Nothing which includes Being, and, in like manner, a Being which includes Nothing.
- (3) TTK-§2: Thus a sage works without taking forced actions, teaches without using any words, but let all things grow without interference, give them life without claiming to be the owner, benefits them without claiming to be the benefactor, makes success without claiming the credit. Without claiming the credit, the credit is instead never lost; LL-§209: Reason is as cunning as it is powerful. Cunning may be said to lie in the intermediative action which, while it permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away, and does not itself directly interfere in the process, is nevertheless only working out its own aims.
- (4) TTK-§25: There was something formed out of chaos, that was born before Heaven and

- Earth; GL(1)-p.29: This realm is truth unveiled...It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.
- (5) TTK-§40: All things in the world come from being, and being comes from nonbeing; LL-§86-87: Being is the pure Thought ... you begin with a figure of materialized conception, not a product of thought; and that, so far as its thought-content is concerned, such beginning is merely Being ... But this mere Being, as it is mere abstraction, is therefore the absolutely negative: which ... is just Nothing.
- (6) TTK-§40,16: Cycling is the movement of Tao; From the vigorous growth of all things, I perceive the way they move in cycles, and all flourishes and finally returns to the roots (Tao)—**Law of Negation of Negation**; LL-§111: Factors in quality and quantity ... (a) have in the first place passed over quality into quantity, and quantity into quality, and thus are both shown up as negations. (b) But in their unity, that is, in measure, they are originally distinct, and the one is only through the instrumentality of the other. And (c) after the immediacy of this unity has turned out to be self-annulling, the unity is explicitly put as what it implicitly is, simple relation-to-self, which contains in it being and all its forms absorbed. Being or immediacy, which by the negation of itself is a mediation with self and a reference to self—which consequently is also a mediation which cancels itself into reference to-self, or immediacy—is Essence.
- (7) TTK-§42,16: Tao begets one, one begets two, two begets three, three begets all differentiated things of the world... All flourishes and finally returns to the roots (Tao); LL-§215: The Idea ... runs through three stages: The first ... is Life ... in the form of immediacy. The second ... is that of mediation or differentiation ... in the form of Knowledge ... under the double aspect of the Theoretical and Practical idea. The process of knowledge eventuates in the restoration of the unity enriched by difference. This gives the third ... the Absolute Idea ... at the same time the true first (the Idea).
- (8) TTK-§42: All things achieve harmonic unities with Ch'i (or, Qi) by blending complementary Yin and Yang—**Law of Contradiction** (or, the Law of the Unity of Opposites); GL(1)-pp.381-382, LL-§81, GL(1)-p.158: All things are in themselves contradictory...contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity; Everything that surrounds us may be viewed as an instance of Dialectic; a more profound insight into the antinomial or, more accurately, into the dialectical nature of reason reveals that every concept is a unity of opposite moments; Or, more accurately [30]: There is thesis (in itself; e.g., Concept), an intellectual proposition; the self of the thesis produces antithesis (out of itself; opposite to the thesis; e.g., Nature) to react to the proposition; the unity of the both gives rise to synthesis (in and for itself; e.g., Idea) formed by reconciling the common truths of thesis and antithesis in solving the confliction between the thesis and the antithesis. The unity is a new thesis in a higher, richer, and fuller form for the next process.
- (9) TTK-§64: A huge tree starts the growth from a tiny seedling; a nine-storey terrace starts the construction from a mound of earth; a 1000 li (half km) travel starts the journey from a step of the feet—**Law of Quantity-Quality Transformation**; GL(2)-§775: Again, water when its temperature is altered does not merely get more or less hot but passes through from the liquid into either the solid or gaseous states; these states do not appear gradually; on the contrary, each new state appears as a leap, suddenly interrupting and checking the gradual succession of temperature changes at these points. Every birth and death, far from being a progressive gradualness, is an interruption of it and is the leap from a quantitative into a qualitative alteration.
- (10) TTK-§65: Profound virtue becomes deep and far-reaching, and with it all things return to their original chaos (because of Yin-Yang). Then complete harmony will be reached; LL-§24: The spirit has by its own act to win its way to concord again. The final concord then is spiritual; that is, the principle of restoration is found in thought, and thought only.
- In the above, Hegel's three dialectic Laws are included: (1) Law of the Unity of Opposites; (2) Law of Quantity-Quality Transformation; and, (3) Law of Negation of Negation.

Notice that, although Lao tzu's dialectic philosophy was known earlier in the West due to the inspiration of the ancient I-Ching, it was the later Greek philosophy that had spread in Europe since Heraclitus. The credits of Hegel's first and second Laws belong to Heraclitus and Euclides (~435-365 BC), respectively. For the first Law, Heraclitus envisaged that there would be no unity if there were not opposites to combine. The theory is the basis of Hegel's philosophy, and synthesized the opposites. For the second Law, Hegel updated Euclides' eristic dialectic to his speculative dialectic. The last Law was not proposed in the Greek philosophy before Hegel. In view of TTK, the Law is featured by the unconstrained triad cycles of a negation-after-negation structure, while Hegel's Law of Negation of Negation is characterized by the triad of negation-after-negation cycles.

4. HEGEL'S BECOMING OF BEING-NOTHING AND I-CHING'S I (CHANGE) OF YIN-YANG

Hegel's dialectic was the culmination of the movement in German philosophy from Kant. The Hegelian philosophical system was coherent and comprehensive. The essence of the system is featured by a triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis which corrected Descartes' rational foundationalism [37] by means of absorbing the principles of Bacon's inductive reasoning which was, however, in contrast with Aristotle's deductive reasoning. The dialectic philosophy hence attained rationalistic, eternal truths in the progressive movement of thought [38].

The movement was assumed to start from the lowest category, where knowledge is reduced to a minimum with a natural constraint of the mind, to pass on to a higher category in thought so as to remove or transcend the limitations of the lower; and so on, until the highest possible category is reached to comprehend and explain all the others [39]. Specifically, the speculative steps Hegel designed were as follows: First, some idea or theory or movement (called "thesis," or "being" at the initial triad) appears; second, it generates opposition due to the innate weakness or restriction in value or quality within the bounded background where it arises; third, the opposing idea or movement (called "antithesis", or "nothing" at the initial triad) struggles with the thesis until some solution is reached beyond both thesis and antithesis by recognizing their respective values and by trying

to preserve their merits and avoid their limitations; the solution (called the "synthesis," or "becoming" in the initial triad) will become the first step of a new dialectic triad if it turns out to be one-sided or otherwise unsatisfactory. In the last step, the synthesis will behave as a new thesis, and a new antithesis will be around again to take the dialectic triad to a higher level. The process may go on to arbitrary multi-layered nesting levels until a satisfactory solution is finally achieved [40].

In comparison with his speculative philosophy, Hegel considered the non-European culture, like that exposed in I-Ching, as the foundation of abstract thoughts and pure categories, however, "lack of both the concrete of pure thoughts to be conceived of speculatively, and a sensuous conception of universal natural or spiritual powers" [41]. In view of Leibniz, I-Ching was "an expression of and source for genuine philosophy and a new logic and mathematics." By contrast, Hegel viewed it as "a work of abstract childish picture-thinking that is simultaneously too abstract & formal and too empirical & naturalistic" [42]. In his eyes [43],

- (1) I-Ching was based on the "superficial ideas out of simple figures" like a straight line (—Yang) which is the principle of unity, and a broken line with two equal parts (—Yin) which is the principle of duality;
- (2) "Unreasonable arrangements and combinations of the two lines" produce eight trigrams (complicated figures with three lines in one) called Kua, ascribed to Fuxi, yet underlying which is "a substructure of static and abstract thoughts out of nothing but meditation on the lines to represent the particularities of ordinary natural existences" like, heaven (Tien), lake (Tui), fire (Li), thunder (Tschin), wind (Siun), water (Kan), mountain (Ken), and earth (Kuen);
- (3) "The eight trigrams continue to produce the 64 hexagrams (more complicated figures with six lines of two three-in-one figures) which are trivial to express nothing except the origin of Chinese characters"; but,
- (4) "The system of hexagrams represents an attempt to offer an explanation for the development of everything from Tao".

Therefore, Hegel held that [44]

- (1) I-Ching is full of "static, abstract figures" which "originate from indicating thoughts and calling up significations", for

- “symbolizing arbitrary empirical phenomena in the transition from the purest, rational category to the realistic, perceptive category”;
- (2) The process of this transition is “too abrupt to be accepted by any Europeans who never put abstract things into such concrete objects”, thus, “no one is interested in referring it (i.e., representing the fully perceptive reality and sensuous objects by means of the abstract thinking of the three-in-one figures) to a kind of philosophical thought”;
 - (3) It is “the language or myth”, rather than “the hexagrams” in I-Ching, that should be adopted as “a better mode to express the nature of the reality which is ultimately spiritual” instead of physical in existence.

Owing to the naive parochialism of his historical and philosophical outlook, Hegel's mind was subject to challenges in its universality. He experienced the deeply rooted Eurocentrism and the Western superiority [45]. He claimed that the evolution of human history is a unified totality to proceed via the evolution of the “world Spirit” which was nothing but the culture of the West (called the New World), while the spirit of the culture “is the German Spirit” [46]. Notice that this point of view was seriously criticized by Russell (1872-1970) [47]: it was tinted with “some distortion of facts and considerable ignorance” [48]; and, “it is odd that a process which is represented as cosmic should all have taken place on our planet, and most of it near the Mediterranean” [49].

Although Hegel seemingly criticized I-Ching due to his deficient understanding of ancient Chinese classics [50], we would like to stress that it was Hegel who was the first Western philosopher to include Oriental philosophy as a historical stage (albeit inferior) in the development of the world philosophy. This was demonstrated in his lectures on the History of Philosophy [51]. From this perspective, it is worth drawing a comparison between Hegel's Being-Nothing-Becoming Triad and I-Ching's Yin-Yang-I Triad, an apparently important issue in the East-West cultural dialogue [52].

Hegel built his dialectic-speculative Logic on the category of “Becoming (Werden),” the truth of Being and Nothing [53]. Becoming is the unity of both, while “Being (or Nothing), if immediate and equal to itself (i.e. thesis), is also the same as Nothing (or Being) in the reaction (i.e., antithesis)

to the initial intellectual proposition so as to reach the reconciliation (i.e., synthesis) of the conflict between both in order to reach a new form of thesis for the next process” [54]. Hegel successfully solved the most fundamental problem of traditional metaphysics about the relation between Absolute Being and relative being by making use of (1) the dialectic logic in the incorporation of the strengths of the approach through Spinoza's immanence; (2) the approach through Kant's transcendence [55]. However, a question concerning the third category, Becoming, as the unity of Being and Nothing, comes up: Can the prime original dialectic of Being, Nothing, and Becoming develop to the whole dialectic life of the Absolute Spirit through the triads of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis at various phases and sub-phases? Because the Absolute Spirit is the Absolute Being in the process of Becoming, and its category form is the Absolute Idea, while the relationship between the Absolute Spirit and the Absolute Idea is Absolute Knowledge, how is the proposed Becoming able to fully explicate the three concepts of the Absolute Being, i.e., Spirit, Idea, and Knowledge?

Hegel suggested a way to solve the fundamental philosophical problem of the dialectical tension between Being and Becoming. Unlike Plato's dualistic theory of forms combining both Parmenides' static world (as being) and Heraclitus's dynamic theory (as becoming), Hegel suggested that there is tension between Being and Nothing, rather than between Being and Becoming. Thus Hegel contended that the antithesis of Being is Nothing, then used Becoming as the higher category to eliminate the contradiction in the evolution of reality to construct a triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming [56]. Nevertheless, this triad did not reflect the essence of I-Ching's “triad” of Yin-Yang-I (Change), if we name it as a “triad” for the convenience in comparison with Hegel's triad [57]; therefore, it might not be convincing in the construction of his speculative dialectics. The arguments are as follows.

Firstly, I (Change) in I-Ching consists of the following five types [58]:

- (1) Unaltered Becoming; (2) Free Self-becoming;
- (3) Forced Self-becoming; (4) Inductive Becoming, and (5) Harmonic Becoming.

The *Unaltered Becoming* provides a reference of the world which is a system of homogeneous relationships, i.e., a cosmos, not a chaos. In spite

of any Change going on, it coincides with the point of reference for cosmic events we are dealing with. The *Free Self-Becoming* denotes those kinds of Change without external impact. Thus the Change follows only the rules ascribed to the internal factors of events. By contrast, the *Forced Self-becoming* describes changes mainly dependent on external factors, whether or not the rules are in favor of or against the innate development of the events. The *Inductive Becoming* refers to changes originated from the interaction between the events and the environment. Finally, the *Harmonic Becoming* is the highest level of changes driven by the integrated force of all the factors determining the first four types of changes. This Becoming is important for the development of deep ecology, and is best defined by I-Ching: The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with Great Harmony: this is what furthers and what perseveres [59].

By contrast, Hegel's Becoming was defined as follows: "it is not only the unity of Being and Nothing, but also inherent unrest...through the diversity of what is in it...at war with itself" [54]. This means that the Becoming has two features: (1) a unity; and (2) changing. Figure 1 illustrates Hegel's dialectic-speculative triad processes by taking a sample series of five thesis-antithesis-synthesis cycles. The three categories, Being (or Nothing), Nothing (or Being), and Becoming, are labelled in each process in black spot, white spot, and dashed arrows, respectively. For a direct comparison, I-Ching's I (Change) during the same processes is represented by Yin-Yang circles the inside of which changes accordingly in partial black, Yin (or Yang), and partial white, Yang (or Yin), with extremes as full black or white. Obviously, Hegel's Becoming is not continuous but intermittent, while I-Ching's Change is continuous at any time. Hegel's Becoming is close to I-Ching's *Free Self-Becoming* if we consider the self-transformation between Being and Nothing and discard the intermittency.

Secondly, Hegel's cell of either Being or Nothing is a pure category which does not contain the opposite. As the pure Being (Nothing), it cannot be Nothing (Being) at the same time, though Being (Nothing) is Nothing (Being) and they are the same if we consider that Being (Nothing) continually merges with Nothing (Being). That is to say, when we designate either spot as Being

(Nothing) in Fig. 1, it cannot be Nothing (Being). However, it will certainly vanish into Nothing (Being) in a process characterized by Becoming, a unity of both Being (Nothing) and Nothing (Being) and a category to represent the transition processes of ceasing-to-be or coming-to-be between Being (Nothing) and Nothing (Being) [60]. In other words, if there are no such transitions, Becoming does not exist. That is why Hegel's Becoming is not a continuous process, as shown in all the processes except process 3.

On the contrary, neither the Yin cell nor the Yang one in I-Ching's change is pure, but a unity of them. They can never vanish but exist to compete with each other in respective processes of the cell: when one process dominates (expressed by $>1/2$ space in either black or white), the whole cell is polarized to the category of Yin or Yang. However, this does not mean there is not the other category. Let us define Hegel's Being as the black cell, and Nothing as the white cell; in I-Ching's cell black part is Yin and white part is Yang. We see that Hegel's cell of Being (pure black) corresponds to I-Ching's cell within which Yin ($>1/2$ space in black) dominates; however, Yang does exist in the cell and competes with Yin in all processes, but temporarily yields to Yin; and the same applies to Hegel's cell of Nothing (pure white): it corresponds to I-Ching's cell within which Yang ($>1/2$ space in white) dominates; however, Yin does exist in the cell and competes with Yang in all processes, but temporarily yields to Yang.

In general, Hegel's self-changing mode implies that, while the initial Being (or Nothing) is immediate and equal to itself, it is also conversely the same as Nothing (or Being) so as to reach a reconciliation of the conflict between both to gain a new balance for the next process. On the contrary, I-Ching's mutual changing mode comes from the contradictory relation between Yin and Yang, the origin of which is Tao-in-stillness, Non-polarity (Wu-chi). Any perturbations to Non-polarity lead to a state of Supreme Polarity (Tai-chi), which is categorized as Yang; yet at the end of the activity Yang becomes still, and the stillness is categorized as Yin; at the end of stillness Yin becomes active again, and activity generates Yang again. Activity and stillness alternate and each is the basis of the other. The two modes persist [61], and the resultant alternation in activity and stillness is backed by the presence of the bipolar dynamics, as demonstrated in Zhu Xi's speculative

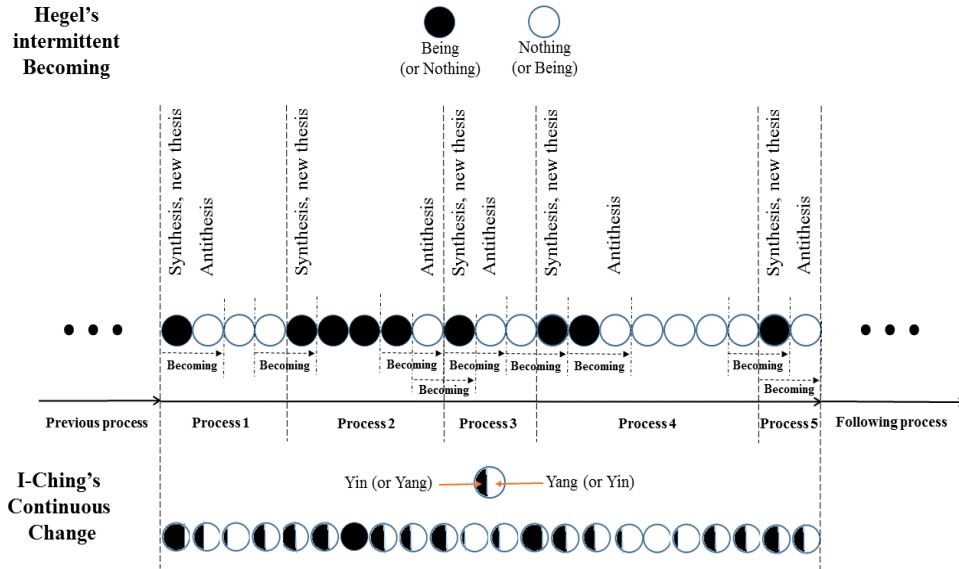


Fig. 1. Hegel's dialectic-speculative triad processes and I-Ching's continuous change

philosophy: "That both being active without stillness and being still without activity characterizes reality; that both being active without activity and being still without stillness characterizes spirituality; however, that both being active without activity and being still without stillness do not mean devoid of activity and stillness, respectively; There is stillness within activity and there is activity within stillness" [62]. Thus, Hegel's cell of either Being or Nothing is entirely different from I-Ching's cell of Yin and Yang.

Lastly, Hegel's initial triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming was considered to trigger a progressive movement of Mind to reach cyclic synthesis through sublation by eliminating both thesis and antithesis, and finally towards a full self-realization of the Absolute Spirit/Idea, the God of the universe; by contrast, I-Ching's initial triad of Yin-Yang-I (Change) was meant to drive the transformation of the Yin-Yang unity to form all things in the universe through the cyclic complementarity of Yin and Yang which are always present to reach different Becomings which are not the recognition of a kind of Soul. Specifically, Hegel assumed an initial inborn contradiction in any given thesis as the engine of an antithesis, then, to bring about the synthesis (also a new thesis of the next triad) of the two to resolve the tension between them by sublation; at the same time the two disappears with the appearance of the synthesis. Hegel updated the previous static and timeless framework of nature

with his dialectical three-step movement of thesis-antithesis-synthesis to reach an understanding of the dynamic and holistic characteristics of developing things. Interestingly, he suggested that such processes employ each synthesis as the thesis for a new proposition to be transcend by a higher level, and repeat in the struggle between thesis and antithesis toward an ultimate truth of intellectual achievement, the Absolute Spirit, the eventual and distant culmination [52]. Table 1 lists the pyramid-like multi-layer thesis-antithesis-synthesis processes based on Hegel's LL. It is easy to see that any possible break-up in the process of Being-Nothing-Becoming will lead to the collapse of the whole.

On the contrary, I-Ching claimed that Tai-Chi gives birth to the unity of Yin-Yang, and the unity in turn changes into the Five Phases and revolve the Four Seasons, leading things to begin, develop, transform, and preserve in nature, without any limitation to attain the final state as mentioned in the text above: Each receives its true nature and destiny, and comes into different types of I (Change) [63]. The process is considered to be dominated by the cyclic Yin-Yang competition and cooperation in a universe which is supposed to be the eventual culmination featured by the Absolute "Ling" in Chinese which is equivalent to "Spirit" in English. As a result, Hegel's triad belongs to the speculative *absolute* idealism, while I-Ching's theory falls within speculative *objective* idealism.

These arguments support that, although Hegel' triad structure is similar to I-Ching's philosophy in appearance (e.g., stressing the universal existence of two correlative contraries, and obtaining a resultant dynamic equilibrium by resolving the struggle of the contraries), his speculative thought is distinct from I-Ching's in the following propositions:

- (1) The thesis itself produces a driving force;
- (2) The force is strong enough to form an antithesis which is able to trigger a reaction to the thesis;
- (3) In solving the conflict between thesis and antithesis, the common truths of the two are exactly equal to each other so as to be reconciled to form a synthesis as the new thesis for the next triad;
- (4) It is not guaranteed that the first Being-Nothing-Becoming chain is a dynamic process.

The last proposition is crucial. See Process 2 in Fig. 1 as an example. In the middle of the

process, the thesis (Being) struggles to be alive, not utterly devoid of specific content. The mind cannot be led naturally to the thought of its opposite, the antithesis (Nothing). Only if both the thesis and the antithesis are present, is it possible to develop a more sophisticated and comprehensive notion of Becoming. Now that the Becoming is absent, and only in the process of Becoming does the Being constitute the Spirit and give rise to Idea and Knowledge, there exists no Spirit/Idea/Knowledge in the middle of Process 2 due to the inability of Becoming to fully explicate Being, as well as its three concepts. In Hegel's dialectical movement of thesis-antithesis-synthesis toward Absolute Spirit in Table 1, the final Absolute Idea (or God) is thus not "Absolute" due to the breakup of the first triad chain. Naturally, in addition to the problematic thought as argued by Russell [47], Hegel's philosophy incurred a dilemma which needs further consideration for a continuous evolution of his triad dialectics. According to Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Hegelian speculative thinking is not self-consistent, but expresses "a colossal piece of mystification which will yet provide

Table 1. Hegel's dialectics of thesis-antithesis-synthesis toward absolute Spirit/Idea

	Top layer	Middle layer	Bottom layer
LL	Being Thesis	Quality Thesis	{ Being-Nothing-Becoming
			{ Being Determinate
			{ Being-for-Self
		Quantity Antithesis	{ Pure Quantity
			{ Quantum
			{ Degree
		Measure Synthesis	{ Specific Quantum
			{ The Measureless
			{ The Infinite
	Essence Antithesis	Essence as ground of Existence Thesis	{ Pure Principle or Categories of Reflection
			{ Existence
			{ The Thing
		Appearance Antithesis	{ World of Appearance
			{ Content Form
			{ Relation
		Actuality Synthesis	{ Substantiality
			{ Causality
			{ Reciprocity
	Notion/Idea Synthesis	Subjective Notion Thesis	{ The Notion as Notion
			{ The Judgment
			{ The Syllogism
		Object Antithesis	{ Mechanism
			{ Chemism
			{ Teleology
		Idea Synthesis	{ Life
			{ Cognition
			{ Absolute Spirit/Idea

posterity with an inexhaustible theme for laughter at our times, that it is a pseudo-philosophy paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking, and, by the most outrageous misuse of language, putting in its place the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and, as is confirmed by its success, most stupefying verbiage" [64].

Nevertheless, Hegel's philosophy did offer a speculative thinking in dialectic philosophy: the lower categories are partly altered and partly preserved in the higher one, so that, while their opposition vanishes, the significance of both is yet to be found in the category which follows [65]. McTaggart & McTaggart presented a detached, balanced comment on Hegel's theory [66]:

- (1) The primary object of Hegel's dialectic philosophy was to establish a logical connection between the various categories which are involved in the constitution of experience;
- (2) Such a connection leads any category (i.e., thesis) on to another which belongs to the same subject but contrary of that category (i.e., antithesis);
- (3) On examining the two contrary predicates further, they are seen to be capable of reconciliation in a higher category (i.e., synthesis), which combines the contents of both of them without contradiction, not merely placed side by side but absorbed into a wider idea;
- (4) The category thus reached leads on in a similar way to a third, and the process continues until at last to reach the goal of the dialectic in a category which betrays no instability (i.e., absolute Spirit/Idea).

5. CONCLUSION

This paper presents a comparative study of Hegel's triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming and I-Ching (including Tao-Teh-Ching)'s triad of Yin-Yang-I (Change). The study gives the similarities and differences between the two triads and yields following findings:

• Similarities:

- (1) Both triads describe a continuous evolution of our universe in three stages of dialectics which are associated with each other;
- (2) The internal motivation of the two processes is contributed by the contradictive motion and competition of two elements;

- (3) The external manifestation of the processes in an exuberant physical world shows that the integration of the processes dominates the production and evolution of all things.

• Differences:

- (1) Hegel's evolution is a static but continued series of abrupt steps during which no development happens before thesis (or antithesis) finishes self-renovation; by contrast, I-Ching's evolution is a dynamic and continuous process due to Yin and Yang's constant alternative changes;
- (2) Hegel's thesis and antithesis are independent of each other, unable to exist at the same time, that is, the appearance of one element leads to the disappearance of the other; by contrast, I-Ching's Yin and Yang are not only inseparable from each other, but also interdependent of and mutually transforming to each other: at any moment, there is always a prevailing one and a yielding one, and at any extremities one begins to recede or ascend;
- (3) Hegel's highest synthesis, that is, Idea/Reason, is the final stage of his periodical developments, corresponding to the *Free Self-Becoming* type of I-Ching's philosophy; by contrast, I-Ching consists of five types of I (change) which are endless without any final stage.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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