

China Academic Library



Yijie Tang

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture



外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

 Springer

China Academic Library

Academic Advisory Board:

Researcher Geng, Yunzhi, *Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China*

Professor Han, Zhen, *Beijing Foreign Studies University, China*

Researcher Hao, Shiyuan, *Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China*

Professor Li, Xueqin, *Department of History, Tsinghua University, China*

Professor Li, Yining, *Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, China*

Researcher Lu, Xueyi, *Institute of Sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China*

Professor Wong, Young-tsu, *Department of History, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA*

Professor Yu, Keping, *Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, China*

Professor Yue, Daiyun, *Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Peking University, China*

Zhu, Yinghuang, *China Daily Press, China*

Series Coordinators:

Zitong Wu, *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, China*

Yan Li, *Springer*

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/11562>

Yijie Tang

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture



外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

 Springer

Yijie Tang (1927–2014)
Department of Philosophy
Peking University
Beijing, China

ISSN 2195-1853

China Academic Library

ISBN 978-3-662-45532-6

DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45533-3

ISSN 2195-1861 (electronic)

ISBN 978-3-662-45533-3 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015931092

Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

© Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Co., Ltd and Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg
2015

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publishers, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publishers, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publishers nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer-Verlag GmbH Berlin Heidelberg is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Contents

1	Confucianism and Constructive Postmodernism	1
1.1	What Kind of Age Are We in Now?	1
1.2	The Rise of Two Trends of Thought in China in the 1990s	3
1.3	In the New Historical Period of Chinese Revival and in the Context of Globalization, Traditional Chinese Culture May Well Make an Epochal Contribution to Human Society	5
1.3.1	“Man and Nature as a Closely Related Living Community” and “Unity of Man and Heaven”	5
1.3.2	Constructive Postmodernism, a Second Enlightenment and Confucian <i>Renxue</i> (Learning of Goodness)	7
1.3.3	Defining “Human” and Examining “Human Rights” from the Standpoint of <i>Li</i> : A Traditional Chinese Concept	8
2	The Contemporary Significance of Confucianism	11
2.1	Why Addressing the Topic “The Contemporary Significance of Confucianism”?	11
2.2	Various Points of View About the “Learning of the Chinese Classics,” Especially Confucianism, in Academic and Cultural Circles	12
2.3	What are the Main Issues in Contemporary Human Society? . . .	16
2.4	The Relationship Between Man and Nature	17
2.5	The Relationship Between Man and Man	23
2.6	The Relationship Between Body and Mind	28
	References	31
3	Toward a Chinese Hermeneutics	33
3.1	Is there a Subject Called “Hermeneutics” in Ancient China? . . .	33
3.2	Is it Possible to Find Out General Patterns of Interpretation in the Study of Chinese Classics?	37

3.2.1	<i>Zuo Chuan's</i> Interpretation of <i>Chun Qiu</i>	39
3.2.2	<i>Ji Ci's</i> Interpretation of <i>I Ching</i>	41
3.2.3	Han Fei Tzu's <i>Interpretation</i> of Lao Tzu	46
	Glossary	52
	References	53
4	Emotion in Pre-Qin Ruist Moral Theory: An Explanation of "Dao Begins in <i>Qing</i>"	55
4.1	On " <i>Dao</i> Begins in <i>Qing</i> "	55
4.2	The Basis for the Pre-Qin Ruist Emphasis on <i>Qing</i>	57
4.3	On " <i>Qing</i> Arises from <i>Xing</i> " 情生于性	59
4.4	Distinguishing <i>Qing</i> and Desire	61
5	Some Reflections on New Confucianism in Chinese Mainland Culture of the 1990s	67
6	The Problem of Harmonious Communities in Ancient China	79
7	An Inquiry into the Possibility of a Third-Phase Development of Confucianism	83
8	Immanence and Transcendence in Chinese Chan Buddhism	87
8.1	Chinese Chan Buddhism Neither Valued Scriptures nor Established in Words, but Claimed Everything Should Listen to the Essential Mind	88
8.2	Chinese Chan Buddhism Broke Outmoded Conventions and Abolished Sitting in Meditation, but Only Valued Seeing the Nature and Accomplishing the Buddhahood	90
8.3	Chinese Chan Buddhism Did Not Worship Images, Rather Abused the Buddhas and Berated the Masters, but Claimed "One Who Is Enlightened in One Thought Is a Buddha"	93
9	The Introduction of Indian Buddhism into China: A Perspective on the Meaning of Studies in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion	101
9.1	The Introduction of Indian Buddhism into China and the Popularization of the School of Prajna Teachings [bo-re xue] in the Wei and Jin Periods	101
9.1.1	The Beginnings of Buddhism in China	101
9.1.2	The An Shigao of Hinayana School	105
9.1.3	The Zhi-lou-jia-qian of Mahayana School	107
9.2	The Interaction Between the Imported Ideological Culture—Buddhism—And the Previously Existing Ideological Culture of China	122
9.2.1	Adaptation to Tradition	123
9.2.2	The Enrichment and Intensification of Tradition	128
9.2.3	Relative Excellence and Real Contribution	130

9.3	The Comparative Study of Philosophies and Regions	133
9.3.1	The Search for Common Laws	134
9.3.2	Attention to the Specific Characteristics of a Culture	136
9.4	The Isolation of Old Topics and New Issues	141
10	Relationships Between Traditional and Imported Thought and Culture in China: The Importation of Buddhism	145
	Vocabulary	151
11	On the Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)	153
12	The Origin and Characteristics of Daoism	159
12.1	General Background	160
12.2	The Development of Daoism	164
12.3	Characteristics of Daoism	167
	Vocabulary	170
13	The Daoist Religion of China	173
14	The Attempt of Matteo Ricci to Link Chinese and Western Cultures	179
14.1	Modes of Relating Oriental and Occidental Cultures	181
14.1.1	Linking Catholicism with Confucianism (Heru)	181
14.1.2	Complementing Confucianism (Buru)	182
14.1.3	Transcending Confucianism (Chaoru)	184
14.1.4	Concordance with Confucianism (Furu)	185
14.2	“Body and Use” and the Correlation of Chinese and Western Harmony	187
15	The Possible Orientations of Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization	191
16	Prospects for the Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy and the Issue of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful in China’s Traditional Philosophy	197
16.1	Chinese Philosophy as a Threefold Integration	198
16.1.1	Integration of Heaven with Man: The True	198
16.1.2	Integration of Knowledge with Practice: The Good	200
16.1.3	Integration of Feeling with Scenery: The Beautiful	203
16.2	The Study of Chinese Philosophy and the Reason for Being Human	205
17	Questions Concerning the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy	209
17.1	The Significance of Studying the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy	209
17.2	How to Study the Concepts and Categories of Traditional Chinese Philosophy	212
17.2.1	Analysis of the Meaning of Concepts and Categories	213

17.2.2	Analysis of the Development of the Meanings of Concepts and Categories	214
17.2.3	Analysis of the Systems of Concepts and Categories of Philosophers (or Philosophical Schools)	216
17.2.4	Analysis of the Similarities and Differences Between the Concepts and Categories of Chinese and Foreign Philosophies	219
17.3	A Tentative Theory of the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy	220
17.4	Discussion	226
18	New Progress in the Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy	229
18.1	The History of Chinese Philosophy as the History of Knowledge of the Chinese Nation	229
18.2	The Concept and Category of Traditional Chinese Philosophy	231
18.3	The Comparison and Analysis of Traditional Chinese and Foreign Philosophies	233
18.4	The Method Employed by Traditional Chinese Philosophy in Establishing a System	235
19	A Reconsideration of the Question of “The True, the Good, and the Beautiful” in Traditional Chinese Philosophy	239
19.1	Confucius’ Demands of the Realm of Life	240
19.2	Laozi’s Quest in the Realm of Life	245
19.3	Zhuangzi’s Quest in the Realm of Life	250
19.4	Brief Conclusion	255
	Chinese Character	257
20	Chinese Traditional Cultures and Corporate Management	261
21	A Study of the Question of China’s Cultural Development	265
22	The Enlightenment and Its Difficult Journey in China	279
22.1	The Eighteenth-Century European “Enlightenment Movement” and China’s Sixteenth-Century Late Ming “Enlightenment Trend of Thought”	279
22.2	The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society Amid the “Enlightenment” of the West and Its Struggle to Advance Through Manifold Obstacles	280
22.3	China’s Own Enlightenment and Its Slogan of “Science and Democracy”: Have They Come to Fruition?	281
22.4	Whither Enlightenment in Chinese Society?	282

23 The Coexistence of Cultural Diversity: Sources of the Value of Harmony in Diversity 285

23.1 Introduction 285

23.2 Harmony in Diversity 286

23.3 Commonalities Across Cultural Traditions 288

23.4 Regional Diversity and the Bidirectional Nature of Cultural Selection 288

23.5 Conclusion 290

24 On the Clash and Coexistence of Human Civilizations 291

24.1 “The Clash of Civilizations” and the “New Empire” Theory . . . 291

24.2 “Coexistence of Civilizations” and New Axial Age 294

24.3 Can Chinese Culture Make Contributions to the Coexistence of Civilizations? 298

24.3.1 The Confucian Doctrine of *Ren* (仁, Benevolence, Virtue) Is a Resource of Thinking with a Positive Meaning for the “Coexistence of Civilizations” 299

24.3.2 The Taoist Doctrine of the Way (*tao*) Can Provide Significant Resources of Thinking to Prevent “The Clash of Civilizations” 304

25 Constructing “Chinese Philosophy” in Sino-European Cultural Exchange 309

25.1 Western Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy as an Independent Discipline 311

25.2 Paradigms and Frameworks of Western Philosophy and Potential Problems in Chinese Philosophy 313

25.3 Future Developments in Chinese Philosophy 315

Chinese Glossary 316

Chapter 1

Confucianism and Constructive Postmodernism

1.1 What Kind of Age Are We in Now?

From a world perspective, our current age can possibly be seen as the transition from modern capitalist society beginning with the first, eighteenth-century, Enlightenment toward a postmodern society of a “second enlightenment.” From a China perspective, our age will be seen as a crucial moment for realizing great national revival in the context of globalization. All in all, for human society, this age represents a precious opportunity to enter a totally new era.

Since the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment, Western capitalism has a history of almost 300 years, during which period the Western world achieved dazzling “modernization.” But now, “modernized society” is suffering from more and more intractable problems. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) proposed that reason should be the watchword of the Enlightenment, but these days “reason” faces its own problems. Originally, “reason” contained two related aspects: “instrumental reason” and “value reason,” both aspects with an extremely important role in advancing human progress, but the present-day reality is that “scientifically omnipotent” “instrumental reason” outshines humanistic “value reason,” and the latter has become marginalized. As a result, everything becomes an “instrument”: people become instruments for others and the natural world has become an instrument to be used by human beings as they see fit. The normal and harmonious relation between man and nature has been severely harmed by man’s unrestrained exploitation, destruction, and waste of natural resources. In turn, man’s own survival is threatened by deteriorating natural conditions such as depletion of the ozone layer, poisoned oceans, polluted environment, and unbalanced eco- environment. Although the Kyoto Protocol for limiting air pollution was signed in Kyoto, Japan, as early as in December 1997, certain developed countries in the

December 23, 2011

Translated by Yuan Ailing

capitalist world set various obstacles on its path. One example is Canada's recent announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Protocol. This illustrates that the "reason" advocated by the Enlightenment is being changed by some Western leaders into a "nonrational" and utilitarian "tool."

With the growth of industrialization, "free market economy" has promoted the huge increase of human wealth, and people have won great material benefit from it. But there is no denying that it has also caused serious polarization between rich and poor (including country to country, ethnic group to ethnic group, class to class within a country). If "free market economy" continues to grow like a rapacious monster, without effective supervision, control, or restraint, sooner or later it will cause economic crisis and social disturbance. The global financial crisis that first appeared in the United States in 2008 was still ongoing when the debt crisis began to sweep Europe in 2011. According to Professor Paul Kennedy of Yale University, liberalism freed people from the shackles of the pre-market-economy age, but it has also put people in danger of financial crisis and social disasters.¹

Another Enlightenment watchword, "liberation of the individual," originally targeted religious superstition and vulgar ignorance, encouraging people to be fully aware of their own strength so as to fully deploy their "free" creativity. Today, however, this notion has become an instrument for the domination of others, a tool that imperialist countries in particular use to support their own hegemony and impose their own value systems on other countries and people, pushing a universalist doctrine.² The distorted development of today's capitalist society has resulted in people no longer in pursuit of "reason," but indulging themselves in the lust for power and worship of money. Consequently, all groups of people live in pain and mental conflict: Ordinary people struggle to survive harsh conditions; intellectuals experience constant guilt because of their inability to settle social chaos; unable to win people's trust, politicians exist in a state of self-deception; entrepreneurs wrestle to figure their way around mutually contradictory rules and systems. Regardless of rank or identity, it seems the happy life to which all aspire is out of reach and happiness eludes all. But this is not a problem caused by any individual: rather, it is an unavoidable pain for a society in the throes of a major transitional period. Therefore, it is incumbent on each and every one of us to work hard for the coming of a new age.

¹ Paul Kennedy, "The Form of Capitalism Will Change to Some Extent," *Cankaoxiaoxi*, March 16, 2009.

² Universalism: Some Western scholars and politicians believe that only the values preached by Western empires have "universal value" and that the ideas and cultures of all other nations have no "universal value" to present-day human society except as museum exhibits. Therefore, we must distinguish the issue of "universalism" from that of "universal value." On this, please refer to the "General Preface" written by Tang Yijie for *Zhongguo Ruxue Shi*, Peking University Press, October 2011.

1.2 The Rise of Two Trends of Thought in China in the 1990s

In the 1990s, there emerged in China's ideological and cultural circles two ideological trends opposing the concept of "monism." One trend is "postmodernism," an idea originating in the West and aiming to deconstruct "modernity." In the early 1980s, "postmodernism" had already come to China, but it made little impact at the time: by the 1990s however, Chinese scholars were suddenly showing it great interest. Another trend is the "*Guoxue* tide"—the ardent pursuit of revitalizing traditional Chinese culture. In truth, in the 1980s, China's thinkers had advocated greater emphasis on traditional Chinese culture, but it did not coalesce into a surge tide until in the 1990s when *Guoxue* rose quietly in Peking University. What does the rise of these two trends mean for us?

In the 1960s, to save human society and cancel out modernity's concomitant negative impact, the trend of "postmodernism" first emerged in the West. In its early period, postmodernism was "deconstructive postmodernism," posited as a way of dealing with problems produced in the course modern society's development. The aim was to deconstruct modernity, to oppose monism and advocate pluralism, to shatter all authority, and to cast the "authoritativeness" and "dominant nature" of modernity into the shade. But postmodernism of the deconstructive kind produced neither positive standpoints nor any designs for a new age.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, "constructive postmodernism," a concept based on process philosophy, proposed integrating the positive elements of the first Enlightenment with postmodernism and thus called for a "second enlightenment."

For instance, according to Whitehead's process philosophy, "man" should not be taken as the center of everything. Rather, "Man and nature should be regarded as a closely related living community."³ According to John B. Cobber, a major founder of process philosophy, "Constructive postmodernism takes a critical attitude towards deconstructive postmodernism. . . we have introduced ecologicalism into postmodernism. In a postmodern age, man and man will co-exist harmoniously, as will man and nature. It is an age which will retain something positive of modernity while transcending dualism, anthropocentrism and male chauvinism, an age that aims to build a postmodern society for the common good." According to process philosophy, if the rallying cry of the first Enlightenment was "to free the self," then the second enlightenment's watchword should be "to care about others" and "to respect differences" (in a postmodern society). In their opinion, when people use their personal "freedom" in ways that diminish the community, they are bound to weaken their own "freedom." Therefore, it is necessary to reject an abstract concept

³ According to the paper "Whitehead's Process Philosophy," "Process philosophy takes environment, resources and human beings as a closely related living community." *Social Sciences Weekly*, Shanghai, August 15, 2002. Even the Stoics of Ancient Greece believed "man is part of nature" (Translator's back translation due to lack of the original English version of the relevant quotation).

of freedom in favor of a profound and responsible freedom by bringing in the notions of responsibility and duty and by revealing the inner relation between freedom and duty. In the West, constructive postmodernism is a tiny branch stream with very little influence, but in China, it has attracted the attention of a group of scholars who are passionate for national revival.

Karl Theodor Jaspers wrote in *The Origin and Goal of History*, “Until today mankind has lived by what happened during the Axial Period, by what was thought and created during that period. In each new upward flight it returns in recollection to this period and is fired anew by it. Ever since then it has been the case that recollections and re-awakenings of the potentialities of the Axial Period—renaissances—afford a spiritual impetus. Return to this beginning is the ever-recurrent event in China, India and the West.”⁴ This is exemplified in the “*Guoxue* tide” in the late 1990s, when China was experiencing a process of national rejuvenation, and for this, the support of a revitalized national culture was essential.

In my opinion, it is precisely because traditional Chinese culture (*Guoxue*) has had over a century of impact from Western culture that Chinese scholars have had the chance for reflecting on our own traditional culture. We have gradually come to realize what of our culture should be promoted, what abandoned, and what absorbed. For over 100 years, Chinese scholars have been trying to absorb and digest “Western learning,” and this most certainly laid the foundation for the transformation of *Guoxue* in the traditional sense to its modern counterpart. The new or modern *Guoxue* must be a spiritually significant power for China’s revival as well as for the “peace and development” of human society. It will help China to realize “modernization” in an all-round way and also to avoid the predicament that Western society currently experiences.

In other words, the new *Guoxue* should stick to the principle of *Fanben Kaixin*. Only through *Fanben* (return to the source) are we able to *Kaixin* (open up new territory). *Fanben* requires of us a deep understanding of *Guoxue*’s essence and insists on the mainstay nature of our own culture, whereas *Kaixin* requires of us a systematic understanding of the new problems facing China and human society, problems in need of urgent resolution. The two aspects are inseparable: Only by digging deeper into the true essence of *Guoxue* can we open up new territory at the appropriate time. Only by squarely addressing the problems of human society can we better promote and update the essence of *Guoxue*, so that in the twenty-first century, the flame of *Guoxue* will once more be ignited by the *Fanben Kaixin* principle and contribute to human society.

What are the prospects of these two trends of thought in China? Will they exert a positive impact on Chinese society and on human society as a whole? To answer these questions, we must fully investigate the possibility of integrating the two.

⁴Karl Theodor Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. by Wei Chuxiong, et al., Huaxia Publishing House, June 1999, p. 14.

1.3 In the New Historical Period of Chinese Revival and in the Context of Globalization, Traditional Chinese Culture May Well Make an Epochal Contribution to Human Society

China is in the process of national revival, and this must have the support of revitalized national culture. However, in this globalized age, the revitalization of our traditional culture requires us not only to address our own social problems but world problems also. It follows that while developing our traditional culture, we must keep in mind that it belongs to both China and the world at large. It requires us not only to pay close attention to the actual development of our own culture but also to incipient tendencies in Western culture. Here, the author would like to offer a possible trend for discussion, namely: Could a combination of *Guoxue* and constructive postmodernism—the former traditional Chinese learning and the latter of Western origin and still in the bud—have something to offer to the healthy and rational development of China and the rest of the world?

1.3.1 “Man and Nature as a Closely Related Living Community” and “Unity of Man and Heaven”

According to John B. Cobber, “Today we recognize that man is a part of nature and that we live an ecological community.” This idea, although coming directly from Whitehead, is very similar to a traditional Chinese notion—the unity of Man and Heaven, Heaven implying the laws of nature. As a core traditional Chinese value, it is a mode of thinking that differs from the “man-nature dichotomy” idea that long prevailed in the West.

In 1992, 1,575 famous scientists from around the world signed and published a document named “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity.” Its first line read: “Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course.” Why has nature been so devastated? There is no getting away from the fact that the long prevalence of the “man-nature dichotomy” mindset made nature a victim.⁵ Fortunately, the “unity of Man and Heaven” way of thinking offers us a feasible way toward tackling the destruction of the natural world.

As early as 2,500 years ago, Confucius was exhorting people to both “know Heaven” and “fear Heaven.” The first admonition requires us to learn more

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, trans. by Ma Yuande, The Commercial Press, August 1988. On page 91 of the final volume of this translation, it is written, “Descartes’ philosophy completed or nearly completed the dualism of spirit and material that began from Plato and was developed by Christian philosophy for religion related reason. . . According to Descartes’ system, the spiritual world and the material world are two parallel and independent worlds and the study of one may not involve the other.”

about nature and thus consciously use it to improve the welfare of human beings. The second requires us to hold nature in awe and fulfill our duty of protecting it. According to Zhu Xi, another great thinker of ancient China, “Heaven is inseparable from man and man from Heaven.” What he is telling us is that, after Heaven gives birth to man, man and Heaven have formed an inseparable relation, one that requires man to embody the laws of Heaven and to be responsible for it.

As we have seen, in dealing with the relation between man and nature, traditional Chinese philosophy takes a road similar to that of constructive postmodernism. As Léon Vandermeersch put it, “Western humanism that brought the world such a perfect thought as the concept of human rights now faces many challenges from modern society that as yet it has been unable to answer. Why, then, not give some consideration as to whether Confucian thinking might indicate a way forward for the world, for example: respect for nature as proposed in the ‘unity of man and Heaven’ concept; and the philanthropic spirit that ‘all men are brothers’? We can and should bring to bear the essence of Confucian teaching on current world problems, to examine them afresh from a new perspective.”⁶

Why does Vandermeersch put Western thought on human rights together with the three concepts from Chinese thinking as mentioned above? As we know, human rights are very important to us, because man should not be deprived of the right of freedom, and social progress can only be realized with “freedom of thought,” “freedom of speech,” “freedom of belief,” “freedom of movement,” etc. However, the question of how to protect human rights is often subject to interference by external forces, to removal even. This has been the case in China and overseas. Some Western thinkers and politicians widen the concept of human rights to the extent that there are no limits and that man can destroy nature at will. Hence, Vandermeersch asserted that there should be some constraints on man’s rights over nature, and to do that, we should use the significant philosophical asset of the concept of their unity.

According to Christian belief, God created the world in its complete form and man can do nothing further to it. However, in Vandermeersch’s opinion, once God created a complete world, the rest was man’s problem and for man to address. Just as André Gide, the French writer, said, “God proposes and man disposes.” The Confucian view that “all men are brothers” is linked to another traditional Chinese idea, namely, “world outlook.” This considers that man’s loftiest ideal is “the world being One” (or the world is in Great Harmony). As written in *The Great Learning*, it is important to cultivate one’s moral character, to take good care of one’s family, to run the State well, and thence to make the whole world peaceful and harmonious. For any country or nation, it is important to consider not just its own interests but “peace in the world” (i.e., common interests of mankind), which, in my opinion, should be an intrinsic meaning of “human rights.” In other words Western thinking on human rights would do well to look into the traditional thought and culture

⁶Léon Vandermeersch, “The Significance of *Ruzang* (Confucian Collection) in the World,” *Guangming Daily*, August 31, 2009.

of other nations (such as China) for valuable elements that could supplement and enrich its own approach and thereby set human society on a more reasonable path.

1.3.2 *Constructive Postmodernism, a Second Enlightenment and Confucian Renxue (Learning of Goodness)*

According to constructive postmodernism, if the watchword of the first Enlightenment was “liberty of the individual,” then those of the second should be “care about others” and “respect for differences.”⁷ The former can be described as *ren* (goodness), a core value of the Confucian school. The starting point and basis of *ren* is “love of family,” but according to Confucius, we should not only extend *ren* to family members but beyond the family too. Similarly, as taught by Mencius, an important successor of Confucius, “Apart from taking good care of the elderly and children of one’s own kin, one should extend concern for the elderly and children of other families.” He also asserted that love for family was a prerequisite for loving others, and loving others a prerequisite for loving all creatures.

Mencius’ thought is also in line with the “care about others” line proposed by constructive postmodernism. According to constructive postmodernism scholars, their philosophy is to try to “construct a postmodern world where all living communities get due attention and concern” on the basis of “retaining some positive factors of modernity” (mainly valuable concepts such as “freedom,” “democracy,” “human rights,” etc., as proposed by Western thinkers on the basis of reason).⁸ This can be regarded as a more comprehensive description of “care about others.” In the development of human society, culture always undergoes a process of accumulation, inheritance, and creation. A postmodern society must retain the positive factors of modernity such as “freedom,” “democracy,” “human rights,” etc., before the significance of “constructing a postmodern world in which all living communities get due attention and concern” can be fully displayed. “Respect for differences” can be taken as a different way of expressing the Confucian proposition “the Ways move in parallel and do not interfere with each other.”

Different ideological and cultural traditions often have different features. Fortunately, such differences can be meaningful to human society to an extent and are by no means necessarily at odds.⁹ For example, to allow the concept of “democracy” proposed by the West as having positive meaning in specific social

⁷ Wang Zhihe, “Postmodernism Calls for a Second Enlightenment,” *World Culture Forum*, February 2007.

⁸ “For the Common Welfare: an Interview with John B. Cobber” (interviewed by Wang Xiaohua), *Social Sciences Weekly*, Shanghai, June 13, 2002.

⁹ According to the section “Supreme Harmony” of *Correcting Ignorance* by Zhang Zai, “Everything has its opposite and the opposite must move against the thing. When the opposite moves against the thing, there must be fight between them. As long as there is fight, the end must be harmony.”

conditions is not to deny traditional Chinese thinking such as *Minben* (people as the root) as also having positive meaning in specific social conditions too; nor do we deny the “universal value” of our traditional thoughts such as “Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.” Only by acknowledging that every ideological and cultural tradition has its positive effect on human society can different countries and nations coexist and co-prosper. Absorbing and digesting the strong points of different cultural systems as a means to achieving real comprehension of them is an essential path for the development of culture. Just as Russell said, “Many times in the past has it been proved that exchanges between different civilizations made milestones in the development of human civilizations.”¹⁰ We should remember that as human beings, we face common problems. We may adopt different ways to tackle those problems, but we often come to the same end via different routes. Therefore, “respect others” and “the Ways move in parallel and do not interfere with each other” have equivalent value to us.

1.3.3 Defining “Human” and Examining “Human Rights” from the Standpoint of Li: A Traditional Chinese Concept

The human rights concept is a very important one for modern society. But each ideological and cultural tradition should discuss deeply how to have the concept play a positive role in building a healthy and rational society. As written in *Thinking Through Confucius*, coauthored by Hall and Ames, two well-known American philosophers, “What we need to do is not only study Chinese traditions but also to use them as a cultural resource to enrich and restructure our own. The Confucian school defined ‘man’ from a societal perspective. Can we use it to modify and strengthen the Western mode of liberalism? Can we find some useful resource from a society built on *li* (rites, courtesy, ceremony, etc.) to help us better understand our insufficiently rooted but indeed valuable outlook on human rights?”¹¹

This paragraph discusses three issues: one, that the West should not stop at studying China’s thinking and culture but go on to apply those things so as to “enrich and restructure” its own; two, the necessity of understanding the significance of “man” as defined from a societal perspective in traditional Chinese culture; and, three, that China’s *li* contains elements that could well be valuable if brought into the Western concept of human rights.

In my opinion, the three issues raised by Hall and Ames are for treating the condition of some of Western philosophical concepts being “insufficiently rooted.” It is precisely because of the great importance attached to man’s right of liberty in

¹⁰ “Comparison between Chinese and Western Cultures,” in Russell’s *A Free Man’s Worship*, Time Literature and Art Press, April 1988. The Chinese translation is slightly changed.

¹¹ *Thinking Through Confucius*, Peking University Press, August 2005.

modern society (since the first Enlightenment) that human society has developed by leaps and bounds. The right of liberty is a great creative force. That said, the misuse of right of liberty by an individual, a country, or a nation can, in certain circumstances, constitute a threat to suppression or violation of the rights of other individuals, countries, or nations. To define “human” from a societal perspective as traditional Chinese culture does means “not defining it from the isolated angle of ‘the individual’” because “humans” have to live and grow up in various relations since the moment of birth. It is much like what Karl Marx said in *Theses on Feuerbach*, “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of social relations.”¹²

How then are we to handle the complex “social relations of man?” In ancient China, great emphasis was placed on *li* in dealing with these relations. Although *li* was a conceptual thing, it did have a restricting power on man’s behavior. As written in *The Analects of Confucius*: “In practicing the rules of *li*, harmony is to be prized.” The most important role of *li* is to promote social harmony as a normalizing power over society. As written in the *Book of Rites*, “. . . rulers use *li* to protect morality and laws to prevent people from committing crimes.” Rulers created *li* for preventing moral norms being ruined and made laws for keeping social order. As written in “Explaining Government” by Jia Yi of the Former Han Dynasty, “*Li* is put into practice before people do something wrong whereas law is executed after people do bad things. The role of law is visible whereas the role of *li* is invisible and hard to perceive.” Another reason that *li* is greatly valued in our tradition is, as advocated by the Confucian school, the importance of reciprocal relationships among people. As written in the *Books of Rites*, “What is human righteousness? It involves ten (or five pairs of) person-to-person relations: A father is kind to children and children show filial obedience to parents; brothers are kind to each other; a husband is responsible to wife and wife obedient to husband; the older children are kind to younger siblings and the younger respect the older; a ruler is benevolent and his subjects are loyal.” That is to say, according to the Confucian school, the moral relation between people should be a relation of rights and corresponding obligations rather than one-sided enjoyment of rights without fulfilling obligations. China’s *li* was created precisely in order to balance the rights and obligations of those social relations. Therefore, in my opinion, is it possible to call premodern China a society under “rule of *li* and law?” This, of course, is an ideal of the Confucian school.

From this, one could envisage in establishing a “convention on human rights” also establishing a “convention on obligations” at the same time, so as to keep a balance between rights and obligations. This would accord with what Hall and Ames believed a possible role for *li*—“enriching and restructuring” the Western concept of human rights. One might envisage a “convention of obligations” to protect and strengthen a “convention on human rights.”

¹² *Complete Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, Vol. 3, p. 5.

According to John B. Cobber, “Traditional Chinese ideology is very attractive to constructive postmodernism, but we should not just return to it. Instead, our postmodernism should renew itself by serious scientific means and by adjusting itself to the changing society. The pre-modern tradition should absorb the positive factors of the Enlightenment such as concern for and respect of individual rights before it can contribute something to the postmodern society.”¹³ This paragraph has great significance for study of our ideology and culture. Traditional or premodern Chinese culture needed to absorb rather than exclude all valuable fruits achieved by modern society since the Enlightenment, such as freedom, democracy, human rights, etc., concepts that embody “concern and respect for individual rights.” In addition, we must work hard to put into practice those positive concepts before we can successfully align traditional or premodern Chinese culture with postmodernism and promote the transformation from modern to postmodern society.

It is good to note that some Chinese scholars have had extensive contact and satisfactory cooperation with Western scholars of constructive postmodernism. The representative figures of constructive postmodernism have also realized the value of traditional Chinese culture to their research and are absorbing nutrition from it. Similarly, some Chinese scholars have noticed the practical significance of constructive postmodernism in helping human society out of predicament and are paying close attention to the development of this thought. If an organic synthesis between the widely influential “*Guoxue* tide” and constructive postmodernism can be achieved, then pioneered deeply in Chinese society, and developed further, China could perhaps proceed smoothly to completing the mission of its own “first enlightenment,” realize modernization, and then rather rapidly enter a postmodern society marked by a “second enlightenment.” If this does come to pass, the fruits achieved in China’s current cultural revival will be of great significance to human history.

In this paper, the author explores the possibility of communication and integration of Western and Chinese cultures. Whether this possibility can become reality hinges mainly on how China’s *Guoxue* can adapt to healthy social development and whether constructive postmodernism, currently a minor branch of thinking in the West, can become more mainstream and win widespread acceptance. The author stresses that this paper is simply a theoretical foray—a tryout—and would welcome any comments.

¹³ “For the Common Welfare: an Interview with John B. Cobber” (interviewed by Wang Xiaohua), *Social Sciences Weekly*, Shanghai, June 13, 2002.

Chapter 2

The Contemporary Significance of Confucianism

2.1 Why Addressing the Topic “The Contemporary Significance of Confucianism”?

I have delivered speeches on the topic “The Contemporary Significance of Confucianism” several times, including in the 1980s and 1990s of the last century. Now, I will continue to address it in the twenty-first century. In addition to me, more and more scholars have started to address this topic. Why? I think there are two important reasons: One is that we are on the eve of the great revival of the Chinese nation. So now, we must review our historical and cultural tradition. Karl Jaspers presented the notion of “the Axial Age.” He thought that great thinkers emerged in ancient Greece, Israel, India, China, and other countries almost simultaneously around 500 B.C., and they all presented unique ideas on problems which concern all human beings. Aristotle and Plato in ancient Greece, Prophets of Judaism in Israel, Shakyamuni in India, and Laozi and Confucius in China independently initiated and formed distinctive cultural traditions. Through 2,000 years of development, these cultural traditions have become central to human intellectual wealth, but these different cultures in different regions developed independently at the beginning and did not originally influence each other. He says, until today mankind has lived all by what was thought and created during the Axial Age. In each new upward leap, it returns in recollection to this period and is fired anew by it. Even since then, it has been the case that recollections and reawakening of the potentialities of the Axial Period—renaissances—always afford a spiritual impetus. The return to the root is the continuous thing in China, India, and West (see Jaspers 1989, p. 14). For instance, the Europeans in the renaissance looked back at the origin of their culture, ancient Greece, which revived European civilization and left its mark on global

Frontiers of Philosophy in China, 2008, 3(4): 477–501

Translated by Yan Xin from *Jiangnan Luntan* 江汉论坛 (Jiangnan Tribune), 2007, (1): 5–14

culture. Similarly, Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism in China was stimulated by Indian Buddhism; the Confucian thinkers, by “recalling” Confucius and Mencius in the pre-Qin period, had promoted the ingenious Chinese philosophy to a new height. When we enter into the new millennium, the world’s intellectual circle has started to appeal for the arrival of “a New Axial Age.” Thus, it has become important to review and research ancient thoughts and wisdom and recall the origin of our own culture in order to respond to the new, diverse world culture. Secondly, in the new century, our country has brought forward a great project to build a “harmonious society.” Fei Xiaotong has raised the issue of “cultural self-consciousness.” In order to build a “harmonious society,” we have to know our own “culture.” What is “cultural self-consciousness”? Fei Xiaotong in *Reconsideration on Humanistic Value* said:

Cultural self-consciousness denotes that people who live in a context of some culture have “self-knowledge” of their own culture, and can explain its origin, development, characteristics, and its trend. It does not mean that people “return to the original culture,” and “return to the ancients,” and it does not mean “complete westernization” or “complete *tahua* 他化 (otherization)” at the same time. The request for self-knowledge intends to strengthen the ability of self-determination in the process of cultural transformation, and grasp the initiative status of cultural choice in the process of adaptation to new conditions and new era. (Fei Xiaotong 2005, p. 248)

It means that we have to have “self-knowledge” of our culture, establish our place in our culture, and have an “independent ability” in the state of globalization and cultural diversity in the great historical era that we are building our “harmonious society.” Our place in our culture does not mean “completely returning to the ancients” and “complete westernization”; instead, it means assuring that our own culture can take deep root in society, like leaves which flourish if the roots are deep. So we have to persist in our cultural understanding in order to be able to absorb and digest the outstanding cultures of other nations to nourish our own culture.

In this situation, when we study our history and the prospect of our national culture, we have to adapt to the new trend of the contemporary development of world culture, that is, the “New Axial Age.” We have to have cultural self-consciousness in order to meet the goal of building a “harmonious society.” In the new historical era, what problems face the world and our society? Which issues should we address in order to realize “the New Axial Age” and our “harmonious society”?

2.2 Various Points of View About the “Learning of the Chinese Classics,” Especially Confucianism, in Academic and Cultural Circles

Entering into the twenty-first century, the learning of the Chinese classics becomes popular. There are various opinions and explanations on this phenomenon. The so-called learning of the Chinese Classics can be found in *Zhouli·Chunguan·Yueshi* 周礼·春官·乐师 (Zhouli 1980), which is the earliest record: “The duty of the official in charge of music is to administer the affairs of nation-owned school, and to teach the offspring of high-ranking officials music and dance.” But, now, the

“learning of the Chinese classics” seems to be the opposite of “Western learning.” The reason is that as we face the influence of “Western learning,” we encounter the problem of how to protect and develop our own traditional culture. The development of Chinese culture faces a dual task. One is that we must protect our culture and maintain our cultural foundation. And the other is how we deal with Western culture. This has been the basis of the cultural dispute of “China and the West, the Ancient and the Modern” for the past hundred years. But today, in the time of globalization, we must go out of the dispute, synchronize the teachings of “China and the West, and the Ancient and the Modern,” and realize the ability of different cultures to coexist and prosper.

Today, there are various points of view about the “learning of the Chinese classics,” especially Confucianism, in academic and cultural circles. I will give a brief introduction in the following passages:

1. Some scholars propose the outline as “the reconstruction of Chinese Confucianism.” They think that we “must revive Confucianism omni-directionally in order to fight against the omni-directional challenge of Western civilization” and “the revival of Confucianism is an urgent affair to revive Chinese culture and reconstruct Chinese civilization.” Therefore, they advocate establishing Confucianism as the national religion and realizing the so-called “combination of politics and religion” of China’s ancient times (Jiang Qing 2005, pp. 3–7).
2. There are two critiques of this point of view: One is from “the school of liberalism.” The critics believe that “the theory that Confucianism can save the nation” counteracts contemporary democratic politics and is harmful to the idea of “equality.” The critics assume that their purpose is to establish “Confucianism” as “the national religion,” and they “attempt to ideologize Confucianism and make use of Confucianism as the instrument of dictatorship” (Chen 2006, p. 6). Another critique is from Marxist scholars. They think that “the essence of salvation in Confucianism is an exaggeration of moral function” and “to apply the ontological *Dao* of Heaven and ontological nature and destiny to pursue the kingliness *Dao* of politics, but this only leads to the trap of feudal dictatorship again.” “The real savior can only be Marxism” (Ibid.).
3. Some scholars fully affirm “Confucianism” in order to maintain and develop Confucian thoughts. For instance, modern Neo-Confucians think that “the *Dao* of kingliness without,” which can adapt to modern democratic politics, can be developed from the learning of the sageliness within. They also think that the system of epistemology can develop from the Confucian “learning of mind and nature.” Others think that “*san gang wu chang* 三纲五常 (the Three Bonds and the Five Moral Rules) in human relationships” still have value. In the 1994 conference, Tu Weiming gave up his former belief that the three bonds still had value for the belief that “the Five Moral Rules in human relationships still had value.” His opinion on “cultural China” is important for making Chinese culture known to the world. But he divided “cultural China” into several circles, with the core circle including Chinese mainland, Taiwan, etc. The second circle includes the overseas Chinese. And the third circle includes those countries which have been influenced by Chinese culture. The fourth circle covers foreigners who

study and enjoy Chinese culture. But one of his beliefs is debatable. He said: “The category of cultural China is very broad. Some persons who have no consanguineous relationship with China, but have a great impact on China are also a part of cultural China” (Tu Weiming 2002, p. 430). This is questionable. From this logic, we can infer the categories of “cultural Europe” and “cultural America” and that Chinese thinkers like Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi had an impact on them, so they are also a part of “cultural Europe” and “cultural America,” too.

4. Of course, some scholars think that the May Fourth Movement refuted Confucianism, and to once again raise Confucianism to a high status is a historical regression.

How should we look at Confucian thoughts? There are various answers. Today, the many perspectives to this issue indicate that our society is progressing, because academic and cultural questions can only be raised in an environment of free discussion and improved by rational dialogue.

Of course, I myself have my own opinion on “Confucianism,” and debates will determine whether my opinion is right or not. It is just one voice. I have several opinions on academics and culture. First, there is no absolutely right way of thinking and culture in history, because each of them contains internal contradictions, including Confucianism. So, some aspects of Confucianism inevitably have historical limitations and cannot adapt to the needs of modern society. The universal significance of Confucianism also needs to be interpreted in a modern way. Second, although thinking and culture are moving forward, the issues raised by ancient philosophers and their thoughts are the same as today because some philosophical issues last forever. For instance, the problem of “the relationship between human and nature” is still discussed in contemporary Chinese philosophy. Third, Bertrand Russell said: “Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress” (Russell 1922, p. 195). Any culture that wants to have continuous historical development must absorb and digest other nations’ cultures, and a culture can only keep up with other cultures through mutual exchanges, especially in the era of globalization. Looking at Chinese history, the entry of Indian Buddhism has proven this. Chinese culture has benefited from Indian Buddhism; Indian Buddhism was further developed and promoted in China. It was absorbed by Chinese culture and had a profound impact on Neo-Confucianism in the time of the Song and Ming dynasties. Today, we must absorb and digest Western culture and other nations’ cultures fully and systematically in the time of globalization. Only in this way can Chinese academics and culture adapt to the demands of contemporary human society and our own nation’s development. Therefore, our culture must be national and international. Fourth, cultural subjectivity should be established. Any national culture must take root in its own soil because it is necessary to understand, comprehend, protect, and develop a native culture fully in order to rationally and healthily develop as well as have the capacity to absorb other nations’ cultures in depth. A culture that is unable to

maintain its autonomy and is unable to absorb other nations’ cultures to enrich and develop its own culture will be wiped out or completely assimilated.

Based on the above discussions, we may analyze “Confucianism” from three different perspectives: political Confucianism, orthodox Confucianism, and academic Confucianism.

Confucianism has been intertwined with politics in past dynasties; undoubtedly, it played an important role in feudal dictatorship. Confucianism pays special attention to its function in moral cultivation, which has a positive side, but the negative side leads to absolute rule, making China a society of “the rule of man” and making it difficult for China to achieve the “rule of law.” Confucians often moralized politics and glorified political rule; and they also politicized morality, making it an instrument of politics. Of course, some of the political philosophy in Confucianism limited dictatorship, for instance, “to resist high-ranking official with virtue,” “people are the most valuable,” and “to kill a dictator” (King Xuan of Qi asked: “Is it tolerable if a government official kills his king?” Mencius said: “He who destroys benevolence and righteousness is called a dictator. I just heard about King Wu of Zhou, the first king of Zhou Dynasty, who killed the dictator Zhou 纣, the last ruler of the Shang Dynasty, and I have never heard that he killed his king as an official”) (Mencius 1980, Liang Huiwang xia). It was also typical of Confucians to apply “*tian*天 (Heaven)” in restricting the emperor’s power. Confucians proposed that humans should revere “Heaven” and fate. In some circumstances, “the interaction between Heaven and man” can also restrict the “emperor’s power.” For instance, when natural disasters or strange phenomena happened, officials would write to the emperor to warn him. Then, the emperor would have to publish an imperial self-criticism. But speaking as a whole, the negative function of political Confucianism is more obvious because it was used by politics. In any case, the thoughts of “stupid loyalty” and “my majesty is holy and wise, and your subject commits intolerable crime and should be put to death” are not advisable. So, when Confucianism is manipulated by politicians, many problems arise.

Orthodox Confucianism: the development and influence of schools with systematic traits and a successive heritage must have their own tradition whether it is in the West or in China. In China, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism all have their own traditions. Because schools with traditions continuously develop, among them, Confucianism is especially conscious of inheriting its tradition, and Confucians regard the inheritance of the cultural traditions of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties as their responsibility. “Confucius inherits the *Dao* of Yao and Shun and imitates King Wen and King Wu of Zhou” (Zisi 1980, Chapter 30). Therefore, today, we should consciously inherit our own cultural tradition. But if Confucianism overemphasizes its “orthodox tradition,” it might exclude other schools and suppress heterodoxy. Heterodoxy is to oppose and overthrow mainstream thought and blaze a new path for new ways of thinking. Confucianism as a whole is relatively inclusive. For instance, Confucians hold that “The myriad things grow equally without harming each other and the circulation of the four seasons, the travel of the sun and the moon go smoothly without interference” (Ibid.). But sometimes there is also a strong sense of exclusiveness in Confucianism.

For instance, Mencius rejected Yang Zhu and Mozi, and he criticized Yang Zhu's lack of filial piety to his father because he advocated universal and equal benevolence and Mozi's lack of loyalty to the emperor because he insisted that individuals came first. Here, Mencius goes too far. Another example is Han Yu's exclusion of Buddhism. At that time, Buddhism had caused some problems, including a tremendous waste of national wealth. But Han Yu suggested "The government should secularize Buddhism monks and nuns, burn off sutra, and transform Buddhism temples to civilian houses" (Han 1991, p. 174). His words go too far. It is not good if factionalism is too strong.

"The academic tradition of Confucianism" is about the history of Confucian learning and its academic ideals. In this aspect, the positive value of Confucianism can be seen, and Confucianism can offer significant resources for human society. Now and in the future, Confucianism should not be ideologized. Learning is learning, and it should not depend on politics. No school of learning should be viewed as the ruling one, and the "contention of a hundred schools of thought" should be put into practice. Of course, we must analyze the thoughts offered by sages and outstanding men in history and interpret them according to contemporary circumstances in order to uncover resources which can assist in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and be universally significant for the rational and all-around development of human society. In order to achieve this goal, Confucianism should be renewed in order to make it a source of real spiritual wealth.

2.3 What are the Main Issues in Contemporary Human Society?

We may judge the value of learning from many perspectives, such as politics, economics, science, and technology. Perhaps, it is most important to make a philosophical judgment on the value of a school. Therefore, we must learn about the main problems faced by our society, nation, and mankind. These issues should be the starting point for considering philosophical questions.

What are the main issues in contemporary human society? In my opinion, there are three: one is the relationship between man and nature, a conflict which is quite serious. The second is the relationship between man and man, including relationships between man and self (man and society), nation and nation, and people and people. The third problem is the relationship between body and mind. The biggest problem facing mankind is the conflict between man and nature, man and man (man and society), and the conflict within oneself. These issues are related to building a "harmonious society" and human society's "peaceful coexistence." In my opinion, the three philosophical propositions, "the unity of nature and man," "the unity of self and others," and "the unity of body and mind," can provide some valuable approaches and important philosophical resources to resolving the three conflicts. Of course, I do not mean that these problems can only be solved by Confucianism.

As we enter the twenty-first century, we will see that the past century was a century of rapid development, a progressive century, but it was also a tragic century

full of conflict and fighting. In 100 years, there were two world wars, and more than a hundred million people died unnaturally due to war. Many cultural artifacts made by mankind several centuries ago were destroyed. China has experienced much suffering, but has also made great progress in the past 100 years. In this process, we nearly completely negated our cultural tradition, and we refused to absorb some progressive Western cultures for a long time, too. It led to social problems, such as “a crisis of belief,” “moral vacuum,” “environmental pollution,” and “money worship.” How should we tackle these problems? I, and not only me, but other scholars, too, think that we can find philosophical resources from the past 5,000 years to deal with these problems. Many scholars have looked for answers to these problems. Of course, we should not think that thoughts and culture can solve all problems. If we think that thoughts and culture can tackle all problems, it will lead to “cultural determinism.” Then, it will be like the belief that science and technology can tackle human and social problems, leading to the trap of “the omnipotence of science,” of “scientism.” Therefore, when we discuss “the significance of Confucianism,” we simply want to find resources and approaches which can be applied to contemporary human and social problems and a way to deal with these problems.

2.4 The Relationship Between Man and Nature

On the problem of “conflict between man and nature,” in 1992, 1575 scientists, including half the Nobel laureates, signed the “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity,” which stated that human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. In my opinion, the warning signaled that human kind will encounter a serious crisis if the world continues as it is now. Advanced science and technology can benefit people, but as a part of nature, people not only control a lot of instruments to destroy nature but also control weapons which can be used to destroy human beings in the process of conquering nature. The never-ending exploitation and destruction of nature results in consequences such as the waste of natural resources, the depletion of the ozone layer, the evaporation of the ocean, environmental pollution, the sudden and sharp growth in the human population, and ecological imbalance. The result is the destruction of “a harmonious nature” and “the harmonious relationship between man and nature,” threatening conditions for human existence. These situations have a relationship with the subject-object dichotomy in Western philosophy. For instance, in *A History of Western Philosophy*, Russell said: “the philosophy of Descartes. . .it brought to completion, or very nearly to completion, the dualism of mind and matter which began with Plato and was developed, largely for religious reasons, by Christian philosophy. . .the Cartesian system presents two parallel but independent worlds, that of mind and that of matter, each of which can be studied without reference to the other” (Russell 1972, p. 567). It means that for a long time, spirit and matter have been regarded as independent and isolated in Western philosophy. Therefore, this kind of philosophy

is established on an “external relationship” (“man” and “nature” are two unrelated factors.), or it can be said that they regard “mind” and “matter” as two independent dual factors, and when Western philosophers study one, they do not involve the other (but Western philosophy has changed, for instance, Whitehead criticizes the dualism in the traditional way of thinking in his *Process Philosophy*). It means that Western thought involves the dualism of “subject-object” (“mind” and “matter,” or “nature” and “man”) from Plato in the Axial Age. But Chinese philosophy is different because it is based on “the unity of Heaven and man” (subject and object are connected and cannot be divided).

One of the origins of Chinese philosophy is *Zhou Yi* 周易 (The Book of Changes). There is an important passage on the Chu Bamboo Slips unearthed in Jing Men, Hubei province, in 1993. It states (Jingmen 1998, *Yucong yi* 语丛一):

The Rituals describes the manners of intercourse.

The Music is used to enjoy or educate.

The Book of History is □□□□ [sic].

The Book of Odes is a collection of poems of the past and the present.

The Book of Changes is to communicate the *Dao* of nature and the *Dao* of man.

The Spring and Autumn Annals is a collection of affairs of the past and the present.

These bamboo slips were written around 300 B.C. They say that “Change communicates with the *Dao* of nature and the *Dao* of man.” It means that *the Book of Changes* studies the *Dao* of Heaven (law of Heaven or nature) and the *Dao* of man (order in society) and why they are connected through a comprehensive study of the subjects. That is, people in ancient times had already realized that they had to include “man” when studying “nature,” and when studying “man,” they had to involve “Heaven,” too. This is “the unity of nature and man.” In fact, this had already been revealed in Confucius’ *Analects*. Zi Gong said: “I cannot hear Master Confucius’ saying about nature and the *Dao* of nature” (Confucius 1980, Gongye chang). Although Zi Gong had never heard Confucius speak about “nature and the *Dao* of nature,” he brought forward this issue, which indicates that there was great interest in the relationship between “human nature” (man) and “the *Dao* of Heaven (nature).” When looking at the development of human society, people originally came across the relationship between “man” and “nature (Heaven)” because humans cannot live without “nature.” Therefore, the ancient Chinese always paid attention to “the relationship between man and nature.”

Of course, there are various attitudes and methods to deal with “the relationship of man and nature.” Some scholars held that man should comply with nature; some scholars thought that man should make use of “nature” to serve man, “know and apply nature to serve people”; and some scholars held that “both man and nature have their own laws and advantages.” But the mainstream Confucian thinkers believed in “the unity of man and nature.” The so-called unity of man and nature means that “nature” is inseparable from “man” and “man” is inseparable from “nature,” too.

Why is there such a belief? Well, it has a long history. We know that the *Book of Changes* was originally a fortune-telling book used to predict good or bad luck and misfortune or good fortune. Who was asked to answer people’s fortunes? *Tian* 天 (Heaven). “Man” asks *tian* about good or bad luck and misfortune or good fortune.

The *Book of Changes* recorded these answers, and so it became a book on the relationship between “Heaven” (*tian*) and “man.” Subsequently, various interpretations of this book formed a new one, that is, *Yizhuan* 易传 (The Appendices to the Book of Changes). Among them, *The Appended Remarks* in particular can be regarded as a philosophical interpretation of the *Book of Changes*. The *Book of Changes* solves the problem of the relationship between “Heaven” and “man”; then what is the relationship between “Heaven” and “man”? *The Appended Remarks* answers this. It argues that *the Book of Changes* includes everything, and the book not only includes “the *Dao* of Heaven,” “the *Dao* of earth,” but also includes “the *Dao* of man.” Although “the *Dao* of Heaven” is manifested by *yin* and *yang*, “the *Dao* of earth” is presented as “hardness” and “softness,” and “the *Dao* of man” is manifested as “benevolence” and “righteousness.” The principle of the three is united, and the three are the manifestation of *qian* 干 and *kun* 坤. The Confucian Zhang Zai in the Song Dynasty said: “Heaven, earth, and man all have the *Dao* of *qian* and *kun*. The Change penetrates in Heaven, earth, and man, and *yin* and *yang* are its substance (*qi*), hardness and softness is its form, and benevolence and righteousness are its nature” (Zhang Zai 1978, p. 235). From the example in the *Book of Changes* that unites Heaven (earth) and man, we can see that Heaven and man are a connected entity. The reason that *qian* and *kun* are used to describe the unity of “Heaven,” “earth,” and “man” is that *qian* denotes vigorous movement and *kun* denotes generosity and virtue in the *Appendices to the Book of Changes*. Therefore, “man” has a special responsibility for “Heaven and Earth” (Heaven). “Man” should know what is demanded by Heaven and Earth in the spirit of “constantly striving for self-improvement” and “with profound generosity to contain things or complete things.” Zhang Zai said, “the *Dao* of Heaven” and “the *Dao* of man” are similar in the sense of “reason or truth.” If we want to know the principle of being a man, we have to know the *Dao* of “Heaven and Earth,” and if we know the truth of “Heaven and Earth,” we can know the principle or law of “man” (society).

Confucians in the Song Dynasty developed “the unity of nature and man.” For instance, Cheng Yi said: “Is it allowable to know the *Dao* of man but do not know the *Dao* of nature? The *Dao* is one. Is it right if the *Dao* of man is one, and the *Dao* of nature is another one?” (Cheng and Cheng Yi 2004, *Er Cheng yishu*, Vol. 18). According to the Confucian thinking, “nature” and “man” cannot be divided, and they cannot be regarded as an external and opposite relationship, and we cannot study only one of the two. Zhu Xi expressed this idea much clearer. He said: “Nature is man, and man is nature. At the beginning of human birth, they are produced from nature; and after the birth, nature is human too” (Zhu Xi 1990, Vol. 17). Zhu Xi held that “nature” cannot be independent of “man,” and “man” cannot be independent of “nature.” At the time of birth, humans come from nature, but when there is a human being, the *Dao* of “nature” (Heaven) is embodied by “man.” In other words, “humans” are responsible for “nature.” If there were no “humans,” how would the lively atmosphere of “nature” be embodied, how would “the constantly striving to become stronger” of “nature” be embodied, and how would “containing things or completing things with profound generosity” of the “earth” be embodied?

So man should know that “the work to establish mind or heart for Heaven and Earth” and “the work to establish life for people” are the same and cannot be separated. Therefore, the Yucong yi of *Guodian Zhujian* 郭店竹简·语丛一(Collection One of the Guo Dian Bamboo Slips for Writing) said: “The *Dao* can be mastered after knowing what Heaven (nature) does and what man does. If we know the *Dao*, then we know what fate is” (Jingmen 1998). If we know “the *Dao* of nature (Heaven)” (the law of nature) and the *Dao* of man (the law of human society and life), then we can know the unified principle or reason for “nature or Heaven” and “man” and the development of “nature or Heaven” (the *Dao* of nature or Heaven) and “man” (“the *Dao* of man,” society). Confucius said: “It is necessary to know destiny or fate mandated by Heaven” (Confucius 1980, Weizheng). He means that “man” should know about “nature or Heaven.” Confucius also said: “man should have reverence for fate or destiny as mandated by Heaven or nature (Ibid., *Jishi*) and cannot randomly destroy the law of development of “nature or Heaven.” A Chinese philosopher never regards “nature or Heaven” as a dead thing. Instead, it is organic, constantly developing, growing, and united with man as an entity. It is common sense that the existence of “man” cannot be separated from “nature or Heaven,” but why does “man” regard “nature or Heaven” as an opposing object and recklessly destroy and conquer “nature”? It is because he regards the relationship between “nature” and “man” as external and does not know that the relationship between “nature” and “man” is close and internal. “The internal relationship” is different from “the external relationship” because “the external relationship” denotes that “nature” and “man” are independent and unrelated. But “the internal relationship” denotes that “nature” and “man” have a close relationship. Therefore, “the unity of nature and man” is an ancient philosophical proposition in Chinese philosophy, and it is the cornerstone of Chinese Confucian thought as well as a proposition which needs to be continuously reinterpreted by human society. When we consider the problems of human beings and our relationship with nature, we should bear in mind the idea of “the unity of nature and man,” and we must deepen our discussion of the close relationship between “nature” and “man.” Human society has neglected the close relationship between “nature” and “man” for a long time, and so are we now being punished by nature? Why have we chosen a confrontational relationship with nature?

The idea of “the unity of nature and man” (the thought, “*yi* 易 (change) is to communicate the *Dao* of nature with the *Dao* of man”), which originated from *Yijing*, supplies a way of thinking that resolves the current conflict between nature and man. It can inspire us in the following three aspects.

Firstly, “The unity of nature and man” as a way of thinking says that people ought not regard “man” as the opposite of “nature” because “man” is a part of “nature” and “the birth of man is from nature.” Acts to destroy “nature” are the same as destroying “man,” and “man” will be punished by “nature.” Therefore, “man” should “know nature” (knowing nature in order to reasonably make use of nature) and should “revere nature.” (Man should revere nature and regard work to protect nature as a holy obligation.) Now, we emphasize only “knowing nature” and blindly use “knowledge” to exploit and conquer “nature” and even destroy

“nature.” But man does not know that we should revere “nature.” It is definitely an extreme manifestation of “scientism” (the omnipotence of science and technology). “Scientism” denies the holiness of “nature or Heaven” and consequently denies the transcendence of “nature or Heaven.” Thus, humanist spirit loses its foundation. The Chinese thought of “the unity of nature and man” holds that “knowing nature” is the same as “revering nature.” If we “know nature” but do not “revere nature,” we will regard “nature” as a dead thing, not knowing that it is organic, alive, and vigorous. “Revering nature” but not “knowing nature” leads man to regard “nature or Heaven” as a mystical power outside of “man” and does not help man gain the real favor of nature. “Knowing nature” is united with “revering nature,” and it is an important manifestation of “the unity of nature and man,” reflecting the inner obligation of “man” to “nature.” The philosophical proposition, “the unity of nature and man,” symbolizes the complicated relationship between “nature” and “man,” which not only includes how “man” should understand “nature” but also that “man” should revere “nature” because of its holiness. This is the reason why Chinese Confucianism has not become a universal religion (like Buddhism and Christianity), but Confucianism possesses a certain “religiosity.” Confucian thought has a religious function in China, that is, Confucians think that the “inner” morality of “man,” which is mandated by “nature,” needs moral cultivation to realize its “transcendence” as “transcendence from an ordinary person to the level of a sage.” Therefore, “the unity of nature and man” is not only a recognition of “nature” but also a realm of life that “man” should pursue. The reason is that *tian* (nature, Heaven) does not just mean nature; it also means “Heaven” in the sense of holiness. “Human nature” should be asked to reach a transcendent sphere which is equal to *tian* (Heaven, nature). In this sense, “man” and “nature” are not in opposition. Instead, “man” is united with “Heaven and Earth.” For instance, Mencius said, “The people of the place where the superior man has visited will be influenced and educated; the impact at the place where the superior man has stayed is miraculous, and the sage acts along with Heaven and Earth” (Mencius 1980, Jinxin shang). In this way, the superior man realizes personal transcendence. This way of thinking not only helps us get rid of the problem of “the division between Heaven and man” (the antagonism of Heaven and man) but also opens a way for human beings to attain the ideal human realm.

Secondly, we cannot regard the relationship between “Heaven (nature)” and “man” as a kind of external relationship, because “Heaven is man, and man is Heaven,” and so “Heaven” and “man” are inherently connected. “Man” cannot be separated from “Heaven,” and “man” cannot survive without “Heaven”; “Heaven” cannot be separated from “man”; without “man,” the reason of “Heaven” cannot be embodied, and so who can realize “the *Dao* of Heaven”? Understanding the relationship between “Heaven” and “man” is a characteristic of Chinese philosophy. On this point, Wang Fuzhi made an important observation. He reviewed ancient scholars’ theories and concluded that they had merely grasped the outer phenomena of the pre-Qin Confucianism and thought that the *Book of Changes* was only about “the *Dao* of Heaven,” but did not know that the *Book of Changes* had been the root or foundation of “the *Dao* of man” since the Han Dynasty (Wang

Fuzhi 1975, Vol. 9, Qiancheng shang). Zhou Dunyi's doctrine of "taiji picture" is about the root (origin) of "the unity of Heaven and man," which explains that the birth of man is the result of a change in "the *Dao* of Heaven." While changing into "the *Dao* of Heaven," Heaven gives its essential part to "man" and makes "man" possess "human nature," which is different from other things. Then, man can discover that all the principles of moral human relations of "the *Dao* of man" (the rules of human society) are in the order of the *yin-yang* movement of "the *Dao* of Heaven" (the law of the universe). "The *Dao* of man" and "the *Dao* of Heaven" should be united. "The *Dao* of man" is based on "the *Dao* of Heaven" because "man" is a part of Heaven (nature), so a discussion of "the *Dao* of man" cannot be separated from "the *Dao* of Heaven," and discussion of "the *Dao* of Heaven" must also take "the *Dao* of man" into consideration because "the principle of daily life and things" of "the *Dao* of man" is in the order of the *yin-yang* movement of "the *Dao* of Heaven." Zhang Zai said that *Yijing* "contains the principle of Heaven, and also includes the *Dao* of man" (Zhang Zai 1978, p. 65).

Thirdly, why does Confucian philosophy hold that there is an "internal relationship" between "Heaven and man"? From the Western Zhou Dynasty, there is an intellectual tradition described as "the ear of Heaven is the ear of my people, and the eye of Heaven is the eye of my people" (Mencius 1980, Wanzhang shang). The tradition can be traced from Confucius and Mencius to Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, Lu Jiuyuan, and Wang Yangming. On this point, Zhu Xi's saying reflects Confucius' consistency on "the learning of benevolence." He said: "the man of benevolence" "should have the heart to produce abundantly in the sense of nature, in sensing the heart of tender affection for man and beneficence for things, the benevolent man's heart includes four morals (benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and wisdom) and penetration into the four beginnings of the four morals" (Zhu Xi 1936, Vol. 13). "The *Dao* of Heaven" continuously produces and regards benevolence as the heart. "Heaven" (nature) can make myriad things grow well, so "man" should follow the example of "Heaven" (nature) and show kindness to man and benefit myriad things. The reason is that "Heaven and man is united as a whole" and "man" obtains the essence of "Heaven" to become a "man," so man should realize the function of "nature" (Heaven) and "the tender affection for other man, and bring benefits to things." "The heart of Heaven" and "the heart of man" have actually the same heart. "Man" must realize "the *Dao* of Heaven" and sense "the *Dao* of Heaven." The value of life is to realize "the destiny (fate) of Heaven," so the relationship between "Heaven" and "man" is actually internal.

We discuss the proposition of "the unity of Heaven and man" and understand it philosophically on the above points to see its real spirit and value. It is a kind of world view, a way of thinking that is applied to an interpretation of "the unity of Heaven and man." Its significance is that it endows "man" with an inescapable responsibility. "Man" can realize its own transcendence and achieve the ideal "unity of Heaven and man" only in the process of "imitating Heaven (nature)" (enhancing to the sphere of "Heaven").

Of course, the Confucian idea of "unity of Heaven and man" probably cannot directly solve specific problems in human society's "conflicts between man and

nature.” However, as a philosophical proposition, the thought of “the unity of Heaven and man” holds that “Heaven” and “man” cannot be separated into two parts; instead, “Heaven” and “man” should be regarded as an inherent union. There is an internal communication between “Heaven” and “man,” which undoubtedly provides a positive way of thinking for philosophically resolving the relationship between “Heaven” and “man.”

2.5 The Relationship Between Man and Man

“The conflict between man and man” that exists in contemporary society is more complicated than “the conflict between man and nature.” Interpersonal conflict is not only related to the various conflicts between “self and others,” “man and community,” “nation and nation,” “people and people,” and “region and region.” For instance, the pursuit of material needs and power, the struggle for natural resources, and the expansion of possession and ambition cause conflict and war between nations, peoples, and regions and leads to “imperial hegemony” and “terrorism.” Excessive preoccupation with the pursuit of money and the enjoyment of material goods, especially the ruling class’ corruption and their oppression of ordinary people, cause tensions in the relationships between people, a negative social atmosphere, numerous factions, and factionalism. In society, children, youth, and the aged all have their own problems. Misunderstandings and hostility in daily life, the isolation of souls, then lead to the dissolution of social harmony. This trend will result in the collapse of human society. Does Confucianism provide a helpful intellectual resource for contemporary society’s faults? In my opinion, the Confucian “learning of benevolence” may have much significance for the formation of harmony “between man and man,” between, nations, peoples, and regions, or “harmonious society.”

The volume of “*xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 (nature coming out of fate)” in the *Guodian Chumu Zhujian* says that “*Dao* originates from affection (feeling, emotion), and affection comes from nature. The beginning is close to affection, and the end is close to righteousness.” It means that interpersonal relationships are initially founded on affection (feeling), and affection comes from human nature. Therefore, at the start of interpersonal relationships, affection is more important (such as the affection between a mother and child), and later on, morality and justice (*Dao*, or the way, and justice or righteousness) become more important than affection. Here, “the *Dao*” denotes “the *Dao* of man,” which means the law of interpersonal relationships or principles of social relations. It is connected with “the *Dao* of Heaven,” but different from “the *Dao* of Heaven,” which means the law of nature (or the external world beyond “man”). “*Dao* originates from affection,” meaning that interpersonal relationships are initially founded on affection. It is the starting point of Confucius’ “learning of benevolence.” Confucius’ disciple Fan Chi asked him what “benevolence” was, and Confucius answered, “to love people.” Where does the moral command “to love people” come from? *Zhongyong* quotes

Confucius: “Benevolence is the character of man, and it is foremost to love family. The moral character of benevolence is inborn, and it is essential to love one’s own family” (Zisi 1980, Chapter 20). But Confucians think that the spirit of benevolence cannot just rest on the love of one’s own family. The *Guodian Chujiàn* says, “It is affection to love family sincerely, but benevolence is understood as a broad affection for ordinary people, not only affection for one’s father” (Jingmen 1998). It is natural to have much love for one’s own family; love (affection) that is extended to other people can be regarded as “benevolence.” There is also the saying, “filial piety should be extended to affection for ordinary people under the sky” (Ibid., Tang yu zhi dao). However, affection for one’s family is the foundation of affection for others. It means that the Confucian “learning of benevolence” requires an extension of the affection for one’s family to the affection of ordinary people. The principle, “put oneself in the place of another,” and the practice, “treat the aged with respect in my family, and extend that respect to the aged outside of my family. Treat the young in my family with tenderness and then extend that tenderness to other young outside of my family” (Mencius 1980, Liang Huiwang shang), reflecting benevolence. It is not easy to abide by the principle “put oneself in the place of another”; one must take “the *Dao* of *zhong* 忠 (the full development of one’s original good mind) and *shu* 恕 (the extension of that mind to others),” described as “you do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you” (Confucius 1980, Yanyuan), “if you wish to establish your own character, also establish the character of others, and if you wish to be prominent, also help others to be prominent” (Ibid., Yongye), to be the principle for carrying out “benevolence.” (Zhu Xi’s *Sishu jizhu* explains “To realize one’s good to the best is *zhong*, and the extension of one’s good is *shu*.”) If “benevolence” is extended to society (all human society), it is like Confucius’ saying, “To master oneself and return to ritual is benevolence. If a man (the ruler) can for one day master himself and return to the rites (ceremony), all under Heaven will return to benevolence. To practice benevolence depends on oneself. Does it depend on others?” (Ibid., Yanyuan) In the past, “overcome selfish desire” and “revive the ritual” had always been explained as two parallel acts, but such an understanding is not correct in my opinion. Overcoming selfish desire and reviving the ritual is benevolence means that it is “benevolence” if “reviving the ritual” is based on “overcoming selfish desire.” Fei Xiaotong explains this well. He said: “Only overcoming selfish desire, the ritual can be revived. To revive the ritual is a necessary condition for entry into society and becoming a social person. To limit one’s selfish desire or to raise one’s selfish desire may be the key difference between western and eastern cultures” (Fei Xiaotong 2002, p. 4). This is a reasonable explanation. If one enters society, he must require something of himself. For instance, he should ask himself to abide by the principle, “you do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you”; then he can follow social criterion (the ritual) and become a social person. A nation is the same; it must abide by the requirements of the world “pact” and the general rules. Then, the world pact and general rules can be preserved. Fei Xiaotong thought that “the restriction of selfish desire” in Chinese culture was good for interpersonal relationships, while “the encouragement of selfish desire” in Western culture, which placed the self

above other persons or other nations, surely and easily led to conflict and war. According to Zhu Xi, the saying can be understood as “conquering selfish desire and returning to the rituals, which represents the principle of Heaven” (Zhu Xi 1983). He means that we should restrict our own selfish desire in order to conform to rituals and criterion in our behaviors and actions. “Benevolence” is man’s innate characteristic (“affection is originated from nature”); in the sense of social life, “the ritual (ceremony)” is the external system which regulates people’s behavior, and its function is to regulate interpersonal relationships in order to ensure harmony. It symbolizes that “the importance of the use of rites (ceremony) is harmony.” Demanding that people obey the ritual (ceremony) must be based on their internal heart (mind) of “the affection for others,” which conforms to “benevolence.” Confucius says: “To practice benevolence depends on oneself. Does it depend on others?” (Confucius 1980, Yanyuan). On the relationship between “benevolence” and “rites (ceremony),” Confucius clearly said: “If a man is not benevolent, what has he to do with rites (ceremonies, etc.)? If he is not benevolent, what has he to do with music?” (Ibid., Bayi) Without the heart (mind) of benevolence, the system of rites (ceremony) and music is deceptive and is for cheating. Therefore, Confucius held that society can be harmonious and peaceful if people consciously pursue “benevolence,” base “the heart (mind) of benevolence” on certain criterion, and put it into practice in daily society. This is the meaning of the saying “if a man (the ruler) can for one day control himself and return to the rites (ceremony), all under Heaven will return to benevolence” (Ibid., Yanyuan). The action of pursuing benevolence in daily practice is similar to “seeking to reach the greatest height and brilliancy and follow the *Dao* of the Mean” in *Zhongyong*. “Seeking to reach the greatest height and brilliancy” (Zisi 1980, Chapter 27) means that people should pursue the highest principle, the ideal of benevolence, in life; “To follow the *Dao* of the Mean” asks people to realize the spirit of “benevolence” in daily life “the doctrine of the mean, denotes the use of the mean.” “Seeking to reach the greatest height and brilliancy” and “following the *Dao* of the Mean” cannot be separated into two parts, and “the *Dao* of sageliness within and kingliness without” is the highest Confucian ideal. Today, we are trying to build a harmonious society, so Confucius’ sayings are very important. There are many explanations of “benevolence” in the Confucius *Analects*, but there are no words for “benevolent governance.” However, “to lead the people with virtue and regulate them by the rules of ceremonies (rites, property),” “to love people widely,” “to elect the virtuous and able talents,” “to extensively bring benefit to the people and bring salvation to all,” etc. are all about “benevolent governance.” There are many discussions of “benevolent governance” in *Mencius*, and the meaning of “benevolent governance” is broad. Some of the explanations are not compatible with the needs of contemporary human society, but two of them are important in helping us to build a harmonious society and achieving world peace. One is “the practice of benevolent government” should ensure people have fixed property. Mencius said: “The people follow the right *Dao*, because they have fixed property and stable hearts, and without fixed property, there cannot be stable hearts” (Mencius 1980, Teng Wengong shang). He means that ordinary people should have some fixed property in order to ensure that

they have certain moral and behavioral principles. Without fixed property, a person will not have moral ideas and behavioral guidelines. Mencius said: “Benevolent governance should start with the private ownership of land” (Ibid.). He means that a benevolent government should ensure that ordinary people have their own land first. I believe that we must ensure that ordinary people have some fixed property if we truly want to build a harmonious society. At the international level, every nation and people should possess the wealth that they deserve; powerful nations should not exploit other nations’ wealth and resources or pursue power politics. The second point of Mencius’ “benevolent governance” opposes unjust war. He said, “those who carry out the kind and right *Dao* will gain more support, otherwise, others will find scant support who lose the kind and right *Dao*.” Here, “the *Dao*” means “morality and justice.” In Gongsun Chou, there is a passage that says that favorable weather is less important than advantageous terrain and advantageous terrain is less important than the support of the people. It reads:

It is not needed to confine civilians by a national boundary, not necessarily to protect a nation with a dangerous mountain, and to threaten the world by the weapons of destruction. Those who carry out the kind and right *Dao* will gain more support. Others who give up the kind and right *Dao* will find scant support. He who has the least support, his family and relatives will all oppose him, and all the people under the sky will come and pledge allegiance to he who has the most support. The just superior man will win if he launches a war against those who are opposed by all supporting forces, even by his family and relatives, or he need not launch the war. (Mencius 1980, Gongsun Chou xia)

The passage tells us that it is not necessary to have national boundaries to restrict civilians, to depend on advantageous terrain to protect a nation, and to rely on weapons of mass destruction to threaten the world. Confucians usually divide war into two kinds: “the just war” and “the unjust war.” Mencius says, “there is no just war in the Spring and Autumn Period” (Ibid., Jinxin xia), and “those who lose public support will lose the regime” (Ibid., Lilou shang). This idea also applies to the ruler of a nation. In the early Han Dynasty, Jia Yi wrote an article, *Guo Qin lun* 过秦论 (An analysis of the fall of the Qin Dynasty). In his article, he concluded that the Qin Dynasty fell because “the Qin government did not carry out the policy of benevolence and righteousness after it had established a united nation, so it lost sovereignty even though it had taken over national power and had many advantages” (Jia Yi 1989, Vol. 1). He quoted the proverb, “the past events are today’s lesson.” Is that the wisdom we should absorb today? Such Confucian thoughts should have some meaning to the rulers of a nation and for the ruling group of the world’s developed nations. “Manage state affairs and pacify the world” for “benevolent governance” and “the *Dao* of kingliness,” instead of “arbitrariness” and oppression.

Since Samuel P. Huntington presented his thesis on the conflict of civilizations in 1993, it has been hotly debated by scholars from all countries. In human history, it is not uncommon to find conflicts and war caused by cultural differences (for instance, differences in philosophy, religion, values). Having entered the twenty-first century, there is no world war, but regional wars frequently break out between nations, peoples, and regions, with political and economical problems being

important reasons, but culture is also an important reason. To resolve conflicts and even wars due to cultural differences, perhaps Confucius's notion of "harmony without sameness" might be a very important principle. In Chinese history, there are two concepts, "*he* 和 (harmony)" and "*tong* 同 (sameness)," which are regarded as different, so there is the so-called discrimination of harmony and sameness. According to the records on Zhaogong ershi nian of Zuo zhuan 左传·昭公二十年 (the 20th year of the Duke Zhao, Zuo zhuan), "Duke Zhao asked, 'Is only Liang Qiuju harmonious with me?' Yanzi (Yan Ying) answered, 'Ju is the same as you. Is it harmonious with you?' The Duke said, 'Is harmony different from sameness?' Yan answered, 'It is different. It is like cooking a thick soup, which needs water, fire, vinegar, catsup, salt, and plum to cook fish or meat, firewood to burn, and then seasoned to assure a fine taste. If the taste is too mild, the cook will add seasoning, and if the taste is too thick, he will add water to dilute the taste. When the superior man has the soup, he will find it delicious. The relationship between the emperor and his officials is alike. . . Now Ju is different, because he always agrees with you no matter what decisions you make. It is like adding water to improve the flavor of water. Who would want this? If musical instruments always play the same tone, who could listen to it? This is why sameness should not be advocated'" (Zuo Qiuming 1980, Zhaogong ershi nian). In Zhengyu of Guoyu 国语·郑语, "The harmonious relationship between things is helpful to produce new things, while sameness cannot. To add one with another is called harmony, so it can create something new; while if the same thing is put together, all will lose their vital force. So the past kings used earth, metal, wood, water, and fire to produce the myriad things" (Zuo Qiuming 1997, Vol. 16). Therefore, "harmony" and "sameness" are not the same. If different and related things can harmoniously grow, then things will develop. If same things are put together, the result is the suppression of vital force. The highest ideal in traditional Chinese culture is "ten thousand things grow together without harming each other; their *Dao* move in parallel without mutual interference" (Zisi 1980, Chapter 30). ("The ten thousand things growing together" with "their *Dao* moving in parallel" expresses a "lack of sameness"; "they do not damage" or "interfere with each other"—this is "harmony.") This can be a rich source of ideas for the coexistence of many cultures.

Different nations and countries should have cultural exchanges and dialogue in order to achieve a common understanding, that is, a process of mutual recognition from difference to a sense of commonality. This kind of mutual recognition does not mean that one side exterminates the other or that one side is completely assimilated by another. It means the search for junctures where different cultures can come together and develop. This is harmony. Therefore, we must diligently strive for harmonious coexistence among different cultures through dialogue. Now, many scholars in China and the West have recognized the importance of pursuing mutual understanding among different cultures through dialogue. For instance, Habermas puts forward the notions of "justice" and "solidarity" (Habermas 1996). I think these should be used as principles in the relationship between different nations and cultures. Habermas' principle of justice can be understood as that every national culture should be independent and self-determining; the

“principle of solidarity” can be understood as that one nation should regard other national cultures with a sympathetic attitude and respect other cultures. Only through continuous dialogue and communication and other means can good communication between different national cultures be established. The German philosopher Gadamer pointed out that “understanding” should be extended to a “broad dialogue” (Pan Derong 2002, pp. 65–68). It is to increase “understanding” to the level of “broad dialogue” that the subject and object become equal. In other words, dialogue can only be truly carried out under the condition of mutual equality. It can be said that Gadamer’s consciousness of subject-object equality and his theory on cultural dialogue are important and necessary ideas for our age. The idea is in inspiration for us to correctly understand Sino-foreign cultural relationships and national relationships. Habermas’ principles of justice and solidarity and Gadamer’s theory of broad dialogue both recognize, as their premise, the need for harmony without sameness. It is only if we recognize that nations and states with different cultural traditions can achieve harmonious coexistence will it be possible for them to have equal rights and duties; it is only under such conditions that “broad dialogue” can truly and smoothly accomplish its ends. Thus, Confucius’ principle of “harmony without sameness,” based on the notion that harmony is valuable, should become a basic principle for handling relations between different cultures.

2.6 The Relationship Between Body and Mind

If we use the Confucian notion of “the unity of Heaven and man” as a philosophical resource to resolve “the contradictions between man and nature” and “the unity of self and others” to resolve “the contradictions among men,” we may then use the “integration of the inner and the outer” to moderate the contradictions within ourselves. There are pressures in modern society. In particular, the unlimited pursuit of sensual pleasure results in psychological imbalance and a split in the human personality. Psychological imbalance induces spiritual disturbances, alcoholism, murder, suicide, etc. This distortion of the human body and mind has become a social disease that seriously affects social peace. The reason for this is the withering of morality; people no longer have a sense of harmony between body and mind. Many perceptive scholars have proposed theories and policies about how to cure the disease. In traditional Chinese culture, much attention has been given to this in the Confucian practice of cultivating the person and nurturing the mind.

Xing zi ming chu in *Guodian Chumu zhujian* says: “if you intend to know the *Dao*, you should return to the innate goodness within yourself, it is called moral cultivation” (Jingmen 1998). *Daxue* 大学 (The Great Learning) stresses that people’s moral practice is important to building a harmonious society. In the first chapter of the book, it says: “The *Dao* of learning to be great consists in manifesting the clear character, renovating the people, and abiding (staying, resting) in the highest good” (Zeng Can 1980, Chapter 1). Zhu Xi commented, “the word, renovate, means remove from old. And if I am clear about myself and clean, I should

help others to abolish the former pollution in the similar way as mine. . . To manifest the clear character and renovate, people should stay at the highest good and not change” (Zhu Xi 1983, Daxue). The purpose of showing a clear character and shaping the people is to reach the highest good and achieve man’s highest realm. Therefore, *The Great Learning* holds that “From the Son of Heaven to common civilians, all must regard moral cultivation as the root or foundation. There has never been a case when the root is in disorder and the branches are all in order” (Zeng Can 1980, Chapter 1). It means that according to Confucianism, if everyone (from the son of Heaven to common people) cultivated their morality well, “family” could be regulated, “state” will be in order, and there will be peace throughout the “world.” Or if moral cultivation, the root or foundation, is disordered, it is definitely impossible to manage “family,” “state,” and the “world” well. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, “Social governance depends on man, the choice should be made according to their moral cultivation, the standard of moral cultivation is the *Dao* (the top *Dao*, harmony), and the heart (mind) of benevolence and love is necessary for realizing a harmonious society” (Zisi 1980, Chapter 20). Here, the connection of an individual’s moral cultivation to “benevolence” proves the consistency of Confucian thought. Confucianism’s attention to “moral cultivation” is not aimless; instead, it is to regulate family, govern the nation, and unite the world, that is, to build a “harmonious society.” The ideal of the commonwealth of great unity in the *Records of Rites* is aimed at building a harmonious society politically, economically, and culturally. Confucianism’s ideal of a harmonious society is based on personal moral cultivation, so Confucians lay particular emphasis on personal cultivation of the body and mind. Confucians think that life and death, riches, and honor should not be the final life goal, and people should pursue moral perfection and knowledge. Confucius said: “I am uneasy that people do not cultivate their moral character, do not learn and teach knowledge, do not behave according to righteousness, and do not correct their mistakes although they know they are wrong” (Confucius 1980, Shuer). This tells us the reason for being a man. It is not easy to cultivate our moral character because we have great dreams and the willingness to improve the welfare of humankind. It is also not easy to study knowledge because we not only need to improve our own wisdom but also need to show culture and education to society. People always make mistakes, but we should have the courage to correct our mistakes, benefiting social harmony. “Be apt to goodness” means that we should strive in the direction of goodness everyday and improve ourselves day to day, and then we can reach the state of being in the highest good. All of the above are reasons to be an upright person, as advocated by Confucianism, and they are necessary for maintaining harmony between the body and the mind, the inner and the outer. Mencius said: “To preserve one’s mind and to nourish one’s nature is the way to serve Heaven. Not to allow any double-mindedness regardless of longevity or brevity of life, but to cultivate one’s person and wait for [*ming* 命 (destiny, fate, Heaven’s decree or mandate) to take its own course] is the way to fulfill one’s destiny” (Mencius 1980, Jinxin shang). If one can preserve his compassionate heart and cultivate his moral character to realize the *Dao* of Heaven, then the length of one’s life does not matter. But he must be sure of being conform to the *Dao* of

Heaven through individual moral cultivation. It is one's peace and calmness and the establishment of destiny.

Confucian self-cultivation has a goal. *Yijing* says, "Make use of personal moral cultivation in order to honor virtue" (*Zhouyi*, Xici xia). People's actions should benefit society, and this should be their main pursuit. An individual undergoes self-cultivation in order to elevate his spirit and "set his mind on Heaven and Earth, establish his life's destiny, and continue to study to achieve sage, so that all things in the world are at peace" (Zhang Zai 1978, p. 320). This is to "establish the great root or foundation and so carry out the *Dao*." What the Confucians in the Song Dynasty pursued is that, as far as an individual is concerned, he will be at peace with himself both in his inner thoughts and emotions and in his external relations. In *A Letter to Zhang Jingfu*, when Zhu Xi discussed "the meaning of the mean and harmony" with Jingfu, he said: "From now on, I know I have a safe place, that is, the place for the peace and calmness of a person, the establishment of destiny, and for the domination of consciousness in the vast transformation of the universe. So the key for us to establish our big root (foundation) and carry out the great *Dao* is described as that substance and function have one source and there is no gap between the apparent and the hidden" (Zhu Xi 1936, Vol. 10). Confucians hold that it is very important for a person to find peace and calmness and to establish his destiny for the harmony of body and mind, inner thoughts and emotion, and external factors. Therefore, Zhu Xi said: "If a person can be harmoniously centered within himself, even though the world at large is in chaos, the inner world, its Heaven and Earth and the myriad things, remains peaceful and unharmed. If someone is unable to attain this, even though there is order in the world at large, within oneself one will be perturbed, even if no harm comes to him from without. It's the same for a country or a family" (Ibid.). If our internal and external beings are harmonious, the chaos of a disordered world cannot disturb our inner peace. If we are not centered and harmonious in our internal and external being, even if there is a very well-ordered world outside, we will still be troubled, worried, or perturbed. We must work hard at cultivating our own virtue whether the world at large is in chaos or is in order. In this way, we can fulfill our life's duty, and when it is time to leave the world, we can go with a sense of peace and fulfillment. Thus, the last two sentences in Zhang Zai's *Ximing* 西铭 (Western Inscription) says: "In life I fulfill my duty as a member of society and as a member of the universe, and when death comes, I rest" (Zhang Zai 1978, p. 63).

Confucians consistently give much attention to an individual's peace and calmness and the establishment of destiny. This comes from self-cultivation. In this way, we can bring harmony to our own hearts and minds and to our internal world and its external manifestations. Our words and actions conform to the "principle of being human." And in this way, our persons will be at peace and our destiny established. We should remove all obstacles in the way of our personal harmony. Zeng Zi says: "Everyday I examine myself on three points: whether in counseling others I have not been loyal; whether in intercourse with my friends I have not been faithful; and whether I have not repeated again and again and practiced the instructions of my teacher" (Confucius 1980, Xue Er). As a man of honor, everyday one should be

aware of himself and examine whether his behavior and actions are moral and just. If there is something immoral and unjust, he should sacrifice his life to realize humanity and defend justice. Confucius said, “A resolute scholar and a man of humanity will never seek to live at the expense of injuring humanity. He would rather sacrifice his life in order to realize humanity” (Confucius 1980, Wei ling Gong). Mencius said: “If I do not act according to humanity and justice, I choose self-abandonment” (Mencius 1980, Lilou shang). It is not easy to carry out the Confucians’ “principle of being human,” but this is something people should ardently strive for. And the purpose of achieving this personal peace is to bring about social harmony.

Sima Qian says: “For one to make a record of the *Dao* of the ancients today is to make a mirror for ourselves; it is not that the two ages are necessarily identical in all things” (Sima Qian 1997, Vol. 18). We have been reviewing the thoughts of Confucius and his school in order to search for resources that human society today can use. This is undoubtedly important. But the thoughts and ideas of the sages and worthies of ancient times are not fully able to solve all the problems of the present time; nor do they all accord with the demands of contemporary society. They can only show us a path for thinking, hints on how to make use of these resources, giving us a new foundation for addressing the concerns of the present time. It is in this way that they contribute to building a harmonious human society. “Though Zhou is an ancient state, its Mandate is ever-new” (*Shijing* 1980, Daya). Our Chinese nation is an ancient nation with 5,000 years of history and culture. Our mission is to assure that our society constantly revitalizes itself and makes contributions to all mankind.

References

- Chen Zhanbiao. (2006, February 23). Ruxue “disici langchao”: Jibian Rujiao (“The fourth wave” of Confucianism: Sharp debate on Confucianism). Shanghai: Shehui Kexue Bao.
- Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi. (2004). *Er Cheng ji* (The collected works of Brothers Cheng). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Confucius. (1980). *Lunyu* (Analects). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Fei Xiaotong. (2002, June 6). *Zhongguo wenhua de qiantu* (The prospect of Chinese culture). Shanghai: Shehui Kexue Bao.
- Fei Xiaotong. (2005). *Fei Xiaotong lun wenhua yu wenhua zijue* (Fei Xiaotong’s theory on culture and cultural self-consciousness). Beijing: Qunyan Chubanshe.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Han Yu. (1991). *Han Changli quanji* (The complete works of Han Changli). The contemporary significance of Confucianism 501. Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian.
- Jaspers, K. (1989). *The origin and goal of history*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jia Yi. (1989). *Xinshu* (New book). Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Jiang Qing. (2005). Lun Zhongguo Rujiao de chongjian (On the reconstruction of Chinese Confucianism). *Zhongguo Rujiao Yanjiu* (Chinese Confucianism Research Journal), (Vol. 1).

- Jingmen Museum. (1998). *Guodian Chumu zhujian* (Chu Bamboo Slips in Jingmen, Hubei Province). Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Mencius. (1980). *Mengzi* (Mencius). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Pan Derong. (2002, April). *Gadamer de zhexue yichan* (Gadamer's philosophical heritage). Hong Kong: Ershiyi Shiji.
- Russell, B. (1922). *The problem of China*. New York: The Century Co.
- Russell, B. (1972). *A history of Western philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Shijing. (1980). *Shijing* (Book of songs). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Sima Qian. (1997). *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian of China). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Tu Weiming. (2002). *Tu Weiming wenji* (The collected works of Tu Weiming) (Vol. 5). Wuhan: Wuhan Chubanshe.
- Wang Fuzhi. (1975). *Zhangzi Zhengmeng zhu* (Annotations on the *Zhengmeng* of Master Zhang). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zeng Can. (1980). *Daxue* (Great learning). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zhang Zai. (1978). *Zhang Zai ji* (The collected works of Zhang Zai). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zhouli. (1980). *Zhouli* (Book of rites). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zhu Xi. (1936). *Zhuzi wenji* (Collected works of Zhu Xi). Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Zhu Xi. (1983). *Sishu zhangju jizhu* (Variorum of the Four Books). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zhu Xi. (1990). *Zhuzi yulei* (Topically arranged conversations of Master Zhu). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zisi. (1980). *Zhongyong* (The doctrine of the mean). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing Zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zuo Qiuming. (1980). *Zuo zhuan* (Zuo Qiuming edition of the spring and autumn annals). In Ruan Yuan (Ed.), *Shisan jing zhushu* (Comments to the Thirteen Classics). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zuo Qiuming. (1997). *Guoyu* (National words). Shenyang: Liaoning Jiaoyu Chubanshe.

Chapter 3

Toward a Chinese Hermeneutics

Since Western hermeneutics was introduced into Chinese academia a little more than 10 years ago, Chinese scholars have been using its methods and theories in the area of social sciences and the humanities. The study of interpretation in the West can be traced back to ancient Greece, but it flourished with Biblical scholarship. After many centuries of gestation, especially after the publication of the works of Friedrich Schleimacher (1768–1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), it has turned out to be an influential and well-developed subject with systematic theories. This thesis will discuss two questions: first, is there a subject called “hermeneutics” in ancient China? Second, is it possible to find out general patterns of interpretation in the study of Chinese classics?

3.1 Is There a Subject Called “Hermeneutics” in Ancient China?

Surely there has been a long history of classics interpretation in China. However, can we say there is a systematic theory of interpretation different from that in the West? I do not think so. We can only say that we are trying to establish our own hermeneutics with Chinese characteristics and that we have made much significant progress along the way to this goal.

In my opinion, in order to establish a subject of study or a branch of learning, one should first be conscious of its own theoretical and methodological assumptions. There has been a tradition of interpretation in the West. However, it was only in the nineteenth century that Schleimacher and Dilthey began to study “the question of interpretation” as a subject. More than one century elapsed before “the question of interpretation” became a subject in the West. Of course, before a subject comes into

Translated by Cui Yujun, Li Chenyang

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Journal of Humanities, 2008 (1): 43–69

© Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Co., Ltd
and Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2015

Y. Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*,
China Academic Library, DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45533-3_3

being, it usually has a period of “question accumulation” or “material-accumulation.” This period could be considered as the prehistory of the subject. For example, it is commonly agreed that comparative literature is a subject established in the nineteenth century, though, as we know, there was such a study as comparative literature both in the West and China in earlier times. In China, for example, there is a comparative study of poetic styles in different times in the chapter of “Ming Shi Pian” (“Understanding Poetry”) in *Wen Xin Diao Long* (《文心雕龙》) by Liu Xie (刘勰, ?465–?532). It says that “at the very beginning of the Sung Dynasty (420–479),¹ poetic styles witnessed continuity and evolution: while the thoughts of Lao Tzu (老子, ?570 B.C.–?470 B.C.) and Chuang Tzu (庄子, 369 B.C.–286 B.C.) were dormant, poetry that described natural landscape became developed.” This is a comparison of style changes that took place in the Wei-Jin period (220–420) and the South-North dynasties (420–589). In the Wei-Jin period, poetry was usually “extremely mysterious and abstruse,” but then it changed to “landscape poetry” in the early South-North dynasties. As a result, poetry looked more “natural” (Tang Yi Jie 1999: 186–187). In his book, *A Study of Comparative Literature: A New Direction*, Li Da San wrote, “As a subject, in France, it was not until 1830s and 1840s when ‘comparative literature’ became mature. Therefore, Amber (1800–1864) and Abel-Francois Villemain (1790–1867) may be considered as scholars who truly intended to establish integrated ‘comparative literature’” (Li Da San 1978: 107). In China comparative literature was studied as a subject late in the 1920s. We cannot take it for granted that comparative literature, as a subject, has been in China since ancient times. Similarly, there were many archeological studies (of usually illegally unearthed items) or antique appraisals long ago, both in China and abroad, yet according to the volume of *Archeology in Encyclopedia Sinica*, Western archeology started from about 1760 to 1840, while Chinese archeology was set up by Pei Wen Zhong (1904–1982) and Li Ji (1896–1979) as late as the 1920s.

I even have a strange and perhaps controversial idea. I don’t think it is right for Hegel to declare that there was no philosophy in China, as there are abundant “philosophical thoughts” in Chinese traditional culture. But it is perhaps right to say that, before Western philosophy was accepted in China as an independent subject separate from “Jing Xue” (经学, the study of classics), “Zi Xue” (子学, the study of ancient philosopher), historiography and literature, “philosophy” was indeed non-existent in China. I wonder whether we could conclude that there are a lot of “philosophical thoughts” or “philosophical questions” in Chinese traditional culture, which were embodied in “Jing Xue” and “Zi Xue.” During the evolution of Chinese intellectual life, no serious effort was made to distinguish philosophy from literature and history. This is also the case in the West in ancient times. Even now in Chinese academia, there is little difference between “Chinese philosophy” and “Chinese intellectual background.” Actually it is much easier to write an intellectual history of China than a history of Chinese philosophy. In my opinion, “philosophy”

¹ Founded by Liu Yu (363–422), different from the Song Dynasty (960–1279) by Zhao Kuang Yin (927–976).

should start from thinking about one or more “philosophical questions,” from a set of organized concepts and elementary propositions based on the relationship of these concepts. It employs in a self-conscious manner critical methods developed from theoretic analysis and synthesis. This question might arise: “If you are right, wouldn’t it mean that many Chinese subjects must follow the models set by the West?” My answer is that in many areas we do need first of all to learn from the West before we can establish our “Chinese” subjects (like “Chinese comparative literature” and “Chinese archeology”), and then we can leave behind the West, our “teacher.”

We can understand this from the transformation of Indian Buddhism in China. During the South-North dynasties, when Indian Buddhism came into China, the Chinese first tried to understand and learn its texts, principles, and theories. It was not until the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907) that China had developed its own Buddhist schools and sects. Integrated with indigenous Chinese cultures, Chinese Buddhism significantly enriched Indian Buddhism. Here I would like to cite Bertrand Russell:

Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress. Greece learnt from Egypt, Rome from Greece, the Arab from the Roman Empire, medieval Europe from the Arabs, and Renaissance Europe from the Byzantines. In many of these cases, the pupils proved better than their masters. In the case of China, if we regard the Chinese as pupils, this may be the case again. (Egner and Edonn 1992: 547)

Although we in China started “comparative literature” and “interpretation of classics” as subjects of study much later than the West, we may well leave the West behind. Of course this is no more than a possibility. There is another possibility, which I will discuss in the following pages. Meanwhile, it cannot be said that there is little in Chinese culture that the West can learn from. For instance, Confucianism had greatly influenced the French philosophers, especially Voltaire (Meng Hua 1993: 14, 149 and 151). I also believe that, as an independent subject, “traditional Chinese medicine” has contributed and will continue to contribute to world medicine. There are many scholars writing on the history of Chinese philosophy, but none of them is interested in the history of “Jing Xue.” We should not turn a blind eye to the fact that “Jing Xue” has had a history of more than 2,000 years. It has been an independent subject and influenced almost all aspects of Chinese society. I believe that the study of “Jing Xue” will eventually have an influence on the development of other cultures.

Let’s go back to the question of the possibility of a Chinese hermeneutics again. My proposal is based on the fact that there has been a long and rich tradition of classical interpretation in China. According to *Lun Yu Nian Pu* (Chronological Table of the Analects) by the Japanese scholar Taisuke Hayashi (1854–1922), there were more than 3,000 books *Analects*. In the preliminary remarks of his book *Tao Te Ching Yuan Zhi* (the Original Meaning of *Tao Te Ching*), Du Dao Jian (1237–1318), a Taoist in the Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368), pointed out that “there were more than 3,000 scholars who had commented on the *Tao Te Ching*.” There should have been the same number of books that were commentaries on other classics, many of which are not extant now. We should make best use of the books that are available and try to define a Chinese version of hermeneutics.

However, here it must be stressed that a Chinese hermeneutics is possible only when it is in contact with Western hermeneutics. In my article “Towards a Chinese Hermeneutics: A Second Study,” I analyzed the types of classical interpretation in the pre-Qin period to show that there has been a long tradition of interpretation in China. It also discussed issues involved in classical interpretation after the Qin and Han dynasties (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). By describing the development of the interpretation of classics in China, I hope to find out whether there are general principles and patterns similar to or different from Western interpretative practices.

To the question of whether a Chinese hermeneutics is different from that interpretative tradition, we can enrich Western hermeneutics by introducing into it interpretative theories and methods peculiar to the Chinese tradition. If we want to establish a Chinese version of hermeneutics, I think the following studies are probably needed:

First, we should work hard to study the history of interpretation (particularly Biblical interpretations) in the West and the hermeneutic theories advanced by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey as well as their current developments in the West. During the past century, almost all the philosophical schools (e.g., phenomenology, structuralism, deconstruction, and postmodernism) in the West are to some extent related to hermeneutics. Many debates arose because of people’s different views on how to “interpret.” So a solid knowledge of German hermeneutic theories is essential for the development of a Chinese hermeneutics.

Second, there is a long interpretative history in China. We will have to work hard to perform two tasks. One is that we should first tidy up the history of Chinese classics interpretation. Why were there different kinds of classics interpretation before the Qin Dynasty? Why was “Zhang Ju Zhi Xue” (annotative study of chapters and sentences in ancient works) the most important method applied during the Han Dynasty not only to Confucian classics but also to the *Tao Te Jing*?² We need also to explain why in the Wei-Jin dynasties scholars held in high regard ideas like “De Yi Wang Yan” (得意忘言, forgetting the word after getting its ideas) and “Bian Ming Xi Li” (辨名析理, distinguishing the names and analyzing the principles) in their interpretative activities. Many new interpretation problems arose when Indian Buddhism came into China, for instance, Ge Yi (格义, interpreting Buddhism classics with existent concepts of Chinese thought) and Lian Lei (连类, putting similar things together to draw analogies) in the Jin Dynasty (265–420). Scholars were arguing over the issue whether translators should not use different Chinese expressions for the same Buddhist term. The translation of the sutras even caused disagreements about the exact meaning of words taken from classical texts. All these issues need further study. Of course, we will also have to ask why there have been so many changes in classical interpretations and which change is the result of the change in Chinese intellectual climate. Because there are many methods in Chinese classical interpretation (such as commentary, record,

²For example, Lao Tzu Dao Te Jing Zhang Ju (an annotative study of Dao Te Jing) by He Shang Gong of early Western (Former) Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–8 A.D.).

explanation, annotation, comment, note, and so on), how can we clearly and explicitly explain the contexts of these methods? Besides, because many areas of knowledge, such as that of “Xun Gu Xue” (explaining archaic words in the current language, or semantic study), philology, archeology, phonology, and “Ban Ben Xue” (study of historical editions) are employed in interpretation, how to consider their functions is a question that we should not neglect.

Third, many Chinese subjects, such as “comparative literature,” archeology, sociology, history, and philosophy, have recently employed theories and methods of Western hermeneutics and have made much progress. It can be said that, like that in the West, there is also a “trend-thought of interpretation” in China. Many Chinese philosophers in the twentieth century have more or less used these theories and methods in studying Chinese philosophy. In my view, without the impact of Western philosophy, modern Chinese philosophy would not have come into being. It could enter from “the past” into “modern times” only when it gets itself rebuilt (or get a new interpretation of itself) with the help of Western philosophy. Only in this way can “Chinese philosophy” be relevant and useful to modern China, a China that is becoming more and more part of the world. This is what I mean when I say we probably must first study Chinese cultural tradition in the light of Western hermeneutical theories before we discuss the possibility of establishing a Chinese hermeneutics. As far as I know, many scholars, such as Qian Zhong Shu (1910–1998), the author of *Guan Zhui Pian* (a detailed comparative study of Chinese and Western classics and literary theories), Prof. Cheng Chungying (1935–) in the United States, the author of *Ontology and Hermeneutics*, and Prof. Rudolf Wagner in Germany who produced an impressive interpretation of the *Lau Tzu*, all have made great achievements by combining classical Chinese interpretative methods with Western hermeneutical theories.

Therefore, for the establishment of a Chinese interpretation theory, we should first of all develop a comparative point of view. Only in this way can we establish our own hermeneutics with Chinese characteristics—a theory that is different from that of the West.

3.2 Is it Possible to Find Out General Patterns of Interpretation in the Study of Chinese Classics?

There is a brief entry of “hermeneutic” in the volume of philosophy in *Encyclopedia Sinica*. According to the entry, the study of interpretation can be traced back to ancient Greece. Augustine (354–430) gradually systematized fragmentary Biblical scholarship before him. Chinese interpretation may have had a longer history than that in the West. Here in this paper, I will demonstrate some characteristics of classical interpretation in ancient China (mainly pre-Chin period). We will be able to discuss the possibility of establishing a Chinese hermeneutics when we have comprehensive knowledge of how classical interpretation was developed in China.

China is a country that pays much attention to history and tradition, so there is the saying “Six Classics are all history.”³ According to the *Analects*, Confucius taught his students such classics as *Shi Jing*, *Shu Jing*, *Li Ji*, and *Yue Jing*, and he called himself a man of “transmitter rather than a maker, believing in and loving the ancients.” (*Analects*, 7:1) That is to say, Confucius did not elucidate his own thoughts without the base of the classics; instead, he interpreted the classics as what they were. He believed in and was fond of ancient classics. Mencius (孟子, ?372 B.C.–?289 B.C.) seemed to start the Confucian teachings of the “*Dao Tong*” (way of transmission), and he took as his ideal “transmitting the ancient traditions of Yao and Shun,” “modeling after and making brilliant the systems of King Wen and King Wu,” and “expatiating on Confucius’ thought.” According to *Xun Tzu*, the mission for “the man of humanity” is “first to follow systems made by Yao, Shun, and Yu⁴ and then to follow the teachings of Confucius and *Zi Gong*” (*Xun Tzu*, Chapter 6).⁵ Even philosophically independent and creative Taoists (before the Qin Dynasty) would rate the classics very highly. Lao Tzu was a custodian of imperial archives of the Zhou royalty and often cited ancient sages’ words in his book. Chuang Tzu would also appeal to the authority of the ancients to attack the mistakes of his contemporaries. Mo Tzu (墨子, ?476 B.C.–?390 B.C.), founder of Maoism, advocated the thought of Yu and said: “Those that are not thoughts of Yu are not thoughts of Mo Tzu”(Sun Yi Rang 1986). The school of Legalism, however, insisted on “neither observing the teachings of the ancient sages nor rigidly observing the set rules” (*Han Fei Tzu*, Chapter 49). It also criticized Confucianism and Maoism for their blind worship of the ancients. This doesn’t mean that the Legalist school denied cultural heritage wholesale. Its representative Han Fei Tzu (韩非子, 280 B.C.–233 B.C.) much valued the legalistic thinkers before him. He said: “The ancient sages cherished it (the tradition) and transmitted it.” It should be noted that there are such articles as “*Jie Lao*” (Explaining *Lao Tzu*) and “*Yu Lao*” (Understanding *Lao Tzu*) in the book of *Han Fei Tzu*. With this Han Fei Tzu established an interpretation pattern different from that of *Zuo Chuan* and *Ji Ci*. How the thinkers in ancient China thought of history and tradition is not what this paper will explore. My main point is that there is a close relation between Chinese emphasis upon history and tradition and Chinese classical interpretation.

Before the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.–206 B.C.), there had been several interpretative books about classics. Here I select three kinds (two books and two articles) that are typical samples of three interpretation patterns. The first kind of interpretation, as exemplified by *Zuo Chuan*’s interpretation of *Chun Qiu*, is called the interpretation of historical events. *Gong Yang Zhuan* (Gong Yang Gao’s

³ In China, “Six Classics” refers to the six books, namely, *Shi Jing* (*Book of Odes*, or *Book of Songs*), *Shu Jing* (*Book of History*), *Li Ji* (*Book of Rites*), *Yue Jing* (*Book of Music*), *I Jing* (*Book of Changes*), and *Chun Qiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). *Yue Jing* is now lost.

⁴ Yao, Shun, and Yu were the three legendary rulers of the third millennium B.C. Yao was succeeded by Shun and Yu. Yu was the founder of the Xia Dynasty (?2183 B.C.–?1752 B.C.).

⁵ *Zi Gong* was one of Confucius’s pupils.

Commentaries on *Chun Qiu*) and *Gu Liang Zhuan* (Gu Liang Chi's Commentaries on *Chun Qiu*) are also interpretations of *Chun Qiu*, and they are quite different from *Zuo Chuan*. The two books will not be discussed here. The second, as shown in *Ji Ci*'s interpretation of *I Ching* (*Zhou Yi*, or *Book of Changes*), is called general philosophical interpretation. The third, represented by "Jie Lao" and "Yu Lao," two articles in the book of *Han Fei Tzu*, is called practical interpretation, that is to say, social and political interpretation. Surely, the three interpretations are not watertight compartments, but we should keep in mind that these interpretations, in any case, all have remarkable features.

3.2.1 Zuo Chuan's Interpretation of Chun Qiu

Zuo Chuan or *Zuo's Commentaries*, written by Zuo Qiu Ming according to legends, includes commentaries on *Spring and Autumn Annals*. However, Yang Bo Jun did not agree with this. Yang said that the author of *Zuo Chuan* is perhaps not Zuo Qiu Ming and that as a Confucian he might belong to another school of Confucianism. Yang also argued that the *Zuo Chuan* came into being somewhere in between 403 B.C. and 386 B.C. (Yang Bojun 1981). Here we will discuss *Zuo Chuan's* interpretation of *Chun Qiu* on the base of Yang's conclusions. According to Yang's dating of *Zuo Chuan*, we can say that *Zuo Chuan* is one of the earliest interpretation books ever known or one of the earliest interpretation books that is extant in the world. This means that the Chinese interpretation of classics boasts a history of over 2,300 years. It is said in *Chun Qiu* that in the first year of Duke Yin's reign (722 B.C.–712 B.C.), "in May, earl Zheng overcame Duan in Yan." There is a long paragraph interpreting this short sentence⁶:

Duke Wu of Zheng had married a daughter of the House of Shin, called Wu Jiang, who bore Duke Zhuang and his brother Duan. Duke Zhuang was born as she was waking from sleep [the meaning of the text here is uncertain], which frightened the lady so that she named him Wu-sheng (born in waking) and hated him, while she loved Duan and wished him to be declared his father's heir. Often did she ask this of Duke Wu, but he refused it. When Duke Zhuang came to the earldom, she begged him to confer on Duan the city of Zhi. "It is too dangerous a place," he replied. "The Younger of Guo died there; but in regard to any other place, you may command me." She then requested Jing; and there Duan took up his residence, and came to be styled Da Shu (the Great Younger) of Jing City. Ji Zhong said to the Duke, "Any metropolitan city, whose wall is more than 3,000 cubits round, is dangerous to the State. According to the regulations of the former kings, such a city of the 1st order can have its wall only a third as long as that of the capital; one of the 2nd order, only a fifth as long; and one of the least order, only a ninth. Now Jing is not in accordance with these measures and regulations. As ruler, you will not be able to endure Duan in such a place." The Duke replied: "It was our mother's wish;—how could I avoid the danger?"

⁶The following translation is taken from Legge's *The Chinese Classic*, Vol. V, *The Chun Tsew* (*Chun Qiu*), with the *Tso Chuen* (*Zuo Chuan*) with slight modifications. Here names of place and person are sometimes converted to the Pin Yin system.

“The Lady Jiang,” replied the officer, “is not to be satisfied. You had better take the necessary precautions, and not allow the danger to grow so great that it is difficult to deal with it. Even when grass has grown and spread all about, it cannot be removed;—how much less the brother of yourself, and the favorite brother as well!” The Duke said, “By his many deeds of unrighteousness he will bring destruction on himself. Do you only wait a while?”

After this, Da Shu ordered the places on the western and northern borders of the state to render to himself the same allegiance as they did to the earl. Then childe Lú said to the Duke, “A state cannot sustain the burden of two services—What will you do now? If you wish to give Jing to Da Shu, allow me to serve him as a subject. If you do not mean to give it to him, allow me to put him out of the way, so that the minds of the people will not be perplexed.” “There is no need for such a step,” the Duke replied. “His calamity will come of itself.”

Da Shu went on to take as his own the places from which he had required their divided contributions, as far as Lin-yan. Zi Feng [the designation of childe Lú mentioned above] said, “Now is the time. With these enlarged resources, he will draw all the people to himself.” The Duke replied, “They will not cleave to him, so unrighteous as he is. Through his prosperity he will fall the more.”

Da Shu wrought at his defenses, gathered the people around him, put in order buff coats and weapons, prepared footmen, and chariots, intending to surprise Zheng, while his mother was to open to him from within. The Duke learned the time agreed on between them and said, “Now we can act.” So he ordered Zi Feng, with 200 chariots, to attack Jing. Jing revolted from Da Shu, who then entered Yan, which the Duke himself proceeded to attack; and in the 5th month, on the day Xin Chou, Da Shu fled from it to Gong.

In the words of the text—“The earl of Zheng overcame Duan in Yan,” Duan is not called the earl’s younger brother, because he did not show himself to be such. They were as two hostile princes, and therefore we have the word “overcame.” The Duke is styled the earl of Zheng simply, to condemn him for his failure to instruct his brother properly. Duan’s flight is not mentioned in the text, because it was difficult to do so, having in mind Zheng’s wish that Duan might be killed.

This is, though long enough, an interpretation of only six Chinese characters. As we see, it is an interpretation recount of a historical event, which includes its origin, its zigzag process, and its ending. There are a variety of discussions and remarks, resulting in it an integrated narrative story. For this very long paragraph, even if it is not considered as a direct interpretation of the text in *Zuo Chuan*, it itself can be thought of as a statement of a whole historical event. The fact is that this paragraph surely is an interpretation of the text. If “earl Zheng overcame Duan in Yan” is a historical event, the passage cited above is an interpretative record of a historical event. The interpreter/narrator will no doubt take account of and be influenced by his own historical background, his moral values, and other contingencies. This means that a narrative story is sure to embody the author’s “historical standpoint” toward particular historical events. In the passage cited above, the expression “by his many deeds of unrighteousness he will bring destruction on

himself” and the last words are highlights that show the author’s “historical standpoint.” This kind of interpretation greatly influenced the following historical books. As we know, in the *24 Histories*, there are many commentaries like this. For example, *San Guo Zhi* (Records of Three States) had commentaries by Pei Song Zhi. Had it not been Pei Song Zhi’s commentaries, *San Guo Zhi* would have been less popular. In his interpretation, Pei Song Zhi did not spend much time in tracing archaism but in explaining and supplementing background facts. Let’s take a look at what he did with *Zhang La Zhuan* (Biography of Zhang Lu) in *San Guo Zhi*. In his commentaries, Pei Song Zhi noted, “During the period of Xi Ping (172–178), disorders took place all around the country. A man named Luo Yao rebelled. During the period of Guang He (178–184), Zhang Jiao and Zhang Xiu rebelled respectively in East and Central China. Luo Yao taught his people how to hide them. Zhang Jiao founded Taiping Dao. Zhang Xiu founded Wu Dou Mi Dao.” Pei Song Zhi’s citation furnishes us with what happened to Taoist schools of that time. Though Pei Song Zhi’s commentaries on *San Guo Zhi* are a little different from that of *Zuo Chuan* on *Chun Qiu*, they belong to the same interpretation pattern. Both are narrative interpretations of historical events recorded in the classics.

3.2.2 Ji Ci’s Interpretation of I Ching

I Ching (*Book of Change*) was originally a classic for divination in ancient China. There is profound wisdom in its divinatory names and diagrams together with its *Gua Ci* (explanation of the text of the whole hexagram) and *Yao Ci* (explanation of the component line). *Ji Ci* (appended remarks) in *I Zhuan* (Commentaries on *I Ching*) has a comprehensive and philosophically mature interpretation of *I Ching*.⁷ *Ji Ci* interpreted *I Ching* as an integrated system. This kind of integrated interpretation of ancient classics has greatly influenced later scholars in China. For instance, *Lao Zi Zhi Lue* (a brief introduction to *Lao Tzu*) and *Zhou Yi Lue Li* (a simple exemplifications of the principle of *I Ching*), all written by Wang Bi (226–249), were systemic and integrated interpretations of *Lao Tzu* and *I Ching* respectively. *Dao De Lun* (on *Lao Tzu*) and the *Wu Ming Lun* (on namelessness) written by He Yan (?–249) were also integrated interpretations of *Lao Tzu*. There were many works like them in Chinese history.⁸ *Ji Ci*’s interpretations are enlightening in many aspects. Here we will focus on ontological and cosmological interpretations, which in practice are different and yet interconnected.

The 64 hexagrams in *I Ching* form an integrated yet open system, with a structural mode indicative of the way of the universe. This mode is an organic

⁷ Besides *Ji Ci*, many passages in *I Zhuan* can be studied and discussed in this context. Because of limited space, only *Ji Ci*’s interpretation of *I Ching* will be discussed in this article.

⁸ Most of the translations in this paper are cited from works by Wing-tsit Chan or Richard Wilhelm.

and dynamic mode. This is why we say “production and reproduction means I (Change)” (*Ji Ci*, Chapter 5).⁹ Everything in the world can find its corresponding position, so *Ji Ci* said, *I Ching* (maybe we should call it “the principle of I”) “molds and encompasses all transformations of Heaven and Earth without mistake, and it stoops to bring things into completion without missing any” (*Ji Ci*, Chapter 4). Heaven, Earth, and all things in the world, their creations and changes, are all connaturally incarnated in the structural mode set up in *I Ching*. So it says: “In the heavens, forms (heavenly bodies) appear and on earth shapes (creatures) occur. In them changes and transformations can be seen” (*Ji Ci*, Chapter 1). The reasons and principles of why Heaven, Earth, and all things exist in the world can all be found in this mode. The foundation for their corresponding position in the structure can also be found here: “by means of the easy and the simple we grasp the laws of the whole world. When the laws of the whole world are grasped, therein lies perfection.” The universe modes embodied in *I Ching*, which not only contains the principles for Heaven, Earth, and all things that have already existed but principles for whatever potential beings, may become the corresponding guidelines for all things existing in the world. *I Ching* said, “the spirit has no spatial restriction and Change has no physical form” (*Ji Ci*, Chapter 4), the changes of “I” (易) have no orientation and place and are not confined to practical beings. That is to say, according to the author of *Ji Ci*, the foundations for the existence and changes of Heaven, Earth, and all things in the world can all be found in the “I” system. “I” is a universe mode that contains everything. It is also a “Dao” (道, way) of metaphysical sense, anything, being or coming into being, can all in this system find their principles why they are; this is the reason why in *Ji Ci* it said “what exists before physical form [and is therefore without it] is called the “Dao” (way). What exists after physical form [and is therefore with it] is called “Qi” (器, a concrete thing).” In Chinese philosophy, judging from the existent literature, *Ji Ci* should be considered the first to advance the two terms “Xing Shang” (before the physical form) and “Xing Xia” (after the physical form). Borrowing Professor Feng Youlan’s words, it may be said that the “Xing Shang” is “Zhen Ji” (真际, ultimate reason), while the “Xing Xia” is “Shi Ji” (实际, particular entity). Shi Ji refers to concrete things, and Zhen Ji refers to the reason (or principle) why concrete things exist.¹⁰ That means that *Ji Ci* has observed the inflexible difference between Xing Shang and Xing Xia and established a metaphysical system on the base of I (change) that has no physical forms.

⁹ The term Zhen Ji had been very popular in Buddhism. For example, in *Ren Wang Jing*, it said, “Buddha nature is Zhen Ji, which has no past and no future, and has no life and death. Zhen Ji is the Buddha nature.” In *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra*, it said, “Zhen Ji is Buddha nature, it has neither being nor non-being.” In *Grand Dictionary of Buddhism* by Ding Fu Bao, it said Zhen Ji refers to ultimate principle. Though it is not an extent concrete being, Tao is not nonexistence but “nonexistence but being.” For further discussion, see Feng Youlan (1999). What Lu Ji (261–303) said “to ask non-being for being and to ask quietness for sound” is the best statement of “non-existence but being.”

¹⁰ “Tao originated from Vacuity,” in *Huai Nan Tzu*, 3:1. Vacuity (Xu Kuo) refers to the condition before time and space are separated. See Chan (1963: 307).

This interpretation pattern has greatly influenced the development of Chinese philosophy. We can see this influence in Wang Bi's interpretation of "the number of the Great Expansion (multiplied together) make 50, of which (only) 49 are used (in divination)" (*Ji Ci*, Chapter 9) and his interpretation of *Lao Tzu* in his *Lao Tzu Zhi Lue*. Han Kang Bo (332–380) quoted Wang Bi in his book *Zhou Yi Ji Ci Zhu* (commentaries to *Ji Ci of I Ching*): "To deduce the principles in the world, 50 numbers are needed, of which 49 are used, while the remaining one will not be used. The reason for us to keep it without using it is that it can make the divination understood. This is where the greatness of I lies. The existence of nonbeing must come from being, so we can understand that nonbeing comes from the ultimacy of being." "Ultimacy" here refers to substance. Here Wang Bi's explanation of the relation between substance and function sheds light on the relation between Xing Shang and Xing Xia.

There is a very important interpretation in *Ji Ci*. It says: "In the system of the I modes there is the Tai Ji (Grand Terminus or Great Ultimate). Tai Ji generates the modes (yin and yang), and the two modes generate the four forms (major and minor, yin and yang). The four forms generate the eight trigrams..." This indicates in the I there is a creative system, which shows the universe's constant changes and progressive development. The universe developed from original chaotic states (taiji), followed by two forces, yin and yang, and their interaction in turn gives rise to four forms (major and minor yin and yang); again, after their interactions, there appear eight trigrams (Qian, Kun, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Li, Gen, and Dui). These trigrams represent respectively different attributes. According to *Shou Gua* (Discussion of the Trigrams), "The creative [Qian] is strong. The receptive [Kun] is yielding. The arousing [Zhen] means movement. The gentle [Xun] is penetrating. The abysmal [Kan] is dangerous. The clinging [Li] means dependence. Keeping still [Gen] means standstill. The joyous [Dui] means pleasure." These attributes can also be demonstrated in that of Heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and marsh (collection of water). Each trigram is combined with another, one upon the other, thus making 64 hexagrams. However, the universe's changes will not stop; it changes forever. The last two hexagrams are Ji Ji (after completion) and Wei Ji (before completion). That indicates that anything (not a particular thing, yet it refers to any kind of thing) will inevitably come to an end, but this end is, at the same time, another new start. Therefore, it is said in *Shuo Gua* that "The succession of events cannot come to an end, and therefore Ji Ji is succeeded by Wei Ji." All things in the world grow and change like this way.

The "I" is an open system, demonstrating the developments and changes in the universe. In *Ji Ci* it is said that "Heaven and earth come together, and all things take shape and find form. Male and female mix their seeds, and all creatures take shape and are born." And in *Xu Gua* (sequence of the hexagrams), it is said that "Heaven and earth existing, all (material) things then got their existence. All (material) things have existence, afterwards there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came afterwards husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came ruler and minister. From ruler and minister there came high and low. When (the distinction of) high

and low had existence, afterwards came the arrangements of propriety and righteousness.” This interpretation includes a cosmic evolution theory. We can say that *Ji Ci*'s interpretation of *I Ching* is one of cosmism. Here there is a question that needs to be discussed. In my opinion, “Tai Ji engenders two forms. . .” is nothing more than a symbolic system, while the statements “Heaven and earth come together, and all things take shape and find form. . .” and “Heaven and earth existing, all (material) things then got their existence. . .” are not symbols but the actual processes or courses; they are used as examples to demonstrate how the universe forms and develops. Consequently we may conclude that what is set up in *Ji Ci* is a symbolic system for developments and changes in the universe.

We can bring forward another new issue in the study of Chinese philosophy, namely, that of the symbolic system for developments and changes in the universe. We can also find this issue in *Xian Tian Tu* (congenital diagram) by Shao Yong (1011–1077) and in *taiji tu* (diagram of the Great Ultimate) by Zhou Dun Yi (1017–1073). It is said that *taiji tu* came from another book, *Wu Ji Tu* (Diagram of Nonbeing of Ultimate) by a Taoist named Chen Tuan (906–989). This is, however, a questionable conclusion. It needs further discussion. I think it is very important to distinguish between symbolic systems of cosmic evolutions, on the one hand, and descriptions of an actual cosmic evolution process, on the other. The latter is usually based on experiential observations and is concerned with the evolution process of concrete things with concrete forms, such as Heaven, earth, male, and female. The former, as symbolic systems, can be based on experiential observations, but the evolution process that it refers to involves symbols rather than concrete things. These symbols may have names, but they are more than signs for concrete things and their natures. Consequently, symbolic systems of cosmic evolutions, like algebra, can include any concrete thing and its nature. For example, the two forms may represent either Heaven and earth or male and female, both vigorousness and submissiveness. Thus, I think it is inappropriate to consider *Ji Ci*'s interpretation of *I Ching* only as a description of the actual evolution of the universe. Instead, it should be understood as a mode of how the universe developed and evolved, a mode that is something like a cosmic algebra. For the system in *Ji Ci*'s interpretation of *I Ching*, I call it “theory of cosmic evolution.”

Ji Ci is not the only one that indicates a cosmic evolution theory in terms of symbols. Many other works are like *Ji Ci*, for instance, Lao Tzu. *Lao Tzu* says: “Dao produced the one; the one produced the two, the two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry the Yin and embrace the Yang, and through the blending of the Qi (material force) they achieve harmony” (Chan 1963:160). This is also a symbol system of cosmic evolution and a cosmic algebra as well, in which the numbers can be replaced by any concrete things. “Yuan Qi” (元气, vitality) or “Xu Kuo” (虚廓, vacuity)¹¹ can

¹¹ “Vacuity produced the universe,” in *Huai Nan Tzu*, 3:1; time and space come to be separated from the condition “vacuity.”

replace the one, and Yin Yang and the universe¹² can replace the two. The three does not necessarily refer to Heaven, earth, and human being; instead, it may be the third thing coming out of two things that have opposite natures. Each concrete thing comes out of the interactions of two things that have opposite natures.¹³ However, the Han ontology, most of which were descriptions of the actual evolution processes of the universe, is different from that established in *Ji Ci*. This is another question; I will discuss it in another essay.¹⁴

So there are two systems in *Ji Ci*'s interpretation of *I Ching*, namely, a system of substance and a system of cosmic evolution. Does it indicate that there is a conflict in the interpretation? I do not think so. On the contrary, these two systems are just mutually complementary, forming respectively two different systems in Chinese philosophy. For the universe itself, we may look at it as an open planar system, which is limitless; as Guo Xiang (252–312) noted in his *Chuang Tzu Zhu* (Commentary on Chuang Tzu), “Yu (宇, limitless space) refers to four quarters of the world, ups and downs, which has no limits.” While at the same time, we can look at the universe as a vertically extending system. The universe, in terms of length, has no terminal, as Guo Xiang noted in the same book, “Zhou (宙, infinite time) covered all time past and future, yet it has no limits.” Since the universe can be looked at from two angles, the “sage” can

¹² Professor Pang Pu advances “one divides into two” to differentiate it from “one divides into three.” This is an interesting question. From the sense of ontology, “one divides into three” may explain that the “three” (which is above or inside the “two”) may be the “substance.” For example, taiji plus two modes is “three”: taiji is substance, and Two Modes are functions of the substance. In one of my essays (see Tang Yi Jie 1986), I said that there are some differences Confucianism and Taoism in their research approaches: Confucianism usually explored the mean (middle, center) from two extremities, e.g., “to go too far is as bad as not to go far enough” (*Analects*, 11:16), “to thrash the matter out, with all its pros and cons, to the very end” (*Analects*, 9:8), and “Faithfully grasp it by the center” (*Analects*, 20:1); on the contrary, Taoism sought one extremity from its corresponding extremity. For example, “All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 2). For the mean in Confucianism, it is not coordinate to the two extremities but is superior to them. In the light of ontology, the “mean” is Tai Ji. So “one divides into three” and “one divides into two” are of the same importance in philosophical study, and the former is actually the basis of the latter.

¹³ For example, in *Huai Nan Tzu*, 3:1, it said, “Before heaven and earth took shape, there was only undifferentiated formlessness. Therefore it was called the great beginning. Tao originated from vacuity and vacuity produced the universe (of space and time). The universe produced the material force. The material force was extremely secure. That which was clear and light drifted up to become heaven, and that which was heavy and turbid solidified to form earth.” Also in *Xiao Jing Wei* (augury book of Book of Filial Piety) it said, “universe (heaven and earth) witnessed five phases before it was born, that is, Tai Yi, Tai Chu, Tai Shi, Tai Su and Tai Ji. It was called Tai Yi before the universe got its shape; it is called Tai Chu when the material force started to germinate; it is called Tai Shi when material force and form began to develop; it is called Tai Su when the universe developed substantially; it is called taiji when the universe get its form and essence.” These messages show that Han ontology was basically based on material force.

¹⁴ For the three Chinese characters, see Feng Youlan (1952).

establish his philosophical systems of interpretation of the universe from two directions; so it said in *Ji Ci*: “The Book of Changes (*I*) contains the measure of heaven and earth.” (Wilhelm 1979: 293)

The I Tao (Way of I) is an open, integrated cosmic structure mode; so it is an indiscernible “great wholeness,” in which things that had existed, exist, and may exist in the future can all find their corresponding basis. The I Tao is not stagnant but a constantly reproducing system. Therefore, it must express itself in two interacting symbols rather than in other quiescent things. The two symbols, yin and yang, as it is said in *I Ching*, “Yin and Yang get transformation because of their blending” and “that which is unfathomable in the operation of *Yin* and *Yang* is called spirit” (Chan 1963: 266), represent two forces with different natures. The I Tao, which includes these two symbols, is the root of changes for the yin and yang. Therefore, “the successive movement of *Yin* and *Yang* constitutes the Way (Tao)” (Chan 1963: 266). Yang Shi Xun, in his book *Chun Qiu Gu Liang Zhuan Shu* (commentary to *Gu Liang Zhuan*), cited Wang Bi’s (226–249) interpretation of this sentence. Yang said that “*Ji Ci* says that the successive movement of Yin and Yang constitutes the Way. Wang Bi said, ‘for *Yin* and *Yang*, some time it is called Yin and some time it is called *Yang*: there are no definite names for them. If it is *Yin*, it cannot be Yang; if it is yielding, it will not be firm. Only when it is neither *Yin* nor *Yang* (and both Yin and Yang at the same time) can it be the Great Master of Yin and Yang; only when it is neither yielding nor firm (and both gentle and yielding at the same time) can it be the Great Master of the firm and the yielding. Accordingly, only when it has no spatial restrictions and physical form, neither *Yin* nor *Yang* can be thought to understand the Tao, and can it be thought to understand the spirit.’” *Yin* and *Yang* represent respectively two different natures; Yin cannot replace Yang, and *vice versa*. Only the Tao can represent both, for it is neither Yin nor Yang, yet it is the substance of both. So it is said in *I Ching* that “spirit has no spatial restriction and I has no physical form.” Seen from this point of view, it is without doubt of great philosophical wisdom that *Ji Ci*’s interpretation of *I Ching* indicates an open planar system as well as a vertically extending system. Let me confirm it once more that *Ji Ci*’s integrated philosophical interpretation of *I Ching* is a very different pattern from *Zuo Chuan*’s interpretation of *Chun Qiu*.

3.2.3 Han Fei Tzu’s Interpretation of Lao Tzu

If *Zuo Chuan*’s interpretation of *Chun Qiu* is a description of historical events, and *Ji Ci*’s interpretation of *I Ching* is an integrated philosophical interpretation, then *Han Fei Tzu*’s interpretation of *Lao Tzu* is mainly in the light of social and political operation. In the two articles “Jie Lao” and “Yu Lao” in *Han Fei Tzu*, we may find that their primary purposes are by and large to elucidate Han’s legalist thoughts

characterized by *Fa* (law), *Shu* (statecraft), or *Shi* (power or authority).¹⁵ Wei Yuan (1794–1857) in his book *Lao Tzu Ben Yi* (original meaning of *Lao Tzu*) said: Among those who studied *Lao Tzu*, there were Han Fei Tzu who wrote “Jie Lao” and “Yu Lao,” which understood Tao in the light of legalist thought; there were scholars such as Wang Fang (1044–1076) and Lú Hui Qing (1032–1111) who understood *Lao Tzu* with *Chuang Tzu*, and there were scholars such as Su Zi You (1039–1112), Jiao Hong (1540–1620), and Li Zhi (1527–1602) who would understand *Lao Tzu* from a Buddhist perspective. None of them understood the essential spirit of *Lao Tzu*. Here we will not discuss all of them but Wei Yuan. It is questionable to say that Wei’s interpretation had got “the essential spirit of *Lao Tzu*,” which is but one of the many interpretations of *Lao Tzu*. But it is reasonable to say that *Han Fei Tzu* explained *Lao Tzu* with legalist thoughts. Therefore, we think “Jie Lao” and “Yu Lao” established another interpretation pattern when he understood the classic in the light of social and political operation. Some later works, such as *Dao De Jing Lun Bing Yao Yi* (the essential meaning of war art in *Dao De Jing*) by Wang Zhen of the Tang Dynasty, should be categorized in this pattern.

Most of the interpretations in “Jie Lao” were made through a social and political approach. Han made a little philosophical explanation of the text; from a philosophical point of view, little philosophical importance can be attached to it. For example, Han’s interpretation of the sentence “this is called shape without shape, form (*Xiang*) without object” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 14) was no more than experiential interpretation based on common sense. Han explained, “Men seldom see a living elephant. They obtain the skeleton of a dead elephant and imagine a living one according to its features. Whatever people use in imagining the real is called form. Although the Tao cannot be heard or seen, the sage decides and sees its features on the basis of its effects. Therefore, it is called (in *Lao Tzu*) ‘shape without shape and form without objects’” (Chan 1963: 161). In his interpretation of another sentence “the Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name,” Han said, “Now, a thing which first exists and then becomes extinct, now lives and then dies, or flourishes at first and declines afterwards cannot be called eternal. Only that which exists from the very beginning of the universe and neither dies nor declines until heaven and earth disintegrate can be called eternal” (Chan 1963: 261). Here the interpretations of “change” and “invariableness” are of great philosophical significance. As this understanding can be obtained from general knowledge, there is some distance from here to the

¹⁵ There were some bamboo books that were unearthed in 1993 in Guo Dian of Hu Bei Province, of which one, named *Wu Xing* (*five agents*), is very different from the one, a silk book, with the same name that was unearthed in 1973 in Chang Sha, Hu Nan Province. There are *Jing* (Ching, classic) and *Shuo* (treatise or interpretation of the classic) in the silk *Wu Xing*, while the bamboo *Wu Xing* has *Jing* but not *Shuo*. That is to say, somebody else put the *Shuo* into silk *Wu Xing* afterwards. Therefore, we cannot confirm both *Jing Shuo* and *Mo Jing* were written by the same person. Certainly we still cannot deny that (1) both of the two books were written by one person and (2) *Mo Jing* was finished before *Jing Shuo*, which was written for more comprehensive understanding of *Mo Jing*.

metaphysical thoughts. The Tao is “a great wholeness,” which is the same in “the Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao” as in “what is above form is called Tao” (*Ta Chuan in I Ching*, Chapter XII; Wilhelm 1979: 323). As for other parts of these two articles, Han often explained them with the thought of *Fa*, *Shu*, and *Shi*. For example, Han explained the sentence “he who possesses the Mother (Tao) of the state will last long” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 59) as “mother is Tao.” Tao was born in the country where tactics are fully used. This kind of country, called “country of mother (Tao),” indicates rightly Han’s legalist thought. In explaining “when his capacity is beyond anyone’s knowledge, he is fit to rule a state” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 59), Han Fei Tzu said, “These who rule a state and save himself from danger are surely these who understand *Tao*. He will become wiser if he understands the Tao; He will get profound knowledge if he becomes wiser, then others are unable to know what he knows and what he doesn’t know. Only in this way can he not only keep himself free from damage but also rule his state.” That is to say, he who understands profoundly the essences of Tao can both save himself from danger and rule the state. This is actually explaining the Tao in terms of law. In explaining *Lao Tzu*’s sentence “who knows when the limit will be reached” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 58), Han said, “Anyone will succeed if he follows the principle. As for success, the greatest will be King, while the less great will be ministers or generals.” That is to say, if one operates following the Tao’s nature, he will get the exalted position of king, while the minister or general will get reward and salary they deserve. Here Han combined the Tao with power. In explaining “ruling a big country is like cooking a little fish,” Han said, “in ruling a big country if the ruler constantly changes the laws, the people will suffer greatly. Therefore the sensible ruler values tranquility (no-action) instead of changing laws.” That is to say, that the laws should be carried out in a long term so that the people can observe them. Such interpretations in *Han Fei Tzu* can be found everywhere, while little can be found from these interpretations that have philosophical significance in this article. Consequently, Han was ready to elucidate his legalist thoughts of *Fa*, *Shu*, and *Shi* when he interpreted *Lao Tzu*.

In “Yu Lao,” more clearly, Han interpreted *Lao Tzu* in the light of social and political operation, most of the materials he employed were historical stories, in order to show how a ruler succeeded or failed and how a state rose and declined. For instance, he took the story of Duke Jian of Qi (484 B.C.–481 B.C.) and his minister Tian Cheng to illuminate that “fish cannot divorce itself from water” (*Lao Tzu*, Chapter 36), for “major powers are a ruler’s base (like the fish to the water), his power should be above his ministers, which he cannot get back once it was rendered to the ministers.” Again he used the story of Duke Xian of Jin (676 B.C.–651 B.C.) who presented nice horses and pieces of jade to Yu State (to lower its guard before he planned to attack it) to explain “in order to grasp (it), it is necessary first to give it.” The reason why Han Fei interpreted *Lao Tzu* in this way is because many thoughts in *Lao Tzu* are about how to govern and administer a state. It is reasonable that he was put together with Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Shen Dao (395–C.315 B.C.) by Si Ma Qian (C.145 B.C.–?) in his book *Shi Ji* (historical records). On the other hand, Han is much different from the scholars (Neo-Taoist) of the Wei-Jin period, for he

made little interpretations in *Lao Tzu* on the texts that have philosophical significance. In one word, Han's interpretation can be considered as another kind of interpretation pattern in the history of Chinese learning.

There are many other interpretation patterns in pre-Qin classics, but I think the three interpretation patterns we have discussed above may be of greatest influence upon later Chinese scholarship. Here I would like to mention the relation between *Mo Tzu*, *Mo Cking* (classic of Moism), and *Ching Shuo* (treatise on Mo Ching). As for the date of these two articles, I do not agree that Ching Shuo appeared after Mo Ching had been finished. I think Mo Ching might appear as much as the same time as Ching Shuo, or the two articles were not written by different persons.¹⁶ Both of them are mainly explanations of concepts; still there are some differences between them. Mo Ching is by and large definitions of concepts, while Ching Shuo focuses on the embodiments or complementary accounts of the concepts. For instance, in Mo Ching it is said, "Jiu (long time) refers to different times." This definition does not refer to a particular period of time but all the time; it is an abstract and extensive explanation, so came Ching Shuo that gives a more explicit definition: "Jiu refers to ancient and modern time, day and night," indicating Jiu covers all the time from ancient to modern and from dawn to sunset. Again in Mo Ching, it is said that, "Yu (limitless space) refers to different spaces." Yu refers to spaces, not some specific place; so "different space" is just a definition to Yu. In Ching Shuo, it is said, "Yu refers to Dong (east), Xi (west), Jia (home), Nan (south) and Bei (north). There are many understandings of the word Jia (家)." For example, Prof. Gao Heng (1900–1986) thought that it is Zhong (中, center), but I would rather think it is Jia (加, plus). Yu is the extension of east and west plus south and north, which is surely an account of Yu in Mo Ching. This kind of interpretation of a specific word or expression is much similar to a present-day dictionary and has great influence, especially on the compilation of dictionaries and Buddhism classics translation.

Since Han Confucianists valued Confucian classics very much, and these classics were approved to be the basic resources for civil service examinations, there rose a movement of studying these classics by syntactic and semantic analysis; gradually such knowledge as explaining and scrutinizing the origins, developments of ancient characters had become indispensable skills for scholars in their interpretation of these classics, and as a result of it, some of which, like Xun Gu, phonology, philology, Kao Ju (textual research), become special and technical subjects. Han's study and interpretation of these classics were loaded with trivial details, as it is said in *Han Shu* (History of the Han Dynasty) that "usually a treatise on a classic would employ over a million characters." A Confucian named Qin Yan Jun explained two characters in the *Yao Dian* with more than a hundred thousand characters and used 30,000 characters to explain four words. In the chapter of "Lun Shuo" (discussion on treatise) of *Wen Xin Diao Long*, it is said, "because persons like Qin Yan Jun who commented *Yao Dian* with over hundred thousand characters whereas Zhu Shan Zhi who explained *Shang Shu* (Book of History) with 300 characters, many

¹⁶ One of the articles in *Shang Shu* (*Book of History*).

scholars were so sick of it that they would not like to study syntactic and semantic analysis.” Scholars in Han Dynasty explained classics not only with unduly triviality but also became ridiculous. However, this style changed greatly in the Wei-Jin period. Scholars of that time tended to interpret the classics concisely and comprehensively. Most of the works during that time, including commentaries on *I Ching* and *Lao Tzu* (by Wang Bi) and commentaries on *Chuang Tzu* (by Guo Xiang), were both compendious and philosophical (Tang Yi Jie 1998a).¹⁷ I would like to use one example to show the different styles between the Han Dynasty and the Wei-Jin period. The “Xiao Yao You” (A Happy Excursion) of *Chuang Tzu* says that “In the northern ocean there is a fish, called the Kun, I do not know how many thousand miles in size. This Kun changes into a bird, called the Peng. Its back is I do not know how many thousand miles in breadth. When it is moved, it flies, its wings obscuring the sky like clouds.” In his commentary, Guo Xiang just said, “For the truth about Kun and Peng, I am not sure of it.” He continued to criticize the trivial styles in the Han Dynasty as “stiff explanations” and said, “a comprehensive-minded scholar should, in his study, catch its essence rather than those extraneous details, and should not pain stakingly explain stiffly all the time. These details can be abandoned as long as they affect the main ideas.” So we can conclude that the way the Han Confucianist interpreted classics was that of “I was commenting on classics,” while that of the Wei-Jin scholars was that of “classics commenting on me.” In Chapter 22 of *Da Hui Pu Jue Chan Shi Yu Lu* (the analects of Pu Jue, the Great Zen Master), it is said, “Guo Xiang was seen writing his interpretation of *Chuang Tzu*. People who knew it said, ‘in fact it is Chuang Tzu who commented on Guo Xiang’.” Also in his foreword to the *Nan Hua Zhen Jing Ping Zhu* (Annotation of *Chuang Tzu*) by Gui You Guang (1507–1571), Feng Meng Zhen (1546–1605) of the Ming Dynasty said, “it is not Guo Xiang’s commentary of Chuang Tzu, but Chuang Tzu’s commentary of Guo Xiang.”

Since Indian Buddhism came to China at the end of the Western Han (206 B.C.–25 A.D.), people became more and more concerned with interpretations. At first when An Shi Gao (belonged to Hinayana) of the Eastern Han began to translate Buddhism classics into China, he matched Buddhist theories with the dominant thoughts of that time, such as Caturmahabhuta (earth, fire, water, and wind) for five agents (water, fire, wood, metal, and earth), Pancasila (no killing living creature, no stealing, no bawdy, no telling lie, and no potation) for five virtues (benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sincerity), etc. In *Yin Chi Ren Jing Zhu* (*Commentary of Yin Chi Ren Classic*), it is said, “Pancaskandha refers to body. . . just like man’s original vigor. When the vigor is mixed, it takes turns to rise, drop, thrive and decline in turn around the Trilokya without end, so it is called seed.” To explain Pancaskandha in terms of vigor was surely far away from the real Buddhism principle, but it coincided with the dominant thoughts of

¹⁷ In the end of this essay, I advanced the question of establishing Chinese hermeneutics theory and method and made some analyses on two methods employed by Guo Xiang when interpreting *Chuang Tzu*. Also see another essay of mine, Tang Yi Jie (1998b).

that time. Later, when Mahayana was introduced into China, it was usually understood as the thought of Neo-Taoism. Therefore, there appeared new interpretation methods, e.g., Ge Yi and Lian Lei (Tang Yong Tong 1991). It is said in *Gao Seng Zhuan* (Biography of Great Dignitary) that, when Hui Yuan (334–416) “was 24 years old, he began giving lectures. Once one person in the audience felt it difficult to understand him. Though Hui Yuan tried hard, he still failed to make himself understood. At last Hui Yuan cited thoughts in *Chuang Tzu*, and the person got it.” From this case, we can say that Ge Yi is nothing more than Lian Lei, namely, interpreting Buddhist classics with Chinese ideas. In fact, scholars had already observed that using Ge Yi to explain classics was prone to misinterpreting their original thought. For example, it occurred to Dao An (314–385) that “Ge Yi had misunderstood most of the classics before.” Seng Rui, one of Kumarajiva’s most distinguished disciples, said, “to propagate and teach (Buddhism principles) with Ge Yi is both pedantry and a deviation of the real Buddhist spirit” (Taisho shinshu daizokyo, 55:59). After that Ge Yi was gradually given up. But it is inevitable that transliteration was employed in translating Buddhist classics, for there are many terms in Buddhism, e.g., Prajna and Nirvana, which cannot find their corresponding substitutions in Chinese. In *Zheng Wu Lun* (on Correcting Mistakes), it is said, “Ni Huan is a Sanskrit word, which in the Jin dynasty refers to non-action” (*Bong Mng M*, Chapter I). Ni Huan is the transliteration of Nirvana; there was no corresponding word for it in Chinese; it was transliterated and interpreted as “nonaction.” Another example can be found in Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra. In the first volume of this book, there are the following words, “Seng Zhao (384–414) said, Bi Qiu (Bhikṣu) in Later Qin Dynasty (936–947) sometimes refers to beggar, sometimes refers to the wiping off of annoyance, sometimes to observing commandment, sometimes to frightening devils. One Indian word can generalize all of the four meanings; however, because there was no corresponding word for it, it can only be transliterated.” This explained the reason why there are some transliterations in Buddhist classics translation. But this may raise a new question, that is, because of the different understandings of the Buddhism ideas, there may be different interpretations for the same concept. In order to have a general and common understanding of the terms in Buddhist classics, there appeared some specific books to set up criteria for the terms. These kind of books included *Yi Qie Jing Yin Yi* (Transliteration Guide for All Classics) and *Fan Yi Ming Yi Ji* (A Recorder for Transliteration). Moreover, from the South-North dynasties to the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907), some Buddhists advanced certain principles for classics translation, such as Qi Da Liang who set up “five principles not to translate,” which were later made more sophisticated by Xuan Zang (602–662) (Tang Yong Tong 1982). It may be of great importance for us, for the development of a Chinese interpretation theory, to systemically straighten out these methods and principles in Buddhist translation. Of course since Western learning entered China, new questions about translation and interpretation have emerged. This gives rise to many issues that are beyond my competence. I hope other scholars would do some research on this field.

Glossary

Ban Ben Xue	版本学
Bi Qiu	比丘
Caturmahabhuta	四大
Chen Tuan	陈抟
Ching Shuo	经说
Chun Qiu	春秋
Da Hui Pu Jue Chan Shi Yu Lu	大慧普觉禅师语录
Dao De Lun	道德论
Dao Tong	道统
Du Dao Jian	杜道坚
Fan Yi Ming Yi Ji	翻译名义记
Feng Meng Zhen	冯梦祯
Gao Heng	高亨
Gong Yang Gao	公羊高
Gong Yang Zhuan	公羊传
Gu Liang Chi	谷梁赤
Gu Liang Zhuan	谷梁传
Gua Ci	卦辞
Guan Zhui Bian	管锥编
Gui You Guang	归有光
Han Kang Bo	韩康伯
He Yan	何晏
Hong Ming Ji	弘明集
I Zhuan	易传
Ji Ci	系辞
Ji Ji	既济
Jiao Hong	焦竑
Jie Lao	解老
Jin Dynasty	晋朝
Jing Xue	经学
Lao Zi Zhi Lue	老子指略
Li Zhi	李贽
Lian Lei	连类
Liu Xie	刘勰
Lü Hui Qing	吕惠卿
Lun Shuo	论说
Lun Yu Nian Pu	《论语》年谱
Mo Ching	墨经
Nan Hua Zhen Jing Ping Zhu	南华真经评注
Pancasila	五戒
Pei Song Zhi	裴松之
Pei Wen Zhong	裴文中

Qian Zhong Shu	钱钟书
Qin Yan Jun	秦延君
San Guo Zhi	三国志
Seng Zhao	僧肇
Shao Rong	邵雍
Shen Dao	慎到
Shi Ji	史记
Shuo Gua	说卦
Sima Qian	司马迁
Su Zi You	苏子由
Tai Ji	太极
Taisuke Hayashi	林泰辅
Tao Te Ching Yuan Zhi	道德经原旨
Wang Bi	王弼
Wang Pang	王雱
Xiao Jing Wei	孝经纬
Wei Ji	未济
Wei Si	魏斯
Wei Yuan	魏源
Wu Ming Lun	无名论
Xu Gua	序卦
Xun Gu Xue	训诂学
Yang Shi Xun	杨士勋
Yi Qie Jing Yin Yi	一切经音义
Yin Chi Ren Jing Zhu	阴持人经注
Zhang Ju Zhi Xue	章句之学
Zheng Wu Lun	正诬论
Zhou Dun Yi	周敦颐
Zhou Yi Luo Li	周易略例
Zuo Qiu Ming	左丘明

References

- Chan, Wing-tsit. (1963). *A source book in Chinese philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Egner, R. E., & Edonn, L. E. (Eds.). (1992). *The basic writings of Bertrand Russell* (p. 547). London: Routledge.
- Feng Youlan. (1952). *A history of Chinese philosophy* (Derk Bodde, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter XIII.
- Feng Youlan. (1999). *A history of modern Chinese philosophy* (p. 217). Guangzhou: Guang Dong People's Press.
- Li Da San. (1978). *The study of comparative literature: A new direction* (p. 107). Taipei: Linking Publishing House.

- Meng Hua. (1993). *Arouet de Voltaire and Confucius* (p. 14, p. 149 and p. 151). Beijing: New China Press.
- Sun Yi Rang. (1986). *Mo Tzu jian Gu*. Beijing: Zhong Hua Publishing House.
- Tang Yi Jie. (1986). On the method used by *Dao Te Jing* to establish its philosophical system. *Philosophical Study* (1), Beijing.
- Tang Yi Jie. (1998a). Differentiating names and analyzing reason: Guo Xiang's new method of commenting on Chuang Tzu. *Chinese Social Science* (1), Shanghai.
- Tang Yi Jie. (1998b). On Guo Xiang's method of commenting Chuang Tzu. *Study of Chinese Culture* (1), Beijing.
- Tang Yi Jie. (1999). On literary theories in Wei-Chin and South-North dynasties. In Tang Yi Jie (Ed.), *Fei Shi Fei Xu Ji* (pp. 186–187). Beijing: Huawen Press.
- Tang Yong Tong. (1982). *A history of Buddhism of Sui and Tang dynasties*(Chapter II, pp. 76–77). Beijing: Zhong Hua Publishing House.
- Tang Yong Tong. (1991). Ge Yi: The earliest method of syncretizing Indian Buddhism and Chinese thought. In Tang Yong Tong (Ed.), *Confucianism, Buddhism and Xuan Xue* (pp. 282–294). Beijing: Beijing University Press.
- Wilhelm, Richard, rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes. (1979). *The I Ching or book of changes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Yang Bojun. (1981). *Chun Qiu Zuo Chuan Zhu* (Commentary of *Zuo Chuan*). Beijing: Zhong Hua Publishing House.

Chapter 4

Emotion in Pre-Qin Ruist Moral Theory: An Explanation of “*Dao Begins in Qing*”

There is a view that holds that Ruists never put much emphasis on *qing* (情)¹ and that they even regarded it in a negative light. This is perhaps a misunderstanding, especially in regard to pre-Qin Ruism. In the Guodian *Xing zi ming chu* (性自命出), the passage “*dao begins in qing*” (*dao shi yu qing*, 道始于情) plays an important role in our understanding of the pre-Qin notion of *qing*. This article will concentrate on discussing the “theory of *qing*” in pre-Qin Ruism, and also in Daoism. In addition, it will attempt a philosophical interpretation of “*dao begins in qing*,” and in the process offer philosophical interpretations of a number of important notions.

4.1 On “*Dao Begins in Qing*”

The Guodian *Xing zi ming chu* is a Ruist text of the middle Warring States period (prior to 300 B.C.), and it contains the following key lines:

Dao shi yu qing, qing sheng yu xing. 道始于情，情生于性。
Dao begins in qing, and qing arises from xing.
Xing zi ming chu. 性自命出。
Xing issues from ming.
Ming zi tian jiang. 命自天降。
Ming descends from tian.

Translated by Brian Bruya and Hai-ming Wen
Department of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i
Philosophy East and West, 2003, 3(2): 271–281

¹ Translators' note: the terms *qing* and *xing* will remain untranslated throughout this article, since to translate them would run counter to the project of exploring the interpretations of the terms. Similarly, we also leave key technical terms of Chinese moral philosophy untranslated, as these terms have no close equivalents in Western philosophy.

Discovering the correlations among these passages is crucial to understanding the pre-Qin notions of *xing* and *qing*. To begin with, we can explain them as follows: the human *dao* (the norms of personal and social conduct) exists from the start on account of shared emotions (*qinggan* 情感) among people. The *qing* of emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le* 喜怒哀乐) emerges out of human *xing*, and human *xing* is conferred by *tian* (human *xing* are obtained from *ming*, which *tian* confers). *Tian ming* is the inevitability and the teleology made manifest by *tian*. We can see from these sentences that “*dao* begins in *qing*” was an extremely important topic for pre-Qin Ruists. It makes sense to say “*dao* begins in *qing*” rather than “*dao* arises from *qing*” because *dao* exists from the start on account of human *qing* rather than emerging out of *qing*.² This is why the *Xing zi ming chu* says: “Someone who understands *qing* is able to convey (*chu* 出) it, while someone who understands *yi* 义 is able to internalize (*ru* 入) it.” Someone who completely comprehends human *qing* is able fully to elaborate human emotion, and someone who has a firm grasp of ritual propriety (*li* 礼) and *yi* is able to modulate human emotion. Thus, ritual propriety and *yi* are intimately related to *qing* and are inseparable from the expression of human emotion.

There are many issues that can be touched on here, and we will focus on the following three:

1. The *dao* of “*dao* begins in *qing*” refers to human *dao* rather than a conflated *tian* and human *dao*. Moreover, it is not the “constant *dao*” that Laozi speaks of because the *Xing zi ming chu* states, “Only the human *dao* can be articulated [*dao*].” The *dao* that “can be articulated” is not the “constant *dao*,” nor is it the “*dao* that cannot be articulated.” So this *dao* is not the *dao* that Laozi says “precedes the generation of *tian* and earth.” The *Xing zi ming chu* also says: “Ritual propriety starts from *qing*” (*li zuo yu qing* 礼作于情).³ Ritual propriety belongs within the scope of “human *dao*.” Therefore, “*dao* begins in *qing*” is not a Daoist notion but a Ruist one. This kind of ritual propriety so tied to *qing* is exactly the basis for maintaining decorum among people in society. However, this *dao* that begins in *qing* is not confined to ritual propriety, for *ren* (仁), *yi*, ritual propriety, wisdom, trustworthiness, etc., all belong to it. For instance:

In the beginning, it is near to *qing* and at the end to *yi* (*Xing zi ming chu*).

Ren arises in people, and *yi* arises in *dao* (*Yu cong* no. 1). (This *dao* is, naturally, also human *dao*.)

However, from the Ruist perspective, the human *dao* originates in the *dao* of *tian*, and that is why we find such a notion as “the unity of *tian* and people.”

2. “*Qing*” typically refers to the “seven *qing*” (delight, anger, grief, fear, love, dislike, desire [*xi, nu, ai, ju, ai, wu, yu* 喜怒哀惧爱恶欲]), the “six *qing*” (delight, anger, grief, enjoyment [*le* 乐], fondness [*hao* 好], dislike), or the

² This is not to say that it cannot emerge at all, for it can also emerge out of rationality or study.

³ The Guodian *Yu cong* no. 1 语丛一 has “Ritual propriety is created as a response to human *qing*.” *Yu cong* no. 2 says: “*Qing* arises from *xing*; ritual propriety arises from *qing*.”

“five *qing*” (delight, anger, grief, enjoyment, resentment [*yuán* 怨]), but the *Xing zi ming chu* says: “the *qi* 气 of delight, anger, grief, and sadness is due to *xing*,” and “fondness and dislike are a matter of *xing*.” Here we touch on the problem of the relationship between *xing* and *qing*.

In the “Tian lun” chapter of the *Xunzi*, we find the following passage, “Fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment are stored within (*zang* 臧⁴), and this is called the natural *qing*.” “Fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment” refer to the emotions (*qinggan*) that naturally issue from within the person. Based on natural human *xing*, *qing* is human emotion (*ganqing*) that “is aroused into action by contact with things” and expressed externally. (This issue will be taken up in more detail below.)

3. What does the Ruist “tian” mean? It has many connotations, and for each of the great Ruists (such as Mengzi and Xunzi), it meant something slightly different. Nonetheless, it is my opinion that it would be reasonable to interpret *tian* in early China (especially for the Ruists) as a governing power and principle that is transcendent with regard to nature and the myriad things (including, of course, people). Thus, *tian* holds connotations of sacredness, supreme power, and morality. That would make *tian ming* the necessity and teleology behind this power governing the myriad things. But this is not a topic to be discussed here, so we will put it off for another time.

4.2 The Basis for the Pre-Qin Ruist Emphasis on *Qing*

Society in ancient China was patriarchal and centered on the family, and familial *qing* (*qin qing* 亲情) was the foundation for preserving ties within the family. By extension, it was also the foundation for preserving ties within the entire society. Because this *qing*-oriented social background is what pre-Qin Ruism developed out of, “*dao* begins in *qing*” can be seen as a foundational issue for pre-Qin Ruist thought, especially for the core issues of moral thought.

There is no record in the *Analects* of Confucius having ever directly discussed the topic of *qing*, but from his behavior, one can see that he attached a significant amount of importance to *qing*. For instance:

Yan Yuan died, and Confucius grieved with abandon (11:10).

When Confucius was in Qi, he heard the Shao music, and for three months, he didn’t notice the taste of meat. He said, “I never expected that music could be like this” (7:14).

Despite his never having discussed *qing* directly, the basis for the pre-Qin emphasis on *qing* is built on the thought of Confucius. For example: “Fan Chi inquired about *ren*. Confucius said, ‘Love (*ai* 爱) others’”⁵ (12: 22). Why does Confucius take love to be the basic connotation of *ren*?

⁴ “Zang” 臧 is “cang” 藏.

⁵ Guodian *Yu cong* no. 3 has “Love is *ren*.”

The *Zhongyong* quotes Confucius as saying “*Ren* has to do with others, and felt intimacy with one’s family (*qin qin* 亲亲) is paramount.”⁶ It is not for nothing that *ren* is taken to be fundamental, for it begins with loving one’s family and is extended outward from there.⁷ This is to say that felt intimacy with one’s family is the most basic emotion, and only after having the emotions for loving one’s family will one “extend them to others” or be able to “honor one’s elders as befits elders and extend this honor to all elders, . . . honor one’s own children as befits children and extend this honor to all children.” To be able to “extend from oneself to others” is not easy and requires that one take the path of conscientiousness and compassion as the standard such that one does “not inflict on others what one does not desire for oneself” and that one “establishes others when wishing to establish oneself, and helps others achieve the goal that one wishes to achieve for oneself.”⁸ The ideal for Confucius was to take the spirit of love and care based on familial *qing* and spread it throughout society, causing all of society to turn toward *ren*: “To control oneself and restore ritual propriety is *ren*. If you can do it for one day, the whole land will turn toward the *ren* in you. *Ren* comes from oneself; how could it come from others?”

“To control oneself and restore ritual propriety” is always interpreted as if “to control oneself” and “restore ritual propriety” were two corresponding notions taken in parallel. I do not think that this is the best interpretation. It should be taken to mean that only the “restoring of ritual propriety” that is based on “controlling oneself” can be called *ren*. *Ren* arises out of one’s inner character, while ritual propriety is the external system of etiquette for regulating human behavior—its purpose being to modulate relations among people and to make them more harmonious: “Achieving harmony is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety.” For people to observe a system of etiquette, it must come from their own sensibility. Only this tallies with *ren*. This is why Confucius said “*ren* comes from oneself, how could it come from others?” Confucius was unequivocal in characterizing the relation between *ren* and ritual propriety: “What has a person who is not *ren* have to do with observing ritual propriety? What has a person who is not *ren* have to do with the playing of music?” (3:3). This theory of *ren* based on love

⁶ Mencius says: “Felt intimacy with one’s family (*qin qin*) is *ren*” (“Gaozi xia”). Guoyu, “Jinyu,” says: “To love one’s family is to put *ren* into practice.”

⁷ Han Fei zi, “Wu du”: “In regard to human *xing* and *qing*, the parents come first. But while parents may both show love for the children, they may not govern the children well.” Note that this passage demonstrates that Han Feizi believed that the emotion of love for one’s parents is not necessarily conducive to the well ordering of the state but also that human emotion is first expressed as love for one’s parents. We can see here that the legalists also believed that emotion toward one’s parents is the foundation of all emotions.

⁸ *Analects* 4:5 says: “Confucius said, ‘Zeng, my path has one continuous thread.’ Zengzi said, ‘Indeed.’ Confucius left. The other disciples asked what Confucius had meant. Zengzi said, ‘The master’s path is nothing more than conscientiousness and compassion.’” Zhu Xi comments: “To do one’s best is called conscientiousness, to extend oneself is called compassion.” Here we see that Confucius took the “*dao* of conscientiousness and compassion,” the foundation of which he found to be familial *qing*, as his one thread for human conduct.

would inevitably influence Mencius, who said, “ren is felt intimacy with one’s family” (6B:3, 7A:15).

In Mencius, we cannot find a passage that directly discusses *qing*. However, Mencius, “four sprouts,” especially the “heart (mind) of commiseration” (*ceyin zhi xin* 恻隐之心), although only the *sprouting* of human *xing*, certainly possesses the content of human *qing*. Addressing the question of why people have a heart (mind) of commiseration, Mencius says: “Anyone seeing a child about to fall into a well would be alarmed, possessing a heart (mind) of commiseration. This is not because they wish to ingratiate themselves with the child’s parents or because they wish for a good reputation among friends and villagers or because they dislike the sound of the child’s voice” (2A:6). On seeing a child about to fall into a well, one would spontaneously reach out to help. This is due to the heart (mind) of commiseration, which is an inner feeling free of selfish motives.

We can also see this vein of Confucius’ thinking developed in the Guodian materials. *Yu cong* no. 3, for instance (as mentioned above), has “Love is *ren*” and “Love arises from *xing*,” and the *Tang Yu zhi dao* says: “The expression of filial piety consists of loving the people of the world.” Amplifying the love of one’s parents is the basis for loving all the people of the world. The *Wu xing* says: “Profound felt intimacy is love. To extend the love for one’s father to others in a prudent way is *ren*.” Love is expressing familial *qing*; loving one’s parents and then extending it to others is called complete *ren*.

But why would people have the emotion of love? Simply because “*qing* arises from *xing*.” As mentioned above, *Yu cong* no. 2 says: “*Qing* arises from *xing*; ritual propriety arises from *qing*,” and *Yu cong* no. 1 says: “Ritual propriety is created as a response to human *qing*.” Human emotion arises from one’s inner *xing*. Maintaining the ties that bind people together through ritual propriety and *yi* is predicated upon everyone’s having the emotion of love for others. Ritual propriety is one meaning of “human *dao*.” According to what is mentioned above, we can say that moral theory in pre-Qin Ruism was built on the foundation of Confucius’ notion of *ren*, which was an extension of familial *qing*. “*Dao* begins in *qing*” should then be an extremely significant part of Confucius’ theory of *ren* and important to the interpretation of Confucius’ notion of love.

4.3 On “*Qing* Arises from *Xing*” 情生于性

There are many passages in the pre-Qin classics that discuss the relationship between *xing* and *qing*. For instance, the *Xunzi*, “Zheng ming,” says: “The emotions (*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*) of *xing* are called *qing*.” But the connotations of *xing* and *qing* in the pre-Qin classics remain to be dearly distinguished. The *Xing zi ming chu* makes two attempts: (1) “emotional (*wu, nu, ai, bei*) *qi* is due to *xing*”⁹ and

⁹“*Qi*” here may refer to blood and *qi*, as in *Yu cong* no. 1: “Anything that has blood and *qi* has also delight and anger, caution and courage.”

(2) “fondness and dislike are due to *xing*.” The bamboo text *Yu cong* no. 2 very nearly takes all human emotions and desires to “arise from *xing*”—for instance, “desire arises from *xing*,” “dislike arises from *xing*,” “delight arises from *xing*,” etc. These passages all explain that human *xing* can express all manner of emotions and that *qing* is inseparable from *xing*—there is no such thing as being without *qing*.

A similar situation can be found in the *Xunzi*, in a passage, for instance, that speaks both of *xing* and of fondness and dislike: “Nowadays when people’s *xing* comes into play, the profit motive comes, too.” I believe that this may have something to do with the use of “*qing xing*,” or “*xing qing*,” in the pre-Qin classics. We find, for instance, the following:

The early kings, based on *qing xing*, . . . (*Li ji*, “Yue ji”)

As for the eyes pursuing colors, the ears sounds, the mouth flavors, the mind personal benefit, and the body comfort and ease, these are born out of human *qing xing*. (*Xunzi*, “Xing e”)

To indulge *xing qing* prevents one from studying. (*Xunzi*, “Ru xiao”)

The *qing xing*, or *xing qing*, mentioned here appears to refer either to *xing* itself or to the functioning of *xing*, but we can also say that Xunzi already understood that there was a distinction between *qing* and *xing*. For instance, in the “Tian lun” chapter, we find the passage, “That emotions (*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*) are stored [in the body] is called the natural *qing*.” The “natural *qing*” here actually refers to emotions (*qinggan* 情感) within the natural *xing* (i.e., the *qing* of *xing*’s emotions [*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*]). The various emotions are stored within human *xing*, which is the same line of thinking as in the *Li ji* (“Yue ji”), which says: “The quiescence of human life is due to natural *xing*; activity upon response to things is due to desires of *xing*.” “Desires” in “desires of *xing*” refers to none other than *qing*.¹⁰

It is apparent from this that “*Xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active” was a slogan that may have been common among pre-Qin Ruists (or we must at least say that it was an important view among pre-Qin Ruists). For instance, the *Xing zi ming chu* says: “Emotional (*xi, yue, nu, ai, bei*) *qi* is due to *xing*. When it manifests externally, it is due to sensual contact with things (*wu qu zhi* 物取之)”; and again, “What sets the *xing* to activity are things (*wu*). It is the outward expression of human *xing* excited internally by external things that manifests as the various emotions (and desires)” it is another way of saying, “That people are born quiescent is due to the natural *xing*; activity upon response to things is due to desires of the *xing*” (*Li ji*, “Yue ji”). Perhaps the most vivid way to put it is the quote from He Ti¹¹ in *Li ji zheng yi*: “*Xing* is to *qing* as a wave is to water. When it’s calm, it’s water, and when it’s active, it’s waves. Likewise, when it’s calm, it’s *xing*, and when it’s active, it’s

¹⁰ In a response to Emperor Wu, Dong Zhongshu says: “*Qing* is human desire” (see *Han shu*, “Dong Zhongshu zhuan”). Also, Chen Li, in *Bai Hu Tong shu zheng*, mentions that “Desires of the *xing* are *qing*” (see his note to the line “*liu qing ye he wei yen*” 六情也何谓也 (what to call the six *qing*) in “Xing qing”).

¹¹ For his biography, see *Liang shu*, chap. 48, “He Ti zhuan.”

qing.” This is to say that human *xing* is our inner quality, and *qing* is the revealing of *xin*’s emotions on becoming active in response to things. Thus, the *Zhongyong* says:

The state of pre-activated¹² (*wei fa* 未发) emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*) is called moderation, and when they are modulated upon activation (*yi fa* 已发), it is called harmony. Moderation is the great foundation of the world, and harmony is the communicating path of the world. Achieving moderation and harmony is where heaven and earth rest and where the myriad things flourish. (chap. 1)

When human *xing* perceives (*gan* 感) things, the emotions (*qinggan*) that are thus aroused should tally with the cosmic patterning (*daoli* 道理); tallying with the cosmic patterning will be of benefit to the growth of the myriad things. Or, as it says in a commentary to the *Zhongyong* in the *Li ji zheng yi*: “with growth and the acquisition of patterning (*li* 理), the myriad things are all nurtured.” The same commentary also says: “The phrase, ‘Harmony is the communicating path of the world,’ means that although *qing* and desire activate, if one can achieve harmony, the cosmic patterning will flow and communicate everywhere.” In short, the arousal and expression of *qing* should always conform to patterning.¹³ We can take the notion of *xing* as belonging to preactivation and *qing* as belonging to activation and generalize this into the theory of “*xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active.” This theory of “preactivation” and “activation” became an important issue discussed by the Song and Ming Ruists, but because it is beyond the scope of this essay, it will be put off for another time.

4.4 Distinguishing *Qing* and Desire

Since ancient times, people have spoken of the “seven *qing* and six desires.” The “*Li yun*” chapter of the *Li ji* says: “What is human *qing*? Delight, anger, grief, fear, love, dislike, desire. These seven are innate abilities.” “Desire” here may be the “desire” of the subsequent passage: “Drink, food, men, and women are the great human desires,” which is to say that “drink, food, men, and women” are natural demands of the human *xing*. That’s why Gaozi said, “Food and sex are due to *xing*.”

Actually, pre-Qin Ruist theories of *qing* and *xing* fall into several schools of thought. Wang Chong mentions in the “Ben *xing*” chapter of the *Lun heng* that there were five such schools of thought and all were expounding on Confucius’ quote, “*xing* are mutually close” (*xing xiang jin* 性相近) (17:2). The different positions held were (1) *xing* is neither not good (*shan* 善) nor not not good,

¹² Translators’ note: the term 发 *fa* is often translated in terms of “issuing forth” or “arousal.” The choice is often made depending on whether the usage in a particular passage appears to be active, passive, transitive, or intransitive. We choose the word “activate” since in its intransitive (admittedly rare in English) use, it means “to become active” and because it can always cover the other three forms as well.

¹³ This issue will be discussed further in the fourth section, “Distinguishing *Qing* and Desire.”

(2) *xing* is good, (3) *xing* is bad (e 恶), (4) good and bad are mixed (*hun* 混), and (5) good or bad depend on whether a person is of higher, middling, or lower quality. In the “Ben *xing*” chapter, Wang Chong spoke about the “six *qing*” as follows: “Of *qing*, there are fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment,” not listing desire as one of the *qing*.

Mentions of the six *qing* occurred as early as the pre-Qin era, for instance:

The people have fondness and dislike, delight and anger, and grief and enjoyment, which are expressed in the six *qi*.¹⁴ (*Zuozhuan*, Duke Shao year 25)

Dislike, desire, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment—these six are obstructions of *de* (德).¹⁵ (*Zhuangzi*, “Gengsangchu”)

Xunzi mentions the six *qing* several times (see quotations above).¹⁶

As for discussion of the six desires, the earliest may be the passage in the “Gui sheng” chapter of the *Lushi chunqiu* that says: “What is called a complete life is that in which the six desires are all appropriately met,” and to this, Gao You of the Han Dynasty notes: “The six desires pertain to life, death, the ears, eyes, mouth, and nose.” The six desires mentioned here all refer to the desires of the senses and are probably approved of when appropriately met.

However, the “*qing* and desire” chapter of the *lushi chunqiu* says: “The five sounds that the ear desires, the five colors that the eye desires, and the five tastes that the mouth desires are of *qing*.” This may tell us that in the pre-Qin classics, either *qing* and desire have not been distinguished yet or that desire is seen as one way of expressing *qing*. This would explain why we often see the use of “*qing* desires” (*qing yu* 情欲), as in:

Before *qing* desires activate—that is the root origin of human *xing*. (*Shi sari jing zhu shu*, *Li ji*, “*Zhongyong*,” note on “‘*Zhong*’ is the great root of the world”)¹⁷ . . . such are the *qing* desires that humans have. (*Xunzi*, “*Zheng lun*”)¹⁸ [They] took the reduction of *qing* desires as internal. (*Zhuangzi*, “*Tianxia*”)

However, these three uses of “*qing* desires” differ significantly. In the note to the *Zhongyong* quoted above, “*qing* desires” refers to *qing* and whether *qing* can be brought into harmony depending on whether they are viewed as good or bad. The *Xunzi* advocates the position that *xing* is bad and therefore takes “*qing* desires” to be bad, as in the “*Zheng ming*” chapter, which says: “Although he be a nobleman or sovereign, if he nurtures his desires and gives free reign to his *qing*, he is no

¹⁴ An annotation to the line “How sages govern the seven *qing*” of the “*Li yun*” chapter of the *Li ji* quotes *Zuozhuan*, “Duke Shao year 25,” to say: “Nature has the six *qi*, which in people become the six *qing* and are called delight and anger, grief and enjoyment, and fondness and dislike.”

¹⁵ “Desire” appears among these six but should be taken as “fondness.”

¹⁶ The “*Xing qing*” chapter of the Han Dynasty *Bai Hu Tong yi* also mentions the “six *qing*.”

¹⁷ Also, in *Guangya*, “*Shi gu*,” “*qing*” is glossed as “quiescence.”

¹⁸ Because Xunzi’s “*xing* is bad” is based on the notion that humans possess desires (e.g., “Now in regard to human *xing*, . . . as soon as people are born, they have sensual desires and seek out their fulfillment. Licentiousness results, and then ritual propriety, *yi*, culture, and patterning are lost” [“*Xing e*”]), one could also say that under this theory, *qing* is also bad.

different from a bandit.” Zhuangzi disapproved of desire while approving of following spontaneous *qing*, as in “the world is sufficient without desire,” and yet he believed that the extraordinary person (*shen ren* 神人) “lives one’s destiny to the fullest while giving priority to *qing*.”¹⁹ And so, “following” (*shuai* 率) in the statement “for *qing*, nothing is better than following” refers to following what is genuine. For this reason, *xing qing* occurs frequently in the *Zhuangzi* (e.g., “if *xing* and *qing* are not separated, how is one to employ ritual propriety and music?” [“Ma ti”]). Sometimes, the meaning of *xing* (or “genuine *xing*”) in the *Zhuangzi* can even include *qing* (or genuine *qing*). For instance, the “Ma ti” chapter also says: “the feet of a horse can cross frost and snow; the fur protects against winter damp. It chews grass and drinks water, raises its hooves and rears back. This is the genuine *xing* of the horse.” The “genuine *xing* of the horse” is the genuine *qing* of the horse.

In addition to “*qing*” and “*yu*” being used in concatenation to mean “*qing*,” and to *qing* desires being taken to be bad, ever since the Qin and Han dynasties there has been the saying, “*xing* is good, *qing* is bad.” For instance, Dong Zhongshu of the Han Dynasty discusses good and bad from the perspective of *yin* and *yang* in his *Chunqiu fanlu*, “Yang zun yin bei”: “The bad belongs only to *yin*, and the good only to *yang*.” Thus, he believed that *xing* possesses both good and bad and that it is associated with ren,²⁰ while the bad side of *xing* is *qing*, and *qing* is greedy. There are also the following:

Nature has the processes of both *yin* and *yang*, and the person has a *xing* of avarice and *ren*. . . . How can one not but eliminate desire and suppress *qing* in response to nature? (*Xunzi*, “Shen cha ming hao”)

Xing is the *yang qi* (阳气) of people, and it is good. *Qing* is the *yin qi* (阴气) of people, and it possesses desires. (*Shuowen*, “Xin bu” 心部)

Qing is the category of the emotions (*xi*, *nu*, *ai*, *wu*); *qing* as such is human desire. (*Da dai li*, “Zizhang wen ru guan,” note on “达诸民之情” [understand the *qing* of the people])

Xing is *ren*, *yi*, ritual propriety, wisdom, et cetera; *xing* as such is the material of life, (*ibid.*, note on “*bu ke bu zhi min zhi xing*” 不可本知民之性 [one must understand human *xing*])

Qing arises from *yin* and in accord with momentary desires; *xing* arises from *yang* in accord with the patternings (*li* 理). *Yang qi* is *ren*, and *yin qi* is avarice, which is why *qing* is marked by base profit and desire, while *xing* is marked by *ren*. (*Bai Hu Tong yi*, “*Xing qing*,” citing *Gou Ming Jue*)

Xing arises from *yang*; *qing* arises from *yin*. (*Lun heng*, “Bing chu”)

This “*xing* is good, *qing* is bad” line of thinking was very popular during the Han Dynasty but differed considerably from the “*xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active” theory of the pre-Qin Ruists. “*Qing* is active” ascribes no valuation to either *qing* or its activity. It can be good or not, depending on whether it accords with patterning (or ritual propriety). Therefore, it does no harm to the view that a sage has *qing*—Confucius was

¹⁹ Cheng Xuanying noted: “Living one’s *xing* and destiny to the fullest while giving priority to the transformations of *qing* amounts to an unprecedented freedom and happiness through giving oneself over to nature.”

²⁰ Dong Zhongshu also had a theory called the “Three Grades of *Xing*,” which differed from this. See the chapters “*Shen cha ming hao*” and “*Shi xing*” of the *Chunqiu fanlu*.

a sage, and he had *qing*. However, into the Wei-Jin Period, a debate arose about whether or not a sage had *qing*.²¹ In the *Wang Bi zhuan*, He Shao says:

He Yan believed that sages do not have emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*), and he discussed it with great precision. His view was followed by Zhong Hui and others. Wang Bi disagreed with them, believing that sages who surpassed others had extraordinary acuity (*shen ming* 神明), and sages who were on the same level as others had the five *qing*. Those of surpassingly extraordinary acuity could merge with harmony in penetrating nothingness; those on the level of the five *qing* couldn't help but respond to things with emotions (*ai, le*). This being the case, the *qing* of the sage responds to things but does not get caught up in them. Those who now take not getting caught up in things and call it not responding to things are very wide of the mark. (*San Guo zhi*, “wei zhi,” *juan* 28; cited in an annotation to the *Zhong hui zhuan*)

He Yan believed that sages were purely in accord with the natural order (*tian dao*) and did not have *qing*. For him, normal people had *qing*, and in their emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*), they might disobey the patterning in giving free rein to them. Wang Bi, however, believed that sages were the same as others in having the “five *qing*.” The sage differs from others not in whether he has emotions (*qinggan*) but in the fact that sages “are in full possession of their wits” and are “naturally self-sufficient” (this is the surpassingly extraordinary acuity). Thus:

Confucius always understood Yan Hui's difficult situation, but on meeting him, he couldn't help but be happy; and when Yan Hui died, Confucius couldn't help but grieve. There are often narrow people [i.e., Xun Rong] who think that in this way Confucius could not keep his *qing* in step with the patterning, but now we understand that nature cannot be rebelled against. (*Wang Bi zhuan*)

None of the natural emotions (*ganqing*) can be eliminated. This is to say that sages have *qing* but also that they can “keep their *qing* in step with the patterning.” It is apparent that He Yan was influenced by the Han Dynasty view of “*xing* is good, *qing* is bad,” in addition to inheriting the Lao-Zhuang position of no desires (but differing from Zhuangzi in not separating *qing* from desires). Wang Bi, on the other hand, assimilated the “*xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active” position of the pre-Qin Ruist *Zhongyong* and other texts. As stated above, Zhuangzi did not favor emotionlessness, but rather desirelessness, and therefore he could not help but distinguish *qing* from desire.

I think that *qing* and desire must differ in some way. According to the view of the pre-Qin Ruists, although *qing* and desire are both generated from activity resulting from the *xing*'s perception (*gan*) of things, and then the emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*) are manifested externally, “*qing*” does not include any sense of possession, while “desire” does have a sense of possession, or acquisition.²² Therefore, we can say

²¹ It may be that the theory of sages being free of *qing* had its origins in Laozi's passage, “The *dao* of *tian* has no favorites (*wu qin* 无亲)” (79).

²² “Now the people are disheartened, yet the sovereign indulges his desires” (*Zuozhuan*, “Duke Heng year 6”). “Desires” in this passages is none other than *qingyu* and has the sense of possession or acquisition. Zhu Xi says: “Sensual contact is called *qing*, . . . [W]hat is pursued is called *desire*” (*Zhuzi yulei*, *juan* 5).

that emotion (*qinggan*) and desire (*qingyu*) are different. Emotions are naturally manifested demands of *xing*, while desire always arises out of what “selfish motives” (*si xin* 私心) pursue, with the object of acquiring it. Although emotion and desire are different, this does not mean that desire should be dispensed with. In the pre-Qin classics, there is no clear distinction made between *qing* (emotion [*qinggan*]) and desire. But whether *qing* or desire could itself be said to be good or bad depends on whether or not they are in accord with the patterning (or ritual propriety). The Han Ruist position of “*xing* is good, *qing* is bad” had a tremendous influence on Ruists of all later periods, such as Li Ao of the Tang, whose *Fu Xing shu* reads: “That one becomes a sage is due to *xing*; that one throws one’s *xing* into confusion is due to *qing*.” In the Song Dynasty, “differentiating patterning from desire” and “preserving natural patterning while destroying human desire” were promulgated. But this “human desire” referred to selfish desire and differed from human *qing* (emotion [*qinggan*]).

Qing is something that flows forth from *xing*. It is not the case that *qing* is innately not good, so how is it that it ends up as not good? It has to do with things (*wu* 物). Due to the influence of things, the *qing* that flows forth from human *xing* turns “not good” if it does not pursue or possess patterning (or propriety). This kind of pursuit or possession that does not conform to patterning (or propriety) becomes selfish desire, which then has a damaging effect on society. Zhu Xi says: “Just as *xing* stands like the quiescence of water and *qing* proceeds like the movement of water, so desire is like the flowing of water that turns into a flood.”²³ Thus, it is apparent that Zhu Xi still continues the “*xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active” theory but clarifies the distinctions between *qing* and desire, thereby returning to the “activation” and “preactivation” locution of the *Zhongyong*. If we take as our basis the *Xing zi ming chu*’s “*dao* begins in *qing*, and *qing* arises from *xing*” and “*xing* issues from *ming*, and *ming* descends from *tian*,” we see that the pre-Qin Ruist position of “*xing* is quiescent, *qing* is active” is without a doubt of more profound theoretical value than “*xing* is good, *qing* is bad.” And we can say that “*dao* begins in *qing*” brings to light the basis for the rise of pre-Qin Ruist moral theory.

²³ Ibid.

Chapter 5

Some Reflections on New Confucianism in Chinese Mainland Culture of the 1990s

My comments on New Confucianism in this essay will be focused on two broad issues: the rise of New Confucianism in Chinese mainland during the 1990s and the questions that New Confucianism addresses in this context.¹ The rise of New Confucianism in contemporary Chinese mainland has attracted much attention internationally, in particular among scholars in the Chinese-speaking world. It is therefore important to give shape to this development by defining its salient features. To my mind, the founding of the International Confucianism Association (Ruxue Lian-hehui, ICA) in October 1994 in Beijing is a very significant moment in the rise of New Confucianism. To date, the ICA has had little influence on its immediate social environment, but the very fact of its existence, considered in the context of the issues I will be discussing below, would tend to suggest that Confucianism might one day play an important ideological role in several Asian countries. But why should Confucianism assume such importance in these countries? It is worthwhile to note the following points. First, the inaugural conference to mark the founding of this Confucian federation in Beijing was attended by representatives from practically every country in the East and Southeast Asian region. Previously, this kind of conference on Confucianism would attract representatives from mainly China, Japan, and South Korea. When I say China, I include Taiwan and Hong Kong because they are important parts of the Chinese-speaking world. But at this 1994 conference, in addition to participants from these countries, there were also academics from Vietnam, Singapore, and even the Philippines.

Translated by Gloria Davies

Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry, 2001: 123–134

¹[Translator's note] *Xin ruxue* has been translated as "New Confucianism," not as "Neo-Confucianism," in order to mark the term as referring specifically to modern twentieth-century interpretations of Confucianism and to avoid confusion with the various historical forms of Neo-Confucianism dating from the Song Dynasty. For this reason, all references to twentieth-century *xin ruxue* in this book have been translated as "New Confucianism."

Participation from across the Asian region greatly broadened the cultural scope of this conference and clearly exceeded the scope of the previous ones. Second, scholars such as Zhang Dainian who took part in this conference and those who participate in the activities of the ICA are among the foremost scholars of Confucianism in the world today.² There were also several young scholars in attendance. The conference was graced by the presence of distinguished scholars such as Kenji Shimada from Japan and a notable number of prominent scholars based in the United States such as Theodore de Bary, Tu Weiming, and Cheng Zhongying. There were also several Taiwanese and Russian scholars there. By contrast, there were very few scholars from the European countries.

The obvious disparity at this conference between a minority of European scholars and the majority of predominantly Asian scholars from various countries is noteworthy and constitutes a salient feature of contemporary New Confucianism. Another feature is the importance attached to this conference by the Chinese government. This is crucial for understanding the rise of New Confucianism in Chinese mainland. At the conference, both Deputy Premier Li Lanqing and the chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Li Ruihuan, delivered speeches. When the proceedings were over, President Jiang Zemin met with a number of prominent scholars who were participants at the conference. From these facts, it is evident that the Chinese government set considerable store by the conference. The topics discussed there were also diverse, including, among other things, the history of Confucianism, the renaissance of Confucian studies, the influence of Confucianism on global culture, and the relation between Confucianism and modern industry.³ At one point during the conference, I said to my friend Sun Changjiang, "At present, Confucianism in Chinese mainland is like speculating in shares. The slightest move will send its stock soaring."

The major week-long Commemoration Conference for the 2,550th birthday of Confucius, which began in Beijing and ended in Qufu on 12 October 1999, provides more recent evidence of the growing importance of Confucianism in the public culture of Chinese mainland as well as the East Asian region. Jointly sponsored by the ICA, China's Confucius Foundation, and UNESCO, the conference drew together academics and business and political figures. According to Kim Yersu, who represented UNESCO at the conference, "Today the whole world is taking a second look at Confucianism as the source of inspiration for the ideas and values needed to deal with the problems facing humanity as it looks forward to the new millennium."⁴

² [Translator's note] Zhang Dainian, a professor of philosophy at Peking University, is an international authority on Chinese cultural and philosophical issues. Tang and Zhang were both founders of the Academy of Chinese Culture, a leading *minjian* (nonofficial) enterprise in the Culture Fever of the 1980s. See Chen Fong-ching's chapter in this book.

³ [Translator's note] The conference proceedings were edited by a committee of the International Confucianism Association and published by Beijing renmin chubanshe in 1995 under the title *International Studies of Confucianism* (*Guoji ruxue yanjiu*).

⁴ [Translator's note] See the report of the conference in *China Daily*, 20 October 1999.

The rise of New Confucianism in contemporary Chinese mainland is also the outcome of critical reflection on the “Culture Fever” of the 1980s. In the more sober climate of the 1990s, several Chinese mainland scholars came to regard the Culture Fever as “radical, overly hasty, irresponsible, Westernized,” and so forth. The legacy of the May Fourth Movement, often invoked during the 1980s, was also placed under critical scrutiny. Some scholars have now come to regard the Culture Fever of the 1980s as having inherited the so-called radical tradition of the May Fourth Movement. They adopt a negative attitude toward the kind of knowledge associated with the May Fourth Movement, thus challenging the once unquestioned authority of the May Fourth Movement as the inaugural moment of modern Chinese thought.

It is important to remember that although cultural conservatism has flourished in Chinese mainland since the 1990s, scholarly inquiry into the viability of cultural conservatism had already begun during the 1980s. In order to explore what is at issue in cultural conservatism, one needs to distinguish between those who adopt a culturally conservative stance and those who study traditional Chinese culture but are not culturally conservative in their views. This is an extremely complex task. Some eminent scholars such as Luo Yijun and Chen Lai openly acknowledge that they are culturally conservative.⁵ However, to claim a position of cultural conservatism does not mean that one is automatically aligned to neoconservatism in contemporary Chinese politics. There is a distinct difference between cultural and political conservatism. Naturally, there are also those who see a direct relation between their own cultural conservatism and political neoconservatism. It should also be noted in this context that scholars like Jiang Qing who seem to be radically conservative in their cultural attitude are not likely to see too much of a connection between their own stance and political neoconservatism in the People’s Republic of the 1990s. Then there are those who are engaged in research on cultural conservatism but do not themselves adopt a conservative approach to the subject of their research.

One may ask why there is now a demand for research into issues of cultural conservatism. To my mind, the main reason is the emergence of critical attitudes toward the new “traditional” concepts that have emerged over the last few decades in Chinese mainland.⁶ Because these new “traditional” concepts have led to the view that radicalism is the only effective approach to cultural development, contemporary research on cultural conservatism represents a critical response toward this view. To my mind, this response is not at all surprising at this present stage, nor is it surprising that some have taken to calling themselves cultural conservatives.

⁵ [Translator’s note] See also Liu Qingfeng’s description of Luo Yijun as someone who “obviously worshiped Mou Zongsan” and who “became very angry whenever anything was said that did not accord with Mou Zongsan’s view” in her chapter in this book.

⁶ [Translator’s note] This is referring to the “tradition” of Mao Zedong Thought and party orthodoxy since the 1940s.

Let us take Chen Lai, for instance.⁷ He has reflected at length on formulations of the past such as “Chinese (ethical) knowledge as the foundation, Western knowledge (and technology) for practical application” (*Zhong xue wei ti Xi xue wei yong*); its reverse, “Western knowledge (and technology) as the foundation, Chinese (ethical) knowledge for practical application” (*Xi xue wei ti Zhong xue wei yong*); or yet another alternative, “Chinese and Western knowledges both as foundation and for practical application” (*Zhong Xi hu wei ti yong*). Chen observes that notions such as “foundation” and “practical application” are inappropriate when applied to Eastern and Western cultures. He proposes instead a different formulation: “Humanity as the foundation and synthesis (of Chinese ethical knowledge and Western knowledge and technology) for practical application” (*Renyi wei ti, zonghe wei yong*). Chen argues that what our age requires is the spirit of synthetic culture (*zonghe wenhua de jingshen*). In this formulation, the cultural conservatism of his intellectual orientation is evident.

The call for “academic standardization” constitutes yet another aspect of cultural conservatism in contemporary Chinese mainland, and it has come from two different sources. The first is the journal *Xueren* (*Scholars*—now defunct), which came into existence in 1992. In the “Commentary” section of its first issue, the question of academic standardization was explicitly raised but along quite traditional lines. *Zhongguo shehui kexuejikan* (*The Journal of Social Sciences*), edited by Deng Zhenglai, also raised the question of academic standards. Broadly speaking, this journal advocates the adoption of Western sociological standards in Chinese academic work. The journal later took up the issue of standardization versus indigenization. To my mind, raising the question of standardization has had a positive effect on the progress of scholarship in China. At the same time, we must not forget that there is clearly room for discussing what standardization really means. Given that those who have raised this question of academic standardization are implicitly criticizing what they view as the rashness and superficiality of the Culture Fever of the 1980s, standardization, if simply accepted in these terms, brings with it certain problems. Such a view of standardization would tend to be defined predominantly in terms of negating the Culture Fever of the 1980s. It has been said that the Culture Fever of the 1980s produced ideas but lacked scholarship, while the craze for national studies in the 1990s has produced scholarship but is lacking in ideas. Evidently, comments of this kind are groundless, but nonetheless they give us some idea of what people are thinking.

One other outcome of the critical reevaluation of the Culture Fever of the 1980s is the emergence or resurgence of a keen interest in historical studies of the late Qing period among contemporary Chinese mainland scholars. This new trend is bound up with ideas of reformism (as opposed to revolution) and positive reevaluations of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the nineteenth century.

⁷ [Translator’s note] Professor Chen Lai teaches Chinese philosophy at Peking University and is a specialist in the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. He has also published on the popular reception of Confucianism and on Confucian ethics in relation to Chinese modernization.

Thus, two different editions of the *Collected Works of Zeng Guofan* have been published in Chinese mainland, together with a collection of his personal correspondence and several biographies about him. We have also seen the publication of biographies of Li Hongzhang and Zuo Zongtang and other such case studies of influential individuals and events of the late Qing. This surge of interest in studies of the late Qing is part of a growing intellectual trend that views revolution as being inferior to reform. It is based on the belief that China would have been better off had it continued along the path of reform (*gailiangzhuyi*) and Western-style “self-strengthening” (*Yangwu yundong*).

Naturally, essays like the ones that appear in Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu’s controversial book *Farewell to the Revolution* (*Gaobie geming*) have elicited two kinds of responses in Chinese mainland, of which the views of Sun Changjiang and Fang Keli can be taken as representative. Sun Changjiang is strongly opposed to the kind of view put forward by Li Zehou in *Farewell to the Revolution* and accuses Li of lacking any sense of social responsibility and historical mission by regressing to such a standpoint. Fang Keli, on the other hand, has analyzed Li Zhou’s essays as being a case of not merely “bidding farewell to the revolution” but opposing revolution altogether. Thus, when Sun Changjiang told me that he wanted to publish his criticism of Li Zehou, I told him that Fang Keli had already criticized him in print and that he should wait for a while or Li Zehou would be under siege from all sides. For this reason, he delayed publishing his criticism of Li Zehou.⁸

One important cultural and ideological context for the rise of New Confucianism is the deepening challenge posed to Marxism in Chinese mainland. For instance, a certain member of the Chinese leadership raised the issue of “national studies” (*guoxue*) at a speech given at a university in Beijing. When members of the audience then asked him whether explicit reference to national studies might not be seen to constitute a blatant promotion of Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture, they were implicitly asking this leader to clarify whether it was necessary to dress national studies in Marxist garb. This leader made it quite clear that national studies could be advocated without resort to such political packaging. On another occasion, when this member of the Chinese leadership was conversing with a foreign political scientist, the foreign political scientist asked him whether China would invade other countries once it had become strong. The Chinese leader replied that China would not “because we have Confucianism.” At the inaugural meeting of the ICA, another political leader, Li Ruihuan, quoted from Mencius in at least five or six places in his speech and was roundly applauded by the audience each time.

The work of compiling and editing textbook materials for ethical and moral education proceeded apace in the 1990s, and it is not surprising that most of these materials are based on Confucianism. What needs to be noted is that this kind of

⁸ [Translator’s note] Sun Changjiang eventually published the review in 1996 under the name Chang Jiang, “Zhehui zhuanxing qi de yizhong wenhua xianxiang: Ping *Gao bie geming*” (“A Curious Cultural Phenomenon during Social Transition: A Critique of *Farewell to the Revolution*,” *Ershiyi shiji* (*Twenty-first Century*), no. 33 (February 1996): 68–71.

work has the full support of the government. Since the appearance of the highly significant full-page article “The Quiet Rise of National Studies at Old Peking University” (“Guoxue zai yanyuan qiaoran xingqi”) in the 16 August 1993 issue of *Renmin rihao* (*The People’s Daily*), Confucianism has gained ever increasing official support. In 1993, *The People’s Daily* was commended for publishing this article, which was said to have been circulated to all members of the party leadership. In 1999, particularly at the time of the Commemoration Conference for the 2,550th birthday of Confucius, party leaders publicly emphasized the importance of turning to Confucianism for solutions to contemporary social problems.⁹

The journal *Zhexue yanjiu* (*Philosophical Studies*) published several articles in its June 1994 issue that criticized the rise of national studies and expressed alarm at the deviation it represented from the new socialist culture of post-Mao China. Hu Sheng, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), published an article in *Liaowang* (*Outlook*), a journal widely read in official circles, in the same year endorsing these published critiques of national studies. The appearance of this concerted attack on national studies led the journal *Kong xue yanjiu* (*Confucian Studies*) to hold a conference in early 1995 that, in turn, criticized *Philosophical Studies* and Hu Sheng, singling out the detractors of national studies by name. This was something quite unprecedented, for Hu Sheng was someone whom most would not have dared to openly criticize. The organizers of the conference took the further step of publishing a summary of the conference in the first issue of *Confucian Studies* for 1995. The third issue of this journal in the same year carried an article by Liu Hongzhang entitled “Some Thoughts on the Relation between Marxism and Confucianists” (“Guanyu Makesizhuyi yu rujia guanxi de sikao”) that further affirmed these criticisms of the president of the CASS. In these various examples, it is evident that the ideological authority of Marxism was being actively challenged in society and, in particular, within the precincts of the university.

Another important context for the rise of New Confucianism is the support that Confucian studies have received from the commercial sphere in contemporary Chinese mainland. In the 1990s, a considerable number of conferences and publications and even some scholarships and grants for research on traditional Chinese culture received financial support from business enterprises. For instance, I attended a symposium in 1995 on Confucianism and modern business jointly organized by the Shenzhen-based Chao Shun Group and the Oriental Cultures Research Association (Dongfang wenhua yanjiu hui). In October of the same year, another symposium called “China’s Buddhist Culture and Modern Society” received funding from the entrepreneur Mei Zi.¹⁰ Several conferences on Chinese or Confucian studies sponsored by business enterprises have been held in different

⁹ [Translator’s note] See also the short critical review by Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “Hi-tech Confucian Future,” *FreeRepublic.com*, www.freerepublic.com/forum/a38058d9d3d3c.htm, 14 October 1999.

¹⁰ Mei Zi is a female entrepreneur based in Beijing who owns real estate in the Beijing suburb of North Putuo used mainly for film and television production.

cities across China. The journal *Zhongguo wenhua* (*Chinese Culture*), edited by Liu Mengxi, receives an annual donation of some 200,000 yuan from another entrepreneur, Xie Yongjian. Similarly, *Yuan dao* (*Original Path*), edited by some of the younger scholars at Peking University, receives funding from a business enterprise in Hainan. The chief executive officer of the Chao Shun Group, Wu Xiegang, has also provided scholarship funds for the establishment of the Society for Moral Cultivation (Xiusheng xuehui) at Peking University. There are many such examples demonstrating that research on Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture has received substantial financial support from the Chinese business sector. Besides these more conspicuous examples, large numbers of business people show an avid interest in Confucian studies, and some, such as the aforementioned Chao Shun Group, even invoke Confucian values by stating that the company's philosophy is "Harmony as the supreme value" (*he wei gui*). To gain perspective on the trend for national studies and the emergence of what has been called cultural conservatism in Chinese mainland of the 1990s, one needs to reflect on the important role played by the commercial sector in fueling this trend.

My own view on the trend toward national studies is that it is likely to have at least three important and culturally complex outcomes. It may serve the interests of the government and become the basis for opposing Westernization. It may be hailed, in the name of patriotism, as the return to nationalism through the celebration of Chinese cultural quintessence. This is not only a likely scenario but also an unfortunate reality to some extent, for several instances of such sentiment have been publicly and even violently expressed over the last few years. Most people know that the emphasis on patriotism and national pride in contemporary Chinese mainland is closely linked to, and a development out of, the "opposition to bourgeois liberalization" within the national ideology. As early as 1993, I expressed my concern over the likely negative social effects of national studies deployed for ideological and political purposes. Today, such effects are evident in Chinese mainland society. In this regard, the undermining of Marxism as the ideological foundation of the People's Republic of China, to which I refer earlier, requires careful analysis. More positively, the turn toward cultural conservatism is likely to produce substantial research in traditional Chinese studies. For some decades, in the periods before and during the Cultural Revolution, a negative attitude to traditional Chinese culture prevailed. In statistics produced at a 1984 symposium in Shanghai organized by the Shanghai People's Press, it became clear that there was a notable discrepancy in the numbers of publications on Chinese culture between two thirty-year periods, 1919–1949 and 1949–1979.¹¹ Between 1919 and 1949, there were more than 200 types of publications dealing specifically with Chinese culture. In the period from 1949 to 1979, there was only one kind of publication dealing specifically with Chinese culture, not including philosophy textbooks. At this symposium, it was decided that the gap should be addressed by the publication of a series

¹¹ This was a symposium dealing with issues emerging from the editing of the History of Chinese Culture Series.

on the history of Chinese culture that would comprise 100 books. The relatively long period of stagnation that research on traditional Chinese culture underwent from 1949 to 1979, and perhaps even some years beyond that, has clearly affected its development.

Thus, the question is whether the contemporary trend toward national studies can produce substantial research on traditional Chinese culture and exercise a decisive influence, irrespective of whether one regards this influence as positive or negative. For instance, a number of scholars have begun to conduct meticulous research on specific aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Everyone is aware of the tremendous interest that *The Book of Changes (Yi Jing)* has attracted in Chinese mainland in recent years. There are, however, few people who actually know a great deal about *The Book of Changes*. *The Book of Changes* developed out of the practice of divination by tortoiseshell and straws (*bu shi*). The practice of divination led to the study of diagrams and the positions of strokes within diagrams (*xiang shu*), which later became constitutive of the principles of *The Book of Changes*. Nowadays, most people who make use of, write about, or read *The Book of Changes* are familiar only with the principles of this classic. They are ignorant of the ancient practice of divination and the study of diagrams and stroke positions that preceded these principles. Thus, they are unable to produce any rigorous interpretation of *The Book of Changes*. In order to engage with this text in a significant way, one would need to examine the specific contexts of its emergence and dissemination. A somewhat different example would be the Mawangdui silk scrolls that have now been almost entirely reproduced in print. In the past, studies of the Mawangdui silk scrolls were based mainly on existing commentaries. Now that the original Mawangdui texts have been published and made widely available, Mawangdui research based on secondary sources alone is no longer regarded as valid. This is one instance in which a decisive shift toward substantial research on traditional Chinese culture has taken place.

In referring to substantial research on traditional Chinese culture, I mean both the study of specific aspects of Chinese culture and the study of traditional Chinese culture as a whole, as several scholars have already posed the question of how traditional Chinese culture should be approached as a totality. Among these scholars is the late Professor Feng Qi, who is the author of *The Quest for Wisdom (Zhihui de tansuo)* and *Three Essays on Wisdom (Zhihui san lun)*.¹² Professor Feng was a Marxist who happened to have studied under two eminent modern philosophers, Jin Yuelin and Feng Youlan, in his youth at the West China Union University (Xinan lianda) during the War of Resistance against Japan. Thus, he had considerable expertise in logical analysis. In the last years of his life, he set himself the task of applying the Western method of logical analysis to traditional Chinese culture in

¹² [Translator's note] Feng Qi (1915–1995) became the foundational professor of philosophy when the Department of Philosophy was established at East China Normal University, Shanghai, in 1986. The ten-volume *Collected Works of Feng Qi (Feng Qi wenji)* was published by Huadong shifandaxue chubanshe in 1996.

order to produce a new understanding of Chinese culture. Unfortunately, this highly significant project could not be completed because Feng passed away in 1995. When he turned eighty in 1994, I wrote to him, mentioning that I had read the doctoral dissertation he wrote on “wisdom” when he was at the West China Union University. I asked him whether he had considered resuming and further developing the path he had mapped in his doctoral dissertation, one that his former teacher Jin Yuelin had laid down. At that time, I had not had the chance to read his then forthcoming publication *Three Essays on Wisdom*. After reading it, I discovered that he had done precisely that. The point of this anecdote is to illustrate the importance of the approach that one adopts in relation to studies of Chinese culture. In order to produce meaningful substantial studies of traditional Chinese culture, one needs to be mindful of the global context in which we now conduct our research. In other words, we must locate our research on traditional Chinese culture within the general trend toward the development of global culture in our time. If we were to depart from this trend, the consequences could be extremely dangerous, for national studies might easily be manipulated to serve the interests of cultural chauvinism and nationalism, resulting in the politicization of academic research.

We need to also consider the nature of the relationship between the old Chinese tradition of several thousand years and the “new tradition” of the last few decades. Evidently, the nature of this relationship is highly complex. One can see this in the work of Jin Guantao. In this regard, the extreme leftism of Marxist dogmatism that prevailed in China for several decades in this century needs to be considered as well. Is there a significant difference between the principles informing this form of dogmatism and Confucianism? To my mind, there is a significant difference between the two. This difference can be explored through a number of central issues. The first is that of struggle (*douzheng*) versus harmony (*hexie*). One of the first attempts to address this issue was undertaken by scholars like Chen Fong-ching and Liu Shu-hsien at a symposium in Hong Kong in 1985, which I attended. At that time, the problem was defined in terms of the difference between Confucianism and the kind of Marxism that was based on class struggle as its guiding principle. Thus, there was no question that the difference between the two was immense. Feng Youlan had also discussed this issue in his seven-volume *A New History of Chinese Philosophy* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi xin bian*). The seventh volume of this collection deals with this issue and for this reason could not be published in Chinese mainland. It was eventually published in Taiwan.¹³ Feng addresses the gulf between Confucianism and Marxism in the form of Mao Zedong Thought, arguing that the latter was a philosophy of struggle based on the idea that “enmity must remain enmity to the end” (*chou bi chou daodi*). This

¹³ [Translator’s note] See Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhexue shi xin bian*, 7 vols. (Taipei, Taiwan: Lan Deng wenhua shiye gufen gongsi, 1991). Editions of the same work published in Chinese mainland contain only six volumes.

means that the struggle must continue until one's enemy is vanquished. Confucianism, however, is entirely different from this, for it proposes that "enmity must be harmonized and thereby dispelled" (*chou bi he er jie*). Although "through opposing positions, enmity arises" (*you dui si you chou*), at the end of struggle, the need for conciliation will also certainly emerge. This notion first appeared in the *Correct Discipline for Beginners (Zheng Meng)* by Zhang Zai (1020–1077) and was later elaborated by Wang Fuzhi (1619–1693) in his *Commentary on the Correct Discipline for Beginners (Zheng Meng zhu)*.

Another significant difference between Marxism and Confucianism is that Marxism is primarily a form of scientism. It is a mode of thinking grounded in the principles of science, whereas Confucianism is a humanistic mode of thinking. Confucianism does not proceed along the path of science nor does it subscribe to principles of science. As a mode of thinking, Confucianism is not based on demonstrable proof or evidence (*lunzheng*). Rather, it relies on intuition (*zhijue*). A third difference between Confucianism and Marxism can be defined in terms of the debate between Liang Shuming and Mao Zedong. Liang Shuming was opposed to the Marxist concepts of class struggle and the class nature of social existence. He subscribed instead to the idea of universal humanity. This was what Liang Shuming told me in 1938 or 1939. When he read Mao Zedong's *The Protracted War (Lun chijiu zhan)*, he was most impressed and felt that what Mao had written of the "protracted war" was very convincing. Thus, Liang went to Yan'an to meet with Mao. On the first day that he met with Mao, things went very well because the discussion was confined primarily to Mao's book on protracted war. By the second day, however, when the discussion shifted to class struggle, the two men quarreled right through the night. The debate turned on questions about whether there was such a thing as universal humanity and what was meant precisely by "class struggle." That the difference between Confucianism and Marxism is significant can be gleaned from the incommensurability of these two questions.

Thus, while the new tradition of the last few decades and the old tradition of several thousand years are complexly related to one another, one should note that the new "tradition" that we have been advocating for the last few decades differs significantly in content from the old tradition. From this an important question arises: Can Confucianism be steered toward radicalism, to the extent that it becomes a form of leftist extremism? This is a question worthy of further reflection, for if it can be demonstrated that Confucianism can become extreme and usher in an ideological trend of leftist extremism or radicalism, then the argument I have put forward in the preceding becomes problematic. In this context, I think it is necessary to distinguish between different tendencies within Confucianism itself. One should distinguish between those aspects of Confucianism that are compatible with the new "tradition" of the last few decades and those that are not.

Two individuals can be named to illustrate this distinction. The first is Tu Weiming, especially in relation to his more recent ideas. At a conference that we both attended in Hangzhou in November 1994, Tu Weiming was, to my surprise, critical of certain fundamental features of traditional Chinese culture such as the complementary relation between "the three bonds" (*san gang*) and "the five

constant virtues” (*wu chang*).¹⁴ He observed that “the three bonds” were no longer acceptable, called for their repudiation, and proposed that “the three bonds” be regarded separately from “the five constant virtues.” This came as a total surprise to me because he would not have made this sort of distinction in the past. When he raised this issue, another scholar at the same conference, Wang Yuanhua, immediately responded by saying, “How do you propose to distinguish between them? It is impossible to separate the two as they are bound together in their historical development.” Naturally, Tu Weiming then proceeded to defend his argument, but, as his explanation is not relevant to the point I am making here, I shall not elaborate on it.

What this exchange between Tu and Wang makes clear is that there is a crucial difference in their views on Confucianism. It is also clear that Tu Weiming has shifted from his previous position on Confucianism. When I later reflected on what this crucial difference might be, it occurred to me that Tu Weiming has had to adapt New Confucianism to the demands of contemporary global cultural discourse, especially within the modern Western cultural context where “the three bonds” might not be readily acceptable.¹⁵ If he did not do this, then his advocacy of New Confucianism might meet with a good deal of resistance. Thus, I am of the opinion that the separation Tu Weiming has sought to effect between “the three bonds” and “the five constant virtues” is largely the practical outcome of advocating New Confucianism from a particular vantage point—and not the result of attempting to resolve a philosophical conundrum. Wang Yuanhua, on the other hand, bases his argument on historical fact. As the “three bonds” and “the five constant virtues” have developed together in history, one cannot easily distinguish between them or treat them separately without distorting their conceptual and historical significance. But what is interesting to note is that Wang Yuanhua has also changed his view quite considerably. Most people are aware that before June Fourth, Wang was an advocate of “the New Enlightenment” (*Xin Qimeng*). What is more, in the years before the Cultural Revolution, he was recognized as someone who firmly upheld the value of the May Fourth Movement. But in the 1990s, he has turned his research interests to Du Yaquan and has moreover written about Du in highly positive terms.

¹⁴ [Translator’s note] The three bonds refer to the three axiomatic human relationships named by Confucius: between ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife. In general, the three bonds are regarded as the basis for defining different modes of proper or ethical conduct in social life, depending on the social position one occupies. The five constant virtues are regarded as innate properties of the cosmic order that manifest in human form as love (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and good faith (*xin*). The common phrase *san gang wu chang* indicates how well entrenched the idea of mutual interdependence between these concepts is in the Chinese language.

¹⁵ [Translator’s note] This is referring to the emphasis Tu Weiming places on the relevance of Confucianism for contemporary Western (or even more specifically North American) cultural enrichment in the context of Tu’s institutional prominence as director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

In 1993, there was even a conference on Du Yaquan held in Zhejiang.¹⁶ The changes in Tu Weiming's and Wang Yuanhua's views allow us to consider a new question and that is whether antitraditionalist and traditionalist positions of a former era might not converge or become collaborative rather than opposed to one another in the present-day context. This question will in turn require us to reconsider the needs of contemporary Chinese scholarship in new ways.

What we must also remember is that the government is interested in advocating *traditional* Confucianism as the ethical and cultural core of Chinese society. It is not interested in scholarly or critical inquiries of the kind that are currently being pursued in the name of modern New Confucianism. As I noted earlier, one of the main reasons for this new turn to Confucianism has to do with the decline of Marxism as state ideology. Indeed, one could say that, since the end of the Cultural Revolution, most Chinese mainland have lost their faith in Marxism. Yet the government needs a strong and dynamic ideology to serve as its *raison d'être* in order to achieve its contemporary goal of a united China that includes not only Hong Kong and Macau but Taiwan as well. In this regard, traditional Confucianism provides the Chinese mainland government with a wholly valid historical basis for claiming cultural unity between Chinese mainland and Taiwan. For this reason, we will need to pay attention to popular response to this ideological shift in Chinese mainland. In this context, the claim that Confucianism provides the basis for "the Asian mode" of economic success commonly heard within the Chinese mainland business sector, not to mention similar claims by governments and business sectors in other Asian countries, must be treated with great caution.

¹⁶ [Translator's note] Du Yaquan (1873–1933), a self-taught writer of popular science and translator, was an important intellectual figure during the May Fourth era. He founded and edited the original *Dongfang zazhi* (*The Orient Magazine*) and compiled several of China's first modern dictionaries of science. According to Xu Jilin, Wang Yuanhua's interest in Du Yaquan began when Xu invited Wang to write the foreword for an anthology of Du Yaquan's selected essays that was about to be published. Wang found Du Yaquan's ideas extremely engaging and ended up writing a foreword of more than ten thousand characters for the anthology. Xu Jilin describes Du Yaquan as "a cultural conservative and a Confucian liberal at that" and suggests that this was the reason for his relative anonymity in studies of modern Chinese intellectual history in Chinese mainland until quite recently. See Xu Jilin's interesting anecdotal and critical account, "Du Yaquan yu duoyuan de Wu Si qimeng," in *Xin yusi dianzi wenku*. www.xys.org/xys/ebooks/literature/essays/Duyaquan.txt, 5 January 2000.

Chapter 6

The Problem of Harmonious Communities in Ancient China

In my essay “On the Problem of Truth, Goodness and Beauty in Chinese Philosophy,” I suggested that the conceptions of truth, goodness, and beauty rest on three propositions: the unity of Heaven and man, the unity of knowledge and action, and the unity of sentiment and scenery. Among these, the unity of Heaven and man is the most fundamental, and it is from this that the other two unities are derived. The unity of knowledge and action requires that people realize both the “heavenly way” and the “human way” and practice them in daily life, while the unity of sentiment and scenery requires that people express Heaven’s work in their thoughts and feelings.

Why did the ancient Chinese philosophers pursue these three unities? In my opinion, Chinese philosophy does not engage in investigating the external world, but is concerned rather with pursuing internal human values. In other words, traditional Chinese philosophy teaches people how to be human by making demands upon themselves, i.e., to cherish an ideal form of human life. Sagehood is defined by the attainment of the three unities. Beginning with Confucius, Chinese philosophers have always aspired to the creation of harmonious societies and have attempted to bring them into being. Even when unsure of the outcome of their efforts, they still consider the endeavor to be obligatory. Thus, it was said of Confucius that he “knew the impossibility [of the task] and yet con-tinued to do it.” The ideal societies they sought are characterized by harmony, for example, the Confucian description of a society of “Great Harmony” in the *Li Yun* chapter of the *Book of Rites*, and the “small country with a small population” in Chapter 80 of the Daoist classic *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*. Such communities exhibit a concordance between man and Heaven, a unity of knowledge and action, and an intermingling of sentiment and scenery.

Translated by Yuk Wong

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 55–57

But these ideals may not be realized in the actual world. Whether we should pursue the ideal of harmony is a matter of attitude. Ancient Chinese philosophers believed that some of their ideals might only be realized in their minds. Why was Zhang Zai's "West inscriptions" so highly esteemed by later thinkers? I think it is because the essay reveals the spirit of an ideal harmonious society. The essay begins "People are my compatriots; things, my fellow-beings" and ends "Living is following my nature; death, my tranquility." When alive, one must fulfill the responsibility of realizing the ideal of "Great Harmony." Thus, one can enjoy serenity without feeling shame to the end of one's life.

This search for an ideal harmonious society differs from Western humanism, though it can be looked at as humanism of a Chinese type. According to the ancient Chinese thinkers, only human beings are the most important link between Heaven and Earth. Sages are capable of "establishing the mind of Heaven and Earth, determining the destiny of human lives, restoring discontinued traditions of learning from the past, and commencing a period of supreme peace for one's descendants." Hence the Confucian notion that men can expand the Way, rather than the other way around. Although the Way of Heaven is an objective Being, it needs human embodiment. According to ancient Chinese thought, a man can embody the Way when he understands the unity of Heaven and man, practices the unity of knowledge and action, and creatively reveals the unity of sentiment and scenery. Conceiving of the loftiest possible realm of humanity, one may concentrate on the above-described ideal in one's mind in order to actualize it. Such a realm harmonizes individual words and deeds with all human societies and even extends this harmony to the whole universe. In traditional Chinese philosophy, the major role of human beings is to "be human" in pursuing the ideal of a harmonious society. As the central element in nature and the community, man assumes a great responsibility.

Chinese philosophy profoundly influenced the Chinese national mentality. I believe that this mentality reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese thought culture.

In brief, the Chinese mentality may be characterized by the pursuit of harmony and unity. Most distinguished Chinese philosophers viewed reality positively and endeavored to transform the conflict-ridden societies in which they lived into harmonious communities. Although their ideals and doctrines did not bring about actual political changes, Chinese rulers used philosophical ideas as window dressing. For instance, the ideals of Great Harmony and supreme peace degenerated into emperors' reign titles, and rulers called themselves the emperor or empress of supreme peace. Peasant revolts throughout history used "supreme peace" as a catchword for their righteous cause. At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220), the Yellow Turban Rebellion used the slogan "The Way of Supreme Peace" to organize farmers; Song Dynasty (960–1279) peasant revolts were aimed at "destroying all inequality in order to achieve supreme peace"; in modern times, the peasant rebellion led by Hong Xiuquan (Hung Hsiu-ch'uan) was known as the "Supreme Peace Army" (Taiping Jun) belonging to the "Heavenly Kingdom of Supreme Peace" (Taiping Tianguo).

Despite its preeminence in the Chinese mind, the ideal of attaining supreme peace has never been actualized. At most, the illusion of "supreme peace and a

prosperous world” was realized during short periods of history. Chinese traditional idealism is basically fantasy. Past sages might have promulgated the ideal of “governing the country and bringing peace to the world” with true sincerity, but since its actualization is impossible, their intentions have to be looked at as little more than idealized feudalism.

We can observe that Chinese thought has always been characterized by a search for unity. From its earliest beginnings, Chinese philosophy stressed the unity of two concepts or the mutual relationship between several concepts. In the *Book of Changes*, *Qian* and *Kun* (later *yin* and *yang*) represent concepts of duality in unity, the “Great Principle” chapter in the *Book of Rites* was based on the system of “five elements” related through dualistic unities. Once Heaven and man were looked upon as dualistic philosophical concepts, Chinese philosophy began to place more emphasis on the unity of Heaven and man. This way of thinking is rational in its stress on harmony and unity and in its objection to excess and insufficiency.

Under certain conditions, this ideal is beneficial to social stability and social development, as well as to the investigation of the actual relationships between objects. Social development requires a period of relative stability, while thought cultures benefit significantly by mutual assimilation and confluence. History has alternating periods of maintaining the *status quo* and reformation. Since the Qin and Han dynasties (221 B.C.–A.D. 220), China has been in a state of great unity. Situations of fragmentation or division were always temporary. The Han people and the minority nationalities formed a unified country while at the same time assimilating foreign cultures. Based also on the concept of unity, Chinese medicine stresses an organic connection between man and his environment, between the human body and human spirit, between the organs of the body, as well as between various remedies. *Qi* (vitality) was used to explain the unity of things and the reason behind their mutual influence. There is a similarity here to the findings of modern physics.

Despite the contributions of Chinese philosophy, we cannot overlook the shortcomings in this national way of thinking. An overemphasis upon harmony and unity resulted in the prolonged stagnation of feudal society, the slow growth of capitalism, exaggerated national pride, and a lack of progressive thinking. Chinese traditional philosophy lacks a systematic epistemology and a tradition of logic. Theoretical thinking in Chinese philosophy has not undergone analysis and is rich in terms of the cognition of essences, similar to some of the conclusions of modern science. But without the necessary analysis and argument, it cannot develop into modern science. Because of the excessive attention paid to mutual relationships and unity and the total disregard of advanced anatomy, the traditional Chinese failed to mature along the path taken by modern science in the West. We must reform our traditional ways of thinking, applying logical discourse and scientific epistemology to the concepts of relationship, unity, and cosmic harmony. We should stress specific analysis, avoid the long-recognized shortcomings in our philosophy, and make good use of the tenets of Western philosophy, in order to establish a school of scientific philosophy with Chinese traits.

Chapter 7

An Inquiry into the Possibility of a Third-Phase Development of Confucianism

Is there the possibility for Confucianism to have a third-phase development? In saying this, we mean to regard the school of thought advocated by Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi during the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States as the first-phase development of Confucianism. After the Han Dynasty, Buddhism spread to China. Under the impact of Buddhist ideas, a Confucian school of idealist philosophy emerged during the Song and Ming dynasties. It greatly pushed forward the Confucian doctrines and constituted the second-phase development of Confucianism. Over the last century, Western civilization has found its way into China. Especially around the time of the “May Fourth” [1919] Movement, Marxism was also disseminated into our country. That gave an even bigger and more serious impact on China’s traditional thought and culture. Under such circumstances, is it possible for Confucianism to have a third-phase development? Can it be brought back to life? Can it still have a role to play in China and the world? In my opinion, it is perhaps too early to conduct an all- round discussion of this issue. However, to raise questions and opinions from certain angles in an attempt to push the inquiry forward may prove helpful.

In discussing whether it is possible for Confucianism to have a third-phase development, we must, first of all, acquire a clear understanding about the basic spirit of Confucianism. Regarding this basic spirit, there have been in the past, and may be in the future, a variety of different views. The existence of different views is not necessarily a bad thing; it may help deepen the study of this issue. In clarifying the basic spirit, I think attention should be paid to two parts: the part of thoughts that have been constantly effective in the entire course of development of Confucianism and the part of thoughts that still have vitality today. To combine the two for

Tang Yijie, “Guanyu rujia sixiang disanqi fazhan kenengxin de tantao.” Beijing University *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 1991: 51–54

consideration, we may perhaps find out whether a third-phase development of Confucianism is possible from a certain aspect.

Running through the entire course of development of Confucianism, I believe there are two basic elements that still bear a major significance to us today: one is idealism and the other humanism; and the two are connected.

Confucianism is a kind of idealism. Starting from Confucius, this school of thought has cherished the ideal of having a society in which “right principles prevail” and has made every effort to materialize the ideal in the real world. Despite its acknowledgment of the unattainability of such a goal, it still insists that one should foster the ideal and dedicate oneself to realize it in the spirit of “doing the impossible.” Therefore, when Zigong asked Confucius: “What if one can generously give to the people and provide relief to them? Can that be called benevolence?” Confucius answered: “One who behaves with benevolence must be a saint! Even Yao and Shun fell short of that.” Evidently, Confucius did not regard the society of Yao and Shun’s time as a society of man’s highest ideal. Thus, it involves the problem of what we should see as an ideal society. According to the Confucians, an ideal society is an ideal, which has the possibility, and not the necessity, of being realized. Despite the fact that an ideal society has never been realized before, it is a matter of fundamental importance, a problem of one’s attitude toward life, whether or not one should seek to realize it. It is the Confucians’ belief that one should ceaselessly seek after it. This is why, as I see it, people at that time criticized Confucians as “being ignorant of world affairs.” Though it is not necessary that an ideal society be realized in the real world, it can be, as far as the Confucian philosophers are concerned, realized in their minds. Why is it that *West Inscription* by Zhang Zai was so highly respected by later Confucians? It was that, as I see it, *West Inscription* embodied the Confucian spirit of seeking to realize an ideal society, plus that Zhang Zai had already built in his mind the ideal society. True, whether the ideal society in which “the people are my brothers and I share my things with them,” as Zhang Zai conceived, could be realized in the real world was important to him, but more important was whether one could have a world outlook of pursuing an ideal society. Therefore, the last sentence of *West Inscription* says: “I carry on my pursuit when alive, and rest at ease when I die.” While one lives, one has a duty to fulfill. The duty is to exert oneself for the realization of the ideal “world of commonweal.” It can be said that this is an attitude of “concerning oneself only about the cultivation instead of the gains.” Whoever holds such an attitude toward life has a clear conscience. Don’t we today need to have an attitude like this more than ever?

Confucianism is a kind of idealism that has humanism as its prerequisite. Why is it that man must have an ideal and seek to build an ideal society? According to the Confucians, man is the most important factor in the world, because he can “formulate ethics for the universe, provide sustenance for the people, carry forward consummate learnings into posterity, and win peace for thousands of generations to come.” Confucius said: “Man can enhance the Way and not the reverse.” The “Way” or the “Way of Nature” is an objective existence. But it needs to be enhanced and carried forward by man; it has to be effected by man through practice.

How can man embody the “Way of Nature”? If, as the Confucians envisaged, man can understand how “Heaven is integrated with man,” “knowledge is integrated with practice,” and “feeling is integrated with scenery,” man can then attain the loftiest realm of being a man. In other words, man can congeal in his heart the ideal of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

The integration of Heaven with man, knowledge with practice, and feeling with scenery are the three basic propositions the Chinese traditional philosophy made about the true, the good, and the beautiful; they are the ideal realms the Confucian school has been trying to attain. Why is it that Confucianism is in pursuit of the three integrations? In my opinion, Confucianism is nothing more than a teaching that teaches one how to behave oneself, namely, one should set a demand on oneself and hold oneself responsible to the world and the nation. This is a very common question, but involves a task extremely difficult to fulfill. Whoever has attained such an ideal realm of the true, the good, and the beautiful is a saint.

Although the proposition of integrating Heaven with man is designed to illustrate the relations between man and the entire universe, it begins with man as the center of the universe. *Zhongyong* [The Golden Mean] stated: “Being honest is the Way of Heaven. Striving to be honest is the Way of man. An honest man hits the right Way without difficulty and understands it without deliberation. One who conforms oneself to the Way of Heaven without qualm is a saint.” Therefore, a saint not only behaves himself in conformity with the requirements of the Way of Heaven but also assumes as his responsibility the fulfillment of such requirements. In living a life in this world, one should not behave oneself with a passive attitude; rather, one should “make unremitting efforts to improve oneself” in order to embody the ceaseless flow and evolution of nature. In this way, man will set a demand on himself; he will find a reason for his existence and foster a lofty ideal. Since one has set a demand on oneself and found a reason for one’s existence, the most important thing is for one to “integrate one’s understanding with one’s behavior” so that one can have a unified viewpoint on understanding and behavior in terms of morality and self-cultivation. The three programs and eight articles outlined in *Daxue* [The Great Learning] tell us exactly what this is about. It is said in *Daxue*:

The Way of the great learning lies in shedding light on the bright principles, being close to the people, and stopping at nothing but the utmost good. Those in ancient times who wanted to shed light on the bright principles for the world had to first bring order to their own kingdoms. To bring order to their kingdoms they had to first bring their own houses to order. To bring their houses to order they had to first cultivate their own moral character. To cultivate their own moral character they had to first set their minds straight. To set their minds straight they had to first foster a sincere desire. To foster a sincere desire they had to first carry knowledge to the utmost degree. To carry knowledge to the utmost degree they had to first inquire into the properties of things. Having inquired into the properties of things, they were able to carry knowledge to the utmost degree. Having carried knowledge to the utmost degree, they were able to foster a sincere desire. Having fostered a sincere desire, they were able to set their minds straight. Having set their minds straight, they were able to cultivate their own moral character. Having cultivated their own moral character, they were able to bring their houses to order. Having brought their houses to order, they were able to bring order to their kingdoms. Having brought order to their kingdoms, the whole world would be at peace.

This is a process of cognizance, still more a process of moral practice. Man must have an ideal, and the highest ideal is to “achieve peace” so that human society can attain a realm of “Great Harmony.” And the world of “Great Harmony” requires that everyone should set for himself a demand for being a man, a reason for being a man, and “not do to others what one does not wish done to oneself.” Noted Confucius: “To implement my principle is nothing more than being honest and just.” Whether the ideal society of “Great Harmony” can be attained or not remains a question, of course. But a Confucian must have such a goal and find pleasure in pursuing it. To lead an existence in the world and be a man, one must find pleasure in doing it and appreciate the creation of the universe. And to have a true appreciation of Nature, one must be able to display creativity and man’s spiritual realm in reproducing the “creation of the universe.” One must be able to show why man should be a man and to create poetry and prose “masterpieces,” paintings of “superb work,” and music like “sounds of nature.” This is why art requires that “feeling be integrated with scenery.” Wang Fuzhi observed: “In name feeling and scenery are two things but in reality they are inseparable. Those gifted in writing poetry are capable of unlimited wit. A witty line naturally has feeling in the midst of scenery and scenery in the midst of feeling.” “Once feeling is integrated with scenery, a witty remark is ready at hand.” When one enters the realm of creation, it will be a realm in which the true, the good, and the beautiful are integrated with one another. This is precisely where the meaning of life and the highest ideal of mankind lie. Confucius described himself as “doing things at will without violating rules at the age of seventy.” Probably, it was the ideal realm as mentioned above. Indeed, it must be the realm of a saint when whatever one says and does is in harmony with the entire universe, society, and one’s own frame of mind.

That Confucianism still has a value for its continued existence is perhaps due to the sole fact that it provides us a reason for being a man. It is most difficult for one to be a man and still more to maintain a harmony between oneself and nature, society and others, or between one’s inside and outside in body and soul. Is such a requirement unnecessary in today’s world? As Confucianism only tells us the reason for being a man, we should not set demands on it in other aspects. And it should come as no surprise that it suffers from some inadequacies.

Chapter 8

Immanence and Transcendence in Chinese Chan Buddhism

When Buddhism transmitted into China, it had developed into several schools until Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) dynasties: Tiantai, consciousness-only, Vinaya, Pure Land, Huayan, Chan, etc. Since Tang Dynasty, Chan Buddhism has become increasingly influential and even has been particularly thriving to surpass all the other schools that were declined early or late. No doubt that there are many reasons for its thriving, perhaps one of the reasons is that Chan Buddhism can particularly reflect the characteristic of Chinese philosophy—“immanent transcendence,” to which scholars probably should pay more attention.

As a religion, Buddhism has its doctrinal scriptures, its regular rituals, its precepts, its worshiped objects, and so on, but Chan Buddhism after Huineng (638–713) renounced all things above. So in Chan Buddhism, there is no need to chant scriptures, observe precepts, follow any rituals, and worship any images, and even leaving home and becoming a monk or nun becomes dispensable; hence, to become a Buddha and attain the state of Nirvana can only rely on the awareness of the own mind. It is said: “one who can be aware within one thought is a Buddha, but confused within one thought a sentient being.” That is to say, to become a Buddha and attain the transcendental state completely depends on the role of the immanent essential mind.

[Chan is more famous for its Japanese name—Zen, and itself derived from the Sanskrit *dhyana*. In English, Chan is usually rendered as “meditation”—editor.]

Journal of Sino-Western Communications, 2010, 2(2): 51–68

Translated by Yang Hao from 《佛教与中国文化》, 宗教文化出版社 1999 年版, “论禅宗思想中的内在与超越性”。引文有所修订。

8.1 Chinese Chan Buddhism Neither Valued Scriptures nor Established in Words, but Claimed Everything Should Listen to the Essential Mind

There is a Chan story called “Buddha twirls a flower and Maha-Kashapa smiles,” which is recorded in *Zhi-yue-lu* [*Record of Fingers Pointing to the Moon*]:

When Buddha was in Grdhrakuta mountain he turned a flower in his fingers and held it before his listeners. Every one was silent. Only Maha-Kashapa smiled at this revelation, although he tried to control the lines of his face. Buddha said: “I have the eye of the true teaching, the heart of Nirvana, the true aspect of non-form, and the ineffable stride of Dharma. It is not expressed by words, but especially transmitted beyond teaching. This teaching I have given to Maha-Kashapa.”

Chan Buddhism considered itself as “transmitted beyond teaching” and proclaimed itself as distinguished from the other schools by telling this story. At the beginning of Buddhism in India, it was quite simple and originally a philosophy of life, in which Shakyamuni Buddha avoided discussing those theories unrelated with real life, say, concerned little about the following problems—“whether the universe is permanent or impermanent,” “whether the universe is limited or unlimited,” “whether life exists or not after death,” “whether life and body are one or not,” etc.—which were often heatedly discussed at his time in India. Later Indian Buddhism became more and more complicated during its developing, further and further away from real life, and its system became larger and larger, its worshiped images more and more, and its technical terms innumerable, which were completely incompatible with Chinese traditional thoughts. After Sui and Tang dynasties, many Chinese Buddhist schools were trying every possible way to get over this complication of Indian Buddhism, such as “one billion worlds entered into one thought” in Tiantai school and “principle and matter integrated into one real mind” in Huayan school both emphasized the role of the essential mind. This tendency was further intensified in Chan Buddhism after Huineng, hence its insistence on establishment in no words and renunciation of all scriptures.

Huineng himself did not renounce the scriptures and advocate establishment in no words yet. It is recorded in *Platform Sutra* that Huineng taught his disciples about *Diamond Sutra* and *Lotus Sutra*, but he maintained that “all scriptures and books exist and tell something in accordance with people” (*Platform Sutra*) and are only the tools to conduct people; hence, one should not cling to the scriptures because one cannot become a Buddha by chanting the scriptures, and one can be liberated only by relying on one’s essential mind. The reasons are, on the one hand, the principles and methods of becoming a Buddha originally exist in one’s own essential mind, so “the twelve-part canons of the Buddhas of past, present, and future are originally inherent in one’s nature” (*Platform Sutra*). Thus, there is no need seeking outside, no need to search the Buddha out of mind, because to be a Buddha and become enlightened totally depends upon oneself, and the extrinsic words just have nothing to do with it. On the other hand, words are outside things. If one attaches to these outside things, one “attaches to the forms,” and “one’s own

essential nature inherently has the insight of *prajna* [wisdom], if one is continually observant, using one's own insight; therefore, one does not depend on words" (*Platform Sutra*). In order to break the bondage of the scriptures, Chan masters after Huineng were simply against chanting the scriptures and even against all kinds of words. It is recorded in *Wu-deng-hui-yuan* [*The Five Lamps Meet at the Origin*]: Wei-shan (771–853) asked Yang-shan (814–890), "Nirvana Sutra has forty volumes. How many are said by Buddha? How many by *mara* [devil]?" (*Vol. 9*) Yang-shan answered: "all are said by *mara* [devil]." If one attaches the sutras as Dharma itself, one has already been bewitched and hoodwinked by devils. *Gu-zun-su-yu-lu* [*Recorded Sayings of the Ancient Worthies*] records: "as to those things which are considered as Buddhas, interpreted as Buddhas, if one sees something, finds something and attaches something, all of these are called dung of intellectual play, coarse words and dead language" (*Vol. 2*). *Jing-de-chuan-deng-lu* [*Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*] records: Lin-ji (787?–867) "went to Huang-bo mountain (where his master lived) in a mid-summer, and saw his master Huang-bo (?–850) reading a sutra. He said: 'I thought there is a man but actually an old monk who puts black soy beans into his mouth'" (*Vol. 12*). All scriptures are nonsense. By attaching to these nonsense, how can one be liberated and become a Buddha? Since Buddhist scriptures are "dead language" and "said by *mara* [devil]," not the tools to awaken, naturally they are not to be fallen back on to attain the goal of becoming a Buddha. *Gu-zun-su-yu-lu* records Nan-quan (748–834)'s saying: "the Way does not belong to the category of knowing or not knowing, because knowing is false awareness and not knowing is no memory. If one really attains the Way of no-doubt which is like great emptiness, wide, vast and open, how can one tell right or wrong? (*Vol. 13*)." The way does not belong to the category of knowledge which have the difference between subject and object, that is, conceptual thoughts, but the enlightenment to the way relies on the self-awareness of the mind. If so, the self can't be not self-aware; if the self isn't self-aware, it is "avidya [ignorance]," therefore "not knowing is no memory."

Chan masters thought that the words were unnecessary and the language cannot be beneficial to the enlightenment and becoming a Buddha. Only through language one cannot comprehend the Buddhist Dharma. Someone asked Wen-yi (885–958): "what is the first meaning (of Buddhist Dharma)?" Wen-yi replied: "If I tell you, it is already the second meaning" (*Wen-yi-chan-shi-yu-lu* [*Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Wen-yi*]). The Dharma is ineffable, and what has been said is already not the Dharma itself. Therefore, is there any method that may lead people to the enlightenment? As far as Chan Buddhism sees, hardly is there a method for becoming enlightened but through one's own awareness. However, Chan Buddhism also used very special methods, such as "stick and shout" to instruct disciples. It is recorded in *Wu-deng-hui-yuan*:

A monk asked: "what is *bodhi* [awakening]?" Master (De-shan, 782–865) struck him and said: "Get out! Don't shit here!" One asked: "what is Buddha?" Master said: "Buddha is an old *bhiksu* [monk] in India." Xue-feng (822–908) asked: "by inheriting from patriarchs before, do you still have discriminations?" Master struck him with a stick and asked: "What does this mean?" Xue-feng answered: "I can't understand." On the next day, Xue-feng asked for more teaching, Master said: "there are neither languages nor sentences taught in our school, and I have no Dharma to give." Hence Xue-feng became aware. (*Vol. 7*)

It is also recorded in *Gu-zun-su-yu-lu*:

(Lin-ji came to) see Jing-shan. When Jing-shan just raised his head to see who was coming, Master (Lin-ji) shouted. When he just intended to open his mouth to say, Master leaved with a flick of his sleeve. (*Vol. 5*)

This is so-called De-shan's stick and Lin-ji's shout. These special methods intended to break down the attachment and listen to the essential mind. As far as Chan Buddhism sees, one loses one's essential nature because one always attaches to something; therefore, a sudden shout and an unexpected strike on the head would make one suddenly become enlightened and attain the Buddhahood by oneself. As Yuanwu (1063–1135) said in *Yuan-wu-fo-guo-chan-shi-yu-lu* [*Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Yuan-Wu Fo-guo*]: “De-shan's stick and Lin-ji's shout are both thorough and complete, and directly cut off the root of the old attachment. They are great knacks and uses, reaching the same end by innumerable means, and could remove bondages from the disciples” (*Vol. 14*). Lin-ji's master—Huang-bo—said in his *Chuan-xin-fa-yao* [*Essential Teachings on the Transmission of Mind*]:

This spiritually enlightening nature. . . cannot be looked for or sought, comprehended by wisdom or knowledge, explained in words, contacted materially or reached by meritorious achievement. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, together with all wriggling things possessed of life, share in this great Nirvanic nature. This nature is Mind; Mind is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the Dharma.

Since this spiritually enlightening nature everyone has cannot be revealed by knowledge and language, the only way is to use stick and shout to break down the attachment (of course not necessarily to use stick and shout, any other method could make it if only they could break down the attachment); hence, the mind has nothing to observe, and one attains the transcendental state denying object and mind.

8.2 Chinese Chan Buddhism Broke Outmoded Conventions and Abolished Sitting in Meditation,¹ but Only Valued Seeing the Nature and Accomplishing the Buddhahood

Sitting in meditation is a practicing method used in every Buddhist schools. Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened under the *bodhi* [awakening] tree by sitting in meditation for 49 days; Bodhidharma came to China and faced the wall by sitting in meditation for 3 years. After Huineng, there has been a great change in Chinese Chan Buddhism. In *Platform Sutra*, Huineng said: “it is only a matter of seeing the nature, not a matter of meditation or liberation.” It is clear that Huineng

¹ Sitting in meditation [zuo-chan] literally means sitting Chan and is more famous for its Japanese name Zazen—editor.

insisted on “seeing the nature and accomplishing the Buddhahood” and believed only through meditation one cannot be liberated; hence, he said:

Deluded people stick to the appearances of things: they cling to the idea of absorption in one practice as only meaning constantly sitting unmoving, not letting the mind be aroused at random. They identify this with absorption in one practice, but those who make this interpretation are equivalent to inanimate objects. This is a condition that obstructs the Way. The Way should be fluid, free-flowing. Why then do you stagnate? When the mind does not dwell on things, then the Way is fluid. If the mind dwells on things, that is called self-binding. If you say constant sitting is right, that is contradicted by the fact that Shariputra was scolded by Vimalakirti for sitting quietly in the forest. (*Platform Sutra*)

Those who attach to sitting in meditation and believe deluded thought cannot arise through their sitting actually regard a human being as a dead thing and know nothing about “the Way should be fluid.” The mind should move and not dwell on things; otherwise the mind is bound, and then how could one be liberated? *Gu-zun-su-yu-lu* records: Ma-zu (709–788) “lived in Nan-yue-chuan-fa Monastery (where his master Huai-rang (677–744) presided) and stayed in a hut alone by practicing sitting in meditation without paying attention to the visitors (even to his master Huai-rang). . . . One day, (in order to instruct Ma-zu) Huai-rang put a tile in front of the hut and began to grind it. Ma-zu didn’t pay attention to it at the beginning, but after a long time, Ma-zu got very curious and then asked: ‘for what by grinding?’ Huai-rang said: ‘grinding into a mirror.’ Ma-zu laughed: ‘how can a tile become a mirror by grinding?’ Huai-rang retorted: ‘if a tile cannot become a mirror by grinding, how could one become a Buddha by sitting in meditation?’” (*Vol. 1*) Ma-zu sat in meditation and was bound by it; hence, Huai-rang used “grinding a tile into a mirror,” a metaphoric method, to inspire him to be enlightened. This is an example freeing from one’s bondage by relying on others. Another example is Hui-leng (854–932) who had worn seven cattail hassocks by sitting in meditation for more than 20 years but still did not see the nature. Until one day when rolling up a curtain by a chance, he suddenly got enlightened and composed a verse: “it was really a mistake, really a mistake, until I see the world when rolling up a curtain. If one asks me what kind of teaching I know, I shall pick up a whiskbroom and strike right toward his mouth” (*Wu-deng-hui-yuan, Vol. 7*). Hui-leng rolled up a curtain accidentally and saw that one billion worlds are just as they are and then “witnessed the mind and saw the nature.” He released the bondage of sitting in meditation, suddenly saw the whole thing in a clear light, and became enlightened. It is said in *Platform Sutra*: “they cannot realize it themselves because of the wandering of the conditioned mind; that is why they need a good knowing advisor to point it out and guide them to perception of essential nature.” Ma-zu was inspired by Huai-rang, but Hui-leng became enlightened by himself; either Ma-zu or Hui-leng has to “realize the good knowing advisor within the essential mind.” That is to say, one has to rely on one’s immanent essential mind to attain the transcendental state. The saying “until I see the world when rolling up a curtain” in Hui-leng’s verse is the crux of his enlightenment, because as far as Chan Buddhism sees, there is no need to deliberately make a certain thing to be enlightened and become a Buddha, and one should naturally see the Way in ordinary daily life, just

like “clouds floating in the blue sky and water filling in the bottle,” and everything goes naturally and ordinarily. There is a verse in *Wu-men-guan* [*Gateless Gate*] written by Wu-men (1183–1260):

In spring, hundreds of flowers; in autumn, a harvest moon;
 In summer, a refreshing breeze; in winter, snow will accompany you.
 If useless things do not hang in your mind,
 Any season is a good season for you.

This spiritual state of Chan Buddhism is a state letting go with the nature: one views the blooming of hundreds of flowers in spring, enjoys serenity under a harvest moon in autumn, feels the sudden coming of a refreshing breeze in summer, and watches thickly falling snowflakes swirling in winter. Let everything go by itself at ease and without any obstruction, then “every daytime is a good day,” and “every nighttime is an enjoyable night.” If one attaches to sitting in meditation, one is bound by the method itself and cannot be liberated. Lin-ji said: “There is no place in Buddhism for using effort. Just be ordinary and nothing special. Relieve your bowels, pass water, put on your clothes, and eat your food. When you are tired, go and lie down. Ignorant people may laugh at me, but the wise will understand” (*Gu-zun-su-yu-lu*, Vol. 11). If one wants to become a Buddha and attain the state of Nirvana, one should not rely on the extrinsic practice, but be enlightened suddenly as Hui-leng experienced. A monk asked Ma-zu: “How to cultivate the Way?” Ma-zu said: “the Way cannot be cultivated. If one says it can be cultivated, even if it has been cultivated, it will disappear eventually” (*Gu-zun-su-yu-lu*, Vol. 1). How can the Way be cultivated? By relying on so-called cultivation, one has to manage it with a contrived effort; certainly “it will disappear eventually.” Therefore, cultivating the Way cannot be searched deliberately out of ordinary life. A Vinaya Master You-Yuan asked Hui-Hai, “Do you make efforts in your practice of the Way?” Hui-Hai answered: “Yes, I do.” The Vinaya Master asked: “How?” Hui-Hai answered: “When hungry, I eat; when tired, I sleep.” The Vinaya Master asked: “And does everybody make the same efforts as you do, master?” Hui-Hai answered: “Not in the same way.” The Vinaya Master asked: “Why not?” Hui-Hai answered: “When they are eating, they think of a hundred kinds of necessities, and when they are going to sleep they ponder over affairs of a thousand different kinds. That is how they differ from me.” An ordinary person eats with preference of the fat or the lean in the food, sleeps with going off into wild flights of fancy, and has different preferences and attachments, and there is no chance for liberation. Those who truly know Chan should “sleep if need to sleep and sit if need to sit,” “enjoy the cool if hot and warm at a fire if cold.” A monk told Zhao-zhou (778–897): “I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me.” Zhao-zhou asked: “Have you eaten your rice porridge?” The monk replied: “I have.” Zhao-zhou said: “Then you had better wash your bowl.” At that moment the monk was enlightened (*Zhi-yue-lu*, Vol. 11). After eating, naturally it is time to wash the bowl. This is so ordinary. Only through this can one meditate when sitting, meditate when sleeping, meditate when resting, and meditate when moving; therefore, eating and shitting are both fine Ways. If meditation is not necessary, there is no necessity to keep all kinds of

precepts. Lu-xi-sheng asked Yang-shan: “do you still observe precepts, master?” Yang-shan said: “I don’t” (*Wu-deng-hui-yuan*, Vol. 9). Li-ao (772–841) asked Yao-shan (751–834): “what are *сила* [precepts], *дхьяна* [meditation] and *праjna* [wisdom]?” Yao-shan said: “we don’t have these idle fitments here!” (*Jing-de-chuan-deng-lu*, Vol. 14). *Sila* [precepts], *дхьяна* [meditation], and *праjna* [wisdom] are the “three practices” of Buddhism, an indispensable gateway for Buddhists, but Chan masters see them as something useless. It seems that this negation means that every practicing method is unnecessary; hence, Chan Buddhism negates anything extrinsic and formal. The reason why Chan Buddhism sees like this is based on “the mind of everyday life is the mind of the Way.” There is no “mind of the Way” apart from the mind of everyday life, and also no need to live any special life apart from everyday life. With this realization, the immanent mind of everyday life can be the transcendental mind of the Way. It is just as Yin-shun (1906–2005) put in his *The History of Chinese Chan Buddhism*: “The nature is both transcendental (away from all forms and its body pure and clear) and immanent (all Dharma cannot be different from the nature). Only when one can enlighten into the transcendental from everything here and now, at the same time being not different from everything, and completely enlighten everything is just no other than the magical application of the nature, can one go into the world or renounce the world at one’s will, get the substance and its application, integrate the matter with its principles, and have one’s feet firmly planted on the ground.”²

8.3 Chinese Chan Buddhism Did Not Worship Images, Rather Abused the Buddhas and Berated the Masters, but Claimed “One Who Is Enlightened in One Thought Is a Buddha”

Indian Buddhism cannot keep from the influence of Indian culture which strongly marked the character of mysticism, especially after Shakyamuni Buddha. For example, there are so-called twenty-eight heavens and eighteen hells, attached to which are adjacent heavens or hells, and there are also innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who have supernatural powers. Certainly all these are influenced by Indian traditional culture. Even the much simpler Indian Chan which is considered as “transmitted beyond teaching” is still of mystical character. It is said that all 28 masters of Indian Chan have so-called six supernatural powers: (1) the power of divine audition, (2) the power of divine vision, (3) the power of awareness of the minds of others, (4) the power of the knowledge of previous lifetimes, (5) unimpeded bodily action, and (6) the power of the extinction of contamination. Even four meditative states—“The Four Meditation Heavens”—Indian Chan

² Yin-shun: *The History of Chinese Chan Buddhism* (in Chinese), Taipei, Taiwan: Zheng-wen Press, 1987, p. 375.

practiced are also very mystical. Chinese Chan Buddhism after Huineng is very different. Huineng said: “my mind inherently has a Buddha in it; and the inner Buddha is the real Buddha” (*Platform Sutra*). Based on this, Chan Buddhism was against supernatural powers and worshipping images. *Wu-deng-hui-yuan* records: Dao-ying (?–902) “built a house nearby a place called San-feng, and did not go to hall for a couple of weeks. Dong-shan (807–869) asked him: ‘why didn’t you go to have meals recently?’ Dao-ying said: ‘a heavenly god served the food everyday.’ Dong-shan told him: ‘I thought you are a man, but still have this kind of idea. Come to my place at night.’ Dao-ying came to Dong-shan’s place at night. Dong-shan called his name: ‘Dao-ying!’ Dao-ying replied. Dong-shan said: ‘if you neither think of good nor think of bad, then what leaves?’ Dao-ying came back and sat silently. Since then Dao-ying couldn’t find the heavenly god any more. After 3 days, there was completely no such thing in Dao-ying’s idea” (*Vol. 13*). The point Dong-shan criticized Dao-ying lies in how could a man like Dao-ying believe these mystical supernatural powers. What is the meaning of “neither think of good nor think of bad”? This is the teaching from Huineng that one should never attach to those things created by one’s imagination. It is recorded in *Chan-zong-zhuan* [*A Biography of Chan Buddhism*]: “Hui-ming asked the Dharma from Huineng. Huineng said: ‘You should shut out all desires and not conceive a single thought of good or bad.’ Hui-ming did what Huineng told him to do. Huineng told him: ‘When you neither think of good nor think of bad, what is your original face?’ At these words, Hui-ming was greatly enlightened and said to Huineng with his deep gratitude: ‘I am like a man who takes a drink of water and knows for himself whether it is cold or warm.’” The so-called a heavenly god served the food was just an illusion of Dao-ying; once he became aware, the illusion disappeared and the heavenly god couldn’t be found any longer. A man is essentially a man and has his original appearance; therefore, everything has to count on the man himself and does not need any help from the extrinsic transcendental powers at all. In *Platform Sutra* (Qi-song Edition), there is a verse called *Wu-xiang-song* [*Verse on Freedom from Forms*]:

When the mind is even, why bother to keep precepts?
 When action is straightforward, what’s the need to practice meditation?
 If you are grateful, you take care of your parents respectfully;
 If you are dutiful, above and below are mentally sympathetic.
 If you are deferential, high and low harmonize amicably;
 If you are tolerant, myriad evils cause no disturbance.
 If you can drill wood and produce fire,
 You will produce red lotuses from the mud.
 Harsh words are clearly good medicine;
 If it offends the ear, it’s surely faithful speech.
 Reform your errors, and you will develop wisdom;
 Defend your faults, and you betray an unsound mind.
 Always practicing altruism in your daily life;
 Attaining the Way does not come from donating money.
 Enlightenment is only to be sought in the mind;
 Why bother seeking mysteries outside?
 Hearing my explanation, practice on this basis,
 And the Heaven is right before your eyes.

This verse not only denies the existence of the extrinsic mystical powers but also denies the existence of so-called Heaven and Hell, believing one should live in the real life ordinarily and responsibly, and by means of one's own Buddha nature (immanent essential nature) in the life here and now can one become a Buddha. It is just as Da-hui (1089–1163) said: “Dharma of secular world is Buddha Dharma and vice versa” (*Da-hui-pu-jue-chan-shi-yu-lu*, Vol. 27).

It is recorded in *Wu-deng-hui-yuan*: Tian-ran (739–824) “met a bitter cold weather when visiting Hui-lin Temple, so he burned a wood Buddha statue for warmth. The head of the temple bawled him out: ‘Why did you burn my wood Buddha?’ Tian-ran prodded the ashes with his staff and said humorously: ‘I am looking for *sharira* [relics] by burning it.’ The head retorted: ‘how can a wood Buddha statue have *sharira* [relics]?’ Tian-ran laughed: ‘Now that it doesn’t have *sharira* [relics], take two more statues and burn them’” (Vol. 5). A wood Buddha statue is an image; how could it have Buddha *sharira* [relics]? Burning a wood Buddha is only burning a wood-made statue. The denial of the image in his mind is the realization that “my mind inherently has a Buddha in it; and the inner Buddha is the real Buddha.” Lin-ji climbed up into the loft of Xiong-er Tower, and the guard of the tower asked him: “do you prostrate yourself first before the Buddhas or first before masters?” Lin-ji said: “neither of them” (*Jing-de-chuan-deng-lu*, Vol. 12). Chan masters paid no respect to the Buddhas and masters at all and even abused the Buddhas and berated the masters. De-shan said: “there are neither Buddhas nor masters down here. Bodhidharma is an old foul foreigner, Shakyamuni Buddha is a pile of dried dung, and Bodhisattva Manjusri and Samantabhadra are men who carry the dung” (*Wu-deng-hui-yuan*, Vol. 7). As Chan Buddhism sees, everyone is originally a Buddha himself, and elsewhere can a Buddha be found? What are abused and berated are nothing but the images in one's mind, the worship of which would certainly obstruct the development of one's essential nature. It is recorded in *Jing-de-chuan-deng-lu*: “someone asked Huai-hai (720–814): ‘What is Buddha?’ Huai-hai retorted: ‘Who are *you*?’” (Vol. 6). In the same book, it is also recorded: “Ling-xun just came to study with Gui-zong, and asked Gui-zong: ‘What is Buddha?’ . . . Gui-zong said: ‘Just *you* are’” (Vol. 10). Everyone by himself is a Buddha. How can one ask “what is Buddha?” By asking “what is Buddha,” one is searching Buddha outside of one's mind. Nevertheless, one should not attach to this idea of becoming a Buddha. Huang-bo said: “if you will conceive of a Buddha, you will be obstructed by that Buddha!” (*Wan-ling-lu* [*Recorded Sayings in Wan-Lin*]). If one bears the idea of becoming a Buddha in one's mind constantly, one cannot live naturally and obstructs himself from becoming a Buddha by this searching. A monk asked Dong-shan when he was weighing some flax: “What is Buddha?” Dong-shan said: “This flax weighs three pounds” (*Wu-deng-hui-yuan*, Vol. 15). A monk asked Ma-zu: “What is the intention of Bodhidharma to come to China?” Ma-zu struck him and said: “If I don't strike you, those who know would laugh at me” (*Jing-de-Chuan-deng-lu*, Vol. 6). Dong-shan gave a reply far from the mark in order to break down the attachment of becoming a Buddha, and Ma-zu even tried to prevent the searching of extrinsic Buddhist Dharma, because as Ma-zu saw, “you all should believe that your essential mind is the Buddha, and right this mind is the

mind of Buddha” (*ibid.*). This is the essential spirit of Chan Buddhism, as it is said in *Platform Sutra*: “Buddhahood is actualized within your own nature; do not seek it outside the body. If your own nature is confused, a Buddha is an ordinary person; if your own nature is awakened, every ordinary person is a Buddha.”

As we have discussed above, we can see that the central thoughts or fundamental subject of Chinese Chan Buddhism is “witnessing the mind and seeing the nature” and “seeing the nature and becoming a Buddha.” The fundamental concepts used in *Platform Sutra* are “mind” and “nature.” “Mind” is also called “one’s own mind” (*zi-xin*), “the essential mind” (*ben-xin*), “one’s own essential mind” (*zi-ben-xin*), etc. “Nature” is also called “own nature” (*zi-xing*), “the essential nature” (*ben-xing*), “Dharma nature” (*fa-xing*), “one’s own Dharma nature” (*zi-fa-xing*), etc. “Mind” and “nature” have quite similar meaning and both refer to the subjective in everyone’s immanent life. They are originally pure and empty, but transcend the phenomenal world; at the same time, their activities can appear as all kinds of different things. As *Platform Sutra* says: “The extent of mind is vast as space. . . the emptiness of physical space contains the colors and forms of myriad things, the sun, the moon, and stars, the mountains, oceans, rivers, and lands, the springs and valley streams, the grasses, trees, and forests, bad people and good people, bad things and good things, heaven and hell—all are within space. The emptiness of the essential nature of people in the world is also like this.” It also says: “The essential nature of human beings is originally pure. All things come from the essential nature; when you think about all evil things, it produces bad behaviors; when you think about all good things, it produces good behaviors. Thus all things are in your own nature, and your own nature is always clear.” Good and bad, Heaven and hell, the mountains, rivers, and lands, the grasses, trees, insects and fishes, and so on—all are realized from your own nature by means of “thinking” (*si-liang*) function of “the mind.” The appearance of everything cannot deviate from “the own nature,” just as everything is within space. If one’s “mind” is confused, one cannot see “one’s own nature”, hence only an ordinary person; if one’s mind is always clear, one “sees the nature” and becomes Buddha or Bodhisattva. It is said in *Platform Sutra*: “My mind inherently has a Buddha in it; and the inner Buddha is the real Buddha. If there were no Buddha-mind, where would we look for the real Buddha?”

As Chan Buddhism sees, one’s own nature (or one’s own mind) is originally a vast space without anything, and it is not a deathly stillness, but rather it can “think” and everything comes from this “thinking.” If this activity of “thinking” goes without any trace, it lays no influence on one’s “own nature,” and one’s own nature can always stay in the clear state. “One’s own nature always clear” is just like the sun and the moon always shining, only that sometimes they are covered by clouds, and appear dim when seen from the ground so that one cannot see the original face of the sun and the moon. If a sudden wind of wisdom (suggests the instruction and inspiration of a good knowing adviser) blows off the clouds or mists, the always shining sun and moon would appear naturally. It is said in *Platform Sutra*: “The nature of worldly people is always drifting, like the clouds in the sky. Wisdom is like the sun, insight is like the moon: knowledge and insight are always light, but when you fixate on objects outside, you get your own essential nature covered

by the drifting clouds of errant thoughts, so you cannot have light and clarity. If you meet a spiritual benefactor and hear truly authentic teaching, you get rid of confusion so that inside and outside are thoroughly clear, and myriad things appear within your own essential nature.” A good knowing adviser can only inspire someone, but whether one can be enlightened or not counts on oneself. “What is meant by liberating yourself through your own essential nature? That means the beings in false views, afflictions and ignorance are liberated by accurate insight. Once you have accurate insight, you get the *prajna* [wisdom] to break through the beings in folly and delusion, so each one is self-liberated” (*Platform Sutra*).

The phrase “Buddha nature” appeared only a few times in Dung-huang edition of *Platform Sutra*, but many times in its Zong-bao edition. “Buddha nature” mentioned in two places of *Platform Sutra* is quite important: one is the verse Huineng composed when he studied with his master: “Buddha nature is always clear,” another is when Huineng answered the question of Governor Wei, he said “building temples, charity, sustaining, etc... haven’t any virtue actually,” and “virtue lies in *dharmakaya* [truth body], not in field of merit; one’s own Dharma nature is the inside virtue and honesty is the outside virtue. While one sees the Buddha nature inside, one will naturally hold in reverence outside.” The first place shows that the essence of “Buddha nature” that has the same quality as “own nature” is “always clear”; hence, so-called Buddha nature is “one’s own nature,” which is the essential nature of human being and the subjective in everyone’s immanent life. The second place shows that “Buddha nature” is “one’s own Dharma nature” which is also the immanent essence in everyone. Based on the ideas above, Chan Buddhism established its theory of “witnessing the mind and seeing the nature” and “seeing the nature and becoming a Buddha.” “Witnessing the mind and seeing the nature” tells that if one can realize one’s own essential mind, one can realize that “one’s own nature is always clear”; attaining “one’s own nature always clear” means the revelation of the immanent essential nature as the transcendental Buddha nature. Hence, it is true that “witnessing the mind and seeing the nature, attaining the Way of Buddhahood by oneself” lie in “the wisdom is accomplished when enlightening.”

In that case how can one “witness the mind and see the nature”? Chan Buddhism pointed out a direct and simple practicing method that they established, that is, “freedom from thought as the source, freedom from form as the substance, and freedom from fixation.” It is said in *Platform Sutra*:

Since time immemorial this school of ours has first established freedom from thought as the source, freedom from form as the substance, and freedom from fixation as the basis. Freedom from form means detachment from forms in the midst of forms. Freedom from thought means having no thought in the midst of thoughts. As for freedom from fixation, while the basic nature of humanity is in the midst of the world, with good and bad, beauty and ugliness, enmity and familiarity, words and speech, offense and attack, deception and contention, one considers it all empty and does not think of retaliation, not thinking about the objects in the surroundings. If thought after thought, previous, present, and subsequent thoughts, go on uninterrupted, this is called bondage. When thought after thought does not dwell on things, then there is no bondage. Thus freedom from fixation is basic.

“Freedom from form” means no attachment to any phenomenon (detachment from form), because ordinary people always attach the phenomena as the substance. For example, one may think that by sitting in meditation, one can become a Buddha, which is certainly attached to sitting in meditation; one may think that by worshipping Buddhas, one can become a Buddha which is certainly attached to the worshipping Buddhas; all these are “taking form and attaching to it.” “Taking form and attaching to it” can obstruct the own nature just as the clouds and mists can cover the bright empty sky. When one “detaches from appearances while in the midst of appearances,” one can suddenly see the original clearness of the body of nature, just as the clouds and mists are blew off and the bright clean empty space is revealed. Therefore, freedom from form not only means no attachment to any phenomenon but also means detachment to appearances and revelation of “one’s own nature always clear.” It is said in *Platform Sutra*: “If you can be detached from forms and appearances, then the substance of nature is pure. Thus freedom from form is the substance.” “Freedom from fixation” means one’s own nature originally has no fixation thought by thought, that is, the previous, present, and subsequent thoughts are consecutive, and if once dwelling on one object, it is not going on uninterrupted but fixing on every thought; hence, “the mind” is “bound.” “When the mind does not dwell on things, the mind is fluid. If the mind dwells on things, the mind is bound” (*Platform Sutra*). If the mind is not dwelling on everything, once a thing has gone, it has gone and left no trace; it is like a wild goose flying across the vast sky that leaves no trace at all and also like a white screen on which a movie is projected for viewing; once the movie ends, nothing is left in the screen; only by this can one not be bound by anything. Hence, one should regard “freedom from fixation as the basis.” “Freedom from thought” does not mean “not thinking of anything at all, and get rid of all thoughts entirely” (*ibid.*), but when getting in touch with objects, the mind is not affected by the external objects, that is, “the mind does not arouse over objects” (*ibid.*). “Thought” is the function of the mind, and what the mind faces is the external objects. Ordinary people’s thoughts arouse over the external objects; if the objects are nice, thoughts arouse over them and cling to them; on the contrary, thoughts again arouse and get angry. Therefore, the “thoughts” of ordinary people just arouse along with the objects and move in accordance with the objects, and the “thoughts” of this kind are “erroneous thoughts,” always drove by the objects without freedom. “When the mind is not influenced by objects” (*ibid.*), one could not be disturbed by the external world, and although one lives in the secular world, one is still not defiled and contaminated but comes and goes at ease, always has one’s own clear nature, and attains the Buddhahood by oneself. “Freedom from form,” “freedom from fixation,” and “freedom from thought” discussed above are the function of the only mind, and the difference between the ignorant and the awakened just lies in one thought; hence, attaining the Buddhahood should rely on the sudden enlightenment.

According to the discussion above, we may conclude as follows:

First, the reason why Chinese Chan Buddhism belongs to Chinese traditional thoughts, distinguishable from Indian Buddhism lies in its “immanent transcendence” which is also the characteristic of Chinese Confucian and Taoist

philosophy. The reason why it could deeply influence Neo-Confucianism of Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties (especially Universal Mind School of Lu-Wang) also lies in the “immanent transcendence” of its thought. It is said that the quest of Confucian thought with the characteristic of “immanent transcendence” is morally ideal personality which transcends “the self” and becomes “a saint,” the quest of Taoist philosophy with the characteristic of “immanent transcendence” is the spiritually absolute freedom which transcends “the self” and becomes “an immortal,” and then the quest of Chinese Chan Buddhism being characteristic of “immanent transcendence” is a mystical state in momentary eternity which transcends “the self” and becomes “a Buddha.” On this point, Chan Buddhism still has some smack of religion.

Second, although Chan Buddhism still has some smack of religion, by virtue of releasing all extrinsic bondage such as chanting scriptures, sitting in meditation, worshipping Buddha, etc., it is bound to contain the implication of denying itself as a religion. That is to say, the secularization of Chan Buddhism makes itself an unreligious religion influencing China, and it leads people to realize the purpose of transcending the reality in the real life by denying the supernatural concepts of Heaven and hell, suggesting the secular spirit of “Dharma of secular world is Buddha Dharma and vice versa.”

Third, as a religion, Chan Buddhism not only breaks all rules of traditional Buddhism, but also believes that it relies not on extrinsic power but rather on the immanent self-awareness of Chan masters themselves to attain the Buddhahood. Therefore, it transforms a religion with the characteristic of “extrinsic transcendence” into an unreligious religion with the characteristic of “immanent transcendence,” turns the direction from renouncing the world to going into the world, and hence avoids the inclination of duality. Whether or not this transformation means Chan Buddhism has some inclination to get out of traditional religious mode. If this can be deduced, certainly it would have important implication to study the history of Chan Buddhism for investigating the religions in real social life.

Fourth, it is said there was a tradition strongly imprisoning the mind of people in China, and then can we say that there were still some resources to be appealed to for breaking everything imprisoning the mind of people? If there were such resources, Chan Buddhism must be an important one of them. Chan Buddhism denies all extrinsic bondage, breaks all attachments, removes the traditional and realistic authority, and lets everything listen to the essential mind; it is in this sense that one can be the master of oneself. This open-mindedness is very valuable in feudal despotic society in China and deserves our attention. Of course, Chan Buddhism thereby built the authority centered by the immanent subjective of the “self” and made up the infinite transcendental power of the “self,” and in turn one could again be bound by the immanent subjective of the “self,” and this probably is an inextricable contradiction to Chan Buddhism.

Fifth, the ideological system of Chan Buddhism with the characteristic of “immanent transcendence” is of obvious subjectivism, and inevitably leads to the

denial of any objective criterion and validity, which is a disadvantage to the investigation of the extrinsic world and establishment of objective valid social system and legal order, and has defects in the investigation of ultimate care of the universe and human life. Therefore, we may suggest an issue: is it possible to build a better philosophical system which contains the thought with the characteristic of “immanent transcendence” and the thought with the characteristic of “extrinsic transcendence?” I think this issue deserves attentions in the development of Chinese philosophy.

Sixth, if it is possible to build a Chinese philosophical system which contains the thoughts of both “immanent transcendence” and “extrinsic transcendence,” then is it possible to find the resources of “extrinsic transcendence” within Chinese traditional philosophy itself? I think Chinese traditional philosophy has this kind of resources. There are two aspects in the thought of Confucius: on the one hand, he advocated the idea “human-heartedness is something that must have its source in oneself” (*Analects*, 12.1) and “it is man that can make the Way great, and not the Way that can make man great” (*Analects*, 15.29) which can be considered as the aspect of “immanent transcendence”; on the other hand, he insisted that one should “fear the will of heaven, fear great men, and fear the word of the divine sages” (*Analects*, 16.8), which can be considered as the aspect of “extrinsic transcendence” or at least a suggestion of it. Later Confucianism has developed the former aspect while leaving the later one undeveloped at all. Is it possible to build a Chinese philosophical system which contains the thoughts being both “immanent transcendence” and “extrinsic transcendence” from the direction of Confucius by developing and combining both aspects of Confucius’ thoughts? In my opinion, it is an issue that deserves our study. There was another philosopher—Mo-zi, born shortly later than Confucius—whose philosophy features “extrinsic transcendence.” Mo-zi’s philosophy includes two interrelated parts: “all-embracing love” being human spirit and “the will of Heaven” being religious. It seems that there is a little bit of contradiction between the two parts, but actually “all-embracing love” is the fundamental principle of “the will of Heaven”; therefore, “the will of Heaven” is the kernel of Mo-zi’s thoughts. Mo-zi’s “the will of Heaven” means “Heaven” has wills which are the supreme and ultimate standard to judge everything, can reward the good and punish the bad, and are the transcendental power outside of human or, we may say, are of obvious “extrinsic transcendence.” Therefore, the later Mohist School suggested a scientific view and had the thought of logic and epistemology, but it is a pity that these thoughts were left undeveloped after the Warring States (403–221 B.C.) in China. Is it possible to use Mohist thought as resources to build a Chinese philosophical system which contains the thoughts of both “immanent transcendence” and “extrinsic transcendence”? I think it is also an issue we can study.

Chapter 9

The Introduction of Indian Buddhism into China: A Perspective on the Meaning of Studies in Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion

Here I do not intend to analyze or study the entire history of the introduction of Indian Buddhism into China; rather, I wish simply to investigate the relationships which existed between Buddhism, after it was introduced into China in the period of the Wei, and Jin, and the North and South dynasties, and the previously existing ideologies and cultures in China at the time, and to illustrate thereby the meaning of studying comparative philosophy and comparative religions.

9.1 The Introduction of Indian Buddhism into China and the Popularization of the School of Prajna Teachings [bo-re xue] in the Wei and Jin Periods

9.1.1 *The Beginnings of Buddhism in China*

There are diverse theories regarding the timing of the introduction of Buddhism from India to China. There is, however, a general consensus that the introduction of Buddhism commenced with the dispatching of an envoy to the lands of the West by Emperor Mingdi of the Eastern Han Dynasty during his reign of Yongping (58–75 A.D.) to seek the Buddhist teachings. According to even earlier legends, the emissary Zhang Xian, who had been sent to the Western lands, heard of the

Tang Yijie, “On the Significance to Study Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Religion through the Study on the Introduction of Indian Buddhism into China.” *Zhexue Luncong* [Collection of Philosophical Discourses], no. 8, August, 1983, pp. 272–301.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 89–137

teachings of foutu (Buddha) and had been commissioned by the monarch of Darouzhì to preserve and transmit the teachings of the *futu jing* (Buddha's classic or sutra). Even disregarding this, I am convinced that the introduction of Buddhism into China predated the dispatch of the imperial envoy during the Yongping reign to seek out Buddhist teachings. In the eighth year of the reign of Yongping, Emperor Mingdi decreed that those criminals who had incurred the death penalty might atone for their crimes by offering *jian* cloth to the state and thus escape the execution of their sentences. Prince Ying, a brother to Mingdi, sent in 30 bales of *jian*, whereupon the emperor issued the following explanatory edict:

Prince Ying of Chu has been reciting the refined teachings of Huang and Lao [Huangdi, or the Yellow Emperor, and Laozi (Lao Tzu) are together revered as the founders of the Daoist school of philosophy, and particularly of its so-called Esoteric or Immortal school—Tr.] and has worshiped at the benevolent shrine of Buddha. He has undertaken to cleanse himself and has fasted for three months, observing his vows to the gods. [In the Chinese Buddhist contexts, fasting does not necessarily mean abstinence from food altogether but usually refers to the assumption of an exacting vegetarian diet avoiding the taking of life, which is known as *zaijie*—Tr.] He has repented and should be considered to have expiated any crime he may have perpetrated or any suspicions he may have provoked. He is now, by way of atonement, submitting his property to add to the grand fete of the *Upasaka* [Buddhist disciples] and to the glory of the temples of Buddha.

The fact that Prince Ying worshiped Huangdi, Laozi (Lao Tzu), and Buddha at the same time and in the same fashion tells us that Buddhism certainly already had been introduced into China for quite some time prior to the eighth year of the Yongping reign. Therefore, it would be quite late to take the sending of the imperial envoy to seek out Buddhist teachings during the reign of Yongping to be the point of beginning of the introduction of Buddhism into China. Still, although Buddhism was not introduced into China after that event, it would perhaps be generally correct to say that it was only during, or even after, the reign of Yongping that Buddhism became a religion of some influence in China. After its introduction into China, Buddhism did not attain the height of its influence until the Eastern Jin Dynasty, meanwhile undergoing several significant stages of propagation and evolution.

During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Buddhism was propagated in China as one of several Daoist practices [*daoshu*] popular at the time. Daoist teachings and practices had gained great currency since the beginning of the Western Han Dynasty and remained in vogue throughout the two Han dynasties. At that time, all Daoist practices, whether the [philosophical] teachings of Huangdi and Laozi (Lao Tzu) or the sorcerous practices of the magicians, were indifferently known as *daoshu* [Daoist practices or techniques]. The techniques practiced and taught by the magicians covered a very wide area: worshiping at shrines and temples, ancestral worship, ways to immortality and longevity, and such methods as *jiushi* [long vision]. According to the *Fangshu zhuan* [Biographies of the Magi] in *Hou Han shu* [History of the Later Han Dynasty], at that time, many people studied diverse things and the teachings of many schools such as “Numbers of Steps according to the Yin and Yang,” “The Writings of He and Luo” [Huang He, or Yellow River, and the Luo River], “The Tortoise and Dragon Graphs,” “The Methods of Ji Zi,” “The Book of Wei [Latitudes] and Hou [Seasons],” “The Talismanic Graphs of the Decision of the Bells,” and “The Book of Shi Kuang,” as well as such techniques as

“Wind Horn,” “Transmutation and Transportation,” “The Seven Ways,” “Cardinal and Primal Breathing,” “The Seven Divisions of the Six Days,” “Divination for Chance Encounters,” “Omen of the Day,” “Firmness and Singularity,” “Instantaneity,” “Solitude and Emptiness,” and so on. The following passage explains the reason for this proliferation of these Daoist practices and methods at that time:

In the Han dynasty, since Emperor Wudi turned his favor toward the methods and crafts of the Daoists, scholars throughout the land who possessed the least learning on those subjects could not afford to miss taking advantage of the situation; they converged upon the royal court, each with his books and with his hands clasped together [in the sign of salutation]. Thereafter, Wang Mang [The ‘usurper’ who dethroned the Han emperor and founded the short-lived Xin dynasty from 8 to 23 A.D.—Tr.] usurped the throne by falsely assuming the mandate under the guise of receiving talismans for that effect secretly. Later on, Emperor Guangwudi [25–57 A.D.] was found to be fond of portents and oracles and believed in them. Thus the scholars who had learned to be attentive to the fashions and ways of the times strove to compete with one another on the field of these techniques and practices and ideas. Whenever they could, they would bring their crafts to the attention of His Majesty and would debate about the validity and relative virtues of these things whenever they could.

According to the records of the day, “Huang-Lao” and Buddha were equally regarded as Daoist techniques. In the ninth year of the reign of Yanxi of Emperor Huandi (166), Xiang Kai memorialized the emperor, saying:

We hear that shrines for Huang-Lao and for Buddha have been erected in the palace. These teachings exhort people to purity of mind and tranquillity of the soul; they place inaction and quietude at the top of their list of values; they emphasize the value of life and abhor killing; they exhort people to restrain their desires and purge themselves of extravagant ways. But Your Majesty is shorn neither of desire nor extravagance, and your habits of killing and punishing people have extended beyond the bounds of reason. Since you violated their way, how can you expect to receive their mandate?

Even the disciples of Buddhism referred to their own teachings as the craft of the dao (tao) [Way]. In *Li Huo Lun* [Discourse on the Disposition of Error], Mouzi wrote, “There are ninety-six types of people adhering to the teaching of *Dao*; of these, none is as great as or is more exalted than the teachings of Buddha.” The *Sishi'er Zhang Jing* [Sutra of Forty-two Chapters] [a sutra often attributed to Kasyapa Matanga and Gobharana, the first Indian monks to “officially” arrive in China as envoys from a Buddhist state—Tr.] also referred to its own teachings as *fodao* [or, Way of Buddha]. Furthermore, the Buddhist teachings at that time contained elements which coincided with, or bore resemblances to, the Chinese Daoist teachings—for example, when it taught:

Arhan [worthy men, or saints] are beings which can fly and are capable of transformation; their longevity is the *kalpa* [age] that is past, and they live and move throughout the heaven and the earth (Chapter 1 of the *Sishi'er Zhang Jing*) and:

those who have learned the Way should purge their minds of impurities and they shall instantly become pure and clean. (Chapter 35)

At such times, the Buddhist sutra came very close to the “immortality teachings” of the Huang-Lao school of Daoism (Taoism).

At that time, the principle contents of Buddhist teachings were such things as “the imperishability of the spirit, or soul,” *yin-guo* [causes and effects as the basic method of understanding the development of things] and *baoying* [retribution].

For example, in the book *Hou Han Ji* [The Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty], Yuan Hong wrote:

[Buddhism] also posits that when the person dies the spirit does not perish but would subsequently take on new form. For all one's deeds in life, whether good or evil, there will be retribution. For that reason one must value the performance of good actions and the cultivation of the *dao*, so as to persist, and continue to persist, in the tempering of the soulspirit, until it arrives at the realm of *wuwei* [inaction or quietude], and at that point one would become Buddha.

This was an idea that existed previously in China. In the Chinese form, the idea of the imperishability of the soul was expressed in the long held *you guei lun* [theory of the existence of ghosts]. The poem *Wen Wang* [King Wen] in the *Da ya* section of *Shi Jing* [Classic of Odes] described the “presence of the three *hou* [secondary, or humane sovereign spirit] in Heaven” and the ascension to that realm of the refined spirits and ghosts [*jing ling*] [of mortals]. In the chapter *Yang sheng zhu* [Lord Nurturer of Life] in the book *Zhuangzi*, there was a parable which spoke of the “continuation of the flame even though the tinder has expired,” and in the chapter *Jing shen xun* [Exhortation on the Spirit] in *Huai Nan Zi*, the idea was posited that “the form indeed has its limitations, but the spirit does not dissolve. Therefore, [the relationship between spirit and form is one in which] something that is incapable of dissolving is adapted to something that does dissolve; the result is that there can be myriad such adaptations; one cannot in any way see these ways of changing and permutation as finite.” It was precisely because of the prevalence of this thought, and in response to it, that opponents such as Huan Tan argued for the theory of “the simultaneous destruction of the form and the spirit,” and Wang Chong suggested that “when a man dies he is not transformed into a ghost.” These latter were all critiques of the idea of the “imperishability of the soul.” The idea that the imperishability of the spirit or soul itself depended on the exercises of tempering and cultivation [in mystical or metaphysical ways] was a concept which also already existed in the tradition of China. As for the ideas of causes and effects and retribution, although these theories of Buddhism in general were not entirely similar to previously existing Chinese theories, the popular forms that they assumed during the Han Dynasty corresponded to certain ideas which the Chinese already held at the time, such as the idea in the *Kun Gua* [Changes through the Feminine Symbol] section of *Yi Jing (I Ching) [Book of Changes]* which held that “good fortune would come to those who performed good deeds, and ill fortune to those who are evil” or that “the family which accumulates good actions will be rewarded with exceedingly great causes for celebration, whereas households which pile up evil deeds will have much cause for suffering.”

By the time of the transition between the Han and the Wei dynasties, owing to the gradual expansion of Buddhism, more and more Buddhist sutras were translated into Chinese. Translations at the time included both Hinayana [Theravedic, known in Chinese as *xiao cheng*] and Mahayana [*da cheng*] sutras. Consequently, the processes by which Buddhism was popularized in China fell into two main channels: the history of the An Shigao school, which belonged to the Hinayana category, and that of the Zhi-lou-jiacan school, which belonged to the Mahayana and emphasized the teaching of *prajna* [wisdom].

9.1.2 *The An Shigao of Hinayana School*

This emphasized the teachings of *dhyana* [meditation exercises, in Chinese, *chan*]. In the first year of the reign of Jianhe of Emperor Huan of the Han Dynasty [147 A.D.], An Shigao arrived at Luoyang and began a prolific career in translating sutras. [An Shigao was the Chinese name of the Buddhist pandit who went to China from Parthia or Persia. The name An translates as tranquillity and may have derived from the monk's Persian identity, since Parthia was, at the time, and for much of Chinese history, known to the Chinese as *Anshiguo*, or land of tranquillity. We have no knowledge of the monk's Persian name—Tr.]

The most influential of his translations were the *An Ban Shou Yi Jing* [Sutra on the Maintenance of Thought by the Practice of *Anapana*] and the *Yin Chi Ru Jing* [Sutra on Entrance to Truth by Covert Maintenance]. The first described a method for practicing *chan*, or meditation exercises; it was a book on breathing methods designed to “keep one's thoughts in place,” which methods were in some ways similar to the breathing and respiration exercises and techniques espoused by the Daoists, and particularly by the School of Immortals. The latter sutra was an exposition of the esoteric significance of names and numbers in the Buddhist canons and bore some resemblance to the line-by-line and phrase-by-phrase exposition of the classics, a method of scholarship known as *zhangju xue*. This was practiced in general by many Han Confucianist scholars in their various annotations and exegeses of the Confucianist classics, often attempting to find “true” meanings that were camouflaged by the words of the scriptures.

This methodology in the studying of the Hinayana scriptures continued in the An Shigao school until at least the third generation of his disciples, chief among whom was Kang Hui the Monk [Kang Zeng Hui], who lived during the time of the Kingdom of Wu [222–280]. This school's theory of life was fundamentally based on the concept of *yuanqi* [original breath]. It maintained that “original breath” was the same as what the Chinese have called the *wu xing* [five elements or five agents] or the *wu yin* [Five Negatives of Five Feminine Qualities] [later this was translated into Buddhist terminology as the *wu yin*, or Five Inward Contents, similar in meaning and identity to the Sanskrit term *skandhas*, of which there were also five—Tr.]. The *Sutra on Entrance to Truth by Covert Maintenance* explained the *wu yin zhong* [five *yin* species] thus:

The five *yin* species make up the body. . .this is similar to the original breath [*yuanqi*]. . . the original breath contains the escalation and demotion of all things, as well as their establishment and ruin. When it reaches its end it will begin again and will continue to go on through the *triloka* [Three Realms]; it does not end, but is infinite; that is why it is called the *zhong* [species, or seed].

This brand of Buddhism believed that in the beginning, the human being was made up of the accumulation and aggregation of the five *yin* [elements]; thus the *Sutra on Entrance to Truth by Covert Maintenance* translated by An Shigao posited that “*yin* was the accumulation of all appearances.” The theory of *yuanqi* [original

breath] had been popular in China since pre-Qin times, and it flourished in the two Han dynasties. Moreover, there was an intimate connection between the idea of original breath and the issue of the form-spirit relationship for it was maintained that whereas form was made up of the *chuqi* [crude breath], the spirit was the *jingqi* [refined breath]. Such a theory had a great deal of connection with the teachings of *yangsheng* [the cultivation and nourishment of life essence] as espoused by the School of Immortality.

In the book *Lü Shi Chunqiu* [Spring and Autumn Classic by Master Lu], the point was made that in order to become immortal and to achieve *jiu shi* [long vision] the *qi*, or breath, must circulate without impediment of any kind in the body; only then will the “refined breath [spirit] be rejuvenated everyday and the evil breath be daily abated,” so that “the spirit shall reside at peace within the form and one’s days and years shall be stretched to everlasting.” At that time, the adherents of the An Shigao school of Buddhism also learned to bring together the ideas of the five *yin* and *yanqi* and claimed that, if one were able to coordinate one’s original breath well, one’s mind would be tranquil, at ease, and the body would be also free of sicknesses; whereas if the original breath were not well coordinated and if the *yin* and the *yang* in a person, and the five elements [wuxing], were not properly blended, the body would succumb to illness. The *Fo Yi Jing* [Buddha’s Medical Sutra], translated in the time of the kingdom of Wu by Zhu Luyan and Zhi Yue, said:

In the human body there are four illnesses: one is related to Earth, another to Water, a third to Fire, and a fourth to Wind. As the Wind increases, the *qi* [breath] arises; as the Fire increases, the heat arises; as the Water increases, the cold would rise; as the Earth increases, the strength [of the person] would wax. It is from these four [basic] illnesses that the four hundred and four illnesses have arisen. Earth belongs to the body, Water to the mouth, Fire to the eyes, and Wind to the ear.

Such sayings bore much resemblance to the medical theories popular during the Han Dynasty, in which emphasis was given to the methods of creating a balance or coordination system within the body for the *yanqi*. This was seen in terms of the need to orientate the development of the *yanqi* in a good or correct direction and away from the evil or wrong direction. It was felt that, if the mind and the spirit were tranquil, the person would be able not to generate or create any desires or worries and that it was only because the mind and spirit moved or acted, thereby generating thoughts, that all sorts of worries and troubles were created.

As to how all these various worries may be eliminated, the Hinayana school of *chan* or meditation believed that one simply had to nourish the mind and cultivate the spirit, in which the main thing was to “keep thoughts [*yi*] in their proper place” [namely, in the state of nonbeing or the state prior to when thoughts were created]. The meditation exercises were therefore intended to prevent the generation of thoughts or ideas by means of concentrating. The *An Ban Shou Yi Jing* said, “One must maintain one’s mind and keep it in place—i.e., before any thoughts have been generated. Once thoughts are generated the maintenance will have been

broken.” The *Chu Jing* [Sutra on Abiding in That Which Is Fixed] translated by An Shigao told the following story:

Buddha said to the gathered *bhikṣu* [mendicant disciples]: You must learn to understand all things by sitting in meditation, but you must also learn to be able to speak the words of the Law. Those who cannot do so must block out their vision and screen sounds and learn to keep their minds in place and be good at listening only within themselves. In this way they may find their way [to Enlightenment or Buddhahood]. When the congregated *bhikṣu* heard Buddha make this proclamation, their hearts were glad and understood Buddha’s words, and immediately they found the way to becoming *Arhat* [saints].

The method of keeping one’s mind in place was known as *an ban* [anapana], in which *ana* referred to inhalation and *pana* referred to exhalation. This was similar to the *tu na* breathing exercises espoused by both the Huang-Lao school and the Immortality school of Daoism (Taoism), both of which were popular in the Han Dynasty. Thus, the *An Ban Zhu Xu* [Preface to the Annotations on Anapana] written by [the monk] Dao An explained: “By *anapana* we mean exhalation [externalization] and inhalation [internalization]” and “One can entrust one’s breath to *anapana* and maintain, or preserve, simply that which is achieved already.” If one could keep one’s mind in place, so the argument went, one’s mind and spirit would become clear and serene, and if one’s mind and spirit were clear and tranquil, one would become Buddha. Thus, also Kang Hui the Monk said in the *An Ban Xu* [Preface to Anapana]:

He who cultivates *anapana* has a totally clear mind; if he should raise his eyes, there is no darkness or gloom within the scope of his vision which he may not pierce. . .there is nothing so far away in the distance that he cannot see, no sound so obscure that he cannot hear. His understanding shall encompass the uncertain, the ambiguous appearances, and the false impressions and resemblances; he shall be completely free in his existence; he shall be big enough to contain within himself all that is within the bounds of the Eight Extremes and yet also small enough to penetrate the stem of a hair or a quill. He shall control the heavens and the earth, and stay the progress of time and longevity. His godly characteristics and powers shall be so fierce as to destroy Heaven’s own arms, and he shall have the power to remove the *trisahasra* [the Three Thousand Things, or All Things] and all the temples on earth. The Eight Unthinking [Non-Thoughts] are unfathomable by even the Brahman, and the Virtuous Character of the God knows no limitations. This is the origin of the six *paramitas* [methods].

From the above, it is clear that the Hinayana *chan* [dhyana, or meditative] techniques espoused by the An Shigao school were certain ideas which had already gained popularity in China before that time through the espousal of the Huang-Lao school and the Immortality school in Daoism (Taoism) and that what we have seen was an obvious attempt to use prevalent Daoist techniques [*daoshu*] to explain and popularize Buddhism.

9.1.3 The Zhi-lou-jia-qian of Mahayana School

This system of thought was quite different as its Mahayana teachings emphasized *prajna* [wisdom]. Zhi-lou-jia-qian had a disciple called Zhi Liang and a third-generation disciple called Zhi Qian; together they were known as the

“Three Zhi’s.” Zhi-lou-jia-qian arrived in Luoyang in the last year of the reign of Emperor Huandi [167] and, in 169, translated the *Daoxing bo-re boluomi jing* [Prajnaparamita Sutra on the Cultivation of the Truth]. Later, Zhi Qian retranslated this sutra as the *Daming Du Wuji Jing* [Sutra on the Transition by Way of the Great Enlightenment to Infinite Endlessness]. This system of thought, espoused originally by Zhi Qian, emphasized that the fundamental principle of life was to make the spirit revert to its original, virginal truth or reality and that life would then conform to the *dao* [or the Way of Natural Things]. With this postulate, the ideas of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi exerted a profound influence over this particular school of Buddhism.

It becomes even more obvious that Zhi Qian’s purpose was to make Buddhism conform to the school of Chinese metaphysics which at the time had as its core the ideas of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi when in the title of his new translation of the Prajnaparamita sutra he substituted “The Great Enlightenment” or “The Great Light” for “prajna.” [Technically, the Sanskrit for the Chinese term *ming*, meaning brightness or enlightenment, is *vidya*, and not *prajna*—Tr.] This reflects the idea contained in the saying in Laozi (*Lao Tzu*) [or *Dao De jing*]: “Zhi chang yue ming” [To know the constant is Enlightenment]. Also, the translation of “paramita” as *du wu ji* [ferrying across to infinite endlessness] appears to refer to the arrival at the realm of oneness or unity with the *dao*. [Actually, the term *du*, meaning to make a crossing or transition, is contained in the Sanskrit term *paramita* itself, which means ferrying across and hence saving—Tr.] Therefore, in the annotations which Zhi Qian made for the first *pin* [folio] of the *Sutra on the Transition by Way of Great Enlightenment to Infinite Endlessness*, we find the following passage:

The teacher [Zhi Qian’s mentor Zhi Liang] said: The Bodhisattva’s mind treads on the Great Way in order to be able to understand and empathize with the Way. The mind became one with the *dao* [Way]. This takes no form; that is why it is simply described as the Void.

Here, the idea of mind “being one with the Way” seemed to be the same notion as that expressed in Daoism (Taoism) as “[having the spirit] revert no more to the *yin* corpus [i.e., the dead body], but join the *dao* (tao) in oneness.” This was described in fuller detail later on in the *Fo shuo si wen qing jing* [sic?]. [There seems to be a typographical error in the Chinese text at this point. We have not been able to identify this particular sutra as it is here presented or even a term in Buddhism corresponding to the phrase *si wen qing*. Perhaps, the term *zi* was mistaken for the character *qing* here. In Buddhism, the term *si zi qing* refers to the so-called four self-injuries, i.e., four ways in which people bring damage to their own bodies and minds. It is possible that there may have been a sutra on the subject—Tr. J translated by Fa Hu [Zhu Fahu].] This idea also bore resemblance to the notion of “simultaneously accomplishing the Deed of the Way” [yu dao ju cheng], which was described and proposed by Ruan Ji in his *Da Ren Xiansheng Zhuan* [Biographies of Great Men and Forebears]. The sentence “There is no form; therefore it is described as the Void” is very similar to Laozi’s (Lao Tzu) dictum, “The Constant Way has no form.” Therefore, it was understood that the mind and the spirit also have no traceable form.

According to people such as Zhi Qian, the human mind-spirit originated from the Way, and only various post-natural influences [such as temptations of desires and appetites] made it impossible for the mind-spirit to return to the state of being one with the Way. In order to be free of these limitations and trammels, therefore, the mind-spirit must empathize with the Way and must understand it. If the mind-spirit was capable of understanding its own original source, it would be able to once again become one with the Way and thus become Buddha. In fact, this uses the ideas of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi to explain the tenets of Buddhism.

During the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties, the metaphysical ontology of the xuanxue [Daoist metaphysics] school, which accepted Laozi (Lao Tzu)'s and Zhuangzi's ideas as its framework, was very popular. Its main focus was the questions of *ben-mo* [the relationship between the fundamental and the incidental] and *you-wu* [existence and nonexistence]. The ideas of *prajna* in Buddhist thought came very close to this sort of metaphysical thought. Therefore, at the time, it was convenient and expedient for Buddhist monks to use this sort of Chinese [Daoist] metaphysics to explain Buddhism. The methodology and approach that they adopted was a metaphysical method of the xuanxue school which moved gradually from the principle of *geyi* [study of meanings] to the principle of *de yi wang yan* [discarding the word when the meaning has been attained] or *ji yai chu yi* [extrapolating the meaning which originates from, and transcends, the word which was its temporary abode].

One very notable phenomenon of the period was that there were many similarities between the ways in which the great monks of Buddhism perceived things and the way in which the great scholars [of the Daoist metaphysical school] looked at the things of the universe. Moreover, they seemed to take pride equally in being free of worldly matters, unconventional, unconfined by normal ethical constraints, and "above it all." While the famous scholars employed the so-called *san xuan* [Three Metaphysical Observations] to develop and promote their *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics], the great monks of the period similarly used the doctrine of *san xuan* to explain the principles of Buddhism. In the Western Jin Dynasty, a renowned monk, Zhi Xiaolong, befriended such great scholars of the day as Ruan Zan and Yi Kai and became known to the people of the time as *Ba da* [He Who Reached Far in All Eight Directions]. In the Eastern Jin, Sun Zuo wrote the book *Dao xian luti* [On the Good People in the Dao] in which he compared seven famous monks to the legendary "Seven Scholars of the Bamboo Grove."

At the time, many Buddhist monks became extremely well versed in the teachings of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi. It was said in the historical record that the Monk Fahu (Zhu Fahu) "was well-read in all the Six Classics, and has been widely exposed to the teachings of all the Hundred Schools [of the pre-Qin period]." Furthermore, the Monk Zhi Dun praised the Monk Yu Falan for "having a comprehensive understanding of the meanings of the *xuanxue*." Zhi Xiaolong claimed that he himself "became a free spirit capable of roaming without restriction [*xiaoyou*] when he achieved the goal of *paoyi* [the Daoist principle of maintaining singularity, or becoming one with and undifferentiated from the Dao] and arrived at *mie* [Nirvana, or extinction] by way of the cultivation of tranquillity." The Monk

Dao Qian [Zhu Daoqian] “roamed freely for 30-some years teaching and preaching; in some cases he transmitted the teachings of the Vaipulya sutras; in others he explained the doctrines of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi.” The Monk Zhi Dun was “fond of the teachings of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi” and annotated the chapter “Xiao yao you” [The Roaming of a Free Spirit] in the book *Zhuangzi*. The Monk Dao An made a comparison between the [Daoist] doctrines of *ke dao* [the Way of Possibilities] and *chang dao* [the Constant Way] and the Buddhist doctrine of the two *satya* [*er li*]. [The two *satya* or two forms of noble statements of the truth sees dogma as existing in two forms—or the universal truth as able to be expressed in two dichotomized ways—one, the *samvriisatya* or vulgar and common statement in which truths are expressed as if phenomena are real and, two, the *paramartha-satya* or true statement by the enlightened who has already understood the true unreality and nonexistence of phenomena (Tr.)] When the Monk Hui Guan annotated the *Fa hua jing* [Saddharmap-undarika sutra, or Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law], he studied the teachings of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi. The Monk Hui Yuan was known also for having “broadly studied the Six Classics, and [he] was particularly adept at interpreting the teaching of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi.”

At the time, the majority of the famous monks preached the doctrine of *prajna*, and, as we have seen already, they were also prone to discuss, if not advocate, the teachings of Lao and Zhuang. Indeed, objectively for the most part, the Buddhist teachings introduced into China from India and other “Western countries” at the time belonged to the *prajna* school, but there were other factors which rendered the popularity of the *prajna* school in China at that time far from accidental.

In the article *Bei nai ye xu* [Preface to the Vinaya, or Discipline, Pitaka], the Monk Dao An wrote:

Of the twelve volumes herein collected, the most voluminous is the collection of Vaipulya sutras. This occurs because in this country the teachings of Lao and Zhuang have already gained much headway among the people. [These teachings] are quite similar to the teachings of the *fangdeng* [*vaipulya*] sutras; there is much that they share in common. That is why the people have already adapted their behavior and ways of life to the teachings [of our sutras].

The “vaipulya” teachings belonged to the category of the *fangdeng* [or *fangguang*, both being the general categorical title given to the Mahayana sutras]. The *prajna* [wisdom] teachings also belonged to the category of *fangdeng*. From Dao An’s explanation, we can see that the popularity of the *prajna* teachings in China during the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties had a great deal to do with the influence of Daoist metaphysics or *xuanxue*. However, even so, the major *pin* [segments] among the *prajna* sutras, namely, the *Fanguang bo-re boluomi jing* [The Prajna-paramita Sutra Emitting Light] and the *Guangzan bo-re boluomi jing* [The Prajnaramita Sutra Praising Light], did not become truly popular until the

early years of the Eastern Jin. That is why the *Jian bei jing xu* [The Account of the Gradual Fulfillment of the Sutras] said:

Although the great *pin* has appeared for some decades, at the time of its appearance the learned people for the most part did not study it or practice it. One wonders why the various masters should have done so? . . . However, this situation has gradually changed, and since [through translation] the major *pin* has arrived *in toto* [in China], there is not a single pandit today, of either East or West, who does not make it his career and goal to teach it.

The *Guangzan bo-re boluomi jing* was produced in translation by Zhu Fahu in the seventh year of the Taikang reign [286], and the *Fanguang bo-re boluomi jing* was translated by Zhu Falan in the third year of the reign of Yuankang [291]. Both became popular only in the early years of the Eastern Jin Dynasty [i.e., circa 320]. This popularity was intimately related to the sociohistorical conditions of the period. Since the Wei Dynasty and the beginning of the Jin Dynasty, there had been a continuous enlargement of the power and influence of the ruling cliques made up of the *men fa shizu* [grand noble families and gentry clans]. One can say that this influence reached its peak in the reign of Yuankang [291–299 A.D.] The subsequent “rebellion of the Eight Princes,” the invasion of the northwestern minority nationalities and their domination of the Central Chinese Plains, and the southward move of the royal house and central government of the Jin Dynasty of the Sima family accelerated the degeneration of the ruling cliques. By this time, this ruling power structure had become extremely helpless and pessimistic about its own fate and the destiny of society. It was natural, therefore, that they then turned their attention to the problems of life, death, and liberation of the individual. This was also one of the reasons for the increasing popularity of the two religions—Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism)—toward the end of the Eastern Jin Dynasty.

A society wherein people are seeking a world which transcends the mundane and real provides a very important context and purpose for the emergence of religions. For religions, they are able to propose to people that solutions can be found in their own particular worlds of fantasy for the many sufferings which exist in such common measure in the real society where they cannot be resolved, including such problems as living and dying. Buddhism is no exception to this generalization. After the introduction of *prajna* Buddhist teachings into China, it remained in a stage of translation until the Eastern Jin Dynasty. That is, the Chinese Buddhist monks had not yet formed their own understanding or interpretation of the *prajna* teachings. In the Eastern Jin, however, sects and subgroups which represented different understandings of the teachings of *prajna* Buddhism began to emerge. Later, it was as discussions and responses to the schools of *prajna* teachings which has emerged since the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The Monk Zhao [Seng Zhao] wrote the *Bu zhen kong lun* [Treatise on the Fallacy of the Doctrine of True Nothingness or Nonexistence] to criticize the refute of the three schools, namely, the *ben wu* [Original Nonexistence or Nothingness] school, the *zhi se* [identity of appearances] school, and the *xiti wu* [Nonexistence of the Mind] school; during the Song Dynasty, Tan Ji wrote the treatise *Liu jia qi zong lun* [On the Six Schools and Seven Sects]; and the Monk Jing [Zeng Jing] wrote *Shi Xiang Liu Jia Lun* [The Six Schools of the Sect of the Reality of Appearances].

We do not propose to spend much time in this essay in discussing in any detail the various *prajna* teachings popular at that time, but two notable issues were the very questions which had occupied the center of attention in the Daoist metaphysical teachings [*xuanxue*] of the Wei and Jin periods, namely, the questions of *ben-mo* [relationship between the fundamental and the incidental] and *you-wu* [substance and unreality, or existence and nonexistence]. These were the very same questions posed by the various schools of *prajna* Buddhism popular at the time. In the following paragraphs, I shall attempt to illustrate this problem by taking, in turn, the three schools contradicted and criticized by the Monk Shao in *Bu zhen kong lun*.

The meaning of the doctrine of the nonexistence of the mind [xin wu yi]. In *Bu Zen Kong Lun*, the Master Monk Shao wrote:

By saying that the mind does not really exist they [the adherent of this doctrine] are actually saying that the mind does not have existence in any thing, but they do not actually say that all things do not really have existence. This doctrine is good in that it leads people toward tranquillity of the spirit, but it is faulty in that it is really things, rather than the mind, that are empty and non-existent.

According to Ji Kang (Chi Kang), in the *Er ti yi* [The Meaning of the Two Statements]:

Those who espouse the dogma of the non-existence of the Mind have for too long taken the truth of this doctrine for granted. Even before the time of the Great Pandita Kumarajiva, and going as far back as to the time of the Masters Dao An and Zhu Fahu, this dogma has existed. Those who speak of the non-existence of the mind cite the sutras, saying: "Those who say that the nature of appearance is empty and non-existent are in fact clear that appearances cannot by themselves be empty and nonexistent but are empty or non-existent in the mind. It is because one can achieve this emptiness of vision [of the mind] that one can say that appearances are non-existent. In the final analysis, however, the appearance cannot be non-existent." Master Shao dispelled this dogma; he understood its goodness to lay in its exhortation to the tranquillity of the spirit, but he also faulted it for its ignorance of the fact that it is matter, or things, which are non-existent. To achieve tranquillity of the spirit one must indeed understand the emptiness, or non-existence, of the mind; in this respect the word of that dogma is good, but, in claiming that appearances may not themselves be non-existent, this dogma has exposed its own weakness.

The idea here is to claim that "the significance of the dogma of the nonexistence of the mind" is that "the mind, not the appearances [of matter], is empty and non-existent." To say that it is not the appearances which are nonexistent is to say that "all things are not [necessarily] non-existent." In the Tang Dynasty, in his annotations to Shao Lun So [Commentary on the Arguments of the Grand Monk Shao], Yuan Kang wrote, "It [the dogma of the non-existence of the mind] affirms that matter has substance and is not non-existent" and "it did not understand that the nature of matter is non-existence; [the Monk Shao] called this its fallacy." To "not understand that the nature of matter is non-existence" is to understand the nature of matter as substance or existence—this is an idea that bears much resemblance to the thought of Guo Xiang.

Although a Daoist metaphysician, Guo Xiang opposed the notion of "taking wu [non-existence, or nonbeing] as the point of origin." He believed that *wan you*

[all that is or all existence] does not originate from *wu* [nonexistence] or have *wu* for its original ontological reality. To Guo Xiang, *you* [existence] is the only real being, and it exists on the basis of the fact that each matter has its own *zi xiang* [particularity of nature of self-nature]. Therefore, he said, “Each matter, or thing, has its nature.” To speak of the nonexistence of the mind would therefore be to project the emptiness, or nonexistence, of the mind into all things. Yuan Kang annotated this notion, saying, “[To say that the mind is non-existent] is to say that one must also not generate a definite, appropriating mind on the basis of matter, this is what is meant by emptiness or non-existence.” This, too, was rather similar to the ideas espoused by Guo Xiang.

In annotating and commenting on the seven “inner” chapters of the book *Zhuangzi*, Guo Xiang wrote a set of essays which explained, from his viewpoint, the meaning of the title of each of those chapters. In three of these essays, Guo espoused the idea of “the non-existence of the mind [*wu xin*].” The essay on the chapter *Ren jian shi* [The Interhuman World], for example, said, “Only those who have no existence of the mind and are not self-serving can go wherever the changes Eead and yet not feel the burdens [of change].” The essay on *Da zong shi* [The Great Ancestor and Teacher] said, “Out of the great expanse of the universe and the richness of all things, there is only one thing which is worth learning from, and of which it is worth one’s while to become master, and that is the emptiness, or non-existence, of the mind.” In the essay on the chapter *Ying di wang* [Response of Emperors and Princes], Guo said, “Those who have no existence of the mind and have learned to allow changes and transformation to come whither they will and lead whither they will are worthy of becoming emperors and princes of men.” According to these sayings, it is evident that Guo Xiang believed that the sage has no existence of the mind and simply follows the [natural] course of matter and is therefore capable of “going wherever changes may lead, and feels no burden.”

Nonetheless, although we may say that the [Buddhist] doctrine on the nonexistence of the mind resembles Guo Xiang’s thinking on the subject in many ways, we have no evidence that the doctrine was directly derived from Guo Xiang’s system of thought. We can say only that at that time, under the prevailing influence of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics], Buddhism often focused on the same problems on which this school of *xuanxue* concentrated.

The meaning of the doctrine of the identity of appearances [ji se yi]. It was Zhi Dun [Zhi Daolin] who advocated the doctrine of the identity of appearances. It was said that he wrote about twenty essays [on the subject], including the *Shi zhi se ben wu yi* [The Buddha’s Notion of the Identity of Appearances Originating in Nothing], the *Ji se you xuan lun* [Treatise on the Free Roaming in the Realm of Metaphysics of the Doctrine of the Identity of Appearances], the *Miao guan zhang* [The Chapter on the Wondrous Vision or Meditation], and the *Xiao yao lun* [Treatise on Free Roaming]. Most of these have been lost and only fragments remain. In the segment *Wenxue* [Literature] in the book *Shi shuo xin yu* [New Specimens of the Talk of the Times], Zhi Dun’s essay *Miao guan zhang* [Chapter on the Wondrous Vision or Meditation] was cited in one of the notes, and in this

citation [the article to which it was attached was itself lost], a certain fragmentary passage read as follows:

The nature of appearances is that appearances do not exist naturally or in and of themselves. Since appearances do not exist naturally or in and of themselves, there are appearances that are kong [empty, or insubstantial]. That is why we say: Appearance [se] is empty, and yet appearance is also separate, or different, from emptiness.

Furthermore, in the *Shao Lun Shu* [Commentary on the arguments of the Grand Monk Shao], the Monk Hui Da was quoted as saying:

The Master of the Laws [*fashi*] Zhi Daolin said, in the *Ji se lun* [Treatise on the Identity of Appearances]: I believe that the saying: “The identity of appearances is emptiness, not that the appearances perish, but that they are empty, or nonexistent” is a most correct statement. (This saying is derived from the text of the *Wei mo jing* [*Vimalakirti nirdeśa Sutra*].) Why? Because the nature of appearances lies in that appearances are not by themselves naturally appearances. Although they are appearances, they are empty.

The saying that “appearances are not by themselves appearances” meant that physical phenomena do not have their own nature or character [*zi xing*, or self-nature]. The saying, “appearances do not exist by themselves or naturally” meant that there are no supporting materials or substances behind things in the natural state. By “self-nature” [*zi xing*], we are actually referring to “substance in itself” [*zi ti*] or ontological substance [*ben ti*]. If things did not have their own substances, although there are myriad separate and diverse phenomena, they are all not real. This is the reasoning behind stating that “although they are appearances, they are empty”; i.e., although there are myriad diverse phenomena, there is in reality not a single true substance. In the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties, the term *kong* [emptiness] was often conceived to be interchangeable with the term *wu* [nonexistence, nonbeing], and *xuanxue* scholars [metaphysicians] [or adherents of the Buddhist religion who were influenced by the ideas of *xuanxue*] of the day often also argued that *kong* [emptiness or insubstantiality or unreality] or interchangeably *wu* [nonexistence] was the ontological substance of all things. (This, for instance, was the contention of the *ben wu yi* [Doctrine of the Nonexistence of Origin], with which we shall be soon dealing.) Therefore, on the point that it made regarding the absence of ontological substance behind matter, or things, Zhi Dun’s idea also came very close to the ideas of Guo Xiang.

The notion of “the non-existence of substance” [*wu-ti*] proposed that behind *se* [phenomena or appearances], there is no ontological substance in the *kong* or *wu* [i.e., the *kong* (emptiness) or *wu* (nonexistence) is not actually ontological substance for the *se* (appearances)]. Although there is phenomenon, there is no ontological substance, and thus “Appearances are also separate from emptiness.” Since there is no ontological substance to appearances, one cannot say that it is only when appearances have perished that they become “empty” [or, revert to emptiness]—hence the saying: “Not that appearances perish, but that they are empty.” From this angle, Zhi Dun’s *Ji se lun* [Treatise on the Identity of Appearances] could have been more appropriately called the *Je se ben wu yi* [Doctrine of the Identity of Appearances Originating in Nothing]. From one angle, Zhi Dun’s idea appeared to be quite similar

to Guo Xiang's thought, as when they seemed to hold in common a belief that there is no ontological substance behind things. From another facet, however, their ideas were different. Zhi Dun's belief, as we have seen, was that if things did not have ontological substance behind them, it meant that things were "empty" to begin with.

From the angle of their separate interpretations of the essay, *Xiao yao you* [Free Roaming] in the book *Zhuangzi*, it becomes even more obvious that there were differences between Zhi Dun's ideas and Guo Xiang's thought. According to the "Zhi Dun zhuan" [The Biography of Zhi Dun] in *Gao Seng Zhuan* [The Biographies of the Great Monks]:

Liu Xizhi *et al.*, when discussing the chapter *Xiao yao bian* of the book *Zhuangzi*, said: "Each must accommodate its own nature and only then can it roam totally freely." Dun [Zhi Dun] disagreed, saying: "That is wrong. Jie [a tyrant, and last ruler of the Xia Dynasty] and Qi [a notorious bandit and rebel of the late Spring and Autumn period] are by nature cruel and ruinous. If it were indeed all right, and necessary, for each to accommodate its own nature, would not Jie and Qi also be free roaming now?" On that [Zhi Dun] retired to write his own annotation of the *Xiao yao bian*.

The idea of "each accommodating its own nature and thereby becoming a free roaming spirit" was, of course, precisely the dominant thought in Guo Xiang's own annotation and interpretation of the *Xiao yao bian*. In the prefatorial note of his commentary to this chapter of *Zhuangzi* in which he laid down his arguments by way of explaining the chapter's title, he said:

Although things may differ in size, if they were each placed in its own appropriate place, where it fits the circumstances, each matter would be able to let loose its own nature and each thing will be suited to its ability; each will be in its proper portion, and all things will be equally free to roam. How then can differences be driven between things?

Moreover, the first annotation in Guo Xiang's annotative commentary on *Xiao yao you* read, in part,

Zhuangzi's general idea was that one must be essentially free to roam and travel totally free of confinements. One must therefore obtain oneself—be independent—by putting oneself in non-action. Therefore the smallest is also the greatest. One must hence understand the principle of fitting one's nature to one's portion.

From the above, we can see that it was precisely to this idea of Guo Xiang's that Zhi Dun objected. What then were Zhi Dun's own views on "the freely roaming spirit"? The full text of his commentary on the *Xiao yao bian* is no longer extant. However, a fragment of it was cited by an annotation in the *Wenxue* [Literature] portion of *Shi shuo xin yu*:

Xiaoyao [free roaming] means the fulfillment of the enlightenment of the mind of the Ultimate Man. The Young Master Zhuang established through the Word the Great Way, by putting his ideas into the words of the roc [*peng*] and the wren [*yan*]. The roc's pathway of life is a broad one; to accommodate it he has to lose himself outside of his own body; the wren, on the other hand, is but close to the ground, yet it jeered at that which was far away and high up in the heavens. He had a sense of arrogance and conflict in his own mind. The Ultimate Man rides on the wings of the Propriety of Heaven and is glad; he roams in the realm of Infinity and is entirely footloose. To objectify objects and not be objectified by objects is to roam freely and not return to one's condition; to contain a sense of *xuan* [the metaphysical principle] and not to engage in action, to move swiftly and yet without

any haste, is to roam freely and be able to go wherever one wishes. That is what is meant by *xiaoyao*. If one had a desire in one's mind which has to be met, and if one is content with meeting the desires whose fulfillment meant contentment, then, though one's happiness may appear similar to natural naivete, it would, in fact, be nothing but like the desire of the thirsty for the contentment of a single drink. How can one lose the sense of luxurious food simply because one has been filled up by one good dinner? Or can we put an end to the reality of the grandeur of the ceremonial wine after we have imbibed some rich quaff? The Ultimate Man does not speak of *xiaoyao* [free roaming] until he is truly satisfied.

It was Guo Xiang's belief that although things differed in magnitude, they were equal in terms of the ability to "roam freely" under the principle of "each according to its own nature." From this opinion, Zhi Dun differed. In his point of view, whether or not one was capable of roaming freely depended on one's perspective. If one could "objectify all objects and not be objectified by objects" [i.e., be in control of all things and not be oneself trammled by things] and "contain a sense of *xuan* [the metaphysical principle] and not engage in action, be swift without being in any haste" [i.e., respond objectively to all things and yet not ask, or need, anything of things; respond to change but not change oneself], then one would be capable of "free roaming" that is indeed worthy of that description.

On the other hand, Zhi Dun believed that if one were to "roam" only to satisfy the requirements of one's own nature and portion, then it would be nothing more than a hungry man seeking a meal or a thirsty man asking for the gratification of a drink. To him, such low levels of demand and satisfaction cannot be considered "free roaming." Therefore, only that which satisfies the ultimate can be called "roaming freely." Zhi Dun thought of "satisfying the Ultimate" as "riding the wings of the Propriety of Heaven" (according to *Zhuang zi's* text, the proper citation should have been "the Propriety of Heaven and Earth") and "being glad, traveling in the realm of Infinity and being completely unconfined." This meant living in the universe and yet not being limited by the limited world and absolutely transcending of the world of matter and being unconfined, unfettered in thought. That is what he meant when he said, "To roam freely is to attain the full enlightenment of the mind of the Ultimate Man." In Zhi Dun's view, "roaming freely" depended solely on the ability of the mind of the Ultimate Man to transcend the limitations of time and space.

Another essay that Zhi Dun wrote, known by the title *Ji se you xuan lun* [Treatise on Free Roaming in the Realm of the Metaphysical by the Doctrine of the Identity of Appearances], is also no longer extant. It is possible to deduce, however, that it contained a theory which was derived from a combination of his "doctrine of the identity of appearances" [*ji se yi*] and his doctrine of "free roaming" [*xiao yao yi*]. If the Ultimate Man was able to realize the principle that "appearances are not by themselves appearances" [*se bu zi se*], then he would be able to "objectify all things and not be objectified by them" and to "contain a sense of the principle of the metaphysical and not engage in action, to be swift and yet not in haste"; such a person would "roam freely everywhere and be able to go wherever he wishes." In other words, such a person's mind would be fully capable of transcending all the limitations of time and space. Therefore, in Zhi Dun's view, to become

Buddha meant, in fact, to roam freely and to become completely unconfined by convention—this was precisely the same goals which the *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] scholars strove to achieve. From this viewpoint, there is, between his “doctrine on free roaming in the realm of the metaphysical by the principle of the identity of appearances” [*ji se you xuan lun*] and his “doctrine of the identity of appearances originating in nothingness” [*ji se ben wu lun*], no inconsistency of theoretical contradiction.

From the above analysis, we can see that the questions discussed in Zhi Dun’s doctrine of the identity of appearances were the same as those which were raised in the circle of *xuanxue*. Furthermore, from his own views on the question of *xiao yao* [free roaming], we can see that he was himself a *xuanxue* scholar [Daoist metaphysician]. Although his views differed from those of Guo Xiang, they were in fact quite close to the original ideas of Zhuang Zhou [Zhuangzi].

The Meaning of the Doctrine of Original Nothingness [*ben wu yi*]. From the *Liu jia qi zong lun* [Treatise of the Six Schools and Seven Sects] written by the Monk Tan Ji and the *Zhong Lun Shu* [Commentary on the *Prannyaya mula sastrika* or Treatise of the Meditation of the Mean] written by the Monk Ji Kang (Chi Kang), the *ben wu yi* [doctrine of Original Nothingness] bifurcated into two major channels. One was the *ben wu zong* [School of Original Nothingness] and the other was known as the *ben wu yi zong* [the Variant Sect of Original Nothingness]. The former school espoused the form of the doctrine as championed by the Monk Dao An; the latter was espoused by the Pandita Shen [or Fa Shen, a.k.a. Zhu Daoqian]. In reality, they resembled each other in major ways and differed only in minor areas. Here, therefore, we shall not dwell on the differences but analyze only Dao An’s “doctrine or original nothingness” [*ben wu*] in order to illustrate the relationship of this doctrine to the teachings of *xuanxue*.

In the *Zhong lun suo*, Ji Kang (Chi Kang) wrote:

Before the arrival of Kumarajiva the Pandita, there were three schools of Buddhist teachings in Changan [the Tang Dynasty capital of China]. One was the school of the Monk [Shi] Dao An, which was represented by his teachings on Original Nothingness, in which he argued that *wu* [nothingness, or nonbeing] existed prior to all creation and that *kong* [emptiness or non-existence] was the beginning of all forms. He also argued that what was holding people back [from their enlightenment] was the sense of *you* [existence, or being] when *you* is in fact a product rather than a point of origin. If people could only rest their minds in contentment with Original Nothingness, they would be able to quell all devious thought. . . . To understand this significance is to maintain tranquillity in the universal enlightenment of Original Nothingness. All the myriad *dharma* [fa, or things] have, as their original nature, emptiness and extinction; that is what we mean when we say Original Nothingness.

This quotation suggests that Dao An first of all posited that the prior existence of all *dharma*, together with all their forms and phenomena, was *wu* [nothingness, or nonbeing] and *kong* [emptiness or nonexistence]. However, *kong wu* [nonexistence and emptiness, or nonbeing] was not the same as *xu kong* [void]. Dao An, therefore, said “*Wu* [non-existence] existed before the original transformation [or creation]; *kong* [emptiness] was the beginning of all forms [formed substance]; that is what we mean when we speak of original nothingness. This does not mean that it was from a

[specific] void that all things were given birth.” (See the citation of Tan Ji’s *Liu jia qi zong lun* in the *Ming Zeng Zhuan chao* [Handcopy of the Biographies of the Renowned Monks].) Therefore, when Dao An argued that “the *wan you* [all things] were generated from *kong wu*” [emptiness and non-existence], the term *kong wu* did not mean *xu kong* [void]; the meaning, rather, was that *kong* [emptiness] or *wu* [nonexistence] was the original ontological substance of *wan you* [all things]. Only in this way could it exist “prior to all existences” [*wan you*].

It should be noted that Dao An’s understanding of the *Kong zong* [Emptiness Sect, or Sect of Nonbeing] in Buddhist *prajna* teaching was not quite in conformity to that sect’s understanding of its own teachings, in which “Original Nothingness” seemed to have been taken to mean that “all dharma did not originally have a nature unto themselves [*zi xing*]” or, in other words, nothing has a real ontological substance in itself. (We shall have more to say on this issue later.) Instead, Dao An’s doctrine of Original Nothingness can be said to have borne certain resemblances to Wang Bi’s idea of “accepting *wu* [nonexistence] as the origin” [*yi wu wei ben*]. In fact, it may be closer even to the ideas of Zhang Zhan. Like Wang Bi, Zhang Zhan posited “non-existence as the origin” [*yi wu wei ben*], but when he spoke of *wu* [nonexistence], he seemed to have been referring to something outside of [and over and above] *you* [existence]. For example, he said: “Because there is such a thing as Ultimate Non-existence [*zhi wu*], it can therefore be the origination and source of all changes and transformations [from which came creation].” He also said: “That which is not born can therefore be the origin of all that is born.” In these illustrations, Zhang Zhan affirmed in his mind that there was, above and beyond *wan you* [all existence], a transcendental absolute which served as the origin from which and by which all existence is born.

This viewpoint differed substantially from that of Wang Bi. Wang believed that although “nonexistence” [*wu*] was the ontological substance of “existence,” it did not exist outside of *you*. He said: “Non-existence cannot be without name; it must have cause in existence.” Also, Wang believed that substance [*ti*] cannot be divorced from usage. He said: “We shall take non-existence for usage; we cannot abandon non-existence as substance alone.” On the other hand, Dao An, when he talked of Original Nothingness, saw *wu* [nonexistence] as existing prior to *wan you* [all existences, or all being]. He was, therefore, closer to Zhang Zhan’s ideas. Furthermore, Dao An, in a way similar to Zhang Zhan, even used the “theory of the Original Breath, or Spirit” [*yuan qi lun*] to explain the construction of the Universe and the formation of all things. It was thus recorded in Tan Ji’s *Liu jia qi zong lun*:

In the first place, thus spoke the Founder of the Sect of Original Nothingness: *Ru lai* [He That Was as He Came, i.e., Buddha] came to prosper the world. He taught the doctrine of Original Nothingness to extend his teachings. That is why the profound *vaipulya* sutras all contain enlightenment on the doctrine of the original nothingness of the *wu yin* [the five negative elements, or agencies]. For the longest time, the doctrine of original nothingness has been accepted and broadened. . . . How so? Prior to primal and Covert Creation, there was nothing but the frame. It was when the Original Spirit or Breath began to mold and transform that the myriad phenomena began to be endowed with forms. . . . This is not to say that it is out of Emptiness that the many things were born. What holds people back is that

they remain stagnated [in their understanding] in the realm of the *you* [being] which is merely the product, or result [and not the origin]. If a person is capable of investing his mind in the Original Nothingness, he would be able to shed this very burden. This is what we mean when we say that, if only one would pursue and exalt the origin, the inconsequential ends would be put to rest.

By *wu* [nonexistence], Dao An meant the original spirit or breath [*yuan qi*] which he conceived to be a frame without form or phenomenon. This viewpoint was consistent with the interpretation which the Buddhist monks, from the Han-Wei period up to this time, held with regard to the notion of the formation of the universe and followed from those interpretations. The Monk Kang Hui, when he translated the *Liu Du Ji Jing* [Collected Sutra of the Six Paramitas], wrote, in its volume 8, under the *Cha Wei Wang Jing* [Sutra of the Observations of the Covert Meanings of the Words of the King]:

What we have observed has rendered us profoundly aware that, when Man was in a primitive original state, he was born of the Original Nothingness. Then the Original Breath became differentiated: that part which was solid and strong became earth, that which was soft became water, that which was warm became fire, and that which was mobile became wind. . . . These four things met in harmony and the Knowing Spirit was born. Arising, it became enlightened as to its capacities and senses, and it ceased to desire, becoming thus empty of mind, and the spirit was reverted to Original Nothingness. This Breath, or Spirit, of the Knowing and the Origin was delicate, subtle, and imperceptible.

Again, in the *Yin Chi Ru Jing Zhu* [Annotations to the Sutra of the Entrance to Truth by Way of Covert Maintenance], the *wu yin zhong* [Five Negative Elements species] were described as being “akin to the *yuan qi* [original breath or spirit].” Therefore, the idea was not that “all existences” were born of “emptiness,” but that “all existences” came about as the result of the transformation of the original breath or spirit which had neither form nor phenomenon. All things were born of this formless, phenomenon-less original breath or spirit, and man was no exception.

The argument continues that man was confused because he was holding on to the various forms and appearances which had temporary existence, but if he was able to comprehend that *wu* [nonexistence] existed before the myriad transformations and that *kong* [emptiness] was the origin of the many forms, he would be able to revert to his own source, transcend life and death, become delivered, and merge as one with the universe and all things, that is, attain the *dao* (tao) [way] and revert to the *yuan qi* [original spirit]. Therefore, in Dao An’s doctrine of Original Nothingness, the key to deliverance was to eliminate the incorrect understanding of things. In nonaction and absence of desire and purity of the mind, one would be able to achieve that state of being “commensurate with the Ultimate Emptiness and roam with the Creator Force in tranquil and serene happiness.” (See *Ren Ben Yu Sheng Jing Zhu* [Annotations on the Sutra on the Origin of the Life of Man in Desires].)

The way to deliverance described by Dao An was almost identical to that proposed by Zhang Zhan. Zhang believed that if man were able to relinquish all tenets and understand the origins and the ultimate destinations of life and death—i.e., that man came from the Ultimate Emptiness and shall return unto that Ultimate Emptiness, man would be able to attain deliverance and become the Ultimate

Being, which has attained the dao (tao) [way]. Furthermore, the Ultimate Being is one “whose mind has been re-joined, re-connected with the Original Spirit or Breath, and whose body, covertly, was in harmony with the Yin and Yang.” (See the book *Lie Zi Zhu* [Annotations on *Lie Zi*].)

In the *Bu zhen kong lun* [Treatise on the Fallacy of the Doctrine of True Nonexistence], the Monk Shao criticized the doctrine of Original Nothingness, saying:

The advocates of Original Nothingness align their sentiments on the side of *wu* [nothingness] and then write their words of teaching to support that argument. They refute, to begin with, the notion of existence and say that *you* [existence or being] was in fact *wu* [non-existence]. Even if one refuted the notion of non-existence will nonetheless still be nonexistence. The original meaning of the Buddhist canons is that *fei you* [not being] is not really being and that *fei wu* [not nonbeing] is not really non-being. Why must one insist on refuting the notion of being and say that “this being is not,” or refute the notion of non-being and say that “non-being is not”?

What this passage says is: The school of Original Nothingness maintains a biased affinity for *wu* [nonbeing]. They accept the idea that nonbeing is the ontological substance of reality, and all its arguments are based on this philosophy of nonbeing. Therefore, the adherents of this school do not recognize *you* [being]; rather, they believe that being cannot be divorced from nonbeing; i.e., they accept “nonbeing as the origin.” They believe, moreover, that nonbeing itself could not be separated from nonbeing; i.e., they maintain the notion of the fundamentality of nonbeing, insist upon it, and see nonbeing as true nonbeing. However, according to the original intent of the Buddhist sutras, what is important, and to be maintained, was that “not being” is not truly being [*fei you bu shi zhen di you*] and not nonbeing is also not truly nonbeing [*fei wu ye bu shi zhen di wu*]. Why, therefore, should anyone insist that “not being” meant the nonbeing of any particular thing or that “not nonbeing” meant the absence of any particular nonbeing?

From the above, it appears that the Monk Shao took the original intent of the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of *prajna* Buddhism as his point of departure in criticizing the doctrine of Original Nothingness and its adherents for their insistence on *wu* [nonexistence] and their failure to comprehend that “nonbeing” was itself a *jia ming* [false name, or illusion] and not a real being. His argument, ultimately, was that only “the refutation of both being and nonbeing” was the true principle taught by Buddhism. In doing so, in the *Bu zhen kong lun* [Treatise on the Fallacy of the Doctrine of True Nothingness], the Monk Shao criticized not only the doctrine of Original Nothingness itself but also Wang Bi’s idea of “valuing nothingness” and Guo Xiang’s idea of “exalting being” as well and thereby developed [not just Buddhist teachings but also] the teachings of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] of the Wei and Jin periods.

The Meaning of the Doctrine of Non-real, Nonexistence, or Emptiness [*bu shen kong yi*]. It can be argued that the criticism contained in the Monk Shao’s *Bu zhen kong lun* of the three schools of *prajna* Buddhism which were popular in China at that time was based on the original intent of the Indian teachings of Buddhist *prajna*. By positing that “emptiness is not real” [*bu zhen kong*], he suggested that

all things do not truly exist, or that all things not truly are, but rather the existence of all things is unreal, and that that is why we can call [existence] *kong* [emptiness or unreality]. In other words, “emptiness” equals “unreality.” This was the Chinese expression of the fundamental premise of the *Kong zong* [Emptiness school] of Indian Buddhist *prajna* teaching, namely, the premise that “all *fa* [*dharma*, or things] do not have ontological self-substance” [*zhu fa ben wu zi xing*].

The Monk Shao said that the *Zhong lun* [Treatise on the Mean] posited the paradox that while, from one angle, “all *fa* [*dharma*] were not existent,” from another angle, “all *fa* were also, and at the same time, not non-existent.” He argued that to understand this principle of “not being and yet not nonbeing” would be to understand the ultimate truth. This is because, he argued, although there were very many things of various forms and appearances, under analysis they can all be found to be formed only by causes and effects and their combinations and have no *zi xing* [self-nature, or ontological substance, or reality in and of themselves]. This would therefore be “nonexistence.” On the other hand, although all *dharma* had no real ontological substance, there were nonetheless phenomena in many diverse forms and appearances, and *dharma* was therefore also “not nonexistence.” Hence, he argued, one cannot say that there are no things, but only that there are no *real* things.

In what way, then, can there be such “unreal existence” [*jia you*]? According to the Monk Shao’s interpretation of *Zhong lun*, all things are formed of the combinations and permutations of causes and effects and therefore have no ontological substance. However, once made up by the combination of causes and effects, things also then become “not nonexistent” and cannot be said to be fundamentally nonexistent. By further applying logical reasoning to this issue, the Monk Shao concluded that this principle was the very basic truth. If “being” was “real being,” he argued, “being” would have existed at the beginning and should exist to the very end, and there would have been no need to wait for the combination of causes and effects to bring “being” into existence. If, on the other hand, “nonbeing” was real nonbeing, “nonbeing” itself should also have existed at the very beginning and to the very end, and there would also have been no need to wait for the combination of causes and effects to bring about “nonbeing.”

If one were to accept that “being” cannot be “being in itself,” but had to wait for the combination of causes and effects to bring it into being, then one would be able to realize that “being” was not “real being.” He said, “Being is not real being; therefore, though there is being, we do not say that there is real being.” At the same time, one must also say that there is “not nonbeing.” If there was real “nonbeing,” it would be monolithic and totally immobile [*zhan ran bu dong*] [i.e., totally incapable of transformation], and no phenomenon could then be generated. Only such a totally immobile “nonexistence” could be called “real nonexistence.” Therefore, if we were to say that “all *fa*” [*dharma*] were “truly nonexistent,” there would not be the generation of all *fa*, and nothing would come of causes and effects. Since “all *fa*” do come as a result of causes and effects, then one cannot say that there is real “nonexistence.”

Both in terms of contents and methodology, one can say that the Monk Shao’s *Bu zhen kong lun* was closer in meaning to the original intents of Indian Buddhist

prajna teaching. It was not by accident that his doctrine of the *Bu zhen kong lun* came about; it was, rather, because by that time two conditions had already come into existence. The first was the fact that Kumarajiva was already in possession of the various sutras that provided full explanation [to the Chinese] of the *prajna* teachings, such as *Da zhi du lun* [Treatise on the Paramita, or ferrying across by way of the Great Wisdom] and *Zhong lun* [Treatise on the Mean] and *Bai lun* [The Hundred Treatises] and *Shi er men lun* [Treatise on the Twelve Sects]. This made it possible by that time to have a clearer understanding of the teachings of the Indian *prajna* school of Buddhism. The second was that contemporary developments in the teachings of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] made it possible for such theories as “nonbeing and yet not nonbeing” [*fei you fei wu*] to appear in the Chinese mind and exert an impact on Chinese thinkers (more on this later).

9.2 The Interaction Between the Imported Ideological Culture—Buddhism—And the Previously Existing Ideological Culture of China

The question of the importation of an alien ideological culture and its interaction with an existing native ideological culture is a very complicated one, and there is great significance in studying this problem. Our country’s philosophical thinking [and, in fact, its entire culture and society] underwent a major transformation in the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties and the North and South dynasties; it can easily be said that the introduction of Buddhism was one of the most significant causes of this transformation. As for China Buddhism was an alien ideological culture, it is very helpful to study the interaction between the two and the process by which this alien ideological culture integrated with China’s own preexisting traditional ideological culture. This would include its development from being formalistically attached to the body of China’s traditional ideological culture, to emerging with its own characteristics which clearly conflicted with and were contradictory to China’s ideological culture, and finally to becoming an integral part of the Chinese ideological culture.

The formation of an ideological culture is certain to have its roots in social history; thus, in the history of the world, various ideological cultures have emerged which are separate and different in both type and form. To understand the characteristics of an ideological culture and the level of its development, one must compare it with other ideological cultures. If we were to compare the Buddhism introduced into China during the period of the Wei, Jin, and North and South dynasties with what existed at that time as China’s native traditional ideological culture, we would be able to understand more profoundly not only the characteristics and level of development of that traditional Chinese ideological culture but also the reasons for which an alien ideological culture was able to be assimilated by the Chinese. The method of analytically studying the comparisons between the

ideological culture of one nation [or country or region] and that of another is known as comparative philosophy, which is guided by Marxist thought.

Another significant phenomenon which emerged in the period of the Wei, Jin, and North and South dynasties was the Daoist religion. This was formed in the late years of the Eastern Han Dynasty and acquired its own theoretical system. Although it can be said that the formation of the Daoist religion was influenced or stimulated by the introduction of Buddhism, it was nonetheless a religion peculiar to the Chinese, particularly to the Han people, and was bound, therefore, to have characteristics which set it apart from Buddhism. Prior to the Wei and the Jin, Buddhism had just been introduced and in the early stages of its introduction had been grafted to the already existing body of the *daoshu* [Daoist techniques and crafts]. Hence, the contradictions between the two religions, although already real, were not obvious or outstanding. Since the Wei and Jin, however, because the Daoist religion's own system of thought and theory had gradually formed and because Buddhism, as an imported alien ideological culture, needed to shed gradually its own earlier attachment to the preexisting native ideological culture, the contradictions and conflict between the two religions became daily more acute and intensified. If we were to analyze and draw comparisons [between these two religions] on the issues upon which they debated, it would be easy for us to see more clearly the characteristics of the Daoist religion as well as the mutual influence which their two religions had upon one another in the midst of their contradictions and polemical struggles. This is the task of those who undertake the study of comparative religion. At this time, we ought also to develop and promote this field of investigation, so that we may form a comparative study of religions, guided, also, by Marxist thought.

What were the most notable characteristics in Buddhism after it was introduced into China and as it became popularized and developed in China? What are the ones we should study and what general laws [of development] can we extract from [such a study]? What conclusions can be drawn? In the following discussion, we shall suggest three major problem areas for analysis.

9.2.1 Adaptation to Tradition

When Buddhism was introduced into China, at first it was grafted upon the body of preexisting Chinese ideological culture; then, it gradually developed on its own and began to exert its own influence on that culture and Chinese society. It should be understood that Buddhism did not have a great deal of influence immediately after its introduction.

After being introduced into China in the Han Dynasty, Buddhism at first attached itself to the *daoshu*. In the Wei and Jin period, because of the popularity and influence of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics], Buddhism switched and was attached to the latter. During the time of the Han Dynasty, the central tenets of [Chinese] Buddhism were “the imperishability of the soul, or spirit,” and “causes and effects.”

These were ideas that were already originally carried within traditional Chinese thought or, in some cases, were at least similar in ways to certain ideas which already existed in Chinese philosophical traditions. Furthermore, the Hinayana methods of *chan* meditation [*dhyam*] which were preached at that time also generally were quite similar to the breathing exercises taught by the Huang-Lao School of Daoism (Taoism) and the Immortality [*shen xian jia*] school. By the time of the Wei and Jin Daoist, metaphysical teachings had become popular, and, since Kong zong [the Emptiness sect] of Buddhist *prajna* teachings was somewhat similar to these Daoist metaphysical teachings, this branch of Buddhism was therefore able to gain popularity by attaching itself to the body of *xuanxue*. However, it was not until Kumarajiva translated the sutras and commentaries [*sastras*] such as the *Zhong lun* that the Chinese understanding of the teachings of the Kong zong of Indian Buddhist *prajna* philosophy came close to capturing the original intents of those teachings. From the above brief description, we can see that, when Buddhism was first introduced into China, it had first to exist as an attachment, or graft, on the body of some previously existing ideology, and only thus was it able to achieve popularity of its own.

There is one question here which needs to be raised and calls for some discussion. When Zhi-lou-jian translated the *Dao Xing Jing* [Sutra on the Practice, or Way, of the Truth] in the year 179 A.D., there was in it a *pin* [segment or folio] known as the *ben wu pin* [segment of Original Nothingness]. This appeared long before the [*xuanxue*] ideas of *gui wu* [exalting nothingness] and *yi wei ben* [taking nothingness as the origin] which are identified with He Yan [190–249] and Wang Bi [226–249]. Does this then mean that Wang and He's idea of "taking nothingness as the origin" was a product, a result of the influence of Buddhism? We do not believe that this is the answer; it would accord with the facts of the historical record to think that Daoist metaphysical thinking [or *xuanxue*] was generated only under the influence of Buddhism. First of all, the formation of Daoist metaphysical thinking responded to the social needs at the time. Moreover, the emergence of *xuanxue* should be considered in the light and context of other intellectual developments, either of the period or slightly earlier. These include the development of the teachings of *ming li zhi xue* [on names and principles] and the distinction between *cai* [ability] and *xing* [nature, or character] which appeared during the interim period between the fall of the Han and the rise of *Wei*, as well as the revival of various schools of Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), the School of Names [*Ming jia*] and Legalism, and their mutual intersection and influence. This makes it possible to see that, from the angle of certain inevitable trends in ideological and intellectual development, this emergence of *xuanxue* was a product of the natural processes of China's indigenous intellectual evolution.

We have not found any convincing evidence that Wang Bi and He Yan were influenced by Buddhism. Even if one or two pieces of evidence were to be discovered indicating that Wang, He, and company may have been in contact with the Buddhism of the day, either directly or indirectly, nonetheless we must still maintain that the ideas of *xuanxue* were products of the development of preexisting indigenous Chinese ideas themselves. Furthermore, there is a great

deal of evidence showing that by and large, during the Han-Wei period, the Chinese officer-scholar gentry did not in the least think highly of Buddhism. For instance, Mouzi in *Li huo lun* [Treatise on the Disposition of Error] said for the record that “the people of the age, and scholars, mostly sneer at it [i.e. Buddhism] and defame it” and “we have not heard that, among the rules and teachings accepted by the five talents or among the discussions taken up in the Forest of Confucianist Scholars, the practicing of the ways of Buddha is valued or self-disfigurement is esteemed.”

One thing serves to illustrate this point even more clearly and conclusively, namely, that while in the *prajna* Buddhist teachings of the time the term *ben wu* [Original Nothingness] was used, it did not mean the same thing as Wang Bi’s idea of *yi wu wei ben* [taking nothingness to be the origin]. In the various *prajna* sutras, the idea of *ben wu* was taken to mean that “all *fa* [*dharmas*] do not have ontological self-substance” [*zhu fa ben wu zi xing*]¹—that is, that all things did not, in and of themselves, have real substance. This, in fact, negated the notion that there was original substance to things. When Wang Bi spoke of *ben wu* [Original Nothingness], on the other hand, he meant that “nothingness was the original substance”—that is, ontological reality—of existence [*wu shi you di ben li*].

The Buddhist teachings that were imported into China in the Wei-Jin period were for the most part teachings of the Mahayana *prajna* Kong zong [Emptiness school]. Its fundamental premise was that “all things did not originally have ontological substance, or self-substance” [*zi xing*]. In this, the term *fa* [*dharmas*] referred to all things, material but also spiritual. These were known as *adharma* in the Buddhist sutras. In the *Da bo-re jing* [Great Collection of Prajna Sutras], volume 556, we find the following passage:

Take ourselves, for instance; we are, ultimately, not life. We are *jia ming* [false names or unreal names] [i.e., we are illusions, or falsehoods.] We have no *zi xing* [self-nature, or nature in and of ourselves]. Likewise, all *dharmas*—they too are nothing but false names, and no nature in and of themselves. What is *se* [appearance]? It cannot be assumed and cannot be born. What is *shou* [acceptance, or destiny] or *xiang* [thought] or *xing* [action] or *shi* [perception, or understanding]? They, too, are incapable of being assumed or being born.

The Kong zong [Emptiness school] of *prajna* teaching believed that while people have always held to the notion that there was something which could be called *you wu* [having oneself, or self-existence], i.e., *zi ti* [self-substance], they have done so without realizing that “self” was nothing but the combination produced by the five elements [*wu yin*] of *se* [appearance], *shou* [acceptance or destiny], *xiang* [thought], *xing* [action], and *shi* [perception or understanding]. They were indeed wrong to have believed that there was such a thing as “self.” How could “self” exist apart from or independent of these five elements? Therefore, it argued the term “self” was really nothing but a hypothesis, an unreal name [*jia ming*], and did not contain any self-nature. Not only was this true of people but of all *dharmas* [things] as well. Therefore, the *Guan si ti pin* [Segment of the Meditation on the Catvariarya satyani, or Four Noble True Statements] in the *Zhong lun* argued:

The various causes and effects generate the *dharmas*. The idea of self is but an idea of emptiness, and also a false name. This is the meaning of the Central Way, or the Mean.

The argument here, apparently, was that, since all things were generated by causes and effects, there is in reality no such thing as *zi xing* [self-nature, or real self-substance] but only *kong* [nonexistence]. The idea of self, therefore, is itself a “nonexistence.” However, although things did not contain “self-substance,” there are, nonetheless, all sorts of separate phenomena in the world after all. What then are such things? To say that, they do not have real existence; still possible, however, are all sorts of *unreal* existences or phenomena. For purposes of convenience, the argument went, these are given hypothetical, or false, names. The *Fang guang bo-re jing* [Prajnaparamita Sutra Emitting Light] said:

Buddha spoke thus to Subhuti [One of the Ten Major Disciples of Buddha, said to have been the best exponent of the Sunya, or Doctrine of the Void—Tr.]: Names are not real; an unreal designation is given and is known as a name, or as the five *yin* [elements] or as a human being, man or woman.

The Monk Shao, in *Bu zhen kong lun*, provided the following explanation:

The *Fanguang* [sutra] said: All *dharma* have false designations which are not real. For example, Man is the product of the transformation of illusions; this is not to say that there is no man who is the product of the transformation of illusions, but simply that Man who is the product of the transformation of illusions is not really Man [i.e., there is no reality to Man who is produced by the transformation of illusions].

This raises a secondary question which must be discussed here. Does the idea of *kong* [emptiness or nonexistence] in the saying “self, as it is expressed, is *kong*, or empty or non-existent” [*wuo shuo ji shi kong*] signify the position that while things, phenomenologically speaking, did not really exist, there was, nonetheless, an ontologically real “nonexistence” [similar to Wang Bi’s ontologically real *wu*, or nonbeing] which itself was true? This, we shall see, was not the viewpoint of the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of *prajna* Buddhist teaching. To the adherents of the Kong zong, *kong* simply referred to the absence “of ontological self-substance in all *dharma*.” This arose because the dictum “*dharma* is produced or generated by causes and effects; the statement of self is itself nonexistent” was proposed for the very purpose of dispelling people’s insistence on holding to the idea of real ontological substance in all things. But if people were simply to switch to insist on [the idea of the reality of] nonexistence, alluded to in the sentence “the statement of self is itself a non-existence,” then the purpose would be defeated, because people would still be insisting on the reality of something, i.e., of “non-existence.” That is why, the Kong zong believed, it was necessary to add: “Even this [non-existence itself] is but a false name.” Hence the formulation, completed, would be: Not only are the names of things, i.e., phenomena, *jia ruo* [false names] and merely hypothetical; *kong* [emptiness, or nonexistence] itself is a false name also.

Volume 556 of the *Da Bo You Jing* contained this parable:

At one time, the various sons of heaven asked He Who Appeared in Goodness [a name for Buddha]: Is it possible to be in Nirvana and still revert to the realm of illusion? He Who Appeared in Goodness replied: If there was a thing [dharma] that overcame Nirvana and yet, then, reverted to the state of illusion, what would Nirvana then be?

One must, therefore, not only understand that all *dharma* do not have real ontological substance; one must at the same time not insist on [the reality of] non-existence. The *Da zhi du lun* [Treatise on the Ferrying Across by Means of the Great Wisdom] said:

The situation is like the taking of medicine. Medicine can dispel the sickness. When the illness has been dispelled, the medicine should also be expelled. If not, then an illness will be acquired. *Kong* [non-existence] is something that was used to dispel all our troubles, but we should be wary lest *kong* itself remain to plague us. Therefore, what we suggest is that we must use *kong* to shed *kong*—that is, we must understand the non-existence of non-existence itself.

This means that the assertion of “nonexistence” was for the purpose of dispelling the insistence on existence. When and if the notion of existence has been dispelled, the time would come for one to know that “nonexistence” is itself an illusion, an unreality, or false name. Yet, one cannot say that all is “nonexistence” (because there is still, e.g., man who is the product of the transformation of illusions). To understand both of these aspects would be to achieve the *Zhong dao guan* [True Meditation of the Middle Way, or Mean]. It was, however, not until the late years of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, after Kumarajiva had already translated such treatises as the *Zhong lun*, that this idea of “not existence and yet not non-existence” [*fei you fei wu*] was truly accepted and understood among Chinese Buddhists and epitomized in the *Bu zhen kong lun* of the Monk Shao.

Prior to the time of the Monk Shao, the general understanding which the Chinese monks had regarding *prajna* teaching was on the whole derived from the perspectives of the Daoist metaphysical [*xuanxue*] thought which was popular at the time. This is something we have already discussed. To further substantiate this argument, let us now analyze again some of the problems raised in connection with Dao An’s theory of Original Nothingness. We have, earlier, cited the following passage from Ji Kang (Chi Kang)’s *Zhong Lun Shu* [Commentary on the Treatise of the Mean]:

When Master An expressed [the doctrine of] Original Nothingness, he meant that all *dharma*’s original nature was emptiness and extinction. That is why he said “Original Nothingness.”

Is this not the same idea as that contained in the saying: “All *dharma* do not originally have any ontological self-substance”? In fact, it is not. The sentence here, “all *dharma*’s original nature is emptiness and extinction,” meant that emptiness and extinction made up the original nature of all *dharma* or, in other words, all things have emptiness and extinction for their original nature or ontological substance. This was an interpretation that could be traced as far back as the Monk Hui Da’s *Shao Lun Shu* [Commentary on the Arguments of the Monk Shao]. There he criticized Dao An’s theory of Original Nothingness by saying: “[He, Dao An,] was simply unable to realize that originally all *dharma* was nothing; and therefore he called original non-existence real, but resulting existence vulgar.” The same idea was contained in An Cheng’s *Zhong Lun Shu* [Commentary on the Treatise of the Mean], which said: “The *Bie ji* [Alternative Record] says ‘The true statement [*zhen li*] is the origin of the vulgar statement [*shu ti*].’ That is why we say that

Non-existence existed prior to the Original, or Primeval, Transformation.” From all the above illustrations, we can see that, in Dao An’s understanding of *kong* [nonexistence] or *wu* [nonbeing], he still took them to be the ontological substance for *you* [existence].

Why did such a set of circumstances come about? Because, as Engels pointed out, tradition is an immense force of conservatism. It appears that every ideological cultural tradition is bound to have its conservative aspect which resists imported alien ideological cultural influences. For that reason, an imported ideological culture must first adapt itself to the requirements and demands of the originally existing native ideological culture and be grafted onto its body. Those elements within the imported ideological culture which are relatively close to the original native ideological culture or which resemble it will be easier to be propagated; only then, after the grafting and the initial propagation, will it be possible for the various parts of the imported culture gradually to infiltrate the original culture and exert some of their own influence, until eventually [the imported culture] modifies, or effects transformations in, the original ideological culture.

9.2.2 *The Enrichment and Intensification of Tradition*

When an imported ideological culture is capable of having a relatively great impact on the country [or nation or region] to which it was imported, in addition to the real and practical societal needs, this would often also occur because the imported culture in general approximated a potential or possible product of the evolution—or certain aspects of the evolution—of the original indigenous ideological culture itself.

It is possible to trace a line of development in the ideas of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] from Wang Bi and He Yan’s ideas of *gui wu* [valuing nothingness or nonbeing] which were based on the notion of “taking nonbeing as the origin” to Guo Xiang’s idea of *cong you* [exalting being] which was based on the notion of “all things generating themselves” [*wan wu zi sheng*]. Subsequently, the ideas of Zhang Zhan emerged during the time of the Eastern Jin, which were exemplified in the saying, “Things are generated by themselves spontaneously and instantly, and yet they share one common origin in nonbeing” [*fu er er zi sheng, ze ben long yu wu*]. What then followed in this line of development was the notion of “not being and yet not nonbeing” [*fei you fei wu*]. This was similar to the doctrine of “not real nonexistence” [*bu shen kong*] in the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of prajna Buddhist teaching. Why was it possible for Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysics to develop into the idea of “not being and yet not nonbeing?” One may say that this was a “potential” product of the evolution of Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysics or, in other words, it can be said that such an evolution was not only not antithetical or contradictory to the essence of Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysics; it was in fact an enrichment of Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysics.

Beginning with Wang Bi and He Yan, and particularly in the case of Wang Bi, Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysical thought carried out rather penetrating examinations and logical reasoning on the question of the relationship between *you* [being] and *wu* [nonbeing]. Wang Bi used the idea of *ti* [substance] and *yong* [effect, function, usage, or phenomenon] to illustrate the relationship between being and nonbeing. He posited that “nonbeing cannot be without expression, and therefore must have cause in being.” Therefore, he believed that, while “nonbeing” was the ontological substance, it was contained in “being” and had expression in “being.” Therefore, he viewed substance [*ti*] and use [*yong*] as essentially one and the same thing. However, since there was an emphasis in Wang Bi’s system of thought on the absoluteness of “nonbeing,” the idea of “exalting the origin and ending the result” [*cong ben shi mo*] emerged. This brought about an inconsistency in Wang Bi’s system of thought. From the perspective of this *cong ben shi mo* idea, it can be said that there was a notion of negating the being or an idea of “not being.” Through Xiang Xiu and Pei Wei, Wang Bi’s idea of *gui wu* [valuing the nonbeing] later made the transition to Guo Xiang’s idea of *cong you* [exalting being].

In Guo’s view, being was the only existence, and there was nothing that existed over and beyond *wan wu* [all things] and that could have served as the ontological substance for *wan you* [i.e., a Creator substance]. He believed that the existence of all things was based on their respective “self-nature” [*zi xing*] and that this self-nature was generated spontaneously and instantaneously. For this reason he argued: “Nonbeing is nonbeing; that is it. It cannot generate being.” In this way, he directly challenged and refuted the idea of an ontologically substantial nonbeing. This idea in itself contained the notion of “not nonbeing.”

In the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Zhang Zhan wrote a commentary and annotations to the book *Lie Zi*, and in it he attempted to bring together in his own way the ideas of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang. On the one hand, he argued that “all beings [*qun you*] have the Ultimate Void [*zhi xu*] as their ancestor [zong]”—i.e., *wu* [nonbeing] or *zhi xu* [the Ultimate Void] was the basis for the existence of *you* [being]. This was his idea of *wu* as ontological substance. To him, nonbeing was neither created nor perishable; it does not come together and does not dissipate, whereas all being is created and is perishable and clusters and dissipates. Moreover, he believed that all species [*wan pin*] have their ultimate test in their ultimate perishability and, therefore, are “not being.” Yet, at the same time, Zhang argued that all things were instantaneously and spontaneously created—their existence was neither purposeful nor conditional. This had the potential or possibility of leading toward the idea of “not nonbeing.”

Nevertheless, in the case of Zhang Zhan, these two ideas were put together mechanistically and were mutually incompatible and contradictory. His system of thought was not one which was tightly woven. And yet, incidentally, it was at this juncture that *prajna* Buddhist teachings, in particular those of the Kong zong, posited the idea of *fei you fei wu* [not being and yet not nonbeing], which itself was far more solid and tightly argued in theory and reasoning methods. For that reason, one can say that the doctrine of the *Bu zhen kong lun* [Treatise on the Fallacy of Real Nothingness] proposed by the Monk Shao was a development

of the ideas of *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] after Wang Bi and Guo Xiang. Although the ideas of the Monk Shao came directly from Indian *prajna* Buddhist teaching, they in fact became an important component of Chinese philosophy itself and helped to make up the following circle in the development of Wei-Jin *xuanxue*—Wang Bi—Guo Xiang—the Monk Shao.

Why was such a development possible? One may ascribe it to the demands or requirements of the heritage or continuity of ideological cultures [as they came into contact with one another]. As long as the development of an ideological culture is not drastically interrupted, what follows must be the product of a continuous evolution from what preceded it. The development of preceding ideas often would contain several possibilities and the ideas which would continue to be developed, representing the subsequent parts of the development, and would be bound to take the shape of one or another of these possibilities. If an imported alien ideological culture can, on the whole, adapt or conform to a certain aspect of a potential or possible development of the original indigenous culture and ideology [or fit into a trend or tendency of one of the possible developments], not only will it be itself developed and thus exert relatively great influence in itself, but it may even become directly a component part of the original indigenous ideological culture and perhaps even to some extent alter the course of the development of that original ideological culture.

9.2.3 *Relative Excellence and Real Contribution*

If an imported alien ideological culture affects the original indigenous ideological culture, and if this is not a temporary influence but a long-lasting one, in some aspects or even in all aspects in general it would have to achieve a higher level of development than that of the indigenous culture. Only in this way can the imported ideological culture serve as a stimulus to the native culture and affect the development of the native culture itself.

Whether or not the level of development and sophistication in reasoning achieved by the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of Indian *prajna* Buddhist teaching was generally higher than that of China's own native and traditional ideological culture which existed at that time is a question which may not be realistically and honestly resolved until very careful and meticulous analysis has been made. This is not a problem which we may attempt to discuss here. However, in one specific aspect of its ways of reasoning and philosophizing, namely, its analysis of the questions of being and nonbeing [*you-wu*], the Kong zong of *prajna* Buddhism, in postulating the dialectical thesis of "not being and yet not nonbeing" [*fei you fei wu*], clearly demonstrated a superior level of theory and reasoning in comparison with the ideas of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, although its own ideas, like those of Wang and Guo, were drawn from the general source of idealism. In terms of development, although it appeared to have been derived out of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang's *xuanxue* thought, the Monk Shao's doctrine of *bu zhen kong*

[not real emptiness] was closer to the original intents of the Kong zong's teachings and should be acknowledged as having made certain advances beyond Wang and Guo's ideas.

As I see it, it was after the baptism of the introduction and assimilation of *prajna* philosophy introduced from India that the idealist philosophies of the Chinese tradition became themselves a truly influential and meaningful system of thought. In them, the doctrine of the Creator [a spiritual ontological substance which created Heaven and Earth and all things] no longer occupied a central position. Instead, abstract concepts such as *li* [principle] or *dao* [Way], which determined, rather than personally created, the existence of Heaven, Earth, and all things, were put into the position of first or primal importance. In another case, it was the mind that was put into that position, as in ideas which posited that "mind equals principle" [*xin ji li*] or "the principle is possessed in the mind" [*li ju yu xin*]; i.e., the notions that the principles of Heaven, Earth, and all things were all present in the mind. It was only after such idealistic concepts were developed that the fundamental forms of China's traditional idealist philosophy were set. This itself set the stage for the emergence of the *li xue* [Neo-Confucianist Philosophy of Principle] in the Song and Ming dynasties, whether it be the Cheng and Zhu [Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi] school or the Lu-Wang [Lu Xiangshan, Wang Yangming] school.

However, for an imported alien ideological culture, even one with a relatively higher level of development in reasoning, to have a great and long-lasting impact on the country [nation or region] to which it is introduced, it not only would have to subject itself, nonetheless, to the limitations of the political and socioeconomic conditions of the host country, nation, or region, but it must also be in possession of the first and second sets of conditions described in the afore-discussed sections. This is particularly true of ideological cultures, especially if the original, indigenous ideological culture did not experience an abrupt and radical interruption or if such an interruption was not to be caused by the introduction of the alien culture. Only in such a way could the new culture affect the original culture in a profound and long-lasting way. Without these conditions, no matter how advanced or superior the imported ideological culture may be, it would be difficult for it to strike roots into the soil of the host country and over the long run exert any deep influence. For example, the *Wei shi* [Vidjñana, or Consciousness Only school] teachings of Buddhism introduced [later] by the [Tang Dynasty] Monk Xuan Zang, and the related teachings of *vidjna* [*yin ming*, or *hetuvidya*, or *nyaya* teachings] which were introduced at about the same time and in conjunction with the Consciousness Only school, were also superior in the levels of their reasoning and development, and yet, though they gained much ground in establishing a reputation for themselves for a time, they did not eventually have a very long-lasting impact on the development of Chinese thought as a whole. Even though specific categories of thought in the Consciousness Only [*Wei shi*] school, such as the dual categories of *neng* [ability or possibility] and *suo* [identity or proper placement], were individually absorbed into Chinese thought, on the whole the *Wei shi* school did not become an integrated component of the Chinese traditional ideological culture, and to this day, we still have the tendency to think of the *Wei shi* [*vid jñana*, or Consciousness Only] teachings as an Indian ideology.

Out of the three points of argumentation outlined above, we may draw out one proposition: that it is meaningful, at least in one aspect, to focus the comparative study of philosophies on the general and historical laws which govern the extent to which an imported alien ideological culture may influence [the ideological culture(s) of] the country, or nation or region to which it was introduced, and on the conditions without which such an influence may not take place. In comparing and analyzing, for example, two ideological cultures which stemmed from different traditions, we must understand, first, the characteristics and level of development and reasoning which have been achieved by the original indigenous ideological culture [i.e., that which, of the two, is the host culture] and, second, the differences and similarities between these two cultures, their mutual influences, their assimilation and conflict, the amelioration of their conflict, and so on.

As we study the introduction of Buddhism from India to China in the first century A.D. and its subsequent development, we must ask its meaning for the practical way of life today. The tendencies in the development of current world ideological cultures are manifested as patterns conflict and harmony between many different ideological cultures stemming from many different traditions. The instability, contradictions, and conflicts in the world today may also be ascribed, in addition to certain other [political and economic] factors, in part to differences in ideological and cultural [i.e., philosophical and religious] traditions. The contradictions between the Arab and Islamic world, on the one hand, and the West, on the other, for example, are themselves fraught with philosophical and religious factors. At the same time, because of the increasing frequency and intimacy in terms of intercultural contacts in today's world, the propensity for mutual interaction and influence and for harmonization and assimilation between various ideological cultures is also very obvious.

In particular, the broad spread of Marxism throughout the world today has provided many new lessons to be learned and emulated in the relations between ideological cultures which stem from different traditions and backgrounds. Marxism itself was generated in Western Europe under historical conditions peculiar to Western Europe and, therefore, as an ideological culture, it was alien to many other parts of the world. Out of this, problems have surfaced in the relationship between Marxism and the various indigenous ideological cultures of the places to which it has been introduced. Even though Marxism is a proletarian philosophy and the cause of the proletariat is not confined by national boundaries—[Marxism] is the ideological weapon with which the proletariat and the revolutionary peoples of all countries carry out their revolutionary struggles—in order for Marxism to take root in any country [or nation or region] in a certain sense, it will still have to become integrated with the native ideological culture of that country [nation or region]. Or, shall we say, it must undertake critically to carry on the legacy of that original indigenous ideological cultural tradition. Unless this is achieved, Marxism will not be able to exert any real influence.

Is it possible then for Marxism to be enriched and furthered in its development by, say, the study of the relations between Marxism and China's traditional indigenous ideological culture? We believe so. In the essay "The Task of the

Youth League,” Lenin said: “It is only when we have indeed understood fully the culture which is created through the entire developmental process of humanity at large, and are capable of transforming this culture of the past, that we can proceed to construct a truly proletarian culture.” Undoubtedly, Marxism is a methodology which will guide us in dealing accurately with our various ideological cultural traditions. It is “not a doctrine, but a methodology. It provides, not ready-made dogma, but points of departure for further investigation and a methodology which may be employed in such an investigation” (see *The Complete Works of Marx and Engels* [Chinese edition], vol. 39, p. 406). It should be acknowledged that in the history of human civilization, each nation or people had, and has, its own special contribution to make. If we were to study, with the correct method, these contributions, we would be able to render accurate assessments regarding them and turn these assessments into parts of the legacy of the spiritual civilization of humanity, which we are to inherit. It is not the intent of Marxism to reject the spiritual cultures which have made contributions to the human society; rather, it hopes to absorb them, and transform them, and in the process continue to enrich and develop itself.

9.3 The Comparative Study of Philosophies and Regions

The present age is vastly different from past ages. As the world marches into the 1980s, developments in science and technology and social progress have made the interaction between the various countries and nations of the world immensely different from that of the past when the world was still in a stage of feudalism. These objective circumstances compel us to absorb imported alien ideological cultures more quickly. What methods can we use to turn those parts of alien ideas which are of use and value to us more speedily into integrated parts of our own ideological culture? One important method would be to engage in the comparative study of philosophies. In the past, the absorption of alien ideological cultures as a natural and spontaneous process was often slow and sluggish, and incidental and accidental factors tended to have a great deal of influence on the process. If we were to carry out such work today in a conscious and deliberate fashion, we are bound to be able to absorb the valuable and refined portions of an alien ideological culture more speedily. This problem applies to Marxism as well. If we are able to deal correctly with the relationship between Marxism and our own ideological cultural tradition, so that Marxism may become even more compatible with the circumstances and sentiments of the people in our country, if we may create a Sinicized Marxism, then it not only would take deeper and stronger roots in China but would also more effectively absorb and retain the good and valuable parts of Chinese ideological cultural tradition and expel those which are valueless or corrupted so that our country’s fine spiritual culture may be further developed. Therefore, the establishment of comparative philosophical studies under the guidance of Marxism is a most important task for us. The question is, how we should undertake the study of comparative philosophy?

9.3.1 *The Search for Common Laws*

In comparatively studying two ideological cultures from different traditions, we should attend to the discovery of certain common laws which govern the evolution of human ideological culture.

The study of comparative philosophy, like the comparative study of religions and literature, has a specific meaning of its own. The study of comparative philosophy does not mean simply the comparison between two, any two, philosophers (taking, for instance, Zhu Xi and Wang Shouren [Wang Yangming]); any more than the study of comparative religion means the simple comparison of any two Buddhist monks [say, Zhi Dun and Dao An]. Comparative philosophy or comparative religion refers to comparing two systems of philosophical thought which stem from different traditions or two religious systems that come from different sources and origins. Therefore, such comparative studies must be comparative analyses of two different countries [such as China and India] or regions [such as East and West] or nations [such as the Chinese people and some other nationality].

Philosophy is the most general science in the study of Nature, society, and human reasoning, and the laws which govern the development of human thought are, fundamentally speaking, similar or for the most part identical. Thus, when we have understood the laws which governed and sustained the evolution of the philosophical thought of a certain ideological cultural tradition, analyze the philosophical thoughts of another ideological cultural tradition promises to be of great help. In "On the Problems of the Dialectical Method," Lenin said:

[These are] the circles which describe the history of philosophy: The Ancient World: Dialectics from Democritus through Plato to Heraclitus; The Modern Age: Feuerbach to Hegel [through Berkeley, Hume, and Kant]; Hegel to Feuerbach to Marx.

In his "Outline to Hegel's 'Notes on the History of Philosophy,'" Lenin also said:

It is possible to see the history of philosophy in terms of circles... Each type of philosophical thinking equals a smaller circle on the big circle (spiral) of the evolution of human thought.

Hegel's idea of "the history of Philosophy as a circle," which Lenin cited in the abovementioned essays, is not only a law which summarizes the development of Western thought but also a profound reflection of the general law of the history of the development of philosophy and of thought in the universal sense. If we took this idea to be a compass to guide us in studying the laws which governed the development of traditional Chinese philosophy, we could see that, in general, traditional Chinese philosophy was also made up of three major spirals. The first would be the philosophy of the pre-Qin period: from Confucius to Mencius to Xunzi [through the philosophies of other schools of the time]. The second would be Wei-Jin *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics]: Wang Bi to Guo Xiang to the Monk Shao. The third would be Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism: Zhang Zai to Zhu Xi to Wang

Fuzhi. Between these three circles, which are to be seen as being put together as spirals, there would be the connecting tissues of development—the Han Classical scholarship [*jing-xue*], which made up the transition from the first circle to the second one, and the development of Sui-Tang Buddhism, which made up the transition from the second circle to the third. Together, these three ascending circles would make up a vast circle which would express the whole of Chinese philosophical tradition: from the pre-Qin and Han philosophy, whose primary substance was Confucianism, to the Wei-Jin and Sui-Tang philosophy, whose primary substance was *xuanxue* [metaphysics] built on the foundation and framework of the ideas of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi as well as a gradually Sinicized Buddhism, to the Neo-Confucianism [Song-Ming Confucianism], which absorbed the thought of both Daoism (Taoism) and Buddhism and on that basis developed [Confucianism] to a higher stage of evolution.

In the book *Comparative Religion*, F. B. Jevons cited one example which quite clearly demonstrated the general significance of the study of comparative religion. He said that it was difficult to understand, or explain, the demotion of the Thunder God in the religion of ancient Babylon from his original status to the rank of a demon. The answer seemed to lie, he also said, in the study of comparative religion and its methodology, because in the history of the development of various religions we often encounter the phenomenon of deities of an earlier religion being demoted to another rank in a new religion when the older, earlier religion is overcome and replaced. In this case, the method of the study of comparative religion provides us with a rational explanation for such a phenomenon as the demotion of the Thunder God of Babylon to the rank of a demon.

At the present time, the methods of comparative studies generally fall into two categories: “parallel studies” and “influence studies.” The former refers to conducting comparative studies between two different ideological cultures which do not have direct or indirect influences upon one another, and yet between whom there obviously are comparable points. In this case, the task would be to discover the similar as well as the dissimilar phenomena between the two and to demonstrate common laws and dissimilar, individual qualities. The latter is to conduct comparative studies where there are direct or indirect mutual influences or, in some cases, unilateral influence, in order to discover the shared phenomena as well as points of dissimilarity so as to demonstrate the contradictions, conflicts, assimilations, and compromises that exist between them.

No matter to which category it may belong, when a comparison is made, it should not simply draw one or two elements from the ideological culture of a country, nation, or region and study them in comparison with a few sayings or one or two isolated phenomena from the ideological culture of another country, nation, or region. This would be what is known as piecemeal comparison which, strictly speaking, has hardly anything to do with the study of comparative philosophy or comparative religion. The comparative study of two different ideological cultural traditions ought to be conducted on the basis of a rather comprehensive and exhaustive comparison of a problem or problems found in both traditions. Only in this way can we discover the phenomena [within each] which reflect the

presence of laws, and only then can we be led from knowledge or its absence to knowledge regarding this particular law of the development of human ideological culture and from the understanding of the individual to an understanding of the general.

9.3.2 *Attention to the Specific Characteristics of a Culture*

In undertaking to study comparatively the ideological cultures of two different traditions, we should base conclusions on the special characteristics and features of both of these cultures. Only when a certain ideological culture is compared and analyzed in the light of a different ideological cultural tradition that its own special characteristics and features can become clarified. It is impossible to express the special characteristics of an ideological culture when it is studied only by itself or internally.

In the first and second part of this essay, we discussed the fact that although there were apparent similarities between metaphysics [*xuanxue*] in China during the Wei-Jin period and the *prajna* teachings of Indian Buddhism, they ultimately were separate and not the same, each having its own special characteristics. We were able to draw such a conclusion because we had made a comparative study of these two ideological cultures which stemmed from separate traditions. For example, we came to know that the analysis which Wei-Jin *xuanxue* made of “being” and “nonbeing” was made from the angle or perspective of “existence,” that is, from the perspective of the relationship between “ontological substance” and “phenomenon,” with the latter being seen as the various expressions of ontological substance. Indian *prajna* Buddhist teaching, on the other hand, often analyzed *wu* [or *kong*, or nonexistence] and *you* [being] as a pair of abstract concepts. Therefore, although both may have appeared to be speaking of *ben wu* [nothingness or origin], when Wang Bi employed the term, he was referring to the idea of *yi wu wei ben* [taking nothingness to be the origin]—i.e., nonbeing [wu] being the substance behind being [you]—whereas when *prajna* teaching used the same, it referred to the idea that “all *dharma* did not have original self-nature” [*zhu fa ben wu zi xing*]. In this latter formulation, *wu* [or *kong*, or nonexistence] did not refer to substance but rather [to the idea] that all things did not have real self-substance [*zi ti*] and therefore that the existence of all things was merely illusory. Furthermore, the methods of reasoning behind Wei-Jin metaphysics and that behind Indian Buddhist *prajna* teaching were also different. The tendency for the Indian Buddhist *prajna* teachers was to employ an analytical method to reason out their viewpoints, whereas the Wei-Jin *xuanxue* metaphysicists would reason by way of the philosophical methods represented by such sayings as *de yi wang yan* [Once the meaning, or intent, is attained, the words may be forgotten] and *ji yu chu yan* [The meaning resides outside of the words, which are only its temporary abode].

For example, in the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of *prajna* Buddhism, the postulate “all *dharma* did not originally have self-nature” [*zhu fa ben wu zi xing*] would often be analyzed in the following logical manner:

1. When things are analyzed at the utmost level of minutiae, further analysis would, presumably, bring the object of analysis to the realm of *tin xu* [the neighborhood of Void or Nothingness]. That is, further analysis would bring about the logical conclusion that the object of analysis does not really have substance or a self—thus the saying: “Observe and contemplate the minutiae of things; when the final minutiae is reached, there would be found no substance.”
2. When one analyzes things from the angle of the relationship between time and object, one will understand that neither *wu xiang* [material or physical phenomenon or appearance] nor *xin xiang* [mental or psychological phenomenon] is real. First, all things are generated instantaneously and also perish equally instantaneously, that is, all things are no sooner generated than they perish. Second, nothing lasts at all, that is, not things are first generated and then perish, but that they are generated and perish all at once: generation and perishing happen at one and the same time. For these two reasons, therefore, things cannot be said to have any real self-substance.
3. The analysis of the object itself leads inevitably to the conclusion that it is made up of the combination of causes and effects and therefore it does not have any real ontological substance of its own. Since all *dharma* does not have real self-substance, all things or phenomena are therefore without original existence—thus the saying: “not that appearances (phenomena) perish, but that they are non-existent.”

The method which the Wei-Jin *xuanxue* [Daoist metaphysics] scholars, such as Wang Bi, used to argue for their idea of “having origin in nonbeing” [*yi wu wei ben*] was very different from that of the *prajna* Buddhists. In the *Laozi* (*Lao Tzu*) *Zhi Lue* [An Outline of the Intentions of *Laozi* (*Lao Tzu*)], Wang Bi said:

The cause for the generation of a thing and the fulfilling of its achievement is this: It must be born of the Form-less [*wu xing*] and have origin in the Name-less [*wu ming*]. The Form-less and the Name-less is the origin of all things. It is neither warm nor cold, neither *gong* nor *shang* [*Gong* and *shang* are sounds of special characters—Tr.]; its sound cannot be heard; one cannot see its expression if one were to look at it, nor know it by feeling, nor taste it. This is made of a primal combination of forces; as a phenomenon it does not have a form, as a noise it has but a little sound, and in terms of taste it does not have any presentation. It is for this reason that it can be the origin of all species and objects. It exists as an embryo, in which all Heaven and Earth is contained and all parts of Heaven and Earth are connected. There is nowhere it cannot go, and yet it will not be directed. If something is warm, it cannot be cool; if something is *gong*, it cannot be *shang*. Once things take form, they are inevitably divided; sounds, too, naturally belong to separate divisions. Therefore, if something that is a phenomenon has form, it cannot be the Great Phenomenon; the sound that has noise cannot be the Great Sound. Nevertheless, if the Four Phenomena did not have form, the Great Phenomenon cannot be free. If the Five Sounds did not have noise, the Great Sound cannot arrive. If the Four Phenomena do take form, and yet objects are not made to submit to a master, the Great Phenomenon will be free; if the Five Sounds have noise but the mind does not follow them, the Great Sound will arrive.

In Wang Bi's view, Heaven and Earth and all things have many forms and appearances. What is one thing therefore cannot be any other thing at the same time; if something has a specific form, it cannot take another form. Thus, it is only the formless that can accomplish any form, only the soundless that can become any sound, and only the nonbeing [that which is not any specific being] that can accomplish being [can become anything]. It is because nonbeing can become or accomplish all being that it can be the foundation of the existence of all existence. Therefore:

All things under heaven are born of "being." The beginning of being is in having non-being as its origin. If one desired to accomplish "being" one must first revert to "non-being" (see *Laozi (Lao Tzu) Zhu* [Annotations on *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*]).

All things under Heaven are specific and concrete existences with forms and phenomena. That these things with forms and phenomena can come into being, or be generated, is because they have "nonbeing" as their ontological substance; only then can this substance be expressed as many specific things with many forms and appearances. For example, it was argued the water of the sea is manifested in waves and billows of many different colors and shapes. That it can be manifested in these many phenomena is precisely because it has its origins in water. Therefore, in order to preserve all things of various forms and phenomena, one must grasp the "nonbeing" which is their ontological substance.

However, the "nonbeing" which is the ontological substance is not a "thing" which exists outside of "all things." Although one can say that "a phenomenon which has form is not the Great Phenomenon," unless "the Four Phenomena have form the Great Phenomenon cannot be free." Therefore, it is only when one can understand things through specific forms and phenomena, and yet not be confined by the specific forms and phenomena, that one can grasp "the phenomenon which is without phenomenon" [*wu xiang zhi xiang*] or "the scenery outside of the picture" [*hua wai zhi jing*]. It is only when one can understand through specific sounds and yet not be insistent on, or confined by, specific sounds that one can grasp "the sound that has no noise" [*wu sheng zhi yin*] or "the sounds outside the chords" [*xuan wai zhi yin*], and it is only through the understanding of language [words] and yet not insisting on language that one can attain the "meaning without words" [*wu yan zhi yi*] or the "meaning outside the words" [*yan wai zhi yi*].

From the above, we can see quite clearly that the method with which the argument "taking nonbeing as the origin" [*yi wu wei ben*] was made by Wang Bi was very different from the analytical approach adopted by the Kong zong of *prajna* Buddhist teaching. The approach taken by Wang Bi was the method of *de yi wang yan* [attain the meaning and lose, or forget, the words] which is a peculiarly metaphysical method of the *xuanxue* scholars.

When we have compared and studied the various aspects of the *gui wu* [valuing nonbeing] school of Wei-Jin *xuanxue*, as exemplified by Wang Bi, and the Kong zong [Emptiness school] of Indian *prajna* teaching, we shall be able to see more clearly each school's characteristics and its level of development. Only on such a basis can we clarify the relationship between Buddhism and Wei-Jin Daoist metaphysics during the period immediately or shortly after the introduction of Buddhism into China.

In issue no. 1, 1980 of *Zhexue Yanjiu* [*Philosophical Studies*], an article was published on “A Brief Discussion on the Theories of Early Daoist Religion on the Questions of Life and Death and Form and Spirit.” In that essay, comparisons were made of the Daoist religion and Buddhism during the period of the Wei, Jin, and North and South dynasties, focusing on their respective views regarding life and death and the question of *jietuo* [emancipation, or, in the Buddhist case, more commonly known as deliverance; in Sanskrit, *mukti*, or *moksa*]. The article pointed out that on these questions between these two religions, both of which were popular at the time, there were three major differences:

1. On the question of life and death, the Daoist religion advocated adopting the notion of “everlasting life” [i.e., nonperishing] as the goal, whereas Buddhism advocated taking “eternal extinction” [i.e., nonlife] as the goal. Daoism (Taoism)’s idea of emancipation advocated the transformation of mortal flesh into immortality by way of an integration of the body and the spirit such that this integrated substance may live on in nonperishable eternal life and in so doing be separated from the trouble-laden world of the present and enter the spiritual world of fantasy and illusion. Buddhism, on the other hand, believed that the source of the pains of human life was the “life of being,” which was the state in which the spirit was connected to the body. Within this state of “life of being,” until the spirit achieves *Nirvana*, it must always return in the cycles of incarnation. Only by transcending these cycles of incarnation becoming separated from the body and returning to everlasting extinction can the spirit be delivered from the sea of bitterness that is human life.
2. On the question of form and spirit, Daoism (Taoism) advocated the achievement of immortality by having the spirit and form become one. Buddhism advocated having the form and spirit separated from one another and thereby achieving Buddhahood. Buddhism believed that, unless the spirit became separated from the form, it would not be able to escape the cycles of incarnation and could not be delivered: to be delivered, the spirit must be separated from the form and, in response to its own completed destiny, enter extinction and perish. Daoism (Taoism) believed that the path of transcending life and death and becoming liberated did not lie in this sort of completed destiny or extinction but in the immortalization of the flesh, and for the flesh to become immortal, it cannot, and must not, be separated from the spirit.
3. As to the methods of achieving liberation or deliverance, Daoism (Taoism) advocated the tempering of the form, whereas Buddhism advocated the nurturing of the spirit. As Buddhism believed that the achievement of Buddhahood depended on enlightenment and realization, the chief means of achieving *Nirvana* was to cultivate the inner mind and enhance one’s own realization or awareness. As Daoism (Taoism) believed that the achievement of immortality depended on the accumulation of successes and attainments, its chief means of achieving liberation was to temper body and mind, nurture life, and be assisted by external matter [foreign substances].

From these three points of comparison, we generally can know the characteristics of the Daoist and the Buddhist religions in China during the period of the Wei, Jin, and North and South dynasties. Daoism (Taoism)'s goal was the achievement of immortality. Though this was an impossibility, because of this people's attention was directed toward the tempering and nurturing of the functions of their own bodies and spirits [e.g., the *qi gong*, or breathing exercises] and to the study of external matter such as the manufacturing of pills and elixirs (foreign substances) whose assistance they counted upon for the achievement of the goal of immortality. The goal of Buddhism was to achieve Buddhahood. Though this, too, was obviously an unattainable goal, nevertheless it directed people's attentions toward the analysis of psychological activities and to the study of the cognitive processes.

Therefore, we have been able to discover that in Daoism (Taoism), there was, and is, much material related to understanding of "the way of materials" and to knowledge concerning the human body that is worthy of our own efforts of analysis and investigation. For example, the book *Dao Zang* [The Treasury of the Way] comprised of 5,000–6,000 volumes, all of which, unfortunately, have yet to be systematically organized and studied, contains a wealth of information on such things as breathing exercises, medicines and herbacology (pharmacology), chemistry, hygiene, and physical education.

On the other hand, there are also over 10,000 volumes of Buddhist sutras [including sastras, annotations, and other exegetical treatises] in Chinese. In many areas, such as the analysis of psychological and psychic activity, of the processes of knowledge and cognition; the analysis of the relationship between subject and object; the analysis of concepts, perception, and conceptualization; and the logical process known as *vidjnana* or sometimes *hetuvidya*, these Buddhist canons have much to add to our enlightenment. If we could but purge from these Daoist and Buddhist materials those parts which are unscientific, fabulous, fantastic, or superstitious and analyze the remaining parts which are of positive value, it would be a most meaningful endeavor.

One of the purposes of studying comparative philosophy or comparative religion is to discover, through comparison and analysis, the characteristics of individual ideological cultures of various traditions, to identify and establish their peculiarities so that people may correctly understand and assess the status and role of these particular ideological cultures in the development of world history, and to ascertain the contributions they have made. The great treasure trove of human ideological and intellectual culture inevitably is made up of the good and superior parts of many individual ideological cultures, each with its own tradition and characteristics. If an ideological culture did not contain any special characteristic of its own, it would be difficult for it to make any contribution to human intellectual civilization. On the other hand, a culture which becomes the ideological culture of a nation, or a part thereof, is bound to have its own special characteristics and therefore is bound to make some contribution to the ideological culture of the human race as a whole.

9.4 The Isolation of Old Topics and New Issues

Finally, in the comparative study of two ideological cultures of different traditions, we should attend to the discovery and rediscovery of problems to be mulled over and solved and to proposing new topics or lessons for investigation and study.

Jin Kemu, in his article “Shi lun fan yu zhong di ‘you yi chuanzai’” [A Tentative Discussion of the Terms, or Expressions, for ‘Being, Unity and Existence’ in Sanskrit], pointed out that there are several roots, or radicals, for the expressions in Sanskrit that stand for the notions of being, unity, or existence. The more common ones, he tells us—and there are two of them—are *as* and *bhu*. These are both translated in the Chinese language as *you* [being]. For example, in the translation of the *Zhong bian fen bie lun* [The Treatise on the Differences Between the Mean and the Extremes] [written by Vasubandhu] made by Chen Zhenti, and in the translation of the *Bian zhong bian lun* [The Treatise on the Debate Between the Doctrines of the Mean and the Extremes] made by Xuan Zang, the term “sattvau,” was consistently translated as *you* [being]. However, *bhava* [having, or possession], one of the *dvadasanga pratityasamutpada* or twelve *yinyuan* [*nidanas*, or combinations of causes], was also translated as *you* [being]. *As* refers to existence or being in the simple, abstract sense, or, if you will, the static, absolute sense, whereas *bhu* refers to existence in the transforming or specific sense, or in the moving, relative sense.

We also know that in ancient Greek philosophy, particularly in the Aristotelian system of thought, “substance” was also divided into two categories: primary substance and secondary substance. The two possessed different meanings. The former does not refer to simple and pure matter, nor to the general form common to the various matters, but to the individual units of matter and their forms. The second meaning of substance [or, secondary substance] referred, on the other hand, to the general form or concept or category of matter, which becomes individualized in each separate matter.

Does this fact—that, while in Sanskrit, corresponding to various linguistic radicals, the terms for “being, unity, and existence” have different meanings and that the term “substance” in the Aristotelian system of thought also has various meanings—enlighten us in any way? In the Chinese translations of the Buddhist canons, the term for existence and being, which had different meanings in the original, all were translated as *you*. In Chinese traditional philosophy, then, did the concept conveyed by the term *you* also have various meanings? When Pei Wei, in his *Cong you lun* [Treatise on the Exaltation of Being] spoke of “self-generating and inevitably existent in substance” [*zi sheng er bie li you*], did the term *you* there refer to specifically existent matters or to the general existence of matter? Again, in the usage of Guo Xiang’s *Zhuangzi Zhu* [Annotations on *Zhuangzi*], did the term *you* sometimes refer to the specifically existent matters and sometimes to the general existence of matter? These are all questions which call for further investigation and require deeper analyses of the meaning(s) contained in the term *you* in traditional Chinese philosophy.

In his book *Ti yong lun* [On Substance and Use], Xiong Shili proposed that the essential and fundamental difference between traditional Chinese philosophy and Indian Buddhism was that where traditional Chinese philosophy talked about the “oneness of substance and use” [*ti yong ru yi*], Indian Buddhism separated substance from use, rending the two asunder. Whether or not Xiong’s conclusion was correct is not something we wish to make a point of in our discussion here, but certainly it can be said that the problem which he raised in his study of these two ideological cultures stemming from different traditions is most likely to have considerable significance for the study of the characteristics of the Chinese philosophical tradition itself.

From the perspective of the general trends in the development of traditional Chinese philosophy, it can be seen that the notions of *tian dao* [Heaven’s Way] and *ren dao* [the way of humanity] generally are considered to be consistent and integrated one with the other—in other words, it was assumed that the ideal should and could be realized in present reality. Even in the *xuanxue* metaphysics of the Wei-Jin period, although this system of thought took the ideas of Lao Zi and Zhuangzi to be its framework, the ultimate pursuit of the metaphysicians was still to achieve the “way of the inner sage and the outward monarch combined” [*nei sheng wai wang: hi dao*] which was contained in the “paradise which is naturally possessed by the Great Teaching” [*ming jiao zhong zi you le di*], i.e., in Confucianism. When the Song-Ming Neo-Confucianists opposed Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism), they did so chiefly on the grounds that Buddhists and Daoists, according to the Neo-Confucianists, “pursued the illusory transcendental periphery of the universe of that which was real.” The Neo-Confucianists claimed to believe fundamentally that “the ethics of the norm” [*gang chang*] and the great teaching [*ming jiao*] equaled “the principle of Heaven” [*tian li*]. On the other hand, in Chinese Buddhism, too, and particularly in the Chan School, the teaching was that “achieving Buddhahood” did not require leaping out of or being separated from a life of reality. The Chan Buddhists said, “Carrying water, cutting firewood, all these contained the most wonderful way and truth”—that is, it was possible for one to become enlightened to the wonderful way of achieving Buddhahood even in the mundane routines of everyday life.

When we compare China’s traditional philosophy with the transcendentalist “going outside of the world” notion in Indian Buddhism, can we say that Chinese philosophy, after all, remained indeed faithful to the idea of “one-ness of substance and use” and that it was for this reason that the notions of complete transcendentalism were never able to become part of the mainstream of traditional Chinese thought? As I see it, this, too, is a question which merits further and more penetrating investigation.

If we were to apply the comparative method to the study of the philosophical ideas and religious doctrines of various ideological cultures which stemmed from different traditions, such as the ideological culture of China and that of India, or that of the Western world, we will, I believe, discover even more lessons to be learned and topics to be discussed.

Over a hundred years ago that Marx and Engels pointed out: “Because the bourgeoisie opened up a world market, the production and consumption of the various countries have become universalized. . . . This is true not only of material production, but of the products of the mind and spirit as well. The spiritual products of the nations have become their common property, and the partialism and parochialism of the individual nations have become daily increasingly impossible. Therefore, out of the literature of the many nations and places of the world a world literature has been formed.”

According to the editor-annotator, the term “literature” here referred to writing in many areas, including science, art, and philosophy. We have now reached the 1980s; our age is much more advanced than that of 1848 when Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*. The interflow of ideas and culture and the interaction between peoples and civilizations have become even more widespread and profound. The comparative study of philosophy and religion is bound to promote the study of the history of Chinese philosophy. In the comparative study of ideological cultures of different traditions, we can discover the common laws which govern the development of things; we can expose and demonstrate the characteristics and levels of development of various ideological cultures and expand the contents and scope of our study. Will this also play a part in the enrichment and enhancement of the development of Marxism? I am sure that it will.

Chapter 10

Relationships Between Traditional and Imported Thought and Culture in China: The Importation of Buddhism

Historically, there were three major occasions when China imported foreign culture and ideology. The first was the importation of Buddhism—the focus of this paper.

The second cultural incursion was that of Western culture, an event which, for a time, gave rise to debate over the respective merits of things past and present, Chinese and foreign. From a philosophical standpoint, this event raised questions concerning the relationships between Western and Chinese philosophy. Many modern philosophers, whether or not they were aware of it, were in actuality striving to reconcile these two vastly different cultures. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, Feng Youlan^a was perhaps most successful in reconciling the two. His “New Rationalism” may be seen as an attempt to use Western pragmatism to resolve several traditional Chinese philosophical questions. That he did not succeed in determining the true course of Chinese philosophical development can be seen in the fact that, in practice, he failed to solve China's social problems.

The third event was the importation of Marxism, a European ideology developed in response to European historical conditions. In order for Marxism to take root in China, it must also, in a certain sense, merge with traditional Chinese culture and thought. That is to say, it must pass through a stage of critical acceptance of traditional culture.

Jia Yi^b in his “Guo Chin Lun”^c (*Treatise on the Failings of Ch'in*) quoted an old adage: “The unforgotten events of the past are teachers of the future.” Can we today learn anything from the contacts between imported Buddhism and traditional Chinese culture? I think we can.

I would like to discuss three important elements which characterized Buddhism's spread in China.

First is the fact that when Buddhism first entered China, it tended to attach itself to native ideologies. Only later did it gradually develop and begin to influence those ideologies.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991:139–146

When, during the Han Dynasty, Buddhism entered China, it identified itself with native religious practitioners. During the Wei-Jin period, Buddhism identified itself with the “Mysterious Learning”^d then popular.

During the Han Dynasty, Buddhism was often seen as on par with the Huang-Lao^e School. Thus, King Ying of Chu is reported as having “recited the subtle words of Huang-Lao^e and respectfully performed human sacrifices to the Buddha,” while Emperor Huan^f “set up shrines to Huang-Lao and the Buddha in his palace.”

Buddhist disciples of the period even identified themselves as “practitioners of the techniques of the Way.” The “Lihuo lun”^g (Treatise on Rectifying Error) of the *Mozi* (*Mo Tzu*)^h states: “There are ninety-six distinct ways, but, among those worthy of veneration, none is so great as the teachings of the Buddha.” The *Sutra in Forty-two Sections*ⁱ also styles itself “the Way of the Buddha.”

At that time the principal tenets preached by Buddhist missionaries were the immortality of the soul and karmic retribution; such Indian concepts as the “non-existence of the self” were simply not understood. The immortality of the soul was already present in traditional Chinese thought, but only in the concept of spirits. The Wen Wang Ode of the *Shi Jing* (*Shih Ching*)^j says of the former Zhou Kings, “The Three Di-rectors are in Heaven,” that is, their souls have ascended. The “Jingshen Xun” of the *Huai Nan Zi*^k asserts that “the form may be ground away, but the spirit is not transformed.” As a result of these beliefs, Huan Tan^l held that “when the form comes to an end, the spirit is easily destroyed,” while Wang Chong^m argued that “when men die, they do not become ghosts (spirits).”

That the immortality of the soul or spirit depended on “refining and nurturing” was also a native Chinese concept.

As for karmic retribution, while the Buddhist conception did not exactly accord with that of China, it was promulgated during the Han and was compatible with the Chinese notion that “good fortune comes to those who are good and evil to the dissolute.” Witness the Wen-yen gloss to the Qian hexagram of the *Yi Jing* (*I Ching*)ⁿ: “Those who accumulate good deeds will certainly have an excess of blessings, while those who accumulate bad deeds will have an excess of calamity.”

During the end of the Han and the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period, as Buddhist translations increased, Buddhism was divided into two main schools. The first was the An Shi Gao^o lineage of Hinayana Buddhism, emphasizing meditation. The second was the Lokaksema lineage of Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasized *prajñā*.

An Shi Gao translated a number of sutras among which the most influential were the *Anapansmṛti-sūtra* (T602) and the *Yin chi Ru Jing* (T1694). The former emphasizes breath control, a practice comparable to the “inhalation and exhalation” (*tu-na*)^p methods of Chinese seekers of transcendence. The latter explicates Buddhist numerical categories and may be compared to Han exegetical studies.

With regard to man’s place in the cosmos, the theories of these sutras are based on the concept of “primal breath” and state that primal breath encompasses the five phases which they equate with the five *skandhas*. It can be seen that the Hinayana practices expounded by the An Shi Gao lineage were assimilated to the popular religious practices and thought of the day which then used them to explicate Buddhism.

The *prajna* concept taught by the Lokaksema lineage held as its most important truth the “return of the spirit to its original perfection and union with the Way.” In this we see already the influence of the philosophy of the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*^q and the *Zhuangzi*.^f

Zhi Qian (Chih Ch'ien),^s the disciple of Lokaksema's disciple ZhiLian, retranslated the *Prajnaparamita sutra* as the *Ta Ming Du Wu Ji Jing*.^l This title itself betrays the influence of the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* and *Zhuangzi*. His translation of “grand luminescence” for *prajna* probably draws on the phrase “He who knows the eternal nature of things appears luminous,” from the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*. The translation “cross to the illimitable” for *paramita* also means to reach a state of union with the Way, that is, the illimitable Dao.

Zhi Qian (Chih Ch'ien)'s gloss for the first chapter states: “My Master (that is Chih Liang^m) said: “The heart of the Bodhisativa treads the Great Way. Wishing to embody the Way, his heart and the way merge. For this reason, the formless is called the ‘empty void’.” This is the same point reached in Ruan Ji's^v “Biography of the Prior-born Great Man,” wherein the great man merges with the way. The latter phrase recalls as well the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* statement, “The constant nature of the Way is formless.”

Zhi Qian (Chih Ch'ien) and the others believed that man's heart and spirit originated in the Dao, but, because of such flaws of the latter heavens as desire, man can no longer join with the Dao. For the heart and spirit to escape these limitations, one must embody one's origin, the Dao, and become a Buddha. This is undoubtedly a Buddhism assimilated to the thought of the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* and *Zhuangzi*.

During the Wei-Jin period, the ontology of Mysterious Learning, based on the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* and the *Zhuangzi*, was very popular. The central issues discussed in the Mysterious Learning were questions of fundamental cause and secondary effects as well as existence and nonexistence. Buddhist *prajna* studies were fairly similar to the concerns of Mysterious Learning, so many monks used it to explain Buddhist principles. Dao An,^w for example, wrote in his *Pi-nai-yeh* (Preface to the Vinaya):

Among the twelve sections of the Tripitaka, the *vaipulya* section is the largest due to the fact that *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* and *Zhuangzi* have spread teachings in this country similar to the *Fang-teng Jing* and *Prajnaparamita sutra*, and thus it has been easy to travel with the wind.

Even the clerics of that time recognized that the popularity of Buddhism was due to the thought of the *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* and *Zhuangzi*.

What is the reason for this situation? As Engels has said: “Tradition is a great conservative force.” It seems that any cultural ideology has its conservative aspects and will resist foreign culture. Because of this, foreign ideologies must first adapt themselves to the requirements of the native ideology, attaching themselves to a native thought system. Elements of the foreign ideology which are similar or identical to the native ideology are easily transmitted, while dissimilar elements seep in only gradually to eventually change the native ideology.

The second element involves the reason why Buddhism, as a foreign importation, was able to have such a strong impact on Chinese culture. In addition to the

fact that it met certain social needs, it often accorded with the natural development of Chinese thought.

The Mysterious Learning of the Wei-Chin period developed from Wang Bi^x and He Yan's^y emphasis on nonbeing as the source of all existence through Guo Xiang's^z emphasis on being ("The ten-thousand things are born of themselves,") to Chang Chan^{aa} of the Eastern Chin, who contended that "in being suddenly born of themselves, the Source of all things resides in Nonbeing." Finally there was Seng Zhao,^{ab} who held that "the Emptiness of the Unreal" consisted of a negation of both being and nonbeing. Why was the Mysterious Learning of the Wei-Chin period summed up in Seng Zhao's *prajna* inspired doctrine? Precisely because this was one possible outcome to which this philosophical system tended.

Beginning with He Yan and particularly Wang Bi, Mysterious Learning was much engrossed with the relationship between being and nonbeing, which was explained in terms of substance and function. It was held that "Nonbeing may not be understood in terms of Nonbeing, (so) it draws its name from Being." Thus, nonbeing was held to be the original substance, which expressed itself as being so that its substance and function were as one. However, since Wang Bi emphasized the unconditional nature of nonbeing, there was also the tendency to glorify the original substance while neglecting its expression as being. This was an internal contradiction in the thought of Wang Bi.

From just this element of Wang Bi's thought, we can extrapolate the negation of being (which was fully realized in Seng Zhao's system).

Wang Bi's emphasis on nonbeing was further refined by Xiang Xiu^{ac} and Pei Gu^{ad} and eventually developed into Guo Xiang's emphasis on being. According to Guo Xiang, all existence was comprised of individual concrete objects. Beyond these material objects, there was no original substance (i.e., no creator). The existence of the ten-thousand things was based solely on their "self-nature." This self-nature was self-generated. He wrote, "Nonbeing has no reality and thus cannot give birth to Being." This direct contradiction of nonexistence contains within it the seeds of (Seng Zhao's) negation of existence.

These two developments fit exactly the Prajna School's negation of being and nonbeing. So Seng Zhao's doctrine of the Emptiness of the Unreal continues the philosophical development begun by Wang Bi and Guo Xiang. We may, then, trace the historical development of Mysterious Learning from Wang Bi through Guo Xiang to Seng Zhao. Later, the San-lun School^{ac} (Madhyamika) would develop Seng Zhao's doctrine and Hui Neng^{af} of the Chan School^{ag} would further refine it and eventually influence the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties.

The reason for this development is that ideologies have certain set principles of development. Unless interrupted, later developments always grow out of earlier tendencies. Also, an ideology often has several possible ways in which it might develop, so that, if an important ideology accords in important respects with one possible line of development, it can have a very great impact. The important ideology may then become a constituent element of the native ideology and, to a greater or lesser extent, influence the development of the native culture.

Thirdly, the reason that Buddhism was able to work such a lasting influence on Chinese thought and culture was that in certain respects, it was superior to native Chinese systems of thought. In this way, it was able to act as a stimulus in the development of Chinese culture.

The question of the Indian Buddhist *prajna* doctrine's superiority to native Chinese modes of thought is one that must be examined closely from every angle before a conclusion can be reached. This we are not able to do here, so we will only examine the *prajna* system's resolution of the contradiction inherent in the doctrine of the negation of being and nonbeing. Despite the fact that, like the thought of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, this doctrine is an instance of idealism, it is undoubtedly superior to theirs in that it can be used to analyze problems from two opposite directions. Even though Seng Zhao's doctrine of the "Emptiness of the Unreal" can be seen as an extension of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, it goes beyond their systems in that it accords fairly well with the Indian *prajna* system.

In my opinion, after its absorption into Indian Buddhism, the idea of a creator or a spiritual entity which fashioned Heaven and earth never again occupied an important position in China's idealism. This was replaced by such abstract concepts as the Confucian *li*^{ah} (the "natural pattern") and *Dao*^{ai} ("the Way"), which, as first principles, determined human existence in the universe. Sometimes "Heart mind"^{aj} was made a first principle; it was held that "the heart is the natural pattern" or that "the natural pattern merges in the heart." This is a feature of Sung and Ming Dynasty philosophy. As this sort of idealism developed, it became the most important form of Chinese traditional philosophy.

However, even for a relatively superior foreign ideology to influence another culture, it must, in addition to satisfying certain economic and political conditions, also meet the first two requirements we have discussed. If it does not, then even a superior ideology will fail to take root in the host country. For example, the "Treatise on the Completion of Ideation Only" (*Wei-shih hun*)^{ak} brought in by Xuan Zang^{al} and Hetuvidya (Vin-ming xiie^{am}) are both fairly lofty constructions, but, despite Xuan Zang's reputation, they were not influential in China and failed to become a constituent of Chinese philosophy.

I think that the above three points are significant phenomena attending Buddhism's importation into China. With these in mind, I would like to bring up a question of current concern: can Marxism merge with traditional Chinese thought and culture. This is a large and difficult question. Predictions are hard to make, but it can be explained. In the abstract, most people respond that they wish for a merger of the two, but the question is whether this is possible and how it could be achieved.

Here I wish only to discuss a few thoughts drawn from the second of the points above: If Marxism is to take root in China, continuing lines of development begun in traditional Chinese thought and culture, the chief issue is to find points of convergence between the two so both Chinese philosophy and Marxism will progress.

Marxism is undoubtedly a superior ideology. Moreover, it developed in the West so that there are great differences between it and traditional Chinese thought. It is also a vast system of thought, so that it is difficult to know just where to search for points of convergence. Naturally, I cannot here discuss the problem in its entirety. I merely wish to raise a few examples.

The dialectical methodology of Marxism centers on the law of the unity of opposites and takes actual practice as the only standard of determining truth. This I believe to be correct. If related principles can be found among those fundamental to traditional Chinese philosophy, then cannot Marxism be sinified and become a further development of Chinese philosophy?

The central problem of traditional Chinese philosophy as defined by ancient philosophers and historians is the question of the relationship between man and Heaven. The traditional answer to this question, in most cases, has been that Heaven (i.e., the natural world, or the Way of Heaven) and man (society, or the way of man) are one. From this unity derives the unity of thought and action and, in art, the unity of subjective feeling and objective expression. (This is what Wang Fu calls the interface of emotion and scene.)

These three unities of man and Heaven, of thought and action, and the unity of subjectivity and objectivity are questions of “truth,” “goodness,” and “beauty.” Chinese philosophy, then, emphasizes unity, a fact which may have something to do with Chinese thought processes or social conditions. Confucian thought has always emphasized the Grand Unity and the Way of the Mean, and opposed excess.

If we correctly understand this unity and do not regard it as inflexible, then it is easy to see it as an active unification as in the *Yi Zhuan (I Chuan)* phrases “giving birth without cessation” and “Heavens movements enduring while the *Xunzi (Hsun Tzu)*^{an} never ceases in expanding himself.”

Would it be wrong, then, to see struggle (or “movement”) as the traditional technique of Chinese philosophy by which union was achieved, with the unities of Heaven and man, knowledge and action, subjective and objective as the goals of this striving? If so, then this is a point of convergence between traditional Chinese philosophy and Marxism. From one standpoint, the Marxist law of the reconciliation of opposites is a superior summation and more scientific continuation of traditional Chinese philosophy. From another, absorbing Chinese ideas of unity would enrich Marxism.

Another special characteristic of Chinese philosophy is that it has never separated its theories of knowledge from questions of moral cultivation. Thus, questions of knowledge and action are at once epistemological and moral. To know one must be able to put something into practice. The unity of thought and action, then, is an important concept.

From the point of view of the development of thought, it is proper and even necessary to separate epistemological and moral questions. The failure to do so may have been a shortcoming. Looked at from another angle, however, the traditional Chinese concept of putting moral theories into action has a great significance.

“Practice” in Marxism primarily denotes production struggle, class struggle, and scientific experimentation. Of course, such things as the “struggle against Japan,” an example of social practice, also included moral practice. “Is it not meaningful, then, to emphasize moral practice?”

I think that such an emphasis would have two important results: first, it would raise our self-evaluation and cause us to view ourselves as moral human beings; second, it would cause us to pay attention to the results of our actions.

I think that if we can overcome the confusion of traditional Chinese philosophy with respect to practice and, moreover, refine it through reference to Marxist views, we can make it more scientific and more correct.

This would serve both to advance traditional Chinese philosophy and to sinify Marxism. The moral emphasis on the unity of thought and action in practice would also enrich Marxism. If this is so, then here is yet another point of convergence between traditional Chinese philosophy and Marxism.

Undoubtedly Marxism must develop, thus it must be an open system, and not a closed one. If it is to develop in China, then it must resolve the question of its merger with traditional Chinese culture. Naturally, the convergence of two such extremely different entities is difficult, but the need to advance Chinese philosophy requires that we strive to do so.

The advancement of Chinese philosophy depends on Marxism's union with the better elements of that philosophy. The modern generation of philosophers is faced with this responsibility. I myself am without special abilities. I can only express my feelings through an old adage: "Though I cannot achieve it, I aspire to do so."

Vocabulary

A 冯友兰	u 支亮
b 贾谊	v 阮籍
c 过秦论	w 道安
d 玄学	x 王弼
e 黄老	y 何晏
f 桓帝	z 郭象
g 理惑论	aa 张湛
h 墨子	ab 僧肇
i 四十二章经	ac 向秀
j 诗经「文王」	ad 裴[固]
k 淮南子「精神训」	ae 三论宗
l 桓谭	af 慧能
m 王充	ag 禅宗
n 易经「乾」卦	ah 礼
o 安也高	ai 道
p 吐纳	aj 心
q 老子	ak 唯识论
r 庄子	al 玄奘
s 支谦	am 因明学
t 大明度无极经	an 君子

Chapter 11

On the Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)

The *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* or *Laozi (Lao Tzu)* is a very important book for studying Chinese philosophy. In its other title, when it was written and by whom remain questions that scholars have long discussed. Some assert that it was written by Lao Ran (sixth century B.C.), who was the teacher of Confucius. Most Chinese, however, believe that it was perhaps written later around the fifth century B.C. because some of its paragraphs criticize certain Confucians who lived around the fifth century B.C. It is believed that someone living at that time put in writing the thought of Lao Ran. The *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* could not have been written as late as the *Zhuangzi*, around the fourth century B.C., because there are quotations from the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* in the *Zhuangzi*. About the third century B.C., a famous scholar, Han Fei, wrote a section entitled “The Interpretation of *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*” in his book *Han Fei zi*. This is the earliest known interpretation of *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*. Since, from the Han Dynasty till now, there have been more than 1,000 different commentaries and annotations of this text. Foreign scholars pay great attention to the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* as well. The English translations of the text already number more than twenty and there are translations into many other languages as well. Of course, in such a long history, many of these commentaries and annotations have been lost. According to the old Taiwan scholar, Yen Linfeng, there should be more than 500 different copies still remaining; he has collected 345 in the series he edited. Among these the following five could be the most important:

- *Laozi (Lao Tzu) Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, interpreted by Wang Bi. His interpretation created a new philosophical theory, known as “Mysterious Learning,” around the third century A.D.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991:61–65

- *Laozi (Lao Tzu) Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, interpreted by He Shang Gong. This is the earliest interpretation from the view of Daoist religion, around second century A.D.
- *Xiang'er Commentary on the Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*. This interpretation reflects the views of another faction of the Daoist religion around the third century A.D.
- *Dao De Zhen Jing Shu*, commentary of Emperor Ming Huang of Tang Dynasty. This is the first text interpreted by an emperor.
- *Laozi Zhu*, interpreted by a great politician, Wang An-Shih.

After 1949, many Chinese scholars tried to put the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* into the vernacular, such as *A New Translation of Laozi (Lao Tzu)*, by Ren Jiyu, *Translation of Laozi (Lao Tzu)* by Yang Liu-qiao, and *Commentary and Translation of Laozi (Lao Tzu) Written on Silk* by Xu Kangsheng, etc.

Regarding the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) on Silk*, in 1973 many books written during the Han Dynasty, in the second century B.C. on silk, the so-called Silk Book (Bo Shu), were excavated from Han Tomb No. 3 at Ma Wang Dui in Hunan Province. These silk books are of two different editions of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, editions A and B, which differ in quite a few words, sentences, and even in the number of characters.

These *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) on Silk* are the earliest known texts of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*. In both editions, there is no title, *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, but two separated titles: *dao* (tao) (meaning “way”) and *De* (meaning “virtue”). We can understand then why in the history book, *Shi Ji* (meaning records of the Historian), the writer said that Laozi (Lao Tzu) wrote two pieces of book, one is *dao* (tao) and the other is *De*. Moreover, the order of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) on Silk* is quite different from the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* circulated today. The former begins with *De* (while the latter does the contrary), which is the order of the *Interpretation of Laozi (Lao Tzu)* written by Han Fei.

With the discovery of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) on Silk*, some long discussed problems were resolved. Now we know that the title, *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, was formed only after the time of Emperor Jin of the Han Dynasty (156–141 B.C.). “Jing” means “canon” or “Scripture,” so *dao* (tao) and *De* became a canon later than many Confucian canons. Besides, there are 5,463 characters in the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) on Silk* (second century B.C.) and 5,683 characters in the text of Wang Bi (third century A.D.). Later, the text of Daoist religion usually includes only 5,000 characters, for which reason the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* is called also *5,000 Characters Canon*.

The *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* is especially important because it is one of the two trends which governed the ideology of the Chinese people for 2,000 years. As we know, for Chinese culture, philosophy, art, and psychology, the greatest influences have been Confucianism and Daoism (Taoism), and hence the canon of Daoism (Taoism), the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*. When the Chinese people established their own local Daoist religion, their scripture was the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*.

It seems reasonable to translate *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* as *Canon of the Way and Its Virtue*, for in fact this book talks about two problems: first, the origin and essence of the universe, that is, the problem of the Way, and second, how people can achieve the Way, or in other words how they can reach and understand the way, namely, the problem of virtue.

In the period of Laozi (Lao Tzu) in answer to the question of how all things in the universe were created, most people held that they were created by Heaven or by the God of Heaven. As Heaven is the highest sovereign and has his own will, he is called the God of Heaven. According to the traditional ideology of Confucianism, Heaven is always a willful and distinctly highest sovereign power. But from the beginning, Laozi (Lao Tzu) did not believe this. In chapter 4 of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, Laozi (Lao Tzu) said clearly that the Dao, the ancestor of all things, seems to have existed before the lord. It is very important to state the question in this way, because it is the first time that someone denied the consistent belief that all things were created by a God in Heaven and on purpose.

Laozi (Lao Tzu) asserted that the dao (tao) is the source of Heaven and earth and everything. What is the meaning of the Dao? Laozi (Lao Tzu) tried to use many different adjectives to modify it. For example, he said: The thing that is called the dao (tao) is elusive and vague, deep and obscure (21), soundless and formless (25). Therefore, it cannot be seen or touched, does not tangle with anything, does not desire to do anything, and is so huge that nothing cannot be included; yet it is so tiny that it can squeeze in anywhere. As such a source of the universe basically cannot be described by language, we have no choice but to name it dao (tao) inadequately. The descriptions of Dao are only ways to make people understand. It must be made clear that the explanation of dao (tao) is different from dao (tao) itself; they are two different things and the former should not be mistaken for the latter.

What is the essence of the Dao? According to Laozi (Lao Tzu), the dao (tao) is the absolute supreme existence; no existence is earlier than the Dao. At the beginning of the universe, the dao (tao) is undifferentiated: “There was something undifferentiated and yet complete, which existed before heaven and earth” (25), that is, Dao. Therefore, there is first the Dao, and then there is the integrated universe. Laozi (Lao Tzu) said: “The dao (tao) produced the one. The one produced the two. The two produced the three, and the three produced the ten thousand things” (42). It is often understood that one is the original material force; it produces the two—yin and yang—and the three are their blending with the original force which blending produces ten thousand things. It should be noted that the evolution here is natural and has nothing to do with any personal purposeful will. This is the first systematic theory of the creation of the universe; it is a sort of cosmology. Although cosmology later developed much further, basically it was influenced by the viewpoint of the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* just outlined. Of course, there are other theories of cosmology in the classics of Confucianism, for example, the *Interpretation of the Book of Change* written around the third century B.C. But what the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* emphasized is that although the dao (tao) is the origin of Heaven, earth, and all things, dao (tao) produced them but never ruled them; everything developed and changed naturally. Therefore, the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* is negative toward

any purposeful or conscious ruling power and for the same reason often describes the essence of dao (tao) as nameless, formless, having no action, no desire, etc.

Furthermore, Laozi (Lao Tzu) defines the essence of dao (tao) as Wu. All things come from being, and being comes from super being—Wu. All things in the world were produced from something with name and form, while things with name and form were produced by things transcending experience, time, and space. In other words, Laozi (Lao Tzu) asserts that dao (tao) which transcends all the sensory experience is the final cause of all things which exist in sensory experience. In this way, the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* touches the problems of ontology. Later during the Wei-Jin period (around third century A.D.), a scholar of mysterious learning named Wang Bi developed the thought of *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* from this side; he tried to use Wu, the super being that transcends experience, to prove the rationality of existence in experience: As all things are produced by Wu, so they are rational.

How can the dao (tao) be gained by human beings? The *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* assumes that people should follow the example of the Dao, which means that people should have De. De means finding the way to reach the Dao. In the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, the supreme moral integrity is to take no action. The Sage said: “I take no action, and the people of themselves are transformed. I love tranquility and the people of themselves become correct. I engage in no activity, and the people of themselves become prosperous. I have no desire, and the people of themselves become simple” (57). This, then, is to follow the example of the Dao, and a person who follows the dao (tao) is a sage.

But how can people know the Dao? Laozi (Lao Tzu) emphasized that the way to know the dao (tao) is totally different from the search for general knowledge. Usually, the more you know, the more you want. Since the dao (tao) is nameless and formless, you cannot know it as one knows things with name and form; the way to know the dao (tao) is to get rid of things with name and form step by step. By eliminating all things that bear names and forms, in other words, without any so-called knowledge, you can know the dao (tao) naturally.

How can we grasp the character of the Dao? Laozi (Lao Tzu) assumed that it is impossible to put the dao (tao) into any language. He in fact said: “The dao (tao) that can be told of is not the eternal Dao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name” (1). Therefore, the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* uses many metaphors to explain the Dao. For example, it says that the character of dao (tao) is just like water. “There is nothing softer and weaker than water, and yet there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things” (78). “The great river and seas are kings of all mountain streams, because they skillfully stay below them” (66).

It is especially interesting that the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* often uses a negative way to explain the Dao: nameless, formless, no activity, no desire—all are negative ideas. Usually, what the dao (tao) is makes sense by saying what is not the Dao, and what kind of character the dao (tao) possesses is described by saying what kind of character the dao (tao) does not possess. Reversal is the action of the Dao, weakness is the function of the Dao (40), sages follow the Dao, and what they pursue is just the opposite of what common people chase after. For example,

common people seek to be in their prime, but after things reach their prime, they begin to grow old and perish. Therefore, sages never seek their own prime. In order not to perish, common people always compete with one another, which a sage does not. “It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him, so he can protect himself in this way and remain whole.” In order to destroy, it is necessary first to give; in order to grasp, it is necessary first to give. This is called the subtle light. The weak and the tender overcome the hard and the strong. All these principles remain till the present very influential in Chinese action and thought.

Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) is the most important canon of Daoist philosophy as well as the most important scripture of the Daoist religion. Daoist religion—the only religion created by the Chinese nation—developed at the end of Han Dynasty in the first century A.D. Its main belief is that one can attain immortality, that one can rise to Heaven with body and soul. This belief of the immortals appeared much earlier than Daoist religion, during the third century B.C. But in the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, we already find certain information. For example, in Chapter 59, we find “that the roots are deep and the stalks are firm, which is the way of long life and everlasting vision.” In the Daoist religion, people either explain the dao (tao) as a personified god or assume that if people know the Dao and grasp the Dao, they can attain immortality. The Xiang'er commentary, *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, described the dao (tao) as qi—vital energy. The supreme god of Daoist religion was accumulated by Qi. In other words, the Qi accumulated into the being that is the supreme god, Tai Shang Lao Jun. The He Shang Gong commentary *Laozi (Lao Tzu) Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* also said: if you can keep the dao (tao) in your body, if you don't waste your vital energy, don't torture your spirit, then, you can attain immortality. Thus, *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* guides people in finding their way to immortality.

Chapter 12

The Origin and Characteristics of Daoism

Religion is a social phenomenon, and studying it with a view to understanding its historical development has special significance today. We can see similar trends in other countries where the rapid developments of science and technology do not in any significant way lessen the people's sense of, nor interests in, religion. Even the people of China, for some reason or other, show similar interests in the development of religion. This phenomenon is enough to raise several theoretical questions concerning the need for a better understanding of religion: what is the nature of religion? Does the human psyche require a religious faith? Is religion synonymous with religious belief? Is religious belief beneficial to social life? Is science complementary to, or inconsistent with, religious belief? Can religion be a modernizing agent? and so forth. This paper does not pretend to deal specifically with these questions, but, why do we study the history of religions? Should an ideal history of religions be time-conscious? Can such a history help people think seriously about the problems of religion that exist in the world today? All historians of religions need to address themselves to these kinds of problems.

The religions which had been popular in Chinese history include Buddhism, Daoism (Taoism), Islam, Christianity, and animism. However, of all these religious traditions, only Daoism (Taoism) is indigenous to China. To be sure, Daoism (Taoism) is a Chinese religion; it has characteristics peculiar to the Chinese. Besides, it has exercised considerable influence on the development of Chinese culture and psychology, customs and habits, science and technology, philosophy and thought, medicine and hygiene, and even political life. Can our investigation into one of the more influential religions—the origin of Daoism (Taoism), its development, and characteristics—help us deepen our understanding of Chinese culture, personality, and way of thinking? Can it indirectly help us understand,

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 67–80

more intimately, the theoretical and practical problems of religion in the world today? I think it can and toward this end, the present discussion is an attempt to analyze and discuss the following issues.

12.1 General Background

The development of Daoism (Taoism) was an attempt to orientate the Han Chinese to their social, political, economic, moral and psychological lives at the end of the Eastern Han.

Why did Daoism (Taoism) develop only at the end of the Eastern Han period? Historically, such Daoist ideas, as “immortality” and “sanctification of the bodies,” had already existed during the time of the Warring States (Zhanguo). They became even more popular during the Qin and Han dynasties—why? We know that not just any kind of superstition can be called religion, although religion often embodies a good deal of superstitious elements. Neither can we say that any theistic discourse can become a religion, even if it is capable of extending its influence over a sizable cross section of the population. Its growth and development were directly related to the social life of the people, their history, and other objective facts. The development of Daoism (Taoism) during the Eastern Han may be attributed to the following factors.

First, the reality of social life at the end of the Eastern Han had laid fertile grounds for the growth of Daoism (Taoism). The social and political conditions, since Shundi of the Eastern Han, had begun to deteriorate. There was outside interference in the day-to-day administration, and the administrative machinery was in the hands of a bureaucracy. Debauchery, unruly behavior, and social strife, both from within and without, were the order of the day. Finally there were crop failures due to severe drought, and large numbers of people died in ditches (Chong Zhangdong, *Changyuan*).¹

Undue economic exploitations and political pressure at that time had made it impossible for the populace to lead a decent life; bankruptcy and emigration were common. The conflict between the ruling class and the ruled was intense and acute. According to historical records, from Shundi’s time, peasant uprisings were rampant. At that time, apart from the common class interest that united them in social movements, their leaders resorted to magic and superstitions as organizing agents. That is why, in history books, the rebels after Shundi’s time were often called yaozei or “the goblin thieves.”

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above discussion. First, a period of economic and political unrest, as well as spiritual and moral decay, provided an objective vantage for the development of religion. Second, as the leaders of the peasantry had used magic and superstitions to rally support in their movements, they knew that these could be used as tools for mobilizing the people, thus paving the way for the widespread development of religion. As is always the case, social turbulence often caused great hardship and suffering to the lower class. Thus, when people became desperate, they tended to hinge their hopes upon some kind of spiritual power, or *shenling*. This was one of the most common

avenues through which people, in antiquity, reconciled themselves with their social reality. This also explains why a majority of the early Daoist believers were members of the lower social strata.

Second, the social conditions at the end of the Eastern Han had provided useful material for the founding of Daoism (Taoism). Since the time of Han Wudi, when Dong Zhongshu pointed out that “of the hundred schools, only Confucianism is the most revered,” Confucian thought had adapted itself to the needs of building a unified feudal society and serving as an ideology for the ruling class. From then on, the development of Confucianism depended primarily on the teaching of a reciprocal relationship between Heaven and man, followed by an increased interest in the development of theology and metaphysics. Though ideally a religion is theistic, not any form of theism is adequate or sufficiently meaningful to become a religion. This is because such a religion (namely, the religion of the masses) must include not only the worship of spiritual beings but also possess a body of canon together with an enduring form of church organization, doctrines, and dogmas, and a historical medium for the dissemination of religious knowledge. Generally, religion must see the world in two forms: the real and the supernatural. Based on this premise, human beings feel that they can only disengage themselves from the problems of social life in a supernatural world—believing that an ideal life can manifest itself only in the yonder shore of the supernatural world.

Despite the fact that Confucianism acknowledged the existence of Shen or God, especially during the Han Dynasty, it had never thought it necessary that its ideals be fulfilled outside the world, but required rather that the ideals of “governing the state and pacifying the world” (*zhi guo ping tianxia*) be actualized in the real world, even though this were merely an illusion. Although religion had played a very important role in feudal China, it had never become a force to reckon with. Instead it had, many a time, occupied a secondary position, which state of affairs clearly bespoke as well the dominance of Confucian ideology.

From the developmental point of view, after the Eastern Han, Confucianism could very well have become a religion, because its metaphysics together with the conception of the sacred could be easily converted into religion. However, Confucianism did not become a religion during the Han Dynasty for the simple reason that it attempted to materialize the ideals of “governing the state and pacifying the world” in the real world. Thus, following the decay of the Han Dynasty, Confucian ideology not only fell short of becoming a religion, but its position as an ideology of the ruling class continued to decline. Because of this decline, Confucian thought had given way to the growth of Daoism (Taoism). History shows that, whenever the dominant ideology of the ruling class lost its power, it often signaled the growth and dominance of a countervailing religion.

Even though Confucianism had declined at the end of the Eastern Han, certain facets of its ideology could still be absorbed and put to good use by an ongoing religion. The fact that Confucian ideas are found in Daoism (Taoism) is clear proof that such assimilation did take place. For example, the idea of “the ultimate peace in the unity of the three (Heaven, earth, and man) in one” (*tian-di-ren san heyi zhi taiping*) shows that the Confucianists were concerned about political reality and the

notion of *sancai* (three endowments) mentioned in *Yi Zhuan*.² The idea that the sky and the universe were formed by breath (*qi*) could have derived from the knowledge of world creation as well as the yin-yang principles and the five elements mentioned in the apocryphal texts. All these ideas were closely connected to Han Confucian thought. That most of the scholars who studied the development of Daoism (Taoism) focused their attention on its relationship with Daoist sources and overlooked the nexus between Daoist and Confucianist ideas is a bias.

Daoism (Taoism) could have another source in its gradual mingling with the tradition of the saints. Although there was a connection between the Daoists and the saints of the early Qin, both seem to belong to quite different schools of thought. Until the beginning of the Western Han, the popular Huang-Lao learning was essentially Daoist. It frequently emphasized the exemplary qualities of the sage and was thus deemed capable of exercising its power over the state and the cosmos. That is why Sima Qian, in his preface, commented that the importance of the Huang-Lao learning lies in the doctrine of “self-actualization through non-action, and self-correction through expiation” (*wuwei zihua, qingjing zizheng*).

The Huang-Lao Daoist learning underwent a change during the Eastern Han: part of its adherents sought the help of the gods installed in shrines, thus becoming unified with the saints. Huandi, for example, made sacrifices to Laozi (Lao Tzu) at the latter’s shrine with the aim to “preserve shen for the uplift of character and the ultimate ascent to Heaven,” thus signaling the initial transformation or Huang-Lao’s Daoist teaching. Also, as early as the end of the Western Han, there was already in existence of what was known as “Huang-Lao’s Dao” (the Way of Huang-Lao) and, later on, the “Fangxian’s Dao” (the Way of the Saints), all of which actually belonged to the immortalist sects. Further, the saints’ underlying objective was to attain “eternal life” (*changsheng busi*) and to cause the bodies to be sanctified (*routi chengxian*). Thus, once it merged with the Daoist ideas of “attaining peace through inaction, and remaining in peace through abstinence” (*qingjing wuwei, tiandan guayu*), it increasingly began to attract the masses and became a powerful social force. Lastly, the basic tenets of Daoism (Taoism), such as “immortality” and “the sanctification of the bodies,” although derived from the Way of the Saints, became part of the Daoist system. Hence, its transformation also represents an important factor contributing to the growth of Daoism (Taoism).

From the above viewpoints, Daoism (Taoism) as a religion may be said to have deviated from the Confucianists’ and Daoists’ schools of thought. However, its source of ideas was inseparable from both. Hence, from the beginning, it had distinguished itself as a religious system in which Confucian and Daoist ideas supplemented each other. This system represents some of the characteristics typical of Chinese culture, psychology, and way of thinking.

Third, the introduction of Buddhism into China had greatly stimulated the development of Chinese religion. From the time Buddhism spread to China during the Western Han till after the middle or the Eastern Han, it maintained a steady level of propagation. Buddhism, acting like a catalyst, escalated the development of Daoism (Taoism). Actually, the school of the saints was already popular during the Western Han, and disciples frequently had given tributes to Huang-Lao.

This was evidenced in the existing learnings of “Huang-Lao’s Dao” and “Fangxian’s Dao.” The former sanctified Huangdi and worshipped him in shrines dedicated to him; the latter talked about “non-death and everlasting life” (zhongshen busi). *Shiji*³ records that the teacher of the river elder, Le Jigong, learned about Huangdi. The book of Fengchan⁴ records that Huangdi became an immortal because of Fengchan. Yujie (more appropriately, Ganjie), who compiled the Daoist scripture *Taiping Jing*,⁵ suggested that the book was originally by Laozi (Lao Tzu). During Han Mingdi, Chu Wangying had already worshipped Huangdi and Foutu. Chu Wangying recited Huang-Lao’s words and honored Foutu’s shrine. Huangdi erected Huang-Lao’s and Foutu’s shrines in his palace. The fact that Huang-Lao and Foutu were worshiped manifestly shows that Huangdi was at that time regarded as a deity or a Buddha. Sainthood was in fact a form of sagehood. Living the life of an immortal is but a human discipline. There was no formal nor enduring form of organization to be used as a base for the interaction of the religious community. But after the spread of Buddhism to China, it became an organized form of religion, possessing not only a set of teaching which differed from that of traditional China but also an organized church, with a religious canon and a spiritual community, all of which served as a blueprint for the founding of Daoism (Taoism).

It is true that Buddhism had served as a model for the establishment of Daoism (Taoism). Of even greater importance is that Buddhism was alien to Chinese culture and its propagation in China was greeted with protests by the bearers of Xia’s cultural tradition. This defensive attitude acted as a stimulus spurring the Chinese to strive even harder toward establishing an indigenous religion. When an ethnic culture encountered an alien culture, it often gave rise to mutual absorption or rejection.

This situation was particularly marked in the case of the Chinese response to Indian Buddhism. We can provide evidence to show how it was actually reflected in the earliest Daoist scripture, *Taiping Jing*. In this scripture, we see how some Buddhist ideas, like *benqi* (the primal beginning) and *sanjie* (the three worlds), had their origins in the Buddhist canon. On the other hand, there were criticisms about Buddhism, for example, the talks that “the conduct of the four destructions collectively denigrates the spiritual Way of Heaven” (Shihui zhi xing, gong wuru huangtian zhi shendao). Moreover, upon the establishment of Daoism (Taoism), its adherents circulated the story about Laozi (Lao Tzu)’s role in bringing about a renaissance among the northern Chinese (Laozi [Lao Tzu] huahu). This was designed not only as a blow to Buddhism but also as an attempt to boost the image of Daoism (Taoism). All this suggests a kind of antagonistic reaction against the entry of the alien culture.

Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the end of the Eastern Han period saw the need for the development of an indigenous religion. The founding of this religion could be traced to the existing tradition of the saints. The fact that it adopted Confucian and Daoist ideas as a basis for the development of Daoism (Taoism) is even less surprising. Once it emerged, it immediately became charged with an intense ethnic fervor and came into direct conflict with the alien Buddhist religion. The outcome is, precisely, a manifestation of an indigenously endowed Chinese culture.

12.2 The Development of Daoism

The Process through which Daoism (Taoism) developed into an organized religion also a clear manifestation of how a religious community came into being.

What is the nature of religion? It can be defined in a great number of ways. Even in Marx's writings,⁶ religion is conceived differently under different circumstances. He said, "religion is the opiate of the people," which is interpreted in terms of the use of religion as a way of hypnotizing the masses. This statement came not from Marx but Feuerbach.⁷ It means that the purveyors of religion who claimed that it could bring comfort to humankind were not being honest. Lenin⁸ conceived of "religion as the workers' groaning sound," which is interpreted as relating to the agony of the proletariat. Brezhnev⁹ said, "Religion has a countless number of definitions. . . . It may be interpreted as a form of relationship that helps to realize the existence of the mystical superhuman power, for humans believe that they can depend on this power." Brezhnev's definition seems to be more relevant and practical, but is there such a mystical power? How do we adjust to the existence of such a power? Why do people find it necessary to believe in such a power? Is belief in a mystical superhuman power superstitious? This raises some philosophical problems, viz, the problems of religion vis-à-vis superstition and belief.

Is religion a superstition? This question can be debated for a long time and no one knows when it will end, but devout believers most certainly will reject the pronouncement that "religion is superstition." Why? It is because believers frequently rely upon certain ideal principles to interpret what often is called the "mystical superhuman power" in the form of ultimate "truth, goodness, and beauty" (zhen, shan, mei), or else they often look upon the ideals of "truth, goodness, and beauty" as a form of "mystical superhuman power." They sincerely believe it to be true and try very hard to apply these ideals in their social life. Probably the belief in, and dependence upon, this ultimate "truth, goodness, and beauty" in the guise of a "mystical superhuman power" is a matter of the human psyche's response to specific social conditions. But believers of the "mystical superhuman power" assume superstition and religion to be two different things. To them, "superstition" can only be a trick played upon those who lack scientific knowledge, i.e., a manifestation of spiritual poverty due to a lack of ideals. Devotees who believe that the "mystical superhuman power" is a manifestation of "truth, goodness, and beauty" may perhaps accept the idea that "religion is synonymous with belief" but certainly will not accept that "religion is superstition." According to them people should have faith: even the agnostics believe in agnosticism.

Religion and belief are undoubtedly related. Religion is based on belief, but whether belief is based on religion, in the classical sense, is a different matter. As a matter of illustration, we can say that "we believe in the scientific explanation of atheism" or even accept that "we believe in Confucian philosophy." Nonetheless, there is no doubt that atheism is not a religion but a scientific doctrine. Even Confucianism may be said to have embodied certain religious elements, although it is not a religion. Therefore, we should distinguish not only between "religion"

and “belief” but also between “religion” and “religious thought.” Otherwise, almost any kind of philosophical discourse could be regarded as a religion, and if that be the case, it would be as good as abnegating the existence of religion.

Based on our understanding of the human psyche, we may postulate that human beings really need a certain kind of belief. The question is whether there is the need for a religious belief. If we could divide religion into two categories—one a scientific belief and another a nonscientific belief—religion may be said, generally, to belong to the latter category. What follows immediately will be questions like whether human spiritual life requires a certain kind of self-satisfaction obtained from a nonscientific discipline or whether social life looks upon religious belief itself as a psychological need. This is too gigantic a problem to be discussed here. We can only postulate that for a nonscientific belief to become an organized religion, it must offer some kind of theoretical bases or support. Also, these arguments must be able to reflect the spirit of the time. If there were no religious teachings to be used as a theoretical system, nonscientific beliefs could become an established religion. Besides, as an established religion, especially one that had colored the history of the social masses, there must be a perduring church organization, a religious canon, a community of devotees, and a history of religion.

In Chinese history, there were thousands of the so-called religious sects, but not all of them could be regarded strictly as “religious organizations.” In fact, a number of them could only be looked upon as “superstitious cults.” If that be the case, what then may be thought to be an organized religion? We shall analyze the growth of Daoism (Taoism) first before illuminating the really meaningful form of religious organization.

An organized religion must have a canon with a philosophical base of its own. The religious teachings should not be nonsensical but must contain a well-organized system of ideas for the advancement of humankind. The reason why Indian Buddhism has become an influential world religion is that it provides an impressive system of thought which is capable of enlightening the human mind. If Daoism (Taoism) merely confined itself to a haphazard way of thinking, as is represented in the *Taiping Jing*, it would have been difficult to become an established religion in China. Thus, from the end of the Han Dynasty, through the Three Kingdoms, till after the Western and Eastern Jin, there emerged Daoists like Ge Hong, Lu Xiuqing, Kou Qianzhi, Tao Hongjing, and others who, in an attempt to fulfill the requirement of the time, not only integrated some of the Daoist and Confucian ideas but also absorbed some of the Buddhist elements to enrich Daoism (Taoism).

A really meaningful and influential religious community must have a formal or more serious form of church organization. Even though the ideas of “immortality” and “the sanctification of the bodies” were subsequently incorporated into the Daoist religion, the saints relied heavily on personal devotion without developing a distinctive church, and so they failed to develop a religion. It was not until the end of the Han Dynasty that Daoism (Taoism) became an established religion with a permanent membership of disciples, together with a body of clergy and church leaders. However, the regimes of the Three Kingdoms and the Western Jin

banned this organization, subjecting it to dissolution until the Eastern Jin when Du Zhigong and others revived it and once again set it on course.

An organized religion must also have a more permanent set of religious teaching and canon. Although Daoism (Taoism) had its own precepts and canon when it was first instituted at the end of the Eastern Han, they were rather simple and impermanent in nature. From the Eastern Han onward, Daoism (Taoism) gradually became more firmly established under the impact of Buddhism and with the tireless efforts of Lu Xiujing, Kou Qianzhi, and others.

An organized religion must have its own canon and scriptures for the guidance of its believers. Although there were a number of Daoist books, like the *Laozi* (*Lao Tzu*)¹⁰ and the *Zhuangzi*,¹¹ before the Wei and the Jin dynasties, these books came to be accepted as scriptures only after being popularized by the devotees. All these books were written by Daoist philosophers of the early Qin, and they had hardly any connection with Daoist religion. It was due to the believers' attempt to look for historical evidences that they decided to upgrade them as scriptures. *Taiping Jing*, for example, was written before the inception of the Daoist religion. Hence, it served only as a groundwork for the development of Daoism (Taoism). However, by the time of the Eastern Jin and the Northern and Southern dynasties, when Daoism (Taoism) was firmly rooted and a church was organized, a large quantity of scriptures expounding the Daoist canon began to appear (Ge Hong's *Pao Pozi*).¹² This period saw the appearance of three distinctive categories of scriptures: *SanhuangJing*¹³ (the Three Emperors Scripture), *Shangqingjing*¹⁴ (the High Pure Scripture), and *Lingbaojing*¹⁵ (the Spirit Protected Scripture). All these scriptures subsequently combined to form the "three caves" (sandong) of the Dizhangjing, namely, the cave of the real (dongzhen), the cave of the gods (dongshen), and the cave of the occult (dongxuan).

An established religion must have a spirit being, or *shenling*, as specific object of worship and a history of its own. When Daoism (Taoism) was first instituted, it had inherited part of the saints' tradition. The Daoist disciples claimed that it was imparted to them by the immortals, mostly with Laozi (Lao Tzu)'s assistance. Until the Northern and the Southern dynasties, Daoist disciples created the "rank of the real being" based on the conception of the social hierarchy prevailing at the time. Tao Hongjing's *Zhenlin Yueweitu*¹⁶ (Real Spirit's Occupational Status Chart) divided the immortals into seven classes, the highest of which was occupied by the first three: the Primal Lord of Heaven (Yuanshi Tianzun), the Daoist Lord on High (Gaoshang Daojun), and the First Divine Daoist Lord (Yuanhuang Daojun). From then on, these three deities became the most honored in the objects of worship in the Daoist temples (daoguan). Since a religion always finds it necessary to undermine the existence of other competing religions, it has to create a history of its own in order to raise its own status. Thus, being an indigenous Chinese religion, Daoism (Taoism) had to tackle the entry of alien Buddhism. Besides emphasizing the differences between "Chinese" and "non-Chinese" (huayi zhi bian) to undermine Buddhism, Daoists also spread the story of "Laozi (Lao Tzu) huahu" and elevated Laozi (Lao Tzu)'s position to that of Buddha Shakyamuni's teacher. Consequently, both Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) remained in conflict for a long time.

However, it was not until the Eastern Jin and the Northern and Southern dynasties that Daoism (Taoism) finally became an established religion. The various stages of its development may be summarized as follows. First, from the Eastern Jin onward, the Daoists began to revive their religion by reorganizing the Daoist community which had become scattered and unstable. At the same time, in order to overcome the inadequacy of Daoist teaching and theoretical formulations, Ge Hong and others had provided a body of Daoist canon and precepts. Thereafter, as an attempt to consolidate the founding of the Daoist church, a set of religious teaching was formulated, and in order to propagate Daoist teaching, the required scriptures were made available. Lastly, so as to set the religion on a proper footing, a compendium of fairy tales and legendary stories was kept alive. The various phases involved in the development of Daoism (Taoism) may thus be said to be characteristic of the circumstances under which a religious body came into existence. One of our aims of studying the history of religion is to use it as a source for illuminating the various phases of its development so as to enable us to assess, more accurately, the role it played in society.

12.3 Characteristics of Daoism

As a form of religious philosophy Daoism (Taoism) has special characteristic, which can be illuminated only through comparison with other religions.

An established religion has characteristics which are distinctively different from those of other religions. Besides such external forms, as church organization, religious doctrines, and canon, as well as its conception of the sacred, its characteristics should be reflected in the theoretical system which forms the core of the religion. This theoretical system usually contains a body of basic ideals and conceptual schema. For instance, the ultimate reality of the Buddhist belief, as embodied in the concepts of self-denial, transcendentalism, and Nirvana, is the insignia which distinguishes it from other religions. The three doctrines of the medieval Christianity—namely, “the existence of God,” “the resurrection of the soul,” and “free will”—form its religious philosophy and conceptual schema. If that be the case, does Daoist philosophy contain any doctrines and tenets which differ from those of other religions? I think it does, especially in the earlier form of Daoism (Taoism). While almost all religions ask the question “what happens after the demise of a person?” Daoism (Taoism) wanted to know “why humans don’t die?” This basic question serves as the key to the theoretical system of Daoism (Taoism). All this shows that it has characteristics different from those of other religions. The early form of Daoism (Taoism) held that its body of belief was made up of the tenet of “the ascent of the three in one,” that is, “the unity of Heaven, earth, and man for the attainment of the Great Peace” (tian-di-ren, sanzhe heyi yi zhi taiping) and “the blending of the essence, breath, and shen to become a saint” (jing-qi-shen, sanzhe hunyi er cheng shenxian). From this it evolves into “non-death and eternal life”

(zhongshen busi), “resurrection of the bodies” (rou ti feisheng), and “transformation of the breath into the three pure ones” (qihua sanqing), thus forming the basis of Daoism (Taoism).

To understand the tenets of the Buddhist philosophy, one must know the meaning of Nirvana. Hence, a Russian Buddhist scholar¹⁷ wrote a book analyzing the meaning of Nirvana. In Mou Zongsan’s book,¹⁸ he analyzed the concept of Nirvana from the Chinese Buddhist viewpoint. In studying Christianity, one should analyze the concept of “God.” Thus, Aurelius Augustinus (354–430), in his *The City of God*,¹⁹ formulated his thesis regarding the “godliness” of the “Almighty.” In his *Shenxue Dazhuan*,²⁰ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) put forward five parameters to prove that “God exists.” In Daoist philosophy, the basic concept is breath (qi), the existence of which may be proved by the following.

First, the unity of the three in one refers to the unity of Heaven, earth, and man, and the reason why “Heaven, earth, and man” can be unified is due to the fact that the breaths of Tian-di-ren are the same. The three Jing-qi-shen (essence, breath, and god) blend to become one, and the reason why Jing-qi-shen can be fused in one is due to the fact that the breaths of the Jing-qi-shen are the same.

Second, the so-called one breath giving birth to the three pure ones means the three most respected worthies of Daoism (Taoism) were the manifestations of the breath, or the three layers of the most sacred Heaven were manifested by breath, or qi. This also shows how the basic concept of Daoism (Taoism) came to be formed.

Third, although dao (the way) is the highest form of Daoist doctrine, its early period identified three circumstances under which the relationship between dao and qi was highlighted. The first circumstance was that dao is more basic than qi, but dao cannot be isolated from qi. Another circumstance showed that qi is more basic than dao, because Daoism (Taoism) used qi as its prime mover—for example, Liu Xie in his *Mie Huo Lun*²¹ (on the Extinction of illusion), while citing *Sampolun*²² (The Three Breakthroughs) said “qi is the prime mover of dao.” The third circumstance was the synthesis that dao is qi—for example, Tao Hongjing in his *Yangsheng Yanmionglu*²³ cited *Fuqijing*²⁴ (Breathtaking Scripture) that “dao is qi.” In studying the philosophical basis of the Daoist canon, if one could analyze the meaning of qi and the conceptual base upon which it is built, one would be able to gain further insight into the various salient features of Daoism (Taoism).

Hegel in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*²⁵ said, “the difference in cultures is due to the difference in the systems of ideas.” If we compare Daoism (Taoism) with other religious systems, the doctrines formulated by Daoist ideas, and the school of thought which formed the basis of these doctrines, we would be able to understand more clearly the characteristics of Daoism (Taoism). Although Daoism (Taoism) is indigenous to the Chinese, it actually owes its development to the inspiration of Buddhism when the latter spread to China. Thus, we are able to identify the rival relationship between Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) as one of its special characteristics.

The earliest Daoist scripture, *Taiping Jing*, on the one hand, shows that it was influenced by Buddhism. For example, it relates to the question of conformity,

a concept which was already in use in traditional Chinese thought. But in *Taiping Jing*, this was discussed in such a detailed and outstanding manner that it became obvious that it was influenced by the Hinayanist Zen Buddhist concept of “mind control” or “control of desire.” On the other hand, the scripture also shows that it was antagonistic to Buddhism. For example, *Taiping Jing*’s satirical expression, “the way of the four destructions” (sihui zhi xing), was clearly aimed at Buddhism. It also put forward the argument that “one’s burden is one’s responsibility” (chengfu) as a direct confrontation to the Buddhist concept of “reincarnation” (laishi baoying). After the Eastern Jin, Daoism (Taoism) gradually developed into a full-fledged religion. It had a theoretical system of its own, and consequently its differentiation from Buddhism became more and more pronounced. At that time, the differences between Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) might be related to the following problems: (1) life and death and the form of god, (2) the cause and effect of one’s deeds and misdeeds (yinguo baoying), and (3) this-worldly and other-worldly orientations. By analyzing of all these issues, we would be able to appreciate the special characteristics of Daoism (Taoism) as a religion.

In comparing Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism), we may encounter yet another question: why does not Daoism (Taoism) become a world religion as did Buddhism rather than remaining merely a Chinese religion? From the historical point of view, it is possible that Daoism (Taoism) could have spread to Korea at the end of the Northern and the Southern dynasties. *Sanguo Shiji*²⁶ (The History of the Three Kingdoms) recorded how Daoism (Taoism) spread to Korea at the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, but, shortly afterwards, Buddhism became popular in Korea and very soon it outran Daoism (Taoism), which thence forward ceased to retain its foothold there. During the same period, Daoism (Taoism) passed through Korea to Japan, where it might have exercised some influence on Japan’s Shinto, though this does not mean that the development of Shinto was due to the Daoist influence. Unlike Buddhism, however, Daoism (Taoism) also failed to spread its wing over Japan. In history Daoism (Taoism) had even less influence on other countries (notwithstanding its continuing impact on Chinese devotees who made their homes outside China).

In my opinion, the main reason why Daoism (Taoism) could not become a world religion is that it not only contains defects in its system of beliefs and practices but also carries a heavy load of sentiments which are peculiarly Chinese. The goal Daoism (Taoism) seeks to achieve is “non-death and eternal life” and “the sanctification of bodies.” All this differs from the monotheistic doctrine that “the soul does not die.” On the one hand, its theoretical arguments, such as “the sanctification of bodies” and “non-death and eternal life,” are too crude and difficult to be absorbed. Consequently, Daoism (Taoism) had no alternative but to take in some Buddhist ideas, such as “when the form ceases, its spirit remains” (xingjin shen bu mie) and “the three kalpas’ wheel of karma” (somshi lunhui). Thus, the spread of Daoism (Taoism) has been seriously restricted, whereas wherever it goes, Buddhism has been able to take the place of Daoism (Taoism) wherever the latter goes. On the other hand, Daoism (Taoism) is too closely related to science. For the sake of preserving life, ensuring “non-death and eternal life,” and sanctifying

the dead, it emphasizes a great deal of physical conditioning for lifting the breath (qi) of material reality to the highest level. Consequently, China's science and technology, especially medicine, came to be developed alongside Daoism (Taoism). Daoism (Taoism)'s use of science was bound to curtail its dynamism as a religion. Thus, the "nonscience" and "antiscience" components, in conjunction with the basic qualities of science, began to contradict each other. Religion usually emphasizes "other-worldly orientations," but Daoism (Taoism) seems to insist instead on "this-worldly orientations" instead. Its adherents believe that they could blend "the three (jing, qi, shen) to become saints" (sanzhe heyi er cheng xian). But as a religious system, Daoism (Taoism) also advocates the unity of the three (tian, di, ran) in one to ensure the Great Peace (sanzhe heyi er zhi taiping) and for this reason can be a potent disruptive force in the political process. In thus fabricating the supernatural world of the saints, Daoism (Taoism) hopes to translate the real world into an ideal one—this undeniably is a conflict of ideas.

The study of the characteristics of Daoism (Taoism) is of great importance for it enables us to understand the difference between Daoism (Taoism) and other religions. By analyzing its characteristics, we are able to illuminate the salient features of Chinese culture, psychology, and philosophy, as well as the direction of developments in science and technology, medicine, and hygiene, and the ensuing shortcomings hidden therein. For people to succeed in development, they must know not only the present and the future but also the past. They must come to grips not only with the reality of political life and economic exigencies but also with their traditional culture, religious belief, and pattern of thought. Herein lies the reason why serious research must be conducted on Daoism (Taoism) so as to enable us to understand its role as a Chinese religion.

Vocabulary

1.	仲长统《昌言》
2.	《易传》
3.	《史记》
4.	《封禅书》
5.	《太平经》
6.	马克思
7.	费尔巴哈
8.	列宁
9.	普列汉诺夫
10.	《老子》
11.	《庄子》
12.	葛洪《抱朴子》

(continued)

13.	《三皇经》
14.	《上清经》
15.	《灵寔经》
16.	陶弘景《真灵业位图》
17.	撒尔巴斯基
18.	牟宗三
19.	圣奥古斯丁《上帝之城》
20.	《神学大全》
21.	刘勰《减惑论》
22.	《三破论》
23.	陶弘景《养生延命录》
24.	《服气经》
25.	黑格尔《哲学史讲演录》
26.	《三国史记》

Chapter 13

The Daoist Religion of China

In Chinese history, there have been various religions such as Buddhism, Daoism (Taoism), Islam, and Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, but among them only Daoism (Taoism) is the religion of the Chinese people. To be more precise, Daoism (Taoism) is a religion of the Han people and has certain concrete features that come from this association. It has had a large influence on Chinese culture, psychology, customs, science and technology, medicine and hygiene, philosophy, and even on Chinese politics and economics. How did the Daoist religion arise and what are its particular characteristics relative to other religions?

Daoist religion was born at the time of the Han Emperor Shundi at the end of the first century A.D. At this time, China already had a written history of about 2,000 years. At the end of the Warring States period (i.e., the third and second centuries B.C.), there had existed people called “immortals” who claimed that by certain practices, they could “extend their lives and not die.” These “immortals” were only individuals practicing by themselves; they never formed any kind of religious organization. However, at the end of the Western Han period (at the beginning of the first century A.D.), Buddhism came to China from India. The entry of Buddhism had a transformative effect and sped up the foundation of a Chinese religion. Because Buddhism was a foreign culture entering China, however, it elicited a strong reaction among the Chinese people.

The interaction of Chinese culture with a foreign culture led to both borrowing and criticizing. We can see both of these in the earliest of the Daoist religious writings, the *Taiping Jing*. In this work, Daoists borrowed such Buddhist terms as the “three realms” but also criticized Buddhists for their so-called four practices. (These were the unfilial abandonment of father and mother to become a monk, the abandoning of wife, and therefore the cutting off of future generations, the practice of begging, and the practice of eating excrement.) The Daoists said that this was

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 81–85

contravening the spiritual Way of Heaven. In particular, once established, the Daoist religion set forth the doctrine of “Laozi (Lao Tzu) converting the barbarians” in order to criticize Buddhism. They said that Laozi (Lao Tzu), the original teacher of Daoism (Taoism) in the Zhou period (the sixth century B.C.), had left China through the Hangu Pass and gone to India, where he had taught Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha was the disciple of Laozi (Lao Tzu).

The founder of the Daoist religion is generally recognized to be Zhang Daoling. There are two views in the Chinese scholarly community as to where the Daoist religion originated. The scholar Chen Yingge claims that the Daoist religion originated in Shandong, Jiangsu, and other coastal areas. Another scholar, Meng Wentong, claims that it originated in Sichuan and was influenced by the customs and practices of minority peoples there. I think that the Daoist religion originated in the coastal areas because the immortals were active in this area. Further, Zhang Daoling himself was from Feng County in Jiangsu and only later went to Sichuan, where he formally established the organization of the Daoist religion. It is quite possible that certain elements of minority peoples’ customs were absorbed into his teachings at that time.

The Daoist religion that later developed in Sichuan and the Han River area is called Five Pecks of Rice Daoism (Taoism) because people on entering the sect made an offering of five pecks of rice. It is also called Heavenly Teacher Daoism (Taoism) because the leader of this sect, Zhang Daoling, was called the Heavenly Teacher. Heavenly Teacher Daoism (Taoism) was passed on from Zhang to his son, Zhang Heng, and again transmitted to Zhang Lu, the latter’s son. Zhang Lu established a Daoist kingdom in the Han River area, which he ruled for 30 years. Eventually he was defeated by Cao, to whom he surrendered. Zhang Lu’s son, Zhang Sheng, fled to Longhu Mountain in Jiangxi where he became the fourth-generation Heavenly Teacher. At the present time, this sect of Daoism (Taoism) has already been transmitted to its sixty-fifth generation. The sixty-fourth-generation Heavenly Teacher is in Taiwan. His nephew is on the Chinese mainland continuing the tradition as the sixty-fifth-generation Heavenly Teacher. This young Heavenly Teacher, a man in his twenties, came to my home to study the Daoist religion.

After the Five Pecks of Rice school, in Yan (Hebei), Qi (Shandong), Jiang (Jiangsu), and Huai (Huaihe, Anhui), another sect of the Daoist religion was founded by Zhang Jiao called Taiping Daoism (Taoism). Zhang Jiao used the Daoist religion to organize an extremely large-scale peasant uprising. When this was put down, Taiping Daoism (Taoism) largely disappeared.

In the Three Kingdoms and Western Jin periods (the third century A.D.), the Daoist religion was hemmed in by imperial rulers and developed very little. However, in the Eastern Jin period (fourth century A.D.), the Daoist religion began to develop speedily and many nobles adhered to it. For example, the most famous aristocratic families of the time for generations believed in Daoism (Taoism). The most famous calligrapher in Chinese history, Wang Xizhi, was also a follower of the Daoist religion. One story recounts that Wang Xizhi particularly loved geese and wanted to buy the dozen or so geese raised by a Daoist priest.

The priest would not sell, and Wang asked a second and a third time. Finally the priest said that if Wang would copy out for the whole *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*), he would give him the geese. So Wang copied the entire work.

An interesting development occurred in the Tang period (618–907), whose rulers had the surname Li. At this time, the leaders of the Daoist religion were looking for a mythological figure they could venerate as the founder of the religion, and they came upon Laozi (Lao Tzu), who was also named Li. This was not a coincidence. First of all, even before the Daoist religion was formally established, Laozi (Lao Tzu) had been mythologized. Second, the Han Dynasty had venerated Confucian thought as orthodoxy, which, of course, honored Confucius. The Daoists claimed that Laozi (Lao Tzu) was Confucius's teacher, thus hoping to overcome the Confucianists. Now, according to the *Shiji*, Laozi (Lao Tzu) was surnamed Li with a given name of Erh. Since the Tang emperors were also surnamed Li, in order to increase their own importance, they said that they were descendants of Laozi (Lao Tzu). Because of this, the Tang emperors took the Daoist religion relatively seriously: Emperor Xuanzong even wrote his own commentary on the *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*).

After the Daoist religion was established, on the one hand, it struggled with Buddhism and, on the other, it absorbed Buddhist thought. But the Daoist religion also has its own definite characteristics. Many religions seek to understand or answer such questions as what happens to human beings after death? For example, Buddhists seek to answer the question: What can people do after death to keep from being reborn into this world? The Daoists, however, seek to answer this question: How can people keep from dying? The ideal in the Daoist religion is for people to “extend their lives and not die,” to “fly up in this very body”—that is, to become an immortal.

Regarding this question, the Daoist religion has certain theories. Daoists claim that people have both a spirit or soul and a body, both of which are constructed from *qi*. The *qi* that makes up the spirit or soul is called soul-*qi*. The *qi* that makes up the body is called form-*qi*. Only when the soul-*qi* and the body-*qi* are joined together in a single person do we have life. People should seek two things—to live forever and to obtain good fortune. If you die, everything is finished, so in order to seek to extend life, first, you must get a body that does not decay so that the spirit or soul will have a place to abide. Then seek a method for the soul to stay with the body, otherwise you will be dead and not be able to achieve any kind of good fortune.

Because of this, Daoists seek ways to keep body and soul together, and Daoism (Taoism) has various methods to accomplish this purpose. The most basic of these are of two sorts: the outer pill and the inner pill. The outer pill consists of using various minerals, especially mercury, in order to concoct a potion. It is hoped that by ingesting various potions, one can keep one's body from decaying, and then the soul can continue forever in its midst. They claim that if you put a bronze mud on your feet and soak your feet in water for a very long time, you will not decay. If you can find the so-called golden pill, once you eat it, your whole body will be able to live forever without decaying.

The inner pill is a series of practices that cause the *qi* within the human body to circulate through certain channels. This is called “working on your *qi*” and is the same kind of thing that is known these days as *qigong*. If the *qi* continually circulates in the human body, the whole body will be suffused with the light of an extremely fine *qi*. The body itself will become as light as *qi* and the person will be able to ascend to Heaven, which is called “to fly up in this very body.”

When Daoism (Taoism) became a religion, it had to have its own deities to venerate. At first the deity most venerated was the mythologized Laozi (Lao Tzu), called “Laojun” or “Taishang Laojun.” Afterwards, under the influence of Buddhism, very many other deities were added. Originally Buddhism had only Shakyamuni as the Buddha, but afterwards they said that before Shakyamuni there had been seven other Buddhas. Toward the end of the Northern and Southern dynasties, a Daoist priest named Tao Hongjing wrote a book called *Zhenling Weiye Tu* in which he divided Daoist deities into seven levels. The highest level contained three deities. In the center was one called Yuanshi Tiandao. On his left was Gaoshang Daojun and on his right was Yuanhuang Daojun. Laozi (Lao Tzu), or Taishang Laojun, was placed below on the fourth level. Today in Daoist temples, the formal hall is called the Hall of the Three Pure Ones, and most sects worship these three deities. However, not all Daoist sects are alike. Some still claim Taishang Laojun as the highest deity, saying that he existed before Heaven and Earth were created and that in different times he has different causes. Originally he was Pan’gu Xiansheng. Heaven and Earth were separated by him, and he has various spiritual powers.

The Daoist religion has one female deity of particular power who is named Xiwang Mu (Queen Mother of the West). Xiwang Mu existed as a deity before the founding of the Daoist religion. In the *Shanhaijing* (from the fourth to the second century B.C.), Xiwang Mu is not yet a female deity, but either of undifferentiated sex or male. Only after the *Mutianzi Zhuan* does Xiwang Mu become a female deity. This book recounts the story of the Zhou King Mu (of about 1000 B.C.) who went to the Kunlun Mountains to seek Xiwang Mu. In the earliest Daoist scriptures, however, where it is said there that the character “Mi” indicates the proof of the longevity of the deity, Xiwang Mu is merely a deity of long life. Thus, “Mu” here does not necessarily mean a female deity. Only in the Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties, when the Daoist religion set up Dongwang Gong as a counterpart to Xiwang Mu, did Xi-Wang Mu emerge as an important female deity.

The Daoist religion took the human body and its cultivation very seriously, as in such matters as exilers, the inner and outer pill, and *qigong*. Because of this, it has had a great influence on ancient medicine, pharmacology, chemistry, and the nourishment of the human body. Many great Daoist leaders such as Ge Hong, Tao Hongjing, and Sun Simiao were important scientists of Old China. Because of this, people today who research the history and development of Chinese science and technology cannot but study the history of the Daoist religion. The English historian of science, Joseph Needham, in his *Science and Civilization in China*, has relied extensively on the writings of the Daoist religion.

Daoists have written many works. The earliest collection of Daoist works, called the *Zhengtong Daozang*, has 5,000 volumes. It was compiled in 1445 in the tenth year of the Zhengtong Emperor of the Ming. Later, in the Wanli period, a supplement appeared. These are important resources for the study of the history of Chinese religion.

In China today, Daoism (Taoism) is one of the important religions. About 3,000 people have formally become Daoist priests, and several important Daoist temples have been restored. In Beijing there is a Daoist temple, called the Temple of the White Clouds (Baiyun Guan), which was established in the Yuan Dynasty (the thirteenth century) and belongs to the Guanzhen sect of Daoism (Taoism). Its Hall of the Three Pure Ones is very fine; it also has two areas for the display of historical objects of the Daoist religion. In Chengdu, Sichuan there is the Green Goat palace and in Wuhan the Temple of Eternal Spring, both of which have been very well restored and belong to the Guanzhen Daoist sect. In Xian a Daoist temple called Louguan Tai belongs to the Northern sect of Daoism (Taoism). It was first built in the Northern Zhou Dynasty (fifth century A.D.), but what exists now was rebuilt in the Ming (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). It is said that in the Louguan Tai, Laozi (Lao Tzu), before he left for the West, dictated the *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*) to the gatekeeper, named Yixi.

Longhu Mountain in Jiangxi is the birthplace of the Zhengyi sect of Daoism (Taoism). Maoshan in Jiangsu is the birthplace of Tao Hongjing's Maoshan sect. Hangzhou has a Daoist temple in Geling where, it is said, Ge Hong refined the pill. At each of these Daoist temples are Daoist priests, young and old, male and female. At Beijing's Temple of the White Clouds, a school of Daoist religion teaches priests how to read Daoist scriptures. Beijing also has a Daoist Association, a national organization publishing the *Journal of the Chinese Daoist Association*. At Sichuan University, the Institute for the Study of Religion is dedicated solely to the Daoist religion and is editing a Daoist dictionary. Beijing University has established an Institute for the Study of the History of the Daoist Religion, where I teach. The Institute for the Study of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing is doing a synopsis of the 5,000 volumes of the Daoist canon. Two national conferences have been devoted to the study of the Daoist religion, one at Beijing University. Thus, the study of Daoist currently is developing very quickly.

Chapter 14

The Attempt of Matteo Ricci to Link Chinese and Western Cultures

When introduced into another country or nation, a foreign culture is confronted by the problem of how to treat that cultural tradition. If it wishes to spread easily and exert influence in the country in which it is introduced, it must identify with that country's native culture. Hence, as the attitude of Matteo Ricci toward traditional Chinese culture is related to his missionary goals in contacting Chinese and especially Confucianist culture, he developed an intensive knowledge of that culture and recognized its very positive value. Therefore, his missionary work is related to an important issue in the history of culture: how effectively to blend not only into one but to communicate between two cultural traditions with different backgrounds. This is the heart of the problem of cultural transplantation. Most probably, he appreciated well the significance of solving the problem and on the whole took a positive attitude toward Confucianist culture. We may observe this problem in two aspects: one is his own description of the problem, and the other is how the literati of the period or a little later looked upon Matteo Ricci.

Matteo Ricci not only had a good command of Chinese but also knew a great deal about Chinese customs and etiquette. He not only dressed in Confucianist style and called himself a “Western Confucianist” (*xiru*) with a square piece of cloth on his head but also followed the etiquette of a Chinese scholar when meeting visitors. He made a careful study of ancient Chinese classics and records and regarded Confucius as a great man of wide knowledge. Of The Four Books (*sishu*) which he translated, he wrote that it “was written by the four great philosophers and is full of reasonable ethical thought.”¹ To his mind, “it is no use at all just to know our learning without the knowledge of theirs.”²

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 147–157

¹ Quoted from Luo Guang, *Matteo Ricci* (in Chinese: Taipei, Taiwan).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209.

But how did he treat Chinese culture? In a letter dated 15 February 1609 to another missionary, he wrote:

As I have gradually illustrated, they (the Chinese) also appreciate very much the principle of filial piety, although one might hold different views. To date from its very beginning, they faithfully followed natural law in ancient times, just like the case in our country. In 1500, this nation did not simply worship any idols. Even though they did worship some, these idols were not so detestable as those worshipped by our Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. Some of the gods were even very moral and well-known for their good conduct. As a matter of fact, in the most ancient and authoritative works of the literati, they only worshipped Heaven and Nature and their common master. When making a careful study of all these works, we may find few things contrary to reason, but instead, most of them are corresponding to reason. And their natural philosophers are no worse than anyone else.³

The above quotations make clear the following: (1) Ricci knew very well traditional—especially Confucian—Chinese culture. As in ancient society, China was dominated by the patriarchal clan system, and moral importance was attached to filial piety based on the principle of blood relation and “natural law.” In China worship of Heaven and Nature also is moral and hence naturally “reasonable.” Being quite knowledgeable regarding Chinese culture, Ricci regarded Confucianism not as a kind of religion but rather as based on “natural law.” (2) Ricci highly appreciated China’s Confucianist culture. He saw that the idolatry in ancient Chinese culture was not like that of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans and hence that ancient Chinese philosophy, in speaking of human nature and heavenly principles, transcended Western philosophy. This appears in his answer to Xu Guangqi’s question, “China now, when virtue and rite and cultural relics are all prevailing, really flourishes culturally as though it has dispelled clouds and seen the sun again.”⁴ This may be due to the fact that as Catholic, he attached great importance to opposing idolatry and advocating morality. Matteo Ricci was strongly against the idolatry of Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism), but he did not regard Confucian worship as a kind of idolatry. Thus, we can say that, on the whole, Matteo Ricci agreed with and appreciated the orthodox Confucianist thought of Chinese culture.

As Xu Guangqi believed in Catholicism through his contact with Ricci, he respected Ricci both for his learning and for his morality. He noted that in Ricci’s speech, “you cannot find even a single word which runs counter to the principle of loyalty and piety, nor can you find one harmful to the will of the people and the world.”⁵ That Xu Guangqi should attach special importance to “loyalty and piety” was influenced strongly by traditional Chinese ideas, and it is on this basis that Matteo Ricci preached the Catholic doctrines and received Chinese culture.

³ Matteo Ricci, *Lettere dalla China*, trans. He Gaoji et al. (Zhonghuashu, China: China Press, 1983), p. 687.

⁴ See the “Epilogue” to *Twenty-five Sayings from Epictetus*, in Xu Zongmian, ed. *Extracts of the Translated Works by the Protestants in Ming and Qing Dynasties* (Beijing: China Press, 1949), p. 329.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

One passage in *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man* describes the statement of Gong Dacan made on Matteo Ricci:

On hearing his wise talk, I feel that the Confucian classics of China and those of his country corroborate each other. Thus those who believe in the real sages, either from the East or from the West, from the North or from the South, are actually all the same.⁶

All the Chinese scholars mentioned above think that what Ricci preached corresponded to traditional Chinese thought, especially to that of Confucianism, the most fundamental linking point of which lies in “the principle of loyalty and piety.” As far as we know, although the Chinese intellectuals at the time set store in Ricci’s knowledge of astronomy, almanac, science, and technology, they valued even more highly his attempt to combine Western with Chinese culture. This probably is one of the earliest manifestations of “regarding Chinese learning as the body and Western learning for use.” I shall discuss this problem later on.

14.1 Modes of Relating Oriental and Occidental Cultures

Judging from the above two aspects, we see that, while doing missionary work in China, Matteo Ricci actually was trying to link Oriental and Occidental cultures. On this premise, we would conclude that his attempt adopted the methods of “linking Catholicism with Confucianism” (*heru*), “using the Catholic doctrines as a complement to Confucianism” (*buru*), “making in some respects the Catholic doctrines transcend the Confucian ones” (*chaoru*), “and making some revisions of the Catholic doctrines so that they would concord with the Confucianist ones” (*furū*). In short, on the above bases, Ricci attempted to discover the point at which Oriental and Occidental cultures could be linked.

14.1.1 *Linking Catholicism with Confucianism (Heru)*

Matteo Ricci wrote three important books on Catholic doctrines: *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man*, and *Twenty-five Sayings from Epictetus*. The original title of the first one is “The True Meaning of the Learning of Heaven.” Obviously, he first thought of avoiding the name “the Lord of Heaven” because there is no such thing in China, to facilitate its reception by the Chinese. Fang Yingjing explains in the Preface as follows:

This book is about the questions and answers between Matteo Ricci and his fellow friends and five Chinese. What is the Lord of Heaven? It is God. It does exist.

⁶ See *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man* (Yanzhoufu: Catholic Press, 1930), Vol. II, p. 76.

The edition of *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* in the Ming Dynasty often used the titles “God” and “Heaven” for “the Lord of Heaven” or “the Lord of Supremacy,” while the present edition often uses instead “the Lord of Heaven” and “the Lord of Supremacy” simply because Ricci used those titles in order to be easily received by the Chinese. Thus, in ancient times, the Chinese people worshipped Heaven, their state, and their forefathers, but not “the Lord of Heaven.” He tries to conform to this by quoting the classics to show that in ancient China “the Lord of Heaven” is God himself. The Chinese classics which he quotes include *The Book of Songs (shi)*, *The Book of History (shu)*, *The Book of Rites (li)*, *The Book of Changes (yi)*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean (zhongyong)*. These quotes appear more frequently in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. For instance, in Discourse 6 of Vol. II, where he answers the question about “rewarding the good and punishing the evil,” he more than once quotes Chinese classics to confirm that the doctrines of Catholicism should be combined with those of Confucianism. (1) Matteo Ricci is quite aware of the existence of a supreme personal “God” in ancient China, regarding which he argues that the “Lord of Heaven” in Western Catholicism and “God” in China are one thing with different names. (2) Criticizing Zhu Xi’s explanation, he argues that there is only one “supreme lord,” not two (Heaven and earth). In his *Introduction to The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, he notes that the ancient sage advised that the subject should be faithful, but that they cannot be faithful to two lords. Of the three Cardinal Guides, ruler guiding subject stands first for since a state has its head, how can Heaven and earth not have their lord? As a state should be unified, how can Heaven and earth have two lords? All these ideas obviously show his interpretations of the Catholic doctrines in relation to Confucianism. (3) Quoting the ancient classics, he also states that God wills to impose fortune and misfortune on humanity. (4) So God has his own “sphere” (*ting*) which is different from the “Heaven” (*tian*) in nature. From all these, we can see that what Matteo Ricci attempts to prove is that Catholicism coincides with Confucianism and the ancient Chinese classics.

14.1.2 *Complementing Confucianism (Buru)*

Lettere dalla China is a note written by Matteo Ricci in Italian in China. Later a British missionary translated it from Italian into Latin and added something concerning the history of missionary work as well as of Matteo Ricci, the missionary. It also has an appendix relating the missionary’s posthumous glory and pathos. One passage in the book reads as follows:

In answering what the main content of Christianity is, Dr. Xu Guangqi sums it up very exactly in four Chinese characters: “expelling Buddhism and complementing Confucianism” (*qufuburu*). That is to say, he wants to expel the idol of Buddhism and add something to the doctrines of Confucianism.⁷

⁷ *Lettere dalla China*, p. 663.

As generally any religion is characterized by excluding others, Ricci criticized Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism), especially the former, since he wanted to bring Catholicism to China; this shows signs in nearly all his works. St. Augustine once pointed out that the main content of a heathen religion should resolutely be given up, but that the ideas put forward by some heathen philosophers should be taken into account, accepted, or approved if they were really reasonable. Matteo Ricci took this approach to the doctrines of Confucianism. He declared that Confucianism had nothing to do with religion, but was rather a kind of philosophy. He particularly esteemed Confucius, noting that as Confucius lived five centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, he could not know what was to happen 500 years later. “Ricci just quotes the classics of Confucianism in their own terms, saying nothing of how they should be evaluated after the death of Confucius.”⁸ In *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man*, there is a passage about Gong Dacan’s discussion with Ricci on the issue: “whether good or evil will be rewarded posthumously.” Gong first notes that the Chinese classics, because Emperor Qin Shihuang burned books and persecuted scholars after the death of Confucius, lost the records of the paradise, hell, and retribution, which are still in a good state of preservation in the West: “Thus the stories about the paradise and hell are well preserved.” In China, the story of retribution in later ages “is both vague and strange to scholars, who half believe and half doubt its existence.” Gong also tries to prove the probable existence of the paradise by quoting ancient classics, but he still doubts the idea that “bestowing charity is bound to be rewarded a place and stand long.” Ricci explains this according to the doctrines of Catholicism in which retribution to those who bestow favor does not consist in “place” or “life span.” A man living in the world should work hard for the Lord of Heaven instead of intending to be rewarded in his lifetime; he should be confident that he will finally go to the paradise. Therefore, answering Xu Guangqi he says: “Those who suffer simply for benefit and emolument or fame and official rank or lasciviousness rather than the sacred cause are actually tragic. But those who suffer for the Lord of Heaven are obviously happy and seem to live in the paradise.”⁹ It is apparent that he wants to complement the thought of Confucianism with Catholic doctrines, but the approach he adopts is not to negate the Confucian classics but to extend and develop them so as to show that the Confucian ideas do not run counter to those of Western religions but may be complemented by them.

In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, many passages deal with the “retribution of good and evil.” In Discourse VI “On Man’s Being Rewarded with Heaven or Punished with Hell after Death,” he more or less complements and revises the Confucianist concept that “the family always doing good is bound to be fortunate, whereas the family always doing evil is doomed to misfortune.” To him, there is not only retribution in one’s lifetime or to one’s descendants (he seems not to be favor of that to one’s descendants). What is more important is posthumous

⁸ Ibid., p. 664; also cf. p. 693.

⁹ All the quotations are from Vol. II of *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man*, pp. 57–79.

retribution: those who do good will go to Heaven instead of going to Hell after death. But as their purpose is not just this, Ricci adds:

All those who do good usually have three intentions: (1) to go to Heaven instead of going to Hell; (2) to reward the kindness bestowed by the Lord of Heaven; and (3) just to follow the imperial edict given by the Lord of Heaven.¹⁰

The first intention serves as a bridge in order for one to reach the third; that is, doing good is after all following the imperial edict. However, the Confucianists did not know this and even criticized the concepts of Heaven and Hell simply because they could not understand their deep significance: “The Confucianists criticize the concepts of the Heaven and Hell because they do not know truth.”¹¹ We can see roughly the difference between Catholicism and China’s Confucianist tradition. Since the Confucianists talk about “the retribution of good or evil” just from personal moral cultivation, everyone should “have self-cultivation” or “stick to morality” only for the purpose of reaching one’s inner moral accomplishment. In this sense, it is pursuing a kind of “inner transcendence.” But the Catholic doing good is after all for “the Lord of Heaven,” which is a kind of power of “outer transcendence.” So it pursues or follows a kind of “outer transcendence.” I shall discuss this problem later on.

14.1.3 *Transcending Confucianism (Chaoru)*

The aim of China’s Confucianist theory is to pursue “inner transcendence,” whereas that of Catholicism is to pursue “outer transcendence.” In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Matteo Ricci points out this shortcoming of Confucianism and criticizes it.¹²

As far as we know, traditional Chinese philosophy, and Confucianist philosophy in particular, is strikingly different from Western philosophy and religion. The Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle already had divided the world into two parts: a transcendental noumenon and a real world. Thereafter Christianity was concerned especially with an outer transcendent God, whereas traditional Chinese philosophy was characterized by “inner transcendence.” What Confucius means by “nature and the doctrine of Heaven” is a matter of inner transcendence, and what Mencius meant by “thinking hard, knowing nature and Heaven” is also a matter of “inner transcendence.” There is a sentence in *Xici* saying: “A feminine (*yin*) and a masculine (*yang*) equals a word, and it is followed by virtue (*shan*) and will have a nature,” which is a matter of “inner transcendence.” According to this, one may reach a realm leading to a transcendental “Way of Heaven” through one’s own

¹⁰ See *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T’ien chu shih)*, p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

inner moral cultivation, without the help of an outer transcendent power. But for Ricci, one can hardly reach the culminating realm just through one's inner moral cultivation; one must be pushed by an outer transcendent power or God; thus, it is necessary to believe in God. That is to say, Ricci considers the doctrines of Catholicism to be more perfect than those of Confucianism.

14.1.4 Concordance with Confucianism (Furu)

This concept means that it is necessary to make some revisions of the Catholic doctrines or to yield to some of the Confucianist ideas in order to concord or chime in with China's traditional Confucianist thought.

The editor's Preface to the French 1978 edition of *Lettere dalla China* says:

Immediately before Ricci's death, the methods adapted by the Chinese missionary group led by him had already become an issue argued both at home and abroad. It was disputed with two objections. In practice, he was accused of paying too much attention to developing his relation to the Confucianist elite instead of pushing forward the missionary cause. In theory, he was also opposed for his positive evaluation of Confucianism. Some people even pointed out that, if so, it would run a risk of sullyng the purity of Christianity. Only by means of a heightened religious emphasis can the missionary preach the Gospel to the broad masses of people and make evident the characteristics of Christianity.¹³

I have already pointed out that Matteo Ricci had some opinions of China's Confucianist tradition and attempted to link Western and Eastern cultures. Naturally, he knew clearly that there were many differences and conflicts between Confucianism and Catholicism and probably would have dealt with these by the methods of "complementing Confucianism" and "transcending Confucianism." If his missionary work were completely according to Catholic doctrines, however, he would have been confronted with more difficulties. Therefore, he had to make some revisions of the Catholic doctrines so as to cater to the Chinese tradition and it is not strange that he was criticized. As to how he adapted Catholicism to Confucianism, the following should be noted.

- (a) In order to fit Catholicism to Chinese society, he explained its differences from Chinese society. In the Italian edition of his *Lettere dalla China*, there is a passage describing how the Confucianist offers sacrifices to gods.

However, according to an old law, there is a grand Confucian temple in every big city where the literati gather, with a figure of Confucius enshrined and his name; every year, the literati offer sacrifices to him four times, with a candle burning and a beast is killed. However, as they do not think of him as godly or want anything of him, such a rite cannot be called a real offering.¹⁴

¹³ See *Lettere dalla China*, p. 660.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

In Matteo Ricci's books, there are many signs of the Catholic stance against idolatry; the criticism of Buddhist idolatry is particularly strong. However, he never criticizes Confucian offerings to the Sage, nor does he criticize the Chinese offerings to their ancestors. The issue concerning offerings is an important reason why China later forbade the preaching of Catholicism. In 1704, the Vatican gave orders that Chinese Catholics should not follow traditional Chinese rites that did not conform to Catholicism. Obviously, offering sacrifices to Confucius as well as to ancestors is especially counter to Catholicism; this led the Chinese government to limit and even forbid the preaching of Catholicism. Since Matteo Ricci well understood Chinese conditions, he adopted the method of compromising with the Chinese tradition for the sake of adapting to Chinese society as well as his missionary work, although the attempts did not conform to the doctrines of Catholicism.

- (b) He makes some Catholic ideas conform to traditional Chinese Confucianist thought so as to enable the Chinese to accept Catholicism. As mentioned previously, the "Lord of Heaven" in Catholicism is, of course, the supreme personified God, but Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* does not mean this according to its original title. In that book, he often uses such words as "God" and "Heaven" of Chinese origin, instead of the "Lord of Heaven." According to Fang Hao's *Collected Essays on The History of Chinese Catholicism*, in contrast to the edition of the Ming Dynasty, it is found that the later edition has changed the words "God" or "Heaven" in the Ming to "Lord of Heaven" or "Supreme Lord" in 79 places.¹⁵ In the Chinese language, there are already such words as "God" (*shangdi*) and "Heaven" (*tian*), but in traditional Chinese thought, *tian* has several meanings. Among these Ricci takes the meanings "God," "Heaven," and the supreme personified God, but for the Chinese people, there may be some other meanings. In 1715, after Ricci's death, the Pope gave an edict that the name "Lord of Heaven" was a legal one and such names as "God" and "Heaven" should no longer be used because they could be interpreted in different ways.

Also, according to Professor Luo Guang, Ricci says in his *Twenty-five Sayings from Epictetus*, "This book is actually composed of 25 chapters. Every chapter is short and concise. It advises people to live simply and to restrain desire and feeling. Happiness lies in one's secure state of mind without having stirred either by good fortune or misfortune. The purpose of human life lies in one's obedience to the Lord of Heaven." It is apparent then that the book is intended to conform to Chinese conditions.

- (c) Ricci made some revisions in the "idea of sin" in order that it should approach more closely the "idea of virtue" in China's Confucianist tradition. As the "idea of sin" in Catholicism implies, human nature cannot be considered "virtuous," which is entirely different from the "idea of human nature being virtuous" in China's traditional Confucianist thought. In accordance with St.

¹⁵ See *Collected Essays on the History of Chinese Catholicism*, pp. 4–8.

Augustine’s interpretation, man is born to be “sinful” because of his rational choice. In the final analysis, what causes man to choose evil with reason is his vanity or an egocentric desire that puts himself over God. Such a desire usually drives him into following his own intention and holding in contempt God’s decree, which is particularly apparent in human desire. Augustine then adds that, since man intentionally chooses evil and commits sins violating God, he can never recover his original state with his own effort, for such a “sin” causes him to degenerate inevitably, being characteristically egocentric in willing and desiring and able only to choose “committing sin” or tending to “evil.”

In this regard in the 7th discourse of *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Ricci thinks that the “human nature” refers to what differentiates man from metal and stone, grass and wood, bird, beast, and even spirit, and this is why man “can reason things out.” So he says: “What can reason things out is alone called human nature, which is different from other creatures.” “Virtue and morality come after reason, which itself is something dependent, and not human nature itself.” Thus, “reasoning things out” refers simply to this virtuous “ability,” and “human nature is born to be virtuous.” This obviously caters to Confucianist ideas. But since Matteo Ricci could not completely violate the doctrines of the Lord of Heaven, he thinks that man is “able to reason things out.” How can he get such an ability? Just as farmers plow, weed, remove the stones, and irrigate before they sow seeds in order to get good harvests, so “learners should first of all get rid of evil before they could be virtuous. Only by standing aloof from worldly success can they be successful.” As this idea is associated with that of “sin” in Catholicism, it could not but conflict with the so-called idea of “good ability.” Thus, it is quite difficult to reconcile one cultural tradition with another.

From the above four points, we can see that Matteo Ricci preached the doctrines of Catholicism for the purpose of linking Oriental and Occidental culture together. Whether his attempt was successful or not will not be evaluated here, but that he was the very first Westerner to make such an attempt is certainly of historical importance.

14.2 “Body and Use” and the Correlation of Chinese and Western Harmony

In trying to link Western and Chinese culture, often we encounter the problem of the “body and use” (*tiyong*), of Chinese learning and Western learning. In preaching Catholicism in China, Matteo Ricci could not but consider his relation to traditional Chinese thought and culture. Similarly, in receiving Catholicism, the Chinese had to consider such a relation. Above I have discussed how he dealt with this problem. Now let us consider how the Chinese intellectuals at the time received Catholicism. In my opinion, such receivers of Catholicism at the time as Xu Guangqi, Li Zhizao,

and others in receiving or studying Western learning took the attitude: “Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use”, we know that although the Protestants were active at that time even at the court in Beijing, yet “the Chinese court made use of them only by employing their techniques.” “For example, Ricci once repaired clocks and other machines in the court, and Tang Ruowang and Nan Huairen and others joined in revising the calendar.” “What China’s enlightened literati were particularly interested in was to learn from them their science and knowledge.” “They did not have great success in shaping China’s intellectuals”¹⁶ for few Chinese intellectuals received the doctrines of Catholicism. As these were received chiefly due to his association with traditional Chinese thought, especially the Confucianist morality, his attempt can be regarded as another earlier form of “regarding Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use” formulated in the 1860s.

During subsequent centuries, there have been various attempts to correlate “Chinese learning” and “Western learning” with that between “body” (*ti*) and “use” (*yong*), such as “Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use,” or “Western learning as body and Chinese learning for use,” and even “both the two learnings as body and Chinese learning for use” are called “all-Westernizers” (*quanpan xihua pai*); those who regard “Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use” are called “Chinese culture supremacists” (*guocui pai*). Such confusions are caused by the attempt to describe the relationship between “Chinese learning” and “Western learning” with that between “body and use.” As a matter of fact, none of the above ideas are tenable.

As a pair of important categories in the history of Chinese philosophy, “body” and “use” are not substantial categories but rather fundamental relations. “Body” (*ti*) generally refers to the “inner transcendental spirit” or “transcendental noumenon.” It corresponds to what Mencius means by “conscience” (*liangzhi* or *liangneng*) and Wang Yangming by “mind” (*xin*), etc.; the latter corresponds to “God’s will” (*tianming*), “taiji,” “God’s word” (*tianli*), and “logos” (*dao*); “use” (*yong*) refers to the various functions demonstrated by such an “inner transcendental spirit” or “transcendental noumenon.” According to traditional Chinese philosophy, *ti* and *yong* are unified, with the former presenting the latter for, as Wang Bi in the Wei-Jin Dynasty pointed out, there would be no corresponding *yong* without *ti*. The so-called concept of “Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use” is nothing but an effort to preserve the inner transcendental noumenon in Chinese tradition, so as to reject the Western spirit. For how could we make “Western learning for use” if we should do like that? Similarly, it is impossible to regard “Western learning as body and Chinese learning for use.” The former will inevitably result in “Chinese learning both as body and for use” and, the latter, “Western learning both as body and for use.”

As for “both the learnings as body and for use interchangeably,” it can be interpreted as: if something in Chinese learning is good, we should regard

¹⁶ See the Preface to the Chinese version of *Lettere dalla China*, p. 23.

“Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use”; also, if something in Western learning is good, we should in turn regard “Western learning as body and Chinese learning for use.” Such an idea is obviously untenable. It will do nothing but include both attitudes in the so-called concept of regarding “both learnings as body and for use interchangeably,” which is just eclectic. Professor Fang Keli involves himself in a confused eclectic situation, although he criticizes the above two attitudes in his “‘Chinese Learning as Body and Western Learning for Use’ and ‘Western Learning as Body and Chinese Learning for Use.’”¹⁷

It would give rise to “stealthily substituting one culture for another” if we use the relation of *tiyong* to explain the relationship between Chinese culture and Western culture. If we do not improve the cultural soil and other conditions, but just stealthily substitute one culture for another, the cultural foundation will not be solid. Thus, to my mind, our modern society should have its modern spirit and various systems embodying such a spirit. If we use the relation of *tiyong* to explain this problem, we might probably regard “the modern spirit as body and the systems and their functions embodying such a spirit for use.” If so, one might ask: What is the “modern spirit” and what are the “systems and their functions embodying the spirit”?

Here I would refer to the point of view put forward by Mr. Yan Fu, who once criticized the idea of regarding “Chinese learning as body and Western learning for use.” He also points out that body and use should be unified rather than dual. Particularly, he lays emphasis on the significance of science and puts forward a very meaningful proposition: “liberty as body and democracy for use.” I do think that such an idea of his is probably of certain modern significance. So in my opinion, “liberty” is the concentrative embodiment of the modern spirit or an inner spirit in the modern era and a universal ideal that the people in modern society are pursuing, whereas “democracy” consists of various systems of modern society ensuring one “liberty” rather than certain people only. We now live in a Chinese society. It is most important to give everyone “liberty” and have a set of democratic systems ensuring its realization if we want to enable our society to become modernized. Only in this way can people give full play to their enthusiasm and creativity, and our country set foot on the road not only of the “four modernization” but also of all-around modernization.

¹⁷ See *Studies of Philosophy*, 9 (1987), 29–35.

Chapter 15

The Possible Orientations of Chinese Culture in the Context of Globalization

In the context of globalization today, human culture will remain diverse. This is because since World War II, with the collapse of the colonial system, the former colonies and oppressed peoples have had the urgent task of confirming their independent status in all aspects; a nation's unique culture (language, religion, values, etc.) is one of the most important pillars for the establishment of this status, and it therefore provides the conditions for the diversified development of world culture. In addition, the rise of the postmodern trend of thought in the Western world in the latter part of the last century and its tremendous impact on the modernist ideas of clarity, determinacy, the ultimate value, and the integrity of the theoretical system led to the pursuit of indeterminacy, disorder, and anti-centrism, which has strengthened multicultural development. Chinese culture, as a component of human culture, needs to walk out of the debates on "China versus the West" and "the ancient versus the contemporary" that have lasted for more than a hundred years and to approach the new stage of mastering the knowledge of the four perspectives to realize the transformation of Chinese culture. At present, due to the diversity of world culture, Chinese culture has also formed its own diversified pattern.

In the history of China, there were two significant cultural imports, one being the import of the Indian Buddhist culture since the first century and the other being the import of Western culture since the end of the sixteenth century, especially in the mid-nineteenth century.

The import of Indian Buddhism into China has undergone three historical phases. (1) From the late Western Han Dynasty to Eastern Jin Dynasty, Buddhism first attached itself to astronomy and astrology in the Han Dynasty and then to the metaphysics in the Wei and Jin dynasties. (2) After the Eastern Jin Dynasty, there were contradictions and conflicts between Chinese culture and Indian culture due to

Chinese Culture and Globalization: History and Challenges for the 21st Century, 2009: 33–40

cultural differences, with the two influencing and absorbing each other. (3) Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, several Sinicized Buddhist sects, such as Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan, had come into being, while the Indian Buddhist culture was influenced by Confucianism and Daoism in China. Meanwhile, Confucianism reemerged, emphasizing traditional Chinese subjectivity, and Daoism absorbed Buddhism. It can be maintained that Indian Buddhist thoughts had been completely fused with Chinese culture by the time of the Song Dynasty. This historical process of the import of the Indian Buddhist culture into China can function as a frame of reference for us to draw experiences and inspiration from when we study the import of Western culture into China.

When it was imported into China in the late sixteenth century, Western culture, similarly, attached itself to the Chinese Confucian culture, which was interrupted due to the famous Rites controversy. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Western culture flooded into China with the invasion of the Western imperialists. For more than a hundred years, there have been debates on “China versus the West” and “the ancient versus the contemporary,” which are, in effect, the debates on “wholesale Westernization” versus “ontological culture.” These indicate that there has been a tendency to set “the ancient” against “the contemporary” and “China” against “the West.” This simplified mode of dealing with intercultural issues is harmful to the healthy and reasonable development of culture. At present, we should abandon setting “the ancient” against “the contemporary” and “China” against “the West” and walk out of the debates. We might claim that cultural developments in China at present are at the transitional point from the second phase of the import of Indian Buddhism (Southern and Northern dynasties) to the third phase (Sui and Tang dynasties), namely, from the phase of cultural contradictions and conflicts between the two cultures to the phase when the local culture begins to digest Western culture. In this third phase, the development of our Chinese culture will go beyond the debates on “China versus the West” and “the ancient versus the contemporary” and into the phase when we absorb and fuse Western culture in an all-round and profound way to help Chinese culture develop from the traditional to the modern, giving rise to multicultural development. I will illustrate this orientation with the example of Chinese philosophy. I believe that under these circumstances, there are at least three “carry-on” orientations for the construction of modern Chinese philosophy:

- A. On the basis of absorbing and fusing Western philosophy, we can “carry on” with traditional Chinese philosophy by talking about “Chinese philosophy.” “Carry-on” and “abide-by” issues were raised by Mr. Feng Youlan. In his view, his “New Confucian Philosophy” carries on rather than abides by the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties. By the same token, the philosophy of the philosophers in the Song and Ming dynasties, so-called Neo-Confucianism, came into being after absorbing and fusing with Indian Buddhist philosophy, which had a great impact on it. Such philosophers in the 1930s and 1940s as Xiong Shili, Feng Youlan, He Lin, Jin Yuelin, Zhang Dongsun, and Zhang Shenfu constructed modern Chinese philosophy by absorbing Western philosophy under the impact of the latter.

We can take Feng Youlan as an example. His New Confucian Philosophy is new because it introduces into Chinese philosophy Plato's "universals" and "particulars" as well as the thought of "the latent" of the New Realism Philosophy. He divides the world into "truth" (or "idea" or "tai chi") and reality. A matter in reality becomes a matter relying on the "idea." In this way, his New Confucian Philosophy carries on the thought that "the principle is one and its manifestations are many" of the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties on the one hand and applies the thoughts of "universals" and "particulars" from Western philosophy into Chinese philosophy on the other hand, giving impetus to the modern transformation of Chinese philosophy. In reality, the scholars in the 1930s and 1940s were generally like this.

Of course, Feng Youlan's "New Confucian Philosophy" has also left unresolved issues. As is stated in the seventh volume of *The Newly Compiled History of Chinese Philosophy (The History of Modern Chinese Philosophy)*, Feng maintains that idea, is nonexistence but being for one thing and it is still "existence" for another. There is a clear contradiction here. Therefore, if we attempt to push the development of Chinese philosophy, we should carry on the "New Confucian Philosophy" instead of the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties. One of the conditions to achieve this goal is for us to further absorb and digest Western philosophy and help Chinese philosophy have more universal significance in the dialogues between China and the West. Meanwhile, we should pay more attention to the strong points of Chinese philosophy and establish the cultural subjectivity of our own so as to make a special contribution to human culture. We can also note that, although there is a tradition of discussing the "relationship between knowledge and action" in traditional Chinese philosophy and the doctrine of "the unity of knowledge and action" once occupied a dominant position, this doctrine was often linked with morality and ethics, lacking an epistemological basis. This issue was raised by He Lin in the 1930s when he stated: "Studying the issue of 'knowledge and action' uncritically and discussing morality directly will definitely lead to dogmatic ethics. Ethics studies the code of conduct and the concept of good, so if we do not study the relevant knowledge and the truth related to the good, we will certainly be trapped in baseless dogmatisms." Therefore, we "must investigate thoroughly the knowledge basis of ethics."¹ We can see that such Chinese philosophers in the 1930s and 1940s as Zhang Dongsun, Xiong Shili, He Lin, Jin Yudin, and Feng Youlan all noticed the lack of "epistemological" theory in traditional Chinese philosophy and made an attempt to learn from Western philosophy in order to complement this deficiency. Hence, the establishment of real modern Chinese philosophy is impossible without Western philosophy. That is to say, paying constant attention to and drawing nourishment from Western philosophy is the necessary means by which Chinese philosophy can develop and enter the world.

¹ He Lin, "New Understanding of the Unity of Knowledge and Action," in *Chinese Philosophy in the Fifty Years* (Liaoning Educational Press, 1989).

B. We can carry on with Western philosophy to construct Chinese philosophy by introducing the ideological resources of the latter into the former. In China's history, there was the experience of carrying on with Indian Buddhist philosophy. During the Sui and Tang dynasties in China, several Sinicized Buddhist sects such as Chan, Tiantai, and Huayan had come into being. They absorbed thoughts from Confucianism and Daoism, becoming Chinese Buddhist philosophy which was different from Indian Buddhist philosophy. We can maintain that Chinese philosophy once benefited from Indian Buddhist philosophy, while the latter was carried into China.

For more than a century, various schools of Western philosophy have entered China one after another and greatly influenced Chinese philosophy. Facing the Western philosophy of great strength, is it possible for Chinese philosophers to introduce Chinese philosophical thoughts into Western philosophy to form several Sinicized schools of Western philosophy, as they did in the Sui and Tang dynasties? Here, I will take hermeneutics as an example to illustrate the point. Currently, there is a "trend of hermeneutic thoughts" in the West, and since the 1980s, scholars from a variety of disciplines in the Chinese academia have been applying Western hermeneutics to the investigation of the different aspects of Chinese culture; thus, some Chinese scholars (including the overseas ones) have been trying to construct "Chinese hermeneutics." Because there is a very long history of interpreting the classic and rich archives of thoughts in China, the issue of the construction of Chinese hermeneutics has been raised under the influence of Western hermeneutics.

In his *The Modern Interpretations of Chinese Philosophy*, Professor Jing Haifeng takes four people, Fu Weixun, Cheng Zhongying, Huang Junjie, and Tang Yijie, as an example to illustrate the efforts to construct Chinese hermeneutics. Fu's "creative hermeneutics" divides a philosopher's thinking into five levels, constructing Chinese hermeneutics from the perspective of hermeneutic methodology. This is characterized by the introduction of the thinking methodology of Taoist philosophy (such as Lao Zhuang philosophy) and Chinese Buddhist philosophy (such as Chan) into hermeneutics. Cheng differs from Fu in his emphasis on the hermeneutic theory of the methodology, paying special attention to the ontological meanings of interpretations. He mainly introduces the thoughts of *The Book of Changes* into hermeneutics, believing that Chinese ontological hermeneutics is different from Western hermeneutics, which is characterized by the static "interpretation of ontology," in that it is characterized by the dynamic "interpretation of ontology," which is based on "life ontology," with knowledge being unified in the mind. Based on his analysis of *Mencius* and his study of Mencius' thinking, Huang reveals the characteristics of the interpretation of the classic in China. Tang has sorted out the history of interpreting the classic in China by analyzing the different types of interpretations in pre-Qin philosophy. Despite all these attempts, more efforts are still needed to establish "Chinese hermeneutics."

However, all these attempts are of great significance at any rate, as they will enrich hermeneutic theory. In fact, in the last century, some scholars attempted to

establish “Chinese phenomenology and Chinese semiotics.” In this connection, the current philosophical circles in China are perhaps adding Chinese philosophical thinking resources to the branches of Western philosophy to form some Sinicized branches of the latter, as they did in the Sui and Tang dynasties. This attempt by Chinese philosophers to introduce Chinese philosophical thinking into a branch of Western philosophy to form a philosophy different from the latter will enrich Western philosophy (as Chan, Tiantai, and Huayan did during the Sui and Tang dynasties) on the one hand and will open up more extensive space for the development of Chinese philosophy (such as the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties), helping Chinese philosophy to enter the diversified philosophy of the world in a better way.

C. We should establish Marxist philosophy with Chinese features: Marxism was originally a branch of Western philosophy. It is quite necessary for us to make a separate study of Marxism because it had a tremendous impact on Chinese society during the twentieth century. Here, I would like to take the late philosopher Feng Qi as an example. Feng attempted to make Marxist philosophy one with Chinese features by absorbing traditional Chinese philosophy and Western analytical philosophy. In the “introduction” of his *Three Discussions on Wisdom*, he states: “This book aims at understanding humanity and nature based on the dialectics of the epistemological process of practice, particularly through the leap of “transforming knowledge into wisdom.””

First of all, Feng does not aim to solve the problem of Western philosophy, but that of “humanity and nature” in Chinese philosophy through practical, materialist dialectics. Second, he thinks that “transforming knowledge into wisdom” (namely, the intuition of wisdom) is the way of solving the problem. “Transforming knowledge into wisdom” is borrowed from the language of Buddhism, which requires that “knowledge” be elevated to “wisdom” to reach the spiritual realm of transcendence. Third, he believes that the purpose of philosophy is to regard the process of understanding the world and that of understanding oneself as the same as achieving the transformation of theories into methods and virtues. Marxism believes that theories and methods are unified, while Chinese philosophy has always maintained that “theories” and “virtues” are unified. Feng Qi requires that “theories,” “methods,” and “virtues” should be unified. He explains that, in one sense, philosophical theories “should be transformed into thinking methods and implemented in their own activities and research areas.” But in addition they should also “be transformed into their own virtues and embodied as their own personalities through their own practice.”

Thus, although based on Marxist materialist dialectics, Feng’s philosophy is to settle the issue of Chinese philosophy and its way is to reach the ideal moral realm of life by absorbing the Buddhist way of thinking into Chinese philosophy (“transforming knowledge into wisdom”). Undoubtedly, this is Marxist philosophy with Chinese “features.” The Chinanization of traditional Marxism will make Marxism in China have more epochal and ethnic characteristics, as did Western Marxism (such as the Frankfurt School) in the last century.

Of course, for more than a century, there have been cultural “revivalists” in Chinese academia. After World War I, traveling back from Europe, Liang Qichao claimed that Western culture had declined and would be rescued by Chinese culture; the “Declaration of the Chinese Cultural Ontology” also appeared in the 1930s. Especially in the twenty-first century, some Chinese scholars have raised the issue of “reestablishing Chinese Confucianism.” They maintain that “the all-round rejuvenation of Confucianism must be achieved in response to the challenges posed by Western civilization” and that “the rejuvenation of Confucianism is the urgent task on hand for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” Therefore, they advocate Confucianism as the state religion in China to achieve the so-called unification of the state and the religion practiced ever since ancient times. I think that this attempt to close one’s own culture and to exclude without analysis Western culture is certainly inadvisable and against the current trend of globalization and so cannot be realized.

The above mentioned three possible orientations of the development of Chinese philosophy might be ways for Chinese philosophy to go beyond the debates on “China versus the West” and “the ancient versus the contemporary,” to approach the new road that fuses the knowledge of the ancient and the contemporary as well as of China and the West, and to let various schools of philosophical thought strive in more extensive fields. That is to say, to construct modern Chinese philosophy, we should uphold the subjectivity of Chinese philosophy on the one hand and have a good absorption of the essence of Western philosophy on the other hand. This requires that we should not only carry on traditional Chinese philosophy but also have the courage to carry on Western philosophy (or the Sincization of a branch on of Western philosophy). We should not simply abide by Chinese and Western philosophy as they existed in history, but carry them on instead, which will open up new prospects for the development of philosophy.

Chapter 16

Prospects for the Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy and the Issue of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful in China's Traditional Philosophy

Confronting us now is the problem of prospects for the study of Chinese philosophy, that is, the problem of how to evaluate the traditional philosophy of China.

China is a great country with a long history and cultural tradition. The traditional philosophy of China is rich in content and displays an originality. Because society has moved forward and China has been in a backward position for more than 100 years, and also because we failed to adopt a scientific attitude toward the study of China's traditional thought and culture, we have been unable, over a long period of time, to acquire a true understanding of the value of China's traditional philosophy or to find out where its shortcomings and problems lie. However, things have been changing dramatically in this area in recent years.

In addressing the rally commemorating the 100th anniversary of Marx's death, Comrade Hu Yaobang, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, said: "The mistaken tendency to split Marxism from the cultural achievements of mankind and pit the one against the other must be opposed; we must acquire a standpoint of respecting the knowledge of science and culture." Note that in recent years, a very important phenomenon has appeared in China's newspapers and periodicals, namely, large numbers of articles on problems in real life all quoting philosophical remarks made in ancient China.

For example, *Guangming ribao* (Bright Daily) carried two short articles on February 19 this year. One article was entitled "Remain Tenacious after a Thousand Whettings and Ten Thousand Thrashings." It was a line from Zheng Banqiao's poem "On Bamboo," which the article used to encourage an indomitable behavior among the people. Another article, entitled "King of Wei Killed Those Who Knew him and the Fake King of Wei," dwelt on the suspicious character of Cao. The article quoted from the *Chronicle of the Reign of Zhenguan* what

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture, 1991: 5–16

Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty said to Feng Deyi: “Whether a flowing water is clear or muddy hinges on its source. An emperor is the source of government and the common people are like the water. If the emperor plays tricks himself and expects his ministers to behave honestly, it is like a muddy source expecting its flow to be clear; it is unreasonable.” The same goes for quite a few literary works. Take, for example, “A Wreath at the Foot of a High Mountain,” a controversial short story, which describes how a PLA commander criticized a high-ranking cadre’s wife. As an admonition, the commander quoted from Du Mu’s “Epic of E-Pang Palace” by saying: “People of Qin had no time to lament and were lamented by people after Qin. If the people after Qin lamented but did not take warning, then they would be lamented by those after them.”

There are many examples like this which can be found everywhere in newspapers and periodicals. All this has raised a question: Since so many ancient sayings in China still bear great significance for us today and serve as an indispensable guide to our behavior in real life, what value does the traditional philosophy of China have in its entirety? A reevaluation of China’s traditional philosophy seems called for.

If we say that philosophical ideas may embody the problems of the true, the good, and the beautiful, then does not the traditional Chinese philosophy have something valuable or unique in this regard? I think it does, and very remarkably so. We can approach this issue from two aspects: one is the contents of its thinking, and another is its attitude toward life, both of which aspects are closely related.

16.1 Chinese Philosophy as a Threefold Integration

Regarding the issue of the true, the good, and the beautiful, traditional Chinese philosophy has had three propositions exerting an extended influence over Chinese thinking: the “integration of Heaven with man,” which inquires into the unity of the world; the “integration of knowledge with practice,” the problem of an ethical norm; and the “integration of feeling with scenery,” involving the creation and appreciation of artistic works.

16.1.1 *Integration of Heaven with Man: The True*

How to define the two concepts of “Heaven” and “man” varies with different philosophers. Nevertheless, the “Way of Heaven” refers to the basics of the universe or the universe as a whole. The “way of man” often refers to the society of man or man himself. The relationship between Heaven and man has always been the fundamental issue studied by Chinese thinkers.

Sima Qian called his *Historical Records* a book that “probes into the relations between heaven and man.” Dong Zhongshu described what he said as a branch of

learning that “studies how man is related to Heaven.” He Yan, one of the founders of the metaphysics of the Wei and Jin dynasties, called another founder, Wang Bi, a philosopher “qualified to discuss the relations between Heaven and man.” Tao Hongjing, the true founder of the Maoshan sect of China’s Daoism (Taoism), said only Yan Huan, another Daoist leader, understood that “what he had in mind” was the problem “between Heaven and man.” The “relationship between Heaven and man” has been explained by different theories in traditional Chinese philosophy. For example, Zhuangzi required that a “distinction be made between Heaven and man,” and Zhuangzi theorized that “those who are ignorant of Heaven know nothing about man.” Furthermore, the question of “relations between Heaven and man” often has found expression in the discussion about the relation between “nature” and the “Confucian ethical code.” Nevertheless, the mainstream of traditional Chinese philosophy has taken as its main task the demonstration or explanation of how “Heaven is integrated with man.”

Confucius said more about “human affairs” and less about “the Mandate of Heaven.” Nonetheless, he also believed that “what the saint says” is in keeping with “the Mandate of Heaven.” Mencius, it can be said, is the philosopher who first proposed the idea of “integration of Heaven with man” in a complete sense. For example, he said: “Do with all your heart, know your lot, and understand Heaven”; “keep up with Heaven and earth above and below.” Even though Xunzi advocated that a “distinction be made between Heaven and man,” his fundamental goal was to “bend the will of Heaven to our use” so that “Heaven” would be integrated with man. Laozi (Lao Tzu) of the Daoist school urged: “Man follows earth, earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows the Way, and the Way follows nature.”

Even Zhuangzi who was “ignorant of Heaven and knows nothing about man” had this to say: “Heaven and earth live side by side with me, and all things on earth are identified with me.” He also said that the superior man can “communicate with Heaven, earth, and spirit.” Dong Zhongshu preached the idea that “Heaven and man respond to each other,” and his argument was that the two were integrated. The metaphysics of the Wei and Jin dynasties focused its discussion on the relationship between “nature” and “the Confucian ethical code.” Even though Ji Kang (Chi Kang) and Yuan Ji advocated that the “ethical code be overstepped and nature followed,” the mainstream of the metaphysics school stressed that the “ethical code” be reconciled with “nature.” As Wang Bi embraced the idea that “the intrinsic and the extrinsic are like one,” he urged that “the essentials (nature and the Way of Heaven) be upheld to rule the nonessentials (ethical code and mundane affairs).” In stressing “the intrinsic and the extrinsic are like one,” Guo Xiang believed “there is no intrinsic beyond the extrinsic” and therefore concluded that “Heaven is the general term for all things on earth.”

By the time of the Song Dynasty, the Confucian philosopher Zhou Dunyi noted in more explicit terms: “A saint shares virtue with Heaven and earth,” and “a saint aspires to Heaven.” Zhang Zai stated in his *West Inscription*: “That which blocks heaven and earth is my intrinsic; that which commands heaven and earth is my character.” The two Cheng theorized that “the intrinsic and the extrinsic come from the same source” and stated: “In Heaven it is destiny, in man it is character, and it is

the heart that commands the body. They are actually one and the same.” Zhu Xi stated that: “Heaven is man, and man is Heaven. The beginning of man is derived from Heaven. Since this man is born, Heaven rests in him.” And he added: “A saint. . . is integrated with Heaven.” Wang Yangming said: “The heart is Heaven. Stressing the importance of the heart upholds Heaven, earth, and all things.” “Man is actually one with Heaven, earth and all things.” “The heart has no intrinsic but takes the response of Heaven, earth, and all things as the intrinsic.” Later Wang Fuzhi advanced the idea that man moves along with the vaporization of Heaven to explain why Heaven is integrated with man. He said: “Destiny is realized by days and character is formed by days.” “There is not a day that Heaven stops thinking of destiny, and there is not a day that man does not submit his destiny to Heaven.”

As far as traditional Chinese philosophy is concerned, the major philosophers, either materialist or idealist, all talked about the problem of “integration of Heaven with man.” By analyzing their theories, we can roughly arrive at the following conclusions: First, in traditional Chinese philosophy, the concept of “integration of Heaven with man” gives expression to the idea of observing things in their entirety. It is a direct description rather than a detailed analysis; we can call it a directly perceived “overall concept.” Second, in traditional Chinese philosophy, the basic argument for the idea of “integration of Heaven with man” is, “The intrinsic and the extrinsic are like one”: unity of the ways of Heaven and man is “both the intrinsic and the extrinsic,” the Way of Heaven serving as the intrinsic and the way of man the extrinsic. This can be termed as an “‘absolute’ concept of unity.” Third, traditional Chinese philosophy does not see the “way of man” as something rigid; what is more, it also sees in the “Way of Heaven” liveliness and unending vitality. “Heaven moves along a healthy track, and a gentleman should make unremitting efforts to improve himself.” That human society should move forward and man should improve himself is due to the necessity of keeping up with the development of the “Way of Heaven.” This can be called the unlimited “concept of development.” Fourth, in traditional Chinese philosophy, “Heaven” is object and the “way of man” must be brought in line with the “Way of Heaven.” However, “man” is the heart of Heaven and earth; he should install a heart for Heaven and earth. Without “man,” Heaven and earth would have no vitality, rationality, or morality. This can be called the “humanistic concept” of ethics. The abovementioned four concepts comprise the total implication of the idea of “integration of Heaven with man” in traditional Chinese philosophy.

16.1.2 Integration of Knowledge with Practice: The Good

The problem of “knowledge and practice” is an issue of the theory of knowledge; in traditional Chinese philosophy, however, it poses even more a problem of ethics and morality. If, in traditional Chinese philosophy, a question of the theory of knowledge had not been linked to the question of ethics, it would have been difficult for it to be passed down as a part of traditional philosophy. Therefore, the problem

of a theory of knowledge is often also the problem of ethics. This is why the philosophers advocated that man not only should seek “knowledge” but must also pay special attention to “conduct” (practice).

What is the “good”? The criterion for the “good” can vary, but, according to traditional Chinese philosophy, unity of “knowledge” and “practice” must be regarded as a prerequisite. From the history of Chinese philosophy, we can come across many different explanations about the relationship between knowledge and conduct. In *History Classic* (Chapter 1, “On Destiny”), it was said long ago that “it is not difficult to know but difficult to put it in practice.” Later, the two Cheng advocated: “Knowledge precedes practice.” Zhu Xi was of the opinion that “knowledge and practice each give rise to the other.” Wang Fuzhi theorized that “practice precedes knowledge,” and Sun Zhongshan advanced the idea that “to know about a thing is more difficult than to do it” and so forth. Taking things as a whole, however, the concept of an “integration of knowledge with practice” actually has run through traditional Chinese philosophy from beginning to end.

Starting from the time of Confucius, the “agreement of one’s words with one’s deeds” has always been used as an ethical criterion to differentiate a gentleman from a villain. Confucius said: “A gentleman feels it a shame not to be able to match his words with actions.” Mencius stressed “intuitive knowledge” and “intuitive ability.” Even though he regarded the four factors including the “sense of pity” as inherent, he thought it is necessary to “foster and enhance” benevolence, righteousness, rite, and wisdom, which had already become moral codes. As they could be acquired only through moral practice, he advocated that “a noble spirit be cultivated.” Zhuangzi stressed “practice” as the purpose of seeking “knowledge”; at the same time, he also admitted the guidance “knowledge” provided for “practice.” He said: “One who practices it knows it. One who knows it is a saint.” As a saint, therefore, one must “integrate knowledge with practice.”

By the Song Dynasty, the Confucian philosopher Cheng Yi, regardless of his opinion that “knowledge precedes practice,” argued in terms of morality and self-cultivation that “one who knows but cannot practice is one who does not truly know.” Therefore, Huang Zongxi noted: “Mr. Cheng already had the idea of integrating knowledge with practice” (*Academic Files of the Song and Yuan dynasties*, Volume 75). Zhu Xi inherited Cheng Yi’s theory that “knowledge precedes practice,” but he stressed in particular that “knowledge and practice are mutually dependent” and “efforts on knowledge and practice should be pushed forward side by side.” He reasoned: “In terms of sequence, knowledge precedes; in terms of importance, practice is more important.” Therefore some people described Cheng and Zhu’s as “a theory of integration of knowledge with practice with emphasis on the latter.” Even though “knowledge” is the foundation of “practice,” “knowledge is shallow when knowledge has just been acquired and yet to be put into practice.” “When one personally experiences it, his knowledge will be deeper, different from what he knew before.” That Zhu Xi stressed “practice” resulted because he basically regarded “knowledge” and “practice” as an issue of morality. This is why he remarked: “Wherever the good is, one must practice it. Having practiced it for a long time, it will become identified with

oneself. Having identified with it, it will become a part of oneself. Failing to practice it, the good remains the good, and oneself remains oneself; they have nothing to do with each other.”

Traditional Chinese philosophy often advocated “practicing the Way (Dao).” This idea perhaps had a twofold implication: One was to “take the Way as the intrinsic,” another to practice the “intrinsic way,” namely, to earnestly practice the “intrinsic way” one advocated. Therefore, this is not merely an issue of understanding. As for Wang Yangming’s theory of “integration of knowledge with practice,” naturally we all know about it; however, our understanding about it seems not to be totally correct. By quoting his remark, “practice begins once an idea is struck upon,” people often describe him as “ascribing practice to knowledge” and “taking knowledge to be practice.” In fact, Wang Yangming did not equate “knowledge” with “practice” completely. The remark that “practice begins once an idea is struck upon” was made in the context of morality and self-cultivation. Immediately after that, he added: “If the idea is no good, we have to overcome it. We have to overcome it thoroughly and thoroughly so that the no-good idea will not lay hidden in our hearts.” He also said: “A close and solid knowledge is where practice lies, and a conscious and precise practice is where knowledge lies. Efforts on knowledge and practice were originally inseparable. Only scholars in later ages split them into two and lost the essence of knowledge and practice.”

In regard to the relations between knowledge and practice, Wang explained clearly: “Knowledge gives the idea to practice, and practice is the efforts made of knowledge. Knowledge is the beginning of practice and practice is the end result of knowledge.” From the angle of the theory of knowledge, Wang Yangming could be suspected of “including practice in knowledge.” In the perspective of morality and self-cultivation, however, emphasis on “integration of knowledge with practice” had a positive significance.

By the time between the Ming and Qing dynasties, Wang Fuzhi advanced the idea that “practice precedes knowledge” and “practice can also gain knowledge.” However, he still stressed “integration of knowledge with practice” when addressing the issue of ethics. He opined that “knowledge and practice complementing each other is use and the two progressing alongside is achievement.” He criticized Wang Yangming’s idea of “integration of knowledge with practice” and called Wang “ignorant of the fact that they each have their own use and complement each other.” Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi, too, was an advocator of “integration of knowledge with practice.” He said:

In calling someone engaged in pursuing knowledge and practice we mean he devotes himself to the pursuit of knowledge and makes every effort to practice. Because of his devotion and efforts, achievements can be made and divided. Since achievements can be made and divided, an order of succession can be established. Since an order of succession can be established, the antecedent and the subsequent can complement each other. From knowledge one knows what is being practiced, and from practice one practices what is being known. Thus it can be said the two progress alongside and therefore make achievements.

That knowledge and practice can progress alongside arises because the two, in the final analysis, are a moral issue. According to Wang Fuzhi's opinion: "A wise man is one who knows the rites. A man of ritual is one who practices knowledge. In practicing knowledge, all rituals will be properly performed; in knowing the rites all essentials will go to the mind. Thus one will improve oneself with each passing day and there will be no end to it." A saint "combines his intelligence with sincerity. He practices what he knows and what he practices becomes his knowledge." This is how traditional Chinese philosophy envisages that a man should behave himself.

Now prevailing in the study of traditional Chinese philosophy is a viewpoint which asserts that "since the Song and Ming dynasties the neo-Confucianists, when discussing knowledge and practice, often mixed up this issue of theory of knowledge with the issue of ethics." It insists that this is where the limitations and mistakes of Chinese ancient philosophers lay. In this regard, two questions deserve to be discussed.

First, Neo-Confucianists since the Song and Ming dynasties, as a matter of fact, did not regard knowledge and practice merely as an issue of the theory of knowledge. They thought the issue was important precisely because it was related to morality and self-cultivation. The final purpose of their discussion of relations between knowledge and practice was to improve moral cultivation. Therefore, it is out of the question to assert that the Neo-Confucians confused the issue of the theory of knowledge with that of morality. Second, as an issue of morality and self-cultivation, the theory of integration of knowledge with practice and the viewpoint of unity between knowledge and practice cannot be said to be without positive significance. Ethically, knowledge and practice cannot be separated into two ends; what is necessary is that "knowledge be integrated with practice." The remark made by Wang Yangming that "knowledge is the purpose of practice and practice is the work of knowledge; knowledge is the beginning of practice and practice is the end result of knowledge" can be seen as the best summary the Chinese ancient philosophers ever made about this issue.

16.1.3 Integration of Feeling with Scenery: The Beautiful

This is an aesthetic issue which Wang Guowei made a thorough discussion in his *Random Talks about Poetry*. He said: "Realm is the top quality in poetry writing. Having realm, a poem is naturally of a high quality and carries famous lines."

What does "realm" mean? Wang explained that "realm does not refer to scenery alone. Delight, anger, sorrow, and joy are also a realm in man's heart. Therefore a poem that can depict true scenery and true feelings can be said to have realm. Otherwise it should be said to have no realm." Obviously, the term "realm" refers not only to scenery but to "sentiments" as well. In *Jialing Manuscripts Discussing*

Poetry, Ye Jiaying made a very perceptive explanation about Wang Guowei's "realm theory." According to Ye:

The generation of realm depends entirely on our sense of perception. The existence of realm depends entirely on what our sense of perception can reach. Therefore the outside world cannot be called realm before we can reproduce it through the function of our perception sense. Judging by such a conclusion, the theory of realm as advocated by Wang, as a matter of fact, can be traced to the same origin as the theory of interest by Canglang and the theory of romantic charm by Yuan Tingzhi.

Bu Yentu, after Wang Guowei, also said in his *Questions and Answers on the Methods of Painting*: "Landscape painting is no more than portraying feeling and scenery, and feeling and scenery is realm." This is why Wang Guowei remarked: "When people in the past discussed poetry, they divided the verses into those describing scenery and those depicting feeling. They did not know all verses describing scenery depict feeling." Obviously, Wang Guowei regarded as top-grade creative writings literary pieces that "integrate feeling with scenery." However, this aesthetic viewpoint of "integration of feeling with scenery" did not start with Wang Guowei.

Generally speaking, it was in the period of the Wei and Jin dynasties that the theory of China's literature and art truly became independent as a branch of learning, and by that time, the idea of "integrating feeling with theory" already emerged. In *Introduction to the Grades of Poetry*, Zhong Rong states:

The four-characters-to-a-line poems, they can be useful if they imply more in fewer words and model on works of literary excellence. However, the problem is they often involve a lot of words but connote little contents. Therefore few people learn to write them. The five-characters-to-a-line poems occupy the primary position in writing and stand out as the most savory among a variety of genres, thus winning the praise of being popular. Isn't it because they are the most detailed and truthful in narrating events, conjuring images, expressing feelings, and portraying things? Therefore there are three approaches to writing poetry: First, implication; second, comparison; third, narration. The idea that there is more to the poem than the words state is what we call implication. Citing things to indicate one's intention is comparison. A direct account of the happening, thus embodying the idea, is narration. Take the three approaches into consideration and choose the most appropriate, enhancing it with charm and force and polishing it with color so that those who read it will find unlimited savor and those who listen to it will be stirred. This will be a poem of the top grade.

A "masterpiece," a "superb work," should "express feelings and portray things." This was the forerunner of the idea of "integration of feeling with scenery." Xie Zhen, one of the later seven scholars of the Ming Dynasty, said in *Four Seas Poetic Discussions*: "Writing poetry rests on feeling and scenery. Neither can work without the other or conflict with the other." He also said: "poetry is the tool for the portrayal of feeling and scenery. Feeling melts inside, running deep and long; scenery shines on the outside, stretching far and wide." In *Poetic Discussions from the Ginger Studio*, Wang Fuzhi put it in an even clearer way: "In name feeling and scenery are two things, but in fact they are inseparable."

Those skillful in writing poems have unlimited chances to hit upon good ones. In an ingenious piece, there is "scenery in feeling and feeling in scenery." "Feeling is generated from amid scenery and scenery is generated from amid feeling. This is why we say scenery is the scenery of feeling, and feeling is the feeling of scenery."

“Once feeling is integrated with scenery, witty expressions are readily available.” This last sentence perhaps constitutes the basic proposition for China’s traditional theory of art and literature, manifesting its basic view on “beauty.” In the traditional thinking in China, what is beautiful has always been linked to what is good. “The substantial is called the beautiful” refers to a spiritual realm in which one has a noble enjoyment. Having listened to the music of “Wu” (nothing, e.g., the silence that follows sound), Confucius commented: “It has all the beautiful but not all the good,” and after listening to the music of “Shao” (few), he remarked: “It has all the good and also all the beautiful.” Only music that “has all the good and also all the beautiful” can be regarded as the highest and most ideal music. This applies to music and should apply to other arts as well. An art that “has all the good and also all the beautiful” is designed to elevate man’s spiritual realm and help him derive there from the highest enjoyment of beauty. Because of this, the creator of artistic and literary works must be one who has “realm,” and his works must “integrate feeling with scenery.”

16.2 The Study of Chinese Philosophy and the Reason for Being Human

With regard to the true, the good, and the beautiful, why does traditional Chinese philosophy consistently pursue the three “integrations”? In my opinion, it is because the basic spirit of Chinese philosophy is to teach how one should behave like a man. To be a “man” one must have set for oneself a demand, must have an ideal realm of the true, the good, and the beautiful. One who has attained such an ideal realm in which “Heaven is integrated with man,” “knowledge is integrated with practice,” and “feeling is integrated with scenery” is a saint. Therefore, the prospects for traditional Chinese philosophy lie in bringing this demand to be a “man” in line with the need of the modernization program and thus realizing it. One’s ideal may find expression in an immense variety of ways; nevertheless, one must have an ideal and noble spiritual realm. The three integrations advocated by traditional Chinese philosophy are in fact a unified realm for one to be a “man.” They cannot be separated, at least theoretically.

The proposition of “integration of Heaven with man,” though designed to illustrate the relations between man and the entire universe, was made in view of man as center of the universe. *The Golden Mean* states: “Honesty is the Way of Heaven; to be honest is the way of man.” “An honest man who hits the target without difficulty, arrives at the right idea without brain-racking, and conforms to the Way without hurry is a saint.” The role of a saint is to “foster a heart for Heaven and earth, create a life for living creatures, carry forward peak learnings for posterity, and open up peace for thousands of generations to come.” Therefore, a “man” (mainly, the saint) must behave in accord with the requirements of the Way of Heaven and should assume it his responsibility to fulfill them. Being alive in the world, one must not take a passive attitude; rather, one should “make unremitting

efforts to improve oneself” so as to embody the evolution of the immense universe. In this way, one will set oneself a demand, find a reason for one’s being, and foster a noble spiritual realm. Since one has set a demand for oneself and has a reason for one’s being, the most important thing is for one to “integrate his knowledge with his practice.” One must have an ethical standpoint unifying the two. The three programs and the eight items listed in the *Great Learnings* tell us the exact reason for this. It says:

The Way of the great learning lies in shedding light on the bright principles, being close to the people, and stopping at nothing but the utmost good. Those in ancient times who wanted to shed light on the bright principles for the world had to first bring order to their own kingdoms. To bring order to their kingdoms they had to first bring their own houses to order. To bring their houses to order they had to first cultivate their own moral character. To cultivate their own moral character they had to first set their minds straight. To set their minds straight they had to first foster a sincere desire. To foster a sincere desire they had to first carry knowledge to the utmost degree. To carry knowledge to the utmost degree they had to first inquire into the properties of things. Having inquired into the properties of things, they were able to carry knowledge to the utmost degree. Having carried knowledge to the utmost degree, they were able to foster a sincere desire. Having fostered a sincere desire, they were able to set their minds straight. Having set their minds straight, they were able to cultivate their own moral character. Having cultivated their own moral character, they were able to bring their houses to order. Having brought their houses to order, they were able to bring order to their kingdoms. Having brought order to their kingdoms, the whole world would be at peace.

“Knowledge” must be integrated with “practice.” From “inquiring into the properties of things to carry knowledge to the utmost degree” to “bringing order to their kingdoms and peace to the world” is a process of cognition and, more important, a process of moral practice. Man must have an ideal. The highest ideal is to “achieve peace” and thus enable human society to attain a realm of “Great Harmony.” The basic demand of a society of “Great Harmony” is that everyone should set on himself a demand, find a reason for his “being,” and “not do to others what he does not wish done to himself.” Said Confucius: “My way is consistent; it is nothing more than honesty and forbearance.” Leading a life in this world, one should behave like a “man” and must enjoy the pleasure of “being a man” and appreciate the creation of the universe.

In order to have a genuine appreciation of the creation of the universe, one should have the ability to display man’s creativity through the reproduction of “the creation of the universe.” One should display the spiritual realm of man, the why and how for a man to exist as a man: this makes it possible to render a writing into a “masterpiece,” a painting into a “superb work,” and music into the “sound of nature.” Therefore, art requires “integration of feeling with scenery” so that “feeling is generated amid scenery and scenery is generated amid feeling.” In the realm of creation, one reaches a situation in which the true, the good, and the beautiful are integrated; there lies the meaning of life and the man’s highest ideal. Confucius professed: “At the age of seventy, I can do everything as my heart pleases without violating the rule.” What he described was probably such a realm in which all one did and said was in harmony with the universe, human society,

others, and oneself—both body and mind, inside and without. This realm of life is, of course, that of the saint.

Traditional Chinese philosophy still bears existential value precisely because it tells us the reason for being a man. To be a man is by no means easy, and it is even more difficult to have harmony with nature, society, other people, and oneself in both body and mind, inside and outside. But is this not necessary for today's world? Therefore, we cannot underestimate traditional Chinese philosophy and ignore its proper value. Precisely, because traditional Chinese philosophy tells us only the reason for being a man, it is inappropriate to set undue demands upon it in other regards, and it should come as no surprise to us that it is inadequate in certain areas. For example, it does not emphasize issues of logic and the theory of knowledge nor provide a well-conceived demonstration of the structure of its own theory; we should not be overcritical of this. Under such circumstances, can we further develop traditional Chinese philosophy while engaged in studying its value? We should and we can. Note that, aside from the *Book of Change*, the pre-Qin Dynasty Confucians are seldom touched upon problems of ontology. Under the impact of Buddhism, however, Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties founded a very significant theory of ontology which made great progress and became Neo-Confucianism. As the mainstream of China's traditional philosophy, thinking, and culture, the Confucian philosophy has sustained today an even heavier impact than in the past. Having made a profound criticism of it, we are now reexamining its value. Is it inconceivable that we can develop it again or impossible under the new impact to establish a new logic and theory of knowledge proper to it? Traditional Chinese philosophy should have a third phase development because "one must have a reason for being a man." Whether or not it can be developed depends on whether or not it can establish for itself a new system of logic and theory of knowledge. "Man can enhance the Way, not the Way can enhance man." The outcome depends upon our efforts.

Chapter 17

Questions Concerning the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy

Aristotle's *Categories* outlined the philosophical categories of ancient Greece, putting forward and thoroughly analyzing ten categories. Hegel's *Logik* outlined contemporary Western philosophical categories in a comparatively complete categorical system. Did China's traditional philosophy (China's ancient philosophy) have a categorical system? Why and how should we study the question of traditional Chinese philosophy's concepts and categories? This essay attempts to contribute to the discussion of these questions.

17.1 The Significance of Studying the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy

1. The study of the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy has its general and particular significance. Its general significance can be expounded in at least the following three aspects:

First, while the study of the history of philosophy necessarily requires the study of the historical function of philosophers and philosophical schools, the ultimate value of such a study is to reveal the necessary logic that determined the specific development of certain philosophical thinking in history. For instance, what is the necessary logic of the development of the pre-Qin philosophical thinking from Confucius to Mencius to Xunzi? A scientific history of philosophy with Marxism as its guiding thought should reveal not

Translated by Liu Bingwen

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Chinese Culture, 1991: 17–37

The tables on p. 222 and p. 228 are taken from *Social Sciences in China*, A Quarterly Journal (Beijing: The Social Sciences Publishing House; no. 4, 1982), III, 204, and 210, respectively.

only the developmental causes of philosophical thought but also the inner logic of the growth of such thought. Since philosophy is a science of the most general laws of nature, society, and human thought presented in the form of abstractions, the development of the content of philosophical thought is therefore a history of the continuous advancement of concepts and categories and of their continuous clarification, enrichment, and growth. We should study how concepts and categories were advanced in the history of philosophy; how their contents became clearer, richer, and more systematic; and how the categorical system became more complicated, more comprehensive, and more systematic; we should conduct a concrete analysis of the development of concepts and categories. This will enable us to discover the laws governing the development of philosophical thought and reveal its inner logic.

Second, when we say that the history of philosophy is one of the struggle between materialism and idealism, we do not mean to imply that this struggle and the development of man's cognition are two separate processes. It was the one and same process through which man's knowledge of the world has been developing in the struggle between materialism and idealism which manifests the law of the development of man's knowledge. As the process of knowledge calls for the use of concepts and categories, every stage of development in the history of philosophy is marked by differing explanations of certain basic concepts and categories out of which emerged materialism and idealism. In the history of Chinese philosophy, for example, the struggle between materialism and idealism before the Qin Dynasty generally centered around the differing explanations of the heavenly way and the human way, name and content, knowledge and conduct, and the variable and the constant. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, it centered around such pairs of concepts as being and nonbeing, essence and function, word and idea, ethical code and spontaneity. During the Song and Ming dynasties, it focused on principle and force, mind and matter, mind and nature, subject and object. A study of the development of concepts and categories is a key to the exposure of the law governing the struggle between materialism and idealism.

What is more is that this study will enable us to understand the necessity of the emergence of certain concepts and categories in the history of cognition and to overcome the shortcomings of maintaining an oversimplified negative attitude toward idealism which can be found in the past studies of the history of philosophy. Wang Bi was an idealist philosopher, but it was he who advanced some categories such as essence and function, the one and the many, word and idea "which help us recognize and master the focal point in the web of natural phenomena." Despite his incorrect presentation of these categories, his advancement of them marked a step forward in man's knowledge, which deserves recognition for its position in the history of philosophy. Only after Wang Bi first posed the concepts of "taking nonbeing as essence" and "forget the words having grasped the concept" did there appear Ouyang Jian's later theory of "The Word Expresses the Concept" (*Yan jin yi lun*) and Pei Wei's "On the Exaltation of Being" (*Chong you lun*). Therefore, the study of the concepts and categories in the history of

philosophy and their development constitutes an indispensable link in correctly appraising materialism and idealism in the history of philosophy.

Third, Engels believed that the study of philosophies of the past was the only way to temper one's theoretical thinking. A scientific history of philosophy can certainly play such a role, and a scientific history of man's knowledge essentially would be the history of the development of concepts and categories. Since concepts and categories in the history of philosophy reflect man's deepening knowledge, when we study its development, we are rethinking in our own thought the process of man's coming to know the world. Of course we discard the accidental and secondary factors and grasp the essential, normative content. This process of rethinking inevitably deepens our own thought. In our study of the development of concepts and categories, we not only relive the process of mankind using concepts and categories to understand the world but invariably use certain methods to revisualize them. That method can only be one of making a theoretical analysis of the contents of the concepts and categories and the relationships between them and the logical relationships in their development. Such a process of analysis itself is a kind of theoretical thinking. In this sense, this study can help us improve our ability for theoretical thinking.

The abovementioned three points give only the general significance of studying philosophical concepts and categories, for that significance exists in the study of the history of any philosophy (e.g., the Western or Indian). However, the study of the categories of traditional Chinese philosophy and its history of development has also its particular significance; namely, it will enable us to understand the characteristics and level of development of traditional Chinese philosophy. Western philosophy has its own categorical system; its characteristics and the different levels of development of its philosophical thinking at different historical stages are reflected in the development from Aristotle's *Categories* to Hegel's *Logik*. The categories used in the primitive Indian Buddhism and the categories of the Kunya and Bhava sects of Mahayana, more or less in succession and each with its striking features, represent the fairly high-level Indian Buddhism attained in logical thought and categorical analysis. Traditional Chinese philosophy has its own concepts and categories which gradually formed a fairly comprehensive system. Because of this, it will not do just to take them in terms of the concepts and categories of Western philosophy nor will it do to take them in terms of the Marxist philosophical concepts and categories.

Except for a few concepts taken from Indian Buddhism, the concepts and categories which have taken form in the long history of Chinese philosophy basically developed independently, hence their striking features. For example, the heavenly way (Tian dao) and the human way (ren dao) as a pair of categories were very important in the history of Chinese philosophy. Therefore, traditional Chinese philosophy not only paid considerable attention to the study of the relationship between the Heaven and man but paid special attention to the study of the

relationships between man and man (society). Another example is the pair of categories *ti* and *yong* which contain the meanings of not only noumenon and phenomenon but also base and function, whole and part, and abstract and concrete. Such series of pairs of concepts and categories reflect not only the characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy but also the level of theoretical thinking at a certain stage of historical development. To make a not completely apt comparison: traditional Chinese medicine certainly has its own particular tradition with its own particular theoretical system, medical terms, and concepts. Despite the fact that we have not found clear scientific explanations for some of the theories and achievements, since it does achieve good results in medical treatment, it must reflect certain aspects of objective reality and contain fairly profound truths. Since concepts and categories are necessary conditions for the formation of knowledge and play a pivotal role in linking the subjective to the objective, definite concepts and categories reflect definite achievements made by man in recognizing certain aspects of objective reality through his theoretical practice; hence, different concepts and categories mark different depths of man's cognition. Therefore, when we study the concepts and categories at different stages of the development of traditional Chinese philosophy, we can see the level of theoretical thinking at the different stages of development of Chinese history.

In the history of Chinese philosophy, there are three periods during which schools made major contributions to the formation of the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy, namely, the various pre-Qin schools, the metaphysical school (*xuanxue*) of the Wei and Jin, and the Neo-Confucianism (*Lixue*) of the Song and Ming dynasties. When we compare the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy in the three stages with those of the Western philosophy, we are impressed by its distinct features and fairly high level. This comparison between the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy and those of other countries, nations, and regions constitutes an important subject in comparative philosophy.

17.2 How to Study the Concepts and Categories of Traditional Chinese Philosophy

Fundamentally speaking, the study of the concepts and categories of traditional Chinese philosophy requires the scientific analytical method of Marxism. Merely to pose the concepts and categories used in the history of Chinese philosophy is contrary to the goal of our study. For that will not uncover the laws governing the development of philosophical thought, nor will it help us better to understand the laws of the struggle between materialism and idealism, or to improve our theoretical thinking; in particular, we will be unable to recognize the characteristics and level of traditional Chinese philosophy. To achieve our goal, it is necessary to use the scientific analytical method of Marxism to (1) analyze the meaning of the concepts and categories, (2) investigate the development of those meanings, (3) analyze the systems of concepts and categories of philosophers or philosophical schools, and (4) study the similarities and differences between the concepts and

categories of Chinese and foreign philosophies. It is only on the basis of such an analysis that it is possible to advance the study of the history of Chinese philosophy along a scientific path.

17.2.1 Analysis of the Meaning of Concepts and Categories

The advancement of one or of a pair of concepts (categories) marks the level of man's understanding of the world, yet it is up to us to make an analysis of the meaning of such a concept or pair of concepts. When ancient philosophers advanced a new concept, they did not have as clear and scientific an understanding of its meaning as we do today; this is particularly true of the concepts they used to explain the origin of the world. For instance, Laozi (Lao Tzu) was the first man to advance the "way" (dao) as the paramount category in his philosophical system. This concept of the "way" he advanced as an antithesis to the contemporary concept of "respecting Heaven." By taking the "way" as the origin of the world, Laozi (Lao Tzu) certainly raised the level of ancient Chinese philosophical thinking. But what was the meaning of the "way"? Laozi (Lao Tzu) himself found it difficult to give a clear definition. He said: "I do not know its name; I call it Dao. If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great." Therefore, he used quite a number of adjectives to describe the "way," such as "soundless and formless," "eluding and vague," and "deep and obscure." Obviously, with the limitations of the objective conditions and their level of knowledge, the ancient philosophers found it difficult to give lucid definitions of the concept of the origin of the world.

Thus, it is necessary for us to investigate the meaning of the concept of the "way" in the light of the book Laozi (Lao Tzu).¹ The term "spontaneity" (ziran) was widely used by ancient Chinese philosophers, but each had his own definition. It was Laozi (Lao Tzu), too, who was the first to use "spontaneity" as a philosophical concept, by which he generally meant non-activity. Wang Chong of the Han Dynasty continued this usage when he wrote: "The Heavenly way is spontaneous non-activity." By the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties, the proponents of non-activity such as Wang Bi and Xiahou Xuan practically took "spontaneity" for the "way"—that is, the primal stuff of the universe. Xiahou Xuan wrote: "Heaven and earth operate with spontaneity and the sage functions following spontaneity. Spontaneity is the way, which originally had no name and Laozi (Lao Tzu) was forced to give it a name."

Even the same philosopher had different definitions for "spontaneity." We can use Guo Xiang's definitions of "spontaneity" as an example for analysis. He identified at least five connotations for "spontaneity." First, the actions of Heaven and man are "spontaneous." In his annotations of Zhuangzi (the chapter, The Great Teacher), he wrote: "He who knows the deeds of both Heaven and man is a sage,

¹ See "Early Daoist Theories of Life and Death, and Spirit and Form," *Zhexue Yanjiu*, 1 (1981).

means knowing the deeds of Heaven and man is spontaneity.” Thus, Guo Xiang looked not only at the natural phenomena but also at man’s deeds as in a sense spontaneous; in what sense could this be so? Second, “working for oneself” (ziwei) is “spontaneity.” Guo Xiang said: “To say that matter is spontaneous means non-activity.” He also wrote: “We value this non-activity and matter’s working for itself.” Then why is “working for itself” a kind of “non-activity”? Third, “being self-willed” is “spontaneity.” Guo Xiang held that “working for oneself” is “spontaneity,” but “working for oneself” does not mean acting wilfully but “acting by one’s nature,” namely, “acting in accordance with one’s nature, that is, spontaneity, thus called nature (xing).” “According to spontaneity” means “according to one’s nature,” that is, neither making others succumb to oneself nor allowing oneself succumb to another. Fourth, “inevitability” is “spontaneity.” Guo Xiang wrote: “Knowing the reality of destiny one will not seek what lies beyond it, but just to fulfill one’s nature.” One who “knows his destiny” will not ask for what cannot be done—this is called “spontaneity.” Destiny here means “inevitability.” Fifth, “chance is spontaneity.” Guo Xiang wrote: “Things are all spontaneous, acting without knowing why or how it should be so.” By not knowing the reason of action, “spontaneity” implies “chance.” Therefore, when the philosophers were trying to explain “self-generation,” they often employed such terms as “suddenly” or “abruptly”—all meaning that things exist without reason, the causality being beyond explanation.

According to Guo Xiang, “spontaneity” has the abovementioned five interconnected meanings, of which the last two are most important, that is, “spontaneity” has the meaning of both “inevitability” and “chance.” Actually, they are a pair of antagonistic concepts and, from the dialectical point of view, are mutually connected and transform themselves into each other, with inevitability manifesting itself through chance. Guo Xiang used the term “spontaneity” to explain both “inevitability” and “change,” precisely because he saw the relationship of mutual dependence between them: that a matter so exists is “inevitable” in one respect because “things emerge by themselves abruptly.” In Guo Xiang’s philosophical system, things must have these two aspects. From this analysis of Guo Xiang’s definition of the concept of “spontaneity,” we can see the general characteristics and level of the philosophy of Guo Xiang.

17.2.2 Analysis of the Development of the Meanings of Concepts and Categories

Not only do the meanings of concepts and categories differ from one philosopher to another, at different times, they also differ in meaning. Nevertheless, if philosophical thoughts follow one another, it is always possible to discover the relationship of succession between these concepts and categories. The study of their development is extremely important for understanding the laws of the development

of man's knowledge. In the following, we will analyze the growth of the concept of *qi* (often translated as material force, ether, or fluid—*tr.*) in traditional Chinese philosophy.

Some thinkers as early as the spring and autumn period already discussed the impact of *qi* on man. For example, the *Zuo Zhuan* mentioned “the six *qi*” in the medical theory recorded in the first year of the reign of Duke Zhao of Lu (B.C. 541). By the Warring States period, *qi* became a general concept. People not only believed that the body of man was made of *qi*, but some believed that the spirit of man also was made of *qi*. In “White Heart,” “Inner Function,” and “Mechanism of the Heart” chapters of the book *Guanzi*, it was said: “As for essence (*jing*), it is the essence of *qi*”; “the *qi* of all things changes and thus becomes life”; “when *qi* goes to the ground, grains grow; when it goes into the heavens, there emerge the constellations; when it floats in the air, it becomes ghosts and spirits; when it goes into man's chest, the man becomes a sage,” and “therefore when there is *qi*, there is life; when there is no *qi*, there is death,” etc. According to these thinkers, among the “*qi*” there is an “essential *qi*” the life giver. When such an “essential *qi*” enters the body of a man, he becomes wise and turns into a sage.

During the Warring States period, this unscientific theory of “essential *qi*” was used to explain man's spirit. If we considered it materialist, it would be a materialist viewpoint with grave defects which, under certain circumstances, were used by idealists and turned into a component part of their system. It could also be utilized by the supernaturalists who transformed it into a basis for advocating “life without end.” We know that Mencius also talked about *qi* and posed a sort of *qi* called the “*qi* of vastness” (*hao ran zhi qi*). The “White Heart” chapter of the book *Guanzi* mentions the “essential *qi*” that can give man wisdom and “this *qi* should not be checked by strength but should be accommodated by power (*de*)” which is to say, *qi* itself possesses an intelligence which should be consolidated by moral power. And in the theory of Mencius, his “*qi* of vastness” is “obtained through accentuating righteousness.” Obviously, *qi* in Mencius' theory has already become spiritual.

By the Han Dynasty, Dong Zhongshu went a step further and moralized and mystified *qi* which became the manifestation of the will and power of God. Dong Zhongshu held that *qi* had the power of meting out punishment and award, that there were good and vicious *qi*, and that *qi* had emotions such as happiness, anger, grief, and joy. So *qi*, though still retaining material appearance, already lost its material substance. Later, during the Han period, there were all sorts of superstitious explanations of *qi* which were indeed the outgrowth of the viewpoint of Dong Zhongshu.

From the historical data of the pre-Qin period and the Han Dynasty, we can see that the concept of *qi* is closely linked with questions of spirit and form and thus has much to do with the question of the preservation of health, which often was deemed a means to becoming a deity. In *Zhuangzi* the “true man” (*zhenren*), the “spiritual man” (*shenren*), and others were often described as “with the spirit guarding the form to achieve longevity,” “drinking dew and breathing the wind instead of eating grain,” “unifying their nature and preserving their *qi*.” They made their spirit integrate with their form so that they could accomplish the goal of “keeping their

form perfect and replenishing their spirit to be merged into one with Heaven and earth.” The *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* includes numerous discussions of the “preservation of good health” and considers that to “achieve longevity,” *qi* “should be made to flow constantly within the body,” and “with essential *qi* renewed daily, the vicious *qi* will go and a full life span will be reached; this is called truth.” In *Huai Nan Zi* the preservation of *qi*, of form, and of nature is the same thing; moreover, all are linked together with *qi*. The writers of both of these two books were influenced by the “theory of essential *qi*,” in “White Heart,” and other philosophical works. They all thought that “spirit” (*Jingshen*) is also a kind of *qi*, or “essential *qi* which can reside or leave the body and that when spirit and body are at one, there will be long life.”

Meanwhile, some philosophers of the pre-Qin and Han periods held a materialist view of *qi* and considered it to be the matter that constitutes the world. Xunzi held that everything in the universe, including man, was made of *qi*. He wrote: “Water and fire have *qi* but no life, plants have life but no senses, birds and beasts have senses but know not righteousness and man has *qi*, life, senses and also righteousness.” The chapter “On Spirit” of the book *Huai Nan Zi* says that the universe was originally a murky body of original *qi* without any shape and that later the interaction of the positive and negative forces gave birth to everything, so “the dirty *qi* became worms and the pure essential *qi* became human beings.” Wang Chong put it with even greater clarity. He wrote: “The merging of the *qi* of Heaven and earth gave birth to everything,” and that was the result of the movement of *qi*. He said: “When Heaven moves, it gives *qi*. . . *qi* comes out and it gives birth to things.” In order to oppose Dong Zhongshu’s idealist view of *qi*, Wang Chong particularly pointed out that *qi* has no will, no aim. He said: “*qi* is void of ambition, purpose or scheme”; “*qi* is like smoke and cloud, how can it listen to man’s request”? Nevertheless, like the book *Huai Nan Zi*, Wang Chong took the spirit of man (or the phenomenon of life) as “essential *qi*.” He said: “Man lives because he has essential *qi*; when man dies, the essential *qi* vanishes.” An analysis of the contents of the concept *qi* in the history of ancient Chinese philosophy reveals clearly the development of this concept. The three doctrines, or rather definitions, mentioned above, however, were all merged into the thought of Daoism (Taoism) toward the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, which we will not discuss here.

17.2.3 Analysis of the Systems of Concepts and Categories of Philosophers (or Philosophical Schools)

Historically major philosophers, in establishing their philosophical systems, have invariably used a series of concepts and categories. Thus, the study of the relationships between these concepts and categories is necessary for us to make a thorough analysis of their theoretical systems. The level a philosopher’s thought reaches often can be judged by how richly and systematically his concepts and categories reflect the essential relationships between the objects they are meant to reflect.

Divergent views in the study of a past philosopher (or philosophical school) sometimes arise from the lack of a comprehensive, systematic study of the system of concepts and categories of that philosopher or school. For example, if we merely take into account Guo Xiang's concepts of "being" and "nonbeing" and their relationship, we might conclude that he was a materialist. But the reason why Guo Xiang's philosophy was the zenith of the Wei and Jin metaphysical school was not that he put forth a view different from that of Wang Bi's on the relationship between "being" and "nonbeing" but that he had a fairly complete philosophical system, an analysis of which reveals that it comprises the following four groups of basic concepts. (Though there are other important concepts in Guo's philosophical system, we will not deal with them here.)

"Being" and "nonbeing": The central topic of discussion among the Wei and Jin metaphysicians was the question of "origin and outcome, being and nonbeing." The philosophy of Guo Xiang might be considered to originate from the discussion on this topic. Guo believed that "being" (the "being of everything") is the only thing that exists; it is constantly present; although being undergoes infinite changes and transformations, it cannot in any instance become "nonbeing," and "we say the Heaven and earth constantly exist because there is no time they have not existed." As for "nonbeing," he held that the creator above "being," or "the nonbeing" serving as noumenon, is nonexistence, that is, "nothing." Thus he said: "Nonbeing is simply nonbeing, it cannot produce being," and "I venture to ask whether there is a creator or not? If not, how can he create things?" Therefore, from the very beginning, Guo Xiang denied the existence of a "creator" above the being of "everything" or a "nonbeing" which is the antithesis of "being" which as the primal body serves as the basis for the existence of being. However, Guo Xiang's philosophy did not stop here, but went further.

"Nature" and "destiny": Since the existence of things is not based on "nonbeing" as the primal body, then is there an inherent cause for the existence of things? According to Guo Xiang, one cannot say that the being of "everything" is groundless. Since things exist, their very existence is the basis for their existence.

Specifically, the basis of their existence is their own "nature": "Everything has its own nature and every nature has its limit." "The nature" Guo Xiang meant is "the reason that things are what they are" which has the sense of "necessity." Thus, he said: "Each gets what he deserves by nature; there is no avoiding it nor adding more." He also said: "Things have their own nature, so the wise stays wise till his last day while the dull goes on being dull till his death, neither able to change halfway." As for "destiny," Guo Xiang defined it as "inevitability"; as he put it "destiny means things all act spontaneously without anything acting on them" and "being aware of the impossible." Obviously, his "nature" and "destiny" are two concepts he employed to prove the point that "being" alone exists and that "nonbeing" as creator or primal body is absolutely nonexistent.

"Self-generated" and "self-sufficient": The "nature" of things is the basis for their existence, but how does this "nature" originate? Is its emergence with some purpose, or condition? Guo Xiang said: "Things exist by themselves without a source; this is the way of Heaven" and "the emergence of things is just out of their

own accord.” If the “nature” of a thing is not “self-generated,” then it must be given by others or intentionally produced by a creator. Yet this thing becoming this thing and that thing becoming that thing is not something else making this or that thing emerge and exist, nor even making itself emerge and exist; therefore, “self-generation” can only be produced “unexpectedly,” “abruptly,” and “spontaneously” by itself. Were there any reason or purpose for the emergence and existence of a thing, it would inevitably lead to the admission of the existence of an initiator. Then what is the relation between one “self-generated” thing and another “self-generated” thing? Guo Xiang held that everything is “self-generated” and its existence is “entirely in keeping with its own nature” and therefore is “self-sufficient” (*wudai*). On the one hand, “self-sufficiency” is possible because “things produce themselves”; “things produce themselves without relying on anything else.” On the other hand, anything can be “self-sufficient” as long as it “conforms with its own nature,” and “is content with its own nature,” “for when satisfied with its own nature, a giant roc does not despise the sparrow and the sparrow does not covet the heavenly lake and both are quite satisfied. Thus, big or small, all live in complacency.” So, to insist on the premise that a thing produces itself without relying on anything else one must recognize that it is “self-generated” and “self-sufficient.”

“Self-transformation” and “mutual indispensability”: To support the concepts of “self-generated” and “self-sufficient” requires the solution of another question. Suppose everything exists by itself, this being this and that being that with one differing from another, then are not all the things related? Suppose all the things are relative, then are not they limited? Suppose they are limited, then are not they “insufficient” (*you dai*)? To answer this question, Guo Xiang advanced the concept of “self-transformation” (*duhua*). By “self-transformation,” he meant that everything emerges and generates independently; hence, “self-sufficiency” is absolute. If we try to seek the cause and basis of the emergence and generation of things, ostensibly we can pursue this question infinitely, but ultimately we can come only to the conclusion of “self-sufficiency.” Thus, he said: “If we try to find out what a thing relies on and what is the cause of its creation, there will be no end and finally we will come to self-sufficiency and the working of self-transformation will be obvious.” In his “Annotations on (Zhuangzi’s) *Qi Wu Lun*” Guo Xiang cited an absolute example. He said that the bodily form, the shadow, and the penumbra are all beings of absolute independence, for “thus throughout the realm of things, there is nothing, not even the penumbra, which is not ‘self-transformed’.”

If one thing does not exist independently, then everything else is not independent, which will inevitably lead to the existence of a primal body (or creator) above “everything,” serving as the basis of their existence and inevitably recognized as “a cause of creation and generation.” Although things exist independently and self-sufficiently, as long as everything fully realizes its “nature,” brings it into full play and “the wise stays wise till his last day and the dull goes on being dull till his death,” then the ideal realm will be achieved where “Heaven and earth are not so long-lived but live along with me, and things in the world are not divergent, but the same as me.” Relating this way to every other thing has the greatest function; that is, “the greatest function of mutual indispensability is the perfection of self-transformation.” Seen from another angle, everything is indispensable as

long as it exists. Guo Xiang said: “A man, though only seven feet tall, possesses the five constant virtues; thus this mere body is provided with everything in the universe. Therefore none of the things in the world can be dispensed for one day. With one thing lacking, the living will not have means to live; with one law lacking, the living cannot fulfill their natural life-span.” Thus, everything existent is rational, inevitable, and not mutually exclusive. This view appears to contradict the doctrine of “self-transformation,” but it does not. According to Guo Xiang, everything that exists is rational, inevitable, and not mutually exclusive precisely because, as the condition for the existence of everything else, everything fully and absolutely brings its “nature” into full play, creates itself, and generates self-sufficiently.

From this analysis of Guo Xiang’s system of philosophical categories, we can see that his philosophy finally arrives at the doctrine of “self-transformation,” and the concept of “exalted being” (*chongyou*) is merely a bridge to “self-transformation.” What is more, in Guo Xiang’s system, only after the establishment of the doctrine on “self-transformation” can one support “sublime being” and a relatively thorough refutation of a “nonbeing” above everything as the basis of the latter’s existence.

If we want to know whether a philosopher is a materialist or idealist, or the characteristic of his philosophy, its ideological relations with its predecessors and successors, and its place in history, we must first make an analysis of his categorical system.

17.2.4 Analysis of the Similarities and Differences Between the Concepts and Categories of Chinese and Foreign Philosophies

A comparison between the categorical systems of Chinese and foreign philosophies will undoubtedly enable us to have a better understanding of the characteristics and level of traditional Chinese philosophy. Because of the breadth of this topic and the limited study conducted by this author, we can make only a rather superficial comparison here between Wei and Jin metaphysics and the Buddhist doctrine of *prajna* introduced into China in that period.

The central theme of Wei and Jin metaphysics is the question of “being and nonbeing, origin and outcome.” Therefore “being” and “nonbeing” are two basic categories in the Wei and Jin metaphysics. The Buddhist *prajna* doctrine also discussed the question of “being” and “nonbeing” (or the “void,” *kong*); hence, Dao-an said: “Of the twelve books, *Vaipuliya* is most copious and its doctrine on the void of being and nonbeing is similar to the teachings of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi, thus the doctrine of Mahayana has been easy to spread in China.” The concept of the “void” (or “nonbeing”) of the Buddhist *prajna* school is actually different from the “nonbeing” advocated by Wang Bi and other Chinese metaphysicians, despite their apparent similarity. The Buddhist concept of original nonbeing, or *Tathata* in Sanskrit, has the meaning that “all the different *dharmas*

are in their original nature void and empty” and that all things have no original actual forms. Wang Bi and other metaphysicians also talked about “original nonbeing” by which, however, they meant that everything “is based on nonbeing as its origin.” Although the two concepts of “original nonbeing” cannot be considered to be entirely different, they do have vast differences in meaning. In Wei and Jin metaphysics, Wang Bi’s thought succeeded the doctrines of Laozi (Lao Tzu). In his philosophical system, the category “nonbeing” is one and the same thing as “the way” or “principle,” as he said: “The extreme of greatness is nothing but the way! . . . though it is important that it has nonbeing as its phenomenon, yet it cannot do without nonbeing as its noumenon”; “nothing exists without principle, everything operates according to its own law.” Obviously, the “nonbeing” used by Wang Bi is not the “void” or “nonexistence” but the “substance” of a thing. The “original nonbeing” of the Buddhist *prajna* doctrine on the void only means that “all the different *dharmas* are in their original nature void and empty.” They held that everything is void of nature, but created through the association of *hetupratyaya*. From this one can see that the Buddhist *prajna* school in its discourse on the void refers not to “substance,” but to “nonexistence.” As for the content of “being,” the Wei and Jin metaphysicians usually referred to “universal being,” namely, all sorts of actually existing things, whereas, on the other hand, in the translation of Buddhist scripts, terms denoting different meanings of “being” (existence) were all translated into the term “being.”

After its introduction into China, Buddhism first attached itself to Daoist necromancy during the Eastern Han Dynasty and then to Wei and Jin metaphysics. The various schools of the *prajna* doctrine formed by Chinese monks during the Eastern Jin period generally still used metaphysical thought to explain the teachings of *prajna* until the arrival in China of Kumarajiva whose translations of *Modhyamikasatra*, *Satasastra*, and *Dvadasa-mikaya sastra* of the *Mahaprajnapramitasastra* provided Chinese Buddhist with the material for understanding the true meaning of Buddhism Monk Zhao’s *On No Real Non-Existence* is more or less close to the original meaning of “neither being nor nonbeing” of the Buddhist *prajna* doctrine.

A comparison and analysis of the Chinese and foreign philosophical concepts and categories can thus show their characteristics and level of development as well as the impact of foreign culture on indigenous traditional culture and the process of a foreign culture being assimilated and becoming a component of the culture of the country (nation or region) into which the foreign culture was introduced.

17.3 A Tentative Theory of the Categorical System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy

The term category has myriad definitions in the history of philosophy in the West. Aristotle in his *Categories* treated it as the basic mode of being and put forward ten categories such as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, state, action,

and passion. And Kant described his 12 categories as principles related to cognition or as the precondition for constituting experience. Lenin said: “Categories are stages of distinguishing, i.e., of cognizing the world, focal points in the web, which assist in cognizing and mastering it.”² *A Dictionary of Philosophy* published in the Soviet Union defines category as “the basic concept that reflects the most general and most essential character, aspect and relationship of the various phenomena and knowledge of reality.”

“Category” then is generally explained from the two aspects of the existence and knowledge of reality: from the aspect of existence, it is defined as “the basic mode of existence” or “the most general and most essential character, aspect, and relationship of the phenomena of reality”; from the aspect of knowledge, it is defined as the “precondition for constituting experience” or “focal points in the web, which assist in cognizing and mastering it.” The necessary precondition for knowledge is certainly the reflection and manifestation of the “basic mode of existence,” while the “basic mode of existence” is meaningful only in the process of man’s knowledge. From what we listed above, we can see the relationship between “category” and “concept”: a category is a basic concept, whereas a concept is not necessarily a category. Thus, what we are discussing here is what are the categories or basic concepts of traditional Chinese philosophy. If, using the basic concepts of classic Chinese philosophers, we can form a system which shows how traditional Chinese philosophy identified and explained “the basic mode of existence” and which reveal the line of development of the traditional Chinese philosophical thinking, then we have proven that traditional Chinese philosophy does have a categorical system. This is presented first in the following diagram and further explained below.

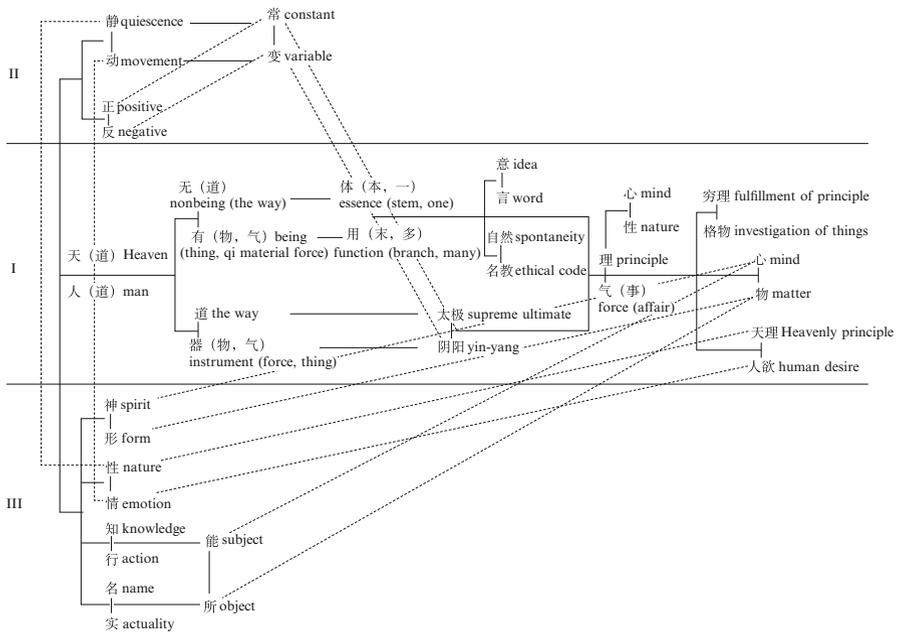
In this diagram, 20 pairs of basic concepts make up the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy. This is certainly a very preliminary proposition. However, despite its many possible defects, it is intended to initiate discussion and study on this question. Here the author would like to explain some points:

- (1) This diagram is divided into three major parts. Part I is intended to indicate what basic concepts are used in traditional Chinese philosophy on the question of the existence of the world, Part II is meant to show what basic concepts are used to present the form of being, and Part III is meant to show what basic concepts are used to denote the existence and knowledge of man. The relationship between “Heaven” (or the heavenly way) and “man” (or the way of man) has always been a central theme for discussion in traditional Chinese philosophy, and it is around this question that the struggle between materialism and idealism has been waged in the history of Chinese philosophy.

Zi Can was the first Chinese philosopher to make a proposition on the relationship between the two when he wrote: “The way of Heaven is remote, whereas the

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), XXXVIII, 92.

way of man is near.” Confucius attached importance to the “mandate of the Heaven,” but he gave even greater attention to the “affairs of man.” Although he mentioned that he “began to know the mandate of Heaven as the age of fifty,” he seldom discussed this question. “The master was seldom heard discussing the question of nature and the Heavenly way,” reports the *Analecets* which, however, extensively records Confucius’ sayings on the question of the “way of man.” Mencius talked about “obeying nature and knowing fate and Heaven,” and the *Doctrine of the Mean* says: “Sincerity is the way of Heaven; knowing sincerity is the way of man.” Xunzi said: “Grasp the way of Heaven and man.” Laozi (Lao Tzu), the founder of Daoism (Taoism) said: “The Heavenly way is spontaneous non-activity,” and he played down the importance of “humanness and righteousness” (the way of man). And Zhuangzi “was misguided by Heaven and ignorant of man.” Dong Zhongshu, the Confucian master of the Han Dynasty, described his research as a study of “the relationship between Heaven and man.” Sima Qian who was much influenced by Daoist thinking said that his *Historical Records* was a work of “investigations into the relationship between Heaven and man and the changes past and present.” The Wei and Jin metaphysicians concentrated on the question of “spontaneity” (the Way of Heaven) and “ethics” (the way of man). Hence, He Yan said: “Only with people like Wang Bi, can you discuss the question of the relationship between Heaven and man.”



The Song Neo-Confucians of both the School of Principle (*Lixue*) and School of Mind (*Xinxue*) strongly believed: “The supreme ultimate (the principle of Heaven) is simply an utterly excellent and supremely good normative principle”;

the supreme ultimate is an appellation for “all that is good in heaven and on earth, and among men and things.” The “principles of Heaven” and the “desires of man” are still a question of the relationship between Heaven and man. Even Wang Fuzhi still made this a focal point in his philosophical discourse. He held that “Rites, no matter how pure they are, are merely expressions of the principles of Heaven inevitably to be found in the desires of man” and that “the desire of man, when reaching superb altruism is the perfection of the principle of Heaven.” Thus, traditional Chinese philosophy proceeded from the discussion of the pair of categories: (the way of) Heaven and (the way of) man, an indication of the main attention and particular content of traditional Chinese philosophy.

- (2) This diagram shows the development of the categories of traditional Chinese philosophy and their relationships. Proceeding from the study of the relationship between Heaven and man, traditional Chinese philosophy branches out into two parts: Daoism (Taoism) and Confucianism. Laozi (Lao Tzu) advanced the relationship between the “way” and “all things.” He said; “The way creates one, one creates two, two create three and three create all things.” He also said: “All things in the world are produced by being and being is produced by nonbeing”; therefore, the relationship between the “way” and the “thing” is also represented by the pair of categories “being” and “nonbeing.” The Confucian school however proposed the categories the “way” and the “instrument” in the *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, which says: “That which shapes and is above is called the way and that which shapes and is below is called the instrument” and adds: “Change contains the supreme ultimate which produces two extremes,” and “the alternation of yin and yang is called the way”; thus, the relationship between the way and the instrument is reflected in the categories of the supreme ultimate and yin and yang. The Han Dynasty witnessed some development in philosophical thought, but it seems that practically no new and influential philosophical categories were advanced. The Wei and Jin metaphysics upheld three philosophical classes, *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Zhou Yi*, which brought a gradual merging of Daoism (Taoism) with the Confucianism of the *Zhou Yi* system. This established the theory of a primal body as the origin of the universe, a theory with Laozi (Lao Tzu)’s and Zhuangzi’s thought as the framework. The Wei and Jin metaphysicians used categories such as “essence” and “function,” “stem and branch,” the “one” and the “many” to illustrate “nonbeing” (the primal) and “being” (everything or the various manifestations of this substance). They used “spontaneity” (essence) and “ethics” (function) to present the relationship between the “originality of the universe” (primal body) and “human social relations” (the various social positions and codes) and used the pair of categories “idea” and “word” to explain questions on understanding the substance of the universe. From the Wei and Jin dynasties and the Northern and Southern dynasties, onward, traditional Chinese philosophical thought, under the impact of Buddhism introduced from India, evolved into the

Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty. If the Wei and Jin metaphysical doctrine on substance has the thought of Laozi (Lao Tzu) and Zhuangzi as the framework, then Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming period alternately was based on an objective idealism (represented by Zhu Xi), a subjective idealism (represented by Wang Yangming), and a fairly high-level materialism (represented by Wang Fuzhi). The philosophical categories of this period succeeded Wei and Jin metaphysics and also absorbed Tang Buddhist thought in the Sui and Tang periods. Thus, there was a confluence of the thinking of Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), and Buddhism within a Confucian framework. The most basic philosophical categories of the time became “principle” and qi, “mind,” and “matter”; the question of “mind” and “nature” grew into the question of whether “mind is principle” or “nature is principle.” Categories such as “subject” and “object,” “investigation of things,” and “fulfillment of principle” were used in the discussion of the question of knowledge, and the categories “Heavenly principle” and “human desire” were used to discuss social issues.

Lenin in his *On the Question of Dialectics* wrote:

“Circles” in philosophy: (is a chronology of persons essential? No!) Ancient: from Democritus to Plato and the dialectics of Heraclitus.

Modern: Holbach—Hegel (via Berkeley, Hume, Kant). Hegel—Feuerbach—Marx.³

In his *Conspectus of Hegel's Book "Lectures on the History of Philosophy,"* he wrote: “Comparison of the history of philosophy with a circle . . . a circle on the great circle (a spiral) of the development of human thought in general.”⁴ Hegel's comparison of the history of philosophy with a circle, as pointed out by Lenin, is a penetrating reflection of the law of development of the philosophical thought. This is of tremendous importance in our study of the development of traditional Chinese philosophic thought.

From the above diagram, we can see that the development of traditional Chinese philosophy is roughly made up of three spiraling circles: The first covers the period prior to the Qin Dynasty; the Confucian school, including Confucius, Mencius, and Zhuangzi (or the *Commentary on the Book of Changes*); Daoism (Taoism) including Laozi (Lao Tzu), the School of Shuxia (i.e., the “White Heart” and other works), and Zhuangzi, with the Han Dynasty forming a transitional period. The second circle was the period of the Wei and Jin dynasties represented by Wang Bi-Xiang Xiu-Guo Xiang (or Wang Bi-Guo Xiang-Seng Zhao). Buddhism was in vogue from the Northern and Southern dynasties through the Sui and Tang dynasties, and after a period of development, Buddhism in China grew into several sects such as the

³ Ibid., p. 362.

⁴ Ibid., p. 247.

Huayan (*Avatamsaka*) Sect and the Chan (Zen) Sect. The third circle covers the Song and Ming dynasties represented by Zhang Zai-Zhu Xi-Wang Fuzhi.

- (3) In the second column of the diagram, only three pairs of categories are listed, of which the most fundamental is the pair “quiescence” and “movement,” whose manifestation is the pair “constant” and “variable,” though in fact “positive” and “negative” are also peculiar manifestations of “quiescence” and “movement.” Although many philosophers of traditional Chinese philosophy discussed the question of “quiescence” and “movement,” little discussion on the question of “time” and “space” was conducted among Chinese philosophers (except for the pre-Qin philosophers of the School of Names and philosophers of the later Mohist School). Philosophical propositions in traditional Chinese philosophy seem not to have been restricted by time or space, and they paid little attention to the question whether movement took place in time and space. That is why we have not included the categories “time” and “space” in our diagram.
- (4) The question of man (the way of man) was much discussed in traditional Chinese philosophy which was especially characterized by the study of the question of “morals” (ethics). Therefore, careful consideration should be given to what should be included in the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy. In this diagram (column III), five pairs of categories (in fact not all of them are related to the way of man) seem to be sufficient as basic concepts. “Spirit” and “form,” or the relationship between spirit and body, are used for the study of the phenomena of the human life. This was discussed from pre-Qin days onward, with materialists and idealists holding different views. The question of “nature” and “emotion” might be looked at as the key ethical issue. There have been divergent views on the question of “nature” ever since the pre-Qin days, such as “man is born good by nature,” “man is born evil by nature,” “man is born with a mixed nature both good and evil,” “man is born neither good nor evil by nature,” and “man is born good or evil by nature, all depending on the specific man,” etc. On the question of nature and emotion, there were views that “nature is good, whereas emotion is bad,” “nature is quiescent and emotion is active,” etc. The Wei and Jin metaphysicians paid considerable attention to this question, but concentrated on a discussion of the difference and similarity between the sage and the ordinary man. The Song and Ming Neo-Confucians divided nature into “the universal nature” and the “humoral nature,” with the former stemming from the “principle of Heaven” and the latter from man’s inherent emotion and desire or from the *qi* that makes up the body. Hence, this is still a question of nature and emotion, and the importance of ethical education is to “maintain the principle of Heaven and suppress human desire.” The question of “knowledge” and “action” also occupies a very important position in traditional Chinese philosophy. Most of the past Chinese philosophers upheld both “acknowledge” and “action” and thought the latter was even more important. The categories “name” and

“actuality” were always contained in traditional Chinese philosophy, and the categories “subject” and “object” were borrowed from Buddhism, but all four are related to the question of knowledge. Therefore, column III of the diagram contains categories involving existence and knowledge.

17.4 Discussion

As the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy is a rather broad and complicated issue, it calls for an earnest and extensive discussion. The following are only preliminary views on some of the questions:

(1) Should the categories in the categorical system be in pairs?

This question should be discussed in two aspects. On the one hand, in the history of philosophy, the philosophical categories used by a philosopher may not be in pairs. For example, the concept “spontaneity” used by Laozi (Lao Tzu) seems not to have its opposite in the book *Laozi (Lao Tzu)*. The concept *qi* used as the most general concept in the “White Heart” chapter of *Guanzi* did not seem to have its opposite either. However, taking the development of traditional Chinese philosophy as a whole, the categories are in pairs. For example, the concept “spontaneity” is paired with “ethics” and “principle” with *qi*. On the other hand, everything is contradictory, with two contradictory aspects, of which one does not exist without the other. Therefore, the categories which reflect the essential relationships of things must be in pairs of opposites. Some of the philosophical concepts and categories of traditional Chinese philosophy indeed seem to have no pairs of opposites, such as the “mean.” We certainly cannot say there is a “counter-mean.” Yet an analysis of the meaning of the mean may possibly lead to the solution of this question. Confucius advanced his “doctrine of the mean” to oppose “excess”; he said: “Excess amounts to insufficiency.” Thus, the “mean” has the sense of “middle” or “correct.” Therefore, it would be sufficient to have the concepts of the “positive” and the “negative” in traditional Chinese philosophy since “mean” is included in the meaning of “positive.”

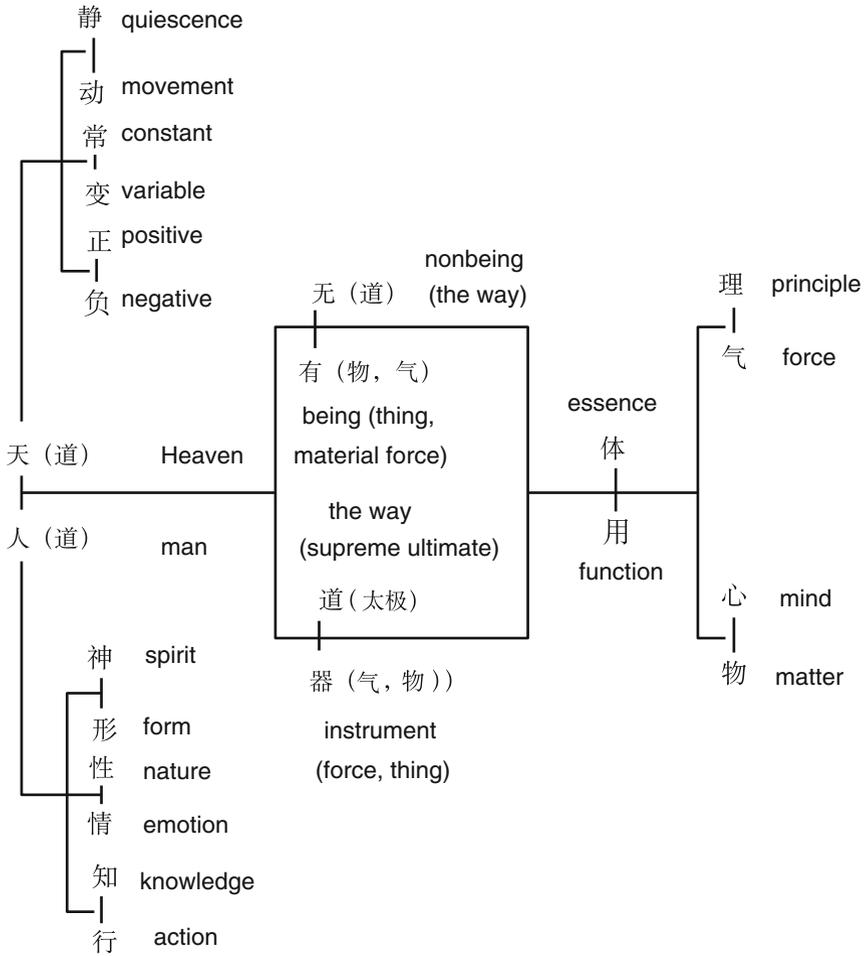
Not all the categorical systems used by Western philosophers necessarily reflect the unity of opposites. Among the ten categories used by Aristotle, some can be paired up as opposites such as “quality” and “quantity,” but “substance” has no specific opposite, though the other nine categories might be considered to be the opposites of “substance.” The 12 categories used by Kant and the categories of the categorical system of Hegel’s *Logik* are mostly pairs of opposites. Though divergent in their views on the categorical system, all Marxist philosophers agree that categories are in pairs, for instance, essence and phenomenon, content and form, necessity and chance, possibility and actuality, etc. Marxist philosophy holds that categories must be pairs of opposites; this is certainly a correct view and reflects the reality of things. Thus, when we today study the categorical system

of traditional Chinese philosophy and try to make it more systematically and scientifically reflect the characteristics and level of traditional Chinese philosophy, we should try to find out the law of unity of opposites in its categorical system.

- (2) How many categories should the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy contain in order to be sufficient to indicate “the basic pattern of being” or “the basic concepts that reflect the most fundamental characteristics, aspects, and relationships of the phenomena and knowledge of the reality”?

The 20 pairs of opposite basic concepts of the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy are merely a tentative proposition. They indicate mostly what the “world” and “man” are; for example, the existence of the “world” comprises “principle” and *qi* and the existence of “man” comprises “spirit” and “form.” The categories used by Western philosophers, however, generally show the mode of existence and the “principles of knowledge.” The contemporary categories of Marxist philosophy as a whole also show the characteristics and aspects of being and do not include the most basic concepts such as “mind” and “thing” in the categorical system. By this criterion, some of the categories listed above should not be included in the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy, and some other concepts should be added. However, the way we have indicated the system of traditional Chinese philosophy might be just one approach, for the various categories listed in the diagram do indicate the “basic mode of existence” so far as their contents are concerned and are also “focal points in the web” of man’s knowledge. Would not, then, our way seem to be better suited to reflect the characteristics and level of traditional Chinese philosophy? Of course it would be even better if we could use less basic concepts to indicate traditional Chinese philosophy, such as the diagram on the next page. (3) Can “the categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy” reflect its characteristics and level?

This is a major question because serious research and thorough discussion is needed to ascertain the characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy and its level. Could we venture to say that our diagram of the categorical system more or less reflects the characteristics and level of traditional Chinese philosophy? Apparently, traditional Chinese philosophy paid special attention to the study of the basic mode of existence and the existence of man and the relationships between things, that is, the identity of things, hence the multitude of concepts such as the “Heaven and man combine as one,” the “knowledge and action combine as one,” “essence and function are like one,” “nonbeing originates in being,” the “spirit and form combine as one,” and “mind and matter are not two.” Although traditional Chinese philosophy did not devote much discussion to such concepts as time and space, cause and effect which are not included in our diagram, yet as a categorical system, traditional Chinese philosophy already attained a fairly high level as compared with ancient Western and Indian philosophy in that it covered a vast scope, with basic concepts all in pairs and the development of the meaning of its concepts reflecting the world with increasing depth.



The categorical system of traditional Chinese philosophy has not been widely discussed and is a fairly new topic. Here, the author has ventured to propose some preliminary propositions with the aim of arousing interest in the discussion of this topic in the hope that the study of the history of Chinese philosophy, under the guidance of Marxism, will advance even more scientifically.

Chapter 18

New Progress in the Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy

In recent years, study of the history of Chinese philosophy has been in full swing in China. The Society of the History of Chinese Philosophy has been set up and has in publication two journals entitled *Studies of the History of Chinese Philosophy* and *Chinese Philosophy* dedicated to publishing research results in this area. A number of books specializing in the subject have come off press, and dozens of seminars have been held to discuss special issues. Thus, a variety of different views in regard to Chinese philosophers ranging from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen have come forth. All this signals the new progress made in the study of the history of Chinese philosophy. However, I do not propose to discuss here the concrete issues; rather, I would like to talk about the prevailing trends in the study as these probably can give a better picture of the new progress made in this area and points to new prospects which will open up in the studies. In light of this, I would like to address myself to four mutually related issues.

18.1 The History of Chinese Philosophy as the History of Knowledge of the Chinese Nation

There had been in the past a theory which moved from the classical conclusion that the history of philosophy was a historical account of the struggle between materialism and idealism to the study of the history of philosophy as the development of man's knowledge and the laws governing the development of theoretic thinking. However, the many years of practice in taking the history of philosophy merely as a historical account of the struggle between materialism and idealism not only gave rise to such drawbacks as oversimplification and indiscriminate labeling but also failed to identify any concepts that bore the nature of regularity. How should we

Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Chinese Culture, 1991: 39–48

resolve this problem? The discussion of “how to evaluate idealism” and “the object of the study of history of philosophy” had failed to lead us out of the dilemma. Under such circumstances, people began to turn their attention to studying how philosophy as theoretical thinking developed in history rather than becoming unduly entangled in the class background of a certain philosopher and his place in history.

A philosophical idea that once played a role in the development of man’s knowledge naturally had a place in history. But excessive discussion about the relative superiority or inferiority of materialism and idealism is unnecessary, for which of the two is better can be fully determined by the effect they each produced on the development of man’s knowledge. The study of the history of Chinese philosophy, in particular, used to stress the role played by a certain philosopher or philosophical school in history and how they were related to the ongoing class struggle and political struggle at that time. Of course, studies of this sort are also important; though strictly speaking, they are the problem that the historical study of philosophy is designed to resolve eventually. The final purpose of such a historical study is to reveal the logical inevitability of the development of theoretic thinking as it occurred in history. In the pre-Qin Dynasty philosophy, for example, was there any inevitability for the ideas of Confucius to develop through Mencius to that of Xunzi?

At present more and more people study the history of Chinese philosophy as a history of knowledge. For example, a multivolume book entitled *History of the Development of Chinese Philosophy* is now being compiled under the auspices of Professor Ren Jiyu, who asserted that the book was intended to deal with the developmental history of the Chinese nation’s knowledge. The *History of Chinese Philosophy* compiled with the joint efforts of Wuhan and Zhongshan universities also applied this idea as its guiding thought. In the preface, Xiao Jiefu (Hsiao Che-fu) of Wuhan University remarked: “The history of philosophy is the history of how the contradictions of philosophical knowledge have developed; it is man’s understanding about the general laws governing nature, society and movements of thinking manifested in the form of theoretic thinking.”

Chen Junmin of Shaanxi Teachers University wrote that the “study of the history of philosophy is in essence a science that inquires into the dialectic movement of man’s philosophical understanding.” In the article “On the Scope, Target, and Task of the History of Chinese Philosophy,” Zhang Dainian observed: “The history of philosophy is the history of knowledge in its totality.” “It is the history of how man’s knowledge develops, that is, a process in which the relative truths developed by mankind accumulate and increase, and the new ones replace the old.” To find out in its totality the law that governs the development of Chinese philosophy, Chinese philosophical circles have also turned their attention to Hegel’s idea of “likening the history of philosophy to cycles.” In the preface to his newly published *History of Chinese Philosophy: New Version*, Feng Youlan made a special reference to this issue.

Two seminars were held in Beijing: one on “The Philosophy of the Han and Tang Dynasties” was convened by the editorial department of *Study of the History*

of Chinese Philosophy and the other on “Philosophy of the Han Dynasty” was under the auspices of the editorial department of *Chinese Philosophy*. At both meetings, I suggested as a clue to the development of traditional Chinese philosophy in its totality that it is formed by a large spiral cycle constituted in turn of three smaller spiral developmental cycles. The first cycle was pre-Qin Dynasty philosophy. With Confucius as the starting point, it moved on through Mencius and Xunzi to the *Book of Change* (also through other masters of the School of Logicians) and thus formed the first cycle in the history of Chinese philosophy. The second cycle was the philosophy of the Wei and Jin dynasties and the Northern and Southern dynasties. Starting from the idea of “valuing nil” advocated by Wang Bi and He Yan, it developed through “esteeming substance” upheld by Xiang Xiu and Guo Xiang, to Seng Pi’s “doctrine of non-vacuum” which was “neither something nor nothing.” The third cycle began with Zhang Zai and moved on through Zhu Xi to Wang Fuzhi.

In the midst of the three cycles were the study of the Confucian classics of the two Han dynasties and Buddhist studies during the Sui and Tang dynasties, indicating the transition from one cycle to another. The three cycles of spiral movements made up the large cycle of traditional Chinese philosophy. Namely, from the philosophy of the pre-Qin period and the two Han dynasties with Confucianism as its main body, it moved on to the metaphysics of the Wei-Jin period and the Sui and Tang dynasties built on the framework of Lao-Zhuang theories. Gradually, it assimilated Buddhism (the Hua Yan sect, the Chan sect) and finally developed into the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties, a new school of Confucianism that had absorbed ideas of both the Buddhist and the Daoist schools which it developed at an even higher plane. This pattern of development, it seems, gives expression to the true feature of traditional Chinese philosophy; it shows the place of Confucianism in traditional Chinese philosophy and also the profound influence which Buddhist and Daoist ideas exerted over the philosophy.

18.2 The Concept and Category of Traditional Chinese Philosophy

If we intend to study the history of philosophy as the history of man’s knowledge and reveal the law of the development of theoretic thinking in history, we must probe the issue of concept and category. As theoretic thinking, philosophy is unavoidably manifested through a series of concepts and categories and philosophical propositions formed by concepts and categories. This applies to philosophies in general and is particularly significant in the study of concepts of traditional Chinese philosophy. As Hegel said: “As cultural difference is generally formed on the basis of differences of ideological categories, it is even more so by difference of philosophy.” Therefore, the study of the concepts and categories of traditional Chinese philosophy and the history of its development will help us understand the characteristics of China’s traditional philosophy and the level of its development.

Except for having absorbed some concepts from the Buddhism of India, philosophical studies in China had in the main developed independently prior to modern times and thus maintained a very distinctive character. Precisely because traditional Chinese philosophy has a set of concepts and categories of its own and has gradually formed itself into a complete system, it is inappropriate to apply to it concepts and categories of Western philosophy in an oversimplified way; nor is it possible to equate them simply with the concepts and categories of Marxist philosophy. For example, the concept of *Shen* in traditional Chinese philosophy has several implications. It may refer to god and ghosts, the meaning that was probably meant by Confucius when he said: "Worship god as if god were there." *Shen* may also mean "spirit" or "soul." This was what Xunzi implied when he said "*Shen* (spirit or soul) is engendered when matter takes shape." Nevertheless, in traditional Chinese philosophy, *Shen* has an even deeper layer of meaning, that is, "a subtle change." This idea stood out in the *Record of Changes*, which said: "When there is no telling whether it is yin or yang, it is called 'shen.'" Even though "Shen" implies a variety of ideas, the implications are related to each other. Another example is the opposite of *yong* in traditional Chinese philosophy. It also has a lot of implications; it implies not only "substance" and "support" but also "whole" and "abstract." The multiplex and mutually related implications embodied in one concept give expression to the special features of traditional Chinese philosophy and its level of development.

Since traditional Chinese philosophy has its special conceptual categories, is it true that it has a special category system? I have discussed this issue in my article "On the Problems of a Category System of Traditional Chinese Philosophy," which, on the basis of the historical development of Chinese philosophy, delineated the system of its categories. According to the article, this system is made up by 20 or 12 pairs of categories. Among them, the most important pair comprises "the Way of Heaven" and "the way of man." This problem of "Heaven" and "man" remains the core issue of traditional Chinese philosophy. Starting from Confucius' theory of "the Way of Heaven and life," it moved on through Mencius' idea of "do with all one's heart, understand one's lot, and know about Heaven"; the concept "honesty is the Way of Heaven and to be honest is the way of man" stated in *The Doctrine of the Mean*; and the idea to "establish the Way of Heaven" and "establish the way of man" as advocated by *Record of Changes* down to Dong Zhongshu, the great Confucian of the Han Dynasty, who described his studies as a learning that probed into "what links man with Heaven." Even Sima Qian, much influenced by Daoist ideas, called his *Historical Records* a book designed as "an inquiry into what is between Heaven and man and a probe into the changes in the past and present." He Yan, a founder of the metaphysics of the Wei and Jin dynasties, described Wang Bi, another founder of metaphysics, as "one who is qualified to talk about what is between Heaven and man." Even Tao Hongjing, a Daoist master during the Northern and Southern dynasties, was also of the opinion that Daoism (Taoism) studied "what is between Heaven and man." By the time of the Song Dynasty, the Confucians discussed such issues as "the separation of reason and Way," "the heart of Way," "the heart of man," "Heaven's reason," "man's desire," and so on,

which were all developments of the issue of “Heaven” and “man.” Therefore, an understanding about the relations between “Heaven” and “man” means having a grip on the basic issue of traditional Chinese philosophy.

Judging by how things stand at present, articles dwelling on conceptual categories of Chinese philosophy in its totality are increasing. Aside from my article, there were “Unfold the Study of Conceptual Categories Inherent in Chinese Philosophy” by Professor Zhang Dainian [*Studies of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, January 1982], “Unfold the Study of Categories in the History of Chinese Philosophy” by Fang Keli [*People’s Daily*, September 3, 1982], “A Preliminary Discussion of Methodology in the History of Chinese Philosophy” by Xiao Jiefu (Hsiao Che-fu) [*Journal of Wuhcut University*, no. 3, 1982], and others. However, there are even more papers and publications dwelling on the category systems of certain philosophers or a certain pair of philosophic categories. For example, in the article “Study of Zhu Xi’s Thinking,” Zhang Liwen made a special study of the relations among different categories of Zhu Xi’s philosophy. In his book entitled *The Viewpoint on Knowledge and Practice in the History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fang Keli analyzed knowledge and practice as a pair of categories in the perspective of historical development. The journal *Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy* began a special column in every issue to publish various studies of categories in traditional Chinese philosophy. In particular, we should mention Pang Pu’s “On ‘San (Three)’”, in which in the perspective of “san’s” various implications, he discussed the unique position of “three” in Chinese culture and the special philosophical significance of triaism. It appears the study of traditional Chinese philosophy can take a further step forward only after such research into the categories of Chinese philosophy and its system.

18.3 The Comparison and Analysis of Traditional Chinese and Foreign Philosophies

Toward the end of October 1980, a “Symposium on the Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Philosophies” was held in Guilin. The conference failed to produce any results; however, the issue it brought up began to arouse the attention of us all. As a matter of fact, the study of conceptual categories of Chinese philosophy naturally would have led to such a question, but special features of the conceptual categories of Chinese philosophy can be identified only through comparison with foreign philosophy. That little attention has been paid to the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign philosophies is due to a variety of factors. As far as the study of history of philosophy itself is concerned, however, one of the most important reasons was the total neglect of the special characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy. We tried either to explain it in light of Western philosophy or mechanically to apply Marxist jargon to it. Thus, it became unnecessary to study the similarities and differences between Chinese and

foreign philosophies. Thus far not many studies have been conducted in this regard, and studies generally have been done on some individual topics. For example, the Department of Philosophy of People's University held a discussion to compare and analyze Zhu Xi's idea of "*Taij*" [the great ultimate] and the "absolute spirit" advocated by Hegel.

An interesting phenomenon which has emerged in the course of comparing Chinese and foreign philosophies is that a number of people, including some natural scientists, have analyzed the Chinese theory of "vitality" and found that it contains more grains of truth and thus is superior to the Western theory of the "atom." According to them, the concept of "vitality" as theorized in China has not only the implication of "basic particle" but also that of "Held"; in other words, it has a "dual character of both wave and particle." Professor He Zuoxiu of the Institute of Theoretic Physics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences published in *Chinese Science* an article entitled "The Materialist Theory of Vitality" in which he said: "Vitality is a matter of continuity. It is close to 'field' as discussed in modern science." "The theory of vitality is the forerunner of the contemporary theory of the quantum field. The theory of 'vitality' as discussed in Chinese philosophy has special value in holding that the interaction among different things comes as a result of the effect of "vital energy."

But while this thesis probably contains some grains of truth, it appears also to have certain drawbacks, namely, it lumps together all different phenomena under "vital energy" or the "effect of vital energy" instead of focusing attention on analyzing the phenomena. The "theory of the atom" which prevailed in ancient Greece required that the smallest, indivisible particles be found and called "atoms." While this was, of course, incorrect, in terms of method it called for analysis of concrete matter which cannot be but as an advantage for Western philosophy. As far as the method of thinking is concerned, traditional Chinese philosophy seems to have laid more emphasis on the relations among things and the unity of their many aspects. On the contrary, Western philosophers in ancient times were probably more concerned about the distinction between different things and stressed the analysis of their various aspects.

As attention has been paid to the comparison of Chinese and Western philosophies, the comparison between Chinese and foreign religions also has drawn more attention than before. More studies have been carried out on Daoism (Taoism), the religion of the Chinese nation. There are institutions for Daoist studies, for example, the Institute of Religion under Sichuan University specializes in the study of Daoism (Taoism). Special courses on Daoism (Taoism) are now being offered in universities, special teams have been set up to compile *An Outline of Daoist Collections*, and articles have been published comparing Daoism (Taoism) with Buddhism. The January issue of *Philosophical Studies* in 1981 carried an article under the title of "A Preliminary Discussion of the Early Daoist Theory of Life, Death, Spirit, and Body," which, based on historical data, this analysis of these specific concepts in Daoism (Taoism) and Buddhism revealed the special features of Daoism (Taoism) as a religion.

In the perspective of a comparison of Chinese and foreign philosophies, two important questions have been raised. First, in view of the different development in Chinese and Western societies, some have asked very perceptively whether there is a “mode of Asian thinking.” Did not some major propositions of traditional Chinese philosophy express the characteristics of the Chinese mode of thinking? Over the last few years, quite a few articles have addressed such propositions as the “integration of Heaven with man,” “identification of the intrinsic with the extrinsic,” “integration of knowledge with practice,” and “feeling and scenery in perfect harmony.” Do not all these propositions embody a search for “unity,” and is this the basic characteristic of the mode of thinking in traditional Chinese philosophy? If such be the case, can we predict that once its lack of logical analysis and demonstration has been rectified, Chinese philosophy will develop more along this search for unity? The second question raised is where the national spirit of Chinese culture lies. The answer to such a question can be found only through the comparison of Chinese with foreign philosophies.

18.4 The Method Employed by Traditional Chinese Philosophy in Establishing a System

At the “Symposium on Philosophy of the Han and Tang dynasties” and the “Discussion of Philosophy of the Han Dynasty” held in 1983, the method of establishing a philosophical system was raised, and Jin Chun Feng was the first to address this issue. He said philosophers of the Han Dynasty generally used the method of positivism to establish the philosophical system; the Wei and Jin people used a different method, but he was not sure how to define it; the method used by Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties can be called the method of ethical rationalism. At an enlarged session of the editorial committee on Study of the History of Chinese Philosophy held in 1981, I proposed that this question be chosen as a topic for solicited contributions. Philosophy has two aspects, the “contents” and the “method.” Not only the “contents” but the “method” as well reflect a philosophy’s level of theoretic thinking. During the period from the pre-Qin Dynasty to the Wei and Jin dynasties, traditional Chinese philosophy comprised two major systems, Confucianism and Daoism (Taoism). These two schools were significantly different not only in their contents but also in terms of the methods they used in establishing their systems.

To put it briefly, the method used by the Confucians was basically that of experience, namely, to use experience in demonstration of things transcending experience or other experience. By the method of experience, we mean that the rationality of a philosophical idea can be proved through experience. Confucius said: “To draw a simile from something close can be called the method of benevolence.” Mencius remarked: “Categorize and list things that are similar.” Xunzi also noted: “Things of the same category do not conflict; they are of the same

rationality even after a long time.” The *Record of Changes* mentioned “draw close experience from your own person and distant experience from things,” “make a divination to observe nature,” and “observe astronomic phenomena above and study geographical features below” to illustrate the principles of its thinking. Dong Zhongshu put forward the idea that “things that can be counted are of the second number and things that cannot be counted are of the second category,” and with this, he demonstrated that “things can be combined by the category and Heaven becomes one with man.”

By the time of the metaphysics school in the Wei and Jin dynasties, the method underwent a change. In fact, metaphysics was built on the framework of Lao-Zhuang’s thinking, and therefore, the method it used in establishing its philosophical system can be called “dialectical thinking,” which is characterized by demonstrating the rationality of things existing in experience with things transcending experience. Wang Bi said: “Forget words when the idea is grasped”; Guo Xiang said: “place words within the framework of the idea”; and Ji Kang (Chi Kang) remarked: “Words cannot express the idea completely”—they all meant the same thing. Wang Bi cited “implements originate from the Way” to demonstrate that “ministers are subordinated to the king.” Guo Xiang tried to prove the “fairyland” did not exist “beyond the real world” (“to take a journey to the outside world in order to enhance the inner world” “inside and outside are mutually obscure”). The method of “dialectical thinking” was used in all these.

Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties was a combination of the two schools and an improvement on them. Their method perhaps can be called “introspection of ethical rationality.” Regardless of whether it was “character is rationality” advocated by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi or “heart is rationality” upheld by Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming, they all took rationality [*taiji*], a priori morality, as the basic contents. Zhu Xi said: “*Tai ji* is a principle of the extremely good. Every man has a *tai ji*, and every thing has a *tai ji*.” Lu Jiuyuan remarked: “Those who know before others know this reason, and those who become aware before others are aware of this reason. For this reason one loves one’s close relative and respects one’s older brother.”

In either “the Way questioning the learning” or “respecting virtue and character,” one can perceive the “reason of Heaven” in its totality through a moral introspection.

Why was this question raised? Because at that time we were thinking about Engels’ remark: “Theoretic thinking is merely an ability endowed by nature and should be developed and trained. To train it, there has been no other method up to now except studying philosophies of the past.” Theoretic thinking calls for the formulation of a number of philosophic concepts and the formation, on the basis of philosophic concepts, of a series of philosophic propositions. In order to form the concepts and propositions of a philosophical system as well as the system itself, it is imperative to use a certain method, which itself must be a certain kind of abstract thinking. The abstract thinking one exercises in the course of establishing one’s philosophical system certainly will train and improve one’s level of theoretic thinking. If we can reveal the different methods employed by the various

philosophers and philosophical schools in history and make a clear analysis of them, they will be an important help in analyzing the philosophers and philosophical schools under study. In addition, practice is no different from telling people a method for training and improving their level of theoretic thinking and is therefore very significant.

Judging from the problems mentioned above, we seem to be able to perceive such a trend of development; namely, people may raise the question: What are the prospects of traditional Chinese philosophy, or in other words, does the continued existence of Chinese philosophy in its entirety have any value? If this question is raised and the proper conditions are available, then a comprehensive and systematic analysis can be made of Chinese philosophy in today's perspective. But at present, quite a few people continuously maintain a negative attitude toward traditional Chinese philosophy as a whole. Whatever the circumstances, they regard traditional Chinese philosophy as a product of old times, an ideology of feudal and even slave society. Nevertheless, certain ideas of the philosophy are continuously quoted in everyday life. We can see that a great many articles, especially writings on "spiritual civilization," often quote passages from books of ancient China or historical stories in ancient times which were mostly the embodiment of traditional Chinese philosophical thinking.

Why are there such a contradictory phenomenon? Is the concept of "value" involved here? Where does the basic spirit of traditional Chinese philosophy lie? Does this spirit still have value in today's world? Following the disclosure of the law of how traditional Chinese philosophy developed, the study of this problem will, in my opinion, show increasingly clearly that it works continuously toward the solution of a major problem, namely, the value of the "'Way of Heaven' and the 'way of' man" and their relations.

This problem should be resolved through the continuous elevation of man's spiritual realm, a concept in Chinese philosophy which requires that man should transcend "oneself" and identify with the "Way of Heaven." Having attained such a realm in which "Heaven is integrated with man" and "man succeeds alongside the Way," an individual could become a saint and society a "world of Great Harmony." As to how or whether it would be possible to realize such an ideal, there were, of course, different views due to the difference in historical conditions and environments. Nevertheless, philosophers in Chinese history tended to take as their motto the epigram that "Heaven moves along a healthy track, and a gentleman should make unremitting efforts to improve himself." How things will develop is hard to predict; we are not prophets, nor do we believe in prophecy. But if things always develop according to law, can we predict its future development by studying and analyzing its previous experience and can the development of philosophy be forecast to help us know what will happen with Chinese philosophy in the future? I think it is possible.

Even though I proposed to describe the new progress now made in China about the study of the history of traditional Chinese philosophy, I mainly discussed my personal views on the new trends of philosophical studies. Perhaps, this can be called the idea of one school.

Chapter 19

A Reconsideration of the Question of “The True, the Good, and the Beautiful” in Traditional Chinese Philosophy

What is the highest ideal in spiritual life human beings quest for? I believe it is “the true, the good, and the beautiful” and the unity of this three in one system. Of course, ideas of philosophers are different regarding what constitutes each of these three ideals. As far as how these are unified in one system, opinions differ from each other. There cannot be any final conclusion to this discussion, and actually there is no need for such one. As long as people quest for truth, goodness, and beauty, thinkers will undoubtedly want to construct systems unifying the concepts. In my opinion, the quest for spiritual realm of life in Chinese traditional philosophy can be referred as ancient philosophers’ quest for “the true, the good, and the beautiful” in another way. I wrote an article entitled “The Question of the True, the Good and the Beautiful in Traditional Chinese Philosophy”¹ which was largely a historical discussion of the Confucian view about the question. This article is, however, not confined to a discussion of the Confucians and is not historical in its approach because such an approach would entail too unfocussed and lengthy an article. We will therefore analyze and discuss selected representative thinkers.

Influence on the development of Chinese philosophy has always been exerted by China’s pre-Qin philosophers, among whom Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi have been the most influential. If we regard these three as typical and through them discuss the question of the different spiritual realm of life (*rensheng jingjie*) advanced by different traditional Chinese philosophies, we may perhaps be able to derive a unified understanding of spiritual realm of life held by traditional Chinese philosophy.

Forty years ago, Shen Youding, who was engaged in research at Oxford University, wrote to friends in China saying:

Translated by Bruce Doar from *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue*, 1990, No. 3, with some added passages translated by Yang Hao.

¹ In *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue*, 1984, No. 4.

The value theories of Kant and of Hegel have one important difference which we can represent as follows:

Kant	The good	←	The beautiful	←	The true
Hegel	The true	←	The beautiful	←	The good

From this we can see that Kant was perhaps closer to the Chinese, while Hegel was closer to the Indian or Greek.²

This conclusion of Mr. Shen is particularly insightful and innovative. From Confucian thought, which formed the mainstream in the development of Chinese traditional philosophy, we can see that this scheme holds, but if we examine the different schools of thought and philosophies which make up traditional Chinese philosophy, we find that it does not. As I see it, in traditional Chinese philosophy there were in fact three different systems integrating the true, the good, and the beautiful. The systems of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi are set out below:

Confucius	The good	←	The beautiful	←	The true
Laozi	The true	←	The good	←	The beautiful
Zhuangzi	The beautiful	←	The good	←	The true

Drawing analogies from this diagram, we can say in overall terms that in terms of value regarding the question of the true, the good, and the beautiful, Confucius approximates Kant, Laozi approximates Hegel, while in a limited way Zhuangzi approximates Schelling or Aristotle. Of course such analogies are limited and we cannot extrapolate them to all other aspects of the ideas of these thinkers, but they do serve to direct the lines along which we can think.

19.1 Confucius’ Demands of the Realm of Life

In the section of *The Analects* entitled “*Wei Zheng*” (Practicing Government), the following statement is attributed to Confucius:

At fifteen I set my heart upon learning, at thirty I had established myself, at forty I was not subject to doubt, at fifty I came to know the commands of Heaven, at sixty I could immediately discriminate the truth or falsity of what others said, and at seventy I followed my heart’s dictates, but did not transgress the rules.

We know that Confucius and later Confucians believed that life and death or wealth and honor were not attained by mere individual efforts, but that the level of a person’s morality or learning could differ because of the amount of individual effort. These words of Confucius are at one and the same time a description of the course of his life, an outline of the process of self-cultivation he pursued, and a summation of his quest for and understanding of the true, the good, and the

² *Zhexue Pinglun*, Vol. 10, No. 6.

beautiful. The years from 15 to 40 can be seen as the preparatory stage for his assumption of sagehood, and the statements that he was “not subject to doubt” and that he could “follow” his “heart’s dictates, and not transgress the rules,” reveal that deepening of the process whereby he acquired sagehood. The statement that he had come “to know the commands of Heaven” explains how he acquired knowledge and understanding of “Heaven” (the ultimate questions of life and the universe), which may perhaps be considered to fall within the scope of the quest for the true. Here Confucius sees Heaven as a cognitive object, and he has not attained the stage where he is “one with Heaven,” having not yet entered that realm of unity. In his “Preface to *Zhuangzi*,” Guo Xiang wrote:

Zhuangzi can be said to have known the origin....although he said he did not have that understanding, he alone responded to it. To respond without understanding is, however, to have no need to apply effort.

To be able to respond to the noumenon of Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things can be called knowing “the root,” but this entails the cognitive subject being apart from the noumenon of Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things, and to see this noumenon as the object of cognition necessarily means that one has not yet attained oneness with that noumenon. While this noumenon exists on a higher realm, Zhuangzi was not yet able to “follow” his “heart’s dictates, but did not transgress the rules.”

Confucius’ statement that at sixty he “could immediately discriminate the truth or falsity of what others said” (*liushi er ershun*) has, in fact, been subject to varying interpretations over the ages. Yang Bojun, whose interpretation presented in *Lunyu Yizhu* (*Analects*, Vernacular Translation and Annotation; Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1958) is used here, writes that the expression *ershun* “is extremely difficult to explain. Many have sought to do so, but I feel all their explanations to be forced....” I believe that Yang’s interpretation is close to what Confucius intended by the statement. Yang’s interpretation is probably based on the explanation of Li Chong of the Jin Dynasty who wrote that *ershun* means “the heart and the ear follow each other” (*xinyuer xiangcong*). Sun Chuo, also of the Jin Dynasty, provided a more metaphysical explanation when he wrote:

Ersun means to discard the logic which governs listening, to intuit the mystery of the meaning, and to not pursue but nevertheless obtain—what can be termed following the principle of the supreme one unconsciously and unknowingly.

This is the intuitive understanding which transcends experience of the entirety of the principles governing the universe and is in the realm of “inner transcendence.” According to the views of modern hermeneutics, all explanations of our predecessors’ ideas contain within them the ideas of the explicator; by definition, there must be connections between the person doing the explanation and what he is explaining. Most of the explanations of Confucius’ thought by thinkers throughout the ages reveal this to be the case. I would like to turn to Zhu Xi’s explanation of these words of Confucius. He wrote:

As the sounds enter, the heart communes with them, finding nothing in them to evade or oppose, thereby understanding their ultimate sense, acquired without any thought.

Zhu Xi’s “sounds” (*sheng*) relate to voice (*shengyin*), and they encompass both the “articulated sounds” (*yousheng zhi yin*) and the “unarticulated sounds” (*wushengzhi yin*). “Understanding their ultimate sense” should transcend the realm in which Confucius knew the commands of Heaven, and so this realm “acquired without any thought” transcends knowledge. I believe that this can be explained as an intuited aesthetic realm, and what is thereby acquired is an intuited image transcending experience. This can also be explained as an artistic realm, the realm of “beauty.” This explanation of Confucius’ statement may also be “forced,” but as Yang Bojun asserts that most explanations of this line have, throughout history, been forced, I see no harm in building on this legacy. But I also believe that such an explanation does have a basis, particularly from the viewpoint of philosophy, in which it may have a new sense. We know that Confucius regarded music as a form of cultivation and that “when in the kingdom of Qi he heard the music of Shao,” he was “unable to savor the taste of meat for three months,” a detail revealing that he had entered a sublime aesthetic realm “acquired without any thought.” Confucius had his own explanation of this realm he had attained: “I had not anticipated that music could transport me to such a state.” He thus unintentionally attained a realm in which he enjoyed a form of transcendental beauty.

Zhu Xi commented as follows on Confucius’ statement that at seventy he “followed” his “heart’s dictates, but did not transgress the rules”:

(*Ju*), the carpenter’s square, is an instrument for measuring patterns, but here it refers generally to pattern or custom. While following his heart’s dictates, Confucius did not transgress his pattern, and so he was at ease in his deeds and attained the mean without effort.

The passage from *The Analects* being commented on here therefore refers to a realm at one with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things, where one “knows truth” (*zhi zhen*), “acquires beauty” (*de mei*), and later arrives in a perfect realm of “ultimate goodness” (*zhishan*). Confucius believed that “perfect beauty” could not compare with “perfect beauty combined with perfect goodness.” *The Analects* contains the following passage in “The Eight Yi”:

Discussing the music of Shao, Confucius commented: “It possesses perfect beauty, as well as perfect goodness.” Of the music of King Wu, he commented: “It has perfect beauty, but does not possess perfect goodness.”

To say that something possesses perfect goodness is, to a certain extent (at least for the Confucians), connected with a judgment concerning ethical value. Mencius said: “Complete truthfulness is called beauty.”

“Beauty” here contains the idea of ethical evaluation. Zhu Xi annotated this line as follows:

When one has strenuously implemented goodness until it is filled to completion and has accumulated truth, then the beauty will reside within it and will not depend on externals.

“Goodness” here is a form of internalized “beauty,” the highest beauty of character. It can be seen that Zhu Xi believed that “goodness” in one respect can

encompass “beauty.” “Perfect goodness” was held to be superior to “perfect beauty” because “perfect goodness” was in fact both “perfect goodness and perfect beauty.” We would now seem to be able to assert that Confucius’ realm of life (or his realm of the sage) proceeds from “knowing truth” and “acquiring beauty” to a realm of perfect goodness in which “one can be at ease in one’s deeds and attain the mean without effort.” In other words, from “truth” we proceed to “beauty” and then we finally attain “goodness.”

“The good ← the beautiful ← the true” was the special characteristic of Kant’s philosophy. As Kant saw it, practical reasoning was superior to speculative reasoning. In his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), the object of research was the phenomenal world, and it was subject to the control of the laws of necessity of nature. In his *Critique of Practical Reasoning*, the object of research was the noumenon of rational functioning, which was not subject to laws of necessity, and so was free. The former was nature, the latter morality. The former belonged to the realm of theoretical knowledge, the latter to the realm of ethical belief, and there was no direct channel connecting the two. The question, therefore, was how to build a bridge between theoretical knowledge (epistemology) and ethical belief (ethics); and to resolve the question of how to connect the two, Kant wrote his *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (*Critique of Judgment*), at the beginning of which he said:

Hence an immense gulf is fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, the supersensible, so that no transition from the sensible to the supersensible (and hence by means of the theoretical use of reason) is possible, just as if they were two different worlds, the first of which cannot have any influence on the second; and yet the second is to have an influence on the first, i.e., the concept of freedom is to actualize in the world of sense the purpose enjoined by its laws. Hence it must be possible to think of nature as being such that the lawfulness in its form will harmonize with at least the possibility of [achieving] the purposes that we are to achieve in nature according to laws of freedom. So there must after all be a basis uniting the supersensible that underlies nature and the supersensible that the concept of freedom contains practically, even though the concept of this basis does not reach cognition of it either theoretically or practically and hence does not have a domain of its own, though it does make possible the transition from our way of thinking in terms of principles of nature to our way of thinking in terms of principles of freedom.³

Kant believes that it was the power of judgment which united reason (pure reason) and rationality (practical reasoning), yet while judgment had something of the nature of each of these forms of reasoning, it was not the same thing as them. Kant divided man’s soul into intelligence, feeling, and idea. The cognitive ability of intelligence was pure reason, the cognitive ability of idea was rationality or practical reasoning which transcended experience, and the cognitive ability of feeling was what Kant called “judgment.” Because feeling was the intermediary between intelligence and idea, it, like intelligence, was moved by external stimuli,

³ Kant, *Panduanli Pipan*, (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Chinese edition), Beijing: Shangwu Yin shuguan, 1964, p. 13. [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. Werner S. Pluhar. Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 15–16. —editor].

and like idea it played its role regarding external things, and thus judgment functioned as an intermediary between reason and rationality.

In one respect, judgment, like reason, confronted incomplete phenomena. In another respect, like rationality, it aimed to reconcile incomplete aspects with a totality. Thus, the understanding of confronted incomplete phenomena and the rationality which addresses itself to a totality meet in judgment, judgment seeks to include the parts within the whole and then subject them to reflection, so judgment is able to act as a bridge between reason and rationality.⁴ Thus, Kant constructed his philosophical trilogy of “the good ← the beautiful ← the true.”

Of course, while there are similarities in value between the philosophies of Confucius and Kant, their aims in constructing their philosophies were dissimilar. Confucius established a philosophy of life, whereas Kant constructed a complete rational philosophical system. This is perhaps one of the differences between Chinese and Western philosophy. If we compare Confucius’ process which led him from knowing the commands of Heaven to being able to immediately discriminate the truth or falsity of what others said and then on to “following his heart’s dictates without transgression,” with the basic theme of the true, the good, and the beautiful in traditional Chinese philosophy, then we can say that Confucius’ statement that “at fifty I came to know the commands of Heaven” represents the stage of seeking “the unity of Heaven and Man” (*tian ren heyi*). His statement that “at sixty I could immediately discriminate the truth or falsity of what others said” represents attaining the stage of “the unity of feeling and scene” (*qing jing heyi*), and his statement that “at seventy I followed my heart’s dictates, but did not transgress the rules” represents the stage at which he was able to realize “the unity of knowledge and action” (*zhi xing heyi*).

The unity of Heaven and Man belongs to the domain of “intelligence” (knowledge). The unity of feeling and scene belongs to the domain of “appreciation” (feeling), and the unity of knowledge and action belongs to “praxis” (idea or intention). According to the Confucians, these three were inseparable. Being human entailed an understanding of the flow of the cosmos and creation as well as an ability to appreciate the achievements of the cosmos and creation. Moreover, in one’s life practice, one should re-manifest the perfect beauty and the perfect goodness of the cosmos. The process that Confucius outlined represented the demands made by the human in the realm of life. This was the summation of Confucius’ personal quest for the true, the beautiful, and the good.

⁴ Li Zehou, *Pipan Zhaxue de Pipan*, (A Critique of Critical Philosophy), Renmin Chubanshe, 1984, pp. 368–370; Jiang Kongyang, *Deguo Gudian Meixue* (Classical German Aesthetics), Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1981, pp. 67–68.

19.2 Laozi's Quest in the Realm of Life

Laozi seems to have upheld an attitude of denial regarding the demands of most people (including the Confucians) for the true, the good, and the beautiful. His call to “deny the sages and discard knowledge” (*juesheng-qizhi*) would seem to be a denial of the quest for ordinary knowledge. His statement that “the five colors blind one’s vision” (*wuse ling ren mu mang*) is an opposition to the general quest for beauty; and his assertion that “when the Great Way declines, compassion and righteousness come into existence” (*dadao fei, you ren yi*) is opposition to the general moral concept of goodness. Does Laozi therefore not argue for any quest for the true, the good, and the beautiful in the human realm? I disagree with this proposition. He called for a quest after such ideals which would transcend the banal, a quest that for him was within a realm “equal with the Way” (*tongyu dao*). We can see that Laozi regarded “the Way” as the unity of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

The 25th chapter of *Dao De Jing (The Classic of the Way and Power)* contains the following passage:

The model for man is the earth, the model for earth is heaven, the model for heaven is the Way, and the model for the Way is Nature.

This is a description of Laozi's views of the quest of the realm of life. He believed that man's highest ideal was imitation of the Way, while the Way itself was natural and spontaneous. What was the Way he discussed? *Dao De Jing* contains a number of definitions, but the most basic is of a transcendental highest criterion.⁵ Chapter 14 of that classic reads:

Viewing it, it cannot be seen and so it is described as “beyond color;” listening to it, it cannot be heard and so it is described as “beyond sound;” grasping for it, it cannot be grasped and so it is described as “formless.” These three are beyond imagination, all being aspects of the one chaotic whole. Upwardly, it emits no light; downwardly, no darkness. It is endless, so that words cannot describe it, and it returns to nothingness. This is formless form, shape without matter, and is called seemingness. Meeting it, it has no front; pursuing it, it has no rear. Cleave to the eternal Way, to govern what exists in the present; if one can understand its ancient origin, one finds the laws governing the Way.

Examining this we find it contains three levels of meaning:

- (1) “The Way” transcends sensory experience, and this transcendence is described as “beyond color,” “beyond sound,” and “beyond form.” Monk Deqing in the Ming Dynasty wrote in his *Dao De Jing Jie (Explanation of The Classic of the Way and the Power)*: “The one chaotic whole” which cannot be imagined is the Way.

⁵Tang Yijie, *Nanbeichao Shiqi de Daojiao* (Taoism in the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties Period), Shaanxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1988, pp. 56–57.

- (2) While the Way is transcendental, it is nevertheless based on the existence of real things, i.e., “formless form, shape without matter.” Wang Bi comments on this line:

From it all “things” possessing specificity can be formed
 One may want to say that it is nothingness, but from it things can be formed; one wants,
 to say that it exists, but one cannot see its form. . . .
 That which is without form and without name is the basic principle of the
 myriad things.

“The seemingness” which is formless form and shape without matter can constitute the basic principle underlying the existence of all forms and shapes. Wang Bi comments that “seemingness” means “one cannot grasp and define it.”

In other words, the Way has no specificity. All things which possess specificity fall within the realm of experience and that which lacks specificity transcends experience. In Chapter 21 of *Dao De Jing*, we read:

This Way is seemingness, but within this seemingness forms can be discerned and real things do exist. In this darkness there is essence. This essence is exceptionally real and can be authenticated.

Therefore, while the Way lacks specificity, from it all “things” possessing specificity can be formed, and so it constitutes the most real existence, being the noumenon of things.

- (3) The Way is the basis of the existence of all things and is the highest criterion of transcendence. “The laws governing the Way” are said to be “principles”.⁶ “The laws governing the Way” are then the Way as the highest criterion of the myriad things from ancient times to the present.

The above three points show that Laozi’s philosophy was a quest for the origin of Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things and for the basis of their existence, from which he created a philosophical system in which the Way was the highest criterion of transcendence. Laozi’s discussion of the noumenon of the cosmos in fact falls within the scope of the quest for truth.

Laozi made the Way the highest category in his philosophical system. If man grasped the Way, then he grasped the truth, and this was in fact the aim of life. Thus, for Laozi “being one with the Way” was the highest aim in life. He said: “Serving the Way is being one with the Way.”

Wang Bi commented:

The Way relies on non-form and non-action to form the myriad things and so if, in serving the Way, one relies on non-action, then one will be a superior man and teach without words. In the continuity of seeming existence things will follow their reality, and the Way will be one with the body. This is called being one with the Way.

“Being one with the Way” is thus equivalent to being of one body with the Way. It can be seen that Laozi believed that the relationship between man and the Way did not entail man regarding the Way as an ordinary object of cognition

⁶ “Sangang Wuji,” in *Baihu Tongyi*.

(because the Way lacked name and form). Rather it involved man becoming one with the Way. Therefore, being one with the Way was merely the highest realm man's life could assume, a realm in which man could transcend the mundane and "acquire the Way" (*de Dao*). This was the supreme realm after which Laozi sought.

How then did Laozi regard the good and the beautiful? We know that Laozi regarded the basic character of the Way as "nature and nonaction" (*ziran wuwei*), and this then was his criterion for goodness and beauty. He said: "When the Great Way declines, compassion and righteousness arise." Because moral concepts such as compassion and righteousness are man-made, not only are they incompatible with the principles of "nature and nonaction" but also destroy the Way. Only when these man-made things are discarded can man acquire true "goodness." Therefore, he said: "Only when compassion is terminated and righteousness is discarded. . . can people return to genuine filial piety and kindness." Only when all man-made moral concepts are discarded can people return to their natural relationships. Chapter 8 of *Dao De Jing* contains the following passage:

Those who possess supreme goodness are like water. Water serves to nourish the myriad things and does not harm them; if one remains in the lowest place that people most loathe, one is closest to the Way.

Ethical persons have the nature of water. Water may benefit the myriad things, but it does not strive for high places. It is content to remain in the lowest place and therefore it approaches the Way. In Chapter 66 we read: "The rivers and oceans are the kings of the waterways, because they choose the lowest places. Because everything flows into them, the oceans and mighty rivers are called the rulers of the valleys."

This is Laozi's explanation of how persons possessing morality are close to the realm of the Way while not yet being one with the Way. To use Feng Youlan's exposition of "the four realms" in his *Xin Yuanren (A New Exposition of Man)*, those who possess the highest goodness belong only to "the realm of morality," while those who are one with the Way belong to "the realm of Heaven and Earth." Thus, in terms of value, the good is on a lower level than the true.

In Chapter 12 of *Dao De Jing*, we read:

The five colors dazzle and blind the eyes; the five sounds deafen the ears; the five flavors numb the palate; indulgence in hunting them leads to dissipation and craziness.

Wang Bi comments:

The eyes, mouths and hearts all follow their own nature; one acts not to follow their nature, then one harms nature, and blindness, deafness, numbness and madness result.

In other words, the five colors, the five sounds, and the five flavors are all "man-made" and have lost the original character of nature. Laozi regarded plain simplicity as beauty (*Jian su bao pu*).⁷ One should heed what is natural.

⁷ "Tiandao," in *Zhuangzi*, contains the following passage: "With pure simplicity, the world cannot compete in beauty." This passage serves to explain the expression *jiansu baopu*.

Artifice results in a loss of the beauty of original nature, and a lack of artifice preserves natural beauty. Thus, in Chapter 41 of *Dao De Jing*, the following passage occurs:

The supreme note has no sound, the supreme image has no form, the Way loses itself in anonymity, yet it alone excels in starting and completing.

Wang Bi commented:

One listens to the supreme note, but cannot hear it, because it has no sound. A note that has sound will fall, necessarily, into either the second note on the pentatonic scale or the first. When it is thus discriminated, it cannot assemble a crowd. Therefore a note that has sound is not the supreme note.

And:

If an image has form then there will be discrimination, and if there is discrimination then it will either be warm or burning. If not burning, it will be cold. And so an image that has form is not the supreme image.

And:

All these good things are completed by the Way. In terms of image, it is the supreme image among all images, and is image without form. In terms of note, it is the supreme note among notes, and is the note of silence.

The music which is one with the Way is supreme music, and the image which is one with the Way is supreme image. The supreme music encompasses all music, while the supreme image encompasses all forms. Music is dependent on sound and painting is dependent on form, but for Laozi the supreme music is without sound and the supreme painting lacks all forms. Because lack of sound or form harmonizes with the principles of “nature and nonaction,” they constitute true beauty. From this we can see that for Laozi the good and the beautiful derive from the true (the Way) and are specific manifestations of the Way.

In the final chapter of *Dao De Jing*, chapter 81, the following passage occurs:

Fealty words are not beautiful,
 Beautiful words are not about fealty.
 Good persons don't argue,
 Those who argue are not good.
 Men of knowledge are without depth,
 Those who have depth do not (seek) knowledge.

I believe that this passage expresses Laozi's hierarchy of the good, the true, and the beautiful. “The beautiful” is spoken of in terms of speech (which can stand for literature), “goodness” is spoken of in the context of deeds or actions, and “knowing” is spoken of in terms of intelligence. “True knowing” is superior to “true goodness,” which in turn is superior to “true beauty,” thereby creating a hierarchical series of criteria. This is the model of Laozi's quest in the realm of life.

When we say that Laozi's view of “the good, the true, and the beautiful” has certain points in common with Hegel's philosophy, we are only saying that there are certain similarities in the arrangement of these three criteria of value orientation. In Hegel's philosophical system, “morality,” “art,” and “philosophy” all belong to

the realm of spiritual philosophy. Spiritual philosophy is the third part of Hegel's philosophical system; it constitutes the third great stage of self-development in the direction of pure spirit—the description of the spiritual stage. The spiritual stage is the unity of the logical and natural stages, and it is self-existing and self-acting. Transition from self-existing to self-acting, spirit experienced a complicated developing process which consists of three stages: (1) subjective spirit, (2) objective spirit, and (3) absolute spirit. “Morality” belongs to objective spirit. Objective spirit means the spirit that manifested itself in the external objective world, which refers not to the natural world and only to the spiritual world, say, different spheres of human social life and human history. It consists of three developing stages: (1) abstract law (property law), (2) morality, and (3) ethic (family, citizen society, country). Objective spirit is inferior to absolute spirit in the stage of spirit development, thus also inferior to “art” and “philosophy” which belong to absolute spirit. To Hegel, both subjective spirit and objective spirit are partial respectively: Subjective spirit such as soul, sense, consciousness, mind, will, etc., is inner conscious state of individuals, and not yet actualized as the reality of existence. Objective spirit, such as property, law, morality, politics, family, society, country, etc., is objective though had no self-consciousness. The essence of spirit is unlimited, absolute, and free; therefore, it has to keep on developing forward to avoid the partiality of subjective spirit and objective spirit and to prevent the incident of their opposition between each other, thus spirit could ascend to the supreme stage of spirit. Absolute spirit is completed and full realization of spirit unto itself. It is both subjective and objective, and apart from taking itself as the object and manifesting its essence self-consciously, it has no other purpose, hence is truly unlimited, absolute, and free. “Art,” “religion,” and “philosophy” as three developing stages of the absolute spirit are identical as far as their content are concerned, for their differences are only forms. Hegel said: “The element of the universal spirit's existence [Dasein] is intuition and image in art, feeling and representational thought in religion, and pure and free thought in philosophy”.⁸ Listed those three stages of absolute spirit as such, Hegel tries to betray that the self-realization of absolute spirit also accords to the process that started from sensuous intuition, passed through the representational thought (he also name it as “pictorial thinking”), and reached to the abstract thinking. Therefore, philosophy is the highest, freest, wisest state of absolute spirit. He said, “The most perfect method of knowledge proceeds in the pure form of thought: and here the attitude of man is one of entire freedom”.⁹ By saying “Pure form of thought,” he means pure conception and logical category. The sensuous form of art cannot fully embody infiniteness, absoluteness, and freeness of absolute spirit (idea), because it was

⁸ Hegel, *Fa Zhexue Yuanli*, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1961, pp. 351. [G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, tr. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1991, §341, p. 372. —editor].

⁹ Hegel, *Xiao Luoji*, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1980, pp. 87. [G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, tr. W. Wallace, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, §24, remark. —editor].

confined by the sensuous form somehow. “This at the same time makes it plain that the manifestation of truth in a sensuous form is not truly adequate to the spirit”.¹⁰ Only philosophy is the perfect way to realize “truth.” To Hegel’s philosophy of mind, “philosophy” is the most accomplished form of truth, the supreme one; and the quest of “beauty” (“art”) being the sensuous manifestation of the idea is only in the developing stage, apparently inferior to “philosophy.” Being the inner belief of behavior subject toward good or bad, “morality” is even lower to the developing stage of “art”.¹¹ That is to say, as far as the value is concerned, Hegel’s idea about the sequence of “the true, the good, and the beautiful” can be referred as “the true ← the beautiful ← the good.” In this sense, his point is not the same as Laozi’s philosophy, but they share the same view that “the true” is superior to both the “the beautiful” and “the good.” As we have said before that Chinese traditional philosophy tends to actually reach a kind of spiritual realm of “the true, the good, and the beautiful,” while Western philosophy tries to establish a kind of thought system that rationalized the value of “the true, the good, and the beautiful.” We can say that the former one was pursuing a kind of enlightenment, and the latter one was only discussing about its “knowledge.”

19.3 Zhuangzi’s Quest in the Realm of Life

Like Laozi, Zhuangzi made the Way the highest category in his philosophy, but Zhuangzi’s philosophy did not concentrate on proving the limitlessness, absoluteness, and eternity of the Way (even though he devoted quite a bit of space in his writings to these questions) but rather on proving the spiritual limitlessness, absoluteness, and eternity of those persons, such as perfected men, spirits, and sages, who had acquired the Way.

The first chapter of his *Zhuangzi* is entitled “Roaming Free” (*Xiaoyao You*), and the theme of this chapter is a discussion of the question of how man can attain absolute spiritual freedom. According to Zhuangzi, while the *peng* creature had a wing span of three thousand *li* and could rise to a height of ninety thousand *li* and Liezi could ride on the wind over eight hundred *li* in a day, actions which would seem sufficiently free, they did not in fact constitute true freedom. For the roc to fly ninety thousand *li*, a vast expanse of space was required; to travel those eight hundred *li*, Liezi had to rely on the force of the wind. These actions were

¹⁰ Hegel, *Mei Xue*, Vol. I, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1979, pp. 133. [G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. I, tr. T. M. Knox, Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 104–105. — editor].

¹¹ The discussion about the philosophy of Hegel refers to: Chen Xiuzhai, Yang Zutao, *Ouzhou Zhexue Shigao*, (History of European philosophy) Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, 1983, pp. 553–558; Jiang Kongyang, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–220; Xue Hua, *Heigeer Yu Yishu Nanti*, (Hegel and artistic problem) Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1986, pp. 25–27.

“conditional” (*you dai*), and only the “unconditional” (*wu dai*) can be described as the attainment of true freedom. Thus, he said:

“If one is able to follow the laws of nature and grasp the transformations of the six breaths and roam freely in a limitless domain, what does one need to rely on?!” Relying on nothing, this “roaming free” was “unconditional.” It constituted absolute freedom. But how could one attain this realm? Zhuangzi believed that ordinary mortals could not attain this realm. Only perfected men, deities, and sages could do so, because “perfected men have no self, deities exert no effort, and sages know no name.” To have no self (*wu ji*) is to “extinguish the self” (*sang wo*), and in “Discussion of the Equality of Things” (*Qiwu Lun*) Zhuangzi wrote: “Now I have extinguished myself.” In the chapter entitled “Great Master” (*Da Zongshi*), there is a passage which describes “sitting in forgetfulness” (*zuowang*), which can be called a description of “having no self” in this realm of absolute freedom:

“I have made progress,” Yan Hui said.

“How have you progressed?” Confucius asked.

“I have forgotten benevolence and righteousness,” Yan Hui replied. “Fine, but that’s not enough,” Confucius said.

Several days later Yan Hui again saw Confucius, and said, “I have made progress.”

“How have you progressed?” Confucius asked.

“I have forgotten the rites and music,” Yan Hui replied.

“Fine, but that’s not enough,” Confucius said.

Several more days passed, and Yan Hui again saw Confucius and announced, “I have made progress.”

“How have you progressed?” Confucius asked.

“I sat in forgetfulness,” Yan Hui replied.

“What do you mean by saying you sat in forgetfulness?” Confucius asked in alarm.

Yan Hui replied, “My limbs fell away, I cast aside my intelligence, I left behind my body, and I forgot all that I know. I merged with the Great Way. That is what I meant by saying that I sat in forgetfulness.”

“To be of one body with the myriad things and to have no preferences, and to participate in the transformations of the myriad things and to depend on no thing—this means you have become a sage! I wish to follow in your footsteps.”

The realm to which Zhuangzi’s “sitting in forgetfulness” belongs is the realm in which he describes one as “transcending self” or “having extinguished the self.” In the text quoted above, Yan Hui sets out from a denial of mundane morality and then enters a state in which the various fetters imposed on the spirit by the body and knowledge which befuddles the spirit are all eliminated. He then finally attains a mental realm in which “his body is like desiccated timber and his mind is like cold ashes,” a realm which transcends material gain, morality, life, and death, and in which there are no restrictions from internal and external truths, untruths, likes, hatreds, beauty, and ugliness. That realm was, moreover, typified by “the oneness of Heaven and Earth” and “unity with the Way.” The most significant feature of that realm was “the rejection of knowledge,” which was the elimination of all discriminatory and conceptual cognitive activities, what Zhuangzi elsewhere called “mental fasting,” or “following the inner channels of the ear and eye, yet being beyond the knowledge of the mind.”

“The perfected men, deities, and sages” Zhuangzi describes had all transcended the mundane world in this way and had achieved an absolute spiritual freedom conferred by “sitting in forgetfulness” and “mental fasting.” In the chapter entitled “Tian Zifang,” we read: “The perfected man looks down from the blue sky above, conceals himself in the Yellow Springs below, and soars in every direction, his expression remaining unchanged.” The “deities” are described in the chapter entitled “Heaven and Earth”: “The supreme deities ride on the light and their form vanishes. This is called abandoning space. To exhaust life and scatter the emotions, to share in the delight of Heaven and Earth and to be unencumbered by the myriad things so that the myriad things return to their true feelings—this is called merging with the dark mystery.” In the chapter “Curbing the Mind,” we read: “The sage in life moves with Heaven and in death blends with external matter. . . .he rejects all knowledge and deceit and follows the constant laws of nature. . . .he is empty and indifferent to gain, and is one with the power of Heaven.” The ability of perfected men, deities, and sages to transcend time and space and roam freely beyond the coordinates of space was the result of their ability to “leave their bodies and discard knowledge,” to rely in everything on nature and nonaction, and to make no demands of the real world. Thus, they were able to roam freely in “a land of nothingness.” Such roaming could, of course, only take place in the spirit. This spiritual realm of absolute freedom could only be an aesthetic realm of art.

In the section entitled “Zhi’s Journey to the North” (*Zhi Bei You*), we read:

Heaven and Earth possess great beauty, but speak no language. The seasons move in accordance with clear laws which they do not discuss. The myriad creatures have reasons for their lives but do not speak. The sages can go to the source of the great beauty of Heaven and Earth and commune with the reasons of the myriad creatures, and thus do the perfected men possess non-action. The great sages do not act, and so are said to partake of the reasons of Heaven and Earth.

And in *Tian Zifang*:

To attain that realm is to gain supreme beauty and supreme joy. The gaining of supreme beauty and roaming in supreme joy define the sage.

The attaining of “truth” in the above passage admits the sage into the realm where “one can wander in the heart to the beginnings of things.” This is the realm of nature’s inarticulate nonaction. The highest form of beauty is “the supreme beauty of Heaven and Earth.” “Sages, the perfected, and the divines” are waiting to “go to the source of the beauty of Heaven and Earth” (or “prepared for the beauty of Heaven and Earth”). Because of the very existence of nature and nonaction, “the abandonment of form, and the rejection of knowledge,” one can gain “ultimate beauty and roam in the midst of ultimate pleasure,” this realm of “ultimate beauty and ultimate pleasure” also constituting the highest aesthetic realm of art.

In the philosophy of Zhuangzi, the relationship between “truth” and “beauty” is also discussed. There is a passage in “Autumn Floodwaters” (*qiushui*):

Horses and oxen have four hooves, which are from Heaven. Bridle the horse’s head, and pierce the bull’s nostrils, this is the work of a human being. So we say: do not use human powers to destroy Heaven, do not use reason to destroy a good name, and do not use gain to harm the people. If one diligently keeps this rule and does not lose it, this is to return to the Dao.

Zhuangzi's emphasis on "imitating Heaven and respecting truth" (*fatian guizhen*) was opposition to all "human actions" (*renwei*) which ran counter to original nature. The authenticity of the horse is its "chewing the pasture and drinking water, raising its hooves, and shaking them," but if the horse's head is bridled and the bull's nostrils are pierced, then horses and bulls lose their original nature (authenticity), and lose their freedom, thereby losing beauty and their truth. Truth and beauty are one and the same in Zhuangzi's philosophy, but truth must be "follow the way (Dao) of nature." "Truth" is defined in the chapter entitled "The Venerable Fisherman" as "the acme of the spirit, and that which is not spirit is not sincere, and so cannot influence man's feelings." The ability to "influence man's feelings" exists when there are true feelings which cause man to gain an appreciation of beauty. "Accomplished beauty is not uniform in its traces," but the most accomplished beauty is not contrived and is able to freely manifest its authenticity. Therefore, Zhuangzi's "quest for truth" was also in order to "seek beauty." If there is no beauty, then there is also no truth to speak of. "The quest for truth" is a quest for a spiritual realm of untrammelled freedom.

Zhuangzi rarely affirmed morality, and his thought was characterized by an anti-ethical trend. He believed that all ethical restraints were "man-made" and that they destroyed man's authenticity. Therefore, he opposed "using humaneness and righteousness to transform man's nature." Zhuangzi believed that the realization of the freedom of the individual personality was not only "great beauty" (*damei*) but the highest form of "morality" (*de*) and supreme goodness (*shan*). In the chapter entitled "Curbing the Mind" (*Ke Yi*), we read: "If we do not hone the intellect but are noble, if we do not practice humaneness and righteousness but are self-cultivated, if we have no great achievements but rule, if we have no rivers and oceans to roam among but roam as if we did, if we practice no breath techniques but possess longevity, we forget everything and possess nothing, then we have no limits and all beauty follows us. This is the Way of Heaven and Earth and the complete virtue of the sage."

Cheng Xuanying explains: "When the heart is not impeded by a single obstacle, and the traces of darkness complement the Five Elements, then we have unlimited peace, are empty and expansive and arrive at the Way that cannot be exhausted. The beauty of true virtue follows and resides in the self." By this he means that when the mind is not trapped, follows nature, and practices nonaction, then one sits in forgetfulness and in total freedom. Thus, one attains the ultimate whereby every beauty gathers about and follows the self. This is the movement of natural spontaneity of Heaven and Earth as well as being the path by which the sage perfects his goodness. According to this interpretation, the "good" for Zhuangzi encompasses the highest beauty ("great beauty") within it.

From the above discussion, we can see that in Zhuangzi's philosophy, "the true, the good, and the beautiful" are a unity and they are unified in an aesthetic realm of spiritual freedom. Zhuangzi, like Laozi, sought "oneness with the Way," but Laozi's unity with the Way entailed understanding and realizing the Way, which were both epistemological concerns, as well as being a form of philosophical enlightenment. For Zhuangzi, however, "unity with the Way" was an appreciation

of, and reflection, on the Way, which involved direct aesthetic perception. From this we can see that the question of "the true, the good, and the beautiful" in the philosophy of Zhuangzi differed from that in the philosophy of Laozi, and for Zhuangzi "the beautiful" was paramount.

The quest for the good, the true, and the beautiful in the philosophical axiology of Western philosophy can be seen to have some points in common with the views of Zhuangzi. The philosophy of Aristotle, and more especially that of Schelling, would seem to be similar to that of Zhuangzi regarding this question.

Regarding the quest for the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty, Aristotle stated: "Beauty is goodness, and the keen perception it imparts is in fact because it is goodness." But the manifestation of good conduct and beautiful art requires the cognition of things as its basis. From the perspective of values (axiology), Aristotle did not impart the same significance to goodness, truth, and beauty. In demarcating human activities, he believed that of the three activities of cognition, practice, and creation, cognition was the highest form of activity, because it was only on the basis of this particular activity that man could confront highest truths. But from the perspective of the products resulting from these three activities, Aristotle believed that the fruits of "the quest for truth" were theoretical sciences (such as mathematics, physics, and metaphysics), knowledge for the sake of knowledge; the quests for goodness and beauty yielded the practical sciences (including politics and ethics) and the creative sciences (including poetics and rhetoric), all of which have higher external goals. The former directs action, the latter directs creation. Aristotle believed that the basic nature of art was creation. He said: "The arts are a form of creative ability, which encompasses the true process of inference." Here, creative activities become those activities most able to realize man's basic nature, which is logical reasoning (Aristotle once defined the parameters of man's nature as rationality). Accordingly, it would seem that we could say that in Aristotle's philosophy, artistic creation which can manifest beauty itself attains the highest value, followed by actions with an external aim (such as moral practice, which belongs to the realm of the "good"), and then followed by knowledge for knowledge's sake which constitutes an activity involving "the quest for truth".¹²

Schelling proposed the philosophical problem of "absolute unity." According to his view, "absolute unity" was neither subject nor object but "the absolute undifferentiated unity of both subject and object." This "unity" can only be realized within an "intellectual direct perception." "Intellectual direct perception" is the activity producing the directly perceived object. The unity of the two (subject and object) is, in fact, an activity of direct perception. By means of direct perception, the ego unites the self with the cosmic spirit which has unconsciously produced the natural world. Schelling believed that even the activity of "intellectual direct perception," which is possible only with a philosophical genius, but not with just any one, cannot be regarded as achieving an absolute unity of subject and object because a

¹² Zhu Guangqian, *Xifang Meixue Shi* (History of Western Aesthetics), Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1963, pp. 55–56.

discrepancy still exists between the direct perceiver and the directly perceived object (although this directly perceived object is produced by the free action of the direct perceiver). Thus, Schelling also believed that only within “the direct perception of art” could a truly undifferentiated absolute unity between subject and object be realized.

This “truly undifferentiated absolute unity” is analogous in some aspects to Zhuangzi’s concept of the realm entered through “mental fasting” and “sitting in forgetfulness.” Schelling believed that “the direct perception of art” is derived from inspiration and from an intense yearning of great internal power within the inner spirit. This can only be described as a mysterious spiritual realm of direct perception. Thus, for Schelling, art constitutes a supreme undifferentiated ideal world. On the basis of the view that “the direct perception of art” is a higher “intellectual direct perception,” Schelling regarded “beauty” as the highest value. As he saw it, “truth” was a question of necessity, “goodness” was a question of freedom, and “beauty” was the synthesis of the two. “Beauty” synthesized in art the scientific knowledge of “truth” and the ethical behavior of “goodness.” Schelling said: “I believe that the highest ideal activity encompasses all idealized aesthetic activities. Truth and goodness can only be brought into proximity within beauty. Philosophers, like poets, must have aesthetic powers.” Thus, from the perspective of the theory of value, “the beautiful” for Schelling constitutes a higher value than “the true” or “the good”.¹³ This schema reveals some similarities with Zhuangzi’s view of these values.

19.4 Brief Conclusion

1. In the world of man, Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi pursued three different quests, and their philosophies manifest three different value orientations. I believe that in philosophical systems embodying any value, we find a quest for the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty, but philosophers have different views on how to effect and attain this unity. From the perspective of the development of mankind’s culture, we cannot demand that philosophies are similar. In China’s pre-Qin period, philosophy richly flowered because of this very diversity of value orientation. Philosophers at that time were able to approach the ultimate questions of life from an unusually broad perspective and realm, and this enabled Chinese philosophy to take its place beside that of other great contemporary cultures, such as Indian and Greek. It is right because it is pluralistic, not monistic. It can quest the issue of ultimate concern about universe and life from different approaches. If the development of pre-Qin philosophy could have some value nowadays, I believe one of the important elements is its plurality. Plurality of philosophy could make itself fully

¹³ See Chen Xiuzhai, Yang Zutao, *op. cit.*, pp. 481, 488; Jiang Kongyang, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–142.

developed, and “centralization” would only suffocate the vitality of philosophy eventually. Currently, world culture and philosophy are showing the tendency of pluralistic development under the global consciousness; we can follow with this developing tide to establish the Chinese modernized philosophy.

2. If the historical philosophies could betray its modern implication, and be practiced in reality in society, we have to give them modern interpretation. The interpretation of the philosophical thought of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi above is an attempt doing this. The interpretation of their thought can only be “both their philosophy and yet not their philosophy.” Because what we said in this article is the interpretation derived from the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. Its foundation is the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi; thus, we can say it IS “philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi.” Also it is “the interpretation derived from philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi,” since it is an inferred interpretation; hence, it is NOT (or not totally) the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. Only by this can we extend the implication of the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. Right because it is derived from the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi nowadays, the modern implication has actualized, and philosophy has developed. Making a comparative study about the philosophy of Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi from the point of axiology, and revealing their different orientations in the axiology of their philosophy, not only could show “plurality” could be significant to the cultural and philosophical development but also could make an example of a distinctive type of philosophical system and respective orientation of life value and at the same time could show our attention and comprehension to “the true, the good, and the beautiful” today. Undoubtedly, this would be very meaningful for the philosophical studies today.
3. It is significant to understand (interpret, study) the characteristics of Chinese philosophy with reference to Western philosophy. In history of traditional Chinese philosophy, hardly can we find any philosopher has been discussed about “the true, the good, and beautiful” particularly, but the conclusion that there were not any such thoughts cannot be drawn. With reference to Western philosophy, we can betray that the philosophy of Chinese philosophers in history of China also contain rich content about “the true, the good, and the beautiful.” On the one hand, the meaning of traditional Chinese philosophy extended from the point of Western philosophy. On the other hand, the meaning of Western philosophy extended from the point of Chinese philosophy. Though western and Chinese philosophy both have their particular meaning, by the comparison between their differences, their perspective characteristics could be distinctively revealed and hence perhaps compensate with each other in some ways. If we can say those western philosophers’ discussion about “the true, the good, and the beautiful” mostly belongs to issue of knowledge (or belief, say, Christian), then Chinese philosophers’ quest of “the true, the good, and the beautiful” mostly belongs to issue of spiritual realm. Therefore, Chinese and Western philosophy, both having their perspective meaning, could be enriched with reference to each other.

Chinese Character

Laozi	老子
Zhuangzi	庄子
rensheng jingjie	人生境界
Shen Youding	沈有鼎
Wei Zheng	为政
Guo Xiang	郭象
liushi er ershun	六十而耳顺
Yang Bojun	杨伯峻
Lunyu Yizhu	论语译注
Zhonghua Shuju	中华书局
ershun	耳顺
Li Chong	李充
xinyuer xiangcong	心与耳相从
Sun Chuo	孙绰
Zhu Xi	朱熹
sheng	声
shengyin	声音
yousheng zhi yin	有声之音
wusheng zhi yin	无声之音
Ju	矩
zhi zhen	知真
de mei	得美
zhishan	至善
The Eight Yi	八佾
tian ren heyi	天人合一
qing jing heyi	情景合一
zhi xing heyi	知行合一
juesheng-qizhi	绝圣弃智
wuse ling ren mu mang	五色令人目盲
dadao fei, you ren yi	大道废有仁义
tongyu dao	同于道
Dao De Jing	道德经
Monk Deqing	释德清
Dao De Jing Jie	道德经解
Wang Bi	王弼
de Dao	得道
ziran wuwei	自然无为
Feng Youlan	冯友兰
Xin Yuanren	新原人
Jian su bao pu	见素抱朴
Xiaoyao You	逍遥游

peng	鹏
li	里
Liezi	列子
youdai	有待
wudai	无待
wu ji	无己
sang wo	丧我
Qiwu Lun	齐物论
Da Zongshi	大宗师
zuowang	坐忘
Yan Hui	颜回
Tian Zifang	田子方
Zhi Bei You	知北游
qiushui	秋水
fatian guizhen	法天贵真
renwei	人为
damei	大美
de	德
shan	善
Ke Yi	刻意
Cheng Xuanying	成玄英
Zhongguo Shehui Kexue	中国社会科学
Zhexue Pinglun	哲学评论
Panduanli Pipan	判断力批判
Shangwu Yin shuguan	商务印书馆
Li Zehou	李泽厚
Pipan Zhexue de Pipan	批判哲学的批判
Renmin Chubanshe	人民出版社
Jiang Kongyang	蒋孔阳
Deguo Gudian Meixue	德国古典美学
Tang Yijie	汤一介
Nanbeichao Shiqi de Daojiao	南北朝时期的道教
Shaanxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe	陕西师范大学出版社
Sangang Wuji	三纲五纪
Baihu Tongyi	白虎通义
Tiandao	天道
Fa Zhexue Yuanli	法哲学原理
Xiao Luoji	小逻辑
Mei Xue	美学
Chen Xiuzhai	陈修斋
Yang Zutao	杨祖陶
Ouzhou Zhexue Shigao	欧洲哲学史稿
Hubei Renmin Chubanshe	湖北人民出版社
Xue Hua	薛华

Heigeer Yu Yishu Nanti	黑格尔与艺术难题
Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe	中国社会科学出版社
Zhu Guangqian	朱光潜
Xifang Meixue Shi	西方美学史
Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe	人民文学出版社

Chapter 20

Chinese Traditional Cultures and Corporate Management

Comments from Max Weber on the Confucian ideology and Chinese traditional cultures which can deter the development of the modern industrialization have proved its accuracy by the history, but, according to the comments from Prof. C. Canchy, vice-chancellor of the Montreal University, Canada, on the 17th Philosophy Meeting in 1983, “From the past two hundred years, due to the success of the economic and technological achievements, the Western countries have proclaimed themselves to have advanced status. Now the gap between East and West has been narrowed to the point that there is a tendency of surpassing the Western economies by their Eastern counterparts. It is the right time to awake and learn from the East.” According to the development in the past 30 years, his opinion is logical and reasonable. The industrialization of Japanese economy in the 1970s and the leapfrog advancement of the Four Little Dragons in Asia can lead to a better prediction of the economic development trend of Eastern and Western countries in 1990s. How can we explain the above-mentioned arguments which are both contradictory and correct? In my opinion, it can be explained by the comments of Japanese sociologist Tomita.

He commented in his *Fundamentals of Sociology* which was published in 1986, “Only the industrialization and modernization of Western countries are internally driven, which is a historical fact and cannot be argued. So, all the non-Western societies cannot depend on their own internal forces to industrialize and modernize their societies.” But he argued that the weakness of Weber’s comment was his negligence to speak of the spread of culture to have modernization; he classified the modernization process of the Eastern world as “External Learning.” It is a very reasonable comment. Why is that so? According to Tomita, it is because “the public create a strong initiative to escape the traditionalism, and introduce the Western idea with the co-existence of their traditional cultures.” His comments had been

Journal of Euro Asia, 11 (July 1996): 19–22

verified by the historical development of the world for the past 30 years. They have tried to introduce the Western civilization and combine it with their local traditional cultures, surpassing the economies of Eastern countries over the West. What is the reason? In my opinion, it is somehow related to the Eastern culture (Confucianism).

Here I would like to elaborate my argument that it would be beneficial to the Eastern countries for enterprise management, even to the development of society, if they can better utilize the philosophy of Confucianism and Taoism on the methodological and theoretical foundation learned from the Western society.

If the Chinese Confucianism and Taoism cannot initiate the process of modernization and industrialization, would it be better for those countries having the traditions of Confucianism and Taoism to integrate some of the concepts of these two philosophies in order to further develop the economy? I believe it is not only possible but also mandatory. In the traditional Chinese culture, there are two important concepts. One is the concept of “harmony,” which is from “Zhaoxi.” We can explain it as “perfect harmony.” Confucius introduced this concept into the society. He said, “It is preferred to have harmony and politeness would be treasured.” The word “politeness” refers to the ceremony and rituals necessary to maintain the social order, and “harmony” is the most important principle. Another one is the concept of “nature.” Everything should follow this principle, which is called “supreme nature.”

If the essence of Confucianism is “harmony” which regulates and maintains the various relationships in the society, the principle of “practices should follow nature” is to regulate the relationship between human and nature. We will realize the positive and negative aspects of the evolution of society brought to mankind by looking back on the history of the twentieth century. The breakout of the World War I and II and the destruction of the natural environment are the consequences of not adjusting the relationship between mankind and nature. Those will have direct or indirect relationship with the operation of enterprises.

Will the development of one enterprise, the enterprise system of one country, and the various enterprises in the world not consider the relationship between the citizens and society? In my opinion, the operation and development of the enterprises, if it is reasonable, healthy, and consistent, has to consider its internal environment, which includes the employers, employees, various departments, and the linkage between the departments themselves, and its external environment, which consists of customers, industry environment, and societal and national interests. If there is no harmonious relationship inside the enterprise, it will encounter many problems, or even demise; if there is no harmonious external relationship, it will encounter many unexpected obstacles, or even bankruptcy. So, I believe, the concept of “treasure of harmony” from Confucianism can provide a valuable concept to enterprise management now and in the future. In the classics of Chinese Confucianism, “The Great Learning,” it stipulated that the basis of harmony for the family, country, and the world will rely on the harmony within oneself. From Confucianism, the harmony within oneself can influence others, and the harmony with others, the country, and society will involve the relationship between oneself and others, which will also create the problem of power and duty.

So, Confucius encourages the five relationships. As long as the mutual relationship can be managed, people can cooperate together. This is also true for the enterprises. The prosperity of the enterprises can be maintained only after the external and internal relationships are handled satisfactorily. It can mitigate the weakness of the competition-oriented culture of Western economies. The emphasis of Confucianism on self-grooming and development is to maintain the mutual development of the group. One's perfection is the condition to create a better environment for the enterprises.

In 1992, a report called "The Advice to Human from the Scientists" was published by 1575 social scientists, saying that "Human and nature are heading in a contradictory road." I believe this warning is just right. The advancement of the technology can initiate a large development to the society but also create a major threat for the survival of people. Due to the excess exploitation of nature, the problems of environmental pollution, thinning of the ozone layer, and the destruction of the biological balance are becoming very serious. For the cultural point of view, the principle of Taoism saying "nature is preferred" may help remedy the relationship between human and nature. According to Taoism, the human is a harmonious body, and Tao represents this natural harmony. The society will have no problems and the emperor can have a peaceful country by having Tao. Tsun Tsu thinks that human should follow the natural development and not interrupt it, so that it can achieve the stage of integration between the human and universe. We can see the importance given by Taoism on the harmony between human and nature.

The traditional Chinese Confucianism and Taoism cultures have a development process for more than two thousand years. During this period, it was influenced by the Indian Buddhism. In the Tong Dynasty, the impact of the Buddhism on the society was ubiquitous and significant, but the Chinese tradition culture could have a full-fledged development after absorbing the Buddhism culture in the Shao Dynasty. It can explain the adaptability of the traditional Taoism and Confucianism cultures on the cultural perspectives. As said by Max Weber, the Confucianism and Taoism cultures could not initiate the process of modernization and industrialization, but under the background of the traditional culture as a basis from Taoism and Confucianism philosophy, after the adaptation of Western modern and industrial economy, the principles of relationship between mankind and nature from Taoism and Confucianism, "treasure of harmony" and "nature is preferred," can become the corporate mission under the modern identification.

These two concepts are only meaningful to the human society and enterprise administration. If it is needed to explore its functions by operationalizing these two concepts in the social life and enterprise management, it is a very complicated process. A lot of procedures have to be done. These concepts will not be transferred into practical consideration automatically, but if there is no meaningful opinion or concept to be promoted, there will not be practical and scientific solutions to realize these meaningful concepts.

Learning from history, the process of modernization and industrialization has happened in the West, while the East has learned from the West about these kinds of experience. Now some of the countries in the East give a modern definition to some

of the concepts in their traditional cultures and operationalize these concepts. The phenomenon is noticed by some of the scholars in the West, and they proclaim to learn it from the East, which can illustrate the importance of coexistence of the Western and Eastern cultures. It can also explain that some of the concepts in Confucianism and Taoism are very important to the economic development of modern enterprises.

After the visit to China in the 1920s, Western philosopher Russell had written one article "Comparison of Eastern and Western cultures." It said "In the past it had proved many times the importance of the cultural exchange to the human civilization process. Greece learnt from Egypt, Rome learnt from Greece, Arabia studied Roman Empire and Europe in the middle century followed Arabia. In all of these exchange activities, the developing countries as a student have surpassed the advanced countries as a teacher. During the process of interaction between China and foreign countries, China will at last surpass his counterparts which are more developed." It is very meaningful for Russell's arguments. China is still a developing country and tries to implement the modernization process. There is a must to learn and transfer the experience of Western economy, but when the Western countries are facing various kinds of problems concerning the relationship between mankind and nature, is it suitable for them also to introduce some of the Eastern concepts? For those Eastern entrepreneurs who are trying very hard to realize the modernization process, it is worthwhile to consider whether they have paid enough attention to the importance of these existing concepts. It seems to be an interesting topic to be discussed in the meeting between the Chinese and European entrepreneurs.

Chapter 21

A Study of the Question of China's Cultural Development

Recently, a “Seminar to Coordinate the Comparative Study of Eastern and Western Cultures” was held at Shenzhen University. The focus of the meeting was the discussion of the meaning and significance of “comparative studies in Eastern and Western cultures.” Why did we discuss this problem? To us, studying comparisons between Eastern and Western Cultures is, fundamentally, for the purpose of resolving the question, “How did, and how does, China’s culture develop?” Naturally, this is a question that cannot be resolved in a short time and neither can a consensus on this issue be achieved in the short run. Nonetheless, it is a lesson that holds epochal significance for us at present and therefore has to be proposed for discussion and commands our careful and earnest consideration.

Since the scholars who attended the conference were, for the most part, students of Chinese intellectual history or history of Chinese philosophy, when we discussed “culture,” we tended to adopt a relatively narrow definition, namely, as referring to the culture of conceptual formations; or, in other words, we looked at Chinese culture from the viewpoint of China’s traditional thought. In the process of our discussions, we agreed that the proposal to study Chinese culture was a natural and inevitable consequence of socioeconomic and cultural developments both in China and in terms of China abroad. In terms of the domestic conditions in China, there are two areas of need—vertical and horizontal.

In the vertical aspect, that is, in terms of the development of history up to the present, we are mindful that our country is now at a stage of history where we are realizing the four modernizations and undergoing a reform of the economic system. The slogan “modernization” has been current for more than half a century, since the May Fourth Movement, and yet the process of modernization has been interrupted time and again. Why did this happen? It appears that quite possibly it was because a

Contemporary Chinese Thought, 1986, 17(4): 16–34

Tang Yijie, “Guanyu Zhongguo wenhua fazhan wentide tantao,” presented at the 4th International Congress in Chinese Philosophy, Stony Brook, New York, July 15–18, 1985.

central problem had not been accurately or properly resolved. Modernization cannot be restricted to the level of science and technology; a more important aspect is modernization of the infrastructure of culture. This includes value concepts, modes of thought, the historical rethinking of our traditional culture, and so on. If we only modernize science and technology but not the people, then the realization of modernization is nothing but an empty slogan. This is well exemplified by the reality that prevails in certain areas of the Middle East and the Near East.

“Modernization” is a very complex problem. If we raise the slogan of realizing modernization, it reflects and demonstrates that we are still in a premodernized or nonmodernized historical era. Therefore, first and foremost, we have to tackle the problem of “modernization” and “tradition.” This involves deep-rooted problems of concepts of values, and these problems are inevitably connected with traditional culture. Therefore, on the issue of modernization, we cannot take shortcuts; we cannot work only on the superficial cultural phenomena of methods of natural science but must introduce some factors in the cultural infrastructure. As we look back on the last century or so of our history, we can see that ever since the introduction of the slogan “Chinese essence, Western function” (*Zhongti xiyong*) or “Chinese learning for essence and Western learning for applicational function” (*Zhong xue wei ti, Xi xue wei yong*), there has been a debate over “the past and the future, the Chinese and the foreign” (*gu jin Zhong wai*). The debate between “wholesale Westernization” (*quan pan xi hua*) and “maintaining China’s essential and original culture” (*benti wenhua*) started during the May Fourth period and extended into the 1930s and 1940s. The problem was never really resolved, and in the end, it was shelved. We should ask ourselves: Isn’t there a problem here of mistaking modernization for Westernization? “Science and democracy” was a slogan in the modernization of the West; it was an unavoidable consequence of the forward development of Western culture on the basis of its medieval theology and theocracy. China, with the May Fourth Movement, simply took over this slogan and engaged in simplistic transplantation. It would appear that something, a certain necessary intermediary link, was and is missing here. This, then, very naturally leads us toward the lesson of comparative studies of Eastern and Western cultures.

For over half a century, people have attempted to discover a shortcut of modernization by simply introducing into China the science and technology of the West and their methods. Nonetheless, China’s path to modernization has been expressed as circuitous and tortuous. It is precisely because of the repeated hiatuses and stoppages in the progress of modernization that people have been forced to turn toward the infrastructure of Chinese society—the traditional cultural—and with that focus to rethink history. They have considered the necessity of comparing the differences in the realities and substance of various cultures. The comparative study of Eastern and Western cultures and the problems of reevaluating China’s traditional culture and of how China’s culture has progressed and will develop are thereby logically proposed on the vertical line of history.

In the horizontal sense, the question of the reversion of Hong Kong to China forces us to confront the reality of one nation with two systems. The issue here is how two very different systems can coexist within one country and how this

situation can remain for a prolonged period in relative stability. This raises another question: If we are to handle this issue in a way that conforms to historical development, do we need an ideological basis for it? If we answer this question in the negative, then how do we guarantee that the handling of this problem will continue to conform to historical development? It therefore appears that we must consider finding, in some quarter, a "common basis of ideology." And this common basis of ideology should and can be found only at the level of some common culture. This touches on the core problem of national culture. To grasp this, we must not only earnestly study current cultural problems but also carry out historical rethinking on the issue of traditional culture.

It is precisely on the cross hairs of these vertical and horizontal lines that the lessons of historical rethinking of traditional culture and comparative study of Eastern and Western cultures assume epochal significance.

In the *Shi Ji* (The Record of History), we find the sentence: "We live in the world of today while we take to heart the way of the past; therefore those who reflect upon themselves may come up with very different images." Jia Yi, in the essay *Guo Qin lun* (Discourse on the Errors of the Qin), cited an old adage: "If we do not forget old things, they will serve as teachers for subsequent ages." Indeed, we cannot take all the things of the past to be the examples or models of development of the future, but can we not, by analyzing and examining history, discover certain regulated phenomena, or phenomena that conform to certain laws, that can serve as a reflection for us? If we cannot, then it makes no sense to study history or to rethink history at all. Therefore, I believe that the adage "If we do not forget old things, they will serve as teachers for subsequent ages" has a certain grain of truth after all.

When we examine China's historical development, we shall see that there have been three major influxes of foreign culture into China: The first was the introduction of Indian culture, primarily Indian Buddhism, starting in the first century A.D. It made a great impact on Chinese culture. The second was the introduction of Western civilization during and after the seventeenth century (from the second half of the Ming Dynasty onward). At first, this was chiefly the Western civilization introduced by Western missionaries such as Matteo Ricci. The third influx was the introduction of Marxism into China before and after the May Fourth Movement. Owing to variations in historical conditions, time, and mode and nature of the introduction, these three influxes of foreign culture into China created different influences and impacts on China. It is not within my scope and ability to examine this problem comprehensively. What I want to do here is simply to examine, by looking at the historical process of the introduction of Indian Buddhism, some of the phenomena resulting from the contact between foreign culture and indigenous culture and to see if we can draw some meaningful conclusions from these phenomena.

As we know, the introduction of Indian Buddhism into China in general followed this process: First, it attached itself to China's indigenous culture and was thereby popularized; then, it came into contradiction and conflict with China's traditional culture; and, finally, it was absorbed by Chinese culture and blended into

it. Thus, it played a major role in propelling forward the development of China's culture. I would like to develop and explain this process somewhat.

1. When Indian Buddhism was introduced into China, it was, in the beginning, attached to China's indigenous culture, and it was through this that it became initially popularized and influential.

When Buddhism was introduced in the Han Dynasty, it first attached itself to *daoshu* (the techniques of the Daoists), also known as *fangshu*; then, during the Wei and Jin dynasties, *xuanxue* metaphysical learning became popular, and Buddhism switched to attach itself to it. In the Han Dynasty, people tended to equate *Foutu* (Buddha) with Huang-Lao. For example, it was said of Prince Ying of Chu that he "recited the hidden words of Huang and Lao and paid homage to the beneficent temples of Foutu." Emperor Huandi "established shrines to Huang-Lao and Foutu in the palace." Indeed, even Buddhists at the time called themselves [disciples of] *daoshu*. For example, in the *Li luo lun* (Discourse on Separating Principle from Confusion), Mou Zi took Buddhism to be one of the ninety-six kinds of *daoshu*. He said: "There are ninety-six kinds of *dao*. Of these the most respected and grand is none other than the *fodao* (Way of Buddhism)" The *Sishi er zhang jing* (Sutra of 42 Chapters) also called *fojiao* (the teaching of Buddha) *fodao*. At that time, the content of the teachings of Buddhism was generally such things as "indestructibility of the soul" and "cause and effect and retribution." In fact, they did not seem to understand anything of the idea of *wuwo* (denial of self) embodied in Indian Buddhism. The idea of the indestructibility of the soul was originally Chinese and was expressed in all sorts of theories of the existence of ghosts or spirits. For example, in the poem "Fu wang" (Father-king) in the Daya section of the *Shi Jing* (Book of Odes), there is the line *san hou zai tian* (the three consorts are in Heaven), which expresses a theory of the sublimation of the essential spirit. In the chapter "Jing shen xun" (Exhortations on the Subject of the Spirit) in *Huai nan zi*, there is the saying "Thus the form can wear out, but the spirit will not dissolve." It is because of all this that in the time of the two Han dynasties, there were theories such as Huan Tan's "When the form is destroyed, the spirit also is extinguished" and Wang Chong's "When a man dies, he does not become a ghost, or spirit." At the same time, the idea that the "indestruction of the soul" depended on the training and nurturing of the body and the mind was also an idea that already had some indigenous currency in China. As for the theory of "cause and result and retribution," although here the interpretations of Buddhism were not quite the same as those indigenous to China, nonetheless, the idea of *yin-guo baoying* (correspondence between cause and effect, and of retribution) popularized by Buddhism clearly was connected to the idea of *fu shan huo yin* (good fortune to good people; calamity befalls the adulterous), which again was indigenous to China. For example, in the *Wen yan* (Text-commentary) of the *Kungua* (The Kun Trigram) in the *Yijing* (Book of Changes), we find the prophetic announcement: "To those families who stock up on good deeds, there will certainly be abundant and overflowing celebration; to the households that pile evil upon evil, there is bound to be overflowing misfortune."

At the end of the Han and in the early Wei Dynasty, the activity of translating Buddhist sutras increased daily. Buddhism was popularized in China in two major branches: one was the system installed by An Shi Gao, which was a school of Hinayana Buddhism, emphasizing the method of *dhyana* (or Chan) or meditation. The other was the system of Zhi-lou-jia-qian, which was a Mahayana school and emphasized the teachings of *prajua* (thinking and wisdom). An Shi Gao translated many sutras, among which the most influential were the *An-boshou-yijing* (Sutra on Entrance by Covert Maintenance). The former taught breathing methods and the steadying or maintaining of one's mind. This was very similar to the teaching of the techniques of breathing (inhaling and exhaling) of China's own Daoists and School of Immortality (*Shen xian jia*). The latter explained the terminology of Buddhism and its concepts and was very similar in style to the textual scholarship with which the Han erudites annotated the Chinese classics. The *Yin chiru jing*, in discussing the universe and human life, took *yuanyi* (original breath) to be the root and said that *yuanyi* was equal to the *wuxing* (Five Elements). It went on to use this to discuss the *wuyin* (Five Negatives) (this was later translated as the *wuyun*) (hidden or internal qualities). It also explained Buddhism's categories of *se* (appearance), *shou* (acceptance), *xiang* (thought), *xing* (action), and *shi* (knowledge or understanding) as the effects of *yuanyi*. Thus, we can see that the Hinayana *dyana* method propagated by An Shi Gao was clearly attached to the *daoshu* thought already popular in China and that he used *daoshu* to explain Buddhism to the Chinese.

Zhi-lou-jia-qian's school, on the other hand, belonged to the *prajua-oriented* teachings of Mahayana Buddhism. It considered *shen-fan ben-zhen* (to revert the spirit to its original truth) as the most important, fundamental truth of human life. It also considered this to be a reversion and reconnection with the *dao* (the natural Way). Here, we can see the extent to which it was influenced by the thoughts of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Zhi-lou-jia-qian's third-generation disciple, Zhi-qian, translated the Indian (Sanskrit) *Prajnaparamita* sutra as *Da ming du wuji jing* (Sutra on the ferrying across to the endless ultimate by the great illumination). Here, he translated *prajua* (wisdom) as *da ming* (great illumination), which is clearly derived from the idea of *zhi chang yue ming* (knowledge of the constant is the illumination or enlightenment) in the classic *Lao Zi*. [Translator's note: The Chinese text of this article, which reads here "zhi chang ri ming (*ri* being the character for "son"), is in error. The corresponding sentence in *Lao Zi*, or the *Daodejing*, reads "Zhi chang yue ming," which translates as rendered here.] He also translated *paramita* (conveyance to the farther shores) as *du wuji* (conveyance to the ultimate), which also conveys the sense of achieving the state of oneness with the *dao* (in *Lao Zi* we read "reversion to *wuji*, or the ultimate").

In the Wei and Jin dynasties, the *xuanxue* ontology, which was formed on the framework of the ideas in *Lao Zi* and *Zhuang Zi*, became greatly popular. The focus of *xuanxue* discussions was on the question of *ben-mo* (origin and end) and *you-wu* (being and nonbeing). The central question in Buddhist *prajua* scholarship was also the question of *kong* (*sunya* or void) and *you* (reality or substantiality), which was rather close to *xuanxue*. Therefore, the Buddhists of the time generally used *xuanxue* to explain the principles of Buddhism and adopted the methods known

as *geyi* (defining meanings) and *lian lei* (connecting categories). For example, the monk Dao An, in *Bi-nai-ye xu* (Preface to the *Vinaya Pitaka*), said: "Of the Twelve segments of scriptures, the most voluminous is the *vaipulya* [i.e., the sutras]. This was because in this country [China] the people used the teachings of Lao and Zhuang to propagate the [Buddhist] teaching. Their teachings [i.e., Lao-Zhuang] are quite similar to the [teachings of] *fang deng* [Mahayana *vaipulya*] scriptures. Therefore [the disciples] changed their practices according to prevailing custom." Here, we can see that even the renowned Buddhist monks of the time recognized that the popularity of Buddhism was dependent on the ideas of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. The section "Wenxue" (literature) in the book *Shi shuo xin yu* (New Sayings Prevalent in Contemporary Times) said: "In the years of the reign of Zhengdi, Wang Bi and He Yan emphasized the discussions by *xuansheng* (metaphysical discourse) in Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, and the people of the time began to value this discussion. Thus, after the crossing of the river, Buddhist teaching became even more widespread." In the early years of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the *prajna* scholarship which had become popular in China underwent an even greater and broader propagation. There were the so-called Six Houses and Seven Schools. The problems they discussed were still, in essence, the problems of *ben-mo* and *you-wu*. The so-called doctrine of *ben-wu* (original nonbeing) was developed on the basis of the legacy of the *gui-wu* (exalting nonbeing) doctrine proposed by Wang Bi and He Yan. On the other hand, the doctrine of *xin-wu* (nonbeing of the mind) was close to the idea of *wu-xin* (nonmind) of Xi Kang and Ruan Ji. Furthermore, the doctrine of *zhi-se* (approaching appearance), also another development of Buddhism at the time, was clearly not unrelated to Guo Xiang's idea of *cong-you* (exalting being).

How did all these conditions come about? It appears that every culture has its conservative aspect, which pits it against a foreign and introduced culture. Therefore, every introduced culture must first adapt itself to certain demands of the indigenous ideological or intellectual culture and attach itself to the latter. Those elements in the introduced culture that are similar or approximate to the indigenous intellectual culture will always be easier to propagate. Only when this is done can the parts of the introduced culture that are dissimilar to the original indigenous culture gradually infiltrate the indigenous intellectual culture and begin to take effect and even influence the indigenous intellectual culture.

2. The spread of Indian Buddhism in China after the Eastern Jin Dynasty led to the contradiction and conflict between the introduced Indian intellectual culture and China's own traditional intellectual culture. In this contradiction and conflict, the development of China's intellectual culture was propelled.

In the early years of the Eastern Jin, Buddhism's *prajna* teachings were still attached to *xuanxue* of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, and we shall call it *fo xuan* (Buddhist *xuanxue*). At the end of the Eastern Jin and in the early years of the Liu-Song Dynasty, there was a general introduction of many schools and sects of Buddhist teaching, Hinayana as well as Mahayana. This led to a great upsurge of all sorts of different interpretations of the Buddhist sutras or scriptures and thus the emergence of the preaching style of the sutra masters. Nonetheless, the Indian culture and the

indigenous Chinese culture were, after all, two very separate and different cultural traditions, and the former could not forever attach itself to the latter. Therefore, after the Eastern Jin, as a result of the daily increase in translation of the Buddhist sutras and the fact that this was becoming more and more systematic, it could be seen eventually that in certain ways, Buddhism indeed was superior to China's traditional culture. As a result, the contradiction between these two cultures of different traditional background was bound to occur.

According to the *Kai yuan lu* (Catalogue of the Years of Kaiyuan), in the 250 years between the end of the Han and the end of the Western Jin Dynasty, a total of 1,420 volumes of Buddhist sutras were translated into Chinese. In the Eastern Jin period (including in contemporary northern China under the later Qin, Western Qin, former Liang, and Northern Liang regimes), 1,716 volumes were translated. In other words, the amount of translation done in those 100 years outstripped the amount done in the preceding 250 years. In particular, there were, in this latter period, the voluminous and relatively accurate translations done by Kumarajiva of the sutras, vinayas, and sastras of both the Mahayana and Hinayana schools. This allowed people to comprehend the original meanings of Indian Buddhist culture. At this time, not only the foreign Buddhist monks who came to China but China's own Buddhist monks, too, came to have understandings of Buddhist teachings that were closer to the original meanings. As a result of this rectification process toward a more accurate understanding of the original intentions of Buddhism, a general problem emerged among Chinese Buddhists. Should they continue to comprehend Buddhism in accordance with indigenous Chinese ideas? Or should they teach Buddhism in China according to the original meanings of Indian Buddhism? This generated a problem of conflict between two cultures.

In the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties, the conflict between Buddhism and the indigenous culture of China was expressed and demonstrated in many areas, including political and economic interests as well as questions of philosophy, religion, and ethics.

History leaves to us a very important book which in general serves to describe to us the conditions of conflict and contradictions between the imported culture of Indian Buddhism and China's traditional culture in the Northern-Southern Dynasty period. This is the book *Hongming ji* (Collection of the Great Illumination). From this book, we can see the range of problems that were involved in the contradiction and conflict between these two cultures. There was, for instance, the debate over the question of whether the spirit can be destroyed or not. There was the debate on whether there are such things as *yin-guo* (cause and effect) and *baoying* (retributions), which involved the philosophical problems of cause and effect and *ziran* (or nature's mandate on life, i.e., fate). There was the debate over the question of the relationship between *kong* (*sunya*, or nonbeing) and *you* (being). There was the debate over whether or not the *shamen* (Buddhist monks and devotees) ought to pay homage to the throne or prince, which involved the question of what it means to be *chushi* (removed from the secular world by joining the religion) or *rushi* (remaining in or entering the secular world). There was the debate over the relationship between humanity and *zhongsheng* (other forms of life).

He Chengtian, basing his argument on the *Zhou Yi* (Zhou Classic of Changes), asserted that humanity and Heaven and earth were the *sancai* (Three Special Elements of Ability) and refuted Buddhism for placing humanity on a par with *zhong-sheng*. This debate, then, was related to the question of defending Confucianism's tradition.

There was also the question of the contest between *Hua* (Chinese) and *yi* (barbarians). He Chengtian, in his "Letter in Reply to [the monk] Zong Bing," said: "Of course there are differences between the *Hua* and the *yi*." In terms of their natures, he said, "The people of China have an innate spirit (*qi*) of purity (*qing*) and harmony (*he*); they contain the ideals of benevolence (*ren*) and principledness (*yi*). That is why Zhou (i.e., The Duke of Zhou) and Kong (Confucius) proposed the teachings of customs on the basis of people's nature (*xing xi zhi jiao*). On the other hand, the disciples of other nations have received a nature that is rigid and forceful (*gangqiang*); they are rapacious and desirous, angry and warlike. That is why Sakayamani (Buddhism's founder) was severe about the disciplining of the Five Barbarians (*wu yong*)." Gu Kuan, in his *Yixia lun* (Discourse on the Barbarians and the Chinese), said that *Huaxia* (the Chinese) were a nation of rites (*li*) and principle (*yi*) and should not abandon Chineseness to follow the way of the barbarian. In general, his logic reflected similarities with that of He Chengtian. The campaigns against Buddhist teaching, such as those conducted by Taiwudi of the Northern Wei Dynasty and Wudi of Northern Zhou, had not only political and economic causes but intellectual and cultural roots as well.

In addition to the Confucianism-Buddhism conflict, there was also at this time an increasingly acute conflict and contradiction between Buddhism and China's indigenous national religion, Daoism (*Daojiao*). First, there was the debate over the historicity or historical authenticity and validity of the legend that Lao Zi went to the barbarians and became their teacher (*Lao Zi hua hu*). In its wake, there was a series of debates over the question of *shengsi* (the meaning of living and dying) and of *shenxing* (spirit and form), over the *chushi* and *rushi* issue, and over the separateness of *yi* and *xia*.

All these debates demonstrate the contradiction and conflict between the two different cultures. Some of them carried over all the way to the period of the Sui and Tang dynasties. We need not belabor the point with detailed descriptions here.

From these aforementioned conditions, we can see that when two different cultures come in contact with each other, contradictions and conflicts between them are inevitable. The question is how did people deal with these contradictions and conflicts? Did they use political force to reject the imported culture? Or did they absorb, from the contradictions and conflicts, the elements of the imported culture and assimilate them, blending them into the indigenous culture? This is a major question. It appears that from the Northern-Southern Dynasty period to the Sui-Tang period, in spite of the existence of contradictions and conflicts between China's indigenous culture and imported Indian culture, the Chinese nation did not reject the imported culture but to the best of its ability absorbed and digested it in the midst of the contradiction and conflicts. This expressed the nation's self-confidence and sense of the value of its own culture. It was precisely because

there were these contradictions and conflicts between the two cultural traditions and because our nation's traditional culture continued to absorb Indian culture in the midst of these contradictions and conflicts that our national culture's development was greatly and forcefully propelled forward. In this period, our nation's culture, in the areas of philosophy and thought, literature and art, architecture and sculpture, and even in science, technology, and medicine and health care, expressed a lively, flourishing posture. This was certainly and undeniably related to the relatively good treatment that it gave to the imported Indian culture.

3. After the Sui-Tang period, Indian Buddhism was absorbed by Chinese culture. First to emerge were sinicized sects of Buddhism. Then, in the Song Dynasty, Buddhism actually became an integral part of Chinese traditional culture and was absorbed, in toto, by China's traditional culture, forming the school of Song-Ming *lixue*, or Neo-Confucianism.

In the Sui-Tang period, a number of (new) Buddhist sects appeared in China. Among these, the Tiantai (Heavenly Terrace), Huayan (Garland), and Chan (Meditation) sects were all in fact Sinicized Buddhist sects. The major issues discussed by these three sects were the questions of *xinxing* (mind and nature) and *lishi* (principle and matter). The *xinxing* question was a major problem in China's own traditional philosophy to begin with. It can be traced back to Confucius and Mencius—especially the latter. When Mencius proposed “extend the mind, know one's innate nature, and thereby know the heavens” (*jin xin zhi xing zhi tian*), he touched on the question of *xinxing*. The aforementioned three sects of Buddhism all discussed the question of *foxing* (Buddha nature) and *ben xin* (original mind). Especially in the case of the Chan sect, the problem of *xinxing* was discussed at length. According to this sect's view, “Buddha Nature” is really the equivalent of “original mind.” What Chan did was to develop, from one particular angle, the question of *xinxing*, which was in China already. As for the question of the relationship between *li* (principle) and *shi* (matter), the Huayan sect proposed that “*li* and *shi* do not interfere with each other” and “*shi* and *shi* do not interfere with one another.” This was related to the *xuanxue* metaphysics of the Wei-Jin period. In Wei-Jin *xuanxue*, there was already the idea of “unity of essence and function” (*ti yong ru yi*). For example, Wang Bi spoke of “the cause of *wu* (nonbeing) lies in *you* (being).” He said: “Even when we are faced with a grand enterprise and immense wealth and acknowledge the *you* of all things (*wan wu*), we must say that each (thing) has its *de* (metaphysical, not physical, character); although we exalt *wu* (nonbeing) as a matter of *yong* (function, i.e., not essence) we cannot have *ti* (essence) in total discard of *wu*.” Here, he was using the concept of “unity or oneness of essence and function” to explain the relationship between being and nonbeing. Thus, the idea of *li shi wu wai* (principle, i.e., the issue of essence, and matter, i.e., the issue of function or phenomena, do not interfere with each other) is clearly related to the ideas of Wang Bi. As for the idea of *shi shi wu wai* (matter does not interfere with other matter), it could very well be something influenced by the notion of singularization (*du hua lun*) of Guo Xiang. Subsequently in China, the Huayan sect and the Chan sect had very important influences or philosophical

thought. This was precisely because they were Sinicized Buddhism. In contrast, the teaching of *wei shi* (the Dharmalaksana sect, or the School of Understanding Only), although propagated and espoused in the early Tang by the Grand Master Xuan Zhang, was popular for only some 30 years and then quickly declined. This is because the *wei shi* school was dyed-in-the-wool Indian Buddhism.

In the Song Dynasty, the *lixue* philosophy opposed Buddhism, but in terms of philosophical intellectual development, it totally took the place of Buddhism. This was, of course, not accidental. In the beginning, China's traditional thought was oriented toward entering the secular world (rather than leaving it) (*rushi*), or we may say it focused on the realization of "bringing stable government to the nation and order to the world" (*zhi guo ping tianxia*) within the context of the world of present reality. In this, it was fundamentally different from the Buddhist idea of removing oneself from the secular world (*chushi*). However, as a consequence, the question of what sort of basis there can be for arguing that it is possible to establish an ideal society and the question of how the ideal of *zhi guo ping tianxia* can be realized became a major problem for consideration. Thus, the concept of "Heaven's principle" (*tian li*) was proposed. Cheng Hao said: "Although there are parts of my learning that came from some previous teachers, the idea of *tian li*—these two words—was definitely something that I derived myself from experience and from my own realizations." "Heaven's principle" was not a "principle of emptiness (*kong li*), but a principle of substance" (*shi li*); it was considered to be the "exterior character of the ultimate or greatest good" (*zhi shan zhi biaode*). As for the relationship between "Heaven" (*tian li*, or Heaven's principle) and "humanity" (*renxing*, or human nature), the Song Neo-Confucianist scholars speak either of *xing zhi li* (nature equals principle) or of *xin zhi li* (the mind equals principle). In this way, the *xinxing* question became the fundamental problem for Song-Ming *lixue* Neo-Confucianism. Both the *xing zhi li* formulation and the *xin zhi li* formulation contain within themselves a question of the relationship between Heaven and humanity (*tian ren guanxi*), and therefore, the Song-Ming *lixue* scholars argued, ontologically speaking, the viewpoint of "unity of Heaven and humanity" (*tian ren he yi*). The two Cheng brothers used the dictum: "Essence and function come from the same source; there is no separation between that which is manifest and that which is hidden" (*tiyong yi yuan, xian wei wu juan*) to describe the relationship between Heaven and humanity. Zhu Xi, on the other hand, used the formulation of "every man has an ultimate, every object has an ultimate" (*ren ren you yi tai ji, wu wu you yi tai ji*) to do the same. Lu Jinyuan said: "The universe is my mind; my mind is the universe" (*yu zou bian shi wu xin, wu xin bian shi yu zou*), and Wang Shouren said: "The mind is Heaven; when we speak of the mind, then Heaven, earth and all things are already mentioned." Here both were speaking of the principle, "Heaven and humanity are of the same essence, or body" (*tian ren yi ti*). What all these people advocated was that to accomplish the ideal state of "unity of Heaven and humanity" (*tian ren he yi*) and thus to realize the sagely enterprise of "giving good government to the nation and order to the world" (*zhi guo ping tianxia*); we must, from the side of man (*ren*), realize in ourselves the principle of Heaven, and to do this, we must enhance our own moral standards to attain the heights of "unity of

knowledge and action" (*zhi xing he yi*) and discipline as well as nurture our mind and nature. From the angle of this doctrine of nurturing and disciplining one's mind and nature, Song-Ming *lixue* once again connected itself in a way to the *xiuyang gongfu* (exercises or efforts of discipline and nurturing) advocated by Chan Buddhism, such that the purpose of moral or ethical practice on the part of *lixue* was not the individual's becoming Buddha but the realization of their ideal of a harmonious society. Song-Ming *lixue* criticized Buddhism, but it also absorbed from Buddhism and blended it into its own teachings, giving Chinese philosophy a more complete ontological theory, theory of value, and a system of *lebensphilosophie* (or philosophy of life). Thus, from the time of the two Han dynasties through the Song and Ming, Chinese philosophy, under the impact of an imported culture, accomplished its first syllogistic process of "positive-negative synthesis" (*zheng-fan-he*), and this propelled Chinese philosophy's forward development. What revelations do we reap from this process? I believe that we can learn at least the following four things:

- (1) The absorption of Indian culture by China's culture took several centuries. This demonstrates that the absorption and blending by a cultural tradition of an imported culture cannot be accomplished in a day. It calls for a certain length of time and certain conditions. From the angle of the introduction of Indian culture, from the first century to the ninth and tenth centuries, Indian Buddhism was very popular in China, but at the same time, China's traditional culture also expressed its extremely great life-force. In each of the three aforementioned stages, China's traditional culture's life-force—where it was located, the locus of its value—was demonstrated; also clearly it expressed an ability boldly to welcome, absorb, and blend in this imported culture. Therefore, we can arrive at a perspective, namely, that when a culture adopts a "liberal" (*kaifang*) attitude toward an imported culture, it is giving expression to the fact that this national culture itself has a strong life-force. For a culture to be able fully to absorb and blend in with an imported culture is an important condition for the accelerated development of this culture. The effect that an imported culture has on the development of an indigenous culture is a new stimulus. When a culture with life-force is challenged by an imported culture, not only will it not reject the latter, but it will digest it so as to make for a faster and more healthy development on its own part. Therefore, such ideas as "keeping to one's own cultural standards" (*ben wei wenhua*) or "national essentialism" (*guo cui zhuyi*) not only are harmful to the development of the nation's culture but are nothing more than a demonstration of the decline of that national culture.
- (2) Our analysis of the numerous phenomena that have been generated since the contact between our country's indigenous culture and Indian culture is an understanding at which we have arrived only today. In the developmental process of history itself, people did not understand this. When we study this developmental process today, we can observe the following phenomenon: in the stage that immediately follows the introduction of an imported culture, it very often automatically and self-motivatingly adapts itself to the needs of the

indigenous culture in some respects and finds for itself some connecting and integrating points with the indigenous culture. For example, in the Han Dynasty, Buddhism focused on preaching such things as the indestructibility of the soul (*jing ling bu mie*) and cause-and-effect retribution (*yin-guo bao ying*) and later on adapted to the requirements of Wei-Jin *xuanxue* metaphysics, giving rise to the so-called fo xuan (Buddhist metaphysics). This phenomenon does not occur by accident. Can we consider this to be a general rule or law then? I think we can and we should. This is because if the imported culture did not adapt itself to the indigenous traditional culture (perhaps we should say certain parts of the traditional culture) but attempted to take its place, it would have to make a wholesale negation of the traditional culture. This would mean cutting through history and severing it into segments, abandoning the spiritual pillar on which the nation had long relied for its very existence. Under these conditions, the imported culture would be, for the nation or country to which it is introduced, a forced imposition and a culture that has no root, and it would not be able to exist for a prolonged time in this way. On the other hand, if we can, soon after the introduction of an imported culture, discover between it and the indigenous culture certain connective and integrative points, and thus make the imported culture quickly and more successfully adapt to the requirements of the development of the nation or country to which it was introduced, it would not only help to enrich and develop the indigenous culture but also cause the indigenous culture to generate, under the impact of the imported culture, certain possibilities of altering its directions of development.

- (3) Every culture is bound to have characteristics that differentiate it from other cultures. If it existed merely as a unique culture in itself, it must preserve its most basic characteristics, or the culture would soon become a relic of history instead of remaining effective as a contemporary culture. By comparison with Indian Buddhism, the most salient characteristic of China's traditional culture was how it taught people to realize its ideal of *zhi guo ping tianxia* in real life. This sort of *rushi* (entering the secular world) spirit was very much at odds with Indian Buddhism's idea of *chushi* (removing oneself from the secular world). After its introduction, Indian Buddhism had a profound impact on the social life of the Chinese people and indeed made a difference in many aspects of that life, but the basic spirit of *rushi* of the Chinese culture was not changed by the imported Indian culture. Thus, as an independent cultural system, China's culture continued to exist and develop. Whether or not this traditional culture of China can continue to develop from now on depends on two conditions: one, it must be able to maintain its special character and, two, it must be bold enough to absorb imported culture to adapt to the requirements of the development of real social life. The first aspect exemplifies the unique value it has as a cultural tradition for all of human civilization. If it cannot maintain its special character, this cultural tradition will disappear from history. The latter aspect exemplifies that a culture with a life-force can, by maintaining its own special character, develop and absorb new things. If it does, it is bound to develop. But if it loses its ability to absorb new things, then it cannot continue to exist solely on the

basis of maintaining its special character. From the viewpoint of the history of the development of China's traditional culture, it can be said to possess both of these conditions.

- (4) After Indian culture was introduced into China, at one stage, it appeared, outwardly, that Buddhism had an influence on social life that superseded that of the indigenous traditional culture. For example, the *Jing zhi zhi* (Record of Books and Documents) in the *Sui shi* (History of the Sui Dynasty) tells us that as a result of the advocacy of kings and emperors, Buddhism flourished to the extent that "people throughout the realm competed to express their adoration of teaching, and the number of Buddhist scriptures in the common society was tens or even hundreds of times greater than that of the Six Classics." Therefore, the development of ideological culture in the Sui-Tang period clearly was related in great part to the development of Buddhism. Many important thinkers of the time were Buddhist monks, and some Buddhist sects were engaged in developing Chinese philosophy. This might have been an inevitable phenomenon at a certain stage of the relationship between two different traditional cultures after they have been in contact with one another for some time. Nonetheless, what is significant here is that the development of the Chinese Buddhist sects did not head in the direction of forcing China's social life to adapt spiritually to the requirements of Indian culture, but on the contrary, Buddhism headed in the direction of sinicization. In particular, the emergence of the Chan sect destroyed the character of Buddhism as a religion. Not only did it not call for the practices of reciting the sutras and worshipping Buddha, it even allowed devotees to scold Buddha and the masters and patriarchs. Buddhism proposed that it was possible to realize the ideal of becoming Buddha in everyday life, saying "no matter whether you are fetching water or cutting firewood, all that is the wondrous way." Therefore, just taking that one step further meant that one could become a saint or a sage if only one "served one's father filially and served one's sovereign faithfully." This meant that China's traditional culture could take the place of Buddhism.

At present, as a result of the requirements of historical development, the question of how China's culture shall develop has once more been placed on our agenda. We are again confronted with the impact of all sorts of Western ideas and trends of thought. How do we reconsider the value of China's traditional culture? How shall we reform and develop it to adapt it to the current trends of the development of modernization? These problems call upon us to continue to explore new lessons. From the history of the introduction of Buddhism into China, we have revealed phenomena that occurred as China's culture came under the impact of an imported culture; this ought to have great value as reference to us in our study of how China's culture should develop from now on.

Chapter 22

The Enlightenment and Its Difficult Journey in China

Two broadly intellectual trends are seen as influential in China today: (1) the zeal for “national essence” or “national character” and (2) constructive postmodernism. These two trends can, if under the guidance of Marxism, not only take root in China but further develop so that, with comparative ease, China can complete its “First Enlightenment”—realizing its modernization—and also very quickly enter into the “second enlightenment,” becoming the standard-bearer of a postmodern society.

22.1 The Eighteenth-Century European “Enlightenment Movement” and China’s Sixteenth-Century Late Ming “Enlightenment Trend of Thought”

Kant (1724–1804) advocated “the audacity to make use of reason” as the watchword of the “Enlightenment Movement.” Therefore, we can say that “rationality” opened up Europe’s Enlightenment Movement. Its thinkers used “reason” to counteract the superstition of the Roman Catholic Church and the folly of secularism, leading up to European capitalistic class society and its revolutionary movements. This movement not only led to a breakthrough in the natural sciences, it also influenced the social sciences of the West (political science, economics, sociology, etc.) by establishing their foundations of intellectual inquiry. European philosophy, political science, economics, jurisprudence, and theories of sociology led to the 1789 capitalistic class revolution in France, overturning its feudal order. By 1793 it proclaimed

This article appeared in 文汇报 (*Wen Hui Bao*), Shanghai, on Wednesday, 14 November 2011. The *Wen Hui Bao* was founded by leftist-leaning intellectuals in 1938. The newspaper has a circulation of more than two million today.

Process Perspectives, Spring 2012, 34(2): 1, 3–5

Translated by Franklin J. Woo, December 21, 2011

“The Human Rights and Citizens Rights Manifesto,” leading up to monarchical constitutionalism. The victory of the French capitalistic class revolutionary movement broke the power of European feudalism and had the powerful influence of other European nations to establish capitalistic class revolutionary movements. Thus began the European Enlightenment which resulted finally in European capitalistic countries with republicanism or the establishment of democratic institutions with monarchical constitutionalism.

Presently, the scholarly world in China often refers to the sixteenth-century late Ming Dynasty where grew the antifeudal totalitarian despotic rule which controlled Chinese society in the name of “the heavenly order,” “eliminating human hubris” in its ritualized socialization. The antifeudal movement attacked asceticism, elevated personhood, and upheld the spirit of individuality in nonconformity to anyone or social mores, with sensuality seen as a new value and the realization of the spirit of humanism, frequently using “enlightenment trend,” “enlightenment thought,” “enlightenment culture,” “enlightenment in substance,” etc., to describe the nature of this movement. Some scholars regarded the antifeudal ritualized socialization of the late Ming as “enlightenment thinking” or enlightenment as a type of “ism.” They saw a branch of the 泰州 Tai Chou School, represented by playwright *Tang Xianzu* (汤显祖, 1550–1616), who stressed “inner feeling” as “a profound enlightened thinker.” This can easily lead people to mistake the sixteenth-century late Ming antifeudal movement against ritualized socialization in the liberation of the individual as being similar to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment of Europe. However, as I see it, the two movements described above are not only different on the surface, they are also very different in their nature and substance. The European Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century was an answer to a call to make *reason* central, while the sixteenth-century late Ming antifeudal movement was in answer to a call to liberate human *inner feeling* as central. The results of the former are the major breakthrough in natural science, the establishment of the foundations of the social sciences, and the systems of capitalistic and democratic societies. The results of the latter are different. Although a small number of thinkers still supported antifeudal totalitarian despotic rule, as the conquering of China by the Qing reinforced the feudal control of Chinese society and suppressed those scholars who were critical of the feudal system, to the point that the tide of antifeudalism was broken.

22.2 The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society Amid the “Enlightenment” of the West and Its Struggle to Advance Through Manifold Obstacles

In the 1840s, after China’s defeat in the First Opium War, amid conflicts with the imperial West (including the industrialized East, as seen in Japan), which made the Chinese people realize that their country was weak, the Chinese government was

inept and corrupt, while the governments of the West were strong and progressive. The root cause was that China's thinking was out of date and its government was in disarray and powerless. A small coterie of progressive intellectuals including government officials in China were passively influenced incrementally by the Enlightenment coming steadily from the West, including its thinking and its political system. During this period, the ideas and political system of the West came to China through its publications and translations. The capitalistic thinkers of the West promulgated democracy, freedom, human rights, and all sorts of thinking emphasizing equality. All these contributed to the progress of humanity that without doubt had a huge influence on China, albeit slowly.

Knowledgeable people in China recognized that the strength of Western countries was based on their progressive knowledge of science and technology. They therefore advocated "to learn from the enemy's strength to control them" and then established a movement to "learn from the West" [in terms of science and technology]. But this learning from the Western movement could not transcend the limited understanding of 中学为体, 西学为用, *zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong*, "Chinese substance, through Western usage." It could break out of the Qing Dynasty's foundation of totalitarian despotic rule. The more progressive intellectuals and government officials in their deeper understanding of the Enlightenment and its condition of governance claimed that China must change its own political system, if it wanted to be strong and economically viable. To promote change, there was an attempt at reform through establishing a constitution by 1898, but this was without effect. And under the Qing government's top-down pressure, the feeble effort at reform was a complete failure.

Under such an impossible situation, it was up to Dr. Sun Yatsen to initiate a revolution to overturn the Qing government. The 1911 revolution was successful in eliminating elitist feudalism and establishing the Republic of China. Although Sun's revolution was successful, it did not solve the fundamental problem of Chinese society. On the one hand, China was still under the encroachment and oppression of the imperialist countries. On the other, there were two attempts to revive the old emperor system, and the old entrenched system of thought and its power kept resisting and being obstructive to any reform attempts. The democratic Republic of China was never truly established, and the harsh reality was that it still awaited the Chinese people themselves to solve its persisting problems.

22.3 China's Own Enlightenment and Its Slogan of "Science and Democracy": Have They Come to Fruition?

Regarding the May Fourth Movement (1919), there are many different interpretations according to Chinese intellectuals, so many that I cannot introduce all of them. But I feel that we cannot place the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement as if there is no connection between these two movements with entirely

different natures. We can perhaps say that the former is a type of antitraditional thinking and culture enlightenment. The latter can be seen as a type of saving-the-nation movement. It is only by having a new culture movement that can enable the Chinese people to have a new perspective and a new set of values to realize how much their country is behind, and this undoubtedly includes the hope that China would be strengthened and enriched economically.

Also, it is only through the May Fourth love-of-country sentiment that enables the Chinese people to realize that governance needs to be democratic, allowing freedom of thought, thus enabling the enlightenment to be concretized in the social life of China. Therefore, both the New Life Movement and the May Fourth Movement were integral parts of the same process. Enlightenment calls forth salvation, and salvation deepens enlightenment, but in the process the 国民党 *Guomindang* (Nationalist Party) came up with the policy of “One leader, one ideology, and the dictatorship of one party” resulting in the opposition between the two movements. Using the salvation of the nation as central, the people’s democracy trend, freedom, human rights, etc., were all suppressed. Because of this, the salvation of the nation took precedence over enlightenment, on the claim that only with salvation of the nation can there be enlightenment. Such was the superficial understanding of enlightenment and salvation of nation on a theoretical and practical level. At the moment we need to consider both the aspirations towards enlightenment of the New Life Movement and the May Fourth Movement. Have these been realized in our present society? This indeed is an extremely big question. I will therefore raise an example regarding this question.

In 1985, I was in Shenzhen at a conference of the “Association for the Coordination of Questions of Culture.” At this conference were 20 or more participating scholars from Beijing, Wuhan, Xian, and Shenzhen. During the conference, we arrived at a common understanding. We felt that Comrade Deng Xiaoping’s promoting of economic development is central and that intensely realizing the four modernizations was correct, and we were totally in full support. At the same time, we asked if the problem of modernization is only to be understood as the modernization of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defense, because we felt that without the modernization of thought, the modernization process will come to naught. This point made us realize that the enlightenment process needs to be continued and still has a long way to go in China. In other words, modernization of Chinese society is a holistic process that includes all sectors of society. We need Enlightenment as an ongoing process, forever moving forward.

22.4 Whither Enlightenment in Chinese Society?

It has been more than 160 years since the Enlightenment trend of the West reached China. However, China has not been able totally to complete its modernization. This was largely because of two trends appearing in China in the latter part of the

last century in the 1990s: (1) One is the opposition to monism (as opposed to pluralism), as seen in the critique of the flaws in modernism by the postmodern trend. (2) Another trend in China was the revival of Chinese cultural tradition in search of Chinese national essence or character. After more than two centuries of development in the West, modernism has shown all types of flaws and weaknesses, manifested in its decline from “science as a panacea” leading to “instrumental reason,” to the degradation of the natural environment. Also, the unbridled development of economic growth resulted in sharp contradictions and mutual antagonism between person and person, and nation and nation, by its support of greed in the accumulation of wealth and power. The result is the decline of human morality. For the saving humanity, the negative consequences of modernity must be eliminated.

During the 1960s, the rise of the deconstructive postmodern trend was the first part of the postmodern movement which was an analysis of the flaws of modernism, in opposition to monism and its authoritative claims, and the smashing of all authorities. Undoubtedly, this was a contribution to humanity; however, deconstructive postmodernism did not provide any viable constructive alternative to what it attacked. Because of this lack, at the end of the last century, through process thinking, constructive postmodernism appeared on the scene, revealing the First Enlightenment (i.e., the enlightenment trends since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) and its negative results. Integrated into the second enlightenment, these process thinkers advocate that the postmodern period is a time for the harmony of person to person and people to nature and for seeing the importance of a postmodern world. At this new era, its purpose is to build constructive relations between all life, sentient beings, and the natural order. They say that if the watchword for the First Enlightenment was “to liberate self,” “to be concerned about others, respect and honor diversity” should be the new watchwords for the second enlightenment. At present, the influence of constructive postmodernism in the West is still minimal, but I believe that, in time, it will be of great importance in both East and West.

The appearance of the quest for national character in China grew out of the revival of the Chinese people. The revival of the Chinese people needs to be grounded in the revival of their culture. Therefore, the task is to shift from the blind criticism of cultural tradition of the past to the present struggle of how to preserve the glorious 5,000 years of Chinese culture, so that it can be relevantly renewed for our time. Such reappropriating of the values of culture can help to overturn the continual destruction of the natural world. A group of Chinese scholars advocate the classical Confucian notion of 天人合一 *tian ren he yi* “Heaven and human united.” This can mean that the harmony between humans and nature is the meaningful source of all relations. Confucius was for “knowing Heaven,” which was also “to fear Heaven.” To know Heaven is to use the natural world properly. To fear Heaven is to respect and protect the natural world as a responsibility. The Chinese Confucian “Heaven and humans united” resonates well with constructive postmodernism’s position that humans and nature are of one body. After more than a century of distorting and denigrating Confucianism, the more knowledgeable scholars of China today are advocating the revival of Chinese culture, including

restoring the important status of Confucianism in China. In the human aim to survive and develop, China inadvertently cut itself off from its own cultural tradition. We all know that the central core of Confucius is 仁学 *ren xue* or “learning to be human.” Fan Qi asked, “What is 仁?” Confucius answered 爱人 *ai ren* (“love people”). Whence come this type of love of people? (*Great Learning*). Quoting Confucius, 仁者 *ren zhi* (“the human person”) is a human being, intimately increasing circles of relationship. Loving in relationship is a virtue that is inherent in humans. To love one’s own relatives is the foundation. But according to Confucius, loving in relationship cannot be confined to one’s own personal relations; it needs to be expanded from self to others in larger circles from intimate relations to loving the whole populace. It was Mencius who said that love must be extended to the populace and from the populace to the entire created order. The Confucian spirit of “loving relations” is not exactly equivalent to constructive postmodernism’s second enlightenment and its “concern of others.” The tunes may not be the same, but the theme is. Together, these emphases can deal with the manifold problems of modernism, preserving all the treasures of its thought and goodness in society while eliminating all its flaws and ill consequences.

We are fully aware that in China there are scholars who are not only in touch with constructive postmodernism but also have begun friendly cooperation. Representatives of constructive postmodernism are interested in traditional Chinese culture and its value and also receptive to its contribution. At the same time, scholars in China are already interested in constructive postmodernism as enabling humanity to come out of its present difficult predicament. Under the guidance of Marxism, these two intellectual trends can seek organic synthesis. If this hybrid trend can take root in China and develop, perhaps China can complete its first Enlightenment and with relative ease realize its modernization. Also, without further delay, China will enter into its second enlightenment and become the standard-bearer of a postmodern society. That is to say, if such is a reality, then the result of China’s enlightenment will be most rich in the development of human society.

Chapter 23

The Coexistence of Cultural Diversity: Sources of the Value of Harmony in Diversity

23.1 Introduction

Though one cannot say that present world conflicts are mainly the result of cultural clashes, they certainly are related to clashes between cultures. A debate taking place in the world over cultural clashes and cultural coexistence might lead to greater mutual understanding, tolerance, and peace or, as a result of cultural isolation and hegemony, to political clashes. In either case, this debate will affect the destiny of humankind in the twenty-first century. Owing to the collapse of colonialism after the end of World War II, Western cultural imperialism gradually faded, and greater cultural diversity emerged in the world. In the past half century, developments in world trade and communication have led to ever more frequent cultural interactions between different peoples, nations, and regions and have made the world an increasingly indivisible whole. In the present stage of world culture, two different tendencies have arisen: Some Western theoreticians, seeking to protect their traditional interests and customs, continue to maintain a Western-centric perspective. Others, adopting an indigenous romantic feeling toward an independent or revitalized people, create a nationalism that seeks to return to roots and preserve native culture and a conservatism that seeks to return to past traditions. Some East Asian scholars, looking at the suffering wrought by Western culture throughout the world and the oppression that they personally suffered, even suggest a cultural perspective focused on East Asia. A great problem that we presently face is how we can prevent these two conflicting tendencies from developing into a large-scale confrontation

Originally published in *Kua wenhua duihua*, Vol. 1 (*Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, I), Yue Daiyun, ed., (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenhua Chubanshe, 1998). Translated from the Chinese by Alan Thwaites. Translation published by permission of the author.

Cultural Interaction Studies in East Asia: New Methods and Perspectives,
March 31, 2012: 229–234

and how we can dispel confrontations that do arise. At the same time, we must be careful about conflicts that may arise between the West and East Asia owing to differences in cultures and traditions.

23.2 Harmony in Diversity

How do we enable peoples, nations, and regions of different cultural traditions to develop together while remaining different and in this way create a globally conscious environment for the development of cultural diversity? I think that the Chinese principle of harmony in diversity (*he er butong*) provides us with a source of positive value for doing precisely this.

The *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* for the 20th year of Duke Zhao of Lu (520 BCE) records the following conversation between Jing, marquis of Qi, and Yan Ying: The marquis of Qi said to Yan Ying, “Does only Liangqiu Ju [an official close to the marquis] act in harmony with me?” Yan Ying replied, ‘Ju conforms. How do you get harmony (*he*) from conformity (*tong*)?’ The marquis said, ‘Is harmony different from conformity?’ Yan Ying replied, ‘Yes. Harmony is like the blending of ingredients of a good soup. The chef uses various condiments to cook a thick meat soup over a blazing fire, blending them together, adjusting the flavor, adding to make up for deficiencies, and draining off excesses. The gentleman eats the soup to calm his mind. The relation between ruler and minister is similar. . . Now Ju does not operate like this. Whatever you approve, Ju also approves, and whatever you reject, Ju also rejects. This is like adding water to water. Who can eat such “soup”? Again, this is like a zither that can produce only one note. Who can listen to such “music”? In all such cases, sameness/conformity (*tong*) is unacceptable.’” Also, *Discourses of the States (Guoyu)*, in the chapter “Discourses of Zheng,” has Shi Bo’s reply to Duke Huan of Zheng (d. 771 BCE): “NOW blending (*he*) various substances can in fact produce many things, whereas things of the same (*tong*) substance do not maintain well. Balancing one substance with another is called blending. Things so produced are rich and long-lasting, and substances naturally come together in this fashion. Supplementing one substance with the same substance produces nothing but rubbish. Thus the kings of the past had clay mixed with metal, wood, water, and fire to produce ceramics of all kinds.” These two passages make clear that *he* and *tong* are completely different in meaning. Confucius said this even more clearly: “The man of virtue harmonizes without conforming (*he er butong*). The narrow-minded man conforms without harmonizing (*tong er buhe*)” (*Analects*, “Zilu”). From the passages above, one can see that the significance of “harmony in diversity” (*he er butong*) is that when two different cultural traditions achieve a common understanding through cultural intercourse and dialogue, they are in some sense attaining a commonality from their diverse perspectives. This commonality consists not of one side vanquishing the other side, nor of one side converting the other side, but of finding points in common in the two different traditions and on this foundation advancing both traditions. Precisely herein lies the power of harmony. We can see this effect in the development of Chinese culture.

Confucians sought to establish propriety and create music to actively maintain (*you wei*) the harmony of society. Daoists, in contrast, sought to follow nature to passively maintain (*wu wei*) peace in society. These two originally very different cultural traditions, over the course of nearly 2,000 years of development, achieved a certain common understanding through continuous dialogue. In the Western Jin period (265–317), Guo Xiang, in an effort to harmonize the Confucian and Daoist traditions, proposed that active administration of government (*you wei*) is a form of passive administration of government (*wu wei*). In a comment on “Autumn Floods” in the *Zhuangzi*, he wrote, “Can men, in eking out a living, forego plowing with oxen or riding horses? In plowing with an ox and riding a horse, can one avoid ringing the ox in the nose or bridling the horse? The ox does not resist being ringed in the nose, and the horse does not resist being bridled, because Heaven wills it. If this is mandated by Heaven, then though these beasts of burden are placed in the service of man, this circumstance is rooted in the will of Heaven.” The point of this passage is that though the ox is ringed in the nose and the horse is bridled, through the active efforts (*you wei*) of man, these relations conform to what is natural (*wu wei*). Both Confucians and Daoists could accept this perspective of Guo Xiang even though this view does not fit squarely within either the original Confucian or original Daoist tradition. Active engagement (*you wei*) and passive following (*wu wei*) are quite different concepts. If both perspectives are to be accepted to some extent, both sides must find, through a process of negotiation, points of commonality (points of harmony). These points of commonality can serve as universal principles that both sides can accept. These universal principles are principles that both sides can accept without their negating the distinguishing features of either side. This state of affairs would indeed be a case of harmony in diversity.

We can also illustrate the significance of harmony in diversity with developments resulting from the encounter of traditional Chinese culture and a foreign cultural tradition. Originally, Indian Buddhist culture and traditional Chinese culture (Confucianism, Daoism, etc.) were quite distinct, but from the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) to Tang (618–907) dynasties, Chinese culture continuously strove to accept and adapt the quite alien culture of Buddhism, and Indian Buddhism, for its part, continuously strove to change aspects of itself ill-suited to the demands of Chinese society. As a result, during the nearly 1,000 years in which Indian Buddhism was transmitted to China, Chinese culture highly benefited from Indian Buddhism. Indian Buddhism profoundly influenced Chinese philosophy, literature, art, architecture, and popular customs. At the same time, Indian Buddhism was able to promote and perfect itself throughout the immense Chinese empire. During the Sui (581–618) and Tang dynasties, for example, there formed several more-Sinitic sects of Buddhism (the Tiantai sect, Huayan sect, and Chan sect). Yet Chinese culture remained Chinese culture and did not lose its distinctive features because it adopted Indian Buddhism. Such cultural exchange and mutual influence serve as an excellent illustration of the principle of harmony in diversity. As a matter of fact, the development of European culture also exemplifies this principle. Bertrand Russell, in *The Problem of China* (1922), wrote, “Greece learned from Egypt, Rome from Greece, the Arabs from the Roman Empire, medieval Europe from the Arabs, and Renaissance Europe from the Byzantines.” The reason that one culture could adopt another culture was often because the notion of harmony in diversity was embedded in the interactions and negotiations of the two cultures.

23.3 Commonalities Across Cultural Traditions

There are various circumstances under which the principle of harmony in diversity appears in the interactions of two different cultural traditions. One is that in the negotiations between cultures, the two cultures discover that they have similar concepts. For example, Christianity has the concept of love for humanity, Buddhism has the concept of compassion, and Confucianism has the concept of concern for the masses. In an abstract sense, all of these concepts signify love. Love can thus serve as a universal principle that all these different cultural traditions can accept. At the same time, love for humanity, compassion, and concern for the masses are concepts that preserve the distinct features of their respective traditions. Another circumstance is that one culture, in its intercourse with another culture, discovers that it lacks important ideas present in the latter culture and that these ideas can be accepted into the former culture. By accepting the new ideas through cultural interaction, transforming them, and fitting them into its culture, the receiving culture can enrich itself. For example, China originally lacked a clear notion of sudden enlightenment, but by the Song (960–1127) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi had adopted the notion of sudden enlightenment into their Rational School of Neo-Confucianism, as did Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Shouren (Yangming) in their School-of-Mind Neo-Confucianism. A third circumstance is that one culture, in its intercourse with another culture, discovers that it lacks significant ideas present in the latter culture and that though these new ideas are incompatible with some ideas of the receiving culture, interactions with the other culture force it to forsake the old ideas and accept the new foreign ideas in order to develop. For example, after the idea of democracy penetrated China, it had to give up such traditional notions as the “three guides” (*san'gang*; the ruler guides the minister, the father guides the son, and the husband guides the wife). A fourth circumstance is that in the interaction of two or more cultures, these cultures discover, through repeated discussions, significant new ideas previously missing in their cultures—ideas such as peaceful coexistence and the coexistence of cultural diversity—that, when incorporated into a system of diverse cultures, are undoubtedly significant for the individual cultures. There may, of course, be other circumstances leading one culture to adopt ideas from another, but here I will say no more. When, as described above, different cultures create commonalities by harmonizing their differences, when they find common principles in their differences, and when they find common understanding in their different circumstances, such indeed is realizing harmony in diversity through cultural interaction and negotiation.

23.4 Regional Diversity and the Bidirectional Nature of Cultural Selection

In this discussion of harmony in diversity as a principle of intercourse between different cultures, there are two other points worth noting. One is the issue of regional differences in cultural development. The other is the bidirectional nature of

culture selection. Having persisted for a long period or having encountered some special cause, a culture may decline or even die out in one particular region or among a particular people and continue to develop in another region or among another people. For example, Buddhism, having been transmitted in India down to the fifth and sixth centuries, stagnated, but in China, having absorbed aspects of Chinese culture and having been developed at the hands of eminent monks during the Sui and Tang dynasties, it became more sinified. Then from China it was transmitted to the Korean peninsula and Japan, where it blended in with the local cultures. In Japan especially, there developed some distinctly local sects of Buddhism. This is why I say that Chinese culture benefited from Indian Buddhism and that Indian Buddhism was promoted and perfected in China. Such regional differences in development occurred not only in China but also in Europe. As Russell said in the passage quoted above, present-day European culture arose in Egypt, was transmitted to Greece, passed through Rome and Arabia, and reentered Europe. Such regional development of culture thus laid down many milestones in the development of human civilization. The reason for such development is that when culture *a* is transplanted within culture *b*, it may acquire aspects of culture *b*. These acquired aspects may be originally lacking in culture *a* or may have not received much development. After being added to culture *a*, these aspects then lead culture *a* to be developed within culture *b*. Such cultural development is perfectly consistent with the principle of harmony in diversity and is a good example of the idea that “blending various substances can in fact produce many things, whereas things of the same substance do not maintain well” (“Discourses of Zheng”).

As for the bidirectional nature of culture selection, as we know, it is not the case that any alien culture transmitted to a region or a people at any time and under any circumstances will always be accepted and developed. For example, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, not only did Buddhism have a tremendous influence on Chinese society; “Buddhist sutras were over ten times more common among the populace than Confucian classics” (*Sui shu* [Book of Sui], *Jingji zhi* [Treatise on Classics and Books]). At this time Nestorianism (a type of Christianity) was transmitted to China and had a degree of influence, yet it could not establish itself. This failure was due to the bidirectional nature of culture selection. Even different sects of Indian Buddhism fared differently in China. For instance, Esoteric (Tantric) Buddhism flourished for a while in the area of Han society after the mid-Tang—a fact verified by the relics excavated from the underground palace at Famen Temple. But later, Esoteric Buddhism fell into decline and had little lasting influence on Han society. Yet in Tibet, Indian Esoteric Buddhism blended in with the local religion to produce Tibetan Buddhism, which has persisted down to the present as the religion of Tibetans.

What brought about this difference? The first type of Buddhism to enter the area of Han society consisted of the Theravada meditation techniques associated with An Shigao (d. 168 CE). Later, Lokaksema (b.c. 147 CE) brought Prajna Buddhism to China. From the Jin Dynasty (265–420) on, the form of Buddhism that spread in China was Prajna Buddhism, not the Theravada meditation techniques. The reason was that Prajna Buddhism was similar to Neo-Daoism (whose core teachings were those of Laozi and Zhuangzi); that Chan Buddhism (which developed during the

Tang Dynasty after Prajna Buddhism was adopted during the Eastern Jin Dynasty [317–420] and the Southern dynasties [420–589]) was different from Indian meditation techniques, its philosophical foundation arising from Prajna Buddhism; and that Chan Buddhism adopted not only some elements of Daoism but also some elements of Confucianism in order to adapt to the needs of Chinese society. Here we see mutual selection between cultures. Moreover, such mutual selection between cultures is another typical manifestation of the principle of harmony in diversity.

23.5 Conclusion

In the early Tang period, Xuanzang (602–664) propagated the Consciousness-Only School of Thought, but this school of thought lasted only 30 some years. The reason that it was not respected by the Chinese is that this mode of thought was thoroughly Indian in style and thus quite different from the Chinese manner of thinking. In contrast, Chan Buddhism spread quickly from the mid-Tang on because Chan thought was similar to Chinese thought and jelled into a Signified sect of Buddhism. It then went on to influence the Rational School of Neo-Confucianism during the Song and Ming dynasties. This shows that in the intercourse between two different cultures, there is often mutual selection, and this mutual selection is to some extent a manifestation of the principle of harmony in diversity. For only if there is diversity between cultures can there be selection among diverse elements. If the thought of two cultures is entirely the same, there is nothing to select, and thought that is completely alike cannot add to preexisting thought any new ideas and so cannot stimulate or promote the development of the preexisting culture. We can thus see that the principle of harmony in diversity has great significance for the mutual selectivity of interacting cultures.

We have seen that the principle of harmony in diversity can spur healthy cultural exchange and promote rational development of culture, in accord with the present world trend toward cultural diversity. If we want Chinese culture to develop for the better, if we want it to make a contribution to future world civilization, then we must approach the culture of other peoples, nations, and regions with an attitude of harmony in diversity, sufficiently absorb the achievements of other cultures, and renew our own traditional culture so that we can create a new culture suited to modern social life.

Chapter 24

On the Clash and Coexistence of Human Civilizations

24.1 “The Clash of Civilizations” and the “New Empire” Theory

In 1993, an essay entitled “Clash of Civilizations?” was published on the summer issue of *Foreign Affairs, USA*, by Samuel Huntington. In 1994, I criticized the American Hegemonism represented by Huntington in an essay titled as “On Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations?”, published in *Philosophical Studies*.¹ Between the publications of the two essays, Huntington’s theory was widely discussed and criticized in all aspects by many scholars at home and abroad. To respond to these challenges as well as to amplify and revise his own theory, Huntington published his chef d’oeuvre, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*, in 1996, which had marked some changes in his arguments; for example, in the Foreword to the Chinese translation, he writes: “The global politics, for the first time in human history, has become multipolar and multicultural.”² In the section of “The Commonalities of Civilization,” he points out:

Some Americans have promoted multiculturalism at home; some have promoted universalism abroad; and some have done both. Multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world. Both deny the uniqueness of Western culture. The global monoculturalists want to make the world like America. The domestic multiculturalists want to make America like the world. A multicultural America is impossible because a non-Western America is not American. A multicultural world is unavoidable

Translated by Yang Zhiyi; Revised by Shen Hong
Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2010 (2): 7381–7391

¹ 《评亨廷顿〈文明的冲突?〉》, 载《哲学研究》, 1994年第3期。

² 中文版序言》, 亨廷顿: 《文明的冲突与世界秩序的重建》, 周琪、刘绯、王圆译, 新华出版社, 1999年。

because global empire is impossible. The preservation of the United States and the West requires the renewal of Western identity. The security of the world requires acceptance of global multiculturalism.³

Though there are still some arguable points in the above-quoted paragraph, the opinion that “the security of the world requires acceptance of global multiculturalism” is undoubtedly prudent enough. Why did this change occur in Huntington’s point of view? It was because he had felt the global challenges and threats endangering the Western (or American *de facto*) hegemony, and the domestic problems of racism and the like, that he proposed the “remaking of world order.” In the section of “Renewal of the West?” Huntington claims:

The West obviously differs from all other civilizations that have ever existed in that it has had an overwhelming impact on all other civilizations that have existed since 1500. It also inaugurated the process of modernization and industrialization that have become worldwide, and as a result societies in all other civilizations have been attempting to catch up with the West in wealth and modernity. Do these characters of the West, however, mean that its evolution and dynamics as a civilization are fundamentally different from the patterns that have prevailed in all other civilizations? The evidence of history and the judgments of the scholars of the comparative history of civilizations suggest otherwise. The development of the West to date has not deviated significantly from the evolutionary patterns common to civilizations throughout history. The Islamic Resurgence and the economic dynamism of Asia demonstrate that other civilizations are alive and well and at least potentially threatening to the West. A major war involving the West and the core states of other civilizations is not inevitable, but it could happen. Alternatively the gradual and irregular decline of the West which started in the early twentieth century could continue for decades and perhaps centuries to come. Or the West could go through a period of revival, reverse its declining influence in world affairs, and reconfirm its position as the leader whom other civilizations follow and imitate.⁴

We conclude from the above quotation that, on the one hand, Huntington has felt “the gradual and irregular decline” of the Western leadership in the world and the potential threat to the West coming from those countries undergoing or having undergone the process of modernization and industrialization by imitating the West. Surely, this is a reality unacceptable for him and some other Western scholars, especially for certain political leaders (Mr. George W. Bush, the current American president, for instance), involved with an unsolvable complex of theirs: why do those resurgent Islamic movements or rising Asian countries which have accepted the western way of modernization and industrialization become a threat to the West instead? According to their reasoning, these countries should and could only play the role of Western adherents or loyal subjects in all spheres, especially in politics and culture. Nevertheless, the reality contradicts their expectations, resulting consequently in an anxiety in the Western mind. On the other hand, the deep-seated dream Huntington really cherishes is the “renewal of the West,” to “reconfirm its position as the leader whom other civilizations follow and imitate.”

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, 1996, p.318

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

The performance of the Bush administration after “9.11” incident can be regarded from this standpoint as an attempt to reconfirm American hegemonic leadership on other civilizations.

After Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, another book, *Empire—A Global Political Order*, coauthored by Antonio Negri (Italy) and Michael Handt (USA), was published in 2000. The basic judgment of this work on current global situation is as follows: “Empire is materializing before our very eyes”; it presents its rule as a regime with no territorial or temporal boundaries; “this new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire,” “the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world.”⁵ Embracing this doctrine, many scholars in the United States propagate the “New Empire” theories. For example, John J. Mearsheimer, professor of politics in the University of Chicago, put forward in his *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, 2002) the following theory: As every state seeks the maximization of its share of world power, no balancing structure could exist, and the best defense is to offend (which provides a theoretical basis for President Bush’s “Preemptive Strike” theory). Another “postmodern state” theorist is Robert Cooper, Foreign Office adviser of British prime minister Tony Blair, who divides all states into three types: first, postmodern states, e.g., North American and European countries and Japan; second, modern states, i.e., nation-states like China, India, Brazil and Pakistan; and, third, premodern states, e.g., African and Middle East countries and Afghanistan. A concept put forward and reiterated by Cooper is “New Imperialism,” which means postmodern states should use their national power (including military power) to control modern states, meanwhile to contain the barbaric acts in premodern states such as mass slaughter.⁶ More aggressive still, the American neoconservatists in the twenty-first century have advocated three core creeds: (1) the extreme adoration of military force, (2) the claim of an American “benign hegemony,” and (3) the emphasis on the exportation of American democracy and values. In accordance with this tone, President George W. Bush delivered his speech at the commencement of West Point on June 1, 2002, which could be summarized as three basic principles: First, America should maintain its power of “preemptive strike”; second, American values are universal; and, third, the United States should maintain an unchallengeable military force.⁷ This “New Empire” doctrine would inevitably arouse “clashes” among the states and nations of other civilizations, and its central rhetoric has already been echoed by Huntington’s

⁵ Michael Handt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*, “Preface”, Harvard University Press, 2000.

⁶ C.f. 佩里·安德森 (Perry Anderson) 等: 《三种新的全球化国际关系理论》 (“Three Recent Theories on International Relationships in Globalization Era”), 《读书》2002年第10期。

⁷ C.f., 陈光兴: 《〈帝国〉与去帝国化问题》 (“Empire and the problem of de-empirization”), 《读书》2002年7期; 崔之元: 《布什原则、西方人文传统、新保守主义》 (“Principles of Bush, Western humanity tradition and Neoconservatism”), 《读书》2003年8期。《布莱尔的自由帝国主义理论奏效吗?》 (“Would Blair’s Liberal Imperialism work?”), originally Tony Blair’s speech: “The best defense of our security lies in the spread of our values.” (Sunday Telegraph, May 30, 2004).

theory of the “clash of civilizations.” Two basic proposals are made in the latter’s “Clash of Civilizations?”: (1) to “limit the expansion of the military strength in Islamic and Confucian states,” to “maintain the military superiority of the West in East and Southwest Asia,” and to “exploit the differences and conflicts among Islamic and Confucian states” and (2) to “strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values and to promote the involvement of non-Western states in those institutions.”⁸ From these proposals, we conclude that because of the “clashes of civilizations” kindled by the West, headed by the United States, on cultural differences (values, for example), the world has become a pandemonium with the upgrading of regional wars.

Should civilizations survive only in “clashes,” in order to materialize the universal “New Empire” doctrine? Why couldn’t they “coexist” in peace?

24.2 “Coexistence of Civilizations” and New Axial Age

Human history has recorded enough cases of clashes caused by cultural (or religious) differences among states, nations, or regions. Nevertheless, in view of the general tendency of history, we find that the development of civilizations among different states, nations, and regions should be dominated by mutual absorption and convergence. In my opinion, most conflicts among these states, nations, and regions were not provoked by cultural differences. As my knowledge about Western culture (both civilization and culture concern with a comprehensive lifestyle of a nation; thus civilization is a magnified culture) is limited, I am not authoritative enough to speak on this issue; here I would like to quote Bertrand Russell to justify a proposition that the present Western civilization is formed by absorbing and syncretizing several cultural elements. In 1922, after Russell’s visit to China, he wrote in an essay titled as “Chinese and Western Civilization Contrasted” the following words:

Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress. Greece learnt from Egypt, Rome from Greece, the Arabs from the Roman Empire, medieval Europe from the Arabs, and Renaissance Europe from the Byzantines.⁹ Though it might be arguable whether Russell was accurate enough on every point of his views, two of which, however, are undoubtedly correct: 1. contacts between different cultures are important dynamics for the progress of human civilizations; 2. the European culture today has absorbed many elements from other national cultures, including some from the Arabian. Another observation based on the progress of Chinese culture would be even more forceful to prove that clashes of civilizations are always temporal, whereas mutual absorption and convergence are far more important.

⁸ Samuel P. Huntington. “Clash of Civilizations?” p. 49, in *Foreign Affairs*, summer, 1993.

⁹ Bertrand Russell. “Chinese and Western Civilization Contrasted”, in *The Problem of China*. London. 1922.

In Spring-and-Autumn and Warring States periods, different local cultures existed in China, including Central Area (*Henan*) culture, Qi-Lu (*Shandong*) culture, Qinlong (*Shaanxi*) culture, Jingchu (Southern) culture, Wu-Yue (Southeast) culture, and Ba-Shu (Southwest) culture. All of them were amalgamated later into a generally unified Chinese (Huaxia) culture. The possibility of the coexistence of two cultures would be especially illuminated by the importation of Indian Buddhism in the first century A.D. Buddhism culture spread in China peacefully; its cultural differences with indigenous Confucianism or Taoism had never brought their disciples into war. Only on three occasions had the Chinese imperial courts suppressed Buddhism, which were caused without exception by political or economic factors. Generally speaking, Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist cultures coexist well in China. A famous French sinologist (Kristofer Schipper) once asked me: “Why is China multicultural?” I pondered for a while and then answered, perhaps there are two reasons: First, from the ideological point of view, the Chinese always advocates “harmony in diversity” (和而不同), i.e., the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures. Secondly, in terms of political systems, the Chinese emperor was the highest authority dominating the fates of religious, philosophical, and ethical cultures in China. For the sake of social stability, the emperor did not want to see conflicts or wars provoked by cultural differences. Thus, he usually sponsored the “debate of three schools,” summoning the representatives of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist scholars to debate in imperial court, arbitrating their respective statuses according to the degree of success in debate, instead of allowing any conflicts or even wars.

From the above arguments and historical experiences, I conclude that Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” theory is, at any rate, ex parte, serving merely for American international politics. He says as follows:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in the new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.¹⁰

Hungtington’s observation is insightful in certain cases, such as Palestinian-Israel conflict in the Middle East, Kosovo conflict, or even the Iraqi War, where some cultural (religious and ethical) elements catalyzed the outbursts of wars. Yet in closer analysis, the basic causes of wars or conflicts are not cultural but political and economic: Palestinian-Israel conflict was a contest for regional hegemony, Iraqi War was mainly for oil, and Kosovo conflict for the strategies of power politics. But on the other hand, cultural differences have not provoked conflicts between many nations, such as in Sino-Indian, Sino-Russian, or even Sino-European relations. In fact, there have been no serious conflicts or wars (for whatever reason) between them, especially in the last decade. Thus, the

¹⁰“Clash of civilizations?”, p. 22, op. cit.

“clash of civilizations” theory hardly fits the present global situation, nor will it be the future perspective of mankind. Instead, the “coexistence of civilizations” should be the only outlet for human society and a future goal we should strive for.

Perhaps, a clearer picture of our age may help to illuminate this problem. In my opinion, we find ourselves in a New Axial Age.

The idea of Axial Age was proposed by German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). According to his theory, around 500 B.C., great thinkers appeared almost simultaneously in Ancient Greece, Israel, India, and China, and they contributed their original ideas to the solution of the problems which are of great concern to humankind. Distinctive cultural traditions were then formed, respectively, by Socrates and Plato in Ancient Greece, Laozi and Confucius in China, Shakyamuni in India, and Jewish prophets in Israel, which, after more than 2,000 years of progress, have become the principle part of human intellectual wealth. These regional cultural traditions were independent in their births and developments, without mutual influence. “Until today mankind has lived by what happened during the Axial Period, by what was thought and created during that period. In each new upward flight it returns in recollection to this period and is fired anew by it. Even since then it has been the case that recollections and reawakenings of the potentialities of the Axial Period—renaissances—afford a spiritual impetus.”¹¹ For example, the Europeans in Renaissance had traced the origin of their culture back to Ancient Greece, which had rekindled the European civilization and left its mark in world history. Similarly, the Song and Ming Neo-Confucian thinkers in China, stimulated by the impacts of Indian Buddhism, rediscovered Confucius and Mencius of the pre-Qin period and elevated the indigenous Chinese philosophy to a new height. In a certain sense, the current development of world multiculturalism might become a new leap forward on the basis of the Axial Age 2,000 years ago. Has the contemporary human cultures created, or will create, a New Axial Age? Judging from certain evidences, we may well draw such a conclusion.

First of all, since World War II, with the gradual collapse of colonialism, the once colonized and oppressed nations have taken upon themselves an urgent task to reaffirm their independent identities by all means. Their unique cultures (such as languages, religions, and social values) were the most important means for this justification. We know that Malaysia after World War II insisted on using Malay as their national tongue to emphasize the nation’s unification; and after the establishment of Israel, the Israeli decided to revive Hebrew as a vernacular, though for a long period of time in the past, Hebrew had only been used in religious ceremonies. “The central elements of any culture or civilization are language and religion.”¹² Some political leaders and scholars in Eastern countries also put forward the “Asian values” centered on community to distinguish themselves from the Western “universal values” centered on individual and so forth. Even Huntington began to

¹¹ Karl Jaspers. *The Origin and Goal of History*. Michael Bullock (trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press.1953, p. 7.

¹² *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order*, p. 59, op. cit.

understand that “non-Western civilizations generally are reaffirming the value of their own cultures.”¹³

Secondly, the Axial Age around 500 B.C. was a time when axial civilizations entered the Iron Age and a time of great leaps forward in productivity, which in consequence produced great thinkers. Now, we have entered the Information Age, when another great leap forward in human society is just happening. Because of the economic globalization, the integration of science and technology, and the progress of information network, different regions all over the world are tightly connected, and local cultural progress could no longer be independent as they once were in the “Axial Age” 2,000 years ago. Instead, they will be developed in the midst of discords, conflicts, and through mutual influences or mutual absorptions. The self-understanding of each culture is undoubtedly limited, as is described in a famous poem of Su Shi (1037–1101):

They know not Lushan Mountain’s real face;
So long as they continue to stay in her embrace.¹⁴

This couplet tells us a different perspective from another cultural system, i.e., from a cultural “other,” might provide us with a more comprehensive view of our own culture. In an essay entitled “Why Is China Necessary for Us Westerners in Studying Philosophy?”, Francois Jullien, a French scholar, writes: “We have chosen departure, which means a choice for leaving here, in order to create a space for thinking from a distant perspective. This detour in steady steps distinguishes itself from exoticism. We have made our trip traversing China in this manner in order to better understand Greece, which, though curtained off from our knowledge by a lapse of time, is something inborn and inherited by us through birthright. For the purpose of enhancing this perspective, we have to cut off this umbilical cord and constitute an exterior viewpoint.”¹⁵ This kind of intercultural study in the spirit of intersubjectivity and inter-reference, together with its methodology of judging one’s own culture from the standpoint of a culture “other,” is gradually accepted by scholars at home and abroad. Why, then, should we understand our culture from another’s perspective? Just because we desire to inherit and develop the cultural tradition of our own. In this case, it undoubtedly becomes a serious problem in how to preserve the proper traits of a culture and pass on its lifeline. As we know, economy can be globalized, science and technology can be integrated, but civilizations can never be monoculturalized. In the history of the progress of human society to date, it is neither possible nor wise enough for any culture to reject all external influences; but only when the essence of the target culture is sufficiently digested could it better absorb foreign cultures to nourish its domestic culture. “When we keep in contacts and exchanges with Western world,” Mr. Fei Xiaotong said, “we should make our own treasures part of the world cultural heritage. Indigenization first, globalization

¹³ Ibid., p. 20 op.cit.

¹⁴ 苏轼:《题西林壁》:“不识庐山真面目,只缘身在此山中。”

¹⁵ As the translator fails to find the French version of this essay, this translation is based on the Chinese translation, 《为什么我们西方人研究哲学不能绕开中国?》, published on 《跨文化对话》, 5th issue, p. 146, 上海文化出版社, Jan. 2001.—Translator’s note.

second.”¹⁶ That is to say, our own cultural root should be protected when learning from other cultures. Thus, the cultural progress in the twenty-first century concerning all human societies should be both national and universal.

Thirdly, judging from the status quo of human societies and cultures, a new pattern of cultural diversity with a global consciousness has already been formed or is still being formed. Perhaps the twenty-first century would be dominated by four principle cultural systems: the Euro-American, the East Asian, the South Asian, and the Islamic (Middle Eastern and North African). Each of the four cultures has a long tradition and a population of over a billion. Of course, there are other cultures influencing the future of human society in the twenty-first century as well, for example, the Latin American and the African; nevertheless, at least in the present, the influence of these cultures is far less than that of the four principle cultures mentioned above. If human society hopes to terminate the present chaos, it should especially criticize the cultural Hegemonism and cultural Tribalism; it should not only face this new cultural Axial Age but also make unremitting efforts to promote the dialogues among states or nations belonging to different cultural traditions, in order to coordinate all the cultures into a project of solving the common problems challenging human society. Undoubtedly, the four principle cultures are burdened with a major responsibility for the current human society. At present, human society is standing on a historic turning point, and every nation or country should seriously reexamine its own culture in the historical perspective. This is especially true for those nations in Euro-American, East Asian, South Asian, or Islamic cultural regions, because of the crucial functions they perform in contemporary human civilization. This kind of reexamination is surely quite necessary for the future of human society. The culture tradition is a reality *de facto* for every nation or state, especially for those nations and states with a long history and having crucial influence on contemporary human society, for it is deeply rooted in the hearts of its people, forming the spiritual prop of this particular nation or state.

Let us return to our own cultural tradition, make it a starting point, and seek in it the source of our power and our spiritual prop, in order to promote the development of our contemporary culture and to solve the pressing problems existing in human society. In this sense, the Euro-American, East Asian, South Asian, and Islamic cultures, with their long historical traditions, might help to promote the human society in the twenty-first century to the level of a “New Axial Age,” comparable to the Axial Age 2,500 years ago. Different cultural traditions would subsist in this New Axial Age, each with a population too large to be eliminated—even with wars, there would be only little or temporary effects. Thus, in the long run, the coexistence of civilizations is predictable.

¹⁶ Fei Xiaotong. (1999). *Fei Xiaotong wenji* [Collected works of Fei Xiaotong] (Vol. 14). Beijing: Qunyan chubanshe.

24.3 Can Chinese Culture Make Contributions to the Coexistence of Civilizations?

If Chinese people want to make contributions to the “coexistence of civilizations” in contemporary human society, they must first know their own culture well, which means they must have a cultural self-consciousness. The so-called cultural self-consciousness refers to the fact that people in a certain cultural tradition can give serious consideration or make earnest reexamination of their own culture’s origin, history, characteristics (including both merits and weakness), and its tendency of progress. It is fair to say that the Chinese nation is on the eve of a national renewal. To achieve this goal, we must have some self-knowledge about Chinese culture, make a proper estimation of its place in human civilizations, and try to ascertain the genuine spirit of this ancient culture, in order to present its true essence to contemporary human society. On the other hand, we must analyze the weak points of our own culture as well, to better absorb other cultures’ essences, and to give a modern reinterpretation of Chinese culture, so that it can adapt to the general tendency in the development of modern society. Only in this way may our country become a vanguard in the development of a global culture and create a brave new world together with other cultures. Confucianism and Taoism were two principle schools of thinking in traditional Chinese culture and generally considered to be complementary to each other. Of course, since Indian Buddhism was introduced into China, Buddhism has also played an important role in Chinese society and culture. Now, I would like to discuss whether the Confucian and Taoist thinking can provide meaningful resources to the doctrine of “coexistence of civilizations.”

24.3.1 *The Confucian Doctrine of Ren (仁, Benevolence, Virtue) Is a Resource of Thinking with a Positive Meaning for the “Coexistence of Civilizations”*

“The Way originates in Emotion” (道始于性), as prescribed in “Destiny is the resource of Human nature” (性自命出), a manuscript text in *Guodian Bamboo Slips* (《郭店竹简》). “The Way” here means “the Way of Humanity” (人道), i.e., the principles in dealing with human (or in other words, social) relationships, which is different from “the Way of Heaven” (天道), i.e., the laws of nature or of universe. Human relationships are established on the basis of emotion, which is the starting point of the Confucian doctrine of *Ren*. Once a disciple named Fan Chi asked Confucius: “What is *Ren*?” The answer was: “To love people.” Where is the origin of this idea—“to love people”? In *The Doctrine of the Mean*, a saying of Confucius was quoted as: “*Ren* is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great

exercise of it is in loving relatives.”¹⁷ The spirit of Benevolence and Love (仁爱) is rooted in human nature, and to love one’s relative is the most basic exercise of it. But the spirit of *Ren* goes far beyond this level. To quote *Guodian Bamboo Slips*: “To love and love deep, that is love; but to enlarge the love for one’s father to the love for human being, that is *Ren*.”¹⁸ “The enlargement of filial piety is to love all the people below Heaven.”¹⁹ From these sayings, we observe that the Confucian Doctrine of *Ren* demands to enlarge “the love for relatives” to “the benevolence on people,” i.e., to “enlarge one’s self-concern to the concern for others” (推己及人), to “treat with the reverence the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated”²⁰—that is, *Ren*. It is not easy to practice the doctrine of “enlarging one’s self-concern to the concern for others,” which requires a “practice of *Ren*” rooted in “the Way of Loyalty and Forgiveness” (忠恕之道), i.e., “never do to others as you do not wish done on yourself,”²¹ “wishing to be established himself, he seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others.”²² (“Loyalty is the complete devotion of oneself; forgiveness is the deduction of one’s self-concern.” 朱熹:《四书集注》)

If *Ren* is to be extended to the whole society, it would be as what Confucius once said: “To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a *junzi* (君子: gentleman, nobleman) can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to *Ren* (after his example). Is the practice of *Ren* from a man himself, or is it from others?”²³ “To subdue one’s self” and “to return to propriety” are usually interpreted as two parallel teachings, but I do not consider this the best explanation of this doctrine. “To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue” actually means the behavior of “returning to propriety” based on the “subduing of one’s self” can be regarded as *Ren*. Mr. Fei Xiaotong had his own interpretation about this doctrine: “Only after one has subdued one’s self could one return to propriety. The return to propriety is prerequisite for one to enter the society and become a social man. Perhaps it is just on this point Western and Eastern civilizations have parted, that is, whether to expand or to subdue one’s self.”²⁴ I think Mr. Fei’s remark makes a lot of sense. Zhu Xi also had an exegesis on this doctrine. “To subdue means to conquer,” he said, “and the self” means one’s

¹⁷ 《中庸》：“仁者，人也，亲亲为大。” C.f. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 20.

¹⁸ 《郭店竹简·五行》：“亲而笃之，爱也。爱父，其攸爱人，仁也。”

¹⁹ 《郭店竹简·唐虞之道》：“孝之放，爱天下之民。”

²⁰ 《孟子·梁惠王上》：“老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼。” C.f. *Mencius*, Chapter 2.

²¹ 《论语·颜渊》：“己所不欲，勿施于人。” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 12.

²² 《论语·雍也》：“己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人。” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 6.

²³ 《论语·颜渊》：“克己复礼曰仁。……” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 12.

²⁴ Fei Xiaotong. (2002, February). *A reconsideration of the relationship between man and nature in culturalism*. Working paper of the Center for Sociological Research and Development Studies of China (CSRSDSC), Department of Sociology, Institute of Sociology and Anthropology, Peking University, Beijing.

personal desires. To return means to restore, and the propriety' means the laws and patterns of the Principle of Heaven." According to this exegesis, one should subdue one's personal desires to abide by proprieties and social criteria. *Ren* is one's natural virtues ("Love is born in nature"²⁵); and propriety is exterior conventions to rule one's behavior, the function of which is to adjust social relationships so that people could live in harmony, as is summed up in one of Confucius's old saying: "The most valuable function of propriety is harmony."²⁶ Only if one abides by proprieties and social criteria willingly, i.e., by an innate will to love people, can one fulfill the demands of *Ren*. Thus, Confucius asked: "Is the practice of *Ren* from a man himself, or is it from others?" He made a distinction between *Ren* and propriety: "If a man be without *Ren*, what has he to do with the rites of propriety? If a man be without *Ren*, what has he to do with music?"²⁷ He who performs the rites or music without a heart of Benevolence and Love is a hypocrite and is serving a purpose of cheating. It is in this sense that Confucius thought if people would pursue *Ren* self-consciously and practice what a heart of Benevolence and Love demands according to the proprieties in everyday life, then harmony and peace would be achieved in a society—"If a *junzi* can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under Heaven will return to *Ren*." In my opinion, this teaching of Confucius is not totally meaningless for the political leaders of a state or the ruling class in developed countries (the United States in particular). "The politics of *Ren*" (仁政), or "the Way of a virtuous emperor" (王道) instead of "the Way of hegemony" (霸道), is indispensable to "rule the state" (治国) and to "harmonize all under Heaven" (平天下). If "the politics of *Ren*" or "the Way of a virtuous emperor" is practiced, different cultures would be able to coexist and develop in peace, while "the Way of hegemony" will bring forth the "clash of civilizations," resulting in monoculturalism and cultural Hegemonism. If Confucian doctrine of *Ren* is applied to the regulating of intercultural relationships, clash or war of civilizations will be avoided and the coexistence of civilizations achieved.

Of course, even the Confucian doctrine of *Ren* is no miracle drug to solve all the problems about the existence of civilizations in contemporary society. Nevertheless, as a set of moral self-regulations based on Benevolence and Love, it would undoubtedly be of some practical significance to harmonize the coexistence of civilizations if practiced as a principle to regulate intercultural and cultural relationships.

It is not easy to make different cultures get along in harmony and thus to make states and nations in different cultural traditions coexist in peace. Probably, the Confucian doctrine of "Harmony in Diversity" (和而不同)²⁸ could provide us with

²⁵ 《郭店竹简·语丛二》：“爱生于性。”

²⁶ 《论语·学而》：“礼之用，和为贵。” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 1.

²⁷ 《论语·八佾》：“人而不仁如礼何？人而不仁如乐何？” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 3.

²⁸ In this context, I translate this saying as "Harmony in Diversity," instead of "Unity in Diversity"—the latter is another popular translation of this term. Tong (同) means Agreement when applied on human relationships, or Sameness/Homogeneity on material objects. Thus the translator would use different translations according to the contexts, and translate the "不同" as diversity, disagreement, or heterogeneity, etc.—Translator's note.

an illuminating resource of thinking. According to Confucius, “The virtuous (*junzi*) get on in harmony without agreeing to each other; the base (*xiaoren*) agree with others without harmony.”²⁹ *Junzi*, as intellectuals with moral discipline practicing the Way of Loyalty and Forgiveness, should try to get on with others in harmony in spite of their different opinions; but those with no morality or discipline always force others to accept their opinions, thus could not maintain a harmonious relationship with others. If this doctrine of “Harmony in Diversity” could be applied as a principle in dealing with intercultural and cultural relationships, it can play a very positive role in resolving the conflicts among states or nations. It would be especially true in dealing with those discords and conflicts provoked by cultural differences (e.g., the differences in religious beliefs or social values) among states or nations, if we practice the teaching of “Harmony in Diversity” as principle to resolve these conflicts.

“Harmony” and “sameness” are generally regarded as two different concepts in traditional Chinese thinking. There was even “a debate on the differences between Harmony and Sameness” in China’s history. As a passage in *Zuozhuan* relates, once the Duke of Qi asked Yan-zi: “Is there only Ju who can get along with me in harmony?” The reply of Yan-zi was: “Ju merely expresses the same opinion with Your Highness,—how can it be called harmony?” “Is there any difference between Harmony and Sameness?” asked the Duke. “They are quite different,” replied Yan-zi. “Harmony is like well-cooked dish, you must concoct fish and meat with water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt and plum, and then cook the dish with firewood. The cook harmonizes these flavors to make it moderate. If it is too light, then salt should be added; if too salty, then water. When Junzi dines with such a dish, his heart would be pacified. This is analogous to the relationship between the King and his magistrates. But Ju is different from it. When Your Highness say that something is right, he agrees; when Your Highness say the opposite, he agrees as well. It is as if to moderate water with water,—who could tolerate to eat such a dish? Or as if a zither always plays the same tune,—who could tolerate to enjoy such music? This is why Sameness differs from Harmony.” (《左传·昭公二十年》) Another saying of Shibo (史伯) was recorded as follows: “In fact, only Harmony can activate the growth of lives, and Sameness would stop it on the contrary. Harmony is to moderate something with heterogeneous things—only in this way, the lives would flourish and find their belongings. If something is supplemented by homogeneous things, it can only be abandoned after its exhaustion. Thus the ancient virtuous emperors had concocted Earth with Metal, Wood, Water and Fire,³⁰ to transform it into miscellaneous lives.”³¹ (《国语·郑语》) From the above quotations, we understand that harmony and sameness are totally different concepts.

²⁹ 《论语·子路》：“君子和而不同，小人同而不和。” C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 12.

³⁰ In ancient Chinese philosophy, Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth are Five Processes (五行), i.e. five basic elements, to make up the world. —Translator’s note.

³¹ 《国语·郑语》：“(史伯曰)夫和实生物，同则不继。以他平他谓之和，故能丰长而物归之；若以同裨同，尽乃弃之。故先王以土、与金、木、水、火杂，以成百物。”

Only under the presupposition of difference and correlation could things “be moderated with heterogeneity,” and the diverse things progress together in harmony with one another. “To supplement something with homogeneity” is to aggregate the sameness, which would only suffocate the lives. The supreme ideal of traditional Chinese culture is that “miscellaneous lives are nourished together without harming each other; miscellaneous ways are practiced together without counteracting each other.”³² The “miscellaneous lives” and “miscellaneous ways” refer to diversity; and the “without harming each other” and “without counteracting each other” refer to harmony. This doctrine would provide us with inexhaustible resources of thinking for the coexistence of diverse cultures.

Now in Western countries, people of insight have already admitted the possibility of coexistence of civilizations that the clash or war provoked by mere cultural differences should be avoided. They believe that different nations and states should be able to achieve common understanding through cultural exchanges, dialogues, and discussions. This would be a process moving from “diversity” to mutual understanding. This mutual understanding is neither to extinct nor to assimilate the individual cultures, but to find a cross-point in two different cultures and to use it as the basis to promote the progress of both cultures—such is the function of “harmony.” It is just because of the differences of diverse cultures that human civilizations have become so colorful and that the complementary and interactive setup is formed gradually in the ever-flowing river of human history. Cultural differences might lead to clashes or even wars, but not all differences are destined to cause clashes or wars. Especially in an era when science and technology are rapidly developing, a massive war, if it really happens, would easily destroy humankind itself. Thus, we must endeavor to maintain a harmonious coexistence through intercultural dialogues. Many scholars at home and abroad have recognized the importance of mutual understanding achieved through dialogues between different cultures. Habermas, for instance, begins to emphasize the concepts of justice and solidarity. In my opinion, they are significant principles in dealing with international cultural relationships. Habermas’s “Principle of Justice” can be understood as follows: every national culture has a right to protect its independence and autonomy and to develop freely according to the will of its people. His “Principle of Solidarity,” on the other hand, can be interpreted as an obligation to sympathize, understand, and respect other national cultures. By uninterrupted dialogues and communication between different national cultures, there will be a time, sooner or later, when a positive cycle of interactions can be formed.³³ Another advocator of this principle is Gadamer, the German philosopher who passed away only recently. He proposed that “understanding” should be extended to the level of “universal dialogue.” Because of this extension, the relationship between subject and object (as cognitive or grammatical concepts) is possible to be transformed

³² 《中庸》：“万物并育而不相害，道并行而不相悖。” C.f. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 30.

³³ Yue Daiyun. (2002). *Cultural relativism and comparative literature*. A bridge across cultures. Beijing: Peking University Press.

from inequality to equality; in other words, only when the dialogues are conducted on equal basis can there be any meaningful dialogue and fruitful result. Gadamer's consciousness of equality between subject and object and his theory of "cultural dialogue" are important ideas urgently needed in our time,³⁴ illuminating enough for us to understand properly and thoroughly the cultural or national relationships between China and other nations. Nevertheless, whether it is Habermas' principles of justice and solidarity or Gadamer's theory of universal dialogue, their common presupposition should be the principle of "Harmony in Diversity," since only when nations and states in different cultural traditions coexist in harmony through dialogues can they acquire equal rights and obligations and only then the "universal dialogue" between them may become meaningful and fruitful. Thus, the Confucian principle of "Harmony in Diversity" based on the belief that "harmony is the most valuable"³⁵ should be practiced as one of the basic principles in dealing with intercultural relationships. This principle, if adopted by all states and nations, would become a positive factor not only in eliminating the discords, conflicts, and even wars but also as a dynamics in promoting the development of all states and nations through exchange and communication. It is just in this sense that Bertrand Russell said: "Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress."³⁶ The contemporary human society needs different cultures to develop their traditional characters through mutual absorption and convergence, in order to bring about the coexistence of civilizations on a new basis.

24.3.2 *The Taoist Doctrine of the Way (tao) Can Provide Significant Resources of Thinking to Prevent "The Clash of Civilizations"*

If Confucius is a "man of virtue" (仁者), then Laozi is a "man of wisdom" (智者). The Way is the fundamental concept in Laozi's *Tao Te Ching*, while "the spontaneity and doing-nothing" (自然无为: to obey natural laws without offences) are the basic features of the Way. "The spontaneity and doing-nothing are the Way of Heaven," said Wang Chong in his *Lun Heng*.³⁷ All kinds of conflicts in contemporary human society are undoubtedly caused by the greedy desires for power and wealth. Those great powers, in their pursuit of selfish gains and expansion of power, exploit the resources of underdeveloped countries and practice power politics, which is the fundamental cause of global chaos. Laozi's doctrine of "spontaneity

³⁴ Pan Derong. "The Philosophical Heritage of Gadamer." *Twenty-First Century*, HK, Apr. Issue, 2002; Yu Qizhi. "Humanistic Cultivation of the Philosophers." *Twenty-First Century*, HK, Aug. Issue, 2002.

³⁵ 《论语·学而》: "和为贵。" C.f. *The Analects*, Chapter 1. (Also: note 23.) —Translator's note.

³⁶ Op. cit.

³⁷ 王充:《论衡·初稟》。

and doing-nothing” could be interpreted as to do nothing against people’s will, which will render the society and the world peacefulness. Laozi once quoted the saying of an ancient sage: “As I do nothing, the people will reform by themselves; since I like quiet, they will keep order by themselves; when I seek no trouble, the people will prosper by themselves; when I have no desire, they will live in austerity by themselves.”³⁸ It means that the ruler with political powers should neither interfere with his people (doing-nothing), nor disturb their everyday life (liking quiet), nor act against their will (seeking no trouble), nor exploit them insatiably (having no desire); thus, the people will reform by themselves, keep order by themselves, prosper by themselves, and live in austerity by themselves. If we give a modern interpretation of this teaching and apply it to the administration of contemporary society, it will not only bring peace to a country but also function significantly in eliminating the clash of civilizations. We can interpret the above-quoted teaching as follows: In international politics, the more a country interferes with the affairs of other countries, the more chaotic the world will become; the more those great powers threaten others with military force, the more turbulent and disorderly the world will become; the more those great powers exploit the underdeveloped countries under the pretext of international aids, the poorer those underdeveloped countries will become; the more those developed countries desire and fight for the world dominance of wealth and power, the more immoral and terrorized the world will become. Therefore, in my opinion, the doctrine of “doing-nothing” may be an effective prescription for the leaders of the so-called new empire. If they would accept this prescription, the world will enjoy peace. Nevertheless, the “new empire” always bully other states and nations by means of “willful acts” (有为), such as interference, exploitation, or military threat, which are undoubtedly determined by its greedy nature as an empire. According to Laozi, “No calamity is worse than to be discontented. Nor is there a sin more dreadful than coveting. He who knows how to be content, truly he will always be so.”³⁹ Isn’t the “new empire” discontented and coveting? Laozi said again: “Isn’t the Way of Heaven much like a bow bent? The upper part has been disturbed, pressed down; the lower part is raised up from its place; the slack is taken up; the slender width is broader drawn. For thus the Way of Heaven cuts people down when they have had too much, and fills the bowls of those who are in want. But the way of man will not work like this: the people who have not enough are spoiled, for tribute to the rich and the surfeited.”⁴⁰ Why is the human society in this world today in a state of turbulence and disorder? Isn’t it totally caused by human beings themselves, especially those leaders of the “new empire” acting against the “Way of Heaven” and losing the “hearts of men,” practicing a policy of spoiling those who have not

³⁸ 《道德经》第 57 章：“我无为而民自化，我好静而民自正，我无事而民自富，我无欲而民自朴。” C.f. *Tao TeChing*, Chapter 57.

³⁹ 《道德经》第 46 章：“祸莫大于不知足，咎莫大于欲得，知足之足，常足矣” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 46.

⁴⁰ 《道德经》第 77 章：“天之道”，其犹张弓欤？高者抑之，下者举之；有余者损之，不足者补之。天之道，损有余而不足，人道则不然，损不足以奉有余。” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 77.

enough, in order to pay tribute to the rich and the surfeited? Isn't it the root of discords, conflicts, and wars in contemporary world? Thus, we find that the "clash of civilizations" theory is closely related to the theory of "new empire" hidden behind its back.

Laozi strongly opposed wars for the sake of preserving peace in the world. In Chapter 31, *Tao Te Ching*, he said: "Weapons at best are tools of bad omen, loathed by all. Thus those of the Way avoid them."⁴¹ In wars, there are always people killed, production interrupted, and social orders broken; thus Laozi thinks that war is evil, because people hate it, and virtuous statesmen would not push the country into war to solve their problems. Again Laozi said: "To those who would help the ruler of men by means of the Way: let him not with his militant might try to conquer the world; this tactic will be revenged by Heaven. For where armies have marched, there do briars spring up; where great hosts are impressed, years of hunger and evil ensue."⁴² This is generally true in the history of all nations. In China, after every major war, the population would be reduced dramatically, farmland dissented, production interrupted, and robbers and thieves infesting. The two World Wars both ended in this way, and the current war in the Middle East is no exception. Whenever the leaders of the "new empire" provokes a war anywhere, they will surely be bogged down there, since the people in the conquered countries will not surrender, they will fight without the fear of death, as Laozi said: "The people do not fear at all to die; what's gained therefore by threatening them with death?"⁴³ And: "As for those who delight to do murder, it is certain they can never get from the world what they sought."⁴⁴ We see from history that those who had initiated wars, though momentary successes they might get, would finally fail and be dishonored. Hitler was such an example, and Japanese Militarism, another. As a "man of wisdom," Laozi could observe the latent converse side with his wisdom, as he said: "On bad fortune the good fortune always leans; in good fortune the bad fortune always hides."⁴⁵ Now, people in some countries are suffering, but it would be a necessary precondition prepared for their nation's renewal in future. Take the past hundred years of China's history, for example, it is just after being beaten repeatedly that the Chinese people had finally waken up. Today, we may say that the Chinese nation is on the eve of a great renewal. In my opinion, leaders of every country, especially those of the "new empire," should learn some wise teachings from the *Tao Te Ching* and realize that, in the long run, the politics of great powers and Hegemonism will have no future. Therefore, I consider the thinking of Laozi valuable in refuting the theories of "clash of civilizations" and of the "new empire." We advocate the

⁴¹ 《道德经》第31章：“夫兵者，不祥之器，物或恶之，故有道者不处。” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 31.

⁴² 《道德经》第30章：“以道佐人主者，不以兵强天下，其事好还。师之所在，荆棘生焉，大军之后，必有凶年。” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 30.

⁴³ 《道德经》第74章：“民不畏死，奈何以死惧之？” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 74.

⁴⁴ 《道德经》第31章：“夫乐杀人者，则不可得志于天下矣。” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 31.

⁴⁵ 《道德经》第58章：“祸兮，福之所倚；福兮，祸之所伏。” C.f. *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 58.

theory of “coexistence of civilizations” and are in agreement with Laozi’s idea of “doing-nothing,” in the expectation of a world of Great Harmony, with peace and security, general progress, and common wealth for humankind. Of course, as Laozi was born 2,000 years ago, his philosophy cannot be used to solve all the problems that contemporary human society is confronted with (including the discords and conflicts among nations), but his wisdom should be of important value to illuminate our way. Our task is to rediscover and develop the essence of his thinking, to give it a modern interpretation, so that the general public can benefit from the edifications in the treasury of ancient Chinese philosophy.

Differences in religious beliefs, values, and ways of thinking may lead to conflicts among nations and states; and conflicts can breed wars. However, we may ask: Are these conflicts inevitable? Would it be possible that these conflicts be resolved peacefully, without a war for cultural differences? We have to find a common resource of thinking in all national cultures advocating the coexistence of civilizations, in order to prevent any possible conflict or war. As argued above, the Confucianism and Taoism in Chinese culture could provide significant resources of thinking to bring about the peaceful coexistence of civilizations. I believe that the same kind of resources can be found in cultures of other nations and states as well. At the turn of the twenty-first century, we must make a careful choice whether to practice the theory of “clash of civilizations” in dealing with the problems among nations and states or the theory advocating the “coexistence of civilizations” to bring peace to human society. It would be a blessing to humankind if we choose not the clash but the coexistence of civilizations. *The Book of History* teaches us: “All the states under Heaven should be harmonized.”⁴⁶ Like many other nations, the Chinese nation is a great one with a long and brilliant tradition of history and culture. Chinese culture is undoubtedly one of the most valuable treasures for mankind. With this cultural heritage, we should be able to make contributions to the peaceful coexistence of human civilizations, promote cultural exchanges, so that harmony might befall on this world of diverse cultures.

⁴⁶ 《尚书尧典》：“协和万邦”。

Chapter 25

Constructing “Chinese Philosophy” in Sino-European Cultural Exchange

In December 2002, I published a 14-volume series *Ershi Shiji Xifang Zhexue Dongjian Shi* (*History of the Dissemination of Western Philosophy to China in the 20th Century*).¹ My reason for engaging in this study was to review the history of the importation of Western philosophy into China in order to more fully understand the development of the discipline of “Chinese Philosophy.”

There was no such a word as “philosophy,” or *zhexue*, in the Chinese language. The term *zhexue* was coined by a Japanese scholar Nishi Amane (1829–1897), who borrowed the two Chinese characters *zhe* (“wisdom”) and *xue* (“study”) to refer to “philosophy” originated in Ancient Greece and Rome. This new term was introduced into China by a Chinese scholar, Huang Zunxian (1848–1905), and was accepted by Chinese scholars. Although this term *zhexue* was accepted by Chinese scholars late in the nineteenth century, the problem remained, regarding whether China had “philosophy” or the sort that was comparable to Western philosophy. Indeed, this issue is still being debated by contemporary scholars in the field.

Western philosophy was imported into China at the end of the nineteenth century. Its foremost and most influential introducer, Yan Fu (1853–1921), had translated numerous Western philosophical texts into Chinese, especially those pertaining to evolutionary theory. In quick succession, the texts of Kant, Descartes, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were introduced into China. These movements provided a perspective on the issue of whether there is philosophy in China. Some Chinese scholars discovered that although “philosophy” was not an independent discipline, there were ample philosophical themes and questions in the

Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 2007, 34 (supple): 33–42

¹ Tang Yijie, ed., *History of the Dissemination of Western Philosophy to China in the 20th Century* [*Ershi Shiji Xifang Zhexue Dongjian Shi*], 14 vols. (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2002).

classical Chinese canons, such as *Shang Shu* (*Book of History*), *Yi Jing* (*Book of Changes*), *LunYu* (*Confucian Analects*), *Laozi*, and *Zhuang Zi*, which were comparable to those in Western philosophy. There were also significant differences between the inquiries in these canons and those in Western philosophy, and study of these differences were invaluable to scholarship.

We must acknowledge that, before the importation of Western philosophy, there was no scholarly study of Chinese philosophy in its own right, as a field distinct from “canon studies” (*jing xue*) and “traditions of the masters” (*zi xue*). From the first half of the twentieth century, there was a surge into China of the fields of Western philosophy including Marxism, pragmatism, realism, analytic philosophy, Ancient Greek philosophy, and nineteenth-century German philosophy. This had a powerful impact on scholarship in China. As a result of their engagement with Western philosophy and its frameworks, Chinese scholars attempted to compile voluminous collections of classical canons and commentaries associated with Kongzi (Confucius), Laozi, Zhuangzi, and so forth, in order to establish a discipline of “Chinese philosophy.” In the early stages, such study focused only on the thoughts of particular individuals or isolated topics. By the twentieth century, however, the field of Chinese philosophy had been founded primarily through the route of studies in Chinese intellectual history. During this period, several volumes of “History of Chinese Philosophy,” including Hu Shih’s (Hu Shi) *Zhongguo Zhaxue Shi Dagang* (*Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*²) and Feng Youlan’s (Feng Yu-lan) *Zhongguo Zhaxue Shi* (*History of Chinese Philosophy*³), were authored by scholars who sought to demonstrate that Chinese philosophy had pre-Qin (before 221 BCE) origins. In other words, these Chinese thinkers were consciously separating philosophical study from studies in classics and studies under masters and establishing Chinese philosophy as an independent disciplinary field. Nevertheless, all these accounts of Chinese intellectual history were greatly influenced and defined by the frameworks supplied by Western philosophy.

From the 1930s, Chinese philosophers were absorbing and adapting Western philosophy in their accounts of Chinese philosophy. This led to the articulation of several modern versions of Chinese philosophy. The prominent thinkers of this period include Xiong Shili, Zhang Dongsun, Feng Youlan, and Jin Yuelin. Unfortunately, after 1949, such attempts to construct strains of modern Chinese philosophy were abruptly halted, as were studies that sought to engage dialogue between Chinese and Western philosophies.

It was not until the 1980s, when China embraced reforms toward a more open society, that the study of Chinese philosophy was again permitted. The doctrines of existentialism, Western Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism, hermeneutics,

²Hu Shih, *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Dong Fang Press, 1996), originally entitled *History of Pre-Qin Sophism* [*Xian Qin Mingxue Shi*], written between 1915 and 1917 and first published in 1922.

³Feng Youlan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1 (first published in 1931) and vol. 2 (first published in 1934) (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shuju, 1962).

postmodernism, and semiotics, to name a few, were introduced in China. This not only broadened the horizons of Chinese philosophers but also provided many different perspectives for richer, in-depth scholarship in Chinese philosophy.

From this brief retrospective on the history of the importation of Western philosophy into China, I would like to make the following proposals in order to generate further discussion.

25.1 Western Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy as an Independent Discipline

There was neither an original Chinese term *zhexue* nor did Chinese philosophy as an independent discipline which originates in China. It was only in engagement with and response to Western philosophy that elements of philosophical ideas and philosophical questions were identified in the Chinese classics. Hence, the “Chinese philosophy” that had been developed through this period was primarily constructed according to paradigms and frameworks provided by Western philosophy. Take Feng Youlan’s *History of Chinese Philosophy*, for example. Its structure, terminology, and perspectives were mainly borrowed from their equivalents in Western philosophy. These include concepts such as idealism and materialism, ontology and cosmology, monism and dualism (or pluralism), empirical and transcendental, phenomenon and essence, universals and particulars, thought and existence, and the like. These conceptual frameworks were employed to explain certain notions in Chinese thought including *dao*, *tian*, and *xin*. Existing ideas, issues, terminologies, concepts, and logic were shaped by Western philosophy. Fortuitously, the result was greater clarity in the specification of issues and outline of concepts as well as greater precision in logic. I suggest that this was a necessary step in the creation of a viable “Chinese philosophy.”

Modern Chinese philosophy of the 1930s and 1940s is comprised by scholarly work that characteristically *continues* rather than *follows* the traditional discourse of Chinese philosophy. That is to say, in the process of studying and adapting Western philosophy, Chinese philosophers transformed Chinese philosophy from the traditional to the modern. This continued development in Chinese philosophy had to meet the criteria of Western philosophy; attempt to “converge the Chinese and the West” was primarily involved supplementing the shortcomings of Chinese scholarship with those of Western scholarship. Let me demonstrate this with two representative examples. The first is Xiong Shili’s doctrine of the Neo-Weishi Lun (Yogācāra Buddhism),⁴ and the second Feng Youlan’s Neo-Confucianism (*xinlixue*).⁵

⁴Tang Yijie and Xiao Jiefu, eds., *Xiong Shili Lunzhu Ji Zhiyi: Xin Weishi Lun [Collected Works of Xiong Shili [I]: New Doctrine of Consciousness Only]* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985).

⁵Feng Youlan, *XinLi-xue [New Rational Philosophy]* (Changsha: Commercial Press, 1939).

Xiong Shili’s Neo-Weishi Lun is only partially complete. The completed section, the “Doctrine of the Jing” (*jing lun*), is a treatise that covers topics in the field of ontology (*benti lun*) in Western philosophy, albeit with some Chinese characteristics. The other section which he had originally planned to write was the “Doctrine of the Liang” (*liang lun*). Had it been written, this section would have covered a topic area roughly equivalent to epistemology (*renshi lun*) in Western philosophy. His other works allow us a glimpse as well into his view of Chinese philosophy as it stands in relation to Western philosophy. Xiong believes that traditional Chinese philosophy tended to place more emphasis on experiential wisdom (*tiren*) than rational judgment or analysis (*sibian*). For Xiong, this is where discussions on epistemology in Western philosophy can benefit Chinese philosophy: He envisaged an epistemological approach that synthesized experiential wisdom with rational analysis.

In his approach to Neo-Confucianism, Feng Youlan asserts that his vision was not to follow, but to continue, the Neo-Confucianism of the Song (960–1280) and the Ming (1368–1644) dynasties. Feng’s approach resulted in an introduction into Chinese philosophy the “universals” (*gong xiang*) and “particulars” (*shu xiang*) of Platonic philosophy as well as ideas in Neo-Realism (*xin shizai lun*). Using this schema, the world is divided into “truth” (*zhenji*)—or principle (*li*) or great ultimate (*taiji*)—and “reality” (*shiji*). Accordingly, things in reality become what they are according to their essence or principle. In adapting the bipolar concepts of truth and reality, Feng was able to continue the Neo-Confucian doctrine of the “many sharing the one” (*li yi fen shu*). Another Neo-Confucian work of Feng Youlan, entitled *A New Understanding of Words* (*Xin Zhi Yan*),⁶ discusses philosophical methodology and its relation to epistemological questions. According to Feng, Western philosophy excels in analysis, while traditional Chinese philosophy excels in intuition. His treatment of Neo-Confucianism combines and reaps the benefits of both these approaches.

Both Xiong Shili and Feng Youlan drew from traditional Chinese thought to articulate Chinese philosophy. However, they continued the tradition by taking on Western philosophy as the fundamental framework. Unfortunately, such exciting developments in Chinese philosophy were forestalled by external circumstances.

From the discussion above, it is clear that whether we understand Chinese philosophy in terms of its early forays into Chinese intellectual history or its continuing development in the early modern period in Chinese history, we must recognize that it was very much shaped by Western philosophy.

⁶ Feng Youlan, *Xin zhi yan* [*A New Understanding of Words*] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1946).

25.2 Paradigms and Frameworks of Western Philosophy and Potential Problems in Chinese Philosophy

As humans, we inevitably share a number of common characteristics that cut across different civilizations and cultures. Nevertheless, each civilization or culture is unique in geographical, historical, and even accidental aspects. Naturally, we expect that Western philosophy will have distinctive characteristics due to its evolution within a particular sociocultural environment. Likewise, Chinese philosophy will necessarily be influenced by social and cultural factors and hence will possess certain particularities. Thus, injudicious and unrestrained construction of Chinese philosophy according to the terms of reference in Western philosophy will unavoidably be problematic. I believe there are at least two fundamental problems.

The first problem concerns the obliteration of characteristics of Chinese philosophy that may be of unique significance to philosophical inquiry. I will discuss two key features of Chinese philosophy that will help to demonstrate this point. Western philosophy from the time of the ancient Greeks and especially from Descartes on has regarded more highly the systematic construction of philosophic knowledge. By contrast, thinkers in the Chinese tradition have put more emphasis on the pursuit of certain paths or goals in order to realize one's virtue or efficacy (*jingshen jingjie*). A passage in the Confucian *Analects* portrays Confucius' emphasis on the "inner," personal pleasure associated with learning: "The Master said, 'They who know the truth are not equal to those who love it, and they who love it are not equal to those who delight in it'" (*Analects* 6:18).⁷ The ultimate pursuit of life is not merely to attain knowledge or acquire skills; Yan Hui, Confucius' much loved disciple, harmonized his love of learning and personal conduct (*Analects* 6:3). In Yan Hui, the body and mind, the exterior and the interior, were in harmony.

The Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi pursued *jingshen jingjie* of spontaneous wandering in his first chapter, "Xiaoyao you,"⁸ that was not cramped by conventional aspirations and values. Similarly, a well-known Chan Buddhist poem articulates the *jingshen jingjie* of being comfortable in different environments:

The spring flowers, the autumn moon;
Summer breezes, winter snow.
If useless things do not clutter your mind,
You have the best days of your life.⁹

⁷ James Legge, trans., *The Four Books* (Taiwan: Culture Book Company, 1981), 195. The following quotations from this book will show chapter and page number(s) in parenthesis.

⁸ Angus C. Graham, trans., *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 43–47. Graham translates "Xiaoyao you" as "Going Rambling with a Destination."

⁹ Wumen Huikai (Mumon Ekai), *The Gateless Gate* (Wumen guan in Chinese; Mumonkan in Japanese). English translation by Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics: The Gateless Gate and the Blue Cliff Records* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 2005, previously published in 1995 by Weatherhill Press). Translation available online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm> (accessed on February 23, 2007).

The spirit of such a philosophy characterized by reflective personal engagement with its insights is distinct from those predominant in Western philosophy, but its value for humanity cannot be underestimated.

Another distinctive and fundamental characteristic of traditional Chinese thought is its balance of holistic and individual perspectives. The key notions in traditional Chinese philosophy include “the unity of Heaven and humanity” (*tian ren he yi*), “the myriad of things are one” (*wanwu yiben*), and “the unity of body and mind, the exterior and the interior” (*shenxin neiwai heyi*). These fundamental paradigms stand in contrast to the subject-orientated approaches and the subject-object dichotomy that are dominant in (Western) Anglo-analytic philosophy. If this subject orientation and its attendant dualistic frameworks are used as reference points from which to understand Chinese philosophy, the distinctive characteristics of the latter will not be sufficiently articulated. On the other hand, it is important to note that the themes in Chinese philosophy outlined above are more closely aligned in spirit and approach with those in continental European philosophy, such as, for instance, in phenomenology, which emphasizes the intersubjective nature (*huzhuxing*) of an individual’s engagement with the world. To bring to the foreground, these features in traditional Chinese thinking will benefit both Chinese and Western philosophies.

The second source of potential problems is related to the translation of Chinese terms and phrases into English. There are many notions in traditional Chinese thought such as *tian*, *dao*, *xin*, *xing*, *you*, *wu*, and *qi*, with distinctive meanings within specific philosophical frameworks that are difficult to express in correspondence with Western philosophy. For example, *tian* (often “thinly” translated “Heaven”) has at least three meanings:

- (a) Supreme and ultimate Heaven, sometimes expressed in terms of a personal god.
- (b) Naturalistic Heaven that incorporates a sense of the natural environment.
- (c) Heaven associated with a transcendent order; this is the ground of normative principles (*yili*) that may also have implications for ethical conduct.

Another example is *qi*, which may be interpreted in at least three ways:

- (a) Material existence
- (b) Vitality and consciousness, as, for instance, in Mencius’ and energetic and dynamic *qi* (*huo qi zhi qi*) or the *Guanzi*’s essential *qi* (*jingqi*)
- (c) The ultimate, as, for instance, in the “one *qi* evolved into three” (*yiqi hua sanqing*) theme in Daoist thought

It is not easy to find parallels to all these meanings of *qi* in Western philosophy. Strictly speaking, some of them cannot be translated, and I suggest in these cases to use transliterations. Here, I refer to an example of successful use of transliteration in order to preserve the original insights of a doctrine. When Buddhist thought was introduced into China, several important notions including “prajna” (*bo-re*) and “Nirvana” (*niepan*) were only transliterated. In time, these transliterations were adopted into the Chinese language, and their original Indian Buddhist meanings

were retained. It is important to note that the Dharma exponent, Xuan Zang (600–664), deliberately articulated five principles of “no translation” (*wu bufan*) in relation to the concepts in the Buddhist canons.¹⁰ We may follow this example to sustain the potency and uniqueness of certain distinctive notions in Chinese philosophy rather than assimilate them according to Western terminologies. However, some indiscriminate superimpositions of categories and paradigms in Western philosophy have already reduced the amplitude and distinctiveness of several concepts in Chinese thought. There is a need to handle these concepts carefully, including attending to translation and transliteration issues so as not to erroneously circumscribe them. Careful consideration of these issues will enhance the contribution of Chinese philosophy to contemporary philosophical debates.

25.3 Future Developments in Chinese Philosophy

In my view, scholars of Chinese philosophy should continue serious and systematic study of Western philosophy, paying special attention to its new trends. In particular, these new developments reflect concerns about globalization and its implications for human understanding, advances in science and technology, and their impact on the environment, moral development, and conceptions of human well-being, to name a few. Here, I make a suggestion for future research.

I draw upon the history of the adaptation and synthesis of Buddhism into Chinese culture to illustrate how we might approach the engagement of Chinese and Western philosophies. During the Sui and Tang dynasties (from the sixth to the eighth centuries), several Sinicized Buddhist schools emerged in China. These schools developed the doctrines of Indian Buddhism by integrating within it Confucian and Daoist ideas.

In engaging Chinese and Western philosophies, one important methodological approach is to employ relevant themes and concepts in Chinese thought to explicate and embellish ideas in Western philosophy. This kind of study not only broadens the scope of Western philosophy but also makes new contributions to the discipline of philosophy. We are now aware that this is an emergent approach as, for instance, in the theses of scholars who discuss Chinese hermeneutics, Chinese phenomenology, Chinese semiotics, and the like. In this light, the phrase “Chinese philosophy” should apply not only to “the philosophy of the Chinese” but also to philosophy that influence contemporary debates in a distinctive way.

¹⁰ According to the Song Dynasty scholar Zhou Dunyi, Xuan Zang’s *wu bufan* recommends that Sanskrit terms should only be transliterated, rather than translated, in the following five situations: the terms are arcane, such as in incantations, they have multiple meanings; there are no equivalent terms in Chinese, traditionally these terms have been transliterated and not translated, and if translation might obscure a profound concept (Zhou Dunyi, *Fanyi Minyi Xu* [Preface to the *Explanation of Buddhist Terms*] [Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1984], 54.1055).

This method is compatible with the kind of constructive strategy used by a number of Chinese scholars in the 1930s and 1940s, which I had referred to earlier. Scholars including Xiong Shili and Feng Youlan constructed the early Chinese philosophical traditions in resonance with Western philosophical themes and concepts to create a modern Chinese philosophy. Indeed, scholars now may even extend and continue the work of Xiong Shili and Feng Youlan, just as they continue the traditions of Confucius, Mencius, Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming in their engagement with Western philosophy. In brief, scholars in the field of Chinese philosophy should both take up the standpoint of its proper tradition and effectively absorb and adapt new ideas in contemporary Western philosophy. In contemporary Chinese-Western cultural exchange we should, in our dialogues, place these philosophies on equal footing. This will allow philosophical discussions to achieve significant developments in the twenty-first century. Active engagement in these discussions will enhance the development of philosophy, Chinese and Western, in an increasingly globalized world.

Chinese Glossary

Bo-re 般若	<i>Lun Yu</i> 《论语》
Benti lun 本体论	Niepan 涅槃
Dao 道	Qi 气
<i>Ershi Shiji Xifang Zhexue Dongjian Shi</i> 《二十世纪西方哲学东渐史》	Renshi lun 认识论 <i>Shang Shu</i> 《尚书》
<i>Fanyi Mingyi Xu</i> 《翻译名羲序》	Shenxin neiwai heyi 身心内外合一
Feng Youlan 冯友兰	Shiji 实际
Gong xiang 共相	Shu xiang 殊相
<i>Guanzi</i> 《管子》	Sibian 思辨
Huang Zunxian 黄遵宪	Taiji 太极
Huo qi zhi qi 活气之气	Tian 天
Hu Shi 胡适	Tiren 体认
Hu zhu ti xing 互主体性	Wanwu yiben 万物一本
Jing lun 镜论	Weishi 唯识
Jing qi 精气	Wu 无
Jingshen jingjie 精神境界	Wu bufan 五不翻
Jing xue 经学	Wumen Huikai 无门慧开
Jin Yuelin 金岳霖	<i>Xian Qin Mingxue Shi</i> 《先秦名学史》
<i>Laozi</i> 老子	“Xiaoyao you” “逍遥游”
Li 理	Xin 心
Liang lun 量论	Xing 性

(continued)

Li yi fen shu 理一分殊	Xin lixue 新理学
xin shizai lun 新实在论	Zhang Dongsun 张东
<i>Xin Zhi Yan</i> 《新知言》	zhenji 真际
Xiong Shili 熊十力	zhexue 哲学
Xuan Zang 玄奘	Zhuang Zi 《庄子》
Yan Fu 严复	<i>Zhongguo Zhexue Shi</i> 中国哲学史
<i>Yi Jing</i> 《易经》	<i>Zhongguo Zhexue Shi Dagang</i> 中国哲学史大纲
yiqi hua sanqing 一气化三清	Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐
you 有	zi xue 子学