# PART TWO

# FAR EASTERN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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# SECTION ONE

# CHINA: THE QUEST FOR ULTIMATE HARMONY AND THE GREAT TRANQUILLITY

# INTRODUCTION: RELIGION IN CHINA

## THE CONCEPTS OF HARMONY AND TRANQUILLITY

Chinese religio-philosophical traditions are dominated by a desire to achieve and maintain harmony with the forces of the cosmos. They reveal a central concern for the proper, the fitting, the appropriate, in all areas of life. In the midst of social struggle and tensions throughout their history, the Chinese have sought the foundations of ultimate harmony.

In the earliest periods this quest was directed toward the natural forces which impinged directly on the lives of the people in their agricultural existence. Harmony was sought through very concrete ritual means in sacrifice and divination.

As society became more complex and conflicts more intense, Confucius and his successors saw that ultimate harmony rested on the character of human relations. Harmony was not merely a matter of complying with natural forces, but of finding ways to bring lives of varying stations and capacities together for the good of the whole.

The Taoists quickly perceived that placing emphasis on external human relations merely gave rise to new conflicts and competitions. They claimed that one must find harmony at the deepest level in Nature—the source of existence. Conforming one's life to cosmic principle was the only way to harmony between man and Nature and between man and man.

Buddhism, imported from India, challenged men to achieve the highest harmony by cutting through the delusions of the ego to an understanding of the nature of things. The perception of the Real aimed at transforming human personality by reducing attachments to the world. Buddhism pointed the way for later Neo-Confucianism in finding the root of harmony beyond the world of appearances.

The quest for harmony still proceeds in China, though on a politi-

cal level. It is still a problem to unite the Chinese people with a common sense of destiny and meaning.

## PERSPECTIVES ON CHINESE RELIGION

China occupies a large portion of the globe and has one of the largest concentrations of population. Since the Chinese have developed one of the most durable societies, their varied systems of thought and value possess great historical significance. To aid the student in assessing the importance of Chinese tradition, we shall analyze its various strands of religio-philosophical thought represented by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, focusing upon the dominant interests and insights that have given Chinese culture its distinctive character.

Religion has been a strong force in China as man's response to elements in his environment over which he had no direct control. On both the societal and individual levels the unpredictable elements stimulated activities designed to prevent or alleviate disasters. From ancient times traditional rites existed to care for such matters. Chinese theories of government and morality drew upon religious sources for their authority.

We cannot enforce on Chinese tradition a Western standard which strictly divides the sacred and profane elements of life. The Chinese, generally, have not considered religion as something apart from life, an independent activity possessing its own intrinsic value. Except perhaps for Buddhism, Chinese religio-philosophic thought and experience does not manifest any of the "tension toward the world" which characterizes Western religious perspectives. The Chinese would not share the sentiment that it is the whole duty of man to glorify God, making religion an end in itself. The instrumental nature of Chinese religion has deep roots in ancient fertility rites designed to stimulate food production and preserve the community. This background helps to explain the anthropocentric, practical, magical, and generally tolerant features of Chinese religion. It is the basis for the organic view of Nature controlling Chinese thought and the social ideal of harmony governing moral and social existence.

Religion for the Chinese is primarily a social function for the good of society as a whole. Those elements which we call religious in the sense of orientation toward the supernatural assume importance for the Chinese only when they function to strengthen social existence. The organic view of Nature includes society, so that harmony with Heaven through religious rites guarantees social existence. Religion was employed as a sanctioning force for the political and social order. Specific, institutional forms of religion were constantly controlled by the government because they were potentially independent centers of faith and allegiance which could threaten the traditional order.

Buddhists in China argued that monasticism and religious practices such as donations to the order benefited the individual but were not merely an individualistic concern. They maintained that society also profited from the aid offered to ancestors in their

progress to a higher destiny and through the believer's good citizenship inspired by Buddhist piety. Further, they claimed that Buddhism augmented the magical and spiritual resources of Chinese religion through the use of Buddhist spells and incantations and through belief in numerous Indian gods which had been absorbed into Buddhism as well as the multitude of mythical Buddhas and Bodhisattvas depicted in Mahayana, Buddhist mythology.

The awareness of varying levels of understanding within Chinese society contributes to more accurate assessment of Chinese religiosity. As we shall see, the basic cleavage in the Chinese religious world has not been between the clergy and the laity, but rather between the scholar-bureaucrat (ordinarily the Confucian elite or literati) and the generally uneducated, illiterate masses of people. While the larger mass of people remained unsophisticated concerning their religious beliefs and practices, the intellectual elite became more critical and philosophical. The two levels of perception were mainly distinguished by the depth of reflection and insight achieved by individuals within their life situation.

The scholar-bureaucrats rationalized religion and opposed excesses of superstition and magic. In order to foster their outlook on the masses, they transformed the ancient myths and traditions into didactic, moralistic stories in which the gods served as anthropomorphic models of virtue to be imitated by men. They were aware, however, of the sanction and support religion gave to political and social authority, and therefore made no attempt to abolish popular cults. When such cults were kept within proper limits, they helped to maintain order through cultivating belief in the supernatural basis of events as the will of Heaven and disposing people to be more acquiescent to the demands made by society on their lives.

While China did not develop a special class of religious personnel who tended primarily to religious matters, the scholar-bureaucrats ensured cosmic and social order and harmony through teaching moral norms and performing rituals. They criticized the contemporary order when it appeared to depart from its basic function of realizing harmony and enforcing values, and they criticized religious activities when they seemed inimical to social goals and ideals. In no case did they present for the individual a way of salvation as an alternative to life in this world and society.

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism have so fused that the average person may not be aware of the source of his beliefs or practices. Even the scholars and monks who were consciously committed to a specific system would not explicitly reject other systems. Confucianism and Taoism long coexisted and mutually influenced each other; in the first stages of its introduction into China, Buddhism was confused with Taoism. As the various traditions came to be better understood, they appeared more complementary than opposing. Confucianism gave guidance for the moral life; Taoism provided techniques of magic to secure longevity, to deal with spirits, and to gain benefits from alchemy. Buddhism came to be related primarily to the afterlife in the Pure Land or Heaven. Through the ceremonies of Buddhism one fulfilled filial piety for his deceased

loved ones. This fusion was expressed in the popular morality text, *T'ai-shang Kan-ying P'ien,* in which a Taoist priest discoursed on religion and destiny:

> *"The soul," he said, "is Tao, and Tao is soul. The soul and the Tao are not different in essence. If the Tao is separated from the soul, you will transmigrate through the six domains and keep on the three paths, but if the soul and the Tao are united, you will finally reach paradise and the land of immortals. Hell and heaven are in your own heart. Unless heaven reside within you, the mere reading or reciting of sacred books profiteth nothing."* [1]

In this passage the reference to Tao and the land of immortals points to Taoism, while the concept of transmigration and the six domains and three paths is clearly Buddhist. The virtues stressed throughout the volume reflect Confucian interest.

The merging of religious traditions can be observed in the diversity of divinities to whom people appeal to fulfill their desires and needs. Of the major deities, some have a Taoist background, some a Buddhist, and one the divinized Confucius. While most of the hundreds of deities relating to every facet of human existence and nature may be located within Taoist religion, Buddhist figures such as Kuan-yin (Avalokitesvara), Ti-tsang-wang (Kshitigarbha), and Yen-lo-wang (Yama) are important in dealing with affairs of this life or the afterlife. On the practical level, the Chinese outlook on the unity of the three teachings has been succinctly stated by Francis Hsu:

> *The Chinese may go to a Buddhist monastery to pray for a male heir, but he may proceed from there to a Taoist shrine where he beseeches a god to cure him of malaria. Ask any number of Chinese what their religion is and the answer of the majority will be that they have no particular religion, or that since all religions benefit man in one way or another, they are equally good.*[2]

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CHINESE RELIGION

Recent historical and archeological sources have pushed back the boundaries of myth and legend to reveal ancient organized life and culture. The once legendary Shang people have been found to be historical and in possession of a highly developed culture.

The Shang (ca. 1500–1100 B.C.) had already developed advanced techniques of bronze-casting, sericulture, weaving, and most significant for Chinese culture—writing. Despite their sophistication in comparison with surrounding peoples, they were unable to defend themselves from invasions and finally fell before the onslaught of the hardier Chou tribes of Northwest China.

1. Teitaro Suzuki, Paul Carus, trans., *T'ai-shang Kan-ying P'ien,* LaSalle, Ill., The Open Court Pub. Co., 1944, p. 84.

2. Francis L. K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese: Two Ways of Life,* p. 237, quoted in Derk Bodde, *China's Cultural Tradition,* New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, p. 21.

The Chou dynasty (1100–221 B.C.) witnessed the establishment and eventual decline of feudalism. The gradual dissolution of the political power of the Chou forms the background for the most creative era in Chinese thought.

Generally, the Chou era divides into three periods. The initial period of the flourishing Chou hegemony extended from the conquest of the Shang in about 1100 to 722 B.C. when the ruler was driven from his capital in Hao to Loyang in Honan. The second period was termed the time of *Ch'un-ch'iu* (Spring and Autum—722–481 B.C.). This phase was the title of a historical chronicle of the kingdom of Lu, traditionally ascribed to Confucius. During this time, numerous petty rulers attempted to extend their authority as the royal house declined. The final period, from 481 to 221 B.C., was one of constant conflict known as the age of Warring States. The continual strife among principalities ended finally when the Chou and other states came under the despotic rule of the founder of the Ch'in dynasty, Shih Huang-ti (First Emperor).

The period of the breakdown of the Chou dynasty and Warring States was one of the most intellectually creative periods that China has experienced. According to tradition, the age witnessed the flowering of a hundred schools, representing the most diverse viewpoints. From among the host of contenders six became traditionally significant. The Confucian school was represented by Confucius (K'ung Fu-tzu, 551–479 B.C.), Mencius (Meng-tzu, 371–289 B.C.), and Hsun-tzu (298–238 B.C.). Derived from the class of literati, this school supported aristocratic morality. In contrast, the Mo-ist school, founded by Mo-ti (479–439 B.C.), appeared to represent a lower-class perspective with a doctrine of universal love and egalitarianism. A different approach to morality was furnished by the Taoist philosophy of Lao-tzu (sixth–fourth century B.C.) and Chuang-tzu (c. 399–295 B.C.). Other significant philosophical schools were the School of Names, composed of men skilled in logic and debate similar to ancient Greek sophists, the Yin-yang school and the Five Elements school,[3] which together explained phenomena in more materialistic or naturalistic terms, and the Legalist school of Han Fei-tzu (d. 233 B.C.), followed by professional politicians. Confucianism and Taoism overshadowed all other schools in shaping Chinese outlook and providing significant insight into the pressing problem of establishing and maintaining a durable society and way of life.

The period of creativity came to an end with the enforced unification under the short-lived Ch'in dynasty (221–206 B.C.). Ch'in despotism, symbolized by the persecution of scholars and destruction of classical texts, was almost immediately replaced by the great Han dynasty which lasted for some four hundred years from 206 B.C. to A.D. 220. Under the Han, Confucianism became the orthodox

3. *Yin-yang* refers to the contrasting cosmic forces which act to produce the world of experience, while the Five Elements, which include metal, water, earth, fire, and wood, are the basic constituents from which all things are formed.

ideology of the state and the basis of education and competitive examinations for official positions. As a result of the practical supremacy of Confucianism, study of other schools of thought waned.

The next major period of intellectual ferment attended the breakdown of the Han age and the ensuing period of disunity (A.D. 221–589). Confucianism also fell into disrepute and a mystical tendency developed as a response to the disruption and anxiety of the age. In this background Neo-Taoist philosophy emerged, and Buddhism, imported from India, spread easily through Chinese society, benefiting from initial confusion with Taoist philosophy and religion.

The spread of Buddhism through Chinese society enabled it to provide the unifying element in the establishment of the Sui dynasty (A.D. 589–618). During the succeeding T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618–907) Buddhism reached the zenith of its power and prestige. This prestige ended in the great persecution of 845, and during the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960–1127) a revived Confucianism absorbing elements from Taoism and Buddhism displaced Buddhist intellectual leadership.

From the time of the Sung until the establishment of the Republic in 1912, Confucianism was the dominant intellectual force and basis of education. The Neo-Confucian philosophies taught by Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130–1200) and Wang Yang-ming (A.D. 1472–1529) were comprehensive in promoting traditional Confucian morality as well as metaphysical and mystical elements which answered needs formerly met by Taoism and Buddhism. Throughout this long period no radically new approach in the realm of thought or religion appeared except for the incursions of Islam and Christianity, neither of which was fully accepted into Chinese life. In modern times Confucianism suffered from the disrupting influences of Western culture.

Despite the many changes, Confucian tradition provided the thread linking Chinese thought. It became the basis for the most outstanding Chinese character traits and functioned as the state's political ideology over a longer period of time than any similar ideology. Its understanding of human nature and political astuteness, as well as its system of training bureaucrats (not so much with technical expertise as with moral and cultural sensitivity), has made it one of the most significant products of the human mind and spirit. On the other hand, it was also responsible for the traditionalism and conservatism of Chinese society, making it difficult to deal with new problems requiring decisive change. For this reason it has been resisted by many Chinese concerned with the task of technological modernization, even though the Confucian tradition embodied the best in the Chinese spirit.

## THE CHINESE CLASSICS

The five classics of the Confucian tradition and the archeological material relating to the Shang people are primary sources of information for pre-Confucian religion. There are some obstacles to reaching a clear understanding of the ancient religion because the texts were edited to conform to the official philosophy in the Chou period and then destroyed in the Ch'in era, necessitating a recon-

struction during the Han age. Disputes arose concerning the authenticity of the reconstructed texts.

The five major classics are the *Shu-ching* (*Book of Documents* or *History*), *Shih-ching* (*Book of Poems*), *I-ching* (*Book of Changes*), *Li-chi* (*Book of Ceremonies*), and *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). A sixth text, the *Book of Music*, has been lost to history, but its existence is implied both in the importance Confucius ascribed to music and in the fact that Confucian studies were divided into six fields.

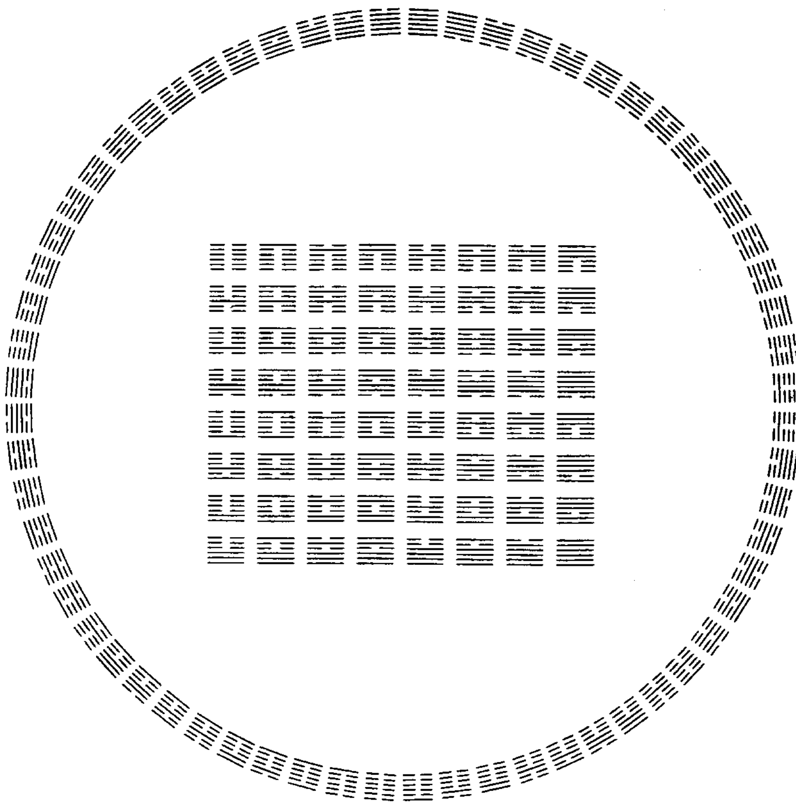
Probably composed around the ninth century B.C. when the Chou dynasty had reached its peak, the *Shu-ching* was the primary source for the legendary history of China. Through later additions to the text, the narrative reached 625 B.C. While much of the material is of late derivation, it contains the reflection of older religious ideas.

The *Shih-ching* is a collection of folk songs covering a period of more than a thousand years beginning with the Shang era. Though it is believed that more than three thousand poems once existed, tradition claims that Confucius selected three hundred and five of the best poems relating to piety, war, and love. Since many of the poems appear to have been ceremonial in origin and purpose they provide direct insight into the earliest religion of the Chinese. Confucius himself regarded poetry as a source of moral guidance and information. Consequently, Confucian tradition has overlaid the poems with orthodox interpretation.

Used for divination, the *I-ching* is perhaps one of the most important and fundamental of the classics. Through its system of interpretation of symbolic trigrams and hexagrams, it also provided a basis for philosophical and mystical speculation in later Chinese thought.

The system of hexagrams, composed of varying combinations of solid or *yang* lines and broken or *yin* lines, is traditionally thought to have been created by the ancient hero Fu Hsi in the initial trigram system of eight symbols. Later the symbols were doubled to form hexagrams giving sixty-four possible forms. Tradition attributes the expanded forms to either Fu Hsi or King Wen of Chou who is said to have composed the text of the *I-ching* while in prison in 1142 B.C. Confucius is reputed to have written a commentary to the text, and it became closely associated with his tradition.

The theory and practices based on the *I-ching* exhibit the Chinese organic view of Nature as a grand, dynamic, harmonious process of interacting yin-yang forces and interdependent elements. Since man and society are parts of the total natural order, their destinies are dependent on harmony with Nature. To achieve or maintain this harmony, it is necessary to discover the appropriate hexagrams governing the present situation. When the diagram is determined through selecting yarrow sticks or throwing coins, the practitioner may consult the manual and interpret their lines in relation to the client's contemplated choices and actions. A significant aspect of these diagrams and their use is the limitation on corruption by the diviner, since the patterns and the explanatory passages in the text are fixed.



*Circular diagram of the sixty-four hexagrams of the* I-ching. (*From Hellmut Wilhelm,* Change: Eight Lectures on the I Ching.)

The *Li-chi* (*Book of Ceremonies*) has considerable importance among the classics because Confucius considered ceremony and propriety essential to forming character and maintaining public peace. The work concerns ancestor worship, music, dancing, and the state sacrifices. The present version of the text derives from the second century B.C. and is clearly the work of later generations. In the twelfth century A.D. two chapters, *Ta-hsueh* (*Great Learning*) and *Chung-yung* (*Doctrine of the Mean*), were singled out for special regard in Neo-Confucianism. Other traditional texts of similar content are the *I-li* (*Ceremonies and Rituals*) and *Chou-li* (*Rituals of Chou*).

The final text, *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), traditionally ascribed to Confucius, concentrates on the history of the kingdom of Lu, Confucius' home state. The narration begins with the rule of Duke Yin (722–712 B.C.) and continues through a series of twelve dukes to Duke Ai (481 B.C.). It is considered one of the first accurate historical texts of China. The text itself is only a statement of fact, but in its choice of terms depicting rulers, it implies criticism of leaders who assume titles they do not deserve. The book thus appears to conform to Confucius' teaching on the rectification of names, whereby the name of a thing must correspond with its reality.

The Confucians were more interested in the meanings and morals of the classics than in the more formal literary elements of presentation. Through their interpretations, they constructed durable and creative systems of thought, although frequently obscuring ancient religious beliefs.

# HARMONY IN THE CLAN AND KINGDOM: THE RELIGION OF THE SHANG AND CHOU

Archeology and the poetry of the *Book of Poems* provide the basic information for the religious outlook of the Shang and Chou eras. Behind the later official interpretations of the poems, is the basic character of the communal religion which must have been the foundation of the royal religion represented mainly in the archeological finds.[1] The emphasis on the harmonization of man and Nature, which became the controlling motif of later Chinese thought, was expressed in tribal and royal rites.

The realization of the harmony of man and Nature appeared in the *Book of Poems* in the interrelation of marriage practices and seasonal fertility themes. Within natural settings such as mountains, woods, and junctures of rivers a variety of rituals were performed in spring and autumn, including purifications, bathings, contests, sexual rites, sacrifices, banqueting, rainmaking, and flower gathering. Though later expurgated as immoral, there are hints of orgies. Concerning the significance of these religious activities Marcel Granet writes:

> *Speaking generally, they are festivals of union, in which people become aware of the bonds which unite them, and, at the same*

1. For a concise summary of the archeological discoveries relating to the religion of the Shang and Chou eras, see Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of World Religions*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1965, vol. II, pp. 317–342.

> *time, of their oneness with their natural environment. To crown all, they also serve to guarantee, along with the prosperity of men and things, the regular working of Nature.*[2]

The concern of the Shang and Chou to maintain the balance of forces in Nature indicates their awareness of interacting but unequal forces within Nature and life which could bring disaster on the community if proper means were not taken to achieve harmonization. From this awareness the yin-yang dualism which pervaded all Chinese religious and philosophical thought and the duality of *shen* (positive divine forces) and *kuei* (negative forces) have arisen.

The concept of yin-yang may have resulted from the confrontation of boys and girls in the ceremonial poetic competition preceding betrothal or from observation of meteorological phenomena, since the yin aspect is represented in Chinese by the character for raincloud and yang is represented by the symbol for the sun's rays. Consequently, yin stands for all characteristics which are dark, wet, cold, soft, and female. It is also square and even-numbered. Yang includes all qualities associated with brightness, dryness, warmth, hardness, masculinity, and is round and odd-numbered. Yang is naturally superior. It is to be noted that the duality is complementary and not conflicting. The traditional symbol implies the ultimate balance of the complementary interaction.

The contrast of positive and negative forces represented by the shen and kuei related to the development of the Chinese pantheon. The shen comprised all the good spirits which eventually came to be organized in a great hierarchy of gods headed by T'ien (Heaven) on the pattern of the feudal monarchy. Each deity had a particular function and rank within the whole.

Ancient thought regarded each person as a compound of the shen and kuei elements (also termed *hun* and *p'o*). The shen was man's superior aspect, the basis of intelligence and vital forces, while the kuei represented inferior features, the basis of physical nature. At death the shen proceeded to the palace of Shang-ti and became a beneficent deity as a result of pacification through the sacrifices of his descendants. The kuei resided in the tomb and along with the decay of the body sank to the underworld. If not appeased through sacrifices, the kuei could become a hostile spirit. The final residence of the keui was believed to be a place in the underworld called Yellow Springs.

The major deities associated with the ancient religion of the soil in China were the fertility deities Hou-t'u (Lord Soil) and Hou-chi (Lord Millet). Among the Chou the same cult was called She-chi (altar of earth and grain). The oldest and most universal cult in China, it has persisted to modern times due to the enduring importance of the soil in the life of the peasant.

In the early stages of Chinese religion the divine forces did not possess highly defined personalities. People did not attempt to relate to the deities in personal communion; they thought of them in

2. Marcel Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, New York, Dutton, 1932, p. 180.

*P'an-ku holding in his hands the yang-yin, symbol of Heaven and Earth. (Courtesy of the British Museum.)*

terms of function. All important natural objects were invested with divine power, undefined but effective. Eventually, however, the deities were historicized so that the earth deity She was identified with Yu, the reputed founder of the Hsia dynasty, and Chi, the grain deity, was identified with the founder of the Chou people. In addition to deities related to agriculture or ancestors, each home was guarded by a group of household deities who guaranteed the prosperity and security of the family. There were deities of the inner and outer doors, the well, the hearth, and the inner court. The ancient cult has continued into modern times.

The realization of harmony with Nature brought religion into close association with political power, as the king was the mediator between the total community and the forces of Nature and deities. The aim of the ritual activities of the king, like the peasants, was to secure the assistance of the ancestral deities in maintaining the continuity of the people and promoting food production. The Shang not only believed that the dead lived in the afterlife in a manner similar

to this life, but that the ancestral spirits guarded the present world and guaranteed the authority of the reigning king. As imperial power grew, the supporting system of sacrifices became more elaborate.

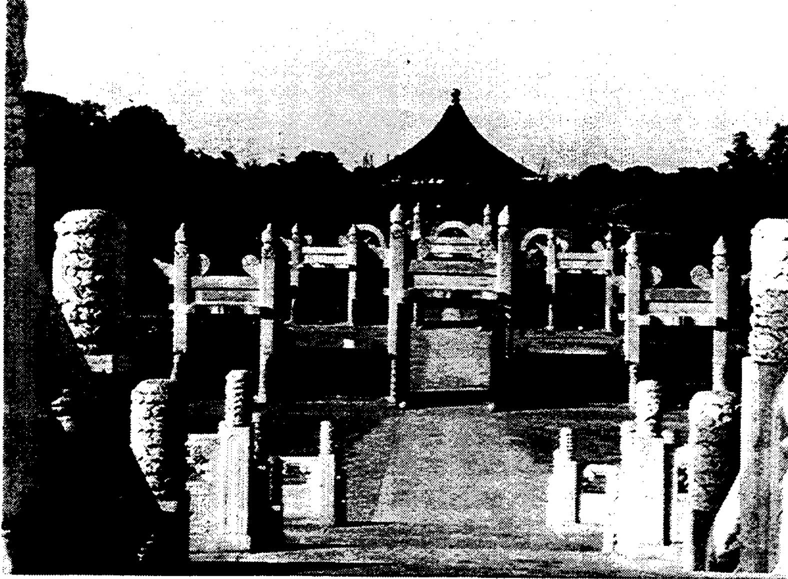
The royal religion may be viewed as the religion of the central clan among the Shang which, as the power of the clan extended, grew to cover the entire body of associated clans. The deity Shang-ti, whose name means "Supreme Ruler" or "Supreme Ancestor," was the central deity of Shang times and may have originally been the ancestral deity of the leading clan. He was addressed as protector of the royal house and in connection with good harvests. With the transition to the Chou age, there was need for a deity who transcended tribal and clan connections. T'ien (Heaven) replaced Shang-ti. The ruler, as representative of T'ien on earth, was called T'ien-tzu (Son of Heaven), and the state defined as T'ien-hsia (Under Heaven). T'ien, in early Chinese thought, was a personal power who controlled the world.[3] There grew up about him a pantheon of deities who had various functions in maintaining the world.

The major religious practices of the Shang and Chou eras were sacrifice and divination. These practices, originally communal in nature, eventually became more individualized. Religious activities pervaded every area of life and were led by the head of the family or the ruler. The sacrifices were occasions to report to the ancestors on family matters or on the success of various ventures—military or diplomatic. Animals by the hundreds were slaughtered, as well as occasional prisoners of war. Methods included burning in open flame, drowning in rivers, or burial, depending on the occasion of the rite.

As the Chou state consolidated, sacrifice assumed central importance and the number of rites and feasts increased. The Shang were employed as ritualists, and the earlier forms of ritual were continued. The major state ceremonies, continuing until 1911, were the sacrifices made to Heaven in the spring and winter solstices. The Emperor performed them on the great altar of Heaven in the capital.

Under Chou rule the perspective on sacrifices shifted from an emphasis on clan relationships to rites centered on the personality of the founder of the dynasty, Wen-wang, to whom the divine mandate to rule had been given by the deity Shang-ti. His successors who were instrumental in the conquest of the Shang people also became

3. Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1952–1953, vol. I, p. 31, notes five meanings given to the term *T'ien* in Chinese thought. They should be clearly understood in order to avoid confusion in interpreting Chinese thought at various times. (1) There is the physical sky, as in the phrase "Heaven and Earth." (2) There is the anthropomorphic ruling Heaven, as "Imperial Heaven Supreme Emperor." (3) There is the fatalistic concept of Heaven applied to all events outside human control. It is equivalent to *ming*, decree, command. (4) There is Heaven used in the sense of Nature. (5) There is the ethical Heaven as the highest moral principle in the universe. In the Confucian *Analects* the anthropomorphic Heaven is most frequent.



*The Altar of Heaven, Peking. (Photo by Fritz Henle, from Monkmeyer Press Photo Service.)*

objects of reverence. Confucius particularly idealized the Duke of Chou for his many social and cultural achievements.

The interrelation of the religious and political was evident in the fact that only the Emperor was entitled to perform national sacrifices. For anyone else to attempt it was equivalent to a challenge to the throne. The term designating the overthrow of the state was "turning over the She-chi," which was to despoil the altars of the earth deity.

Although a more rationalistic attitude toward sacrifice developed in Chinese tradition, the basic beliefs and activities forged in the ancient period remained until recent times as the symbol of the political foundations of the state as well as the recognition of man's dependence upon the forces of Nature for his existence.

The second major practice of communal importance in ancient China was divination, since it was necessary to determine the will of the deity before engaging in activities affecting the whole society. In China the practice assumed special importance in view of the concern for the harmonization of Nature and society.

The major materials for divination among the Shang were ox bones and tortoise shells, or occasionally, sheep bones. The tortoise shells had particular significance, as they embodied in their shape the structure of the universe itself. The upper round part was like the vault of the sky, while the square lower section represented the earth. In the ancient thought tortoises were pictured as the foundation of certain islands and the world. Consequently, the ancient Chinese considered them important sources of information on worldly and heavenly affairs. The *I-ching* eventually became a major manual for acquiring counsel concerning one's future actions.

Numerous other methods of divination developed. Appeal was made to astrology; almanacs with observations on the seasons; arrangements of the five elements as earth, wood, fire, metal, and water; dreams; and the system of forms represented by phrenology. In later times coins were used in which the yang was the upper side, while the yin was the lower. Three coins were tossed at least six times and the combination was interpreted according to the *I-ching* series of sixty-four hexagrams. Also fortune-telling was performed through consideration of the correlation of the five basic elements, calendrical symbols, and one's birthdate (the year, month, and day). Divination not only pertained to matters of one's future destiny, but also to the use of the environment in placing a building. Geomancy, called *Feng-shui* (Wind and Water), was a conspicuous feature of the Chinese approach to the world.

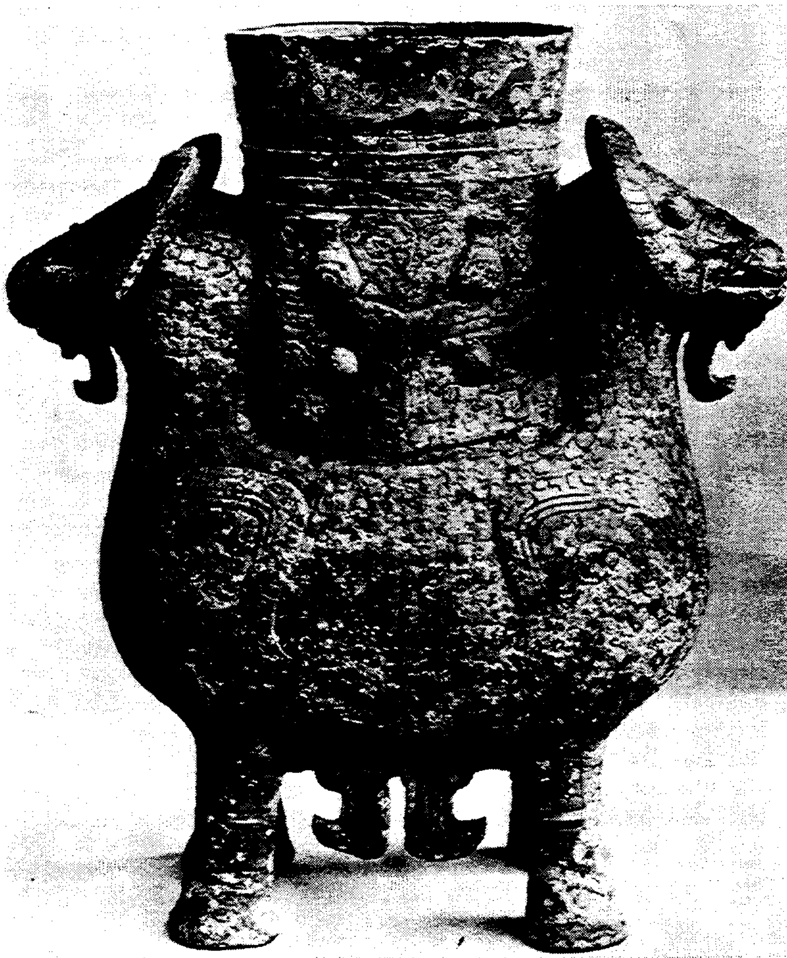
As C. K. Yang [4] indicates, divination in earliest times was primarily a political activity dealing with war and peace. Divination gave a sacred character to political decisions and consequently contributed to their authority and popular acceptance. Yang notes that Confucian thought, though rationalistic at many points, did not alter this basic function. Only in later times was the activity extended to more private and individual concerns.

The religion of the classical period largely centered on the royal and noble clans. Through securing the support of their ancestral spirits all the land was peaceful and prosperous. Since it was the duty of the heads of the clans to perform the sacrifices, the formation of a specifically priestly caste was inhibited.

However, in connection with the sacrifices and divination performed by the king on behalf of the entire people, personnel of allied clans assisted in the prayers and sacrifices. Eventually they became specialized in function, and the performance of rites was transmitted through certain families. During the Chou period the organization of the ritual and personnel became formalized. Nevertheless, the officials of the state cult did not have mystic or magical authority.

Along with the development of official ritualists, there were functionaries termed *wu* (sorcerers or wizards). The status of these individuals in early times was quite high, sometimes second only to the king himself, who originally attained his position on the basis of magical charisma as a rainmaker. The functions of the sorcerers were divination, sacrifices, rainmaking, and ridding the community of evils. During the Chou period the status of the wu declined as a rationalistic view of government grew and the prestige of the literati advanced. Displaced through the growth of the Confucian school and its ritual functions, the wu also later faced competition from Taoist and Buddhist priests. The wu have persisted into modern times, performing fortune-telling, geomancy, prayers for the sick, exorcisms, and various forms of magic for individuals or groups out-

4. C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1961, pp. 107, 259–265.



*Bronze ritual vessel from the Shang-Yin Dynasty, 1766–1122 B.C. (Courtesy of the British Museum.)*

side the traditional religious structures. However, they are not regarded very highly.

In assessing the Chinese religion which emerged from the information available on the classical period, we may observe that it was rooted in an ancestral cult chiefly designed to maintain and unify the group by enlisting the powers of the departed members of the tribe and family. This cult with its seasonal festivals did not contain highly defined deities of concrete character, but rather an indefinite awareness of forces impressed on the imagination by natural phenomena. As the organization and function of society developed and as larger urban centers arose, the religion of the people evolved along a somewhat parallel course, resulting in the highly organized and multitudinous pantheon with each deity having its specific task in the divine bureaucracy.

During the Han period, the emergence of religious Taoism and the arrival of Buddhism spurred the proliferation of deities. The

popular standing of religion as a means for attaining health, wealth, and security underlay this development and linked the modern Chinese religious perspective with its ancient precedents. There has been no significant alteration in the popular Chinese religious viewpoint, save in the scope and multiplicity of objects of worship and appeal.

The details of early Chinese religious beliefs and practices are not particularly unique when compared with other ancient religious cults revering ancestors or natural forces. Thus the specific features of the ancient cult do not explain the peculiar developments of Chinese religio-philosophic tradition. The outstanding feature of the religious history of China is the rationalization and moralization of the cult making man and the social order the central concern. This tendency was most conspicuous in the teachings of Confucius.

The basic presuppositions of Chinese religio-philosophic thought were clearly rooted in the earlier religious perspective. As we have previously noted, it was axiomatic that society was an integral part of Nature, and it was the duty of man through his ethical and moral behavior not to disturb the harmony basic to his life. Only those features of the ancient religious system which symbolized and strengthened this awareness in the people were retained and implemented in the official cult. All other elements were ignored or left to the common man for individual solution. Consequently, ancient Chinese skeptics ridiculed the rulers for their excessive attention to the spirits and superstition when the state was in danger.[5] Confucius also warned his followers not to be overly concerned about the spirits, while yet affirming the need for ceremony.

5. Fung, op. cit., vol. I, p. 31.

# HARMONY IN SOCIETY: CONFUCIANISM

## THE LIFE OF CONFUCIUS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS CULT

Confucius' life and his social ideals must be viewed against the background of the turmoil, social upheaval, and succession of intrigues and war that were destroying traditional morality, undermining old loyalties, and eroding the power of the royal house at the beginning of the Warring States period (481–221 B.C.). The magical and pragmatic traditional religion lacked sufficient moral and spiritual depth to contribute to social harmony.

In order to meet the problems of the age there appeared numerous private teachers and statesmen who offered their services to various lords. As politicians and administrators, they aided the ruler in cultivating and extending his power. These scholars were called *ju* (literati). The term itself meant weak or mild and may have first been applied sarcastically to those teachers who espoused a more pacifistic and moderate approach to human relations. Although there are numerous theories concerning their origin, they appear to have had skill in reading and writing, which enabled them to master traditional wisdom useful in administration. It is significant that Confucianism came to be known as *Ju-chiao* (the teaching of the literati) and that Confucius was perhaps most representative of that class. Undoubtedly his keen insight into human relations, the foundation of morality, and the function of leadership set the direction for later Chinese scholarship.

A major traditional source for information on the life of Confucius, apart from indications in the *Analects*, has been the *Historical Records* (*Shih-chi*) of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (d. 85 B.C.). According to his account, Confucius (K'ung Fu-tzu, 551–479 B.C.) was born in the state of Lu in the family of K'ung and given the personal name of Ch'iu and literary name Chung-ni. His parents died when he was very young. At an early age he showed great interest in sacrifice and

ceremonies. Though his family was of poor and common background, the young Confucius was given responsibility in the house of Baron Chi. In the many positions which he came to hold, he had a reputation for fairness. When he was magistrate in Chung-tu, it became a model town. Under Duke Ting he became Grand Secretary of Justice, then Chief Minister. During this time, we are told, he reformed society so that mutton and pork butchers no longer sold spoiled meat; men and women used different roads; [1] things left on the street were not stolen; and foreigners were safe.

Despite his competence and moral character, Confucius ran into difficulty in the various principalities that he served, making it necessary for him to wander about seeking employment. He suffered from intrigue and slander. In the course of his travels he taught disciples the ways of a gentleman and government. Some of these pupils gained administrative positions in various states. In spite of his many problems, Confucius did not alter his ways, being convinced he had a mission which none could thwart because it was supported by Heaven. Besides carrying on his political and educational activities, Confucius also studied and edited the classics and composed the *Spring and Autumn Annals.*

His personal deportment and character are described in most eloquent terms as very much the example of what he constantly taught. Upon his death in Lu at the age of seventy-two, the Duke of Ai and his disciples deeply mourned his passing. Eventually his tomb became a shrine where his personal belongings were kept and ancestral sacrifices offered. The first Emperor of Han came to make sacrifice at the tomb in 206 B.C. At the end of his account, Ssu-ma Ch'ien poignantly contrasted the pervasiveness and lasting character of Confucius' influence with the perishability of worldly power:

> *There have been many kings, emperors and great men in history, who enjoyed fame and honor while they lived and came to nothing at their death, while Confucius, who was but a common scholar clad in a cotton gown, became the acknowledged Master of scholars for over ten generations. All people in China who discuss the six arts, from the emperors, kings and princes down, regard the master as the final authority.*[2]

Despite this legendary glorification, the life of Confucius does not suggest actions or characteristics which might lead to the formation of a religious movement or cult, and although Confucius himself was agnostic in religious matters, a cult of Confucius developed under the sponsorship of the state when Confucianism achieved supremacy as the orthodox ideology of the nation.

It should be noted, however, that this development was in line with the outlook of Chinese ancestor reverence and popular religion which, as an expression of gratitude and reward for their merit, exalted to the level of divinity individuals who benefited mankind.

1. In ancient Confucian thought the sexes were strictly segregated.
2. Lin Yu-tang, *The Wisdom of Confucius*, New York, Random House, 1938, p. 100.

*Three sages—Shaka, Confucius, and Lao-tzu. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bigelow Collection.)*

Wang Chung, a critic of Chinese religion about A.D. 80, summarized the general Chinese attitude to such practices:

> *Two motives are underlying all sacrifices: gratitude for received benefits and ancestor worship. We show our gratitude for the efforts others have taken on our behalf, and worship our ancestors out of regard for their kindness. Special efforts, extraordinary goodness, merits and universal reforms are taken into consideration by wise emperors, and it is for this reason that they have instituted sacrifices. An oblation is offered to him who has improved the public administration, who for the public welfare has worked till his death, who has done his best to strengthen his country, who has warded off great disasters, or prevented great misfortunes.*[3]

Although traditions claim that Duke Ai of Lu initiated the cult of Confucius, it did not really begin to take shape until the Han era when in A.D. 37 the Emperor Kuang Wu sponsored sacrifice at the grave of Confucius and conferred honors on his family. Even more important was the first regular cult paid to Confucius by Emperor Ming in A.D. 59, when he proclaimed that schools in the major cities should make sacrifice to Confucius. The cult became associated with education and the class of scholars in which Confucius functioned as a hero or patron saint.

Corresponding to the exaltation of the sage, there developed legends concerning his miraculous birth. While direct references to divinity were generally avoided, Confucius received honorific titles such as "Confucius, the perfectly holy teacher of antiquity." During the Ming period (A.D. 1363–1644) the cult was reformed. The image of Confucius was replaced by a tablet, and excessive titles were rejected. These changes led early Jesuit missionaries to regard the cult as reverence rather than worship.

The cult of Confucius was never a popular cult, but the reverence paid to him by the state naturally seeped down to the people so that on family and clan altars tablets, images, or pictures of Confucius were found along with Buddha, Kuan-ti, and ancestral tablets. As Hsu notes: "The popular gods in all family shrines were three: Kuan Kung (The warrior from Three Kingdoms), Confucius, and one or more Buddhas. A fourth popular figure is the Goddess of Mercy or Fertility." [4]

The Confucian cult was official instead of popular. The principle lying behind such official cults was that "the sages devised guidance by way of the gods and the (people in the) empire became obedient." [5]

In effect, the various cults receiving official authorization sanc-

3. John K. Shryock, *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius*, New York, Harper & Row, 1960, pp. 81–82, quoted from the *Lun Heng*.

4. Francis L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestor's Shadow*, New York, Doubleday, 1967, p. 184.

5. C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1961, p. 145.

tioned the ethical and political values of the society. The cult of Confucius had particular relation to the power of the state. According to C. K. Yang, it is a mistake to neglect the religious elements of this cult evident in the awe and reverence it induced among the people through its ceremonies and the dispersion of grand buildings through the country.[6]

## CONFUCIUS' PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN RELATIONS

After the death of Confucius his disciples, perhaps feeling need for his continued counsel and direction, culled from their memories his basic ideas and deposited them in a small manual now known as the *Analects* (*Lun-yu*), or "Words of Confucius."

Despite various textual problems concerning the present work, it is the most reliable source available for studying Confucius' thought. Its content is unsystematic, but there emerges a consistent system of values and insights on human behavior which have contributed to the formation of later Confucian philosophy and social theory. In order to grasp the distinctive features of his perspective, we must first consider the audience to whom the material is directed.

The audience assumed in the *Analects* was clearly the aspiring scholar-bureaucrats who sought positions in the courts of the various principalities. It was, consequently, a practical work with an aim to alert the individual to the problems of power in catering to powerful rulers and in controlling the common people. The practical advice given in the text, however, was susceptible to wider interpretation, since the problem of the man in power was only an intensified version of the problem facing all men—namely, how to develop and maintain successful human relationships.

Throughout the text there is an awareness of the limitations of sheer authoritarian compulsion and the use of force in gaining one's goals. There is also a recognition that society is structured with inevitable distinctions of superiority and inferiority. In every form of human relationship there is a leader and a follower. There is embodied in the basic philosophy the insight that individuals will accept any amount of authority provided they are permitted to retain their self respect and dignity. That government should benefit the people and that only the most morally competent should rule are two principles implied throughout the work. A basic element of governing or leading is knowing when to defer or yield. In view of these insights, the major issue confronting Confucius in the *Analects* is the formation of the appropriate moral character enabling the individual to wield power without force.

To realize the character for successful leadership Confucius advocates the cultivation of a number of principles and perspectives on human relations, all designed to contribute to harmony among men. These principles divide into interior and exterior aspects of moral life. Both dimensions are ultimately united in the ideal person. The central interior qualities of moral life essential to leadership are

6. Ibid., pp. 164–165.

*jen, chung, shu,* and *hsueh,*[7] while *li* and *hsiao* are the exterior elements of moral character.[8] All aspects are joined and harmonized in the ideal of the *chun-tzu* and *shih.* The power they manifest in human affairs is their *te.*

The achievement of ideal human existence requires the harmonization of the inner and outer aspects of man's life. The attainment of this harmony within himself would inevitably make the individual a leader among men through the attractiveness and magnetic quality of his character. In contrast to magical forms of charisma, Confucius asserts that the most real and effective charisma is rooted in the cultivation and expression of virtue. The durability of his thought rests on the fact that it is rational, being based on the realistic contemplation of the requirements for groups to maintain social life in the most meaningful way. It is not perfectionistic but only requires that those who subscribe to the ideal begin to move in that direction, starting where they find themselves at present. Heaven guarantees morality by responding to human actions with reward or punishment. Relying upon the classics, Confucius holds up the examples of the ancient sages and rulers such as Yao, Shun, Yu, Chou Kings Wen and Wu, and the Duke of Chou as the justification for his moral views and as models to be followed in the cultivation of virtue.

Jen stands as the supreme virtue and interior quality in Confucius' catalogue of values. As the symbol of Chinese humanism, the term embraces a wide range of meanings reflecting the importance of human relations. It may mean humaneness, humanity, humanheartedness, man-to-manness, love, benevolence, or goodness. In essence, jen is what one does when he is most truly human and implies that humanity is a task and an achievement.

As presented in the *Analects* the term jen has two dimensions. There is the level of expression in particular actions and attitudes, and a deeper dimension of perfection which can never be defined or exhausted in particular acts.

As Confucius believed that one must begin with lower things in order to arrive at the higher, we may begin to understand jen by indicating the types of action which may manifest that quality. When Jan Jung inquired about the nature of goodness, Confucius answered:

> *Behave when away from home as though you were in the presence of an important guest. Deal with the common people as though you were officiating at an important sacrifice. Do not do to others what you would not like yourself.*
>
> (*Analects* XII.2) [9]

7. Other correlative principles appearing in the *Analects* are *hsin* (faithfulness in keeping one's word) and *chi* (straightforwardness). Later, the quality *ch'eng,* usually translated as "sincerity," became a major virtue on the basis of the text of the *Chung-yung.*

8. The concept of *I* (righteousness) received greater stress in the teaching of Mencius as a correlate of *jen.*

9. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the *Analects* are taken from the excellent translation by Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius,* New York, Random House, 1938.

To Fan Chih he replied to the same question:

> *In private life, courteous, in public life, diligent, in relationships, loyal. This is a maxim that no matter where you may be, even amid the barbarians of the east or north, may never be set aside.*
>
> (*Analects* XIII.19)

In response to Tzu-chang, Confucius indicated that the good person would possess five virtues: courtesy, breadth, good faith, diligence, and clemency.

It is interesting to note in relation to the ultimacy and supremacy of jen that there are actually few passages delineating specifically the actions and qualities which constitute it. The *Analects* indicate that Confucius rarely spoke of jen, and never claimed to be good himself. As he pointed out, the man of jen is chary (jen) of speech because it is a quality difficult to attain. Confucius refused to judge the jen quality of specific persons or situations. However, it is possible to move in the direction of jen by turning one's merits to account and helping others to apply theirs, as well as using one's own feelings as a guide in helping others according to the principle of reciprocity. Everyone should compete in the pursuit of jen. One pursues it by making friends with those who manifest it.

Confucius recognized the problem of the inner reality and the external appearance. He maintained that jen came from within the man and could not be derived from someone else:

> *For Goodness is something that must have its source in the ruler himself; it cannot be got from others.*
>
> (*Analects* XII.1)

A true gentleman may lack jen, but all possessing jen would of necessity be true gentlemen. True jen avoids artifice as represented in clever talk and pretentious manners.

The pursuit of jen is not easy. If it is to be undertaken, it must be the primary goal of life, and, although it is a difficult task, it is the source of true happiness. While it enables one to bear up under adversity and eventually to achieve prosperity, it is an end in itself:

> *The Good man rests content with Goodness; he that is merely wise pursues Goodness in the belief that it pays to do so.*
>
> (*Analects* IV.2)

Finally, jen is the basis for the love of men, and it is the only means to make power durable after one's wisdom has brought him into power.

From the brief indications of jen provided in the *Analects* we can observe a studied attempt to avoid pinning the virtue down in such a way that one could assert that his superficial and limited efforts had fully expressed the quality. The nature of jen on its deepest level is a quality possessed by sages and heroes as a transcendental perfection. It is never fully present in living or historic persons.[10]

Although the political or social dimension of Confucius' thought appears to be its central interest, the ultimate indefinability of jen

10. Waley, ibid, p. 27.

and its crucial role in forming the basis for all successful rule and exercise of power make Confucius' thought more than mere politics or ethics. Rather, he seems to point toward a situation in which the moral order is embodied in men, enabling them to realize their full human potential.

According to Confucius, the "beads" of jen are strung on the threads of chung (conscientiousness, loyalty) and shu (reciprocity, altruism). The fulfillment of the human potential implied in jen requires a deep awareness of others and identification with them. When asked if there is a principle that would be applicable day or night, Confucius offers the quality shu expressed in the Golden Rule: Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.

The character in Chinese for shu is a combination of the term for "like" and "similar" and the term for "mind." Behind this principle lies an idea of identification enabling persons to know the appropriate behavior for dealing with others through considering what they themselves need to live happily and securely. This principle is not to be applied mechanically. Rather, it can only be realized when there is a felt sense of oneness with others. It is in line with this principle that Confucius rejects action based on calculation of profit for oneself. The foundation for true ethical action in Confucius' view comes from contemplating what benefits all, and not merely oneself.

An ethic based on shu is more dynamic and inward than an imposed, external ethic. Shu does not exclude the existence and necessity of formal prescriptions of behavior, but it means that their application will be dictated in accord with the situation. Thus, morality is not fixed or static. Confucius is reputed to have said: "As for me, I am different from any of these. I have no 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not' " (*Analects* XVIII.8). Further, he was astute in noting that people with fixed principles are good when there is need for someone to take a position on an issue, but they cannot function in an emergency calling for flexibility and adaptation.

It is clear that Confucius was attempting to replace the traditional, tribal morality with an inwardly motivated morality based on one's awareness of his common humanity with others. In this view of morality he was far in advance of his time and mankind as a whole. E. R. Hughes succinctly summarizes the problem Confucius confronted:

> *It was an age of marked individualism, individualism of the dangerous egotistical kind, and Confucius' achievement was to point out to all who would listen that a man is not more of a man because he has fiercer appetites and more power to gratify them, but when he can recognize his fellow man as having equal rights with himself.*[11]

The quality chung, which generally accompanies shu, complements it. Chung represents the development of one's mind, while shu is the extension of that mind to others. According to Yu-lan

11. E. R. Hughes and K. Hughes, *Religion in China*, London, Hutchinson, 1950, p. 27.

Fung, though the concept chung is not defined in detail in the *Analects*, it carries the meaning of acting on behalf of others.[12] One is exhorted to be conscientious in dealing with all men, loyal to the prince one serves.

An indispensable quality or attitude in the cultivation of virtue was the desire for, and love of, hsueh (learning, study), or wisdom. While goodness (jen) is the goal of virtue, learning is its condition. It is significant that Confucius did not boast of his goodness or perfection, but rather of his love of learning. He regarded learning as an essential qualification for teaching, since only "he who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher" (*Analects* VII.33). The learning advocated by Confucius was not restricted merely to the acquisition of information, but included the wisdom which recognized the limits of one's knowledge. Learning was to be pursued with utter seriousness and no possible source rejected, since it was only through such learning that the virtues could be kept in proper harmony without excess or distortion.

It is thus clear that for Confucius the purpose of learning was to build moral character and not merely to instruct in skill or impart information. Maintaining that "a gentleman is not an implement" (*Analects* II.12), he desired to develop leaders who were persons of broad moral quality rather than specialists in some activity. Consequently, he refused requests of disciples that he teach them farming and gardening.

Learning is for change. Confucius notes that the already wise and the stupid do not change. The wise probably do not need to, while the stupid do not want to change. The love of learning, though stated as a boast, is a confession of imperfection and openness to the future. Confucius complained that his moral power and learning remained imperfect.

Confucius' ideal of teaching was strikingly modern. He taught without discriminating according to class or economic ability. Only the desire to learn was necessary. He demanded, however, that the person who came to him for instruction must be committed and engaged in the effort to learn. He did not so much *give* education as he challenged the individual to gain his own.

> *If I hold up one corner and a man cannot come back to me with the other three, I do not continue the lesson.*
>
> (*Analects* VII.28)

He worked with students individually, adapting his approach to the student's need. He did not claim to have all wisdom, but remained open to thrashing out questions put to him even by the simplest peasant. Despite his willingness to work with all people, Confucius did not advocate indiscriminately using one's time and energy:

> *The Master said, Not to talk to one who could be talked to, is to waste a man. To talk to those who cannot be talked to, is to*

12. Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, vol. I, p. 71, n.1.

*waste one's words. "He who is truly wise never wastes a man," but on the other hand, he never wastes words.*

(*Analects* XV.7, VI.19, XV.15)

Since Confucius' philosophy of human relations was practical and not merely theoretical, the interior moral qualities had to find expression in supporting and complementary behavior. The concept li covered the whole range of human activities from the performance of religious rituals, such as practices of mourning, to dress, personal manners, and decorum within the family and among associates. In addition, Confucius stressed hsiao (filial piety) as an important aspect of moral behavior.

Although the Chinese character for li originally signified placing ritual vessels in proper order for sacrifice, the concept expanded to embrace all things properly done. In Confucian thought it came to represent the rationalized social order and conventions which aid in avoiding conflicts. As the practical means for achieving harmony, Confucius claimed that the people would respond to the goodness (jen) of the ruler if he would conform to li.

The necessity of li stems from the fact that the direct expression of virtue can at times be as destructive of human relations as creative. Li provides the fine polish and restraint needed to make virtue effective. Confucius states:

*Courtesy not bounded by the prescriptions of ritual becomes tiresome. Caution not bounded by the prescriptions of ritual becomes timidity, daring becomes turbulence, inflexibility becomes harshness.*

(*Analects* VIII.2)

Confucius is also aware that the li might become mere external show. He maintains that the inner and outer must be harmonized, since "only when ornament and substance are duly blended do you get the true gentleman" (*Analects* III.12).

Hsiao (filial piety) loomed important in Confucius' thought as a test of the actual moral character of the individual. His basic assumption was that without a deep sense of obligation toward one's parents who made his existence possible, an individual could not be trusted to have the necessary sense of obligation toward other members of society. Further, the discipline of family life was the foundation for the inculcation of the attitudes of loyalty, faithfulness, and submissiveness required for social harmony. Although Confucius regarded filial piety as essential to moral and social life, he did not consider it the supreme virtue which it later became in the *Hsiao-ching* (*Classic of Filial Piety,* written 350–250 B.C.).

Confucius held that sons should obey and defer to their parents. However, a son should also remonstrate with his parents when they fell into error. Should they fail to accept his admonitions, he must remain silent and unresentful out of respect for them.

All the virtues and qualities advanced by Confucius as the foundation and expression of moral character were combined in the ideal person termed chun-tzu. This word, originally referring to the

son of a ruler or an aristocrat by birth, came to mean in the *Analects* the true gentleman or superior person as a result of his moral development. The term shih (knight, warrior) also came to signify a person of highest moral attainment rather than the virtues of warfare.

Fundamentally, the chun-tzu represents the fusion of all qualities in such a way that a person can respond to every situation benefiting mankind without sacrificing his principles. He is particularly distinguished by his faithfulness, diligence, and modesty. He neither overpowers with his knowledge, nor is afraid to admit error. He looks at all sides of any issue, is cautious and not concerned for personal recognition. Carrying himself with dignity, he appears imperturbable, resolute, and simple. He is exemplary in filial piety and generous with his kin. In his relations with others he looks for good points, though he is not uncritical. As a leader, he knows how to delegate responsibility and when to pardon or promote. He is sensitive to the feelings and expressions of others, knowing when to defer or desist. Always conciliatory, he does not merely accommodate.

In addition to the numerous qualities which depict the true gentleman, there are specific principles which govern his actions. Most important, he is committed to the good as an end in itself and to right before all else. He rejects seeking mere personal profit as well as doing wrong in order to advance or to serve an evil prince. He will not employ expediency. Honesty is essential to life. Ready to lay down his life for the good, he serves his master in faithfulness. He demands more of himself than of others. He holds to consistency (of principle), but not blind fidelity. He neither judges things by externals, nor by eloquence or status:

*A gentleman does not*
*Accept men because of what they say,*
*Nor reject sayings, because the speaker is what he is.*

(*Analects* XV.22)

In summary, the chun-tzu combines inner quality and spirit with outer form. He provides the harmony of substance and ornament. However, in such an ideal there is always the possibility of mere sham. Confucius notes that the gentleman may not always be good, meaning perhaps that the good could not be exhausted in any expression. Eloquence is not moral power, though they can be confused. A brave man is not necessarily good. One must be careful of those who put on solemn airs. Many passages scattered through the text criticizing the decadence of the age suggest that the true gentleman is a rarity, and Confucius almost despaired of creating or finding one.

The ideal of the chun-tzu in his nature and function created several issues which stimulated the development of later Confucian thought. These issues comprise a series of dichotomies, which, though interrelated, affect the cultivation and application of Confucian ideals. The first polarization is the conflict between devotion to self-cultivation and the ordering of society. The second dichotomy

concerns the harmonization and mutual relation of inward moral capacity and the outer sphere of rules, rituals, and forms.

The third polarity was the relationship of knowledge and action. It was generally agreed that the basis of action was knowledge and learning. The problem was the nature of this knowledge and how it was developed. The earlier scholarly, historical, and factual approach of Confucius eventually developed into the more metaphysical approach of the Neo-Confucians, who sought intellectual enlightenment either by discovery of the essential harmony in the outer world or through intuiting it in the inner world of mind.[13]

As we have earlier pointed out, the fusion of moral qualities in the true gentleman endows him with profound effectiveness in creating and maintaining human relationships. The moral charisma which he generates is denoted by the term te, that peculiar efficaciousness resulting when a thing or person functions as it is designed to function. The essence of leadership is the ability to influence. Influence depends on character, in contrast to coercion which requires force. Te, as moral influence, is that power which causes people to do things on behalf of others through their own volition and desire. Confucius aptly sums up the meaning of te:

> *Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual and they will keep their self respect and come to you of their own accord.*
>
> (*Analects* II.3)

Although in theory te was practical, it appears that in Confucius' time men hesitated to enter fully into his way. He complained that only a few understood it and that he had not seen anyone in whom te was as strong as his sexual power. Some apparently were willing to apply te only in certain limited situations.

There were also dangers which obstruct te or destroy it. It is not to be confused with eloquence. Physical prowess is also no true indicator of te. Clever talk confounds te, while hearing the teaching and merely repeating without acting on it is to throw it away. The attempt to please everyone also undermines te.

As te is perhaps the inner force of attraction generated by the ideal ruler and official, its correlate, *wen,* is the exterior quality of culture, bearing, poise, and carriage expressed in the polite arts and ritual. Although the substance is prior to the decoration, the element of culture is indispensable. The attractive power of culture is expressed by Master Tseng:

> *The gentleman by his culture collects friends about him, and through these friends promotes Goodness.*
>
> (*Analects* XII.24)

Wen refers concretely to the arts of peace such as music and dancing, and literature in contrast to war. It is whatever beautifies

13. Benjamin Schwartz, "Some Polarities in Confucian Thought," in A. F. Wright, *Confucianism and Chinese Civilization,* New York, Atheneum, 1964, pp. 3–15.

human existence. Confucius believed that the true way to conquer a people was to spread culture. Although one may win the battle, in order to prevail completely one must have wen. Illustration of the Confucian principle appears in the Greek cultural conquest of the Romans after they themselves had been conquered militarily. The principle has frequently been tested in Chinese history where invader after invader succumbed to the allure of Chinese culture.

Before concluding the study of Confucius' thought, we should note that he employed the concepts Tao (Way) and T'ien (Heaven) in the discussion of his philosophy. In contrast to later Taoist thought, the Tao of Confucius was represented by the chun-tzu as the highest ideal of human endeavor. For him the Tao was primarily social. Aware of rival views of Tao, Confucius claimed that when his Tao prevailed, society would be ordered and authority effective. The ultimate basis for his philosophy, according to Confucius, was T'ien. Heaven was the source of moral power which guaranteed virtue. Hence, the Tao set forth by Confucius was ultimately the will of Heaven. This view was based on his conviction that his system of morality conformed to the nature of man when he functioned as a true human being.

The concept of Heaven is important in strengthening the moral commitment of the true gentleman. It gives him confidence that a power greater than his own individual strength works through his efforts to attain its ends. The belief in the ordination of Heaven mitigates disappointment when things do not go as men might desire. For this reason the true gentleman must fear and understand Heaven, since it gives perspective to his efforts and keeps the necessary balance in his deportment and attitudes.

Heaven appears in some ways to be a personal force, but it is certainly unlike spirits and ghosts. Confucius does not speculate on its nature, but attributes all events outside the control of man to the will of Heaven. Sometimes he appeals to Heaven to avert the consequences of his errors.

Confucius' contribution to the history of moral and social thought lies in his articulation of a consistent system of inner values and qualities and correlation of external actions which must be the basis for effective government. His ideal of the true gentleman is a comprehensive and universal goal which, in its humane, compassionate, sensitive, and implicitly democratic character, is worthy of serious pursuit. Its relevance for this age of moral and social confusion will be apparent to thoughtful students. Nevertheless, Confucius does not speculate on the nature of reality or the nature of man to determine precisely what basis there is in reality or man for the achievement of these aspirations. The further exploration of his thought remained for his interpreters, especially Mencius (Meng-tzu, 372–288 B.C.) and Hsun-tzu (298–238 B.C.)

## INTERPRETERS OF CONFUCIUS: MENCIUS AND HSUN-TZU

In the period after Confucius the political conflicts multiplied and intensified. At the same time more challenging solutions to the problems of human relations contended for acceptance, as indicated in the so-called Hundred Schools. Social thought swung between the

two poles of despair and rejection of social conventions of Yang-chu (440–369 B.C.?) and a more utopian idealism of universal love of Mo-ti (479–380 B.C.) The Confucianists followed a middle path between these extremes, applying the rational and practical outlook of the master.

Yang-chu became the symbol of social irresponsibility and indifference, espousing a hedonistic enjoyment of life. He was described by Mencius as advocating an "every man for himself" philosophy without any allegiance to a ruler and refusing to save the world even if it required only the plucking of a hair. His doctrine was pictured as a grand egoism because he put the enhancement and nurture of one's own individual existence before social obligations. The *Lu-shih Ch'un-ch'iu* quotes Yang-chu:

> *Now, my life is my own possession, and its benefit to me is also great. If we discuss what is noble and mean, even the honor of being Emperor could not compare with it. If we discuss what is unimportant and important, even the wealth of possessing the empire could not be exchanged for it. If we discuss peace and danger, were we to lose it for only one morning, we could never bring it back. These are three points on which those who have understanding are careful. There are those who care too much about life and so injure it. This is because they have not reached an understanding of the qualities of human life. Without such an understanding, of what avail is caution? . . . Among the rulers and nobles of the world, whether worthy or unworthy, there are none who do not desire to live long and see many days. Yet if they daily obstruct the course of their life, of what avail is such a desire? All long life consists in non-resistance to it. What causes such resistance are the desires. Therefore the Sage must first of all put his desires into harmony.*[14]

It is clear that Yang-chu did not promote licentiousness by his hedonism, but a principle of not being ensnared by things and affairs. Although from a later time, the sentiment of the Yang-chu chapter in the *Lieh-tzu* expressed succinctly the spirit of those ancient recluses who rejected conventional social striving as destructive to one's inner spirit and integrity:

> *Do we live for the sake of being cowed into submission by the fear of the law and penalties, now spurred to frenzied action by the promise of a reward or fame? We waste ourselves in a mad scramble, seeking to snatch the hollow praise of the hour, scheming to contrive that somehow some remnant of reputation shall outlast our lives. We move through the world in a narrow groove, pre-occupied with the petty things we see and hear, brooding over our prejudices, passing by the joys of life without even knowing that we have missed anything. Never for a moment do we taste the heady wine of freedom. We are as truly imprisoned as if we lay at the bottom of a dungeon.*[15]

14. Fung, op. cit., p. 137.
15. H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*, New York, New American Library, 1953, pp. 82–83.

The tradition of iconoclasm and social criticism began very early in Chinese history. In the *Analects* (XVIII.5, 7) there appear several incidents when Confucius or his disciples encountered anarchistically inclined individualists who did not hesitate to criticize his activities. As we shall see, the Taoists, Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, were direct inheritors of these views, though providing them with a deeper mystical and philosophical basis.

At the opposite extreme from Yang-chu, Mo-ti advocated a utilitarian, utopian principle of universal or indiscriminate love (*ch'ien-ai*) as the ultimate solution to human problems. Although little is known of the teacher himself, he was, like Confucius, from the province of Lu and at first sought office as a Confucianist. Failing in his ambition, he turned to private teaching and developed a philosophy and way of life which criticized the Confucian emphasis on elaborate ceremonial music and uneconomic ostentation. In his own character he was an ascetic, combining intellectual acumen and moral intensity. Unlike the Confucianists, he formed a tight-knit organization by which he could direct the activities of his disciples more closely. Each student had to contribute to the master's upkeep. Through the control of his students, Mo-ti could refuse to serve rulers who did not accept his teachings.

The basic principle of his social thought by which he achieved fame was his exhortation of universal love. Although criticized by Confucianists, the concept is an extension of the Confucian principles of jen (love, humaneness) and shu (reciprocity) applied without discrimination to all people. In defense of his principle, Mo-ti appealed to the instinctive behavior of men to show that all people really accepted it, though in theory and word they might reject it. He pointed out that in a situation of crisis and disaster, people would appeal to rulers or individuals whom they knew to be inspired by generosity and social concern rather than to those they knew to be narrow and selfish. Such a reaction in his view testified to their tacit awareness of the necessity and truth of the principle of universal love. He stated:

> *It seems to me on such occasions as these there are no fools in the world. Even though he be a person who objects to universal love himself, he would choose the "universal" rulers. This is rejection of the principle in word but acceptance of it in actually making a choice—this is a contradiction between one's word and deed. It is incomprehensible, then, why the gentlemen of the world should object to universal love when they hear of it.*[16]

A corollary principle growing out of the assertion of universal love was the idea of utilitarian benefit as the basis of durable order. This concept of profit appears entirely contrary to Confucian rejection of profit, but the two perspectives may be reconciled when it is understood that Confucians denied personal profit while retaining concern for the total good. Generally Mo-ti espoused the greatest good for the greatest number as the objective of government. In re-

16. William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition,* New York, Columbia, 1964, vol. I, p. 43.

alizing this, rulers must promote productivity throughout the kingdom and stress frugality and simplicity in living.

Another corollary aspect of his philosophy was the rejection of aggressive warfare. Although opposed to violence, Mo-ti developed a reputation for defensive warfare and expertise in fortifications. He lent his services to besieged, weaker kingdoms.

Despite the apparent idealistic and sentimental character of the concept of universal love, Mo-ti supported strong central government to bring order to the world. He also urged the rejection of the Confucian concept of fate and the maintenance of belief in the gods and spirits in order to induce men to belief in universal love on pain of divine retribution. In addition, he preached obedience and submission to superiors, ignoring egalitarian implications of his doctrine.

The importance of Mo-ti's philosophy lies in his recognition that society must inculcate into people a broad concern for others beyond the limits of self and kin if it is to have stability. He should be credited with the astute insight that people always prefer others to be altruistic toward them, though they may act egotistically toward others. Further, in exalting material prosperity as the index of the achievement of a society he was very close to modern exponents who employ the standard of living as the basis for judging social progress.

Mencius, the St. Paul of Confucianism, lamented that the doctrines of Yang and Mo filled the world and had great appeal to the people of that time. He made it his mission to refute these philosophies and to revive the fortunes of Confucianism. Mencius' career paralleled in many ways that of Confucius. Born in the region of Tsou in Lu, he became a disciple of Confucius' grandson Tzu-ssu. In the course of his life he served numerous rulers. His thought has been preserved in the text called *Mencius*.

The *Mencius* differs conspicuously from the *Analects* in being more discursive in style. Whereas Confucius' ideas appear in epigrammatic form without elaboration, the arguments of Mencius are more fully articulated to meet the challenge of opponents. His arguments in defense of Confucianism are probably the basic reason for its eventual supremacy over other schools and its lasting influence. Though Mencius, like Confucius, is humble in attributing his views to the sages of the past, there can be no doubt concerning his creative intellectual insight.

The starting point of Mencius' thought was the Confucian assumption that to be a human being means to be a social being and that the principles of social behavior are rooted in human nature. Consequently, all theories are false which conflict with man's nature. A major consideration of Mencius and later Confucians was the definition of the nature of man.

It was from this standpoint that Mencius criticized Yang-chu for undermining allegiance to rulers, and Mo-ti for not recognizing the gradations of love in human psychology. Both, as panaceas for society, were extreme and one-sided, as well as unrealistic in understanding human nature.

With this theory of the goodness of human nature Mencius clarified the ambiguity of Confucius who simply declared without elaboration that men were "by nature, near together; by practice far apart." [17] Like Mo-ti, Mencius appeals to the spontaneous actions of people as evidence for his view. When people confront various human problems, they react with compassion, commiseration, shame, dislike, or modesty. These responses he terms "the beginnings" of the basic qualities that distinguish men from animals. When these innate potentialities of moral behavior are allowed to develop to their fullest, they express themselves in behavior embodying the qualities of jen (humaneness), I (righteousness), li (propriety), and chih (knowledge or wisdom). That men lack goodness is simply because they have not permitted their capacities to develop. Thus he argues:

> *The real kings of old were compassionate human beings, and so theirs was a government by compassionate men. And having thus brought order to the world, they turned it on the palm of their hands. It can be said that all men have a capacity for compassion because, even today, if one chances to see a toddler about to fall into a well, one becomes apprehensive and sympathetic. This is not because one knows the child's parents; it is not out of desire for the praise of neighbors and friends; and it is not out of dislike for the bad reputation that would ensue if one did not go to the rescue. In the light of all this we can conclude that without compassion one would not be a human being. And the same holds if there is no sense of shame, no ability to yield to others, no sense of what is correct and what is not correct. The sense of compassion marks the beginning of becoming man-at-his-best. The sense of shame marks the beginning of propriety. Submissiveness marks the beginning of a sense of ceremony. The sense of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. Every human being possesses these four beginnings just as he possesses four limbs. . . .*
>
> (*Mencius* II.A.6) [18]

A number of significant implications for the view of man and society flow from Mencius' theory of human goodness. He recognized the essential equality of all men in maintaining that every man could become a sage through proper cultivation of his nature. As a result of his high estimation of man, he interpreted the Mandate of Heaven as the basis for revolution against despotic kings, making government rest on the will of the people. He further insisted that the purpose of government was to benefit the people and enable them to fulfill their potentialities. To do this the ruler should provide universal education and sufficient work and income to make crime unnecessary to survive. He saw the necessity of a division of labor in society as represented in traditional class structure, but he maintained that it was functional and no real indication of the essential worth of

17. *Analects* XVII. 2. See also V. 12.
18. James Ware, trans., *The Sayings of Mencius*, New York, New American Library, 1960, pp. 68–69.

people. Mencius clearly understood that social institutions do not make people good, but enable them to express goodness.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have exemplary rulers who stimulate the people in their moral efforts. Accordingly, true kingship is realized when the ruler shares his benefits with the people and identifies with them. Through his compassion on their behalf he would be universally attractive to his own people and those beyond his borders. Ministers to kings must play the role of critic when occasion demands. A minister must never serve an evil king. Both the king and his ministers need self-scrutiny to evaluate their actions.

It is in this connection that Mencius proclaimed a type of moral mysticism which cultivated the discernment of and commitment to moral values even in difficult times. Though the precise method of meditation was not specified, it produced a state described as "being on top of oneself and the world" and embraced an intuitive conviction relating to the rightness of things. It was not a mysticism in which one lost his personality in an all-embracing reality. Rather, it related concretely to life in this world where, by moral exercise, the division of the egocentric world and the outer world was abolished through consistent goodness. Mencius related:

> *It is difficult to describe. As power, it is exceedingly great and exceedingly strong. If nourished by uprightness and not injured, it will fill up all between heaven and earth. As power, it is accompanied by righteousness and the Way. Without them, it will be devoid of nourishment. It is produced by the accumulation of righteous deeds but it is not obtained by incidental acts of righteousness. When one's conduct is not satisfactory to his own mind, then one will be devoid of nourishment.*
>
> (*Mencius* II.A.2) [19]

According to this passage, righteous action reinforced moral commitment, which in turn stimulated further action. Mencius forged the union of knowledge and action, later to be stressed in Neo-Confucianism, within a highly sensitive moral consciousness.

The deep moral concern of Mencius was reflected in his analysis of the profit principle which Confucianism has consistently rejected. He asserted that all ambitions motivated by desire for profit and advantage were open-ended and could never be fully satisfied until the ruler or individual had striven to attain complete possession and control. There would also be a competitive struggle for advantage once the challenge was issued. In true government, following correct procedure and propriety would naturally result in the satisfaction of all interests.

Mencius' thought in its turn received criticism from several quarters. He engaged in lengthy conversations concerning Kao-tzu, a non-Confucian who maintained the moral neutrality of human nature and asserted that one's goodness or badness depended on external

19. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 63.

conditions. Within the Confucian tradition itself, the philosopher Hsun-tzu took issue directly with Mencius' thesis, declaring: "Mencius states that man is capable of learning because his nature is good, but I say that this is wrong. It indicates he has not really understood man's nature nor distinguished properly between the basic nature and conscious activity." [20]

In following out his argument, Hsun-tzu declared that man's basic nature was evil, while such goodness as he possessed was acquired. Nature, according to him, signified whatever man possessed that was neither learned nor worked for. He regarded ethical and moral conduct as determined by culture. Similar to previous thinkers, Hsun-tzu summoned the spontaneous behavior of individuals as evidence for his position. He observed that from the time of birth onward, man was egocentric and desirous of his own profit and advantage; that he possessed violent emotions of envy and hatred. Driven by desires, man naturally found himself in conflict with his fellow men. Certainly, the background of conflicts in the age of Warring States could furnish ample evidence of the thesis.

In order to deal with this fundamental selfishness in man, the sages had developed rituals and regulations in order to train (socialize) human behavior. The goodness of man was the result of restraining human nature just as "a warped piece of wood must wait until it has been laid against the straightening board, steamed and forced into shape before it can become straight. . . ." [21]

As a consequence of his view of man, Hsun-tzu, contrary to Mo-ti, regarded music, ritual, and ceremonies as indispensable in the cultivation and refinement of human emotion. He complained that Mo-ti did not understand human emotion. According to Hsun-tzu, "music is the great arbiter of the world, the key to central harmony, and a necessary requirement of human emotion. This is the manner in which the former kings created their music. And yet Mo Tzu criticises it. Why?" [22] "Therefore, I say that Mo Tzu's attempts to teach the Way may be compared to a blind man trying to distinguish black from white. . . ." [23]

As music exerted a beneficial influence on the spirit of man, bringing harmony and tranquillity, Hsun-tzu noted the function of ritual and ceremony in social control. According to him, the ancient kings established rituals in order to overcome disorder. However, the rites also had a deep root in human emotion, being a means of expressing human feeling in moments of depression, melancholy, or times of elation. He stated:

> *Hence the sacrificial rites originate in the emotions of remembrance and longing, express the highest degree of loyalty, love and reverence, and embody what is finest in ritual conduct and formal bearing. Only a sage can fully understand them. The sage*

20. Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Mo-tzu, Hsun-tzu, Han Fei-tzu*, New York, Columbia, 1967, p. 158.
21. Ibid., p. 157.
22. Ibid., pp. 113–114.
23. Ibid., p. 114.

*understands them, the gentleman finds comfort in carrying them out, the officials are careful to maintain them, and the common people accept them as custom. To the gentleman they are part of the way of man; to the common people they are something pertaining to the spirits.*[24]

Hsun-tzu's perspective on religious ritual was rationalistic, distinguishing between the true understanding of the sage and gentleman and the naive belief of the common man. Further, he regarded religion as a form of art or means of beautifying life. It ennobled existence with form, order, and meaning, impressing man with his relation to the spheres of Heaven, earth, and man.

His rationalistic, antisuperstitious tendency was also expressed in his concept of Heaven, which he regarded as an amoral, naturalistic process. His view contrasted sharply with the anthropomorphic, moralistic conception of Confucius and Mencius. According to Hsun-tzu, Heaven had its regularities which, without peering into the causes of phenomena, the sage could utilize beneficially. He rejected occult interest in heavenly phenomena, for man could only affect the actions of men, not of Heaven:

*You pray for rain and it rains. Why? For no particular reason, I say. It is just as though you had not prayed for rain and it rained anyway. The sun and moon undergo an eclipse and you try to save them; a drought occurs and you pray for rain; you consult the arts of divination before making a decision on some important matter. But it is not as though you could hope to accomplish anything by such ceremonies. They are done merely for ornament. Hence the gentleman regards them as ornaments, but the common people regard them as supernatural. He who considers them ornaments is fortunate; he who considers them supernatural is unfortunate.*[25]

Hsun-tzu manifested a deep scholarly interest and perspective and possessed a confidence in human intellect, believing that man could control his destiny through effort and reason. However, he appears gripped by pessimism concerning man's moral capacities. His social theory based on this pessimism contributed to the development of the authoritarianism of the Ch'in dynasty. Although Hsun-tzu carried forward the rationalistic and intellectual tendencies of Confucianism, his thought fell into the shadow before the more positive and inspiring view of man of Mencius.

## CONFUCIANISM IN THE TA-HSUEH AND CHUNG-YUNG

In addition to the three major figures who laid the foundation for Confucian tradition, we must also call attention to two texts which became particularly influential in the Neo-Confucian philosophy of Chu-hsi (1130–1200). The *Ta-hsueh* (*Great Learning*) and *Chung-yung* (*Doctrine of the Mean*), as we earlier noted, were sections in the Chinese classic *Li-chi* (*Book of Ceremonies*). Although the dates

24. Ibid., p. 110.
25. Ibid., p. 85.

of composition of the works remain uncertain, they revealed at an early age the two basic tendencies of Confucianism, namely, rationalism and intuitionism or mysticism.

The *Ta-hsueh* is a short chapter, presenting in capsule form a summary of the Confucian basic approach to life. Though the work is attributed to Confucius himself, the authenticity is doubtful. It is an advance over Confucius' thought in the *Analects* because it is a more systematic presentation of his basic ideas.

The text opens with a statement of the three major concerns of Confucian teaching: manifesting clear character, loving the people, and abiding in the highest good. As an outline of Confucian teaching, they indicate that the basis of life rests in cultivating the inner self, applying oneself on behalf of the people, and striving to realize the highest good or jen. The text shows that the order of the world depends on the proper ordering of the self and all human relations based on the investigation and extension of knowledge. The world rests on character and character is founded on insight.

We may summarize its philosophy briefly, following the text's chain of reasoning. In order for the ruler to make clear his character, he must bring order to the state. Order is brought to the state through order in the family, and one may regulate his family by cultivating his personal life. In order to cultivate the personal life, one must rectify his mind. When the mind is rectified, the will will be sincere. Sincerity will result when one's knowledge is extended through the investigation of things. Working back through the chain, we can see that the life of man begins with knowledge as the basis for the cultivation of character and the proper functioning of every level of social existence. Implicitly the text affirms that society is no better than the people who make it up, whether ruler or common person.

The text not only emphasizes the fact that the health of society rests on the character of those who live in that society, but it stresses that it is of utmost necessity to have a proper ordering of values. We must know what is primary and what is secondary. The principle that the primary knowledge of the highest good yields inner tranquillity reveals a basic insight into the conduct of life. Knowing the goal and foundation of one's life makes possible the detachment and confidence required to reach necessary decisions.

The *Chung-yung* (*Doctrine of the Mean*) is a work of decidedly more mystical character, elucidating themes taught earlier by Mencius. Its mystical emphasis made it popular among Taoists and Buddhists as well as Confucianists. They were attracted by its philosophical character. As the title (the terms appear in *Analects* VI. 27) indicates, it is concerned with what is central (*chung*) and universal or harmonious (*yung*). It deals with human nature and its relation to reality. According to Yu-lan Fung, the terms have the meaning of equilibrium and normality which characterize the superior man in contrast to the small, petty man. In this view the superior man performs the proper actions fitting to the situation. The concept "mean" has the sense of hitting the mark or correctness, as in common speech we say that the person is right on target.

The consideration of human action and morality is set within the framework of the great harmony which exists between man and Nature. This harmony is realized through sincerity, which is not a passive attitude in man, but involves practical efforts to manifest in human affairs the ultimate harmony of man and Nature. Pursuing the harmony of Nature within human personality, Confucian ethical perspective receives a basis in Nature which differs from its earlier emphasis on the sages as models of human behavior.

Education is the process whereby man develops the capacity to express his fundamental unity with Nature. The natural sentiments of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure receive expression in proper measure through instruction. The true gentleman thus attains the equilibrium and poise required to manage affairs.

A major conception in the *Chung-yung* is *ch'eng* which may be variously translated as sincerity, reality, or truth. As reality, it is the way of Heaven and the foundation of harmony. It is the only basis of successful government and may be cultivated in man through the five steps of study, inquiry, thinking, sifting, and practice.

In contrast to the ordinary conception in the West of sincerity as an attitude of a person toward his actions, the concept of ch'eng signifies that a man is sincere when his actions and attitudes are in harmony with the highest reality and that reality radiates through his deportment. The background of the concept is the ancient Chinese view of the universe as a grand organic harmony of Heaven and earth. All phases of the cosmic process, including human existence, have a common essence revealed in the perfect equilibrium and harmony of the cosmic process. To manifest this harmony in human affairs in every situation is to be sincere.

## LATER DEVELOPMENTS IN CONFUCIAN TRADITION

As the basic perspective on life and the fundamental value system had been established in the classical period through the writings of the figures and texts studied above, there has been little decisive change in the character of Confucianism except in the direction of broadening the vistas of understanding reality and pursuing the realization of those values. After a setback in the persecution of scholars by the Ch'in despots, Confucianism, under the Han rulers, attained the position of the official ideology of the state. It never retreated from this position down to modern times. Despite the lack of great alteration in basic outlook through the centuries, there have appeared significant thinkers who amplified or refined its understanding. We may only mention them briefly here as a guideline to the further study of Confucian tradition.

Tung Chung-shu (179–104 B.C.) is noteworthy for the cosmological framework he gave to Confucianism, and his effort to relate the political order to the order of Nature. His thought was based on the *I-ching* and the theory of yin-yang. Accordingly, the universe was seen as a system of coordinated, interrelated parts in a continual process of transformation. Human life was a microcosm of the great system and the interaction between the human and natural orders

was based on morality. In his concept of man Tung Chung-shu attempted to unite the theories of Mencius and Hsun-tzu.

Wang Chung (A.D. 27–100) was noted for his rationalistic approach to religion, and he was critical of the flourishing interest in divination and Taoism. He attacked the conception that Nature responds morally to man's actions by arguing that the yin-yang process was entirely impersonal, man being no more comparatively than a flea or a louse. He rejected belief in ghosts and afterlife. He appeared to be progressive in opposing reverence of the past for its own sake, and scientific in stressing factuality in assessment of the classics. In his understanding of man he attempted also to unite the theories of Mencius and Hsun-tzu.

The development of Confucian thought suffered in the decline of the Han empire and loss of confidence in the ability of Confucianism to solve pressing problems. As a consequence, Taoism revived and Buddhism began to attract intellectuals and assume spiritual leadership. After the Buddhist interlude which extended from the end of Han to the end of the T'ang dynasty, Confucianism again reasserted itself in the Neo-Confucian movement.

While we cannot go into the many reasons leading to the Confucian revival, such as the breakdown of empire, a weighty and positive cause lies in the continuing need for administrators to serve in the bureaucracy even during T'ang times. The Confucian examinations were reestablished after a long interval of neglect, and by the ninth century the intellectual class was thoroughly imbued with Confucian ideals. Consequently, the scholars expressed criticism of the religious practices of Taoism and Buddhism. Most outstanding was the famous memorial of Han Yu (768–824) who in 819 attacked the reverence given by the court to a bone of the Buddha.

The development of Neo-Confucianism, which began with such figures as Han Yu and Li Ao (c. 789), can be termed a "rediscovery" of Confucian ideals, though tailored to fit a new social situation. While its promoters intended to revive the original Confucian perspective, the movement became more metaphysical in orientation as it responded to questions posed by Buddhism. What emerged was a firmer foundation in philosophy and mystical experience for the traditional Confucian ethic. In effect, Neo-Confucianism synthesized all major thought streams which had developed in China to that time.

It is significant that the formulators of Neo-Confucianism had been either Buddhists or Taoists in their youth. Though drawing upon the experience of other traditions, Neo-Confucianism produced its own distinctive view. In particular it remained this-worldly in its concern for morality and ethic. Though influenced by *Ch'an* (*Zen*) Buddhism, it rejected Ch'an subjectivism by holding generally to the objective existence of the principle of universal order (li).

The Neo-Confucian movement can be divided into two stages or streams. These are the Reason school of the Sung era (960–1279), which culminated in the thought of Chu Hsi (1130–1200), and the Mind school of the Ming period (1368–1644), represented in the thought of Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529).

Building on numerous precedents in thought, Chu Hsi taught that everything has its li (principle or ideal prototype). The things of the world are formed through a combination of the li with the *ch'i*, a type of ether or vacuous gas providing the principle of individuation. The system of the whole exists within the Supreme Ultimate or absolute which cannot be defined and exists beyond time and space. The world is produced through a process in which the five basal elements, the yin-yang process, the li, and the ch'i interact. The embodied principle within a specific thing is its nature. It is within the Ultimate and the Ultimate is within it.

This interpretation was not developed simply for the sake of metaphysical speculation, but in order to understand man and his role in the world. The li of man consisted in the virtues of love, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Since he was conjoined with impure ether, man was unstable in his expression of virtue. If he purified himself, enlightenment would follow. The method to do this was to investigate things and extend knowledge according to the pattern established in the *Ta-hsueh*. Through the study of objective things and affairs one would eventually come to an understanding of the harmony of the whole which would animate his expression of virtue.

Wang Yang-ming was a scholar of broad attainments in religion, philosophy, poetry, and military and social affairs. Drawing on the thought of Lu Hsiang-shan, he emphasized three points in his Confucian philosophy. He maintained that there was a unity between li and the mind; that innate or intuitive knowledge may be cultivated without cognition or corrupting external influence; and that there was a unity of knowledge and action so that knowledge was expressed immediately in action. Whatever Buddhist influence can be discerned in his system was displaced through emphasis on selfless action in the world. In actuality, though his thought had mystical overtones, he was an activist attempting to remove the intellectualist blocks from one's commitment to action. In the background was the formalistic, rationalist Neo-Confucianism based on Chu Hsi. His thought became very popular for a time in China and was also introduced into Japan where exponents were active in the restoration of the Emperor in 1868.

In the period after the Sung and Ming philosophers there was little if any advance in the substance of Confucian thought. A major reason for the decline in the vitality of Confucian thought was the nature of the literary examinations which were the chief means to official position. Restriction of the content to Confucian dogma and authoritarianism made the system rigid. In the Ch'ing period (1644–1911) there was a reaction against Neo-Confucianism with attempted purges of the tradition of Taoist and Buddhist overtones. A major issue was the determination of the authentic texts of Confucianism giving rise to the Old Text-New Text controversy. While the movement had scientific and empiricist emphases, it did not issue in the formation of scientific theory or outlook. This limitation made the adaptation of Confucianism to modern challenges extremely difficult and contributed to the intellectual crisis in the confrontation with the West.

In the modern period, when China was challenged on all levels by Western thought, culture, and technology, there were various reactions among Chinese scholars. These reactions ranged from total rejection of the West, attempts to relate Chinese tradition to Western outlook, or total repudiation of the Chinese tradition in favor of Westernization. O. Briere has summarized succinctly the problem confronting Chinese thinkers at the end of the nineteenth century:

> *All knew that it was necessary to change something in the governmental machinery, but remained faithful to the Empire; all knew that it was necessary to borrow from the Occident its scientific spirit, its spirit of organization, whatever made for strength and material greatness; but all wanted to conserve at all costs the Confucian morality which had in the past brought about the strength and greatness of China. They reckoned that Confucianism still had its word to say in modern times, and were convinced that the welfare of humanity depended upon putting this morality into practice throughout the world.*[26]

The future of Confucian philosophy in view of the Communist takeover in 1949 remains in doubt. It is to be hoped that Marxian philosophers will better be able to assess the enduring insights of their tradition after they have recovered from the initial necessity to purge the tradition of elements inhibiting progress.

26. O. Briere, *Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy 1898–1948*, New York, Praeger, 1965, p. 17.

# HARMONY WITH NATURE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TAOISM

## PHILOSOPHICAL TAOISM

The "drop-out" philosophy expounded by earlier individualistic nonconformists such as Yang Chu received eloquent expression in the *Tao-te-ching,* traditionally attributed to Lao-tzu (sixth or fourth century B.C.), and the text of Chuang-tzu (between 399 and 295 B.C.). Our information concerning both sages depends on the accounts of Ssu-ma Ch'ien which are of doubtful historical value.

According to tradition, Lao-tzu, whose name means simply Old Sage, was identified by the historian with a historical individual Li Erh and the legendary archivist Lao Tan, indicating obscurity concerning the life of the teacher. Most famous in the story of Lao-tzu are the narratives of his conversations with Confucius which highlight the contrast between the Confucian and Taoist approaches to life.

In terms reflecting Taoist perspectives on morality, social responsibility, and inner freedom, Lao-tzu condemned Confucius for his attachment to the past and for excessive concern with external displaying of goodness. Then brusquely dismissing Confucius, Lao-tzu urged him:

> *Get rid of that arrogance of yours, all those desires, that self-sufficient air, that overweening zeal; all that is of no use to your true person.*[1]

On another occasion, Lao-tzu left Confucius with the observation that the exercise of intelligence and learning in making just criti-

1. Max Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism,* Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1969, p. 8.

cisms and exposing others' faults leads to an early death. He further declared that subordination to another, whether one's father or ruler, prevented a person from being his own man.

The mystery of Lao-tzu is heightened by the circumstances of his taking leave of history. After serving some time in court and witnessing its corruption, he set out in the direction of the state of Ch'in to the west. When he was about to pass through Han-ku Pass, the guard requested that he set down his teaching. He quickly composed the small volume of about 5250 characters now known as *Tao-te-ching*. His destination and place of death were unknown.

The *Tao-te-ching* itself appears to have been composed during the Warring States period and is regarded by scholars as a compilation of materials rather than the product of a single mind. Despite the implied historical priority of Taoism over Confucianism in the legendary conversations of Lao-tzu and Confucius, the *Tao-te-ching* can be understood better as criticism of the growing currency of Confucian thinking. A compact, poetical work of eighty-one sections, it has had wide influence in Chinese history, providing perspective and guidance for individuals in disturbed times. Through the centuries more than 950 commentaries have attempted to plumb its meaning, and there have been more than forty English translations, testifying to both its inherent attraction and the difficulty of rendering its sometimes obscure language. In Communist China also its thought is explored and interpreted along materialistic lines.[2]

Although the *Tao-te-ching* is commonly understood to contain a deeply personal mystical philosophy, it should be noted that it addressed itself to the problem of human relations and the functioning of society. Directed at rulers who wished to control their people, the text contains numerous passages commenting on government, the nature of the sage-ruler, criticism of society, war, and oppression. Later Legalist philosophers perceived the significance of the opportunistic political implications of the Taoist principle of acting according to Nature which discounted the past.

Although similar to the Confucian interest in morality and true leadership, there are significant differences in the Taoist approach to the problem. Where Confucianism proposes a specific system of values by which men could attain the durable society, the *Tao-te-ching* points to the requisite attitudes and personal traits which the individual must cultivate as the foundation of human relations. Confucian emphasis is on doing and acting, following specific rules of behavior. The teaching of the *Tao-te-ching* stresses one's mode of being in the world and the perspective which one must hold when dealing with the circumstances of life. The Confucians are more oriented toward the fulfillment of external obligations, while the Taoists attempt to develop their inner lives, enabling them to meet any contingency spontaneously. Although Confucius warns against

2. Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *The Way of Lao-tzu*, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, pp. 30–31; Holmes Welch, *Taoism, The Parting of the Way*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 4–5, presents a list of other major English translations.

externalism in the *Analects,* later Confucians tend to place greater stress on the exterior acts, opening the way for formalism, hypocrisy, and rigidity, which the Taoists acutely criticize.

As its name implies, the central concept of Taoism is the Tao, which means the Way or Path. Although all schools of Chinese thought had their respective Tao, for the Taoist school it refers to the process of Nature and the cosmos and to the underlying reality embracing all existence. It is the symbol of ultimate reality.

The opening passage of the *Tao-te-ching* initiates the reader immediately by means of a short, pithy statement into the metaphysical and mystical perspective of Taoism. As a warning concerning the limitation of speech to exhaust the meaning of reality, it declares unequivocably that the "*Tao* (Way) that can be told is not the eternal *Tao;* the name that can be named is not the eternal name." In a later passage, we are told that "He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know" (*Tao-te-ching* 56).[3]

The concept of Tao may have evolved from ancient observation of the fixed, unchanging process of Heaven or Nature. The religious beliefs concerning a female agricultural deity or the god Shang-ti may have contributed to its formation. However, in the *Tao-te-ching* the Tao has become the formless, nonactive-active reality and is essentially indefinable.

In keeping with the Taoist economy of speech in describing the nature of reality, cosmological concepts are kept to a minimum. The evolution of the world out of the Tao offers a model for the attitudes necessary in human relations and dealing with life. The concept has two aspects. It is at once the totality of the order of Heaven and Earth and at the same time the nameless, vital potentiality which is the basis of the order of Nature. As the ultimate ground of things, Tao can only be termed the nameless, or Nonbeing. It is beyond categorization, but is the necessary source of all. Among the world of things dualism is the fundamental mode of thinking. The term "Nonbeing," consequently, has two aspects. On one hand it is the basis of Being beyond thought. On the other it is the correlate of Being in the world of experience. As Nonbeing implies Being in the world of dualistic thought, so Being has mysteriously flashed forth from the midst of Nonbeing. Te is Tao manifest as the power of Being within the myriad things. It is that which makes (virtue) a thing to be what it is. Through te things fulfill their natures:

*Tao produces them.*
*Virtue fosters them.*
*Matter gives them physical form.*
*The circumstances and tendencies complete them.*
*Therefore the ten thousand things esteem Tao and honor virtue.*
*Tao is esteemed and virtue is honored without anyone's order.*
*They always come spontaneously.*

3. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the *Tao-te-ching* are from Chan, op. cit.

*Therefore Tao produces them and virtue fosters them.*
*They rear and develop them.*
*They give them security and give them peace.*
*They nurture them and protect them.*
*(Tao) produces them but does not take possession of them.*
*It acts, but does not rely on its own ability.*
*It leads them but does not master them.*
*This is called profound and secret virtue.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 51) [4]

In Western terms, Taoist cosmological thinking appears grasped by the mystery of existence expressed in the ancient question: Why is there something and not nothing? Taoists are deeply aware that individual objects are not self-explainable. Things point beyond themselves to their ultimate source. At the same time, that ultimate source is mirrored in things. Each element of the world embodies a significant aspect of Tao from which man may glean wisdom for living. Thus the only true existence is that which conforms to the wisdom of Nature.

Drawing inspiration from Nature, a wide variety of natural images depict the essential qualities of the Taoist way of life. In the figure of the valley there is the suggestion of characteristics such as breadth, openness, inclusiveness, humility, and lowliness. As female, the valley expresses qualities of passivity, receptiveness, tranquillity, and productivity. The flexibility and suppleness of grass and young trees are signs of vitality, while rigidity and hardness signify death. Strength in weakness is dramatized in the invulnerability of the infant. The eroding ability of water attests to the hidden power in softness and weakness in dealing with affairs:

*There is nothing softer and weaker than water*
*And yet there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things.*
*For this reason there is no substitute for it.*
*All the world knows that the weak overcomes the strong and the soft overcomes the hard.*
*But none can practice it.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 78)

The uncarved block suggests qualities such as genuineness, simplicity, and naturalness. It is the condition before something is imposed on it. The one who cultivates eternal virtue is described:

*He will be proficient in eternal virtue,*
*And returns to the state of simplicity (uncarved wood).*
*When the uncarved wood is broken up, it is turned into concrete things.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 28)

4. Other passages employing the term "virtue" (te) are 10, 21, 23, 28, 38, 41, 54, 55, 56, 60, 65, 79.

*Landscape with waterfall and two figures, from the Ming Dynasty, fifteenth or sixteenth century. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)*

Objects of human invention could also provide insight into the nature of reality and life strategy. In this connection the *Tao-te-ching* develops the thesis of the utility of the empty:

*Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel,*
*But it is on its non-being that the utility of the carriage depends.*
*Clay is molded to form a utensil,*
*But it is on its non-being that the utility of the utensil depends.*
*Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,*
*But it is on its non-being that the utility of the room depends.*
*Therefore turn being into advantage, and turn non-being into utility.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 11)

The most famous and significant quality advanced in the *Tao-te-ching* is the trait of *wu-wei* (nonaction). Many interpretations have been given to this concept which is repeatedly set forth as the ideal way of handling affairs and governing:

*Tao invariably takes no action, and yet there is nothing left undone.*
*If kings and barons can keep it, all things will transform spontaneously.*
*If, after transformation, they should desire to be active,*
*I would restrain them with simplicity, which has no name.*
*Simplicity, which has no name is free of desires.*
*Being free of desires, it is tranquil.*
*And the world will be at peace of its own accord.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 37; also 48 and 57)

It is clear that wu-wei does not mean doing nothing. Rather, it is a special perspective on the nature of doing. Its basic meaning is to do nothing contrary to Nature or the Tao. It may also mean not to do anything with selfish motives and ends in view. However, since Nature is the model for all action, it refers to the fact that all events in Nature flow out from within Nature, and all appear to be spontaneously self-caused. They happen of themselves. The nonaction by which all is accomplished would imply that one is to cultivate his nature in order to act spontaneously from within without contriving or forcing himself or others externally in attaining a goal. If we consider that action refers to deliberate, contrived, externally imposed efforts toward some personally desired end, then nonaction is a *state of being from which* actions flow freely. Goals are not based on mere subjective desire. The difference in the two perspectives on the foundations of behavior may be illustrated in the contrast between two questions: What should I do? as against What kind of person should I be? In terms of Confucian-Taoist contrast, the Confucianist tended to specify actions which would bring a person into harmony with reality. The Taoist emphasized that harmony with reality is the basis of action.

While in relation to oneself nonaction means to act from inward and spontaneous impulse as one is harmonized with the Tao, dealing with others it also signifies that one can achieve his goals without deliberately imposing his will on others. Through the natural influence of his character, he can lead people toward desired ends in a manner corresponding to the concept te in Confucianism.

A correlative idea grows out of the understanding of nonaction. It is to let things alone. This aspect means not to intrude oneself and one's personal desires into the course of events in order to bend them to one's wishes. One should understand the course of events and allow things to work out by themselves in the light of the true way of influencing:

> *Therefore the sage manages affairs without action*
> *And spreads doctrines without words.*
> *All things arise, and he does not turn away from them.*
> *He produces them but does not take possession of them.*
> *He acts but does not rely on his own ability.*
> *He accomplishes his task but does not claim credit for it.*
> *It is precisely because he does not claim credit that his accomplishment remains with him.*
>
> (*Tao-te-ching* 2)

This passage urges the true leader to reject the ego which would attempt to dominate affairs. It is the quality of the sage that he does not intrude himself, while yet bringing to bear his influence. Letting alone may be illustrated in the image of cooking a small fish whereby, with too much poking, one may lose the fish (*Tao-te-ching* 60). Because action fails and grasping loses, the sage "supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action" (*Tao-te-ching* 64).

Two other traits are associated with letting alone. One is the noncompetitive approach to human relations, and the second is knowing when to stop. Contrary to the opinion that competition is the nature of life, hence inevitable, the sage indicates that it is willed by man, and to end it one must decide to stop it. Then there is no competition. Competition is the attempt to subjugate others to one's own ego. It is to win superiority over the other. When one has his own ego in proper perspective, however, there is no competition, as is evident in the pattern of Heaven's dealings with the world:

> *The way of Heaven does not compete, and yet it skillfully achieves victory.*
> *It does not speak, and yet it skillfully responds to things.*
> *It comes to you without your invitation.*
> *It is not anxious about things and yet it plans well.*
> *Heaven's net is indeed vast,*
> *Though its meshes are wide, it misses nothing.*
>
> (*Tao-te-ching* 73)

Knowing when to stop and discarding extremes suggest a necessary sense of moderation and balance:

*To hold and fill a cup to overflowing*
*Is not as good as to stop in time.*

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

*Withdraw as soon as your work is done.*
*Such is Heaven's Way.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 9)

The sage thus "discards the extremes, the extravagant, and the excessive" (*Tao-te-ching* 29).

In addition to appeals for cultivation of various general attitudes as the basis for fruitful human relations, the *Tao-te-ching* exhorts readers with more specific and concrete principles of behavior. It declares that "much talk will of course come to a dead end" (*Tao-te-ching* 5). It recommends closing the mouth and limiting the desires.

In dealing with affairs, it counsels care and foresight. Particularly when success is in sight the greatest care is necessary:

*If one remains as careful at the end as he was at the beginning,*
*there will be no failure.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 64)

In one's dealings with others one does not justify himself, boast, or brag. One is to be honest and good with all. Whether dealing with the big or small, many or few, hatred is to be repaid with virtue. The sage observes:

*To patch up great hatred is surely to leave some hatred behind.*
*How can this be regarded as good?*
*Therefore the sage keeps the left-hand portion (obligation) of a contract*
*And does not blame the other party.*
*Virtuous people attend to their left-hand portions,*
*While those without virtue attend to other people's mistakes.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 79)

Again, keen insight into human relations is revealed in the admonition:

*It is only when one does not have enough faith in others*
*that others will have no faith in him.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 23)

People's reactions to us are often reflections of our reaction to them.

The political philosophy of the *Tao-te-ching* rests on the principle that the best ruler is the one whose existence is hardly noted by the people. He rules by the principles of nonaction, letting alone, and moderation. Through the beneficent influence of his character, he brings peace and harmony to the kingdom. On this point the Taoists and the Confucianists both recommend example and moral influ-

ence over the imposition of laws as the ideal means of ordering society.

However, there are a number of passages in the *Tao-te-ching* which appear, at least on the surface, to express a despotic approach to government. They were employed later by Legalists to support their methods and outlook. While scholars agree that the passages in question have affinity with the Legalist philosophy, they also point out that the criticism of society and the Confucian system, as well as the general tendency of the Taoist perspective on human relations, would argue against their being Legalist in intent. Rather, they are paradoxical in their meaning when the value system of Taoism is kept in mind in interpreting them.

The passages in question are 3, 36, and 65. In verses 3 and 65 there is the suggestion that the ruler may despotically control the minds of his subjects by emptying their hearts, weakening ambitions, and limiting knowledge. Interpreted as advocating deceit, passage 36 has been widely condemned in Chinese tradition. While there is the suggestion of treachery, the text may also be intended to inform the king "that it is a common lot among men and kings to be built up for a fall." [5] By implication, the king should understand "that gentleness is stronger than harshness." [6]

Taoist criticism of society and war contains insights relevant in our own time. With respect to society, Taoists realized that appeals to virtue were an indication that society had already failed. Such appeals only arise when people have ceased spontaneously fulfilling virtues inspired by deep human relations.

As symptoms of a deeper problem, appeals provide no solution. Hence, calls for patriotism betray a condition in which people's patriotic fervor may be at low ebb. What is necessary is not exhortation to patriotism, but a rectification of the condition leading to a decline in the spontaneous commitment to the state. In a similar fashion laws are also seen as signs of society's failure and an attempt to gain by compulsion what should flow naturally from the human situation. The externalization of virtue and imposition of law lead only to competitive struggle, hypocrisy, and oppression in society. In essence it is a thwarting of human nature and hence society in its deepest sense. Thus the sage notes:

*When the great Tao declined,*
*The doctrine of humanity and righteousness arose.*
*When knowledge and wisdom appeared,*
*There emerged great hypocrisy.*
*When the six family relationships are not in harmony,*
*There will be the advocacy of filial piety and deep love to children.*
*When a country is in disorder,*
*There will be the praise of loyal ministers.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 18)

5. R. B. Blakney, *The Way of Life: Lao Tzu*, New York, New American Library, 1955, p. 89.
6. Ibid.

On the failure of law, the sage declares:

*Govern the state with correctness*
*Operate the army with surprise tactics.*
*Administer the empire by engaging in no activity.*
*How do I know that this should be so?*
*Through this:*
*The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world,*
*The poorer the people will be.*
*The more sharp weapons the people have,*
*The more troubled the state will be.*
*The more cunning and skill man possesses,*
*The more vicious things will appear.*
*The more laws and orders are made prominent,*
*The more thieves and robbers there will be.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 57)

In view of the people's willingness to die in resisting oppression, the sage advises rulers not to be extravagant in extracting taxes or in spending and not to "reduce the living space of their dwellings. Do not oppress their lives" (*Tao-te-ching* 72).

War is also seen as a basic failure in society, though it is recognized that war is sometimes inevitable. It brings desolation and encourages disrespect for life. When undertaken, it is to be done with sad regret. Any rejoicing in war is a sign of lack of basic humanity and understanding of existence. The sage keenly notes the results of the use of force and war:

*He who assists the ruler with Tao does not dominate the world with force.*
*The use of force usually brings requital.*
*Wherever armies are stationed, briers and thorns grow.*
*Great wars are always followed by famines.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 30)

The Taoist criticism of society made it the spokesman for the oppressed in society. Due to this feature it fostered secret societies responsible for popular uprisings aimed at political and economic reforms.[7]

The ideal state requires rejection of the superficial ways by which society measures people and demands the cultivation of awareness of the Tao rather than enforcement of externally imposed values and goals. The sage draws a picture of the ideal society which is essentially a primary group where values are spontaneously realized without legislation:

*Let there be a small country with few people.*
*Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many utensils*

7. C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1961, pp. 218–227.

*But let them not be used.*
*Let the people value their lives highly and not migrate far.*
*Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them.*
*Even if there are arrows and weapons, none will display them.*
*Let the people again knot cords and use them (in place of writing).*
*Let them relish their food, beautify their clothing, be content with their homes, and delight in their customs.*
*Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard,*
*Yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting one another.*

(*Tao-te-ching* 80)

While it may be argued whether this ideal can ever be realized in the modern context, the atmosphere and values it expresses are those which need to be cultivated wherever possible if the human spirit is not to be submerged within the structures it has created for its own protection and fulfillment. Passages like these serve to remind us that civilization extracts a price from the human spirit. With increasing civilization and organization comes the loss of spontaneity, naturalness, simplicity, and sheer delight in life itself.

The second major figure in the development of Taoist tradition is Chuang-tzu. According to the traditional biography provided by Ssu-ma Ch'ien:

*Chuang-tzu was a native of Meng (in present Honan). His personal name was Chou. He held a small post at Ch'i-yuan, in Meng. He was a contemporary of King Hui or Liang (370–319) and Hsuan of Ch'i (319–301). His erudition was most varied, but his chief doctrines were based upon the sayings of Lao Tzu. His writings, which run to over 100,000 words, are for the most part allegorical. His literary and dialectic skill was such that the best scholars of the age were unable to refute his destructive criticism of the Confucian and Mohist schools. His teachings were like an overwhelming flood which spreads unchecked according to its own will, so that from rulers and ministers downward, none could apply them to any practical use.*[8]

Despite the presumed factuality of this account the precise date of Chuang-tzu, his relation to Lao-tzu and his teaching, and his relation to his contemporary Mencius remain unclear and uncertain. It is also a problem whether the book *Chuang-tzu* was actually authored by that individual. Nevertheless, the text reflects the work of a penetrating mind (or minds) which gave new depth and scope to Taoist teaching.

The *Chuang-tzu* advocated a decidedly mystical approach to life in contrast to the activist views of other ancient schools of thought such as the Confucianists and Mohists whom it severely criticized. Although the *Chuang-tzu* was concerned with the problem of social

8. Fung, op. cit., p. 221.

harmony and the fulfillment of human existence in common with the other schools, it presented a radical solution by advocating emancipation from the world instead of reforming it. According to the *Chuang-tzu,* men created their own problems by the pursuit of virtue, fame, and wisdom.

Attempting to encourage men to transcend the world, the *Chuang-tzu* makes a determined effort to shake the mind loose from its addiction to words, values, conventions, and actions which have come to be regarded as natural to man and necessary to his existence. It strives to free the mind from the conviction that what it perceives, thinks, and understands is what really is. In order to bring about this loosening, the *Chuang-tzu* employs a number of strategies such as the non sequitur, paradox, "pseudological discussion," and humor.

To achieve emancipation the *Chuang-tzu* urges the practices of "free and easy wandering," "fasting of the mind," and "forgetting." Through mystical meditation resulting in the perception of the blinding effect of words and intellection, and awareness of the illusory nature of the world and life, one arrives at a true understanding of change and death.

Through "free and easy wandering" we journey in the vast spaces of reality where one "climbs up on clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon and wanders beyond the four seas." Traveling "beyond the dust and dirt, one wanders free and easy in the service of inaction." Following "any far-away, carefree, and as-you-like-it paths," we enter into the beyond where there is nothing and where there is no trail. Borne beyond the trivialities of mundane concern in company with the Creator and great Teacher we truly govern the world as the sage notes:

> *Let your mind wander in simplicity, blend your spirit with the vastness, follow along with things the way they are, and make no room for personal views—then the world will be governed.*[9]

Not all can make this journey, for bound by benevolence and righteousness, they are blind. For small minds and spirits the freedom of the sage is as incomprehensible as the flight of ninety thousand leagues by the great P'eng bird is to the cicada and the dove. To have evident skills and capacities means slavery:

> *In comparison to the sage, a man like this is a drudging slave, a craftsman bound to his calling, wearing out his body, grieving his mind. They say it is the beautiful markings of the tiger and the leopard that call out the hunters, the nimbleness of the monkey and the ability of the dog to catch rats that make them end up chained.*[10]

To wander in the world means neither to submerge oneself in mere conformity, nor to reject or withdraw from affairs. Rather, the

9. Burton Watson, *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings,* New York, Columbia, 1964, pp. 90–94.
10. Ibid., p. 91.

true sage, flexible in confronting circumstance, is "able to wander in the world without taking sides, can follow along with men without losing himself."[11]

Embarking upon the path of free and easy wandering requires that "you strip away not your fine fur only, but every impediment of the body, scour your heart till it is free from all desire, and travel through the desolate wilds."[12] Through the "fasting of the mind" we transcend the intellect and enter the emptiness of the Tao. By means of true forgetting we attain union with the Tao as we "drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding."[13]

The spiritual ascent to enlightenment and the realization of the unity of all differences is a process of progressive emptying of the self:

> *So I began explaining and kept at him for three days, and after that he was able to put the world outside himself. When he had put the world outside himself, I kept at him for seven days more, and after that he was able to put things outside himself. When he had put things outside himself, I kept at him for nine days more, and after that he was able to put life outside himself. After he had put life outside himself, he was able to achieve the brightness of dawn, and when he had achieved the brightness of dawn, he could see his aloneness. After he had managed to see his aloneness, he could do away with past and present, he was able to enter where there is no life and no death. That which kills life does not die; that which gives life to life does not live. This is the kind of thing it is: there's nothing it doesn't send off, nothing it doesn't welcome, nothing it doesn't destroy, nothing it doesn't complete. Its name is Peace-in-Strife. After the strife, it attains completion.*[14]

This passage is noteworthy in that the stages outlined conform generally to the pattern of mystical experience throughout the world. Devotees pass through the stages of *purgation*, freeing them from bondage to the external world, *concentration*, leading to unification of the self, and *enlightenment* or union with reality.

Although the mystic path outlined in the *Chuang-tzu* implies disregard for the affairs of ordinary men, there is no call for rejecting any particular life context in order to become the perfect man. Rather, there is recognition that a man cannot always control the conditions of life about him:

> *But though you may be one time a ruler, another time a subject, this is merely a matter of the times. Such distinctions change with*

11. Ibid., pp. 137–138.

12. Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, New York, Doubleday, 1956, p. 39.

13. Watson, op. cit., pp. 86–87.

14. Ibid., p. 79. The alternative translation in Fung, op. cit., pp. 238–239, suggests a vision of the One which enables the sage to transcend all distinctions, past-present, life-death, tranquillity-strife.

*the age and you cannot call either one or the other lowly. Therefore I say, the Perfect Man is never a stickler in his actions.*[15]

It even suggests that mystic endeavor enables the ideal ruler to manage affairs successfully. Rejecting the quest for fame or imposing schemes and projects as evidence of his wisdom, his mind will be like a mirror: "going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing. Therefore, he can win out over things and not hurt himself." [16] He can call out troops and conquer nations without losing the hearts of the people, and he benefits countless ages, though not having love for men.[17]

While the mystical pursuit appears useless from the conventional standpoint, it actually provides man with his footing in the world:

*A man has to understand the useless before you can talk to him about the useful. The earth is certainly vast and broad, though a man uses no more of it than the area he puts his feet on. If however, you were to dig away all the earth from around his feet until you reached the Yellow Springs, then would the man still be able to make use of it?* [18]

The concept of the "usefulness of the useless" in the *Chuang-tzu* corresponds to the idea of the utility of the empty in the *Tao-te-ching*. As a practical approach to life, it suggests that the truly wise person avoids grief and pain and fulfills his life by following a simple, quiet, obscure life which the world passes over as insignificant just as the woodcutter and carpenter ignore the gnarled and bumpy ailanthus or oak tree.

Free and easy wandering in the boundless beyond in meditative endeavor produces keen awareness of the contrast of the heavenly and the human. The heavenly is the natural, original, or fated endowment of any being just as horses and oxen naturally have four feet. In contrast the human refers to man's intentional imposition on, and manipulation of, Nature.

Heaven, like the nameless, formless Tao is beyond human categories and determinations. However, just as men cut a road through a trackless field, they attempt to impose order on Heaven, making it conform to their scheme of values:

*What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable. A road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. . . .*[19]

Further, Heaven stands for what is essential and inward, while the human is the external, artificial, and manipulative. Thus, while it is

15. Watson, op. cit., p. 137.

16. Ibid., pp. 94–95.

17. For eloquent description of the demeanor and bearing of the ideal man, see ibid., pp. 75, 99–100.

18. Ibid., pp. 136–137.

19. Ibid., pp. 35–36.

according to Heaven that horses have four legs, it is the result of human intentions that horses wear halters and oxen have pierced noses. The timely word of the sage urges:

> *I say: do not let what is human wipe out what is Heavenly; do not let what is purposeful wipe out what is fated.*[20]

Against the background of this distinction we must observe the attack which the *Chuang-tzu* launches against words and language. Fundamentally, words represent man's intellectual effort to order reality. When his words are believed to represent reality as it really is, they become a barrier to the full realization of his existence.

Perceiving that the preachments of moralists, i.e., Confucianists and Mohists, permit people to consider themselves superior to others or that the subtle word play of logicians deludes people into believing they truly understand reality, the *Chuang-tzu* emphasizes the relativity of words and views. Differences among people are only matters of degree and standpoint, not substance or reality:

> *If a man sleeps in a damp place, his back aches and he ends up half paralyzed, but is this true of a loach? If he lives in a tree, he is terrified and shakes with fright, but is this true of a monkey? . . . Men claim that Mao-ch'ing and Lady Li were beautiful, but if fish saw them they would fly away. . . . Of these four, which knows how to fix the standard of beauty for the world? The way I see it, the rules of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of right and wrong are all hopelessly snarled and jumbled. How could I know anything about such discriminations?*[21]

The evaluations which men make of their experiences create endless dissatisfactions and struggles for more and more achievement. Man's life is bound and overwhelmed by fears and anxieties. Failing to see that human life is simply part of the ever-transforming process of Nature, change becomes threatening. Confusion and frustration in life result from not perceiving man's pettiness within the cosmic order.

To be able to accept and harmonize with change and to confront death with equanimity, one must press beyond the world of contrary distinctions and arbitrary evaluations. Attaining a vision of the unity of the Tao which unifies all the dualities of existence, one may keep his spirit whole, and his response to life will be like the hinge well-fitted to its socket or like a mirror which embraces and reflects all without stain. The person not touched by good or bad "just lets things be the way they are and doesn't try to help life along."[22]

It is important to notice that the man who perceives the Tao does not abolish the world of things. He understands its nature. Those who are close to attaining truth, according to the *Chuang-tzu*, are those who do not reject what pertains to Heaven nor neglect what pertains to man. He does not use "the mind to repel the Way" nor

20. Ibid., p. 104.
21. Ibid., p. 41.
22. Ibid., p. 72.

"man to help out Heaven." [23] "When man and Heaven do not defeat each other, then he may be said to have the True Man." [24]

Making a perfect adjustment to life, those who understand the Tao develop a skill in life and never exhaust their spiritual power just as the expert cook was able to use his knife for nineteen years without sharpening it because he merely passed his knife through the empty space between joints when butchering a cow.

It is clear that the major problem of existence is egoism and ego attachment. If one can attain a detachment from the self and world, one's spirit would not be disturbed by dramatic shifts in affairs. In order to drive home the relativity of existence and ego experience, the *Chuang-tzu* emphasizes that the line between dream and reality is difficult to maintain and the solidity of our ego may be merely the solidity of a dream from which we shall awake.

> *What's more, we go around telling each other, I do this, I do that —but how do we know that this "I" we talk about has any "I" to it? You dream you're a bird and soar up into the sky; you dream you're a fish and dive down in the pool. But now when you tell me about it, I don't know whether you are awake or whether you are dreaming. Running around accusing others is not as good as laughing, and enjoying a good laugh is not as good as going along with things. Be content to go along and forget about change and then you can enter the mysterious oneness of Heaven.*[25]

Concerning life and death, the *Chuang-tzu* emphasizes that the distinction is meaningless in the light of the dream nature of existence and the fact that the duality of life and death is wrongly evaluated by man. Both must be accepted as part of the nature of things. Death, particularly, is merely one of the many changes the individual undergoes through his process of living. They should not perturb his spirit.

When the spirit of Chuang-tzu's philosophy is apprehended, it enables the individual to approach life with a grand indifference. Although he is not entirely disinterested, the true man views with detachment all affairs as part of the same process whose secret he knows. He therefore refrains from trying to force it to conform to his desires.

We may compare Chuang-tzu's attitude toward fate and death with the stoic attitude of accepting everything as the working out of a universal reason. His philosophy does not guarantee success in every situation. Rather it teaches how to face every situation. When one loses, he has fortitude; when he wins, he is not prone to presumption or pride. Unless the person is certain of himself within, he cannot be sure facing the world. The nurture of the inner man, which is the foundation of all life's activities, forms the central concern of the *Chuang-tzu*.

23. Ibid., p. 74.
24. Ibid., p. 76.
25. Ibid., pp. 84–85.

NEO-TAOISM

At the end of the Han era the loss of prestige of Confucianism and the upheaval of society led to revived interest in Taoist philosophy. Two distinct trends appeared in the movement. On the one hand there was a group of philosophers with Confucian leanings and devoted to reconciling Taoism with the established teaching of Confucius. The other group appears more interested in the life-style engendered by Taoist principles. The Neo-Taoist movement was termed "Pure Talk" because of its concentration on philosophical issues and rejection of worldly advantage. It was also called "Dark Learning" because it focused on the relation of the abstruse and mysterious Tao to the world.

Those concerned mainly with philosophical issues included such philosophers as Wang Pi (A.D. 225–249), who is considered the founder of the movement, Hsiang Hsiu (c. 221–c. 300), Kuo Hsiang (d. 312), and Chi K'ang (223–262). These philosophers wrote commentaries to the *I-ching*, the *Tao-te-ching*, and the *Chuang-tzu*. Through their commentaries they reinterpreted Taoism in the light of their own age and manifested considerable originality in the application of Taoist principles.

A distinctive feature of these later Taoist philosophers was their attitude to Confucius, whom Taoists generally criticized and identified with sham and hypocrisy. The latter-day Taoists regarded Confucius as the greatest sage, even superior to Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu. The reason for this was that according to Taoist principle, he who knows does not speak and he who speaks does not know. Since Confucius did not speak of Tao and its mysterious operations, he must know it, while the Taoist sages, who spoke about it, must not know it. The motivation behind this peculiar reconciliation was the fact that Confucianism was the official philosophy of the state, and one could hardly advance in any position without coming to terms with the sage. Taoist philosophers reinterpreted the Taoist sages in order to provide a basis for participation in society. Thus the reconciliation of the perspectives of both philosophies proceeded from two directions: the exaltation of Confucius and the interpretation of his thought in terms of Taoism, and the reinterpretation of Taoist principle to make it amenable to Confucian outlook.

In general, Neo-Taoist philosophy focused attention on the problem of metaphysics, the relation of things to the source of their being and the relation of Being and Nonbeing which had been raised in the *Lao-tzu* and the *Chuang-tzu*. This type of inquiry was part of a wider interest at that time in analyzing terms and developing principles growing out of the School of Names tradition. By investigating the distinctions and meanings involved in names and terms, the principles governing reality could be discerned. Much discussion was devoted to these terms and principles, and little attention was paid to concrete actualities.[26]

The second group, known as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, appear more significant for the attitude and style of life they embodied than for the contribution they made to Taoist thought.

26. For detailed discussion, see Fung, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 175–179.

Their philosophy was hedonistic in its exaltation of the enjoyment of life and pursuit of pleasure. Like Yang Chu earlier, they sought enjoyment and freedom from cares. They refused office, glorified drinking, and believed that following impulse was the expression of integrity. They were also sensitive to Nature. Their care-nothing attitude was represented by Liu Ling who, unabashed at criticisms of his nakedness at home, retorted:

> *I take the whole universe as my house and my own room as my clothing. Why, then, do you enter here into my trousers?* [27]

The sense of equality of all things was demonstrated in the practice of the Juan family who enjoyed their drinking bouts by sharing the same large wine bottle, even to the extent of permitting the pigs to join in. Sympathy for animals was depicted in Chih-tun's freeing a captured crane. Sheer impulsiveness was represented in the tale of Wang Hui-chi. In the middle of the night he got the urge to visit his friend Tai K'uei, even though it was snowing. However, when he got to the door he did not knock. When asked why, he replied that the urge had passed and there was no need to knock.

## RELIGIOUS TAOISM

While philosophical Taoism has provided the bureaucrat, scholar, or artist with a profound understanding of existence upon which to base his life and seek his satisfactions, it is religious Taoism which has functioned among the hosts of ordinary people to fulfill their desires for satisfaction in life and a bright destiny beyond this life.

Religious Taoism, as an institution, began about A.D. 143, established by one Chang Ling. However, the diverse beliefs and practices which make up the religion originated in more ancient times with the evolution of Chinese folk religion. Although Chinese folk religion employed elements from both Confucianism and Buddhism, religious Taoism has been the central element as the vehicle of folk beliefs. It has, however, never been supported officially by the state or advocated by scholars in the same fashion as Confucianism. At times individual rulers favored it as in the case of Emperor Kao Tsung of the T'ang who in 666 designated Lao-tzu the "Most High Emperor of Mystic Origin," a status above Confucius and Buddha.[28]

The origin or roots of religious Taoism may be traced to four sources which merged to form the complex of religious Taoism in the fourth century B.C. before any institutional establishment appeared. These sources include the philosophical Taoism of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, and Lieh-tzu; a school of hygiene; the Five Element school of Tsou Yen, which later came to be regarded as a school of alchemy; and belief in the Isles of the Blest where the secret of immortality could be obtained.

The unifying element fusing these varied beliefs was the quest for

27. Ibid., p. 235.
28. Wing-tsit Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, New York, Columbia, 1953, pp. 138–139.

immortality. It appears that magicians (*fang-shih*) were largely instrumental in promoting them. After unifying China, the first Ch'in Emperor sought his own immortality by turning cinnabar into gold in 133 B.C.

In the early centuries of the Christian era the quest for immortality developed in a hygienic direction. It became a quest for achieving longevity in this world through care of the body and deities within. According to the theory, everyone had thirty-six thousand deities dwelling within. Arranged in a hierarchy, these gods also ruled the universe. In order to maintain life, the deities must remain in the body. To assure this, certain rules of diet had to be undertaken, such as abstaining from wine, meat, and grain. Circulation was to be improved through gymnastics and breathing exercises termed "embryonic respiration," which meant to breathe like the baby in the womb. One held his breath as long as he could and directed the inhaled air to various parts of the body.

The hygienic practices, which required considerable expenditure of effort and time by the devotee, were also linked to performance of good works in order to achieve complete fulfillment. The devotee's actions contributed to his destiny from their resulting rewards or punishments.

The popular work entitled *T'ai-Shang Kan-ying P'ien*[29] illustrates the moralistic character of religious Taoism. Developed in the eleventh century, it became one of the most widely read religious books in China. Through a combination of Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist ideas it reveals how morality and religious concepts were made available to the common people and enabled the Confucian elite to maintain their control over the people through fears of punishment inculcated by its text and drawings.

A conspicuous feature of Chinese popular religion and religious Taoism is its complex and multitudinous pantheon. For detailed study of this profusion of divinities, the reader may be referred to the study of Chinese peasant deities by Clarence Burton Day.[30] Among the most important Taoist deities, he notes the Jade Emperor, who is regarded as the father of the gods in Taoist lore. His palace is in the constellation above the North Pole where all the powers of Nature which influence earth are concentrated.

Below the more exalted deities are the popular Eight Immortals who work to bring blessings to mankind. Other widely revered deities are the Great God of Five Roads (also known as General of the Five Brigands) of evil omen and the positive God of the Five Bless-

29. Translated by Teitaro Suzuki and Paul Carus; discussions in Holmes Welch, *Taoism, the Parting of the Way,* Boston, Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 139–141. For a detailed study of this type of literature the reader may refer to Wolfram Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China,* Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1967; also, C. J. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society,* Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1961, pp. 286–289.

30. Clarence Burton Day, *Chinese Peasant Cults,* Shanghai, Kelly and Walsh Limited, 1940. Also on the historical development of the pantheon, see Welch, op. cit., pp. 135–141.

ings. Very important is the god of the hearth, who keeps track of family doings and annually reports to the Jade Emperor.

As a survey of the many functions of the hosts of Chinese deities indicates, every aspect of the physical and social environment is overseen by a deity who assumes his office by appointment of the Jade Emperor (concretely through designation of the government, which regulated religious matters). The divine world is a replica of the bureaucratic world of the Chinese state.

Interaction with Buddhism imported from India contributed to the development of religious Taoism. Beliefs in Heaven and Hell, karma and transmigration, and Buddhist divinities expanded Chinese perspectives on human destiny.

The previously outlined beliefs took more concrete shape with the establishment of religious Taoism by Chang Ling in A.D. 143. Religion and politics were mixed in his work, resulting in the formation of a semi-independent state in the regions of Szechuan and Shensi. His group was called Five Bushels of Rice Taoism, since he charged that amount for membership. He also initiated a health cult to cure diseases by charms and spells, and emphasized abstention from alcohol, giving of charity, moral deeds, filial piety, meditation, repentance, and the reading of the *Tao-te-ching.* The movement continued to modern times, headed by descendants of Chang.

It is to be noted that during the period of the breakdown of the Han dynasty, the dissatisfactions of the people grew as the power of Confucianism waned. Land became concentrated in the hands of the few, and frequent floods, droughts, ruinous taxation, and banditry imperiled life.

Taoist religious organization provided a refuge for people seeking stability through a hierarchical system and offered the benefits of magic. In A.D. 184 Chang Chueh led the revolt of the Yellow Turbans, who promoted T'ai-p'ing Tao (Great Peace Taoism) in the region of Hopeh. According to this movement the age of Great Peace, the millennium, had come when all men would be equal. Yellow turbans, the color of the earth element, were their badge. Although it was put down with great effort by the Han government, the movement seriously disrupted the government itself.

In 189 Chang Ling's followers led a rebellion, gaining control over wide areas in Szechuan and Shensi. Taoist priests performed the functions of government administrators and collected taxes. In 215 they capitulated to the central government, but in return the government recognized the Taoist religion.

In the course of Chinese history numerous other rebellions have had a religious foundation in Taoism. Against the Chin and Mongols appeared the Chuan-chen-chiao (Complete Truth Religion). During the Ch'ing period there were rebellions of Taoist and Buddhist origins. The T'ai-p'ing rebellion of the nineteenth century, however, had Christian influence.

While Taoism as a religious and clerical organization has never shown an interest directly in politics, Taoist philosophy as expressed in the *Tao-te-ching* and the *Chuang-tzu* criticizes tyranny

and oppressive government and society. Thus it appears to be on the side of the masses, upholding the principle of benefiting the people as the basis of successful rule. In times of stress and strain the people turned to Taoism for inspiration for their struggle. Also the magical notions of invulnerability and promises of immortality gave encouragement in face of danger.[31]

In modern times Taoist religion appears to be waning and heading for extinction, but at the same time it has inspired the formation of numerous religious societies. Largely secret in character, they require initiation into membership, vows, and the use of symbolic communications, chanting, and fasting.

Many societies began in the period preceding or just after World War I in the area of Shantung, a center of much civil and international conflict. Reflecting the general disillusion of the times, "they are all negative in outlook, utilitarian in purpose and superstitious in belief." Though they are rejected and attacked by intellectuals, Chan asserts they are not so easily dismissed, for they embody features which will influence the future of religious belief in China. He notes a number of tendencies latent in such organizations. It is a striking fact that Taoist schools and societies have generally begun as patriotic movements opposed to invaders. The Boxer Rebellion in 1900 was an outstanding modern example. They also opposed tyranny. They were this-worldly in attempting to obtain the fruits of salvation in this life. Though there are beliefs in Heaven and Hell, these were not the central religious concern. The quest of longevity was to increase life in this world. A strong ethical emphasis accompanied the attempt to achieve the good life on earth. Movements were laymen-oriented as each worked out his own salvation. Clergy performed ceremonies, but they did not control the people. The groups were syncretic, drawing from all major traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.[32]

While Taoist religion continues to exist on Taiwan, its status on the mainland is in doubt. It faces severe problems in both regions from the rising influence of science and education and from its own emphasis on magical quests for self-benefit and lack of commanding leaders.

31. For discussion of the history and character of the Taoist church, see Welch, op. cit., pp. 113–123.

32. Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, pp. 168–185.

# HARMONY WITH REALITY: BUDDHISM

THE ASSIMILATION OF A FOREIGN TRADITION

Buddhism represents the first major foreign religio-philosophical tradition to penetrate and seriously influence Chinese religious and cultural outlook. Buddhism, in its Theravada (Hinayana) or Mahayana forms, promoted an essentially Indian view of reality and life which at once contradicted the Chinese understanding and also amplified it.

Buddhism contradicted Chinese interpretations of existence by generally regarding the common world of human experience as a delusive product of passion-infected minds. Hence, truth lay beyond this world in a transcendent experience of enlightenment which would reveal things as unsubstantial and valueless. This effort was to be carried out by individuals within special communities devoted to the goal of emancipation apart from common social life. Monasticism and the rigorous discipline to control the mind and passions aimed at inducing an awareness of the voidness of things, leading to detachment, tranquillity, and egolessness. These qualities marked emancipation from bondage to finitude in this life and hereafter. The individualistic character of the Buddhist quest for enlightenment collided sharply with the Chinese sense of social or communal obligation and filial piety, as well as the positive acceptance and enjoyment of this world.

The interaction between the Indian and Chinese perspectives on the world took place on various levels of Chinese society. As a consequence, distinctive forms of Chinese Buddhism (such as Ch'an) emerged, advocating acceptance of this world and supporting participation in it.

Buddhism also broadened the scope of Chinese understanding of human destiny through the concepts of karma, transmigration, and mythical cosmology. The moralism of the karmic system fitted well

with Confucian social concern. Confucian tradition showed little interest in the aspirations and hopes of ordinary individuals, and Taoist philosophy primarily enabled individuals to adjust to their life conditions. Taoist religion attempted to enhance the individual's prospects in this world, but it was mainly Buddhism which attempted to console ordinary people with hope for their future well-being beyond this life through Pure Land teaching.

Although Buddhism contained aspects alien to the Chinese outlook, it had a wide attraction for people on all levels of Chinese society. On the popular level Buddhism resembled religious Taoism which could confer benefits of long life, good luck, and help in misfortune by means of magical power. Buddha was early ranked with the Yellow Emperor (Huang-ti) and Lao-tzu as an important divine personage. Emperor Huan set up an altar to these three divinities in the capital at Loyang in the period A.D. 147–167.

While the popular masses looked upon Buddhism as a means to enhance their worldly fortunes, on higher levels of society it appealed to more cultured individuals who yearned for freedom and release from worldly burdens resulting from the collapse of the Han empire. Along with the resurgence of interest in Taoist philosophy, the life of retirement and withdrawal afforded by Buddhist monasticism invited the gentry of that time.

Buddhist teachers took advantage of the similarities between Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics through a practice of matching or paralleling terms rendering Buddhism more intelligible to the Chinese mind. Consequently, the Buddhist concepts of the Absolute (*Bhutatathata*) and the phenomenal world of change were paired with the Taoist terms *Wu* (Nonbeing) and *Yu* (Being). The distinction *Nirvana-Samsara* was interpreted in terms of *wu-wei* (nonaction) and *yu-wei* (activity). The Buddhist religious ideal of the Arhat was related to the Taoist immortal Chen-jen. The five precepts of Buddhism were matched with the five virtues of Confucianism. Buddhist texts were also translated in conformity with Confucian moral sentiments. The text *Mou-tzu on the Settling of Doubts,* the first apology for Buddhism by a Chinese composed sometime between the second and fifth centuries, employed traditional Chinese texts in order to demonstrate that there was no essential contradiction between Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Despite initial efforts of early Chinese Buddhists to commend Buddhism to the Chinese people on the basis of the similarity of its thought and practices to traditional Chinese ways, the production of more accurate translations of Buddhist texts and more penetrating studies of Buddhist philosophy revealed its basic differences with Chinese thought. As a result, numerous Taoist and Confucian spokesmen throughout subsequent Chinese history criticized and challenged the religious and social implications of Buddhism in order to advance their own religious or social interests.

Taoists charged that Buddhism was inappropriate for Chinese society because of its foreign dress, ritual, and burial customs, as well as its strange rules for food and family. They objected to Buddhist celibacy, to the use of impure materials for medicine, and to the

*Kneeling Bodhisattva, from the Northern Wei Dynasty, early sixth century. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Hoyt Collection.)*

practice of begging. Taoists followed Confucianists in criticizing the unproductive labor and wealth of the monks. They also argued about the historical priority of Lao-tzu and Buddha or superiority of Taoist and Buddhist teachings. Forged texts and misrepresentation were widely used on both sides.

The Confucianists had two main objections to Buddhism which continually recurred in memorials to the throne. They claimed that Buddhism was contrary to the basic pattern of ruler-subject relationship and that the existence of a class of nonproductive priests meant less revenue for the state. Buddhism was charged with the decline of the government and society and had to be rooted out. Such indictments often became the pretext for persecution as illustrated in the attack on the order in 446 by Emperor Shih Tsu of the Wei dynasty.

In a memorial to Emperor Liang Wu-ti (502–549), Hsun-chi, a Con-

fucian scholar, made seven charges against Buddhism of which sedition was the central issue:

> *(1) the Buddhists were imitating the imperial quarters with their monasteries and temples; (2) they were translating and circulating seditious works in disrespect of the imperial mandates; (3) they were soliciting contributions for exemption from punishment in hell, thus usurping the sovereign's power of imposing penalties and punishment; (4) the Buddhist designation of the three months for fasting each year, and six days each month, was an attempt to set up another calendar in opposition to that of the dynasty; (5) they implied the existence of hardship and suffering in the royal domain by portraying the peace and joy of the Buddha lands; (6) they regarded the great bell in the temple courtyard as a substitute for the clepsydra in the imperial palace; and (7) they hoisted banners and pennants that imitated the imperial insignias.*[1]

Criticisms of monastic life and superstitions were made by Fu-yi (544–639) and Han Yu (768–824). Intellectual objections centered on the existence of the soul and transmigration which the Confucians denied, mainly on the ground that this opened the people to exploitation. Confucianists were interested in ideas which had social utility.

Buddhists countered the various criticisms of both Confucianists and Taoists by maintaining that Buddhism was not contradictory to Chinese social and moral concerns. Philosophically they asserted that Buddhism was universalistic while Taoism and Confucianism were inferior in being concerned only with this world and its petty affairs. The interdependence of all beings taught in Buddhism reduced selfishness and competition, according to Buddhists.

While the attacks on Buddhism were substantial and involved many forms of argument, Buddhism spread among the people by offering glorious salvation and many benefits. The attacks sometimes resulted in persecutions of the order and restriction of its activities and numbers of monks. Sometimes wealth was expropriated in land, money, or art treasures. However, the persecutions were never of long duration, because the restlessness of the common people who supported Buddhism caused the rulers to relent.

Further, Buddhism was able to answer objections in deed as well as word. The Buddhists engaged in social work and contributed to the economy of the country through its rolling mills, oil processing facilities, hostels, and the "inexhaustible" treasury used for welfare. Buddhism brought medicine to the poor, aided the sick and starving, built roads, wells, bridges, and planted trees. In the capital the only places for recreation were the open spaces provided by temples. Buddhism grew in the face of bureaucratic and official opposition, appealing to the common man with compassion and to the intellectual with a profound vision of wisdom and spiritual emancipation.

1. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 143–144.

From the early beginnings of the Buddhist movement in China some of the best Chinese minds devoted themselves to understanding, interpreting, and elaborating the content of Buddhist thought and experience. A brief role call will serve to remind us of the personal labors behind Buddhist growth. Tao-an (312–385) studied metaphysics and meditation. His interests extended to problems of translation, cataloguing sutras and rules of discipline. Hui-yuan (344–416) was noted for his discussions on karma and the indestructibility of the soul. He argued for the independence of the Buddhist Order, maintaining that monks should not bow before kings. He also promoted meditative practices based on faith in Amitabha Buddha. The monk Tao-sheng (360–434) advanced theories which eventually became hallmarks of Chinese Buddhism, such as the doctrines of instantaneous enlightenment and universal Buddha nature. Seng-chao (374–414) was an outstanding interpreter of the philosophy of Nagarjuna which he had learned as a disciple of the famous Indian missionary Kumarajiva (in Chang-an, 401–413). Hsuan-tsang (596–664) achieved eminence as a pilgrim to India, translator, and commentator. Chi-tsang (549–623) systematized the Madhyamika philosophy of Nagarjuna and earned the reputation of being one of the most virtuous monks.

## THE SCHOOLS OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

As Buddhist teachings flowed into China from India, their many tendencies gave rise to a diversity of schools and interpretations. The history of the formation of Buddhist schools divides into two periods. The initial period was known as the age of the "Six Schools and Seven Branches." During the second stage, the encouragement and support of Buddhist scholarship by the Sui and T'ang emperors led to the formation of more distinct and well-defined systems of Buddhist teaching which had enduring significance as the zenith of Buddhist intellectual leadership and influence in Chinese culture. As these schools developed, they reflected the gradual assimilation of Buddhism to the Chinese mind.

The first scholarly movement in the "Six Schools and Seven Branches" exhibited the two basic interests of early Chinese Buddhism in meditation and *Prajna*, or Wisdom. Influenced by the contemporary ascendancy of Neo-Taoism, there was a concern for the nature of ultimate reality and its relation to things. The names of the individual schools reflected rudimentary traces of Indian Buddhist philosophical tendencies.

The later major schools of Chinese Buddhism developed during the T'ang age in an endeavor to interpret Buddhism on its own terms. Efforts were made to ensure orthodoxy by the construction of doctrinal lineages. Ten schools emerged of which five had distinct Indian character and were limited in their overall influence on the Chinese mentality. These schools represented the Hinayanistic Satyasiddhi, Abhidharma Kosa, and Vinaya teachings and the Mahayanistic Yogacara and Madhyamika philosophies. More consonant with Chinese spirit were the T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, Ch'an, and Ching-t'u schools, which have had wide influence in Japan as well as

*Eleven-headed Kuan-yin from the T'ang Dynasty, early eighth century.* (*Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Severance A Millikin.*)

China. The Mantra or Cheng-yen school, transmitting Tantric teachings, did not become fully systematized in China but was absorbed into the traditions of other schools.

The transformation of Indian Buddhism into Chinese Buddhism appeared as early as Seng-chao, the famous Madhyamika teacher, when he asserted: "Reality is wherever there is contact with things." [2] This statement contrasted with the Indian emphasis on the delusive character of the world motivating withdrawal. Chinese Buddhists were critical of the Indian tradition for attempting to abolish the spiritual domination of the world over man by doing away with the world. For the Chinese, wisdom was not divorced from the

2. Wing-tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy,* Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 356.

things of the world but rather wisdom revealed their true nature. Seng-chao declared:

> *Hence the sage is like an empty hollow. He cherishes no knowledge. He dwells in the world of change and utility, yet he holds himself to the realm of non-activity (wu-wei). He rests within the walls of the nameable, yet lives in the open country of what transcends speech. He is silent and alone, void and open, where his state of being cannot be clothed in language. Nothing more can be said of him.*[3]

With reminiscences of Taoist terminology and thought, Buddhism took up the cause of world affirmation.

**The Hua-yen School**

The development of a more this-worldly interpretation of Buddhism received a strong philosophical support in the thought of Fa-tsang (643–712) who expounded a complex system based on the *Avatamsaka* (*Hua-yen*) *Sutra*. In his famous parable of the golden lion presented before Empress Wu (684–705) we have a striking illustration of the ability of Buddhist teachers to render abstruse doctrines intelligible through analogies from the everyday world. Commanded to demonstrate the truth of his school, Fa-tsang explained the ten basic principles of Hua-yen philosophy concerning the relationship of ultimate reality to things by referring to a golden lion standing in the hall.

According to Fa-tsang, the ultimate teaching of Buddhism was the principle of the mutual interpenetration of all things as a result of their being manifestations of the one, all-embracing Buddha-mind. Things in the world had a degree of reality as expressions of the absolute Buddha-mind within things. Corresponding to aspects of objective idealism in the West, the teaching combined logical and psychological insight, making it one of the most influential philosophies in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. It not only synthesized major philosophical currents in Mahayana thought, but its universal vision and ideal of mutuality within the whole inspired mystical endeavor and contained sociopolitical implications.

**The T'ien-t'ai School**

The face of Chinese Buddhism began to show itself in the formation of the T'ien-t'ai school, whose name was taken from the mountain in South China where the founder Chi-i (531–597) resided. This fact suggests the Chinese concern and interest in this world.

The central texts for this sect were the *Lotus Sutra* (*Fa-hua-ching*). Its teaching combined in a unified system the central Mahayana doctrines of universal Buddha nature, mutual interpenetration of all things, and the theory of instantaneous enlightenment. Although there were several predecessors in the development of the school, Chi-i was the pivotal figure in completing the doctrinal system. His character, depth of learning, and intellectual power have been unparalleled in Chinese Buddhist history.

3. Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1953, vol. II, p. 268.

The T'ien-t'ai school attempted to confront the increasingly difficult problem of the diversity of teachings attributed to the Buddha flowing into China from India. Each doctrinal system claimed to be the direct teaching of the Buddha because all sutras opened with an affirmation that they had been originally recited by Ananda, Buddha's companion and original transmitter of his teachings.

It was Chi-i's contribution to develop a comprehensive historical-doctrinal organization of Buddhist texts and doctrine covering Buddha's lifetime which set the pattern for later thought in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. He gave an account of the order of appearance of Buddhist teachings involving a theory of progression to the ultimate truth of the *Lotus* and *Nirvana Sutras.* His system came to be known as the theory of "Five Periods and Eight Doctrines."

Briefly stated, during the first period of twenty-one days the Buddha attempted to teach the profound doctrine of the *Hua-yen-ching*. However, his disciples did not have the capacity to understand. Consequently, he had to devote himself during the next twelve years to the propagation of Hinayana doctrine. In this time he hoped to induce individuals to higher aspirations by using a simple doctrine. In the third period, covering eight years, some individuals converted to elementary Mahayana teaching, while others were rebuked for rejecting this doctrine. The fourth stage of twenty-two years centered on the propagation of the *Prajna* (*Wisdom*) *Sutras.* The Mahayana concept of Voidness was stressed. In the fifth and final period of eight years the Buddha proclaimed the doctrine of the *Lotus* and *Nirvana Sutras* as the supreme way of Buddhism. Correlated with the different periods of Buddha's life and teachings Chi-i developed a set of criteria for distinguishing various forms of doctrine with the aim of showing the superiority of full Mahayana teaching over earlier Hinayana or elementary expressions of Mahayana philosophy.

The theory of five periods represented a quasi-historical attempt to place the Buddhist texts in their approximate historical order based on the perception of growth in the depth and breadth of Buddhist insight on the nature of salvation and the world in the development from Hinayana to Mahayana philosophy. The criteria for evaluating doctrines reflected pedagogical and mystical insight. Its major contribution to the development of Buddhist thought lay in its systematic and scholarly approach, drive for unity and coherence, and theory of religious development. Further, its universalistic philosophy, expressed in the theory of "three thousand in one moment (or instant) of thought," proclaimed, like the Hua-yen philosophy, that everything is the essence of every other thing from the standpoint of ultimate reality. Consequently, this philosophy also asserted the importance and reality of the things of this world as embodiments of the universal Buddha-nature.

### The Ch'an (Zen) School

Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism appeared as the culmination of several trends within Chinese Buddhism. Combining with Taoist iconoclasm, it was, in a measure, a reaction to the scholasticism and lifeless formalism of T'ang Buddhism. It attempted, through the discipline of

meditation, to bring to full practical and experiential realization the principles of universal Buddha-nature and instantaneous enlightenment. It also focused attention on life in this world, fusing with Taoist love of Nature. The emphasis on egolessness and nonduality (Buddhism) together with the resulting qualities of naturalness and spontaneity (Taoism) achieved the complete assimilation of Buddhism within the Chinese spirit.

The term Ch'an or Zen was derived from the word *dhyana,* meaning "meditation" in Sanskrit. In the sense that meditation is the heart of Buddhism, Ch'an claimed to be the most essential aspect of Buddhist life. Originally meditation was a discipline of regulated sitting, breathing exercises, and mental exercises designed to still the passions and bring discursive thought to a halt. Indian Yoga techniques provided the basic elements for this endeavor. In China, India's elaborate system of meditation underwent considerable modification in its adaptation to Chinese ways. Influenced by Taoist nature mysticism and Chinese interest in this life, meditation aimed at instantaneous enlightenment. Rather than merely bringing discursive thought to a halt, Chinese Buddhists directed their effort at realizing their fundamental identity with the absolute reality surrounding them in the world of Nature. This identity produced a new awareness of the world in which the singularity of things in the given world at the same time revealed the allness of the Buddha-nature.

As a specific tradition in Chinese Buddhism, Ch'an had a long history. Though shrouded in conflicting legends there appeared numerous schools claiming to transmit the true doctrine and practice of Ch'an. The main divisions were the Northern school, derived from the monk Shen-hsiu (605–706) who is described as maintaining a gradualist approach to enlightenment, while the Southern school, stemming from Hui-neng (638–713), emphasized instantaneous enlightenment. In the contest between these two factions the Southern school became the main stream of tradition for present schools. The basic text for this tradition was the *Platform Sutra* attributed to Hui-neng.

The story of Hui-neng and the teaching given in the *Platform Sutra* manifests certain religious characteristics of Ch'an noteworthy for their social implications. The account of Hui-neng's entrance into the monastic life and his eventual assumption of spiritual leadership depicts the democratic principle in Ch'an in which all beings equally possess the potentiality to manifest Buddha-nature. Lowly people are not to be despised. Thus Hui-neng, an illiterate woodcutter, attains enlightenment and displaces Shen-hsiu who, by virtue of training and background, is in line for leadership. The stress on illiteracy and lowly background of Hui-neng may be a comment on the scholasticism and formality in the great schools in much of Chinese Buddhism of that time. Hui-neng retorts to his master Hung-jen's assertion that he was a barbarian:

> *I replied: "Although people from the south and people from the north differ, there is no north and south in Buddha nature. Al-*

*though my barbarian's body and your body are not the same, what difference is there in our Buddha nature?"* [4]

The spiritual revolution urged by Hui-neng discounted the external religious activities of building temples, giving alms or offerings, or mechanically reciting sutras. Merit in Ch'an Buddhism meant "inwardly [to] see the Buddha nature; outwardly, practice reverence." [5]

The rejection of externality and formality was carried further by the monk I-hsuan (d. 867) who declared the essence of Buddhism as the natural way of life:

*The Master told the congregation: "Seekers of the Way. In Buddhism no effort is necessary. All one has to do is to do nothing, except to move his bowels, urinate, put on his clothing, eat his meals, and lie down if he is tired. The stupid will laugh at him, but the wise one will understand. An ancient person said, 'One who makes effort externally is surely a fool.' "* [6]

The radicality of I-hsuan's rejection of the obstructive attachment to externalities and forms burst forth in his demand to his disciples to "Kill the Buddha if you happen to meet him. Kill a patriarch or an arhat if you happen to meet him. Kill your parents or relatives if you happen to meet them. Only then can you be free, not bound by material things, and absolutely free and at ease.[7]

As the Southern school of Ch'an developed after Hui-neng and his disciple Shen-hui (670–762), who led the attack on the Northern school, two other schools appeared which became most influential in the progress of Ch'an in China and in Japan to the present day. These two important streams were that of Lin-chi, established by the monk I-hsuan, and the Ts'ao-tung, formed by the monk Liang-chieh (807–869). The major difference between these two schools united in aim and philosophy was the method undertaken to attain enlightenment. The Lin-chi (Japanese *Rinzai*) employed a method whereby the disciple was catapulted into enlightenment through pondering a riddle (*kung-an, koan*) and subjection to physical shock by means of a shout or blow causing the individual to release his grip on reason. The Ts'ao-tung (*Sodo*) school was more tranquil and emphasized quiet meditation under the direction of a master which would lead to the realization of one's Buddha-nature.

As the Ch'an perspective took shape, five basic principles emerged to guide its basic way of life.[8] These principles were frequently dramatically presented in the many stories used in the training of the monk as the basis of his meditation.

The first principle, that "the highest truth or first principle is inexpressible," indicates that Ch'an strives for an experience of reality beyond words and is not satisfied with merely conceptual knowl-

4. Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, New York, Columbia, 1967, pp. 127–128.
5. Ibid., p. 156.
6. Chan, op. cit., p. 445.
7. Ibid., pp. 447–448.
8. Based on the discussion provided by Fung, op. cit., pp. 388–406.

edge. This experience is called Void because it cannot be defined, but it is also called Buddha-nature or Original-nature as a symbol of union with the root of our being.

Buddhist philosophy, unlike some contemporary philosophies, is one of experience, a self-evidential experience. Consequently Ch'annists generally refuse to engage in merely rational argument and appear pretentious in their retort: "Try it yourself."

The second principle, that "spiritual cultivation cannot be cultivated," is a paradoxical assertion emphasizing the fact that religious endeavors which may begin on the conscious level must eventually be made second nature and part of the instinctive, spontaneous reactions of our personalities. When this aim is attained, one does not practice Buddhism; one is in his deepest being Buddhist. The conquest of conscious goodness abolishes affectedness and competition from religious life.

The third principle, that "in the last resort nothing is gained," refers to the fact that the world is not abolished, nor are we transferred to another realm by the fact of enlightenment. The true existence of this world is affirmed in all its depth. However, our understanding is transformed: "When I began to study Zen, mountains were mountains; when I thought I understood Zen, mountains were not mountains; but when I came to full knowledge of Zen, mountains were again mountains." [9]

The fourth principle states: "There is not much in Buddhist teaching." This is not to be taken as an expression of doubt or unbelief. Rather, it is a declaration that concepts, doctrines, and words are inferior to the experience of enlightenment itself. From the highest perspective there is really neither Buddha, Buddhists, nor Buddhism. We noted above I-hsuan's instruction to his disciples that if they meet Buddha, they should kill him. If one perceives Buddha over against himself, he is still caught in the net of discriminating abstractions. The whole attempt of Buddhist discipline, generally, is to actualize in experience what is learned in concept.

Related to this principle also is the claim that Ch'an Buddhism is a transmission beyond scriptures. There are, of course, scriptures and important texts, but the experience to which Ch'an aspires is not gained from books but through persons. Famous stories of insight gained by disciples through striking encounters with the master under whom they were training emphasize the person-to-person contact which accounts for some of Ch'an's modern appeal.

The fifth principle declares that "in carrying water and chopping wood: therein lies the wonderful Tao." It is a vivid comment on the texture of religious existence. Ch'annists have developed their specific forms of education and monastic life. Nevertheless, the sentiment exists that enlightenment is not itself confined to definite practices but may come instantly in the course of carrying out the most menial tasks. As the world is the world, and Buddha-nature is universal, one may realize it anywhere. Such a viewpoint intensifies the

9. D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, New York, Dell, 1955, p. 187.

significance of even the most elementary acts. Hence, Ch'an has had extraordinary influence in art. In an age when the significance of individuals and persons appears to be declining in mass society, Ch'an stresses one's inner and ultimate identity in deep interpersonal relation with others. Artificialities are to be swept away. The emphasis on the validity of daily life as the sphere of ultimate reality and meaning also supports the individual in his quest for self-understanding.

The Pure Land School

The final major tradition of Chinese Buddhism which we must consider is the Pure Land tradition (Chinese *Ching t'u*, Japanese *Jodo*). This teaching attracted the popular masses through its offer of a simple way to salvation through reciting the name of *Amitabha* Buddha (Chinese *O-mi-to-fo*, Japanese *Amida*). The faith and practice of recitation would permit the individual to be born in the Pure Land, from which state he would eventually be assured the achievement of Nirvana or realization of Buddhahood.

The Pure Land in Buddhist mythology was created by Amitabha Buddha as the result of his vows to save all beings and the infinite merit he acquired through aeons of practice. In the Chinese mind it represented a glorious heaven beyond the travail of this world and easily accessible through reciting the Buddha's name in faith. In order to stimulate faith in the Pure Land, there were Buddhist texts which depicted the alternative destiny of birth in one of many hells for those who ignored or despised that faith. These teachings coincided with belief in heavens and the quest of immortality which had developed in religious Taoist tradition.

Like other schools, the Pure Land teachers sought in Buddhist tradition for texts and teachers in order to construct an orthodox lineage for the doctrine. They believed Buddha Sakyamuni taught the doctrine in three central texts, the *Wu-liang-shou-ching* (*Great Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*), the *O-mi-t'o'ching* (*Short Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*), and the *Kuan-wu-liang-shou-ching* (*Amitayur-dhyana Sutra*). It was then reputedly passed on through the famous Indian Mahayana teachers Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu. Eventually it made its way to China, where it was practiced by such outstanding monks as Hui-yuan who formed the White Lotus Society for the purpose of meditating on Amitabha Buddha.

T'an-luan (476–542) was responsible for the popular development of the doctrine. He was followed by Tao-cho (c. 645) and Shan-tao (613–681). In addition to this line of transmission, other teachers promoted the doctrine either as a subsidiary aspect to one of the more philosophical schools such as Ch'an or T'ien-t'ai or as the central teaching.

The first major figure in the Chinese tradition was T'an-luan from the area of Wu-t'ai-shan in North China. Living in an environment infiltrated with magical religion, T'an-luan engaged upon a search for the elixir of immortality following a long illness. Having obtained texts containing formulas from a Taoist master in the south of China, he returned home. On the way, legend relates, he

met the Indian monk Bodhiruci who convinced him that true everlasting life was attained through Pure Land teaching. Casting aside his Taoist texts, he became a teacher of Pure Land doctrine.

T'an-luan popularized Pure Land doctrine by joining it to the theory of the decline of Buddhism. According to this theory, which became basic to Pure Land doctrine in China and Japan, the purity of the Buddhist Order, doctrine, and discipline and the ability to achieve enlightenment decreased as the inspiration of Buddha receded into the historical past. Finally, the last age of the decline and disappearance of Buddhism arrived when no Buddha was present and extremes of egoism, passion, stupidity, anger, pride, and doubt dominated human life. During this age, men did not practice or attain Buddhist ideals, though the doctrine was taught.

On the background of the degeneracy of Buddhism, T'an-luan held that ordinary mortals could achieve salvation through the recitation of Amitabha's name. Rather than depending on one's own power (self-power), mortals had to rely on the saving power of Amitabha deposited in his name. This method of salvation was designated the "easy" way in contrast to the "difficult" ways of meditation and austerities of earlier Buddhism.

The teaching was later systematically organized by Shan-tao, who made the practice of recitation of Buddha's name the central Buddhist discipline. Analyzing the doctrine into the method of meditation, attitudes, and conditions of practice, he developed a comprehensive interpretation of religious life. Through his writings he defended Pure Land doctrine against proponents of the more traditional modes of Buddhist discipline and set the stage for its later flourishing in Japan.

The evolution of Pure Land teaching coincided with the Chinese tendency to affirm life in this world, despite its other-worldly emphasis, because it opened the doors of salvation to the lowliest common man. Through the simple vocal recitation, and without arduous or strict regimentation, individuals could achieve salvation, while fulfilling their family and social obligations.

## BUDDHISM IN CHINESE SOCIETY

As Buddhism spread through Chinese society it met sporadic opposition from either Confucian or Taoist exponents who regarded it as inimical to the health and progress of Chinese society and culture. As a consequence of their criticisms and the traditional control over religion maintained by the Chinese government, Buddhism was constantly under the surveillance of the state even when officials patronized the order for the sake of merit. The result of these conditions was to keep Buddhism institutionally weak but not to interfere with its permeation of the masses. Buddhism reached the peak of its influence in the Sui and T'ang periods, where it blossomed with great intellectual and spiritual creativity witnessed in the various schools.

The comparison of the state of Buddhism after the T'ang period with its prosperity during that age gives the impression that Buddhism entered into a state of continuing decline and lethargy with

few signs of vitality. The persecution of Buddhism in 845, which was most severe and damaging, signaled the end of Buddhist influence on the higher levels of society. In addition, Confucian knowledge had begun to revive and spread during the T'ang age. Confucian scholars eventually displaced Buddhist intellectual leadership. Beginning with the memorial of the scholar Han Yu (786–824) against Buddhist superstition, the criticism of Buddhism mounted and reached its zenith in the Sung and Ming Neo-Confucian schools which attempted to deal with issues raised by Buddhism from a Confucian standpoint. In contrast to the other-worldly and mystical tendencies of Buddhism, the Confucianists stressed practical efforts in the world.

Further, Ch'an emphasis on practice and discipline and its anti-intellectualism limited efforts to educate monks and contributed to the waning intellectual influence of Buddhism. Buddhist scholarship did not progress beyond the lines established by the major schools of the T'ang era. In modern times reformist monks such as T'ai Hsu have advocated the education of monks and have endeavored to revive scholarly traditions, particularly the study of the Wei-shih (Consciousness-only) school of subjective idealism which T'ai Hsu thought was most compatible with the scientific era.

With the change of circumstance Buddhism lost prestige among the wealthy classes, which also meant a loss of income. The increased intellectual competition and resistance led to more government control. On the popular level the government permitted the spread of concepts and practices which aided in pacifying the people, but the aspects of asceticism and other-worldliness were made to conform to Chinese interest in this world. Nevertheless, Buddhist influence in Chinese society and culture has been extensive through its two thousand-year history, and it can be discerned in language, popular ideas, beliefs about afterlife, festivals, arts, literature, and philosophy.

Buddhism as a specific faith became relegated to a popular religion on the level of religious Taoism with which it generally fused. Among the common people the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas together with Taoist deities became the protectors of the common man in his struggle for existence. He implored divinities for aid in avoiding disaster and recovery from disease or misfortune. Buddhism became largely associated with the performance of funerals as a consequence of the promise of a glorious destiny promoted by the Pure Land cult. It also developed masses and memorials for the dead, such as the Avalambana festival designed to save ancestors as far back as seven generations from suffering. Such celebrations enabled Buddhists to fulfill filial piety demanded by Chinese morality. Although Buddhism entered into a comparative state of decline because of its changing fortunes in society, there were some positive features. During the Sung period the development of printing aided diffusion of Buddhist texts. The founder of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Chu Yuan-chang (1328–1398), had originally been a Buddhist. He placed Buddhism under strict regulation, knowing its hold on the masses, and also reorganized the order, testing the

scholarship of priests, building and repairing temples, and contributing to publishing the canon of scriptures. Further, there were a number of Buddhist scholars during the Ming period such as Yun-ch'i Chu-hung (1535–1615) who advocated the unity of the three teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism as well as combining Ch'an and Pure Land teaching. He also defended Buddhism against Christianity.

During the three hundred year domination of the Manchus in the Ch'ing dynasty, Buddhism suffered from oppression and strict control under the influence of Confucian orthodoxy. Also the T'ai-ping rebellion (1864) resulted in a great destruction of Buddhist temples in southern China. Nevertheless, some emperors had personal interest in Buddhism and favored it.

With the confrontation of China and the West, like the Confucians the Buddhists have also had to struggle to discover ways to cope with the cultural crisis. In addition, Buddhists have had to deal with skeptical and reform-minded officials who wished to seize their institutions and transform them to schools or museums. While the founders of the republic in 1911 appreciated the high moral outlook of Buddhism, they did not believe it supported democracy, since it was apolitical and too passive. The crisis, however, served to awaken interest in Buddhism among laymen as well as clerics. This interest was also stimulated by a religious desire to acquire merit for their future destinies. Thus laymen sponsored Buddhist publications, lectures, and societies for the study of Buddhism. They were also moved by a desire to unite Chinese society based on Buddhist ideals as a means of meeting the modern challenge.

Although materials are now becoming more accessible for the assessment of the role of Buddhism in modern China, it has suffered from widespread misrepresentation by Christian missionaries, Chinese Confucianists, the Japanese, and Communists. The Christians regarded Buddhism as superstition and the priests lazy and ignorant, while the Confucianists looked on it as parasitic. The Japanese tended to despise it as inferior to their own forms of Buddhism, while the Communists saw it as exploitive and reactionary to social and political progress.

Due to the general negative views of Buddhism put forth by modern observers, there has been a tendency to interpret Buddhism since T'ang times as one of complete decline, degradation, and loss of vitality until a revival took place at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This view has been challenged through detailed studies of Buddhist institutions and history in the modern period. In some measure the serious practice of Buddhism has always been carried on by a few dedicated monks in a number of monasteries widely respected for their purity and rigor. Buddhism has performed a positive role among the people in caring for their spiritual needs. The revival represented by the flurry of activity largely developed by laymen can be regarded as a shift away from the central core of Buddhism, since the major element of Buddhism was its system of meditation and discipline whose function was to provide an alternative for the human spirit to the tedium, anxiety, and struggles of conventional social life. The attempt to adjust Bud-

*Kuan-yin seated in the "royal ease" pose, from the Sung Dynasty.* (*Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Hervey Edward Wetzel Fund.*)

dhism to modern conditions in the effort to make it relevant may represent the secularization of Buddhism and signal a true loss of vitality and meaning for the religion.

In the present situation the future of Buddhism in China hangs in doubt. Though initially rejecting religion in 1949, the 1954 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Nevertheless, the Communist regime has seized property and forced monks in great numbers to become laymen and join the work force. In comparison to its treatment of Christianity, also a foreign and international religion, the Chinese Communists have recognized the cultural contributions of Buddhism and its utility as an instrument of foreign policy in dealing with the Buddhist countries of Asia. They have maintained the Chinese Buddhist Association which engages in studies of Buddhist tradition as well as serving as a spokesman for government policy to Buddhists outside of China. Whether the Buddhist spiritual outlook can survive its complete subordination and subjugation to the interests of a totally secular political order remains to be seen.