

# The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review

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2000 - Volume 5, Number 1

MITA (P) 195/04/2000

## Chinese Culture and its Future Place amongst the World's Spiritual Traditions

### Papers

Brothers and Sisters: Buddhism in the Family of Chinese Religion  
*Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew*

Heaven in China without "Religion" and Manifestation  
*Theo A. Cope*

Chinese Religions: Evolution, Compatibility and Adaptability  
A Historical Perspective  
*Kow Mei Kao*

The Future of Confucianism  
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The Challenge of Change for the Chinese in SEA  
*Yin Hong Shuen*

Science and Religion in Chinese Culture  
*Anjam Khursheed*

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Journal of the Association for Bahá'í Studies of Singapore

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Chinese Culture and its Future Place

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## Note from Editor

The annual Association for Bahá'í Studies conference this year, held on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, focused on the theme of "Chinese culture and its future place amongst the world's spiritual traditions". Some of the talks presented at the conference inspired the papers that appear in this volume. This volume is the first Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review issue to focus on Chinese culture.

We also include an obituary for our beloved Antonella, secretary of our Singapore Bahá'í Studies group, who passed away in a tragic motorway accident in Italy on July 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. Words cannot express our sorrow and sense of loss. This is the first issue of the Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review that has not been desktop published by Antonella. In a short obituary published here, we give tribute to a remarkable person, someone who will be deeply missed by us all.

I would like to thank Ing Ing Sahadevan and Lynette Thomas for their copy- editing.

Anjam Khursheed  
December, 2000

Note from Editor

The annual Association for Bahá'í Studies conference this year, held on the 17th April, focused on the theme of "Chinese culture and its impact on the world's spiritual traditions". Some of the talks presented at the conference inspired the papers that appear in this volume. This volume is the first Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review ever to focus on Chinese culture.

We also include an obituary for our beloved Amosella, secretary of our Singapore Bahá'í Studies group, who passed away in a tragic motorway accident in Italy in July 10<sup>th</sup> of this year. Words cannot express his sorrow and sense of loss. This is the first issue of the Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review that has not been edited/published by Amosella, in a year that our group has been fortunate to have a number of people who have stepped into his shoes. We give thanks to a number of people who will be clearly missed by us all.

I would like to thank the Bahá'í community and friends for their support and encouragement.

Amos K. L. Loo  
December 2000

# Brothers and Sisters: Buddhism in the Family of Chinese Religion

*Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew*

## **Abstract**

Confucianism is often referred to as the "Chinese Great Tradition" and hailed for imbuing Chinese civilisation with humanitarian values. Yet its endurance and sustainable power for 2,000 years is in part ascribed to its two sisters, Buddhism and Taoism, which were content for the most part to play a subordinate role. Confucianism acknowledged their vitality but kept them in the wings, conscious always that its privileged position as elder brother not be infringed upon. In this way, periodically encouraged, tolerated, and persecuted, the ecclesiastical personnel and structure of Taoism and Buddhism survived into modern times. Eventually, the sisters no longer asserted themselves, content with the hearts and allegiance of the masses while relegating state power to Confucianism. This paper examines Buddhism's role in the family of Chinese religions as well as the implications of its role in relation to new religions in China.

## **1. Introduction**

It is often claimed that Confucius was the greatest and most significant unifying force of Chinese civilisation. In fact, Confucianism (Ju Chiao) is synonymous with what is known as the "Chinese Great Tradition". It was the official philosophy of China for about two thousand years until the birth of the Republic of China in 1911. Through the influential education system, teachers succeeded in inculcating Confucian values into the minds of young people. The term Confucianism embraces education, letters, ethics and political philosophy. The large family system with its special emphasis on filial and fraternal obedience, for example, was heavily influenced by Confucian ideals and continues to be a dominant factor in

Chinese society. Thus, the Chinese outlook on life has been immensely coloured by Confucian ideas, which have been formulated since Confucius' day into a governing code of etiquette and morality.

Although Confucius only claimed to be a transmitter of knowledge, temples have been built in his name. Indeed, his name became a religion among the learned of China who were the officials and the literati and who included scholars waiting for official appointments. The philosophy became in all meaning and purposes a "religion", with its classics its scriptures, its schools its churches, its teachers its priest, and its ethics its theology.

Its endurance and spiritual power may in part be ascribed to its two sisters, Buddhism and Taoism, which were content for the most part to play a subordinate role to their elder brother. Confucianism borrowed their vitality and kept them in the wings, conscious always that its privileged position as elder brother not be infringed upon. Periodically encouraged, tolerated, and persecuted, the ecclesiastical personnel and structure of Taoism and Buddhism survived into the modern day. In time, the sisters no longer questioned this role, as they were able to capture the heart and allegiance of the Chinese masses. The older brother honoured the gods of the sisters and the sisters in turn incorporated many of their brother's principles and priorities. Through the passage of time, Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian gods all came to be united in the same temple and formed one whole. Though they were different in origin and emphasis, they came to view themselves as having one and the same object.

Of the two sisters, this article will focus on the older and foreign one, that is, Buddhism. Buddhism's relationship with Confucianism and Taoism in the religious history of China will be examined. This is of special interest to the Bahá'í Faith because in the Chinese religious trilogy, only Buddhism is recognised as a revealed religion and Buddha, a Manifestation of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authoritative interpretations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings state that the Buddha originally established the oneness of God and a new religion.<sup>1</sup> However, he cautions that while Buddha was a Manifestation of God, like Christ, His followers do not

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<sup>1</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 165.

possess His authentic Writings.<sup>2</sup> Where Confucius was concerned, Bahá'ís regard him as the cause of civilisation, advancement and prosperity for the people of China.<sup>3</sup> He was a "cause and illumination of the world of humanity."<sup>4</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá also said: "Confucius was not a Prophet. It is quite correct to say he is the founder of a moral system and a great reformer."<sup>5</sup> In like manner, Bahá'ís do not consider Lao-tzu a prophet.<sup>6</sup>

There is another reason to take a closer look at Buddhism. First, its impact was great enough for Chinese itself to become an essential language of the Buddhist religious canon, since translations have survived where the originals have not. As early as 166 CE, we find a record of Emperor Huan installing statues of Huang-Lao (a god synthesised from the Yellow Emperor Huang-ti, a prehistoric immortal and Lao-tzu) and of the Buddha within his palace. Many Buddhist texts from Sanskrit and other Indic and Central Asian languages have been translated into Chinese and these have been disseminated far and wide in China. Second, stories from the Lotus Sutra are dominant features on the walls of popular temples, while religious preachers, popular storytellers and lower-class dramatists have always drawn on the rich trove of mythology provided by Buddhist narratives. Last but not least, Chinese Buddhism has survived the Cultural Revolution.

## 2. Reasons for the Spread of Buddhism

Many scholars have been puzzled as to the ease and extent to which Buddhism, a foreign religion, has spread to China. Its Chinese reference, *Fojiao* (teachings of Buddha) involves the recognition that this teaching, unlike the other two, (*Daojiao*, teachings of the Tao, and *Rujiao*, teachings of the scholars) originated in a foreign land. While Ru refers to

<sup>2</sup> From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, December 26, 1941. Quoted in H. Hornsby, *Lights of Guidance*, No. 1684.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 476.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 346.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, 10. 11. 1939. Quoted in H. Hornsby, *Lights of Guidance*, No. 1694.

a group of people and *Dao* refers to a concept, *Fo* does not make literal sense – it represents a sound, a word with no semantic value – after the Chinese Sanskrit word “Buddha”. Yet Buddhism became widespread not only in China but the surrounding regions and it enjoys a perennial appeal. Many reasons can be established for this unusual phenomenon but only four will be discussed here. They are the Chinese intrinsic interest in gods, Buddhism’s familiarity to the Chinese people, its explanation of the after-life and its ability to acquire state support.

## 2.1 The Interest in gods

The Chinese people have always been intensely interested in things seen and unseen. Where the unseen is concerned, there is a lively interest in myths, which portray a fascination with the riddle of existence. Take for example, the popular and colourful stories of Wang Mu, the Western Queen. Storytellers have vied with one another in fantastic descriptions of the wonders of her fairyland, and the repairing of the heavens by Nü Kua Shih with five-coloured stones and the great tortoise, which supports the universe.

There is evidence to believe that there have been ancient religions practised in China, the details of which we no longer possess. Perhaps this may explain why in China’s long history, we find sacrifices to heaven, the hills and rivers, ancestors and spirits. In traditional Chinese towns and villages, there is an abundance of village and wayside temples and shrines to honour their ancestors. The gods of thunder, rain, wind, grain, and agriculture abound in the lives of peasants. The later emergence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism added more temples, monasteries, priests, sacrifices and rituals to the Chinese landscape. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, explained that: “The only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic prophets is because their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history... we are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of their names.”<sup>7</sup>

A typical Chinese funeral will also bear testimony to the Chinese fascination with the things of the spirit. There is a three-tiered world view:

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<sup>7</sup> Letter by Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 4 October, 1950.

of heaven above, the dead below, and earth, the abode of the living in between. On death, the upper soul (*hun*) rises up to heaven while the lower soul (*p'o*) descends to earth. There are also other festivals, for example, the New Year festival, celebrated with extravagance and grandeur so as to mark a passage not just in the life of the individual and the family, but also in the annual cycle of the cosmos. Last but not least, there is the traditional Chinese practice of consulting a spirit medium in the home or small temples for solutions to some sickness or misfortune. Dream divination and manipulating the hexagrams of the *I Ching* is still practised as a way to allow people to understand the pattern of the universe as a whole and also the concept of Yin-Yang.

## 2.2 The Familiarity of Buddhism

Buddhism took a firm grip on the Chinese mind because many of its subsequent practices form a familiar landscape.<sup>8</sup> For example, Buddhist shrines were very similar to the existing shamanistic shrines to deities. Many of these shrines would contain some icon or relic of a Chinese Buddhist monk and this was something reminiscent of shamanistic and Taoist practices. Buddhist temples, similar to earlier native temples became places where people would meet to celebrate festivals. Buddhism also affirmed values of filial piety, longevity and posterity by, for example, allowing the building of stupas<sup>9</sup> to be a means of preserving the memory of parents. In time, local deities were incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon and Buddhist deities incorporated into the existing local pantheon.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, many Buddhist shrines and complexes were so like shamanistic and Taoist shrines that it was hard to tell one from the other. In addition, Taoist ideas and expressions were used in the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, resulting in a blending of Indian and Chinese thought.<sup>11</sup> The first translations of Buddhist sutras into Chinese – namely those dealing with such topics as breathing control and mystical concentration – utilised a Taoist vocabulary to make the

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<sup>8</sup> J. Ching, (1989) argues that this is the main reason why Buddhism survived in China, that is, it did so by essentially serving Chinese goals including Confucian family values. Its monastic life was, however, criticized by the Confucians.

<sup>9</sup> A round domed building erected as a Buddhist shrine.

<sup>10</sup> This was also true of Buddhism in Tibet, Japan and Mongolia.

<sup>11</sup> J. Ching, *Chinese Perspectives*, p. 203.

Buddhist faith intelligible to the Chinese. For example, the Buddhist terms *dharma* and *yoga* were both translated using the Chinese word *tao*; *nirvana* was translated as *wu wei*. This resulted in a fusion of Taoist and Buddhist ideas.

It is pertinent here to note that it is the Mahayana rather than Theravada version of Buddhism which made inroads into China. The Mahayana version was attractive for various reasons. First, there was the teaching of the universal accessibility of Buddhahood. This was very much like the universal accessibility of the goal of sagehood in Confucianism, a concept which was easily understood. Second, the Chinese liked the idea of a bodhisattva (including the lay bodhisattva as in the *Vimalakīrti* sutra), a saviour figure who refrains from entering Nirvana in order to help more people. This reminded them of the noble Confucian sage who "returns to the people what they have lost" and "helps all things find their nature"<sup>12</sup>. The Buddhist doctrine of compassion (*karuna*) could also be related to the Confucian *jen*, the concept of the ideal relationship among human beings. In addition, the Chinese appreciated the Buddhist explanation of suffering, something which was not expounded in Confucianism and Taoism. While suffering is something to be escaped from in Theravada teaching, in Mahayana teaching, suffering becomes meaningful and is a means of salvation.<sup>13</sup>

Mahayana Buddhism's message of salvation was of great appeal to the masses, many of whom led a life of great poverty and hardship. While Theravada's doctrine is atheistic with no anthropomorphic god, the Mahayana doctrine turned the human Buddha into an eternal and supreme deity presiding over the world and offering salvation to all. The Mahayana version makes it possible for a believer to pray and worship as a means of pleasing God and in so doing, achieving salvation. In addition, there was no necessity to leave the family to live in the monastery or to live an ascetic life.

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<sup>12</sup> H. Maurer, *Tao, the Way of the Ways*, chap. 64.

<sup>13</sup> This is similar to the Bahá'í faith in that Bahá'u'lláh teaches that suffering tempers the individual and makes him realise his vulnerability and spiritual needs: "The true lover yearneth for tribulation even as doth the rebel for forgiveness and the sinful for mercy." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Arabic Hidden Words*, No. 49)

Much relief was offered for the masses in the form of Mahayana personalities who had human features. For example, if a bodhisattva vowed to liberate all beings from suffering, that bodhisattva was also the object of devotion. Bodhisattvas such as Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom; Ksitigarbha who, as Jizo, in Japan rescues children, born and unborn; Maitreya, the bodhisattva who will become the next Buddha; and most of all Avolokitesvara, who took the female form as Guanyin in China and Kannon in Japan and who in Tibet, takes the human form in the succession of Dalai Lamas. According to Ching (1989), the Bodhisattva Guanyin is probably a response to a popular need for a protectress, one not a mother herself, but who listens and responds effectively to the prayers of would-be mothers.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the intelligentsia was also converted to Buddhism. This is not surprising because once the voluminous scriptures of Buddhism were translated into Chinese, people found in them a depiction of the world incomparably broader than that found in the six Chinese classics. The vivid accounts of human emotion, volition and psychology found in the Buddhist scriptures were also far more complex and richer than that handed down by the sages.

### **2.3 The Accounting of the Afterlife**

One reason for the popular appeal of Buddhism (and religious Taoism) was the irresistible human desire for immortality. Buddhism taught the indestructibility of the soul and the attainment of nirvana as a kind of immortality. The idea was so appealing that a popular Chinese sect, the Pure Land Buddhists, also introduced the notion of rebirth not into heaven or hell, but directly into the "Pure Land of Bliss" established by Amitābha Buddha. These pure lands are described in elaborate detail in certain Mahayana sutras, which tell of the variety of jewels, the streams of water, and soothing breezes. Rebirth in one of these heavenly pure lands (buddhaksetra) is the goal of Buddhist practice in India, China and Japan. Pure lands are not a permanent paradise but a realm devoted to the nurturance of the Buddhist Faith. It is the ideal environment in which to achieve Buddhist enlightenment and eventually, Nirvana.

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<sup>14</sup> See J. Ching, *Chinese Perspectives*.

Buddhist (and Taoist) funeral ceremonies also involve the symbolic transfer of goods, made out of paper to the next world. There is a belief that the physical and spiritual worlds are interconnected. In Chinese mythology, the journey imagery is seen through the cline of existence. Immorality and morality are often blurred, and there are degrees of both states. Spiritual powers attributed to monks and nuns seemed to threaten the core value of the Chinese family system. The interdependent nature of the relationship between lay people and the professionally religious is seen in such phenomena as the kinship terminology – an attempt to recreate family – amongst monks and nuns, lay donors and monastic officials in a wide range of rituals designed to bring comfort to ancestors.

In contrast, for the Confucian literati, the question of whether life exists after death is always carefully left out of the discussion. As Tzu-kung (520-450 BC) said, "We cannot hear our Master's views on human nature and the Way of Heaven". In the first century AD Wang Ch'ung, one of the more critical and influential philosophers in Chinese history, wrote a treatise to disprove the existence of spiritual beings. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Fan Chen (450 BC) attacked the Buddhist belief in immortality. Neo-Confucianists, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, have unanimously attacked both the Taoist and Buddhist belief in everlasting life. The main concern for Confucians was not whether man had a soul but rather how to put this distinctively human quality to good use.

## 2.4 State Support

The influence of Buddhism was also due to the fact that it enjoyed state support at certain periods in Chinese history. The conversion of a Parthian prince (c 148-170 CE) named An Shih-kao, for example, greatly accelerated the growth of Buddhism. Later, in 401 AD, the Chinese court commissioned the Indian monk, Kumārajīva, to do the monumental translations of the Hindu Vedas, the occult sciences and astronomy, as well as to standardize the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras. During the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, new specifically Chinese Buddhist schools began to form. Monastic establishments proliferated and Buddhism became well established among the peasantry.

The collapse of the Han dynasty in 220 CE caused China to lapse into disunion and to break into small warring states for four centuries. Political disunion caused the political power of Confucianism to collapse and this opened the door to the rapid spread of Buddhist ideas. Many kings of small states became nominal Buddhists and sought to replace Confucian influence with Buddhist influence. This was especially so in the northern Chinese states, which were keen to reject Confucianism, as it represented the regimes they had toppled. During the Sui dynasty (581-618 AD), Buddhism flourished as a state religion.

The Tang dynasty (618-906 AD) was the golden age of Chinese Buddhism. This period witnessed a flowering of translation activity. The most famous was Hsüan-tsang, pilgrim and translator, who brought back to China hundreds of sutras. Although T'ang emperors were usually Taoists, they tended to favour Buddhism, which had become extremely popular and which was similar to Taoism in many of its metaphysical principles. Under the T'ang, the government extended its control over the monasteries as well as the ordination and legal status of monks. From this time onward, the Chinese monk styled himself simply "ch'en" or "subject". During this period, several Chinese schools developed their own distinctive approaches and there was a comprehensive systemization of the vast body of Buddhist texts. This was a period when many monasteries were built. It was also a period when many scholars made pilgrimages to India, heroic journeys that greatly enriched Buddhism in China, both by the texts that were acquired and the intellectual and spiritual inspiration that came with them.

Emperor Wu (c. 502-549) is best remembered by posterity for his lavish patronage of the Buddhist religion.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, he himself was the author of a short treatise entitled *Shen-ming ch'eng-fo I-chi*, which contains some of the standard Chinese Buddhist arguments for the existence of the eternal soul. He was also a fervent student of the *Mahayana Māhāparinirvānasūtra*, having commissioned Pao-liang and Fa-lang of the Chien-yüan temple to compile commentaries for it. To summarise, the Tang period saw unprecedented numbers of ordinations into the ranks of the Buddhist order, the flourishing of the new allegedly "Chinese" school of thought and lavish support from the state.

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<sup>15</sup> See his poem on the three religions, in *Tao-hsuan* (c. 596-667).

### 3. The Relegation of Buddhism to the Background

We come now to an interesting paradox. If Buddhism was so attractive and appealing to both the literati and the masses, why has it adopted a secondary position? Why is the "Great Chinese Tradition" more Confucian than Buddhist? Four reasons can be found to explain this unusual phenomenon: the association of Confucianism with state power, the emergence of Neo-Confucianism, the nature of sinic Mahayana Buddhism and the lack of unity among the myriad Buddhist groups.

#### 3.1 Confucianism and State Power

One reason Confucianism lasted as long as it did was because, over time, it became synonymous with state power. Confucianism shaped the bureaucracy which supported the system of absolute monarchy and the bureaucracy itself was the institutional embodiment of the Confucian tradition. The bureaucracy was under the emperor, who was the founder or descendant of a founder whose virtue enabled him to take over from a previous corrupt ruler. He ruled by the principle of the "mandate of heaven" (Tianming), that is, he was conceived as a semi-divine force and carried out the commands of heaven. Over the ages, Confucian moral values have often been politicised to serve an oppressive authoritarian regime. The virtue of loyalty to the state was exploited because it contributed to the social and political ideology, which kept the emperor in power. Emperors found that Confucianism rather than Taoism or Buddhism served their political needs better because of its emphasis on decorum and rationalised orderliness. For example, the five obligations: between the sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother and between friends helped keep peace and order in society.

The bureaucracy was all-powerful in traditional Chinese society. The chief official responsible for a county was a magistrate, selected from a central pool on the basis of his performance in the state examination system. He was responsible for employing lower-level functionaries e.g. scribes, clerks, sheriffs and tax-keepers. He reported to superiors and

followed their orders. He made offerings at a variety of officially recognised temples and to local deified heroes, gave lectures to residents on morality and watched over religious activities especially those whose actions threatened the sovereignty and the prerogatives of the state.

Any religion then that posed a threat to the great power of Confucianism was periodically persecuted. Perhaps the major one was that led by Emperor Wu-tsung in 845 AD. According to records, 4,600 Buddhist temples and 40,000 shrines were destroyed and 260,500 monks forced to return to lay life.<sup>16</sup> There was persecution, not just against religionists but also against philosophers who deferred from the main ideological stream. For example, followers of Mo Tzu were persecuted because Mo Tzuism closely resembled the anthropomorphism of Christianity. In this philosophy, we find Heaven (which was anthropomorphically regarded by Mo Tzu as a personal Supreme Being) creating the sun, moon and innumerable stars. On the other hand, the philosophy of Mo Tzu's contemporary, Mencius, was exalted because the latter's chief concern was to eulogize the doctrines of the great Confucius, and like his master, Mencius preferred to let the origin of the universe look after itself.

### **3.2 The Emergence of Neo-Confucianism**

After a period of decline during the Tang dynasty, the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD) saw a revival of Confucianism which was sufficiently different from earlier Confucianism to merit the term "neo-Confucianism". The neo-Confucianists realised that the only way to revive Confucianism was to plug its deficiency with regards to its metaphysical foundation. It was in their vested interest after all to preserve and strengthen their bureaucratic office and high social prestige with the formalisation and spread of Confucianism. Accordingly, the neo-Confucianists tried to attain a firm metaphysical basis for its ethical ideas by looking into a scientific theory of the origin of the universe and man. Sung scholars secularised Buddhist and Taoist mystical ideas and used them as starting points to establish a systematic ontology and cosmology as the metaphysical foundation for Confucian ethics.

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<sup>16</sup> See the New *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under "Buddhism", pp. 273-4.

To ensure that Confucianism remained the bedrock and that its sister philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism remained as helpers and companions, many temples were built in honour of Confucius. In these temples, the chief disciples and distinguished Confucians of later ages were also honoured. Above the altars were the words, "The teacher of 10,000 generations". Only scholars could take part in the sacrifices. Emperor T'ai-tsu (960-976 AD) of the Sung dynasty made regular sacrifices to Confucius. Emperor Chen-tsung (997-1022 AD) who claimed to have had frequent heavenly visitations set a precedent by prostrating to Confucius at the temple in Lu. In 1012, Emperor Chen-tsung also bestowed on Confucius the title "most perfect sage".<sup>17</sup>

The neo-Confucians also wrote many polemical works against Taoism and Buddhism, especially on the topics of rebirth and karma which found no correspondence in Confucian teachings. Generally, neo-Confucians criticised Buddhism as metaphysically nihilistic and therefore amoral. They felt that *sobre* reason was superior to what was perceived as the superstitious or spiritualistic obsession and imaginative invention of both Buddhism and Taoism. Chu Hsi's (1130-1200) critique of Ch'an Buddhism in particular was devastating. Chu Hsi accused Buddhism of failing to tackle everyday socio-moral problems, which, in his Neo-Confucian judgement, only the Confucian tradition was able to resolve completely and perfectly.<sup>18</sup> There were also attacks on the Ch'an teachings of "sudden awakening" and accusations that Ch'an had completely neglected the importance of the necessary and gradual life-long cultivation of man's moral and social nature.

What was ironical in the neo-Confucian movement was that in its attempts to stem the popularity of its sister traditions, it drew much inspiration from them. Neo-Confucianist, Lu Hsiang-shan (Lu Chiu-yuan), for example, stressed that truth is a result of experiencing "sudden enlightenment", a Buddhist concept. He also argued that the goal of enlightenment is the attainment of the supreme knowledge of self and the

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<sup>17</sup> See N. F. Gier, *On the Deification of Confucius*, *Asian Philosophy*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>18</sup> Chu Hsi may be said to be the most influential Neo-Confucian and he has been compared to a Chinese Spinoza or St. Thomas Aquinas. His interpretation of Confucianism was accepted as official philosophy and served the interests of feudalistic dynasties for over 700 years (from the late Southern Sung (1127-1279) to the end of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912)).

world of the universal truth. Another famous neo-Confucian was Wang Yang-ming, who was more Buddhist than Confucian. It was reported that he was suddenly enlightened one night and attained a new understanding of the central idea of The Great Learning, which became central to the Neo-Confucianist reformulation of the Confucian classics. He said "the great man is an all-pervading unity, which is one with Heaven, Earth and all things." In his research, Chan Wing-tsit (1989) located more than 40 Buddhist expressions and stories in Wang's treatise, the *Ch'uan-hsi In* (Instructions for Practical living).<sup>19</sup>

Not surprisingly, this period saw tensions arising between Confucianism and Buddhism. To counter Confucianist criticisms, Buddhists viewed themselves as "ultimate cure" (*pi-ching chih*), and characterised Confucianism as a "worldly dharma-medicine (*shih-chieh fa-yao*) which merely provoked a "view of the temporary (*chia-kuan*)."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this rivalry did not enable Confucianism to defeat Buddhism, because Buddhism (and Taoism) still retained its mass appeal. If one can be certain as to what Confucianism achieved, it would be that it enriched all three spiritual traditions and encouraged their synthesis to a greater degree than ever before. While Confucianism became more Taoist and Buddhist, it also contributed to Taoism and Buddhism. For example, the Ch'an Masters Miao-hsi and Chu-an in the Sung dynasty edited a famous book named *Valuable Instructions in the Forest of Ch'an*, which adopted many of the moral norms of Confucianism.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3 The nature of Sinitic Mahayana Buddhism

One reason why Sinitic Mahayana Buddhism never overtook Confucianism in terms of its influence was the fact that it was not so much interested in state governance as it was in the pursuit of individual salvation and nirvana. Sinitic Buddhism was more concerned with spiritual realism than the state of governance. Buddhism (like religious Taoism) is ultimately concerned with the problem of life-and-death –

<sup>19</sup> Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1528) may be said to be the most outstanding philosopher of the Ming Dynasty. See W. M. Tu, *Neo Confucian Thought in Action*.

<sup>20</sup> E. T. Ch'ien, *The Neo-Confucian Confrontation with Buddhism*, pp. 347- 370.

<sup>21</sup> Wu Yi, *On Chinese Ch'an in Relation to Taoism*, pp. 131-154.

while Confucianism is committed to the constant moral perfecting of man and society. Sinitic Mahayana Buddhism was basically a popular lay movement that sought to restore Buddha's original compassion through the ideal of the bodhisattva, the person who sacrifices his own welfare in order to lead all to nirvana. It is interesting here that the bodhisattva represented is not so much an inspiration but as a model to be scrupulously emulated. One can think here perhaps of the role of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Bahá'í Faith.

Sinitic Mahayana Buddhism taught self-perfection as the supreme good and the final goal. It is a religion of salvation concerned not so much with the world but with liberation from suffering and rebirth. Qualities such as benevolence, liberality, gratitude and tolerance are stressed rather than worldly possessions. The Bahá'í Faith is somewhat similar here -- in the sense that the individual's salvation is a personal journey from him to God. The individual has to develop his spiritual faculties to the fullest in this earthly life so that in the next life, he will be able to attain a higher spiritual station and his soul can move closer to God. The Confucians, on the other hand, were very much involved with the material world and with the faculty of reason in their dealing with life. For the Buddhists, the faculty of reason provided a relatively superficial awareness, insufficient to the task of directly apprehending the truth. All endeavours in the realm of what might be termed "philosophy" were thus theoretically subservient to the greater ultimate goal of enlightenment.

Sinitic Mahayana Buddhism also chose to play a more defensive role. It tended to be metaphysical, transcendental, and above all worldly things. While the religious specialist was a popular and important figure in Chinese culture, there was no self-perpetuating Sangha, and ordination ceremonies were rarely held. This contrasted with the more practical, morally idealistic, and historically minded Theravada form of Buddhism.<sup>22</sup> In Theravada Burma, the Sangha (Buddhist hierarchy) has always been politically active, more so since the military overthrew the civilian government of Prime Minister U Nu in March 1962. Similarly, while Theravada Buddhism does not play a visible role in Thai politics, it nevertheless influences many of its political, economic and social policies.

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<sup>22</sup> See B.L. Suzuki, *Mahayana Buddhism*. See Chapter 1 (pp. 21-35) on the comparisons between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism.

While there had been Buddhist/Taoist-led messianic peasant rebellions throughout Chinese history, they were essentially non-political as they did not offer an alternative to the civil service.<sup>23</sup> Neither did the uprisings come from ideological opposition to religious Taoism or Confucianism. In contrast to the Confucianist persecutions against Buddhism, which were mainly political and economic, the issues in Buddhist/Taoist-led rebellions were basically economic. The major persecution of 845 AD came about mainly because of economic issues. Many able-bodied men had joined monasteries and thus became unavailable for agricultural production and army or labour conscription, or too much land belonged to the Buddhist church and thus became tax-exempt. Significantly, confiscated images of bronze were made into currency, those of iron into agricultural implements, those of gold and silver turned over to the Treasury and images of wood, clay and stone left untouched.<sup>24</sup> On the whole, Buddhism may be said to possess a distinguished legacy in "search after truth" and has clearly-stated lessons on detachment. More than any other religion, it warns against the perils of blind attachment to religion. There are many images that beautifully express this in Buddhist writings.<sup>25</sup>

It should also be noted that besides the Chinese trilogy of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, there were many other sectarian groups, which were a mixture of these. They were split up into numerous competitive sects with no central organising body. Many of these are syncretic Buddhist and religious Taoist groups. Most are not well defined because syncretic religions have ever-changing combinations. Chinese secret societies range from political, religious, politico-religious and they adapt themselves to changing conditions due to the demands of the people they wish to attract. In the long history of China, these groups have organised uprisings for what may seem to be religious concerns but which are, upon further investigation, economic or political.

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<sup>23</sup> See T. de Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism*, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> See W. T. Chan, *The Historical Chinese Contribution to Religious Pluralism*, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> One such story is the "Parable of the Raft". See A. Khurshheed, *Crossing Religious Boundaries*, p. 161.

### 3.4 The Lack of Unity in Chinese Buddhism

Generally in China we can discern five varieties of Buddhism.<sup>26</sup> The following are the main Buddhist groups in China but these are in no way discrete or self-contained for it is possible to find believers embracing features from two or more schools. In addition, each of these schools may, by themselves, be divided into many sub-sects or branches, depending on the varying emphasis on methods and techniques. These sects meant that there was no central ecclesiastical authority of Buddhism in China as there was in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, and this meant that they did not have the power or influence they had in these other countries.

1. T'ien-t'ai (Japanese: Tendai) school named after the mountain where Chih-io (538-97) founded his most important monastery. It preached that sainthood was not the highest aim.
2. Hua-yen (Japanese: Kegon) started before 600 CE. It is associated with the Fa-tsang (643-712) text called the Hua-yen Ching. It envisaged all phenomena as interconnected and likened the world to the famous mythic jewel-net of Indra, a net of jewels in which each one reflects all the others. Those who see this vision with clarity will see the essential Buddhahood of each living being and the presence of the Buddha mind everywhere. It presents an optimistic and beautiful picture of cosmic inter-relatedness.
3. Ch'an (Japanese: Zen) is where Buddhist meditation fused with Taoist mysticism to form the distinct Ch'an School. There is a need for master-pupil transmission rather than learning from scriptures. Monastic life revolves around a meditation hall with rigorous training under a master. In order to attain the spontaneity of enlightenment, people have to work hard. One notes that there are many sects of Ch'an with varying emphasis on various forms of meditation practices.
4. Pure Land and Kuan-Yin. Here, marvels of pure lands (paradise) believed to be presided over by the Buddha Amitābha (in Chinese, *Omitofo*; in Japanese *Amida*) who is assisted by bodhisattva

<sup>26</sup> Y.H. Yeo, *Mahayana Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith* lists eight Mahayana schools.

Avalokitesvara (in Chinese *Kuan-yin*, in Japanese *Kannon*). The Pure Land sutra which has two visions – a lengthier one emphasising the equal importance of faith and devotion to the Buddha as well as good works, and a shorter one (the Amitābha sutra) which says specifically that only faith in the infinite compassion of the Buddha, shown in prayerful and meditative repetition of Amitābha's name, is necessary.

5. Folk Buddhism. There is a belief here in the Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. Maitreya is a well-known figure in Buddhist sutras and represents messianic influences from beyond India, perhaps from Persia. The image of Maitreya undergoes transformation – from a large and heroic figure to the appearance of a wrinkled laughing monk with an exposed potbelly carrying a hemp bag but in a reclining posture, with small children climbing on top of him and surrounding him – an extremely popular devotional cult. Mi-lo (evolved from Maitreya) performs the same function as Kuan-Yin (evolved from Avalokitesvara).<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. The Role of Buddhism in Chinese Culture**

Buddhism gained a foothold in China because of four main reasons: the Chinese intrinsic interest in the spiritual life, Buddhism's ability to adjust and adapt to Chinese culture, its explanation of the after-life and its ability to acquire state support. On the other hand, Buddhism did not become the state philosophy of China because of four main reasons. First, as a predominantly lay movement, it did not enjoy state power. Neither did it endeavour to pursue, capture or maintain such power, being more interested in the pursuit of salvation and nirvana. The neo-Confucianists' efforts to increase their influence at Buddhism's expense also contributed

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<sup>27</sup> One notes that while all schools of Buddhist thought acknowledge and use the name of Maitreya, the name of Buddha Amitābha can only be found in Mahayana scriptures. But the signs and times for their occurrences are similar. Amitābha was made into a purely spiritual phenomenon to be experienced only in a spiritual plane, and by this process, Mahayanists were able to isolate the references regarding time and dates from the phenomenon of Amitābha and settled upon Maitreya as the actual physical Buddha, Who would manifest Himself on earth in accordance with the prophecies – in their Scriptures and the Pali text. According to J. Fozdar, p. 243, Maitreya and Amitābha signify One and the same Person.

towards this end. Last but not least, the numerous Buddhist groups were disadvantaged in not being united in their beliefs and practices and in their lack of a central authority.

This article has also discussed how, despite the predominance of Confucianism in Chinese religion, it was on closer inspection, an official philosophy valued more for its ability to ensure stability and order in society than as a means of spiritual insight or source of inspiration. Its endurance and sustainability for 2,500 years was in part due to its sister-faiths, Buddhism and religious Taoism, which satisfied the spiritual needs of the masses and kept them compliant. The sisters were much more metaphysically in tune than their brother who was often preoccupied with matters of state. While Confucianism was concerned with the moral perfecting of man and society, Buddhism and Taoism became intimately connected with the problem of life, death and immortality. Emerging in China around the same time to fill the spiritual vacuum left by Confucianism, the sisters were similar in many ways. For one, both were completely at home with metaphysical propensities. The Taoist, for instance, had no problem understanding the Buddhist's penchant for solitude, meditation and monasticism. In like manner, Buddhism utilised a Taoist vocabulary to make the Buddhist faith intelligible to the Chinese, especially when dealing with topics such as breath control and mystical concentration.

As elder brother of the Chinese religion, Confucianism guarded its privileged position jealously. While it acknowledged its sisters' contributions to the family, it was determined that they should not overstep their boundaries. Occasionally there were jealousies, disagreements and rivalries. Sometimes it was the brother with one of the sisters, or two of the sisters together; at other times, the two sisters would disagree among themselves and periodic quarrels and squabbles would break out. Whatever the cause, the elder brother would often use the state apparatus to stem the disorder. Most of the time, however, the three lived together in harmony and co-operation. They also borrowed ideas freely from each other in their daily lives. Through the course of history, Buddhism eventually found it prudent to coalesce with Confucian-Neo-Confucian and Taoist traditions to form a complex multi-religious ethos within which all three traditions were more or less comfortably encompassed. This was also the case with religious Taoism which in the

Tang period, incorporated Confucius into its pantheon of gods, a hierarchy which was headed by the Tang Emperor himself! Not surprisingly, after such intimate and intricate liaisons, it was often difficult for outsiders to tell the members of the family apart.

## 5. The Future of Religion in China

### 5.1 Needs of the Chinese people

Archaeological discoveries in China (as elsewhere) have established beyond doubt that from the earliest times, the Chinese people have had an awareness of an Unseen Power. Humanity has instinctively felt "it" inwardly and worshipped "it" outwardly. The Chinese appear to be instinctively intuitive and spiritually receptive. Despite the fact that they had to endure repeated periods of upheaval, oppression and chaos, there is no questioning the close and pervading relationship of religion to the daily lives of the Chinese people. Even when religion was at its ebb during the time of Mao, "Maoism" (much in the spirit of the two sisters) attempted to fill the void. Mao was called "our great helmsman" and "the red sun in the heart of people throughout the world". He was praised for "unlimited wisdom, courage and strength" and for "always being with us". He was also the source of inspiration and the object of devotion in songs and rituals with a strongly religious character.

Today, the overseas Chinese community is perhaps the best example of this religiosity. Chinese religion thrives in the myriad temples in the overseas communities of Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a special compliment for the Chinese people: "The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking... In China, one can teach many souls and train and educate such divine personages that each one of them may become the bright candle of the world of humanity."<sup>28</sup> Perhaps he was thinking of Emperor Ming (58-67 AD) who, having seen Buddha in a dream, sent envoys to India to inquire about the doctrine and whose envoys subsequently returned with numerous sutras and holy objects, as well as two Indian monks to translate the sutras.

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<sup>28</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in the *Star of the West*, Vol. 13, 185. Note that in this instance the original text of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words is not available.

We may also learn from what the neo-Confucians have realised all along: that for any philosophy or religion to have a powerful and enduring hold on the hearts and minds of the people, it must have a metaphysical foundation. The neo-Confucianists endeavoured to fill the chasm of unfulfilled needs left by the *Analects*, a chasm which enabled ancient shamanistic practices to continue to thrive in Chinese society and which led to the subsequent emergence of Buddhism and Taoism.

In the past, attempts were made to fill this chasm. Confucius was deified 500 years after his death in the later Han dynasty and worship of him was conducted in government schools. Numerous temples were also erected in his honour in the Tang dynasty in 630 AD. This did not stem the growing popularity of the sisters and a further effort was made during the Sung dynasty by the neo-Confucianists to strengthen Confucianism by the infusion of metaphysical principles into it. While their efforts succeeded in stemming the growth of Buddhism and Taoism, it certainly did not succeed in eradicating their influence.

It is apparent from Chinese history that the metaphysical foundation of religion or philosophy must provide answers to the afterlife since a human being is more self-centred than humanitarian. One remembers 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exposition on man: "Self love is moulded into the very clay of man."<sup>29</sup> Human beings are fundamentally spiritual creatures and a part of them is intensely interested in what lies beyond death. This is a much stronger impulse than the fact that they are human. The humanist philosophy has no answer to what lies beyond death and an answer is only provided by religion. Understandably, people are constantly worried about their own survival and what the future holds for them. It can be argued here that humanitarianism as a creed has not succeeded in laying the foundation of any great civilisation such as the Egyptian, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist civilisations. Marcus Aurelius was a humanist but his philosophy did not spread to the psyche of the masses. Communism, a

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<sup>29</sup> Capitalism's success lies in its ability to exploit the self-love and profit motive inherent in man. In this sense it has used an important potential of man mentioned in the Bahá'í Writings. It is stated that "self-love", which in this context may be translated into self-interest "is moulded into the very clay of man". Self-love is the greatest motivational force known to us, and the use of personal reward is a valuable path towards material advancement.

humanitarian creed, which aimed to effect social justice had to be sustained by the barrel of the gun. The most successful humanitarian movement of all – Confucianism – lasted 2,500 years only because it was supported and sustained by its two sisters who were content for the most part to be part of the family of “Chinese religion”.

The composition of Chinese religion also reveals the Chinese as a practical people. This can be seen in the fact that the Chinese religion is not an institutional religion but one that satisfies a range of religious needs. It can be compared to an empty bowl, which can be filled with the contents of religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Hinduism, etc. Confucianism, for example, fulfilled the Chinese need for a social order, Taoism, the need for the spirit and Buddhism, the need for belief in the afterlife. Confucianism filled the role as the “moral” and “ritual” religion, Taoism the “polytheistic” and “alchemical” and Buddhism, the “devotional” and “mystical”. Their contributions are also distinct: Buddhism and Taoism influenced Chinese art, sculpture, religion, and philosophy of life, Confucianism contributed to government, education, literature, society, and ethics. It is a question of fulfilling needs. In Chinese funerals, this type of functionalism can be seen very clearly. The Chinese family may employ a Buddhist and Taoist monk to perform funeral rituals although they may have nothing to do with one another. After the funeral, they perform the Confucian rites of ancestral worship. On another occasion, they may reach into their shamanistic tradition by consulting a spirit medium to consult about matters of luck.

While it is often argued that Buddhism survived because it acculturated itself,<sup>30</sup> it must also be remembered that its survival was due to the fact that it fulfilled a basic craving left by Confucianism – the need for salvation for all beings and the opportunity for progress to an afterlife.<sup>31</sup> Buddhism provided a spiritual respite from the harsher routines of

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<sup>30</sup> See J. Ching, *Chinese Perspectives*, p. 221. Buddhism adapted so much to Chinese society that Julia Ching has posed the question as to whether it was “the Buddhist conquest of China or the Chinese conquest of Buddhism?”.

<sup>31</sup> Similarly, religious Taoism was more appealing than philosophical Taoism because it was essentially preoccupied with basic concerns, such as life, death and immortality, and pragmatic issues relating to health, wealth, business and marriage. See P.G.L. Chew, *Life, Death and Immortality*, *The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review*, 2, 1, 1997, pp. 69-90.

Confucianism. It gave hope to the masses by teaching that the Buddha-nature is in all of us, that the Bodhisattva lives to help his fellow creatures, and that ignorance can be removed through the attainment of Enlightenment when the Truth of the Highest reality is realised.

Indeed, I would venture so far as to say that the ordinary Chinese person is not concerned much with Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism even though we hear such names vaunted frequently in their literature. The *real* religion of the ordinary Chinese people is concerned with meeting their immediate needs, that is, the pursuit of worldly success, the appeasement of the dead and spirit, and the seeking of knowledge about the future. On the other hand, the *real* religion of the intellectuals is an ideology that conforms to rationality, order and harmony. To attain a foothold in China, a religion must address these needs.

## 5.2 Addressing Basic Needs: the Chinese Religion and the Bahá'í Faith

In relation to these basic needs, the Bahá'í Faith has specific teachings addressed to the creation of wealth, of the spiritual world and of the future. In terms of worldly success, Bahá'ís are not opposed to the accumulation of wealth. Marxism was attractive to the Chinese because it offered a solution to widespread poverty and proposed as its goal an egalitarian society in which individuals receive benefits according to their true needs. Like the founding fathers of communism, Bahá'ís believe that there must be tyranny somewhere if poverty exists. While wealth is to be encouraged, poverty is to be abolished. Bahá'í teachings stipulate that if an owner has a large fortune, his workmen should also have a sufficient means of existence. In the Bahá'í model, employees are partners and not just wage earners. Bahá'í institutions such as the Huqúqu'lláh, which institutes a 19% tax on profits above a certain level has helped in the equalisation of income.<sup>32</sup>

There are also teachings with regard to the metaphysical. There is a belief in an ultimate goal or Being, the existence of an afterlife and the necessity of performing good deeds in the material world of existence. In line with

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<sup>32</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 14.

Chinese beliefs, Bahá'ís believe that the status of a departed spirit is influenced by the intercession of others through prayers and good works done in their name and that there should always be gratitude towards parents and grandparents for the gift of life.<sup>33</sup>

Last but not least, the Bahá'í Faith is concerned about the future. All of its social principles are designed to enable humanity to exist happily for another 1,000 years. The keyword is unity and the principles are centred on the one-world concept, that is, the promotion of a world language, a world currency, a world tribunal and a world defence force.<sup>34</sup> The Bahá'í world is basically a world without borders where humanity is one and the same everywhere. The Bahá'í recognises a world made one by the revolution in telecommunications and the impracticality and the redundancy of working within man-made political borders. It is a principle aligned to the economic prosperity of humanity since it would mean the eradication of wars – a major disincentive to prosperity.

Where intellectuals are concerned, an attractive philosophy would be one where the principles of rationality, order and harmony, are adhered to. After all, Confucianism was adopted because it was an incarnation of common sense and practical wisdom. It also ties in well with the concept of harmony in the universe. The idea of harmony is an important component of Chinese traditional culture. As early as the last years of the west Zhou dynasty 5,000 years ago, ancient scholars elucidated the brilliant idea of “harmony making prosperity”. Later, Confucius and the Confucian school put forward the proposition of “harmony above all” and established theories on the co-ordination of inter-personal relations, the protection of the natural environment and the maintenance of ecological balance.

Indeed, harmony appears to be the predominant motif in Chinese religion. Confucianism finds supreme harmony in a disciplined and ordered human relationship. Buddhism perceives all reality as interdependent and teaches man to achieve union through the rejection of selfish desires and of a separate ego. Taoism finds harmony in nature and naturalness and dreams of immortality beyond this earthly life. The Bahá'í vision of the unity of

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

humankind and the establishment of a world civilisation based on peace and justice can be an appealing one in this context.

The trilogy of Chinese religion reveals to us the possibility of the peaceful co-existence of religious beliefs. A reason for the harmony of both Taoism and Buddhism is that both converge in the quest for the truth of existence. Where the Chinese perception is always oriented in the triadic heaven-earth-humankind relationship to exhibit the Tao and its manifestation, the Buddhist took the lead from the historical Buddha's insight that led to nirvana. On the whole, the methodological quest for the Tao is similar to the quest for Dharma. Both acknowledge the subtleties of the quest. In addition, the Buddhist idea of "all in one" or "one in all" is an appealing one. During the reign of Empress Wu (684-704 AD), there was an attempt to develop a universalistic view called the Dharmadhatu, which was adopted to promote the spirit of cosmopolitanism, not only in politics but also in religion.<sup>35</sup>

This idea was propagated by the neo-Confucianists and has its source in the *I Ching*: "In the world there are many different roads but the destination is the same. There are a hundred deliberations but the result is one."<sup>36</sup> In line with this idea and in contrast to the Theravada tradition, sinic Mahayana temples usually have many Gods and also an infinite number of future Buddhas.<sup>37</sup>

As the Chinese experience shows, religion becomes viable if it does not attempt to displace and deny the essential truth of all the great religions. Buddhism's incursion into China did not replace the native gods of China. The Bahá'í perspective of progressive revelation will not be too unfamiliar to the Chinese since the traditional attitude was one of tolerance rather

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<sup>35</sup> King Asoka in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC is another good example of a tolerant ruler. As an ardent Buddhist, he made no attempt to suppress other religious groups. On the contrary, he lent them positive aid and encouragement. To suppress Brahmanism would, he believed, depart from the true spirit of Buddhism. See D. Ikeda, *Buddhism in the First Millennium*.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in J. Legge, *The 4 books*, Pt. 2, Ch. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Theravada temples contain only the image of Skyamuni Gautama Buddha and the bodhi tree. In contrast, the Mahayana temples contain a multitude of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which are myriad manifestations of Absolute of which Gautama is only one. Also Amitābha Buddha (Amitufo) and the Bodhisattva Avalokitevara Kuanyin is more important than that of Buddha. Icons in Mahayana temples are always more numerous and there may be ancestral tablets on the altar as well.

than dogmatic discrimination and ideological opposition. One observes in the history of Chinese thought a tendency for wholeness and a sense to look towards the relativity of particulars within the universal totality. There are also other implications for teaching that may be derived from a study of Buddhism in China. The history of Sinitic Buddhism tells us the great importance of good translations. The greatest figure who made Mahayana thought really acceptable and digestible for the Chinese was Kumārajīva, who came to Chang-an in 401. During the 12 years that followed, aided by his able disciples, he translated thirty-five sutras. Although these translations were later criticised by Hsuan-chuang as not scholarly or faithful enough to the original, Kumārajīva knew better – because he aspired to present the sense in such a way and style to be readily understood by his readers. Here, one discerns two schools of translators; the one is scholarly and the other strives to reproduce the spirit. Hsuan-chuang belongs to the former and Kumārajīva to the second.<sup>38</sup> Both are needed of course. Other translators were Paramartha (499-569) who came to South China in 546; Chi-I (538-597 AD) and Chi-tsang (549-623) of the Sui dynasty; and last but not least, Fa-tsang (643-712 AD) the founder of the Avatamsaka School.<sup>39</sup> The importance of good translators able to transmit both the thought and spirit of religious scriptures cannot be lightly discounted.

The success of Buddhism in China tells us that foreign ideologies can take root and develop. The Chinese are eager to learn from foreigners. Presently, they desire to learn from the West. Even Lao-tzu's ideas are not so thoroughly native to the Chinese as that of Confucius. Some scholars think that Lao-tzu derived these teachings from India and while this cannot be historically proven, it cannot be ignored either. The Chinese love for knowledge and learning is legendary. One remembers here that while the Europeans were attracted to India for its material wealth, the Chinese were attracted to India for its spiritual wealth.

If there has been religious persecution in China, the key issue was not whether something was "foreign" or "home grown" but whether it had mass appeal and whether it was a potential threat to the monopoly of state

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<sup>38</sup> See B.L. Suzuki, *Mahayana Buddhism*, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Chi-I is the founder of the *T'ien-dai* (*Tendai* in Japanese) School whose teaching is the development of the doctrine contained in the *Saddharmapundarika*. Chi-tsang is the principal expounder of the shastras belonging to the Madhyamika School of India.

power. One remembers that although there were religious persecutions in the history of China, these were not prolonged and there was not so much an opposition to the religious doctrine itself as there were grievances with respect to its economic and political implications.<sup>40</sup> The scenario today is no different from the past. Today, Communist China seems determined to maintain control over religion, regardless of the impact on its international relations. In recent years, Beijing has outlawed several Christian groups – as illegal cults. In December 1999 alone, more than 100 Christians were arrested nation-wide while six Protestant leaders in Henan province were sentenced to labour camps for leading “evil cults”.<sup>41</sup> The massive crack down on the fast growing and popular Falun Gong spiritual sect in July 1999 is another example. Reminiscent of past persecutions, one notes that the absolute power of communism is not so much opposed to the spiritual content of the teachings, but are more fearful of its potential threat to state supremacy. It is apparent here that just as the Neo-Confucians were fascinated and fearful of Buddhism’s growing influence in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, so too, there is a simultaneous love-hate, and attraction-repulsion relationship to the incursions of new ideologies into China.

According to the Bahá'í Faith, the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as one where humanity sheds the last vestiges of a troubled adolescence to enter into a more mature and stable adulthood.<sup>42</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has seen the death throes of many political social and economic ideologies as well as unprecedented technological developments and a massive search for a new world order. In 1912 and 1949, in China, Republicanism and Communism respectively filled the political gap but these ideologies seem all too soon to be losing their influence. For one thing, Communism has no metaphysical foundation and its humanitarian ideals are powered by force. Like Confucianism, there is no flight of imagination or soul-stirring religious emotion in its scriptures. Worse, the sisters have been excommunicated, and communism, unlike Confucianism, is perched precariously alone. Time will tell whether the 20<sup>th</sup> century is indeed another axial period in which the essential insights that spawn great cultures take root. Great political, social, economic and spiritual changes often occur during such times. So too, do teachers of great civilisations

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<sup>40</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *The Historic Chinese Contribution to Religious Pluralism*, p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> See *Time*, January 24, 2000, pp. 16-17.

<sup>42</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 1-11.

such as Confucius, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed emerge. Whether the 20<sup>th</sup> century is another watershed in human history will only be apparent to later historians.

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## Heaven in China without “Religion” And Manifestation

*Theo A. Cope*

“The Mandate of Heaven,  
How beautiful and unceasing!  
Oh, how glorious  
Was the purity of King Wen’s virtue!  
With blessings he overwhelms us.  
We will receive the blessings.  
They are a great favor from our King Wen.  
May his descendents hold fast to them”.  
(*Book of Odes*, ode no. 267, “The Mandate of Heaven”)

It has often been asked by Bahá’ís who inquire into such things, “How is it that China developed as it did, into a society founded upon morals and ethical principles, without the acknowledged presence of an ‘identifiable’ Manifestation of God?” This question seems to lead many into searching for answers, into an understanding based upon a predominantly Western notion of “religion,” or reaching back through philosophical works attempting to find justification for asserting that, in fact, ancient China did have a Prophet. This assertion is based upon the belief that there never was a time that humanity was without a Prophet to guide it, and perhaps in the case of China, the absence of clear reference to such a Personage is indicative of the ancientness of such a Being. Absence of such records should not persuade us of the absence of such guidance, given the belief that “[T]he only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic prophets is because their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history... We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of their names.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, some conclude that China *may*

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<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi in, H. Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, rev. ed., 1988, No. 1696, p. 503.

have had such a Prophet for guidance. Unfortunately, as there is no evidence to support such a contention, and since a Bahá'í-Chinese dialogue cannot be based upon such a contention in today's academic milieu demanding empirical evidence, perhaps a different approach may enable us to contemplate religion without a Prophet.

This paper will present some ideas that may enable us to begin an approach to this query from a different perspective. It will also present briefly some teachings of the Bahá'í corpus that indicate a harmonious manner of conceiving what we discern in Chinese philosophy. In making this assertion, it will be necessary to suspend our notions of "religion" and adopt a more inclusive construct.<sup>2</sup> We are emboldened in this manner of advancing by a definition offered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We read: "Religion, then, is the necessary connection which emanates from the reality of things..."<sup>3</sup> And in another passage we read, "... religion is the essential connection which proceeds from the realities of things."<sup>4</sup> We also notice another passage that forces us to stop and ponder deeply: "Now concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things."<sup>5</sup> Religion is the necessary or essential "connection," and nature is the "essential properties and necessary relations." If one takes a brief perusal at the corpus of Bahá'í Writings existing in translation, it will become apparent that the dominant view of religion, as heretofore used and taught in many Western constructs, is too limited. Even if we take an etymological view, religion is derived either from the Latin *religare* meaning "to bind fast," or from *religio*, which is what the Church Fathers derived from *religare*; it could even be from *religere* which means to "go through again, think over, recollect, or consider carefully." Thus, we see in the Western word "religion" a few ways of conceiving it. What 'Abdu'l-Bahá permits us to do is to radically rethink this concept, and to begin to ponder religion in a manner that is not fixed by specific definition.

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<sup>2</sup> In the Bahá'í Writings, we find many "definitions" or characterizations of the term religion that indicate the need for a broader consideration than a doctrine or set of teachings.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, Translated by Laura Clifford-Barney. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1981, p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> 'Tablet to Dr. August Forel', *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XV, pp. 37-43. MARS computer data base.

One current Bahá'í thinker defines religion, based upon this conceptual clarification by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, by asserting that it "is the name we give to the *relationship* or link between these two values, God and humanity. The living embodiment of this link is the Manifestation. Religion thus consists of the three fundamental components: God, Man and the relationship between God and Man, namely the Manifestation."<sup>6</sup> This central component, this tripartite relationship will become clear as we contemplate the concept of tian/heaven as it developed within Chinese thought. It needs commenting, though, that this tripartite relationship extends beyond the Manifestation as the connective "link" with an Unknown Deity, and is reflected in the injunctions found in the Bahá'í religious corpus that "He who knoweth himself knows his Lord."<sup>7</sup> This is similar to the relational view espoused in many Chinese philosophical works, wherein we learn that "He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows *tian*."<sup>8</sup> It is herein contended that if we limit our view of religion to a connective link between an Unknown (and Unknowable) Reality and the Manifestation or Prophet that is the "Spokesman" for this Reality, we endanger the fundamental relationship that emanates from the "reality of things." The relationship which results from the connections emanating from the reality of things could be construed to be, in Chinese thought, what was discussed as Principle (*Li*), which in Neo-Confucian thought, subsumed the notion of heaven (*tian*).

In the Chinese *Weltanschauung*, that is, world-view, there is not a unique word for religion. As Phyllis Chew informs us, "In discussing the 'Chinese religion', one should note too that there is no Chinese word that corresponds exactly to the word 'religion.' To the Chinese there is no difference between religion and education. The Chinese people use the word 'teaching' (*chiao*) to include all religions."<sup>9</sup> In fact, for one who

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<sup>6</sup> W.S. Hatcher, *Ethics of Authenticity*, Book 1, International Moral Education Project, p.3, St. Petersburg, Russia, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 1976, p. 178.

<sup>8</sup> Mencius 7A: 1, cited in Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 1963, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> P.G.L. Chew, *The Chinese Religion and the Bahá'í Faith*, 1993, p. 20. [One is challenged by most works on Chinese thought to find the current transliterated term. E.g. *chiao* as used in this passage follows the old Wales-Giles system of transliteration. The current system, in use since 1949, is Pinyin. This system was an attempt at standardization. Thus, the current word is *jiao*. Through out this paper, I will provide both

peruses Chinese thought, to find such a differentiating term would be surprising. In the current English-Chinese dictionaries, religion is transliterated from *zongjiao*; *zong* is the 1<sup>st</sup> tone and means ancestor or school, and *jiao* is the 4<sup>th</sup> tone and means teach, instruct and consult. Chinese philosophy and religion are characterized by one essential fact: there never was conceived to be a separation between Tian/Heaven and Earth and Humanity. The central idea of this article is that it was, among other factors, the notion of tian/heaven and its implicit unity with Earth and Humanity that provided the religious orientation to Chinese culture and philosophy. Since this trinitarian construct is central to Chinese thought, it would behove us to pare it down and consider the idea of tian/heaven. In so doing, we will be permitted a glimpse into a fundamental thread that runs through the Chinese *Weltanschauungen*. The lack of separation between Humanity and heaven implies much for a world-view that is oriented by observation of the principles of nature, and a deduction from these into the essential human principles of social and personal life.

The Chinese word for heaven is *t'ien/tian* and carries translations that differ in dictionaries:

"The standard Chinese-*English* dictionary translations for *tian* are: (1) the material heavens, the firmament, the sky; (2) the weather; (3) a day; (4) Heaven Providence, God, Nature; (5) husband; (6) indispensable. In spite of some overlap, these equivalences contrast rather starkly with those provided by the Chinese-*Chinese* dictionary: (1) the sky; (2) qi; (3) the movement and pattern of the heavens; (4) the sun; (5) spirituality/divinity/mystery (*shen*); (6) nature, what is so-of-itself (*ziran*) ... The most significant gap in these two definitions of *tian* is the clear absence of "Heaven, Providence, God, Nature" in the Chinese dictionary. In fact, the dualism that requires appeal to transcendent deity in the Western tradition has no relevance at all to Chinese culture."<sup>10</sup>

This passage is offered to orient our ponderings, and provides our ponderings with a view of the orient. What we clearly notice in many

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transliterated terms for scholarly and common usage. See Chew's work, p. xi, for similar reasons in her choice of systems.]

<sup>10</sup> D. Hall, R. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 1998, p. 235.

discussions, based upon the denotations of the term, is a diversity and plurality of views. It may plausibly be asserted that the absence of these three terms is indicative of the dominant Marxist-materialist philosophy and cultural values in modern China, and does not indicate what the authors cited may take it to mean. The work of Hall and Ames makes a strong and cogent case that in Chinese thought, at least in the Han dynastic times (206 BC-220 AD), that had significant impact upon subsequent philosophical thought, there was no notion of a transcendent *tian* (also spelled *t'ien* by some)/"heaven." This evocation of transcendence is, they assert, a Western conceptual overlay due to its inherent dichotomous thought. They are not alone in the insistence that the notion of transcendence that is dominant in the Western philosophical tradition is not applicable to Chinese thought, while other authors make assertions that, in fact, the concept of *tian* involves the notion of transcendence. That there will ever be a resolution to this debate is uncertain; what is certain is that the authors who debate these issues are involved in a process of hermeneutics and interpretation. What is also certain is that, even in translations of the ancient texts, translators give differing views.

One factor we are contemplating in this article, spelled out only briefly here, is that of semantic slides. Semantics, as the field that studies word use and meaning, indicates that the words we use change over time, "slide" upward or downward in their usage. Thus, we note that the Greek term *psyche* originally was used to refer to "breath," underwent a slide to imply the "soul". Likewise, as we ponder the Chinese term *tian*, it may serve us well to consider that what we may observe in our understandings of its referent is how the meaning of *tian* is changing in human consciousness and usage. *Even if* traditional Chinese culture had no overt belief, expressed philosophically, about a transcendent field or Being in a manner consonant with Western thought, the fact that many are now "seeing it" or "reading it into the texts" does not imply its presence or absence *for the originators of the texts*. It implies a different understanding. But this is exactly what has occurred in the West; we clearly witness it in the Chinese interpretations of their early philosophical texts, beginning with the different understandings of *tian* in Confucius/Kongzi, and his successor, Mencius. It should be noted here that the Chinese term *tian*, often translated as "H/heaven" by some,

"N/nature" by others, may best be left untranslated. We shall observe this in what follows.

In pre-Zhou dynastic times (before 1100 BC), we find the word *Ti* (*Di*) existed when referring to a tribal Lord. This tribal concept was later expanded to mean the Deity for all humanity. "In the Shang [dynasty], he was the supreme anthropomorphic deity who sent blessings or calamities, gave protection in battles, sanctioned undertakings, and passed on the appointment or dismissal of officials. Such belief continued in the early Chou [Zhou], but was gradually replaced by the concept of Heaven (*T'ien*) as the supreme spiritual reality."<sup>11</sup> This supremacy of *Ti* which was later transformed into *Tian*, occurred in the Shang times (1600-1100 BC) and "coincides with the supremacy of the Shang and its ruling clan."<sup>12</sup> The continuance of this God-concept seems to be relatively stable at an early date, and is reminiscent of a similar transformation that occurred in the Israeli tradition when Yahweh was "transformed" from a local tribal volcano god into the Supreme Deity. In China, *Tian* was perceived as intimately involved in human affairs, especially the ruling dynasty. The king was the counterpart of *Tian*, as the Son of Heaven, and *Tian* bestowed favour upon righteous kings, and sent portents if the dynasty fell into disfavour through disregard for the proper rules of conduct (*li*). Thus, the concept of *Tian Ming*, the Mandate of Heaven, played a significant role in Chinese socio political history. This remained consistent until the establishment of the People's Republic in 1911.

It is important at the outset to acknowledge that there is not unequivocal certainty as to the historical origin of the word or its referent. "The etymological origins of the term *t'ien* are obscure. The earliest unambiguous instances of usage date from the early Western Chou, that is, the eleventh century BC."<sup>13</sup> Eno's work reviews two of the dominant theories of the origin of *tian* and finds in both plausible and implausible referents. He asserts that the tradition associated with the word indicates that it might have referred to *tian* as the literal sky, the direction that the ashes of the dead floated. This created in the minds of the people, an

<sup>11</sup> W. T. Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 1963, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in B.I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 1985, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> R. Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*, 1990, p. 181.

association with immortality, death and a cosmic order. It also indicated the importance in China of ancestor worship.

After the Shang and during the Chou/Zhou dynasties, the concept of *tian* is seen to appear with that of *Di*--God. "Just how the three terms were understood in the early Zhou is less than clear, but it appears that, over time, the term *di* would come to be used increasingly not to refer to a supreme deity, as in the Shang, but to the supreme ruler of human society, the emperor, while the word *tian* or 'Heaven', would more often be employed to denote the power that governed all creation."<sup>14</sup> However this may be, it is generally mentioned that the "[U]ses of the word also varied over time and among different filiations or schools of thought."<sup>15</sup> It will be helpful to keep this in mind as we proceed.

Kongzi (Confucius 531-479 BC) used the appellation *Tian* instead of the more personal *Ti* when referring to heaven. The recorded sayings of the Master in *The Analects*, which was likely written down by his followers, had a more naturalistic conception than personal. *Tian* operated in the affairs of Humanity through Nature, which were regular, seasonal and balanced between the opposites of *Yin* and *Yang*, as well as the Five Agents (*Wu Xing*): earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. In the Chinese tradition, there were Five Classics that were central to Confucian ideology: the Book of Documents/History (*Shu Jing*); the Book of Songs/Odes (*Shi Jing*); the Book of Changes (*I Qing* or *Yi Jing*); the Book of Rites (*Li Ji*); and the Book of Ceremonies/Spring and Autumn Annals (*Yi Li*).

Each of these books present images of *tian*/heaven that are complementary. We shall limit ourselves to a consideration of *tian*/heaven as it is presented in the works attributed to Kongzi, and the Confucian School, and the *Yi Jing* (I Ching). The reason for limiting our inquiry is not only due to the complexity of the idea, but also due to the diversity of views in the Chinese tradition. From 1313 until 1905, a Confucian quadrad known as the Four Books was the required standard for civil service examinations in the country. These four books were *The Analects*

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<sup>14</sup> W. DeBary, and I. Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1999; p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 170.

(*Lunyu*)<sup>16</sup>, the *Book of Mencius*, the *Great Learning (Da Xue)* and the *Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong Yung)*. The interpretations used were those of Chu Hsi (*Zhu Xi*), 1130-1200 AD, who established Neo-Confucian ideology in ways that stripped it of its Daoist and Buddhist influences that had gathered over the decades. Thus, even though we will look only at Confucian tradition, this in no way detracts from the understanding we can gain of *tian*/heaven, nor imply the insignificance of Daoist views.

We find in the Yin Yang School, which developed the doctrine of *yin* and *yang* to cosmological principles from the likely origin of referring to physical phenomena, a philosophy that impacted all aspects of Chinese civilization. *Tian*/Heaven is said to have given King Yu, the founder of the Xia dynasty (2200-1700 BC) the Nine Categories. These were central to philosophy, in various guises. These categories have been given as consisting of sets of five and include: five agents (elements); five activities; five directions; five arrangements of time; five musical notes; five grains; five sense organs; five atmospheric conditions; five metals. The Five Agents, or Five Elements were used conceptually to extend to different dynastic reigns, thus each dynasty was characterized by a particular manner represented by an element, and a particularly dominant colour. "Philosophically, however, it resulted not only in the concept of a common law governing both man and Nature, but also in a most important doctrine that has dominated Chinese philosophy in the last eight hundred years, namely the unity of man and Nature, or 'Nature and man forming one body'."<sup>17</sup> There is little remaining of this school of thought, but its impact was highly significant.

Heaven, as a term used by translators of Chinese thought, was translated from *tian*. However, this term was also translated more in the sense of "nature" by many of Kongzi's followers, thus presenting a philosophy that was integrated with the human world. In *The Analects*, when *tian* is mentioned, it is usually with reference to an impersonal, but conscious order, or being. This does not mean that Kongzi disavowed belief in a personal heaven, but that the interpretations usually offered on this theme

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that even this term, translated from the term *Lunyu*, comes from the Greek term *analekta* meaning "selection," while it could just as well be defined as "conversations, discussions, or viewpoints." I am indebted to the presentation of this concept in DeBary and Bloom, see p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> B.I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought*, 1990, p. 246.

are presented more naturalistically. A modern interpreter presents an image of Kongzi and asserts that he was deeply religious from his youth, and inculcated this religiosity in his followers.<sup>18</sup> *Analects* (14, 37) is a comment on Kongzi's belief that Heaven knows him and his purpose. We read: "But there is Heaven, He knows me!" Another interpreter gives us this: "It is heaven that knows me." We notice immediately the personalistic attribution in the first translation by Jingpan, and this may be due, in part, to his education at a St. John's University in Shanghai, a Christian university. We also notice that in the first translation, Heaven is given, while the second has heaven. The capitalization of the transliterated term may be indicative of a Western oriented transcendental bias, but no matter what, it is indicative of semantic changes. Heaven must be transcendent, and must be "H" since this indicates a superior reality. Be that as it may, *tian*/heaven was intimately concerned with Kongzi's mission. In *The Analects* we also find that *tian*/heaven communicates through Nature (17, 19), and has been interpreted to imply that Nature is an "emanation" of Heaven.<sup>19</sup> This is not an interpretation that stands alone, but seems to represent an idea common among translators. Heaven could be offended against, and then one would have no recourse to assistance from another source (*Analects* 3, 13). In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, attributed to Kongzi's grandson Zi Si, and taken as the authentic words of Kongzi, we find: "The ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth are those by which we serve Shang Ti (God)." (19, 6)<sup>20</sup> We also find it translated as "Lord on High" instead of Shang Ti as God.

Kongzi's role was, as presented by himself, not a reformer, but a transmitter. This has been debated, but in his transmission of the concept of *tian*/heaven, he seems to hold to the view as expressed in the earlier Chinese religious traditions.<sup>21</sup> As long as there were noble men and sages

<sup>18</sup> Jingpan Chen, *Confucius as a Teacher: Philosophy of Confucius with Special Reference to Its Educational Implications*, 1990. This work was originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Toronto in 1940.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see B.I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 1985 p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> This is Jingpan's translation in op. cit., p. 362, but is consistent with other translations available.

<sup>21</sup> The debate in this arena is summed up as follows: the "Ancient Text" school asserts that Kongzi was a transmitter of ancient knowledge, and what we read in the *Analects* should read this; the "Modern Text" school asserts that Kongzi was a reformer, and he simply asserted it was not out of genuine humility and cultural propensity to not assert one's self.

who worked to redeem mankind from straying from the *Dao*, the Way, heaven supports their workings, even if it is inscrutable to individuals. In fact, we find in *The Doctrine of the Mean* passages that require our reflection:

“(31) Only the perfect sage in the world has quickness of apprehension, intelligence, insight, and wisdom, which enable him to rule all men; magnanimity, generosity, benignity, and tenderness, which enable him to embrace all men...Therefore we say that he is a counterpart of Heaven.

(32) Only those who are absolutely sincere can order and adjust the great relations of mankind, establish the great foundations of humanity, and know the transforming and nourishing operations of heaven and earth. Does he depend on anything else? How earnest and sincere--he is humanity! How deep and unfathomable--he is abyss! How vast and great--he is heaven! Who can know him except he who really has quickness of apprehension, intelligence, sageliness, wisdom, and understands character of Heaven?”<sup>22</sup>

In these passages we notice clearly that the sage is the counterpart of heaven, and *is heaven*. No sense of transcendence is implied here, but an immanence that the sage embodied. In fact, the entire corpus of Confucian philosophy was about embodiment and *becoming* a sagely person. The rectification of one's conduct and names, the becoming *ren*, or the noble person (*junzi*), having integrity, and living up to one's word, is about embodying the qualities and characteristics that these entail. So, even if Kongzi did not overtly talk about *tian*, in a doctrinal sense, but only informs us that he did not talk about it, it does not tell us why or if he believed it was immanent or transcendent (if these terms even are applicable).<sup>23</sup>

One of Kongzi's grandson's disciples was Mencius/Mengzi/Meng Ke (371-289 BC). Little is known about his life, but the extant writings attributed to him clearly show a continuance of the personal idea of Heaven. He believed that God (*Di*) was the supreme moral authority, and

Fundamentally, we do not know! For a concise discussion, see Wing-Tsit Chan, p. 314; or Jingpan, p. 150.

<sup>22</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 112. Other translations differ, and the one by Hall and Ames is consistent. Others provide the expression: “He is like heaven”.

<sup>23</sup> See Analects 5, 12.

humanity's goal was to live a life in order to keep the harmony with *tian*/heaven. He also spoke as if he had a role to play in continuing the transmission of *tian*/heaven's dictates to humanity. We read: "Heaven's plan in the production of mankind is this--that they who are first informed should instruct those who are later on being informed, and they who first apprehend principles should instruct those who are slower to do so. I am one of Heaven's people who have first apprehended; -- I will take these principles and instruct this people in them. If I do not instruct them, who will do so?"<sup>24</sup> We thus notice a clear notion of *tian*/heaven as intimately involved and concerned with the affairs of Humanity, and Its spokesmen as striving to keep people following the Way of *tian*/heaven. *Tian*/heaven has endowed Humanity with faculties and senses. Humanity's task is to use these senses, under the control of the mind, to find the principles inherent in all things. "If we do not think, we will not get them. This is what Heaven has given to us. If we first build up the nobler part of our nature, then the inferior part cannot overcome it. It is simply this that makes a great man."<sup>25</sup>

Following Mengzi, Xun Kuang, or Xunzi (?310 BC-?215 BC), an influential scholar at the Jixia Academy in the feudal state of Qi, presents *tian* as simply natural order that does not interfere with human affairs and should not be interfered upon by humans. It is, rather, the given context within which all beings exist. As natural order, it is unconcerned with the dynastic changes, or the fortunes of any sovereign or individual; but individual effort and responsibility is required. The complementarity that exists with *tian*/heaven and Humanity, and the recognition of the trinity of these and Earth, formed a seminal idea in Confucian thought.<sup>26</sup>

Dong Zhong-Shu (Tung Chung Shu) was a minor philosopher who lived from 179-104 BC, but historically he is significant inasmuch as he was pivotal in getting Confucian philosophy to be the state doctrine. He saw the universe as an organic whole, and man as a microcosm. With Nature the macrocosm and Humanity the microcosm, the dynamic interplay observable in Nature were reflected in Humanity. *Tian*/heaven has its forces of *yin* and *yang*, the opposites of passive and active, etc., and

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 365. The translation is from J. Legge's work on Mengzi.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in W.T. Chan, *A Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> DeBary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 170.

Humanity likewise has its opposites of humanity (*jen/ren*) and greed. As *tian*/heaven can restrict the operations of these two forces, so can a person. From this, we are given to learn that *tian*/heaven and Humanity operate in a similar manner. On the personal level, humanity was viewed to have inherent goodness, but potentially so. What was needed was education to discipline this human nature. "The activity of Heaven extends to a certain point and then stops. What stops within the operation of Heaven is called human nature endowed by Heaven, and what stops outside the operation of Heaven is called human activity."<sup>27</sup> This dimension of human endeavour needs to be trained, thus the king and the sage are set up to provide the society in which these aspects can be cultivated. Dong Zhong-Shu even went to far as to make a correspondence with *tian*/heaven and the physical body, as we also notice in Jewish and Islamic mystical speculations, with the human mind resembling the spiritual intelligence of *tian*/heaven.

The persistence of the belief and teaching that *tian*/heaven, Earth, and Humanity formed a trinity was long lasting in Chinese thought. In generations of Confucians succeeding Mengzi, we notice a gradual transition in the idea of *tian*. Instead of maintaining the usual usage as *tian*/heaven, in a Zhou or Shang perspective, the developments and philosophical integration during the Han dynasty (202BC - 220 AD), it became to be presented more in reference to natural phenomena. In part this was due to Mengzi himself. He is quoted as saying, "He who exercises his mind to the utmost knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven." Another translation gives us: "He who fully realizes the potentialities of his heart knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven."<sup>28</sup> From this was deduced that *tian*/heaven was immanent in the heart of Humanity. What we also notice here is the use of mind and heart for the same term. This is not unusual, and represents the fact that one term, *xin*, is used for both ideas, and is often translated in more recent philosophical works as "mind-heart," or "heart-mind". The role of the sage is to continually guide mankind to what is immanent in human

<sup>27</sup> W.T. Chan, op. cit., p. 275. This concept is reminiscent of a work by P.D. Ouspenski, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, where he asserts a similar construct.

<sup>28</sup> These both are translations of 7, 1 of Mengzi's work. The first is by J. Legge, cited in Jingpan; the second by Lau, cited in Schwartz. Nature is translated from *xing*, usually given as "human nature" and mentioned in the Analects only twice, but developed more fully in Mengzi and other Confucianists.

nature, and to educate humanity in the proper use of the mind, and the right attachments of the heart, thus to "attain heaven."

A contemporary of Meng Zi was Xuanzi (Hsun Tzu), and he was often considered a rival to Mengzi's theories. Even though his thought dominated until the Han period (206 BC - 220 AD), Mengzi is considered as the heir of Kongzi's teachings. However, in Xuanzi, we notice clearly the presentation of *tian* in a more natural manner, and translators often use "nature" and this became part of many subsequent ideas of *tian*/heaven in Confucian philosophy. To him, *tian*/heaven was invisible and "The sage, however, does not seek to know Heaven. When the office of Heaven is established and the work of Heaven is done, the body will be provided and the spirit born, and the feelings of like, dislike, pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy embodied. These are called the natural feelings."<sup>29</sup> Nature and natural law is called *Dao* or *Li* (Principle), which everyone needs to obey. For Xuanzi, *tian*/nature and Earth were the source of life, and the noble man or the sage, formed a triad by following and embodying the principles of Nature. As we will see, from these followers of Kongzi, many others held to the notion that *tian*/heaven was immanent, and the role of the sage was not to attempt to discern *tian*/heaven's will, but to embody it. This embodiment was not accomplished only through Humanity, but became to be primarily reflected in the speculations and observations upon Nature as an embodiment of *tian*'s will.

Before progressing further in time, let us pause and consider the concept of *tian*/heaven as presented in the Book of Changes, the *Yi Jing*. This work, more than any other, formed a central basis of both Confucian and Daoist thought. This work is attributed to King Wen, who preceded Kongzi by about 500 years. While there are questions about some of the current text, there are parts that all scholars concur existed in pre-Confucian times. Both Kongzi and Laozi were reported to have consulted this work and meditated deeply upon its meanings. In this work, we notice that the first hexagram, *Ch'ien* (*Chen*), meaning the Creative, is connected with *tian*/heaven, and oftentimes, *ch'ien* is even translated as heaven. "Through the inclusion of the heavenly in the concept of creativity, something truly significant happens to heaven. It is drawn down out of its heights into the human cosmos. The divine heaven becomes a human

<sup>29</sup> Cited in W.T. Chan, *A Source in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 118.

heaven. The idea of a divine heaven is also known in the Book of Changes, but the places where only the divine heaven are meant are so clear and stand in such a lively and fruitful contrast to those signifying the human heaven that the interplay is easily recognizable.<sup>30</sup>

We notice that the second hexagram, *K'un*, which is attributed to earth, is the counterpart of heaven. There is no duality implied in this construct, but a complementarity/polarity that is essential to Chinese thought. Heaven is *yang*, the ruler, the father, dynamic, creative, and bold; earth is *yin*, the subject, recipient, passive, and yielding. We see here that Nature is the counter-part of Heaven, and neither is complete without its complement. "Heaven is high, earth is low; thus the Creative and receptive are determined. In correspondence with this difference between low and high, inferior and superior places are established... In the heavens phenomena take form; on earth shapes take form. In this way change and transformation become manifest."<sup>31</sup>

The "Great Appendix" which discusses this book claims, "the *tao* of Heaven is in it; the *tao* of man is in it; the *tao* of earth is in it."<sup>32</sup> We also notice that the "Great Appendix" is referred to as "The Great Treatise" and was a commentary on the Book of Changes by successive generations of scholars. In this work we read: "The Book of Changes contains the measure of heaven and earth; therefore it enables us to comprehend the *tao* of heaven and earth and its order."<sup>33</sup> It is through contemplation on the changes visible in nature and humanity that the images of the trigrams (three lines, either broken or solid) were composed, combined into hexagrams, and said to represent all the manifold changes in existence. The persistence of the trinity of *tian*/heaven, Earth and Humanity is enforced and carries through to successive generations of Chinese. One significant fact of the Book of Changes is its pronouncements on life. It provided an imagistic and some say proto-philosophical view that looked to the natural world and its images and events to discern *tian*'s/heaven's ways. In this work, interpreters present spirit as connoting natural forces of observable life, and *tian*/heaven is conceived to be Principle (*Li*), a cornerstone idea of Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought.

<sup>30</sup> H. Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes*, 1997, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> *The I Ching, or The Book of Changes*, translated by H. Wilhelm, 1977, p. 281.

<sup>32</sup> B.I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 1985, p. 394.

<sup>33</sup> H. Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes*, 1997, p. 293.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, a revival of Confucian thought is seen in the philosophy of Han Yu and Li Ao. Before their time, Confucian doctrines were becoming more and more entangled with Daoist and Buddhist speculative ideas about mind, spirits, emptiness, and the reality or non-reality of created existence. These two worked to strip Confucianism of these tendencies, the inaction ascribed to by Daoists, and the silence and illusory nature of existence ascribed to by the Buddhists, and to return its focus to moral society and moral action. Neo-Confucian thought followed the reformulating by these two men, and is said to begin with Zhou Tun-i (Chou Tun-i) (1017-1073).<sup>34</sup> He re-establishes the philosophical focus upon human nature and the Way (*Dao*), which had been neglected in the intervening years due to too much emphasis upon textual studies of the classics, for attaining bureaucratic positions, and not enough upon living the implications of the views expressed.<sup>35</sup> One of his major works was "An Explanation of the Diagram of Great Ultimate," which gave the framework of Neo-Confucian metaphysics for centuries. "Therefore it is said that 'yin and yang' are established as the way of Heaven, the weak and strong as the way of Earth, and humanity and righteousness as the way of man."<sup>36</sup> The correlation between *tian*/heaven, Earth and Humanity is continued, and sincerity, righteousness, purity of heart, and other Confucian ideals again become the thrust of this philosophy.

Continuing the Neo-Confucian thought, we notice two brothers, Zheng Hao (Ch'eng Hao) and Zheng Yi (Ch'eng I) who rise to dominance and greatly impact later developments. In the case of the first brother (1032-1085), we see a focus on the manifestation of existents from the one principle (*li*), and his brother's (1033-1107) focus on production and reproduction. Zheng Hao's dominant motif is the Principle of Nature, that

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<sup>34</sup> There seems to be disagreement about this by various scholars, but let us not concern ourselves with this here.

<sup>35</sup> In considering Confucian philosophy, we must remember its integral relationship to bureaucracy in China. Ever since the implementation by King Wu (141-187 BC) of Academies, at the urging of Dong Zhongshu, the examinations for bureaucratic office were based upon Confucian texts. This guaranteed the dominance of Confucian over other philosophies, and integrally linked Confucian thought with political position. Thus, in understanding the development of Confucian thought, an awareness of this relationship is helpful. It was utilitarian to know the Classics, pragmatic and financial more than purely philosophical (if there was ever a time that it was since from its inception Confucianism was intimately concerned with the socio political order).

<sup>36</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 464.

is, *Tian-li*, the Principle of Heaven. This became to refer to Natural Law. "The great innovations of the Ch'engs, as we have seen, is the elevation of principle to the place formerly occupied by heaven; and this involves treating 'heaven' and its 'decree', as well as the 'Way', as merely names for different aspects of principle."<sup>37</sup> We even notice that the ancient term for Heaven, *Ti*, which also referred to God, becomes simply another name for Principle that controls all things. Both brothers adhere to this construct. We find, "Heaven is principle. 'The word 'psychic' refers to what is inscrutable in the innumerable things.' God (*ti*) is the name given to it as the ruler of events."<sup>38</sup> In this passage, psychic refers to a state of being that can also be characterized by integrity, or composure.

Semantic change, like what is witnessed in the alteration from *tian*/heaven as a ruling concept, as an ordering principle for human life, becoming subsumed under the rubric of Principle, indicates the non-theological nature of this concept in Chinese thought. More than that, it seems to demonstrate the alternative aspect of *religare*, that is, the aspect of relationship which is built upon "the necessary connection which emanates from the reality of things." It is essential here that we briefly consider how Heaven became so subsumed.<sup>39</sup>

Since Confucian philosophy was not given over to speculative metaphysical thought in the same manner as found in Daoism, it remained grounded, so to speak, by "investigation into the nature of things," *ke-wu*. Even when Confucianism became embroiled in such debates, it was in response to Daoist and Buddhist philosophies. As indicated above, Confucianism always seemed to return to its "roots" in an embodied, life-as-lived, relationally-defined and textually documented approach.

<sup>37</sup> A.C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, 1992, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> In what follows, we shall follow one line of reasoning: the notion of Heaven was altered from a transcendent field that was also an immanent field. With *yin* and *yang*, at their extremities, *yang* becomes *yin*, and *yin* becomes *yang*. These corollaries are inherent in its polar dimension; thus to speak of an immanent-transcendent field is to acknowledge the polar necessities here as well. Below in the text, we shall present a view that eschews any notion of a transcendent reference to heaven. Ultimately, we must acknowledge that we do not know what the Chinese philosophers in the "Warring States" or Han dynasty believed. The hermeneutic process invariably involves the hermeneut's frame of reference and locus of understanding, etc.

The investigation into the nature of things has its origin in the *Da Xue*, the Great Learning. There, we read in Chapter 4: "Confucius said, 'In hearing litigations, I am as good as anyone. What is necessary is to enable people not to have litigations at all.' Those who would not tell the truth will not dare to finish their words, and a great awe would be struck into people's minds. This is called knowing the root." Chapter 5: "This is called knowing the root. This is called the perfecting of knowledge."<sup>40</sup>

Based upon the interpretations of chapter five, it was taken to mean the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. This investigation was into the principles that underlie all phenomena, based upon careful observation and penetration. Investigation was taken to extend from the observation of the myriad things of existence, with their flux and harmony, leading one to inner sincerity, peace and harmony with the *tian*/heaven and Earth, thus forming the trinity. The precursors to Neo-Confucian thought, Han Yu and Li Ao, worked to reconnect Confucianism with the classics, and by so doing, re-establishing the social component implicit in this tradition.<sup>41</sup>

Investigation into principles meant the principles of proper social order as well as one's nature, *yin* and *yang* visible in natural events, and the material force (*qi / chi*) running through all things. Since humanity was an integral part of nature, investigation was into the roots of one's self and these forces operating within the individual, and one's social relationships. We find this fundamental component of Neo-Confucianism articulated clearly by Zheng Hao and his younger brother, Zheng Yi. In the works of the former we find: "The investigation of principle to the utmost, the full development of nature, and the fulfillment of destiny (*ming*, fate)—these three things are to be accomplished simultaneously. There is basically no time sequence among them. The investigation of principle to the utmost should be regarded merely as a matter of knowledge. If one really investigates principle to the utmost, even one's

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<sup>40</sup> These passages are translated and cited in W.T. Chan's work, pp. 88-89.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Confucian thought was its insistence upon "returning to the texts" for legitimization. We note that in the West, it was metaphysical assertions and claims that impelled speculative theosophers/philosophers to harken to ancient traditions and texts for "verification" of their veracity.

nature and destiny can be fulfilled."<sup>42</sup> Principle, since it is coursing through all things, can be approached in an external or internal manner. The younger brother comments thusly, "To learn them from what is outside, and grasp them within, is called 'understanding.' To grasp them from what is within, and connect them with outside things, is called 'integrity.' Integrity and understanding are one."<sup>43</sup> Graham comments on this, "Yi-ch'uan, followed by Chu Hsi and his school, lays stress on the objective approach, which Ming-tao, anticipating Lu Chiu-yuan (1139-1192) and Wang Shou-jen (1472-1528), prefers the subjective. But the two points of view are of course not incompatible, and the difference, which was to become the great controversial issue in Neo-Confucianism for the next five-hundred years, is only a difference of emphasis in the Ch'eng brothers."<sup>44</sup>

However, this difference of emphasis, this extraverted and introverted approach taken by these two brothers, forever alters the discourses and understandings of Li/Principle, *Tian*/Heaven and Humanity as portrayed and debated in Neo-Confucian thought. We see how easy it was to subsume *tian*/heaven under the primary concept of Principle (*li*), and to assert that the various names, as presented above are all different aspects of Principle. For the Zheng's (Ch'eng's) Principle became the primary referent, and the concept of Heaven was more "naturalized." Following this move, Lu Hsiang-Shan (Lu Xiang-shan) declared that "Principle is endowed in me by Heaven, not drilled into me... The mind is one and principle is one. Perfect truth is reduced to a unity; the essential principle is never a duality. The mind and principle can never be separated into two."<sup>45</sup> Here, to investigate things means to investigate mind, since mind is principle. Neo-Confucian thought was thenceforth divided over the concept of *tian*/heaven and Principle (*li*), without coming to a resolution or clear determination as to the nature of either. But, one consistency is that *tian*/heaven became equated with the Principle of Nature in its naturalistic guise. It does, however, remain a moral obligation to follow *tian*'s/heaven's decree and the investigation of things.

<sup>42</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 531.

<sup>43</sup> A.C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, p. 75.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> W.T. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

So far we have seen how the concept of *tian*/heaven served, in Chinese philosophy, a mediating role in human consciousness, with all of existence. By coming to learn the Mandate of Heaven, (*tianming*) society was to be ordered. In order to balance the needs of society, one must balance the other relationships of human life. In order to balance the relationships of life, one must live in balance with *tian*/heaven. In its initial guise, the Mandate was a relationship relegated to the King, but later became the Principle of Nature, and Nature's decrees, an inherent component of every person. It was the nobleman, the sage, that could best embody this Mandate and best understand the Principle. From its roots in pre-Confucian religious thought, the idea of *tian*/heaven has played a dominant role in all subsequent permutations of Confucianism. While the concept has fundamentally changed to a viewpoint that is more natural, the continuation of the belief in Heaven, Humanity and Earth forming a trinity remained consistent, and religious in orientation.

It seems a bit disingenuous not to mention that the discussion about *tian*/heaven being 'religious' and transcendent, is a modern Western-originated one. In the philosophical works of Chinese thinkers, we find no such debate. It is not until after the impact of Western thought, and Christianity, as presented to the Chinese in the late 1800's, that the debate of a 'religious' aspect to *tian*/heaven enters the literature.<sup>46</sup> Levenson asserts that "[I]t was left to the nineteenth century Christians, Western and Taiping, to dwell on the shadowy classical concept of *Shang-ti* as a transcendental supreme power. The traditional Confucian sancta were all bound up in *T'ien*, Heaven, whose 'mandate' (*ming*) made rulers legitimate and committed them to virtue (not power) to the end of harmony (not creative change). *T'ien* and *Shang-ti* had different origins."<sup>47</sup> He is not alone in this contention, and its mention serves to forewarn us to not exclude this consideration in our ponderings.

Likewise, the work by Hall and Ames, as indicated above, calls our attention to the assertion that *tian*/heaven was never a transcendent field of reference in Chinese thought. There was simply no conception of a separation that implied transcendence. *Tian*/Heaven was immanent in life

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<sup>46</sup> It is telling that we do not find such a change after the initial encounter with Christianity, under the Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, who came to China in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>47</sup> J.R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, 1964, Book 2, p. 91.

and the heart. Indeed, it has been asserted by one Chinese scholar that "... whatever might be construed as transcendent in classical Chinese thought, it is not independent of the natural world, nor is it theistic. Far from entailing the dualism entailed by Western models of transcendence, classical China's world order, according to Mou, is altogether 'this worldly'."<sup>48</sup> The sage was concerned with actively transforming his inner character in order to transform the outer social structure and interactions. Thus, as we saw above, the sage is the representative of *tian/heaven*, and *is tian/heaven*. The Chinese view affords us an alternative and complement to the Western concept of transcendence that has dominated philosophical discourse and interpretive hermeneutics. It also affords us insight into the alternative meaning of religion that is under consideration.

It would appear that much of Confucian thought, both in its original and Neo-Confucian strain, utilized the concept of *tian/heaven* and the relationship with the individual and the collective, to contemplate man's place in the universe. While it retained its relationship in the formation of a trinity, the strong religious nature of *tian/heaven* was altered, without losing its moral prerogatives. If we contemplate the definitions of religion proffered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá given in the opening passages of this work, then it seems logical that a civilization and culture that based much of its philosophy upon the views of Kongzi, deriving from ancient Chinese heritage, would find religious fulfilment by determining the essential connections that emanate from the reality of things.

While there is no way to verify the thesis that China never was graced with a Manifestation, and while it is a central component of Bahá'í belief that humanity has always been guided by such Mediators, unless some empirical historical evidence is forthcoming, perhaps we may be better served in learning how it is that Chinese thought retained its essential connection to *tian/heaven* and the principles (*li*) emanating from the reality of all things. If we are enabled to understand this dimension of the Chinese psyche and thought, we may learn from Chinese thought how to conceive of Heaven, Earth and Humanity forming a trinity. And lest we pass over this casually, to conceive also means to "take to oneself" (thus

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<sup>48</sup> Cited in Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 1998, p. 223.

its use as conception in a physical sense); so we conceive new ways of understanding by new ways of embodying and taking these conceptions as our own.

By so doing, we come to de-literalize the Western concept of Heaven, permit a fluid and unfixed definition, as well as learn to see religion in a manner that truly focuses on the "essential connections emanating from the reality of things." Then religion can be reconceived from being merely a set of rules that one is obligated to follow, imposed upon humanity from a Deity, to one that also acknowledges religion as a relationship which is inherent in the very structure of existence. In so doing, we are also enabled to overcome the strict transcendence that is the cultural heritage of Western theology that has created such a gulf between heaven and earth, spirit and nature, God and creation. Indeed, the Bahá'í corpus provides us with the means of conceiving this polar view, but this is not the place to develop this line of thought.<sup>49</sup>

It may serve us well if we now very briefly consider how it is that the Bahá'í Writings present the concept of Heaven, Nature and the Manifestation, and determine if there is a concordance of thought with these Chinese ideas. In fact, it is very apparent that in Bahá'í thought, "heaven" is a concept of immense import. We notice clear teachings indicating its metaphorical nature. In Bahá'u'lláh's work, *Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude*, He elucidates many of the meanings of heaven as used in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions. We read, referring to the term heaven as used in these Holy Scriptures:

"In the utterances of the divine Luminaries the term 'heaven' hath been applied to many and divers things; such as the 'heaven of Command,' the 'heaven of Will,' the 'heaven of the divine Purpose,' the 'heaven of divine Knowledge,' the 'heaven of Certitude,' the 'heaven of Utterance,' the 'heaven of Revelation,' the 'heaven of Concealment,' and the like. In every instance, He hath given the term 'heaven' a special meaning, the

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<sup>49</sup> What this would entail is a consideration of the concept of the Manifestation as presented in the Bahá'í corpus, as well as a profound realization of a Both/And complementarity. The Writings present such a consideration by permitting us to contemplate the "distinction and unity" of the Manifestation. See Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 21. We are given to hold such disjuncts without conceiving therein essential opposition. Likewise, to hold a transcendent/immanent disjunct without seeing these as opposites, moves us closer to grasping the polar terminology as used in Chinese thought.

significance of which is revealed to none save those that have been initiated into the divine mysteries, and have drunk from the chalice of immortal life."<sup>50</sup>

The process by which "heaven" became concretized into a "place" is beyond the scope of this article. However in the New Testament, we read that Christ ascended into heaven, and in the Qu'ran we read that Muhammad ascended to the seven heavens, and these were interpreted to refer to the physical sky, and spiritual places.<sup>51</sup> We find, contrary to these notions, that the Bahá'í corpus emphasizes the non-literal and non-physical meaning of these terms. When they do refer to a physicalist-sky concept, it is made clear. Commenting on the idea of the "seventh heaven", 'Abdu'l-Bahá informs us that:

"With regard to that which hath been mentioned concerning the seven spheres and the seven heavens referred to in the Books revealed by the Dawning-places of Light and Repositories of Secrets in previous ages, such references were dictated by the conventional wisdom prevailing in those times, for every cycle hath its own characteristics which are determined by the capacities of the people and their readiness to accept fresh revelations of the truth from behind the veil. All things are ordained by God according to a given measure. When the Prophets spoke of the celestial spheres what they intended was no more than the orbits of the planets falling within that greater world that embraces the sun and its attendant planetary system."<sup>52</sup>

The psychological tendency to concretise these spiritual concepts led many into assuming that heaven referred to the physical sky and that there were levels of heavens of a subtle nature, and that both Jesus and Muhammad physically ascended into the immensity of space. But it must be noted that "space" is a modern concept that replaced the notion of

<sup>50</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán (The Book of Certitude)*, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> For a fuller discussion of the concretisation of place in historical thought, see the author's work, *Re-Visioning, Re-Thinking, Re-Placing: From Neo-Platonism to Bahá'í in a Jung Way*, to be published in February 2001 by George Ronald Press.

<sup>52</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet of the Universe*, provisional translation, original in Makatib-i

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. 1, pp 13-32.

place in Western thought.<sup>53</sup> Thus, heaven was a place where souls of believers went after death, and where the true believers were rewarded with meeting the Cherubim and Seraphim as well as the other elect and Prophets. The Bahá'í concepts shatter this concretisation, persuading us that a new manner of envisioning "heaven" is needed.

Indeed, this new manner impels us to conceive of a relationship between heaven and humanity that is embodied. This embodiment is derived from the fact that "Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me and is faithful to My Cause."<sup>54</sup> This immanent presence of the Divine in the human reality and consciousness enables us to realize that the connection between heaven and humanity, between the Prophet and humanity is closer than our life-vein.<sup>55</sup> The heart is the "seat of the All-Merciful and the throne wherein abideth the splendor of His revelation,"<sup>56</sup> and it is by cleansing the heart that knowledge of the Manifestation is attained. This conscious knowledge establishes a relationship with this Presence, and in so establishing a relationship, humanity recognizes its connection to the physical and spiritual cosmos.

In a manner similar to the re-visioning of the concept of heaven, the Bahá'í Writings present the idea of Nature in a way that also impels us to conceive a connection similar to that found in Chinese thought:

"Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise. Were anyone to affirm that it is the Will of God as manifested in the world of being, no one should question this assertion. It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp. Indeed a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendour of Our Name, the

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<sup>53</sup> For an excellent discussion of this, see E. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186. This reiterates a hadith attributed to Muhammad.

<sup>55</sup> This is an allusion to a poetic utterance mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in *Gleanings*, p. 185.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

Creator. Say: This is an existence which knoweth no decay, and Nature itself is lost in bewilderment before its revelations, its compelling evidences and its effulgent glory which have encompassed the universe."<sup>57</sup>

While it is clear that the Chinese world-view does not include the concept of Names of God, nor the Will of God in a manner similar to that in the West, the notion of Principle (*li*) can be discerned to be a harmonious concept. Indeed, a man of discernment would observe the workings of the laws of nature and perceive these signs and principles underlying them. In fact, the *Yi Jing* uses the observations of the principles of nature discerned by humanity, codifies them into a symbolic system that has sustained Chinese speculative thought for centuries and still resonates deeply in the Chinese psyche. To present the concept of Nature in such a fashion, Bahá'u'lláh reveals passages that have profound reverberation in the human psyche, both in the East and West, and permits us to re-consider the connection inherent in the reality of all things.

It also provides us a framework with which to grasp the interconnection of all existence as well as imagine how it is that the reality of the Manifestation is conceived by Bahá'u'lláh to be "...transfigured before Him into a sovereign Potency permeating the essence of all things visible and invisible."<sup>58</sup> This potency, reflected in the human heart and Nature, provides the foundation of the harmony that exists between Humanity, Nature and Divinity.

In like manner, to re-conceive the concept of God, we note how the Bahá'í corpus presents ideas of profound import. Perhaps it would be better to assert that there is not a concept of God found in the Bahá'í Writings, but a concept of the Manifestation of God that dominates. In fact, we are informed clearly that any concept we may have, any Name or Attribute that humanity has attributed to God must be re-considered. 'Abdu'l-Bahá informs us, "Accordingly all these attributes, names, praises and eulogies apply to the Places of Manifestation; and all that we imagine and suppose beside them is mere imagination, for we have no means of comprehending

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<sup>57</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Translated by H. Taherzadeh, 1978, p. 142.

<sup>58</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, p. 102.

that which is invisible and inaccessible."<sup>59</sup> Likewise, He informs us that contingent reality can never conceive the non-contingent Reality, that Reality, that "Potency" mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh.

"Then how could it be possible for a contingent reality, that is, man, to understand the nature of that pre-existent Essence, the Divine Being? The difference in station between man and the Divine Reality is thousands upon thousands of times greater than the difference between vegetable and animal. And that which a human being would conjure up in his mind is but the fanciful image of his human condition, it doth not encompass God's reality but rather is encompassed by it. That is, man graspeth his own illusory conceptions, but the Reality of Divinity can never be grasped: It, Itself, encompasseth all created things, and all created things are in Its grasp. That Divinity which man doth imagine for himself existeth only in his mind, not in truth. Man, however, existeth both in his mind and in truth; thus man is greater than that fanciful reality which he is able to imagine."<sup>60</sup>

This assertion seriously challenges many of the concepts of God that humanity has held for centuries. It compels us to humble ourselves, accept the limitations of our concepts, and begin to envision in a manner that maintains the immanent connection between us and that Potency, while honouring fully the station of humanity as an embodied servant. Again, we discern how it is that the Bahá'í Writings present to us a concept of the harmony of humanity with existence.

Chinese thought pursued an understanding of this relationship by investigating the principles they observed in life processes and phenomena. Chinese philosophy, in its Confucian and Daoist manifestations, encouraged and inculcated the notion of embodying the principles of *tian*, in order to effectuate the fullness of being a human, which carried over into the social relationships, society and the kingdom. The West pursued an understanding by abstract metaphysical speculations. The Chinese way (*dao*), as articulated in Confucianism, was of embodiment; the Western way was of separation from nature and

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<sup>59</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 149.

<sup>60</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Translated by, G. Marzieh, 1978, p. 47.

transcendence. The Western philosophical ideal was founded upon rationalism, while Chinese ideal never forgot the body with its needs and implications.<sup>61</sup> Chinese thought never divided *tian* from Earth, *Yin* from *Yang*, positive from negative, etc. It saw all life as a unified and coherent whole, with polarities that were essential to existence. As the root of "whole" can be found in "holy" perhaps to contemplate within the temple of a unified holistic reality may permit us to grasp in greater depths of the essential connection emanating from the reality of things. By so doing, we can move beyond the secular/sacred, holy/unholy transcendent/immanent dichotomies of Western religious thought. As part of the trinity composed of Heaven, Earth and Humanity, we are an integral part of one whole, not isolated in reality, but only in our thoughts. We have but to understand that we form an integral part of existence, a connection that is essential to its operations, at least *for us*. Chinese religious and philosophical thought enables us to begin an approach to this essential connection we serve. The Way of Heaven and the Way of Humanity coincide. It is our misunderstandings that divide.

When Westerners or religious adherents approach Chinese philosophy, and when contemporary Chinese do likewise, it may behove us to examine closely the notion of transcendence in Chinese thought, and *our* field of reference for this idea. While we can never get behind these views as held by early philosophers, we are well served by considering whether or not the Western notion of transcendence is applicable to Chinese philosophy. We may ask ourselves: "Why should it be?" If the thrust of Chinese thought is embodiment, in order to perpetuate the harmony that was believed to exist between *tian* and humanity and the earth, surely the immanent dimension of *tian* should be considered. We must move beyond our Western constructed and influenced categories in our interpretive hermeneutics of Chinese thought. Akin to the notion that light is a wave and a particle, and ultimately is electromagnetism, to hold that there can be a transcendence in polar union with an immanence effectually enables us to conceive new manners of thinking. As we conceive, new ways are born.

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<sup>61</sup> For a wonderful work that presents this idea clearly, see Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living*.

Religion, as the "necessary connection" seems to have imbedded in it an immanent component. By hesitating to translate *tian* as H/heaven, we may be enabled also to learn how it is that Chinese philosophers conceived of existence as an integrated whole with polar dimensions that are integral to the human experience. We may also learn how to conceive without fixed categories and terms, akin to how the Bahá'í corpus present the notions of heaven and religion, and how quantum physics presents current understandings of "matter." For philosophical works, especially as developed in the West, specificity of terms is essential. Aristotle spent many works coming up with clearly demarcated definitions and this set the precedence. We see no such specificity in Chinese thought. Pluralism, as a philosophical view, as well as a pluralistic manner of perceiving, is not new. This is exactly what quantum physicists hold in their approaches: matter is and is not solid. It is our frame of reference that, in part, determines what we observe. *Tian* is and is not transcendent; is and is not "heaven"; it is much more than this. In this way, and by extension, in considering other terms that have been given decidedly Western interpretive frameworks, we may learn more of what is implied in the Bahá'í Writings when Bahá'u'lláh informs us that "[T]he highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God."<sup>62</sup> Likewise, we note a clear principle proffered: "He also saith: "We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain."<sup>63</sup> Likewise, "... the classical Chinese commentators focus their interest in *how* a living term discloses its meaning within its various contexts, rather than assuming that terms have some univocal, essential meaning independent of how they are used."<sup>64</sup> Westerners, seeking to understand philosophical or religious texts are inclined to literalize and concretise these terms. Perhaps we can learn not to, thus not to ossify these dynamic systems.

The resonance we notice within the language of the Bahá'í corpus and Chinese thought may enable humanity to learn a new manner of envisioning the full complexity of our existence. We are transcendent and

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<sup>62</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, p. 95.

<sup>63</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 255. Here He cites a tradition of Islam.

<sup>64</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 1998, p. 142.

immanent; the Manifestation is the immanent Representative of a transcendent "Energy" we have learned to call "God".<sup>65</sup> The focus in the West on transcendence to the exclusion of immanence, except the mystical doctrines that served to counterbalance this tendency, has served to fragment our views from nature, society, self-in-relation, and ultimately, from our self.

These considerations, it is herein proposed, may provide us with views as to how China could develop as it did without records of an identifiable Manifestation. By suspending traditional interpretive notions and terms, we may be enabled to envision manners of approaching existence, approaching an understanding of Chinese thought as well as the Bahá'í Religion that are in harmony with "heaven".

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<sup>65</sup> For a consideration of how the Bahá'í Writings use the terms "energy" and "force" the reader is encouraged to turn to them to investigate.

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# Chinese Religions: Evolution, Compatibility and Adaptability - A Historical Perspective

*Kow Mei Kao*

## Abstract

The Chinese civilization has a long, long history and its religions too, have a history of almost 2000 years. It is interesting and worth our while to have a retrospective examination of its early development as a case study of its nature and characteristics so as to predict its future trend of development.

It is widely known that there were three major religions in imperial China; these are Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. I shall examine them one by one, tracing their formations, and whenever convenient, demonstrate each of their compatibility and adaptability and mutual influences in the process of their early development.

## 1. Religious Confucianism

Whether Confucianism is a religion is debatable, and most scholars are not in favour of considering it as a religion. A recent publication by Li Shen, of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, has regarded Confucianism as a religion, though he admitted that many of his friends did not agree with him. The *ru* Confucianism in Indonesia is being developed into a religion and this may lead one into concluding that Confucianism was a religion. My own impression is that Confucianism was strictly and solemnly observed in imperial China and therefore it had the spirit of a religion. The modern translation of the English word religion is *zongjiao*, derived and borrowed from the Japanese translation of such a concept, and it is quite difficult to find an equivalent in the Chinese language per se. In fact, Confucianism or *rujiao* can either mean

the teaching of the *ru* or to the modern Chinese, the *ru* religion (*jiao*). While Buddhism and Daoism were always called *jiao* in Chinese, the man in the street does not bother to distinguish whether the *jiao* has a religious connotation or not. In any case, this paper tries to adopt a new term, "religious Confucianism", modelled on the distinction made between philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism.

The initial formation of *rujiao* or religious Confucianism, came much later in Confucian history, at the beginning of Western Han dynasty (206 BC - 24 AD).

Confucius has always been regarded as a great thinker or philosopher in ancient China, and his ethical and political thinking, expounded by his followers, has had extensive influence on Chinese culture. Although the *Analects* recorded that he never talked about death, ghosts and spirits,<sup>1</sup> I would argue that he thought about them. All this might show inclination of his religious sentiments, which could be developed into a religion.

It was from the early Han dynasty that Confucius was deified as a *jiaozhu* or religious master. Since Confucius' teachings suited the ruler's administration, rulers of different dynasties made an effort to reform or moderate them so that they might become compact and complete. After a long process, Confucius was eventually deified, and his classics regarded as canons. Later, when Daoism was formed, maybe in the wake of the spread of Buddhism into China, Confucianism absorbed some of the thoughts both from Buddhism and Daoism, became more religious, took on an ideological form, and extended its lasting influence.

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<sup>1</sup> See Book VII "Shu'er.22" and Book XI "Xianjin.12" in Lunyu (*Analects*). These are the two occasions where Confucius' views on ghosts and spirits are recorded. See D.C. Lau (tr.) *The Analects*, 1979 p.88 and p. 107. The two passages are being translated respectively as follows:

"The topics the Master did not speak of were prodigies, force, disorder and gods", and "Chi-lu asked how the spirits of the dead and the gods should be served. The Master said, 'You are not able even to serve man. How can you serve the spirits?' ". Based on the two passages above, I assume that such a topic was lingering in Confucius' mind and had him puzzled, though he never openly spoke on it. At least one of his students was also eager to know something about it, though nobody could provide an answer.

During the Spring and Autumn periods (776-476 BC), Confucius' teaching first inherited the views on Heaven and ancestor worship from the Zhou period (770-221 BC). The cornerstone of this thinking placed emphasis on the absolute authority of social hierarchy and advocated the graded system of blood relationship. Thus Confucianism had the potential to be developed into a religion. It was not yet a religion in Pre-Qin China, competing on an equal basis with other great schools of philosophy. The time was ripe when China was united into a great empire for the first time. During a period of evolution lasting 1000 odd years, there had been two major reformations. The first occurred during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, when Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC) obtained imperial support, disparaged all hundred schools and upheld Confucianism as an orthodox school. Such an act was badly needed, as the autocracy required such a religion and philosophy, ideologically matching its sentiments.

Dong Zhongshu expressed his central ideas best when he wrote of how the actions of man flowed into the universal course of Heaven and Earth and caused reciprocal reverberations in their manifestations. Since there was a close relationship between Heaven and man, the Han Confucians believed that abnormal events in the human world caused Heaven to manifest abnormal phenomena in the natural world. These abnormal phenomena were known as catastrophes and anomalies. Catastrophes represented the warnings of Heaven to errant man. Such warnings might be in the form of floods, famines, landslides or earthquakes. If man persisted in his evil ways despite these warnings, Heaven would cause strange anomalies to occur in the form of the eclipse of the Sun or the Moon, unusual movements of the stars, the growth of beards on women, or the birth of babies with two heads. If man still persisted in evil, unmindful of these signs from Heaven, then he was doomed to ruin. On the other hand, if man acted correctly, then the world system would be harmonious and well governed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dong Zhongshu is regarded the creator of religious Confucianism. Dong held Confucius in high esteem and advocated to disparage the hundred schools. Dong was particularly interested in education and he set up many local schools. He emphasized the selection of talented, filial and worthy persons as government officers. Dong maintained that the reciprocal actions between man and Heaven are the highest principle of his theory. He believed that man's goodness or evil manipulated Heaven's wishes. He differed from Confucius and Mencius in that Confucius and Mencius advocated making people rich before educating them while Dong placed primary emphasis on education. More importantly, Dong standardized rituals such as offering sacrifices to Heaven, sacrifices at

In general, Confucianism of the Han period had the following features:

- a) Belief in Heaven and a personal god, who watches over the conduct of man and government;
- b) Belief that man is the noblest creature created by the essence of Heaven and Earth, and is favoured by Heaven;
- c) Belief in rewards and punishments for good and evil;
- d) Belief that there is a reciprocal relationship between Heaven and the conduct of man, so that good deeds bring forth propitious omens, and evil deeds, warnings and penalties;
- e) Belief in astrology as the means of predicting events and interpreting the meanings of the Heavenly phenomena.

All these elements were woven into a comprehensive system of politico-religious philosophy of Confucianism.

The Han Confucianists, using their earthly empire as a model, created a Heavenly kingdom, and then used the divine instruction from this Heavenly kingdom to control activities on earth. The natural order was created to be like the social order and acquired the same ethical attributes. Although there was no creation of the world by God, as is found in Western civilization, there were similarities. Confucius was the only sacred teacher, and the Confucian classics had become the yardstick for moral, social, and family life.

The second reformation of Confucianism took place in the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD). Based upon the experience of the failure of previous dynasties, the rulers during this period centralized military power, finance and administration. Confucianism underwent some reforms to suit new political requirements. Actually, even during the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD), the dynasty immediately preceding the Sung dynasty, Han Yu (768-824 AD), a leading Confucianist thinker, had already upheld the *Mean* to confront Buddhism, while his disciple, Li Ao, had also used the *Mean* to counter-attack Buddhist mysticism.<sup>3</sup>

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the ancestors' temples and regulating altars for various rites. This was Dong's contribution to establishing a religious system for Confucianism. See Li Shen, *Zhongguo Rujiao Shi*, pp. 217 - 241.

<sup>3</sup> See Zhu Bosi, *Sanjiao Xinlun*, (Preface dated 1971) p.8. Actually Confucianism was not pure even as early as the Early Han dynasty. Lu Jia's *Xinyu* was regarded one of the purest Confucian classics of Early Han dynasty, yet Daoist thinking such as non-action was found

Although the Three Compendium (*sangang*) of the early Confucianists and Legalists such as Xunzi (331-283) and Han Feizi (? – 233 BC) were merely political and ethical ideals, it was Dong Zhongshu, as mentioned earlier on, who put them into practice in daily life. In order to strengthen their regimes, the rulers always matched imperial power with divinity, paving the way for the acceptance of the fact that the divine bestowed imperial power on them. But in actual fact, the divine power was subordinated to the ruler and was never supposed to surpass that of a sovereign.

In the early Han dynasty, the imperial meeting at the White Tiger Hall was a typical example of a ruler using the “divine” to support his imperial regime. This kind of Confucianism was not the primordial Confucianism of the Pre-Qin period in its own right. It already displayed signs of adaptation.

During the Wei-Jin dynasty (220-420 AD), Daoism and Buddhism flourished, and Confucianism lost its dominance, but it was not deserted. Confucianism was widely influenced by Daoist mysticism. Most of the Confucianists were fond of “Empty Talks” (*qingtan*) though this trend subsided eventually.<sup>4</sup> After the establishment of Neo-Confucianism in the Sung dynasty, the process of the institutionalization of religious Confucianism was complete. Neo-Confucianism absorbed concepts from Buddhism to re-interpret Confucianism and was different from primordial Confucianism.<sup>5</sup> Confucianists worshipped Heaven and Earth, the ruler, parents and teachers. Heaven was upheld as the highest authority, teachers were regarded as priests. It contained a theory similar to the Christian belief that man has original sin - desires and selfishness.

Religious Confucianism propagated the belief that poverty was an honour, and upheld the avoidance of material enticements. Religious Confucianism did not make any effort to study the laws of Nature, but concentrated on the purification of the heart. Thus religious Confucianism was like any other religion.

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in his thoughts. We were not surprised to see that Confucianism in the Six Dynasties was influenced by Daoists “Empty talks”. See also Yuxueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai di Zhexue yu Zongjiao*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>4</sup> Yu Xueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai de Zhexue yu Zongjiao*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

## 2. The inception of Religious Daoism

Religious Daoism emerged at the end of the later Han (25-220 AD) dynasty, just about the time of the spread of Buddhism into China. It might be that the Chinese created this religion to counteract the impact of an alien religious faith.

In ancient times, people worshipped the sun, moon, stars, rivers and seas in the natural world, and their ancestors which they regarded as spirits. This form of worship had eventually evolved into a primordial religion and witchcraft. The witches were, by profession, mediums who communicated with ghosts and spirits on behalf of man. They passed on messages of the gods to men and prayed for blessings. Daoism eventually absorbed traditional sacrificial rituals, together with all these concepts, to form the first indigenous Chinese religion.

The concept of immortals emerged quite early in Chinese history and was widely believed. Most people were enthusiastic pursuers of immortality and transcendence. Magicians (*fangshi*) used many techniques, such as alchemy, herbs, talisman and breathing exercises, to achieve this aim. Daoists incorporated all these beliefs and techniques into their religion. In the process of the development of an indigenous religion, Daoists drew a lot from the ontological view of life of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. The Daoists saw *Dao* as God who was omnipresent, the source of myriad things, and the saviour of the world.

Daoism represented by *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, was a sort of nature - mysticism. The Daoists discovered nature, expressed their joy and amazement over it, and sought to identify with it, also calling it *Dao*. The Confucian *Dao* represents the right to act, in terms of morals, society and politics. The *Dao* of the Daoists is metaphysical; it is the natural law of the universe. To them, the *Dao* brings all things into existence and governs their every action. The guiding aim of the Daoist is to achieve union with this *Dao* through identification. Since the *Dao* is perceived as eternal, everlasting and unchanging, the individual who achieves unity with it is also considered to have reached eternity. To distinguish this aspect of Daoism from its other expressions, this aspect of it is often referred to as philosophical Daoism.

About the same time that philosophical Daoism was taking shape in the third century BC, there developed another movement that was primarily a religion of salvation. It also aimed at attaining immortal life for individuals. This movement became prevalent about the beginning of the Christian era and represented an amalgamation of all popular ideas and superstitions rampant in Chinese society at that time. It is held that the cult called itself Daoism during the Han dynasty (206 BC – 219 AD) in order to acquire some respectability, since the contents of the texts of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* were ambiguous enough to accommodate its views.

In the religion of salvation, the ambition of Daoists is to acquire material immortality. To the Daoists, man is formed with a spiritual soul and a material body, and consists of elements that disperse at death. Immortality is achieved by conquering these elements that form the body and by preventing them from dispersing. In order to obtain immortal life, certain obligations are necessary. First, the body has to be nourished in order to suppress the causes of decrepitude and to create an embryo endowed with immortality. Second, the spirit had to be nourished, and this involves meditation and concentration. Even during the centuries before the Christian era, Daoists were already engaged in this kind of spiritual cultivation.

Huang Lao's philosophical theories play a great part in the formation of Daoism. Huang-Lao advocated quietness and non-action, concepts that were basically mysterious. The Daoists used the Yin-Yang and Five Phases to interpret Huang-Lao's theories and these became the primordial form of Daoism.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the influences mentioned above, Confucianism and Moism, especially the prognostics and the Five Phases, can also be found in the Daoist literature *Taiping Jing* and *Laozi Xiangerzhu*, which have concepts of filial piety, loyalty, the Yin-Yang theories, calamities and strange phenomena. The *Taiping Jing* and *Laozi Xiangerzhu*, together with the Moists' *Heavenly Wishes*, had paved the way for Daoism to teach the way of spirits and ghosts.<sup>7</sup> The *Laozi Xiangerzhu* is annotations using *Laos's*

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<sup>6</sup> For Huang-Lao and Religious Daoism, see R.P. Peerenboom, *Law and Morality in Ancient China*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>7</sup> The *Taiping Jing* (Canon of Great Peace and Equality) is the earliest Daoist canon which highlights virtues and loyalty to the ruler. The *Laozi Xiangerzhu* is an important canon for

mysticism to explain Laos's concepts and using *Laozi's* terminologies to expound longevity and immortality.

Being the earliest Daoist canon, the *Taiping Jing* deserves a detailed note here. Its main features are as follows:

- a. It advocates that it is the primordial *qi* that generates the Universe.
- b. It deems that *qi* subdivides into *Yin*, *Yang* and Central Harmony.
- c. It advocates the theory of *Yin*, *Yang* and the Five Phases. It emphasizes that man should follow the signs of warning from Heaven such as natural calamities and catastrophes and make changes.
- d. It advocates that Heaven and man are communicative.
- e. It advocates that misdeeds of ancestors will pass down (*chengfu*) to their posterity who in turn will bear the sufferings on their behalf.
- f. It advocates that each one should try his best, and if so, those of middle capability will gain longevity while those below average, minor longevity.

The *Taiping Jing* put emphasis on accumulation of good deeds and loyalty to the sovereign, respecting of teachers as well as being filial to parents. Its rationale is that a sovereign gives one honour, that is why one should be loyal to him, while a teacher is where one's wisdom comes from, therefore due respect should be accorded. In the respect of cultivation, the *Taiping Jing* emphasizes:

- a. Guard major internal organs and make them firm.
- b. Guard that body and spirit be inseparable and form an entity so as to achieve longevity.
- c. Take the *qi* breath and medicine and follow the formula from canons when preparing elixirs.
- d. It upholds equality and justice as its social ideal.

Buddhism also served as a point of reference, and its rituals as well as its tenets were also absorbed into the Daoist system.<sup>8</sup> Evidence shows that

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further understanding the teaching of Wudoumi Daoist Sect (The Five Bushels of Rice Sect of the Later Han dynasty). In this canon, *Dao* is the highest god, surpassing all human beings.

<sup>8</sup> See Ren Jiyu *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi*, pp.154-159 and p. 187. See also Dang Shengyuan and Li Jikai, *Zhongguo Gudai Daoshishi Shenghuo*, p.10.

Daoism drew its tenets from Buddhism. Thus its compatibility or all embracing nature is revealed. For instance, an important Daoist canon *DongxuanLingbao Jing* modelled upon Buddhist sutras in form by changing Buddhist terminologies and absorbing Buddhist tenets such as *nirvana*, retribution and *karma*. Another Daoist canon, *Zhengao* copied a Buddhist sutra *Sishi'erzhang Jing*. A third Daoist canon, *Taishangdong Xuanling Baozhi Huidingzhi Tongwei Jing* was based on the Buddhist belief in accumulating merits and upon death ascending to Heavenly paradise. In fact Daoism's compatibility can be further shown in that it absorbs some of Confucian concepts such as loyalty, filial piety, propriety and righteousness for its disciplines. For example, a Daoist canon, *Dajue Shangpin Jing*, wished that when a Daoist saw an emperor, he should be as filial (loyal) to him as he would be to his own parents. Furthermore, the creation of Daoist gods could be inspired by Buddhism.

*Taiping Jing*, which already contained tenets, later branched out into two different Daoist sects. One was the Elixirs Sect while the other was the Talismans Sect. The highest gods of Daoism are the Three Purities followed by the Jade Emperor, Heavenly Officials (*Tianguan*), Earthly Officials (*Diguan*), Water Officials (*Shuiguan*), which are composed of the pedigree of the Daoist gods. The Daoists also believe that there are gods everywhere, even in human bodies and organs.<sup>9</sup>

During the Wei-Jin period (220-420 AD), along with the emerging Daoism, the movement of creating deities was overwhelming. In the Northern Wei dynasty, Kou Qianzhi (386-448 AD) created gods in the 36 Heavenly Palaces,<sup>10</sup> while in the Sung dynasty of the Six Dynasties period (470-589 AD), Tao Hongjing (456-536 AD) classified 700 gods into nine levels, each level having a principal god at the center flanked either by male or female gods.<sup>11</sup> Historical figures also had a place in these

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<sup>9</sup> Names of gods and spirits of human organs can be found in a Daoist canon, *Yunji Qiqian*, See Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi*, p. 137; see also Dang Shengyuan and Li Jikai, *Zhongguo Daoshi Shenghuo*, p. 38 note no. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Kou Qianzhi was an important Daoist in the development of Daoism. In the 36 Heavens created, each had a palace, presided over by a god. The highest God was "Wuji Zhi Jun" (The Limitless and Most Sacred Lord). See Re Jiyu, *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi*, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> Tao Hongjing was also an important Daoist in the development of Daoism. He constructed the system and hierarchy of gods and immortality. See Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi*, pp. 179-183.

hierarchies.<sup>12</sup> Tao Hongjing was very intelligent and widely read. Normally Daoists pursued immortality. This might be regarded as religious illusion, but because of Tao Hongjing's vast scholarship, while he practised Daoism, he delved deeply into research and he composed, valuable canons such as *Zhengao*, *Dengzhen Yinlunjue* and *Bencao Jizhu*. He contributed extensively in alchemy and in establishing the Maoshan Daoist Sect.

The Daoists believed death was the disintegration of corpse and soul, and another way to attain salvation was ascendance into Heaven. There are altogether 36 heavenly palaces in the sky as mentioned earlier. The immortals are classified into three types. The first type is those who can fly, the second are those who wander around. Those who cannot ascend to Heaven live in caves on earth or on islands. There are 10 caves and 36 minor caves and 72 places of blessings, which occupy all the major scenic places on earth.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The Spread and Adaptability of Buddhism into China

The dream of Emperor Ming (58-75 AD) of the Han dynasty has often been connected with the introduction of Buddhism to China. Briefly, the episode was as follows: One night in a dream, Emperor Ming saw a golden deity flying in front of his palace, and the next day he asked his ministers to explain the identity of this deity. One of them, Fu Yi, replied that he heard there was a sage in India who had attained salvation and became Buddha, who was able to fly and whose body was of a gold hue. He went on to say that the deity seen in the dream was this Buddha. The emperor accepted his explanation and dispatched envoys abroad to learn more about this sage and his teachings. The envoys returned bringing back with them a Sutra in 42 Sections, which was received by the emperor and deposited in a temple constructed outside the walls of the capital Loyang.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Buddhism had already existed in China slightly earlier

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<sup>12</sup> See Dang Shengyuan and Li Jikai, *Zhongguo Gudai Daoshi Shenghuo*, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> See Dang Shengyuan and Li Jikai, *ibid.*, p. 38 note no. 4.

<sup>14</sup> The contents of this section are basically drawn from K. Chen, *Chinese Buddhism, A Historical Survey* unless otherwise stated.

than the later part of the Han dynasty, though its influence was insignificant.<sup>15</sup>

a. Buddhist teachings in the Han dynasty

Among the many tenets of Buddhism, were the indestructibility of the soul and the circle of rebirth and karma. In the beginning, Chinese Buddhists had difficulty understanding the idea of repeated rebirths without some entity linking together the different stages of rebirth. To overcome this difficulty, they evolved the concept of *Shenling*, or an indestructible soul that is transmitted through successive rebirths. Man consists of a material body and a spiritual soul. The body comes into being at birth and disintegrates at death, but the soul is indestructible and eternal. Due to the effects of the karma, this soul is forever bound to the circle of rebirths. The *Hou Hanji* of Yuan Hing (318-376), summarized these different arguments succinctly. The Buddhists also teach that when a person dies, his soul does not perish, but is reborn and assumes another form. The meritorious and evil deeds performed during one's lifetime all have their rewards and punishments. Therefore, the *Hou Hanji* values the practice of meritorious deeds and the cultivation of the way so as to discipline the soul. By so doing, they are able to attain *nirvana* and become Buddha.

b. Period of Preparation

By the end of the Han dynasty, two different trends had already developed in Buddhism. One was the Dhyana School with its emphasis on mind cultivation and the suppression of passions. It was Hinayana in nature. The chief transmitter was An Xigao of Persian origin.

Contrary to this school was the Prajna School. It was based largely on the translation of Chih Ch'an and was Mahayana inclined. It was more interested in probing the nature of the Buddha and ultimate reality behind the external appearance of things. Beginning in the middle of the third century, this sect of Buddhism was to grow and develop until it became dominant within Buddhism in the Southern Dynasties (470-589 AD). The

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<sup>15</sup> For detailed discussion, see D. Ikeda (Author), Burton Watson (Translator) *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 9-13.

popularity of the Prajna School brought about two results: 1) The spread of Mahayana Buddhism in China; 2) the development of close relations between Buddhist monks and the Chinese literati who embraced the thoughts of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, especially those of quietness and non-activity.

Early translators of Buddhist texts were almost all foreigners (non-Chinese). At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty (617-420 AD), a prominent translator, An Xigao, was the son of a Persian king who had abdicated the throne. The most prominent translator was Lokaraksa (Zhi Loujiaqian), from Great Yuezhi (Kushana), and according to *Chu Sanzang Ji* (Translation of Tripitaka and other Miscellaneous Essays), there were 30 sutras translated by him.

At the end of the Three Kingdoms period, Indian and Central Asian monks came to China in order to spread Buddhism. Some came from Indo-China, but whether they were Indo-Chinese is not clear. Among them, the most prominent one was Dhamarkala (Tangke Jialuo). A learned man, he was born in India and was familiar with astrology. His major contribution to Chinese Buddhism was the translation of the Buddhist Laws. Another translator by the name of Zhiqian, was of Great Yuezhi origin but was totally sinicised. He began to study foreign languages at the age of 13, and was proficient in 6 languages. He translated 30 sutras into Chinese.<sup>16</sup>

Kang Senghui was of Kangju origin (Sogdina, in present day Sarmarkand). The family lived in India for generations. His father was a merchant who migrated to Kochin (Jiaozhi). Both Zhiqian and Kang Senghui were bilingual in Central Asian languages and Chinese.

In Western Jin (265-316 AD), QiYu came to China from Funan (present Cambodia) and then to Kochin, eventually arrived in Xiangyang of Hubei via Guangzhou, Yuchang (present day Nanchang) and Hunan. Another monk Zhu Shulan, of Indian origin, was born in Henan. He was the translator of important sutras such as *Fangguang Panruo Jing* (a version of Prajna Sutra) and *Weimoji Jing* (*Vimalakirti Sutra*), which amounted

<sup>16</sup> See Kamata Shigeo's book translated into Chinese titled *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi*, Vol. 1, p. 155 and pp. 195-199.

to more than 100,000 words. Zhu was proficient in Chinese and several Central Asian languages, and his translations were precise and accurate.

Among these translators, Kumarajiva (active around 400 AD) was the greatest translator of Buddhist texts<sup>17</sup>. He was well versed in Buddhist philosophy and learned in medicine, astronomy, exegetics, technology and logic. Being proficient in Indian and Chinese languages, his translations were not only noted for their skill and beauty of language, but also for their accuracy. It was generally believed that later, the great Chinese translator of Buddhist texts, Xuanzang (602-624) of the Tang dynasty, surpassed him almost in every sutra ever translated. In actual fact, some of Kurarajiva's translations remained standard despite efforts put in by Xuanzang to re-translate them.

As the Sanskrit language was very difficult and the translators were not always accurate, there were a number of monks who braved the geographical distance and climate and went to India through Central Asia to obtain the authentic meanings of the sutras.

One of the pioneers was Fa Xiang (340-420 AD).<sup>18</sup> He recorded the following: "In the deserts were numerous evil spirits and scorching winds, causing death to anyone who would meet them. Above there were no birds, while on the ground there were no animals. One looked as far as one could in all directions for a path to cross, but there were none to choose. Only the dry bones of the dead served as indications...."

On crossing the Pamirs, he wrote, "The path was difficult and rocky and ran along a cliff extremely steep. The mountain itself was one sheer wall of rock 8000 feet high, and as one approached it, one became dizzy. If one wished to advance, there was no place for him to place his feet. Below was the Indus River...."<sup>19</sup>

Despite these dangers and hardships in succeeding centuries, many other Chinese monks followed in his footsteps and went to India to acquire the wisdom of the Indians, and returned to China to transmit the sutras to their

<sup>17</sup> See D. Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, translated by Burton Watson, pp. 33-56.

<sup>18</sup> For Fa Xiang, *ibid.*, pp.73-76.

<sup>19</sup> For a brief introduction of Fa Xiang's travel to India, *ibid.*, pp. 69-86.

fellow Chinese. This period was a period of preparation for Chinese Buddhism. In the beginning, only a limited number of sutras were available, and there were no outstanding Chinese monks at all. By the end of Eastern Jin in 420 AD, some of the most eminent monks had completed their tasks and had made available important Mahayana texts such as the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra*.

More important was the fact that this period witnessed Chinese Buddhism developing along two divergent lines in the north and south. In the North, the emphasis of the Buddhist monk was upon rendering service in the form of military and diplomatic counsel to the non-Chinese rulers of the era. The relationship cultivated greatly benefited the development of Buddhism at a later stage.

#### c. Growth in the period of disunity (Northern and Southern Dynasties)

When the Han dynasty fell in AD 220, Buddhism was barely able to maintain its existence in Chinese soil and had to seek support from Daoism to retain its foothold. By the time the country was reunited in 581 AD (the Sui dynasty), however, Buddhism had spread to all parts of the empire; converts had been made in all strata of society; images, statues and temples were prevalent everywhere; and a great source of literature had accumulated. There were 1768 temples and 24000 monks and 2846 nuns in the Sung dynasty. It was said that the number of Buddhist texts circulated exceeded the number of Confucian texts by several tens to a hundred times. And in the region of the Yangtze and south, where the Liang dynasty ruled from 502-557 AD, there are reported to have been over 2,800 temples and 82,700 monks and nuns. In addition, of course, there must have been great numbers of lay believers.<sup>20</sup>

A conspicuous point of Buddhist adaptability was that Chinese Buddhism espoused the cardinal Confucian virtue of filial piety. Once a person joined the monastic order, he severed all relations with his family and society, so that he was no longer bound to honour his ancestors. Yet in the description found at Yunkang and Longmen, there were indications that

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<sup>20</sup> See D. Ikeda (author) and B. Watson (translator), *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, p.31.

donors prayed for their ancestors to attain meritorious rebirths in paradise. Stupas of Buddhas were erected to perpetuate the memory of their parents. This shows that Buddhism adapted itself to suit Chinese customs.<sup>21</sup>

Among the factors causing Buddhism's growth in the period of disunity were:

a. Its attraction to the commoners

Among the Buddhist monks in north China during the period of disunity there were many who were proficient in the interpretation of charms, or who claimed to be able to predict the future. By such powers of prognostication, Buddhist monks were able to gain wide attention among the general public. Such feats attracted both the common people and the ruling classes. By giving advice on the outcome of military movements or the reliability of some of the officials, the monks obtained state support and patronization.

Karma, the doctrine of personal reward and retribution gave hope to those who were sunk in hardship and misery during the period of uncertainty. The ideal held by Mahayana was that all creatures, no matter how low or humble, possessed the Buddha nature and so were capable of attaining Buddhahood and salvation. Such a noble ideal had never been put forth before common Chinese people until this time, and it acted like a magnet, drawing people to Buddhism. Mahayana's repetition of the names of Amitaba also made the path leading to this type of salvation very easy.

b. The attraction to the intellectuals

The failure of the Confucian system to provide a satisfactory outlet for the religious aspirations of the Chinese people also contributed to the growth of Buddhism. Individuals normally desired communion with deities to find solace for their own sorrows and disappointments, or to ask for divine assistance when their earthly burdens seemed too heavy to bear. Such

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<sup>21</sup> For adaptability of Buddhism, see Yu Xueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai di Zhixue yu Zongjiao*, pp. 108-110; see also Kamata Shigeo, *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi*, Vol. II, pp. 202-206. The preface to this book in Vol. I especially pp. 32-45 on the exchanges of Buddhism and Confucian are useful for a quick reference.

earthly burdens tend to become accentuated in times of uncertainty and instability.

Confucianism, with its lack of emphasis on the spiritual world (one of its most important doctrines advocated respect for the spirits while still keeping them at distance) was too earth-bound and practical to satisfy the religious yearning of common people. Buddhism stepped in to fill this gap. It brought with it a host of deities in the form of ever compassionate and merciful Bodhisattvas, always ready to supply aid to those who sought their assistance. It dazzled the Chinese with a brilliant hierarchy of heavens, and rebirth, which was held up as the reward for meritorious living on earth. At the same time, it depicted hells, where the tortures became progressively more terrifying. As a Chinese philosopher Hu Shi once expressed it, the Chinese were so captivated by this colourful pageantry of heavens and hells that they succumbed easily to the Buddhist religion.

#### c. Maturity and acceptance

After adequate preparation, Chinese Buddhism flourished and bloomed in the Tang Dynasty and developed its own characteristics. A lot of *Yijing* (modified sutras) were created. These modified sutras first appear in the Southern dynasties, and later on, more and more of such sutras emerged. The mixing of these sutras with a number of Chinese teachings, enhanced their Chineseness. There were altogether 209 such sutras according to Seng Zhao's *Xinji Yiping Weizhuan Jilu*.<sup>22</sup>

### 4. The Synthesis of the Three Teachings

Ever since the introduction of Buddhism into China, the three teachings have always been intertwined through conflict and synthesis. Buddhism as an alien religion, naturally faced the resistance of Chinese culture, especially by Confucianism. The main conflict was between Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, while the conflict between Confucianism and

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<sup>22</sup> See K. Shigeo, *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi*, pp. 171-174.

Daoism was minor. This was because Confucianism and Daoism had their roots in the same culture, complementing and supplementing each other.<sup>23</sup>

During the Eastern Jin dynasty, despite general antagonism towards Buddhism, we can already see the amalgamation of Confucianism and Buddhism. There were scholars such as Dao'An (312-385 AD), who were born into traditional Confucian families. He studied under FoTucheng for 14 years. At the age of 38, he went to Hengshan of the Taihang Ranges, and later he returned to Jizhou in Hebei, and from Jizhou later he lived for 15 years in Xiangyang of Hubei where he had hundred of followers and his influence even extended to Jingzhou. He was captured in Chang'an where he died 5 or 6 years later. He was skilled at composing poems, well versed in Confucian classics and Buddhist sutras (*jing*), the disciplines (*lu*) and treaties (*lun*).<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Eastern Jin was the earliest meeting point of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism and the place where they adopted many aspects of one another. Through various conflicts and competition, the merging of the three religions into a single religion commenced. This was typified by the case of Su Chuo (?- 367 AD). He was fond of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* and was fascinated by the hermit's life style. Yet he took up government posts as the Confucianists did. He had, to his credit, writings on Confucianism and Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> He deemed the Confucian sages to be equal to Buddhist saints. He combined Confucianism and Buddhism's views in his writing, *Yudaolun* (Essays Revealing the Dao).<sup>26</sup>

Though there were efforts to reconcile the three religions, unfortunately, the conflicts between these three teachings mixed with unending political struggles. Buddhism was persecuted bitterly twice in the Northern Dynasties. Each time monasteries were demolished and sutras were burnt, monks were secularised.<sup>27</sup> But Buddhism tried to maintain its own characteristics, and at the same time, it tried to adapt to new circumstances. This approach worked quite well, and Buddhism succeeded in becoming part of the Chinese culture.

<sup>23</sup> See Yu Xueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai di Zhaxue yu Zongjiao*, pp. 108-114.

<sup>24</sup> See K. Shigeo, Vol. I, pp. 347 - 364.

<sup>25</sup> See K. Shigeo, *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi*, Vol. II, p. 204.

<sup>26</sup> K. Shigeo, *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi*, Vol. II, pp. 202-206.

<sup>27</sup> c/f the description of Dasaku Ikeda, *The Flower of Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 153-168.

Buddhism emphasized the renouncing of the world, which contradicts Chinese cultural beliefs. Therefore it had to reach a compromise with Chinese culture. The *Mouzi Lihelun* is a work representing a general view of the people of the Wei-Jin period (220-420 AD), it attacked Buddhist sutras, saying that they were alien and would not be accepted by *ru* Confucianism. In addition, the fact that Buddhism advocated the renouncing of the world and destroyed one's outward appearance, meant it was not compatible with Confucian ethics. Further, Buddhism talked about rebirths and karma, and this too did not match Confucian teachings.

The Buddhists refuted the incompatibility accusations, arguing that whatever is good should be adopted, and that they should not necessarily adopt these teachings from Confucius and other sages. On top of this, the distinction between Chinese and alien people were not so clear-cut. The Confucian sages, such as the great Yu were of Qiang origin (probably a north western tribe in China)<sup>28</sup> and thus, not Chinese. The Buddhists' renunciation of their families was a minor matter when compared to moral cultivation, and Buddhists do have moral cultivation. On top of that, if Buddhists have achieved Buddhahood and have returned to help their parents and brothers, they are also filial or even better. The Chinese custom of invoking ghosts and offering sacrifices is no different from the Buddhist karma.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, there was a legend that *Laozi* went to the West to educate the barbarians; this legend was purposely fabricated to show the superiority of Chinese culture.<sup>29</sup> In order to gain a foothold in China, Buddhists tolerated this fabrication. They even said that *Laozi* and Confucius were saints of Buddhism.

During the Six Dynasties (235-589 AD), the cultural exchanges between religions were more thorough. Buddhism had ambitions not only to convince Daoists and Confucianists, but also to win superiority, to be

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<sup>28</sup> For a full discussion of the Qiang tribe, see Huang Li, *Zhongguo Gudai Minzushi Yanjiu*, 1987, p. 45-47.

<sup>29</sup> A Daoist by the name of Wang Fu of the Western Jin, based on the legend of *Laozi*, fabricated *Laozi Huahu Jing* (A Canon that *Laozi* taught the Hu barbarious Indians) just to show the Chinese superiority. See K. Shigeo, *Zhongguo Fojiao Tongshi* Vol. I, pp. 288-298).

ranked first in the hierarchy. Confucianism and Daoism were reluctant to give up their own orthodox status; so heated debates took place.<sup>30</sup> The issues were as follows: the distinction between Chinese and alien people, whether monks should show respect to emperors and kowtow to them or not; and the belief in the indestructibility of a soul.

Monk Seng You (445-518 AD)<sup>31</sup> argued that the territorial distinction between China and alien states was not fixed. The sages held in high esteem by the Chinese, such as Emperors Yu and Shun, were not of Chinese origin. The Chinese upheld this distinction out of ethnic pride. Of course, this was conservative and harmful because it blocked the path of cultural interactions with other civilizations.

The issue of whether monks should kowtow to emperors reflects the contradictions between Buddhism and the ruling regimes. The monks were forbidden to kowtow to common people and even to their parents. But the supremacy of emperors was so deeply rooted in Chinese culture, that this problem was not easy to solve.

Monk Hue Yuan (334-416 AD)<sup>32</sup> explained that living in the mundane world is different from renouncing the world; therefore monks do not have to kowtow to emperors. The argument also abated for a while but recurred during the Tang Dynasty. Both parties eventually compromised agreeing that monks did not have to kowtow to emperors, but should acknowledge themselves as subjects of the emperor.

In the South Dynasty, Buddhists believed that the soul was indestructible. They likened souls to firewood and fire. Hueyuan said that fire was passed onto wood, and when the wood finished, the fire could be passed on to another piece of wood, likewise, the soul was passed onto the body, and

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<sup>30</sup> The debates on the ranking of the three religions and related issues took place from 463-466 about 8 different times under the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang dynasty (See K. Shigeo, *op. ci.*, pp. 451-478). The struggles were on and off throughout the history of China. The ranking was not always in this manner: Daoism followed by Buddhism and Confucianism. It all depended on the liking and sponsorship of each individual emperor.

<sup>31</sup> For Monk Seng You's life and work, see Mou Zongjian and Zhang Jian, *Zhongguo Zongjiao Tongshi*, pp. 418-420; see also Yu Xueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai di Zongjiao yu Zhaxue*, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup> For Hui Yuan's thought, see Mou Zongjian and Zhang Jian, *Zhongguo Zongjiao Tongshi*, p. 400.

when the body decomposes, the soul can be passed onto other forms, and therefore souls were indestructible. This is the origin of the theory of retribution.

But in the Qi-Liang period (479-557 AD), Fan Zhen challenged this theory. He regarded soul and body as an organic entity. Fan asserted that the fate of different people was different, and this was not the result of retribution. He considered man's fate to be like the flowers on a tree. When a flower falls on a carpet, he is lucky enough; but if it drops in the mud, he is unlucky. He said this was natural and contingent, not predestined. Fan was very famous and influential, and many intellectuals followed the debate closely.

Thus, we can see that from Eastern Jin to the South dynasties, there was a period of conflict, but by obtaining gradual consensus, compatibility emerged. Buddhism tried hard to identify its similarities with the other two religions, at the same time Confucianism and Daoism also tried to adapt the Buddhist way of thinking. Within the spirit of mutual understanding, the three religions were involved in gradually merging into one. Buddhism became more sinicised and had a new direction. It placed emphasis on the heart and mind, and influenced the Chinese culture immensely.

In Tang times, the issue of supremacy continued to spark conflicts. From the Sui dynasty to mid-Tang, the translation of Buddhism was extensive and was fully absorbed by the Chinese intellectuals; Confucianists were amazed that they were short of such profundity. Ever since the Wei-Jin dynasties (220-420 AD), Daoism had continuously learned from Buddhism in the areas of thought, ritual, organization and canon, while Confucianism from late Tang, commenced to absorb Buddhist and Daoists ideas in order to revive itself. On the other hand, Buddhism also absorbed the Daoist's nourishment of life, and incorporated the filial piety of Confucianism into its system of beliefs. Thus, the synthesis of the three was complete at the end of the late Tang dynasty.

## 5. Conclusion

The above paper has portrayed some characteristics of Chinese culture, especially in the area of religion. China was, and will be a great political and economic entity. Its contacts with other cultures are wide and extensive. It will also continue to be so in the Information Technology age and more globalized environment. History shows that it is difficult for a great culture to survive without any adaptation to new challenges; it is very difficult for any great culture to survive if it is not broad-minded and adaptable!

By accepting an injection of new blood to revitalize itself, Chinese culture, like any other culture in the world, will proceed in this direction.

## Author's note and acknowledgements

The early draft of this paper was based heavily on the following four books and other textbooks, but subsequently authoritative works were cited to substantiate the facts. Of course, some of the views were derived from my own teaching experience when I taught a module entitled *Chinese History and Culture*. The four books are: Dang Shengyuan and Li Jikai, *Zhongguo Gudai Daoshi Shenghuo (The Daoists Lives in Ancient China)*; Yu Xueming and Chen Hong, *Zhongguo Gudai de Zhexue yu Zongjiao (Philosophy and Religions in Ancient China)*; Eva Wong, *The Shambhala Taoism, A Complete Introduction to the History, Philosophy, and Practice of an Ancient Chinese Spiritual Tradition* (Shambhala, Boston and London, 1997) and Chen Kenneth, *Buddhism in China, A Historical Survey*. Other books referred to for completing this paper are also listed below. Because of time constraints, the author is apologetic for not being able to indicate every source, but he intends to do so in the next revision. The author wishes to thank Emeritus Professor Liu Ts'un-yan for his comments and suggestions for the early draft. Dr. Tan Cheng Lim and Miss Cecily Layzell for their quick check of the English of this paper. This paper was originally intended to be delivered at a forum on Chinese culture for the general public and not for specialists.

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# The Future of Confucianism

*Yeo Yew Hock*

## 1. Historical development

For the last 2,500 years, the teachings of Confucius have had a great and enduring influence on Chinese society and its people. This article will discuss briefly the history of Confucianism, its teachings, followed by a critique of its place in the modern world. It will then discuss the future of Confucianism and its survival into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Historically, the main periods of development for Confucianism took place as follows:

Confucius 551-479 BC

Mencius 371 – 289 BC

Hsun Tzu 298 - 238 BC

Western Han Dynasty 206 BC – 8 AD

Early 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Century - Decline of Confucianism

Tang Dynasty 618 – 907 AD

Sung Dynasty Confucian revival

Yuan Dynasty 1271 – 1368 AD

Korean Dynasty 1392 – 1910 AD

19<sup>th</sup> Century – Encounter with Foreign Ideas

### **Confucius (551-479 BC)**

Confucius was an ardent admirer of the King of Chou, who lived in 1094 BC, in the Age of Yao and Shun, known to be an Age of great harmony in ancient China. In his lifetime, Confucius had about 3000 disciples. He started the “Scholar tradition.” Scholars were men of action as well as of ideas. Confucius tried to reanimate the old Order so as to attain a new one. He believed it was possible to retrieve the meanings of the past by breathing vitality and life into outmoded rituals. Among these were the ancestral cult, reverence for Heaven and mourning ceremonies, all of

which had survived for centuries in China before his lifetime. He regarded the everyday human world as profoundly spiritual. He tried to found human unity on the unity of Heaven. The period from 550 to 200 BC was known as the Age of the hundred philosophers – a golden age in classical Chinese thought. Flourishing during this epoch together with the thoughts of Confucius were Taoist and Moist philosophies. Of these schools, only Confucianism managed to penetrate virtually all aspects of life in ancient China.

### **Mencius (371 – 289 BC)**

Mencius, the most famous Confucian philosopher after Confucius, was a native of the state of Tchou. Like Confucius, he travelled widely to get an audience for his ideas with the various rulers of the time. He was not successful. Finally he retired and together with his disciples he compiled the *Mencius* in seven books. *Mencius* later became one of the famous Four Books. In it are recorded the conversations between Mencius and the warlords and Mencius and his disciples. Mencius taught that human nature is basically good and proposed the cultivation of a class of scholar officials who were not to be involved in agriculture, industry and commerce in ancient China.

### **Hsun Tzu (298 – 238 BC)**

Unlike Mencius, who believed in the goodness of human nature (the latter also requires rituals and authority to be good), Hsun Tzu teaches that human nature is basically evil. A person's passions and desires have to be controlled so that he can act within social norms. Hsun Tzu outlined the process of Confucian education, from nobleman to sage. He said that this is a ceaseless endeavour by man to accumulate knowledge, skills, insight and wisdom.

### **Western Han Dynasty (206 BC – 8 AD)**

The Han Dynasty was significant as the Emperors adopted Confucianism as a model to base the Chinese state on. In 124 BC, during the reign of the Martial Emperor, Emperor Han Wu Ti, he appointed five Confucian Scholars (called Erudites) in his Court. They became the Masters of the five Classics, in effect, creating the first University in China. Fifty official students were assigned to support their work. By 1 AD, 100 men were entering the Imperial government service via entrance exams conducted

by the state. By 50 AD, there were 3,000 students in the Imperial University at the Court. In 58 AD, all government schools were required to conduct sacrificial rites to Confucius. By this time, Confucianism had come of age. In 175 AD, the Imperial Court approved the official first version of the five Classics. These were as follows:

*The Book of Documents,*  
*The Book of Poetry,*  
*The Book of Rites,*  
*The Book of Change*  
*The Spring and Autumn Annals.*

### **From the Early 3<sup>rd</sup> to Late 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD**

When the Han Dynasty ended, China went through a turbulent period and non-Chinese invaders captured large parts of North China. For the next four hundred years no one ruler was able to rule all of China. As the Chinese State declined, so did the influence of Confucianism. During this same period, Buddhism flourished and made a significant impact in many parts of China. Although many Buddhist schools arose and were established, neither Taoism nor Confucianism disappeared.

### **Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 AD)**

The Tang Dynasty was the next significant period of Chinese history. China was again a unified state, and under the rule of the Tang Empire it rose to new heights of power, prestige and prosperity. This gave a boost to Confucianism as it had done in the Han Dynasty, and the Tang Dynasty based its political structure on Confucian principles. The Emperors recruited

their staff through the Civil Service Examinations System with the syllabus based mostly on Confucian Classics and publications. A newer and more definitive official edition of the five Classics was published during the Tang Dynasty.

### **Sung Dynasty (960 – 1279 AD)**

The Sung Dynasty saw the revival of Confucianism. During this period the Imperial Examination system was fully implemented by the Emperors. Chu Hsi (1130 – 1200 AD) the eminent Sung scholar of the epoch placed the Four Confucian Books (namely *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great*

*Learning, The Analects and Mencius*) above the five original Classics. His major contribution was in restructuring the priority of Confucian scriptural traditions.

### **Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368 AD)**

In 1279 AD, the foreign Mongolians conquered and united all of China. Although they generally treated the Confucian scholars badly, it was during the Mongol Dynasty that the Yuan Court officially adopted the Four Books as the basis of the Civil Service Examinations. This system of examinations was religiously observed till 1905, a period of about 600 years. Hsu Heng the eminent Confucian scholar of this period educated the sons of Mongol nobility to be teachers of the Confucian classics.

### **Korean Dynasty (1392 – 1910 AD)**

Among all the dynasties in China (both Chinese and foreign) the Korean Choson Dynasty (1392 to 1910) is considered to be the most thoroughly Confucianised. The Korean Confucian scholar, Yi T'oegye (1501 to 1570), re-interpreted Chu Hsi's teachings for the Koreans. To this date, the vitality of the Confucian tradition is still felt throughout both North and South Korea. We note that the late North Korean communist leader, Mr Kim Il Sung, passed over the leadership of the country to his son, Kim Jong Il, a practice which is very much part of Confucian tradition.

### **The Encounter with Foreign Ideas in 19<sup>th</sup> Century China**

Ever since the Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368 AD) both Chinese creativity and originality in China had slowed down, as people were more content to repeat old social customs and forms. This was probably due to enforced conformity brought about by Confucianism and the lack of stirring and stimulating contacts with external cultures.

As China was steeped in Confucian traditions for a long time, a traumatic and revolutionary clash of cultures happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the Chinese people and foreigners who brought new ways of thinking and advanced technology. The people who were imbued with Confucianist teachings for many centuries could not understand nor withstand the tests and challenges of more progressive European ideas and way of life.

Coincidentally at the time, 19<sup>th</sup> century China was also faced with an incompetent, decadent and weak leadership under the Ching Emperors. During this period, social and political changes were slow. The Chinese concept of a State was that of an Empire embracing all civilisation (with China as The Central Kingdom). To them, all states owed allegiance to the one sovereign Son of Heaven, the Emperor. China was governed by trained Confucian scholars schooled only in Confucian principles. China was also primarily an agricultural and rural country.

On the other hand, the foreigners from the New World were educated differently. They had an industrial and urban background. Their experience was shaped by the Industrial Revolution and they were very much part of the machine age. Applied science had made profound social changes that had transformed every aspect of human life. The western conception of the nation and international order was driven by a vision of a commonwealth of nations, with each nation being a sovereign state. The latter was also guided in international relations by international law.

As opposed to these new ideas and concepts brought by foreigners, social relations in China were based on the family. China was a patriarchal society. The individual and the state were subordinated to the family. These differences in social and scientific experiences caused conflict and mutual suspicion between Chinese people and foreigners in 19<sup>th</sup> century China.

In many ways, clashes of ideas also occurred in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in China, as it emerges from obscurity into a more technologically advanced world. Although the clash of cultures is less severe, there is still a lack of understanding between Chinese people and Western people, and when they meet, it is often with a feeling of mutual suspicion.

## **2. The Teachings of Confucianism**

Confucius described himself in the following way:

“At 15 I set my heart on learning; at 30 I firmly took my stand; at 40 I had no delusions; at 50 I knew the Mandate of Heaven; at 60 my ear was

attuned; at 70 I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the boundaries of right."<sup>1</sup>

When one of his students had difficulty describing him, he said:

"Why do you not simply say something to this effect: he is the sort of man who forgets to eat when he engages himself in the pursuit of learning, who is so full of joy that he forgets his worries and who does not notice that old age is coming on."<sup>2</sup>

Confucius was concerned with self-improvement and acquiring virtues: "It is these things that cause me concern: failure to cultivate virtue, failure to go deeply into what I have learned, inability to move up to what I have heard to be right, and inability to reform myself when I have defects."<sup>3</sup> He believed education to be a ceaseless process of self-realisation and self-teaching. He told his students that they must be willing to learn: "I do not enlighten anyone who is not eager to learn, nor encourage anyone who is not anxious to put his ideas into words."<sup>4</sup>

Mencius thought virtues were innate to human character, and that education was required for their full development:

"All men have a mind which cannot bear (to see the suffering of) others... If now men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress... From this case we may perceive that he who lacks the feeling of commiseration is not a man; that he who lacks a feeling of shame and dislike is not a man; that he who lacks a feeling of modesty and yielding is not a man; and that he who lacks a sense of right and wrong is not a man. The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of human-heartedness. The feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and yielding is the beginning of propriety. The sense of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. Man has these four beginnings, just as he has four limbs... Since all men have these four beginnings in themselves, let them know how to give them full development and

<sup>1</sup> S. Leys, *The Analects of Confucius*, 1997, 2.4, p 6.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 7.19, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 7.3, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 7.8, p. 30.

completion. The result will be like fire that begins to burn, or a spring which has begun to find vent. Let them have their complete development, and they will suffice to protect all within the four seas. If they are denied that development, they will not suffice even to serve one's parents."<sup>5</sup>

### A Transmitter of Traditions

Confucius considered himself to be a transmitter of traditions rather than a creator of something new. In China, he is known as the "First Teacher" and the 16<sup>th</sup> September of each year is still being celebrated in Taiwan as Teacher's Day in his honour. Confucius was keen to learn from history and he said:

"A transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients, I venture to compare myself with our old Pang."<sup>6</sup>

"I am one who is fond of antiquity and earnest in seeking it there."<sup>7</sup>

His aim was to put into practice the political ideas that he learnt from the ancient sage kings (in particular the Duke of Chou). He did not realise this dream during his lifetime, but later, his philosophy of moral persuasion was influential and became an indivisible and enduring part of Chinese society.

### The Five Obligations

According to Confucius, people's readiness to be governed arose from five Universal Obligations. These obligations are between individuals of different social status. They are reciprocal duties and are considered to be appointments of Heaven. If all these duties are faithfully discharged, a state of "happy tranquillity" will prevail for all people under Heaven. The five universal obligations are those between:

- The Sovereign and the minister
- The Father and his son
- The Husband and his wife
- The Elder brother and younger brother
- Friends

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<sup>5</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, II, A.6.

<sup>6</sup> S. Leys, *Analects*, 7.1, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 7.20, p. 31.

Within the family the two important obligations are those between the father and son and between elder and younger brothers. Master You said: "A man who respects his parents and his elders would hardly be inclined to defy his superiors. A man who is not inclined to defy his superiors will never foment a rebellion. A gentleman works at the root. Once the root is secured, the Way unfolds. To respect parents and elders is the root of humanity."<sup>8</sup>

A human being is connected to humanity through various degrees of kinship. One should love one's parents more than the other members of the family, other members of the family more than members of the same village and so on until one reaches humanity at large. As love for humanity is only an extension of the love for parents or for son, it is not considered to be as important as family relations. Mencius elaborated on these obligations:

"... love between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of the old over the young, and faith between friends..."<sup>9</sup>

Kung-sun Chou asked, "Why does a gentleman not take on the teaching of his own sons?"

"Because in the nature of things," said Mencius, "it will not work. A teacher necessarily resorts to correction, and if correction produces no effect, it will end by losing his temper. When this happens, father and son will hurt each other instead. 'You teach me by correcting me, but you yourself are not correct.' So father and son hurt each other, and it is bad that such a thing should happen. In antiquity people taught one another's sons. Father and son should demand goodness from each other. Not to do so will estrange them, and there is nothing more inauspicious than estrangement between father and son..."<sup>10</sup> The content of benevolence is the serving of one's parents...<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 1.2, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, IIIA, p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, IVA.18, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, IVA.27, p. 127.

A benevolent man extends his love from those he loves to those he does not love."<sup>12</sup>

Between the old and the young, he said:

"There are three things which are acknowledged by the world to be exalted: rank, age, and virtue. At court, rank is supreme; in the village, age; but for assisting the world and ruling over people, it is virtue."<sup>13</sup>

Between Ruler and the Minister:

"If a prince treats his ministers as his hands and feet, they will treat him as their belly and heart. If he treats them as his horses and hounds, they will treat him as a mere fellow countryman. If he treats them as mud and weeds, they will treat him as an enemy."<sup>14</sup>

There is a common expression, "The Empire, the state, the family." The Empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and the family in one's own self."<sup>15</sup>

### **Benevolent Rulership**

Confucius preached that men can and should adapt to the ruler and that there is within them a readiness to be governed. He said that this human quality could be harnessed effectively by the ruler if he goes about it in the right way. He said if this were done, the response of the people would be like them following a true "shepherd of men."

He taught that the Emperors needed to practise benevolent rulership:

"The growth of government would be rapid, just as vegetation is rapid in the earth: yea, their government would display itself like an easily growing rush."<sup>16</sup>

This principle was called "benevolent government" by Mencius, who expounded it in greater depth. Mencius said that the Emperor has to be

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, VIIB.1, p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, IIB.2, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, 1970, IVB.3, p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, IVA.5, p. 120.

<sup>16</sup> J. Legge, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, chap. 20.3, p. 405.

seen by the people to have the Mandate of Heaven or he will be considered unfit to rule China. The virtues of the Emperors were essential for their remaining in power and retaining their authority over people. Their mandate to rule was also believed to be linked to their ancestral lineage. They had to practise filial piety towards their ancestors and to Heaven.

To the people, the Emperor was akin to the Father of China:

"The people of are supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler. When a feudal lord endangers the altars to the gods of earth and grain he should be replaced. When the sacrificial animals are sleek, the offerings are clean and the sacrifices are observed at due times, and yet floods and droughts come, then the altars should be replaced.<sup>17</sup> ... It was through losing the people that Chieh and Tchou lost the Empire, and through losing the people's hearts that they lost the people. There is a way to win the Empire; win the people and you will win the Empire. There is a way to win the people; win their hearts and you will win the people.<sup>18</sup> The kingdom, the world, (can be) brought to a state of tranquillity."<sup>19</sup>

Mencius proposed the cultivation of a class of scholar officials who were not to be involved in agriculture, industry and commerce in ancient China. This implies a form of division of labour and puts scholars on an equal footing with other governmental concerns, such as economic progress:

"No man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others. Such a sensitive heart was possessed by the former kings and this manifested itself in humane government. With such a sensitive heart behind humane government, it was easy to rule the world as rolling it in your palm."<sup>20</sup>

### **The Golden Rule**

Confucius' teachings focus on The Way, ethics, rites, education and improving the duties of the individual. He teaches that the individual must learn to be human. His purpose in life is to be a good man (a gentleman).

<sup>17</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, 1970, VII, B.14, p. 196.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, IV, A.9, p. 121.

<sup>19</sup> J. Legge, *The Great Learning*, paras. 4 and 5, p. 357 – 359.

<sup>20</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, II, A.6.

However, Confucius did not hold out any rewards in this world or the next for being a gentleman or for achieving good morals and goodness. He said that one's life should be based on the Golden Rule:

"Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."<sup>21</sup>

According to Confucius, the gentleman (chun tzu) must have the virtues of wisdom and courage. For instance:

"The man of wisdom is never in two minds; the man of benevolence never worries; the man of courage is never afraid."<sup>22</sup>

His objective was to reformulate and revitalise social institutions that are necessary for political stability and social order, namely, the family, school, local community and the state. He said that virtue is a personal quality that must be possessed by the Emperor. His virtues are needed for individual dignity, communal peace and political order.

### On Women

According to Confucian writings, women were subject to the three obediences. When young, she must obey her father and elder brother, when married she must obey her husband. When her husband is dead, she must obey her son. She may not think of marrying a second time. A women's duty lies in the preparation of drinks and food. There is a strict injunction that no instructions or orders must issue from the harem. She must not be known beyond the threshold of her apartment. She may take no step on her own volition, and may come to no conclusion through her own deliberation.

Women were supposed to follow the instructions of men, and help carry out their principles. The following five types of women were not to be taken into marriage:

The daughter of a rebellious house

The daughter of a disorderly house

The daughter of a house that had produced criminals for more than one generation

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 12.2, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, 9.29, p. 43.

The daughter of a leprous house

The daughter who has lost her father and elder brother.

A wife may be divorced by the husband for the following six reasons:

Disobeying her husband's parents

Not giving birth to a son

Dissolute conduct

Jealousy

Talkativeness

Theft

However, there are three humane considerations for not divorcing a wife:

She has no home to go to

She has gone through three years of mourning for her husband's parents

If the husband has become rich from being poor.

### 3. Modern Day Criticisms of Confucianism

Criticisms of China's Confucianist past have been made by many people ever since China was successively defeated by different foreign powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the severest criticisms have come from the Chinese themselves. The humiliation of defeat gave rise to many reform movements within China. Under intense pressure from many reform groups, the Chinese Emperor just before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century issued the following declaration

"... Those who claim to be Conservative patriots consider that all the old should be upheld and the new ideas repudiated without compromise. Such querulous opinions are worthless. Consider the needs of the times and the weakness of our Empire! If we continue to drift with an army untrained, our revenues disorganised, our scholars ignorant, and our artisans without technical training, how can we possibly hope to hold our own among the nations. ....The virtuous rulers of remote antiquity did not cling obstinately to existing needs, but were ready to accept change, even as one wears grass-cloth garments in summer, and furs in winters. We now

issue this special Decree so that all our subjects, from the Imperial family downwards, may hereafter exert themselves in the cause of reform...<sup>23</sup>

The numerous 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese reform movements are too many to describe here. The reader is referred to works such as Vohra's *China's Path to Modernization*.<sup>24</sup> A classic book illustrating Western criticisms of modern Confucianism is Joseph Levenson's, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*, written around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Levenson summarises the fate of Confucianism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century amongst the intellectual elite in the following way:

"What was the 'new world' in China? Not the Confucian intellectual world with technical interests pasted on, but the Confucian world transformed by the western interests, the Classics paling into functional insignificance... the rise of business (historically associated with the rise of 'yung-ian' science), under western aegis, to a point of possible rivalry with Confucian-official status. Western yung, embraced by literati, corrupted the literati's way of thought, ultimately sapping the fullness of their conviction of the Confucian learning's indispensability; and western yung, wielded by westerners, put a challenge to the literati's way of life, by encouraging a social alternative, the commercial-industrial way of life, which likewise made the Confucian learning seem more and more irrelevant – and Confucian sanctions (like those behind the family-system) more and more impossible."<sup>25</sup>

Much has of course changed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Just when the Chinese were following through their reforms, communism in China rose to power. At the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is timely to take stock and re-evaluate the influence and relevance of Confucianism in our modern technology centred world. In the present context, only a brief summary of the more obvious problems with Confucianism today will be mentioned. It will be assumed that communist rule in China does not substantially change the issue of whether Confucianism will survive in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> R. Vohra, *China's Path to Modernization*, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> See particularly chap. 3, "The Decline of the Old Order, Beginning of the New", p. 52-79.

<sup>25</sup> J. Levenson, "*Confucian China and its Modern Fate*", p. 64.

**Parochial regional outlook**

Confucius' teachings were meant for a feudal, traditional and family-centred society and obviously did not address international relations among independent nation states. In a globally interdependent world, it is necessary to have an open and close contact with people of different cultures. The context of society has changed – during Confucius' time, Chinese society was agrarian and isolated, families were the main social units, and there were many small principalities. Now the world is more urban, industrial and integrated. Individuals have much greater power than they ever had before, and their family heritage no longer seems to play the same important social role as it did in the past.

**Elitist and narrow form of education**

It is now a more democratic world. The modern world is less hierarchical, and has an egalitarian outlook. Such an approach is not in sync with elitist Confucianist principles. It is also a rapidly changing world in which traditional values have been undermined.

The focus of Confucian education was extremely narrow and rigid. The examination syllabus was based only on the four Confucian classics and this system had operated in China for twelve centuries. The students' examination technique was based on rote learning. There was a restricted range of subjects, as the students were occupied only with Confucian writings.

For the scholars, to pass the Civil Service Examinations was a practical necessity for success in life. It was a means to an end, as the aim was to obtain a job with the Imperial Bureaucracy. The Civil Service Exams created an elitist and exclusive culture that was perpetuated by scholars. The Confucian educational system was geared towards training a class of scholars to be bureaucrats to serve as advisers to the Emperor and there was a tendency to reserve education for the upper classes.

As the Confucian scholars were a relatively small group in the country, the great majority of Chinese people did not participate in public affairs. Although Confucius' teachings were for the masses, in subsequent periods, scholars were unwilling to share literacy and learning with the masses.

Ironically Confucius' intention was to share learning as widely as possible with the people. Chu Hsi in 12<sup>th</sup> century in *Great Learning* stated that there was a need for schools in every town and village. Confucian scholars also said similar things in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (in the court of Kublai Khan) and in 17<sup>th</sup> century (Huang Tung Hsi and Lu Liu Liang). Nothing much came of such suggestions to introduce education to the masses. Even when an imperial decree was issued to this effect it did not succeed. One possible reason was that China was an agrarian society. In each family every able-bodied man was needed in the field and the families were loath to release them to school. The Imperial Bureaucracy was also not big enough to manage the large numbers of candidates. There was no large middle class with surplus wealth and leisure to provide attractive alternative careers or cultural pursuits that were independent of the bureaucracy and the official establishment.

Problems abounded because the scholars were mainly interested in securing a career within the Civil Service Bureaucracy. As a result, they failed to address social changes, new needs and fundamental human issues. China failed to industrialise, as education based on Confucian classics did not promote science and technology. Students took exams to obtain magistracy and for a better life, and not for the sake of learning and enlightenment.

### **A hierarchical and paternalistic community**

A major characteristic of Confucian society is its hierarchical and paternalistic nature. The Chinese people have often been considered to be submissive. It is also thought that Confucius' teachings inculcate subordination and subservience. Among the Chinese people, there is a certain love of order and peace, a certain willingness to submit to "the powers that be."

Foreign writers attribute this to Confucianism, but that is not a fair comment, since the Chinese were like that before the lifetime of Confucius. It is more likely that Confucius was moulded by the character of the Chinese people and not the converse.

### **Not much elaboration on the five obligations**

Confucius's own teachings did not explain much about how a happy well governed state depends on the five relations: he spoke more about the first

two (relations between the sovereign and the minister, between the father and his son) – but not much about the other three (relationship between the husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and between friends).

### **Ancestral worship**

Confucius encouraged the practice of ancestral worship, which required that children carried out elaborate rites and ceremonies for the dead. Large sums of money and energy were often spent by many families (even by poor families) to ensure that the traditional rites for their dead ancestors were carried out dutifully. Generally speaking, the practice of ancestral worship with its elaborate rites, rituals and funerals is not popular among the young generation today.

### **Unfavourable teachings on women**

Traditional Confucian teachings are not favourable with respect to the role and status of women in society. The subordinate position they give to women is generally not acceptable in today's society where women and men have equal rights. Traditionally, the system of civil service examinations did not allow women to participate.

### **Lack of teachings about Life After Death**

Confucius did not provide teachings about the purpose and the meaning of life, human destiny or human origins. He also did not discuss the subject of life after death. Confucianism therefore, cannot claim to be a complete philosophy of life. Historically, it tended to focus on this world. Chi Lu asked about serving the spirits of the dead, and Confucius said:

“While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits? ”

The

disciple continued, “I venture to ask about death,” and he answered, “While you do not know life, how can you know death?”<sup>26</sup>

### **Teachings Lack Scientific Content**

There was little scientific content in Confucius' teachings. Confucian teachings did not lead to the development of the physical sciences in China. Unlike the situation in Europe, no Industrial Revolution took place

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<sup>26</sup> J. Legge, *Analects*, 11.9.

in China. Any philosophy or system of thought that ignores science cannot hope to survive in today's world.

### **Suspicion of Foreigners**

Traditionally, Confucianism has had a conservative view of foreigners. China was considered to be the Central Kingdom and people outside it were considered to be rude barbarians. Once when Confucius expressed his disgust of China and expressed his intention to go and live among foreigners, his disciple asked him as follows:

"They are rude. How can you do such a thing?" He replied, "If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?"<sup>27</sup>

Confucius had no knowledge of distant foreign nations. Confucianism was ethnocentric and China-centred. Unlike Buddhism it did not allow the absorption of other races and cultures and new knowledge from outside China.

"Barbarians who have rulers are inferior to the various nations of China who are without."<sup>28</sup>

The aforementioned limitations of Confucianism are not by themselves enough to discard it. True, its teachings on women are clearly sexist, but then again, Confucius lived a long time ago. Moreover, Confucius drew his inspiration from ancient tradition, and did not seek to start something new. Just because Confucius did not mention science or say much about how Chinese people should relate to foreigners does not mean that Confucianists need reject modern science or harbour feelings of racial superiority. But historically, particularly during the last seven centuries or so, that was what happened. The problem is that Confucianism, in the garb of Neo-Confucianism, became a philosophy of everything and rejected anything that was not specifically mentioned in the Confucian classics. It monopolised everything, and this was a mistake. It is this mentality that does not have a future. This aspect of Neo-Confucianism resulted in China not being able to make progress while Europe was experiencing its industrial revolution.

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 9.13, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 3.5.

#### 4. The Future

Having pointed out aspects of Confucianism that are not likely to survive, this section describes Confucian values that are enduring and are likely to remain.

The concept of social order and the governing of a state being ultimately rooted in individual self-cultivation and family unity is an important part of the Confucian heritage. The aims of being a "gentleman" through self-transformation, of striving to create harmony within the family, are Confucian teachings that are relevant to the modern world. In an interdependent world, where relationships between people can all too easily be undermined by technology and individualism, these ethical teachings of Confucianism are an invaluable human resource.

The Confucian scholar, Tu Wei-ming, emphasises the continuity between Confucian self-cultivation and the concept of the fiduciary community in the modern world:

"The logic of taking the cultivation of the self and the regulation of the family as "roots" and the ordering of the community, the governance of the state, and universal peace as "branches," may give the impression that complex political processes are reduced to simple relationships explainable in personable familial terms. Yet the dichotomy of root and branch conveys the sense of a dynamic transformation from self to family, to community, to state, and to the world as whole. Self-cultivation is the root, and harmony attained in the family is a natural outgrowth, like the branch, of our cultivated selves. Family is the root, and harmony attained in the community, the state, and the world is a natural outgrowth of the well-regulated families. In this sense what we do in the privacy of our own homes profoundly shapes the quality of life in the state as a whole.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Confucians do not, by stressing the centrality of self-cultivation, undermine the corporate effort that is required for the family, the community, the state, and the world to become humane or fully human. Just as the self must overcome egoism to become authentically human, the family must overcome nepotism to become authentically human. By analogy, the community must overcome parochialism, the state must overcome ethnocentrism, and the world must

overcome anthropocentrism to become authentically human. In light of Confucian inclusive humanism, the transformed self individually and corporately transcends egoism, nepotism, parochialism, ethnocentrism, and anthropocentrism to "form one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things."<sup>29</sup>

This passage has much in common with Bahá'í teachings. It encourages a global perspective, where each person in the world is looked upon as a member of the human family. Bahá'u'lláh stated, "We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; but let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."<sup>30</sup>

Tu Wei-ming argues for a "third epoch" in Confucianism, where it becomes a "common creed for humanity as a whole", and where "concern for the survival of the Confucian tradition and for the continuity of traditional Chinese culture must be subsumed under a broader concern for the future of humankind". In the context of the challenge facing modern Confucianist scholars, Tu Wei-ming writes:

"The real challenge to them is how a revived Confucian humanism might answer questions that science and democracy have raised. In a deeper sense, these scholars perceive the challenge to be the formulation of a Confucian approach to the perennial human problems of the world: the creation of a new philosophical anthropology, a common creed for humanity as a whole. They are fully aware that concern for the survival of the Confucian tradition and for the continuity of traditional Chinese culture must be subsumed under a broader concern for the future of humankind."<sup>31</sup>

This is of course, very close to Bahá'u'lláh's words on placing love for humanity above love for one's country.

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<sup>29</sup> W.M. Tu, *Confucius and Confucianism*, p. 115-116.

<sup>30</sup> J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, Bahá'u'lláh's words to E. G. Brown, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> W.M. Tu, Quoted by R. L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimension of Confucianism*, p. 138.

Another important contribution of Confucianism to the modern world is its positive approach to education. According to Confucius, learning is a process that can never be completed. In a world where the boundaries of knowledge are rapidly growing, a deep respect for learning is an ethic that is much needed.

"He who by revising the old knows the new, is fit to be a teacher."<sup>32</sup> Maybe there are people who can act without knowledge, but I am not one of them. Hear much, pick the best and follow it; see much, and keep a record of it: this is still the best substitute for innate knowledge."<sup>33</sup>

Traditionally, Confucianism has always been directed to human ends, to self-improvement in moral rectitude, to self-cultivation in virtues. Confucian teachings have focussed on attaining better relationships between people, whether it be in the family or in society at large. Some critics have accused it of being too one-sided in this, claiming that it emphasised the learning of human virtues at the expense of making scientific or technological progress. Ironically, today's modern society, dominated as it is by science, is arguably suffering from the reverse problem. Our society seems to give priority to scientific and technological learning, and relatively little attention, in comparison, is given to instruction in human ethics and morals. Confucianist teachings within this context may play an important role in gaining a better balance. Okada Tahehiko, a modern Confucianist scholar, points towards this being the future contribution of Confucianism:

"The main purpose of Confucianism is to establish true humanity. No matter how far science has developed, the Confucian never loses sight of the development of humanity. Before any discussion of logic or rationality the Confucian focuses upon the importance of subjectivity. In our day-to-day lives we distinguish what goes on within us from the outside world, but we become trapped by the outside world and in this way we lose our humanity. Given this situation we should try to control that external world, but in practice this is a very difficult thing to do. The important issue is to establish one's own inner subjectivity within the mind."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> S. Leys, *The Analects of Confucius*, 2.11, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 7.28, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> Okada Tahehiko quoted by R. L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism, Modernity and Religion*, p. 143.

These views are close to the Bahá'í principle that "spiritual progress" must develop alongside "material progress". While in Paris in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated:

"It is indeed a good and praiseworthy thing to progress materially, but in so doing, let us not neglect the more important spiritual progress, and close our eyes to the Divine light shining in our midst. Only by improving spiritually as well as materially can we make any real progress, and become perfect beings. It was in order to bring this spiritual life and light into the world that all the great Teachers have appeared. They came so that the Sun of Truth might be manifested, and shine in the hearts of men, and that through its wondrous power men might attain unto Everlasting Light."<sup>35</sup>

From the Bahá'í point of view, Confucius is in the category of "great Teachers". 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to him as a "Blessed soul" who, among others, was the "cause of illumination of the world of humanity":

"Blessed souls - whether Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius or Muhammad - were the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity."<sup>36</sup>

The spiritual aspects to Confucius's teachings, such as self-cultivation, of acquiring moral virtues, family unity, are relevant to the modern world, and can help it acquire a better balance between "material progress" and "spiritual progress". There is much common ground between Bahá'ís and modern Confucianists on these points, and this may provide the basis by which they can work together in the future.

### **Acknowledgements**

This article was written in collaboration with Dr Anjam Khursheed, who helped me both formulate the original ideas as well as revise several versions of the paper.

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<sup>35</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 346.

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# The Challenge of Change for the Chinese in Southeast Asia

*Yin Hong Shuen*

## **Abstract**

Who are the Chinese in Southeast Asia? What are the changes that they have been through and what are their challenges for the future? Chinese Bahá'ís in some Southeast Asian countries are a microcosm of Chinese people in this region. I will address this issue from my personal experience as a Nanyang Chinese. Also, an e-mail survey was conducted. The following questions were asked: What attracts the Chinese in Southeast Asia to the Bahá'í Faith? What do they see as their contribution to the community at large? What are some of the difficulties they face? What changes are expected in the future? To conclude, I will outline how and why adopting a world vision helps the Chinese in Southeast Asia cope with their future challenges.

## **1. Introduction**

What is change? Various definitions exist: "make different the form, nature, content of something", "to become transformed or converted", "to become altered or modified". Another definition of change is the experience of "significant difference". One way of describing the challenge of change for the Southeast Asian Chinese is to look for experiences that cause "significant difference".

Who are the Chinese in Southeast Asia? I am not referring to the Taiwanese Chinese or the Mainland Chinese who are permanent residents of Singapore. I mean people of Chinese ancestry who are born locally, and whose parents emigrated to this part of the world. They may not even speak or write Chinese. Their staple food may be Thai, Indonesian or

Indian. They are your sundry shopkeepers in a little village in Chiangmai, your fishermen in Balik Pulau in Penang, your rubber tappers in Sarawak as well as the Banker in Shenton way and IT specialists and electronics engineers now in great cities from Manila to Kuala Lumpur. They come from all walks of life. Most of them have never been to China nor know much about their cultural heritage or beliefs, except for one or two things like filial piety and Chinese New Year reunion dinner.

Loosely called, "The Nanyang Chinese" or Southeast Chinese,<sup>1</sup> they would be the descendants from the early Chinese immigrants who settled in Southeast Asian countries. They would be those who still retain some of the physical features and traditions or values of their forefathers. They don't necessarily speak Chinese, nor even any of its dialects. I discovered this when we organized the first Southeast Asian Bahá'í Chinese Teaching Seminar in Petaling Jaya when we had Chinese Bahá'ís from various Southeast Asian countries. We had great difficulties because we could only communicate with the Indonesian Chinese in Bahasa and the Thai Chinese were not proficient in Mandarin either. In the end, we used English, Mandarin and Bahasa to struggle through.

## 2. Migration Patterns

Southeast Asia was the place where the Chinese emigrated to predominantly in the late 19th and 20th centuries. The Chinese were in Southeast Asia even before the English sailed on the "Mayflower" to arrive on the shores of America. In 1504 AD, Admiral Cheng Ho visited the Malacca Sultanate. The presence of the Chinese just like the Indians in Southeast

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<sup>1</sup> This is a popularization of the term, *Nanyang huaqiao*. The historian Yeu-Farn Wang explains this term in the following way: "The most commonly used term for Chinese in Southeast Asia is *Nanyang huaqiao*, literally meaning overseas Chinese in the South Seas. *Hua* signifies Chinese and *qiao* signifies a short-term visitor, a sojourner. Historically, people who left China at any period to go abroad did not generally do so with the blessing of the state... The fact that many had sojourned for centuries had not altered the prevailing expectation that they would eventually return to the motherland. This was the case at least until mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The other half of the name, *Nanyang*, means southern ocean or the South China Sea. *Nanyang* is employed by Chinese to designate all the sub-continental and island countries of Southeast Asia." Y.F. Wang, *The National Identity of the Southeast Asian Chinese*, p. 2.

Asia is a known historical fact. Just a few interesting examples: Brunei in 1972 unearthed a gravestone dated 1264 AD of a Chinese Muslim official from Fujian. When the Europeans reached the East Indies in Indonesia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they already found a substantial Chinese settlement, trading in pepper. So did the Spanish when they arrived in Manila in the same century. The Chinese chronicler Zhou Daguan in 1296 AD recorded that there were Chinese merchants and carpenters at the Angkor city in Cambodia. Thailand's famous King Taksin was known to be half-Chinese. However, the influx of the Chinese to Southeast Asia came much later, due mainly to the expansion of trade created through the opening of tin mines and rubber plantations.

Professor Wang Gungwu outlined the migration patterns into four types<sup>2</sup>:

1. The Trader pattern (merchants & artisans)
2. Coolie patterns (landless labourers who worked in plantations and tin mines)
3. Sojourner (teachers, journalists and other professionals who went out to promote awareness of Chinese culture and national needs)
4. Descent or re-migrant pattern (Southeast Asian Chinese who migrated to other countries)

Wang Gungwu states that, "Migration is a universal phenomenon made more conspicuous today by international attention in an era of nationalism."<sup>3</sup> This aptly describes the situation of Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia.

### **3. What have been these changes for the Chinese?**

What have been the changes experienced by the Chinese people who migrated to Southeast Asia? They can cover a whole gamut of cultural, political, economic and social aspects of their lives. The processes leading to change that occur as a result of contact between societies are complex

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<sup>2</sup> G.W. Wang *China and the Chinese Overseas*, pp. 3-10.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

and diverse. Dennis O'Neil describes some of these "processes of change" to include the following<sup>4</sup>:

1. Diffusion
2. Acculturation
3. Transculturation

Diffusion is the movement of things and ideas from one culture to another. When diffusion occurs, the form of a trait may move from one society to another but not its original cultural meaning. For instance, when McDonald's first brought their American style hamburgers to Moscow and Beijing, they were accepted as luxury foods for special occasions because they were relatively expensive and exotic.

Acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when alien traits diffuse in on a large scale and substantially replace traditional cultural patterns. After several centuries of relentless pressure from European Americans to adopt their ways, Native American cultures have been largely acculturated. As a result, the vast majority of American Indians now speak English instead of their ancestral language, wear European style clothes, go to school to learn about the world from a European perspective, and see themselves as being at least a peripheral part of the broader American society.

While acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when alien traits overwhelm it, transculturation is what happens to an individual when he or she moves to another society and adopts its culture. Immigrants who successfully learn the language and accept as their own the cultural patterns of their adopted country, have transculturated.

Over decades, especially in those areas where Chinese education has not been encouraged or emphasized, a different set of cultural traits diffuse and gradually replace traditional cultural patterns. An example would be the Peranakan Chinese who speak Malay, wear Malay dress, chew betel leaves and see themselves as part of the local community.

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<sup>4</sup> Internet article by Dennis O'Neil, Thursday, May 06, 1999,  
<http://daphne.palomar.edu/change/glossary.htm#top>

Despite the relatively long association with the locals, discrimination against Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia has been evident. In the Philippines for instance, deep-seated Spanish suspicion of the Chinese gave way to recognition of their potentially constructive role in economic development. Chinese expulsion orders issued in 1755 and 1766 were repealed in 1788. Similarly, during the Second World War, while the Japanese occupied China and various countries of Southeast Asia, the Chinese were again, targets of persecution.

Largely because of the rise of nationalism in Southeast Asian countries after the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> world wars, the loyalty of Chinese immigrants has often been questioned.<sup>5</sup> Yet, if one were to make a survey of intermarriages, it would be no surprise, in my opinion, to see that the Chinese in Southeast Asia probably have the highest number of interracial marriages than any of the other ethnic communities in the region.

The story of the Chinese in Southeast Asia is one of slow assimilation and brief episodes of bloody conflict. Despite the fact that they have been living in this region for many decades and generations, the question of their identity continues to be of concern to themselves as well as to the non-Chinese. They have carved a place for themselves and found success with small businesses. It is this same success that is a source of conflict for them. This is because even though there are estimated to be over 23 million ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, representing 5 percent of the total population, they control economic power that is disproportionate to their numbers.

Take for example, Indonesia, where Chinese immigrants account for only 4 percent of the population. They are reported to control 20 of the 25 biggest business groups in the country. In Thailand, although Chinese immigrants make up only about 10 percent of the population, they own 90 percent of the commercial and manufacturing capital of the country, and

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<sup>5</sup> There are many books devoted to the theme of nationalism in Southeast Asia being the root cause of discrimination against the Nanyang Chinese. Leo Suryadinata follows through this theme in his book, *Chinese and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia*, Thompson and Adloff also describe it in their book, *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia*, and Y.F. Wang discusses it in *The National Identity of the Southeast Asian Chinese*.

over half of its banking capital. These economic inequalities have raised considerable tension among the people of Southeast Asia, and are expected to continue to do so in the future.

How has the Asian Crisis and the so-called, "knowledge-based economy" affected the Chinese in Southeast Asia? It is interesting to note that the crisis in Asia occurred after several decades of outstanding economic performance. Annual GDP in the ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) averaged close to 8 percent over the last ten years.

It would be hard for anyone to imagine that these changes have not escaped the Nanyang Chinese. The problem of urbanization where the younger and more educated flock to the cities for better paying jobs at factories affects everyone, including the Chinese. New technologies impact manufacturing costs and make it even more competitive to survive, and so Chinese businesses now have to compete even harder with more efficient and cost effective enterprises. With stock markets and exchange rates plunging, not only foreign equity investors, but also many overseas Chinese investors lost nearly three quarters of the value of their equity holdings in recent years. Restrictions on monetary flow, fluctuations of exchange currencies or sudden depreciation, severely affect many Nanyang Chinese, who have to remit money for their children studying in foreign countries like Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Many of their children return home, IT-(Information Technology) savvy, infused with new knowledge from these developed countries, and newly acquired tastes and habits. They often do well because of the high demand for their skills and expertise, and unlike their older and less educated countrymen, who are struggling to survive. The next generation are propelled to the forefront of newly created jobs, opportunities and wealth. The new South Asian Chinese elites join the ranks of the new sophisticated cultural consumers, whose families are smaller and whose diets are apt to contain as much bread as rice. They travel internationally. They watch CNN news broadcasts as avidly as they watch Hollywood movies. Intellectuals pack the concert halls to hear the music of Western composers, who are now as much a part of Southeast Asian culture as they are of any country in the West.

#### **4. Personal Experience of a Nanyang Chinese**

Born up North in Alor Setar near the Thai border, I attended the same school as the current Prime Minister of Malaysia. My father was a businessman who had a wine distillery but died as a Muslim, while my mother was a school teacher who followed the Buddhist Faith until her acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith years later. We spoke the local Hokkien dialect and Bahasa Melayu. I followed my mother everywhere to the temples and took amulets from Chinese mediums. When my father died, his cortege was taken into the oldest mosque in town, there for the first time as a little boy I thought I heard God speaking (it was actually the echo of prayers being recited). At the age of 13, I took a vow and became a young monk for a short three days at the Thai Theravada Buddhist temple. As a youth, I always felt and admired the harmony, beauty and peace of the Buddhist, Muslim and Christian faiths.

When I think of my youth, these are some of the pictures in my mind: "A group of elderly people with the Buddhist priests and one or two Muslim Hajis sitting at the temple verandah, smoking and chit chatting away. The soul stirring call of the minaret to prayers in the evenings. The chanting of the Pali scriptures by the monks. Eating at my Malay classmate's home in the village."

Years later, I was shocked to learn of politically motivated racial riots and religious fundamentalism that meant my Muslim brothers and I could not eat from the same plate or drink from the same cup. Even to this day, I feel very uncomfortable when any group of people, be they Chinese, Iranians or Afrikaans get too enthusiastic about their culture and beliefs. I remember an incident when a Malay couple whom I knew were talking about the racial undercurrents among the various races including the Chinese. They turned to me and said, "But you don't understand this! You are a Bahá'í!"

The shock of being an overseas Chinese came to me when I was a young student. I had left Sri Lanka to enter India in the 1960's via Talaimannar, the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Although holding a Malaysian passport at the time, I was detained for a few hours because I was classified as "Chinese". On the other hand, when I was residing in Hong Kong in the 1970's for a short period of time, I was told how unChinese I

was when a Hong Kong shopkeeper in Kowloon said "You are Chinese and you don't speak Chinese". He chastised me because I couldn't converse in Cantonese! That was my enigma, too Chinese to the Indian and not Chinese enough for our Hong Kong Chinese.

It was therefore not difficult for me when I first heard about the Bahá'í Faith. I liked its fundamental concepts of the oneness of God, the oneness of religion and the oneness of mankind. Since religion is a very personal affair and acceptance of a faith and its philosophy is a major change, I thought it would be interesting to take a peek at the challenge of change of Chinese Bahá'ís living in the Southeast Asian region.

### **5. Random Sampling of Some Chinese Bahá'ís in the Region Through an E-mail Survey**

Since the Chinese Bahá'ís in some of these Southeast Asian countries are a microcosm of the Chinese in this region, an e-mail survey was conducted to find out on a very small scale, what such a change means. While the sample size may be very small, it provided a glimpse of how one Southeast Asian Chinese groups responded to a change, in this case, a religious conversion amidst the many changes surrounding them over the recent years.

The survey set out to discover how the Chinese in Southeast Asia respond to the Bahá'í Teachings and how they see their role in the worldwide Bahá'í community. The following questions were asked in the survey:

- What attracts the Chinese in Southeast Asia to the Bahá'í Faith?
- What do they see as their contribution in the community?
- What are some of the difficulties they face in the change?

Thirty-three responses were received. They were mainly from Malaysia and Singapore and almost 80% of them had ten or more years of membership in the Bahá'í community. One third of these people came from a Buddhist background.

The three reasons/factors which attracted the respondents to the Bahá'í Faith, in the order of their popularity were:

1. Spiritual, practical and relevancy of Bahá'í teachings (almost 85% chose this)
2. Sense of spiritual identity
3. Belonging to an international community of people which subscribes to the three oneness principles (God, Religion and Humanity)

Other reasons were:

Belief in the protecting powers of the Faith

Fellowship and love

How the respondents thought they could contribute to the Bahá'í Community in general were, again according to popularity:

1. Add to the cultural and spiritual enrichment of the community (72%).
2. Bring in more pragmatic and innovative ways of teaching the Faith.
3. Serve as a "bridge" between traditional Chinese and host communities.

The problems or difficulties that the respondents encountered in adjusting to their new Bahá'í beliefs in the initial stages were:

1. Fasting
2. Family / Parental objections
3. Peer acceptance

Some of their remarks about difficulties of adapting to the change were:

Consent for interracial marriage and the amount of time spent on meetings and travelling to meetings

Elders' fears that one is being drawn away from traditions

Peer pressure and ridicule in such acts as fasting, abstaining from alcohol

Living the life (not backbiting etc)

The Bahá'í Faith sounded obscure

Disbelief in the Bahá'í Faith being a religion

Obedience to the institutions and self-restraint

Lack of Chinese literature

Difficulty of practising consultation

Racial prejudices (from other non-Chinese in the community)

Based on this e-mail survey, it was found that Chinese Bahá'ís are a pragmatic group, looking at religion from very practical considerations, while at the same time, they value a sense of spiritual connectedness. They also like the idea of belonging to an international community and wish to contribute to it.

The problems that the respondents faced in adjusting to their new beliefs were mainly related to fasting, family objections and peer acceptance. Despite these considerable difficulties, they were able to adjust to the change. This brings me to the last part of my paper. What is the future of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia? Will they become fully accepted as part of their country? How will they meet the new challenges of change?

## **6. Future Changes**

In the political arena, successive generations of Southeast Asian Chinese will probably develop greater bonds with their respective countries of residence, particularly in countries where there is no obvious discrimination of race, culture or religion. They will integrate with the locals and develop some distinct characteristics of their own, such as the Peranakans.

The Chinese of Southeast Asia will never be "Chinese Chinese" in as much as Australians or Americans are not English. Except for those who are presently in their eighties, very few Chinese in Southeast Asia are expected to have any emotional attachment to Mainland China. Southeast Asia is now home for the new generation.

In the area of economics, the impact of E-economy will be further felt and with more business restructuring and trade liberalization, small and medium enterprises including those belonging to Southeast Asian Chinese will be severely affected. For those who have been fortunate in obtaining better education in these newer technologies, they will do well. As a result of decades of investment in education, hard work and resilience in their host environments, the Southeast Asian Chinese are expected to achieve even more economic success than they have already had. On the other hand, these new successes could again be perceived as a threat to the

locals. The resentment will not only come from the local non-Chinese, but also the Chinese in China, who do not necessarily welcome business competition from foreign Chinese businesses.

With improvements in the economy, there will be a corresponding increase in materialism and less concern with religious matters. However, not all will be benefiting from this wealth, and the gap between the haves and have nots will continue to widen. We will continue to witness the migration and draining of local Chinese talent throughout Southeast Asian countries to more developed ones elsewhere in the world.

There will be greater mobility in the future. For the younger and Western educated Chinese, whose parents or family may be in Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur, an employer may be in Hong Kong or Singapore, and project work may be anywhere in the Asia Pacific.

Many changes that we see now as external events, incidents or pictures in the media daily, will continue to grow in importance: Chinese shops burnt as a result of racial or religious riots, the gap between the very rich and poor among the Chinese will continue to widen, Chinese Karaoke lounge bars and triad societies will continue to proliferate, and so on.

Obviously, such conflicts will not go away overnight. It is easy to be pessimistic as we scan the present political and social scene not to feel anxious about the immediate present and future. The Asian crisis, the emergence of China as a superpower, all these factors are not helping to reduce the many dangers that threaten the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Thus, in my opinion, the many problems experienced before the Asian crisis will continue.

To conclude, I will outline how and why adopting a world vision helps the Chinese in Southeast Asia cope with their challenges. Changes are external. Transitions are internal. As the famous ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed, the only thing permanent is change. One could look to the past and analyze the socio-political and historical factors shaping the events changing and afflicting the Nanyang Chinese, or one could view the change as a journey of many stages.

To me, the biggest challenge facing the overseas Chinese is how to manage the transition. It is not what these changes are so much as how they should manage the changes which are under their control and their own perceptions of these changes. I believe the Chinese of Southeast Asia have reached a turning point, a crisis. The Chinese word for crisis is a combination of two words: danger and opportunity.

## 7. Who am I? What am I?

There is a popular Jackie Chan movie called "Who am I?" It is about a Chinese soldier who is lost in an African country and suffers from amnesia after a plane crash. He lives among the local Africans, adopting their ways, and is eventually able to discover his true identity (and of course, helps thrash some bad people in the process).

The Chinese in Southeast Asia are like economic refugees who left their homeland, settled down, and are now victims of various social political and economic circumstances. They should be proud of their heritage without being xenophobic. A good guide to follow would be this quote from a Bahá'í international community statement:

"There is no question that one's unique cultural characteristics should be prized, and that pride in one's culture can be a healthy emotion that can motivate persons to achieve their full potential and reach out to others, both within and without their particular group. At the same time, if taken to an extreme, as it too often is, attachment to one's group can lead to mistrust of and enmity towards other groups. Unbridled pride in one's heritage then becomes an excuse for the venting of hate upon others, because they do not share the same culture, language or religion. Such attitudes contribute to the deplorable violations of minority rights that have occurred throughout this century."<sup>6</sup>

The many changes that the Chinese Southeast Asians are now facing and will be facing, may be viewed as a threat or an opportunity. The threats include: loss of identity, confusion, unknown future, and insecurity. These

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<sup>6</sup> Bahá'í International Community, *Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, 21 Jan. 1991, UN Document #E/CN.4/1991/NGO/9, BIC Document #91-0102.

threats may result in defensiveness, anxiety, and loss of confidence. The opportunities on the other hand, include: learning, creativity and more importantly, survival and recognition. For too long, the Chinese Southeast Asians have been the victims of change. In this new Millennium, they must rise up and be in the forefront of change, positive change agents in the progress and advancement of human society. To do that, they must view themselves as part of that inevitable movement toward a new order, a world commonwealth, which calls for sufficient flexibility to respond to the growing and ever-changing needs of modern society.

The fundamental principle they must now recognize is that man is spiritual and that "... the source of human rights is the endowment of qualities, virtues and powers which God has bestowed upon mankind without discrimination of sex, race, creed or nation. To fulfil the possibilities of this divine endowment is the purpose of human existence."<sup>7</sup>

The second principle is that "Minorities and majorities must embrace an expansive view of world society that sees all human beings as members of one human family, united in their fundamental aspirations, yet enriched by the precious variation in human thought, language, religion and culture. The development of such a universal and unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind is essential if the rights of minorities are to be fully realized."<sup>8</sup>

It is these two visions, that many Chinese Bahá'í s, enamoured by the love of Bahá'u'lláh, are working towards. It is that role that will prove to be the turning point and an example of successful living, which will be a model for the Chinese of Southeast Asia. As it is said in the Bible, Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

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<sup>7</sup> The Bahá'í International Community United Nations Office, 1996 -- Bahá'í International Community, *Protection of Minorities*. BIC Document #90-0127 (c), UN Document #E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/NGO/1.

<sup>8</sup> In the first paragraph of "*A Bahá'í Declaration of Human Obligations and Rights*" presented to the first session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at Lake Success, NY, USA., February, 1947.

## 8. Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to describe the presence of the Chinese in Southeast Asia at the macro level, and look at some of the changes affecting them. Some personal experiences are shared of what it means to be a Southeast Asian Chinese in a changing environment. A small survey is taken of Chinese Bahá'ís to find out what attracted them to Bahá'ís beliefs, the difficulties they encountered, and what they feel they can contribute to their respective Bahá'í and Chinese communities. An attempt is then made to outline the future changes awaiting the Chinese in Southeast Asia and why a world vision helps.

Adopting a world vision may appear like a simplistic single prescription approach to solving the ethnic problems of the Chinese. While there are undoubtedly other important factors, such as education, human rights legislation etc, I maintain that the single most important challenge for the overseas Chinese is to give up their traditional exclusivity, and become partners and co workers in the formation of a world society. It will not come immediately. It will take courage, humility and faith to let go of the past and embrace the uncertain future, just like our forefathers did when they left the shores of China. Success this time, will not be measured in terms of material gains, but spiritual value. Just as our forefathers were driven by the dream of a better life, our dream should be to bring about a better world.

I believe that the magnificent Chinese adaptability to change, and their eclectic approach to life, will make them succeed and thrive once more in the new millennium. It is this very same pragmatic attitude and philosophy of life, as demonstrated in the past by them embracing one of the world's great spiritual traditions, Buddhism, for example, that led to the further blossoming of Chinese civilization. Similarly, I believe that the Bahá'í Faith will contribute in no small measure to a renewal of civilization not only among the ethnic Chinese but also among all the people of the world.

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# Science and Religion in Chinese Culture

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## **Abstract**

According to the Bahá'í Faith, religion, in one form or other is believed to lie at the root of all civilisations. This paper sets out to examine this belief with respect to the great developments of philosophy and science in the Chinese civilisation during the Tang (618-907 AD) and Sung (960-1279 AD) dynasties.

Science in China is usually thought to have developed in isolation, with relatively little influence from other cultures, while philosophy in China is often described as "humanist", that is, one which is not reliant upon religion. The theme of this paper is that Chinese cultural achievements during the Tang and Sung dynasties not only emerged from considerable contact with other cultures, but were inspired by religion. The impact of Buddhism on Chinese culture is highlighted. This paper draws parallels between Buddhism being the inspiration behind the Chinese Sung Renaissance, and Islam lying at the root of the European Renaissance.

Another issue addressed in this paper is "Needham's puzzle", that is, the question of why modern science did not develop in China. Some of the source texts of the three main spiritual traditions in China, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are examined in the light of whether they encourage or discourage scientific investigation. Also, elements of Neo-Confucianism are critically reviewed, since it has been the dominant school of philosophy in China for the last millennium. The general conclusions are that: when China was characterised by an ethnocentric world-view, illustrated for instance by Neo-Confucianist suppression of Buddhism, Chinese science did not make much progress. On the other hand, creative and innovative periods in Chinese history were characterised by an openness to foreign people, not only in terms of

scientific exchange, but also with respect to embracing their philosophy and religion.

## 1. Chinese Scientific Achievement

It is now well known, that around a millennium ago, the Chinese culture was one of the most scientifically advanced cultures in the world. Chinese people living at that time, were in many ways centuries more advanced than their European contemporaries. Until relatively recently, all this was not widely appreciated. Only after the second world war, largely through the seminal work of the English scientist/historian Joseph Needham, were the great achievements of Chinese science better disseminated to the Western world.<sup>1</sup>

Three Chinese inventions in particular, printing, gunpowder and the magnetic compass, are conspicuous of the great scientific legacy that China bequeathed to Europe. These inventions transformed medieval Europe and prepared it for the modern era. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many European scientists and philosophers were acknowledging their debt to these inventions, although curiously, they did not know where these inventions originated. The well-known English 17<sup>th</sup> century spokesman of modern science, Sir Francis Bacon, refers to the impact of these inventions in the following way:

“It is well to observe [said Lord Verulam] the force and virtue and consequences of discoveries. These are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world, the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have followed innumerable changes; in so much that no empire, no sect, no star, seems

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Needham's massive achievement is embodied in the continuing Science and Civilisation in China series, the successive parts of which have been published by Cambridge University Press since 1954. The home of the project is now the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge, which also houses a unique and growing library (the East Asian History of Science Library) used by scholars from East and West alike.

to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries..."<sup>2</sup>

Bacon's clear testimony that printing, gunpowder and the magnetic compass were among the most powerful scientific discoveries of his day is important, as is his ignorance concerning their origins. It is difficult to exaggerate the great social impact these inventions had on European life in the late medieval period. The Reformation, Renaissance and the rise of capitalism all made use of printing, and the democratic form of education that it made possible. Gunpowder weapons brought about a more democratic form of warfare, and led to the end of Western military aristocratic feudalism. The castle was no longer the most secure fighting post. Both at sea and land, gunpowder made war more mobile. The magnetic compass opened up a new era of navigational science for Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and took Europeans around the world, eventually to discover America. The great social transforming effect of such expeditions gave rise to Western colonies and brought the world much closer than it had ever been before. Also, no less important, is the role magnetic science played in the development of modern science. The study of magnetism provided parallels by which the gravitational force was understood, and this body of science finally evolved into field theory. Field theory is an important branch of physics by which we understand electromagnetic and gravitational phenomena today.

It is extraordinary, that given the far-reaching effects of printing, gunpowder and the magnetic compass on European society that their origins were to remain "obscure". What is even more surprising is that for most Europeans, the origins of these inventions remained a mystery right up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, Needham cites two occurrences of it in books written by well-known European scholars, one which was published in 1920, and the other published in 1962. Needham refers to it as an attitude of 'invincible ignorance'.<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese wrote of magnetic effects as early as 83 AD, in relation to divination devices called *Shih*. The earliest description of a magnetic compass dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. A small wooden piece of

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<sup>2</sup> J. Needham, *The Grand Titration*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

loadstone is embedded in the body of a wooden fish that is floated in water. The fish has a little needle projecting from it that points south. An interesting feature about this arrangement was that the compass-fish was magnetised by being heated to red heat while held in the north-south position in the earth's magnetic field. This shows that the Chinese knew about remnant magnetism. There is also evidence that they knew of magnetic declination (the fact that compasses do not point exactly North-South and that the difference varies with time). The Chinese used the magnetic compass in navigation around the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. They achieved all these things long before Europeans even knew of magnetic polarity. The earliest mention of magnetic polarity in Europe dates from 1180 AD. This puts China ahead of Europe by at least two to three centuries. However, Arabic commentators certainly knew of the Chinese fish-compass, and often referred to it. It is thus quite likely that information about the compass and magnetic effects came to Europe via the Islamic civilisation.

Gunpowder seems to have developed out of Taoist alchemist experiments aimed at developing an elixir for longevity. The first mention of an explosive chemical mix resembling gunpowder occurs in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. In 919 AD, the 'fire drug', as it was known, was used as an ignition for a flame-thrower. By 1000 AD, it was packed into bomb and grenade form. The first composition formulae appeared in 1044 AD, some three centuries earlier than references to gunpowder composition in Europe. These first gunpowder devices were more like rockets, and did not consist of the much later destructive explosive mix. In fact, rocket devices in China date from around the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Gunpowder weaponry in Europe started to develop in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Block printing in China developed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. The earliest printed book is a Buddhist text (The Diamond Sutra), which dates from 868 AD. In 932 AD, the complete printed edition of the Classical Books of Confucius was commissioned. Moveable type was developed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, even though a separate piece of type was needed for each one of the thousands of Chinese characters. Moveable type in Europe was introduced into Europe some 400 years later, when Gutenberg printed his Latin Bible in 1456 AD.

There was much more to the Chinese technological heritage than the development of gunpowder, the magnetic compass and printing. Other contributions of China, according to Needham, include, the efficient equine harness, the technology of iron and steel, the invention of the mechanical clock, the development of basic engineering devices such as the driving-belt, the chain-drive, the standard method of converting rotary to rectilinear motion, segmental arch bridges, nautical techniques such as the stern-post rudder, the seismograph, and deep drilling, to mention only a few. The list is considerable.

Although the Chinese contribution in technology is impressive, the idea that all these inventions came only from China is misleading. There are several instances of Needham's Chinese inventions being shared by other cultures. Take for instance the invention of the mechanical clock, whose development Needham claims to be mainly Chinese.<sup>4</sup>

A clock driven by a waterwheel is described by Su Sung in Khaifeng, the capital of the Northern Sung Dynasty in 1092 AD. This clock used a linkwork escapement mechanism that made it accurate. Clocks in Europe did not arrive at the same accuracy of Su Sung's clock until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first origins of clock making in China started around 725 AD, when a Tantric Buddhist, I-Hsing and an engineer Liang Ling-Tsan built a water wheel clock for an imperial court of higher learning.

The development of the clock had of course, a profound influence on the craft tradition that accompanied modern science. Needham speculates that the Chinese water-wheel linkwork clock was known in 13<sup>th</sup> century Europe, or that there was at least the knowledge that mechanical time-keeping had been solved. But knowledge of clocks, as with many other scientific developments, reached Europe more directly through the Islamic civilisation. In fact, water-wheel driven clocks were designed and constructed in the Islamic world precisely around the same time they appeared in China, and there is disagreement among historians whether medieval Muslims knew of Chinese clocks or vice versa. The historian, Arnold Pacey cites the Muslim contribution in the following way:

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<sup>4</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West*, pp. 131-2.

"Among Islamic books studied or translated at Toledo, there were several which discussed mechanical devices including astronomical and several types of water clock. One author who wrote on this subject was al-Muradi, and he illustrated elaborate gear trains, some with epicyclic and segmental gears. It is particularly interesting to note that he was working at almost exactly the time Su Sung was building his great clock in China. Indeed, one of al-Muradi's designs was for a clock driven by a water-wheel like Su Sung's, but no connection between the two seems likely. A more relevant connection is with two water-clocks of rather simpler design which were operating at Toledo in the 1080s."<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between clocks in the Islamic and Chinese civilisations is not well documented. It may be that Muslims learned of Chinese clocks, and made developments of their own. Or it could be that there was much more exchange of technology than we suppose; and that water-wheel clocks was a shared invention. There are similar examples in astronomy. Water-wheel clocks in China were used to drive astronomical devices called armillary spheres, which mapped the coordinates of stars on the celestial sphere. Needham cites the Chinese astronomer, Kuo Shou-Ching for the development of a bronze armillary sphere in 1275 AD at Peking, which he takes to be the forerunner of the equatorial mounting of the modern telescope. Modern astronomy uses the Chinese system of equatorial coordinates to measure a star's position on the celestial sphere, rather than the ecliptic coordinates of the Greeks or the altazimuth measurements of the Arabs. But Needham himself explains that Kuo Shou-Ching arrived at his invention by modifying the 'torqutum', a kind of computing machine for performing transformations between coordinate systems, which was first designed by the Spanish Muslim Jabir ibn Aflah, and that it was introduced into China by the scientific mission of Jamal al-Din in 1267 AD.<sup>6</sup> This is an instance where a Chinese invention was inspired by Islamic science. Moreover, the explicit mention of there being an Islamic "scientific mission" in China does seem to suggest that Muslims at least, were looking for scientific collaboration.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A. Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization*, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> J. Needham, *The Grand Titration*, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> This kind of collaboration was no doubt inspired by the Prophet's injunction to, "Seek after knowledge, even unto China", quoted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 26.

Needham records an instance of the Chinese setting out to learn from the Arabs. The famous Muslim physician Al-Razi records the visit of a Chinese scholar to his home in Baghdad in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Al-Razi wrote of how his Chinese guest stayed there learning Arabic in 6 months, and then translated the works of Galen into Chinese, after which he left to return to China. Chinese and Islamic scientists collaborated under Mongol rule. The Mongols instigated an astronomical observatory in the 13<sup>th</sup> century at Maragha (south of Tabriz in Iran) under the care of the famous Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. The Mongols arranged for a collaboration of Chinese astronomers (Fu Meng-Chi) with Muslim astronomers that came from Spain (al-Maghribi, al-Andalusi). Later, a similar astronomical observatory was set up in Samarkand in Central Asia.<sup>8</sup> The Islamic/Chinese contact, although officially sanctioned and encouraged by the Mongols in the 13-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, had certainly taken place earlier, in the Sung and Tang dynasties. Islam's overland entry in China is likely to have occurred in the mid-seventh century.<sup>9</sup> During the Tang dynasty, Arab traders were frequently in Canton. Mosques started to appear in China around the turn of the first millennium. All this suggests that there was ample opportunity for scientific interchange.

Chinese science also has points of contact with India. There are Chinese references in 636 AD to many Brahmin books on astronomy, medicine, and mathematics that are now lost. Around the same period, there are Chinese references to Indian knowledge of mineral acids.<sup>10</sup> There are records of Buddhist activity in building and repair of bridges along routes connecting China to India, and large bronze statues of the Buddha have been found as early as 734 AD, which must have involved the use of metal furnaces capable of melting about 1 ton of metal.<sup>11</sup> Already mentioned, is the oldest printed book, which is a copy of the Diamond Sutra, the most sacred of all Chinese Buddhist sutras. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, Buddhist mathematical textbooks in China were very common. A 12<sup>th</sup> century Confucian scholar cited by Needham states, "Nowadays even children learn mathematics from Buddhist textbooks which deal with the counting of infinite numbers of sand-grains..."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ching, *Chinese Religions*, p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> A. Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> C. A. Ronan, *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

Needham acknowledges that the interchange of scientific information between China and other Asian civilisations such as the Indian and Islamic ones requires further research.<sup>13</sup> But one important point emerges from the scanty information that already exists. It is not possible to study Chinese science in isolation, without reference to other Asian cultures. The period 600 – 1200 AD, during the so-called “dark age” of Europe, three Asian civilisations reached their height: Chinese, Indian and Islamic, and they had considerable contact with one another. It was also a period of revivals: the revival of Confucianism by the Neo-Confucianists during the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries in China, the revival of the teachings of the Upanishads by the religious leader Shankara in India during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the revival of ancient Greek learning in Europe. Interestingly, both the leading figures of the Chinese and Indian revivals, Chu Hsi and Shankara respectively, were accused of being “Crypto-Buddhists”.

A Table depicting some of these cross-cultural parallels in science, religion and philosophy is presented below. The Table is by no means definitive and there are many scientific achievements that have been omitted for reasons of space and clarity. Some general patterns nevertheless, do emerge from it. Firstly, during the Tang dynasty, which was when Buddhism in China was at its height, some of China's most enduring scientific discoveries such as gunpowder and the mariner's compass were made. Reference has already been made to specific inventions like bridge building and printing, which had direct Buddhist involvement. The great scientific achievements of the Sung dynasty in China roughly correlate with similar developments in the Islamic civilisation. They include improvements in clock design, construction of mechanical devices for astronomy, and the use of algebra. The very best of Chinese science, which occurred in the Tang and Sung dynasties, took place when China was open to Buddhist and Islamic cultures. They were periods when China's links with other countries were strong, through Central Asia to Islamic countries in the west, across the mountains south to India, eastwards to Japan, and down by sea around South East Asia.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen*, pp. 28-29.

Period	Religion and Philosophy	Science
600 -500 BC	Confucius, Lao Tze, Buddha, Socrates, Plato	Ancient Greek geometry, mathematical proofs, astronomy
270 BC-0 AD	Asoka and spread of Buddhism	* Jain Mathematics (large and small numbers, root extraction, sequences; etc) * Chinese "Nine chapters on the mathematical arts" (root extraction, number ratios etc)
0-100 AD	Beginning of Christian era and entry of Buddhism in China	
320-550 AD	Gupta Age in India -Buddhism still strong and dominant	* Indian Trigonometry, concept of zero, algebra, astronomical tables * Chinese solution of equations
618-907 AD	* Tang Dynasty – height of Buddhism in China * The rise and spread of Islam * Revival of "Hinduism" (Upanishads) in India (Shankara) * Beginnings of Confucian revival (Han Yu (768-824 AD))	* Chinese inventions of printing, mariner's compass, gunpowder, segmental arch bridge, mechanical clocks * Islamic commentaries on algebra, astronomical observatories, modern hospitals etc * Further developments in Indian mathematics
960-1279 AD	* Sung Dynasty Revival of Confucianism (Neoconfucianists, Chou Tun-I, Shao Yun, Chang Tsai, Ch'eng Hao, Ch'eng I, Chu Hsi) * Height of Islamic civilization * Greco/Christian revival in Europe (13 <sup>th</sup> century scholastics)	* Height of Chinese algebra, number theory, accurate water-wheel clock of Su Sung, clock-work mechanisms for astronomy by Shen Kua * Height of Islamic science: optics of Al-Hazen, medical advances of Avicenna, development of Algebra by mathematicians like Al-Kharizmi, use of zero in symbolic form ("Arabic numbers"), water-wheel clocks, astrolabe and armillary spheres for astronomy
1279-1368 AD	* Yuan dynasty (Mongol occupation of China)	

Another pattern that emerges from the above Table is that each revival occurred after an innovative period of science and religion. The revival of the Upanishads (Hinduism) by Shankara followed the scientifically creative Gupta period, the time of a second renaissance for Buddhism in India. The Neo-Confucianist revival followed on from innovative scientific discoveries in the Tang dynasty, a time when Buddhism reached its greatest popularity in China. The revival of Greek philosophy by the Christian Scholastics followed on from the scientific and religious achievements of the Islamic civilisation.

There is also an interesting similarity with respect to how Islam influenced the West and the impact of Buddhism in China. The great cultural impact of Islam on the West culminated with the European Renaissance, roughly 1000 years after its birth, while Buddhism inspired the Chinese Sung Renaissance, which occurred around 1000 years after its inception. The Neo-Confucianists, although borrowing much from Buddhism, claimed it to be directly from Confucian writings. Similarly, the Christian Scholastics, although using many concepts developed from within the Islamic world, claimed them to come either directly from the Bible, or from Aristotle. Both the Neo-Confucianists and Christian Scholastics were ethnocentric in their outlook.

Needham points out that understanding the multi-cultural roots of modern science helps us realise that many cultures have a share in the development of modern science. This means that no culture can claim to be intrinsically superior to any other on the basis of it being the originator of modern science:

"Science and its application need therefore no longer be regarded in China or by other Asian people as something for which they should feel themselves beholden to the generosity of the West, something with no roots in their own culture. On the contrary, it had many great and illustrious roots, roots which helped to sustain the scientific Renaissance itself, and it is right that the Chinese should become more and more conscious of them. Though *modern* science originated only in Europe, to modern science everyone in the last resort contributed.... When all debts are acknowledged... Asians and Europeans will be able to go forward together without hesitation, on a just and mutually appreciative basis,

'neither afore or after other', truly 'without any difference or inequality'.<sup>14</sup>

The same principle broadly speaking is also true within Asian science. The recognition that there were important foreign elements to the development of Chinese science implies mutual respect and equality amongst Asian cultures. Further research on the history of Chinese science may well benefit from correlating it to the development of science in other Asian civilisations.

## 2. Science in the Spiritual Traditions of China

The last section summarised some Chinese scientific achievements, and found them to be inextricably related to foreign influences coming from Buddhist and Islamic cultures. The question of how science is related to the sacred traditions that flourished in China is now considered. One possible approach is to first list criteria that are important for the growth of science, and then examine to what degree they are present in Chinese sacred literature. The following approach is a preliminary attempt to do precisely this. There are many pre-requisites for science to develop but only four will be mentioned here. They are discussed more fully elsewhere and will be stated here without discussion.<sup>15</sup> They are as follows:

- 1) Investigating/thinking for oneself and not relying upon tradition
- 2) Openness to learning from wherever it comes (from other cultures)
- 3) Underlying conviction in the rationality, unity and harmony of nature
- 4) Underlying conviction that we have the ability to understand/discover Nature's unity and harmony (that we are also rational)

These criteria for the growth of science take the form of individual ethics or beliefs. The social component to science for the purposes of this discussion will not be addressed. Selections from the scriptures of the

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<sup>14</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>15</sup> A. Khursheed, *Spiritual Foundations of Science*, *The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

three main sacred traditions that existed in China, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are now examined with the above criteria in mind.

## 2.1 Approach to Science from Within the Confucian Classics

The early official formulation of Confucian literature was endorsed by the Imperial Court of China in 175 AD. Confucianism became popular and was to be found in the "Five Books"; The Book of Documents, The Book of Poetry, The Book of Rites, The Book of Changes and The Spring and Autumn Annals. After a period of decline in the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), Confucian teachings underwent a revival in the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD). The leading scholar of the "Neo-Confucianist" revival was Chu Hsi (1130 – 1200 AD), and he reformulated the Confucian doctrines into the "Four Books", comprising: The Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and the writings of Mencius. Chu Hsi's version of the Confucian writings received official sanction, and became the basis of the state examination system for around 800 years. In the following discussion, citations will be taken from 'The Analects' and 'The Great Learning'.

A background ethic articulated quite clearly in Confucianism, which is encouraging for the study of science, is the pursuit of learning. Although education is usually spoken of in the context of self-cultivation, of acquiring virtues, there is an underlying respect for learning. Confucius summarised his concerns in the following way:

"The Master said, 'The leaving virtue without proper cultivation; the not thoroughly discussing what is learned; not being able to move towards righteousness of which a knowledge is gained; and not being able to change what is not good:- these are the things which occasion me solicitude.'" (Analects 7: 3)

There is the encouragement of acquiring the ethics of honesty and humility in our search for knowledge:

"The Master said, 'The study of strange doctrines is injurious indeed!' The Master said, 'Yû, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it; - this is knowledge.'" (Analects, 2: 16-17)

This attitude of mind is vital for the growth of science. On the other hand, Confucius regarded himself mainly as someone who sought traditional knowledge, whose mission it was to renew old wisdom:

"The Master said, 'I am not one who was born in the possession of knowledge; I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it there.'" (Analects, 7: 19)

If one then seeks to emulate Confucius's way of life, as was done later in the Confucian tradition, then following ancient knowledge will be the primary concern. Now renewing ancient wisdom in terms of rediscovering eternal spiritual ideals may be what Confucius had in mind, if this be the case, looking towards tradition may be beneficial. But if the same attitude is applied to scientific knowledge, then it is likely to be a hindrance to the growth of science.

Although there is reference to "an all-pervading unity" and "principles" of nature, they appear primarily in terms of improving human conduct:

"The Master said, 'Shan, my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity'. The disciple Tsang replied, 'Yes'. The Master went out, and the other disciples asked. Saying, 'what do his words mean?' Tsang said, 'The doctrine of our master is to be true to the principles of our nature and the benevolent exercise of them to others – this and nothing more.'" (Analects, 4: 15)

In 'The Great Learning', the text mentions that the ancients "first extended to the utmost their knowledge" and that this "lay in the investigation of things", which appears to be a very scientifically encouraging statement. But when examined more carefully, this process of "investigating things" is rooted in the "cultivation of the person".

"The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things... From the Son of Heaven

down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.” (The Great Learning, 4-6)

Cultivating human virtues need not necessarily be opposed to the growth of science. In fact, from a Bahá'í point of view, they should develop hand in hand. But Confucius was relatively silent about cosmological questions, such as the origin of the universe or the unity of Nature. He was more concerned with acquiring harmony within human nature. With this lack of explicit guidance, in practice, whether Confucianism was encouraging to science or not depended on the whims of the ruling elite.

In the Analects, the relationship with foreign people is mentioned several times. There is the following famous passage that refers to all men as “brothers”:

“Sze-mâ Niû, full of anxiety, said, ‘*other* men all have their brothers, I only have not.’ Tsz-hsiâ said to him, ‘There is the following saying which I have heard: - “Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honours depend upon Heaven.” ‘Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety: - then all within the four seas will be his brothers. What has the superior man to do with being distressed because he has no brothers?’” (Analects 12:5)

It is not clear what “within the four seas” means here, but it most likely refers to the known world for the Chinese at the time Confucius lived. The passage implies that a morally “superior” man does not need to be physically related to a brother, because through his elevated conduct, all men will treat him as if he were their brother. This passage suggests that moral behaviour transcends family ties, and by implication, racial ties, although that is not clearly stated.

Another passage, which relates to the same theme, is in the context of Confucius being disappointed with his reception in China, and him expressing his intention to live amongst the “wild tribes of the east”. Someone asked him, “They are rude. How can you do such a thing?” His reply was, “If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?” (Analects, 9: 13)

Confucius thought that the "rude" foreigners or "Barbarians" would no longer be uncivilised if a "superior man" were to live amongst them. This does not necessarily mean that all "superior" men come from China, or that all foreigners are "barbarians". But it does emphasise the power of moral transformation that moral conduct is more important than the race a person belongs to. So once again, moral behaviour is the primary concern, while racial allegiances in comparison, are secondary.

Passages like these should generally encourage a more open attitude towards people of a foreign race. However, there are some other passages that suggest China is superior to the "rude tribes of the east and north":

"... In festive ceremonies, it is better to be sparing than extravagant. In the ceremonies of mourning, it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to observances. The rude tribes of the east and north have their princes, and are not like the States of our great land which are without them." (Analects, 3:3-5)

It is not clear what is meant here, but historically, it had been interpreted to mean that the Chinese were superior to people of other races. The above passage was quoted by Confucianists to suggest that China without rulers is superior to foreign countries with rulers. In the "The Disposition of Error", a dialogue between a Confucian and Buddhist in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Confucian states: "Confucius said, 'The barbarians with a ruler are not as good as the Chinese without one.' Mencius criticised Ch'en Hsiang for rejecting his own education to adopt the ways of (the foreign teacher)..."<sup>16</sup>

In summary, there is in Confucian literature, a general respect for learning, but it is primarily in the context of acquiring human virtues. There is a tendency to look towards traditional knowledge, which might, if taken to apply to all forms of knowledge, be detrimental to the growth of science. Also, there are conflicting statements about how to treat foreigners, and Confucius is for the most part, silent about it. Confucius also avoids discussion of cosmological questions about the origin of the universe or whether there is an underlying unity of Nature. While none of these observations are directly against the practice of science, they are not strongly encouraging towards it either.

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<sup>16</sup> K. Reilly, *Readings in the World Civilizations*, Vol. 1, p. 168.

## 2.2 Approach to Science from Taoist Writings

Some excerpts from the Tao-Te Ching, the main body of writings attributed to Lao Tzu, the author of Taoism are given below. They are, in terms of the criteria considered here, very encouraging to the practice of science. Firstly, there is a definite origin to things (The Tao) and although it is in essence unknowable, it is subtle, and manifests itself in many different ways. The Tao is the way by which "we see the beginning of all things". Everything, including the world of Nature, derives its harmony and unity from the Tao. All are invited to discover the presence of the Tao, both in the world of Nature and in human nature. There are many mysteries to solve, and we are encouraged to delve into them. If we contemplate the Tao, it will reveal its mysteries to us. We must be all-embracing by "knowing the eternal". The citations demonstrating these points are as follows:

"The Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; the name that can be named is not the eternal name. The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth; the Named is the mother of all things. Therefore let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety, and let there always be being so we may see their outcome. The two are the same. But after they are produced, they have different names. They both may be called deep and profound. Deeper and more profound the door of all subtleties!" (Tao-Te Ching, 1)

"Hold on to the Tao of old in order to master the things of the present. From this one may know the primeval beginning [of the universe]. This is called the bond of Tao." (Tao-Te Ching, 14)

"The all-embracing quality of the great virtue (te) follows alone from Tao. The thing that is called Tao is eluding and vague. Vague and eluding, there is in it the form... Eluding and vague, in it are things. Deep and obscure, in it is the essence. The essence is very real; in it are evidences. From the time of old until now, its name (manifestations) ever remains. By which we may see the beginning of all things. How do I know that the beginning of all things are so? Through this (Tao)." (Tao-Te Ching, 21)

"Tao produced the One. The One produced the two. The two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things. The ten thousand

things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of the material force they achieve harmony.” (Tao-Te Ching, 42)

“The best (man) is like water. Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them. It dwells in (lowly) places that all disdain. This is why it is so near to Tao. [The best man] in his dwelling loves the earth. In his heart, he loves what is profound. In his associations, he loves humanity...” (Tao-Te Ching, 8)

“He who knows the eternal is all-embracing.” (Tao-Te Ching, 16)

The Tao-Te Ching contains some of the most poetic statements on the harmony of Nature in all the world’s sacred scriptures. It is a religious tradition in which the Tao, as a Creator-God, has much in common with the Jehovah, Father or Allah of the Abrahamic religions. In both cases, the world of Nature derives its origin and unity from a supreme source, an infinitely mysterious and subtle being. In both cases, God and the Tao are in their essence unknowable. In both cases, God is revealed through Nature’s laws and lies at the root of human inspiration. True, the Tao is not described in human personal terms, nor does it directly intervene in human affairs like the God of the Abrahamic traditions. The Tao is to be contacted by calm contemplation, by appreciating Nature’s inherent harmony and balance, by discovering universal harmony.

Historically, Taoists made many scientific investigations to uncover the mysteries of the Tao. Taoist diviners during the Han times were responsible for the early development of the magnetic compass, while gunpowder was developed in the Tang dynasty from Taoist alchemist experiments in search of longevity. Their science was mixed up with notions of predicting the future, of finding an “elixir of life”. There may have been elements of magic in their science, but their belief in the universal harmony of Nature, in the existence of profound mysteries, and their conviction that we can be empowered to discover these mysteries, had a very positive effect on the development of science.

### 2.3 Approach to Science in Chinese Buddhism

There have been numerous schools of Buddhism in China. Excerpts from the source writings of only two of them will be given here. Both the Hua-Yen School and Chan Buddhism have their roots in the Tang dynasty. Both are distinctively Chinese and had significant influence on Chinese philosophy and religion around a millennium ago. In the case of the Hua-Yen school, it did not exist as a school of Buddhism in India.

The Hua-Yen School is well known for its "one-and-all" philosophy, which not only emphasises the unity of Nature, but also stresses the belief that the "one and many" are linked through the law of causation. When one understands, "great wisdom can be achieved". In the "One-and-all" philosophy of Fa-Tsang (643-712 AD) for instance, the most well known spokesman of the Hua-Yen school, the "one and many" principle is described in the following way:

"All phenomena which exist spontaneously can be combined because they rise through causation. As the one and the many totally involve each other, we look at one particle of dust and everything suddenly becomes manifest... The reason is that, when the mind understands, all dharmas can be free and at ease, and because the principle is clear, great wisdom can be achieved."<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere, Fa-Tsang touches on the profound mystery behind universal causation, its paradox of embracing all in one, and how, "if we investigate its mystery", enlightenment can be attained.

"From the above principles, the theory of things coming into existence through causation is unfathomable; thus its many gates are universally alone. All things are exhaustively combined as one, and all infinities are embraced to form a totality. If we investigate its mystery, although (coming into existence through causation) may occupy a narrow position, it is always broad, and if we wish to investigate its source, we find that the deeper it is, the shallower it becomes. The principle of coming into existence through causation is great indeed!"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 424.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 419-20.

These citations not only stress the unity of Nature, but they encourage us to understand the "principles" that give rise to this harmony. In terms of the criteria for the growth of science given earlier, these writings are extremely encouraging.

One of the most influential formulations of Chan Buddhism comes from Hui-neng (638-713 AD), its 6<sup>th</sup> Patriarch. The historical details that surround him, as well as the earlier Patriarchs need not concern us here.

A disciple of Hui-neng, Yoka Daishi, presents the "one and many" Chinese Buddhist tradition in terms of the moon's light being one, although it is scattered over many surfaces:

"One Nature, perfect and pervading, circulates in all natures; One Reality, all comprehensive, contains within itself all realities; the one moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water, and all the moons in the waters are embraced within the one moon; the Dharma-body of all the Buddhas enters in my own being, and my own being is found in union with theirs..."<sup>19</sup>

It is not certain where this analogy comes from, but it was used later by the Neo-Confucianists.

One of the main contributions of Chan Buddhism, in terms of it encouraging scientific investigation, was its principle of discovering truth for oneself, as opposed to following tradition. Chan Buddhism pointed to the "Buddha-nature" within everyone, and inculcated methods of meditation to achieve enlightenment, as opposed to relying on the authority of tradition. Hui-neng for instance, explicitly stated:

"All scriptures and writings, both Mahayana and Hinayana, and the twelve sections are provided for men. It is because man possesses the nature of wisdom that these were instituted. If there were no men in the world, there would naturally be no dharmas. We know, therefore, that dharmas exist because of man and that there are all these scriptures

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<sup>19</sup> Yoka Daishi, disciple of Hui-Neng, cited by D. T. Suzuki in his *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 97.

because there are people to preach them... we know that all dharmas are immanent in one's mind and person. Why not seek in one's mind the sudden realization of the original nature of True Thusness? The *P'usa chieh ching* says, 'We are originally pure in our self-nature. If we understand our minds and see our nature, we shall achieve Buddhahood ourselves.'<sup>20</sup>

Even within Buddhist schools in China, Chan Buddhism acquired a reputation for being unorthodox. Its meditation practices were specifically designed to rely on one's own individual investigations, rather than follow set forms of meditation. The Chinese philosopher Wing-Tsit Chan describes various novel techniques that Ch'an Buddhist monks employed, so that their students would not blindly follow tradition. They prescribed travel, to "broaden one's perspective and deepen one's insight". They adopted an approach to "never to tell too plainly", so that the student must learn for himself. There was also the *koan* – the question and enigmatic answer. Lastly, they employed shouting and beating – an "unorthodox way of shocking the pupil out of his outmoded metal habits and preconceived opinions."<sup>21</sup>

Chan Buddhism was extremely influential in encouraging openness to foreign knowledge. This was firstly due to the obvious reason that Buddhism itself came from outside China. Many Chinese Buddhists during the Tang dynasty embarked upon the long and arduous journey South, across the mountains to India. It is quite likely that Buddhist monks were the means through which Indian and Chinese science came together. There was also another reason for Buddhism's openness to learning from wherever it came. Buddhism is intrinsically universal in its outlook and does not encourage a parochial approach to learning. This is why in its history, wherever there arose rivalries between various sects of Buddhism, there would also be movements to unite them. During the Tang dynasty, there were differences between Buddhists living in the East and those in the West. In the "Pure Land" sect of Buddhism, some of those living in the East came to regard a place in the West to be a "pure land", where they believed the faithful would be reborn. They recited the name "Amitabha" to achieve this. But when Hui-neng was asked about

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<sup>20</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 438-9.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 428-9.

this tradition, he made it clear that Buddhism involved the search of a "pure land within" rather than a specific place:

"Although you are native of the East, if your mind is pure you are sinless. On the other hand, even if you were a native of the West, an impure mind could not free you from sin. When the people of the East commit a sin, they recite the name of Amit bha and pray to be born in the West; but in the case of sinners who are natives of the West, where should they pray to be born? Ordinary men and ignorant people understand neither the essence of mind nor the pure land within themselves, so they wish to be born in the East or the West. But to the enlightened everywhere is the same. As the Buddha said, 'No matter where they happen to be, they are always happy and comfortable.'"<sup>22</sup>

During the Tang dynasty, there also arose a difference in meditation techniques between Northern and Southern schools of Buddhism. Within Chan Buddhism, those in the North stressed "gradual enlightenment" of the mind, while those in the South preferred "sudden enlightenment". There was also a great cultural divide between the monk and the "barbarian" (uneducated). But Hui-neng preached a more universal outlook, and directed his teachings specifically to overcome such differences:

"Although people are distinguished as northerners and southerners, there is neither north nor south in the Buddha-nature. The physical body of the barbarian and that of the monk are different. But what difference is there in their Buddha-nature."<sup>23</sup>

Hui-neng himself came from an illiterate background, and his becoming the 6<sup>th</sup> Patriarch for Chan Buddhism was in itself, a significant triumph for the more universal approach. All this was of course, most helpful in creating an atmosphere of openness to foreign learning, and it was therefore important to the growth of Chinese science.

Apart from the positive influence on the level of ethics and values, there were some instances where Buddhist philosophy directly suggested more

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<sup>22</sup> *The Sutra of Hui-neng*, p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 430-1.

enlightened ways to understand cosmology. There was for instance, the Buddhist concept of space being infinite. This contrasted sharply with the finite closed way of seeing the universe in medieval Christendom. Hui-neng for instance speaks of space as an "illimitable void", and uses it as a metaphor to understand the infinitely great void (universe) of the mind:

"The capacity of the mind is as great as that of space. It is infinite... the illimitable void of the universe is capable of holding myriads of things of various shape and form, such as the sun, the moon, stars, mountains, rivers, worlds, springs... space takes in all these, and so does the voidness of our nature. We say the essence of mind is great because it embraces all things, since all things are within our nature. ... you should know that the mind is very great in capacity, since it pervades the whole dharmadh tu [the sphere of the Law, i.e, the universe]. When we use it, we can know something of everything, and when we use it to its full capacity we shall know all. All in one and one in all..."<sup>24</sup>

The Chinese Buddhist teaching that the power of the mind embraces the Universe, that it contains a universe greater than the physical universe, is very similar to Bahá'í teachings. Bahá'u'lláh states that:

"The All-Merciful hath conferred upon man the faculty of vision, and endowed him with the power of hearing. Some have described him as the 'lesser world,' when, in reality, he should be regarded as the 'greater world'."<sup>25</sup> The concept of the human mind "embracing the world of Nature", is a dominant theme in the talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.<sup>26</sup> The belief that the human mind is capable of understanding the world of Nature, capable of looking at it from a "higher" perspective, of studying it "objectively", implies that it must in some way be fundamentally different from it. Science is obviously reliant on the human mind being intrinsically different to what it observes, otherwise, none of its conclusions would be valid.

<sup>24</sup> *The Sutra of Hui-neng*, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, p. 340.

<sup>26</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 239-244.

### 3. The Influence of Buddhism on the Neo-Confucianists

The influence of Buddhism on Chinese philosophy and religion were far reaching. It nurtured a revival in Confucian thought during the Sung dynasty known as Neo-Confucianism. China, for the last 800 years, has largely been dominated by the Neo-Confucianist tradition, and the Sung period of Neo-Confucianism is regarded to be the golden period of Chinese philosophy. The Neo-Confucianists were themselves, strongly anti-Buddhist and anti-Taoist. One of their explicit aims was to eliminate Buddhist influence from China, and they were responsible for directing much Nationalistic propaganda against it. However, the Buddhist and Taoist influence on their philosophy is unmistakable, and although they claimed that their philosophy was founded on Confucianist teachings, it borrowed a great deal from Buddhist and Taoist doctrines. This subject has received considerable scholarly attention over the last few decades only a brief introduction to it will be given here. Carson Chang, in his two-volume treatise on the "Development of Neo-Confucian Thought", devotes a chapter to the Buddhist influence, calling it "Buddhism as stimulus to Neo-Confucianism". He summarises the Buddhist influence in the following way:

"Neo-Confucianism was one of the results of the introduction to China of Buddhism from India. Neo-Confucianism was no product of the cross-breeding of Buddhism and the Chinese tradition, but rather a declaration of independence from Buddhism after China had been under the influence of Indian thought for a long period. This, however, did not leave the Chinese mind entirely free from some of the more valuable elements in the Buddhist way of thinking. Without the introduction of Buddhism into China there would have been no Neo-Confucianism, and this despite the fact that according to Chinese practice Confucian scholars were exceedingly reluctant to admit the influence of Buddhism, and were anxious to make clear that they would have no traffic whatever with that school of thought."<sup>27</sup>

Wing-Tsit Chan, the author of the widely read "A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy", also frequently refers to the great impact Buddhism had on

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<sup>27</sup> C. Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. I, p. 43.

Chinese philosophy. He describes Chan Buddhism's influence on aspects of Neo-Confucianism to be "Zen in Confucian disguise":

"It was inevitable that such a philosophy would exercise a profound influence. Its impact on Chinese philosophy was great. The new doctrine of seriousness (*ching*) in Neo-Confucianism was one of its direct products, and the whole idealistic Neo-Confucian movement of several hundred years, initiated by Lu Hsiang-shan (Lu Chiu-yüan, 1139-1193) and culminating in Wang Yang-ming (Wang Shou-jen 1472-1529), was so much influenced by it that it has often been called Zen in Confucian disguise. Even the Neo-Confucian tradition of compiling and publishing the recorded sayings of philosophers is an imitation of those of Zen."<sup>28</sup>

Recently, a complete volume of "Buddhism in the Sung" has been compiled in which most of the authors follow through the theme of how Buddhism contributed to the great cultural achievements of the Sung dynasty. They stress, in particular, Buddhist influences on the Neo-Confucianist movement.<sup>29</sup> The purpose here, is not to review the work of the main Neo-Confucian philosophers, starting with Chou Tun-I (1017-1073), on to Shao Yung (1011-1077), through to Chang Tsai (1020-1077), Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085) and Ch'eng I (1033-1107), culminating with the prolific grand synthesis of Chu Hsi (1129-1200). The aim here, is to present some Buddhist teachings which inspired the Confucian Renaissance.

The Neo-Confucianist movement had its roots with Han Yü (768-824 AD), an influential Confucian poet of the Tang dynasty. His scathing attacks on Buddhism and Taoism betray the overt Nationalist objective of the Neo-Confucianists. In a letter to the Emperor, he protested against plans to bring a Buddhist relic to the capital for an exhibition:

"The Buddha was born in a barbarian country. His language was different from that of the Chinese, his clothes were different, he could not speak about the merits of our ancient emperors. If he were living today and asked for an audience, Your Majesty would probably receive him and order the officials of the protocol to give him a dinner party. Then he

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<sup>28</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 429-430.

<sup>29</sup> *Buddhism in the Sung*, edited by P. N. Gregory and D. A. Getz.

might be presented with new clothes, and sent away, in order to prevent his corrupting our people."<sup>30</sup>

Han Yü's main objection was that the Buddha was not Chinese, a "barbarian". Not only did the Buddha not eat and dress like the Chinese, but more importantly, he did not praise the ancient Chinese Emperors, indicating the central role that traditional authority played for the Confucian mind. In underlying the danger that Buddhism posed, Han Yü pointed to the danger of "corrupting" the Chinese people. This brings out the political nature of the Confucianist mind. They perceived the Buddhist threat mainly in social terms, not spiritual or philosophical ones.

Han Yü, like the Confucian in the "Disposition of error" already cited, appeals to the recorded sayings of Confucius to justify his anti-foreign bias, "The barbarians even *with* a King were not to be compared to the Chinese even *without* a king."<sup>31</sup> But as already mentioned, the original text in the Analects (3:3-5) upon which this is founded, is far from clear, and there are other passages to suggest that racial ties are secondary to moral conduct (see for instance, Analects 12:5). Han Yü even stigmatised Lao-Tzu as a "barbarian", knowing perfectly that he was Chinese<sup>32</sup>. Han Yü's recommended action was along the following lines, "Let a man be a man. Buddhist books should be burned. Monasteries should be used as dwelling places."<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, this is precisely what happened on some occasions. In 845 AD, under Emperor Wu-tsung, 4,600 large temples and monasteries, and 40,000 smaller ones were burned and demolished. Neo-Confucianist criticisms of Taoism and Buddhism were inseparable from a nationalist propaganda to regain Confucianist influence over the Chinese people.

Many statements within Neo-Confucianist literature reveal their Taoist and Buddhist influence. Take for instance, some statements from Chu Hsi, the most famous of all Neo-Confucianists. He writes:

"Fundamentally there is only one Great Ultimate, yet each of the myriad things has been endowed with it and each in itself possesses the Great

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<sup>30</sup> C. Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

Ultimate in its entirety. This is similar to the fact there is only one moon in the sky but when its light is scattered upon rivers and lakes, it can be seen everywhere. It cannot be said that the moon has been split."<sup>34</sup>

This citation closely parallels the former Ch'an image of: "One Reality, all comprehensive, contains within itself all realities; the one moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water, and all the moons in the waters are embraced within the one moon; the Dharma-body of all the Buddhas enters in my own being, and my own being is found in union with theirs..."<sup>35</sup> Here, instead of the universal Buddha being reflected in everything, it is the "Great Ultimate".

Another instance where Ch'an Buddhist influence is evident in Chu Hsi's philosophy is in his ideal of arriving at a mental state of "sudden release":

"We must eliminate the obstructions of selfish desires, and then it will be pure and clear and able to know all. When the principles of things and events are investigated to the utmost, penetration will come as a sudden release..."<sup>36</sup> The "sudden release" of understanding here closely parallels the "sudden enlightenment" of the southern Ch'an Buddhist school led by Hui-neng.

The goal of mind-control, was something explicitly associated with Buddhism and had never been a major concern in the Confucianist tradition. Yet Chu Hsi weaves it into his philosophy of "investigating all things":

"As to the exerting of the mind to the utmost, it is to investigate things and study their principles to the utmost, to arrive at broad penetration, and thus to be able fully to realize the principle (li) embodied in the mind".<sup>37</sup>

Although Chu Hsi wrote to disassociate his philosophy of mind from the Buddhist one, it is based upon simplifying and distorting the Buddhist approach. In the context of him replying to the accusation that his philosophy of mind bears similarity to the Buddhist one, Chu Hsi states

<sup>34</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 639.

<sup>35</sup> D.T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> W.T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* p. 630.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 604.

for instance, that Buddhists "seek the mind with the mind", and that it is like the "eye seeing the eye"<sup>38</sup>. Of course, this is not the Buddhist position. Buddhism seeks to go beyond the mind with respect to its inherent egoism so that it can discover the "universal mind". Chu Hsi's views of Buddhist doctrines are better understood in terms of him having an underlying feeling of racial superiority, which he sometimes made explicit. After criticising the Buddhist approach to the mind, he states, "But unless one is a superior man who thinks accurately and sifts clearly, how can he avoid being deluded in this matter?"<sup>39</sup> "Superior" here of course, is the word the Chinese used for themselves, as opposed to the word "barbarians", which they reserved for foreigners.

Chou Tun-i and Chu Hsi made commentaries on the "Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate", a diagram of Taoist origin. The Neo-Confucianists used it to provide an explanation for the creation and evolution of the universe, something that is missing in ancient Confucian writings. Neo-Confucianists used the diagram to provide a response to Buddhist cosmology.

There was a clear influence of the Buddhist doctrine of "universal compassion for all things" on the philosophy of Chang Tsai. In his *Western Inscription*, he wrote: "My body reaches as far as the borderline of heaven and earth; the commandment of heaven and earth constitutes my nature; men are my brothers; animals and inanimate objects are my fellow-creatures..."<sup>40</sup> Also, the Neo-Confucianist practice of "quiet-sitting" was a form of meditation inspired by Ch'an Buddhism.

Perhaps the most important contribution made by Ch'an Buddhism was the injunction of not blindly following tradition, but investigating things for oneself. This was incorporated in Neo-Confucianist doctrine, and became known as "investigating principle to the utmost".

There were many examples of Buddhist monks being respected for their learning by the Confucian scholar officials or literati. Chang Chiu Ch'eng (1092-1159) was a famous Confucian scholar who was also a disciple of

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*

<sup>40</sup> C. Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 1, p. 131.

the Buddhist (Ch'an) monk, Ta-hui Tsung-Kao (1089-1163). Chu Hsi accused Chang of being "outwardly Confucian but secretly Buddhist". In fact Chu Hsi was himself later accused of being a "Crypto-Buddhist". Although many Neo-Confucianists in public life ridiculed and attacked Buddhism, the same people privately acknowledged their debt to Buddhist teachings. Chang, speaking to his nephew who was intolerant of Buddhism, said of his Buddhist teacher:

"The subtle benefits our teaching [Confucianism] has gained from the Buddhist dharma are great. Do not be so quick to denigrate it. The reason why I befriended the monk Ta-hui Tsung-Kao is because I got such enjoyment from his extraordinary ideas and discussions..."<sup>41</sup>

The same kind of situation existed for Han Yü, the pioneer of Neo-Confucianism. Although he was publicly anti-Buddhist, on the individual level, he had admiration for a monk named Ta-tien. This inconsistency between public and private life was quite typical of many Neo-Confucianists. The Buddhist association did not of course, go unnoticed. Han Yü was accused of being a secret Buddhist. In his defence, Han Yü wrote:

"Your story that I am converted to Buddhism is mere gossip. When I was in Ch'ao-chuo, I met an old monk called Ta-tien [a Ch'an disciple of the monk Shih-t'ou, 700-790 AD], who was intelligent and well-versed in philosophy. Since I was living in exile in a remote place, and could find no person with whom to discuss, I invited him to come to the city and stay about two weeks. Ta-tien is a man who looks with contempt upon the world, and who has his own convictions about truth. He is not one whit stirred by what is going on in the world. Though I did not understand his discourses, I was well aware that his mind was thoroughly intelligent and unaware of puzzles. Such a man is rare, and I was glad to consider him an acquaintance..."<sup>42</sup> It is significant that Han Yü's admiration of Ta-tien was based upon his intelligence and detachment from the world.

There were also Buddhist monks who were so knowledgeable in science, history, literature, poetry, and the Confucian tradition, that they even became advisors to the Emperor. Take for instance Tsan-ning (919-1001

<sup>41</sup> P. N. Gregory and D. A. Getz, *Buddhism in the Sung*, p. 84.

<sup>42</sup> C. Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 1, pp. 127-8.

AD), he was so admired for his knowledge of the Confucian tradition, that he was known as a "Confucian monk". He was a *wen* master, that is, someone who was part of the movement to revive Confucian learning. Interestingly, he was renowned for his scientific learning. He for instance, gave correct explanations of luminescent objects and invisible ink and gained great respect from Confucian officials who were otherwise anti-Buddhist.<sup>43</sup>

All this goes to show that Buddhism was an inspiration to Neo-Confucianism and to the growth of science in China. It should be mentioned in passing here, that these observations are diametrically opposite to those arrived at by the historian Joseph Needham. Needham cites some positive influences of Buddhism, but then comes to the following conclusion:

"When all is said and done, though, Buddhism does not seem to have helped the development of science in China. It was essentially inimical to it as any philosophy built on a profound rejection of the world was bound to be... Buddhism, it is true, was a great civilising force in Central Asia, but in China, where there was already a civilisation of a high order, matters were rather different."<sup>44</sup>

In fact, in support of this conclusion, there is an instance of Needham citing Chu Hsi's criticisms of Buddhism.<sup>45</sup> But as already pointed out, Neo-Confucian criticisms of Buddhism are replete with an underlying Nationalistic agenda and feelings of racial superiority, which was made explicit on many occasions. Moreover, to dismiss the Buddhist contribution on the grounds that its philosophy involves a "rejection of the world" is to misunderstand both Buddhism and science. In its open declaration of investigating truth for oneself and not blindly following tradition, in its profound conviction that the human mind can discover the secrets of nature, in its inherent belief in the unity of nature, in its concept of universal causation, and much more besides, Buddhism has been extremely encouraging to the practice of science. There is also much more to science than empirical observations. Observations need to be carefully

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<sup>43</sup> P. N. Gregory and D. A. Getz, *Buddhism in the Sung*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>44</sup> C. A. Ronan, *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 2, Chap. 14, pp. 271-2.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 267-8.

selected, interpreted and valued, and this involves creative powers of the mind that are both rational and spiritual.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. Parallels between the Neo-Confucianists and the Christian Scholastics

The Neo-Confucianists had many points in common with the medieval Christian scholastics and ancient Greeks like Aristotle. All of them, in one way or another, had versions of the "One in Many" paradox. The Neo-Confucianists referred to an eternal unitary realm they called *ri*, manifesting itself in diverse physical ways, *ch'i*. Chu Hsi stated, "*ri* is one, but its manifestations are demonstrated in thousands of ways", and "each particular thing forms a Supreme Ultimate in itself".<sup>47</sup> The relationship of the "Supreme Ultimate" or *ri* to individual objects is very much like the relationship between "universals" and "particulars" in ancient Greek thought, which were debated at great length by medieval scholastics. The "Supreme Ultimate" is used on other occasions like Aristotle's "Final Cause" or his "Unmoved Cause", and is also similar to the "First Cause" of the Scholastics. Chu Hsi's dual model of human nature, of an eternal realm hidden within a transient mind, like a "pearl in dirty water"<sup>48</sup>, has similarities to the Form/Body distinction of Aristotle's philosophy, and the half-animal/half-angel doctrine in Christianity. The Neo-Confucianists believed in different grades of life, each manifesting to its own degree, the inherent *ri*.

This has similarities to Aristotle's differing levels of "souls" (vegetable, animal and human). Like Aristotle, the Neo-Confucianists thought that human reason was the distinguishing feature that made people different from animals. Like Plato's form of the Good, the Neo-Confucianists believed in the existence of an objective eternal universal moral order. In short, the kind of philosophy that was being pursued in China around 1000 years ago, although in name very different, and ostensibly humanist (as opposed to religious or theological), was in fact much like the

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<sup>46</sup> For more on this subject, see A. Khursheed, "The Spiritual Foundations of Science", *The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review*, Vol 1, pp. 3-22.

<sup>47</sup> C. Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 1, p. 257.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 262.

philosophy/theology of the medieval scholastics. Around exactly the same period we have: Averroes (1126-98 AD) demonstrating the harmony of Aristotle's philosophy with the Quran, Maimonides (1135-1204 AD) formulating the harmony of Aristotle's philosophy with the Torah, and Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) writing of the harmony of Aristotle's philosophy with the Bible. Their philosophies had many areas in common with Neo-Confucianism as articulated by Chu Hsi (1131-1200 AD), and in fact, all these schools of philosophy, whether in the East or West, in their own ways, express harmony between science and religion.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century European pioneers of science, such as Galileo and Kepler echoed many of the same fundamental beliefs articulated by the medieval scholastics, such as the unity and rationality of nature, and the essential harmony of science and religion. One simple illustration of this is the metaphor of "The Book of Nature", where the world of Nature is likened to the revelation of scripture. Galileo for instance states:

"Philosophy is written in this grand book the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and to read the alphabet in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it."<sup>49</sup>

Galileo is often portrayed to be modern in his outlook, and his work is usually thought to have opposed medieval scholasticism, but in the above quotation, there are echoes of the scholastic doctrine. Kepler also referred to mathematics being the script of the Book of Nature.<sup>50</sup> Broadly speaking, the same is true for the other 17<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of modern science. Viewed from this perspective, the most lasting influence of medieval scholasticism was its doctrine on the harmony of science and religion.

On the other hand, medieval scholasticism is also known for impeding scientific progress. Something that was cited by the 17<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of modern science to be an obstacle for the growth of science was the

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<sup>49</sup> S. Drake, *Galileo*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> A. Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 268.

University Aristotelian tradition of learning. Aristotle's philosophy had been made a core and compulsory part of university education by Christian scholastics since the rise of universities in Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Those who worked within Aristotle's school of philosophy were known as "Peripatetics". In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Francis Bacon, Descartes and Galileo, all wrote of the necessity to remove Aristotelian learning from the curriculum of European universities. In Galileo's words:

"There remain in opposition to my work some stern defenders of every minute argument of the Peripatetics. So far as I can see, their education consisted in being nourished from infancy on the opinion that philosophizing is and can be nothing but to make a comprehensive survey of the texts of Aristotle, that from divers passages they may quickly collect and throw together a great number of solutions to any proposed problem. They wish never to raise their eyes from those pages - as if this great book of the universe had been written to be read by nobody but by Aristotle, and his eyes had been destined to see for all posterity."<sup>51</sup>

Galileo himself had to reject Aristotelian theories before he could make progress. An obvious example that comes to mind is Aristotle's impetus theory of motion, which was defended by the university Peripatetics, and which needed to be rejected before Galileo could advance the modern description of projectile motion. Galileo's references to the Peripatetics suggest that they were largely concerned about preserving Aristotle's tradition of learning, rather than investigating matters for themselves. Understood in this way, the scholastics had institutionalised a tradition of learning that impeded the growth of science. On the need for science to rely on individual investigation, as opposed to traditional authority, Galileo wrote:

"It appears to me that they who in proof of anything rely simply on the weight of authority, without adducing any argument in support of it, act very absurdly. I, on the contrary, wish to be allowed to raise questions freely and to answer without any adulation [of authorities] as becomes those who are truly in search of the truth."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 434.

<sup>52</sup> S. Drake, *Galileo*, p. 23.

There are many historical similarities between medieval Christian scholastics and the Neo-Confucianists in the context of the history of science. The following table summaries some of them.

<b>Comparison between European Scholastics and Chinese Neo-Confucianists</b>		
<i>Common elements</i>	<i>Christian Scholastics</i>	<i>Chinese Confucianists</i>
Both sought to revive ancient traditions	Philosophy of Aristotle	Tradition of Confucius
Both were inspired by foreign influences and then sought to suppress them	Christian scholasticism set out to suppress influence of Islamic philosophy/theology	Neo-Confucianists set out to suppress influence of Buddhism
Both became part of orthodox doctrine that lasted for around 800 years	Aquinas theology became part of official Catholic doctrine	Chu Hsi philosophy became part of official ideology of the ruling elite
Both were ethnocentric and exclusivists with respect to other cultures	Rejected everything non-Christian/Greek	Rejected everything non-Chinese
Both incorporated ancient doctrines into a formal education system	Aristotelian tradition in newly created European universities	Chinese state examination system based on Neo-Confucian formulation of Confucian texts
Both ancient traditions held back progress of science	Scholastics delayed the Copernican revolution by making the university curriculum Greco-Christian, and so were slow to absorb developments in Asian theoretical science, mathematics, also the Peripatetics opposed 17 <sup>th</sup> century scientists like Galileo.	Confucianists opposed all foreign learning, making it difficult to learn Greek geometry, Indian trigonometry, Islamic astronomy, so that they did not have all the necessary pieces of the puzzle to develop modern science

The main points which emerge from the comparison is that both Christian scholastics and Neo-Confucianists over-emphasised the role of ancient learning and institutionalised them into rigid formal systems of education. The Chinese state examination system, which was based entirely on the study of Confucian texts, excluded not only Taoist and Buddhist education, but also did not include scientific subjects. This examination system dominated and dictated the pattern of education in China for over 800 years, and it in effect, created a rote-learning environment of education, where ancient Confucian texts dominated all forms of scholarly activity. Many generations of Confucian scholars in the centuries following the Neo-Confucianist pioneers, looked to ancient Confucian texts for their scientific inspiration. But unlike the Neo-Confucianists, they did not find a philosophy in these texts that explicitly encouraged scientific investigation. The problem had been created by the Neo-Confucianists themselves, who had derived their inspiration from Buddhism and Taoism, but wrongly attributed it to ancient Confucian writings. Unlike the situation in Europe, where the Aristotelian scholastic tradition at universities was overthrown, there was no comparable revolution in the Chinese educational system. The Confucian system of education in China was for the most part, unchallenged. This greatly impeded the growth of science in China, since progress in science depends on thinking for oneself, as opposed to following tradition.

The Christian scholastics were Eurocentric in their outlook and this also retarded progress in science. It meant for instance that the contributions of India and China in the pure sciences, which were well known in the Arab-Islamic world, were not recognised in Europe for many centuries. Needham cites the reason for this being the highly selective translations that were made from Arabic into Latin in medieval Europe. He states:

"It is not that there was no contact between Arabic civilization and East Asian science; quite the contrary. But for some reason or other, when the translations were being made from Arabic into Latin, it was always the famous authors of Mediterranean antiquity who were chosen, and not the books of Islamic scholars concerning the science of India and China".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> J. Needham, *Clerks and Craftsmen*, p. 15.

A similar problem existed in China. The Neo-Confucianists succeeded in creating a hostile attitude towards the learning of other cultures. In fact, rejecting all forms of foreign learning had been one of their founding aims. This meant that in subsequent centuries, the ruling elite, schooled only in the Confucian classics, was not so open to learning from other cultures as their predecessors had been during the Tang and Sung dynasties. This meant that China was deprived of crucial scientific advances, such as Greek geometry, Indian astronomy, and Islamic astronomy, which all proved important to the development of modern science in Europe.

Equally important, is the Neo-Confucian opposition to Buddhism and Taoism within China. This resulted in Neo-Confucianism depriving itself of spiritual traditions that were rich in scientific inspiration, and as a result, Chinese science declined as Neo-Confucianism rose to power. Seen from this perspective, it is perhaps no coincidence that the decline of innovative science and the decline of Buddhism in China occurred over approximately the same period, that is, the one stretching from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Through adopting the Neo-Confucianist policy of not accepting learning and wisdom from other cultures, both within and from outside China, China deprived itself of the necessary pieces of the puzzle from which the modern scientific revolution was made. These observations may provide the basis for a solution to "Needham's puzzle": as to why China did not develop modern science.<sup>54</sup>

It is perhaps instructive at this point to remind ourselves of the demise of Neo-Confucianism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when China suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of various foreign powers. Although the invading countries had armies numerically much smaller than the Chinese one, they were technologically much more superior, and this proved to be the decisive element in their victory. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is, of course, well known for being a crisis point for Confucianism in China. It was a time when many of the Chinese elite rebelled against the Neo-Confucianist orthodoxy and sought to make reforms. Significantly, the crisis brought about a revival of Buddhism in China. Ian Mabbitt, a historian on modern

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<sup>54</sup> J. Needham, *The Grand Titration*, Chap. 6.

China, notes that most the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese reformers drew much inspiration from Buddhism:

"China's modern "revolutionaries" grew up in a tradition of rebellion where Buddhism was an integral part of the surroundings, like wallpaper. But the influence of Buddhism upon the intellectual life of the new men, who sought during the last hundred years to bring their country into the modern world, is indeed direct and traceable... Buddhism, as a tradition of heterodoxy with something to offer to intelligent men, was of very considerable interest to the fathers of reform in old China. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the confrontation with a menacing western civilization which could not readily be accommodated to the place assigned to it by orthodox thought compelled many Chinese thinkers to distance themselves from their own culture, seeking to assess it critically as one among many, not as the only possible framework for thought. Liang Qichao (Liang Ch'ch'ao, 1873-1929), one of the later products of this movement, looked back at the intellectual currency of its protagonists and wrote that 'among the late Ch'ing "Scholars of the New Learning", there were almost none who did not have some connection with Buddhism.' ..."<sup>55</sup>

Mabbitt judges the influence of Buddhism on modern China to be such a spiritually profound one, that he predicts it will grow and dominate Chinese culture in the future:

"This Part begins with a prediction. However irrelevant Buddhism may seem to modern Chinese culture now, it will in the coming years emerge bit by bit as an influence of no mean order upon the national psyche; and the forms of its influence will appear, not to have re-emerged after long eclipse, but to have been always there. It is therefore proper to give it special attention. This attention is unusual, because it is usually Confucianism that commands our notice. There are those who say that in China the past refuses to lie down dead, but their argument is usually nothing to do with Buddhism. It is the mandarin, not the bonze, who has discarded his robes; and he has put on the new-pressed uniform of the commissar."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> I. W. Mabbitt, *Modern China*, p. 139.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* p. 101.

These observations on Buddhism in modern China reinforce the theme pursued here, that Buddhism has had a lasting impact on scientific and cultural progress in China. The universal, egalitarian, non-partisan principles of Buddhism contrast sharply with the elitist, nationalistic doctrines of Neo-Confucianism, and of the two, it is Buddhism that seems more in tune with the modern world. There is an interesting historical comparison that can be made between China and Japan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Both Buddhism and Confucianism coexisted in these cultures, but their response to the modern world was quite different. As is well known, Japan adopted a much more open response to foreign learning than China, and in fact, its adaptation to the modern world has been a remarkable achievement. Among one of the many differences between 19<sup>th</sup> century Japan and China, was that in Japan, Buddhism had much more of a stronger social profile than it had in China. An interesting line of inquiry would be to investigate whether the greater influence of Buddhism in Japan helped it better adjust to the modern world.

In the Bahá'í Writings, China's 19<sup>th</sup> century defeat is cited in the context of calling for more openness to foreign learning in 19<sup>th</sup> century Persia. The contrast between Japan and China is mentioned, and the benefits of being open to the learning of other cultures are highlighted.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his book, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 110, states that, "Observe to what a degree the lack of education will weaken and degrade a people. Today [1875] from the standpoint of population the greatest nation in the world is China, which has something over four hundred million inhabitants. On this account, its government should be the most distinguished on earth, its people the most acclaimed... Not long ago, a small contingent of English and French troops went to war with China and defeated that country so decisively that they took over its capital Peking. Had the Chinese government and people been abreast of the advanced sciences of the day, had they been skilled in the arts of civilization, then if all the nations on earth had marched against them the attack would still have failed... Stranger even than this episode is the fact that the government of Japan was in the beginning subject to and under the protection of China, and that now for some years, Japan has opened its eyes and adopted the techniques of contemporary progress and civilization, promoting sciences and industries of use to the public, and striving to the utmost of their power and competence until public opinion was focused on reform. This government has currently advanced to such a point that, although its population is only one-sixth, or even one-tenth, that of China, it has recently challenged the latter government, and China has finally been forced to come to terms. Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honour, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people."

## 5. Chinese Spiritual Traditions and the Belief in a Personal God

It is often claimed that Chinese spiritual traditions are humanist, in the sense that they do not rely upon the belief of a personal God. Usually, only Taoist and Confucianist traditions are discussed. But if the considerable impact of Buddhism on Chinese culture is acknowledged, then the situation is quite different.

Our knowledge of God, according to the Bahá'í Writings, is related both to the attributes of the Manifestations of God, (founders of religion; Moses, Christ, Buddha, etc), and our self-knowledge. Through their teachings and lives we are able to unlock our true spiritual potential, and this is, effectively knowledge of God for us. The Manifestations of God are likened to be perfect "Mirrors" which reflect the light of the "Sun of Truth" (God). The "image of God" in human beings is a reflection of the light cast by these perfect "Mirrors". After referring to man's knowledge of God, Bahá'u'lláh qualifies what He means by it:

"... these mentionings that have been made of the grades of knowledge relate to knowledge of the Manifestations of that Sun of Reality, which casteth Its light upon the Mirrors. And the splendour of that light is in the hearts, yet it is hidden under the veilings of sense and the conditions of this earth, even as a candle within a lantern of iron, and only when the lantern is removed doth the light of the candle shine out. In like manner, when thou strippest the wrappings of illusion from off thine heart, the lights of oneness will be made manifest."<sup>58</sup>

When we think of God, according to the Bahá'í Faith, we are actually thinking about the spiritual attributes of a Manifestation of God reflected within ourselves.<sup>59</sup> When we praise God, we are not actually saying anything about God, we are rather learning more about ourselves. Bahá'u'lláh states:

<sup>58</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 23-4.

<sup>59</sup> In the context discussing the attributes of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "Accordingly all these attributes, names, praises and eulogies apply to the Places of Manifestation; and all that we imagine and suppose beside them is mere imagination..." *Some Answered Questions*, p. 149.

"Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can confirm of Thee, or attribute unto thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee! Whatever duty Thou has prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves."<sup>60</sup>

If our concept of God is inextricably tied to the attributes of a Manifestation of God, then the great awe and devotion with which Jews and Muslims worship God, or that Christians worship Christ, is equivalent to the way Buddhists regard the Buddha. While Jews, Christians and Muslims pray to God, Buddhists pray to Buddha. While Jews, Christians and Muslims address God in terms of the Father and Lord, so Buddhists address the Buddha as the "Blessed One" and, "Lord of the World".<sup>61</sup> The Buddha declares that:

"The Tathagata sees the universe face to face and understands its nature. He proclaims the truth both in its letter and in its spirit, and his doctrine is glorious in its origin, glorious in its progress, glorious in its consummation. The Tathagata reveals the higher life in its purity and perfection."<sup>62</sup>

These attributes of the Buddha are very similar to those ascribed to the God of the Bible, Jesus, or the Allah of the Quran. Now these observations have several consequences for our present discussion.

Our highest conception of God is an inner one, in terms of spiritual attributes. Ultimately, these attributes do not belong to God at all, but actually belong to us. There is then, no objective description of God possible for us, that is, we cannot describe God in terms that are independent of our spiritual understanding or capacity. The conception of God as an external force, "The All-Powerful Creator" for instance, characterises the traditional approach to God in the Semitic religions, but the inner approach to God, the Immanent One, has also always been present in traditions. Christ declared, "The Kingdom of God is within

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<sup>60</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>61</sup> see P. Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, pp. 158-9, where both of these titles are used.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 142.

you" (Luke 17: 20). In the Quran it is stated that, "And We know what his soul whispers within him, and we are nearer to him than the jugular vein" (S 1: 15).

Knowledge of God comes from a process of inner enlightenment inspired by a Manifestation of God, and this is an irreducibly personal process. This doctrine shares much with the search for the universal "Buddha nature" within each human being, which characterised the primary aim of Chinese Buddhism. Knowledge of God, is then, effectively the discovery of Buddha's spiritual attributes within oneself. The personal relationship that Christians strive to have with Christ through prayer, is similar to the meditation practice of Buddhists aimed at discovering the universal "Buddha-nature" within. From this perspective, the belief in a personal God was very much alive in China. It was expressed primarily in terms of an inner and personal relationship with the "Universal Buddha" immanent within the mind. Chinese Buddhism covered a wide range of different beliefs, from the humanisation of Buddha through to his God-like exaltation.<sup>63</sup> Since Chinese Buddhist monks greatly influenced the pattern of spiritual life in China, it is reasonable to acknowledge that there were at least these elements of a personal God belief in China. They did not speak of the attributes of God, but referred to the spiritual qualities of the universal Buddha, the "Buddha nature" within the mind, and this from the Bahá'í point of view, is effectively the same thing.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has argued for Buddhism being the founding inspiration of the Chinese cultural renaissance in the Tang and Sung dynasties occurring over a thousand years ago. It calls for a reassessment of the place of Buddhism in Chinese history. The Chinese culture is usually portrayed as primarily Confucian. Redressing this balance is somewhat analogous to pointing out that the European Renaissance was inspired by Islam,<sup>64</sup> it goes against centuries of orthodoxy and ethnocentricity.

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<sup>63</sup> Y. H. Yeo, An introduction to the doctrines of soul and Enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith, *The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review*, Vol. 3, pp. 54-62.

<sup>64</sup> A. Khursheed, Medieval Islam: The influence of Islam on Judaism and Christianity, *The Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review*, Vol. 2, pp. 175-229.

What implications do the findings of this paper have for science and religious issues in China from a Bahá'í perspective? The first observation is that it is misleading to think of the Chinese spiritual tradition as a "religion without revelation"<sup>65</sup>. The Chinese Religion consists of three spiritual traditions, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Buddha is referred to as a "Manifestation of God" in the Bahá'í writings, comparable to Jesus, Moses, Muhammad or Krishna,<sup>66</sup> so if the Chinese religion includes Buddhism, it is certainly a "religion with revelation". This then provides some ways at least, to apply the basic Bahá'í premise that religion lies at the root of all civilisations<sup>67</sup> to the history of China. It also allows for the role of a personal God in China, since from the Bahá'í perspective, God is effectively understood through the spiritually transforming impact a Manifestation of God has on people's inner lives. Chinese Buddhist monks for centuries sought enlightenment through meditating on the universal "Buddha-nature" within the mind, and their spiritual transformation had a considerable impact on Chinese society as a whole, particularly on the ruling Confucian elite who frequently sought their company.

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<sup>65</sup> P. G. L. Chew, *The Chinese Religion and the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 51.

<sup>66</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 197, "The Holy Manifestations Who have been the Sources or Founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and teaching. Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are one in spirit and reality."

<sup>67</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 80, "Our purpose is to show how true religion promotes the civilization and honour, the prosperity and prestige, the learning and advancement of a people once abject, enslaved and ignorant, and how, when it falls into the hands of religious leaders who are foolish and fanatical, it is diverted to the wrong ends, until the greatest of splendours turns into blackest night."

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## Biographical Data

*PHYLLIS GHIM LIAN CHEW* is immediate past President of both the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and the University Women's Association of Singapore (UWAS). She is co-researcher of the award-winning book: "Voices and Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore" and was the co-ordinating secretary for the Singapore NGO Committee for the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995. For many years, she was on the editorial committee of *One Voice*, the organ of the Singapore Council of Women's organisation. By profession, she is a socio-linguist at the National Institute of Education, which is part of Nanyang Technological University; and by religious affiliation, a Bahá'í.

*THEO A. COPE* graduated in gerontology from the University of Oregon, USA. He is also the recipient of a Masters Fellowship Certificate in Psychology from the Landegg Academy, Switzerland. He has written a book on religion, philosophy and psychology, to be published in the year 2001. He has also written several articles on a similar theme, that are also awaiting publication. He joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1977 and is currently living in China. Theo A. Cope is married and has three children.

*KOW MEI KAO* graduated from the former Nanyang University with a BA degree in Chinese language and literature; obtained his MA (Asian Studies) from the Australian National University and Ph. D. in Chinese Studies from the National University of Singapore. He is currently an associate professor with the Chinese Studies Department, National University of Singapore, and teaches classical fiction both to undergraduate and graduate students.

*YEO YEW HOCK* was born in Singapore in 1952, and has Singaporean Nationality. By profession, he is a military officer in the Singapore Armed Forces and holds the rank of Colonel. He was brought up in the Chinese Confucian tradition and became a Bahá'í in June 1986. He is interested in Chinese philosophy and religious studies.

*YIN HONG SHUEN* has over 28 years of Human Resource management and training experience, working with multinational and local companies such as Caltex, Honeywell Synertek, Texas Instruments, Straits Times and Straits Echo Press in both Malaysia and Singapore. He did his degrees by distance education. As a Human Resource Change Management Consultant, he advises management and helps formulate and implement good people strategy towards organizational effectiveness. Mr Yin is a member of various professional associations (SHRI, SIM) including as Chairman ITE Bukit Batok Advisory Committee. He became a member of the Bahá'í Faith while living in Malaysia in 1963, and has been an active member of the Bahá'í communities in Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

*ANJAM KHURSHEED* was born in Pakistan and grew up in Scotland where he received all his schooling and university education. By training, he is an applied physicist, and is at present, an Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. In 1976, he became a member of the Bahá'í Faith. Apart from his international publications and patent applications as a professional scientist, Professor Khursheed is the author of three books that reflect his interest in the philosophy of science, religion and mind.

## Obituary

### Antonella Khursheed (1958-2000)

Antonella Khursheed, the secretary of our Singapore Association Bahá'í studies group, lost her life on 30<sup>th</sup> July in a motorway accident while vacationing in Italy. The cause of the accident was a burst tire. She leaves behind her husband Anjam, and 6 year-old daughter Sarah.

Antonella enthusiastically served our Singapore Association of Bahá'í Studies group from its very beginning in 1996. She helped found it, and was one of the three key people always involved in it. Antonella desktop published all four volumes of the Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review journal published so far and managed its distribution to various Bahá'í institutions around the world. In 1996, Antonella wrote a paper entitled "Jesus the Son of God and the Incarnation Doctrine", which was subsequently published in our first Singapore Bahá'í Studies Review. She had a deep interest in the history of Christianity, and its relationship to the Bahá'í Faith. Antonella organised our annual Singapore Bahá'í Studies conference. Practically all the conference organisation was managed single-handedly by Antonella. She arranged all the usual conference details with great love and enthusiasm, from providing the food, welcoming our participants and speakers, through to the printing of the programme of Abstracts. She did all this in a great spirit of service, and she is for us, quite simply, irreplaceable. Words cannot describe our feeling of loss for Antonella.

Antonella was an Italian from a Catholic background, born in 1958 in Rome. When she was 15 years old, she investigated and discovered the Bahá'í Faith, and was the first in her family to become a Bahá'í. Later her sister and mother also became Bahá'ís. In 1992, she married Anjam Khursheed, a Pakistani of British nationality. In September 1993, her daughter, Sarah, was born in Torino, a city in the Northern part of Italy. The family moved to Singapore in January 1995 where Anjam Khursheed took up an Associate Professor post in the Electrical Engineering Department at the National University of Singapore.

Antonella Khursheed was well known in the Singapore community for her altruism and inspiration and she leaves behind a living legacy of good deeds and charitable works. She was the past president of Faculty Link, an organisation in the National University of Singapore that co-ordinates and helps newcomers settle down. Antonella always made herself available to anyone in need and readily offered a helping hand to all who asked. She worked tirelessly to create a sense of unity and involvement within this diverse community and initiated charity projects and fundraising events. Antonella was also a keen crusader for the environment and was responsible for starting the glass bottle and 'green bag' recycling projects at Kent Vale (condominium for university lecturers), for which she recently received a community award. She also initiated the 'Books at Home' project which allowed residents to browse and buy quality children's books in the comfort and convenience of her own home.

Antonella was a very active member of the Singapore Bahá'í community. Apart from being secretary of the Singapore Bahá'í Studies group, she most recently served as Secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Queenstown. Antonella believed deeply in the underlying unity and equality of all people and devoted her life to making this belief a reality. She and her husband held regular dinner talks in their home to promote inter-religious and multi-racial harmony. She was also the editor of her daughter Sarah's school newsletter and still managed to find time to volunteer weekly at the Rotary family community centre. Antonella was enthusiastic and tireless in her pursuits and her generous spirit and warm heart will be greatly missed by all those whose lives she touched. Her compassion, generosity and enthusiastic spirit of service will not be forgotten and is an inspiration to the many people she came into contact with. She will always be with us ~ her belief in people and her desire to be of service to humanity ~ these are living legacies that we can continue in our own lives.

*Anjam Khursheed*