

Toward the Ecumenical Unity of The Renaissances of Confucian China And Christian Europe

by Michael O. Billington

I consider it a singular plan of the fates that human cultivation and refinement should today be concentrated, as it were, in the two extremes of our continent, in Europe and in China, which adorns the Orient as Europe does the opposite edge of the earth. Perhaps Supreme Providence has ordained such an arrangement, so that, as the most cultivated and distant peoples stretch out their arms to each other, those in between may gradually be brought to a better way of life.

—G.W. Leibniz,
Novissima Sinica, 1697

The millions of people throughout the world who watched the 1989 revolutionary upsurge in China were awed and inspired by images of universal culture presented by the courageous young demonstrators: Beethoven's heroic Choral Symphony played over the students' loudspeakers; the Goddess of Democracy statue; quotations from Abraham Lincoln on large banners. To the Chinese who were observing these events (or were participating in them) another image presented itself for reflection—an image from Chinese antiquity. In the closing chapter of the *Analects* (or *The Discourses*) of Confucius, the sage quotes a great Emperor of an earlier age giving instructions to his

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appointed successor as his own death drew near: "If there shall be distress and want within the Empire, the mandate of Heaven shall be taken away from you forever."

Ignoring the Confucian warning, Margaret Thatcher and George Bush defied Heaven and rushed to defend Deng Xiao-ping's Communist regime, even before the blood was washed away and the dead were buried. Henry Kissinger praised Deng's pragmatism and insisted that moral considerations should not sway the response in the West. Bush sent Kissinger Associates executives Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger as official emissaries to meet with Deng; their message: continue driving millions of desperate unemployed Chinese peasants and workers into the colonial-style "concessions" (now called "Special Economic Zones") along the coast, providing cheap labor to foreign investors, and the Anglo-Americans will protect the regime from the righteous anger of the world's citizens.

The Communist Party of China (C.P.C.) which Bush was protecting, is a modern expression of the most infamous reign of terror in Chinese history, that of Emperor Ch'in Shi-huang (reigned 221-206 B.C.). The Ch'in Empire was based on the principles of Legalism and Taoism, the sworn enemies of the moral teachings of the Confucian school established by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.). Emperor Ch'in Shi-huang, whom Mao Zedong revered as his hero and mentor, is most famous for burning the Confucian scholars alive, along with their classical texts, while imposing a vast forced-labor policy on a population stripped of education and culture. Most importantly, the Legalists and Taoists, like Mao, rejected the Confucian belief that man was fundamentally good, owing to the power of reason bestowed by the grace of Heaven. Instead, they considered

East and West

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Li,
Principle

A large, bold calligraphic Chinese character '氣' (Ch'i) is centered in the middle portion of the page. The character is written in a thick, expressive black ink on a light background.

Ch'i,
Material Force

A large, bold calligraphic Chinese character '仁' (jen) is centered in the lower portion of the page. The character is written in a thick, expressive black ink on a light background.

jen,
agapê

man to be a mere beast, devoid of any higher spiritual qualities, driven only by greed and the sensual passions.

Among men and women of moral conscience, the Tiananmen massacre provoked a response more in keeping with the Confucian dictum, however. In Eastern Europe, the courage of the Tiananmen martyrs inspired millions of citizens to overcome the fear that had held them captive to years of Communist tyranny. As the Berlin Wall fell, the world witnessed with joy a recurrence of the images from Tiananmen—mass, peaceful demonstrations against the armed might of the state, accompanied by the music of Bach and Beethoven. Here, too, the Anglo-American leadership rushed to defend the Communist dictatorships which had, in their view, served to keep the European continent divided and weak. Unlike the situation in China, however, the spirit of freedom prevailed.

Today, that freedom is about to be lost. Rather than the expected support from the West, the ex-Communist states received “shock therapy.” Motivated by “geopolitical,” balance-of-power considerations, the I.M.F. has acted to prevent the economic recovery of these nations, fearing a potential alliance of European and Asian nations for the economic development of the Eurasian landmass.

This “divide and conquer” mentality was perhaps best expressed by the racist Rudyard Kipling, the apologist for the British Empire’s rape and looting of “lesser races,” who said, “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” Such statements were not philosophical ruminations, but statements of policy: the fruits of Western science and technology were to be denied to the East, while the moral, ethical, and cultural heritage of the East would be distorted and hidden in a cloak of “inscrutability” from Western minds.

The revolutionary upsurge which swept from Beijing to Berlin to Moscow, despite severe setbacks, has unleashed the universal moral spirit needed to unite East and West in a new Renaissance. The Maoist efforts to extirpate the Confucian moral tradition from the soul of Chinese youth has failed, just as the Christian concept of the divine nature of the individual has survived communist thought-control in Eastern Europe.

Each of these moral traditions was enhanced by a great Renaissance during the first half of the current millennium, which renewed and strengthened its philosophical inheritance from antiquity. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the Chinese Renaissance of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Sung Dynasty, associated with the Neo-Confucian school of Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200), paralleled in all fundamental aspects the Christian Renaissance of fifteenth-century Europe. In

particular, we will compare the extraordinary coherence between Chu Hsi's work and that of the central figure of the Christian Renaissance, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (Cusanus) (1401-64). Reference to the works of a crucial predecessor of Cusanus, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74, more nearly a contemporary of Chu Hsi) will reinforce this comparison.

Cusanus dedicated himself to the effort to reconstitute the divided Christian Church upon the basis of the conception of man created *imago viva Dei*, in the living image of God, as expressed in the Christian Trinity. He set about proving this concept scientifically, historically, and philosophically, drawing on the works of Plato as well as the Church Fathers and St. Augustine. These efforts, which led to the brief unification of Christendom achieved at the 1437-39 Council of Florence, were the launching pad for the achievements of the Golden Renaissance in the arts and sciences.

Cusanus strove to establish world peace by forging an ecumenical agreement between Christendom and those whose belief in God was expressed through the other major religions of the world. His method was to demonstrate that the revealed truth of the Christian Trinity, the existence of the Triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—was also a scientific truth imbedded in the lawfulness of Creation, and that, therefore, every sincere seeker after truth would necessarily be brought to discover this natural law reflection of the Trinity. In *“De Pace Fidei”* (“On the Peace of Faith”), Cusanus uses this method to create an ecumenical dialogue between Christian, Moslem, Jew, Persian, Indian, Chaldean, Tatar, and others.

Cusanus was not familiar with Confucianism, however, let alone with Chu Hsi's twelfth-century contributions to Confucian knowledge. An included result of this study, therefore, will be to extend Cusanus' ecumenical approach to embrace China and Confucianism, demonstrating the coherence of the fundamental conceptions and worldview of Sung Renaissance Confucianism with the natural law expression of the Christian Trinity.

An Ecumenical ‘Grand Design’

The greatest scientist and statesman of modern Europe, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), did make extensive studies of Confucianism however, and of Chu Hsi in particular, through his correspondence with Jesuit missionaries in China. This collaboration represented the first, and perhaps only, serious effort by the West to discover the truths that made possible the development of the largest and oldest civilization in the world.

Following the Golden Renaissance, as part of the same process that led to the discovery and evangelization

of the Americas, Christian missionaries from the Society of Jesus settled in China, studying and translating the Chinese classics, while preaching the Christian message and teaching the scientific discoveries of the Renaissance. They found in the ancient Chinese sages and the Sung Neo-Confucians, a deep understanding of natural law, and found nothing to conflict with the potential to adopt the Christian faith.

Back in Europe, Leibniz followed these developments with avid interest and hope. The existence in China of an ancient culture so in keeping with the truths of natural law discovered by Western civilization, were proof to Leibniz that the human mind must, through *reason*, naturally arrive at these truths—or, as he said, that these truths were “inscribed in our hearts” for all to read.

Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the Jesuit priest who led the opening to China in 1581, had received intensive training in Rome in the scientific breakthroughs of the Renaissance, including the construction of astronomical and musical instruments. He believed that the leap in scientific progress in Renaissance Italy was inseparable from the parallel developments in Christian theology, but insisted that such scientific knowledge was not a “secret” of the West, but the patrimony of all mankind. He found the Chinese to be of a moral disposition to embrace Christianity, while also willing and anxious to enhance their rich scientific heritage with the scientific ideas and technologies that the Jesuits brought with them. Ricci concluded that if the Chinese would reject Buddhism and Taoism, and also reject polygamy and a few other relatively minor rites, they “could certainly become Christians, since the essence of their doctrine contains nothing contrary to the essence of the Catholic faith, nor would the Catholic faith hinder them in any way, but would indeed aid in that attainment of the quiet and peace of the republic which their books claim as their goal.”

Leibniz, later, reflecting on the writings of the Jesuits and his own study of the classics, characterized Confucianism as follows:

To offend Heaven is to act against reason; to ask pardon of Heaven is to reform oneself and to make a sincere return in work and deed in the submission one owes to this very law of reason. For me, I find this all quite excellent and quite in accord with natural theology. . . . Only by strained interpretation and interpolation could one find anything to criticize on this point. It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed on our hearts, except for what revelation and grace add to it to improve our nature.

As will become clear in the course of this study, the

historical conflict between Confucianism, on the one hand, and Legalism and Taoism, on the other, follows the same course as the conflict between Platonism and Aristotelianism in the West. And thus, just as the representatives of Renaissance Christian Platonism identified with the Confucian tradition when they encountered it in China, so too did the Western Aristotelians recognize in Legalism and Taoism a kindred spirit.

The nearly successful alliance of Christianity and Confucianism championed by Leibniz collapsed in the early eighteenth century. Within a century, the British imperial intrusion into China was unleashed, with opium and gunships jointly leading the assault to break the moral and political institutions of the faltering Ch'ing Dynasty. Immediately, the British empiricists launched cultural warfare against Confucianism, extolling Taoist mysticism and Legalist totalitarianism as the "essence" of Chinese culture. Later, the British contributed to the creation of a new Legalist Dynasty under Taoist Mao Zedong, organized to a large extent to sabotage the efforts of the great Chinese statesman—both Christian and Confucian—Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

British support for tyranny in China has been justified for centuries by the fraudulent argument that the Chinese have never believed in the freedom of the individual, individual civil and human rights, or other "Western" concepts, and thus the bloody suppression of any and all dissent, as carried out by dictators (Communist or otherwise), is justified by "Chinese" standards.

To the contrary, the dominant school of Confucianism for nearly a thousand years in China—the Sung Neo-Confucian school—proclaimed the role of the individual as the singular reflection of the love of the creator of Heaven and earth; an individual whose creative potential must be nourished and extended without bound in order to achieve both personal peace, in keeping with the Way of Heaven, and social progress, based on the expanding capacity of each individual to contribute to that process of development. This scientifically valid view of mankind is the necessary basis for ecumenical peace and global development. Accommodation to any other view will court disaster.

Part I. The Renaissance In Chinese Society

Following the collapse of the T'ang Dynasty in A.D. 907 and a period of general disunity, the Sung Dynasty emerged in 960. The T'ang era had seen the general collapse of the Confucian moral tradition and a broad

degeneration of society and culture. The founders of the T'ang, and most of its Emperors, had been dedicated Taoists, but Buddhism also swept through the East during the seventh to tenth centuries. The Taoists and Buddhists were occasionally in conflict (between A.D. 843 and 845, a fanatical Taoist Emperor totally suppressed Buddhism, closing thousands of shrines and defrocking the monks and nuns), but they generally merged into a syncretic amalgam, dragging most of the Confucian scholars into the soup.

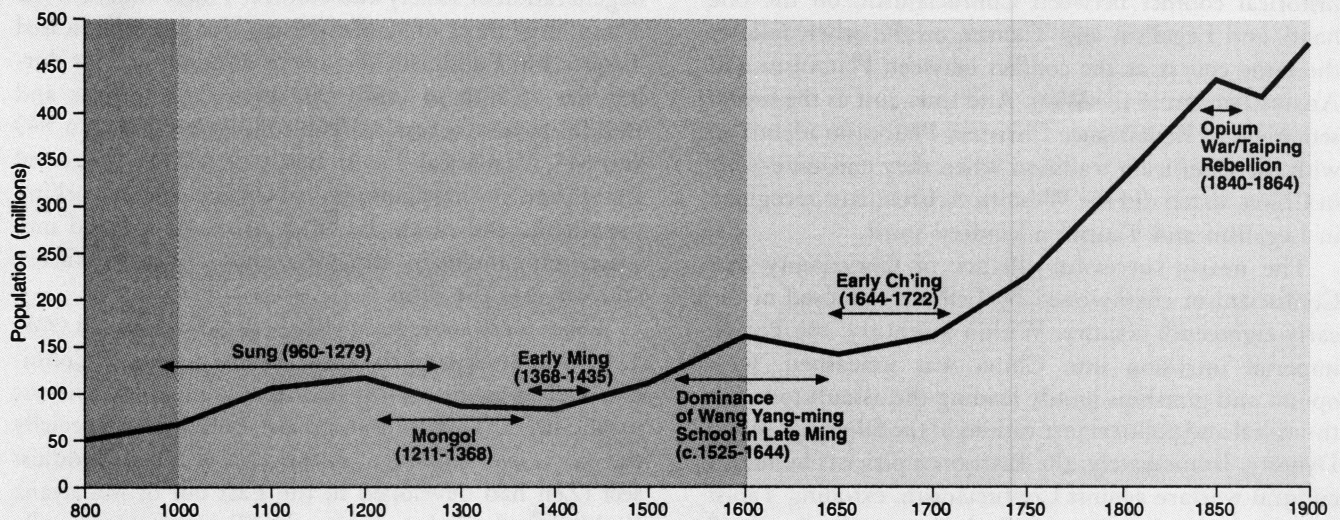
There were some exceptions—notably Han Yü (968-824), who attempted to defend the teachings of Confucius and Mencius against both the irrationalist, animist mysticism of Taoism and against Buddhism, especially the pervasive influence of the Zen (Ch'an) Buddhist sect (Zen had developed in the East out of Mahayana Buddhism through contact with Taoism). He equally attacked those Confucianists who believed the three worldviews could coexist.

As the economy and society degenerated under the T'ang, Buddhist monastic communities became the centers of power for oligarchical families. Chinese law had long forbidden the rule of primogeniture, forcing a *division* of property and wealth between one's progeny, which hindered the development of powerful landed families, as well as the larger-than-life power of such "*fondi*" over several generations. However, the monastic communities were generally tax-exempt and were permitted to expand their property holdings indefinitely. Thus, families with oligarchical ambitions would establish their own Buddhist monasteries, and "contribute"

The Neo-Confucian School

There are four primary predecessors of Chu Hsi in the Neo-Confucian School, whose works are cited in this study:

- **Ch'eng I** (A.D. 1033-1107), who, together with Chu Hsi contributed his name to the "Ch'eng/Chu School," as Neo-Confucianism is generally known in Chinese;
- **Ch'eng Hao** (A.D. 1032-85), Ch'eng I's brother, who was less often quoted by Chu Hsi, and was often corrected by him for his leanings toward Zen Buddhism and Taoism;
- **Chang Tsai** (A.D. 1020-77), the uncle and teacher of the Ch'eng brothers;
- and **Chou Tun-i** (A.D. 1017-73), another teacher of the Ch'eng brothers.



GRAPH I. Rapid population growth accompanied the three major periods of influence of the Neo-Confucian (Sung) Renaissance worldview, while population collapse followed each recurrence of Taoist/Legalist rule. In addition to the Sung period proper, there were two major revivals of Chu Hsi's ideas as guides to the institutions of the Empire, each leading to a period of dramatic economic, scientific, and cultural advance: First, the early Ming Dynasty, following the devastation of the Mongol occupation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and second, the early Ch'ing Dynasty, following the collapse of the Ming in 1644 under the dominance of the school of Wang Yang-ming. British Empire "Legalist" policies, combined with their manipulated anti-Confucian Taiping Rebellion, resulted in another population collapse during the eighteenth century.

Note changes in time scale at A.D. 1000 and 1600.

Source: Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*.

extensive wealth and property to the monastic "community." These functioned much the same as the *fondi* in Europe—the monasteries ran businesses, owned vast agricultural lands, and even functioned as the primary source of credit, running pawn shops and loaning money at interest.

The Neo-Confucian school, often called the "Sung teaching" or the "Ch'eng/Chu school," emerged in the eleventh century as a direct counter to this pervasive corruption of government and society, which they blamed squarely on the "heterodox" teachings of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, and the capitulation of Confucianists to these heresies. Just as St. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-74) undertook the task of countering the destructive influence of Aristotelianism, which had increasingly corrupted Christian teachings in Europe, so the leading scholar of Neo-Confucianism, Chu Hsi (1130-1200), building especially on the work of four great scholar/statesmen from the eleventh century [SEE BOX], unleashed a devastating attack on the immoral and scientifically fraudulent premises of Taoist and Zen Buddhist beliefs. Also, extending the comparison, just as St. Thomas, in the process of combatting Aristotelianism, had reached back to the ideas of Plato, as adopted and amended from a Christian standpoint by St. Augustine, and laid the foundation for the Christian Renaissance

that followed, so, too, the Neo-Confucianists re-examined and advanced the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. The result was a Confucian Renaissance, a burst of cultural and scientific progress in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which was to be revived again in the early fifteenth century following the intervening Mongol occupation of China.

The Sung Economic Revolution

The Chinese discovery of woodblock printing in the tenth century led to a vast expansion of printed books in subsequent centuries. Not only were the Confucian classics printed and distributed, but also the works of the Neo-Confucians, by both government and private publishers. For the first time in history, scholars were able to reach the entire nation with their teaching. The other major category of printed books was scientific studies, covering agriculture, hydraulics, astronomy, and other areas of technological development. The Ch'eng/Chu dictum to "investigate the Principle in things to the utmost" led to an explosion of scientific and technological discoveries, with each discovery spread around the country rapidly through books and newspapers.

The agricultural revolution was the driving force for the expansion of the economy. Historian Mark Elvin has

written: "It was the generalization over the country as a whole of the best Sung techniques, without a correspondingly large expansion of the area of farmland . . . [by which] the foundation of China's enormous present population was laid." (Elvin) [SEE Bibliography for publication information] The potential population density exploded, as the following technological capacities were developed and implemented (SEE Graph I):

- **New hydraulic techniques and irrigation networks;**
- **New seed strains**, to increase yields and enhance the capability for double cropping;
- **Improved methods of soil preparation**, utilizing fertilizers and tools; and
- **vast networks of roads and canals**, allowing broader marketing, and thus greater specialization of crops.

By the thirteenth century, "China had what was probably the most sophisticated agriculture in the world, India being the only conceivable rival." (Elvin)

Internal and foreign trade boomed. Shipbuilding became a major industry, producing thousands of inland and seagoing ships of a quality not seen in Europe for centuries. The mariner's compass, discovered in about 1119, led to the charting of the sea and advanced navigation techniques. A national customs service was established to regulate and tax trade, with over two thousand custom houses. Standardized coinage and the world's first system of paper currency were established in the early eleventh century. Federally issued notes, based on convertibility at any of several provincial Treasuries, facilitated safe and expanding internal trade.

Industries of a size not seen in Europe until the eighteenth century were developed. Iron works, using coke and other metallurgical discoveries, and silk factories with as many as five hundred looms, contributed to national growth and to rapid urbanization. By 1100, there were fifty-one prefectures which had over 100,000 households, far surpassing the cities of Europe.

Although there were many internal policy differences, the Sung leadership was generally the driving force behind the revolution in education and science. Books in all fields were prepared and published by the government, while great public works, public granaries, and infrastructure projects were undertaken at government expense. Chu Hsi was himself a significant figure in establishing these policies, both through his writings and through his various positions in government. His establishment of public granaries in the area under his jurisdiction, both to prepare for emergencies and to prevent speculation by "the propertied gentlemen who would stop selling grain in order to realized a profit" (*Further Reflections on Things at Hand*, 9:23), was adopted

as national policy.

Chu Hsi's advice on infrastructure reveals an advanced sense of physical economy:

Recruiting hungry people to build waterworks, and slightly increasing outside sums to be used for capital in beginning construction, is to protect against disaster and to create new prosperity, like killing two birds with one stone. . . . The cost would be minimal, but the advantages would last forever. (*Further Reflections*, 10:51)

Chu Hsi and the Conjunctural Crisis

Chu Hsi knew, however, that China had fallen into a severe, long-term breakdown crisis over the previous millennium, and that as important as the developments under the Sung were, the underlying problem had not been solved. He repeatedly warned that the rule of Universal Principle was lost among the people, and that a disaster (an "unnatural embankment") faced the nation:

Today, the Principle of Tao is lost. Can we unflinchingly cultivate ourselves and restore it? This is why it is such an urgent matter. If we do not study, we will face an unnatural embankment. In normal times we could, perhaps, barely get by. But when we are faced with a critical matter, there will be only confusion. (*Further Reflections*, 2:35)

The works of his eleventh-century predecessors, in fact, had been subjected to severe attack. Cheng I had been banished in 1097, and his teachings prohibited. He was then pardoned in 1100, blacklisted in 1103, and pardoned again in 1106; but the ban on his teachings remained until 1155, when Chu Hsi revived them. In the interim, in 1126, the Juchin from Manchuria successfully invaded northern China, establishing the Chin Dynasty in the north, while the Sung were forced into the south.

Chu spent nine years in government office. He submitted numerous memorials on diverse subjects to several different Emperors, with varying effect. His proposals for specific government policies in water management, canal building, national food resources, and other areas were implemented regionally and in some cases nationally. He instituted the White Deer Grotto Academy as the center for his teaching, which became the pre-eminent intellectual center of his time, and the model for education in China, Korea, and Japan for centuries.

But his warnings made many uncomfortable. In his sixty-sixth year, he was dismissed from his last official position in the Court, accused of teaching a "false theory"

and of plotting to usurp the government. His leading pupil was exiled. It was in these last years that he devoted himself to completing his work on the Confucian text, the "Great Learning." [SEE page 16]

The Ming Renewal

Once the Mongol invasions, begun in 1211, were successful in over-running the country in 1279, a Dark Age descended over China. With the subsequent 1368 collapse of the Mongol Dynasty, however, China experienced a phenomenal internal and external expansion of great projects, including the rebuilding of the Grand Canal, the movement of the capital to Peking in the north, and the launching of the greatest ocean-going armada in history, carrying out missions of peaceful exploration and diplomacy to India, Africa, and the Persian Gulf. This was the era of the flowering of the Ch'eng/Chu school, which almost entirely dominated the court, the education system, the civil service examinations, and the political leadership at every level.

The great projects, and especially the voyages, were in fact the direct expression of the domination of Chu Hsi's philosophical worldview over China. The continuation of the earlier Sung commitment to the development and application of science and technology to internal infrastructural projects, and the voyages of the eunuch Admiral Cheng Ho, were expressions of the view that man could and must carry out God's mandate for the exploration of the Principle in all things under Heaven. These policies continued until the emergence of a counter-reaction to this Renaissance view, leading to a sudden and disastrous reversal after the year 1435.

Accomplishments before 1435 include:

- **Education and the examination system were vastly expanded**, based entirely on Chu Hsi's curriculum. Chu Hsi's works were officially compiled and the examinations restructured in 1415. This education and examination system functioned in the manner of a constitution, in the sense that attaining a position of responsibility in the Empire required a rigorous demonstration of an understanding of and a dedication to virtue, as embodied in the classics compiled by Chu Hsi and the related scientific training.
- **The Grand Canal** connecting northern and southern regions of the country was totally reconstructed, allowing the transfer of the capital north to Peking, which depended on the Grand Canal for grain from the south, and for the supply of military forces to defend against continuing threats from the Mongols beyond the Great Wall. This led to considerable development along the canal route.

- **Shipbuilding became a top priority.** From 1403 to 1419, 2,149 seagoing vessels were built in the major shipyard in Nanjing. Many of these were "treasure ships," which held five hundred men and utilized technologies not developed in Europe for centuries.
- **Voyages of discovery and diplomacy** were launched beginning 1405, continuing until 1433. Under the eunuch Admiral Cheng Ho, seven major voyages were undertaken, which explored the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea up to Jidda, Saudi Arabia, and along the East coast of Africa. They carried out trade, brought diplomats back to China, and performed scientific investigations.
- **Trade extended eastward.** Japan had closed all contact after the failed invasion under the Mongols, and banned all foreign trade. But in 1401, on an initiative from the Japanese, trade was re-opened and was to continue until 1549.

Had these voyages continued, it is not unlikely that a "Columbus" voyage to the east might have been launched sometime in the fifteenth century, discovering America from the west. But this was not to be. During the 1430's, Nicolaus of Cusa was leading the efforts to reconstitute the Christian Church in Europe, culminating in the 1439 Council of Florence, which, among other achievements, hatched the plans for the Columbus voyages fifty years later. During this same time period, the Chinese took a giant leap in the opposite direction. With the death in 1435 of Emperor Hsüan-te, the last Ming Emperor who sponsored great voyages, the Renaissance worldview and economic policies were suddenly and ruthlessly crushed. The voyages were ended, the shipyards deteriorated, and China turned inward. Although the scale of the economy and the population would continue to grow throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this was due entirely to the technological revolution of the Sung and early Ming dynasties. The "Intuitionist" school, heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism and Taoism which had taken root during the Mongol occupation, now rapidly became predominant.

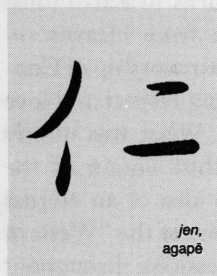
Part II.

The Confucian and Christian Renaissances

The parallels between the Confucian and the Christian Renaissances are most obvious when both are viewed from the perspective of universal history. The converse is also true: without this demonstrably valid view of history, any attempts at comparison result in the wildest

fantasies and concoctions. Such strained comparisons literally fill the scholarly texts on comparative philosophy. Chu Hsi, for example, has been compared often (and correctly) to St. Thomas Aquinas, but also to Alfred North Whitehead, G.W.F. Hegel, and Immanuel Kant, while even described by some as a polytheist. As we will see, such views belie a total failure to grasp the fundamental principles guiding Chu Hsi's thought.

Leibniz, in his 1716 *Natural Theology of the Chinese*, approached his analysis of Chinese philosophy by acknowledging that the highly cultured and learned civilization of the Chinese, and the relatively enormous population density, were proof that the Chinese had succeeded in mastering to a high degree the truths of natural law which govern the universe. He, therefore, in undertaking a study of the classic texts, *assumed the most positive interpretation possible* of the ideas presented, not out of a false sense of generosity or kindness to the Chinese, but in order to ferret out the truths which he knew must be contained within these writings, without, of course, ignoring disagreements on important secondary issues. Cusanus, although he was unfamiliar with Confucianism and thus did not address it directly in his writings, expressed the same principle in "On the Peace of Faith": "The divine commandments are very brief and are all well known and common in every nation, for the light that reveals them to us is created along with the rational soul." (Wertz, *Toward A New Council of Florence*)



Confucian Jen and St. Paul's Agapē

A crucial polemic of the Neo-Confucians revolved around the interpretation of the notion of *jen* (仁), a word usually translated as "humanity" or "benevolence," terms which do not adequately convey the meaning in Chinese. Confucius and Mencius defined *jen* as the highest of all virtues with which Heaven endows mankind, subsuming love and righteousness, propriety and wisdom. In the eleventh century, Ch'eng I, one of the greatest of Chu Hsi's predecessors, identified the fact that the interpretation of the term *jen*, over the centuries following the death of Mencius, had become synonymous with another term meaning "love." But since this term for "love" represented a human feeling, often ambiguously connected to notions of mere sensuality, it had become "an inferior and crude concept," in the words of one of Chu Hsi's students. (Ch'en Ch'un [1159-1223], cited in Hitoshi)

Even the greatest of the T'ang Dynasty Confucians,

Han Yü, who extended the meaning of *jen* to be "universal love," still failed to comprehend the "loftier and nobler" concept intended by Confucius and Mencius, according to this Neo-Confucian school.

The failure to understand the deeper meaning of *jen* was blamed primarily on the acceptance, even by supposedly Confucian scholars, of the object fixation and irrationalism of the pervasive Zen and Taoist schools of thought. As shown below, Chu Hsi argued that these sects failed to recognize the divine spark of reason in man, man's capacity to participate in God's continuing creation of the universe, and they were thus reduced to a materialist view of the world, a God-less world in which man is impotent to rise above an animal state of sense perception.

The solution lay, said Chu Hsi in his "Treatise on *Jen*," in recognizing that *jen* is the "principle of love." Chu wrote:

When one realizes that *jen* is the *source* of love, and that love can never exhaust *jen*, then one has gained a definite comprehension of *jen*. (Hitoshi)

Together with righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, *jen* is a virtue created by God for no "practical" purpose, but as a pure expression of his own boundless love. Human love and compassion are the *effect* of *jen*, not its substance. Confucius said that "spreading charity widely to save the multitudes" is not *jen*, although *jen* is the source of morality and of all moral deeds. Said Chu,

It is not for the sake of anything that [*jen*] came into existence. . . . *Jen* is the principle of love and the way of life. Thus by living in *jen*, all four primary virtues will be covered. (Hitoshi)

Ch'eng I emphasized that *jen* is the "foundation of goodness," and as such can be considered as "universal impartiality" (Chu Hsi, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 1:11), in the sense of God's impartial love for all creatures. Man's coherence with universal impartiality is guided by the Golden Rule, which is expressed by Confucius and Mencius in both positive and negative forms: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and "Do not do anything to another which you would not have them do unto you." The principles of both charity and equity are subsumed in this notion of impartiality. Says Cheng I,

Because of [man's] impartiality, there will be no distinction between himself and others. Therefore, a man of *jen* is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of *jen*, while love is its function. (*Reflections*, 2:52)

Chu Hsi identifies *jen* as the essence of creation itself:

The mind of Heaven to produce things is *jen*. In man's endowment, he receives this mind from Heaven, and thus he can produce. Therefore, man's feeling of commiseration is also a principle of production. (*Reflections*, 1:42)

The divine spark of reason, which distinguishes man from beast, and provides man with the unique capacity to participate in God's continuing creation of the universe, is precisely this power of love, *jen*.

The effort to identify the more profound meaning of *jen* proves to be a process of discovery parallel to that of St. Paul in developing the concept of a higher form of love, or *agapē*. This higher notion of love, as distinguished from erotic love, was located in the love of God, the love of truth, and of mankind as a whole which must guide man if he is to find true meaning in his life.

One of the clearest expressions of the Neo-Confucian development of this concept came in the famous "Western Inscription" of Chang Tsai, also called "Correcting Obstnacy":

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore, that which fills the universe I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions. . . . Respect the aged. . . . Show affection toward the orphans and the weak. . . . Even those who are tired, infirm, crippled or sick, those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to. . . .

To rejoice in Heaven with no anxiety, this is filial piety at its purest.

He who disobeys [the principle of Heaven] violates virtue. He who destroys *jen* is a robber. He who promotes evil lacks [moral] capacity. But he who puts his moral nature into practice and brings his physical existence into complete fulfillment can match [Heaven]. One who knows the principle of transformation will skillfully carry forward the undertaking of Heaven, and one who penetrates spirit to the highest degree will skillfully carry out Heaven's will.

Do nothing shameful in the recesses of your own house. . . . Preserve the mind and nourish the nature and thus serve them with untiring effort. . . .

In life I follow and serve [Heaven]. In death I will be at peace. (*Reflections*, 2:89)

Several points are of special significance. First, the "Western Inscription" places the concept of *jen* as the guiding principle of God's creation, and defines man's

nature as the same as "that which directs the universe." In Christian terms, this is to be "in the living image of God," *imago viva Dei*. It also addresses another related Christian concept, that man is created with the capacity to be like-unto-God, *capax Dei*, by acting in accord with His will. Here, Chang Tsai says that if man applies his true God-given moral nature in every aspect of his life, and subjects his physical nature to God's will, he can "match" God.

Secondly, the "Western Inscription" places a profoundly higher perspective on the meaning of filial piety—a fundamental Confucian virtue, but one often interpreted as merely a set of strict codes of conduct towards one's parents. Here, Chang Tsai holds Heaven to be the father and Earth to be the mother of man, in the sense of God creating man's physical body out of the substance of His material creation. Man exists in a dignified "intimate" place in the universe owing to his creation as a human being, a blessing he owes to God and to all of God's creatures who have gone before him, and in particular to his physical mother and father. In return for this endowment of life, man returns this love, to his parents, of course, but also to *all* mankind and to God himself. Thus, "to rejoice in Heaven with no anxiety—this is filial piety at its purest."

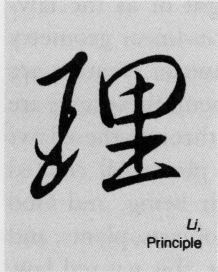
Lastly, while none of the Confucian nor the Neo-Confucian scholars explicitly taught the existence of everlasting life after death in the sense of the Christian Heaven, it is acknowledged that upon death, that part of man which came from Earth returns to Earth (dust to dust), while that part which came from Heaven returns to Heaven. The so-called ancestor worship of Confucianism is primarily a ritual of paying respect and love to the spirit of those departed souls. What was utterly *rejected* by Chu Hsi was the Buddhist notion of the transmigration of souls, and not the idea of an eternal soul. Therefore, the closing paragraphs of the "Western Inscription," like other similar expressions throughout Neo-Confucian teaching, which refer to attaining peace at death, can be interpreted as: "Follow God and serve Him, and you shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Chu Hsi refers directly, although negatively, to the immortality of the soul in writing that if one fails to live according to the Way of God, "then one will live an empty life and die an empty death. . . ." (*Further Reflections*, 12:14)

Ch'eng I said that a virtuous man identifies a quality in himself which is more important than life itself, and implies that that quality is sustained in death when one's life is given for humanity:

Some ancient sages sacrificed their lives. They must have truly understood that life is neither as important

as righteousness nor as satisfactory as death. Therefore, they sacrificed their lives to fulfill humanity. (*Reflections*, 7:25)



Li: The School of Principle

The Neo-Confucian school is also known in Chinese as the “School of Principle.” The primary new conceptual contributions to the Confucian body of knowledge by the Ch’eng/Chu School centered on the concept of *Li* (理), or Principle. Confucius did not use the term at all, while Mencius used it to mean “moral principle,” but not as a fundamental concept in his teaching. Chu Hsi developed and used the concept in a manner analogous to Plato’s concept of the eternal “Ideas.” Leibniz noted that Chu’s concept was similar to his own notion of the “monad.” Lyndon LaRouche has developed his own notion of the “thought-object” as analogous to the historically specific concepts of Plato’s Ideas and Leibniz’s monads. The Neo-Confucian Principle (*Li*) is coherent with these various valid scientific discoveries concerning the fundamental lawfulness of the universe.

Chu Hsi defines Principle as follows:

Universal Principle is indeed complete wholeness. However, we call it Principle in that it has a completely ordered pattern. . . . Universal Principle is simply a comprehensive term for the four virtues (*jen*, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom), and each of them is an individual enumeration for Universal Principle. (*Further Reflections*, 1:9)

Universal Principle is sometimes called the Great Ultimate, or the Ultimate of Non-being, or the Essence of Tao, where Tao means the Way or the Path. To Chu Hsi, these terms all refer to the one Creator God in the same sense as was understood by the fathers of Christianity and those who followed in the tradition of St. Augustine. [As these terms are used interchangeably by Chu and his school, we occasionally use the word God in place of them in these translations, although the works cited in the Bibliography do not do so.]

Leibniz, in his study of Neo-Confucianism, arrived at this same conclusion, while also equating Principle (*Li*) with Universal Reason:

The first principle of the Chinese is called *Li*, that is, Reason, or the foundation of all nature, the most universal reason and substance; there is nothing

greater nor better than *Li*. . . . [It] is not at all capable of divisibility as regards its being and is the principal basis of all the essences which are and which can exist in the world. But it is also the aggregation of the most perfect multiplicity because the Being of this principle contains the essences of things as they are in their germinal state. We say as much when we teach that the ideas, the primitive grounds, the prototypes of all essences are all in God. . . . The Chinese also attribute to the *Li* all manner of perfection . . . so perfect that there is nothing to add. One has said it all. Consequently, can we not say that the *Li* of the Chinese is the sovereign substance which we revere under the name of God? (Leibniz, *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese*, #4-9)

To Chu Hsi, God, the Universal Principle, is infinite, indivisible, and eternal. He is the creator of all that is, and preceded everything which was created. Most importantly, Chu developed the notion that Principle “is an all encompassing wholeness which contains everything, and which is contained in everything.” (*Further Reflections*, 1:2) Principle is Unity, but “the myriad things partake of it as their reality. Hence, each of the myriad things possesses in it the Great Ultimate.” (*Chu Tzu ch’üan-shu* [Collected Works of Chu Hsi], 49:8b-13a; hereafter CTCS. All translations from CTCS are from deBary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*) The true essence of every individual thing in the universe is its Principle, which is given by God as its nature. In particular, the nature of man is Principle.

Leibniz, in his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, said, “It can indeed be said that every substance bears in some sort the character of God’s infinite wisdom and omnipotence, and imitates Him as much as it is able to.” Like Plato’s Ideas, the individual Principle of any created thing is eternal, although the thing itself is, of course, not eternal. St. Augustine, drawing on Plato through the revelation of Christianity, said:

Ideas are the primary forms or the permanent and immutable reasons of real things and they are not themselves formed; so they are, as a consequence, eternal and ever the same in themselves, and they are contained in the divine intelligence. (Wertz, *Toward a New Council of Florence*)

Cusanus extended this concept, saying that, “every created thing is, as it were, a finite infinite.” It is finite, in that it is bounded by its material form, but it is infinite precisely as its nature reflects God’s creation. The nature of every created thing (Chu Hsi’s “Principle”) is demonstrated by the fact of the coherent, self-developing order of the universe itself, or as Cusanus said: “The universe is ordered to its origin—through order the universe

indeed shows itself as being from God—it is ordered to Him as to the Order of the order in everything.” (“On the Not-Other,” in Wertz)

This concept, that all created things reflect the lawfulness of the creation, and that this connection between all things and the Creator is the essence of each particular thing, is the necessary basis of any scientific knowledge, while also serving to refute any and all materialist views of the universe. To the Christian humanists, the empiricist tradition of Aristotle, which attempts to reduce the world to a mere collection of disconnected objects, and man’s impotent observations (sense-perception) of those objects, was both false and an obstacle to the development of fruitful scientific knowledge of the universe.

In Plato’s terms, true scientific knowledge comes from a process of hypothesis; when an existing state of knowledge is contradicted by newly discovered phenomena, an hypothesis based on this higher conception of the order of creation (Plato’s Ideas) would provide the basis for advancing the state of knowledge as a whole, affecting the entire range of human knowledge, beyond the specific phenomena investigated. (SEE LaRouche, “The Science of Christian Economy” and “On the Subject of God”)



Ch'i and Imago Viva Dei

Chu Hsi’s understanding of science is in keeping with this Platonic method. The primary tenet of the Neo-Confucian teaching is that the nature of man, like the nature of all things, and of the universe as a

whole, is Principle. Ch’eng I said: “Principle is one but its manifestations are many. . . . There is only one Principle. As applied to man, however, there is in each individual a particular Principle.” (CTCS 49:1b)

God creates the universe through what Chu calls *Ch'i* (氣) or Material Force (*Ch'i* is also translated as “energy,” “vital force,” etc. Mencius used the term as that which “pervades and animates the body,” subordinate to the will, and nourished by acting according to righteousness and reason. [*Mencius*, 2:1.2]) This Material Force, as developed by Chu, is not identical with Principle, but is created by it and cannot exist without it. Universal Principle, God, is infinite, incorporeal, and eternal. The Material Force, said Chu,

refers to material objects, which are within the realm of corporeality; it is the instrument by which things are produced. . . . Before heaven and earth came into being, Principle was as it was. . . . As there is a certain Principle, there is the Material Force corresponding

to it, and as this Material Force integrates in a particular instance, its Principle is also endowed in that instance. (CTCS 49:5b, 6a, 8a)

The Material Force can be thought of as the lawfulness imbedded in nature, or, the non-linear geometry of the created universe. While the laws of creation are not the same as God, who precedes them, those laws are indistinguishable from God, and it is through these laws that the creation of all things takes place. All created things thus reflect these laws in their being, and God exists in them in this way. Inanimate objects, plants, and animals represent, in ascending order, this natural law, in that they reflect increasingly the self-generating principle of God, while only man has this natural law in such purity, through the power of reason, that he can reflect upon and perfect his powers of creativity and self-generation.

Leibniz also concluded that Chu Hsi’s Material Force (*Ch'i*) functioned as the natural law created by God:

Thus I believe that without doing violence to the ancient doctrine of the Chinese, one can say that the *Li* [Principle] has been brought by the perfection of its nature to choose, from several possibilities, the most appropriate; and that by this means it has produced the *Ch'i* [Material Force] with dispositions such that all the rest has come about by natural propensities. (Leibniz, #18)

This is a reference to Leibniz’s concept that this world is “the best of all possible worlds,” such that the laws governing the physical universe assure that the greatest good is achieved in the most efficient way possible: “we say that nature is wise; that she does all for an end and nothing in vain.” (Leibniz, #8) Chu Hsi hinted at this by asserting: “Everything naturally has a way of being just right.” (*Further Reflections*, 10:11)

In this light, it is important to note that Chu Hsi, like Cusanus and Leibniz, rejected any materialist idea that material objects were composed of some “fundamental particle,” but, rather, saw in even the smallest being a dynamic existence in space-time. The laws of creation found in every created thing are intelligible to man, as Cusanus’ Minimum/Maximum Principle or Leibniz’s Principle of Least Action are examples. (SEE LaRouche, “On the Subject of Metaphor”) Chu would have laughed at the modern-day search for the “ultimate particle,” recognizing such efforts as a reflection of a Taoist view of the universe.

Leibniz saw in Chu Hsi’s concept of the Material Force a reflection of his own notion of the continuum of space-time, and related it to his idea of the aether. Leibniz wrote:

It seems that this *Ch'i* (Material Force), or this primitive air, truly corresponds to Matter, just as it corresponds to the instrument of the first principle which moves matter; just as an artisan moves his instrument, producing things. This *Ch'i* is called air, and for us could be called aether, because matter in its original form is completely fluid, without bonds or solidarity, without any interstices and without limits which could distinguish parts of it one from another. In sum, this *Ch'i* is the most subtle one can imagine.

Thus, to Leibniz, as to Chu Hsi, the Material Force (*Ch'i*) is the geometry of the universe, the non-linear ordering principle by which all things come into being, and the basis upon which all things interact with each other.

It is the Material Force in each created thing, its particular "geometry," which distinguishes the myriad of things from one another. In particular, although all things are equally created by God and reflect His perfection through their Principle, it is through the Material Force that God made man in His own image, just as the Bible identifies this fundamental truth for Judeo-Christian culture. Said Chu Hsi,

From the point of view of Principle, all things have the same source, and, therefore, man and things cannot be distinguished as higher or lower creatures. From the point of view of Material Force, man receives it in its perfection and unimpeded, while things receive it partially and obstructed. Because of this, they are unequal, man being higher and things lower. (CTCS 42:27b-29c)

This, then, is the condition of each and every man at birth. Mencius had emphasized this fact, that Man is born Good, reflecting the Highest Good of God, and that this was the primary truth of mankind, without which nothing could be understood. Throughout Chinese history, those who wished to justify evil, those who wished to impose political tyranny, argued against Mencius on precisely this point. Like the Aristotelians in Western history, the Legalists in ancient China, based on Taoist ideology, argued that man was born as a mere beast, driven by greed and other animal instincts, who can be ruled only by enforcing a stratified, slave society, governed by punishment and reward. [SEE Billington, "The British Role in the Creation of Maoism," for a comparison of Legalism and modern British empiricism.] Mao Zedong, in particular, totally rejected Mencius in favor of Legalism, going so far as to declare that "class enemies" of the Communist Party were, often by mere circumstances of birth, not human beings, and, therefore, not worthy of any basic human rights.

Chu Hsi extended Mencius' idea to a higher scientific level. It is this quality of perfected Material Force, or perfected potential, which makes man uniquely capable of both continuous expansion of his knowledge of the laws of the physical universe, and also of participating with God in the continuing creation of the universe, through the exercise of his "divine spark" of reason, the Principle (*Li*) endowed by Heaven.

In the Christian tradition, St. Thomas Aquinas and Nicolaus of Cusa distinguished between the intellect and lower levels of human thought, including mere linear, logical, inductive or deductive thinking, and the even lower level of sense-perception. The mind is always in danger of becoming entangled with the material, finite aspects of the things of this world, which are the objects of our senses, but by rising to the level of the intellect, which is that part of our mental powers which reflect the Creator, we can intuit the Absolute Infinite. This is because, as St. Thomas wrote,

the intellect is a form not in matter, but either wholly separate from matter, as in the angelic substance, or at least an intellectual power, which is not the act of an organ, in the intellectual soul joined to a body. (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q. 7, Article 2)

Chu Hsi's notion of the mind is very similar to this. While the original nature of man is Principle, which comes from God, and man receives the Material Force "in its perfection," still, the mind is always in danger of responding to the appearance of material things rather than their essence, their Principle. In this way, the mind becomes "cloudy," dragged down by fixations on things in themselves, and the purity of the God-given original nature is obscured. Chu points out that man receives the Material Force in the clearest form, while animals receive it in a turbid state. "However," says Chu, "those whose Material Force is turbid are not far removed from animals." (CTCS 43:7a-b) Also:

The essence of a person's original mind is also boundless. It is only that it is corralled by the selfishness of the thing, and stagnated by the paucity of knowledge. (*Further Reflections*, 1:56)

How does one overcome "selfishness" and "paucity of knowledge"? Chu insisted that true knowledge is not particular facts about particular things, but rather the knowledge of God, the Principle of the universe. Since the Principle of any created thing reflects the Universal Principle of the Creator, the investigation of the Principle of any particular thing will contribute to understanding the Principle of all other things, as well as the Universal Principle itself. Also, by the fact that every created thing

reflects God's creation, and that man's (unobscured) mind is based on that same Principle, man is uniquely capable of achieving an understanding of any particular thing or phenomena in the universe—i.e., the laws of the universe are intelligible to man.

Conversely, achieving such an understanding of the Principle of any particular thing improves one's knowledge of one's own nature, and thus increases one's ability to probe deeper into the Principle of other things and into one's own mind.

The following quotes illustrate the concept:

Chu Hsi:

When Heaven creates a thing, it gives each thing a truth. (*Further Reflections*, 1:66)

Chu Hsi:

There is not one thing in the universe, however great or small, or obscure or bright, that is without Principle. We cannot speak of inner and outer. If there is anything that cannot be reasoned out, then how could it mean Principle? (*Further Reflections*, 3:8)

Ch'eng I:

All things under Heaven can be understood through Principle. . . . Each thing necessarily has its manifestations of Principle. (Gardner)

Cheng Tsai:

By enlarging one's mind, one can enter into all things in the world. . . . The mind of ordinary people is limited to the narrowness of what is seen and heard. The sage, however, fully develops his nature and does not allow what is seen and heard to fetter his mind. Heaven is so vast there is nothing outside it. Therefore, the mind that leaves something outside it is not capable of uniting itself with the mind of Heaven. (*Reflections*, 2:83)



'Learning for Adults'

The message that man must pursue the scientific investigation of the ordering principles of things and phenomena in the physical universe, became a central theme of Chu Hsi's effort to save Chinese civilization. The Taoists taught that the laws of the universe were unknowable, that an irrational, mystical force governed Heaven and Earth, and that proper government required the suppression of knowl-

edge in order to enforce order. The Buddhists rejected the physical world as unreal, teaching that enlightenment is found by suppressing thinking altogether, through quietism. To combat this, Chu Hsi chose a short passage from the ancient *Book of Rites*, which was probably written by Confucius. Called the "Great Learning," the passage consisted of only seven short paragraphs, plus commentary by a disciple of Confucius.

Through a new interpretation of two key passages in the "Great Learning," Chu turned it into a concrete starting point for the broad dissemination of his own fundamental epistemological contributions, using the words of Confucius himself. In fact, Chu Hsi even interpreted the title ("Great Learning") differently than had been generally accepted usage, taking the word for "Great" to mean "Adult": The title then is "Learning for the Adult." This contrasted with a common understanding that the classics were "learning for the sages." Chu Hsi's interpretation is in keeping with his life-long commitment to the establishment of universal education, both because such education is necessary for each individual to achieve true happiness through communion with the Creator, but also because the successful progress of the state depends on an enlightened population.

The first of the two passages from the "Great Learning" re-interpreted by Chu is in the first paragraph, which reads in Chu Hsi's interpretation:

The way (Tao) of greater learning lies in *keeping one's inborn luminous virtue unobscured*, in renewing the people, and in coming to rest in perfect goodness. (Gardner)

Earlier scholars had interpreted the italicized phrase as "manifesting luminous virtue," with the intention that the sage or ruler must manifest outwardly a perfected virtue, which by example would inspire the people to virtue. Chu, instead, emphasized the "inborn" nature of the "luminous virtue," in keeping with his concept that the nature of man is the God-given Principle, which is one with *jen*, the highest virtue. This then applies to all men, not just the ruler. In addition, Chu changes "manifesting" to "keeping unobscured," which re-emphasizes the same point—that the nature of all mankind is good, but becomes obscured in the process of interacting with the physical universe. Chu says that although the God-given luminous virtue can become restrained or obscured by material things and human desires, "Never, however, does its original luminosity cease. Therefore, the student should look to the light that emanates from it and seek to keep it unobscured, thereby restoring its original conditions." (Gardner)

Chu Hsi retains the notion of teaching by example,

as in the phrase: “renewing the people,” which results from the love and charity (*jen*) of one who “keeps the inborn luminous virtue unobscured.” But, again, this is something which each individual, not just the ruler, is capable of doing, and is called upon by Heaven to do.

The second section of the “Great Learning” (or “Learning for Adults”) which Chu Hsi interpreted in a new way came in the famous passage which sequentially links proper government to the full development of the individual creative potential. In Chu Hsi’s interpretation, this reads as follows:

Those of antiquity who wished that all men throughout the empire keep their inborn luminous virtue unobscured put governing their states well first; wishing to govern their states well, they first established harmony in their households; wishing to establish harmony in their households, they first cultivated themselves; wishing to cultivate themselves, they first set their minds in the right; wishing to set their minds in the right, they first made their thoughts true; wishing to make their thoughts true, they first extended their knowledge to the utmost; the extension of knowledge lies in fully apprehending the principle in things.

Note that the last line is not part of the sequence, but is a general statement defining the extension or perfection of knowledge. This statement is, in the Chi-

nese, ambiguous, and had been subject to drastically different interpretations historically. Chu’s interpretation meant that the final source in the entire sequential process necessary for successful government was the scientific investigation of the Principle of all things and phenomena in society and in the physical universe by the individual.

This was a dramatic contribution to the interpretation of the classics, although Chu insisted that this was precisely the meaning understood by Confucius and Mencius. To justify his interpretation, Chu Hsi did something even more dramatic, making what could be called a *Promethean* intervention into history, past, present, and future. He argued that a chapter in the commentary by the disciple of Confucius, which discussed the meaning of this passage, had been lost and that he, Chu, had, in his own words, “taken the liberty . . . of filling in the lacunae,” and “made bold . . . to supplement it.” This added chapter is an eloquent statement of Chu’s understanding of the beautiful order of the creation:

What is meant by “the extension of knowledge lies in fully apprehending the principle in things” is that, if we wish to extend our knowledge to the utmost, we must probe thoroughly the Principle in those things we encounter. It would seem that every man’s intellect is possessed of the capacity for knowing and that everything in the world is possessed of Principle. But, to the extent that Principle is not yet thoroughly

James Legge: British Aristotelian Taoist

Perhaps the best demonstration of the power of the passage interpolated by Chu Hsi into the Confucian “Great Learning”—in which he wrote, “to extend our knowledge to the utmost, we must probe thoroughly the Principle in those things we encounter”—can be found in the hysterical reaction it provoked in British Wesleyan missionary and scholar James Legge, whose late nineteenth-century translations of the classic Chinese texts are still standards today. Legge was in the employ of opium dealer Joseph Jardine, and, among other things, helped train at least one key leader of the fanatic pseudo-Christian Taiping Rebellion, which was used by the British to force the Chinese government to capitulate to their opium dealing and “free trade” colonialism. In other words, Mr. Legge was a polished example of the Aristotelian/Hobbesian/Taoist/Legalist worldview that characterized British imperial policy.

According to Legge, “Chu Hsi takes [the passage]

to mean ‘exhausting by examination the principles of things and affairs, with the desire that their uttermost point may be reached.’ We feel that this explanation cannot be correct, or that, if it be correct, *the teaching of the Chinese sages is far beyond and above the condition and capacity of men.* [emphasis added] How can we suppose that, in order to secure sincerity of thought and our self-cultivation, there is necessarily the study of all the phenomena of physics and metaphysics, and of the events of history?”

Legge painfully constructed a counter-interpretation: “‘When self-knowledge is complete, *a man is a law to himself* [emphasis added], measuring, and measuring correctly, all things with which he has to do, not led astray or beclouded by them.’ This . . . is the only view into any sympathy with which I can bring my mind.” *Clearly a mind which has obscured its “inborn luminous virtue”!*

probed, man's knowledge is not yet fully realized. Hence, the first step of instruction in greater learning is to teach the student whenever he encounters anything at all in the world, to build upon what is already known to him about Principle and to probe still further, so that he seeks to reach the limit. After exerting himself in this way for a long time, he will one day become enlightened and thoroughly understand; then, the manifest and the hidden, the subtle and the obvious qualities of all things will all be known, and the mind, in its whole substance and vast operations, will be completely illuminated. This is called "fully apprehending the Principle in things." This is called "the completion of knowledge."

Note, first, that Chu Hsi rejects Aristotelian empiricism as a method of scientific exploration, demanding the investigation of the Principle of things, rather than mere observation of physical characteristics, and, second, that he identifies the necessity of the Platonic method of hypothesis—"to build upon what is already known to him about Principle"—in order to achieve true knowledge.

Chu Hsi is accused by his enemies with tampering with the Confucian classics and distorting their meaning. Serious study of those classics, however, confirms Chu's contention that the concepts he develops all come directly from Confucius and Mencius, or were coherent with the worldview taught by them. In fact, Chu Hsi himself carried out a comprehensive study of the classics, wrote extensive commentaries on all of them, and is even personally responsible for elevating the writings of Confucius and Mencius to become the central focus of all education and examinations in the Empire. Previously, it had been even earlier texts, which Confucius had studied (and helped to compile), that had functioned as the core of the scholarly curriculum. Chu chose two shorter sections from the *Book of Rites*—the "Great Learning" and the "Doctrine of the Mean"—which, together with the collected writings of Confucius and Mencius, were called the "Four Books." These texts, with commentaries by Chu Hsi, remained the core of the education and examination system into the twentieth century.

The Renaissance in the West

Chu Hsi's central concepts, discussed above, can be readily shown to be coherent with those which guided the Renaissance in the West. In Cusanus' "On Equality," he describes the universe and everything in it as "similitudes" of God, in the same sense that Chu sees the Principle of every created thing as coming directly from God and reflecting His creation. Then, as in Chu's central theme that "the extension of knowledge lies in fully

apprehending the Principle in things," Cusanus says that the human intellectual soul sees the "knowable extrinsic through the consubstantial intrinsic. . . . The more it moves toward the other, in order to know it, the more it enters into itself." The shared concept here is that the laws of creative thought in the human mind are the same as the laws that govern the creation and development in the physical universe, and this fact uniquely defines man's capacity to know those laws, in an increasingly less-imperfect way.

In "On Beryllus," Cusanus restates this, in words similar to Chu Hsi's interpretation of the "Great Learning," which called on man to "keep one's inborn luminous virtue unobscured." Cusanus states that while God is absolutely infinite, and although the truth cannot be known in full by man, "but its similitude, which can be received to a greater or lesser degree, according to the disposition of the recipient, is communicable."

Cusanus said that man, by acting on his "similitude" with God, through exercise of the intellect, can become an "adoptive Son of God." Thus man is "relatively infinite," capable of comprehending the Absolute Infinite from within the finite, material body. (Aristotle, by contrast, argued that "the infinite considered as such is unknown.")

St. Thomas Aquinas had formulated these ideas in a manner which also reveals the parallel to Chu Hsi. In the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas said that man is capable of knowing God and the laws of the universe

according to analogy, that is, according to proportion. . . . Thus, whatever is said of God and creatures is said *according to the relation of a creature to God as its principle and cause*, wherein all perfection of things pre-exist excellently. [emphasis added]

There is, furthermore, an explicit parallel between Chu Hsi's use of the concept of Material Force (*Ch'i*) as described above, and a concept introduced by Cusanus, "the potential-to-become." Cusanus distinguishes between the eternal, the perpetual, and the temporal. God, the eternal, is actual-potential. But every created thing which is actual in the universe had the potential-to-become, which was created by God. This "potential-to-become" is the perpetual process whereby all temporal things are created by God, in keeping with His law. According to Cusanus the potential-to-become is created out of nothing by God, who is the actual-potential. Therefore, the potential-to-become is created, but does not cease; rather it remains for all time and is perpetual, because it precedes everything that has become actual, which is temporal.

This is a scientific statement of Creation, of God creating the heaven and the earth out of nothing. Unlike the Aristotelian empiricist cults which dominate scientific thinking today, which describe a finite world with a fixed number of “fundamental particles” which is entropically “running down,” Cusanus’ notion describes the actual negentropic universe, undergoing perpetual creation through the potential-to-become, which was created by the actual-potential which is God.

Compare this to Chu Hsi’s discussion of Principle (*Li*) and Material Force (*Ch’i*):

God has no other business but to produce things. The Material Force of the origination revolves and circulates without a moment of rest, doing nothing but creating the myriad things. (CTCS 49:23b-24a)

That which integrates to produce life and disintegrates to produce death is only Material Force. . . . Principle fundamentally does not exist nor cease to exist because of integration or disintegration. As there is a certain Principle, there is the Material Force corresponding to it, and as this Material Force integrates in a particular instance, its Principle is also endowed in that instance. (CTCS 49:8a)

This substantiates the view of Leibniz, discussed above, that Chu Hsi’s Material Force (*Ch’i*) corresponded to his notion of the aether.

The Trinity

The coherence between the Neo-Confucian worldview of natural law as expressed in the concepts of *jen* and *Li*, and the fundamental concepts of Christian humanism, is most clearly seen insofar as these concepts are reflections of the ideas expressed by the Christian notion of the Trinity.

Cusanus argues that the revealed truth of the Trinity, the triune God, consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, always existed, even before the time of Christ, in the form of *Unity*, *Equality*, and *Connection*, and that the Trinity is thus inherent in any form of knowledge of the One God.

By *Unity* is meant the One and the Many co-existing in God; that the One God is the cause of everything singular, while every actual thing is singular in its essence precisely as it is a reflection of God’s creation. This is God the Father. It should be clear that to the Neo-Confucians this is a description of Universal Principle, which is the One God, and which exists in each created thing as its nature.

By *Equality* is meant the unique capacity of man in his purest, God-given nature, in the living image of God,

to approach equality with God, as a similitude of God, and through the intellect to examine and discover the similitude of all things to the Creator. For Christians, God the Son represents perfect *Equality* with God, while through the imitation of Christ every man can be one with Him. For the Neo-Confucians, this describes man’s “inborn luminous virtue,” the particular Principle (*Li*) in each man, manifested through the Material Force (*Ch’i*, or Cusanus’ “potential-to-become”), and through which, if kept unobscured and nourished through the sincere investigation of the Principle in things, can make it possible to walk in the Path of God (Tao).

By *Connection*, Cusanus meant precisely that divine love which flows from the Unity of God, connecting Him directly with his creation, and which flows also from the creatures of his creation through their Equality, or similitude, with God. This capacity to love is what defines man as being in the living image of God. To Christians, this is the Holy Spirit, St. Paul’s *agapē*, which proceeds from the Father and from the Son. To Confucians, this is *jen*, the boundless love of Heaven and Earth.

Thus, the three central concepts in Chu Hsi’s Neo-Confucian worldview can be described as:

理

1. **Universal *Li*** (Principle), or the Great Ultimate, the origin of the universe;

2. ***Li*** (Principle), the nature of every created thing, imbedded in the process of creation through the instrument of the *Ch’i* (Material Force), the “geometry” or the lawful ordering principles of the created universe; and

氣

仁

3. ***jen***, divine love, the essence of the Creation.

These three concepts, to Chu Hsi, are One. They constitute an equivalence in natural theology with the Trinity of Christian Renaissance humanism.

This ecumenical vision came close to becoming a reality at the end of the seventeenth century, through the nearly successful evangelization of China by Jesuit missionaries working with Neo-Confucian scholars. The sabotage of that effort came primarily from Europe, from the Aristotelian faction whose reaction against the Golden Renaissance had fueled the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and Enlightenment; it was assisted, however, by the existence in China of a movement against the Renaissance thought of Chu Hsi. But first, we must examine the faith of the Sung Neo-Confucians and their battle against Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

Part III. The Faith Of Confucianism

What is the nature of the belief, or faith, of the Confucians?

The often repeated contention that Confucianism is not a religion obscures the issue, for although the Rites of Confucianism do not include formalized rituals for the worship of God, the insistence on unbending faith in the truth of God is found throughout both the Confucian texts and those of the Neo-Confucians.



The Confucians use the term “sincerity” (*cheng*, 誠) in a much broader and deeper sense than the English term connotes. When used as a necessary quality in the virtuous man, it includes the sense of a strong faith in God. Being sincere of heart and mind is to follow the will of God in all things, not simply

out of obligation, but due to uncompromising belief, or faith, in the Tao. Ch’eng I said,

The way to make the self sincere lies in having firm faith in God. As there is firm faith in God, one will put it into practice with determination. When one puts it into practice with determination, he will keep it securely. Then *jen*, righteousness, loyalty and faithfulness will never depart from his heart. (*Reflections*, 2:3)

Ch’eng Hao describes the superior man who lives by such sincerity as one who “makes uninterrupted effort all day,” and “faces the Lord in Heaven all day.” (*Reflections*, 1:19)

In the same way that St. Paul warned that one cannot fool God by performing acts of charity if one does not at the same time have total faith in God, so Chu Hsi warned:

There are indeed those people who do good their whole lives and yet who deceive themselves. One must arrange things completely. Only when one’s intention is sincere will the mind be upright, and only when you have passed through this will you be able to advance. (*Further Reflections*, 2:21)

Cusanus made the same point:

One attains nothing without faith, which places the wanderer on his way at the beginning. Therefore, the

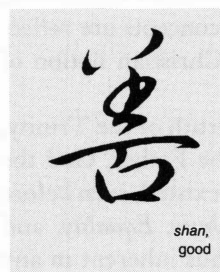
power of our soul is able to climb upwards to the perfection of the intellect only insofar as it believes. (“On the Filiation of God,” in Wertz)

Faith without charity is impossible, since faith is “formed” through works of charity, says Cusanus. God will not be fooled by insincere acts of charity, but even less can one who knows God shrink from acting to combat the great evil in the world, regardless of personal dangers. Ch’eng I said: “When sages and worthies know the Way is being destroyed in the world, can they remain seated, watching the chaos, and refuse to save the world?” (*Reflections*, 7:9)

Empiricists and positivists, following Aristotle, argue that faith in God is not in keeping with a “scientific” view of the world. Such a concept reduces science to no more than a description of the appearance of things, and is incapable of making any true scientific discovery, which must necessarily come from the discovery of a higher-ordering principle in the universe, bringing our knowledge closer to God’s law, or Universal Principle. Chu Hsi addressed this in discussing the scientific investigation of the Principle of things:

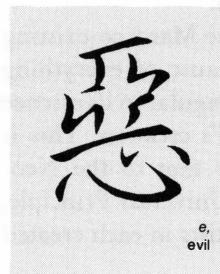
The mind of God is the ruler, and the mind of man cannot dominate it. Thus, if we are faced with an extremely difficult task and for the tiniest instant are cut off from God, then human desire will be active. (*Further Reflections*, 4:13)

Here, he means selfish desires and habits. What is desired is good, said Chu, only when it is the desire for *jen*, or for “the idea of what can be loved.” (*Further Reflections*, 1:15)



Good and Evil

Chu Hsi agreed with Mencius that the nature of man was good, but he clarified this in order to combat various “Manichean” ideologies which used the Taoist yin-yang dualism to posit the equal existence of good and evil in the universe. To say simply that God is good is misleading, he said. It is better to say that God is the source of all goodness, for, said Chu, God is



an all pervading perfection not contrasted with evil. This is [also] true of what Heaven has endowed in the self. But when it operates

in man, there is the differentiation of good and evil. When man acts in accord with it, there is goodness.

When man acts out of accord with it, there is evil.
(CTCS 42:9b-10a)

It is because man is endowed with free will, necessary for the exercise of reason, that he is capable of failing to act in accord with God's will, which causes evil. But such evil is not a choice between two equally eternal forces, but a failure to act in accord with the One eternal force. As St. Augustine made the same point, the existence of evil is not a necessary existence, but derives from a created thing (in Christianity, from the angel Lucifer), which acts against the only necessary existence, God.

This is essential in understanding the idea of man created in the image of God. Chu Hsi completed his discussion as follows:

What is received from Heaven is the same nature as that in accordance with which goodness ensues, except that as soon as good appears, evil, by implication, also appears, so that we necessarily speak of good and evil in contrast. But it is not true that there is originally an evil existing out there, waiting for the appearance of good to oppose it. We fall into evil only when our actions are not in accord with the original nature.
(CTCS 42:9b-10a)

It is the same good whether before it has emerged or afterward when it becomes contrasted with evil. Only after its emergence is it intermingled with evil. But the good in this state is the same good that emanates from the source of our being. (CTCS 42:13b-14a)



Universal Classical Education

The purpose of education to the Ch'eng/Chu school was the transformation of the world, with the primary goal being that of providing every human child the opportunity to develop his "inborn luminous virtue," and become a sage. Ch'eng Hao said,

The essential training should be the way of choosing the good and cultivating the self until the whole world is transformed and brought to perfection so that all people from the ordinary person up can become sages. (*Reflections*, 9:2)

Chu Hsi, in his several political assignments and in his teachings and writings, insisted that anything less than classical education was, in the long run, more destructive than constructive. By education, Chu meant a rigorous examination of the Principle in all things, with

the classics functioning as a guide for the process of that investigation.

Education to Chu was the basis upon which every child was connected to every other human being, past, present, and future. The study of the classics allowed the ancient sages to cross centuries of time and impart their eternal wisdom, and, together with the student, to build the proper future for all those to come. The curriculum was to be centered on the works of Confucius and Mencius. But, although Chu Hsi compiled the "Four Books" and wrote extensive commentaries, which he continued to refine throughout his life, he nonetheless denounced rote learning:

If students stick to the classics, recite them in order to know their words, and analyze them in order to penetrate their meaning (without focusing on essentials, this is not learning. (*Further Reflections*, 2:24)

As to scientific and technical training, the Ch'eng/Chu School drew on the work of an early eleventh-century scholar and educator, Hu Yuän (993-1059), who taught many officials of the early Sung Dynasty. Hu Yuän linked classical studies with courses on mathematics, hydraulic engineering, military science, and civil administration. He emphasized specialization only following a mastery of each field. Chu's curriculum added the study of astronomy, geography, topography, proper rites and music, and criminal justice.

However, Chu went to great effort to counter those who studied merely to pass examinations and win official positions, and even more those who fell into dilettantism, dabbling in the arts and literature to flatter leaders or pander to sensuality.

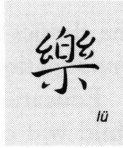
On the issue of morally depraved scholarship, the Neo-Confucians were uncompromising. During the T'ang Dynasty and into the Sung, an artistic school in art, poetry, and music had developed which used flowery techniques and ornamentation to pander to sensual titillation. The Ch'eng/Chu sages insisted that the purpose and true Principle of art was the capacity to convey truth from one mind to another.

On literature, Ch'eng I said,

Today those who are engaged in writing literary compositions devote themselves exclusively to phraseology and diction in order to please people's ears and eyes. . . . The sage, however, unfolded and expressed what was held in his mind, and that naturally became literature. (*Reflections*, 2:57)

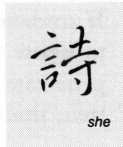


On **music**, Chou Tun-I was even more uncompromising:

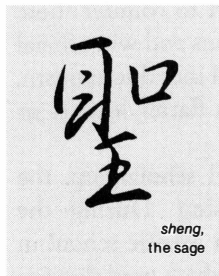


Rulers claimed that ancient music is not worth listening to and replaced it by or changed it into modern music, which is seductive, licentious, depressive, and complaining. It arouses desires and increases bitterness without end. . . . Alas! Ancient music appeased the heart, but modern music enhances desires. Ancient music spread civilizing influence, but modern music increases discontent. (*Reflections*, 9:1)

On **poetry**, Chu Hsi, in a preface to his commentary to the *Book of Poetry*, showed an understanding of the nature of tragedy in art:



The emotions sometimes may be morally right and sometimes morally wrong, so what is expressed may be either right or wrong. According to the sage-emperors, the emotions were rightly expressed if their language could be used for purposes of teaching. Even if the emotions became violent, their expression might be pedagogically useful as a warning. . . .



The Sage

Although Confucius was viewed as the greatest of all sages, and certainly worthy of imitation, the Neo-Confucians posited an idealized sage as a model for emulation.

In the opening paragraph of the *Reflection on Things at Hand*, the basic collection of Neo-Confucian writings compiled by Chu Hsi, Chu quotes from Ch'eng I:

The sage establishes himself as the ultimate standard for man. Hence the character of the sage is "identical with that of Heaven and Earth; his brilliancy is identical with the sun and moon; his order is identical with the four seasons; and his good and evil fortunes are identical with those of spiritual beings." (*Reflections*, 1:1; the quoted passage is from the commentary on the first hexagram in the *Book of Changes*.)

The responsibilities of the sage cannot be simply enumerated. Primarily, as was stated in the "Western Inscription," his task is that of a model whose love of God and of His creation, and whose projection of *jen* in all

his pursuits, "renews the people." But he cannot exclude from his responsibilities those of scientist, statesman, moral philosopher, and teacher. The Ch'eng/Chu writings refer repeatedly to the sins of omission of those who fail to achieve breakthroughs in all these areas.

Ch'eng I placed the responsibility for technological innovations, necessary for advancing the livelihood of the people, on the sage:

Take plows, plowshares, and the instruments of the potter and the blacksmith, for example. If any of these had not been invented, man's livelihood would have been reduced. How could sages and worthies stop speaking even if they wanted to? (*Reflections*, 2:5)

The Neo-Confucians were not only analyzing the cultural decay and economic collapse of the past centuries, they were constantly warning that if their policies were not adopted, that another breakdown crisis was imminent. (The Mongol invasion did, in fact, follow the death of Chu Hsi in 1200 by only a few decades.) Ch'eng I addressed the task of the sage both generally and personally:

When sages and worthies know the Way is being destroyed in the world, can they remain seated, watching the chaos, and refuse to save the world? . . . [The sage] should investigate his fate to the utmost in order to fulfill his aim. When he knows that according to fate the situation should be so, his mind will not be disturbed by poverty, obstacles, or calamity. He will merely act according to what is right. (*Reflections*, 7:9,13)

Ch'eng I is equally clear that while a superior man cannot shrink from a crisis, it is also the case that the impending crisis can be met only if the sage is given the reins of power:

Things in the world will retreat if they do not advance. They cannot remain still. . . . The sage alone can handle the abnormal situation in an expedient manner. . . . (*Reflections*, 8:13)

Just as Chu Hsi fought for universal education, so he believed that every human being had the capacity to become a sage, if he would "diligently put his mind in order and not allow it to strive after material goods." (*Further Reflections*, 2:30) Lü Liu-liang, the seventeenth-century follower of Chu Hsi during the reign of the Kang Hsi Emperor, extended this idea to include both the freedom to develop and the necessity of that development. Referring to the famous "mandate of Heaven" bestowed on the Emperor, which is removed by Heaven

if he fails to meet the needs of the people, Lü Liu-liang said:

This is not only a responsibility which weighs on the ruler. Everyone has his own self, and therefore there is no one on whom the responsibility does not lie. . . . The commoner may not have the official function of ordering the state and bringing peace to the world, but inherent in the fulfilling of his self-cultivation is the principle of ordering the state and bringing peace to the world. (deBary, *Trouble With Confucianism*)

This is very close to the Christian notion of a personal relationship to God as the basis for individual sovereignty, located in the individual's capacity (and necessity) to bring change to the world as a whole.

In this light, the Ch'eng/Chu school also emphasized the potential for redemption of even the most evil of sinners. Chu said,

Even the most wicked person, if he can be good for one day, becomes a good man for that day. Is it possible that one cannot change? (*Reflections*, 1:14)

And elsewhere:

For those who are most evil, my only lament is that they are so thick-headed and unenlightened. If in their own minds they would come to realize their insecurity and then follow up on this and correct the fault, could they too not be good people? (*Further Reflections*, 12:39)

Part IV. Countering Taoism And Zen Buddhism

Lao-tzu, the guru of Taoism, a semi-mythical contemporary of Confucius, said: "That which is looked at but not seen is said to be the invisible . . . and can never be fully understood by investigation." Man is immediately reduced to a grovelling beast, incapable of understanding anything beyond the mere appearance of things. Ruled out is any concept such as Plato's Ideas, or Chu Hsi's Principle. What Plato knew to be only the "shadows" of reality are to the Taoists, the limit of our intelligibility. The "Tao" of Taoism (the Way or the Path) is unintelligible by definition. The first sentence of Lao-tzu's writings states that anything that is capable of being expressed is not the true Tao.

By the time of the Neo-Confucians in eleventh-century Sung China, Taoism was pervasive, corrupting even the Confucian literati. The previous T'ang Dynasty had been founded and led almost entirely by confirmed Tao-

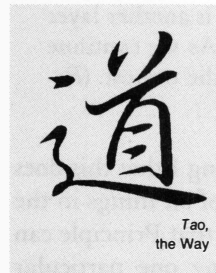
ists, while Buddhism spread dramatically across China, developing a new "Chinese" form—Ch'an, or Zen as it became known later in Japan—through an interaction with Taoism. Although the two conflicted, the conflicts were more political than philosophical. When Buddhism was briefly banned by the Taoist regime between A.D. 843 and 845, the motivation is evident in the result: 4,600 Buddhist monasteries were abolished, while tens of millions of *mu* of land were confiscated!

As reported above, the Buddhist monasteries had become surrogates for would-be feudal lords, using the tax-exempt status and freedom from inheritance regulations to build up the equivalent of vast landed estates controlled by wealthy families.

Without attempting a thorough critique of either Taoism or Buddhism here, I will discuss the method and some of the content of the Neo-Confucian defense of the Confucian worldview against these "heterodox" teachings.

The Neo-Confucians recognized that the mystical and irrational aspects of the heterodox teachings were, in part, embraced by a population which was hungry for answers to questions of a cosmological and religious nature, especially as to the source of life and the disposition of the soul after death. These questions became even more urgent as the social and economic condition deteriorated throughout the T'ang Dynasty. Confucius and Mencius had not adequately answered these questions, although they were addressed implicitly in their writings. But the sweeping influence of Taoism and Zen, and the chaos and destruction they helped bring upon the Empire, necessitated a thorough confrontation and refutation if China were to survive. This was the self-defined task of the Ch'eng/Chu School.

Rather than simply rejecting the concepts proposed by the Taoist and Zen schools, Chu took them, one by one, refuted them, and reformulated the concept, within the Confucian worldview, as advanced by his own discoveries concerning the order of Creation. We will review this in regard to several concepts: the Tao (Way, Path) itself; the use of the ancient *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*); "quiet-sitting" and emptiness of mind; and personal enlightenment.



The Tao

The Tao (the Way or Path) for Lao-tzu and the Taoists was mystical, totally beyond the comprehension or understanding of man, just as Aristotle argued that "the infinite considered as such is unknown," and thus finite man can never know the infinite

God. Government, under such mystical conditions, where there is no intelligible higher standard of truth, can only avoid chaos through brute force suppression of knowledge and political freedom. Lao-tzu said: "The people become difficult to govern when they have too much worldly knowledge. Thus, if worldly knowledge governs a state, it becomes a state of outlaws." This was precisely the justification used by the Legalist Ch'in Dynasty to ban the study of history and the classics.

Chu Hsi agreed that God, or the Principle of the Tao, could not be named or expressed in words, but that did not mean man could not know God. He also agreed that worldly knowledge alone could not govern a nation without leading to chaos. Similarly, when the Buddhists argued that human desires were the source of evil in man, Chu did not entirely disagree. But he charged that the Taoists and Buddhists, rather than solving the problem of how to know God, or how to subject worldly knowledge to a higher moral order, or how to subject human desires to a higher moral purpose, instead simply adopted mysticism, empiricism, and asceticism, and denied the existence of such problems, or the possibility of any solutions.

Chu Hsi countered that the infinite God could be known by what He is not:

God [Tao] alone has no opposite. (*Further Reflections*, 1:69)

He [the Great Ultimate] is not spatially conditioned. He has neither corporeal form nor body. There is no spot where He can be placed. (CTCS 49:11a-b)

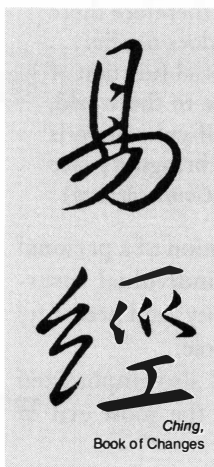
But man, graced with a nature which is the same Principle as the Universal Principle of God, and with an intellectual capacity capable of perfection, is uniquely capable of comprehending such an infinite being.

Chu's notion of "investigating the Principle of things to the utmost," contains an explicit understanding that there is a "negative" process involved in coming to know God. Chu says that in investigating the Principle of something:

After we understand one layer, there is another layer under it, and after that another. . . . As we continue to try to understand, we shall reach the utmost. (*Reflections*, 3:9)

In the same place, Chu quotes Ch'eng I that this does not mean to investigate the Principle of all things in the world to the utmost, nor does it mean that Principle can be understood merely by investigating one particular Principle. Thus, man cannot know God in full, but

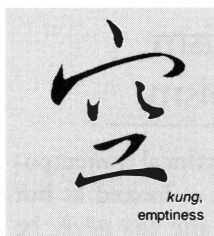
through an ever-less-imperfect knowledge he can "face the Lord in Heaven all day." (Confucius)



The Book of Changes

The *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*) was one of the classics of the "Golden Age" preceding the time of Confucius. Confucius himself almost never referenced the book. It came to be identified primarily with the Taoists, who used it for divination, and it is still a favorite of occultists in both East and West today. The famous hexagrams were each assigned a meaning, and a text accompanying each provided moral teachings. Used as a Taoist fortune-telling book, the diviner throws a set of sticks like dice, to determine a specific hexagram. The accompanying text is taken as the answer to the problem at hand.

The Ch'eng/Chu school used the teachings from the *Book of Changes*, while cleverly exposing and ridiculing its fortune-telling aspects. One example will suffice to demonstrate the method of turning the book against the mysticism of the Taoists. When a specific hexagram, said Ch'eng I, "indicates that there will be good fortune, let the subject of divination re-examine himself as to whether his virtue is outstanding, lasting, and correct. If so, there will be no error."



Emptiness vs. Creativity

One of Chu Hsi's primary targets was the Zen Buddhist contention that to get to the original pureness of mind, all thoughts must be extinguished, all emotions and desires removed. Chu protested that this eliminates any notion of human creativity, and that this God-given creative power is the very nature of the mind. What they fail to understand, he said, is that the nature of the mind, like the mind of Heaven,

is none other than the production of things; that if one interprets this mind any other way, one will invariably be drowned in emptiness and submerged in quietude, and will fail to attain the proper connection between substance and function, root and branch. (Hitoshi)

Creativity and production are impossible without interaction with the physical universe, which the Buddhists considered unreal, illusionary. But Chu additionally

warned against those who argued that Confucian teachings were best for ethical matters of society and government, while at the same time the Buddhists could be followed for their understanding of the transcendental realm of human consciousness. In a passage reminiscent of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, Chu said,

The Buddhists are really in a dream world, seeing only shadows of mind and nature. They have never carefully looked at their genuine mind and nature. Even if they are successful in preserving and nourishing, this is only the preservation and nourishment of the shadows they see. (*Further Reflections*, 13:15)

He quotes Ch'eng Hao:

The Buddhists devote themselves only to penetration on the transcendental level, not to learning on the empirical level. This being the case, can their penetration on the transcendental level be right? Their two levels are basically disconnected. Whatever is separated is not the Way. (*Reflections*, 13:4)

Chu went further by emphasizing that although Confucian teachings on ethics were indeed completely opposed to those of Buddhism, the fundamental difference was metaphysical, not ethical:

Those who refute Buddhism today rely upon the distinction between righteousness as the essence of the Confucian Way and self-interest as the essence of the Buddhist Way. . . . This distinction is rather secondary. . . . Buddhists take Emptiness as the essence of their metaphysical view. . . . Their metaphysical view is all wrong, consequently all other doctrines they maintain have to be equally wrong. . . . We Confucianists say all metaphysical Principles are real, while they say all Principles are empty.

Thus, to Chu, ideas are more real than the ephemeral, material substance of the objects of sense perception.

It is worth noting here that Aristotle was, in fact, a Zen Buddhist and a Taoist! Aristotle rejected Plato's concept of the Ideas, which is a rejection of Chu Hsi's parallel notion that the nature of each created thing is its particular Principle, which participates in the Universal Principle, God. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says: "To say that the Ideas are patterns and that other things participate in them is to use empty words and poetic metaphors. . . ."

Aristotle's rejection of any nature or meaning in things and affairs other than what can be observed by the senses, is epistemologically equivalent to the Zen teaching that the material world is an illusion—that only

the perception by the consciousness is real.

The ultimate goal of the Zen Buddhists was to find "peace" through contemplative enlightenment. Aristotle's view of "reason," his concept of the mind, and his view of the selfish aim of mental activity, are not far removed from the Zen Buddhists, as evidenced by this passage from his *Ethics*:

The activity of reason, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in serious worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself . . . and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unwearyedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes to the supremely happy man are evidently those connected with this activity.

Chu did not denounce the concept of "emptying the mind," nor the value of meditation; rather, he redefined them. The process of investigation of the laws of the universe, of the "Principle of things and affairs," necessarily leads to the arousal of selfish desires and a fixation on "things" and "objects," rather than their Principles. This clouds up and obscures the "inborn luminous virtue," the creative process, creating a screen of habits and fixed notions through which reality, true Principle, is distorted. It is this screen, which Lyndon LaRouche has identified as the matrix of axiomatic assumptions through which one views the world, which Chu insists must be "emptied" from the mind. It must be emptied in full, not in part, since it functions as a whole to prevent the creative potential inherent in the mind from functioning. Said Chu: "Habit becomes one's second nature, causing one to get further and further from his nature." (*Reflections*, 1:14) Also:

Modern scholars are unable to empty their minds and take a step back to slowly look over the teachings of sages and worthies in order to seek out their ideas. Instead, they directly take their own ideas and force them onto those [of the sages and worthies]. . . . (*Further Reflections*, 2:62)

Chu was most critical of self-described Confucian scholars who had adopted the various ideologies over the preceding millennium, and could not "empty their minds" of these prejudices to make a creative contribution. The Ch'eng/Chu School argued that the true Tao had been passed on by Confucius to his disciples, and then to Mencius, but with the death of Mencius in 289 B.C., the Way was lost. Significant efforts were made by individual scholars in the intervening years to rediscover the true teachings of the sages, according to Chu Hsi, but none were successful until the Ch'eng brothers.

Errors and corrupting influences from Taoism and Buddhism, once introduced in a Confucian form, were passed on in an hereditary manner from teacher to student. As Lü Liu-liang, the brilliant follower of Chu Hsi in the seventeenth century, identified the problem: “Scholars’ minds and hearts become like block-prints, and just as errors in the text of the block are reproduced in what is printed, they all repeat the same errors.” (deBary, *Trouble With Confucianism*)

How can one “empty his mind” and at the same time “preserve the mind and investigate things”? Are these not contradictions? Said Chu,

The Zen Buddhists see the mind as empty and possessing no Principle at all, while we see that although the mind is empty, it does possess all the 10,000 Principles completely within itself. (Fu) (“10,000” is used in Chinese to mean “countless” or “infinite.”)

Here, Chu distinguishes between man’s “human mind” and his “Heavenly mind.” It is not that there are two minds. Rather, man’s original nature comes from God, but as soon as man acts in the world, his free will subjects him to human desires, both good desires and selfish desires. If these desires are not governed by the “original mind”—i.e., by Principle—then they will become ensnared in evil. Chu said,

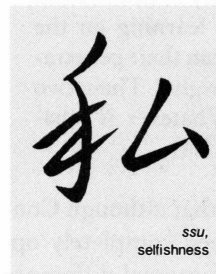
At the moment that we perceive good and wish to do it, this is the first stirring of the appearances of our true mind. But once it does appear it is covered by the natural inclination for worldly things. We must personally and intensively investigate it. (*Further Reflections*, 5:16)

This “original mind,” that of Principle, is what Cusanus distinguished as the “intellect,” as opposed to mere linear reasoning or sense perception. Matters which appear as total contradictions to a mind “fettered by what is heard or what is seen” (CTCS 44:13a-b), such as the Aristotelian mind, limited to deductive or inductive reasoning, are no longer contradictory at the level of the creative intellect. Cusanus termed this the “coincidence of opposites” in the Divine Mind, where apparent contradictions are resolved in the absolute infinite (God) and in the relative infinite potential in the mind of man. The Neo-Confucians made the same point, calling God both the Great Ultimate or Universal Principle, in that He contains everything there is, but also the “Ultimate Non-Being,” since He preceded Heaven and Earth. At the human level, man is both finite and infinite, his mind both “empty” and full of all Principles of nature.

Chu Hsi mocked any lesser concept of the mind,

either the Taoist/Legalist argument that, in order to impose order on the ignorant masses, people must be treated like beasts, or the Zen Buddhist argument that the outside world should be rejected in favor of self-reflection and personal enlightenment. When many Taoists and Buddhists claimed to follow the Confucian tenet to “Hold the mind fast and preserve it,” Chu Hsi responded:

“Holding it fast” is another way of saying that we should not allow our conduct to fetter and destroy our innate mind which is characterized by *jen* and righteousness. It does not mean that we should sit in a rigid position to preserve the obviously idle consciousness and declare that “this is holding fast and preserving it.” (CTCS 44:28a-29b)



Selfishness

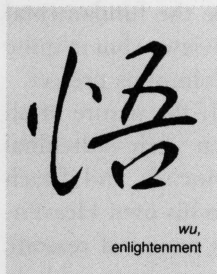
When the Zen Buddhists prided themselves on repressing all selfish desires in their search for Nirvana, Chu made the obvious point that in reality they were totally selfish. To refuse responsibility for society as a whole is to condone or outrightly support the evil that exists in that society in order to selfishly find one’s own peace through idle contemplation. “A person who has never spoken of doing good must first hate evil,” said Chu. “Once they are able to hate evil, then they can do good.” (*Further Reflections*, 5:24) Eliminating evil thoughts from one’s personal life while refusing to act on the crisis in society is not even possible: “If our mind is unresponsive and stubbornly immovable, even though our mind is free of evil, still the refusal to move can only be an unjust principle.” (*Further Reflections*, 5:35)

Similarly, professing a love of humanity, and even carrying out acts of charity, while at the same time refusing to fight evil, no matter what the personal consequences, will only lead to serious mistakes even in the intended acts of charity. Chang Tsai said,

Because one hates inhumanity, he will never fail to realize it whenever he does anything wrong. But if one merely loves humanity but does not hate inhumanity, he will be acting without understanding and doing so habitually without examination. (*Reflections*, 5:35)

The ultimate selfishness of the Zen Buddhists, said Chu Hsi, is that they taught their students that they could become enlightened entirely on their own, without God. Students were told to

concentrate their minds on places totally incomprehensible and unknowable, so that they will one day see by themselves and then get it. But this is simply a case of claiming by oneself that he has it. (*Further Reflections*, 13:24)



Enlightenment

Chu Hsi did not deny the existence of a state which could be called “enlightenment,” but, as the above quote demonstrates, he ridiculed the simplistic, cultist notion of “instant enlightenment,” while motivating instead the long, arduous,

but joyful process of study, political work, and scientific and artistic creativity to attain enlightenment and “face the Lord in Heaven all day.” Chu spoke of students who came to him

for the first time, always talking about this “sudden enlightenment,” but afterwards, to the contrary, they were even more screwed up and out of whack. So it seems that what we call “sudden enlightenment” was at the time a slight comprehension, with a feeling of being completely pure and happy. But after a while, the feeling wore off. How can we ever depend on such a thing? (*Further Reflections*, 13:23)

Such Zen “enlightenment” came from drowning one’s identity in an “all-is-one” soup which fails to distinguish between God and the myriad things and ultimately rejects the existence of God the Creator, and man the creature of reason. Today’s radical environmentalists would do well to consider Chu Hsi’s rebuke to a Zen-influenced student who said, “Things share the same Material Force and form one body. Only when one is absolutely impartial and is without selfishness can one share their joy and sorrow without interruption.” Chu responded,

When have earth and trees been selfish? They are not concerned with other things. Man, however, fundamentally has this concern. That is how he can be absolutely impartial, without any selfishness, and can embrace all things without interruption. (*Reflections*, 14:19)

“Sudden enlightenment,” said Chu, is in fact a rejection of everything real in the universe, and is the equivalent of embracing death as real, and life as an illusion. The Confucian “enlightenment,” on the other hand, comes from an engagement in life in all its facets, and its attainment is not an end, but a new beginning. Said Chu,

“Seeing into man’s nature” is a Zen Buddhist expression; it means “seeing just once and for all.” By contrast, the Confucians speak of “knowing man’s nature”; after knowing the nature, the nature still requires a full nourishment until it is exerted to the utmost. (Fu)

True enlightenment, then, is not a sudden, mystical experience, but is the equivalent of the process described by Cusanus as rising to the level of the intellect, whereby man can become an “adoptive son of God,” or, what the Confucians call a “sage.”

Overcoming Death

It is only in his attack on Buddhist ideas concerning death and reincarnation that Chu Hsi directly addresses the question of life after death. In general, he follows Confucius and Mencius by insisting that this is at best a mystery, and that man is better encouraged to concentrate on living according to God’s will than to dwell on the afterlife. However, as mentioned above in the discussion of the “Western Inscription,” where, Chang Tsai said, “In life I follow and serve Heaven; in death, I will be at peace,” Confucians considered the disposition of the soul at the time of death to be of the utmost importance, while also expressing a belief in the eternity of the soul through their strong belief in the necessity to offer prayers to ancestors.

But Chu Hsi was forced to become more explicit to counter the Buddhists. First of all, he totally ridicules the notion of the transmigration of souls:

Buddhists say that when a person dies they become a ghost, and the ghost becomes a person. If so, then throughout the world there certainly are a lot of comings and goings without any transformation or creations from anything else. There certainly is no Principle in this. (*Further Reflections*, 13:12)

To someone who said that Buddhists combine Confucian concern with human affairs and life with concern for ghosts and death, Chu responded:

I say that I don’t know whether these matters of humans and ghosts and life and death are one thing, or two things. If they are one thing, then talking about human affairs and the principle of life already certainly includes such matters as death and ghosts and spirits. We need not combine them in order for them to be combined. If you have to make a separate category then there will be a desire to have a division between beginning and end, and between the living and the dead. (*Further Reflections*, 13:25)

Such references to immortality are repeatedly joined with warnings against succumbing to a selfish notion of “preparing to get into Heaven” while actually ignoring the often difficult task of following God’s will in this life. “If you don’t cultivate this life but you cultivate the next life—why?” (*Further Reflections*, 13:30) To do so is to mistake death for life, and to thus fail in this life and also fail to achieve everlasting life: “I am afraid the Buddhists will only love the true nature after death. Isn’t their intention egoistic and self-interested?” (Fu)

The Zen Buddhists claim to believe in the continued life of the soul after death, but their notion of this is one of escape from the thoughts, desires, and mental activity of this world—in fact, they teach their students to attempt to achieve this state of death-like nothingness as their highest goal. Chu counters this by addressing the eternal, negentropic process of the Creation as the necessary location of man’s concentration both in life and in death:

The creative transformation of heaven and earth is likened to a great furnace, in which human and non-human beings never cease to grow and re-grow. This points to the principle of reality, and we need not worry about the cessation of the creative transformation. Now, Buddhists see it as a vast, vacuous and quiet thing, and mistake the “awareness or consciousness” posterior to death of human and non-human beings to be the principle of reality. Isn’t this wrong?

Now, what our Confucian sages and worthies call “to go back in fulfillment and die in peace” is none other than not to miss the Principle of Heaven man has received, so that he can die without any regret or shame. (Fu)

Part V. Confucian Crisis And the Arrival Of Christianity

When the Jesuit missionaries arrived in China in the late sixteenth century, the Confucian tradition they encountered was seriously degenerated from the Renaissance of Chu Hsi, for under the influence of the ideas of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529), it had increasingly come to conform to the Aristotelian worldview so effectively combated by the Neo-Confucians.

The role of Wang Yang-ming, and the character of his thought, is summarily expressed by an incident in

the world-historic year 1492. While Columbus was conducting a crucial experiment to confirm the Renaissance hypothesis on the geographic nature of the world, Wang Yang-ming, a twenty-year-old student from a leading Mandarin family, decided to carry out his own experiment to test what he perceived to be the fundamental thesis of Chu Hsi’s Renaissance worldview—but in quite a different manner than the great Columbus project.

Wang considered the following: If the nature of all created things is Principle, such that each individual Principle participates in Universal Principle, and if each Principle is intelligible to man due to his own Heavengiven Principle (characterized by his power of reason), then, thought Wang Yang-ming, it must be possible to discover this Principle in some particular thing—such as the bamboo in his father’s garden. So he and a fellow student sat down in his father’s garden, gazing at the bamboo. After several days, his friend fell sick, and Wang followed suit after several more days “effort,” having failed to discover the true Principle of bamboo!

His conclusion? Chu Hsi was obviously wrong. Wang became a dedicated Taoist, dropped out of society, studied Zen Buddhism and wrote “beatnik” poetry. Later, this incident contributed to his “sudden enlightenment,” when he realized in a dream that there is no reality inherent in the entities in the physical universe, but only as objects of man’s consciousness. This obvious Zen Buddhist notion became the basis for his “reform” version of Confucianism, mislabeled by historians, unfortunately, as a second “branch” of Neo-Confucianism.

This sounds very much like a parody of Voltaire’s disgusting *Candide*, in which Voltaire mocks Leibniz through the story of a young student who attempts to confirm a ridiculous materialist interpretation of Leibniz’s notion that the world created by God is “the best of all possible worlds.” But Wang Yang-ming was totally serious about this incident, and later reported it had taught him that

there is nothing in the things in the world to investigate. The effort to investigate things can only be carried out in and with reference to one’s body and mind.

The parallel to Aristotle’s rejection of Plato’s Ideas as “empty words and poetic metaphors” is obvious, as is Wang Yang-ming’s Aristotelian contention that only what the mind perceives through sense perception is real.

The fact that such thinking was tolerated within Confucian scholarly circles, and, in fact, became predominant, demonstrates the rapid moral and cultural decay

after 1435, when the Sung economic development programs and voyages of discovery were suddenly halted. Although he called himself a Confucian (primarily on the grounds that he supported involvement in political affairs rather than dropping out to find a personal Nirvana), Wang is nevertheless credited with responsibility for a revival of Zen Buddhism, which had received a severe setback under Sung Neo-Confucianism. And although called an unfortunate aberration by Wang's apologists, the later development of total moral depravity in one faction of his followers—the "Wildcat Zen"—was, in fact, the necessary result of Wang's immoral *atheism*.

Wang claimed to base his ideas on Mencius, who had asserted the innate goodness of man, based on the creative powers of the mind which reflect the lawfulness of the entire universe. Wang turned this on its head, saying that since the mind contained every Principle in the universe, it was unnecessary for man to go beyond examining his own mind!

Wang's specific philosophic construct was rooted in Ch'eng Hao, the Ch'eng brother who was sometimes quoted by Chu Hsi, but was also often criticized and corrected by Chu in his anthology of Neo-Confucian writings. Despite his inclusion among the founders of the Neo-Confusion school, Ch'eng Hao was essentially an atheist who, like Deists in the later West, viewed the human mind to be the same thing as the mind of the universe, while believing that man's life was predeter-

mined by the "quantity" of Material Force with which he was endowed.

This aspect of Ch'eng Hao's teaching was adopted by a contemporary of Chu Hsi named Lu Hsiang-shan (1139-1192). Lu also argued that Principle is not the *nature* of the mind, but is the *mind itself*, thus making the mind one with the universe. This *atheistic* rejection of any power greater than man (except, perhaps, a mystical Taoist "Non-being" completely unknowable to man) is the common thread running through this "School of Intuition," so-called. Lu Hsiang-shan is explicit on this:

The theory that Principle is due to Heaven whereas desire is due to man, is, without saying, not the best doctrine. If Principle is due to Heaven and desire due to man, then Heaven and man must be different.

Lu, like Wang Yang-ming later, accused Chu Hsi of demanding too much of mere man, who is incapable of any transfinite conceptions, and thus will only get confused by all the study and investigation of things.

Wang Yang-ming's contribution to this worldview was contained in two slogans: the extension of "innate knowledge," and the "unity of knowledge and action." Wang blatantly equated his notion of "innate knowledge" with the Buddhist notion of "original state." His purpose was to counter Chu Hsi's interpretation of the "Great Learning," where Chu called on man to "investigate the nature of things to the utmost." Wang attacked

Which Confucianism?

In the aftermath of the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the end of the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution which had wracked China for the ten years preceding Mao's death, there has been a most welcome resurgence of Confucian studies. This "Confucius Project" will certainly play a crucial role in shaping any future policy on the mainland, as well as in Taiwan. However, we must stop and ask the question—*which* Confucianism? Because, as is true in the history of Christianity, there have been many schools within Confucianism.

Although it is the renewal of the school of Neo-Confucianism associated with Chu Hsi that is essential if the current threat of a holocaust and dismemberment of China is to be avoided, much of today's "Confucius Project" is, unfortunately, not directed at this result. Instead, there is an effort to motivate a "Greater China"

movement, uniting Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and mainland China, behind the very "free trade" and libertarian policies that have brought the Western world into the current collapse.

In order to add a "Confucian" garb to this I.M.F. policy, a degenerate school of pseudo-Confucianism—which, in fact, represents Taoist and Zen Buddhist ideology—has been put forward as the necessary "pragmatic" policy alternative. This is the Ming Dynasty school of Wang Yang-ming, a "covert Buddhist" whose atheism and pragmatism have been perceived by the Western financial institutions and their agents as useful ideological tools to cover up and accomplish the looting and dismemberment of China—including the open support of Western finance for the continued dictatorial control of China's "pragmatic" Communist Party.

this, saying that the words in the “Great Learning” meant only to “rectify the mind.” Wang wrote,

Extension of knowledge is not what later scholars understood as enriching and widening knowledge. It means simply extending my innate knowledge of the good to the utmost. (*Yang-ming ch’üan-shu*, [Collected Works of Wang Yang-ming] 26:1b-5a, as translated in Tu Wei-ming)

To know this good, to “rectify the mind,” meant simply to return to the pure, unblemished “innate knowledge,” in which case whatever one does will be automatically good.

This anarchistic conclusion rested also on Wang’s second slogan, “the unity of knowledge and action,” which claimed that no prior knowledge of a particular action is necessary, or even possible, before doing it. This pragmatism of Wang Yang-ming has been referenced by all modern-day empiricists to attack any attempt to revive the Neo-Confucian Renaissance notion of the power of reason—from the disciples of John Dewey in their attack on Sun Yat-sen, to Mao Zedong’s “On Practice,” to Deng Xiao-peng’s “pragmatic” transformation of the Chinese population into a vast unemployed army fueling the new colonial free trade zones.

The ridiculous nature of Wang’s “concept” is well captured in the passage:

I cannot tell you any more than a dumb man can tell you about the bitterness of the bitter melon he has just eaten. If you want to know the bitterness, you have to eat a bitter melon yourself. (Tu Wei-ming)

Wang’s “sudden enlightenment” came in 1508, after he had been whipped, imprisoned, and exiled, following a confrontation with the “eunuch dictator” of his day. Depressed in his exile in Guizhou Province, and frightened of death, he had a sarcophagus constructed for himself. He sat upright in front of the coffin, and swore that he would “quietly wait for the commands of Heaven.” During this process of this death worship, he achieved “sudden enlightenment”—which confirms Chu Hsi’s point that Buddhists “mistake the ‘awareness or consciousness’ posterior to death . . . to be the principle of reality.” (Fu)

Such atheistic irrationalism must necessarily lead to a Nietzschean sort of glorification of the unrestrained will. Wang’s rejection of any external criteria for truth was, in fact, the basis for the fascist-like “Wildcat Zen” movement in the dying days of the Ming Dynasty. This group argued for the overthrow of all conventional moral precepts, considering anything that emerged from the unre-

strained mind to be the “innate, pure mind,” beyond questions of good and evil. Drunkenness, orgies, “art” consisting of paint thrown on paper, and similar debauchery characterized this sect. Li-chih (1527-1602), the most renowned spokesman for this school, proclaimed the “three religions [Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism] to be one,” a syncretization which continues to plague China to this day. Natural law was violently rejected in favor of total moral relativism:

Yesterday’s right is today’s wrong. Today’s wrong is right again tomorrow. Even if Confucius reappeared today, there is no way of knowing how he would judge right and wrong. So how can we arbitrarily judge everything, as if it were a fixed standard? (Ts’ung shu, VIII, in deBary, *Learning For One’s Self*)

Li-chih, not surprisingly, favored Legalism as a way of controlling the bestial masses—provided that the Legalist Emperors were in keeping with his own concept of the heroic (Nietzschean) superman, who would honor the unrestrained, innate nature of fellow supermen like himself! Like Mao, he considered the Legalist tyrant Ch’in shi-huang to be the “greatest Emperor of all time” (Ts’ung shu, II, in deBary, *Learning For One’s Self*).

The Arrival of Christianity

This is the environment in which the Jesuit missionaries arrived in the late sixteenth century, led by Matteo Ricci. During the waning days of the Ming Dynasty, Ricci and his successors spread the influence of Christian Renaissance science and moral teachings among the scholar officials, and within the court. By the time of the fall of the dynasty in 1644, Jesuits were in several official positions in the court, responsible for astronomy and various technological agencies such as hydraulics.

But it was in the first seventy-five years of the following Manchu (Ch’ing) dynasty, that the collaboration between Renaissance Confucianism and Renaissance Christianity reached the point of a nearly successful global ecumenical alliance, going so far as to include the very real possibility of the evangelization of China. The first Ch’ing Emperor appointed the Jesuit missionaries as teachers to educate the Crown Prince, and thus the young man destined to become the Kang Hsi Emperor in 1661 was educated simultaneously in Confucianism and in the Christian moral and scientific teachings.

Kang Hsi emerged as a staunch advocate of the Ch’eng/Chu school. Wang Yang-ming had been generally discredited, blamed for the moral decay and collapse of the Ming Dynasty. Although many of the leading

Neo-Confucian scholars of the Ch'eng/Chu school refused to support the new "foreign" dynasty from Manchuria, Kang Hsi did not suppress their work because of political differences, but encouraged and sponsored all those furthering the teachings of Chu Hsi and the Sung Renaissance. Historian W.T. deBary has credited the work of several such "anti-Manchu" scholars for the fact that the "Ch'eng/Chu teaching emerged as something more than just an examination orthodoxy; it grew into an active intellectual force both inside and outside the court." (deBary, *Trouble With Confucianism*)

Kang Hsi was at the same time increasingly encouraging the Christian missionaries, both in expanding their scientific work and teaching, and in their expanding proselytizing efforts among the Chinese elites and among the common people. This culminated in 1692, when Kang Hsi decreed that the Christians were to be granted full rights to travel throughout the Empire and to convert those who so desired. Although he never himself adopted Christianity, he affirmed that the Lord on High of Confucianism was in fact the One Creator, the "ruler and the Lord of heaven, earth, and all things," and confirmed other aspects of the Jesuits' understanding of Confucianism as being consistent with the teachings of Christianity. This came in response to a mounting effort back in Europe—aimed at disrupting the potential cultural and economic alliance of Europe and Asia—which insisted that Confucianism must be denounced as a pagan heresy by the missionaries and any potential converts. This conflict became known as the Rites Controversy.

To understand this conflict, it is essential to examine the advances being made by Neo-Confucian scholars during the Kang Hsi era. Professor deBary has made a major contribution to this effort through his recent uncovering of the work of Lü Liu-liang (1629-83). Although, as Professor deBary notes, Lü has been generally ignored by scholars both East and West, it is clear that he played the leading role in advancing the work of Chu Hsi in light of the revelations of the Christian teaching. Lü was himself interested in Western medical science conveyed to the East by the Jesuits, and made contributions of his own in this area. Lü's study of the European Renaissance developments in astronomy led him to insist on such studies for all students of moral philosophy, and he wrote a preface to a book by an associate on the Western calendar. Several aspects of his philosophical writings reflect a similar study of the Christian theological ideas, which Lü then develops within the context of the Neo-Confucian teachings of Chu Hsi.

First, as previously quoted, Lü Liu-liang made explicit that the God of the Universe was, at the same time,

a personal God for every human being, since "everyone has his own self, and therefore there is no one on whom the responsibility does not lie." Lü extended this notion of responsibility to include a sense of the "sins of omission." He ruthlessly attacked Wang Yang-ming, whose idea of "innate knowledge," he said, subverted Principle by restricting it to something wholly contained in the mind, and thus ignoring the universal nature and necessity of Principle, of God's Will, especially in matters of state. Of the sage, Lü said:

[W]hen he stands at court, there is no way he can keep silence. If something is done contrary to the Way, he can only withdraw from participation in it. To keep silence is what base officials and unworthy scholars do. (All quotations from Lü Liu-liang are taken from deBary, *Trouble With Confucianism*)

Lü also explicated the question of scientific method in a manner that comes closer to the Platonic method of Christian science than any other Chinese scholar. The knowledge obtained from the "investigation of things and the extension of knowledge" is not the mere collection of empirical facts, but, said Lü: "In what Chu Hsi said about 'the method of advancing in the Way,' the 'method' was definitely meant as the real business at hand."

This method was understood by Lü to lie in the continually improving capacity to hypothesize equivalences between the process of development in the physical universe and the creative process of mentation in the mind. Said Lü,

What the sage (Chu Hsi) spoke of in relation to the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge was the point of thorough penetration where there is integral comprehension, as the Principles in things and affairs meet, through inquiry and discussion, with Principles in the substance of the mind.

Another aspect of Lü's teaching, which directly affected the emerging "Rites Controversy" of the day, was his discussion of the rites themselves. The European enemies of China in the Rites controversy referred to the rites as a mere collection of ceremonial acts, which displayed belief in magic, or ghosts, or animism of some sort.

For Lü, however, the rites were not mystical rituals of a Taoist sort, but the embodiment of the Way. In this sense, Lü argued that institutions should be governed primarily by rites, that is, *by moral standards by which man honors the principles of propriety and respect for others.* Lü wrote:

Rites derive from Heaven, emotions from the mind and heart. Rites are always joined to human emotions, but this must mean to be in accord with the norms of the highest excellence in human emotions. . . . Whether to set rites forth clearly so that emotions attain their proper fulfillment, or (contrarily) for the emotions alone to be relied upon, allowing Heaven's principles to be overruled—that is the essential difference between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Failure

Lü Liu-liang's work demonstrates the positive response within Confucianism to the Christian ideas introduced by the Jesuits, drawing on and enhancing the Sung Renaissance tradition. But the destructive influence of Wang Yang-ming's materialist ideology, and the "syncretization" of Confucianism with Taoism and Buddhism, which accompanied his school, was still active. The battle between the two fundamentally opposed worldviews is evident in Leibniz's famous study, *The Natural Theology of the Chinese*.

Leibniz studied translations of Confucius, Mencius, and Chu Hsi done by Father Longobardi, one of the Jesuits who *opposed* the acceptance of Confucianism as a complementary worldview to Christianity. Leibniz analyzed the Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts, while also criticizing Father Longobardi's analysis and interpretations, as well as those of a Franciscan critic of Confucianism, Father de Sainte Marie. It is clear in reading Longobardi's and de Sainte Marie's quotes from "Confucian scholars" of their own time that they were working with followers of Wang Yang-ming!

Although we must assume that they knew of the fierce disagreements between the different currents, they apparently ignored them, accepting the covert-Buddhist notions of these contemporaries as representative of Confucianism in general. Leibniz was not personally acquainted with the work of Wang Yang-ming, but he nevertheless easily recognized that the quotations from these Fathers' associates were totally contradictory to all the fundamental concepts in the classics of Confucius, Mencius, and Chu Hsi. With his typical sense of humor, Leibniz wrote:

The authority that Fathers Longobardi and de Sainte Marie ascribe to Chinese moderns is only a scholastic prejudice. They have judged the later Chinese school as the medieval European school (with which they are preoccupied) would have us judge them, namely to judge the texts of the divine and human Laws and of ancient authority by their own interpretations and commentaries. This is a defect rather common among

philosophers, lawyers, moralists, and theologians. (Leibniz, #39)

Although Leibniz saw through this obfuscation, others did not. In the hands of the enemies of the Renaissance, such false readings of "Confucianism" provided the justification to crush the entire evangelization project. After a protracted battle in Europe, both within and outside the Vatican, a decision was made to issue Papal Bulls demanding that Christian converts denounce the Confucian Rites, and ordering the Jesuits to desist from their "accommodationist" policies. Emperor Kang Hsi, stunned by the ignorance displayed by the dicta from Rome, was finally forced to retract his open invitation to the conversion of his realm to Christianity. He explained that to denounce the Confucian Rites was to denounce the entire moral basis of Chinese civilization, which served as well as a civil code for the peace and development of society. The damage wrought to both East and West by this tragic development is incalculable.

Within China, this failure contributed significantly to the slow but certain collapse of the Manchu dynasty following Kang Hsi's reign. The subsequent Emperors not only rejected the Christian doctrines, pointing to the absurdity of the dictates from Rome, but, not coincidentally, also turned away from the Neo-Confucian teachings of Chu Hsi. Various schools emerged within Confucianism, mostly based on Wang Yang-ming's empiricism, while Taoism and Zen Buddhism again flourished. By the next century, the potential to adopt the science and economy of the Christian Renaissance was lost, and China fell easy prey to the genocide of the British opium warriors and colonial looters, from which it has yet to recover.

Part VI. Correcting British Philosophical Disinformation

To conclude this study, a particularly nasty piece of disinformation concerning Chinese philosophical history, that of the senior British China scholar Joseph Needham, must be refuted. In his multi-volume encyclopedic study, *Science and Civilization in China*, Needham constructs a representation of the Neo-Confucian school of Chu Hsi and its relationship to Western philosophy, which turns reality on its head.

He acknowledges the Ch'eng/Chu school to be the

most important school in all of Chinese history, and, in the false guise of his own construction, the one with which he personally identifies. Subsequent scholars and analysts may disagree with his preference for this school, but no one has questioned his historical characterization of it, which is a gross—if cleverly constructed—fraud, and continues to damage clear thinking on China's future and its role in the emerging world crisis.

Needham acknowledges Chu Hsi's role in transforming Chinese thought, and also the crucial role of the Ch'eng/Chu school in the explosion of scientific and cultural development in the Sung Dynasty. He also points emphatically to the fundamental epistemological agreement between Leibniz and Chu Hsi. From there he departs into a flight of fantasy whose effect is to equate this Renaissance Christian/Confucian worldview with its opposite, the bestial Social Darwinist, Aristotelian philosophical hedonism of the British Empire, distorting both Leibniz and Chu Hsi to that purpose.

In Volume II of his *Science and Civilization in China*, Needham concludes a chapter on Sung Neo-Confucianism with a section called "Chu Hsi, Leibniz, and the philosophy of organism." "Organism" is the positivist school developed by the Cambridge "Apostle" Alfred North Whitehead, who is Needham's professed mentor, and, in his view, the seminal figure in discerning the great truths of so-called modern science, meaning the pseudo-science of British empiricism.

Whitehead's circle at Cambridge, the "Apostles," included Bertrand Russell, with whom, through a ten-year collaboration, Whitehead co-authored the monstrous *Principia Mathematica*, whose sole purpose was to combat the influence of mathematician Georg Cantor's discovery of the existence of the transfinite numbers. (SEE LaRouche, "On the Subject of God") Russell went on in the 1920's to play a crucial role in the formation of the Communist Party of China, including spreading the ideological structures of those other spokesmen for "organism," Marx and Engels!

'Organism'

Needham rejects all religion as, at best, a "socially valuable fraud" (Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* throughout), arguing that the non-existence of God had been proven by Darwinian evolution theory, which showed that man's power of reason and moral principles are nothing but a "natural" result of the evolving levels of organization of matter over time, and that the evolution of the universe is governed by no higher laws, but only by the "increase of entropy." Says Needham of Chu Hsi,

All previous interpretations of Neo-Confucianism . . . lacked the background . . . of modern organicist philosophy. . . . Whether it is necessary to endow the universe, or some creativity "behind" the phenomenal universe, with "spiritual" qualities . . . is a question which is perhaps outside the field of philosophy, and certainly outside that of natural science.

To ascribe such a view to Chu Hsi is certainly inconsistent with Chu's concept of Principle (*Li*) as First Cause, without parts, the Creator of the universe; or with his notion of *jen* (*agapē*) as the spirit of that Creation. Needham deals with this by translating *Li*, not as "Principle," but as "Organization." Equating *Li* with Plato's Ideas, he says, is "entirely unacceptable," especially since the Idea of man to Plato was the soul, but, says Needham, "the great tradition of Chinese philosophy had no place for souls." Says Needham,

I believe that *Li* was not in any strict sense metaphysical . . . but rather the invisible organizing fields or forces existing at all levels within the natural world. Pure form and pure actuality was God, but in the world of *Li* [Principle] and *Ch'i* [Material Force], there was no [God] whatsoever.

As to the existence of *jen*, Needham mocks an earlier scholar for being "carried away by his theistic tendencies" by referring to Chu Hsi's insistence that Love (*jen*), Righteousness, Propriety, and Wisdom are endowed in man by Heaven. According to Needham, *jen* was not the boundless love of God through which he created all things, endowing them with His own creative nature—as, in fact, Chu Hsi explicitly argued—but rather it was merely an excretion of biological entities at some undefined point in their random evolution; or, as Needham calls it, "emergent morality."

Rather than seeing all men created in the image of God, Needham ascribed to Chu Hsi his own racist view that only certain men (the British, perhaps?) had evolved to the point that their "high-level qualities" would "emerge."

This, then, serves to justify Needham's other primary fraud: that Chu Hsi synthesized Taoism and Confucianism. Just as he falsely claims the efforts of St. Thomas Aquinas to combat the influence of Aristotle on Christian Europe to be a synthesis of Christianity and Aristotelianism, so he accredits Chu Hsi with the synthesis of "the two greatest indigenous schools of Chinese thought," Taoism and Confucianism!

This argument rests on an overt distortion of Chu Hsi's concept of God, in order to equate the "natural world of the Taoists and the moral world of the Confu-

cians.” Recall here, that Needham is ignoring Chu Hsi’s repeated rejection of the idea that one can take “Taoism for metaphysics and Confucianism for moral ethics,” insisting instead that there is only one universe.

Needham simply lies about Chu Hsi’s concept of the Tao (Way or Path). He says,

In general, it is clear . . . that Chu Hsi’s doctrine of *Li* and *Ch’i* had reconciled the divergent uses of the term Tao by the ancient Taoists and the Confucians. The Tao of human society was now seen to be that part of the Tao of the cosmos which makes itself manifest at the organic level of human society, not before, and not elsewhere.

But this totally contradicts Chu Hsi’s insistence that Universal Principle is the Tao, and that it is a single entity with “no parts,” that is, “not spatially conditioned,” and that it existed “before Heaven and Earth.” Here it becomes almost humorous, as Needham adds a footnote that “in Chu Hsi’s writings there are polemics against the Taoist conceptions of the word [Tao], which rested on complete misunderstandings of Lao-tzu (the founder of Taoism).”

Leibniz and Chu Hsi

Needham’s Delphic distortions conclude with a bizarre formulation about Leibniz, which in its absurdity reveals the British positivists’ adherence to Taoist mysticism. Modern science—by which Needham means “organism”—can be traced in a direct line back from Whitehead, to Marx and Engels, to Hegel, and finally to Leibniz! He portrays Leibniz as a “split personality,” who in trying to rectify “theological idealism on the one hand and atomic materialism on the other,” moved from Aristotelian-Thomist scholasticism, to atheistic Cartesian mechanical materialism, then finally to “the alternative view of the world as a vast living organism.” This last view, Needham claims, is the source of later “organism,” but cannot be traced further back in Europe.

Needham’s “discovery” is that the source of Leibniz’s “organism” is in fact in China, and in Chu Hsi in particular. Thus, the leading spokesmen for a Renaissance humanist worldview in the East and in the West, whose lives were spent in a battle to crush the evil effect of empiricist dogma utilized by oligarchical powers, are adopted by their enemies as the source of empiricism!

In fact, Leibniz explicitly and repeatedly attacked such a view, and in his book on Chinese natural theology, he directly rejects any attempt to read such a false interpretation onto the Chinese texts. Leibniz writes,

Perhaps some Chinese assume that a primitive composite has resulted from the primitive form, or *Li*, and from the primitive matter, or *Ch’i*; a substance of which the *Li* is the soul and the *Ch’i* its matter. They could comprehend this substance under the name (Supreme Ultimate), and the entire world would thus be conceived of as an animal, life universal, supreme spirit, a grand personage; the Stoics speak of the world in this fashion. Among the parts of this grand and total animal would be the individual animals just as for us animalcule enter into composition of the bodies of large animals. But since one does not find this error explicitly in the ancient Chinese authors, it should never be attributed to them, all the more so since they have conceived of matter as a production of God. God will not combine substance with matter, and thus the world will not be an animated being, but rather God will be an *intelligentia supramundana*; and matter, being only an effect of His, will never be coeval with Him.

It would be hard to find a more precise description of Needham’s “organism,” or a more total rejection of such a view on behalf of the Neo-Confucian scholars.

Needham’s admiration for Taoism stems from his own oligarchical view, consistent with his Marxist leanings, that a ruler *must be evil* in order to impose order. Needham states explicitly in his chapter on Taoism that the Taoist superiority over Confucianism is their “definitive rejection of ethics from the scientific world-view now in the forging.” Benevolence (*jen*), said Needham, has no place in science nor in government. “Ultimate benevolence,” he claims, “may require temporary non-benevolence.” His favorite passage from Lao-tzu, about which he says he is often “irresistibly reminded of the third and fourth lines,” begins:

Heaven and Earth are not benevolent (*jen*);
They treat the ten thousand things like straw dogs.
Nor is the Sage benevolent (*jen*);
To him also the hundred clans are but straw dogs.
(Tao Te Ching, Chap. 5)

POSTSCRIPT

The Chinese Communist Party On Neo-Confucianism

The Maoist philosophical and physical violence against Confucianism was, and still is, most virulently applied to Chu Hsi, while Wang Yang-ming is praised as a

progressive. One modern mainland theoretician, Li Zehou, reports the "line" on Chu Hsi in the 1980's as follows: Chu

served the feudal ruling class and the behavioral codes; he used the Principle of Heaven and the Mandate of Nature to repress and smother man's sensual natural passions. . . . [His philosophy] seriously poisoned the minds of the people in its several hundred years of dominance, leaving in its wake disasters and sorrow. (quoted in Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*)

This mainland scholar's typically Maoist attack on Chu is that he is full of "contradictions." These contradictions are: "Heaven and mind are rational but also perceptual, supernatural but also natural, *a priori* but also empirical, and they encompass morality but also the cosmic order." In other words, Chu's "error" was to recognize the "coincidence of opposites" in God, and man's potential to participate in the transfinite through

reason.

Wang Yang-ming is credited by this mainland scholar with correcting Chu's "error," by moving from "external Heavenly principles . . . to internal, nature, feelings, and even desires. . . . [H]uman nature is man's natural passions, needs, and desires." This "advance" gets closer to Mao himself, who used Wang Yang-ming in his assault on Chinese civilization, while establishing a new Legalist-Taoist regime, overthrowing entirely the view of the individual as sacred, endowed by Heaven with *jen* and *Li* (Principle).

Sun Yat-sen attempted to save classical Confucian teaching in conjunction with the fruits of Christian science and moral philosophy. He specifically rejected Wang Yang-ming's theories, recognizing the coherence of such degeneracy with the evil philosophy of the British enemy. His efforts must be renewed today, in keeping with the principles that governed the Christian Renaissance and the Sung Neo-Confucian Renaissance as the ecumenical basis for world development and peace.

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