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TO ACQUIRE WISDOM :
THE "WAY" OF WANG YANG-MING
(1472 - 1529)

by
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Submitted to the Australian National University
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
September, 1971

This dissertation is based entirely
upon my own research.

Julia Ching

Abstract

This is a study of Wang Yang-ming's philosophy, considered as a "Way" of acquiring wisdom and sagehood, based on his central insight into the nature of hsin (mind-and-heart), the fundamental principle of all human activity which is capable of determining and of perfecting itself through its intuitive knowledge of the good, at once inborn and acquired. The "Introduction" indicates the broad problem of the quest for wisdom, and of the question of "correctness" of approach and "orthodoxy" of thought which arises, in the context of traditional Chinese philosophy. The first chapter defines the so-called "Confucian Way" as a quest for wisdom, with the latter consisting of the attainment of consciousness of the unity of man with all things, and of the realisation of a high moral character. It speaks of Han Yü's effort to "restore" Confucian learning, and especially of the Neo-Confucian synthesis accomplished by Chu Hsi. A brief description of Wang Yang-ming as man and philosopher follows, with special emphasis on his interior evolution. His philosophy is then presented in its gradual development, through an analysis of his teachings of hsin, leading up, after exchanges with certain of his contemporary thinkers, to the discovery of his method of acquiring wisdom through the "extension of liang-chih (knowledge of the good)". The deeper implications of his thought and method are then discussed, especially his teaching of the "unity of all things". His expressed attitudes concerning Taoism and Buddhism are also studied, revealing his readiness to accept truth and goodness or "orthodoxy". The concluding chapter offers a critique of his philosophy, evaluating his attempt to solve the basic problem of the acquisition of wisdom, and indicating certain unresolved ambiguities which he has left behind.

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(galley proofs)

Australian National University Press

PREFACE

There are enough books published on the subject of the life and thought of Wang Shou-jen 王守仁 [Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 1472-1529] to fill a library, but these are written in Japanese or Chinese. The situation is quite different for European languages. There are only three English translations of Yang-ming's selected writings. The first, by Frederick Henke (1916) gives an abridged translation of Ch'uan-hsi lu 傳習錄, thirty-six letters and twelve short essays.¹ However, it contains many mistakes and gives very few references. The second is Wing-tsit Chan's Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings (1963) which includes a complete translation of the Ch'uan-hsi lu together with certain documents on social and political affairs issued by Yang-ming.² The third is my work, The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming, a translation of all of Yang-ming's letters with sufficient philosophical content to justify the effort, with critical annotations and references. It is now being prepared for publication by the Australian National University Press.

Where personal research on the thought of Wang Yang-ming is concerned, the field has been almost entirely unexploited in English, the only doctoral thesis being Tu Wei-ming's The Quest for Self-realization: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Formative Years, (1472-1509) (Harvard, 1968). As the title shows, this is a study of the philosopher's early life, with special emphasis on the formative influences which had acted upon him, but without treating his philosophy as a whole. There is another work, published in French, La Philosophie Morale de Wang Yang-ming, by Wang Tchang-tche (1936) also a doctoral

thesis.³ It presents a clear exposition of Yang-ming's practical teachings, without saying much of his doctrine of the "Unity of All Things" (wan-wu yi-t'i 萬物一體), which I consider to be the core of his teaching. Prompted, therefore, by the need of making the philosophy of this thinker better known to the world of English scholarship, I have allowed my reading of Ch'uan-hsi lu, of Yang-ming's letters, essays and poems to lead me to undertake this study, entitled: "To Acquire Wisdom: the 'Way' of Wang Yang-ming". My assumption is that, interest in Chinese philosophy has always been centred, to a greater or lesser extent depending on times and circumstances, on the practical aspect of whether and how wisdom may be acquired, with the goal being understood as the attainment of high moral character and a certain consciousness of man's fundamental unity with all things, which -- in the Confucian school -- overflows into a strong sense of social responsibility.

In order to see Yang-ming's philosophy of life in the context of the development of "Confucian thought" itself, for the purpose of determining the "correctness" or "orthodoxy" of his position, I have written the first chapter on the so-called "Confucian quest for Wisdom", giving special attention to the meanings of such words as Tao (the Way), Tao-hsüeh 道學 (School of the Way), and Tao-t'ung 道統 (Orthodox Transmission of the Way). I shall speak of the central Confucian virtue of jen 仁 (humanity), with its underlying, optimistic estimate of human nature. I shall speak of the notion of T'ien-jen ho-yi 天人合一 (Unity of Heaven and Man), crystallised especially during the Han (202BC-220 AD) dynasty. I shall go on to the heralds of Tao-hsüeh, Han Yu 韓愈 (786-824) and Li Ao 李翱 (fl. 798), and their effort to revive Confucianism after 400 years of Taoist-Buddhist dominance. I shall then discuss Chu Hsi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) synthesis of Sung philosophy through his interpretation of the ideas of his predecessors, Chou Tun-yi 周敦頤 (1017-1073), Ch'eng Hao 程頤 (1032-1085), Ch'eng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and Chang Tsai 張載 (1020-1077), as well as through the debates he had with his

contemporaries, in particular Lu Chiu-yüan 陸九淵 (1139-92) and Ch'en Liang 陳亮 (1143-94). A certain legacy of this synthesis was the transformation of the earlier idea of the "Unity of Heaven and Man" into the newer one of "the Unity of Man with All Things".

The subject-matter of this first chapter makes it the most complex. It sets the scene, as it were, for the rest of the study. The second chapter focuses the attention on Wang Yang-ming himself, as man and philosopher, presenting an analysis of his intellectual and spiritual evolution, and introducing the key-words in his philosophical vocabulary and the main lines of his thought.⁴ The three chapters which follow from there give a more detailed examination of his teachings, analysing his words and presenting the gradual evolution of his thought within the framework of his life-history. Extending from his basic insight, hsin (心) (mind-and-heart), which he understood as the source and agent of all virtue and goodness, through the controversies which he had with his contemporaries over the meaning of ko-wu 格物 (investigation of things), involving different ideas regarding the role of intellectual inquiry or personal insight in the quest for wisdom,⁵ to his discovery of a universal "way", chih liang-chih 致良知 (extension of one's knowledge of the good), these chapters seek to explain Yang-ming's interpretation of what was the "sacred legacy" of the sages, transmitted to posterity not through Chu Hsi, but Lu Chiu-yüan. The sixth chapter then discusses the inner meaning of Yang-ming's discovery, with special attention to his own teaching on the "Unity of Man with All Things", while the seventh represents an attempt to review the comprehensive nature of his approach to wisdom, which transcends the conventional divisions of "orthodox" and "heterodox" schools. The final chapter is a critique, based on personal judgement, of Yang-ming's whole philosophy, commenting upon its similarities and dissimilarities with that of Chu Hsi, his manner of dealing with the inherent conflicts and polarities of the "Confucian Way", between the "inner-outer" realms of interest, between

"knowledge" and "action", "enlightenment" and "cultivation", "self" and "authority", the "metaphysical" and the "moral". Certain unresolved difficulties related to his philosophy which entailed serious consequences in the intellectual development of late Ming times, are also discussed.⁶

I have desisted deliberately from giving too much of my own judgement of his ideas until the final, concluding chapter, in order that the critique itself may be based on impartial analysis of Yang-ming's own words, as examined in the light of their historical context.

I have included an Epilogue which gives a brief discussion of the study of Yang-ming's philosophy in Japan, past and present. Given a different situation--arising, among other factors, from deeper "Zen" influences--Japanese writers have not been as much affected by the criteria of doctrinal orthodoxy which have been imposed on the Chinese themselves.

I have also included, for the reader's reference, a short résumé of the thesis and its contents, an outline chronology of Yang-ming's life, a few pages on the interpretation of certain selected terms of his philosophical vocabulary and certain selected translated texts. There is also a selected bibliography.⁷

In writing this thesis, I have incurred a debt of gratitude to many persons and institutions. I wish in particular to thank Prof. Liu Ts'un-yan and Dr. K.H.J. Gardiner for their kind direction, to Prof. A.L. Basham for his constant encouragement, and to Dr. A. Ruhan for giving important suggestions regarding the methods of philosophical analysis and inquiry.

Notes to Preface

- 1 The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming, New York, Paragon reprint, 1964.
- 2 Published in New York by the Columbia University Press.
- 3 Variétés sinologiques, No. 63; published in Shanghai, 1936.
- 4 This chapter has appeared, in a slightly different form, in Papers on Far Eastern History III (March, 1971), 85-130.
- 5 Since Yang-ming's critics, both the earlier ones and our contemporaries, have usually attacked his doctrine of the "investigation of things" and of the so-called "absence of good and evil" (wu-shan wu-ō 無善無惡) of man's mind-and-heart, to present him as a Ch'an Buddhist or a metaphysical idealist, Chapters IV and VI have a special relevance, and I wish to indicate it here.
- 6 Although I have chosen to make an independent study of Yang-ming's thought, based on analysis of his own words, I have sought to indicate, by footnote references, the many important works that have been written on him.
- 7 The presence of the bibliography makes it unnecessary to give, in every footnote reference, the names of authors and titles in Chinese characters.

Abbreviations

<u>CSPSR</u>	<u>Chinese Social and Political Science Review</u>
<u>CTCS</u>	<u>Chang-tzu ch'üan-shu</u>
<u>CTYL</u>	<u>Chu-tzu yü-lei</u>
<u>CWWC</u>	<u>Chu Wen-kung wen-chi</u>
<u>CYTC</u>	<u>Cheng Yi-t'ang ch'üan-shu</u>
<u>ECCS</u>	<u>Erh-Ch'eng ch'üan-shu</u>
<u>ESWS</u>	<u>Erh-shih-wu shih</u>
<u>HCLC</u>	<u>Han Ch'ang-li ch'üan-chi</u>
<u>HJAS</u>	<u>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</u>
<u>HSCC</u>	<u>Hsiang-shan ch'üan-chi</u>
<u>MJHA</u>	<u>Ming-ju hsüeh-an</u>
<u>MS</u>	<u>Ming-shih</u>
<u>PEW</u>	<u>Philosophy East and West</u>
<u>SBE</u>	<u>Sacred Books of the East</u>
<u>SKTY</u>	<u>Ssu-k'ü ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao</u>
<u>SJHA</u>	<u>Sung-ju hsüeh-an</u>
<u>SPPY</u>	<u>Ssu-pu pei-yao</u>
<u>SPTK</u>	<u>Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an</u>
<u>SS</u>	<u>Sung-shih</u>
<u>SSCC</u>	<u>Ssu-shu chi-chu</u>
<u>TSCC</u>	<u>Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng</u>
<u>TSD</u>	<u>Taishō Shinshu Daizōkyō</u>
<u>TT</u>	<u>Tao-tsang</u>
<u>WLCC</u>	<u>Wang Lung-hsi ch'üan-chi</u>
<u>WWKC</u>	<u>Wang Wen-ch'eng kung ch'üan-shu</u>

Note: Except for the abbreviations of the following editions: CYTC 正誼堂全書 SPPY 四部備要
SPTK 四部叢刊 TSCC 叢書集成
and TSD 大正新修大藏經 and SBE [Sacred Books of the East], all titles of books and periodicals are cited in complete form in the first references made to them.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1472 Birth of Wang Yang-ming, on October 31, at Yü-yao.
- 1482 Family moves to Peking.
- 1484 Death of his mother.
- 1488 Going to Kiangsi to get married.
- 1489 Visit to the philosopher Lou Liang (1422-91).
- 1492 Passing provincial examinations.
- 1499 Wang Yang-ming receives the chin-shih degree and serves in minor official posts.
- 1501 Visits to many Buddhist and Taoist monasteries in Anhwei.
- 1502 Retirement in the "Yang-ming Cave" and practice of Taoist cultivation (several months).
- 1504 Return to official life and Confucian principles.
- 1505 Yang-ming begins to receive disciples as a Confucian teacher.
Meeting with Chan Jo-shui.
- 1506 Flogging and imprisonment as a result of his memorial intervening in favour of some officials imprisoned unjustly by the powerful eunuch Liu Chin.
- 1507 Exile to Kweichow.
- 1508 Enlightenment: Yang-ming realises that li is to be found in hsin the mind-and-heart.
- 1509 He begins to speak of the Unity of Knowledge and Action.
- 1510 Return from exile, to Kiangsi and Peking.
- 1511 Minor official posts and teaching of philosophy in Peking, Nanking and other places.
- 1516 Yang-ming is appointed Censor-in-Chief and Grand Co-ordinator of the border-regions of Kiangsi, Kwangtung and Fukien.
- 1517-8 Pacification of bandits and re-organisation of local government.

- 1518 Publication of two works:
 "The Old Version of the Great Learning"
 "The Definitive Views of Chu Hsi, arrived
 at Late in Life."
 Hsüeh K'an, Wang Yang-ming's disciple, publishes
 the first collection of his recorded conversa-
 tions, the Ch'uan-hsi lu.
- 1519 Suppression of the rebellion of Prince Ch'en-
 hao.
 Southern expedition of Emperor Wu-tsung (r.1506-
 21).
- 1520 Emperor Wu-tsung returns to Peking.
- 1521 Yang-ming begins to speak of the "extension of
liang-chih."
 Accession of Emperor Shih-tsung (r.1522-66).
 Honours accorded to Yang-ming.
- 1522 Death of Yang-ming's father.
- 1522-27 Six years of teaching in retirement.
- 1527 Recall to active service, to suppress rebellions
 in Kwangsi.
 Teaching of "Four Maxims".
- 1528 Pacification and re-organisation of Kwangsi.
 Yang-ming's health deteriorates steadily.
 Homebound journey.
- 1529 Death of Yang-ming, on his way home, on January
 9 at Nan-an, Kiangsi.

INTRODUCTION

One single man can change [the destiny of] the world [by his thought], and leave behind an influence that is felt for over one hundred years. [We know of] men who did so in the past: Wang Yi-fu 王夷甫 [Wang Yen 王衍 256-311] by his "Pure Talk",¹ and Wang Chieh-fu 王介甫 [Wang An-shih 王安石 1021-86] by his "New Laws".² In recent times, Wang Po-an 王伯安 [Wang Yang-ming] did the same through his [teaching of] liang-chih.³

Looking back upon the many things which have been said by Yang-ming's admirers and critics, during a period of nearly 500 years, one can see the gradual shifts of focus in the "Yang-ming controversy". During and after his life-time, lasting until the early nineteenth century, the issue was over his "orthodoxy": whether his philosophy should be called "Confucian" or "Ch'an" 禪 [Japanese: Zen]. Debates regarded particularly his interpretations of the "investigation of things" (ko-wu 格物) and of the so-called "absence of good-and-evil" (wu-shan wu-ô 無善無惡). In the 19th and 20th centuries, with the introduction of Western philosophical ideas, Chinese thinkers are being re-examined in the light of Western abstract categories. The entire hsing-li 性理 movement of the Sung and Ming dynasties, with its two branches--the school of Ch'eng Yi [Ch'eng Yi-ch'uan 程伊川 1033-1107] and Chu Hsi [Chu Hui-an 朱晦庵 1130-1200], usually known to the Chinese as li-hsüeh 理學, and the school of Lu Chiu-yüan [Lu Hsiang-shan 陸象山 1139-93] and Wang Shou-jen [Wang Yang-ming], usually known to the Chinese as Hsin-hsüeh 心學 --is being represented as a "Neo-Confucian" philosophy, divided into the so-called "rationalist" Ch'eng-Chu and "idealist" Lu-Wang branches.⁴ And so, although the "Confucian versus Ch'an"

issue has not yet disappeared, the tendency today is to praise or dismiss Yang-ming's thought as a system of "idealist" metaphysics.

"Confucian" or "Ch'an Buddhist"?

Yang-ming's contemporaries, including Lo Ch'in-shun 羅欽順 [Lo Cheng-an 羅整庵 1465-1547], had reproached him for departing from the accepted lines of the Ch'eng-Chu school of thought, and for the similarity of his teachings to those of Buddhism. Ch'en Chien 陳建 [Ch'en Ch'ing-lan 陳清瀾 1497-1567], Feng K'o 馮訶 [Feng Chen-po 馮貞白 fl. 1562], Lu Lung-ch'i 陸隴其 [Lu Chia-shu 陸稼書 1630-1692] and Chang Lieh 張烈 [Chang Wu-ch'eng 張武成 1622-1685] continued these criticisms in a much stronger language.⁵ T'ang Chien's 唐鑑 (1778-1861) history of Ch'ing (1644-1912) philosophy gave special prominence to the critics of Yang-ming's school of thought, which he accused of having caused men to "lose heart" by empty, irresponsible talk, "destroying the morality of the times, and leading to the final annihilation of the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty."⁶

Among the most famous critics of Yang-ming's philosophy were the leading scholars of the Tung-lin 東林 Academy, Ku Hsien-ch'eng 顧憲成 [Ku Ching-yang 顧涇陽 1550-1612] and Kao P'an-lung 高攀龍 [Kao Ching-yi 高景逸 1562-1626]. Both regarded Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi as the "orthodox" heirs of the Confucian tradition and attacked Yang-ming for rebelling against the authority of the Classics and their "correct" commentaries, and for strong Buddhist-Taoist sympathies.⁷ Kao said: "Not satisfied with remaining as an adherent of Buddhism and Taoism, Yang-ming was determined to usurp a position in the orthodox Confucian line. That was why he took great trouble to match his own discoveries with the teachings of extension of knowledge' (chih-chih 致知) and 'investigation of things', moving left and right, back and front [in his arguments]. One need merely give [his thought] a calm look, to find all his inconsistencies."⁸

The Opinions of Huang Wan (1477-1551)

Whether during or after his life-time, Yang-ming's critics usually took for granted the "Confucian orthodoxy" of the Ch'eng-Chu school itself, to which the "un-orthodox" Ch'an Buddhist teachings were polarised. The criticisms of Huang Wan 黃綰 [Huang tsung-hsien 黃宗賢 1477-1551], however, were an exception.

Huang Wan had been an ardent disciple of the Ch'eng-Chu school before his meeting with Wang Yang-ming (1501), whose close friend and disciple he became. After Yang-ming's death (1529), he assumed the role of guardian to Yang-ming's infant son, who was also engaged to his own daughter. Still later in life, however, Huang underwent another intellectual evolution, as his published notes, the Ming-tao p'ien 明道篇 [Elucidations of the Way], still testify.⁹

Huang's main target of attack were those disciples of the Yang-ming school who tended to neglect completely the discipline of intellectual inquiry and the established standards of moral behaviour. He referred to them as "the gentlemen of today" or "[our] friends today". But he also criticised Yang-ming himself, although he did so without mentioning the name. He took issue especially with Yang-ming's teaching of ko-wu, which he regarded as more Ch'an-Buddhist than Confucian, and also with the doctrine that "the man of jen (humanity) is one with Heaven-and-Earth and all things",¹⁰ which he said was contrary to the Confucian idea of "graded love", and could easily degenerate into a complete disregard of basic moral relationships.¹¹

Huang's criticisms are all the more significant because he openly pointed out the deep Taoist-Buddhist influences which had penetrated into the entire hsing-li movement ever since the Sung dynasty, mentioning by name Chou Tun-yi [Chou Lien-hsi 周濂溪] Chang Tsai [Chang Heng-ch'ü 張橫渠], Ch'eng Hao [Ch'eng Ming-tao 程明道], whom he described as "superior Ch'an Buddhists" and Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi whom he called "inferior Ch'an Buddhists".¹²

Although it is [usually] said that the School of Sages became dominant in the Sung dynasty, [this was not really so]... That is why Ch'an teachings have become even more wide-spread today. True doctrine has been lost, but people are still unrepentent.¹³

Nevertheless, Huang's indictment remained an exception in an age when the basic assumptions of the state-approved Ch'eng-Chu school were little questioned. Other Yang-ming critics of his time and after continued to adhere to the simplist "Confucian versus Ch'an" argument, writing polemics which tended to become diatribes.¹⁴ It was only in the Ch'ing dynasty, with the gradual revival of classical exegesis according to re-discovered Han (202 B.C. - 220 A.D.) techniques, that criticisms of both the Ch'eng-Chu and Lu-Wang schools were again heard.¹⁵

Strangely enough, however, this restoration of "Han learning" led later on to a renewal of the ancient "New Text"/"Old-Text" controversy which was occasioned by the intrusion of Western influence in 19th century China. But the extraordinary K'ang Yu-wei 康有為 (1858-1927)¹⁶ and his disciples T'an Ssu-t'ung 譚嗣同 (1865-98)¹⁷ and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao 梁啟超 (1873-1929)¹⁸ expressed a certain predilection for Yang-ming and considered his philosophy as capable of inspiring new hope in the minds of a people then facing the serious political, technological and intellectual challenges of the West. Anxious to promote a synthesis of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist ideas with the religious and political thinking of Western Europe, K'ang and his disciples praised Yang-ming's openness of mind. For them, there was no question of "Confucian versus Ch'an" controversy.

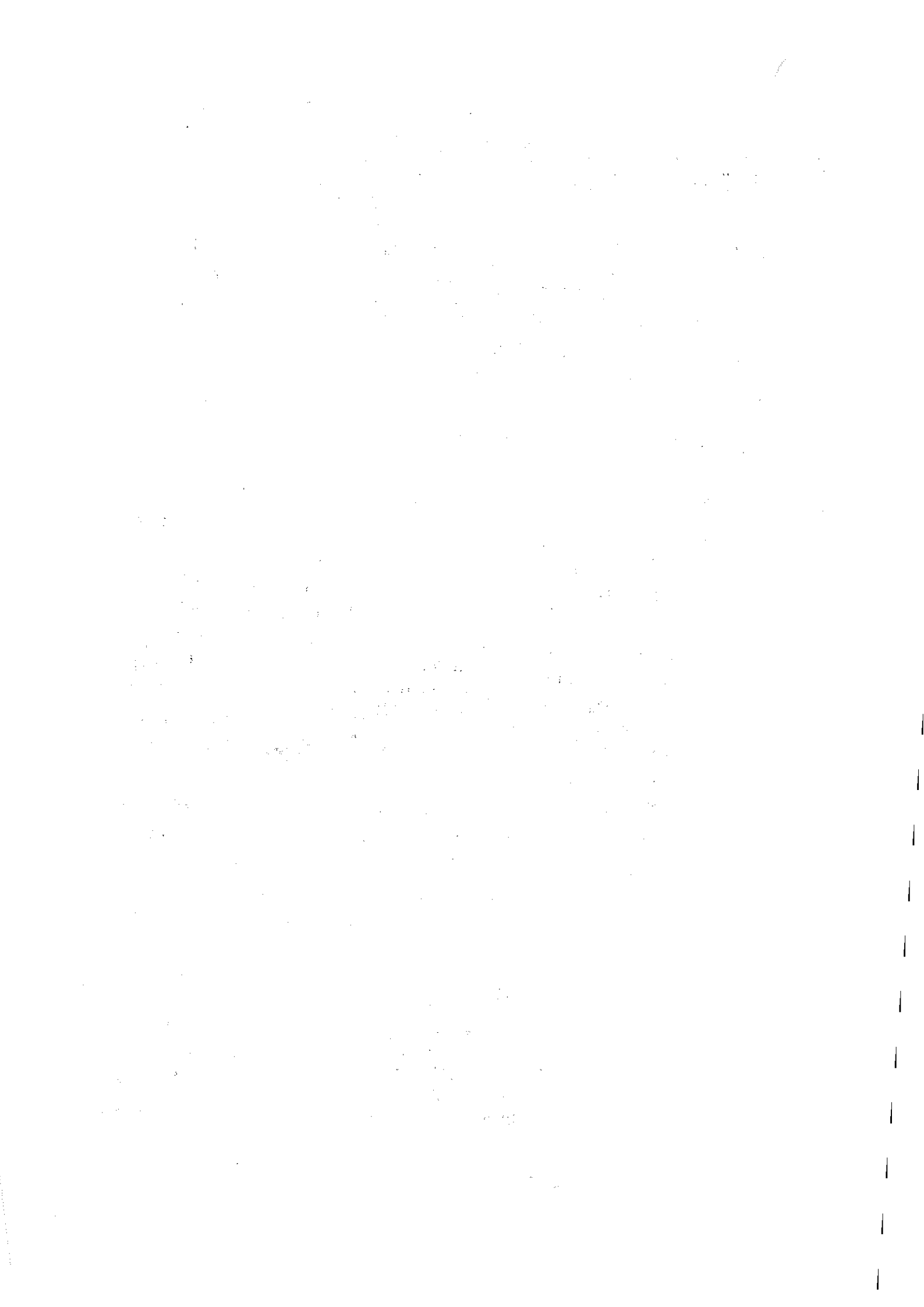
K'ang's political misfortunes prevented him from carrying out projected institutional reforms. In our own times, however, feelings for or against Yang-ming's philosophy continue today to be coloured "politically".

"Metaphysical Idealism"?

Yang-ming's metaphysics has been described as "idealist" by both Chinese and Europeans. A. Forke said so in 1939,¹⁹ J. Needham in 1956,²⁰ Carsun Chang in 1962.²¹ The assertion, that Yang-ming denied the existence of an external world, was made by these writers either as a criticism of his philosophy or as an appreciation—in this second case, by comparing him with European philosophers such as Berkeley (1685-1753) and Hegel (1770-1831). It represents the tendency to re-evaluate Chinese thinkers in terms of European philosophical categories. In Yang-ming's case, this judgement might appear especially relevant, on account of the strong Ch'an Buddhist influence on his thought.²²

But the expression "metaphysical idealism" has assumed special meaning in the writings of Chinese intellectuals in the mainland, where the criterion of orthodoxy has become Marx-Lenin-Maoism. The whole range of the history of Chinese thought is being re-examined in terms of a "Materialist" versus "idealist" struggle, with idealism represented as the villain of philosophy. Both the Ch'eng-Chu and the Lu-Wang schools are classified as "Idealist", with the former, named as "Objective Idealism" and the latter, "Subjective Idealism". Yang-ming's role as a commanding officer against "peasant rebels" has also contributed to the attacks made against his philosophy. Thus, Hou Wai-lu 侯外廬 summarised Yang-ming's thought in a sentence taken from one of his letters: "It is easier to defeat the bandits in the mountains than to defeat those in one's mind-and-heart", and judged him accordingly.²³

Hou and others of his persuasion, however, have also chosen to praise the so-called "leftist" branch of Yang-ming's school, in particular Wang Ken 王艮 [Wang Hsin-chai 王心齋 1483-1541] and his T'ai-chou 泰州 followers, including Yen Chün 顏鈞 [Yen Shan-nung 顏山農]. Ho Hsin-yin 何心隱. [pseudonym]



The Problem of Orthodoxy

I wish to point out, first of all, the ambiguity of this problem. By definition, the word "orthodoxy" refers to a "right way of thinking". But, as we shall see, the debate in China has been over the "right way of living", that is, about the correctness of ideas regarding the good life, the life which can lead man to the highest attainments of sagehood. The issue, therefore, is less one of "truth", or the "correctness" of certain intellectual propositions, than of "wisdom", which concerns insights into the whole of life, of man and his place in the universe, the knowledge of which must be accompanied by virtuous action culminating in the completion of a sublime moral character and an inspiring, transcendent personality.

It is also my opinion that a distinction is to be made between the "content" of the teaching concerning the good life, and the "way" by which it has been transmitted. The human mind attains truth by means of confronting problems. If, at one time, men conceived that the right way of thinking—in our case, of thinking of the "good life"—to be contained in certain formulae, they were later obliged, with the rise of new situations and of new problems, to devise new ways of thinking to keep the formulae right. The problem of orthodoxy, therefore, involves both continuities of terms used, as well as discontinuities of meanings, bringing about eventually modifications in the thought-content itself.

I propose therefore to regard Wang Yang-ming's philosophy mainly as a "way" of acquiring wisdom, and do so against the background of the entire Confucian quest itself, especially as it was presented by the philosophers of hsing and li. My intention is to discuss the shifts of emphases made by Yang-ming, first by moving away from the state-supported "Confucian orthodoxy" of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, and then, within his own system. I shall attempt to do so by a careful analysis of certain key-words he used, indicating, wherever possible, the nuances of meaning—both within his own system of thought and in comparison

with those developed by earlier philosophers--and, failing that, the ambiguity involved.²⁶

It should be pointed out that this is a study of nuances of meaning in a man's thought, nuances which can only be understood when seen against the practical end to which his whole life-goal is directed: the attainment of sagehood. Growth and development took place more in depth of understanding than in extent of interest. This work proceeds, therefore, in a "spiral" fashion, as a series of concentric circles, following Yang-ming as he talked always about the same thing--Tao, or ultimate reality and how it can be acquired--but in different words.

On account of the method which I have chosen, I have deliberately avoided using the more commonplace terms, including that of "Neo-Confucianism" itself, which may be susceptible of misunderstanding. I refer, however, to the conventional divisions of Chinese thought into "Three Ways" or "Three Teachings", without discussing in detail the extent of Buddhist and Taoist influences on Yang-ming's philosophy. Instead of implying that these have been minimal, however, it is my belief that they are too deep and extensive to permit sufficient examination within the scope of this study. It is rather my aim to show that Yang-ming's concern for personal insight was such that he could not confine himself to the so-called "orthodox" boundaries of thought.

Notes to Introduction

- 1 For Wang Yen's life, see Chin-shu [Chin Dynastic History], Erh-shih-wu shih [Twenty-five Histories] series, K'ai-ming ed., 43:127. "Pure Talk" (ch'ing-t'an 清談) refers to metaphysical discussions, particularly regarding the nature of Tao or ultimate reality. It was very popular during the Wei (220-65) and Chin (265-420) times. See Donald Holzman, "The Conversation Tradition in Chinese Philosophy", Philosophy East and West VI, (1956), 223-30.
- 2 Reference to the attempted reforms of Wang An-shih in classical education, political administration and finance. See H.R. Williamson, Wang An-shih, Chinese Statesman and Educationalist of the Sung Dynasty (London: 1935-37), 2 volumes; and James T.C. Liu, Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021-86) and His New Policies (Cambridge, Mass.: 1959).
- 3 Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武 [Ku T'ing-lin 顧亭林 1613-82], Jih-chih iu chi-shih [Collected Commentary on the Record of Daily Learning], ed. by Huang Ju-ch'eng SPFY ed., 18: 28a. Ku preferred Chu Hsi's philosophy to that of Wang Yang-ming.
- 4 For the definitions of Hsing-li hsüeh 性理學, Li-hsüeh 理學 and Hsin-hsüeh 心學, see Appendix I.
- 5 See Ch'en Chien's Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien [A General Critique of Obscure Learning], (Preface 1548), bk. 4, 3; Feng K'o's Ch'iu-shih p'ien [In Quest of Correct Learning], ch. 4; Lu Lung-ch'i, Lu Chia-shu chi [Collected Writings of Lu Lung-ch'i], ch. 2; and Chang Lieh, Wang-hsüeh chih-yi [Questions on Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy], (Preface 1681).
- 6 Ch'ing Hsüeh-an hsiao-shih [A Few Notes on Philosophical Records of the Ch'ing Dynasty]; (Preface 1845, Taipei reprint, 1969), "Introduction", 5. T'ang's focus on Yang-ming critics in his history of philosophy stands in strong contrast to Huang Tsung-hsi's Huang Li-chou 黃梨洲 [Huang Li-chou 1610-95] Ming-ju hsüeh-an [Philosophical Records of the Ming Dynasty], which centred Ming philosophy around the School of Wang Yang-ming. Yet T'ang sought clearly to model the structure of his book on that of Huang's.
- The criticism that Yang-ming's philosophy contributed to the fall of Ming had been voiced earlier by many others, especially during the change of dynasties. These included Wang Fu-chih 王夫之 [Wang Ch'uan-shan 王船山 1619-92], Ku Yen-wu and others. See Wang's own preface to his Cheng-meng chu [Commentary on Chang Tsai's Correction of Ignorance] in Chang-tzu Cheng-meng chu, (Reprinted in Peking: 1956), 8-9; Ku's Jih-chih iu chi-shih, 7:6a. See also Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Chung-kuo chin San-pai-nien hsueh-shu shih [The History of Thought and Scholarship in China During the Past Three Hundred Years], in the Yin-ping-shih ho-chi, Chuan-chi, [Combined Writings of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Special Writings], (Shanghai: 1936), 75: 6-7, 79-80; Hsü Shih-ch'ang

(1858-1939), Ch'ing-ju hsüeh-an [Philosophical Records of the Ch'ing Dynasty], (Taipei: 1967), 8: 1-2; Ch'ien Mu, Chung-kuo chin-san-pai-nien hsüeh-shu shih [The History of Thought and Scholarship in China During the Past Three Hundred Years] (Shanghai: 1937), 18-21.

7 See Ming-ju hsüeh-an [abbrev. as MJHA] SPPY ed., ch. 58. Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih [History of Ming Thought], (1st published, 1941; Taipei reprint, 1962), 284-314; Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Min-matsu no Jūgaku [Wang Yang-ming and late Ming Confucianism], (Tokyo: 1970), 399-438, *passim*. Ku had studied under a disciple of the Yang-ming school. He acknowledged Yang-ming's merits, especially his independence of mind, and sought, in a sense, to reconcile Yang-ming's teachings with Chu Hsi's which he clearly preferred for its more stabilising influence on social morality. Kao voiced stronger criticisms of Yang-ming. But even his polemics were less harsh than those of Feng K'o, Lu Lung-ch'i and Chang Lieh. See below, n. 8.

8 MJHA 58:32a.

9 For Huang's life, see MJHA 13: 5b-6b and his own Ming-tao p'ien (1st published, 1547; reprinted in Peking, 1959), especially Hou Wai-lu's Introduction.

10 This came from Ch'eng Hao. See Erh-Ch'eng ch'üan-shu [Complete Works of the Two Ch'engs], [abbrev. as ECCS], Yi-shu 遺書 [Surviving Works], SPPY ed., 2A: 3a-b.

11 Huang Wan, Ming-tao p'ien, 1: 11-13.

12 Ibid., 1: 12-14. He criticised, in turn, Chou Tun-yi's T'ung-shu [Penetrating the Book of Changes], Ch'eng Hao's letter on "Calming Nature" [See Ch. I, n. 57], and the teachings of Ch'eng Yi, Chu Hsi, Yang Chien 楊簡 [Yang Tz'u-hu 楊慈湖 1141-1226].

13 Ming-tao p'ien, 1:12.

14 It is my opinion, however, that those who argue from ideology frequently know the inadequacies of their pre-assumptions, but do so for specific aims, such as to correct practical abuses, and often refrain from questioning their own pre-assumptions, for fear of shaking the foundations of belief accepted by the masses who cannot clearly discern between truth and ideology. I believe this was the case in the "Confucian versus Ch'an Buddhist" controversy over Yang-ming's thought.

15 Ch'ing exegetes like Yen Yuan 顏元 (1635-1704) and Tai Chen 戴震 (1723-1777) criticised both li-hsüeh and Hsin-hsüeh. For Yen Yuan, see Kuo Ai-ch'un, Yen Hsi-chai hsüeh-p'u [Intellectual Biography of Yen Yuan], (Shanghai: 1957), 20-38; Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *op.cit.*, 105-32; Ch'ing-ju hsueh-an, 11: 1-13. For Tai Chen, see his Meng-tzu tzu-

yi su-cheng [A Documented Investigation into the Meanings of Words in Mencius], given in Hu Shih's Tai Tung-yüan te che-hsüeh [The Philosophy of Tai Chen], (1st published, Shanghai, 1927; reprinted in Taipei, 1963), 61-72, 77-79, 143-56. As a young student at the age of ten, while studying the Great Learning (Ta-hsüeh 大學), Tai had questioned his preceptor by what authority Chu Hsi could decide the "line" of "orthodox transmission", since he was separated from Confucius by two thousand years. See "Tai Tung-yüan hsien-sheng chuan" [Life of Tai Chen], in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's Yin-ping-shih ho-chi, Wen-chi, 40:41. See also Ch'eng Chung-ying, Tai Chen's Inquiry into Goodness, (New Haven: 1969), 18-34.

16 For K'ang Yu-wei, see his biography, "Nan-hai K'ang hsien-sheng chuan", in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's Yin-ping-shih ho-chi, Wen-chi, 6: 58-64. K'ang also sought to promote a new image of Confucius as a reformer of ancient institutions, through his revival of the "New Text" classical scholarship, taught a "progressive" view of history, and expressed bold ideas for the construction of an ideal society of the future which called for the abolition of all social-political distinctions including governments and families.

17 T'an, a disciple of K'ang, and one of the reformer-martyrs in 1898, recommended the reading of Chou Tun-yi, Chang Tsai, Lu Chiu-yüan, Wang Yang-ming and Huang Tsung-hsi, but not of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi. His philosophy, centred on jen (Humanity), which he identified with that which is indestructible in the elements of existence (Charmas), reminds one of Yang-ming's vision of the unity of all things. See his "Jen-hsüeh" [Philosophy of jen], in T'an Ssu-t'ung ch'üan-chi, [Complete Works of T'an Ssu-t'ung], (Reprinted in Peking: 1954), v. 1, pt. 1, 6-9.

18 Liang wrote appreciatively of Yang-ming in Wang Yang-ming chih-hsing ho-yi chih-chiao [Wang Yang-ming's Doctrine of Unity of Knowledge and Action] (1926), see Yin-ping-shih ho-chi, Wen-chi 43: 22-67.

19 Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie, (Hamburg: 1938), 380-99. Forke said of Yang-ming, that his "things" were "spiritual", that is, "functions of thought", and not "physical", and that he considered the world to be a "mental construction of the World Spirit, to which the human spirit is identified." (p.399).

20 Science and Civilisation in China, (Cambridge University Press: 1956), v. 2, 506-10. Needham gave little space to Lu Chiu-yuan and Wang Yang-ming, saying that "subjective and metaphysical idealism was no more helpful to the natural sciences in China than in any other civilisation." (p.507). He especially cited Yang-ming's account of his attempt to "investigate li" in the bamboos to show that he was unable "to grasp the most elementary conceptions of scientific method." (p.510).

21 Chang's book was entitled Wang Yang-ming: Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth Century China (New York: 1962). Professor Wing-tsit Chan, while praising Yang-ming's practical doctrine, also expressed disapproval of him for having confused "reality" with "value". See Instructions for Practical Living, Introduction, xxxiii.

22 The Chinese expression for the English term "metaphysical idealism" wei-hsin 唯心 [Mind-only] is derived from a technical term in Buddhist philosophy: citta-mātra. It is also translated as "Mind itself", and can refer to a certain ultimate and transcendent reality, of which the objective world is the manifestation. This occurs even when this ultimate reality is presented in negative terms, such as śūnyatā.

This idea permeates the Lankāvatara-sūtra (Leng-chia ching 楞伽經), [TSD No. 670, XVI, 480-514]. See also the English translation by Daisetz T. Suzuki, The Lankavatara Sutra, A Mahayana Text, (London: 1959), Introduction, xxi-xxiii, pp. 36, 44. See also Chang Chung-yüan, Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, Selected from the Transmission of the Lamp, Introduction, 4-14. Thus this term should not be equated to that of "metaphysical idealism" which refers usually to that philosophical attitude which regards all reality as the mere projection of the mind. In the case of the "Marxist" critics of the wei-hsin approach, however, it must also be added that their rejection of an ontological interpretation of reality--of the One behind the Many--leads also to an a priori rejection of both Ch'an Buddhist and Sung-Ming Confucian teachings.

23 Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih [A General History of Chinese Thought], ed. by Hou Wai-lu, (Peking: 1960), v. 4, pt. 2, 875. In this book, Liang Su-ming 梁漱溟 is criticised for "inventing history, saying that there was no class struggle in the medieval Chinese society, which was a world of "reason" and "peaceful harmony". ... For him, "reason"... can mean "without contradiction", that is, a kind of all-embracing "human feeling" which transcends exploitation and resistance, which is also what Wang Yang-ming called liang-chih. (p.908). Chiang Kai-shek is also attacked for "propagating a feudal, Fascist philosophy to fool the people, by saying that Wang Yang-ming's "extension of liang-chih" gave him "a foundation for study and work". (p.909).

The concluding judgement was that "Marxist truth has discarded Wang Yang-ming's teaching of "non-contradiction", and Chiang Kai-shek's feudal-Fascist... deceptions as well as his foolish talk about how he continues the orthodox transmission of Wang Yang-ming's philosophy." (p.909).

24 See Hou Wai-lu, op.cit., v. 4, pt. 2, ch. 22, 23, 24 (pp. 958-1095).

25 Ibid. p.958. Fung Yu-lan, however, has sought to be more impartial in his judgements of both the Ch'eng-Chu and Lu-Wang schools. In his Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih lun-wen ch'u-chi [Collected Essays on Chinese Thought Ist Series], (Shanghai: 1957) pp. 90-93, 122-123, he tried to point out the "merits" of the Lu-Wang school in propagating a philosophy of protest and "opposition" against the established authority of the time, through their liberating teaching on hsin. He did this while making use of the "orthodox Marxist" framework of the conflict of thought between "materialism" and "idealism". In another publication of his collected essays, Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih lun-wen chi [Collected Essays on the History of Chinese Thought], (Shanghai: 1958), he repeated the same message, and also made the claim that, by denying a prior, transcending li (principle of being), Yang-ming helped to "bring the Ch'eng-Chu abstract world back into the concrete world." He also praised Yang-ming's doctrine of liang-chih, as the discovery of a criterion of moral judgement which is independent of the traditional teachings and of the state authority.

26 On this account, I have sought, as much as possible, to give my own translations of the passages from the philosophers' writings cited in this work, while referring to the available published translations.

Chapter I

THE CONFUCIAN WAY (TAO) AND ITS TRANSMISSION (TAO-T'UNG)

"My Way (Tao) is that of an all-pervading unity".

....

"The Master's Way is chung (faithfulness to the principles of human nature) and shu (generosity and benevolence with regard to others)."

- Analects 4:15

The word Tao is at once the simplest and most complex of words in the Chinese philosophical vocabulary.¹ It has been especially associated with the philosophy, Tao-chia 道家 and the religion, Tao-chiao 道教, both of which are known in English as "Taoism". It is a word, however, which is also used by Confucian philosophers, including Confucius and Mencius themselves.² In philosophical or religious Taoism, the word referred to a metaphysical notion, that of ultimate reality, described in negative terms, of to the possession of special and "mysterious" knowledge, such as that of the art of acquiring physical immortality or of prolonging physical life. In the Confucian tradition, on the other hand, the word carried always a moral connotation, referring both to ultimate truth and to the moral and virtuous way of life. The meaning of this word became all the more ambiguous after the introduction of Buddhism into China, when the Buddhists also started to speak of their doctrines and their manner of life as "the Way", Tao. The confusion of meaning became an important issue especially as "the Way" implies the only, correct Way, bringing thus into focus a problem of orthodoxy, both regarding doctrine and manner of life.³

It is the aim of this chapter to study the origins and crystallisation of that movement of thought which called itself in the beginning, Tao-hsüeh, but which came to be called, in the later course of its development, Hsing-li hsüeh. For this reason, we shall mention Confucius (551-479 BC) and his pre-Ch'in (before 221BC) followers only for the sake of defining the

central message of his school of thought. We shall speak briefly of Han Confucianism and its elaboration of this "message". Our attention will be especially focused on the T'ang (618-906) and Sung (960-1278) dynasties, as we hearken to the voices of the first heralds of a new Confucianism, and watch the process of rationalisation which sought to explain the transmission of doctrine believed to have been lost and re-discovered, as well as the doctrine itself. We shall then conclude with a few words on the meaning of the precious spiritual legacy, as it is formulated by the sixteen word credo taken from the "Counsels of the Great Yü" (Ta-Yü mu 大禹謨) of the Book of Documents (Shu-ching 書經).⁴

The Confucian Way

As far as it is possible for us to know, Confucius had consciously refrained from speculations touching the supernatural, and had said very little about the nature of man and his relationship to the universe. His main teaching was of jen (humanity) → the old virtue of kindness which he transformed into the universal, all-embracing virtue, that which made a man human. He failed in his endeavours to find a ruler who would be willing to put into practice his ideas of moral renovation of society, but became famous as a teacher of the good life. It is important to our discussion of "Confucian orthodoxy" to note that the school of Confucius was only one of the many schools of thought which competed for state support during the late Chou period (1111?-249BC).⁵ The philosophers Mencius (372-289 BC?) and Hsun-tzu 荀子 (fl. 280BC) made important contributions to "Confucian" thought by their divergent ideas on the nature of "Heaven" (T'ien), of Man, and of sagehood. But they both showed the same optimism in human perfectibility, to be accomplished through education, as Confucius did before them.⁶ "Confucian" humanism came to mean that man --whether originally good or evil in his nature -- had the ability to "save" himself, by learning to live virtuously, and could even reach the highest goal of moral sagehood, should he choose to strive after it.

The Ch'in dynasty (221-206 BC) put an end to the "flowering" of the "hundred schools". Confucianism emerged as the dominant philosophy of the land only under Han, with the help of state power, after being transformed into an "ideology".⁷

The official patronage given to the study of the Five Classics, together with their "accretions", and the selective interpretation of these texts, accomplished with the help of prevalent "non-Confucian" ideas, resulted in the great Han synthesis with its yin-yang world-view, its exaltation of the Han state, its emphasis on submission to hierarchical authority. But ideas of human dignity and of man's special relationship with the universe received further elaboration. The scholar Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (c. 179-104 BC) propounded a theory of correspondence between Heaven and Man, describing man as the microcosm of the macrocosm, that is, the universe. Based more on artificial symbolisms, such as numbers, and not spiritual oneness, he left unexplained the ultimate meaning of man's life.⁸ Besides, the growing reverence accorded to Confucius as the greatest sage almost transformed him into a god and made sagehood generally inaccessible to the common man.⁹

The development of a "Confucian orthodoxy" during Han times revealed a certain pattern which would be repeated, with modifications, in T'ang and Sung times. Once again, the need of having a state ideology, the selection and use of Classical texts regarded as containing the deposit of ancient wisdom, the elaboration of a method of resolving inherent contradictions between the aims envisaged and the texts themselves, would lead to the formation of an eclectic teaching which came to be regarded as the embodiment of orthodoxy. Such a second reconstruction of "Confucian doctrine" had become necessary after many intervening years of political chaos and intellectual ferment between the fall of Han and the rise of T'ang. Six centuries of Taoist and Buddhist dominance impressed upon all the relative neglect which Confucianism had up to now manifested with regard to the deeper problems of man and his life in the universe -- problems to which Han scholars only provided a few superficial and artificial answers, incapable of satisfying the minds of those who had been exposed to the subtle arguments of Buddhist thought. With their interest in metaphysics and psychology, Taoist and Buddhist thinkers had at least grappled with these problems at much deeper levels of human consciousness and dialectic.¹⁰ The Ch'an sect had focused attention on the creative depths of the human personality and continued to fascinate many Confucian scholars, who

objected to the "Two Teachings".¹¹ Thus, when time came for the Confucians to strike back, they were obliged to forge new weapons --- to present a new cosmology, a new metaphysics, a new psychology, and a new method of attaining sagehood, all based upon a new evaluation of the ancient sources of inspiration. In this way, they enriched the content of Confucian thought and opened new horizons for the practice of their ideals. Thus reinforced, they hoped to combat the "unorthodox" teachings, to restore social responsibility and social order, and to justify the Confucian claim to superiority.

The first effort toward the restoration of Confucian learning was made by the Tang government which once again ruled over a unified China, and wished to put order in the intellectual life of the country as well as in its administration. A new edition of the Five Classics,¹² the texts which allegedly contained the Confucian deposit of wisdom, was published, together with what was considered to be the best available commentaries, (chu 註) as well as explanations of these, called "sub-commentaries" (su 疏). Called "Correct Meaning of the Five Classics" (Wu-ching cheng-yi 五經正義), this work represented the "orthodox" version of the wisdom of the ancients. but, when made into the required syllabus for examination candidates, who were forbidden to deviate from the given interpretations, the books became a hindrance as well as a help.¹³ Besides, they could not command the attention of men's minds, with their thirst for wisdom rather than for information. This failure on the part of state authority to promote a real inquiry into the meaning of man, of life and of the universe, accompanied by continued toleration of Taoist and Buddhist teachings and practices, left the way open for a "revival" of Confucianism under the leadership of individual thinkers and men of letters rather than of the government as such.

Tao-hsüeh: School of the Way

The man who raised most forcefully the banner of "orthodox" Confucianism against the onslaught of Taoism and Buddhism was Han Yü (786-824), known also as the herald of a new, future, Confucian orthodoxy. For him, however, "the Way" lay in a return to the "sources" of Confucian inspiration, including among these the book of Mencius, the record of the sayings of that philosopher who had first given expression to the idea of the orthodox, Confucian "Way", and of its correct transmission,¹⁴ but whose teaching had been largely forgotten in the wake of China's first "state orthodoxy", Han Confucianism. It was largely due to Han Yü that the Neo-Confucian movement became known as Tao-hsüeh, - School of the Way". As Han said:

Universal love is called humanity (jên); applying this in a proper manner is called righteousness (yi 義). Acting in accordance with them is called the Way (Tao). Finding them adequate for oneself without need of anything from the outside, is to be in possession of its inner power or virtue (tê 德). Lao-tzu... understood humanity and righteousness in only a very limited sense, and so it is natural for him to belittle them. What he called the Way was only the Way as he saw it, and not what I call the Way. What he called inner power was only power as he saw it, and not what I call inner power.¹⁵

To Han Yü's mind, there was no doubt that Taoist and Buddhist teachings which laid false claims to the word Tao, were destructive of Confucian morality, in the same way as those of Yang Chu and Mo Ti had been much earlier. He proposed the radical suppression of Taoism and Buddhism as a necessary first step leading to the restoration of a lost tradition, that of Confucius and Mencius. His cry was:

Make these people [Taoists and Buddhists] human again; burn their books, and convert their temples into ordinary homes. Direct them with explanations of the Way of the ancient kings... Then will all be well.¹⁶

These were strong words, to be literally executed under Emperor Wu-tsung 武宗 (r.841-846).¹⁷ But these were also misleading words, making no distinction between Taoists and Buddhists, between their clergy, or hermits and their layfolk. Confucians and the followers of Taoism and Buddhism were polarised, placed in opposing camps. Han Yü seemed, indeed, to regard himself as the lone Confucian, intent upon the destruction of the enemies of the human race. The reality, however, was quite different. Neither Han nor his disciples were free from Buddhist associations and influences.¹⁸

Han Yü was, after all, a man of letters rather than a systematic thinker. He set in focus the importance of Confucian "orthodoxy" and the question of taking up again an interrupted transmission of the "Way". He pointed out the "enemies" of Confucianism: the Taoists and Buddhists. He also brought back to the fore the problem of goodness and evil in human nature. But it was left to his friend and disciple, Li Ao (fl.798), a more conscientious thinker, to explore, in great depth, the problems relating to human nature and human emotions. In a treatise he wrote on the subject of the "recovery" of the original goodness in human nature, Li indicated that the 'Way' lay inside man:

That whereby a man may become a sage is his nature (hsing). That whereby a man may betray his nature are the emotions (ch'ing 情)...When the emotions cause hindrance, nature is obscured...[just as] when water is muddy its flow will not be clear...But this is not the fault of the water in its [inherent] clarity...¹⁹

Li Ao's notion of "inner calm" and "inner fasting"²⁰ paved the way to a freer method of exegesis, giving less attention to philology or to allegorical correlations, and more to personal insight, to a more generalised and spiritual interpretation of the Classics, with the specific aim of deepening the understanding of human nature and of finding the right way of developing its tendency toward goodness.

Tao-t'ung: Orthodox Transmission

The Sung government continued the T'ang policy of official encouragement of Confucian learning. Under imperial patronage, the stone-engraving of the classical texts was completed, the T'ang edition of the Wu-ching cheng-yi was again published, and a visit to Confucius' birthplace was made by Emperor Chen-tsung 真宗 (r.998-1022), who awarded the sage with a long posthumous title.²¹ However, such official gestures did not meet with the enthusiastic support of the leading scholars of the time, who objected to the rigid adherence to traditional commentaries required by civil examinations and criticised the government for extending patronage to Taoists and Buddhists as well as to Confucians. It would be these men, rather than the government, who eventually set up new standards of scholarship, leading to the creation of a "new" Confucianism.²²

During the Sung dynasty and after, a merging process was also taking place between the more speculative Buddhist sects, like T'ien-t'ai 天台 and Hua-yen 華嚴 on the one side, and Ch'an, on the other, to continue until the three became almost indistinguishable.²³ It was thus no accident that Sung and Ming philosophers should usually refer to Buddhism as Ch'an. Moreover, the penetration of Taoist philosophical ideas into Buddhism contributed also its share in the shaping of a final form of "Chinese" Buddhism, which, in its turn, especially through Ch'an and the Pure Land sect, also enriched the teachings of religious Taoism.²⁴ Hence, Neo-Confucian thinkers habitually referred to Buddhism and Taoism in conjunction as the two "heterodox" teachings.

However, the depth of the level of inter-penetration of ideas between all three teachings--Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist--remains obscure. It seems that, in spite of their negative tendencies, the two "heterodox" teachings acknowledged a certain underlying reality in the world.²⁵ A certain continuum between the self and the other, between man and the universe, so very central to the Confucian message, was thus affirmed. Certain Buddhist ideas, regarding the universal capacity for attaining salvation,

and the method of doing so by the recovery of one's original "Buddha-nature" from the contamination of passion or selfish desires (kiesá), acted also as a stimulus to a reinterpretation of Confucian thought.²⁶

The notion that the Confucian Tao had not been transmitted after Mencius, and the appeal for a renewed line of "orthodox transmission", voiced by Han Yü and Li Ao, found echoes in the writings of these men and early Sung scholars. They envisaged the true "Way" under three aspects. Its content or "substance" (t'i 體) is made up of unchanging moral ideals; its application or "function" (yung 用) is the pursuit of these ideals by right action, while its "literary expression" (wen 文) includes the whole range of Confucian Classics.²⁷ To understand well the content and put it into practice (yung), however, one must first acquire insights in the mind-and-heart, before expressing them in words. Both Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng Yi emphasised this personal character of the knowledge of the "Way". Ch'eng Hao affirmed that, "Although I have learnt certain things from others, I have discovered for myself, the truth of the words, T'ien-li 天理 ('principle of Heaven')".²⁸

This does not necessarily preclude a serious knowledge of the texts of the Classics or the help of teachers. But the work of teachers was less the transmission of exegetical skills — as was that of the great "New Text" and "Old Text" Han scholars²⁹ — than that of provoking thought and inspiring insight. There was no question of the passing on of a static truth, but the transmission of faith and understanding in an eternal message, unchanging, and yet to be discovered anew by every generation.

The Transmission Determined

Chu Hsi was the first Sung philosopher to make explicit use of the term, Tao-t'ung (Transmission of the Way).³⁰ As the disciple of Li T'ung 李侗 (1093-1163), the disciple of Lo Ts'ung-yen 羅從彦 (1072-1135), the disciple, in turn, of Yang Shih 楊時 (1053-1135), Chu himself could claim to be heir to a distinguished intellectual lineage

which traced back to Yang's teacher, Ch'eng Yi.³¹ He considered that the "Way" of the sages, lost to posterity with the death of Mencius, was rediscovered by the two Ch'engs. He also honoured Chou Tun-yi as the teacher of the Ch'eng brothers. He spoke also of Chang Tsai's role in the "Transmission", but placed him after the Ch'engs, who were his nephews.³²

Besides determining the "line" of orthodox transmission, Chu Hsi was also chiefly responsible for the choice of the "Four Books"³³ as the final, authoritative storehouse of Confucian wisdom, taking precedence over the "Five Classics". Chu wrote voluminous commentaries to many classical texts, to the Historical Annals (Shih-chi 史記) of Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 (145?-86BC), and also to some Taoist manuals. But his most important works were his commentaries on the Four Books,³⁴ which were later made into standard texts for civil examinations. Chu punctuated, annotated, and divided into chapters, the texts of the Four Books. He divided the Great Learning into eleven chapters, changing the word ch'ing 親 (love) of the first part of the first chapter into the word hsin 新 (renovate), and providing also material for a "missing" chapter, by giving his own commentary on the meaning of the "investigation of things" (ko-wu) and the "extension of knowledge" (chih-chih).

The problem, however, arises from the contradiction inherent in a "lineal" transmission of "insights" into a dynamic truth: a problem of criteria. How can it be decided that a certain man has attained any real insight at all, and what is the nature of such insight, and of truth itself? Chu Hsi's determination of the "line" of "orthodox transmission" did not provide any external criteria. It merely set up the authority of Chu himself, as the criterion of judgement regarding the orthodoxy of the insights of those thinkers whose names had been included among the transmitters of the Tao. This consideration is to be kept in mind in our analysis of Chu's philosophical synthesis, and of the responses he made to the challenges presented to him, in the metaphysical and ethical realms, by his chief

rival, Lu Chiu-yüan, and, in the realm of historical and political thinking, by his other contemporary, Ch'en Liang. It was, indeed, a problem which had deep consequences in the later development of Confucian thought.

An interesting phenomenon which accompanied the development of a new, "orthodox" Confucianism was the emphasis on oral transmission. Whereas, before, scholars either spent their time annotating the Classics or writing their own treatises, based always on the appeal to the authority of the Classics, another literary genre came into vogue during the Sung dynasty. Probably following the examples of Ch'an monks who published recorded conversations (yü-lu) of their great Masters, and also going back to the Confucian models in the Analects and Mencius, students of famous philosophers began to note down for later publication the conversations they had with their Masters.³⁵ These yü-lu made up the largest repository of Neo-Confucian philosophy. As a genre, it expressed the attitude of the men who considered themselves primarily as teachers of disciples, living with them in an intimate circle, and communicating to them the ineffable teaching of the Sages, which could be easily distorted when given too ornate a form. Such a lack of organization in written expression (wen) stands in strong contrast to the truly organic system of philosophy which was constructed, embracing within itself a synthetic view of the world and of man's role in it, of the deeper recesses of the human spirit and its longing for self-transcendence, goals of personal cultivation and of sagehood.³⁶

The Four Masters

Chu Hsi's greatness consists less in originality of thought than in his remarkable ability to adapt and fuse together in one system of thought the individual contributions of the thinkers who preceded him.³⁷ These included especially four of the so-called "Five Masters" of the Northern Sung period: Chou Tun-yi, Chang Tsai, Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng Yi.³⁸ For this reason, their names have been associated with that of Chu's as the chief moulders of Tao-hsüeh, which became known, more and more from then on as Li-hsüeh or Hsing-li hsüeh.

T'ai-chi, T'ai-ho and T'ai-hsu

The first of the "Four Masters" was Chou Tun-yi. According to Chu, he was the first philosopher after Mencius to discover anew the lost Confucian Tao and to transmit it on to others. From Chou, Chu derived his understanding of the world, both of things and of men, as the spontaneous production of the interaction between the five agents and the principles of yin and yang, which, in their turn, came from the transcendent T'ai-chi 太極, a notion derived from the Book of Changes where it refers to the "Ground of Being", that which holds the universe together.³⁹ But Chou also described it as Wu-chi 無極 (literally, "limitless" or "Non-Ultimate"), thereby giving rise to later debates about his intended meanings.⁴⁰ But his effort was generally directed toward the construction of a world-view which explains the countless phenomena of existence as having come from an original source, pure and undifferentiated, the totality of reality.⁴¹ In this way, he affirmed the idea that reality is both "one" and "many", an idea which became basic to the Sung philosophical synthesis.⁴²

Also from Chou, Chu derived his belief that man participates in the excellence of T'ai-chi, possessing a "moral" nature which came to him through the cosmic transformations. Contact with external things provides the occasion for evil, as a deflection from the good rather than as a positive presence.⁴³ The perfect man, the sage, is completely sincere (ch'eng 誠). His mind-and-heart is like a mirror, quiet when passive, upright when active or moved by emotions.⁴⁴ Chou asserted unequivocally, however, that sagehood can be acquired by effort or learning (hsdeh 學). This is done by keeping inner tranquillity (ching 靜) or freedom from desires (wu-yü 無欲).⁴⁵

For Chu Hsi -- as for the later Wang Yang-ming -- Chang Tsai, uncle of the two Ch'engs, had a special importance as a thinker. Chang called Chou's T'ai-chi, "T'ai-ho" 太和 (Great Harmony), and described it as the Tao, the undifferentiated First Principle, source of all activity as well as tranquillity. He also gave it the name of T'ai-hsu 太虛 (Great Void), describing it, in another regard as the totality of formless ch'i 氣 (ether or vital force), of which yin and

yang are two modes. The gathering of ch'i gives rise to all things, including man, who participates thereby in the T'ai-ho. Ch'i is the basic "stuff" of everything. It is characterised by constant flux, a process which man should seek to comprehend, in order that he may "harmonise" his action with it.⁴⁶ For man is, after all, part of the cosmos, and so the truer is his unity with it, both morally and physically, the better he becomes in his human nature. In a very famous passage, which exerted a tremendous influence on the whole hsing-li movement, Chang enunciated his doctrine of the unity of man with all things, which extends not only to the cosmic realm, but also to the social realm.

Heaven is my Father, and Earth is my Mother. Even such a small creature as I find 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.

The great ruler [the Emperor] is the eldest son of my parents; the great ministers are his stewards. By showing respect for the aged, [I] treat the elders as elders. By evincing affection for the lonely and the weak, [I] treat the young as young. The sage is one who merges his virtue with Heaven and Earth, and the worthy is one who is outstanding. All persons in the world who are without brothers, children, wives or husbands, are my brothers in distress who have no one to turn to....⁴⁷

Chang Tsai gave great importance to hsin (mind-and-heart). According to him Heaven (T'ien) has no mind-and-heart of its own,⁴⁸ but man alone has a mind-and-heart. He can, however, "give" a mind-and-heart to Heaven-and-Earth.⁴⁹ For he can "enlarge" his own hsin, until it embraces all things within itself.⁵⁰ This is accomplished both by knowledge and by love, the knowledge which arises from sincerity (ch'eng) and enlightenment (ming 明) being described as T'ien-te 天德 (Heavenly virtue) or that which is endowed by Heaven, and liang-chih 良知 (knowledge of the good). This is far superior to knowledge gained through "seeing" and "hearing".⁵¹

Li 理 and ch'i 氣

The two Ch'engs were closely related to their contemporary thinkers, having had Chou Tun-yi as their teacher and Chang Tsai as their uncle. Chu Hsi tended to regard the doctrines of Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng Yi as forming a single school, although it was later recognised that the divergences in the ideas of the two brothers contained the seeds of that difference which was to divide Hsing-li hsüeh into two major branches: the so-called li-hsüeh or Ch'eng-Chu school named after Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi and Hsin-hsüeh or Lu-Wang school, named after Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming.⁵²

Both brothers treated the same problems: of the nature of things and of man and of a method of recapturing man's original goodness. Ch'eng Hao remained closer to the pronouncedly monistic assumption of Chou Tun-yi, that all things are one, having emerged from a common source, which is imperceptible and yet continuous with them.⁵³ In his famous essay, Shih-jen 識仁 ["On Understanding jen"], Ch'eng Hao explained how man is united to the universe by a vital, creative and mysterious power universally active within the operations of Heaven-and-Earth. This power is jen, the old Confucian virtue which receives a new dimension. He said that since the jen of Heaven-and-Earth is life-giving, man partakes of this virtue in so far as he is one with all things, through a kind of vital "sympathy" for all life and growth.⁵⁴ Human nature, as received from Heaven, is originally good, and in a state of harmony with the universe. Once actualised, however, good and evil may be both present, on account of the "ether" in which nature is embedded.⁵⁵ The work of spiritual cultivation is the transformation of our physical endowment. This is done by uniting man's inner and outer existence through the practice of reverence (ching 敬) towards one's self and righteousness (yi 義) towards the world outside.⁵⁶ In a famous letter written to Chang Tsai, he discussed these ideas, showing an undeniable affinity with the mystical doctrine of Chuang-tzu and of Buddhism:

The constant principle (li) of Heaven-and-Earth is that their hsin is in all things, yet of themselves they have no hsin. The constant principle of the

sage is that his feelings are in accord with all creation, yet of himself he has no feelings. Therefore, nothing that the gentleman learns is more important than to be completely disinterested toward everything, responding spontaneously to things [or events] as they arise.⁵⁷

Ch'eng Yi elucidated the distinction between the realm of li (principle of being and goodness), which is "above shapes" (hsing-erh-shang 形而上) and the realm of ch'i (ether, matter-energy) which is "within shapes" (hsing-erh-hsia 形而下). Using a vocabulary derived from the Appendix of the Book of Changes, he sought to explain that li, the transcendent principle, is what gives form and identity to ch'i, the basic stuff which makes up all things. This provided a basis for his explanation of human nature and its capacities for good and evil.⁵⁸

Ch'eng Yi affirmed Mencius' doctrine of human nature as being originally good, ascribing the capacity for evil to the "quality" of ch'i or physical endowment. His theory of human nature is much clearer than that of Chang Tsai or of Ch'eng Hao. He said:

Nature (hsing) comes from Heaven, whereas capacity (ts'ai 才) comes from ch'i (ether). When the ether is clear, the capacity is wholesome. When the ether is turbid, the capacity is also affected. Take, for instance, wood. Its straightness or crookedness is due to its nature. But whether it can be used as a beam or as a truss is determined by its capacity. Capacity may be good or evil, but nature is always good.⁵⁹

Ch'eng Hao had spoken of inner reverence (ching) and outer righteousness (yi) in the cultivation of moral character. Ch'eng Yi advocated the additional practice of "investigating things" through assiduous study.⁶⁰ This was Chang Tsai's proposition. But Ch'eng Yi expressed it with greater vigour, giving moral cultivation a strongly intellectual dimension. He is known to have emphasised, that li (being and goodness) is present in everything, and should be "investigated" to the utmost. "There are many ways of doing this. One way is to read books and under-

stand moral principles (li). Another way is to discuss people and events of the past and present, and to distinguish the right and the wrong. Still another way is to handle affairs and settle them properly." He also added significantly: "Every blade of grass and every tree has its li (being and goodness) which should be examined."⁶¹

Criticism of Heterodox Teachings

Of the "Four Masters", all but Chou Tun-yi criticised Taoist and Buddhist thought. Chang Tsai said that the doctrine of transmigration represents merely a desire to escape from suffering, that the attitude of regarding life to be a delusion prevents true understanding, not only of man himself, but also of Heaven, since "Heaven and man form a unity".⁶² Ch'eng Hao's criticisms were more practical. He attacked the Buddhists for their "selfishness", their abandonment of social responsibilities for the sake of seeking mere inner tranquillity. "The Buddhists advocate reverence for the sake of straightening one's inner life, but they do not require righteousness [which is necessary] for the sake of making one's outer life correct ... Buddhism is narrow. Our Way is different. [We simply] follow [the goodness of] our nature".⁶³ Ch'eng Yi attacked both Buddhism and Taoism with greater vehemence than did his brother, without, however, saying anything new.⁶⁴ For him, as for Chang, Ch'eng Hao, and Chu Hsi, there was no doubt that Buddhism and Taoism, and in particular Buddhism, was the great enemy to the restoration of the true Confucian Way. The expression of militant opposition to "unorthodox teachings" became characteristic of the hsing-li movement.

The Synthesis of Chu Hsi

Chu Hsi's synthesis of hsing-li philosophy is left to posterity in his numerous writings: letters, essays, poems and commentaries, as well as in the recorded conversations noted down by his disciples. It is best given in the Chin-ssu lu ⁶⁵. Thus, through such works, he greatly expanded the content of "Confucian" thought, enlarging it to embrace a more speculative world-view, while taking care to

keep the emphasis on moral and spiritual issues. He recognised Chou's T'ai-chi as the source and fullness of all being and perfection, and identified it with the Ch'engs' T'ien-li, the embodiment of all truth, wisdom and virtue.⁶⁶ By so doing, he also internalised this T'ai-chi, describing it as that which is not only immanent in the whole of the cosmos, but also in each individual person.

Chu sought also to bring more clarity to the question of goodness and evil in human nature incorporating the teachings of Chang Tsai and the Ch'engs and distinguishing between hsing (nature) as it is endowed by Heaven, full of li (being, goodness), and its physical endowment, which is conditioned by ch'i (ether).⁶⁷ He confirmed the assertion of Mencius, repeated by Chou, Chang and the Ch'engs, that all men are capable of attaining sagehood by their own efforts,⁶⁸ and defined this goal in terms of the possession by man in himself of perfect virtue and goodness, T'ien-li. Such a possession would also enable man to realise the conscious unity which exists between himself and all things. As a method of self-perfection, Chu proposed the cultivation of reverence (ching) through quiet-sitting (ching-tso 靜坐) and the permeation of the spirit of tranquillity into life, and the 'investigation of things' through assiduous study, for the sake of acquiring as much li as possible.⁶⁹ The final goal of such a dual activity, however, is less the acquisition of comprehensive knowledge and solid virtues, but the attainment of inner enlightenment in one's mind-and-heart, which occurs at the moment of the "recapturing" of the original goodness of his nature.⁷⁰ The constant maintenance of this state of mind-and-heart constitutes wisdom or sagehood. Seen in this light, the apparently "dualist" nature of the philosophy of Chu Hsi becomes manifestly unitary. There is only one Tao: one wisdom and one way of attaining it.

Nevertheless, certain problems of nuances of meanings concerning the nature of this wisdom, the "correct way" of its acquisition and the criteria of this "correctness" remain unresolved. The exchanges which took place between Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan would especially bring them to the fore.

The Controversies: Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan

Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan shared similar ideals of sagehood, and believed these to be attainable by human nature. Both had a high regard for man's hsin, the mind-and-heart, and considered self-knowledge, or knowledge of one's mind and heart, as very important in the quest for sagehood. However, they disagreed in their understanding of the meaning of T'ai-chi, of the distinction between human nature (hsing) and the human mind-and-heart (hsin), and of the best possible method for the attainment of sagehood and perfection. Chu held to Chou Tun-yi's description of T'ai-chi as also Wu-chi, explaining that the totality of li, the source and fullness of all being and goodness, the One behind the Many, is not subject to determinations of time and place, of shape and appearance:

Master Chou refers to [T'ai-chi] as Wu-chi precisely because it occupies no position, has no shape or appearance, and because he considers it to be prior to physical things, and yet has never ceased to be, after these things came to be. He considers that it is outside yin and yang and yet operates within them, that it permeates all form and is everywhere contained, and yet did not have in the beginning any sound, smell, shadow or resonance that could have been ascribed to it.⁷¹

Lu Chiu-yüan preferred to think that the term, Wu-chi represents either a later interpolation, or an earlier and immature stage in Chou's intellectual development, since his later work, T'ung-shu 通書, contains no mention of it. The issue in question, however, was much deeper than a disagreement concerning textual problems. Lu opposed Chu Hsi's explanation of T'ai-chi as also Wu-chi on account of a "dualist" approach he detected in it, of regarding the realm of the Way, to which the T'ai-chi belonged, as "above shape", and distinct from the realm of "usefulness", to which belonged yin and yang and the five agents, and of the dichotomy between the "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li) and "selfish desire" (jen-yü 人欲), which Chu used to explain the inherent goodness in human nature and its strange tendency

toward evil. Lu claimed that this proposition divides the man's unity and bears the imprint of Taoist influence.⁷²

For Chu Hsi, what is called li (being) in things, is called hsing (nature) in man. Hsin (mind-and-heart), however, is something different. It consists of both li and ch'i (ether). It is not purely good, and prevents the full manifestation of T'ai-chi or T'ien-li--in each and every person and thing.⁷³ He thus attempted to safeguard the transcendent as well as immanent nature of T'ai-chi--the totality of li--while explaining at the same time the origin of evil. For Lu Chiu-yüan, however, hsin like hsing, is full of li,⁷⁴ and so constitutes a single, undifferentiated continuum with the whole of reality. For this reason he said, "The universe is my hsin, and my hsin is the universe."⁷⁵ In other words, while Chu envisaged an imperfect unity of Heaven and Man with the dual presence of T'ien-li and ch'i in persons and things, resulting in a certain tension between heavenly and earthly attractions, Lu Chiu-yüan conceived of Heaven and Man as belonging to a continuum, without tension, without conflict. Evil, he said, arises from "material desires" (wu-yü 無欲),⁷⁶ the origin of which he did not clearly explain.

The debate between Chu and Lu expressed itself in terms of ideology more than of truth. Lu criticised Chu for showing Taoist attachments by maintaining that T'ai-chi is also Wu-chi, while Chu attacked Lu for showing Ch'an Buddhist influence in identifying hsin and hsing. On closer examination, however, it appears that Lu was indicating to Chu the danger of dividing reality into two realms, thus making the transcendent less immanent. Chu, on the other hand, feared that Lu's identification of hsing and hsin represented a misinterpretation of "nature" in terms of its conscious activity, thus reducing that which belongs properly to the realm of li, to that of ch'i. He criticised Lu indirectly for admitting of nothing transcendent in his philosophy.

The difficulty probably lay with the different understandings of the nature and function of hsin. For Chu, it was the directive agent of both "nature" and the "emotions", but, on that account also, not entirely good. For Lu, however, it was much more. As he said, "Sages arise in the Eastern Seas; they have the same hsin, the same li. Sages arise in the Western Seas; they have the same hsin, the same li."⁷⁷ Thus, the human hsin, especially as exemplified

in the sages' hsin, becomes universalised as a norm of truth and goodness. It remains interior, but takes on objective, even absolute qualities. He did not deny the transcendent. He merely said that it is somehow immanent in men's minds-and-hearts as well as in the universe.

Following the suggestion of Lü Tsu-ch'ien, their common friend, Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan--accompanied by his brother Lu Chiu-ling 陸九齡 (1132-80)--held a famous debate in the Goose Lake Temple in 1175. It was supposed to cover the whole field of their differences in philosophy. We merely know, however, that they were unable to agree, especially on the subject of the method of cultivation. Chu insisted on the need of extensive learning, while the Lu brothers maintained developing hsin was the only thing necessary.⁷⁸ On that occasion, Lu Chiu-yüan wrote a famous poem to characterise the difference between his approach to sagehood and Chu Hsi's. It concluded with these lines:

Effort easy and simple is in the end lasting and
great;

Work involved and complicated will remain aimless
and inconclusive.⁷⁹

These verses reveal the essentially practical nature of Lu's thought. He was less interested in expounding his own teaching on hsin as such and more concerned with its moral application. For this reason, his school of philosophy is said to give greater emphasis to the "respect of one's virtuous nature" while Chu's school insisted on the necessity of "following the way of inquiry and learning".⁸⁰

Needless to say, however, Lu's verses did not please Chu. But all three parted as friends. Six years later, Chu invited Lu to the White Deer Grotto Academy in Kiangsi to speak to Chu's own students. Lu gave a discourse on the text of Analects, 4:16: "The gentleman's hsin is conversant with righteousness (yi); the mean man's hsin is conversant with profit (li 利)". Lu spoke so earnestly that he moved the audience to tears. Chu himself was most impressed, and had the text of the discourse engraved in stone to honour the occasion.⁸¹

Chu's main criticism of Buddhism regards its basic nihilism. When asked once the difference between the

"nothingness" (wu 無) spoken by the Taoists and the "emptiness" (k'ung 空) spoken by the Buddhists, he answered that the Taoists use the word wu to describe the mystery of being, and so allow room for reality, while the Buddhists consider Heaven-and-Earth and the elements as mere illusions. He claimed that even the Hua-yen school, which maintains an identity between the noumenal and phenomenal realms, describes the phenomena as having no permanence, and so implies that the noumenal realm, even the Absolute, is itself "empty" or unreal.⁸²

Lu Chiu-yüan did not refrain from criticising Buddhism either, but his criticisms were based on practical, not speculative, reasons. He used the words "righteousness" and "profit" to distinguish between Confucianism and Buddhism, attacking the latter for its negative attitude toward human life: "[The Buddhists] consider [life] to be extremely painful, and seek to escape from it Even when they strive to ferry [all beings across the sea of suffering] to a future realm, they always base themselves on the idea of withdrawal from the world".⁸³

Political Philosophy

Just as, in ethics and spiritual cultivation, man is directed to return to the source of his own being, to recover the "original goodness of his nature" or his mind and heart, so too, in the philosophy of history, inseparably allied to that of politics, a return to the moral idealism of the Golden Age of remote antiquity is advocated by the Sung philosophers. Chu Hsi described the age of remote antiquity as the age of the dominance of the "principle of Heaven", a time when men lived according to the natural virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, bestowed on them by Heaven. He also attributed the "success" of the Golden Past to the moral education which flourished then, which taught all to develop the goodness inherent in their nature. This was the vision of a "moral utopia", situated in an imaginary point of time rather than of place, composed of men educated in the practice of virtue, and ruled by benevolent sage-kings and scholars, who formed a class of intellectual and moral aristocracy.⁸⁴ It implied

This was taken, not from the Four Books, but from the Book of Documents, considered to be one of the earliest Classics. Moreover, it was taken out of a chapter allegedly transmitted to posterity in the old, pre-Ch'in script: the "Counsels of Great Yü". It is interesting to note that the authenticity of this chapter was subject to doubt by Chu Hsi himself.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to adopt those lines, for which the philosophers of early Sung had shown a great fondness, as containing the "original message" of the sages.⁹⁵ All complete in sixteen Chinese characters, this cryptic formula may be translated as:

Man's mind-and-heart (jen-hsin 人心) is prone to error,

[While] the mind-and-heart of the Way (Tao-hsin 道心) is subtle⁹⁶

Remain discerning and single-minded:

Keep steadfastly to the Mean [or Equilibrium] (chung 中).⁹⁷

This formula was generally accepted by all Neo-Confucian philosophers, both of the Ch'eng-Chu, hsing-li school and of the school of hsin begun by Lu Chiu-yüan and developed later on by Wang Yang-ming.⁹⁸ An examination of these lines, however, shows us very little doctrinal content. As commonly agreed, the "central message" was essentially a warning and an exhortation, presented through the statement of a certain duality between the fallibility of the human mind-and-heart, and the subtlety and evasiveness of the "Way", for the sake of encouraging a constant discernment and the maintenance of psychic equilibrium. Represented as the sacred legacy of the earliest sages, these lines express the Confucian message as a call to unity between man's hsin and the Tao, (ultimate truth, wisdom).⁹⁹ Instead, however, of using the earlier expression, T'ien-jen ho-yi, (Unity of Heaven and Man) the Sung philosophers had preferred to speak of Wan-wu yi-t'i (Unity of All Things).¹⁰⁰ But the core of the Confucian transmission is clearly presented as the attainment of sagehood, visualised as the union of Heaven and Man, be Heaven a supreme deity, as it probably was for Confucius, or that which is immanent in the cosmos and holds it together, the fullness of being and goodness: T'ien-li. In either case,

it expresses a vision which is simple but ambiguous, which hides within itself, the depth of spiritual richness. It indicates, quite unequivocally, the goal of the entire Tao-hsüeh movement: the acquisition of ultimate truth and wisdom, through a "Way" of life recognised as correct and efficient. And this Tao, this Way of life, aims especially at the acquisition of a state of mind-and-heart, the mind-and-heart of the sages (Tao-hsin) characterised always by emotional equilibrium. Thus, "orthodox transmission" (Tao-t'ung) emerges finally as the transmission of "the sages' hsin".¹⁰¹

Conclusion

And so, with Han Yü and Li Ao as heralds, Chou, Chang, the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi as "constructors", the "School of the Way", Tao-hsüeh, became systematised during Sung, to become officially approved as state doctrine by the Mongol dynasty of Yüan (1271-1368) which succeeded it. The Commentaries of Ch'eng Yi and of Chu Hsi on the Four Books and on other classical texts became incorporated into the official examination syllabus in 1313, to remain there until 1904.¹⁰² The idea of "correctness" or "orthodoxy", inherent in the doctrine of Tao-t'ung or "orthodox transmission", and in the interpretation of the sacred formula of truth allegedly derived from the Book of Documents, became enshrined in the Sung Dynastic History which presented a novel, double classification of Sung scholars and thinkers as belonging to Ju-lin 儒林 (literati) or Tao-hsüeh.¹⁰³ It is thus an irony of history that the system of thought, which had grown up without state support and even in spite of state opposition, should eventually come to be regarded by posterity as a great product of "Sung genius", and given official sanction by an alien dynasty.

It is, besides, an additional irony that the same historical pattern which had produced the Sung hsing-li philosophy, should repeat itself in the Ming dynasty, to bring about a powerful philosophical challenge to the Sung synthesis. The early Ming government would show its approval of Chu Hsi's thought by ordering the compilation of three monumental collections: the Wu-ching ta-ch'üan 五經大全 [Great Compendium of the Five Classics], the Ssu-shu ta-ch'üan 四書大全 [Great Compendium of the Four Books], both of which incorporated the new commentaries of Sung and Yüan scholars, and the

Hsing-li ta-ch'üan 性理大全 [Great Compendium of the Hsing-li philosophy], which presented the best of the teaching of the Sung-Yüan thinkers themselves.¹⁰⁴ As works of exegesis, the classical commentaries now officially approved did not on the whole equal in quality those of the T'ang and Sung "Correct Meaning" Series.¹⁰⁵ In receiving government endorsement, however, the Neo-Confucian synthesis, based only partly on the Confucian Classics but very much more on the syncretic backgrounds of its makers, was transformed from the charisma that it had been to the orthodox tradition that it became. The inherent contradiction of Confucian orthodoxy again became manifest: as a doctrine, Confucianism had always been eclectic until officially approved and made thereby to stagnate. The price of government support, and of official promulgation in the whole country, would always be the loss of its inner vitality. Certainly, Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi had never desired that their opinions should become the only ones allowed circulation, to the exclusion of all others, but this was what official orthodoxy effected. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Ch'eng-Chu branch of Neo-Confucianism, after receiving the ambiguous benefit of imperial patronage, should produce no more great thinkers in the wake of such support, and become merely an ideology to which lip service was paid by countless students eager to achieve an eminent position in government service. Instead of being a stimulus to thought, the officially approved commentaries only produced scholars with good memory and accurate expression. Successive generations of time-servers, of men anxious to climb the official ladder of success and to keep their political gains were thus produced. At the same time, many persons of real scholarship and tried virtue refused to serve in a government which demanded the compromise of their convictions and characters. The tension between the "inner" or contemplative and "outer" or active pulls of Confucian teaching became more evident than ever before, and as the Chinese philosophical genius went underground again, to express itself in those students of Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy who revolted both against these orthodox philosophers and the system of intellectual tyranny which supported them. This time, the polarisation of "orthodoxy" and of "heresy" can be

made more accurately, since we no longer deal with the conflict between Confucianism on the one side and Taoism and Buddhism on the other, but with that between official Confucianism and a dissident school. This was no other than that of Lu Chiu-yüan, revived and strengthened in the Ming dynasty by the appearance of several great thinkers, nourished and educated within the orthodox tradition, who reacted against its rigidity and stagnation. Of these, the greatest was Wang Yang-ming. It is to an analysis of his philosophy, of his understanding of the Confucian Tao, of the relevance of his position to the question of "orthodoxy" and of "orthodox transmission", that the bulk of this thesis is devoted.

Notes to Chapter I

- 1 According to Hsü Shen's 許慎 (c.30-124AD) lexicon, the literal meaning of tao is the "way" by which one walks or travels, while its extended meaning is "reason" (tao-li 道理). See Shuo-wen chieh-tzu Tuan-chu [Hsü Shen's lexicon, with the annotations of Tuan Yu-ts'ai] (Taipei: 1964), 76. In his book Universismus der Grundlage der Religion und Ethik, des Staatswesens und der Wissenschaften Chinas, (Berlin: 1918) 5-7, J.J.M. de Groot emphasised the Way (Tao) as the ideal looked for in Chinese philosophy, religion, arts and sciences, and natural organisation. He described it as the basis of the universe, the manifestation of existence and life, the ultimate ideal behind the natural, moral and social order.
- 2 See Analects (Lun-yü 論語) 1:2, 4:5, 4:15, 5:6, 6:15, 14:38, 15:28. Mencius 1B:3, 2A:2, 2B:1, 3A:4.
- 3 See J.J.M. de Groot, Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China, (Amsterdam: 1903), v.1, pp. 8-16. This book was written by a Christian with the aim of demonstrating the intransigent position of official Confucian orthodoxy with regard to the Taoist and Buddhist religions, in particular the latter. Emphasis is especially made on the Ming and Ch'ing (1644-1912) persecutions of Buddhism.
- 4 See below, pp. 22-24.
- 5 For early Confucianism in general, see Fung Yu-lan, Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih [abbrev. as che-hsueh shih], (Shanghai: 1935) pt. 1, 66-104. Eng. tr. by Derk Bodde, A History of Chinese Philosophy, [abbrev. as History], (Princeton: 1952), v.1, 43-75; Hu Shih (1891-1962); Chung-kuo ku-tai che-hsueh shih, [History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy], (3rd ed., Taipei: 1968); 64-138, H.G. Creel, Confucius, the Man and the Myth, (New York: 1949), 109-141.
- 6 For general studies of Mencius and Hsun-tzu, see Fung, che-hsueh shih, 139-166; 349-382 [History, v.1, 106-127, 279-311]. The best book in English on Hsun-tzu is Homer Dubs' Hsüntzu, the Moulder of Ancient Confucianism, (London: 1927). For special studies of the criticisms directed against Mencius' teachings by him, see Homer Dubs, "Mencius and Sündz on Human Nature," Philosophy East and West [abbrev. as PEW] VI (1956) 213-222. Mencius regarded human nature as being originally good, Hsun-tzu as originally evil. Mencius revered Heaven as the source of moral goodness, Hsun-tzu tended to see it in naturalist terms, identifying it to the physical universe. Dubs suggests that Hsun-tzu, more than Mencius, inspired much of Chu Hsi's philosophy, especially his reliance on authority. I should like to modify this proposition, by pointing out that Chu Hsi's "authority" was very much himself and the philosophers of his choice. Certainly, the "authoritative" position he gave himself was not accepted during his lifetime by the Sung government. However, I should also like to point out that Hsun-tzu's influence on the hsing-li philosophy can be discerned in the importance given to the task of freeing hsin from pre-occupations and obscurity, which is an important

theme of the chapter on Chieh-pi 解蔽 (Dispelling obsession), in Hsün-tzu 21, SPFY ed., 15: 4a-5b, Eng.tr. by Burton Watson, Hsün-tzu, Basic Writings, (New York: 1963), 126-138. See also Tai Chen's Meng-tzu tzu-yi su-cheng, op. cit., 71-72. Tai asserted that Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi interpreted the Confucian classics in the spirit of Hsün-tzu, Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and of Buddhist philosophy.

7 Creel, Confucius the Man and the Myth, 222-242, explains how the school of Confucius attracted the interest and support of the Han rulers, especially Emperor Wu 武帝 (r.140-87BC), on account of its active outlook on life and government and because of the wide popular adherence it had already gained. The historical process is described in Han-shu [Han History], Erh-shih wu shih [Twenty-five Histories series], [abbrev. as ESWS], K'ai-ming ed., 6: 15-18 [See Homer H. Dubs, trans., A History of the Former Han Dynasty (Baltimore: 1955); v.2, "Introduction", 20-25 for an analysis of the events]. For the development of exegetical tradition, see P'i Hsi-jui, Ching-hsueh li-shih [A History of Classical Studies], annotated by Chou Yü-t'ung (Shanghai: 1929).

8 For Tung's correlation of Heaven and Man, see his Ch'un-chiu-fan-lu [Luxuriant Gems of the Spring-Autumn Annals], SPFY ed., Sect.56, 13: 1b-2a. English translation from Wing-tsit Chan's Source Book, op.cit., 280-1. For Tung, the word T'ien refers sometimes to the natural universe, and sometimes to a power possessing cognition and consciousness. See Fung, che-hsueh shih, p.503 [Eng.tr., Bodde, History, v.2, p.19].

For an understanding of Han Confucianism, see also Fung's che-hsueh shih, 497-600: [Eng.tr. by Bodde, History, v.2, 7-167], Tjan Tjoe Sam, Po Hu T'ung: the Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall, (Leiden: 1949), v.1 Introduction, 95-99, 137-145, 166-175. Creel, Confucius the Man and the Myth; 242-253. Although Hsün-tzu is usually considered as having exerted more influence on Han Confucianism than Mencius, Fung Yu-lan points out in his A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York: 1948), 208-210, Tung Chung-shu's closeness to Mencius, especially in his discussion of human nature. He suggests that the "New Text" school of classical exegesis, of which Tung was the best known scholar, be considered as continuing in a certain sense the work of Mencius, by the emphasis on moral idealism, while the "Old Text" School, which rejected excessively metaphorical interpretations of classical texts, preferring a more strictly philological approach, as being closer to the spirit of Hsün-tzu. However, as Fung certainly knows, an "Old Text" scholar, Yang Hsiung 楊雄 (53BC-18AD) has always been singled out as the Han scholar who regarded himself as a special follower of Mencius. See Fung, che hsueh shih, p.587 [History, v.2, 150] Chou Yü-t'ung, Ching chin-ku wen [Old and New Text Classical Scholarship], (Shanghai, 1926), 14-22.

9 Fung, che-hsueh shih, 571-572; Eng.tr., History, v.2, 128-130. Tjan, Po Hu T'ung, v.1, Introduction, 100-128. Tjan speaks in particular about the attempt to divinise Confucius.

10 There is a comprehensive history of Buddhism during the intervening centuries: a Chinese work by T'ang Yung-t'ung, Han-Wei liang-Chin Nan-pei ch'ao fo-chiao shih [The History of Buddhism during Han, Wei and the Northern and Southern Dynasties], (Changsha: 1938). See especially 18-34, 87-120. The best general study in English is Kenneth K.S. Ch'en's Buddhism in China, (Princeton: 1964). See especially 147-151, 187-271, 610-672. The development of Taoist philosophy after Han is best presented by Fung Yu-lan. See che-hsueh shih, 602-660, Eng. tr. History, v.2, 168-175, and his A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, 217-240. [This work is not a summary of the longer History, but contains new materials. It gives an excellent discussion of the philosophy called Neo-Taoism.] As for religious Taoism, besides Fung's che-hsueh shih, 813-819, (History, v.2, 424-433), there is Henri Maspero's Les Religions chinoises: Melanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la chine: le Taoisme (Paris: 1950), 25-36, 43-57, 85-116, 179-189, and Holmes Welch's The Parting of the Way: Lao-tzu and the Taoist Movement (London: 1957) 88-97, 105-122, 141-151. On interactions between Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, see Tokiwa Daijō, Shina ni okeru Bukkyō to Jukyō Dōkyō [Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism in China], (Tokyo: 1930), 45-120; 627-664.

11 For Ch'an, see Fung's che-hsueh shih, 772-799, [Eng. tr. History, v.2, 386-406], Heinrich Dumoulin, SJ, A History of Zen Buddhism (London: 1963), 67-105, Daisetz T. Suzuki's treatment of its teachings in his Essays in Zen Buddhism, published in 3 series, (London: 1926, 1950, 1953). See also Hu Shih, "Ch'an Buddhism in China: Its History and Method", PEW, 3-24; Suzuki, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih" [25-46]. The debate was over the historical versus transcendent nature of Ch'an Buddhism.

12 P'i Hsi-jui, op.cit., 197-211, The Five Classics refer to the Yi-ching 易經 (Book of Changes), Shih-ching 詩經 (Odes), Shu-ching 書經 (Book of Documents), the Ch'un-ch'iu 春秋 (Spring-Autumn Annals), and the ritual texts. Since the "Correct Meaning" series included the three commentaries of the Spring-Autumn Annals (Tso-chuan 左傳 or Annals of Tso, and the Kung-yang 公羊 and Ku-liang 公羊) and three distinct ritual texts, there were really "Nine Classics". Later, these were all engraved in stone together with the Hsiao-ching 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety), the Lun-yü (Analects of Confucius), and the Erh-ya 爾雅 an ancient glossary, to make up a total of "Twelve Classics". The commentaries incorporated included Wang Pi's 王弼 (226-249) commentary on the Book of Changes. K'ung An-kuo's 孔安國 (fl. 2nd cent. B.C.) on the Book of Documents, Tu Yu's 杜預 (222-284) on the Annals of Tso, and the older works of Cheng Hsuan 鄭玄 (127-200) on the Odes and the ritual texts. These made up the official syllabus.

13 The work was done under the supervision of K'ung Yin-ta 孔穎達 (574-648). See Chiu T'ang-shu [Tang Dynastic History, older version], K'ai-ming ed., ESWS series, 73-270.

14 Mencius had regarded Mo Ti 墨翟 (fl. 5th cent. Bc) and Yang Chu 楊朱 (440-360BC?) as teachers of "perverse doctrine". See Mencius 3B.9, Eng. tr. in James Legge, The Chinese Classics [abbrev. as Classics], (Oxford, Clarendon 1893, reprinted in Hongkong 1960), v.1, 284.

15 "Yüan-tao" 原道 (Inquiry into the Way), in Han Ch'ang-li ch'uan-chi [Complete Works of Han Yü], [abbrev. as HCLC], SPPY ed., ll: 1a-b. The English translation is adapted from Wm Theodore de Bary, et al., ed., Sources of Chinese Tradition; [abbrev. as Sources] (New York: 1964); p.376. Note that Han is making use of the concept of universal love which had been characteristic of the teaching of Mo Ti. Han's work served thus to expand the Confucian concept of jen [See Wing-tsit Chan, "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept Jen," PEW IV (1955) 295-319, which described the deepening of meaning in this keyword. Han wrote several other treatises which had bearing on later development of philosophy. These included, "Yüan-jen" 原人 (Inquiry into Man) [HCLC ll: 9a-b], which maintains that man's moral nature is what distinguishes him from the beasts, and "Yüan-hsing", 原性 (Inquiry into Human Nature), which discusses the question of good and evil in human nature, [HCLC ll: 9a-b, 5a-7b], and "Shih-shuo" 師說 (On Teachers) which advocates a new type of teachers, modelled on the ancient masters who communicated to their disciples their intimate knowledge of and faith in the Way [HCLC 12: 1b-2b]. An English translation of the last treatise can be found in de Bary, Sources, v.1, 374-5.

16 "Yüan-tao", HCLC ll: 4b-5a, Eng. tr. in de Bary ed., Sources, v.1, 379. Han attacks Buddhists and Taoists jointly here. For his vehement attack against Buddhism alone, see the memorial to the throne, in which he opposed Emperor Hsien-tsung's 憲宗 (r.805-820) proposed reception of "the finger-bone of the Buddha" with the aim of displaying a supposed Buddhist relic in the palace. See HCLC 39: 2b-4b [Eng. tr. in de Bary, ed., Sources, v.1, 372-4]. For this bold action, Han was exiled to southern China. See Chiu T'ang-shu, 160: 440-441.

17 Chiu T'ang-shu, 18A: 72.

18 See Chu Hsi's remarks on Han Yü's friendship with Buddhists in Chu-tzu yü-lei [Classified Conversations of Chu Hsi] comp. by Li Ching-te 黎靖德 (fl. 1263), (1473 ed., reprinted in Taipei, 1962), [abbrev. as CTYL] 137: 19b-21a. This reprint contains many mistakes. Care is taken to see that references cited are correct. See also Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 120-138.

19 "Fu-hsing shu", 復性書 [Treatise on the Restoration of Goodness in Human Nature], Li Wen-kung wen-chi [Collected Writings of Li Ao], SPTK ed., 2: 5a. Fung Yu-lan says that what Li calls hsing (nature) approaches what the Buddhists--especially Ch'an--call pen-hsin 本心 [citta], while what Li calls ch'ing (emotions) resembles what the Buddhists call yü 欲 (kleśa). See che-hsüeh shih, 805-806. [Eng.tr. History, v.2, 414].

20 "Fu-hsing shu", Li Wen-kung wen-chi, 1: 8a-9b. Li speaks of "inner fasting", of hsin "having no thought", attaining tranquillity and a state of sincerity (ch'eng) which is preparation of inner enlightenment. Such tranquillity and sincerity would also eliminate passions or evil desires. His teaching shows closeness to the Ch'an proposition, "No-thought is not to think even when one is involved in thought" (wu-nien che yü nien erh wu-nien 無念者於念而無念), Liu-tsu fa-shih fa-pao t'ian-ching TSD No. 2007, XLVIII, 338; Eng.tr. is taken from Philip B. Yampolsky, The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, (New York: 1967); 138; see also Wing-tsit Chan, The Platform Scripture (New York: 1963), 51. The notion of "inner fasting" can also be traced to the Great Appendix of the Book of Changes: see Chou-yi cheng-yi [Correct Meaning of Yi-ching], SPPY ed., 7: 16a-b; Eng.tr., Legge, Yi-King (from SBE series, v.16), (1st pub. 1882, reprinted in Delhi, 1966), p.372, and to Chuang-tzu, 4, SPPY ed., 2:7:70a as well as to Wang Pi who said that the sage is, in a sense, "without hsin", (wu-hsin 無心) since he is empty of unruly desire, and can therefore respond to affairs without becoming entangled by them through excessive emotional involvement. I consider this an important tenet on account of its continuity in the later hsing-li tradition. See also Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 607; Eng.tr., History, v.2, 171; Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 128-138.

21 See Sung-shih [Sung Dynastic History] [abbrev. as SS], ESWS series, K'ai-ming ed., 6: 28 Ch'ien Mu, Kuo-shih ta-kang [Outline History of China], (Changsha: 1940), 388-391. Fumoto Yasutaka, Hokusō ni okeru jūgaku no tenkai [Introduction to the development of Confucianism in the Northern Sung Period of China], (Tokyo: 1967), p.3.

22 These scholars included Hu Yüan 胡瑗 (993-1059), a famous teacher who transmitted to thousands of students an intensely personal faith in Confucianism, thus answering Han Yü's appeal for a new type of teacher, Sun Fu 孫復 (992-1057), who undertook an independent study of the Spring-Autumn Annals without conforming to traditional methods of exegesis, and Shih Chieh 石介 (1005-1045), an independent exegete of the Book of Changes, Ch'en Hsiang 陳襄 (1017-1080), who was particularly interested in the philosophy of hsing (nature) and li (organising principle in things, moral virtue or principles). See Huang Tsung-hsi and Ch'üan Tsu-wang, Tseng-pu Sung-Yüan hsüeh-an [Philosophical Records of the Sung and Yüan Dynasties] [abbrev. as SYHA], SPPY ed., 1: 1a-2b, 2: 1a-2a, 21a-b, 5: 1a-3b.

23 For Sung Buddhism, see Ch'en, Buddhism in China, 398-399; Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 139-146; Dumoulin, A History of Zen Buddhism, 124-132; Galen Eugène Sargent, "Les Débats personnels de Tchou Hsi en Matière de Méthodologie", Journal Asiatique, t.243, (1955), 215-225, where Chu Hsi's anti-Buddhistic attitude was discussed in the light of the development of Buddhism during his time. See Paul Demiéville, "La pénétration du bouddhisme dans la tradition philosophique chinoise", Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale, I (1956), 19-38, which discusses the interpenetration of Buddhist and Taoist ideas particularly with regard to the acquisition of wisdom by inner enlightenment. See also, Araki Kengo, Bukkyō to Jukyō-Chūgoku shisō no Keisei [Buddhism and Confucianism: the Formation of Chinese Thought] (Kyoto: 1963), Kamata Shigeo, Chūgoku Kegon shisōshi no kenkyū [The Study of Chinese Hua-yen Buddhist Thought], (Tokyo: 1965); 253-288. Araki's book gives especially the influence of Buddhism on the formation of Neo-Confucian thought.

24 Kusumoto Masatsugu pointed out that even in medicine, from Sung onward, the practice was to attack the disease from within. Chu Hsi would also interpret the Taoist "external pill" in terms of the "internal pill". See "Conflicts between the Thoughts of the Sung Dynasty and the Ming Dynasty," Philosophical Studies of Japan V (1964) 52-53. For Sung Taoism, see also Maspero, 43-47; Welch, 130-140; Sun K'uo-k'uan, Sung-Yuan Tao-chiao chih fa-chan. [The Development of Taoism during the Sung and Yuan Dynasties], (Taichung: 1965); v.1, 29-36, 43-116; Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 665-686.

See also Kamata Shigeo for the mutual influence of Hua-yen Buddhism and philosophical Taoism, [op.cit., pp.253-288,] and of that between Hua-yen Buddhism and religious Taoism, [pp.289-522]. The general amalgamation is given in Kenneth K.S. Ch'en, Buddhism in China, 398-9.

25 See Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men [Method of Concentration and Insight in the Mahāyāna], TSD No. 1924 XLVI, 642-661 [de Bary, Sources, 314-317]. The ultimate reality is here described as "Mind" (hsin), Sanskrit, citta mātra and equated to "True Thusness" (chen-ju 眞如; Sanskrit: Tathatā); "Buddha-nature" (fo-hsing 佛性; Sanskrit: Buddhata or Buddhatva) - "Tathāgata-Store" (ju-lai tsang 如來藏; Sanskrit: Tathagata-garhva). As for Taoist philosophy, the concept tao itself had always represented ultimate reality.

26 See Mokusen Miyuki, An Analysis of Buddhist Influence on the Formation of the Sung Confucian Concept of Li-ch'i, (Claremont Graduate School and University Center Thesis, 1965), Xeroxed copy, p.105.

27 SHYA 1: 17. The words t'i and yung came from Wang Pi's commentary on Lao-tzu, ch. 4. See Lao-tzu, SPPY ed., 3a. They refer to two cosmic states: the "latent" (t'i) and the "manifest" (yung). The process of moving from one to the other was conceived of as that of decay by Lao-tzu,

who advocated a "return to the origin". Wang Pi re-interpreted it as development or the passing from "original non-being" (pen-wu 本無) to the appearance of the manifold things which constitute the world.

The Buddhist monk Seng-chao (僧肇), (384-414) described the cosmos in terms of the "Mind" (hsin 心) which refers to t'i, the "Within" (nei 內) and its manifestation, yung or the "Without" (wai 外). One can unite with the "Mind" through meditative trance (samāchi) and so acquire wisdom (prajñā). See Walter Liebenthal, Chao-lun, (Peiping: 1948, reprinted in Hongkong, 1968), Introduction, 17-25. This t'i-yung pattern was further developed in T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, where the Absolute, Bhūta-tathatā (chen-ju) or Tathāgata-garbha was t'i and its manifestations and functionings were yung. See T'a-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men. TSD No.1924, XLVI, 642, 647. Fung, che-hsueh shih, 759-762; Eng.tr. History, v.2, 361-364. For the "restorers" of the Confucian tradition, t'i-yung sometimes retains its meaning of "Within" - "Without", and sometimes takes on a less metaphysical meaning, simply as the "essential" the "basis" or the "theory" (t'i) and the "function", "application", or "practice" (yung).

28 See Wai-shu 外書 [Other Works], In Erh-Ch'eng ch'üan-shu, [Complete Works of the two Ch'engs,] [abbrev. as ECCS], SPPY ed., 12: 4a.

29 Official T'ang and Sung exegesis favoured a philological approach, closer to the New Text than to the Old Text scholars.

30 He did it in his preface to the Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung chang-chü), dated 1189.

31 See Wang Mou-hung, ed., Chu-tzu nien-p'ü [Chronological Biography of Chu Hsi], TSCC ed., 1: 13-15.

32 See Ssu-shu chi-chu [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books], [abbrev. as SSCC], SPPY ed., 1a-3a, and also referred there to the two Ch'engs as having discovered the lost Way of Confucius and Mencius. Chu established the "line" definitively especially by preparing, with the help of his friend Lü Tsu-ch'ien 呂祖謙 (1137-1181), the work which is known as Chin-ssu lu 近思錄 an anthology of quotations from Chou, the Ch'engs, and Chang. He dismissed the pre-Sung exegetes from the "line", giving as reason their failure to discover the intended meaning of the sages. See "Yü-Meng chi-yi hsü", 語孟集義序. [Preface to the Collected Commentaries of the Analects and Mencius], in Chu Wen-kung wen-chi [Collected Writings of Chu Hsi], [abbrev. as CWWC], SPTK ed., 75: 22a. He also ignored Han Yü, whom he regarded as a man of letters rather than a follower of the Way. CTYL 137: 13a-18a.

33 These were the Analects, Mencius, the Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung 中庸), the two later books being chapters taken from the Book of Rites. See the study by Ch'en Tieh-fan, "Ssu-shu chang-chü chi-chu k'ao-yüan," [Investigation into the Origins of

the Collected Commentaries of the Four Books], in K'ung-Meng Hsueh-pao (Journal of Confucius-Mencius Society), IV (Taipei: 1962), 206-253. According to Ch'en, Chu's commentaries cited fifty-six scholars, of whom forty-one were Sung philosophers and writers, and fifteen were earlier exegetes.

34 See also Jih-chih lu chi-shih, SPPK ed., 18: 2b-3a, for Ku's appreciation of these commentaries.

35 Donald Holzman has traced the Sung and Ming philosophers' yü-lu 語錄 through the Ch'an Masters' dialogues and Liu Yi-ch'ing's 劉義慶 (403-444), Shih-shuo hsün-yü 世說新語 [Contemporary Records of New Discourses], to Confucius' Analects pointing out the qualities of this genre, which is concrete, immediate and vital. He also compares this genre to Plato's dialogues, noting that the Platonic "conversations" are, unlike the Chinese counterpart, a living embodiment of the dialectic method, by which, for example in the Symposium, the philosopher directs the participants in the dialogue from the understanding of particular beauty to the contemplation of the Form of Beauty. The Chinese yü-lu, on their part, consist mostly of short question-answers linked together in an almost random fashion in which truth is perceived through communication of insight rather than dialectical arguments. See "The Conversational Tradition in Chinese Philosophy," PEW VI (1956) 223-230. To this, it may be added that Chou Tun-yi's exhortation that literature (wen 文) should only be a vehicle for the Tao certainly contributed to the Sung-Ming philosophers' distaste, not only for embellishing the written expression of their thought, but also for giving any more than the minimum of structure to it. In the Lu-Wang school, this tendency led almost to the abandonment of all writing. See Chou-tzu T'ung-shu [Penetrating the Book of Changes] [abbrev. as T'ung-shu], SPPY ed., 28: 5a. Thus, the yü-lu stand in great contrast to the coherent and organic nature of the philosophy which they seek to reveal--but only to those who look beneath the surface.

36 See Joseph Needham, Science and Civilisation in China, v.2: History of Scientific Thought (Cambridge University Press, 1956) 496-505, in which he discusses Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucianism as the "philosophy of organism", the "organic" quality of which allegedly influenced European philosophical thought through the intermediation of G.W. Leibniz (1646-1716). He claims that such an influence might have contributed much to the theoretical foundations of modern European natural science.

37 For this reason, Chu has been compared by Zenker, Forke, Franke, Bruce and others to Thomas of Aquinas. See especially, A. Forke, who judged Chu as the greatest Chinese philosopher, Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie, 198; and Olaf Graf, Tao und Jen: Sein und Sollen in Sung chinesischen Monismus, (Wiesbaden: 1970), 313-4, and to G.W. Leibniz, who might indeed have been influenced by the hsing-li philosophy which he came to know and appreciate through Jesuit writings. In Science and Civilisation,

v.2, 496-505, Needham proposes the possible influence of Chu Hsi's synthetic philosophy on the development of a more "organic" philosophy in 17th century Europe and after, which saw the triumphs of Darwin (1809-1882) Freud (1856-1939), Einstein (1879-1955) and others. See also Henri Bernard, "Chu Hsi's Philosophy and Its Interpretation by Leibniz," T'ien-hsia, V (1937) 9-17.

38 The fifth was Shao Yung 邵雍 (1011-1077), whom Chu Hsi omitted from the line of "orthodox transmission". He is included in our discussion of the Sung philosophical synthesis, because the Sung-shih later listed him too as a teacher of Tao-hsueh. See SS 427: 1098-9.

39 Science and Civilisation, v.2, 460-463. "T'ai-chi-t'u shuo", 太極圖說 [Explanation of the Diagram of T'ai-chi], SYHA 12: 1a-b; English translation in de Bary, Sources, 458-459. The notion T'ai-chi can be traced to the Great Appendix of the Book of Changes, see Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7: 17a, Legge, Yi King, 373, where it refers to the First Principle and Source of all things, and the "Ground of Being". [Legge translates it as the "Grand Terminus"]. Joseph Needham translates T'ai-chi as "Supreme Pole", a kind of "organisation-centre" for the entire universe, viewed as a single organism.

40 The term, Wu-chi, literally comes from Lao-tzu, ch.28, and connotes "that which is without limit". Chou mentioned in the same treatise that T'ai-chi is fundamentally Wu-chi.

Chou spoke of Wu-chi erh T'ai-chi 無極而太極, a sentence which occasioned much controversy in later times, including the famous debate between Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan. See also Fung, che-hsueh shih, 942-3 [Eng.tr. History, 437-8].

Needham also asserts that the identity of T'ai-chi and Wu-chi means this "organisation-centre" cannot be localised at any particular point in space or time. It is regarded as co-extensive with the organism itself. Besides, he adds that Chou's description of cosmic transformations through yin-yang forces which experience alternate periods of "motion" and "rest", express a legitimate scientific abstraction, that Nature functions in a "wave-like" manner. See Science and Civilisation, v.2, 463-467. It may be added that the cosmic process moving from T'ai-chi to the Five Elements and culminating in the emergence of man suggests a perception of progressive scientific evolution.

41 The treatise is a commentary on the "Diagram" itself, which purports to show, in a series of circles, the whole cosmic process beginning from T'ai-chi and resulting in the production of all things. See SYHA 12: 1a. The origin of this Diagram has been much discussed. It bears remarkable similarities to the T'ai-chi Hsien-T'ien-t'u 太極先天圖 [Diagram of the T'ai-chi which Antedates Heaven], which the Taoist Ch'en T'uan 陳搏 (c.906-989) allegedly transmitted to Ch'ung Fang 种放 (c.1014), who passed it on to Mu Hsiu 穆修 (979-1032) who in turn passed it to Li Chih-ts'ai 李之才 (c.1045) who transmitted it to Shao Yung. See SS 427: 1098. See also Fung, che-hsueh shih, 822-4 [Eng.tr. History, v.2, 438-442.] This is especially interesting since it refers to

a Taoist "line of transmission". See also A. Forke, Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie, (Hamburg: 1938), p.21, Chow Yi-ching, La Philosophie Morale dans le Néo-Confucianism (Tcheou Touen-yi), (Paris: 1953), 47-52.

42 The inter-relationship between the "one" and the "many" probably indicates a deeper Buddhist influence, coming from T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen concepts which penetrated Ch'an also. See also Chow Yi-ching, op.cit., 53-54.

43 SYHA 12:1a-b; SPPY ed. ch. 22, p.5a. See also Chow Yi-ching, op.cit., 112-122.

44 T'ung-shu, ch.1, p.1a; ch.4, p.1b; ch.10, p.5a. For the "mirror image", so often used by hsing-li Thinkers, see Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel", Sinologica 1, (1948) 112-137. Chou's description of the sage alludes again to the Great Appendix of the Book of Changes, [See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7:14a, Legge, Yi King, 370,] and also reminds one of Wang Pi, as Chi Li Ao's. See above, note 20.

It was especially through Chou, that the more metaphysical and moral sections of the Book of Changes entered into the Sung synthesis. The other three great predecessors of Chu Hsi and he himself were all fond of these, but gave more consideration to the Four Books. See Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 824. Eng.tr., History, v.2, 444, Chow Yi-ching, op.cit., 80-111.

45 T'ung-shu, ch.10, 20; Chan, Source Book, 470,473. Tranquillity was recommended as a preparation for enlightenment. This method of cultivation had a great influence on the Ch'eng Yi-Chu Hsi synthesis. See Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 828-829. Eng.tr., History, v.2, 448, Chow Yi-ching, op.cit., 123-126. See also Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 202-218 for Buddhist influences on Chou's thought.

46 See "Cheng-meng", 正蒙 [Correcting the Ignorant], Chang-tzu ch'üan-shu [Complete Works of Chang Tsai], [abbrev. as CTCS], 2:1b-3b; English tr. in de Bary, Sources, 466-9.

See also T'ang Chün-yi, "Chang Tsai's Theory of Mind and Its Metaphysical Basis", PEW VI (1956) 113-136; Huang Sui-chi, "Chang Tsai's Concept of ch'i", PEW VIII (1968), 247-260. Although Chang spoke of T'ai-hsü as that which is full of ch'i, I do not conclude thereby, that he was a "materialist". For while I accept that "matter-energy" is one meaning of ch'i, I think it has other meanings also. As "ether", it suggests the Greek $\piνεύμα$ (spirit), as T'ang Chün-yi had also reminded the readers. Certainly, ch'i is present in man as a vital principle. This explains in part why Chang's description of the cosmos and of man's hsin, in terms of ch'i does not make of him a pure "materialist". To do so would be to judge the case strictly in Western philosophical categories which have been derived, in the case of spirit-matter, from Aristotelian metaphysics.

- 47 "Hsi-ming", 西銘 [Western Inscription], CTCS 1: 1a-3b. See the Eng.tr. in Wing-tsit Chan, Reflections on Things at Hand, (New York: 1967), 76-77.
- 48 "Shih-Shu" 詩書 [On the Book of Odes and the Book of Documents] CTCS 4: 7b.
- 49 In another famous passage, Chang describes the work of the sage thus: "To give heart (li-hsin 立心) to Heaven and Earth, to give life to living peoples, to continue the interrupted teaching of the former sages, and to open a new era of peace for coming generations". See "Chin-ssu-lu shih-yi", 近思錄拾遺 [Other Sayings taken from Chin-ssu lu], CTCS, 14: 3b. This had come down to us from Chu Hsi's Chin-ssu lu. See also Chiang Yung (1681-1762) ed., Chin-ssu lu chi-chu [Collected Commentaries on the Chin-ssu lu], SPPY ed., 2: 22b. Wing-tsit Chan, trans., Reflections on Things At Hand; (New York: 1967); 83. Chan relates that the explanation of Yeh Ts'ai 葉采 (fl. 1248) is that the sage "gives heart" to Heaven and Earth by participating in its creative processes, [through the practice of life-giving jen]; he "gives the Way" to the people by the maintenance of moral order; he "continues the interrupted learning" by resuming the "orthodox transmission" (tao-t'ung); "gives peace" to the coming generations because his virtue should prepare the way for a true and ideal "king" (wang 王).
- 50 "Ta-hsin p'ien" 大心篇 [On Enlarging hsin] Cheng-meng, ch.7, CTCS 21a-22b. The idea of "giving hsin" to Heaven-and-Earth is described elsewhere as the work of the sage. See above, n.49.
- 51 "Ch'eng-ming p'ien" 誠明篇 [On Sincerity and Enlightenment], Cheng-meng, ch.6, CTCS 2: 17a-b. Chang's reference to liang-chih [See Mencius 7B: 15] is important, because of its repercussions on Lu Chiu-yüan's and especially Wang Yang-ming's thought. Chang was also the first philosopher to make a clear distinction between T'ien-li ("Principle of Heaven" or perfect virtue) and jen-yü 人欲 (selfish desires) ["Ch'eng-ming p'ien", CTCS 2: 18a], a distinction which assumed so much importance in the thought of the Ch'engs and of Chu Hsi. Wang Yang-ming would also make use of this distinction, although Lu Chiu-yüan objected to the excessive dichotomy made by the Ch'engs and Chu. See Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 861-866, Eng.tr., History, v.2, 488-494, see also Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 219-244 for Buddhist influences on Chang Tsai.
- 52 I should like to point out that the words li-hsüeh or hsin-hsüeh are sometimes used generally also, to refer to the whole hsing-li movement, since both the Ch'eng-Chu and Lu-Wang schools speak of hsin and li.
- 53 A.C. Graham, op.cit., "General Introduction", p.xvii.
- 54 ECCS, Yi-shu, 24: 3a-b; Eng.tr. in de Bary, Sources, v.1, 504-5. Ch'eng refers in this essay to Chang Tsai's "Western Inscription", and also to Mencius 7A.15, with the

mention of liang-chih 良知 and liang-neng 良能, concepts which were to become so important in the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming.

55 ECCS, Yi-shu, 1: 7b-8a; Sources, v.1, 507-8.

56 ECCS, Yi-shu, 2A: 5b-6a. The formula itself came from the Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks". See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 1: 16a; Eng.tr. by James Legge, Yi King, Appendix IV, p.420.

57 The letter is known as "Ting-hsing shu" 定性書 (On Calming Human Nature). See Ming-tao wen-chi, [Collected Writings of Ch'eng Hao], ECCS, 3: 1a-b; Eng.tr. in de Bary, Sources, v.1, 506. Ch'eng Hao went on to say that one should forget distinctions between "inner-outer" realms which separate contemplation from action. This would have an important influence on Wang Yang-ming, who praised this letter very much. See also Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 274-298 for Buddhist influences on Ch'eng Hao.

58 ECCS, Yi-shu, 15: 14b-15a. For the expressions, Hsing-erh-shang and hsing-erh-hsia also come from the Great Appendix of the Book of Changes. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7: 18b; Eng.tr. in Legge, Yi King, 377.

Outside the Four Books, the appendices to the Book of Changes gave most inspiration to the Sung philosophers, contributing especially to Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi and Chang Tsai's T'ai-ho theories, the Ch'engs' idea of a life-giving jen and their method of self-cultivation.

In Science and Civilisation, v.2, 458-485, passim., Needham translates li as "principle of organisation" and ch'i as "matter-energy". He claims that Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi attained true insight into an organic, naturalist universe, where they detected a universal pattern interwoven by li and ch'i. He compares Chu Hsi's world view to that of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and of A.N. Whitehead (1861-1947) pointing out that this was reached without the Chinese thinkers having accumulated the experimental and observational knowledge of Nature and of the theoretical discoveries of Galileo (1564-1642), and Newton (1642-1727). Although I agree with him that "principle of organisation" is one meaning of li and "matter-energy" one meaning of ch'i, I should say also that li refers in Chu's ethics to moral principles or virtues, having definitely a transcendent, normative significance. As for ch'i, see above, note 46.

59 ECCS, Yi-shu, 19: 4b; Eng.tr. in de Bary, Sources, v.1, 473. Chu Hsi praised highly the Ch'engs' explanation of goodness and evil in human nature, declaring that it settled once for all the long-standing debate in the Confucian school on this subject. See CTYL 4: 12b-16b. See also Fung, che-hsueh shih, 861, Eng.tr., History, v.2,

60 ECCS, Yi-shu, 18: 5b; de Bary, Sources, v.1, 476. See also Wing-tsit Chan, "Neo-Confucian Solution of the Problem of Evil," first published in Studies Presented to Hu Shih on his Sixty-fifth Birthday (The Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, v.28, 1957),

reprinted in Neo-Confucianism etc., Essay by Wing-tsit Chan, compiled by Charles K.H. Chen, (New Haven: 1969), 99-112.

- 61 ECCS, Yi-shu, 18: 8b-9a; de Bary, Sources, v.1, 477.
See Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 298-320 for Buddhist influences on Ch'eng Yi.
- 62 "Cheng-meng", CTCS 2.22b; 26a 3: 22a-b; Eng.tr. in Wing-tsit Chan, Source Book, 516-7. Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 146-180 for Buddhist influences on the Neo-Confucian thinkers, and 180-182 for Chang Tsai's criticisms of Buddhism.
- 63 ECCS, Yi-shu, 14: 1b-2a; Chan, Source Book, 542; Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 182-184.
- 64 ECCS, Yi-shu, 15: 5b; 7b; 18: 10b; de Bary, Sources, 477-8; Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 184-187.
- 65 The Chin-ssu lu is the basic text for the study of Sung philosophy. It is a forerunner of the Hsing-li ta-ch'üan [The Great Compendium of the hsing-li Philosophy], compiled by Hu Kuang 胡廣 (1370-1418) and others under imperial command during early Ming, which gives an expanded form of Chu's anthology. See Chi Yun et al., Ssu-k'ü ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao [Essentials of the Four Libraries], [abbrev. as SKTY], (Shanghai: 1933 ed.), 18:29-30.
The Chin-ssu lu has had many editions, including those of Chiang Yung, Yeh Ts'ai and Chang Po-hsing. Besides the English translation by Wing-tsit Chan, Reflections on Things at Hand, there is a German translation by Olaf Graf, Djin-si lu; (Tokyo: 1953), a 3 volume, mimeographed version, based on Yeh Ts'ai's edition.
- 66 see CTYL 1: 1a-b, 94: 4a-6b, 12a, 20b, 35a-b.
Chu Hsi interpreted Chou's T'ai-chi in terms of his other book, T'ung-shu, emphasising thereby the ethical dimensions of this "Ultimate". He said that it was present entirely in every person and thing, as well as in the whole human and physical universe. He identified it to T'ien-li, the fullness of goodness, the inner principle in man, the full realisation of which is sagehood. He therefore gave more immanence to the transcendent First Principle, making it something which resembles Plato's idea of the Good, which, in Republic, Book VII, was described as that which is source of light, responsible for all that is good and right, the contemplation of which is an innate ability of the mind.
I therefore quite disagree with the interpretation of Stanislas le Gall, see Tchou Hi, sa Doctrine, son Influence, (Shanghai: 1925), [Preface, 1, also pp. 32-36], who adhered to the opinion of so many Jesuits since the time of Matteo Ricci, in understanding T'ai-chi as a materialist principle.
I realise that this position, even earlier, was only one of many, that J.P. Bruce, for example, interpreted T'ai-chi in a strongly theistic sense, [see Chu Hsi and His Masters (London: 1923) p. 281] while Father Olaf Graf has spoken of li [the fullness of which is T'ai-chi] as the heavenly Tao, the realisation of which within the self is sagehood.

[Tao und Jen: Sein und Sollen im sungchinesischen Monismus, 26-27]. It was in this sense that Chu also identified T'ai-chi to "nature" (hsing).

67 CTYL 4: 8a-19b.

68 SSCC, Meng-tzu chi-chu, [Collected Commentary on Mencius], 3: 1a-b; 2: 11a-12a; 6: 4b-5b; 7: 1a-2a.

69 SSCC, Ta-hsüeh chang-chü, 4b-5a. This represents Chu's effort to supply a "missing chapter" to the text of the Great Learning. See CTYL 15: 1a-14b. See also William E. Hocking, "Chu Hsi's Theory of Knowledge", Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies [abbrev. as HJAS] I (1936) 109-127.

70 Chu speaks about restoring the brightness of man's nature, bestowed by Heaven, and originally full of goodness, but later obscured by passions. See "Ta-hsüeh chang-chü", SSCC, 1a-b; CTYL 4: 10a-15b. See also his first letter to friends in Hunan, written in 1169, on the subject of chung-ho 中和 (equilibrium and harmony) of the Doctrine of the Mean in CWWC, SPPY ed., 64: 30b-31b, [Chan, Source Book, 600-602]. This was considered by Liu Tsung-chou 劉宗周 (1578-1645) as the embodiment of Chu's final doctrine on moral cultivation. See his comment in SYHA 48: 8b-9b. It emphasises the importance of keeping peace in one's mind and heart. This can be achieved through the practice of quiet-sitting, as recommended in CTYL 12: 15a-18b. See also G.E. Sargent, "Les Débats personnels de Tchou Hi", op.cit., 222; P.C. Hsu, Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought, (Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 1933, microfilm copy of 1969 typescript), 136-8; Araki Kengö, Bukkyō to Jukyō, op.cit., 359-367.

71 See Chu's letter to Lu in CWWC 36: 10a-b.

72 See Lu's first letter to Chu, as well as his answer to Chu's letter cited above in Hsiang-shan ch'üan-chi [Complete Works of Lu Chü-yuan], SPPY ed., 2: 5b-11b. This work will be abbreviated as HSCC.

73 This was really a teaching of Ch'eng Yi's. See Yi-shu, 22A:11a. Chu made frequent references to it. See CTYL 65: 9b. Chu objects to Ch'eng Yi's explanation of Kao-tzu's contention that "what is born is called nature" [Mencius 6A:3], saying that it is not clear enough and does not explain why nature is totally good.

74 See Lu's letter to Tseng Chai-chih 曾宅之, in HSCC 1:3b.

75 See Lu's "Nien-p'u", [Chronological Biography] in HSCC 36:3b. Lu said this at the age of twelve. Like Chu Hsi, he manifested very early an interest in philosophy. The saying is also given in HSCC 22:5a.

76 HSCC 32:4a. See also Huang Siu-chi, Lu Hsiang-shan, A Twelfth Century Chinese Idealist Philosopher, (New Haven: 1944), 51-74. Unlike the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi, Lu lacks an interest in the metaphysical concept of ch'i, by which they had explained the rise of evil.

77 See Lu's "Nien-p'u", HSCC 36:3b, and HSCC 22:5a. See also Fung, che-hsueh shih, 939-941; Eng.tr., History, v.2, 585-589. While both Chu and Lu started out speaking of the "mind-and-heart", Lu finished by giving it an absolute quality, seeing in it something greater than itself. Chu failed to agree. His view-point was better expressed by his disciple Ch'en Ch'un 陳淳 [Ch'en Pei-hsi 陳北溪 1153-1217], in Pei-hsi tzu-yi, a lexicon of some thirty words and expressions which form the core of Hsing-li philosophical vocabulary. Appearing at the time of continuing conflict between the two schools of Chu and Lu, as did the lexicon of Hsü Shen at the time of the New Text-Old Text controversy, this work, of a much smaller scale and quite polemic in character, clarified to a certain extent the meanings of the words used by Chu's school. It referred to the Chu-Lu debate without mentioning their names, but compared Lu's notion of hsin to the Buddhist idea of consciousness. See Pei-hsi tzu-yi, TSCC ed., 1: 9-10. In Hsüeh-pu t'ung pien, Ch'en Chien also discussed at length the Buddhist influence displayed by Lu's philosophy. See 4: 1a-6-14b. He also quoted from Chen Ch'un in his criticism of Yang-ming. See 7: 10a-b.

78 HSCC 34:24b. This was their first meeting. Lu made the remark: "Before the time of Yao and Shun, were there any books that people must study?" to emphasise that the development of hsin alone is sufficient for the attainment of sagehood. See his "Nien-p'u", HSCC 36:9b.

79 HSCC 34:24b.

80 Doctrine of the Mean, ch.27; Legge, Classics, v.1, 422. See also Lu's admission of this difference between himself and Chu, in HSCC 34: 4b-5a. For more discussion of Lu's method of cultivation, see Huang Siu-chi, Lu Hsiang-shan, A Twelfth Century Chinese Idealist Philosopher, 59-67.

81 See Lu's "Nien-p'u", in HSCC 36:10b. The text of the discourse is given in HSCC 23: 1a-2a. This appeared to be the two men's second meeting.

82 CTYL 126: 5b-17a. See Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 185-189, 367-384. Chu's chief concern was that the Buddhist teaching made nature (hsing) empty, whereas he considered it to be "full" of li. His criticism of Hua-yen philosophy shows that Buddhist influence on his thought is more superficial than real.

83 See Lu's two letters to a friend, HSCC 2: 1b-4b; Fung, che-hsueh shih, 932-933; Eng.tr., History, v.2, 577-8. In his second letter, Lu attacks Buddhism for not subscribing to the Confucian teaching that Heaven and Earth and Man

form "Three Ultimates", in other words, that Buddhism is not a humanism. However, the monk Tsung-mi 宗密 (d.841) had spoken explicitly of the "Three Ultimates". Lu was probably aware of this. He could mean either that Tsung-mi's teaching was not thorough-going enough, or that he was an exception. [See his "Yüan-jen lun" 原人論, or "Inquiry into Man", Preface, TSD No.1886, XLV, 707]. Besides, it appears to me that in criticising Buddhism, hsing-li philosophers usually attacked those aspects of it which were most uncongenial to the positive, "Confucian" mind, whether the issue concerned was speculative, as regarding an "illusory" view of the world, or practical, as regarding their tendency to minimise the importance of social responsibility. See also Tokiwa Daijō, op.cit., 385-397.

84 See Chu's preface to Ta-hsueh chang-chü, in SSCC, la-2b.

85 The famous chapter on the "Evolution of Rites" (Li-yün 禮運) in the Book of Rites, describes the two ages of "Great Unity" (ta-t'ung) and "Lesser Tranquillity" (hsiao-k'ang). See Li-chi cheng-yi [Correct Meaning of the Book of Rites] SPPY ed., 21: la-4b. See also English translation in de Bary, Sources, v.1, 175-6.

86 CWWC 36:22b. The Three Dynasties refer to Hsia, Shang (c.1751-1112BC) and Chou (1111-249BC).

87 Ibid.

88 Chu Hsi had learnt from his father Chu Sung 朱松 (1097-1143) a strong aversion to the policy of appeasing the Jurchens. See Chu Sung's "Hsing-chuang," 行狀 [Biography] written by Chu Hsi himself, in CWWC 97: 18b-28b.

For Ch'en Liang and his ideas, see SYHA 56: la-2b; Lung-ch'uan wen-chi [Collected Writings of Ch'en Liang], SPPY ed., 20:6b; Carsun Chang, The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought, (New Haven: 1957), v.1, 309-331; Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Heresies of Ch'en Liang (1143-1194)", Asiatische Studien XI, 3/4 (1958), 102-111.

89 Chu's debate with Ch'en was carried out in a series of letters. For Chu's answer to Ch'en, see especially CWWC 36: 22b, 24b-28b.

90 CWWC 36:22b. According to Chu, the sovereign's hsin or mind-and-heart was the "foundation of the state". Hence the emperor had the strict duty of making sure that his hsin was upright. However, Chu did not neglect practical statecraft. His memorials contained also practical proposals related to the reform of taxation, the employment of civil personnel and other such issues.

91 See Mencius 1B.9; 2B.2; 5B.9; Legge, Classics, v.1, 167, 210-215, 392-393, for the sage's independent manners toward the ruler, and his teachings regarding regicide and the right of rebellion.

92 See Ssu-ma Kuang's criticisms of Mencius for disrespect to authority, in Weng-kuo wen-cheng Ssu-ma Kung wen-chi [Collected Writings of Ssu-ma Kuang], SPTK ed., 73: 10b-11a, 12a-b, and Lin-ch'uan chi [Collected Writings of Wang An-shih] SPTK ed., 67: 6a-7a.

93 Wang Mou-hung, ed., Chu-tzu nien-p'u, 164; Li Hsin--ch'uan 李心傳 (1126-1243), "Hui-an hsien-sheng fei su-yin" [Master Chu was not a Recluse], in Chien-yen yi-lai ch'ao-yeh tsa-chi [Miscellaneous Accounts of Court and Country since 1127], TSCC ed., pt.2, pp.445 f. and Conrad M. Shirokauer, "Chu Hsi's Political Career: A Study in Ambivalence," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, ed., Confucian Personalities, (Stanford: 1962), pp. 162-188. Chu Hsi offended the government by his direct criticisms and by his preference for a life of semi-retirement, chosen as a protest against policies of which he did not approve.

94 CTYL 78: 2a-3a. In the early Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912), the scholar Hsien Jo-chü (1636-1704) definitively proved that this chapter, together with twenty-four others, "preserved" in the old text or script, were all forgeries. See Hsien's Ku-wen Shang-shu su-cheng [Documented Commentary on the Old Text version of the Book of Documents] in Huang-ch'ing ching-chieh hsu-p'ien [Supplement to the Collection of Classical Commentaries of the Ch'ing Dynasty] comp. by Wang Hsien-ch'ien (1842-1918), contracted lithograph ed., Preface 1889, 13: 1a, 10a-b.

95 Book of Documents, "Ta-Yü mu". See Legge, Classics, v.3, p.61. The first three sentences from this chapter come from Hsün-tzu, 21, where the philosopher cites a lost classic Hsün-tzu, Basic Writings, 131. "Chieh-p'i", SPPY ed., 15:7a (English translation: Watson, and the last from Analects 20.1 which cites a counsel given allegedly by Yao to Shun. See P'i Hsi-hui, Ching-hsüeh t'ung-lun, 51a-52a. P'i points out the contradiction displayed by Sung thinkers who cited from a forged book to find support for their teachings, while suspecting it to be forged.

96 "The mind-and-heart of the Way" refers to the "heart" of the Confucian, moral Way, which, as we shall see later, refers also to the sages' hsin, or their "state of mind". See below, n. 98.

97 The "Mean" (chung 中) refers to the state of equilibrium which characterises the mind-and-heart before it is aroused by feelings or emotions. See Doctrine of the Mean, ch.1; Legge, Classics, v.1, 384 and CTYL 62: 1b-2b.

98 HSCC 34:1b. Lu Chiu-yüan challenged Ch'eng Yi's explanation of jen-hsin and Tao-hsin in terms of jen-yü (passions, selfish desires) and T'ien-li ("principle of Heaven" or perfect virtue), saying that such an interpretation, separates Man from Heaven, and is basically Taoist in its inspiration.

Chu Hsi explained that jen-hsin is man's mind-and-heart (hsin), considered as consciousness of instinctive needs,

while Tao-hsin is the same mind-and-heart, considered as awareness of moral principles. He thus modified Ch'eng Yi's explanation of jen-hsin as that which is affected by jen-yü (passions, selfish desires) and Tao-hsin as that which is full of T'ien-li. See CTYL 78: 26b-34a.

99 Tao is called Shang-ti 上帝 (Emperor-on-High) or T'ien (Heaven) in other parts of the Book of Documents, as for example in "Tang-shih" 湯誓 [Speech of King T'ang], where both words are used. See Legge, Classics, v.3, 174-5.

100 This teaching permeates Chang Tsai's "Western Inscription" and Ch'eng Hao's essay "On Understanding jen", and Lu Chiu-yüan's insistence on the identity of hsin and li. Chu Hsi referred to it frequently, especially in his "Shuo-jen" 說仁 [Treatise on jen] CWWC 67: 21b-23a, Eng.tr., Chan, Source Book, 593-596.

101 Admittedly, this vision comes out more clearly in Lu Chiu-yüan's explanation than in Ch'eng Yi's or Chu Hsi's. I wish to add here, that the notion that hsin can be transmitted from one Master to another was especially prominent in Ch'an Buddhism, with its scorn for the written word and its emphasis of direct intuition into the mind-and-heart and human nature. This idea underlies the entire Platform Sutra of Hui-neng as well as the Transmission of the Lamp, the title of which connotes itself the notion of the transmission of an "inner light". See Ching-te ch'uan-teng-lu, Preface by Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1030), TSD No.2076, LI, 196; also 3:219; 9:273-274. The last reference is from Hsi-yüan's Ch'uan-hsin fa-yao [Transmission of the Mind].-- However, in defence of the adoption by Sung Confucian thinkers of this Buddhist idea, it may be said that the earlier Confucian exegetes also had similar ideas of "transmission"-- if only of techniques of exegesis and of methods of interpretations-- although they did not speak of hsin. Besides, here as well as elsewhere, the Confucians actually made use of Buddhist ideas to combat what they considered to be the "fundamental errors" of Buddhist teachings, those considered to be most dangerous to Confucian morality. Thus, a Confucian line of "orthodox transmission" of hsin was established as an alternative to the Buddhist transmission, with explanation of the difference between the Confucian sages' hsin and what the Buddhist considered to be hsin. In general, the Buddhist hsin was often described in negative terms, as the "Un-differentiated emptiness (śūnyatā)", while the Ch'eng-Chu school preferred to speak of hsin in association with hsing (nature), and in terms of ethical goodness. Wang Yang-ming would be strongly criticised for his "Four Maxims" on account of his teaching that hsin-in-itself is beyond ethical categories. See Chapter VI, 221-225, where I discuss the problem especially from the vantage-point of its practical implications regarding "enlightenment" and "cultivation".

102 yüan-shih [Yüan Dynastic History], ESWS series, 81:206.

103 see SS 427:1096.

104 Ming-shih [Ming Dynastic History], ESWS series, [abbrev. as MS], 70:155.

105 Jih-chih lu chi-shih 18:10b-11b.

Chapter II

WANG YANG-MING (1472-1529): THE MAN AND THE PHILOSOPHER

In Analects 13:21, we find this passage:

The Master said: 'Since I cannot get men who act according to the Mean, to whom may my teaching be transmitted? I must look for the "ardent" (k'uang 狂) and the cautious (chüan 狷). The ardent will advance to lay hold of [the truth]. The cautious will desist from doing wrong.¹

Three classes of men are mentioned here: those who act according to the Mean, the ardent or eccentric, and the very cautious. Elsewhere, in the Analects a fourth class is mentioned: the hsiang-yüan 鄉愿 --"village respectable" or "Pharisaic."² Confucius considers the first kind unobtainable and declares himself content to have the second and third kind among his disciples. The fourth kind, the "respectable" man of the village, who seeks to please every one, and has no firm principles of his own, he despises.

Referring to this passage, Mencius had described the k'uang as men who spoke eloquently and extravagantly of the ancients--whom they purported to imitate--but whose actions did not correspond to their words. He had also given, as examples of k'uang, Tseng Tien 曾點, Ch'in-chang 琴張 and Mu-p'i 牧皮.³ Chu Hsi followed this interpretation in his textual commentary on the passage in question. He added, according to the recorded conversations, that Confucius desired to "restrain" the k'uang, and help them to become "men who act according to the Mean." In so doing, he was already making reference to still another passage of the Analects, also cited by Mencius. Here, Confucius, during his sojourn in the state of Ch'en, expresses his desire to return to his disciples in his native state of Lu 魯:

"Let me return! Let me return! The little children of my school are k'uang [translated by Legge here as 'ambitious'] and chüan [translated here as 'hasty'].

Although quite accomplished, they do not know how to restrict themselves."⁴

Chu Hsi defines the meaning of k'uang-chien as "having great ambitions while being careless of one's actions."⁵ He presents Confucius as having first desired to exercise his "Way" in the world, but had, by the time of his sojourn in Ch'en, realised that it was impossible for him to find a ruler who would make use of his talents. He decided therefore to concentrate his attention on training disciples who would transmit his teaching to later generations. Not finding, however, the most desirable kind of disciples--men who acted always according to the Mean--he turned to the k'uang, to these highly ambitious men who were capable of promoting the true Way, but might also "fall into heresy" by their excesses. He wished, therefore, to return home to teach them restraint.⁶

When applied to human conduct, the Chinese word k'uang, contains unmistakable overtones of "madness" and "eccentricity." The Analects itself distinguished between the "k'uang of the ancients," who paid scant attention to little things, and the "k'uang of the moderns," who fell easily into licentiousness.⁷ It also gave the example of the "madman of Ch'u 楚," Chieh-yü 接輿, who sang and mocked Confucius for his "vain pursuit," presumably of looking for a ruler who would use him.⁸ Throughout Chinese history, scholars who preferred a life of retirement to one of government service, and manifested a certain disdain of social conventions, were described as k'uang. These included the "Seven Masters of the Bamboo Grove" of the Wei-Chin period, (220-420), known for their poetry as well as their shocking eccentricity,⁹ and the later "Immortal Poet" (shih-hsien 詩仙), Li Po 李白 (c. 701-762) of the T'ang dynasty, who did not restrain himself from excessive drinking at Court, but offended the powerful eunuch, Kao Li-shih 高力士, by once obliging him to do in public the menial task of removing Li's shoes for him. In one of his poems, Li even compared himself to the madman of Ch'u.¹⁰

Neo-Confucian philosophers were not interested in literary genius, and sometimes considered it an obstacle to the

pursuit of sagehood. But their disdain of conventional mediocrity, as well as their conception of the high goals of sagehood, led them back to the Confucian notion of k'uang, as explained especially by Mencius, and giving it an additional meaning of the experience of harmony between man and the universe. But the connotation of madness and eccentricity remained, as we have seen, in the interpretations of Chu Hsi. It is therefore significant that this word, representing both the quality of the disciple Confucius wished to choose as transmitter of his teaching, and the tendency to excess and heresy which Chu Hsi underlined, should have been used by Wang Yang-ming himself, as well as by his opponents, in describing his personality. It was also the word which the later critics of the popular T'ai-chou 泰州 branch of the Yang-ming school used to condemn the movement. They called its adherents the K'uang-Ch'an 狂禪 --mad Ch'an Buddhists.¹¹

A Life of "Ardour"

Wang Yang-ming is the name by which Wang Shou-jen is popularly known. Born on October 31, 1472, in Yüeh-ch'eng 越城, near Yü-yao 餘姚, of the modern Chekiang province, the eldest child of a distinguished literati family, Yang-ming's entire life was to become an expression of mad ardour. His was the daring of a magnanimous man, driven by a restless energy, to fulfil limitless ambitions, not for worldly success, but for the attainment of absolute values. The quality appeared in him from a very early age, as when he doubted the words of his preceptor, that "the greatest thing to do in life" was to "study and pass examinations," and offered his own alternative, "to learn how to become a sage."¹² Richly endowed with a quick nature and a remarkable versatility, he was interested in everything: reading, poetry, horsemanship, archery, as well as religion and philosophy, and he was ready to pursue, and capable of developing, all these interests to a high degree of achievement. Fascinated with the profound meaning of life, he sought to probe its mystery. He believed in responding fully to the challenges of greatness, and would not

stop at half-measures. His multi-dimensional achievements in life, as a writer, statesman, soldier, philosopher and teacher, provided material for both the conventional annalist and the historical novelist. There is a story which tells us how the young boy handled his callous step-mother after the early death of his own mother. Although difficult to confirm, the account describes for us the early manifestation of an unconstrained character, which fits in well with the brief lines of his conventional biographers.¹³ According to this story, the boy of twelve placed an owl in his step-mother's bed. She was frightened to discover it there, especially as the bird was, to the Chinese, an unlucky omen, and made strange noises. The boy offered to search for a sorceress, a woman who performed exorcisms and prayed for blessings on the house. He fetched home an accomplice. She pretended to have received a communication from Yang-ming's deceased mother, complaining of the step-mother's ill treatment of her son, and threatening dire consequences unless this was stopped. The trick proved quite effective.¹⁴

In Ming China, the ambition that all gentry families entertained for their scions was naturally the attainment of high office through success in civil examinations designed mainly to judge literary skill. Yang-ming's father, Wang Hua 王華 (1446-1523) had distinguished himself as optimus at the examinations of 1481, and had taken great care to provide an orthodox Confucian education for his sons.¹⁵ But books alone could not occupy the entire attention of the boy Yang-ming. At the age of fourteen, he learned to ride a horse, to use a bow and arrow, and to acquaint himself with military strategy. All his life, he was to show himself contemptuous of scholars who were skilled in verbal dialectic, but quite powerless in a time of military crisis. At the age of fifteen, Yang-ming spent a month at the strategic Chü-yung 居庸 Passes of the Great Wall in the company of his father. He observed the movements of the Tartar horsemen, as well as the physical features of these frontier regions. This experience left a deep impression on him. After his return to Peking, he was said to have offered his

services to the emperor for the suppression of bandits, and was only stopped by his father who told him that he was crazy (k'uang).¹⁶

In 1488, at the age of sixteen, Yang-ming travelled from Peking to Nanchang 南昌, Kiangsi, to fetch his bride, the daughter of the Assistant Administration Commissioner. On the day of his wedding, the absent-minded bridegroom walked into a Taoist monastery, met an interesting priest, and spent the night in the monastery, in an absorbed conversation on the art of cultivating life, and in the practice of Taoist meditation. The bride's family did not find him until the next day.¹⁷ During the rest of his sojourn with his in-laws, he also showed an absorbing interest in practising calligraphy, using up the paper stored in his father-in-law's official residence for his exercises.¹⁸ The next year, he took his wife back to his home town, Yü-yao, stopping at Kuang-hsin 廣信, Kiangsi, to visit the philosopher Lou Liang 婁諒 (1422-91), and discussed with him the theory of "investigation of things."¹⁹ His father also returned soon to Yü-yao, to mourn the death of his grand-father. Yang-ming was ordered to study the Classics in the company of four relatives. He threw himself into this work, often reading till late at night. In dealing with others, however, he remained casual and amiable.²⁰

Also following upon the passing visit to Lou Liang, Yang-ming's ardour for the investigation of things led him to search for all the extant writings of Chu Hsi, which he read. It was this ardour, rather than a real understanding of the intended meaning of Chu Hsi, that made him put into application Chu's advice about a thorough "investigation of things," of every plant and every blade of grass, as a means towards attaining their inherent principle, and with the view of acquiring final enlightenment concerning man's life in the universe. Yang-ming tells his own story as follows:

People merely say that in the 'investigation of things' we must follow Chu Hsi, but when have they carried it out in practice? I have attempted this

earnestly. In earlier years [at the age of twenty] I discussed the question of becoming a sage with my friend Ch'ien, wondering how a person can have such tremendous energy to investigate all things under Heaven. So I pointed to the bamboos in front of the pavilion, and asked him to investigate these. Ch'ien spent three days trying to investigate thoroughly the meaning of bamboos, working hard day and night and using up his mental energy, until he fell ill... . So I myself proceeded to this investigation, working day and night without reaching the principle, until I also fell ill through mental exhaustion on the seventh day. So we lamented together that sagehood is unattainable.²¹

A series of minor official appointments followed his success in the chin-shih examinations of 1499 first in the Ministry of Public Works, and then in that of Justice. Yang-ming did his work conscientiously, and also took time to visit Buddhist and Taoist monasteries in Chiu-hua 九華 Mountain, Anwei, seeking out and speaking with Taoist recluses. Experiencing a strong desire to retire from active life, Yang-ming pleaded ill health and was granted permission to return to his home town to rest.²²

Disagreement exists concerning where Yang-ming resided during his convalescence. The older accounts speak of his living in the so-called "Yang-ming Cave" (Yang-ming tung 陽明洞) from which he got his name.²³ While the exact location of this hermitage is not clearly known²⁴ it is usually accepted that he spent his time there practising Taoist methods of the cultivation of self. Supposedly, he acquired para-psychic powers, knowing in advance an unexpected visit from certain friends, as well as circumstances surrounding their journey. This knowledge astonished the friends, but caused disillusionment to Yang-ming himself, becoming for him the occasion for an inner query which ended with a decision to return to society and active life,²⁵ a decision made also on the basis of his attachment to his father and grand-mother, which, he thought, was something so deeply rooted in his human nature that to expunge it

would involve cutting himself from his very humanity.²⁶ He returned to his official career, demonstrated his "conversion" to the school of sages by open criticisms of Buddhism and Taoism, and also began to teach students interested in Confucianism.

Just when Yang-ming was settling down intellectually and spiritually, however, a change of fortune occurred, leading him into exile in Kweichow. This crisis was provoked by his own decision to intervene in favour of several officials imprisoned unjustly by the eunuch Liu Chin 劉瑾 (d.1510) the power behind the throne.²⁷ The memorial which he wrote in 1506 probably never reached Emperor Wu-tsung 武宗 (1505-1521) but led to the imprisonment, public flogging till loss of consciousness, and banishment to the frontier region of Lung-ch'ang 龍場 Kweichow, to live among the Miaos 苗aborigines.²⁸ A period of great trials began, during which Heaven was to prepare him for even greater trials, as well as for the maturation of his personality and his philosophical ideas.

After an arduous journey by a devious route, during which he pretended to have committed suicide by drowning in the river, to divert the attention of the agents of Liu Chin sent to follow and assassinate him, Yang-ming finally reached his destination in exile.²⁹ He found himself in the midst of the "bush". The place was infested with serpents and insects. The climate was quite different from that of Peking or Yü-yao. In the beginning, he had to live in a cave. The Miaos did not speak Chinese, and he did not know their dialects. The few Chinese living there were rough men, often outlaws fleeing from justice. Some of them worked as couriers and coolies, despatching messages and official documents, and transporting supplies for the region. Yang-ming's responsibility was to care for the horses which they used.³⁰

There were other trials too, and worries and anxiety. Yang-ming knew that Liu Chin's anger had not yet abated. What would Liu do, once he found that the bold, young

scholar had not perished on the way, but had arrived in Kweichow? Would he not send further assassins, to pursue and put him to death? Yang-ming had been able to remain above considerations of honour or disgrace, success or failure. But he was still very much preoccupied with the question of life or death. He knew that he was not yet a sage. But then, what would a sage, a truly great man, do in such circumstances?

He knew that it was essential for him to rise above all earthly concerns. He made a coffin for himself out of stone and spent much time, day and night, in front of it, sitting in silent meditation and seeking for spiritual liberation. This brought him a certain interior peace and joy. When his servants fell sick with fever, Yang-ming personally attended to their needs, gathering fuel and water and doing their cooking. He even entertained them with songs and prosody and, when these failed to please them, told them amusing tales to help them forget their misery.³¹ It was in these circumstances that he suddenly received enlightenment one night. Probably, he was deep in meditation. But it seemed as though someone was talking to him. All of a sudden, the meaning of "investigation of things" and "extension of knowledge" was revealed to him. Almost mad with joy, he leapt up from place, awaking all those with him. He could only say to them: "I have finally understood that my human nature is quite adequate for the task of achieving sagehood. My mistake in the past was seeking principle in events and things [external to my nature]."³² He was then thirty-six years old.

In 1510 Yang-ming completed the term of his exile, and was promoted to be Magistrate of Lu-ling 廬陵 in Kiangsi. After seven months of remarkable service, he was summoned to Peking, had an audience with the Emperor, and was transferred to serve in various minor posts in Nanking and in Peking.³³ His fame as a teacher of philosophy was rapidly spreading. Through the recommendation of the Minister of War, Wang Ch'ung 王瓊 (1459-1532), he was promoted in

1517 to be Senior Censor and Governor of the border regions of Kiangsi, Kwangtung and Fukien, with the task of pacifying the bandits there.³⁴ His military career had finally begun.

Yang-ming distinguished himself as an able administrator and a good soldier. In seven months, he completed victoriously his campaigns against those rebels who had troubled the Kiangsi region for years, and put into effect many measures of rehabilitation, erecting new counties, establishing village schools, and reforming taxation.³⁵ And then, in 1519, while on his way to suppress a rebellion in Fukien, he received news of the revolt of the imperial prince Ch'en-hao 宸豪, in Kiangsi. The prince had a large army and intended to capture Nanking and declare himself emperor. Yang-ming turned his attention swiftly to Kiangsi, and was able to capture the prince. But his success also initiated the worst trial of his life.³⁶

The reason for this was the jealousy of the Emperor. Wu-tsung had been delighted at the news of Ch'en-hao's rebellion, which, he thought, provided him with an occasion for going south at the head of an expedition which would bring him military glory. Yang-ming was urged to release Prince Ch'en-hao and his men in the P'o-yang 鄱陽 Lake, so that the Emperor might himself "defeat" his forces.³⁷ Yang-ming found himself in a terrible predicament. Either he had to violate his conscience for the sake of pleasing the emperor, in which case there would also be needless bloodshed, or he must resist pressure and run the risk of becoming the object of intrigue. He chose the latter course of action. His enemies, the Emperor's favourites, did their best to injure his reputation, accusing him even of having been the rebel Prince's accomplice. To this end, they imprisoned one of his students who had earlier visited the Prince. Although no evidence was ever produced of the involvement of either Yang-ming or the student, the latter was to die in prison.³⁸

The following poem, written about that time, expresses well the sentiment of frustration and of disgust with

political life that he surely experienced:

Not the least contribution have I made in the
 service of the august Dynasty,
 As I watch in vain, the growth of [white] hair
 on my temples,
 Han Hsin³⁹ was surely never a true credit to his
 country,
 While Shao Yung⁴⁰ certainly was a hero among men.

The times are difficult, and offer no security,
 No longer able to improve the state of affairs,
 I wish to keep my knife intact.⁴¹
 I go to seek my former place of retirement east of
 the Yüeh waters,
 In a thatched hut, high above the mountains, in
 the company of clouds.⁴²

The death of Emperor Wu-tsung, and the accession of his cousin, Emperor Shih-tsung, brought Yang-ming a certain change of fortune. His military merits were finally recognised, and he was awarded the title of Earl of Hsin-chien 新建.⁴³ The death of his father in 1522, however, obliged him to spend the next three years in mourning in his home town. He was there during the so-called "Rites" controversy, concerning the awarding of posthumous titles to Emperor Shih-tsung's deceased father. He expressed no opinion in public on this issue, although the general trend of his teaching, as well as conversations he had with disciples, seem to indicate his approval in principle of the Emperor's filial desires.⁴⁴ In 1524, when the period of his mourning was over, Yang-ming's talents were recommended to the Emperor by the Minister of Rites, Hsi Shu 席書 (1461-1527). But the jealousy of high officials at Court, including that of Yang Yi-ch'ing 楊一清 [Yang Sui-an 楊邃庵 1454-1530], who was made Grand Secretary, prevented him from being summoned to serve at the highest level of government.⁴⁵ He continued to live in virtual retirement until 1527. Most of his important letters were

written during this time when he finally developed the doctrine of "extending liang-chih." Ironically, his philosophy was officially regarded as a "heterodox teaching," and as the reason why he should be banned from high office.⁴⁶

In 1527, after nearly six years of life in retirement, Yang-ming was called upon to undertake another military campaign against rebels, this time in Kwangsi.⁴⁷ On his way, he passed by Nan-chang, in Kiangsi, where he was formerly stationed.

The village elders, soldiers and common people all came to welcome him, holding incense in their hands, and lining the streets. They filled the roads and the streets, so that it became impossible for him to move. The elders, therefore, held up [Yang-ming's] sedan, passed it along over the heads of the crowds until they reached his quarters in the city. Yang-ming invited the elders, soldiers and the common people to come in to see him. They came in through the east gate and came out through the west gate. Some could not bear to leave him...It went on from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon.⁴⁸

Surely this was a sign of sincere gratitude on the part of those people for whom he had toiled and suffered in the past. It was also a very timely expression. For this was to be Yang-ming's last visit in life to Nan-chang. He was, indeed, on his last military expedition. For he was already sick when he began the journey. He managed to pacify Ssu-en 思恩 and T'ien-chou 田州 by early 1528, after which he ordered the erection of village schools and put into effect other measures of rehabilitating the people.⁴⁹ As his health steadily deteriorated, he begged for leave, and started, eventually, on his homeward journey, without having received official permission. He died on his way, on January 9, 1529, near Nan-an 南安 in Kiangsi. He was then

fifty-seven years old. His last words were: "My heart is full of brightness; what more can I say?"⁵⁰

The trials and opposition that had constantly beset Yang-ming's life did not leave him even at death. His bitter enemy, Kuei 〇 桂 夢 (fl. 1510) then Minister of Rites, accused him of having left his post without permission, and of teaching heretical doctrines.⁵¹ In spite of the protests of his friends, Yang-ming's infant son was prevented from inheriting his father's title. The bereaved family, indeed, was reduced to dire straits, and had to seek the protection of his friend Huang Wan, then in Nan-king.⁵² It was not until 1567, thirty-eight years after Yang-ming's death, and after the accession of a new emperor, Mu-tsung 穆 宗 (1567-72), that his case was finally vindicated. Yang-ming's son was given the title of Marquis of Hsin-chien. He himself received another posthumous dedication, that of Wên-ch'eng 文 成 (Accomplished Culture).⁵³ Seventeen years later, in 1584, Yang-ming was given sacrifice in the Temple of Confucius.⁵⁴ It was the highest honour any scholar could expect. It was also a sign that his teaching was regarded officially as part of Confucian "orthodoxy." His name was finally associated, with the names of all the other distinguished philosophers of the Neo-Confucian movement of both the Sung and the Ming dynasties.

The best eulogy of Wang Yang-ming that was ever delivered was probably that of his friend and disciple Huang Wan, who describes him in these words:

By nature, he was endowed with an extraordinary intelligence, and could retain by memory whatever he had once read. In youth, he was fond of knightly ventures; in adulthood, of prose and prosody, and of Taoism and Buddhism. After taking upon himself the mission of [restoring] the true Way [of Confucius], and with the belief that sagehood is attainable, he changed his ways and corrected his faults. He responded courageously to the difficulties and challenges of the times, assisting, with his learn-

ing, the sovereign above, and serving the people below. Earnest and untiring, he counselled others to the practice of good, desiring, by jên, to save all living beings under Heaven. He showed no ill will towards those who hated him. Even when he was in a position of wealth and honour, he frequently manifested a desire to leave all things and retire into the mountains. Money was to him as mud and grass. He regarded with the same equanimity, the amenities and comforts accompanying high rank, such as rare food, silk robes and a spacious dwelling, and the inconveniences of poverty and lowliness, such as coarse soup, hemp garments and a thatched roof. He was truly a born hero, and stands high above all others of the world. There has not been anyone like him in recent ages.⁵⁵

The "Five Falls" and the "Three Changes"

Wang Yang-ming's intellectual and spiritual evolution has been described in terms of "Five Falls" and "Three Changes." The "Falls" refer to his unorthodox interest in knightly ventures, sporting and war-like skills, letters, pursuit of physical immortality and Buddhist religion, which preceded his final conversion to the Confucian Way of sagehood. Strictly speaking, they did not represent consecutive events, but rather, simultaneous and frequently recurrent interests. The "Changes" refer, not to ruptures with the past, or even evolution in the direction of his life, but to the different shifts of emphases which occurred in his teaching, or, more precisely, in his practical direction of his disciples. All these occurred after his definitive return to Confucianism, and marked the stages of the development of his own philosophy, which was, essentially, a practical doctrine.

Yang-ming's friend, Chan Jo-shui 湛若水 [Chan Kan-ch'uan 湛甘泉 1466-1560] has described for us the "Five Falls":

His first fall was an absorbing interest in knightly ventures; his second was in the skills of horsemanship and archery. His third fall was an absorbing interest in letters; his fourth was in the art of pursuing immortality, and his fifth was Buddhism. Only in the year 1506, did he return to the orthodox teaching of the sages.⁵⁶

Yang-ming has compared the "ardent" man to a phoenix, flying above, at a height of 10,000 feet.⁵⁷ His own inner evolution is an illustration of this truth. His dynamic vitality did not allow him to stop anywhere, but led him from one interest to another, from one spiritual adventure to another.

He was a precocious child, and as such, tended to be difficult. His biographer relates how, at the age of eleven, he was given a preceptor to supervise his studies, but manifested a greater fondness for roaming in the streets of Peking. Once he tried to obtain a bird from a seller without paying for it. The ensuing dispute attracted the attention of a physiognomist in the crowd, who paid for the bird, encouraged the boy to study, and left him with some cryptic words about his future greatness. Such adventures could hardly have been pleasing to his father, a compiler in the Hanlin Academy, who "frequently worried about him."⁵⁸ The "knightly ventures" probably started to fascinate him in the streets of Peking, where he led other boys in battle games. The four Chinese words used to describe his character, as it first unfolded in these days of his carefree youth, are hao-man pu-chi 豪邁不羈.⁵⁹ They mean: "he was bold, fearless, and totally uncontrollable."

A hero of Yang-ming's youth was Ma Yuan 馬援 (14BC-49AD), the conqueror of Cochin. At the age of fourteen, Yang-ming visited in dream the temple dedicated to Ma's memory, and composed a poem for that occasion. Over forty years later, shortly before his death, Yang-ming had the occasion to visit the real temple, during a military campaign which he conducted in Kwangtung and Kwangsi.⁶⁰

As we have already said, Yang-ming was early introduced to the art of horsemanship and archery. After his return from the sojourn at the Chü-yung Passes, he kept up this interest in military affairs, and had to be desisted by his father from submitting a memorial to advise the emperor on this subject and to offer his services. At twenty-five, he studied military science more seriously, even playing war-games at table while entertaining guests, using fruit kernels as soldiers. He regretted that the military examinations held by the state required only knowledge of horsemanship and archery, and not military strategy. He continued to study military science even during his period of repose in 1502, while living in his hermitage, with the help of Hsü Chang 許璋 a scholar conversant with astronomy, geography, and the art of war, who preferred a life of retirement to official service.⁶¹

That Yang-ming was an excellent archer was demonstrated at a public contest held between him and the two favourites of Emperor Wu-tsung, the eunuch Chang Chung 張忠 and the general Hsü T'ai 許泰. This was in 1519, soon after his capture of Ch'en-hao. The two men had imagined it an easy task to win such a contest with a scholar. They were astonished and frightened to watch Yang-ming hit the target everytime.⁶²

The art of letters also began to fascinate him at an early age. At ten, he had surprised his father's friends with his impromptu verses. He did so again at twenty, when he associated himself with several others in a poetry club (shih-she 詩社) which included the elder scholar, Wei Han 魏瀚. His other friends included the "Four Talents" (ssu-chieh 四傑) of his times: Li Meng-yang 李夢陽 (1472-1529), Ho Ching-ming 何景明 (1483-1521), Hsü Chen-ch'ing 徐禎卿 (1479-1511) and Pien Kung 邊貢 (1476-1532). Advocates of the movement calling for a return to a classical style in Ming prose and poetry, these men were to consider Yang-ming's development of other interests stronger than that of literary writing a real loss to their cause.⁶³ For a time, however, Yang-ming devoted himself to

modelling poems and essays on pre-Sung and earlier pieces. He has left us examples of fu-sao 賦騷 and of imitations of T'ang poetry. His prose has been much acclaimed, especially for the independent style which he developed later. His "Yi-lü wen" 瘞旅文 [Burying the Dead Travellers], written at Lung-ch'ang, concludes with a song of lament, and is a moving essay. His letter to Yang Sui-an [Yang Yi-ch'ing], dated 1523, is another expression of a simple and dignified style.

Until the age of thirty, literary writing was one of his principal occupations. He read avidly the pre-Ch'in and Han writings, staying up till late at night until his health was seriously damaged. He also kept up his exercises in calligraphy. He was finally obliged to practise more moderation when he started vomiting blood. Said he in the end: "How can I waste my finite energy in the writing of useless and empty compositions?"⁶⁴

Yang-ming had been in contact with Taoism and Taoists since his early years--according to himself, since the age of seven.⁶⁵ At the age of eleven, he met a physiognomist in the streets of Peking. The words of the physiognomist, describing his future greatness, are full of Taoist allusions:

When the beard brushes the collar, you will enter
sagehood,
When the beard reaches the upper cinnabar field,
you will form a sage-embryo.
When the beard reaches the lower cinnabar field,
your sagehood will be perfect.⁶⁶

In Taoist terminology, "cinnabar field" refers generally to the part of the body below the navel. Pao-p'u tzu 抱朴子 refers to the "three cinnabar fields": the lower one below the navel, the middle one below the heart, and the upper one between the eye-brows.⁶⁷ In these lines quoted above, only two, upper and lower, are mentioned. Since they are mentioned especially in relation to the length of the beard,

it is safe to suppose that they indicate the parts below the heart and the navel. Those special terms are usually associated with the Taoist practice of breath control and breath regulation, considered as one of the means conducive to the prolongation of life, or even to the attainment of physical immortality. The "formation of a sage-embryo," is also a Taoist expression referring to a certain degree of progress made, for example, through practice of breath control, leading to the growth within oneself of the "inner pill."⁶⁸

Yang-ming's feeble health might have been one reason for his interest in popular Taoism. Mention has already been made of his excursion to a Taoist temple on the night of his wedding. He persisted in seeking out unusual Taoist priests, asking them questions about the art of cultivating life. It is, besides, perfectly consonant with his restless, insatiable nature to desire to "steal the secret springs [of the creative operations] of Heaven and Earth."⁶⁹ After all, did not Chu Hsi himself make textual studies of those Taoist classics which describe such "theft": the Yin-fu Canon and the Ts'an-t'ung Ch'i?⁷⁰

At the age of thirty, Yang-ming retired to a little hermitage near his home-town. We have already spoken of his practice of assiduous cultivation, and of his acquisition of a kind of "prescience." If he finally decided against a life in retirement, it certainly goes to show that he had frequently entertained the desire to be a "mountain man", and indeed, he delighted in calling himself Yang-ming Shan-jen 陽明山人 (the Mountain Man of Yang-ming).⁷¹ Whether his hermitage of 1504 was situated in a cave is not so important. But he definitely manifested, all through life, a fondness for caves. He named his cave-dwelling in Lung-ch'ang, the "Little Yang-ming Cave," and wrote several poems on it. In 1518, during one of his campaigns, he visited a double cave south of Lung-ch'uan 龍川, in Kwangtung, and fell in love with it. He gave it the name "Another Yang-ming Cave," and again wrote a series of poems to commemorate the occasion.⁷² Connected with his

love of caves, of course, is his passion for nature itself. Habitually, he instructed his disciples while roaming about in the mountains or near the lakes.

Yang-ming's frequent travels and visits to famous mountains brought him to many Buddhist as well as Taoist monasteries. The Japanese author, Kusumoto Fumio, has made a careful study of Yang-ming's peregrinations, noting a total of forty Buddhist monasteries with given names, which Yang-ming had visited. They were spread out in eight different provinces. He claims that there were another forty or more monasteries which Yang-ming also visited, the names of which are unknown to us. These visits occurred not only in his early life, but also after his conversion to the Confucian quest for sagehood. At the age of thirty-one, Yang-ming spent eight months in a Buddhist monastery--the longest sojourn recorded. At the age of forty-nine, he made thirteen visits to Buddhist monasteries, spending one or two weeks there every time.⁷³ Certainly, Yang-ming regularly met and taught his disciples in such monasteries. While these contacts do not necessarily indicate heavy influence, and Yang-ming's biographers have said much less of his Buddhist than of his Taoist practices, we should recall firstly, that the two religions, Taoism and Buddhism, experienced a "merging" process during the Yuan and Ming dynasties, and secondly, that Yang-ming himself admitted to "thirty years of interest" in Taoism and Buddhism.⁷⁴

True, starting from 1504, when he set questions for the Shantung provincial examinations, Yang-ming expressed his repudiation both of Taoism and Buddhism.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, his conversion to Confucianism did not seem definite until his meeting with Chan Jo-shui in 1505, or according to Chan in 1506.⁷⁶ And then, as we shall see, he was to develop his own "Confucian" doctrine, a response to the Taoist-Buddhist challenges, which shows that he has not been able to throw away the formative influences on his early life and thought. Indeed, as we must have discerned, the "Five Falls" were not consecutive but represented sometimes simultaneous and frequently recurrent interests. Among

them, certainly, Taoism and Buddhism lasted longer, and left deeper imprints.

Not only do the "Five Falls" refer to recurrent temptations, but they had also competed all along for Yang-ming's attention with a sixth attraction: Confucian learning. His father was known as a scholar who refused to have anything to do with Taoism and Buddhism, and had given him an "orthodox" education in the Confucian Classics. Yang-ming never seemed to have questioned the value of the Confucian goal of sagehood. He had only objected to making compromises, to regarding success at examinations and in an official career as the ultimate goal. Even when practising calligraphy, he recalled to mind the words of Ch'eng Hao: "I write with great reverence, not for the sake of writing beautiful words, but in order to learn [virtue]." ⁷⁷ He also explained: "When I started to learn calligraphy, I used to copy from model writings, and could only imitate the shapes of the characters. Later on, I no longer used the writing brush so flippantly. I first concentrated my attention and meditated upon the characters in my heart (or mind)..... . Once the heart knows, the characters will naturally be well written." ⁷⁸ This contains already the whole of his philosophy in embryo form. It explains why Yang-ming's philosophy became an inspiration for the Ming literati painters. ⁷⁹

The philosophy of Yang-ming cannot strictly be traced through a direct line of teachers, as can that of Chu Hsi, or even that of Chan Jo-shui. Much, however, has been said of Yang-ming's meeting with Lou Liang, the disciple of Wu Yü-pi 吳與弼 (1392-1469). Certainly, Lou's remark that "Sagehood is possible of attainment through learning," ⁸⁰ is extremely significant. Yang-ming was undoubtedly aware of the intellectual controversy that raged in the Chin dynasty concerning whether sages have feelings and whether "sagehood is attainable by one's own means." ⁸¹ It must certainly have been his own problem too. He is described as having searched everywhere for the extant writings of Chu Hsi in order to read them. His zeal for putting into practice the words of Ch'eng Yi and

Chu Hsi led to his "investigating" the bamboos. He did so until over-taken by sickness. He also sought to follow Chu's counsel to "study systematically, in order to become excellent in learning", and once again, he fell sick. It was therefore his supposition that only a "select" few can become sages and so was tempted to abandon the Confucian quest, and leave the world in order to practise the cultivation of life.⁸² In other words, he was ready to give up Confucian ideals of sagehood only because he did not regard himself as being capable, physically and otherwise, of attaining them.

The Taoist must have disconcerted him since they treated him as a Confucian scholar, destined to an official career, rather than as one of themselves. Determined to search for a more profound meaning in life, he then retired to his hermitage for nearly a year. However, he was to find the result of Taoist cultivation also disappointing in itself. Without having discovered a solution to the problem of "whether sagehood is possible of attainment," he decided to return to worldly society and an official career, armed now with a crusading zeal to persuade others also to "remain true to their human nature," by adherence to Confucian social morality.⁸³

Friendship with Chan Jo-shui was an important factor in Yang-ming's inner evolution. He had longed and looked, but without much success, for teachers and friends, for men who were his own intellectual equals, who had the same kind of boundless desires as he. In 1505 or 1506 the two men met for the first time in Peking. Yang-ming was then thirty-three, and Jo-shui thirty-nine. Of this meeting, he was to say: "I have lived in official circles for thirty years, without having met such a man." Chan, in his turn, also said, "I have travelled widely and seen much, but without having met such a man."⁸⁴ Together, they discussed the learning of sages, in particular the teaching of Ch'eng Hao, that "the man of jen forms one body with Heaven and Earth and all things."⁸⁵ On Yang-ming's exile to Kweichow, Chan presented him with nine poems, including the following:

We form one body with Heaven and Earth,
 One family with the Universe,
 Since our minds are already at one,
 Why should we complain of separation?
 The floating cloud cannot stay fixed;
 The traveller on the route must make his turn.
 Let us honour brilliant virtue,
 And explore the boundless vastness.⁸⁶

In reply, Yang-ming also presented Chan with several poems, including these lines, which express succinctly his desires for greatness as well as the assistance and encouragement he had received from Chan's friendship:

The waters of Chu 洙 and Ssu 泗⁸⁷ flow over a
 small area,
 The waters of Yi 伊 and Lo 洛⁸⁸ appear to be only
 a thin line.
 As to the three or four later philosophers,
 Their qualities cannot adequately make up for
 their defects.
 Alas, that I should refrain from measuring my own
 weakness,
 Limping in my walk, yet I desire to go so far.
 Repeatedly, I fall down and I rise up again,
 Breathing heavily, often near the point of breaking.

On the way I met a man with the same ambition,
 Together, we dare to proclaim the greatness of
 moral character,
 We fight for the important differences which exist
 between nuances,
 And encourage each other to go forward ten thousand
 li,
 The winds and waves are rising; we suddenly lose
 sight of each other,
 As I utter these words, my tears are vainly
 falling.⁸⁹

At that time, there was no doubt that, of the two men, Chan was the "senior" philosopher, older and more mature. He had already spent the past nine years of his life in the study of Neo-Confucianism. Yang-ming, on the other hand, was only beginning to settle down intellectually. Friendship with Chan certainly contributed to the firmness of his determination to seek for Confucian ideals, until, during his exile, he was once more faced with the same question: how could one, in those circumstances, become a sage? He would discover the answer for himself, and it was to change, not only his life, but also that of many others.

In his Preface to Yang-ming's Collected Writings (Wen-lu 文錄), Ch'ien Te-hung proposed two "triple changes" in Yang-ming's life, first as a student, and then as a teacher. As a student, Yang-ming first went through a phase of fondness for letters, then passed on to an absorbing interest in Buddhism and Taoism, and finally, during the hardships of his exile, understood the meaning of the Confucian Way.⁹⁰ All this we have already treated in our description of the "Five Falls", while noting that, given the shifts in emphasis in the general direction of his life, these "changes" or "falls" represent, to a large extent, recurrent rather than consecutive interests. The three changes in his life as a teacher, however, refer to something different. Although closely related to his own inner development, and to the refinement of his teaching, they have particular reference to the spiritual direction which he gave to his disciples, and so arose as much from his experience of their needs and responses as from that of his own. On the basis of Ch'ien's theories of the double "triple changes," and also on that of his own observations, Huang Tsung-hsi has presented his own version of a double set of "triple changes," which occurred before and after Yang-ming's development of his own teaching.⁹¹ Since the two versions do not differ very much from each other, and for the sake of convenience, we shall adopt the earlier, or Ch'ien's version. According to him, Yang-ming first taught at Kweiyang the doctrine of unity between

knowledge and action, then in 1513, after his arrival in Ch'u-yang 滁陽, Anhwei, he gave special emphasis to quiet meditation. Lastly, after 1521, having experienced all the trials that accompanied his victory over Ch'en-hao, he began to teach the doctrine of the extension of liang-chih, going right to the heart of the matter, in order to bring insight to his hearers.

From the above description of Ch'ien Te-hung, we can see how Yang-ming's teaching represented essentially a practical method rather than a metaphysical system. He had primarily sought to provide the answer to the burning question: how to become a sage? Chu Hsi's suggestion was: by cultivating an attitude of reverence in one's life and by the "investigation of things" which is achieved through an extensive knowledge. His belief, and that of Ch'eng Yi, was that such a diligent pursuit of learning--primarily moral learning--would bring with it eventually a kind of sudden enlightenment, powerful enough to give meaning to the whole of life: "There is li in everything, and one must investigate it to the utmost... . One must investigate one item today and another item tomorrow. When one has accumulated much knowledge, he will naturally achieve a thorough understanding all of a sudden."⁹²

Earlier in his life, Yang-ming had attempted to follow this advice to the letter, and had found it wanting. Instead of bringing him closer to the goal of sagehood, the exhaustive investigation of "li" discouraged him and even affected his health. Moral principles, after all, are inexhaustible, just as life itself is unfathomable. If their knowledge was necessary for virtue, then very few men would be competent to the task of pursuing virtue. This, however, would not be in accordance with the writings of the sages, especially of Mencius. It is characteristic of Yang-ming's mentality, and of the nature of the Chinese language, that he would have sought to solve this problem, not by denying the value of knowledge, but by giving it a new meaning. By proposing the doctrine of the unity or identity between knowledge and action, he placed emphasis

on a very special kind of experience: that of practising virtue. One can become a sage only by acting in a sagely way, and this action, itself, is knowledge.⁹³

That this insight should have come to him during his exile was no coincidence. Mencius had said that every man can be a Yao 堯 or a Shun 舜,⁹⁴ but Chu Hsi had specified that the road to becoming Yao and Shun lies in moral asceticism and the intellectual pursuit of moral knowledge. Yang-ming, however, found himself in the midst of people who had never heard of Yao and Shun. Have they, and their ancestors, been banned from reaching sagehood? Should they be instructed in the intricacies of investigation of principles? The Confucian had always been aware of his civilising mission towards the barbarians. Yang-ming could not help asking himself how a sage would act in these circumstances.

The unity of knowledge and action was, in a sense, the only rationalisation one could make in order to justify Mencius' teachings. He began to teach it, first to the few humble Chinese living there and then to the even humbler and less civilised Miaos. The response was gratifying:

When I spoke to [the Chinese] of the theory of knowledge and action, they were all very much pleased to hear it. After a while even the barbarians became interested and reacted in the same way. But when I came out of my exile and spoke of it to scholars and officials, they raised diverse opinions, often refusing to accept what I said. And why is it so? Because they [have been biased] by having heard other opinions.⁹⁵

The unity of knowledge and action provides a necessary foundation for the proposition that sagehood is attainable by all, but gives no instruction regarding what is virtuous action. If this need not be learned from books, then there must be another way of learning. Life, of course, is the

best teacher, but it is also an ambiguous one. The human subject, especially, cannot always remain intent, waiting to hear the instructions that life might unfold to him. A certain "formal" learning is necessary, which is not the perusal of Classics. Yang-ming suggested the method which he himself had found fruitful: that of "quiet sitting". During this exercise, one seeks not thought nor understanding, but the recovery of one's original nature--the nature that is perfectly good. In the light of its discovery, the principles of sagehood and virtue would naturally reveal themselves.

The great Sung philosophers--Chou Tun-yi, Chang Tsai, the two Ch'engs, Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan--as well as Yang-ming himself, all had a general knowledge of the principles of "meditation," common to Taoism and Buddhism.⁹⁶ These include the "remote" preparation for this exercise, which is a morally upright life, and a more "immediate" preparation, the control and regulation of one's emotions. An erect, sitting posture, whether on the chair, or, for the Buddhist, on the rush-mat, and in a lotus position, is always recommended. Attention is also given, both by the Taoists and Buddhists, to the control and regulation of breathing during the exercise of meditation. Chu Hsi himself had written a famous instruction on breath control, for which he recommends "watching the white on the nose," a Taoist practice. Control should also be exercised over one's sensations, with a view of keeping external stimuli away from the senses. The mind should be concentrated upon itself, to the exclusion of all distracting thought, and for the sake of attaining unity and harmony between consciousness and the object of consciousness, which is one's innermost self.⁹⁷

Yang-ming practised such meditation himself, and also recommended its exercise to his disciples. Soon after his exile, in 1509, while on his way to Lu-lin in Kiangsi, he had met several of them in Ch'en-chou 辰州 and had sat with them in meditation in a temple. Afterwards, he wrote to explain to them the purpose of such an exercise:

What I have said earlier in the temple about sitting in meditation was not meant for the sake of attaining Ch'an impassivity.⁹⁸ Rather, since people like us are usually distracted by our many occupations, and do not know how to recollect ourselves, I wish to recommend such a remedy to our lack of study by the recollection of the mind.⁹⁹

But Yang-ming found that meditation can also be a temptation, that one may be inclined to meditate, for the sake of resting in the tranquillity which gives, rather than for the purpose of recovering one's innate principle of moral activity. If knowledge is action, meditation surely should not be an end in itself. Besides, for the "initiated," meditation becomes much less necessary. If one is habitually conscious of the demands of liang-chih 良知 (knowledge of the good), one needs to do nothing more than living up to them in depth and fullness.

This "extension of liang-chih" represents the culmination of Yang-ming's teaching. According to Ch'ien Te-hung, he began developing this theory around 1521, after his experience of the great trials which followed the victory he had won over the rebel, Prince Ch'en-hao. It was to be his guiding principle for the rest of his life. It was also the guiding principle he gave to his disciples.

Extension of knowledge is not what later scholars understand as enriching and widening knowledge. It means simply extending my knowledge of the good to the utmost. This knowledge of the good is what Mencius meant when he said: "The [moral] sense of right and wrong is common to all men." This sense of right and wrong requires no deliberation to know, and does not depend on learning to function. This is why it is called liang-chih.¹⁰⁰

The development of this doctrine, however, did not entail a repudiation of his earlier teaching regarding the

unity of knowledge and action, or of the important role of quiet sitting, in one's understanding of self and perception of this knowledge of the good. It was rather the result of a fusion of these two, and of their simplification in practice. Since extension implies action, the extension of liang-chih necessarily presupposes the recognition that true moral knowledge lies only in action. Moreover, it includes also the meaning of acting always as one would in meditation without losing sight of one's virtuous nature, or rather, of permeating one's life and action with the spirit of quiet contemplation. For this reason, Yang-ming admitted that, in principle, ever since his exile of Lung-ch'ang, he had not taught anything but this "knowledge of the good."¹⁰¹

Since the time of Confucius, and even more since the time of Chu Hsi, the "School of Sages" had become identified with Confucian "scholasticism". Yang-ming desired to lead his students back to the sources--beyond Chu Hsi, beyond Confucius and the Classics, beyond even the first sages, who had attained sagehood without first studying the Classics. He desired to lead them back to the deepest faculty within themselves, to the principle of their originally good human nature, to liang-chih. And, after having done so, he knew that they would be able to live, as did Confucius, Yao and Shun, by practising the simplest human virtues, which make a man human, which make him also, a son, a brother, and a member of the human society in association with other men. This is the meaning of the "extension of liang-chih."

Beyond "Ardour"

The "Five Falls" describe Yang-ming's mad ardour, which led him, during his early life, from one interest to another, without resolving the problem of his fundamental restless search for absolute values. The "Three Changes", on the other hand, present to us the gradual evolution of the substance and method of his teaching, after his definitive return to the Way of Confucianism. He remained, even then, madly ardent, but his ardour was now tempered with peace and serenity. He had become totally independent of the vicissitudes of life and the judgement of others.

His development of a new philosophy, interpreting the investigation of things as the rectification of the mind or heart, brought him criticisms, including the charge of preaching heresy. In 1523, students sitting for civil examinations in Peking were questioned about the "philosophy of the mind"--in an attempt by the authorities to discredit Yang-ming's teachings. Among the candidates, one disciple of Yang-ming, angered by the move, walked out of the examination hall. Others, too, were very much provoked. Yang-ming's reaction, however, was very different. "The learning of the sages will, from now on, be well known," he said, "because, ...if my teachings are held [everywhere] to be false, there must be people in the world who will do their best to find out the truth."¹⁰²

He went on to explain that, before, during his sojourn in Nanking (1515-1516), he had yet something of the "Pharisaic" in him. But by this time he only believed in liang-chih:

Where truths and falsehood are concerned, I no longer need to hide or be on the defensive. This is how I can be "ardent." Even if the whole world says that my actions do not measure up to my words, I would still act according to liang-chih.¹⁰³

When questioned further concerning the distinction between the "Pharisaic" and the "ardent," Yang-ming explained:

The "Pharisaic" seeks approval of the gentleman (chün-tzu 君子) by being faithful and incorrupt. He also seeks not to offend the mediocre men (hsiao-jen 小人), by doing what they do His mind is therefore corrupt, and he cannot enter the way of Yao and Shun. The "ardent" aims at emulating the ancients. No turmoil or worldliness is sufficient to disturb his mind. He is like a phoenix flying above at a height of 10,000 feet. With one more motion, he can become a sage.¹⁰⁴

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find Yang-ming praising that man of strange ambitions, Tseng Tien, without reservation. Using the words of the Doctrine of the Mean, he remarked that Tseng was a man who "can find no situation in which he is not at ease with himself."

If he is in the midst of barbarous tribes, he does what is appropriate to being in the midst of barbarous tribes. If he is in danger and difficulty, he does what is appropriate to this situation of danger and difficulty.¹⁰⁵

Besides, he added: "The other three disciples may be described as ch'i ^{天泉}. Tseng Tien showed that he was no ch'i."¹⁰⁶ Neither, of course, was Yang-ming.

A man who admired Yang-ming's accomplishments as a writer, statesman, soldier and man of virtue, but disapproved of his philosophy, once remarked: "Men of old became famous, sometimes for their literary writings, sometimes for their political achievements, sometimes for their high virtue, and sometimes for their military victories. But you possess all these titles to fame. If you would only abandon your work of teaching, you would be a perfect man." With a smile, Yang-ming replied: "I would prefer to give up the other four titles to fame, and only teach [philosophy]. I believe that this would not make me less perfect."¹⁰⁷

In the autumn of 1524, during Yang-ming's period of retirement from public office, he prepared a banquet for his students on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival. The tables were set outdoors, at the Pi-hsia ^{碧霞} Pond near the T'ien-ch'üan ^{天泉} Bridge. Over 100 persons were present. Wine was served, after which the guests enjoyed themselves by singing, pitching arrows, beating drums, or boating. Pleased and a little gay himself, Yang-ming composed a poem to honour the occasion. Its first verse concludes with these lines:

Old as I am, I sing wild (k'uang) songs tonight,
 To be transformed into heavenly music, filling up
 the Great Purity.¹⁰⁸

The second verse goes on to say:

Everywhere brightly shines the mid-autumn moon,
 Where else can you find another assembly of such
 talents?

Alas, that learning should already have been
 interrupted for 1000 years!

Waste not your one life, men born to greatness!
 Whether our influence will outreach Chu Hsi's is
 a matter of doubt,

Yet in no wise shall we imitate Cheng Hsüan's¹⁰⁹
 quest for details and fragments.

Setting aside the lute while the notes are still
 vibrating in the spring breeze,

Tseng Tien, the ardent and eccentric (k'uang),
 understands my mind best.¹¹⁰

However, the next day, when his disciples came to thank him for the feast, he said some very remarkable words, which show that while he approved of "mad ardour", he aimed at something even higher. Referring to the passage of Mencius in which the philosopher explained to one of his disciples why Confucius, during his sojourn in the state of Ch'en, expressed his desire to return to his "ardent" (k'uang) students of Lu,¹¹¹ Yang-ming offered his own reflections. He said that while scholars of the world, shackled by considerations of wealth, honour and profit, might be able to liberate themselves from these vanities when they heard the teaching of Confucius, yet they still ran the risk of giving only notional assent to the sage's words without really putting them into practice:

And so they might gradually suffer from the defect of despising worldly affairs, and of paying scant attention to questions of social morality. Although they might be different from the commonplace and

mediocre people of the world, they also have not attained the Way. That was why Confucius wanted to return [to Lu] from Ch'en in order to instruct them, and lead them on to the Way. When you, my friends, discuss learning, you should also fear not having understood this message. Now that you have seen it, must make assiduous efforts to reach the Way. Do not be satisfied with some small insight, and stop at being "ardent" (k'uang).¹¹²

If Yang-ming valued the quality of "ardour", it was for the sake of a higher goal. He was to reach beyond ardour, on to sagehood.

And this was also the verdict of his favourite disciple, Hsü Ai, who was to die eleven years before the Master. In his introduction to the first part of Ch'uan-hsi lu, Hsü had this to say about the person of Yang-ming:

The master is naturally intelligent and perceptive. But he is also serene, joyful, straightforward and easy-going. He pays no attention to his appearance. People who knew how impatient of restraints and conventions he had been as a young man, and how he was once absorbed with the writing of artful prose and poetry, and with the teachings of Buddhism and Taoism, regarded his new theories as novel doctrines, unworthy of careful study. They did not realise that his three years of exile among barbarians, and his efforts to keep [his mind] at peace while in the midst of difficulties, had brought him a degree of discernment and of single-mindedness that indicates his penetration into the state of sagehood, and his attainment of supreme harmony and truth.¹¹³

Notes to Chapter II

- 1 Analects 13:21. Adapted from Legge, Classics, v.1, 272.
- 2 Analects 17:13, Legge, Classics, v.1, 324. Confucius even calls the hsiang-yüan or Pharisaic the "thief of virtue".
- 3 Mencius 7B:37. See Legge, v.2, 499-500. Tseng Tien, father of Tseng Shen 曾參, was characterised as k'uang by Ch'eng Hao and Chu Hsi for his carefree reply to Confucius regarding his ambition in life [Analects 11:25; Legge, Classics, v.1, 246-9] See Yi-shu 12:1b; CTYL 40:2b. Ch'in-chang is often identified with Tzu-chang, a disciple of Confucius, and how he played and sang on the lute in the presence of a dead friend of his. See Chuang-tzu, "Ta Tsung-shih" 大宗師 [Great and Venerable Teacher], SPPY ed., 3:10a. See also Burton Watson, Eng.tr., op.cit. p.86. Nothing is known of Mu-p'i.
- 4 Analects, V, 21. Adapted from Legge, Eng.tr., op.cit., v.1, p.181. Mou Jun-sun, in his article, "Shih Lun-yü 'k'uang-chien' chang," [An interpretation of 'k'uang-chien' of the Analects] Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao (New Asia Journal), II, (1957), pp. 79-86, explains that this passage of the Analects should not be interpreted as referring to conduct, but that the two words here refer to writing. He therefore objects to Mencius' interpretation of the words, as well as to Chu Hsi's comments.
- 5 SSCC, Lun-yü chi-chu [Collected Commentary on the Analects], 3:6b, 7:24b.
- 6 CTYL, op.cit., 29: 11a-13b.
- 7 Analects 17:16. Legge, Classics, v.1, 325.
- 8 Analects 18:5. See Legge, Classics, v.1, 332-333. Chien-yü, of course, was only feigning madness to mock Confucius.
- 9 These seven men included Hsi K'ang 嵇康 (223-262), Juan Chi 阮籍 (210-263), Shan T'ao 山濤 (205-283), Hsiang Hsiu 向秀 (c.221-c.300), Wang Jung 王戎 (234-305), Liu Lin 劉伶 (c.221-c.300) and Juan Chi's son Juan Hsien 阮咸. See Donald Holzman, "Les Sept Sages de Forêt des Bambous", T'oung-Pao LXIV, (1967) pp. 317-346.
- 10 This poem is entitled "Lu-shan yao" 廬山謠, [The Lu-shan Song]. For the life of Li Po, see Hsüeh Chung-yung's 薛仲邕 "Nien-pu" [Chronological Biography of Li Po] in Li T'ai-po chi [The Collected Poems of Li Po] (Shanghai:1930) 35: 54-56. See also 14:35 for the poem.

- 11 Huang Tsung-hsi, MJHA, 32: 1a-4b, gives an account of the T'ai-chou branch of Yang-ming school and its unique development.
- 12 Ch'ien Te-hung 錢德洪 (1496-1574) "Nien-p'u" [Chronological Biography of Wang Yang-ming], in WWKC 32: 904a-b.
- 13 This story comes from the novel by Feng Meng-lung 馮夢龍 (d.1645), who wrote under the pseudonym Mo Han-ch'ai 墨憨齋. The novel is called Wang Yang-ming ch'u-sheng ching-nan lu [Wang Yang-ming's life and Pacification Campaigns]. It has been reprinted in Taipei, in 1968. See pp. 7-8. This incident has been quoted by many responsible writers on Yang-ming. See, for example, Shimada Kenji, Shu-shi gaku to Yōmei-gaku [The Chu Hsi School and the Yang-ming School], (Tokyo: 1967), p.123.
- 14 See above, n.13.
- 15 See Yang Yi-ch'ing, "Hai-jih hsien-sheng mu-chih ming," 海日先生墓誌銘 [Epitaph on Wang Hua], in WWKC 37: 1042b. For the Ming educational and examination system, see Tilemann Grimm, Erziehung und Politik im Konfuzianischen China der Ming-Zeit: 1368-1644, (Hamburg: 1960).
- 16 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", op.cit., WWKC 32:904b. During Yang-ming's time, the Ming dynasty had seen its best days, and was declining gradually. The despotic nature of the imperial government made political dissent difficult, while a series of Oirat and Tartar raids on the northern frontiers harassed the dynasty. See MS 327: 837-840; 328: 841-842; Tilemann Grimm, "War das China der Ming-Zeit totalitär?" Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur und Völkerkunde LXXIX/LXXX (1956), 30-36.
- 17 WWKC 32: 904b-905a.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 For Lou Liang's life and teaching, see MJHA, 2: 8a-9a.
- 20 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32:905b.
- 21 Ibid. See also "Ch'uan-hsi lu", WWKC 3:153a. Adapted from Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions, p.249.
- 22 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 905b-906b.
- 23 Ibid., 32: 907a-b. See also MS 195:463; Yü Hsien, Huang Ming chin-shih teng-k'o k'ao [Record of the Successful Candidates of the chin-shih degree in the Ming Dynasty], (Preface 1548), in Ch'ü Wan-li's Ming-tai shih-chi hui-k'uan [A Collected Depository of the Historical Records of the Ming Dynasty], (Taipei reprint, 1969) 9:37b.

24 See Mao Ch'i-ling, Wang Wen-ch'eng chuan-pen [Draft Biography of Wang Yang-ming], in Hsi-ho ho-chi [Collected Writings of Mao Ch'i-ling], (Preface dated 1685), v.1, pp. 1b-2a. Feng Meng-lung's novel suggests that the "Cave" was situated south of the Ssu-ming 四明 Mountain from which the name Yang-ming derived. See pt. 1, 12a.

25 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", op.cit., WWKC 32: 907b.

26 Tu Wei-ming gives much importance to this change of mind. See The Quest for Self-realisation: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Formative Years, 1472-1509, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1968), microfilm copy, p.55.

27 For Ming eunuch power, see Chao Yi ., Erh-shih-erh shih cha-chi [Study Notes on the Twenty-two Histories]. SPFY ed., 36, and [Yeh] Ting-yi, Ming-tai te t'e-wu cheng-chih [The Secret Police Politics of the Ming Dynasty] (Peking: 1950) 8-9; 15-34; Robert B. Crawford, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty." T'oung-Pao XLIX, (1962), 115-148.

28 For Yang-ming's memorial, see WWKC 9: 276-7.

29 The traditional accounts speak of Yang-ming going south to Ch'ien-t'ang 錢塘 River where he pretended to have committed suicide. He then took a boat which was blown by typhoon to Fukien. After a stay in a Taoist monastery in the Wu-yi 武夷 Mountain, he went to Kuang-hsin, crossed the P'o-yang 鄱陽 Lake to visit his father in Nanking, went south again to sail up the Ch'ien-t'ang River to Nanchang, and from there he travelled by boat along the Yuan 沅 and Hsiang 湘 Rivers to reach his final destination. See "Nien-p'u", WWKC 22:908b; "Hsing-chuang," WWKC 37:1057. Wing-tsit Chan has questioned these accounts [see Instructions, "Introduction", xxiv]. Possibly, Yang-ming's poems, singing of adventures of crossing the sea and the mountains, had provided cues for those who accept the "devious route" [See WWKC 19:576a]. Chan Jo-shui, however, dismissed the historical value of these verses, claiming that they represented Yang-ming's attempt to feign madness and avoid the suspicions of his enemies. See "Mu-chih ming", WWKC 37: 1053b.

30 "Nien-p'u", op.cit., WWKC 32: 909a-b. MS 195:463. See also Yamane Sachio, Mingdai yōeki no tenkai [The Development of the corvée system in the Ming Dynasty] (Tokyo: 1966) p.73f. He alleges that Yang-ming probably learnt how to handle rough men during his exile.

31 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", op.cit., WWKC 32:909b.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 32: 911a-b.

- 34 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32:917b. MS 195:463. Wang Ch'ung was to show unwavering trust in, and support of Yang-ming, also after his defeat of the rebel Prince Ch'en-hao.
- 35 MS 195:463. See also Fei Hung's 費宏 (1468-1535), "Yang-ming hsien-sheng p'ing Li-t'ou chi" 陽明先生平 利頭記 [Account of Yang-ming's Pacification of Li-t'ou] in WWKC 38: 1109-1111, and "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 917b-925b. For Yang-ming's military exploits and political achievements, see also an article by Chang Yü-ch'uan, "Wang Shou- jen as a Statesman", in Chinese Social and Political Science Review [abbrev. as CSPSR], XXIII (1939-40), pp. 230-5. Yang-ming did not like war; he wept for having had to give orders to kill. See WWKC 32:924a.
- 36 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 933-943. MS 195:463.
- 37 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33:944. MS 16:31 Mao Ch'i-ling. Ming Wu-tsung wai-chi, (Taipei reprint: 1964); 11-29. Many officials had suffered death or imprisonment for counselling the emperor not to go south. See also Wolfgang Seuberlich, "Kaisertreue oder Auflehnung? Eine Episode aus der Ming-Zeit", Deutsche Morganländische Gesellschaft Zeitschrift 102, (1952), 304-313.
- 38 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 945-952, passim.
- 39 Han Hsin 韓信 (d.196BC) had helped to found the Han dynasty but was later killed by the Empress Lü 呂 with connivance of Emperor Kao-tsu. See Shih-chi, ESWS series, K'ai-ming ed., 92: 221-3.
- 40 Shao Yung, the Sung philosopher, spent most of his life in virtual retirement. See SS 427: 1098-9.
- 41 Keeping the knife intact refers to cultivation of life. See Chuang-tzu "Yang-sheng chu" 養生主 [Caring for life], SPFY ed., 2: 1b-2a. Burton Watson's trans., op.cit., 50-51.
- 42 This poem is taken from WWKC 20:611b.
- 43 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33:954b. Shih-tsung 世宗 reigned 1522-66.
- 44 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34:962, MS 17: 31-32; Hsia Hsieh 夏燾 (fl.1850), Ming T'ung-chien [Comprehensive Mirror of the Ming Dynasty] (Peking: 1959), 50: 1851-6; 51: 1895-1932 passim. Yang-ming seemed to have expressed his opinions on this subject through certain poems he wrote at the time. See WWKC 20:627. See also article by Amada Takeo "Tairei no gi to Ōyōmei," [The great Ceremonial dispute and Wang Yang-ming], in Chūgoku Tetsugaku, I (February 1961), pp.1-9. See also Nakayama Hachirō, "Futatabi 'Kasei' chō tairei mondai no hotan ni tsuite," [Twice concerning 'The Origin of the Ceremonial Affairs in the Chia-ching Era'], in Mindai shi ronsō [Studies on the Ming Period] ed., by the Shimizu Hakase Tsuitō Kinen Mindaiishi Ronsō Hensaiinkai [Editorial Committee of the Studies on the Ming Period, in honour of the memory of Dr. Shimizu] (Tokyo: 1962), pp. 61-78.

- 45 See Huang Wan's "Hsing-chuang" [Biography of Wang Yang-ming], WWKC 37: 1071a-b Yang's jealousy is also hinted at in "Nien-p'u, WWKC 33: 943a during the time following Wang's victory over Ch'en-hao.
- 46 Huang Wan, "Hsing-chuang", op.cit., WWKC 37: 1071b.
- 47 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 973b-981a MS 195: 464.
- 48 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 976b.
- 49 Ibid., WWKC 37: 976-981a.
- 50 Ibid., WWKC 34: 990a-991b.
- 51 Huang Wan, "Hsing-chuang," WWKC 37: 1074a-b.
- 52 See MS 195: 464.
- 53 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 35: 1017a.
- 54 Ibid.,
- 55 "Hsing-chuang", WWKC 37: 1074b.
- 56 Chan Jo-shui, "Mu-chih ming", op.cit., WWKC 37: 1052b-1053a. See also Wang Chi's 王畿 [Wang Lung-hsi 王龍溪 1498-1583] "K'io Yang-ming hsien-sheng nien-p'u hsi". 刻陽明先生年譜序 [Preface to Nien-p'u] WWKC 36: 1021b-1022a. As for Chan Jo-shui, the disciple of Ch'en Hsien-chang 陳獻章 [Ch'en Po-sha 陳白沙 1428-1500], see MJHA 37: 2a-b.
- 57 WWKC 34: 958b.
- 58 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 904a.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid., 32: 904b. The real visit to the temple is described in WWKC 34: 988b.
- 61 Ibid., 32: 906a-907b. Mao Ch'i-ling, Wang Wen-ch'eng chuan-pen, 1, p. 6. Yu Ch'ung-yao, Yang-ming hsien-sheng chuan-tsuan [Collated Biography of Wang Yang-ming] (Shanghai: 1923), p. 5. For the life of Hsü Chang, see MJHA 10: 4b.
- 62 Ch'ien "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 943b.
- 63 Huang Wan, "Hsing-chuang", WWKC 37: 1057a. See also Sung P'ei-wei, Ming wen-hsueh shih [History of Ming Literature] (Shanghai: 1934), pp. 89-106.
- 64 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 907a.

- 65 See Yang-ming's letter to a friend who asked him about how to attain physical immortality. WWKC 21: 638a-b.
- 66 Ch'ien, Nien-p'u", op.cit., WWKC 32: 904a.
- 67 See Pao-p'u Tzu, [The Philosopher Who embraced Simplicity], SPPY ed. "Nei-p'ien", 內篇 [Inner Chapters], 18: 1a.
- 68 Liu Ts'un-yan, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought", in Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., Self and Society in Ming Thought pp. 293-296. See also T'ai-hsi ching-su [Commentary on Embryo Breath Canon] by Wang Wen-lu, in Po-tzu ch'üan-shu [Complete Works of a Hundred Philosophers] (Shanghai: 1927), part 1, 1a-3a.
- 69 Liu Ts'un-yan, "Taoist Self-cultivation", op. cit., p. 301. See Yin-fu 陰符 Canon in Po-tzu ch'üan-shu, op.cit., pt. 1, 1a-3a.
- 70 The Ts'an-t'ung ch'i 參同契 is attributed to Wei Po-yang 魏伯陽 (fl. 147-167). In one of his letters, Yang-ming accused Chu Hsi of having wasted his time writing these books. See WWKC 21: 640. According to Chi Yün et al., comp., SKTY 28: 37-8 and 28: 55, Chu's studies resemble commentaries, but are called textual studies because the books concerned were not Confucian classics, but Taoist texts.
- 71 WWKC 20: 609. See article by Suzuki Tadashi, "Mindai sanjin ko," in Mindaishi ronsō, op. cit., pp. 357-388. Yang-ming is not among them, but certainly shared their love of solitude. However, it must be pointed out that the term "Shan-jen" was frequently used by both scholars and pseudo-scholars in the Ming dynasty in "literary names" which they gave themselves. See SKTY 36: 45.
- 72 WWKC 20: 609a.
- 73 Kusumoto Fumio, Ōyōmei no zen no shisō no kenkyū, [A Study of Zen Buddhist Elements in Yang-ming's Thought], (Nagoya: 1958), pp. 65-82, passim. In his article "How Buddhist is Wang Yang-ming?" PEW XII (1962), 203-216, Prof. Wing-tsit Chang argues that Buddhist influence on Yang-ming was less than what is usually believed. It is my judgement, to be further developed in Ch. VII and Ch. VIII that Yang-ming's openness of mind made irrelevant the "orthodox-heretic" debate with its concern for discerning in his thought Buddhist or Taoist influences.
- 74 See his poem "Tseng Yang-po", 贈陽伯 [To Yang-po] WWKC 19: 570b. He mentions thirty years explicitly with regard to Taoism.
- 75 WWKC 31B, 876a - 902a.

- 76 See below, n.83.
- 77 ECCS, Yi-shu, 3:2a.
- 78 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32:905a.
- 79 See Nelson I. Wu, "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, 1555-1636: Apathy in Government and Fervour in Art," in A.F. Wright and D. Twitchett, ed., Confucian Personalities, 277.
- 80 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 905a-b.
- 81 See T'ang Yung-t'ung, Wei-Chin hsüan-hsüeh lun-kao [A Preliminary Discussion of the Metaphysical Learning of the Wei-Chin Period], (Peking: 1957), 72-83. See also an older book by Jung Chao-tsu, Wei-Chin te tzu-jan chu-yi [The Naturalism of the Wei-Chin Dynasties], (Peking: 1934), 24-25.
- 82 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32:906a-b.
- 83 Ibid., 32:907b.
- 84 See Chan Jo-shui, "Mu-chih ming", op.cit., WWKC 37: 1053, which gives the year as 1506. In his article on "Tan Kan-sen to Ō Yōmei," [Chan Jo-shui and Wang Yang-ming] Tetsugaku nenpō XXVII (1968), p.301, n.2, Araki Kengo mentioned this discrepancy and also gives the same date as the "Nien-p'u", as being probably the more accurate.
- 85 ECCS, Yi-shu, 2A:3a.
- 86 See Chan Jo-shui, "Mu-chih ming", WWKC 37:1053a.
- 87 These two rivers flow through Shantung, the region which belonged to the former state of Lu, where Confucius was born. Hence the two rivers represent the culture of Lu and the teaching of Confucius.
- 88 These two rivers flow through Honan, and represent the teachings of the two Ch'eng brothers, who were natives of Loyang 洛陽. Ch'eng Yi lived near the River Yi 伊 and called himself by the name Yi-ch'uan.
- 89 This poem can be found in WWKC 19: 572b.
- 90 Ch'ien Te-hung, "K'o wen-lu hsü-shuo" 刻文錄銘說 [Some Words on the Printing of Yang-ming's Collected Writings], WWKC, Prefaces, p.13. See also Yamashita Ryuji, "Ō Yōmei no shisō no henshen," [The Evolution of Wang Yang-ming's Thought], in Nippon Chugoku gakkaihō X, (1958), 119-133.
- 91 MJHA 10:3b-4a.
- 92 ECCS, Yi-shu, 18:5b. See Wing-tsit Chan, Source Book, 561. See also CTYL 15:4b-5a.

- 93 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 909a-901b "Ch'uan-hsi lu", WWKC 1: 58a-b. See Chan, Instructions, 11.
- 94 Mencius 4B: 32. Legge, Classics. v.2, p. 340.
- 95 Ch'ien Te-hung, "K'o wen-lu hsü-shuo," op. cit., WWKC, Prefaces, p. 13a-b.
- 96 See above, Ch. I.
- 97 See Okada Takehiko, Zazen to seiza [Ch'an meditation and quiet sitting], (Nagasaki: 1965), pp. 19-20.
- 98 The Chinese word ting 定 can also refer to the Sanskrit samādhi.
- 99 WWKC 4: 170.
- 100 See Yang-ming's "Ta-hsüeh wen" 大學問, [Inquiry into the Great Learning] WWKC 26: 739a. Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions, p. 278. Yang-ming is making reference here to Mencius 7A: 15.
- 101 Ch'ien, "K'o wen-lu hsü-shuo," WWKC, Prefaces, 13b.
- 102 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 958.
- 103 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 958b.
- 104 Ibid., 34: 958b-959a.
- 105 Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 14. See Legge, Classics, v.1, 395.
- 106 "Ch'uan-hsi lu", part 1, WWKC 1: 66b. See Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions, p. 31. See also WWKC 3: 140a and Chan, p. 215. The reference is to Analects 2: 12, where Confucius said that a gentleman is not a "utensil". See Legge, Classics, v.1, p. 150.
- 107 Tsou Shou-yi 鄒守益 [Tsou Ch'ien-chih 鄒謙之 1591-1562], "Yang-ming hsien-sheng wen-lu hsü", 陽明先生文錄序 [Preface to the Collected Writings of Yang-ming], WWKC Preface, p.8b.
- 108 "Great Purity" (T'ai-ch'ing 太清) refers to the sky. See WWKC 20: 627b for the poem.
- 109 Cheng Hsüan wrote commentaries on all the classics. See Hou-Han-shu [History of the Latter Han Dynasty] ESWS series, K'ai-ming ed., 65: 132-3.
- 110 WWKC 20: 627b.
- 111 Analects 5: 21. Legge, Classics, v.1, 181.
- 112 Ch'ien, "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 961a-b.
- 113 "Ch'uan-hsi lu", pt. 1, op. cit., WWKC 1: 55b, translated by Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions, 4.

Chapter III

THE STARTING POINT: HSIN

When a person devotes himself to study (hsüeh), he must have a "starting-point" [t'ou-nao , literally, "head"]. Only then can his effort become fruitful..... He will [have a definite direction] as a boat can have when [provided with] a rudder.¹

An examination of Yang-ming's life prior to 1508, the year of his enlightenment, has yielded a recurrent pattern of two apparently contrary pulls--an attraction toward tranquillity and contemplation, as well as an interest in scholarship and political action. At first sight, the enlightenment of 1508 might appear to be the maturation of his fondness for contemplation, a fondness which he had carefully and systematically cultivated. He admitted to having erred in his practice of the investigation of things external to himself. And since in Chinese, the word "things" (wu 物) contains the meaning of "affairs" (shih 事), it may be argued that he finally realised the folly he committed in having engaged himself in the active life of a scholar-official, a life which brought him to the loneliness of exile, in which place, however, he discovered the value of solitude and the self-sufficiency of his own nature.

However plausible this explanation at first appears, a glance at his subsequent life and activities is sufficient to dispose of it. Yang-ming was to show himself far more active after 1508 than before that year. He would never lose his fondness for silence and contemplation, but he was to give less and less importance to the practice of meditation. Finally, he would seem to have succeeded in uniting the two contrary attractions of tranquillity and activity, by his elaboration of the famous doctrine of the "extension of liang-chih", according to which every interior and exterior act of the human person can contribute to the development of his hsin or character.

To understand the real meaning of Yang-ming's "discovery"--the meaning held by Yang-ming himself--we must, therefore, constantly keep in mind the pragmatic character of the need which it answered. The two contrary "pulls" of involvement in the world and withdrawal from it not only reveal to us the tensions inherent in his exuberant temperament. They also express his restless search for the "right method" that would direct him to the ultimate goal of human life: sagehood. It would have been meaningless for Yang-ming to recognise the theoretical possibility of every man attaining sagehood, unless he could also find the correct method for its attainment. The agreement of Mencius and Hsün-tzu on the "universal possibility of sagehood" did not solve the problem for the later generations who purported to see passages in the Classics susceptible of a differing interpretation of this issue, and who were especially disconcerted by the scarcity of sages, especially since the time of the end of Chou. It was, in fact, almost contradictory that philosophers like Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi should accept so earnestly Mencius' notion of this "universal possibility", while considering him as the "last sage". Probably, they regarded that the loss of the orthodox Confucian teaching since the death of Mencius, which involved the loss of understanding of "universal possibility of sagehood", had led to this very scarcity. Certainly, the long prevalent belief that sages were born, not "made", was little encouragement to the pursuit of sagehood. Even if the triumph of Sung Neo-Confucianism of the philosophy of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, spelled the triumph of the "idea" of the "universal possibility of sagehood", sages did not thereby become more abundant. Somehow, the ideal of sagehood still remained the reserved goal of a few selected scholars, who always risked the danger of being considered "mad" (k'uang) for daring to have such an ambition. It was against this situation that Yang-ming revolted, and, in revolting, would present his own discoveries--that every man not only can be a sage, but possesses within himself all the means necessary to become one, and that sagehood is not a remote,

impersonal ideal, but a concrete goal, well within the reach of everyone, a "state of mind", self-transcending, yet to be made immanent, to become internalised.

The "enlightenment" of 1508, with its assertion of the entire adequacy of human nature itself as the agent and cause of sagehood, appeared, at first sight, as the parting of the ways for Wang Yang-ming and Chu Hsi. In reality, it represented the fruit of Yang-ming's labour in attempting to give consistency to Chu's teaching of the universal capacity for sagehood. Yang-ming had tried Chu's method for acquiring wisdom--that of investigating things and extending knowledge--and had found it inadequate. He finally discovered a new basis or principle which would lay the foundation for a different method. His goal remained the same as Chu's. The shift, however, is evident. Where knowledge of the Classics, and of all the moral principles enshrined in them, as well as in external events and things, was the basis of Chu Hsi's thought and the criteria for his action, they are, for Yang-ming, of much less importance. His emphasis would be primarily on personal insight, the result of evidences drawn from life and books and experiences, but completely internalised. Words, for example, are no longer important because they come from Classical texts, but only because they are meaningful to hsin.

Nevertheless, Yang-ming refrained for the time being from criticising Chu Hsi. His first pre-occupation after the "enlightenment" was to seek for confirmation in the canonical texts which he knew by heart, as proofs of his convictions. He committed to writing the findings, entitling the collection, "My Personal Explanations of the Five Classics". It was, at the same time, an appeal to authority, an attempt to remain within the "orthodox" tradition, as well as a subtle declaration of independence. He selected what he remembered of the words of the Classics, interpreting these according to his needs, and presenting them as "internal evidence" for his own thought. Besides, he said that the Classics are only "instruments" to be used

in one's quest of the "Way". Once the "Way" has been found, the instruments should be put aside, just as the fishing rod should be put away once the fish has been caught, and the dregs of rice should be discarded once the good wine has been extracted from them.² The mistake of the worldly scholar, however, was to look for fish in the rod itself and consider the dregs to be wine. Yang-ming then went on to describe the writing of his "Personal Explanations":

As I have not been able to bring books with me [to Lung-ch'ang] I have been sitting daily in the mountain cave, noting down what I remember by heart of the books which I studied in the past. I have given explanations on those points which have impressed me. After seven months I have virtually covered the ideas of the Five Classics. I call [this work] "Personal Explanations" because [the ideas I offer] are not necessarily in accordance with those of the worthy [scholars] of the past.³

And so, quite early in his philosophical career, Yang-ming adopted the attitude characteristic of that great rival of Chu Hsi's, Lu Chiu-yüan: "The Six Classics are all my footnotes".⁴ He made a strong assertion of the validity of his personal insights, assigning to the texts of the Classics a secondary, supporting role. He also set aside quite completely those authoritative commentaries on the Classics, written by Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi. The "enlightenment" was to mark a "beginning". Yang-ming had decided to make the "journey" to sagehood all alone, relying completely on his own internal, spiritual resources.⁵

The Starting-point: "hsin"

Yang-ming asserted the importance of having a correct "starting-point" before one's effort to attain sagehood can become fruitful.⁶ According to him, this "starting-point" is, without doubt, hsin (mind-and-heart). He

described it as a life-giving power, and as the source and principle of goodness in man.

In his "Personal Explanations of the Five Classics", Yang-ming gave a rather arbitrary interpretation of the beginning line of the Spring-Autumn Annals: "[It was his] first year.... the kings first month"⁷, by extolling the powers of Heaven, Earth and Man. He said that just as Heaven possesses the power of jen, by which it brings forth living beings, so too, man is endowed with hsin, the power and capacity which comes to him with life, and gives meaning to life. What is [called] origin, is, for Heaven, the power of jen which brings forth living beings, and, for man, hsin. Hsin is that which comes [to us] with life.⁸

Thus, he brings out that which, after long reflections upon the experience of his recent enlightenment, he considers to be the central idea of his philosophy: the living, human hsin as that "beginning" from which philosophical thinking should start and to which it should frequently return. It is no wonder that his school of thought, as a development of those ideas already present in the philosophy of Lu Chiu-yüan, should be known to posterity as Hsin-hsüeh.

Already in these earliest extant writings which have come down to us from the time of his exile, Yang-ming has spoken of "making illustrious virtue manifest" (ming ming-te 明明德)⁹ in terms of making hsin, the mind or heart, manifest. For him, hsin, which is one with nature, is the source of all goodness as well as the principle of all conscious and moral activity, possessing within itself the power of conducting the human person to the highest goals of sagehood. This does not necessarily mean that it is completely free of any or all imperfections, but rather, that it possesses within itself the power of controlling these imperfections, and so, of perfecting itself. Comparing therefore hsin, the mind or heart, to the sun, which is naturally bright, and becomes obscure only when hidden from view by some obstacle, Yang-ming described the earth as that which, at the sun's setting, blocks from view what is

of itself total brightness: This can happen for the individual too, when his mind is obscured by "selfishness".

There is nothing of the virtue of hsin that is not originally bright. That is why we speak of "illustrious virtue". If, at times, [hsin] is not bright, it is merely obscured by selfishness. When selfishness is removed, there will be nothing that is not bright. Just as the sun rises of its own accord [up the horizon] from under the earth, without relying on the help of heaven [or the sky] (t'ien), so too the gentleman of his own accord makes illustrious virtue manifest, without requiring the help of another.¹⁰

And so, according to Yang-ming, hsin, the mind-and-heart is that which refers to three things: the perfect hsin of pristine purity, the actual hsin obscured by selfishness, and the restored, acquired hsin of the gentleman who attains wisdom and sagehood. Yet the whole process is self-determining: hsin is capable of improving and restoring itself, without requiring any outside help.

Hsin chi li

Yang-ming's determination that hsin should be the great "starting-point" of his philosophy proceeded naturally from the discovery he made in 1508--that his hsin was itself adequate as an instrument in the pursuit of sagehood, and that he had made a mistake in the past by seeking for this instrument outside the self. It also led him to formulate the proposition: hsin chi li 心即理 .

The Chinese word hsin refers to that centre in man's being which is the source of all his conscious and moral activity.¹¹ As such, it extends beyond the meaning of the English word "mind". It can perhaps be translated better into the Latin word "mens", taken to mean the innermost point or the apex of the soul, or the French word "coeur", in the sense assigned to it by Blaise Pascal. It is, therefore, the meeting-point of the intellect and the will.

For that reason, its activity, yi 意, translated sometimes as "thought", refers also to all conscious activity, including pre-reflective as well as volitional acts, that is, "intention". The word li,¹² on the other hand, referred, in the system of thought constructed by Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, to the "essence" or "nature" of things as well as of man, that which constitutes their organising principle, but that which also, in the Chinese interpretation, has a moral dimension, since human nature, and the world with which it is existentially one, is fundamentally moral. And, since the Chinese language lacks a definite verb to be, the proposition, hsin chi li-literally, hsin and li are one and the same--can be translated to mean that "the source of all virtue, perfection and moral principles lies in hsin, in man's mind-and-heart". Initially therefore, this proposition represents Yang-ming's attempt to internalise the moral quest, by claiming for the mind-and-heart, the possession of all moral principles, and even by identifying hsin with virtue or the sum total of moral principles.

In the year 1512, during a discussion with his favourite disciple and brother-in-law, Hsü Ai 徐愛 (1487-1518), Yang-ming had to answer the objection of Hsü, who thought, with Chu Hsi, that the "highest good" should be sought in external things and affairs, because all these possess in themselves a definite li. Yang-ming's reply was to identify the "highest good" with the "original substance" (pen-t'i) of hsin--that is, hsin-in-itself--commending Chu Hsi for having explained the words "making illustrious virtue manifest" in terms of "realising perfect virtue (T'ien-li) to the fullest extent without the least bit of selfish human desire."¹³ He also added:

Hsin chi li [The source of all virtue, perfection and moral principles lies in the mind-and-heart]. Is there any affair (shih) in the world which is outside [the realm of] hsin? Is there any virtue (li 理) which is outside [the realm of] hsin?¹⁴

Hsü gave as examples or moral principles which reside in affairs outside of the mind, those relating to the virtues of filial piety in serving one's friends, and benevolence in governing the people. In other words, he was thinking of the whole world of moral relationships, which form the recognised core of Confucian ethics.

Wang Yang-ming replied that the principles of filial piety or loyalty and the rest can hardly be looked for in the parents or the ruler, and so on. These principles are all in hsin. Repeating here that hsin chi li, he continued:

When hsin is free from the hindrance of selfish desires, it is the embodiment of the perfect virtue (T'ien-li)... . When this hsin, which is the pure and perfect virtue, is applied to serving parents, there is filial piety, to serving the sovereign, there is loyalty, [and so on].....¹⁵

He sought thus to answer Hsü's question by limiting the meaning of the word li purely to its ethical dimension, as that which constitutes moral and virtuous activity.

"Perfect virtue" or "principle of Heaven", [T'ien-li] is, of course, that totality of goodness, present in the universe as well as in man, present, however, in its fullness and purity only in the sage, the perfect man, whose hsin is free from all traces of selfishness.

Yang-ming also agreed with Hsü that practical matters relating to caring for the parents' comfort in winter and summer and the like deserve investigation. But he did not think that the pursuit of virtue would begin with such details. He suggested that the filial son develop within himself a deep love for his parents, a love which as the "root" of virtue will make possible the growth of filial piety, blossoming into all the minute points of observance which constitute the "branches".¹⁶ And so, instead of seeking to acquire moral knowledge of virtuous conduct through the study of details and techniques discovered by chance occasions, he envisages the pursuit of virtue as

being best carried out by the development of the goodness inherent in hsin, the seat of man's personality and the source of all moral activity.

... The Book of Rites says: "A filial son who loves his parents deeply is sure to have a peaceful disposition. Having a peaceful disposition, he will surely have a happy expression. And having a happy expression, he will surely have a pleasant countenance".¹⁷ There must be deep love as the root and then the rest will naturally follow.¹⁸

About the same time that the discussion with Hsu Ai took place, or perhaps a year after, Yang-ming wrote a letter to another friend of his, in which he also spoke of the teachings of the Great Learning, in particular those regarding sincerity and the understanding of the good. He said:

What one calls li (moral principle) in an object [or event], "righteousness" in adapting ourselves towards it, and "good" in nature, is differently designated on account of the things to which they refer, but in reality are all manifestations of my hsin. There is no object, no event, no moral principle, no righteousness and no good that lies outside hsin.... . To insist on seeking the supreme good in every event and object is to separate what is one into two things.¹⁹

And so, Yang-ming directs the seeker of the "highest good" to an inner quest of the fullest moral development of himself. This would not isolate the self from reality, nor remove it from the world of active involvement. Rather, it represents the fusion, through practice, of "inner" and "outer" concerns. The development of an ever-deepening mind-and-heart in the aspirant for sagehood brings about a union between the agent and the objects of his intentions and actions, thus transcending the dualism between the self

and the non-self, between the hsin and li.

Yang-ming sought to justify his identification of hsin with li by pointing out that it is the intention of the mind rather than the act itself, or the object to which the act is directed, which makes the act virtuous. He used as an example the Five Despots of the Spring-Autumn times, who gave the appearance of practising virtue by resisting barbarian invasions and by honouring the dynastic house of Chou, but really acted out of selfish motivations.²⁰ These people who make a distinction between hsin and li, may express admiration for such historical figures, on account of their external achievements, and neglecting to consider their unworthy motives. They may even imitate such conduct, doing deeds that appear virtuous without ascertaining that these are in conformity with their intentions. "[These people] make two things of hsin and li, and drift unwittingly into the kind of hypocrisy that is characteristic of the way of despots. I speak of hsin and li as being identical, so that people may know [this is so] and devote their efforts to [cultivating] hsin instead of accumulating isolated and external acts of righteousness."²¹

It is the inherent goodness of hsin, rather than external relationships, which prompts us to the practice of virtue. In other words, it is the "moral" or "virtuous" nature of hsin, which manifests the presence of a natural knowledge of the moral nature of human relationships, and of a natural ability to act in accordance with such knowledge. Thus, "On seeing the father, one naturally knows how to be filial; on seeing the elder brother, one naturally knows how to be fraternally respectful; on seeing a child fall into the well, one naturally knows how to be compassionate".²² The moving power of filial piety, fraternal respect and compassion are not present in the father or the brother or the child but in one's own hsin.

If the principle (li) of filial piety was present in the parent, would this li... no longer [affect] my heart (hsin) after the parent's death?.... The

substance of hsin is hsing (nature). Hsing (nature) and li (virtue) are one. And so, where there is a mind (hsin) of filial piety toward the parent, there is the principle (li) of filial piety. Where there is no mind of filial piety, there will be no principle of filial piety.²³

Yang-ming appealed to the authority of Mencius as support for his proposition, hsin chi li. The sage seldom mentioned the word li, largely unknown to the early Chinese philosophers.²⁴ But the sage frequently discussed both hsing (nature) and hsin (heart-and-mind), often using the two words interchangeably. He had particularly stressed the innate human capacity for goodness and of the presence in it of the "four beginnings" of virtue.²⁵ Yang-ming declared that the dichotomy of hsin and li and the quest for moral principles (li) outside of hsin would imply the acceptance of Kao-tzu's proposition that righteousness was an exterior virtue,²⁶ and so indicate a lack of the proper knowledge of righteousness itself. "[Neither] humanity... [nor] righteousness can be sought outside hsin. How then could li alone be sought outside? To seek li outside hsin would divide knowledge and action into two things. To seek li in hsin is the teaching of the 'unity of knowledge and action' given by the school of the sages".²⁷

Obviously, the practical, moral implications of Yang-ming's proposition that li is present in hsin and somehow identical to it represents a radical departure from the practical, moral teachings of Chu Hsi, who had always insisted on the "investigation of things" outside of the self as a help to the practice of virtue. Yang-ming never denied that human affairs and the events of life as well as persons and things with which we come into contact are a good "test" of the reality of our knowledge of moral principles.²⁸ He only preferred to regard all affairs, events, persons and things in terms of their relationship with hsin. In other words, the moral dimension of the whole lived world of human relationships and affairs connotes somehow the "inseparability" of these relationships and affairs with hsin, the source of morality.²⁹

Universal Capacity for Sagehood

Yang-ming made the goal of sagehood accessible to all, bringing a higher sense of consciousness and understanding of man's innate dignity and potential greatness, which is also the foundation of man's basic equality with man. He also did something else. He also discovered the real meaning of sagehood, and of the word "sage": he is not a being with super-human powers as described by the Han apocryphal classics; or a person born great, with extraordinary intellectual and moral capacities, somehow identified with Tao or original non-being, as presented by the Neo-Taoists; or a bodhisattva prepared by innumerable previous lives of high virtue and merit for the bliss of Nirvāna, but who prefers to remain within the cycle of life and death, of change and transmigration, in order to help and save others, to bring them also over to the other shore of eternal rest. Yang-ming described the sage very simply as a man whose hsin is filled with pure T'ien-li (perfect virtue) without admixture of "selfish desires". The sage is born like everyone else. He has no special knowledge other than the capacity for knowing the good which every man and woman has. He does not necessarily know, by "innate endowment" and without the need of study, all the information pertaining to the rites, music, systems and institutions.³⁰ Indeed, it is not even necessary that the sage should study all things, and be prepared in advance for every kind of situation. Even Confucius, Yang-ming pointed out, had to ask questions on rites and ceremonials when he went inside the grand temple.³¹ Thus, in a sense, the sage is an "improvisor": he responds to the needs of the times, learning to do so as the needs arise. Neither is it necessary that the sage should be impeccable. Citing the famous formula of the doctrine of the sages which was supposedly transmitted by Yao to Shun, Yang-ming said:

If Yao and Shun really considered themselves as faultless, they would not be sages. The advice they gave to each other was, "Man's hsin is prone

to error; but the Tao-hsin is subtle. Keep always to the Mean; practise discernment and single-mindedness". Since they themselves regarded that the man's mind is prone to error, it shows that their own minds were also prone to faults. Only because they were always wary, were they able to hold fast to the Mean and avoid transgressions.³²

To learn to be a sage, is therefore simply to preserve and cultivate T'ien-li--that inborn power of goodness within us, or liang-chih (literally, knowledge of the good) as it will be called--and, by so doing, eliminate selfish desires. Sagehood is a quality which is somehow inborn, since every man's nature or mind-and-heart is originally full of goodness. To become a sage is simply to recover our original innocence, to take over complete possession of ourselves by re-capturing our pristine state of mind-and-heart.

Yang-ming was fond of comparing the mind-and-heart (hsin) of the sage to a bright mirror,³³ which is endowed with the power of reflecting all things as they come. By itself, it does not engage in either "activity" or "tranquillity". It merely responds to all events, without allowing anything to tarnish it, without retaining any of the images. Thus, "the emotions of the sage are in accord with all things and yet of himself he has no emotions."³⁴

The work of striving after sagehood resembles therefore that of polishing the mirror, or rather, of the mirror polishing itself. For while "the mind-and-heart of the sage cannot tolerate the least particle of dust and has naturally no need of polishing, the mind-and-heart of the average man... resembles a spotted and dirty mirror, which needs thorough polishing, to have all its dust and dirt removed. Then will the tiniest speck of dust become visible, and only a light stroke will wipe it away, without [anyone] having to spend much energy."³⁵

Yang-ming placed much emphasis on the need of "polishing the mirror". This image expressed for him the effort of removing selfish desires and of developing .. T'ien-li (perfect virtue) in the mind-and-heart (hsin). He described

not attain the goal sought after in his actions, let him examine himself".⁴¹ And then, with characteristic directness, and employing also the technique of "shock" so well developed by Ch'an Buddhist Masters, he explained the task of "establishing sincerity" in the following words:

Recently, whenever I discussed learning with friends, I spoke only of two words, "establishing sincerity" (li-ch'eng 立誠). As in killing a man, the knife ought to be placed on the throat, so in studying, efforts should be made to enter the fine points of hsin. Then would study naturally become earnest and solid, and radiate brightness, and even if selfish desires sprout up, they will disappear in the same way as a few flakes of snow melt upon a fiercely burning stove.⁴²

Yang-ming developed his doctrine of sagehood especially in his conversations with Ts'ai Tsung-tui 蔡宗兌 [Ts'ai Hsi-yüan 蔡希淵] and others. Ts'ai had agreed that one can learn to be a sage. But he could not understand why such different people, as Confucius, Po-yi and Yi-yin should all be considered sages.⁴³ In other words, he had such a high ideal of sagehood, and of Confucius the sage par excellence, that he could not understand how other men, in his view inferior in character to Confucius, should also be venerated as sages. Yang-ming replied by comparing the work of attaining sagehood to that of refining gold. When a man has completely identified his mind with perfect virtue or "principle of Heaven", the state of perfection he has achieved can be likened to that of pure gold, which is no longer mixed with copper or lead. Men, however, differ in capacity (ts'ai), just as gold pieces may differ in weight. But the purity of gold is decided on the ground of its perfection in quality, not quantity.⁴⁴

Therefore, even an ordinary person who is willing to learn to have his mind become completely identified with perfect virtue can also become a sage, just as a piece of gold weighing one tael is

inferior in quantity, but not [necessarily] in quality, to another piece weighing 10,000 yi 斤. ⁴⁵
 This is why [we] say, "Every man can become Yao and Shun". ⁴⁶

Yang-ming went on to explain that some men are born with a greater capacity for sagehood, and can practise virtue naturally and with great ease, whereas others are obliged to make greater effort to learn how to do so. Those who are less "talented" must make one hundred efforts where others need make only one, and one thousand efforts where others need only make ten. But they can all achieve the same kind of success. He then criticised the scholars who regarded sagehood as something determined by "knowledge and ability". Thinking that a sage must know all and be able to do all, they aim at encompassing all the knowledge and ability which they attribute to sages, and so devote themselves to acquiring "extensive knowledge" instead of to the only thing necessary--developing in themselves T'ien-li (perfect virtue). In the end, as they become more and more learned, they also become more and more selfish, more and more estranged from this T'ien-li itself. It is like a person who puts lead, brass and iron into gold, so as to increase its weight in quantity, thus lowering its purity of quality, until it is no longer fit to be called gold. ⁴⁷

Yang-ming made the ideal of sagehood possible of achievement, accessible to all men. This made a strong impression on his disciples. On two separate occasions, two of his disciples told him that they discovered that all the people walking in the streets were sages. Yang-ming took it calmly, remarking that this was just a natural fact. ⁴⁸ However, while he believed in the universal capacity for sagehood, he was careful to see to it, that none of his disciples assume the artificial "bearings" of a sage. To those who complained to him, that many did not listen to their teachings, he said: "You assumed the bearing of a sage, and so scared people away. How could you succeed in lecturing to people? You must become like one of the people of ordinary intelligence. Then you can discuss learning (hsüeh) with them." ⁴⁹

Unity of Knowledge and Action

The proposition, that "the source of all virtue, perfection, and moral principles lies in hsin", laid the foundation for Yang-ming's affirmation of the universal capacity for acquiring wisdom. It provides also the basis for his practical doctrine, his method, since hsin is capable of determining itself through a process of knowledge which involves experience and action. This will be clarified later on by Yang-ming's adoption of the term liang-chih--literally, good knowledge, or rather, knowledge of the good--as the basis of both his thought and method. To act, therefore, was to become for Yang-ming, to "extend and develop our knowledge of the good".

From the beginning, or at least, ever since the enlightenment of 1508, Yang-ming understood knowledge, chih 知 as being primarily moral knowledge--the personal, moral judgement. To know, therefore, is especially to know the principle of this or that moral act. On the other hand, the word "action", hsing 行 does not simply designate any movement whatsoever, but only that by which one acts in conformity to his "knowledge of the good". In other words, just as true knowledge is always knowledge of virtue, true action should always be virtuous action. "The Unity of Knowledge and Action" is therefore primarily a moral ideal rather than a principle of epistemology.

Yang-ming began teaching "the unity of knowledge and action" in 1509, the year following his enlightenment. He was still living then in Kweichow, the place of his exile, and had been befriended by Hsi Shu, Assistant Superintendent of Education, who asked him about the similarities and differences between the teachings of Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan. Refraining from giving direct answers, Yang-ming explained to Hsi instead his own recent discoveries. He spoke of the relationship between knowledge and action, proving his points by quoting the Five Classics and the ancient philosophers. Hsi finally understood and said, "The teaching of the sages has become clear again [for me] today. The similarities between Chu [Hsi] and Lu [Chiu-yüan] show that each had his insights as well as his

weaknesses. Instead of resorting to argumentation, it is better to seek for answers in my own [human] nature. Then I shall naturally understand." He ordered the repair of the Kwei-yang 貴陽 Academy, and, together with Mao Hsien 毛憲 the Vice-Commissioner, led the students of Kwei-yang in paying respects to Yang-ming as their teacher.⁵⁰

In another conversation with his disciple Hsü Ai, Yang-ming was to outline his ideas on the unity of knowledge and action. Hsü had pointed out that there are people who know they ought to serve their parents with filial piety but do not put this knowledge to practice, which shows a clear distinction between knowledge and action.⁵¹ Yang-ming answered that, in such a case, knowledge and action are being separated from each other by selfish desires, and thus are no longer knowledge and action "as they ought to be",⁵² In his own opinion, however, there have never been people who "know" but do not "act". Those who seem to know but do not act simply do not know.

Seeing beauty pertains to knowledge, while loving it pertains to action.⁵³ However, beauty is no sooner seen than loved. One does not first see it and then make up his mind to love it....

This is like saying that such a man knows filial piety.... [or] fraternal respect. This must be due to his already having practised filial piety and fraternal respect.... This is also like the knowledge of pain. One can only know pain after having experienced it.⁵⁴

Interestingly, Yang-ming illustrates the unity of moral knowledge and moral action by giving examples taken from the experience of sense perception which provokes an immediate and instinctive desire--or sometimes, aversion--for the objects perceived. He made no distinction between knowledge and the broader human consciousness. For him, the cycle of reflection begins with a more passive activity, that is, with sensation, and proceeds to a reflective, moral

knowledge, involving choice or action. Thus, where pre-reflective or sense knowledge is by nature "knowledge in action", so too moral knowledge--reflective or pre-reflective--should be one with action.⁵⁵ Yang-ming knew, of course, that the perfect unity of moral knowledge and moral action is only a reality in the ideal man, the sage, who acts spontaneously according to his deep moral convictions, which have become to him, like second nature. Such a man acts always according to his originally good nature, practising all virtues instinctively. Thus, Yang-ming expounded his teaching of the unity of knowledge and action, by referring almost accidentally to the unity which must exist in pre-reflective knowledge, for the sake of holding up a moral ideal to be achieved. For this reason, he also said that "knowledge is the direction for action, and action is the effort of knowledge".⁵⁶ "Knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the completion of knowledge".⁵⁷

To justify his methodology, Yang-ming also says:

People today distinguish between knowledge and action and pursue them separately, believing that one must know before he can act.... They say that [they will wait] till they truly know before putting their knowledge into practice. Consequently, to the end of their lives, they will never act and also will never know. This doctrine of knowledge first and action later is not a small sickness.... My present advocacy of the unity of knowledge and action is [made] precisely as medicine for that sickness...⁵⁸

This is certainly the language of a prophet, seeking to arouse the moral conscience of his fellow countrymen to the recognition of certain ethical ideals. For Yang-ming, indeed, the "return to hsin" can only mean going back to the original source of both knowledge and action, to that power which is productive of all moral goodness. As he put it: "If one understands my meaning [and purpose]

there is no harm in saying that [knowledge and action] are two things, since they will still be only one in reality. If one does not understand my meaning, even if he says [knowledge and action] only make up one thing, it will still be useless, like idle gossip".⁵⁹

The teaching of the unity of knowledge and action also seeks to reform and rectify men's characters by going right to the heart of their troubles: to their thoughts and intentions. To his disciple Huang Chih 黃直, Yang-ming explained that those people who separate knowledge and action into two things do not make any effort to remove their evil thoughts and intentions so long as these remain as such, and have not been translated into "action". On his part, however, he advocates the unity of knowledge and action precisely so that people may understand that "when a thought is aroused, there is already action. If there is anything evil there..., one must overcome it at once. One must go to the root and the bottom of [things] and not allow the evil thought [or intention] to lie latent in one's chest. This is the basic purpose of my doctrine."⁶⁰

All his life, Yang-ming would never get tired of speaking of this "unity of knowledge and action." He discussed it in his letter to Ku Lin, saying that "where knowledge is genuine and earnest, it is also action, and where action is intelligent and discerning, it is knowledge."⁶¹ He kept repeating that a true understanding of this unity between knowledge and action would lead a disciple of the Confucian Way to seek for the source and principle of all perfection and goodness in hsin--the mind-and-heart.⁶² In a long letter written in 1526, he took up the subject again, in response to questions posed by a friend, saying:

Knowledge and action are really two words describing the same, one effort. This one effort requires these two words in order to be explained completely. If one sees clearly the essential point of departure, he would know this is only one, and that though [knowledge] and [action] may be described as two activities, they really remain one effort.⁶³

Sitting in Meditation

The teaching on the "Unity of Knowledge and Action" sets forth an ideal for both knowledge and action, foreshadowing a method to be developed for its attainment. Ever since his enlightenment of 1508, Yang-ming spoke frequently of preserving and developing "the principle of Heaven" or perfect virtue, and of eliminating selfish desires. These are practical goals, of the ascetic and moral order. Before 1520 or 1521, however, he had as yet no "universal method" to offer. He could only encourage his disciples to practise "quiet sitting" (ching-tso). This is a technique for cultivating one's character and personality. It is not the all-efficacious method. Nevertheless, Yang-ming frequently practised sitting in meditation, and advised others to do the same. Many of the poems he wrote before 1520 and even after manifest his deep love of silent contemplation. In one of them, probably written in 1514, he had this to say:

If our Master Confucius desired to remain
silent and wordless,⁶⁴

We ought to believe that wordlessness expresses
great joy.

When one wakes to the hidden meaning of the
hawk flying and the fish leaping⁶⁵

One knows that moral striving does not lie in
expounding texts.

Self-cultivation and mind-culture are not Ch'an
practices.⁶⁶

In attempting to correct errors, one may go to
the opposite.

.....

Under the influence of hearsay and rumour,

True learning has long been interrupted.

I need to sit in silence in the woods,

Green mountains understand well my unspoken
words.⁶⁷

In the Buddhist and Taoist schools, meditation was made for the sake of gaining inner calm, of reaching pure consciousness, of reducing the body to "dry wood" and the mind to "dead ashes".⁶⁸ Yang-ming, however, promoted this exercise for a different goal. It is only a "remedy" for the lack of study, to help toward the recollection of the mind. "If, during the day, our work and effort begin to

annoy us, we can practise sitting in meditation. [And] if, we feel lazy and uninclined to read, we should [go against this inclination] and read. This is like applying a remedy according to the disease."⁶⁹ It is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

Yang-ming regarded sitting in meditation especially as a good method by which the beginner may acquire enough peace and strength to discern and eliminate his selfish desires. This, he said, resembled the work of getting rid of bandits. One must be determined to wipe them out completely.⁷⁰ Before doing so, the unruly desires, whether for sex, money or fame, must first be discovered. The root of the trouble must be pulled up and thrown away so that it will never grow again. "Act at all times like a cat trying to catch a mouse, with its eyes intent on watching and its ears intent on listening. As soon as a [bad] thought takes rise, overcome it at once, as decisively as [a blacksmith] removes a nail or saws iron."⁷¹ It is not, he said, the concern of the beginner to abandon all thought and reflection. He must first examine himself and overcome his unruly desires. He must think of sincerity. He must think of the "principle of Heaven". When he has acquired, in his hsin, the pure "principle of Heaven", he will then also have attained a state of emptiness or void regarding thoughts and reflections.⁷²

In 1519, when a disciple expressed disappointment in the effort of "putting a stop" to thoughts and deliberations through meditation, Yang-ming explained that thought is never, and can never be, absent. There is, after all, no tranquillity without activity as there is no activity without tranquillity. What is aimed at, rather, should be the elimination of selfish desires. And then, nature can be calm whether in a state of activity or tranquillity. When being reminded of Ch'eng Yi's praise of a man who was able to sit absorbed in meditation, and become completely unaware of the doings of his son who was near him, Yang-ming merely remarked that Ch'eng was probably speaking in jest and mocking the man. Distractions, after all, will always be felt. What is important is not to be misled by them.⁷³

When one of his disciples, Liu Chün-liang 劉君亮, expressed a desire to retire into the mountains for the sake of giving himself up to quiet sitting, Yang-ming replied that such a course of action can be recommended if his motive had been to cultivate himself in a quiet place. But the same practice would not be helpful if Liu was seeking tranquillity for its own sake, and through disgust with the affairs of the world and of society.⁷⁴ And so, if sincerity of intention can be cultivated in meditation, it is also used as a criterion to judge the practice of meditation itself and the appropriateness of such a move.

All his life, Yang-ming himself yearned for silence and quiet. As far as he could, he also gave himself and his disciples every opportunity of retiring to a quiet place, or at least of spending some days or weeks, from time to time, in such places. But just as he had repented of his retirement in Yang-ming Cave in 1504 when he had achieved a certain measure of success in acquiring "parapsychic" powers, recognising this to be merely the result of "playing with [his] mental powers"⁷⁵, so he would always be wary of practising quiet sitting or meditation for its own sake. He wanted, both through quiet sitting and through the activities of daily life, to attain a fusion of the "inner" and "outer" realms of his mind and spirit, or rather, he could not see these realms divided into two. For him, life is thoroughly one, and the "inner" permeates the "outer." His goal was not self-perfection for its own sake. It was to be a Confucian sage, a man who unites "kingliness without" with "sageliness within", a man who "manifests" his "illustrious virtue" not only by cultivating himself, but also by allowing self-cultivation to overflow into the fulfilment of responsibilities towards the family, the state and the world.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, sitting in meditation, while geared to action, remains, in itself, a technique. It cannot take the place of an all-embracing, universal method. It contains, besides, the risk of making its practitioners prefer silence and contemplation to action. From the beginning, Yang-ming was well aware of these risks and dangers. Writing in 1511 to Wang Chün 汪俊 [Wang Shih-t'an 汪石潭] on the subject of Chu Hsi's commentary on the Doctrine of

the Mean, Yang-ming had objected to the work of self-cultivation being divided into two sections, with a special time set aside for quiet and passivity. He said:

I would recommend that you pay more attention to activity, without allowing such effort to suffer any interruption. When activity is not without harmony, passivity[or tranquillity] will not lack equilibrium.⁷⁷

Already, in 1515, soon after his departure from Ch'u-yang, Yang-ming issued a warning regarding the danger of being turned away from a life of action by the practice of contemplation.⁷⁸ In later life, he described clearly his own shift from an emphasis on quiet sitting and contemplation to a different technique, that of "extending liang-chih", which can be achieved either through quiet reflection, in or out of meditation, or through action itself.

When I was in Ch'u-yang, I saw that my students were mostly concerned with intellectual knowledge, and spent time debating on similarities and differences of meanings of words, which did them no good. For a while, they realised the situation better, and achieved some immediate results. But in time they gradually developed a fondness for silence and a disgust for action, thus falling into the pitfall of becoming lifeless like dry wood. There are people who advocate abstruse and subtle theories to startle others. But I expound now only the doctrine of extending liang-chih. If liang-chih is clear, one can either try to attain truth through quiet reflection, or through efforts made in the midst of activity.⁷⁹

The universal method of "extending liang-chih" was not, however, easily discovered. Yang-ming had to suffer further tribulations, before the initial experience of enlightenment which he received in 1508 could yield its full result. This fuller discovery will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Notes to Chapter III

- 1 WWKC 1: 79b, [Chan, Instructions, 66]. The English translation is my own.
- 2 Allusion to Chuang-tzu, 26 "Wai-wu p'ien", 外物篇, SPPY ed., 9.6a; Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 302. See also Hsieh Lin-yün's 謝靈運 (385-433) "Yu chu tao-jen pien-tsung lun" [Discussion of Essentials with Some Venerable Gentlemen] in Tao-hsüan's 道宣 (596-66) ed., Kuang hung-ming chi, SPPY ed., 20: 9b-10a. In discussing the question of gradual and sudden enlightenment, he alluded to the fishing rod and the rabbit's traces as representing the Confucian Classics and the Buddhist Tripitaka both of which may help one to attain enlightenment. [The doctrine of sudden enlightenment discussed therein is attributed to Hsieh's friend, the monk Tao-sheng 道生 (c. 360-434)].
- 3 "Wu-ching yi-shuo hsü" 五經臆說序 [Preface to "My Personal Explanations of the Five Classics"], WWKC 22: 668b. The expression "former worthies" (hsien-hsien 先賢) obviously refers to scholars like Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi.
- 4 HSCC 22.5a.
- 5 See Yamada Jun, Yōmeigaku seigi, (Tokyo: 1942), 64. Regarded in this light, Yang-ming's enlightenment may be compared to René Descartes' (1596-1650) experience of 1619, when he decided to make a clean sweep of the confusing ideas of other philosophers, and to bring new clarity and system into the sciences by relying upon the pristine powers of his native intelligence. This is given in his "Private Thoughts", and from Discourse on the Method, parts 1 and 2.
- 6 WWKC 1: 79, Chan, Instructions, 66. Hiroyuki Iki indicates the importance Yang-ming placed on a correct "starting-point" in his article, "Wang Yang-ming's Doctrine of Innate Knowledge of the Good," PEW XI (1961-2), 27.
- 7 See Legge, Classics, v.6, 1. Tung Chung-shu had also said much on this first line of the Spring-Autumn Annals, particularly regarding the word yuan 元 (first, origin, source). See Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu, SPPY ed., 4: 1a. Both Tung and Yang-ming manifest the characteristically Chinese "correlative" thinking by their manners of reading different levels of meanings into words.
- 8 "Wu-ching yi-shuo shih-san t'iao" 五經臆說 十三條 [Thirteen Items from the "Personal Explanations of the Five Classics"], WWKC 26: 742b. These were salvaged by Ch'ien Te-hung from Yang-ming, who had committed the rest of the manuscript to fire, saying that the doctrine of liang-chih hardly needed the support of Classical proofs. See Ch'ien's note, attached to the beginning of the "Thirteen Items": WWKC 26: 742a. In comparing hsin to jen, Yang-ming calls to mind the teaching of Ch'eng Hao concerning the life-giving power of jen. See Ch. I, n. 54.

9 Great Learning, Ch. 1. Legge, Classics, v.1, 356. Thus, Yang-ming developed further a concern for the "inner" world of human character and personality which Confucius had begun. See Hsü Fu-kuan, Chung-kuo jen-hsing lun shih [History of the Chinese Philosophy of Human Nature], Hsien-Ch'in-p'ien, [pre-Ch'in period], (Taichung: 1963), 65-74. [I disagree, however, with Hsü's view that Confucius was an agnostic in his attitude regarding the existence of the Supreme Being or God, and that Chu Hsi and others had sought to continue this tradition].

Yang-ming's objective has also been described as "the development of a [philosophical] system centred on the transcendent True Self [i.e., the "human ultimate" (jen-chi 人極)] which stands in correlation to the "cosmic ultimate" (T'ai-chi 太極) [also called Heaven-and-Earth]. See Yasuoka Masaatsu, Ō Yōmei Kenkyū, [A Study of Wang Yang-ming] (Tokyo: 1967), 240.

10 "Wu-ching yi-shuo shih-san t'iao," WWKC 26: 745a Yang-ming was fond of comparing hsin to the clear sky or to the bright sun which may be hidden by dark clouds. See also WWKC 3: 146a-b; 20: 627b. This reminds one of Plato's parable of the dark cave of ignorance with an opening to daylight, through which men ascend till they reach the Form of the Good, represented by the source of light. In Yang-ming's case, the implication would be that light is only hidden by the darkness, and the action required is less to "ascend" to light, than to "dispel" the darkness. See Republic, Book VII.

11 See also Ch. 1, pp. 18-19.

12 See also Ch. 1, pp. 14-15; 18-19.

13 WWKC 1: 56a; Chan, Instructions, 6-7. The reference is to Chu's Ta-hsueh chang-chü, 1a-b.

14 WWKC 1: 56b-57a; Chan, Instructions, 7. Wang and Hsü were discussing the passage from the Great Learning, ch. 1, regarding the "highest good", which Chu Hsi considered as belonging to the text containing Confucius' words as noted down by his disciple Tseng Shen. See Legge, Classics, v.1, 356.

15 WWKC 1: 56b; Chan, Instructions, 7. Although it has been pointed out by P.C. Hsü, Okada Takehiko and others that Chu Hsi also gave much importance to the development of hsin, there is no doubt that he would not agree with Yang-ming's "reflexive" method of doing so by regarding hsin itself as the direct agent of its own perfection. In his "Kuan-hsin shuo" 觀心說 [On the Contemplation of hsin] CWWC 67: 20a-21b [Eng. tr. Chan, Source Book, 602-604], Chu clearly declared that one may contemplate things (wu) with hsin, in order to acquire li and so perfect hsin too, but cannot contemplate hsin itself with hsin. Thus he sought to retain a strict difference between the "subjective" (chu 主) and the "objective" (k'o 客), saying that the investigation of li is Confucian while the development of hsin by hsin is Buddhist.

- 16 WWKC 1: 57a; Chan, Instructions, 8.
- 17 Li-chi cheng-yi, "Chi-yi" 祭義, SPPY ed., 47: 5b; Legge, Li Chi (Oxford: Clarendon, 1885; reprinted in New York: 1967), 215-6.
- 18 WWKC 1: 57b; Chan, Instructions, 8.
- 19 Letter to Wang Tao 王道 [Wang Ch'un-fu 王純甫 1487-1547] WWKC 4: 178b-179a. In Yang-ming ch'uan-hsin lu [Record of Yang-ming's Transmission of the Truth] Liu Tsung-chou praised Yang-ming's recovery of hsin as an event which achieved as much as Mencius' teaching on the original goodness of human nature. See Liu-tzu ch'uan-shu yi-p'ien [Supplement to the Complete Works of Liu Tsung-chou] 11: 4a. Yang-ming rejects an entitative interpretation of reality in favour of an ontological interpretation.
- 20 The Five Despots were Dukes Huan of Ch'i 齊桓公 (r. 685-643 BC) Wen of Chin 晉文公 (r. 636-628 BC) Mu of Ch'in 秦穆公 (r. 659-621 BC) Hsiang of Sung 宋襄公 (d. 637 BC) and King Chuang of Ch'u 楚莊王 (r. 613-589 BC). See Shih-chi, ESWS series, K'ai-ming ed., 40: 15-16; 5: 18-19; 40: 142.
- 21 WWKC 3: 155a; English translation adapted from Chan, Instructions, 252. See T'ang Chun-i "Yang-ming hsüeh yü Chu-Lu yi-t'ung ch'ung-pien," [A Repeated Discussion Concerning the Similarities and Differences between Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy and that of Chu Hsi and of Lu Chiu-yüan], in Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao, VIII (August, 1968), 67.
- 22 WWKC 1: 60a; Chan, Instructions, 15. Yang-ming is referring here to Mencius. 2A 6. See Legge, Classics, v. 2, 201-2.
- 23 Letter to Ku Lin 顧璘 [Ku Tung-ch'iao 顧東橋 1476-1545] WWKC 2: 90a; Chan, Instructions, 94.
- 24 Mencius used the word li 理 several times without attaching to it much philosophical meaning. See Mencius 5B: 1, 6A: 7, 7B: 19. See also Tai Chen, Meng-tzu tzu-yi su-cheng in Tai Tung-yüan te che-hsüeh, op. cit., 40-72. Tai's book was an attempt to find the intended meanings of Mencius, which he considered to have been obscured by Sung-Ming philosophers. See also Chan, "The Evolution of the Neo-Confucian Concept li", op. cit., 50.
- 25 The feelings of commiseration, shame and modesty, together with the moral intuition, are the beginnings of the virtues of jen (humanity), yi (righteousness), li (propriety), and chih 智 (wisdom). See Mencius 2A, 6; Legge, Classics, v.2, 203.

26 See Mencius 6A: 1-6 [Legge, Classics, v.2, 394-403] for Mencius' debate with Kao-tzu, regarding whether righteousness is a virtue external to the self. Mencius spoke of the "feelings" (hsin 心) of commiseration, shame, respect, and the ability to distinguish right and wrong as the "four beginnings of virtue". Virtue, of course refers to humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom.

27 Letter to Ku Lin, op.cit., WWKC 2: 90a-b; Chan, Instructions 95. Note the explicit declaration that the teaching of hsin chi li implies an acceptance of the "unity of knowledge and action". It is interesting that Yang-ming should criticise Chu Hsi's teaching of hsin and li as that which makes of righteousness an external thing. He must have known that Chu had criticised Lu Chiu-yüan's identification of hsing and hsin as a return to Kao-tzu's view that "what is inborn is called nature" (Mencius 6A: 3) See CTYL 124: 10b; 126: 11b. Chu Hsi implied in this criticism that Lu's position was close to that of Ch'an Buddhism.

28 Wing-tsit Chan, "Chinese Theory and Practice with Specific Reference to Humanism" in The Chinese Mind, Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture, ed. by Charles A. Moore, (Honolulu: 1967), 82. On this point, Wang was in agreement with Chu Hsi.

29 In "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," International Philosophical Quarterly V, (1965), 621, Jung Hwa Yol says of this "unity of knowledge and action": "Not withdrawal, but involvement, is the essence of Wang's philosophy... The mind is of centrifugal character: it extends or directs itself towards the world." This excellent article, however, concentrates upon those aspects of Yang-ming's philosophy which deal with knowledge and intentionality, and says little of the underlying, practical aim.

30 WWKC 3: 134b; Chan, Instruction, 201. See also Shimada Kenji, "Yōmei gaku ni okeru ningen-gainen jiga ishiki no tenkai to ki igi" [The Evolution of the Notion of 'the Human' and of the Consciousness of Self in the Yang-ming School and the Meaning of this Evolution] Tōyōshi kenkyū VIII, (July 1943), 155-156.

31 Analects 3: 15; Legge, Classics, v.1, 160.

32 Letter to His Younger Brothers, (1518), WWKC 4: 189b; Shimada Kenji, "Yōmei gaku ni okeru," op.cit., 156-7.

33 WWKC 1: 65a; 2: 112b-113a; Chan, Instructions, 27; 148-9. The parable recalls to mind the gathas of the 7th cent. Ch'an monks Shen-hsiu 神秀 and Hui-neng 慧能 recorded in Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching, TSD No. 2007; XLVIII, 337-8. Eng. tr., in Yampolsky op.cit., 130-132; Wing-tsit Chan, Platform Scripture 35-41. Yang-ming prefers the position of Shen-hsiu to that of Hui-neng.

- 34 WWKC 2: 112b; Chan, Instructions, 148. The reference is to Ch'eng Hao, Wen-chi, 3: 1a, but Yang-ming was quoting from Lu's letter.
- 35 Letter to Huang Wan and Ying Liang 應良 . [Ying Yuan-chung 應原忠] (1511) WWKC 4: 171b. By using the image, Yang-ming was continuing a long tradition.
- 36 Poem written as Farewell to his Students Wang Chia-hsiu 王嘉秀 and Hsiao Ch'i 蕭琦 , WWKC 20: 600a.
- 37 WWKC 1: 71b; Chan, Instructions, 45. Wing-tsit Chan remarks that this is the only independent saying by a disciple of Wang's which is recorded in the Ch'uan-hsi lu.
- 38 WWKC 1: 60a; Chan, Instructions, 14-15.
- 39 WWKC 1: 71b; Chan, Instructions, 44. In an essay addressed to Wang Chia-hsiu ["Shu Wang Chia-hsiu ch'ing-yi chüan" 書王嘉秀請益卷], Yang-ming develops at some length the work of self-mastery, saying that its aim is complete selflessness. See WWKC 8: 262.
- 40 Mencius 4A, 4; Legge, Classics, v.2, 294.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Letter to Huang Wan (1513), WWKC 4: 176a "Study" refers to moral cultivation. Liu Tsung-chou remarked that Yang-ming gave a certain priority to "Establishing sincerity", even over the doctrine of liang-chih. See Yang-ming ch'uan-hsin lu 1: 3b.
- 43 According to Shih-chi, Po-yi 伯夷 was the scion of a feudal house who chose to live in retirement as a hermit, in order to yield his position to a younger brother. He opposed the expedition of King Wu of Chou 周武王 against the Shang dynasty and starved to death after the King's victory through his refusal to live on the grains of Chou. Yi-yin 伊尹 belonged to an earlier period. He was a minister of King T'ang 湯, founder of the dynasty Shang, whom he helped in the task of bringing peace and prosperity to the country. The fact that both Po-yi, the hermit, and Yi-yin, the minister, were venerated as sages had always given room in Confucian doctrine to the teaching that both the eremitical and active lives could lead to sagehood, with the choice of one or the other being dependent on varying needs and circumstances. Confucius, however, was the sage who sought for an opportunity of active service but was obliged to live in retirement. For this reason, he was considered as greater than Po-yi and Yi-yin. See Mencius 6B: 1, [Legge, v.2, 369-372;] Shih-chi 61: 179a-b; 3: 11a-b.

- 44 WWKC 1: 77b; Chan, Instructions, 60. For the importance of this passage and of what follows, to Yang-ming's doctrine of sagehood, see Takahashi Kōji, "Yōmei Kyogaku no mujun-sejinkan chūshin to shite," [The Contradiction in Yang-ming's Teaching: the Notion of Sagehood] Chūgoku Tetsugaku, III, (1965), 2. Takahashi also considers this doctrine as the natural consequence of the doctrine of the identity of hsin and li.
- 45 WWKC 1: 78a-80b; Chan, Instructions, 61-69. To a disciple who was not so happy with the "allotment" of 10,000 yi of gold to Yao and Shun, and only 9,000 yi to Confucius, Yang-ming answered that the comparison with gold should not be taken too seriously. Sagehood, after all, was a transcendent state, and cannot be weighed quantitatively. While natural endowments differ from person to person, all can attain a certain capacity of self-realisation, developing their given talents according as these are big or small.
- 46 WWKC 1: 77b-78a; Chan, Instructions, 61; see also Takahashi, op.cit., 2-4. Yamada Jun, op.cit., 85-87.
- 47 WWKC 1: 78a-80b; Chan, Instructions, 239-240.
- 48 Ibid. Professor de Bary compares the development of Yang-ming's ideal of sagehood to the proclamation of universal Buddhahood through the Mahāyāna in China, Japan and Korea centuries earlier, and especially to those forms which emphasised the attainment of Buddhahood in this life and this body. He points out the difference between Yang-ming's ideal and that of Mahāyāna Buddhism; where the latter identified life with suffering and illusion, the former consistently exalts life, creativity and the potentialities of the human individual. See Self and Society, Introduction, 14-15.
- 49 WWKC 3: 151a; Chan, Instructions, 240.
- 50 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 910a-b.
- 51 WWKC 1: 57b; Chan, Instructions, 10. For the teaching on knowledge and action in earlier Chinese philosophy, see Wing-tsit Chan, "Chinese Theory and Practice," op.cit., 84-85.
- 52 Literally, "in their pen-t'i"
- 53 Referring to a sentence in the Great Learning, ch.6; Legge, v.1, 366, which describes how a gentleman ought to make his intention sincere. This shows that already then, (1512 or 1513), Yang-ming was considering the extension of knowledge as an effort of making one's intention sincere. See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Yang-ming chih-hsing ho-yi chih chiao [Wang Yang-ming's Teaching on the Unity of Knowledge and Action], (1926) Yin-ping shih wen-chi, op.cit., 43: 27-28, n.2. In Liang's words. "The entire Complete Works of Wang Yang-ming (WWKC) serves merely as a footnote to the words [concerning the unity of knowledge and action]". [See 43: 27].

- 54 WWKC 1:58a; Chan, Instructions, 10. Araki Kengo points out how Ku Hsien-ch'eng criticises Yang-ming for distinguishing intellectually between knowledge and action, only to conclude by saying that they are one. Ku considers this teaching self-contradictory. In Yang-ming's defence, I wish to say that he was merely using certain conceptual distinctions to indicate a deeper unity which is rooted in experience, for the sake of emphasising a fact of great ethical importance. See Araki's Bukkyō to Jukyō, 370-2.
- 55 Jung Hwa Yol, op.cit., 633. This article points out the closeness of Yang-ming's metaphysical positions to those of existential phenomenology. For the present, however, I am concentrating on the practical aspects of Yang-ming's proposition.
- 56 WWKC 1:58b; Chan, Instructions, 11.
- 57 Ibid. For a general discussion of the ethical aspects of this teaching, see also Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Yang-ming, 46-49. Ch'ien Mu, Yang-ming hst'eh shu-yao [Essentials of Yang-ming's Philosophy], (Taipei:1963), 57-60; Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Minmatsu no jugaku, [Wang Yang-ming and Late Ming Confucianism], (Tokyo: 1970), 57-59.
- 58 WWKC 1:58; Chan, Instructions, 11-12. Yamada Jun, op.cit., 98-112. Note that in this quote, Yang-ming referred to "people today" rather than to Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, although elsewhere [WWKC 3:153-154; Chan, Instructions, 249] he mentioned the danger inherent in the Ch'eng-Chu school's emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge.
- 59 WWKC 1:58-59; Chan, Instructions, 12. While Yang-ming's theory of the unity of knowledge and action allegedly bears the imprint of Ch'an Buddhist influence, by proclaiming a "unity" resembling that found in the unitary experience of pre-reflective knowledge or consciousness, Araki Kengō points out its difference from Ch'an teaching which regards Tao (ultimate reality) as belonging to a realm which transcends both knowledge and action. Araki cites the Buddhist monk Chu-hung 株宏 (1532-1612) who said that the concern over knowledge and action was basically Confucian and that Yang-ming did not understand Ch'an tenets in any depth, since, as a soldier, he accepted killing as a possibly good act. See Bukkyō to Jukyō, 389-391. For the Ch'an teaching on knowledge and action, see Wu-men kuan 19, TSD No.2005, XLVIII, 295; German tr. by Dumoulin, Der Pass ohne Tor, (Tokyo:1953), 31-32.
- 60 WWKC 3:134a-b; Chan, Instructions, 201.
- 61 WWKC 2:89b-90a; Chan, Instructions, 92-94.

- 62 Ibid.
- 63 WWKC 6: 215a.
- 64 Analects 22: 19, Legge, Classics, v.1, 326.
- 65 Book of Odes. "Wen-Wang chih shih" ; Legge Classics, v.4, 445. The Doctrine of the Mean, ch.12 makes reference to it. See Legge Classics, v.1, 392. The expression "hawk flying and fish leaping" represents the way of nature, which reveals the operations of the "principle of Heaven".
- 66 Yang-ming denies here that inner cultivation is a Ch'an Buddhist practice, and warns others from shunning this cultivation for fear of being contaminated by Buddhism.
- 67 This poem was written by Yang-ming on the occasion of the departure of Luan Tzu-jen 樂子仁, a friend of his. See WWKC 20: 605b.
- 68 Chuang-tzu ch. 2, SPPY ed., 1: 18a.
- 69 WWKC 1: 64b; Chan, Instructions, 26. Yang-ming's teaching of "quiet-sitting" was actually less "Buddhist" than that of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, whose emphasis on tranquillity as a means of recovering one's original goodness made such practice an essential part of their cultivation. Yang-ming, however, gave equal value to quiet-sitting and any other practice, particularly with his doctrine of "extending liang-chih." See Kusumoto Masatsugu, "Conflicts between the Thoughts of the Sung Dynasty and the Ming Dynasty", Philosophical Studies of Japan, op.cit., 54-57, who emphasised the "quietist" trend of Chu Hsi's philosophy in contrast to the more "dynamic" Yang-ming School. Later on, in seeking to correct the abuses of Yang-ming school's T'ai-chou branch, Nieh Pao and others after him would again emphasise quiet-sitting and tranquillity and thus effect a certain return to Chu's teachings. See also Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai jugaku shisō no kenkyū; [A Study of the Confucian Thought of the Sung and Ming Periods], (Chiba-ken: 1963), 173-184, 327. Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 21, 173-4, 256-8.
- 70 WWKC 1: 68a; Chan, Instructions, 35. Note that Yang-ming would also comment on the relative easiness of the work of suppressing bandits when compared to that of removing "the bandits of hsin". See Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 60-62.
- 71 WWKC 1: 68a; Chan, Instructions, 35. The example given of the cat was taken from Ch'an sources. Chu Hsi had made reference to it also in teaching the need of concentration. See WWKC 71: 7a-b. Yet Ch'en Chien argued that Chu merely used Ch'an parables to teach Confucian truths whereas Yang-ming, like Lu Chiu-yüan, was a "Buddhist". Yang-ming, Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien 7: 15b-16a. For the Ch'an source, see Wu-ming (fl. 1189) Lien-teng hui-yao, [Essentials of

the Combined Lamps] 15, Zokuzōkyō 1st coll., pt. 2, B, case 9, 339b. Even after he had begun teaching the doctrine of liang-chih Yang-ming continued to insist on the need of discovering and eliminating selfish desires through the practice of sitting in meditation. The fact that he developed the later doctrine did not imply his discarding this practice, although he gave it less emphasis. WWKC 3: 144a-b; Chan, Instructions, 223-4.

72 WWKC 3: 144a-b; Chan, Instructions, 223-224.

73 WWKC 3: 130b; Chan, Instructions, 190-1. The incident concerning Ch'eng Yi is given in ECCS, Yi-shu, 3: 5a.

It must be kept in mind, of course, that Yang-ming was giving advice to specific disciples for their specific problems.

74 WWKC 3: 140a; Chan, Instructions, 214. See also Yang-ming's letter to Liu, in WWKC 5: 202.

75 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 32: 907. See also above, ch. II, p. 50.

76 WWKC 3: 130b, 141a; Chan, Instructions, 191, 216-7.

77 WWKC 4: 172b

78 See his essay addressed to Meng Yüan [Shu Meng Yüan chüan 書孟源卷], WWKC 8: 263b.

79 WWKC 3: 141a; Chan, Instructions, 217.

Chapter IV

THE CONTROVERSIES: KO-WU

Whenever [philosophical] teaching is given, there must be similarities and differences. It is not necessary for all to have the same opinions; that is the way to seek the same [truth].¹

Yang-ming realised that his own teachings--"the source and principle of all virtue and perfection lies in hsin", and "knowledge and action are one" clashed with the accepted teachings of Chu Hsi regarding ko-wu--the "investigation of things"--and chih-chih--the "extension of knowledge". Chu had spoken of such "investigation" and such "extension" as consisting of "developing hsin (mind-and-heart) to the utmost, knowing one's nature, and knowing Heaven". It is the first step to take in the pursuit of sagehood. He had said that "sincerity of the intention, rectification of hsin, and cultivation of the person" are equivalent to "keeping to one's hsin, nurturing one's nature, and serving Heaven" all of which follow the first step. He had also said that perfect wisdom and perfect humanity (jen) lie in "remaining single-minded regardless of whether one's life will be long or short".² Yang-ming, however, disagreed with such teaching, preferring to equate the "investigation of things" with the cultivation of T'ien-li, which means, for him, "abiding in the highest good".

Preliminary Discussions

In the famous conversation with Hsü Ai, Yang-ming explained that Chu Hsi made the mistake of reversing the proper order which should be observed in the work of study, requiring of the beginner what can be done only by the moral genius or expert. He considered rather becoming "single-minded", regardless of whether one's life is long or short, as the first step, equivalent to "making up one's mind" (li-hsin 立心).³ He admitted that it involves

painful and arduous labour, as is proper to all beginnings. He added: "Chu Hsi reversed the proper order [of things], so that the beginner has no place to start".⁴

Yang-ming declared also that he preferred to use the word ko as "rectifying" rather than "investigating" or "reaching", and the word wu as "affairs" (shih) rather than "things". For whereas "investigating or reaching things" implies a linear movement of the person who reaches out of himself to attain to the so-called "principles" (li) of things, "rectifying [oneself in the handling of] affairs" connotes a circular movement involving the dynamic activity of hsin, the mind-and-heart, engaged in perfecting and determining itself. Let us listen to his own words:

The master of the body (sheng) is the mind-and-heart (hsin). That which proceeds from the mind-and-heart is intention (yi). Intention-in-itself [literally, the "original substance" (pen-t'i) of intention] is knowledge. That to which intention is directed is affair (wu). For example, when the intention is directed to the service of one's parents, then such service is an "affair" [or action].... There is no li (virtue, moral principles), no wu (affair, action) outside of hsin (the mind-and-heart).⁵

Following this line of reasoning, Yang-ming concludes that the central moral teaching of both the Doctrine of the Mean and of the Great Learning lies in "seeking the sincerity of the intention", and this, in turn, is the meaning of ko-wu, called "investigation of things".⁶

Yang-ming objected to Chu Hsi's new arrangement of the text of the Great Learning, which put the section on the "investigation of things" before that on "making the intention sincere". For him, "making the intention sincere" is the principal message of this book, and the starting point of the entire task of study or personal cultivation. Chu's re-arrangement confused the order of importance as well as of precedence. He referred to it as the "infinitesimal

mistake in the beginning which led to an infinite mistake in the end".⁷ He remarked that Chu's effort to interpret the whole text in terms of reverence (ching) and of sincerity (ch'eng) was superfluous, like "drawing a snake and giving it feet".⁸ It would be much better if he had left the entire text intact without additions and without changes.

In a letter written in 1514, Yang-ming gave a thorough discourse on this question of the "investigation of things". He says that "sincerity of intention" is the essential principle and basis of learning, while the "investigation of things and the extension of knowledge are the results achieved by sincerity of intention". He also stated that Chu Hsi's teaching of "intention becoming sincere after exhausting the principles (li) of things", while not contradictory in itself, does not completely conform to the original meaning of the text of the Great Learning or of the Doctrine of the Mean. Unfortunately, this teaching became accepted by "later scholars", who "adhere to the added commentaries, and do not investigate deeply into the meaning of the Classics".⁹

Yang-ming attempted, for a long time, to accommodate Chu Hsi's teachings, by a process of re-interpretation, presenting what he considered to have been the "real meaning" of Chu Hsi's words, and appealing from a "misunderstood" Chu Hsi to the "real" one. Later on, he would take a further step, and move from an "immature" Chu Hsi to a "mature" Master, who, allegedly in his old age, reached virtually the same positions as did Yang-ming himself.

In his "Tzu-yang shu-yuan chi hsü" 紫陽書院集序 [Preface to the Collected Works on the Tzu-yang Academy], dated 1515, Yang-ming had tried to reconcile his teaching that "the source and principle of all virtue and perfections lies in the hsin" with Chu Hsi's famous "Rules for Instruction of Po-lu tung Academy".¹⁰ He claimed that his desire was to present a systematic methodology for the acquisition of virtue through learning. For him, this means

going from the roots to the branches, cultivating the mind-and-heart (hsin) and expressing this cultivation through the practice of such virtues as humanity and righteousness. He says that this was also the inner meaning of Chu's "Rules", which first set forth knowledge of the five moral relationships as the "essentials" of learning, and then prescribe for the students a graded programme of "study, inquiry, reflection and discernment", which, in turn, is followed by certain "main points" on practical moral behaviour in the management of affairs. He admits the danger which arises when Chu's words are taken in a detailed and fragmentary manner, adding that his own teaching is designed to clarify what Chu Hsi has not been able to explain completely. Thus, according to Yang-ming, hsin remains always as the object of "study, inquiry, reflection and discernment",¹¹ In other words, all efforts of learning or self-cultivation should be concentrated on the cultivation of man's hsin.

So long as Yang-ming kept his teaching on the "investigation of things" private, in letters and discussions with disciples and friends, he was able to avoid public controversy. The situation, however, changed in 1518, with his publication of the two works: Ta-hsueh ku-pen p'ang-chu 大學古本旁注 [Old Version of the Great Learning, with side commentaries], together with the preface he wrote for it three years before, and the Chu-tzu wan-nien ting-lun 朱子晚年定論 [Definitive Ideas of Chu Hsi, as developed in His later Life], also with his preface.¹² These works indicated his state of mind at the time. The first was an open assertion of views on the Great Learning which differed from Chu's, while the second work represented an effort to defend himself against possible accusations of "heterodoxy", by a strange appeal to Chu Hsi himself. The text of the Great Learning had been divided into small chapters, punctuated and explained by Chu Hsi, who had also altered the expression, ch'in-min 親民 (love the people) to that of hsin-min 新民 (renovate the people). This edited text, together with Chu's commentary, had gained wide acceptance and official approval during Yuan and

Ming to such a point that many forgot the original text was an integral part of the Book of Rites.¹³ Yang-ming, however, preferred the pre-Sung text as found in the T'ang edition of the Nine Classics, and had it published, together with his own "Preface", prepared three years earlier, as well as certain brief, side commentaries. Yang-ming's second publication consisted of a collection of excerpts from thirty-four letters, written by Chu to twenty-four persons, disciples and friends, and a selected passage from the writings of Wu Ch'eng 吳澄, [Wu Yu-ch'ing 吳幼清 1249-1333] who expressed regret at the degeneration of Chu's school of thought into a "school of exegesis", and declared his own "conversion" from a fondness for fragmentary knowledge to the cultivation of real virtue.¹⁴ To these Yang-ming added his own preface, written three years earlier. He claimed here that he had found proofs that Chu had reached, in his later life, the same conclusions as himself, on what the correct Way of the Confucian school was.¹⁵

These publications established Yang-ming's reputation as a thinker, and also stirred up a great deal of controversy, which was to last throughout the Ming and well into the Ch'ing dynasty.¹⁶ This controversy can best be seen through the letters and remarks exchanged between Yang-ming and Chan Jo-shui, Lo Ch'in-shun--a renowned scholar of Chu Hsi's school, Yang-ming's senior in age and official rank--and several other people. It revolves around the philosophical question called "the investigation of things", so much a part of the teaching of the Great Learning, and generally associated with the interpretations given to it by Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi. And it also calls to question the authority of Chu Hsi, till then unchallenged.

I propose to study the controversies aroused by Yang-ming's two publications, by discussing the debates between Yang-ming and his friends, concerning both the "investigation of things" and the authority of Chu Hsi, and then move on to a more thorough treatment of Yang-ming's entire attitude toward the Classics and the role of intellectual inquiry in the quest for wisdom and sagehood.

The Controversies

In the preface to the Ta-hsüeh ku-pen p'ang-chu, Yang-ming presented his reasons for the publication of the old version of the text. He began by saying that the essential teaching of the Great Learning, including that of the "investigation of things", lies in "making the intention sincere". This is also the meaning of "extending knowledge", which is achieved through the "rectification of hsin", as expressed in the "cultivation of self", which is nothing else than "manifesting illustrious virtue"--with reference to self--and "loving the people"--with reference to others. He thus internalises the whole quest for wisdom and sagehood. Self, mind-and-heart, intention, knowledge and even thing [in his case, referring to action] are all one and the same, are all different manifestations of the same reality, or better still, of the same process. Let us listen to his own words:

The work of making intention sincere lies in the investigation of things. To seek such sincerity means, at its utmost, to rest in the highest good. To rest in the highest good requires the extension of knowledge. The rectification of hsin is aimed at the recovery of the pen-t'i [of hsin]. The cultivation or perfection of self expresses the operation [of such rectification]. This is called manifesting virtue with reference to the self, and loving the people with reference to others.¹⁷

After this explanation, Yang-ming went on to say that, when the entire text of the Great Learning is taken as a whole, and meditated upon in an attitude of reverence, everything falls well into perspective and the meaning of the sages is clear. When, however, the text is divided into sections, and given a commentary, the doctrine transmitted by Confucius to Tseng-tzu and contained therein is lost. "Fragmentation [of knowledge], emptiness [of content] and falsehood" are the results. The highest good disappears from sight.¹⁸

ko-wu: "Whole" or "Parts"?

Lo Ch'in-shun was Yang-ming's elder by nine years and a known scholar of the time. He had studied Ch'an Buddhist writings and followed Buddhist practices, but had later discarded them in favour of the "orthodox" teachings of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi.¹⁹ He was a conscientious official and led a blameless life. After reading Yang-ming's two publications of 1518, which had been sent to him in 1520, he wrote to tell Yang-ming of his reactions.

Like Ch'an Jo-shui, Lo pointed out that Yang-ming advanced his own teaching on the "investigation of things" by taking the two words ko-wu out of context. He added that Yang-ming's interpretations appear to favour discarding the "investigation of things" outside of the mind-and-heart, for the sake of cultivating the mind-and-heart alone, which would result in a direct contradiction of the words of the text, and come dangerously close to the teachings of Ch'an Buddhism.²⁰

Yang-ming shared little common ground with Lo, other than the fact that he and Lo respected each other as eminent scholars and men of integrity, with the same high ideals of sagehood. Lo held to the distinctions Chu Hsi made between hsin (mind-and-heart) and hsing (nature). He did not share Yang-ming's optimistic estimate of the power of hsin. Instead of discussing with Lo the subtler questions, such as of knowledge and action, Yang-ming concentrated on explaining to Lo his own basic position regarding the "unity" and "wholeness" of the quest for sagehood. It is, he said, the whole personality that should be developed, not by "investigating" one thing after another in the manner of an assiduous scholar and exegete, but by cultivating hsin. Besides, he sought to make this explanation, not by a discourse on hsin, as he had done with his own disciples, but by beginning with li, which, together with hsing, (nature), made up Lo's basic starting-point, as it did Chu Hsi's earlier.

Yang-ming admitted to Lo that the words of the text of the Great Learning make mention not merely of making the intention sincere and of rectifying hsin, but also of the "investigation of things" and the "extension of knowledge", as "methods" of personal cultivation. However, he claims that this does not justify the separation of learning into two realms: "inner" and "outer". The four "methods"²¹ or procedural steps are in reality four aspects of the same effort, an effort directed at the integral development of the character of the whole man, by the cultivation of his personality at its deepest recesses--at its hsin. And then, propounding a thoroughly unitary philosophy for the sake of supporting his single, integrated method of self-cultivation, Yang-ming presented his own understanding of li. This time, it is in terms of this word that he seeks to explain the other words, of hsing (nature), hsin (mind-and-heart), yi (intention), chih (knowledge), and wu (thing).

There is only one li (principle of being). When concentrated in an individual, it is known as hsing (nature). As master [or moving principle] of this (nature), it is known as hsin (mind-and-heart). In terms of the operation of this [hsin], it is known as yi (intention or thought). In terms of the clear consciousness [one has] of this intention, it is known as chih (knowledge). And, from the point of view of [the object of] experience of this [knowledge] it is known as wu (act or "thing").²²

According to his view, the investigation of li would therefore become the investigation of human nature itself, and this is to be done by the control that the mind-and-heart exercises over its acts and operations, which means, over its "intentions". By this control, the mind-and-heart assures the sincerity of its intentions, which, in turn, assures the sincerity and rectitude of the mind-and-heart itself and of the whole person. Yang-ming therefore gave a renewed statement of his views on the method of self-cultivation, flowing from the above explanation of li:

With regard to wu (acts or "things"), we speak of ko [for him, rectifying but usually, "investigation"]. With regard to chih [knowledge, in his case not different from action], we speak of chih 致 (extending). With regard to yi (intention), we speak of ch'eng (making sincere). With regard to hsin (mind-and-heart), we speak of cheng 正 (rectifying). To rectify is to rectify this [hsin], to make sincere is to make this [hsin] sincere, to investigate is to investigate this [hsin]. This is what is meant by investigating li to the utmost for the sake of completely developing [human] nature. There is no li outside hsing (nature); there is no wu [either] outside hsing.²³

With this last sentence, therefore, Yang-ming seeks to explain his own position to Lo by taking Lo's position, by speaking, of hsing (nature), li (principle of being) and wu ("thing", for him, really "act"), in his explanations of hsin (mind-and-heart).

In later life, Yang-ming frequently had to answer his disciples' questions concerning his teaching on the "investigation of things" and on hsin and li. On one occasion,²⁴ a disciple asked how Yang-ming would reconcile his own teaching with that of Ch'eng Yi on these questions, quoting from Ch'eng Yi the sentence, "In wu (things), [it] is called li (principle of being)".²⁵ Yang-ming must have known very well the context for this sentence, taken out of a passage in which Ch'eng Yi had discussed the question of the goodness of hsin. For he promptly replied to the disciple, that the word hsin should be inserted: "In wu (things), [hsin] is called li". He went on to explain that for him, this meant that when the mind-and-heart (hsin) applies itself to the practice of serving one's parents, then this virtuous action is li, and when the mind-and-heart applies itself to the practice of serving the ruler, this virtuous action also becomes li.²⁶ Thus, over and over again, Yang-ming asserts that li is not an abstract

principle, whether of being or of virtue. For him, being and virtue cannot be separated from life and action. Hsin (mind-and-heart) and li (virtue) are inseparable, because it is hsin which makes li.

On that same occasion, Yang-ming continued his discourse by explaining his underlying reason for teaching such a doctrine regarding li. He said that to consider li as abstract principles, albeit principles of virtue, but quite separate from and outside of hsin, the centre of moral activity, has led to the abstraction of the concept of virtue itself, and the divorce between virtue and life.

[There are people] who only strive to make their actions look good on the outside, while separating them completely from hsin (mind-and-heart). They make hsin (mind-and-heart) and li (virtue) into two things, drifting unconsciously into hypocrisy as did the [Five] Despots. I speak of li as being present in hsin, so that.... people may make efforts on hsin and not accumulate individual acts of righteousness externally..... This is the basic reason for my teaching in this respect.²⁷

When the disciple posed a further question as to why Yang-ming always tried to synthesise the teachings of the many sages and worthy men of the past, by regarding them in a holistic or unitary view, he replied: "There is only one Way (Tao),.... Heaven-and-Earth and the sages are all one. How can they be divided?"²⁸

ko-wu: Knowledge or Action?

Wang Yang-ming was a "self-taught" philosopher. Chan Jo-shui, on the other hand, was the recognised disciple of Ch'en Hsien-chang, the disciple, in turn, of Wu Yü-pi. At the time of the first meeting of Yang-ming and Chan Jo-shui, the latter was, without doubt, the "senior" philosopher, older and more mature. Chan's friendship certainly

contributed to Yang-ming's resolution to engage himself in the quest for wisdom and sagehood, and to do so by relying very much on personal insight acquired through the practice of virtue.

Unlike Lo Ch'in-shun, with whom Yang-ming seems to have had no real discussion until 1520, Chan had discussed with Yang-ming the problems related to the Great Learning over a long period of time. It revolved around the question of knowledge and action. Where Chan insisted upon the role of classical knowledge in the quest of sagehood, Yang-ming replied that there was no genuine knowledge outside of action. But the basic positions of the two men were not so far apart. Both believed in hsin, the mind-and-heart, as the self-determining principle capable of bringing a man to his highest goals, although Chan would have added, provided he made certain efforts to study the Classics.

Late in 1511, Yang-ming wrote an essay in Chan's honour, in which he expressed openly his debt of gratitude:

For twenty years, I had meddled with perverse doctrines and heresies.... Later, I made friends with Chan Kan-ch'üan [Jo-shui], after which my determination [to seek after the ideals of Confucian sagehood] became firmer and stronger, and quite irrevocable. This shows how much I have received from Kan-ch'üan.²⁹

He continued by praising Chan's insistence on the role of personal insights in the quest for sagehood, defending Chan from the charge of being tainted with the influence of Ch'an Buddhism by appealing to Chan's high ideals:

The teachings of Kan-ch'üan insists upon acquiring for oneself personal insights. The world has not been able to understand it....[Many] suspect it to be Ch'an Buddhism. If that be so, then I still have not known Ch'an Buddhism. For, with such sublime ambitions as his, how can someone like Chan Kan-ch'üan not be a disciple of the sages.³⁰

The seeds of disagreement, however, were already present. Having received, through Chan, the legacy of Ch'en Hsien-chang concerning the importance of acquiring for oneself personal insights, as well as the teaching of the unity of man with all things, Yang-ming had also gone beyond these horizons. The period between 1512 and 1518 had already witnessed his gradual development of an independent philosophy. From then on, he was to influence Chan more than Chan could influence him. The two engaged in philosophical disputes in letters and conversations, which ended with Yang-ming's death in 1529.

Chan's teaching centred around the notion of T'ien-li or "principle of Heaven", a notion which calls to mind again the teaching of Ch'eng Hao and his emphasis on acquiring insight for oneself. But it also gives some importance to Chu Hsi's notion of li. This would later bring him into conflict with Yang-ming, who objected to Chu's doctrine of an "exhaustive search for li" by the "investigation of things". The dispute was to focus on the differences of methodology of self-cultivation. It brought out Yang-ming's entire dependence on personal insight, as opposed to Chan's admission of the role of the Classics as the ultimate corrective criteria to such insights, which he, no doubt, valued also. It also brought out certain subtle nuances in the understanding of the word hsin. For Yang-ming, hsin, the mind-and-heart, which is one with all things, is in itself independent and sufficient, without necessarily requiring the help of the Classics in its quest for wisdom. For Chan, hsin, understood also as one with all things, must on that account accommodate also the Classics as the deposit of truth and wisdom.

Already in 1515, Yang-ming had discussed with Chan the relative merits of the Old and New Versions of the Great Learning, as well as the interpretation of the words ko-wu, "investigation of things". They were then unable to reach an agreement. According to one of Yang-ming's disciples:

Kan-ch'üan held the old theory [of Chu Hsi]. The Master said: "This would be seeking wisdom in external things". Kan-ch'üan replied, "If you regard the investigation of the li of things as external, you are belittling your hsin (mind-and-heart)". Then the Master proceeded to give a discourse on Mencius' chapter on developing hsin to the utmost.³¹

The next day, Chan explained his own ideas further in a letter addressed to Yang-ming, objecting to Yang-ming's interpretation of the word wu (thing) as "that to which the intention of hsin is directed". For him, that implied that things (wu) are outside of the mind-and-heart (hsin). He suggested rather that the mind-and-heart (hsin) comprehends all things (wu), and hence, that the "investigation of things" is no external quest. "For the mind-and-heart [which] investigates [things] and extends [knowledge] is not external [to oneself]".³²

Did Chan, however, understand correctly Yang-ming's definition of the word wu? Could he, perhaps, have misunderstood Yang-ming, by placing wu (things) in a context of the investigation of knowledge, where Yang-ming himself had referred rather to action, the action, namely, of "polishing" the mind by removing from it all selfish desires? In other words, was not Chan's idea of self-cultivation that of the mind-and-heart (hsin) expanding itself through a deepened understanding of all things, while Yang-ming preferred that hsin (mind-and-heart) empty itself of all unruly desires through a process of purification and asceticism? To a disciple, Ch'en Wei-chün [Ch'en Chiu-ch'uan 陳九川], who had shared Chan's misgivings regarding Yang-ming's position, Yang-ming had explained that he too, did not consider wu to be outside of hsin. He regarded rather that wu (thing) is somehow one and the same with sheng (body or self), hsin (mind-and-heart), yi (intention) and chih (knowledge). He said: "The [sense organs of] eyes, ears, mouth and nose, together with the four

limbs, make up sheng (body or self). Yet without hsin (mind-and-heart), how can they see, hear, speak or move? And also, if hsin wishes to see, hear, speak or move, it too would be powerless without the eyes, ears, mouth, nose and the four limbs. Hence hsin (mind-and-heart) is nothing without sheng (body) and sheng is nothing without hsin".³³

Thus, hsin (mind-and-heart) is that which is in command of the body or the "self" (sheng), and the two cannot be understood in isolation from each other. Besides, the mind-and-heart (hsin) is dynamic: its activity is called intention (yi), whereas the intelligence which permeates this activity is called knowledge (chih). As to "thing" (wu), it is that to which intention is directed. In other words, knowledge involves the moral activity of the intention, and even "thing" (wu)--which, for Chan, is the object of knowledge--must involve action.

And so, Yang-ming's method of self-cultivation lies in the rectification of intention, a process in which knowledge and action are one, in which truth or wisdom is discovered by action. For Yang-ming, action contains knowledge.

Between 1517 and 1520, when Wang was busy suppressing bandits and the rebellious forces of Prince Ch'en-hao, Chan was back in his home-town, mourning the death of his mother. He gradually lost his former misgivings concerning the old version of the Great Learning, coming around to Wang's point of view especially in expressing preference for the words "ch'in-min"--loving the people--which Chu Hsi had altered.³⁴ He also regarded the "investigation of things" as "realising personally the 'principle of Heaven' (T'ien-li) everywhere". This seemed to make his position closer to Wang's although they still remained a step apart:

[Chan's] present view on the investigation of things is much nearer [the truth]. However, there is no need for him to substitute the word li (virtue) for the word wu (thing). Let the word wu be restored, and his teaching will be correct.³⁵

For Yang-ming, Chan's use of the word li implies his continued adherence to the importance of the role of knowledge, of knowing the principles of things, of attaining the supreme reality in T'ien-li, the "principle of Heaven", or, more clearly, perfect virtue.

Chan, on the other hand, could not accept the reduction of the teaching of the Great Learning to "making the intention sincere". For him, that is tantamount to saying that the universe is empty and unreal. While he admits to a "mystical unity" between self and the Universe, he also maintains that the two are somehow distinct in existence. The investigation of things would therefore refer to the attainment of "principles" existing in the universe. For him, to "investigate" means to "reach" or "arrive", while "things" refer to perfect virtue or "principle of Heaven". This can be attained through study, inquiry, thought, discernment and action.³⁶ Thus, he visualised a certain "ascent" to perfect virtue or "principle of Heaven", which forms the supreme reality, being also the fullness of all goodness and perfection, and which involves a man in becoming wise so that he may be good. Action, therefore, depends on knowledge, as does also the attainment of sagehood itself.

In a letter written to another friend, Ku Lin, some time before 1524, Yang-ming has left us with his reply to Chan's interpretation of the investigation of things. After saying that, to develop one's nature and know Heaven, all that is needed is to extend one's liang-chih to the utmost, which, in turn, includes the effort of "carefully examining T'ien-li", he declares that he has never discouraged others from "investigating things" to the utmost, nor has he urged them to live in seclusion and do nothing. Rather, he holds that "if an unenlightened student can really carefully examine T'ien-li... in connection with things and events as they come, and extend his knowledge of the good, then though stupid, he will surely become intelligent, and though weak, he will surely become strong".³⁷ However, he continues:

Who knows that the "investigation of things" of the Great Learning should not be interpreted in the sense of "rectifying" rather than in the sense of "reaching"? If it must be interpreted in the sense of "reaching", it would be necessary to say, "investigating things to the utmost until you reach the principles of all things" in order to make sense... To mention only the "investigation of things" and dogmatically to say that it means the investigation of the principles of things to the utmost is to regard the latter as belonging entirely to the sphere of knowledge and the investigation of things as involving no action... That is why later scholars have separated knowledge and action into two sections and have been constantly caught up in fragmentary knowledge and dissociated details, and why the doctrine of the sages has been declining and fading away.³⁸

Hence, with regard to the doctrine of "investigating things", the chief difference between Wang's and Chan's teachings is that of practical asceticism. For Wang, the quest for sagehood is purely moral and mystical. In his view, the unity of knowledge and action implies that moral knowledge and moral action are almost indistinguishable, that the former lies in the latter. His overwhelming emphasis was therefore upon moral and spiritual asceticism, through the individual's continual responses to the movements of his own mind and to the events of life which act upon the mind. Chan, however, insisted upon the necessity of intellectual effort, of study of Classics. He considers that it is difficult to ascertain the "correctness" or "orthodoxy" of one's thoughts and concepts without making intellectual efforts. To break out of the narrow boundaries of a purely internal quest for sagehood, as consisting in the purification and rectification of one's inner thoughts and motives alone, he expresses preference for "the realization of T'ien-li" as the meaning of "investigating things". True, Yang-ming also speaks of developing T'ien-li.

the civil examinations and become interested in the writing of prose and poetry, how he devoted his mind to Confucian learning but was confused by the great variety of theories and interpretations regarding the texts, and how he turned to Taoism and Buddhism for an answer to the meaning of life. Then he described his exile in Lung-ch'ang, the enlightenment he received and the confirmation of it by his meditations on the Classics. He was troubled, however, by the fact that his insights were not in agreement with the teachings of Chu Hsi, whom he respected very much. Finally, after "searching" through Chu's works, Yang-ming found that Chu's ideas had changed remarkably in later life, when he "expressed regret" at the mistakes he made in earlier years. And so, with great joy, Yang-ming decided to make open Chu's intellectual evolution and the insights he attained late in life, which were largely unknown to the scholars of the world, attached only to the "tentative" doctrine of Chu's age.⁴²

In the same letter in which he discussed Yang-ming's publication of the old version of the Great Learning, Lo Ch'in-shun also gave his criticisms of Yang-ming's second publication of excerpts from letters which Chu was supposed to have written in later life. He pointed out that Yang-ming had selected these passages on an arbitrary basis, and had taken them out of context to highlight Chu's teaching on inner cultivation. Besides, Yang-ming had also presented as written late in life four letters written in Chu's middle age or even earlier--certainly before Chu's publication of his "Collected Commentaries" and his "Questions and Answers" on the Four Books, -which Yang-ming asserted, incorporate Chu's "tentative" doctrine.⁴³ He also pointed out, that if Wu Ch'eng finally acquired insights into "the learning of the sages", these probably came suddenly, as the culmination of his long years of devoted study of the Classics and the Commentaries, thus proving that the assiduous study of the Classics should be promoted rather than discouraged. After all, one might forget the fish-trap on catching the fish, and forget the rabbit's traces on catching the rabbit itself, but there is no reason why one should also regret having used the fish-trap and followed upon the rabbit's traces.⁴⁴

In his answer, Yang-ming insisted that most of the letters in his selection were written by Chu Hsi towards the end of that philosopher's life, although he admitted that he had not taken care to establish the correct chronology for all the letters. He acknowledged that he had published the selection for the sake of "reconciling" as much as possible, Chu's teachings on the "investigation of things" and Yang-ming's own insights. But he denied that he had made this work public with the motive of deceiving his readers.⁴⁵


All my life, Chu Hsi's teachings have been like a revelation from the gods or from divination and oracles. I could hardly bear to depart from his teachings so abruptly. In my heart, I cannot bear to contradict Master Chu, and yet I cannot but contradict him, because the Way is what it is and the Way will not be made clear unless I am forthright.⁴⁶

This was in 1520. Yang-ming had made an attempt to reconcile his teaching with Chu Hsi's, or rather, to reconcile Chu Hsi's teaching with his own, and his attempt had been largely unsuccessful. One can hardly blame him for any intellectual dishonesty. He had merely acted in accordance with Lu Chiu-yüan's remarks, of the Six Classics being only footnotes to one's insights, and had applied it to the writings of Chu Hsi. In doing so, he had been grossly careless of chronology, and quite unfair to Chu Hsi's intended meanings. And he had admitted his errors. Yang-ming's differences with Chu Hsi were only made clearer by this publication, aimed originally as an appeal, from a supposedly "mistaken" Chu Hsi, to the "real" Chu Hsi, for support for Yang-ming's own teachings. There would be no reconciliation possible. If the ideas of Chu Hsi were the criterion for Confucian orthodoxy, as this was known in the Ming dynasty, then Yang-ming was without doubt a dissenter and even a heretic.⁴⁷ But there can be other ways of looking at this picture.

To Acquire Wisdom

Classics versus Commentaries

How much value Yang-ming attaches to intellectual inquiry as well as to the authority of the ancients can be seen in his attitude toward the Classics. Yang-ming had spoken at length on this subject, especially in a conversation with Hsü Ai.⁴⁸ He gave then his reasons for favouring a return to the sources, the classical texts themselves, without paying attention to the commentaries. He said that Confucius' merit was in abridging and transmitting the Classics, reducing their contents, purifying them of accumulated dross. This was done in order to help people to find out more easily the real "message" of the Classics. This message lay, not in the words or narratives given by the texts, but in the spirit in which these were recorded. The Classics represent a "portrait" of the "principle of Heaven". They can be compared to the portrait of a human person, given by a painter who offers an outline of the man's appearance in such a way as to communicate something of his genuine, spiritual personality. Those who view the portrait should use it in order to seek out this true personality, this hidden spirit. The commentaries, however, are written by later men, who came after the sages. Their works can be compared to the "copies" of the master-pieces. These copies have changed and added to the originals, until the true likeness has been lost.⁴⁹ One should therefore return to the sources, to the texts themselves, in order to recover the primary purpose for which Confucius and the other sages had transmitted the Classics, and this was: "to rectify men's hsin, keep intact the 'principle of Heaven', and eliminate selfish desires."⁵⁰

In an essay he wrote on the "Tsun-ching Pavilion" [literally, Respect-the-Classic Pavilion] of Chi-shan College, Yang-ming describes the Classics as the "constant Way (Tao)". This is called ming  (ordinance, or destiny) in Heaven, and hsing (nature) in man. It is also called hsin (mind-and-heart) as master of the person.

Thus, this constant Way "penetrates persons and things, reaches the four seas, fills up Heaven and Earth, goes through past and present, comprehends all that exists, and is identical to all that exists, without changing anything."⁵¹ And also:

When it responds to events, it becomes compassion, sense of shame, modesty in yielding to others, and discernment of right and wrong. When it is expressed in affairs, it becomes the affection between father and son, the righteousness between sovereign and subject, the relationship between husband and wife, the order between elders and juniors, the fidelity between friend and friend.... The Six Classics are nothing other than this constant Way in my hsin.⁵²

Yang-ming explained that sages of old had committed to writing these Classics, for the sake of giving support to the ultimate human criteria of morality. Such action can be compared to that of the ancestors of a rich clan, who committed to writing the record of their property, which they bequeathed to their descendants.⁵³ "Thus, the reality of the Six Classics is contained in my hsin, just as the real, accumulated wealth and property of all kinds and items are preserved in the rich family, while the inventory book merely presents an account of their names, kinds, and numbers." And so, worldly scholars who do not seek the reality of the Classics in the mind-and-heart, and search for it in words and sounds, resemble the descendants of the rich family, who squander their heritage, while pointing vainly to the inventory books, saying, "Here is my accumulated wealth and property."⁵⁴

The primary purpose for which the Classics have been handed down determines also the manner in which they should be studied. Yang-ming was against merely understanding the words themselves. He recommended that the texts be read over and over again, until they have yielded their spiritual meaning. This spiritual meaning cannot be separated from virtuous action:

One should make efforts [to develop] hsin in-itself. Whenever something is not understood and cannot be put into practice, one should enter into oneself and seek to realise [what is said] in one's hain. Understanding will surely come. For the Four Books and Five Classics talk about nothing but hsin in-itself. And this is nothing other than the Way (Tao). When hsin in-itself is understood, the Way is also understood.⁵⁵

Thus, the Classics should be the object of an intellectual inquiry which is permeated by virtuous intention and activity. For the philosopher of the unity of knowledge and action, there cannot be any other answer. Elsewhere Yang-ming said of the different books of the Classics, their various genres and the different truths which they seek to communicate:

In [using] the Six Classics, the gentleman seeks the movements of yin and yang of the mind-and-heart (hsin), in order to act in accordance with them, by his reverence for the Book of Changes. He seeks the laws and ordinances and governance of hsin, in order to put them into practice, by reverence for the Book of Documents. He seeks the musical and lyrical expressions of the feelings of hsin, in order to give vent to these, by reverence for the Odes. He seeks the regulations and rules of hsin, in order to pay attention to them, by reverence for the Book of Rites. He seeks the joy and peace of hsin in order to give expression to them, by reverence for the Classic of Music. He seeks the distinctions between sincerity and hypocrisy, perversity and rectitude of hsin, in order to learn discernment, by reverence for the Spring-Autumn Annals.⁵⁶

And so, by reverent contemplation of the Classics, the portrait of perfect virtue (T'ien-li) or of hsin-in-itself, the student is able to benefit from the spiritual richness hidden in each book, for the development of his own hsin, his own personality.

Yang-ming recognised that many of the Classical texts are obscure, and in need of explanations. He did not discount the role of simple commentaries. He wrote a preface to a new edition of Wu Ch'eng's Li-chi ts'uan-yen 禮記纂言 [Annotated edition of the Book of Rites]. He praised warmly this attempt to elucidate the confusing and complicated body of ritual texts, which have accumulated many commentaries. These often consist of detailed explanations of articles and numbers of sacrificial vessels as well as minor items of criminal law. The Li-chi ts'uan-yen, however, seeks to bring the student back to the foundation of the rites, putting various issues in a proper order of moral values.⁵⁷

Speaking of the fundamental unity underlying the many ordinances of the ritual texts, Yang-ming had this to say:

There are three hundred rules of canonical rites and propriety (ching-li 經禮) and three thousand additional rules of demeanour (ch'ü-li 曲禮).⁵⁸ Not one of them is not based on humanity (jen); not one of them is not based on human nature (hsing). Such are the ordinances and arrangements of Heaven. Such is the very mind of the Sage.⁵⁹

According to him, it would be a mistake to pay so much attention to the details of rites and propriety, as to forget this very reason for which the ritual texts exist: to expound the mind (hsin) of the sages. He quoted the Analects, saying: "Propriety! Propriety! Are gems and silk all that is meant by this word?"⁶⁰ and also, "If a man is lacking in the virtue of humanity, what can propriety [or the rites] do for him?"⁶¹

Voicing sympathy for the followers of Lao-tzu⁶² and Chuang-tzu⁶³, who claim that the rise of ritual law or of

the practice of particular virtues followed the decline of real virtue (tao and te), and who prefer to overlook "propriety" and talk only of human nature, Yang-ming went on to give his own views of propriety:

Li [propriety, ritual observance] is to the ceremonies what the compass and the quadrant are to the shapes of squares and circles. Without squares and circles there can be no function for quadrant or compass; without ceremonies there can be no show and propriety. Yet squares and circles are made by quadrant and compass, without being themselves compass or quadrant...[For] the compass and the quadrant are not limited to certain definite circles and squares, while circles and squares are ruled by definite compasses and quadrants.⁶⁴

These words help us to understand what Yang-ming said on an earlier occasion, when he claimed that the two words, li 禮 (rites or propriety) and li 理 (organising principle, being, virtue) have the same meaning. For, he said, to restrain or control oneself with the rules of propriety implies that one's hsin is already full of the "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li).⁶⁵

Yang-ming has left us with two long letters on the subject of propriety or the rites. From these, we discover his expert knowledge of the Classics, particularly of detailed questions of rites and of historical precedents, and also of Chu Hsi's well known Chia-li 家禮 [Family Rites].⁶⁶ From these, we also discover his constant pre-occupation, which was to direct his friend or disciple, away from an excessive fondness for ritual hair-splitting, and on to a new awareness of and respect for "genuine human feeling". Without such, the rites would be a dead question. For this reason, although he has made no explicit pronouncement on the matter of Emperor Shih-tsung's desire to transgress precedents by giving posthumous, imperial honours to his deceased father,⁶⁷ it might safely

be presumed that Yang-ming was sympathetic to such expressions of genuine filial feeling. Some of his poems, written in 1524, have especially been interpreted by his disciples as being expressive of Yang-ming's attitude toward the controversy aroused by Emperor Shih-tsung's gestures.⁶⁸ In one of them, he attempts to lift men's minds from petty preoccupations with ritual observances to a higher plane:

An autumn rain brings in the newness of a cool night,
 Sitting on the pond's edge, I find my spirit
 stimulated by the solitary moon.
 Swimming in the depths, the fish are passing on
 words of power;
 Perched on the branches, birds are uttering the
 veritable Tao.⁶⁹
 Do not say that instinctive desires are not
 mysteries of Heaven.⁷⁰
 Know that my body with one with the ten thousand
 things.
 People talk endlessly about rites and music,
 But who will sweep away the heaps of dust from the
 blue sky?⁷¹

According to him, therefore, man's first attention should be given to developing T'ien-li, and to eliminating selfish desires. Everything else is secondary. Once T'ien-li is well developed, and hsin (mind-and-heart) has become crystal clear, what one should do on specific occasions and for specific needs would become naturally clarified also.

Personal Insight versus Authority

In 1522, Chan Jo-shui wrote a long letter to Yang-ming, in which he explained clearly the differences between his understanding of "investigation of things" and Yang-ming's. He presents four objections to Yang-ming's interpretation. Of these, the first two are concerned with textual problems.

he will grow old and die as a fool. Of course, your intelligence is far superior to anyone else's. I would not dare say this of you. But as I observe how Confucius exhorted himself to study, and was worried about not studying, and as I realise how you occupy a high position in the world, and are esteemed by the scholars of the world, I wish to [remind you] that one must be cautious in his learning, and balanced in his teaching....⁷⁵

Whether Yang-ming answered this letter from Chan Jo-shui is not known to us. However, from the letter he wrote to Lo Ch'in-shun, we can find his thought on the role of intellectual inquiry in the quest for sagehood, as well as on the role of authority of Confucius himself as the teacher of wisdom. He maintained that he included the "Nine Items" of self-cultivation set out by Chu Hsi in his own interpretation of the "investigation of things".⁷⁶ But he acknowledged also that he differed from Chu Hsi in the relative emphasis made on these items. After this, he attacked the so-called disciples of Chu Hsi of his own times, whom he compared unfavourably with Yang Chu and Mo Ti,⁷⁷ the two "heretics" whose fallacies had been exposed by Mencius himself. He also likened himself to Han Yü, who had been audacious enough to combat the harmful teachings of Buddhism and Taoism, without being equal to Mencius in virtue.⁷⁸

That Yang-ming accepted in all sincerity the role of intellectual inquiry in personal cultivation can also be seen in the explanation he gave for "honouring virtuous nature" and "following the path of study and inquiry". Commenting on Chu Hsi's admission that Lu Chiu-yuan taught more of "honouring virtuous nature" while Chu himself gave greater emphasis to "study and inquiry", Yang-ming once told his disciple, Huang Chih, that the two cannot be separated from each other. He said: "Is there such a thing as 'honouring virtuous nature' in a vacuum without also pursuing 'study and inquiry', or pursuing 'study and inquiry'?

in a vacuum without relating it to '[honouring] virtuous nature?' If there is, I do not know what we are seeking to learn in our present studies and discussions".⁷⁹ It would seem, therefore, that his main pre-occupation was to permeate intellectual inquiry with the desire for virtue, while at the same time subordinating it to the cultivation of this desire itself, and of one's capacity for virtue.

Yang-ming's attitude to intellectual inquiry can be discerned in his teaching concerning the role of the arts (yi 藝) in the quest for wisdom. With his eyes always fixed on the ultimate goal of life, he declared that this word yi (arts) is related to the other word of the same sound, yi 義, meaning righteousness. The arts, therefore, ought to lead man to the practice of virtue (li 理). Such activities as the recital of poetry, the reading of books, the playing of lutes and the practice of archery are all intended to give greater harmony to hsin, the mind-and-heart, and so help it to proceed with its quest of the great Way. "The man who does not first set his will firm on the Way, and only seek amusement in the arts, is like a fool who does not first plan the building of a house, but attend only to the purchase of paintings which he can hang up as show, without knowing where he is going to hang them".⁸⁰

To the difficulty, that reading or intellectual work sometimes brings with it ideas of vanity connected with the desire to succeed in the civil service examinations, Yang-ming replied that even this should not become any hindrance to the man whose liang-chih (desire for goodness) is genuine and earnest. He would know then that he should not force himself to commit things to memory, that he should not yield to impatience, to ambition or to boasting. As long as he immediately overcomes such temptations, he will remain in perfect accord with the "principle of Heaven". "Let him therefore read. He will be merely refreshing and giving harmony to his mind-and-heart (hsin). What difficulty is there?"⁸¹

There is no doubt, however, that, for Yang-ming, reading (tu-shu 讀書 literally, reading or studying books) is a means toward an end, and this end is the quest for wisdom, much more than the passing of examinations. He excuses the persons who read or study with the ambition of passing examinations, so long as these persons have need of official emolument for the support of their parents or family.⁸² But he is anxious to point out that intellectual inquiry should only be carried out as a help to the acquisition of wisdom and sagehood. Care should therefore be taken that such inquiry does not absorb the mind and lead it astray.⁸³ For this reason, he is against the laborious work of classical exegesis. He warned his disciple Chi Pen 季本 [Chi Ming-te 季明德] in these words:

If you wish also to divide up every section of the [Classical] writings, giving commentaries and citing proofs, taking these to be systematic steps of the pathway by which a sage advances in the Way (Tao), ... then you will not be free from the defects of making comparisons and of being fettered by words. To show in this way the fact that sagehood is attainable by learning, may give some insights, but would tend to make of the status of sagehood something very high and far away.....⁸⁴

Reading, after all, is only one exercise of the task of study. As already mentioned, the Chinese word hsüeh (study) means simply, to learn, or to acquire by learning--whether through moral effort or intellectual inquiry. For the philosopher who teaches the unity of knowledge and action, there can be no distinction between the two. Yang-ming generally means by hsüeh, a method by which selfish desires may be removed. It is therefore, no different from the effort of extending liang-chih. As he put it:

A scholar who has already determined to become a sage, needs merely to extend his liang-chih, in its intelligent and conscious aspects, to the uttermost,

proceeding gradually day by day. He does not need to worry about externals and details. Criticisms, the praise and blame of others, can also be used profitably.... but without having these affect his hsin in the least.....⁸⁵

Given this view of study or intellectual inquiry, it is easier to see why Yang-ming regarded as suitable objects of study, not only the recognised books of the Confucian canon, but also the so-called Taoist and Buddhist scriptures, so long as these contribute to the realisation in oneself of T'ien-li or perfect virtue.⁸⁶ These unorthodox texts are not required for the passing of official examinations, but contain insights which are nonetheless valuable. This concession which Yang-ming made is important to the student who wishes to understand the universal character of his "Way" of acquiring wisdom, although it cannot be denied that Yang-ming valued the Confucian classics far above those of the other two schools.

The Appeal to Confucius

Lo Ch'in-shun had criticised Yang-ming for putting forward views which differed from those of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, and in direct contradiction of the words of the Classical texts. To this charge of "heresy", Yang-ming replied in self-defence that he had merely attempted to return to the sources of Confucian teaching by restoring an old text which Chu Hsi had tampered with. Appealing directly to the authority of Confucius, he said: "The old version of the Great Learning is the original version transmitted from generation to generation in the Confucian school. Master Chu, suspecting that errors and gaps have crept in, corrected and amended it. But I believe that there has not been any errors and gaps. That is why I followed the old version completely. Perhaps, my mistake has been in believing too much in Confucius. I did not omit Master Chu's chapter divisions or delete his commentary on purpose."⁸⁷

The appeal to Confucius was no sooner made when Yang-ming also went beyond it. He went on to say that true learning is only that which is personally acquired in one's hsin, without regard to the authority of other scholars, even of Confucius.

If [words] are examined in the hsin and found to be wrong, then even if they have come from [the mouth of] Confucius, I dare not accept them as correct. How much more so for what has come from people inferior to Confucius! If [words] are examined in the hsin and found to be right, then even if they have come from [the mouths] of mediocre people, I dare not regard them as incorrect. How much more so for what has come from Confucius!⁸⁸

He then criticised Chu Hsi for having tampered with the old version, which had been handed down for several thousand years. "By what [authority] did Chu Hsi [decide] that this paragraph should be here and that one should be there, that this part had been lost and should be provided for....? Are you not taking too seriously [my] divergences from Chu Hsi and not seriously enough Chu's rebellion against Confucius?"⁸⁹

Wisdom, after all, is no static deposit of unchanging truths which have been discovered by any one man who can therefore claim a certain monopoly over it. Wisdom means the ability to deal with different circumstances. It pre-supposes an open mind, a mind without set judgements and ready answers, a mind which looks for the answers in the circumstances themselves. For this reason, every sage understands wisdom and virtue in his own unique way.⁹⁰ For this reason also, even Confucius himself would never present any simple, rustic questioner with a standard answer. He would merely try to direct the man himself to see the right and wrong of a situation in his own heart and with his own judgement.⁹¹ The words of the ancients are all the results of deep personal experience, acquired frequently through trials and tribulations. In order to

attain the wisdom contained in them, the student himself must not stop at the words, he must also re-discover wisdom at its source, through the complete engagement of his hsin in its quest, permitting the whole of life to strengthen his nature, and so improve his understanding.⁹²

Yang-ming's answer to the question concerning the role and guidance of authority in the quest for sagehood is one which points beyond the authorities, beyond Chu Hsi, beyond Confucius and the Classics, beyond even the first sages, to the source of all wisdom and sagehood: the self-determining, self-perfecting hsin, the deepest and most dynamic principle within man himself. As he says in one of his poems, every man possesses a "Confucius" in his own heart, a seed of greatness quite sufficient in itself and capable of developing into a powerful tree with many branches. In another poem, written in 1524, he speaks again of sages and of Classics, of their function of helping to purify man's mind-and-heart of its accumulated pollution, and of the ultimate authority of the "polished mirror", of hsin alone, as that which reflects both truth and error.⁹³ His words are:

Under the new autumn moon, I sit alone in the
courtyard.

Where else between Heaven (Ch'ien 乾) and Earth
(K'un 坤) has man more freedom and ease?

My loud songs move away with the fresh breeze,
My quiet feelings flow off with Spring's clear water.
The thousand sages have no word of power outside of
the mind;

The Six Classics exist for the purpose of wiping
away the mirror's dust.⁹⁴

Alas, that the dreams of Duke Chou should still
disturb me;⁹⁵

I have not awakened to the beauty of living in a
poor alley.⁹⁶

Yang-ming's attitude towards one specific Classic, the Book of Rites, as well as the application of the moral principles set forth by it to real life, can thus enlighten us with regard to his general attitude toward all of the Classics and how one should use them. The Classics are made for man, not man for the Classics.

Notes to Chapter IV

- 1 From a letter to Yang-ming by Chan Jo-shui, in Kan-ch'üan wen-chi, [Collected Writings of Chan Jo-shui] 1866 ed., 14: 36a.
- 2 Chu Hsi's teachings can be found in his Meng-tzu chi-chu, [Collected Commentary on the Book of Mencius], where he sought to explain the beginning lines of Mencius 7A in terms of the first chapter of the Great Learning, and vice versa. See SSCC 7: 1a-b.
- 3 The Chinese words used here recall Chang Tsai's understanding of the work of the sage. For other references to the importance of a "firm determination" and "single-mindedness" emphasised by the Ch'eng-Chu school as well but made into the essential component of self-realisation in the Lu-Wang school, see WWKC 1: 82; 7: 230, 254. The starting-point of Yang-ming's philosophy contains, in itself, the end to be achieved.
- 4 WWKC 1: 59b; Chan, Instructions, 12-14. The same subject came back in the letter Yang-ming wrote to Ku Lin, before 1524. See WWKC 2: 90a-92b. Chan, Instructions, 95-97. Yang-ming gave the same exposition as he did to Hsü Ai.
- 5 WWKC 1: 59b-60a; Chan, Instructions, 14-15.
- 6 Ibid. See also Yang-ming's letter to Wang Tao, WWKC 4: 178b-179a.
- 7 WWKC 2: 118b; Chan, Instructions, 162. This is a variant of a frequently cited sentence: "To make a mistake of a hair's breadth may lead [a person] one thousand li astray". See Shih-chi, op.cit., 130: 279. This quotation, often given as from the Book of Changes, actually comes from the apocryphal Book of Changes. See Tjan, op.cit., v.1, 102. Tjan cites as his authority a commentary of P'ei Yin 裴駰 (5th cent.AD). See also Takigawa Kametarō, Shiki kaichu kōsho [An Investigation into the Collected Commentaries of Shih-chi], (Tokyo: 1956-1960), 130: 24.
- 8 WWKC 1: 87a-b; Chan, Instructions, 86-7. See Chang Lieh's criticism of Yang-ming's argument, Wang-hsüeh chih-yi, CYTCS ed., 2: 4b-6b. The story concerning drawing the snake's feet comes from Liu Hsiang 劉向 (c.77-6BC) ed., Chan-kuo ts'e 戰國策 [Intrigues of the Warring States] "Ch'i-shu" 齊書 [Book of Ch'i]. See Chan-kuo ts'e chiao-chu [Intrigues of the Warring States, Annotated Version] SPTK ed., 1st series, 4: 17b-18a. Eng.tr. by J.I. Crump, Jr., (Oxford: 1970), 167.--The Warring States period lasted from c. 300-221 B.C.
- 9 To Wang Ch'eng-yü 王承裕 [Wang T'ien-yu 王天宇 1465-1538], WWKC 4: 183b-184a.

- 10 The name "Po-lu tung" 白鹿洞 means "White Deer Cave." See CWWC 73: 18a-19a.
- 11 WWKC 7: 238b.
- 12 The preface is in WWKC 3: 160a-b; Eng.tr., Chan, Instructions, 264-267. One version of this work can be found in the Han-hai 函海 collection, comp. by Li Tiao-yuan, (Preface 1782, Taipei reprint, 1967), v. 13, 8165-8174. But Prof. Wing-tsit Chan has expressed doubt regarding its authenticity. See Instructions, 103, n. 27. Yang-ming's side commentaries were based on the commentaries of Cheng Hsuan and of K'ung Yin-ta. The work has been praised by Chu Yi-tsun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709) in Ching-yi k'ao [An Investigation into the Classics and their Meanings] SPY ed., 159: 3a. The two works were published in 1518, a particularly busy year for Yang-ming. During the first five months, he was engaged in military campaigns against bandits in southern Kiangsi. On concluding these successfully, he initiated measures of rehabilitation for the population. He also mourned the premature death of Hsü Ai, his brother-in-law and most promising disciple, which had occurred shortly after Hsü's publication of certain recorded conversations between himself and Wang, which now make up the first part of Ch'uan-hsi lu.
- 13 See above, Ch. I, n. 33.
- 14 WWKC 3: 168b-169a. Wu Ch'eng, also known as Wu Ch'ao-lu 吳卓虞 was one of the two best known philosophers of Yuan times, the other being Hsü Heng 許衡 [Hsü Chung-p'ing 許仲平 1209-1281]. But where Hsü remained an adherent of the Ch'eng-Chu school, Wu showed a greater fondness for Lu Chiu-yuan. See SYHA 90: 1b-2a for Hsü and 92: 1a-b for Wu. It is therefore not astonishing that Yang-ming should criticise Hsü [WWKC 1: 73; Chan, Instruction, 44] and single out Wu for praise. See also below, his praise of Wu's commentary on the Book of Rites.
- 15 WWKC 3: 160a-b; Chan, Instructions, 264-267.
- 16 See criticisms of Yang-ming by Kao P'an-lung, in Kao-tzu yi-shu, "Yang-ming shuo-pien" 陽明說辨 [A Critique of Yang-ming's Teachings], 1: 3a-4b; 3: 46b-51a; 4: 51a-b; and by Ku Yen-wu, in Jih-chih lu chi-shih, 18: 23a-28a, by Ch'en Chien, Hsueh-pu t'ung-pien 11: 2a-b; 8a-9a; 11b-14b, Feng K'o, Chiu-shih p'ien 3: 3a-4a, 14a-15b; 4: 1a-2b, and Lu Lung-ch'i, in Lu Chia-shu chi, "Hsüeh-shu pien" 學術辨 [A Critique of Learning], 1: 1a-17b.
But Yang-ming also had his supporters, including Liu Tsung-chou and Huang Tsung-hsi. See MJHA, "Shih-shuo" 4a-b, 10: 1a-b.
Huang Tsung-hsi is especially responsible for modifying certain extreme tendencies manifested by the later Yang-ming school.

17 The preface, given in WWKC 7: 241a-b, is dated 1518. But we know that it was first written in 1515, and then published in 1518. According to Lo Ch'in-shun, however, the preface dated 1518 and sent to him by Yang-ming in 1520 was later amended and expanded before being finally published by Yang-ming's students in 1536. See K'un-chih chi [Record of Assiduous Learning], CYTC ed., 4: 9a-10a. A comparison of the texts as quoted by Lo and as given in WWKC shows that the latter represents the final version of the preface. See also Yang-ming's letter to Hsüeh K'an 薛侃 [Hsüeh Shang-ch'ien 薛尚謙, d.1545], (1523), for mention of changes made in the preface. WWKC 5: 208b.

18 WWKC 7: 241a-b. Yang-ming's confidence in the capacity of hsin to improve and perfect itself, and to attain the "highest good", recalls to mind, even more than the philosophy of Chu Hsi, the concern of Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) the acquisition of wisdom through a method of "improving the understanding" by which one rises to the intellectual love of God, the highest good. Both by his life and teachings--he believed in the identity of intellect and will, of thought and action, and in an immanent God, the highest good--Spinoza resembles Yang-ming to an unusual degree. Even Spinoza's effort to complete and correct Descartes' view of clear and distinct ideas which require the support of a God outside of the self, by accepting the human understanding to be its own guarantee, reminds one of Yang-ming's faith in the self-determining nature of hsin. The Chinese thinker differs from the Dutch Jew, however, because he grew up in a tradition which did not know the "geometrical method" of reasoning, and concentrated much more on intuitive perceptions. See Spinoza: Selections, ed. by John Wild, (New York: 1930), Introduction, ix-xxxii, xlv-lix; "On the Improvement of the Understanding," 1-15; "Ethics," 282-288, 390-400.

19 MJHA 47: 1a-2b. Lo has been hailed as "the first important thinker who opened the way to modern thought" by his support of a rational, objective approach to reality and by his independent emphasis of ch'i (matter-energy). See Abe Yoshio's article in Chügoku no shisöka [The Thinkers of China], (Tokyo: 1963), 571-583.

20 Lo Cheng-an chi ts'un-kao [A Collection of Some Surviving Works of Lo], CYTC ed., 1: 6a-7b. Lo also remarked that Yang-ming's interpretation of the sentence, "the extension of knowledge is in the investigation of things" made of it "the investigation of things is in the extension of knowledge"; see his letter to Ou-yang Te 歐陽德 [Ou-yang Nan-yeh 歐陽南野 1496-1554] a disciple of Yang-ming's, in 1: 9b. In his other work, K'un-chih chi 1: 1a-b; 2: 2a-b; 3: 7a-b, Lo referred to the identification of hsin and hsing as an error which shows Buddhist influences. He himself explained hsin as the locale in which li is found, and hsing as the content of hsin. He also pointed out to Yang-ming that if Wu Ch'eng finally attained insights into the nature of sagehood, it might have occurred as the fruit of his long years of devoted study of the meaning of words in the Classics and Commentaries.

- 21 He is referring to the Great Learning, ch. 1. The four "methods" or procedural steps are: investigation of things, extension of knowledge, making the intention sincere and rectifying the mind-and-heart.
- 22 WWKC 2: 117a-b; Chan, Instructions, 160-1. Yang-ming speaks here of li as the One behind the Many, the ultimate reality which is both hidden and manifest. He is developing a tenet of the Ch'eng-Chu school, but in a much more thorough-going manner, thus denying certain conclusions reached by the Ch'eng-Chu school itself.
- 23 WWKC 2: 118a-b; Chan, Instructions, 161. He speaks here of the method of acquiring li.
- 24 WWKC 3: 154b; Chan, Instructions, 251.
- 25 ECCS, Yi-shu, 18: 17a.
- 26 WWKC 3: 154b-155a; Chan, Instructions, 251. Kao P'an-lung would say that Chu Hsi had neither separated hsin and li, or knowledge and action, but had, rather, reconciled them, and that Yang-ming had merely misinterpreted his thought. See "Yang-ming shuo-pien," Kao-tzu yi-shu, 1: 3a; 3: 49a-51a. While taking into consideration the fact that the abuses Yang-ming attacked were attributable more to the latter-day disciples of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi than to the philosophers themselves, one can also recall Huang Tsung-hsi's judgement, that Kao himself was very close in his thinking to Yang-ming, without having acknowledged it. See MJHA 58: 18b-19a.
- 27 WWKC 3: 155a; Chan, Instructions, 251-2. The example of the Despots has been used before. Here Yang-ming clearly enunciates the practical purpose of his philosophy.
- 28 WWKC 3: 155a; Chan, Instructions, 252. I realize that the "holistic" view of reality [whole versus parts] is more concerned with truth as such than action. I have used this concept to discuss Yang-ming's practical teaching on ko-wu to show that his "integrated" approach flows from his basic understanding of reality and of the nature of wisdom.
- 29 From an essay written in Chan's honour (1511) when he was sent as envoy to Annam. See WWKC 7: 232a-b. Yang-ming's intellectual debt to Chan implies also a certain debt to Chan's teacher, Ch'en Hsien-chang, whom he never met, but whose spontaneous and dynamic approach to sagehood and consciousness of the unity of all things are reflected in his philosophy. While Yang-ming himself never acknowledged this debt, his disciple Wang Chi mentioned it. See Wang Lung-hsi ch'üan-chi [Complete Works of Wang Chi], (1822 ed., Taipei reprint, 1970), [abbrev. as WLCC], 10: 31b-32a. See also MJHA 5: 1a-3b; Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 78-79.

- 30 WWKC 7: 232b. As Chan himself was accused of being close to Ch'an teachings, his disagreements with Yang-ming were less on "ideological" Confucian versus Ch'an grounds, and more on their understanding of hsin as the agent of its own perfection. See Okada Takehiko, O Yomei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 72-73; 87-94. See also Lo Ch'in-shun's criticism of Chan's understanding of hsin and T'ien-li, which, according to Lo, required merely "awakening" (wu 悟) to the power of consciousness in hsin. See K'un-chih chi, 4: 11a-b.
- 31 WWKC 3: 129; Chan, Instructions, 186.
- 32 Kan-ch'uan wen-chi, 7: 1a.
In Hsin-hsing t'u-shuo 心性圖說, [Explanations of the Diagram of Mind-and-Heart and Nature], Chan has given his own explanation of the interaction which takes place between mind-and-heart and human nature, and nature at large or all things. It consists of a big circle, enclosing within itself three small circles. The big circle represents the mind and human nature as "embracing" all things. The small ones signify their "penetration" of all things. This is done through the practice of ching (reverence)--through vigilance over self when one is alone, achieving the state of harmony or equilibrium of emotions, which permits the development of the virtues and so attains unity with all things, again in an attitude of reverence. It may therefore be said that the diagram represents the totality of reality, and the participation of mind and human nature in that reality. "To embrace and to penetrate are not really two separate [functions]. Hence hsin is that which embraces Heaven-and-Earth and all things without, and yet penetrates Heaven-and-Earth and all things within. The "within" and "without" are also not two different [spheres]. There is no such division with regard to Heaven-and-Earth, nor, for that matter, with regard to the mind. This is only a question of words". Chan was to accuse Wang of regarding merely the physical heart, located in the breast, as hsin--mind-and-heart. He claims that, for him, it is something much greater: "To say that hsin is inside self, while Heaven-and-Earth and all things are outside, is to belittle hsin". See MJHA 37: 2b-3a.
- 33 WWKC 3: 129b; Chan, Instructions, 188-189. Yang-ming internalised the whole quest for truth and sagehood, emphasising the interaction between the self (sheng) and reality (wu) in both knowledge and virtuous behaviour.
- 34 WWKC 3: 129b-130a; Chan, Instructions, 189-190. Tseng-ch'eng is in the modern province of Kwangtung.
- 35 WWKC 3: 130a; Chan, Instructions, 190
- 36 Kan-ch'uan wen-chi, 7: 18a.
- 37 WWKC 2: 94a; Chan, Instructions, 105.

38 WWKC 2: 94b-95a; Chan, Instructions, 105-6. Chan Jo-shui had followed Chu Hsi in interpreting ko as "reach". See SSCC, Ta-hsüeh chang-chü, 2a; Kan-ch'üan wen-chi, 7: 1a.

39 Chan was to publish, several years after Yang-ming's death, a one hundred chüan work entitled, Sheng-hsüeh ko-wu t'ung [A Penetrating Study of the Doctrine of Investigating Things according to the School of Sages] and addressed to Emperor Shih-tsung. He developed there his own understanding of ko-wu, making it an all-reaching formula, extending from the practice of "making intention sincere" to that of "governing the country" and "giving peace to the world". I have consulted the edition published in Yang-chou 揚州, with a preface dated 1533.

40 WWKC 1: 77b; Chan, Instructions, 59-60.

41 WWKC 1: 78b; Chan, Instructions, 62-63.

42 WWKC 7: 239a-b; Chan, Instructions, 264-6.

43 Lo Cheng-an chi ts'un-kao 1: 7b-9b. Ku Yen-wu pointed out that the repercussions raised by the controversial question of Chu Hsi's 'mature views' were still going on in his own time. For himself, however, he considered Lo Cheng-an's refutations as already adequate. See Jih-chih lu chi-shih, 18: 23a.

44 Lo Cheng-an chi ts'un-kao 1: 9a-b.

45 WWKC 2: 119a-b; Chan, Instructions, 164. The polarisation of "Correct" versus "perverse" learning, supported by state authority, has always obliged Chinese thinkers to present their own views by appealing to the authority of others. For this reason, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao opposed the movement which favoured the establishment of "state" Confucianism in early republican China (1902). Speaking of the classical period of Chinese philosophy during the Warring States, the success of which he attributed to freedom of thought, he related the persecutions of Ch'in, the establishment of Han orthodoxy, and the subsequent evolution of many systems of thought which claimed to transmit the "orthodox" teaching of Confucius. Thus, he said, Confucius became in turn, Cheng Hsüan, Han Yü, Chu Hsi, Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming, and yet others. See Yin-ping shih wen-chi, 9: 55.

In the light of these facts, Yang-ming's action can hardly be condemned. The experience of the medieval European scholastics can also shed light on this point. The philosophical method they followed was to resolve every question in some precise sequence of authority and refutation and resolution. A good scholastic was one who could find authority for either side of the question and who was convinced further that truth could be discovered best by examining all the contradictory statements. See Richard McKeon, ed., Selections from Medieval Philosophers, (New York: 1929), v.1, Introduction, xiv-xv.

46 WWKC 2: 119b; Chan, Instructions, 164.

In his letter to Ku Lin, Yang-ming had avoided giving a direct answer to Ku's charge of his having made arbitrary selection from Chu Hsi's writings for the publication. He had merely argued on the problem of "investigation of things". See WWKC 2: 91b-92a; Chan, Instructions, 98-9.

47 Yang-ming's critic, Ch'en Chien, carefully compared the chronology given in Chu Hsi's "Nien-p'u", his biography, and his "Collected Writings" and "Recorded Conversations" with Yang-ming's work itself, giving the necessary details of Chu's activities year by year, in his refutation of Yang-ming. See Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 11: 2a-14b.

See also Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai jugaku shiso no Kenkyū, 241-243 on Chu Hsi's doctrine of "reverence", especially as given in those letters he wrote which were included by Yang-ming in his publication. Kusumoto noted that if this development brought Chu nearer to Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming in their method of cultivation in one way, it also brought him further from them in another way, by Chu's increased emphasis on the investigation of things and of li.

In his Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought, 135-138, Hsü Pao-ch'ien remarked also that Chu Hsi's "spiritual crisis" occurred in middle age rather than in his later life, and resulted in his greater emphasis on the practice of "reverence", as that which united the inner development of the mind and the outer investigation of things.

48 WWKC 1: 61a-63b; Chan, Instructions, 17-24. This was probably in 1513.

49 WWKC 1: 64b; Chan, Instructions, 26-27.

50 WWKC 1: 62a; Chan, Instructions, 20.

51 "Chi-shan shu-yüan Tsun-ching-ko chi" 稽山書院
尊經閣記 [Record on the Respect-the-Classic Pavilion]
 of the Chi-shan College], WWKC 7: 250-1. This College was situated in Yang-ming's home-town, Yüeh-ch'eng.

52 WWKC 7: 250. In criticising Yang-ming, Kao P'an-lung said that since the Classics transmit the sages' hsin, to understand the Classics is also to understand hsin and vice versa. He who only understands the texts and not hsin is a mediocre scholar, while he who only understands hsin and not the texts is a "heretic". See "Yang-ming shuo-pien", Kao-tzu yi-shu, 1: 7b.

53 WWKC 7: 250b-251a.

54 WWKC 7: 251a.

55 WWKC 1: 67a; Chan, Instructions, 32.

56 WWKC 7: 250b-251a. The Classic of Music is no longer extant. Liu Tsung-chou remarked that to regard the Classics as footnotes to one's personal insight is to respect the Classics rather than to disregard them. See Yang-ming ch'uan-hsin lu, op.cit., 2: 17a.

- 57 See WWKC 7: 241b-242a. The preface was dated 1520.
- 58 Allusion to the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 27; Legge, Classics, v.1, 422.
- 59 WWKC 7: 241b.
- 60 Analects 17: 11; Legge, Classics, v.1, 324.
- 61 Analects 3: 3, Legge Classics, v.1, 155.
- 62 See Lao-tzu, ch. 18. SPPY ed., 10a, where the rise of jen (humanity) and of yi (righteousness) is described as that which follows the abolition of the Great Way. Chan, Source Book, 148.
- 63 See Chuang-tzu 9, "Ma-ti" 馬蹄 [Horses' Hoofs] SPPY ed., 4: 7a-b. Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 105. This idea is also in the "Li-yün" chapter of the Book of Rites. See Li-chi cheng-yi, 21: 1a-13a.
- 64 WWKC 7: 242a. Yang-ming also used the parable of "compass and quadrant" to describe man's liang-chih or capacity to know the good. See Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 96; Chan, Instructions, 109.
- 65 WWKC 1: 60a-b; Chan, Instructions, 16.
- 66 Addressed to Ho Meng-ch'un 何孟春 [Ho Tzu-yüan 何子元], (1512), and to Tsou Shou-yi (1526). See WWKC 21: 646a-b; 210a-211b.
- 67 MS 17: 31-32. See also Ch. II, n.44.
- 68 For Yang-ming's attitude toward this controversy, see "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 962b. See also Ch. II, n.44.
- 69 Allusion to the Book of Odes, "Ta-ya" 大雅 referred to in the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 12. See Legge, Classics, v.4, 445 and v.1, 392.
- 70 Allusion to Chuang-tzu 6, "Ta Tsung-shih", 3: 2a; Burton Watson tr., The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu, 78. Chuang-tzu had described the "True Man" as one who is "deep in his passions and desires, and shallow in the workings of Heaven".
- 71 "Sitting At Night At the Pi-hsia Pond", [Pi-hsia-tz'u yeh-tso 碧霞池夜坐], WWKC 20: 627a.
- 72 Kan-ch'üan wen-chi, 7: 25b. The citation was from the Varjacobhedikā or Diamond Sutra, TSD No. 235, VIII, 749; Eng. tr. by E. Bonze, Buddhist Wisdom Books, (London: 1958); 47-48. The Ch'an Patriarch Hui-neng allegedly attained enlightenment through meditation on this passage. It should be pointed out that Yang-ming himself cited this sentence with approval in a letter to his disciple Lu Ch'eng [Lu Yuan-ching 陸元靜 fl. 1517] (1524), see WWKC 2: 112-3; Chan, Instructions, 148-9.

- 73 Kan-ch'üan wen-chi, 7: 25b.
- 74 Analects 2: 4; Legge, Classics, v.1, 147.
- 75 Kan-ch'üan wen-chi 7: 25b.
- 76 The "Nine Items" refer generally to various practices associated with intellectual inquiry as a means of self-cultivation. They are enumerated in Chu Hsi's Ta-hsüeh huo-wen. 大學或問 [Questions on the Great Learning] See Chan, Instructions, 162, n. 11.
- 77 WWKC 2: 118b; Chan, Instructions, 162. Yang-ming was not attacking Chu Hsi himself, but Chu's latter-day disciples. It was thus unfair to criticise Yang-ming for having called Chu Hsi a "heretic", comparable to Yang Chu and Mo Ti, as did Lu Lung-ch'i, in a letter to a friend; see Lu Chia-shu chi, 1: 23a.
- 78 WWKC 2: 118b-119a; Chan, Instructions, 163-4.
- 79 WWKC 3: 155b; Chan, Instructions, 253. The reference is to the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1. Aside from maintaining his acceptance of intellectual inquiry in the quest for sagehood, Yang-ming did not give a satisfactory answer directly to Lo's charge of his closeness to Ch'an Buddhist teachings. Presumably, he implied that the man who follows the path of intellectual inquiry cannot be a Ch'an Buddhist who merely looks for enlightenment in meditation. The question of Yang-ming's attitude toward Buddhism will be treated more fully in a later chapter.
- 80 WWKC 3: 137a; Chan, Instructions, 207. Yang-ming also gave much value to the role of music in helping self-cultivation. He expressed the desire of purifying theatrical music of its licentious words and tunes, and of keeping only stories with moral lessons, to help the people extend liang-chih. He did not, however, recommend a restoration of ancient musical tunes, saying that the essential thing is to find peace and harmony in hsin, for it was to this purpose that the ancient tunes were first devised by the sages. See WWKC 3: 148a-b; Chan, Instructions, 233-235.
- 81 WWKC 3: 137a-b; Chan, Instructions, 207-8.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Letter to Chi Pen, (1526), WWKC 6: 218b.
- 85 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 111a; Chan, Instructions, 146.
- 86 Letter to Chi Pen, WWKC 6: 218b.
- 87 WWKC 2: 117a; Chan, Instructions, 159.

- 88 Ibid. Yang-ming had been criticised many times for "belittling Confucius". Ku Hsien-ch'eng considered it impossible that one's hsin might find incorrect, the words of the sages. Like Chan Jo-shui he also objected to the identification of hsin and li recalling that even Confucius did not attain the state of being able to follow the desires of his heart without transgressing the Mean till old. MJHA 58: 14a; see also Ch'ien Chien, Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 12: 4b and T'ang Chen 唐甄 [T'ang Chu-fang 唐凱方 1630-1704], Ch'ien-shu [Book of Depth], (Peking: 1955), 11. An ardent admirer of Yang-ming's learning and ability, T'ang remarked that Yang-ming did not attain the virtue of sagehood, since he lacked esteem for Confucius, once having compared himself favourably with Confucius when speaking of the knowledge of warfare.
- 89 WWKC 2: 117a; Chan, Instructions, 159.
- 90 WWKC 3: 147b; Chan, Instructions, 230.
- 91 WWKC 3: 147b-148a; Chan, Instructions, 231-2.
- 92 WWKC 20: 629a.
- 93 "Sitting at Night" (Yeh-tso 夜坐), WWKC 20: 628a.
- 94 Reference again to "polishing the mirror".
- 95 Allusion to Analects 7: 5; Legge, Classics, v.1, 196. Yang-ming, however, uses this metaphor to refer to his own worldly ambitions of success.
- 96 Allusion to Analects 6: 9; Legge, Classics, v.1, 188.

Chapter V

THE "WAY" DISCOVERED: CHIH LIANG-CHIH

The greater simplicity and perfection (ching 精) one attains in his effort (kung-fu 工夫) of [self-cultivation], the more difficult verbal expression and discussion of it becomes.¹

The period from mid-1519 to early 1521 witnessed the climax of Yang-ming's career as soldier, statesman and philosopher, and marked the final crystallisation of his thought. But this climax, this crystallisation, did not come without a price. Just as Yang-ming's first great philosophical discovery--the recognition of hsin as the basic principle in man's quest for wisdom, and the formulation of the proposition that "the source of all virtue, perfection and goodness lies in hsin"--came to him during the time of exile in Lung-ch'ang, so too his greatest discovery, the elaboration of his basic principle into an all-embracing method, occurred at a time of great stress. The spectacular victory he won over the rebel, Prince Ch'en-hao, became for him the occasion of great trial. Yang-ming was faced with the dilemma of abandoning his captives for the sake of giving pleasure to an irresponsible emperor, and thus provoking another battle at which unnecessary losses of lives would surely occur, or of withstanding the caprice of his enemies, the Court eunuchs, at the risk of encountering serious danger to himself, his family and his faithful subordinates. He was, at the same time, pained by his own powerlessness to relieve the sufferings of the population under his government,² and by the news of his grandmother's death and his father's illness.³ He was also under attack for his teaching of "novel doctrines" by the Regional Inspector, T'ang Lung 唐龍⁴ and the Assistant Commissioner of Education, Shao Jui 邵鏡, both of Kiangsi, and both adherents of Chu Hsi's school of thought. T'ang advised Yang-ming to give up teaching and show more caution in the

choice of his friends. In such circumstances and under such pressures, it is easy to understand why many people, including some of Yang-ming's own disciples, decided to avoid his company. Only in early 1521, when Emperor Wu-tsung left his temporary capital of Nanking to return to Peking, did the tension begin to relax.⁵

Nevertheless, these severe trials, accompanied by the continued controversy aroused by Yang-ming's publication of the Old Version of the Great Learning and of what he considered to have been the proofs of Chu Hsi's "change of mind" in late life, contributed eventually to the development of his famous doctrine, chih liang-chih 致良知, literally, "the extension of liang-chih or of one's knowledge of the good", and of his own mature views on the Confucian Way and its transmission through history. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss this doctrine and to present Yang-ming's understanding of the Confucian Way and the orthodox transmission of the truth.

That Yang-ming had been fumbling for a verbal formula with which to express his inner discovery is clear from his own words. He had long been teaching, for a long time, of the importance of developing the "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li) and of eliminating "selfish desires" (jen-yü). But he had never explicitly described the "principle of Heaven". He had merely told his questioners to find out for themselves. Once he told his friends: that "I desire to elaborate upon this [principle of Heaven], but feel that I cannot utter the word. It is as though I have something in my mouth [but cannot pronounce it]"⁶ He also said: "More and more, I feel that there is nothing in this learning [of the sages] outside of 'this little thing'"⁷ Ch'ien Te-hung also relates:

The Master once said: "Since my experience at Lung-ch'ang, my thoughts have not been outside of the two words, liang-chih. However, I have not been able to articulate these two words [until now]. So I have had to use many words and expressions [to explain myself]. Fortunately, I have now made this discovery. I now see the whole [of truth] in one expression....."⁸

Yang-ming learned to articulate his thought in terms of the words liang-chih during the trials and tribulations which visited him after his battle with Prince Ch'en-hao. These experiences proved to him the reliability of his own "way", the way to sagehood which follows the promptings of the human heart and its desire for the good. In a letter to a friend, written in 1526, near the end of his life, Yang-ming described the experience of being guided by the inner light, his own liang-chih, during his difficulties of 1520, and of the peace and equanimity this had given him:

Formerly, when His Majesty, Emperor Wu-tsung, was in Nanking [1520], his entourage vied with one another to slander me in his august presence. At that time, I faced unknown calamity, and my equals and subordinates all feared for me, saying that... I ought to attempt to explain myself. I answered that the gentleman does not expect the world to believe him, but is rather satisfied with his belief in himself.⁹

Yang-ming made up the formula chih liang-chih, (to extend the knowledge of the good), by inserting the word liang (good) between the words chih-chih (extending knowledge) of the Great Learning.¹⁰ The expression liang-chih also came from Mencius,¹¹ where it refers to the "inborn capacity to know the good", which, together with the "inborn ability to do good", or liang-neng, enables man to act according to his originally good nature, by the practice of virtue leading to complete self-transcendence. In an age when many philosophers searched for "universal" methods of attaining sagehood, the formula, chih liang-chih, became identified with the Yang-ming school. It is today the best known of many other formulas, including, for example, Chan Jo-shui's sui-ch'u t'i-jen T'ien-li 隨處體認真理 (recognising everywhere the 'principle of Heaven'),¹² Huang Wan's ken-chih 艮止 ([acting and] reposing harmoniously)¹³ and Liu Tsung-chou's shen-tu 慎獨 (being attentive to oneself when alone).¹⁴

Yang-ming had met with much criticism for his explanation of the "investigation of things" in terms of "making the intention sincere". He had attempted to defend himself by explaining that this manner of interpretation did allow for "the path of study and inquiry", which was subordinated to, or incorporated into, the practice of "honouring virtuous nature". As this did not adequately satisfy his critics, and after having been "tested" by trials and tribulations himself, he presented the final, synthesising concept of "extending liang-chih" as an all-inclusive way of self-cultivation which transcends all divisions between the "inner" and the "outer" realms of life, between activity and tranquillity. He sought, in this way, to interpret the Great Learning by means of Mencius. Indeed, the "extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things". But the extension of knowledge refers to extending the knowledge of the good, or better still, of all that goes to make the person good, by developing the capacity for virtue which he possesses in his heart, mind and nature. And besides, since genuine knowledge must involve action, such knowledge which makes a person virtuous or good necessarily flows into action.

The Great Principle: liang-chih

In the method of cultivation developed by Chu Hsi, the attitude of ching (reverence), and the exhaustive, assiduous investigation of li (being or virtue) occupy positions of primary importance. Hsin, (mind-and-heart) is limited in meaning to that source of human activity and consciousness which is composed of both li and ch'i (ether). While hsin controls both hsing (nature) and ch'ing (emotions), it does so only in the human being. It is inferior in importance to hsing, which is identified with li, and is therefore present in all things.¹⁵ For Yang-ming, however, hsin and hsing are one and the same, and, so to speak, co-extensive. The mind-and-heart's "capacity to know the good", is also somehow identical with the mind-and-heart itself, with nature, with li considered as "being" or

"virtue", and even with T'ien-li, the "principle of Heaven" or "perfect virtue".¹⁶ It is upon this principle--liang-chih--that Yang-ming built his own thought and method. It is from this principle that Yang-ming elaborated the entire interpretation of his thought and method.

If an unenlightened scholar is able to discern carefully the "principle of Heaven" in his heart, as things happen and as events occur, in order to develop his liang-chih, then... he will surely become intelligent and strong. The great Foundation will be established and the universal Way will prevail.¹⁷

Yang-ming describes liang-chih as an inborn moral sense, common to all, whether sages or men in the street, which gives all their fundamental dignity and equality. It enables a man to discriminate between right and wrong, not by providing him with ready-made concepts which can be applied a priori to individual, particular situations, but because it directs him to search for the good through a moral experience acquired in this orderly manner.

Our knowledge of the good (liang-chih) does not come from seeing and hearing, and yet seeing and hearing are all functions of liang-chih.¹⁸

He went on,¹⁹

Our capacity to know the good (liang-chih) is in the human heart, the same through all time and in the whole universe. It is the "capacity for knowledge which does not depend on reflective thinking"²⁰ which "works with ease and knows where danger is".²¹ It is "the ability for action which does not depend on learning",²² which "works with simplicity and knows where obstruction is".²³

To be genuine, liang-chih must be spontaneous, pre-reflective. It is the feeling of alarm and commiseration

any man would have when he sees a child fall into a well.²⁴ "It is no other than the 'principle of Heaven' in its [power] of natural consciousness."²⁵ Its "original substance" (pen-t'i 本體) is "genuine sincerity and compassion".²⁶ It is the foundation of all knowledge, embracing within itself all true learning. "There is no knowledge outside of this knowledge of the good (liang-chih), and no work outside that of extending this knowledge (liang-chih). He who seeks knowledge outside of this knowledge, finds only vain knowledge. He who seeks to perfect himself without extending this knowledge, falls into error".²⁷ It is the inner forum, where each man passes judgements on the moral rectitude of his own thoughts and intentions.

Your liang-chih is your own criterion. As your thoughts and intentions arise, it knows what is right and what is wrong. You cannot deceive it at all..... Follow it faithfully in everything you do. Then good will be preserved and evil will be removed. How secure and joyful [one can be] with it! This is the true secret of the investigation of things, and the real effort of extending knowledge.²⁸

It is compared to the Buddhists' "spiritual seal", which gives certitude to the truth they know, to the "stone" by which gold is tested, to the "mariner's compass" which gives direction to the traveller, to a secret medical formula, a miraculous pill, a magic wand by which iron can be changed into gold.²⁹ "If you see clearly into this 'little thing' (liang-chih)..., all right and wrong, sincerity and hypocrisy, will become manifest in front of it. What is in accord with it is right, what is not, is wrong."³⁰

However, although liang-chih begins as an inborn moral sense, it does not always offer a clear programme of detailed action. There is often need of reflection, of careful deliberation, for the sake of clarifying the basic response given by this "inborn moral sense". When made

sincerely, such effort becomes at once part of the "moral sense", increasing continually the original capacity for goodness. "In our countless thoughts and deliberations, we must only extend liang-chih. The more we think, the more liang-chih becomes clear and discerning. Unless one thinks carefully, without responding haphazardly to the affairs that arise, liang-chih would become rusty."³¹ Emperor Shun, for instance, was also known as a man who was fond of discernment and inquiry only for the sake of putting into application his liang-chih. He did not give himself to "seeing and hearing" for its own sake. He always united knowledge and action.³²

In order to explain how liang-chih, an "inborn" moral sense, is at the same time a disposition which can be acquired, Yang-ming gave two allegedly historical and well known examples. These concerned the legendary Shun, and the Sage King Wu 武王, founder of the Chou dynasty (1111-249BC).³³ Emperor Shun was said to have married the daughters of Emperor Yao without telling his own parents of his plans. According to known Confucian norms, this should have constituted an un-filial act. King Wu of Chou was reported to have launched a military expedition against the house of Shang before burying his own father. According to Confucian moral norms, this too should have constituted an un-filial act. However, the sage Mencius voiced approval of both men and their actions, because, in each case, the son was moved by a greater motive of filial piety than that which was required by social convention. Emperor Shun realised that his parents might not give consent to the projected marriage, which, however, was his way of assuring them proper descendants. King Wu desired urgently to save the people who were suffering under the cruel rule of King Chou of Shang. In each case, therefore, the person was faced with certain moral options, without the benefit of having before him any historical precedent recorded by the Classics. Each acted as he did, after having "queried his liang-chih in an instant of thought in his own heart and weighed all the factors involved."³⁴

The capacity to know the good, innate in all men, relies, therefore, not on abstract principles which can be applied to every case, but on the guidance of experiential wisdom. This may be acquired through reading of the Classics, especially when such reading is united to the activity of the virtuous intention, but also and more particularly through options made in perfect sincerity and often after much agony and reflection. It is in the depths of the human heart, in the hsin, and through the activity of liang-chih, that virtue and vice are discerned by the judgement and sealed by action. "If Emperor Shun's heart was not sincere about having no posterity, and if King Wu's heart was not sincere about saving the people, then the former's marriage... and the latter's expedition... would be cases of great filial impiety and disloyalty."³⁵

Thus, liang-chih is to "detailed actions and changing circumstances as compasses and measuring rods are to areas and lengths".³⁶ Detailed actions and changing circumstances cannot always be known in advance. But if liang-chih is genuine, and its basic and pivotal role well understood, detailed actions can always be decided upon as the changing circumstances arise. When seen in this perspective, a place can even be found for the study of ancient instructions.³⁷ Yang-ming, however, is loath to admit as the proper object of study for a Confucian scholar, those matters that do not immediately pertain to the cultivation of virtue. He does not, for example, consider the details of ritual matters and of music, as worthy of the attention of the disciples of the sages.³⁸ For him, the whole of education should be moral, in spirit as well as in content, directed entirely to man's real goal in life, the attainment of sagehood.

Since liang-chih is present in all men, and can be deepened and developed by all, and since its development or extension is the sine qua non of sagehood, it follows that the difference between the sage and the ordinary man is one of degree, not of kind, a degree of the intensity of liang-chih's presence in each. Yang-ming explained, that

the belief that a sage is "born with knowledge" referred to a capacity to know the good, rather than to "innate knowledge" concerning all matters of life and culture. He also added that ordinary people are also "born with knowledge", that is, with the same moral sense.³⁹ All must therefore make efforts to deepen and develop this capacity, to acquire more and more of the knowledge of the good. The sage, indeed, may be more gifted at birth. He may not need to make as much effort as another man. Nevertheless, he becomes a sage, not because of his natural endowment, but because he has been able to keep it pure and intact and free from obscuration. But even the least gifted person can attain sagehood, provided he is willing to make a hundred or a thousand times the effort required of a moral genius. Thus, with the practice of filial piety, the better endowed person may find it easier than the less gifted man. But both must make efforts to follow sincerely the inner light given by liang-chih, and by so doing, unite knowledge with action and increase and develop their original capacity for both.⁴⁰

Yang-ming was fond of comparing liang-chih to the sun. He used this comparison to describe the differences between the moral knowledge of the sage, the worthy man, and the fool. In each case, the knowledge concerned is not merely the inborn capacity, but also what has been acquired and realised, what has passed from potentiality to act. He said:

The knowledge [or wisdom] of the sage can be compared to the sun in a clear sky, that of the worthy man to the sun in a sky that is partly clouded, and that of the fool to the sun on a dark and dismal day. These three kinds of knowledge [seem to] differ in clarity, but have all the power of discerning between black and white, [although with unequal efficacy.]... The work of learning through assiduous study or effort is to begin with the light [one has] as a starting point, in examining things (wu) carefully.⁴¹

All men have liang-chih. Its presence in individual persons differs, however, according to the natural endowment of each, and, even more important, according to the degree of realisation to which each has brought his natural endowment.

Hsin chih pen-t'i

The Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1, speaks of the state of equilibrium (chung) which characterises the mind-and-heart before the rise of feelings, and the state of harmony (ho) which characterises it afterwards--provided that the feelings arisen are in due proportion to the events which aroused them. Chu Hsi had said that equilibrium is characteristic of hsing chih pen-t'i 性之本體, that is, pure "nature" as such, full of goodness or good potential.⁴² Yang-ming identified hsin to hsing. He spoke, therefore, of hsin chih pen-t'i 心之本體, that is, of the pure mind-and-heart, which he also identified to liang-chih. "Liang-chih is [hsin in] equilibrium before [emotions] are aroused..... It is what every man has."⁴³

The meaning of hsin chih pen-t'i is better clarified when it is discussed in terms of t'i (substance) and ying (application), the inner (nei) and the outer (wai).⁴⁴ It is as though hsin has many layers, one deeper than the other. Its pen-t'i is hsin at its deepest level, where it is totally itself, unchanging and unchangeable. There, it is "active without activity and tranquil without tranquillity. [It] is neither that which precedes or follows any state; it is neither internal nor external. It is totally undifferentiated, a unity in itself."⁴⁵

Contemplating hsin at its deepest level, Yang-ming also re-defines "activity" and "tranquillity". His criterion is not the movement of emotions, but the moral intention. When the intention is correct, no distinction need be made between states of mind as tranquillity and activity. Hsin would remain in peace, even when it is responding to events and affairs, just as it would not lack anything which activity may give, even when it is engaged in quiet meditation.

The state before the emotions arise exists in the state in which emotions have already arisen..... The state after the emotions have arisen [also] exists in the state before the emotions arise. Neither is without activity or tranquillity and neither can be separately described as active or tranquil.⁴⁶

Anxious to do away with unnecessary, subtle distinctions between tranquillity and activity, and to maintain that "equilibrium" and "harmony" penetrate each other, Yang-ming emphasised the dynamic function of liang-chih, ever tranquil and ever active. "Liang-chih makes no distinction between doing something and doing nothing."⁴⁷ It is foolish to seek after tranquillity for its own sake, because liang-chih itself is always tranquil, as it is also always active. Rather, one should simply stay alert, remaining always attentive to the task of keeping the heart as such pure and free from selfishness. This is what Mencius [2A,2] means by "Always be doing something".⁴⁸

Yang-ming describes liang-chih as the "shining hsin",⁴⁹ and also, compared it to a mirror. "Liang-chih always knows and always shines. It is like a bright mirror, hung [on the wall]. The things which appear before it cannot conceal their beauty or ugliness."⁵⁰ It is also identified to the "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li) or perfect virtue which fills the pure mind-and-heart. "There is only one liang-chih. It is where the 'principle of Heaven' is bright and spiritual. Therefore liang-chih and the 'principle of Heaven' are one and the same thing."⁵¹

The Great Method: Chih liang-chih

The "extension of liang-chih" is a possible task because liang-chih is at once inborn and acquired because liang-chih "originally knows everything and yet knows nothing."⁵² It is also an all-important task, because it alone can bring one to the desired goal of sagehood. Yang-ming was fond of saying that while sages and ordinary men all have liang-chih, sages differ from ordinary men by the fact that they know how to "extend" liang-chih and really do it.⁵³

The knowledge of the good (liang-chih) which is [present] in the mind and heart may be called sagehood (sheng 聖). The learning of sages lies precisely in extending this knowledge of the good. The sage is he who extends it with ease. The worthy man is he who extends it with some effort. The fool or the good-for-nothing is he who hides himself from the truth and refuses to extend it. However, no matter how great is his ignorance and foolishness, the good-for-nothing still possesses this capacity to know the good. If only he would extend and develop it, he would be no different from the sage... There is no [other] knowledge beyond this knowledge of the good.⁵⁴

A moral doctrine is always ordained to practice. If it is impracticable, it can hardly be called moral. Yang-ming's teachings concerning liang-chih were given for the sake of moral action. It is important, therefore, to find out how to "extend" or "develop" this capacity for goodness, which is at once inborn and acquired. Yang-ming himself was most emphatic about this. He considered "the extension of liang-chih" to be an "easy and simple" method, which is sure to bring man to sagehood. Nevertheless, one must understand it correctly. One must not, especially, take for granted the word chih (extend).

Among our companions now, there is not one who does not know this theory of the extension of liang-chih. Yet, there are very few who really apply their efforts in this direction. This is so because they do not yet see their liang-chih clearly, and especially take the word chih (extension) too light-heartedly, so that from many points of view they do not gain much in strength.⁵⁵

In his teachings on the subject, Yang-ming is careful in pointing out that the extension of liang-chih is not the acquisition of abstract principles of morality--for

example, of filial piety--or of simple techniques for performing moral duties--for example, of how to care for one's parents in hot or cold weather. It is simply the great principle, to do always in one's life what one's mind-and-heart says is right and good. And this involves both knowledge and action, or rather, of knowledge that is also action. As he told his disciple Lu Ch'eng:

All men have this moral ability to judge between right and wrong.⁵⁶ This is what we call liang-chih... There are [however] people who do not know how to extend it. The Book of Changes speaks of "knowing the utmost point to reach, and reaching it."⁵⁷ To know the utmost point is real knowledge. To reach it is to extend knowledge. This is how knowledge and action become united. In recent ages, the teaching concerning ko-wu (investigation of things] and chih-chih (extension of knowledge) covers only one word: chih (knowledge), and [even] that, it has done quite inconclusively. As to the effort of chih (extension), this has been completely omitted. This is why knowledge and action have been made two separate things.⁵⁸

In this discussion of the "extension of liang-chih", Yang-ming returned to his earlier teaching of the "unity of knowledge and action." Whether liang-chih pertains more to knowledge or action has been a subject of academic dispute. Where Yang-ming himself is concerned, however, there can be no doubt that knowledge and action necessarily penetrate each other, and that there is no true moral knowledge outside of action.⁵⁹

Purity of mind-and-heart

As said before, Yang-ming was much concerned about the proper understanding of liang-chih. He calls it the basic idea, the great principle, or the great starting-point. Yet he said remarkably little about how it is to be extended

or developed. He preferred rather to approach it from different angles, to see the work itself always as a whole, rather than as parts or steps. Man is a unity, and the work of acquiring wisdom is a unique endeavour. It is a work which takes up the whole of man, the whole of his time. It can neither be broken into fragments, nor organised into a system.

One angle from which Yang-ming contemplated the work of extending liang-chih is that of purifying hsin. For although the extension of liang-chih is a simple task, its practice can be quite difficult, on account of the resistance of hsin. This arises from man's "material desires" (wu-yü), which prevent the proper functioning of our movement toward the good. It is thus necessary that such selfish desires be removed, for the sake of making possible the spontaneous operation of liang-chih. As he put it:

The determination to have the mind-and-heart completely identified with the "principle of Heaven" and devoid even of the least bit of selfish desire is the work of becoming a sage. But this is not possible unless such desires are prevented from arising.... To do this is the task of caution and apprehension, as taught in the Doctrine of the Mean, and of the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things, as taught in the Great Learning.⁶⁰

This does not mean that a two-fold labour is required, first negative and then positive. On the contrary, the removal of selfish and material desires is accomplished, quite simply, by "making intention sincere". When our intentions are correct, liang-chih is thereby being extended.

To remove a bad intention is at once to have a good intention and to recover hsin chih pen-t'i. This is like the sun which had been hidden by clouds, and which becomes bright again when the clouds disappear. If, once the bad intention is gone, [one attempts] to have some good intention, it would be like lighting a lamp under the bright sun.⁶¹

Yang-ming especially singled out pride as the great danger to virtue. The proud son, he said, cannot be filial, the proud minister cannot be loyal, the proud father cannot be affectionate, and the proud friend cannot be faithful. His exhortation is that one should always keep the "principle of Heaven" pure and integral in the heart, for purity of heart means selflessness. The virtue of the ancient sages lies in their selflessness. Only the selfless can be humble. Humility is the fountain of all virtues, just as pride is the source of all vice.⁶²

To have no selfish desires, one must be able to get rid not only of one's desires for renown and profit, and for other particular interests, but also of the attachment to life itself. It is only when one is totally detached and unconcerned with life or death, that a man is single-minded. Only then will his heart be completely free, able to operate in every direction without encountering any obstacle.⁶³

While Yang-ming clearly asserted that selfish desires can be discerned and eliminated by meditation, he would never limit the task only to a time of formal "quiet sitting". He believed that hsin should be always active, even in meditation, just as it should remain always tranquil, even in the midst of activity.⁶⁴

Perfect Harmony

By harmony, Yang-ming refers to adherence to the natural state, without any affectation or insincerity. "The excess of emotion is not harmony. The movement of temper is not harmony. To be attached to selfish desires and stubbornness is not harmony. The infant cries all day without hurting his throat.⁶⁵ This is the extreme of harmony".⁶⁶

Yang-ming criticised Chu Hsi for making the work of maintaining harmony of the emotions too complicated, and for over-emphasising the role of tranquillity. He preferred to give more attention to activity, by which he means, to the attitude of constant vigilance and caution and apprehension over one's least movements. "When activity is not

without harmony, passivity or tranquillity will not lack equilibrium."⁶⁷

When asked about the control of anger, Yang-ming replied that it is natural to men to get angry sometimes. The important thing was not to let our anger go to excess. We can only respond spontaneously to events as they happen, without becoming too much affected by any of them. We may, for example, find people fighting, and get angry at the party in th wrong. But we should be careful to keep our hearts free, not allowing ourselves to become too emotionally involved.⁶⁸

To another question, as to how joy can be maintained when a person is experiencing a great sorrow, such as the death of his parents, Yang-ming's answer is quite different from the conventional one. There can be no joy, he says, unless the son has cried bitterly. "For joy means that hsin is at peace. [It means that] hsin-in-itself has not been perturbed."⁶⁹

To follow the course of nature in the control of emotions therefore, one must see to it that the emotions are in proportion to the events which arouse them. One must control anger, even in face of provocation, in order to avoid being carried away by anger. On the other hand, one need not fear giving in to sorrow, when there is just reason for it. The essential thing to do is to keep peace. Where there is peace, there is equilibrium and harmony.

For Yang-ming, hsin is a dynamic principle of moral activity. It is "always doing something".⁷⁰ To be more precise, it should always be "accumulating righteousness" (chi-yi 集義).⁷¹ Hsin should be always intent upon the practice of virtue, without ever forgetting this great objective, and without allowing itself to become impatient, and to seek for quick results. "If one accumulates righteousness in and through his own heart every hour and every minute, liang-chih pen-t'i 良知本體 will be absolutely clear and will spontaneously see right as right and wrong as wrong."⁷²

The extension of liang-chih refers to the whole task of pursuing wisdom, but the "accumulation of righteousness" speaks of the performance of individual acts of virtue. However, if every individual act one performs is just and right, hsin itself will certainly be in peace and harmony and the capacity to know the good will be developed. For this reason, Yang-ming stated that the "accumulation of righteousness" was nothing but the extension of liang-chih. And, to use the vocabulary of the Great Learning [ch.1], the extension of liang-chih in daily affairs means "investigating things" and "making the intention sincere". It effects also the "rectification of the hsin". To use the vocabulary of the Doctrine of the Mean, [ch.1] it is the same as being constantly alert when alone, practising vigilance without being seen, and apprehension without being heard.⁷³

To the question whether the constant practice of vigilance over self, of respect for one's virtuous nature, entails the loss of spontaneity and freedom, thus bringing about a state of tension, Yang-ming's answer was negative. For him, it is less a question of "practice", than one of "attitude". He did not require hsin to be always making conscious efforts. He merely insisted that it be kept always free from unruly desires.⁷⁴ "Always be doing something" is therefore merely a positive manner of stating the negative imperative, "Do away with your selfish desires".

To practise caution when one is not seen, and vigilance when one is not heard, refers to a state of mind-and-heart which one ought to have. [It is not the same as] being fearful and anxious... Respect and reverence arise out of the natural operation of the mind-and-heart. To arise out of the natural operation of the mind-and-heart, to do something without conscious action, refers to natural spontaneity.⁷⁵

Yang-ming opposes forcible exertion of self in the practice of virtue. To him, this would be indicative of

impatience, and so, of selfishness. After all, too much anxiety to attain perfection is in itself an imperfection and a hindrance. A beginner, he says, cannot suddenly jump into the position of a sage. Rise and fall, advance and retreat make up the natural rhythm of the task of extending liang-chih.

Whether the task advances or recedes, remain always [your own master] and extend liang-chih. Do this without ceasing, and in time [your] effort will succeed and no external events can disturb you.⁷⁶

Inseparable from Social Responsibility

Yang-ming teaches very clearly the fact that the extension of liang-chih is inseparable from the fulfilment of one's social responsibilities. For the gentleman who extends his "knowledge of the good" will naturally regard other people as he does himself, looking upon the country as his family, and seeing Heaven-and-Earth and all things as one. "[When this is the case], even if [we] want the world to be without good government, it would not be possible."⁷⁷ The ancient sages developed their knowledge of the good to such an extent that they felt that "the good came from themselves when they saw others doing good, and evil also came from themselves when they saw others doing evil. They regarded the hunger... of others as their own, and felt that when a man in want had not been adequately helped, it was as if they themselves had pushed him into a ditch."⁷⁸

The sage-emperors Yao and Shun and the Three Kings⁷⁹ spoke and all the people believed them, because in speaking they extended their knowledge of the good. They acted and all the people were pleased with them, because in acting they merely extended their knowledge of the good.⁸⁰

"The Way of Yao and Shun was simply that of filial piety and brotherly respect."⁸¹ Not everyone is placed in the position of a ruler. But everyone can practise the simple virtues of filial piety and brotherly respect, and, by doing so, contribute toward the good government of the world. When the extension of liang-chih is directed to serving parents, it is filial piety. When this... is directed to serving the ruler, it is loyalty."⁸²

This did not mean, however, that conventional standards of behaviour associated with filial piety and loyalty, or with all the other virtues governing man's social relationships, should always be closely followed. Mention has already been made of the unusual examples of Emperor Shun's marriage and of King Wu of Chou's military expedition. The events and circumstances of life cannot always be foreseen. One should remain always sincere and free from self-deception. "Given sincerity, there will be enlightenment."⁸³

[Therefore], throughout the countless changes [which occur] in his dealings with others, the gentleman acts if it is proper to act, stops if it is proper to stop, lives if it is proper to live, and dies if it is proper to die. In all his considerations and responses, he is always extending his liang-chih to its utmost.⁸⁴

Moral practice, therefore, aims at the highest goals of virtue, with the attainment of which man becomes completely sincere, free from the least duplicity and hypocrisy, to himself as well as to the others. Sagehood, after all, is the transformation of the inner man. It cannot be achieved by external imitation. To a friend who agreed that from the beginning the student should recognise the final end of his studies (hsüeh) as the achievement of sagehood, but who prescribed that such a student should also find out, from the beginning, "what the feelings and dispositions of a sage" are like, in

order that he may use these as a model, Yang-ming replied that the feelings and dispositions of the sage are his own, and cannot be "experienced" by someone else. Unless, a person seeks to experience at close range the lessons which his own liang-chih can teach him, it would be like using an unmarked scale to weigh things or looking for one's reflection in a covered mirror. In such a way does the inferior man judge the mind-and-heart of a gentleman by his own standards.

One's liang-chih is originally the same as that of the sage. If I can clearly experience my own liang-chih, then the sage's feelings and dispositions would not [only] be with the sage but [also] with me. Master Yi-ch'uan [Ch'eng Yi] once said,⁸⁵ "If one merely looks at [Emperor] Yao and imitate his [external] actions, without possessing his quickness of apprehension, intelligence, insight and wisdom, how can one always act and appear [as did he], always in accord with propriety?"⁸⁶

And so, throughout his life, a man's effort to cultivate virtue is directed only at one practice. From youth to old age, from morning to evening, he only has to extend his liang-chih in response to affairs and circumstances as they arise, rendering his hsin ever more sincere and transparent, open to life and to its challenges of greatness, open especially to the calls of responsibility which link him with others in a society which is fundamentally a moral order.

The Transmission Re-defined

Yang-ming set great store on his discovery of a "universal method". The formula, chih liang-chih, represented for him the acquisition of an infallible "starting point" or "basic principle" for the quest of sagehood. It was the prize which he had acquired in the midst of "a hundred deaths and a thousand difficulties". He hoped that it will not be taken for granted by later scholars. He considered it

to be the precious legacy of the sages.⁸⁷ In a letter dated 1521, he spoke of the discovery:

What I say about the extension of knowledge is the "treasure of the orthodox dharma-eye"⁸⁸ of the Confucian school. He who sees the truth of this, "sets it up before Heaven-and-Earth, and finds nothing in it in which he transgresses. He presents himself with it before spiritual beings, and finds no doubt regarding it. He examines it by comparing [it] with the doctrines of the three [sage] kings, and finds it free from error. He is ready to wait for a hundred years for a sage, without harbouring any misgiving."⁸⁹

For Yang-ming, the discovery he made was not of a new way, but rather of the only and universal Way, the Way of the sages, of Yao, Shun, Confucius and Mencius. He identified his teaching on chih-liang-chih to the "orthodox" Confucian doctrine, to that which was discovered by the earliest sages, but became lost with the death of Mencius, until, centuries later, it was expounded anew especially by Lu Chiu-yüan. This new presentation of "orthodox transmission", the establishment of a "new line" as well as the new interpretation of the "sacred legacy" of the sages, was given by him first in 1520,⁹⁰ probably a little before Yang-ming's public teaching on liang-chih. It was reaffirmed in 1512 and after, again and again, until the end of his life.

Yang-ming declared that the teaching of the sages is that of hsin, that profound and unitary source of man's moral judgements and actions as well as his vital consciousness, the "substance" of which he called jen (humanity)⁹¹ He pointed out Confucius' instruction to his disciple Tzu-kung 子貢 who had imagined that virtue could be procured through an abundant learning and who regarded as "humanity", the practice of "securing extensive benefits for the people". The Master, however, taught him to seek for "humanity" in an all-pervading

unity, in the quest for perfect virtue, and to learn to judge others by what is near oneself⁹²—that is, to seek the Way in one's own hsin. Yang-ming also recalled how Mencius, that great transmitter of Confucian doctrine, combatted the teachings of both Mo Ti and Kao-tzu. The former practised the virtue of humanity to the point of "rubbing his head and wearing out his heels",⁹³ while the latter taught that if the virtue of humanity resides in the person, that of righteousness is exterior to man. Mencius, however, combatted such tendencies of externalising virtue. For him, both humanity and righteousness are "in" man, in his hsin.⁹⁴ And so he said, "There is naught else in learning except the recovery of the lost hsin."⁹⁵

For Yang-ming, the Way of the sage-kings was lost when hsin and li became separate entities, giving the excuse to scholars to seek external and fragmentary knowledge of "laws, useful things and numbers", for the sake of understanding what is called wu-li 物理—the principles of things. By doing so, they deserted hsin, which is in reality identical to true li. Buddhists and Taoists, on the other hand, erred in another direction. Although they did seek for the understanding of hsin, they did not realise either that hsin is the source of all moral perfection and responsibility; they abandoned their social responsibilities, indulging rather in talks of emptiness and the void.⁹⁶

Fortunately, the transmission of the Way was resumed in Sung times. Yang-ming spoke explicitly of Chou Tien-yi's teaching of Wu-chi and T'ai-chi, and the practice of tranquillity,⁹⁷ and of Ch'eng Hao's teaching of hsin as being always the same, in both activity and tranquillity. But he did not consider either of them as direct "transmitters" of the Confucian teaching.⁹⁸ This honour was reserved to Lu Chiu-yüan.

Although [Lu's] teaching could not equal to that of Chou and Ch'eng in purity and harmony, it was simple and direct, it really transmitted to us the teaching of Mencius. That there existed certain features characteristic of him [and not of Mencius] in his discussion and [philosophical] elaborations

was due to differences in temperament and opinion between him and Mencius. However, in giving the essential teaching of the quest of the Way in hsin, he remained united to that great philosopher. That is why I always said that Lu's teaching was Mencius' teaching.⁹⁹

The Sacred Legacy

Like Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, Yang-ming regarded the "formula" taken from a forged chapter of the Book of Documents to contain the sacred message handed down by the early sages. But whereas Chu had interpreted jen-hsin as man's mind-and-heart, regarded as the seat of consciousness, composed of blood and "ether", and Tao-hsin as the same mind-and-heart, considered as the source of moral discernment, or the embodiment of the "principle of Heaven" in the person of the sage,¹⁰⁰ Yang-ming's explanation was much simpler. He said that Tao-hsin refers to the pure mind-and-heart, without selfish desires, described as "subtle" because of its spiritual character, while jen-hsin refers to the mind-and-heart contaminated by selfish desires, and so become prone to error. As to the remainder of the formula, he said that "discernment" and "single-mindedness" are practices which reinforce each other, making up, together, the task of achieving sagehood.¹⁰¹

Yang-ming identified Tao-hsin to liang-chih, our capacity to know and do good.¹⁰² He explained that the extension of liang-chih enables one to "keep steadfastly to the Mean". And since, for him, the Mean — the state of equilibrium preceding the rise of emotions—refers also to the "principle of Heaven", or hsin chih pen-t'i, it too was no different from liang-chih.¹⁰³

Yang-ming also identified the task of "being discerning and single-minded" to the extension of liang-chih. He believed, however, that this should be done gradually and attentively. He compared the work to that of giving water to a growing plant or tree. One should continue to water the tree. But one should not give it more water than it could take.¹⁰⁴

Notes to Chapter V

- 1 WWKC 3: 150a; Chan, Instructions, 237. Although this chapter discusses Yang-ming's practical philosophy in terms of a "method". I wish to indicate at the outset that the Chinese words kung-fu refer more to an "effort" of asceticism which disposes the person to inner enlightenment. See below, n. 46.
- 2 After his victory over the rebellious forces of Prince Ch'en-hao, Yang-ming proposed various practical measures for the alleviation of the difficulties of the people of Kiangsi, such as reduction of taxation, and increase of emolument to the impoverished officials in the lower ranks of local bureaucracy. In the meantime, Emperor Wu-tsung was enjoying himself south of the Yangtze. Instead of submitting moral lectures to the throne as did Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi, Yang-ming took the occasion of flood and famine in Kiangsi to rebuke himself for these natural calamities, begging for removal from office. Enumerating four crimes of which he regarded himself as being guilty, including that of failure to persuade the emperor to mend his ways, he concluded a memorial by saying: "Even if your servant should be executed as an example to the world, he would consider himself fortunate". An expression of irony and protest, this document certainly was. But it represented a futile effort, a desperate act undertaken with the hope of moving the heart of the sovereign, the really guilty party.
- See "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 949b-951b; Mao Ch'i-ling, Ming Wu-tsung wai-chi, op. cit., Yang-ming's memorial is found in WWKC 13: 390-391a. See its English translation by Chang Yü-ch'üan in his article, "Wang Shou-chen as a Statesman," CSPSR XXIII (1939-40), 221-2.
- 3 See "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 949-950a; Mao Ch'i-ling, Wang Wen-ch'eng chuan-pen, 2: 4a-5b as well as ch. III of thesis.
- 4 His other name was T'ang Yü-tso 唐虞佐. A chin-shih in 1508, he was to fill many important positions, such as Minister of Justice, of Civil Personnel, and of Military Affairs. See MS 202: 482. Cf. Liu Ts'un-yan, Wu Ch'eng-en, His Life and Career, (Leiden: 1967); Appendix I, p. 92.
- 5 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 950b. We have two extant letters written by Yang-ming to T'ang Lung. In the first, written in 1520, Yang-ming explained the reasons why he was willing to take disciples, including those who were less bright, for instructions in his philosophy. In the second, written the next year, he discussed "the study of the instructions of the ancients". See WWKC 4: 192-3, 5: 196-7.
- 6 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 951a.

- 7 Ibid. In a letter to Hsüeh K'an (1518) there was already a hint of liang-chih, described as "this little thing" (che-hsieh-tzu 這小子) WWKC 4: 188b.
- 8 "K'o wen-lu hsü-shuo", WWKC, Prefaces, 13b-14a.
- 9 WWKC 6: 214a-b.
- 10 Great Learning, ch. 1; Legge, v.1, 358. The text says that "the extension of knowledge is in the investigation of things".
- 11 Mencius 7A, 15; Legge, v. 2, 456. The text says, "The ability man has without having to acquire by learning is liang-neng; the knowledge man has without having to acquire by reflection is liang-chih".
- 12 MJHA 37: 2b; Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 52.
- 13 Huang Wan, Ming-tao p'ien, op.cit., 20. MJHA 13: 5b; Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 174-177. The two Chinese words literally mean, to limit and to stop. The expression is taken from the Book of Changes. The word ken represents the fourth trigram, and has also the meaning of "mountain". It also represents the fifty-second hexagram. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 5: 15b-16a; Legge, Yi King, 256 where the metaphysical meaning is "When one's movements and restings all take place at the proper time for them, his way [of proceeding] is brilliant and intelligent". I have simplified it by saying "[acting] and reposing harmoniously". It refers especially to keeping one's spirit always recollected, in both activity and tranquillity. See also Liu Ts'un-yan, "Lin Chao-en, 林兆恩 (1517-1598) Master of the Three Teachings," T'oung-pao, LIII (1967) 253-278.
- 14 MJHA 62: 4b; Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 329-331.
- 15 CTYL 5: 1b-3b. The idea that hsin controls both hsing and ch'ing came from Chang Tsai. Yet Chu Hsi continued to consider hsin as somehow "less good" than hsing because he considered the former, more dynamic principle to be affected by ch'i, and the latter, more passive principle to be full of li, with no admixture of ch'i.
- 16 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 94a; [Chan, Instructions, 103]. Letter to Ou-yang Te, WWKC 2: 114b [Chan, Instructions, 152]. See Mou Tsung-san, Wang Yang-ming chih-liang-chih chiao [Wang's Doctrine of the Extension of liang-chih], (Taipei: 1954); 2-4.
- 17 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 94a; Chan, Instructions, 103.
- 18 Letter to Ou-yang Te, WWKC 2: 113b; Chan, Instructions, 150. Yang-ming did not say that "things" (wu) are a product of hsin, or of mental processes. He rather pointed out that "things", by which he referred to human acts, particular to man's behaviour in society, owe their moral character to hsin and its liang-chih.

- 19 Ibid., WWKC 2: 116a; Chan Instructions, 156.
- 20 Mencius 7A: 15; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 456.
- 21 Chou-yi cheng-yi, 8: 13b; Legge, Yi King, 404.
- 22 Mencius 7A: 15; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 456.
- 23 Book of Changes, Appended Remarks, pt. 2. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 8: 13b; Legge, Yi King, 404.
- 24 Mencius 2A, 6. Legge Classics, v. 2, 202. Mencius says that this "innate" feeling arises spontaneously, before the man has time to consider other reasons for which he may wish to save the child, for example, to gain the favour of the child's parents, the praise of friends and neighbours, or to avoid criticism for not showing compassion. Chu Hsi also commented on the "pre-reflective" nature of such feeling. See CTYL 53: 4a-5b. Yang-ming made reference to this parable in Mencius in his essay, "Ta-hsüeh wen" 大學^{第9} [Inquiry into the Great Learning], WWKC 26: 736a; Chan, Instructions, 272.
- 25 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2: 124b; Chan, Instructions, 176. This letter was written in 1528, not long before Wang's death.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Letter to Ou-yang Te, WWKC 2: 113b; Chan, Instructions, 150.
- 28 WWKC 3: 131a; Chan, Instructions, 193. According to Ch'en Wei-chün 陳惟愷 (1495-1562), this was in 1520. The accent placed on making intention sincere is clearly given.
- 29 WWKC 3: 131b; Chan, Instructions, 194. For the allusions to Taoist alchemy, see Arthur Waley, "Notes on Chinese Alchemy," Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies VI, (1930), 12-13.
- 30 Ibid. Yang-ming's liang-chih has sometimes been compared to Kant's "categorical imperative"--the moral law obliging human beings a priori to strive for the highest good through use of freedom. But where Kant reached this ultimate principle through analysis of common knowledge and then examined its use in common knowledge, Yang-ming discovered liang-chih through an experience of inner enlightenment and applied it to practical use as a principle of action.
- 31 WWKC 3: 145a-b; Chan, Instructions, 226.
- 32 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 97b; Chan, Instructions, 112-3.

33 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 96b; Chan, Instructions, 109-110. This letter was written some time before 1524. Shun was supposedly the filial son of a blind and foolish father and a wicked step-mother who hated him but spoiled her own son, his step-brother. Shun distinguished himself in the service of Emperor Yao, who offered his own [two] daughters to Shun in marriage. To prevent any obstacle his own father and step-mother might place in his way, Shun married them without first asking for his parents' consent. Shun was a figure of legend. King Wu, on the other hand, was a figure of history, the founder of the dynasty of Chou, who undertook to fight against his tyrannical overlord before the burial of his own father, King Wen 文王, was properly accomplished. He successfully defeated the forces of King Chou of Shang 商紂 and established a new dynasty. See Mencius 5A: 2, Legge, Classics, v. 2, 345-6, for the question of Shun's marriage. See also Shih-chi 4: 73; 61: 179.

34 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 96b; Chan, Instructions, 110. See also Yamada Jun, op.cit., 121-125.

35 Ibid. See T'ang Chün-i, "Yang-ming-hsüeh yü Chu-Lu yi-t'ung ch'ung-pien," op.cit., 39-43.

36 Ibid., WWKC 2: 96a; Chan, Instructions, 109. Yamada Jun, op.cit., 130.

37 Ibid., WWKC 2: 97b; Chan, Instructions, 112.

38 Ibid., WWKC 2: 99a-b; Chan, Instructions, 116-7.

39 Ibid.

40 WWKC 3: 146b; Chan, Instructions, 229-230.

41 WWKC 3: 146a; Chan, Instructions, 228.

42 This teaching of Chu's, based on the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1, evolved after much thought and discussion, and is considered to lie at the core of his philosophy and method of cultivation. Ch'eng Yi had identified hsing with mind-and-heart (hsin) before the rise of emotions (wei-fa 未發, unstirred), when it is said to be in a state of "equilibrium" or "tranquillity", and hsin with mind-and-heart after the rise of emotions (yi-fa 已發, stirred). If the emotions are "in due proportion", it is in a state of "harmony", or what may be called, harmonious "activity". See Yi-shu, 18: 15a-17a; Chan, Source Book, 566-567. Chu Hsi explained this by emphasizing on the oneness of hsin, and by pointing out that since "equilibrium", the state of lost innocence, cannot strictly speaking be restored, while "harmony" cannot easily be manipulated, one should seek to unite "tranquillity" and "activity" by permeating life with the spirit of reverence (ching). See Chung-yung chang-chü, SSCC, 2a; Letter to his friends in Hunan, CWWC 64: 30b-31b; Chan, Source Book, 600-602. "Chin-hsin shuo" 盡心說 [On Developing hsin], CWWC 67: 16b-17a. See also Chiang Yung, Chin-ssu lu chi-chu, 2: 19b-20a. Chan, Reflections, 79-80, for the comment by Yeh Ts'ai.

43 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 106b. Both in this letter, and in another, earlier letter to Wang Chün 汪俊 [Wang Shih-t'an 汪石潭] (1511), WWKC 4: 172a-173b, Yang-ming discussed the questions of the relationship between hsing and hsin, in terms of wei-fa and yi-fa, of t'i (substance) and yung (application). The substitution of hsin for hsing as the most important factor in self-cultivation is of great consequence, for it is the substitution of a passive principle by a dynamic one.

44 Hsin chih pen-t'i is an extremely important principle in Yang-ming's philosophy. Being identified with liang-chih, it represents that, in the dynamic hsin, which is also unchanging in the midst of activity, with what appears to be absolute qualities,—the one Reality (t'i) behind the Many (yung, or reality as it is constantly changing).

45 The nei-wai (inner-outer) distinction can be made both in the metaphysical sense, in which the inner realm corresponds to the invisible reality or t'i and the outer realm corresponds to the visible changes through yung, [See Ch. 1, n. 27] or, in the practical sense, to the contrasting tendencies of human nature toward inner contemplation and outer action. Since Yang-ming viewed knowledge and action, and, in a certain way, even t'i (substance, reality) and yung (practice, application) as one, he could find no distinction between the inner-outer realms of reality or action. See the following note.

46 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 107b-108b; Chan, Instructions, 137. Where Chu Hsi had sought to unite activity and tranquillity through the practice of reverence, Yang-ming attempted to find it at the source of one's being itself, in this pen-t'i of hsin, which possesses the ability of perfecting itself. For him, the union of activity and tranquillity is accomplished not merely by the continual effort (kung-fu) of self-cultivation, of watchfulness over one's least movements whether in meditation or at other times, but also by the awareness that hsin chih pen-t'i, the source and origin of activity and tranquillity, is itself one and indivisible. For this reason, Yang-ming frequently mentioned that pen-t'i,—at once the agent of its own perfection and the goal of such endeavour, the identification of self with the unchanging One,—is to be found in kung-fu, and vice versa. For this reason too, he explained how difficult it is to describe kung-fu, which is continually simplifying itself. See WWKC 3: 130b Chan, Instructions, 192. See also T'ang Chün-yi, "Yang-ming-hsüeh yü Chu-Lu yi-t'ung ch'ung-pien", op.cit, 16.

47 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 107b; Chan, Instructions, 136. See also Wang Tchang-tche, La Philosophie Morale, 127-131.

48 Ibid., WWKC 2: 110b-111a; Chan, Instructions, 143-144. The reference is to Mencius 2A: 2; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 190.

- 49 Ibid., WWKC 2: 109a; Chan, Instructions, 139-140. Note the "mirror image" again. See Wang Tchang-tche, La Philosophie Morale, 131-134. Wang Tchang-tche noted that hsin refers both to the principle of action and the act itself. Hence the adjective "shining" can also refer to the object reflected in hsin, to hsin itself as that which reflects, or to the action of reflecting light.
- 50 Ibid., WWKC 2: 112b-113a; Chan, Instructions, 148-9. See above, n. 49. See also Yamada Jun, op.cit., 164.
- 51 Letter to Ou-yang Te, WWKC 2: 114b; Chan, Instructions, 152. T'ang Chün-i, Chung-kuo che-hsüeh yüan-lun, Yüan-hsing p'ien [An Inquiry into Chinese Philosophy, Section on Human Nature], (Hong Kong: 1968); 433-434.
- 52 WWKC 3: 145a; Chan, Instructions, 225.
- 53 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 96a; Chan, Instructions, 108; Okada Takehiko, O Yomei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 75-76.
- 54 "Shu Wei Shih-meng chüan," 書魏師孟卷 [Essay Written in Honour of Wei Shih-meng], (1525), WWKC 8: 268b.
- 55 Letter to Ch'en Wei-chün (1527), WWKC 6: 225a. See Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō - Min jidai jugaku, 436-437; Okada Takehiko, O Yōmei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 76.
- 56 Mencius 6A: 6; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 402.
- 57 Book of Changes, Commentary on the Hexagram Ch'ien; see Chou-yi cheng-yi, 1: 8a; Legge, Yi King, 410.
- 58 Letter to Lu Ch'eng (1529), WWKC 5: 201a. The meaning of the semantic shift from Chu Hsi's chih-chih (extension of knowledge) to Yang-ming's chih liang-chih (extension of the knowledge of good) is here explained as that of emphasis on the first word in each case: chih (extend), and in view of uniting knowledge and action.
- 59 Liang ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Yang-ming chih-hsing ho-yi chih chiao, Yin-ping shih wen-chi, 43: 50; T'ang Chün-i, "Yang-ming-hsueh yu Chu-Lu yi-t'ung ch'ung-pien", op.cit., 13-15.
- 60 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 109b; Chan, Instructions, 140-1. Since hsin has been identified to hsing, which is originally full of goodness, it follows reasonably that liang-chih should be somehow identified with hsin-in-equilibrium. But the origin of wu-yü is not explained. The word, of course, recalls to mind Lu Chiu-yüan's teaching, which also attributed evil to wu-yü. In Yang-ming's case, however, the word used by the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi, jen-yü (selfish, human desires) occurs even more frequently. See WWKC 1: 62a-b, 81a-b; 2: 109a-b; Chan, Instructions, 20-21, 60-62, 140-141.

- 61 WWKC 3: 136b; Chan, Instructions, 206.
- 62 WWKC 3: 158a; Chan, Instructions, 259.
- 63 WWKC 3: 144a; Chan, Instructions, 223. The subject of single-mindedness and indifference to life or death is treated in Mencius 7A: 1.
- 64 WWKC 3: 144a-b; Chan, Instructions, 223-224. He rebuked a disciple who questioned the effectiveness of such practice, saying that "quiet-sitting" is useful even to those who have practised it for ten or more years. As this occurred in 1520 or after, it shows Yang-ming's mature attitude toward "quiet-sitting".
- 65 The reference is to Lao-tzu, ch. 55, SPPY ed., 12a. See Eng. tr. in Chan, Source Book, 165.
- 66 Letter to Hsü Hsiang-ch'ing 許相卿 [Hsu T'ai-chung 許台仲 1479-1557], WWKC 27: 769b.
- 67 Letter to Wang Chün (1511) WWKC 4: 172b. Kusumoto Masatsugu spoke of the influence of the Ts'ao-tung 曹洞 [Japanese: Soto] sect of Ch'an Buddhism with its quietist tendency, on Chu Hsi, and that of the more active Lin-chi 臨濟 [Japanese: Rinzai] sect, on Wang Yang-ming. See Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 238-241.
- 68 WWKC 3: 136a; Chan, Instructions, 204-205.
- 69 WWKC 3: 146a-147b; Chan, Instructions, 230.
- 70 See above, n. 48.
- 71 Mencius 2A: 2; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 190. See also the discussion on chi-yi in Yang-ming's letter to Tung Yün 董澂 [Tung Lo-shih 董蘿石 1457-1533] (1515), WWKC 5: 207-208. See Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 441-442.
- 72 Letter to Nieh Pao, (1528), WWKC 2: 123a-124a; Chan, Instructions, 173-175. A disciple of Yang-ming's, Nieh Pao would later develop a more quietist tendency, and would be helped in this by Lo Hung-hsien 羅洪先 [Lo Nien-an 羅念庵 1504-1564] in their effort to counteract the excesses of the T'ai-chou branch. See MJHA 17: 10a-13b; 18: 4b-11b.
- 73 WWKC 1: 83b; 2: 108b; Chan, Instructions, 77: 139-140. Such watchfulness over one's least interior movements would be emphasised by those of his disciples who have been considered as his rightful heirs. They included Ch'ien Te-hung, Tsou Shou-yi, and Ou-yang Te and, still later, Liu Tsung-chou. See MJHA 11: 6a; 16: 5a; 17: 2a; 62: 7a-b. See also Yamada Jun, op.cit., 170; Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Minmatsu no jugaku, 170-173.

- 74 Letter to Shu Kuo-yung 舒國用 (1523), WWKC 5: 201b.
- 75 Ibid., WWKC 5: 202a. Chu Hsi had also spoken of watchfulness over self, but emphasised the seriousness of this effort, whereas Yang-ming presented it as a spontaneous action. See CTYL 62: 17b-23b; see also T'ang Chün-i, "Yang-ming-hsueh yü Chu-Lu yi-t'ung ch'ung-pien," op.cit., 21-27.
- 76 WWKC 3: 138a; Chan, Instructions, 209.
- 77 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2: 120b; Chan, Instructions, 167.
- 78 Ibid., Allusion made is to the Book of Documents, "Yüeh-ming" 說命 pt. 2; Legge, Classics, v. 3, 262.
- 79 The Three Kings were T'ang of Shang 商湯, and Wen and Wu of Chou. See also above, n. 33.
- 80 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2: 120b; Chan, Instructions, 167.
- 81 Mencius 6B: 2; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 424.
- 82 Letter to Nieh Pao (1528) WWKC 2: 124b; Chan, Instructions, 176.
- 83 Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 21; Legge, Classics, v. 1, Li Ao had quoted this sentence earlier. See "Fu-hsing shu", Li Wen Kung chi, 1: 8a.
- 84 Letter to Ou-yang Te, WWKC 2: 115a; Chan, Instructions, 153.
- 85 Yi-shu, 18: 5a. Ch'eng Yi alludes here to the Doctrine of the Mean ch. 31.
- 86 Letter to Chou Heng 周衡 [Chou Tao-t'ung 周道通] (1524), WWKC 2: 103b-104a; Chan, Instructions, 127-128.
- 87 See Ch'ien, "K'o wen-lu hsü-shuo," WWKC Prefaces, 13b-14a; see also "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 951a-b.
- 88 Allusion to the Buddhist story regarding the origin of Ch'an according to which Siddharta once showed his listeners a flower while preaching a sermon. The only person who understood his meaning was his disciple Mahakasyapa who smiled. So Siddharta gave him the "orthodox treasure" of the "dharma-eye", that is, the heart of his message, which is not transmitted by the written texts. "Dharma-eye" (fa-yen 法眼) is literally, that which looks into the depths of truth. The story, however, is of very late origin, to be found in the Ch'an collection compiled by Wu-ming (fl. 1189) Lien-teng hui-yao 1, Zokuzōkyō 1st coll., pt. 2, B, case 9, 220b-221a and is also alluded to in the Preface to the Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an ching, TSD No. 2008, XLVIII, 345c and Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu 1, TSD No. 2076, No. I, 205b-c. For this reason Mahākāśyapa was considered to be the first Ch'an patriarch. See also Daisetz T. Suzuki, Studies in Zen (London: 1955); 12, 21.

- 89 Letter to Yang Shih-ming 楊仕鳴 (1521), WWKC 5: 198a, Allusion is to Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 29; Legge, Classics, v. 1, 425-426.
- 90 This was done in his Preface to the new edition of Hsiang-shan wen-chi which he himself republished, WWKC 7: 242b-243b. Earlier in 1511, in a preface written in honour of Chan Jo-shui, Yang-ming had spoken of the transmission of Confucian doctrine to Yen Hui 顏回, Tseng-tzu, and Mencius, with whose death it was lost. But he made no mention then of Lu. See WWKC 7: 242b-243b.
- 91 WWKC 7: 242b. This shows a continuity of Ch'eng Hao's emphasis on jen.
- 92 Analects 6: 28; 15: 2; Legge, Classics, v. 1, 194.
- 93 A description given by Mencius 7A: 26; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 464-465.
- 94 Mencius 6A: 4-5; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 397-400.
- 95 Mencius 6A: 11; Legge, Classics, v. 2, 414.
- 96 "Ta-hsueh wen," WWKC 26: 737b; Chan, Instructions, 274-275.
- 97 WWKC 7: 243a. Note that Yang-ming mentioned Wu-chi and T'ai-chi explicitly.
- 98 WWKC 7: 243a. I presume that he is referring to Ch'eng Hao, and not Ch'eng Yi. Earlier, in 1511, he had mentioned Chou Tun-yi and the two Ch'engs explicitly as the orthodox "transmitters". See the essay he wrote in honour of Chan Jo-shui, WWKC 7: 232a.
- 99 WWKC 7: 242a-b. Elsewhere, Yang-ming praised Lu as the only great thinker that had appeared since Chou and Ch'eng, but remarked that his teaching lacked precision. See WWKC 3: 130b-131a; Chan, Instructions, 192.
- 100 CTYL 78: 2b-3a. See above, Ch. I.
- 101 WWKC 1: 60b; 2: 106a; 3: 139a; 4: 189b. Chan, Instructions, 16-17; 132-133; 212.
- 102 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 97b; Chan, Instructions, 112. See also Araki Kengo, Bukkyo to Jukyo, 401.
- 103 WWKC 1: 70; 74. Chan, Instructions, 42; 52. For Chu Hsi, the "Mean" refers to the state of equilibrium, although he also said that, in the context of the Book of Documents, it is to be understood as "going to no excess". See CTYL 62: 2a-b; 78: 104a.
- 104 WWKC 2: 117b; 3: 134a. Chan, Instructions, 160; 200.

- 105 WWKC 33: 951a. The belief was that if the descent was not genuine, the blood would not be absorbed by the bones. The story can be traced to Nan-shih [History of the Southern Dynasties], ESWS, 53: 128a, in the biography of Hsiao Tsung 蕭綏 Emperor Wu of Liang's 梁武帝 (r. 502-549) second son, who had doubts regarding his paternity. Kusumoto Masatsugu pointed out that Yang-ming attributed to liang-chih the power of instinctive consciousness which such "warm blood" was supposed to possess, thus infusing into ethical awareness a "vital" quality. See Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 415.
- 106 Probably referring to the thousand years which preceded the death of Mencius.
- 107 This does not necessarily mean that the words liang-chih were literally handed down verbatim by the sages, but that they express the core of the sacred message.
- 108 WWKC 20: 630a. The diagram is an allusion to Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi t'u.
- 109 See Letter to Tsou Shou-yi (1525), WWKC 6: 212. In Chinese, the question and answer are phrased in identical words.

I can be so happy as to forget my own self."⁶ As a
disciple, Huang Hsing-tse^{ng} 黃省曾 [Huang
Mien-chih 黃勉之] said:

...While the Master had many friends and followers even before the Nanking days [1514-16], there were never as many as in Yüeh [Yü-yao]. This was partly because the more lectures he gave, the more people believed him. Essentially, however, it was because the Master's daily progress in learning gave him a mysterious power of attraction and influence....⁷

It is our aim, in this chapter, to examine the results of this period of the culmination of Yang-ming's teachings. It is our assertion that this culmination lies in a form of "mysticism", taking this word to refer to the total vision of life and reality which he developed, as well as to the transcendent ideals of sagehood which he outlined. In this connection, it may be also claimed that Yang-ming himself attained an enduring state of mind, both sublime and human, which made him regard himself as being related to all reality in a dynamic unity of heart and spirit. However, since it is his thought more than his personal life which interests us—although the two can hardly be separated—we shall present Yang-ming's enunciation of his "total vision", and then proceed to an examination of his teaching of hsin, this time not only as a principle of moral activity but also as the dynamic principle of vital consciousness which unites man to the universe and makes of him its psychic centre, its heart, its hsin.

All in One⁸

Yang-ming gave expression to these ideas and ideals especially in his famous essay of 1527, the "Ta-hsueh wen" [Inquiry into the Great Learning], which is supposed to embody his basic teachings and "final conclusions". But the ideas and ideals themselves existed seminally in many of his earlier writings, as well as in his recorded

conversations. In this respect, in the letter addressed to Ku Lin, the long passage on "Pulling the Roots and Stopping the Source" (po-pen sai-yuan 拔本塞源),⁹ probably written in 1524 or earlier, is noteworthy. Out of these texts emerges a unified picture, rich with meaning, of Yang-ming's understanding of sagehood as culminating in an experience of oneness with Heaven and Earth and all things, an experience which permeates the sage's thinking and being and acting, which becomes identified with his hsin or liang-chih and its pen-t'i, overflowing into a concrete awareness of his social and political responsibilities.

"An Inquiry into the Great Learning" begins by explaining the title of the book as "the learning of a great man", that is, of a sage. It goes on doing so by concentrating on the words, "making illustrious virtue manifest", which Yang-ming had, already in 1508, explained as that which expresses the entire task of self-cultivation. Yang-ming says here that the great man is he who regards Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad things as one body, the world as one family and the country as one person. This state of mind, however, is not the result of deliberate efforts of the will, but the natural and spontaneous outcome of his "humane" heart—full of jen—and unobscured by selfish desires.¹⁰ To prove this, Yang-ming gives as an example the spontaneous, pre-reflective reactions of any man, even of the "small man", the man mediocre in virtue and learning:

When he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help having a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humanity (jen) forms one body with the child. It may be objected that the child belongs to the same species [as he]. Yet when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and beasts [about to be slaughtered], he cannot help feeling an "inability to hear" their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and beasts. It may be objected that birds and beasts are sentient

beings too. But when he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help having a feeling of pity. This shows that his humanity forms one body with plants. It may be said that plants are living things too. Yet even when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed he cannot help having a feeling of regret. This shows that his humanity forms one body with tiles and stones. This means that even the heart of the small man must have [in potentiality, this humanity which unites him to all things].¹¹

The great man "cultivates his moral qualities to such a point as to enable a happy order to prevail throughout Heaven-and-Earth and so that all things flourish".¹² He has been compared, time and again, to a bright mirror. He has been compared to Heaven itself. He is one whose nature has been completely transformed, who is completely identified with goodness. He practises virtue by instinct. He is always joyous and peaceful, in harmony with the universe, and participating in its creative processes.¹³

According to Yang-ming, this "humane" heart which unites man to all things is rooted in our Heaven-endowed nature, and is naturally intelligent and clear. For this reason it is called ming-te (illustrious virtue or clear character). It is present in all men, "great" and "small" alike, so long as the mind-and-heart is unmoved by selfish desires. When aroused by these, however, and when compelled by greed for gain and fear of harm or the impulse of anger, man is capable of destroying things, of killing members of his own species, even of slaughtering his own brothers--evil actions which cause his "humanity" to disappear. The universal task of self-cultivation, for both the small and the great man, lies therefore in removing selfish desires, and in making manifest "illustrious virtue", so that the "original condition of the unity of Heaven and Earth and the myriad things may be restored".¹⁴

In other words, "humanity" is the natural development of spontaneous feelings of commiseration, coming from within man's mind-and-heart, in order to embrace all others, from his nearest kin on. The Mohist notion of love, however, disregards the spontaneous quality of this love itself as well as the natural distinctions inherent in social relations and in the order of things. The danger is that, by promoting an "equal love of all", the very nature of love be denied. For if love springs spontaneously from man's nature, it must also recognise the order of nature itself, with its inherent distinctions, based on natural kinship and obligations.

In this regard, a letter Yang-ming wrote to Huang Hsing-tseng in 1524 is also significant.¹⁷ Huang had spoken approvingly of Han Yü's definition, that "universal love is called jen (humanity)",¹⁸ calling to mind also Chou Tun-yi's statement, the "Love is jen".¹⁹ To him, it seemed that both of these sayings agreed well with the meaning given to the word by Mencius. He was however puzzled by the fact that other Sung thinkers had criticised Han Yü, preferring rather to relegate love to the realm of emotions (ch'ing), while using jen to signify a virtue pertaining to nature (hsing).²⁰ Yang-ming replied that he too, agreed with Huang, recalling also how Confucius himself had said that the meaning of jen lay in "loving others".²¹ He then went on to speak of a "correct" kind of love and an "incorrect" kind of love:

But while the pen-t'i of love can be called jen, there is a kind of love that is correct, and a kind that is not correct. Only the correct kind of love is the pen-t'i of love, and can be called jen. If one knows only universal love, without distinguishing between the correct and incorrect kinds of love, there will be a difference.²²

However, what did Yang-ming mean by the "correct" and "incorrect" kinds of love? For the answer to this question, we must once again go back to the "Inquiry into the Great

Learning", and examine his teaching concerning the order of "relative importance" among things, that is, whether all things are equally important, or whether some are more important than others, and should be recognised as such. This time, the specific question posed to him was that, if the great man forms one body with all things, why should the text of the Great Learning refer to things as possessing a "relative importance"?²³ Again, Yang-ming answered by giving the example of a living organism--this time of the human body. The body is of course a unity. However, the nature of things being what they are, we use our hands and feet to protect the head, without intending to show less regard for the hands and feet, but rather for the sake of the whole body. So too, we love both plants and animals and yet feed animals with plants. We love both animals and men, and yet allow the animals to be slaughtered in order to feed our parents, to provide for religious sacrifices, and to entertain our guests at table. The same can be said of our love for our parents and for the man in the street. If we have only a little bit of food with which to save either our parents or the man in the street from hunger, we will prefer to save our parents in stead of the man in the street. And so, to love all things, to be one with all things through the practice of the life-giving virtue of humanity (jen) does not necessarily preclude distinctions being made in the concrete application of our love and humanity. In fact, the humane feeling we may have for all people is itself somehow derived from the affection we bear for our parents. It is again the question of roots and branches, because it is a question of the communication of life within the living organism. We must accept both our own limitations and the natural order of things. "What the Great Learning describes as [an order of] natural importance refers to the natural order derived from our knowledge of the good (liang-chih). Not to transgress this [natural order] is called righteousness (yi). To act according to this order is called propriety (li). To know this order is called wisdom (chih). To follow this order from beginning to end is called fidelity (hsin 信)."²⁴ Fidelity, therefore, sums up righteousness, propriety and wisdom.

Ch'in-min: loving the people

Proceeding with the text of the Great Learning, Yang-ming then went on to explain the expression of "loving the people" (ch'in-min). Making the distinction between t'i (substance, reality) and yung (activity), he said that "making manifest clear or illustrious virtue"--the perfection of self--refers to the work of "establishing the 'reality' (t'i) of the unity of Heaven and Earth and the myriad things", whereas "loving the people" is the "activity" which flows from this same unity. In other words, making manifest our clear virtue lies in loving the people, and loving the people is the way to manifest clear virtue: these being two aspects of the same work. And then, in the concrete, practical language so characteristic of him, Yang-ming gives examples of how the practice of filial piety and of other social virtues, when extended to embrace not merely one's own parents and kin but the parents and kin of all men, brings about this unity of man with all things.

Only when I love my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men, can my humanity really form one body with my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men.... Then the clear virtue of filial piety will be made manifest.....²⁵

Even the world of spirits, of beasts and of plants and of inanimate beings are to be included in this all embracing jen:

Everything from ruler, minister, husband, wife and friends to mountains, rivers, heavenly and earthly spirits, birds, beasts and plants, all should be truly loved in order that the unity may be reached [through] my humanity (jen). Then will my clear virtue be completely made manifest; then will I really form one body with Heaven and Earth and the myriad things.²⁶

Just as, in personal life, the quest of sagehood lies in the "recovery" of one's original nature, so too, in social and political life, the same quest lies in recapturing a Golden Past, a moral "Utopia". Yang-ming's sage is not a contemplative lost in the wonder and admiration of his own unity with the world, but a man with social and political responsibilities striving to make this reality a social and political fact. For him, the world of nature and of human society are fundamentally one, and unity with other men extends itself to unity with birds and beasts and the whole cosmos.

In a letter he wrote to Ku Lin some time before 1524, Yang-ming explained the chief ideas of his "utopian theory". Beginning with the doctrine of the unity between the self and all things, he says:

The mind-and-heart of the sage considers Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad things as one body and regards all men under Heaven, whether inside or outside [his family], near or far, all with blood and breath, as his brothers and children and kin. He wants to give peace and security, education and nourishment to all, in order to fulfil his desire of [really] forming one body with all things.²⁷

In this ideal society, everything contributes to helping the people live a moral life, and attaining the highest goals of sagehood. There was no fear of envy or discontent. Division of labour was done to assure better service of the common good, but no social distinctions were made between the various ways of serving all. Rather, each man shared in the effort and merit of all. Those with special abilities contributed their specialised knowledge, whether they be in agriculture, education, music, or the rites. In a passage strikingly reminiscent of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians [1 Cor. 12: 14-21] Yang-ming described the coherent and harmonious functioning of the ideal society in terms of a living organism:

The eyes see, the ears hear, the hands hold, the feet walk--all fulfilling the functions of the body. The eyes are not ashamed of their not being able to hear. When the ears hear something, the eyes will direct their attention towards it. The feet are not ashamed that they are not able to grasp. When the hands feel something, the feet will move forward.....²⁸

But, the moral greatness of the Golden Age was the only aspect of the past that Yang-ming desired to recapture. Unlike Chang Tsai, the Ch'eng brothers and Hu Hung 胡宏 (1100-55), he never spoke about the restoration of Chou feudalism or of the well-field system. Yang-ming desired to strike at the root and the source: to heal the moral sickness of society. If, therefore, he may seem to us to be too idealistic in his hopes of moral restoration, he might also be taken as being realistic in his belief that ancient institutions could no longer be restored.

Yang-ming regards the governing of a family, of a country, and even of the world as nothing else than the extension of love and affection between the self and others. For him, the final goal is the recovery of the unity which should rightfully exist between the two, so that there is essentially no difference between "loving" one's self and "loving" the people:

If I extend affection for my father to other people's fathers, there will be affection between all the fathers and sons of the world. If I extend love for my elder brother to other people's elder brothers, then there will be affection between all the elder and younger brothers of the world. The same can be said about the ruler and subject, husband and wife, friend and friend, and even about birds and animals and grass and trees. There can be affection for all these. And it will always promote the complete development of hsin, in making manifest its clear virtue. This is what is known as making manifest

clear virtue in the world, giving order to the family, good government to the country and peace to the world.²⁹

Certainly, this was a vision which went beyond that of a political and social "utopia". It bore within itself a tremendous moral and mystical idealism and dynamism, an enormous confidence in the basic goodness of human beings and of their capacity for self-transcendence, and a consciousness of the inner unity of man and the whole of nature. But is this vision possible of realisation in political life? Is it not, perhaps, the expression of a naive idealist unacquainted with the realities of human existence and of human nature?

As a philosopher or wise man, Yang-ming's proposed remedy for society's ills, the method he suggested as a means of restoring the purity of heart necessary for the recovery of the Golden Past was moral education. For him, loving the people necessarily means, educating the people in the right way, in the philosophy of hsin, in the ways of extending liang-chih. As an experienced administrator, however, he did not forget the more concrete needs of life. He said that his reason for preferring the phrase, "loving the people" (ch'in-min) to that of "renovating the people" (hsin-min) is that the former reading allowed room both for "educating the people" and for "feeding the people". This did not merely mean giving food to the people in times of famine. It meant, essentially, making the people wealthy and self-sufficient. In a certain memorial to the throne, he had this to say:

Wealth is what the people want. When wealth is given to the people, they will live together [in peace]. The people make up the foundation of the state. When the foundation is secure, the state will be in peace.

.....

That the ruler and the people make up one body is a perennial truth.³⁰

However, it was not easy for Yang-ming to convince his disciples that his substitution of "loving the people" for "renovating the people", and his identification of the former work with the great task of "manifesting virtue", was correct. They remembered Chu Hsi's explanation of "manifesting clear virtue" as the "root"--the fundamental task--and of "renovating the people" as the "branch"--a work of less importance.³¹ Yang-ming's teaching seemed rather to obscure the difference between the "roots" and the "branches", thus confusing the methodical pursuit of self-cultivation.³²

Yang-ming answered that he approved of making a distinction between "roots" and "branches". However, they should not be understood as two different things. After all both "roots" and "branches" belong to the trees. In the same way, "manifesting clear virtue" and "loving the people" are basically two aspects of one same task. So too, are the efforts of "investigating things", "extending knowledge", "making the intention sincere", "rectifying hsin", "cultivating self", "ordering the family", "governing the state" and even "giving peace to the world". All are aspects of the same task, for all are aspects of the basic work of "extending liang-chih". And this work of "extension" lies in "investigating things". "To investigate", however, means "to rectify", while "things" means "affairs" or "acts". Thus, "when we come into contact with the 'thing' to which our intention is directed, if we really do good and avoid evil to the utmost, as our innate faculty knows and [directs us to do], then everything will be investigated..... and our knowledge of the good.... will be extended to the utmost."³³

Jen (humanity) and Lo (joy)

The "Inquiry into the Great Learning" concludes on a note of joy (lô 樂). Yang-ming had described the task of the great man--the extension of liang-chih. He had said that this task involves many dimensions, many steps to be

taken one after the other. Both as a whole, however, and also in each of the steps, what is involved is "doing good and avoiding evil", developing to the utmost the capacity of our liang-chih. "And then the heart will be naturally joyous, happy and without regret. And then there will be no deception in the functioning of our intentions, and sincerity may be said to have been attained."³⁴

Joy is an important tenet of the philosophy developed by the hsing-li thinkers of Sung and Ming times. Chou Tun-yi used to ask his disciples, the Ch'eng brothers, to describe the joy of Confucius and Yen Hui.³⁵ In answering a question concerning whether this joy of the sages is the same as that joy which is given as one of the seven emotions, Yang-ming answered that the joy--of the sage--is characteristic of hsin-in-itself. Without being one of the seven emotions, it is not totally outside the realm of these emotions. True joy can be possessed by ordinary people as well as by sages, except that ordinary people are not aware of this. They allow themselves to become overwhelmed with sorrow and grief and confusion. And yet, even in the midst of all this, as soon as the light shines through, and the person examines himself and becomes sincere, joy is immediately within his reach. To look for joy outside of oneself is thus like "looking for a donkey while riding on it."³⁶

Joy comes from the practice of jen. The man of jen--the sage--is capable of deepening his emotions, and of incorporating them on a higher level, while purging them of a mere emotion. In Yang-ming's terms, he is thus one with Heaven-and-Earth and all things, being united to all in harmony. Joy is the natural and spontaneous consequence of this harmony. The only effort required for the maintenance of this true joy is an attitude of constant vigilance over self when one is alone, a vigilance which is itself spontaneous and without tension. Yang-ming described this "vigilance in solitude" (shen-tu) as the "extension of liang-chih", and liang-chih as nothing other than "joy-in-itself".³⁷

Joy is the expression of the peace of mind-and-heart, the peace of a man at ease with himself and with others, united by virtuous action to Heaven-and-Earth and all things in a marvellous harmony which allows him to be always natural and spontaneous, always his true self.

Liang-chih pen-t'i

Yang-ming's teaching on the unity of man with all things represents the culmination of his practical doctrine on the extension of liang-chih. It also contains certain metaphysical implications and pre-suppositions, relating especially to the nature of "hsin-in-itself" [hsin chih pen-t'i] or of liang-chih-in-itself [liang-chih pen-t'i 良知本體 literally, the "original substance" of liang-chih].

The word hsin refers primarily to the principle of our conscious and moral activities. The word liang-chih refers to the capacity of hsin to know and do good. Yang-ming's introduction of this term in his philosophy has already served to point out the richness of the notion of hsin. He speaks interchangeably of hsin and liang-chih, of the hsin-in-itself and of liang-chih-in-itself. It is also obvious from the context that he sometimes refers to liang-chih-in-itself when he is using the word hsin or simply liang-chih, with the result that his meaning is not always clear. Nevertheless, from many unequivocal references to "hsin-in-itself" and to "liang-chih-in-itself", he obviously wished to use these terms to speak of hsin and liang-chih at a deeper level.

Yang-ming speaks of liang-chih pen-t'i, both as the agent which achieves a certain end and as the end itself. Just as in his practical doctrine, the same word represents both the starting-point and the end achieved. No doubt, this is because, to his mind, the end is always present in the beginning. One can become a sage because he already carries within himself the seeds of sagehood, and self-realisation is what brings about the realisation of sagehood

and the acquisition of wisdom. The end, the goal, is never something out of oneself. It is a presence which is already possessed, which can be developed to the utmost, to the point at which one can truly say: "All things are present in me. I have no greater joy than to find, when I look deep into myself, that I am true to myself."³⁸

Yang-ming speaks of hsin, the mind-and-heart, not merely as the source and centre of man's thoughts and intentions, emotions and decisions, but also as the source and centre of his vital functions and movements, and of all his conscious activities, sensory and supra-sensory. For it is that which gives unity to multiplicity, which organises all our multiple experiences into one meaningful experience, to which we ourselves are identified. It gives us inner unity. But it also does more. It is that which makes us one with Heaven-and-Earth and all things.

For this reason, Yang-ming explains that hsin or liang-chih is present in every part of man, being that which unites the whole man. It is present wherever consciousness functions. For "hsin (the heart) is not just a piece of flesh with blood. It is wherever [we experience] consciousness. For example, the ears and eyes can hear and see, and the hands and feet experience pain and irritation. All this consciousness [comes from] hsin".³⁹

Seeing, hearing, speaking and moving are all [activities of] hsin (principle of consciousness). Hsin's ability to see has the eyes as its channels. Its ability to hear has the ears as its channels. Its ability to speak has the mouth as its channels. Its ability to move has the four limbs as its instruments. Without your hsin, there would be no eyes, ears, mouth or nose.⁴⁰

Yang-ming identifies the principle of moral activities with that of vital consciousness. He also recommends that the gentleman's practice of watchfulness over hsin, over the least movements of his mind-and-heart, should include

as a matter of fact a certain control of the senses and of the physical activities of the body. Recalling Lao-tzu's teaching that beautiful colours cause the eyes to be blind, beautiful sounds cause the ears to be deaf, beautiful tastes spoil the palate and hunting and racing make a man mad,⁴¹ he draws from it the moral exhortation that one should only see, hear, speak and move when the occasions to do so is in accordance with propriety.⁴²

Hsin, of course, is nothing other than liang-chih. Just as hsin is present in the senses, as it also is in the thinking mind, in our intentions and decisions, the same can be said of liang-chih.

Through conscious activity and experience of reality, man's mind-and-heart and senses penetrate all things, uniting, and even identifying, hsin-in-itself to Heaven-and-Earth and all things. As he put it:

The eye has no "substance" (t'i) of its own. It regards as [its] "substance", the colour of all things. The ear has no "substance" of its own. It regards as [its] "substance", the sounds of all things. The nose has no "substance" of its own. It regards as [its] "substance", the odours of all things. The mind-and-heart has no "substance" of its own. It regards as [its] "substance", the right or wrong of the operations and responses of Heaven-and-Earth and all things.⁴³

Colour, for example,--or sound in the case of the ear-- is a quality of the object of perception as well as of the sense organ, the eye which sees it. Yang-ming resolves a problematic relationship between this "quality", and the "sensation" through which it is perceived, in terms of potentiality and actuality. Instead of denying the separate existence of the senses apart from the reality which they experience, or of hsin from the whole of the cosmos, he is asserting that, in the case of sensation, the "source" (t'i) of the activity (yung) meets the activity itself which flows

from and fulfils the very nature of the sense organ, in the actualisation of sight or hearing. Thus, according to him, neither the eye nor the ear can be properly understood outside of the experience of reality which it has. And also, eye, ear, or any or all of the other sense organs, together with hsin, the central unifier of all our experiences, sensory or otherwise, work together to bring the human person into dynamic contact with the whole of reality, and in so doing, unite him to the whole of the cosmos.

If this can be said of the eye or ear with the colour or sound of things with which it comes into contact and communion, it can also be said of the body as such, which, after all, is one with the spirit or heart. For "liang-chih speaks through the same mouth and acts through the same body. How can it get outside ch'i (ether, matter-energy) and have another organ with which to speak or act?"⁴⁴ That is why it is incomplete to speak about the nature of man and of things without also speaking of ch'i, the material force, just as it is incomplete to speak of ch'i without also speaking of nature. And therefore, Yang-ming concludes, "Ch'i is [indistinguishable] from hsing (nature of man or things) and hsing is [indistinguishable] from ch'i."⁴⁵ And so it should be said that even liang-chih, principle of life and consciousness in man, cannot be understood apart from the body which it animates and through which it functions. And since liang-chih is that which brings about the union of man with all things, it can also be said that all things can have meaning only in relation to liang-chih.

Role of ch'i

When asked whether inanimate beings also have liang-chih, Yang-ming replied:

Man's liang-chih [acts also as] the liang-chih of plants and trees, tiles and stones. Without man's liang-chih, there can be no plants and trees, tiles and stones.... This is true not just of plants and

trees, tiles and stones. Heaven-and-Earth will not be Heaven-and-Earth without man's liang-chih. For Heaven-and-Earth and the myriad things form basically one body with man. And this unity is best manifest in the spiritual intelligence of man's hsin.⁴⁶

It is the dynamic power of man's liang-chih which differentiates all things, knowing plants to be plants, and stones to be stones. It is also the dynamic power of man's liang-chih which overcomes the differentiations between various orders of beings, and even between the duality between the self and the non-self, by merging all into a higher form of unity. However, this is possible, Yang-ming asserts, because wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones, are all "one body with man". The same ch'i permeates all. For this reason--and Yang-ming offers this fact almost as a scientific proof for his "mystic" view of reality--grains and animals can nourish man's life, while herbs and minerals can heal human diseases. "Because they share the same ch'i, they can enter into [the bodies of] one another."⁴⁷

In other words, if liang-chih-in-itself is capable of achieving unity out of the multiplicity of things, it is on account of a certain component which permeates all things. And this component is called ch'i.

And so, liang-chih-in-itself, the principle of life and consciousness, is not just a spiritual power or capacity. It too is spirit-in-matter. For it too is permeated with ch'i, the same ch'i which permeates all other things, and which makes possible the passage of duality into non-duality.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that Yang-ming merely reduces liang-chih-in-itself to ch'i or material force. The universal presence of ch'i is only given as a proto-scientific explanation of the unity of all things. But the only way man achieves this unity in himself is through liang-chih. And certainly, Yang-ming himself is more interested in the self-transcending state which can be realised by liang-chih, than he is in the ubiquitous ch'i.

A puzzled disciple once questioned Yang-ming concerning his teaching about Heaven-and-Earth and all things having no meaning apart from man's liang-chih. He said that since Heaven-and-Earth, the spiritual beings and the myriad things have all existed since time immemorial, how can one presume that they will also disappear, when the end comes for the man whose liang-chih has attained this unity with all things? Yang-ming's answer shows that his teaching on unity and multiplicity, and on the role of ch'i in this unity, does not concern the objective existence of the universe, but rather the state of consciousness by which man's heart attains a certain oneness with all things. He said:

Consider the dead man. His spirit has drifted away and dispersed. Where are his Heaven and Earth and myriad things?⁴⁸

Another example is given of the person when he is asleep. Yang-ming claims that liang-chih is always conscious, or rather, is always capable of consciousness, even when the person is asleep. He said:

As night falls, Heaven-and-Earth becomes an undifferentiated continuum. All forms and colours disappear. With man too, the ears hear nothing, the eyes see nothing.... It is the time when liang-chih is collected and concentrated. As Heaven-and-Earth open up again, all the myriad things reveal themselves..... With man also, the ears and eyes now hear and see.... It is the time when liang-chih begins its wonderful functioning.⁴⁹

From this observation also, he concludes that hsin or liang-chih forms a single unity with Heaven-and-Earth and all things.

Yang-ming spoke of liang-chih-in-itself as being free from all impediments, such as passions. As such, it is also identified to the Taoist "void" (hsü 虛) and the

Buddhist "non-being" (wu ~~無~~) two words by which hsin is often described. That, here again, he is turning metaphysical notions into practical philosophy is evident from the context:

When the Taoists conclude that [hsin] is vacuous, can the sage himself add a bit of reality to that vacuity? When the Buddhists conclude that [hsin] is non-being, can the sage himself add a bit of being to that non-being? But the Taoists speak of vacuity for the sake of cultivating life, and the Buddhists speak of non-being for the sake of escaping from the sorrowful sea of life-and-death [samsāra]. In both cases, certain [selfish] ideas have been added to the pen-t'i [of hsin], which loses therefore its original character of vacuity and non-being. The sage only returns to it the original character of liang-chih and does not attach to it any [selfish] idea.⁵⁰

In other words, the notions "void" and "non-being" provide an insight into the purity and freedom of liang-chih-in-itself when it is without any hindrance and obstacle. However, the Taoist philosophy is geared to the selfish activity of prolonging one's physical life, and the Buddhist philosophy is aimed at a different, but equally selfish goal of escaping from the cycle of life-and-death, with all the social responsibilities attached to it.⁵¹ Such motivations contaminate the believer's hsin-in-itself, causing it to lose its original purity and emptiness. Instead, the Confucian would-be sage seeks merely to recover its original innocence, and to maintain it.

To the terms "void" and "non-being", Yang-ming prefers a third term, the Great Void [T'ai-hsü]. It is that which, according to Chang Tsai, fills the universe with its own fullness of ch'i, which, however, does not change its vacuous character.⁵² Yang-ming identifies liang-chih-in-itself to the Great Void, which, he says, "embraces all things, without letting anything become a hindrance to itself".⁵³

The vacuity of liang-chih is [one with] the vacuity of the Great Void [T'ai-hsü]. The non-being (wu) of liang-chih is the formlessness of the Great Void. Sun, moon, wind, thunder, mountains, rivers, people and things--all that have figure, shape, form and colour--all operate within this formlessness of the Great Void. None of them ever becomes a hindrance to Heaven. The sage merely follows the functioning of his liang-chih. Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things are all contained in its functioning and operating. How can there be anything else transcending liang-chih which can become a hindrance [to it]?⁵⁴

For the man who strives after sagehood, wealth, poverty, gain and loss, love and hatred--desires for the one and fear of the other--all are worth as much as the passing storm and the floating smoke, which move and change in the Great Void, while the substance of the Great Void remains always vast and unlimited.⁵⁵

Yang-ming constantly reveals the practical orientation of his thought. He wishes to guide men to the attainment of a higher state, that which goes beyond such thinking. And so, when his disciple, Wang Chi, questioned him on the Buddhist doctrines of metaphysics which concern the reality or illusoriness of the elements of existence (dharmas), Yang-ming turned it into a riddle containing practical exhortations. He said:

If hsin is present, there is reality; if hsin is absent, there is illusion.

If hsin is absent, there is reality; if hsin is present, there is illusion.

Wang Chi quickly responded:

[When you say], "If hsin is present, there is reality; if hsin is absent, there is illusion", you are speaking of [moral] effort (kung-fu) from

of mind-and-heart, a disposition of the spirit, which is to be achieved. Yang-ming is saying that so long as one follows spontaneously the naturally good promptings of the mind-and-heart, he will keep his liang-chih-in-itself free from unruly desires. When this is done, nothing in life can hinder the continual operation of liang-chih as it responds to events and affairs, entering into reality, absorbing reality by its activity, until it becomes one with all reality, and even the heart of all reality.

This is a self-transcending state, conscious and possible of realisation on account of man's dynamic thrust toward goodness, through his inner self, his liang-chih, described sometimes as his "True Self".⁵⁹ As Yang-ming had taught earlier:

The pen-t'i of hsin is nothing other than T'ien-li ("principle of Heaven"). It is originally never out of accord with li (propriety). This is your True Self. This True Self is the master of [your] physical body. Without the True Self, there is no physical body. With it, one lives, without it, one dies.⁶⁰

Thus, for the good of the physical body itself, one should take good care of the "True Self", keeping always intact its pen-t'i, and practising caution and apprehension even when one is not seen or heard.⁶¹ And then, as a man shreds off the super-structures which his "false self"--his ego--has erected as barricades behind which he has formerly attempted to hide himself and to limit his activity, as he clears away the selfish desires which hinder his inner vision, he will naturally discover this innermost core of his own being, this liang-chih, always shining even when it is temporarily obscured from view. He will then become transformed, completely true to himself, completely true to the universe in which he lives and acts, and following its natural courses of operation which will lead him to the realisation of perfect goodness.

Once, when Yang-ming was taking a walk in the mountainous region of Nan-chen 南鎮, one of his friends pointed to the blossoming trees, and asked: "If there is nothing in the world that is not outside of hsin, how is it that these trees hidden in the mountains can produce flowers which bloom and die without my heart being in anyway involved?"

Yang-ming replied: "Before you see this flower, the flower and your hsin are both dormant. When you see this flower, its colour suddenly becomes clear. This shows that the flower is not outside of your hsin."⁶²

He meant to say that, for him, reality was always dynamic, always related to man's hsin. For by themselves, flowers in the wilderness can hardly be called "things" (wu). It is only when they have become known to man's hsin, and, by being known, have become somehow activated by man, that they take on the status of being "things". Thus, Yang-ming again presents man's hsin, and especially liang-chih, as the cause of the fundamental unity of all things: that which knows all things, that which has the power to direct all things to their proper ends. In this context, we can also understand his words concerning the "creative power" of liang-chih. He has described it as the spirit which creates all things, Heaven-and-Earth, ghosts and gods.⁶³ "It is that to which there is no equal."⁶⁴ Thus, the recovery of liang-chih in its original purity will put man at the heart of all things, at the heart of creation.

Yang-ming speaks of man as "the heart (hsin) of Heaven-and-Earth".⁶⁵ For him, it is man, with his spiritual intelligence and dynamic power for self-transcendence, who alone is capable of knowing and of reflecting all things, of giving ultimate meaning to all things as well as to his own existence. He can therefore be said to occupy the position of "heart", as the psychic centre of the universe. For while men may be separated from one another and from all things on account of their physical forms or bodies, which limit them to specific positions in time and place,

the heart of man transcends such limitation. It fills up Heaven-and-Earth and all things by means of its dynamic spirituality. In it, the unity of Heaven-and-Earth and all things is most clearly seen.

My clear intelligence is the master of Heaven-and-Earth and all things. If Heaven is deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to look into its height? If Earth is deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to look into its depth? If spiritual beings are deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to distinguish their good and evil fortune, or the calamities and blessings they will bring? Separated from my clear intelligence, there will be no Heaven, Earth, spiritual beings or myriad things, and separated from these, there will not be my clear intelligence.⁶⁶

The Problem of Evil

Yang-ming's treatment of the problem of evil is related to his discussions of "hsin-in-itself". Here too, he is interested, not in ontological imperfections or physical evil, but in moral evil--that which proceeds from the evil intentions of the mind-and-heart. He said of flowers and weeds that the distinction made between them is purely arbitrary. After all, the same principle of life of Heaven-and-Earth flows through both.⁶⁷ In the human realm, when hsin is full of the pure "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li), and therefore empty of all selfish desires, it may be said to be resting in the state of "highest good". This state, however, is beyond the distinctions of good and evil, should the word "good" be used merely in opposition to "evil". Thus, the state of the "highest good" may also be described as being "neither good nor evil". This is true of "hsin-in-itself"--the mind-and-heart in a state of tranquillity, before the rise of emotions. This is also true of the mind-and-heart in a state of perfect harmony, after the rise of emotions. Evil only arises with the

deviation from tranquillity or from harmony, that is, with undue attachment to the objects which attract our desires and provoke our feelings.⁶⁸

The highest good [refers to] hsin-in-itself. When one deviates a little from this, there is evil. It is not as though there are two given opposites: good and evil. Good and evil are [two possible states] of one and the same thing, [i.e. hsin].⁶⁹

This tendency to regard reality as a whole rather than in terms of its component parts, explains Yang-ming's understanding of evil. He recognised that human nature-in-itself (the pen-t'i of hsing) is neither good or evil, while being capable of either good or evil. Both flow from the deepest recesses of man's hsin, being dependent on the activity of the intention. Neither can therefore be defined in terms of social conventions, exterior to the person and his convictions. He gave the example of the human eye, which takes on different expressions of joy or anger, which may glance fully and directly at its object or merely glimpse from its corners. He said that one should not identify the eye itself with any one of its expressions or postures, but should keep distinct its t'i (substance) and yung (activity). In describing human nature as good, Mencius was looking at it from its "substance" or source, as principle of its activity. In describing it as evil, Hsün-tzu was speaking mostly of abuses which arise in its activity. Mencius was anxious that people make efforts, to keep nature-in-itself clear and manifest. Hsün-tzu desired that measures be taken to correct the abuses of its activity, which, however, made the task of self-cultivation more difficult.⁷⁰

For Yang-ming, the question of good and evil lies simply in following the "principle of Heaven" or in deviating from it. When asked whether the desire to remove weeds has at all a moral character, he refers the questioner back to his hsin-in-itself. All depends on the intentions, and that which moves the intentions. If hsin is moved

inordinately by wrath or attachment, its desires are tainted by selfishness. If hsin is correct, the desires and the acts which flow from them will also be correct.⁷¹ Thus, the act of removing weeds in itself is indifferent. It only takes on a moral character when the mind-and-heart, with its intentions, intervenes.

While Yang-ming holds that hsin in a state of tranquillity is in possession of the highest good, which, in turn, is beyond conventional distinctions of good and evil, he does not require that a person make a special effort to "acquire" such a state. He expressed this opinion in a letter written in reply to questions from his disciple Lu Ch'eng.⁷² Lu had questioned Yang-ming on the Buddhist method of striving to "recognise one's original countenance (pen-lai mien-mu 本來面目) at the time when one's mind-and-heart was clear of either good or evil thoughts".⁷³ He knew it to be different from the Confucian Way, recommended by Yang-ming, of "investigating things as they come", that is, of attending to affairs with a sincere heart. He said that the only time he knew of, when one's hsin was without good or evil thoughts, was when the person was passing from sleep to waking. But this condition would not last long. In an instant, thought and deliberation would quickly arise. Lu himself had frequently sought to re-capture and maintain the disposition of tranquillity, when the mind-and-heart was without good or evil thoughts, but found it extremely difficult to do so.

Yang-ming characterises the Buddhist method mentioned by Lu as an "expedient" technique which may be practised by those who do not yet understand or recognise their "hsin-in-itself". For those, however, who already know what hsin-in-itself, or liang-chih in itself, is, there is no longer any need to make use of this technique. Besides, he explains that to desire to think of neither good nor evil involves already some selfishness, for it implies the wish to re-capture some past experience of [partial] enlightenment, which has served one well but is no longer necessary for self-cultivation. A person who seeks to "re-capture" a disposition known in the past resembles the man

capacity for the knowledge of the good, and then as a dynamic tendency which follows its own knowledge and judgment, through the method of "investigation of things", that is, of rectifying the mind-and-heart. Thus, it is a method which makes of knowledge, action.⁷⁶

At that time, in 1527, Wang Chi and Ch'ien Te-hung already could not agree on a definite interpretation of these Maxims. Ch'ien's great admiration for his Master caused him to consider the words to be part of Yang-ming's sacred teaching in its final form, while Wang Chi regarded them as a "tentative" explanation of liang-chih, from which certain logical conclusions can be inferred. Following from the First Maxim, he drew the inference that with the realisation of hsin-in-itself being "neither good nor evil", will also come the understanding that its intentions, its knowledge, and all its acts can and should also be "neither good nor evil".

If we say that hsin-in-itself is characterised by the absence of good and evil, then [we should be able] to say the same of the intentions, of knowledge, and of things [or acts]. And if we say that the [movements of] the intentions are characterised by the presence of good and evil, then, [we should also] say the same of hsin-in-itself.⁷⁷

He is speaking here of a complete "transcendence" of the ethical categories of good and evil which occurs with the recognition in oneself that hsin is, fundamentally speaking, independent of moral judgements while being at the same time the source of such judgements. The best example is of the sage, whose mind-and-heart is so well in tune with ultimate reality--the "highest good" which is beyond good and evil--that he can follow all its dictates without fear of making any moral transgression. But since every man is potentially a sage, the same truth can apply to every one, provided that he gains this realisation which constitutes the experience of total, inner enlightenment.

On the other hand, Ch'ien has in mind, not enlightenment, but self-cultivation. He sees the First Maxim as expressive of our given hsin-in-itself, as it is in the state of "equilibrium", the recovery of which is the objective of all self-cultivation. The following three Maxims would therefore be to him the embodiment of a practically-oriented teaching, aimed at the instruction of all whose hearts are no longer in possession of pristine innocence and purity. The distinction between good and evil should therefore be maintained for the activities of the intentions, for the moral judgement exercised by liang-chih, as well as for the practice of "investigation of things" understood as "extension of liang-chih" -- following always the judgement of our liang-chih in our acts. For "if there were no such distinctions between good and evil, where would there be any need for such effort [of self-cultivation]?"⁷⁸

As the two disciples could not reach an agreement concerning the correct interpretation of the Master's teaching, they raised the issue again in the presence of Yang-ming. The Master told the two that both were right. For him, it was a question, less of doctrine, than of pedagogy. He said that the man of superior intelligence was capable of penetrating at once into the nature of hsin-in-itself and of uniting the internal and external in his efforts of self-cultivation. But for those men whose minds-and-hearts were less open to truth -- being hindered by passions -- it was more important to learn how to do good and avoid evil in their thoughts and intentions. Gradually, their minds-and-hearts would be rid of impurities, and hsin-in-itself would become clear and manifest. He then added that Wang Chi's interpretations were suited for students of superior intelligence, whereas Ch'ien Te-hung's views could be useful to those less endowed. But he warned that there were few men in the world who would be so intelligent as not to need making efforts to do good and avoid evil, and merely had to meditate upon hsin-in-itself. Rather, this could lead to the danger of emptiness and the void.⁷⁹

From Yang-ming's other teachings on the problem of evil, and on the nature of hsin-in-itself, there is no difficulty in accepting this conciliatory reply to both Wang Chi and Ch'ien Te-hung. It would seem that Wang Chi interpreted all Four Maxims as indicative of a superior stage of development, and that, granted the truth of the First Maxim, as well as the attainment of a total, inner enlightenment, one can also say that all the spontaneous functionings of hsin should be as perfect as hsin itself, and so need no longer be qualified either as good or evil. Action, after all, follows being.

Nevertheless, the fact that such a superior state of enlightenment which brings about a transformation of all a man's interior and exterior activities may be attained, and that instantaneously, does not necessarily mean that it will be attained by everyone. Just because a sage can always "follow the dictates of his own heart without transgressing what is right" [Analects 214] does not mean that the ordinary man or woman can therefore abandon all effort of self-cultivation and merely follow his or her instinctive desires.⁸⁰ The risk is quite obvious. Yang-ming's awareness of this made him utter the Four Maxims in their given form, and moved him to counsel the two disciples to give instruction on these according to the capacity of the student concerned.

[For] it is not easy to find [many] persons of superior spiritual intelligence. Even Yen Hui and [Ch'eng] Ming-tao dared not assume that they could [attain a] full realisation of hsin-in-itself as soon as they apply themselves to the task.... Men's hearts are [usually] governed by [deep-seated] habits. If we do not teach them to devote themselves concretely and sincerely to the task of doing good and avoiding evil in their liang-chih rather than merely visualising in a vacuum their [hsin-in-itself], what they do cannot all be genuine, and what they cultivate will only be an empty and tranquil heart. This is no small mistake and should be exposed as early as possible.⁸¹

Yang-ming recognised the existence of a short-cut to wisdom and perfection: in a sudden, instantaneous, penetrating understanding of one's hsin-in-itself which constitutes the experience of total enlightenment, and which may elevate the person into a realm beyond that of good and evil for the rest of his life. But he also knew that such an experience, while within reach of everyone, is not at the beck and call of anyone. It comes as a pure gift, to men of usually superior spiritual intelligence, who have kept their minds-and-hearts ready and alert. Nevertheless, for those who wish to perfect themselves, the great Way and the correct path remains that of extending and developing their liang-chih, through the acquisition of great sincerity of will and intention, and the conformity of every one of their acts with the inner light given to them all.

Enlightenment is certainly a short-cut to wisdom. But there is no method for inducing this experience. It should not be sought after for its own sake. But enlightenment, and wisdom itself, is present seminally in liang-chih. A person needs merely to follow its promptings, attentively but without fear or anxiety, to pre-dispose himself for this gift, should it come. And then, failing its arrival, he can remain confident that wisdom is yet within reach, since wisdom is virtue, and virtue is practised by the extension of liang-chih, which slowly makes of one, his hsin and ultimate reality, Tao. And then, once united with ultimate reality, this hsin becomes also its own authority, the reason for its having faith in itself, because it is the cause of its own attainment of sagehood and wisdom.

For this reason, a doctrine of pure enlightenment can be often dangerous. When adhered to by an "unenlightened" person, it may result in a complete disregard of all known criteria of truth and of moral behaviour. And then, instead of acquiring wisdom, one will be lost in ignorance and licentiousness.

Notes to Chapter VI

- 1 WWKC 1: 72a-b; Chan, Instructions, 47. See also WWKC 2: 126a; 3: 146a; Chan, Instructions, 180, 228.
- 2 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33: 955b-973b. Yang-ming's first wife died childless in 1525. He later re-married and had a son by his second wife.
- 3 Ibid., WWKC 34: 958a-962b. During this time, Yang-ming also wrote several of his most important letters dealing with his philosophical teaching.
- 4 WWKC 3: 152a; Chan, Instructions, 245. See also "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 960b.
- 5 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 34: 960b; Yamada Jun, Yōmei gaku seigi, 187-9.
- 6 WWKC 3: 152a-b; Chan, Instructions, 245.
- 7 WWKC 3: 152b; Chan, Instructions, 245-6.
- 8 By "All in One" I refer to the belief in a certain ultimate reality underlying the apparent multiplicity of things, the "whole" of which can be found in each of its "parts". This idea usually referred to as the "Unity of All Things" (wan-wu yi-t'i) permeates Yang-ming's philosophy--metaphysics and ethics included. As support for his own unitary teachings, he cited Analects 15:2, where Confucius declares: "There is one [unifying thread] which runs through all my teachings". [See letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 97]. He also alluded to the Buddhist--especially T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen, but absorbed into Ch'an--notions of the total harmony and mutual interpenetration of reality; see his letter to Hsüeh K'an (1518), WWKC 4: 188. These Buddhist ideas can be found especially in the Avatamsaka sūtra (Hua-yen ching 華嚴經), ch. 1. See particularly the poem from ch. 9, in TSD No. 279, IX 4, 9; 453-8.
- 9 The expression, "Pulling out the Roots and Stopping the Source" (po-pen sai-yüan) is found in the Annals of Tso, 9th year of Duke Chao 昭公 [Legge, Classics v. 5, 624-5]. There was no question of philosophical significance there. With Ou-yang Hsiu's 歐陽修 (1007-1070) "Essay on Fundamentals" (Pen-lun 本論 literally, Discussing "Roots"), see Ou-yang Wen-chung kung wen-chi [Collected Writings of Ou-yang Hsiu] SPTK ed., 17: 1a-6b, [English translation in de Bary, Sources, 387-390], the famous call for social renovation for the sake of removing the underlying causes for the popularity of Buddhism, came the idea of the physician treating a disease--how he ought to do so by ascertaining and healing the source of the infection especially by "strengthening the patient's vitality". Yang-ming frequently spoke of this example too. Most probably, he had it in mind when he discussed "Pulling the Roots and Stopping the Source" in a long section of this letter which treated the question of personal and social renovation. WWKC 2: 99-102.

10 WWKC 26: 736a; Chan, Instructions, 272. Chu Hsi had explained the title of the Great Learning as "education for an adult". See his preface to the Ta-hsüeh chang-chü, [SSCC], 1a-b; CTYL 14: 3b. Yang-ming gave it even greater importance by declaring it to contain the learning of a "great man" or sage, defined as he who is "one with all things". He did so, however, by explaining its first chapter in terms of Mencius 2A: 6 and also by introducing the notion of universal sympathy, already present in Sung philosophy, especially Chou, Chang and Ch'eng Hao, but certainly of Mahayana Buddhist inspiration, recalling to mind in particular the doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai patriarch Ch'an-jan 湛然 (d. 779 AD) that insensible beings as plants and stones, also possess the Buddha-nature (fo-hsing). See Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 770-1; Eng. tr., History v.2, 385-386. This had already influenced the Ch'eng-Chu interpretation of hsing as li in things. Yang-ming merely developed further the implication of this teaching.

Professor de Bary compares the development of Yang-ming's ideal of sagehood to the proclamation of universal Buddhahood through the Mahayana in China, Japan and Korea centuries earlier, and especially "to those forms which emphasized the attainment of Buddhahood in this life and this body". He also points out the difference between Yang-ming's ideal of the sage and that of Mahayana Buddhism. Where Buddhism identified life with suffering and illusion, the Neo-Confucian thinker consistently exalts life, creativity and the potentialities of the human individual. See Self and Society in Ming Thought, Introduction, 14.

11 WWKC 26: 736a-b; Chan, Instructions, 272-273. The Confucian character of Yang-ming's interpretation is safeguarded by the emphasis on jen, with its ethical as well as life-giving connotations, as that by which union of self with others is accomplished.

12 Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1; Legge, Classics, v.1, 385. See also Mishima Fuku, op.cit., 82-88.

13 Allusion to the Book of Changes, Commentary of Hexagram Ch'ien, which speaks of the great man as having a character which is united to that of Heaven-and-Earth, with a brilliance equal to that of the sun and the moon, and participating in the movement of the four seasons. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 1: 12a-b. Legge, Yi-King, 417. Yasuoka Masashirō remarked that Yang-ming's interpretation of the Great Learning begins with the consciousness of "self" going to that of a "transcendent self", an Absolute, Heaven. See Ō Yōmei kenkyū, 233-234.

14 WWKC 26: 736b; Chan, Instructions, 272-3. Yang-ming added: "which does not mean adding something from the outside to this original condition (pen-t'i)." As in speaking of extending liang-chih, he was careful to point out that while the "capacity" for knowing the good, is at once inborn and possible of development, its "pen-t'i" can neither be augmented nor diminished, thus establishing

the independent and transcendent character of this pen-t'i, which is one with the pen-t'i of all things. See his letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 107b; Chan, Instructions, 137. Wang Tchang-tche, La Philosophie Morale, 135-136.

15 WWKC 1: 76a; Chan, Instructions, 56-7. Already, before Yang-ming the teachings of Han Yü, Chou Tun-yi and Ch'eng Hao had virtually transformed the meaning of jen into universal love. Yang-ming merely completed this transformation. See above, Ch. I, n. 54 and below, notes 18 and 19.

16 WWKC 1: 76b; Chan, Instructions, 57. Fung, che-hsüeh shih, 960-962; [Eng. tr., History v.2, 612-614]. Yang-ming sought to preserve a certain distinction in the practice of jen which is based on human nature itself rather than on seemingly predetermined "grades". Universal love is an ideal to be achieved, rather than an excuse for "levelling" human affection and responsibility.

17 WWKC 5: 205a.

18 "Yüan-tao", in HCLC 11: 1a.

19 Chou-tzu T'ung-shu, 1: 1a.

20 Allusion to Ch'eng Yi's criticism of Han Yu. See Yi-shu 18: 1a.

21 WWKC 5: 205a-b.

22 Analects 12:22; Legge, Classics vol. 1, 260.

23 WWKC 3: 143b, Chan, Instructions, 222; Yamada Jun, op.cit., 193-4; Mishima Fuku, op.cit., 93-97. The questioner was probably Huang Hsing-tseng, who recorded this section. The reference is to the Great Learning, ch. 1; Legge, Classics, v. 1, 359.

24 WWKC 3: 144a; Chan, Instructions, 223.

Knowledge of this "natural order" is therefore manifested through the "gradation" of affections according to the objects of these affections in the practice of jen, which pertains to the general disposition from which actions flow. It is also observed in deed through li (propriety) which governs real as well as symbolic behaviour, including ceremonial usages. It is "not transgressed"--in actual behaviour, by giving to each his due--through yi (righteousness). It is known to the mind, in the order of thought, through chih (wisdom). And it is followed through, from beginning to end, through hsing (fidelity). Together, these five virtues are usually known as the five "constant virtues" (wu-ch'ang 五常) which are based on human nature. The notion of hsin (fidelity) recalls the Hebrew emet while jen suggests hesed. But the Hebrew virtues describe the Divine-human relationship more than that between human beings themselves.

25 WWKC 26: 736b; Chan, Instructions, 273. Yang-ming had earlier explained similar ideas on "manifesting clear virtue" and "loving the people" in an essay, "Ch'in-min t'ang chi" 親民堂記 [On the "Love the People Pavilion"] (1525), WWKC 7: 247-248. See also below, n. 29.

26 WWKC 26: 737a; Chan, Instructions, 273; Mishima Fuku, op.cit., 85-94. Thus, the love Yang-ming recommended operates in the manner of a ripple in a pond, which expands itself continually, until it effects a unity between man and his family, the society at large, his physical environment, all his fellow creatures, and even with invisible spiritual beings.

27 WWKC 2: 99b; Chan, Instructions, 118. The oneness between self and others can be understood either as a state of consciousness attained through genuine sympathy with all, or as a gross form of egoism, by which the ruler may, for example, identify the interests of the state with his own interests. It is interesting that in Sung and Ming China, under a strongly centralised and authoritarian dynastic government, the political ideal was always for the ruler to forget and transcend himself in the service of his people, while in actual practice, it was frequently the contrary notion of an inflated egoism which prevailed.

28 WWKC 2: 100b; Chan, Instructions, 121. See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Yang-ming chih-hsing ho-yi chih chiao, in Yin-ping shih wen-chih, 43: 59-61. Liang points out Yang-ming's ideal as being diametrically opposed to the pursuit of personal profit. It was thus a development of Lu Chiu-yüan's polarisation of yi (righteousness) and li (profit). See also Yamada Jun, op.cit., 191-193; Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 431 for Yang-ming's discussion of social renovation (po-pen sai-yüan).

29 "Ch'in-min-t'ang chi", WWKC 7: 247b.

30 WWKC 13: 388b. This memorial, written in 1521 after the suppression of Ch'en-hao, requested a thorough investigation into the wealth which the rebel prince had appropriated, frequently unjustly, in order to make suitable compensation to the victims.

31 WWKC 26: 738a-b; Chan, Instructions, 276. Although the name of Chu Hsi was not explicitly mentioned, there is no doubt that reference to him is being made, since the explanations in question are given in Chu's commentary on the Great Learning. See SSCC, Ta-hsüeh chang-chü, la-b.

32 "Loving the people" is close to "manifesting clear virtue", since "clear virtue", even according to Chu, is "that which man receives from Heaven. It is vacuous, spiritually intelligent and unobscured, possessing all principles and [capable of] responding to all events", in other words, it is equivalent to man's originally good nature. See SSCC, Ta-hsüeh chang-chü, la. And Yang-ming, of course, identifies this nature with hsin and with humanity (jen) itself. WWKC 1: 85a; Chan, Instructions, 80.

- 33 WWKC 26: 738b-739a; Chan, Instructions, 277-8.
- 34 WWKC 26: 740a; Chan, Instructions, 279.
- 35 See Chin-ssu-lu chi-chu, 2: 8a-b; Eng. tr. in Chan, Reflections, 50.
- 36 WWKC 2: 112a-b; Chan, Instructions, 147-8.
- 37 Letter to Huang Mien-chih, (1524), WWKC 5: 204b-205a. "Joy in-itself" or the pen-t'i of joy.
- 38 This lack of clarity in the use of terms will be singled out as a serious weakness in Yang-ming's philosophy in the last chapter of this work.
- 39 Mencius 7A:4; Legge, Classics, v. 1, 450-1.
- 40 WWKC 3: 155a; Chan, Instructions, 252. See also WWKC 1: 85a; Chan, Instructions, 80. In speaking of hsin in terms of vital consciousness, Yang-ming uses a language akin to that of Aristotle who defined the soul as the determining principle of the living body, that which gives it life and unity, motion and essential nature. See his Psychology, Book II.
- 41 WWKC 1: 84b-85a; Chan, Instructions, 80.
- 42 WWKC 1: 84b; Chan, Instructions, 80. Allusion is here made to Lao-tzu ch. 12 [See Chan, Source Book, 145].
- 43 WWKC 3: 144a; Chan, Instructions, 223.
- 44 WWKC 3: 137b; Chan, Instructions, 208-9.
- 45 WWKC 3: 137b-138a; Chan, Instructions, 209. Elsewhere, Yang-ming also defined li in terms of ch'i, and of ch'i in terms of li, in a metaphysical discussion, saying: "Li is that which gives a pattern of organisation (t'iao-li 條理) to ch'i, and ch'i is that through which li functions. Without the pattern of organisation, there can be no functioning; without functioning, there is also no way of discerning any pattern of organisation". Thus, he makes a conceptual distinction between li and ch'i, just as he does between hsing and ch'i, but he is careful to assert their necessary unity in things. See his letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2: 106a; Chan, Instructions, 132. The difficulty with this passage, however, is the obscurity surrounding its context. Evidently, it was an answer to a question posed by Lu concerning the line "Be discerning and single minded" from the "Counsels of Great Yu", Book of Documents. But the question itself is missing in the three editions of WWKC I consulted: SPTK 1st series double-page lithograph ed., SPPY ed., and the annotated edition of Ni Hsi-en published by the Shou-yeh shan-fang as well as Shih Pang-yao's (1585-1644) Yang-ming hsien-sheng chi-yao, [Essential Writings of Wang Yang-ming] SPTK ed.

- 46 WWKC 3: 143a-b; Chan, Instructions, 221-222.
- 47 WWKC 3: 143b; Chan, Instructions, 222.
- 48 WWKC 3: 157b; Chan, Instructions, 258. Certainly then, for those who are alive, there is yet a Heaven-and-Earth and all things which they may call "theirs".
- 49 WWKC 3: 142a; Chan, Instructions, 219.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 If one accepts Yang-ming's definitions of Taoists and Buddhists, one must also conclude that he himself was neither a Taoist nor a Buddhist.
- 52 "T'ai-ho p'ien", CTCS 2: 2a-3b. See also Ch. I, Yang-ming's fondness for the use of negative language in describing liang-chih recalls also Chu Hsi's insistence on T'ai-chi being described also as Wu-chi, as well as Ch'an Buddhist descriptions of the Absolute Mind. See, for example, Hsi Yün's (fl. 850AD) Wan-ling lu, [Wan-ling Record], TSD No. 2012B, XLVIII, 386b, where he spoke of the "Mind-ground" as being like empty-space, with neither form nor shape, direction nor location. See also Eng. tr. by John Blofeld, The Zen Teaching of Huang Po, (London: 1958), 93. Hisamatsu Shin-ichi compares such a negative approach to that in Christian theology, which refers to God as being beyond all predication. See his article, "The Characteristics of Oriental Nothingness," Philosophical Studies of Japan II (1969), 65-69. Very interestingly, therefore, through a language of negation, Yang-ming is pointing out the absolute character of liang-chih, that in us which is greater than ourselves, which is one with T'ai-hsu.
- 53 Letter to Nan Ta-chi 南大吉 [Nan Yüan-shan 南元善 1487-1541], (1526), WWKC 6: 217. Kusumoto Masatsugu remarked that Nan was a fellow countryman of Chang Tsai's. See Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 427.
- 54 WWKC 3: 142; Chan, Instructions, 220. Yang-ming spoke little of T'ai-chi. In discussing Chou Tun-yi's teaching on that subject, he was more concerned with explaining that yin and yang refer to the same ch'i which contracts and expands, while tung 動 (activity) and ching (tranquillity) refer to the same li which is sometimes hidden and sometimes manifest. Thus, he emphasised that tung-ching and yin-yang do not refer to two different stages in the cosmic process, but rather to one and the same transformation. Nevertheless, in doing so, it appears that Yang-ming approved of the notion of T'ai-chi, as the "ground of being", and, to use Chu Hsi's words, the source and fullness of li. And then, keeping in mind Yang-ming's metaphysical definitions of li and ch'i, as well as the understanding he shared with Chang Tsai that T'ai-hsu refers to the fullness of ch'i, one may infer that for him, T'ai-chi is that which gives pattern or organisation (li) to T'ai-hsu (fullness of ch'i), and T'ai-hsu is that through which T'ai-chi functions and is made manifest. See also above, n. 45.

- 55 Certainly, according to the context of Yang-ming's letter to Nan Ta-chi, he was speaking of "scholars of virtue" who despise the considerations of wealth, honour, profit and position. Kusumoto Masatsugu considered such an attitude to be in accord with Yang-ming's "mad ardour" (k'uang). See Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 426-427.
- 56 WWKC 3: 157b; Chan, Instructions, 258. Yang-ming was using the discrimination of opposing terms to obtain a meaning which answered Wang Chi's question. Ch'ien Te-hung remarked that it indicated the fundamental unity of pen-t'i and kung-fu. Ku Hsien-ch'eng commented that those who emphasise pen-t'i unduly tend to neglect kung-fu, while those who emphasise kung-fu may not understand pen-t'i. See MJHA 58: 11a-b.
- 57 WWKC 3: 155a; Chan, Instructions, 251.
- 58 Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1, Legge Classics, v. 1, 384-5.
- 59 See the essay written by Yang-ming for his aged friend and disciple, Tung Yün, WWKC 7: 246.
- 60 WWKC 1: 85a; Chan, Instructions, 80-1.
- 61 WWKC 1: 85a; Chan, Instructions, 81.
- 62 WWKC 3: 143b; Chan, Instructions, 222. This incident has often been cited by those who argue that Yang-ming was close to "metaphysical idealism": Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Yang-ming chih-hsing ho-yi chih chiao, Yin-ping shih wen-chi, 43:40; Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 85; Forke, op.cit., 380-399; Wing-tsit Chan, Instructions, "Introduction", xxxiii; Carsun Chang, The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought, v. 2, 56-57. My interpretation differs from theirs. I agree with Ch'ien Mu: Sung-Ming li-hsueh kai-shu, [A general Discussion of the Philosophy of the Sung and Ming Dynasties], (Taipei: 1962), 67-68, and Yasuoka Masashirō: Ō Yōmei kenkyū, 134, that Yang-ming was then speaking of the experience of consciousness, not of the reality of the flower.
- 63 WWKC 3: 141a; Chan, Instructions, 216.
- 64 Reference to Ch'eng Hao's "Shih-jen p'ien", ECCS, Yi-shu, 2A: 3b. This quotation has been interpreted out of its context as meaning "[Liang-chih] can have [or, put up with] nothing contradictory to it [or, no 'antithesis']" and even given as evidence of Yang-ming's disapproval of "class struggles" and of the Marxist dialectical method. See Hou Wai-lu, Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih, v. 4, pt. 2, 890-891.
- 65 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2: 120a; Chan, Instructions, 166. See Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai jugaku, 419-424.
- 66 WWKC 3: 157a-b; Chan, Instructions, 257.

- 67 WWKC 1: 79a; Chan, Instructions, 63.
- 68 WWKC 1: 79b; Chan, Instructions, 63-64. Yang-ming therefore affirmed that the emotions are not in themselves evil, a fact which Chu Hsi had not clearly asserted, since he preferred to distinguish between hsing and ts'ai, li and ch'i, identifying li to all that is good, while making ch'i somehow responsible for the rise of evil through excess of emotions. See also, Fung, che-hsueh shih, 942-944; Eng. tr., History, v. 2, 614-618.
- 69 WWKC 3: 134b-135a; Chan, Instructions, 202. To say that evil arises from a certain "deviation" from the "highest good" is not really to explain its rise. Takahashi Koji discussed the problem of this contradiction in Yang-ming's philosophy in "Ö Yōmei ni okeru aku no seiritsu", [The Origin of Evil in the Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming], Daitō Bunka Daigaku Kangaku-kai shi [Bulletin of the Sino-logical Society of the Daito Bunka University] IV (1961), 19-25. See also Nomura Keiji, "Ö Yōmei dokirun ni tsuite no ichi kosatsu," [A Study of Motivism (or Intentionality) in Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy], Osaka Furitsu Daigaku Kiyo [Bulletin of the University of Osaka Prefecture] XI (1963) 83-93.
- 70 WWKC 3: 149-150; Chan, Instructions, 236-237, see Ch. I, n. 6 for Dubs' judgement regarding Chu Hsi's continuation of Hsun-tzu's belief in human nature being evil, in spite of his own declarations in favour of Mencius' ideas.
- 71 WWKC 1: 79b; Chan, Instructions, 65.
- 72 WWKC 2: 110a-b; Chan, Instructions, 140-3. The special effort would refer particularly to an arduous practice of sitting in meditation, for the sake of inducing a certain state of mind.
- 73 Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching, TSD No. 2008, XLVIII, 349. The pen-lai mien-mu refers to ultimate reality. The version of the t'an-ching (Platform Scripture) which refers to it has no English translation although Yampolsky mentions this line in his work [op.cit., 134, n. 48].
- 74 WWKC 2: 110a; Chan, Instructions, 141. The story about the hare is from Han Fei Tzu, ch. 49, SPTK ed., 19: 1a. English translation by W.K. Liao, The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu (London: 1959), v. 2, 276. For merely giving partial approval to this Buddhist method of seeking to refrain from having either good or evil thoughts, Yang-ming had been severely criticised. See Ch'en Chien, Hsueh-pu t'ung pien, 9: 1a-2a, Chang Lieh, Wang-hsueh chih-yi, 4: 4b-5a. As for criticisms of his acknowledging that the pen-lai mien-mu is only another name for the Confucian Tao or ultimate reality, see below, Ch. VII.
- 75 WWKC 3: 151a-b; Chan, Instructions, 243. There are other versions of the "Four Maxims", usually giving the teaching in a slightly different form. But since the

accounts of both Ch'ien and Wang Chi coincide--which, indeed, resulted in their disagreement over the interpretation of the First Maxim,—it is better to accept the more common version of wu-shan wu-ô. On the other hand, since Yang-ming himself had declared that the state of "highest good" lies beyond that of distinctions between good and evil, I keep to the accounts given by Ch'ien and Wang Chi.

76 This was essentially the interpretation of Huang Tsung-hsi [MJHA 10: 1b] who remarked that wu-shan wu-ô referred to the absence of thoughts which may be called good or evil, rather than a description of human nature itself. The mistake would be to take yi-fa [which belongs to the realm of thoughts, intentions and emotions] to be wei-fa [the state prior to the rise of thoughts, intentions and emotions]. Kao P'an-lung expressed a similar opinion, saying that Yang-ming's doctrine did not affect the truth of the goodness of human nature, although it had other undesirable consequences. MJHA 58: 29b.

77 WWKC 3: 151b; Chan, Instructions, 243; WLCC "T'ien-ch'uan cheng-tao chi," , 1: 1a-b. Wang Chi objected to Ch'ien's judgement of the Maxims as containing the final form of Yang-ming's teaching, saying that Yang-ming had always insisted on acquiring insights and enlightenment for oneself, and therefore would not wish others to adhere blindly to any "formula" as expressive of his own "definitive thought".

78 WWKC 3: 151b; Chan, Instructions, 244. See also WLCC, 1: 1b-2a; MJHA 11: 6a-b. As Yang-ming had said earlier [WWKC 1: 79a; Chan, Instructions, 63] that the absence of good and evil characterises the state of "tranquillity" in which li is found, while the presence of good and/or evil characterises the movement of ch'i, he would seem to favour both Huang Tsung-hsi's explanation [see above, n. 76] and Ch'ien's emphasis of self-cultivation.

79 WWKC 3: 151b-152a; Chan, Instructions, 244-245. Wang Chi's account affirmed that for those of superior perceptivity, Yang-ming favoured "sudden enlightenment", but delayed saying so, for fear that listeners might be tempted to forego systematic self-cultivation for an easy short-cut. See WLCC 1: 2a-b; and a letter he wrote to a friend, in 12: 8a-b, where he also mentioned that inner enlightenment cannot be induced, although he regarded such enlightenment to be the key to wisdom.

80 WWKC 3: 151b; Chan, Instructions, 244-245. See also WLCC 1: 2b. Wang Chi added that Yang-ming recommended even for the "already enlightened", the practice of gradual cultivation, in order to enter sagehood. For a discussion of the Four Maxims and their interpretations, as well as for repercussions regarding "enlightenment" on "cultivation", see Takahashi Koji, "O Yōmei no 'shiku ketsu' ni tsuite," [On Wang Yang-ming's "Four Maxims"] Chūgoku Tetsugaku, I, (1961) 10-18.

81 Ibid. Given this warning, it is difficult to understand those men of the T'ai-chou branch who appealed to Yang-ming for support of their negligence of self-cultivation, as well as of the critics who blamed Yang-ming for this negligence. Kao P'an-lung remarked that it was Wang Chi who spoiled the teaching of liang-chih, but that Yang-ming had also lacked in caution in his teachings. See MJHA 58: 36a.

Chapter VII

THE CULMINATION: THE UNITY OF THE THREE WAYS

"Universal virtue" (t'ung-te 同德) is that which one shares with ordinary men and women. "Heresy" (yi-tuan 異端) is that which differs from what is present in ordinary men and women.¹

Yang-ming's life was that of a statesman, a soldier and a philosopher. As a statesman and soldier, he was denied adequate opportunity to make use of all his competence, since the brilliance he displayed in the assignments confided to him aroused such fear and jealousy in high places. As a philosopher, he was even less trusted. Time and again, the charge of "false learning", of "heresy", was levelled against him. This misfortune pursued him even after his death in 1519. It was not until forty-eight years afterwards that his distinguished services to the dynasty were finally acknowledged and posthumous honours were bestowed upon him. And then, another seventeen years afterwards, in 1584, sacrifice was offered in his honour in the Temple of Confucius.² Although this spelt the official approval of his teachings, his philosophy continued to be regarded as a sign of contradiction until even the Ch'ing dynasty.

So far I have spoken of the evolution of the "Confucian Way", I have pondered, in particular, on the opening of new vistas on this Way, introduced by Wang Yang-ming. I have discussed the emergence of certain of his key-ideas, the controversy resulting from them, and the gradual formulation of his all-embracing, practical methodology. I have spoken also of the culmination of his teaching in "the unity of all things". I have attempted to draw out certain spiritual and metaphysical implications of this doctrine, giving special attention to the notion of hsin-in-itself or liang-chih-in-itself, and discussing the problems ensuing from this teaching. It is now my aim in

this chapter to treat Yang-ming's ideas regarding the "oneness" and universality of the true "Way", the validity of the insights of all--whether Taoist, Buddhist or Confucian--as well as the subtle differences which divide the Taoist and the Buddhist from the true Confucian. I shall point out the fact that Yang-ming considered as "real heretics", not the Taoists or Buddhists, but the renegade Confucians, men who voiced admiration of and desire for wisdom but acted in contradiction to their words. I shall then speak of "the Way of Yang-ming", making a few remarks on the new criterion which he set for the judgement of truths and error, of wisdom and perversity: lianq-chih. Regarded as that in us which is greater than oneselves, the Absolute, it becomes therefore the authority for its own truth.

The Unity of the Three Ways³

Yang-ming was fond of saying, "Tao is everywhere".⁴ This can be understood in two ways. Firstly, truth is seen as that which is within the access of all, rather than the private property of any one man, or any one school of thought. It is both interior to man and universally present in man and in all things through man. Secondly, the "Way" of acquiring this truth, this wisdom, is also broad and open. Whatever "way" brings one there, is the true Way.

One consequence of this attitude was his openness of mind regarding Buddhism and Taoism. These "Two Teachings" had long been regarded as standing in opposition to the Confucian Way. Yang-ming's attitude served to clarify the difference between truth and prejudice. For while truth is everywhere, there is always danger that one seek to barricade himself in one place and to say that he alone has the truth, and that falsehood reigns everywhere else.

This does not mean, however, that Yang-ming did not recognise important differences between the Confucian attitude toward life and the known attitudes of the Taoist

and Buddhist schools. He was not only aware of these, but assiduous in pointing them out. Where the differences are acute, he was unhesitating in giving his views, in pronouncing in favour of one side. He was open-minded, but he did not believe in making compromises.

Yang-ming's previous association with the "Two Teachings" and his continued tolerance and broad-mindedness drew to him many disciples who manifested sympathy and interest in Taoism and Buddhism. Quite early in Yang-ming's career as a Confucian teacher, a discussion took place between himself and a disciple, Wang Chia-hsiu, concerning the relative merits of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The two agreed that Buddhists and Taoists share with Confucians the same goal,--the same Way. In order to persuade others to follow them, however, the Buddhists offer the promise of escape from the cycle of life and death (samsāra), while the Taoists speak of a long life or even physical immortality. Thus, the means they employ for the achievement of their goal were improper. The Confucians, on their part, have also lost the true teaching of the sages, and have turned to the pursuit of rote study, literary excellence, success and profit, and textual criticism, and so have become, at bottom, no different from the so-called "heterodox" schools. Indeed, they compare unfavourably with those Buddhists and Taoists of pure minds and few desires, who are free from worldly attachments. "Today, students need not first of all attack Taoism and Buddhism. They should rather fix their determination earnestly on the doctrine of the sages. As this doctrine... is made clear to the world, Buddhism and Taoism will disappear of themselves. Otherwise, I am afraid what we want to learn will not be considered worthwhile by the Buddhists and Taoists".⁵

Yang-ming added that the Way of the sages is that of the great Mean and of perfect Rectitude, which penetrates all levels, both of ends and of means, as a thread which runs through everything. "The man of humanity sees it and calls it humanity. The man of wisdom sees it and calls it

wisdom. The common people act daily according to it without knowing it...."6 He thus implied that the Way is common to all of the "Three Teachings", although it may be known by different people under different names.

Around 1521, Yang-ming began his teaching of liang-chih. In 1523, he told his disciples that he was content to follow his liang-chih without worrying about what the world might say. In other words, he was determined to make sagehood his goal, with no regard to human respect. More and more, he wished no longer to distinguish between the "Three Teachings", not even by name.7 In a discussion with Chang Yüan-ch'ung 張元冲 the question came up as to whether the Confucian should also learn from the good points of Buddhism and Taoism, especially for the sake of personal cultivation. Yang-ming said:

The practices of the "Two Teachings" can all be my practices. When I complete and cultivate myself while developing my nature and fulfilling my destiny, [what I do] may be called Taoist. When I refrain from worldly contaminations while developing my nature and fulfilling my destiny, [what I do] may be called Buddhist. But certain scholars of these later ages have not understood the completeness of the Teaching of the Sages. For this reason, they have distinguished themselves from the "Two Teachings" as though there exist two views [of truth]. This is like having a large hall which can be separated into three rooms. The Confucians did not know that the whole place could be used by themselves. When they saw the Buddhists, they separated the room on the left to give it to them. When they saw the Taoists, they also separated the room on the right to give to them. And so the Confucians themselves remain in the middle.8

There is no reason why a Confucian should not enter into and make use of the "rooms" allotted to the Buddhists and Taoists. There is no reason, indeed, why walls should exist at all, dividing up the hall into three parts.

He went on to say that since the sage is one with Heaven-and-Earth and all people and all things, he has also at his disposal, all that come from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. He called this manner of accepting the good and the true from everywhere the "Great Way". He added, however, that a certain selfishness manifested by the "Two Teachings" of Buddhism and Taoism have caused them to be known as "Small Ways".⁹

Yang-ming and Taoism

In Yang-ming's time, the word "Taoism" was chiefly associated with teachings and practices regarding "Eternal Life" (ch'ang-sheng 長生), of the body as well as of the soul. Interest was in the discovery of "the secret springs of Heaven-and-Earth" which would bring the key to peace, happiness, and even immortality--or at least a prolonged life on earth. Effort was thus concentrated on self-cultivation, observing certain methods which might hopefully help their practitioners to attain their desired goals. These methods ranged from the practice of alchemy in the quest for the "external pill" or elixir, and the consolidation and concentration of the self,--of the sperm (ching 精), the spirit (shen 神) and the ether (ch'i), through practices of breath control. It is a well known fact that Yang-ming had early contacts and long associations with Taoism and Taoist practices.¹⁰ A letter of his, dated 1503, shows how he was regarded by some people as being possibly in possession of preternatural knowledge and powers. T'ung Cheng 佟珍, the Prefect of Shao-hsing 紹興, had written to ask him for information concerning the "art of making rain".¹¹ In his reply, Yang-ming emphasised the importance for the responsible local official to live a virtuous life and to carry out his duties properly, saying that such conduct would be in itself a continual prayer, and more meritorious and efficacious in its power of moving Heaven than any formal prayer or sacrifices for rain conducted in the time of need. He then turned his attention to the so-called magicians and their claim to

special knowledge and power. "All such reports [of their successes], come to us from miscellaneous accounts of minor importance and not from the Classics. The gentleman tends to consider these happenings as coincidences. As to our present-day priests and sorcerers, many of these are little different from the loafers and ruffians of the market places. How can we therefore expect them to rebuke the thunder, to call forth wind and rain?"¹²

And then, urging the Prefect to be doubly fervent in the exercise of his official duties as well as in prayer and penitence, he explained that, so long as this was done, "even though Heaven [should] send us no rain, there will be no harm.... And on my part, though I am no different from the common people... I too shall pray at Nan-chen, to help your fervour. [For] if only you beg with your whole heart for the people, without allowing yourself to be deceived by false teachings, and without anxiety to obtain a better reputation, then, although the way of Heaven is distant, it has never failed to respond to a case of such fervour".¹³

If this letter to T'ung gives us Yang-ming's scorn for the "priests and sorcerers" of the market places, as well as his Confucian pre-occupation with the impact of good works and a good life on the cosmic order itself, a later letter, dated 1508, to an unnamed friend, gives us his attitude towards "spirits and immortals". After admitting that he had been interested in the art of obtaining physical immortality, or at least, in prolonging life, through the practice of Taoist methods of cultivation, he said with some irony:

More than thirty years have passed.... My teeth are becoming unsteady, several of my hairs have turned white, my eyes cannot see beyond a foot's distance, and my ears cannot hear beyond the distance of ten feet. Moreover, I am often bed-ridden with sickness for entire months. My need of medicine as well as my capacity for it is growing. These are all the results of my interest in spirits and immortals.¹⁴

And then, proceeding to a discussion of those figures of antiquity esteemed by Taoists as sages and immortals: of Kuang-ch'eng tzu,¹⁵ and of Li Po-yang 李伯陽 [Lao-tzu], he said that they were "perfect men, of genuine virtue and mature Tao, who lived in harmony with yin and yang and the four seasons, away from the world and its vanities. Concentrating their sperm (ching) and their energies, they moved between Heaven and Earth, seeing and hearing things which were beyond the scope of ordinary experience". They were, however, men of special gifts, for the keeping intact of our energies and bones "refer to a natural endowment received at the beginning of our existence. This is the work of Heaven, and not what human force can compass",¹⁶

To Lu Ch'eng, a man gifted with a subtle and penetrating understanding but of poor health, and keenly interested in Taoist methods of cultivating life, Yang-ming cited the Epilogue of Wu-shen p'ien 悟真篇 [On Awakening to Truth], where it is stated that "the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu took pity on [the people's] covetous desires, and used the art of immortals to give them gradual and systematic direction",¹⁷ He argued that, had an art of immortality really existed, the sages of antiquity, from Yao, Shun on to Confucius, must have been aware of it, and would have — out of compassion—revealed it to others also.¹⁸ He described Ch'en Chih-hsu¹⁹ as a man who possessed certain skills "which could not be called the real Tao"--although, he added: "Still, we can not be sure",²⁰

But he denied flatly any belief in the later Taoist immortals, in those men who allegedly "could ascend with their families into the air, transform objects, borrow corpses and return to life again".

[These] refer to deceptive and strange things belonging to the realm of secret magic and ingenious arts--what Yin-wen-tzu 尹文子 called illusion, what the Buddhists call heterodoxy. If such actions are called real, you would be equally deceived.²¹

In both these letters, Yang-ming disassociated himself explicitly from the Taoist attempt to obtain secret knowledge concerning the art of acquiring physical immortality or a longer life on earth, and spoke rather of the Confucian view of immortality--the immortality of virtue. Yen-tzu, he said, died at the age of thirty-two, and yet still lives today.²² "Generally speaking, the cultivation of virtue and the cultivation of life are one and the same thing. If what you call the "True Self" (chen-wo 真我) could really remain vigilant when not seen, and apprehensive when not heard, and concentrate on such practices, then your ch'i (ether) and your ching (sperms) will be collected. In this case, what the Taoists call physical immortality will also be present".²³

Lu Ch'eng contemplated abandoning the world for the sake of devoting himself entirely to Taoist practices of cultivation. Yang-ming opposed such a move vigorously, advising his friend to follow rather the Confucian "methods" of cultivating one's moral character and personality:

Since you have a weak constitution and are often sick, you need merely to abandon the path of honours and reputation, purify your mind and your desires, concentrate on the learning of the sages, in the sense in which the theory of the "true self" was referred to earlier. You ought not to believe in heterodox teachings, thus confusing your understanding needlessly, wasting your mental and physical energies as well as your time. If you stay away long and do not return to society, you will become easily a frenzied and mentally sick man.²⁴

In 1514, Yang-ming wrote two poems to criticise Chang Po-tuan,²⁵ whom he suspected to have written the three commentaries on the Wu-chen p'ien. They contain his harshest criticisms of Taoism:

"On Awakening to Truth" (Wu-chen p'ien) is nothing than "On Mistaken Truth" (Wu-chen p'ien 誤真篇),²⁶

The Three Commentaries came originally from the same hand.

[How I] hate the monstrous demons who, for sake of profit,

Spread deceit and falsehood, far and wide,
Chang P'ing-shu could not have escaped the blame
of being the first culprit--

Who was the one who falsely attributed it
to Hsueh Tzu-hsien²⁷ (Hsüeh Tao-kuang)

Let me tell you my friend, quite frankly:
Look carefully, from head to toe, at "Wild-cat
Ch'an"²⁸

Was "On the Awakening to Truth" no other than "On
the Mistaken Truth"?

Already, in the time of [Chang] P'ing-shu, this
has been said.

And yet the deep attachment [to life] of wordly
men,

Gave rise to karma, in their feelings and desires.
How can dreams be discussed in front of a silly man?
What nore mystery is there beyond one's genuine
nature?

Men still have eyes, for the search for Tao--
O look and see, where is the blue sky?²⁹

Nevertheless, Yang-ming remained fond of using Taoist expressions and examples, in the teaching of his own philosophy as well as in his criticisms of Taoist ideas and practices.³⁰ He also discussed directly certain Taoist concepts. When asked once the meanings of what the Taoist call "prime ether" (yüan-ch'i 原氣), "prime spirit" (yüan-shen 原神) and "prime sperm" (yüan-ching 原精), he had explained, in his characteristic way, that they all refer to the same thing, which exists as "ether," coagulates as "sperm", and operates in a marvellous way as "spirit".³¹ He also identified all of them to liang-chih:

There is only one liang-chih. In terms of its marvellous functioning, it is called "spirit"; in terms of its universal operation, it is called "ether", and in terms of its concentration and coagulation, it is called "sperm". How can it be understood as [objects with] shapes and forms and locations?³²

Thus, Yang-ming applies the Taoist language of cultivation, to a higher plane -- that of ultimate truth. In identifying liang-chih to "spirit", "ether", and "sperm", he is not merely accommodating in a superficial manner, concepts that are quite disparate, but rather indicating the deeper pre-occupation inherent in Taoism: the longing to discover one's true self, to unify one's life and its profound energies, of both the body and the spirit, and to extend this unity to all things.

Towards the end of his life, Yang-ming expressed the fulfilment of all his desires in the discovery of liang-chih, and, by that count, of his having transcended the Taoist quest for immortality in the following poem,³³ which presents a summary of his personal evolution:

Immortality I merely envy
 Lacking pills and money
 Famous mountains I have combed,
 Till my temples yield silken hairs.
 My light body fettered by smrti (nien 念)³⁴
 Daily move I farther from Tao.
 Awakened suddenly, in the middle of life, I find
 the
 Pill of Nine Returns³⁵
 No need for oven, nor for tripod:
 Why seek I k'an 坎 and why li 離)³⁶
 No end is there, nor beginning.
 So too, for birth and death--
 The magicians' wise words
 Only increase my doubts;
 Confusedly these old men
 Transmit arts difficult and complex,

In me is Ch'ien (Heaven), in me K'un (Earth)
 I need not seek elsewhere--
 The thousand sages pass as shadows,
Liang-chih alone is my guide.³⁷

Yang-ming and Buddhism

As philosophy, Buddhism had long been on the decline before the time of Yang-ming. Fusion with Taoism led to gradual loss of identity on both sides, effecting, therefore a deeper permeation of certain ideas and practices in the lives of people, both high and low. The "mirror image", so frequently used by the Ch'eng-Chu philosophers as well as by Yang-ming, and the teaching that "the emotions of the sage are in accord with all things and yet he himself has no emotions", can be traced back to Chuang-tzu³⁸ as well as to Hui-neng, to Wang Pi as well as to Seng-chao.³⁹ The doctrine of T'ien-li jen-yü 天理人欲 and the emphasis on restoring the luminous "principle of Heaven" in one's nature through the purification of self from all passions and selfishness, resembles the Buddhist teaching of the restoration of one's "Buddha-nature" from attachment to passion or klesā, but can also be traced back to Lao-tzu's idea of the "return" to original nature.⁴⁰ And yet, in spite of his stronger recorded contracts with Taoism, Yang-ming has been accused of being a Ch'an Buddhist in disguise more often than for his Taoist connections. This can be readily understood from the greater antagonism of "orthodox" Confucianism against "alien" Buddhist teachings, which had made of the word Ch'an the target of all attacks. It is also due to the fact that Ch'an Buddhism, had, in fact, a stronger appeal for the more speculative persons than the practical Taoist quest for "immortality".

An exhaustive treatment of Buddhist influences on Yang-ming's philosophy would also be difficult, if only because these can be detected in almost everything he said.⁴¹ His highly integrated and very unitary thinking

is an excellent illustration of the T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen teachings which saw unity in multiplicity, "One in All and All in One". We have mentioned, in passing, certain traces of Buddhist influence in Yang-ming's thought. We shall speak now only of his conscious attitudes towards Buddhism, as these have been expressed in his writings and recorded conversations, moving from his objections to Buddhism on to his accommodation of certain truths which lie at the core of Ch'an doctrine, as well as his employment of quasi-Buddhist techniques in teaching his disciples.

Like many Chinese thinkers, one of Yang-ming's objections to Buddhism was based on its alien origin. In a memorial which he addressed to Emperor Wu-tsung but never submitted, he counselled the Emperor against the sending of envoys to Tibet for the purpose of looking for learned Buddhist Masters. After praising the Emperor's good intentions of seeking for "the Way of Buddhism in order to save...the myriad people under Heaven [from] their sufferings". He added that the same goal could be achieved by learning from the Confucian sages:

For Buddha was the sage of the barbarians, just as [our] sages were the Buddhas of China. In the barbarian lands, the teachings of Buddha can be used for the instruction and reformation of the ignorant and stubborn. In our own country, we ought naturally to use the Way of the sages to educate and transform [our people]. This is like using horses and carriages for land travel and boats for crossing the seas. If, living in China, we [make ourselves] disciples of Buddhism, it will be like crossing the seas in horses and carriages....⁴²

He explained to the Emperor how he himself had abandoned the study of Buddhism, after realising the greatness of the "Way of the sages". He pointed out that Siddharta lived a shorter life than either Yao or Shun, and said that

resort to oracles and charms had been condemned by orthodox Buddhists themselves as "heresies and perversities". He exhorted the emperor to devote his energy to the quest of Confucian ideals, promising that with such a quest, the "supreme happiness of the West will be in front of your eyes".⁴³

Much more frequently, however, Yang-ming criticised Buddhist teachings and practices for their "selfish" orientations. He said, for example, that the Confucians do not separate themselves from affairs and things when they nourish hsin, but do so only in a spontaneous and natural way, measuring the efforts according to times and occasions. The Buddhists, however, preach the abandonment of all affairs and things, regard hsin as illusion, and lead man to a state of emptiness and void, without giving any attention to life in the world. For this reason, Buddhism cannot contribute to the government of the world. To his disciple Huang Chih, Yang-ming said:

The Buddhists are afraid of the burden involved in the father-son relationship and so run away from it. They are afraid of the burden involved in the ruler-minister relationship and so run away from it. They are afraid of the burden involved in the husband-wife relationship and so run away from it. They do all this because [these]...relationships involve attachment to phenomena...We Confucians accept the father-son relationship and fulfil this [responsibility] with humanity. We accept the ruler-minister relationship and fulfil it with righteousness. We accept the husband-wife relationship and fulfil it with attention to the separate functions it involves. When have we been attached to these... relationships?⁴⁴

He went on to say that the Confucians accept the father-son relationship and fulfil it with the humanity it deserves. They accept the ruler-subject relationship and fulfil it with the righteousness proper to it. They

accept the husband-wife relationship and fulfil it with attention to the separate duties involved. There is, therefore, no inordinate attachment.⁴⁵

Yang-ming's language abounds with Buddhist allusions, to a greater extent than that of the Ch'engs, Chu Hsi and even Lu Chiu-yüan. He openly identified liang-chih to the Buddhist "ultimate reality"--the pen-lai mien-mu.⁴⁶ He quoted with approval, the famous line from the Diamond Sutra: "Yin wu-suo-chu erh sheng-ch'i-hsin 應無所住而生其心"⁴⁷ These two facts alone gave rise to much criticisms, since they showed acceptance of a fundamental truth of Ch'an metaphysics as well as of its "methodology" of inner enlightenment. It must, however, be pointed out that in both instances, he did so only in passing mention, in answer to a disciple's letter.

Yang-ming also manifested a certain fondness for using quasi-Buddhist techniques in instructing his disciples, by means of parables and riddles--even what resembled the insoluble Ch'an riddle: kung-an 公案 [Japanese: koan]. For example, when asked by Hsiao Hui how selfish desires are to be overcome, he replied in a manner reminiscent of the patriarch Hui-k'o 慧可 (486-593) speaking to his disciple and later successor, Seng-ts'an 僧璨 (fl. 592): "Give me your selfish desires, and I shall overcome them for you".⁴⁸

To Liu Kuan-shih 劉觀時 who questioned him on the state of equilibrium before emotions are aroused, Yang-ming also answered with a parable taken from a collection of Ch'an stories: "I cannot tell you this any more than a dumb man can tell you about the taste of the bitter melon he has just eaten. If you want to know it, you will have to eat the...melon yourself".⁴⁹

Yang-ming made generous use of Buddhist allusions especially in his poems. It is for this reason that Ch'en Chien, in Hsüeh-pu t'ung pien, cited many of Wang's poems to demonstrate the extent of Buddhist influence on his philosophy. Wang visualised his own role of prophet to a world of inert men in one such poem,⁵⁰ where he relied very

much on Buddhist imagery:

The whole world is drowned in sleep,
 But the lonely man--who is it?--by chance still sober
 Cries aloud but cannot stir the others.
 Who stare at him in great astonishment.

Calling him mad, they rise up
 Only to surround him and belabour him.
 The waters of Chu and Ssu covered the peals of the
 Golden Bell,⁵¹

The rivers Lien and Lo carried faint voices.⁵²

Who is sounding the poison-painted drum,⁵³
 While the hearers remain dull and unresponsive?
 Alas, what are you all intent on doing,
 Going about, toiling so restlessly?
 How can you be made to hear this drum,
 Which can open your innate intelligence?⁵⁴

Indeed, the line which divides the authentic disciple of the sages from the Ch'an Buddhist is a very narrow one. Yang-ming knew that those scholars, like himself, who were interested in the inner cultivation of mind-and-heart, were frequently accused of being Ch'an Buddhists in Confucian disguise. He has now given his own criterion for "orthodoxy": the sense of social responsibility. He has described the Buddhists as selfish men, concerned only with their own salvation, and not with that of society at large. They are escapists who run away from these responsibilities which bind a man to his family, his country, and the world. The Confucians, however, seek to "develop his mind-and-heart to completion, by regarding Heaven-and-Earth and all things as one body". They are not merely satisfied with the performance of their own duties. They also desire to rectify all that is amiss in the proper network of human relationships which make up the world. "When he finds affection in his father-son relationship, but knows it to be lacking for others in the world, he will not consider his mind-and-heart to be fully developed.... When his own

family is well fed and warmly clad, and has leisure for enjoyment, but he knows there are others in the world who have not these essentials of life and advantages, can he expect them to have affection, righteousness, differentiation of duties and faithfulness?.... This shows that his mind-and-heart is not yet fully developed. On that account, he sets up laws and government, and dispenses rites, music and education, in order that these may promote and contribute to the completion of himself and of others, through the full development of his mind-and-heart."⁵⁵

Thus, there is a broad view of what is "mind-culture", as well as a narrow one. The Confucians take the broad outlook, embracing the world and all things in his vision and in his practice of humanity, the Ch'an Buddhists adhere to the narrow view, and, in the end, fail to save themselves.

The Real Heretics

In the final analysis, Yang-ming considered as the worst enemies of the school of sages, not the Buddhists and Taoists, but the "mediocre scholars" of his own days. He compared these scholars to Yang Chu and Mo Ti, and himself to Mencius, who condemned them as "heretics" and exposed the fallacies of their teachings. While Mo Ti supposedly erred in preaching a universal love which went too far in the practice of humanity, and Yang Chu erred in advocating an egoism which went too far in the practice of righteousness, Yang-ming considered that the scholars of his days who treated the study of Confucian doctrines merely as a means of personal advancement on the official ladder to be teachers neither of humanity nor of righteousness.⁵⁶ He considered that their misinterpretations of true doctrine mislead others and hinder the progress of those persons sincerely interested in the Way, turning them rather to the study of Taoism and Buddhism, the teachings of which, he claimed, were in fact superior to those of the mediocre Confucians. Thus, the decline of Confucianism should be blamed on the renegade scholars who purported to be the disciples of the sages rather than on the other "Two Teachings",⁵⁷

All his life, Yang-ming showed his great abhorrence for such hypocrites, who paid lip service to the words of the sages, while contradicting them by their manner of life. If, on the one hand, even Buddhists and Taoists possess valid insights into the true Way, on the other, the false doctrine of the worldly scholars is to the true teaching of the sages what mock jade, is to jade.

There is only one Tao,... The mediocre Confucian scholars all start from a partial view of it, and embellish their image with comparisons and imitations, giving expression to it through divisions of chapters and sentences and borrowed explanations. They are used to such practices, which can instil enough self-confidence, producing sections and items which give them a sense of make-belief security, with which they can deceive themselves and others, remaining in this pitfall for a whole life-time without realising it.⁵⁸

The root of their evil, however, is less the fragmentary nature of their insights than the moral bankruptcy of their intentions. It is selfishness which corrupts their knowledge, and enlists their learning in service of hypocrisy.

The width of their knowledge of memorised texts merely serves to increase their pride. The wealth of learning they possess merely contributes to their evil actions. The breadth of information they have accumulated by hearing and seeing merely helps them to indulge in arguments. Their skill in prose-writing merely covers up their hypocrisy.⁵⁹

Yang-ming repeated his condemnation of the mediocre Confucians in his "Inquiry into the Great Learning". He criticised first and foremost those people who did not realise that the highest good is inherent in hsin, but exercised their selfish ideas and their cunning to look for it outside, with the belief that every event and

every thing or object must be thoroughly investigated before virtue can be known and practised. "In so doing, they obscure the law of right and wrong, [causing the mind-and-heart to become] concerned with fragmentary and isolated details, [until] selfish desires become rampant and the 'principle of Heaven' is lost. In this way, the teaching of manifesting virtue and of loving the people [of the Great Learning] is thrown into confusion in the whole world".⁶⁰

He followed this up with a much milder criticism of the "Buddhists and Taoists", "who wanted to manifest their clear virtue, but did not know how to abide in the highest good, but press their minds and hearts to something too lofty, thus losing themselves in illusions and emptiness, and refusing to be at all concerned with social responsibilities toward the family, the country and the world".⁶¹

The opportunists, or the promoters of "profit and gain", come next under fire. These wanted to love the people, but did not know how to abide in the highest good. And so they sank their minds in base and trifling tricks, losing all feeling of humanity and commiseration.⁶²

Yang-ming's attitude toward the mediocre Confucians was not lost on those who were the object of his criticisms. On their part, these scholars never ceased to launch counter-attacks of heresy and of false learning against Yang-ming himself. They pestered and persecuted him all during his life and even after his death. Yang-ming's student, Ch'ien Te-hung, has testified to this fact:

Our Teacher was, during his whole life, the object of criticisms, slander, intrigues and other attempts to destroy him. He survived the dangers of ten thousand deaths. Yet he always kept himself busy and never relaxed his effort of teaching, lest we might fail to hear the real Way, and fall into the pitfalls of worldly honour and profit and unprincipled opportunism, and degenerate unconsciously to the manners of barbarians and beasts.....⁶³

the other hand, is that by which one diverges from this universal "virtue".⁶⁸ He was anxious, therefore, that no exterior criterion be set up for truth and orthodoxy and the quest for sagehood, which should discourage people from its pursuit. He said of his disciple Lu Ch'eng, for example, that Lu was too concerned with questions of textual understanding. "If one has faith in liang-chih and makes effort only [to extend] liang-chih, one will find that the thousand classics and canons will all conform to it and all heretical doctrines... will be destroyed when measured against it."⁶⁹

For Yang-ming, liang-chih is the only criterion of truth, just as its extension to the utmost is the only requisite for the attainment of sagehood. He held up this criterion especially in opposition to that of classical learning, and to all intellectual endeavour which he classified as "knowledge through seeing and hearing". He also recalled to Nieh Pao the experiences of Confucius himself during life-time--how he had been criticised, ridiculed, slandered, denounced and insulted. "People like the gate-keeper [of Shih-men 石門] and the basket-carrier, [considered] at the time to be virtuous men, said of [Confucius] that 'he knows a thing cannot be done and still wants to do it', and that 'he is contemptible and obstinate, and should stop seeking [official service] when no one really knows him'. Even his disciple Tzu-lu 子路 rebuked him for going to see a woman of ill repute".⁷⁰ And yet--Yang-ming reasoned--the Master could not but act as he did, because, as a sage, "his humanity regarded Heaven and Earth and all things as one body".⁷¹ Confucius was so keenly aware of his responsibilities toward the world that he could not abandon his desires and attempts to serve other men, even though he was being thwarted at every step. Such a mind could only be appreciated by the mind of another sage, by someone else who was also one with Heaven and Earth and all things.

Yang-ming declared that he had the same hsin as Confucius--he felt the same urgent responsibility to save

a world which was proceeding headlong on a course which can only bring it destruction. If this attitude of his should cause people to consider him insane, it did not matter. After all, this was the insanity of a man who was willing to run the danger of drowning himself to save others who were sinking and falling down an abyss. "The minds (hsin) of all the people in the world are my mind (hsin) also. If there are people in the world who are insane, how can I not be insane also? If there are people who have lost their minds, how can I not lose my mind?"⁷² He went on to excuse himself for having the boldness of comparing himself to Confucius:

How dare such an unworthy person as I regard the Way of the Master to be my own responsibility? However, to some extent, I realise in my mind that there is [the same] sickness and pain in my own body, and so I look everywhere for someone who may be able to help me, with whom I may discuss ways and means of removing this sickness and pain. If I can really find heroic men who have the same ambitions, in order to help one another to promote the spreading of the learning of liang-chih in the world... and bring about a state of Great Unity [Ta-t'ung], then my insanity should certainly be cured all of a sudden, and I can finally avoid losing my hsin....⁷³

Is it, after all, the Classics, together with the officially approved commentaries, that define the meaning of wisdom and point out the way toward its acquisition, or is it rather the sage, the man who has succeeded in finding and becoming his "true self", the man who knows no deceit, whose mind-and-heart has become completely identified with the true and the good and the beautiful, who fixes the criteria for true wisdom and authentic learning? And, if the sage, the man qualified to write new Classics, is the best arbiter of matters orthodox and

heretical, the best judge of true and false wisdom, can one not say, with Yang-ming, that he is so by right of, and through the use of, that which makes him a sage: his liang-chih? And again, is not this liang-chih present in every man, the seed of possible greatness and sageliness, the criterion of its own movements, the authority for its own beliefs, and its own wisdom?

In a series of four poems written for the instruction of his disciples, Yang-ming has expressed for us his ideas of liang-chih as the criterion of true doctrine and of wisdom, a criterion which can be compared to the authority of Confucius himself, the sage par excellence, to that of the Taoist text, the Ts'an-t'ung ch'i, which "tallies the ideas of the Confucian Book of Changes with those of the Taoist classic, Lao-tzu",⁷⁴ and to the mariner's compass. He refers also to the Buddhist quest for tranquillity, saying that the supra-sensory experience of the self contains within itself the higher experience of that ultimate reality which is "the ground of Heaven and Earth and all things".

Confucius resides in every man's hsin
 Hidden by distractions of ears and eyes.
 The real image being now discovered,
 No longer suspect your liang-chih

Why, sir, are you always agitated:
 Wasting efforts in the world of sorrows--
 Do you not know the sages' word of power:
Liang-chih is your Ts'an-t'ung ch'i

In every man there is a compass,
 His mind-and-heart is the seat of a thousand
 transformations.

Foolishly, I once saw things in reverse:
 Leaves and branches I sought outside.
 The soundless, odourless moment of solitary
 knowledge.⁷⁵

Contains the ground of Heaven, Earth and all beings.

Foolish is he who leaves his inexhaustible treasure,
 With a bowl (t'o-pen 托鉢) moving from door to
 door, imitating the beggar.⁷⁶

Liang-chih, indeed, begins with the self and brings
 one back to the self. In doing so, however, it also
 enriches the self, expanding and deepening it until it is
 fully cognisant of its own greatness and depth, which is
 no less than the greatness and the depth of Heaven-and-
 Earth and the myriad things.

Notes to Chapter VII

- 1 WWKC 3: 142b; Chan, Instructions, 220. Allusion to Mencius 6A:8, regarding how men's hearts (hsin) agree in approving of virtue, and adding: "the sages only apprehended before me that which my hsin shares with other men". See Legge, Classics, v. 2, 406-407.
- 2 See Y.K. Shryock, The Origins and Development of the State Cult of Confucius, (New York: 1966), 183-189.
- 3 The movement of amalgamation of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist ideas began early, especially with interactions between Taoism and Buddhism, in both their teachings and practices. See T'ang, fo-chiao shih, 87-120; Maspero, le Taoisme, 185-199; E. Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China; (Leiden: 1959), v. 1, 288-9, 309-319. I agree with Zürcher that the distinction made between "philosophical" and "popular" or religious Taoism is misleading, since it suggests a doctrinal difference accompanied by a social distinction. He claims that hsüan-hsüeh 玄學 (profound learning), sometimes called "Neo-Taoism", so dominant in the Wei-Chin times, was actually a Confucian recasting of early Taoist philosophy, which has drastically re-interpreted the old Taoist doctrines. The fusion of Buddhist and Taoist ideas in the Sung times has already been described in Ch. I. Chu Hsi's philosophical synthesis as well as Lu Chiu-yüan's rival thought both embodied a fusion of the "Three Ways". Yang-ming certainly took another, firmer step toward that direction, with an open admission of his thoughts on this subject. As for later developments in the Ming dynasty, especially the conscious amalgamation of the "Three Ways" on the part of scholars, frequently influenced by Yang-ming's philosophy, see Sakai Tadao, Chugoku zenshu no kenkyü [A Study of Chinese Morality Books], (Tokyo: 1960), 226-304, passim., and Prof. Liu Ts'un-yan's article, "Lin Chao-en", 253-278; and Araki Kengō, "Minmatsu ni okeru Ju Butsu chōwaron no seikaku." [On the Thought of the Late Ming Era as Revealed in the Attempts at Harmony Between Confucianism and Buddhism], Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō XVIII (1966), 210-224.
- 4 WWKC 3: 156; Chan, Instructions, 255.
- 5 WWKC 1: 70a; Chan, Instructions, 40-41.
- 6 WWKC 1: 70b; Chan, Instructions, 41-42. Yang-ming was citing from the Appendix to the Book of Changes. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7:7b; Legge, tr., Yi King, 355-356. See also Yang-ming's letter to Tsou Shou-yi, (1526), WWKC 6: 212b.
- 7 WWKC 34: 958a-b.
- 8 WWKC 34: 959b-960a. See also WLCC, "San-shan li-tse lu" 三山麓澤錄 1: 19a-b. Wang Chi said that Yang-ming's teaching on liang-chih can be considered as the opening into all "Three Teachings".

- 9 WWKC 34: 960a.
- 10 See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Wang Yang-ming yü Tao-chiao", [Wang Yang-ming and Taoism], written for Yōmei gaku daikei [A Compendium of Yang-ming's Philosophy] to be published in Japan, 1971-2. I have used Professor Liu's private manuscript.
- 11 According to Shao-hsing fu-chih [Shao-hsing Prefecture Gazetteer], comp. by Hsiao Liang-kan et al., and published in 1586, 2b:11b. This was the name of the Prefecture. Incidentally, the compiler, Hsiao Liang-kan, was a disciple of Wang Chi. See WLCC, Preface, 3a.
- 12 This letter to T'ung is in WWKC 21: 634b-635a.
- 13 Ibid. Yang-ming's own prayer for rain on this occasion is given in WWKC 25: 723. He chose to pray at Nan-chen, a place east of K'uai-chi 會稽, probably on account of the temple there dedicated to the sage Emperor Yu. See Chekiang t'ung-chih, [Chekiang Gazetteer], (1899 ed., Shanghai reprint, 1934), 1: 210-4.
- 14 WWKC 21: 638a-b. Note that these two are the earliest extant letters of Wang Yang-ming, and that 1508 was the year of Yang-ming's enlightenment. Moreover, this letter testifies to Yang-ming's weak health. At the time he wrote it, he was only thirty-four years old. Certainly, this letter, as also the previous one to T'ung, prove Yang-ming's repudiation of the Taoist quest for physical immortality or the prolongation of life.
- 15 Kuang-ch'eng-tzu 廣成子 was a legendary immortal who supposedly lived in the K'ung-t'ung 崑崙 mountain and was visited by the Yellow Emperor who asked for his advice concerning the way of immortality. See Chuang-tzu, "Tsai-yu" 在宥 [Let it Be] 4: 18a, Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 118-120.
- 16 Ibid. Yang-ming considers these Taoist sages as men specially endowed with a propensity for long life. This differs from his teaching--already crystallised in 1508,--concerning Confucian sagehood which can be acquired by all who devote themselves to its quest. The obvious difference is that between "preternatural" longevity and human fulfilment in a life of virtue. See his letter to Lu Ch'eng, written in 1521 [WWKC 5: 199] where he includes P'eng Keng 彭鏗, a legendary immortal who lived during the Hsia and Shang dynasties, in this same category.
- 17 This is from an Epilogue (dated 1078) written by Chang Po-tuan 張伯端 [Chang P'ing-shu 張平叔 983-1082], and is included in Tao-tsang 道藏 [abbrev. as TT], 64, Epilogue, 1b. See also Liu Ts'un-yan, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society in Ming Thought, 311-5.

- 18 WWKC 5: 199b. See SKTY, op.cit., 28:88. For his life, see "Yüan Ch'iu Ch'u-chi Nien-p'u," 元丘處機年譜 [Chronological Biography of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi of the Yuan Dynasty] in Yao Ts'ung-wu, Tung-pei-shih lun-ts'ung, [On the History of the North-east] (Taipei: 1959), v. 2, 214-276.
- 19 Ch'en Chih-hsü 陳致虛, alias Shang-yang-tzu 上陽子, who compiled the book, Chin-tan ta-yao 金丹大要 [Essentials of the Golden Pill] in 1335. See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Ming-ju yü Tao-chiao" [Taoism and Neo-Confucianists in Ming times] in Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao, VIII (1967), 4.
- 20 The preference for Bodhidharma and Hui-neng was based on their exemplification of a high moral character. Both were then considered also as Immortals by the Taoists. However, Ch'en Chien said that this letter shows Yang-ming's constant desire to reconcile the "Three Teachings". See Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9: 4a.
- 21 WWKC 21: 638b.
- 22 Ibid. Ch'en Chien criticised Yang-ming particularly for saying that Yen Hui was still alive. See Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9: 4a-b.
- 23 WWKC 5: 199a-b. The references are to the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1.
- 24 WWKC 5: 199b.
- 25 WWKC 20: 606a. Chang Po-tuan promoted the fusion of religious Taoism and Ch'an Buddhism through practices of "internal alchemy". See Welch, The Parting of the Way, 147-148.
- 26 A play on words. For a textual discussion of Wu-chen p'ien, its three commentaries, and their authors, see Liu Ts'un-yan, "Tao-tsang Wu-chen p'ien san-chu pien-wu," [On the Edition of the Combined Three Commentaries on the Wu-chen P'ien in the Taoist Canon], Tung-hsi wen-hua (East-West Culture) XV (1968), 33-41. One of the three commentaries is attributed to Hsüeh Tao-kuang 薛道光 [Hsüeh Tzu-hsien 薛紫賢 fl. 1106].
- 27 See above, n. 26.
- 28 Ch'an Buddhists spoke of "fake" Ch'an Buddhists as "wild-cat Ch'an", alluding to the story of the punishment inflicted on a Buddhist monk who had given an incorrect answer in speaking to his Master and had to go through a series of transmigrations, becoming a wild-cat after 500 such lives before liberating himself. See Wu-ming, Lien-teng hui-yao 4, Zokuzōkyō, 1st coll., pt. 2 B case 9, 248a. The name was frequently given to the T'ai-chou branch of the Yang-ming school in late Ming, for their obvious Ch'an sympathies and to signify contempt.

- 29 The blue sky refers to hsin.
- 30 WWKC 2: 123; Chan, Instructions, 173-4.
In a letter to Nieh Pao, written in 1526, he thus made use of certain lines from Mencius 2A:2:
Now, if one does not devote himself to the task of "always doing something", but clings in a vacuum to "not forgetting" and "not assisting", it is like heating the pot to cook rice without first putting in water and rice, but concentrating only on putting in fuel and starting the fire. I do not know what kind of thing would be cooked in this way. I fear that before the intensity of the fire can be adjusted, the pot itself will already have cracked.
The parable of the pot and of cooking is obviously an allusion to Taoist cultivation, that connected with the "Golden Pill", whether internal or external. See Chang Po-tuan, Wu-chen p'ien chu-su [Commentary on Wu-chen p'ien], in TT XI; 4:9b, given in Liu Ts'un-yan, "Wang Yang-ming yü Tao-chiao," manuscript copy. The term yüan-ching is translated by Chan Wing-tsit as "prime essence". I say "prime sperm" to indicate Taoist allusions.
- 31 WWKC 1: 71; Chan, Instructions, 44. The questioner here was probably Lu Ch'eng.
- 32 According to Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo: "T'ai-chi generates yang through movement. When this activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquillity, T'ai-chi generates the yin. When tranquillity reaches its limit, activity begins again. Thus movement and tranquillity alternate and become the root of each other; giving rise to the distinction of yin and yang." See SYHA 12: 1a-2b. Eng. tr. adapted from de Bary, Sources, 458. That Yang-ming was referring to Chou's cosmology is supported also by the discussion in another part of this letter, sometimes classified as a separate letter, WWKC 2: 108a; Chan, Instructions, 137-138.
- 33 See WWKC 20: 632b for the poem.
- 34 Smṛti is the Sanskrit word for recollection or thought.
- 35 Reference to Taoist elixirs, which bring about different degrees of physical immortality. The Ts'an-t'ung ch'i speaks of the huan-tan 還丹 (Pill of Return). See Chu Hsi's Ts'an-t'ung ch'i kao-yi [An Investigation into the Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i] SPPY ed., 12a. For the "Pill of Nine Returns" see especially the Yu-ch'ing wu-chi ts'ung-chen Wen-ch'ang ta-tung hsien-ching 玉清無極總真文昌大洞仙經 [The Purest, Limitless, Truest, Wen-ch'ang Classic of Immortality]. TT LI, 4:12b-17b.
- 36 These words as k'ian and li, taken from the Book of Changes, had specific meanings in Taoist methods of self-cultivation, referring to alchemy related to the quest for the "external" or "internal" elixirs. See Liu, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought," in de Bary, Self and Society, 293.

- 37 See Chao T'ai-ting 趙泰定 (fl.1570), Mai-wang [On Conducting Breath-circulation], TSCC ed., 4:61, where the author quotes his father, Chao Chen-chi 趙貞吉 (1508-1576), disciple of Wang Chi, saying that liang-chih "was heretical doctrine" during the reign period of Ch'eng-hua 成化 (1464-1487) and only became acceptable to Confucian scholars afterwards.
- 38 Chuang-tzu 7, SPPY ed., 3:19a; Burton Watson's Eng. tr., op.cit., 97. See also Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel," Sinologica I, (1948), 117-121.
- 39 See Ch.I, n.20. See also Fung, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, 237-238, 287-288, and Chao-lun, TSD No.1858, XLV, 152; Eng. tr. by Liebenthal, op.cit., 56-57.
- 40 Miyuki, An Analysis of Buddhist Influence, 105-110.
- 41 Yang-ming's extant writings and recorded conversations point to his wide knowledge of Buddhist scriptures and teachings. He was acquainted with the important texts of Mahayana Buddhism, including the Saddharma puṇḍarīka (Miao-fa lien-hua ching 妙法蓮華經 or Lotus sutra), the Suraṅgama (Leng-yen ching 楞嚴經), the Vajracchedikā Prajñā-Paramita (Chin-kang ching 金剛經 or Diamond sutra), the Lakṣavatāra (Leng-chia ching 楞伽經), the Parinirvāna (Nieh-p'an ching 涅槃經), the Yūan-chūeh ching 圓覺經 ("Perfect Enlightenment" sutra), and Hsi Yün's Ch'uan-hsin fa-yao 傳心法要. He cited most frequently from the Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching. He was also familiar with the biographies of many eminent Ch'an monks and with their recorded dialogues, alluding to the sayings of Tsung-mi, Ch'eng-kuan (760-838), Ch'u-shih 楚石 (1290-1370), and Ch'i-sung 契嵩 (fl.1062). Ch'en Chien mentioned in particular Yang-ming's knowledge of Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu [Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9:4b]. See P.C. Hsü, Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought, 145-148. See also Ch.II, n.73.
- 42 WWKC 9:279a-b.
- 43 WWKC 9:279b.
- 44 WWKC 3:136a-b; Chan, Instructions, 205.
- 45 Ibid., see also Tokiwa Daijō, Shina ni okeru Bukkyō to Jukyo Dokyo, 466-470. Tokiwa pointed out how Yang-ming's way of uniting activity and tranquillity was opposed to the Buddhist quest for tranquillity alone.
- 46 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:109b-110a; Chan, Instructions, 141-142. See also Ch. VI, n.73.
- 47 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:112b; Chan, Instructions, 148. The quotation from the Diamond Sutra refers to the importance of achieving a state of consciousness of the pure self (citta) which is not attached to rupa [matter or the six sense objects]. See above, Ch.IV, n.72. For criticisms

of Yang-ming, see Ch'en Chien, op.cit., 9:1b-3b; Chang Lieh, op.cit., 4:4b-5a.

48 WWKC 1:84a-b; Chan, Instructions, 79. Hui K'o had responded in like manner to a disciple, by saying: "Give me your sins, and I shall do penance for you." See Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, TSD No.2076, LI, 3:220. For a fuller discussion of Buddhist influence on Yang-ming, see Tokiwa, op.cit., 461-466.

49 WWKC 1:85b; Chan, Instructions, 82. Allusion to a parable from Yüan-wu (fl.1125), Pi-yen lu [Records of the Green Cave], TSD No.2003, XLVIII, 143a.

50 For Ch'en Chien, see 9B:4a-6a, 10a. This poem also contains an allusion to the poet Ch'ü Yüan 屈原 (340?-278 BC), who allegedly spoke of himself as the only sober man in a world of people fast asleep. See Shih-chi, 84:210.

51 The Golden Bell is an allusion to the Chou-li 周禮 (Rites of Chou) where it describes the official post of a teacher of music. Yang-ming refers here to the teachings of Confucius, a native of the state of Lu, through which the waters of Chu and Ssu flow. See Chou-li Cheng-chu [Rites of Chou with Cheng Hsüan's Commentary], SPPY ed. 12:8a-9b.

52 Reference to Chou Tun-yi and the two Ch'engs.

53 In the Mahaparinirvāna sutra, there is a parable regarding a "poison-painted" drum, the sound of which killed all but one of the hearers. It represents the teachings of the sutra itself, which can extinguish all covetous desires in men's hearts. [TSD No.375, XII, 661]. In Chih-yi's (530-597) Commentaries on the Saddharma pundarīka, there are references to two drums, the Heavenly^one which is productive of good, and the poisoned one which is productive of evil. See Miao-fa lien-hua ching hsiün-yi [The Metaphysical Ideas of the Lotus Sutra], TSD No.1716, XXXIII, 758, 761. In Chih-yi's Miao-fa lien-hua ching wen-chü [On the Sentences of the Lotus Sutra], he refers to the "poisoned drum" as the symbol of the Buddha-nature, which brings good to those who hear it. [TSD No. 1718, XXXIV, 141]

54 This poem, written around 1524, is from WWKC 20:629.

55 "Ch'ung-hsiu Shan-yin hsien-hsiieh chi," 重修山陰縣志記 [On the Reconstruction of the Shan-yin Prefectural School] (1525), WWKC 7:252b.

56 Letter to Lo Ch'in-shun, WWKC 2:119a. Chan, Instructions, 163. For Mencius' condemnation of these two philosophers, see Mencius 3B:9. Yang-ming also mentioned the example of Han Yü, who combatted the Buddhists and Taoists. In comparing himself to Han, he obviously implied that the new "heretics" of his days were the mediocre adherents of the Ch'eng-Chu school.

- 57 "Chu -tzu wan-nien ting-lun hsü", WWKC 3: 160a-b; Chan, Instructions, 265. Yang-ming's attitude was in accord with that of Lu Chiu-yüan, who had pointed out the incongruity of calling Buddhists and Taoists "heretics" (yi-tuan), in the name of continuing the teaching of Mencius, who had not known Buddhism and had not attacked Taoism. See HSCC 13: 5a.
- 58 Letter to Tsou Shou-yi, (1526), WWKC 6: 212b-213a. There are five letters to Tsou, all dated 1526. This is the fourth letter.
- 59 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 101b; Chan, Instructions, 123.
- 60 WWKC 26: 737a-b; Chan, Instructions, 274-5.
- 61 ibid. Earlier, Yang-ming had said that "to manifest clear virtue" without also "loving the people" is to fall into the error of the Buddhists and Taoists. See WWKC 1: 75b; Chan, Instructions, 5b.
- 62 WWKC 26: 737b; Chan, Instructions, 275.
By the opportunists, Yang-ming probably had in mind the people who were interested too much in statecraft as such, particularly, the Confucians who were much influenced by Legalist ideas of "enriching the state and strengthening the army". Although a soldier and statesman himself, he believed that such concrete and limited objectives should always be made subject to the higher work of pursuing sagehood.
- 63 Preface to Ch'uan-hsi lu, pt. 2, in WWKC 2: 88a; Chan, Instructions, 90. In other words, Yang-ming advocated an authentic humanism, based on the self-perfecting hsin, in opposition to a false humanism, which pays lip service to moral ideals, but risks the loss of its hsin, through a pattern of behaviour which is not in accord with hsin.
- 64 Since mention is made here of Ch'u-yang, the poem was probably written in 1513 or 1514, during Yang-ming's sojourn there.
- 65 Allusion here again to the gathas of Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng. Yang-ming makes use of a known Buddhist--and also Taoist--imagery to describe his Way, which he claims to be "neither Buddhist nor Taoist".
- 66 Reference to the study of classical exegesis.
- 67 The poem is taken from WWKC 20: 600a.
- 68 WWKC 3: 142a-b; Chan, Instructions, 220.
- 69 WWKC 2: 113a; Chan, Instructions, 149.
- 70 WWKC 2: 121b; Chan, Instructions, 169-170. The references are to Analects 14: 41-42; 6: 26 [Legge, Classics, v. 1, 290-291; 193].

- 71 WWKC 2: 121b; Chan, Instructions, 170.
- 72 WWKC 2: 121a-b; Chan, Instructions, 169.
- 73 WWKC 2: 121b-122a; Chan, Instructions, 171. Note that the Chinese word for "insanity" is again k'uang, also translated in Ch. II as "mad ardour". In describing his "insanity", however, Yang-ming compared himself to Confucius, hence revealing his belief in his own charismatic mission. But this cannot be called pride, since he also believed in the universal call to sagehood.
- 74 This is the literal meaning of the book's title.
- 75 A reference to the Book of Odes, "Ta-ya" 大雅 "wen-wang chih-shih," Legge, tr., Classics, v. 4, 431, where the "soundless, odourless" image refers to Heaven's operations. It is quoted in the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 33, where it refers to the practice of virtue in solitude. See Legge tr., Classics, v. 1, 433. Chu Hsi used the same image in his commentary on Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo to describe the T'ai-chi (Ultimate), which is also Wu-chi. See CTYL, 94: 1b-2a. "Solitary knowledge" refers to what is known to one person alone. See Huai-nan-tzu 淮南子, SPPY ed., 15: 16a. Together, the line alludes to the moment of enlightenment, which, as the next line reveals, is concerned with the insight into the ultimate reality of the universe. See, for this interpretation, Ch'en Chien, Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 98: 5b.
- 76 The poem is from WWKC 20: 629a. The last line contains an obvious allusion to the mendicant Buddhist monk by his use of the words t'o-pen (Sanskrit: pañdapātika, holding a bowl). See Hsu Ch'uan-teng lu, [Supplement to the Transmission of the Lamp], ch. 10, TSD No. 2076, LI; 527. Yang-ming was criticising the practice of seeking perfection outside of oneself. As to the allusion in the previous line to the abandonment of one's own inexhaustible treasure, this is taken from Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, TSD No. 2076, LI, 6:246.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

How perfect are the secret springs of Heaven and Earth!
A divine abyss separates mad ardour (k'uang) and
sagehood--

Truth and error diverge on an infinitesimal point.¹

As a study of the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming, with special reference to its "correctness" or "orthodoxy", the underlying polarity in the foregoing chapters of analysis has been that of "orthodoxy versus heterodoxy". I have pointed out the inherent ambiguity of the problem, with reference to the development of the Confucian tradition as a whole, and particularly with regard to the "Confucian versus Ch'an Buddhist" debate generally associated with the criticisms of Yang-ming's philosophy. But I have also indicated the presence of certain minor tensions within the broad controversy of the question of "orthodoxy", such as the "whole versus parts" and the "knowledge versus action" controversies.² Other tensions have also been touched upon, such as that between nei (the "inner", or contemplative) and wai (the "outer", or active), between wu 悟 (enlightenment) and hsiu 修 (cultivation), and, with greater relevance to the problem of orthodoxy, what may be called the tension between "self" and "authority". There is also a more fundamental dichotomy, that which Yang-ming sought especially to reconcile: between t'i (reality, or the "metaphysical") and yung (practice, or the "moral").³

In this final chapter of critique and inquiry, it is my intention to review the results of my analysis in terms of these four final polarities, for the sake of bringing to light the many ambiguities related to the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming. This will not entail returning to pre-Ch'in Confucianism and looking again at its historical evolution. I propose rather to examine at closer range the similarities and differences between the philosophy of Chu Hsi on the one side, and that of Wang Yang-ming on the other, referring back to the position of Lu Chiu-yüan,

Chu's contemporary and Wang's "mentor"--although separated from him by three hundred years of history-- whenever this seems helpful.

Nei (the Inner) versus Wai (the Outer)

At first sight, it may seem that Lu's attempt to internalise the whole pursuit of wisdom by his philosophy of a self-determining, self-perfecting hsin, tends to the "inner" pull of self-cultivation in silence and contemplation at the expense of social involvement. Chu's balanced method of both "reverence" and "extending knowledge", on the other hand, appears to be more "outer"-oriented, since it takes the person out of himself, to the investigation of truth in classical texts. In reality, however, Chu's attention was focused on hsing (nature), which he regarded as containing all "goodness" in potency (li), but which awaits the effort of being cleared from the obscuration cast upon it by passions or evil desires. It is, therefore, a more passive principle, which must be acted upon, through the work of hsin, the mind-and-heart, which controls both hsing (nature) and ch'ing (emotions). Chu placed much emphasis on quiet-sitting, as a technique which helps to restore to man, his originally good nature. Lu's vantage-point was quite different. His basic principle, hsin(mind-and-heart), is a source of dynamic action.⁴ While its development is promoted by the practice of quiet-sitting, it is not necessarily dependent upon this "inner"-oriented technique. It is, by nature, independent. Thus it need not appear so remarkable that, with all his desires for social involvement, Chu had led the life of a near-recluse, while Lu, who never attained a very high position, was content to exercise the duties of the minor official posts entrusted to him.⁵ But the culmination of Lu's philosophy would come only with Wang Yang-ming, whose life revealed the same contrary pulls between concerns for the "inner" and "outer" realms of existence, but whose method of self-perfection, based on a dynamic hsin, which confronts all events as they occur, would direct him to undertake social and political activities as the opportunities arose.

This method, however, was not discovered without difficulty. Political conditions had been such that many early Ming thinkers felt obliged to abstain even from the civil examinations, in order to avoid the compromise of exchanging their convictions for official advancement.⁶ Such a voluntary departure from known Confucian teachings on social commitment was made as a sign of protest rather than as a surrender of responsibility. But it could not become incorporated into the Confucian tradition as a permanent feature without destroying the tradition itself from within. Whether engaged in political activity or living as recluses, Ming scholars searched earnestly for a single, all-inclusive method of achieving sagehood, which would resolve the "inner" and "outer" contradictions. It is in the light of this context that Yang-ming's enunciation of chih liang-chih, as well as Chan Jo-shui's proposed method of "recognising T'ien-li everywhere", should be understood.

Yang-ming was determined to find wisdom. He was ready to try all methods and recipes, in the hope of discovering the right one. His chief difficulty, as he himself acknowledged, was not knowing where to begin.

When I learned a little [of the importance of acquiring] correct learning (cheng-hsteh 正學) I was much puzzled by the differences and contradictions [which I found] in the many ideas [of the various philosophers], and was worn out [by their divergent recommendations]. I was at a complete loss, not knowing how to begin the whole effort.⁷

Yang-ming moved from Confucian studies to the investigation of Taoist and Buddhist beliefs and practices, even abandoning the world for some time. This gave him a certain peace and tranquillity. He came near to believing that he had found in this "unorthodox" way of life, the secret of attaining sagehood. But he was troubled by their divergences with Confucian teaching, and by their lack of

attention for action and social involvement. . "I was torn between following them and rejecting them, between believing them and doubting them."⁸ Not satisfied with whatever gains he made in insight and virtue, he was several times near the verge of declaring that sagehood was not universally accessible, since he himself could not get within sight of the goal.

Light finally dawned, during his exile in Kweichow, in the form of a certain insight into his own human nature. Yang-ming finally discovered the meaning of sagehood: it flows from hsin, and returns to hsin. It is nothing other than the development of T'ien-li (perfect virtue) in hsin. Thereupon, he formulated the tentative doctrine of the "Unity of Knowledge and Action". Against the accepted teachings of Chu Hsi, he contended that the knowledge of particular virtues could not bring one the fullness of virtue itself, which is less the sum total of particular acts and of the knowledge of these, than the intrinsic, harmonious development of one's moral character(hsin).⁹

By personal practice, Yang-ming discovered the merit of the "technique" of quiet-sitting. The stillness it inculcates in the heart enhances the deepening of a genuine self-knowledge, opening the person who practises it to a new world of life and conscious activity within himself.¹⁰ However, as it is only a technique, which can be practised from time to time, but remains subject to abuse, its importance is yet secondary. It is not the method for which he was searching.

The quest for a methodological formula brought Yang-ming first to the doctrine of the "Unity of Knowledge and Action". This evolved, through personal effort of realisation accompanied by refinement of thought, to the "extension of the knowledge of the good", and then, finally, to the attainment of consciousness of the unity of man with all things. For Yang-ming's understanding of "knowledge" was not the knowledge of particular truths, but that of

universal truth, of wisdom, of the Tao, the possession of which must necessarily be accompanied by the development of a perfect, moral character. The same, however, cannot be said of his understanding of "action", which, by its very nature, refers to innumerable, particular acts. But, for the man determined to find wisdom through the development of his hsin, every act merges with the whole effort (kung-fu) of self-realisation, which should eventually bring him into the consciousness of the very oneness of his being with all things. He will then find Heaven (T'ien) and Earth (ti地) and the myriad creatures in himself. Seen in this perspective, one may explain the assertion, yü wan-wu yi-t'i 與萬物一體 (being one body with all things), as "making all things (wu) one". Through moral action allied to knowledge, man comes into vital contact with things-- whether persons or events-- and transforms all into his own life, making of all, a unity identified with himself.¹¹

The culmination of Yang-ming's philosophy in the vision of wan-wu yi-t'i (the unity of all things) represents, therefore, a personal, practical life-goal, an attitude of mind which is capable of constant growth and development, and one which necessarily overflows into social action.¹² For Yang-ming, the reconciliation of the "inner-outer" tension was clearly in the realisation of "sageliness within and kingliness without."¹³

Wu (Enlightenment) versus Hsiu (Cultivation)¹⁴

Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi both recognised the universal capacity for sagehood and wisdom. For them, however, its acquisition was a task which required tremendous effort, usually the fruit of a sudden, inner enlightenment which follows the accumulation of encyclopaedic knowledge, and the permeation of the spirit of "reverence" and "tranquillity" into daily living. Lu Chiu-yüan, however, disagreed with the assumption underlying this approach. For him, human nature is, in itself, an entirely adequate instrument of its own perfection. It is not merely the tranquil locale

where enlightenment occurs. It is identical with the dynamic hsin (mind-and-heart). Lu regarded this hsin to be somehow one with ultimate reality (Tao). Whoever sought enlightenment should therefore grapple with this hsin, this Tao, without allowing himself to be distracted by other affairs and pursuits. Lu once said of Chu that he could be compared to the sublime Mount T'ai 泰山, "but, unfortunately, in spite of his [great] learning, he has not seen Tao. He merely wastes his own energy."¹⁵ It was the comment of an "enlightened" man, on an "unenlightened" man.

Lu pointed out the correct direction to sagehood. But he merely spoke of it in random fashion, as a support for his exclusive concern for "honouring one's virtuous nature". Yang-ming pushed it to its final conclusions. Much more than Lu, he always referred to his personal experience as the proof for the truth of his words. Yang-ming's inner life developed through a series of enlightenments.¹⁶ But the insights he attained in the these experiences helped him to develop a method, not of "enlightenment"-- for there is no such method-- but of "cultivation". The "extension of liang-chih" refers not to the application of innate, unchanging, ready-made concepts of right and wrong to life and action,¹⁷ but rather to the gradual and steady development of one's character, through an experience acquired in an orderly manner, with emphasis on searching in one's personal behaviour, although without discounting the role of classical learning. It was his way of coming to grips with life at its deepest level, of pre-disposing the self for entrance into a state of vital sympathy and cosmic consciousness with all things. Yang-ming recognised the difficulty of describing such a process in logical language. He spoke of purifying the mind-and-heart, of maintaining the equilibrium and harmony of the emotions. He made use of parables, such as "polishing the mirror", planting a tree, and so forth. The former recalls the ability of hsin to reflect all light, the latter suggests that it is also capable of

organic growth.

The formulation of the "Four Maxims" has often been interpreted as Yang-ming's preference for enlightenment, and rejection of cultivation, in the quest for wisdom. A careful study of his answer to Wang Chi and Ch'ien Te-hung, however, shows that this was not the case. Yang-ming saw clearly that enlightenment cannot be induced at will. It is a free gift, usually more accessible to the man of "superior spiritual intelligence." But that was no reason why a man less endowed spiritually, should not have access to wisdom itself.¹⁸ An analysis of the meaning of the Four Maxims considered as a whole, demonstrates rather the greater importance of cultivation. Yang-ming was not a Ch'an Buddhist Master, a teacher of enlightenment who relied mainly on "hock techniques" to induce psychic and spiritual experiences.¹⁹ He was rather a teacher of virtue, a man who believed in "polishing the mirror", in developing the mind-and-heart.²⁰ He indicated a "Way" of acquiring wisdom; he did not presume to have the power to "give" it to others.

In other words, a sudden, traumatic experience of "enlightenment" is useful but not absolutely essential to the quest for sagehood, which can also be attained through constant development of the dynamic hsin. The effort of cultivation is not to be strained or painful, but spontaneous and confident. After all, the quest is for that which one already possesses, if only in potentiality.²¹ The discovery will come as a revelation of that which is hidden, within oneself. And it will be a revelation of all things, as reflected in a clear mirror. Therefore, in stead of deepening a dichotomy between "enlightenment" and "cultivation", Yang-ming opted for their reconciliation. Enlightenment need not be sudden; it may come gradually, through the process of cultivation.²²

A question which naturally arises, however, is the foundation of the reality of one's "enlightenment", and finally, of one's "sageliness". How can a man decide,

that his experience of enlightenment, or his many insights, derived from earnest inquiry in reflective thought as well as from virtuous behaviour, is genuine? How indeed can a human being, so limited in his capacity for that which is unlimited --wisdom-- know for sure that he has acquired enough of this ultimate truth to consider himself "wise"? It is a question of authority. But whose authority?

This question must have pursued Yang-ming throughout his own quest for wisdom, for virtue, for the Absolute. It colours the entire evolution of his thought. It underlies the whole foundation of his method.

"Self" versus "Authority"

At first sight, the philosophy of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi seems to support the role of authority in the acquisition of wisdom and in the ordering of society. The harmonious universe of li and ch'i which revolves around the notion of T'ai-chi-- the "Ultimate" in being and goodness-- may argue well for a hierarchic structure of a strongly centralised government.²³ The appeal to the Classics and to the sages, considered as "lineal forebears" of the exponents of this philosophy, provides another corner-stone for a regimented system of education. The truth, however, is far more complex, since the philosophy which Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi had developed was founded on an independent interpretation of the Classics. The authority to which they gave adherence was indeed higher than the state-- which saw itself as the guardian of classical exegesis-- higher, indeed, than the Classics. In fact, they relied primarily on their own authority, as self-appointed interpreters of the sacred message.²⁴ For this reason, they acted as moral judges of their sovereigns rather than as dutiful ministers.

Lu Chiu-yüan, on the other hand, appears to be a rebel against the entire classical tradition, and a prophet of pure insight. He proposed the recognition of

hsin (mind-and-heart) as Tao (ultimate truth). He sought to internalise wisdom and virtue completely, and to make the pursuit of sagehood entirely independent of classical studies. Naturally, therefore, such a rejection of external authority, did not bring to his philosophy, the favour of state power, which always relies on external sanctions.

In fact, however, Lu was only inferring certain logical conclusions from Ch'eng Yi's and Chu Hsi's attitudes toward the Classics. He clearly pointed out the significance of that "higher authority", to which appeals had been made: it was the sages' hsin, as Ch'eng and Chu also acknowledged, but it was seminally present in man's hsin, a fact which neither Ch'eng nor Chu clearly demonstrated. In Yang-ming's case also, in stead of being accepted as an important contribution to the "Confucian quest", his teachings were criticised as "heresy" on doctrinal grounds -- because based on "private interpretations" of the Classics, through his accomodation of Ch'an Buddhist ideas.²⁵ The controversies he sustained led Yang-ming eventually to question not only the exact role of personal insight or of intellectual inquiry, of inner enlightenment, which relies solely on insight, and of cultivation, which includes studies, in the quest for wisdom, but even of the very role of "authority" itself-- whether of the sages, of the Classics, or of government-- in the determination of truth. For if authority can be detrimental to that which it claims to defend, by what right does it continue to demand respect and adherence?

Yang-ming's debate with Chan Jo-shui, for example, put the focus on the problem of the "criteria" of truth. Chan admitted the value of insight, but regarded the Classics as a source of rich inspiration and insight which should not be set aside. Yang-ming, on the other hand, tended to give other pursuits in life equal value with the study of the Classics. But then, to what authority can the man of insight appeal as a support for the correctness of his views? If truth is only regarded as the

product of action -- that is, of trial and experience -- and therefore quite independent of intellectual knowledge, he can only appeal to his own moral character as final arbiter. His only authority, it would seem, is himself.

This would be the case if man's moral character, his hsin, contains nothing greater than itself. Yang-ming, however, discovered in it a certain self-transcending quality. It was the agent as well as the goal of sagehood. It was also the meeting place of Heaven-and-Earth and all things. Yang-ming spoke of hsin and liang-chih as the ultimate authority of wisdom and perfection. He formulated the first of the Four Maxims in this light, explaining how hsin-in-itself, the final and most profound centre in man, that which is beyond ordinary consciousness and yet capable of being "awakened" to itself through enlightenment, defies ethical differentiation and judgement. Basically, it is responsible to itself alone. Its authority, with regard to itself, is absolute. It is therefore a more fitting object of "faith" than the Classics.

Indeed, Yang-ming declared that he had the same mind-and-heart as Confucius -- he felt the same urgent responsibility to save a world which was proceeding headlong on a course that could only bring it destruction.²⁶ By this act of boldness, he virtually assumed to be his own, the

double mission of restoring the true teaching of the sages, and of saving the world of his time.²⁷ He did not openly claim to be a sage himself. But his criticisms of the Ch'eng-Chu commentaries, his independence of the Confucian classics themselves, as well as his personal teaching of disciples, in a new "Way" of acquiring wisdom and sagehood, marked him out as the self-appointed spiritual heir of Confucius. - And all this Yang-ming was and did, so he explained, by right of, and through the use of, that in him which united him to the sages of old, which contained itself the secret of sagehood, his hsin (mind-and-heart), his liang-chih (knowledge of the good).

Thus the authority to which Yang-ming appealed, as support for the truth of his teaching, and as guarantee for the success of his "Way", is identical with the core of his teaching itself: hsin, or liang-chih. Viewed in this light, this self-determining agent of wisdom and perfection is transformed into an absolute norm, an authority for itself. In and through liang-chih, he had discovered the Good itself.

Yang-ming advocated having faith in this "knowledge of the good" (liang-chih).²⁸ He identified the object of faith with this authority itself. He was speaking of ultimate truth, the understanding of which brings wisdom.

Paradoxically, therefore, this philosopher who acknowledged no earthly authority, who desired to subject the words of Confucius himself to the examination of his own hsin, recognised one sole authority: that of hsin, the vehicle itself of wisdom. For him, this referred not merely to his own mind-and-heart which is one and the same with the minds-and-hearts of all the sages, past and present, but also to what constitutes the sacred legacy of all orthodox transmission.²⁹ It is what he called, hsin-in-itself or liang-chih-in-itself. It is also, according to him, the Tao (ultimate truth) and even Heaven.

In this light, Wang Yang-ming merely gave the finishing strokes to the work which Lu Chiu-yüan had begun. He developed a philosophy of hsin which sees everything only in relation to hsin. He also formulated a new "line" of "orthodox transmission"-- and why should he not do so, if Chu Hsi could do it?

T'i (the Metaphysical) versus Yung (the Moral)

Before discussing the problem of "orthodoxy" in itself, a brief look at Yang-ming's attempt to unite the two concerns of t'i (the Metaphysical) and yung (the Moral), and in particular, of the search for pen-t'i (ultimate reality) and the self-exertion or kung-fu which it calls for, may be helpful. For it will show us how the increasingly practical orientation of post-Sung Neo-Confucian philosophy, which culminated in the thought of Wang Yang-ming, could also become misconstrued by certain of its adherents, as to defeat the very purpose of the movement itself. This, in turn, will serve to emphasise the ambiguity of Yang-ming's philosophical legacy, which must be pointed out in this concluding chapter.

Compared to the earlier Confucians, the thinkers of the Sung period speculated much more deeply about the meaning of man, and of his place in the universe. The system of thought which they constructed has been interpreted largely in terms of such abstract concepts as

T'ai-chi, li and ch'i.³⁰ A closer examination, however, has revealed that even Chou Tun-yi's understanding of T'ai-chi cannot be separated from his ideas of moral goodness and sagehood, and that Chu Hsi had interpreted Chou's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo in terms of his other book, T'ung-shu, emphasising thereby the ethical dimensions of this "Ultimate" Ground of Being. Indeed, by identifying T'ai-chi with the Ch'eng brothers' T'ien-li -- the inner, "heavenly principle" in man -- Chu had given more immanence to the transcendent First Principle, while recognising also man's possession of the power to transcend himself.³¹

Wang Yang-ming continued and completed in the Ming dynasty Lu Chiu-yüan's efforts to strengthen and intensify the practical orientations of Sung philosophy. Yang-ming seldom spoke of T'ai-chi, except in terms of its operations: of yin and yang, "tranquillity" and "activity". Even then, he emphasised that such processes were difficult to explain in words, and could best be understood in silence by those who already knew the "Way" (Tao).³² Otherwise, he added, one ran the risk of allowing one's mind (hsin) to be "turned around by the Lotus Sutra in stead of turning the Lotus Sutra around."³³

Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming both speak of hsin as that which explains the meaning both of the universe and of man. Yang-ming also takes a further step, going deeper into hsin, and discovering therein, the meaning of liang-chih, --that in man which enables him to transcend himself, which is identical with T'ien-li, with Tao, with the Absolute. In order to discern between the unstable, changing, "mind-and-heart" of man, and that in him which is constant and unchanging, he speaks of hsin chih pen-t'i and liang-chih pen-t'i.³⁴ And since he discovers pen-t'i (ultimate reality) in hsin, he is obliged to describe hsin chih pen-t'i as the undifferentiated First Principle, that which is above ethical categories of good and evil.³⁵

Through his untiring emphasis on the work of chih liang-chih as that which combines moral cultivation with the quest for sudden enlightenment and so fuse together the seemingly contrary pulls of contemplation and of action, Yang-ming also seeks to explain his identification of pen-t'i (reality) itself with kung-fu (moral effort)³⁶ indicating thereby that the meaning of ultimate reality, hidden in hsin, can only be discovered through moral and spiritual ascesis, and that hsin or liang-chih is its own adequate authority. Thus, liang-chih, or liang-chih pen-t'i, is both the agent which achieves a certain end -- its own determination and perfection -- and the end itself, while the effort of chih liang-chih refers to the discovery, in the starting-point, of the goal to be achieved, which is the realisation of the pen-t'i of hsin or liang-chih.³⁷ But the very fluidity of his use of such terms, as also of hsin and liang-chih -- frequently without carefully distinguishing them from their pen-t'i -- gives the impression that he hardly noticed any difference between the changing and the unchanging, the relative and the Absolute. This was to produce serious consequences on the later development of his school of thought, which easily became a haven for the restless and eccentric, for all who claimed to be in possession of the Absolute within themselves, without adequate realisation of the meaning of such an assertion, or of the need of a sense of responsibility and of moral ascesis.³⁸ Thus, Yang-ming's proposal to unite the "inner", contemplative life and the "outer" active life, became easily the victim of his own attempts to regard all reality as a "whole" rather than in terms of its "parts". Even if he himself offered the example of a life of action permeated by contemplation, many of his latter-day disciples preferred to pass their time in empty speculation on the pen-t'i of their hsin, rather than embrace any discipline which a life of cultivation necessarily required. As a result, even the understanding of the absolute character of liang-chih was lost.³⁹

The Problem of 'Orthodoxy'

The examination of the "inner-outer", "~~enlightenment-cultivation~~", "self-authority" and "metaphysical-moral" tensions in the development of a new Confucian Way of acquiring wisdom, and in the evolution of Yang-ming's universal method, should help us to decide upon the issue concerning the "orthodoxy" of Yang-ming's philosophy. This can be done by first reviewing the thought-content of his underlying vision, and then, by consideration of the various implications of the method toward which his thought was oriented.

Yang-ming's exposition of the "unity of all things" (wan-wu yi-t'i) manifests resemblances with as well as divergences from both the primitive idea of "unity of Heaven and Man" (T'ien-jen ho-yi) and the later vision developed by Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi with the help of other Sung philosophers. But the transformation of the meaning of Heaven (T'ien), from the conscious, intelligent Master of the universe to the vague, more ambiguous notion of a natural Power with transcendent attributes occurred very early.⁴⁰ This shift enriched the understanding of Man, regarded earlier as being in all things subject to the will of the reasonable and mysterious One, rewarder of good and punisher of evil, and then attaining later a higher dignity through the teaching of the immanent perfect virtue, "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li) in his heart. The "unity" between the two became also more conscious, with the crystallisation of a method of realising it in greater depth, through the dual practice of "reverence" and "extending knowledge". All this was accomplished long before the time of Yang-ming. He accepted the thought-content of the Confucian Tao, already modified by his predecessors. His own contribution was also through his method, which, by its focus on the self-determining hsin, made the "unity" between Heaven and Man more dynamically conscious of itself. But there was no question about his acceptance of the expansion of the earlier notion of T'ien to include "Heaven-and-Earth and all things". He did not return to the primitive idea of

a personal deity, which, in any case, became quite early, one of the many components inherent in the meaning of the word "Heaven" (T'ien). On the other hand, however, it may be pointed out that Yang-ming never rejected either the possibility of the possession by Heaven of conscious, intelligent attributes. Rather, his description of Man in terms of the dynamic hsin, and his insistence upon the oneness between Man and all things, indicated that he saw the dynamic, human intelligence as the reflection of a greater, more dynamic Intelligence, present in the depths of the self and yet master of the whole universe. But this was never articulated in unequivocal terms. According to Yang-ming's usage, the word Heaven (T'ien) remained ambiguous, with the emphasis on the continuum comprising man and all things pre-dominating over the presence of a masterly intelligence clearly transcendent and immanent.

In terms of his content, therefore, Yang-ming's philosophy manifests a basic resemblance with the thought system of the Ch'engs, Chang Tsai and Chu Hsi, effecting a lesser shift than that made by his predecessors of the Sung dynasty. In terms of the method he developed, however, the picture is different. Indeed, Yang-ming revealed a real concern for the continuity of the Confucian transmission. He proposed that liang-chih was the sacred legacy in question, used it as a key in his explanation of the "formula of faith" which had been crystallised earlier, and established in retrospect a new line of transmission tracing the handing down of the legacy through Lu Chiu-yüan rather than Chu Hsi. Such daring was sufficient to indicate his entire independence of the officially approved Ch'eng-Chu philosophy. Moreover, his explanations of the universal, fool-proof method, chih liang-chih, expressed clearly his faith in the correctness of personal insight, so long as the mind-and-heart (hsin) remains open and sincere, free from unruly passions and evil desires. The Confucian classics, regarded always as the guardian of truth and wisdom, preserved a place of honour in his heart. But the gates of sagehood were flung open to all, whether Confucian or barbarian.

And it is this teaching which resolves the inherent contradiction contained in the doctrine of "orthodox transmission". For insights, unlike techniques of exegesis, cannot be transmitted.⁴¹ They must be acquired anew, by and for oneself. But faith in liang-chih, which deepens itself into faith in ultimate truth, in what is called, "the sages' hsin", can be passed on, by inspiration. Just as Confucius had inspired it in Mencius, without having known or taught him personally, so too Mencius inspired it in Lu Chiu-yüan, after an intervention of over 1,500 years. And Lu Chiu-yüan, in turn, had inspired it in Yang-ming, after another interval of over 200 years. In other words, the transmission of hsin, an entirely interior process, requires the person to look into his own hsin to discover the orthodox legacy itself, which, in turn, is sometimes described in a negative vocabulary, for the sake of emphasising its un-differentiated character and the consequent ineffability.⁴²

In this way, Yang-ming completed and perfected certain teachings of Chu Hsi, while rejecting others. He taught the doctrine of "orthodox transmission", and of a truth which was transmitted. But he did so only in order to show that truth or wisdom cannot be delineated by human ideas of "correctness". There is ultimately only one truth and it is everywhere, our hsin being fundamentally one with all things. Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi had both incorporated Taoist and Buddhist ideas into their system. Yang-ming declared that this was perfectly natural and legitimate. There are no Confucian, Taoist or Buddhist taos. There is only one Tao.

Therefore, Yang-ming's method precluded any attempt of continuing to use the time-honoured classification of philosophies as "orthodox" and "un-orthodox", "Confucian" on the one side, and "Taoist" or "Buddhist" on the other. Whether and how much Yang-ming had been influenced by Taoist and Buddhist ideas loses, therefore, its importance. In fact, the whole question of orthodoxy itself becomes irrelevant. By its very meaning, "orthodoxy" should refer

to thought. Where methods are concerned, correctness can only be decided by the test of their effectiveness.

And so, how effective was the method of Wang Yang-ming? The answer lies partly in what it produced. The best example is the life and character of Yang-ming himself. From all evidences, his was the exemplification of a life which fused together the "inner and "outer" pulls of contemplation and of intense activity, of wisdom sought for and discovered through enlightenment and virtuous action, of the harmonious integration of such diverse pursuits as philosophy, statesmanship, and even war. The tensions were not always completely resolved. Yang-ming continued to show throughout his life of activity, a desire for tranquillity and silence. He made intermittent attempts of withdrawal from active life. But his strong sense of social responsibility and commitment, inherent both in his vision of the "unity of all things" and in his practical ideal of sagehood, always brought him back into the arena of active affairs and their resultant conflicts. It was the best demonstration of his inner adherence to his own method: the extension of liang-chih, of his knowledge of the good, gained through life and action, making of one, tranquillity and activity, permeating all decisions and acts with the inner light of the good.

An Ambiguous Legacy

The sublime moral character of Yang-ming as man and philosopher, the degree of unity he achieved in his own life, argues well for the effectiveness of his method of self-perfection. There is, however, another question. Does this necessarily imply that the method itself is a viable one for all seekers of sagehood?

It is not easy to answer this question. The very nature of the method of chih liang-chih, so dependent upon personal insights, which vary from individual to individual, and change according to the contexts of time and place, makes the judgement of its tenets according to any set of unchanging

criteria a well-nigh impossibility.⁴³ The "School of Wang Yang-ming" produced many great men, although none of these equaled or surpassed Yang-ming as a philosopher and a sage. But the philosophical legacy of Yang-ming was so ambiguous that diverse interpretations soon set in, putting once more in motion the tensions in thought and action of the "inner-outer" pulls, of the "enlightenment-cultivation" debate, of the "self-authority" dichotomy, and of the "metaphysical-moral" polarisation. The group which followed the leadership of Wang Chi and Wang Ken sought particularly to draw certain logical conclusions from the enlightenment versus cultivation debate, arguing in favour of an instantaneous enlightenment of the mind-and-heart, hsin, which is sufficient to assure the acquisition of wisdom.⁴⁴ But it offered no way of determining the authenticity of such enlightenment and of the possession of wisdom. In the end, every "aspiring" sage considered himself an already "made" sage, and acknowledged only the rules of behaviour which he himself had made. Such a development contributed to the growth of the Yang-ming school into a popular movement, penetrating into all segments of the stratified society of late Ming times, and effecting a marked tendency toward individual and eccentric behaviour, and of an attitude of independence and resistance with regard to all authority, especially that of the political state.

Other followers of the Yang-ming school sought to prevent or remedy the above tendency, which, with all its beneficial consequences for the development of the ideas of social egalitarianism based on men's equal dignity, was seen in the context of traditional China as bringing havoc to the orderly pursuit of philosophy and of wisdom. They either emphasised the importance of silence and of tranquillity, acquired in quiet-sitting, for the sake of confronting events and circumstances, or insisted upon the development of moral virtues in the "extension of liang-chih". In both instances a certain return to some of the ideas of the Ch'eng-Chu school was achieved.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note here that the development of a popular, protest movement in the Yang-ming school also prevented it from being ever clearly accepted as official doctrine without leading either to sufficient rational planning or to constructive action aimed at changing the status quo in late Ming China.⁴⁶ But the rich ambiguity of Yang-ming's legacy, which allows such diversity of interpretation and of application in practice, permitted the eventual development in Japan of a movement of thought and action which drew from the fusion of moral ideals, social commitment, and the cultivation of an "inner" personality, a certain strength and freedom of action that served well the later, mid-nineteenth century Meiji reforms.⁴⁷ Yang-ming's method functioned well in producing many inspiring individuals of high character in Japan and Korea as well as in China. In Japan especially, it also helped to effect a certain social transformation, based on ancient moral ideals, but looking forward to an independent confrontation with new political, social and intellectual realities which entered Japanese life and awareness with the incursion of European and American interests.

In conclusion, let us remember that the very quest for a universal, all-embracing method of self-cultivation implied that the method looked for must be one of great breadth of view, based on the common human nature, but dependent upon changing ideas and circumstances. A certain ambiguity, therefore, cannot be avoided. But this merely underlines the ambiguity inherent in the primitive ideal of the "unity of Heaven and Man", for which a clear method of personal realisation was never enunciated, as well as that contained in its revised version, of the "unity of all things", as taught by the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi-- although Chu's strong insistence on intellectual inquiry, nearly jeopardised the credibility of the universal accessibility of sagehood. It was for the sake of resolving this dilemma that Yang-ming embarked upon the search for a method which would make of the theory of "universal accessibility" a practical possibility. In doing so, it

was also inevitable that he should radically change the notion of "orthodoxy", declaring as real heretics, not the adherents of alien creeds or practices, such as Taoists and Buddhists, but the hypocrites of the Confucian school itself, who mouthed traditional ideals but denied them in life and action. By rendering obsolete the old criteria of correctness and orthodoxy, which were applied to a man's thoughts rather than to his life and action, and by substituting a new criterion, that of personal insight into the good, Yang-ming performed a signal service to the cause of sagehood itself. He declared himself in favour of truth rather than of ideology and of virtue rather than worldly success. He also pointed out that sagehood confers an assurance of its own correctness or "orthodoxy", because it reveals to man that in him which, united to all things, is greater than himself: his hsin, which is also called Tao.

Yang-ming's "Way" of acquiring wisdom has also made manifest the nature of wisdom: it is the recognition by man, of that in him which is greater than himself, which unites him to Heaven-and-Earth and all things. The object of this quest is well within one's reach, for it is already in his possession. And it is this knowledge which constitutes the fruit of Yang-ming's enlightenment, which makes of his "method", a transcendent philosophy: the discovery of Tao, of the Absolute.

Notes to Chapter VIII

¹ WWKC 19:573b-574a.

² See Chapter IV, 123-133. I wish to point out that I have found Benjamin Schwartz' article, "Some Polarities in Confucian Thought," in Confucianism in Action, ed. by David S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: 1959), 50-62, very stimulating.

³ I admit that the t'i-yung and nei-wai tensions may be interpreted in a similar way, to refer both to the "latent" and the "manifest", and even the wu-hsiu dichotomy may be explained in terms of emphasis on the one or the other of the same metaphysical pattern. However, in this chapter, by referring to t'i-yung, I have in mind the tension between the "metaphysical" and "moral" concerns, and, by extension, between "metaphysical" or even "ultimate" truth, and the "method of cultivation" required for acquiring a penetrating understanding of this truth or wisdom. When I speak of the nei-wai tension, it will be in terms of the attractions of the contemplative and the active ways of life, and when I speak of the wu-hsiu debate, it will be in terms of the roles of enlightenment and cultivation in the quest for sagehood. Thus, within the context of this chapter, both the nei-wai and the wu-hsiu tensions belong more to the realm of yung than to that of t'i. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that Yang-ming himself saw a fundamental unity between t'i and yung, finding the former in the latter, just as he held also that contemplation should permeate action, and enlightenment should be attained through cultivation.

⁴ Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai Jūgaku shisō no kenkyū, 237-239; 341-346.

⁵ For Chu Hsi, see Chapter I, n.93. For Lu Chiu-yüan, see SS 434:1114.

⁶ The reluctance of many scholars to assume official positions has been attributed to the severity which the early Ming emperors manifested to their ministers. See Chao Yi, Erh-shih-erh shih cha-chi, 32:5b-6a. The early Ming scholars who refrained from participating in government service, often even from taking civil examinations, included Wu Yü-pi, Hu Chü-jen 胡居仁 (1434-1484), Lou Liang and Ch'en Hsien-chang, all of whom spent their entire lives in semi-retirement. See MJHA 1:1a-2b; 2:1a-2a; 8a-9a; 5:1a-3b.

⁷ Yang-ming's preface to Chu-tzu wan-nien ting-lun, in WWKC 3:160; Chan, Instructions, 265.

⁸ Ibid.

- 9 See above, Chapter III, 100-103.
- 10 Of the Ming thinkers who preceded Yang-ming, Ch'en Hsien-chang was the best known for his practice of quiet-sitting and for the discovery of an interior world of vital activity through this practice. See MJHA 5:2a-3a, 6a; Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society, 53-57, 75-78.
- 11 See Chapter VI, 217-218.
- 12 In Self and Society, Introduction, 15, Prof. de Bary describes Yang-ming's ideal of sagehood in these words: "To be a sage, then, was to be the master of all creation. For Wang Yang-ming and many of his followers, the sagehood to which any man might aspire was no less cosmic in its significance. With a belief in the direct attainment of sagehood, and a vision of man standing at the centre of creation, the ingredients of a spiritual revolution were at hand."
- 13 Chuang-tzu, "T'ien-hsia p'ien," 天下篇 [All under Heaven], 10:14a; Eng. tr. in Burton Watson, op.cit., 364.
- 14 In this respect, I have found Prof. de Bary's draft paper on "Spiritual Cultivation and Intellectual Enlightenment in Neo-Confucian Thought," (Sept., 1970), very stimulating.
- 15 HSCC 34:14b. Lu himself is a good example of an "enlightened" man, who acquired profound insights into the meaning of hsin during early youth. But his judgement of Chu should not be regarded as expressive of conceit. To a disciple who suggested that both he and Chu should publish books, in order to allow posterity to choose between the two of them, Lu had replied severely that neither his own presence nor that of Chu could make the universe a better or greater place. See also HSCC 36:3b. On my own part, I wish to point out that I am not denying Chu's wisdom, nor the possibility of attaining enlightenment and sagehood by following his method of cultivation.
- 16 Yang-ming's critics, especially Ch'en Chien, referred especially to his teaching of inner enlightenment as a proof of his Ch'an Buddhist affiliations. [op.cit., 9E:6a-b]
- 17 See above, Chapter V, 167-172. See also in this regard the article by Ho Lin, "Sung-ju te ssu-hsiang fang-fa," [The Method of Thinking of the Sung Philosophers], in Sung-shih yen-chiu chi [Collected Studies in Sung History] comp. by the Study Committee on Sung History (Taipei:1964), 54. See also Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 92-94, where Jung explains how Yang-ming's teaching of chih liang-chih permits the acquisition of wisdom either by a

sudden and thorough-going "enlightenment" or by "gradual cultivation" through doing good and avoiding evil, which leads to complete understanding of pen-t'i. He also claims that Wang Chi was the real heir to Yang-ming's thought. [See p.109].

18 Let it be noted that the differences of emphases between Ch'ien Te-hung and Wang Chi on the relative merits of inner enlightenment and gradual cultivation have led them to interpret Yang-ming's inner evolution each in a slightly different way. Ch'ien spoke of the "triple changes" in Yang-ming's evolution, first as a student, and then as a teacher, emphasising his gradual shifts of focus in his own thought as well as in his spiritual direction of disciples. See Chapter II, 66-67. Wang Chi described Yang-ming's superior intelligence, his wide interests -- including his sympathy for Taoist and Buddhist teachings-- and his experience of sudden enlightenment during exile. He placed emphasis on the insights into the meaning of liang-chih, which Yang-ming acquired through this experience. See "Yang-ming hsien-sheng nien-p'u hsu," 陽明先生年譜序 [Preface to Yang-ming's Chronological Biography], WLCC 13:2b-3a, also given in WWKC 36:1021b-1022a.

19 For the Ch'an Buddhist's "shock therapy", see Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, 2nd series, (London:1950), 15-69. For Yang-ming's use of these pedagogical techniques, see Chapter VII, 249. However, Yang-ming never relied solely on such methods for his instruction of disciples.

20 Besides speaking of "polishing the mirror [of hsin]" as did the monk Shen-hsiu, Yang-ming also referred sometimes to the very "absence" of the mirror itself, comparing this absence to the fact that T'ai-chi (Ultimate) is basically Wu-chi (Ultimateless). See his poem in WWKC 20:620a. This, of course, is no argument for his denial of the reality of hsin, but points rather to his discovery in hsin of something greater than itself, which can only be described in negative terms. In this regard, Hisamatsu's article, which discusses especially the concept of "nothingness" in Ch'an Buddhism, can also help us to appreciate Yang-ming's intended meaning. See "The Characteristics of Oriental Nothingness," 65-97.

21 Hence it may be said that Yang-ming advocated a kind of "cultivation" which is akin to "non-cultivation" and so reminiscent of the ideas of Chuang-tzu and of Ch'an Buddhism. This "cultivation through non-cultivation", based on faith in the possession within oneself of the object of one's desires, regards any anxiety for the acquisition of this object as being harmful to the maintenance of an unperturbed mind-and-heart, one and the same in action and contemplation. One speaks therefore even of "having no mind" (wu-hsin 無心) which refers, even in Ch'an Buddhism

to independence or transcendence of one's thoughts and images, in a state of mind described as "void" (hsü). See the discussion on the spontaneity which should accompany the work of extending liang-chih, in Chapter V, 176-177. See also the discussion of "cultivation through non-cultivation" in Ch'an Buddhism, given in Fung Yu-lan's History of Chinese Philosophy as translated by Derk Bodde, v.2, 392-399. I have not been able to find the Chinese original to this section of Fung's book in the che-hsteh shih of Shanghai, 1935.

22 I repeat therefore that I consider the later excesses of the T'ai-chou branch of the Yang-ming school, made in the name of acquiring sagehood through "sudden enlightenment", as being quite contrary to the true spirit of Yang-ming's teaching. See above, Chapter VI, n.81.

23 Joseph Levenson, Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, v.2: The Problem of Monarchical Decay (London: 1964), 65-66.

24 True, in the Ch'eng-chu system, T'ai-chi holds the place of the Absolute, immanent in all and yet somehow transcendent, the "Ground of Being" with moral attributes, described as "full of goodness". But the Ch'eng-Chu method of investigating li and practising reverence for the sake of attaining a fuller realisation of T'ai-chi, also called T'ien-li, the presence of which fills the "sages' hsin" considered also by them to be the "sacred legacy", does not clearly indicate the basis of authority to which they appeal for the truth of their words. The usual claim of correct interpretation of the Classics' spiritual message and of self-realisation through "reverence" shows uncertainty regarding their "starting-point".

25 See above, Chapter IV, pp.123, 142.

26 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2:121 ; Chan, Instructions, 169.

27 Ibid, WWKC 2:122; Chan, Instructions, 171.

28 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33:951 . See also Wang Tchang-tche, La Philosophie Morale de Wang Yang-ming, 68-71.

29 See above, Chapter V, 182-183.

30 See Wing-tsit Chan, "The Ch'eng-Chu School of Early Ming," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society, 33.

31 See Chapter I, n.66.

32 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:108a-b; Chan, Instructions, 137-138.

33 Ibid. The allusion is to Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching, TSD No.2008, XLVIII, 355.

34 See Chapter V, 169, and Chapter VI, 207-208.

35 See Chapter VI, 221-225.

36 The idea that the sage's response to ordinary affairs in the world (kung-fu) constitutes, in itself, the mysterious Tao (pen-t'i) was first taught by Ch'an Buddhists, who spoke of bodhi (wisdom or enlightenment) as being present in klesa (passions, afflictions, delusions) for those who have eyes to see, and recommended "cultivation through non-cultivation". See Bodde's translation of Fung's History of Chinese Philosophy, v.2, 402-406. The fact that it entered the mainstream of Neo-Confucian thought is as much indicative of Buddhist influence on Sung-Ming Confucianism as it is of Confucian "penetration" of Buddhism. Among the Sung thinkers, Ch'eng Yi taught especially that t'i and yung came from the same source. See ECCS, Wai-shu, 12:8a. Yang-ming referred to this, while teaching his disciples. See WWKC 3:132a. His personal teaching on the fundamental unity between pen-t'i (ultimate reality) and kung-fu (moral effort) was especially given during his instruction of Ch'ien Te-hung and Wang Chi on the meaning of the Four Maxims. He said then that the man of superior spiritual endowment was capable of receiving enlightenment by direct contemplation of pen-t'i, thus discovering the unity between it and kung-fu. See WWKC 3:151b-152a; Chapter VI, 221-225.

37 Chapter VI, 207-220.

38 The discovery of liang-chih pen-t'i (ultimate reality) in hsin is also reminiscent of the Ch'an Buddhist assertion that the "ordinary mind" (p'ing-ch'ang hsing 平常心) is the Way (Tao), and that this Way belongs neither to the realm of knowledge nor to that of non-knowledge. Araki Kengo cited this passage, taken from the Wu-men kuan TSD No.2005, XLVIII, 295; German tr. by Dumoulin, p.32. while discussing Yang-ming's doctrine of knowledge and action. See Bukkyō to Jukyō, 390. The danger, of course, is the possible confusion of the relative and the Absolute, especially by persons who have not discovered for themselves and in themselves, the presence within of the Absolute, but who engage merely in philosophical conversations on the nature of this Absolute, and presume that they have been dispensed from the need of making any particular effort to seek the good for themselves.

- 39 See MJHA 32:1a-4b. This danger had been pointed out by Chan Jo-shui. See Chapter IV, 141-143. In an article on Wang Chi, Yamashita Ryūji said that while Yang-ming had insisted on liang-chih as the highest and unchanging Absolute, Wang Chi had made of it a relative principle, being able to see the Absolute only in terms of negations such as wu(non-being) and hsū(void). See "Ō Ryōkei ron," Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō VIII, (1956), 91-93.
- 40 See Chapter I, n.6.
- 41 This has been pointed out especially by Ku Yen-wu. See Jih-chih lu chi-shih 18:14b-17b.
- 42 Understood this way, the Buddhist influence in the "transmission of hsin" cannot be denied, both in the case of Chu Hsi and in that of Wang Yang-ming. Ku Yen-wu referred to it at length [Ibid.]. See also Chapter I, n.101.
- 43 It is difficult enough for the person concerned to decide his own "sageliness", given his personal awareness of the degree of realisation of his hsin. It is more difficult for one to decide the "sageliness" of others, since the experience and awareness would be less direct.
- 44 MJHA 12:1a-2b; 32:1a-4b. Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Min-matsu no Jugaku, 122-137; 183-255. These men made up the so-called "leftist" Yang-ming school. Prof. Okada prefers to call them "Existentialists", on account of the famous liang-chih hsien-ch'eng lun 良知現成論 developed by Wang Chi, which emphasised the "innate" quality of liang-chih and taught the possibility of sudden enlightenment by which it was at once realised. Through him, Yang-ming's doctrine also took on a much more religious character, with frequent exhortations to "faith" in liang-chih. See also Prof. Okada's article in English, "Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism," in de Bary, ed. Self and Society, 121-144.
- 45 MJHA 16:1a-4a; 17:1a-2b; 18:1a-2b. Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Min-matsu no Jugaku, 138-182.
- 46 One must not, however, forget the contribution of Yang-ming's philosophy to the gradual amalgamation of the "Three Teachings". See Chapter VII. See also Araki Kengō, "Min-matsu ni okeru Ju-Butsu chōwaron no seikaku," [On the Thought of the Late Ming Era as Revealed in the Attempts at Harmony between Confucianism and Buddhism], Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō XVIII, (1966), 210-219.
- 47 See below, Epilogue.

Epilogue

Was he the sage of Ōmi, or was he the sage of Japan?
Was he the sage of the East, or was he also the sage
of the whole world?

But a sage is a sage in the same way in the past and
the present, in the East and in the West.

As the sage of Ōmi, he was also the sage of the world.¹

The Yang-ming school in Japan is associated in the first place with Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608-1648), "the sage of Ōmi",² This is a tribute to Yang-ming's doctrine of sagehood, based on the "universal virtue" (t'unq-te 同德)³ present in men's minds-and-hearts, and to his "method" of attaining this sagehood. Understandably, however, the development of the Yang-ming school in Japan showed similarities as well as differences with its development in China. Its early advocates were semi-recluses or low-ranking samurai. It manifested strongly contrasting attractions for "inner contemplation" or "outer activity", as exemplified by the two disciples of Nakae Tōju, the retiring Fuchū Okayama 淵園山 (1617-1686)⁴ and the active Kumazawa Banzan 能澤菴山 (1619-1691).⁵ These tendencies continued to be manifested in the later disciples of the Japanese "Yōmei" school, described sometimes as having had a "rightist" and a "leftist" branch.⁶ But the Yōmei school as a whole certainly provided a high moral idealism for the political movement leading to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which appealed to the "restoration" of the Golden Past, but looked forward to Westernisation and modernisation.

A Japanese "Orthodoxy"?

The establishment of a militant Ch'eng-Chu "orthodoxy" in 17th century Tokugawa Japan appeared as a contradiction to the very origin of the history of this school, which had been introduced into the country by Zen (Ch'an) monks returning from China.⁷ It seemed to have been more the result of

a conscious imitation of "things Chinese" than a response to felt needs. For the same reason, the Yang-ming school, considered "heretical" in China, could find its way more easily in Japan to a position of dominance in men's minds, once it demonstrated its adequacy in fulfilling the intellectual and social needs. On the other hand, the anxiety of the Tokugawa government to defend the Ch'eng-Chu "orthodoxy", offered additional reasons to the followers of the Yōmei philosophy to work more arduously for an Imperial Restoration.

As for themselves, the Japanese disciples of Ō Yōmei usually kept their esteem for the philosophy of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi even when they preferred that of Yang-ming. The scholar accredited with the renewal of interest in the Yōmei philosophy, Miwa Jissai 三輪執齋 (1669-1744)⁸ and the philosopher whose thinking exercised a great influence on the Meiji period, Satō Issai 佐藤一齋 (1772-1859), explained the First of Yang-ming's Four Maxims according to the teaching of self-cultivation given in the Great Learning, and even according to Chou Tun-yi's and Chu Hsi's description of T'ai-chi, effecting thereby a certain reconciliation between the two schools. Satō declared himself to be a teacher of Chu Hsi's philosophy, but most of his disciples were known as Yang-ming adherents.⁹

This greater flexibility of the Yōmei school in Japan was also extended, first to Shintō ideas, by Nakae Tōju and Kumazawa Banzan, each in his own way, and then to Westernising influences. Hayashi Shihei 林子平 (1738-1793) suffered imprisonment for his interest in and discussion of naval affairs.¹⁰ Satō's famous disciple, Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山 (1881-1864), raised the cry of "Eastern Ethics and Western Science" (Tōyō no dōtoku, Seiyō no gakuhei 東洋の道徳・西洋の學藝),¹¹ the counterpart, in China, of the slogan "Chinese learning as [moral] basis, Western learning for functional use". (Chung-hsüeh wei-t'i, Hsi-hsüeh wei-yung 中學為體・西學為用). However, he attributed his interest in Western science and technology, less to Satō's teaching, and more to the doctrine of "investigation of things" of the Ch'eng-Chu school.¹²

The Heroic Legacy

During the late Tokugawa Period (1571-1867) the reconciliation of the "inner-outer" tensions resulted in the quasi-religious exaltation of "faith" in ryōchi (liang-chih), the realisation of which was frequently sought for in attempted social reform or political action, usually against the Shogunate. Thus, the Japanese united the courageous spirit of Yang-ming the soldier, which flowed from his "transcendence" of questions of life and death, achieved first in exile and then in the midst of many battles, with their own discovery, through ryōchi, of the need for social or political change, which they attempted to fulfil by individual protest or organised revolt. The feudal structure which prevailed under Tokugawa rule permitted them to appeal to the virtue of loyalty in different forms: Ōshio Chusai 大塩中齋 (1793-1837) sold all his books to help the needy of Ōsaka during the famine, but was led to rebellion by the attitudes of the local authorities who had refused to open the granaries. He carried out this action in the name of the sage kings of China who had founded the Shang and Chou dynasties, and of the legendary Emperor Jimmu of Japan, for the realisation of benevolence toward the people.¹³ The revolt was doomed to fail, but his heroic spirit can be discerned in these stirring words:

In face of a crisis, a hero certainly transcends considerations of fortune or disaster, life or death. But even when [the crisis is over and] the work is accomplished, he should still question [the importance of] fortune or disaster, life or death. This is the same with the gentleman whose learning has become refined and genuine.¹⁴

This same courage which defied death itself was manifested in Sakuma Shōzan's disciple, Yoshida Shōin 吉田松蔭 (1830-1859), the fiery young warrior, a believer in the ability and destiny of the "common man" in facing the crisis of the superior military and technological challenges coming

from the West. Killed at the age of thirty for organising an assassination plot, he became a hero to generations of his countrymen, giving inspiration also to the Chinese reformers and martyrs of 1898.¹⁵ Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1827-1877), who shared actively in the work of Imperial Restoration by his role as chief of staff of the imperial armies at Edo, displayed the same independence of mind and samurai spirit by his later opposition to Westernisers which led to his violent death in 1877.¹⁶

In each case, ryōchi was the source of their courage and the authority to which they appealed for their convictions.

"Restoration" or "Modernisation"?

The practical, social-political orientations of the Yang-ming school in Japan, combined with a high ideal of self-sacrifice acquired in quiet cultivation, prepared its adherents for an important role in the final Meiji Reforms. The restoration of rightful authority to the Emperor was hailed as a glorious return to the Golden Past, indeed, not merely to the Taika 大化 Reform of 645 or to the time of Prince Shōtoku 聖徳 and Empress Suiko 隨古 (r.592-628), when Japan first embarked on modelling its government and institutions on the Chinese pattern, but even earlier still, to the legendary past of Emperor Jimmu.¹⁷ The pragmatic needs of government and of technological skills were not overlooked. Sakuma Shōzan and Yoshida Shōin were both interested in "Dutch Learning", particularly in the casting of cannons and other weapons. Sakuma's other disciple, Katsu Kaishū 勝海舟 (1823-1899) became known later as the "Father of the Japanese navy".¹⁸ Other Yōmei scholars were more concerned with "enriching the country" than with "strengthening the army". Another pupil of Satō Issai, Yamada Hōkoku 山田方谷 (1805-1877)¹⁹ and his friend Kasuga Senan 春日潜庵 (1811-1878) offered ideas of economic reform to the Shogunate government.²⁰ Kasuga's anti-Shogunate activities brought him imprisonment, and,

save for the intervention of Yamada, possible execution. A common friend of Yamada and Kasuga, Ikeda Sowan 池田草庵 (1813-1878) preferred a life of retirement and of education to political activities.²¹

The young, low-ranking samurai who had contributed so much to the success of the Imperial Restoration, drew up the Charter Oath of 1868, a vague statement of general principles which were derived in great part from the ideas of Saigō Takamori.²² These vague egalitarian principles, enshrined in the Constitution of the same year, were balanced by the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, with its emphasis on the "Confucian" virtues of loyalty to the Imperial House, of filial piety, conjugal harmony, brotherly love and friendship, which recall the more "orthodox" influences of Chu Hsi's school. Its conclusion stated:

The Way (Tao) here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by their Descendants and subjects, as infallible [doctrine] for all ages.....²³

This "Confucian" moral Way, so strongly re-asserted in a time of institutional changes and adaptations to Westernising influences, gave inspiration to the political activities of Itō Hirobumi 伊藤 博文 (1841-1909), a disciple of Yoshida Shōin, whose statesmanly leadership assured the establishment of a constitutional government for his country, the victorious outcome of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, and the successful revision of the "unequal treaties" imposed upon Japan by Western powers a few decades earlier.²⁴ The success of Japan's effort of modernisation, cannot, of course, be entirely attributed to the Yōmei school. It appears quite clearly that the "radicals" of the late Tokugawa Period, who were often attached to the Yōmei teaching as it was interpreted in Japan, turned "conservative" after the Meiji Restoration, and pleaded rather for the preservation of traditional "Confucian" values against the rapid tide of continued Westernisation. Itō Hirobumi himself is known today more as

a Westerniser than as a Confucian traditionalist.

And so, Japan entered the 20th century, dynamic and rejuvenated, ready to confront events and affairs as they arise. The events of the Second World War provided a traumatic experience to the modern, militant nation, and all the more to the deeper thinkers, as they reflected in their ryōchi on the significance of the victories and defeats. The "heroic spirit" of the Yōmei philosophy was made manifest by the bravery of the soldiers. But was such heroism the result of blind obedience to military commands, or the manifestation of an adherence to an inner light, to an authority higher than that of the state? Had the true spirit of Ō Yōmei been lost in the formation of an ideology, with its exaltation of the anti-intellectual tendencies of the new Shintoist nationalism? These questions came to the fore in the post-war years,²⁵ which witnessed the gradual emergence of a capitalist society, with clearly pluralist values. Studies on the philosophy of Ō Yōmei continued, with the application of more Western, scientific techniques, as well as philosophical categories. Even the "Materialist" versus "Idealist" dichotomy which prevails in Communist China affected the examination of Ō Yōmei's thought in Japan, particularly in the case of the debate regarding the T'ai-chou branch of the Yang-ming school and the later decline of Ming and Ch'ing thought.²⁶ And now, with the advent of the fifth centenary of Yang-ming's birth, a project is underway to publish the Yōmeigaku daikai 陽明學大系 [A Compendium of the Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming], which should provide the summation of the development of the Yōmei school in Japan.²⁷

Notes to Epilogue

- 1 The praise of Nakae Tōju, by Sugiura Jūgō 杉浦重剛 who had been tutor to Emperor Taishō 大正 (r. 1912-1926). It is cited in Chang Chün-mai, Pi-chiao Chung-Jih Yang-ming hsüeh [A Comparison of the Study of Yang-ming's Philosophy in China and Japan], (Taipei: 1970), 61. Eng. tr. in W.T. de Bary, Ryosaku Tsunoda and Donald Keene, ed., Sources of Japanese Tradition, (New York: 1964), v. 1, 370.
- 2 Nakae Tōjū was known as "Master Yōmei of Japan". He devoted his life to teaching disciples, and manifested a great filial piety toward his mother. He believed in a Supreme Being, called Taotogami 太乙神 whom he regarded as Creator and Ruler of Heaven-and-Earth and all things. See Inoue Tetsujirō et al., Nihon rinri ihen Yōmeigakuha no bu [A Compendium of Japanese Ethics: Section on the Yang-ming School], (Tokyo: 1970), v. 1, 1-6. This Compendium gives also the Collected writings of certain selected Yōmei scholars of Japan, including Nakae Tōjū, Kumazawa Banzan, Miwai Jissai, Sato Issai, Ōshio Chusai. It does not include, however, certain others which had been included in Inoue Tetsujirō's Nihon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku [The Philosophy of the Yang-ming School in Japan], (Tokyo: 1936). A Chinese work, by Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsüeh chi Yang-ming hsüeh [The School of Old Learning and the Yang-ming School in Japan], (Shanghai: 1962), is very comprehensive.
- 3 WWKC 3: 142b; Chan, Instructions, 220. This is cited above in Ch. VII, n.1.
- 4 Inoue Tetsujirō, Nihon Yōmeigakuha, 167-171; Chu Ch'ien-chih, op.cit., 262. He remained a teacher all his life, and showed an absolute faith in the teaching of Nakae.
- 5 Kumazawa was a samurai in the service of Ikeda Mitsumasa 池田光政 feudal lord of Okayama 岡山 and interested himself in political and economic action. See Inoue, Nihon rinri, v. 1, 6-8; Chu Ch'ien-chih, op.cit., 260-261.
- 6 Chu Ch'ien-chih, op.cit., 220-221, 383-387.
- 7 See Inoue Tetsujirō's Nihon Shushi gakuha no tetsugaku [The Philosophy of the Chu Hsi School in Japan], (Tokyo: 1945), 605-615; Chu Ch'ien-chih's Jih-pen te Chu-tzu hsüeh [The Chu Hsi School in Japan], (Peking: 1958), 31-78, passim. The Yōmei school was also allegedly introduced into Japan by the monk Ryōan Keigo 了庵桂悟 who claimed to have met Yang-ming in China. See Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsüeh chi Yang-ming hsüeh, 220-221; Ishiyori Tōkoku, Yōmeigakuha no jinbutsu [The Personalities of the Yang-ming School], (Tokyo: 1917), 62-73.
- 8 Inoue, Nihon rinri, v. 2, 2-5; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsüeh chi Yang-ming hsüeh, 276-279.

- 9 Inoue, Nihon rinri, v. 3, 1-6; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 294-279.
- 10 Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 288-291.
- 11 See especially his "Seiken roku" 省愆錄 [Examination of Conscience], in Shōzan zenshu [Complete Works of Sakuma Shōzan] (Tokyo: 1913), v. 2, p.6.
- 12 Inoue, Nihon no Yōmeigakuha, 515-520; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 314-319. Sakuma is sometimes classified as a follower of the School of Chu Hsi.
- 13 Inoue, Nihon rinri, v. 3, 6-11; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 337-365, *passim*. Oshio's Hohon Daigaku katsumuku 古本大學刻目 [Collected Commentaries on the Old Version of the Great Learning] is a collection of all the commentaries on this book by Han, T'ang, Sung, Ming and Ch'ing scholars, especially those written by the disciples of the Yang-ming school. It is included in the Nihon rinri ihen, v. 3, 143-442, together with one version of Yang-ming's Side Commentaries on the Great Learning [194-198] which is different from that given in Han-hai.
- 14 "senshindō tōki" 洗心洞刻記 [Notes of Senshindō], in Inoue Tetsujirō et al., comp., Yōmeigakuha (Tokyo: 1936), v. 3, 15.
- 15 Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 374-382. Earlier, he had attempted, without success, to leave Japan for Europe or the United States, with the aim of learning military technology. Called a "madman" by his critics, Yoshida Shōin once wrote an essay entitled "Kyōfu no gen," 狂夫の言 [Words of a Mad Man], in which he reminded his readers how sages had been called "mad" (k'uang) men. See Yoshida Shōin zenshu [Complete Works of Yoshida Shōin], (Tokyo: 1934), v. 4, 13-19. For his influence on the Meiji Era, see Kōsaka Masaki, ed., Japanese Thought in the Meiji Era, (Tokyo: 1958), 37-38.
- 16 Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 371-373. The development of an ultra-nationalism can also be associated in part with the ideas of the Japanese Yōmei school. Its theory and psychology have been described by Maruyama Masao, in Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics, (London: 1963), 1-23; 135-154. The contemporary Yōmei scholar Yasuoka Masashiro (Masaatsu), (b. 1898) was one of Japan's most respected intellectuals in the pre-War Nationalist movement. [Maruyama, 332]. The deceased novelist Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫 acknowledged the influence of the Yōmei school on the evolution of his own thought in an article he wrote, "Kakumei tetsugaku to shite no Yōmeigaku," 革命哲學としての陽明學 [The Yōmei Teaching as a Philosophy of Revolution] in

Shokun 諸君 (Sept. 1970). It is referred to in Tasaka Kō's "Sono shi no bawai: Mishima Yukio no Nihilism," [Mishima's Nihilism: the Circumstances Surrounding His Death], Tenbo 展望 No. 148, (April, 1971), 106.

17 During the time preceding the Meiji Restoration, writers appealed for political action and change in the name of the "restoration" of an old moral and social order, described as the Golden Past of the Chinese sages or of the Japanese gods, and for the sake of resisting the "foreign barbarians." See Motoyama Yukihiro, Meiji shisō no keisei [The Formation of Meiji Thought]. (Tokyo: 1969), 47-67.

18 See Katsu's autobiography, Katsu Kaishū jiden: Hikawa seiwa (Chibaken: 1968), especially his praise of Ō Yōmei on p.105.

19 Inoue, Nihon no Yōmeigakuha, 497-503; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 320-323.

20 Inoue, Nihon no Yōmeigakuha, 521-536; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 323-325. See also Yasuoka Masaatsu, "Ming-chih wei-hsin yü Yang-ming hsueh," [The Meiji Reforms and the Yang-ming School], tr. into Chinese by Ching-chia 景嘉 in Tung-hsi wen-hua XXV, (1969), 10-15.

21 Inoue, Nihon no Yōmeigakuha, 537-543; Chu Ch'ien-chih, Jih-pen te ku-hsueh chi Yang-ming hsueh, 325-327.

22 Yoshino Sakuzō et al., comp., Meiji bunka zenshū [Collected Writings on the Meiji Period], (v. 2) Seishihen [Section on History], pt. 1, (Tokyo: 1927-1930), 33.

23 Yoshino Sakuzō et al., comp., Meiji bunka zenshū, (v.3) Seishihen, pt. 2, p.275. Eng. tr. in W.T. de Bary, et al., ed., Sources of Japanese Tradition, v. 2, 140.

24 Kimura Ki, ed., Meiji jinbutsu ronshū [On the Personalities of the Meiji Period], [Meiji bunka zenshū--Collected Writings on the Literature of the Meiji Period-- v. 92], (Tokyo: 1970), 3-25.

25 See Gotō Motomi, "Studies in Chinese Philosophy in Postwar Japan," Monumenta Serica XIV (1949-1955), 164-187.

26 Shimada Kenji's Chūgoku ni okeru kindai shisō no zassetsu [The Breakdown of of Modern Thought in China], (Tokyo: 1949), regarded the concept of man as the central problem of hsin-hsueh, tracing it from Wang Yang-ming to Li Chih, and calling it "modern thinking". He considers its eventual decline to have come from the rigidity of the Chinese social structure. This theory occasioned a debate between himself and Yamashita Ryūji, who locates the anti-Confucian movement in the Taoist and Buddhist thinking of the philosophers concerned. Their debate went on in a

series of articles. See Gotō Motomi, op.cit., 185-187, and Yamashita's article, "Yōmeigaku kenkyū no rekishi kara," [On the History of the Study of Yang-ming's Thought], Rekishi kyoiku III, (1955), 71-77.

27 This work is under the supervision of the best Japanese scholars on Chinese thought, including Araki Kengō, Uno Tetsujin, Okada Takehiko, Yasuoka Masaatsu, Yamashita Ryūji and Yamai Yū. It is to consist of 12 volumes, with sections treating of Yang-ming's life, thought, disciples, and the development of the Yang-ming school in China and Japan, written by Japanese and Chinese scholars, to be published in the course of the years 1971 and 1972.

Appendix I

On the Interpretation of Certain Technical Terms

The following terms, both single words and expressions, have been selected for discussion because of their frequent occurrence in this study, and also because--with the exception of the historical terms--they often illustrate the unitary character of the thought of Wang Yang-ming. Very often, they manifest the different dimensions of the same truth which persistently pre-occupied Yang-ming's mind. That this truth pertains both to the ontological and methodological orders is a fact which should emerge from the reading of his works and from this discussion. The words and expressions are being given roughly in the order of their occurrence in this thesis, alphabetically whenever possible, and are grouped together according to the associations of meanings to which they are attached.

A. The Historical Terms:

Tao-hsüeh

道學

The movement of thought heralded by Han Yü and Li Ao, developed by Chou Tun-yi, Chang Tsai, the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi, and continued through the Yüan, Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, translated into English as "Neo-Confucianism". It is synonymous with hsing-li hsüeh, although it refers sometimes to the earlier stages of development of that movement.

Tao-t'ung

道統

The line of orthodox transmission of the Tao or of the meaning of ultimate reality in the Confucian school.

Hsing-li hsüeh

性理學

The movement of thought which concentrated its interest in the investigation into the meanings of hsing and li, the Confucian philosophy as re-interpreted by thinkers of Sung and Ming times who gave it a much more interior dimension. It is usually translated into English by the word "Neo-Confucianism".

Li-hsüeh

理學

The movement of thought which concentrated its investigation into the meaning of li. It refers sometimes to the whole hsing-li movement, and sometimes to that particular school of thought connected with the names of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi.

Hsin-hsüeh

心學

The movement of thought which concentrated its investigation on the meaning of hsin. The term refers sometimes to the whole hsing-li movement, but more often to that particular school of thought connected with the names of Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming.

B. The Philosophical Terms:

Chih

知

Literally knowledge, wisdom.

For Wang Yang-ming: moral knowledge, wisdom, the mind-and-heart itself, the knowledge which is united to action and experience.

Hsing

行

Literally, to walk, to act.

For Wang Yang-ming: every conscious and voluntary human act, which proceeds from the mind-and-heart, and is united to the knowledge of the morality of the act in question.

Chih-hsing ho-yi

知行合一

The Unity of Knowledge and Action, according as Yang-ming himself understood knowledge and action.

Ko-wu

格物

- a) Usually translated as "the investigation of things".
 - b) For Chu Hsi, it refers essentially to "investigating into the meanings (li) of things (including external reality and man's mind-and-heart)"
 - c) For Wang Yang-ming, it refers to "rectifying the mind-and-heart", i.e., especially through the acts in which man's mind-and-heart is engaged.
- Thus, Chu understood the word ko mainly as "reaching", while Yang-ming understood it to mean "rectifying". Chu also understood wu as "things" while Yang-ming meant by it primarily "affairs" and "acts".

Chih-chih

致知

Usually translated as "the extension of knowledge".

For Chu Hsi, knowledge is extended especially through the investigation of the meanings (li) of things.

For Wang Yang-ming, the only knowledge to be extended is the "knowledge of the good" (liang-chih).

Ch'eng-yi

誠意

Usually translated as "making the intention sincere". The word yi refers to both thought and intention: an interior movement of hsin, the mind-and-heart, which has a moral value.

Chung

中

Literally, the middle, the Mean. In the Doctrine of the Mean, it refers to the state of "equilibrium" which governs the person's disposition before his emotions have been aroused or "stirred". Chu Hsi spoke of "equilibrium" as the characteristic of the pen-t'i of hsing, that is, of pure nature as such.

Ho

和

Literally, harmony, peace. In the Doctrine of the Mean, it refers to the state of "harmony" which ideally speaking, should govern the person's disposition after his emotions have been aroused or "stirred". Chu Hsi had spoken much of the importance of acquiring a "harmonious" disposition, as close as possible to that of one's pre-stirred "equilibrium." He later developed the doctrine of uniting "activity" and "tranquillity" by permeating one's life with the spirit of "reverence" (ching 敬). Liang-chih makes no distinction between "equilibrium" and "harmony", or even between "activity" (tung) and "tranquillity" (ching), since the work of extending liang-chih unites these states of the mind-and-heart.

Hsin

心

Literally, the mind-and-heart, the seat of consciousness and the source of all human activity. In Ch'an Buddhism, it refers to the undifferentiated First Principle. For Chu Hsi: it is composed of both li and ch'i, and is inferior in importance to hsing (nature) which is identified with li. Hsin is the active principle. It controls both hsing (nature) and ch'ing (emotions), but it is inferior in importance to hsing, the more tranquil principle, which is full of li (being and goodness). For Lu Chiu-yüan, hsin and hsing are identical. In other words, there is only one principle, of both activity and tranquillity, which is full of li, and which possesses the capacity of transcending itself, because it is somehow greater than itself, one with the universe and all things. Yang-ming adopted Lu's understanding of hsin. More clearly than Lu, he explained

that hsin is the principle in man which is capable of self-determination and self-perfection, which hides, within itself, that greater than itself, the Absolute, and which is identical with liang-chih.

Hsing

性

Literally, nature, the natural, human nature. Chu Hsi regarded hsing as the source and principle of moral and ontological goodness in man and the universe, that which is full of li, while he took hsin as that which contains both li and ch'i and therefore morally ambivalent.

Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming understood hsing and hsin to represent one and the same reality, considered under its more tranquil dimension, that by which man shares in T'ien-li [principle of Heaven] (hsing) and its more dynamic aspect, that which directs all human activity, that is, the "given" nature of man as well as that which is to be acquired, through experience and action.

Jen

仁

Literally, kindness, benevolence, humanity, goodness, love.

In Confucian philosophy, the perfect and universal virtue.

Ch'eng Hao and other Sung philosophers gave this word a cosmic, life-giving connotation, making it that power or virtue by which man becomes one with Heaven-and-Earth and all things and shares in the creative processes of the universe.

Wang Yang-ming also identified jen with the pen-t'i of hsin, that is, with the mind-in-itself, the Absolute.

Li

理

Etymologically, the veins in jade.

According to ordinary usage, reason, truth, or meaning, pattern.

For Chu Hsi, it is being, reality, the principle of organisation, that which constitutes the essence of a thing, moral truth and goodness, the transcendent and normative principle of moral action.

Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming considered li especially under its moral aspect. They regarded hsin to be full of li, thus departing from Chu Hsi's views.

Ch'i

氣

Literally, breath, ether, vital force
Chu Hsi considered it to be the concrete, material, differentiating principle of things, that which together with li constitutes all beings, that which gives life to things.

For Wang Yang-ming, li and ch'i represented, not distinct principles, but the rational and moral versus the irrational and vital manifestations of the same human nature or of nature at large.

Liang-chih

良知

Literally, knowing the good, knowledge of the good.

In Mencius 7A:15, the expression refers to man's inborn capacity to know the good. For Wang Yang-ming, it is that in man which enables him to discern between right and wrong, the inborn capacity to know and do the good, a capacity to be developed as well as a goal to be attained, since the perfect development of liang-chih would signify sagehood.

Yang-ming also spoke of liang-chih as the principle of vitality, of consciousness, and of conscious activity in man. Besides, he identified it to hsin, especially to the latter in a state of "equilibrium"--before emotions are aroused. In this sense, he spoke interchangeably of the "original substance" (pen-t'i) of hsin--the "mind-and-heart-in-itself"--and of the "original substance" of liang-chih--liang-chih pen-t'i or "liang-chih in-itself". In this context, he gave it certain cosmic qualities, identifying it to T'ai-hsü, and making of it, that which is the ultimate authority to its own acts.

Nei/wai

內外

Literally, "inner"/"outer"; or "within"/"without".

It has the same metaphysical meaning as t'i-yung, referring thereby to the One Reality and its external manifestations. It can also refer in practice to the opposing attractions of contemplation and of activity.

T'i/yung

體用

Usually translated as "substance"/"function".

For Wang Pi: they refer to two cosmic states, the "latent" (t'i) and the "manifest" (yung).

For Seng Chao, t'i refers to the One Reality, hsin, (Mind), the "within", and yung refers to its manifestations, the "without".

In T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, t'i refers to Reality, the Absolute, and yung to its manifestations.

For the Sung Confucians, t'i-yung may refer to the essential components of the Confucian teaching and to its application in moral practice (Hu Yüan), or to the metaphysical "within" and "without". Yang-ming spoke sometimes of t'i-yung in terms of pen-t'i and kung-fu.

Pen-t'i

本體

Usually translated as "original substance". For Yang-ming, it refers to "metaphysical reality", at its deepest level: eg., hsin chih pen-t'i, translated as hsin in-itself, refers to hsin at its deepest level, the "true" mind-and-heart, as contrasted against the mind-and-heart which is affected by selfish desires or passions. Yang-ming identified hsin with hsing, and with liang-chih. Thus, for him, the pen-t'i of hsin is identical to the pen-t'i of hsing and of liang-chih.

Kung-fu

工夫

Literally, work and effort. For Yang-ming, it refers to the effort and work of moral cultivation. He equated pen-t'i with kung-fu, meaning by it that reality is to be discovered in the effort of searching for it.

Tung/ching

動靜

Usually translated as "activity"/"tranquility", or "movement"/"quiescence". The Sung and Ming thinkers often identify tung to yi-fa, and ching to wei-fa. They may refer to "action" and "contemplation".

Wei-fa/yi-fa

未發 已發

In the Doctrine of the Mean, they refer to the two successive states of mind which prevail before and after the emotions are aroused or stirred.

Chu Hsi spoke of wei-fa in terms of chung (equilibrium), and recommended that it be restored and preserved.

Yang-ming regarded them as referring to two aspects under which liang-chih, always active and yet always the same, can be understood.

Wu/hsiu

悟修

Usually translated as "enlightenment"/"cultivation". Taken together, they refer to the relative emphases placed on inner enlightenment or moral asceticism as a means of acquiring wisdom and sagehood.

Chu Hsi emphasised hsiu (cultivation), but looked upon it as a preparation for wu (enlightenment).

Yang-ming's explanations of his Four Maxims seem to show a preference for wu, but without neglecting the importance of hsiu.

T'ai-chi

太極

Literally, the Great and Ultimate, or the Supreme and Ultimate.

For Chou Tun-yi, it represents the Source and Principle of all being and goodness, the Ground of Being, the One behind the Many, the Fullness of li.

Chu Hsi identified it with the Ch'engs' T'ien-li, the embodiment of all truth, wisdom and virtue. He thus internalised Chou's T'ai-chi, describing it as immanent not only in the whole of the cosmos, but in each individual being as well.

Yang-ming seldom referred to it, and then usually as the Source and Principle of moral goodness.

T'ai-ho

太和

Literally, the Great Harmony.

For Chang Tsai, it is synonymous with Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi, that is, the undifferentiated First Principle, the fullness of li.

Wang Yang-ming spoke little of T'ai-ho, and much more of T'ai-hsü.

T'ai-hsü

太虛

Literally, the Great Void.

For Chang Tsai, it is full of ch'i (ether), the shapeless stuff which makes up the universe.

Wang Yang-ming spoke of liang-chih as being somehow one with T'ai-hsü, thus endowing the latter not only with life and vitality but also with consciousness and a certain intelligence and spirituality. He spoke, for example, of liang-chih pen-t'i as T'ai-hsü, describing it as a self-transcending state of mind-and-heart.

Tao

道

- a) Literal meaning: the "way" by which one travels.
- b) Extended meaning: "reason".
- c) In Taoist philosophy: ultimate reality, nameless and ineffable.
- d) In Taoist occultism: the secret of life, and of the art of prolonging life.
- e) In Buddhism: the meaning of life, ultimate reality, Buddhahood.

- f) In Confucianism: the moral way of life-- especially the observance of the "five relationships", the meaning of life, ultimate reality.

-Chu Hsi: all the above, and also knowledge of ultimate reality or of the Absolute, which was being transmitted to posterity by the Ch'engs and himself after the interruption which occurred with the death of Mencius.

-Wang Yang-ming: all the above, including the meaning given to it by Chu Hsi, but as identified to hsin.

Tao-hsin

道 心

Literally, "the mind-and-heart of Tao", or the "moral mind-and-heart".

In the movement of thought called "Tao-hsüeh", it refers to the sacred legacy which is transmitted by the sages. As such, it is opposed to jen-hsin, 人心 literally, "man's mind-and-heart".

Ch'eng Yi explained jen-hsin as the mind-and-heart which is affected by jen-yü 人欲 (passions or selfish desires) and Tao-hsin as the mind-and-heart which is full of T'ien-li.

Chu Hsi explained jen-hsin as man's mind-and-heart, considered as the seat of consciousness, composed of blood and "ether", and Tao-hsin as the same mind-and-heart, considered as the source of moral discernment.

Yang-ming regarded jen-hsin as the mind-and-heart contaminated by passions and so become prone to error, and Tao-hsin as the pure mind-and-heart, without passions or selfish desires, and identical with liang-chih.

T'ien

天

- a) Literally, "Heaven", "sky".
- b) In the Book of Documents, it is synonymous with "Shang-ti" or the "Emperor-on-High", i.e., God.
- c) For Confucius, it refers especially to the Supreme Being.
- d) For Mencius, it refers sometimes to the Supreme Being, sometimes to the ultimate truth of the universe, or to the fullness of goodness, and sometimes to Fate.
- e) For Hsün-tzu, it refers especially to the physical heaven, or nature.
- f) For Tung Chung-shu, it refers sometimes to nature at large, to which he attributes qualities of intelligence and spirituality.

- g) The Sung and Ming thinkers sometimes speak of T'ien-ti, i.e., Heaven-and-Earth, as representing the whole universe, and sometimes speak of T'ien alone, as representing the whole universe, or of the fullness of being and goodness.
- h) Yang-ming identified T'ien with Tao, with hsin, and with Iiang-chih.

T'ien-li

天理

Literally, heavenly reason.

The Ch'engs speak of T'ien-li as the fullness of being and goodness, innate in human nature (hsing) as well as in nature at large. To it, is opposed jen-yü 人欲, passions or selfish desires.

Chu Hsi followed the interpretation given it by the Ch'engs, and identified T'ai-chi with T'ien-li.

Yang-ming explains it also as the fullness of being and goodness, innate in all, the ideal norm to which all our moral judgments and actions should conform. At times, he also opposed it to jen-yü. He also identified T'ien-li with Iiang-chih.

T'ien-jen ho-yi

天人合一

Literally, the "Unity between Heaven and Man".

It refers in particular to the teaching of the Confucian school, developed especially by Mencius and Tung Chung-shu, each in his own way, that Heaven and Man make up a certain continuum.

Wan-wu yi-t'i

萬物一體

Literally, the myriad things form one body. It refers to the doctrine of the "Unity of All Things", the central doctrine of the Sung and Ming thinkers of the hsing-li movement. As such, this formula represents a development of the earlier doctrine of "T'ien-jen ho-yi", with certain shifts in words and meanings, giving more emphasis to "All Things" rather than to "Heaven" and "Man". These shifts manifest the incorporation of Taoist and Buddhist ideas into a new "Confucian" world view.

Appendix II

Selected Essays and Poems: Translations


The following pages present certain selected essays and poems written by Wang Yang-ming which provide supporting evidence for the interpretation of his thought as it has been given in this work. The texts have been classified roughly in chronological order. The poems are difficult to date accurately, and most of them have never been translated into English before. On account of their content, some of the translations of the poems will resemble more prose than poetry. A list of titles of the essays translated are given here below.

- A Farewell Essay in Honour of Chan Jo-shui(1511)
- Preface to the Old Version of the Great Learning(1518)
- Preface to the Annotated Edition of the Book of Rites
(1520)
- Preface to the Collected Writings of Lu Chiu-yüan(1520)
- On the "Love the People" Pavilion(1525)
- On the "Respect the Classics" Pavilion of Chi-shan
College(1525)
- On the Reconstruction of the Shan-yin Prefectural
School(1525)

As the titles of the poems do not usually give much indication of the content, no special list will be given of them here.

A Farewell Essay in Honour of Chan Jo-shui (1511)

With the death of Yen-tzu the teaching of the Sage was lost. Tseng-tzu alone transmitted the one-pervading meaning [of the Sage's teaching] to Mencius, with whose death the transmission ceased. After another two thousand and more years, Chou [Tun-yi] and the Ch'eng brothers resumed this transmission.¹ From their time on, the more words were used, the more obscure the Way became. The better li was analysed, the more fragmented and dispersed learning became. It was more and more concerned with external pre-occupations, more and more complicated and difficult.

Mencius had feared the growing influence of Yang-tzu and Mo-tzu.² During the time of Chou Tun-yi and the two Ch'engs, Buddhism and Taoism were very widespread. Today, all scholars know how to honour Confucius and Mencius, how to despise Yang-tzu and Mo-tzu, and to keep away from Buddhism and Taoism. The Way of the Sages seems to be well understood. But, when I follow their instructions, I cannot find any Sage. Is there [today] anyone who can practise Mo-tzu's doctrine of universal love, or Yang-tzu's teaching of self-interest, or keep himself pure and undefiled as the Taoists, or investigate the mind (hsin) and the destiny (ming ) as the Buddhists? I mention these people: Yang-tzu, Mo-tzu, Taoists and Buddhists, because while their ways differed from the Way of the Sages, they did possess certain insights. But the scholars of today [spend their time] underlining words and digging into sentences in order to flatter the world. They use their cunning to pretend to agree [with others], and seek to protect one another with hypocrisy. They say that the Way of the Sages is wearisome and no longer worthy of attention. They engage merely in verbal arguments, accusing themselves with such words: "In the past, there had been scholars who were unable to understand [what they studied] after having spent their entire lives in such investigation. Now we all understand, and can explain, certain general ideas [regarding the teaching of the Sages]. This is already quite sufficient." In this way,

the teaching of the Sages has gradually been abandoned.

Thus, we can see that the greatest threat confronting us today is the [scholars'] habit of learning by heart and of seeking to understand the literal meaning of words and sentences, a habit which is all the more dangerous when the explanations given and the analyses made are of such minute details. The mistake of Yang-tzu, Mo-tzu, the Taoists and the Buddhists, all of whom studied the virtues of humanity and righteousness, and sought the meaning of human nature and destiny, but without finding the Way, was in diverging from the Mean. Our scholars of today, however, consider that humanity and righteousness are not to be studied, and that nature and destiny are useless topics. Therefore, I regard today as worthy men those who study humanity and righteousness, seek the meaning of nature and destiny, and avoid learning by heart the [detailed] explanations of words and sentences, even though they may make the same mistake as did Yang-tzu, Mo-tzu, the Taoists and the Buddhists. For they still seek in their minds-and-hearts for personal insights, and this is, after all, the necessary predisposition for learning the Way of the Sages.

As a child, I had not sought true learning. For twenty years, I meddled with perverse doctrines and heresies. Later, I began to make a study of hsin in Taoism and Buddhism. Thanks to Heaven, I acquired some insights, and continued my quest by following the teachings of Chou Tun-yi and the Ch'engs, from which I received some enlightenment. I had only one or two friends to help me in this endeavour. Time and again, I fell down only to rise up once more. Still later, I made friends with Chan Kan-ch'üan, and my determination [to seek after the ideals of Confucian sagehood] became firmer and stronger, and quite irrevocable. This shows how much I have received from Kan-ch'üan. The teachings of Kan-ch'üan insist on acquiring for oneself personal insights. The world has not been able to understand it. Those who know of it suspect it to be Ch'an Buddhism. If that be so, then I still have not

known Ch'an Buddhism. For, with such sublime ambitions as his, how can someone like Chan Kan-ch'üan not be a disciple of the Sage?....³

(WWKC 7:232a-233a)

¹For reference, see Chapter I, pp.8-10, and Chapter V, pp.179-183.

²See Mencius 7A:26; Legge, Classics, v.2, 464-465.

³Part of this paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.127.

Preface to the Old Version of the Great Learning (1518)

The essential teaching of the Great Learning is that of making the intention sincere. The work of making the intention sincere lies in the investigation of things. To make the intention sincere means, at its utmost, to rest in the highest good. To rest in the highest good requires the extension of knowledge. The rectification of the mind-and-heart (hsin) is aimed at the recovery of the pen-t'i (pristine goodness)[of the mind-and-heart]. The cultivation or perfection of self expresses the operation [of such rectification]. This is called manifesting virtue with reference to the self, and loving the people with reference to others. That is why the supreme good refers to the pen-t'i of the mind-and-heart. When this has been aroused, and when something extraneous comes in, it is always recognised by the knowing faculty of the pen-t'i. The word "intention" (yi) refers to activity; the word "things" (wu) refers to affairs. When one extends the knowledge of the pen-t'i, such activity is always good. However, unless one investigates such affairs as they arise, one cannot extend knowledge. That is why the extension of knowledge is the root of the sincerity of the intention. The investigation of things refers to the reality of the extension of knowledge. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended. When the intention is sincere, the pen-t'i [of the mind-and-heart] can be recovered. This is called "resting in the highest good."¹

Fearing that people would seek all this outside of themselves, the Sage repeats his words over and over again. If the Old Version [of the Great Learning] were to be divided into sections, as it is the case with the version [currently in use], the meaning which the Sage desired to communicate would be lost. That is why, to fail to make the intention sincere, and merely to investigate things, results in fragmentation, to neglect the investigation of things, and merely to seek the sincerity of the intention, brings about emptiness [of mind].

Besides, not being rooted in the extension of knowledge, but merely investigating things and making the intention sincere, would lead to falsehood. Fragmentation [of knowledge], emptiness [of content] and falsehood are far from the highest good.

When we take the whole text together as an entity, approaching it in an attitude of reverence, then everything falls well into perspective. When we seek to amend it by adding a commentary, we tend more and more to divide the meaning up. For fear that learning become daily further removed from the highest good, I have abolished the chapter divisions and restored the Old Version, while providing it with some side explanations. This makes it possible again for the reader to discover the mind (hsin) of the Sage, and allows all who seek to acquire this mind, to grasp the essentials [of his message]. Indeed, to extend knowledge, one must keep to the mind (hsin), and seek to awaken (wu 勿) to the extension of knowledge. That is all.

(WWKC 7:241a-241b)

¹This is a discussion of Chapter 1 of the Great Learning. A part of this first paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.122.

Preface to the Annotated Edition of the Book of Rites
(1520)

The observance of rites and of propriety (li 禮) pertains to the moral realm (li 理). Moral principles are discovered in human nature (hsing). Human nature is ordained (ming) [by Heaven]. "The ordinances of Heaven are profound and unceasing."¹ With reference to man, they are called nature (hsing). When they are expressed in rules, they are called rites. When they assume the form of pure virtue, they are called humanity (jen). When they express decisive judgements, they are called righteousness (yi). When they appear as a clear form of moral consciousness, they are called knowledge. All of these are related to human nature; all have the same moral principles. That is why humanity can be called the "substance" of the rites, righteousness is their essential attribute, and knowledge refers to clear perception.

There are three hundred rules of canonical rites and propriety (ching-li 經禮) and three thousand additional rules of demeanour (ch'ü-li 曲禮). There is not a single one which is not based on humanity, nor one which is not based on human nature. Such are the ordinances and arrangements of Heaven. Such is the very mind of the Sage.² Every one of them is likewise in accordance with the ordinances (ming) of Heaven. That is why the conquest of self and the restoration of propriety is called humanity. The exhaustive investigation of moral principles leads first to the completion of nature and then to [the discovery of] destiny (ming). The completion of nature implies that activity, demeanour and interactions with others shall all be in accordance with propriety.

The later teachings on propriety, however, perplex me. These include disputes about the articles and numbers [of sacrificial vessels] and minor items of criminal law. Those who propagate such interpretations work very hard. They make the mistake of specialising in the knowledge concerning the dregs of wine and rice, left over by the priests, and in forgetting human relationships and the

fundamental virtue of humanity. After all, "Do rites refer merely to jade and silk?"³ And, "if a man is lacking in the virtue of humanity, what can propriety or the rites do for him?"⁴

That is why the followers of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu have abandoned propriety in order to speak of human nature. They say that propriety arises out of the decline of real virtue. Hence, with the loss of humanity and righteousness, we have already fallen into the abyss of nothingness. Yet worldly scholars continue to abandon nature and to seek propriety. Saying that propriety consists merely in the knowledge of sacrificial utensils-- of their numbers, and of regulations [governing their use], they discuss the sounds and shadows of this virtue, as though these comprehend the whole meaning of propriety. We ought therefore to recognise the fact that if the rules of propriety of the ancient Sage Kings have been obscured by smoke and even reduced to ashes, the disaster cannot be attributed solely to the fires of the Ch'in dynasty.⁵

Foolhardy and without considering my limitations, I had always wanted to make an exposition of the main themes and of the foundations of the Book of Rites, and to give explanations of its contents, in order to make manifest the unity of the "roots" and "branches" of the Way (Tao). However, my lack of virtue as well as my fear that the time was not yet ripe, inhibited me. But I have often said: "Propriety is to the ceremonies what the compass and the quadrant are to the shapes of circles and squares. Without circles and squares there can be no use for quadrant or compass. Yet circles and squares are made by compasses and quadrants, without being themselves compass or quadrant. When the compass and the quadrant are applied to make circles and squares, they can be used indefinitely. But when the compass and the quadrant are not used to make circles and squares, and when the shapes of circles and squares are used as though these were themselves compasses and quadrants, then the real compass and quadrant would no longer have any usefulness. For the compass and the

quadrant are not limited to certain definite circles and squares, while circles and squares are ruled by definite compasses and quadrants."⁶ This explains the essential meaning of propriety. On this account, men of abundant virtue remain in accord with the Mean in their action and demeanour, and in their relationship with one another.⁷

Lamenting the confused state in which the canonical ritual texts found themselves, the Sung scholar, Chu Chung-hui 朱仲晦 [Chu Hsi] wanted to examine, correct and revise them, taking Yi-li 儀禮 [The Ceremonials] to be the canonical book, and the Book of Rites to be its commentary. However, he was unable to finish the work. After him, Wu Yu-ch'ing [Wu Ch'eng] decided to compile an annotated edition,⁸ without repeating anything that Chu had already said. He explained many important points, distinguishing between questions of precedence and of gravity. The opinions of both Chu and Wu are based on the instructions left behind by the Han scholars. I only regret that I was born too late to be able to hear what they said about [the importance of] seeking the fundamental unity of the rules of propriety, in order to act in accord with the principles of the rites. True, if the later Sages had written on the subject, there would then be no need to say more. But since the later Sages had not written on the subject, Wu Ch'eng's book, the Annotated Edition of the Book of Rites remains the necessary "sieve and fur-coat"⁹ and "fish-trap and bait"¹⁰ for anyone who wishes to learn the rites. It cannot, therefore, be neglected....

(WWKC 7:241b-242b)

¹The Odes, "Chou-sung" 周頌 [Chou Sacrificial Odes], Legge, Classics, v.4, 570. This is cited in the Doctrine of the Mean, ch.26. [Legge, v.1, 421].

²The preceding part of this paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.139.

³Analects 17:11; Legge, Classics, v.1, 324.

⁴Analects 3:3; Legge, Classics, v.1, 155.

⁵See Shih-chi 6:25 for the account of the burning of books in the Ch'in dynasty.

⁶Part of this paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.140.

⁷Chu's unfinished work was entitled Yi-li ching-chuan t'ung-chieh 儀禮經傳通解 [Complete Explanations of the Classic and Commentaries of Yi-li]. See SKTY 22:26.

⁸For Wu Ch'eng's book, see SKTY 21:4.

⁹Allusion to the Book of Rites. See Li-chi cheng-yi "Hst'eh-chi" 學記 [On Learning], SPPY ed., 11:5b-6a; Eng. tr. in Legge, Li Ki, v.2, 90. The reference is to sons learning their fathers' trades.

¹⁰Allusion to Chuang-tzu 26, SPPY ed., 9:6a; Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 302. See also Chapter III, n.2.

Preface to the Collected Writings of Lu Chiu-yüan(1520)

The teaching of the Sages is that of hsin(the mind-and-heart). Yao passed it to Shun, and Shun to Yü, saying: "Man's mind-and-heart is prone to error, [while] the mind-and-heart of the Way(Tao-hsin) is subtle. Remain discerning and single-minded; keep steadfastly to the Mean".¹ This was the beginning of the teaching of hsin. The "Mean" refers to the Tao-hsin. The discerning quality and singleness of mind of the Tao is called jen(humanity), which again, refers to the Mean. The teaching of Confucius and Mencius, centred on the quest for jen, transmitted to us the doctrine of discernment and of singleness of mind. However, at their time already, certain people made the mistake of seeking the Tao in external things. Tzu-kung for example, asked [the Master] if it might reside in an abundant learning,² and regarded as jen the practice of "procuring extensive benefits for the people."³ The Master, however, taught him to seek an "all-pervading unity",⁴ and to learn to judge others by what is near oneself,⁵ that is, to seek that Tao in one's own mind-and-heart. At the time of Mencius, the philosopher Mo-tzu spoke of the virtue of jen to the point of 'rubbing his head and wearing out his heels'⁶ and the disciples of Kao-tzu taught that although jen(humanity) resides inside the person, yi (righteousness) is to be found outside of the self.⁷ Such teaching greatly injured the school of hsin. Mencius attacked the opinion that righteousness was external to man, and insisted also that humanity pertained properly to the mind-and-heart. He said: "There is naught else in learning except the restoration of the lost mind-and-heart."⁸ He said also: "Humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are not infused into us from without. We possessed them from the beginning, but we do not think much of this fact."⁹

When the Way of the Sage-kings was forgotten, the art of the hegemony took over. The seekers of fame and profit pretended to act according to T'ien-li(perfect virtue), but only in order to fulfil their selfish desires. They

deceived others by saying: "Such is the 'principle of Heaven'", without realising that he who no longer has the right mind cannot possess the "principle of Heaven". Thenceforth, the mind-and-heart(hsin) and virtue(li) became two different things, and the teaching of discernment and singleness was lost. The scholars of the world became fragmentary in their learning, seeking externally for the detailed knowledge of laws, of [sacrificial] utensils and of [their] numbers, in order to understand what is called "the meaning of things"(wu-li 物理). They did not know that the mind-and-heart is itself the source of all being and virtue(li), which need not be sought outside. As for the Buddhists and the Taoists, they spoke of emptiness(sūnyatā) and the void, abandoning the regular principles of human relationships and of worldly affairs, in order to seek the understanding of the mind-and-heart, without realising that the mind-and-heart is itself the source of all principles, and cannot be attained by neglecting these very principles. In the Sung dynasty, the philosophers Chou [Tun-yi] and Ch'eng [Hao] sought again to return to the sources of inspiration in Confucius and Yen-tzu. They taught of Wu-chi (Ultimateless) and T'ai-chi (Ultimate), and confirmed these teachings with explanations of jen (humanity) and yi (righteousness), of remaining in accord with the Mean, and of the importance of tranquillity. They said that the mind-and-heart is always the same, whether active or tranquil, there being no division between the inner and the outer, between following after or going forward to meet external events.¹⁰ Thus they nearly recovered the message of discernment and singleness.

After these men, came Lu Hsiang-shan [Lu Chiu-yüan]. His teaching did not equal that of Chou and Ch'eng in purity and harmony. But it was direct, and transmitted to us the genuine teaching of Mencius. [True], certain features of his doctrine were peculiar to him, but that was due to the differences of temperament and opinion

which distinguished him from Mencius. However, in his teaching others to seek the Tao in the mind-and-heart, he remained united to that great philosopher. For this reason I used to say that Lu's teaching was the very teaching of Mencius.¹¹ The critics, however, attacked him for his disagreements with Hui-an[Chu Hsi], and accused him of having been a Ch'an Buddhist. [As we know], the Ch'an Buddhists advocated the abandonment of moral relationships and of the principles of things (wu-li), and, what is more important, forbade the service of the country and the world. Was Lu's teaching really like theirs? If the answer be Yes, he would have to be classified as a Ch'an Buddhist. But there are books in existence today which explain both Ch'an Buddhist teachings and Lu's. Scholars need merely read to find out the truth for themselves. And then, the causes of right and wrong, as well as similarities and differences, need no more debates to become known. Yet people act like a dwarf who follows the crowd in an open-air theatre, conforming to the opinions already expressed, without knowing why they are laughing or weeping. Is this not a case of honouring the ears excessively and neglecting the eyes? Are they not committing the fault of "not seeing in the mind-and-heart what is not attained in words"?¹² Talks of right and wrong, similarities and differences, often take their rise from the fact that people desire to excel, to justify themselves--their old habits and their own opinions. For this reason even worthy men are not entirely free from the desire to excel and from certain habits.

Li Mao-yüan 李茂元, the Prefect of Fu-chou 撫州, wishes to publish again the Collected Writings of Lu Chiu-yüan. He has asked me to write a preface for it. What else can I say, except to exhort the readers to seek the answer in their own minds-and-hearts, without being hindered by old habits and by private opinions? Then will the difference between coarse husks and fine rice naturally become known to the mouths of those who taste them.

¹Book of Documents, "Ta-Yü mu". See Legge, Classics, v.3, 61. See also Chapter I, n.95.

²Analects 15:2; Legge, Classics, v.1, 295.

³Analects 6:28; Legge, Classics, v.1, 194.

⁴Analects 15:2; Legge, Classics, v.1, 295.

⁵Analects 6:28; Legge, Classics, v.1, 194.

⁶Mencius 7A:26; Legge, Classics, v.2, 464-465.

⁷Mencius 6A:4-5; Legge, Classics, v.2, 397-400.

⁸Mencius 6A:11; Legge, Classics, v.2, 414.

⁹Mencius 6A:4-5; Legge, Classics, v.2, 397-400.

¹⁰Allusion to Chuang-tzu 6, "Ta Tsung-shih", 3:7b.

¹¹This is cited in Chapter V. See pp.181-182.

¹²Reference to the teaching of Kao-tzu. See Mencius 2A:2; Legge, Classics, v.2, 188.

On the "Love the People" Pavilion (1525)

When Nan Yüan-shan was appointed Prefect of Yüeh [Shao-hsing], he came to Yang-ming to ask for counsel. Yang-ming said: "Government consists in loving the people." He asked: "How does one love the people?" Yang-ming answered: "By making clear virtue manifest." He asked: "How does one make clear virtue manifest?" The answer was: "By loving the people." He pursued: "Is 'making clear virtue manifest' and 'loving the people' the same thing?" Yang-ming replied: "Yes, they are one and the same thing. Making clear virtue manifest means making manifest the nature of the 'ordinance of Heaven' (T'ien-ming). [The ordinance of Heaven] is the intelligible and brilliant principle (li) of all principles [of being and virtue] (li). All men know what being filial to their fathers, or being fraternally respectful toward their elder brothers, entails. All possess a natural understanding [of such virtues], which operates when they are required to respond to events and things. This flows from the [knowledge] in their minds-and-hearts (hsin), which is full of spiritual brilliance, and which continues through past and present without changing and without becoming obscured. This is what we call 'clear virtue'. If, at times, it suffers hindrance from unruly desires (wu-yü), the man of understanding is capable of removing the hindrance and of keeping intact the brilliance of the pen-t'i [of his hsin]. But it does not mean that anything can be added to this pen-t'i."¹

[Nan] continued: "But why should all this consist in loving the people?" I answered: "Virtue cannot make itself manifest. The man who wishes to make manifest his virtue of filial piety, must love his father. Then only will the virtue of filial piety become manifest. The man who wishes to make manifest his virtue of fraternal respect, must love his elder brother. Then only will the virtue of fraternal respect become manifest. The same is true of the virtues which govern the relationship

between sovereign and subject, husband and wife, friend and friend. This is why making clear virtue manifest must consist in loving the people, while loving the people is the way by which clear virtue can be made manifest. Thus they refer to one and the same thing." He asked: "I can see how loving the people is the way by which clear virtue is made manifest and the cultivation and perfection of self is promoted. But what has it to do with the family, the country, and the world?" I answered: "Man is the mind-and-heart (hsin) of Heaven-and-Earth. The word 'people' refers to the self. With people [i.e., 'man'], the way of the 'Three Powers' (sants'ai 三才) is complete.² This is why, when I extend affection for my father to other people's fathers, there will be affection between all the fathers and sons of the world. If I extend love for my elder brother to other people's elder brothers, there will be affection between all the elder and younger brothers of the world. The same can be said about the virtues which govern the relationships between sovereign and subject, husband and wife, friend and friend, and even about [what touches the life of] birds and beasts and trees and grass.³ There can be affection for all. And this affection will always promote the complete development of the mind-and-heart, as it makes its clear virtue manifest. This is [what I mean by] making manifest clear virtue, giving order to the family, good government to the country, and peace to the world."³

He said: "But then, what does 'resting in the highest good' consist of?"

I said: "In the past, there were men who really wanted to make their clear virtue manifest. But some of them made the mistake of falling into [the state of mental] emptiness and void, neglecting thereby the service of the family, the country, and the world, as they did not know that 'making manifest clear virtue' consists in 'loving the people'. These were the Buddhists and the Taoists. There were also others, who made the mistake of relying on power politics and on cunning dealings,

while neglecting the practice of sincere benevolence and of commiseration, as they did not know that loving the people is the way of making clear virtue manifest. These were the disciples of the Five Despots, seekers of fame and profit. Neither of these kinds of people knew the meaning of 'resting in the highest good.' In fact, the 'highest good' refers to the 'ultimate' in 'clear virtue' and in 'loving the people'. The 'ordinance of Heaven' (T'ien-ming) is full of pure goodness. Its spiritual brilliance reveals this highest virtue. This is the pen-t'i of 'clear virtue', which may also be called 'knowledge of the good' (liang-chih). The highest good clearly reveals right and wrong. It is the discerning principle (li) with which the mind-and-heart (hsin) is naturally endowed, and it cannot be increased or diminished. Increase or diminution comes through selfish motives or petty cunning, and does not pertain to the 'highest good'. However, because people do not know that the highest good resides in the mind-and-heart, they apply their cleverness to seek it outside. They thus obscure the principle of right and wrong, to the point of confusing [the two]. In this way, unruly desires are let loose and the 'principle of Heaven' (T'ien-li) is lost. The teaching of manifesting virtue and of loving the people is thus distorted. From all this, we can see 'resting in the highest good' stands in relation to 'manifesting virtue' and 'loving the people', as do the compass and quadrant to circles and squares, and what the ruler and measure do to length, as also what the scale does to weight. If circles and squares are not ruled by the compass and quadrant, they would lose their functions. If length is not governed by the ruler and the measure, it would disturb the usage. If weight is not controlled by the scale, it would lose its criterion. And if 'manifestation of virtue' and 'love of the people' do not rest in the highest good, they would lose their governing principles. This is the teaching of the Great Man. For the Great Man is he who regards Heaven-and-Earth and all things

as one body, and who can also really become one body with Heaven-and-Earth and all things."

[On hearing this], Yüan-shan sighed and said: "Really, how very simple is this teaching of the Great Man. Now I know that Heaven-and-Earth and all things are one body. Now I know that all under Heaven is one family, and the whole Middle Kingdom is one person. So long as there is yet one man who has not received the benefit [of the good rule of the Sage Kings], it will be as though I myself had pushed him into a ditch.⁴ Yi-yin must have had the same insights as my own mind-and-heart." So he named his official hall the "Love the People Pavilion" (Ch'in-min t'ang 親民堂), saying: "My official duty is to love the people. I must love my people in order to make manifest my clear virtue." So he had these words engraved on the wall to remain as a record for all to see.

(WWKC 7:247a-248b)

¹The discussion revolves around the main themes of the Great Learning.

²See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 9:2a-b; Legge, Yi King, 423-424. The reference is to the "way" of Heaven, which is allegedly that of yin and yang, the "way" of Earth, which is that of "softness" and "hardness", and the "way" of Man, which is that of humanity and righteousness.

³Part of the preceding paragraph is cited in Chapter VI. See pp.203-204.

⁴See Mencius 5A:7; Legge, Classics, v.2, 363-364. The allusion is to the words of Yi-yin, explaining his reasons for accepting the invitation of King T'ang, founder of the Shang dynasty, to serve in his government.

On the "Respect the Classic" Pavilion of
Chi-shan College (1525)

The Classics (ching 經) contain the constant Way (Tao). In Heaven, this is called "destiny" or "ordinance" (ming). Bequeathed to man, this is called human nature (hsing).¹ As the master of the person, this is called mind-and-heart (hsin). The mind-and-heart is one with nature and destiny. They are all one. This "Way" penetrates persons and things, reaching the four seas, filling up Heaven-and-Earth, going through past and present, comprehending all that exists, one with all that exists, and without changing anything. This is the constant Way. When it responds to events, it becomes compassion, sense of shame, modesty in yielding to others, and discernment of right and wrong. When it is expressed in affairs, it becomes the affection between father and son, the righteousness between sovereign and subject, the relationship between husband and wife, the order between elders and juniors, and the fidelity between friend and friend.² Thus, compassion, sense of shame, modesty, discernment of right and wrong, intimate affection, righteousness, order, and conjugal relationship, as well as fidelity, all refer to the same thing, and express the same mind-and-heart. Thus too, nature, destiny, penetration of persons and things, extension to the four seas, the filling of Heaven-and-Earth, and the continuity between past and present, as well as the comprehension of all that exists and the oneness with all that exists, but without changing anything-- all these refer to the constant Way.

Thus, this constant Way explains the movements of yin and yang, in the Book of Changes, presents the execution of decrees, ordinances and government in the Book of Documents, gives expression to human nature and emotions through songs and poems in the Odes, and lays down the rules and regulations of propriety in the ritual texts. It also expresses joy and peace in the Classic of Music, distinguishes between sincerity and hypocrisy, perversity

and orthodoxy in the Spring-Autumn Annals. Hence, everything is one-- from the movements of yin and yang, to the discernment of sincerity and hypocrisy, perversity and orthodoxy. Everything expresses the same mind-and-heart, the same nature and the same destiny-- all of which penetrates persons and things, reaching the four seas, filling up Heaven-and-Earth, joining past and present, embracing all, and identical with all that exists, without changing anything. Such are the so-called Six Classics. They are nothing other than the constant Way in my mind-and-heart. Hence, the Book of Changes gives the operations of my mind-and-heart. The Book of Documents gives the laws, ordinances and government of my mind-and-heart. The Odes give the musical and lyrical expressions of my mind-and-heart. The ritual texts give the regulations of my mind-and-heart. The Classic of Music gives the joy and peace of my mind-and-heart. The Spring-Autumn Annals give the distinction between sincerity and hypocrisy, perversity and orthodoxy of my mind-and-heart.

In using the Six Classics, the gentleman seeks the movements of yin and yang of the mind-and-heart, in order to act in accordance with them, by his reverence for the Book of Changes. He seeks the laws and ordinances and government of the mind-and-heart, in order to put them into practice, by his reverence for the Book of Documents. He seeks the musical and lyrical expressions of the emotions of the mind-and-heart, in order to give vent to these, by his reverence for the Odes. He seeks the regulations and rules of the mind-and-heart, in order to pay attention to them, by his reverence for the Book of Rites. He seeks the joy and peace of the mind-and-heart, in order to give expression to them, by his reverence for the Classic of Music. He seeks the distinctions between sincerity and hypocrisy, perversity and orthodoxy of the mind-and-heart, in order to understand their differences, by his reverence for the Spring-

Autumn-Annals.³

In the past, the Sages who were the support of the ultimate human criteria of morality, made a written record of the Six Classics for the benefit of posterity. They acted in the same way as the ancestors of a rich clan, who, fearing that their descendants might forget and scatter the accumulated wealth and become reduced to poverty and destitution, committed to writing an inventory of their property, and then, in bequeathing everything on their descendants, told them to preserve this accumulated wealth, and avoid falling into poverty. Thus, the Six Classics are the "records" of my mind-and-heart. The reality of the Six Classics is contained in my mind-and-heart, just as the real, accumulated wealth of all kinds, and each item of this, is preserved in the rich family, while the inventory book merely presents an account of their names, kinds and numbers. The scholars of the world, however, do not know how to seek the reality of the Six Classics in the mind-and-heart, and instead look for it in shadows and sounds, becoming hindered by details of words and meanings, which they proudly consider to be the Six Classics. Their behaviour resembles that of the descendants of the rich clan, who have been careless in their management of the inherited property, until all has been forgotten and lost, while they themselves are reduced to poverty and beggary. They can only point in vain to the inventory books, saying, "Here is our accumulated wealth!" What difference is there between the two courses of action?

Alas, the teachings of the Six Classics have been lost to the world for a much longer time than a day or a night! To esteem fame and profit and false teachings is to transgress the [teachings of the] Classics. To study exegesis and to remember words and sentences by heart, to become attached to superficial knowledge and inferior ideas, using these to cover the ears and eyes of the world, is to insult the Classics. To indulge in extravagant language, to resort to cunning debates, to

cover up treacherous motives, to perform wicked deeds in the world and yet occupy important positions, monopolising knowledge by claiming to be Classical scholars, is to pilfer the Classics. Such people are even ready to tear up and discard the inventory books of their wealth! How can they retain any reverence for the Classics?

The city, Yüeh, used to have a school called the Chi-shan 稽山 College, which was situated on the Wo-lung 卧龍 Hill in the west. The place had long been neglected. The Prefect, Nan Ta-chi [Yüan-shan]... ordered ...the restoration of the College, and the addition to it of a building called Tsun-ching Pavilion, saying: "When the Classics are respected, the people will prosper; when the people prosper, there can be no wickedness." Now that this building has been completed, he requested a few words from me to serve as a notice to other scholars. Not being able to decline from the honour, I have written this essay. How I wish that the scholars of the world, on hearing my words, would seek for the Way in their minds-and-hearts! Then will they know what is the meaning of reverence for the Classics (tsun-ching).

(WWKC 7:250a-251b)

¹Reference to the Doctrine of the Mean, Chapter 1.

²Part of this preceding paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.137.

³This paragraph is cited in Chapter IV. See p.138.

On the Reconstruction of the Shan-yin
Prefectural School (1525)

On account of age, the Shan-yin 山陰 Prefectural School has been in a dilapidated condition. The Education Officer, Mr. Wang Han 汪翰 and others, requested ...that it be renewed. They also asked me to write an essay to serve as notice to the students. As I was then in mourning, I declined the invitation.... [Since then], Mr. Wu Yin 吳瀛 of Loyang, who had become Prefect, renewed the request for an essay. Earlier, when I was serving an official position in Nanking, I once responded to the request of the Mayor, and wrote an essay for his school. My general message was: "In promoting scholarship, the desire of the Court is not specifically to have the students pass their civil examinations, but rather to dispose them to the learning of sagehood. Here too, by enlarging and restoring the school buildings, by providing it with boarding facilities and by introducing regulations, the authorities desire to encourage learning. [They] seek [as students] those persons who regard the entire world as their large house¹ and peaceful dwelling², to offer them [the opportunity of] the cultivation and perfection of their selves. This is the way by which both teachers and students can promote [true] learning." All those who read these words then were moved to reflection. However, I did not say much about how learning is to be carried out. I shall do so now, for our students of Yüeh.

The teaching of the Sages is that of hsin (mind-and-heart). The goal of learning is the complete development of hsin, the mind-and-heart. The teaching which Yao transmitted to Shun, and Shun to Yü, was: "Man's mind-and-heart is prone to error; the mind-and-heart of the Way (Tao-hsin) is subtle. Remain discerning and single-minded, and keep steadfastly to the Mean."³ This Tao-hsin refers to [pure] human nature--without admixture of selfish desires-- which is to be followed. It is beyond sound or odour, extremely subtle and yet very

clear, the very source of sincerity. The mind-and-heart of man, however, being tainted with selfishness, is prone to error. [Among other things], it contains the beginnings of hypocrisy. For example, while commiserating an infant falling into the well is in accordance with nature, rescuing him and bringing him back to his parents in order to gain their favour and obtain a good name in the village, comes from man's mind-and-heart. Also, to eat when one is hungry, to drink when one is thirsty, is to act in accordance with nature. But to seek for what is best in taste, to indulge one's mouth and belly, is to follow man's mind-and-heart (jen-hsin).

As to the word "single-mindedness", it refers to the intent quest for the Tao-hsin, while the word "discernment" refers to the effort of keeping oneself in singleness of purpose without becoming tainted with the jen-hsin. To have the Tao means to hold always to the Mean. To remain singly intent on the Tao-hsin is to hold steadfastly to the Mean. When one is intent on the Way (Tao), one is always in accord with the Mean while in a state of rest, and always attains harmony when aroused. Thus, when this mind-and-heart of Tao is expressed in the relationship between father and son, there is always affection; when it is expressed in the relationship between sovereign and subject, there is always righteousness; when it is expressed in the relationships between husband and wife, elders and juniors, and between friend and friend, there is always differentiation of duty, order and fidelity. Such is the harmony of due degree, the universal path of all under Heaven. It reaches the four seas without going astray, joins past and present without becoming exhausted. It is the same mind-and-heart, the same human nature, the same universal path, which is shared by all under Heaven. Shun asked Hsieh 契 to be the Grand Tutor, to teach the people, his people, the moral principles governing human relationships, which is nothing other than this universal path.⁴ At that time,

all men were gentlemen, all qualified for enfeoffment.⁵ For those who taught, taught only this teaching [of hsin], those who studied, studied only this teaching.

However, with the disappearance of the Sages, the teaching of hsin became obscure. Men practised hypocrisy, and aimed at fame and profit. They applied their efforts to the work of exegesis, to studying by heart, and to writing artful prose. With the passage of months and years, learning became more and more fragmented. Year after year, scholars copied from one another, seeking to make their mistakes appear correct. The jen-hsin became daily more prominent, and no longer knows the subtlety of the Tao-hsin. If, at times, certain persons perceived these errors, and sought to return to the roots and sources [of the teaching of the Sages], they were criticised and accused by the multitudes as disciples of Ch'an Buddhism. Alas, how, then, can one make known again the teaching of hsin?

The teaching of Ch'an Buddhism and the teaching of the Sages both seek the complete development of the mind-and-heart (hsin). There is only a slight difference between the two. The Sage seeks to develop his mind-and-heart completely, by regarding Heaven-and-Earth and all things as one body. When he finds affection in his own father-son relationship, but knows it to be lacking for others in the world, he will not consider his mind-and-heart to be completely developed. When he finds righteousness in his own sovereign-subject relationship, but knows it to be lacking for others in the world, he will not consider his mind-and-heart to be completely developed. When he finds the proper differentiation of duty in his own husband-wife relationship, when he finds order in his own elder-junior relationship, and fidelity in his relationship with friends, but knows these to be lacking for others in the world, he will not consider his mind-and-heart to be fully developed. When his own family is well fed and warmly clad, with leisure to enjoy themselves, but he knows there are others in the world,

who have not the essentials of life and these advantages, can he expect them to have affection, righteousness, differentiation of duty and fidelity[in their relationships]? This shows him that his own mind-and-heart is not yet fully developed. On that account, he sets up laws and government, and dispenses rites, music and education, in order that the completion of himself and of others may be promoted, through the full development of his mind-and-heart. When his mind-and-heart is fully developed, his family will also be in good order, his country will be well governed, and all under Heaven will enjoy peace. That is why the teaching of the Sages is nothing other than the full development of hsin(the mind-and-heart).

[On the other hand], the teaching of Ch'an Buddhism, while it also speaks of the mind-and-heart, considers the universal path, that of the mind-and-heart, as consisting merely in keeping it free from passions, without having to seek for any external fulfilment. And, when there is something amiss in the external [circumstances], it does not bother to seek for understanding from within. This is what they mean by the complete development of the mind-and-heart. However, in holding to this teaching, they hardly realise that they have fallen into the pitfall of self-interest. That is why the abandonment of human morality, and of affairs and things of the world, may perhaps contribute to the perfection of the self, but cannot promote the government of family, country and world.

The teaching of the Sages makes no distinction between the self and others, between the inner and the outer. It considers Heaven-and-Earth and all things as hsin. The teaching of Ch'an Buddhism, however, is rooted in self-interest, and cannot avoid the division between the inner and the outer. That is why it is different. Those persons today who devote themselves to the learning of hsin(mind-and-heart) and hsing(nature) would certainly be disciples of Ch'an Buddhism if they were to abandon human

morality and concern for affairs and things. But if they do not abandon human morality or concern for affairs and things, but concentrate on keeping to the mind-and-heart and on nurturing human nature, theirs would be the learning of discernment and of singleness of mind, taught by the School of Sages. How, then, can these be called disciples of Ch'an Buddhism? Unfortunately, scholars of today inherit the practice of preparing for civil examinations through the writing of artful prose, and injure their minds-and-hearts by such indulgence. They depart daily from what the Sages teach of the complete development of the mind-and-heart, until it looks as though the two will never meet. When they are presented with the teaching of the mind-and-heart and of nature, by those who wish to lead them back to the right path, they become astonished, accuse their benefactors of Ch'an Buddhism, and regard them as enemies. Is this not very lamentable?

To be ignorant of one's wrong, and yet to accuse others others of being wrong, may be due to the hindrances of old habits, and cannot be considered a fault. However, there are people who know what is wrong, who despise the mistakes of others, and yet refrain from telling them. This is plain selfishness. There are also people who are told of their mistakes, but who continue blindly without making any self-examination. These seem to despise themselves....

(WWKC 7:251b-253b)

¹Mencius 7A:36; Legge, Classics, v.2, 471.

²Mencius 2A:7; 4A:10; Legge, Classics, v.2, 204, 302. The allusion is to the virtue of jen (humanity) which Mencius considered to be the gentleman's "peaceful dwelling."

³See Chapter I, n.95.

⁴See Book of Documents, "Shun-tien" 舜典 [Canon of Shun]; Legge, Classics, v.3, 44.

⁵Reference to certain words used by Wang Mang 王莽 (6-73) when speaking of the days of the sage-kings. See Han shu, 99A:35.

Poems Written in the Company of Chan Jo-shui
on My Departure for the South¹

The waters of Chu and Ssu flow over a small area,
The waters of Yi and Lo appear to be only a thin line.
As to the three or four later philosophers--
Their qualities cannot adequately make up for their
defects.

Alas, that I should refrain from measuring my own
weakness:

Limping in my walk, yet I desire to go so far.
Repeatedly, I fall down and I rise up again,
Breathing heavily, often near the point of breaking.

On the way I met a man with the same ambition,
Together, we dare to proclaim the greatness of moral
character,
We fight for the important differences which exist
between nuances,
And encourage each other to go forward ten thousand li.
The winds and waves are rising; I suddenly lose sight
of you--
As I utter these words, my tears are vainly falling.

(WWKC 19:572b)

This same hsin and this same li we both share,²
What need is there to discern between self and other?
Whose sigh has been immortalised throughout the ages,
Lamenting his separation from the others?³

Between the vastness of Heaven and Earth,
Is there someone who does not share the same Spring?
Our thoughts of each other should serve as mutual
encouragement--

We must not let worldly affairs separate us.
Do not allow our minds to be separated by any distance,
Then will ten thousand li only serve to strengthen
our friendship.

.....

(WWKC 19:572b-573a)

Ch'i ^德₁₂ and Tao are inseparable,⁴

To make two out of one is against nature (hsing),
Confucius, the Sage, preferred to remain wordless:⁵
Inferior learning can only lead to flippant responses.

The gentleman is assiduous in little things;
Their accumulation builds up his conduct.
I recited the chapters of ceaseless searching,
And heard, with you, the meaning of destiny.
How can the solitary scholar
Find tranquillity in an empty valley?

(WWKC 19:573a)

Tranquil emptiness is not empty nothingness:
It contains within itself, the pre-stirred equilibrium.
What does it possess within itself,
Without which one would be really empty?

When the desire to see the True Self⁶ is lacking,
"Not forgetting" and "Not assisting"⁷ are no longer
genuine efforts.

The secret of mysterious transformation is profound
indeed,
With whom else can I probe it, if not with you?

(WWKC 19:573a)

¹The poems translated here are the third, fourth, fifth and sixth of the group, all of which were written in 1507. The first one of these has been cited in Chapter II. See p.65.

²Allusion to HSCC 34:8a.

³Allusion to the words of Tzu-hsia 子夏, a disciple of Confucius. See Li-chi Cheng-chu, "T'an-kung" 檀弓 pt.1, 2:10a; Legge, Li Ki, v.1, 135-136.

⁴Allusion to the Appendix of the Book of Changes. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7:18b; Legge, Yi King, 377.

⁵Analects 17:19; Legge, Classics, v.1, 326.

⁶The words used here are chen-t'i 真體 which refer to "metaphysical reality".

⁷Mencius 2A:2; Legge, Classics, v.2, 190.

Two Poems for Ch'u Ch'ai-hsü¹

Once we decided: you and I
 To probe into the Book of Changes and seek its mysteries.
 You had to travel to the Western Mountains,
 Returning only after one entire year.
 And then, on the point of this endless quest,
 We had to utter new farewells again.
 Separated by a distance of over ten thousand li
 How can we count on a future re-union?
 You ask for the secret of long life:
 I do not wish to deceive you.
 Hidden behind growths and declines,
 How perfect are the secret springs of Heaven and Earth!
 A divine abyss separates mad ardour (k'uang) and sagehood--
 Truth and error diverge on an infinitesimal point.²

To discern an infinitesimal error:
 Look into the mind-- does one seek Self, or the Others?
 The Unselfish differs from the Selfish
 As the action of Heaven from that of Man.
 How precious is this body of ours, received from parents:³
 The fulfilment of character⁴ can bring it no loss.
 May you excel in respect of moral nature,⁵
 And avoid division in your learning.
 Let not temperament lead you astray,
 And do not allow things to deceive you.

.....

(WWKC 19:573b-574a)

¹ 儲柴壚 was also known as Ch'u Huan 儲巖 (1457-1573). There are really three poems in this group. But only the first two are translated here.

²The last three lines have been cited at the very beginning of Chapter VIII. For the reference to an "infinitesimal error", see Chapter IV, n.7.

On the T'ai-chi Cave, Written for Wang Chin-chih¹

Whose intelligence made an opening for primaeva] chaos,
 To give Tao-chou² its thousand-year old form?
 To believe that the mind is no bright mirror:
 Know well that the T'ai-chi (Ultimate) was originally the
Wu-chi (Ultimateless).

To believe that the mind is no bright mirror³
 Know well that the bright mirror is smirched with dust.
 Every man carries his own little circle:
 Do not sit on the rush-mat till your mind turns to dead
 ashes.⁴

(WWKC 20:620a)

¹ 汪遵之 His other name was Wang Hsün 汪循.

² 道州 a place in Hunan, home of Chou Tun-yi.

³ This allusion again to the gathas of Hui-neng and Shen-hsiu. See Ch. III, n. 33.

⁴ Chuang-tzu 2 "Ch'i-wu lun," 齊物論 [On Making All Things Equal], 1:10a. Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, 36.

Sitting at Night³

Under the new autumn moon, I sit alone in the courtyard,
Where else between Heaven and Earth has man more freedom
and ease?

My loud songs move away with the fresh breeze
My quiet feelings flow off with spring's clear water.

The thousand sages have no secret outside hsin,
The Six Classics exist only to wipe away the mirror's dust.
As long as the dreams of Duke Chou still disturb me,
I have not awakened to the beauty of living in a poor alley.

(WWKC 20:628a)

Two Poems: Answers to Questions on liang-chih⁴

Knowledge of the good is knowledge of self,
Outside of this there is no knowledge.
Who is there without this knowledge?
Yet who is there that understands it?

Who is there that understands this knowledge?
One's pain and irritation is known only to oneself.
Should one ask others what is pain and irritation,
They will answer: what else is it?⁵

(WWKC 20:629b)

¹This poem is cited in Chapter IV, p.141.

²The last two lines of the first poem have been cited in Chapter II, together with the entire second poem. See p.74.

³This poem is cited in Chapter IV. See p.148.

⁴These poems were written around 1524.

⁵By giving the example of pain or irritation--especially related to the sense of touch-- Yang-ming sought to emphasize the experiential character of the knowledge of the good.

A Poem Written on the New Name of
Ch'ien Hsi-ming: Hsin-yü¹

A fisherman sings:

The art of fishing depends not on the eye,
but on the mind(hsin).

The mind is not on the fish, but on something
more profound.

The whales of the Northern Ocean are all very small,²
It is not enough to catch six sea-turtles at one
cast of the net.³

May I ask then, how do you fish?

Yes-- My net is the Way(Tao)

My ropes are my knowledge of the good(liang-chih)

My bait is the Great Harmony(T'ai-ho)

My boats are Heaven and Earth.

I adjust the net without thinking,

And cast it without considering the direction.

So I cannot glory in my gains,

Nor need I fear lest anything be forgotten.

(WWKC 20:628a)

¹ Ch'ien Hsi-ming 錢希明 was the father of Yang-ming's disciple Ch'ien Te-hung. He was blind since early childhood. The new name, Hsin-yü 心漁, means "fishing with the mind(hsin)". The dialogue form of this poem, as well as the theme of fishing, recalls to mind the conversation which supposedly took place between Ch'ü Yuan 屈原 (340?-278 BC) and a fisherman, some time before the poet committed suicide by drowning himself in the River Mi-lo 汨羅. See Shih-chi 84:210; Ch'ü-tz'u pu-chu [An Amended and Annotated Edition of the Songs of Ch'ü], ed. by Wang Yi, (Taipei: 1966), 7:1b.

² Allusion to Chuang-tzu 1, 1:1a; Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 29.

³ Allusion to Lieh-tzu, "T'ang wen" 易問 [Questions of King T'ang], SPPY ed., 5:5a.

On the Departure of Lin Ju-huan¹

Every man can emulate Yao and Shun¹

This saying of the ancient worthy is no deception.

Henceforth, you can go forward a thousand li in one day,

Remember that I too, was once lost and led astray.

The myriad principles have always resided in my nature,

The Six Classics serve merely as steps of the ladder.

The rustic life offers its own joy and leisure:

When will you cross the waters again, in your solitary
boat?

(WWKC 20:627b)

¹ 林汝桓. This poem was written some time after 1521.

² Mencius 6B:2; Legge, Classics, v.2, 424.

Four Poems on liang-chih Written for My Students¹

Confucius resides in every man's heart,
 Hidden by distractions of ears and eyes.
 The real image being now discovered,
 Doubt no longer [your] liang-chih.

Why, sir, are you always agitated:
 Wasting efforts in the world of sorrows--
 Know you not the Sages' occult word:
Liang-chih is your Ts'an-t'ung ch'i

In every man there is a [mariner's] compass,
 His mind-and-heart is the seat of a thousand transformations.
 Foolishly, I once saw things in reverse:
 Leaves and branches sought I outside.

The soundless, odourless moment of solitary self-knowledge
 Contains the ground of Heaven, Earth and all beings.
 Foolish is he who leaves his inexhaustive treasure,
 With a bowl, moving from door to door, imitating the beggar.

(WWKC 20:629a-b)

¹These poems, written in 1524, are cited in Chapter VII.
 See p.257.

Answers to Questions on the Tao¹

To eat when hungry,

To sleep when weary;²

Such is asceticism--

The Mystery of Mystery.³

The world cannot believe when it hears this,

It seeks immortality outside of the body.

(WWKC 20:630a)

Bidding My Students Farewell⁴

The sages' instruction lasted a thousand years:

Liang-chih is its oral transmission.

Compasses give circles and quadrants squares,

To discover pristine unity, do not wield an axe.

Without leaving the ordinary realm of actions and
movements

Go straight to the primaeval moment, before any diagram
was made,

.....

(WWKC 20:630a)

¹These poems were written around 1524.

²See Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, TSD No.2076, LI, 6:247.

³Lao-tzu, ch.1; see SPTK ed., 1a. [In the SPPY ed., the word used is yüan 淵 rather than hsüan 玄, which is given here in the poem.] Wing-tsit Chan translates it as "deep" and "profound". See Source Book, 139.

⁴This poem is cited in Chapter V. See p.183.

On Immortality¹

Immortality I merely envy
 Lacking pills and money.
 Famous mountains I have combed,
 Till my temples yield silken hairs.

 My light body fettered by smṛti
 Daily move I farther from Tao.
 Awakened suddenly in the middle age of life, I find the
 Pill of Nine Returns.

 No need for oven, nor for tripod.
 Why seek I k'an 坎 and why li 離
 No end is there, nor beginning.
 So too, for birth and death.--
 The magicians' wise words
 Only increase my doubts;
 Confusedly these old men
 Transmit arts difficult and complex,

 In me is Ch'ien(Heaven), in me K'un(Earth):
 I need not seek elsewhere--
 The thousand sages pass as shadows,
Liang-chih alone is my guide.

(WWKC 20:632b)

¹This poem is cited in Chapter VII. See pp.245-246.

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Translator's Note

There are enough books published on the subject of the life and thought of Wang Shou-jen, more commonly known as Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529), to fill a library, but these are written in Japanese or Chinese. Where European languages are concerned, the situation is quite different. There are only two English translations of Yang-ming's selected writings. The first, of Frederick Henke (1916), contains an abridged translation of the *Ch'uan-hsi lu*, thirty-six of Yang-ming's letters, and twelve of his short essays. The second is Wing-tsit Chan's *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings* (1963) which gives a complete translation of the *Ch'uan-hsi lu* together with certain official documents on social and political affairs issued by Yang-ming. This has filled a definite need since Henke's translation is incomplete, very faulty, and lacks the support of critical scholarship. However, on account of the wealth of biographical material and especially philosophical content contained in Yang-ming's private letters, students of Yang-ming must still refer to Henke's translation, which was republished even after the appearance of Wing-tsit Chan's book, under the title, *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming* (1964).

These considerations have led me to the translation of all of Yang-ming's letters with sufficient philosophical content to justify the effort, and to offer critical annotations and references where necessary. Sixty-seven letters have therefore been chosen, of which thirty-one had never been translated before. Simple subject-headings have also been given for each letter. A bibliography of reference books used is included at the end.

Letters chosen for translation have all been taken out of the *Wang Wen-ch'eng kung ch'üan-shu* [Complete Works of Wang Yang-ming] of the Ssu-pu ts'un⁴k'an [Four Libraries Series] edition, which is a reproduction of the 1572 edition compiled by Hsieh T'ing-chieh. It contains a total of some 160 letters - including the seven that make up *Ch'uan-hsi lu*, part 2.¹ They were written to about one hundred people: some letters were written to several persons, others to individuals whose names have not been given. A few, written to Yang-ming's superior officials, are concerned with details of practical administration

or military campaigns. Many are of a friendly nature, with little philosophical content. Several were written to various members of his family, giving either news or practical instructions. All these extant letters were written between 1503 and 1528,² the year of his death. We have no letters for the years 1504-6, nor for 1510.

All of the letters translated were written between 1503 and 1527, and so cover a span of twenty-four years. No letters for the year 1520 have been translated, although two short ones are extant.

Before making this selection for translation, other existing selections, such as Liu Tsung-chou's *Yang-ming ch'uan-hsin lu* [Record of Yang-ming's Transmission of Truth] from *Liu-tzu ch'uan-shu yi-pien* [Supplement to Master Liu's Complete Works],³ Huang Tsung-hsi's *Ming-ju hsieh-an* [Philosophical Records of Ming scholars],⁴ and the earlier Sun Ch'i-feng's *Li-hsueh tsung-chuan* [Orthodox Transmission of the 'School of Principle']⁵ were examined. Other available collections of Yang-ming's writings, such as *Yang-ming wen-lu* [Collected Writings of Yang-ming] of 1536,⁶ Shih Pang-yao's *Yang-ming hsien-sheng chi-yao* [Collection of Important Works by Master Yang-ming] originally of 1636,⁷ Ni Hsi-en's *Hsiang-chu Wang Yang-ming ch'uan-shu* [Complete Works of Wang Yang-ming, Fully Annotated], as⁸ well as the *Yang-ming ch'uan-shu* of Ssu-pu pei-yao [Essentials of Four Libraries] edition,⁹ have also been consulted.

In his article, 'Tegami yori mitaru Ō Yōmei no shiso daiyō' [The Essentials of Wang Yang-ming's Thought as Seen in His Letters],¹⁰ the Japanese scholar, Yasuda Kiyoshi, has pointed out for us the importance of studying Yang-ming's letters in order to attain a better appreciation of his philosophy. Referring first to the fact that Yang-ming's friends and contemporaries, as well as later Ming scholars, have offered varying ideas of what they consider to be the philosopher's 'essential thought', he goes on to indicate six recurring themes, which, he contends, have been important in the evolution of Yang-ming's ideas. Five of these themes are taken from one early letter, that of 1509, written to his students at Ch'eng-chou,¹¹ shortly after the end of his exile. They show Yang-ming's concern for the all-pervading

universal truth or wisdom, his preoccupation with the cultivation of the inner self and the contrary attraction of official service, his disapproval, however, of working for motives of gaining reputation and profit, and his conviction of the need for mutual encouragement and admonition as a help to those seeking the same moral goals. The sixth theme is taken from a letter, written in 1518, to Wang's younger brothers.¹² There, he explains how the minds of sages and those of the ordinary man are similarly prone to error, the difference being that the sages know how to correct and avoid faults. Yasuda then refers extensively to other letters where these themes are also present and traces especially the gradual development of Yang-ming's most important contribution to philosophy – the idea of *liang-chih*, and, even more, that of *extending liang-chih* – which pervades the letters of 1527 and 1528. He also explains how the letters of 1527 provide a background for a better understanding of the theory of 'Four Axioms', expounded that same year, and given in *Ch'uan-hsi lu*, part 3.¹³

An example of how the letters of Yang-ming provide further light on ideas expressed in the *Ch'uan-hsi lu* and in the *Nien-p'u* [Chronological Biography] is shown in Yang-ming's answer to his student, Liu Yüan-tao, who desired to retire to a life of contemplation in the mountains. The *Ch'uan-hsi lu* gives only a few sentences:

Liu Chün-liang wanted to engage in sitting in meditation in the mountains. The teacher said, 'If you seek tranquillity because you feel disgusted with external things, you will only build up an air of arrogance and laziness. But if you are not disgusted with external things, it will be good for you to cultivate yourself in a quiet place.'¹⁴

The *Nien-p'u* states:

Liu [Chün-liang] asked about retiring into the mountains for the cultivation of tranquillity . . . He [Yang-ming] told Liu that the gentleman's learning regarding the cultivation of the mind resembles the art of healing of a good physician, who measures the gravity of the disease and the temperature of the patient, in order to decide on the use of medication. The essential need is to remove the disease. He has no fixed prescription in the beginning, which must be followed by everyone. If a person is merely intent upon retiring into the mountains, abandoning the affairs of the world, and giving

up thought and worry, he [Yang-ming] fears that when a disposition for emptiness has once been developed, even if the person wishes no longer to fall into such emptiness, he can no longer prevent it.¹⁵

The letter written to Liu, which is much longer, is Letter 44 in this work. A comparison of the three passages will show that Yang-ming regards quiet meditation as one of the means of self-cultivation, but not as the only or absolute means. The emphasis he makes is always on flexibility and judgment. The parable of the good physician is thus important. But that is not given in *Ch'uan-hsi lu*. The *Nien-p'u* refers briefly to the parable, but does not explain the issue sufficiently to show the recognition by Yang-ming of the role of quiet meditation in self-cultivation, as well as the need for flexibility of judgment in making use of this means.

The translation of certain philosophical terms, especially those used most frequently by Wang Yang-ming, has posed a real problem. I realise that Professor Wing-tsit Chan and others have made a great contribution in this regard by their lucid translations of Neo-Confucian texts. However, to preserve the richness and ambiguity of meaning inherent in the Chinese characters, I have preferred to transliterate certain key-words, such as *hsin* [mind or heart, principle and source of all human activity], *liang-chih* [man's inborn capacity for knowing and doing the good, that which, when developed to the utmost, unites him with heaven and earth and all things], and so on. I have included in this book a brief Selection of Terms – 'On the Interpretation of Certain Key-words' – endeavouring thereby to point out the hidden richness of the words themselves as well as the difficulty which every translator of Chinese philosophical texts encounters.

Finally, the translations presented here have been arranged, as much as possible, in chronological order. This has been done in accordance with the wishes of Yang-ming himself, who desired that readers in later ages should be able to discern the development of his thought.¹⁶

The translator hopes that this work will serve to promote greater knowledge and understanding of the philosopher who has exerted such an important influence on East Asian thought for the past five hundred years, and who also has much to say to the Western reader of the twentieth century.

- 1 *Wang Wen-ch'eng kung ch'uan-shu*, Ssu-pu ts'un³k'an double-page lithograph edition (hereinafter referred to as *WWKC*). See Wing-tsit Chan (trans.), *Instructions for Practical Living and other Neo-Confucian Writings* (1963), pp. 88 ff. (hereinafter referred to as *Instructions*).
- 2 An important letter written by Yang-ming shortly before his death in 1528 was that to Nieh Wen-yu (1487-1563). It has been included in *Ch'uan-hsi lu*, pt 2. See Chan's *Instructions*, pp. 1172 ff.
- 3 Liu's dates are 1578-1645. The edition used is of 1850.
- 4 Huang's dates are 1610-95. Ssu-pu pei-yao edition.
- 5 Sun's dates are 1584-1675.
- 6 Library of Congress microfilm no. 2015.
- 7 Ssu-pu ts'un³k'an edition.
- 8 Published in Shanghai by Shao-yeh shan-fang, 1935. The edition used was of 1568.
- 9 This is the same as *WWKC*, but contains many mistakes.
- 10 In *Tetsugaku Kenkyū* [Philosophical Studies], vol. 380 (1949), pp. 665-82.
- 11 See Letter 3 in this work.
- 12 See Letter 28 in this work.
- 13 See Chan's *Instructions*, p. 243.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- 15 *WWKC*, 34:961-2.
- 16 See Preface by his student, Ch'ien Te-hung (1496-1574), in *WWKC*, p. 12.

ASIAN PUBLICATIONS SERIES NO. I

The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming

Calligraphy on the frontispiece may be translated as 'The thousand sages are all passing shadows; *liang-chih* alone is my master' (from a poem by Wang Yang-ming). Calligraphy is by Ku Yu-hsiu of the University of Pennsylvania. The large seal was carved by Ch'i Pai-shih.

The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming

translated and annotated by Julia Ching

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY PRESS

CANBERRA 1971

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Library of Congress Catalog Card no. 76-148301

National Library of Australia Card no. and

ISBN 0 7081 0127 5

For my mother

Acknowledgments

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Liu Ts'un-yan, Dr J.D. Frodsham, and Dr K.H.J. Gardiner for their kind direction and generous help without which this work could not have been completed; Professor A.L. Basham for his constant encouragement; Miss Ludmilla Panskaya for her kind assistance and valuable suggestions; Mrs Audrey Marks and the typing staff of the Asian Studies Faculty for typing the manuscript, as well as the staffs of the National Library of Australia and the Australian National University Library for help given.

Finally, thanks are due to the Publications Committee of the Asian Studies Faculty, Australian National University, for assistance in the publication of this work.

Australian National University
Canberra, 1970

J.C.

Events in the life of Wang Yang-ming

- 1472 Birth of Wang Yang-ming at Yu-yao on 31 October.
- 1482 The family moves to Peking.
- 1484 Death of Yang-ming's mother.
- 1488 Journey to Kiangsi to get married.
- 1489 Visit to the philosopher Lou Liang (1422-91).
- 1492 Yang-ming passes provincial examinations.
- 1499 Yang-ming obtains the *chin-shih* degree and serves in minor official posts.
- 1501 Visits to many Buddhist and Taoist monasteries in Anhwei.
- 1502 Retirement to the 'Yang-ming Cave' and practice of Taoist cultivation. (several months).
- 1504 Return to official life and Confucian principles.
- 1505 Yang-ming begins to receive disciples as a Confucian teacher.

- 1506 Flogging and imprisonment as a result of the memorial intervening on behalf of some officials imprisoned unjustly by the powerful eunuch Liu Chin.
- 1507 Exile to Kweichow.
- 1508 Enlightenment.
- 1509 Yang-ming begins to speak of the unity of knowledge and action.
- 1510 Return from exile, to Kwangsi and Peking.
- 1511 Minor official posts and teaching of philosophy in Peking, Nanking, and other places.
- 1516 Yang-ming appointed Censor-in-Chief and Grand Co-ordinator of the border regions of Kiangsi, Kwangtung, and Fukien.
- 1517-18 Pacification of bandits and re-organisation of local government.
- 1518 Publication of two works: 'The Old Version of the *Great Learning*' and 'The Definitive Views of Chu Hsi, Arrived at Late in Life'. Hsüeh K'an, Yang-ming's disciple, publishes the first collection of his recorded conversations with the Master, the *Ch'uan-hsi lu*.
- 1519 Suppression of the rebellion of Prince Ch'en-hao. Southern expedition of the Emperor Wu-tsung (r. 1506-21).
- 1520 Emperor Wu-tsung returns to Peking.
- 1521 Yang-ming begins to speak of the 'extension of *liang-chih*'. Accession of the Emperor Shih-tsung (r. 1522-66). Honours accorded to Yang-ming.
- 1522 Death of Yang-ming's father.
- 1522-7 Six years of teaching in retirement.
- 1527 Yang-ming recalled to active service to suppress rebellions in Kwangsi. Teaching of the 'Four Maxims'.
- 1528 Pacification and re-organisation of Kwangsi. Yang-ming's health deteriorates steadily. Homebound journey.
- 1529 Death of Yang-ming at Nan-an, Kiangsi, on the way home, on 9 January.

Abbreviations

CTYL	<i>Chu-tzu yü-lei</i>
CWKW	<i>Hui-an hsien-sheng Chu Wen Kung wen-chi</i>
HSCC	<i>Hsiang-shan ch'üan-chi</i>
MJHA	<i>Ming-ju hsüeh-an</i>
SPPY	Ssu-pu pei-yao edition
SPTK	Ssu-pu ts'un-k'an edition
TSD	Taisho shinshu daizokyo
WWKC	<i>Wang Wen-ch'eng-kung chüan-shu</i>
<i>Classics</i>	<i>The Chinese Classics</i>
<i>Instructions</i>	<i>Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings</i>
<i>Li Chi</i>	<i>Li Chi, Book of Rites [The Li Ki]</i>
<i>Reflections</i>	<i>Reflections on Things at Hand</i>

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On Prayers for Rain

I. TO PREFECT T'UNG,
 ON ASKING FOR RAIN¹

1503

Yesterday, your two subordinates, Yang and Lee, came with your letter, and inquired about the art of making rain.

... The Way of Heaven is hidden and distant. How can an ordinary mortal probe and understand it? However, your concern for the welfare of the people, and your diligence on their behalf, are so sincere, that I must not neglect sending you a word of reply.

Confucius once said, 'I have already been praying for a long time.'² The prayer of a gentleman is not limited to the moments spent in formal prayer for Yüeh, but refers especially to daily conduct. You have been governor in Yueh for several years already. All that pertains to removing evils for the people, promoting their welfare and benefit, can be called 'prevenient'

prayer, and need not wait until today. But the summer drought is still with us, and the rain has not yet come. Is there perhaps some reason for this? In the ancient times, during periods of drought, the ruler would eat less and refrain from enjoying music, re-examine judicial cases, and decrease taxation. He would pay special attention to sacrifices, to inquiring about the sufferings of the people, and take the blame for the drought on himself – distributing alms, and praying for the people to the spirits of the mountains, rivers, of earth and harvest. That was why there were sacrifices begging Heaven for rain, and proclamations of self-criticism and examination, and vows for self-reform. What historical records referred to by saying, 'King T'ang [d. 1753 B.C.?] blamed himself for six things',³ what the *Book of Rites* said: 'During the great summer sacrifice for rain to God, all the instruments of music are employed',⁴ what the *Spring-Autumn Annals* recorded: 'In autumn, during the ninth month, there was a great sacrifice for rain'⁵-all belong to this category. I had heard of these ancient practices, but never of magic or charms for obtaining rain. Only later magicians practised these from time to time. When these were men of integrity and perseverance, then, even if their actions were not always in accordance with the Mean, but differed from the ordinary, they were still able to obtain rain. All such reports, however, come to us from miscellaneous accounts of minor importance and not from the Classics. The gentleman tends to consider these happenings as coincidences. As to our present-day priests and sorcerers, many of these are little different from the loafers and ruffians of the market places. How can we therefore expect them to rebuke the thunder, to call forth wind and rain?

I would rather advise you to come out and ⁱⁿcontemplate yourself at the official hall, to stop whatever business is not urgent, open the door for the reform of self, to set aright cases of injustice, forbid luxury and sophistication, strengthen your sincerity and purify your mind, reproaching yourself, and praying on behalf of the people of the eight counties [of Yueh],⁶ the spirits of the mountains, rivers, of the earth and grain. And, if the people wish to employ the service of priests to pray for them, let them do so without interference, but also without your sponsorship, and without your relying on them. For, with your

style of conduct, you have certainly nothing to be ashamed of in front of the spirits. And if, facing such events, you examine yourself even more, leading your subordinates to beg sincerely for rain, then, even though Heaven sends us drought, there will be no harm. If only human affairs can be regulated, some response from Heaven ought to come within ten days. And, on my part, though I am no different from the common people, if I did know the art of obtaining rain, how would I dare to sit back and watch the people suffer without doing anything about it? . . . In one or two days, I too shall pray at Nan-cheng,⁷ to help your fervour. If only you beg with your whole heart for the people, without allowing yourself to be deceived by false teachings, and without anxiety to obtain a better reputation, then, although the way of Heaven is distant, it has never failed to respond to a case of such fervour.

WWKC, 21:634-5

¹ Acc. to Hsiao Liang-kan *et al.* (comp.), *Shao-hsing fu-chih* [Shao-hsing Prefecture Gazetteer] pub. 1586, 26:11b. T'ung Cheng was Prefect of Shao-hsing.

² *Analects (Lun-yu)*, VII:34. See James Legge (trans.), *The Chinese Classics* (1893, reprinted by Hong Kong University Press, 1960; referred to hereinafter as *Classics*), vol. I, p. 206. I have modified Legge's translation nearly every time, but still refer to him in the footnotes to show that I have consulted him on every occasion.

³ Although 'historical records' are mentioned, this line is not found in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi*. The reference, rather, is to Wang Ch'ung (b. A.D. 27) and Hsun-tzu (fl. 298-238 B.C.). See 'Kan-hsü' ['Fictitious Influences'] in Huang Hui (ed.), *Lun-heng chiao-shih* [Annotated Version of Wang Ch'ung's *Lun-heng*], Taipei, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 237-8 and Wang Ch'ung, *Lun-heng* [Balanced Inquiries], translated by A. Forke, *Lun-heng* (1962), vol. 2, pp. 183-4. The six things are enumerated in *Hsun-tzu*, 'Ta-lueh' [Miscellaneous Items], SPPY ed., 19:9b. See Herman Koster's German translation, *Hsun-tzu* (1967), 27:354.

⁴ *Book of Rites (Li-chi)*, 'Yueh-ling' (Proceedings of Government in Different Months). See Legge (trans.), *Li Chi, Book of Rites* (1885, reprinted by University Books, New York, 1967, hereinafter referred to as *Li Chi*), vol. 1, pp. 273-4.

⁵ The great rain sacrifice often took place 'in autumn, during the ninth month', as, for example, during the sixth and the sixteenth year of Duke Chao, the first year of Duke Ting. See *Spring-Autumn Annals (Ch'un-ch'iu)*, Legge's *Classics*, vol. v, pp. 607, 661, 742.

⁶ These counties were: Shan-yin, K'uai-chi, Hsiao-shan, Chu-chi, Yü-yao, Shang-yü, Sheng, and Hsing-ch'ang. See *Che-chiang t'ung-chih* [Chekiang Gazetteer], Shanghai reprint, 1934, 1:114 and *Ming-shih* [Ming Dynastic History], K'ai-ming ed., 1937, ch. 44:100.

⁷ The name of a place east of K'uai-chi in modern Chekiang, with a temple dedicated to King Yu. See *Che-chiang t'ung-chih*, 1:210-14. Also see Yang-ming's prayer for rain in *WWKC*, 25:723.

2. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS ABOUT
SPIRITS AND IMMORTALS

1508

You asked me whether spirits and immortals exist. Thrice you have written and I have not replied, not because I do not wish to reply, but because I did not know what to say! Yesterday, your younger brother came, and desired very much to get an answer. Actually, ever since the age of eight I have been interested in such matters. More than thirty years have passed since then. My teeth are becoming unsteady, several of my hairs have turned white, my eyes cannot see beyond a foot's distance, and my ears cannot hear beyond the distance of ten feet. Moreover, I am often bedridden with sickness for entire months. My need of medicine as well as my capacity for it is growing. These are all the results of my interest in spirits and immortals. But people who know me still say glibly that I can yet attain this Way of Immortality, and you too, having heard such talk and believing it readily, have asked me about it! Since there is no way out for me, I shall say a few foolish words to you about it.

In ancient times, there were perfect men, of genuine virtue and mature *tao*, who lived in harmony with *yin* and *yang* and the four seasons, away from the world and its vanities. Concentrating their sperm [*ching*] and their energies, they moved between Heaven and Earth, seeing and hearing things which were beyond the scope of ordinary experience. Such were Kuang-ch'eng-tzu¹ who lived to the age of one thousand five hundred years without weakening his powers, Li Po-yang² who lived through the dynasties of Shang and Chou, and who went west through the Han-ku Pass. These men really existed. To deny that would be to deceive you. However, to correspond to the *tao* in our breathing and movements, to keep our energy and bones intact, refer to a natural endowment received at the beginning of our existence. This is the work of Heaven, not what human force can compass.

Stories concerning men of later generations who could ascend with their families into the air, transform objects, borrow corpses and return to life again, refer to deceptive and strange things

belonging to the realm of secret magic and ingenious arts – what Yin-wen-tzu³ called illusion, what the Buddhists call heterodoxy. If such actions are called real, you would be equally deceived. After all, words cannot describe what lies between existence and non-existence. One can understand after long reflections and deep self-cultivation. Before having reached the proper state, it is not possible to force such knowledge.

However, we Confucians also have our own doctrine of immortality. Yen-tzu⁴ died at the age of thirty-two, and yet still lives today. Can you believe this? Men of later generations such as Shang-yang-tzu⁵ possessed certain skills, which could not be called the real *tao*. As to Bodhidharma [fl. 460–534?]⁶ and Hui-neng [638–713],⁷ they would be closer to the *tao*. But we can still not be sure of this. If you wish to hear more about this doctrine, you need to retire into the mountains or forests for thirty years, perfect your ears and eyes, unify your mind and ambition, keep your breast free from the least particle of dust. And then you can discuss this Way. But at present, you are still far from the Way of Immortality. – Please forgive my bold words!

WWKC, 21:638

¹ A legendary immortal who supposedly lived in the K'ung-t'ung mountain and was visited by the Yellow Emperor who asked for his advice on the way of immortality. See 'Tsai-yu' [To Put the World at Peace] in *Chuang-tzu*, SPPY ed., 4:18a; English translation by Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (1968), pp. 118–20.

² One of the names given to Lao-tzu in *Shih-chi* [Historical Records of Ssu-ma Ch'ien]. See Erh-shih-wu shih series, K'ai-ming ed., 63:180–1.

³ A philosopher of late Chou times who studied under the logician Kung-sun Lung (b. 380 B.C.?). See the book ascribed to him, *Yin-wen-tzu*, 2 vols., SPTK ed.

⁴ Favourite student of Confucius.

⁵ Ch'en Chih-hsu, alias Shang-yang-tzu. He compiled the *Shang-yang-tzu Chin-tan ta-yao* [Essentials of the Golden Pill] in late 1335. See Liu Ts'un-yan, 'Ming-ju yü tao-chiao' (Taoism and Neo-Confucianists in Ming times) in *Hsin-ya hsueh-pao* [New Asia Journal], vol. 8 (1967), p. 4.

⁶ The supposed first patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China (fl. A.D. 420–79). See Tao-hsüan, *Hsiü kao-seng chuan* [Supplement to the Biographies of Eminent Monks], TSD No. 2060, vol. 50, p. 551.

⁷ Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China who started the Southern School of Sudden Enlightenment. He lived supposedly from A.D. 605 to 706. See Tao-yüan, *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*, SPTK ed., 3:14a–16a.

3. TO STUDENTS AT
CH'ENG-CHOU¹

1509

Since the tradition of learning has been abandoned, few people seek the *Tao* [Way]. A man of Ch'i living in the midst of a multitude from Ch'u is very easily swayed by temptation.² Except for men of heroic virtue, very few remain firm and unchanged. True, there are some among our modern scholars and officials who know a little about seeking the Way, but they all show off their attainments before having acquired genuine virtue, drawing to themselves criticisms in the world, and therefore often toppling down for lack of solid foundation and becoming even a hindrance to this Way. You, my friends, ought to take that to be a warning. Detaching yourselves from wordly fame, you must apply real effort in your innermost selves. What I said earlier in the temple about sitting meditatively was not meant for the sake of your attaining *samadhi*.³ Rather, since we are usually distracted by many objects and affairs, and do not know how to take care of ourselves, I wished to recommend such a remedy to our lack of learning by an effort of the recollection of the mind. [Ch'eng] Ming-tao [1032--85] had said, 'When one begins to study, one ought to know where to apply one's effort; when one has already studied, one ought to know where one has acquired strength'.⁴ You, my friends, ought to apply your efforts here, in order to make progress. Later, you will see where you have acquired strength.

Study requires directing the whip towards the inner self.⁵ 'The way of the gentleman is hidden but becomes more prominent every day'.⁶ Although reputation and profit imply a greater or lesser degree of purity and impurity, nevertheless they manifest the same desire for gain. 'Modesty brings its reward'.⁷ 'Seek not to be different from others, but to be in agreement with *li* [moral principle or reason]'.⁸ These words should be written on the wall, to be looked at many times by the eyes. Our learning to write examination essays will not prevent our pursuit of knowledge (or virtue), but may injure our firm determination [to become sages].⁹ If you proceed systematically in your work,

according to what we agreed upon the other day, neither will interfere with each other. As it has been said, when we know how to sprinkle water on the floor and sweep it, how to answer the door and respond to the questions of other people,¹⁰ the refined meanings of knowledge will have entered our spirits.¹¹

WWKC, 4:170-1

- ¹ These students included Chi Yuan-heng, Chiang Hsing, and Liu Kuan-shih. See 'Nien-p'u' in *WWKC*, 32:911. Ch'eng-chou is in the present province of Hunan.
- ² This refers to the parable given in *Mencius*, comparing the difficulty of keeping one's own convictions alone to that of a man learning the language of Ch'i while living in the midst of people speaking that of Ch'u. His lone teacher, a man of Ch'i, cannot help him very much if the men of Ch'u are continually shouting into his ears. See *Mencius*, 3B:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 275.
- ³ The Chinese work *ting* is a translation of the Sanskrit *samādhi* rendered into English by Derk Bodde as 'intent meditation'. See his translation of Fung Yu-lan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (1953), vol. 2, p. 395.
- ⁴ Ch'eng Ming-tao was the other name of Ch'eng Hao. This saying comes from *Erh-Ch'eng ch'üan-shu* [Complete Works of the two Ch'engs], *Yi-shu* [Surviving Works], SPPY ed., 12:20, *Yi-shu*, *Wai-shu*, *Ts'ui-yen*, *Ming-tao wen-chi*, and *Yi-ch'uan wen-chi* are all from *Erh-Ch'eng ch'üan-shu*.
- ⁵ A famous sentence of Ch'eng Hao, advocating the direction of our efforts inwards, *Yi-shu*, 11:11b. See also Chiang Yung, *Chin-ssu lu chi-chu* [Collected Commentaries on Chu Hsi's *Chin-ssu lu*], SPPY ed., 2:11b, and Wing-tsit Chan's translation, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (1967; hereinafter referred to as *Reflections*), p. 58. Chan translates this: 'In learning it is only necessary to drive with a whip, as it were, so that one may get nearer to the inside and be genuinely concerned with one's internal life'. The expression *pien-p'i* (drive with a whip), according to Chu Hsi, was a colloquial expression in Lo-yang, where the Ch'eng brothers lived. The driver of a carriage had to whip people to make them get off the streets into the houses. See *Chu-tzu yü-lei* [Classified Sayings of Master Chu], 1473 ed. (Taipei reprint, 1962), 45:3a. This book will be abbreviated as *CTYL*.
- ⁶ *Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung)*, 33:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 431.
- ⁷ *Book of Documents (Shu-ching)*, 'Ta-Yu mu' ['Counsels of the Great Yu']. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 65.
- ⁸ *Mencius*, 6A:7, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 430.
- ⁹ Ch'eng Yi (1033-107), *Wai-shu* [Other Works], 11:5a. See *Chin-ssu lu chi-chu*, 7:6b; also Chan's *Reflections*, p. 199.
- ¹⁰ Confucians and Neo-Confucians have always esteemed manual work and training in the ways of ordinary life as part of their program of education, following the instance given in the *Analects*, 19:12, (Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 343). Ch'eng Hao had said, 'Even sprinkling and sweeping the floor and dealing with and answering questions belong to the realm of what exists before physical form, for in principle there is neither great nor small.' See *Yi-shu*, 13:1b.
- ¹¹ Allusion to *Book of Changes (Yi-ching)*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 2, James Legge (trans.), *The Yi King*, Oxford, 1822, Delhi reprint, 1966 (referred to hereinafter as *Yi King*), p. 390; also *Yi-shu*, 4:4b, 15:8a.

On Learning

4. TO HSÜ CN'ENG-CHIH¹

1511

. . . The perfection of self and the government of men are not actually two different things. Administrative duties are complicated, but remain within the realm of learning. I believe that you, my Ch'eng-chih, benefit much from every situation

While reflecting recently upon your efforts to make progress in learning, I had the slight impression that you are over-exerting yourself. Former scholars have said that while the earnest determination to attain the *tao* [Way] is sincerity, too much haste and impatience in seeking it would make of it instead selfishness.² This cannot be left unattended to. In our daily life, is there anything that is not the functioning and movement of *T'ien-li* [Principle of Heaven]? If we only guard this mind and not allow it to become dispersed, the principles of reason will mature themselves. This is what Mencius meant when he said: 'Let not [the mind] forget its work or assist [the growth of the vast, overflowing *ch'i*]',³ and also: '[The gentleman] advances in learning with deep earnestness, [wishing] to get hold of it in himself'.⁴ True, how can the work of learning be left to move slowly? And yet, I fear that too much effort to force and exert ourselves, even if it brings progress, may not allow us to have security

WWKC, 4:171

¹ His private name was Hsü Shao-ch'eng, and he was, like Yang-ming, a native of Yü-yao. See *Shao-hsing fu-chih*, 41: 48a-b.

² A paraphrase of one of the sayings of the Ch'eng brothers, identified by Chu Hsi as Ch'eng Yi. See *Yi-shu*, 2A:1a and *Chin-ssu-lu chi-chu*, 2:7b, Chan's *Reflections*, p. 48.

³ *Mencius*, 2A:2. Earlier in this passage, Mencius had spoken of the 'vast, overflowing *ch'i*', or *hao-jan-chih-ch'i*, as a certain moral rectitude in one's character which can somehow unite the gentleman to Heaven and Earth. Later in the passage, he gave the parable of a foolish man who seeks to assist the growth of his crop by 'pulling up' his plants, only to cause them all to wither away. For Legge's translation of this passage, see vol. II, pp. 190-1.

⁴ *Mencius*, 4B:14, *ibid.*, p. 322.

On the Mind (*hsin*) as a Mirror

5. TO HUANG TSUNG-HSIEN¹ AND
YING YUAN-CHUNG²

1511

The heart and mind of the sage cannot tolerate the least particle of dust and has naturally no need of polishing. The heart and mind of the average man, however, resembles a spotted and dirty mirror which needs thorough polishing to have all its dust and dirt removed. Then will the tiniest speck of dust become visible, and only a light stroke will wipe it away, without our having to spend much energy.³ At this stage, one already knows the substance of perfect *jen* [virtue]: When the dirt is not yet removed, the mirror may still have certain bright spots, which allow us to detect falling particles of dust and to rub them off. But whatever accumulates on top of the dirt and dust cannot even be seen. This shows why learning benefits from hard and diligent work.⁴ Please do not doubt my words because of the difficulties involved. Human nature tends to prefer ease and dislike difficulty; it is naturally affected by selfish desires and habits. But when we see through this, naturally we no longer find it difficult. There were men in ancient times who gladly risked their lives ten thousand times, on account of this realisation. Formerly, we did not understand the meaning of directing efforts inwards; and so we could say nothing of this work. Now that we realise this, we fear being dragged by love of ease and hate of difficulty into Ch'an Buddhism.⁵ Yesterday we discussed the difference between Confucianism and Buddhism. Ming-tao had already disclosed eighty or ninety per cent of the truth when he said that [the Buddhists] straighten their interior disposition by reverence, but do not perfect their exterior conduct by righteousness, and therefore, in the end, do not even succeed in straightening their interior disposition by reverence.⁶

WWKC, 4:171-2

¹ Huang Tsung-hsien (1477-1551), private name Huang Wan, literary name Chiu-an. He met Yang-ming and Chan Jo-shui in 1510, and later became Yang-ming's disciple, and also relative through the marriage of his daughter to Yang-ming's son. Huang rose to the official rank of Minister of Rites. In later life, he was much displeased with the excesses of some of Yang-ming's disciples, and wrote the controversial *Ming-tao p'ien* [Elucidation of the Way] to criticise them. For his biography, see Huang Tsung-hsi,

Ming-ju hsueh-an [Philosophical Records of Ming Scholars], SPPY ed., (hereinafter referred to as *MJHA*), 13:5b-6b and *Ming-shih*, 197:470.

² Private name Ying Liang. For his life, see *WWKC*, 33:911; see also *Ming-shih*, 283:699.

³ Comparison of the mind or heart to a mirror represents a rich tradition in Chinese thought going back to the philosophers Chuang-tzu (about 4th century B.C.) and Huai-nan-tzu (d. 122 B.C.). But Yang-ming must have had in mind especially the account in the *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching* [Platform Scripture of the Sixth Patriarch] concerning the *gathas* of the two Buddhist monks, Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng, the later Sixth Patriarch (see TSD, No. 2008, 48:348-9). Yang-ming's use of the metaphor manifests a preference for Shen-hsiu's *gatha*. See Wing-tsit Chan's translation, *The Platform Scripture* (1963) and also Paul Demiéville's 'Le miroir spirituel', *Sinologica*, 1 (1948), pp. 117-19.

⁴ Allusion to *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20:9. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 407.

⁵ Again he voices his opposition to *Ch'an* Buddhism.

⁶ This refers to *Yi-shu* 4:4b. Yang-ming, following Chu Hsi, attributes the saying to Ch'eng Hao (Ming-tao). See *Chin-ssu lu chi-chu*, 13:1b, Chan's *Reflections*, p. 281. The quotation contained in it comes from the *Book of Changes*, Hexagram 2, 'K'un', Appendix 4, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 420. Wing-tsit Chan translates *ching* as 'seriousness'. I prefer 'reverence', implying reverence to one's inner self, or to one's moral nature.

On Emotions

6. TO WANG GHIH-T'AN, THE HAN-LIN ACADEMICIAN¹

1511

... Pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, are emotions. When we refuse to yield to them, they remain *wei-fa* ['unstirred'].² This *wei-fa* of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy refers to their substance, that is to human nature. This explanation began, not with Ch'eng [Yi], but with Tzu-Ssu.³ Since you disagree on this point, let us begin our discussion with Tzu-Ssu's *Doctrine of the Mean*.

Pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, as well as thought and consciousness, all proceed from the mind (*hsin*). The mind controls nature and emotions.⁴ Nature (*hsing*) is the 'substance' of *hsin*, emotions are its 'functions'. Ch'eng [Yi] said: 'The mind is one'. Where the substance is concerned, it is 'quiet and passive'. Where the functions are concerned, it 'penetrates all things immediately, when it is acted upon'.⁵ I can add nothing to this. You can find the answer in this theory of substance and function. After all, substance and function have the same origin. If you know how substance is function, you would also know how function is substance. But substance is obscure and difficult to know; function is obvious and easily seen. You are quite right in what you said. The person who claims that, from morning till night, there is not a moment of passivity, sees function only and not substance.

In his studies the gentleman seeks 'substance' through 'function'. As Ch'eng-tzu [Ch'eng Yi] said, thought is that which is 'stirred'⁶ (*yi-fa*), to have consciousness is to have that which is active. All this refers to the time before the four emotions have been stirred but does not say that they are never stirred. In the beginning, Chu-tzu [Chu Hsi, 1130-1200] also doubted this theory of *wei-fa*. He held repeated discussions and debates – dozens of them – with [Chang] Nan-hsüan [1133-80]⁷ before he finally made up his mind. The results are now gathered together in his *Chung-yung chu-shu* [Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean].⁸ This is therefore no haphazard theory. Only what he said about beginning with vigilance and apprehension, in the control of oneself, and arriving at the harmony of supreme tranquillity, as well as beginning with caution in solitude, in refinement of spirit, and arriving at perfect response to events of life, seems to show over-analysis. Later readers divided this into two sections, thinking that there might be a special time of quiet and passivity, for tranquillity and for nurturing and preserving *hsin*, the mind. They did not realise that we should always preserve a vigilant, cautious, and apprehensive mind, without a moment's pause in such effort of self-cultivation, and also without having necessarily to preserve and nurture the mind by vigilance over self at the times when one is neither seen nor heard.

I would recommend you to make more effort in what regards activity, without allowing such effort to suffer any interruption. When activity no longer lacks harmony, neither will passivity or tranquillity lack equilibrium. Then would one know what is called the quiet and passive substance. If, before attaining this state, we try to guess its meaning, we would be 'discussing the pagoda's finial while looking at it'.⁹ Even Chu-tzu spoke merely of the conscious person, and not of consciousness. This points to a lack of clarity. You have good reasons, therefore, for your doubts. But pay attention, that your doubt may not resemble the action of a man who abstains from food after an experience of choking. When a gentleman has a theory which differs from those of the ancients, he should not consider it as definitive, but should first investigate it thoroughly, until he really finds it inadequate, before he makes his decision. Thus will he be able to discuss the question clearly and analyse it properly

WWKC, 4:172

- ¹ Private name Wang Chün, courtesy name Che-chih. Shih-t'an was his literary name. He became *chin-shih* (presented scholar) in 1493. Later he was dismissed from office as Minister of Rites (1524) on account of his uncompromising attitude concerning the awarding of posthumous titles to Emperor Shih-tsung's father. For his biography, see *MJHA*, 48:1a-b.
- ² This whole letter is a discussion on the control of emotions as given in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch.1. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 384.
- ³ Confucius's grandson, to whom is attributed the authorship of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.
- ⁴ Chang Tsai, *Chang-tzu ch'üan-shu* [Complete Works of Master Chang], 'Hsing-li shih-yi' [Additional Sayings on Nature and Principle], SPPY ed., 14:2a.
- ⁵ Ch'eng Yi, *Ts'ui-yen* [Pure Words], 1:10b. The quotation marks indicate Ch'eng's citation of the *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 1, ch. 10, see Legge's *Yi King*, p. 370. See also the discussion given in Angus C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers* (1958), pp. 51-3. But the translation given for the citation is my own.
- ⁶ *Yi-shu*, 18:14b.
- ⁷ See the correspondence exchanged between Chu Hsi and Chang Shih (Nan-hsüan) in *Hui-an hsien-sheng Chu Wen Kung wen-chi*. [Collected Works of Master Chu], SPTK ed., chs. 31-2. This book will be abbreviated as *CWKW*.
- ⁸ Yang-ming is referring to Chu's *Chung-yung chang-chü* [Commentary on the Text of the *Doctrine of the Mean*] which forms part of Chu's *Ssu-shu' ji-chu* [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books].
- ⁹ This expression was also employed by the Ch'eng brothers. See *Yi-shu*, 1:4a-b. It means that one cannot discourse about an experience which one has not yet reached.

On Civil Examinations

7. TO CHU YUNG-MING¹

1511

A gentleman has only one fear: that he neglect his study. Whether he succeeds in the civil examinations earlier or later is not important. Besides, my dear brother, I expect much more of you than the passing of examinations. I wonder whether you thought of that. Please tell me of it when you have time. I heard that my two nephews, Chieh and Yang,² both took the examinations last year. Although I do not object to their youthful ambitions, I still do not approve of it. If, unfortunately, they succeeded at this immature stage, would that not spoil their whole lives? The talents of youth should be carefully cultivated in obscurity and hiddenness. If the Way of Heaven does not concentrate, it will not, later on, radiate. All the more so with human beings. The flower with a thousand leaves cannot yield fruit, for its beauty is too manifest. If my nephews would not consider my words as foolish and unrealistic, they would certainly make progress.

In your letter, you advised me to enter the government service. Surely, I have no intention of keeping myself pure from politics. My hesitations are due not only to the times, which prescribe my remaining in obscurity, but also to the fact that my studies are not yet complete

WWKC, 4:173

¹ The younger brother of Yang-ming's first wife, who, together with his two sons, became Yang-ming's disciple. See Yü Ch'ung-yao, *Yang-ming hsien-sheng chuan-tsuan* [Collated Biography of Master Yang-ming] (1923), pt 1, p. 39.

² Chu Yung-ming's two sons.

On Spontaneity

8. TO WANG HU-KU¹

1511

... What you said about being broad-minded and vigorous² is very right, but then to say 'we ought neither to abandon our efforts, nor to diminish them, neither to stay at a standstill, nor to stop short of reaching the goal', shows yet a 'forced' feeling of doing what is necessary. Between such 'forced' feeling and the spontaneous feeling of advancing without cease, is yet another step. Ch'eng-tzu [Ch'eng Yi] said, 'to reach it because we know it, implies that it is a joy to conform to principle, and a deprivation of joy not to conform to principle'.³ That which naturally cannot cease to advance is finding joy in conforming to *li* [moral principle]. But this cannot be easily attained except by those who really know their nature. To know nature is to know *jen* [humanity]. Humanity is proper to the mind of man. The substance of the mind is of itself naturally broad and vigorous. When it is not broad, that is on account of some obstruction. When it is not vigorous, that is on account of some hindrance. So when the principle is clearly seen, selfish desires naturally cannot hinder the mind, and when selfish desires present no hindrance, our mind cannot but naturally be broad and vigorous. To be broad does not mean having to expand or enlarge something. To be vigorous does not mean having to do or strengthen something. For there is no need to make any slight addition to what lies within the realm of our duty. Tseng-tzu⁴ said, 'Do not lack in breadth of mind and vigour'. This was meant for the scholar. But Tseng-tzu said this after he had exhausted the depths of principle, and after he had already seen the substance of *jen*. Yet our own scholars only know they must not lack in breadth and endurance, and do not know how to exhaust principle, believing only that to expand [knowledge] is to be broad, to work on strengthening it is to be vigorous. This too comes from a momentary selfishness of the temperament, and is still quite far from the way of *jen*. It shows a distinction between the universal and the particular, between righteousness and working for profit

WWKC, 4:173-4

- ¹ The literary name of Wang Yün-feng (1465-1517), whose courtesy name was Ying-shao. His biography is in *Ming-shih*, 165:388.
² *Analects*, 8:7. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 210.
³ *Yi-shu*, 15:16b, 18:5a. Yang-ming paraphrased Ch'eng Yi's words.
⁴ Disciple of Confucius. His name was Tseng Shen. For the quotation, see note 2.

On Humanity and Reciprocity

9. TO HUANG TSUNG-HSIEN

1511

. . . What men do to me, that I do not wish, I do not do to them.¹ What I do wish, proceeds from the desire of my heart, naturally and spontaneously, without being forced. Not doing to others [what they do not wish] is possible after some effort. This indicates the difference between *jen* [humanity] and *shu* [reciprocity].² But reciprocity, the method of acquiring humanity, is precisely our business. Even Tzu-lu, with all his courage, was not admitted by the Master as having humanity.³ To have courage but not judgment shows that this courage may not completely proceed from the universal *T'ien-li*.⁴

To serve the sovereign to the point of not running away from him when he is in danger, is about all that we can ask of a man of *jen*. But not knowing that to serve Ch'e [Marquis of Wei] as an official and to receive recompense from him for this service is unrighteous, shows that the courage [of Tzu-lu] was not properly directed, and cannot be regarded as *jen*.⁵ But, as a property or quality of *jen*, courage is indeed what people like us yet lack . . .

WWKC, 4:174

¹ *Analects*, V:11, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 177.

² For reciprocity, see *Analects*, XV:23, *ibid.*, p. 301.

³ *Analects*, V:7 *ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Tso-chuan*, fifteenth year of Duke Ai. During the rebellion of K'ung Kuei, the Marquis of Wei escaped to the state of Lu. Tzu-lu, a disciple of Confucius, who was in the service of the Marquis, died during the troubles. Confucius had predicted that Tzu-lu would die an unnatural death. See *Tso-chuan* (Annals of Tso), Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, p. 843, and *Analects*, XI:12, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 241.

On Patience

10. TO WANG CH'UN-FU¹

1512

. . . I also used to have the habit of looking down on others of the same rank as myself, and of despising the ways of the world. Later, I knew a little better about how to correct myself, but

only by resisting [this temptation] and by maintaining an exterior appearance [of modesty]. It was only with my three-year exile in Kueichow, where I suffered every possible difficulty, that I received some insight, and began to believe that the words of Mencius about 'being born in sorrow and calamity'² are no deception. I had often thought that 'the gentleman regulates his conduct according to the condition in which he finds himself, desiring nothing beyond. In wealth and honour, he seeks to adjust himself to wealth and honour. In poverty and abjection, misfortune and suffering, he seeks to adjust himself to poverty and abjection, misfortune and suffering . . . That is why, always and everywhere, he is always himself'.³ The gentlemen of later times ought also to act thus

WWKC, 4:177

¹ Private name Wang Tao. See *MJHA*, 42:18a-b.

² *Mencius*, 6B:15, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp. 447-8.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 14, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 395.

On Friendship

II. TO CH'U CH'AI-HSU¹

1512

. . . The gentleman considers only righteousness in his relations with others . . . Friendship depends on *tao* and *te* [virtue] . . . and has nothing to do with age or position . . . *Jen* is the virtue of the mind or heart. The man who has no *jen* is not worthy of being a man. To promote *jen* through friendship² is to complete the virtue of the mind. This is what friendship means. . . . Mencius said, 'Friendship should not admit presumptions of superiority.'³ Meng Hsien-tzu had five friends, but none of these was from his own family.⁴ Did he entertain considerations of nobility or lowliness of rank? Chung-yu⁵ was three years younger than Yen Lu,⁶ but he regarded Yen Hui⁷ as a friend. Yen Hui and Tseng Tien⁸ were contemporaries, but Tseng Shen⁹ spoke of [Yen Hui] as his friend. Were there considerations of age or seniority? . . . Formerly Ch'eng Yi-ch'uan (Ch'eng Yi) and Lü Hsi-che were school friends, and regarded each other as such. Then, Hsi-che became Yi-ch'uan's disciple, and was regarded as a disciple. Could we say that Yi-ch'uan was respectful to Hsi-che when they were school friends, but not when the latter became

his disciple? Confucius regarded Yang Hu as an official¹⁰ but Yen Hui and Tzu-kung as disciples. Could we say that he regarded [Yen] Hui and Ts'u (Tzu-kung) with less esteem than Yang Hu? The way of master and disciple has long been neglected. Among younger men, the intelligent and able ones often have the intention of seeking *tao*, but, because their elders do not regard them with sufficient seriousness and do not understand their hearts, they treat the younger men with empty politeness, trying thereby to please them and seek the reputation of practising kindness to scholars . . . Hence, the way of master and disciple becomes daily more degenerate . . . I often think how fortunate I would be if I had the opportunity to be disciple to such philosophers as Chou Tun-yi [1017-73] and the Ch'engs. If not, I would still be fortunate if I could become a disciple of Chou's and Ch'engs' disciples. However, we no longer have these men with us in the world. Whither then, can men of ambition turn in disappointment? How can they be free from anxiety? To have anxiety and not to reproach oneself, to express oneself and not to seek for help from others, will eventually bring no accomplishment. With regard to the younger men of this generation, I do not presume to consider myself their master. I only seek to discuss with those among them who are intelligent and able, in order also to promote *jen* in myself. But if they regard themselves as my juniors, and seek for my teaching, even though they do not serve me as their master, there is still a relationship of elders and juniors . . . It has been said, 'When the teacher is severe, the Way is honoured; when the Way is honoured, the people esteem learning'.¹¹ Men need some discipline and fear, in order to listen to the words of others. Yi-yin said, 'Heaven, in giving life to the people, causes those who are first enlightened to enlighten those who are later enlightened, I am [one of] the first enlightened of Heaven's people. If I do not awake the others, who will do so?'¹² Hence, the very wise enlighten those who possess a little wisdom, while those who possess a little wisdom enlighten those who have no wisdom; the well-awakened awaken those who are slightly awakened, the slightly awakened awake those who are not awakened. Would it then be better to wait until one is already very wise and awakened before seeking to awaken all

under Heaven? But this is not possible. And so, if one considers oneself as possessing only a little wisdom, and as being only slightly awakened, and therefore does not dare to awaken others, one will eventually not awaken any one. Does a man of *jen* act in this way? The man of *jen* establishes others' characters when he wishes his own to be established and enlarges others' [minds] when he wishes [his own] to be enlarged.¹³ My idea is that when one already has a little portion of wisdom, one ought to wish at once to share this little portion of wisdom with others, and when one already has a little bit of enlightenment, one ought to wish at once to share this little bit of enlightenment with others. The more people there are who possess a little wisdom and a little enlightenment, the easier it will be to have them share with one another their wisdom and enlightenment. And then, after this, we might look forward to great wisdom and great enlightenment. With regard to the younger generation of today, I hardly dare to consider myself as one who possesses a little wisdom and enlightenment. Rather, I should use the example of a man suffering from hunger and cold. He knows that the farming of rice and mulberry can give him food and clothing. He has also heard, by accident, of the ways of planting rice and growing mulberry, and desires to attempt these. Thereupon, he tells others who are also suffering from hunger and cold, to make them take part in this work. For he does not let his own lack of experience in farming prevent him from telling others of its advantages. However, the gentleman first possesses something in himself before he requires it in others. I do not possess anything in myself. How could I therefore require anything of others? But then, I have been speaking about those who, of their own will, come to me. . . .

WWKC, 21:642-4

¹ Ch'u Ch'ai-hsu (1457-1513), private name Ch'u Huan and courtesy name Ching-fu. See *Ming-shih*, 286:708.

² *Analects*, XII:24. Legge's translation of the whole sentence, from which this part is taken, is: 'The superior man, on grounds of culture, meets with his friends, and by their friendship, *helps his virtue*' (*Classics*, vol. I, p. 262).

³ *Mencius*, 5B:3, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 376.

⁴ *Ibid.* Meng Hsien-tzu did not wish his friends to consider him as a nobleman.

⁵ The other name of Tzu-lu, disciple of Confucius.

⁶ The father of Yen Hui, favourite disciple of Confucius. He is mentioned in *Analects*, XI:7, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 239.

⁷ See note 6.

⁸ Tseng Shen's father, also called Tseng Hsi. See *Analects*, I:25, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 246-7.

⁹ Also called Tzu-yu, son of Tseng Tien. To him is attributed the authorship of the *Great Learning*.

¹⁰ *Analects*, XVII, 17:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 317.

¹¹ *Book of Rites*, 'Hsueh-chi' [On Education]. See Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. 2, p. 88.

¹² *Mencius*, 5A:7, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 363. For Yi-yin, see *Shih-chi*, 3:11.

¹³ *Analects*, VII, 28, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 194.

On Being a Teacher

12. TO CH'U CH'AI-HSU

1512

. . . In your letter, you reproved me for not regarding myself as a teacher, and you fear that I have not sincerely spoken out on everything. But who am I to dare to regard myself as a teacher? In our former letters, when we spoke about the relationship between elders and juniors, it was taken for granted that I would be slightly older, and that my correspondent would have the intention of seeking the *tao*. If he were about the same age as I, and had no intention of seeking the *tao*, I would naturally regard him as a guest or a friend. How can I follow the rule of elders and juniors? I would be making a fool of myself! Moreover, is there any reason in the world why I should presume to regard myself as a teacher without even considering the other person's intention in coming to me? One cannot acquire the dignity of being a teacher by taking it for granted. If someone comes to me to learn the truth from me, then I can respond to him in the appropriate way. Alas, in these days, is there any real 'teacher'? There are teachers today for the apprentices of various arts and crafts. There are also teachers today for those who learn to write examination essays and seek after reputation and profit. Such students know that arts and crafts can procure for them a means of livelihood, while examinations can obtain for them reputation, profit, and a high official position. Unless a person is well aware of the fact that the development of his own nature and endowment is even more important than the means of livelihood or an official position, would he seek a teacher? However, the ignorance of arts and crafts merely brings with it a lack of food and clothing; the ignorance of examination essays merely implies the deprivation of an official position. But if the

person's nature and endowments were somewhat obscured, he would no longer be human. People understand the former, but not the latter. Is this not a cause for great sorrow?

Formerly, I attended the *t'ai-hsüeh* [State University] together with Wang Yin-chih and Liu Ching-su. Yin-chih was always ahead of Ching-su in every seasonal examination, but did not consider himself Ching-su's equal in systematic studies and suddenly one day paid him the respect due to a teacher, and asked for instruction from him. I used to admire him for this. Such a person can really become a hero of virtue. If Yin-chih had only turned his mind to seeking the *tao*, would there be any degree of sagehood beyond his reach? When Tseng-tzu was very sick, he changed the mat on which he was lying.¹ When Tzu-lu was dying he took care to adjust the tassels on his cap.² Chang Heng-chü (Chang Tsai) was humble enough to remove the tiger skin from his seat and make his disciples take lessons from the two Ch'engs.³ Only men of great courage and selflessness in the world can do this.

The world today has long been morally degenerate. It does not differ from a sick man approaching death. And yet, every man continues to hold stubbornly to his own opinions, and refuses to seek in humility for guidance and correction. That is why, in today's world, only the heroic and independent scholars, who really recognise the urgency of the need to seek one's own nature and endowment, take upon themselves the responsibility of seeking the way of sages, and are anxious to find a teacher to follow. And yet, you, my friend, consider it unsuitable to treat as guests those younger scholars, though their talents and purposefulness are not adequate for learning the *tao* . . . True, if there were a great difference of age, the question of seniority remains, and hardly needs mentioning. Even Confucius caused a youth of the Ch'üeh village to take messages for him, and said 'I observe that he is fond of occupying the seat of a full-grown man. He walks shoulder to shoulder with his elders. He is not one who is seeking to make progress in learning. He wishes quickly to become a man.'⁴ However, he did not refrain from giving the youth his instructions. I need not say, all this refers to people who are less perfect than ourselves. In the case of those of great virtue and superior knowledge, who happen to have been

born several decades of years after me, I would prefer to consider the greater ones as my teachers, and the lesser ones as my friends. How can I yet take into consideration the difference of age? . . .

WWKC, 21:645

¹ *Book of Rites*, 'T'an-kung', Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. I, pp. 128-9.

² To show that he was dying as a gentleman. See *Tso-chuan*, fifteenth year of Duke Ai, Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, pp. 842-3.

³ See *Sung-shih* [Sung Dynastic History], 427, p. 1098; also *Wai-shu*, 12:13a.

⁴ *Analects*, XIV:47, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 293.

On the Rites

13. TO HO TZU-YUAN¹

1512

⁴ . . . According to the *Book of Rites*, Tseng-tzu had asked: "Suppose the feudal princes are assembled in a body to appear before the Son of Heaven. They have entered the gate, but are unable to go through with the rites [of audience]. – How many occurrences will cause these to be discontinued?" Confucius replied, "Four". Tseng-tzu asked again: "Suppose the feudal princes are visiting one another. [The visitors] have entered the gate after customary bowings and courtesies, but are unable to go through with the rites [of audience]. – How many occurrences will cause these to be discontinued?" Confucius replied, "Six, including an eclipse of the sun". Tseng-tzu said: "If, during [an important] sacrifice, an eclipse of the sun occurs, or the grand ancestral temple takes fire, what should be done?" Confucius replied: "The sacrifice should be hurried on. But if the victims have arrived, and have not yet been slain, the sacrifice should be discontinued."² I (Meng-ch'un), however have doubts concerning these replies. The death of the Son of Heaven, the grand ancestral temple taking fire, the funeral rites of the queen [or of the princess of the state], the robes getting unsightly through soaking rain are all unforeseeable events which may occur. The eclipse of the sun, however, can be calculated in advance. When the feudal princes were performing the rites, could they not have avoided this? And why should they have had to perform sacrifice that very day, and even to hurry it on? If the sacrifice may be discontinued when the victim has not yet

been slain, may I ask why the time of the eclipse of the sun was not known when the time for the slaying was fixed? . . . '

[Yang-ming's answer:]

. . . In ancient times, the Son of Heaven had a *jih-kuan* [officer of days], the feudal lords had *jih-yü* [superintendent of days]³ . . . So how could it happen, that it should not yet be known, on the day of the sacrifice, that an eclipse of the sun would occur? I suppose that during the time of the Spring-Autumn Period [722-481 B.C.] these officials were often negligent in their work, so that eclipses of the sun sometimes took place without their knowing in advance. Yao had entrusted to the families of Hsi and Ho, the work of 'delivering respectfully the seasons to be observed by the people'.⁴ This meant he considered it a very important thing. Yet, during the time of Chung-k'ang which was not so long after Yao, Hsi and Ho were already negligent in their duties. Confused in the reading of the heavens, they did not know when the eclipse of the sun would occur. That was why Yin was sent on a punitive expedition against them.⁵ By the times of Shang and Chou, this position became even less important. With the removal of the capital by King P'ing to the east [77 B.C.], the political control and instructions, the commandments and orders of the government could not reach the whole world. We can therefore imagine how the officials became even more negligent in their duties after that. In the *Spring-Autumn Annals*, thirty-six eclipses of the sun were recorded.⁶ But if we verify these in the *Tso-chuan* [Annals of Tso], we shall find out that one out of three times some transgression was committed against the rites either by the beating of drums and offering of victims and silks, or by other irregularities.⁷ Also two out of four of the officials were negligent in their appointed duties. Tu Yu⁸ regarded all officials who did not record the days on which the eclipse of the sun occurred as being negligent in their duties. That is why these things can be verified. In the *Spring-Autumn Annals* it is recorded: 'In the winter of the seventeenth year of Duke Huan, on the first day of the tenth month, there was an eclipse of the sun'.⁹ The *Tso-chuan* said: 'Not to record the date would be a negligence of official duty'.¹⁰ Again, in the summer of the fifteenth year of Duke Hsi [663 B.C.], in the fifth month, there was an eclipse of the sun. The *Tso-chuan* said: 'Not to record

the character "shuo"¹¹ and the date, was a negligence of official duty.¹² Hence, the *Tso-chuan* has already given us this information. In the winter of the twenty-seventh year of Duke Hsiang on the *yi-hai* day of the twelfth month, there was an eclipse of the sun.¹³ But the *Tso-chuan* said: "This was really the ninth month. So the mistakes made in calculations led to the omission of two intercalations."¹⁴ Hence, the ignorance concerning the eclipses of the sun would rather be considered as a small mistake. Besides, in ancient times, before the sacrifice, seven days of fast and abstinence were observed as a sign of sincerity and respect towards the spirits. When the day for the sacrifice arrived and the eclipse of the sun occurred, since the rites were already begun, it would not have been possible to interrupt them. To hurry on the sacrifice means to go faster, with simplified ceremonies. Thus could the sacrifice also be preserved without harm. Especially with regard to the seasonal sacrifices of the Son of Heaven to Heaven and Earth, these should be completed as the great sacrifices of the state. Other minor sacrifices could perhaps have been stopped. They had to be decided according to their degree of importance. For example, during a sacrifice performed in the ancestral temple, if the temple was to take fire, it would seem that the sacrifice would have to be stopped. Although there is nothing clearly written about this, I would think so. . . .

WWKC, 21:646

¹ His private name was Ho Meng-ch'un. A *chin-shih* in 1493, he later became Vice-Minister of Civil Officials. Always interested in questions of rites, he led the opposition to Emperor Shih-tsung's awarding of certain posthumous titles to the Emperor's deceased father, going to the extreme of kneeling and crying one entire morning with a group of officials in front of the palace gate. See *Ming-shih*, 191:453. In the light of his life, it is interesting that the only extant letter written to him by Yang-ming should be on the subject of rites.

² See *Books of Rites*, 'Tseng-tzu wen' [Questions of Tseng-tzu], Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. 1, pp. 328-31.

³ These were court astronomers. See *Tso-chuan*, Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, p. 69.

⁴ *Book of Documents*, Yao-tien [Canon of Yao], *ibid.*, vol. III, pt 1, p. 18.

⁵ *Book of Documents*, 'Yin-cheng' [Punitive Expedition of Yin], *ibid.*, pp. 162-9.

⁶ See Feng Cheng, *Ch'un-ch'iu jih-shih chi-cheng* [Collected Proofs of the Eclipses of the Sun during the Spring-Autumn Period], Shanghai, 1929.

⁷ For irregularities connected with 'beating of drums and offering of victims and silks', see *Tso-chuan*, Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, pt 1, pp. 108-10, 268-72.

⁸ The Chin scholar (A.D. 222-84) who wrote a standard commentary on *Ch'un-ch'iu* and *Tso-chuan*.

⁹ 3 October, in the year 594 B.C., in Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, pp. 67-69.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ It meant the beginning of the lunar month.

¹² Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, p. 167. Also, it would seem that the eclipse really took place in the third month. See Feng, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

¹³ It was 7 October, the 12th cycle day, in 545 B.C. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. V, pp. 528-36.

¹⁴ Ibid.

On Sincerity

14. TO HUANG TSUNG-HSIEN

1513

... Mencius said, 'If anyone loves others but is not loved in return, let him examine himself to see whether his *jen* is perfect'.¹ and, 'If anyone does not attain the goal sought after in his actions, let him examine himself.'² Unless we have personally experienced such things, we would not be able to realise the perennial truth and the earnest meaning of these words. . . .

... Recently, whenever I discussed learning with friends, I spoke only of two words: 'establishing sincerity'.³ As in killing a man, the knife ought to be placed on the throat, so in studying, efforts should be made to enter the fine points of the mind. Then would study naturally become earnest and solid and radiate brightness, and even if selfish desires sprout up, they will disappear in the same way as a few flakes of snow melt upon a fiercely burning stove. Thus, the fundamental, universal principle will be established. If an individual only pays attention to the tips of the twigs, to the unessential decorations and to making comparisons, then such things which we usually call learning and inquiry, reflection and making distinctions, will only tend to increase his pride and conscious error, so that while he considers himself to be becoming more intelligent and superior, he fails to realise that he is sinking into the depths of hatred and jealousy. . . .

WWKC, 4:176

¹ Mencius, 4A: 4, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 294.

² Ibid., p. 295.

³ *Book of Changes*, Hexagram 1, 'Ch'ien', Appendix 4. See Legge's *Yi-King*, p. 410.

. . . In your letter you said, 'while the goal of study is certainly the understanding of the good and the attainment of sincerity,¹ I do not know what is really the good, where it comes from, where it now is, how should one make efforts to understand it, how these efforts should be begun, whether the search for sincerity contains systematic stages, and what sincerity is really about. These points are minute and complicated. . . .'

. . . Your mistake is to have divided things into isolated units, and to have gone outside of yourself too much without being conscious of it. The mind is the master of the person; the nature is within the mind, and the good originates in nature. This is what Mencius meant, when he talked about human nature being good.² The good refers to nature, rather than to any external form or any determinate direction. Since it is formless and resides in no fixed place how can anyone receive it from somewhere? . . . You think as you do because you have not inquired carefully into the real teaching of the school of sages, but are used to stopping at the etymological research of later ages. You think that every thing and object has its own good, and so to seek the supreme good, one must begin with things and objects, before one can be said to 'understand the good'. On that account you use such words as 'Where does it come from?' and 'Where is it now?'. . . .

What one calls 'moral principles' in an event of object, 'righteousness' in our adapting ourselves towards it, and 'good' in nature, are differently designated on account of the things to which they refer, but in reality are all manifestations of my *hsin*.³ There is no object, no event, no moral principle, no righteousness, and no good that lies outside the mind. When my mind regards events and objects purely from the viewpoint of moral principles (*li*) and without any falsity, there is good. This is not fixed in events and objects, and can be sought for in a definite place. Righteousness means to adapt oneself properly to objects; it refers to my mind having done what is appropriate. For righteousness is not an external object,⁴ which one can seize and take over.

To 'investigate' means to investigate this, to 'extend' means to extend this. To insist on seeking the supreme good in every event and object is to separate what is one into two things. Yi-ch'uan (Ch'eng Yi) has said, 'If you use that you would know this',⁵ meaning that this and that are not to be distinguished in nature, or principle or goodness. As to what you say about 'how to make efforts to understand the good, how to begin such efforts, whether there are definite steps towards the attainment of sincerity, and what is sincerity all about', these show that you think there is a special effort for the attainment of sincerity. But according to my idea, the understanding of the good *is* itself the effort of attaining sincerity. When we say sincerity means freedom from falsehood, we mean also that the attainment of sincerity means to have no falsehood in ourselves. And so the effort of attaining sincerity is also that of understanding the good. That is why the man of wide learning learns this, the man of careful inquiry inquires into it, the man of cautious reflection reflects upon it, the man of discernment discerns it, and the man of earnest belief puts it into practice.⁶ This is all the effort of understanding the good and of becoming sincere. And so there is a way to attain sincerity, and this way is the understanding of the good. If a man does not understand the good, he cannot become sincere. There is no other way outside the understanding of the good which can be called the effort of becoming sincere. When one begins to strive after sincerity, one is not yet sincere, and so one calls this work the understanding of the good. But the goal of the understanding of the good is to become sincere. If we say that understanding the good has its own effort, while attaining sincerity also has its own effort, we are separating it into two things. And then it will be difficult for us not to make the mistake of falling into the danger of making a slight error which will take us a thousand *li* astray from our goal. . . .

WWKC, 4:178-9

¹ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 412-13.

² *Mencius*, 6A. See the discussion between Mencius and Kao-tzu who maintained that human nature was neither good nor evil. Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp. 394-9.

³ This shows the difference between Yang-ming's philosophy and Chu Hsi's. To develop the innate moral knowledge in the mind is, for Yang-ming, the only thing necessary in the pursuit of sagehood, while Chu Hsi had said that one ought to investigate the principles of all things.

⁴ Allusion to Kao-tzu's teaching. See *Mencius*, 6A:4, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 396.

⁵ Referring to *Yi-shu*, 18:5b.

⁶ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20:19, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 413.

On Learning

16. TO [TS'AI] HSI-YUAN¹

1513

... There is naught else in the way of learning, except to seek for the lost mind.² This one sentence is enough. As to the items of our effort, these multiply endlessly the more we speak about them. . . .

I heard from friends that many wish you to keep your aloofness and not come out. But then the various factors involved ought to be weighed. If your parent could continue to get rice, there is no need to talk of remaining aloof, and then, of course, it is not appropriate for you to come out. Otherwise I fear that people might be trying to 'justify' their selfish sentiments. We cannot let this go unnoticed.

WWKC, 4:180

¹ Private name Ts'ai Tsung-tui, literary name Wo-chai. He was an early disciple of Yang-ming. See *MJHA*, 11:5a-b.

² *Mencius*, 6a:11, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 414. The 'lost mind' refers to a mind or heart that has gone astray from the principle of *jen* or humanity and the path of *yi* or righteousness.

On Determination

17. TO TAI TZU-LIANG¹

1513

... The man of determination will accomplish his desire. I wish you much courage. It is not just for one day already that learning has been obscure. For too few people have the ambition or determination to apply themselves to it. Yet, since it is common and normal for people in general to desire virtue,² how could one say that there is absolutely nobody interested? Rather, what happens is that many cannot overcome their selfish desires, and fall eventually into the conventional ways, which means the same thing as saying that they have no firm determination. . . .

WWKC, 4:181-2

¹ His private name was Tai Te-ju. As Prefect of Lin-chiang he assisted Yang-ming in his victorious campaign against the rebel Prince Ning in 1519. See 'Nien-p'u' in *WWKC*, 33:939.

² Allusion to *Book of Odes* (*Shih-ching*), "Tang-chih shih" [Decade of Tang], pt 3, bk 3, ode 6 (Legge's *Classics*, vol. IV, p. 541).

On the Gentleman Living with Inferior Men

18. TO HU PO-CHUNG¹

1513

... When a gentleman must live with men of inferior virtue, there is no reason why he should compromise himself and become like them. If, unfortunately, at the end of his power and reason, he is injured by them, he ought merely to endure this in peace. If his reactions are not sufficiently in accord with the *tao* – if he has an excessive hatred of evil, or suffers from justifiable anger – these would be of no help to him, and would only increase the hatred and venom of his opponents. It would then all be the fault of the gentleman. Men in the past have said, in anything which does not oppose the principle of righteousness, custom, or convention may be followed. While a gentleman does not follow custom or convention lightly, neither does he mind differing from custom.

To live with evil men would be the same as 'sitting with court robes and court cap amid mire and ashes'. This refers to the purity of Po-yi.² 'Although you stand by my side with breast and arms bare, or with your body naked, how can you defile me?'³ This refers to the peace-loving nature of Liu-hsia Hui. As a gentleman regards the transformation of natural endowments to be learning, it seems to me that you should imitate such a peace-loving method of conducting yourself, by not allowing the three highest dignities of the empire to change your determination.⁴ Surely, the others [with whom Po-chung was having difficulty] do not have the purity of Po-yi. But my attitude towards you can be described thus: 'Virtue is light as a hair, but few are able to lift it. When I think over the matter, [I find that] only Chung-shan Fu can lift it. I love him but can do nothing to help him.'⁵ Upright men are difficult to find; orthodox learning is difficult to understand. Vulgar conventions are difficult to change; the straight path is difficult to keep to. I feel quite lost as I write this letter. I cannot say all that I wish to say. Only the heart understands.

WWKC, 4:182

¹ I have not been able to identify him.

² *Mencius*, 5B:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 369. As a hermit, Po-yi refused to serve the Chou court. He was regarded as a sage of 'purity'.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-1. In contrast to Po-yi, Liu-hsia Hui, minister of Lu, the sage of 'peace', was ready to serve under any ruler and in any capacity.

⁴ *Mencius*, 7A:28, *ibid.*, p. 466.

⁵ *Book of Odes*, 'Tang-chih-shih', Pt 3, bk 3, ode 6 (Legge's *Classics*, vol. IV, p. 544).

On Fixing the Determination

19. TO HUANG CH'ENG-FU¹

1513

... It sounds almost nagging to talk about fixing our determination. Still, in speaking with close friends, we cannot give it up. For those whose minds are fixed on the attainment of virtue, glory and fame are not sufficient to deter them. For those whose minds are fixed on glory and fame, wealth and honour are not sufficient to deter them. But what the recent ages have considered as virtue, is merely glory and fame. And what the recent ages have considered glory and fame, is merely wealth and honour. A man of *jen* conforms to the requirements of righteousness without seeking profit, and understands *tao* without calculating merit.² When once he has the intention of calculating gain, then even if he conforms to the requirements of righteousness and understands *tao*, it is nothing but vain glory and profit. ...

WWKC, 4:182

¹ Private name Huang Tsung-ming (d. 1536). See his biography in *MJHA*, 14:4a-b.

² Tung Chung-shu, *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* [Luxuriant Gems of the Spring-Autumn Annals], SPTK ed., 32:33a-b.

On Fixing the Determination

20. TO [WANG] T' IEN-YÜ¹

1514

... You, T'ien-yü, said of yourself, 'I have the determination, but cannot remain diligent'. But then, what is meant by determination, and who is it that cannot be diligent? You also said, 'the learning of the sages and worthy men can control activity by tranquillity'. But then, how can you be tranquil, and do 'tranquillity' and 'activity' refer to two minds? You say, 'when

one is performing official and administrative duties, one forces oneself to grasp virtue and to imitate virtuous deeds. In so doing, one is forcing things to conform to the *tao* [Way], though in the end one does not frequently succeed'. But then, '[The gentleman] cleaves [to virtue] in moments of haste and danger'.² What sort of efforts can one make in that regard? You also said, 'one can learn something every time one opens a book, and one is moved by inspiration when one meets wise worthy men and superior men'. But then, what is it with which one is thus inspired? And if one must rely on these two things to be inspired, what must one do without them? Also where is the so-called determination at this moment? . . .

These sentences can only arise because you, T'ien-yü, really apply effort. But they are also sufficient to show that you have not always understood what you have been taught. If you gain any insight after thinking it over, do not hesitate to instruct me in it.

WWKC, 4:183

¹ Private name Wang Ch'eng-yü (1465-1538); T'ien-yü was his courtesy name. See his biography in *MJHA*, 9:5.

² *Analects*, IV:5, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p.167.

On Investigation of Things

21. TO [WANG] T' IEN-YU¹

1514

. . . In your letter you said, 'To investigate things one must attain sincerity in person'. On first reading I was not free from doubt. Later, after carefully questioning Hsi-yen [T's'ai Hsi-yüan], I understood what it meant.

But I have not taught about any such relationship concerning personal sincerity and the investigation of things. Has it, perhaps, come from Hsi-yen? According to my humble opinion, sincerity of intention is essential in the learning of the gentleman, while the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge are the results achieved by sincerity of intention. This can be compared to a hungry man seeking satiation as his goal, and food and drink as the means towards the goal of satiation. Hsi-yen is quite acquainted with my ideas, and ought not give such a

different interpretation. Perhaps my teaching has lacked clarity sometimes; please consider it in detail.

You also said, 'The *Great Learning* gives the steps taken systematically by the ancients in their striving for learning.' Chu-tzu said that the intention become sincere when the principles (*li*) of all things have been exhaustively [studied].² But then, this would be in contradiction to what he also said about maintaining a reverent and serious disposition and exhausting *li* and about the extension of knowledge being impossible without the employment of the mind.³ For the theory about maintaining reverence and employing the mind comes from an addition in the commentary, while the holy Classic declared directly that the mind is rectified when the principles are exhausted. Beginning scholars use the Classic without investigating its commentary. This leads to mistakes. How can our study, therefore, not become isolated and fragmentary?

The *Great Learning* discusses systematically only the investigation of things, which brings about the attainment of perfect knowledge, and the attainment of perfect knowledge, which brings about the sincerity of intention. As to the intention becoming sincere after exhausting the principles of things, it is the doctrine of Chu-tzu, and is not so self-contradictory, except that it may not completely conform to the original meaning of the text of the *Great Learning*. As to 'Without employing the mind, it is impossible to extend knowledge', not only does this sentence not conform completely to the *Great Learning*, but also not to what is meant in the *Doctrine of the Mean* about the respect of virtuous nature and of study through inquiry.⁴ But this would require a long discussion, which we can have only when we see each other. Later scholars adhere to added commentaries, and do not investigate deeply the meaning of the Classics. Stopping at the literal understanding of words, they do not pay attention to the direct experience of their mind and person. That is why knowledge becomes fragmentary, and they achieve nothing in the end. This, I fear, is the fault of adhering to the Classics without consulting the commentary.

You also said, 'To apply oneself to the attainment of sincerity in person without starting from the exhaustive study of *li*, risks the danger of not attaining any real sincerity, but only practising pretence.'

This is very well said. But then how would the effort of seeking sincerity in person operate? I hope you will recognise that.

You also gave the example of traveller for whom the destination is the capital city which can be called the Supreme Good. The traveller braves any danger, obstructions and difficulties, being determined to advance. This can be called the determination of the mind. Now if this man does not know where the capital city is, but still wants recklessly to go there, it would be a wonder if he did not go south to Yueh or north to Hu.⁵

This example is generally correct. But to take his fearlessness of dangers, obstructions and difficulties, and his determination to advance, to be the employment of the mind, is somewhat far-fetched and misses the crux of the problem. Not to fear dangers, obstructions and difficulties, but to be determined to advance, is concerned rather with the word 'intention' referred to in the 'sincerity of intention'. In that case, all that pertains to asking for directions, getting travelling provisions, and taking certain boats and vehicles, cannot be neglected. Otherwise, how can he be determined to advance, and yet advance recklessly? Not to know where the capital city is, but to want recklessly to go there, shows only a desire to go, rather than the reality of going. Because he only desires to go, and does not really go, he neglects asking for directions, getting his travelling provisions, and taking the correct boats and vehicles. Otherwise, if he is determined to advance, he would really get there. How can a person who really goes there act in the way you described? This is where effort must be urgently applied. . . .

You also said, 'Formerly men spoke about the investigation of things as the defence of self from external objects.'⁶ When external objects are kept away from us, our minds are properly employed. When the mind is employed, the person can apply himself to knowledge. . . .'

This way of speaking makes of the defence of self against external objects one thing, and the application or extension of knowledge another thing. While the defence against external objects is not so harmful, to stop at defending oneself externally does not imply the removal of the roots of the disease. It is not what has been called the effort of self-conquest to seek *jen*. My theory about the investigation of things is also different from this. What the *Great Learning* means by the sincerity of intention⁷ is exactly what the *Doctrine of the Mean* means by sincerity in

person.⁸ What the *Great Learning* says about the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge⁹ is exactly what the *Doctrine of the Mean* calls the understanding of the good.¹⁰ Wide learning, careful, questioning, attentive reflections, clear discernment and earnest application are all what is called the understanding of the good and are all efforts in striving for sincerity in person. There is no other effort of making oneself sincere outside of the understanding of the good. Outside of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, is there another so-called effort of making the intention sincere? What the *Book of Documents* says about having a single purpose,¹¹ what the *Analects* say about having a wide knowledge of books and conforming to the rules of propriety,¹² what the *Doctrine of the Mean* says about the esteem of the virtuous nature and the direction of learning through inquiry¹³ – all mean the same thing as we have said. This is the essential point of learning and of making efforts. It is here that the difference of a hair's breadth can lead one a thousand *li* astray. . . .

WWKC, 4:183-5

¹ This letter should be read in relation to Yang-ming's second letter to Wang Ch'un-fu (oo) in which he also discusses the problems of attaining personal sincerity and understanding the good.

² Referring to Chu's commentary on the *Great Learning*, 1:4-5. See *Ta-hsueh chang-chu* in *Ssu-shu chi-chu*, SPPY ed., 1b-2a.

³ *CTVL*, 11:1a-5b, 12:4b-6b, 15:2a-7b.

⁴ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 27:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 422.

⁵ Yueh refers here to the present province of Chekiang, and Hu to northern frontier.

⁶ Ssu-ma Kuang (1019-86). See *Ssu-ma Wen-kung wen-chi*, SPTK ed., 71:11a.

⁷ *Great Learning*, ch. 6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 366. The Chinese word *yi*, sometimes translated as 'thought', refers also to 'intention'.

⁸ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20:17-22, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 412-15.

⁹ *Great Learning*, 1:4-5, *ibid.*, pp. 358-9.

¹⁰ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20:37, *ibid.*, p. 413.

¹¹ *Book of Documents*, "Ta-yü mu", in Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pt 1, p. 61. I prefer 'single purpose' to 'being undivided'.

¹² *Analects*, VI:25, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 193.

¹³ See note 4.

On the Educative Mission of the Official

22. TO LI TAO-FU¹

1515

. . . I heard recently that when you first took charge of your prefecture, you wanted to teach people this learning at once.

42

This is of course natural to the heart of a man of *jen*. On this account, I am really very pleased with you, but at the same time very worried for you.

Since the learning of the sages has been forgotten and the Way of virtue lost, vulgar conventions have been all powerful, and those contaminated may be compared to a man struggling in the midst of great sea waves. He needs to be helped to land on the shore² before he can be given clothes and food. If we threw to him clothes and food into the waves, we would only increase his chances of drowning by adding to his weight. He would thus consider it not an act of kindness, but rather the contrary. Therefore, in our present times, we ought to adjust to opportunities and circumstances in directing and counselling others, making use of special affairs which arise to opening and enriching [the minds of others],³ influencing them in a calm and unagitated manner. When their feelings are awakened and their interest is aroused, we can then begin to expound to them our opinions. In this way, we need expend little energy and yet obtain large results. Otherwise, there would be danger of meeting conflicts and unsurmountable obstacles.⁴ Besides, it would also become a burden for the gentleman to love others. . . .

WWKC, 4:185

¹ I have not been able to identify him.

² Allusion to *Mencius*, 4A:17, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 307.

³ Allusion to *Book of Documents*, 'Yueh-ming' [Charge to Yueh], Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 252.

⁴ *Book of Rites* 'Ch'ü-li' [Minutiae of Etiquette], Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. I, p. 86.

On Learning

23. TO LU YUAN-CHING¹

1516

. . . We have already discussed in detail the theory concerning an extensive learning. Why should you still be preoccupied by it today? I fear this is also due to lack of firmness of determination, and to the obstacles set up by worldly customs. If I had really no ambitions of renown and gain, then, even though I be engaged in affairs of finance, collecting revenues, or of warfare, of transporting firewood or rice,² I can go nowhere without finding genuine learning, and meet with nothing that will not

be full of *T'ien-li*. This is all the more so, if I am reading books on philosophy, history, poetry, and literature, But if I still harbour ambitions of renown and profit, even though I might talk every day about virtue, about *jen* and *yi* [righteousness], these would still be affairs of merit and gain, all the more so if I happen to be reading books on philosophy, history, poetry, and literature. To speak about abandoning and renouncing all things, is still to be hindered by old habits. This happens when our daily efforts and applications to study bring no special discovery. I recommend that you purify yourself of conventional concepts, and recover your original determination. Then, if you think further of [my] parables contained in our daily eating and drinking for the nourishment of the body, and in the planting, cultivating and watering of trees, everything would certainly become very clear to you. 'In all things, we ought to distinguish between the essential and the accessory; in all affairs, we ought to distinguish between the roots and the branches. He who knows what comes first and what comes after is not far from the Way of perfection.'³ . . .

WWKC, 4:186

¹ Private name Lu Ch'eng, courtesy name Ch'ing-po. He obtained his *chin-shih* degree, in 1517. See *MJHA*, 14:3a-b.

² Allusion to the Ch'an Buddhist idea that enlightenment can be found in menial labour. The Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng was given the task of pounding rice for eight months when he went to the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen for instruction. See *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching*, TSD, No. 2008, 48:34b. See also Wing-tsit Chan (trans.), *The Platform Scripture* (1963), p. 31, and Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (second series, 1950), p. 41, no. 2.

³ *The Great Learning*, 1:3, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 357.

On Moral Cultivation

24. TO YANG SHIH-TE¹ AND HSUEH SHANG-CH'EN²

1517

. . . I have reached Lung-nan³ today, and shall invade the bandits' headquarters tomorrow. The soldiers from the four routes are all proceeding according to appointed times, and it looks as if the bandits will certainly be defeated. When I was in

Heng-shui,⁴ I once wrote to you, Shih-te, saying: 'It is easy to defeat the bandits in the mountains, but difficult to defeat the bandits in our minds.' That I am able to eliminate a few petty thieves is no cause for surprise. But for you, my worthy friends, to sweep your hearts clean of the bandits inside, and to succeed in restoring inner clarity and peace and calm, would certainly be an epoch-making accomplishment of great men. I suppose that during the past few days, you must have already obtained a strategy which will be sure of victory, so that we can already await the reports of your triumph in the near future. What cause for joy is this!

WWKC, 4:187

¹ Yang Shih-te's private name was Yang Chi. He died before his brother Yang Shih-ming with whom he had studied first under Chan Kan ch'uan and then under Yang-ming. See *WWKC*, 25:731 and *MJHA*, 30:1a-b.

² Private name Hsueh K'an (d. 1545). See *MJHA*, 30:3a.

³ In the present province of Kiangsi. During Ming times, it was a county attached to Kan-chou. See *Ming-shih*, 43:97.

⁴ In the present province of Kiangsi; Yang-ming established a county there. See 'Nien-p'u', *WWKC*, 32:926. The letter referred to is not included in these *Complete Works*. But according to 'Nien-p'u', Yang-ming was in Heng-shui two months earlier. See also note 3.

On Civil Service

25. TO WEN-JEN PANG-YING AND PANG-CHENG¹

1518

... When our family is poor and our parents old, how can we not seek after an official's emolument?² Yet, when we do seek after an official's emolument, but pay no attention to preparations for examination, we would merely be negligent in making human efforts, and blaming Heaven and fate in vain. This is silly. If we could only make our determination very firm, and always keep to the *tao* in every affair, without being moved by considerations of gain and loss, then, even if we work hard to prepare for examinations, and even if we talk daily of virtue, we would only acquire the defect of becoming listless and vain. That is why men in the past spoke about losing one's determination [to seek sagehood] as being more dangerous than the hindrances to making

45

efforts.³ Now, to speak of losing determination means that one already has a determination which can be lost. If one has not yet a determination which may be lost, must one [not] therefore think deeply and reflect upon oneself as early as possible? . . .

WWKC, 4:187

¹ Wen-jen Pang-ying and Pang-cheng were two brothers, Yang-ming's cousins and disciples. Their private names were Yin and Chuan. See *Shao-hsing fu-chih*, 33:436. Also *Yang-ming hsien-shang chuan-tsuán*, pt 1, p. 35.

² *Mencius*, 5b:b, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 383.

³ Ch'eng Yi, *Wai-shu*, 11:5a.

On Civil Service

26. TO WEN-JEN PANG-YING AND PANG-CHENG

1518

The gentleman only seeks to do what is right. If he takes up an official position, it is not normally on account of poverty, although sometimes it might be on account of poverty.¹ Former men all did that; why should we alone be different? But it is wrong to say that the participation in the civil examinations goes against the learning of the sages. Ch'eng-tzu said that 'If the mind does not forget [its objective] even though one might have to take care of worldly affairs, there is nothing that is not solid learning, nothing that is not *tao* [virtue]'.¹ The same is true of participation in examinations. However to say that participation in civil examinations does not at all work against the learning of sages is also wrong. Ch'eng-tzu also said that, if the mind forgets [its objective], then even if you spend a whole lifetime, all that you do is but superficial.³ This is all the more so with participation in civil examinations. Between 'forgetting' and 'not forgetting', the difference is slighter than a hair's breadth. The essential is in thinking deeply and understanding in silence, what thing is that which he says one ought not forget. To know this is to know learning. . . .

WWKC, 4:187-8

¹ *Mencius*, 5B:5, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 383.

² This saying is attributed to Chang Tsai by Chu Hsi. See *Chin-ssu lu chi-chu*, 2:23b Chan's *Reflections*, p. 85.

³ This is the continuation of Chang Tsai's saying (note 2).

On *liang-chih*

27. TO HSÜEH SHANG-CH' IEN¹

1518

. . . Several years of studying together can only help us to fix our determination and to distinguish between righteousness and profit.² If we have not yet acquired strength in this regard, all our daily talk will be vain words, and all our daily insights will be quite unreal. We must not fail to realise and examine ourselves with effort upon this. The man who falls once acquires one more experience. There is no reason why the failure of today cannot very well become the success of the day after. But we have come to the Second Principle, while we really ought to apply our efforts first to the First Principle.³ The truth in one is the truth in all.⁴ Since it is the case with this little thing [*liang-chih*], there is no more need to seek for what is not true.

WWKC, 4:188

¹ See Letter 24.

² *Analects*, IV:16, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 170.

³ 'First Principle' (*ti-yi-yi*) and 'Second Principle' (*ti-erh yi*) are Buddhist terms, referring respectively to the Highest Truth and to secondary truths. In Ch'an Buddhism, the First Principle is that which is beyond the realm of the conscious mind and hence inexpressible. The Sanskrit word for 'First Principle' is *paramartha*. See *Lankavatāra Sūtra*, TSD No. 670, 16:500, English translation by D.T. Suzuki, *The Lankavatāra Sūtra: A Mahayana Text* (1959), p. 35.

In the case of Yang-ming, *liang-chih* is his 'First Principle' and everything else is secondary, as the rest of this letter shows.

⁴ Allusion to the *T'ien-t'ai* philosophy of Buddhism, with its 'one-in-all and all-in-one' proposition. See the *Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men* [The Method of Concentration and Insight of the Greater Vehicle] ascribed to Hui-ssu (514-577) in *Hsü kao-seng chuan*, ch. 17, TSD No. 2060, 50:562-4. Yang-ming is trying to say that *liang-chih* contains all truth. This is the first time, in these letters, that he hints at his teaching of *liang-chih*. We know this to be so -- that 'this little thing?' (*che-hsieh-tzu*) refers to *liang chih* -- through the information given in the *Nien-p'u*; see WWKC 33:951 for the account of Yang-ming's discovery of *liang-chih*.

On Correction of Faults

28. TO MY YOUNGER BROTHERS
[AND COUSINS]¹

1518

. . . Our *pen-hsin*² is as bright and clear as the sun in the day time. No one who has faults does not know them himself. The only

fear is that he does not correct them. Once determined to reform, he recovers at once his own mind.

Which human being, indeed, is without fault? The noble thing is to correct one's fault. Ch'ü Po-yü was a very worthy man.³ Yet he said, 'I wish to correct my fault, but am unable to do so'. King T'ang and Confucius were two great sages. And yet one said, 'I willingly correct my faults',⁴ and the other, 'I wish to be free from big faults'.⁵ Everyone says, 'Except for Yao and Shun, who can be without fault?'

This also is a conventional way of talking. We cannot learn adequately from this how the minds of Yao and Shun were like. If Yao and Shun really considered themselves as faultless, they would not be sages. The advice they gave to each other was, 'The mind of man is prone to error, the mind of *tao* is subtle. Keep always to the Mean; practise discernment and single-mindedness'.⁶ Since they themselves regarded the mind of man as prone to error, it shows that their minds were as prone to faults as those of other men. Only because they were always wary were they able to hold fast to the Mean and avoid transgressions.⁷ Sages and worthy men of the past always saw their own faults and corrected them. Hence they were able to avoid faults. This is not due to their minds being really different from those of other men. He who is vigilant without being seen, and apprehensive without being heard,⁸ constantly obtains the results of seeing for himself his faults. Recently, I have really seen where I can apply effort in this aspect of learning, but, on account of accumulated habits and deep-seated faults, I lack courage to correct myself. That is why I warn you of this earnestly in advance as my brothers, so that you may not allow yourselves to develop such deep-seated faults as mine are, and then find it difficult to correct them. When people are young, they have enough vital energy and physical power to keep up their courage. Besides, family worries are not yet so pressing. So they find it rather easy to apply their efforts [to the task of self-cultivation]. But as they grow older, they become more and more involved in the cares of the world while their vital energy diminishes daily. If they are able to devote themselves with earnest determination to study, they can yet do something useful with themselves. But by the time they reach forty or fifty, they resemble the setting

sun, which decreases in power, and cannot be held back any more. That is why Confucius said, 'The person who at the age of forty or fifty has not yet been heard of by others, is not worthy of being regarded with respect'.⁹ He also said, "When a man is old, and his physical powers have diminished, he ought to guard against covetousness".¹⁰ Recently, I have seen this defect also in myself. That is why I earnestly warn you of it in advance, my brothers, so that you may make efforts while you still have time, and not wait until it is too late, when you will only regret in vain.

WWKC, 4:189-90

- ¹ The eldest son of his parents, Yang-ming had three younger brothers: Shou-chien, Shou-wen, Shou-chang, as well as a younger sister, married to his favourite disciple, Hsu Ai. He was, however, the only child of his mother, who died when he was twelve. I add 'and Cousins' because of the appearance of the words *ti-pei* (brothers' generation) in China, paternal cousins regarded one another as brothers.
- ² The word *pen-hsin*, literally 'original mind', was frequently used by Lu Chiu-yuan [Lu Hsiang-shan] (1139-93). In the writings of Yang-ming, it does not occur very often.
- ³ A famous minister of Wei, and contemporary of Confucius. See *Analects*, XIV: 26, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 285-6.
- ⁴ *Book of Documents*, 'Chung-hui chih kao' [The Announcement of Chung-hui], Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 180.
- ⁵ *Analects*, VII: 16, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 200.
- ⁶ *Book of Documents*, 'Ta-Yu mu', Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pp. 61-2.
- ⁷ *Book of Documents*, 'Kao-yao mu' [Counsels of Kao-yao], *ibid.*, p. 73.
- ⁸ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 1:2-3, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 384.
- ⁹ *Analects*, IX:22, *ibid.*, p. 223.
- ¹⁰ *Analects*, XVI:7, *ibid.*, p. 313.

On Patience under Criticism

29. TO [TS'AI] HSI-YUAN

1519

... Although someone might treat him harshly and unjustly, a gentleman would first examine himself saying, 'Could I not be lacking in *li* [propriety] towards him?' And if he then decides he has not failed in *li*, he must still examine himself saying, 'Could I not be lacking in *chung* [fidelity] towards him?'¹ Since, Hsi-yuan, your effort of self-conquest is becoming daily more perfect and sincere and earnest, you certainly will not presume to be perfect in fidelity.

In the past during my exile in Kuei^wchot^w, not a month passed without my suffering tribulation [at the hands of others] all the time. Yet, when I think of it now, it was there that I could have

made the most progress in all that relates to the stimulation of the mind, the strengthening of human nature,² the practice of polishing and perfecting oneself. At that time, however, I only stopped at an imperfect accomplishment of my duties in order to pass time, and so I wasted the precious opportunity. . . .

WWKC, 4:181

¹ *Mencius*, 4B:28, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp. 333-4.

² *Mencius*, 6B:15, *ibid.*, p. 447.

On Similarities and Differences in Opinion

30. TO [CHAN] KAN-CH'UAN¹

1519

. . . In your letter, you reproached me earnestly for not having written to you for so long. This shows how much you love me. I am really at fault in this respect.

Given the same *hsin* [mind], and the same *li* [moral principles],² if we only know how to apply efforts on this point, then, in spite of a hundred anxieties and different paths, we shall tend to the same goal.³ Otherwise, even if we seek to prove every word, and to pursue the meaning of every sentence, the slightest divergence in our beginnings will lead to a difference of a thousand *li* [Chinese mile] at the conclusions . . . While, in our common purpose of advancing forward with the determination of attaining the goal [of sagehood], our minds may meet unconsciously and inadvertently, it may also not be possible for us not to find occasionally small differences in our insights. But since you manifest no weariness to me in this regard, I also am not anxious to influence you. What is important is that, sharing the same ambition, we resemble two men, both on their way to the capital, but possibly taking different routes, whether straight or circuitous. They both know that at the end they will arrive in the same place.

Formerly, when we were together in the boat at Lung-chiang [Nanking], I used to tell you how I preferred the old version of the Great Learning, and also about my theories on the *ko-wu* [investigation of things]. You did not, then, agree with me, and I too put such questions aside without insisting upon them. For

I knew you would, soon enough, come to a thorough understanding. Now that my judgment has been proved correct, my joy is of course beyond description! The waters coming from the K'un-lun mountain⁴ may sometimes flow underground, but they will eventually reach the sea. I am like a pauper. Were I to discover a translucent jade, others would not believe me, and would consider it a false imitation. Such a gem must enter the house of Ch'i-tun,⁵ in order to be made manifest to the world, so that its discoverer may at least be free of the crime of forgetting the gem. However, even this parable remains ambiguous. A translucent jade is obtained after a search outside of self. What I have been referring to, on the other hand, is something I originally possessed, without the need of any external search. But it might occasionally be forgotten, or, without being forgotten, it might get obscured from vision. . . .

WWKC, 4:190

¹ His private name was Chan Jo-shui. A native of the present province of Kuangtung, he became *chin-shih* in 1505, and later rose to the rank of Minister of Rites, of Civil Service, and of Military Affairs. He was also a famous philosopher, and a student of the philosopher Ch'en Hsien-chang (1428-1500). See *MJHA*, 37:2a-b.

² Allusion to a saying of Lu Chiu-yuan: 'Sages appeared tens of thousands of generations ago. They shared the same *hsin*, the same *li*. Sages will appear tens of generations after us. They will share the same *hsin*, the same *li*. . . . 'See *Hsiang-shan chüan-chi* [Complete Works of Lu], SPPY ed. (referred to hereinafter as *HSCC*), 22:5a.

³ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 2, ch. 5, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 389.

⁴ The longest mountain range in China.

⁵ A ancient rich man. See *Shih-chi*, ch. 129, p. 276.

On the Old Version of the *Great Learning*

31. TO FANG SHU-HSIEN¹

1519

Recently I received your letter together with the two letters exchanged between you and Kan-ch'üan. I read quickly through them and felt as refreshed as a man being soothed by a clear, cool breeze after having been in the heat. Your opinions are above the ordinary. You have made rapid progress – going forward a thousand *li* [distance] a day!

The re-publication of the old text of the *Great Learning* is especially a great event. I rejoice very much over it. In your discussions concerning Hsiang-shan, you cited several passages

from Mencius with regard to the 'lost mind',² but Kan-ch'uan still did not consider that adequate, and cited in addition: 'Sages arise in the Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Seas; they have the same *hsin*, the same *li*',³ and also 'all that is within the universe is our concern'.⁴ His quotations are certainly to the point. But I prefer the intimacy and earnestness of your insights, Hsi-ch'iao! He who grasps the essentials must also make intimate and earnest efforts. If such intimate and earnest efforts are not made, his seemingly 'important' insights are mere hypothesis. Ever since Mencius made of original goodness the source of mind and nature,⁵ scholars have often discussed the problem back and forth. But their learning became finally fragmentary and external, without their being aware of it, precisely because their efforts lack in earnestness. . . .

WWKC, 4:191-2

¹ Private name Fang Hsien-fu, literary name Hsi-ch'iao. He became a *chin-shih* in 1505, and a disciple of Yang-ming. See *Ming-shih*, 196: 466-7.

² *Mencius*, 6A:11, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 414.

³ *HSCC*, 22:5a.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Mencius*, 6A:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 401.

On Learning

32. To Hsia Tun-fu¹

1521

. . . Formerly Confucius said to Tzu-kung, 'Tz'u [Tzu-kung's name] do you consider me as a learned man who remembers a great deal of things?' He responded 'Yes - or is that not correct?' Confucius said, 'No, I merely seek an all-pervading unity in my knowledge'.² And so, should the learning of sages not possess certain essential doctrines? The desertion of human morality and of the principles of things by the Buddhists and their consequent fall into the void, certainly cannot be called the understanding of the mind. On the other hand, can the external quest of wordly scholars, who seek for knowledge through investigations, without knowing how to focus on the mind, be called investigation of *li*? . . .

WWKC, 5:194

their own thinking, and in so doing, become more conscious of its depths. What is your honourable opinion thereof? Where the theory of the extension of knowledge is concerned, I fear that I shall not change my ideas, and hope you will have the kindness to think it over more and tell me at your convenience what is your second thought. For it forms the essential core of doctrine in the 'transmission of mind' of the learning of sages. If this is clear, everything else will be too. When the purpose is sincere and earnest, one cannot but be straightforward. Please do excuse my boldness. . . .

WWKC, 5:195

¹ This was the constant teaching of Chan Kan-ch'uan. See *MJHA*, 37.

² *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 2, ch. 5, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 389.

³ *Great Learning*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 355-9.

On *hsin*: Activity and Tranquillity

35. To Lun Yen-shih¹

1521

. . . The mind (*hsin*) is that which can neither be described as active nor tranquil. Tranquillity refers to its substance, while activity refers to its function. That is why the learning of the superior man makes no distinction between activity and tranquillity.² When he is tranquil he is constantly aware of the tranquillity of the mind and therefore it cannot be said to be non-existent. That is why he responds constantly to the external world. When he is active he is also constantly in control of the activity of his mind, so that it cannot be said to be existent. That is why it seems always to be quiet. Constantly responding and constantly quiet, both activity and tranquillity are present. This is called *chi-yi*³ [concentration of righteousness]. Such concentration of righteousness can free one from great regrets,⁴ for the mind remains fixed whether active or tranquil. The mind is only one. Tranquillity is its substance. If you seek for another foundation of tranquillity, you are disturbing its original substance. Activity is its function; if you fear its being easily stirred, you are preventing its functioning. That is why the desire for tranquillity is itself activity, while the aversion for activity is not [necessarily] tranquillity.⁵ This activity is active,

¹ His private name was Hsia Shan-p'u. He became a *chin-shih* in 1511. In his youth he had studied under the philosopher Lou Liang [1422-91]. See *MJHA*, 4:1a.

² *Analects*, XV:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 295.

On Lu Chiu-yuan

33. TO HSI YUAN-SHAN¹

1521

. . . The teaching of [Lu] Hsiang-shan is simple and direct. In this, he ranks only after Mencius. While his theories about study, inquiry, reflection and discernment,² about the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things,³ are not free from 'conformity' to tradition, his basic insights are definitely far beyond what the other philosophers can hope to have. . . .

WWKC, 5:195

¹ His private name was Hsi Shu (1461-1527). He became a *chin-shih* in 1490 and later rose to the rank of a Grand Secretary. See *Ming-shih*, 197:468.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 413.

³ *Great Learning*, ch. 1, *ibid.* p. 358.

On Similarities and Differences in Opinion

34. TO [CHAN] KAN-CH'UAN¹

1521

. . . To recognise everywhere the principle of Heaven¹ is a truthful proposition, and quite free from deceit. I used to teach it too, in the beginning. But when I investigated the starting points of your ideas, I seem to find slight divergences of a hair's breadth from my teaching. However, we should eventually reach the same destination, even by taking different routes.² The cultivation of self, the ordering of one's family, the governing of the country, and the pacification of the world remain always *ko-wu*,³ but if one wished to explain these passages repeatedly, one would seem to be talking too much. Besides, the simpler and more ancient are the meanings of the words used, the harder and more obscure they become when compared to the original text, so that readers would find more difficulty in searching for understanding. Is there not some defect of the mind in this? It would be better to use clear and simple terms, to point out briefly the general direction, and so to enable others to reach the meaning through

and even tranquillity is active, the movement back and forth, up and down, becomes endless. That is why obedience to principles is called tranquillity while assent to unruly desire is called activity. Desire does not necessarily refer to the external luring of music and dancing, women, possessions or profit. All that which the mind is privy to is desire. That is why the following of *li* (moral principles) is always tranquil, even in the midst of changing vicissitudes. This is what [Chou] Lien-hsi [Chou Tun-yi] meant by the emphasis on tranquillity giving no place to desire.⁶ This is what is meant by the concentration of righteousness. When a man follows the impulse of his desire, were he then to practise the fasting of the mind and even attain the [transcendental] state of *tso-wang* [self-forgetfulness], he would remain active.⁷ What Kao-tzu⁸ meant by forced restraint merely promotes [*ch'i*].⁹ It makes of righteousness an external thing. . . .¹⁰

WWKC, 5:196

¹ His private name was Lun Yi-hsün (born in 1498). A *chin-shih* in 1517 (he ranked second that year) he later became Chancellor of the National University in Nanking. See Yü Hsien, *Huang-Ming chin-shih teng-k'o k'ao* [Study on the Successful Candidates of the Chin-shih Degree of the Ming Dynasty] (pub. between 1521 and 1566), in Chü Wan-li (comp.), *Ming-tai shih-chieh hui-k'an* [Collected Historical Documents of the Ming Dynasty], Taipei, 1969.

² See Ch'eng Hao, *Ming-tao wen-chi*, 3:1a-b (Answer to Master Heng-chu's letter on calming Human Nature). See also, in connection with this subject, the letter (oo) written by Yang-ming to Wang Ch'un-fu (1513).

³ *Mencius*, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 190.

⁴ Allusion to *Book of Changes*, Commentary on the Hexagram 'Fu', see Legge's *Yi King*, p. 108.

⁵ See note 2.

⁶ See *Chou-tzu T'ung-shu* [Chou Tun-yi's *Book of Penetration*], 'Sheng-hsüeh' [Learning to Be a Sage], SPY ed., ch. 20.

⁷ Allusion to *Chuang-tzu*, ch. 5, Watson (trans.), p. 90.

⁸ A contemporary of *Mencius*, see *Mencius*, 2A: 2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp. 189-91.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Mencius*, 2A:2, 4A:4, *ibid.*, pp. 190, 397.

On Learning

36. TO T'ANG YU-TSO, THE REGIONAL INSPECTOR¹

1521

. . . Fu Yueh said, 'If you study the instructions of the ancients, you will certainly obtain knowledge.'² To study the instructions

of the ancients does not refer to being proficient in letters, to being eloquent in speech,³ and to obtaining knowledge outside of one's self through incidental deeds of righteousness.⁴ To 'obtain' means to get in the mind; it is not infused from without.⁵ One must proceed according to the ancient instructions, learning all that which the ancients learned, and then make oneself sincere. 'Completing such task by silent study, and securing the faith of others without recourse to words'⁶ refers to the fruit of study. 'To have a humble mind and to maintain a constant sagacity'⁷ does not refer to covering up one's feelings by showing external humility, while being anxious to obtain success in one's career and reputation. To have a humble mind means to act like the earth underneath us, which supports everything, or like the empty ocean, which contains everything. To maintain a constant sagacity means to act in accordance with the virtue of Heaven, being always cautious and apprehensive without waiting to see or hear things, somewhat like the *t'ai-ho* [Great Harmony]⁸ which moves without ceasing. In this way, one can 'wait for a hundred generations, without misgiving, for the rise of the sage',⁹ 'all-embracing and vast, deep and active as a fountain, sending forth his virtues in due season, so that he speaks and the people all believe him, he acts, and the people are all pleased with him.'¹⁰ 'His fame will extend to the barbarian tribes',¹¹ and his virtue will last for ever. This is why Yueh is Yueh . . . Yen-tzu had said, 'Shun was a man; I am also a man.'¹² Could you not, Yü-tso, say the same of yourself in relation to Fu Yueh? . . .

WWKC, 5:196-7

¹ His private name was T'ang Lung. A *chin-shih* in 1508, he was to fill many important positions, such as Minister of Justice, of Civil Officials, and of Military Affairs. See *Ming-shih*, 202: 482.

² *Book of Documents*, 'The Charge to Yueh', pt 2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pt 1, p. 260. Fu Yueh was the worthy minister of King Wu-ting (1323-1264 B.C.) of the Shang dynasty.

³ *Hsün-tzu*, 'Ch'üan-hsüeh', [Encouraging Learning] See Burton Watson (trans.), *Basic Writings of Hsün-tzu* (1963), 20.

⁴ *Mencius*, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 190.

⁵ *Mencius*, 4A:6, *ibid.*, pp. 402-3.

⁶ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 1, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 378.

⁷ *Book of Documents*, Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pp. 250-1.

⁸ An idea developed by Chang Tsai. See his first chapter in *Chang-tzu ch'üan-shu*, *Cheng-meng* [Correcting Youthful Ignorance], 2:1b-5b.

⁹ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 24, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 426.

¹⁰ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 31, *ibid.*, p. 429.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Mencius*, 3A:1, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 235.

On Learning

37. TO FANG SHU-HSIEN

1521

. . . There is only one *tao*!¹ With regard to its ultimate roots and sources, there is not one of the Six Classics and the Four Books that cannot be explained in harmony with it – not just the *Hung-fan* [Great Plan]² in relation to the *Ta-hsüeh* [Great Learning]. This is what I frequently say to my friends. We can use plants as an example. They resemble one another in their growth. But if all is to be alike – the display of flowers and fruit, the height of leaves and branches – I fear that the creator of nature would not do as well as the sculptor of art. . . .

. . . True learning has remained obscure for several hundred years already. Now, thanks to those who share my ideals, such as Kan-ch'uan and yourself, who discuss learning together and provide one another with the benefit of mutual corrections and encouragements, we have been able to obtain some light. If you suddenly return to such excessive concern with the literal meanings of words, to whom can I turn? True, in discussing learning the gentleman follows only the path of truth, without always seeking agreement with others . . . In what pertains to the extension of learning and the investigation of things, Kan-ch'uan's theory is still slightly different from mine, although that does not prevent their being essentially in harmony. . . .

WWKC, 5:197

¹ *Mencius*, 3A:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 234.

² A chapter in the *Book of Documents*. See Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pp. 320-43.

On the Extension of Knowledge

38. TO YANG SHIH-MING¹

1521

. . . You spoke of your daily efforts at learning, how you merely follow your own *liang-chih*, doing away with the hindrances,

while seeking to expand and complete its substance, and doing all that without complying with the caprices of our epoch by compromising with the conventional practice. This is all very good. To act thus is to extend your knowledge and investigate things,² to understand the good and attain personal sincerity.³ In acting thus, how can your virtue not be renewed daily, and your merits not be enriched?⁴ . . . You spoke of watching yourself every day without being able to permeate the entire day with this vigilance. This means merely that the effort of extension of knowledge is interrupted. After all, the value of *jen* also depends upon [constant practice] bringing it to maturity.⁵

You also spoke about testing such effort with the similarities and differences in what earlier scholars have written, and find that [your effort] does not correspond to what they say. This gives rise to frequent doubts.

What I say about the extension of knowledge is the 'treasure of the orthodox dharma-eye' of the Confucian school.⁶ He who sees the truth of this 'sets it up before Heaven and Earth, and finds nothing in it in which he transgresses. He presents himself with it before spiritual beings, and no doubt arises concerning it. He examines it by comparing [it] with the doctrines of the three sage kings, and finds it free from error. He is ready to wait for a hundred years for a sage, without harbouring any misgiving.'⁷ Only he who knows this can be said to know *tao*. Only he who attains this can be said to possess virtue. He who learns something different from this is a heretic. He who teaches something different from this teaches falsehood. He who acts without understanding this acts blindly. Even though a thousand devils and ten thousand phantoms may delude and confuse us with their transformations,⁸ we have only to touch them in order to pierce the illusions, to receive them in order to dissolve them, just as the devils and phantoms have nowhere to hide when the sun rises. . . .

WWKC, 5:198

¹ Together with his elder brother Yang Shih-te, he was first the disciple of Kan-ch'uan and then of Yang-ming. Both brothers died before Yang-ming. See Yang-ming's *chi-wen* (obituary essay) written in memory of Yang Shih-ming in 1526, in *WWKC*, 25:73 and *MJHA*, 30:1a-b.

² *Great Learning*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 356-9.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20, *ibid.*, p. 413.

⁴ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 1. See Legge's *Yi King*, p. 355.

⁵ *Mencius*, 6A:19, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 421.

⁶ Allusion to the Buddhist story concerning the origin of Ch'an Buddhism. See *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*, 1:4a. 'Dharma' refers to truth. 'Dharma-eye' is that which looks into the depths of truth. See also D.T. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen* (1955), pp. 12, 21.

⁷ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 29, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 425-6.

⁸ Allusion to the Buddhist notion of men's deception by phantoms which are the products of the delusions of his own mind. The Chinese word *mo* is the abridged form of the transliteration of the Sanskrit word *Mara*, referring to the devil, who sends his daughter or assumes monstrous forms to tempt men. See for example *Surangama sūtra*, TSD No. 945, 15:629.

On Cultivation of Life

39. TO LU YUAN-CHING

1521

. . . I hear that on account of your frequent sicknesses, you intend to apply yourself to the 'cultivation of life'.¹ In the past, I also did so. Only later did I realise that it was unnecessary, and then I began again to concentrate on the learning of sages. Generally speaking the cultivation of virtue and the cultivation of life are one and the same thing. If what you call 'the real self' could really 'remain vigilant when not seen, and apprehensive when not heard',² and concentrate on such practices, then your *ch'i* [ether] and your *ching* [sperm] will be collected.³ In this case, what the Taoists call physical immortality will also be present. The school of immortals is different from that of sages, but its purpose and starting point is also to direct men to *tao*.⁴ It is said in the epilogue of *Wu-chen p'ien* [Treatise on Awakening to Truth], The Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu took pity on their covetous desires, and used the art of immortals to give them gradual and systematic direction.⁵ If you will read this over, you will see for yourself its hidden meanings. The sages from Yao, Shun, Yu, T'ang, King Wen, and King Wu down to the Duke of Chou and Confucius, have been all-embracing in their love of the people and for things. If there had been an art of physical immortality, they would not have been unwilling to show it to others. As to people like Lao-tzu and P'eng Keng,⁶ they are naturally endowed with the propensity to long life, which is not a thing one can acquire by learning. Later men, such as Po Yü-ch'an⁷ and Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un,⁸ known among the Taoists as patriarchs and teachers, lived only to the age of fifty or sixty, which shows that the so-called theory of physical immortality should certainly refer to something different. Since you have a weak constitution and are often sick, you need merely to abandon the path of honours and reputation, purify your mind and your desires, concentrate on the learning of sages, in the sense in

to see whether what they say may be true, and whether there are yet things which they say, which we have not accepted. We ought to try hard to seek for the truth, and not always consider ourselves right and others wrong. On the other hand, if what they say is wrong, and we are right in our own convictions, we should the more put our principles into practice, and seek to be humble. This is what is meant by 'Meditate upon it and you will complete it, use no words and people will believe you'.¹ However, are not the many criticisms of today occasions for us to practise patience, forbearance, and mutual admonition?² Besides, the criticisms do not necessarily arise out of personal grudges. People say such things because they consider themselves the defenders of truth. Moreover, their sayings come originally from the general theories of former scholars, and so they do have their proofs, while our words appear suddenly as being different from those of the past, rather like forced interpretation and things invented by the imagination. For people do not know that the teaching of the sages was originally so, but, through transmission, has lost its pristine purity. The teachings of former scholars became daily so fragmentary, also because later scholars kept on copying from one another and thereby accumulated many errors. Since they [our critics] decided first not to believe, and refused to investigate with humility, while we, in our discussions, may also be carried away by a desire to excel and by other superficial dispositions, without avoiding certain excesses of expression, we deserve their ridicule and alarm. This is our responsibility, for which we ought not blame them solely.

Alas, when we teach today, do we seek to say things that differ from what others say, or do we seek to say the same things as the others? Do we seek to excel by goodness, or to educate others by goodness? We only pay lip service to the theory of the unity of action and knowledge. When have we really united our knowledge and action? If we seek the source of the difficulty, then someone like myself will be found most guilty, since, ordinarily, I merely expound this with my lips, and have not applied it to myself, so that my words do not correspond to reality, and my actions cannot cover my words. Without having really practised the extension of knowledge, I say that the teachings of former men on this subject are incomplete, in the

which the theory of the 'true self' was referred to earlier. You ought not to believe easily in heterodox teachings, thus confusing your understanding needlessly, wasting your mental and physical energies as well as your time. If you stay away long and do not return to society, you will become easily a frenzied and mentally sick man. . . .

WWKC, 5:199

- ¹ Taoist cultivation aiming at prolonging one's life. Its classics include Wei Po-yang (fl. 147-67), *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i* [Tallying Ideas of Taoist Cultivation with the Book of Changes]. See Liu Ts'un-yan, 'Lu Hsi-hsing and His Commentaries on the *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i*', *Tsing-hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, vol. 7 (1968), p. 80.
- ² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 384.
- ³ These are Taoist terms. See Liu Ts'un-yan, 'Ming-ju yu tao-chiao', *Hsin-ya hsueh-pao*, vol. 8 (1967), pp. 1-38, for an exposition of Taoist practices and influence in Yang-ming's time.
- ⁴ Here Yang-ming probably means by *tao*, transcendental human destiny.
- ⁵ The *Wu-chen p'ien* of Ch'en Chih-hsu (see Letters 2 and 5 00) was criticised earlier by Yang-ming in a poem of 1514; see WWKC, 20:606. Here he speaks of the Epilogue of Chang Po-tuan (dated 1078) given in the *Tao-tsang* (Ming ed., Shanghai reprint, 1923-6), 64, Epilogue, lb. See Liu Ts'un-yan, 'Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought' in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (1970), pp. 311-15.
- ⁶ His name was Chien Keng. P'eng was given to him as a fief. He was supposed to have lived for over 800 years, during the Hsia and nearly throughout the Shang dynasty. For his story see *Lieh-hsien chuan*, attributed to Liu Hsiang (first century B.C.) in *Ku-chin yi-shih* [History of Hermits of Past and Present] (Ming ed., reprinted in Shanghai, 1937), pt 1, 8a, French translation by Max Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-Sien Tchouan* [Biographies of Immortals] (1953), p. 82.
- ⁷ His real name was Ko Ch'ang-keng. He lived during the Southern Sung dynasty and is regarded as the last of the five patriarchs of the Southern branch of religious Taoism. See Chi Yun (1724-1805) *et al.*, *Ssu-k'u ch'uan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao* [Essential Information on the Complete Catalogue of the Four Libraries], Shanghai, 1933, 28:88.
- ⁸ His real name was Ch'iu Ch'u-chi (1148-1227). A native of Shantung, he was summoned by Genghis Khan to the region between Kabul and Anderob in present-day Afghanistan to preach to him. He lived to the age of 79, though Yang-ming gave him much less. See 'Yuan Ch'iu Ch'u-chi Nien-p'u' [Chronological Biography of Chiu Ch'u-chi of the Yuan dynasty] in Yao Ts'ung-wu, *Tung-pei-shih lun-ts'ung* [On the History of the North-east] (1959), vol. 2, pp. 214-76.

On Patience under Criticism

40. TO LU YUAN-CHING

1522

. . . To stop criticisms by not arguing, was what was taught by former men. In our present situation, would this not be even more correct? On account of differences and similarities in their teachings, heroes of virtue and leaders everywhere are now engaged in many discussions. Would our people be able to win arguments with them? We should rather reflect upon ourselves,

same way as a poor beggar may talk about gold, and yet still follow and beg for food from others. You, my friends, have suffered through your faith in and your affection for me. You liked me so much that you did not see my faults, and this [indulgence] has led to many [unpleasant] talks today . . . [Ch'eng] Yi-ch'uan and [Chu] Hui-an were not able³ in their times to avoid slander, criticism, and exile. This is all the more for us, as our actions have often fallen short of our ideals, so that the slander, abuse, and criticism of others are just what we deserve. Besides, the people today who argue about learning must necessarily desire to learn. We ought not remain distant from them just because their ideas are different from our own.

Everyone has the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Only on account of long established habits, they are unable easily to understand our teachings. After all, did not some of you, my friends, when you first heard my words, ridicule and slander them? After some time, you have come to an understanding, and even express theories that show a certain excess. How do we not know that the strength expended today in criticism will not become the depth of belief at some later date? . . .

All men have this moral ability to judge between right and wrong.⁴ This is what we call *liang-chih*. Who does not have this *liang-chih*? There are only people who do not know how to extend it. The *Book of Changes* speaks of 'knowing the utmost point to reach, and reaching it'.⁵ To know the utmost point is real knowledge. To reach it is to extend knowledge. This is how knowledge and action become united. In recent ages, the teaching concerning *ko-wu* and *chih-chih* cover only one word: *chih* [knowledge], and that quite inconclusively. As to the effort of *chih* [extension] – this has been completely omitted. This is why knowledge and action have become two things.

WWKC, 5:200

¹ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 1, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 378.

² *Mencius*, 6B:15, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 447.

³ See *Sung-shih* K'ai-ming ed., 1937, 427:1097-8 on Ch'eng Yi and 429:1101-3 on Chu Hsi.

⁴ *Mencius*, 6A:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 402.

⁵ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', Legge's *Yi King*, p. 410.

You asked me about the similarities and differences between the philosophers Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yüan [Lu Hsiang-shan]. As I read carefully over your letter, I would say that while [Wang] Yü-an¹ is mistaken in preferring Lu to Chu, you too are mistaken in preferring Chu to Lu. The world has long held that Chu is right and Lu is wrong. Such opinion has become difficult to change . . . But it is my opinion that in your present dispute you should not seek to win the argument, to put Hsiang-shan definitely in the wrong and Hui-an definitely in the right. Rather, go back to the roots and to the source, in order really to see the nuances of their strong and weak points in very small things. This would be acting like a clever judge, hearing judicial cases. He has to see why the man in the wrong might have done something because he could not help it, while the party in the right may also have shown some faults. In this way, he would allow the persecuted party to state his situation, while the party receiving redress also must not escape responsibility. This would be to exhaust to the utmost the justice of the cause and its principles, rest the minds of men, and wait a hundred generations for a sage.²

. . . You two, however, have discussed this question, each with the idea of seeking to win over the other. To seek to win is to be moved by passion. And does not being moved by passion, take [one] more than a thousand *li* away from the course of reason and righteousness?

In discussing the qualities and defects of the ancients, one must never rely on the imagination and decide the case summarily. Now, in speaking of Hsiang-shan, Yü-an said, 'Although he concentrated on the respect of the virtuous nature,³ he did not avoid falling into the emptiness of Ch'an Buddhism. However, his conduct and faith would still be adequate to allow him to be counted as a disciple of the sage. But Hui-an, on the other hand, insisted on study and inquiry,⁴ and became fragmentary and divided in his knowledge, teaching what was no longer the sincerity of thought and the rectification of the mind of the school

of sages.' And you, in speaking of Hui-an, said: 'Although he insisted mainly on knowledge and inquiry, and did not avoid keeping to the conventions and becoming fragmentary in his learning, he followed the teaching and order and gradual improvement, without going against the instructions of the *Great Learning*. Hsiang-shan, however, in concentrating on respect for virtuous nature, became empty and abstract, and no longer taught the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge in the *Great Learning*.'

However, if one speaks of the respect of virtuous nature, one cannot also speak of falling into the emptiness of Ch'an Buddhism. And when one speaks of falling into the emptiness of Ch'an Buddhism, one cannot also speak of respect of virtuous nature. Also, when one speaks of study and inquiry, one cannot speak of keeping to the conventions and becoming fragmentary in knowledge. While when one speaks of keeping to the conventions and becoming fragmentary in knowledge, one cannot also speak of study and inquiry. The distinction between the two is very minute indeed. Yet the discussion which you two have held was not free from imaginative judgments. Formerly, when Tzu-ssu discussed learning, in an essay not less than a thousand and several hundred words,⁵ he summarised these in the sentence concerning 'respecting virtuous nature yet studying through inquiry'.⁶ In your argument, however, with one emphasising respect for virtuous nature, and the other study and inquiry, you are each insisting too much on one aspect, and so cannot decide who was right and who was wrong. But how can each of you take one thing to be right and the other wrong? I wish you would both keep your minds fair and broad, without any desire to win. How can the discussion of learning with the motive of winning be called respect of virtuous nature, or study and inquiry? It would seem that not only are your criticism of Hsiang-shan and Yü-an's criticism of Hui-an both wrong, but your approval of Hui-an and Yü-an's approval of Hsiang-shan are also not given in their right contexts. . . .

WWKC, 21:639

¹ See 'Nien-p'u', WWKC, 32:912.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 29, Legge's *Classics*, vol. 1, p. 426.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 27, *ibid.*, p. 422.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Referring to the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

⁶ See note 3.

... In your earlier letter you said that I made a vague and equivocal reply to you, which, on close reading, you found to be secretly on Yü-an's side. I could not help but laugh as I read that!

... Yü-an favoured Hsiang-shan, and said that he concentrated on the respect of virtuous nature. Now, when I read the *Collected Writings of [Lu] Hsiang-shan*, I find that he too, taught his disciples to read books and exhaust principles, and where he claimed himself to be different from others in understanding words, he meant that he did this through experience of life. What he constantly instructed others to do was: 'Always maintain respect. Practise reverence in the management of affairs, and fidelity in dealing with others',¹ and also: 'Conquer yourself and recover *li* [propriety]'.² and again: 'All things are already complete in us. There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity on reflecting upon ourselves',³ and then: 'There is naught else in learning except the recovery of the lost mind',⁴ and: 'Remain steadfast in that which is great [the mind] and that which is little will not be taken from you'.⁵ These are the words of Confucius and Mencius. Can we say they are empty? Only, his teaching 'on ease and freedom'⁶ concerning awakening and enlightenment was held in doubt by his contemporaries. But this teaching on ease and freedom came from the Appended Remarks to the *Book of Changes* and while what he said about enlightenment bears resemblance to Buddhist teachings, it may also be said that these Buddhist teachings also bear resemblance to our Confucian teachings, except for certain nuances of difference. And so, why should such similarity be hidden and not proclaimed? Why should the differences also keep us away from a close examination of them? So even Yü-an, taking Hsiang-shan's side, has not exhausted all the reasons in his favour. You, on the other hand, taking Hui-an's side, say that he concentrates on study and inquiry. But Hui-an had said: 'We should keep reverence and exhaust principles',⁷ and: 'Unless we employ our minds, we cannot extend knowledge',⁸ and: 'The mind of the gentleman constantly preserves reverence and apprehension.

He is not negligent, even when he is not seen or heard. Thus, he preserves the foundation of the principle of Heaven, without letting it leave him even for a minute." Although such words are not entirely clear, they show that he too, was concerned with the respect of virtuous nature. And so, how can one say he was fragmentary in his knowledge?

However, Hui-an paid a great deal of attention to the interpretation of the Classics, and even wrote commentaries on, and did textual criticisms of such works as the writings of Han-wen Kung [Han Yü], the *Ch'u Tzu* [*Songs of Ch'u*], *Yin-fu Canon*, and the *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i*. Others suspected that he was merely being superficial. Then again, his worry that students might not follow the proper steps in learning, and thus waste their efforts, caused him to make them first investigate things and extend knowledge until all was clear, before making their intentions sincere and their minds up right and therefore free from error. The scholar in the world, however, becoming preoccupied with one thing, forgets ten thousand others. The more he seeks, the more he loses. Some even use up the energy of a whole lifetime, and still attain no real insights. Thus, they criticise Hui-an for being fragmentary in his quest for knowledge, without realising that this was rather the error of later scholars, while Hui-an himself was not at fault. And so, even your approval of Hui-an has not gone far enough. Now, since both of you have not exhausted the reasons for which you considered either of the two scholars to be correct, have you, in your disapproval of the one or the other, exhausted all the reasons that exist? Because you argue back and forth, you cannot, for once, reflect upon yourselves. This is why I suspect that you do so out of the motive to win the argument. Yet such motivation destroys the foundation of learning. How can you still be discussing it? So I wish you two would reflect upon yourselves. How could I have given vague and equivocal explanations, which sought to help Yü-an secretly?

When a gentleman discusses learning, the essential is what he has received in his mind. When one considers something correct, yet reflects upon it without finding that it agrees in his mind, he does not dare to proclaim it correct. When one considers something to be incorrect, and yet, when he reflects upon it and in his mind finds it correct, he does not dare to proclaim it

incorrect. The mind is the principle that we receive from Heaven. It is not different in Heaven and man, in the past and the present. If I exhaust my mind to seek truth, even if I do not attain it, I cannot be far from it. To study means to seek to exhaust my mind. That is why one ought to respect virtuous nature and study through inquiry. This is what we respect. This is what we inquire. If we do not acquire something in our mind, and only believe the external words of others considering this to be learning, how can we call it study? I used to think that while Hui-an and Hsiang-shan were different as scholars, they both remained followers of the sages. Today, however, the teaching of Hui-an is studied by every man and child in the world. It has penetrated deeply into the minds of men, and can hardly tolerate to be questioned. The teaching of Hsiang-shan, however, on account of his disagreement with Hui-an, has been neglected. Actually, if the two had been considered different as were Yu [Tzu-lu] and Tz'u [Tzu-kung]¹¹ it would be more acceptable. Rather, Hsiang-shan has been criticised and rejected, as though the difference between the two was like that between an inferior agate and a precious gem. Is that not somewhat excessive? Hui-an synthesised the teachings of many scholars, in order to proclaim to the world the meaning of the Six Classics, of the *Analects*, and of the *Book of Mencius*. The ensuing benefit to later students is indisputable. But Hsiang-shan also distinguished between righteousness and profit, established the great foundation [of learning], taught the recovery of the lost mind, and pointed out to later students the way towards a genuine and solid self-discovery. Can we forget his contributions and berate him entirely? However, the scholars of the world, out of motives of conformity to established patterns, and without studying the facts, all regard him as a teacher of Ch'an Buddhism. This was certainly undeserved. That was why I once used to wish to risk the ridicule of the world by explaining the teaching of Hsiang-shan. Were I to be condemned for it, I should have no regret. However, even towards Hui-an I remain greatly indebted. How could I want to take up his lance to enter his house? For since the teachings of Hui-an are illuminating the world as the sun and stars, while Hsiang-shan alone is being unjustly berated, already for four hundred years, without anyone to proclaim his innocence,

I would imagine that if Hui-an were conscious of the situation, he would certainly not enjoy for a day the position accorded him in the annex of the Confucian temple! This is my personal feeling, which I must finally reveal to you. So, how could I have wanted to give an equivocal explanation, in order to help Yu-an surreptitiously? I still find Yu-an's saying incomplete!

The learning of the sages of the past and the present is the public property of the whole world and not a private possession of the three of us. The learning of the whole world should be publicly and justly proclaimed to the world, and belongs not just to Yu-an.

You also mentioned the argument concerning *t'ai-chi*,¹² saying that Hsiang-shan did not even understand completely the meaning of these words, and yet argued with such confidence. Where, therefore, was his self-cultivation? However, to say that he was not entirely clear on the meaning of the words does not alter the fact that he did not go into details. To say that his self-cultivation left something to be desired, does not mean his not having attained the highest degree of cultivation was his fault. When one has studied, and yet has not attained sagehood, how can one avoid excess or deficit? Yet, people try to vilify him entirely on this ground. I fear that Hui-an's criticism of Hsiang-shan being influenced by Ch'an Buddhism shows a certain amount of injustice due to passion. For it is the one who failed to know well the meaning of words, and the other who was unfair. Both show some defect in self-cultivation. Confucius was a great sage, and yet he said: 'Give me a few years to study the *Book of Changes*, and then I should be without faults.'¹³ Chung-hui praised King T'ang, saying merely, 'He was not slow in correcting his errors.'¹⁴ How can the fact that these men were lacking in self-cultivation alter the fact of their being virtuous? This shows precisely why the perception of Hui-an and Hsiang-shan did not reach that of Yen-tzu and [Ch'eng] Ming-tao. It is precisely here that we ought to admire their unequal qualities, and reflect over their deficiencies, as a means to cultivation and self-correction. We should not allot to them selfish motives, thus adding to or subtracting from their greatness. 'The faults of a gentleman are like eclipses of the sun and the moon. Everyone sees them. Also, everyone looks up to them when he corrects

them.¹⁵ 'But the mean man is sure to gloss over his faults.'¹⁶ The scholars of the world consider that Chu Hui-an, as the great Confucian, should not have faults, and so try to cover these up for him and add to his greatness. However, they have only ridicule for Hsiang-shan, as a Ch'an Buddhist, for they believe that in this way they aid the orthodox side, the side of Hui-an. They do not understand that the faults of Hui-an were those of a gentleman, but regarded from the viewpoint of a mean man who tries to gloss over them. Hui-an possessed the virtue of knowing how to rejoice when he heard of his faults.¹⁷ Why should we follow him vainly, and engage in making excuses for him? Hui-an had hoped that later generations would follow the teaching of sages and worthy men, yet the world's scholars regard him with the etiquette more appropriate for a mean man. How can we not say they slander Hsiang-shan generously, and yet treat Hui-an with coldness. If I say these things, it is not only in regret for Hsiang-shan, but also as a lament for Hui-an. You know well my unusual regard for Hui-an. That is why I say this now. So you should be able to understand my motive . . . Mencius said, 'The gentleman seeks only *jen*. Why should he wish to be the same as the others.'¹⁸ I hope you will reflect carefully over this, and correct your views.

WWKC, 21:640-2

- ¹ *Analects*, XIII:19, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 271. See *HSCC*, 1:3b, 34:24b.
- ² *Analects*, XII:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol I, p. 250. See *HSCC*, 1:1b, 10:3a, 13:2b.
- ³ *Mencius*, 7A:4, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp. 450-1. See *HSCC*, 1:3b-4a, 35:7b, 35:18a.
- ⁴ *Mencius*, 6A:11, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 414. See *HSCC*, 32:1b-2a, 35:22a.
- ⁵ *Mencius*, 6A:15, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 418. See *HSCC*, 11:1a, 13:7a, 34:5a.
- ⁶ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt. 1, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 349. See also *HSCC*, 11:6a.
- ⁷ This is not a direct quote from Chu Hsi, but refers to his teaching. See *CTYL*, 15:2b-7b.
- ⁸ This too is not a direct quote from Chu, but refers to his teaching. See *CTYL*, 11:1a-5b, 12:4b-6b, 15:2a.
- ⁹ This is a direct quote from Chu's *Chung-yung chang-chü*, in the *Ssu-shu chi-chu*, SPPY ed., 1b.
- ¹⁰ *Yin-fu Canon* is a Taoist book attributed to the Yellow Emperor.
- ¹¹ These were two disciples of Confucius.
- ¹² Referring to Chu Hsi and Lu Chiu-yuan's arguments concerning Chou Tun-yi's ideas on *t'ai-chi* (Ultimate) and *Wu-chi* ("Ultimateless"). See *CWKW*, 36:4b-5b and *HSCC*, 2:5a-11b.
- ¹³ *Analects* VII:16, Legge, *Classics*, vol. I, p. 200.
- ¹⁴ *Book of Documents*, 'Chung-hu chih kao', Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 100.
- ¹⁵ *Analects* XIX:21, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 346.
- ¹⁶ *Analects* XIX:8, *ibid.*, p. 342.
- ¹⁷ See Huang Tsung-hsi and Ch'uan Tsu-wang, *Tseng-pu Sung-Yuan hsüeh-an* [Philosophical Records of the Sung and Yuan Dynasties, expanded version], SPPY ed.
- ¹⁸ *Mencius* 6B:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 433.

. . . You said, 'The increase of respect and reverence entails the loss of spontaneity and freedom', and that 'Respect and reverence imply conscious effort of the mind. But how can one go beyond such conscious effort of the mind? How can one act with natural spontaneity, without having any doubt concerning his actions?' All this refers to what I mean by the danger of desiring to assist at the rapid growth [of the vast, overflowing *ch'i*].² What the gentleman means by respect and reverence has nothing to do with what is called fear and anxiety. It refers rather to practising vigilance³ without being seen, and apprehension without being heard. What the gentleman means by spontaneity and freedom also has nothing to do with dissipation and the free play of passions. It refers rather to the substance of the mind not being hindered by unruly desire, so that he finds himself in no situation in which he is not himself.⁴ The substance of the mind is the principle of Heaven. That which is bright and spiritual and conscious in the principle of Heaven is what we call [*liang-chih*]. The gentleman practises vigilance and apprehension, lest that which is bright and spiritual and conscious becomes obscured and dissipated, and even degenerates into perversion and falsehood, thus losing the correctness of its original substance. The effort of vigilance and apprehension should never be interrupted, so that the principle of Heaven may always remain, and its bright and spiritual and conscious substance may suffer no loss or hindrance, no complication or involvement, no fear or anxiety, no preference or anger,⁵ no foregone conclusion, no stubbornness, obstinacy or selfishness,⁶ no discontent, disgrace, discouragement. But rather, it enjoys harmony and brilliance, filling up all space in its operations, 'movements and countenance are natural but in accordance with propriety',⁷ 'following the desires of the heart without transgressing what is right'.⁸ This can be called true spontaneity and freedom. Such spontaneity and freedom arise out of the constant presence of the principle of Heaven, and the constant presence of the principle of Heaven arises out of the continuity of caution and apprehension. Who can say, then, that the increase of respect and reverence can become a

hindrance to spontaneity and freedom? This only happens when one does not know that spontaneity and freedom belong to the substance of the mind, while respect and reverence are the functions of spontaneity and freedom. These are then regarded as two separate things, which divide the efforts of the mind, and so come to mutual conflict, causing contradiction in action, and degenerating into a process of hastening the growth [of the vast, overflowing *ch'i*]. Thus, what you, Kuo-yung, call respect and reverence, refers rather to the fear and anxiety of the *Great Learning* than to the vigilance and apprehension of the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Master Ch'eng [Yi] often said that when people speak of *wu-hsin* – literally, not having a mind – they can only mean not having a selfish mind. They cannot mean not having any mind.⁹ To practise caution when one is not seen, and apprehension when one is not heard, refers to a state of the mind which one ought to have. But to be fearful and anxious refers to a selfish mind, which one ought not to have. The efforts of Yao and Shun in 'being wary and fearful',¹⁰ of King Wen in being 'watchful and reverent',¹¹ all refer to respect and reverence, and all arise out of the natural operation of the substance of the mind. To arise out of the natural operation of the mind, to do something without conscious action, refer all to natural spontaneity. The effort of respect and reverence makes no distinction between activity and tranquillity; this is what we mean by 'practising respect to straighten the interior, and righteousness to square the exterior'.¹² When reverence and righteousness are established, the way of Heaven is attained, and one no longer harbours doubt concerning one's own action. . . .

WWKC, 5:201-2

¹ I have not been able to identify him. He may be related to Shu Fen (1484-1527), a disciple of Yang-ming's, also known as Shu Kuo-shang. See *MJHA*, 58:13b-16a.

² *Mencius*, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 190.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 384.

⁴ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 14, *ibid.*, p. 395.

⁵ *Great Learning*, ch. 7, *ibid.*, p. 368.

⁶ *Analects*, IX:4, *ibid.*, p. 217.

⁷ *Mencius*, 7B:33, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 495.

⁸ *Analects*, II:4, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 147.

⁹ Cheng Yi, *Wai-shu*, 12:16a.

¹⁰ *Book of Documents*, 'Kao-yao mu', Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 73.

¹¹ *Book of Odes*, 'Ta-ya' [Greater Odes], Wen-wang chih-shih [Decade of King Wen], pt 3, bk 1, ode 2 [Legge's *Classics*, vol. IV, p. 433].

¹² *Book of Changes*, Hexagram 2, 'K'un', Appendix 4, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 420.

In your letter you spoke of your desire to retire into the depths of the mountains, to abandon worldly affairs, to give up thought and worries, in order to nourish your intelligence and clairvoyance, until you know they can penetrate ceaselessly day and night, and then you will respond with unfeeling equanimity to the affairs of the world. You also said that it seemed to you more direct to seek such a goal in tranquility, as long as you can avoid falling into the danger of emptiness.

Reading this, I see well the firmness of your sense of responsibility with regard to *tao* and the unusualness of your determination.² However, when a good physician treats an illness, he must follow the reality and gravity of the disease, the inside and outside temperatures, before he can decide on medical prescriptions and the quantity of drugs. The essential goal being to remove the disease, he does not begin with a fixed formula . . . This is not different from what the nurture of the mind is for a gentleman. You, Yüan-tao, ought to measure the degree of your sickness, the state of your physical constitution, and then you will know how to decide on a treatment, without doing yourself any harm. If you are only intent on abandoning worldly affairs, on giving up thought and worry, on seeking tranquillity, I fear that you have already developed the emptiness of your nature beyond your control. In your free time, reflect upon what Ch'eng Ming-tao wrote in his *Ting-hsing shu* [Letter on Calming One's Nature].³ Your disposition will then become different. . . .

WWKC, 5:202

¹ His private name was Liu Chun-liang. See Chan's *Instructions*, p. 243, and Translator's Note to this work.

² *Analects*, VIII:7, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 210-11.

³ *Ming-tao wen-chi*, 3:1a-b.

On Extending *liang-chih*

45. TO HSUEH SHANG-CH' IEN

1523

In your letter you blamed yourself, attributing your faults to carelessness and pride. This shows how earnestly you are applying your efforts. But it is *liang-chih* which recognises these faults. For this *liang-chih* to eliminate carelessness and pride is to investigate things. The extension of this knowledge is the secret transmission of the ancient learning of the school of sages. Formerly, when I was in Ch'ien-chou [in Kiangsi] I spoke of this all the time, but many among our friends did not comprehend it well. Recently, I changed a few words in my Preface to the edition of the old version of the *Great Learning*, developing these ideas further. But those who read it do not always notice them . . . This is the 'treasure of the orthodox dharma-eye'¹ of the Confucian school. Many former scholars did not realise it, and therefore promulgated fragmentary teachings. . . .

WWKC, 5:208

¹ For an explanation of this expression, see p. 00, n.

On the Art of Government

46. TO YANG SUI-AN, THE GRAND SECRETARY¹ 1523

. . . Since your Excellency entered upon the confidential charge of government, scholars and officials of the world have been visibly joyous and pleased in the belief that the great peace would soon be attained. However, your humble student alone has been most worried, for I consider the goal still very difficult of attainment . . . A rudder weighing 10,000 *hu*² cannot be controlled by one hand alone. Questions concerning speed and direction cannot be decided completely in accordance with one's own wishes. To lack the authority of managing alone the direction of the ship, and yet to have to be blamed for the loss of the ship when affairs go wrong, is what I mean by the difficulties involved . . . But does that mean that one can do nothing for the affairs of the world? Only he who makes himself responsible for the

calamity of the world can handle the power of the world. And only he who handles the power of the world can remedy the evils of the world . . . Those who usually strive to obtain control of the rudder weighing 10,000 *hu* do so out of motives of gain. Once the winds and storms shake the ship, and suddenly its future becomes unknown, everyone gets frightened and seeks merely to escape death. Who else will then compete for her control? If, at that time, someone comes forth to take over the control, everyone else will rely on him to mitigate fear, and the affair may be remedied. If this person also follows the crowd in showing cowardice and passivity, all will undoubtedly drown. That is why I say, when power is given to him, it becomes easy to exercise. The gentlemen of former times understood the direction of affairs and held fast to the pivot. They observed the waxing and waning of *yin* and *yang* and made use of their movements. That is why their activity was always rewarded with success, and fortune smiled upon them. This was how Yi-yin and Tan, the Duke of Chou, served Shang and Chou. In the Han and T'ang [dynasties] it was almost like this. For while learning was somewhat deficient in those ages, it was yet adequate for strengthening the foundation of the state and for appeasing the altars of Earth and Grain.³ Later generation of cowardly opportunists could not achieve even this. For power controls the benefit or the harm of the world. An inferior man who steals it uses it to accomplish evil, while a gentleman exercises it to bring about good. That is why the government cannot be without the gentleman for a day, nor can it tolerate the inferior man for a day. If you wish to cure the evil of the world, without taking up the reins of power, you act as though you are holding a sword backward, giving someone else the handle, and hoping that he will not thrust it. So the gentleman has a way of gaining power. He should be rooted in complete sincerity, to establish his virtue, and surround himself with good men to assure the help of others, show forth a boundless magnanimity to stabilise their feelings, extend it with a mind that seeks no emulation to calm their passions, make it radiant with an immovable strength of moral character to justify his direction, apply to it an unfathomable intelligence to ward off the wicked and cunning, and give it form with a reliable knowledge so as to attract the confidence of all.

He should lower himself in an easy and natural way so that he will be raised by others, yield precedence so that he will be made the foremost of by others. In this way, his merits can cover the whole world without attracting envy. He can do good to all things, without occasioning strife. All this is something your ability and resourcefulness enable you to do and it is moreover what you have undertaken to do in a moment of urgency, when you take responsibility for the calamity of the world, and decide to accept the direction of affairs. To take upon himself the calamity of the world is not what a gentleman would prefer to do, were there a choice. But when he does take this responsibility, knowing that he will not be able to escape from the calamity of the world, and so preferring to take it upon himself, he does so in order to save the world from that calamity. The inferior man, on the other hand, does not realise that one cannot escape from calamity by chance, and so attempts a hundred intrigues in order to save himself, but finishes only in creating a great calamity from which he cannot run away. That is why only those gentlemen who are faithfully and sincerely devoted to the country can take upon themselves the calamity that faces them, while the inferior men are incapable of doing so . . .

WWKC, 21:649-50

¹ Private name Yang Yi-ch'ing (1454-1530). He became a *chin-shih* in 1472 and was Grand Secretary from 1515 to 1516. In late 1524 he was recommended again to this post and in late 1525 he was finally summoned. See *Ming shih-lu* [Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty], Taipei, 1966, 43:8b, 57:5-6 and *Ming-shih* 198:471-2. It is not known whether this letter bears an erroneous date, or refers to an office other than that of Grand Secretary.

² The rudder refers to the direction of government. A *hu* was a corn measure holding 5 or 10 pecks (*tou*). A peck contains 316 cubic inches.

³ Originally, the emperor was entitled to sacrifice on the altar of Earth and the feudal lords on the altar of Grain. The two words 'Earth' and 'Grain' came to represent the state itself. See *Book of Rites*, 'Chü-li', pt 3, Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. 1, p. 116.

On Learning

47. TO HUANG MIEN-CHIH¹

1524

Mencius said, "There is naught else in learning outside of finding one's lost mind".² The reading and studying of the classics and of history certainly belong to the realm of learning, and ought not to be neglected. But the danger is to forget the root and to chase

after the branches. Ch'eng Ming-tao warned against 'trifling with things to the detriment of our determination'.³ As to making theories and transmitting one's own instructions [when they are considered yet imperfect], these above all are not what a scholar should anxiously pursue. You were very kind to show me your *Ko-wu shuo* [Book of Investigation of Things] and *Hsiu-tao chu* [Commentary on the Cultivation of *Tao*], but it is hardly what I would dare to expect of you. Besides, what you said in these is not completely in harmony with what I have in mind. I shall explain everything to you when you put these together. Please do not yet show them to others. . . .

. . . I only did my explanation of the Old Text of the *Great Learning* because I had to do so, but even then I did not dare to say too much, fearing precisely that the weeds and ivy might obscure the tree and its branches. I amended my short foreword three times, and they sent the last copy to the engraver [1518]. Now I am sending you a copy of each, so that you will know that my earlier opinions should not be considered as definite theories.

WWKC, 5:203

¹ His private name was Huang Hsing-tseng (1490-1540). He became Yang-ming's disciple. See *MJHA*, 25:4a-b.

² *Mencius*, 6A:11, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 414.

³ Originally from the *Book of Documents*, 'Lü-ao' [The Hounds of Lü], Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, pp. 348-9. Reference to this was attributed to Ch'eng Yi-ch'uan in Sun Ch'i-feng (1584-1675), *Li-hsueh tsung-chuan* [Orthodox Transmission of Neo-Confucianism], reprinted in Taipei in 1969, 3:13.

On Various Questions

48. TO HUANG MIEN-CHIH

1524

. . . In your letter you said, 'Considering your teaching on *liang-chih* I find that it alone is present in activity and tranquillity, by day and night, past and present. It does not depend upon the tiniest bit of reflection, does not increase even the smallest part of [*Ch'i*],¹ adjusts correctly [to things and events], remains conscious and bright, responds to stimulus, perceives through experience, reflecting all things, being conscious of all things, attaining all things. It is the same path by which a thousand sages have travelled, over which ten thousand virtuous

men have left their marks. There is no other spirit, other than this spirit, no other *T'ien* [Heaven] to imitate other than this *T'ien*, no other *Ti* [God] to submit to other than this *Ti*. By nature, there is nothing in it that is against the Mean, nothing in it that is not perfectly just. One can deal with affairs all day without it being noticeably stirred, one can stay home all day without it remaining noticeably inactive. This is the real, intelligent substance of *Ch'ien* [Heaven] and *K'un* [Earth], the marvellous principle of operations for us men. Besides, I think that what the *Book of the Mean* calls the understanding of sincere people is precisely this *liang-chih*, and what is called the vigilance and apprehension of the man practising sincerity is also precisely this *liang-chih* under the aspect of caution and apprehension. These, like compassion and the hatred of evil, are all conditions of *liang-chih*. To know vigilance and apprehension, to know compassion, to know hatred of evil, means *liang-chih* which is also understanding. . . .'

In this you discussed the question very clearly. Knowing this, one knows that there is no other effort outside that of extending knowledge, and that what is called 'that which is set up in face of Heaven and Earth, and does not go against them, presented before the spirits, and arouses no doubt, prepared to wait for a hundred generations for the rise of a sage, and has no misgivings',² are no empty words. Sincerity, understanding, caution, apprehension, did not originally have two meanings when effects and efforts are concerned. Since it is known that what penetrates activity and tranquillity, death and life, is nothing but this [*liang-chih*], therefore, how can understanding and sincerity, caution and apprehension, as well as compassion and hatred of evil, be something different?

You also said, 'The *ch'i* [ether] of *yin* and *yang* interact in harmony and produce all things. Hence all things receive this harmonious *ch'i* in their existence. That is why man's principle of life was originally harmonious, and not without joy. If you observe the hawks flying, the fish leaping, the birds singing,³ and the animals dancing, and the plants flourishing, you see that they all share this joy. However, this joy is sometimes interrupted by the invasion of extraneous *ch'i*, and by unruly desires. Confucius recommended 'learning with constant perseverance and application'⁴ as a means to attaining an uninterrupted effort.

For pleasure is the beginning of joy. When friends come, learning is complete and the joy of the original substance of my nature is restored. That is why he said "Is it not pleasant [to have friends come]?" and also "Though others may not know me, I feel no sorrow": he means, not the least sorrow which interrupts the joy of my nature. The sage feared that the scholar's joy is not continuous. That was why he said this. As to the other things he said about "not murmuring, not complaining",⁵ "joy being in the midst of this",⁶ and "without changing his joy"⁷ – do they all refer to the uninterrupted joy?

Joy belongs to the mind – in – itself. The man in *jen* is one with Heaven and earth and all things, being united with all in harmony and concord without experiencing any hindrance. What you said about man's principle of life originally being in harmony and full of joy, until disturbed by extraneous *ch'i* [ether] and unruly desires, is quite right. To learn with constant perseverance is to seek the recovery of the mind-in-itself. When 'we are pleased'⁸ we gradually recover this mind-in-itself. When 'friends come',⁹ the peaceful harmony of the mind-in-itself fills everything without meeting any hindrance. This peaceful harmony of the mind-in-itself was originally so, and did not receive any increase [from the friend's visit]. Even if no friends come, and no one in the world knows us, the harmony should not decrease.

You also said that 'the meaning of joy not being interrupted' also refers to the sage of his being 'perfectly and continually sincere'.¹⁰ The only effort required is to learn constantly, and the essential of learning constantly is to watch over ourselves when we are alone, and this vigilance in solitude¹¹ is precisely the extension of *liang-chih*, while *liang-chih* is nothing other than joy-in-itself.

In this section, also, what you said is generally right. But it is important that [the person concerned] should not be clinging to the matter with undue effort.

You also said, 'Han Ch'ang-li [Han Yu] said that "universal love is called *jen*".¹² This seems quite right on the whole. Why should the Sung scholars criticise it, by taking love to refer to feeling, and *jen* to refer to nature, so that love cannot be identified with *jen*? I would propose that "nature is feeling before it is

stirred, feeling is nature after it is stirred. *Jen* is love before it is stirred, love is *jen* after it is stirred. Why can not we call love *jen*? For to speak of love is also to speak of *jen*!"¹³ Chou-tzu said, "Love is *jen*".¹⁴ Hence what Han Yu said here is not so different from what Mencius and Chou-tzu meant. We ought not to ignore it just because he was a man of letters [and not a philosopher].⁷

The teaching of universal love is not really much different from the teaching of Chou-tzu. When Fan-ch'ih asked what *jen* meant, Confucius said, 'to love others'.¹⁵ Hence, why can one not use the word 'love' to speak of *jen*? Formerly, when the scholars read the words of the ancients, they often manifested preference for this person or that. Here is an instance of this. But while the original substance of love can be called *jen*, there is a kind of love that is correct and a kind that is not correct. Only the correct kind of love is the original substance of love, and can be called *jen*. If one knows only universal love, without distinguishing between the correct and incorrect kinds of love, there will be a difference. I used to say that the word *po* [universal] was not as good as the word *kung* [just]. On the whole, when one seeks to explain the meanings of words, one can merely get a general idea. The refined subtle nuances are only reached through personal reflection, not through verbal explanations. Later scholars frequently clung to words and form, trying to dig through the vocabulary. Their minds merely rotate with the *Lotus Sutra (Saddharma puṇḍarīka sūtra)*.¹⁶

You also said, '*The Great Learning* says, "... as beautiful colours (or women) are liked; as evil odour, is disliked" [and so on].¹⁷ What is said about the dislike of all bad odour presents no difficulty. But if all beautiful women everywhere must be liked, should one delight in every beautiful woman who passes before the eye? This instruction of the *Great Learning* probably made use of ordinary, instinctive feelings of like and dislike to describe the sincerity of the sage and the worthy man in loving good and hating evil. But what is meant here may be that while sages and worthy men like beauty, they can keep their thoughts pure even when a beautiful [woman] passes before their eyes, and not [have] any disturbance in the substance of their minds. It is said in the *Book of Odes*: "There are beauties like clouds".¹⁸

The person concerned was quite aware of their beauty, yet, in spite of that, he continued to say, "but my thoughts are not of them".¹⁹ Since his thoughts are not of them, his thoughts are pure and do not hinder the substance of his mind. The same can be said of a man who sees pavilions and coronets, gold and jade. While recognising them to be pavilions and coronets, gold and jade, he does not become envious or greedy in his mind – I wonder whether my interpretations here are correct? . . . '

Ordinarily, in human likes and dislikes, there may be lack of genuineness. However, the love of beauty and the hatred of bad odour both emanate from the real mind, and seek for their satisfaction, without the least bit of pretence. The *Great Learning* merely refers to that which is genuine in everyone's likes and dislikes, to show us that we should be just as sincere in our love of good and hatred of evil. It only describes the one word 'sincerity'. Now, if you develop so many reflections over the words 'love of beauty', you would seem to suffer from the defect of an excessive imagination taking the finger to be the moon.²⁰ Many men in the past were hindered by words and sentences, and misinterpreted the holy Classics. They did that on account of this same fault. You must therefore watch over it. . . .

Your letter said: 'There are people who wish to stop thinking completely, because Hsueh Wen-ch'ing [Hsueh Hsuan, 1390–1456] thought to excess and did violence to his *ch'i* [temper].²¹ I remember Confucius once said, "I once refrained from food for a whole day, and from sleep for a whole night, in order to think".²² Would one say that Confucius went to an excess and did violence to *ch'i* [temper]? It would seem to me that one goes to excess when one thinks outside of *liang-chih*. If one seeks, in every thought, to experience *liang-chih*, then, even though he may think all day and all night as did Confucius, he would not go to excess . . . "If one thinks nothing outside the sphere of *liang-chih*, when can he be at fault in employing his mind or contemplating. What excess will there be?"'

To say that excessive thinking may lead to a bad temper is quite correct. But to wish therefore to give up thinking would be like abandoning eating after having got something caught in your throat. What you said in your letter concerning 'going to an

excess when one thinks outside of *liang-chih*', and, 'if one seeks, in every thought, to experience *liang-chih*, then, even though he may think all day and all night, there would be no excess', and also 'If one thinks nothing outside the sphere of *liang-chih*, when can he be at fault in employing his mind and contemplating?' – these words express well my thought. Confucius said, 'I once refrained from food for a whole day, and from sleep for a whole night, in order to think. There is nothing more beneficial than studying'.²³ He does not necessarily mean that he really acted in this way. He merely pointed out the danger of only thinking without learning. If one only thinks and does not learn, how can one avoid thinking to excess?

WWKC, 5:204-5

- 1 *Mencius*, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 189. The word *ch'i* refers here to that moral rightness which unites man to the universe.
- 2 *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 29, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 426.
- 3 *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 12, *ibid.*, p. 392.
- 4 *Analects*, I:1, *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 5 *Analects*, XIV:37, *ibid.*, p. 288.
- 6 *Analects*, VII:15, *ibid.*, p. 200.
- 7 *Analects*, VI:9, *ibid.*, p. 188.
- 8 *Analects*, I:1, *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 26, *ibid.*, p. 419.
- 11 *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, *ibid.*, p. 384.
- 12 'Yüan-tao' [Inquiry into the Original Way] in *Han Ch'ang-li ch'uan-chi* [Complete Works of Han Yu], SPPY ed., 11:1a-b. An English translation can be found in Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (1963), p. 454.
- 13 *Mencius*, 6A:6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 402.
- 14 See *Chou-tzu T'ung-shu*, 1:1a.
- 15 *Analects*, XII:22, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 260.
- 16 Allusion to the *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching*, TSD No. 2008, 48:355^{7 43}. See Chan (trans.), *The Platform Scripture*, p. 115. 'If your mind is correct, it will turn the *Lotus Scripture* around. If it is perverse, the *Lotus Scripture* will turn it around.' Men should be masters of words, not *vice versa*.
- 17 *Great Learning*, ch. 6, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 366.
- 18 *Book of Odes*, 'Odes of Cheng', *ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 146.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Allusion to the parable contained in *Surangama sutra*. If a man mistakes a finger stretched out to be the moon he loses sight of the true nature both of the finger and of the moon, see TSD No. 945, 19:111. This story, however, is contained in a late version of the sutra. It is not in the earlier version of TSD No. 642, 15:629-45. See also Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (first series, 1927), p. 17.
- 21 His private name was Hsüeh Hsuan. See his biography in *MJHA*, 7:2a-3b.
- 22 *Analects*, XV:32, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 302-3.
- 23 *Ibid.*

. . . A scholar who has already determined to become a sage in order to gain insight needs merely to extend his *liang-chih*, in its intelligent and conscious aspects, to the uttermost, proceeding gradually and naturally day by day. He does not need to worry about externals and details. Criticisms, praises and blame from others can also be used profitably as warning, correction, and encouragement, but without having these affect his mind in the least; otherwise he would become daily more and more fatigued without his being aware of it himself. . . .

In his action, the sage does not really differ so much from ordinary men. When the people of Lu had a hunting contest,² Confucius also took part in the hunting contest. When the villagers performed their exorcist ceremonies to drive away pestilences, Confucius also [showing his interest], put on his court robes and stood on the eastern steps.³ He received in interview a boy from Hu-hsiang, a village where the people had a bad reputation for being argumentative and difficult.⁴ Already, there were those who could not help wondering over such conduct. And then, when Confucius visited Nan-tzu, his disciple Tzu-lu showed visible displeasure. Not knowing, at that point, how to explain to Tzu-lu the reasons for his action, Confucius could only have recourse to swearing.⁵ And why was that so? If he had tried to explain his reasons for seeing Nan-tzu, it would have required much labour on his part. On the other hand, if he was to follow Tzu-lu's ideas and acknowledge his conduct as having been incorrect, then Tzu-lu would never have discovered the real motives of the sage, and his learning would have remained obscure. Such mental deliberation was only understood by Yen-tzu. That is why he said of him: 'In nothing that I said did he not take delight' . . .⁶

I offer you these examples, because I desire to see you also keep a humble mind, broaden your capacity for understanding, remove distinctions between the self and others, and abandon any foregone conclusion and stubbornness.⁷ Then will you certainly receive insights on this essential point, and sigh [in the company of Yen-tzu], wishing to follow Confucius in everything, and yet finding him beyond your reach.⁸

In general, the strange and extraordinary feats of the men of old easily provoke admiration among later generations. Sages and worthy men do not consider that as something very valuable. 'The man who lives away from society, and works wonders, will be remembered by posterity',⁹ while the gentleman who 'acts in accordance with the Mean, feels no regret even though he may be completely unknown to the world' . . .¹⁰

WWKC, 5:206-7

- ¹ I have not been able to identify him.
² *Mencius*, 5B:4, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 381.
³ *Analects*, X:10, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 233.
⁴ *Analects*, VII:28, *ibid.*, p. 204.
⁵ *Analects*, VI:26, *ibid.*, p. 193. Nan-tzu was the wife of the Marquis of Wei.
⁶ *Analects*, XI:3, *ibid.*, p. 238.
⁷ *Analects*, IX:4, *ibid.*, p. 217.
⁸ *Analects*, IX:10, *ibid.*, p. 220.
⁹ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 12, *ibid.*, p. 391.
¹⁰ *Ibid.*

On *liang-chih*

50. TO TUNG YUN (LO-SHIH)¹

1525

You told me, 'I am by nature obedient, straightforward, conscientious, and submissive. On meeting eloquent persons, I often feel ashamed of my slowness. I fear that my natural endowments are very feeble.'

All this suggests a certain emphasis on externals, and neglect of the inner life. If you would only practise *chi-yi* [concentration of righteousness]² in your ordinary life, then you would naturally cultivate the 'vast, flowing, sublime *ch'i*',³ which fills heaven and earth, so that 'wealth and nobility will not be able to corrupt you, poverty and lowliness will not be able to change you, might and power will not be able to subdue you',⁴ and you will naturally 'understand the words [of others]'⁵ while all that is prejudiced, extravagant, depraved and evasive speech, will become quite powerless in front of you. How could you still remain ashamed of yourself? To accumulate righteousness is only to extend the innate knowledge. For righteousness is what is appropriate to the mind, and in extending *liang-chih* the mind will attain what is appropriate to it.

WWKC, 5:207-8

- ¹ His literary name was Lo-shih (1457-1533). A poet without official position or degree, he became Yang-ming's disciple at the age of 67. See *MJHA*, 14:1a-b.
- ² *Mencius*, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 190. It refers to the practice of virtue. See Letter 4, n. 3.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *Mencius*, 3B:2, *ibid.*, p. 255.
- ⁵ *Mencius*, 2A:2, *ibid.*, p. 191.

On *liang-chih*

51. TO TSOU CH' IEN-CHIH¹

1526

Recently, I have had many family troubles, and the application of effort has become very arduous for me. However, the two words *liang-chih* have become even more personal and meaningful to me now than before, 'This is really the 'great root' and the 'broad way'.² Outside of this, there is no learning that can be discussed. Concerning our efforts, the teaching to recognise everywhere the principle of Heaven³ is, generally speaking, not incorrect. However, if we merely pursue this, we should only be chasing the wind and running after shadows. Even if we turn our direction towards the inner self,⁴ our efforts would still remain slightly different from what the school of sages teaches regarding the extension of *liang-chih*. If again, we make there a tiny error, we would risk going astray for a thousand *li*. . . .

WWKC, 6:209

- ¹ His private name was Tsou Shou-yi (1491-1562). A *chin-shih* in 1511 (he ranked first that year), he was Yang-ming's disciple and frequent companion. After Yang-ming's death he continued the 'Yang-ming school of thought' in Kiang-si, and is said to have received the 'correct transmission'. See *MJHA*, 16:2a-3a.
- ² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 384-5.
- ³ The teaching of Chan Kan-ch'uan. See *MJHA*, 37.
- ⁴ Allusion to Ch'eng Hao, *Yi-shu* II:11b.

On the Rites

52. TO TSOU CH' IEN-CHIH

1526

Thank you for explaining to me *Yü-su li-yao*.¹ These follow in general the principles laid down in the *Wen-kung Chia-li*,² while simplifying them, and remaining very true to human nature. All

this is very good indeed . . . Of the ancient rules of propriety still extant, many venerable masters and aged scholars found their teachings too difficult to exhaust even in a lifetime. The people today usually regard them as being too complicated, and so put them aside and do not act in accordance with them. That is why those who are placed in official positions of responsibility over the people today, and wish to instruct them in propriety, find it hard, not so much to give detailed explanations, but to present in a simple and clear way inducements which would lead the people to practise them.

Concerning the arrangement of the ancestral tablets of four generations, and questions of the associated sacrifices, these I had formerly wanted to adapt to conventional usage. Your adaptation has been found to be in harmony with human feelings, which is the best thing. After all, men of the past and present share the same nature and the same feelings. Former kings gave due consideration to the rules of propriety according to what is universal in human feelings, and that is why these have become a pattern for all generations. If there are certain points which cause our minds to be ill at ease, these may be due either to errors of transmission, or to differences of customs and manners between the past and the present. . . .

If we were to remain so attached to ancient customs that we followed rules blindly without understanding them in our mind, we would not be acting according to real *li* [propriety] . . . The learning of the mind was forgotten by later generations. Man lost his genuine feelings, and now finds it hard to speak about real propriety. However, since *liang-chih* remains the same throughout all ages in human hearts, we need merely to follow our minds' *liang-chih*, then 'even if, without knowing the size of the foot, one tries to make sandals, we know he will not end up making a basket'.³ 'It belongs to the Son of Heaven only to order ceremonies, to fix the measures'.⁴ If we discuss this subject now, it is not for the sake of ordering ceremonies, but only because, in this degenerate age when rites have become so utterly neglected, we wish to point out its meaning a little, in order to begin to revive it. This is why I wish to explain it in a simple and easy manner, so that it can be easily understood and followed.

To add to ceremonies for capping, marriage, mourning and

sacrifice, certain village regulations, which can be quite beneficial to the people's ways and manners . . . As to arrangement of tablets in the ancestral temple, . . . someone remarked, 'According to the *Wen-kung Chia-li*, the tablets of the great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather and father are all placed in the west, in a line which goes towards the east. This does not make me very happy at heart.' I had answered, 'In ancient temples, the gates all faced the south, the tablets all faced east. When a general sacrifice is made, those on the left were moved to the northern windows, those on the right were moved to the southern windows, so that all would be in accord with the prior dignity of the first ancestor, who ought to face east. That was why the tablets are placed from the west, eastward. Now that the ancestral temples are no longer the same as those of old, and the tradition of having the first ancestor's tablet face east has been lost, the arrangement of the tablets in the west does seem incorrect.' He said thereupon, 'What should we do about it now then?' and I answered, 'The rites should be in accord with the times. If we are to serve the dead as we serve the living, then the great-great-grandfather's tablet should face south, the great-grandfather's, grandfather's, and father's tablets should be arranged on the east and west, on slightly lower places, without facing each other. This seems to put our hearts more at ease . . . However, I fear that the ordinary people's halls are often too small and narrow, and lack often the required vessels, so that this course of action is difficult for all to follow.'

I was then asked, 'In the case of someone who dies without descendants, if he happens to belong to the generation of my sons and nephews, then there is no difficulty in placing his tablet in a lower position. But what should be done if he happens to belong to the generations of my ancestors?'

I answered: 'In the past, the Great Officers were entitled to three temples, which did not include their great-great-grandparents. An Officer of the First Grade was entitled to two temples, which did not include his great-grandparents.⁵ Now, however, the ordinary people are allowed to sacrifice to their great-great and great-grandparents, which shows a real recognition of genuine human feelings. If ancient customs were to be again followed, this would be considered a transgression, all the more so if

such sacrifice included those who died without descendants. In the past, an official who had no son was given adopted heirs, so that there were few people who were without descendants. In later ages, human feelings became crass, so that the poor and lowly were neglected. In the past, those who died without descendants were usually people who died before maturity.

According to 'Chi-fa' [Laws of Sacrifice],⁶ under the rank of king, there were five classes of deceased young who received sacrifices: rightful son, rightful grandson, rightful great-grandson, rightful great-great-grandson, rightful great-great-great grandson – five generations in all [always the children of the first wives]. Those under the rank of feudal princes had the right to sacrifice to three generations, the Great Officers could sacrifice to two generations, the Officers of the First Grade and the common people could sacrifice only to their sons. Hence, the sacrifice offered to those who died without issue referred to one's sons and grandsons. Now, since the common people of today can sacrifice to four generations, then, it would be all right to sacrifice to those of a younger generation, such as our nephews.
...

WWKC, 6:210-1

¹ [Instructions on the Essentials of Customs and Propriety], probably an essay written by Tsou Ch'ien-chih.

² [Chu Hsi's Treatise on Family Rites].

³ *Mencius*, 6A:7, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 405.

⁴ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 28, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 424.

⁵ *Book of Rites*, ch. 12, 'Wang chih' [Royal Regulations], Legge's *Li Chi*, vol. 1, p. 223.

⁶ *Book of Rites*, ch. 46, 'Chi-fa', *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 207.

On *liang-chih*

53. TO TSOU CH' IEN-CHIH

... Recently, I find the words *liang-chih* daily more genuine and simple.¹ Day and night, when I speak with my friends, I merely regret that I cannot develop this concept to its fullest. For these two words represent something which everyone has in himself, and even the most foolish and least endowed awakens to truth on hearing of it. If we only extend this to the utmost limit, we shall find in it that which even sages [do not know], and even heaven and earth cannot satisfy. Hence, the meaning of these

words cannot be exhausted even if we go on until the end of *kalpa*.³ If worldly scholars still maintain doubt with regard to it, and find it still rather inadequate, this would be only due to their not really having seen it. Recently, a retired official invited me to give a lecture, saying, 'Beside *liang-chih*, is there anything else [you can] talk about?' I answered, 'Besides *liang-chih*, is there anything else [to] talk about?'⁴

WWKC, 6:212

¹ According to Ch'ien Te-hung (1496-1574), Yang-ming's disciple from 1521 on, Yang-ming's teaching became more and more simplified and he spoke almost always of '*liang-chih*'. See his preface to the *Wen-lu* [Collected Writings] of Yang-ming, WWKC, 1:13.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 29, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 425-6.

³ The Chinese word used here, *chieh*, is the translation of *kalpa*, the Sanskrit word meaning a Buddhist aeon or world period.

⁴ In the original Chinese, the question and answer are phrased in a similar way.

On Unity of the 'Three Ways'

54. TO TSOU CH'IEN-CHIH

1526

... There is only one *tao*. The man of *jen* [humanity] sees it, and calls it humanity. The man of *chih* [wisdom] sees it, and calls it wisdom.¹ What the Buddhists call Buddhist, what the Taoists call the follower of Lao-tzu, what the common people do daily without knowing² – all are *tao*. How can there be two *tao*? The true or false, orthodox or perverse doctrines of the past and present, resemble *mock jade* and jade. Yet many people remain confused during their whole lives, without being able to distinguish between them. It is precisely because this *tao* is only one, and its changes and transformations fill up all space, vertically, horizontally, and in every direction, that all can be inferred from it. The worldly Confucian scholars, each start from a partial view of it, and embellish their image with comparisons and imitations, give expression to it through divisions of chapters and sentences and borrowed explanations. They are used to such practices, which can instil enough self-confidence, producing sections and items which give them a sense of make-believe security, with which they can deceive themselves and others, remaining in this pitfall for a whole lifetime without realising it. And yet, it was a very slight divergence which led to this difference of a thousand

li. Those who do not have the sincere determination to become sages, and to devote themselves to being 'discerning and single-minded'³ will not be able to diagnose the root of this disease, and unveil the hidden, mysterious evil. . . .

WWKC, 6:212-3

¹ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', pt 1, Legge's *Yi King*, p. 356.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Book of Documents*, 'Ta-Yü', Legge's *Classics*, vol. III, p. 61.

On *liang-chih*

55. TO TSOU CH' IEN-CHIH

1526

. . . To recognise the principle of Heaven in every event¹ refers to the effort of vigilance and apprehension.² I consider this still slightly different [from my own teaching], for it implies that every event and object in the world has its own fixed principle, which one must seek outside of one's self. If the effort of the extension of *liang-chih* is understood, this teaching will be without harm. If not, the danger remains that a slight divergence may lead one a thousand *li* astray. In your letter you mentioned the fear that this [searching to recognise the principle of Heaven] may lend too great emphasis on events or affairs. This shows that you have thrown light on its weak point.

Thank you for sending me Kan-ch'üan's essay – 'Tsun-ching-ko Chi' [Record on 'Respect the Classics' Pavilion]. It is very good. His general theme is similar to that which I expressed in my essay on the Chi-shan Shu-yüan [Chi-shan College].³ I had formerly sent that essay to Kan-ch'üan, thinking that it did contain some real insights. Now Kan-ch'üan speaks about 'those today who say that intelligence and consciousness need not be sought externally in the Classics, and need not be invoked in order to awaken',⁴ and so on. In so doing, he seems to be too anxious to set up theories, without taking time to see carefully what I mean. If the later generations found learning obscure, this has not been due to the lack of intelligence and understanding of later men when compared to the ancients. Rather, this is generally due to their great desire to excel, which prevents them from learning from each other's good points with modesty. While

knowing that someone has propounded a right theory, one wishes all the same to propose another theory in order to excell the first. That is why the more theories there are, the more confused people become . . . This is therefore the fault of people like us, who seek to excell each other. Now the theory of *liang-chih* has already made very concrete the essential points of learning. If only all could eliminate the desire to excel, and seek rather to co-operate in propagating this teaching, and, paying attention to endowment and individuality, teach and persuade others systematically to follow this doctrine, we should certainly achieve real results. Otherwise, if we merely seek to establish different schools of thought, using the external pretext of the defence of doctrine, to obtain the goal of excelling others, and without paying attention to the growing neglect of orthodox teaching, people's minds will become increasingly confused. To form one's own party in order to attack others, to conceal our shortcomings while we argue about our supposed qualities in order to promote certain selfish interests, is not what a man of *jen* can tolerate. Kan'ch'uan may not have this intention. But his words stirred me up and I just give my general impressions of what I consider to be the common sickness to today's teachers. Even I myself may not perhaps be free from this. However, I would not dare not to seek to cure myself of it radically. . . .

WWKC, 6:213-14

¹ A constant teaching of Chan Kan-ch'uan. See *MJHA*, 37.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 384.

³ See *WWKC*, 7:250.

⁴ Quoting Chan Jo-shui's essay. See [Chan] *Kan-ch'uan wen-chi* [Collected Writings of Chan Jo-shui], Preface 1581, republished 1866, 18:8a-9b.

On Learning

56. IN REPLY TO A FRIEND

1526

The learning of the gentleman is concentrated merely on the quest within himself.¹ Should there be criticisms, praise, glory, or disgrace these things not only cannot move his mind, but can even provide him with something with which he can polish and improve himself. That is why the gentleman can find himself in no situation in which he is not himself,² since whatever he does

is, for him, learning. If one is glad on hearing praise, and sad on hearing criticism, one becomes always fearful, until even the day is found not sufficiently long³ for all his fears. How can such a person be a gentleman? Formerly, when His Majesty Emperor Wu-tsung was in Nanking [1520], his entourage vied with each other to slander me in his august presence. At that time, I faced unknown calamity, and my equals and subordinates all feared for me, saying that since I was being suspected by so many, I ought to attempt to explain myself. I answered that the gentleman does not expect the world to believe him, but is rather satisfied with his belief in himself. Since I already lacked adequate time to cultivate such belief in myself, where would I find time to persuade others to believe me? . . .

WWKC, 6:214

¹ *Analects*, XV:20, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 300.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 14, *ibid.*, p. 395; *Mencius*, 4B:16, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 323.

³ *Book of Documents*, T'ai-shih' [The Great Declaration], *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 290.

On Knowledge and Action

57. IN REPLY TO INQUIRIES FROM A FRIEND 1526

You asked: 'The former scholars all regarded study, inquiry, reflection and discernment as belonging to the realm of knowledge, while earnest action was assigned to the realm of action.¹ These were therefore clearly regarded as two different realms. Now you alone say that knowledge and action are one. I cannot but doubt your words.'

I answer thus: 'I have spoken many times of this already. All that is meant by activity is to do something concretely. If one applied earnest effort to study, inquiry, reflection, and discernment, these four things would therefore become action also. Learning means learning to do this, inquiry means seeking to do this, reflection and discernment also mean reflecting upon this and discerning between it and other things. If one is first to study, inquire, reflect and discern, before one acts, how can one not study, inquire, reflect and discern in a vacuum? And how can one do these things during one's action? In its intelligent, conscious, and discerning aspects, action is knowledge. In its

genuine, concrete, and practical aspect, knowledge is action. If one acts without intelligence, consciousness, and refined observation, one is acting blindly. This is what is meant by "Learning without thinking is labour lost".² That is why one must also remember knowledge. However, if one knows without being genuine, concrete, and practical in knowledge, one is merely harbouring illusions. That is what "Thinking without learning is perilous" means.³ Therefore one must also speak of action in knowledge. Essentially, it is the same effort all throughout. Where the ancients spoke of knowledge and action, they did so always to correct or clarify some effort, and so differ from the people today who divide them into two separate things. When I speak now of the unity of knowledge and action, I do so also to correct and remedy certain present errors. However, in substance and procedure, knowledge and action are also fundamentally one. We need merely to experience it in our minds in order to reach this realisation. But if one seeks only to understand it through the meanings of words, one gets very involved in hair-splitting, and more and more confused. This is precisely the disadvantage of not being able to unite knowledge and action.'

You also said: 'There are many similarities and differences between the teachings of [Lu] Hsiang-shan and those of [Chu] Hui-an. You used to say that Hsiang-shan saw very directly and clearly whatever concerns the great point of departure of learning. Now, when I consider the teachings of Hsiang-shan, I find that he divides learning into clear exposition and concrete application. He regards also the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things as belonging to the category of clear exposition. Thus I find his teaching quite similar to that of Hui-an, but rather different from your teaching on the unity of knowledge and action.'

I answer: 'With regard to learning, the gentleman does not place importance on similarities and differences, but only on what is right. If my teaching presents similarities with the teaching of Hsiang-shan, it is not due to any imitation on my part. If there are differences also, I should not try to hide these differences. Where I do differ from Hui-an, it is not due to my seeking to be different. Where I teach as he did, there is no harm either coming from this similarity. If Po-yi,⁴ Liu-hsia Hui,⁵

Confucius, and Mencius were to find themselves in the same room, and each were to express his particular views, it would be impossible for them to hold identical views. What is essential is that they are all sages. Later scholars, however, sought merely to defend those who have similar opinions and attack those who differ from themselves, being moved this way by selfish minds and superficial habits, regarding the work of sagehood as a child's game.'

You asked also: 'The unity of knowledge and action is an essential part of your teaching. Since this differs from the teaching of Hsiang-shan, may I ask what in it is the same?'

I answer: 'Knowledge and action are really two words describing the same, one effort. This one effort requires these two words in order to be explained completely. If a person sees clearly the essential point of departure, he would know this is only one, and that though these may be described as two activities, they really remain one effort. If, in the beginning, the two activities do not seem to harmonise, they would always tend towards unity in the end. If, however, someone does not see clearly the great point of departure, and regards them as two entirely different things, then, even if he were to speak of the two as one, they would still lack harmony, and would be separated into two things in action, resulting in losing head and tail of the body'. . . .

You asked also: 'Since the teaching of the extension of *liang-chih* is viewed by one who, having held it, may "wait for a hundred generations for a sage, without having any doubt",¹ and since Hsiang-shan saw clearly the essentials of learning, why would he present different views in this regard?'

I answer: 'Scholars have followed one another in similar interpretations of the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things. Hsiang-shan followed their footsteps, and did not cast doubt on their explanations. This showed also that Hsiang-shan's teachings present imperfections, which it is not necessary for us to hide.'

I also wish to add: 'Action is knowledge in its genuine and concrete aspects. Knowledge is action in its intelligent, conscious, and discerning aspects. If, when one knows, the mind is not genuine and concrete, then one's knowledge also lacks intelli-

gence, consciousness and discernment. It does not mean that one needs merely to know with intelligence, consciousness and discernment, without having to seek after genuineness and concreteness. And, when one acts, if the mind is not intelligent conscious, and discerning, then one's action cannot be genuine and concrete. It does not mean that one needs merely to be genuine and concrete in action, without having to seek after intelligence, consciousness, and refinement. The substance of the mind knows the changes and transformations of Heaven and Earth.⁷ Together with Heaven, it also knows the great beginning.⁸

WWKC, 6:215

¹ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 413.

² *Analects*, II:15, *ibid.*, p. 150.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See *Shih-chi*, 61:179. Also see *Mencius*, 5B:1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, pp.370-1.

⁵ His real name was Chan Ch'in. A man of Lu, he lived under Liu-hsia, and became the symbol of a sage-minister. See, *ibid.*, pp. 370-2.

⁶ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 29, *ibid.*, p. 426.

⁷ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 33, *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁸ *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', Legge's *Yi King*, p. 349.

On *liang-chih*

58. TO NAN YUAN-SHAN¹

1526

Only a scholar of real virtue can see the brilliance and conscious intelligence of his *liang-chih* in harmony and penetration, one with *t'ai-hsu* [Great Void].² *T'ai-hsu* embraces all things, without letting anything become a hindrance to itself. For the substance of my *liang-chih* is naturally and originally 'quick in apprehension, clear in discernment, of far-reaching intelligence and all-embracing knowledge'³ as well as 'magnanimous, generous, benign, and mild',⁴ and also 'unfolding, energetic, firm, and enduring',⁵ 'self-adjusted, grave, never swerving from the Mean',⁶ 'accomplished, distinctive, concentrating, and searching',⁷ 'vast and all-embracing, deep and active as a fountain, sending forth its virtues in due season'.⁸ Essentially there are no wealth and honours to be admired, no poverty or lowliness to be anxiously avoided, no gains or losses that merit joy or sadness, no love or hatred to choose from.⁹ For if my ear is not *liang-chih*, it cannot

hear, and how can it be called quick in apprehension? If my eye is not *liang-chih*, it cannot see, and how can it be called clear in discernment? If my mind is not *liang-chih*, it cannot think and become conscious, and how can it be said to be far-reaching in intelligence and all-embracing in knowledge? . . . That is why the admiration of wealth and honours, the anxiety over poverty and lowliness, the joy or sorrow over gains or losses, as well as love and hatred, can all obscure the apprehensive and intelligent substance of *liang-chih*, and hinder its function in sending forth [virtues] in due season. They are what dust is to the eye, and wooden plugs to the ears . . . Scholars of virtue regard the removal of such things . . . as bathing their eyes of dust, and of extracting the wood from their ears . . . From them, wealth, poverty, gain, loss, love, and hatred are worth as much as the passing storm and the floating smoke, which move and change in the *t'ai-hsu*, while the substance of *t'ai-hsu* remains always vast and unlimited. . . .

WWKC, 6:216-17

¹ His private name was Nan Ta-chi. (1487-1541). A *chin-shih* in 1511, he became Prefect of Shao-hsing, Yang-ming's home country. He was also Yang-ming's disciple. See *MJHA*, 29:11a-b.

² The term *t'ai-hsu* was used by Chang Tsai; see *Chang-tzu sh'uan-shu*, *Cheng-meng*, ch. 1:2a. It refers to the universe or to space.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 31, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 428.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

⁹ *Mencius* 3B:2, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 265.

On *hsin*

59. TO CHI MING-TE¹

1526

. . . Recently, a friend told me to change to *Pei-mu* pills² [for my cough]. I have found them quite effective. However, this is nothing compared to your advice about using the methods of cultivation of life³ to remove the roots of the disease and reach the source [of the problem]. This is valid not only for curing sickness, but also for our application in study.

You told me that your determination to study has increased,

that you consider sagehood as certainly attainable by study, that you cautiously learn from experience in concrete affairs, and besides, that feelings of annoyance arising from your relationship with friends are decreasing. This is a cause for rejoicing. You also said that the teaching of sagehood requires also the accumulation of gradual efforts. This is all very solid. As to your using the teachings of Yao, Shun, King Wen, Confucius, and Lao-tzu to develop the meaning of the chapter on 'Fixing Determination in Learning' in the *Analects*,⁴ it adequately shows your diligence in seeking progress . . . Ming-te! It would be all right to make use of this idea to encourage your own spirit, and improve your own morale. But if you wish also to divide up every section of these writings, giving commentaries and citing proofs, taking these to be systematic steps of the pathway by which a sage advances in *tao* . . . then you will not be free from the defects of making comparisons and of being fettered by words. To show in this way the fact that sagehood is attainable by learning might give some insights but would tend to make of the status of sagehood something very high and far away, without showing everyone that it is really attainable . . . There is much in the instructions of the sages that cannot be adequately given in books and words.⁵ In reading the Classics, we must use what helps our learning in order to extend our *liang-chih*. Thus, all that is in thousands of classics, in whatsoever inverted and transposed order, can serve our purpose. But if we fall into fixed types of comparisons, we become fettered by these, and, in spite of occasional insights, which have some value, prejudiced and arbitrary judgments will be lurking around and hindering our *liang-chih* without our being conscious thereof . . . To speak of *liang-chih* would make things easier for people to understand. That is why I have been saying recently that the *liang-chih* of *hsin* is sagehood . . . Man is the *hsin* [mind] of Heaven and Earth and all things. The mind is the master of Heaven and Earth and all things. The mind is the word of Heaven; the mind suggests Heaven and Earth and all things. This is direct, simple, and intimate. So it would be better to say, for study one merely needs to develop the mind. . . .

WWKC, 6:218-19

- ¹ His private name was Chi Peng. He became a *chin-shih* in 1517. See *MJHA*, 13:1a-2a.
² A species of *Fritillana thunbergii* used in Chinese medicine.
³ Referring to Taoist physicalmental cultivation.
⁴ *Analects*, II:4, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 146.
⁵ Allusion to *Book of Changes*, 'Appended Remarks', Legge's *Yi King*, p. 377.

On Extending *liang-chih*

60. TO WEI SHIH-YÜEH¹

1527

... You spoke about following one's *ch'ing* [feelings] and thoughts,² and acting according to these as though they were *liang-chih*, rather than according to the real *liang-chih*. This shows that you have already located the danger. Thought and *liang-chih* should be clearly distinguished one from the other. Thought arises out of response to an object, and may be either good or bad. *Liang-chih* is that which can distinguish between the good and the bad in the thought. When one follows one's *liang-chih*, all that one does cannot be wrong.

As to your questions concerning considerations of 'face' and the modification of circumstances, all refer to *hsin* [mind], which, while applying itself to the extension of *liang-chih*, does not succeed in concentrating itself with sufficient earnestness. If [the mind] could apply such earnest concentration [in this work], there would be no such difficulty. Those who, in doing things, find the beginning difficult, or tend to be careless and compromising, all do so because they are not sufficiently concentrated in extending their *liang-chih*. This means that they have not completely understood *liang-chih*. If they clearly comprehend it, then, even such considerations of face and circumstances become its operations, and there is no other *liang-chih* beyond 'face' and circumstances. And, so how can one be disturbed by 'face' or circumstances? When that happens, a man has already been moved by selfish desire, and has already lost his original *liang-chih*. Although now our companions all know that *liang-chih* is present everywhere, they tend to separate human feelings and the principles of things from *liang-chih* whenever they are involved in human affairs. This is certainly something for which we should be on the watch.

WWKC, 6:221

- ¹ His private name was Wei Liang-pi (1492-1575). See *MJHA*, 19:19b-20a.
² The Chinese word *yi* is translated here as 'thought'. It refers actually to 'intention' also, as the Chinese do not separate the operations of the intellect from those of the will.

On *liang-chih*

61. TO MA TZU-HSIN¹

1527

... Even before, we often spoke of *liang-chih*; I wonder whether you have now a clearer understanding of it. [Ch'eng] Ming-tao said, 'Although I derive my teaching partly from others, yet the two words *T'ien-li* is what I myself have discovered by experience'.² *Liang-chih* is *T'ien-li* (Principle of Heaven). To experience it means actually to possess it in oneself.³ It is not the same as what is done by those in the world who teach what they imagine. In these days, all our companions speak of *liang-chih*, but I have not yet seen any who can really experience it, which is why they are still not free from doubt. For some say that *liang-chih* itself is not adequate to exhaust all the principles in the world, so that a thorough external investigation is still necessary in order to complement its work. Others say that the mere extension of *liang-chih* may not bring one into complete conformity with the principle of Heaven, so that it is necessary to use *liang-chih* to seek what is called principle of Heaven. Thus they hold on to certain fixed rules which they follow systematically in order to be free from defect. With regard to such theory, unless one can really apply the effort of experience and attain to real insight of *liang-chih* one will not be able to distinguish between what is true, and what only seems true. ...

WWKC, 6:222

¹ His private name was Ma Ming-heng. A *chin-shih* in 1517, he was Yang-ming's disciple, and was to bring Yang-ming's teachings to the province of Fukien. See *Ming-shih* 207:497.

² *Wai-shu*, 12:4a.

³ *Great Learning*, ch. 9, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 371.

On Extending *liang-chih*

62. TO MAO KU-AN, THE VICE
REGIONAL COMMISSIONER¹

1527

... What I teach concerning the extension of *liang-chih* and what is being taught today concerning the recognition of *T'ien-li* (principle of Heaven)² is not so very different except for certain

slight divergences, with one taking a straight road and the other a detour. Take planting, for example. He who extends his *liang-chih* cultivates life from the root upward until it reaches the branches and leaves. He who recognises the principle of Heaven enriches the life in the branches and the leaves, and then seeks to return it to the roots. However, while promoting life in the roots, one can certainly conduct it to the branches and leaves, in enriching the life in the branches and the leaves, how can one abandon the roots and seek elsewhere for life with which to enrich the branches and leaves? . . .

WWKC, 6:222-3

¹ His private name was Mao Hsien (1469-1535). Together with Hsi Shu, he became Yang-ming's disciple during Yang-ming's exile in Kueichow. See Chiao Hung (ed.), *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu* [Documentary Records of the Ming dynasty], Ming ed., reprinted in Taipei, 1965, 80:51.

² The constant teaching of Chan Kan-ch'uan. See *MJHA*, 37:1a-23a.

On Extending *liang-chih*

63. TO HUANG TSUNG-HSIEN

1527

For the man in an official position, the task [of self-perfection] is ten times more difficult than when he is living in retirement in mountains or forests. Without the help of friends who warn and correct him, his original determination will easily be weakened. . . .

. . . Recently, I was telling [Huang] Ch'eng-fu that, since you have few friends in Peking, the two of you should arrange in advance with each other, so that, when one observes a slight movement of passion,¹ the other should at once talk about the extension of *liang-chih*, in order that you may correct each other in this way.

Only the bravest man in the world² can stop himself suddenly and keep silent while he is in the course of an interesting conversation, can recollect and control himself when his temperament is about to become manifest, and can melt his anger and desire, just when these are near the boiling point. However, for one who sees intimately the *liang-chih*, even such effort is not so difficult. Hence the difficulties mentioned do not originally belong to the realm of *liang-chih*. They only appear when *liang-chih* becomes obscured and obstructed. When *liang-chih* awakens,

it is as though the bright sun has arisen, and ghosts and spirits naturally disperse. The *Doctrine of the Mean* says, 'He who possesses the sense of shame is close to being brave'.³ The shame to which this sentence refers is due merely to not being able to extend one's own *liang-chih*. People today often feel ashamed of not being able to win over others in speech, to subdue others through temperament, or to follow their own impulses of anger or desire. They do not know that these difficulties all arise from obstruction of *liang-chih*, which is really what a gentleman should be ashamed of. Now, if they consider as shame not being able to obstruct their own *liang-chih*, they are really feeling shame in what they ought not to feel shame, while they do not feel shame in what is really shameful. Is this not a very sad thing? . . . I only wish that you will become like the officers of ancient times. They were not noted for any crafty knowledge and ability, but were 'plain and sincere, without other ability, but with a straightforward and generous mind, which is capable of holding much'.⁴ Your knowledge and ability are certainly beyond those of most people. If you have not yet self-confidence, it is because you are not yet able to extend your own *liang-chih* and have not yet attained the state of 'plain sincerity and straightforward generosity'. The present situation in the world resembles that of a man who is seriously sick with accumulated diseases. The only hope of restoring the dead to life rests with you. If you have not yet removed your own sickness, how can you cure the sickness of the world? . . . You must really overcome your own selfish desires and become one with heaven and earth and all things, in order really to bring benefit to the world to restore the perfect rule of the Three Dynasties,⁵ and thus be not unworthy of our intelligent Sovereign, manifest gratitude for the trust placed in you, also not wasting the great privilege⁶ of having lived this life in the world. . . .

WWKC, 6:223-4

¹ Mencius, 2A:2, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 189.

² Ibid., p. 187.

³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 407.

⁴ *Book of Documents*, 'Ch'in-shih' [The Speech of the Duke of Ch'in], *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 629.

⁵ The three dynasties are Hsia (2205?-1766? B.C.), Shang (1766?-1122 B.C.), Chou (1122-221 B.C.), according to traditional Chinese chronology.

⁶ The Chinese term used — *ta-shih* — suggests a Buddhist term — alluding to the 'great cause' for which Buddha appeared in the world. See *CTYL*, 13:7a, where Chu Hsi says that the sage also lives for a great cause. For the Buddhist usage, see Saddharma-pundarika sutra, TSD ed., No. 262, 9:7; Eng. tr. by W. E. Soothill, The Lotus of the Wonderful Law (1930), 71.

On Extending *liang-chih*

64. TO CH'EN WEI-CHÜN¹

... When sages speak of learning [they teach] that there is no effort which cannot be applied. However, the three words *chih liang-chih* [the extension of *liang-chih*] are especially simple and clear, providing a concrete starting point for our efforts, so that we shall not go astray. Among our companions now, there is not one who does not know this theory of the extension of *liang-chih*. Yet there are very few who really apply their efforts in this direction. This is so because they do not yet see their *liang-chih* clearly, and especially take the word *chih* [extension] too light-heartedly, so that from many points of view they do not gain much in strength. Although this represents a slight improvement when compared to their former attachment to fragmentary teachings, their real progress is like the difference between two soldiers, one of whom retreats a hundred paces, and the other retreats fifty. . . .²

WWKC, 6:225

¹ His private name was Ch'en Chiu-ch'uan. He became a *chin-shih* in 1514. See *MJHA*, 19:15b-19b.

² *Mencius*, 1A:3, Legge's *Classics*, vol. II, p. 130.

On *liang-chih*: Orthodoxy

65. TO MY FRIENDS IN AN-FU¹

1527

... Ming-tao once said, 'I prefer to learn to follow the sages and not succeed, rather than to become famous for one good deed'.² He said this for the sake of those who have the ambition to become sages and yet have not attained the learning of sages. The teaching of *liang-chih* which we are promulgating today is the genuine doctrine transmitted by the sages. If we only learn from this, we may be certain to attain sagehood. The only fear is that we still prefer to become famous through one good deed, and are therefore unwilling to devote our minds to such efforts . . . Our efforts must be simple and true. The truer they are, the simpler they become. The simpler they are, the truer they become. . . .

WWKC, 6:225-6

¹ This was a county in the present province of Kiangsi belonging to Chi-an, from which many of Yang-ming's disciples came. See especially *MJHA*, 19.

² This is actually taken from a eulogy written in honour of Ch'eng Hao after his death by Lü Yu-shu [Lü Ta-Lin, 1044-90]. See *Chün-ssu lu chi-chu*, 14:6b, and Chan's *Reflections*, p. 305.

On *liang-chih*

66. TO LU CH'ING-PO¹

. . . When a man does what is not good, even acting to the extreme of unreasonableness and the disruption of morality, the *liang-chih* of his mind will not be without awareness of its evil. However, because he cannot extend his naturally endowed 'innate knowledge', he does not investigate things, he does not render his intention sincere, and so he enters finally the ranks of the mean men. Hence all who extend their knowledge extend merely their naturally endowed knowledge of the good [*liang-chih*]. What the *Great Learning* calls *chih-chih* and *ko-wu* [the extension of knowledge and the investigation of things],² what the *Book of Documents* calls *ching-yi* [being discerning and single-minded],³ what the *Doctrine of the Mean* calls *shen-tu* [watching over self when one is alone],⁴ and what Mencius calls *chi-yi* [the concentration of righteousness]⁵ – all refer to the application of the same effort. . . .

WWKC, 27:769

¹ Another name of Lu Ch'eng, also known as Lu Yuan-ching. See Yang-ming's other letters to him in 1516, 1521, and 1522 (pp. 000).

² *Great Learning*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, pp. 358-9.

³ *Book of Documents*, 'Fa-Yü mu', *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 61.

⁴ *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 6, *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 384.

⁵ *Mencius*, 2A:2, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 190.

On Emotions

67. TO HSÜ T'AI-CHUNG¹

. . . When joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are stirred to movement and remain moderate,² they are said to produce the state of harmony. There is harmony in sorrow. This refers to its taking rise from complete sincerity and without any affectation. The excess of feeling is not harmony. The movement of *ch'i* [temperament] is not harmony. To be attached to selfish desires and stubbornness is not harmony. The infant cries all day without hurting his throat.³ This is the extreme of harmony. To know this is to know that the teaching concerning how to observe mourning does not differ from the teaching concerning practical living. . . .

WWKC, 27:769

¹ His private name was Hsu Hsiang-ch'ing (1479-1557). He became a *chin-shih* in 1517. See *Ming-shih*, 208:500, and *WWKC*, 4: 186.

² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 1, Legge's *Classics*, vol. I, p. 384.

³ *Lao-tzu*, 55. See Chan's translation in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 165.

On the Interpretation of Certain Key-words

The following key-words, all substantives, have been selected for discussion because of their frequent occurrence in the writings of Wang Yang-ming, and also because they illustrate the *unitary* character of his thought. Very often, these words manifest the different dimensions of the same truth which persistently pre-occupied Yang-ming's mind. That this truth pertains both to the ontological – the given, as well as the goal to be attained – and the methodological – the way of attaining the goal – realms is a fact which should emerge from the reading of his letters and from this discussion of certain key-words he used.

hsin : literally, the heart or mind, the seat of consciousness

For Wang Yang-ming, it is the source and principle of all human activity, identical to moral conscience, to human nature, to the self, to the person.

hsing : literally, nature, the natural

Chu Hsi regarded *hsing* as the source and principle of moral and ontological goodness in man and the universe, that which is full of *li*, while he took *hsin* as that which contains both *li* and *ch'i* and therefore morally ambivalent.

Wang Yang-ming considered that *hsing* and *hsin* represent one and the same reality. For him, *hsing* is somehow the tranquil dimension of this reality, that by which man shares in *T'ien-li* [principle of Heaven], while *hsin* is the more dynamic principle, that which directs all human activity, the 'given' nature of man as well as that which is to be acquired, through experience and action – in other words, both starting-point and goal.

li : etymologically, the veins in jade; according to ordinary usage, reason or truth, pattern

For Chu Hsi, it is being, reality, the principle of organisation, that which constitutes the essence of a thing, moral truth and goodness, the principle of moral action.

Wang Yang-ming considered *li* especially under its moral aspect. He regarded *hsin* to be full of *li*, thus departing from Chu Hsi's views.

T'ien-li: literally, heavenly reason, 'principle of Heaven'

For Wang Yang-ming, it represents the supreme moral truth or the plenitude of moral goodness in which man participates, as well as that to which our moral judgments and actions should conform. At times he also opposed it – as did Chu Hsi – to '*jen-yu*' [human desire in a pejorative sense].

ch'i: literally, breath, ether, vital force, temperament Chu Hsi considered it to be the concrete, material, differentiating principle of things, that which together with *li* constitutes all beings, that which gives life to things.

For Wang Yang-ming, *li* and *ch'i* represent, not distinct principles, but the rational and moral *versus* the irrational and vital manifestations of the same human nature or of nature at large.

liang-chih: literally, knowing the good, knowledge of the good

In *Mencius*, 7A:15, the expression refers to man's inborn capacity to know the good.

For Wang Yang-ming, it is that in man which enables him to discern between right and wrong, the inborn capacity to know and do the good, a capacity to be developed as well as a goal to be attained, since the perfect development of *liang-chih* would signify sagehood.

Yang-ming also spoke of *liang-chih* as the principle of vitality, of consciousness, and of conscious activity in man. Besides, he identified it with *hsin*, especially to the latter in a state of 'equilibrium' – before feelings are aroused. In this sense, he spoke interchangeably of the 'original substance' [*pen-t'i*] of *hsin* – the 'mind-in-itself' – and of the 'original substance' of *liang-chih* – '*liang-chih* in itself'.

jen: literally, kindness, benevolence, humanity, goodness, love

In Confucian philosophy, the perfect and universal virtue.

Ch'eng Hao and other Sung philosophers gave this word a cosmic, life-giving connotation, making it that power or virtue by which man becomes one with heaven and earth and all things and shares in the creative processes of the universe.

Wang Yang-ming also identified *jen* with the 'original substance' of *hsin*, that is, with the 'mind-in-itself'.

t'ai-chi: literally, the Great and Ultimate, or the Supreme and Ultimate

For Chou Tun-yi, it represents the source and principle of all being and goodness, the Beginning, the One behind the Many, the Fullness of Perfection, of Being, of *li*.

Wang Yang-ming seldom referred to it, and then usually as the source and principle of moral goodness.

t'ai-hsu: literally, the Great Void

For Chang Tsai, it is full of *ch'i* [ether], the shapeless stuff which makes up the universe. Wang Yang-ming spoke of *liang-chih* as being somehow one with *t'ai-hsu*, thus endowing the latter not only with life and vitality but also with consciousness and a certain intelligence and spirituality.

tao: literally, the Way

In Taoist philosophy, the ultimate truth and reality.

In Confucian philosophy, virtue, the fullness of moral teaching, the authentic doctrine of the sages. Wang Yang-ming understood this word in its Confucian meaning. He identified his own teaching of *liang-chih* with the Confucian Way or *tao*.

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GLOSSARY AND
INDEX

Ai, Duke	哀公
An-fu	安福
Chan Ch'in	展禽
Chan Jo-shui	湛若水
[Chan] Kan-ch'uan	湛甘泉
Chan Wing-tsit	陳榮捷
Ch'an	禪
[Chang] Ching-fu	張敬夫
[Chang] Heng-chu	張橫渠
Chang Nan-hsuan	張南軒
Chang Po-tuan	張伯端
Chang Shih	張栻
Chang Tsai	張載
<i>Chang-tzu ch'uan-shu</i>	張子全書
Chao, Duke	昭公
Che	輒
<i>Che-chiang t'ung-chih</i>	浙江通志
che-hsieh-tzu	這些子
Chekiang	浙江
Ch'en Chih-hsu	陳致虛
Ch'en Chiu-ch'uan	陳九川
Ch'en Hsien-chang	陳獻章
Ch'en Wei-chün	陳惟謨
<i>Cheng-meng</i>	正蒙
Ch'eng	誠
Ch'eng Hao	程顥
Ch'eng Ming-tao	程明道
Ch'eng Yi	程頤
Ch'eng Yi-ch'uan	程伊川
Ch'eng-chou	辰州
Ch'eng-tzu	程子
Chi Ming-te	季明德
Chi Peng	季本
Chi Yuan-heng	冀元亨
Chi Yun	紀昀
Chi-an	吉安
chi-fa	祭法
<i>Chi-shan shu-yuan</i>	稽山書院
chi-wen	祭文
chi-yi	集義
Ch'i	齊
ch'i	氣

'
n

ch'u

che


惟

昀

Ch'i-tun	猗頓
Chiang Hsing	蔣信
Chiang Yung	江永
Chiao Hung	焦■ 竑
Chieh	階
chieh	劫
Chien Keng	錢鏗
ch'ien	乾
Ch'ien Te-hung	錢德洪
Ch'ien-chou	虔州
chih-chih	致知
chih liang-chih	致良知
chin-shih	進士
<i>Chin-ssu lu</i>	近思錄
<i>Chin-ssu lu chi-chu</i>	近思錄集■ 注
<i>Chin-tan ta-yao</i>	金丹大要
Ch'in-shih	秦誓
ching	敬，靜，精
<i>Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu</i>	景德傳燈錄
Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un	邱長春
Ch'iu Ch'u-chi	邱處機
Chou	周
Chou, Duke of	周公
[Chou] Lien-hsi	周濂溪
Chou Tun-yi	周敦頤
<i>Chou-tzu Tung-shu</i>	周子通書
Chu Hsi	朱熹
Chu-chi	諸暨
[Chu] Hui-an	朱晦庵
Chu Yung-ming	諸用明
Chu Po-yu	■ 伯玉 濠
Ch'ü Wan-li	屈萬里
Chu-tzu	朱子
<i>Chu-tzu ch'uan-shu</i>	朱子全書
<i>Chu-tzu yü-lei</i>	朱子語類
Ch'u	楚
Ch'u Ch'ai-hsu	儲柴墟
Ch'u Huan	儲■ 山 麓
Ch'u Tz'u	楚辭
Ch'u-li	曲禮
<i>Ch'uan-hsi lu</i>	傳習錄
ch'uan-hsueh	勸學
Ch'uan Tsu-wang	全祖望
<i>Chuang-tzu</i>	莊子
Ch'üeh	闕
<i>Ch'un-ch'iu</i>	春秋
<i>Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu</i>	春秋繁露
<i>Ch'un-ch'iu jih-shih</i>	春秋日蝕集證
<i>chi-cheng</i>	
Chung K'ang	仲康
Chung-hui chih-kao	仲虺之誥
Chung-shan Fu	仲山甫

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Chung-yu	仲由
Chung-yung	中庸
Chung-yung chang-chu	中庸章句
Chung-yung chu-shu	中庸注疏
<i>Erh-Ch'eng ch'uan-shu</i>	二程全書
<i>Erh-shih-wu shih</i>	二十五史
Fan Ch'in	樊遲
Fang Hsi-ch'iao	方西樵
Fang Hsien-fu	方獻夫
Fang Shu-hsien	方叔賢
Feng Cheng	馮  敷
fu	復
Fung [Feng] Yu-lan	馮友蘭
Fu Yueh	傅說
Fukien	福建
<i>Han Ch'ang-li</i>	韓昌黎全集
<i>ch'uan-chi</i>	
Han Wen Kung	韓文公
Han Yu	韓愈
Han-ku	函谷
Han-lin	翰林
hao-jan-chih-ch'i	浩然之氣
Heng-shui	橫水
Ho	和
Ho Meng-ch'un	何孟春
Ho Tzu-yuan	何子元
Hou Wai-lu	侯外盧
Hsi	羲
Hsi, [Duke]	僖公
Hsi Shu	席書
Hsi Yuan-shan	席元山
Hsiang, [Duke]	襄公
<i>Hsiang-chu Wang</i>	詳注王陽明全
<i>yang-ming ch'uan-shu</i>	書
<i>Hsiang-shan ch'uan-chi</i>	象山全集
Hsia Shang-p'u	夏尙樸
Hsia Tun-fu	夏敦夫
Hsiao-shan	蕭山
Hsiao Liang-kan	蕭良幹
Hsieh T'ing-chieh	謝延傑
hsin	心
Hsin-ch'ang	新昌
<i>Hsin-ya hsueh-pao</i>	新亞學報
hsing	性
Hsing-chuang	行狀
'Hsing-li shih-yi'	性理拾遺

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<i>Hsiu-tao chu</i>	修道注
Hsu Ai	徐愛
Hsu Ch'eng-chih	徐成之
Hsu Hsiang-ch'ing	許相卿
<i>Hsu kao-seng chuan</i>	續高僧傳
Hsu Shao-ch'eng	徐紹誠
Hsu T'ai-chung	許台仲
Hsueh Hsuan	薛瑾
Hsueh K'an	薛侃
Hsueh Shang-ch'eng	薛尚誠
Hsueh Shang-ch'ien	薛尚謙
Hsueh Tao-kuang	薛道光
Hsueh Wen-ch'ing	薛文清
Hsueh-chi	學記
Hu	胡
hu	斛
Hu Po-chung	胡伯忠
Hu-hsiang	互鄉
<i>Huai-nan tzu</i>	淮南子
Huan, Duke	桓公
Huang Ch'eng-fu	黃誠甫
Huang Chiu-an	黃久庵
Huang Hsing-tseng	黃省曾
Huang Hui	黃暉
Huang Mien-chih	黃勉之
Huang Tsung-hsi	黃宗羲
Huang Tsung-hsien	黃宗賢
Huang Tsung-ming	黃宗明
Huang Wan	黃綰
<i>Huang-Ming chin-shih</i>	皇明進士
<i>teng-k'o k'ao</i>	登科考
<i>Hui-an hsien-sheng Chu</i>	晦庵先生朱文
<i>Wen Kung wen-chi</i>	公文集
Hui-neng	慧能
Hui-ssu	慧思
Hung-fan	洪範
Hung-jen	弘忍
jih-kuan	日官
jih-yu	日御
Kan-chou	贛州
<i>Kan-ch'uan wen-chi</i>	甘泉文集
'Kan-hsu'	感虛
Kao-tzu	告子
'Kao-yao mu'	皋陶謨
Ko Ch'ang-keng	葛長庚
ko-wu	格物
Ko-wu shuo	格物說
<i>Ku-chin yi-shih</i>	古今逸史

K'uai-chi	會稽
Kuang-ch'eng-tzu	廣成子
Kueichow	貴州
k'un	坤
K'un-lun	崑崙
kung	公
Kung-sun Lung	公孫龍
K'ung Kuei	孔惺
K'ung-t'ung	崆峒 <small>徵</small>
<i>Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu</i>	國朝獻 <small>錄</small>
Lao-tzu	老子
Lee	李
<i>Leng-chia ching</i>	楞伽經
<i>Leng-yen ching</i>	楞嚴經
li	里·禮·理
Li Po-yang	李伯陽
Li Tao-fu	李道夫
<i>Li Chi</i>	禮記
<i>Li-chi</i>	禮記
<i>Li-hsueh tsung-chuan</i>	理學宗傳
liang-chih	良知
<i>Lie-Sien Tchouan</i>	列仙傳
<i>Lieh-hsien chuang</i>	列仙傳
Lin-chiang	臨江
Liu Chin	劉謹
Liu Ching-su	劉景素
Liu Chün-liang	劉君亮
Liu Hsiang	劉向
Liu Kuan-shih	劉觀時
Liu Nei-chung	劉內重
Liu Ts'un-yan	柳存仁
Liu Tsung-chou	劉宗周
Liu Yuan-tao	劉元道
Liu-hsia Hui	柳下惠
<i>Liu-tzu ch'uan-hsin-lu</i>	劉子傳信錄
<i>Liu-tzu ch'uan-shu</i>	劉子全書遺編
<i>yi-pien</i>	
<i>Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching</i>	六祖大師法寶壇經
Lo-yang	洛陽
Lou Liang	婁諒
Lu	魯
Lu Ch'eng	陸澄
Lu Ch'ing-po	陸清伯
Lu Chiu-yuan	陸九淵
Lu Hsiang-shan	陸象山
Lu Yuan-ching	陸元靜
Lu-ao	旅 <small>整</small>

Lü Hsi-che	呂希哲
Lü Ta-lin	呂大臨
Lü Tsu-ch'ien	呂祖謙
Lü Yu-shu	呂與叔
Lun Yen-shih	倫彥式
Lön Yi-hsun	倫以訓
Lun-heng	論衡
Lun-heng chiao-shih	論衡校釋
Lun-yü	論語
Lung-chiang	龍江
Lung-nan	龍南
Ma Ming-heng	馬明衡
Ma Tzu-hsin	馬子■
Mao Hsien	毛憲
Mao Ku-an	毛古庵
Meng Hsien-tzu	孟獻子
Ming	明
Ming shih-lu	明實錄
Ming-ju hsüeh-an	明儒學案
'Ming-ju yü tao-chiao'	明儒與道教
Ming-shih	明史
Ming-tai shih-chieh hui-k'an	明代史籍集刊
Ming-tao p'ien	明道編
Ming-tao wen-chi mo	明道文集 麈
Nan Ta-chi	南大吉
Nan Yuan-shan	南元善
Nan-an	南安
Nan-cheng	南鎮
Nan-tzu	南子
Nanking	南京
Ni Hsi-en	倪錫恩
Nieh Wen-yü	聶文蔚
'Nien-p'u'	年譜
pei-mu	貝母
pen-hsin	本心
P'eng Keng	彭鏗
pien-p'i	鞭辟
P'ing, King	平王
po	博
Po Yu-ch'an	白玉蟾
Po-yi	伯夷
Shan-yin	山陰
Shang	商
Shang-yang-tzu	上陽子

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<i>Shang-yang-tzu</i>	上陽子金丹大
<i>Chin-tan ta-yao</i>	要
Shang-yü	上虞
Shao-hsing	紹興
<i>Shao-hsing fu-chih</i>	紹興府志
Shao-yeh shan-fang	掃葉山房
Shen Yi-chi	沈翼機
Shen-hsiu	神秀
shen-tu	慎獨
Sheng-hsüeh	聖學
Shih Pang-yao	施邦曜
<i>Shih-chi</i>	史記
<i>Shih-ching</i>	詩經
Shih-tsung	世宗
Shu Fen	舒芬
Shu Kuo-shang	舒國裳
Shu Kuo-yung	舒國用
<i>Shu-ching</i>	書經
Shun	舜
shuo	朔
<i>Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu</i>	四庫全書總目
<i>tsung-mu t'i-yao</i>	提要
Ssu-ma Ch'ien	司馬遷
Ssu-ma Kuang	司馬光
<i>Ssu-ma Wen-kung</i>	司馬文公文集
<i>wen-chi</i>	
Ssu-pu pei-yao	四部備要
Ssu-pu ts'un ¹ k'an	四部叢刊
<i>Ssu-shu chi-chu</i>	四書集注
Sun Ch'i-feng	孫奇逢
<i>Sung-shih</i>	宋史
Suzuki, Daisetz T.	鈴木大拙
<i>Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan</i>	大乘止觀法門
<i>fa-men</i>	
<i>Ta-hsueh</i>	大學
<i>Ta-hsueh chang-chu</i>	大學章句
'Ta-lüeh'	大略
Ta-shih	大事
Ta-yü	大雅
'Ta-Yü mu'	大禹謨
Tai Te-ju	戴德儒
Tai Tzu-liang	戴子良
T'ai-chi	太極
T'ai-ho	太和
T'ai-hsü	太虛
t'ai-hsueh	太學
'T'ai-shih'	泰誓
<i>Taishō shinshu daizokyo</i>	大正新修大藏
	經
Tan	旦

史

'T'an-kung'	檀弓
'Tang-chih-shih'	蕩之什
T'ang, King	湯王
T'ang Lung	唐龍
T'ang Yü-tso	唐虞佐
tao	道
Tao-hsuan	道宣
Tao-tsang	道藏
Tao-yuan	道原
'Tegami yori mitaru	手紙より見太
Yomei no shiso	る王陽明思
daiyo'	想大要
Tetsugaku <i>genkyu</i>	哲學研究
Ti	帝
ti-erh-yi	第二義
ti-pei	弟輩
ti-yi-yi	第一義
T'ien	天
T'ien-li	天理
T'ien-t'ai	天台
Ting, Duke	定公
ting	定
'Ting-hsing-shu'	定性書
tou	斗
'Tsai-yu'	在宥
Ts'ai Hsi-yen	蔡希顏
Ts'ai Hsi-yuan	蔡希淵
Ts'ai Tsung-tui	蔡宗兌
Ts'ai Wo-chai	蔡我齋
Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i	參同契
Tseng Hsi	曾■ 皙
Tseng Shen	曾參
Tseng Tien	曾點
Tseng-pu Sung-Yuan	增補宋元學案
hsueh-an	
Tseng-tzu /	曾子，曾子問
'Tseng-tzu wen'	
Tso-chuan	左傳
tso-wang	坐忘
Tsou Ch'ien-chih	鄒謙之
Tsou Shou-yi	鄒守益
Ts'ui-yen	粹言
Tsun-ching-ko chi	尊經閣記
Tu Yu	杜預
Tung Chung-shu	董仲舒
Tung Lo-shih	董蘿石
Tung Yün	董■ 澐
Tung-pei-shih	東北史論叢
lun-ts'un	
T'ung Cheng	佟珍

史

<i>T'ung-shu</i>	通書
Tz'u	賜
Tzu-kung	子貢
Tzu-lu	子路
Tzu-ssu	子思
<i>Wai-shu</i>	外書
Wang Che-chih	汪折之
Wang Ch'eng-yü	王承裕
Wang Chün	汪俊
Wang Ch'un-fu	王純甫
Wang Ch'ung	王充
Wang Hu-ku	王虎谷
Wang Shih-t'an	汪石潭
Wang Shou-chang	王守章
Wang Shou-chien	王守儉
Wang Shou-jen	王守仁
Wang Shou-wen	王守文
Wang Tao	王道
Wang T'ien-yü	王天 _■ 字
<i>Wang Wen-ch'eng kung</i> <i>ch'üan-shu</i>	王文成公全書
Wang Yang-ming	王陽明
Wang Yin-chih	王寅之
Wang Ying-shao	王應韶
Wang Yu-an	王輿庵
Wang Yun-feng	王雲鳳
'Wang-chih'	王制
Wei	衛
Wei, Marquis of	衛公 _→ 良
Wei Liang-pi	魏 _■ 弼
Wei Po-yang	魏伯陽
Wei Shih-yueh	魏師說
wei-fa	未發
Wen, King	文王
Wen-chi	文集
Wen-jen Ch'üan	聞人詮
Wen-jen Pang-cheng	聞人邦正
Wen-jen Pang-ying	聞人邦英
Wen-jen Yin	聞人闡
<i>Wen-kung Chia-li</i>	文公家禮
'Wen-wang chih-shih'	文王之什
<i>Wen-lu</i>	文錄
Wu, King	武王
<i>Wu-chen p'ien</i>	悟真篇
<i>Wu-chen p'ien san-chu</i>	悟真篇三注
Wu-chi	無極
wu-hsin	無心
Wu-ting, King	武丁
Wu-tsung	武宗

Yang, yang	楊, 陽
Yang Chi	楊驥
Yang Hu	陽虎
Yang Shih-ming	楊仕鳴
Yang Shih-te	楊仕德
Yang Sui-an	楊邃庵
Yang Yi-ch'ing	楊一清
<i>Yang-ming ch'uan-hsin lu</i>	陽明傳信錄
<i>Yang-ming ch'uan-shu</i>	陽明全書
<i>Yang-ming hsien-sheng chi-yao</i>	陽明先生集要
<i>Yang-ming hsien-sheng chu'an-tsu'an</i>	陽明先生傳纂
<i>Yang-ming wen-lu</i>	陽明文錄
Yao	堯
Yao Ts'ung-wu	姚從吾
'Yao-tien'	堯典
Yasuda Kiyoshi	保田清
Yen Hui	顏回
Yen Lu	顏路
Yen-tzu	顏子
yi	義, 意
<i>Yi-ching/Yi King</i>	易經
<i>Yi-ch'uan wen-chi</i>	伊川文集
yi-fa	已發
yi-hai	乙亥
Yi-yin	伊尹
<i>Yi-shu</i>	遺書
Yin/yin	胤, 陰
'Yin-cheng'	胤征
<i>Yin-fu Canon</i>	陰符經
<i>Yin-wen-tzu</i>	尹文子
Ying Liang	應良
Ying Yuan-chung	應原忠
Yu [Tzu-lu]	由
Yu, King Emperor	禹
Yu Ch'ung-yao	余重耀
Yu Hsien	俞憲
<i>Yu-su li-yao</i>	諭俗禮要
Yu-yao	餘姚
Yuan Ch'iu Ch'u-chi nien-p'u	元邱處機年譜
'Yuan-tao'	原道
Yueh	越
'Yueh-ling'	月令
'Yueh-ming'	說命