

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

by
Julia Ching

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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

Yang-ming is reported to have said that, just as a man could prove his genuine ethnic descent from his ancestors by digging out their dry bones, and then by letting a drop of his own blood fall on these and become absorbed by the bones, so too "my two words, liang-chih, is really the drop of blood transmitted from antiquity by the sages".¹⁰⁵ In a poem written a few years later, he expressed the same idea in different words:

The sages' instruction lasted a thousand years,¹⁰⁶
Liang-chih is its oral transmission.¹⁰⁷
 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.¹⁰⁸

For the rest of his life, Yang-ming went on meditating upon these two words. Day and night, he spoke of them to his friends and disciples. Gradually, his teaching became more and more simplified, as the expression, liang-chih, came to represent all that he had ever discovered and taught. With some humour, he described how a certain retired official once invited him to give a lecture, saying "Besides liang-chih, is there anything else [you can] talk about?" His answer was straight and direct: "Besides liang-chih, is there anything else [to] talk about?"¹⁰⁹

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-jen 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.