

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

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Chapter VII

THE CULMINATION: THE UNITY OF THE THREE WAYS

"Universal virtue" (t'ung-te 同德) is that which one shares with ordinary men and women. "Heresy" (yi-tuan 異端) is that which differs from what is present in ordinary men and women.¹

Yang-ming's life was that of a statesman, a soldier and a philosopher. As a statesman and soldier, he was denied adequate opportunity to make use of all his competence, since the brilliance he displayed in the assignments confided to him aroused such fear and jealousy in high places. As a philosopher, he was even less trusted. Time and again, the charge of "false learning", of "heresy", was levelled against him. This misfortune pursued him even after his death in 1519. It was not until forty-eight years afterwards that his distinguished services to the dynasty were finally acknowledged and posthumous honours were bestowed upon him. And then, another seventeen years afterwards, in 1584, sacrifice was offered in his honour in the Temple of Confucius.² Although this spelt the official approval of his teachings, his philosophy continued to be regarded as a sign of contradiction until even the Ch'ing dynasty.

So far I have spoken of the evolution of the "Confucian Way", I have pondered, in particular, on the opening of new vistas on this Way, introduced by Wang Yang-ming. I have discussed the emergence of certain of his key-ideas, the controversy resulting from them, and the gradual formulation of his all-embracing, practical methodology. I have spoken also of the culmination of his teaching in "the unity of all things". I have attempted to draw out certain spiritual and metaphysical implications of this doctrine, giving special attention to the notion of hsin-in-itself or liang-chih-in-itself, and discussing the problems ensuing from this teaching. It is now my aim in

this chapter to treat Yang-ming's ideas regarding the "oneness" and universality of the true "Way", the validity of the insights of all--whether Taoist, Buddhist or Confucian--as well as the subtle differences which divide the Taoist and the Buddhist from the true Confucian. I shall point out the fact that Yang-ming considered as "real heretics", not the Taoists or Buddhists, but the renegade Confucians, men who voiced admiration of and desire for wisdom but acted in contradiction to their words. I shall then speak of "the Way of Yang-ming", making a few remarks on the new criterion which he set for the judgement of truths and error, of wisdom and perversity: lianq-chih. Regarded as that in us which is greater than ourselves, the Absolute, it becomes therefore the authority for its own truth.

The Unity of the Three Ways³

Yang-ming was fond of saying, "Tao is everywhere".⁴ This can be understood in two ways. Firstly, truth is seen as that which is within the access of all, rather than the private property of any one man, or any one school of thought. It is both interior to man and universally present in man and in all things through man. Secondly, the "Way" of acquiring this truth, this wisdom, is also broad and open. Whatever "way" brings one there, is the true Way.

One consequence of this attitude was his openness of mind regarding Buddhism and Taoism. These "Two Teachings" had long been regarded as standing in opposition to the Confucian Way. Yang-ming's attitude served to clarify the difference between truth and prejudice. For while truth is everywhere, there is always danger that one seek to barricade himself in one place and to say that he alone has the truth, and that falsehood reigns everywhere else.

This does not mean, however, that Yang-ming did not recognise important differences between the Confucian attitude toward life and the known attitudes of the Taoist

and Buddhist schools. He was not only aware of these, but assiduous in pointing them out. Where the differences are acute, he was unhesitating in giving his views, in pronouncing in favour of one side. He was open-minded, but he did not believe in making compromises.

Yang-ming's previous association with the "Two Teachings" and his continued tolerance and broad-mindedness drew to him many disciples who manifested sympathy and interest in Taoism and Buddhism. Quite early in Yang-ming's career as a Confucian teacher, a discussion took place between himself and a disciple, Wang Chia-hsiu, concerning the relative merits of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The two agreed that Buddhists and Taoists share with Confucians the same goal,--the same Way. In order to persuade others to follow them, however, the Buddhists offer the promise of escape from the cycle of life and death (samsāra), while the Taoists speak of a long life or even physical immortality. Thus, the means they employ for the achievement of their goal were improper. The Confucians, on their part, have also lost the true teaching of the sages, and have turned to the pursuit of rote study, literary excellence, success and profit, and textual criticism, and so have become, at bottom, no different from the so-called "heterodox" schools. Indeed, they compare unfavourably with those Buddhists and Taoists of pure minds and few desires, who are free from worldly attachments. "Today, students need not first of all attack Taoism and Buddhism. They should rather fix their determination earnestly on the doctrine of the sages. As this doctrine... is made clear to the world, Buddhism and Taoism will disappear of themselves. Otherwise, I am afraid what we want to learn will not be considered worthwhile by the Buddhists and Taoists".⁵

Yang-ming added that the Way of the sages is that of the great Mean and of perfect Rectitude, which penetrates all levels, both of ends and of means, as a thread which runs through everything. "The man of humanity sees it and calls it humanity. The man of wisdom sees it and calls it

wisdom. The common people act daily according to it without knowing it...."⁶ He thus implied that the Way is common to all of the "Three Teachings", although it may be known by different people under different names.

Around 1521, Yang-ming began his teaching of liang-chih. In 1523, he told his disciples that he was content to follow his liang-chih without worrying about what the world might say. In other words, he was determined to make sagehood his goal, with no regard to human respect. More and more, he wished no longer to distinguish between the "Three Teachings", not even by name.⁷ In a discussion with Chang Yüan-ch'ung 張元冲 the question came up as to whether the Confucian should also learn from the good points of Buddhism and Taoism, especially for the sake of personal cultivation. Yang-ming said:

The practices of the "Two Teachings" can all be my practices. When I complete and cultivate myself while developing my nature and fulfilling my destiny, [what I do] may be called Taoist. When I refrain from worldly contaminations while developing my nature and fulfilling my destiny, [what I do] may be called Buddhist. But certain scholars of these later ages have not understood the completeness of the Teaching of the Sages. For this reason, they have distinguished themselves from the "Two Teachings" as though there exist two views [of truth]. This is like having a large hall which can be separated into three rooms. The Confucians did not know that the whole place could be used by themselves. When they saw the Buddhists, they separated the room on the left to give it to them. When they saw the Taoists, they also separated the room on the right to give to them. And so the Confucians themselves remain in the middle.⁸

There is no reason why a Confucian should not enter into and make use of the "rooms" allotted to the Buddhists and Taoists. There is no reason, indeed, why walls should exist at all, dividing up the hall into three parts.

He went on to say that since the sage is one with Heaven-and-Earth and all people and all things, he has also at his disposal, all that come from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. He called this manner of accepting the good and the true from everywhere the "Great Way". He added, however, that a certain selfishness manifested by the "Two Teachings" of Buddhism and Taoism have caused them to be known as "Small Ways".⁹

Yang-ming and Taoism

In Yang-ming's time, the word "Taoism" was chiefly associated with teachings and practices regarding "Eternal Life" (ch'ang-sheng 長生), of the body as well as of the soul. Interest was in the discovery of "the secret springs of Heaven-and-Earth" which would bring the key to peace, happiness, and even immortality--or at least a prolonged life on earth. Effort was thus concentrated on self-cultivation, observing certain methods which might hopefully help their practitioners to attain their desired goals. These methods ranged from the practice of alchemy in the quest for the "external pill" or elixir, and the consolidation and concentration of the self,--of the sperm (ching 精), the spirit (shen 神) and the ether (ch'i), through practices of breath control. It is a well known fact that Yang-ming had early contacts and long associations with Taoism and Taoist practices.¹⁰ A letter of his, dated 1503, shows how he was regarded by some people as being possibly in possession of preternatural knowledge and powers. T'ung Cheng 佟珍, the Prefect of Shao-hsing 紹興, had written to ask him for information concerning the "art of making rain".¹¹ In his reply, Yang-ming emphasised the importance for the responsible local official to live a virtuous life and to carry out his duties properly, saying that such conduct would be in itself a continual prayer, and more meritorious and efficacious in its power of moving Heaven than any formal prayer or sacrifices for rain conducted in the time of need. He then turned his attention to the so-called magicians and their claim to

special knowledge and power. "All such reports [of their successes], come to us from miscellaneous accounts of minor importance and not from the Classics. The gentleman tends to consider these happenings as coincidences. As to our present-day priests and sorcerers, many of these are little different from the loafers and ruffians of the market places. How can we therefore expect them to rebuke the thunder, to call forth wind and rain?"¹²

And then, urging the Prefect to be doubly fervent in the exercise of his official duties as well as in prayer and penitence, he explained that, so long as this was done, "even though Heaven [should] send us no rain, there will be no harm.... And on my part, though I am no different from the common people... I too shall pray at Nan-chen, to help your fervour. [For] if only you beg with your whole heart for the people, without allowing yourself to be deceived by false teachings, and without anxiety to obtain a better reputation, then, although the way of Heaven is distant, it has never failed to respond to a case of such fervour".¹³

If this letter to T'ung gives us Yang-ming's scorn for the "priests and sorcerers" of the market places, as well as his Confucian pre-occupation with the impact of good works and a good life on the cosmic order itself, a later letter, dated 1508, to an unnamed friend, gives us his attitude towards "spirits and immortals". After admitting that he had been interested in the art of obtaining physical immortality, or at least, in prolonging life, through the practice of Taoist methods of cultivation, he said with some irony:

More than thirty years have passed.... My teeth are becoming unsteady, several of my hairs have turned white, my eyes cannot see beyond a foot's distance, and my ears cannot hear beyond the distance of ten feet. Moreover, I am often bed-ridden with sickness for entire months. My need of medicine as well as my capacity for it is growing. These are all the results of my interest in spirits and immortals.¹⁴

And then, proceeding to a discussion of those figures of antiquity esteemed by Taoists as sages and immortals: of Kuang-ch'eng tzu,¹⁵ and of Li Po-yang 李伯陽 [Lao-tzu], he said that they were "perfect men, of genuine virtue and mature Tao, who lived in harmony with yin and yang and the four seasons, away from the world and its vanities. Concentrating their sperm (ching) and their energies, they moved between Heaven and Earth, seeing and hearing things which were beyond the scope of ordinary experience". They were, however, men of special gifts, for the keeping intact of our energies and bones "refer to a natural endowment received at the beginning of our existence. This is the work of Heaven, and not what human force can compass",¹⁶

To Lu Ch'eng, a man gifted with a subtle and penetrating understanding but of poor health, and keenly interested in Taoist methods of cultivating life, Yang-ming cited the Epilogue of Wu-shen p'ien 悟真篇 [On Awakening to Truth], where it is stated that "the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu took pity on [the people's] covetous desires, and used the art of immortals to give them gradual and systematic direction",¹⁷ He argued that, had an art of immortality really existed, the sages of antiquity, from Yao, Shun on to Confucius, must have been aware of it, and would have — out of compassion—revealed it to others also.¹⁸ He described Ch'en Chih-hsu¹⁹ as a man who possessed certain skills "which could not be called the real Tao"--although, he added: "Still, we can not be sure",²⁰

But he denied flatly any belief in the later Taoist immortals, in those men who allegedly "could ascend with their families into the air, transform objects, borrow corpses and return to life again".

[These] refer to deceptive and strange things belonging to the realm of secret magic and ingenious arts--what Yin-wen-tzu 尹文子 called illusion, what the Buddhists call heterodoxy. If such actions are called real, you would be equally deceived.²¹

In both these letters, Yang-ming disassociated himself explicitly from the Taoist attempt to obtain secret knowledge concerning the art of acquiring physical immortality or a longer life on earth, and spoke rather of the Confucian view of immortality--the immortality of virtue. Yen-tzu, he said, died at the age of thirty-two, and yet still lives today.²² "Generally speaking, the cultivation of virtue and the cultivation of life are one and the same thing. If what you call the "True Self" (chen-wo 真我) could really remain vigilant when not seen, and apprehensive when not heard, and concentrate on such practices, then your ch'i (ether) and your ching (sperms) will be collected. In this case, what the Taoists call physical immortality will also be present".²³

Lu Ch'eng contemplated abandoning the world for the sake of devoting himself entirely to Taoist practices of cultivation. Yang-ming opposed such a move vigorously, advising his friend to follow rather the Confucian "methods" of cultivating one's moral character and personality:

Since you have a weak constitution and are often sick, you need merely to abandon the path of honours and reputation, purify your mind and your desires, concentrate on the learning of the sages, in the sense in which the theory of the "true self" was referred to earlier. You ought not to believe in heterodox teachings, thus confusing your understanding needlessly, wasting your mental and physical energies as well as your time. If you stay away long and do not return to society, you will become easily a frenzied and mentally sick man.²⁴

In 1514, Yang-ming wrote two poems to criticise Chang Po-tuan,²⁵ whom he suspected to have written the three commentaries on the Wu-chen p'ien. They contain his harshest criticisms of Taoism:

"On Awakening to Truth" (Wu-chen p'ien) is nothing than "On Mistaken Truth" (Wu-chen p'ien 誤真篇),²⁶

The Three Commentaries came originally from the same hand.

[How I] hate the monstrous demons who, for sake of profit,

Spread deceit and falsehood, far and wide,
Chang P'ing-shu could not have escaped the blame
of being the first culprit--

Who was the one who falsely attributed it
to Hsueh Tzu-hsien²⁷ (Hsüeh Tao-kuang)

Let me tell you my friend, quite frankly:
Look carefully, from head to toe, at "Wild-cat
Ch'an"²⁸

Was "On the Awakening to Truth" no other than "On
the Mistaken Truth"?

Already, in the time of [Chang] P'ing-shu, this
has been said.

And yet the deep attachment [to life] of wordly
men,

Gave rise to karma, in their feelings and desires.
How can dreams be discussed in front of a silly man?
What nore mystery is there beyond one's genuine
nature?

Men still have eyes, for the search for Tao--
O look and see, where is the blue sky?²⁹

Nevertheless, Yang-ming remained fond of using Taoist expressions and examples, in the teaching of his own philosophy as well as in his criticisms of Taoist ideas and practices.³⁰ He also discussed directly certain Taoist concepts. When asked once the meanings of what the Taoist call "prime ether" (yüan-ch'i 原氣), "prime spirit" (yüan-shen 原神) and "prime sperm" (yüan-ching 原精), he had explained, in his characteristic way, that they all refer to the same thing, which exists as "ether," coagulates as "sperm", and operates in a marvellous way as "spirit".³¹ He also identified all of them to liang-chih:

There is only one liang-chih. In terms of its marvellous functioning, it is called "spirit"; in terms of its universal operation, it is called "ether", and in terms of its concentration and coagulation, it is called "sperm". How can it be understood as [objects with] shapes and forms and locations?³²

Thus, Yang-ming applies the Taoist language of cultivation, to a higher plane -- that of ultimate truth. In identifying liang-chih to "spirit", "ether", and "sperm", he is not merely accommodating in a superficial manner, concepts that are quite disparate, but rather indicating the deeper pre-occupation inherent in Taoism: the longing to discover one's true self, to unify one's life and its profound energies, of both the body and the spirit, and to extend this unity to all things.

Towards the end of his life, Yang-ming expressed the fulfilment of all his desires in the discovery of liang-chih, and, by that count, of his having transcended the Taoist quest for immortality in the following poem,³³ which presents a summary of his personal evolution:

Immortality I merely envy
 Lacking pills and money
 Famous mountains I have combed,
 Till my temples yield silken hairs.
 My light body fettered by smrti (nien 念)³⁴
 Daily move I farther from Tao.
 Awakened suddenly, in the middle of life, I find
 the
 Pill of Nine Returns³⁵
 No need for oven, nor for tripod:
 Why seek I k'an 坎 and why li 離)³⁶
 No end is there, nor beginning.
 So too, for birth and death--
 The magicians' wise words
 Only increase my doubts;
 Confusedly these old men
 Transmit arts difficult and complex,

In me is Ch'ien (Heaven), in me K'un (Earth)
 I need not seek elsewhere--
 The thousand sages pass as shadows,
Liang-chih alone is my guide.³⁷

Yang-ming and Buddhism

As philosophy, Buddhism had long been on the decline before the time of Yang-ming. Fusion with Taoism led to gradual loss of identity on both sides, effecting, therefore a deeper permeation of certain ideas and practices in the lives of people, both high and low. The "mirror image", so frequently used by the Ch'eng-Chu philosophers as well as by Yang-ming, and the teaching that "the emotions of the sage are in accord with all things and yet he himself has no emotions", can be traced back to Chuang-tzu³⁸ as well as to Hui-neng, to Wang Pi as well as to Seng-chao.³⁹ The doctrine of T'ien-li jen-yü 天理人欲 and the emphasis on restoring the luminous "principle of Heaven" in one's nature through the purification of self from all passions and selfishness, resembles the Buddhist teaching of the restoration of one's "Buddha-nature" from attachment to passion or klesā, but can also be traced back to Lao-tzu's idea of the "return" to original nature.⁴⁰ And yet, in spite of his stronger recorded contracts with Taoism, Yang-ming has been accused of being a Ch'an Buddhist in disguise more often than for his Taoist connections. This can be readily understood from the greater antagonism of "orthodox" Confucianism against "alien" Buddhist teachings, which had made of the word Ch'an the target of all attacks. It is also due to the fact that Ch'an Buddhism, had, in fact, a stronger appeal for the more speculative persons than the practical Taoist quest for "immortality".

An exhaustive treatment of Buddhist influences on Yang-ming's philosophy would also be difficult, if only because these can be detected in almost everything he said.⁴¹ His highly integrated and very unitary thinking

is an excellent illustration of the T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen teachings which saw unity in multiplicity, "One in All and All in One". We have mentioned, in passing, certain traces of Buddhist influence in Yang-ming's thought. We shall speak now only of his conscious attitudes towards Buddhism, as these have been expressed in his writings and recorded conversations, moving from his objections to Buddhism on to his accommodation of certain truths which lie at the core of Ch'an doctrine, as well as his employment of quasi-Buddhist techniques in teaching his disciples.

Like many Chinese thinkers, one of Yang-ming's objections to Buddhism was based on its alien origin. In a memorial which he addressed to Emperor Wu-tsung but never submitted, he counselled the Emperor against the sending of envoys to Tibet for the purpose of looking for learned Buddhist Masters. After praising the Emperor's good intentions of seeking for "the Way of Buddhism in order to save...the myriad people under Heaven [from] their sufferings". He added that the same goal could be achieved by learning from the Confucian sages:

For Buddha was the sage of the barbarians, just as [our] sages were the Buddhas of China. In the barbarian lands, the teachings of Buddha can be used for the instruction and reformation of the ignorant and stubborn. In our own country, we ought naturally to use the Way of the sages to educate and transform [our people]. This is like using horses and carriages for land travel and boats for crossing the seas. If, living in China, we [make ourselves] disciples of Buddhism, it will be like crossing the seas in horses and carriages....⁴²

He explained to the Emperor how he himself had abandoned the study of Buddhism, after realising the greatness of the "Way of the sages". He pointed out that Siddharta lived a shorter life than either Yao or Shun, and said that

resort to oracles and charms had been condemned by orthodox Buddhists themselves as "heresies and perversities". He exhorted the emperor to devote his energy to the quest of Confucian ideals, promising that with such a quest, the "supreme happiness of the West will be in front of your eyes".⁴³

Much more frequently, however, Yang-ming criticised Buddhist teachings and practices for their "selfish" orientations. He said, for example, that the Confucians do not separate themselves from affairs and things when they nourish hsin, but do so only in a spontaneous and natural way, measuring the efforts according to times and occasions. The Buddhists, however, preach the abandonment of all affairs and things, regard hsin as illusion, and lead man to a state of emptiness and void, without giving any attention to life in the world. For this reason, Buddhism cannot contribute to the government of the world. To his disciple Huang Chih, Yang-ming said:

The Buddhists are afraid of the burden involved in the father-son relationship and so run away from it. They are afraid of the burden involved in the ruler-minister relationship and so run away from it. They are afraid of the burden involved in the husband-wife relationship and so run away from it. They do all this because [these]...relationships involve attachment to phenomena...We Confucians accept the father-son relationship and fulfil this [responsibility] with humanity. We accept the ruler-minister relationship and fulfil it with righteousness. We accept the husband-wife relationship and fulfil it with attention to the separate functions it involves. When have we been attached to these.... relationships?⁴⁴

He went on to say that the Confucians accept the father-son relationship and fulfil it with the humanity it deserves. They accept the ruler-subject relationship and fulfil it with the righteousness proper to it. They

accept the husband-wife relationship and fulfil it with attention to the separate duties involved. There is, therefore, no inordinate attachment.⁴⁵

Yang-ming's language abounds with Buddhist allusions, to a greater extent than that of the Ch'engs, Chu Hsi and even Lu Chiu-yüan. He openly identified liang-chih to the Buddhist "ultimate reality"--the pen-lai mien-mu.⁴⁶ He quoted with approval, the famous line from the Diamond Sutra: "Yin wu-suo-chu erh sheng-ch'i-hsin 應無所住而生其心"⁴⁷ These two facts alone gave rise to much criticisms, since they showed acceptance of a fundamental truth of Ch'an metaphysics as well as of its "methodology" of inner enlightenment. It must, however, be pointed out that in both instances, he did so only in passing mention, in answer to a disciple's letter.

Yang-ming also manifested a certain fondness for using quasi-Buddhist techniques in instructing his disciples, by means of parables and riddles--even what resembled the insoluble Ch'an riddle: kung-an 公案 [Japanese: koan]. For example, when asked by Hsiao Hui how selfish desires are to be overcome, he replied in a manner reminiscent of the patriarch Hui-k'o 慧可 (486-593) speaking to his disciple and later successor, Seng-ts'an 僧璨 (fl. 592): "Give me your selfish desires, and I shall overcome them for you".⁴⁸

To Liu Kuan-shih 劉觀時 who questioned him on the state of equilibrium before emotions are aroused, Yang-ming also answered with a parable taken from a collection of Ch'an stories: "I cannot tell you this any more than a dumb man can tell you about the taste of the bitter melon he has just eaten. If you want to know it, you will have to eat the...melon yourself".⁴⁹

Yang-ming made generous use of Buddhist allusions especially in his poems. It is for this reason that Ch'en Chien, in Hsüeh-pu t'ung pien, cited many of Wang's poems to demonstrate the extent of Buddhist influence on his philosophy. Wang visualised his own role of prophet to a world of inert men in one such poem,⁵⁰ where he relied very

much on Buddhist imagery:

The whole world is drowned in sleep,
 But the lonely man--who is it?--by chance still sober
 Cries aloud but cannot stir the others.
 Who stare at him in great astonishment.

Calling him mad, they rise up
 Only to surround him and belabour him.
 The waters of Chu and Ssu covered the peals of the
 Golden Bell,⁵¹

The rivers Lien and Lo carried faint voices.⁵²

Who is sounding the poison-painted drum,⁵³
 While the hearers remain dull and unresponsive?
 Alas, what are you all intent on doing,
 Going about, toiling so restlessly?
 How can you be made to hear this drum,
 Which can open your innate intelligence?⁵⁴

Indeed, the line which divides the authentic disciple of the sages from the Ch'an Buddhist is a very narrow one. Yang-ming knew that those scholars, like himself, who were interested in the inner cultivation of mind-and-heart, were frequently accused of being Ch'an Buddhists in Confucian disguise. He has now given his own criterion for "orthodoxy": the sense of social responsibility. He has described the Buddhists as selfish men, concerned only with their own salvation, and not with that of society at large. They are escapists who run away from these responsibilities which bind a man to his family, his country, and the world. The Confucians, however, seek to "develop his mind-and-heart to completion, by regarding Heaven-and-Earth and all things as one body". They are not merely satisfied with the performance of their own duties. They also desire to rectify all that is amiss in the proper network of human relationships which make up the world. "When he finds affection in his father-son relationship, but knows it to be lacking for others in the world, he will not consider his mind-and-heart to be fully developed.... When his own

family is well fed and warmly clad, and has leisure for enjoyment, but he knows there are others in the world who have not these essentials of life and advantages, can he expect them to have affection, righteousness, differentiation of duties and faithfulness?.... This shows that his mind-and-heart is not yet fully developed. On that account, he sets up laws and government, and dispenses rites, music and education, in order that these may promote and contribute to the completion of himself and of others, through the full development of his mind-and-heart."⁵⁵

Thus, there is a broad view of what is "mind-culture", as well as a narrow one. The Confucians take the broad outlook, embracing the world and all things in his vision and in his practice of humanity, the Ch'an Buddhists adhere to the narrow view, and, in the end, fail to save themselves.

The Real Heretics

In the final analysis, Yang-ming considered as the worst enemies of the school of sages, not the Buddhists and Taoists, but the "mediocre scholars" of his own days. He compared these scholars to Yang Chu and Mo Ti, and himself to Mencius, who condemned them as "heretics" and exposed the fallacies of their teachings. While Mo Ti supposedly erred in preaching a universal love which went too far in the practice of humanity, and Yang Chu erred in advocating an egoism which went too far in the practice of righteousness, Yang-ming considered that the scholars of his days who treated the study of Confucian doctrines merely as a means of personal advancement on the official ladder to be teachers neither of humanity nor of righteousness.⁵⁶ He considered that their misinterpretations of true doctrine mislead others and hinder the progress of those persons sincerely interested in the Way, turning them rather to the study of Taoism and Buddhism, the teachings of which, he claimed, were in fact superior to those of the mediocre Confucians. Thus, the decline of Confucianism should be blamed on the renegade scholars who purported to be the disciples of the sages rather than on the other "Two Teachings",⁵⁷

All his life, Yang-ming showed his great abhorrence for such hypocrites, who paid lip service to the words of the sages, while contradicting them by their manner of life. If, on the one hand, even Buddhists and Taoists possess valid insights into the true Way, on the other, the false doctrine of the worldly scholars is to the true teaching of the sages what mock jade, is to jade.

There is only one Tao,... The mediocre Confucian scholars all start from a partial view of it, and embellish their image with comparisons and imitations, giving expression to it through divisions of chapters and sentences and borrowed explanations. They are used to such practices, which can instil enough self-confidence, producing sections and items which give them a sense of make-belief security, with which they can deceive themselves and others, remaining in this pitfall for a whole life-time without realising it.⁵⁸

The root of their evil, however, is less the fragmentary nature of their insights than the moral bankruptcy of their intentions. It is selfishness which corrupts their knowledge, and enlists their learning in service of hypocrisy.

The width of their knowledge of memorised texts merely serves to increase their pride. The wealth of learning they possess merely contributes to their evil actions. The breadth of information they have accumulated by hearing and seeing merely helps them to indulge in arguments. Their skill in prose-writing merely covers up their hypocrisy.⁵⁹

Yang-ming repeated his condemnation of the mediocre Confucians in his "Inquiry into the Great Learning". He criticised first and foremost those people who did not realise that the highest good is inherent in hsin, but exercised their selfish ideas and their cunning to look for it outside, with the belief that every event and

every thing or object must be thoroughly investigated before virtue can be known and practised. "In so doing, they obscure the law of right and wrong, [causing the mind-and-heart to become] concerned with fragmentary and isolated details, [until] selfish desires become rampant and the 'principle of Heaven' is lost. In this way, the teaching of manifesting virtue and of loving the people [of the Great Learning] is thrown into confusion in the whole world".⁶⁰

He followed this up with a much milder criticism of the "Buddhists and Taoists", "who wanted to manifest their clear virtue, but did not know how to abide in the highest good, but press their minds and hearts to something too lofty, thus losing themselves in illusions and emptiness, and refusing to be at all concerned with social responsibilities toward the family, the country and the world".⁶¹

The opportunists, or the promoters of "profit and gain", come next under fire. These wanted to love the people, but did not know how to abide in the highest good. And so they sank their minds in base and trifling tricks, losing all feeling of humanity and commiseration.⁶²

Yang-ming's attitude toward the mediocre Confucians was not lost on those who were the object of his criticisms. On their part, these scholars never ceased to launch counter-attacks of heresy and of false learning against Yang-ming himself. They pestered and persecuted him all during his life and even after his death. Yang-ming's student, Ch'ien Te-hung, has testified to this fact:

Our Teacher was, during his whole life, the object of criticisms, slander, intrigues and other attempts to destroy him. He survived the dangers of ten thousand deaths. Yet he always kept himself busy and never relaxed his effort of teaching, lest we might fail to hear the real Way, and fall into the pitfalls of worldly honour and profit and unprincipled opportunism, and degenerate unconsciously to the manners of barbarians and beasts.....⁶³

the other hand, is that by which one diverges from this universal "virtue".⁶⁸ He was anxious, therefore, that no exterior criterion be set up for truth and orthodoxy and the quest for sagehood, which should discourage people from its pursuit. He said of his disciple Lu Ch'eng, for example, that Lu was too concerned with questions of textual understanding. "If one has faith in liang-chih and makes effort only [to extend] liang-chih, one will find that the thousand classics and canons will all conform to it and all heretical doctrines... will be destroyed when measured against it."⁶⁹

For Yang-ming, liang-chih is the only criterion of truth, just as its extension to the utmost is the only requisite for the attainment of sagehood. He held up this criterion especially in opposition to that of classical learning, and to all intellectual endeavour which he classified as "knowledge through seeing and hearing". He also recalled to Nieh Pao the experiences of Confucius himself during life-time--how he had been criticised, ridiculed, slandered, denounced and insulted. "People like the gate-keeper [of Shih-men 石門] and the basket-carrier, [considered] at the time to be virtuous men, said of [Confucius] that 'he knows a thing cannot be done and still wants to do it', and that 'he is contemptible and obstinate, and should stop seeking [official service] when no one really knows him'. Even his disciple Tzu-lu 子路 rebuked him for going to see a woman of ill repute".⁷⁰ And yet--Yang-ming reasoned--the Master could not but act as he did, because, as a sage, "his humanity regarded Heaven and Earth and all things as one body".⁷¹ Confucius was so keenly aware of his responsibilities toward the world that he could not abandon his desires and attempts to serve other men, even though he was being thwarted at every step. Such a mind could only be appreciated by the mind of another sage, by someone else who was also one with Heaven and Earth and all things.

Yang-ming declared that he had the same hsin as Confucius--he felt the same urgent responsibility to save

a world which was proceeding headlong on a course which can only bring it destruction. If this attitude of his should cause people to consider him insane, it did not matter. After all, this was the insanity of a man who was willing to run the danger of drowning himself to save others who were sinking and falling down an abyss. "The minds (hsin) of all the people in the world are my mind (hsin) also. If there are people in the world who are insane, how can I not be insane also? If there are people who have lost their minds, how can I not lose my mind?"⁷² He went on to excuse himself for having the boldness of comparing himself to Confucius:

How dare such an unworthy person as I regard the Way of the Master to be my own responsibility? However, to some extent, I realise in my mind that there is [the same] sickness and pain in my own body, and so I look everywhere for someone who may be able to help me, with whom I may discuss ways and means of removing this sickness and pain. If I can really find heroic men who have the same ambitions, in order to help one another to promote the spreading of the learning of liang-chih in the world... and bring about a state of Great Unity [Ta-t'ung], then my insanity should certainly be cured all of a sudden, and I can finally avoid losing my hsin....⁷³

Is it, after all, the Classics, together with the officially approved commentaries, that define the meaning of wisdom and point out the way toward its acquisition, or is it rather the sage, the man who has succeeded in finding and becoming his "true self", the man who knows no deceit, whose mind-and-heart has become completely identified with the true and the good and the beautiful, who fixes the criteria for true wisdom and authentic learning? And, if the sage, the man qualified to write new Classics, is the best arbiter of matters orthodox and

heretical, the best judge of true and false wisdom, can one not say, with Yang-ming, that he is so by right of, and through the use of, that which makes him a sage: his liang-chih? And again, is not this liang-chih present in every man, the seed of possible greatness and sageliness, the criterion of its own movements, the authority for its own beliefs, and its own wisdom?

In a series of four poems written for the instruction of his disciples, Yang-ming has expressed for us his ideas of liang-chih as the criterion of true doctrine and of wisdom, a criterion which can be compared to the authority of Confucius himself, the sage par excellence, to that of the Taoist text, the Ts'an-t'ung ch'i, which "tallies the ideas of the Confucian Book of Changes with those of the Taoist classic, Lao-tzu",⁷⁴ and to the mariner's compass. He refers also to the Buddhist quest for tranquillity, saying that the supra-sensory experience of the self contains within itself the higher experience of that ultimate reality which is "the ground of Heaven and Earth and all things".

Confucius resides in every man's hsin
 Hidden by distractions of ears and eyes.
 The real image being now discovered,
 No longer suspect your liang-chih

Why, sir, are you always agitated:
 Wasting efforts in the world of sorrows--
 Do you not know the sages' word of power:
Liang-chih is your Ts'an-t'ung ch'i

In every man there is a compass,
 His mind-and-heart is the seat of a thousand
 transformations.

Foolishly, I once saw things in reverse:
 Leaves and branches I sought outside.
 The soundless, odourless moment of solitary
 knowledge.⁷⁵

Contains the ground of Heaven, Earth and all beings.

Foolish is he who leaves his inexhaustible treasure,
 With a bowl (t'o-pen 托鉢) moving from door to
 door, imitating the beggar.⁷⁶

Liang-chih, indeed, begins with the self and brings
 one back to the self. In doing so, however, it also
 enriches the self, expanding and deepening it until it is
 fully cognisant of its own greatness and depth, which is
 no less than the greatness and the depth of Heaven-and-
 Earth and the myriad things.

Notes to Chapter VII

- 1 WWKC 3: 142b; Chan, Instructions, 220. Allusion to Mencius 6A:8, regarding how men's hearts (hsin) agree in approving of virtue, and adding: "the sages only apprehended before me that which my hsin shares with other men". See Legge, Classics, v. 2, 406-407.
- 2 See Y.K. Shryock, The Origins and Development of the State Cult of Confucius, (New York: 1966), 183-189.
- 3 The movement of amalgamation of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist ideas began early, especially with interactions between Taoism and Buddhism, in both their teachings and practices. See T'ang, fo-chiao shih, 87-120; Maspero, le Taoisme, 185-199; E. Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China; (Leiden: 1959), v. 1, 288-9, 309-319. I agree with Zürcher that the distinction made between "philosophical" and "popular" or religious Taoism is misleading, since it suggests a doctrinal difference accompanied by a social distinction. He claims that hsüan-hsüeh 玄學 (profound learning), sometimes called "Neo-Taoism", so dominant in the Wei-Chin times, was actually a Confucian recasting of early Taoist philosophy, which has drastically re-interpreted the old Taoist doctrines. The fusion of Buddhist and Taoist ideas in the Sung times has already been described in Ch. I. Chu Hsi's philosophical synthesis as well as Lu Chiu-yüan's rival thought both embodied a fusion of the "Three Ways". Yang-ming certainly took another, firmer step toward that direction, with an open admission of his thoughts on this subject. As for later developments in the Ming dynasty, especially the conscious amalgamation of the "Three Ways" on the part of scholars, frequently influenced by Yang-ming's philosophy, see Sakai Tadao, Chugoku zenshu no kenkyü [A Study of Chinese Morality Books], (Tokyo: 1960), 226-304, passim., and Prof. Liu Ts'un-yan's article, "Lin Chao-en", 253-278; and Araki Kengō, "Minmatsu ni okeru Ju Butsu chōwaron no seikaku." [On the Thought of the Late Ming Era as Revealed in the Attempts at Harmony Between Confucianism and Buddhism], Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō XVIII (1966), 210-224.
- 4 WWKC 3: 156; Chan, Instructions, 255.
- 5 WWKC 1: 70a; Chan, Instructions, 40-41.
- 6 WWKC 1: 70b; Chan, Instructions, 41-42. Yang-ming was citing from the Appendix to the Book of Changes. See Chou-yi cheng-yi, 7:7b; Legge, tr., Yi King, 355-356. See also Yang-ming's letter to Tsou Shou-yi, (1526), WWKC 6: 212b.
- 7 WWKC 34: 958a-b.
- 8 WWKC 34: 959b-960a. See also WLCC, "San-shan li-tse lu" 三山麓澤錄 1: 19a-b. Wang Chi said that Yang-ming's teaching on liang-chih can be considered as the opening into all "Three Teachings".

- 9 WWKC 34: 960a.
- 10 See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Wang Yang-ming yü Tao-chiao", [Wang Yang-ming and Taoism], written for Yōmei gaku daikei [A Compendium of Yang-ming's Philosophy] to be published in Japan, 1971-2. I have used Professor Liu's private manuscript.
- 11 According to Shao-hsing fu-chih [Shao-hsing Prefecture Gazetteer], comp. by Hsiao Liang-kan et al., and published in 1586, 2b:11b. This was the name of the Prefecture. Incidentally, the compiler, Hsiao Liang-kan, was a disciple of Wang Chi. See WLCC, Preface, 3a.
- 12 This letter to T'ung is in WWKC 21: 634b-635a.
- 13 Ibid. Yang-ming's own prayer for rain on this occasion is given in WWKC 25: 723. He chose to pray at Nan-chen, a place east of K'uai-chi 會稽, probably on account of the temple there dedicated to the sage Emperor Yu. See Chekiang t'ung-chih, [Chekiang Gazetteer], (1899 ed., Shanghai reprint, 1934), 1: 210-4.
- 14 WWKC 21: 638a-b. Note that these two are the earliest extant letters of Wang Yang-ming, and that 1508 was the year of Yang-ming's enlightenment. Moreover, this letter testifies to Yang-ming's weak health. At the time he wrote it, he was only thirty-four years old. Certainly, this letter, as also the previous one to T'ung, prove Yang-ming's repudiation of the Taoist quest for physical immortality or the prolongation of life.
- 15 Kuang-ch'eng-tzu 廣成子 was a legendary immortal who supposedly lived in the K'ung-t'ung 崑崙 mountain and was visited by the Yellow Emperor who asked for his advice concerning the way of immortality. See Chuang-tzu, "Tsai-yu" 在宥 [Let it Be] 4: 18a, Eng. tr. by Burton Watson, op.cit., 118-120.
- 16 Ibid. Yang-ming considers these Taoist sages as men specially endowed with a propensity for long life. This differs from his teaching--already crystallised in 1508,--concerning Confucian sagehood which can be acquired by all who devote themselves to its quest. The obvious difference is that between "preternatural" longevity and human fulfilment in a life of virtue. See his letter to Lu Ch'eng, written in 1521 [WWKC 5: 199] where he includes P'eng Keng 彭鏗, a legendary immortal who lived during the Hsia and Shang dynasties, in this same category.
- 17 This is from an Epilogue (dated 1078) written by Chang Po-tuan 張伯端 [Chang P'ing-shu 張平叔 983-1082], and is included in Tao-tsang 道藏 [abbrev. as TT], 64, Epilogue, 1b. See also Liu Ts'un-yan, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society in Ming Thought, 311-5.

- 18 WWKC 5: 199b. See SKTY, op.cit., 28:88. For his life, see "Yüan Ch'iu Ch'u-chi Nien-p'u," 元丘處機年譜 [Chronological Biography of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi of the Yuan Dynasty] in Yao Ts'ung-wu, Tung-pei-shih lun-ts'ung, [On the History of the North-east] (Taipei: 1959), v. 2, 214-276.
- 19 Ch'en Chih-hsü 陳致虛, alias Shang-yang-tzu 上陽子, who compiled the book, Chin-tan ta-yao 金丹大要 [Essentials of the Golden Pill] in 1335. See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Ming-ju yü Tao-chiao" [Taoism and Neo-Confucianists in Ming times] in Hsin-ya hsüeh-pao, VIII (1967), 4.
- 20 The preference for Bodhidharma and Hui-neng was based on their exemplification of a high moral character. Both were then considered also as Immortals by the Taoists. However, Ch'en Chien said that this letter shows Yang-ming's constant desire to reconcile the "Three Teachings". See Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9: 4a.
- 21 WWKC 21: 638b.
- 22 Ibid. Ch'en Chien criticised Yang-ming particularly for saying that Yen Hui was still alive. See Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9: 4a-b.
- 23 WWKC 5: 199a-b. The references are to the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 1.
- 24 WWKC 5: 199b.
- 25 WWKC 20: 606a. Chang Po-tuan promoted the fusion of religious Taoism and Ch'an Buddhism through practices of "internal alchemy". See Welch, The Parting of the Way, 147-148.
- 26 A play on words. For a textual discussion of Wu-chen p'ien, its three commentaries, and their authors, see Liu Ts'un-yan, "Tao-tsang Wu-chen p'ien san-chu pien-wu," [On the Edition of the Combined Three Commentaries on the Wu-chen P'ien in the Taoist Canon], Tung-hsi wen-hua (East-West Culture) XV (1968), 33-41. One of the three commentaries is attributed to Hsüeh Tao-kuang 薛道光 [Hsüeh Tzu-hsien 薛紫賢 fl. 1106].
- 27 See above, n. 26.
- 28 Ch'an Buddhists spoke of "fake" Ch'an Buddhists as "wild-cat Ch'an", alluding to the story of the punishment inflicted on a Buddhist monk who had given an incorrect answer in speaking to his Master and had to go through a series of transmigrations, becoming a wild-cat after 500 such lives before liberating himself. See Wu-ming, Lien-teng hui-yao 4, Zokuzōkyō, 1st coll., pt. 2 B case 9, 248a. The name was frequently given to the T'ai-chou branch of the Yang-ming school in late Ming, for their obvious Ch'an sympathies and to signify contempt.

- 29 The blue sky refers to hsin.
- 30 WWKC 2: 123; Chan, Instructions, 173-4.
In a letter to Nieh Pao, written in 1526, he thus made use of certain lines from Mencius 2A:2:
Now, if one does not devote himself to the task of "always doing something", but clings in a vacuum to "not forgetting" and "not assisting", it is like heating the pot to cook rice without first putting in water and rice, but concentrating only on putting in fuel and starting the fire. I do not know what kind of thing would be cooked in this way. I fear that before the intensity of the fire can be adjusted, the pot itself will already have cracked.
The parable of the pot and of cooking is obviously an allusion to Taoist cultivation, that connected with the "Golden Pill", whether internal or external. See Chang Po-tuan, Wu-chen p'ien chu-su [Commentary on Wu-chen p'ien], in TT XI; 4:9b, given in Liu Ts'un-yan, "Wang Yang-ming yü Tao-chiao," manuscript copy. The term yüan-ching is translated by Chan Wing-tsit as "prime essence". I say "prime sperm" to indicate Taoist allusions.
- 31 WWKC 1: 71; Chan, Instructions, 44. The questioner here was probably Lu Ch'eng.
- 32 According to Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo: "T'ai-chi generates yang through movement. When this activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquillity, T'ai-chi generates the yin. When tranquillity reaches its limit, activity begins again. Thus movement and tranquillity alternate and become the root of each other; giving rise to the distinction of yin and yang." See SYHA 12: 1a-2b. Eng. tr. adapted from de Bary, Sources, 458. That Yang-ming was referring to Chou's cosmology is supported also by the discussion in another part of this letter, sometimes classified as a separate letter, WWKC 2: 108a; Chan, Instructions, 137-138.
- 33 See WWKC 20: 632b for the poem.
- 34 Smṛti is the Sanskrit word for recollection or thought.
- 35 Reference to Taoist elixirs, which bring about different degrees of physical immortality. The Ts'an-t'ung ch'i speaks of the huan-tan 還丹 (Pill of Return). See Chu Hsi's Ts'an-t'ung ch'i kao-yi [An Investigation into the Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i] SPPY ed., 12a. For the "Pill of Nine Returns" see especially the Yü-ch'ing wu-chi ts'ung-chen Wen-ch'ang ta-tung hsien-ching 玉清無極總真文昌大洞仙經 [The Purest, Limitless, Truest, Wen-ch'ang Classic of Immortality]. TT LI, 4:12b-17b.
- 36 These words as k'ian and li, taken from the Book of Changes, had specific meanings in Taoist methods of self-cultivation, referring to alchemy related to the quest for the "external" or "internal" elixirs. See Liu, "Taoist Self-cultivation in Ming Thought," in de Bary, Self and Society, 293.

- 37 See Chao T'ai-ting 趙泰定 (fl.1570), Mai-wang [On Conducting Breath-circulation], TSCC ed., 4:61, where the author quotes his father, Chao Chen-chi 趙貞吉 (1508-1576), disciple of Wang Chi, saying that liang-chih "was heretical doctrine" during the reign period of Ch'eng-hua 成化 (1464-1487) and only became acceptable to Confucian scholars afterwards.
- 38 Chuang-tzu 7, SPPY ed., 3:19a; Burton Watson's Eng. tr., op.cit., 97. See also Demiéville, "Le miroir spirituel," Sinologica I, (1948), 117-121.
- 39 See Ch.I, n.20. See also Fung, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, 237-238, 287-288, and Chao-lun, TSD No.1858, XLV, 152; Eng. tr. by Liebenthal, op.cit., 56-57.
- 40 Miyuki, An Analysis of Buddhist Influence, 105-110.
- 41 Yang-ming's extant writings and recorded conversations point to his wide knowledge of Buddhist scriptures and teachings. He was acquainted with the important texts of Mahayana Buddhism, including the Saddharma puṇḍarīka (Miao-fa lien-hua ching 妙法蓮華經 or Lotus sutra), the Suraṅgama (Leng-yen ching 楞嚴經), the Vajracchedikā Prajñā-Paramita (Chin-kang ching 金剛經 or Diamond sutra), the Lakṣavatāra (Leng-chia ching 楞伽經), the Parinirvāna (Nieh-p'an ching 涅槃經), the Yūan-chūeh ching 圓覺經 ("Perfect Enlightenment" sutra), and Hsi Yün's Ch'uan-hsin fa-yao 傳心法要. He cited most frequently from the Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching. He was also familiar with the biographies of many eminent Ch'an monks and with their recorded dialogues, alluding to the sayings of Tsung-mi, Ch'eng-kuan (760-838), Ch'u-shih 楚石 (1290-1370), and Ch'i-sung 契嵩 (fl.1062). Ch'en Chien mentioned in particular Yang-ming's knowledge of Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu [Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 9:4b]. See P.C. Hsü, Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought, 145-148. See also Ch.II, n.73.
- 42 WWKC 9:279a-b.
- 43 WWKC 9:279b.
- 44 WWKC 3:136a-b; Chan, Instructions, 205.
- 45 Ibid., see also Tokiwa Daijō, Shina ni okeru Bukkyō to Jukyo Dokyo, 466-470. Tokiwa pointed out how Yang-ming's way of uniting activity and tranquillity was opposed to the Buddhist quest for tranquillity alone.
- 46 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:109b-110a; Chan, Instructions, 141-142. See also Ch. VI, n.73.
- 47 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:112b; Chan, Instructions, 148. The quotation from the Diamond Sutra refers to the importance of achieving a state of consciousness of the pure self (citta) which is not attached to rupa [matter or the six sense objects]. See above, Ch.IV, n.72. For criticisms

of Yang-ming, see Ch'en Chien, op.cit., 9:1b-3b; Chang Lieh, op.cit., 4:4b-5a.

48 WWKC 1:84a-b; Chan, Instructions, 79. Hui K'o had responded in like manner to a disciple, by saying: "Give me your sins, and I shall do penance for you." See Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, TSD No.2076, LI, 3:220. For a fuller discussion of Buddhist influence on Yang-ming, see Tokiwa, op.cit., 461-466.

49 WWKC 1:85b; Chan, Instructions, 82. Allusion to a parable from Yüan-wu (fl.1125), Pi-yen lu [Records of the Green Cave], TSD No.2003, XLVIII, 143a.

50 For Ch'en Chien, see 9B:4a-6a, 10a. This poem also contains an allusion to the poet Ch'ü Yüan 屈原 (340?-278 BC), who allegedly spoke of himself as the only sober man in a world of people fast asleep. See Shih-chi, 84:210.

51 The Golden Bell is an allusion to the Chou-li 周禮 (Rites of Chou) where it describes the official post of a teacher of music. Yang-ming refers here to the teachings of Confucius, a native of the state of Lu, through which the waters of Chu and Ssu flow. See Chou-li Cheng-chu [Rites of Chou with Cheng Hsüan's Commentary], SPPY ed. 12:8a-9b.

52 Reference to Chou Tun-yi and the two Ch'engs.

53 In the Mahaparinirvāna sutra, there is a parable regarding a "poison-painted" drum, the sound of which killed all but one of the hearers. It represents the teachings of the sutra itself, which can extinguish all covetous desires in men's hearts. [TSD No.375, XII, 661]. In Chih-yi's (530-597) Commentaries on the Saddharma pundarīka, there are references to two drums, the Heavenly^one which is productive of good, and the poisoned one which is productive of evil. See Miao-fa lien-hua ching hsiün-yi [The Metaphysical Ideas of the Lotus Sutra], TSD No.1716, XXXIII, 758, 761. In Chih-yi's Miao-fa lien-hua ching wen-chü [On the Sentences of the Lotus Sutra], he refers to the "poisoned drum" as the symbol of the Buddha-nature, which brings good to those who hear it. [TSD No. 1718, XXXIV, 141]

54 This poem, written around 1524, is from WWKC 20:629.

55 "Ch'ung-hsiu Shan-yin hsien-hsiieh chi," 重修山陰縣志記 [On the Reconstruction of the Shan-yin Prefectural School] (1525), WWKC 7:252b.

56 Letter to Lo Ch'in-shun, WWKC 2:119a. Chan, Instructions, 163. For Mencius' condemnation of these two philosophers, see Mencius 3B:9. Yang-ming also mentioned the example of Han Yü, who combatted the Buddhists and Taoists. In comparing himself to Han, he obviously implied that the new "heretics" of his days were the mediocre adherents of the Ch'eng-Chu school.

- 57 "Chu -tzu wan-nien ting-lun hsü", WWKC 3: 160a-b; Chan, Instructions, 265. Yang-ming's attitude was in accord with that of Lu Chiu-yüan, who had pointed out the incongruity of calling Buddhists and Taoists "heretics" (yi-tuan), in the name of continuing the teaching of Mencius, who had not known Buddhism and had not attacked Taoism. See HSCC 13: 5a.
- 58 Letter to Tsou Shou-yi, (1526), WWKC 6: 212b-213a. There are five letters to Tsou, all dated 1526. This is the fourth letter.
- 59 Letter to Ku Lin, WWKC 2: 101b; Chan, Instructions, 123.
- 60 WWKC 26: 737a-b; Chan, Instructions, 274-5.
- 61 ibid. Earlier, Yang-ming had said that "to manifest clear virtue" without also "loving the people" is to fall into the error of the Buddhists and Taoists. See WWKC 1: 75b; Chan, Instructions, 5b.
- 62 WWKC 26: 737b; Chan, Instructions, 275.
By the opportunists, Yang-ming probably had in mind the people who were interested too much in statecraft as such, particularly, the Confucians who were much influenced by Legalist ideas of "enriching the state and strengthening the army". Although a soldier and statesman himself, he believed that such concrete and limited objectives should always be made subject to the higher work of pursuing sagehood.
- 63 Preface to Ch'uan-hsi lu, pt. 2, in WWKC 2: 88a; Chan, Instructions, 90. In other words, Yang-ming advocated an authentic humanism, based on the self-perfecting hsin, in opposition to a false humanism, which pays lip service to moral ideals, but risks the loss of its hsin, through a pattern of behaviour which is not in accord with hsin.
- 64 Since mention is made here of Ch'u-yang, the poem was probably written in 1513 or 1514, during Yang-ming's sojourn there.
- 65 Allusion here again to the gathas of Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng. Yang-ming makes use of a known Buddhist--and also Taoist--imagery to describe his Way, which he claims to be "neither Buddhist nor Taoist".
- 66 Reference to the study of classical exegesis.
- 67 The poem is taken from WWKC 20: 600a.
- 68 WWKC 3: 142a-b; Chan, Instructions, 220.
- 69 WWKC 2: 113a; Chan, Instructions, 149.
- 70 WWKC 2: 121b; Chan, Instructions, 169-170. The references are to Analects 14: 41-42; 6: 26 [Legge, Classics, v. 1, 290-291; 193].

- 71 WWKC 2: 121b; Chan, Instructions, 170.
- 72 WWKC 2: 121a-b; Chan, Instructions, 169.
- 73 WWKC 2: 121b-122a; Chan, Instructions, 171. Note that the Chinese word for "insanity" is again k'uang, also translated in Ch. II as "mad ardour". In describing his "insanity", however, Yang-ming compared himself to Confucius, hence revealing his belief in his own charismatic mission. But this cannot be called pride, since he also believed in the universal call to sagehood.
- 74 This is the literal meaning of the book's title.
- 75 A reference to the Book of Odes, "Ta-ya" 大雅 "wen-wang chih-shih," Legge, tr., Classics, v. 4, 431, where the "soundless, odourless" image refers to Heaven's operations. It is quoted in the Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 33, where it refers to the practice of virtue in solitude. See Legge tr., Classics, v. 1, 433. Chu Hsi used the same image in his commentary on Chou Tun-yi's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo to describe the T'ai-chi (Ultimate), which is also Wu-chi. See CTYL, 94: 1b-2a. "Solitary knowledge" refers to what is known to one person alone. See Huai-nan-tzu 淮南子, SPPY ed., 15: 16a. Together, the line alludes to the moment of enlightenment, which, as the next line reveals, is concerned with the insight into the ultimate reality of the universe. See, for this interpretation, Ch'en Chien, Hsüeh-pu t'ung-pien, 98: 5b.
- 76 The poem is from WWKC 20: 629a. The last line contains an obvious allusion to the mendicant Buddhist monk by his use of the words t'o-pen (Sanskrit: pañdapātika, holding a bowl). See Hsu Ch'uan-teng lu, [Supplement to the Transmission of the Lamp], ch. 10, TSD No. 2076, LI; 527. Yang-ming was criticising the practice of seeking perfection outside of oneself. As to the allusion in the previous line to the abandonment of one's own inexhaustible treasure, this is taken from Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, TSD No. 2076, LI, 6:246.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

How perfect are the secret springs of Heaven and Earth!
A divine abyss separates mad ardour (k'uang) and
sagehood--

Truth and error diverge on an infinitesimal point.¹

As a study of the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming, with special reference to its "correctness" or "orthodoxy", the underlying polarity in the foregoing chapters of analysis has been that of "orthodoxy versus heterodoxy". I have pointed out the inherent ambiguity of the problem, with reference to the development of the Confucian tradition as a whole, and particularly with regard to the "Confucian versus Ch'an Buddhist" debate generally associated with the criticisms of Yang-ming's philosophy. But I have also indicated the presence of certain minor tensions within the broad controversy of the question of "orthodoxy", such as the "whole versus parts" and the "knowledge versus action" controversies.² Other tensions have also been touched upon, such as that between nei (the "inner", or contemplative) and wai (the "outer", or active), between wu 悟 (enlightenment) and hsiu 修 (cultivation), and, with greater relevance to the problem of orthodoxy, what may be called the tension between "self" and "authority". There is also a more fundamental dichotomy, that which Yang-ming sought especially to reconcile: between t'i (reality, or the "metaphysical") and yung (practice, or the "moral").³

In this final chapter of critique and inquiry, it is my intention to review the results of my analysis in terms of these four final polarities, for the sake of bringing to light the many ambiguities related to the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming. This will not entail returning to pre-Ch'in Confucianism and looking again at its historical evolution. I propose rather to examine at closer range the similarities and differences between the philosophy of Chu Hsi on the one side, and that of Wang Yang-ming on the other, referring back to the position of Lu Chiu-yüan,

Chu's contemporary and Wang's "mentor"--although separated from him by three hundred years of history-- whenever this seems helpful.

Nei (the Inner) versus Wai (the Outer)

At first sight, it may seem that Lu's attempt to internalise the whole pursuit of wisdom by his philosophy of a self-determining, self-perfecting hsin, tends to the "inner" pull of self-cultivation in silence and contemplation at the expense of social involvement. Chu's balanced method of both "reverence" and "extending knowledge", on the other hand, appears to be more "outer"-oriented, since it takes the person out of himself, to the investigation of truth in classical texts. In reality, however, Chu's attention was focused on hsing (nature), which he regarded as containing all "goodness" in potency (li), but which awaits the effort of being cleared from the obscuration cast upon it by passions or evil desires. It is, therefore, a more passive principle, which must be acted upon, through the work of hsin, the mind-and-heart, which controls both hsing (nature) and ch'ing (emotions). Chu placed much emphasis on quiet-sitting, as a technique which helps to restore to man, his originally good nature. Lu's vantage-point was quite different. His basic principle, hsin(mind-and-heart), is a source of dynamic action.⁴ While its development is promoted by the practice of quiet-sitting, it is not necessarily dependent upon this "inner"-oriented technique. It is, by nature, independent. Thus it need not appear so remarkable that, with all his desires for social involvement, Chu had led the life of a near-recluse, while Lu, who never attained a very high position, was content to exercise the duties of the minor official posts entrusted to him.⁵ But the culmination of Lu's philosophy would come only with Wang Yang-ming, whose life revealed the same contrary pulls between concerns for the "inner" and "outer" realms of existence, but whose method of self-perfection, based on a dynamic hsin, which confronts all events as they occur, would direct him to undertake social and political activities as the opportunities arose.

This method, however, was not discovered without difficulty. Political conditions had been such that many early Ming thinkers felt obliged to abstain even from the civil examinations, in order to avoid the compromise of exchanging their convictions for official advancement.⁶ Such a voluntary departure from known Confucian teachings on social commitment was made as a sign of protest rather than as a surrender of responsibility. But it could not become incorporated into the Confucian tradition as a permanent feature without destroying the tradition itself from within. Whether engaged in political activity or living as recluses, Ming scholars searched earnestly for a single, all-inclusive method of achieving sagehood, which would resolve the "inner" and "outer" contradictions. It is in the light of this context that Yang-ming's enunciation of chih liang-chih, as well as Chan Jo-shui's proposed method of "recognising T'ien-li everywhere", should be understood.

Yang-ming was determined to find wisdom. He was ready to try all methods and recipes, in the hope of discovering the right one. His chief difficulty, as he himself acknowledged, was not knowing where to begin.

When I learned a little [of the importance of acquiring] correct learning (cheng-hsteh 正學) I was much puzzled by the differences and contradictions [which I found] in the many ideas [of the various philosophers], and was worn out [by their divergent recommendations]. I was at a complete loss, not knowing how to begin the whole effort.⁷

Yang-ming moved from Confucian studies to the investigation of Taoist and Buddhist beliefs and practices, even abandoning the world for some time. This gave him a certain peace and tranquillity. He came near to believing that he had found in this "unorthodox" way of life, the secret of attaining sagehood. But he was troubled by their divergences with Confucian teaching, and by their lack of

attention for action and social involvement. . "I was torn between following them and rejecting them, between believing them and doubting them."⁸ Not satisfied with whatever gains he made in insight and virtue, he was several times near the verge of declaring that sagehood was not universally accessible, since he himself could not get within sight of the goal.

Light finally dawned, during his exile in Kweichow, in the form of a certain insight into his own human nature. Yang-ming finally discovered the meaning of sagehood: it flows from hsin, and returns to hsin. It is nothing other than the development of T'ien-li (perfect virtue) in hsin. Thereupon, he formulated the tentative doctrine of the "Unity of Knowledge and Action". Against the accepted teachings of Chu Hsi, he contended that the knowledge of particular virtues could not bring one the fullness of virtue itself, which is less the sum total of particular acts and of the knowledge of these, than the intrinsic, harmonious development of one's moral character(hsin).⁹

By personal practice, Yang-ming discovered the merit of the "technique" of quiet-sitting. The stillness it inculcates in the heart enhances the deepening of a genuine self-knowledge, opening the person who practises it to a new world of life and conscious activity within himself.¹⁰ However, as it is only a technique, which can be practised from time to time, but remains subject to abuse, its importance is yet secondary. It is not the method for which he was searching.

The quest for a methodological formula brought Yang-ming first to the doctrine of the "Unity of Knowledge and Action". This evolved, through personal effort of realisation accompanied by refinement of thought, to the "extension of the knowledge of the good", and then, finally, to the attainment of consciousness of the unity of man with all things. For Yang-ming's understanding of "knowledge" was not the knowledge of particular truths, but that of

universal truth, of wisdom, of the Tao, the possession of which must necessarily be accompanied by the development of a perfect, moral character. The same, however, cannot be said of his understanding of "action", which, by its very nature, refers to innumerable, particular acts. But, for the man determined to find wisdom through the development of his hsin, every act merges with the whole effort (kung-fu) of self-realisation, which should eventually bring him into the consciousness of the very oneness of his being with all things. He will then find Heaven (T'ien) and Earth (ti地) and the myriad creatures in himself. Seen in this perspective, one may explain the assertion, yü wan-wu yi-t'i 與萬物一體 (being one body with all things), as "making all things (wu) one". Through moral action allied to knowledge, man comes into vital contact with things-- whether persons or events-- and transforms all into his own life, making of all, a unity identified with himself.¹¹

The culmination of Yang-ming's philosophy in the vision of wan-wu yi-t'i (the unity of all things) represents, therefore, a personal, practical life-goal, an attitude of mind which is capable of constant growth and development, and one which necessarily overflows into social action.¹² For Yang-ming, the reconciliation of the "inner-outer" tension was clearly in the realisation of "sageliness within and kingliness without."¹³

Wu (Enlightenment) versus Hsiu (Cultivation)¹⁴

Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi both recognised the universal capacity for sagehood and wisdom. For them, however, its acquisition was a task which required tremendous effort, usually the fruit of a sudden, inner enlightenment which follows the accumulation of encyclopaedic knowledge, and the permeation of the spirit of "reverence" and "tranquillity" into daily living. Lu Chiu-yüan, however, disagreed with the assumption underlying this approach. For him, human nature is, in itself, an entirely adequate instrument of its own perfection. It is not merely the tranquil locale

where enlightenment occurs. It is identical with the dynamic hsin (mind-and-heart). Lu regarded this hsin to be somehow one with ultimate reality (Tao). Whoever sought enlightenment should therefore grapple with this hsin, this Tao, without allowing himself to be distracted by other affairs and pursuits. Lu once said of Chu that he could be compared to the sublime Mount T'ai 泰山, "but, unfortunately, in spite of his [great] learning, he has not seen Tao. He merely wastes his own energy."¹⁵ It was the comment of an "enlightened" man, on an "unenlightened" man.

Lu pointed out the correct direction to sagehood. But he merely spoke of it in random fashion, as a support for his exclusive concern for "honouring one's virtuous nature". Yang-ming pushed it to its final conclusions. Much more than Lu, he always referred to his personal experience as the proof for the truth of his words. Yang-ming's inner life developed through a series of enlightenments.¹⁶ But the insights he attained in the these experiences helped him to develop a method, not of "enlightenment"-- for there is no such method-- but of "cultivation". The "extension of liang-chih" refers not to the application of innate, unchanging, ready-made concepts of right and wrong to life and action,¹⁷ but rather to the gradual and steady development of one's character, through an experience acquired in an orderly manner, with emphasis on searching in one's personal behaviour, although without discounting the role of classical learning. It was his way of coming to grips with life at its deepest level, of pre-disposing the self for entrance into a state of vital sympathy and cosmic consciousness with all things. Yang-ming recognised the difficulty of describing such a process in logical language. He spoke of purifying the mind-and-heart, of maintaining the equilibrium and harmony of the emotions. He made use of parables, such as "polishing the mirror", planting a tree, and so forth. The former recalls the ability of hsin to reflect all light, the latter suggests that it is also capable of

organic growth.

The formulation of the "Four Maxims" has often been interpreted as Yang-ming's preference for enlightenment, and rejection of cultivation, in the quest for wisdom. A careful study of his answer to Wang Chi and Ch'ien Te-hung, however, shows that this was not the case. Yang-ming saw clearly that enlightenment cannot be induced at will. It is a free gift, usually more accessible to the man of "superior spiritual intelligence." But that was no reason why a man less endowed spiritually, should not have access to wisdom itself.¹⁸ An analysis of the meaning of the Four Maxims considered as a whole, demonstrates rather the greater importance of cultivation. Yang-ming was not a Ch'an Buddhist Master, a teacher of enlightenment who relied mainly on "hock techniques" to induce psychic and spiritual experiences.¹⁹ He was rather a teacher of virtue, a man who believed in "polishing the mirror", in developing the mind-and-heart.²⁰ He indicated a "Way" of acquiring wisdom; he did not presume to have the power to "give" it to others.

In other words, a sudden, traumatic experience of "enlightenment" is useful but not absolutely essential to the quest for sagehood, which can also be attained through constant development of the dynamic hsin. The effort of cultivation is not to be strained or painful, but spontaneous and confident. After all, the quest is for that which one already possesses, if only in potentiality.²¹ The discovery will come as a revelation of that which is hidden, within oneself. And it will be a revelation of all things, as reflected in a clear mirror. Therefore, in stead of deepening a dichotomy between "enlightenment" and "cultivation", Yang-ming opted for their reconciliation. Enlightenment need not be sudden; it may come gradually, through the process of cultivation.²²

A question which naturally arises, however, is the foundation of the reality of one's "enlightenment", and finally, of one's "sageliness". How can a man decide,

that his experience of enlightenment, or his many insights, derived from earnest inquiry in reflective thought as well as from virtuous behaviour, is genuine? How indeed can a human being, so limited in his capacity for that which is unlimited --wisdom-- know for sure that he has acquired enough of this ultimate truth to consider himself "wise"? It is a question of authority. But whose authority?

This question must have pursued Yang-ming throughout his own quest for wisdom, for virtue, for the Absolute. It colours the entire evolution of his thought. It underlies the whole foundation of his method.

"Self" versus "Authority"

At first sight, the philosophy of Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi seems to support the role of authority in the acquisition of wisdom and in the ordering of society. The harmonious universe of li and ch'i which revolves around the notion of T'ai-chi-- the "Ultimate" in being and goodness-- may argue well for a hierarchic structure of a strongly centralised government.²³ The appeal to the Classics and to the sages, considered as "lineal forebears" of the exponents of this philosophy, provides another corner-stone for a regimented system of education. The truth, however, is far more complex, since the philosophy which Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi had developed was founded on an independent interpretation of the Classics. The authority to which they gave adherence was indeed higher than the state-- which saw itself as the guardian of classical exegesis-- higher, indeed, than the Classics. In fact, they relied primarily on their own authority, as self-appointed interpreters of the sacred message.²⁴ For this reason, they acted as moral judges of their sovereigns rather than as dutiful ministers.

Lu Chiu-yüan, on the other hand, appears to be a rebel against the entire classical tradition, and a prophet of pure insight. He proposed the recognition of

hsin (mind-and-heart) as Tao (ultimate truth). He sought to internalise wisdom and virtue completely, and to make the pursuit of sagehood entirely independent of classical studies. Naturally, therefore, such a rejection of external authority, did not bring to his philosophy, the favour of state power, which always relies on external sanctions.

In fact, however, Lu was only inferring certain logical conclusions from Ch'eng Yi's and Chu Hsi's attitudes toward the Classics. He clearly pointed out the significance of that "higher authority", to which appeals had been made: it was the sages' hsin, as Ch'eng and Chu also acknowledged, but it was seminally present in man's hsin, a fact which neither Ch'eng nor Chu clearly demonstrated. In Yang-ming's case also, in stead of being accepted as an important contribution to the "Confucian quest", his teachings were criticised as "heresy" on doctrinal grounds -- because based on "private interpretations" of the Classics, through his accomodation of Ch'an Buddhist ideas.²⁵ The controversies he sustained led Yang-ming eventually to question not only the exact role of personal insight or of intellectual inquiry, of inner enlightenment, which relies solely on insight, and of cultivation, which includes studies, in the quest for wisdom, but even of the very role of "authority" itself-- whether of the sages, of the Classics, or of government-- in the determination of truth. For if authority can be detrimental to that which it claims to defend, by what right does it continue to demand respect and adherence?

Yang-ming's debate with Chan Jo-shui, for example, put the focus on the problem of the "criteria" of truth. Chan admitted the value of insight, but regarded the Classics as a source of rich inspiration and insight which should not be set aside. Yang-ming, on the other hand, tended to give other pursuits in life equal value with the study of the Classics. But then, to what authority can the man of insight appeal as a support for the correctness of his views? If truth is only regarded as the

product of action -- that is, of trial and experience -- and therefore quite independent of intellectual knowledge, he can only appeal to his own moral character as final arbiter. His only authority, it would seem, is himself.

This would be the case if man's moral character, his hsin, contains nothing greater than itself. Yang-ming, however, discovered in it a certain self-transcending quality. It was the agent as well as the goal of sagehood. It was also the meeting place of Heaven-and-Earth and all things. Yang-ming spoke of hsin and liang-chih as the ultimate authority of wisdom and perfection. He formulated the first of the Four Maxims in this light, explaining how hsin-in-itself, the final and most profound centre in man, that which is beyond ordinary consciousness and yet capable of being "awakened" to itself through enlightenment, defies ethical differentiation and judgement. Basically, it is responsible to itself alone. Its authority, with regard to itself, is absolute. It is therefore a more fitting object of "faith" than the Classics.

Indeed, Yang-ming declared that he had the same mind-and-heart as Confucius -- he felt the same urgent responsibility to save a world which was proceeding headlong on a course that could only bring it destruction.²⁶ By this act of boldness, he virtually assumed to be his own, the

double mission of restoring the true teaching of the sages, and of saving the world of his time.²⁷ He did not openly claim to be a sage himself. But his criticisms of the Ch'eng-Chu commentaries, his independence of the Confucian classics themselves, as well as his personal teaching of disciples, in a new "Way" of acquiring wisdom and sagehood, marked him out as the self-appointed spiritual heir of Confucius. - And all this Yang-ming was and did, so he explained, by right of, and through the use of, that in him which united him to the sages of old, which contained itself the secret of sagehood, his hsin (mind-and-heart), his liang-chih (knowledge of the good).

Thus the authority to which Yang-ming appealed, as support for the truth of his teaching, and as guarantee for the success of his "Way", is identical with the core of his teaching itself: hsin, or liang-chih. Viewed in this light, this self-determining agent of wisdom and perfection is transformed into an absolute norm, an authority for itself. In and through liang-chih, he had discovered the Good itself.

Yang-ming advocated having faith in this "knowledge of the good" (liang-chih).²⁸ He identified the object of faith with this authority itself. He was speaking of ultimate truth, the understanding of which brings wisdom.

Paradoxically, therefore, this philosopher who acknowledged no earthly authority, who desired to subject the words of Confucius himself to the examination of his own hsin, recognised one sole authority: that of hsin, the vehicle itself of wisdom. For him, this referred not merely to his own mind-and-heart which is one and the same with the minds-and-hearts of all the sages, past and present, but also to what constitutes the sacred legacy of all orthodox transmission.²⁹ It is what he called, hsin-in-itself or liang-chih-in-itself. It is also, according to him, the Tao (ultimate truth) and even Heaven.

In this light, Wang Yang-ming merely gave the finishing strokes to the work which Lu Chiu-yüan had begun. He developed a philosophy of hsin which sees everything only in relation to hsin. He also formulated a new "line" of "orthodox transmission"-- and why should he not do so, if Chu Hsi could do it?

T'i (the Metaphysical) versus Yung (the Moral)

Before discussing the problem of "orthodoxy" in itself, a brief look at Yang-ming's attempt to unite the two concerns of t'i (the Metaphysical) and yung (the Moral), and in particular, of the search for pen-t'i (ultimate reality) and the self-exertion or kung-fu which it calls for, may be helpful. For it will show us how the increasingly practical orientation of post-Sung Neo-Confucian philosophy, which culminated in the thought of Wang Yang-ming, could also become misconstrued by certain of its adherents, as to defeat the very purpose of the movement itself. This, in turn, will serve to emphasise the ambiguity of Yang-ming's philosophical legacy, which must be pointed out in this concluding chapter.

Compared to the earlier Confucians, the thinkers of the Sung period speculated much more deeply about the meaning of man, and of his place in the universe. The system of thought which they constructed has been interpreted largely in terms of such abstract concepts as

T'ai-chi, li and ch'i.³⁰ A closer examination, however, has revealed that even Chou Tun-yi's understanding of T'ai-chi cannot be separated from his ideas of moral goodness and sagehood, and that Chu Hsi had interpreted Chou's T'ai-chi-t'u shuo in terms of his other book, T'ung-shu, emphasising thereby the ethical dimensions of this "Ultimate" Ground of Being. Indeed, by identifying T'ai-chi with the Ch'eng brothers' T'ien-li -- the inner, "heavenly principle" in man -- Chu had given more immanence to the transcendent First Principle, while recognising also man's possession of the power to transcend himself.³¹

Wang Yang-ming continued and completed in the Ming dynasty Lu Chiu-yüan's efforts to strengthen and intensify the practical orientations of Sung philosophy. Yang-ming seldom spoke of T'ai-chi, except in terms of its operations: of yin and yang, "tranquillity" and "activity". Even then, he emphasised that such processes were difficult to explain in words, and could best be understood in silence by those who already knew the "Way" (Tao).³² Otherwise, he added, one ran the risk of allowing one's mind (hsin) to be "turned around by the Lotus Sutra in stead of turning the Lotus Sutra around."³³

Lu Chiu-yüan and Wang Yang-ming both speak of hsin as that which explains the meaning both of the universe and of man. Yang-ming also takes a further step, going deeper into hsin, and discovering therein, the meaning of liang-chih, --that in man which enables him to transcend himself, which is identical with T'ien-li, with Tao, with the Absolute. In order to discern between the unstable, changing, "mind-and-heart" of man, and that in him which is constant and unchanging, he speaks of hsin chih pen-t'i and liang-chih pen-t'i.³⁴ And since he discovers pen-t'i (ultimate reality) in hsin, he is obliged to describe hsin chih pen-t'i as the undifferentiated First Principle, that which is above ethical categories of good and evil.³⁵

Through his untiring emphasis on the work of chih liang-chih as that which combines moral cultivation with the quest for sudden enlightenment and so fuse together the seemingly contrary pulls of contemplation and of action, Yang-ming also seeks to explain his identification of pen-t'i (reality) itself with kung-fu (moral effort)³⁶ indicating thereby that the meaning of ultimate reality, hidden in hsin, can only be discovered through moral and spiritual ascesis, and that hsin or liang-chih is its own adequate authority. Thus, liang-chih, or liang-chih pen-t'i, is both the agent which achieves a certain end -- its own determination and perfection -- and the end itself, while the effort of chih liang-chih refers to the discovery, in the starting-point, of the goal to be achieved, which is the realisation of the pen-t'i of hsin or liang-chih.³⁷ But the very fluidity of his use of such terms, as also of hsin and liang-chih -- frequently without carefully distinguishing them from their pen-t'i -- gives the impression that he hardly noticed any difference between the changing and the unchanging, the relative and the Absolute. This was to produce serious consequences on the later development of his school of thought, which easily became a haven for the restless and eccentric, for all who claimed to be in possession of the Absolute within themselves, without adequate realisation of the meaning of such an assertion, or of the need of a sense of responsibility and of moral ascesis.³⁸ Thus, Yang-ming's proposal to unite the "inner", contemplative life and the "outer" active life, became easily the victim of his own attempts to regard all reality as a "whole" rather than in terms of its "parts". Even if he himself offered the example of a life of action permeated by contemplation, many of his latter-day disciples preferred to pass their time in empty speculation on the pen-t'i of their hsin, rather than embrace any discipline which a life of cultivation necessarily required. As a result, even the understanding of the absolute character of liang-chih was lost.³⁹

The Problem of 'Orthodoxy'

The examination of the "inner-outer", "~~enlightenment-cultivation~~", "self-authority" and "metaphysical-moral" tensions in the development of a new Confucian Way of acquiring wisdom, and in the evolution of Yang-ming's universal method, should help us to decide upon the issue concerning the "orthodoxy" of Yang-ming's philosophy. This can be done by first reviewing the thought-content of his underlying vision, and then, by consideration of the various implications of the method toward which his thought was oriented.

Yang-ming's exposition of the "unity of all things" (wan-wu yi-t'i) manifests resemblances with as well as divergences from both the primitive idea of "unity of Heaven and Man" (T'ien-jen ho-yi) and the later vision developed by Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi with the help of other Sung philosophers. But the transformation of the meaning of Heaven (T'ien), from the conscious, intelligent Master of the universe to the vague, more ambiguous notion of a natural Power with transcendent attributes occurred very early.⁴⁰ This shift enriched the understanding of Man, regarded earlier as being in all things subject to the will of the reasonable and mysterious One, rewarder of good and punisher of evil, and then attaining later a higher dignity through the teaching of the immanent perfect virtue, "principle of Heaven" (T'ien-li) in his heart. The "unity" between the two became also more conscious, with the crystallisation of a method of realising it in greater depth, through the dual practice of "reverence" and "extending knowledge". All this was accomplished long before the time of Yang-ming. He accepted the thought-content of the Confucian Tao, already modified by his predecessors. His own contribution was also through his method, which, by its focus on the self-determining hsin, made the "unity" between Heaven and Man more dynamically conscious of itself. But there was no question about his acceptance of the expansion of the earlier notion of T'ien to include "Heaven-and-Earth and all things". He did not return to the primitive idea of

a personal deity, which, in any case, became quite early, one of the many components inherent in the meaning of the word "Heaven" (T'ien). On the other hand, however, it may be pointed out that Yang-ming never rejected either the possibility of the possession by Heaven of conscious, intelligent attributes. Rather, his description of Man in terms of the dynamic hsin, and his insistence upon the oneness between Man and all things, indicated that he saw the dynamic, human intelligence as the reflection of a greater, more dynamic Intelligence, present in the depths of the self and yet master of the whole universe. But this was never articulated in unequivocal terms. According to Yang-ming's usage, the word Heaven (T'ien) remained ambiguous, with the emphasis on the continuum comprising man and all things pre-dominating over the presence of a masterly intelligence clearly transcendent and immanent.

In terms of his content, therefore, Yang-ming's philosophy manifests a basic resemblance with the thought system of the Ch'engs, Chang Tsai and Chu Hsi, effecting a lesser shift than that made by his predecessors of the Sung dynasty. In terms of the method he developed, however, the picture is different. Indeed, Yang-ming revealed a real concern for the continuity of the Confucian transmission. He proposed that liang-chih was the sacred legacy in question, used it as a key in his explanation of the "formula of faith" which had been crystallised earlier, and established in retrospect a new line of transmission tracing the handing down of the legacy through Lu Chiu-yüan rather than Chu Hsi. Such daring was sufficient to indicate his entire independence of the officially approved Ch'eng-Chu philosophy. Moreover, his explanations of the universal, fool-proof method, chih liang-chih, expressed clearly his faith in the correctness of personal insight, so long as the mind-and-heart (hsin) remains open and sincere, free from unruly passions and evil desires. The Confucian classics, regarded always as the guardian of truth and wisdom, preserved a place of honour in his heart. But the gates of sagehood were flung open to all, whether Confucian or barbarian.

And it is this teaching which resolves the inherent contradiction contained in the doctrine of "orthodox transmission". For insights, unlike techniques of exegesis, cannot be transmitted.⁴¹ They must be acquired anew, by and for oneself. But faith in liang-chih, which deepens itself into faith in ultimate truth, in what is called, "the sages' hsin", can be passed on, by inspiration. Just as Confucius had inspired it in Mencius, without having known or taught him personally, so too Mencius inspired it in Lu Chiu-yüan, after an intervention of over 1,500 years. And Lu Chiu-yüan, in turn, had inspired it in Yang-ming, after another interval of over 200 years. In other words, the transmission of hsin, an entirely interior process, requires the person to look into his own hsin to discover the orthodox legacy itself, which, in turn, is sometimes described in a negative vocabulary, for the sake of emphasising its un-differentiated character and the consequent ineffability.⁴²

In this way, Yang-ming completed and perfected certain teachings of Chu Hsi, while rejecting others. He taught the doctrine of "orthodox transmission", and of a truth which was transmitted. But he did so only in order to show that truth or wisdom cannot be delineated by human ideas of "correctness". There is ultimately only one truth and it is everywhere, our hsin being fundamentally one with all things. Ch'eng Yi and Chu Hsi had both incorporated Taoist and Buddhist ideas into their system. Yang-ming declared that this was perfectly natural and legitimate. There are no Confucian, Taoist or Buddhist taos. There is only one Tao.

Therefore, Yang-ming's method precluded any attempt of continuing to use the time-honoured classification of philosophies as "orthodox" and "un-orthodox", "Confucian" on the one side, and "Taoist" or "Buddhist" on the other. Whether and how much Yang-ming had been influenced by Taoist and Buddhist ideas loses, therefore, its importance. In fact, the whole question of orthodoxy itself becomes irrelevant. By its very meaning, "orthodoxy" should refer

to thought. Where methods are concerned, correctness can only be decided by the test of their effectiveness.

And so, how effective was the method of Wang Yang-ming? The answer lies partly in what it produced. The best example is the life and character of Yang-ming himself. From all evidences, his was the exemplification of a life which fused together the "inner and "outer" pulls of contemplation and of intense activity, of wisdom sought for and discovered through enlightenment and virtuous action, of the harmonious integration of such diverse pursuits as philosophy, statesmanship, and even war. The tensions were not always completely resolved. Yang-ming continued to show throughout his life of activity, a desire for tranquillity and silence. He made intermittent attempts of withdrawal from active life. But his strong sense of social responsibility and commitment, inherent both in his vision of the "unity of all things" and in his practical ideal of sagehood, always brought him back into the arena of active affairs and their resultant conflicts. It was the best demonstration of his inner adherence to his own method: the extension of liang-chih, of his knowledge of the good, gained through life and action, making of one, tranquillity and activity, permeating all decisions and acts with the inner light of the good.

An Ambiguous Legacy

The sublime moral character of Yang-ming as man and philosopher, the degree of unity he achieved in his own life, argues well for the effectiveness of his method of self-perfection. There is, however, another question. Does this necessarily imply that the method itself is a viable one for all seekers of sagehood?

It is not easy to answer this question. The very nature of the method of chih liang-chih, so dependent upon personal insights, which vary from individual to individual, and change according to the contexts of time and place, makes the judgement of its tenets according to any set of unchanging

criteria a well-nigh impossibility.⁴³ The "School of Wang Yang-ming" produced many great men, although none of these equaled or surpassed Yang-ming as a philosopher and a sage. But the philosophical legacy of Yang-ming was so ambiguous that diverse interpretations soon set in, putting once more in motion the tensions in thought and action of the "inner-outer" pulls, of the "enlightenment-cultivation" debate, of the "self-authority" dichotomy, and of the "metaphysical-moral" polarisation. The group which followed the leadership of Wang Chi and Wang Ken sought particularly to draw certain logical conclusions from the enlightenment versus cultivation debate, arguing in favour of an instantaneous enlightenment of the mind-and-heart, hsin, which is sufficient to assure the acquisition of wisdom.⁴⁴ But it offered no way of determining the authenticity of such enlightenment and of the possession of wisdom. In the end, every "aspiring" sage considered himself an already "made" sage, and acknowledged only the rules of behaviour which he himself had made. Such a development contributed to the growth of the Yang-ming school into a popular movement, penetrating into all segments of the stratified society of late Ming times, and effecting a marked tendency toward individual and eccentric behaviour, and of an attitude of independence and resistance with regard to all authority, especially that of the political state.

Other followers of the Yang-ming school sought to prevent or remedy the above tendency, which, with all its beneficial consequences for the development of the ideas of social egalitarianism based on men's equal dignity, was seen in the context of traditional China as bringing havoc to the orderly pursuit of philosophy and of wisdom. They either emphasised the importance of silence and of tranquillity, acquired in quiet-sitting, for the sake of confronting events and circumstances, or insisted upon the development of moral virtues in the "extension of liang-chih". In both instances a certain return to some of the ideas of the Ch'eng-Chu school was achieved.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note here that the development of a popular, protest movement in the Yang-ming school also prevented it from being ever clearly accepted as official doctrine without leading either to sufficient rational planning or to constructive action aimed at changing the status quo in late Ming China.⁴⁶ But the rich ambiguity of Yang-ming's legacy, which allows such diversity of interpretation and of application in practice, permitted the eventual development in Japan of a movement of thought and action which drew from the fusion of moral ideals, social commitment, and the cultivation of an "inner" personality, a certain strength and freedom of action that served well the later, mid-nineteenth century Meiji reforms.⁴⁷ Yang-ming's method functioned well in producing many inspiring individuals of high character in Japan and Korea as well as in China. In Japan especially, it also helped to effect a certain social transformation, based on ancient moral ideals, but looking forward to an independent confrontation with new political, social and intellectual realities which entered Japanese life and awareness with the incursion of European and American interests.

In conclusion, let us remember that the very quest for a universal, all-embracing method of self-cultivation implied that the method looked for must be one of great breadth of view, based on the common human nature, but dependent upon changing ideas and circumstances. A certain ambiguity, therefore, cannot be avoided. But this merely underlines the ambiguity inherent in the primitive ideal of the "unity of Heaven and Man", for which a clear method of personal realisation was never enunciated, as well as that contained in its revised version, of the "unity of all things", as taught by the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi-- although Chu's strong insistence on intellectual inquiry, nearly jeopardised the credibility of the universal accessibility of sagehood. It was for the sake of resolving this dilemma that Yang-ming embarked upon the search for a method which would make of the theory of "universal accessibility" a practical possibility. In doing so, it

was also inevitable that he should radically change the notion of "orthodoxy", declaring as real heretics, not the adherents of alien creeds or practices, such as Taoists and Buddhists, but the hypocrites of the Confucian school itself, who mouthed traditional ideals but denied them in life and action. By rendering obsolete the old criteria of correctness and orthodoxy, which were applied to a man's thoughts rather than to his life and action, and by substituting a new criterion, that of personal insight into the good, Yang-ming performed a signal service to the cause of sagehood itself. He declared himself in favour of truth rather than of ideology and of virtue rather than worldly success. He also pointed out that sagehood confers an assurance of its own correctness or "orthodoxy", because it reveals to man that in him which, united to all things, is greater than himself: his hsin, which is also called Tao.

Yang-ming's "Way" of acquiring wisdom has also made manifest the nature of wisdom: it is the recognition by man, of that in him which is greater than himself, which unites him to Heaven-and-Earth and all things. The object of this quest is well within one's reach, for it is already in his possession. And it is this knowledge which constitutes the fruit of Yang-ming's enlightenment, which makes of his "method", a transcendent philosophy: the discovery of Tao, of the Absolute.

Notes to Chapter VIII

¹ WWKC 19:573b-574a.

² See Chapter IV, 123-133. I wish to point out that I have found Benjamin Schwartz' article, "Some Polarities in Confucian Thought," in Confucianism in Action, ed. by David S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: 1959), 50-62, very stimulating.

³ I admit that the t'i-yung and nei-wai tensions may be interpreted in a similar way, to refer both to the "latent" and the "manifest", and even the wu-hsiu dichotomy may be explained in terms of emphasis on the one or the other of the same metaphysical pattern. However, in this chapter, by referring to t'i-yung, I have in mind the tension between the "metaphysical" and "moral" concerns, and, by extension, between "metaphysical" or even "ultimate" truth, and the "method of cultivation" required for acquiring a penetrating understanding of this truth or wisdom. When I speak of the nei-wai tension, it will be in terms of the attractions of the contemplative and the active ways of life, and when I speak of the wu-hsiu debate, it will be in terms of the roles of enlightenment and cultivation in the quest for sagehood. Thus, within the context of this chapter, both the nei-wai and the wu-hsiu tensions belong more to the realm of yung than to that of t'i. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that Yang-ming himself saw a fundamental unity between t'i and yung, finding the former in the latter, just as he held also that contemplation should permeate action, and enlightenment should be attained through cultivation.

⁴ Kusumoto Masatsugu, Sō-Min jidai Jūgaku shisō no kenkyū, 237-239; 341-346.

⁵ For Chu Hsi, see Chapter I, n.93. For Lu Chiu-yüan, see SS 434:1114.

⁶ The reluctance of many scholars to assume official positions has been attributed to the severity which the early Ming emperors manifested to their ministers. See Chao Yi, Erh-shih-erh shih cha-chi, 32:5b-6a. The early Ming scholars who refrained from participating in government service, often even from taking civil examinations, included Wu Yü-pi, Hu Chü-jen 胡居仁 (1434-1484), Lou Liang and Ch'en Hsien-chang, all of whom spent their entire lives in semi-retirement. See MJHA 1:1a-2b; 2:1a-2a; 8a-9a; 5:1a-3b.

⁷ Yang-ming's preface to Chu-tzu wan-nien ting-lun, in WWKC 3:160; Chan, Instructions, 265.

⁸ Ibid.

- 9 See above, Chapter III, 100-103.
- 10 Of the Ming thinkers who preceded Yang-ming, Ch'en Hsien-chang was the best known for his practice of quiet-sitting and for the discovery of an interior world of vital activity through this practice. See MJHA 5:2a-3a, 6a; Jen Yu-wen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society, 53-57, 75-78.
- 11 See Chapter VI, 217-218.
- 12 In Self and Society, Introduction, 15, Prof. de Bary describes Yang-ming's ideal of sagehood in these words: "To be a sage, then, was to be the master of all creation. For Wang Yang-ming and many of his followers, the sagehood to which any man might aspire was no less cosmic in its significance. With a belief in the direct attainment of sagehood, and a vision of man standing at the centre of creation, the ingredients of a spiritual revolution were at hand."
- 13 Chuang-tzu, "T'ien-hsia p'ien," 天下篇 [All under Heaven], 10:14a; Eng. tr. in Burton Watson, op.cit., 364.
- 14 In this respect, I have found Prof. de Bary's draft paper on "Spiritual Cultivation and Intellectual Enlightenment in Neo-Confucian Thought," (Sept., 1970), very stimulating.
- 15 HSCC 34:14b. Lu himself is a good example of an "enlightened" man, who acquired profound insights into the meaning of hsin during early youth. But his judgement of Chu should not be regarded as expressive of conceit. To a disciple who suggested that both he and Chu should publish books, in order to allow posterity to choose between the two of them, Lu had replied severely that neither his own presence nor that of Chu could make the universe a better or greater place. See also HSCC 36:3b. On my own part, I wish to point out that I am not denying Chu's wisdom, nor the possibility of attaining enlightenment and sagehood by following his method of cultivation.
- 16 Yang-ming's critics, especially Ch'en Chien, referred especially to his teaching of inner enlightenment as a proof of his Ch'an Buddhist affiliations. [op.cit., 9E:6a-b]
- 17 See above, Chapter V, 167-172. See also in this regard the article by Ho Lin, "Sung-ju te ssu-hsiang fang-fa," [The Method of Thinking of the Sung Philosophers], in Sung-shih yen-chiu chi [Collected Studies in Sung History] comp. by the Study Committee on Sung History (Taipei:1964), 54. See also Jung Chao-tsu, Ming-tai ssu-hsiang shih, 92-94, where Jung explains how Yang-ming's teaching of chih liang-chih permits the acquisition of wisdom either by a

sudden and thorough-going "enlightenment" or by "gradual cultivation" through doing good and avoiding evil, which leads to complete understanding of pen-t'i. He also claims that Wang Chi was the real heir to Yang-ming's thought. [See p.109].

18 Let it be noted that the differences of emphases between Ch'ien Te-hung and Wang Chi on the relative merits of inner enlightenment and gradual cultivation have led them to interpret Yang-ming's inner evolution each in a slightly different way. Ch'ien spoke of the "triple changes" in Yang-ming's evolution, first as a student, and then as a teacher, emphasising his gradual shifts of focus in his own thought as well as in his spiritual direction of disciples. See Chapter II, 66-67. Wang Chi described Yang-ming's superior intelligence, his wide interests -- including his sympathy for Taoist and Buddhist teachings-- and his experience of sudden enlightenment during exile. He placed emphasis on the insights into the meaning of liang-chih, which Yang-ming acquired through this experience. See "Yang-ming hsien-sheng nien-p'u hsu," 陽明先生年譜序 [Preface to Yang-ming's Chronological Biography], WLCC 13:2b-3a, also given in WWKC 36:1021b-1022a.

19 For the Ch'an Buddhist's "shock therapy", see Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, 2nd series, (London:1950), 15-69. For Yang-ming's use of these pedagogical techniques, see Chapter VII, 249. However, Yang-ming never relied solely on such methods for his instruction of disciples.

20 Besides speaking of "polishing the mirror [of hsin]" as did the monk Shen-hsiu, Yang-ming also referred sometimes to the very "absence" of the mirror itself, comparing this absence to the fact that T'ai-chi (Ultimate) is basically Wu-chi (Ultimateless). See his poem in WWKC 20:620a. This, of course, is no argument for his denial of the reality of hsin, but points rather to his discovery in hsin of something greater than itself, which can only be described in negative terms. In this regard, Hisamatsu's article, which discusses especially the concept of "nothingness" in Ch'an Buddhism, can also help us to appreciate Yang-ming's intended meaning. See "The Characteristics of Oriental Nothingness," 65-97.

21 Hence it may be said that Yang-ming advocated a kind of "cultivation" which is akin to "non-cultivation" and so reminiscent of the ideas of Chuang-tzu and of Ch'an Buddhism. This "cultivation through non-cultivation", based on faith in the possession within oneself of the object of one's desires, regards any anxiety for the acquisition of this object as being harmful to the maintenance of an unperturbed mind-and-heart, one and the same in action and contemplation. One speaks therefore even of "having no mind" (wu-hsin 無心) which refers, even in Ch'an Buddhism

to independence or transcendence of one's thoughts and images, in a state of mind described as "void" (hsü). See the discussion on the spontaneity which should accompany the work of extending liang-chih, in Chapter V, 176-177. See also the discussion of "cultivation through non-cultivation" in Ch'an Buddhism, given in Fung Yu-lan's History of Chinese Philosophy as translated by Derk Bodde, v.2, 392-399. I have not been able to find the Chinese original to this section of Fung's book in the che-hsteh shih of Shanghai, 1935.

22 I repeat therefore that I consider the later excesses of the T'ai-chou branch of the Yang-ming school, made in the name of acquiring sagehood through "sudden enlightenment", as being quite contrary to the true spirit of Yang-ming's teaching. See above, Chapter VI, n.81.

23 Joseph Levenson, Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, v.2: The Problem of Monarchical Decay (London: 1964), 65-66.

24 True, in the Ch'eng-chu system, T'ai-chi holds the place of the Absolute, immanent in all and yet somehow transcendent, the "Ground of Being" with moral attributes, described as "full of goodness". But the Ch'eng-Chu method of investigating li and practising reverence for the sake of attaining a fuller realisation of T'ai-chi, also called T'ien-li, the presence of which fills the "sages' hsin" considered also by them to be the "sacred legacy", does not clearly indicate the basis of authority to which they appeal for the truth of their words. The usual claim of correct interpretation of the Classics' spiritual message and of self-realisation through "reverence" shows uncertainty regarding their "starting-point".

25 See above, Chapter IV, pp.123, 142.

26 Letter to Nieh Pao, WWKC 2:121 ; Chan, Instructions, 169.

27 Ibid, WWKC 2:122; Chan, Instructions, 171.

28 "Nien-p'u", WWKC 33:951 . See also Wang Tchang-tche, La Philosophie Morale de Wang Yang-ming, 68-71.

29 See above, Chapter V, 182-183.

30 See Wing-tsit Chan, "The Ch'eng-Chu School of Early Ming," in de Bary, ed., Self and Society, 33.

31 See Chapter I, n.66.

32 Letter to Lu Ch'eng, WWKC 2:108a-b; Chan, Instructions, 137-138.

33 Ibid. The allusion is to Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching, TSD No.2008, XLVIII, 355.

34 See Chapter V, 169, and Chapter VI, 207-208.

35 See Chapter VI, 221-225.

36 The idea that the sage's response to ordinary affairs in the world (kung-fu) constitutes, in itself, the mysterious Tao (pen-t'i) was first taught by Ch'an Buddhists, who spoke of bodhi (wisdom or enlightenment) as being present in klesa (passions, afflictions, delusions) for those who have eyes to see, and recommended "cultivation through non-cultivation". See Bodde's translation of Fung's History of Chinese Philosophy, v.2, 402-406. The fact that it entered the mainstream of Neo-Confucian thought is as much indicative of Buddhist influence on Sung-Ming Confucianism as it is of Confucian "penetration" of Buddhism. Among the Sung thinkers, Ch'eng Yi taught especially that t'i and yung came from the same source. See ECCS, Wai-shu, 12:8a. Yang-ming referred to this, while teaching his disciples. See WWKC 3:132a. His personal teaching on the fundamental unity between pen-t'i (ultimate reality) and kung-fu (moral effort) was especially given during his instruction of Ch'ien Te-hung and Wang Chi on the meaning of the Four Maxims. He said then that the man of superior spiritual endowment was capable of receiving enlightenment by direct contemplation of pen-t'i, thus discovering the unity between it and kung-fu. See WWKC 3:151b-152a; Chapter VI, 221-225.

37 Chapter VI, 207-220.

38 The discovery of liang-chih pen-t'i (ultimate reality) in hsin is also reminiscent of the Ch'an Buddhist assertion that the "ordinary mind" (p'ing-ch'ang hsin 平常心) is the Way (Tao), and that this Way belongs neither to the realm of knowledge nor to that of non-knowledge. Araki Kengo cited this passage, taken from the Wu-men kuan TSD No.2005, XLVIII, 295; German tr. by Dumoulin, p.32. while discussing Yang-ming's doctrine of knowledge and action. See Bukkyō to Jukyō, 390. The danger, of course, is the possible confusion of the relative and the Absolute, especially by persons who have not discovered for themselves and in themselves, the presence within of the Absolute, but who engage merely in philosophical conversations on the nature of this Absolute, and presume that they have been dispensed from the need of making any particular effort to seek the good for themselves.

- 39 See MJHA 32:1a-4b. This danger had been pointed out by Chan Jo-shui. See Chapter IV, 141-143. In an article on Wang Chi, Yamashita Ryūji said that while Yang-ming had insisted on liang-chih as the highest and unchanging Absolute, Wang Chi had made of it a relative principle, being able to see the Absolute only in terms of negations such as wu(non-being) and hsū(void). See "Ō Ryōkei ron," Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō VIII, (1956), 91-93.
- 40 See Chapter I, n.6.
- 41 This has been pointed out especially by Ku Yen-wu. See Jih-chih lu chi-shih 18:14b-17b.
- 42 Understood this way, the Buddhist influence in the "transmission of hsin" cannot be denied, both in the case of Chu Hsi and in that of Wang Yang-ming. Ku Yen-wu referred to it at length [Ibid.]. See also Chapter I, n.101.
- 43 It is difficult enough for the person concerned to decide his own "sageliness", given his personal awareness of the degree of realisation of his hsin. It is more difficult for one to decide the "sageliness" of others, since the experience and awareness would be less direct.
- 44 MJHA 12:1a-2b; 32:1a-4b. Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Min-matsu no Jugaku, 122-137; 183-255. These men made up the so-called "leftist" Yang-ming school. Prof. Okada prefers to call them "Existentialists", on account of the famous liang-chih hsien-ch'eng lun 良知現成論 developed by Wang Chi, which emphasised the "innate" quality of liang-chih and taught the possibility of sudden enlightenment by which it was at once realised. Through him, Yang-ming's doctrine also took on a much more religious character, with frequent exhortations to "faith" in liang-chih. See also Prof. Okada's article in English, "Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism," in de Bary, ed. Self and Society, 121-144.
- 45 MJHA 16:1a-4a; 17:1a-2b; 18:1a-2b. Okada Takehiko, Ō Yōmei to Min-matsu no Jugaku, 138-182.
- 46 One must not, however, forget the contribution of Yang-ming's philosophy to the gradual amalgamation of the "Three Teachings". See Chapter VII. See also Araki Kengō, "Min-matsu ni okeru Ju-Butsu chōwaron no seikaku," [On the Thought of the Late Ming Era as Revealed in the Attempts at Harmony between Confucianism and Buddhism], Nippon Chūgoku gakkaihō XVIII, (1966), 210-219.
- 47 See below, Epilogue.