

## CHAPTER III

### THE "THREE TEACHINGS": CONFUCIANISM, TAOISM, AND BUDDHISM

We have seen that many characteristic features of Chinese philosophy can be related directly to the written language. But other aspects of traditional Chinese thought seem more closely related to environmental factors. Fung Yu-lan, for example, argues that the land-locked agrarian character of early China encouraged a naturalistic, socially-oriented approach to philosophy. Attunement to natural processes in China led eventually to an organismic view of the universe, in which the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* interacted to produce the so-called five elements (*wu-hsing*, also rendered "five agents"). These elements in turn became the "material force" (*ch'i*) of which all things, animate and inanimate, were constituted.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese cosmology viewed the universe as a regular, self-contained, self-operating whole, spontaneously generated and perpetually in motion. Everything within the cosmos existed as part of an orderly and harmonious hierarchy of interrelated parts and forces. Synchronicity (the coincidence of events in space and time) was stressed over simple causality. But the harmonious cooperation and synchronic interaction of all things in the universe arose not from the commands of a supreme external will or authority, but rather from a unified pattern or process (the natural "Way," or *tao*) in which all things followed the internal dictates of their own natures.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the Chinese are unique among all peoples, ancient and modern, in having no indigenous creation myth, no supreme heavenly ordainer. Eventually, in post-Han times, the Chinese borrowed a creation story based on a creature named P'an Ku; but the P'an Ku myth is the weakest in a generally weak and quite unsystematic Chinese mythology.<sup>3</sup> In any case, P'an Ku was never viewed as a *logos* or demiurge, much less as the omniscient, omnipotent creator of the Semitic, Christian, and Islamic traditions.

Lacking the idea of a personalistic creator external to the cosmos, the

Chinese developed an approach to religious life that led to the rejection of both monotheism and theological absolutism, the weakness of institutional religion, the strength of diffused religions (such as ancestor worship, the worship of Heaven by the state, and the worship of patron gods in associations such as guilds [*hang*]), and the failure to develop a concept of "evil" as an active force in the Western sense. The introduction of Buddhism and other alien belief systems in China, and the later development of an elaborate neo-Confucian metaphysics, did nothing to alter these basic features of Chinese religious life.<sup>4</sup>

Neo-Confucian metaphysics did, however, introduce the idea of a prime mover or "supreme ultimate" (*t'ai-chi*), which not only generated the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* but also served as the source (and sum) of the ideal forms or "principles" (*li*) around which material force (*ch'i*) coalesced to form all things.<sup>5</sup> But by Ch'ing times and even earlier, interest in the notion of *t'ai-chi* had waned considerably. Wing-Tsit Chan indicates, for example, that even among the followers of Chu Hsi, who made the "supreme ultimate" a central feature of his elaborate metaphysical system, many downplayed the subject or virtually ignored it. "The difference between the early Ming and Ch'ing Neo-Confucianists," writes Chan, "is that the earlier philosophers turned away from the Great Ultimate (*t'ai-chi*) to internal cultivation, whereas the Ch'ing Neo-Confucianists turned away from the Great Ultimate to everyday affairs." In both cases, "interest in abstract discussion had already faded away."<sup>6</sup>

The notion of *yin-yang* complementarity, on the other hand, remained very much alive. For our purposes, the salient point is that *yin-yang* concepts encouraged eclecticism in Chinese thought not only because as general terms they implied unity, harmony, and reconciliation of opposites, but also because as parts of a convenient conceptual paradigm they could accommodate nearly any set of dual coordinates, from abstruse Buddhist and neo-Confucian concepts such as "perceived reality and emptiness" (*se-k'ung*) or "principle and material force" (*li-ch'i*), to such mundane but important polarities as light and dark, hot and cold, wet and dry, soft and hard, or passive and active.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, *yin* and *yang* were themselves relative concepts. As cosmic forces they were continually in flux, and even as specific evaluative categories they were seldom viewed as absolutes. Any given object or phenomenon might be designated *yin* in one set of relations, and *yang* in another. In the vocabulary of painting and calligraphy, for example, the brush was considered *yang* because it was the active instrument using ink (*yin*). Yet the brush could also be considered *yin* in relation to the *yang* of the artist (or, for that matter, his subject material); and although the ink was dark (*yin*) on the light paper or silk, it showed a *yang* aspect when considered in relation to the passiveness of the paper or silk.<sup>8</sup> By the same token, and more to the point, although Confucianism

SOME *YIN-YANG* CORRELATIONS

<i>YANG</i>	<i>YIN</i>
Bright	Dark
Heat	Cold
Dry	Moist
Fire	Water
Red	Black
Day	Night
Light	Dark
Sun	Moon
Spring-Summer	Autumn-Winter
South	North
Heaven	Earth
Male	Female
Activity	Quiescence
Motion	Rest
Life	Death
Advance	Retreat
Expand	Contract
Full	Empty
Straight	Crooked
Hard	Soft
Round	Square
Outside	Inside
Left	Right

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was clearly the *yang* of Chinese thought and Taoism the *yin*, Taoism stood as *yang* in relation to the *yin* of world-denying Buddhism.

Throughout most of China's imperial history, Confucianism was the predominant intellectual influence. This was especially true during the Ch'ing. P. T. Ho writes, for example, "In no earlier period of Chinese history do we find a deeper permeation and wider acceptance of the norms, mores, and values which modern students regard as Confucian."<sup>9</sup> The Ch'ing emperors patronized Confucian scholarship and paid unprecedented homage to Confucius in official ceremonies, including two kneelings and six prostrations in Peking, and the full kowtow—three kneelings and nine prostrations—in Ch'ü-fu, the birthplace of Confucius. The education of Manchu princes followed carefully constructed Confucian lines, and the examination system was, of course, based almost entirely on the Confucian classics and commentaries.<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Kessler writes that by the end of the K'ang-hsi emperor's reign in the early eighteenth century, "the Manchu-controlled state and the Chinese-guarded Confucian value system were



SOME FIVE ELEMENTS (*WU-HSING*) CORRELATIONS

ELEMENT	DOMESTIC ANIMAL	ORGAN	NUMBER	COLOR	DIRECTION
wood	sheep	spleen	8	green	east
fire	fowl	lungs	7	red	south
earth	ox	heart	5	yellow	center
metal	dog	liver	9	white	west
water	pig	kidneys	6	black	north

ELEMENT	EMOTION	TASTE	STATE OF <i>YIN-YANG</i>
wood	anger	sour	<i>yin</i> in <i>yang</i> (or lesser <i>yang</i> )
fire	joy	bitter	<i>yang</i> (or greater <i>yang</i> )
earth	desire	sweet	equal balance
metal	sorrow	acid	<i>yang</i> in <i>yin</i> (or lesser <i>yin</i> )
water	fear	salty	<i>yin</i> (or greater <i>yin</i> )

NOTE: Like *yin* and *yang*, the five elements were used in Chinese thought to indicate both cosmic activities and conceptual categories. In either case, as with *yin* and *yang*, the pattern of movement was one of ceaseless alteration and cyclical change. The order of the elements and the process by which one displaced another varied according to different schemes, however.

harmoniously joined . . . [and the] Confucian ideal of the unity of state and knowledge, under the rule of a sage-king, seemed near realization."<sup>11</sup>

During the Ch'ing period there were, however, several major schools of Confucianism, each with its own special emphasis. The idealistic neo-Confucian School of Sung Learning—also known as the School of Principle (*li-hsüeh*)—placed particular emphasis on moral cultivation and the power of positive example as the keys to good government. This school of thought served as official orthodoxy during the Ch'ing period, and was distilled in the highly influential examination "syllabus" known as the *Hsing-li ching-i* (Essential Ideas of the School of Nature and Principle), commissioned by the K'ang-hsi emperor in the early eighteenth century and widely disseminated.<sup>12</sup> The so-called T'ung-cheng School was closely allied to the School of Sung Learning, but placed particular emphasis on literature as the vehicle of Confucian "faith." Both schools were uncompromisingly hostile to the School of Han Learning, also known as the School of Empirical Research (*k'ao-cheng*), which devoted itself primarily to philological study and textual criticism.<sup>13</sup> The School of Statecraft (*ching-shih*), as its name implies, took practical administration as its central concern, avoiding the moralistic extremes of Sung Learning as well as the scholastic extremes of Han Learning. Other schools of Confucian thought also arose during the Ch'ing dynasty, some championed by highly individualistic iconoclasts, and

others developed by eclectic thinkers searching for an effective intellectual synthesis.<sup>14</sup>

One's intellectual posture was ordinarily a function of several major variables: (1) personality and family background; (2) educational experience; (3) personal and dynastic fortunes; and (4) career concerns. Political factors were especially important in determining the popularity of a certain school of thought at a particular time;<sup>15</sup> but the attachment of any individual to a given point of view might well hinge on career concerns. Thus, for example, young students and gentry awaiting official appointment could be expected to emphasize Sung idealism, if only because a mastery of Chu Hsi's thought brought the possibility of personal advancement. Officials, on the other hand, might publicly espouse neo-Confucian moral principles only to seek specific administrative guidance from the School of Statecraft. And retired officials might find satisfaction in pure scholarship and the contemplative life, studying works such as the *I-ching* and perhaps also investigating the officially disparaged but attractive ideas of Wang Yang-ming, the Taoists, and even the Buddhists.<sup>16</sup>

But for all the diversity of Ch'ing intellectual life, there was still a striking uniformity of outlook. Much of this uniformity can be explained by the educational common denominator of preparation for the examinations. The vast majority of Ch'ing scholars read the same basic works, prepared for the examinations in the same basic way, and used the same set of evaluative terms and conceptual categories to express their ideas. The emphasis in private academies (*shu-yüan*) might differ somewhat from the curriculum in "official" schools, but the practical aim of education in Ch'ing times remained success in the examinations, and the early patterns of rote learning directed toward this goal left an indelible impression on most scholarly minds.<sup>17</sup>

Further, as Yü Ying-shih and others have indicated, the differences between certain schools of Confucian thought have often been over-emphasized. There were, for example, important affinities between Sung Learning and Han Learning in the area of philology, between Sung Learning and the School of Statecraft in the "management of practical affairs" (*chih-shih*), and even between the School of Principle and the intuitive School of the Mind (*hsin-hsüeh*) in the areas of both mental discipline and scholarship.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the major polarities that existed in Confucianism between scholarship and public service, academic pursuits and self-cultivation, contemplation and activity, and aesthetics and practical concerns, should be seen as "dynamic unities" rather than conflicting imperatives, a source of both vitality and adaptability.<sup>19</sup>

We can identify the following general features of Ch'ing Confucianism: (1) A great reverence for the past, expressed in the idea of "restoration of antiquity" (*fu-ku*); (2) a rationalistic outlook, predicated



on a belief in the intelligibility of the universe; (3) a humanistic concern with "man in society"; (4) an emphasis on morality in government and the moral perfectibility of all men; (5) the supreme authority of fundamental Confucian principles; and (6) a disesteem of law.<sup>20</sup> Frederick Mote explains the significance of the last point: "In a civilization like the Chinese where there are only human sources (or, among Taoists, 'natural' sources) of normative ideas, law could scarcely be expected to achieve the significance it possessed in other civilizations. For in all other civilizations it was based on the supra-rational and unchallengeable law of God, which commanded all creatures, and states as well, to enforce its literal prohibitions. Nor in China could there be any priestly enforcers of divine commandment, or even governors enforcing divine law or civil law armed with the analogy between man's and God's law."<sup>21</sup> In Ch'ing China, the emphasis was decidedly on *li* (ritual, or more generally, rules of social usage) rather than law.

Despite the general lack of interest in metaphysics, Ch'ing Confucians saw a basic unity between Heaven, Earth, and Man. This unity is expressed clearly in the Great Commentary of the *I-ching*: "The Changes is a book vast and great, in which everything is completely contained. The tao of heaven is in it, the tao of earth is in it, and the tao of man is in it." By using the *I-ching*, "man comes to resemble heaven and earth, [and] . . . is not in conflict with them. His wisdom embraces all things, and his tao brings order into the whole world; therefore he does not err. . . . He rejoices in heaven and has knowledge of fate, therefore he is free of care."<sup>22</sup>

The key concept here is fate (*ming*). Fate is best thought of as a series or set of predestined situations evolving out of the natural processes of eternal cosmic change. These situations were believed to be represented by the sixty-four hexagrams (*kua*) of the *I-ching* and their constituent lines (*yao*). By consulting the *I-ching* a scholar could not only determine the nature and direction of universal change, but also devise an appropriate Confucian strategy for coping with any given situation. He could not only "know fate" (*chih-ming*) but also "establish fate" (*li-ming*).<sup>23</sup> In the words of the great Ch'ing scholar T'ang Chien (1776-1861): "He who knows fate will cultivate the Way [*tao*]; he who [merely] relies on fate will do harm to the Way."<sup>24</sup> The Confucian belief in predestination thus did not lead to a crippling of self reliance—although it could be used by some to explain personal failure and adversity.<sup>25</sup>

"Cultivation of the Way" began with self-cultivation (*hsiu-shen*). This implied a conscious effort at self-improvement through the development of one's innate potential. The means differed occasionally, but not the end. Indeed, there was considerable agreement regarding means. Most Ch'ing intellectuals aimed at achieving a balance of "book study" (*tu-shu*), meditative "quiet sitting" (*ching-tso*), and indulgence in ritual and the arts—especially music, poetry, painting, and calligraphy.<sup>26</sup> An examination

of the massive Ch'ing encyclopedia *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng's* subcategory on Confucian Conduct yields a wealth of information on how Ch'ing Confucians approached the problem of self-cultivation. In addition to the basic approaches outlined above, self-improvement could be achieved through such means as "investigating principle to the utmost" (*ch'iung-li*), "extending knowledge" (*chih-chih*), "conquering the self" (*k'o-chi*), "paying attention to fundamentals" (*wu-pen*), "regulating desires" (*li-yü*), "correcting faults" (*kai-kuo*), and "abiding in reverence" (*chü-ching*).<sup>27</sup> Emphasis was also placed on the value of "personal experience" (*t'i-jen*) in the quest for truth, as well as the importance of unifying knowledge and action (*chih-hsing*).

The purpose of Confucian self-cultivation was to manifest "illustrious virtue" (*ming-te*). Among the most esteemed Confucian virtues were *jen* (humaneness), *li* (ritual or propriety), *i* (righteousness or duty), *chih* (humane wisdom), and *hsin* (faithfulness). Other important and related virtues included *ch'eng* (sincerity), *chung* (loyalty), *shu* (reciprocity), *lien* (integrity) and, of course *hsiao* (filial piety). At the heart of the Confucian value system was the family, which served as the model for other forms of social organization, including the state. Confucianism emphasized hierarchy, submissiveness to authority, subordination of the individual to the group, graded love (*ch'a-teng*), and above all, social harmony.<sup>28</sup>

The key to social harmony was *li*. Although *jen* represented the sum of all other virtues, and was equated by neo-Confucians with the goodness of man's nature itself,<sup>29</sup> *li* was the externalization of *jen* in concrete social circumstances.<sup>30</sup> Confucius once said, "If a man is not humane [*jen*], what has he to do with *li*?" But in another context the Master remarked: "To conquer the self and return to *li* is humaneness." When asked how one could achieve this object, Confucius replied, "Do not look at what is contrary to *li*; do not listen to what is contrary to *li*; do not say what is contrary to *li*; and do not make any movement contrary to *li*."<sup>31</sup> As one of the Five Classics of Confucianism, the *Li-chi* (Record of Ritual) prescribed, often in minute detail, the behavior appropriate to a Confucian gentleman (*chün-tzu*). Other compilations on ritual did the same.<sup>32</sup> *Jen* represented the idealistic thrust of Confucianism, with its emphasis on altruism and compassion, duty and reciprocity; but *li* gave structure and concrete expression to Confucian values.

Just as the internal, subjective value of *jen* required external, objective manifestation in *li*, so self-cultivation required manifestation in public service. Confucian sagehood was never an end in itself. Since the goal of Confucianism was social harmony rather than personal salvation, self-realization could never be divorced from service to humanity. The Confucian imperative was "internal sagehood and external kingship" (*nei-sheng wai-wang*). In the famous formulation of the *Ta-hsüeh* (Great



Learning), self-cultivation led to the regulation of family relations (*chia-ch'i*), regulation of family relations led to good government (*kuo-chih*), and good government led to tranquility throughout the world (*t'ien-hsia p'ing*).<sup>33</sup>

The *yang* of Confucian social responsibility was balanced by the *yin* of Taoist escape. Unlike Confucianism, which for virtually all Ch'ing intellectuals was a way of life, even a living faith,<sup>34</sup> Taoism was essentially a state of mind. It provided an escape valve for world-weary Confucians, trammled by social responsibility. The writings of Taoist philosophers such as Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu were fresh and poetic, often playful and always paradoxical. They advocated spiritual release, communion with nature, and "not-striving" (*wu-wei*).<sup>35</sup> Where Confucianism stressed others, Taoism stressed self. Where Confucians sought wisdom, Taoists sought blissful ignorance. Where Confucians esteemed ritual and self-control, Taoists valued spontaneity and naturalness (*tzu-jan*). Where Confucianism stressed hierarchy, Taoists emphasized equality; and where Confucians valued refinement (*wen*), Taoists prized primitivity. What to Confucians were cosmic virtues were to Taoists simply arbitrary labels.<sup>36</sup>

Lao-tzu highlighted the essential difference between Confucianism and Taoism in asserting: "It was when the Great Tao declined that there appeared humanity and righteousness. It was when knowledge and intelligence arose that there appeared much hypocrisy. It was when the six relations [father, son, elder brother, younger brother, husband, and wife] lost their harmony that there was talk of filial piety and paternal affection. It was when the country fell into chaos and confusion that there was talk of loyalty and trustworthiness. Banish sageliness, discard wisdom, and the people will be benefitted a hundredfold. Banish humanity, discard righteousness, and the people will return to filial piety and paternal affection. . . . See the simple, embrace primitivity; reduce the self, lessen the desires."<sup>37</sup> This was the Taoist message.

There was just enough affinity between Confucianism and Taoism to ensure an enduring philosophical partnership. Both schools of thought sought inspiration and guidance in the *I-ching*, and both cherished the ideal of harmony and oneness with nature (although one posited a moral universe, and the other, an amoral one). Confucianism gave life structure, while Taoism encouraged freedom of expression and artistic creativity.<sup>38</sup> Most Ch'ing scholars had a healthy schizophrenia. As de Bary points out, neo-Confucians recognized that man's response to Heaven and the fulfillment of his nature was not limited to social service. "In the midst of social and political engagement," he writes, there was "a need to keep some part of . . . [oneself] not subservient to the demands of state or society. To the neo-Confucian, the aesthetic and spiritual, or . . . 'supermoral' concerns [in the words of T'ang Chün-i] represent this area of freedom. Much



of it was expressed in journals, lyrical poetry, prose-poetry, travel diaries written in a contemplative frame of mind, painting and calligraphy, and the appreciation of art expressed in poetic inscriptions."<sup>39</sup> The inspiration for these activities was predominantly Taoist, even if the fruits of such labors were ultimately believed to convey moral worth.

Where does Buddhism fit into all of this? We know the orthodox view of Buddhism: "A student should forthwith get as far away from Buddhist doctrines as from licentious songs and beautiful women. Otherwise they will soon infiltrate him."<sup>40</sup> Confucians tended to criticize the Buddhists for their other-worldliness and selfish interests, as well as for their elaborate metaphysical ideas of reincarnation and karmic retribution. Ch'ing intellectuals as unlike as Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738-1801) and Yüan Mei (1716-1798) took delight in chiding their Buddhist friends for believing that one became what one ate, or that the Buddha was anything more than an "ordinary, workaday apparition."<sup>41</sup> Yet even the skeptic Yüan Mei believed in the idea of karma, and, as we shall see, Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng saw considerable merit in certain Buddhist writings.

The fact is that by late imperial times, Buddhism had fairly well adapted itself to the Chinese social and intellectual environment. It was "more activist than contemplative, more moralistic than theological, more world affirming than world rejecting." Indeed, as Kristin Yü Greenblatt points out, lay Buddhism (*chü-shih fo-chiao*) flourished in the Ch'ing period precisely because it "did not demand a radical break from the social system in which it existed."<sup>42</sup> Buddhism found a comfortable place in all levels of society. Ch'ing emperors could identify themselves as Buddhist bodhisattvas ("enlightened ones"), officials could call upon Buddhist (and Taoist) priests to undertake ceremonies on behalf of the state, and at the local level Buddhist sanctions could be used by officials and the elite to encourage or enforce Confucian secular values. Buddhism was also an integral part of Chinese ancestor worship.<sup>43</sup> But no more vivid demonstration of the adaptation of Buddhism to the Chinese environment could be found in Ch'ing times than the common use of names such as *Pao-chung ssu* (Monastery for Honoring Loyalty [to the State]), or *Hu-kuo ssu* (Monastery for the Protection of the State) for Buddhist religious establishments. Particularly striking in light of the kinship-renouncing doctrine of Buddhism was the common designation *Kuang-hsiao ssu* (Monastery for the Glorification of Filial Piety).

The syncretic tendencies of Chinese thought, together with the convenient Mahayana Buddhist notion of relative truths, encouraged such forms of cultural accommodation. During the late Ming Buddhist revival, which was itself closely linked with the popularity and prominence of Wang Yang-ming's neo-Confucian School of the Mind, religious thinkers such as Yün-ch'i Chu-hung (1535-1615) not only preached the idea of unity between

the diverse schools of Ch'an (better known as Zen) and Pure Land (*Ching-t'u*) Buddhism, but also between Buddhism and Confucianism.<sup>44</sup> In the Ch'ing period, individuals such as the influential lay-monk and philosopher P'eng Shao-sheng (1740-1796) played a similar syncretic role in a rather more hostile intellectual climate, attempting, with considerable success, to reconcile Buddhist and Confucian doctrines.<sup>45</sup>

Many orthodox Confucians, for their part, tended to view Buddhist ideas in a Confucian light. Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng, for example, argued that the origins of Buddhism could be found in the teachings of the *I-ching*. Further, he maintained that Buddhist mythology should not be taken lightly simply because it failed to make literal sense: "The Buddhists' description of Buddha as sixteen feet high with a richly adorned, golden colored body, and their strange imaginings that no one has ever seen—the splendors of heaven, the torments of hell, the heavenly goddess scattering flowers, yakshas covered with hair—these things the Confucians criticize as absurd." But Chang insisted that the Buddhists were simply presenting their teachings symbolically, just as the *I-ching* did in discussing things such as "dragons with dark and yellow blood." In the end, Chang asserted, the best of Buddhist writings came close to being "superior to that of the philosophers."<sup>46</sup>

A more down-to-earth illustration of the effort to interpret Buddhist concepts in a Confucian light may be found in the following excerpt from a set of late Ch'ing clan rules (*tsung-kuei*): "The Buddhists say that if you want to know about previous lives, look at the sufferings of this life. If you want to know about the next life, look at what is being done in this life. This is an excellent statement. However, what Buddhists refer to as previous lives and the lives to come stems from their theory of rebirth and transmigration of souls. I think what has happened before yesterday—the father, and the ancestors—are really the previous lives, and that what will happen after today—the sons and the grandsons—are really the lives to come."<sup>47</sup> In this view, at least, Buddhism and Confucianism were but two sides of the same coin of ethical conduct.

Neo-Confucianism encouraged rational and secular interpretations of other-worldly phenomena. The popular religious terms "ghost" (*kuei*) and "divine spirit" (*shen*), for example, became expressly identified in neo-Confucian literature as the forces of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Confucian ancestor worship, which involved sacrifices to the *yin* and *yang* components of the soul (*p'o* and *hun*, respectively), was considered to be essentially a secular rite, with no religious implications. Deemed to be nothing more than "the expression of human feelings," mourning and other ritual observances expressed love and respect for the dead, while at the same time cultivating the virtues of filial piety, loyalty, and faithfulness. Ancestor worship was a standard means of "honoring virtue and repaying merit" (*ch'ung-te pao-*



*kung*), in the stock phrase. The Confucian gentleman sacrificed to his ancestors because it was the proper thing to do; lesser men did so to "serve the spirits."<sup>49</sup>

Yet for all their rationalism and avowed agnosticism, Confucian intellectuals could hardly avoid personal involvement in Chinese religious life. It is significant, I think, that of the thirty-two sub-categories of the Ch'ing encyclopedia *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng*, the sub-category on Religion (*shen-i*, literally "spirits and the supernatural") ranks tenth, just after Ritual (*li-i*). It is also significant that the sub-category on Ritual contains many sections (*pu*) on sacrifices connected with some of the most common deities worshipped in "popular" religion. A striking contrast exists between the extensive coverage of local deities and sacrifices in the *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng* and the meager attention paid to the huge corpus of Buddhist and Taoist literature in China. The encyclopedia devotes a mere twelve *chüan* ("rolls," i.e., Chinese volumes) to the Buddhist canon (*Fo-ching*), and only eight *chüan* to expressly Taoist works (*Tao-shu*), as compared to seventy *chüan* devoted to the *I-ching* alone.

Sections on religion in local gazetteers often quote the following commentary to the *I-ching*, attributed to Confucius: "The sages devised guidance in the name of the gods, and [the people of] the land became obedient."<sup>50</sup> Yet it would be surprising if commoners were the only ones touched by religious or superstitious feelings. Even Chu Hsi, when asked whether sacrifices were merely to express one's "sincerity" (*ch'eng*), or whether some force actually came to receive the sacrifice, replied: "If you say that nothing comes, then why sacrifice?" Wing-Tsit Chan explains that what Chu Hsi meant was that "while no force comes like a ghost, certain forces are affected by one's sincerity, and so they react as if spiritual beings were coming to accept the sacrifice."<sup>51</sup> One suspects, however, that the sense of an actual spiritual presence was much more keenly felt by the Chinese, even among the literati.<sup>52</sup>

Certainly the ambiance of the main hall that contained the ancestral altar in every Chinese home encouraged such feelings. "The presence of the [wooden spirit] tablets, the incense and candles that were periodically offered to them, the religious ceremonies that were performed for them, all suggested that the symbols of the dead continued to occupy a place in the family activities of the living, that the dead in the shadowy world continued to oversee the conduct of the existing members of the family and took part in an invisible way in their struggle for happiness and prosperity."<sup>53</sup> C. K. Yang writes that many "agnostic" modern Chinese intellectuals retain "a childhood memory of sensing the realistic presence of the ancestors' spirits in front of the shadowy ancestral altar on a dark night."<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, as Holmes Welch has indicated, a filial Confucian could hardly ignore the religious implications of Mahayana Buddhist concepts of

reincarnation, heavens, and hells. Ancestor worship may have been regarded as a secular rite, but who could be sure that the departed ancestor would not in fact be reborn? Thus Buddhist rites were often undertaken to ensure a better rebirth in the event that the Buddhist notion of reincarnation was correct. The desire to do everything possible for the deceased, no matter who was right, the Confucians or the Buddhists, "fostered the development of an extraordinarily rich assortment of posthumous rites in China."<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps, although the point would be difficult to prove, the fact that women played the major role in daily non-monastic religious life in China made Chinese scholars and officials more comfortable in their avowed agnosticism. Presumably they would benefit from any prayers or sacrifices offered by their wives and concubines on behalf of the family as a whole, just as they might also benefit from religious rites undertaken by themselves on behalf of the "ignorant masses."

In all, the defining characteristic of Chinese intellectual life was eclecticism. This eclecticism, conditioned by *yin-yang* alternation and accommodation, was most vividly expressed in the popular expression *sanchiao ho-i*, "the unity of the Three Teachings." Together, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were complementary in Chinese society, each helping to build a solid structure of intellectual, psychic, and spiritual unity.<sup>56</sup> This unity was also expressed in the most esteemed forms of Chinese art and literature.

## NOTES

1. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York and London, 1966), pp. 16-29 and chapter 23.
2. Derk Bodde, "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," in Arthur Wright, ed., *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 20-24 and 67-70.
3. Frederick Mote, "The Cosmological Gulf Between China and the West," in David Buxbaum and Frederick Mote, eds., *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture* (Hong Kong, 1972).
4. Bodde, "Harmony and Conflict," p. 40.
5. See note 1 above.
6. Wing-Tsit Chan, "The *Hsing-li ching-i* and the Ch'eng-Chu School of the Seventeenth Century," in W. T. de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York and London, 1975), pp. 561-563.



7. See Andrew Plaks, "Allegory in *Hsi-yu chi* and *Hung-lou meng*," in Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 169-170. For a full discussion of *yin-yang* thinking, see Alfred Forke, *The World-Conception of the Chinese* (London, 1925), pp. 163-220 and especially 220ff.

8. Mai-Mai Sze, *The Way of Chinese Painting* (New York, 1956), p. 73. For other examples, see Forke, *The World Conception*, pp. 214-215.

9. P. T. Ho, "The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (February 1967): 193.

10. Harold Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 115-132.

11. Lawrence Kessler, *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule 1661-1684* (Chicago and London, 1976), p. 169.

12. Chan, "The *Hsing-li ching-i*," pp. 543ff. For an overview of Ch'ing thought, see Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), chapter 1.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

14. See Liang, *Intellectual Trends*, *passim*.

15. *Ibid.*; see also David Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738-1801)* (Stanford, 1966), pp. 1-19.

16. See, for example, Liang, *Intellectual Trends*, p. 115.

17. See Tilemann Grimm, "Academies and Urban Systems in Kwangtung," in G. William Skinner, ed. *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1977).

18. Yü Ying-shih, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Rise of Ch'ing Confucian Intellectualism," *Tsing Hua Journal* n.s. 11, nos. 1-2 (December 1975); also Chan, "The *Hsing-li ching-i*," in de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding*, pp. 553-554.

19. De Bary, "Introduction," in *The Unfolding*, p. 11.

20. W. T. de Bary, "Some Common Tendencies in Neo-Confucianism," in David Nivison and Arthur Wright, eds., *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford, 1959).

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22. Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton, 1967), pp. 351 and 295.

23. C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 247-253, 257-268, and 272-274.

24. Quoted in Hellmut Wilhelm, "Chinese Confucianism on the Eve of the Great Encounter," in Marius Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization* (Princeton, 1969), p. 300.
25. C. K. Yang, "The Role of Religion in Chinese Society," in John Meskill, ed., *An Introduction to Chinese Civilization* (Lexington, Mass., Toronto, and London, 1973), pp. 662-663.
26. See de Bary, "Introduction," in de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding*.
27. *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng, tien 22*.
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29. Wing-Tsit Chang, *Neo-Confucianism, Etc.: Essays by Wing-Tsit Chan* (Hong Kong, 1969), pp. 1-36.
30. See Tu Wei-ming, "Li as Process of Humanization," *Philosophy East and West* 22, no. 2 (April 1972): 187-200.
31. *Analects (Lun-yii)*, 3:3; *ibid.*, 12:1.
32. James Legge, *The Li Ki* (Oxford, 1885); J. Steele, *The I Li* (London, 1917).
33. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong, 1961), vol. 1, p. 357.
34. Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, p. 7.
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36. See Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, 1969).
37. Quoted in W. T. de Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York and London, 1964), vol. 1, p. 55 (slightly modified).
38. See Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism* (New York, Evanston, and London, 1970).
39. De Bary, "Introduction," in de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding*, p. 10.
40. Chu and Lu, *Reflections*, p. 283.
41. Nivison, *The Life*, pp. 54-55; Arthur Waley, *Yüan Mei* (Stanford, 1970), p. 81-82.
42. Kristin Yü Greenblatt, "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism in the Late Ming," in de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding*, pp. 131-132.
43. Yang, *Religion, passim*.
44. See Araki Kengo, "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming," in de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding*.



45. Liang, *Intellectual Trends*, pp. 115-117.
46. Nivison, *The Life*, pp. 76, 126-127.
47. Cited in Hui-chen Wang Liu, "An Analysis of Chinese Clan Rules," in Nivison and Wright, eds., *Confucianism in Action*, pp. 71-72.
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49. Smith, "An Approach," p. 68.
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52. See, for example, the interesting ambivalence of even the notorious skeptic Yüan Mei. Waley, *Yüan Mei*, pp. 130-131.
53. Yang, *Religion*, p. 29.
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55. Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900-1950* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 181-185.
56. See Cheng, "A Generative Unity," p. 98; Yang, *Religion*, pp. 194-196; Plaks, "Allegory," p. 169.