1. Introduction: Interreligious Dialogues and the World Peace

Over the past few decades, “interreligious dialogues” has been becoming a hot topic and a frontier field in the international religious academic circle. Hans Küng, who is the chief drafter of Declaration Toward a Global Ethic, emphasizes many times that without the peace among religions, there could be no peace among nations, countries or cultures; without the dialogues among religions, there could be no peace among religions; without religious studies, there could be no dialogues among religions. His argument is actually a “syllogism that explains the importance of interreligious dialogues”. According to its inference, interreligious dialogue is so important that it concerns not only the peace among religions, but also the peace among countries and cultures. Back to the end of 1980s, many people held the view that Hans Küng's syllogism had overestimated the importance of interreligious dialogues. However, 20 years later, with the growth of the problems and phenomena of religions after the Cold War, and the obvious impact of religious elements or background to the conflicts among nations, countries and cultures, the importance of interreligious dialogues has become a consensus in global politicians, religious leaders and scholars of religious studies.

Paul F. Knitter, the well-known American theologian, hits the nail on the head in terms of the urgency of interreligious dialogues. He embraces that, in the development of the geographical-political event, fear causes anger, anger causes violence, and it is more and more the case in some nations and countries. For many people, Samuel Huntington's view has been verified, and the conflicts among civilizations have become more and more serious. What is more worrying and threatening is that, the conflicts among religions have added to the brimming pot of hatred. Terrorists and Imperialists defend their evil deeds by means of religious beliefs. They call others “evil”, while at the same time consider themselves to be “good”. It is actually a religious declaration, which means “God is with me, so let me punish you.” In this way, religion has been used as a tool to help the growth of the conflicts among civilizations, and this is
part of the reason why religion has become a global problem. However, religious belief could and should help promote the dialogues and cooperation among civilizations, for all religious personages would achieve a consensus if they stand by the teachings of the founders and the classics of their religions: religious faith must promote the world-peace, rather than turning off to the thought resources of violence.¹

For as much as the importance and urgency of interreligious dialogues, academic circle at home and abroad has more and more emphasized the religious cultural tradition both in the east and west in order to find the historical experiences and ideology resources that help to promote the religious dialogues, resolve the civilization conflicts and establish a harmonious society. This essay is an elucidation of the relevant theoretical inquiry of the scholars of the elder generation, which mainly includes three parts. First, it is a reconsideration of the historical characters of Chinese religious cultures. Second, it is a summary of the tradition of Chinese religious cultures. Third, Chinese traditional culture can supply the ideology resources of promoting interreligious dialogues, resolving the civilization conflicts and creating a harmonious world.

2. The Historical Characters of Chinese Religious Cultures

If we want to argue that Chinese religious cultural traditions can help to promote the religious dialogues, resolve the civilization conflicts and build a harmonious world, we must know the historical characters of Chinese religious cultures. However, ever since the cultural encounter between the east and the west in the end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Qing Dynasty, how to interpret Chinese religious traditions and its characters has always been a tough problem.

Ninian Smart, the well-known scholar in comparative religious studies introduces Chinese religious like this, “the westerners always feel confused about the religions in China. . . from the point of view of our westerners, Chinese religion is indeed a hodgepodge.”² What is more, scholars like Hans Küng claim that, “scholars in the west once inferred that there was no religious life in ancient Chinese society.”³ Why is it the case? We can find some thought-provoking clues in C. K. Yang's Religions in Chinese Society. The “introduction” of this book contains a section—”some points of view concerning the characters of the religions in Chinese society,” in which Yang mentions that the missionaries first came to China found something that is completely different from Christianity—the religious belief for the Chinese is superstitious belief. From that time on, this view began to prevail in the western world. The other important reason is that Confucian ethics determines the social value system most of the time in Chinese history, which functions as the religious ethics as Christianity in the west. Therefore, there were no religious organizations, nor any long-time conflicts between the government and the church. For this reason, western scholars that study Chinese culture hold the view that Confucian tradition is secular in terms of value system and agnosticism in terms of religious thought. This is actually a negation of the role religion plays in Chinese society. Influenced by the view of western scholars, Chinese scholars in modern times developed the view point that “Chinese society is non-religious”. For instance, Liang Qichao doubted “whether we could write a history of Chinese religion”; Hu Shi considered that “China is a country without religion, and Chinese is a nation that doesn't have superstitious belief of religion”; Chen Duansheng held the view that “Chinese is non-religious. China doesn't have great religion. . . .”⁴ The reason that I mention the above academic background is to emphasize the value of the following research.

In order to eliminate the negative influence of “western viewpoints” on Chinese religious studies, Prof. Lou Yulie includes the ten features of Chinese religious tradition in many conferences and lectures recently.

First, it never occurred in Chinese history that the authority of god overtopped that of the emperor. The view that “all the lands belong to the emperor, and all the people live on these lands belong to the emperor” had always been the leading standpoint ever since Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. Therefore, the authority of god had been always subordinate to that of the emperor. While in the middle ages which lasted for thousands of years, it is just the opposite case.
Second, the “belief in one god” never occurred in Chinese history; instead, it was always the “belief in many gods”. Although there are all kinds of names that designate the superior god, just as “Di”, “God”, “Heaven” and “the One”, they are by no means absolute beliefs. Therefore, there is no command that “you can only believe in this god rather than that god”. The folks always burn incense whenever they see a temple, go down on their knees whenever they see a statue of god. It is completely different from the western Christianity that “it is only allowed to worship God”.

Third, worship the ancestors. The gods in China are always the ancestors. For example, “Di” and “God” in oracle mainly mean “the ancestors of the primitive tribes”, namely, the heroes that once made great contributions to the tribes. People believed when these ancestors died, they would bless their posterity. This is in fact a kind of worship of the heroes, or the sage. However, in Zhou dynasty, this point of view began to change. These gods of the ancestors or the sages never blessed their posterity blindly, rather, they blessed them according to whether they were virtuous or not. For example, the thought that “the Heaven is just, only blesses people who are virtuous” first came into existence in Zhou dynasty; in the Spring and Autumn period, there were thoughts as “what the Heaven sees is actually what the people see, what the Heaven hears is actually what the people hear”, “people is the master of the gods”. In this way, ever since the Western Zhou dynasty, the culture tradition of “people-oriented humanism” gradually developed.

Forth, people don't obey the authority of the gods, don't believe the gods have the absolute right; rather, they handle the relationship between god and the people as they deal with interpersonal relationship. Confucius says, “if you cannot handle the secular affairs, how can you deal with the affairs concerning gods?” He also says, “in order to help people lead a good life, we should teach them to respect the gods, but never attempt to go near to the gods. This is what we call wise.” Liang Qichao once pointed out that the religions in the west can be called “the religion of the divine logos”, while the religions in China can be called “the religion of the human logos”, which means, in Chinese culture, the emphasis on the personal relationship overrides the relationship of the human beings and the gods.

Fifth, Chinese religious belief is characterized by its worldliness and utilitarianism, while divinity is what it lacks. Just as the case in Tan Jing, “Buddha Dharma is right in the secular world, so one doesn't need to look for it beyond the world. It is as silly as looking for the horns of the rabbit to search for the Buddha Dharma outside the world.” Prof. Fei Xiaotong steaks out his position that the Chinese have very practical attitudes towards ghosts and gods. We worship them in order to ask for timely wind and rain for raising crops, and to escape from the disasters. Our sacrifices and worships are like standing treat, offering a bribe to somebody. Ghosts and gods for us are rights, powers instead of ideals; financial resources instead of justice.

Sixth, Chinese religious beliefs are more rational rather than emotional. Ever since the modern times, some people have argued that Buddhism is religion, some hold that it is philosophy, some say it is both religion and philosophy, while there are still others hold that it is neither religion nor philosophy, but rather a kind of method—Buddha Dharma. The reason why people have argued a lot is that there are many rational elements in Buddhism. From another perspective, Buddhism is a kind of “religion without gods”, for it rejected the view that “God creates the world” with its theory of “Yuan Qi” and “Ye Bao”. It suggests looking for the ultimate reason from within things, which is “self do, self have”.

Seventh, Chinese religious belief emphasizes “the inner transcendence of the self”. Chinese culture that is directed by Confucian thought is a kind of “culture of cultivating morality”, namely, to cultivate oneself, to transcend oneself by means of “Xiu Shen”. Under this circumstance, Chan Zong, the largest sect of Chinese Buddhism, has completely developed the humanism of self-freeing of Buddhism, which emphasizes thinking through your own problems, knowing yourself completely; getting to know that the nature of all human beings is Buddha makes one to be a Buddha. It is the feature of Chinese religion that emphasizes the ethical cultivation of body and soul. Daoism takes Taoism as its base, which respects nature and advocates natural inaction. In the final analysis, it is to respect the nature of human beings and to develop spontaneous activity as completely as possible.
Eighth, Chinese religion lacks the intense missionary spirit. It largely relates to Chinese traditional culture. Confucianism is a typical example. As it is said in *Liji (The Book of Rites)*, “people come from all around to learn Li, rather than the Li is spread by the teacher initiatives.” It is Jiang Ziya went fishing—freedom is always for the volunteers. Buddhism and Daoism are also the same. Buddhism doesn't force someone to believe. Buddha helps who has “Yuan” with him. How could western missionaries have this attitude? The missionary work of the western religions is aggressive, while the Chinese religions are conservative.

Ninth, the emperor and the government in Chinese history were tolerant about religions, and they allowed all kinds of religions to co-exist. The authority of the emperor always had the leading position, so it adopted a tolerant attitude that reconciled and used all kinds of religions, which let these religions compete with each other, and helped the consolidation of the power of the emperor and the government. This makes all religions communicated frequently in teachings and ceremonies. These religions assimilated each other within themselves, while at the same time kept the independence of themselves.

Tenth, China is a country with many religions, so China has many problems concerning ethnic religions. Ethnic religions have something in common with the above stated religions, but they are also different. For example, the Buddhism from Tibet and from the Southern China is different from that from Han area. The former two have combined with the local ethnic culture, and they even become the symbol of their ethnic culture.

The scholars in domestic academic circles all know that Prof. Mou Zhongjian has devoted his life to the history of Chinese religions studies, and he completed a great work that has nearly a billion words—*The History of Chinese Religions* (two volumes, 2000). In the last chapter of this book, Prof. Mou summarizes five characteristics of Chinese religions. They are, first, the continuing existence and development of an original religion; second, the authority of the emperor always overrides that of religions; third, diversity and inclusiveness; fourth, humanization and secularization; fifth, the connection and disconnection of the three structures. We can draw these conclusions if we compare Prof. Mou's 5 points and Prof. Lou's 10 points.

First, the two persons have consensus in many aspects. Point 2 of Prof. Mou is what Prof. Lou emphasizes in point 1, “it never occurred in Chinese history that the authority of god overtopped that of the emperor,” in other words, “the authority of the emperor always overrides the authority of religion.” However, this consensus is more expressed in the following aspect.

Second, the points 1, 3, 4 of Prof. Mou are more general than that of Prof. Lou. For example, with regard to the point 1, Prof. Mou pointed out that, in accordance with the long-time existing patriarchal society, the original religions, namely, the worship of nature, of ghosts and gods, and of ancestors has been kept completely, developed and strengthened, in contrast to what happened in Greece, Egypt, Persia and India, where their original religions were gradually replaced by creative religions. In this way, the worship of Heaven, the god, ancestors has been combined with the authority of the emperor, which formed a religion of patriarchal society. This explanation not only contains the points 2, 3 of Prof. Lou, but also helps us to understand its historical reasons. When it comes to point 3, the “diversity and inconclusiveness”, Prof. Mou emphasizes the diverse-unity structure of Chinese traditional culture, the philosophy of Confucianism, the view of “accommodating divergent views” and the tolerant circumstances of Chinese society. It thus includes the points 2, 9, 10 of Prof. Lou. What's more, “humanization and secularization”, the point 4 of Prof. Mou, includes the points 4, 5, 6, and their main points are almost the same as well, as the ethics, secularity, utilitarianism, humanity and rationality that the Chinese cultural tradition has.

Third, although these two scholars share different viewpoints, they both have their deep insights, which can help us use their views as references and get to know the whole characteristics and the complexity of the culture tradition of Chinese religions. For example: what Prof. Lou pointed out in 7, 8, namely, “Chinese religions emphasizes the inner transcendence” and “Chinese religious traditions don't have intense intent of missionary”. Another example: what Prof. Mou elucidates in the point 5, namely, the
beliefs of the Chinese are mainly constituted by “official belief”, “scholar belief” and “folk belief”. The three kinds of belief are consistent with each other, but relatively independent, even don't have much relation. Therefore, we cannot summarize the characters of beliefs of Chinese people with a simple judgment.

Hans Küng keenly pointed out that “the China as the western scholars who do research in Chinese cultures see it” and “the China that the Chinese see it” are totally different. With what is discussed above, we can draw the conclusion that views of the cultural tradition of Chinese religions are also totally different for “the former Chinese scholars” and “the Chinese scholars nowadays”. Now it's time to see how elder scholars summarize the fine tradition of Chinese religious culture based on the contemporary researches.

3. The Fine Tradition of Chinese Religious Culture

Based on the long-time research of the history of Chinese religions, Prof. Mou summarizes the tradition of Chinese religious culture into 5 points.

(1) One of the remarkable historical features of Chinese religious culture is diversity-unity, namely, diversity and harmony, or, difference within harmony.

China is a large country with multiple ethnic groups, religions and beliefs, but these three kinds of multiplicities by no means make China placed in a situation of division and hostility. Instead, all the ethnic groups become more and more harmonious in difference, the beliefs become more rational with communication, and different religions become more abundant in interaction.

In the first instance, China is a multi-ethnic country with fifty-six ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups in China live in peace with each other and constitute the Chinese nation together. As a community of oriental ancient culture, the Chinese nation has great cultural cohesion. China is also a unified country for thousands of years and still in the process of revival, which is really unique in the world. Secondly, China is a multi-belief country. It not only has Confucianism which is characterized by humanities and rationality, but also has numerous religious beliefs characterized with Shinto worship. Philosophy, religion, literature mingle with each other, making the Chinese philosophy possess some religious sanctity and mystique, and also some strong humanities and rationality at the same time. Therefore, neither strong excommunication currents nor mighty religious fanaticism has ever appeared in the Chinese history.

Thirdly, China is a multi-religion country. There were in history national religions that worshiped Heaven, ancestors and the state, Daoism that occurred and developed in mainland China, religions from outside of the country as Buddhism, Christianity and Muslim, and once there were Judaism, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. China is like a “religious garden”, religions from original religions to world religions can co-exist in peace. There never was big bloodshed among religions in Chinese history, nor were there cruel and long-lasting wars that happened in western history of religion.

(2) Another remarkable historical feature of Chinese religious culture is that it paid great attention on doing good in order to accumulate merits, teaching the people morality, and placing eliminating the evil at the first place. This is the chief spiritual purpose of Chinese religion.

For instance, Buddhism teaches mercies, “the deep and broad mercies of all people”, namely, to have mercies on all living beings. Influenced by the thought of “respecting the Dao and Virtue” and “Paying back hatred with virtue” of Laozi, Daoism emphasized a lot the key function of morality and virtue in practicing Dao. There were conflicts of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in the Northern and Southern Dynasties periods. In the end the they reached a consensus that though they are different in three, they are one in terms of teaching human beings to do good. These “three religions” are actually three ways of teaching human beings to be moral. Therefore, the essence of the traditional Chinese religions is to cultivate public morality. This kind of moral tradition also had great impact on Muslim and Christianity (including Protestantism) in China, making the moral characters of their teachings enlarged and protruded.
In China, all kinds of religions could survive and develop only by virtue of their good moral reputation. Religious denominations that preach vendetta and panderism are seen as evil cults, thus can by no means be welcomed in broad daylight. Therefore, the Chinese religion with such profound moral tradition could help to purchase more moral force instead of extremism.

(3) The third feature of Chinese religious culture is that it is good at combing loving the religion with loving one's country.

China became a vassal of western imperial powers after the Opium War, thus suffered a lot from western colonialism. Japan the imperialist invaded China, making the Chinese face the danger of losing their own country and race. In the war for the independence and liberty of our nation, almost all the personages from all different kinds of religions who loved the country joined actively in the social movements that defended their own country. Buddhism teaches that “benefiting all the living beings, making the world we live solemn”. During the War of Resistance against Japan, the Grand Master Hongyi appealed to the society that “you should never forget to save the country even when you are praying to Buddha.” He called forth all the monks to resist the invasion of the Japanese. Chen Yingning, the master in Daoism advocated the spirituality of Daoism, saying that “one believes in Daoism in order to preserve oneself, one promotes Daoism in order to save the nation.” Muslim in China established “Muslim Association for saving the country.” Muslim scholar Hu Songshan put forward that “Muslim is responsible for the rise and fall of the country.” Muslim hero Ma Benzhai organized the “group of Muslim”, vowed to “ask for the blood back for the sake of our country and our people”.

In China, the love for one's religion must be combined with the love for one's country. A religious believer who doesn't love one's country cannot live in this society. The religious believers that helped the imperialists invade China were condemned by the people. . . . At the same time, the mainstream of the religious circle in China is not constituted by the narrow nationalists. What the believers struggled for were the revival of the country and the equality of all ethnic groups. What they fought against were the oppression of the strong to the weak, the ugly deeds of the evil to the good. They wish to get well along with all the religions and ethnic groups all over the world, resolve the hatred, fight against the war, and defend the peace of the world.

(4) Chinese religious culture also has the fine tradition of advancing with the times, being ready to innovate.

For example, Buddhism had been innovating in its theory since it was introduced to China, ended up with Chanzong that bears Chinese characters, and “Buddhism in the World” that established in the modern times. Another example, from “Waidandao's theory of the immortality of the body” to “Neidandao's double exercises of nature and life”, from “new theory of Spirituality of Daoism” to “Daoism in life”, Daoism has been writing its history in consistent innovation. Muslim combined with Chinese culture, making innovation in both teachings and ceremonies, especially diluting the idea of “the Divine War”, emphasizing the spirit of peace and mercy. Catholic and Christianity all faced the problem of localization. At the end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Qing Dynasty, Jesuits respected the propriety and Confucianism in China, which received praise from the Chinese, while Dominicans and Francis attempted to use the authority of the Pope to forbid the religious ceremonies in China, naturally ended up with being excelled by the Chinese. In the Republic of China, there was “movement of non-Christianity”. Christianity made an effort to establish “the Chinese Church”, which aimed to “on the one hand, ask for the Chinese Christians to take their responsibility, on the other hand, make good use of the grand eastern culture, to eliminate the belittled name of Yangjiao of Christianity.” The patriotic movement of the “Three Spontaneities” since the 1950s, and the theology establishment since the 1990s, are the expressions of consistent innovations as well.

(5) It is, too, one of the good traditions of Chinese religious culture to stress importance of one's humanity and cultural qualities so as to make more contributions to social and cultural prosperity.

For example, Buddhism and Taoism, with their respective broad and rich cultural systems, have been exerting extensive and far-reaching influences over Chinese philosophy, Chinese morality, Chinese
literature, Chinese arts, Chinese folklore, as well as China's science and technology and exchanges between China and other countries, thus becoming constituent parts of Chinese superior culture. In terms of philosophy, Buddhist wisdom inexperience-based enlightenment and Taoist doctrine of life and character have their respective features and both have played promoting roles in the enrichment and development of such aspects of Chinese philosophy as cosmology, ontology, mind-nature theory, life theory, epistemology, personal accomplishments and dialectics. Among the three theoretical peaks in the history of Chinese philosophy, including wisdom of Zen Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and Internal Dan of Taoism, two were related to Buddhism and Taoism, while Neo-Confucianism thriving in the Song Dynasty and the Ming Dynasty was innovated by absorbing nourishment from Buddhism and Taoism. In terms of morality, traditional moral values advanced by Confucianism have been supplemented and enriched by three retributions, mortal livings and five commandments and later ten commandments, which belong to Buddhism, and by quietness and passivity, redemption from bitterness, and severe treatment of self to benefit others, which belong to Taoism. viii

Mr. Mou's ideas, summed up as above, have never felt lonely, and on the contrary, they are common views shared by the elder generation of Chinese scholars. Mr. Fang Litian, when discussing on the important roles religion plays in the construction of a harmonious society, briefly summarizes the superior traditions of Chinese religions into the following four points:

(1) Tolerance among different religions. As shown in religious history, different religions, in spite of their conflicts, have a tendency of being reconciled with each other. For instance, Buddhism and Taoism are reconciled after a period of conflict, and Taoism has long been in reconciliation with folk religions. Different faiths between different Chinese religions have never caused long-termed conflicts, nor even caused wars between different religions. On the contrary, different religions enjoy their own proper places while getting well along with each other.

(2) Loving and benefiting others. For instance, Buddhism holds ideas of equality, mercy, tolerance and generosity, and Taoism holds ideas of equally mercifulness and goodwill between different kins, and Christianity and Islamism hold ideas of loving, mercy, charity and public benefit, and all these ideas are conducive to harmonious relationships between one and others and between man and society.

(3) Attachment to the state and the church. It is showed both in history and reality that Chinese religions favor the unity of attachment to the state and attachment to the church, leading to a positive maintenance of national sovereignty, national independence, national honor and national fundamental interests. For instance, Buddhism holds ideas of sovereign land with people enjoying happiness, and Taoism holds ideas of searching for the way of saving the country by spreading Taoism, while Islamism holds that every Muslim has a share of responsibility for the fate of his country. All these ideas reflect a noble patriotism and flinty protection of the country among Chinese religions.

(4) Treatment of nature with care. Chinese religions generally acknowledge that universe is a whole and man and nature form a whole, too. For instance, Conditioning Cause and coexistence of Buddhism holds that man and nature coexist, complementary to each other, according to various causes and conditions. Taoism considers heaven, earth and man as a whole. They all pay much respect to nature, asserting a good treatment of all natural things and a harmonious coexistence of man and nature. ix

In a comparison between the summarizations made by Mr. Mou and those made by Mr. Fang, two impressions are left. On one hand, it is obvious that the former three points, among five points summarized by Mr. Mou and four points summarized by Mr. Fang, on the superior traditions of Chinese religions, together with their proving arguments, are in substantial agreement, which may be synthesized into three superior traditions, including advocating of all-embracing, attention to morality and ethics, and solid attachment to the state and the church. On the other hand, the latter three points made by both Mr. Mou and Mr. Fang, though expressed from different angles, are complementary to each other, all are conducive to a more complete elaboration of the superior traditions of Chinese religions in the future. As for the theoretical values and practical significance of this study, Mr. Mou explains as follows:
When looking back and observing the journey of Chinese religious culture in the light of crossing different cultures and in the vision of comparative religious studies, we will find out some traces and characteristics of Chinese religious culture quite different from those of western religious culture, with the traditions of Chinese religious culture standing out valuable in many respects. Especially in the world nowadays when national religious conflicts are getting more and more violent, and the antagonism between the United States with the background of Christianity and the Arabian countries with the background of Islamism is getting bitterer, the superior traditions of Chinese religious culture shows still more obviously its distinctive values and strong points, of which we can be proud, and which we are required to inherit and advance, and it is important to do so, for propelling the stability and prosperity of the Chinese society and for promoting the world’s peace and development.

4. Ideology Resources of the Chinese Cultural Tradition

Based on the above two sections, our train of researching thought may as well go deeper to explore the inner relationship between the outstanding characteristics and superior traditions of Chinese religions, as discussed in previous sections, and ideology resources of the Chinese cultural tradition. Why should it be explored? Because religion, as Mr. Lou Yulie points out, “is an important social cultural phenomenon. Religion, as an important part of culture, covers its values, thinking patterns, ways of life and religious customs, while being closely related to the whole cultural ideas and concepts. Therefore, studies of a religious culture, whether national, regional or historical, cannot be made without the whole cultural environment it depends upon, otherwise its cultural characteristics would never be precisely revealed.”

It is generally acknowledged in Chinese academic circles that the Chinese cultural tradition mainly embraces three ideology headstreams, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Mr. Fang Litian has made a concise description of this as follows. The Chinese traditional culture, under the unique Chinese geographical conditions and historical background, mainly consists of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, as three supporting pillars. Their essential thoughts are alike, all paying attention to humanistic values, but their connotations are remarkably different, presenting different branches of each other's cultural tradition. According to Mr. Fang, in order to carry forward the superior traditions of Chinese culture, the most urgent of all necessary tasks is to carry forward Chinese traditional philosophy, or mainly the superior traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. History indicates that the superior traditions of the three philosophies, with wide spread and enduring influence, have long been nurturing and soaking the spiritual world of the Chinese people and, as an intrinsic force to promote social harmony and national development, have been playing a positive role in aspiring social progress and encouraging national advance. This advocacy on the importance of carrying forward the traditional ideology resources of Chinese philosophy is in high affirmative to the background of Chinese culture, learning and ideology. Mr. Fung Yu-Lan pointed out that “the place philosophy occupies in Chinese civilization is always as important as that religion occupies in many other civilizations.” Here, let us make some appraisals on how the elder generation of Chinese scholars elucidated the philosophical ideology resources of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, by keeping to key theoretical issues and practical questions.

Can the Chinese cultural tradition make new contributions to the coexistence of civilizations? That is the question Mr. Tang Yijie has been thinking about for his refuting the theory of civilization conflict. In his essay “Conflicts between Civilizations and Coexistence of Civilizations”, Mr. Tang focuses on the
positive ideology resources provided by the philosophy ideas of Confucianism and Taoism. The following are some essential points.

4.1. Some positive ideology resources provided by Confucian humanity

   It is said in *The Bamboo Slip from Guodian Chu Tombs* that “Dao comes from feelings.” Here Dao indicates humanity, that is, the principles in human relations and social relations. Human relations begin to be set up from feelings, and that is the starting point of Confucian Humanity. According to Confucius, to be humane is to love people. Where does humanity come from? Confucius said, “humanity means loving people, among whom family and relatives are the foremost.” Loving one's family and relatives is the essential feeling that naturally exists in human beings. What is more, loving people goes even further. In Confucian Humanity, loving one's family and relatives expands into loving all people. That is to say, the feeling of loving one's own people expands into a larger sense of loving all people.

   It is not an easy job to expand loving one's own people into loving all people. In order to love all people, to be honest and considerate is the code. One should “treat others in the same way as one would like to be treated”, and “if one wishes to stand firm, one should help others stand firm, too, and if one wishes to be successful, one should make others successful, too.” When humanity is spread into the society, it is what Confucius said about “controlling oneself and regaining order”. Zhu Xi, later, gave a further explanation, “to control is to fight against, and oneself covers one's own private desires; to regain is to return, and order includes the laws of nature and universal morals.” That is to say, one should get over one's own private desires and make one's conduct in conformity with grace and propriety. Fei Xiaotong pointed out that “only by controlling oneself can order be regained, and controlling oneself and regaining order is one of the essential requirements for one to step into the society as a social being. One of the key differences between eastern culture and western culture perhaps lies in controlling oneself in the east and indulging oneself in the west.”

   Humanity is man's inner morality, and order includes grace and propriety that normalize people's conduct. “It is better to normalize people's conduct by peaceful means.” So people normalize their conduct from spontaneity and consciousness, and from a heart of loving people. As Confucius said, loving people is one's own free will and humanity can never be reached by external forces. With a conscious pursuit for humanity, hearts of loving people may be expected in accordance with grace and propriety in the whole society, which is sure to be harmonious and peaceful. “Once self is controlled and order regained, the world returns to humanity.”

   These Confucianism thoughts are hardly of less significance for the rulers of a country and for the ruling clique of developed countries in today's world (especially for the United States). It is through “benevolent governance” and “kingly ways”, instead of “tyranny ways”, that a country is well governed and the world is made peaceful. Different cultures may coexist and develop together where benevolent governance or kingly ways prevail. If tyranny ways prevail, conflicts between civilizations will arise, and cultures are apt to go in one direction so as to breed cultural hegemony. If Confucian humanity theories are applied to dealing with relations between different civilizations, no conflicts nor even wars will aroused between them, and their coexistence will be realized.xiv

4.2. Some positive ideology resources provided by Taoism

   In *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi, Tao is a basic concept, with natural inaction as its fundamental characteristics, which is said in Wang Chong's *Lunheng* as a universal truth.

   Natural inaction advocated by Laozi may be understood as follows: never do anything against people's will, and so comes social tranquility and world peace. Laozi quoted from ancient sages, “If I am in natural inaction, people will be naturally humanized; if I am in tranquility, people's conduct will be naturally normalized; if I make no disturbances, people will naturally get rich; if I have no desire, people will be
naturally modest.” That is to say, rulers of a country should not much interfere with people (should be in inaction), should not disturb people's normal life (should be in tranquility), should not do anything against people's will (should make no disturbances), and should not greedily exploit people (should have no desire), so that people will humanize themselves, normalize their conduct on their own, get rich at their own efforts, and prefer a modest way of life.

In today's interpretation of the above passage, natural inaction has significance not only for a country's internal peace but also for removing conflicts between different civilizations. Further interpretations of the above passage may be added as follows. The more a country interferes in other countries' affairs, the more disorderly the world will be. If big countries or powerful countries are apt to use force or threaten to use force, the world is getting more and more turbulent and disorderly. If big countries or powerful countries plunder small countries or weak countries in name of assisting them, small countries or weak countries will become poorer and poorer. If developed countries contend, from an ever-increasing desire, for the wealth and the reign of the world, it will become a terrible world destitute of morality. I think, therefore,” natural inaction” may be a good remedy for the leaders of the new empire. If they accept that idea, the world will get peace and tranquility. xv

4.3. Some positive ideology resources provided by Chinese Buddhist philosophical ideas

In the modern society and in the course of the world's modernization, has Chinese Buddhist philosophy certain values? If it has, what are they in modern terms? That is the question Mr. Fang Litian answers in the conclusion of his magnificent book The Essences of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy. Therein, Mr. Fang firstly investigates in “fundamental characteristics and fundamental contradictions of the human society”, and then, having an eye on the development trends in the 21st century, he explains some basic ideas of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, such as “conditioning cause”, “cause and effect”, “equality”, “mercy”, “harmony”, etc. And finally, in view of the three basic contradictions in the contemporary human society—contradictions between man and ego, between man and his fellow men, between man and nature, he elucidates the modernist meanings, one by one, of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Among them, what is discussed in the second part, under the title of “harmonizing the contradiction between man and his fellowmen so as to maintain world peace”, is closely related to what we are discussing now.

Mr. Fang points out those relations among human beings, including multiple relations between man and his fellow men, between man and society, between man and his nation, between man and his country. Judging from this view, there are two big problems in today's world: one is disturbances and conflicts in some parts of the world, caused by such factors as national conflicts, religious conflicts, territorial disputes, contentions for resources and interests, from which some local people in those troubled areas are suffering; meanwhile nontraditional security problems such as terrorism become more and more serious. The other is ever-widening gap between the rich north and the poor south of the world, owing to which, quite a number of people are living in poverty.

With the two problems mentioned above, peaceful coexistence stands out. The two world wars in the 20th century slaughtered millions upon millions of people, and if world wars repeat in the 21st century, the whole mankind will possibly be doomed. In order to avoid wars, the causes of war must be rooted out. One of the causes of war is ignorance of the truth that human beings must coexist, relying on each other and be self-interested while altruistic. Also ignored are communication and reconciliation, and other lives are not respected. The Buddhist concept of equality stresses on equality between all human beings, who are all equal in nature, in personality, in dignity. Equality means respect and peace, and peace comes from a deep understanding of equality between one and others, and only based on equality can peace be real and enduring. Therefore, the Buddhist idea of mutual respect is conducive to human coexistence, and to their common pursuit of a pure land on earth. In addition, such theories of “mercy saving the world”, “five commandments” and “ten commandments”, all puts “no killing” at the first place, prominently revealing Buddhist noble qualities in respecting life and respecting other fellows. And Buddhist idea of mercy
incarnates sympathy and affection with other fellows, far above war and showing care for peace. Since Master Taixu initiated human Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism has been paying attention to world peace, longing for world peace, and appealing for world peace. It may as well be said that to maintain world peace has become one of the utmost Buddha Dharma for contemporary Buddhism to carry forward, and Buddhism has been playing a unique and irreplaceable role in promoting world peace.

The wide gap between the rich north and the poor south and the poverty some people live in do not only concern the existence of disadvantaged groups and toiling masses, but also become root causes of social disorders, and constitute a direct threat to regional or even world peace. Buddhist ideas of equality and mercy provide directions for the solution to those questions. Buddhism has always been attaching importance to mercy saving the world, so as to relieve people's pains and make people happy. It is an important Buddhist practice to practice generosity, giving welfare to others from a mind full of compassion, providing others with money, goods, strength and wisdom, thus making others happy and wise. Nowadays, Buddhists between the Cross-straits are making great efforts to promote Buddha's all kindness and mercy to help all living creatures from sufferings while seeking no comfort for themself, and they are emphasizing their function of philanthropy in helping the poor, providing medical care, supporting Hope Projects, converting delinquents and criminals, so that the beneficiaries are not only adequately provided for, but also promoted in their human qualities.

The significance of Chinese Buddhist philosophy in modern times lies in the fact that its important principles have been well elucidated and their functions have begun to be highlighted after their elucidations with originality. If the philosophical thoughts of Chinese Buddhism are applied to relieving human social contradictions, they are sure to be conducive to the promotion of people's human qualities, to the alleviation of people's present sufferings, to the meeting of people's new demands, and even more, to the facilitation of the peaceful coexistence and common development of the human society.

4.4. The Essential Philosophical Spirit of the Chinese Cultural Tradition

In the previous passages, the important practical significance of the ideology resources provided by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism has been reviewed respectively. The Chinese cultural tradition, blended by the three ideology headstreams, is obviously an organic whole. And then, what is the philosophical essence of the whole Chinese cultural traditions? What kind of important ideology resources may this philosophical essence provide for the promotion of religious dialogues, for the reconciliation of conflicts between civilizations, and for the construction of a harmonious world? Those two questions may well be said the frontier subjects Chinese scholars have long been exploring since China's opening and reform, especially for the recent dozen years. Among enormous available academic achievements, those theoretical explorations made by the elder generation of Chinese scholars, whose knowledge expands to cover both the East and the West, are the most notable ones deserving attention and having referenced values.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Mr. Ji Xianlin summed up the essence of Chinese traditional culture in one sentence: it is unity of heaven and man, and it is harmony. Nowadays, most Chinese scholars stress on the idea of harmony, when dealing with the philosophical essence of the Chinese cultural tradition, and explain harmony by a Confucius's term “to reach a state merging but differences”. But only this term is not adequate, though we understand the idea of harmony through it as a main ideology resource. It should be raised to one of the basic categories of the Chinese philosophical tradition so as to reveal the Chinese philosophical wisdom it contains. Let us see some understandings and interpretations made in this category by Fung Yu-Lan and Zhang Dainian, the two inaugurators of the discipline of Chinese philosophy history.

Confrontation is not only conflict, but also too often contrary to conflict, called harmony. Harmony is no sameness, and those in harmony with each other are not necessarily similar to each other. Harmony is not unity, either. Those in harmony with each other, though forming a unity owing to relations with each
other, reflect another relation outside the unity. Harmony consists of four aspects: the first is difference, that is to say, never absolutely the same; the second is no mutual destruction, that is to say, no negation of each other; the third is complementation, that is to say, supporting each other; the fourth is a balance maintained between each other.\textsuperscript{vii}

That is Mr. Zhang Dainian's definition for harmony, which is raised to the level of philosophy thinking and understood as one of the basic concepts of dialectics. So is Mr. Fung Yu-lan's train of thought. His \textit{New Version of the History of Chinese Philosophy} (in 7 volumes), completed at the age of 95, concluded with the demonstration of the historical enlightenment of the idea of Supreme Harmony (\textit{Taihe}). He points out that Zhang Zai, a philosopher in the Song Dynasty, summarized the laws of dialectics in a few sentences: “a phenomena must have two opposite sides, which must go in opposite directions. When they are opposite to each other, they must hate each other and fight against each other. As a result, their mutual hatred and fighting must tend to be harmonized and dissolved.” (“Supreme Harmony”, \textit{Discovery of Veiled Truths}) Harmonization is an important category in Zhang Zai's philosophical system, and he says at the beginning of \textit{Discovery of Veiled Truths}: “Supreme harmony is wisdom of Dao, where are conceived factors opposite to each other, such as ascending and descending, floating and sinking, motion and inaction, and wherein start antipathies, conflicts, fighting, victories and defeats, shrinking and stretches.” So what is to be harmonized is full of contradictions and conflicts, not on the contrary. “Factors opposite to each other, such as ascending and descending, floating and sinking, motion and inaction,” are contradictions, while “antipathies, conflicts, fighting, victories and defeats, shrinking and stretches” are struggles. Therefore, according to Zhang Zai, a normal state of the society is a state of harmonizing contradictions, and so is the normal state of the universe. This state is called “Supreme Harmony”. Mr. Fung goes on, with a deeper understanding, with the following conclusion:

In classical Chinese philosophy, “harmonization” is different from “sameness”. “Sameness” can not tolerate “differences”, while “harmonization” tolerates “differences”, and can not be called as it is without “differences” to be harmonized.

It is an objective dialectics that “hatred must be harmonized and dissolved”. No matter how people may wish, the modern society, especially the international community, has been developing in accordance with this objective dialectics.

Modern history has been developing in the direction of harmonization of hatred, but the procedure of the development of history is usually circuitous, taking necessary time as centuries. . . Human beings are the most wise and rational of all creatures, and they will never take the road of “keeping hatred to the end”. So, harmonization represents the future of both the Chinese philosophical tradition and philosophy worldwide.\textsuperscript{xviii}

The above perceptions of Mr. Fung and Mr. Zhang not only represent the identification of the basic philosophical essence of Chinese cultural traditions among Chinese scholars, but also find echoes among learned scholars in other countries. For instance, Hans Küng, advocate of religious dialogues and global ethics, when introducing Chinese religious cultural traditions to the western television audience, said that in the whole tradition of Chinese philosophy, a consistent trend is the seeking for a harmony between heaven and earth. Even up to now, the Chinese people are still seeking for the harmony between heaven and earth, between man and nature, between mortal and immortal, between oneself and the society. He calls this tradition of Chinese philosophy the “great harmony”, and believes that it not only have a great significance for China's future, but also will make a great contribution to the construction of world ethnics.\textsuperscript{xix}

As for the development prospect of the human society and world culture, Mr. Fei Xiaotong has a wise saying, “one appreciates one's own beauty and appreciates others’ beauty, too, and a mutual appreciation of each other's beauty leads to a universal harmony in the world.” Can this “harmonious spirit”, full of “appreciations”, provide “Chinese experience with ancient wisdom” for promoting religious dialogues, dissolving conflicts between civilizations, and building up a harmonious world? My answer to it is yes.
References:


v The above summary is in Lou Yulie, “An Exloration in Religious Study Theories in Conformity with the Native Cultural Traditions”, in *Chinese Religions* (楼宇烈,” 探求合乎本土文化传统的宗教学研究理论”,《中国宗教》), vol. 11, 2008.

vi Hans Küng, *Spuren suche Die weltreligionen auf dem weg* (汉斯•昆,《世界宗教寻踪》), p.129.


viii In the concluding part of his *Panorama of Chinese Religions* (《中国宗教通史》), Mr. Mou presents comprehensive review on the historical contributions Chinese religions have made to Chinese culture and society, the details of which may be seen in the section “on the historical functions of Chinese religions”, Chapter 13.


