中國哲學小史

馮友蘭著

[*The Chinese title by Mrs. Fang Chao-ying*]

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

FUNG YU-LAN

Edited by Derk Bodde

THE FREE PRESS
New York London Toronto Sydney

THE FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

ISBN-13: 978-0-684-83634-8
ISBN-10: 0-684-83634-3

Manufactured in the United States of America

20 19 18 17

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In spite of the innumerable books that have been written about China in recent years, it is remarkable how little really authentic knowledge we in the West have about the philosophy of that country. Even most well-educated Americans, if asked to list some of China's major philosophers, will, unless they are China specialists, be unable to name more than Confucius and possibly Lao Tzu. This statement, I suspect, applies almost as strongly to the average professional teacher of philosophy as it does to the layman.

Books and articles in English on the subject are not lacking, to be sure, but with few exceptions they are either too specialized to be popular or too popular to have much value. The present volume, indeed, is the first in English that attempts to give a really comprehensive and systematic account of Chinese thought as a whole, from its beginnings with Confucius to the present day. The fact that it is the work of a Chinese scholar who is generally acknowledged by his countrymen to be supremely well qualified for the task, makes its appearance all the more significant.

As we read this book, we see that Chinese philosophy is far wider in scope than either Confucius or Lao Tzu, or even the Confucian and Taoist schools with which they are linked. In the course of some twenty-five centuries, Chinese thinkers have touched upon well-nigh all the major subjects that have engaged the attention of philosophers in the West, and though the schools to which they have belonged have often borne the same name through many centuries, their actual ideological content has changed greatly from one age to another. Could Confucius, for example, have been reincarnated through a Buddhist process of metempsychosis so as to meet his great twelfth century follower, Chu Hsi, he would probably hardly have guessed

that the ideas preached by the latter were the orthodox "Confucianism" of that time.

Beneath this diversity, however, we find certain themes occurring and reoccurring; one of them is what Dr. Fung describes in his first chapter as that of "sageliness within and kingliness without." How to acquire the *Tao* or Way to become an inner sage and outer king? This, understood in a somewhat figurative rather than strictly literal sense, has been a central problem of Chinese philosophy, and gives it, as Dr. Fung points out, its dual quality of being both this-worldly and other-worldly. It is this point that Dr. Fung took as the main thesis of his recent book *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*. I shall not spoil his story at this point except to suggest that this same quality, half-consciously perceived by the West, has perhaps helped to create that common impression of China as a land peopled both by mystic sages, who sit in eternal meditation on mountain peaks below pine trees, and by exceedingly practical and somewhat matter-of-fact men of affairs.

During the 1930's, when I began my study of Chinese philosophy and other aspects of Chinese culture in Peiping, one of my happiest contacts came in 1934-35 when I attended Dr. Fung's class on Chinese philosophy at Tsing Hua University. He had then just published the second volume of his monumental *History of Chinese Philosophy*, which speedily became the standard work in its field. One day when I came to class, Dr. Fung asked me whether I knew of anyone who would be willing to translate his book into English. As a result, I agreed to undertake the task, and my translation of the first volume was published in the summer of 1937, just after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war. At the time, I hoped to translate the second volume within two or three years.

Meanwhile, however, my work took me from China, the long years of war followed, and many other tasks intervened. Aside from a few sporadic efforts, therefore, it was only with the coming of Dr. Fung from China to the University of Pennsylvania in the autumn of 1946 as Visiting Professor of Chinese that I was able to begin anew. Since then I have translated a series of individual chapters from volume two which have already appeared, or will probably appear, in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, a publication of the Harvard-Yenching Institute in Cambridge, Mass. A list of them will be found in the bibliography at the back of this book, and when completed they will be

published as a single volume. Under a grant recently awarded to me under the terms of the Fulbright Act, providing for the sending of American scholars and teachers to China and other countries, I expect to leave shortly for a year in Peiping, where I hope to complete the translation of the entire second volume by the autumn of 1949.

Last year, however, while I was beginning this work in Philadelphia, Dr. Fung decided that he would himself like to write in English a shorter version of his original *History*. For this he enlisted my aid as editor, and the present book is the result.

In subject matter this book for the most part follows the original Chinese work fairly closely. Its first sixteen chapters correspond roughly to the latter's volume one, and its remaining chapters to volume two. It is, however, considerably shorter, as is evident from the fact that my translation of the first volume of the original *History* covers 454 rather large pages, and the Chinese edition is in turn 50 pages shorter than volume two. This shortening has been achieved for the present book by omitting entirely some of the lesser thinkers dealt with in the original *History* and reducing the space allotted to the remainder. Footnotes have also been largely avoided, and such matters as detailed bibliographical references, discussions on the dating and authenticity of various texts, and much biographical data have been eliminated. Yet the resulting volume is a product of solid scholarship, which may be relied on as a remarkably acccurate and well-rounded account of its subject.

There are other features, too, which distinguish it from the usual abridgement. In the first place, it has been written with the Western reader specifically in mind, which means that its treatment and subject matter are not always the same as they would be in a book intended solely for a Chinese public. Such is the case with its first two chapters, for example, which do not occur in the original *History* at all, and the same is true of a good part of its chapter twenty-seven.

In the second place, it embodies a number of conclusions and points of emphasis which were arrived at by Dr. Fung only after the publication of his original *History* in 1934. The third chapter, for example, summarizes a theory that was first published by Dr. Fung in Chinese only in 1936, in a separate *Supplement* to his original *History*. The final chapter, devoted to Dr. Fung's own philosophical ideas, is also necessarily new, since these ideas were first expressed in a series of creative philosophical books which he wrote during the war

years. Likewise, the treatment of Neo-Taoism and Buddhism in chapters nineteen to twenty-two has been considerably changed from that in the *History*. (The corresponding chapters in the latter work, however, are to be revised by Dr. Fung along similar lines before I translate them into English.)

The choice of subject matter, treatment, and actual writing of the present book are, of course, almost entirely the work of Dr. Fung himself. My own contribution has been primarily that of editing his manuscript with the needs of the Western reader in mind, so as to make its English correct and readable. Many of the quotations from original texts have been borrowed, with occasional trifling changes, from my translations of the same passages in the longer *History*, when available, but in other cases Dr. Fung has prepared renditions of his own for key terms or passages, or has used those contained in E. R. Hughes' translation, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*. Many other quotations, of course, are entirely new. The Bibliography and Index have been compiled by me.

The general reader may find it helpful to be given a brief résumé of the course of Chinese history, before concluding this introduction. Traditionally, the history begins with a series of sage-kings, said to have reigned in the latter part of the third millennium B.C. It is the uncritical acceptance, both by Chinese and Westerners alike, of the stories about these men, that has created the erroneous widespread impression regarding the excessive antiquity of Chinese civilization. Today, however, scholars are generally agreed that these sage-kings are little more than mythical figures, and that the stories about them are the idealized inventions of a much later period. The historical existence of China's first dynasty, the *Hsia* (trad. 2205-1766 B.C.), is likewise uncertain, though it may some day be confirmed by future archaeology.

With the *Shang* dynasty (trad. 1766-1123 B.C.), however, we reach firmer historical ground. Its capital, which has been partially excavated, has yielded an abundance of inscriptions carved on bone and tortoise shell. It is these inscriptions that were prepared in conjunction with the method of divination described in chapter twelve.

Coming to the *Chou* dynasty (1122?-256 B.C.), we have abundant historical records, and the Chou is also the golden age of Chinese philosophy. During its early centuries, a large number of small states, most of them grouped around the valley of the Yellow River in

North China, were linked together through common ties of allegiance to the Chou royal house in a feudal system roughly analogous to that of medieval Europe. As time wore on, however, this feudal system gradually disintegrated, resulting in the eclipse of the Chou royal power, the steady increase of bitter warfare between the now independent states, and other violent political, social, and economic upheavals. It was men's efforts to find answers to the resulting pressing problems that confronted them, that caused the appearance of the first Chinese organized philosophical thought, which constitutes the cultural glory of the age. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was the earliest of these philosophers, and was followed by a host of others belonging to widely differing schools of thought. Most of the subject matter in chapters three to sixteen of the present book is concerned with these schools. Politically, the same centuries following Confucius are appropriately known as the Period of the Warring States.

The state of Ch'in, from which the name China is probably derived, brought this age to an end in the year 221 B.C. by annihilating the last of the other opposing states, thus for the first time creating a really unified Chinese empire. The resulting *Ch'in* dynasty replaced the old feudal aristocracy by a centrally appointed nonhereditary bureaucracy, thus instituting a form of government that has since set a pattern for all later dynasties. With the sole exception of the creation of the Chinese Republic in 1912, these events marked the greatest single change in China's political history.

The very harshness exercised by the Ch'in to achieve this end led to its speedy overthrow. Its work of unification was continued, however, by the politically powerful *Han* dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), under which the empire was expanded to include most of present day China proper, together with much of present Chinese Turkestan. This political unification was accompanied by a corresponding unification in the field of thought. Most of the Chou philosophic schools disappeared as separate schools, though many of their ideas were absorbed into Confucianism and Taoism, which now became dominant. These developments are described in chapters seventeen to eighteen.

Following the four hundred years of Han rule, there came another four centuries which may be termed the Period of Disunity (A.D. 221-589), during much of which China was usually divided between a series of short-lived dynasties in the south, and another series of equally short dynasties in the north. Several of the latter were ruled

by non-Chinese nomadic groups, who during this period succeeded in forcing their way past the Great Wall. For the Chinese people as a whole these centuries, sometimes referred to as China's dark ages, were ones of frequent suffering. Culturally, nevertheless, they were outstanding in many ways, and philosophically they were marked by the temporary eclipse of Confucianism, and the dominance of Neo-Taoism and Buddhism. These two latter philosophies are the subjects of chapters nineteen to twenty-one.

The *Sui* (590-617) and especially *T'ang* (618-906) dynasties, however, brought renewed unity and political strength to China, and in many ways marked a high-water mark in cultural achievement. Under the T'ang, Buddhism reached its peak, and one of its schools, Ch'anism, is treated in chapter twenty-two. Afterwards, however, Buddhism entered the gradual decline which it has ever since followed; Confucianism, on the contrary, began once more a rise which brought it to eventual supremacy. The early steps in this revival are described in the beginning of chapter twenty-three.

The collapse of the T'ang was followed by an uneasy interlude of fifty odd years. Then came the *Sung* dynasty (960-1279), which though politically weaker than the T'ang, was culturally equally brilliant. In the field of thought, it was marked by the greatest recrudescence of Confucianism which had been seen since the Han dynasty. This movement, known to the West as Neo-Confucianism, is described in chapters twenty-three to twenty-five.

The *Yüan* dynasty (1280-1367), which replaced the Sung, is notable as the first under which all of China was ruled by an alien group, the Mongols. Culturally, however, it was comparatively unimportant. The *Ming* dynasty (1368-1643) which followed restored the country to Chinese rule, but though it was a pleasant period in which to live, it contributed little to culture that was radically new. In philosophy, however, it was notable as the dynasty under which the school in Neo-Confucianism known as that of Universal Mind reached its culmination. This development is described in chapter twenty-six.

Under the following *Ch'ing* dynasty (1644-1911), all of China again fell under non-Chinese rule, this time that of the Manchus. Yet until the beginning of the nineteenth century it was one of the most prosperous periods of Chinese history, and also one which saw definite advances in certain cultural fields, though declines in others. Politically, the empire was extended even beyond the frontiers which

it had achieved under the Han and T'ang. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, however, Manchu power steadily decayed, and China's resulting internal weakness unfortunately coincided with the growing political and economic pressure of the industrialized West. The ways in which these various developments influenced the field of thought are described in chapter twenty-seven.

The overthrow of the Manchus in 1911, resulting in the abolition of the oldest monarchical system in the world, marks a turning point in Chinese history. During the decades following the establishment of the *Republic* in 1912, China has been faced with the need of simultaneously making sweeping changes in her social, political, and economic fabric alike. We in the West have required some three centuries to pass through similar changes. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that long years of political and intellectual disorder in China—disorder greatly aggravated by fierce aggression from the outside—have been the result. Indeed, as we look around us at the Western nations today, it is obvious that among them, too, gigantic changes are still in the making, the outcome of which no man can predict. Little wonder, then, that in China the future looks dark and uncertain. Yet Chinese history shows us that repeatedly in the past, though often at untold cost in human suffering, the Chinese have succeeded in surmounting and recuperating from the crises that have faced them. They can do so again, but only provided that the world as a whole learns quickly to accept the same cosmopolitanism that has been prominent in much of Chinese political thinking. (See chapters sixteen and twenty-one.) In the changes that China is yet to make, a good deal of her past ideology must inevitably be discarded. Some of it, however, will survive as a permanent contribution to future world philosophy. Possible ways in which this contribution may be made are suggested by Dr. Fung in his final chapter.

DERK BODDE

May, 1948
Philadelphia, Pa.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A SHORT history of any subject should not simply be an abridgement of a larger one. It should be a picture complete in itself, rather than a mere inventory of names and "isms." To achieve this, the author should, as a Chinese expression says, "have the whole history in his mind." Only then can he give the reader an adequate and well-rounded account within his chosen limited scope.

According to Chinese historiography, a good historian must have wide scholarship in order to master all his materials, sound judgment to make proper selection of them, and literary talent in order to tell his story in an interesting way. In writing a short history, intended for a general public, the author certainly has less chance to display his scholarship, but he needs more selective judgment and literary talent than he would for writing a longer and strictly scholarly work.

In preparing this work, I have tried to use my best judgment in selecting what I consider the important and relevant from materials which I have mastered. I was very fortunate, however, to have as editor Dr. Derk Bodde, who has used his literary talent to make the style of the book interesting, readable, and comprehensible to the Western reader. He has also made suggestions regarding the selection and arrangement of the material.

Being a short history, this book serves as no more than an introduction to the study of Chinese philosophy. If the reader wishes to know more about the subject, I would refer him to my larger work, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. The first volume of this has been translated by Dr. Bodde, and he is now translating the second one; also to my more recent work, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, translated by Mr. E. R. Hughes of Oxford University. Both works are mentioned in the bibliography compiled by Dr. Bodde at the end of the

present book. Acknowledgements are due to both Dr. Bodde and Mr. Hughes, from whose books I have borrowed some translations of the Chinese texts appearing herein.

In publishing this book, I welcome the opportunity of expressing my thanks to the Rockefeller Foundation for the grant which made it possible for me to come from China to the University of Pennsylvania as Visiting Professor during the year 1946-47, and which resulted in the writing of this book. Also, I wish to thank my colleagues and students in the Department of Oriental Studies for their co-operation and encouragement, and especially Dr. Bodde, Associate Professor of Chinese. I am likewise grateful to Dr. A. W. Hummel, Chief of the Asiatic Division, Library of Congress, for his encouragement and help in making arrangements for the publication of the book.*

FUNG YU-LAN

June, 1947
University of Pennsylvania

* Dr. Bodde is now Professor of Chinese at the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Hummel has become Chief Emeritus at the Library of Congress.

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER 1

THE SPIRIT OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

THE place which philosophy has occupied in Chinese civilization has been comparable to that of religion in other civilizations. In China, philosophy has been every educated person's concern. In the old days, if a man were educated at all, the first education he received was in philosophy. When children went to school, the *Four Books*, which consist of the *Confucian Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, were the first ones they were taught to read. The *Four Books* were the most important texts of Neo-Confucianist philosophy. Sometimes when the children were just beginning to learn the characters, they were given a sort of textbook to read. This was known as the *Three Characters Classic*, and was so called because each sentence in the book consisted of three characters arranged so that when recited they produced a rhythmic effect, and thus helped the children to memorize them more easily. This book was in reality a primer, and the very first statement in it is that "the nature of man is originally good." This is one of the fundamental ideas of Mencius' philosophy.

Place of Philosophy in Chinese Civilization

To the Westerner, who sees that the life of the Chinese people is permeated with Confucianism, it appears that Confucianism is a religion. As a matter of fact, however, Confucianism is no more a religion than, say, Platonism or Aristotelianism. It is true that the *Four Books* have been the Bible of the Chinese people, but in the *Four Books* there is no story of creation, and no mention of a heaven or hell.

Of course, the terms philosophy and religion are both ambiguous. Philosophy and religion may have entirely different meanings for dif-

ferent people. When men talk about philosophy or religion, they may have quite different ideas in their minds concerning them. For my part, what I call philosophy is systematic, reflective thinking on life. Every man, who has not yet died, is in life. But there are not many who think reflectively on life, and still fewer whose reflective thinking is systematic. A philosopher *must* philosophize; that is to say, he must think reflectively on life, and then express his thoughts systematically.

This kind of thinking is called reflective because it takes life as its object. The theory of life, the theory of the universe, and the theory of knowledge all emerge from this type of thinking. The theory of the universe arises because the universe is the background of life—the stage on which the drama of life takes place. The theory of knowledge emerges because thinking is itself knowledge. According to some philosophers of the West, in order to think, we must first find out what we can think; that is to say, before we start to think about life, we must first "think our thinking."

Such theories are all the products of reflective thinking. The very concept of life, the very concept of the universe, and the very concept of knowledge are also the products of reflective thinking. No matter whether we think about life or whether we talk about it, we are all in the midst of it. And no matter whether we think or speak about the universe, we are all a part of it. Now, what the philosophers call the universe is not the same as what the physicists have in mind when they refer to it. What the philosophers call the universe is *the totality of all that is*. It is equivalent to what the ancient Chinese philosopher, Hui Shih, called "The Great One," which is defined as "that which has nothing beyond." So everyone and everything must be considered part of the universe. When one thinks about the universe, one is thinking reflectively.

When we think about knowledge or speak about knowledge, this thinking and speaking are themselves knowledge. To use an expression of Aristotle, it is "thinking on thinking"; and this is reflective thinking. Here is the vicious circle which those philosophers follow who insist that before we think we must first think about our thinking; just as if we had another faculty with which we could think about thinking! As a matter of fact, the faculty with which we think about thinking is the very same faculty with which we think. If we are skeptical about the capacity of our thinking in regard to life and the

universe, we have the same reason to be skeptical about the capacity of our thinking in regard to thinking.

Religion also has something to do with life. In the heart of every great religion there is a philosophy. In fact, every great religion *is* a philosophy with a certain amount of superstructure, which consists of superstitions, dogmas, rituals, and institutions. This is what I call religion.

If one understands the term religion in this sense, which does not really differ very much from common usage, one sees that Confucianism cannot be considered a religion. People have been accustomed to say that there were three religions in China: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. But Confucianism, as we have seen, is not a religion. As to Taoism, there is a distinction between Taoism as a philosophy, which is called *Tao chia* (the Taoist school), and the Taoist religion (*Tao chiao*). Their teachings are not only different; they are even contradictory. Taoism as a philosophy teaches the doctrine of following nature, while Taoism as a religion teaches the doctrine of working *against* nature. For instance, according to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, life followed by death is the course of nature, and man should follow this natural course calmly. But the main teaching of the Taoist religion is the principle and technique of how to avoid death, which is expressly working *against* nature. The Taoist religion has the spirit of science, which is the conquering of nature. If one is interested in the history of Chinese science, the writings of the religious Taoists will supply much information.

As to Buddhism, there is also the distinction between Buddhism as a philosophy, which is called *Fo hsüeh* (the Buddhist learning), and Buddhism as a religion, which is called *Fo chiao* (the Buddhist religion). To the educated Chinese, Buddhist philosophy is much more interesting than the Buddhist religion. It is quite common to see both Buddhist monks and Taoist monks simultaneously participating in Chinese funeral services. The Chinese people take even their religion philosophically.

At present it is known to many Westerners that the Chinese people have been less concerned with religion than other people are. For instance, in one of his articles, "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture," * Professor Derk Bodde says: "They [the Chinese]

* *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 293-9. Reprinted in *China*, pp. 18-28 (H. F. MacNair, ed.), University of California Press, 1946.

are not a people for whom religious ideas and activities constitute an all important and absorbing part of life. . . . It is ethics (especially Confucian ethics), and not religion (at least not religion of a formal, organized type), that provided the spiritual basis in Chinese civilization. . . . All of which, of course, marks a difference of fundamental importance between China and most other major civilizations, in which a church and a priesthood have played a dominant role."

In one sense this is quite true. But one may ask: Why is this so? If the craving for what is beyond the present actual world is not one of the innate desires of mankind, why is it a fact that for most people religious ideas and activities constitute an all-important and absorbing part of life? If that craving is one of the fundamental desires of mankind, why should the Chinese people be an exception? When one says that it is ethics, not religion, that has provided the spiritual basis of Chinese civilization, does it imply that the Chinese are not conscious of those values which are higher than moral ones?

The values that are higher than the moral ones may be called super-moral values. The love of man is a moral value, while the love of God is a super-moral value. Some people may be inclined to call this kind of value a religious value. But in my opinion, this value is not confined to religion, unless what is meant here by religion differs from its meaning as described above. For instance, the love of God in Christianity is a religious value, while the love of God in the philosophy of Spinoza is not, because what Spinoza called God is really the universe. Strictly speaking, the love of God in Christianity is not really super-moral. This is because God, in Christianity, is a personality, and consequently the love of God by man is comparable to the love of a father by his son, which is a moral value. Therefore, the love of God in Christianity is open to question as a super-moral value. It is a quasi super-moral value, while the love of God in the philosophy of Spinoza is a real super-moral value.

To answer the above questions, I would say that the craving for something beyond the present actual world is one of the innate desires of mankind, and the Chinese people are no exception to this rule. They have not had much concern with religion because they have had so much concern with philosophy. They are not religious because they are philosophical. In philosophy they satisfy their craving for what is beyond the present actual world. In philosophy also they have the

super-moral values expressed and appreciated, and in living according to philosophy these super-moral values are experienced.

According to the tradition of Chinese philosophy, its function is not the increase of positive knowledge (by positive knowledge I mean information regarding matters of fact), but the elevation of the mind —a reaching out for what is beyond the present actual world, and for the values that are higher than the moral ones. It was said by the *Lao-tzu*: "To work on learning is to increase day by day; to work on *Tao* (the Way, the Truth) is to decrease day by day." (See ch. 48.) I am not concerned with the difference between increasing and decreasing, nor do I quite agree with this saying of *Lao-tzu*. I quote it only to show that in the tradition of Chinese philosophy there is a distinction between working on learning and working on *Tao* (the Way). The purpose of the former is what I call the increase of positive knowledge, that of the latter is the elevation of the mind. Philosophy belongs in the latter category.

The view that the function of philosophy, especially metaphysics, is not the increase of positive knowledge, is expounded by the Viennese school in contemporary Western philosophy, though from a different angle and for a different purpose. I do not agree with this school that the function of philosophy is only the clarification of ideas, and that the nature of metaphysics is only a lyric of concepts. Nevertheless, in their arguments one can see quite clearly that philosophy, especially metaphysics, would become nonsense if it did attempt to give information regarding matters of fact.

Religion does give information in regard to matters of fact. But the information given by religion is not in harmony with that given by science. So in the West there has been the conflict between religion and science. Where science advances, religion retreats; and the authority of religion recedes before the advancement of science. The traditionalists regretted this fact and pitied the people who had become irreligious, considering them as having degenerated. They ought indeed to be pitied, if, besides religion, they had no other access to the higher values. When people get rid of religion and have no substitute, they also lose the higher values. They have to confine themselves to mundane affairs and have nothing to do with the spiritual ones. Fortunately, however, besides religion there is philosophy, which provides man with an access to the higher values—an access which is more direct than that provided by religion, because in phi-

losophy, in order to be acquainted with the higher values, man need not take the roundabout way provided by prayers and rituals. The higher values with which man has become acquainted through philosophy are even purer than those acquired through religion, because they are not mixed with imagination and superstition. In the world of the future, man will have philosophy in the place of religion. This is consistent with Chinese tradition. It is not necessary that man should be religious, but it *is* necessary that he should be philosophical. When he is philosophical, he has the very best of the blessings of religion.

Problem and Spirit of Chinese Philosophy

The above is a general discussion of the nature and function of philosophy. In the following remarks I shall speak more specifically about Chinese philosophy. There is a main current in the history of Chinese philosophy, which may be called the spirit of Chinese philosophy. In order to understand this spirit, we must first make clear the problem that most Chinese philosophers have tried to solve.

There are all kinds and conditions of men. With regard to any one of these kinds, there is the highest form of achievement of which any one kind of man is capable. For instance, there are the men engaged in practical politics. The highest form of achievement in that class of men is that of the great statesman. So also in the field of art, the highest form of achievement of which artists are capable is that of the great artist. Although there are these different classes of men, yet all of them are men. What is the highest form of achievement of which a man *as a man* is capable? According to the Chinese philosophers, it is nothing less than being a sage, and the highest achievement of a sage is the identification of the individual with the universe. The problem is, if men want to achieve this identification, do they necessarily have to abandon society or even to negate life?

According to some philosophers, this is necessary. The Buddha said that life itself is the root and fountainhead of the misery of life. Likewise, Plato said that the body is the prison of the soul. And some of the Taoists said that life is an excrescence, a tumor, and death is to be taken as the breaking of the tumor. All these ideas represent a view which entails separation from what may be called the entangling net of the matter-corrupted world; and therefore, if the highest

achievement of a sage is to be realized, the sage has to abandon society and even life itself. Only thus can the final liberation be attained. This kind of philosophy is what is generally known as "other-worldly philosophy."

There is another kind of philosophy which emphasizes what is in society, such as human relations and human affairs. This kind of philosophy speaks only about moral values, and is unable to or does not wish to speak of the super-moral ones. This kind of philosophy is generally described as "this-worldly." From the point of view of a this-worldly philosophy, an other-world philosophy is too idealistic, is of no practical use and is negative. From the point of view of an other-worldly philosophy, a this-world philosophy is too realistic, too superficial. It may be positive, but it is like the quick walking of a man who has taken the wrong road: the more quickly he walks the further he goes astray.

There are many people who say that Chinese philosophy is a this-world philosophy. It is difficult to state that these people are entirely right or entirely wrong. Taking a merely superficial view, people who hold this opinion cannot be said to be wrong, because according to their view, Chinese philosophy, regardless of its different schools of thought, is directly or indirectly concerned with government and ethics. On the surface, therefore, it is concerned chiefly with society, and not with the universe; with the daily functions of human relations, not hell and heaven; with man's present life, but not his life in a world to come. When he was once asked by a disciple about the meaning of death, Confucius replied: "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?" (*Analects*, XI, 11.) And Mencius said: "The sage is the acme of human relations" (*Mencius*, IVa, 2), which, taken literally, means that the sage is the morally perfect man in society. From a surface point of view, with the ideal man being of this world, it seems that what Chinese philosophy calls a sage is a person of a very different order from the Buddha of Buddhism and the saints of the Christian religion. Superficially, this would seem to be especially true of the Confucian sage. That is why, in ancient times, Confucius and the Confucianists were so greatly ridiculed by the Taoists.

This, however, is only a surface view of the matter. Chinese philosophy cannot be understood by oversimplification of this kind. So far as the main tenet of its tradition is concerned, if we understand

it aright, it cannot be said to be wholly this-worldly, just as, of course, it cannot be said to be wholly other-worldly. It is both of this world *and* of the other world. Speaking about the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung Dynasty, one philosopher described it this way: "It is not divorced from daily ordinary activities, yet it goes straight to what antedated Heaven." This is what Chinese philosophy has striven for. Having this kind of spirit, it is at one and the same time both extremely idealistic and extremely realistic, and very practical, though not in a superficial way.

This-worldliness and other-worldliness stand in contrast to each other as do realism and idealism. The task of Chinese philosophy is to accomplish a synthesis out of these antitheses. That does not mean that they are to be abolished. They are still there, but they have been made into a synthetic whole. How can this be done? This is the problem which Chinese philosophy attempts to solve.

According to Chinese philosophy, the man who accomplishes this synthesis, not only in theory but also in deed, is the sage. He is both this-worldly and other-worldly. The spiritual achievement of the Chinese sage corresponds to the saint's achievement in Buddhism, and in Western religion. But the Chinese sage is not one who does not concern himself with the business of the world. His character is described as one of "sageliness within and kingliness without." That is to say, in his inner sageliness, he accomplishes spiritual cultivation; in his kingliness without, he functions in society. It is not necessary that the sage should be the actual head of the government in his society. From the standpoint of practical politics, for the most part, the sage certainly has no chance of being the head of the state. The saying "sageliness within and kingliness without" means only that he who has the noblest spirit should, theoretically, be king. As to whether he actually has or has not the chance of being king, that is immaterial.

Since the character of the sage is, according to Chinese tradition, one of sageliness within and kingliness without, the task of philosophy is to enable man to develop this kind of character. Therefore, what philosophy discusses is what the Chinese philosophers describe as the *Tao* (Way, or basic principles) of sageliness within and kingliness without.

This sounds like the Platonic theory of the philosopher-king. According to Plato, in an ideal state, the philosopher should be the

king or the king should be a philosopher; and in order to become a philosopher, a man must undergo a long period of philosophical training before his mind can be "converted" from the world of changing things to the world of eternal ideas. Thus according to Plato, as according to the Chinese philosophers, the task of philosophy is to enable man to have the character of sageliness within and kingliness without. But according to Plato, when a philosopher becomes a king, he does so against his will—in other words, it is something forced on him, and entails a great sacrifice on his part. This is what was also held by the ancient Taoists. There is the story of a sage who, being asked by the people of a certain state to become their king, escaped and hid himself in a mountain cave. But the people found the cave, smoked him out and compelled him to assume the difficult task. (*Lü-shih Ch'un-ch'iu*, I, 2.) This is one similarity between Plato and the ancient Taoists, and it also shows the character of other-worldliness in Taoist philosophy. Following the main tradition of Chinese philosophy, the Neo-Taoist, Kuo Hsiang of the third century A.D., revised this point.

According to Confucianism, the daily task of dealing with social affairs in human relations is not something alien to the sage. Carrying on this task is the very essence of the development of the perfection of his personality. He performs it not only as a citizen of society, but also as a "citizen of the universe," *t'ien min*, as Mencius called it. He must be conscious of his being a citizen of the universe, otherwise his deeds would not have super-moral value. If he had the chance to become a king he would gladly serve the people, thus performing his duty both as a citizen of society, and as a citizen of the universe.

Since what is discussed in philosophy is the *Tao* (Way) of sageliness within and kingliness without, it follows that philosophy must be inseparable from political thought. Regardless of the differences between the schools of Chinese philosophy, the philosophy of every school represents, at the same time, its political thought. This does not mean that in the various schools of philosophy there are no metaphysics, no ethics, no logic. It means only that all these factors are connected with political thought in one way or another, just as Plato's *Republic* represents his whole philosophy and at the same time is his political thought.

For instance, the School of Names was known to indulge in such

arguments as "a white horse is not a horse," which seems to have very little connection with politics. Yet the leader of this school, Kung-sun Lung, "wished to extend this kind of argument to rectify the relationship between names and facts in order to transform the world." We have seen in our world today how every statesman says his country wants only peace, but in fact, when he is talking about peace, he is often preparing for war. Here, then, there is a wrong relationship between names and facts. According to Kung-sun Lung, this kind of wrong relationship should be rectified. This is really the first step towards the transformation of the world.

Since the subject matter of philosophy is the *Tao* of sageliness within and kingliness without, the study of philosophy is not simply an attempt to acquire this kind of knowledge, but is also an attempt to develop this kind of character. Philosophy is not simply something to be *known*, but is also something to be *experienced*. It is not simply a sort of intellectual game, but something far more serious. As my colleague, Professor Y. L. Chin, has pointed out in an unpublished manuscript: "Chinese philosophers were all of them different grades of Socrates. This was so because ethics, politics, reflective thinking, and knowledge were unified in the philosopher; in him, knowledge and virtue were one and inseparable. His philosophy required that he live it; he was himself its vehicle. To live in accordance with his philosophical convictions was part of his philosophy. It was his business to school himself continually and persistently to that pure experience in which selfishness and egocentricity were transcended, so that he would be one with the universe. Obviously this process of schooling could not be stopped, for stopping it would mean the emergence of his ego and the loss of his universe. Hence cognitively he was eternally groping, and conatively he was eternally behaving or trying to behave. Since these could not be separated, in him there was the synthesis of the philosopher in the original sense of that term. Like Socrates, he did not keep office hours with his philosophy. Neither was he a dusty, musty philosopher, closeted in his study, sitting in a chair on the periphery of life. With him, philosophy was hardly ever merely a pattern of ideas exhibited for human understanding, but was a system of precepts internal to the conduct of the philosopher; and in extreme cases his philosophy might even be said to be his biography."

The Way in which Chinese Philosophers Expressed Themselves

A Western student beginning the study of Chinese philosophy is instantly confronted with two obstacles. One, of course, is the language barrier; the other is the peculiar way in which the Chinese philosophers have expressed themselves. I will speak about the latter first.

When one begins to read Chinese philosophical works, the first impression one gets is perhaps the briefness and disconnectedness of the sayings and writings of their authors. Open the *Confucian Analects* and you will see that each paragraph consists of only a few words, and there is hardly any connection between one paragraph and the next. Open a book containing the philosophy of Lao Tzu, and you will find that the whole book consists of about five thousand words—no longer than a magazine article; yet in it one will find the whole of his philosophy. A student accustomed to elaborate reasoning and detailed argument would be at a loss to understand what these Chinese philosophers were saying. He would be inclined to think that there was disconnectedness in the thought itself. If this were so, there would be no Chinese philosophy. For disconnected thought is hardly worthy of the name of philosophy.

It may be said that the apparent disconnectedness of the sayings and writings of the Chinese philosophers is due to the fact that these sayings and writings are not formal philosophical works. According to Chinese tradition, the study of philosophy is not a profession. Everyone should study philosophy just as in the West every one should go to church. The purpose of the study of philosophy is to enable a man, *as a man*, to be a man, not some particular kind of man. Other studies—not the study of philosophy—enable a man to be some special kind of man. So there were no professional philosophers; and non-professional philosophers did not have to produce formal philosophical writings. In China, there were far more philosophers who produced no formal philosophical writings than those who did. If one wishes to study the philosophy of these men, one has to go to the records of their sayings or the letters they wrote to disciples and friends. These letters did not belong to just one period in the life of the person who wrote them, nor were the records written only by a single person. Disconnectedness or even inconsistency between them is, therefore, to be expected.

The foregoing may explain why the writings and saying of some philosophers are disconnected; but it does not explain why they are brief. In some philosophic writings, such as those of Mencius and Hsün Tzu, one does find systematic reasoning and arguments. But in comparison with the philosophic writings of the West, they are still not articulate enough. The fact is that Chinese philosophers were accustomed to express themselves in the form of aphorisms, apothegms, or allusions, and illustrations. The whole book of *Lao-tzu* consists of aphorisms, and most of the chapters of the *Chuang-tzu* are full of allusions and illustrations. This is very obvious. But even in writings such as those of Mencius and Hsün Tzu, mentioned above, when compared with the philosophical writings of the West, there are still too many aphorisms, allusions, and illustrations. Aphorisms must be very brief; allusions and illustrations must be disconnected.

Aphorisms, allusions, and illustrations are thus not articulate enough. Their insufficiency in articulateness is compensated for, however, by their suggestiveness. Articulateness and suggestiveness are, of course, incompatible. The more an expression is articulate, the less it is suggestive—just as the more an expression is prosaic, the less it is poetic. The sayings and writings of the Chinese philosophers are so inarticulate that their suggestiveness is almost boundless.

Suggestiveness, not articulateness, is the ideal of all Chinese art, whether it be poetry, painting, or anything else. In poetry, what the poet intends to communicate is often not what is directly said in the poetry, but what is not said in it. According to Chinese literary tradition, in good poetry "the number of words is limited, but the ideas it suggests are limitless." So an intelligent reader of poetry reads what is outside the poem; and a good reader of books reads "what is between the lines." Such is the ideal of Chinese art, and this ideal is reflected in the way in which Chinese philosophers have expressed themselves.

The ideal of Chinese art is not without its philosophical background. In the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Chuang-tzu* it is said: "A basket-trap is for catching fish, but when one has got the fish, one need think no more about the basket. A foot-trap is for catching hares; but when one has got the hare, one need think no more about the trap. Words are for holding ideas, but when one has got the idea, one need no longer think about the words. If only I could find some-

one who had stopped thinking about words and could have him with me to talk to!" To talk with someone who has stopped thinking about words is not to talk with words. In the *Chuang-tzu* the statement is made that two sages met without speaking a single word, because "when their eyes met, the *Tao* was there." According to Taoism, the *Tao* (the Way) cannot be told, but only suggested. So when words are used, it is the suggestiveness of the words, and not their fixed denotations or connotations, that reveals the *Tao*. Words are something that should be forgotten when they have achieved their purpose. Why should we trouble ourselves with them any more than is necessary? This is true of the words and rhymes in poetry, and the lines and colors in painting.

During the third and fourth centuries A.D., the most influential philosophy was the Neo-Taoist School, which was known in Chinese history as the *hsüan hsüeh* (the dark or mystic learning). At that time there was a book entitled *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, which is a record of the clever sayings and romantic activities of the famous men of the age. Most of the sayings are very brief, some consisting of only a few words. It is stated in that book (ch. 4) that a very high official once asked a philosopher (the high official was himself a philosopher), what was the difference and similarity between Lao-Chuang (i.e., Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu) and Confucius. The philosopher answered: "Are they not the same?" The high official was very much pleased with this answer, and instantly appointed the philosopher as his secretary. Since the answer consists of only three words in the Chinese language, this philosopher has been known as the three-word secretary. He could not say that Lao-Chuang and Confucius had nothing in common, nor could he say that they had everything in common. So he put his answer in the form of a question, which was really a good answer.

The brief sayings in the *Confucian Analects* and in the philosophy of the *Lao-tzu* are not simply conclusions from certain premises which have been lost. They are aphorisms full of suggestiveness. It is the suggestiveness that is attractive. One may gather together all the ideas one finds in the *Lao-tzu* and write them out in a new book consisting of fifty thousand or even five hundred thousand words. No matter how well this is done, however, it is just a new book. It may be read side by side with the original *Lao-tzu*, and may help people

a great deal to understand the original, but it can never be a substitute for the original.

Kuo Hsiang, to whom I have already referred, was one of the great commentators on Chuang Tzu. His commentary was itself a classic of Taoist literature. He turned the allusions and metaphors of Chuang Tzu into a form of reasoning and argument, and translated his poems into prose of his own. His writing is much more articulate than that of Chuang Tzu. But between the suggestiveness of Chuang Tzu's original and the articulateness of Kuo Hsiang's commentary, people may still ask: Which is better? A monk of the Buddhist Ch'an or Zen school of a later period once said: "Everyone says that it was Kuo Hsiang who wrote a commentary on Chuang Tzu; I would say it was Chuang Tzu who wrote a commentary on Kuo Hsiang."

The Language Barrier

It is true of all philosophical writings that it is difficult for one to have a complete understanding and full appreciation of them if one cannot read them in the original. This is due to the language barrier. Because of the suggestive character of Chinese philosophical writings, the language barrier becomes even more formidable. The suggestiveness of the sayings and writings of the Chinese philosophers is something that can hardly be translated. When one reads them in translation, one misses the suggestiveness; and this means that one misses a great deal.

A translation, after all, is only an interpretation. When one translates a sentence from, say, the *Lao-tzu*, one gives one's own interpretation of its meaning. But the translation may convey only one idea, while as a matter of fact, the original may contain many other ideas besides the one given by the translator. The original is suggestive, but the translation is not, and cannot be. So it loses much of the richness inherent in the original.

There have been many translations of the *Lao-tzu* and the *Confucian Analects*. Each translator has considered the translations of others unsatisfactory. But no matter how well a translation is done, it is bound to be poorer than the original. It needs a combination of all the translations already made and many others not yet made, to reveal the richness of the *Lao-tzu* and the *Confucian Analects* in their original form.

Kumarajiva, of the fifth century A.D., one of the greatest translators of the Buddhist texts into Chinese, said that the work of translation is just like chewing food that is to be fed to others. If one cannot chew the food oneself, one has to be given food that has already been chewed. After such an operation, however, the food is bound to be poorer in taste and flavor than the original.

CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

In the last chapter I said that philosophy is systematic reflective thinking on life. In thinking, the thinker is usually conditioned by the surroundings in which he lives. Being in certain surroundings, he feels life in a certain way, and there are therefore in his philosophy certain emphases or omissions, which constitute the characteristics of that philosophy.

This is true of an individual, as it is also true of a people. In this chapter I shall try to say something about the geographic and economic background of the Chinese people in order to show how and why Chinese civilization in general, and Chinese philosophy in particular, are what they are.

Geographic Background of the Chinese People

In the *Confucian Analects* Confucius said: "The wise man delights in water; the good man delights in mountains. The wise move; the good stay still. The wise are happy; the good endure." (VI, 21.) In reading this saying, I feel there is in it something which suggests a difference between the people of ancient China and those of ancient Greece.

China is a continental country. To the ancient Chinese their land was the world. There are two expressions in the Chinese language which can both be translated as the world. One is "all beneath the sky" and the other is "all within the four seas." To the people of a maritime country such as the Greeks, it would be inconceivable that expressions such as these could be synonymous. But that is what happens in the Chinese language, and it is not without reason.

From the time of Confucius until the end of the last century, no

Chinese thinkers had the experience of venturing out upon the high seas. Confucius and Mencius lived not far from the sea, if we think in modern terms of distance, yet in the *Analects,* Confucius mentions the sea only once. He is recorded as saying: "If my way is not to prevail, I shall get upon a raft and float out to the sea. He who will go with me will be [Chung] Yu." (V, 6.) Chung Yu was a disciple of Confucius known for his courage and bravery. It is said in the same work that when Chung Yu heard this statement, he was much pleased. Confucius, however, was not so pleased by Chung Yu's over-enthusiasm, and remarked: "Yu is more brave than myself. I do not know what to do with him." (*Ibid.*)

Mencius's reference to the sea is likewise brief. "He who has seen the sea," he says, "finds it difficult to think anything about other waters; and he who has wandered to the gate of the sage, finds it difficult to think anything about the words of others." (VIIa, 24.) Mencius is no better than Confucius, who thought only of "floating out to sea." How different were Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who lived in a maritime country and wandered from island to island!

Economic Background of the Chinese People

The ancient Chinese and Greek philosophers not only lived under different geographic conditions, but different economic ones as well. Since China is a continental country, the Chinese people have to make their living by agriculture. Even today the portion of the Chinese population engaged in farming is estimated at 75 to 80 percent. In an agrarian country land is the primary basis of wealth. Hence, throughout Chinese history, social and economic thinking and policy have centered around the utilization and distribution of land.

Agriculture in such an economy is equally important not only in peacetime but in wartime as well. During the period of the Warring States (480-222 B.C.), a period in many ways similar to our own, in which China was divided into many feudal kingdoms, every state devoted its greater attention to what were then called "the arts of agriculture and war." Finally the state of Ch'in, one of the seven leading states of the time, gained supremacy both in agriculture and war, and as a result succeeded in conquering the other states and thus bringing a unification to China for the first time in her history.

In the social and economic thinking of Chinese philosophers, there

is a distinction between what they call "the root" and "the branch." "The root" refers to agriculture and "the branch" to commerce. The reason for this is that agriculture is concerned with production, while commerce is merely concerned with exchange. One must have production before one can have exchange. In an agrarian country, agriculture is the major form of production, and therefore throughout Chinese history, social and economic theories and policies have all attempted "to emphasize the root and slight the branch."

The people who deal with the "branch," that is, the merchants, were therefore looked down upon. They were the last and lowest of the four traditional classes of society, the other three being scholars, farmers, and artisans. The scholars were usually landlords, and the farmers were the peasants who actually cultivated the land. These were the two honorable professions in China. A family having "a tradition of studying and farming" was something of which to be proud.

Although the "scholars" did not actually cultivate the land themselves, yet since they were usually landlords, their fortunes were tied up with agriculture. A good or bad harvest meant their good or bad fortune, and therefore their reaction to the universe and their outlook on life were essentially those of the farmer. In addition their education gave them the power to express what an actual farmer felt but was incapable of expressing himself. This expression took the form of Chinese philosophy, literature, and art.

Value of Agriculture

In the *Lü-shih Ch'un-ch'iu,* a compendium of various schools of philosophy written in the third century B.C., there is a chapter titled "The Value of Agriculture." In this chapter a contrast is made between the mode of life of people who are engaged in the "root" occupation—the farmers, and that of those who are engaged in the "branch" occupation—the merchants. The farmers are primitive and simple and therefore always ready to accept commands. They are childlike and innocent and therefore unselfish. Their material properties are complex and difficult to move, and therefore they do not abandon their country when it is in danger. Merchants, on the other hand, are corrupt and therefore not obedient. They are treacherous and therefore selfish. They have simple properties which are easy to transport, and threfore they usually abandon their country when it is