

2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS IN THE EAST OF ASIA

2.2.1 CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Preamble

The main theme that permeates the entire philosophical discourse in China is humanism.⁶ For this reason, philosophical discourse revolves around a man (ethics/ anthropology) and his society (politics) over and above metaphysical speculation. Let's look at the root of the discourse.

Background

Chinese philosophy emerged out of the Chinese people's fundamental beliefs, cultural background, and tradition. From the Shang dynasty (17th–11th-century BCE) to the Zhou dynasty, China moved from a tribal to a feudal society and from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. The Shang people prayed to their ancestors (i.e., Shangdi, the tribal Lord) to solve their problems, while the Zhou people turned to man, though they honoured their ancestors no less than the Shang people did. They also supplanted the worship of *Shangdi* (the tribal Lord) with the worship of heaven (*tian*) as the supreme spiritual reality, whose mandate was absolute and constant and beyond man's control. With time, the determining factors for reward, punishment, and control of one's destiny (*ming*) tilted towards man and his virtues (*de*). The meaning of sacrifice changed from magical to ethical, from placating spiritual beings to pure expressions of reverence for nature. For instance, the ancient Chinese people, following the traditions of Zhou-Yi,⁷ understood nature and reality as moving and changing dynamically. Such change and movement explain the integrative wisdom in the cosmos. It (Zhou-Yi) also unveiled the features of reality and facilitated the attainment of balance, centrality, harmony, transformative development, and return of things to their ultimate source. Within Zhou-Yi's principles, integrating the present, the past, and the future into a whole becomes possible (i.e., complementary opposites defining a whole).

The simplest complementary opposites are *yin* (shady) and *yang* (bright) on mountainsides and riverbanks. The *yin* signifies the absence of light, whereas the *yang* signifies the presence of light. Although it is natural to see the light as energy, motion, and penetrating power, the *yang* acquires characteristics that create life and sustain reality. We associate *the yin* with features suggestive of hiddenness, passivity, receptivity, and comprehension on the opposite side.

⁶ Humanism is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the potential and agency of human beings, individually and socially. It considers human beings as the starting point for serious moral and philosophical inquiry.

⁷ *Zhouyi* "Changes of the Zhou", also called *Yijing* "Classic of Changes", or, shortly, "The Changes", is one of the most important Confucian classics (i.e., canon of important writings reflecting the teachings of the philosopher Confucius). It has not only influenced Confucian and especially Neo-Confucian thinking but is also deeply rooted in the Daoist tradition.

The yin-yang relationship of contrast presents harmony and balance as a richer experience of changes that suggests the absence and presence of being and thus non-being, which is a being. Laozi was the first philosopher to underline that 'the Being and non-being mutually generate each other.' This dialectical way of thinking in the Zhou-Yi requires a process of comprehensive observation and inquiry, analysis and synthesis or integration. The integrative aspect of this way of thinking is twofold: First, it integrates all observation elements into a structure of relationships. Second, it allows the relationships to extend to other not covered things. Hence, Zhou-Yi's thought opens a world of infinite possibilities in which new relationships can be discovered and realised. Thus, there is no end to differentiation and integration, observation and inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. Zhou Yi's potentiality influenced the development of Chinese philosophy in both its form and its substance.

This stance led to the later Confucian view that man's nature (xing) is what heaven has endowed him with (ming). In substance, he possesses the nature of ultimate reality, which is heaven, and thus is capable of creative advance and participation in the cosmological process of creativity. For the Confucianist, it is important for the human being to make this a moral self-understanding and a moral duty. Given consciousness of the human heart-mind, it is consistent to assume that any inceptive state of existence is a basis for creativity which leads to harmony, especially that of the mind called 'centrality' (Zhong).

Divination led to self-transformation, integration of the future and an individual's past in the present, and self-realisation. One finds these principles in Confucianism. Zhou Yi's principle is the basis for the inspiring development of the classical schools of Chinese philosophy in the 'axial age' beginning with the eighth century BC. (Yi began as a way of thinking as early as before the Xia Dynasty in the sixteenth century BC.). That is why we can say that it is the starting point and matrix for Chinese philosophy, especially if we take philosophy as a cosmological enterprise.

Drawing on the above, one can deduce three strains of thinking in ancient Chinese philosophy. They are:

- i. An intrinsic reverence (Ji) for nature (like heaven) and worship of ancestral spirits via rites and rituals (li)
- ii. Quest for a methodology that conditions the perception and thinking of the Chinese people.
- iii. A focus on the potentiality and creativity of the human subject (i.e., intrinsic humanism).

The principles of change, transformation, or righteousness (Yi) and reverence and piety (jing) promoted order, mutual dependence, complementarity, piety, solemnity, and carefulness of a person towards an object of emulation and identification in ancient China (See Zagzebski on Moral exemplar).

Developmental Phases of Chinese philosophy

Historically, Chinese philosophy has gone through four periods, namely:

- i. The classical era
- ii. The neo-Daoist and Buddhist era
- iii. The neo-Confucian era
- iv. And the modern era.

The Chinese people are currently in the fifth period, which I describe as the contemporary era. Therefore, let us unveil their philosophical doctrines through the epochs mentioned above.

i. The Classical Period (6th–3rd-century BCE)

Some thinkers in this period focused on unification as an ideal state of social well-being. As a result, Legalism (one of the nine schools in this epoch) arose and gradually assumed a dominating role in solving unification. Other schools in this era include the Name School (Ming Jia), the Yin-Yang Wu-Xing School, the Military Strategy School (Bing Jia), the Agronomy School (Nung Jia), and the Diplomatic School (Zong Heng Jia), Mohism, Daoism, and Confucianism. Every school in this period had its way, but the Way of Confucius (551–479 BCE) and another traditional sage, Laozi (6th-century BCE), were the most prominent. I will focus on the last two schools.

a) CONFUCIANISM

‘Confucius’ (‘Master Kong’, 551–479 BC), also known as Kongqiu and Zhongni, was born in Lu (Qufu, Shandong province) during the Spring and Autumn Period. His ancestors were nobles of Song, but the status of their descendants gradually declined. His father, Shulianghe, was a minor official—the head of Zou county in Lu. His father died when he was three years old, leaving Confucius and his mother in deplorable financial circumstances. Confucius engaged himself in education, political activities, travelling and persuading princes of his political views, and searching for and revising Chinese classical writings. He expressed his various ideas and opinions during these activities.

To him, Dao (“the Way”) is the way of man, the Way of ancient sage-kings, and the Way of *de*, [i.e., virtue such as benevolence” or “humaneness” (*ren*) and “propriety”⁸ or “rightness” (*Yi*)]. A combination of the terms *ren-Yi* represents morality. The Confucian doctrine underlines that an individual’s development of *ren* quality would restore and reformulate *li* (rites and rituals) on a social and cultural level and reconstruct the world of human harmony and values. As a result, humans would have a place of worth and a veritable environment for self-realisation and self-fulfilment. Confucius, Mencius, and Xun Zi applied the above principles in their philosophical thoughts.

⁸ The term also refers to conformity to conventionally accepted standards of behaviour or morals.

Cosmology

A central theme of Daoism is that of *return*: all things eventually decay and return to their ultimate source within the *Dao*. Thus, there are clear natural cycles in the cosmos: everything around us has been recycled and will again be recycled. Likewise, plants and animals die and decay, leaving their elements to become the raw materials of other things. So we will wither, die and decay, whether we like it. Therefore, according to Chuang-tzu, we should submit to the natural transformation process (i.e., the yin and yang or forces of nature) and do otherwise amounts to disobedience.

Ethics and Epistemology

The most practical advice of Daoism is that of *non-action* (*wu Wei*), also called *effortless action*: everything we do should flow with simple spontaneity and without contrivance (plan). Artificial actions run counter to the natural course of things and usually involve aggression and competition.

Paralleling the notion of non-action is that of *non-mind* (*wu-hsin*): we need to eliminate knowledge and act spontaneously through natural intuition. Accumulated knowledge hinders creativity and can make one inflexible or subject to a false sense of security. Therefore, we avoid acquiring knowledge by conventional means and rid ourselves of the cumbersome knowledge we have acquired throughout the years. Most importantly, our understanding of the *Dao* itself comes through the practice of non-mind: "Those who are skilled in the *Dao* do not dispute about it, and those who dispute are not skilled in it" (ibid, 81).

Political Philosophy

As a political treatise, the *Dao de Jing* insists that if rulers follow the *Dao*, then their states will be well ordered and in natural harmony: "If a prince or the king could hold onto the *Dao*, all would spontaneously submit themselves to him" (Ibid, 32). Thus, to rule according to the *Dao*, leaders must abandon common notions of governance, which typically involve authoritatively imposing their wills on the people. Instead, a more *Dao*-centered way of ruling involves not ruling but allowing society to function naturally. Successful rulers should adopt the attitude of non-action when governing: the more aggressive input and regulation a government imposes on its citizens, the more disorder results. But when a leader sits back and does nothing, society develops independently. Nature needs no help from rulers, and when the general public follows the *Dao*, each person will naturally find peaceful and simple ways to flourish. Even a well-intentioned leader may disrupt the natural flow of social order by imposing rules. The mere existence of rules will generate rule-breakers. Daoism thus recommends political *anarchy* in the true sense of the word, namely, a peaceful state of *no rule* in which we naturally find our place.

Confucius' Epistemology

Confucius' educational thoughts admit that some people were born with knowledge (i.e., innate knowledge/ see internalism). His educational activities aimed to train his disciples to be men who could realise his political ideal. He advocated that self-cultivation was for governing the state ('he cultivates personal virtue to give happiness to all (ch. 14). 'Learning,' he said, 'has its reward in itself.

b) DAOISM OR TAOISM

Like Confucianism, Daoism emerged during China's Warring States period. Tradition credits the founding of Daoism to a figure named Lao-tzu (Laozi), literally meaning "master Lao." But virtually nothing concrete is known about him. Some modern scholars argue that early Daoists created him as a rival to Confucius. Tradition also credits him with composing Daoism's most important text, the *Dao de Jing* (*Tao te Ching*), which means *The Book of the Way and its Power*. According to one story, as Lao-tzu was leaving his hometown, the city gatekeeper was sorry to see the great master go and asked that he write a book of his views by which people could remember him. So, Lao-tzu sat down on the spot and composed the *Dao de Jing*. Although tradition dates the *Dao de Jing* to around 450 BCE, scholars today place it around 300 BCE based on its literary style. The work is an anthology of sayings compiled to instruct kings on government; specifically, it recommends that kings rule through an extreme "hands-off" policy, allowing social events to conform to nature.

Daoism's second most important book is the work attributed to and named after Daoist philosopher Chuang-tzu (Zhuangzi, 369-286 BCE), or "master Chuang." Unlike the *Dao de Jing*, the *Chuang-Tzu* is not a political treatise. Instead, it is popular with vivid stories and parables for a more general readership. Let's examine some prominent themes in *Dao de Jing* and the *Chuang-tzu*.

Daoists' Metaphysics

The notion of the *Dao* is the central concept in Daoism. The term means "way" or "path." However, it refers specifically to the originator of all things, the ultimate reality of the cosmos or the fundamental ordering principle behind nature, society, and individual people. So, it is the source of all existence, which we can grasp through mystical experience since it is formless and invisible. This experience begins with subduing one's desires. When we go against the *Dao*, the consequences are disastrous for us personally and for everything that we damage in our path. Other key concepts in this period are *ren* ("humanity," "love"), *Yi* ("change, transformation, righteousness"), *tian* ("heaven"), and *yin-yang* (cosmic elements of tranquillity and activity, or weakness and strength, respectively). Some of their concepts are ethical, while others are metaphysical.

Ethical Thoughts of Confucius

Confucius' ethical thoughts focus on moral self-cultivation. An agent cultivates morals when:

- He acts strictly according to his social status demands ('Let the prince act the prince, the minister the minister, the father the father, the son the son' (ch. 12)), which Confucius called 'establishing one's character' (ch. 13).
- He loves all men (i.e., shows universal benevolence to the people and promotes all men's happiness (ch. 6)).
- He treats other people as one treats oneself. 'The virtuous man wishes to be established himself, and to establish others—he wishes to possess perfect intelligence himself, and lead others to perfect knowledge' (ch. 6). 'What you do not wish others to do to you, do not to them' (ch. 12).
- He thinks highly of justice and despises benefit. 'The superior man is influenced by the love of rectitude, the mean man by the love of gain' (ch. 4). He esteemed that man a perfect man 'who, when he sees an opportunity to gain, thinks of justice' (ch. 14), who 'seeks not the preservation of life nor the injury of virtue but will give up life to complete his virtue' (ch. 15). Confucius created a series of moral categories around the notions of benevolence and justice: filial piety, fraternal affection, faithfulness, forbearance, intelligence, bravery, etc.

Confucius' Political Philosophy

Applying the notion of benevolence to politics, Confucius emphasised benevolent government and virtuous rule and opposed the government, which depended only on administrative decrees and punishment. He, therefore, demanded that the ruling strata 'conquer the self and return to propriety (ch. 12), 'serve their prince with fidelity' (ch. 3) and especially be loyal to the King of Zhou. As for the people, he advocated that the ruler 'lead them by virtue, and regulate them by propriety [right actions]' (ch. 2) practice a policy of valuing education and culture, lightening penalties and punishment, and reducing taxes and corvée (A work done by masses for a state without payment). Thus, people could live and work in peace and contentment in this condition, and public order could be stable. This political philosophy was Confucius's benevolent governing and virtuous ruling. Moreover, the best governor was a superior man with various excellent virtues and talents. Thus, Confucius unified his ethical and political thoughts into a systematic doctrine, which was afterwards generalised in the Great Learning as follows: a thorough investigation of the nature of things, perfecting knowledge, purifying one's motives, rectifying one's inclinations, adorning one's person with virtues, regulating one's family, establishing order in the state of the prince, making the world of the king enjoy peace and plenty—the unity of inner sage and outer king.

ii. The neo-Daoist and Buddhist period (3rd–9th-century C.E.)

Neo-Taoism/ Daoism flourished in the third and fourth centuries A.D. (the so-called Wei-Chin period). This period witnessed a radical turn to strictly metaphysical concepts. Going beyond Laozi's characterisation of Dao as Nonbeing, the neo-Daoists/ Taoist concentrated on whether Ultimate Reality is Being or Nonbeing and whether the principle *Li* (rites and rituals) underlying a thing was universal or particular. Under their influence (i.e., of neo-Daoists), early Chinese Buddhist philosophers directed their attention chiefly to Being and Nonbeing. Subsequently, They divided their schools (introduced from India) into corresponding categories: schools of Being and Non-being. Chinese Buddhist schools focused on the following themes: "universality and particularity" or "one and many." Historians sometimes ascribe philosophical discourse in this era partly to the chaos and corruption of the late Han dynasty and the repeated wars, droughts, and floods of the time. Chinese Buddhism incorporates elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Some of their beliefs and practices include:

- Paying homage to Triple Gems
- Veneration of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
- Through offerings of incense, flowers, food, etc.
- Offerings to Devas who reside in the heavenly realm
- Paying respect to one's ancestors during the Qingming and Zhong Yuan Festival
- Conducting or participating in religious services to pray for one's ancestors and the souls of the deceased to attain peace and liberation
- Creating positive affinities with other people through gifts of Dharma books and acts of charity or social service.
- Monks must be vegetarian and devout laity are often vegetarian on certain sacred days or festivals.
- Compassion towards all living beings through activities such as "life release."
- Existence of gods, ghosts, and the hell realm
- Reincarnation, or more technically, rebirth, according to one's karma
- Karmic retribution, ethically cause and effect

fundamental distinction between (a) the ordinary realm of life, death, and suffering and (b) the realm of nirvana which extinguishes suffering. But the point of the *Heart Sutra* is that even this distinction is not justified. Stated most forcefully, the ordinary and nirvana realms are the same things; the world itself does not change when viewing it in nirvana. Thus, the entirety of reality is one huge empty thing that is incapable of distinction or descriptive content.

Grasping the notion of emptiness is a genuine challenge, and one branch of Mahayana Buddhism, known as Zen Buddhism, devised an innovative method for conveying the idea. Zen Buddhism began in China around the fifth century C.E. Some scholars attribute its historical origin to a possibly mythical figure named Bodhidharma (470-543 CE), who reportedly moved from Northern India into China. For nine years, he sat in meditation, and a young man named Hui-K'o, who wanted to be Bodhidharma's disciple, approached him. Bodhidharma resisted until, in desperation, Hui-K'o cut off his left arm and said to Bodhidharma, "My mind is not at peace; please bring it peace." Bodhidharma said, "If you bring me your mind, I will give it peace." Hui-K'o replied, "When I look for it, I cannot find it." Bodhidharma answered, "There! I have pacified it for you." Hui-K'o then became enlightened. Zen is famous for its paradoxical meditative puzzles. It neither has verbal formula nor creeds.

Zen Epistemology

Zen focuses on experience and rational discourse. Therefore, the doctrine plays no role in gaining enlightenment. Rather, it states that an agent gains enlightenment when a seasoned teacher transmits something from his mind during training. It is like passing a flame from one candle to another.

From the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, after Buddhism's propagation and development in China, a fierce conflict developed between Confucianism and Buddhism. Sometimes Confucianism defeated Buddhism, and sometimes the other way round, but the rule of Confucianism over social ideology was firm all along. Confucius was always respected and worshipped by almost all dynasties' emperors. Lixue (the School of Laws or Principles) of the Song and Ming Dynasties assimilated the thoughts of Buddhism and the Daoist School and formed the third peak in the history of Confucianism (i.e., Neo-Confucianism).

- Chinese Buddhist philosophy transformed Chinese thought in the following three crucial areas:
- It transformed it by ensuring the understanding of Mahāyāna Emptiness (Zen-Buddhism) as a more profound wisdom-reality than the naïve realism of the Confucian world of Being and the nihilism of the Daoist Non-Being or Nothingness.
 - It uncovered a corresponding non-self (anātman) through emptying the empirical self or selfhood.
 - It ensured the final transvaluation of Mahāyāna into a positive, direct, and immediate identity between the Buddha-nature self and the Suchness nature of reality.

Zen Buddhism

Around 100 CE, Buddhism split into two main denominations, Theravada and Mahayana. While Theravadists held fast to the Pali Canon teachings, Mahayanists argued that Buddha's more advanced teachings were transmitted orally and ultimately recorded in later Mahayana texts. A running theme within these new Mahayana works is the notion of *emptiness*, which is the view that all reality is devoid of any discernable content or description. The metaphor of *emptiness* presumes that something like a container with a label that reads "reality" has nothing in it. The point of the metaphor is this: when we look inside the container, we find no different parts or qualities that define its true nature. For all practical purposes, it is empty, but there is still some characterless thing in the container.

One anonymously written Mahayana text, the *Heart Sutra*, pushes the notion of emptiness to its extreme. It maintains that everything about our identities and the ordinary world is empty without actual content. But, then, the author continues with the more radical claim that even the four noble truths and nirvana are empty. He opines:

"There is no knowledge, no ignorance, or destruction of knowledge. There is no decay and death or no destruction of decay and death. There are no [four noble truths, namely,] pain, the origin of pain, its elimination, and its path. There is no knowledge, no obtaining, no not obtaining of nirvana." [*Hear! Sutra*]

It is not enough to merely concede that the ordinary realm of life and death are empty of descriptive content. What's more important is that nirvana (liberation), the solution to our misery, has no descriptive content. Why is this so dramatic? We have seen that Buddhist teachings in the *Pali Canon* make a

CORE EPISTEMOLOGICAL THESES IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

The Chinese sought to discover the relation between knowing and doing by addressing the following:

- Is knowing divorced or derived from doing?
- Is it easy to know and hard to do, or the reverse?
- How can a criterion be worked out to judge if ‘knowledge’ is true or false?
- Should knowing or doing be given priority, and should the two be combined or unified?

Is Knowing Divorced Or Derived From Doing?

Laozi (c. 570 BC) was the first person to discuss the relationship between knowing and doing in the history of Chinese philosophy. He is also known as the philosopher of objective idealism. He formulated Dao as the fundamental category of his philosophical system. Dao (the way or path) was assumed to be the very source from which came into being the absolute soul of the material world. Through Dao, one can understand the universe without resorting to any action to prevent one from understanding. Laozi said, Without going out of doors, one can know all that happens in the world; without looking out of one’s window, one can grasp the law of heaven. Therefore, a divine sage sees all he needs to see without action, understands all he wants to understand without looking elsewhere, and accomplishes his object without exertion. Knowing has nothing to do with doing while doing prevents one from knowing. Laozi refers to intuitive and innate knowledge. One acquires the latter before birth (i.e., without doing anything).

Is It Easy To Know And Hard To Do, Or The Reverse?

The Chinese believe that it is not difficult to know but to do.’ This aphorism plays an influential role in China’s political and intellectual life. This stance implies that knowledge (mainly book-learning) gained by predecessors is much easier than acting upon it (practical aspect). So, book learning becomes one’s knowledge in reality when put into practice. On the contrary, the idealist philosopher, Cheng Hao, underlines that ‘to know is also difficult. His stance refers to the difficulty of creating and attaining new knowledge. This view contains epistemological rationality in itself. From then on, political and intellectual circles generally held that ‘to know is as difficult as to act’ until Sun Yatsen unequivocally put forward his objection against the theory.

Regarding Sun Yatsen’s philosophy, it is still uncertain whether it is a form of dualism, as interpreted by some, or a form of materialism, as understood by others. Regarding the relation between knowing and doing, he believed it is difficult to know and easy to do.’ Mao Zedong, guided by Marxism, transcended the formulae ‘easy to know and difficult to do’ or ‘difficult to know and easy to do.’ He attached importance to practice on the one hand and laid stress upon the motto ‘Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.’ On the other hand, he advocated combining theory and practice and thus addressed and solved the difficulty and easiness of knowing and doing.

iii. The Neo-Confucian period (11th–early 20th century)

The influence of Buddhism and Daoism prompted Confucianists in this period to find metaphysical and epistemological foundations for their ethics. Two basic concepts of neo-Confucianism are nature and principle—nature, especially human nature. They held to those concepts because Confucianism was still primarily concerned with man. As a sequel to this, they substituted the Buddhist void and Daoist Non-being with their metaphysical principle, *Li* (“pattern”), the positive, concrete, and rational laws that form the universe and are always good.

According to neo-Confucianism’s greatest proponent, Zhu Xi (1130–1200), *Li* is the principle or pattern that makes things what they are. Human nature is the *Li* that is universal among all people. Coupled with this universal essence is *Qi* (“vital breath,” “pneuma”), the particular material force that makes each person unique. *Qi* obscures human nature and its inherent goodness; therefore, metaphysical speculation, or inquiry into the laws of human nature and the universe, is the path of ethical conduct for the neo-Confucian.

It is interesting to note that these three periods represent a dialectical movement: the classical period was concerned chiefly with mundane problems; the neo-Daoist and Buddhist period was concerned with the transcendent, and the neo-Confucian period was a synthesis of the two.

iv. The Modern/Contemporary period (beginning in the 20th century)

Chinese philosophy moved from westernisation to developing new philosophical vistas in metaphysics, logic, and epistemology. The general tone was scientific, positivistic, and pragmatic. Of all Western systems, the most influential was pragmatism, introduced and promoted by Hu Shi (1891–1962), leader of the intellectual revolution of 1917. In the “polemic of science versus life” in the 1920s, leading Chinese intellectuals debated whether or not science could form the basis of a philosophy of life. The debate questioned the supremacy of Western philosophy, which, as understood by the Chinese, was regarded as essentially scientific instead of metaphysical.

In contemporary China, Marxism has been the official philosophy since the mid-1920s. By establishing the People’s Republic in 1949, it had gone from Leninism to Maoism. The official ideology does not prohibit the study of traditional Chinese philosophy but has subjected it to critical evaluation and severe criticism. The general viewpoint on Chinese philosophy’s history is that it is a history of the struggle between materialism and idealism. Some examples include the conflict between the theories of human nature’s original good and evil character, the opposition between principle and material force, the contradiction between Being and Non-being, and the conflict between names and actuality. So, the history of Chinese philosophy is but the development of Marxism-Leninism.

How Can A Criterion Be Worked Out By Which To Judge If 'Knowledge' Is True Or False?

According to Mozi, there are three criteria for judging an utterance to be correct or not. What are these three criteria? The first criterion is to trace the source of the utterance (justification). The second is examining its situation (context). The third is testing its practicality (pragmaticism). First, one traces the source by looking for historical events of emperors of past successive dynasties. Second, he examines the context by acquainting himself with what the ordinary people hear with their ears and see with their eyes. Finally, he tests its practicality by applying it to a given context or a state of affairs, such as criminal law and politics, to see if it conforms with the nation's interests and the people. Any utterance corresponding to these three principles is correct; otherwise, it is incorrect. The three criteria correspond to Mohist's four concepts, namely: ming (name), shi (fact), he (correspondence), and wei (action).

Should Knowing Or Doing Be Given Priority, And Should The Two Be Combined Or Unified?

Wang Yangming (1472–1528), whose idealist philosophy was called 'the science of the mind,' set out a theory of 'combining knowing and doing into one.' He says, 'Knowing is the origin of doing while doing is the realisation of knowing.' For instance, when a person sees a good colour with his eyes, one calls such an act of seeing 'knowing'; and as soon as he has a liking for the colour, we call it 'doing.' This stance means that knowledge becomes action when it reaches the truth and reality. Here 'truth and reality' mean a mentality completely devoid of man's selfish desire. Hence, his so-called 'doing' is no less than an endeavour for moral cultivation or refinement.

Wang Fuzhi criticised Wang Yangming's 'combination of knowing and doing into one. In his view, Knowing and doing complement each other by their respective functions.' Knowing and doing have their respective functional effects; he considered cognition to be an ongoing process beginning from doing to knowing and again from knowing to doing. This position represents the unity of knowing and conforming to a dialectical cognition process. Of course, he did not view historical materialism as the basis of his theory since he failed to characterise 'doing' as a social practice. He also could not apply this view of the 'unity of knowing and doing' to explaining the formation and function of man's moral notions.

In the new democratic revolution, Mao Zedong, guided by Marxist philosophy, summed up the discussion on knowing and doing in Chinese history thus: Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice, verify and develop the truth. Therefore, first, start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change the subjective and the objective world. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle, the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such, he said, is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing.⁹

⁹ On Practice, in Mao Tse-tung's Selected Works (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1966), p. 285. For an English version, see Mao Tse-tung, Four Essays On Philosophy (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 20.

b) Epistemology

Mādhyamika understands the task of Buddhist philosophy to be more than just describing how things are. For the Mādhyamika, language and ideas undermine themselves. The distinctive philosophical mood of Mādhyamika is in Japan's Zen Buddhist kōan or riddles. Koans are absurd riddles, such as the famous "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" which defies any logical response. The koan system involves a Zen master having his student answer a series of up to 50 ridiculous riddles over many years. The student's mind becomes loosened from traditional reasoning by struggling with these conceptually paradoxical questions. In this way, the student realises that the ultimate reality is not discoverable. It is only then that he experiences the emptiness of all things.

c) Psychology

Yogācāra conscientiously preserves the Buddha's psychological approach to the objective world, seeing the 'objective' cosmos as the reflection or projection of consciousness. Thus, yogācāra-type Buddhist philosophies influenced Japanese thought directly and indirectly.

Evaluation

Japanese Buddhists have inherited both Yogācāra, and Mādhyamika approaches to Buddhist philosophy and commonly regard them complementary. Yogācāra-type philosophies try to explain how things are, emphasising that things are not what they seem (nor are they otherwise, adds Zen). At the same time, Mādhyamika reminds the philosopher that all such explanations belong in the realm of conventional truth and that not too much importance should be attached to them. The doctrine of two levels of truth casts suspicion on all verbal formulations, whether Buddhist or not. In contrast, Japanese philosophers have traditionally been respectful toward received truths. A Buddhist text with enduring influence in Japan and special mention is the Lotus Sūtra. The Lotus Sūtra states that the Buddha, out of compassion, provided different paths to the same goal of enlightenment to suit living beings of various dispositions. The sūtra also offers several darani or mantras used to evoke the power of the Buddha. The Lotus Sūtra thereby relativises the 'truths' of Buddhism and emphasises the role of magical methods in Buddhist practice, a key feature of Esoteric Buddhism.

Conclusion

The underlying philosophical basis of Japanese Buddhism owes more to Yogācāra and the notion of innate enlightenment than to Mādhyamika logic.

2.2.2

JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY

Preamble

Japanese thinkers have drawn upon various authoritative traditions from different parts of the world (initially Chinese and Indian Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism; Japanese Shintō, and later Western thought). Buddhism and Confucianism were brought to Japan from Korea during the fourth to sixth centuries A.D. Centuries later, Zen-Buddhism came to Japan from China. This section focuses only on Buddhist practice in Japan.

Buddhism In Japan

Buddhism is one of the mainsprings of Japanese philosophy. Though originating in India, it spread and adapted to many different cultures like the Chinese, which later influenced Japanese thought. Most Japanese have seen Buddhism not as an Indian religion but simply as one of the 'three religions' of Shintō, Buddhism, and Confucianism, corresponding to the three religions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in China.

Core Philosophical Doctrines

Japanese forms of Buddhism are overwhelmingly Mahāyānist in content and approach. They regard the Buddha as a cosmic, eternal entity or principle and adopt the bodhisattva as their religious role model who vows to save all beings before he enters perfect supreme enlightenment. Mahāyāna Buddhist thought started in India, and after that, it evolved into two broad streams or tendencies, Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. Both types of philosophy aim to account for the way things are, in conformity with the teachings of the Buddha.

a) Metaphysics

Yogācāra is a form of Buddhist idealism that presents a model of the realms or levels of consciousness to explain why and how Buddhist practice operates as a vehicle of liberation from ignorance, craving, and delusion. According to Yogācāra (known in China and Japan as the 'Mind-only' philosophy), the enlightenment of an agent is inherent. Sometimes an unenlightened mind obscures this intrinsic quality in us. Enlightenment will manifest spontaneously through all the spheres of consciousness once an unenlightened mind begins to practice Buddhism.

The Mādhyamika, on the other hand, presents the notion of Two Truths. The first or Lower Truth is the accessible, expressible, conventional truth necessary to attain the higher truth, which words cannot express. Mādhyamika influenced thinkers who understand the dialectical relationship between these two levels of truth regarding what can be said, written, and described as a necessary stage in attaining that truth beyond speech.

b) Metaphysics

Koguryo, in the north of the Korean peninsula, adopted a branch of Buddhism that interpreted Buddhism in terms of the Daoist concept of nothingness. This concept was familiar in the local shamanist beliefs, but scholars replaced it with the doctrine of emptiness (*Sunyata*) that underlines “What can be said, cannot be real.” The Three Treatise School (the Madhyamika School) and scholars in Koguryo uphold the latter, while those in the Yogacara School in Shilla focused on consciousness. Hence the name “Consciousness-Only School” or the Yogacara School.

As the name suggests, their main claim was that the external world is nothing more than objectifying inner cognitive activities since consciousness and cognition exist (see Blackburn¹⁰). A Shilla monk named “Woncheuk” (613–696) popularised this theory, which was influential in Tibet and China. Many more monks brought other Buddhist doctrines from different schools into Korea after studying abroad (7th century C.E.). The coming of new perspectives brought fierce debates and disputes among the monks, each group arguing that what it had learned was the exclusive truth. Through this process, conflicting theoretical stances adjusted themselves to accommodate each other, which led to the unique characteristic of Korean Buddhism called *integrationism*.

c) Epistemology

Shilla monk, Wonhyo (617–686), analysed three core concepts of Buddhism, namely: mind (*citta*), enlightenment (*bodhi*), and ignorance (*avidyā*), to illuminate their mutual relationship. In his view, Buddha’s mind and people’s minds are the same. However, he emphasised that people born with Buddha’s mind lost track of the actual facet of human existence because of ignorance (i.e., self-centeredness and greed). Thus, being in the state of Buddha’s mind (enlightenment) is nothing above and beyond being in the form of freedom from ignorance and thus returning to the original state of the human mind. Furthermore, he argued that the Three Treatises and the Consciousness-Only School methods were different ways of removing ignorance to reach Buddha’s mind. In this way, Wonhyo harmonises the doctrinal differences among diverse schools as he evolved a single-minded way to get an all-encompassing interpretation of Buddhism. This holistic doctrine facilitated harmony between individuals and the state and between individuals and the universe and supported the political consolidation of the Unified Shilla dynasty.

¹⁰ Presenting a thesis that combines emotivism and quasi realism, Blackburn opines: “we express or project our attitudes onto the world as if they were true (and thus truth-apt), thus accounting for the surface logical structure of moral discourse” (Grefenstette 2007: 3).

2.2.3

KOREAN PHILOSOPHY

Preamble

In the second century C.E., philosophy in Korea began when people unfettered themselves from myths, legends, and shamanist beliefs and began to think in more general and philosophical terms. First was the introduction of Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms (Shilla, Baekje, and Koguryo). As the Three Kingdoms expanded to constitute sovereign states, politics separated from religion. Tribal federations became transformed into monarchies. The mythologies of clans and the associated religious rituals that had dominated people's spiritual world were no longer adequate to serve as the basis of a state. This situation created a need for a unified belief system to reconcile diverse native religious thought and practice and provide a political rationale for the monarch-centred sovereign state. Such an ideology would also counteract the aristocrats who resented the monarch's increasing concentration of political power. The introduction of Buddhism from China filled just this need, and the royal authority welcomed it. After its introduction, Korean Buddhism went through diverse changes and developments.

Buddhism in Korea

Korean Buddhism distinguishes itself from other forms of Buddhism due to its attempt to resolve what it sees as inconsistencies in Mahayana Buddhism and its new holistic approach to Buddhism. Its system accounts for Buddhism in Korea called *Tongbulgyo* ("interpenetrated Buddhism"). *Tongbulguo* is a form of Buddhism that seeks to harmonise all disputes (a principle called *hwajaeng*). Korean Buddhism consists mainly of the Seon lineage, primarily represented by the Jogye and Taego Orders, because of its strong relationship with other Mahayana traditions that bear the imprint of Chan teachings and are closely related to Zen. However, different sects, such as the modern revival of the Cheontae lineage, the Jingak Order (a contemporary esoteric sect), and the newly formed Won, have attracted sizable followings.

Core Philosophical Doctrines

a) Ethics

The Three Kingdoms mentioned above endorsed the School of Precepts (the Vinaya School), which stressed the importance of rule abidance to solidify the ethical norms and regulations of the newly established nations. As the number of Buddhist monks increased, their mission extended beyond the performance of ceremonies and rituals; they started to study the Buddhist doctrines and texts from a scholarly point of view.

CARVAKAS

The philosophical tradition of this school of thought denies the existence of deities and the possibility of knowledge and certainty. So it is an atheistic philosophy of scepticism and materialism. Cārvāka epistemology holds that perception is the primary source of knowledge or the surest way of proving the truth while rejecting inference, which it considers an invalid way to knowledge. The westerners regard this stance as realism and empiricism. Jainism relegates the concepts of liberation, reincarnation, and accumulation of merits or demerits through karma as “reasoning of fools” due to its emphasis on joyful living, unlike the Yoga and Samkhya schools.

BUDDHISM

The founder of Buddhism in India was a Hindu monk named Gautama Siddhartha (563-483 BCE), or Buddha (i.e., the enlightened one). He was from a wealthy family in what is now the country of Nepal, where his father was a feudal lord. Later in life, he abandoned his family estate to pursue a life of religious devotion after being influenced by five ascetic Hindu monks, who taught him the practice of self-denial. So austere was the practice that Buddha could not pull through the ascetic practice. When he started eating again to regain health, his ascetic colleagues disgusted him. Disheartened by his failures, Buddha sat under a fig tree, hoping to achieve a supreme awakening. He stayed all night, and he became enlightened at the first glimpse of the morning star. He eventually drew a large crowd of followers and set up monasteries in every major city. The oldest accounts of Buddha's teachings are in the *Pali Canon*, compiled during the first five centuries after Buddha's death. The writing in the texts is related to Sanskrit, called “Pali,” hence the designation “*Pali Canon*.”

His philosophy draws heavily from Hinduism except for extreme asceticism. Buddha also rejects the Vedic concepts of Brahman (ultimate reality) and Atman (soul, self), fundamental in Hindu philosophies. On the other hand, it accommodates some stances in Indian philosophy like the belief in *karma*, *samsara* (i.e., ideas about cyclic deaths and rebirths), *dharma* (i.e., ideas about ethics, duties, and values), impermanence of all material things, and the body, and possibility of spiritual liberation (*nirvana* or *Moksha*). A major difference between Buddhist philosophy from Hindu and Jain philosophies is that the former rejected the Vedic concepts of an eternal soul (*Atman*) and Brahman (ultimate reality). It underscores, on the contrary, that there is *anatta* (non-Self). The latter forms the basis of Buddhist ethical teaching, which presents four noble truths:

HETERODOX SCHOOL OF THOUGHT (NĀSTIKA)

The heterodox school of thought existed in India before the 6th century BCE. Most of the proponents of this school of thought do not accept the authority of the Veda; rather, they anchor their teachings on non-Vedic Śramaṇic traditions that promote toil and suffering. Their standpoints are opposed to these theories: atomism, materialism, atheism, agnosticism, fatalism, free will, *extreme asceticism*, *strict ahimsa* (i.e., they do not practice a rigid version of the principle of non-violence), and vegetarianism. Notable philosophical traditions under this school include Jainism, Cārvākas, Buddhism, Ajñanas, and Ājīvikas.

JAIN PHILOSOPHY

Jainism is a transtheistic doctrine that opposed the idea that God created the universe and upheld the view that there are two levels of existence: living or conscious beings (*Jiva*) and non-living conscious beings (*ajiva*). Besides this, dualistic metaphysics also deals with reality, cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and divinity. Since ancient times, Jain's philosophical tradition has continued the ancient Śramaṇa tradition. It upholds mind-body dualism and denies the existence of a creative and omnipotent God. The proponents of this school of thought also teach that humans can attain perfection by disciplining themselves and leading a moral life. Their moral code emphasises a *flexible* version of *ahimsa* (i.e., non-injury to all living beings) and vows (*vratas*) of various orders. Other doctrines by Jain philosophers include their doctrine on karma, the theory of the multiple facets of truth, and morality based on the soul's liberation.

An agent obtains such liberation through the three jewels: Right Philosophy, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct (Triratna). To practice Right conduct, one must engage in five kinds of abstinences: abstinence from lying, stealing, striving for luxury and possessions, unchastity, and injuring someone else (Ahimsa). These ethical views unveil strong emphasis by the Jain philosophers on self-control and renunciation. They also insist on the relativity of truth, the individualistic nature of the soul, personal responsibility for one's decisions, and the view that self-reliance and individual efforts alone are responsible for one's liberation. Jain philosophical concepts like Ahimsa, Karma, Moksa (i.e., the liberation of the soul from the cycle of rebirth), and Samsara (transmigration) are common with Hinduism and Buddhism.

self consists of five components: matter, sensation, perception, predisposition, and consciousness. For example, sensations come and go rapidly and are far too fleeting to have any permanence. I have a pleasant sensation; the next moment, I have a painful one. The other four components of the self are equally temporary and changing. In the end, there is not a shred of permanence found in the self. So, the five components instead lead to suffering.

Buddha's epistemic project proffers a solution to the human spiritual/existential problem, such as knowledge verification. For instance, Buddha lists the six internal-external sense fields (*ayatanas*) that solve the latter's problem. They are the eye (for visible objects), ear (for sound), nose (for odour), tongue (for taste), body (for problems associated with touching), and mind (for mental objects). This stance implies that an agent's experience is the only criterion for verifying knowledge. Thus, Buddha's epistemology is a form of correspondence theory with elements of Coherentism.

Buddhist thought is trans-regional and trans-cultural. It is a dominant philosophical tradition in Tibet and Southeast Asian countries like Sri Lanka and Burma. Thinkers in China like *Xuangzang* (authored new works on Yogacara), *Zhiyi* (founder of the Tiantai school and the theory of Madhyamaka), and *Guifeng Zongmi* (the author of Huayan and Zen) developed new perspectives on this philosophical tradition.

AJNANA SCHOOL

Ajñana school was a movement and a major rival of early Buddhism and Jainism. It argues that it was impossible to obtain knowledge of metaphysical nature or ascertain the truth value of philosophical propositions. According to them, even if knowledge was possible, it was useless and disadvantageous for final salvation. Their sophism (i.e., unsound reasoning used for deception) did not yield any positive doctrine.

AJIVIKA SCHOOL

The Ājīvikas were wandering ascetics (shramanas or sannyasins) and atheists who rejected the authority of the Vedas but believed that every living being is an *ātman* – a central premise of Hinduism and Jainism. Some of its prominent figures were Makkhali Gosala and Sanjaya Belatthaputta. These scholars support the doctrine of absolute determinism or fate (*Niyatta*), the premise that there is no free will, that everything that has happened and will happen is entirely preordained, and a function of cosmic principles. Ājīvika school of thought thinks that the karma doctrine is fallacious.

- i. The truth is that life is *suffering or dislocation*. This stance means that the root of all suffering involves some twisting or distortion of our true nature.
- ii. The cause of suffering is desire: This means that it is the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for a future life, or the craving for success in this present life that leads to suffering.
- iii. The truth is that one can achieve the end of suffering by extinguishing or getting rid of one's desire (i.e., *nirvana*, which means "to extinguish").
- iv. The truth is that we can deal with our desires by adopting some moral attitudes, beliefs, and actions, which Buddha collectively calls the *eightfold path*: The noble eightfold path." Include:
 - a. That one must adopt the *right views* free from superstition or delusion.
 - b. One must possess the *right aims* that are high and worthy of the intelligent and earnest person.
 - c. One must practice the *right speech*, which is kindly, open, and truthful.
 - d. An agent must do the *right thing*, peaceful, honest, and pure.
 - e. An agent must adopt the *right livelihood* that brings no harm or danger to living things.
 - f. One must put forth the *right effort* in self-training and self-control.
 - g. To be fully aware of the present moment, one must have the right mindfulness and not be preoccupied with hopes or worries.
 - h. An agent must engage in the *right concentration*, which involves proper meditation that leads to the *nirvana* experience.

These recommendations help an agent extinguish desires and lead to *nirvana* through adopting a *Middle Way* (i.e., calm detachment achieved by avoiding the extremes of asceticism and self-indulgence).

Buddha also suggests that misconceptions about punishment owe to our failure to grasp *true causal connections*. Suppose, for example, that my friend gets injured in an automobile accident shortly after visiting me. I might feel partly responsible for the accident if the visit lasted too long and put him in the wrong place at the wrong time. I might then expect to receive some karmic punishment for my role.

Buddha's metaphysics is obvious in addressing the questions of existence. So, it addresses questions such as "Do I exist?" and "What does myself consist of?" According to him, the commonsense notion of our conscious self is that it is a fixed and permanent feature of our identity. Just as my arms and legs are features of my body, my consciousness is a feature of my non-physical self. As I travel through life, a conscious part of me receives new experiences through my senses, reflects on them, recalls other experiences from my memory, and makes me act in various ways. So, our commonsense notion of the