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# Hung Liang-Chi: a Chinese Malthus

By LEO SILBERMAN\*

Hung Liang-chi is well-known to Chinese scholars as a poet, philosopher, calligrapher, historian and patriot.<sup>1</sup> He has also been considered under the more generally arresting title of "Chinese Malthus".<sup>2</sup> As such the wider demographic public only knows of him as a name, and textbooks on population questions ignore him completely. A translation of his demographic essays is thus overdue; to-day they have a special, fairly obvious interest. The growth of China's economy; the size of her population revealed in the recent census; and the frequent discussions of population,<sup>3</sup> birth control, Malthusianism and their relevance to socialist China add point to what recent and past literature in China has had to say on the interrelation of population size and national welfare.

The main body of traditional opinion in China, viewing the vast, under-developed parts of the economy, has dwelt, of course, on the deficiency of population rather than on overpopulation. More people meant more taxpayers and more soldiers; more land could be put under cultivation; and the growth of the population was interpreted as a good index of increasing wealth. They represented increments in the social capital of the nation.<sup>4</sup> But every now and then there was an unorthodox voice, uneasy about the local, rapid increase of population. Hung Liang-chi was such a writer. Moreover, below the level of the *literati*, the people themselves knew, discussed and practised, a variety of measures which had the effect of slowing down the growth of population. Abstinence was sometimes practised during marriage, for the additional reason that it was said by the Buddhists and Taoists to prolong the length of life; and many other popular devices included, to an extraordinary extent, infanticide.<sup>5</sup> Both Adam Smith and Malthus reported these practices.

Hung was a contemporary of Malthus. He, like Malthus, had several predecessors. However, he is much like Malthus, the first in his own country to give coherent expression to the theory of the inexorable danger of threatening

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<sup>1</sup> For Chinese references to his philosophical ideas and chronological biography cf. A. Forke: *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie*, 1938, pp. 562 ff., and A. W. Hummel: *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 1943-4, Article on Hung Liang Chi.

<sup>2</sup> C. F. Lung: "A note on Hung Liang Chi, the Chinese Malthus", *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, October, 1935, pp. 248ff. Also Ta Chen: *Population Problems*, Shanghai, 1933, who reprints Hung's essay as an appendix; Chen Ch'ang Hung: *The Population of China*, and Chang Ying Lia: "Hung Liang Chi's Theory of Population," *Eastern Miscellany*, 1936, 2, pp. 67 ff. Wu Pai-hsi: "The population theory of Hung Liang Chi," *She Hui Yen Chiu*, 1935, 81, pp. 241-3. The translation of the essays was prepared from the appendix of Ta Chen (1933).

<sup>3</sup> For references up to 1958 cf. U.S. Bureau of the Census: *The Population and Manpower of China: An annotated Bibliography*. Int. Pop. Reports Series 90, No. 8.

<sup>4</sup> In the classical period Confucius, Mo Ti and Mencius all wrote on population. They were concerned about underpopulation.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. J. Matignon: *La Chine Hermétique*, 1936. Also P. Falcon: *L'Infanticide i Cina*. *Arch. Antrop. Crim. Psich. Med. Leg.*, Turin, 1928, xxviii.

overpopulation. From this there was no escape. Both writers crystallized ideas sporadically occurring to others: Hung's China was witnessing a rapid increase in population, as was contemporary Europe, possibly for similar reasons following the introduction of American food plants.<sup>6</sup> There is debate whether in the 150 years from the mid-seventeenth century the population doubled or trebled,<sup>7</sup> depending on what credence is given to the censuses.<sup>8</sup> It certainly was a period of anxiety, it forced men to think along new lines, as Hung in his own life exemplified: he courted death rather than let the situation drift.

#### THE LIFE OF HUNG LIANG-CHI (1744-1809)

Up to the point of his death sentence, Hung was typical of the Chinese scholar who rose from humble beginnings to a pleasant position in Peking. He was born in the province of Kiangsu. His mother was widowed when Hung was only six years old. So as a poor lad, he had to supplement the family's livelihood. At the age of 13, the boy was already known as a good poet, a reputation he has retained; his work has been lovingly edited by his great-grandson. He eked out a living by giving private lessons to relatives. His industry was prodigious he worked in the cold winter nights for his examinations. These he twice failed. At 20 he was earning 3,800 *cash*, a year later he made 7,000 *cash* (£3 4s. od. it would then have been in England). At the age of 26, he was at last appointed private secretary to the Chancellor of Anhwei. At 44, having passed his provincial examinations and the metropolitan examinations with the second highest honours (*pang-yen*), he became *Hanlin* and was elected Fellow of the Historical College. Two years later he was Chancellor of Kweichow. At first he busied himself with restocking the library, but these tranquil duties did not satisfy him. He memorialised Prince Chêng. As teacher in the School of Princes and on the staff of the National Academy, his protest would reach the august ears, but he had no formal right to permit himself such luxuries, the more so since he accused the Imperial family of corruption. The background to his bold step was the growing unrest in Szechwan, Shensi, Hupeh, and his own province. The new Emperor seemed in earnest about reforms, the evil days of the past were to be no more.

The sentence was death. However, the Emperor commuted it to exile, disregarding the demands of his courtiers and Minister of Justice that the sentence be carried out. Hung, in the eyes of the monarch, had acted from patriotic motives. He was banished to Ili. Hung's friends accompanied him to the

<sup>6</sup> Ho Ping-ti: "The Introduction of American Food Plants into China," *Amer. Anthropologist*, 1955, lvii, no 2, pt. 1. "Early Ripening Rice in Chinese History," *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, December, 1956. "American Food Plants in China," *Plant Sc. Bull.*, January, 1956.

<sup>7</sup> W. F. Willcox: "China's Population around the End of the Empire," *Jnl. Amer. Stat. Assoc.*, March, 1928, and September, 1930. A. M. Carr Saunders: *World Population*, 1936.

<sup>8</sup> E. Biot: *La Population de la Chine*, *Jnl. Asiatique* (2e serie), 1838. J. Sacharoff: "Historische Übersicht der Bevölkerungsverhältnisse Chinas," *Arbeiten d. kais. russ. Gesandtschaft*, Peking, 1858. W. Rockhill: "Inquiry into the Population of China," *Smithsonian Misc. Coll.*, 1904, xlvii. C. P. Fitzgerald: "Historical Evidence for the Growth of the Chinese Population," *Sociol. Rev.*, 1936, xxviii, pp. 133 ff., and 267 ff. H. Bielenstein: "The Census of China during the Period 2-742 A.D.," *Bull. Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, Stockholm, 1947, xix. O. B. van der Sprenkel: "Population Statistics of Ming China," *Bull. School of Orient. and Afr. Studies*, 1953, xv, pp. 289 ff. J. D. Durand: "Some remarks on the Population Statistics of Ancient China and the Outlines of Chinese Population History", 1959, annual meeting of the Population Association of America.

Lukou Bridge outside Peking, almost a procession of protest, certainly one in sympathy with Hung's stand. Hung always had a capacity for friendship, his genial character was improved by a love of carousing, his gift for song writing, his loyalty to those he loved. As is so often the case with this temperament he also made many enemies.

His exile lasted only a hundred days, the shortest on record. The Emperor having qualms about the sentence from the first, ascribed the continuing drought to the patriot's exile. Hung would have scoffed at such a superstitious idea, as his essays sufficiently prove, but in the circumstances he was glad to be returned with honours. Rain promptly fell in abundance. His epithet henceforth was "The Scholar Reborn".

His remaining days were usefully spent among books, students and friends, and in travels, gazetteering, and diversions. At the age of 55 he founded a drinking club. He was head of the Yang Ch'uan Academy from its foundation. When he died at the age of 65 he was thought to be the greatest intellectual of his age. He is often placed on an equal footing with the philosopher-astronomer Tai Chen (1723-1777) and the great scholar of the generation succeeding him Kung Tsu-chên (1792-1841). His works, grouped under 24 titles, contain, beside poetry and literary criticism, and comments on the Ch'un Ch'iu and Tso Chuan, a good deal of descriptive writing, especially local histories and geographical accounts prepared for the series edited by Pi Yüan, the Governor-General of Kiangsu and Anhwei, patron and bibliophile, a journal of his life in exile, and essays of the type translated in this paper; a description of his mother's family is part of the miscellany.

#### HUNG'S VIEWS ON SOCIETY

Hung was a controversialist hitting at opposing schools of thought. He was a thoroughgoing materialist as the eighteenth century produced them in France. Religious notions were to him mainly a hoax of religious teachers, though they were not without their uses in keeping the lower orders in check. He lived, and was willing to die, by his idea that "if the living cling so tenaciously to life, perhaps the dead do the same and prefer death to life," and both are obstinate in doing so, and as sleep was pleasant so might death be. Death like sleep shut out cold, heat and pain; one probably encountered one's dead friends. He thought that the human spirit returns to its progenitor, much as the body merges into its own element, the earth. He dismissed the anthropomorphic conceptions of the deity as born from a paucity of imagination. He mocked at the common propensity that elevated ancient kings and warriors into gods. He opposed fanciful metaphors. To him there was no demon of thunder—only thunder. Reality was all a matter of where one stood, of one's perspective.

Viewed from the vantage point of a higher being, man was but part of the animal kingdom. Man evolved but did not necessarily gain wisdom as he gained strength. In these thoughts, Hung had more in common with Diderot and Darwin; "Parson Malthus" would not share such views.

Hung had none of Malthus's qualities in manipulating statistics. He obviously knew of them in his official capacity but he rests his case on plausibility and an

appeal to deductive reasoning. His title as the "Chinese Malthus" derived mainly from the rebuff Hung gives to easy optimists. Hung's formulation of the principle of geometric increases outstripping more slowly developing food production; his idea about the survival of the fittest; and finally his reliance on natural checks, are pure Malthusianism.

Land reform is desirable to Hung but no permanent way out. He would welcome a war on waste and the suppression of parasitical elements like the Buddhist and Taoist monks. But these are stopgaps, as is the cultivation of new lands. The waste of war is a blessing in disguise. He tilted at proposals made by members of opposing schools of thought and implicitly also by Poivre and other French physiocrats who were admirers of China and believed that China showed the way towards lasting prosperity.<sup>9</sup> Hung cannot have known of Malthus for the simple reason that he published his essays in the same year as Malthus (1798) and two of those quoted in 1793, a true case of independent discovery.<sup>10</sup> In fact, closer to China was a "Japanese Malthus"<sup>11</sup> contemporary with Hung; the notion that only Western Europe could produce the views associated with the name of Malthus is certainly fallacious. Thus social reformers in non-European societies facing rapid population growth, need not accept the attack that they are mouthing alien ideas, borrowed from the West. The England of Malthus differed only radically from the rest of the world in that an essay such as Malthus's was immediately taken up, countered, developed, and bowdlerised, whereas Chinese scholars disregarded Hung's sociology. It was his attitude to the classics, that excited their comment. It will be interesting to see how he is treated in this day by the Peking authorities. The independent discovery of new ideas in separate civilisations is testimony to scientific determinism. The pressure of similar problems generates identical theories in widely different personalities.

#### ANTI-MALTHUSIANISM IN MODERN CHINA

What is the status of the population problem in China?

Birth control appliances can be legally sold in Communist China. For a time it even seemed as if the discussion of birth control would become part of the social revolution taking place in China. In 1956 resolutions were carried, urging that a birth control campaign be pursued with vigour, using all the agencies at the disposal of the government, including co-operatives, trade unions, youth and women's clubs. The population was growing by 15 millions annually, but this was not the (overt) reason for the campaign. The emphasis was on the health of the women, not on the dangers of overpopulation. "Any interpretation of the campaign as a means to assist the economic development of the country was categorically rejected".<sup>12</sup> This was made clear in the

<sup>9</sup> Cf. L. A. Naverick: *China, a Model for Europe*, 1946. F. Quesnay: *Le Despotisme de la Chine*, 1767.

<sup>10</sup> Malthus thought "China had 60% more population than her food resources can comfortably support" (*Essay*, 1933, edit, I, p. 131).

<sup>11</sup> D. Keen: *The Japanese Discovery of Europe*, 1952, deals with the "Japanese Malthus," Honda Toschiaki (1744-1821).

<sup>12</sup> R. Pressart: "La population de la Chine et son économie," *Population*, October-December, 1958, pp. 569-89. Cf. also Pierre Simon: "Le contrôle des naissances en Chine," *La Maternité Heureuse*, December, 1958, no. 7.

authoritative speeches during the third session of the First National People's Congress on June 26, 1956:—

“ ‘In regard to the problem of birth control which has been put into practice for the health of women and babies, for the education of children, and for the growth of our people, our propaganda has not been sufficient. Henceforth, we should, under the leadership of the party and the government, further develop the work of propaganda and education and strengthen the work of technical guidance in co-operation with the units concerned.’

As I am deeply interested in this problem, Minister Li's statement has made me very happy. Minister Li has correctly evaluated the importance of the problem of birth control, frankly admitted the inadequacy of propaganda conducted in the past, and carefully pointed out the direction of our future efforts. I truly believe that, in regard to birth control, propaganda and education on the one hand, and technical guidance on the other, will be properly developed as required.”

The campaign was also limited to the Chinese-speaking population, the national minorities numbering 35 million persons were not touched, perhaps because the authorities did not know how to tackle the delicate question among peoples of different cultures, though even in the outlying provinces chemists stocked contraceptive devices whenever they were supplied, and displayed them.

In 1958, opinion swung away from the campaign. Ma Yin-chun, the President of Peking University was criticized for Malthusian views. During 1958 occurred the bombardment of Quemoy and the remarks, reported with great emphasis, that China with 650 millions will not be dictated to from any quarter. It was said that because China had an immensely large population, she had less to fear than any other nation from an atomic war, a point also at the time made by Marshal Tito. Moreover, there was the bumper crop and much optimism engendered by it. It was stressed that the defeatist idea that China could not feed her additional mouths, could be “smashed” by yet higher production achievements. The ultimate trouble might not be overpopulation, but underpopulation. Liu Shao-chi said at the second session of the eighth congress of the Chinese Communist Party in May, 1958:

“Some people doubted whether agricultural production could expand very rapidly. They quoted authoritative works, chapter and verse, to prove that agriculture could only advance slowly and that, what is more, its growth could in no way be guaranteed. Some scholars even asserted that the rate of agricultural growth could not keep pace with the growth of population. They argued that as the population grows, consumption will increase and there will not be much of an increase in accumulation. From this they draw their pessimistic conclusions on the rate of growth of agriculture in our country, and, indeed, of the national economy as a whole. Underlying such ideas is an underestimation of the organized revolutionary peasants of our country, and the facts inevitably gave them the lie. The great forward leap in agricultural production and construction this year has not only completely knocked the bottom out of their contention that agriculture cannot make quick progress but also blown sky high their argument that a big population impedes accumulation. All they see is that men are consumers and that the greater the population, the bigger the consumption. They fail to see that men are first of all producers and that when there is a large population there is also the possibility of greater production and more accumulation. Their views obviously run counter to Marxism-Leninism.”

Thus, whatever may be the extent of birth control in China today, the theoretical basis of such practice is not Malthusian. In the circumstances, Hung Liang-chi

is at present likely to be more frequently referred to outside China than in his own country.

#### FIVE ESSAYS BY HUNG LIANG-CHI

##### CAUSERIE ON A PEACEFUL REIGN

No one deems himself unhappy if he lives in a state of peace. No one deems himself unhappy if he lives in a peaceful reign of long duration. When peace reigns for more than a hundred years, the duration may be called a long one. And yet there are inescapable dangers.

Take the population question. Population will in 30 years increase five times and 10 times in 60 years. Within a matter of a hundred years it will have increased twenty-fold.

Let us take a single family as our unit of calculation. Suppose that at the time of the great-grandfather or the great-great-grandfather a man possesses 10 rooms and 100 *mon* of land, and is single. When he gets married there will be two in the family. The two in the family will find the 10 rooms and the 100 *mon* of land more than adequate for their needs. Let us suppose, however, that the man has three sons. Now in the children's generation the father and his three sons, each with his spouse, constitute a group of eight. With eight in the family there is no overlooking the desirability of servant help. So now there will be no less than 10 people in the family. With 10 people living in 10 rooms and feeding on 100 *mon* of land, we know that their lodging and board will only just be sufficient. When the sons bear sons and they acquire wives there will be no less than 20 odd people in the home even taking possible deaths into account. With over 20 people living in 10 rooms on 100 *mon* of land we know, even if they tighten their belts and live most modestly, that shelter and land will not be sufficient.

When grandsons beget great-grandsons and great-grandsons beget great-great-grandsons the population will have swollen to 50 or 60 times the size we started with in the first generation. In other words, the one family in the first generation will have multiplied relentlessly into 10 families. In our sample, of course, there will be families of low fertility as well as families of high fertility. Probably the extremes cancel one another out. Someone will probably tell me that by the time we have reached great grandsons, new previously vacant land and new houses will be available. Even so, the increase in land and houses will be just double, three times, or at most five times the original, whereas the population has increased 10 or 20 times. In other words, the amount of land and the number of houses will always be deficient compared with the size of population. The number of families will always be excessive.

What, too, about the added factor of human greed? One man may possess a house big enough for 100 persons. Another family may own land enough for 100 families. Small wonder that everywhere men die of hunger and cold, in wind, storm and frost, and of the dew in the morning.

Does Heaven know a remedy? Flood and drought, plague and pestilence are what nature offers us as remedies, though the percentage that die in natural calamities rarely exceeds one or two-tenths of the population.

Do emperors and state officials possess remedies? They can see to it that there is no uncultivated land and no unused labour in the realm. When land is reclaimed they can move people on to it to cultivate there. When taxation is unduly heavy, they may lighten it according to ancient precedent. They can forbid luxurious living and suppress speculation in land. In the case of flood, drought and plague they can open granaries and allow the treasury to relieve the masses. But that is all there is as to the remedies that could possibly be put into effect by the emperor and the state officials.

In short, in a long reign of peace, the emperor and his officials can neither stop human reproduction, nor are the measures they do dispose of adequate to provide the people with sustenance—no more at least than what we have stated.

The actual situation is rather worse than shown by our statistics of population increase and the growth of the means of survival. For among 10 young people in a family, one or two will not abide by the precepts of their elders. Tramps and vagabonds also cannot be taught to abide by the laws enacted by their betters. Unpleasantness is the inevitable outcome, when 10 people must share one man's lodgings. What happens when they share it with a hundred? To distribute one man's food among 10 means deprivation, and what of a hundred? This is why I am worried about the lot of a people living in a peaceful reign.

## CAUSERIE ON LIVELIHOOD

What with one thing and another, natural calamities, and crops that are bad, a *mou* of land produces no more these days than once did a *shib*. The people with all the old and infirm about, nowadays consume no more than one *sheng* per day per person. On this basis, a person's annual consumption of food is equivalent to what four *mou* will produce, so that 40 *mou* of land are needed for a family of 10. Forty *mou* yield to-day the equivalent of 100 *mou* in the old days.

The four classes of society each have their own way of making a livelihood. The peasants and artisans depend on their labour. The merchants use their profits to buy food. The scholars with their knowledge of books secure their wants by teaching and writing. Artisans and merchants (we can omit the peasants here) with the lowest incomes can save 100 *cash* a day. Scholars also can put aside 100 *cash* a day with their teaching and writing. Hence the annual savings of scholar, artisan and merchant total no less than 40,000. Fifty years ago, in my father's and grandfather's time, one unit of rice, i.e. one *sheng*, cost no more than 6-7 *cash*. One unit of cloth, i.e. one *chang*, cost no more than 30-40 *cash*. If a person possessed five *chang* of cloth in any year he did not suffer from the cold. If he consumed four *shib* of rice a year he did not suffer hunger. And in those days four *shib* of rice cost 2,800 *cash* and five *chang* of cloth only 200 *cash*. In other words, one man's income was quite sufficient to keep 10 people alive. Even in a family which did not farm or weave, so long as one person worked, the rest did not want.

To-day the situation is different. There are 10 times more farmers than there were, with no increase in land. There are 10 times the merchants of before, with no increase in the volume of trade. There are 10 times more scholars, with no increase in the number of jobs for teachers and scribes. Moreover, the *sheng* of rice costs 30-40 *cash*; the *chang* of cloth costs 100-200 *cash*. The income is smaller and the prices are higher. Hence the scholars, artisans, merchants and the farmers each bring down the value of their labour in an endeavour to sell their labour and buy cloth, silk, nuts and rice, all inflated in price. That is the reason why we have to toil the whole year round and for all our lives and why the honest citizen must face the threat of starvation while the criminally-minded takes to stealing and robbery.

Incidentally, I have only considered the diligent and the gainfully employed. In point of fact, with a population 10 times larger than before, the number of loafers must also be 10 times what they were before. In the event of floods, droughts and plague these far greater numbers of loafers will obviously not simply wait for death to come. This is a further point which causes concern and apprehension.

## CAUSERIE ON THE WORLD

Sometimes it is said that Heaven created all earthly things with the beneficent aim of keeping man alive. The saying is a case of fallacious reasoning.

Fish come with running water. Birds fly with the winds up from the forest. Insects and all kinds of animals are brought with the breezes from the plains. It is maintained that these animals are specially created by Heaven for the benefit of man. What of crocodiles and alligators in the water that eat men? Is it a correct assumption that Heaven created man for the sake of the crocodiles and the alligators? The bears of the forest sometimes will devour men. Has Heaven made man for the sake of bears? Tiger and leopards ravish men who go near watering places. Has Heaven made man for the sake of tigers and leopards? Now crocodiles and alligators kill men at times, but men also can kill crocodiles and alligators. Bears, tigers and leopards kill men, yet the number of these animals killed by man exceeds the number of men killed by the former. All can be summed up in the words "strength and number". When the crocodile is more powerful than the man, the crocodile kills the man, and vice versa. When tigers, bears and leopards outnumber men, they will kill the men, or vice versa. If it were correct to say that Heaven created everything for the best then all waters would be inhabited not by crocodiles but solely by fish, and the forest only by sables, foxes and badgers, and not by bears. The plains should be stocked by stags, deer and other non-savage animals, not by tigers and leopards.

Of course, you might say that all these animals are not part of man's regular food supply, that dogs, pigs, cows, lambs and chickens are truly Heaven's gift to man. Even this is an



erroneous assumption. Were they really created exclusively for man, they would be utterly docile, giving us not trouble, but rather allow themselves to be eaten willingly by men. Instead, the horns of rams and cows will sometimes butt men to death, and dogs fatally bite men. Anyway, how is it that animals supposedly solely created for men, kill men? Again since the T'ang and Sung dynasties men eat dogs less frequently. If it was Heaven's will that something dog-like should be eaten by men, then some other animal should take the dog's place subsequently to the T'ang and Sung periods, to satisfy men's changing desires and appetites.

From men's perspiration vermin is generated, just as on cows, sheep and horses. Once insects infest a being they suck the skin. Do men intentionally create lice so that they can be bitten? And similarly, because plants have no senses and are silently devoured by man, is it not stupid to contend that plants by nature like being consumed by man?

#### CAUSERIE ON FATE

Are longevity and premature death, success and failure in life, all pre-determined? The plain answer is they are not. The notion that all is fated has been put forward by the sages for the benefit of those whose intelligence is below average. The doctrine of fate is like the theories of transmigration of souls and of the effects caused in a previous existence that the Buddhists and Taoists talk about. Are there really transmigrations and consequences that flow from actions in a previous state? The plain answer is that there are no such things. The claim that they exist is but a Buddhist way of bamboozling the uneducated.

We say that neither longevity, nor success or failure are pre-determined, but that men stand in the same relationship to the earth that fleas do to the body. Just as there are countless human lives, so there are countless fleas in the crevices of the human body. Of these fleas living on the body some are destroyed even before they are hatched; others are killed long after they have reached maturity; some are never killed but exist on, finally to perish in the seams, hems and folds of our clothing. Some are killed in our bath; some in the morning wash. When they say that man's fate is the special care of the Creator; to whose will is the fate of fleas entrusted? As men do not expressly decide on the life of each individual flea, so it may be assumed does Heaven not take stock of the destiny of each separate human being.

Someone may now reply that men are large and fleas are small. But from the viewpoint of Heaven men are as small as fleas. Fleas are like men: those on a rich man luxuriate in silks, those on a poor man live in rags condemned to poverty and a humble station. A man in my country plagued by innumerable lice and with a quick temper threw his clothes into the fire. Presumably no louse escaped after the clothes had been consigned to the flames. The fate of all that man's lice was identical, a case surely similar to the mass murder of Chao or the flood at Li-yang Hsien and Suchow when these two places were turned in one day into a lake? If lice have no pre-determination how can we pretend that humans have?

Of course, a man with a lower than average status in society, unless kept aloft by the theory of fate, will indulge in impudent mischief. Likewise the stupid, unless kept going by a belief in the transmigration of souls and consequences in a future life for actions committed in this, would do unlimited evil. So I accept that men of low class should believe in Fate. Herein lies the inner meaning of the philosophies of the wise men: the stupid should believe in transmigration and that is the purpose of Buddha's sermon to the humble. By this motive force Buddhism perpetuates itself.

#### CAUSERIE ON LONGEVITY AND EARLY DEATH

Early death as much as human longevity is a consequence of a person's constitution. I do not think that the span of life can be lengthened by elaborate precautions nor shortened by over-indulgence. Why? Because the span of life of animals is often shorter than man's and yet I have not heard that animals indulge.

Confining our discussion to man, the spans of life given to the rich and to the poor are about equal, though it is obvious that a poor man has no means of imitating a rich man's self-indulgence. Further, it is maintained sometimes, that longevity can be achieved by physic and by breathing exercises. This surely cannot be. In ancient times the man who knew most about hygiene and dietetics was Hsüan-yüan. Hsüan-yüan however did not even live to see the reigns of Yao and Shun. Yung-chi Chi and Pao-tu Tzu were the two foremost men who

knew how to conserve their energies and achieve harmony of mind. These two did not live beyond early manhood and middle age respectively.

Now suppose there are two men—one with few desires and taking good care of himself even in his bedchamber, and the other indulging to his heart's content in song and women. At the end the length of life of these two will not differ much. Why? Well, the one with few desires although not devoid of all desires, may have a weak constitution. The other who indulges himself, although not entirely unmindful of his health, has a strong constitution. So in the final analysis the key to long life lies in a person's constitution. Naturally not even with the strongest constitution and the best care in the world can a man live for ever.

Look at flowers and you will perceive the force of my argument. Some flowers and leaves on a plant drop before the season is over, some after. Good watering is like a man taking good care of himself. Flowers will die at different times by virtue of their innate nature as in the case of men. And in the end all flowers must die. So despite the difference in the constitution all life arrives at a similar end. The same can be observed with insects. Some are fierce, some weak. Some hibernate and some retire long before the season of snow and frost. There are differences in the time of hibernation but no difference in the ubiquity of hibernation. Flowers and leaves cannot flourish without eventually fading; insects cannot exist without periodically hibernating. Then how could men live and avoid death?

People also say that in the fairyland of peace and purity there exist genii and that these genii are immortal. The immortal genii living in that land of purity and celestial peace do not partake of food and drink. Is there a connection? An old account tells us that silkworms lay eggs after 22 days of eating in which they never drink. On the other hand, the cicada lay their eggs after 30 days in which they drink but never eat, while ephemera die within three days, if left without food and drink. If some live without food and drink, why must the ephemera die so soon? If death could be postponed by abstaining from food and drink, the ephemera should be able to keep going for more than a mere three days?

A casuist may say: "It isn't that genii don't eat or drink at all; they merely abstain from cooked food." But on this subject the records tell us: "The peoples of the East are called *I*. Their hair is dishevelled, their bodies are painted; and they do not eat cooked food. The peoples to the South are called *Men*. Their foreheads are tattooed, their toes webbed close together, and they do not eat cooked food". If immortality were achievable by desisting from cooked food, then these peoples of the East and the South would be immortal. If someone holds the Easterners and Southerners nowadays eat cooked food, where are men from the time before cooked food was consumed? Men live and die whether on cooked or uncooked food. The notion that immortality is achievable by not eating and drinking, or by not eating cooked food, does not make sense.

Should men transform into genii, why is it then that more of the latter are about from olden times and fewer from more recent periods? Why is it that the genii one hears about these days and allegedly encounters are mostly of people born after those of the T'ang and Sung eras have all died, so that the present-day genii are of people living since the days of T'ang and Sung? If there is passing over in fairyland there is no fun in being a geni. It is a contradiction in terms. Hence I contend that there are no such things as genii in this world and there are no immortals. The span of life varies as the constitution of individuals varies.