

**Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese**

sur antiquité établie sur toute de peu  
mille ans ou environ; cette cause plane  
échappe à l'expérimentation long temps, et  
ce n'est pas dans la philosophie des Grecs, mais dans  
les écrits de Platon, que l'on trouve l'explication  
de ce sens une grande importance et préférance  
à tout autre, nouveau venus au monde, et sans à peine  
la barbare de la veuler rapporter une telle doctrine, si aventurelle  
que ce qu'elle ne démontre pas ne paraît point s'accorder  
avec les observations physiques ordinaires. Mais il résulte d'apparence qu'en  
l'antiquité que nous en eussions les premières  
plus simples et quantité d'opinions des livres  
écris par les Chinois, où ils parlent des principes  
de la nature. Mais cela n'étant point suffisant pour juger  
peut-être que, par prudence. Et comme le père Nicoll,  
longtemps (vol. 2) dit Longobardi, successivement  
avait visiblement démontré les principes de la nature, alors le p. Ricci, qui écrivit le premier  
livre de physique chinoise, et fut l'auteur de la  
tradition, a été pendant nombre d'années dans la chine jusqu'à sa mort, étant professeur à l'école de jésuites  
et a rapporté plus de passages des auteurs chinois.  
Chanoine, et ainsi dans le second de ses œuvres, et ce qui  
qui leur sont antérieurs, jusqu'à ce que de nos jours il y ait  
des travaux pour donner un véritable et réellement  
aux dignes autorités de la science. Il est donc  
rompt pour point dans une révolution en ce qui a trait  
d'apparence à ce sujet, sans plus faire, et  
nous n'avons pas de preuve de l'opinion de l'autre  
de l'autre, mais avons une confirmation de l'autre.  
Le premier principe des Chinois s'appelle Li (Longobardi fd. 2. p. 13)  
C'est-à-dire la première raison ou fondement de toute la  
nature (fd. 9. p. 32) racine superficielle de toute la  
nature (fd. 11. p. 50) il n'y a rien de plus grand que de tout ce  
qui existe que le Li (fd. 11. p. 51) le père  
affirme de S. Marc Evangeliste, qui a aussi écrit  
un temps dans la chine, et a aussi écrit contre  
les dogmes de l'orthodoxie, et il a écrit que le Li est  
la loi qui dirige les choses, et une intelligence qui  
les connaît (p. 62.) la loi et la règle superficielle  
de laquelle le Ciel et la terre ont été formées (p. 65.)  
Alors laquelle le Ciel et la terre ont été formées (p. 72.)  
origine, source et principe de tout ce qui a été produit (p. 72.)  
Il convient que les Japonais disent quelque chose  
sur le principe de la Terre ou Li, toutes les choses  
sont produites comme le tout principal, et il est  
ainsi que le monde entier est aussi produit selon les Chinois  
que le soleil et la lune, et autres étoiles, et il est  
le Li qui fait la cause qui fait mouvoir le Ciel depuis tant  
de siècles, et il mouve toujours également il donne la  
sécurité à la Terre, il commande aux étoiles, lunes et  
planètes. Comme l'écrit le père Ricci, que le Ciel n'a pas  
de principes de son propre chef, et que le Li est le principe  
qui lui confère et répète dans le Li, que il est prédominant  
dans tout, et il gouverne tout, mais il n'est pas tout  
ou n'a pas de force au delà de la Terre, (p. 73) le père de Schone  
écrit que le Ciel et la Terre, (p. 26) le p. 8

DISCOURSE ON THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF THE CHINESE

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Translated, with an Introduction, Notes and Commentary

by

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and

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MONOGRAPH NO. 4 OF THE  
SOCIETY FOR ASIAN AND COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY

1977

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Manufactured in the United States of America

First printing, 1977  
Second printing, 1980

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, Freiherr von, 1646-1716.

Discourse on the natural theology of the Chinese.

(Monograph of the Society for Asian and Comparative  
Philosophy ; 4)

Translation of Lettre sur la philosophie chinoise à  
Nicolas de Remond.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Philosophy, Chinese. I. Rosemont, Henry, 1934-  
II. Cook, Daniel J. III. Title. IV. Series: Society  
for Asian and comparative Philosophy. Monograph of the  
Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy ; 4.

B2591. L47E5 1977 181'.11 77-2411

ISBN 0-8248-0542-9

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These acknowledgements stand as testimony to the range, depth, and quality of Leibniz's mind: even with a division of the varied labors between us, much assistance was needed to complete and produce this work.

Our first debt is to Lynne van Voorhees of Lehman College, CUNY, whose detailed knowledge of 17th Century French syntax and idiom reduced markedly the number of errors from the first to later drafts of the translation; we are grateful for her close and careful reading of the text. John Tagliabue, of the Mittelateinisches Seminar, University of Bonn, assisted us in translating passages from Latin, and provided specific citations for several of the allusions Leibniz made to various aspects of Roman law and religion.

An early version of the manuscript was read by Eliot Deutsch of the University of Hawaii, Gerald Larson of the University of California - Santa Barbara, and David Mungello of Briarcliff College, all of whom made several helpful suggestions for improving it. The final version was given added clarity and detail thanks to a clear and detailed reading by Nathan Sivin of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

We are further grateful to David Mungello for making available to us the typed draft of his forthcoming Leibniz and Neo-Confucianism: The Search for Accord, to which we have referred frequently in the footnotes. Similarly, we

have frequently cited the German version of this work by Renate Loosen and Franz Von Essen, Zwei Briefe Über das Binäre Zahlensystem und die Chinesische Philosophie; differences of translation and interpretation notwithstanding, we have profited from the work of our predecessors. We have also profited from the work of our contemporaries: Christopher Benoit, Alan Berkowitz, and Thatcher Deane, of the Leibniz-Bouvet Correspondence Project at the University of Vermont, kindly made available to us drafts of their important work, which we hope is soon published.

Because the monographs in this series are produced directly from a typescript, and because this particular manuscript required several type faces, a planned layout, and materials in several languages, it was essential that the final copy be prepared with special care and skill. We are confident that readers will agree that the work was done outstandingly well. All of the credit goes to Anna Laura Rosow and Sally Warren of the East Asian Research Center at Harvard University, who, in addition to their typing, proofread the manuscript in an uncommonly competent manner. Matching the typescript in its aesthetic qualities is the Chinese calligraphy, for which we are indebted to Diana Wang of the Korean Studies Department at Harvard. Katherine Bruner, formerly with the Harvard University Press, kindly undertook the difficult task of preparing the index.

Our final debt is to Albert Heinekamp and his associates at the G. W. Leibniz Gesellschaft in Hanover, West Germany, who supplied us, from the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, with a photographic copy of Leibniz's autograph of the Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese, and with other materials relevant to this translation.

To all of these people we are deeply grateful.

Lexington, Massachusetts

H. R.

September, 1976

D. J. C.



**Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese**



## INTRODUCTION

### I. Background of the Discourse

If Erasmus of Rotterdam was the "Universal Man" of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was a major candidate for the title two hundred years later. He not only studied, but wrote original works on subjects as distinct as geometry and biology, geology and theology, and metaphysics and statistics; his doctoral dissertation topic was jurisprudence; he was one of the foremost mathematicians of his time, and a famous philosopher whose fame has endured; and he was all of these while engaged in a long and active public career.

It is well known that China was among his many interests. He studied Chinese civilization throughout his adult life, and from the late 1680's until his death in 1716 his studies were fairly detailed, not merely exotic diversions. A significant amount of his correspondence was devoted to China, and several of his correspondents were among the most knowledgeable Europeans of his day on the subject of Chinese affairs. One of the relatively few of his writings on any subject published during his lifetime was his "Preface" to the Novissima Sinica<sup>1</sup> (Recent News from China), issued in 1697 and again in 1699.

A part of his interest was ecumenical; he wanted to bring together the several European countries into one Christian body, and he believed the goal would be realized sooner, and be more enduring, by including other major civilizations such as Russia and China in the expanded human community. But China was not only a means to an end for Leibniz, for he had a high regard for Chinese accomplishments in and of themselves, sufficient to think that China had much to teach Europe. In his "Preface" he wrote:

[I]f we are their equals in the industrial arts, and ahead of them in contemplative sciences, certainly they surpass us (though it is almost shameful to admit this) in practical philosophy, that is, in the precepts of ethics and politics adapted to the present life and use of mortals.

From the "Preface" alone, however, we will not learn about Leibniz's ideas on Chinese philosophy and religion in detail, because the bulk of the Novissima Sinica is more a catalog of current events dealing with China and the opening of trade routes than it is a serious sinological treatise. Further, although Leibniz regularly discussed Chinese thought in his correspondence, the discussions were usually only a few paragraphs in length. Not until the last year of his life did he set down his views on Chinese thought systematically, in a long letter written to one of his later correspondents, Nicholas de Remond, a French Platonist and the head of the Councils of the Duke of Orleans. In correspondence written the year before, Remond sent Leibniz two works on Chinese

religion written by Catholic missionaries, and asked the philosopher's opinion of them.<sup>3</sup> Leibniz's reply is the document translated herein. It is usually referred to as the "Letter on Chinese Philosophy"; Leibniz himself, however, referred to the text as a "Discours sur la Theologie naturelle des Chinois," which provided the title of this edition.<sup>4</sup>

Even by Leibnizian standards (and he was a prolific correspondent), the reply is a long one: over 14,000 words. The main topics discussed are the Chinese conception of God, universal principles, spiritual substance(s), souls, immortality, and the correlations between Leibniz's binary mathematical notation and the I Ching, China's oldest book of divination. In these contexts he also discusses his own famous views of pre-established harmony, entelechies, primary and secondary matter, and God. Further, he both states and shows what he considers to be the proper method of philosophical argumentation and demonstration in the Discourse, and, along the way, makes repeated references to Greek philosophy, the early Church fathers, and to history, both Western and Chinese. The length and sophisticated content of the Discourse thus make it a significant element of Leibniz's corpus, especially when it is remembered that he wrote it in his 70th year; it must be taken as a statement of the mature and considered reflections of the author.

It may therefore seem unusual that the text was not translated for two and a half centuries. A German edition did not

appear until 1966,<sup>5</sup> and the present work marks its first presentation in English. Part of the reason for this neglect must lie in the fact that the Discourse was written in French, which has remained a fairly common research language for scholars. Moreover, the text is by no means unique in being untranslated; many of Leibniz's works remain available only in the French, Latin or German in which they were originally written.

But there are more substantive reasons for the neglect of this document. First, while Leibniz had many insights into, and understanding of, the history and nature of Chinese thought, the Discourse should not be the only work read on the subject. By the end of his life Leibniz was probably as well versed on China as any of his contemporaries who had not actually been there; nevertheless, the Discourse contains mistakes, ranging from chronology, to authorship, to the meanings of key Chinese philosophical and religious terms and ideas. Most of these mistakes, of course, were not original with Leibniz (he knew some characters, but could not read classical Chinese); rather did they come from the missionary writings which formed the basis of much that he learned about China, especially Chinese thought. These missionaries were the ground-breakers of sinological studies in the West, guaranteeing that they would make mistakes even without the handicap of bringing a strong Christian perspective to bear on the non-Christian culture they were studying. If those mistakes

are now seen easily, the ease is due in no small measure to the growth of scholarship that followed the early missionary cultivation of the field.

Still another reason for neglecting the Discourse might lie in the difficulties it presents to translators. In the first place, Leibniz refers often and at length to the missionary writings, making it necessary to devote almost as much time and energy to the latter as to the Discourse itself. Cross-reading of this kind is particularly important for ascertaining the references to Chinese texts and authors, and for determining responsibility for misspelled or mistranslated Chinese terms, wrong dates, or clearly inadequate interpretations. Second, Leibniz wrote at times in non-standard French, occasionally with archaisms and often with unusual sentence constructions; while he wrote in a legible hand, he made deletions and additions at the top of pages, at the bottom, along the sides, and anywhere else he could squeeze in a needed word or two.<sup>6</sup> Third, the transcription of Chinese terms by Leibniz (and by the missionaries) is an orthographer's nightmare. The original Chinese characters are not given in the works consulted by Leibniz, and the missionaries were not consistent in their systems of transliteration. Further, the context of a passage usually does not make obvious which Chinese terms are being transliterated, so that the various Roman alphabetic spellings necessitate guesswork at times. An illustration of these difficulties is seen in the Discourse

when Leibniz refers to a "Vuen-Wang" on one occasion, to a "Vuen Vuang" on another, and to a "Ven Vam" on still another.<sup>7</sup> In transliterating from Chinese into an alphabetic language consistency and precision in the use of letters and marks is essential, but all three quoted terms refer to the same person, King Wen, founder of the Chou Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.).

There is yet another reason, perhaps the most important, why the Discourse has not received more attention from scholars: the vision of Leibniz for a close understanding and communication between China and the West has not yet come to pass. The growth of knowledge of Chinese culture in Europe and the U.S. has not been matched by a similar growth in its dissemination, especially at the public level; and the respectability of narrow specialization in the academic disciplines provides a ready-made excuse for all but China scholars to professionally ignore the world's oldest continuous culture, inherited by one quarter of the human race. Nowhere else is this more true than in academic philosophy, where interest in the present document should be the greatest. If Leibniz's writings on logic, philosophy of science, and epistemology have been published in several editions, with many articles and commentaries on them, the attention reflects the concern of contemporary philosophers with logic, philosophy of science, and epistemology. If the philosophy and philosophical arguments of the Discourse are virtually unknown, with little written about them, then that, too, reflects something; and the reflection

is not flattering. In this light we would do well to heed the prophetic remark made by Leibniz in a letter to Peter the Great in 1716. If we do not actively promote understanding, exchange and communication between the Chinese and ourselves, he said,<sup>8</sup>

It will follow that when the Chinese will have learnt from us what they wish to know they will then close their doors to us.

The Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese should thus be read by serious students of Leibniz, because of what he said therein; and it deserves a wider audience as well, because it represents the culmination of one gifted man's efforts to keep a Western foot in the door, and to open it wider so that we might all look in.

## II. Sources of Leibniz's Knowledge of China

Almost totally ignorant of China for a thousand years, Europe began to receive a trickle of information about the "Middle Kingdom" again at the close of the 13th Century, beginning with the publication of the journals of Marco Polo and his brothers. Nevertheless, knowledge of China was still minimal in Leibniz's Europe four centuries later; there were few translations of Chinese texts, the language was considered exotic, communications were poor and infrequent, and myths about the country and its peoples abounded. For his information on China Leibniz was thus obliged to rely heavily on Catholic

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missionaries, who had been proselytizing in the country for a little over a hundred years.

The five men most responsible for Leibniz's views on China were Claudio Grimaldi (1638-1712), Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), Nicholas Longobardi (1565-1655), Antoine de Sainte-Marie (1602-1669), and Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730). Four were Jesuits, the fifth (Ste. Marie) a Franciscan; all of them had spent considerable time in China, knew the language(s) well, and consequently were as well acquainted with almost all facets of Chinese civilization as any other Europeans of their time.

Although Leibniz had some familiarity with China early in his life,<sup>9</sup> his mature study of the country and its culture can be marked as beginning in 1689, when he met Claudio Grimaldi in Rome. Grimaldi was born in Northern Italy, and took priestly vows when he was nineteen. Entering China as a missionary in 1669, he soon found his way to the court at Peking, and, with Ferdinand Verbiest S.J. ,(1623-1688), served as a diplomatic aide to the Chinese emperor and became active in the Jesuit mathematical and astronomical endeavors at court. After seventeen years there, Grimaldi returned to Europe, and met Leibniz at Rome in 1689.

Following their first meeting, Leibniz addressed thirty questions about China to Grimaldi in a letter written in July of the same year.<sup>10</sup> The questions ranged from the industrial arts to botany, from chemistry to military weapons; they

reflect Leibniz's encyclopaedic mind, but also show that at the time of writing he was not well versed in Chinese geography, history or culture. Even at this early stage of his sinological development, however, Leibniz displayed the concerns that motivated his later studies, concerns which he makes explicit in the "Preface" to the Novissima Sinica and in the Discourse: the importance of learning about China for Europe's benefit, and the desire to increase Chinese receptivity to European ideas and artifacts -- both concerns having as their goal a closer cooperation, understanding and intercourse between the two civilizations.

In answering Leibniz's questions Grimaldi disparaged to some extent -- not entirely accurately -- Chinese astronomical abilities, which probably formed the basis of the philosopher's fairly low opinion of the current state of natural science in China.<sup>11</sup> Leibniz had a high regard for Grimaldi; partly because of the latter's scientific skills, and partly because of Grimaldi's close association with Verbiest. The latter was also a competent scientist, but more important for Leibniz's political concerns, was also influential at the court in Peking. For these reasons, Leibniz and Grimaldi remained in correspondence for several years after Leibniz returned to Hanover, and both Grimaldi and Verbiest contributed to the Novissima Sinica. Grimaldi's influence on the philosopher was not, however, confined to describing Chinese flora and fauna; the missionary also held definite views about Chinese philosophy

and religion, views first put forth by the most famous missionary to China of the 16th and 17th centuries: Matteo Ricci.

The first Catholic mission in China was started by Ricci shortly after he arrived in the country from Macao in 1583. He remained in China until his death in 1610, and very few missionaries before or since have learned as much about the culture of the peoples whose conversion they sought.<sup>12</sup> Ricci's command of spoken Chinese was excellent, matched only by his skill in writing the difficult classical language. He wrote literary essays which, from the standpoints of classical learning, stylistic elegance and historical scholarship, were virtually indistinguishable from the essays written by the most prominent Chinese scholars and officials of his day.

Ricci's journals were published posthumously in 1620 under the title On the Propagation of Christianity Among the Chinese, with editions in Latin, Italian, German, French and Spanish. The journals show Ricci's significant understanding (and appreciation) of Chinese customs, rituals and traditions, and argue for the compatibility of these elements of Chinese civilization with the basic beliefs and practices of Christianity. He excoriated popular Buddhism and Taoism, but cultivated the literati (Confucians) that he met, whom he believed to be convertible to the true faith because he also believed the classical texts which they revered could be shown to express ideas consonant with Christian doctrine. More pointedly, Ricci saw -- and the later history of missionary activity in China

showed the clarity of his vision -- that those classical texts were a basic ingredient of a three millenia old cultural tradition, which was not about to be abandoned by intelligent Chinese just because it was denounced by Christians, no matter how scientifically knowledgeable, or courageous, or pious those Christians might be. As a consequence, Ricci advocated what came to be known as the "accommodationist" position with respect to the conversion of the Chinese: tolerance for their ancient writings, their ritual observances and practice of ancestor worship, incorporating all of these into the Christian faith in China.

Although Ricci died before Leibniz was born, the latter's admiration for the scholarly Jesuit is clear in the Discourse, and it is Ricci's accommodationist position that Leibniz defends and advances therein. Opposed to this position was Father Nicholas Longobardi, who succeeded Ricci as the head of the China Mission. Longobardi believed that the ancient Chinese were materialists, and the moderns atheists; so that conversion to Christianity required the renunciation of traditional Chinese beliefs (largely Confucian). Unlike his predecessor, Longobardi did not cultivate the Chinese literati to any great extent. He believed that the basic tenets of Confucianism, to which all educated Chinese paid at least minimal homage, were flatly incompatible with Christian doctrine, and he set down his views in De Confucio Ejusque Doctrina Tractatus (hereafter cited as the Religion Treatise).<sup>13</sup> This work was

probably written about 1600, but not published until after the death of Ricci, and it was not translated into French until 1701, well after Longobardi's death. The views expressed in it were influential in undercutting Ricci's sympathetic approach to Chinese conversion. The Religion Treatise is one of the two works sent to Leibniz by Remond, and Leibniz's criticisms of Longobardi's views are a major component of the Discourse.

Although Longobardi was one of the few Jesuits who disagreed with Ricci, most of the missionaries of other orders attacked the accommodationist position, for political if not for theological reasons. Prominent among them was the Spanish Antonio Caballero, known also as Antonio Caballero a Santa Maria, or, as Leibniz referred to him, Antoine de Sainte-Marie.<sup>14</sup> This Franciscan, born in 1602, first went to China from the Spanish mission in Manila in 1633, and left three years later to take the anti-Ricci position to Rome. He returned in 1649, and remained in China until he died in Canton in 1669. Shortly before his death Sainte-Marie wrote about the Chinese Mission, but the Spanish manuscript now appears to be lost. The French translation of the text was entitled Traite sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine (hereafter the Mission Treatise). Published in 1701, it was the other text apparently sent to Leibniz by Remond.

Like Longobardi, Sainte-Marie believed the ancient Chinese to be materialistic (and superstitious), and their successors devoid of spiritual views; therefore he, too,

advocated the need for total renunciation of China's tradition as a necessary condition for Christian conversion. Thus, Leibniz is no less critical of Sainte-Marie than Longobardi in the Discourse, and directs many of his arguments specifically to the Franciscan.

The position of Ricci with respect to converting the Chinese came to be the dominant one among the Jesuits, but it did not prevail in Rome. Opposition to this position was voiced by a few Jesuits, and by many Franciscans and Dominicans. The arguments lasted almost 150 years, and the "Rites Controversy," as it was called, was settled once and for all against the Jesuits by Benedict XIV's Ex quo singulari of 1742. The anti-Jesuit forces "won" the Rites Controversy, but "lost" the conversion of the Chinese; how much the loss was to be felt outside the Vatican will probably never be known. Had he lived that long, Leibniz would have been bitterly disappointed at the papal decision; in a letter written in 1710 he said: "In the Chinese controversy which is raging at Rome today, I favor the Jesuits and have for a long time. . . ." <sup>15</sup>

The last of the five missionaries who exerted a strong influence on Leibniz's views of China was Joachim Bouvet, one of the first French Jesuits to go there. Like Verbiest, Bouvet had access to the throne, and was a tutor of the K'ang-hsi Emperor's children. He entered China in 1688 and remained there for nine years, returning to Europe in 1697 to raise support (money and more missionaries) for the China Mission.

He had read the first edition of Novissima Sinica, and sent Leibniz a copy of his recently published "Historical Portrait of the Emperor of China." Leibniz published the "Portrait" in the second edition of Novissima Sinica, and the correspondence between the two continued for awhile after Bouvet returned to China in 1698. The most significant exchanges of letters took place from 1700 to 1703, after which Bouvet stopped writing, probably due to the pressures of his work in Peking. Leibniz's last six letters to Bouvet went unanswered, which must have troubled the philosopher because of the intellectual excitement generated by their earlier correspondence.<sup>16</sup>

Bouvet thought on a grand scale, much more a philosopher than philologist. He conveyed many original (and sometimes far-fetched) ideas about Chinese history, language, and religion to Leibniz, three of which are reflected in the Discourse.<sup>17</sup> First, Bouvet believed that the legendary early ruler Fu Hsi ("Fohi" in the text) had produced a notation for describing all of science, a notation exemplified in the basic trigrams of the I Ching<sup>18</sup> (see p. 20). These trigrams are made up of combinations of solid and broken lines, but their scientific and mathematical significance was, according to Bouvet, lost on later Chinese, who simply saw the trigrams and their extensions, hexagrams, as part of a system of divination. Second, after learning of Leibniz's work in binary arithmetic, Bouvet was able to translate the notation of Leibniz into the trigrams, as proof of his first claim. Leibniz's excitement at

Bouvet's letter describing the parallels can easily be imagined, for the philosopher held firmly throughout his life the belief that reason was all-persuasive, and if used by everyone, would eventually bring everyone to the true faith, i.e., Christianity. By thinking that the Chinese of 4500 years ago possessed a mathematical notation similar to his own -- which was useful for the exemplification of the principles of reason -- Leibniz not only found support for his arguments that the ancient Chinese had natural religion, but he was also able to believe, thanks to his faith in reason, that the conversion of the Chinese would proceed apace once it was demonstrated to them that later generations had simply lost the true principles set down by Fu Hsi.

The last major idea of Bouvet's which is reflected in the Discourse is more fanciful. Bouvet believed that Fu Hsi was not Chinese, but a manifestation of the "Lawgiver," akin to Hermes Trismegistus in the West; indeed, on the basis of some questionable etymologies and arguments Bouvet even tries to show that Fu Hsi and Hermes Trismegistus were one and the same.<sup>19</sup> Further, according to the French Jesuit, the ancient form of the Chinese language shows a relationship to ancient Hebrew, and to the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians. Bouvet promises to document these speculative claims in later letters, but the documents are not forthcoming; the correspondence from Bouvet's end stopped at this point. Yet despite what must have been keen disappointment at having his later letters

go unanswered Leibniz gave credence not only to Bouvet's views on the trigrams of the I Ching and binary arithmetic, but to the Jesuit's views on the ethnicity of Fu Hsi as well; although Bouvet's influence is seen most clearly in Part IV of the Discourse, there are suggestions in the earlier sections of the text that the founders of Western civilization (i.e., the "Patriarchs") passed on their traditions to the Chinese in the dim past.<sup>21</sup>

Leibniz's mature knowledge of China thus came primarily from men who saw the country, its peoples and its culture through the filter of their own culture, a situation that was exacerbated by their avowed purpose in going to China: to gain converts from the former to the latter. But their biases notwithstanding, these men learned much of China, and the three who advocated moderation and accommodation -- Ricci, Grimaldi and Bouvet -- came not only to have an appreciation of the Chinese heritage that was uncommon among Europeans, but to transmit that appreciation to Leibniz as well. As a consequence, Leibniz was opposed to the position of Longobardi and Sainte-Marie, whose acquaintance with Chinese philosophy and religion was not matched by any enthusiasm for it, and who therefore argued that the Christian faith must supplant, and not supplement, indigenous Chinese beliefs and practices. Believing that this position was fundamentally mistaken, Leibniz wrote the Discourse as a rebuttal to the historical and theological arguments put forth by the two missionaries in their treatises.

The rebuttal rests largely on Leibniz's own philosophical ideas, and his own view of Chinese intellectual history, which caused him to distinguish sharply among and between the ideas of the ancient Chinese, and the Chinese encountered by the missionaries. In order to place the manifold temporal references in the Discourse in their proper context it is necessary to outline the order of development of Chinese thought, and Leibniz's views thereof.

### III. The Chinese Intellectual Tradition

For purposes of understanding the arguments in the Discourse, the history -- real and legendary -- of Chinese thought must be divided into three discontinuous ages: 1) the era of the sage kings, from the 29th through the 12th centuries, B.C.; 2) the period of Confucius and his classical successors, from the 6th through the 3rd centuries B.C.; and 3) the "modern" period of Neo-Confucianism, with its criticisms of Buddhism, beginning in the 11th Century A.D. and continuing to Leibniz's own day.<sup>22</sup>

The Methuselah-like reigns attributed to them suggests that the earliest legendary rulers of China were just that: legendary. There is no evidence -- except for the legends, written millenia later -- that China was a major civilization circa 3000 B.C., the time period in which Leibniz (via Bouvet and others) places Fu Hsi and the oldest strata of the I Ching.

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The earliest date in Chinese history confirmed by archaeological work is the 15th Century B.C., the period of the Shang Dynasty, whose traditional dates are 1766-1122 B.C. The artifacts recovered from Shang sites reveal highly sophisticated technological and artistic abilities in such areas as architecture, bronze-casting and writing, which show that Chinese civilization, as a civilization, must go back to at least the 19th or 18th centuries B.C.; but this is still more than a thousand years later than the dates accepted by Leibniz.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, it bears emphasizing that there are no Chinese texts which can be shown to be earlier than approximately the 11th Century B.C., and even these documents are fragmentary and/or contain much material that was interpolated many centuries later. Thus, although the missionaries and Leibniz refer to the sage kings as China's "most ancient philosophers," there are not even fragments of philosophical writings that can be attributed to them.

In attempting to understand Leibniz's views of China, however, the historicity of the legendary rulers is perhaps less important than the qualities the legends attribute to them. In addition to Fu Hsi, Leibniz mentions the emperors Yao, Shun, and others, who share similar characteristics. First, they were not supernaturally endowed; they lived to very ripe old ages, but all eventually died, and during their lifetimes performed no feats that contravened the laws of physics. Second, the sage kings were highly intelligent, and they put

their intelligence to good use in the service of the Chinese people by their inventions and discoveries (medicine, agriculture, writing, etc.). And third, the sage kings were moral exemplars, endeavoring to rule by moral suasion rather than force. From the Discourse it is apparent that Leibniz was aware of these qualities, and he uses the morality and intelligence accorded them -- especially Fu Hsi -- in making his case for the religiosity of the ancient Chinese. Indeed, his highest praise for Chinese thinkers is given to these men.

After the period of the sage kings, the next significant time period referred to by Leibniz (not always clearly) begins many centuries later, with the birth of Confucius (551-479 B.C.). No philosophical works prior to his time (if, indeed, any were written) have survived, and there is little evidence that any were extant during his lifetime. Works on other topics were produced, however, and several of them have come down to the present: books of poetry, governmental records, history, rituals, divination, and so forth. Some of these works received special attention from Confucius and his followers, who read philosophical and religious themes into them. These books became classics (ching), and like the Iliad and Odyssey in Greece, were not only a basic part of, but came to define the later cultural tradition of the Chinese. Three of these classics are cited specifically by Leibniz in the Discourse, and thereby deserve specific mention.

(1) The I Ching (易經), or Book of Changes.<sup>24</sup>

This book has several components, not all of which were written at the same time. The oldest strata are divinatory in nature: symbolic descriptions of the 64 hexagrams which comprise the basic text. According to the I Ching, change takes place in the universe because of the complementary interaction of two fundamental principles, the yin and the yang. Yin denotes passivity, receptivity, and descent, and represents the female principle, the earth, darkness, valleys, moon, etc. The yang principle is active and ascending, male, light, heaven, mountains and the sun. In the I Ching the female principle is symbolized by a broken line (— — ), and the male principle by a solid one (— — ).

By means of a formulaic counting out of yarrow (milfoil) stalks a person consults the oracle, obtaining at the end of the count either a yin or a yang number, which is recorded as a broken or unbroken line. The counting ritual is repeated six times, until a hexagram (six lines) is obtained, and the several female and/or male lines which make up the hexagram represent, in symbolic form, the diviner's place in the universe at the time of consultation.

The hexagrams probably grew out of an earlier symbolic tradition of trigrams (three lines), which represented familial, social and natural phenomena. Thus, three consecutive yang lines (☰) represented the sun, South, heaven, the head, and the father, while three yin lines (☷) stood for the

moon, North, earth, the abdomen, mother, and so forth. One yang line followed by two yin ( ☰ ) stood for thunder, etc., and the oldest son; one yin line between two yang ( ☷ ) represented lightning, East. . . , and the middle daughter. Hence the hexagrams, read on the one hand as the sum of six lines, and on the other as being made up of two trigrams, were replete with a metaphorical symbolism sufficiently rich that a good deal of concentration and meditation was necessary on the part of the diviner in order to determine the significance of the hexagram obtained.

As a consequence, the I Ching must not be seen only as a fortune-telling manual; no medium is needed to interpret the symbols, and the motive for consultation is not so much to predict the future as it is to orient oneself properly in the natural and social scheme of things. Nor should the I be read as a proto-scientific work, in the sense that "science" is used today. It bears repeating that the yin and yang principles were seen by the Chinese as complementary rather than as antagonistic, and that these symbolized principles were not so much empirical explanations as they were metaphorical constructs. As an illustration, a non-Chinese would probably symbolize peace, or stability -- using the I Ching paraphernalia -- as ☰; that is, heaven above and earth below. But remember that yang rises while yin descends, so that stability would be enhanced by having heaven below and earth above:

☰ -- the I Ching hexagram for peace.

The Chinese tradition -- passed on to Leibniz through Bouvet and others -- attributes the formation of the eight basic trigrams to Fu Hsi, circa 2800 B.C. More probably the oldest strata of the text date from about 1100-1000 B.C. at the earliest. In addition to the trigrams, hexagrams, and their descriptions, the Book of Changes also contains commentaries on them, and on the individual lines of some hexagrams. These commentaries were written much later, perhaps as late as the 3rd Century B.C., and are much more philosophical in nature than the earlier strata, without, however, altering the basically contemplative quality of the book as a whole.

In writing about the I Ching to Leibniz, Bouvet (and others) dismissed the symbolic and divinatory elements of the work, focusing instead on the sequence of broken and unbroken lines. For Bouvet,<sup>25</sup> these lines could be read in the first place as isomorphic with Leibniz's system of binary arithmetical notation, with 0 represented by ——, and 1 by ——. Thus all of Leibniz's translations of numbers from base 10 to base 2 notation were similarly translatable into the I Ching notation of yin and yang lines. There is a way of ordering the hexagrams so that they can be read, using the Leibniz/Bouvet isomorphism, as an arithmetical progression from 0 to 63.

But Bouvet read even more into the trigrams: he saw them as the oldest form of Chinese writing, and, because he saw some similarities between the trigrams and ancient Hebrew (his correspondence does not say what those similarities are), he

assumed that in the very ancient past the Chinese had received the culture of the West.<sup>26</sup> Many of Bouvet's ideas would not be given much credence today, but it might be noted that his view of the trigrams as being the first Chinese writing does have some traditional support.<sup>27</sup> The tradition rests on the fact that a few Chinese characters bear a resemblance to certain trigrams (and hexagrams). The most striking example is the character for water 水, which was anciently written 巽. Turned horizontally with its lines straightened, this would look like ☰, which is the trigram symbolizing (running) water in the I Ching.

## (2) The Shu Ching 書經

Translated as the Book of History, or the Book of Documents, parts of the Shu Ching may be China's oldest written work, dating from the 11th Century B.C. It is made up of a series of small essays, memorials and documents which record parts of the reigns of the sage-kings Yao, Shun, Yu, the reigns of several Hsia Dynasty rulers, Shang rulers after them, and the early years of the Chou Dynasty under Kings Wen, Wu, the Duke of Chou, and their successors. It is by no means a complete history of antiquity, and the oldest parts of it were written down long after the events described therein were supposed to have occurred. Further, several sections of the Shu Ching were interpolated into the text at a later date, some of them probably after the time of Confucius.

Although parts of the Shu are simply chronicles of events, other parts of it are the charges of rulers to their successors, or to their subordinate ministers, and the themes repeated in those exhortations had political and moral qualities that came to be definitive of the ideal Confucian state. Those in positions of authority were commanded to: (a) work for the welfare of the people; (b) maintain the rites and ritual observances of their ancestors; (c) be frugal; (d) view their position as a trust conferred by Heaven (t'ien 天), which was not so much a symbol of deity as it was a reflection of the natural order; (e) obtain and keep harmony within the social order, and between the social and the natural order. Many of the practices and ritual observances described in the Shu Ching were surely based on early beliefs in the supernatural, but these beliefs are not emphasized in the book, and were virtually ignored by Confucius and his followers during the classical period.

(3) The Shih Ching 詩經, Book of Poetry or Book of Odes.<sup>29</sup> According to the disciples of Confucius, he regularly quoted lines from the Shih Ching to emphasize an ethical, aesthetic, social or political point he wanted to make. The original 314 poems which make up the book, however, are just that: poems; while some of them do indeed have morals that can easily be read out of them, the majority of them are celebrations of Chinese life. There are love poems, and poems lamenting a son or husband going off to war; poems dealing with

nature; with hunting and fishing; with friendship; with festivals; and there are poems dealing with legends, and ancient rituals. Together the poems of the Shih Ching paint what must be the most accurate picture we have of the everyday life of a Chinese living in approximately the 9th Century B.C.

Returning now to Confucius, he would probably have been surprised to learn that the "Period of the philosophers" in China begins with his birth. He said of himself that he was a transmitter rather than an innovator;<sup>30</sup> a classicist rather than a philosopher. This autobiographical statement is not entirely accurate -- Confucius was an original thinker by any standard -- but the statement does capture an essential ingredient of Confucianism: a deep respect and affection for the rich cultural heritage of the past. He saw the ideal state as having existed during the reigns of the ancient sage kings, and advocated a return to their principles of government. According to Confucius, (and the Shu, Shih and other early works), the sage kings governed on the basis of ritual and custom rather than law or force, were themselves reverent toward the past, were more concerned to insure the material and spiritual well-being of the people than in accumulating personal wealth, and saw as their main task the maintenance of harmony between the collective society and the natural order.

Like many other epochal thinkers of the ancient world, Confucius never wrote anything that has survived. All that we know of his views with assurance comes from the Lun Yu

(論語 often translated as the Analects;<sup>31</sup> Leibniz refers to it as the "Lung Iu," "Lun Iu" and the "Su Lum Iu."). The book is a collection of brief conversations between the Master and his disciples, but other parts of the work may have been written down a full century or so after Confucius died. Many other writings have been attributed to him, and he is supposed to have edited some of the classics; but it is now widely held (as it was not during Leibniz's day) that the only solid text for ascertaining the Master's views is the Lun Yu.

Most Western interpreters of Confucius, and not a few modern Chinese themselves, portray China's First Teacher as a thoroughgoing rationalist, agnostic in religious matters if not downright atheistic. There is much textual evidence for this view, some of which is not-too-enthusiastically cited by Leibniz in the Discourse. Such a portrayal, however, can be overdrawn; the "this-worldliness" of Confucius notwithstanding, there are also significant passages in the Lun Yu which show that he was at least occasionally concerned with less rationally-oriented issues. Thus, he is supposed to have lamented that "Heaven had forsaken him" in one passage, believed that Heaven had given him a special mission in another, and in still others he was troubled by the fact that neither in his dreams nor his observations of natural phenomena had he been given a "sign" that he would be successful in his efforts.<sup>32</sup>

Such other-worldly concerns, however, are not the kind Leibniz sought in seeking comparisons with Christian doctrine.

Interpreters of Confucius may never agree on the extent to which he focused on the secular over the sacred, or the magical, but they all agree that he was neither a metaphysician nor a theologian. The Lun Yu discusses ethics, rituals, customs, socio-political issues, and aesthetics in some detail, but there are no discussions of first principles, God, primary or secondary matter, Reason, and so forth; there are no discussions, in other words, of the major issues Leibniz discusses in the Discourse. It is for this reason that Leibniz refers somewhat less to Confucius himself than to his legendary predecessors, or later followers, the descriptions of whom can be more easily read as having Christian and/or cosmological implications, at least by stalwart readers.

The most famous successor to Confucius was Mencius, who lived one hundred and fifty years later (ca. 372-289 B.C.). In the book 孟子 that bears his name,<sup>33</sup> Mencius elaborated the views of Confucius, and while he did discuss some of the concepts taken up by Leibniz, for the most part the "Second Sage" of Confucianism shared the non-metaphysical and non-theological perspective of his predecessor.

Not until the Li Chi (禮記), or Records of Ritual,<sup>34</sup> do we find a Confucian text that begins to link ethics and socio-political thought with cosmological speculation (and even in this book the speculations are not lengthy). The Li Chi was probably made up in its present form during the 2nd Century B.C., and the 49 heterogeneous chapters which comprise

it treat topics ranging from the details of social etiquette to ontology. The book is fundamentally concerned with customs, rituals, morals and manners; one can find in it the proper form of address to one's in-laws, sacrifices to be made by the emperor, detailed instructions for bathing one's parents, and so forth. Some of the chapters, however, attempt to link these ceremonial duties with the place of human beings in the universe, and two of these chapters were singled out centuries later as worthy of especial study: the Ta Hsüeh (大學), or Great Learning, and the Chung Yung (中庸), or Doctrine of the Mean.<sup>35</sup> The latter work is quoted several times by Leibniz in the Discourse, as coming from Confucius; almost surely it was written by some disciples(s) of his disciples, but it is an authentic early Confucian work. In any event, these two short works, together with the Mencius and Lun Yu, are the "Four Books" to which Leibniz also makes reference in his text. Taken together, these four works can be read a variety of ways, but their basic thrust is clear, and can be summarized succinctly by taking the lines from Pope: "Presume then not God to scan // the proper study of mankind is man."

In summary, while classical Confucianism is correctly characterized as religious and philosophical, the religion is civil, and the philosophy ethical, aesthetic, and socio-political. The very early ritual practices (of the Shang and early Chou) inherited by Confucius and his followers were originally derived from supernatural beliefs, but

those beliefs, while never repudiated, were nevertheless not widely discussed by the educated during the period in which he lived. No matter what his own personal views with respect to the supernatural may have been, Confucius saw that those links with the rich cultural past were too important to be lost in a secular age, and he therefore devoted his energies, as did those who followed him, to preserving those cultural links by placing them in a social and humanistic context.<sup>36</sup> With their steady focus on tradition, customs, rituals, rites and so on, the early Confucians laid claim to being the guardians and transmitters of the Chinese heritage. It is for this reason that ever since the classical period, referring to a person as a Confucian often meant little more than that he was a typical member of the literati.

The third period of Chinese intellectual history significant for reading the Discourse begins over a thousand years later. After many centuries of being eclipsed by the Buddhism imported from India, the Confucian classical texts underwent thorough re-examination in the light of the changes in Chinese thought brought about by Buddhist doctrines, and by the changes in political and cultural patterns that accompanied China's growth as an empire. This re-examination marked the beginning of the period of Neo-Confucianism, and many of the philosophers mentioned by Leibniz in the Discourse were formative of the renewal of the classical tradition: Chang Tsai, the Ch'eng brothers, and especially the encyclopaedic

Chu Hsi (1130-1200).<sup>37</sup> Taking some passages from the I Ching, from the Mencius, Chung Yung, and from other classical texts, the Neo-Confucians constructed a metaphysical system in which to place the older Confucian concerns with moral, social and political questions. Where the classical Confucians discussed primary obligations, the Neo-Confucians discussed primary principles; earlier critiques of benevolence and righteousness were followed by critiques of ether and matter; and whereas the classical texts placed great emphasis on describing the details of ritual sacrifices, the Neo-Confucians described to whom and why the sacrifices were being made. This is not to suggest that the Neo-Confucians distorted fundamentally the views or writings of their forerunners. On the contrary, they used their metaphysics to justify the earlier Confucian way of life: spiritual self-cultivation could not proceed without fulfilling one's many obligations to family and society.

Neo-Confucianism came to dominate Chinese intellectual life until the 20th Century. By the time of the Ming Dynasty the history and philosophy of China as interpreted by Chu Hsi became required reading for everyone, the Chinese examination system being based on Chu's writings and commentaries on the classics. In 1422 a major compendium of classical texts, with the commentaries of Chu Hsi and many other Neo-Confucians, was compiled. It was called the Hsing-li ta-ch'üan shu (性理大全書 ; hereafter cited as the Compendium),<sup>38</sup>

and is the Chinese source most often quoted in the Discourse, as it was by the missionaries Longobardi and Ste. Marie. The form of the Compendium is partially responsible for the fact that at times, Leibniz attributes views to philosophers of the ancient period which were actually the views of the Neo-Confucians. The anthology contains materials that span twenty-three centuries, and neither Longobardi nor Ste. Marie, who quote at length from the Compendium, always make clear whether they are citing passages from a classical text or from a commentary thereon. Indeed, parts of the Religion Treatise and the Mission Treatise suggest that even the two missionaries are not always sure whom, or what, they are quoting; this is especially true for Longobardi, who erroneously attributes much of the compilation of the Compendium to scholars of the 10th Century B.C.<sup>39</sup>

The resurgence of Confucianism did not, of course, lead to the demise of Buddhism, nor of Taoism, the second major philosophical and religious tradition indigenous to China. In Chinese religion, however, the several belief systems were not as sharply demarcated, or as exclusive, as Western religious sects have tended to be. Depending on the locale, the common people adopted different, but equally rich and complex admixtures of beliefs, rituals, heroes and deities drawn from Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism; sufficiently rich and complex that sorting out the distinguishing features of each school of thought was (and continues to be) a difficult task.

Moreover, by the time Father Ricci arrived in China to found the first mission, there was a strong syncretic movement among the intelligentsia as well, with many efforts being made philosophically to merge the "Three Schools into One."<sup>40</sup> This syncretism would leave Confucianism intact as a political, social and moral code, adding to it substantive elements of Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics, theology and liturgy.

But at the same time (early 17th Century), there were many Chinese literati who were not religiously oriented at all. They kept the official state and familial observances prescribed by the Confucian classics, but were otherwise entirely secular, having little use even for the metaphysical pronouncements of the earlier Neo-Confucians. It is partly because of the views of such men that Longbardi, Ste. Marie and other missionaries concluded that the Chinese had to abandon completely their own ways of thinking if they were to become true Christians. Leibniz did not hold these latter-day secular Confucians in very high regard, made clear by the epithets -- "Modern Atheists," "Sceptics," and "Hypocrites" -- by which he referred to them in the Discourse.

In summary, it is essential to appreciate the peculiar role played by Confucianism in shaping Chinese thought, culture, and daily life as well. As a philosophy, with religious overtones, Confucianism was the dominant belief system among the literate for most of the last two millenia. And because governmental officials were drawn from the ranks of

the literate, Confucianism came to be the official state ideology as well as the major intellectual force in China. Moreover, because Confucianism celebrated tradition, with all its rituals, familial obligations, ancestor worship, etc., it was exemplified in the lives of most traditional Chinese commoners, who were thereby Confucians by practice even though they had no first-hand acquaintance with the philosophical or the traditional texts. Confucius, then, was not simply one philosopher among many; his defense and enhancement of the early Chinese heritage caused him to be seen as the symbol of Chinese civilization, and he was consequently revered even by those whose views were different (Taoists and Buddhists), and by those who could not read the writings which contained those views (the common people). Thus, the spirit of Confucianism was reflected strongly in the writings and actions of Confucian philosophers, and in addition, it thoroughly permeated the entire fabric of Chinese culture.

Although Leibniz occasionally attributes a correct Confucian view to the wrong Confucian, and at other times attributes views to them which no Confucian held, he did appreciate the significance of the Confucian tradition in China. Like Father Ricci before him, Leibniz also appreciated that no other belief system would have an impact in that country unless it came to terms with the country's intellectual heritage. He therefore wrote the Discourse, attempting to pour some Christian wine in Confucian and pre-Confucian bottles.<sup>41</sup>

#### IV. Outline and Structure of the Discourse

For the most part, Leibniz describes his position and advances his arguments in the Discourse clearly enough to be followed without undue difficulty. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the work may be useful, because the several historical, philosophical and political issues at stake were not as clearly delimited by Leibniz as a modern reader might desire, owing in large measure to the fact that he was not only outlining his own views, but responding to the views of others.

The Mission Treatise and the Religion Treatise both make the same arguments with respect to Chinese thought. According to Fathers Longobardi and Ste. Marie, resemblances between Chinese and Christian concepts were only superficial, especially on issues basic to Christian theology: 1) the nature of God, and spiritual substance(s); 2) the existence and qualities of spirits, and matter; and 3) the immortality of the human soul. In the opinion of the missionaries the ancient Chinese thinkers were, at best, materialists; and even this much could not be said for their modern counterparts, who were simply atheists. To support their position Longobardi and Ste. Marie cited passages from classical texts, passages from commentaries thereon, and they also quoted at length contemporary Chinese intellectuals (some of them Christian converts) with whom they had spoken. This evidence was placed (according to Leibniz)<sup>42</sup> in a Scholastic philosophical

framework, from which their negative theological conclusions are generated. And these conclusions in turn generate a more political one equally negative: because Christian doctrine is incompatible with Chinese thought, the conversion of the Chinese can only proceed by having them abandon altogether their intellectual and cultural heritage in favor of Revealed Christian truth.

The Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese is an attempt to counter this position philosophically, and at the most general structural level should be read as an argument modus tollens. The conclusion -- that conversion of the Chinese requires abandonment of a 3000 year-old intellectual tradition -- must be false; therefore the premise(s) from which the conclusion follows must also be false.

<sup>43</sup> There are four sections<sup>43</sup> in the Discourse, the first three of which contain Leibniz's detailed replies to the missionaries' claims that Chinese thought is fundamentally incompatible with basic Christian doctrines. He first argues (Part I) that the Chinese do indeed have a close conceptual analogue to the Christian concept of God, and spiritual substance. In Part II, which is almost half of the manuscript, Leibniz maintains that spirits and matter in China are considered and treated in very nearly the same way angels and matter are considered and treated in Christian Europe. Throughout Parts I and II, Leibniz's arguments regularly take the form that first, Chinese thought is compatible with his

own philosophy; second, his own philosophy is compatible with Christianity; therefore Chinese thought is compatible with Christianity. Part III is devoted to making a similar case for the compatibility of the Chinese and Christian concepts of the human soul and its immortality.<sup>44</sup>

Together the first three parts comprise over nine-tenths of the Discourse. Part IV appears to be more or less an appendix to it, the subject under discussion being an exposition of Leibniz's binary arithmetic, and an analogue with it claimed by Leibniz and Bouvet to be found in the trigrams of the I Ching. Part IV is not, however, an appendix. On the contrary, it is an essential ingredient of Leibniz's most fundamental argument, and it must be seen as such in order to appreciate Leibniz's overall view of the nature, history and development of Chinese thought.

He accepts, for the most part, the claims of Longobardi and Ste. Marie that many educated Chinese of his own time were atheists. But, he insists, these moderns have "strayed. . . from their own antiquity" (§1). If we focus instead on the classical texts, he says, "I find [them] quite excellent, and quite in accord with natural theology. . . . It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed on our hearts" (§31).

To be sure, there are important theological issues on which the classical texts are silent, and even the most famous of Chinese philosophers, Confucius, is occasionally in

"error."<sup>45</sup> But this only shows, Leibniz believed, that we have not gone back far enough in the relevant cases. If we return to the era of the sage-kings, "we could uncover in the Chinese writings of the remotest antiquity many things unknown to modern Chinese and even to those commentators thought to be classical " (§68; emphasis added). The I Ching is one such book, according to him, and if we read it carefully, what we will uncover is the fact that "the ancient Chinese have surpassed the modern ones in the extreme, not only in piety. . . but in science as well " (§68a).

The crucial term in this quote is "science," which is why Part IV is crucial to the Discourse: "it concerns justification of the doctrines of the ancient Chinese and their superiority over the moderns" (§69). Remember that Leibniz acknowledged the theological weaknesses of modern Chinese thinkers, but maintained that the ancient texts -- some of them pre-Confucian -- strongly suggested a natural theology consonant with Christianity, and thereby worthy of European respect. What better way to establish that respect than to show that the most ancient authors of those texts not only had theological ideas similar to Christian theology, but also developed pure mathematics to a point which had only been reached in Europe during his own lifetime? Leibniz believed (as did Bouvet) that while binary arithmetic was not the "universal characteristic" he had long sought, it was nevertheless the basis of natural science.<sup>46</sup> If he could show,

therefore -- to post-Galilean Europe -- that his mathematical notation had been prefigured 4500 years earlier in China, Leibniz would have a very strong case for denying the conclusion of Fathers Longobardi and Ste. Marie, and for advancing his own view of the proper method for engaging the Chinese in ecumenical dialogue: show them the truth, but not simply by quoting from the Bible and giving them telescopes; show them also how both theological and scientific truth could be read in their most ancient writings. (This argument also provided Leibniz with an explanation for the silence of Confucius on some important theological issues, and his "mistakes" on others; he, too, had occasionally lost the meaning(s) of the writings of his predecessors, and therefore could not be relied upon uniformly as the ultimate authority on, of or for Chinese thought.)<sup>47</sup>

Seen in this light, Part IV of the Discourse can be read as the coup de grace to the anti-accommodationist position with respect to China. The text breaks off abruptly, and although Leibniz continued to write for the remaining months of his life, he never returned to the Discourse to finish it. The evidence suggests, however, that philosophically, the manuscript may be substantively complete, and that Leibniz had accomplished what he had set out to do: provide a sophisticated philosophical and theological framework in which the ecumencial movement in China could go forward.

#### V. The Manuscript and Its Translation

During the later years of his life Leibniz maintained an intensive and extensive correspondence with Remond. The text now known as the Monadology was originally a letter written to the latter in 1714, and a little over a year later Leibniz began composing the Discourse, addressed to the same correspondent. In a letter dated 27 January 1716 Leibniz wrote that he had completed the work,<sup>48</sup> but two months later wrote to Remond again, saying, "I need more time to finish completely my discourse on the natural theology of the Chinese."<sup>49</sup> He never found the time, and the Discourse was never sent.

This translation is based on the original and only draft of Leibniz's autograph, to be found in the archives of the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek in Hanover, West Germany, Ms. XXXVII, 1810, #1, entitled (by a later archivist) Lettre de Mr. Leibniz touchant les Chinois. No fair copy of the draft is extant, and several of the sixteen folio pages are frayed, making certain passages either illegible or incomplete. For this reason it has been necessary at times to rely on the earliest printed edition of the Discourse, which is found in C. Kortholt, ed., Leibnitii Epistolae ad diversos (Leipzig: B.C. Breitkopf, 1735), II, pp. 413-494. In the same volume Kortholt also includes the Religion Treatise of Longobardi (pp. 89-164) and the Mission Treatise of Ste. Marie (pp. 268-412) -- complete with Leibniz's footnotes on them -- which are the editions of the missionary texts

that have been consulted and are cited herein.<sup>50</sup> Having the advantage of working from a fully preserved manuscript, the Kortholt edition, despite many errors of transcription, is the only source for some lacunae in Leibniz's manuscript. The later edition by L. Dutens, G.G. Leibnitii: Opera Omnia (Geneva: Fratres de Tournes, 1768), IV, 169-210, is not helpful in this regard because Dutens used the Kortholt edition (and not the original manuscript) for his printing of the text. Both Kortholt and Dutens entitled the work Lettre de M. G.G. Leibniz sur la Philosophie Chinoise a M. de Remond. Kortholt himself, like many early editors of Leibniz's untitled writings, is responsible not only for the title, and the numbering of the paragraphs, but also for the division of the manuscript into four parts, and their subtitles as well. He also gave short descriptive titles (omitted from this translation) to each numbered paragraph, inserting them collectively at the beginning of each part.

Given the unsatisfactory and at times incomplete transcriptions found in both of these editions, it is fortunate that the recent German translation of the Discourse by R. Loosen and F. Vonessen includes a new printing of the French text as well. Their work is entitled Zwei Briefe über das Binäre Zahlensystem und die Chinesische Philosophie, which first appeared in Antaios, VIII (1966), 2, pp. 144-203. The present translation differs significantly from Loosen-Vonessen at times, both with respect to translations and to

transcriptions from the original manuscript. Nevertheless, this German edition offers the best printing of the French original at present, and the numbering of the paragraphs of this English translation is taken from them; an appendix has been added herein which gives all the variants where their text differs from the original.

As a draft, hastily written and never completed, the Discourse suffers from many stylistic and orthographic inconsistencies. Except in passages deemed essential for understanding the text no effort has been made to be precise in the transcription of Leibniz's manuscript in this regard. An exception is the transliteration of Chinese terms. While it would have made for a smoother and clearer reading of the Discourse to have standardized, in English transliteration, all of Leibniz's various spellings of the Chinese, it would have attributed to him a familiarity with those terms which he may well not have had. His Chinese transliterations, therefore, have been transcribed precisely, so that readers of the text may judge for themselves when, and where, Leibniz did or did not know he was writing a variant spelling of the same term he had used in another place. To compensate for this narrative difficulty each Chinese term (when known) has been transliterated in the standard English form in the footnotes,<sup>51</sup> and all variant spellings have been similarly noted and transliterated when they appear. In addition, the Chinese original for each term mentioned by Leibniz is given on its first occurrence in the manuscript.

Leibniz's narrative inconsistencies and difficulties are not confined to Chinese terms. It is clear that he did not edit the text -- a simple arithmetical error of addition is found in Part IV<sup>s2</sup> -- and his French is often archaic and opaque, abounding in many lengthy and convoluted sentences. There being no point in translating vague French sentences into confusing English ones, Leibniz's sentence structure has often been modified in this translation, largely through the use of colons and semi-colons, parentheses, and dashes. In the few instances where there was an irreconcilable conflict between his inadequate French and his obvious (from the context) intent, the latter has been determinate; what distinguishes Leibniz, and the Discourse, is his philosophical reasoning and not his literary abilities in a non-native language. Whenever a linguistic liberty with the text has been taken, it has been noted; for the rest, the careful Leibniz scholar may consult the original manuscript, or the Loosen-Vonessen transcription in conjunction with the appendix in this edition.

Many of Leibniz's citations to classical Chinese texts are taken -- via Longobardi and Ste. Marie -- from the Compendium, none of which has been translated into a Western language. As a consequence, all references in the footnotes to classical texts are to English translations (usually Legge, who includes the original), so that non-sinologists may consult the sources as easily as Chinese specialists. On several occasions a translation of a Chinese passage is

proffered in the footnotes which differs both from Leibniz's text and from other English translations of the passage; all such occasions are marked, followed by reference(s) to other translations.

The translators' own general interpretations of Leibniz's views, and of Chinese thought, are contained in this Introduction. More specific interpretations are also given in the footnotes, but an effort has been made to keep the notes basically factual when possible, because the Discourse has been sufficiently neglected by scholars that it would be premature, and perhaps stultifying, to attempt to impose a be-all and end-all reading of the text at the present time; the goal of this first English edition has been merely to provide a useful begin.<sup>53</sup>

## FOOTNOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Donald F. Lach, trans., The Preface to Leibniz' NOVISSIMA SINICA, hereafter referred to as Lach (1). His edition is based on the 1699 printing.
2. Lach (1), p. 69.
3. The two texts discussed by Leibniz in the Discourse were written by Fathers Longobardi and Ste. Marie, to be taken up in detail later in this Introduction. In his letters to Leibniz of 1 April and 4 September 1715, Remond mentions the Longobardi work, but not Ste. Marie's, mentioning instead Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715), who wrote A Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher: On the Existence and Nature of God (Paris, 1708). Receipt of this latter work is acknowledged by Leibniz, even though it is never cited in the Discourse. Leibniz must have received the Ste. Marie text from Remond as well however, because he acknowledged it in a letter of 4 November 1715: "It would now remain to speak to you sir, of the natural theology of the Chinese literati, according to what the Jesuit Father Longobardi and Father Antoine de Ste. Marie, of the Minorite order, report to us thereon in the treatises which you have sent me, . . ." Remond's letter of 1 April is in Gerhardt III, p. 640; the letter of 4 September, Ibid., p. 651; Leibniz's letter of 4 November, Ibid., p. 660. An English translation of Malebranche's Dialogue has recently been completed by George Stengren of Central Michigan University.
4. In his letter to Remond of 27 March 1716. Gerhardt III, p. 675. Similarly, in a letter of 13 January 1716 written to Bartholomew des Bosses S.J., with whom Leibniz corresponded in Latin, he referred to his manuscript as a "dissertationem de Theologia Sinensium naturali." Gerhardt II, p. 508. From his earlier correspondence with des Bosses it is clear that Leibniz knew something of the works of Longobardi and Ste. Marie before receiving them from Remond, because he mentions reading reviews of them in 1709. See Gerhardt II, p. 380-81.
5. See p. 40.

6. The Frontispiece in this edition is a copy of Leibniz's folio page 1 verso, reproduced from the copy of the entire manuscript provided through the courtesy of the G.W. Leibniz Gesellschaft in Hanover.
7. In §34, §58 and §68 respectively.
8. Translated in Wiener, p. 598.
9. Lach (2), p. 439.
10. A copy is in the Grimaldi-Leibniz file, Leibnizbriefe 330, #3-5, in the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek with the date of 19 July 1689. The correspondence between Grimaldi and Leibniz has not been published; for a fuller discussion of the contents of their letters, see Mungello, Chapter 4, and Lach (1), pp. 11-12 and passim.
11. Fn. 10. A fuller account of Western astronomy in China is in Sivin.
12. Joseph Needham, for example, calls Ricci "one of the most remarkable and brilliant men in history." Needham, vol. 1, p. 148.
13. Translated in French as Traite Sur Quelques Points de la Religion des Chinois; see p. 11 below. Referring to the works of Longobardi and Ste. Marie as the Religion Treatise and the Mission Treatise, respectively, was first done by Mungello, and the same abbreviations are retained here to facilitate cross-references with his work.
14. About Antoine de Sainte-Marie nothing is known. His name cannot be found in other materials pertaining to Leibniz (except as the author of the Mission Treatise), nor in French biographical dictionaries, nor in Catholic dictionaries and encyclopaedias. There are several references, however, in these works to a Spanish Franciscan named Antonio Caballero, who is also called therein Antonio Caballero a Santa Maria. The dates and activities given and described for Caballero correspond precisely with those that must be assumed for Ste. Marie on the basis of statements and dates found in the Mission Treatise. Moreover, the epitaph in Canton included in Caballero's most detailed biography reads (with thanks to our student Freddie Vasquez for assistance with Spanish passages):

A. R. P. F. ANTONIO A S. MARIA  
 ORDINIS MINORUM, MINISTRO ET PRAEFECTO VERE APOSTOLICO  
 AB EXILIO CANTONENSI AD COEL ESTEM PATRIAM EVOCATO  
 ANNO M. D. C. L. XIX.

-- which suggests strongly that Caballero and Ste. Marie were one and the same. The biographies of Caballero do not, however, specifically mention his writing the Mission Treatise, so there remains some room for doubt. See Sinica Franciscana, vol. II, p. 329, and the New Catholic Encyclopedia under "Caballero."

15. Gerhardt III, p. 549; cited also in Lach (2), p. 447.
16. See H. Wilhelm (1). See also Mungello, who devotes the third chapter of his work to the Leibniz-Bouvet correspondence.
17. Several commentators have implied that the isomorphism of his binary system and the trigrams of the I Ching was discovered by Leibniz and transmitted to Bouvet. Thus Lach (2), p. 446, says: "By his analysis of Fu Hsi's trigrams, Leibniz hoped to strengthen Father Bouvet's theory that the I Ching was a key to all the sciences." There is certainly some support for this view, for Leibniz himself said as much. In his letter to Tsar Peter, for example, he said: "The new and marvelous discovery I have made, namely, the secret of deciphering the old characters of the famous Fohi. . . ." Wiener, p. 598. But Bouvet's letter to Leibniz of 4 November 1701 shows fairly clearly that Leibniz provided Bouvet with an outline of his binary system, and that the missionary provided the hypothesis of the isomorphism of it with the I Ching trigrams. And at other times Leibniz himself acknowledges Bouvet's work on this issue, as in a paper he published in 1703 (see textual fn. 188). See also Needham, II, p. 341.
18. See also Waley (1).
19. See pp. 36-38.
20. Bouvet to Leibniz, 4 November 1701. See fn. 17 above, and textual fn. 79.
21. I.e., in §24, §32, and §37. See also Merkel, pp. 83-84.

22. This temporal trichotomy is by no means the invention of Leibniz; most Chinese of the Confucian persuasion, from at least the 12th through the late 19th centuries, would have outlined the intellectual history of their civilization in roughly the same way.
23. The most recent study of the Shang Dynasty is Keightley. While the Shang had a sophisticated writing system, all extant materials are in the form of brief divinatory formulae, or memorials; no texts, if any were written, have been unearthed.
24. The best translation of which is R. Wilhelm. See also H. Wilhelm (2).
25. Bouvet to Leibniz, 4 November 1701. See also fn. 17, above, and textual fn. 79.
26. Ibid.
27. Although Fu Hsi is known as the inventor of the trigrams, the tradition usually accords the honor for the invention of writing per se to the Yellow Emperor's minister Ts'ang Chieh 倉頡, ca. the 27th Century B.C.
28. Translated in Legge, vol. III, and Karlgren (2).
29. Legge, vol. IV. A more poetic translation is Waley (2), and the most literal translation is Karlgren (3).
30. Lun Yu 7:1. All references to the Lun Yu here and in the textual notes are by book and chapter number. For other translations see Legge, vol. I, and Waley (3), both of which use the same numbers employed herein.
31. See fn. 30.
32. Lun Yu 11:7, 7:22 and 9:5, 7:5, and 9:8 respectively.
33. Translated in Legge, vol. II.
34. Translated in Legge/Chai.
35. Chapters 39 and 28.
36. An original philosophical interpretation of Confucius in this context is found in Fingarette. See also the review article of Fingarette in Rosemont. Another interpretation is in Creel.

37. These Neo-Confucians are taken up in the textual notes. See also Bernard.

38. Mungello uses the Compendium to refer to the Hsing-li ta-ch'üan shu, and again, the term is kept herein to facilitate cross-references with his work. For the difficulties faced by the missionaries and Leibniz in citing this work accurately see Mungello, esp. Chapter 5.

39. Religion Treatise (1;9). In his marginal notes to Longobardi's text Leibniz makes reference to Ste. Marie's bibliographic discussion, who placed the compilation of the Compendium as occurring 300 rather than 2500 years earlier.

40. Efforts to combine the san chiao 三教, "Three Teachings," can be traced to the 11th Century, and it became a significant movement by the 14th, in Ming times. Arthur Wright has argued that many Chinese emperors endorsed the syncretism as a means of increasing social control. Wright, pp. 100-101. This may help to explain why many Neo-Confucians of the late Ming and early Ch'ing struggled to keep their belief system free of the "impurities" of Taoism and Buddhism; see, for example, W.T. de Bary.

41. As mentioned earlier, the Neo-Confucians did not break with their classical predecessors. Rather did they add to the early works, especially in the areas of cosmology, ontology and epistemology. One of the major threads which ties both traditions together is the importance of self-cultivation, not only for moral strength, but for spiritual insight as well. The discipline involved in self-cultivation takes on a contemplative element in Neo-Confucianism which is not found in the classical tradition to any extent, but the emphasis on self-cultivation and personal discipline is constant. In the Discourse Leibniz does not show that he is aware of this central thread of all Confucianism. But neither do Longobardi and Ste. Marie, and Leibniz is not so much concerned in the Discourse to explicate Confucianism in full as he is to counter the attacks of the missionaries. See also Bodde, and Schwartz.

42. See esp. §39 and §39a.

43. The formal sectioning was done by Kortholt, but is not misleading;

Leibniz described the Discourse in a way parallel to the sections in a letter to Remond of 17 January 1716. Gerhardt III, p. 665.

44. Leibniz also employs regularly two other forms of argument in the Discourse: 1) when confronted by a Chinese passage which appears to be clearly in conflict with Christian theology, Leibniz attempts to show that similar "errors" had been made by the Greeks, or early Church Fathers, scholastics, etc., without destroying Christianity, or indeed, without diminishing the respect with which such persons were treated in the Western tradition; 2) when rebutting a specific charge of Longobardi and/or Ste. Marie against the ancients, Leibniz will point out whenever possible that the ancient texts do not explicitly state the heresy charged by the missionaries. Whatever the persuasiveness of these particular arguments from negative evidence may have been in his own day, they cannot be given credence today, because most of the "heresies" deal with metaphysical and/or theological issues which were not discussed in the ancient texts at all. There being no statements about prime matter in the classical texts, for example, it follows trivially, but worthlessly, that there cannot be any statements in the classical texts which contradict Christian statements about prime matter.

45. As, e.g., in §49 and §50.

46. Bouvet's letter of 4 November 1701 suggests this view for Leibniz's binary system, and in his letter of 8 November 1702 says that the same system, as embodied in the trigrams of the I Ching, was the basis (now lost) of music, physics, and so forth, as well as arithmetic for the ancient Chinese. See also Mungello, Chapter 3.

47. In §49 Leibniz says that "Confucius himself could have been ignorant about that which he did not want to investigate more deeply."

48. Gerhardt III, p. 667.

49. Ibid., p. 675.

50. Kortholt calls this section of the volume "Aciens Traitez de divers auteurs sur les ceremonies de la Chine avec des notes de Monsieur de Leibniz."

51. With reluctance, the Wade-Giles system of Romanization is used throughout, instead of the pin yin system now standard in the People's Republic of China. On the one hand, whenever the Chinese original is available Chinese specialists do not need any Romanization at all. On the other hand, non-sinologists who wish to consult English works on Chinese philosophy and religion will confront the Wade-Giles system, and to have added still one more kind of spelling to the many already present in this text would have made a difficult task virtually impossible.

52. See textual fn. 197.

53. Minor textual matters: 1) as noted above, parentheses have been employed on occasion to simplify Leibniz's own language, but all materials enclosed in square brackets have been interpolated by the translators; 2) Leibniz's textual references to Longobardi and Ste. Marie have been made uniform, with the former cited by both a section and a page number, separated by a full colon, and the latter cited by page number only; and 3) citations in the footnotes are by author, with a full citation for each consulted work appearing in the Bibliography.

Monsieur [Remond]:

[I. Chinese Opinion Concerning God]

§1 I have taken the pleasure of looking through the books you sent me on Chinese thought. I am inclined to believe that the [Chinese] writers, especially the ancient ones, make much sense. There should be no difficulty in granting that to them despite the opinions of some of their own modern writers. It is comparable to the Christians, who are not always obliged to follow the meaning which the Scholastics and later commentators have given to Scripture, the Church Fathers or the ancient laws. A fortiori, concerning the Chinese, where the Monarch, who is the leader of all sages and the living embodiment of the law, appears to reveal national expressions of ancient doctrines.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the

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1. Leibniz's reference to the Chinese monarch here and two sentences below is to the K'ang Hsi (康熙) Emperor, who reigned from 1662-1722. During Longobardi's time, China was suffering from the internecine wars that eventuated in the overthrow of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The new Ch'ing, or Manchu Dynasty (1644-1911), brought a new stability to China, reflected in the length of K'ang Hsi's reign: 61 years.

grounds upon which Father Nicholas Longobardi (successor to Father Ricci, founder of the mission to China) most often supports himself in order to combat the accommodationist explanations of his predecessor, namely, that the Mandarins did not take such ancient writings seriously (something which made for considerable difficulty in Ricci's time), are no longer valid today by authority of this prince and many knowledgeable members of his court. One should therefore profit from so great an authority. It is the proper way of correcting quite subtly, without appearing to do so, those who have strayed from the truth and even from their own antiquity. This shows that one should not be put off initially by such difficulties and that Father Martinus<sup>2</sup> and those who are of his opinion, have done wisely to follow the advice of Father Ricci and other great men, and to maintain these explanations in spite of the opposition of Father Emanuel Diaz, S.J.,<sup>3</sup> Father Nicholas Longobardi, S.J., and

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Although the Emperor exercised firm control over the government, he was an excellent scholar and patron of the arts. Leibniz was very impressed with the K'ang Hsi Emperor, as his flattering remarks here and in the "Preface" to the Novissima Sinica make clear. See Lach (1), esp. pp. 71-74.

2. Martino Martini (1614-1661), a Jesuit missionary in China. His trip to Rome (c. 1650) was influential in obtaining official papal support for the Jesuit (Ricci's) position on the Rites Controversy.

3. Like Longobardi, Emanuel Diaz (1574-1659) was one of the few Jesuits who had little use for Chinese thought and ritual practices. He wrote on astronomy for the Chinese court.

of Father Antoine de Sainte-Marie Franciscan, and in spite of the contempt of several Mandarins. It would be enough for the explications of the ancients simply to be sustainable because the opinions of modern Chinese appear to be ambivalent. But to examine these things more closely, these explications can, in fact, be more than sustained by the texts.<sup>4</sup> I speak here only of doctrine and will not examine ceremonies or worship, which require longer discussion.

§2 Initially, one may doubt if the Chinese do recognize, or have recognized, spiritual substances. But upon reflection, I believe that they did, although perhaps they did not recognize these substances as separated, and existing quite apart from matter.<sup>5</sup> There would be no harm in that with regard to created Spirits, because I myself am inclined to believe that Angels have bodies; which has also been the opinion of several ancient Church Fathers.<sup>6</sup> I am also of the

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4. I.e., passages from Chinese texts translated and quoted in the treatises of Longobardi and Ste. Marie.

5. A theme developed further in §40 and §41.

6. The existence of the Devil and "fallen" angels is explained by several early Church Fathers as showing that certain orders of angels must possess some sort of material body, and thus, not being "essentially good," are capable both of good and evil. For example, Origen, De Principiis, I, v, 1-3; St. Justin (Martyr), The Second Apology, 5. St. Justin is quite explicit, calling the Biblical manna "angel's food" (Dialogue with Trypho, 57). St. Augustine speculated that God communicates

opinion that the rational soul is never entirely stripped of all matter.<sup>7</sup> However, with regard to God, it may be that the opinion of some Chinese has been to give Him a body, to consider God as the Soul of the World, and to join God to matter, as the ancient philosophers of Greece and Asia have done. But in showing that the most ancient authors of China attributed to the Li,<sup>8</sup> or first principle, the production

corporeal actions through the medium of angelic bodies (On the Trinity, III, x, 21) and that the bodies of evil angels never die (Enchiridion, XXV, XXVI). Lactantius also believed that angels and human souls are of a heavenly fire -- following Psalm 104.4. See §63.

7. In §47 below, Leibniz states that there are an infinity of animated or ensouled substances, below as well as above the soul of man. The superhuman souls or spirits are called "genii," or more traditionally, "angels." No soul, whether animal, human or superhuman is ever entirely separated from a body, even if it is a very subtle or ethereal one (§14, 20, 63), or, in a religious sense, made up of celestial fire or ether (§63, 64; see fn. 6). There are no "totally separate souls, nor genii without bodies. God alone is entirely bodiless." (Monadology, #72). Leibniz is always quick to note that this does not mean that a soul is nothing but an accidental collocation of material atoms (§21) or merely the epiphenomenon of some changing and perishable material substratum (§60; cf. Plato's doctrine in the Phaedo). For the reason why Leibniz held the view that "the rational soul is never entirely stripped of all matter," see fn. 135.

8. Li 理, "Principle," "Reason." In §14 Leibniz discusses the etymology of this term. See fn. 44. For a history of the development of this concept in Neo-Confucianism, see Wing-tsit Chan.

itself of the Ki,<sup>9</sup> or matter, one need not reprimand them, but simply explain them. It will be easier to persuade their disciples that God is an Intelligentia supramundana, and is superior to matter. Therefore, in order to determine whether the Chinese recognize spiritual substances, one should above all consider their Li, or order, which is the prime mover and ground of all other things, and which I believe corresponds to our Divinity. Now it is impossible to understand this [correspondence] with reference to a thing purely passive, brutish and indifferent to all, and consequently without order, like matter. For example, internal order comes not from wax itself, but from whoever forms it. Also, their Spirits, which they [the Chinese] attribute to the elements, to the rivers, and to the mountains, represent either the power of God who appears through them, or perhaps (according to the opinion of some of them), they represent particular spiritual substances which are endowed with the force of action and with some knowledge, although they attribute subtle and ethereal bodies to them like the ancient philosophers and [Church] Fathers attributed to genii or Angels. That is why the Chinese are like those Christians who believed that certain Angels

9. Ch'i 氣, "Ether," "air," "breath," "force," "matter." Originally used to denote the elan vital in human beings (as, e.g., in the Mencius), ch'i was developed by the Neo-Confucians as the complement (matter/force) of li (form/principle).

govern the elements [of earth] and the other large bodies;<sup>10</sup> which would be an obvious error, but which would not overthrow Christianity. During the time of the Scholastics, one did not condemn those who believed, with Aristotle, that certain intelligences governed the celestial spheres. Those among the Chinese who believe that their ancestors and great heroes are among the Spirits, come rather close to the words of our Lord [Matt. 22:30] which suggest that the Blessed resemble the Angels of God. It is then important to consider that those who give bodies to the genii or Angels, like the ancient philosophers or early Fathers, do not thereby deny the existence of created spiritual substances, for they accord rational souls to these genii endowed with bodies, as also men have them, but souls more perfect because their bodies are also more perfect. Therefore, Father Longobardi -- and Father Sabbatini<sup>11</sup> who is cited by him --

10. For example, Origen, whom Leibniz mentions below in another context (§60) believed that God appointed certain angels to administer the natural elements:

For we say that the earth bears the things which are said to be under the control of nature because of the appointment of invisible husbandmen, so to speak, and other governors who control not only the produce of the earth but also all flowing water and air. Contra Celsum, VIII, 31.

11. Sabatino De Ursis, S.J. (1575-1620), a colleague of Ricci and Longobardi in Peking. He wrote the first treatise on the Chinese calendar in a Western language, which is translated in D'Elia.

should not conclude from the fact that the Chinese appear to attribute bodies to their Spirits, that they do not at all recognize the existence of spiritual substances.

§3 China is a great Empire, no less in area than cultivated Europe, and indeed surpasses it in population and orderly government. Moreover, there is in China in certain regards an admirable public morality conjoined to a philosophical doctrine, or rather doctrine of natural theology, venerable by its antiquity, established and authorized for about 3000 years,<sup>12</sup> long before the philosophy of the Greeks whose works nevertheless are the earliest which the rest of the world possess, except for our Sacred Writings. For both of these reasons, it would be highly foolish and presumptuous on our part, having newly arrived compared with them, and scarcely out of barbarism, to want to condemn such an ancient doctrine because it does not appear to agree at first glance with our ordinary scholastic notions. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that one could destroy this doctrine without great upheaval. Thus it is reasonable to inquire whether we could give it a proper meaning. I only wish that we had more complete accounts and greater

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12. This reference to a 3000-year old doctrine of natural theology, coupled with Leibniz's high admiration for the trigrams of the I Ching, suggest that it is probably this classical text to which he is alluding.

quantity of extracts of the Chinese classics accurately translated which talk about first principles. Indeed, it would even be desirable that all the classics be translated together. But this not yet being done, one can only make provisional judgments. Father Longobardi, S.J., Director of the Mission of China -- following Father Ricci (who was the first to go there) -- lived in China a great many years until his death (being nearly 90 years of age), and he recorded, in an incompletely published work, many passages of classical Chinese authors, but with the intent of refuting them. Since this makes those passages much less suspect of having been embroidered by him, I believe that what I might extract from them in order to give a reasonable meaning to the authoritative dogmas of China would be more reliable, and less subject to the suspicion of flattery. In addition, I will appeal here and there to what Father Antoine de Sainte-Marie, of the same opinion as Father Longobardi, has added to them.

§4 The first principle of the Chinese is called Li (2: 13), that is Reason, or the foundation of all nature (5: 32), the most universal reason and substance (11: 50); there is nothing greater nor better than the Li (11: 53). This great and universal cause is pure, motionless, rarefied, without body or shape, and can be comprehended only through the understanding.

From the Li qua Li emanate five virtues: piety, justice, religion, prudence and faith (11:49).<sup>13</sup>

§4a Father de S. Marie, who also lived a long time in China and has also written against Chinese doctrine, says in his Treatise on Some Important Points of the Mission of China that their Li is the law which directs all things and is the intelligence which guides them (p. 62). It is the Law and universal Order, according to which Heaven and Earth have been formed (p. 65); the origin, source and principle of all which has been produced (p. 72). He notes<sup>14</sup> that the Japanese said to the missionaries that all things proceed in their very beginning from the power and virtue of the Li. As Father Luzena,<sup>15</sup> S.J., cited by Father de Sainte-Marie (p. 68) records in his History of the Arrival of Father Francois Xavier<sup>16</sup> to Japan (Book 8, Ch. 2), the Li is sufficient

13. Longobardi gives no transliterated Chinese terms here, and is not quoting from the Compendium. The reference must be to the wu ch'ang (五常) -- "5 constant [virtues]" -- of the Confucians: jen (仁), "benevolence," "human-heartedness"; i (義), "Righteousness, "justice"; li (禮), "ritual," "rites," "worship," "etiquette"; chih (智), "wisdom," "knowledge"; and hsin (信) "sincerity," "trustworthy."

14. On p. 71.

15. Fr. Joao de Lucena S.J. (1548-1600), an early biographer of St. Francis Xavier.

16. One of the most famous missionaries to Asia, St. Francis Xavier S.J., (1506-1552), established missions in Goa, Japan and Macao. He planned a mission to China, but it never materialized. He was canonized in 1622.

unto itself so that the world has no need for another diety. Thus, according to the Chinese, the Li is the sole cause which always moves Heaven, throughout the centuries, in a uniform motion. It gives stability to the earth; it endows all species with the ability to reproduce their kind, this virtue not being in the nature of the things themselves and not depending at all upon them but consisting and residing in this Li. It has dominion over all; it is present in all things, governing and producing all as absolute master of Heaven and Earth (p. 73). Father de Sainte-Marie adds: see the Chinese texts in their Philosophy Kingli (I believe it should read Singli),<sup>17</sup> Book 26, p. 8.<sup>18</sup>

§5 In the 14th section of his work (14: 74), Father Longobardi compiles the qualities which the Chinese attribute to this first principle. They call it (par excellence) the Being, the Substance, the Entity. According to them, this substance is infinite, eternal, uncreated, incorruptible and without beginning or end. It is not only the principle of the physical basis of Heaven and Earth and other material

17. The Compendium. See Introduction, pp. 30-31.

18. Following this paragraph was a section struck out which reads:

After all this, why not simply say that the Li is our God? That is, the ultimate, or if you wish, the primary ground of Existence and even of the possibility of things; the source of all good which is in things, the primary intelligence which was called by Anaxagoras and other ancient Greeks and Latins, NOUS, Mens.

things, but also the principle of the moral basis of virtues, customs and other spiritual things. It is invisible, it is perfect in its being to the highest degree, and it is itself all perfections.<sup>19</sup>

§6 The Chinese also call it the Supreme; or, as Longobardi says, they call it the Summary Unity because as in the number series, unity is the basis, yet is not itself a member. Also, among substances, the essences of the universe, one of them is absolutely unitary, not at all capable of divisibility as regards its being and is the principal basis of all the essences which are and which can exist in the world. But it is also the aggregate of the most perfect multiplicity because the Being of this principle contains the essences of things as they are in their germinal state.<sup>20</sup> We say as much when we teach that the ideas, the primitive

19. According to Leibniz, "perfection" refers to any attribute or essential property of a thing which makes it a "perfect" example of what it is. Something is "perfect in its being" if it is wholly and completely itself, i.e., has all the properties or perfections necessary to its essential being. God is Himself all perfections (by definition) and, containing all these perfections in the highest degree, is the cause of them in other beings.

20. Following the words "Longobardi says . . .," up to "germinal state," Leibniz is quoting the former directly, except that all emphases are Leibniz's, and he has interpolated the emphasized phrase "the most perfect multiplicity." The expression "Summary Unity," which Longobardi refers to frequently, is t'ai i ( 太一 ), "Great One."

grounds, the prototypes of all essences, are all in God. And conjoining supreme unity with the most perfect multiplicity, we say that God is: "One and all things, one containing all; all things embraced in one; but formally, all things as its perfection."<sup>21</sup>

§7 In the same section Father Longobardi mentions that the Chinese say that the Li is the Grand Void, the immense capacity (or Space), because this universal Essence contains all particular essences. But they also call it the sovereign plenitude because it fills all and leaves nothing empty. It is extended within and without the universe. These matters (he says) are dealt with thoroughly in the Chung-Jung (one of the books of Confucius) from Chapters 20 through 25.<sup>22</sup> In the same way we explain the immensity of God: He is everywhere and everything is in Him. So also Father Lessius has said that God is the place of

21. Unum omnia, Unum continens omnia, omnia comprehensa in uno, sed Unum formaliter, omni eminenter.

22. Chung Yung is about, but not written by, Confucius. The claim of authorship comes from Leibniz himself, not from Longobardi. The expression t'ai hsü ( 太虛 ) -- "Great Void" or "Great Plenum" -- was originally a Taoist and Buddhist term. It came into Confucian parlance with Chang Tsai 張載 (1020-1077), who used the term to denote ch'i in its uncondensed form, as pure ether, without form. While formless, the t'ai hsü nevertheless existed, and Chang's usage of the term was designed to combat the Buddhist view of non-existence.

things, and Mr. Guirike, inventor of the vacuum machine, believes that space pertains to God.<sup>23</sup> In order to give an appropriate sense to this, it is necessary to conceive of space not as a substance which possesses parts upon parts, but as the order of things insofar as they are considered existing together,<sup>24</sup> proceeding from the immensity of God inasmuch as all things depend upon him at every moment. This order of things among themselves arises from their relationship to a common Principle.<sup>25</sup>

23. Leonard Lessius (1554-1623) was a Flemish Jesuit active in doctrinal disputes within the Church. Otto von Guericke of Magdeburg (1602-1686) performed an experiment in 1654 involving the creation of a vacuum by pumping the air out of hemispherical containers.

Leibniz mentions this experiment (as well as Torricelli's in 1643, where he emptied the air out of a glass tube by means of mercury) in his correspondence with Clarke (Fifth Paper, #34). Leibniz, like the Aristotelians and the Cartesians, did not admit the existence of a true void and often used their arguments to support his views. Ibid.

24. In his last years, Leibniz often used this same language to describe the nature of space (e.g., Ibid., #29). Leibniz believed that he had sufficiently demonstrated that space cannot be real or absolute, but is purely ideal, i.e., the perceived mutual relations of co-existing things. Space is "only an order of things, like time, and in no sense an absolute being." (Ibid., Fourth Paper, Postscript; Parkinson, p. 220.) For Leibniz's many arguments -- direct and indirect -- against the reality of space, see the Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, Third Paper, ##3-5; Fourth Paper, ##7-11 and Postscript; Fifth Paper, ##27-29; 33-47.

25. According to Leibniz, God not only created all, but sustains and governs through "pre-established harmony." See §14 and fn. 48.

§8 The Chinese also call their Li a globe or circle.<sup>26</sup> I believe that this agrees with our way of speaking, since we speak of God as being a sphere or a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.<sup>27</sup> They call it the Nature of things, which I believe corresponds to our

26. Represented by the Yin-Yang symbol ☰, called t'ai-chi 太極, the "Supreme Ultimate." This is a basic term in Neo-Confucianism, to which Leibniz refers. The light part of the symbol represents yang, the dark, yin (see Introduction, p. 20). For the Chinese, these forces are complementary and not antagonistic, indicated in the symbol itself: each side penetrates the other, and each contains an element of the other within it. Longobardi discusses the relationship of t'ai chi to yin and yang at some length (e.g., 5:31, 32), and Ste. Marie does too; but Leibniz makes no mention of yin and yang in the Discourse and does not discuss t'ai-chi in detail.

27. Leibniz uses this same image for God in his Principles of Nature and of Grace, Founded on Reason (1714), #13. Loemker says that "Leibniz may have learned [of it] from Pascal, or from the German Rosicrucians and theosophists." (II, 1203) More specifically, Leibniz's actual source may well be Nicholas of Cusa who devotes many passages to explicating this image. In turn Cusa, or perhaps even Leibniz himself, might have learned of this image for God from the Hermetic tradition. In their edition of Cusa's works, E. Hoffman and R. Klibansky quote a passage from "Hermes Trismegistus" written in language identical to that of Leibniz's. "Deus est sphaera infinita, cuius centrum est ubique; circumferentia nullibi." Liber XXIV philosophorum, prop. 2. Cited in Nicolaus Cusanus: De Docte Ignorantia, p. 104, notes on lines 1-3. Also see Wittkower, p. 28, n. 2. Leibniz often used notions and images of Cusa in his writings, including the notion of each creature mirroring every other as well as God, the latter "mirroring" being Cusa's explanation of God's immanence as well as an excellent example of the Microcosm-Macrocosm model that Leibniz used. See fn. 136.

saying that God is the Natura Naturans.<sup>28</sup> We say that Nature is wise; that she does all for an end and nothing in vain. The Chinese also attribute to it truth and goodness as we attribute it to Being in our metaphysics. But apparently for the Chinese, just as the Li is Being par excellence so it also possesses Truth and Goodness par excellence. Father Longobardi adds that the author (I believe he means Confucius, author of the Chung-Jung)<sup>29</sup> proves his statement by referring to 18 passages from other, more ancient authors.

§8a In conclusion: Father Longobardi notes that the Chinese also attribute to the Li all manner of perfections, so that there can be nothing more perfect. It is sovereignly spiritual and invisible; in short, so perfect that there is nothing to add. One has said it all.

§9 Consequently can we not say that the Li of the Chinese is the sovereign substance which we revere under the name of God? But Father Longobardi objects to this (14: 78 ff.). Let us see if his reasons for doing so are sufficient. I imagine (he says) that someone could believe that the

28. Natura naturans is a scholastic term used to distinguish the active, creative power of nature, viz., God, from natura naturata, created nature of substance, viz., the world.

29. Longobardi's citation is ambiguous. See fn. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Li is our God because one ascribes to it those qualities and perfections which are appropriate only to God. However, do not let yourself be dazzled by these specious names under which a poisonous doctrine is hidden. For if you penetrate to the very heart of the matter, to its very root, you will see that this Li is nothing other than our prime Matter. The proof of this is that on one hand they ascribe to it grand perfections while on the other they ascribe to it grand imperfections as our philosophers do with respect to prime Matter. I have recorded the actual words of Father Longobardi and will examine them with care, for it appears that he is wide of the mark.

§10 I will first respond in general to the Father's comments: if the Chinese have themselves forgotten so much that they speak in a manner which appears so contradictory, one should not be assured thereby that the Li of the Chinese is prime matter rather than God. <sup>31</sup> Initially, one should

30. All emphasized sentences are a direct quotation from Longobardi, except that after "Li," Longobardi has "or Tai-Kih," which Leibniz has omitted.

31. As Leibniz says below (§12), prime matter is purely passive, capable only of receiving motions or shapes from an active power (e.g., forms or entelechies) and is hence incapable of the active powers ascribed to the Li. Without being informed with a soul or entelechy or some sort of power of activity, matter is never a genuine or complete substance according to Leibniz and can be known only in abstraction from

suspend judgment and see which of the two opinions is the more plausible and whether there is not a third one as well. One should also see if they do not ascribe to the Li more of the attributes of God than the attributes of prime matter and if the first of the two doctrines does not have more in common with the rest of their doctrine. For my part, I fear that the good Father Longobardi, already prejudiced against Chinese doctrine, has himself been "dazzled" by the writings of certain Mandarin Atheists, who have ridiculed those who wish to draw consequences from the doctrines of their ancestors in order to establish the Divinity, Providence and the rest of natural religion. One should no more trust the obviously strained interpretation of such people than one would trust those of an Atheist in Europe who would try to demonstrate by passages pulled out of context, from Solomon and other holy authors, that there is no reward or punishment beyond this life.<sup>32</sup> And if by misfortune Atheism should prevail in Europe and become the doctrine of the most learned -- as there was a time when Averroism almost prevailed among the philosophers of Italy -- then if missionaries were sent to Europe by the sages of China and

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it. Loemker, I, 560, n. 79. Secondary matter (see §23) refers to the matter of individual bodies subject to the various laws of physics (e.g., inertia, resistance, etc.).

32. Ecclesiastes 9:2-5.

they studied our ancient books, they would have reason to oppose the wave of opinion of these most learned men and to ridicule their ridicule.

§11 Father de Sainte-Marie (p. 84, 85), recounting the great and good things the Chinese say of the Li, the Taikie and the Xangti,<sup>33</sup> which are appropriate only to God on the one hand, but which they deprive of all consciousness on the other, believes that they thereby contradict one another. But if this is the case, why do they not cling to the good which they ascribe to it, refuting and rebutting that which they say is bad and contradictory of the good? According to the Chinese, the Li or the Taikie is the one par excellence, pure goodness without admixture, a being completely simple and good, the principle which formed Heaven and Earth; it is supreme truth and strength in itself, yet not confined to itself; and in order to manifest itself, created all things. It is the source of purity, virtue and charity. The creation of all things is its proper science, and all perfections come from its essence and its nature. This principle comprehends all the ways and the laws of

33. T'ai chi (see fn. 26) and Shang ti 上帝, "Lord-on-high." This latter term goes back to high antiquity; in its earliest use it probably referred to the first ancestor of the ruling family. Many translators, from Longobardi's time to the present, translate Shang ti as "God." See also fn. 89.

reason (external as well as internal to itself), by which it disposes of all in its time without ever ceasing to act or create. It can be assumed that the Li, Taikie, or Xangti is an intelligent nature which sees all, knows all and can do all. Now the Chinese could not without contradiction attribute such great things to a nature which they believed to be without any capacities, without life, without consciousness, without intelligence and without wisdom.<sup>34</sup> But the Father responds that pagan philosophers have also advanced things which imply contradiction. I believe that the contradictions are indeed expressed in the language they use, in terminus terminantibus.<sup>35</sup> One can, however, attribute them to different sects. Or if they are within the same sect, one should seek a conciliation and do so in the most reasonable fashion.

§12 But turning to the details [of my objection to Longobardi's argument], I do not at all see how it could be possible for the Chinese to elicit from prime matter -- as our philosophers teach it in their schools, as purely passive, without order or form -- the origin of activity, of order and of all forms. I do not believe them to be so stupid or absurd. This scholastic notion of prime matter

34. See the conclusion of §16b.

35. I.e., "in the terms to be defined."

has no other perfections beyond that of Being, other than that of receptivity, i.e., passive power. It has only the capacity to receive all sorts of shapes, motions and forms. However, it could never be the source of them. It is clear as day that the active power, and the perception which regulates this active power to operate in a determinate manner, are not suited to it. Therefore, I believe that it is quite inappropriate to equate the Li of the Chinese -- which is Reason or Order -- with prime matter.

§13 During the time of the Scholastics, there was a certain David of Dinant<sup>36</sup> who held that God was the prime matter of things. One could say the same of Spinoza who appeared to hold that creatures are only modes of God.<sup>37</sup> But prime

36. Little is known about this figure, except that he taught in Paris at the beginning of the 13th century. He is known as a materialistic pantheist, but our knowledge of him is mostly from other sources. He held a monistic view of reality where God, mind and matter were essentially undifferentiated (i.e., possessed no essential forms). According to Dinant, if God and matter have no form, they are being in potentiality or prime matter. Thus, "The ultimate reality, which is at once God, mind, and matter, is best described as matter." "David of Dinant," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. I, 306.

37. In Book I, Definition of the Ethics, Spinoza says, "By mode I understand the modifications of substance, . . ." Furthermore, Proposition XIV of the same Book states, "Besides God no substance can be nor can be conceived." Hence anything which is, is a mode of God.

matter in the sense of these authors is not a purely passive thing, for it contains in itself the active principle. It could be that some Chinese had similar ideas, but one cannot thus simply accuse their whole school of such ideas.<sup>38</sup> Among us, one often says that the soul is part of God, divinae particulae aurae.<sup>39</sup> Such expressions require a charitable interpretation. God has no parts at all and if one claims that the soul is an emanation of God, one should not imagine thereby that the soul is a portion which is detached from Him and to which it must return as a drop of water to the ocean. Such would render God divisible, whereas in fact the soul is an immediate production of God. Some philosophers, such as Julius Scaliger,<sup>40</sup> have held that forms are not at all the result of matter, but the result of an efficient

38. The context here makes it difficult to tell whether Leibniz is referring to 1) all Chinese philosophers; or 2) the literati -- i.e., the Confucians; or 3) those syncretistic thinkers of the Ming-Ch'ing times who were attempting to merge the "3 Schools" into one.

39. "A particle of the divine breath."

40. Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558) was a student of the Aristotelian Renaissance scholar Pietro Pomponazzi. He is confused at times with his famous son, Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), a Greek and Roman scholar.

cause; this was sustained by the Traducians.<sup>41</sup> But one may not say that the soul could have emanated from the substance of God in such a way as to grant parts to God; therefore the soul can only be produced from nothing. Consequently if some Chinese philosopher says that things are emanations of the Li, one should not immediately accuse him of making Li the material cause of things.

§14 I believe that one can take the passage from the book entitled Chu-zu (Chap. 28 of the [Hsing-li] Philosophy, p. 2) that Father Longobardi cites, in the above sense. This author [Chu Hsi] says very wisely that the Spirits are not merely air, but the force of air. And if Confucius has said to one of his disciples that the Spirits are only air,

41. Both Scaliger (see fn. 40) and the Traducians objected to the theory that substantial forms and souls "were derived from the potency of matter, this being called Eduction." (Theodicy, #88) Scaliger and the Traducians opposed this theory with one of Traduction, where souls are propagated in a similar way to the procreation of the body, thus, in effect, being transmitted by the parents to their children. Leibniz himself inclines to such a theory in a modified form to explain the origin of human souls as well as organic bodies in general.

This production [of human souls] is a kind of traduction, but more manageable than that kind which is commonly taught; it does not derive the soul from a soul, but only the animate from an animate, and it avoids the repeated miracles of a new creation, which would cause a new and pure soul to enter a body that must corrupt it. (Theodicy, #397; Allen, 166)

he meant animated air and was accommodating himself to the intellectual capacity of this disciple, scarcely capable of conceiving spiritual substances.<sup>42</sup> Thus for the Greeks and the Latins, Pneuma, Spiritus, signifies air; that is a subtle and penetrating matter in which created immaterial substances are in effect clothed.<sup>43</sup> The same author (book 28, p. 13) adds a little later that the Spirits are called Li. I judge that the word is ambiguous and is sometimes taken as Spirit par excellence, sometimes also as any spirit, for it may be the case that etymologically, it signifies reason or order.<sup>44</sup> The Chinese author, according to the translation which Father Longobardi gives us, proceeds as follows:

42. Here and elsewhere in the text Leibniz attributes to Confucius a pedagogy that geared the Master's teachings to the intellectual and spiritual development of his students. While there are many passages in the Lun Yü which show that Confucius did indeed evaluate the progress of his followers, there is little evidence to suggest, as Longobardi and Ste. Marie do, that he had an esoteric doctrine transmitted only to advanced initiates. Leibniz argues this point explicitly in §49.

43. See fn. 6.

44. The character 理 has two components: 玉 and 里. The former is the term for jade, and the latter is the term for the Chinese mile (about 1/3 of a mile). 里 in turn is made up of the term for field 田, and the term for earth 土. Chinese etymologies suggest that the compound Li of which Leibniz speaks ( 理 ) originally referred to the venation in pieces of jade, and thus came to have the meaning of order, or pattern. See Karlgren (1), #978.

The Spirits are all from the same Li,<sup>45</sup> so that the Li is the substance and the universal Being of all things. I would imagine that he means to say that the Li is, so to speak, the quintessence, the very life, the power and principal being of things, since he has expressly distinguished the Li of the air from the matter of the air. It appears that here the Li does not signify prime spiritual substance but spiritual substance or entelechy<sup>46</sup> in general; that is

45. In quoting Longobardi here, Leibniz omits a phrase. In this section of the Religion Treatise Longobardi is discussing the different kinds of spirits in Chinese religion, and his statement begins: "These spirits, as well as others, called Li . . . ."

46. For Leibniz, every substance qua substance is such by virtue of an internal unifying active power or force. Leibniz uses the Aristotelian term ENTELECHEIA to denote this activity (as well as a synonym for substance itself, especially immaterial ones -- see §21), believing that he alone was faithful to its original sense, unlike later medieval commentators on Aristotle (see end of §38). Entelechy is used by Leibniz as a more inclusive term than soul, the latter usually being reserved for those substance or monads "whose perception is more distinct and is accompanied by memory." (Monadology, #19) Yet in other writings, such as the present text, he several times uses "entelechy" as synonymous with "soul" or "spirit" (see §21). Occasionally, if Leibniz wishes to stress the immaterial aspect of some entelechies, he adds the word "first" or "primitive" (see §19). In this sense, he is conforming to Aristotle's distinctive use of "first entelechy": (De Anima, II, 412a, 20-29) as the form or actuality of living, natural bodies. Directly below Leibniz pluralizes Li, which should cause discomfort to some sinologists. In his review of the Loosen-Vonessen German translation of the Discourse, Zempliner argues that these passages show that for Leibniz, Li = monads (p. 228).

it signifies what is endowed with activity and perception or orderly action as souls are. And since [Chu Hsi] adds, that things have no other difference among them than that of being more or less coarse, more or less extended matter,<sup>47</sup> he apparently wants to say, not that the Li or Spirits are material, but that those things animated by spirits, and those conjoined to material less coarse and more extended, are more perfect. It is easy to see that this author has not penetrated enough into this issue and that he has sought the source of the diversity of Spirits in their bodies -- as has been done by many of our own philosophers, who have not known of pre-established harmony<sup>48</sup> -- but at least he has said nothing

47. Although Leibniz underlines here, he is paraphrasing Longobardi and not quoting directly.

48. As in this context, Leibniz usually invoked the celebrated doctrine of pre-established harmony in conjunction with the mind-body problem. Leibniz sees the Chinese facing the same difficulty as the rationalists (e.g., the Cartesians) of his day, namely, how to explain the interaction of "immaterial qualities" and "material particles," or more specifically, of a soul with its own body, given that each is a totally different substance with no common attributes. Since he has already rejected the alternative of strict materialism for the Chinese, and finds Descartes' answer unintelligible, Leibniz believes:

there remains only my hypothesis, that is to say, the way of pre-established harmony -- pre-established, that is, by a Divine anticipatory artifice, which so formed each of these substances from the beginning, that in merely following its own laws, which it received with its being, it is yet in accord with the other, just as if they mutually influenced one another . . .

false. Thus his intention is not at all to make the Li's or Spirits (and much less the Li absolutely or principally) material.<sup>49</sup> He is far from this since he has just distinguished between air and the Spirits which animate it. Nor does he say that the Li is the matter of things but seems to suggest that the individual's Li's are more or less perfect emanations (according to their bodies) of the great Li. Consequently the differences of things are proportionate to the subtlety and the extension of their matter, since their Li's themselves correspond to them. In this he says nothing which is not true.

§15 However, having provided explicit passages from the Chinese classical authors which make the Li the source of perfection, Father Longobardi cites none which show it to be the formless prime matter of the Scholastics, which he claims

(New System, and Explanation of the New System; Parkinson, p. 131). Further, all substances (and not just an individual soul and its body) are created and preformed with certain natural dispositions or propensities (see §18), which they will actualize naturally in time and in keeping with the pre-established harmony that God ordained from the beginning. This perfectly timed and executed correlation of all substances not only solves the mind-body problem for Leibniz, but also affords a satisfactory explanation for causation without resorting to "influxes" or other invisible and unintelligible causal agencies.

49. Leibniz is here laying the groundwork for the argument he will develop in §23.

to prove by reasoning; but his reasoning is not as clear as the explicit [Chinese] passages. Here are his reasons (14; 79) which I find very weak: (1) He says that Li cannot subsist by itself and has need of primal air.<sup>50</sup> I do not know if the Chinese say that explicitly. Perhaps they would say that it cannot act by itself because it naturally acts in things, since it produces things only by means of prime matter by which they apparently mean this primal air. Thus he has only demonstrated thus far that the Li is not prime matter.

§16 His second reason is that according to the Chinese, the Li, considered in itself, is inanimate, without life, without design and without intelligence. Elsewhere the Father records views which confirm this. The universal cause, he says (5: 32), according to the Chinese scholars, has neither life nor knowledge nor any other power; they say the same of Heaven, where the Li manifests itself most clearly. The father cites the Xu-King (11:54; one of the earliest of Chinese works), Book I, p. 33, where it is said that Heaven, which is the most significant thing of the world, neither

50. "Primal air" is ch'i 氣 . The French is primogène, meaning "first generated or produced [air]." Elsewhere Leibniz uses protogene in the same way.

sees, nor understands, nor hates, nor loves.<sup>51</sup> He also cites the Chinese [Hsing-li] Philosophy, Book 26, pp. 16-17, where it is said that Heaven and Earth have neither reason, will nor deliberation. And Father de Sainte-Marie (p. 81), following Father Ricci, cites the Lung-iu, Chapter 14, where in explicating the Li as the Tao (order), Confucius says that it is incapable of knowing man, but man is capable of knowing it.<sup>52</sup> One must, however, have a very exact translation of this passage in order to see if Confucius speaks there of the first principle, or whether he is not speaking of law or order in abstracto as when one also says among us that the law knows no one, that is, it has no regard for the individual before it.

51. The reference here must be to Shu Ching, Part II, Book II, 7, which Leibniz also cites below (see fn. 58). Legge (vol. III, p. 74) translates the passage so that it flatly contradicts Longobardi's: "Heaven hears and sees as our people hear and see; Heaven brightly approves and displays its terrors, as our people brightly approve and would awe . . ." The thrust of Confucian thought on this issue, however, is much better captured by Karlgren's translation of the same passage: "Heaven's seeing and hearing (proceed from) work through our people's hearing and seeing, Heaven's (enlightenment) discernment and (fearsomeness) severity work through our people's discernment and severity (sc. against bad rulers)." (See Karlgren (2), p. 9.) That is, the will of Heaven is expressed, and known, through human deeds.

52. The reference is to Lun Yü 15:28, which reads jen neng hung tao, fei tao hung jen 人能弘道非道弘人. The term "hung" does not mean "know," and the translation should read: "Men can enlarge Tao; Tao cannot enlarge men."

§16a In addition, I answer that if the classical Chinese authors deny to the Li, or first principle, life, knowledge, and power, they mean without doubt these things in human form and as they exist among created beings.<sup>53</sup> By life, they would mean the animation of organs; by knowledge the knowledge which is acquired by reasoning or experience; and by power they would mean the power such as that of a prince or magistrate who governs his subjects only by awe and by hope.<sup>54</sup>

§16b However, in ascribing to the Li the greatest perfections, they ascribe to it something more exalted than all this, of which the life, knowledge and power of creatures are only shadows or feeble imitations. It is somewhat like those mystics -- among others Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite -- who have denied that God could be a Being, ens, ON, but have

53. Leibniz is alluding here to the via negativa or "negative way" (usually associated with mystical theology), which claims that since God is infinite and transcendent, we cannot ascribe -- but indeed must explicitly negate -- any predicates (e.g., life, knowledge, power) that are associated with finite, created beings. Thus God may only be described by denying Him any characteristic that implies such finitude. Indeed, the use of the word "infinite" is the best example of such an approach. See also fn. 55 below.

54. Leibniz is referring back to Longobardi here, and the latter was using, in this context, "life," "knowledge," and "power" as his own terms, not as translations from the Chinese.

said at the same time that he could be greater than being, super-ens, HYPEROUSIA.<sup>55</sup> Thus do I understand the Chinese, who say, according to Father de Sainte-Marie (p. 62), that the Li is the law which governs, and the intelligence which leads, things; that it is, however, not itself intelligent, but through natural force, its operations are so well regulated and sure, that one could say that it is intelligent. In our way of speaking, where one must seek and deliberate in order to act properly, we would say that the Li is more than intelligent; whereas for the Chinese it is infallible by its very nature. As for Heaven and Earth, perhaps the author, in speaking of them, believed that they truly lack knowledge (which we believe too), although they are governed by knowledge, reason and order.

§17 The third argument [of Longobardi's] is that the Li acts only contingently and not by will or deliberation. From

55. Virtually nothing is known about Pseudo-Dionysius, as he is more often called, except that his writings were first cited in the 6th century and that he was clearly a devout Christian who had absorbed the traditions of late Neo-Platonism concerning the "negative way" of describing God (see fn. 53) even more strongly than the later mystics such as Nicholas of Cusa. Pseudo-Dionysius claims that one cannot even say that God "exists" or has "Being." Although the "Cause and Origin and Being and Life of all creatures (The Divine Names, I, 3) [God] "Itself exists not, for It is beyond all Being." (Ibid., I, 1.)

the Li (5: 33), the primal air<sup>56</sup> is emitted naturally and contingently; equally naturally and contingently (34) the agitated air produced heat, and (36) consequently the creation of Heaven and Earth occurred purely contingently in a manner quite natural, i.e., with neither deliberation nor design. He also says (11: 54) that Heaven and Earth act only by natural propensity, just as fire burns and stones fall. Further (14: 77) the Li is the natural law of Heaven and by its operation all things are governed, according to weight and measure, and conforming to their state; not, however, on the basis of intelligence or reflection, but only by propensity and natural order. The governance (17: 88) and the order of things of this world stems naturally and necessarily from the Li, following the connectedness of all things, and the disposition of individual subjects, which we call destiny. The same Father says (17: 90), I asked a celebrated man, leader of a school with a great number of disciples, who understood perfectly the doctrine of the three sects (that is, the literati, the bonzes or the idolators, and the Tao-cu, which the Europeans call sorcerers),<sup>57</sup> I asked him (I said) if

56. See fn. 50.

57. "Doctrine" is in the singular in both Longobardi and Leibniz, so the reference may be to the syncretist movements. The parenthetical remark, however, suggests the three schools separately: the Confucians, Buddhists and Taoists respectively.

the King-on-high (Xangti the Lord of Heaven) had life and intelligence, if he knew the good and evil which men do, and if he rewarded and punished them. The response of this learned man is noteworthy. He responded that the King-on-high had none of this knowledge but acted as if he had, thus conforming to what is said in the Xū-King, Book I, p. 35, that Heaven neither sees nor understands nor loves nor hates, but performs all these operations through the efforts of . . . the people . . . with whom the Li is connected.<sup>58</sup>

§18 All these expressions of the Chinese have a rational meaning. They say of Heaven what we say of the beasts, namely that they act according to intelligence and as if they possessed it, although they do not possess it at all because they are directed by the supreme order or reason; which the Chinese call Li. When they say that the primal air or matter leaves the Li naturally and involuntarily, it could be they

58. The Longobardi text is ambiguous about who is quoting whom with respect to the Shu Ching. "For Heaven neither loving nor hating, etc.," see fn. 51. Leibniz, however, cites p. 35 for this quote, whereas he earlier cites p. 33. The Shu Ching does make reference to Heaven 天 (t'ien) and Lord-on-high (Shang ti) in the Book following the last one cited. The gist of the passage is that if the ruler is virtuous, and appoints only virtuous officials, the people will respond, showing that the ruler has the support of the Lord-on-high, and that Heaven's mandate will remain with him. Legge, vol. III, p. 79, and Karlgren (2), p. 11. Again, in neither passage does Li occur.

believe that God has created matter necessarily. But one could grant yet a better meaning to their words, explaining them more fittingly: namely, that supreme Reason has been brought to that which is the most rational. It is possible they call the Li necessary, because it is determined and infallible; misusing the term "necessary" as many Europeans do.<sup>59</sup> And they have excluded voluntary action because they have understood by voluntary, an act of design and deliberation where at first one is uncertain and then one makes up one's mind afterwards -- something which has no place in God. Thus I believe that without doing violence to the ancient doctrine of the Chinese, one can say that the Li has been brought by the perfection of its nature to choose, from several possibilities, the most appropriate; and that by this means it has produced the Ki or matter<sup>60</sup> with dispositions such that all the rest has come about by natural propensities, in the same way that Monsieur Descartes claims to bring forth the present order of the world as a consequence of a small number of initially generated assumptions. Thus the Chinese, far from being blameworthy, merit praise for their idea of things being created by their natural propensity and

59. This is not an example of Leibniz's best argumentative style. No expression in ancient Chinese approximates the meaning of "necessary" as used in Western philosophy and religion. Thus his "It is possible they call the Li necessary, misusing the term, . . ." should be ignored.

60. See fn. 50.

and by a pre-established harmony.<sup>61</sup> But contingency [as Longobardi uses it in his third argument] is not at all appropriate here and does not appear to be based in any way on the words of the Chinese.

§19 The fourth objection of Father Longobardi is based on a false supposition: he says that the Li is the subject of all generation and of all corruption, taking on or discarding various qualities or accidental forms. But there is nothing in the passages that he quotes which says this of the Li, or rule, or supreme Reason. They speak rather of the primal air, or of matter, through which the Li creates the primitive entelechies or the substantive operating qualities, which form the constitutive principle of spirits.<sup>62</sup>

§20 His fifth objection is also based on a false or mistaken supposition: namely, that according to the Chinese all things of the world are necessarily material and that there is nothing truly spiritual. As proof of this he cites Books 26 and 34 of their [Hsing-li] Philosophy. He would have done well, however, to give us the passages concerning this point. But I believe (as I have already said)<sup>63</sup> that the Chinese

61. See fn. 48.

62. See fn. 46.

63. In §2.

recognize no distinct immaterial substance other than the Li which has produced Matter. In this I believe they are correct and that the order of things brings it about that all individual Spirits are always united to bodies and that the soul, even after death, is never stripped of all organized matter or of all informed air.<sup>64</sup>

§21 Father Longobardi relies heavily on the Chinese axiom which says that all things are one. He mentions it expressly (7: 41) and returns to it often.<sup>65</sup> Father de Sainte Marie also speaks of it (p. 72).<sup>66</sup> There is yet another passage recorded by Father de Sainte Marie (p. 73) which shows that there exists something more than material qualities. The Sing-Li Philosophy, Book 26, p. 8, says that the directing and procreating virtue is not found in the disposition of things and does not depend on them but is composed of and resides in the Li which has dominion over, governs, and produces all. Parmenides and Melissus spoke in the same way but the sense which Aristotle gives them appears different from the sense given to Parmenides by Plato.<sup>67</sup> Spinoza reduces all

64. See fn. 7.

65. And according to Longobardi, the Chinese learned this doctrine from Zoroaster (7: 41).

66. Ste. Marie translates the saying Van-voe-ie-ti-Van-voe-ie-li (Wan wu i ti, wan wu i li) 萬物一體 萬物一理, without citation.

67. Leibniz introduces the references to these specific Greek philosophers because Longobardi has done so in the same passage from which Leibniz has

to a single substance, of which all things are only modifications. It is not easy to explain how the Chinese understand it but I believe that nothing prevents according them a rational interpretation. With respect to that which is passive in them, all things are composed of the same prime matter, which differs only by the forms which motion gives it. Also, all things are active and possess Entelechies, Spirits and Souls<sup>68</sup> only by virtue of the participation of the Li, i.e., the same originative Spirit (God), which gives them all their perfections. And matter itself is only a production of this same primary cause. Thus everything emanates from it as from a central point. But it does not follow from this that all things are different only by virtue of accidental qualities: as, for example, the Epicureans and other materialists believed, admitting only matter, figure and movement, which would truly lead to the destruction of immaterial substances, or Entelechies, Souls and Spirits.

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just quoted. Aristotle interprets Parmenides as allowing for an efficient cause (i.e., of motion and attraction) as well as a material one, thus diluting the strict interpretation of the Eleatics that all is one and unchangeable. Metaphysics, Book I, Chap. 3, 984b 2-4; 30-31. Plato, on the other hand, adheres to a stricter interpretation of Eleatic monism, including Parmenides, which denies the existence of motion or genuine plurality. Theatetus 180E; Parmenides, 137CD.

68. See fn. 46.

§22 The saying that all is one should be counterposed with another, that the one is all, of which we have spoken above in recounting the attributes of the Li.<sup>69</sup> It means that God is everything by eminence, as the perfections of effects are in their cause, and not formally, as if God was the aggregate of all things. In the same way, all things are one, but not formally as if they comprised one, or as if this great One was their matter. Rather all things are one by emanation, because they are the immediate effects of Him; that is, He attends to them intimately and fully, and expresses Himself in the perfections which He communicates to them according to their degree of receptivity.<sup>70</sup> And it is thus that one says Jovis omnia plena;<sup>71</sup> that He fills all, that He is in all things and that also all things

69. I.e., in §4 through §8. Longobardi does not say "one is all"; Ste. Marie and Leibniz use the expression.

70. The Stoics thought of reason as the creative fire (*pneuma*) or soul residing in the individual as well as the world at large. God (or Zeus) is often thought of as being the animating force or soul of the world, the latter thus being a gigantic rational animal. In his correspondence with Clarke (Fifth paper, #43), Leibniz makes the same point in criticizing the notion that space is a property of God, thus in effect giving Him divisible parts. "This God with parts will be very like the Stoic God, who was the whole universe, considered as a divine animal." (Parkinson, p. 230). See also, "Letter to Hansch," Loemker, II, 996.

71. "Jupiter fills the universe," a phrase taken from Virgil's Eclogues, III, 60.

are in Him. He is at the same time the center and the space because He is a circle of which the center is everywhere, as we have said above.<sup>72</sup> This sense of the axiom "that all is one" is all the more certain for the Chinese, since they attribute to the Li a perfect unity incapable of division -- according to the report of Father Longobardi noted above -- and what makes the Li incapable of division is that it can have no parts.<sup>73</sup>

§23 One could perhaps claim that in fact the Li cannot be equated with the prime Matter of our philosophers, but that one can conceive of it as the prime form, that is, as the Soul of the World, of which the individual souls would only be modifications. This would follow the opinions of several ancients, the opinions of the Averroists, and in a certain sense, even the opinions of Spinoza, for all of whom secondary matters are only modifications of prime matter.<sup>74</sup> And consequently the supposed individual soul would be no more than those organs through which the Soul of the World operates. This doctrine is not at all tenable, because each soul has its own individuality or self.<sup>75</sup> Individual matter is

72. See fn. 27.

73. See §6 and §14.

74. See fn. 31.

75. For Leibniz, prime matter itself is not genuinely substance (fn. 31), but gains its existence and identity as an individual substance only when

able to result from modifications of prime matter because prime matter has parts. But prime form or pure activity has no parts; thus secondary forms are not produced from the prime one, but by the prime one.<sup>76</sup> I do not want to deny that several Chinese may have fallen into this error, but it does not seem to me that the error can be found in the passages of their ancient writers.<sup>77</sup> Father Longobardi, who has spoken to many Mandarins trying to find passages contrary to our theology, would have cited some of them had he found them. Consequently I believe that one can claim [on behalf of the Chinese], without doing violence to their classical authors, that there are Spirits such as those of Man or genii which are of different substances than the Li, although they emanate from it.

it is informed with a form or soul. Hence for Leibniz, as for many Scholastics, individual identity is based on the particular form of a substance, not its individual or secondary matter, which is simply a modification of prime matter.

76. See fn. 49. Translators' emphasis.

77. Among those whom Leibniz believed fell "into this error" was probably Chu Hsi, cited on this point in §14. The error will not be found in the "ancient writers" -- i.e., in the classical texts -- because discussions about primary and secondary matter do not occur there.

[II. Chinese Opinion Concerning the Productions of God or Prime Matter, and Spirits]

§24 Having spoken enough concerning the Li, let us turn to what it produces, following what Father Longobardi tells us from the Chinese authors. From the Li issues the air (5: 39), the primitive air (11: 49), or the primogeneous (or protogeneous) air (14: 79). He calls this primitive air Ki (10: 48 and 11: 56/57); it is the instrument of the Li (11: 50). The operations of the Spirits pertain ultimately to the Li, instrumentally to the Ki, and formally to the Spirits (11: 56). It seems that this Ki, or this primitive air, truly corresponds to Matter, just as it corresponds to the instrument of the first principle which moves matter; just as an artisan moves his instrument, producing things. This Ki is called air, and for us could be called Aether because matter in its original form is completely fluid, without bonds or solidarity, without any interstices and without limits which could distinguish parts of it one from the other. In sum, this matter (Ki) is the most subtle one can imagine.

§24a Now Father Longobardi expressly states that this Ki is a production of the Li. But he also says (5: 33) that from the Li the primal air has naturally issued and (11: 56) although the Li performs no operations itself, it

commences to do so after having produced its Ki, that is, its primitive Air. Either we must overlook the inconsistency here, or admit that the good Father has made a mistake. How can one say that the Li does nothing itself, without the Ki, if it produces the Ki? Can one create without acting? And since the Ki is only the instrument, isn't it necessary to say that its virtue or its principal efficient cause is in the Li? In consequence of this production of prime Matter by the primary principle, or primitive Form, by pure Activity, by the operation of God, Chinese philosophy more closely approaches Christian theology than the philosophy of the ancient Greeks who considered matter as coeval with God, a principle which produces nothing but only informs it. Admittedly, it appears that the Chinese believed that the Li first and always produced its Ki and that therefore one is as eternal as the other. But there should be nothing surprising about this since they were apparently ignorant of the one Revelation which can explain to us the beginning of the universe -- St. Thomas [Aquinas] and other great doctors having claimed that this dogma could not be demonstrated by reason alone. However, although the ancient Chinese expressly state that the Ki never perishes, they do not explicitly state that it has no

beginning.<sup>78</sup> And there are those who believe that because the beginnings of the Chinese empire occurred during the time of the Patriarchs, they could have learned about the creation of the world from them.<sup>79</sup>

§25 It seems that after the Li and Ki comes the Taikie, but Father Longobardi has not written enough about the latter to give us a distinct idea of it.<sup>80</sup> One could almost say that the Taikie is nothing other than the Li working on the Ki: "The Spirit of the Lord who is borne upon the waters,"<sup>81</sup> taking the sovereign spirit for the Li,

78. Like li, ch'i is not used in a metaphysical sense in classical Confucianism, guaranteeing the truth of Leibniz's ". . . they do not explicitly state . . . ."

79. Prominent among those who so believed was Bouvet, who communicated this view to Leibniz in some detail in his letter of 4 November 1701. After referring to Fu Hsi as "the prince of all the philosophers," Bouvet went on to add that such a description was not an "atrocious offense against Europe," because Fu Hsi was not Chinese, but either Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, or Enoch. Leibniz repeats this idea of the Patriarchs visiting China in §32 and §37. He also referred to it in other correspondence, cited by Merkel, pp. 84-85. Longobardi held a similar view (see fn. 65), and Ste. Marie suggests in the Mission Treatise (p. 21) that the Chinese are descendants of Noah.

80. Longobardi did discuss t'ai chi in some detail; Section 13 is devoted to it. See also fns. 26 and 33.

81. A slight paraphrase of the Latin vulgate edition of the Bible, Genesis 1: 2, Spiritus domini qui ferebatur super aquas.

and the waters for the primary fluid -- i.e., primal air or Ki or prime matter. Thus the Li and Taikie would not be different things but one and the same thing considered under different predicates. The Father says (5: 33) that the Li becomes an infinite globe (this is doubtlessly metaphorical) which they name the Taikie -- that which has attained the ultimate degree of perfection and consummation -- because it operates effectively and exercises its virtue in the production of things, and gives them that ability which includes pre-established order in virtue of which everything proceeds thereafter by its own natural propensity. Consequently, after creating natural objects God needs only thereafter to proceed in his ordinary course.<sup>82</sup> This is why it seems to me that the Father is somewhat confused (10: 47) by confounding the Ki with the Taikie and saying that the Taikie is the primal air.

§25a Perhaps some Chinese assume that a primitive composite has resulted from the primitive form, or Li, and from the primitive matter or Ki; a substance of which the Li is the soul and the Ki its matter. They could comprehend this substance under the name of Taikie, and the entire world would thus be conceived of as an animal, life universal, supreme spirit, a grand personage; the Stoics speak

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82. See fn. 48.

of the world in this fashion. Among the parts of this grand and total animal would be the individual animals just as for us animalcule enter into the composition of the bodies of large animals. But since one does not find this error explicitly in the ancient Chinese authors, it should never be attributed to them, all the more so since they have conceived of matter as a production of God. God will not combine substance with matter, and thus the world will not be an animated being, but rather God will be an intelligentia supramundana; and matter, being only an effect of His, will never be coeval with Him. When Father Longobardi (11: 49) says that the Taikie contains within itself the Li and the primal air or Ki, one should not understand this to mean that it is composed of them but simply that it contains them, as conclusions are contained in their assumptions, because the Taikie is the Li operating on the Ki and thus the Ki is assumed.

§26 One may also attribute to the Taikie the attributes of the Li. It is said (11: 53) that all the spirits issue from the Taikie, that the Xangti is the son of the Taikie -- as a modern Mandarin said -- although one could perhaps be sustained by the ancients in supporting the view that the Xangti is also nothing other than the Li or Taikie conceived as the governing principle of the universe, that is, Heaven; as I will shortly demonstrate. Longobardi says (11: 54) that

the Spirits are the same Li or the same Taikie, applied to different subjects, such as to Heaven, to Earth and to the Mountains. The latter point is not in accord with what the Mandarin said, however, for if the Xangti or the Spirit of Heaven, is the son of the Taikie, it is not identical with it. But sufficient to say here that the Taikie is equated with the Li; we will see below what can be said of the Xangti. Father Longobardi expresses the title of his 13th section in these terms, viz., that all the Gods of the Chinese, or all the Spirits to which they attribute the governance of things, reduce themselves to only one, which is the Li or Taikie. Though it would be better do do so, I am not going to examine this notion at present, but simply note that [even for Longobardi] the Li and Taikie can be taken for the same thing. He says, in this section (13: 68), that the Li is the "cause of understanding and the guiding norm of all nature";<sup>83</sup> immediately following, he says that the Taikie is "nature's womb, containing in itself, potentially, all possible things."<sup>84</sup> But he also states the latter of the Li in 14: 75 and consequently he is certain (13: 68) that the difference between the Li and the Taikie is only a formality in that the Li denotes an absolute Being, while the Taikie

83. This and the following sentence which Leibniz quotes were written in Latin by Longobardi: Mentis ratio et totius naturae regula directrix.

84. Sinus naturae continens in se virtualiter omnia possibilia.

denotes a Being with respect to things of which it is the root and origin. He cites Book 26 of the Chinese Philosophy, page 8, where it is said that causes act incessantly because the Li or the Taikie is within, governing them and directing them. And in Book One of the same text, page 31, it says that the Li (Reason) has dominion over the things of the world and consequently they lack nothing. Book 36, page 9 states that the Taikie is the cause of the beginning and the end of this world<sup>85</sup> and after a world is ended it produces another (5: 36) -- after the revolution of the great year called Ta Sui<sup>86</sup> (4: 32) -- but that it itself never ends. This proves that the Taikie is not the world. Finally, according to St. Marie (p. 69), the Chinese recognize nothing greater nor grander than the Li or the Taikie. They also [according to Longobardi] say that all things are the same Taikie. I believe this is not to be understood as if things are parts or modifications of the Taikie, because their absolute realities or perfections are emanations of it. But, just as we still often speak in a figurative way as if souls were particles of divinity, it should not then be

85. Longobardi's text reads "production and destruction" rather than "beginning and end."

86. Ta sui 大岁, "Great year." The term denotes different time periods -- weeks, months, etc. -- and is also a name for the planet Jupiter. Thus the time period alluded to here is probably 12 years. Leibniz's citation should read 5: 32 instead of 4: 32.

surprising if the Chinese speak of them sometimes in the same manner. And it is in this sense that the Chinese Philosophy says in Book 26, page 1, that the Li is one, but that its parts are several. For to speak properly, a thing composed of parts is never truly One. It is unitary only by external denomination, as one pile of sand or one army. Thus the first principle does not have any parts -- as other passages already cited have shown.

§27 Father de Sainte Marie records passages (p. 64) from the Chinese where they seem to make up a word Li-Taikie. This word signifies (p. 69), according to Confucius (in the Chung-Jung, one of the four Books) substantial truth, Law, the principle and end of all things;<sup>87</sup> there is nothing which does not receive from it its effective and true being, without the essence of any of these things having a single atom of imperfection. It is somewhat like (the Father adds) what we read in Genesis [1:31]: God saw all that he had made and all was good. However, he then (p. 107/108) cites

87. This sentence follows Leibniz's text, but Ste. Marie does not imply that the Chinese "made up" a word for li/t'ai-chi in the Chung Yung. Again, li does not occur in this classical text; rather does the philosophically significant term tao 道 -- "Way" -- occur, and the latter Neo-Confucian philosophers interpreted tao as signifying li in the ancient writings. Ste. Marie says that for him, the two expressions have the same meaning.

a passage from Lactantius concerning the first principle, where this author, after having cited the ancient poets and philosophers, says that all these opinions, although uncertain, establish providence under the names of Nature, Heaven, Reason, Spirit, Fate, Divine Law, which all amount to what we call God.<sup>88</sup> Father de Sainte Marie then adds that the Chinese recognize only a material principle divided into small parts. In this it seems to me that the good Father is being misled by a strange prejudice which comes to him not from classical authors but from the discourses of some modern impious ones who, in China as elsewhere, see themselves as skeptics in order to set themselves above the people.

§28 What the Chinese speak of as the most magnificent after the Li or the Taikie is the Xangti, that is, the King-on-high, or rather the Spirit which governs Heaven. Having come to China and remaining there for some time, Father Ricci believed that one could take this Xangti to mean the Lord of Heaven and Earth; in a word our God, Whom he also called Tien-chu,<sup>89</sup> the Lord of Heaven. In China, it

88. The Divine Institutes, Book I, Ch. 5.

89. T'ien-chu 天主, "Heaven's Lord." This was Ricci's term for "God," although he was willing to allow the ancient Chinese terms t'ien and Shang ti to be translated in the same way. After the conclusion of the Rites Controversy -- in which these terms were an issue -- only T'ien-chu could be used by the Catholic missionary translators for "God."

is by this last term that one usually refers to the God of the Christians. Fathers Longobardi, S. Marie and others who do not sanction calling God Xangti are satisfied with the name Tien-chu, although in effect the two terms signify almost the same thing in Chinese -- keeping in mind the force of the terms "King-on-high" and "Lord of Heaven." The main question is, whether the Xangti is an eternal Substance or a mere creature for the Chinese. Father Longobardi admits (2: 13) that the text (from the original books) seems to say that there is a royal sovereign named Xangti who lives in the palace of Heaven from which he governs the world, rewards the good and punishes the wicked. But on the same page, the Father presents the views of other ancient interpreters who attribute these same qualities to Heaven, or to the universal substance called Li. But far from being detrimental to those who give the name of Xangti to our God, the term serves them marvelously. For the Li is eternal and endowed with all possible perfections; in a word one can take it for our God, as I have shown above. Thus if the Xangti and the Li are the same <sup>90</sup> thing, one has every reason to give to God the name of Xangti. And Father Ricci was not wrong to claim (Longobardi 16: 84) that the ancient philosophers of China recognized and honored a supreme being called Xangti, King-on-high,

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90. This is Longobardi's claim.

as well as subordinate Spirits -- his ministers -- and that in this way, they had a knowledge of the true God.<sup>91</sup>

§29 The Chinese say yet other great and good things of Heaven, of the Spirit of Heaven, of the order of Heaven, all of which are most fittingly said of the true God. For example, they say (17: 99) the order of Heaven is the being of sovereign goodness which is imperceptible. And they call the Li (14: 77) the natural order of Heaven, insofar as all things are governed by weight and measure and conform to their condition through the operation of the Li. This order of Heaven is called Tien-tao,<sup>92</sup> and according to Father de Sainte Marie (p. 69), Confucius in the Chung-Jung says that the Tien-tao is the same as the Li, the determinate order of Heaven in its course and its natural operations.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, according to the account of Father Longobardi (15: 81), the universal or primitive substance qua the state it possesses in Heaven is called Li.

91. Bouvet went further; according to him, the ancient Chinese, through the Patriarchs, had a knowledge not only of the true God, but of His triune nature as well. (Letter of 4 November 1701.)

92. T'ien-tao 天道, "Heaven's Way."

93. Again, Leibniz appears to have misread Ste. Marie's text here, which reads: "Confucius, in the same place, speaking of the T'ien-tao, which is the same as the Li . . ." Ste. Marie thus makes the two Chinese terms synonymous, but does not ascribe this view to Confucius. See also fn. 87.

(that is to say, order or reason). And the Li (14: 76) is called an object in Heaven because the first principle, although it is present in all objects of the world is itself primarily in Heaven -- which is the most excellent object of the universe -- where its efficacy is most apparent. And in Book 2, Chapter 5 of the Lun-Ju,<sup>94</sup> it is said of the Li that this principle is of an incomparable essence and that this principle is of an incomparable essence and that there is nothing equal to it. So too the same praises are given to Heaven, and therefore these praises can be reasonably understood as being given not to matter, but to the Spirit of Heaven or the King-on-high. So must Father de Sainte Marie be understood when he says (p. 13) that the absolute and supreme divinity of the Chinese literati is Heaven.<sup>95</sup>

§30 Here is how Father de Sainte Marie quotes a Chinese doctor in speaking of the Xangti (p. 74): "Our Chinese

94. Because li does not occur in the Lun Yü, it is difficult to ascertain what Leibniz and Longobardi are citing. Lun Yü 2: 5 discusses rituals, the Chinese term for which is li 禮, homophonous with li 理, "Principle." The homonymy might have confused Longobardi, Ste. Marie, and/or Leibniz, but it would not have confused any literate Chinese. Moreover, there is no passage in the Lun Yü which treats of the "incomparable" nature of the other terms with which li was often equated, except possibly for 8: 19. Mungello suggests (Ch. 5) that it is a reference to 5: 12, wherein it is said that one of the things Confucius refused to discuss was "Heaven's Way," -- i.e., T'ien-tao.

95. Ste. Marie then goes on to describe Confucius as the Chinese Minerva.

philosophers, examining with great care the nature of Heaven and Earth and all things of the world, recognized that they were all good and that the Li was capable of containing them all, without exception, and that from the grandest to the smallest they possessed the same nature and the same substance, from which we conclude that the Lord or God Xangti is present in each thing, with which it is really one. For this reason, we should preach to men and exhort them to flee from vice which would dishonor and soil the perfections of the Xangti; to follow his justice, otherwise this would offend sovereign reason and supreme justice; and not to injure any beings because this would outrage the Lord Xangti, soul of all created things." This passage shows that according to its author, the Xangti is the universal substance, sovereignly perfect -- ultimately the same as the Li. One cannot sanction, however, the statements of this scholar (apparently modern) who would make the Xangti into the soul of things as if it were of their essence.

§31 The ancient sages of China, believing that the people have a need for objects in their cult which strike their imagination, did not want to propose to the public the reverence of the Li or of the Taikie, but rather the adoration of the Xangti, of the Spirit of Heaven, meaning by this name the Li or the Taikie itself, which manifests its power

principally [in Heaven].<sup>96</sup> At times the Hebrews also attribute to Heaven that which pertains to God -- as for example in the Book of Maccabees<sup>97</sup> -- and they have considered God the Lord of Heaven; for this reason, they were called Coelicolae ["heaven-worshippers"] by the Romans: qui/Nil praeter nubes, et coeli numen adorant.<sup>98</sup> Further, Aristophanes, wanting to make Socrates odious and ridiculous in the eyes of the Athenians, makes the people believe that, contemptuous of the Gods of the land, [Socrates] reveres Heaven or the clouds (which the ignorant confound);<sup>99</sup> this

96. This is a particularly obscure passage, which does not seem to make sense without the interpolated phrase. Even with it, the translation is tentative.

97. God is referred to as "Heaven" (OURANÓS) often in the Book of Maccabees. For example: I, 3: 19, 4: 10, 24, 40, 55; 9: 46; 12: 15; 16: 3; also in II Maccabees: 7: 11; 9: 20. He is also called "Sovereign in Heaven" or "Sovereign of the Heavens."

98. The quote is from Juvenal's Satires, V, 14, 97: "They worship nought but the clouds and a god of Heaven." There is no evidence that the Romans referred to the Jews as Coelicolae. The verb colere has two meanings: "to dwell (inhabit)," and "to worship." In the former sense, the Romans used Coelicolae to refer to their own gods: "Heaven-dwellers." (The editors are grateful to Mr. John Tagliabue for the information in this footnote.)

99. ". . . il adoroit le Ciel, ou les nuages, ce que les ignorans confondoient, . . ." Given the plot of The Clouds, and the thrust of Aristophanes' attack on Socrates therein, the text should read "which confound the ignorant." But the French phrase underlined above is clearly to be translated as "which the ignorant confound."

can be seen in his comedy The Clouds. It is for this reason Father de Sainte Marie says (p. 72), that the Chinese philosophers, ancient and modern, revere the visible Heaven and sacrifice to it, under the name of King-on-high, Xangti, because the dominant and visible quality of the Li is incomprehensible to the common people. But it would be better to say that the Xangti, or that which the Chinese revere principally, is the Li which governs Heaven, rather than say that it is the material Heaven itself. Further on (pp. 77/78), Father de Sainte Marie almost says the same thing himself, the thrust of which is that the Chinese no less than the Japanese (instructed doubtlessly by the Chinese) recognize no other God than a first principle (he adds, without foundation, material); that they call him the supreme king, Xangti, in his capacity as having dominion over Heaven; that Heaven is his Palace; that there on high he leads and governs all and spreads his influence. They sacrifice to this visible Heaven (or rather to its King) and revere in profound silence that Li which they do not name because of the ignorance or the vulgarity of the people who would not understand the nature of the Li. What we call the light of reason in man, they call commandment and law of Heaven. What we call the inner satisfaction of obeying justice and our fear of acting contrary to it, all this is called by the Chinese (and by us as well) inspirations sent by the Xangti (that is, by the true God). To offend Heaven

is to act against reason, to ask pardon of Heaven is to reform oneself and to make a sincere return in word and deed in the submission one owes to this very law of reason. For me, I find all this quite excellent and quite in accord with natural theology. Far from finding any distorted understanding here, I believe that it is only by strained interpretations and by interpolations that one could find anything to criticize on this point. It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed in our hearts -- except for what revelation and grace add to it to improve our nature.

§32 Regarding the Spirit which governs Heaven as the true God, and taking it for the Li itself -- that is, for order or for sovereign reason -- these ancient sages of China were more nearly accurate than they realized. This is shown by the discoveries of the astronomers that Heaven is the whole known universe and our earth is only one of its subaltern orbs; one can say that there are as many world systems as there are fixed or principal stars, ours being the system of the sun, which is only one of these stars. Thus the governor or Lord of Heaven is the Lord of the Universe. Since, however, the Chinese have been fortunate enough to come by this wisdom without sufficient warrant for it, it may be that they learned part of it from the tradition of the Patriarchs.<sup>100</sup>

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100. See fn. 79.

§33 Let us now see what Father Longobardi offers in contrast on this point. He says (2: 18) that according to Chinese scholars, the Xangti is Heaven itself or rather the virtue and the power of Heaven. But to say that the Xangti is the material Heaven is implausible. As for its being the virtue and power of Heaven, it could be nothing other than the virtue and power of the entire universe, since Heaven comprises all that we know of the universe. The idea of some kind of individual soul for Heaven, which would be the Xangti, is very unlikely, the expanse of Heaven being so immense. It would make more sense to attribute a soul to each system, or rather to each star, as the Chinese attribute one to the earth. The praises given to the Spirit of Heaven, or to the Order of Heaven, would not be suitable to an individual soul; they are appropriate only to the Li. Thus (11: 52) if Ching Cheu, a classical author,<sup>101</sup> has said that the Xangti is the same thing as Heaven, one can take this expression as figurative or as less than exact, just as we often use "Heaven" to denote the Lord in Heaven. It may also be that this author considered Heaven as a person of which the soul is the Li, and of which the body is the

101. Longobardi gives no sources here, and because he is not consistent in his method of transliteration it is not possible to identify "Ching Cheu," which does not occur elsewhere in the Religion Treatise. It is probably the name of a Neo-Confucian commentator on the classics.

celestial material; and consequently he would have regarded Heaven as the Stoics regarded this world. But until such time as one can better examine this passage, it is more plausible to think that he spoke figuratively (as is still customarily done in Europe) in speaking of Heaven as God.

§34 According to Father de S. Marie (p. 57), ancient Chinese writings contain the following anecdotes: the Emperor Vuen-Wang<sup>102</sup> persevered all his life to be humble and to hide the splendor of his majesty, to rectify himself and to abase himself before this Lord and King-on-high, Xangti. The Emperor named Hia Xi,<sup>103</sup> when he reproached himself for a wicked action, trembled in fear and respect before the Xangti and had the habit of saying that this fear and respect restrained him so that he dared not commit a sin against true reason. In ancient times the Emperor himself cultivated the earth on which the seed offered to the sovereign

102. One of the transliterations for King Wen 文王, founder of the Chou Dynasty (1122-256 B.C.).

103. Ste. Marie (p. 57) provides no source for the anecdote of "Hia Xi," who is unknown. In the Loosen-Vonessen translation it is plausibly suggested (p. 147) that the reference may be to the Shu Ching chapter in which T'ang, founder of the Shang Dynasty says: "The Hsia sovereigns [Hsia shih 夏氏] have offended; and because I fear Shang ti, I dare not let them go unpunished." (Translation modified from Legge, vol. III, p. 174.) If this suggestion is correct, however, then Ste. Marie (and thus Leibniz) have attributed the lauded qualities to the wrong person.

King and Lord Xangti was sown. Further (p. 59), a King of China asked Confucius if one should pray to the tutelary god of fire or the more inferior one of the hearth. Confucius answered him that if one had given offense to Heaven -- that is to the Lord of Heaven -- it is from him alone that one should ask pardon.<sup>104</sup> This seems to show that Confucius, like Plato, believed in the unity of God but accommodated himself to popular prejudices.<sup>105</sup>

§34a Father Longobardi himself recounts (17: 90) the conversation which he had with a Chinese doctor, who told him that the King-on-high or Xangti<sup>106</sup> was the same as Heaven,

104. Ste. Marie provides no source here, but the reference must be to Lun Yü 3: 13. Only the term t'ien "Heaven," occurs therein, however; Ste. Marie equates it with Shang ti ("Lord-on-high"), and Leibniz has altered the equation to "Lord of Heaven."

105. Although most scholars believe, on both theological and etymological grounds, that Plato was not a monotheist, there is nevertheless the statement by Plato himself in Epistle XIII which shows that he could make the distinction between "God" and "gods" if necessary. In writing to Dionysius, Plato says:

You no doubt recall the sign that distinguishes the letters I write that are seriously intended from those that are not . . . Those that are seriously meant begin with "God"; those less seriously with "gods." Morrow, Plato's Epistles, p. 268.

Leibniz was clearly aware of these letters of Plato. For further details, see Riley, p. 209.

106. Neither Longobardi nor the Chinese doctor say "Xangti"; Leibniz has added the phrase.

Li, Taikie, Iven-Ki<sup>107</sup> (the author does not explain this term), the Tien-Xing<sup>108</sup> (or genii, p. 19), the Tien-Ming<sup>109</sup> (virtue sent from Heaven), the Nan-lin<sup>110</sup> (virtue of the earth). The same doctor also said that the Xangti of the literati sect was the Spirit or the God which the Bonzes venerated under the name of Foe<sup>111</sup> and the Tao-cu under the name of Jo-Hoang.<sup>112</sup> Another has said (17: 87) that our heart (that is what operates within us) is the same thing as the Xangti and Tien-Cheu, for the Chinese say that the heart is the Chu Zay<sup>113</sup> (or director) of man, regulating all his physical

107. Probably Yüan-ch'i 元氣 , "primal fluid." This term is first found in the Huai Nan Tzu 淮南子 , an early metaphysical text of the Former Han Dynasty, written ca. 130 B.C. This work is not a part of the Confucian classical corpus, but was widely read.

108. There are four possibilities here: 1) The term is T'ien-shen 天神 , "Heavenly spirits"; 2) Being equated with Li and T'ai-chi, however, the term could be T'ien-hsing 天行 , "Heaven's conduct," or "Heaven's path"; or it could be 3) T'ien-hsing 天性 , "Heaven's nature." The last possibility would be 4) the Taoist term T'ien-hsien 天仙 , "Heavenly Immortals," suggested by Leibniz's parenthetical remark. See also fn. 117.

109. T'ien-ming 天命 , "Heaven's mandate."

110. It is not clear what "Nan-lin" refers to; it is not a common Chinese compound. Longobardi translates it as "Husband of the earth," which Leibniz has altered.

111. Fo 佛 , i.e., the Buddha.

112. Yü-huang 玉皇 , the Jade Emperor, highest Taoist deity.

113. Chu-tsai 主宰 , "Supreme ruler."

and moral actions (15: 81). This shows how some Chinese often speak vaguely and confusedly under the pretext that all is one, and that one should not always take them literally. To be able to speak clearly of their dogmas, it is safest to consider the reason and the harmony of their doctrines, rather than individual utterances.

§35 Father Longobardi also recounts the discourse of Chinese Mandarins who told him that the Xangti and the Tien-Cheu, the King-on-high or Lord of Heaven, is only a production of the Taikie and will end like other creatures while the Taikie itself endures (11: 53); that the King-on-high or Spirit of Heaven will cease with Heaven (17: 89); and that if our God or our Tien-Cheu (Lord of Heaven) were the same as the Xangti, He would cease to exist as well (17: 87, 89). But the good Father produces no passage from the ancients which says as much.<sup>114</sup> On the contrary, it would seem that the ancients wanted to revere the Li in the Xangti. These then are only the ideas of moderns, who try to substitute simple material substances for all spiritual substances, much as the Cartesians do with the souls of beasts,<sup>115</sup> and as some

114. Because the "ancients" didn't discuss the topic. Longobardi is not citing the classics, but his Chinese contemporary here.

115. As noted above (fns. 46, 48), Leibniz saw any substance qua substance as possessing some sort of soul or "spirit" (entelechy). On the other hand, Descartes and his followers, as strict dualists, thought of

ancients in the Phaedo insisted, namely, that the soul is nothing other than a harmony, or a congeries of material dispositions, or a mechanical structure.<sup>116</sup> This tends only to destroy religion (as if it were only a political invention) in order to hold the people in check, which is just what a Chinese doctor said to Longobardi -- the same doctor whose discourse, noted earlier, confounded different things on the basis of a poor understanding of the notion that all is one (17: 92).

§36 As taken absolutely, the Universal Spirit is called Li or Order; as operative in Creatures it is called Taikie or that which consummates creation and establishes things; as governing Heaven, the principle creation is called Xangti, or King-on-High or Tien-Chu, Lord of Heaven. Having established this, I want now to turn to the genii or individual, subaltern Spirits. In general, they are called

beasts or brutes as as having no soul or spiritual qualities and therefore no consciousness at all. Animals for Descartes, are finely tuned machines or automata (he likens them to watches; The Passions of the Soul Articles VII, XVI), made up only of matter set in motion by the mechanical beat of the heart (Discourse on Method, V).

116. Simmias elaborates the theory that the soul is nothing but an attunement (HARMONIA) of certain material elements of the body. Phaedo, 85B-86D. Cebes follows with another materialist argument against the absolute immortality and indestructibility of the soul, claiming that the latter may still "wear out" after many incarnations. Ibid, 87B-88C.

Tien Xin (Longobardi, Preface, p. 6) or simply Xin (8: 44), or rather Kuei-Xin<sup>117</sup> (St. Marie, p. 89). Father Longobardi notes (8: 44) that by the word Xin, the Chinese mean pure rising spirits, and by Kuey, impure or descending spirits. But that does not seem an exact interpretation, since Father de S. Marie (p. 89) quotes the words of Confucius: "Oh, the rare virtues and grand perfections of these celestial spirits Kuei-Xin! Is there any virtue superior to them? One does not see them, but by their actions they are made manifest. One does not hear them, but the marvels which they never cease to effect speak enough."<sup>118</sup> Confucius also says (recorded on p. 91), that we are not able to conceive in what manner the Spirits are so intimately united with us;

117. T'ien-shen 天神 , "Heavenly spirits," and kuei-shen 鬼神 , "ghosts and spirits," the general term for inhabitants of the spirit world. Kuei is properly "ghosts," connoting troubled, and mischievous entities, often demons. Shen has only favorable connotations, referring to pure and intelligent spirits. Both terms are often used to refer to the human souls (see fn. 153), and Leibniz, taking his cue from Ste. Marie and Longobardi, distinguishes "subaltern spirits" from human souls more sharply than most Chinese would have done. See §57ff. for Leibniz's treatment of the human soul. "Genii" has been used by most sinologists of the last century as translation for the Taoist hsien "immortals."

118. The quotation is from the Chung Yung XVI, 1-3, where it is attributed to Confucius.

thus we cannot be hasty in honoring them or serving them or offering them sacrifices, for although their operations are secret and invisible, their benefits are visible, effective and real.<sup>119</sup>

§37 With such clear statements from a classical author, it seems to me that the missionaries of whom Father de S. Marie speaks (p. 90) have had good reason to compare the Spirits or the genii to our Angels. Father de S. Marie recognizes that the Chinese regarded them as subordinate to Xangti, universal and supreme Spirit of Heaven (p. 89), and he compares them (p. 96) with the ministering or inferior gods of the great God of Seneca, and of St. Augustine when he was still a Manichean, as recorded in his Confessions [Book VII, 7]. These missionaries have thus believed (with good reason, to my mind), that the most ancient Chinese philosophers, and Confucius after them, have had knowledge of the true God and of the celestial Spirits who serve Him, under the names of Xangti and Kuei-Xin. I say this because the ancient Chinese philosophers seem to ascribe to them a particular concern for defending and protecting men, cities, provinces and kingdoms, not as if they were the souls or the substantial forms of these things, but as if they were pilots of vessels -- what our philosophers call assisting intelligences and forms. And it is necessary to admit that

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119. Ibid., XVI, 4-5, and XVII, 1-3.

the words of Confucius and other ancient authors carry the meaning sensu maxime obvio et naturali.<sup>120</sup> There is a great likelihood that these [Chinese] expressions, so close to the great truths of our tradition, have come to the Chinese through the tradition of the ancient Patriarchs.

§38 Father de Sainte Marie opposes only those interpreters who are called classical, but who are in fact much later. The great Commentary on the original books called Ta-Ziven, and the compendium of philosophy called Sing-Li (1: 11)<sup>121</sup> or what Father de Sainte Marie calls the Taciven Singli were compiled, according to this Father, by royal order over 300 years ago, so that one may consider them as modern. And their authority concerning the true sense of the ancient texts is no greater than the authority of an Accursius or a Bartolus concerning the explanation of the meaning of the Edictum perpetuum of ancient Roman jurisprudence, which one has found today to be often quite

120. "In a maximally obvious and natural sense."

121. The citation (and transliteration) here is to Longobardi, not Ste. Marie. The former's description of his sources (1: 11-12) is not clear, so that Leibniz might well have been confused by the separation of the names Ta-Ziven from Sing-Li, which together comprise the Compendium. At times, Ste. Marie also reverses the title, calling it the Taciven Singli. See Introduction, pp. 30-31. See also Mungello.

removed from these commentators.<sup>122</sup> It is like several views which the Arabs and Scholastics have ascribed to Aristotle, which are far removed from the true sense which the ancient Greek interpreters gave to him and which modern interpreters have recovered. And I believe myself to have shown what Entelechie means, which the Scholastics scarcely understood.<sup>123</sup>

§39 Thus the authority that Fathers Longobardi and de Sainte Marie ascribe to Chinese moderns is only a scholastic prejudice. They have judged the later Chinese school as the medieval European school (with which they are preoccupied) would have us judge them, namely to judge the texts of the divine and human Laws and of ancient authors by their own

122. The form of the Edictum -- the decree outlining the jurisdictional procedures, which was issued by each ancient Roman magistrate upon entering his office -- was finally stabilized about 130 A.D. by the jurist Salvius Julianus at the instigation of the Emperor Hadrian. This Edictum Perpetuum ("Perpetual Edict"), alterable only by the Emperor himself, became an object of legal study in the Middle Ages, even though the original text was lost and its contents known only through commentaries. Both Franciscus Accursius (c. 1182-1260) -- last and greatest of the Glossators of the Bologna school of law -- and Bartolus of Saxoferrato (1314-1357), teacher of law at Perugia and the most famous of the so-called "Commentators" or "Post-Glossators," dealt with the Edictum Perpetuum in their writings. Both were paragons of medieval jurisprudence for later generations, though for Leibniz, they are examples of the inadequacy of medieval legal studies, given the advances in understanding Roman law in his own day.

123. See fn. 46.

interpretations and commentaries. This is a defect rather common among philosophers, lawyers, moralists and theologians. It is also common among medical doctors, who not yet having a definite school, nor the same regulated language, have gone so far in contempt of the ancients (and are so eager to shake off such a yoke), that they have fallen into arbitrariness, since they have scarcely anything of established fact beyond experience or observations, which themselves are often not too well ascertained. Consequently it seems that medicine has need of being entirely rebuilt on the basis of the authoritative communications of several of its outstanding practitioners, who would re-establish a common language, would distinguish the certain [from the possible], would provisionally assign probabilities to the latter and would discover a sure method of development for the science -- but this is said simply in passing.<sup>124</sup>

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124. Leibniz often attacked the scientific pretensions of the medicine and jurisprudence of his day. He thought of medicine as an empirical and inductive science, but nevertheless hoped that one day, after firmly establishing certain facts through continued observation and experimentation, it might be possible to discover certain rules or laws which would then be the basis of establishing a rational, deductive science of medicine. Leibniz was certain that the latter could be done with the principles of law and often attacked those who thought of jurisprudence as based simply on various empirical rules. See Couturat, pp. 154-155.

§39a The scant authority of the commentators makes it surprising to me that very clever theologians of our time, who prefer the doctrine of the ancient Fathers of the Church to modern sentiment in speculative theory as well as in morality, nevertheless pretend to judge Chinese theology through modern eyes rather than ancient ones. One should not find it at all surprising in a Father Longobardi or in a Father de S. Marie, who apparently reflect the sentiments of a vulgar theological and philosophical school. But it seems to me that among scholarly theologians who oppose themselves to the Jesuits on this matter of Chinese doctrine, there must be others who should be able to judge quite otherwise.

§40 Father de S. Marie does record something in passing which could make us suspect that the ancient [Chinese] philosophers did not have true beliefs [i.e., consistent with Christian doctrine]. But since he scarcely dwells on it, I doubt that the matter can be adequately verified or made clear. However, I do not wish to conceal it, so I will proceed with all possible sincerity. After having quoted (p. 89) the fine passage of Confucius noted above, he claims that the same author, continuing his discourse, discovers how far his vulgar error on this point goes. For Confucius says (according to this Father), that the Spirits are in truth united and incorporated with all things, from which

they are unable to separate themselves without being totally destroyed.<sup>125</sup> This opinion conforms very much (says the Father) to the overall philosophy of Confucius, in which he teaches that the Nature and essence of things is the Li, Taikie, their first principle and their Creator, which as King of Heaven is called Xangti (that is, Supreme King). That which dominates the individual and subaltern Beings, where generation and corruption take place, is called Kuei-Xin. Now as matter and form cannot be separated without the destruction of the whole unit that they constitute, in the same way, spirits are so united to things, that they could not leave them without their own dissolution.<sup>126</sup>

§41 I wanted to cite word for word the words of Father de S. Marie which I am now going to examine. I should say at the outset that I am inclined to believe that these are not the express doctrines of Confucius, but opinions which have been ascribed to him on the basis of modern interpretations. For the actual words recorded of him do not bear this meaning, unless one wanted to claim that he spoke under the veil of religion simply to fool his unsophisticated readers. But the charge that his true beliefs were those of Atheists should only be made on the basis of solid evidence, for which

125. See fn. 127.

126. Leibniz uses this argument in another context in §64.

I have seen absolutely no basis until now, other than the veiled interpretations of modern commentators who would probably not dare to assert as much explicitly. If Confucius had this opinion concerning Spirits, he would not have thought any more positively of them than our ordinary Schoolmen do concerning the souls of animals -- i.e., they believe them to perish with the animal itself. But if that were so, how is it that Confucius ascribes to these Spirits and genii those rare virtues and great perfections, those marvelous operations, those grand benefits worthy of our recognition and worship?

§42 Furthermore, Confucius and the ancients ascribe Spirits and ministering genii to several things which are not at all suited for such ascriptions, for example to men, to towns and to provinces. But then, what is the likelihood of a Spirit being incorporated with its mountain, or river, or the likelihood even of the spirit of the four seasons being incorporated with the seasons themselves, or of the spirit of hot and of cold being incorporated with these qualities? Thus it must be said either that these ancient Chinese were hoodwinking the people and sought only to mislead them -- a charge one should not make without proof -- or that they believed in subaltern spirits, ministering agents of the divinity, each governing matters in his own department; or finally, that they honored, through

their names, a divine quality that was suffused everywhere, as some ancient Greeks and Romans claimed that they worshipped only one Godhead, but under the names of several Gods.

§43 Furthermore, I suspect that Father de S. Marie has mistaken the meaning of Confucius when he interprets the latter as saying that spirits cannot be separated from the things they govern without being destroyed. Confucius seems rather to have said that Spirits cannot separate themselves from things without those things they are meant to govern being destroyed, for this is how I find that Father Longobardi has understood it, citing Chapter 16 of the Chung-Jung (11: 57) where Confucius, after having taught that spirits are parts which compose the being of things, adds that Spirits can be separated from them, but only with the destruction of those things (he does not say of the spirits) ensuing.<sup>127</sup> Further, there is the likelihood that since Confucius made spirits parts of things, he did not mean all spirits, for the reasons I have cited [in §41 and §42]. Perhaps also the term part is taken here in a broader

127. Leibniz is following Longobardi's text, but they both read too much into the Chung Yung passage, which reads: 體物而不可遺 ; "[The kuei-shen] are present in things, and may not leave them." Ste. Marie (fn. 125) must have been referring to the same passage.

sense, i.e., that which is in a thing, and is required for its subsistence of conservation.

§44 There are many Chinese moderns who claim to be followers of Confucius and the ancients, but who do not at all recognize the existence of spiritual substances, and not even of true substances, excepting matter, which they consider as alterable only by figural motions and by accidental qualities. According to these moderns, I say, celestial or other spirits which the ancient Chinese ascribe to things are only nominal, denominating simply the mass of accidental qualities of matter, and are like the forms which make up the Beings per accidens of the Schoolman,<sup>128</sup> i.e., a pile of stones, mountains of sand, etc. -- forms quite inferior without doubt even to the souls of beasts. Whether one takes these souls in the manner of the Scholastics, or in the Cartesian sense (much better organized, but still a mass of accidental qualities); on either interpretation, these souls are quite removed from meriting worship, since the Spirit of Heaven, the Spirit of natural causes, the Spirit of the mountains (for example) lack organs, and consequently they would be incapable of knowledge and even of the possibility of knowledge. Thus it would be pure deceit to want to do homage to them.

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128. As opposed to a Being in itself or ens per se, such as an animal with a soul and an organized body. See also fns. 7 and 115.

§45 The Xu-King, one of the most ancient and seminal works according to Father Longobardi (1: 10), recounts, Chapt. 1, page 11 (11: 51), that since the time of Jao and of Xun (early founders of the Empire), the Chinese have revered Spirits and that four kinds of sacrifices were made to four kinds of Spirits. The first sacrifice, called Lui,<sup>129</sup> was made to Heaven and collectively to its Spirit called Xangti. The second, called In,<sup>130</sup> was made to the Spirit of the six principle causes, i.e., the four seasons of the year, heat, and cold, the Sun, the Moon, the stars, the rain and dryness. The third, named Vuang,<sup>131</sup> was made to the Spirit of the Mountains and of the great rivers. And the fourth, named Pien,<sup>132</sup> was made to the Spirits of things of lesser importance in the Universe, and to illus- trious men of the empire. Now the same Father notes (2: 13) that according to the text, there are different Spirits, which he names Kuei, or Xin or jointly Kuey-Xin,<sup>133</sup> which preside over the mountains, the rivers or other things

129. The legendary sage rulers Yao 禺 and Shun 舜, who reigned ca. the 24th and 23rd centuries B.C. The Shu Ching source is in Legge, vol. III, pp. 33-34.

130. Lei 類.

131. Yin 種.

132. Wang 望.

133. P'ien 偏.

134. Kuei-shen. See fn. 117.

in the lower world. But the [Chinese] interpreters explain these rather as natural causes or qualities which produce certain effects.

§46 These interpreters are correct when they do not accept -- as the ignorant people of antiquity did -- that Jupiter, or some aerial genie throws thunderbolts, that there are certain greybeards, residing in the mountains and the hollows of the earth who pour out the rivers from their urns; they are correct when they believe that all comes about naturally by virtue of the qualities of matter. However, the Chinese interpreters cited by Longobardi are not correct if they believe that the ancients wanted to show reverence to these brute objects and that they reduced the first principle, the governor of Heaven -- or rather the governor of the Universe -- to this same condition of a mass of brute qualities, since the wonders of particular things, which know not at all what they are doing, could come only from the wisdom of the first principle. Therefore, one must believe either that the ancient sages of China believed that certain genii, as Ministers of the supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth, presided over earthly things, or that they still wanted to revere the Great God through the qualities of individual things, under the names of the Spirits of these things, for the benefit of popular imagination. If the second alternative is correct, then it is in this way that

they believed that all is one; that the quality of a grand, unique principle appears throughout the wonders of particular things, and that the Spirit of the seasons, the Spirit of the mountains, the Spirit of the rivers, was the same Xangti who governs Heaven.

§47 This second alternative is the truest. However, the first view, which acknowledges genii presiding over natural things, celestial spheres, etc., is not at all intolerable to, nor destructive of, Christianity, as I have already remarked above [in §2]. It will be easy to teach and make the Chinese receptive to that which is the most true by a reasonable interpretation of this Axiom that the all reduces itself to the power of the one; that is, that the powers of all inanimate creatures do not manifest their own wisdom, but the wisdom of the Author of things and they are only a natural consequence of forces which the first principle instills in them. It will be more difficult, however, to make them understand -- following the true philosophy of our time -- that animated substances are potentially everywhere, but they actually exist only where there are bodies that can perceive;<sup>135</sup> that these animated

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135. See §2. The "true philosophy of our time" is, of course, Leibniz's own. He is referring to his theory that there are an infinity of substances or monads that have life, that is, that are informed with souls (animae) or entelechies that enable them to feel and/or perceive.

substances have their own souls or spirits as does man, and that there is an infinity of them above as well as below the Soul or Spirit of man. Moreover those substances which are above, are called Angels and genii, some of which, more specifically, serve the supreme Spirit, being more disposed to comprehend his will and conform themselves to it; that the souls of virtuous people are associated with them, rendering the latter worthy of homage, but not to the destruction of one's obligations to the supreme substance.

§48 Thus one can even find satisfaction with modern Chinese interpreters, and commend them, since they reduce the governance of Heaven and other things to natural causes and distance themselves from the ignorance of the masses, who seek out supernatural miracles -- or rather super-

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There are infinitesimal levels of such feelings or perceptions, each blending into the next (Leibniz's doctrine of petites perceptions). Some substances are endowed or "preformed" with bodily organs giving them the potential for apperception or reflective consciousness. Such potentialities are eventually realized in accordance with a pre-established harmony (see §14 and fn. 48); that is, when there is a complete correlation between the level of complexity and subtlety of the matter and the corresponding form or soul. Leibniz believed that this theory was the only one which explained the origin of individual forms or souls without appealing to purely materialistic grounds (viz., that the soul is nothing but a particular collocation of material atoms) or to God's consistently miraculous and ad hoc creation of new forms or souls (see §13). The Monadology, #s 14ff and Theodicy, #91 give accounts of this central doctrine of Leibniz's mature philosophy.

corporeal ones -- as well as seek out Spirits like those of a Deus ex machina. And one will be able to enlighten them further on this matter by acquainting them with the new discoveries of Europe which give virtually mathematical reasons for some of the great wonders of nature, and by acquainting them with the true systems of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm.<sup>136</sup> But at the same time, it is necessary to make them recognize, as reason demands, that these natural causes -- which render their functions so exactly at a particular point in order to create many of the wonders [of the world] -- could not be brought about were it not

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136. It is hard to know exactly what specific discoveries Leibniz is referring to concerning the "true systems of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm." The belief that man, the Microcosm, "mirrors the universe" or Macrocosm (and vice versa in that both are constructed according to the same proportions or have the same organic structure), is an ancient doctrine, with many variations, going back to the pre-Socratics. With his characteristic immodesty, Leibniz is probably alluding to his own doctrine, whereby "every single substance is a perpetual living mirror of the universe" (Monadology, #56) and "every monad . . . is representative of the universe from its own point of view, and is as much regulated as the universe itself" (Principles of Nature and Grace [1714], #3). The same coherent body of natural laws and the same harmony (see §14, fn. 48) pre-established by God to govern individual substances governs the universe as a whole. In this sense, Leibniz claims, we should understand the Chinese doctrine that "all is one"; that is, "that the quality of a grand, unique principle appears throughout the wonders of particular things" (end of §46 above).

for mechanisms prepared for, and formed by, the wisdom and power of the supreme substance, which one may call, with them, Li.

§48a It is for this reason perhaps, that Confucius did not want to explain himself concerning the Spirits of natural things;<sup>137</sup> he thought that what should be revered in the Spirit of Heaven, the seasons, the mountains, and other inanimate things was only the supreme spirit, the Xangti, the Taikie, the Li, but did not believe the people at all capable of detaching this Supreme Spirit from the objects which fell under their senses, and therefore he did not want to expound on it. This is why, according to F. Longobardi (3: 27), in the Lunxin,<sup>138</sup> Chap. 3, Part 3, a disciple of Confucius named Zuku<sup>139</sup> said as if in complaint of his Master: "I never got him to speak about human nature and the natural state of Heaven, except at the end of his life." In the same book, Confucius says, "The proper way of governing the people is to so act that they honor the Spirits while distancing themselves from them." That is,

137. Probably a reference to Lun Yü 7: 20: "The Master would not discuss unusual occurrences, physical strength, disorder, or spirits [shen 神 ]." See also fn. 42.

138. The Lun Yü. The reference should be to 5: 12.

139. Tzu-kung 子貢 (520-450? B.C.), one of the most famous disciples of Confucius. In this section Leibniz is quoting Longobardi directly.

he refrained from wanting to examine what the Spirits are and what they do.<sup>140</sup> In Book 4, page 6, it is said that there were four things -- Spirit one among them -- about which Confucius maintained a great silence.<sup>141</sup> Commentaries state that the reason for this is because there are several matters difficult to understand, and consequently it is unseemly to speak of them to everyone. In the Book Kialu,<sup>142</sup> it is said that Confucius, wanting to deliver himself from the importuning queries of his disciples (who did not cease to question him about the Spirits, the rational Soul and about what happens after death), decided to give them a general rule: to argue and dispute as much as they wanted

140. Lun Yü 6: 20. Leibniz has interpolated the phrase "to govern the people." He then inserted, but crossed out, another anecdote from the Lun Yü, 11: 11.

141. See fn. 137.

142. Longobardi provides no source, nor context, for ascertaining the reference of "Kialu." Perhaps it is the Chia Yü 家語 -- a text of the Han Confucians -- but there is no mention of the "6 positions" in this work. On the other hand, the reference to Lun Yü 11: 11 that Leibniz crossed out above (fn. 140) concerns one of the disciples of Confucius, Chi Lu 季路 (542-479 B.C.), and this chapter fits the context of Leibniz's remarks -- except for the "6 positions": "Chi-lu asked about serving the spirits [kuei-shen]. The Master said, 'Not [yet] being able to serve mankind, how can you serve the spirits?' The disciple then asked about death. The Master said, 'Not [yet] knowing about life, how can you know about death?'" The "6 positions" are the 4 cardinal directions, zenith and nadir.

to on matters concerning the six positions, which are in the visible world (it is necessary to learn more about these six positions); however, with regard to other matters, he desired to leave them be, without discussion and without investigating them more deeply.

§49 From this Father Longobardi infers the conclusion that the literati sect possessed an esoteric doctrine reserved for the masters alone; but this does not follow at all, because Confucius himself could have been ignorant about that which he did not want to investigate more deeply. To all appearances there is no such secret sect today in China, unless one would like to say that the Hypocrites<sup>143</sup> constitute one. And even if there were such sects, one cannot rest merely on what people venture to say in their public works. Everywhere there are some who ridicule their own dogmas. Thus when this Father says (11: 58) that the majority of literati acknowledge living spirits or spirits of sacrifice, while prestigious literati acknowledge only spirits of generation and corruption (which are merely simple material properties), I am surprised

143. Like his use of "Atheist Mandarins" in §10 and "Skeptics" in §27, Leibniz probably uses "Hypocrites" here to denote those members of the Chinese intelligentsia of Ming-Ch'ing times who were elaborate but proper in the carrying out of ritual observances and sacrifices, but agnostic, or atheist, in their religious beliefs.

that the Father wants the Missionaries to pay deference principally to these latter doctors. My own belief is that they should regard them as heterodox, and ally themselves to common, public doctrines.

§50 Furthermore, the Father appears to conclude from the affected silence of Confucius that Confucius himself had wrong opinions. The father says throughout his work that the ancient Chinese were as atheistic as the modern; he says so expressly in section 16, page 84. He believes that this method of Confucius corrupted the hearts and clouded the minds of the Chinese scholars, reducing them to thinking only about visible and palpable matters, and that consequently they fell into the greatest of all evils: Atheism. I would believe that this silence and approach of Confucius contributed to it, and that he would have done better to explain himself further; however, it appears that the moderns have pressed the matter beyond the limits of his method. One could say that far from denying the existence of spirits and of religion, he simply wanted his followers not to dispute about such matters but to content themselves with appreciating the existence and the effects of the Xangti and the Spirits, honoring them and practicing virtue in order to please them, without delving into their nature and without entering into the how or the manner of their operations. Throughout our

own history, there have been Christian authors who have given the same advice without having any evil intent. Thus I find that everything that has been said against the ancient Chinese to be only groundless suspicions.

§51 The common authoritative doctrine of the Chinese on Spirits appears sufficiently well presented in a passage of their philosophy which the Father himself recounts (12: 61ff). The Chu-zu,<sup>144</sup> Book 28 of the Great Philosophy, page 2, asks: "Are Spirits made from air?" The answer given is that it appears more likely that they are the force, the power, and the activity in the air, rather than the air itself. On page 13, he [Chu Hsi] distinguishes between good spirits who possess clarity and righteousness and produce good effects in the sun, moon, day, night, etc., on the one hand, and devious and obscure spirits on the other. He adds a third category of spirits, who respond to questions asked of them and grant requests made of them.<sup>145</sup> On page 38, he proves that there are spirits by the following reasoning: if there were no spirits, the ancients would not have made demands of them after fasting and other abstinences. Moreover, the Emperor sacrifices to Heaven and Earth; the Princes and Dukes (or heroes)

144. Longobardi is quoting a passage written by Chu Hsi -- i.e., "Chu-zu" -- from the Compendium.

145. See fn. 117.

sacrifice to the great rivers and grand mountains; the lords offer five sacrifices, etc.,

§52 The same author asks further, "When one sacrifices to Heaven, to Earth, to the mountains and the waters; when one offers up and slaughters [animal] victims; when one burns pieces of silk; when one offers libations of wine; is all this done only in order to demonstrate the heart's good intentions, or indeed because there is an Air (a spirit) which receives the offerings? If we say that nothing comes to receive what is offered, then to whom are we sacrificing? And what is it on high which inspires us with awe and which leads mankind to make sacrifices and to be fearful? If we also say that he descends in a cloud-chariot, it will be a great deception." It seems that this Author wanted to hold a position midway between the skepticism of the unbelievers and the crude imaginings of the people. He desires that one recognize and honor spirits, but that one not believe them existing in such a manner as the imagination may represent it.

§54 [Chu Hsi] also seeks a relationship or sense of proportion between the Spirit to whom one sacrifices and he who sacrifices. That is why the Emperor must sacrifice to the King-on-high or the Lord of Heaven, and thus he is

called Tien Zu,<sup>146</sup> son of Heaven. Princes and Dukes sacrifice to the protecting Spirits of the five ways of life. Scholars sacrifice to Confucius in the schools of the Universities. This relationship also requires further that each person sacrifice to his ancestors. From this, [Chu Hsi] wants to indicate that the Spirits govern according to order and aid those who conform to it. Whereas Father Longobardi concludes from these passages (12: 65) that Spirits are made up only of air and matter, the Chinese Author actually suggests the opposite.

§54a I have also found another rather charming line of reasoning against idolators in this Chinese Philosophy. The scholar Ching-Lu<sup>147</sup> explains the Chung-Jung of Confucius (Book 28, page 37) -- as reported by Father Longobardi himself (12: 60) -- saying that it is quite stupid to ask for rain from wooden and earthen idols, which are inside Temples, while neglecting the mountains and the waters, that is, those things whose vapors produce the rain. He suggests that reverence should be grounded on reason, by observing the relations and proportions between things; only then is it acceptable to the spirits, or rather to the

146. T'ien tzu 天子, "Son of Heaven."

147. Ch'eng I 程頤 (1033-1108), was a famous Neo-Confucian philosopher. The reference is not to the Chung Yung, but to Ch'eng I's commentary thereon in the Compendium, from which Longobardi is translating.

Xangti, to the Universal Spirit, or if you wish, to the Li, to the supreme reason which governs all. Now the good Father penetrates very little into [the author's] meaning when he concludes from this that the latter recognizes the existence of no other Spirit in the waters and mountains than that of corporeal air, which is without consciousness.

§54b In the same vein, Confucius says in his Su Lum Iu<sup>148</sup> (by the account of Father de S. Marie, p. 29); that to sacrifice to a spirit not of your station and situation or not fitting for you is foolhardy and futile flattery; justice and reason find it repugnant. Now according to the account of Chum Ko Lao,<sup>149</sup> it is the province only of the Emperor to sacrifice to Heaven and Earth; only the Heroes of the Kingdom sacrifice to the mountains and the waters; and only illustrious men sacrifice to the Spirits; the rest of the people are responsible for the sacrifices to their ancestors. The Philosophical Summa [Hsing-Li] says (in F. de S. Marie, p. 31) that souls seek Spirits of the same quality and those with which they have the best rapport. For example, if a peasant addressed himself to the spirit

148. Must be a reference to the Lun Yü, 2: 24.

149. This term appears twice in the Mission Treatise: once as CHVM KO LAO, and once as CHAM KO LAO. In neither place is a context provided that suggests a reference for the term. It is most probably the name of a minor Neo-Confucian who had some of his writings, or commentaries, included in the Compendium.

of a man of station, he would be immediately rebuffed and the spirit would do nothing. But if someone invokes a spirit appropriate to his station, he is assured that he will affect the spirit and cause it to favor him. Now the F. de S. Marie adds (p. 32) that only scholars sacrifice to Confucius and that it is in this way that one should understand what Father Martinius divulged in Rome in 1656, namely that the temple, or as it is called, the Hall of Confucius, is closed to everyone but scholars. The same Father notes (p. 50) that Chinese soldiers revere an ancient and illustrious captain, Tai-Kung, doctors a Chinese Asclepius, goldsmiths an ancient Alchemist, whom they call Su-Hoang.

150. Ste. Marie provides no more information about these figures than Leibniz gives here, making the task of identifying them difficult, because the Chinese pantheon of minor deities and patron saints is very large. "Tai-Kung" is probably the military hero of the Three Kingdoms period Kuan Yü 關羽, better known as Kuan Ti 關帝 or Kuan Kung 關公. He was one of the most popular of all heroes in China. There are many patron saints and gods having to do with medicine, but the "Chinese Asclepius" is probably Yao Wang 耀王 (ca. 9th Century B.C.), whose given name was Sun Ssu-miao 孫思邈. "Su Hoang" is probably a reference to the 2nd Century B.C. magician Tung-fang So 東方朔, legendarily an incarnation of the planet Venus, and the protector of those who work with metals. See also Werner.

§55 This father goes into further detail (p. 95). According to him, the Chinese ascribe to the very exalted Kangti, and to all the other Spirits, Kuei-Xin, the governance of the world. The former governs as a sovereign Lord who inhabits Heaven as his palace, and the latter govern as his ministers, each overseeing the position which has been entrusted to him: the Sun, moon, stars, clouds, thunder, hail, storms and rain; earth, mountains, lakes, rivers, crops, fruits, forests, and the grass; humans and animals, houses, doorways, wells, kitchens, furnaces and even the most unclean places; and still others oversee war, the sciences, medicine, agriculture, navigation and all the technical arts. Each Chinese takes for his Patron a spirit to whom he prays, whom he invokes, and to whom he sacrifices in order to be treated favorably. Each also renders to his ancestors the same obligations rendered to familiar and domestic spirits; [non-familial] dead are treated as strangers. They pray to Confucius and his most renowned disciples as the Spirits who preside over the Schools and the sciences. The Father adds that the Chinese are like the Stoics, who pictured a material God suffused throughout the Universe in order to move it, and to govern it with other, subaltern gods. But I find nothing which prevents us from finding here a spiritual God, author of matter itself, displaying His wisdom and power in brute things and served by intelligent spirits

similar to our own angels and souls. And one could thus say that the average Chinese, like the pagans, multiply individual spirits beyond measure and need, while wise men content themselves with a belief in the Supreme spirit and in his ministers in general, without assigning them fixed ministries.

§56 I said at the outset that I did not want to examine to what extent the manner of worship of the Chinese could be condemned or justified, and that I only wanted to investigate their doctrines [end of §1]. It seems to me (to bring everything together) that the intent of their sages was to venerate the Li or supreme reason -- which made itself visible and operative everywhere -- be it directly in brute objects where intelligence is appropriate only to their author, or be it through lower spirits, serving as ministers (with whom virtuous souls are associated). The very same sages wanted attention given to objects in which the supreme wisdom appears more particularly, and that each one render homage in the prescribed ways to the objects appropriate to his station. The Emperor will render homage, and defer, to Heaven and Earth; the great Lords to the great bodies which have an influence in the production of food (such as the elements, the rivers, the mountains); the scholars to the spirits of great philosophers and legislators; and everyone to the

virtuous souls of their families. Father de S. Marie (p. 25) records an outstanding passage, where the Chinese interpreters tell us that two characters -- Ty Chang<sup>151</sup> -- are uttered to honor one's ancestors. Here is their explanation: when the Emperor sacrifices to his ancestors, he must elevate his spirit and reflect upon the creator from which his first ancestor is descended, and address his sacrifice to both of these united. (And not as if they were equals; this is, I believe, how one should understand it.) Father S. Marie here adds that the ancient interpretation of these characters says the same thing; that the letter Ti signifies that, in sacrificing to their ancestors, worshippers relate through their sacrifices to the origins from whence they came and to which they will return at death; always careful, however, of the order of precedence of ancestors. In other words, the souls of the ancestors are regarded as subaltern spirits to the supreme spirit and universal Lord of Heaven and Earth.

151. Although Ste. Marie does not cite a source, he is probably making reference to the Li Chi chapter (Legge, vol. I, pp. 223-25) in which the sacrifices of the Emperor and nobles are specified. Four of the major sacrifices related to the seasons, and those for summer and autumn were named ti 祀 and ch'ang 宰, which were later used together as names of the highest ancestral sacrifices. At times ti was used this way alone, as in Lun Yü 3: 10 and 3: 11. In neither of these classical texts, however, is it mentioned that the names of these sacrifices were to be uttered while performing them.

[III. Chinese Opinion Concerning the Human Soul, its Immortality, Rewards and Punishments]

§57 We have spoken of the First Principle, author and governor of things, known under the name of the Li, Taikie or Xangti, according to the Chinese, and then of his ministers, the subaltern spirits called Xin, Tunxin,<sup>152</sup> Kuei-Xin. To complete their theology, one has to speak of human souls, which -- when they are separated from gross bodies -- are called Hoëن by F. Longobardi (8: 44), and more often Ling-Hoëн<sup>153</sup> (Preface, p. 6 and 2: 19). Sing-Hoëн

152. This is the first (and only) mention of "Tunxin" in the Discourse. The term does not occur in either Longobardi or Ste. Marie, and there is no close analogue for it in this context. The two most likely candidates are: 1) t'u-shen 土神, "spirits of the earth," which Ste. Marie writes as "Tv Xin" (pp. 77 and 122); or 2) ch'ün-shen 群神, the "hosts of spirits." This latter term occurs in the Shu Ching chapter discussed by Leibniz in §45. The pien sacrifice (fn. 133) was offered to the ch'ün-shen.

153. Hun 魂 and ling-hun 靈魂. The hun is the spiritual element of human souls, as opposed to the p'o 魂魄, or material element. The p'o did not leave the body at death, and if the deceased was properly buried and sacrificed to thereafter, the material soul would remain at peace in the grave with the body, while the hun became a shen 神, spirit, and aided descendants. If the body was not properly cared for, however, the p'o left it and became a kuei (ghost), and caused mischief. Ling-hun is another name for the spiritual soul, but more specifically connotes the active power, efficacy, and sphere of influence which the spiritual soul had with respect to the descendants of the

are mentioned by Father de S. Marie (p. 58), but I suspect a printer's error, although I am not positively certain of this because the same Father says further on (p. 93) that deceased men are called Sin-Kuei,<sup>154</sup> which he says means retired from mortal life. It is true that for the Chinese, souls are subsumed in some fashion under spirits, and are integral to their worship; souls merit, however, a separate discussion, in order to know what Chinese scholars teach concerning the nature of these Spirits and their state after this life.

§58 Father Longobardi asserts (2: 14) that the earliest Chinese texts, speaking of the human soul under the name of Ling-Hoēn, lead us to understand that it endures after the death of the body. This is why it is said in the Xi-<sup>155</sup> King, Book 6, page 1, that Vuen Vuang, ancient king of China, is on high in Heaven; he is at the side of the

departed. When the sacrifices to the ancestors have been minimally neglected -- not neglected enough for the material soul to become a kuei -- their spiritual souls would wander about, and in this state would be called yu-hun 鬼魂 (see below, fn. 156). For additional materials dealing with the Chinese concept of the soul, especially translations, see De Groot, vols. I and III.

154. Shen-kuei 神鬼, reversing the order.

155. Shih Ching. See Legge, vol. IV, pp. 428-29. "Vuen Vuang" is King Wen (fn. 102).

Xangti or the King-on-high, Lord of Heaven, and that he is at times rising, at times descending (2: 14 and 15: 83). The separated soul is also called Jeu-Hoën,<sup>156</sup> wandering soul (ibid., p. 83), which means freely, I believe, animula vagula blandula.<sup>157</sup> Doctor Paul,<sup>158</sup> a Christian scholar, doubts, however (according to Father Longobardi), whether the Chinese have any knowledge of the true God, but nevertheless believe that regarding the soul, they did have some knowledge of it, though quite confused (17: 100). This allows enough of an opening for knowledgeable missionaries to enlighten them and to clear up their confusion. Let us begin this task.

§59 The Chinese say (Longobardi, 15: 81) that the death of man is only the separation of the elements of which he is composed, and which return after this separation to the places which are proper to them. Thus the Hoën, or soul, rises to Heaven; the Pe,<sup>159</sup> or the body, returns to the

156. See fn. 153.

157. I.e., "wandering soul."

158. Probably Hsü Kuang-ch'i 徐光啟, (1562-1633), Ricci's most famous convert to Christianity. He wrote, and translated with Ricci, works on astronomy, mathematics and agriculture. His descendants remained one of China's most influential Christian families until the present century.

159. While Leibniz refers to the physical body here, the term "Pe" is almost surely p'o 脈. See fn. 153.

earth. This is what is said in the Xu-King, Book I, p. 16, where the death of King Iao<sup>160</sup> is described in these terms: he has risen and descended. The commentary explains it in this manner; he has risen and descended means he is dead, because when a man dies, his essence of fire and air (the commentator means the animated air, the Soul) rises to Heaven, and the body returns to earth. This author speaks almost as if he had read the Holy Scriptures. So, too does the Author of the Chinese Philosophy who speaks of this matter in Book 28, about page 41, where he records this sentence of Chin-Zu:<sup>161</sup> when the composition of man occurs and he comes into this world -- that is, when Heaven and Earth are united -- Universal Nature does not come (for it is already present). When man dies -- that is when Heaven and Earth are separated -- Universal Nature does not leave (for it is always everywhere). But the air, which is of the essence of Heaven, returns to Heaven; and the corporeal element, which is of the essence of the earth, returns to earth.

160. Emperor Yao (see fn. 129). The reference to the Shu Ching does mention Yao's death, but not his "rising and descending," which was Chu Hsi's commentary on this passage. See Legge, vol. III, pp. 40-41.

161. In this section of the Compendium Ch'eng I (see fn. 147) is the author, who must therefore be the "Chin-zu" referred to here.

§60 It also appears that some Chinese scholars regard men, and especially great men, as angels incarnate. A certain Chinese Doctor Michael,<sup>162</sup> a Christian, but one partial to Chinese doctrines, said in his preface to the explanation of the Ten Commandments that the ancient savants of China had been Spirits or incarnated Angels, one succeeding the other. And with respect to the greatest men, he goes so far as to claim that the Xangti itself or the supreme Spirit has been incarnated in them, as for example in the personages of Iao, of Xun, of Confucius and of others. This is doubtlessly an error, for such an incarnation is fitting only to Jesus Christ, and his words show well that this doctor is only quasi-Christian. But he did not believe, however, that he would do violence to long-standing Chinese doctrine in denying that the soul is a fleeting and evanescent thing, [by saying that] an incarnate angel subsists before birth and after death. This doctrine is in accord with that of Plato and Origen.<sup>163</sup>

162. Probably Yang T'ing-yun 楊廷筠 (1557-1627), another influential convert of Ricci's.

163. Plato's belief in the pre-existence of the soul, based on the argument from recollection (ANAMNESIS) is first presented in the Meno (81; 85D-86B) and further developed in the Phaedo (72E-77A). Though there are scattered references throughout Plato to the soul's immortality, or rather eternality (e.g., Meno 86B; Phaedrus 245C-246A), the main arguments are found in the Phaedo and form the bulk of this dialogue.

Another Chinese doctor, friend of the Christians, testified to Father Longobardi that he had opinions on this matter quite close to those of Father Michael.

§61 Father de S. Marie reports (p. 76) that the Chinese believe that Confucius and the sage kings and the ancient philosophers of their land -- who were oracles by excellence of their virtue -- were all incarnations of God in Heaven, Xangti, in the Kingdom of China. The Father supports this by citing the views of some ancient philosophers, and of the Manicheans according to Augustine, and by the views of the Averroists and of Spinoza, who made the soul a part or modification of God, which does not have a separate existence after death. But on this account, great men would have nothing over others in this respect, and since the souls of those who are angels incarnate subsist after death, why wouldn't the soul of one who is incomparably greater subsist, if God supreme is united to this Soul and to its body in a particular fashion?

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Many Church Fathers, such as Sts. Basil and Gregory, believed that angels and other spirits were created before the material universe. Origen in particular "was led by his strongly Platonist leanings to affirm [the soul's] pre-existence and explained its confinement in a body as a punishment for sins committed in its previous incorporeal state." Article on "Soul," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 1273. See Origen, De Principiis, I, vi, 2; I, viii; I, ix. On the immortality and ethereality of the soul, see ibid., IV, i, 36; II, iv, 7.

§62 Thus I see nothing which prevents us from, and much that is favorable to, our claiming rather that human souls, according to the classical doctrine of the Chinese, resemble the nature of Spirits, ministers of the Supreme Spirit -- although they are to a degree inferior to them. I am not at all surprised that Father Longobardi and Father de S. Marie are opposed to this opinion, since heterodox and atheistic scholars (who are permitted in China to utter their impieties with impunity, at least orally) presented them with strange views, current in China today, but which are directly contrary to ancient doctrine and to religious practices instituted over 3000 years ago in the Chinese Empire. These [contemporary] views claim: (1) that the Li itself (supreme Reason), or the supreme Spirit (Xangti, as the substance of this Order or Reason) and all the intelligent Spirits which serve him are only fictions; (2) that the supreme Spirit or universal principle is nothing other than prime matter or corporeal air and nothing more; (3) that the Spirits offered to the common people for veneration are portions of this air; and (4) that all occurs by accident or by necessity in a brutish fashion, without any wisdom, providence or justice directing it; so that all of Chinese religion is only a farce. But as this imputation is ill-founded in every way, both with regard to God and to the Angels, as we have amply demonstrated, one

may judge as well that the same obtains with respect to souls.

§63 I find nothing that these Fathers bring forth from the passages of the classical authors, from the earliest on, which sufficiently favor their allegations concerning the human soul, any more than they adduce textual support for their allegations concerning God and the angels. These Fathers give only interpretations grafted on from without, which strain or even destroy the texts and render them ridiculous, contradictory and deceitful. Father Longobardi, given what we have reported of his views -- namely, that according to the Chinese, death separates the terrestrial from the celestial, which is aerial and firelike in nature and returns to Heaven -- concludes from this that souls are something purely material which are dissolved in the air or in the ether. But by the same reasoning, one could say that Angels are nothing but fire, since God, according to Holy Scriptures, fecit Ministros suos flammam ignis.<sup>164</sup> One should rather say that these Spirits are spiritual substances, though they are clothed in subtle material bodies. So has antiquity, both pagan and Christian, ordinary conceived of the genii, Angels and Demons.

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164. "He made a flame of fire to be His servants." A paraphrase of the Vulgate, Psalm 103, 4.

The soul returns to Heaven, and is more united than before to the celestial matter diffused everywhere, and thus more capable of conforming to the will of God, quite like the angels it resembles.<sup>165</sup> So have the ancient Chinese apparently understood it, when they have said that the soul is joined again to Heaven, and to the Xangti.

§64 These Fathers, or rather those who have given their impressions to the Fathers, having misused the Chinese axiom that everything is one -- i.e., that all participates in the one -- would have us believe that according to the Chinese everything is only matter but in different dispositions; that the Xangi itself is only that [i.e., matter], and so too is the Li -- "Reason" or primitive substance -- and that everything participates in matter's perfection according to its own measure of the same. Consequently, they would want the return of the soul to the Xangti to be nothing other than its dissolution into ethereal matter, it losing all knowledge gained through its bodily organs. They could say, with even more likelihood, conforming to the opinions of the Manicheans and the Averroists, that God or the Li or the Xangti is the soul of the world, which creates individual souls by acting on organic bodies, and which puts an end to them as soon as they are decomposed.

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165. See §2 and fn. 10.

But besides the fact that these opinions are also contrary to reason and to the nature of the individual,<sup>166</sup> these opinions are also contrary to the passage from the Chinese Author (cited by Father Longobardi) who clearly distinguishes the Universal Nature -- the Li and the Xangti -- from the particular nature of the soul. The Universal Nature (the Chinese author says), neither comes nor goes, but the soul comes and goes, rises and descends. That is, it is sometimes united to a coarse body, sometimes to a more noble one, and this gives us to understand that it continues to subsist, for otherwise it would return to the Universal Nature.

§64a Now let us see how Father de S. Marie speaks about it (p. 40): the Chinese have various errors concerning human souls. Some believe that they do not die at all, that they simply move on and proceed to animate different bodies, human and animal. Others believe that they descend into Hell from whence they come out after some time.<sup>167</sup> Still other Chinese acknowledge the souls as immortal, claiming that they wander in the farthest mountains, calling these souls Xin-Sien,<sup>168</sup> under which name they have

166. See §23.

167. Buddhists held the first view, and some Buddhists and many Taoists held the second.

168. Shen-hsien 神仙, another name for "Immortals." (See fn. 108.) This was a fairly pervasive view in China.

certain chapels dedicated to them. The literati and the better educated believe that our souls are small portions of subtle air or a firelike and celestial vapor, detached from the most subtle matter of Heaven from whence they draw their origins; which, once they leave their bodies, rise again to Heaven which is their center and from whence they issue and where again they intermingle. The Chinese Philosophical Summa Singlitaciven,<sup>169</sup> Vol. 28 -- a treatise concerning the soul and the body -- says that the suitable and true origin of the ethereal soul is in Heaven, to which the ethereal soul soars [after death] to become one and the same substance with it. The origin of the body is the Earth into which it dissolves and transforms itself [after death]. The author of this particular work is from a later time and his authority does not approach that of the ancients. However, one need not ignore this passage. I believe that the translation of it suffers somewhat from the prejudice of the translator [i.e., St. Marie], when he states that the soul becomes the same substance with Heaven. Perhaps the Chinese author only wants to say that the two are united after death. But even if the passage were to say what [St. Marie] makes it say, such very general expressions can always be given a [different, but

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169. The Compendium. Leibniz is quoting Ste. Marie directly.

equally] rational meaning. For all celestial spirits are of the substance of Heaven, and the soul, becoming a celestial Spirit, becomes thereby of the same substance with Heaven. But by Heaven is understood the whole celestial Hierarchy, exercitus Coelorum,<sup>170</sup> under the Grand Monarch of the Universe. This Heaven is not simply the visible sky, for according to the opinions of the Chinese cited above, Heaven's air (with its celestial Spirits) extends everywhere. Thus it is not necessary, according to them, to conceive of souls as completely distinct from Heaven. To talk of wandering here and there in the mountains, rising and descending, being at the side of the Xangti, and so forth, are only imagistic ways of speaking.

§65 The [Chinese concept] of immortality of the soul will become clearer if one interprets ancient Chinese doctrine as saying that souls receive reward and punishment after this life. It is true that the literati sect [i.e., the Confucians] speak neither of Paradise nor Hell, and the Chinese Christian, Dr. Michael, regretfully acknowledges this (17: 95) in praising the sect of Foë which pro-pounds both.<sup>171</sup> It also appears that modern Chinese, who

170. "The Army of the Heavens."

171. Ironically, the view which Leibniz applauds here and in the next paragraph comes from Buddhism, not Confucianism.

wish to pass for being the most enlightened, ridicule this [Buddhist] view when one talks to them of another life (17: 89). But perhaps they will not always ridicule it if they consider that this supreme substance -- which on their own grounds is the source of wisdom and justice -- could not act less perfectly on the spirits and the souls which it creates, than a wise king in his realm acts upon his subjects whom he did not create of his own will, and whom it is more difficult for him to govern since they do not depend upon him absolutely. Thus this Kingdom of the Spirits under this great Master cannot be less orderly than a Kingdom of men, and consequently it follows that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished under this governance, justice being insufficiently done in this life.

§65a This is also what the ancient Chinese have suggested. We have already noted that they place a wise and virtuous Emperor at the side of the Xangti and that they consider the souls of great men as angels incarnate. Father de S. Marie (p. 27) cites the Xi-King (one of the five principal books of the literati), which makes mention of some of their ancient kings, who, after their death, rise to Heaven in order to enlighten and help (I believe this should be translated "to assist and serve") this very exalted king Xangti, and to sit at his right and left

<sup>172</sup> side. It is said in the same book that these kings, rising from the earth to Heaven, and descending from Heaven to earth, can favor and abet the Kingdom as its patrons and protectors.

§66 The worship of ancestors and great men instituted by the ancient Chinese can indeed have for its goals, to display the gratitude of the living as they cherish the rewards of Heaven, and to excite men to perform actions which render them worthy of the recognition of posterity. However, the ancients speak as if the Spirits of virtuous ancestors, surrounded by the aura of glory at the Court of the Monarch of Universe, were capable of obtaining good and evil for their descendants. And it appears by this at least that they have conceived of them as continuing to subsist.

§66a It is instructive to see how they explicate this matter. According to the account of Father de S. Marie (p. 21ff.), Confucius makes the Emperor Xum<sup>174</sup> author of

172. This is Ste. Marie's interpretation of the same Shih Ching passage cited by Leibniz via Longobardi in §58. The "author" referred to below is Chu Hsi.

173. Leibniz is quoting Ste. Marie directly, except for the parenthetical remark.

174. Shun. See fn. 129.

the Ancestor worship (Chung-Jung, Chpt. 17); this Emperor was the fifth after the Foundation of the Monarchy (according to the Tung-Kien)<sup>175</sup> -- i.e., the Royal Chronology, or Universal History, one of the classical texts). Confucius praises him in the extreme and attributes the prosperity of the Empire to the worship he instituted and also Ch. 78,<sup>176</sup> in which he proffers the ancient kings as models for posterity. He also says towards the end of this chapter that anyone who understood perfectly what the worship of Heaven and Earth comprised, and the proper reason for sacrificing to his ancestors, would be able to assure himself a peaceful prosperity and a wise government throughout the kingdom with as much certainty as if he held them in his very hand.<sup>177</sup>

§67 It is true that the Chinese scholars speak neither of Hell nor of purgatory, but it is possible that some among

175. The Tzu-chih t'ung-chien 資治通鑑 , known as the Comprehensive Mirror, is a major history of China written by the famous scholar and statesman, Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 , (1018-1086). It is not clear from Longobardi's text that he has used this work, however. More probably he was using the T'ung-chien kang-mu 通鑑綱目 , -- Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror -- an abridgement of Ssu-ma Kuang's work by Chu Hsi.

176. Ste. Marie and Leibniz have 78 here, but it should be 19.

177. This well known example can also be found in Lun Yü 3: 11, and in the Li Chi (Legge, vol. II, p. 272).

them believe or have believed at other times that the wandering souls which prowl here and there in the mountains and the forests are in a sort of purgatory. We have already spoken of these wandering souls.<sup>178</sup> Without making too much of a comparison between the opinions of the Christians and the pagans, one could nevertheless say that there is something approaching this in the life of St. Conrad, a Bishop of Constance, whose biography is published in the second volume of my collection,<sup>179</sup> where it is recorded that he and his friend St. Udalric discovered souls in the form of birds condemned to the waterfalls of the Rhine which they saved by their prayers. So too, perhaps, according to some of these Chinese literati, ancient or modern, souls deserving of punishment become spirits destined to lowly stations, guarding doors and tending kitchens and furnaces until they have expiated themselves. We are not sufficiently conversant with the doctrine of the scholars on these matters to go into detail about them.

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178. In §58 and §64a.

179. Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicensium. Hanover: N. Foerster, vol. II, 1710, pp. 7-8.

[IV. Concerning the Characters which Fohi,<sup>180</sup> Founder of  
the Chinese Empire, used in His Writings and Binary  
Arithmetic]

§68 It is indeed apparent that if we Europeans were well enough informed concerning Chinese Literature, then, with the aid of logic, critical thinking, mathematics and our manner of expressing thought -- more exacting than theirs -- we could uncover in the Chinese writings of the remotest antiquity many things unknown to modern Chinese and even to other commentators thought to be classical. Reverend Father Bouvet and I have discovered the meaning, apparently truest to the text, of the characters of Fohi, founder of the Empire, which consist simply of combinations of unbroken and broken lines, and which pass for the most ancient writing of China in its simplest form. There are 64 figures contained in the book called Ye Kim,<sup>181</sup> that is, the Book of Changes. Several centuries after Fohi, the Emperor Ven Vam<sup>182</sup> and his son Cheu Cum, and Confucius more than five

180. Fu Hsi. See the Introduction, pp. 17-18, 22. See also fn. 79 from the text.

181. I Ching.

182. Again, King Wen; this time the spelling is Bouvet's. "Cheu Cum" is Chou Kung 周公, the Duke of Chou and King Wen's brother. He was one of Confucius' favorite culture heroes.

centuries later, have all sought therein philosophical mysteries. Others have even wanted to extract from them a sort of Geomancy and other follies. Actually, the 64 figures represent a Binary Arithmetic which apparently this great legislator [Fohi] possessed, and which I have rediscovered some thousands of years later.

§68a In Binary Arithmetic, there are only two signs, 0 and 1, with which one can write all numbers.<sup>183</sup> When I communicated this system to the Reverend Father Bouvet, he recognized in it the characters of Fohi, for the numbers 0 and 1 correspond to them exactly<sup>184</sup> if we put a broken line for 0 and an unbroken line for the unity, 1. This Arithmetic furnishes the simplest way of making changes, since there are only two components, concerning which I wrote a small essay in my early youth, which was reprinted a long time afterwards against my will.<sup>185</sup> So it seems that Fohi

183. At this point Leibniz wrote, but then crossed out the following: "I have since found that it further expresses the logic of dichotomies which is of the greatest use, if one always retains an exact opposition between the numbers of the division."

184. At this point, Leibniz wrote, but then crossed out the following: "provided that one places before a number as many zeroes as necessary so that the least of the numbers has as many lines as the greatest."

185. In a letter to Remond in July, 1714 Leibniz wrote about: "a little schoolboyish essay called 'On the Art of Combinations,' published in 1666, and later reprinted without my permission." Gerhardt, vol. III, p. 620. See also Loemker, vol. II, pp. 1067-68.

had insight into the science of combinations, but the Arithmetic having been completely lost, later Chinese have not taken care to think of them in this [arithmetical] way and they have made of these characters of Fohi some kind of symbols and Hieroglyphs, as one customarily does when one has strayed from the true meaning (as the good Father Kirker has done with respect to the script of the Egyptian obelisks of which he understands nothing).<sup>186</sup> Now this shows also that the ancient Chinese have surpassed the modern ones in the extreme, not only in piety (which is the basis of the most perfect morality) but in science as well.

§69 Since this Binary Arithmetic, although explained in the Miscellany of Berlin,<sup>187</sup> is still little known, and mention of its parallelism with the characters of Fohi is found only in the German journal of the year 1705 of the late Mr. Tenzelius,<sup>188</sup> I want to explain it here -- where it

186. Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), a German Jesuit scholar interested in mathematics, Hebrew, hieroglyphics and archaeology. He is credited with inventing the magic lantern. In Lach (2), Jean Baruzi is cited as saying that Kircher corresponded with Leibniz about China as early as 1670 (p. 439).

187. "De periodis columnarum in serie numerorum progressionis Arithmeticae Dyadice expressorum," by P. Dangicourt, in Miscellanea Berlinensis, I (1701), 336-376. This and the Tenzel article cited below (fn.

188) were both instigated by Leibniz himself. See Zacher, p. 1.

188. "Erklärung der Arithmeticae binariae, . . . .," in Curieuse bibliothec oder Fortsetzung der Monatlichen Unterredungen einiger guten

appears to be very appropriate -- since it concerns justification of the doctrines of the ancient Chinese and their superiority over the moderns.<sup>189</sup> I will only add before turning to this matter that the late Mr. Andreas Müller,<sup>190</sup> native of Greiffenhagen, Provost of Berlin, a man of Europe, who without ever having left it, had studied the Chinese characters closely, and published with notes, what Abdalla Beidavaeus wrote on China. This Arab author remarks that Fohi had found a peculiare scribendi genus Arithmeticam, contractus et Rationaria, a peculiar manner of writing, of arithmetic, of contracts, and of accounts.<sup>191</sup> What he says confirms my explanation of the characters of this ancient philosopher-king whereby they are reduced to numbers.

Freunde , ed., W.E. Tenzel (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1705), pp. 81-112. See Zacher, p. 210.

Leibniz omits mention of his own, earlier endeavor concerning binary arithmetic and its relationship to the characters of Fu Hsi, written in 1703: "Explication de l' Arithmetique Binaire qui se sert des seuls caracteres 0 et 1; avec des Remarques sur son utilité, et sur ce qu'elle donne le sens des anciennes figures Chinoises de Fohi," par M. Leibniz, Histoire de l'Academie Royale des Sciences, Année 1703; avec les Memoires . . . pour la même Année, Paris 1705 [Mem.], pp. 85-89. A more readable and available edition of this work is found in Zacher, pp. 293-301.

189. See Introduction, p. 37.

190. 1630?-1694. For a study of Müller on China, see Lach (3).

191. The hexagrams were never used for this purpose; Leibniz is quoting directly from Tenzel. See also Zacher, p. 159.

570 The ancient Romans made use of a mixed arithmetic, quinary and denary, and one still sees reminders of it in their counters.<sup>192</sup> One sees, from Archimedes' work on the counting of the sand,<sup>193</sup> that already in his time something approaching denary arithmetic was understood (which has come down to us from the Arabs and which appears to have been brought from Spain, or at least made more known by the renowned Gerbert, later Pope, under the name of Sylvester II).<sup>194</sup> This prevalence of base 10 arithmetic seems to come from the fact that we have 10 fingers, but as this number is arbitrary, some have proposed counting

192. Leibniz is talking of the Roman numerals, which except for unity (I), are based on either five (V, L, D) or ten (X, C, M), hence the mixed nature of their numeration or counting, but not necessarily of their arithmetic, about which little is known. The purpose of the Roman counters, originally pebbles (calculi), is uncertain; it has been argued that they were used in games such as backgammon or checkers, or even like poker chips. See Smith, vol. II, pp. 165-66.

193. "Archimedes saw the defects of the Greek number system, and in his Sand Reckoner he suggested an elaborate scheme of numeration, arranging the numbers in octads, or the eighth powers of ten." Ibid., vol. I, 113.

194. Gerbert, who was Pope from 999 to 1003, has traditionally been held responsible for introducing the Arabic numerals into Christian Europe, which he probably learned while studying in Spain. Leibniz is wrong in thinking that Gerbert introduced the decimal or denary system, rather than simply the nine characters. "He probably did not know of the zero, and at any rate he did not know its real significance." Ibid., vol. II, 74-75; see also, Ibid., vol. I, 195-196.

by dozens, and dozens of dozens, etc.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, the late Mr. Erhard Weigelius resorts to a lesser number predicated on the quaternary or Tetractys like the Pythagoreans;<sup>196</sup> thus, just as in the decimal progression we write all numbers using 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, he would write all numbers in his quaternary progression using 0, 1, 2, 3; for example 321 for him signifies  $3 \times 4^2 + 2 \times 4^1 + 1$  or rather  $48 + 16 + 1$ , that is 65 according to the ordinary system.

§71 This gives me the opportunity to point out that all numbers could be written by 0 and 1 in the binary or dual progression. Thus:

195. Leibniz himself toyed briefly with a base 12 (and even mentioned a base 16) number system and may have gotten the idea from Pascal. See Zacher, pp. 17-21.

196. Erhard Weigel (1625-1699) was professor of Mathematics at the University of Jena, where Leibniz followed his lectures for one semester in 1663. Having been influenced strongly by the Pythagorean and other mystical traditions in mathematics, Weigel saw the number 4 as the perfect number and constructed a base 4 number system. Although Weigel influenced Leibniz in many areas (e.g., the need for linguistic and legal reforms in Germany), the latter saw no need for such a number system. Practically, a base 10 or even higher number system (12 or 16) shortened calculations and condensed enumeration; theoretically, a base 2 system was best, since it had the simplest and most easily analyzable base. Couturat, pp. 473-474.

1	1	10 is equal to 2
10	2	100 is equal to 4
100	4	1000 is equal to 8
1000	8	etc.
10000	16	
100000	32	
1000000	64	

And accordingly, numbers are expressed as follows:

0	0
1	1
10	2
11	3
100	4
101	5
110	6
111	7
1000	8
1001	9
1010	10
1011	11
1100	12
1101	13
1110	14
1111	15
10000	16
10001	17
10010	18
10011	19
10100	20
10101	21
10110	22
10111	23
11000	24
11001	25
11010	26
11011	27
11100	28
11101	29
11110	30
11111	31
100000	32
etc.	etc.

These terms correspond with the hypothesis;  
for example:

$111 = 100 + 10 + 1 = 4 + 2 + 1 = 7$

$11001 = 10000 + 1000 + 1 = 16 + 4 + 1 = 25$  <sup>197</sup>

They can also be found by continual addition of unity, for example:

The points denote unity which is kept in mind in ordinary calculation. <sup>198</sup>

1	
.1	
—	10
1	
—	11
..1	
—	100
1	
—	101
.1	
—	110
1	
—	111
..1	
—	1000

197. The mistake is Leibniz's; 4 should be 8.

198. See §72 for explanation.

§71a But, to continue, if one wishes to make a table expressing terms for all the natural numbers in order, one need not calculate, since it is sufficient to note that each column is periodic, the same periodicity recurring ad infinitum: the first column runs 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, etc.; the second 0, 0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 1, 1, etc; the third 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, etc. And so on with further columns, assuming that the empty places above each column are filled with zeroes. Thus one can write these columns at once and accordingly make up the table of natural numbers without any calculation. This is what one can call enumeration.

§72 As for addition, it is simply done by counting and making periods when there are numbers to add together, adding up each column as usual, which will be done as follows: count the unities of the column; for example, for 29, look how this number is written in the table, to wit, by 11101; thus you write 1 under the column and put periods under the second, third and fourth column thereafter. These periods denote that it is necessary to count out one unity further in the column following.

§73 Subtraction is just as easy. Multiplication is reduced to simple additions and has no need of the Pythagorean

table, it sufficing to know that 0 times 0 is 0, that 0 times 1 is 0, that 1 times 0 is 0, and that 1 times 1 is 1.

§74 In division there is no need to tally as in ordinary calculation. One must only see if the divisor is greater or lesser than the preceding remainder. In the first case, the sign of the quotient is 0, in the second case it is 1; the divisor may be subtracted from the preceding remainder to get another remainder.

§75 These are simplifications that have been proposed by a clever man since the introduction of this Arithmetic into certain calculations.<sup>199</sup> But the principal utility of this binary system is that it can do much to perfect the science of numbers, because all calculations are made according to periodicity. It is some achievement that the numerical powers of the same order, made by raising the ordered natural numbers, however high the order, never have a greater number of periods than the natural numbers themselves which are their roots . . . . [Text breaks off at this point.]

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199. Leibniz is referring to Arithmeticus perfectus, Qui Tria numerare nescit, seu Arithmetic dualis (Prague, 1712) by W.J. Pelican. Pelican apparently showed how one can use the binary system for other calculations as well, i.e., fractional arithmetic, roots and proportions. See Zacher, p. 211.



APPENDIX

## VARIANT READINGS OF TEXT

What follows is a list of all the variant readings where the autograph differs from the best printed text, i.e., the Loosen-Vonessen edition. Paragraph numbers follow that edition. We have not noted the many instances where Loosen-Vonessen have either added or corrected the page numbers Leibniz noted in referring to the texts of Longobardi and Sainte-Marie.

## Paragraph:

- §1: for "considerable de son temps," read "considerable en son temps"
- §2: for "Philosophes et les Peres," read "Philosophes et Peres"
- §2: for "ressemblent à ces Chrestiens," read "ressemblent à des Chrestiens"
- §2: for "ou Anges ne nient," read "ou Anges avec des anciens peres ou philosophes ne nient"
- §3: for "on ne pourra pas luy," read "on ne pourra luy"
- §3: for "n'etant point encore fait," read "n'etant point fait encore"
- §11: for "se contredisent. Mais," read "se contredisent veritables. Mais"
- §11: for "refutant et rebutant," read "refutant et faison [?] rebutant"
- §11: for "la plus uniforme," read "la plus raisonnable"
- §13: for "legerement toutes leurs Ecoles," read "legerement toute leur Ecole"
- §16: for "(ouvrage des plus ordinaires hez," read (ouvrage des plus originaires chez"
- §16: for "une traduction bien," read "une transaction bien"
- §17: for "et qui entendoit parfaitement," read "et qui savoit parfaitement"
- §18: for "en les expliquant de," read "en l'expliquant de"
- §20: for "qu'il n'y en a point de," read "qu'il n'y a point de"

- §21: for "directrice et productice," read "directrice et productrice"
- §30: for "souiller les vertus et les perfections," read "souiller les perfections"
- §32: for "autant de systemes du Monde," read "autant de systemes Mondains"
- §34: for "Hiaxi," read "Hia Xi"
- §34a: for "qu'il avoit eue avec," read "qu'il a eue avec"
- §35: for "il confondoit des choses differents," read "il confondoit des different choses"
- §38: for "par ordre du Roy," read "par ordre Royal,"
- §38: for "il y a plus de 300 ans," read "il y a quelques plus de 300 ans"
- §39: for "separeroient l'incertain du certain," read "separeroient le certain"
- §41: for "cela étant, ainsi que seroit-ce," read "cela étant, que ce seroit ce que"
- §43: for "des esprits) ne s'ensuive. Et," read "des esprits) s'ensuive. Et"
- §48: for "des Machines préparées pour cela," read "des Machines préparées à cela"
- §48a: for "parce qu'il jugeoit," read "parce qu'ils jugeoit"
- §50: for "en conclure encore, que," read "en conclure encore de ce silence affecté de Confucius, que"
- §53: for "activité ou son influence," read "activité ou influence"
- §54a: for "ou si vous voulés au Li," read "ou si voulés au Li"
- §54b: for "peuple a le droit de sacrifier," read "peuple a droit de sacrifier"
- §55: for "comme son palais," read "comme à son palais"
- §55: for "terre, sur les montagnes," read "terre, les montagnes"
- §55: for "favorable par des Sacrifices," read "favorable par ses Sacrifices"
- §55: for "que les sages se contentent," read "que sages se contentent"
- §63: for "de Dieu, de même que les Anges," read "de Dieu, tout comme les Anges"
- §64: for "que selon les Chinois," read "que tout selon les Chinois"

§74: for "qu'on talonne comme," read "qu'on tatonne comme." [See Zacher, p. 210, n. 378.]

Loosen and Vonessen regularly, but not uniformly, include in brackets brief passages which Leibniz crossed-out in the manuscript. On only three occasions did we believe the crossed out material added to an understanding of the text. See textual footnotes 18, 183, and 184.

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