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## WHY CHINA HAS NO SCIENCE —AN INTERPRETATION OF THE HISTORY AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY.<sup>1</sup>

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In one of his articles published last year in the *New Republic*, Professor Dewey, said:

"It may be questioned whether the most enlightening thing he [the visitor] can do for others who are interested in China is not to share with them his discovery that China can be known only in terms of itself, and older European history. Yet one must repeat that China is changing rapidly; and that it is as foolish to go on thinking of it in terms of old dynastic China as it is to interpret it by pigeon-holing its facts in Western conceptions. China *is* another world politically and economically speaking, a large and persistent world, and a world bound no one knows just where."<sup>2</sup>

It is truly a discovery. If we compare Chinese history with the history of Europe of a few centuries ago, say before the Renaissance, we find that, although they are of different kinds, they are nevertheless on the same level. But now China is still old while the western countries are already new. What keeps China back? It is a natural question.

What keeps China back is that she has no science. The effect of this fact is not only plain in the material side, but

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<sup>1</sup> In publishing this paper I take the opportunity to thank many members of the faculty of the Philosophy Department of Columbia University for encouragement and help. By science I mean the systematic knowledge of natural phenomena and of the relations between them. Thus it is the short term for Natural Science.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Republic*, Vol. XXV, 1920, New York, p. 188.

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also in the spiritual side, of the present condition of Chinese life. China produced her philosophy at the same time with, or a little before, the height of Athenian culture. Why did she not produce science at the same time with, or even before, the beginning of modern Europe? This paper is an attempt to answer this question in terms of China herself.

It is beyond question that geography, climate, and economic conditions are very important factors in making history, but we must bear in mind that they are conditions that make history possible, not that make history actual. They are the indispensable settings of a drama, but not its cause. The cause that makes history actual is the will to live and the desire for happiness. But what is happiness? People are far from agreeing in their answers to this question. It is due to this fact that we have many different systems of philosophy, many different standards of value, and consequently many different types of history. At the end of this paper I shall venture to draw the conclusion that China has no science, because according to her own standard of value she does not need any. But before we come to this conclusion, we have first to see what the older Chinese standard of value is. In doing so a general survey of the history of Chinese philosophy is indispensable.

## I

At the end of the Chow dynasty, the emperors lost their power to control the feudal princes who began to regard themselves as independent, and the land was subjected to warfare. It was an age of political confusion indeed, but of great intellectual initiative. It was equivalent to the Athenian period of mental vigor in Europe.

Before attacking the different types of Chinese ideals, for the sake of convenience I shall introduce two words which seem to me to indicate respectively two general tendencies of Chinese philosophy: They are "nature" and "art," or, to translate more exactly, "nature" and "human." To illustrate this I cite from Chuang Tse a passage:

"What is nature? What is human? That ox and horse have four feet is nature; to halter the head of a horse or to pierce the nose of an ox is human."<sup>3</sup>

Thus "nature" means something natural; "human" means something artificial. The one is made by nature, the other by man. At the end of the Chow dynasty there were two tendencies representing these two extremes and a third representing a mean between the two. The one said that nature is perfect in itself and that men are self-sufficient and need no help from outside; the other said that nature is not perfect in itself and that men are not self-sufficient and need something outside in order to be better; the third made a compromise. These three main types of ideal did not appear one after the other, but rather arose simultaneously, and expressed at one time the different aspects of human nature and experience. Now according to the "Book of Han," at the end of the Chow dynasty there were nine branches of thought: Confucianism, Taoism, Moism, the School of Religion, the School of Law, the School of Logic, the School of Diplomacy, the School of Agriculture, and the Miscellaneous School. But among them the most influential at that time were Confucianism, Taoism, and Moism. In almost every book written at the end of the Chow dynasty, we are informed that these three were struggling for existence. To illustrate this I cite from the polemic speeches of Mencius, a great defender of Confucianism at that time:

"Philosopher emperors cease to arise; the princes of the states give reins to their lusts; and the scholars indulge in unrational discussions. The words of Yang Chu and Mo Ti fill the world. The discourse of the people has adopted the views either of Yang or of Mo. Yang's doctrine is: each one for himself; then there will be no king. Mo's doctrine is: love all equally; then there will be no father. To have neither king nor father is to be beasts. . . . If the doctrines of Yang and Mo are not stopped and the doctrine of sages not set forth, then the perverse speakings will delude the people, and stop the path of benevolence and righteousness. When benevolence and righteousness are stopped, beasts will be led on to devour

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<sup>3</sup> From the chapter entitled "The Autumn Floods." Compare with H. A. Giles' translation in his book, *Chuang Tsu, Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer*. London, 1889, p. 211.

men and men will themselves devour one another. I am alarmed by these things and address myself to the defence of the doctrines of the former sages, and to oppose Yang and Mo. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Now Mo Ti was the founder of Moism, and Yang Chu was the disciple of the founder of Taoism, Lao Tse. This passage seems to me to be a vivid picture of the state of war existing between these three powers. They were not only struggling for existence, but each one of them had the ambition to conquer the whole empire.

To illustrate their doctrines a little more in detail I choose Lao Tse (570 B. C.?–480 B. C.), Yang Chu (440 B. C.?–360 B. C.), and Chuang Tse (350 B. C.?–275 B. C.) to represent Taoism; Mo Tse (Mo Ti, 500 B. C.?–425 B. C.) to represent Moism; and Confucius (551 B.C.–479 B. C.) and Mencius (372 B. C.–289 B. C.) to represent Confucianism. Referring to the three tendencies which I just mentioned, Taoism stands for nature, Moism for art, and Confucianism for the mean. It seems to me that in every aspect of their doctrines, Taoism and Moism were always at the two extremes and Confucianism in the middle. For instance, with regard to their ethical theories, Mencius agrees in arranging them in a scheme as I do. He said:

"The doctrine of the philosopher Yang was: each one for himself. Though he might benefit the whole world by plucking out a single hair, he would not do it. The doctrine of the philosopher Mo was: to love all equally. If by rubbing smooth his whole body from the crown to the heel, he could benefit the world, he would do it. Tse Mo held a mean between them. By holding it without leaving room for the changeableness of circumstances, he resembled them in maintaining his one point to the exclusion of others."<sup>5</sup>

It goes without saying that to hold the mean while leaving room for the changeableness of circumstances is the only right way of action. It is exactly the teaching of Confucianism. I shall make it clearer a little later.

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<sup>4</sup>James Legge's translation, with some modification. See the *Chinese Classics*, second ed., London, 1895, Vol. II, pp. 282–83.

<sup>5</sup>James Legge's translation, with some modification. See the *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, pp. 464–465.

## II

The teaching of Taoism can be summarised in one phrase: "returning to nature." The omnipotent Tao gives everything its own nature, in which it finds its own satisfaction. For instance:

"In the northern ocean there is a fish, called the Leviathan, many thousand li <sup>6</sup> in size. This Leviathan changes into a bird, called the Rukh, whose back is many li in breadth. With a mighty effort it rises and its wings obscure the sky like clouds. At the equinox, this bird prepares to start for the southern ocean, the Celestial Lake. And in the 'Record of Marvels' we read that when the Rukh flies southwards, the water is smitten for a space of three thousand li around, while the bird itself mounts upon a typhoon to a height of ninety thousand li for a flight of six months' duration. . . . A cicada laughed, and said to a dove: 'Now when I fly with my might, it is as much as I can do to get from tree to tree. And sometimes I do not reach, but fall to the ground midway. What, then, can be the use of going up ninety thousand li in order to start for the South?'" <sup>7</sup>

This passage is cited from a chapter entitled "The Happy Excursion" from Chuang Tse's work. It shows clearly that both the great Rukh and the small cicada are perfectly satisfied, each with his own excursion. They continue to be so as long as they live in accordance with their nature without imitating artificially each other. So everything is perfect in its natural condition. Art simply disturbs nature and produces pain. For, as Chuang Tse said:

"A duck's legs, though short, cannot be lengthened without pain to the duck, and a crane's legs, though long, cannot be shortened without misery to the crane, so that which is long in nature cannot be cut off, nor that which is short be lengthened. All sorrows are thus avoided." <sup>8</sup>

Yang Chu's egoism, therefore, is not selfish in the ordinary sense of that word. He was simply teaching that every man should live as his nature wishes to live; but he need not impose upon others what he thinks to be good. So he said:

"If the ancient by injuring a single hair could have rendered a service to the world, he would not have done it; and had the world been offered to a

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<sup>6</sup> The "li" is about one-third of an English mile.

<sup>7</sup> H. A. Giles' translation. See his *Chuang Tzu*, etc., pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> From the chapter entitled "The Joined Toes." See Giles' *Chuang Tzu*, etc., p. 101.

single person, he would not have accepted it. If nobody would damage even a hair, and nobody would have the world for profit, the world would be in a perfect state."<sup>9</sup>

Another passage from Chuang Tse:

" 'Tell me,' said Lao Tse, 'in what consist charity and duty to one's neighbor?' 'They consist,' answered Confucius, 'in a capacity for rejoicing in all things; in universal love, without the element of self. These are the characteristics of charity and duty to one's neighbor.' 'What stuff!' cried Lao Tse, 'does not universal love contradict itself? Is not your elimination of self a positive manifestation of self? There is the universe, its regularity is unceasing; there are the sun and the moon, their brightness is unceasing; there are the stars, their groupings never change; there are birds and beasts, they flock together without varying; there trees and shrubs, they grow upwards without exception. Be like these; follow Tao; and you will be perfect. Why, then, these struggles for charity and duty to one's neighbor, as though beating a drum in search of a fugitive? Alas! sir, you have brought much confusion into the mind of man.' "<sup>10</sup>

Thus the Taoists see only the good aspects of what is called the state of nature. Every kind of human virtue and social regulation is to them against nature. As Lao Tse said:

"Cast off your holiness, rid yourself of sagacity, and the people will benefit a hundredfold. Discard benevolence and abolish righteousness, and the people will return to filial piety and paternal love. Renounce your scheming and abandon gain, and the thieves and robbers will disappear. These three precepts mean that outward show is insufficient, and therefore they bid us be true to our proper nature: to show simplicity, to embrace plain dealing, to reduce selfishness, to moderate desire."<sup>11</sup>

The government, if the Taoists need any, must be extreme *laissez-faire*.

"As restrictions and prohibitions are multiplied in the country, the people grow poorer and poorer. When the people are subjected to over-much government, the land is thrown into confusion. When people are skilled in many cunning arts, strange are the objects of luxury that appear. The greater the number of laws and enactments, the more thieves and robbers there will be."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> From the chapter, "Yang Chu," in the work of Lieh Tse.

<sup>10</sup> From the chapter entitled "The Way of Nature." See Giles' *Chuang Tzu* etc., p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> Lionel Giles: *The Sayings of Lao Tzu*, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Government should imitate nature:

"The Tao in its regular course does nothing and so there is nothing which it does not do."<sup>13</sup>

This is because Tao lets everything work for itself in its own way:

"Therefore the sage said: 'So long as I do nothing, the people will work out their own reformation. So long as I love calm, the people will be right themselves. So long as I am free from meddling, the people will grow rich. So long as I am free from desire, the people will come naturally back to simplicity.'"<sup>14</sup>

So what man ought to do is to accord with his nature and be content with his destiny. To illustrate this passive nature of Taoism I cite from Chuang Tse:

"Tse Lai fell ill. . . . Tse Li went to see him. Leaning against the door, he asked the dying man: 'Great indeed is the Creator! What will he now make you to become? Where will he take you to? Will he make you the liver of a rat? or an arm of an insect?' Tse Lai answered: 'Where a parent tells a son to go, East, West, South, or North, he simply follows the command. The Yin and Yang (the two forces of nature) are more to a man than his parents are. If they hasten my death and I do not quietly submit to them, I shall be obstinate and rebellious, but they are not mistaken. The great mass of nature makes me to be moved with the body, to be busy with life, to be at ease with old age, and to be at rest with death. Therefore what has made my life a good makes also my death a good.'"<sup>15</sup>

Knowledge is of no use and can do only harm:

"Our life is limited, but knowledge is not limited. With what is limited to pursue what is not limited is a perilous thing."<sup>16</sup>

What we need and ought to know and to get is the Tao, but it is in us. It is like the God of the pantheistic philosophy. So what we ought to do is to know and to control ourselves:

<sup>13</sup> James Legge: *The Texts of Taoism* (in the *Sacred Books of the East* series). London, 1891, Pt. I, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> From the chapter on "The Great Master," Giles' James Legge's *Texts of Taoism*, Pt. I, p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> From the chapter on "Nourishing the Essence of Life." *Ibid.*, p. 198.

"He who knows others is clever, but he who knows himself is enlightened. He who overcomes others is strong, but he who overcomes himself is mightier still."<sup>17</sup>

Besides, we have to use an altogether different method to know and to get the Tao. Lao Tse said:

"He who devotes himself to knowledge seeks from day to day to increase. He who devotes himself to Tao seeks from day to day to diminish. He diminishes and again diminishes till he arrives at doing nothing. Having arrived at the point of doing nothing, there is nothing which he does not do."<sup>18</sup>

As Tao is already in us, it can be known not by adding something artificially to it, but by taking away what has been artificially added to it before. That is what Lao Tse meant by "diminish." So the arguments of those who were simply interested in intellectual exercise were to the Taoists of little value. Thus in Chuang Tse's book one passage reads:

"To wear out one's intellect in trying to argue without knowing the fact that the arguments are the same is called 'three in the morning.' 'What is three in the morning?' asked Tse Yu. 'A keeper of monkeys,' replied Tse Chi, 'said once to his monkeys with regard to their chestnuts, that each was to have three in the morning and four in the night. But to this the monkeys were very angry, so the keeper said that they might have four in the morning and three in the night, with which arrangement they were all well pleased.'"<sup>19</sup>

Thus Taoism stood for nature as against art.

### III

The fundamental idea of Moism is utility. The sanction of virtue is not that it is natural, but that it is useful. In the book bearing Mo Tse's name one passage reads:

"Righteousness is what is beneficial to us. Benefit is that which we are glad to have."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lionel Giles: *The Sayings of Lao Tzu*, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> James Legge: *The Texts of Taoism*, Pt. I, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> From the chapter on "The Identity of Contraries," H. A. Giles: *Chuang Tzu*, etc., p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> From the first of the two chapters on "Definitions."



Thus Mo Tse's position in ethics was essentially that of utilitarianism. He was also a pragmatist and an empiricist. He said:

"For argument there must be a standard. If we argue without a standard, it is just like fixing morning and night on a moving circle: we cannot know clearly whether it is right or wrong, useful or harmful. For testing an argument there are three standards. What are these three standards? They are: to trace it, to examine it, and to use it. Where trace it? Trace it in the authority of the ancient philosopher kings. Where examine it? Examine it in the facts which the common people see and hear. Where use it? Put it into practice and see whether it is useful for the benefit of the country and the people. These are the three standards for argument."<sup>21</sup>

Among these three standards, the third seems to be the most important. So Mo Tse taught the doctrine of universal love, because it seemed to him to be the most "useful for the benefit of the country and the people." To let him speak for himself, I select from the chapters entitled "Universal Love":

"The business of the benevolent man must be to strive to promote what is advantageous to the world and to take away what is injurious to it. At the present time, what are to be accounted the most injurious things to the world? They are such as the attacking of small states by the great ones; the inroad on small families by the great ones; the plunder of the weak by the strong; the oppression of the few by the many. . . . Let us ask whence all these injurious things arise. Is it from loving others or advantaging others? It must be replied 'No'; and it must likewise be said 'They arise clearly from hating others and doing violence to others.' Do those who hate and do violence to others hold the principle of loving all, or that of making distinctions between man and man? It must be replied, 'They make distinctions.' So then it is the principle of making distinctions between man and man, which gives rise to all that is most injurious to the world. On this account we conclude that that principle is wrong. . . . There is a principle of loving all which is able to change that which makes distinctions. . . . If the princes were as much for the state of others as for their own, which one among them would raise the forces of his state to attack that of another? He is for that as much as for his own. . . . So then it is the principle of universal, mutual love, which gives rise to all that is most beneficial to the world. On this account we

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<sup>21</sup> From the first of the three chapters on the "Absurdity of Predestination."

conclude that that principle is right. . . . Others may say, 'It is good, but it is extremely hard to be carried into practice.' But how can it be good, and yet incapable of being put into practice? . . . I apprehend there is no one under heaven, man or woman, however stupid, though he condemn the principle of universal love, but would at such a time (the most dangerous time), make one who held it the subject of his trust. . . . I apprehend there is no one under heaven, however stupid, man or woman, though he condemn the principle of universal love, but would at such a time (the most dangerous time), prefer to be under the sovereign who holds it."<sup>22</sup>

This shows that the doctrine of universal love is not only advantageous to others, but to those as well who act according to this principle. In the book that bears Mo Tse's name three chapters are devoted to describing the disadvantages of war. War is not only injurious to the conquered, but to the conqueror as well. Even occasionally some of the states may make profit at the expense of others, it still cannot be justified. He compared this to medicine. There is medicine; if ten thousand people use it and only four or five are benefited, it is surely not a good medicine. Mo Tse stood for the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

He also, unlike the Taoist, knew the imperfection of human nature. Mankind is too shortsighted to see its own interests. Men cannot be convinced that loving others is advantageous to themselves and selfishness can do only harm. So, Mo Tse, again unlike the Taoist, saw the need of authorities to regulate human action. He taught that there is a personal God. Men should love each other, not only because so doing is advantageous, but also because it is the will of God. Even belief in the existence of spirits and ghosts as the invisible watchers over men's conduct is upheld as a valuable aid in maintaining morality.

The function and authority of the state are likewise emphasized by Mo Tse as aids to a right life:

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<sup>22</sup> Up to the present time there is no English translation of the book bearing Mo Tse's name. But these three chapters on universal love were translated by James Legge in the introduction to the work of Mencius. See the *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, pp. 108-111.

"In ancient times, when mankind just began to enter the world and had no political association, every one had his own righteousness. If there was one man, there was one righteousness; if two, two righteousnesses; if ten, ten righteousnesses; the more men, the more righteousnesses. Every one considered his own righteousness as right and others' as wrong. Therefore, people were against each other. . . . The world was in disorder and people were like birds and beasts. They knew that the reason that the world was in disorder was that there was no right leader; therefore, they elected a wise and able man to be their emperor. . . . Then the emperor ordered the people, saying: 'If you hear what is good and what is not good, tell all of them to your superior. What your superior considers as right, all of you must consider as right; what your superior considers as wrong, all of you must consider as wrong.' " <sup>23</sup>

This is altogether different from the Taoistic conception of the state. Besides this, Mo Tse also emphasised the importance of education. In the book that bears his name, one chapter is entitled: "What is Dyed," in which one passage reads:

"Master Mo Tse saw one dyeing silk. He sighed and said: 'Dyed in blue, the silk becomes blue; dyed in yellow, the silk becomes yellow. What it enters changes; it changes its color accordingly. By entering five times, it is turned into five colors. Therefore it is necessary to take care of the dyeing.' " <sup>24</sup>

Following this he cited a long list of facts to show how some men became good by associating with good men, and others bad by associating with bad men. Human nature seems to him to be a *tabula rasa* and its color depends entirely on how one dyes it. This again is very different from the Taoistic conception of human nature.

In contrast with Taoism Mo Tse denied predestination. Reward and punishment either by God or by the state are the results of men's voluntary action. If the will is not free, men will not be responsible for their bad doing, and will not be encouraged to do good. They will think, as Mo Tse said:

"He who is punished is predestined to be punished but not because he is bad. He who is rewarded is predestined to be rewarded but not because

<sup>23</sup> From the first of the three chapters on "The Preference of Uniformity."

<sup>24</sup> From the chapter on "What is Dyed."

he is good. Therefore if they become princes, they will not be righteous; if they become ministers, they will not be loyal. . . . " <sup>25</sup>

Thus Mo Tse worked out many devices for making people good. His ideal is to have the greatest number of population, with the necessary external goods, living together peacefully and loving each other. Mo Tse said:

"When a philosopher governs a country, the wealth of that country can be doubled; when he governs the world, the wealth of the world can be doubled. It is doubled not at the expense of others, but by utilizing the country and by cutting off useless expenditures. . . . What is it that is not easy to be doubled? It is the population only that is not easy to be doubled. But there is a way to double it. The ancient philosopher kings had a law saying: 'When the boy is twenty years old, he must have a home; when the girl is fifteen years old, she must have her man. . . .'" <sup>26</sup>

This is Mo Tse's ideal of progress. Progress is possible not by struggle and competition, but by universal love and mutual help. To this I must add that the ideal of Mo Tse is not a Platonic one. Mo Tse was too realistic to be content to put his pattern in heaven. He was ready to fight against anything that seemed to him to be incompatible with the increase of wealth and population. He taught economy of expenditure because, as he said:

"Philosopher kings do not do those things which increase the expenditure but not the profit of the people." <sup>27</sup>

He was also against music and fine art, because they have nothing to do with the fact that:

"People have three troubles: those who are hungry but have no food; those who are cold but have no clothes; and those who are tired but cannot rest." <sup>28</sup>

He was also against the Confucianist teaching of the luxurious way of burying the dead and the three years' mourning on occasion of the death of parents. Because people ought not spend their time, energy, and wealth in this way; in doing so,

<sup>25</sup> From the first of the three chapters on "The Absurdity of Predestination."

<sup>26</sup> From the first of the three chapters on "The Economy of Expenditure."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, second chapter.

<sup>28</sup> From the chapter on "Against Music."

"The country must become poor; the population must become small; and politics must become corrupted." <sup>29</sup>

These steps probably represent the decisive attitude of Moism to oppose nature. Indeed if one sees things wholly from the point of view of intellect, music and fine art are really of no use at all. If we know that death is a natural process, what is the use of mourning? Suen Tse said:

"Mo Tse was blinded by utility, and did not know refinement." <sup>30</sup>

This criticism is quite justified.

Anyway, Mo Tse was certainly a philosopher who taught men to find happiness in the external world. He did not think, as the Taoists did, that men are most happy in the state of nature, and that what men need and should do is to return to nature, instead of turning away from it. He knew, in contrast with Taoists, that men in nature are imperfect, foolish, and weak; that, in order to be perfect, strong, and wise, they need the help of the state, of virtue, and of a personified God. So in his philosophy there was a strong sense of progress and of the future. In the book bearing his name one passage reads:

"Pung Ching Shin Tse said: 'The past can be known, but not the future. Mo Tse said: 'Suppose that your parents are at a place one hundred li from here, and meet some trouble: they ask you to go to them within one day; if you can do so, they will be alive; if not they will die. Now there is a good car with a good horse, and a bad horse with a car with square wheels. I ask you to choose between them. Which one will you take?' 'I take the good car with the good horse in order that I may be able to arrive earlier' was the answer. Mo Tse said: 'Then why do you say that you cannot know the future?' " <sup>31</sup>

This is indeed a good illustration of utilizing the past to control the future. The spirit is scientific. In the book bearing Mo Tse's name there were several chapters devoted to what we now call logic or definitions. They

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<sup>29</sup> From the chapter on "The Economy of Burying."

<sup>30</sup> From the chapter on "The Elimination of Blindness" in the work of Suen Tse.

<sup>31</sup> From the chapter "Lu Wen."

must be the product of Mo Tse's followers, if not of the master himself. They contain many definitions which are sometimes interesting and scientific. For instance:

"Space is that that covers different places. Duration is that that covers different times. Cause is that after getting which a thing can be. Circle is that one middle has the same length to all sides. Energy is that by which a form arises."<sup>32</sup>

There are many others like these, which seem to be germs of science. Indeed Mo Tse was famous also for making machines to defend the city-wall, to which several chapters in the book bearing his name are devoted.

This is all I wish to say to support my statement that Moism stood for art as over against nature. Now let us turn to the third system, Confucianism.

#### IV

Confucianism, as I said before, is a mean between the two extreme standpoints of nature and art. But at the time immediately after Confucius, there were two types of Confucianism. The one, represented by Mencius, stood nearer to the extreme of nature; the other, represented by Suen Tse, stood nearer to that of art. The teaching of Confucius himself was nearer to the extreme of nature. So afterwards Mencius was and is considered as the true and legal heir of Confucianism. Here I follow tradition in choosing Confucius and Mencius to represent Confucianism, but shall discuss Suen Tse in another place and shall consider him as another philosopher in Chinese history who attempted to develop the art line of Chinese thought.

Confucius, as Mencius said, was a "sage of time."

"When it was proper to go away quickly, he did so; when it was proper to delay, he did so; when it was proper to keep retirement, he did so; when it was proper to go into office, he did so:—this was Confucius."<sup>33</sup>

So Confucius emphasized discrimination of situations. It is not a first question whether I should love a person in

<sup>32</sup> All are selected from the first of the two chapters on "Definitions."

<sup>33</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, p. 371.

such and such a way or not; the first question is who that person is. Mencius said:

"In regard to the inferior creatures, the superior man is kind to them, but not loving. In regard to people generally, he is friendly to them, but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his relatives, and friendly to people generally. He is friendly to people generally, and kind to creatures."<sup>34</sup>

He said again in another place:

"Here is a man, and a stranger bends his bow to shoot him. I will advise him not to do so, but speaking calmly and smilingly, for no other reason but that he is not related to me. But if my brother be bending his bow to shoot the man, I will advise him not to do so, weeping and crying the while, for no other reason but that he is related to me."<sup>35</sup>

Thus was developed the doctrine of loving with a difference of degree, as over against that of universal love on the one hand and that of each for himself on the other. We ought to love with difference of degree, because it is human nature. Thus one passage in the work of Mencius reads:

"E Tse said: 'According to the principle of the learned, we find that the ancients acted towards the people as if they were watching over an infant. What does this expression mean? To me it seems that we are to love all without difference of degree; but in practice we begin with our parents.' Seu Tse reported this to Mencius. Mencius said: 'Does E Tse really think that a man's affection for the child of his brother is merely like his affection for that of his neighbor? . . . Heaven gives birth to creatures in such a way that they have one root, and E Tse makes them to have two roots.'<sup>36</sup>

Human nature, according to the teaching of Confucianism, is essentially good. This seems to have been a tradition even before the time of Confucius. Because human nature is originally good, so the sanction of virtue is its being admirable and desirable. Thus Mencius said:

"Men's mouths agree in having the same relishes; their ears agree in enjoying the same sound; their eyes agree in recognizing the same beauty; shall their minds alone be without that which they similarly approve? It is, I say, reason and righteousness. The sages only apprehended before

<sup>34</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, p. 476.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

us what our mind also approves. Therefore reason and righteousness are agreeable to our mind, just as good food is agreeable to our mouth.”<sup>37</sup>

In another place he said:

“What is desirable is what is called good.”<sup>38</sup>

But, although human nature is originally good, it is not to be inferred that men are born perfect. They cannot be perfect until their innate reason is completely developed, and their lower desires are wholly taken away. Thus Mencius said:

“The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of benevolence; the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness; the feeling of modesty and complaisance is the beginning of propriety; the feeling of approving and disapproving is the beginning of wisdom. . . . Since all men have these four feelings in themselves, let them know how to give them their development and their completion, and the issue will be like that of fire which has begun to burn, or that of a spring which has begun to find vent. If they have their complete development, they will suffice to love and to protect all within the four seas. If they be denied their development, they will not suffice for a man to serve his parents.”<sup>39</sup>

And to develop reason on the one hand is to diminish the lower desires on the other:

“To nourish the mind there is nothing better than to make the desires few.”<sup>40</sup>

So in order to develop men’s natural faculties, they need some positive organization. The simple Taoistic way of returning to nature is not sufficient here. Therefore the state is indispensable:

“In the Book of History it is said: ‘Heaven having produced the people in the lower earth, appointed for them rulers and teachers.’ ”<sup>41</sup>

But teachers and rulers are not to be separated. Most of the Chinese political ideals are the same as Plato’s. King must be philosopher; philosopher must be king. This is

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<sup>37</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, pp. 406–407.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 497.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.



especially emphasized in the Confucianist's conception of the state. The chief duty of the state is first to maintain a certain amount of wealth to enable people to live, and then to teach them. Thus one passage in the Confucian Analects reads:

"When the Master went to the state of Wei, Yen Yew acted as the driver of his carriage. The Master observed: 'How numerous are the people!' Yew said: 'Since they are thus numerous, what shall be done for them?' 'Enrich them,' was the answer. 'And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done?' The Master said: 'Teach them.'"<sup>42</sup>

Moreover in a state, teaching is more important than enriching. In the Confucian Analects another passage reads:

"The Duke King of Tse asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied: 'The prince is prince, the minister is minister, the father is father, and the son is son.' 'Good,' said the duke, 'If, indeed, the prince be not prince, the minister not minister, the father not father, and the son not son, although there is food, can we enjoy it?'"<sup>43</sup>

As for the individual, external things are determined by destiny. Therefore in the Confucian Analects we read:

"Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honors depend on Heaven."<sup>44</sup>

And Mencius said:

"When we get by our seeking and lose by our neglecting; in this case seeking is of use to getting, and the thing sought for is something which is in ourselves. When our seeking is conducted properly, but the getting is only as destiny determines, in this case our seeking is of no use to getting, and the thing sought for is that which is without us."<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, what man should do is to seek what is in himself. The fact that he is not able to control what is outside him does not make him imperfect; he is given by Heaven the godly reason within him, in which he can find truth and be happy. So Mencius:

"He who has exhausted all his mind, knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one's mind and nourish one's

<sup>42</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. I, pp. 266-267.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 450.

nature, is the way to serve Heaven. When neither a premature death nor a long life makes any difference, but he waits in the cultivation of his character for whatever comes; this is the way in which he establishes his Heaven-ordained being.”<sup>46</sup>

In another place he said:

“All things are already in us. Turn our attention to ourselves and find there this truth; there is no greater delight than that.”<sup>47</sup>

In this point Confucianism is much nearer Taoism than Moism. Happiness and truth are in our mind. It is in our own mind, not in the external world, that we can seek for happiness and truth. We are self-sufficient, if only we develop our innate power. To learn is to cultivate our character according to our rational nature, not to make intellectual exercise or simply to remember mechanically what the books said.

We have now completed our general survey of the three original types of Chinese ideals. We have seen that in the theory of existence, the power that governs the universe, to Taoism is the omnipotent Tao or Nature, to Moism is a personified God, and to Confucianism is the Heavenly Reason. In the theory of the state, Taoism needed a “laissez faire” government, if any; Moism needed the state to regulate the different individual opinions, and Confucianism needed it to develop men’s moral faculties. In the theory of life, Taoism said that human nature is perfect in itself and that every one should only live in accordance with one’s own nature; Moism said that human nature is not perfect in itself, and that one should love all equally in order to make possible the prosperity of all; Confucianism said that although human nature is good, one needs efforts to “develop,” to “nourish,” and to “complete” it, and that although one should love others, the difference of natural relation should be considered. In the theory of education, Taoism taught a return to nature, Moism taught control of the environment, and Confucianism taught the way of

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<sup>46</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. I, pp. 448–449, with some modification.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 450–451.

self-realization. These seem to me to have justified my statement that in the history of Chinese thought Taoism stood for nature, Moism for art and Confucianism for the mean. We have seen that they struggled bitterly for existence. The result of that great war was the complete failure of poor Moism, which soon disappeared once for all. The causes of the failure of Moism were unknown; but, I think, the chief cause must have been the defect of the system itself. To illustrate this I cite from Chuang Tse a passage:

"Mo Tse composed the treatise 'Against Music' and the subject of another was called 'Economy in Expenditure.' He would have no singing in life, and no wearing of mourning on the occasion of death. He inculcated universal love and a common participation in all advantages, and condemned fighting. . . . The teaching of such lessons cannot be regarded as a proof of his love for men; his practicing them in his own case would certainly show that he did not love himself. But this has not been sufficient to overthrow the doctrine of Mo Tse. Notwithstanding, men will sing, and he condemns singing; men will wail, and he condemns wailing; men will express their joy, and he condemns such expression. Is this truly according to men's nature? Through life toil, and at death niggardliness; causing men sorrow and melancholy and difficult to be carried into practice, I fear it cannot be regarded as the way of sages. Contrary to the minds of men, men will not endure it. Though Mo Tse himself might be able to endure it, how is the aversion of the world to it to be overcome?"<sup>48</sup>

Truly the aversion of the world to Moism had not been overcome, and people turned their back from it after the disappearance of the enthusiastic, great personality of Mo Tse himself.

But, as already noted, there was another man at that time, who, although different from Mo Tse, tried to develop the art line of Chinese ideal. He was Suen Tse (269 B. C.?–239 B. C.), who considered himself as the true successor of Confucianism. He taught that human nature is absolutely bad and that to make it good is the duty of ruler and teacher. He condemned Chuang Tse as:

"One who was blinded by nature and did not know human."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> From the chapter "The World." James Legge: *Texts of Taoism*, Pt. II, pp. 218–219.

<sup>49</sup> From the chapter on "The Elimination of Blindness" in the work of Suen Tse.

According to his own ideal, he would conquer nature instead of returning to it:

"It is better to treat nature as a thing and regulate it than to consider it very great and always think of it. It is better to control nature and use it than to follow and admire it."<sup>50</sup>

This is nearly the same as the Baconian conception of power. But, unfortunately, his pupils did not develop his thought along this line. They carried out their master's political philosophy and carried it too far. In the third century B. C. Shi Hwang Ti, or the "First Universal Emperor," of the Chin Dynasty, unified again warring states into one, and Li Si, the disciple of Suen Tse, became the Premier. He helped the emperor in every respect to unify the empire and carried the authority of the government to an extreme. Having abolished the existing feudalism and thus absolutely unified the empire politically, he took a step farther to unify the people's thought. He burned books, killed scholars, and ordered the people to come to the state or government professors to learn things. Thus the emperor became an extreme tyrant and the people rebelled. Suen Tse's teaching, together with the Chin Dynasty, disappeared soon and forever.

## V

After the Chin Dynasty the "art" motive of Chinese thought almost never reappeared. Soon came Buddhism, which again is a "nature" philosophy of the extreme type. The Chinese mind oscillated among Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism for a long time. It was not until the tenth century A. D. that a new group of men of genius succeeded in combining these three, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, into one, and instilling the new teaching into the Chinese national mind, which has persisted to the present day.

Because this new teaching started in the Sung Dynasty, it is known as the "Learning of Sung." These philosophers

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<sup>50</sup> From the chapter on "On Nature" in the work of Suen Tse.

themselves claimed that their teaching was the genuine Confucianism. But it must be a new Confucianism, if it is Confucianism at all. Most of its representatives were at first believers in Taoism and Buddhism, and afterwards came back to Confucianism. Then they picked from the "Li Ki" as their textbooks two chapters, to which few scholars had paid any attention before that time. Truly it was their merit to call attention to these two chapters, "The Great Learning" and "The Doctrine of Mean and Common," which embodied Confucianism in a very systematic way. I cannot refrain from citing from the "Great Learning" certain passages, which were regarded till very recent time by the Chinese people as the sole aim of life. The passages are:

"The doctrine of the Great Learning is: to enlighten the enlightened virtue, to make people love each other, and to stop at the supreme good. . . . The ancients who wish to enlighten the enlightened virtue in the world first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated their own families. Wishing to regulate their own families, they first cultivated their own character. Wishing to cultivate their own characters, they first rectified their minds. Wishing to rectify their minds, they first sought to be sincere in their wishes. Wishing to be sincere in their wishes, they first extended their wisdom. Such extension of wisdom lay in the investigation of things."<sup>51</sup>

This in a few words gave an admirable exposition of the Confucianist aim and art of life. The philosophers of Neo-Confucianism picked out these passages and unconsciously read Taoism and Buddhism into them. They differed from the original Confucianism in that they set up what they called the "heavenly reason" as over against "human desire," conceptions which were really suggested by the ideas of "Norm" and "Ignorance" in Buddhism, and were never spoken of very much before this period. According to the genuine Confucianism, as we have seen, although human nature is good, the good is only a germ or a "beginning," to use the term of Mencius, and much effort is needed to "nourish," to "develop," and to "complete"

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<sup>51</sup> James Legge: *Chinese Classics*, Vol. I, pp. 356-358, with modification.

it. Now according to Neo-Confucianism, the heavenly reason, though covered by human desires, is as perfect as ever, and men need only to remove these desires, and the true mind, like a diamond, will shine itself. This is very like what Lao Tse called "to diminish." Yet Neo-Confucianism differed from Taoism and Buddhism radically and attacked them seriously. It held that in order to "diminish" human desire and to recover the heavenly reason, it is not necessary for one to be in a state of complete negation of life. What is necessary is to live according to reason, and it is only *in* life that the reason can be fully realized.

Now these philosophers set out to investigate the "things," of the above quotation, and faced immediately the question: What are these things? This gave rise to two types of Neo-Confucianism. The one said that the "things" are all external things and affairs. It is impossible to investigate all of them at once, and no one carried this interpretation into practice, not even the interpreter, Chu He, himself. The other said that "things" refer to phenomena in our mind. This interpretation was more successfully carried out. There were many subtle and convincing arguments from both sides, and all of them made some great contributions to the theory and what may be called the art of life.

This period of the history of Chinese philosophy was almost perfectly analogous to that of the development of modern science in European history, in that its productions became more and more technical, and had an empirical basis and an applied side. The only, but important, difference was that in Europe the technique developed was for knowing and controlling matter, while in China that developed was for knowing and controlling mind. To the latter technique India has also made a great contribution. But while the Indian technique can be practiced only in the negation of life, the Chinese technique can be practiced only within life. Arts differ according to the difference of ideals.

But these controversies are not important for the present purpose. What concerns us here is the ideals that direct the Chinese mind, not the methods of realizing them. We may, therefore, say that so far as the ideal or aim is concerned all types of Neo-Confucianism are the same: the ideal is to diminish the human desire in order to recover the heavenly reason, and that is all.

## VI

Such is the Chinese idea of good. In the history of mankind Mediæval Europe under Christianity tried to find good and happiness in Heaven, while Greece tried, and Modern Europe is trying to find them on earth. St. Augustine wished to realize his "City of God," Francis Bacon his "Kingdom of Man." But China, ever since the disappearance of the "nature" line of her national thought, has devoted all her spiritual energy to another line, that is, to find good and happiness directly in the human mind. In other words, Mediæval Europe under Christianity tried to know God and prayed for His help; Greece tried, and Modern Europe is trying to know nature and to conquer, to control it; but China tried to know what is within ourselves, and to find there perpetual peace.

What is the use of science? The two fathers of modern European philosophy gave two answers. Descartes said that it is for certainty; Bacon said that it is for power. Let us first follow Descartes and consider science as for certainty. We see at once that if one is dealing with one's own mind, there is at first no need of certainty. Bergson says in *Mind Energy* that Europe discovered the scientific method, because modern European science started from matter. It is from the science of matter that Europe gets the habit of precision, of exactness, of the anxiety for proof, and of distinguishing between what is simply possible and what is certain.

"Therefore science, had it been applied in the first instance to the things of mind, would have probably remained uncertain and vague, however

far it may have advanced; it would, perhaps, never have distinguished between what is simply plausible and what must be definitely accepted.”<sup>52</sup>

So China has not discovered the scientific method, because Chinese thought started from mind, and from one's own mind. Is it necessary for me when I am hungry to prove to myself with roundabout, abstract, scientific method that I am desiring food?

Besides, Chinese philosophers considered philosophy as something most serious. It is not for intellectual information, it is for doing. Chu He, the philosopher of Neo-Confucianism, said that the sages would not tell what virtue was like; they simply asked you to practice it; as they would not tell how sugar was sweet, they simply asked you to taste it. In this sense we may say that Chinese philosophers loved the certainty of perception, not that of conception, and therefore, they would not, and did not translate their concrete vision into the form of science. In one word China has no science, because of all philosophies the Chinese philosophy is the most human and the most practical. While the philosophers of the West are proud of their clear thinking and scientific knowledge, the Chinese philosopher would say with Marcus Aurelius:

“Thanks, too, that in spite of my ardour for philosophy, I did not fall into the hands of a professor, or sit poring over essays or syllogisms, or become engrossed in scientific speculations.”<sup>53</sup>

. . . “Nothing is more disheartening than the weary round of spying anything, probing (as Pindar says) ‘the depth of the earth,’ guessing and prying at the secrets of our neighbors’ souls, instead of realising that it is enough to keep solely to the god within, and to serve him with all honesty. . . .”<sup>54</sup>

But, although in comparison with the West China is short of clear thinking, in compensation she has more rational happiness. Bertrand Russell said in the *Nation*

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<sup>52</sup> H. Bergson: *Mind Energy*; Translated by H. W. Carr; New York, 1920, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> Marcus Aurelius Antoninus: *To Himself*; translated by G. H. Rendall; London, 1910. I, 17, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 13, p. 15.



(London) that the Chinese people seem to be rational hedonists, differing from Europeans through the fact that they prefer enjoyment to power.<sup>55</sup> It is because of the fact that the Chinese ideal prefers enjoyment to power that China has no need of science, even though science, according to Bacon, is for power. The Chinese philosophers, as I said just now, had no need of scientific certainty, because it was themselves that they wished to know; so in the same way they had no need of the power of science, because it was themselves that they wished to conquer. To them the content of wisdom is not intellectual knowledge and its function is not to increase external goods. To Taoism, external goods seem to be something that can only bring confusion to man's mind. To Confucianism, while they are not so bad as Taoism supposes, they are by no means the essentials of human welfare. Then what is the use of science?

It seems to me that if the Chinese people had followed Mo Tse identifying good with useful, or Suen Tse so as to try to control nature instead of admiring it, it is very likely that China would have produced science at a somewhat early time. Of course this is only a speculation. But this speculation is justified by the fact that in the books of Mo Tse and Suen Tse we do find the germs of science. Unfortunately or fortunately this "art" line of Chinese thought was conquered by its opponents. What is the use of science, if intellectual certainty and the power to conquer the external world are not included in the idea of good?

One question may be raised: Why could Europe turn its attention from heaven to earth, whereas China at the same time could not turn from the internal to the external? To this I answer: No matter whether the people of Europe tried to find good and happiness in heaven or in earth, their philosophies all belong to what I called the line of "art." Before the establishment of Christianity, Stoicism,

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<sup>55</sup>Vol. XXVIII (1921), p. 505.

which seems to me to be the "nature" line of European thought, taught man to serve his god within. But then came Christianity, which taught man to serve his God without. Man was no longer a self-sufficient being, but a sinner. Accordingly the European mind occupied itself in proving the existence of God. Philosophers proved it with the Aristotelian logic and by the study of natural phenomena. Philosophy and science, according to most philosophers of scholasticism, even Roger Bacon, were needed to explain the contents of the Scripture. Modern Europe has continued this spirit of knowing and proving the outside, only changing God for "Nature," creation for mechanism—that is all. There is a continuation of history, but no clear demarcation between mediæval and modern Europe. Both try to know the outside world. They first try to know it, and after getting acquainted with it, they try to conquer it. So they are bound to have science both for certainty and for power. They are bound to have science, because they all suppose that human nature is imperfect in itself. Men are weak, foolish, and helpless. In order to be perfect, strong, and wise, they need something that is to be added artificially. They need knowledge and power. They need society, state, law, and virtue. Besides they need the help of a personified God. But how about what I called the "nature" line of thought? If everything good is already in us for all eternity, what use to search for happiness in the external world? Will that not be like what the Buddhist said about a beggar asking for food with a golden bowl? What is the use of scientific certainty and power?

To speak of things in abstract and general terms is always dangerous. But here I cannot refrain from saying that the West is *extension*, the East is *intension*; and that the West emphasizes what we *have*, the East emphasizes what we *are*. The question as to how to reconcile these two so that humanity may be happy both in body and in mind is at present difficult to answer. Anyway, the Chinese conception of life may be mistaken, but the Chinese

experience cannot be a failure. If mankind shall afterwards become wiser and wiser, and think that they need peace and happiness in their mind, they may turn their attention to, and gain something from, the Chinese wisdom. If they shall not think so, the mind energy of the Chinese people of four thousand years will yet not have been spent in vain. The failure itself may warn our children to stop searching for something in the barren land of human mind. This is one of China's contributions to mankind.

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