

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY CHANGE  
SERIES VII SEMINARS ON CULTURE AND VALUES, VOLUME 6

*General Editor*  
*George F. McLean*

*Moral Imagination and Character Development*

*Volume III*

# IMAGINATION in RELIGION and SOCIAL LIFE

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2003

THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

## CHAPTER X

### THE DECLINE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF MORALITY IN CHINESE SOCIETY

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China is in crisis, *Wei Ji*. According to the Chinese understanding, “*Wei*” means danger and “*Ji*,” opportunity. In crisis, danger and opportunity always coexist. If we have a sober realization of the danger and the opportunity we are facing, the future is hopeful.

#### INTRODUCTION

The seven weeks demonstration in Beijing in the Spring of 1989 and the subsequent Tiananmen incident on June 4 are among the manifestations of the present crisis, which permeates many dimensions of society: politics, economy, education, morality, family and others. Objectively speaking, the crisis resulted not only from malpractices or flaws, but also from the progress and developments we have achieved in the last decade. One fact is that the great economic progress in China in this decade has been an important inspiration to peoples elsewhere, just as the progress of other peoples provides founded hope for the people of China. Like all great changes which bring with them great progress as well as great turmoil, China is undergoing a critical as well as historic period of development.

Actually at this time, not only China, not only socialist countries, but the whole world is in crisis which is manifested differently in different societies. However, the confusion does not appear to be the despairing slide into conflict and terror which marked the earlier half of the 20th century and resulted in two World Wars, but it is a more hopeful pattern of change as people strive for new and generally agreed upon goals. All — whether people or governments, East or West, North or South — seem to look for greater peace, democracy, freedom and economic prosperity. The problems concern the means to be used in, and the pace of, moving toward the accomplishment of these commonly shared goals. There is general uncertainty about how to proceed and how fast and about whether people will have the moral staying power to travel the road which in many cases promises to be arduous and taxing. This much

is shared among most peoples of the world

More specifically, the problems faced by the Chinese people are complex and to some degree inevitable facets of the process of modernization. For example, the process of mechanization and bio-technical developments as well as the reforms of management system have greatly liberated the labor force in the countryside. As a result the number of people needed to produce a given quantity of food is dropping. This produces a lack of jobs in the countryside and concomitant pressures to move to the city. At the same time, an unreasonable price system dampens the initiative of farming. Moreover, the development of education and information technologies enable people in the countryside to envisage new modes of life available only in urban areas. More advanced education, medical facilities, recreational activities, new modes of employment and of social life exert a strong attraction to move to the cities. This combination of factors, rather than a simple rise in the number of people or failure of a specific scheme of the reform, would appear to be the basis for the increasing flow of people to the cities which causes a series of social problems. Here I do not mean to excuse the failures of some schemes of the reform or to advocate limiting of the reform thus far, nor do I try to mask the problems. My hope is to consider and to research the problems at a deeper level.

There are many problems or crises in Chinese society today, the one which I consider to be significant, is the decline of morality. Without morality, social turmoil is unavoidable and social change will lose its humane bearings. Historically, it seems that great developments of civilization are often accompanied by a decline of morality, which is evident in Chinese society today. The corruption of officials, degeneration of social mood, disintegration of family, unscrupulousness of manufacturing and commerce, as well as selfishness, egoism, irresponsibility, superficiality and impetuosity, which directly or indirectly seriously imperil society and its healthy development. The situation is precarious in the extreme and requires a major effort expertly to combine all available moral resources in order to counter with an effective response.

At the same time, China need not abandon hope since there is not only danger but also opportunity in the crisis. Our opportunity is provided by our great history, the great people and the progressive world. The abundant heritage of ancient and Chinese modern cultures together with those of other peoples can significantly contribute to present day efforts and to the efforts of mankind.

The moral crisis is here, but the moral problem cannot be

solved in itself. We need to think about morality in a wider scope, namely, in terms of values in which morality is a part. Though it is difficult to define values, this may be due not to their inherent lack of clarity, but just the opposite. Just as Aristotle's categories express basically different ways of being and, therefore, cannot be defined one in terms of the other, the same is true of values. Hence, the best approach may be to note that the field of human consciousness contains two dimensions. One is truth which is concerned with stating the facts. In this sense truth is concerned with objects of what is there before us. The other dimension is values, which are concerned not with whether something exists or in what species it falls, but with what human evaluation is given to it and whether it is what it should be or lives up to its nature. This concerns whether an object is good or not, beautiful or not and is something that I ought or ought not to undertake.

We may distinguish at least three dimensions or relations of values: man and himself, man and man, man and nature (*Tian*<sup>1</sup>) which bound together constitute a value system. Morality basically focuses on one of the relations, i.e., man and man, or relations of persons. So the reconstruction of morality, which is a part of the value system, must be the reconstruction of the value system. First, I shall analyze the mechanism of a value system.

## MODEL OF VALUE SYSTEM

Values are shaped in the practice of human life. Repeated decisions in the face of difficulties or challenges engender a real capability for such decision making on the part of a person. This is a strength, capacity or power (*virtus*, "virtue"), e.g., courage or fortitude. As these are admired or prized they become valued (values). Further, the imagination enables this process to go beyond the mere appreciation of what already is in order to delineate what we want to be or to realize in human action. Over time these values emerge more clearly, have more weight and become norms according to which we assess concrete possibilities and decide upon courses of action. Historical instances and personages bring out certain aspects of these virtues and thereby shape the specific character of individual virtues and of the complex of virtues which come to form a specific value system. Throughout this process, the work of the imagination in delineating and symbolizing what we value is essential.

Once a value system comes into being, it displays a certain

stability. But the living practice of human life and new problems challenge this stability and force it to restructure: to reject the antiquated and unsuitable, to absorb the new and suitable. If the stability of a value system is so powerful that the restructure cannot be brought about in this system, the fate of it will be destruction, hindering the development of human society and destroying itself. This will lead to a crisis of values (morality), and in the crisis the opportunity is opened to new values or value systems as well as to the older changed value system.

This, of course, is not merely a spiritual affair; value system is carried out by real human persons who as such are social and live their lives with and through theirs. Hence, the pattern of social relations is crucial in this process of the evolution of values. Social persons create, transmit and reconstruct values or value systems. At the same time, the creation, transmission and reconstruction of a value system can only be realized in society through social structures. Social structure chooses transmissive values, and the values necessarily define and determine social structure. Thus, historically the existing value systems fix the specific social structures of value transmission.

Values are not merely received from the past but are foundational in responding to present challenges and must be passed on to the future. In this light the application of values becomes of central importance. As new circumstances evolve they must be evaluated. This is not a process simply of accepting certain possibilities and rejecting others according to a heritage of values received from the past. It is also one of determining what I as a person and we as a people want to become in our new circumstances with the new challenges and opportunities these entail for us. So the existing value systems are due to be evaluated and re-evaluated too. This constitutes a pattern of mutual interaction and interchange between the modification of the value system and the adjustment of social structures.

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR FUTURE CONSTRUCTION IN CHINA**

In order to face the challenges of the times and build a constructive response, it is necessary to clarify the cultural heritages available to us and to look to the ways in which they can contribute to the growth of a people. It is not merely that without a foundation nothing can be built or that from nothing, nothing comes. To turn

away from the entire experience of a people in the name of a hope of something unknown and never experienced is to destroy all and opt for the vacuum of nihilism from which only anarchy can be expected. It also is not merely that a specific culture should be reserved or a specific value system substituted for another. Only man is the end. Cultural heritages should serve man, human society and its future.

Human history has developed to this new era when the boundaries of nations or cultures are broken down and the world becomes a "global village." Every group of people should benefit from other peoples or cultures in this "global village." Thus we need imagination to respond to various challenges.

Considering availability, a constructive approach for China today would suggest rather a threefold approach. First, it calls for rejuvenation of the great traditions of the resources generated in the 5,000-year history of a great people with its Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist components. In doing this, the search would be not to restore the past, but to bring to new life its resources for constructing the future. Secondly, this should be joined with the modern developments of the Chinese people in their struggle to free themselves from various forms of feudalism, imperialism and colonialism and to rebuild their nation anew. From this struggle comes new commitment and further developments of the value patterns of the Chinese people; these too can serve in the construction of the future. Thirdly, one should not allow the colonialist aberrations of the West to retract from the techniques and values of modernity which constitute the aspirations, means and underpinnings of the modern modes of human dignity, social cooperation and material production. These need to be considered carefully so that they become not merely a substitution for Chinese life, but an implementation of its capabilities and an enrichment of its proper values. At this level, too, the richness of the Confucian tradition and of the Chinese experience can enrich and broaden world horizons in a manner that would make room for full participation by the Chinese people in constructing the world of the future and enriching all mankind.

### **THE CLASSICAL CHINESE TRADITION OR CONFUCIANISM**

The classical Chinese tradition generally will be referred to as "Confucianism" for this is clearly its major component. Here the

term will be employed in a broader sense, including earlier roots of the Chinese heritage as well as its Taoist and Buddhist dimensions.

In what does this cultural heritage consist? What element especially does it contain which promises to be important for future construction? One of the characteristic central concepts in the classical Chinese tradition is three-dimensional harmony: the harmony of man and nature (*Tian*), which regards truth; the harmony of knowledge and behavior, which regards good; and the harmony of feeling and scenery, which regards beauty. Let us look at each of these in succession using the first to look also into the broader context within which Chinese culture has developed.

### *The Harmony of Man and Nature (Tian)*

The harmony of man and nature (*Tian*) which regards truth consists of two aspects: the first is focused upon knowledge about nature; the second is a broad attitude toward nature (*Tian*).

In the classical Chinese tradition, *Tian* is understood as external nature (*Ziran*) and the divine heaven. To know *Tian* is to understand the harmony of the cosmos through knowing things in the cosmos. The metaphysical basis of this understanding is the cosmology of Yin and Yang. Cosmologically and ontologically, the origin of the universe is Tao. Tao is the absolute being and the first principle which is formless, nameless, eternal, all pervading and all embracing. Tao is Oneness (*Taiji*), Oneness produces Duality Yin and Yang. Duality evolves into Trinity (Yin, Yang and the harmony which results from and defines the interaction of Yin and Yang). From this Trinity all things emerge. Human knowledge should go through concrete things to realize the Tao and the harmony. If we trace this cosmology to its source and the importance of the sense of harmony in these two respects in shaping the Chinese outlook in life, one might refer to the geography of the country itself. This is marked by two great rivers, the Changjiang (Yangzi) and the Huanghe (the Yellow River). The civilization of China arose from these two regions, and the constitution of the cultural tradition of China depended upon its success in uniting harmoniously these two civilizations. In a parallel fashion, the people of China derive from two tribes or peoples: the Huang and the Yan and their two quasi-mythical original monarchs. The former was symbolized by the dragon and the latter by the phoenix. Both symbols have continued to the present time and the unity of the Chinese people has depended upon bringing the two into harmony one with another.

Harmony then has been a basic theme for China as a people and a nation. It is not surprising then to see this as a basic metaphysical theme of the Confucian and Taoist components of its tradition. Both think in terms of an original contrasting pair of forces: yin and yang. Inseparable one from another, the two constitute the third, but more integrating and foundational element of harmony.

In the first aspect of the harmony of man and nature (*Tian*), it includes an epistemological component. As human beings live in this nature, it is necessary to know this nature. Only in the harmony with nature can one know it because harmony is the basic principle of the cosmos and of the relationship between man and nature. Chinese traditional epistemology stresses the whole and synthesis; it regards analysis as damaging or destroying things in nature (*Ziran*).<sup>2</sup> This is shown in the well-known book, *The Tao of Physics*.<sup>3</sup>

In view of this, one can comprehend something of the pervasive character of the value of harmony and of the way in which this should characterize one's attitude toward nature. This is the second aspect of the harmony of man and nature (*Tian*). Man should search for a way to live in harmony with nature. This would rule out hostile attitudes toward nature as an object to be conquered or defeated. This is not a compromise or a mere pragmatic tactic. On the contrary, it is an inevitable expression of the inner harmony of yin and yang of which all consists, it is the only way to be, for it is of this that being internally consists. Externally, nature is not viewed as an alien object with which one is confronted. On the contrary, nature (*Tian*) is pervasive and inclusive; it extends from the material environment to mankind and to heaven. Indeed, nature as a whole, shares the characteristics of heaven and is inclusive and benevolent. In this light, the only realistic attitude is one of harmony; anything else would be futilely out of step and self-destructive. Without harmony, human artifice can destroy human beings as well as nature.

At this point, the classical Chinese tradition is in contrast to the Western focus upon man as one who is to rule and conquer nature and as a detached observer of nature which is considered to be a thing or object to be inspected and precisely calculated. Both attitudes have their importance as well as limitation. The Western attitude toward nature has developed great modern sciences which greatly benefit mankind. However, the crisis of ecological environment is serious, imperiling the life of mankind. In response to this crisis, the Chinese tradition has much to contribute, as shown

in the great popularity of the work of Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the development of an objective attitude of precise observation and calculation is important in providing for the needs of the populace in modern times. In the past, notable advancement had been made in astronomy and in the calculation of time, stimulated by the desire to understand the harmony of man and the heavens. Today's science has a different orientation with multiple ramifications. For instance, a close attention to precise measurement naturally directs attention to the role of the subject which carries out these measurements. Thus, scientific objectivity is shadowed by the development of awareness of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and this has multiple implications for social consciousness and social relations.

#### THE HARMONY OF KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOR: GOOD

In view of this harmony between man and nature (*Tian*), it can be expected that knowledge will have strong moral sense. Rather than being separated from value concerns, the purpose of knowledge is to found appropriate and/or improved behavior. Indeed, knowledge which is not so oriented is considered not merely to be unhelpful or even indifferent, but disruptive. As part of the general harmony of man and nature, knowledge should promote right and harmonious behavior in society. This is not solely a matter of ethics as a branch of knowledge, but of morality as a quality of human action.

For its part the emphasis of the Chinese culture has always been upon the humanities. True knowledge was always considered to be concerned with moral norms and the regulation of behavior. Actually the more important content of knowledge, according to Confucianism, is knowledge of the humanities, especially history and philosophy, which directly help to shape people's morality. What was shown to be conducive to harmonious relations among people in the past was evidently good; what did not do so was useless or detrimental. This is grounded in the deeper metaphysical sense of harmony described above, for the purpose of morality is to function in such a way as to promote harmony in society. In this sense, it is an extension of the harmony of man and physical nature to the relation of man to other men; more deeply it is the way of integrating the social relations of which human life consists with the great harmony of reality including heaven (*Tian*).

Contemporary pressures, such as social turbulence, conflicts between ethnic groups and nations, the threat of nuclear and chemical weapons, gave urgent contemporary importance to this harmony of knowledge and behavior. Besides, contemporary concern for the destruction wreaked upon the environment by the new scientific and technological capabilities also directs renewed attention to the sense of harmony and moral knowledge which have characterized Chinese traditional culture. In the West, the importance of humanities, especially moral knowledge over and above physical sciences, was implied in the succession of the Kantian Critiques, but this essential insight of Kant has been often underestimated or even neglected.

However, a danger I must point out is that in Confucianism the emphasis on harmony and moral knowledge can be appealed to as a means for manipulating the people, calling for sacrifices in laboring and living standards and postponing personal gratification by people after the need for such sacrifices has passed. This manipulation of the Confucian tradition by modern technologies of power can consider the harmony of knowledge and behavior as a tool for repression, thereby constituting a break upon the dynamism of the people.

Another salient point is the focus of modern Western knowledge upon the objective sciences and thus upon epistemology or the science of knowledge per se. Consequently, the resulting controls over the direction of the human powers of subjectivity has given Western civilization a great capability for dominating the material and physical environment of life. This also has made possible great strides in the social sciences. China appears to be in considerable need of developing this type of knowledge. The ramifications of such sensibilities for all dimensions of life should not be underestimated. As a matter of fact, a wedding of the two is an obvious need, but how can we actualize this wedding?

In comparison to the complex sophistication of modern structures, the Confucian harmony seems too simple and rudimentary. One might think of negating the Confucian harmony by modern social technologies and then returning to the Confucian harmony by a sort of dialectical negation of negation. This is a quite common tendency among Chinese scholars and students. In proceeding through such a series of negations, one may lose precisely the life and life-giving power of the tradition. Even if one were to retain its abstract concept, one would lose its attractive and emotive power. In sum, one would be dealing with tradition in terms of theory

but would be insensitive to it as the river of human freedom, personal commitment and popular destiny.

In this light, the image of the river which is popular among contemporary youth may be helpful. This allows for continuity from the early, rudimentary beginnings, through the incremental stages of a great river, onward to ever new and large dimensions. This conveys a sense of identity with novelty, of tradition with change, of continuity with critique; it has the basic value, which is much appreciated in our day, of realism.

Developmental psychology may describe this process. Piaget points out that the correction of flaws at an earlier or more fundamental level must be carried out during that level because later on at a higher level, even more sophisticated corrections are ineffective. In this light, if the affective reevaluation and reappropriation of the Confucian roots, still present in the Chinese sense of personal dignity, the family and social relations, are to be protected from manipulation, this must be done in terms of the deep Confucian level of the Chinese self-identity. At that level it was precisely the Taoist and Buddhist traditions which balanced the human weakness and which made the more personal, paternal responsibilities within the system of harmony susceptible to degeneration into imperial order and eventually repressed or ridiculed Buddhism. In depth, healing of the Chinese, basically Confucian, psyche might then benefit from a freer contribution of its elements of Buddhism and Taoism.

Correspondingly on the structural level, in this century modern social critique is needed in order to correct overbearing social and political structures. Such critiques have been at the heart of the Chinese revolution and now will be considered below

#### THE HARMONY OF FEELING AND AMBIENCE: BEAUTY

In one sense this harmony of feeling and ambience might be looked upon as an extension over and above those of man and nature and of knowledge and behavior. This is not something outside of the first harmony with nature (*Tian*) which is all inclusive; neither can feeling be truly outside of the order of social interaction delineated in the second harmony with behavior. Hence it may be appreciated more appropriately as the inmost sensibility at the heart of the second and the first harmonies taken as sets of concentric circles. The harmony of feeling and ambience can also be regarded as a fulfillment

of the first and the second harmonies. Only when this harmony is being achieved can all of man's artificiality be in the harmony with nature, *Tian* and *Tao*. So the life of the human being in a great harmonious way is simultaneously good and beautiful

The harmony of feeling and ambience composes *jingjie* which can have many degrees or types. Though they are especially important for the fine arts, music and poetry, progression through these is the very process by which man realizes the basic level of unity or harmony with *Tian* and approaches to wisdom. Without some sense of beauty, that is, of unity of feeling and ambience, human fulfillment cannot be achieved.

Harmony for Confucius did not have the depressive, haunting and obediencial sense given it in the Sung Dynasty for political purposes. Harmony of feeling and ambience was much more joyous, free and creative. This is not an order imposed from without, but a cumulative sense which wells up from within as people express the goodness of their nature and form a truly happy society.

The social structures for the transmission of Confucianism are to be found both in education and in the family. The task of education was precisely to find the good potential in everyone and to reject the evil in the environment. The family and Confucianism have always interacted in such a way that the family was both shaped by and transmitted Confucianism. These two were related not as cause and effect but more in terms of a correlation so that each proceeded in and by the other. Confucianism might be called the spirit of the family. This was communicated by means of the schools, the families and the official system of exams for advancement in public life. Presently, it is communicated almost only by the family — a special social structure whose roots are in the human heart.

Confucianism has been dying ever since the modern sciences, technologies and gunboats of the West awoke this Oriental people from their age-old dream. Their value system was too stable and too self-enclosed; it could not respond to the challenges of modernity and imperialism. But, the Chinese people were not self-enclosed; and in order to save the nation, China absorbed Marxism as a vital new value system. After undergoing a nearly century-long criticism, Confucianism was dying; however, death is regeneration. Like the myth of the self-burned phoenix, a new vital phoenix is being borne. When the crises in modern society are aggravated, Confucianism, after being severely criticized, radiated new light.

There are concrete recent indications of the continued

importance of this tradition. Internationally, the nations in the cultural circle of Confucianism on the Asian rim — the so-called ‘little dragons’<sup>3</sup> — have achieved success in technology, advanced industrial production and commerce which has brought the Confucian cultural area into an active role in leadership and participation in the international economic and political order. Despite an almost total lack of natural and physical resources and despite being at the greatest distance from the major commercial markets of the world, the ability of these peoples to be so successful focuses attention precisely upon their human, i.e., their cultural, resources. Meanwhile, some insightful Western intellectuals began to realize and appreciate the significance of Confucianism for the whole of mankind.

From within China there is renewed interest in the classical heritage of the people. New academies have sprung up and been received with considerable interest by people distributed throughout the country. In October of 1989, a colloquium was held in Beijing and Confucius’ birthplace, Qufu, Shandong, sponsored by the Confucius Foundation of China and UNESCO, in memory of the 2,540th anniversary of the birthday of Confucius. More than 200 scholars from within China and other parts of the world participated, and it received great attention by scholars and other people.

In terms of social structures, Confucianism is very favorably placed. As the classical tradition of the people, it not only resonates in the deep sensibilities of the people, but it is reflected in the pattern of family life. Furthermore, because it has focused strongly upon the family and made the harmony of the family its basic concern, Confucianism lives and is communicated to the degree that this Chinese family is not dissolved. It is true that the present crisis of society is also a crisis of the family. But, as people attempt to respond to this crisis by reemphasizing the importance of family life and looking for its underpinnings, they are by that very fact bringing to consciousness once again Confucian values. Hence, the simple people in the villages, concerned for the life of their family, respect and even worship Confucius. Among intellectuals in urban areas, the dynamics of the critique of modern Western values, if it does not lead toward nihilism, directs attention also to the basic Confucian virtues.

### MARXISM (MAOISM)

A second dimension of the present situation in China is Marxism or Maoism born in the revolution it embodies. Hence, it

shares in some of the deep emotive commitment by the people to the revolution’s goals and hopes. These include:

- (a) a new society with equality, freedom and respect for the needs of all, especially the lower-class people;
- (b) a threefold social critique: anti-feudalism, anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism.

The first of these are authentic enlightenment values shared by all modern peoples. They are experienced by each people in its own way and time. For the Chinese, this experience came especially at the end of the empire in 1911 and was deeply reinforced by the revolution that began with liberation from the Japanese and other imperialistic occupations. This deep commitment to freedom and equality has been shaped through the Marxist-Maoist analysis of history so that the thrust of liberation has come to mean also, and in a special way, the liberation or improvement not only of the material but of the social condition of the peasant and worker. The process has come to be seen as the extension of the “long march” and to be invested with its emotion and commitment. This search for social justice and sense of service to the people, especially the exploited and the oppressed, must remain a major element in the social consciousness of China.

The second facet of the Maoism which shapes and applies the first is its emphasis upon social critique. Mao encouraged young people to retain a sense of rebellion, saying that it is right (reasonable) to rebel against the injustice (*Zaofan Youli*). In view of the first goal of concern for the peasant and general Marxist theory, this critique has been articulated in terms of class analysis. Hence, recently some have objected to persons who have been exploitive being admitted to membership in the Communist Party, which it is claimed must be a Party, not of all, but of the working people. Along with the development of human society, in practice the element of class analysis will remain an important factor in social analysis and is being used as such throughout the world. It was the combination of these two goals in the Christian context of Latin America which generated its “theology of liberation.”

However, monopoly of a value system will always present some dilemmas. Practically, it appears from experience that some aspects of free enterprise are required. Hence, ten years of reforms which permit limited private enterprise and free market economy have achieved great progress in the economy of China. But

importance of this tradition. Internationally, the nations in the cultural circle of Confucianism on the Asian rim — the so-called 'little dragons'<sup>25</sup> — have achieved success in technology, advanced industrial production and commerce which has brought the Confucian cultural area into an active role in leadership and participation in the international economic and political order. Despite an almost total lack of natural and physical resources and despite being at the greatest distance from the major commercial markets of the world, the ability of these peoples to be so successful focuses attention precisely upon their human, i.e., their cultural, resources. Meanwhile, some insightful Western intellectuals began to realize and appreciate the significance of Confucianism for the whole of mankind.

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encouraging free enterprise is not in conformity with antiexploitation in one policy. How is that to be integrated with society as a whole and expressed politically?

In addition, the emphasis of Marxism upon class or the whole working class can easily lead to repressing individuals. Self-sacrifice of individuals for the whole (class or people) may be manipulated by authoritarians, and the person may become a function of the system and fail to generate personal initiative and creativity required for needed progress.

Nevertheless, new times will require progress at all levels: economic, social, political and philosophical. In this the Marxist heritage of the 20th century with its high goals of liberation, rationally social critique and advancement of the vast body of peasants and workers will be an essential component.

The social structures for the transmission of Marxism (Maoism) are broad: schools, the public propaganda, especially the Party organization at all levels. These social structures as well as the inherent attraction of Marxism (Maoism) will help to transmit this value system. Self-criticism of Marxism and a positive response to the challenges of social crises will play a crucial role in the transmission of Marxism

#### WESTERN VALUES (CHRISTIANITY)

At the present time in other regions, the Marxist countries are undergoing a process which M. Gorbachev terms "reconstruction" or *perestroika*. One after another — the U.S.S.R., Poland, Hungary, East Germany, etc. — have come to recognize that they cannot make progress, or even hold their own, economically, socially or politically, without finding ways to promote participation and creativity by their people. For this they look to the West. In looking for the value components which can constitute a moral sense adequate for China of the 21st century, looking to the West holds promise. In so doing, the goal should not be to look merely at the particular instrumentalities of Western culture in order to mimic them in another cultural setting, but to search out the basic philosophical underpinnings which provide the exceptionally creative adaptability.

One could look immediately to the enlightenment for its affirmation of the key modern values of freedom, equality and fraternity. To get a sense of the roots of freedom now being sought by the Marxist countries of Eastern European, however, one must look more deeply into the culture of the West to discover its resource

of freedom and creativity. This might be thought to be its sense of individuality, but this is susceptible to its negative, antisocial interpretation as individualism in the sense of Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith. This is the inverted and extreme mirror image of that of the deadening conformism from which *perestroika* is seeking to escape. At a deeper level, the deadening extremism of both individualism and conformism shares a common origin as modern scientific reductionism.

In order to find the basis for a sense of freedom which is both intensely self-aware and self-determining, intensely social and extensively inclusive, one needs to look more deeply into the Western heritage for the development of its notion of the person. In modern times that took place especially in Kant, but it is rooted in the Christian sense of the person as image of God. This relation to an absolute fullness of existence, consciousness and bliss (to use the Hindu expression) has a number of crucial implications.

First, it grounds the dignity and rights of the person. These are not restricted according to the ever imperfect and inevitably limited state of human social awareness; instead, human society is always challenged to recognize and promote these inviolable God-given rights of the person.

Secondly, in exercising this freedom the person stands always in relation with others who also are images and equal participants in that same absolute source: they are brothers in a common Father. Hence one's life is always and inherently social, rather than individualistic.

Thirdly, the grounding of the person's will in infinite Good and Love means that to whatever degree anything is it can be attractive, but that no one thing or combination of things can be determinative. The attractive character of reality entails creativity because all things, actual and possible as far as my imagination can go, are of interest and potentially attractive. Nevertheless, through all of this I remain free because nothing or combination of things measures up to the infinite good in which my will is grounded; hence, my will cannot be determined from without.

These insights regarding the person as inviolable, social and creatively free are not without analogues in other world religions, but a number of characteristics of Christianity have been foundational in the development of much of what is called modernity, particularly its sense of the person and its place in society and world. The first is its strong sense of the transcendence of the divine which sets it clearly above all humans and all social creations. In this light, God-

given rights of persons such as life and liberty remain untouchable by any social or political reality. As these rights are not given by society, they cannot be removed by society; on the contrary, it is the duty of social institutions to protect and promote them.

This, in turn, has numerous implications for participation in the social order. When joined to the progressive capacitation of humanity proceeding through printing, education and communication, the basic sense of human dignity and freedom calls for even more active participation in the decision making processes regarding social, political, economic and cultural affairs at the local, national and indeed world levels.

Further, if freedom comes to be newly appreciated as the best thing in this and in ever expanding realms, then the abuse of freedom or sin can also come to be appreciated as the most dangerous thing. It will not do to ignore this side of human and social life in a world in which the immense powers of science and technology can be implemented for evil as well as good. In this situation the Judeo-Christian tradition has much to offer, both through its ancient mythology of original sins and the modern theological elaboration of this in terms of basic alienation. Further, the Christian elements of sacrifice, redemption and resurrection bring out at once both the profound horror of evil as sin and the ability to overcome this in human life.

Finally, the conviction that what was accomplished in principle in Christ can be shared in by all persons and all mankind reinforces the notion of freedom as responsibility. For all are empowered to take real and full account of their own encounters with evil and their own failings, knowing that they can overcome evil, that they can experience forgiveness and share it with others, that they can be about the process of rebuilding the heavenly Jerusalem in this world. This allows for redemption, healing and new and vibrant life.

Indeed, Paul Tillich has developed this in the form of an existential dialectic. It begins from Paradise as a state of basic human goodness lived in a state of dreaming innocence. This thesis is followed as an antithesis by the step into existence, where the exercise of freedom entails negation and fault. Redemption cannot come from man who cannot save himself but is accomplished on the strength of the One Absolute Truth and Love. Nevertheless, this redemption is realized in time and as history where the gradual healing of disrupted structures constitutes a new manifestation of the divine in man. Pope John XXIII spoke of it as restoring the face of Christ. His wounds and cross, now overcome as signs of death,

become symbols of the power of good over evil, of battles fought and won, of new life that emerges through our struggle and suffering.

In this light there is hope for overcoming old enmities, for forgiveness and reconciliation, for peace among men. This is not merely an ideal which ignores evil and hence is unrelated to reality. Christ's victorious encounter with evil gives hope that it can and must be overcome. In this perspective, there is no need to suppose that man is a wolf to other men and merely a channel of conflict, nor is there need to abandon personal freedom in order to have social unity. On the contrary, community is built of the personal triumphs of generosity over selfishness and of love over enmity. Society is ever emerging as victories are won in the struggle of human freedom to overcome selfishness and to reach out to others in truth and love.

Another point worth stressing is the modern sciences and technologies which have prospered in the West. This value system provides profound basis for human knowledge and for the development of technology which have benefited mankind greatly.

The social structures for the transmission of Western values in China are colleges and churches. Modern technology makes it impossible to forbid the spread of thought. Active introduction and critique of Western values by the dedicated scholars in universities has been a tradition since the great May Fourth Movement of 1919. Chinese intellectuals chose Marxism in order to rescue the nation and respond to the crises at that time. Today, in order to develop our nation, and respond to the crises today, many intellectuals are seeking more effective values. Western values are naturally attracting to them. More importantly, some scholars begin to emphasize the much deeper level of Western values, namely, Christian values. The interests of college students in Christianity is rising greatly, along with the interest in all of Western values.

At the same time, Chinese Christian (Protestant and Catholic) Churches have developed rapidly in recent years both in cities and in the countryside. These churches are an effective transmissive structure of this value system — to believers and also to non-believers.

## CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world people more and more appreciate pluralism. The need for pluralism is based on the common philosophical recognition: man is finite, human consciousness is

limited, thus man's knowledge and values are limited. Every value system has its inherent weakness or limitation. Any monopoly of one value system can only bring misfortune to human society and mankind. It is important then that all cooperate to benefit mankind in a harmonious way. This philosophical understanding calls for real pluralism.

As we look toward the future of China, what are the prospects? In discussing each of the three systems of values, each is seen to be consistent in its own right. Hence, it does not seem that their mere amalgamation or homogenization is probable.

Actually, in China there is a tradition of pluralism. This flourished in the first thousand years of this era, when Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism lived side by side, each complementing and balancing the other. This reflects the Chinese notion that three legs give the strongest support.

It is fully conceivable that the next century may find existing in a mutually complementary relation the three value systems outlined above: Confucianism (taken as the threefold tradition of Confucius, Buddhism and Taoism), Marxism (in its Chinese version) and Western values (in their Christian roots). Any one might be particularly reflected in any single person, but all three might find deep expression in a society that would reflect the combined riches of all: the ever deepening harmonies of the Confucian traditions, serious and yet playful in the spirit of Taoism, worldly and yet detached in the sense of Buddhism, the critical stance and social concerns of the Marxian tradition and the divinely founded personal worth and democratic participation of the Christian traditions of the West.

I believe that individuals are able to construct by themselves their own value system, integrating from available sources, and are able to constantly live up to their faith. Meanwhile, as modern persons, they should be able to acknowledge the general trend of the times and enjoy the pluralistic context of society. One of the present tasks of intellectuals committed to the nation and to man is to clear away the obstacles in the way of a harmony of multiple value systems and to help to give birth to this new era.

## NOTES

1. *Tian* (Heaven) is one of the important concepts in Chinese intellectual history. The meaning of *Tian* mainly includes nature and supernature which rules the universe. Cf. Zhang Dai-Nian,

"Theories Concerning Man and Nature in Classical Chinese Philosophy" and Yi-jie, "On the Unity of Man and Heaven," both in *Man and Nature: The Chinese Tradition and the Future* Tang Yi-jie, Li Zhen, George McLean, eds. (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1989)

2. *Ziran* (nature) originally means "thing-as-it-is" or "spontaneousness."

3. F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (Toronto & New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

4. E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973).

5. "The four little dragons" are Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea