HUI-YUAN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT:

A CASE STUDY IN

CHINESE BUDDHIST SYNCRETISM

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by

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ABBREVIATIONS

(See the bibliography for details concerning the publications mentioned here.)

AH	Abhidharmahrdaya-śāstra (A-p'i-t'an-hsin lun) 阿毘曇心論
KSC	Kao seng chuan 高僧傳
MPYL	Ming pao-ying lun 明報應論
SPWL	Sha-men pu-ching wang-che lun 沙門不敬王者論
SPL	San-pao lun 三報論

INTRODUCTION

The various chronicles that recount the history of Buddhism in China reveal a religion that has undergone an almost continuous process of change and assimilation. The influence of indigenous Chinese beliefs and practices upon Buddhism throughout this process can be observed at nearly every stage of its absorption into the Chinese cultural milieu. Once Buddhism ceased to be regarded as a barbarian religion from the West, and became an accepted aspect of Chinese society, its proponents no longer needed to exert as much energy as before defending its status and merit. By the T'ang dynasty (618-907) Buddhism reached new heights in China and was accepted by practically all strata of society.

During its formative years, however, Buddhism encountered many obstacles. It bore the brunt of numerous attacks and criticisms from stalwart supporters of traditional Chinese attitudes and customs. These confrontations were motivated by both political and religious reasons, and occasionally the two were inseparable. Confucianism and Taoism had much to lose if Buddhism became an important factor in the religious life of China and their proponents did their best to undermine Buddhism's growing popularity.

In addition to having to deal with external enemies, Buddhism also had to come to terms with internal difficulties. Methods had to be devised to translate the Indian Buddhist texts, written in Sanskrit, into Chinese. This task was difficult enough in itself and it was many years before the Chinese were able to do justice to the

Buddhist idiom. Once translated the texts and the ideas expressed therein had to be interpreted and taught to the people in such a manner that their message could make sense within a Chinese context. It was one thing to make the texts understandable to a small group of educated Buddhist scholars and quite another to make them intelligible to the laity and members of opposing religious sects. With this in mind various Buddhists developed different techniques by which they might best convey the seminal ideas of Buddhism to the people. If they failed in this endeavor, then the struggle against external opposition as well as all the effort put into translating would have been pointless.

During the latter half of the fourth century C. E. the Chinese Buddhist monk Shih Hui-yüan 釋慧遠 (334-416) was the leader of a monastic community in Southern China. In many ways his predicament was typical of those faced by other Buddhists during the early years of Chinese Buddhism. From without, he had to deal with political and religious opposition. Both of these came in the person of Huan-hsüan 桓玄, a pretender to the throne who subscribed to the teachings of Taoism. Although Huan-hsüan's anti-Buddhist sentiments were politically motivated, they were supported by his own religious beliefs. From within, Hui-yüan constantly was faced with the task of explaining the Buddhist scriptures to his lay followers in a manner which would make them understandable and meaningful.

Hui-yüan was compelled to use whatever means were at his disposal to fulfill his two-fold responsibility of defending the faith and preaching its message. His doctrine of the immortality of the spirit (<u>shen</u> 神) served both purposes well. By maintaining that the spirit does not perish when the body dies, Hui-yüan was able to win his debate with Huan-hsüan

and preserve the autonomy of the clergy.[1]

At the same time, with the doctrine of the spirit Hui-yüan also was able to explain the doctrine of karma to those who already had adopted Buddhism, as well as to those who had not yet been converted.[2]

With both ends in mind, Hui-yüan borrowed concepts and categories which were Chinese, and redefined them to make them applicable to Buddhism. This is the basis of Hui-yüan's syncretism. In fact Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit is a hybrid concept which does not precisely resemble either the Buddhist attitude toward the spirit or those attitudes maintained by any one Chinese religious sect. But by taking certain liberties Hui-yüan was able to achieve his goal. It was less important to Hui-yüan that philosophical consistency be maintained. He felt he was justified in sacrificing the latter for the sake of bringing Buddhism down to the level of common sense understanding.

This thesis is an exploration of the various dimensions of Hui-yüan's doctrine of the immortality of the spirit. In Chapter One we will present a brief biographical sketch of Hui-yüan. It will take note of those individuals and ideas which played a significant part in the development of his thought, particularly his doctrine of the spirit.

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[1]While the secular authorities had control over the affairs of state, the clergy were alone responsible for the fate of the spirit. The latter was immortal and therefore not subject to the rules of secular society. If the clergy were to guide the spirit effectively, then they too must be allowed to function outside the parameters within which the state had jurisdiction.

[2]The existence of an immortal spirit lent credence to the argument that one received in a future lifetime the consequences of acts performed in previous lifetimes.

In Chapter Two we have provided a brief outline of some of the more important developments in Chinese intellectual history regarding the subject of the spirit. By being cognizant of the major role which beliefs in spirits of one sort or another played throughout Chinese history, we will be able to understand why Hui-yüan was tempted to refer to the concept as much as he did and why it was so difficult for him to avoid alluding to the term in his essays.

The third Chapter jumps from these historical issues to a discussion of the doctrine of karma. As we will see, Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit was in part a by-product of his attempts to explain this principle to the Chinese. At various points throughout our discussion of karma we have made note of those occasions in which Hui-yüan makes use of Taoist idioms and terminology to elucidate points of Buddhist doctrine.

In Chapter Four we turn to a discussion of the spirit itself. It is divided into five sub-sections. The first section establishes that Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit is not simply a misunderstanding of the traditional Buddhist teaching of no-self (anātman). In response to this, the second section explains the various reasons why Hui-yüan did introduce the doctrine of the spirit into his essays. The third section provides a summary of the illustrations with which Hui-yüan attempts to prove the existence of an immortal spirit which transmigrates from one lifetime to the next. Section four sets forth Hui-yüan's definition of the spirit. Again, we emphasize those elements in his description of the spirit which reflect his syncretism and use of parallel Taoist categories. In the last section we have attempted to establish from the context that beneath the seemingly unorthodox doctrine of the spirit are implicit some traditional

Buddhist attitudes. To one schooled in Buddhism there are aspects of Hui-yüan's definition of the spirit which are consonant with tenets of orthodox Buddhism.

The last Chapter deals with Hui-yüan's understanding of the relationship between the spirit and nirvāṇa. This merits particular attention because bringing others to a realization of nirvāṇa was the primary motivating force behind all of his efforts as a teacher of Buddhism. If Hui-yüan could not achieve this end then his essays would have been mere rhetoric and his labors on behalf of the monastic community would only have been politically expedient.

CHAPTER

I

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HUI-YÜAN

Hui-yüan, whose family name was Chia 賈, was born in the commandery of Yen-men 鴈門 to a family of poor literati.[1] When he was thirteen he went with his uncle to the centers of learning at Hsü-ch'ang 許昌 and Lo-yang 洛陽 to study the Confucian Books and the Classics. There, he excelled in all his studies. It was said that "even the most prominent among the experienced literati all stood in awe of him."[2] When Hui-yüan first encountered the Tao-te-ching attributed to Lao-tzu and the Chuang-tzu, however, he realized that "Confucianism was no more than empty talk."[3] His facility for Lao-Chuang thought accounts for his extensive use of those texts and of Taoist expressions in general throughout his writing.

When he was twenty-one Hui-yüan left Lo-yang, the scene of much political unrest, in search of a place where he could live in retirement and pursue his scholarly endeavors in peace. In the course of his journey east he heard a sermon given by Tao-an 道安, an eminent Buddhist monk and leader of the monastic community at Mt. Heng 恆山. Upon hearing the Buddhist truths, especially Tao-an's explications on Prajñā-sūtras, Hui-yüan is reported to have exclaimed: "Confucianism, Taoism, and (the other of) the Nine Schools (of philosophy) are but chaff."[4]

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[1] KSC 357c23, tr. Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China, p. 241; Hui-yüan's biography is found in KSC VI, 357c-361b.

[2] KSC 357c24, tr. Zürcher, op. cit., p. 241.

[3] Zürcher, op. cit., p. 206.

[4] KSC 358a3, tr. Zürcher, op. cit., p. 240.

Hui-yüan remained with Tao-an, preached his first sermon when he was twenty-four, and soon became the favorite pupil of the Master. Tao-an often was heard to say about him: "Should Hui-yüan not become one who will cause the Way to spread over the Eastern country?"[5] History has shown that Hui-yüan indeed lived up to his teacher's expectations.

In 379 A.D. the community of Tao-an's disciples, which had by then moved to Hsiang-yang 襄陽, was again forced to disperse as a result of political turbulence in the area. Before departing Tao-an gave instructions to all his students except Hui-yüan. Concerned about this apparent neglect Hui-yüan is said to have knelt before his Master and said: "'I am afraid that I am the only one who has not obtained your advice and help--I am afraid that I am not equal to the others,' to which Tao-an replied, 'Should I worry about one like you?'"[6]

With a group numbering "several tens of disciples," Hui-yüan started towards Lo-fou shan 羅浮山 (near modern Canton) but stopped en route at Lu-shan 廬山. With the aid of his brother, Hui-ch'ih 慧持, and Hui-yung 慧永, a former companion from Hsiang-yang with whom he had planned to live at Lo-fou shan, Hui-yüan settled at Lu-shan. He remained there until his death in 416 A.D.[7] During his years at Lu-shan he established a Buddhist community the importance of which was surpassed only by that of Ch'ang-an 長安.[8]

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[5]KSC 358a11, tr. Zürcher, op. cit., p. 240.

[6]KSC 358a20, tr. Zürcher, op. cit., p. 241.

[7]For a complete chronological table noting the yearly events in Hui-yüan's life (in Japanese), cf. Kimura (ed.), Eon Kenkyu, p. 537.

[8]For detailed studies of Hui-yüan's life, cf. Hurvitz, "'Render

It is reasonable to expect that Tao-an exerted a strong influence upon Hui-yüan's intellectual and spiritual development. Although an extensive review of Tao-an's own thought is not essential, it is necessary to look briefly at those features which are reflected in the essays of Hui-yüan.[9]

Tao-an was one of the first major native Chinese Buddhist clerics who attempted to break away from the Neo-Taoist ch'ing-t'an 清談 or Pure Conversation school. This esoteric and mystical group of Chinese thinkers reached their height during the end of the second and the beginning of the third century. Their other-worldly attitude was a reaction to the turbulent social conditions and general disorganization that followed the dissolution of the Han dynasty.[10] Tao-an was also among the first Chinese Buddhists to break away from the currently accepted technique of ko-i 格義 or "matching the meanings," a method employed by translators to render Indian Buddhist terminology into Chinese.[11] It was used primarily

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Under Caesar,' In Early Chinese Buddhism," in Sino-Indian Studies, 5, pts. 3 and 4, pp. 80-114; Makita, "Hui-yüan--his life and times," in Zinbum, Memoirs of the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies," pp. 1-28; Zürcher, op. cit., Ch. 4 inclusive; and, Liebenthal, "The Immortality of the Soul in Chinese Thought," Monumenta Nipponica, no. 8, pp. 327-397.

[9]For studies on Tao-an, cf. Zürcher, op. cit., Ch. 4; also, Link, "The Taoist Antecedents of Tao-an's Prajñā Ontology," History of Religions, Nov. 1969, pp. 181-215; and Link, "Biography of Shih Tao-an," T'oung-pao, no. 46, pp. 1-43.

[10]Cf. Balazs, "Nihilistic Revolt or Mystical Escapism," Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy, pp. 226-254.

[11]On ko-i, cf. T'ang, "On 'Ko-yi,' The Earliest Method by Which Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism were Synthesized," in Radhakrishnan, Comparative Studies in Philosophy, pp. 276-286. For a discussion of Tao-an's use of ko-i, cf. Hurvitz, Chih-I, pp. 58 ff.

by translators of the Prajñā-sūtras who tried to find Chinese terms and idioms, usually from the Taoist texts, which would match the meanings of the Sanskrit Buddhist terms.

This move away from indigenous Chinese thought and language gave the Chinese the opportunity to see Indian Buddhism as it was, rather than through lenses which had been ground and framed in the Chinese tradition. Tao-an forbade the use of the works of the major Chinese schools--Confucianism and Taoism--for the purpose of drawing analogies. Only Hui-yüan was excepted from this restriction. This single exception to the Master's rule had a significant effect upon Hui-yüan, who continued to allude to Taoist texts and Taoist thought. As we will see it was Hui-yüan's proclivity for Taoism that provided the basis for the syncretistic aspect of his thought.

Even Tao-an was not entirely successful in his attempts to break with native Chinese thought. He was unable to completely divorce himself from his Chinese heritage and from the notion that the classical Chinese texts still contained, although perhaps in its seminal stages, all that was necessary to support a 'good life.' In addition, he could not read the Buddhist texts in their original Sanskrit and was compelled to rely upon translations which still were inaccurate. Despite these shortcomings, Tao-an was one of the great figures in the formative period of Chinese Buddhism.

The second prominent feature of Tao-an's thought which played a role in Hui-yüan's intellectual development was his interpretation of śūnyatā as pen-wu 本無 or Original Non-being. He equated śūnyatā with wu or Non-being, basing his interpretation of wu upon the way in which it is explained in the Tao-te-ching:

> All things come from being;
> All being comes from non-being.[12]

Professor Link argues that Tao-an had two options as to how he could have interpreted wu.

> Wu was used frequently in Taoist texts to designate that primal undifferentiated state which preceded the later state of manifested things (yu), or else it referred to the perpetual alternation of the absence of something (wu) as contrasted to the presence of something (yu).[13]

Of these two, the first is particularly evident in the thought of Hui-yüan. He understood Original Non-being as the source from which all things arose and to which all things returned at death. Thus it was similar to Tao. Hui-yüan then went even one step further than Tao-an and equated the changeless state of Non-being with nirvāṇa. By doing this he hoped to establish that there is an essential similarity between the ways in which Buddhism and Taoism conceive of that state of being which lies beyond change and flux (saṃsāra).[14] A reappraisal of the earlier identification of pen-wu with śūnyatā, initiated by Tao-an and sustained by Hui-yüan, was initiated by the thoughts of the Mādhyamika school, the texts of which were translated by Kumārajīva, who came to Ch'ang-an in 405.[15]

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[12] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 40, tr. Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 173, hereafter referred to as Chan.

[13] Link, "Taoist Antecedants of Tao-an's Prajñā Ontology," p. 187.

[14] Cf., infra., Ch. 4, for a full discussion of these points.

[15] One of its treatises was the Ta-chih tu lun 大智度論, Taishō 221, attributed to Nagarjuna, which is a commentary to one of the Prajñā-sūtras. Hui-yüan was asked to write an abridged version of the Ta-chih tu lun and supply an introduction to it. Puzzled by many of the new ideas and concepts in the Ta-chih tu lun, he began to correspond with

A third effect which Tao-an had upon Hui-yüan's ways of thinking is revealed in their similar attraction toward cultic religious practices. On a sophisticated level, both were acquainted with the various techniques of dhyāna or meditation and considered it an integral part of the spiritual life. Both also were familiar with the intricate philosophical tenets which lent credence to these techniques. But Tao-an and Hui-yüan also were involved in the more cult-like practices of venerating certain Bodhisattvas, whose intervention it was believed would facilitate one's ability to realize nirvāna. Tao-an worshipped Maitreya and Hui-yüan invoked Amitabha. According to Hui-yüan's biography:

> Then, before a statue of Amitabha in the vihāra, Hui-yüan (and these lay devotees) held a fasting (ceremony) and made the vow together to strive for (rebirth in) the Western Region (Sukhāvatī).[16]

Zürcher notes that Hui-yüan's attraction to cultic practices was in part a response to the unacceptability among the laity of the "laborious procedures of dhyāna"[17] and adds that:

> Everywhere, in the biographical records as well as in Hui-yüan's own writings, we find the same stress on visual representation: the use of icons in meditation, visualization of Amitabha,

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Kumarajiva in the hope that he could better familiarize himself with the facets of Madhyamika thought. The Correspondence, known as the Ta-cheng ta-i chang 大乘大義章, is available in Taisho 1856. A synopsis of each of its eighteen sections can be found in Zürcher, op. cit., pp. 226-229; cf. also Kimura, op. cit., Ch. 4, written by Hurvitz, entitled "The Triune Vehicle in the Correspondence of Hui-yüan and Kumārajīva." As Robinson points out in Early Mādhyamika in India and China, pp. 107 ff., the Mādhyamika doctrine that samsāra and nirvāna are the same had a profound effect upon Hui-yüan. Cf. infra., Ch. 4, section E.

[16] KSC 258c21, tr. Zürcher, op. cit., p. 244.

[17] Zürcher, op. cit., p. 220.

> his hymns to the 'shadow of the Buddha,' the Dharma-kāya (transcendent body) of the Buddha and that of the Bodhisattva, etc.[18]

This emphasis on the concrete and the move towards a simplification of concepts as a means by which to stimulate and sustain lay interest in the monastic community and in Buddhist life in general, as both aided in the attainment of salvation, contributed to Hui-yüan's development of the doctrine of the spirit. There were other reasons which, as we shall see, provided additional incentives for his use of the doctrine of the spirit. But behind these always was a search for simplicity and clarity, sometimes at the sacrifice of philosophical precision.

We have noted that Hui-yüan uses the doctrine of the spirit for a number of reasons. But before these can be discussed it first is necessary to come to an understanding of the place which a belief in the spirit had for the Chinese up to and during the lifetime of Hui-yüan. This is the subject of the next chapter.

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[18] Ibid., p. 220.

CHAPTER

II

SOME ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SPIRIT INDIGENOUS TO THE CHINESE

The corpus of Chinese literature[1] which pre-dates Hui-yüan is vast; some of its works date back to the beginning of the first millenium before the Common Era. It is necessary to look briefly into that body of literature which not only played a decisive role in Hui-yüan's personal education but was an integral part of the cultural milieu in which he operated. It is important to ascertain the prevalence of beliefs concerning the spirit and the degree to which they influenced the development of Chinese thought up to and during the time of Hui-yüan. In light of that history, Hui-yüan's thought can be seen as a syncretism of indigenous Chinese beliefs and those brought into China with the introduction of Buddhism.

Of the Chinese Classics, the Shih-ching 詩經 or Book of Odes and the Shu-ching 書經 or Book of Documents are the two oldest, both containing materials collected approximately between 1000 and 550 B.C.E.[2] In them can be found some of the oldest provisos for ethics and human conduct. These are the principle of the Mandate of Heaven 天命 and the worship of ancestral spirits.

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[1] Cf. Watson, Early Chinese Literature, p. 4, on the scope of the term literature with regard to Chinese literature, who says: "I should explain that I use the word literature here not in the restricted sense of 'pure literature' or belles lettres, but to mean all types of writing--historical, philosophical, or poetic--whose aim is to express ideas or emotions with clarity and artistic finesse."

[2] On the dates of these and other pieces of literature cf., Ch'en, Chinese Literature: A Historical Introduction, pp. 15 ff.; also, Watson, op. cit., pp. 21 ff., pp. 202 ff., for a discussion of the Shih-ching and Shu-ching.

The Mandate of Heaven is the will or decree of Heaven whose dictates are to be followed by men. In this context Heaven takes on anthropomorphic proportions. As long as men know and abide by the will of Heaven the state will prosper and the populace will be content. The Shih-ching states:

> The Mandate of Heaven,
> How beautiful and unceasing!
> Oh, how glorious
> Was the purity of King Wen's virtue!
> With the blessings he overwhelms us.
> We will receive the blessings.
> They are a great favor from our King Wen.
> May his descendants hold fast to them.[3]

According to tradition, King Wen was the father of the founder of the Chou dynasty (1111-249 B.C.E.). Because of his virtuous actions he and his descendants received the Mandate of Heaven, and were thereby able to conquer the Yin dynasty (1751-1112 B.C.E.). In order to continue to receive the Mandate, appropriate rituals were performed and sacrifices to ancestors made. If Heaven were ignored or the ancestral spirits slighted, their blessings would be withdrawn and disaster would follow. It was on the basis of this reciprocal relationship that the people of Chou accounted for their successful defeat of the Yin dynasty, which held the Mandate previously. The Shu-ching explains that:

> Thus Duke Chou (d. 1094 B.C.) said, "Prince Shih, Heaven, without pity, sent down ruin on the Yin dynasty. Yin having lost the Mandate of Heaven, we, the Chou, have received it. But I dare not say with certainty that our heritage will forever truly

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[3] Shih-ching, ode no. 267, tr. Chan, A Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy, p. 6; cf. also Legge, She King, p. 570; Waley, The Book of Songs, p. 227; and Karlgren, The Book of Odes, p. 239.

> remain on the side of fortune. If Heaven
> renders sincere help, I do not dare say
> with certainty that the final end will
> result in misfortune. Oh! you have said,
> Prince, 'it depends on ourselves.'[4]

Once having obtained the Mandate, the Chou's ability to keep it depended upon their own good behavior.

To behave virtuously meant not only to treat men fairly and thereby maintain Heaven's favor but also to respect the spirits of one's ancestors. This was achieved by sacrificing to the ancestral spirits who, in return, would intercede favorably in the affairs of the living. According to the Shih-ching:

> Grandly come our progenitors;
> Their spirits happily enjoy the offering;
> Their filial descendants receives blessings.[5]

Sacrificing to one's ancestors was part of the filial relationship and, as the Shu-ching points out, is as important as the filial bonds which one has with the living.

> Reverently and respectfully you discharge
> your filial duties;
> Gravely and respectfully you behave to
> spirits and men.[6]

It is clear from these early records of Chinese civilization that the Mandate of Heaven and ancestral spirits played an important role in providing a basis for an ethical way of life. How the family or state fared depended directly upon the favors received from these supernatural

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[4] Shu-ching: "Prince Shih," tr. Chan, op. cit., p. 6: cf. also, Legge, Shoo-king, p. 474; and Karlgren, Book of Documents, p. 59.

[5] Shih-ching, ode no. 209, tr. Legge, She King, p. 368 ff.; cf. also Karlgren, The Book of Odes, p. 161; and Waley, op. cit., p. 209.

[6] Shu-ching, "Charge to the Viscount of Wei," tr. Legge, Shoo King, p. 378; also, Couvreur, Chou King, p. 229.

powers, and the disposition of their favors depended upon the behavior of the living. It was a reciprocal relationship.

In the early literature references are made, as well, to nature spirits which, like Heaven and the spirits of ancestors, intervene in worldly affairs and thus need to be placated through ritual. One short passage from the Shu-ching notes that: "The spirits of the hills and rivers likewise were all in tranquility."[7]

References to this variety of spirit are not frequently found in either the Shih-ching or Shu-ching. There often is a degree of ambiguity when deciding whether to interpret the terms shen 神 or kuei-shen 鬼神 as ancestral spirits or nature spirits. This problem continues to present itself in the various translation of the Lun-yü of Confucius.[8]

In spite of this and other difficulties of interpretation and translation, it is the case that there were references in the corpus of early Chinese literature to at least three varieties of supernatural forces. These are succinctly enumerated by the fifth century B.C.E. Chinese thinker Mo-ti, who explains that:

> The ghosts and spirit of past and present are of three kinds only: the spirits of Heaven, the spirits of the mountains and rivers, and the ghosts of men who have died.[9]

With Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) we encounter a change in the

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[7] Shu-ching, "The Instructions of I," tr. Legge, Shoo King, p. 193; also Couvreur, Chou King, p. 113.

[8] Cf., for example, the difference between Legge's and Waley's translations of Lun-yü 6:20, Waley, The Analects of Confucius, p. 120; Legge, Confucian Analects, p. 191.

[9] Mo-tzu, sect. 31, tr. Watson, Mo-tzu, p. 107.

prevailing attitudes towards the spirits. Confucius was a man who adhered to tradition and believed men should follow the examples provided by the behavior of the ancient sage-kings. At the same time, he felt that certain changes were necessary and that the acquisition of knowledge was a necessary prerequisite for beneficial change. Thus Confucius explained that, "he who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher."[10]

Confucius' attitude towards the spirits concurs with the double-edged principle. On the one hand, he recognized the importance of the Mandate of Heaven.[11] Similarly, Confucius regarded filial piety as the backbone of the social system of his day and therefore agreed that it should apply to one's relationships with ancestral spirits as well as to the living. Thus he said:

> When parents are alive, serve them according to the rules of propriety. When they die, bury them according to the rules of propriety and sacrifice to them according to the rules of propriety.[12]

At the same time Confucius' teaching marked a change in the prevailing attitude towards belief in the spirits. With the Lun-yü there is a move away from the unqualified attention and devotion paid to the spirit world advocated in the Shih-ching and Shu-ching. The move was not a rejection of the past but rather a change in perspective regarding the role which spirits took in the affairs of the living. Confucius maintained

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[10] Lun-yü, 2:11, tr. Waley, The Analects of Confucius, p. 90.

[11] Cf., Lun-yü, 2:4, "At fifty I knew what were the biddings of Heaven," tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 88.

[12] Lun-yü, 2:5, tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 89, altered.

that the basis for ethical responsibility should be found in the human sphere and not be dependent, as in the past, upon the motivation for good conduct provided by the reciprocal relation between men and spirits. The intervention of some superhuman arbiter should not be necessary in the affairs of men. Instead, the humanism advocated by Confucius allowed that men should be the measure of what was right and wrong, and that one's actions be determined not out of fear of divine intervention but rather as a result of a heightened awareness of what was best for oneself and others. Thus the Lun-yü states:

> Tzu-kung asked saying, Is there any single saying that one can act upon all day and every day? The Master said, "perhaps the saying about consideration: "Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you."[13]

In line with this humanistic and rational attitude, the Lun-yü explains that affairs of a supernatural order were among those topics about which Confucius declined to speak.[14] Confucius explained to his disciple, Fan Ch'ih, that men should concern themselves with the affairs of the living and remain at a distance from the spirits.

> The Master said, He who devotes himself to securing for his subjects what it is right they should have, who by respect for the Spirits keeps them at a distance, may be termed wise.[15]

At no point in the Lun-yü is Confucius reported to have said that

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[13] Lun-yü, 15:23, tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 198.

[14] Lun-yü, 7:20, "The Master never talked of prodigies, feats of strength, disorders or spirits," tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 127.

[15] Lun-yü, 6:20, tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 120.

spirits do not exist. In fact, he maintained that "one should sacrifice to the spirits, as if they were present."[16] But Confucius considered the spirit world to be beyond the scope of his knowledge and, since he did not wish to speculate, not an appropriate topic for discussion. Furthermore, as we have noted, he explained that the impetus for ethical conduct should come not out of fear that the spirits would punish men if they were to misbehave but out of the concern which the living should have for each other. The filial bonds which require that sacrifices be made to one's ancestor's spirits are modeled upon the filial relationships which one has with the living. Thus mens' first responsibility rests with the living. Accordingly, Confucius explained to Tzu-lu, who asked how one should best serve the spirits, that:

> Till you have learnt to serve men, how can you serve ghosts? Tzu-lu then ventured upon a question about the dead. The Master said, Till you know about the living, how are you to know about the dead?[17]

Confucius' reluctance to discuss spirits displayed in the Lun-yü is carried further in the other three so-called Confucian books. The Mencius mentions the word spirit only three times, and one of those references is itself found in a quote taken from the Shu-ching.[18] The Ta-hsüeh or Great Learning, attributed to Confucius' pupil Tseng-tzu, never uses the term spirit. The Chung-yung or Doctrine of the Mean, attributed to Tzu

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[16] Lun-yü, 3:12, tr. Legge, Confucian Analects, p. 159, altered.

[17] Lun-yu, 11:11, tr. Waley, op. cit., p. 155.

[18] Cf. Hung, ed., Meng-Tzu Yin Te, (A Concordance to Meng-tzu). All other references to the frequency of occurrence of the term shen or spirit also are based upon the concordances published by the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

Ssu, Confucius' grandson, mentions the spirit only four times and one of these references is a quote from the Shih-ching, Ode 256. None of these texts sheds any more light on the subject of the spirit than does Confucius himself.

The diminution of the role of the belief in the spirits initiated by Confucius continued in the rational or humanistic branch of the Chinese tradition. This is hardly surprising since a large number of Chinese thinkers were reared on the Confucian books which, from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.) to the beginning of the twentieth century, were the foundation of orthodoxy in China.[19]

Although Confucian orthodoxy was for most of China's history the basis of its institutions, it was by no means the only factor which influenced the development of China's intellectual history. Despite the importance and weight of the Lun-yü in China, it never was able to obliterate the concepts and practices handed down through generations of common people, as Bodde has pointed out. Beliefs in the spirits and in supernatural matters in general continued to exert their influence on the growth of Chinese thought. During the Han dynasty, the beliefs in spirits and the like provided the basis for the beginnings of many folk religions and

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[19]Cf. Bodde, "The Chinese View of Immortality: Its Expression by Chu Hsi and Its Relationship to Buddhist Thought," in Review of Religion, no. 6 (1942), p. 373, in which Bodde states that: "It is a really remarkable fact that, for millenia, China has been a stronghold of the so-called worship of ancestors, a cult presumably based upon a belief in the immortality of the soul; that it has been a country in which superstitious beliefs in spirits and ghosts of all kinds are rife among the common people; and yet that, when we study what China's sophisticated thinkers have had to say on the subject, we find either that they have hesitated to admit the possibility of immortality at all or have conceived of it only in general semi-pantheistic terms."

immortality cults, many of them out-growths of Taoism, which appealed to the populace.

It can be said, therefore, that by the beginning of the Common Era at least two traditions were in the process of development in China. One of these, the humanistic and rational tradition based upon the Confucian teachings, rejected speculative and superstitious thought. The second tradition was supported by the requirements and demands of popular religious sentiments and leaned towards the supernatural. Out of the latter evolved in part those religious beliefs and practices associated with popular Taoism.

One text written not long after the Lun-yü was compiled which continues to discuss spirits is the Tso-chüan. According to the Tao-chüan, when Tzu-ch'an was asked whether Po-yu could become a spiritual being or ghost at death, he replied:

> Yes, he could. In man's life the first transformations are called the earthly aspect of the soul (p'o). After p'o has been produced, that which is strong and positive is called the heavenly aspect of the soul (hun). If he had an abundance in the use of material things and subtle essentials, his hun and p'o will become strong. From this are developed essence and understanding until there are spirit and intelligence. When an ordinary man or woman dies a violent death, the hun and p'o still are able to keep hanging about men and do evil and malicious things.[20]

Not only does the Tso-chüan speculate upon the destiny of the spirits

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[20] Tso-chüan, "Duke Chao, 7th Year," tr. Chan, op. cit., p. 12: cf. also, Legge, The Ch'un Ts'ew With the Tso Chuen, p. 618. For discussions about the hun and p'o, cf. Needham, Science and Civilization in China, vol. V, pt. 2, p. 86; and Smith, "Chinese Concepts of the Soul," Numen, vol. 5 (1958), pp. 165-179.

after death, but it is more descriptive than either the Shih-ching or Shu-ching when it comes to characterizing the spiritual and physical constitution of human beings.[21] The hun 魂 and p'o 魄 are the vital forces which go into every human being. The hun is associated with intelligence and psychic qualities, while the p'o generally is associated with the physical and coarser qualities. At death they separate, the p'o returning to the earth and the hun ascending to heaven as the spiritual element.[22] In this context the hun is equivalent to the shen 神 .

The Tso-chüan is one of the first texts to discuss immortality as 'no-death' 不死 . It relates the sentiments expressed by Duke Ching of Ch'i regarding his desire for longevity and immortality. He is reported to have said:

> If from ancient times until now there had been no death, how great would (men's) pleasure have been.[23]

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[21] According to the Concordance to the Shih-ching, for example, neither hun nor p'o are referred to in the Shih-ching, cf. supra., p. 17, note 18.

[22] According to Needham, the Li-chi notes that at death, "the hun or ether returns to heaven; the body or p'o returns to the earth," op. cit., p. 87: 魂氣歸天，形魄歸地.

Smith, op. cit., p. 168, notes that the Shuo-wen identifies the meaning of kuei 鬼 , which by itself means spirit or ghost and is the common radical in related graphs, with kuei 歸 meaning "to return" or "revert back to." The implication is that there is inherent in these characters with the kuei radical a tacit acknowledgement of the return they undergo at death. For example, the Chuang-tzu, Ch. 22, tr. Watson, Chuang-tzu, p. 240, states that "the soul and spirit are on their way, the body following after, on at last to the Great Return, 魂魄將往，乃身從之，乃大歸乎.

. Remarks to this effect also are made by Wang

Attitudes expressed by such statements as this formed the foundation of the immortality cults which were to blossom in Han China.

Other Chinese Classics which discuss the spirits are the Li-chi and the I-ching. Although Confucius is purported to have been familiar with both texts and supposedly edited them, the redactions extant today are versions of the texts compiled after his death. The Li-chi fell victim to the proscriptions and book burning of the Ch'in dynasty and was not re-assembled until the second century B.C.E.[24] The I-ching, however, was not banned. Thus the actual text is perhaps quite close to its original form, but the majority of the Ten Wings or Appendices, which are the various commentaries in the text, date from after the time of Confucius. All but six of the thirty-three references to the term spirit 神 in the I-Ching are found in the Appendices.[25]

There are passages in both the Li-chi and the I-ching which attest to the existence of popular beliefs in immortal spirits and which continue to acknowledge the role which they play in the affairs of the living. For example, the I-ching states that: "Spiritual beings inflict calamity on

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Ch'ung, who lived during the first century C.E.: "When a man dies, his spirit ascends to heaven, and his bones return to earth, therefore they are called Kuei (ghost) which means 'to return.'" Lun-heng, Ch. 15, "Lun-ssu," tr. Forke, Lun-heng, pt. 1, p. 191.

[23] Tso-chüan, "Duke Chao, 20th Year," tr. Legge, The Ch'un Ts'ew, with the Tso Chuen, p. 684 b; cf. Yü, "Life and Immortality in Han China," Harvard Journal of Asian Studies, no. 25 (1964-1965), p. 90 ff.

[24] For a discussion of the authenticity and dates of the Li-chi and I-ching, cf. Ch'en, op. cit., p. 74 ff. and p. 68 ff., respectively.

[25] Cf., supra., p. 17, note 18.

the full and bless the humble."[26] And in connection with the direction which the various spirits take after death the Li-chi allows that:

> All the living must die, and dying, return to the ground, this is what is called ... But the spirit [shen] issues forth, and is displayed on high in a condition of glorious greatness.[27]

The kuei is the earthly aspect of an individual and corresponds to the p'o. The spirit or shen, like the hun, is the psychic element which goes to heaven at death.

The final text which will be examined is the Mo-tzu, a collection of the writings of another contemporary of Confucius, Mo-ti. According to Mo-ti, man's nature was not determined at birth but rather had to be cultivated and developed to insure that every individual matured correctly. Mo-ti contended that it would be beneficial to impose certain religious sanctions which would see to it that everyone's nature developed appropriately. Mo-ti's idealistic visions looked toward a time when there would be universal love 兼愛 which would benefit all the people 利民. He argued that a belief in spirits could expedite the formation of such a just society. Thus he states:

> If now all the people in the world could be made to believe that the spirits can reward virtue or punish vice, how could the world be in chaos?[28]

There is an obvious similarity between this statement and those found in

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[26] I-ching, tr. Legge, in Sung, The Text of the I-ching, p. 71.

[27] Li-chi, tr. Needham, op. cit., p. 87.

[28] Mo-tzu, Ch. 31, "Ming Kuei," tr. Watson, Mo-tzu, p. 95.

the Shih-ching and Shu-ching which acknowledge the importance of a reciprocal relation between the spiritual world and the world of the living.

To the extent that Mo-ti does emphasize the role which the spirits play, it is evident that he does not belong to the rational Confucian tradition. At the same time, Mo-ti's understanding of the place of the spirits also differs from that espoused in the pre-Confucian and later popular movements. In the Mo-tzu there is a pragmatic and purely functional aspect to the doctrine of the spirit which leads the reader to sense that Mo-ti advocated that spirits should be believed in as an expedient device to bring about social harmony. There is no sense that spirits were important in and of themselves. This line of thinking is exactly opposite to that set forth in the Lun-yü, as well as both the Shih-ching and Shu-ching. Confucius agreed with the earlier texts that the spirits themselves were important not because they were a means toward an end, i.e., social harmony, but because they were an extension of one's filial relationships.

The pragmatic bent of the Mo-tzu is apparent in other issues which relate to spiritual matters. For example, Mo-ti argues that since the spirits of the dead are immortal, there is no need for elaborate funeral services which serve only to mourn the final demise of a loved one. Furthermore, Mo-ti contends that it does not benefit the people to bury with the dead gifts and valuables which would better the life of those still living. At the same time, however, Mo-ti does point out that funeral rites do serve a useful function in society no matter what one's attitude toward spiritual immortality is. A funeral is an occasion in which family and community can be brought together and is therefore helpful in promoting the general welfare and establishing universal love.

In conclusion, we can note that there existed during the formative period of Chinese intellectual history several different attitudes towards the spirit. At opposite ends of the spectrum we find Confucius' rational humanism and the popular beliefs discussed in many texts composed both before and after Confucius. Along with the influence of popular Taoism, the latter provided the basis for the immortality cults which flourished during the Han dynasty and after. Between these two extremes is Mo-ti's pragmatic and highly functional attitude toward the spirit. The influence of these and other beliefs about the spirit continued up to and after Hui-yüan's day. As we will see, they were particularly dominant in the thought of Hui-yüan's Taoist opponents. Thus it is easy to see why Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit is syncretistic. In its most general manifestation it is Hui-yüan's attempt to describe Buddhist categories with concepts and terms which already are familiar to his Chinese audience.

In the following three Chapters, we will explain in detail the ways in which Hui-yüan develops the relationship between the native Chinese understanding of the spirit and the spirit as Hui-yüan understands the term within a Buddhist context.

CHAPTER

III

HUI-YUAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF KARMA

The relationship between deeds and retribution is explained by Hui-yüan by means of the doctrine of karma 業.[1] According to this doctrine, every action committed by an individual elicits a retribution 報 or response 應. Whether or not the retribution is favorable or unfavorable is determined by the quality of the action. The relationship is simple: wholesome 善 actions bring about favorable rewards and unwholesome 惡 actions result in punishments.

Although strictly speaking the word karma means action, in practice it denotes not only all kinds of action--wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate--but also the consequences of those actions. The influence of karma cannot be escaped but karma itself is neutral. It is not an entity. It has no will of its own and, therefore, is neither arbitrary nor does it seek to establish itself in the world in such a manner that people will obey its dictates. The direction which the karmic energies take someone is dictated solely by the nature of the action which individuals commit. By means of doctrine of karma, Hui-yüan is able to illustrate that the onus of responsibility for one's deeds and their recompense rests squarely on the shoulders of every individual, and not upon some external arbiter. For Hui-yüan the karmic mechanism is the moral backbone of Buddhism. It provides an impetus for adhering to the ethical proscriptions of the Buddha

[1] We intend here to discuss the mechanism of karma as it was understood by Hui-yüan and not necessarily as it was articulated in other scriptures or by other Buddhists. In most cases, however, his explanations agree with traditional interpretations of karma.

which set forth the path to be followed by nirvāna. By following the rules and regulations enumerated in Buddhist scriptures those actions detrimental to the realization of nirvāna will be avoided, while those which are beneficial will be cultivated.

Taken as a whole the doctrine of karma was a novel concept to the Chinese, although certain aspects of it were consonant with their own beliefs. Prior to the introduction of Buddhism into China, the Chinese had relied primarily upon the concepts of the Mandate of Heaven 天命 or Tao 道 to provide explanations for the various exigencies of life. A belief in the Mandate of Heaven encouraged ethical behavior, but Heaven assumes anthropomorphic proportions and is judgemental. It responds to human activities with punishments or blessings but those responses still are being mediated. Tao, on the other hand, is non-judgemental but seemingly arbitrary in its dictates. It destines men without regard for the nature of their deeds. According to Hui-yüan, both the principles of Heaven and Tao failed to consider the one-to-one correspondence between act and retribution which is precisely what is taken into account by the theory of karma.

Furthermore, the principles of Heaven and Tao also failed to come adequately to terms with a major ethical quandary facing Hui-yüan. Why, Hui-yüan asks, should there be so little correspondence between what a man does and the quality of the retributions meted out in response to those deeds? He cites many examples of this injustice. For example:

> There are some who desire to save the king and rescue the times; they speak about aiding the people and are determined to step high and walk tall in order to establish merit. Then, in the midst of their great works, they are upset and calamities

from Heaven suddenly befall them.[2]

In another case:

> There is one known to have excelled in the ways of the four classes of virtues and who excelled in scholarship. He was full of love and humility, longing for the highest good in order to foster virtue. This man has embraced compassion and harmony and yet has become ill. He has acted with trust and obedience and yet (has died) while still a youth.[3]

Such circumstances illustrate to Hui-yüan the ethical paradox stated by the question: why do the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper? In the face of these events the Chinese, accuses Hui-yüan, have been unable to provide an explanation.

> They mourn over Heaven's having sent down destruction upon good men. They all say that the books of the School of Names are not honored above.[4]

They recognize that there is a lack of correspondence between deed and retribution but they are at a loss to explain why. Thus they have described the predicament but are incapable of finding an answer. As far as Hui-yüan is concerned, only Buddhism with its doctrine of karma offers a reasonable explanation of these events which is prescriptive as well as descriptive.

It is descriptive in that it explains that the fulfillment of the correspondence between deed and retribution is not limited to the span of

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[2] SPL, 34b26, our translation.

[3] SPL, 33b29, our translation.

[4] SPL, 33c9, our translation.

a single lifetime. Thus with reference to the illustrations quoted above, Hui-yüan explains that:

> Each of these is an illustration of present deeds not having brought retribution while former deeds have begun to bear fruit.[5]

The circumstances of an observable situation may indeed be the result of a deed committed in a previous lifetime.

The doctrine of karma is also prescriptive in that it provides the basis for an ethical imperative. Since for each and every deed there is a corresponding return, one is impelled to adhere to that ethical pattern which will most effectively bring about rewards and, eventually, salvation. For Hui-yüan that ethical pattern is laid down in Buddhist scriptures which prescribe the path (mārga 道) which leads to nirvāna.

Karma is then the principle of moral economy which regulates the relationship between deed and retribution. Specifically, the karmic energies establish a 'non-term' but ultimately binding contract between an act and its consequence. As a result of a given deed a retribution will result, the nature of which is determined by the moral quality of that deed. Although such retribution is unavoidable, the actual time period or lifetime during which it is actualized is not determined by the deed.

Hui-yüan explains that all deeds derive from mental volition (cetanā 心). There is no intentional action, whether of body 身, speech 口, or thought 意, that does not generate retribution.[6]

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[5] SPL 33b24, our translation.

[6] According to orthodox Pali Buddhist sources any action which is either wholesome or unwholesome that is performed intentionally will bear fruit. Only those actions occurring accidentally and not involving mental volition escape retribution.

> [Retributions] are surely motivated by mental volition. These mental volitions lack a fixed arbiter. They initiate activities and responses follow. The various responses are slow or fast, therefore some retributions come sooner while others come later.[7]

Elsewhere he explains that:

> The initiation of activity is certainly dependant upon mental volition, and retribution certainly results from activity.[8]

Since all deeds are spawned by one's own mental volition, one has recourse to no other power to which the responsibility for one's deeds can be shifted. There is no one to blame but one's self when things go awry. With this in mind, Hui-yüan rhetorically asks: "How can there exist some hidden arbiter [造化者] who is allowed to drive yet lose the way?"[9] Each and every individual must realize that he is the sole determining factor involved in the working out of his destiny.

Hui-yüan's understanding of karma is acquired from and corroborated by the Abhidharmhrdaya-śāstra (AH). The chapter of that text devoted to an explication of karma explains that:

> Bodily actions and verbal and mental ones are performed by those who exist. By them the formations are produced, bearing the kinds of bodies (as fruits).[10]

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[7] SPL 34b7, our translation.

[8] MPYL 34a9, our translation.

[9] MYPL 30c21, our translation; cf. also SPWL 30c12.

[10] AH 812b22, verse 34, tr. Willemen, p. 27.

The bodies referred to here are the various bodies or forms into which one may be reborn in a future lifetime.[11]

This description of action and its basis in mental volition still does little to answer the question posed by the ethical paradox. It only explains the origin of individual action. A Confucian would also agree that good deeds should be rewarded, that evil deeds should be punished and that accidental deeds should go uncompensated.

What makes the Buddhist position unique is its theory of three types of retribution 三報. This is discussed in an essay entitled San-pao-lun (SPL) or "A Treatise on Three Types of Retribution." It explains that the retribution for a given deed need not necessarily be received during the course of the lifetime in which the deed was committed.

> The scripture says: action yields three types of retribution: the first is called present-retribution, the second is called rebirth-retribution, the third is called later-retribution. In the case of present-retribution wholesome and unwholesome actions are initiated in this body and this body receives the retribution. In the case of rebirth-retribution the forthcoming reborn body then receives the retribution. In the case of later-retribution perhaps only after the passing one, two, one hundred or even one thousand lifetimes will a body receive the retribution.[12]

In point of fact, present-retribution 現報 is quite rare.[13] It is much

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[11] Traditionally there are five such realms or destinies (gati 趣) into which one may be reborn: Hell, hungry ghosts (preta), beasts, men, and gods. Sometimes a sixth destiny is added, that of the asuras.

[12] SPL 34b4, our translation.

[13] Cf. SPL 34b19.

more common that one receive 受 retribution in the next rebirth (i.e., rebirth-retribution 生報) or in a later lifetime (i.e., later-retribution 後報).

Again, Hui-yüan relied a great deal upon the AH for his understanding of karmic retribution. In it[14] are discussed the so-called Nine Classes 九品 which are mentioned in the SPL.

> The arising of wholesome and unwholesome actions comes into existence gradually and thereby gradually reach an extreme. Thus there is a treatise on the Nine Classes. Anyone who exists within the Nine Classes is not caught up in (born of) present-retribution. Hence it is understood that the ordinary class of men is cut off from retribution in the present lifetime.[15]

The Nine Classes refers to the nine grades of candidates for salvation who receive retribution in forthcoming rebirths but not in the present lifetime. A certain number of rebirths are required to come to terms with the consequences of previous deeds. Thus it is said that these individuals do not receive retributions for deeds performed during the present lifetime. In other words, under most circumstances the retribution which is received during the present lifetime is not the result of any deeds performed during that same lifetime but rather the consequence of acts committed in some

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[14] Cf. AH 819a7 ff.

[15] SPL 34b14, our translation. The nine classes are: 上上, 下上, 中上, 上中, 下中, 中中, 上下, 下下, 中下. The passage is difficult to translate. Liebenthal, in "The Immortality of the Soul in Chinese Thought," Monumenta Nipponica, no. 8, 1952, p. 363, renders the same section: "Good and bad Karma develop slowly in a gradual process which comprises altogether Nine Classes of Candidates (to salvation). None of them are rewarded in this life. From this it follows that reward in life is unusual ..." The "treatise" referred to is no doubt a reference to the AH; cf. supra, note 14.

prior lifetime. Similarly, deeds performed during the present lifetime do not bear fruit until some future lifetime.

It is because of this phenonemon that the ethical paradox remains a puzzle. Once the existence of multiple rebirths and future retribution is acknowledged, however, the mystery disappears. Hui-yüan explains this stating:

> The causes [of confusion] are the various canons of the world which regard a single birth as the limit, not perceiving what lies beyond. What lies beyond is not yet understood. Therefore those who have examined this principle have arrived at their conclusions drawn from the realms of sight and sound.[16]

Prior to the advent of Buddhism the Chinese could analyze human actions only on the basis of what could be seen and heard. Limited as they were to empirical and observable phenomena they could not understand that a seemingly righteous man was suffering not from deeds performed during his present lifetime but from unwholesome deeds committed in a prior life. Not until the arrival of Buddhism with its doctrine of successive lifetimes could the Chinese understand that the contract between an act and its consequence extended beyond the duration of a single lifetime. Thus the contract is non-term in nature. Although every act receives a corresponding retribution, there is no set term during which the retribution must manifest itself.

In the SPL the concept of karma as an agreement is developed in a sophisticated manner by Hui-yüan. He refers to the mechanism by which karma operates as a mysterious tally or agreement 冥符. He explains

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[16] SPL 34c12, our translation.

that this "mysterious tally dictates the hidden exchange of events which revolve around each other."[17] Just as two halves of a tally must be joined to ensure the completion of an agreement, so must the retribution for a deed be dispensed to remove the weight of obligation from the potential recipient of that retribution. Until that time he is not yet released from his half of the agreement. In Buddhist terms this means that until all accumulated retributions are disposed of, one still is subject to the round of rebirth in samsāra, and nirvāna remains beyond one's grasp. Only after one is released from all attachments, material and karmic, can nirvāna be realized.

Hui-yüan stresses that this contact or agreement 契[18] is determined in the past, stating:

> The mutual reliance of the agreement is determined in the past.[19]

The key to understanding this passage rests in coming to terms with the implications of terms "relying" 倚 and "yielding before" 伏 , which appear to be borrowed from the fifty-eighth Chapter of the Tao-te-ching.

> When the government is non-discriminative
> and dull,
> The people are contented and generous.
>
> When the government is searching and
> discriminative,
> The people are disappointed and con-
> tentious.

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[17] SPL 34c4, our translation.

[18] Reading 契 for 勢 .

[19] SPL 34c5, our translation.

Calamity is that upon which happiness depends 倚 ;

Happiness is that in which calamity is latent 伏.

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The purport of this verse is that complementary concepts not only complement each other but actually establish each other's identity. There would be no such concept as calamity were there not a corresponding concept such as happiness. There are no absolute concepts, only ones that exist in relation to each other. Calamity is calamitous only because we chose to contrast it with another condition which we choose to call happiness. Joy and sadness are experienced only because we choose to refer to specific circumstance with certain value-laden terms. Taoism contends that when labels are eliminated the emotions provoked by them will subsequently disappear. Buddhism, of course, does not agree with Taoism's extreme naturalism. The deed exists, along with its corresponding ethical value, as does the retribution whether or not it is given a name. And just as the existence of the category 'calamity' depends upon the existence of the concept 'happiness,' so does the existence of retribution rely upon the performance of a deed.

Hui-yüan explains that the reciprocal relationship between deed and retribution is analagous to that which inheres between a sound and its echo or between a form and its reflection.[21] Retribution will cease only after actions are cut off. Until that time there is no escape from retribution.

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[20] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 58, Chan, p. 203.

[21] Cf. MPYL 33c20 and 33a2.

> The three types of action differ in substance yet they each determine retribution. They determine retribution which when the time comes must be received. It is neither swayed by prayers nor evaded by the intellectual abilities. 22

There is nothing that can be done after an act has been committed to reduce the consequences. It behooves every individual tc be aware of his actions before they are carried out in body, speech or thought.

Further emphasizing that the responses to deeds are irrevocable, Hui-yuan allows that the response initiated by an action is spontaneous 自然 or natural.

> Thus the mind understands wholesome and unwholesome actions as though they are shape and sound, and conceives of retributions as though they were like a shadow and echo. These originate by means of feelings which are brought about by mental volition, and the responses follow naturally. There is no hidden manger of affairs who is allowed to lead and lose his way. Good and bad responses rely solely upon actions. They are self-so and are called natural. Such responses are precisely the echoes and reflections of one's own actions. What efficacy would there be to an external controlling power? 23

Asserting that the correspondence between deed and retribution is a natural process, Hui-yuan again borrows from the Tao-te-ching particularly, in order to make his point more intelligible to his readers with Taoist sympathies. For the latter the concept of tzu-jan 自然, which we have translated as "natural," connotes the inevitable course taken by all things

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[22] SPL 34b19, our translation.

[23] MPYL 33c20, our translation; cf. also, 34b10.

according to their disposition. If an individual responds according to his or her own nature, then that response is said to be natural. It is the immediate and spontaneous response which precedes any conscious act of will. Describing just such an enlightened individual the Tao-te-ching states:

> Being kingly, he is one with Nature.
> Being one with Nature, he is in accord with Tao.
> Being in accord with Tao, he is everlasting.
> And is free from danger throughout his lifetime.[24]

Hui-yüan has thus taken the concept "natural" out of its Taoist setting and placed it within a Buddhist context. Doing so he has redefined the term. Retribution is the natural consequence of an act, and one must act and behave at all times with this in mind. This is the heart of the doctrine of karma and the basis of its ethical significance.

In the SPL and MPYL Hui-yüan has explained the doctrine of karma. With it he has been able to provide a solution to an ethical paradox which had perplexed the Chinese for centuries. Since retribution is determined by action he was able to explain why individuals should follow the teachings of the Buddha which set forth the ways in which right actions can be performed.

One problem still remains to be resolved by Hui-yüan before his arguments for the operation of karma can be completed. The following question has yet to be answered: what is it that undergoes the myriad transformations brought about as a result of the karmic mechanism? In part

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[24] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 16, Chan, p. 128.

it was in response to this question that Hui-yüan introduced the doctrine of the immortality of the spirit. Yet his use of the concept of the immortal spirit was very unorthodox in Buddhist circles. In the following Chapter we will discuss the unorthodox nature of the doctrine of the spirit, why Hui-yüan used the term so extensively, and what the word spirit meant to him.

CHAPTER

IV

II

HUI-YUAN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT

A. Anātman

One of the fundamental and incontrovertible tenets of Buddhism is that there exists no permanent self (ātman) or spirit which endures from moment to moment during the course of a single lifetime or over a period of a number of rebirths. What constitutes the illusion of self-hood is the five aggregates (skandhas) which comprise both the physical body and the mental attributes.[1] There is no single entity as a self, yet in ignorance it is thought that the aggregates are one.

The no-self (anātman) doctrine was well-known to Hui-yüan as a result of his familiarity with the Indian Buddhist Abhidharma text AH. The AH explains that selflessness is one of the four characteristics (laksanas) of all dharmas or elements. One verse and commentary relate that:

> Engaging in the contemplation in relation to the dharmas in general one contemplates the common characteristics of the dharmas. The four are: impermanent, void, selfless, and unpleasant.
>
> ... the four are: inpermanent, void, selfless, and unpleasant. Because, as these bodies, feelings, thoughts, and dharmas continue in existence, they are produced one after another, they are impermanent.

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[1] Cf. AH 809b25-29, verse 6 and commentary: "I.e. the formed dharmas--because they are produced by causes--which are free from the afflictions: the view of individuality, etc., and which are free from the impurities, all these are and the previously mentioned aggregates of grasping are all called aggregates. They are the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness." Tr. Willemen, p. 5.

> Because they are not self-existing, they are selfless. Because of their evil calamities, they are painful.[2]

Dharmas are void and have no self-existence. They rely upon causes and conditions for their temporary and conditional existence.[3] In reference to the impermanence of dharmas the AH states that:

> Answer: Finally, none can come into existence because they are without a companion.
>
> Nothing can come into existence of itself. Why? Because all formations are by nature weak and without strength, just as a weak sick person cannot rise up by his own strength.
>
> Question: When he cannot rise up by his own strength, how will he rise up?
>
> Answer: Through the power of all conditions, then all things can come into existence.[4]

When the supporting conditions are removed the dharmas cease to exist, therefore it is said that they are impermanent.

The AH discusses at great length the specific qualities of each of the six causes (hetu 因)[5] and four conditions (pratyaya 緣)[6] responsible for the formation (samskrta) of dharmas. Hui-yüan avoids detailed

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[2] AH 818a24, ff., verse 100 and commentary, tr. Willemen, p. 68.

[3] These are the conditioned (samskrta) or formed dharmas. For a discussion of the difference between the conditioned dharmas and unconditioned (asamskrta) or unformed dharmas, cf. infra, Ch. 4, sect. 5.

[4] AH 810b19-25, verse 15 and commentary, tr. Willemen, p. 12.

[5] Cf. AH 811c1 ff., verse 25 and commentary, tr. Willemen, p. 20-24.

[6] Cf. AH 812a19 ff., verse 30 and commentary, tr. Willemen, pp. 24-26.

references to these points and only alludes to the conditional nature of existence briefly in the MPYL.

> That which is induced by causes and conditions and that which is produced by change and transformation--how is it that they do not result from their [specific] ways [of production]?[7]

All things that exist are produced as a result of their causes and conditions. This curt reference to such a complex matter should not be interpreted, however, as a deficiency or oversight. It was not Hui-yüan's intention to provide a commentary to the AH but rather to offer simple explanations of Buddhist doctrine in a manner intelligible to Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike. He wanted to make the fact of conditionality known and cared less about explaining in detail all of the complex reasons for conditionality. At almost every step, Hui-yüan is a religious teacher and not a philosopher concerned with the fine points of metaphysics and psychology. For Hui-yüan it is sufficient that certain basic points be understood so that with that knowledge both potential and avowed Buddhists will appropriate those insights and be better equipped to learn the Buddha's teachings and attain nirvāṇa. Thus in the foregoing passage Hui-yüan not only alludes to the conditioned nature of existence but in the same breath refers to the parallel category in Taoist thought, namely, change 化 and transformation 變. These two terms also denote the constant flux of the world and the impermanent nature of things. This technique of drawing parallels between Buddhist and Taoist categories is indicative of Hui-yüan's syncretistic style.

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[7] MPYL 33c9, our translation.

We may conclude then that Hui-yüan was versed in the traditional Buddhist teaching of anātman and that his use of the term shen or spirit did not result from any lack of understanding of orthodox Buddhism.

B. Reasons for Hui-yüan's use of the doctrine of the spirit

To what, then, can Hui-yüan's highly unorthodox doctrine of the spirit be attributed? In light of our discussion of indigeneous Chinese attitudes toward the spirit and our analysis of karma and anātman we now will consider some of the possible explanations for why Hui-yüan used the term so extensively.

We have excluded the possibility that Hui-yüan utilized the doctrine of the spirit as a result of any fundamental misunderstanding of Buddhism.

It is equally unlikely that Hui-yüan proposed the idea that the spirit does not perish capriciously, failing to consider the demands of the specific context in which he was operating. We have repeatedly noted, for example, the care which Hui-yüan took in choosing his terminology throughout his discussion of karma and how he consciously selected Taoist concepts to elucidate the finer points of Buddhism. It would have been out of character for him to then sloppily use a notion such as the doctrine of the spirit totally without regard for context.

This supposition holds up when the texts are examined. For example, the character shen 神 or spirit occurs only once in the SPL, and then not in the sense of spirit but rather in conjunction with another character to express a different meaning.[8] The reason for this is that

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[8] Cf. SPL 34b17: 神機 , "cosmic mechanism."

the SPL is more strictly a Buddhist exposition of Buddhist doctrine. Therefore Hui-yüan does not rely on non-Buddhist terminology to discuss the three types of retribution. In the MPYL, on the other hand, Hui-yüan does use the term shen to denote spirit but always with a specific intent in mind. He uses it to make his points clear to his orthodox Taoist readers. One gets the impression reading the MPYL that Hui-yüan talks in terms of the spirit because the circumstances demand that he do so or else confuse his audience with foreign terminology. Hui-yüan often uses the doctrine of the spirit in this didactic way.

In the SPWL we note a similar application of the term spirit. Again, Hui-yüan uses it to illustrate points of Buddhism and to counter arguments of Taoist opponents, but by using their terminology to his advantage. The SPWL does differ somewhat from the SPL and MPYL in that it goes on to further discuss and to define the spirit.

It is clear, therefore, that Hui-yüan is selective in his application of the doctrine of the spirit and that his use of the concept is far from arbitrary or haphazard.

We have so far dismissed the possibility that the doctrine of the spirit appears in Hui-yüan's essays as a consequence of either ignorance or carelessness. But there remain two, more reasonable, explanations for the presence of this unusual principle in Hui-yüan's writing.

In Chapter Two we noted that the belief in the existence of ancestral spirits had become a significant part of Chinese religion and culture by the time of Hui-yüan. It is also the case that, much like the Buddhists, the Chinese stressed the importance of living an ethical life, the parameters of which had been laid down in the Confucian Classics. The

difficulty for the Buddhists lay in their ability to translate their values and particularly their doctrine of repeated rebirth onto Chinese soil. We have discussed Hui-yüan's criticism of the Chinese mind with respect to its inability to comprehend what lay "beyond the realm of sight and sound." Still more difficult would be the task of trying to teach the Chinese the principles of karma while simultaneously asserting that there was indeed no such entity as a self or spirit that was reborn.

It is our hypothesis that it was in response to this seeming contradiction that Hui-yüan cultivated his doctrine of the spirit. It was not his intention to contradict the principles of what he certainly knew to be orthodox Buddhism, specifically the anātman doctrine. We conjecture instead that Hui-yüan considered the end to be more important than the means in this instance. The doctrine of the spirit was utilized to explain Buddhism's theory of rebirth to the indigenous population of China, many of whom were Taoists, so that they would be able to experience the benefits of Buddhism as a religion and realize nirvāna. It was less important to Hui-yüan that his audience and potential converts understood in depth the finer points of Buddhist metaphysics and psychology as he did. By teaching that there indeed existed such a permanent entity as the spirit he was able to provide a logical basis for the rebirth mechanism. With this end in mind perhaps he felt justified in distorting somewhat the traditional teaching of anātman. Once karma was regarded as a working principle, individuals could recognize the merits of Buddhist ethics, adherence to which would expedite their release from the round of birth and death.

That the doctrine of the spirit is used in this manner is attested

to by an inspection of Hui-yüan's essays. In the SPL, as we already have stated, there is no instance in which the term shen is used to imply spirit, soul, or self. The SPL is a straight exposition of the theory of three types of retribution. It is not written as a reply to Huan Hsüan or any other opponent advocating Taoist beliefs. Consequently there was no need for Hui-yüan to borrow non-Buddhist terminology in order to make his point.

The MPYL, however, is written in response to some exacting questions raised by Huan Hsüan which reflect his Taoist persuasion. Accordingly, Hui-yüan uses the same Taoist idiom. Hui-yüan employs the same technique in the SPWL even though it is not addressed to Huan Hsüan but rather to an imaginary Taoist opponent.

Hui-yüan's facility for borrowing an opponent's terminology and then taking the terms and using them to his own advantage is an extension of the technique known as ko-i 格義 or "matching the meanings." But in this instance Hui-yüan is not matching the meanings in order to render a good translation. Instead he is reinterpreting the meanings to make them fit the Buddhist context. His ability to do this so successfully attests to his brilliance as a teacher and student of Buddhism.

In addition to lending credence to the doctrine of karma there is a second reason for which Hui-yüan introduces the doctrine of the spirit. It is revealed in the actual title of one of his essays, namely, the SPWL or "A Monk Does Not Bow Down to One Who Is King."

In the year 396 the Emperor Hsiao-wu-ti 孝武帝 was murdered by his wife and was succeeded by his son Ssu-ma Te-tsung 司馬德宗 whose dynastic title was An-ti 安帝. Because An-ti was by all accounts an

imbecile,[9] the Southern Empire was taken over quickly by several political adventurers, among them Huan Hsüan. By the year 399 Huan Hsüan had consolidated his power and had usurped the throne.

In an attempt to further secure control over the dynasty, Huan Hsüan visited Hui-yüan on Mt. Lu to inform him that the monks owed certain allegiances to the king. By undermining the authority and autonomy of the clergy, and by taxing the monasteries, Huan Hsüan hoped thereby to eliminate the possibility that the seeds of unrest could be sown in the monastic community. It too would be subject to the same restraints and obligations as were all other institutions in the realm.

The SPWL is Hui-yüan's reply to these demands, stating that the monk should be released from such requirements and not have to bow down to the king. He argues that while the king is in charge of all secular affairs, it is the monk who is in control when considering the affairs of the spirit. Thus the king was responsible for all the aspects of one's life in the world but the clergy was responsible for the well-being of the immortal spirit which was not of the world. Huan Hsüan finally gave in to Hui-yüan's protestations in the year 403.

There thus are two explanations as to why Hui-yüan introduces the doctrine of the spirit into his discussions of Buddhism. First, it helps explain the mechanism of karma. The second reason for the doctrine of the spirit revolves around the issue of the separation of church and state. The Buddhist clergy must retain its independence under the reign of Huan Hsüan because the immortal spirit is the ward of the church.

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[9] Cf. supra, p. 3, note 8.

In practice, however, these two explanations are inseparable. Had Hui-yüan not been engaged in debates with Huan Hsüan or other Taoist sympathizers it is possible that he would not have found it necessary to introduce the doctrine of the spirit. But once having begun his discussions with Huan Hsüan it became expedient for Hui-yüan to continue the use of the doctrine of the spirit to clarify various doctrinal points of Buddhism such as the theory of karma.

C. Hui-yüan's illustrations for the existence of the immortal spirit

Over the span of time during which Hui-yüan was productive he was faced with two tasks. First it was necessary to convince those Chinese who already believed in the existence of a spiritual afterlife that those spirits, redefined now in Buddhist categories, are subject to karma and to not one but many rebirths. Second, Hui-yüan had to persuade Huan Hsüan and other Taoists who believed that the spirit perishes with the death of the body that it does not perish when the physical body deteriorates. He had to convince them that the spirit was capable of transcending the physical constraints of the body and the limitations of the material world. Failing in this endeavor he would not have been able to convincingly argue for the autonomy of the clergy who must remain unattached to the world in order to direct the spiritual life of the people. Hui-yüan focuses upon this task specifically in the third and fifth sections of the SPWL entitled, Ch'iu-tsung pu-shun hua, "One Who Seeks First Principles Does not Acquiesce to Change," and Hsing-chin shen pu-mieh, "When the Body is Consumed the Spirit Does Not Perish," respectively.[10]

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[10] SPWL 30b24, ff. and 31b10 ff.; cf. also Hurvitz, "'Render Unto Unto Caesar' in Early Chinese Buddhism," pp. 101-102 and 106-113.

Hui-yüan's debates with Huan Hsüan had a significance which reached beyond the bounds established merely by different philosophical attitudes toward the nature of the spirit. Indeed, the latter, although it was the subject of Hui-yüan's essays, was indicative of a more deep-seated conflict which resulted from the desire of each group to gain the support and recognition of the state. Hui-yüan's philosophical victory over Huan Hsüan, who eventually did give in to Hui-yüan's demands for autonomy, reflects the increasing power and control which Buddhism in general was able to exert in China during the period of the Southern and Northern Empires (316-589) over the Taoists. While the rivalry between the two remained strong, by the beginning of the Sixth Century Buddhism was sanctioned officially by prominent emperors of both the North and the South.

We now will consider the various arguments set forth in the SPWL in which Hui-yüan provides various illustrations with which he attempts to prove the existence of an immortal spirit. The essay is written in the form of an imaginary dialogue between the author and an orthodox Taoist opponent.

The dialogue opens with the Taoist introducing his position, contending that the spirit and body perish simultaneously at death:

> The receipt of spirit is limited to one life. When the life is exhausted the breath evaporates, and it is the same as nothing. The spirit, though it is more subtle than matter, is still a transformed manifestation of the dark element and the light element. When they have been transformed there is life; when they are transformed again there is death. When they agglomerate there is a beginning; when they disperse there is an end. If one

> reasons from this, one must know that the spirit and the body are transformed together, and that originally they are of the same line. The subtle and the gross are one breath, from beginning to end they have the same abode. While the abode is whole, the breath agglomerates and there is a soul; when the abode crumbles, the breath disperses and the light goes out. When it disperses, it returns what it has received to the Great Origin. When it has perished, it returns to a state of nothingness. Return and termination are natural fates. Who could create them? If you say that (body and soul) are fundamentally different, then their different elements combine by fate; when they combine, they transform together.[11]

Transformation and change together constitute the one inexorable force that determines the ultimate destiny and direction of all things produced from Tao. The Taoist does not doubt the existence of the spirit but only that it is somehow uniquely different from all other things subject to change and transformation and therefore able to transcend the natural flux of the mundane world. No entity, according to Taoist cosmogony, including the spirit that animates the body, is able to escape their pull.

The Taoist purport of the passage is clear. Consider, for example, the following explication of Taoist cosmogony set forth in the Tao-te-ching:

> Tao produced the one.
> The One produced the two.
> The two produced the three.
> And the three produced the ten thousand things.

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[11] SPWL 31b15, tr. Hurvitz, p. 107.

> The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of the material force they achieve harmony.[12]

The expression "ten thousand things" implies everything that exists in the world, which by definition comes from Tao. All elements of existence derive from Tao and return to Tao when they decay and perish. The spirit, in spite of its subtlety, still is a thing and therefore owes its existence to the combination of the "dark element and the light element." These are the yin 陰 and the yang 陽, respectively, and are referred to as the "two" in the Tao-te-ching. Further, the "Great Origin" is a euphemism for Tao and the state of non-being[13] 無. Similarly, the term "breath" in the SPWL is merely an alternate English translation of ch'i 氣, which Chan renders as "material force." Thus Hui-yüan in the SPWL has provided a general summary of the essential points of Taoist cosmogony which will be recognizable to Taoist readers.

Hui-yüan's Taoist opponent concludes his presentation of the Taoist argument for the impermanence of the spirit by quoting a passage from the Chuang-tzu which, because of its ambiguity, allows for a variety of interpretations:

> ... the spirit resides in the body as wood is in fire. While (the body) lives (the spirit) exists, but when (the body) crumbles (the spirit) must perish. When the body departs the spirit dispels and has no dwelling. When the tree rots the fire dies out and has nothing to attach to. The principle is so.[14]

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[12] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 42, Chan, p. 176.

[13] Cf. Tao-te-ching, Ch. 40: "All things in the world come from being. And being comes from non-being," Chan, p. 173.

[14] SPWL 31b23, tr. Hurvitz, p. 107.

To the Taoist the case is clear. When the wood is exhausted the fire perishes as well. Similarly, when the body dies so does the spirit living within it. This is the destiny of all things born from Tao. Thus he concludes, "Return and termination are natural fates. Who could create them?" The implication is that man has no control over the forces of birth and death.

As we have repeated in the previous Chapter, this laissez-faire posture in response to the dictates of fate runs contrary to the very heart of Buddhism. As Hui-yüan states, "(The spirit) submits to fate but it is not fated."[15] The spirit indeed is part of the mundane world but it has the potential to transcend it because one's destiny is determined by one's actions.

To bring others to this same conclusion Hui-yüan must convince his opponent that the spirit does endure and that over a period of rebirths man can take control of his destiny and eventually escape the round of birth and death (samsāra). To make his point Hui-yüan gives the following interpretation of the same passage from the Chuang-tzu which was cited above:

> The passage of fire to firewood is like the passage of the spirit to the body. The passage of fire to different firewood is like the passage of the spirit to a new body. If the former firewood is not the latter firewood, then we know that the way in which the finger exhausts its duty is past comprehension. If the former body is not the latter body, then one understands that the interaction of feelings and fate is profound. The person in error, seeing the body wither in one life, then thinks that the spirit and feelings perish

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[15] SPWL 31c9, tr. Hurvitz, p. 108; cf. infra, Ch. 4, sect. D.

> with it. It is as if one were to see fire exhaust itself on one piece of wood, and say that all fire has been consumed.[16]

Arriving at an entirely different interpretation of this passage than does his Taoist opponent, Hui-yüan concludes that, although the wood is exhausted, the fire passes on. The key to their different interpretations lies in the phrase: "If the former firewood is not the latter firewood, then we know that the way in which the finger exhausts its duty is past comprehension." It appears that Hui-yüan intends that his reader draw a parallel between the action of the finger in the transmission of fire and the mechanism of karma in the transmigration of the spirit. As the finger supplies a new source of wood and therefore a new locus for the fire, so does karma supply the energy that carries the spirit from one birth to the next.

Hui-yüan then offers a second illustration of the existence of an imperishable spirit reminiscent of his arguments in both the MPYL and the SPL. He contends that if one accepts the Taoist position, then there is no way to account for differences in human nature. Speaking to his imaginary opponent he states that:

> If, as you say, the spirit and body are transformed together, then they both begin from a spontaneous source. Fools and wise men come into being and both alike receive

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[16] SPWL 32a1, tr. Hurvitz, p. 111. Due to the ambiguity of the original Chinese, it is difficult to determine which of the two interpretations most closely adheres to the intentions of the Chuang-tzu. But given the context of the pasage as a whole it is unlikely that the text is making a case for transmigration as Hui-yüan would have us believe. In addition, Hui-yüan is making a category mistake. He is equating individual fires with the principle of fire.

> what they receive. As to what they receive, do they receive it from the body or do they receive it from the spirit? If they receive it from the spirit, it must be transmitted by means of the spirit ... then we know for certain that the structure of imperceptible causes was manifested in antiquity, and that the lot of intelligence or stupidity is fixed at the body's birth. Though the invisible forces dispense their beneficent motive powers with equality, yet they cannot alter the character's nature, much less anything else.[17]

Since the Taoist must concede that all things derive from Tao and share in it equally, he is unable to answer such simple questions as, for example, why some men are wise and others are stupid. A Buddhist understands that man's nature is the consequence of the deeds accrued over a period of successive rebirths. This accounts for variations in people's dispositions, abilities and temperaments.[18]

With these illustrations Hui-yüan has established that what distinguishes Buddhist from Taoist is not merely that one believes in the transmigration of the spirit while the other believes in the finality of a single lifetime. What is of central importance is what is done with these insights. While Taoism advocates that one should relinquish control over the course of one's life and acquiesce to the forces of change and transformation dictated by Tao, Hui-yüan contends that man is the master of his fate and that one's destiny is contingent upon the disposition of one's spirit and feelings.

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[17] SPWL 32a7, tr. Hurvitz, p. 111.

[18] It should be noted that both Hui-yüan and his Taoist opponent ignore one traditional Chinese solution to this problem. According to Mencius, man's nature is originally good, but, like water flowing down a mountain, it can pick up impurities or remain clean depending upon its course; cf., Mencius, Ch. 6A2.

D. Hui-yüan's definition of the spirit: further similarities and contrasts between Buddhist and Taoist categories

In the SPWL Hui-yüan defines the spirit. The last section of that essay contains his answer to the question: "What is the spirit?," to which he replies:

> It is subtlety that has reached an extreme and become immaterial. The extreme of subtlety cannot be charted by hexagrams and monograms. Therefore the Sage calls it 'more subtle than matter.'[19]

The spirit is so subtle that it is not part of the order of mundane material things and, consequently, is not completely bound by the laws which dictate the destiny of material things. The latter have no capacity to escape the impelling forces of change and transformation, and for a Taoist the spirit is also subject to those forces. Accordingly, Hui-yüan redefines the spirit. For him the spirit alone is capable of transcending the world regulated by change and transformation or karma.

To stress the unique position that the spirit has in the world, namely, that it is in the world but not of it, Hui-yüan adds that the spirit cannot be charted by the hexagrams and monograms of the I-ching. To the Chinese this implies the existence of an unusual phenomenon, for it was believed by some that the destiny of all phenomena was capable of being analyzed by the I-ching. Now Hui-yüan informs them that the spirit is so subtle that it cannot be fathomed by any established techniques of divination. The spirit is not an ordinary thing produced from Tao.

According to Professor Robinson the I-ching is also alluded to in the last phrase of the passage quoted above, which he translates: "There-

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[19] SPWL 31c1, tr. Hurvitz, p. 108.

fore Holy Men define it as inspiriting things and so name it."[20] The passage in the I-ching to which Hui-yüan may have been alluding says about the spirit that: "The spirit is mysterious in all things and works through them."[21] It implies that the spirit and material things are made of different substances. The spirit, although not a thing itself, is infused within physical forms and subsequently is responsible for animation.

In this vein Hui-yüan does maintain that there is a direct correlation between the presence of a spirit in some thing and that phenomenon's degree of animation.

> In general, they who reside within the limits received life from Great Change. Although the assembled varieties have a myriad of differences and subtle and gross are of different chains, if one reduces them to their ultimate there are only soulfull and soulless.[22]

Everything that exists is either imbued with a soul or is without a soul. The character ling  or soul is used to distinguish between animate and inanimate things. All things whether they are subtle or gross, large or small, are either animate or inanimate, as well. The quality or degree of animation is due to the presence of the spirit  within an inanimate form. This is the implication of the verse from the I-ching: "The spirit is mysterious in all living things and works through them." The spirit as such cannot be seen but its presence can be demonstrated by the characteristics of the forms which it inhabits.

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[20] Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China, p. 107 and n. 17.

[21] I-ching; Shuo-kua, Ch. 6, tr. Wilhelm/Baynes, p. 272.

[22] SPWL 30c1, tr. Hurvitz, p. 101.

Still further defining the spirit, Hui-yüan states that:

> The spirit is in perfect accord and has no master, it is subtle to the extreme and has no name. In response to beings it moves; submitting to fate it functions. It responds to things but it is no thing. Therefore though the things may change it does not perish.[23]

Here Hui-yüan has reiterated his main theme: the spirit is not a thing 非物 and consequently does not perish. The spirit is also said to have no name 無名, a description intended to alert Hui-yüan's readers to the similarity between the spirit and Tao. In the Tao-te-ching the Tao is also characterized as nameless[24] and, like the spirit, it does not perish. According to Taoist cosmogony Tao alone is not created, and because it is not born it cannot die. Thus both Tao and the spirit do not exist because of any precipitating causes or conditions.

That the spirit has no master 無主 implies that it is in control of its own fate, but not that it can ignore or remain immune to fate. Hui-yüan explains that:

> (The spirit) submits to fate but is not fated, therefore, though its fate may run its course, it is not terminated. If it has feelings, one can stimulate it by means of things; if it has intelligence, one can seek it in terms of fate. Of fated things there are subtle and gross, therefore their natures are different.[25]

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[23] SPWL 31c7, tr. Hurvitz; cf. also SPWL 30c5.

[24] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 1:
"The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth.
The named is the mother of all things."
Chan, p. 97.

[25] SPWL, 31c9, tr. Hurvitz, p. 108.

The spirit is subject to the dictates of fate but the direction it takes is not dictated by some higher principle such as Tao or the Mandate of Heaven. The spirit is capable of determining its own fate on the basis of its actions. The spirit is autonomous and can transcend the flux of the lower order of existence.

Hui-yüan emphasizes the autonomy of the spirit in order to establish the points at which Buddhism and Taoism differ. By contrast, the Taoists advocate that one should acquiesce to the forces of change. This is frequently recommended in the Tao-te-ching.

> Tao invariably takes no action, and yet there is nothing left undone. If kings and barons keep it, all things will transform spontaneously.[26]

Elsewhere in the Tao-te-ching it is said that:

> No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone.[27]

Since the destiny of all things is dicatated or fated by Tao, the best course of action is the course of non-action 無為 lest one act in such a manner as would be contrary to the course of Tao. Were this to occur death would come about more quickly, because the vital energies required for life would be exhausted prematurely. But by remaining obedient to Tao life is preserved for as long as possible. For the Taoist, longevity is an end in and of itself. During later phases of Taoism the pursuit for longevity evolved into a cult of immortality.

The Taoist pursuit of individual longevity is consistent with their

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[26] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 37, Chan, p. 166.

[27] Tao-te-ching, Ch. 48, Chan, p. 184.

belief that one is limited to a single lifetime. But since the Buddhists believe that there are many births due to karma, acquiescing to change will reap no significant benefits but rather will serve only further to bind the spirit to samsāra. Adhering to a life of non-action would undermine the very core of Buddhism's ethical system. As a result Hui-yüan devoted one of the five sections of the SPWL to the subject entitled, "He Who Seeks First Principles Does Not Acquiesce to Change."[28]

Thus for Hui-yüan there are two levels of existence. There exists the lower plane of conventional reality which consists of the continual transformations of birth and death (samsāra). Hui-yüan then recognizes a higher level of reality of which the spirit is a part. There exists an ontological dichotomy between these two levels of reality, between the spirit and all material things. That the spirit appears to be made of the same substance as are material phenomena is an epistemological error and does not derive from any ontological similarity between the two orders of existence. The unenlightened do not recognize that the spirit is foreign to the lower order of reality because of its very nature. Once the true character of the spirit is recognized the spirit is awakened to its own nature and it can escape the trammels of karma and rebirth.

In summation, Hui-yüan has provided a number of insights into the nature of the spirit. The spirit lives in the midst of the world of flux but has the capacity to transcend the round of birth and death. It is nameless, subtle and, therefore, not a thing. It cannot be fathomed by ordinary means of cognition, as these are able to comprehend only those things which belong to the lower level of reality made up of created or

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[28] SPWL 30b24, ff. tr. Hurvitz, p. 101, 102.

conditioned things. In its subtle and pure form the spirit is indigenous to the higher plane of reality.

None of these descriptions and euphemisms for the spirit are characteristically Buddhist. The vocabulary is distinctively and intentionally Taoist, though with obvious inclusions of significant redefinitions and re-interpretations provided at propitious points.

This is not to say, however, that Buddhist doctrine is entirely absent from Hui-yüan's deliberations in the SPWL. On the contrary, if his definition of the spirit is examined in light of Abhidharma teaching, particularly as it is presented in the AH, it becomes clear that implicit throughout his discussions of the spirit are certain authentically Buddhist doctrines.

E. Spirit as unconditioned (asamskrta) dharma: implicit parallels between Hui-yüan's understanding of the spirit and Buddhist thought

Supporting much of what Hui-yüan has to say about the spirit is his tacit acknowledgement of the theory of dharmas as propounded by the Sarvastivadin school. The AH is a text of this school. According to it all dharmas or elements of existence fall within two grand categories: conditioned elements (samskrta-dharma 有為法) and unconditioned elements (asamskrta-dharma 無為法). There are three unconditioned dharmas and seventy-two conditioned ones. The latter are again divided up into four divisions: elements of form (rūpa-dharma 色法), a single element of mind (citta-dharma 心法), elements that are concomitants of thought (caitasika-dharma 心數法)[29] and, finally, those elements which are neither form nor concomitant to thought (viprayuktasamskāra-dharma

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[29] Also written: 心所有法.

不相應行法. The breakdown of the seventy-five elements is adhered to in all Sarvastivadin Abhidharma texts, although different texts do relegate varying numbers of dharmas to the specific divisions.[30]

According to the AH all conditioned dharmas are characterized by four qualities.

> Answer: All formed things know birth, abiding, changing, and passing away.
>
> All formed things have four characteristics each: birth, abiding, changing, and passing away. Because they arise in the world they come into existence. Because, having arisen, the entities themselves are established, they abide. Because, when dwelling, their condition declines, they change. Because, having changed, they are extinguished, they pass away. These characteristics are called formations not associated with thought.
>
> Question: When each of the formed things has the four characteristics, do they also have the characteristics as characteristics?
>
> Answer: These also have four characteristics.
>
> Together with these characteristics four other characteristics are produced. A birth forms a birth. An abiding forms abiding. A changing forms a changing. A passing away forms passing away.
>
> Question: If so, then it is endless.
>
> Answer: In the course of their process they form one another.[31]

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[30]Cf. AH, Ch. 2, "Formations"行, inclusive, for its discussions of the conditioned and non-conditioned elements. Cf., also, Takakusu, The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, pp. 57-73, for a discussion of Abhidharma theory of dharmas and a table of the seventy-five elements.

[31]AH 811b17-24, verse 24 and commentary, tr. Willemen, pp. 19-20.

These four characteristics (laksana 相) are inherent in all formed or conditioned things. They rely upon causes 因 and conditions 緣 for their existence, and when these are removed the dharmas cease to abide and pass away.

There are three unconditioned dharmas as well.[32] Of the three, "cessation as a result of carefull consideration" (pratisamkhyānirodha 數緣滅) is nirvāna.[33] Careful consideration (pratisamkhyā) is the "intellectual power"[34] or "wise gnosis,"[35] as the term also has been translated, which is contemporaneous with the realization of nirvāna. When such insight is manifest there no longer are any attachments to unwholesome dharmas, and one is freed from the rebirth process. This is the fruit of a religious life and spiritual cultivation.[36]

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[32]Cf. AH 809c10, ff., verse 9 and commentary: "Non-information, and the three unformed (dharmas): space, cessation as a result of careful consideration, and cessation not as a result of careful consideration. All these are called the basis dharma and furthermore they are the element dharma," tr. Willemen, p. 6. "Cessation not as a result of careful consideration" is apratisamkhyānirodha 非數緣滅 and "space" if ākasa 虛空.

[33]Cf. Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, p. 162: "The first of these [pratisamkhyānirodha] is Nirvana which is defined as a dharma which brings about the 'possession' of 'disjunction' (visamyoga) from all impure dharmas, this disjunction itself being eternal and not produced by causes."

[34]Takakusu, op. cit., p. 72, fold-out.

[35]Conze, op. cit., p. 160.

[36]The choice of language here may appear to contradict the point being made. Nirvāna is unsupported and consequently is not the result of any causes or conditions, yet the realization of nirvāna is referred to as the result of one's spiritual labors. The Abhidharma texts do not clearly establish the relationship which exists at the moment of enlightenment or wise gnosis between samsāra and nirvāna. Conze notes that this is attributable to the fact that the Abhidharmists were so involved in constructing and refining their analyses of dharmas that they, "while stressing the

Nirvāna as an unconditioned dharma is eternal, changeless and enduring. The same is said of Tao. Neither are the result of any causes or conditions and, therefore, do not perish. To the extent that these descriptions and characterizations are similar to those used by Hui-yüan to describe the spirit, we can conclude that Hui-yüan sees certain ontological similarities between the spirit, Tao and nirvāna. The subtle identity that Hui-yüan has established between these three is an excellent demonstration of his ability to syncretize concepts.

We stress at this point that nowhere in his essays does Hui-yüan make the connection between these three concepts. However, we have drawn the connection based upon our understanding of the context of Hui-yüan's writings as a whole. As we have stated previously, it is unlikely that Hui-yüan derived his doctrine of the spirit in ignorance of the Buddhist doctrine of anātman. Furthermore, we have demonstrated that Hui-yüan was not only aware of the anātman doctrine but that he also was well aware of other complex elements of Abhidharma reflection. Based upon our analysis of Hui-yüan's descriptions of the spirit and the applicable aspects of Abhidharma theory known to Hui-yüan as a result of his familiarity with the AH, we contend that the spirit demonstrates characteristics similar to those displayed by the unconditioned dharmas.

To reiterate, based upon the descriptions of the spirit provided by Hui-yüan, we conjecture that he also may have recognized an ontological

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fact that Nirvana and this world are quite incommensurable, gave up all attempts at explaining how anyone can ever reach Nirvana," op. cit., p. 160. We conjecture that Hui-yüan was struck by this as well, and decided that it was more important to focus on how one might 'reach' nirvāna than engage in the lengthy and circuitous debates familiar to him in the AH. Cf. supra, Ch. 5.

similarity between the spirit, Tao, and the asamskrta-dharmas (i.e., nirvāna). According to the proponents of the traditions holding to the three categories, each is eternal, subsists on its own, and does not depend upon any causes and conditions for its existence. None of the three can be grasped physically, for they are not material objects, nor mentally, since they exist beyond the boundaries within which ordinary cognition operates. They are nameless, and can only be 'grasped' with the wisdom and insight that are synonymous with enlightenment.

The following diagram may present a more straightforward illustration of Hui-yüan's syncretism:

Buddhist category		Taoist category	Hui-yüan's category	General characteristics
samskrta-dharma	=	things =	(same)	conditioned impermanent lower level reality
asamskrta-dharma	=	Tao =	spirit	unconditioned permanent higher level reality

Thus in the SPWL Hui-yüan has established a subtle matrix of categories and concepts which heretofore had been mutually exclusive. This has not been achieved without a certain amount of reinterpretation and subsequent redefinition, but as we have emphasized it was Hui-yüan's endeavor to make Buddhism understandable to the populace and not to create philosophical bulwarks as though he were engaged in a sectarian debate.

It is this pragmatic aspect of Hui-yüan's thought that encouraged him also to try not only to explain the nature of the relationship between the spirit and nirvāna in common sense terms, but then to explain how the spirit could realize nirvāna. The final Chapter of this essay will discuss this facet of Hui-yüan's thought.

CHAPTER

V

THE SPIRIT AND ITS RELATION TO SAMSARA AND NIRVANA

Typical of the manner in which Hui-yüan articulates complicated points of Buddhist doctrine in simple terms is his explication of nirvāṇa. Traditionally, nirvāṇa is contrasted with saṃsāra. The former is a state free of affliction, causes and conditions from which there is no rebirth. Saṃsāra is the round of birth and death generated by causes and conditions and is synonymous with impermanence and suffering. Nirvāṇa is the ultimate goal of a Buddhist's spiritual avocation.

In order to facilitate an understanding of these concepts and their implications among his Chinese followers, Hui-yüan translated them into concepts more familiar to the Chinese. He converted the Indian Buddhist polarity of nirvāṇa and saṃsāra into the Chinese Buddhist dichotomy changelessness 不化 and change 化. Again, Hui-yüan borrowed terminology used throughout the Taoist corpus. Thus he states in the SPWL:

> Therefore the Scriptures say that nirvana is changeless making the cessation of change its home, while the three worlds are in flux making sin and pain their place. When change is exhausted, then causes and conditions cease forever; when there is flux then the suffering of pain has no limit.[1]

Change and saṃsāra, as Hui-yüan uses the terms, are synonymous with rebirth. The spirit remains chained to the cycle because of ignorance and desires which together promote the necessary causes and conditions necessary for rebirth.

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[1] SPWL 31c12, tr. Hurvitz, p. 102.

> Ignorance is the abyss of the web of illusion; desires are the storehouse of all ties. These two principles wandering in darkness are the function of the spirit ... Therefore feelings and thoughts are congealed and weakened by external objects. Desire continues by its own nature. Thus the Four Great (Elements) combine and become form.[2]

As long as ignorance prevails, the path to nirvāṇa remains obscured and desires control the spirit. One desires material objects and possessions, not realizing their impermanence. In the end even the physical body which is constituted by the Four Great Elements[3] is viewed as permanent and the merely transient pleasures of the body are contemplated and clung to. Thus Hui-yüan states:

> When there are barriers between the self and others then the self possesses a body and it is not forgotten. Where there exists a master over wholesome and unwholesome deeds, then one hankers after life and rebirth is not cut off.[4]

In other words, as long as there exists a selfish ego, personal desires prevail and rebirth continues. Elsewhere he notes that:

> Life is fettered by the body, and life depends upon the existence of Change. As Change produces an effect upon feelings, the spirit is barred from its own source and the intellect is blinded to its own illumination. If there is a hard enclosure, then what is maintained is only the self, and what is traversed

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[2] MPYL 33c9, ff., our translation.

[3] Four Great (Elements) 四大 : earth 地 , water 水 , fire 火 , wind 風 .

[4] MPYL 33c13, ff. our translation.

is only the state of flux.[5]

Until the spirit is released from the restraints of the hard enclosure 封 of the body, it remains bound within saṃsāra.

The roots of the existential predicament of rebirth are ignorance and desire, but neither are the focal point of Hui-yüan's discussions. In order to explain how the spirit may find its way out of saṃsāra, Hui-yüan directs his attention toward the ch'ing 情 or feelings.

The ch'ing are the mark of sentient existence; without their presence there is no awareness of suffering or joy. The ch'ing impel the deluded self to cling to the notion of self-hood (ātman) and other objects of desire. Consequently the ch'ing must be cut off before the spirit can be freed from the constraints of the body. According to Hui-yüan:

> He who transcends the grimy enclosure does not encumber his life with feelings. If one does not encumber one's life with feelings then one's life can end. If one does not encumber one's spirit with life then one's spirit can be made subtle. The subtle spirit breaking the bounds--this is what is meant by Nirvana.[6]

At the point at which the spirit transcends life within the grimy enclosure of the physical body the spirit has attained nirvāṇa.

The realization of nirvāṇa is the goal of all Buddhists. But Hui-yüan acknowledges that this end cannot be obtained until the process which binds the spirit to the body is fully understood. This wisdom is the only antidote to ignorance. Therefore it behooves Hui-yüan to explain why the ch'ing must be cut off.

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[5] SPWL 30c9, tr. Hurvitz, p. 102.

[6] SPWL 30c14, tr. Hurvitz, p. 102.

According to Hui-yüan, rebirth results from the continuous interdependence of three related elements: the spirit, the ch'ing and change.

> ... one knows Change is felt by the feelings; and that the spirit is transmitted through Change. Feelings are the mother of Change and the spirit is the root of the feelings. The feelings have a way of uniting with physical things, and the spirit has the power of moving imperceptibly. But one of penetrating perception returns to the Source, while one who has strayed from the principle merely runs after physical things.[7]

If allowed to run its course, this process is a vicious cycle. The source of change is not the spirit itself but rather the ch'ing which are rooted in the spirit. As long as the ch'ing are rooted in the spirit, the spirit is subject to change and rebirth. Because of the ch'ing an individual responds to things in certain ways. Therefore the various sorts of actions undertaken by an individual depend upon the disposition of the ch'ing. If the ch'ing are selfish and desire worldly gain, then the spirit will be subjected to karmic retribution commensurate with those types of actions. If untoward actions are performed then the retribution will be negative and the spirit will be tied all the more to saṃsāra.

In a strictly Buddhist context the ch'ing may refer to the saṃskāras or karmic formations. The saṃskāras are determined by the deeds committed during previous lives which actually determine the disposition of the individual of which they are a part. With this in mind, Professor Robinson translates ch'ing as "predispositions."[8] The nature of one's saṃskāras

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[7] SPWL 31c11, tr. Hurvitz, p. 109.

[8] Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China, p. 106.

are inexorably tied to the whole process of karma: the ch'ing are the fruit of prior action which, in turn, determine the karma or action of the present lifetime manifested through body, speech, or thought.

What Hui-yüan fails to express clearly is the exact nature of the relationship that exists between the ch'ing, the spirit and what we have referred to as the 'individual' or 'person' who performs the actions which dictate the direction taken by the spirit. The 'person' is actually the combination of body and spirit in which the inanimate form of the body is animated by the spirit. The spirit is an autonomous entity. Although this autonomy is a fact, it often is obscured by ignorance.

Thus the spirit frequently is guided not by its own nature but by the ch'ing which are conditioned.

In effect, then, the spirit alone is not the root of the ch'ing. It is the combined presence of the spirit within a body, which constitutes a 'person,' that provides the locus for the ch'ing. The ch'ing, however, are conditioned and consequently depend upon some factor or factors, i.e., karma, and present conditions, for their existence. But the spirit is likened to an unconditioned dharma, and unconditioned dharmas cannot themselves be the cause of further production. The spirit and the ch'ing are ontologically different. The spirit could not be the mother of the feelings. By definition, then, if the spirit were to exist on its own, free from the body, there would be no ch'ing.

It is difficult to determine whether or not Hui-yüan understood this. But as long as the unconditioned spirit and the unconditioned ch'ing appeared to belong to different levels of reality, Hui-yüan was hard pressed to explain how the gap between them could be traversed. What

logical process could connect samsāra and nirvāna so that Hui-yüan could explain how one could get to nirvāna from samsāra? The Abhidharma theorists had long since ceased to ask such questions,[9] so Hui-yüan could not turn to the AH for an answer to his dilemma. Not until the introduction of the Mādhyamika school into China with Kumārajīva's translations of their scriptures was Hui-yüan to learn that nirvāna and samsāra were ontologically identical. With this knowledge many of Hui-yüan's deliberations about the nature of the spirit may have seemed unnecessary.

Lacking these insights, however, it was absolutely essential that Hui-yüan bridge the gap between nirvāna and samsāra. Otherwise he would have failed to provide any sensible reasons for adhering to the tenets of Buddhism, which operate on the premise that nirvāna is accessible from the realm of samsāra. If Hui-yüan could not prove that the realization of nirvāna was the fruit of spiritual cultivation and that there indeed was a direct process by which the spirit could move from samsāra to nirvāna, then the most basic message of the Buddha's teaching would have been rendered meaningless.

We conclude that it is in response to this predicament that Hui-yüan asserts that the feelings derive from the spirit. Thus even though the spirit is unconditioned it gives birth to the feelings. When the feelings are cut off the spirit is free to realize its identity with nirvāna.

With regard to this conclusion, critics, particularly those schooled in the Abhidharma, may be quick to accuse Hui-yüan of having committed a serious breach of philosophical consistency. In his defense, however, we must emphasize once again that the main object of his writing

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[9] Cf. supra, Ch. IV, sect. E, note 36.

and teaching was not to create a defendable philosophical position. Foremost in Hui-yüan's thought was the desire to make Buddhism understandable and accessible. His personal observances within the cult of Amitābha reflects his awareness of the need for personal salvation in nirvāṇa. If this end could only be achieved by sacrificing philosophical integrity or rigidity, then it appears that Hui-yüan was willing to make such a sacrifice. In this respect, Hui-yüan rejected the subtle systems of the Abhidharma, which had lost sight of the real purpose of Buddhism, in exchange for teaching how one could realize the ultimate goal of Buddhism which is nirvāṇa.

CONCLUSION

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It appears that Hui-yüan's doctrine of the immortality of the spirit had no long lasting effect upon the development of Buddhism in China. No doubt this is due to the fact that within the Buddhist circles it remained a highly unorthodox doctrine. For most, the dangers inherent in speaking in terms of the spirit outweighed the advantages that Hui-yüan found in utilizing the concept. What Hui-yüan is best remembered for are his efforts on behalf of the cult of Amitabha, which some regard as the beginning of the popular White Lotus society and the Pure Land sect. These each enjoyed a prominent role in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

This is not to say that Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit is unimportant in the annals of Chinese Buddhism. In the first place, to anyone interested in the process by which one religion or system of thought is transplanted onto foreign soil and then puts down roots, the lessons revealed in Hui-yüan's theories are highly informative. He was certainly a master of both the Chinese and the Buddhist idiom, and his ability to syncretize the two attests to his brilliance. Students of either Chinese or Chinese Buddhist thought thought can acquire no small degree of insight into the thought patterns of either system. The Buddhist should feel free to test the efficacy of the anātman doctrine against Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit. Furthermore, Hui-yüan's subtle allusions to Abhidharma dharma theory should be a lesson to anyone who is curious about how a most complex theory can be restated in simple terms, and still do justice to its essential elements. The student of Taoism, on the other hand, can

similarly gain many insights into the nature of Taoist thought. He can test the validity of the Taoist interpretation of tzu-jan or nature by studying it in light of Hui-yüan's new application of the concept with reference to the mechanism by which karma operates. In addition, much can be learned from a comparison of the Buddhist and Taoist understanding of the difference between produced or conditioned elements of existence and those elements which are unconditioned.

Apart from these and other specific points, there is in Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit a lesson of a more general nature which pertains to a phenomenon common to the history of religions without regard for any particular time or place. It has to do with the often noted dichotomy between praxis and theoria. Throughout the foregoing Chapters, we have noted again and again a methodological thread which runs through all of Hui-yüan's essays. Whenever it was necessary, in matters of interpretation and explication, Hui-yüan always opted for that explanation or interpretation which conveyed the essential points of the argument with the greatest simplicity. Hui-yüan sought out the most direct and straightforward path sometimes even sacrificing philosophical consistency or accuracy. Clearly, the doctrine of the spirit came dangerously close to heresy. But Hui-yüan was not interested in theory for its own sake. He was concerned with the practice of Buddhism which would lead its adherents to nirvāṇa. If apologies need to be made for Hui-yüan's doctrine of the spirit, then it must be said in his defense that for him the end justified the means. If, by preaching that there indeed existed an immortal spirit, Hui-yüan was able to preserve the autonomy of the clergy and explain difficult points of Buddhism, such as the theory of karma, then it is clear that he regarded such means as justified by the end result.

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