

EARLY NEO-CONFUCIAN CRITICISM

OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

The introduction of this thesis gives the cultural background of the thousand-year old confrontation between a well sinicized India-born religion, Chinese Buddhism, and the reviving Chinese orthodoxy of the Sung period, Neo-Confucianism. Early Neo-Confucianist philosophers, namely Ch'eng Hao, Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, attacked Buddhism on four main grounds: historical and textual formulations, cosmology, metaphysics, and ethics -- both social and personal. The point of the thesis is to give a critical account and a tentative appraisal of their criticism, by examining both their rejection and their assimilations of Buddhist views, and in so doing to propose an answer to why Neo-Confucianism finally succeeded in permanently defeating the still powerful Chinese Buddhism of the time.

PREFACE

Je tiens ici à dire dans ma langue maternelle ma gratitude envers l'admirable équipe de professeurs, étudiants et membres du personnel, qui m'a accueilli au département de religion de l'Université McMaster. Ce milieu privilégié m'a permis d'atteindre mon objectif, celui d'accroître et d'affiner mes connaissances sur les pensées indienne et chinoise, ainsi que sur la problématique occidentale contemporaine.

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MERCI.

le 30 août 1972

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ABBREVIATIONS

- B de Bary, W. T., Sources of Chinese Tradition
- CP Chan, W.-t., A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy
- ES 1 Essai sur le bouddhisme, I, in G. E. Sargent, Tchou Hi contre le bouddhisme p. 137-141
- ES 2 Essai sur le bouddhisme, II, in G. E. Sargent, Tchou Hi contre le bouddhisme, p. 142-148
- FH Fung Yu-lan, A History of Chinese Philosophy
- FSH Fung Yu-lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy
- NC Chan, W.-t., Neo-Confucianism, Etc.: Essays
- OT Chang Chung-yuan, Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism
- PS Chan, W.-t., The Platform Scripture
- PSU Yampolsky, P. B., The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch
- R Chan, W.-t., Reflections on Things at Hand
- S Ts'ai, Y.-c., The Philosophy of Ch'eng I, A Selection...
- TT Sargent, G. E. Tchou Hi contre le bouddhisme, section sur le bouddhisme du "Tchou-tseu Ts'ian Chou" ((Chu Tzu ch'uan-shu)), k. 60, p. 8b-24a.

INTRODUCTION

Many historians describe the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) as the Golden Age of Chinese Culture, as well as the starting point of "the early modern society of China",¹ which has been characterized for the last 800 years by the Neo-Confucian state ideology.²

This major change in Chinese history reached its turning point with a major philosophical event: the confrontation of two great philosophical and religious traditions,³ the Chinese-born, 1500 year old, well-established Confucianism, in the process of its second major recasting since Tung Chung-shu,⁴ and the India-born but well-adapted, highly appealing to both the people and the intelligentzia, especially in times of trouble and insecurity, and "at the peak of its power":⁵ Chinese Buddhism.

The result of this confrontation which lasted from Chou Tun-i (1017-73) considered the founder of Neo-Confucianism,⁶ to Lu Chiu-yuan (1139-93) and Wang Yang-ming (1472-1528), was a complete and lasting change on the religious map of China: the displacement of Buddhism from its dominant position among the intelligentzia and the

¹E.O. Reischauer and J.K. Fairbank, East Asia, The Great Tradition, 183 sq.

²J. Liu, Ou-yang Hsiu, 18.

³For the meaning of these terms, see below p. 11.

⁴A.F. Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History, 89.

⁵"Aujourd'hui le bouddhisme est au comble de sa puissance" (Chu Hsi TT 65).

⁶W.-t. Chan, NC 69

establishment of Neo-Confucianism as the new system of thought which moulded early modern China for eight succeeding centuries.

The significance of this decisive event is multifold. Firstly for China, it meant the triumph of orthodoxy, which for the second time since the Hans, proved its vitality by assimilating major elements of rival ideologies, initially the Yin-Yang conception of history, then the Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics and spirituality, while still preserving the essence of the original Confucian spirit, which is humanism. Secondly for Buddhism, it meant not only the beginning of its decline as the leading ideology, which has produced for a millenium generations of China's best thinkers,⁷ but also as a universal religion, after its disappearance from India itself, the first serious indication of its second failure to bring salvation to the world. Thirdly for humanity as a whole, it meant a major change in the cultural and religious map of the world and the advent of a new civilization impregnated with some of the best of the old Chinese systems and having an impact on history on the same scale as China itself.

Such an important and rather sudden change cannot but raise various questions. Why did this confrontation, which was going on under different forms since the introduction of Buddhism in China, finally succeed in the Sung period with the Neo-Confucianist

⁷Y. P. Mei, "The Basis of Social, Ethical, and Spiritual Values in Chinese Philosophy", in C. A. Moore, Ed. The Chinese Mind, 161.

criticism? Which new points did Neo-Confucianism raise so forcefully that Buddhism was not able adequately to counterattack? Some of these questions are of an economic, social, political and cultural order, and though the present thesis deals exclusively with this confrontation from the philosophical and religious viewpoint, it may serve the purpose of the subsequent discussion to shed some light on the other aspects of the problem.

The Sung Dynasty did not display the same military power as the Tangs did. Actually it failed to preserve Chinese territorial integrity and lost to the Chin the whole of North China. In return, the Southern Sung were keen to develop the Chinese economy, to the point that a real commercial and social revolution took place, and this had a direct impact on both Buddhism and Confucianism. The former lost the support of the great families with the rise of a new 'gentry class' and the fading of the aristocracy. The newcomers invaded the key-posts of the state and the cities, and created a need for "a new ethos in a new society".⁸ Weakened materially, Buddhism lost its social significance as well. Gone were the days when it answered the needs of Chinese society, whether as a unifying agent in a time of disunion, as it was for centuries during the North and the South Dynasties,⁹ or as a social, medical and educational organization for the benefit of the masses.¹⁰ The Sung Buddhist monks had lost track of the social

⁸ A. F. Wright, op.cit., 90

⁹ Ibid., Ch.3

¹⁰ Jan, Yun-hua, A Chronical of Buddhism in China, 7

applications the early Buddhist Chinese had made of the Bodhisattva doctrine. They lived more and more in isolation from the people, in temples built deep in the forests. In the meantime, the Confucian intelligentsia ruled the new state with dedication and efficiency. The reinstatement by the Sui Dynasty (581-618) of the Han system of examinations based on the Confucian classics had secured a position of power for Confucianism in the Chinese state; this Buddhism never really challenged. On the contrary, Buddhism received a hard blow in 845 when the state decreed the destruction of 4,600 monasteries, 40,000 temples, the secularization of 260,500 monks and the liberation of 150,000 slaves, both of classes "being subjected to the double tax".¹¹ Though the anti-Buddhist measure was revoked a year later, the psychological effect on both the public and the sangha was shattering, and although it is perhaps rash to claim that one year's suppression was the start of the Buddhist decline in China, it still seems true to assert the existence of a strong anti-Buddhist movement in the ruling class and of a vigorous revival of Confucianism.¹²

This failure of Buddhism at the social and political level happened in spite of its efforts to adapt itself to the Chinese milieu. The usual charges against it, since the very beginning of its acclimatation to the country, mainly concerned its immorality, because it ignored filial piety and reverence due to the ruler.

¹¹ K. Ch'en, Buddhism in China, 232

¹² E. O. Reischauer and J. K. Fairbank, op. cit. 236, See p.18, n.31. Also Hu Shih, "Chan (Zen) Buddhism in China" in Philosophy East and West, 3 (1953), 17.

Moreover, it was disliked because of its barbarian origin and its economic and social parasitism, its doctrine of transmigration, and its political obnoxiousness. These criticisms, the Buddhists were not able to answer effectively, especially in matters of monastic discipline and karmic doctrine. However, they counterattacked on many points, and especially on the very serious charges of being a religion of decadent periods,¹³ and of ignoring filial piety.¹⁴ But the fundamental questions underlying these rather shallow encounters were almost ignored. Furthermore, these attempts of Buddhism to suggest to the Chinese that its other-worldliness would not disqualify it as a public and even a state religion, or that its doctrine contained "points which conform to the contents of the Book of Changes and the Analects of Confucius",¹⁵ could only increase the feeling of inner contradictions inside and outside the sangha.

With the advent of the new intelligentsia of the Sung Dynasty, this rather ambiguous discussion between Buddhism and the old Chinese orthodoxy came to an end. Contrary to what happens in the West, these new men were both intellectuals and bureaucrats, which means that they had developed the practical side of their Chinese mind to the utmost, and that the social and political aspects of the problems were for them of prime importance. The Neo-Confucian movement started

¹³Jan Y.-h., A Chronicle of Buddhism in China, 581-960 A.D.,

¹⁴K. Ch'en, "Filial Piety in Chinese Buddhism", 81-97

¹⁵Jan Y.-h., op. cit., 85

among these men. Their confrontations with the Buddhists were mainly on these grounds, and more than ever before the Chinese view that theory, like virtue, has to be demonstrated was applied to metaphysics as well as to ethics. The Neo-Confucianists described Buddhist ethics as selfishness on the social level, a fundamental selfishness rooted in their metaphysical other-worldliness.

To these extremely severe charges, the Buddhists could find no proper defence. Socially, as we have seen, they were to a great extent out of the picture, and the very success of such a radical movement as Ch'anism was a confirmation of the Neo-Confucian accusations. Metaphysically, most of the weapons which they imported from India, like the formidable dialectics of the Madhyamika school, were of no use to the Buddhist schools against their practical minded opponents. Furthermore, some of them, and especially the T'ien-t'ai, the Hua-yen and the Ch'an schools, had themselves departed from the original Indian doctrines and had developed their own metaphysical system around the concepts of sūnyatā and Mind-only, a purely absolutist, subjective and idealistic approach to the Real. In view of their conduct, it is no surprise that their theory failed as a valid answer to the Chinese mind. The positions of Buddhism being already undermined socially, politically and culturally, it seems that this attack on their own grounds, the sūnyatā and Mind-only doctrines, as well as their programme of spiritual cultivation, constituted the final blow from which Chinese Buddhism never recovered.

But, as Reischauer and Fairbank point out¹⁶, it would be a mistake

¹⁶ Op.cit., 236 sq.

to picture the rise of Neo-Confucianism merely as the result of the Buddhist failure. The main cause is to be found in Neo-Confucianism itself, in the coming of a new generation of thinkers who accepted, as did their predecessors, the authority of the classics, but for the first time in a thousand years, answered the Buddhist challenge by building up a new Confucian metaphysics to support a renewed Confucian ethics adapted to the needs of their time. This period, which came to its peak with the philosophers of the two Schools, is a key moment in the Confucian-Buddhist confrontation.

Although scholars gave due attention to this confrontation, no systematic and comprehensive study has so far been made on it. Whether their writings deal with the Sung period in general, or with Neo-Confucianism or Buddhism in particular, their comments on the confrontation proper are in most cases sketchy and of side-line importance. Those like G.E.Sargent who have worked on individual thinkers have treated the question in too limited a way.

The present thesis attempts to be a critical approach of the Neo-Confucian criticisms of Chinese Buddhism. That these criticisms were successful and led to the decline of Buddhism as the leading religion of China is a fact. Therefore, they deserve careful examination.

As it is usually the case in a confrontation, the opponents influenced each other, and most commentators describe Neo-Confucianism as a synthesis of the three main earlier traditions in China, in which the Buddhist influence is traced at every level. In order to cope with this give-and-take process, the method adopted for the present thesis consists in examining, in each area of the confrontation, both the rejections and the assimilations of the Buddhist views by its opponents.

The present thesis is an attempt to collect materials in translation from all sources available, in English and in French, and to review this

confrontation, mainly from Ch'eng brothers' and Chu Hsi's texts, and to review it as a whole. This study is limited first of all to the dominant school of Neo-Confucianism, namely the Ch'eng Chu school, or Li hsüeh (School of Principles). This school is represented by Ch'eng I (1033-1108) as the founder and Chu Hsi (1130-1200) as the synthesizer; and secondly to Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085), brother of Ch'eng I, who exerted a major influence on the development on the Ch'eng Chu school,¹⁷ although he is considered the initiator of another school which developed later on with Lu Chiu-yüan (1139-1193) and Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529). These two scholars became very important figures of the Neo-Confucian thought, but their reputation and influence during the Sung period were nevertheless very limited and far from competing with the dominant orthodoxy represented by Chu Hsi. Moreover, Lu's philosophy was always connected with the later development of Wang Yang-ming' thought in the sixteen century, and of his later followers. The influence of these two philosophers rightly belongs outside the scope of this thesis.

The Ch'eng Brothers and Chu Hsi, who are sometimes designated in the thesis under the name of the Sung philosophers or even of the Ch'eng Chu school when the three are in agreement, attacked the Chinese Buddhism of their time on three main grounds: historical,

¹⁷Chu Hsi incorporated Ch'eng Hao's texts into his anthology: Reflection on Things at Hand. They are at times confused with Ch'eng I's texts and this constitutes a major exegetical problem for the study of this period. In the present thesis, we rely on the research of W.-t. Chan on the occasion of his translation of Chu Hsi's anthology.

metaphysical and ethical. For a better reading of the present thesis, the extension and limits of each of these fields, as well as the terminology used in reference to them, ought to be clarified.

The firsts chapter entitled "Historical and Textual Criticisms" presents no special difficulty. The historical aspect concerns mainly the founders and protectors, while the textual criticism is about the early literature of Chinese Buddhism. But the terminology used for the three other chapters might raise some questions. Most commentators of the Neo-Confucianist philosophers use the terms 'metaphysics' or 'metaphysical' when discussing about categories like Heaven, Tao, li, ch'i, yin and yang, even jen, without making any distinction between the cosmological and the metaphysical levels. However, authorized thinkers like Chang and Fung Yu-lan refer to the pioneers of Neo-Confucianism (Han Yu, Li Ao, Chou Tun-i, Shao Yung, Chang Tsai) as 'cosmologists'¹⁸, presumably because these pioneers did not developed the metaphysical aspects of their systems, whereas they refer to the philosophers of the two Schools, the Ch'eng Chu school or Li hsueh (School of Principle) and the Lu-Wang school (School of Mind), as 'metaphysicians' probably because these philosophers emphasize the metaphysical dimension. The specific study of the latter in Chap. II and III will show that some cosmological elements are also found in their system and therefore that there is no radical opposition between cosmology and metaphysics. It is a matter of emphasis. For instance, according to the French philosopher Paul Janet (1823-1899), metaphysics taken as the science of the highest principles and first causes can be divided into a) general metaphysics or ontology, which treats of principles in an abstract

¹⁸ Fung Y.-l., A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, 266 and C. Chang, The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought, 137 and 159.

and general manner and deals, as Aristotle puts it, with being as being, and b) special metaphysics, which deals with beings and is divided in three parts: rational psychology, rational cosmology and rational theology or theodicy¹⁹.

In the present thesis, cosmology means this part of metaphysics which deals with the general laws that govern the structure and the development of the universe. The terms 'metaphysics' and 'metaphysical' refer to the science of the first principles and causes comprehensible only to speculative reason, the ultimate explanation beyond ('meta') the perception of the physical phenomena. This division and its underlying definitions, which seem to cover satisfactorily the general characteristics of the Neo-Confucian system, might also be applied to Buddhism. Already T.R.V. Murti, in his Central Philosophy of Buddhism, makes constant use of the terms 'metaphysics' and 'metaphysical' when speaking of the radical pluralism or the radical absolutism of the Buddhist schools, and uses the term 'cosmological' when discussing the rejection of Eternalist and Nihilist (or Materialist) views²⁰. Moreover, Chapters II and III will show that Buddhism preserved many cosmological conceptions like the three worlds, the cycles, samsara, etc.²¹. This seems a sufficient reason to adopt the distinction between metaphysics and cosmology as do Murti and Western scholars as well in their study of Buddhism²².

19

620.

A. Lalande, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie,

20

T.R.V. Murti, Central Philosophy of Buddhism, 5 and 38-39 and 7.

21

See Chap. II, 22.

22

E.g. A.F. Wright speaks of Chu Hsi who developed "a cosmology, a set of metaphysical notions, a cluster of psychological concepts" (op.cit., 90)

It is important to note that Buddhist metaphysics deals with ultimate explanation in terms of the real and the true, whereas Neo-Confucianism deals with ultimate explanation rather in terms of the principle or rationality or the concrete world.

For the last chapter, which is entitled "Ethical Views", the term 'ethics' seems, likewise, to be suitable for both Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism, providing it is understood in a broad sense, as the study of human conduct, its goals, its ultimate values, its obligations, rights, and means of fulfilment, both in social and personal life. Therefore, this fourth chapter is divided into "Social Views", dealing with human responsibility and conduct in relation to society, and "Personal Cultivation", referring mainly to questions about self-realization, in terms of goals, means, virtues and methods.

While the general term of 'philosophy' refers more specifically, in this thesis, to cosmology and metaphysics, the term 'religion' covers more specifically the field of ethics. Both terms, though, are used occasionally to designate Confucianism or Buddhism as a whole, depending which aspect, ethical or metaphysical-cosmological, is emphasized in the context.

I

HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL CRITICISMS

This first section deals mostly with Chu Hsi's historical and textual criticism as found mainly in a section of the Chu Tzu ch'uan-shu and a short essay on Buddhism, the Che che louen, II , both of which appear in translation in G.E. Sargent's thesis Tchou Hi contre le bouddhisme.

It is Chu Hsi who brought into complete synthesis the various elements of the young Neo-Confucian system. Nearly a hundred years had passed since the Ch'eng brothers had laid down the foundations of the Ch'eng Chu school and Chu Hsi was in a better position than his predecessors to launch his attacks against Buddhism in a comparatively comprehensive and thorough manner. It is also no surprise that Chu Hsi attracts the attention of the philosophers and historians who study this turning point in the development of Chinese thought. Sargent's work is a typical example of this. But precisely because Chu Hsi is the 'great synthetizer' (W.-t. Chan) of early Neo-Confucianism, it is important not to isolate him from his forerunners.

Another point to keep in mind is the fact that the Neo-Confucian attack proved to be successful; this in itself, is an indication that the Ch'eng Chu philosophers somehow hit the target. Their target was the particular Buddhism of their own time and their own context, Chinese Buddhism as it had developed up to the time of the Sung Dynasty. This

is particularly important to remember in trying to evaluate Chu Hsi's historical and textual criticisms. A good number of commentators, and this remark seems to fit Sargent's work, do not make a clear distinction, when speaking of Buddhism in China, between its Indian and its Chinese characteristics.

In his book Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples, Nakamura points out three main areas of sinicization in which the original Indian version of Buddhism developed into a Chinese version which proved to be, a thousand years later, quite different from its Indian counterpart.

The first of these areas is philosophical and concerns the minor role in Chinese Buddhism given to the Indian logic which had moulded the bulk of the Sastra literature. Not only did the Chinese translate very few and only the minor Indian logical treatises, but none of the epistemological works attempting to develop a theory of knowledge was translated. As in the field of culture or religion, the Chinese were not interested in theory as such, but in its practical and ethical implications. Perhaps one of the best illustration of this selective and concretizing process of the Chinese mind is the "non-logical character" (Nakamura) of Ch'an Buddhism. The cryptic and disconcerting answers of the Ch'an masters are well-known but their way of ignoring some of the basic distinctions familiar to the Indian mind is to be noted as well. Nakamura quotes the monk Huang-po as referring to the true universal body of the Buddha as being "like the sky": "But they do not understand that the universal body is sky, and sky is the universal body. The two are not different."²³

²³ Nakamura, op. cit. 193

From this it is easy to understand how this way of thinking may affect, in the long run, the very root of the basic concepts of any system of thought. It may also lead opponents to deep misunderstandings of its fundamentals. In the light of these facts, it is no surprise to find in the Chinese canon of Buddhist literature characteristics which contrast sharply with what remains of the original Sanskrit canon. Modern historians have noted the "Taoization" of the first Chinese translations as well as the ke-yi method of the early Chinese Buddhist scholars.

The second area of sinicization for Buddhism was its social role and status in Chinese society. The early Buddhists interpreted the Bodhisattva ideal of 'compassion' in terms of a tangible answer to the needs of Chinese society. Here is how a historian of Chinese Buddhism for the period 581-960 A.D. describes their contribution:

Regarding the social activities of the Buddhists, monasteries conducted hospitals and medical services, maintaining of free kitchens, public hostels and bath, banking institutions and the burial of poor deceased persons. Monasteries also acted as the centres of learning, many distinguished scholars studied in Buddhist temples availing themselves of the facilities offered. In many places, monks also worked for the promotion of mass education.²⁴

Underlying this altruistic attitude was the doctrine of samāta, sameness, or the non-duality of the self with the other, so that helping others was part of self-realization. But this undifferentiated concern in human relations, though once promoted by Moism and taught by Taoism, conflicted with the traditional Confucian ideal of limited and graduated

²⁴Jan Yun-hua, A Chronicle of Buddhism in China, 7

love, first for the family and from the family outward. Quite unexpectedly Chinese Buddhism departed from its first orientation to become more and more otherworldly, otherworldly in its teaching of the Mind-only, and otherworldly in its monastic evolution, moving its temples to wildernesses and away from the Chinese life. Along with this trend towards seclusion, in which one might suspect Taoist influence, there was the growth of the Ch'an School, with its theory of introspective meditation or concentration of mind which asserts that our mind is nothing but the Buddha itself. The altruistic aspects of the early Buddhist tradition were progressively replaced by a drastic other-worldly ideal of self-realization. Even the Buddha-land or Western Paradise of the Pure Land School became under the interpretation of the Ch'an masters identified with the pure-mind, and thus reduced to the very dimensions of man's self-realization.

This merging of the Pure Land doctrine with the Ch'an teachings brings us to the third area of Buddhist sinicization: syncretism. In contrast with Indian thought, which tends to break down into a multiplicity of schools and sects, the main thrust of Chinese thought is towards the harmonization and syncretization, sometimes conscious, sometimes not, of the various traditions.²⁵ Here again, Ch'anism, as we have seen, was instrumental in this process which resulted, after the Sung dynasty, in the general agreement of the Chinese Buddhists on the pure-mind view, and even after the Ming Dynasty, in their adoption of both Ch'an and Pure

²⁵The best example would be the Confucianist tradition itself, with its syncretization of a multiplicity of concepts not only of the Confucian classics but, with Neo-Confucianism, the Taoist and Buddhist traditions as well.

Land practices.²⁶ The doctrinal justification for this process was the Ch'anist opinion that "Buddha never taught any fixed doctrine" and consequently that enlightenment can be attained "if one neither likes or dislikes a set doctrine".²⁷

From these characteristics of Chinese Buddhism, we may have a better appreciation of the Neo-Confucian criticism in general, and the historical criticism of the greatest of the Ch'eng Chu School: Chu Hsi in particular. The Ch'eng brothers did not formally attack Buddhism on this ground. The only historical account concerning Buddhism is found in Ch'eng Hao, in a passage about the harm of heterodox doctrines and the urgency of their refutation. It reveals a poor knowledge of the origins of Buddhism and of its association, in China with Taoism. But at the same time it gives an insight into the Neo-Confucian interpretation of the Buddhist impact on Chinese thought:

Le Bouddha était à l'origine un homme des régions occidentales, il avait pour thèses la quiétude (santi) et l'extinction (nirvana). Sa doctrine pénétra en Chine au temps des Han. Lao-tseu, dont le nom personnel était Tan, était un scribe (tchou hia che) de Tcheou; son livre discute le Tao de la pureté et du non agir. A partir du déclin des Tcheou, les enseignements des saints confucianistes furent négligés, et les hérésies surgirent comme des abeilles; elles étaient bonnes à tromper le monde et à égarer les masses. Mais il faut distinguer des degrés dans le mal qu'ont causé ces différentes hérésies. En effet, les sentiments du Bouddha et de Lao-tseu sont tellement pleins de jactance et d'hypocrisie, et leurs attitudes rusées et habiles, que les lettrés confucianistes eux-mêmes, tant ceux de jadis que ceux d'aujourd'hui, en ont subi la séduction trompeuse et ne s'en sont pas encore réveillés. (TT 56)

²⁶ Nakamura, op. cit. 253.

²⁷ Quotations of the Chuan-hsin-fa-yao and the Hsin-sin-ming respectively. Cf. Nakamura, op. cit. 290.

This text closely associates Buddha and Lao Tzu as fathers of harmful heresies for the orthodox literati. It charges them with imposture. These themes will be developed and substantiated by Chu Hsi.

The real attack on Chinese Buddhism's claim to be a genuine and honest system of thought, both in its founder and teachings, comes from an historian²⁸ who developed into the great synthetizer of early Neo-Confucianism: Chu Hsi. Chu Hsi's criticism is remarkable in that he attacks the Buddhism of his generation precisely from the same angle as modern scholarship would approach the problem: from the exegetical viewpoint. Of course the list of Buddhist works quoted in his work amounts to only fourteen items, including ten of the most popular sūtras in China,²⁹ and this is a very narrow basis for the critical examination of a religion whose scriptural body is the Tripitaka comprising 2,184 works published in the latest Japanese edition in 55 volumes of about 1000 pages each.³⁰ But in view of the syncretic trend which resulted, as we have seen, in a kind of "ch'anification" of the Sung Buddhism,³¹ in view also of the lack

²⁸To support several points of his exegetical criticism, Chu Hsi refers to a T'ang historian, Song King-wen (998-1061), who is an ardent protagonist of Buddhism (TT 58n.)

²⁹The Sūrangama-sūtra, the Sūtra in Forty-two sections, the Fourth Mahā prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, the Heart Sūtra, the Avatamsaka-sūtra, the Saddharmapundarika-sūtra, the Diamond-sūtra, etc. (Cf. Sargent, Tchou Hi contre le Bouddhisme, 4).

³⁰The Taisho Issaikyo, 1924-29. Cf. Conze, Buddhism, its Essence and Development, 31.

³¹Non mentioning an important historical factor: the suppression of Buddhism in 845, which affected the religion in general, at the exception of Ch'an school which continued to flourish in spite of the destruction of scriptures and temples for which it had little concern (Cf. Ch'en, op. cit. 363).

of concern of Ch'an Buddhism itself for the Buddhist scriptures, Chu Hsi's criticism might be considered a serious attempt to change the image of Buddhism in the mind of the young Sung intelligentsia.³²

The main thrust of his attack concerns the Buddhist scriptures. Starting from 'obvious borrowings' from Taoism,³³ he claims that these texts are to a great extent whether poor translations from a different barbarian language, or altered by borrowings, interpolations, even forgeries:

Tout ce qu'ils ont dit de meilleur est entièrement fait de plagiats de Tchouang-tseu et de Lie-tseu (ES2 142).

Apart from these borrowings, the content of what remains genuine in the Buddhist scriptures is merely common, boring, or in the case of the passages on demons and magical formulas, ridiculous and vulgar.

Leur vulgarité et leur grossièreté comparées aux profonds mystères et aux sublimes merveilles ((qui se trouvent)) dans les premiers chapitres sont comme l'eau et le feu qui ne se mélangent pas. (TT 144)

Chu Hsi mentions that the first scriptures to be imported into China dealt generally with the void (sūnyatā), the conditioned actions (karma), the higher knowledge (abhiññā) and the miracles (prātihārya) (TT 142).

The second object of Chu Hsi's criticism concerns the contemporary Buddhist schools which he reduces to two: one emphasizing meditation, the Dhyana (Ch'an) school; the other which he does not name, emphasizing ascetism and alms. Both of them are, in his view, only the offspring or

³² His views are found in three of his works: the Chu Tzu ch'uan-shu, the Che che louen, chang and hia, and a passage of the Chu Tzu yu lei in TT 57n.

³³ Chu Hsi refers, with quotes, to the Yuan kiue king (TT 58), the Lieh Tzu (TT 58 and 144) and the Sūramgama-sūtra (TT 144).

branches of Moism and Taoism (TT 56). The main target of his attack is the Ch'an school. Besides his general contention that its doctrine is derived from Moism and Taoism, he puts a question mark on the twenty-eight Indian patriarchs³⁴ and he notes that this school has no scriptures and only a quite unreliable oral tradition (TT 143). Coming to its Chinese founder, Bodhidharma, he quite ironically implies that Buddhism, already in difficulty with its discussions about the void and the pair activity-passivity, was given a new start by Bodhidharma's promotion of silent meditation and stillness of the mind. (TT 63)

The third point of Chu Hsi's criticism concerns some early Chinese rulers and clever literati³⁵ who contributed to the growth and eventual supremacy of Buddhism in China. The former did not understand the point of its doctrine, the latter were imposters who embellished, and modified the primitive texts. (TT 62)

And the last remark of Chu Hsi is one of a scholar who might prove to be at times a violent lampoonist but is still clear about the facts of Chinese Buddhism: "Aujourd'hui, le bouddhisme est au comble de sa puissance (TT 65).

This criticism of a great scholar like Chu Hsi might leave the reader with conflicting impressions. Firstly, his knowledge of Buddhism

³⁴(TT 58).

³⁵"Many Confucian scholars have joined the ranks of heresy (Ch'anism) eventually, not because they wished to do so, but because they could not help it. (...) Why a Confucian scholar meet with obstruction? Because he does not practise the 'achievement of knowledge'" (Ch'eng I, S 245)

is obviously superficial and even deficient in the case of his confusion of the Sung Buddhist schools with a kind of revival of Taoism (CP 653). Furthermore, his dislike for both Taoism and Buddhism is expressed without restraint and his reading of the Buddhist texts as well as his interpretation of the various phases of Buddhist development are obviously biased.

Nevertheless, some of his accusations are still valid from the point-of-view of modern scholarship, especially those referring to the distortions in translations. Commenting on the Sutra in 42 sections in his history of Buddhism in China, Ch'en agrees with Chu Hsi:

During its long history this earliest piece of Buddhist literature in China has undergone numerous changes, so that the version as preserved in the present Chinese canon differs in many places from that current during the T'ang era. The wording of passages has been changed; some portions of the T'ang version are not found in the Sung editions. More serious are changes which were apparently made by followers of the Ch'an School . . .³⁶

As for the ke-yi³⁷ method used in the translations of the early Buddhists, the same author confirms that "in spite of its usefulness, it was criticized as being contrary to reason, pedantic, and divergent from the original text".³⁸ Another instance of Chu Hsi's historical flair is the list of the twenty-eight Ch'an patriarchs which is undoubtedly a fictitious production.³⁹

³⁶Ch'en, op. cit. 36.

³⁷Matching of the meaning in using Taoist terms for translating Indian coined expressions.

³⁸Ch'en, op. cit. 69.

³⁹D.T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, 170.

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³⁶Ch'en, op. cit. 36.

³⁷Matching of the meaning in using Taoist terms for translating Indian coined expressions.

³⁸Ch'en, op. cit. 69.

³⁹D.T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism, 170.

But what perhaps is more important in Chu Hsi's exegetical and historical attack is that his criticism summarizes a long tradition of opposition to Buddhism in the Confucianist circles, as we have seen in the introduction of the present thesis. The merit of Chu Hsi lay in the fact that for the first time in the history of Chinese philosophy, he used some of the most powerful weapons -- historical, textual and philological analysis -- to undermine the very source of the Buddhist prestige and seduction: its claim to be a genuine, non-Taoist tradition which was more ancient in origin and therefore more venerable, than all the Chinese traditions including Confucianism and Taoism themselves.

In so far as Chu Hsi ignores facts or misreads texts through prejudice and superficiality, his criticism is unacceptable though a part of this misinterpretation on the part of Chinese orthodoxy is due to the lack of concern of the Buddhist themselves, and especially those of the Ch'an school, for a careful study and exposition of their own scriptures.

But the very violence of his attack reveals both the powerful position that Buddhism was still holding in Sung China and the remarkable courage and determination of the Neo-Confucian philosophers in their attempt, which proved to be successful, of turning down what they considered a most harmful ideology endangering the very future of Chinese culture.

II

COSMOLOGICAL VIEWS

Both Chinese Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism had inherited cosmologies which had come down to them from the very early beginnings of their traditions.

The early Buddhist schools had adopted and adapted a large proportion of the Brahmanical cosmological views, like that of the Three Worlds (kāma-vacara, the world of the six senses, including hells and heavens, rūpa-vacara, the world of forms, perceived by the three noble senses, arūpa-vacara, the formless world or world of mind) or the recurring cycles, the eternity of the universe, etc.⁴⁰ They themselves developed genuine cosmological notions like the law of causality though the 'law of karma' is very probably pre-Buddhist. Even with the advent of radical idealism, this cosmology was not abandoned. The Yogacara accepted "the phenomenology of the early realistic Buddhism", (Chatterjee) and developed a list of 100 dharmas from the Sarvastivadian and the Theravadian sources.⁴¹

Chinese Buddhism inherited this cosmology, but in the most sinicized schools it went through considerable transformations. The Pure-Land emphasized certain religious aspects of this cosmology which were intended for popular consumption (eg. the idea of the Western

⁴⁰E.J. Thomas, op. cit., 50, 56, 63, 75, 111, 257.

⁴¹A.K. Chatterjee, The Yogācāra Idealism, 143, 146 and Ch. I.

Paradise); the T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen and Ch'an schools on the other hand, developed its philosophical aspects from a synthetic and idealist viewpoint, as we will see in Chapter Three. For instance, the T'ien-tai school departed from the traditional list of dharmas⁴² and reshaped the phenomenal universe into 3000 realms of existence so interpenetrated that they were said to be immanent in a single instant of thought.⁴³ The Hua-yen went further with a highly 'organic' vision of the cosmos based on the notion of the universal causation of the Realm of the Dharmas, in which the entire universe rises at the same time and in which the Dharmas are interrelated. Such an organic vision of the world is typically Chinese, as we will see, and foreign to Indian cosmology.

Already it is possible to trace in these Chinese Buddhist cosmologies a Confucian influence. In fact early Confucianism, being a highly ethical and humanistic system of thought, had an organic vision of the world. The pioneer of such a cosmology was Tung Chung-shu (c.179-c.104 B.C.), the theorizer of the Han. Starting from the Ying Yang school's idea of a universe of relations, and from the idea of transformation in the Book

⁴²Cf. T. Stcherbatsky, The Central Conception of Buddhism, 80 sq.

⁴³"In the realm of Temporary Truth, that is, the phenomenal world, there are ten realms: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, buddhas-for-themselves, direct disciples of the Buddha, heavenly beings, spirits, human beings, departed beings, beasts, and depraved men. Since each of them involves the other, there are thus one hundred realms. Each of these in turn possesses the Ten Characters of Thusness: character, nature, substance, energy, activity, cause, condition, effect, retribution, and being ultimate from beginning to end, that is "thus-caused", "thus-natured" and so forth. Each of these consists of living beings, of space, and of aggregates (matter, sensation, thought, disposition, and consciousness). The result is three thousand worlds, which is the totality of manifested reality." (W.-t. Chan, CP 396).

of Changes, he synthetized both ideas into a dynamic, organic and even anthropomorphic conception of the world, where elements activate each other as in the human body.⁴⁴

This organic and humanistic character in the Neo-Confucianist cosmology is easily discernable. While Neo-Confucian pioneers like Chang Tsai were mainly concerned with cosmological questions,⁴⁵ the second generation, the Ch'eng Chu School, in spite of its emphasis on metaphysics, retained, developed and synthetized a number of cosmological ideas. A new conception of the universe began to emerge with the Ch'eng brothers and became fully developed with Chu Hsi. As we will see in the metaphysical section, from the concrete and tangible conception of ch'i, Chang Tsai's 'corporeal matter' or physical energy, and the Tao or Great Harmony which produces the Two Forms of yin and yang,⁴⁶ we come with the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi to the conception of an organic and 'humanized'

⁴⁴"His body with its bones and flesh matches the thickness of Earth. He has ears and eyes above, with their keen sense of hearing and seeing, which resemble the sun and moon. His body has its orifices and veins, which resemble rivers and valleys. His heart has feelings of sorrow, joy, pleasure, and anger, which are analogous to the spiritual feelings (of Heaven)" etc. (Tung Chung-shu, Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals, CP 280. See also W.-t. Chan, CP 271.

⁴⁵Modern commentators, like Fung Yu-lan, refer to them as Cosmologists. FSH 266.

⁴⁶The evolution of the concept of Tao, with the Ch'eng brothers and Chu Hsi, towards an ethical connotation is one of the contributions of the Neo-Confucian synthesis. E.g. compare the Tao of Chang T'sai (FH 479) with the Tao of Chu Hsi (R 18).

universe, permeated as it were with rationality (li). Man is conceived of not only as an integral part, but as the superior being of this universe.⁴⁷ Jen, humanity, which was the core of human nature in traditional Confucianism, acquires with the Sung philosophers a cosmic dimension and becomes the heart of the cosmos, its dynamic and humanistic element.

This concrete, tangible and 'organic'⁴⁸ conception of the universe could not but clash with the Buddhist conception, which is threefold: a) entirely subjective and idealistic, from the transcendental standpoint (concept of Universal Mind or Tathagata-garbha, Ju-lai-tsang), b) immobilist (notion of cycles like the 'waves of the sea')⁴⁹ and c) magical (e.g. the fantastic universes and beings of the sūtras). Let us see in detail the points of controversy.

⁴⁷Among living things men and women form the same species and are on the highest level." Chu Hsi R 77.

⁴⁸See J. Needham's chapter on "Chu Hsi, Leibniz and the Philosophy of Organism" in Science and Civilization in China, Vol. II, 496.

⁴⁹Hua-yen comparison modified by Chu Hsi (CP 638, also CP 408).

1. Rejection of Buddhist Views

By the time of the Sung Dynasty, the three above mentioned Buddhist schools: T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen and Ch'an, had come to a basic consensus on the theory of the mind-only, though they differed on the cosmological implications which each saw as following from it.⁵⁰ This means that for these schools, the phenomenal world was in reality but the expression (phenomenon) of the mind (noumenon), and consequently that the world was, in the end, illusory and unreal. The Neo-Confucianists had therefore to attack Buddhist cosmological views by affirming, in the first place, the reality and concreteness of the universe and of man. This way of answering the Buddhists is typical of Neo-Confucian argumentation. Generally speaking, they do not attempt to refute the opponent from his own standpoint, turning against him his own weapons. They prefer to affirm a position based on their own tradition, one which is seen as being, above all, ethically and practically sound. By contrast, along with their own view they point out the absurdity of the opponent's position according to Confucian norms.

That the affirmation of the physical world has been made as a counterproposal to the Buddhist idealist position is implied quite

⁵⁰E.g. For the Hua-yen school, dharmas do not merely depend on and correspond to each other, like in the T'ien-tai. "They imply each other as well, for their character of speciality, for example, implies generality, and vice-versa ... In a real sense, dharmas exist only in relation to each other and to the entire universe." (W.-t. Chan, C.P. 407). It is only an 'organic' relationship. This organicism is foreign to Indian Buddhism.

clearly in this passage of Chu Hsi:

The doctrine of physical nature originated with Chang Tsai and Ch'eng I. It has made a tremendous contribution to the Confucian school and is a great help to the students... None before had enunciated such a doctrine... Hence, with the establishment of the doctrine of Chang and Ch'eng, the theories of human nature of all previous philosophers collapse. (R 73)

About Buddhist cosmology, Chu Hsi remarks that the Buddhists "consider heaven and earth as illusory and erroneous and the Four Elements (Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind) as temporary (unreal) aggregates. This means complete non-being." (CP 646). He also says that "the Buddhists ignore the universe completely, and only pay attention to the mind" (CP 647) and he quotes Ch'eng I's opinion "that we can draw a final conclusion ((that Buddhism and Confucianism are different)) from the manifestations of Buddhism alone" (Ibid.), in other words from the practical point of view.

In opposition to the Buddhist nihilism and idealism, Ch'eng I's affirmation of the concreteness and the reality of the cosmos stands clear and firm:

In the creative process of the heaven and the earth and in the coming into existence of all things and creatures, all that have being are the result of condensation. The principle which underlies existence and non-existence, motion and stillness, beginning and end, is nothing but ((the basic fact of)) condensing and dispersing. Therefore by observing how they condense, the constitution of the heaven and the earth and all things and creatures may be seen." (S 109)
When energy is dispersed it is exhausted. It cannot according to reason return to its source. Nature is like a great furnace, in which things are destroyed although at the same time things also continue to be formed. (S 110)

As a consequence of this concept of cosmic energy, the cosmological views of the Buddhists are easily refuted. To their theory of transmigration,

which refers to the general concept of samsāra, Chu Hsi answers by applying the Neo-Confucian concepts of ch'i and its yin-yang dynamism to which he refers as the creative process of production and reproduction:

The material force that has disintegrated cannot again be integrated. And yet the Buddhists say that man after death becomes a spiritual being and the spiritual being again becomes a man. If so, then in the universe there would always be the same number of people coming and going, with no need of the creative process of production and reproduction. This is decidedly absurd." (CP 646)

In another passage, Chu Hsi is even more explicit and he draws ethical conclusions about the Buddhist attitude towards life and death:

Les bouddhistes disent que tant qu'il y a naissance, il y a destruction; ils considèrent que la mort et la vie représentent un processus cyclique, et que ce cycle est un océan de douleur (duhkha). Aussi doivent-ils rechercher un corps véritable (dharmakāya), une Nature véritable qui permettent de ne plus naître et de ne plus mourir, et grâce auxquels on soit délivré de la douleur de la transmigration. Ici se montrent clairement leur convoitise de la vie et leur incapacité d'approfondir la vie, leur crainte de la mort et leur ignorance du fait que tout commencement engendre une fin. Leur théorie de la mort et de la vie manifeste tout simplement leur égoïsme, leur égocentrisme et leur vue erronée. Comment cela serait-il le vrai Tao? Suivant la vérité du Tao, quand on doit naître on naît, quand on doit mourir on meurt. Ce qui est reçu intégralement ((à la naissance)) est rendu intégralement ((à la mort)). 'Si un homme, le matin, entend le Tao, il peut mourir, le soir, ((sans regret))' (Louen yu, IV, 8). Dans l'ordre céleste, il ne saurait exister de principe qui ait un commencement et qui n'ait pas de fin; donc il ne saurait exister un être qui naisse et qui ne meure pas. A quoi bon convoiter, à quoi bon craindre? Quelle utilité y a-t-il à un comportement égoïste ((tel que celui des bouddhistes))? (TT 73n.)

Throughout these texts runs another affirmation which is inextricably interwoven with that of the concrete existence of this world: the ceaseless action of the cosmic yin and yang dynamism. This constitutes another area of conflict with the Buddhists, since the Neo-Confucian

concept of cycle is antithetic to the Buddhist idea of change. The Hua-yen school, for instance, looked upon the universe -- and history, as a continuous process of manifestations and disappearances like the waves of the sea, perfectly harmonized in Emptiness. This passage on expansion and contraction gives a good idea of their conception of change:

It means that dust has no nature (of its own). When substance comes to the fore and completely permeates the ten cardinal directions, that is expansion. The ten directions have no substance and are entirely manifested in the dust through causation -- that is contraction... When contracted, all things are manifested in one particle of dust. When expanded, one particle of dust will universally permeate everything. Expanding is the same as ever contracting, for a particle of dust will universally permeate everything. Contracting is the same as ever expanding, for everything involves one particle of dust. This is what is meant by saying that expansion and contraction are free and at ease. (Treatise on the Golden Lion, CP 423)

From this text we can see that from the Buddhist viewpoint, i.e. from the ultimate viewpoint, movement is a series of rhythms, but in reality there is no change at all.

In contrast with this static conception, the Neo-Confucian view is essentially dynamic. Its cycle is a unit of production and reproduction, but history is made of these cycles which are complete in themselves, so that history never repeats itself. "Every production has an element of novelty, since it requires a new relationship of yin and yang."⁵¹ This conception applies to the individual man as well as to dynasties and is directly opposed to the Buddhist idea of transmigration. Here is how

⁵¹W.-t. Chan, "Syntheses in Chinese Metaphysics", in Chs. A. Moore, The Chinese Mind, 134.

Ch'eng I expresses his disagreement with the Buddhists:

As for the theory of the Principle of growth and decay, what does it have to do with the Buddhist doctrine of kalpas?⁵²
 ... The latter speak of (these kalpas as constituting stages of) formative growth, static existence, decay, and utter annihilation. To speak of formative growth or destruction is permissible, but not of static existence or annihilation. For example, as soon as a child is born, it grows day by day. Thus it cannot have any kind of static existence. Fundamentally there is only the Principle of decline and growth, waxing and waning. Besides this there is nothing else."
 (FH 519)

Another important cosmological doctrine for the Buddhists is the supra-human world of the spirits and the gods and the magic powers. Here again the concept of ch'i is used as a refutation. An interesting question was posed to Ch'eng I by Pao Jo-yü about a passage of the Book of Changes where it is said that what is unfathomable in the yin and yang movement is the spirit and that spirit means the subtle in all things (I Ching).⁵³ Pao Jo-yü pointed out that "from this we conclude that what the Buddhists say about spiritual beings is absurd" (because it is in contradiction with the Confucian scriptures). On the other hand, the scriptures say that "the ((ghosts of)) the ancestors come ((to the service)) (Shu Ching)⁵⁴ and "While respecting spiritual beings keep aloof from them" (Analects,

⁵²These kalpas or world periods are: formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence. "This concept came to exert a marked influence upon all Neo-Confucian theories of cosmic evolution -- most conspicuously so in the case of Shao Yung. In him, however, it is given a Confucian touch by being expounded in terms of the growth and decay of the yin and yang, as represented by the sixty-four hexagrams of the Book of Changes." (Fung Yu-lan, FH 474).

⁵³App. III, I, V, 32: App. V, VI, 10 (Cf. S 119)

⁵⁴App. II, IV, 2 (Cf. S. 119)

VI, XX, S 118).

From these, concludes Pao Jo-yü, it would seem that there is some truth in what the Buddhists say. My humble opinion is that where energies of the same kind respond to each other that is the presence of the spirit. Only one must hold the attitude of absolute sincerity, and must approach it with irreverence...What do you think of this?"

((Answer)): "By brooding over it long enough you will understand." (S 119)

In reality, Cheng I does not answer. The references to Confucian sources were well chosen and needed careful interpretation. But in several other conversations, the Master is very clear: "What the Book of Changes calls 'spiritual beings' is the creative process of nature" (S 117), or briefly: "Simply Ch'i: Ch'i is spirit." (S 118).⁵⁵

Another doctrine which might be considered part of the Buddhist cosmology is that concerning heavens and hells. The Pure Land School, in particular, had spread the belief in the Buddha land or the Western Paradise.⁵⁶ Beliefs were also spread about horrible hells for those who would accumulate bad karma. Already these doctrines had evoked criticism from the Confucianists.⁵⁷ In a brief passage, Ch'eng Hao rejects them by referring to sincerity which penetrates Heaven and Earth and does not indulge in false views:

Someone said, "The Buddhist doctrine of hells and the like is meant for people with low intelligence so they will be scared and do good."

The Teacher said, "Even when one's perfect sincerity penetrates Heaven and Earth, one cannot transform all the people. How can one expect to transform them by setting up a false doctrine?" (R 283)

⁵⁵Ch'i, i.e., Vital Energy (S 110). See Chapter III.

⁵⁶Cf. Ch'en, Buddhism in China, p. 338.

⁵⁷E.g. Hui-lin (ca. 4th century), a former Buddhist monk, author of Pai-Lei-lun (On Black and White), points out that instead of extirpating cravings, these doctrines increase them. (Ch'en, op. cit. p. 139)

2. Assimilations of Buddhist Ideas

The above mentioned rejections of Buddhist cosmology did not prevent these Neo-Confucian philosophers from being influenced, to some extent, by these same Buddhist ideas. The main guide-lines for this hazardous prospections into the deeper layers of Neo-Confucian thought seems to be the following questions which recur in Wing-tsit Chan's writings: "Where this idea comes from. Why were certain ideas of the Confucian classics given suddenly such an emphasis, after having been dormant for a thousand years?"⁵⁸

If we keep in mind that the main thrust of this School is ethical, and thus in the line of the entire Confucian tradition, it is possible to raise a certain number of questions concerning its basic cosmological concepts.

The first which comes to mind is about Ch'eng Hao's idea of jen. This concept is the core of the Confucian tradition, but up to the Sung period, it had a strictly ethical connotation. With Ch'eng Hao, jen takes a cosmological dimension. Not only is it, like in Mencius, the cardinal virtue, and thus the ethical unifying principle of man, but it becomes with Ch'eng Hao the cosmic dynamism through which:

a) man finds his oneness with all things. "The man of humanity regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body." (Ch'eng Hao, R 13).

⁵⁸E.g. CP 554.

That is why Ch'eng I calls jen 'universal impartiality' (R 13), but in a restricted manner, i.e. in a more ethical sense, as in Chang Tsai, and in maintaining a distinction between impartiality and jen.⁵⁹

b) the universe itself tends to grow as a living organism:

"The will to grow in all things is most impressive... This is jen."

(NC 27). Jen is therefore this dynamic principle of growth and oneness which permeates the whole cosmos and is rooted in man's nature, so that man is in complete harmony with the universe. As Ch'eng I puts it: "Jen is the correct principle of the world. When the correct principle is lost, there will be no order and consequently no harmony." (R 17)⁶⁰

It seems that the enlarged conception of jen, which meant a new vision of the world, the idea of a living and humanized universe, can be traced, as W.-t. Chan suggests,⁶¹ in the Buddhist concept of the Single Absolute Mind (Ju-lai tsang) which prevailed among the Buddhist Schools of the Sung period and with which Ch'eng Hao was undoubtedly familiar.⁶²

⁵⁹Cf. R 62. As it will be discussed in the ethical section, the Neo-Confucianists avoid systematically any danger of confusion with the Buddhist idea of a state of mind cut off from concrete activity and which they call karuna. "The point of practice makes the whole difference between transcendental and quietistic Buddhism, on the one hand, and active and humanistic Confucianism, on the other. (W.-t. Chan, NC 25)

⁶⁰In his comment (Ibid.), Chu Hsi gently introduces a distinction between jen and the Principle of Nature (T'ien-li), thus introducing the metaphysical perspective with li and leaving jen in its ethical function.

⁶¹CP 554.

⁶²According to his brother, Ch'eng Hao spent 10 years of his life studying Taoism and Buddhism. (S 157)

The T'ien-tai School had adopted the Yogācārin concept of 'storehouse' or alaya-consciousness, (the Tathāgata storehouse) and developed the theory of the 'seeds'. In a 'Mind-only' perspective, the 'seeds' are the principles of the empirical world, the very roots of the Transcendental Illusion.⁶³

The best indication of a possible influence is this text of Cheng I: "The mind is comparable to seeds of grain. The nature of growth is jen. When it develops on contact with the material force of yang that is feeling"

(R 28). Another one is this semantic remark of Hsieh Liang-tso (1050-1103):

"The seeds of peaches and apricots that can grow are called jen. It means that there is the will to grow. If we infer from this, we will understand what jen is." (NC 27)

Thus, it seems justifiable to affirm the Buddhist influence on one of the most basic cosmological view of the Neo-Confucianists. As Wing-tsit Chan notes in "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept jen" (NC 27), this idea of life or production (sheng) goes back to the Book of Changes ("The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is production".) "But to make jen and production synonymous was definitively an innovation of the Neo-Confucianists". How this idea occurred to them? It is the contention of the present paper that it is via the alaya-consciousness doctrine of the Buddhists. And what is the most remarkable, this new meaning of a cosmic as well as ethical jen being "vital, dynamic and life-giving" is "the exact antithesis of Buddhism" (NC 27). This is a good instance of how Neo-Confucianism is a real synthesis offering to the Chinese thought a genuine, though enriched from its various sources, philosophical system.

⁶³"Considered from the point of view of the seeds, it (primary consciousness) is the alaya consciousness, because it acts as the fundamental seed for all things." The Awakening Sūtra as quoted by the Ta ch'eng Chih-kuan Fa-men (FH 366)

III

METAPHYSICAL VIEWS

The confrontation between the metaphysics of the Ch'eng Chu school and that of Sung Buddhism is of great interest in the history of human thought. In India, Buddhism had risen as a system challenging the old Brahmanical orthodoxy based on the substance-view (ātmavāda) of reality, and therefore developed a dynamic conception which was a non-substance or modal-view (anātmavāda) of reality.

"The Brahmanical system took the real as Being, Buddhism as Becoming; the former espoused the universal, existential and static view of Reality, the latter the particular, sequential and dynamic... Subjectively minded, Buddhism is little interested in cosmological speculations and constructive explanations of the universe."⁶⁴

In the course of its confrontation with the Brahmanical tradition, Buddhist subjectivism developed into a strong idealistic current, the Yogācāra school. It also had developed a powerful epistemological weapon, dialectical criticism, while the ātmavāda was affirmativist, posing the alternatives of Being and non-Being, Buddhism elaborated a negativist system in negating both alternatives.⁶⁵

Although the confrontation between Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism presents several analogies with the Brahmanic-Buddhist encounter, the differences are still greater. When Indian Buddhism was introduced in China, both its metaphysics and its epistemology proved to be foreign --

⁶⁴Cf. T.R.V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, 10 sq.

⁶⁵Being is an illusion, therefore non-being is an illusion as well. Both are considered as relative and truth "secundum quid", but Emptiness transcends them both.

and to some extent meaningless, to the Chinese mind, which has developed its philosophy along entirely different lines. The Chinese vision of the universe being essentially realist⁶⁶ and primarily ethical, the metaphysical discussions were of little interest to them unless they proved to be of some relevancy to the practical level. While the Indian mind would stress universals and abstract conceptions, Chinese thought would emphasize the perception of the concrete.⁶⁷

Consequently, Buddhism in China faced an entirely new problem. Most of its highly speculative 'armament' was useless because the battlefield presented a set of different conditions, and therefore it had to develop along new lines. Since there was, on the Confucian side, little metaphysical development compared to the strong emphasis laid on ethics, the Buddhist schools which remained closer to their Indian roots, like the San-lun (Three-Treatises) or the Fa-Hsiang (Consciousness-only) schools,⁶⁸ did not have the same impact and the same longevity as did the deeply sinicized schools like the T'ien-t'sai, the Hua-yen and the Ch'an schools. These three schools, which have no counterpart in India, worked in their

⁶⁶"Whereas the Buddhists talk about non-being, the Confucianists talk about being" (Chu Hsi, CP 648). In fact both alternatives were affirmed, in Neo-Confucianism, and therefore "synthesized" (W.-t. Chan, *Syntheses in Chinese Metaphysics*, *op. cit.* 133).

⁶⁷See Nakamura, Ways of Thinking of Eastern People, 44, 51, 177, 184.

⁶⁸The Fa-Hsiang school rapidly declined after the persecution of 845. "This type of philosophy is completely alien to the Chinese tradition so that, like the Three-Treatise School, it was merely an Indian system transplanted on Chinese soil" (W.-t. Chan, CP 373).

metaphysics towards a synthesis of the transcendent and the immanent, the phenomenon and the noumenon (T'ien-t'sai), the Realms of Principle and Facts (Hua-yen), the Buddha-nature and one's nature (Ch'an). These attempts to reconcile both the worldly and the other-worldly made it more appealing to the Chinese mind.

By the time of the Neo-Confucian counter-attack, the Confucianist thinkers had been challenged since a thousand years by Buddhist metaphysics, without paying much attention to it. They were satisfied with the kind of intuitive and implicit metaphysical basis found in their Classics, like the Meng Tzu and the Book of Means, for their ethical doctrines on human nature and the cosmos.⁶⁹ It is the merit and the glory of the Neo-Confucian School of the Sung Dynasty to have built a genuine metaphysical system which would be satisfactory to Chinese mind as well as provide an answer to Buddhist theories. Of course, this system was greatly influenced, as we will see in the subsequent pages, by Buddhist metaphysics, to the point that it might be called a synthesis. But while the Buddhist failed in answering the fundamental questions of the Chinese of the Sung period, the Neo-Confucianists succeeded in building a complete, genuine and consistent philosophical system which lasted down to our time.

⁶⁹Ch. IV of the present thesis, p. 67.

1. Rejection of Buddhist Views

Perhaps the best starting point for the present discussion is this remark of Chu Hsi, which is right to the point:

The Buddhists are characterized by vacuity, whereas we Confucianists are characterized by concreteness. The Buddhists are characterized by duality, whereas we Confucianists are characterized by unity. (CP 648)

That the Buddhists are characterized by vacuity and the Confucianists by concreteness, we have already seen in the first chapter. But that the former be termed dualists, and the latter not, would appear absurd to the Indian mind: the Madhyamika system refuted the early pluralist schools on the ground of their dualism. And that the Confucianists be non-dualists seems in contradiction with their metaphysical concepts of li and ch'i, inseparable but distinct. In the above quoted text, Chu Hsi refers to a well-known doctrine of Chinese Buddhism: the doctrine of the Double Truth, the relative and the absolute, the empirical and the transcendent, or what Chu Hsi calls the 'Stubborn' and the 'True' Emptiness (CP 647). As a counterproposal, the Neo-Confucianists hold that there is but one concrete reality which is formed of matter (ch'i) and principle (li) in such a way that in all and every being li is inherent to ch'i as its rationality and ultimate standard and as a particularization of the Ultimate Li, the "Supreme Ultimate". Li is both immanent and transcendent, and the Neo-Confucian texts affirm these two aspects, sometimes separately, sometimes jointly. Here is how Ch'eng I expresses it:

((Li-in-itself is)) void and pure, and without any sign of the beginning of anything physical. Yet it is already complete with all things. Before it is applied ((in anything concrete)) it is not anterior; after its application, it is not posterior." (S 76)

In affirming the unity as well as the concreteness and the reality of the world in both its empirical and transcendent aspects, the Neo-Confucianist metaphysicians were in radical opposition with the Buddhist doctrine of sūnyatā or emptiness, as applied at both the empirical and the transcendental levels. In rejecting all views as false, the Buddhists had to speak of the Real as an Absolute, i.e. as beyond the empirical. The Confucianists found a name for this radical absolutism: the Buddhist otherworldliness. Furthermore, as described in Chapter I, the Buddhists of the Sung period had come to a kind of general consensus on the doctrine of the Mind-only, which is a radical idealism. Therefore, as A.K. Chatterjée notes about Indian Buddhism in the first pages of The Yogācāra Idealism, "Subjectivity is the key-note of Buddhism. From the very outset Buddhism had been subjectivistic and critical. A content is said to be subjective when it is merely in thought, and has no grounding in external reality."⁷⁰ The Neo-Confucianists had not overlooked the ethical aspect of this radical idealism and subjectivism, which they considered to be the very root of what they called, quite ironically, since Buddhism denies the self, a radical selfishness. Ch'eng I tackles precisely this question in the following passage:

⁷⁰The Yogācāra Idealism, 1. -- This does not mean that the Neo-Confucianists of the two Schools may be themselves considered as idealists. Commenting Hou Wai-lu's reappraisal of Neo-Confucianism, H. Wilhelm notes that Hou characterize his thought as 'objective idealism' as against the 'subjective idealism' of the Lu-Wang school, a characterization which has by now found just about universal acceptance. ("The Reappraisal of Neo-Confucianism", The China Quarterly, 23 (1965), 137.

The reason why it is said that all things form one body is that all have this principle simply because they all have come from it (...) Man can extend this principle to others (...) Simply because of selfishness, man thinks in terms of his own person, and therefore belittles principle. (...) Because the Buddhists do not know this, they think in terms of the self." (R 284)

For the Ch'eng Chu metaphysicians, Li is the principle by which all particular beings, including and especially man, share in existence. "Things and the self are governed by the same principle" (Ch'eng I, R 93). For man, this is the metaphysical basis of his ethical life, as it is also the basis of the Neo-Confucian doctrine of the extension of knowledge, as we will see in the next part. Therefore, Ch'eng I continues: "If you understand one (principle), you understand the other, for the truth within and the truth without are identical" (Ch'eng I, Ibid.).

"The truth within and the truth without are identical", this is the Neo-Confucian doctrine of the Unique Truth as opposed to the Buddhist theory of the Two Truths, and this Truth is: that the world is one, in all its aspects and dimensions, phenomenal and noumenal, this world we perceive, the empirical, as well as the realm of the transcendent, the Great Ultimate ^{70b}.

The second major area of confrontation between the metaphysics of the Buddhists and the Neo-Confucianists concerns human nature. In fact this problem is at the crossroads of all other questions in Neo-Confucianist thought, and this for the simple reason that right from the start, the Con-

^{70b} In fact the One-Truth theory seems very close to the Threefold Truth doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai school, according to which both the emptiness and the temporariness of things, i.e. their universality and their particularity amount to a comprehensive or synthetic third Truth or the Truth of the Middle which is that all dharmas are both empty and temporary, the whole and its parts are identical and that "one thought is the three thousand worlds" (Cf. W.-t. Chan CP, 396 and Ch'en, op. cit., 311).

Confucianist vision of the world is ethical and man centered. That until the Sung period the Confucianists did not develop in a genuine and elaborate system the metaphysical implications of their classics, and especially the Doctrine of the Mean, is a confirmation of this fact. And even in their metaphysics, as in their cosmology, we find strong ethical and often humanistic overtones.

The Chinese Buddhist view of human nature (hsing) is derived from Hsüan-tsang's Mere-Ideation theory, itself an interpretation of Vasubandhu's and Dharmapala's systems. The Indian Buddhist concept of nature is an elaborate application of the non-soul theory. Empirically speaking, what is called a man or a thing is nothing but a bundle of functions or dharmas, and even the idealistic schools had integrated this dharmic worldview of the early pluralistic systems. With the sinicized schools of Hua-yen, T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an, this idealistic conception developed into what Fung calls an objective idealism, emphasizing the concept of an immutable, universal and absolute Mind which is manifested through and shared by all phenomenal beings as their mind-nature or Buddha-nature (FH 385). Thus, instead of remaining in its abstract formulation, as it had in the Indian sastras, the concept of nature was submitted, in the course of its development, to a number of transpositions, which generally tended toward a more and more concrete expression. The following passage of the Ta-cheng Chih-kuan Fa-men, one of the major works of the T'ien-t'ai School, gives an idea not only of the idealistic and otherworldly perspective in which human nature is described, but also of the controversial concept in the dispute between Buddhists and Neo-Confucianists: the Dharmakāya.^{71a}

^{71a} Asked whether the Buddhist really hold that the Dharmakāya is eternally subsistent and indestructible, Chu Hsi answered: "Oui, mais je ne saurais dire comment tu pourrais découvrir cette chose qui subsiste ((incorruptible)) dans le monde corruptible, ni comment tu pourrais découvrir que cette chose est éternelle et indestructible." (TT 98)

The text deals with the Tathagata-storehouse, which "embraces the natures of all sentient beings", i.e. the entire universe consisting of a simple absolute mind, the Tathāgata-garbha (Ju-lai tsang):

The storehouse of the Tathāgata has originally and for all time contained the two natures, the one impure, the other pure. Because of its impure nature, it is capable of manifesting the impure things pertaining to all sentient beings. Hence its storehouse, being in this respect the Dharmakāya as it lies within the barriers ((i.e., within the phenomenal world)) is called the Buddha-nature. But because it also contains the pure nature, it is capable of manifesting the pure attributes of all the Buddhas. Hence its storehouse, being in this respect the Dharmakāya as it transcends the barriers, is also called the pure-in-nature Dharmakāya or pure-in-nature Nirvāna" (FH 362).

Such an idealistic view of human nature was, of course, unbearable to the Neo-Confucianists in that there was no room in this conception for the concrete, material, visible being which is man and for man's metaphysical oneness with the cosmos. One of the most explicit reactions against the Buddhist theories on human nature comes from Chu Hsi:

Ts'ao asked how to tell the difference between Confucianism and Buddhism. The Teacher said: Just take the doctrine, "What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature." (The Mean, ch. 1) The Buddhists simply do not understand this, and dogmatically say that nature is empty consciousness. What we Confucianists talk about are concrete principles, and from our point of view they are wrong. (CP 647)

And again:

We Confucianists regard nature as real, whereas Buddhists regard it as unreal. However, it is incorrect to equate mind with nature. Nowadays people often explain nature in terms of mind. They should first understand before they talk. (CP 616)

This remark about the mind is important not only because it shows how the Buddhist theories on Mind-only were influential but because the distinction between mind and nature was vital for the Neo-Confucian philosophers in their discussion with the Buddhists:

Someone advocated the doctrine of the absence of mind.^{71b} I-ch'uan said, "The absence of mind is wrong. We should say only the absence of a selfish mind. (Ch'eng I, R 71)

Commenting on this passage, Shih Huang (fl. 1705) specifies that the absence of mind is a Zen Buddhist doctrine. "Only the absence of a selfish mind is Confucian learning". (Ibid.) And Chu Hsi rejects a theory of one of his pupils who identifies nature and principle in these terms:

Where Tzu-jung is wrong is to have mistaken the mind and the nature. This is just like the Buddhists, except that the Buddhists polish the mind to the highest degree of refinement. It is like a lump of something. Having peeled off one layer of skin, they peel off another, until there is no more layers of skin to peel... When the mind is polished to the point of having nothing ((else but its true nature)), they recognize it as nature. They do not realize that this is precisely what the Sage called the mind. Therefore Hsieh Shang-t'sai said, "What the Buddhists call nature is precisely what the Sage called the will." ((Sheng-t'sai yu-lu, pt. 2, p.7a)) ((The mind is simply to embrace principle.)) At bottom the Buddhists do not understand this part, namely principle, and look upon consciousness and movement as nature. (CP 649)

This distinction between nature and mind, which is dear to the Neo-Confucians, was indeed a very keen attack on Buddhism. It showed that Buddhism, in denying the reality of human nature as part of the empirical world, was depriving the mind of its object and therefore denying any objectivity and any concreteness to mind itself. It showed, on the other hand, that Buddhism not only did not recognize the cosmic dimension of human nature -- since human nature is simply an individualization of the Universal Li, but that it also did not recognize the very possibility for man to be in total harmony with the Universe, which is the ultimate expression of the Neo-Confucian idea of self-fulfilment. And this is, by Chinese standards, a decisive argument.

^{71b} "It is your own mind that produces the ten thousand things. That is why the sutra says: "If mind is produced all things are produced, if mind is destroyed all things are destroyed" (Hui-neng (638-713), the 33rd Patriarch in Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, PSU 83).

Another important area of this metaphysical battle is the problem of evil. In the Buddhist view, evil is metaphysically related to the very concept of empirical nature: sūnya, which means that the empirical world is radically evil, by its very emptiness: it is unreal and illusory. This view was most repugnant to Confucian minds. Since Confucius and especially Mencius, nature was considered by Chinese orthodoxy as "naturally good, just as water naturally flows downward" (The Mencius 6 A:2).

The Neo-Confucian answer to this position is two-fold: reaffirming the goodness of nature and introducing the notion of "capacity" (ts'ai) which derives from ch'i, ch'i being the limitative factor in the process of differentiation of beings, since li is their principle of identification. In order to preserve the idea of goodness of nature against the negativist approach of the Buddhists, the Neo-Confucianists carefully avoided deriving evil directly from nature. That is why they introduced this concept of "capacity" which is "either good or not good" (Ch'eng I, FH 577) as the occasion for evil. Here are two texts representative of this view, the first from Ch'eng I: "All things in the world form complementary pairs. Where there is yin there is yang. Where there is good there is evil" (S 214); and the other is from Chu Hsi:

It is the principle of nature that the material force with which man is endowed necessarily has the difference of good and evil. For in the operation of material force, nature is the controlling factor. In accordance with its purity or impurity, material force is differentiated into good and evil. Therefore there are not two distinct things in nature opposing each other. Even the nature of evil material force is good, and therefore evil may not be said to be not a part of nature. The Master further said, "Good and evil in the world are both the Principle of Nature. What is called evil is not original evil. It becomes evil only because of deviation from the mean." For there is nothing in the world which is outside one's nature. All things are originally good but degenerated into evil, that is all. (CP 598)

This concept of evil is an open attack on the Buddhist view that the world is radically evil. It is, at the other end of the spectrum, the most imperative affirmation that the world is radically good, even beyond the reach of evil.

2. Assimilations of Buddhist Ideas

One of the characteristics of the Sung period is the development, among the Chinese thinkers, of an interest in metaphysical problems and ultimate questions, or what Fung Yu-lan calls the problems of nature and Destiny. (FSH 266) Consequently a new selection of the Confucian classics was undertaken⁷² and it is interesting to note which works, among the mass of classical texts, were finally selected as the Neo-Confucian classics: Confucius, as the founder of the School, Mencius, as the theorist of the goodness of nature, and two sections of the Li Chi, the Book of Rites, which had received little attention until the time of Ssu-ma Kuang (1019-1086), who wrote commentaries on them, treating them as separate works for the first time.⁷³ They are the Great Learning (Ta-hsüeh) and the Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung). The reason for their selection lies obviously in their metaphysical content, which met the needs of Sung China for an answer to its metaphysical search.

But the question which comes to mind is why these problems became so important at this particular moment of Chinese thought. Taoism had been there since the days of Confucius and several other indigenous systems had developed in course of time. Why these problems and at this period of

⁷²"Since the time of Confucius and Mencius, Han (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) Confucianists merely had textual studies of the Classics. The subtle doctrine of the Way and nature of man and things have disappeared for a long time." (Huang Tsung-hsi (1610-95), CP 461)

⁷³Cf. W.-t. Chan CP 85n and 97.

history? Part of the answer might well be the development of Buddhist thought, in its distinctively Chinese sessions like the T'ien t'ai and Hua-yen theories, a development which reached its golden age around this time. These theories were largely circulated, as we may see from the questions of the pupils to their Neo-Confucianist masters. Ch'eng Hao, who had studied himself for ten years with the Buddhist and the Taoists,⁷⁴ speaks of the real seduction exerted by Buddhism on the students of his time: "A student should forthwith get as far away from Buddhist doctrines as from licentious songs and beautiful women. Otherwise they will soon infiltrate him." (R 283)

It is therefore no surprise to find in the metaphysical system of the Neo-Confucianists of this period traces of Buddhist influence. Not only had they to build under the pressure of the triumphant Buddhist ideas a whole metaphysical system of their own, and this nearly from scratch by selecting long neglected sections of the Book of Rites as their basic sources but they also had to answer very precise and challenging questions on the fundamentals of the old Confucian tradition, and in doing so they became involved inevitably with the problematics of their opponents. The best evidence of this Buddhist influence is the Neo-Confucian idea of the mind. Early Confucianism had not developed the metaphysical aspects of the concept of the human mind. Knowledge was strictly an ethical category.⁷⁵ With the Neo-Confucianists, not only human, but things themselves had a mind and each

⁷⁴"This Buddhist School was very active in the city of Lo-yang where the Ch'eng brothers lived" (W.-t. Chan, NC 109).

⁷⁵E.g. Lun-yü 16, 8; Meng-Tzu 7A, 15; Hsün Tzu ch. 21.

mind was essentially identical with the "Mind of Heaven and Earth" (R 12).

The whole cosmos was now seen not only as a living organism,⁷⁶ but this organism had a mind. It was humanized, in a certain sense:

Heaven and Earth reach all things with this mind. When man receives it, it then becomes the human mind. When things receive it, it becomes the mind of things (in general). And when grass, trees, birds, and animals receive it, it becomes the mind of grass, trees, birds, and animals (in particular). All of these are simply the one mind of Heaven and Earth.
(Chu Hsi, CP 643)

The analogies with the doctrine of the Mind-only are striking: the same idea of the mind existing at the transcendental level and being manifested at the empirical level, the same notions of radical unity and intercommunication in the transcendental Mind, the same concept of the radical sameness of all beings. The difference, a decisive one, with the Buddhist conception lies mainly in that the Neo-Confucianists sees this Mind as immanent as well as transcendent. "The mind embraces all principles and all principles are complete in this single entity, the mind." (CP 606)

In the light of these texts, the tribute paid by Fung Yu-lan to India takes its full signification:

The idea of the Universal Mind is a contribution of India to Chinese philosophy. Before the introduction of Buddhism, there was in Chinese philosophy only the mind, but not the Mind. The Tao of the Taoists is the "mystery of mysteries", as Lao Tzu put it, yet it is not Mind. After the period dealt with in this chapter, ((i.e. by the time of Tao-sheng (died 434))) there is in Chinese philosophy not only mind but also Mind.
(FSH 254)

⁷⁶Instead of a gigantic mechanism à la Descartes. (J. Needham, op. cit., p. 503).

Here is what seems to be a case of appropriation of a metaphysical framework (the Buddhist idea of an Universal Mind) and its use for developing an entirely different system of thought based on a concept of a concrete universe of relations between living and inanimate beings.

Another case of influence if not of assimilation of Buddhist doctrine, concerns the two concepts of li and ch'i. No trace is found of them in Confucius and Mencius. Why is it that, starting from Chou Tun-i (1017-73), the Neo-Confucianists developed these two concepts as a pair from certain elements found in the Appendices of the Book of Changes? (FSH 269, 284). But what is even more striking is the pattern along which li and ch'i were developed: not only is li abstract and invisible, while ch'i is concrete and visible; but their relation is that of "one-in-all" and "all-in-one".

Principle is most subtle, whereas forms and symbols are most obvious. Substance and function come from the same source and there is no gap between the manifest and the hidden. (Ch'eng I, R 109)

This passage offers great similarities in content, wording and general framework, with passages of the Essay on the Gold Lion⁷⁷ on the Buddhist concept of simultaneous completeness.

"The one is the all" and "the all is the one". "Noumenon does not interfere with phenomenon, for what is pure is ever mixed. (Likewise) phenomenon ever comprises noumenon in its totality, for what is mixed is ever pure. Since noumenon and phenomenon each have their own course, there is no barrier between what is pure and what is mixed". (FH 351)

⁷⁷By the Hua-yen master Fa-tsang (643-712).

From these two passages, it seems obvious that, whether consciously or unconsciously, Ch'eng I had used the Buddhist metaphysical framework to support and convey his own views of the universe. Of course the core of the Neo-Confucian doctrine is antithetic to the whole thrust of Buddhist thought. The latter is idealistic, the former realistic and practical. But that a kind of cross-fertilization, as we have seen in both examples of this section, can be inferred as being at the origin of some of the metaphysical views of the Sung philosophers, this is, in the present state of our knowledge, of great probability.

One thing, however, must be made clear at the end of this chapter: whatever the Buddhist influence might have been on the development of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, in no way did the Sung philosophers deviate from their goal. They were determined to reconquer the positions which the old Confucian orthodoxy had lost to the Buddhists. They fought with weapons made in the shape of their opponents' own weapons, but melted in the fire of a pure Confucian spirit. To the otherworldly, negativist metaphysics of the Buddhists, the Neo-Confucianists opposed a concrete, organic, mind-impregnated and in this sense spiritual vision of the world, a world in which the transcendent, the Great Ultimate, is immanent to all beings and in which all beings, and first of all man, find their oneness and communicate ontologically as well as ethically.

IV

ETHICAL VIEWS

Chinese thought is primarily ethical and realist, which means that it is most of all interested in man and in the world of man. Throughout its development, Confucianism paid little attention to speculative problems, and concentrated almost exclusively on ethics. At the very start, Confucius (551-479 B.C.), with his stress on man-in-relation-to-society, exerted a great influence on the whole of Confucian thought in giving it its definitive orientation towards the building of a genuine humanism. Mencius (371-389 B.C.) accentuated this trend by developing Confucius' intuitive view of human nature into a complete ethical system based on the idea of the original goodness of human nature. Later on, Han Confucianists like Tung Chung-Shu (c.179-c.104 B.C.) maintained this orientation. For instance Tung based his theory of education on the assumption that there is goodness in human nature (CP 274).

With the advent of Neo-Confucianism, not only was this ethical and homocentric character of Confucian thought not watered down by the integration of cosmological and metaphysical perspectives, but it was even reinforced, so that the whole new synthesis appeared as a triumphant humanism.

We have seen that the main reason for the development of the Ch'eng Chu school's cosmology and metaphysics was Buddhist pressure on the Chinese intelligentzia. But the crux of the matter did not concern

these questions, inspite of their importance and the necessity to provide them with a metaphysical basis. The real issue was ethical and above all, man's relation to the world and to society. This was so not only because this problematic brought the Sung thinkers back to the main stream of their Confucian tradition, but also because this question was still the most actual in a time of great need for social reforms in China.

In reference to cosmology and metaphysics, the Neo-Confucianists had accused the Buddhists of "otherworldliness". But their main charge concerned the complete dissociation of their opponents from life, a charge they capsulized in one word: selfishness. Historically, as it is described in Chapter I the Buddhists had furnished an important contribution to society in the first phase of their integration to China. Not only did they provide a basis for Chinese cultural and political unity in a time of turmoil and division, but they had fulfilled many social needs which the Confucianists were not in a position to answer.⁷⁸ But in the time of the Sung Dynasty, the situation was completely changed. While the Confucian intelligentsia had undertaken a general revival of Chinese institutions and thought, and was serving the state, the Buddhists did, comparatively, very little in a time which called for the creativity and dedication necessary to build a new society.⁷⁹

In the Chinese mind this charge of selfishness was of the

⁷⁸See A.F. Wright, op. cit. Ch. IV.

⁷⁹W.T. de Barry, "A Reappraisal of Neo-Confucianism" in A.F. Wright, ed. Studies in Chinese Thought, pp. 81-111.

greatest weight. Concrete and practical as they are, the Chinese hold that theories have to be checked by facts, and a real virtue must be demonstrated.⁸⁰ That is why the best refutation, from the Chinese standpoint, of Buddhist cosmology and metaphysics was to show how the Buddhists had failed in both social and personal issues.

⁸⁰"The real test of the truth is in human history". E.R. Hughes, "Epistemological Methods in Chinese Philosophy" in Chs. A. Moore, Ed. The Chinese Mind, p. 80.

a) The Social Viewpoint

Whatever the early Buddhists had done at the social level might be attributed ideologically — because they were closer to the original doctrine — to the Indian ideal of Bodhisattahood and its corresponding concept of karuṇa. Indian Mahayana Buddhism had emphasized the altruistic aspects of self realization in reaction to the Hinayana conception of the Path culminating in the self-realization ideal of Arhathood.⁸¹ The Bodhisattva did not seek enlightenment for himself but sought to contribute to the enlightenment of all sentient beings; and for this reason he would remain voluntarily in the wheel of samsāra. In other words, the mahayana wisdom (prajñāpāramitā) was karuṇa-oriented, although it was still short of a social formula.

As for the latest Chinese schools, T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen and Ch'an, not only did they seem to focus on individual salvation and seem to retain of the Bodhisattva ideal his indifference to Nirvāna rather than his altruistic concern,⁸² but also they failed in providing the Chinese with any concrete means of social salvation. Furthermore, the idealistic character of these schools, with their doctrine of the Universal Mind, had eroded the Bodhisattava ideal to the point that it was described as a mere state of mind, a mere consciousness cut off from the concrete predicament of the empirical world. Other factors contributing to this erosion were the doctrines of salvation of schools like the Pure Land which paid

⁸¹The Mahayana-sutras are full of comments on the difference between the two Paths. See for instance Sadharmā-Puṇḍarīka, VIII, 33.

⁸²See FH 343. This aspect will be studied in the present section.

little attention to the needs of Chinese society, being concerned primarily with the devotee's own anxiety to escape the Wheel of Life, with the help of Amitabha, and to find refuge in the Buddha land.

To respond to these doctrines, which they found "harmful", the Sung philosophers went back to their own tradition and selected the fundamental concept of jen which had already served as the key-note of early Confucianism. We have seen in the preceding chapter that this concept was given a cosmological and metaphysical dimension. This is consistent with the ethical character of Chinese philosophy: the world of metaphysics and the world of ethics are one: man is one with the universe, and the Great Ultimate is the Principle of Ultimate Goodness, the totalization of goodness of all individual li or natures.

Just as Unity in the Universe can be achieved only by way of jen, so Unity in man cannot be realized without jen. "The man of jen is undifferentiably one with all things" (FH 2..) Jen is the moral dynamism by which the social and personal growth of man is made possible. In both cases, the Neo-Confucianists carefully insisted on this dynamic aspect as the counterproposal to the Buddhist views.

1. Rejection of Buddhist Views

As we saw in the introduction and the first chapters, the chief criticism which had been directed against Buddhism by the Chinese for a thousand years was their lack of participation in the struggle of the individual Chinese striving to cope with his world. As early as in the Mou-tzu (c. 250) the Buddhists were charged with unfilial conduct. During the Chin Dynasty, the Confucian bureaucracy objected to the autonomous status of the Sangha and the regent Yu Ping, in 340, proposed that monks should pay due respect to the ruler. The Liang Dynasty (502-557) saw another wave of opposition and Fan Chen stated that Buddhism was detrimental to the government, destructive of the family and an economic burden to the people. Even more explicit was the attack of Hsun Chi, a contemporary of Fan Chen, who blamed the foreign religion for neglecting or harming the relations between father and son, prince and minister, husband and wife, and between friends, and accused the Buddhists of sedition.⁸³ It is no surprise that Buddhism had been periodically suppressed, partly in 446, completely in 574 and 845.

The Neo-Confucian philosophers could not forget these facts and they agreed on the accusation that the Buddhists ignored the Five Constant Virtues and harmed society. Ch'eng Hao, who knew them well, says about them:

⁸³See Ch'en, op.cit., pp. 38, 70, 140, 143.

It is true that the Buddhists know the mind and understand nature, but of preserving the mind and nourishing nature they know nothing. Of course they say that they renounce the family to attend their own virtue in solitude. This shows they are deficient in the substance of the Way. (R 283)

And Chu Hsi:

In the case of ((orthodox)) Buddhism, human relations are already destroyed. When it comes to Zen, however, from the very start it wiped out all moral principles completely. Looked at this way, Zen has done the greatest harm. (CP 647)

This charge of immorality against the Buddhists recurs again and again in the Neo-Confucianist texts, but their chief attack brings something new and far more subtle. In charging them with selfishness, they describe perfectly the nature and the degree of this immorality, because selfishness is the very negation of jen.⁸⁴

In the XIIIth chapter of Chu Hsi's anthology Reflection on Things at Hand, there is a text of Ch'eng Hao with a commentary by Chu Hsi which discusses in full precisely this radical opposition between Buddhist selfishness and Confucian jen. The two texts read as follows:

The Buddhists are fundamentally afraid of life and death and are selfish. Is theirs the way for all? They devote themselves only to penetration on the transcendental level, not to learning on the empirical level. This being the case, can their penetration on the transcendental level be right? Their two levels are basically disconnected. Whatever is separated is not the Way.

((Comment)) Simply because ((the Buddhists)) have no righteousness to square the external life, even their seriousness to straighten the internal life is incorrect. Master Ch'eng said, "They devote themselves only to penetration on the transcendental level, not to learning on the empirical level. This being the case, can their penetration on the transcendental level be right?" He meant the same. (R 282)

⁸⁴"Tao ((has Only)) two ((aspects)): there is jen together with not jen" (Ch'eng I, S 107).

In order to unfold the consistent argumentation of these texts, let us proceed by way of parallelism between selfishness and jen.

What is selfishness? Ch'eng Hao describes it as escapism from the reality of this world. "They are fundamentally afraid of life and death". Not only are they indifferent to this world in its concrete reality, but they look down on it as being illusory (māyā)⁸⁵ and therefore evil. And what are they craving for? "They devote themselves only to penetration on the transcendental level", and they have no concern for this world of ours. So that the root of their selfishness is their other-worldliness itself. Because they refuse the reality of this world, and the inescapability of the cycle of life and death, not only do they close their eyes to the real, in mistaking reality for Emptiness,⁸⁶ but they speak about absurdities like transmigration or the Dharmakāya, as we have seen in the preceding chapters. From the Neo-Confucian standpoint, there is no greater sin. Because they ignore "learning on the empirical level" they fail, as Chu Hsi points out, both in their inner life, because their seriousness (ching) is incorrect, and in their external life, because of their lack of righteousness (yi) in ignoring human affairs. This is rejection of the virtues, this is radical immorality.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Buddhists are in a schizophrenic predicament in that there is a gap, a metaphysical and ethical disconnection

⁸⁵Cf. FH 567.

⁸⁶"One may eat rice the livelong day, and they (the Buddhists) will say that one has not chewed a single grain" (CHU Hsi, FH 567).

⁸⁷"To renounce human relations and to do away with the Four Elements ((the basic elements which are connected with death and life)) is to deviate very far from the Way" (Ch'eng Hao, R 281).

between the transcendental and the empirical, and this is in contradiction with the Neo-Confucian conceptions of oneness between man and universe.

"Whatever is separated is not the Way".

In other words, Buddhist selfishness, in the eyes of the Neo-Confucianists, has a cosmic aspect, in that they deny the reality of the universe to escape the law of Heaven,⁸⁸ the cold facts of life and death. It has also an ethical aspect, in that they renounce human relations, and are thus unable to "square the external life". Here is a quotation of Cheng I which summarizes this ethical aspect with perfect clarity:

The Buddhists themselves will not abide by the principles of the relationship between ruler and minister, between father and son, and between husband and wife, and criticize others for not doing as they do. They leave these human relations to others and have nothing to do with them, setting themselves apart as a special class. If this is the way to lead the people, it will be the end of the human race. As to their discourse on the principle and the nature of things, it is primarily in terms of life and death. Their feelings are based on love of life and fear of death. This is selfishness. (B 478)

In radical opposition to this selfishness of the Buddhists stands the Neo-Confucian concept of jen. What is jen? Jen is "the will to grow in all things" (Ch'eng Hao, NC 27). It is a supremely optimistic approach to the real. It is the welcoming of life and death as part of the natural order. It is to share in the universal dynamism and in so doing to achieve one's ultimate fulfilment. "He who ((possesses)) Jen is one with Heaven and Earth and all things" 160). This is the cosmic dimension of Jen and the Neo-Confucianists, since Chang T'sai, have called it "impartiality".

⁸⁸ "Whatever is not in accordance with the Law of Heaven is selfish desire (Ch'eng I, S 254).

To the question "What is jen?" Ch'eng I answers: "Nothing but an impartial all-inclusive interest (kung)" and in another passage: "Jen is universal impartiality, it is the foundation of goodness (S 186 and R 13). Speaking of the Sage, he describes him as one who has "no selfish subjectivity", which means, as Chu Hsi interprets it, to be impartial.

From these quotations we see that while the Buddhists reject this world and turn towards the transcendent, the man of jen abides in impartiality and oneness with the universe, without any selfish attempt to escape. "Man's task in the world is to comprehend this process of change and to harmonize his action with it, not, like the Buddhists, to try to achieve some state of suspension outside the process" (de Barry, B 466). Here again appears the contrast between Buddhist selfishness, which is a negative withdrawal from life, and the healthy optimistic approach of the Neo-Confucianists to the real and to life: jen. As Hsieh Lian-tso (1050-1103) puts it:

That which is alive is jen and that which is dead is not jen. We call paralysis of the body and unconsciousness of feeling the absence of jen (...) Those Buddhists who understand this claim that they have thus discovered their true nature and there is nothing more to do. Hence they finally result in falsehood and absurdities. (NC 25)

The above discussion covers mainly the cosmic aspect of jen. But the main dimension, and of course the most traditional, is its ethical aspect. While Buddhist selfishness means not only indifference to life and death but indifference to society, i.e. a radical immorality, jen means, for the Neo-Confucianists, besides this impartiality or harmony with the world, harmony as well with society. Being essentially dynamic, a life force, jen is the ethical principle of human growth, within and

without, and at all levels: ethical, social, individual. Ch'eng Hao uses this helpful comparison:

Books of medicine describe paralysis of the four limbs as absence of jen. This is an excellent description. (...) If things are not parts of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force no longer parts of myself. (NC 26)

The Neo-Confucianists extensively developed this ethical aspect of jen as dynamic principle. And this adds to the contrast with the Buddhist monastic ideal of extinction of the passions and freedom from family ties.

In his treatise on jen (CP 593), Chu Hsi makes a clever distinction between the substance and the function of jen. The substance is its cosmic aspect of impartiality or oneness with the world. The function is the growing of the Five Constant Virtues corresponding to the Five Cosmic Elements. "From the store of essences of Heaven and Earth, man alone obtains the cream of the five elements. His intrinsic nature is pure and still. In its unstirred state it is complete with the Five Constant Virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and good faith." (Ch'eng I, S 148). Most of the time, however, the Neo-Confucianists speak of the Four Virtues of Mencius: "Love, righteousness, propriety and wisdom", which constitute for Mencius human nature (Meng Tzu 6A: 6).

At this level jen operates through altruism and love.

When man puts impartiality into practice, that is jen. Because of impartiality, one can accommodate both others and himself. Therefore, a man of jen is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of jen, while love is its function. (Ch'eng I, NC 25)

This distinction between jen and love preserves the two-fold character of jen as impartiality and as the general virtue of human nature.

Jen 'vitalizes' in turn the three other virtues: li (propriety or rules of conduct) is the ethical aspect of natural order.^{89a} It concerns the relations between parents and children, (chiao, filial piety), husband and wife, friends, and minister and ruler (chung). Therefore this is the case for social behaviour in Confucianism. Yi (righteousness) is that which "squares the external life" and "enables one to know what is right and what is wrong (Ch'eng I, R 66). And finally, chih (knowledge) is that which deals in Neo-Confucian ethics, with an important function: the investigation of things.^{89b}

From the mere enumeration of these virtues, we see how essential is the concept of jen for the Neo-Confucianists and how antithetic it is to Buddhist selfishness. Ch'anism for instance, teaches a radical subjectivism, the Mind-only doctrine, and is totally oriented towards this sudden enlightenment which is in itself the most otherworldly goal one can aim at. Consequently Ch'an Buddhism forgets about the world and society and in the mind of its opponents, does not escape from self-contradiction and ridicule:

The Buddhists advocate the renunciation of the family and the world. Fundamentally the family cannot be renounced. Let us say that it can, however, when the Buddhists refuse to recognize their parents as parents and run away. But how can a person escape from the world? Only when a person no longer stands under heaven or upon earth is he able to forsake

^{89a}"It was asked: Is propriety the order of Heaven and Earth, and music the harmony of Heaven and Earth?" He said: "You are right. ((In this sense)) there is nothing in the world without propriety and music." (Ch'eng I, S 85)

^{89b}While the Buddhist knowledge (prajñā) is a transcendental wisdom, "the ability to see the non-rising of thoughts, to see emptiness without being" (Shen-hui (670-762), PSU 33), the Confucian knowledge (chih) is empirical and related to practice. "To know the ultimate point to be reached and to reach it is to extend knowledge... To know the finishing point and to reach it is to practice with effort... Thus one holds on at the end and is therefore able to preserve his righteousness (Ch'eng I, R 42).

the world. But while he continues to drink when thirsty and eat when hungry, he still stands under heaven and sets his feet on earth. (B 478)

To this fundamental subjectivism and selfishness, the Neo-Confucianists oppose the essentially positive, optimistic, dynamic and thisworldly concept of jen which enables man to relate not only at the cosmic (transcendental and immanent) but at the ethical (social and personal) levels to all beings inanimate as well as living. This relationship is for man the essence of his fulfilment. Whereas the Buddhist goal is the final extinction (nirvāṇa) of the empirical illusion and the awakening to the Ultimate consciousness, which is at the same time the ultimate negation of all views and of what reality means for the Neo-Confucianists, ultimate human fulfilment is for the latter the exact opposite: It is jen, it is acceptance of the world as it is, in its total dimension, it is acceptance of life and death, it is to relate to all beings and participate in the universal growth and fulfilment.

This fundamental opposition between the Buddhist and the Neo-Confucian approaches to the ultimate questions is confirmed, in another area of the present discussion, namely the contrast between karuṇa and jen. At first sight it would seem that we are rather in an area of rapprochement since both concepts are universal in their object. The Bodhisattva ideal entails seeking self realization, at least in the original Indian tradition, in an altruistic way. But as we suggested previously, the Chinese Buddhists did not put the same stress on the "Great Pity" (Mahā-karuṇa) as they did on the indifference to both samsāra and nirvāṇa. The Hua-yen Huan-yüan kuan describes the Bodhisattva ideal in these terms:

By viewing matter as empty we achieve Great Wisdom ((Mahāmati)), so that we do not abide in (the cycle of) life and death. By viewing emptiness as matter we achieve Great Pity ((Mahākaruṇa)), so that we do not abide in Nirvāna. Only by creating no dualism between matter and emptiness, and no differentiation between pity and wisdom, do we reach Truth. (FH 343)

And the text goes on in quoting a passage of the Treatise on the Precious Nature^{90a} on the prospective Bodhisattava in which the emphasis is clearly and exclusively on right views of Emptiness.

From what has been said about the Buddhist otherworldliness and selfishness, even when dealing with the Bodhisattva ideal, we may see how radically this doctrine conflicts with the Neo-Confucian concept of jen. Basically the Buddhist "Great Pity" is a state of mind made of a very unsatisfactory equivalence (prajñāpāramitā) and benevolence (karuṇa), which is fundamentally indifferent to life and death, saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, and which is the final stage of a Bodhisattva's quest for the Ultimate Truth. This radical indifference or "selfishness", from the Neo-Confucianist viewpoint, results in two characteristics of the Buddhist love:

a) karuṇa is an undifferentiated love for all beings, b) karuṇa is mere consciousness, a mere state of mind, with no concrete repercussions at the practical level, i.e. in human conduct and in the practice of social virtues.^{90b} Such a conception of love hits precisely the "tender spot" of traditional Chinese thought from the times of the great polemics between Mo^z-ti (fl. 479-438 B.C.) and Mencius (371-289 B.C.?) (CP 211). The Confucianists were always the champions of the distinctions in love and conceived of it as dynamically related, as the cardinal virtue, to the

^{90a} D. Bodde thinks that this sastra could be the Indian Mahāyanāttaratantra Sāstra arrived in China in 508. (FH 363, n.5.)

^{90b} See below pg. 65 (CP 648 & TT 13) Chu Hsi's quotations.

other virtues rooted in human nature (Meng Tzu CP 54). In other words, Confucian love is concrete, personal, considerate of the social order and above all efficient. Virtue has to be demonstrated.

The Neo-Confucianists were therefore on familiar ground and their attack on the Buddhists was merciless. Against the first aspect of Buddhist love, its undifferentiation, Chu Hsi affirms the doctrine:

When he ((the Buddhist)) arrives at what is called the realm of Emptiness, he does not find any solution. Take the human mind, for example. There is necessarily in it the Five Relations between father and son, ruler and minister, old and young, husband and wife, and friends. When the Buddhists are thorough in their action, they will show no affection in these relationships, whereas when we Confucianists are thoroughgoing in our action, there is affection between father and son, righteousness between ruler and minister, order between old and young, attention to their separate functions between husband and wife, and faithfulness between friends.
(CP 648)

This lack of differentiation in their love lead the Buddhists to extreme positions and conflicting concrete situations. Chu Hsi takes advantage of it as evidence of the non-sense of their doctrine.

Les bouddhistes prêchent la bienveillance inconditionnée. Je me souviens de je ne sais quel passage où ils traitent de 'la Nature pénétrant tout, qui engendre la grand bienveillance ((Mahākaruṇa)) inconditionnée'. En effet ce que les bouddhistes appellent la bienveillance n'est sujet à aucune condition; c'est simplement l'amour universel. Prenons le cas de l'amour qui consiste à aimer ses parents: les bouddhistes le considèrent comme conditionné, et c'est pourquoi ils abandonnent père et mère et ne ((remplissent pas leur devoir de)) les entretenir. Mais s'ils rencontrent un tigre affamé, ils renoncent à leur propre corps afin de le nourrir. Cela est-il raisonnable?
(TT 134)⁹¹

As for the second aspect of Buddhist love, its "quietism", Chu Hsi

⁹¹This example is based on a passage of the jataka about a bodhisattava identified as the Bothisattva Mahasattva by E. Lamotte (Le Traité de la Grande Vertue de Sagesse, 143).

uses a similar example to show the disconnection between theory and practice and therefore the immorality of Buddhist ethics, by Neo-Confucian criteria:

Peu importe ((selon eux)) si l'on agit sans se conformer à la morale ((li)). La relation entre le père et le fils, par exemple, relève de la 'Nature ((assignée)) par le Ciel. Si le père est maltraité par autrui, le fils doit naturellement lui venir en aide. Cependant pour eux ((les Dhyanistes)) il n'en est pas ainsi: si le fils a la pensée de sauver son père, c'est que son esprit est entraîné et mu par l'affection, et cela ne fait que troubler le 'vieux patron' ((Tchou-jen-wong)). Si tel est cet 'éveil', à quoi aboutit-il? J'ai parcouru autrefois le Sseu kia lou et j'y ai remarqué des passages à la fois ridicules et effrayants. Il y est dit que si le père et la mère sont tués par des gens, on ne peut être appelé un 'Bodhisattva ayant initialement émis la pensée de la bodhi' (prathama (bodhi) cittotpadika-bodhisattva) que si l'on éprouve aucune émotion, aucune pensée mise en mouvement. (TT 123)

Such indifference to what was dearest to the heart of a true Confucianist could only culminate in a violent clash with the Neo-Confucianists.

2. Assimilations of Buddhist Views

We have seen in the second chapter how jen, which was an ethical notion in early Confucianism, acquired with the Neo-Confucianists a cosmic dimension. Even if the Doctrine of the Mean (Ch. 20) and after it the Meng Tzu (7 B: 16) had suggested for jen a metaphysical connotation in identifying it with human nature ("Jen (humanity, love) is jen, man? (Chung-yung, Ch. 20, CP 104)), the dynamic aspects of jen understood as the "seed" of the Universe, both as cosmic and as ethical seed, is essentially a contribution of the Neo-Confucianists. This two-fold character of jen was integrated into their new synthesis through the distinction of jen as substance and jen as function, thus dissociating clearly jen as ethical dynamism from love as function.

Since Mencius said that the sense of commiseration is jen, scholars have considered love as jen. But love is man's feeling, whereas jen is man's nature. (...) The sense of commiseration is only the beginning of jen. (...) It is incorrect to equate universal love with jen." (Cheng I, NE 16)

The other development of the concept of jen concerns precisely jen as function, that is to say love, and this is the question which we have now to examine. The object of love, in early Confucianism, is restricted to society and differentiated according to the prescriptions of li (propriety) (Vg. Lun-yü 1, 2, Meng-Tzu 6A: 5, Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu, ch. 35). But with Chang Tsai, the universalization of love appears in Neo-Confucianism. In his Western Inscription, which exerted a decisive influence on the Ch'eng Chu school, we find not only the cosmic, but the ethical universalization of jen:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. (...) All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions." (NE 16)

Why such a sudden break-through of the concept of jen happens not only on the cosmological level, as we have seen in the second chapter, but on the ethical level as well? Even after the long struggle of the early Confucianists against the Moist conception of universal love, the Neo-Confucianists took the risk of a resurgence of the "heresy". Of course they took great care in reaffirming the traditional idea of differentiation in love as the best means of staying as close as possible to the reality and concreteness of the human condition. But they nevertheless came out with an entirely new and perilous perspective.

As we did for the cosmic aspect of jen, we have to conclude that the universalization of Confucian love finds its inspiration, obviously, in the Buddhist doctrine of the Bodhisattva and more precisely in the Avatamsaka Sūtra, an important sūtra in the history of later Chinese Buddhism. This Sutra being the basis of the Hua-yen school, it is worthy to quoting here a remarkable passage which undoubtedly was known to most of the Neo-Confucianists, and which summarizes the essential of the current Buddhist doctrine of salvation in China:

All the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten quarters have attained great spiritual and unhindered perception, and are able by means of excellent and skillful acts of merit to rescue all distressed beings. Having thus meditated, let them make a great vow that they will with single mind think only of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so as to produce in this way a settled conviction. Then at the end of life they will attain entrance into the Buddha's realm, and perceiving the Buddhas and bodhisattvas with perfected faith they will be everlastingly freed from evil conditions. As a sutra says 'If good men and good women would think only on Amitabha

in his perfectly blessed world in the western region, and direct all their root of merit towards him, and desire to be born there, then they will assuredly be born there'. Faith increases through a constant beholding of the Buddhas, and there would never be a relapse. Through hearing the Dharma one comes to contemplate the Dharmakaya of the Buddha, and by persistent discipline one enters into a state of Truth.⁹²

This text is typically Buddhist in character not only in its terminology, but in its way of speaking of this world from a transcendental viewpoint. And still, if you compare it with the above quoted passage of Chang Tsai, you find the same universal and cosmic inspiration. This view is well expressed by W.-t. Chan: "There is no doubt that this idea reflects Buddhist influence for hitherto Confucian love had been confined largely to the mundane world, whereas the object of moral consciousness in Buddhism is the entire universe" (NC 19)

If we come now to the Neo-Confucianists, we find that they speak of universal love as taken for granted and that they are concerned primarily with the distinction to be preserved between jen and love as feeling, which might have Buddhist overtones, karuṇa being a state of mind. In discussing these two passages of Meng Tzu: "The feeling of commiseration is what we call jen" (6A: 6) and "The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of humanity" (Ibid.), Ch'eng I insists in this distinction, while referring to love as universal:

Since it is called the beginning of jen, it should not be called jen itself. It is wrong for Han YU ((768-824)) to say universal love is jen. A man of humanity, of course, loves universally. But one may not therefore regard universal love as jen (R 27).

⁹²Translation of D.H. Smith in Chinese Religions, 127.

In the same way, Ch'eng Hao comes out with this very Neo-Confucianist statement:

A man of jen is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of humanity, while love is its function (R 62).

And again Ch'eng I, while speaking of impartiality:

When kung is embodied in man, then it is jen. It is simply because of kung that I am able not only to look after myself but also all things and creatures ((outside of me)). Therefore, jen is that by which one is able to practice "like-heartedness" (shu, or placing oneself in the other man's position). It is also that by which one is able to love. 'Like-heartedness' is the dispensation of jen. Love is the application of jen. (S 187)

It is therefore possible to conclude that even on their most solid ground: the genuine Confucian notion of jen, i.e. as seen both in its substance and its function, the Neo-Confucianists made use, in their synthesis, of this remarkable contribution of Indian thought to Chinese thought: the Bodhisattva ideal of love.

b) Personal Cultivation

With this last section, we reach an area where Neo-Confucianism is deeply indebted to Chinese Buddhism. One cannot but make a connection between seriousness and extension of knowledge of the Ch'eng Chu school on the one hand, and the Ch'anist emphasis on samādhi and prajñā on the other. But before Chinese Buddhism might exert such an influence on the old Confucian tradition, it had to go through a radical evolution away from its original Indian form.

One essential difference between Indian and Chinese Buddhism is that in India, Buddhism developed into two rival traditions: Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, while in China only Mahāyāna was wide-spread and well-known. Therefore, the discussions which opposed Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists in India were meaningless to the Chinese. In India, this discussion can be traced as early as from the first schism of the Śaṅgha, at the Council of Vaiśali, when the early Mahāsaṅghikas were excommunicated by the Sthaviras.⁹³ It may be summarized as follows: while the Hīnayānists understood the Arhat and Pratyekabuddha ideals as consisting basically in entering the freedom of Nirvāṇa, the Mahāyānists consider these two stages as individualistic, inferior and therefore preliminary to Bodhisattvahood, which is an altruistic ideal of personal renunciation of Nirvāṇa for the 'salvation'

⁹³ Cf. E. Lamotte, Histoire du bouddhisme indien, 138 sq. See also the Kathavatthu.

of all beings.⁹⁴ Concretely, these two conceptions of the goal gave rise to two different paths. The Hinayana path consists of the traditional eightfold Path or the threefold division of the disciple's training into śīla (morality), samādhi (concentration) and prajñā (knowledge). The Mahayana goes further in proposing the Bodhsattva's six pāramitās (perfections),⁹⁵ which culminate in the Perfection of Wisdom (prajñāpāramitā)

Though the Mahāyāna Sūtras are full of hints and comments concerning this discussion, the evolution of the Chinese Buddhist schools went along entirely different lines, as we have already seen.⁹⁶ They adopted both the Vinaya (Sss-fen-lu) rules based on the Hīnayānist conception of śīla, samādhi and prajñā, and the Bodhisattva ideology proposed in the Prajñāpāramitā literature.⁹⁷ In course of time, the process of sinicization of a few schools resulted in an important evolution on both levels: on the practical level, the schools sticking to the Indian Vinaya,

⁹⁴Etymologically, arhat has two meanings: either "he who slains (han) the enemies (ari)", i.e. who achieves extinction of passions, or he who is 'worthy' or perfect saint. The Pratyekabuddha (Praty-eka, single, individual) differs from the arhat in having attained full Enlightenment independently and as a 'separate Buddha'. He differs from the complete Buddha in that not being omniscient, he cannot proclaim the doctrine. Therefore the Bodhisattva is considered in the Mahayana tradition as belonging to the Buddha class, with the difference that he postpones voluntarily his final liberation from samsāra for the sake of others. (CF. E. Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, 166, 210; E. Thomas, op.cit. 168; T.R.V. Murti, op.cit. 278)

⁹⁵Alms giving, morality, patience, heroism, meditation, and wisdom. OT 34n.

⁹⁶Eg. their basic agreement on the Mind-only doctrine.

⁹⁷H. Smith, op. cit. 17 sq.

like the Disciplinary School, did not have a wide following.⁹⁸ On the contrary, the Ch'an school, the most influential in China, freed itself from the Vinaya and adopted its own regulations, making them closer to the Chinese mentality and independent from the traditional rules of the Saṅgha.⁹⁹ On the theoretical level, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, all the sinicized schools, in their interpretation of the Bodhisattva ideal, emphasized the freedom from attachment to both samsāra and nirvāṇa, rather than the altruistic dimension.

Here is a typical passage of the Platform Sutra which is the only Chinese text which receives the title of "Sutra".¹⁰⁰ When treating of prajñāpāramitā, the sūtra clearly lays the emphasis on self-realization in relation to the traditional threefold path.

Good and learned friends, the mahāprajñāpāramitā is the most supreme, the highest, and the best. It neither remains, nor goes, nor comes. The Buddhas of the past, the present, and the future come from it; use this great wisdom to reach the Other Shore, and destroy the Five Aggregates and the afflictions resulting from passions. The most supreme, the highest, and the best! Praise this very best method. If you practice it you will surely achieve Buddhahood. Being neither remaining, nor coming, nor going, this state is the same as calmness and wisdom, with no contamination (PS 73).

Though the T'ien-t'ai school put a certain emphasis on concentration and insight,¹⁰¹ the Ch'an school was by far the most genuine, efficient and well adapted method of personal cultivation for the Chinese. This

⁹⁸ K. Ch'en, op. cit., 301.

⁹⁹ Jan, Y.-h., op. cit., 80 n.

¹⁰⁰ W.-t. Chan, PS 20.

¹⁰¹ CP 397.

school had fully achieved the synthesis of the two main trends of Buddhism in China: the dhyāna (concentration) and the prajñā traditions.¹⁰² And it is through this dual emphasis, not so much on the speculative level as on the level of personal cultivation, that Ch'anism, and through it Chinese Buddhism as a whole, had a decisive impact on Neo-Confucianism. The Chinese mind feels that doctrine, like virtue, has to be demonstrated.

Personal cultivation is not foreign to Confucianism. Already Confucius and Mencius had laid down its ethical and metaphysical basis, the former by emphasizing the need for education and learning, as well as the practice of the great Confucian virtues (CP 18); the latter in affirming the goodness and therefore the perfectibility of human nature (CP 52). But it is the Great Learning which provided the immediate key-concepts which enabled the Neo-Confucian philosophers to build their own synthesis in answer to the Buddhist challenge. It speaks of the investigation of things and extension of knowledge, of sincerity of will and rectification of mind, which are fundamental to personal cultivation. And personal cultivation is the foundation of Harmony, peace and order in society, both in the family and in the state (CP 86). If we compare this text with the passage of the Platform Sutra quoted above, we notice at once the main point of disagreement between Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism: the emphasis on the transcendent — the otherworldliness in the eyes of the Neo-Confucianists, of the former, and the social mindedness of the latter. While Ch'an Buddhism, in contrast with a school like the Pure Land, is a purely monastic movement, Neo-Confucianism is entirely society-oriented.

¹⁰²W.-t. Chan, CP 336

But in order to appreciate the extent to which Neo-Confucianism was finally influenced by the Buddhist conception of personal cultivation, we have to examine, in the light of the early Confucian tradition, the main features of the 'new Path' of Neo-Confucian self-fulfilment.

The Ch'eng Chu school had found its Confucian basis in the Great Learning,¹⁰³ as was mentioned above. Ch'eng I adopted it as the vade mecum of the learner:

The Great Learning is a surviving work of the Confucian school and is the gate through which the beginning student enters into virtue. It is only due to the preservation of this work that the order in which the ancients pursued their learning may be seen at this time. The Analects and the Book of Mencius are next to it. The student should by all means follow this work in his effort to learn and then he will probably be free from mistakes. (CP 85)

So important was this document for Chu Hsi that he published it with a commentary attributed to Tseng Tzu, a pupil of Confucius, and a few personal comments. The doctrine of the Great Learning on self cultivation is typically Confucian in the sense that it is oriented toward the harmonization of both man and society. It is described as a series of steps organically — here as in Neo-Confucian cosmology prevails the organic conception — interrelated, circulating from roots to branches, i.e. from the investigation of things in the depth of personal life up to the practice of jen by the ruler at the public level. At the personal level:

when things are investigated, knowledge is extended;
 when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere;
 when the will becomes sincere, the mind is rectified;
 when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated;

¹⁰³ Chu Hsi classified this brief section of the Book of Rites (ch. 42) among the "Four Books" (with Lun-YU, the Meng Tzu and the Doctrine of the Mean, Chung-yung) and so "made it important in the last 800 years" (W.-t. Chan CP 85)

and at the public level:

when the personal life is cultivate, the family will be regulated,
when the family is regulated, the state will be in order;
and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout
the world.

From the Son of Heaven down to the common people,
all must regard cultivation of the personal life as the
root or foundation. (CP 86)

From this text we see how personal fulfilment is not the ultimate goal in Confucianism, but a goal which is integrated, harmonized, with the greater goal: social harmony in the families, in the state and in the world. The ultimate fulfilment is the total harmony of all in one and one in all.

This ideal was already suggested in the famous curriculum vitae of Confucius, where he says that "at seventy, I could follow my heart's desire, without transgressing moral principles" (Lun-Yu 2, 4 - CP 22), which means that he had reached the ultimate stage of perfect harmony not only with the world within but with the world without, the world governed by moral principles, by the Tao. In the Meng-Tzu, as in the Lun-Yu, both aspects, the personal and the social, are treated depending on whether the text speaks of the individual or the ruler. But the superiority of the Great Learning lays in the fact that the Confucian doctrine had reached with it an explicit synthesis of the two dimensions of its ultimate goal. And, since the Great Learning was really 'discovered' by the Neo-Confucianists fifteen hundred years after the foundations of their own tradition, they have to be credited with it, as well as with the development of their own doctrine of personal cultivation. In fact the early Confucianists

in spite of their emphasis on the perfectibility of human nature¹⁰⁴ and on education, never systematized this aspect of personal cultivation. But the Neo-Confucianist not only treated extensively of its importance, its goal, its means and method, its stages, its main virtues, they also had reinterpreted the basic concept of "the investigation of things" in giving it a metaphysical basis.

Here is a brief outline of the essentials of their doctrine, though it is beyond the scope of the present thesis to substantiate each point with quotations. First Cheng I (FH 529) and then Chu Hsi applied their concept of li (principle) to the Book of Changes' notion of investigation of things: it is through the investigation of li which is in all things, that man will reach his oneness of perfect harmony with all things.

There is no human intelligence ((utterly)) lacking knowledge, and no single thing in the world without li. But because the investigation of li is not exhaustive, this knowledge is in some ways not complete (Chu Hsi, FSH 306)

This is why the extension of knowledge is essential to him who wants to progress towards Enlightenment.¹⁰⁵

But without ching (seriousness, earnestness, attentiveness of mind or concentration), which is a self-discipline -- "seriousness merely means

¹⁰⁴This is true even of Hsun Tzu, who strongly advocates the practice of virtue or discipline to overcome the shortcomings of human nature (Ch. 23 CP 128).

¹⁰⁵"There is no other way to investigate principle to the utmost than to pay attention to everything in our daily reading of books and handling of affairs. Although there may not seem to be substantial progress, nevertheless after a long period of accumulation, without knowing it one will be saturated ((with principle)) and achieve an extensive harmony and penetration." (Chu Hsi, CP 610).

the mind being its own master" (Chu Hsi, CP 606), the pursuit of knowledge might be mere speculation, or dream. To a disciple complaining about confusion in his thoughts, Ch'eng I answers:

This is not good. Fundamentally this is due to insecurity. You must practice. When you practice to the point of being able to concentrate on one thing, you will be all right. Whether in thought or in the handling of affairs, we must seek concentration. (R 148)

As for the extension of knowledge, not only do the Neo-Confucian masters stress the importance of this disposition, but they also insist on its Confucian roots. Quoting Confucius (Lun-Yü 4:25), Ch'eng Hao describes it as the way to fulfilment:

Seriousness without fail is "the state of equilibrium before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused". Seriousness is not equilibrium itself. But seriousness without fail is the way to attain equilibrium. (R 129)

Besides these two legs (extension of knowledge and seriousness) which are necessary to advance in spiritual cultivation, there are several other dispositions which are equally important: ch'eng, absolute sincerity, harmony without (vg. R. 144), chung, harmony within (vg. S 195) and tranquillity in activity (vg. CP 607). What is more important here is to note the insistence, a very Confucian insistence, of the Ch'eng Chu master, on the verification of knowledge by practice. "When knowledge is deep, practice is sure to be thorough. No one ever knows without being able to practice. To know without being able to practice is an indication that the knowledge is superficial." (Cheng I, CP 240). These different dispositions and virtues were inevitably revealed in polemic discussions, as we will see in the subsequent pages. But the main point to clarify is the question of the very goal of this personal cultivation. The text speaks generally of

fulfilment, and furthermore, in terms of self-fulfilment. "If one cultivates himself, he will attain his unity" (Ch'eng I).

The investigation of Li, the fulfilment of one's nature, and the attainment of the knowledge of Heaven's appointment are but one thing. As soon as Li is thoroughly investigated, one's own nature is fulfilled. As soon as one's own nature is fulfilled, the knowledge of Heaven's appointment is attained. (Ch'eng I, S 93)

or, discussing the goal of learning:

What is it then that Yen Hui ((disciple of Confucius)) alone is said to love to learn? It is none other than the way to sagehood (or perfect manhood). But can sagehood be attained by learning? Yes. (Ch'eng I, S 227)

It might appear rather surprising that little emphasis is laid on the social aspect of personal cultivation. One explanation might be that the Confucian disciple takes it for granted, and what he really does need is a clear statement about this rather new doctrine of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation. Still, the social aspect comes out spontaneously and loudly when challenged by Buddhist quietism. Nevertheless, what is implicit in most of the texts stands out very clearly in this remarkable passage of the Doctrine of the Mean (ch. 22) which is quoted in abridged form by Ch'eng I:

It is only he who is most true to himself who can fulfil his own nature. Able to fulfil his own nature, he can fulfil the natures of other men. Able to fulfil the natures of other men, he can fulfil the natures of animals and things. Able to fulfil the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a triad. (S 147)

1. Rejection of Buddhist Views

After this brief exposition of the Buddhist and Neo-Confucian conceptions of personal cultivation, we are in a better position to appreciate the main oppositions of the two systems. They are opposed of course at the level of the means, and particularly with regard to the antithetic pair: seriousness-samadhi, but primarily at the level of the goal: the Neo-Confucian fulfilment versus the Buddhist enlightenment.

That Buddhism is otherworldly from the Neo-Confucian standpoint is affirmed by Chu Hsi:

Le point de vue fondamental des bouddhistes est que la Raison (tao li) est vide et non pleine ((i.e. dépourvue de toute réalité empirique)). C'est pourquoi ils veulent obtenir la délivrance transcendante et se dégager de toutes les entraves des choses. (TT 89)

It is also confirmed by the Buddhist concept of Enlightenment itself, as expressed in the Platform Scriptures. The Great Master describes the sudden enlightenment as follows:

If one understands the doctrine of sudden enlightenment leading to the ending of the cycle of birth and death, it takes only an instant to see the Western Region. If one does not understand the Great Vehicle doctrine of sudden enlightenment, the way to go and be born there through reciting the name of the Buddha is very far. How can one ever get there? (PS 93)

We have already seen, in the preceding section, how this attempt to escape life and death is mere selfishness in the eyes of the Neo-Confucianists:

They have some enlightenment, which enables them to be serious to straighten their internal life. But they differ from us Confucianists. They are fundamentally impatient, and therefore want to do away with everything. We Confucianists treat

existing things as existent and non-existing things as non-existent. All we want is that when we handle things we shall manage them in the correct way. (Chu Hsi., R. 282)

About this same problem of life and death, production, reproduction, what we could call the cosmic law of change, we have heard Cheng Hao saying, "Because the Buddhists do not know this, they think in terms of the self" (R. 284) or, "Can their penetration on the transcendental level be right? Their two levels are basically disconnected" (R. 282), and Chu Hsi., "However, the Buddhists ignore the universe completely and only pay attention to the mind" (CP 647) or, "The Buddhists go straightly to their destination of emphasis and void" (CP 648). In another text, Chu Hsi gives a more technical description of the Buddhist Path and Goal: "Le point de vue fondamental des bouddhistes est que la Raison (tao li) est vide et non pleine ((i.e. dépourvue de toute réalité empirique)). C'est pourquoi ils veulent obtenir la délivrance transcendante et se dégager de toutes les entraves des choses".

This idea of transcendence is inadmissible to him who holds this very Confucian view of fulfilment:

The sage is the perfect ((pattern)) of manhood ... When the perfection of manhood is reached, nothing can be added. When a person does one thing which is benevolent we say that he is Jen (benevolent); when he has fulfilled the requirements of true manhood, we also say that he is Jen (a true man). That is why I said that the word Jen may be used to include both the higher and the lower stages of moral achievement. (Ch'eng I, S 235)

While the Neo-Confucian conception of fulfilment is not only this-worldly but also beyond the individual in what could be called the social and cosmic harmony, the Buddhist enlightenment is to reach "the

Other Shore" (prajñāpāramitā)¹⁰⁶

If we now look into the sphere of the means to reach this goal, the opposition, of course, is still there. Both the Buddhists and the Neo-Confucianists attach great importance to the concentration of mind, but as Chu Hsi puts it:

Although there is a slight resemblance between the doctrines of the Buddhists and our own Confucian doctrines, they are really what is called similar in appearance but different in spirit, or appearing to be so but actually not. (CP 651)

With his usual fairplay, Ch'eng Hao acknowledges some positive aspects in the Buddhist enlightenment, but in a very Confucian way he turns it down at the level of practice:

In Buddhism there is the principle of awakening. Thus the Buddhists can straighten the internal life with seriousness. But they lack righteousness to square the external life. Essentially the fundamentals of their straightening of the internal life are also wrong. (R 281)

They lack seriousness (ch'eng) which means 'this-worldliness' in the Confucian sense of the word, i.e. to be in accordance with the universe (S 188).

The Buddhist concentration of mind (samādhi)¹⁰⁷ especially with Ch'anism, is a process which takes the mind from this world.

¹⁰⁶"What is meant by prajñā? Prajñā means wisdom. If at all times one is not ignorant but always acts wisely, that is practicing wisdom. (...) What does it mean paramitā? This is a Sanskrit word. In Chinese it is 'to reach the Other Shore'. It means to be free from birth and extinction" (PS 71).

¹⁰⁷"The original meaning of the Sanskrit dhyāna was meditation, or concentration or tranquillity. Dhyāna originated in India in the Vedic Age, and was adopted by Buddhists throughout Asia. Dhyāna is sometimes used synonymously with samādhi, or absorption. It is one of the essential approaches of Zen; as it is practiced in China and Japan, the awakening of prajñā is its object." (C.-y. Chang, Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, 173, n. 33)

The samādhi of oneness ((I-hsing san mei. Ekavyuha or ekakara samādhi)) is straightforward mind at all times, walking, staying, sitting, and lying. (...) Only practicing straightforward mind, and in all things having no attachments whatsoever, is called the samādhi of oneness. The deluded man clings to the characteristics of things, adheres to the samādhi of oneness, ((thinks)) that straightforward mind is sitting without moving and casting aside delusions without letting things arise in the mind. This he considers to be the samādhi of oneness. (PSU 136)¹⁰⁸

The Confucianists call this state of mind quiescence or quietism (ching) which, ironically, sounds like seriousness (ching). On a passage of Ch'eng I about quiescence and seriousness, Chu Hsi points out:

By speaking of quiescence one immediately falls into Buddhist doctrine. Not 'quiescence' but only 'earnestness' is the word that should be used. For as soon as one speaks of quiescence, the result is that 'forgetting' of which Mencius speaks. Mencius says: 'We must do something, and never stop and never forget, yet never help to grow'. (18.8). (FH 528)

His response to the Buddhists is as follows:

As to your contention that in Zen, entering into meditation is to cut off thought and reveal the Principle of Nature completely, that is especially wrong. When thinking is correct, there is the Principle of Nature. In all operations and functioning, there is none which is not a revelation of the Principle of Nature. Does it need to wait to have all thoughts cut off before the Principle of Nature can be revealed? Furthermore, what is this that we call the Principle of Nature? Are humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom (the four moral qualities natural to man) not the Principle of Nature? (CP 652)

As in the case of the discussion in the preceding chapter about the Buddhist otherworldliness, Chu Hsi cannot but reach this conclusion:

In the case of ((orthodox)) Buddhism, human relations are already destroyed. When it comes to Zen, however, from the very start it wipes out all moral principles completely. Looked at this way, Zen has done the greatest harm. (CP 647)

¹⁰⁸ W.-t. Chan translates the samadhi of oneness "Calmness in which one realizes that all dharmas are the same" (PS 47)

Before concluding this section, we must read his refutation of the Ch'an conception of Sudden Enlightenment on the principle that systems have to be demonstrated by facts. It reveals not only the extent of Chu Hsi's explorations of Ch'anism, but also the extreme violence of his rejection:

La méthode du Dhyana n'est qu'un entêtement stupide:
 ((embrouillé)) comme trois livres de fils de chanvre,
 ((nauséabonde)) comme un tas d'ordures (k'ien che kiue).
 Au début, leurs principes ne consistaient pas en cela
 ((la méditation passive)). Mais on leur embroïlla l'Esprit,
 et ils ne pensent plus qu'à cette unique route. A force
 de concentrer et d'unifier ((l'Esprit)) pendant longtemps,
 subitement ((disent-ils)) on a la vision: c'est cela
 ((qu'ils appellent)) l'éveil. En gros, cela ne consiste
 qu'à unifier l'Esprit par le recueillement (samadhi) et à
 éviter toute dispersion et distraction; alors à la longue,
 l'illumination se produit d'elle-même. Un homme illettré
 peut ainsi, à peine illuminé, composer des stances (gatha) et
 des hymnes. Bien que ((l'on puisse supposer que)) la vue
 soit la même ((chez tous les illuminés)) après l'illumination,
 il y a pourtant ((des gens qui sont)) plus ou moins profondé-
 ment ((illuminés que d'autres)). (TT 126)

2. Assimilations of Buddhist Views

In the beginning of this section on personal cultivation, we have seen how the Neo-Confucianists 'discovered' the Great Learning and used it to build a doctrine of self fulfilment. As in the case of metaphysics, a question comes to mind: why, after 1500 years, is there this sudden interest, among the Confucian scholars, for the question? On the one hand, we know that all these Neo-Confucianist philosophers had personal contacts with Buddhist monasteries and prominent Buddhist monks. On the other hand, both their own admission (Ch'eng Hao, R 283) and their very aggressiveness (Chu Hsi, TT 126) reveal the great attraction the Buddhists of their time exerted on them as well as on the Chinese intelligentsia at large. Therefore, it is possible to answer the question: 'Why this sudden interest for a systematic doctrine on personal cultivation?' by pointing at the Buddhists, and especially those of the Ch'an school, as the main source of influence. The very pattern in which the Confucian doctrine has developed speaks for itself: its two key-notes are the extension of knowledge (by investigation of things) and seriousness or concentration of mind both of which are analogous to the Ch'anist pair prajñā-samādhi.¹⁰⁹ Chu Hsi considers ko-wu and ching as being "really

¹⁰⁹"Good friends, my teaching of the Dharma takes meditation (ting) and wisdom (hui) as its basis. Never under any circumstances say mistakenly that meditation and wisdom are different; they are a unity, not two things. Meditation itself is the substance of wisdom; wisdom itself is the function of meditation." (PSU 135) This dual emphasis comes originally from the Northern branch of Ch'anism.

the essentials for the student to advance in establishing himself in life." (CP 606). In his foreword to the Platform Scripture, W.-t. Chan is explicit:

The rationalistic School of Principle of Ch'eng I (1033-1107), as developed and systematized by Chu Hsi (1130-1200), Zen influence is considerable. While the rationalist school insists that principles exist in things and not in the mind, it holds that the mind must be alert, tranquil, and free from any deliberate effort. The rationalistic school's dual emphasis on extension of knowledge and the cultivation of seriousness of mind is indisputably a copy of the Zen dual emphasis on wisdom (prajñā) and calmness (samādhi). (PS 4)

Besides this fundamental area of influence, it might be of particular interest to point out, as a concluding note, what may be considered a perfect illustration of subtle assimilation, most of the time perhaps unconscious, of Buddhist views by the Neo-Confucianist thinkers. The case concerns precisely an area where their (conscious) rejection was the most explicit: sudden enlightenment, as expounded by the Ch'an school. The same Chu Hsi who rejects so strongly this doctrine,¹¹⁰ speaks himself, in his commentary on Great Learning, of a sudden enlightenment which comes as a result of a long and patient investigation of things (and more precisely of li in things) and seriousness.

The intelligent mind of man is certainly formed to know, and there is not a single thing in which its principles do not inhere. It is only because all principles are not investigated that man's knowledge is incomplete. For this reason, the first step in the education of the adult is to instruct the learner, in regard to all things in the world, to proceed from what knowledge he has to their principles, and investigate further until he reaches the limit. After exerting

¹¹⁰ See quotation, page 84 above.

himself in this way for a long time, he will one day¹¹¹ achieve a wide and far-reaching penetration. Then the qualities of all things, whether internal or external, the refined or the coarse, will be apprehended, and the mind, in its total substance and great functioning, will be perfectly intelligent. This is called the investigation of things. This is called the perfection of knowledge. (CP 89)

The main emphasis of this text is, of course, the gradual extension of knowledge, which is in agreement with the Neo-Confucian conception of transcendence and immanence, and of spiritual cultivation. However, this instance on the instantaneousness of perfect understanding is revealing of the powerful influence of Ch'anism on the most distinguished representatives of the Neo-Confucian Sung intelligenzia.

¹¹¹The words which W.-t. Chan had translated as "one day" also means "suddenly". This is close to the doctrine of 'Sudden Enlightenment' as taught by the South branch of Ch'an School.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this discussion on cosmological, metaphysical, and even ethical views, we have seen how deeply the Neo-Confucians, in spite of their incisive and successful attacks on what they considered their own grounds, were indebted to Chinese Buddhism. Their most central and most 'Confucian' concept, the concept of jen, was given an amazing extension and a profounder meaning, both cosmical and ethical, which cannot be traced in their old Confucian system and which is comparable in importance to the Mahaynist ideological revolution in the Buddhist tradition. The only satisfactory explanation for this sudden evolution is found in the Buddhist conceptions of the Universality of the mind seen as the source ("seeds" storehouse) of the empirical world, and of the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion for all sentient beings. In the same way, this great metaphysical idea of associating li and chi, so that both remain at the same time coextensive with and distinct from each other, has striking similarities with the Hua-yen concept of Perfect Harmony between the noumenon and the phenomenon. Finally, the whole pattern of the Neo-Confucian conception of personal cultivation bears the imprint of Ch'anism, from the dual emphasis on knowledge (ko-wun) and concentration of mind (ching), down to Chu Hsi's idea of a kind of sudden enlightenment.

However important this Buddhist influence may be on the development of Neo-Confucianism, it is clear that the synthesis which emerged from the confrontation of the two systems was deeply Confucian in spirit. In the

same way, the main thrust and the most telling strokes of the Neo-Confucian attacks is precisely what is the core of Confucianism: its concern for the social dimension of man.

This ideological revolution is a striking instance of revitalization of an orthodoxy challenged by a powerful rival. A similar case happened in India with the old Brahmanism which finally started a new cycle of evolution under the Buddhist challenge.

With this survey of the main criticisms of the Sung philosophers, a three-fold question, already suggested in the introduction, comes back to mind: what is the significance of this decisive confrontation, for China, for Buddhism and for the world?

For China, this meant not only the triumph of the old orthodoxy over a foreign-born religion, but also the ideological consolidation of a new Chinese society which lasted until the Marxist confrontation. It meant above all a unique phenomenon in world history of a country which retained its orthodoxy for twenty-five centuries. The significance of this is that at a turning point of its long history, China had the opportunity to switch to an entirely different vision of the world and to share the fate of the South East Asian countries. Its answer was however, to remain faithful to its roots and to answer the challenge by an act of amazing vitality: the integration of some very dynamic and appealing concepts of the heterodox ideology, into a genuine and still authentically Confucian synthesis, which could answer the needs of the new Chinese society.

The second question concerns Buddhism, first of all in China. After its gradual elimination from the main areas of influence, Buddhism did not

for all that disappear from Chinese society. It survived mainly under popular forms of devotion and the Ch'an school. It survived also, in a more subtle way, as it happened in India for the Vedanta systems, through its ideological imprint on Chinese synthesis or reviewed orthodoxy. As an universal religion, Buddhism had to adapt itself to various cultural and political contexts. In most of these areas, it is still alive and sometimes flourishing. However, there are two countries -- both very important --, in which Buddhism failed to become predominant: India and China. Being an indigenous religion of India, Buddhism arose as an alternative to the Brahmanical orthodoxy. But after a first period of rapid growth and flourishing of schools, it entered its decline both in the North, where the Muslim destroyed its institutions, and even in the South. In China, Buddhism was persistently seen as a foreign ideology, even in the time of Chu Hsi, after over a thousand years of acclimatation. The questions raised by the Buddha about life and the self, which were so appealing to the speculative Indian mind, remained largely irrelevant to the highly ethical and practical minded Chinese. And the Buddhist attempts to conform with this mentality only created inner tensions and contradictions. The Chinese experience shows that though Buddhism proved its adaptability to many peoples and civilizations, it does not appear to some others to be the unique, irresistible and universal alternative to the human ultimate quest. It shows also that there may be in Buddhism, at least in its Mahayana vision, inner weaknesses due to tensions between the individual and the universal ideal of salvation which remained in Mahayana Buddhism, even after its rejection of the Arhat ideal.

As for the world, both the Chinese and the Indian experiences are indicative of the amazing vitality, and consequently the validity of orthodoxies deeply rooted in tradition and already put to the proof by centuries of ideological and practical challenges. This consideration might even lead to some hints concerning the second major ideological confrontation, in modern China, with a foreign ideology. And perhaps the final conclusion to be drawn, in the present thesis, from the failure of Buddhism in its confrontation with Neo-Confucianism, is that religions cannot forget the importance of cold facts, of what the Buddhists call the empirical realm. However otherworldly these religions may be, if "man shall not live by bread alone"¹¹² nor does he live by mere ideas either. If this is true, it can be fatal for a religion, however appealing, widespread and powerful it may become, to forget that man is still the most important element at stake in ultimate issues. This is precisely what Neo-Confucianism was all about in its confrontation with Chinese Buddhism.

¹¹²Matthew 4,4.

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